

## TOP THINGS TO DO IN JIUZHAIGOU

Standing majestically in the edge of Tibetan plateau is the Jiuzhaigou Valley. It is known for its straight-out-of-postcard scenic views. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is nothing short of amazement. Jiuzhaigou is nestled right in between northern Sichuan and Qinghai-Tibetan highway. The altitude in Jiuzhaigou ranges between 2000ft to 4500ft. Since the opening of the valley in 1984, tourists have flocked to see the spectacular beauty. Jiuzhaigou, when translated means a valley of nine villages. There are nine villages in the valley and seven are still occupied by the native people and tourists are not allowed to stay in those villages.

The autumn hues, colourful lakes, cascading waterfalls, reflective lakes, greenest of the green leaves, skyline with mountain silhouettes, fauna rarities, and warm locals all add up to the beauty of this valley. This valley is worthy of being every artists' inspiration and every photographers' haven. This valley stretches for over 72,000 hectares and sees an annual footfall of 2 million people. The best time to visit the valley is during fall, i.e. September and October. The whole valley has a golden glow to it and it is also the time when the tourism is at its peak. Every season adds its own charm to the valley.

Here are the top things to do in Jiuzhaigou:

### a) COLOURFUL LAKES:

Jiuzhaigou is fondly called the 'Fairylane of Water' and lives up to the name. Jiuzhaigou National Valley Park is full of colourful lakes ranging from pristine blue to turquoise. The water is so crystal clear that you can see everything that's under water and they are so reflective they are always mirroring the skies and the mountains. A local legend has it that when goddess Semo was being chased by a demon, accidentally dropped her mirror which shattered into 114 shimmering pearl-like lakes.

Some of the lakes are Mirror Lake, Five Flower Lake, Panda Lake, Reed Lake, double Dragon Lake, Spark Lake, Rhinoceros Lake, Long Lake, etc. Each lake is unique and pretty in its own way. Mirror Lake is a long lake stretching about 1,000m in length. It is a beautiful lake where you can see the fishes swimming and the reflection of birds. Five Flower Lake is interlaced with brocades and colourful leaves. It is called Five Colour Lake because the calcium carbonates and hydrophytes present different colours like yellow, blue, green, and various shades of them. Panda Lake is outlined by unique cliffs in the sides, it got its name because it is said that pandas used to drink water from this lake and play in the vicinity. Reed Lake has contrasting colours due to the jade marsh and turquoise water. Dragon Lake has visible calcareous dykes running underneath that look like a dragon that is resting underneath a lake and thus the name.

Each lake has its own story and its own significance. The lakes are outlined by cliffs, trees, and cascading waterfalls. When you go to Jiuzhaigou it is simply not possible to miss the lakes because there are abundant of them and each so beautiful that you would want to see them all.

### b) SPECTACULAR WATERFALLS:

A waterfall is simply a high vertical drop where the gravity is just doing its job. The roaring sound, fierce waters, and simple physics make waterfalls one of the most majestic natural phenomena. Some of the main waterfalls that are must visit in Jiuzhaigou are Nuorilang Waterfall, Shuzeng Waterfall, and Pearl Shoal Waterfall. It is about 105 ft. wide making it the widest waterfall in Jiuzhaigou. Nuorilang in Tibetan means 'grand and majestic,' once you see you would see why it was named so. When you walk south from the waterfall you will see the

valley dividing down to two paths: Zechawa Valley in the South and Rize in the South West. Shuzeng waterfall is the first waterfall that you will come across in the valley. It is the smallest waterfall in Jiuzhaigou. The lakes in the upper part of the valley form small streams which join at the head of this waterfall. The force of the falls forms a smoke screen of water droplets when cleared show the spectacular falls in the view. The Pearl Shoal Waterfalls in Rize Valley require a bit of walking and it is worth it. This falls has a 40 m drop and forms pretty blue-green pools at the foot.

#### c) HIKING IN THE VALLEYS:

Jiuzhaigou is made up of three valleys: Shuzeng Valley, Zechawa Valley, and Rize Valley. The valley park is too big to be covered by foot in a day. So there are tourist shuttle buses that take tourists to all the attractions in limited time. The buses take you to the top of the valley and when you come down you stop to see all the attractions. Hiking is also another way to explore the valley. If you plan to hike plan at least 2 or 3 days to stay in Jiuzhaigou. Hiking in these valleys can be tedious but it is worth every second. Many hike for a more authentic experience, photographers hike to capture that perfect picture in perfect lighting, some hike just to take in all the beauty at their own pace.

Shuzeng Valley is 19.5km long, Rize Valley is 11km and Zechawa is 18km long. Shuzeng and Rize are the most visited valleys by the tourists. Shuzeng is not as popular as it is in the south eastern part of the valley. The hiking experience is whole lot more pleasant and beautiful in autumn and fall months where there is golden touch to the whole valley. The colours are more popping and weather is not so cold. Even if you are hiking you cannot camp inside the valley park. You have to get out of the valley and continue again the next day. It is important to buy enough food and keep some additional oxygen tanks as there are not many stores inside the valley park.

#### d) EXPERIENCE TIBETAN CULTURE:

'Fairylane of Water'; is not just about fantabulous sceneries and colourful lakes there is also an element humanity that is unperturbed by the nature. When you are hiking or touring the valley park, you will come across Tibetans living in the villages. Although tourists cannot stay in the villages or live in the villagers' house, there are other ways to experience their culture. One way is to do the Songpan horse riding activity, where the local guide will take you through the valley whilst explaining the history of the people. He will also set up a small camp for the day and cook traditional food items. You can also take part in the roasted lamb party that is conducted by locals in their villages. There is yummy food, campfire, music, and dance. Festivals like Lunar New Year festival, Singing Goddess Festival, Lamp festival are celebrated by the locals every year.

Going to famous show 'Mystery of Tibet' is another way to know more about the Tibetan culture. This piece is performed by 80 dancers. The show is what a woman experienced felt and experienced when she visited the holy city, Lhasa. This show is always packed with audiences. Of course, last but not the least—local food. No culture is fully experienced without trying the local food. There are plenty bars and cafes where you can have local food. Some of items that are not to be missed are butter tea, qingke barley liquor, blood sausage, zanba, and a long list of many more mouth-watering food items.

There are a lot of places to stay ranging from homestays to lodges to star hotels in Jiuzhaigou. The prices can get expensive if not booked in advance. You might not get the rooms you want if you

book in the last minute. As mentioned above there are lots of things to do in Jiuzhaigou. Book a two-day trip to Jiuzhaigou when you visit China as the scenic beauty is like no other.