

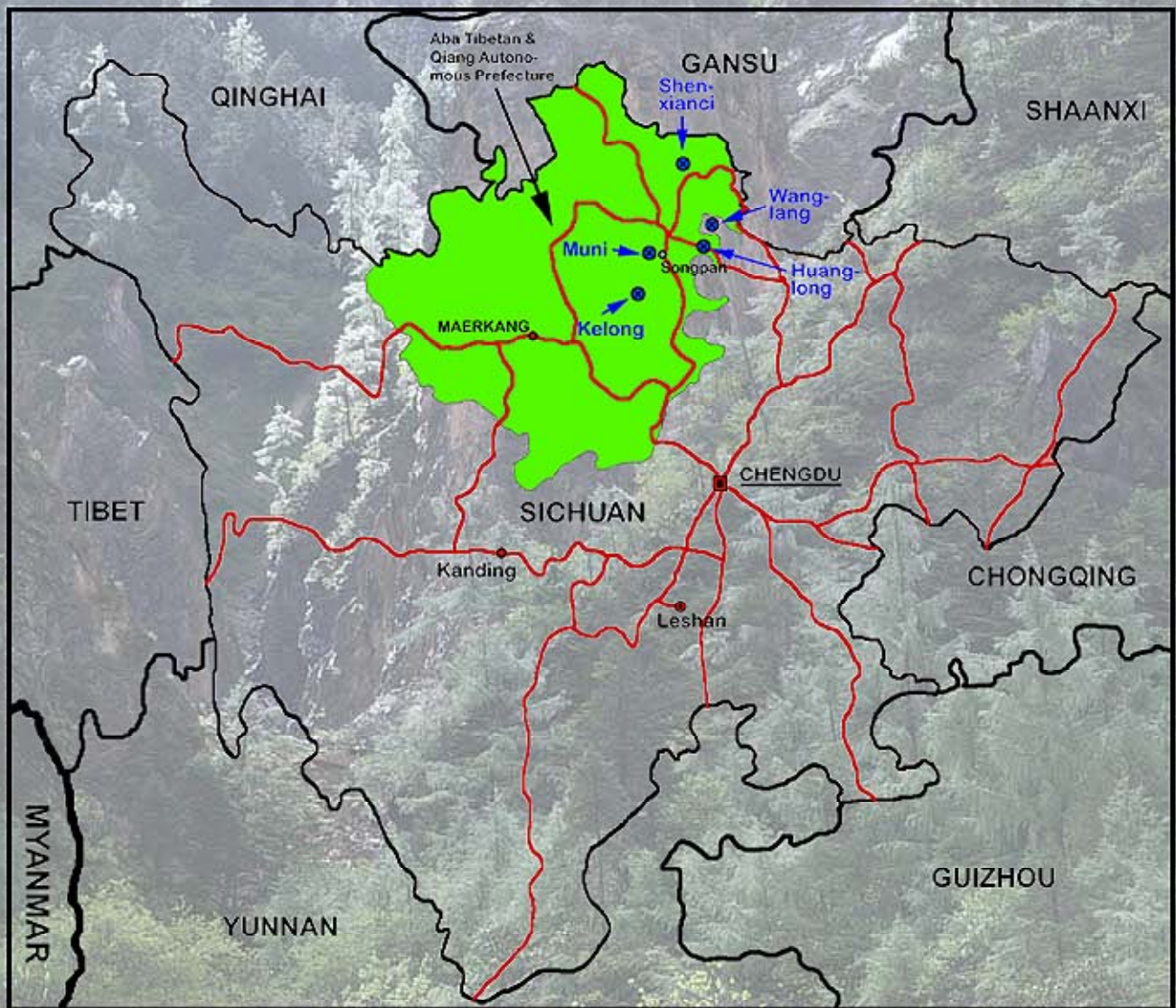
Botanical Study Tour to North Sichuan in Southwest China

Orchids, Scenery and Culture

Our destination is the mountains of North Sichuan, where we will mainly travel within Aba Tibetan Qiang Autonomous Prefecture. We will visit some of the most spectacular nature reserves in the northern hemisphere. These are boasting in majestic mountain ranges, harboring a unique wildlife, such as the elusive Giant Panda (will not be seen in the wild), have spectacular limestone travertine formations, and are the home of Tibetan and Qiang ethnic groups with their colorful culture. But the highlight of the tour will be the experience of the richest temperate flora in Asia! Southwest China is the global distribution center of several genera of high horticultural value, like *Primula*, *Rhododendron* and *Cypripedium*. Our tour focuses on the orchids of the region, and we expect to see several splendid species in flower. We have chosen a slightly later date for this tour than usual to better match the flowering time of certain rare species and some special orchid populations at altitudes between 3400-3600 m (approx. 11100-11800 ft.). On the tour we will mostly stay at altitudes between 2000-3200 m (approx. 6500-10500 ft.), the highest altitude will be 4000 m (13100 ft.), and we briefly pass it on a bus ride when we cross the pass above Huanglong (Xueshan-liang).

14 days, from June 18 to July 1, 2013





Itinerary:

1. Tu. 06. 18. International flight to China (not included in this offer, but see below).
2. We. 06. 19. Arrival in Chengdu (capital of Sichuan province), welcome and pick up at the airport, transfer to the Hotel, meals and other activities according to daytime. Overnight stay in a 4-star hotel.
3. Th. 06. 20. Bus tour from Chengdu to Huanglong with botanizing stops on the way. We will drive through the Min river valley, home of *Lilium regale* (endemic to the valley and in flower in late June). We stay overnight in the new 5-star hotel in Huanglong.
4. Fr. 06. 21. Botanical excursions in the Danyun gorge of Huanglong National Park. The 18 km long gorge, with a 700 m (2300 ft.) altitude drop, has a very rich temperate to warm-temperate flora, including trees, shrubs and herbs. 10 *Cypripedium* species are at home here. Overnight in the same hotel.
5. Sa. 06. 22. Excursion in the Huanglong valley, which is covered in about 3400 travertine pools and harbors 32 orchid species. Some, like *Cypripedium flavum*, form large colonies of thousands of plants. Overnight stay in the same hotel.
6. Su. 06. 23. Bus tour from Huanglong to Shenxianci. Alpine meadows along the road above Shenxianci are rich in a flora that differs from that above Huanglong. At Shenxianci ('Divine Bathing Pool'), which is a travertine formation surrounded by mountain forest and rich in orchids, we will botanize. Overnight stay in a 4-star hotel in Jiuzhaigou.
7. Mo. 06. 24. Bus tour from Jiuzhaigou to Wanglang with botanizing stops, especially on the Rhododendron pass. Overnight stay in the lodge of Wanglang reserve.
8. Tu. 06. 25. Excursion in the Wanglang National Panda reserve, particularly in the Baisha valley with its rich orchid populations. Lacking fancy travertine formations Wanglang attracts only very little tourism. But the scenery in the Baisha valley is amazing (see background on these pages) and the scrub-clad valley floor, covered in limestone pebbles washed down from the snow-covered peaks, is rich in large orchid populations. Overnight stay in the lodge.
9. We. 06. 26. Bus tour from Wanglang to Muni-gou with botanizing on the way. Overnight stay at a local Tibetan family guest house with simple but clean facilities.
10. Th. 06.27. Botanizing in Muni-gou, especially around Erdao-hai, a travertine area with ponds and caves fed by a thermal spring, and the Zhaga Waterfall, which is the highest travertine waterfall in China. In the afternoon bus ride to Kelong (old spelling Kalong). Overnight stay at a local Tibetan family guest house.
11. Fr. 06.28. Botanizing in the Kelong valley. This is a travertine valley the size of Huanglong valley but without the large number of ponds and thus attracting very little tourism. The orchid flora is different and less numerous than in Huanglong, but with some interesting particularities. A large colony of *Cypripedium guttatum* under tall conifers at an altitude of over 3400 m (over 11150 ft.) is quite remarkable. Rarely, if ever, visited by foreign tourists, the site is also rich in a variety of attractive alpine flowers, like a pure scarlet form of *Caltha palustris* var. *barthei*. Overnight stay at the same guest house.
12. Sa. 06.29. Bus tour back to Chengdu with botanizing stops on the way. Overnight stay in a 4-star hotel in Chengdu.
13. So. 06.30. We will visit the nursery and laboratory of Hengduan Biotech, and after that go to Huanglong Xi, a small town southwest of Chengdu with a centre mostly unaltered since the Qing Dynasty. Alternatively tour participants are free to take a day off and explore Chengdu, a capital and important city founded 311 BC ago under the name still in use (Chengdu means 'becoming capital'), which is unique for China, where localities often change names. Today it is one of the fastest growing cities in China, with 7 million inhabitants in the 9 municipality districts and a total of 14 million citizens including the urban districts. Overnight stay in the same 4-star hotel.
14. Mo. 07.01. Return trip home.

General remarks: Please note that the itinerary as presented above is basically fixed, but due to unforeseen circumstances during the tour, i.e. bad weather or traffic problems, we might have to do minor adjustments, like e.g. depart or arrive earlier respectively later as planned. Hotels will be of 4-star level or higher. Due to the remoteness of several places we visit, hotels are not available in Wanglang, where a nice lodge was built with support from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and in Muni and Kelong, where we will stay in simple but clean guest houses run by local Tibetan families. In China the tour will be covered by an insurance according to Chinese travel regulations. But we additionally recommend a travel health insurance which you need to buy in your home country.

Health issues: No specific health hazards at our destinations in Sichuan came to our knowledge, however, we will stay at altitudes between 2000-3000 m (ca. 6600-9900 ft.) for most of the time on the tour. The weather is expected to be humid and warm (between 20-30 °C or 68-86 °F) in Chengdu and cool in the mountains (10-20 °C or 50-68 °F). With the beginning of the monsoon season rainfalls have to be expected, but usually will be alternate with sunny weather on a daily basis in late June. We recommend summer clothing for the lowland and some autumn and winter clothing including rain gear and a warm jacket for the mountains. Protection from sun (lotion, sunglasses) and some high altitude headache remedy are recommended as well. Biting insects are unlikely encountered in the mountains. Shoes should be fit for city and field, and they should provide some protection from water. We will not conduct difficult mountain hikes, but on occasion we have to walk for some time in uneven terrain, and we will have to walk longer distances on ascending and descending boardwalks at higher altitudes in Huanglong, Shenxianci and Kelong (up to 3500 m or 11500 ft.). Please consult your physician for recommendations regarding your fitness for the tour.

International flights: Because the tour participants are expected to come from various regions, we do not offer prearranged international flights with this itinerary. Booking inexpensive international flights through your computer at home is easy and reliable these days. You will want to coordinate the flight schedule with us and if you have to arrive a day earlier in China we will arrange additional hotel and airport transfer for you. In case you feel inconvenient with arranging the flights yourself, we can book the international flight for you as well.

Visa: For every nation different visa regulations for entering China as a tourist apply. Please inform yourself about the necessary procedures for your country. Basically getting tourist visa for China is a relatively easy and uncomplicated procedure, but in most countries requires personal attendance for submission of the application. We will provide formal invitations if necessary for your visa application, but we cannot arrange the visa for you. You need to apply for the visa yourself and pay the necessary fees, which are different for each country.

The tour will take place when at least 10 persons have signed for it, the maximum number of participants is limited to 15. The tour fee is US\$ 2860.-, and single bedroom surcharge is US\$ 460.-. The price includes all meals, soft drinks, bus, hotels, special permission fees, entrance fees, insurance and tips. International flights are not included.

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About us: We are both fluent in English. In addition Wenqing, a linguist born in China, having lived in Japan for many years and being a German citizen since 2000, speaks and writes also fluently German, Chinese and Japanese. Holger, a native German speaker, only masters English as second language. We met each other on a botanical study tour in Sichuan in 1997 and married in 1998. Until summer 2001 we lived in Germany. After that we moved to Sichuan, where we work for the administration of Huanglong national park and also run our own company, Hengduan Mountains Biotechnology, Ltd., which is specialized in laboratory propagation and nursery raising of orchids, but also produces fruit crops like blueberry shrubs and other plants. Since 1999 we regularly organize and conduct 1 to 3 botanical study tours in China annually, mainly in temperate mountain regions of Southwest China, but since 2010 also in the subtropical to tropical mountains of South China. Our guests come from all over the world and many have participated in 2 or 3 tours with us, some in 5 or more!



Wenqing and Holger Perner on the Xueshan pass, alt. 4000m, high above Huanglong valley.

(July 5, 2012)

Day 3: *Lilium regale* in the upper Min valley.

(June 11, 2005)

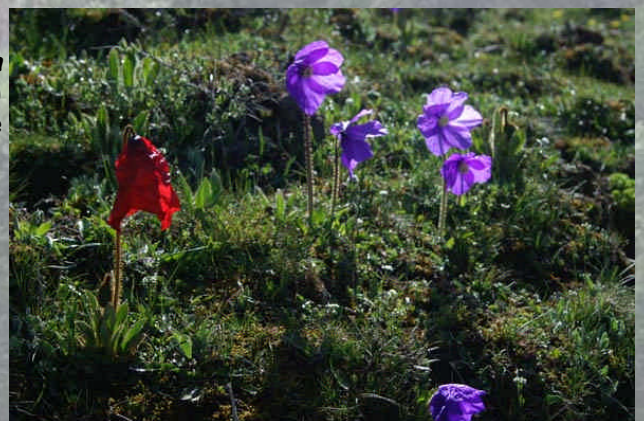


Day 3: *Cypripedium tibeticum* on the pass road above Huanglong, 3600 m altitude.

(June 18, 2011)

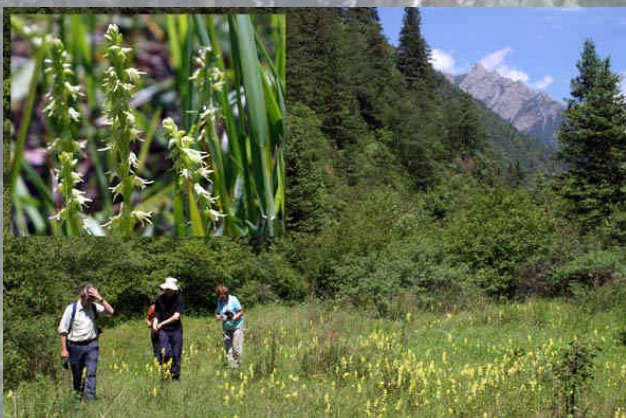
Day 3: *Meconopsis punicea* (red) and *M. henricii* (purple) at the pass road above Huanglong, alt. 3900 m.

(June 24, 2006)



Day 4: Flower meadow near Danyun gorge with *Pedicularis semitorata* and thousands of *Herminium monorchis* (detail photo insert).

(June 17, 2009)



Day 4: *Cypripedium palangshanense* above the Danyun gorge at 2930 m altitude.

(June 24, 2006)



Day 5: *Cypripedium tibeticum* in Huanglong valley, 3150 m.

(June 20, 2011)



Day 5: *Phaius delavayi* (in the foreground *Galearis diantha*, in the background *Cypripedium flavum*) in Huanglong valley, 3150 m.

(June 22, 2008)



Day 6: Two forms of *Galearis roborowskii* on the way to Shenxianci, 3300 m.

(May 13, 2012)



Day 6: *Cypripedium shanxiense* in Shenxianci at an altitude of 3100 m.

(June 16, 2002)



Day 7: At the rhododendron pass at 3500 m altitude. On the ground *Amitostigma monanthum* (right).

(June 19, 2012)



Day 7: Lunch break at a home of the Baima people, an ethnic group belonging to the Tibetans.

(June 16, 2005)



Day 7: Arrival at the ranger station with lodge (right) in Wanglang. Near to the lodge *Oreorchis foliosa* var. *indica* (left) can be seen under shrubs beside the unpaved road.

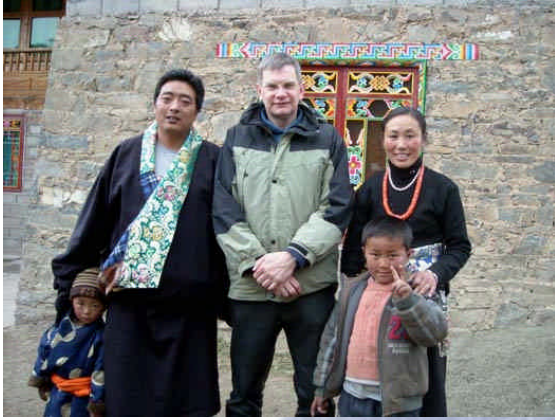
(June 17, 2007)



Day 8: Botanizing in the unspoilt nature of Wanglang. Here at Baisha-gou extensive populations of orchids can be seen. (June 18, 2007)

Day 8: The rare *Cypripedium farreri* in flower, Baisha-gou, 3300 m. (June 18, 2007)





Day 9: Overnight stay in Muni with a Tibetan family (left) in their guest rooms (right) and joining them for supper in their kitchen is a unique experience.

(March 23, 2008)



Day 10: Erdaohai in Muni is a unique travertine system with many caves. Though rich in seemingly suitable habitats, orchids do not abound here like at other travertine sites. (September 24, 2005)



Day 10: Part of the 104 m high Zhaga waterfall close to Erdaohai in Muni. (September 25, 2005)



Day 10: Overnight stay in another guest house run by a Tibetan family, now in Caigaicun, Kelong. (September 20, 2011)



Day 11: One of the specialties in Kelong valley is an attractive scarlet form of *Caltha palustris* var. *barthei*. (June 16, 2004)

Day 11: The travertine deposits in Kelong have nearly the size of those in Huanglong but lack the many ponds.
(June 16, 2004)



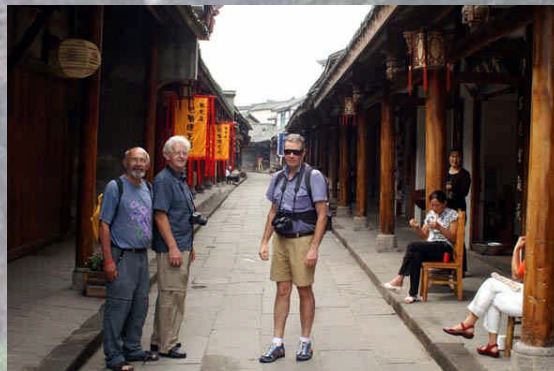
Day 11: *Cypripedium tibeticum* var. *amesianum*, a self pollinating slipper orchid. (June 16, 2004)



Day 11: Still in bud in mid June this colony of hundreds of *Cypripedium guttatum* is expected to flower end of June. (June 16, 2004)



Day 13: Visit at the nursery and lab of Hengduan Biotech. Here Bob Pemberton, Fairchild Botanic Garden, Florida, pays us a visit. (June 27, 2010)



Day 13: Experiencing a part of old China in Huanglongxi. (June 20, 2007)



Day 13: Dinner with traditional Sichuan Opera. (June 21, 2012)



Day 14: Good bye, Chengdu!

Through Google or Yahoo a lot of additional information about our destinations can be found, here are some links:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chengdu>

<http://china-trade-research.hktdc.com/business-news/article/Fast-Facts/Aba-Prefecture-Sichuan-City-Information/ff/en/1/1X000000/1X06B48G.htm>

http://english.51766.com/detail/city_detail.jsp?prov_id=1005132

<http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/hzqz/t84229.htm>

<http://www.slack.net/~rd/wanglang/home.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huanglong,_Sichuan
(The page has some facts wrong!)

http://www.huanglong.com/main_en.html

Coordinates of some of our more remote destinations (check Google Earth):

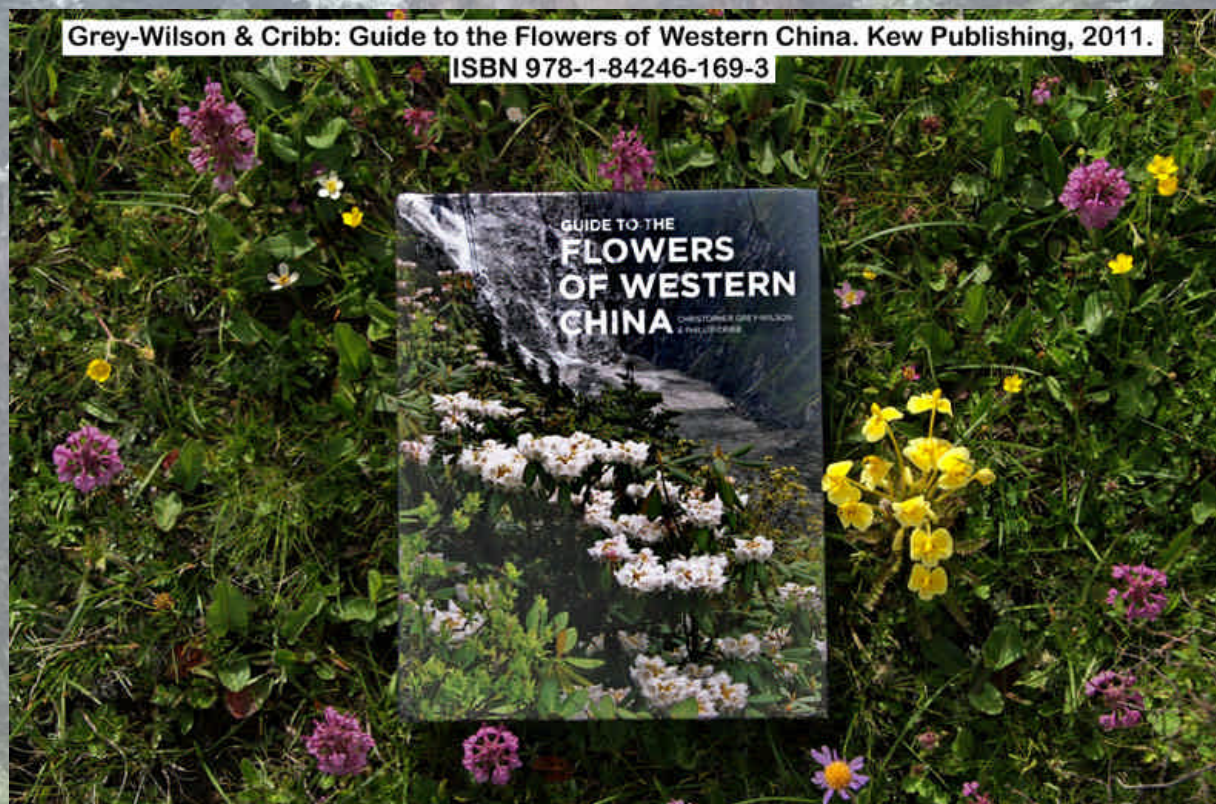
Wanglang, Baisha-gou: 32°52'55" N; 104°06'30" E

Shenxianci: 33°22'27" N; 103°41'03" E

Muni, Erdaohai: 32°39'47" N; 103°30'04" E

Muni, Zhaga: 32°34'50" N; 103°30'26" E

Kelong: 32°23'55" N; 103°19'59" E



A perfect companion for the botanical study tour through the mountains of Sichuan is this excellent book with 2200 photos. Available through Amazon and other sources.