



# Sìchuān

POP 80.8 MILLION

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## Best Hiking

- ➔ Yǎdīng Nature Reserve (p756)
- ➔ Jiǔzhàigōu National Park (p764)
- ➔ Sōngpān (p760)
- ➔ Tǎgōng (p749)

## Best History & Culture

- ➔ Chéngdū (p721)
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## Why Go?

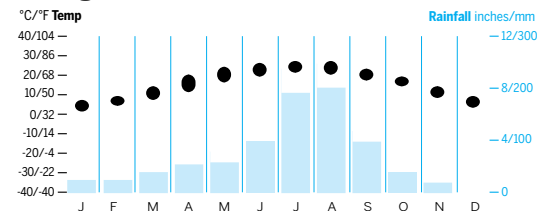
It's fitting that an ancient form of opera and magic called *biànlǎn* (face-changing) originated here, for Sìchuān (四川) is a land of many guises.

Capital Chéngdū shows a modern face, but just beyond its bustling ring roads you'll find a more traditional landscape of mist-shrouded, sacred mountains, and a countryside scattered with ancient villages and cliffs of carved Buddhas. Central Sìchuān is also home to the giant panda, the most famous face in China.

To the north, the visage changes again into a fairyland of alpine valleys and blue-green lakes. Sìchuān's Tibetan face appears as you venture west. This is Kham, one of the former Tibetan prefectures: a vast landscape of plateau grasslands and glacial mountains where Tibetan culture still thrives and you're certain to have your most challenging, yet most magical, experiences.

## When to Go

### Chéngdū



**Mar–May** Prime time for Chéngdū. Not too humid, little rain and peach blossoms.

**Jul–Aug** In the west, the warm grasslands bloom in technicolor.

**Aug–Oct** The turquoise lakes to the north offer secluded camping amid stunning autumn leaves.

## Sìchuān Highlights

- 1 Make the pilgrimage trek around the stunning holy mountains of **Yǎng Nature Reserve** (p756)
- 2 Chat with monks and nuns in training at Sèdǎ's massive **Buddhist institution** (p751)
- 3 Rise with the sun on the forested slopes of **Èméi Shān** (p734)
- 4 Meet China's cuddly national icon at Chéngdū's **Giant Panda Breeding Research Base** (p721)
- 5 Camp in Jiǔzhàigōu's alpine valley through the park's **ecotourism program** (p764)
- 6 Break bread with Tibetan nomads on **Tǎgōng's** (p749) grasslands
- 7 Peer over the toenails of the world's largest **Buddha statue** (p737) in Lè Shān
- 8 Discover salt and dinosaurs in **Zìgòng** (p740)
- 9 Horse trek to the mountain lakes around **Sōngpān** (p760)

