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PROMOTIONS

ASIA CHINA

# PEAK OF PERFECTION

Leave the country's exploding cities far behind by following the ancient caravan trail through a land of snow-capped mountains and cobalt lakes in Tibet and Yunnan



Chinese government as Shangri-La to promote tourism, for a warm shower and comfortable accommodations among the antiquities at Songtsam Retreat ([songtsam.com](http://songtsam.com)). The retreat recently launched a circuit of five boutique properties in the surrounding area known as Three Parallel Rivers. Cover this Himalayan route in Land Cruisers driven by the team at Aspera Explorations ([asperaexplorations.com](http://asperaexplorations.com)), and step out onto this sacred terrain on Aspera's day trek to pastoral villages along the remote borders between Tibet, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. Return to Songtsam in the evening where staff and chefs from the local community spoil guests with specialist home-cured Jinhua hams and freshly picked mushrooms.

Turn up the luxury even higher on China's periphery by travelling onboard a Gulfstream 450. Touch down on the edge of China's Taklimakan Desert to explore the Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, filled with Buddhist paintings and carvings dating between the 4th and 14th centuries.

Continue on through the clouds to Kashgar's mosques and Yekshenba Bazaar the largest open-air market in the world with over 100,000 vendors from as far away as Pakistan and Uzbekistan. You can also head off on one of Remote Lands' airborne caravans west through Tibet and on to Chengdu for a private audience with the pandas ([remotelands.com](http://remotelands.com)).



First-timers and business travellers tend to climb the shiny skyscrapers of China's exploding cities. Far wilder adventures await those who make their way to the country's rougher edges. The appropriately-named WildChina ([wildchina.com](http://wildchina.com)) travel company leads trekkers along Tea Horse Road, the ancient caravan route into Tibet and up Abujee Mountain in northwest Yunnan, a rarely-visited alpine landscape of snow-capped mountains and placid, cobalt lakes.

The eight-day trek with porters and a gourmet chef offers views of Kawa Karpo, the highest and most sacred peak in Yunnan, and winds its way past Buddhist temples and settlements of Naxi and Yi



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: THE SHIGATSE MONASTERY, SONGTSAM RETREAT; CHINESE CHILDREN IN TRADITIONAL GARB; PRAYER FLAGS FLUTTER IN THE WIND IN TIBET

nomads who named the mountain, Abujee, after their exclamation of delight. They believe its rocks, plants and animal life possess supernatural powers.

Descend to Zhongdian, recast by the

▼ TREKKING ALONG THE TEA HORSE ROAD, THE ANCIENT CARAVAN ROUTE INTO TIBET, VISITORS WILL ENCOUNTER A RARELY-VISITED ALPINE LANDSCAPE OF SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS AND PLACID, COBALT LAKES ▼

