

WHISTLING
ARROW

Sichuan

The Yading Kora Trek



Your epic journey

To
Trek the Yading 'Big Kora'.

Starting
June 14th – 27th, 2015.

EPIC
JOURNEYS

Get in touch

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Dream. Explore. Discover.



The big picture



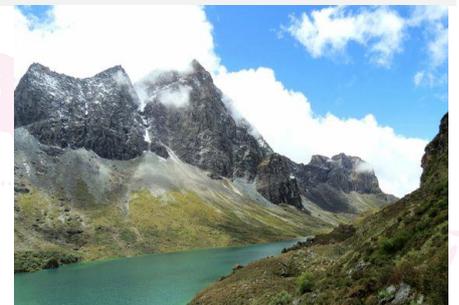
The first spectacular campsite at Biyu pasture.



The stunning drive en route.



Beautiful Chado Basin.



Turquoise Wisdom Lake.



Trekking past Mt Shenrezig.



Through Nyakshi Valley.



Trekking back to Yading.

Your trip details

➤ Setting the scene

The Yading 'Big Kora' is a spectacular pilgrimage route located in the Ganzi Autonomous Tibetan region of South West Sichuan. Pioneered by Whistling Arrow, this 'best of breed' trek circumambulates three sacred 6000m+ peaks sanctified in the 8th Century by the fifth Dalai Lama. The adventure typically lasts for 14 days and involves 8 days of expeditionary trekking (including one rest day) through some of the most stunning mountain scenery in Western China. Notably, the trip is also well 'off the beaten track', offering trekkers the chance to connect with local pilgrims in a way that feels more genuine and meaningful than other more commercial routes such as Mt Kailash. Yading also has an interesting historical context. The 'holy mountains of the outlaws' were 'discovered' by Joseph Rock, a famed explorer of these wild borderlands in 1928, and an extensive account of his travels was published in the July 1931 issue of National Geographic giving the outside world its first jaw-dropping glimpse of this incredibly beautiful 'Shangri-La'. Indeed, it is likely that the fictional paradise written about by James Hilton in the 1933 novel 'Lost Horizon' was inspired by these amazing images.

➤ Experience required

The Yading 'Big Kora' is sustained multi-day trek that includes some long days and significant ascents and descents. The route also climbs over six high mountain passes, the highest of which is the wild Ji San pass at 4,700m. As such you need to be physically fit, although no previous himalayan trekking experience is required. Of more importance is a love of the mountains, dedication, and a commitment to undertake an adventure of a lifetime. As for altitude, the trek is carefully planned to allow plenty of time for acclimatisation.

➤ Logistics and equipment

All tents, camping equipment and food on the trek will be provided. In addition to a good pair of walking boots you will also need to bring a warm sleeping bag and appropriate mountain clothing. During the trek you will only have to carry your day pack. The main gear will be transported by mule. In addition to first rate equipment, you will also be accompanied on the trek by local porters and guided by Adrian Bottomley and our experienced local guide and partner, Edward. Between them they have successfully organised and completed the kora three times. The epic journey begins in Shangri-la (IATA code: DIG). For most people getting there will involve a transfer via Kunming.

➤ The bottom line

The cost of the trip is US 3,900. This includes all accommodation, transfers, transport and guides. Meals on the trek itself are also included. Please note that flights to Shangri-la are not included.

A 30% deposit will be required to secure a booking with the balance payable 30 days before the departure date.

Further detailed information can be viewed online at <http://whistlingarrow.com/destination/yading-big-kora-trek>

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Your trip schedule

Day 1: Sunday June 14th 2015

Fly to Shangri-la, a Tibetan town in Northern Yunnan named after the mythical settlement in James Hilton's 'Lost Horizon'

You will be met at the airport and transferred to a traditional courtyard lodge. Staying at the simple but cozy accommodation for the next two nights will offer the perfect opportunity to acclimatize and explore the surrounding area. Over dinner you will have a chance to get acquainted with the other members of the group as well as the local and international guides.

- Please note that in January 2014 there was a large fire that tragically burnt down most of the old town centre. Depending on how rebuilding progresses we will choose the most appropriate accommodation. The attractions in the surrounding area were not affected by the fire.

Day 2: Monday June 15th 2015

After breakfast we will visit the Sungzanlin Monastery built by the 5th Dalai Lama in 1681. The temple is the largest Tibetan Buddhist lamasery in Yunnan and was almost completely destroyed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976). It has since been reconstructed, and today, the yellow hat sect monastery houses 800 crimson-robed monks and lamas. Alternatively, we will drive through the Ringha valley to the quieter 'temple of the five wisdom Buddhas' set on a hill draped with fluttering prayer flags.

After lunch, we can visit Baijisi or White Chicken Temple. Devotees come here to pray for good health and accumulate positive karma by releasing chickens and other animals that had been slated for slaughter. The temple sits on a hill planted with hundreds of prayer flags inscribed with auspicious symbols, invocations and mantras and offers panoramic views of the Shangri-la valley.

Day 3: Tuesday June 16th 2015

Today we will set off on the beautiful six to seven hour drive to the town of Xiangcheng. The route passes through forested valleys dotted with sunflowers and whitewashed Tibetan houses and climbs over the spectacular 'big snow mountain pass' at 4,100m. This marks the border between Yunnan and Sichuan. On the way we will stop to stretch our legs, take photos and have a picnic lunch.

After checking in to the newest and best hotel in town we will visit the nearby San Po Monastery, an impressive Tibetan temple that houses several sacred Buddhist relics.

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Day 4: Wednesday June 17th 2015

After breakfast we will drive six hours to the small village of Yading where we will spend the final night before embarking on the trek itself. The route is once again very picturesque following a river gorge before climbing up over another high altitude pass at 4,100m and descending to the lovely Tibetan village of San Dui. Here we will take some time to explore the nearby Ben Po Monastery, a small temple complex rarely visited by outsiders.

The road then passes through a stunning high altitude valley before arriving at the pretty Tibetan settlement of Yading. We will spend our last night here before the real adventure begins, surrounded by wheat fields and watched over by the three sacred 6000m peaks.

Day 5: Thursday June 18th 2015

The eight day trek begins with a hike up through lichen forest to the Chonggu Monastery, a yellow hat sect temple which accommodated Joseph Rock on his 1928 expedition to the region. It is a beautiful spot, nestled at the foot of the mountains with ornate orange carvings on the roof. Our trekking route then passes Lourong pasture before climbing up through ancient forest to a spectacular ridge with the first stupendous view of the revered peaks of Shenrezig and Chanadorje.

Our campsite for the night at Biyu pasture (4,320m) is a spectacular yak herder's meadow framed by mountains and faces the massive, sheer East facing wall of Mount Shenrezig. This is one of the easiest days on the trek and involves hiking for five to six hours. We should arrive at camp by 3pm giving us time to relax in the afternoon sun.

Day 6: Friday June 19th 2015

Today's trekking is incredibly beautiful and varied taking approximately seven hours before we reach our second campsite. We begin by climbing steadily out of the high altitude valley carpeted with edelweiss flowers to cross the rugged Ji San pass (4,700m). The path then descends through a vast, wild valley flanked by mountains and inhabited by flocks of squawking ravens to a yak herder's camp where we will stop for lunch.

Descending further through the valley the scenery becomes green and lush with small waterfalls cascading off the forested hillsides. Continuing through fresh smelling pine trees we eventually break out into a pristine valley dotted with grazing yaks and horses. In front of us is the imposing North East face of Chanadorje looming like a sentinel over the vast natural amphitheatre where we will camp (3,900m) for the night.

Day 7: Saturday June 20th 2015

Due to the expeditionary nature of this trek we have factored in a 'spare' rest day to allow guests the opportunity to soak up the amazing scenery. This extra day also gives us the flexibility to make amendments to the trekking route should we be unlucky enough to encounter bad weather.

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Depending on the weather, this additional day could potentially be scheduled later in the trek. Assuming the sun is shining, this campsite is one of the most beautiful en route and a fantastic spot to relax. For the last two years we have scheduled the trip in mid-September and the weather has been mostly fine.

Day 8: Sunday June 21st 2015

The day begins with a hard 90 minute ascent out of the valley up to Zu Ya pass (4,350m). The path then follows a high ridge that flanks the South wall of Mt Chanadorje, before descending past a massive white scree field and down the valley towards Yaka pass (4,550m).

This evening, we will camp in a sheltered lush pasture next to a small stream. Once the initial ascent is behind us this is a relatively easier day's trekking and should take us 5-6 hours.

Day 9: Monday June 22nd 2015

After breakfast, today's five to six hour hike begins with a tough climb up to the top of Yaka Pass (4,550m) and then down through a knarly boulder field before arriving at Nyakshi meadow where we will stop for lunch.

After lunch we will trek along and over the South East facing ridge of Mt Jembayang to Qi Liu meadow. This is considered to be the halfway point of the kora and pilgrims leave prayer flags and beads here on a poignant stone shrine. We will set up camp near a large stream surrounded by dramatic mountain peaks.

Day 10: Tuesday June 23rd 2015

The day begins with a tough 45 minute climb out of Qi Liu meadow before trekking up and along the flank of the mountain. The path traverses several large scree and boulder fields before turning into the next valley and heading to another natural amphitheatre surrounded by the south face and shoulder of Mt Jembayang.

From here we will descend slightly towards the equally stunning basin at Chado (4,270m) where we will set up camp for the night on a small ridge facing the setting sun. Today's hike should take us approximately six hours and is one of the most mind-blowing of what is a scenically unforgettable trip.

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Day 11: Wednesday June 24th 2015

Climbing out of the Chado Basin we pass a small lake and steadily ascend to the forth pass at Tai Yu (4,520m). The mountain vistas are spectacular and include an uninterrupted view of Jembayang peak. In front of us is the truly stunning 'Wisdom Lake' and the view from its west bank across the water towards Jembayang is definitely one of the many highlights on this trek.

We then hike along the far shore, past grazing yaks and over the fifth pass (4,500m) out of the other side of the valley. From here we take a small detour to the edge of a rocky outcrop with more amazing views down towards 'Milk Lake' before descending past another huge scree field on the west facing flank of Shenrezig. Our final night's campsite (4,270m) is in a lush meadow near the edge of Yan Zi Lake.

Day 12: Thursday June 25th 2015

Our last day involves five hours hiking and begins with a descent through the beautiful but inappropriately named 'Hell Valley'. The path is dotted with wildflowers and winds down through the tree line crossing several small streams and waterfalls to arrive at a yak herder's meadow. For the final time we climb steeply up over Po Tai pass (4,540m) and down through ancient forest towards what looks like the finishing line; a string of fluttering prayer flags extended across the valley floor.

The last half an hours walk back into Yading village is an emotional time to contemplate the achievement and fulfillment of the last few days. Tonight we will sleep in a proper bed in the same small hotel owned by our Tibetan head horseman and local guide, Wan Dui.

Day 13: Friday June 26th 2015

The drive back to Shangri-La is along a fairly bumpy road cut through rugged mountain passes. It is a long drive but allows us to arrive back in Shangri-La on the same day. The route is very beautiful and we will break up the journey with a couple of picnic stops.

Arriving back in Shangri-La, we end the adventure with some comfort and spend the last night in a wonderful boutique hotel owned by our good friend, Dakpa.

Day 14: Saturday June 27th 20145

Time to say goodbye and arrange transfers to the airport.

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Equipment List – Yading Big Kora

Whistling Arrow will provide all camping equipment, tents, stoves, fuel, kitchen equipment & utensils, food and water.

Here is a check list of what you need to bring.

Packing

- A larger 65 - 75 L backpack
- A small daypack with rain cover

Clothing

- Underwear
- Wool socks – mid weight
- Trekking pants - quick dry
- Waterproof Gore-Tex pants
- Trekking shirts - quick dry
- Synthetic T shirt for warmer days
- Long sleeved fleece
- Waterproof Gore-Tex jacket
- Lightweight waterproof gloves
- A wooly hat to wear at night
- Sun hat
- Warm clothing for wearing at night
- Waterproof gloves

Footwear

- Lightweight, waterproof trekking boots
- Closed toe sandals e.g. crocs

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Sleeping

- Synthetic sleeping bag rated to - 9C
- Small inflatable pillow

Personal items

- Head torch & extra batteries
- Camera & extra batteries
- Sunglasses
- Refillable water bottle
- Trekking poles
- A small waterproof stuff sack
- A small quick dry towel
- A few energy bars/gels
- Some Chinese currency (RMB)

Personal care

- Talcum powder
- Anti-chaff cream
- Biodegradable soap
- Deodorant
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Sun lotion
- Lip balm with SPF
- Plasters (band aids)
- Personal wipes or tissues
- Small roll of toilet paper
- Insect repellent
- Moisturizer
- Personal medical kit e.g. blister plasters, aspirin, antiseptic cream, diarrhoea pills etc

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