

# Holy Mt. Kailash, Divine Mountains & the Lakes of the Himalayas | 20 Days



This wild, remote journey starting from Lhasa the exotic capital of Tibet takes us deep into a region of central and far western regions of Tibet where the diverse journey reflects the Silk Route trade of olden times; old men and women with weathered, turning the wheel of Dharma chanting prayers. The nomads, in their turquoise, coral and amber necklaces and Tibetan 'chubas' worship in their Tibetan Buddhist Gompas and animism still is visible in many forms.

We embark on an epic cross-Tibet jeep expedition from Lhasa to western Tiber via the scenic southern route, thus seeing much of central Tibet and head towards Everest Base Camp North Face, covering the high plateau approaching the great spine of the Himalaya, Everest, Cho Oyu and Shishapangma. The three 5000m road passes are quite unbelievable viewpoints, and finally we reach Holy Mt. Kailash & Lake Manasarovar our final destination.

Western Tibet or Ngari as it is known to Tibetans, is one the most beautiful and remote parts of Asia and the main attractions of this region: sacred Mt. Kailash (6,714 m.), Lake Mamasarovar. The journey is marked by stunning, if desolate, scenery and Holy Mt. Kailash and Lake Manasarovar are two of the most remote travel destinations in the world. Situated in the far corner of the Tibetan plateau, this legendary snow capped jewel is revered by different religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism & Bonpo) as one of the most sacred and challenging pilgrimages in the world. Four of the orient's greatest rivers, the Bhramaputra, the Sutlej, the Indus, & the Ganges originate from and

around the Mt. Kailash. For the Hindus, Holy Mt. Kailash is regarded as the earthly manifestation of Mt. Meru, a spiritual centre of the universe, which is described in the Hindu mythology as a fantastic pillar of 84,000 miles around which everything revolves with its root to the lowest hell and summit touching the heaven. Mt. Kailash is itself is an abode of Lord Shiva, lord of the universe, who shares this magnificent mountain with his consort Parvati. There, at the base is the sacred Lake Manasarovar, where a bath offers a pilgrim an access to Brahma's (Hindu god for creation) paradise and drink of it holy water wipes out the sins of hundred lifetimes. For Jains, a religious group in India with many similarities with Buddhist, Mt. Kailash is taken as the holy pilgrimage where their first prophet achieved enlightenment.

For the Tibetans, Mt. Kailash is known as Ghang Rimpoche (Jewel of the Snow) of Tise (Tibetan name) like Hindu, recognize Mt. Kailash as the manifestation of Mt. Meru, the navel of the world' rising just like the handle of a mill-stone into the heavens. Milarepa, a poet-saint of Tibet is believed to have spent several years meditating in a cave in this holy Mt. Kailash.

Mt. Kailash is equally sacred for the Bon religion. The mountain is the site where its founder, Shranrab is believed to have descended from heaven. However, it is interesting to know that the Bon people circumambulate the holy mountain in an anti-clockwise manner just opposite to the Hindus & Buddhist.

The Kailash Kora, in the high plateaus of the Ngari region in western Tibet, is one of the most spectacular short treks in the Himalaya, crossing the Dolma La (5,600 m) to erase the sins of a lifetime.

### Trip Highlights

- Lhasa: Explore Buddhist landmarks such as seventh-century Jokhang Monastery, the hundreds of Buddha statues carved into the Sanggye Dhungu cliff and the towering Potala Palace.

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- Everest Base Camp: Enjoy a truly awe-inspiring place – the absolute north face of the highest mountain in the world (Mt. Everest) soaring above you
- Circumambulation of Holy Mt Kailash
- Visit holy Lake Manasarovar

## Detailed Itinerary

### Day 1: Arrive in Lhasa (3,595 m) | Lhasa City-Gateway to Tibet

Welcome to Tibet! Upon arrival in Lhasa Gongkar a *travel-to-nature Asia* guide/representative will be at the airport to greet and take us to our hotel in Lhasa (approx. 70 km), soaking up the wonderful mountain scenery en route. Please look out for your name-card once you exit out of arrival area.

Lhasa, the heart and soul of Tibet and one of the highest cities on earth at 3,595 m; Lhasa is also the most populous city on the Tibetan Plateau. Home of the Dalai Lamas and historic Potala Palace, the city reveals modern influences and a beautiful dichotomy between past and present.



Check into our hotel and spend the remains of the day at leisure, to acclimatize.

Over the following two days we visit most of the most important sites in and around Lhasa with our Tibetan guide. Late afternoons will be free for us to discover the endlessly fascinating bazaars, walk koras around the Jokhang with the myriad other pilgrims, or sit in

the Barkhor square, immersing ourselves in the exoticism of Lhasa. Overnight stay in Lhasa.

**Accommodation:** Kyichu Hotel  
**Meal:** Dinner

### Day 2: In Lhasa

#### Potala Palace, Sera Monastery and Norbulinka Monastery

Today we enjoy a guided tour of the autonomous region's capital. Sightseeing includes a visit to the beautiful Potala Palace - the dominant landmark of Lhasa, towering 117 meters above the city below. Construction started on the red hill in 1645 under the 5th Dalai Lama. This immense building is a masterpiece in design, 13 storey high with walls 3 meters thick, containing over 1000 rooms, 10,000 shrines and 200,000 statues, it was both the residence of the current Dalai Lama and tomb of the former Heads of state. The entire building is made of stone and wood and covers an area of 130,000 square meters. The Potala is full of elaborate art work and frescos that tell many stories.

Sightseeing also includes the Sera Monastery and Norbulinka monastery - the Dalai Lama's summer palace which was completed in 1783 under the Eighth Dalai Lama. Set in beautiful grounds with fountains, chapels and pools, Norbulinka is located on the outskirts of Lhasa and it is from here that the present Dalai Lama fled in the 1950's. Sera Monastery is still a working retreat, 600 years after its foundation as a main teaching monastery and one of the three great Gelukpa 'universities' once housing more than 5500 monks. The best thing to see here is the live debate-talking place among the competing monks from the different monasteries in Tibet. Overnight stay in Lhasa.

**Accommodation:** Kyichu Hotel  
**Meal:** Breakfast, Dinner

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## Day 3: In Lhasa

### Jokhang Temple - Buddhist Treasures

The Jokhang Temple is situated in the central part of the old section of Lhasa. It was built in the mid 7th century. With successive extensions, it has now become a gigantic architectural complex which houses various wives of King Srontsen Gampo including the Nepalese queen Bhrikuti. The Bazaar of Barkhor is the downtown of Lhasa city with Jokhang Temple as its centre from where one can enjoy the hustle and bustle of every day Tibetan lifestyle with thousands of Pilgrims from all over Tibet paying homage to Holy City of Lhasa.

We will also visit Drepung the biggest monastery in Tibet which once housed ten thousand monks. Situated on the foothill to the northern direction of the Lhasa City, it was built in 1416 by Jymyang Choje, a disciple of Tseng Khapa. Overnight stay in Lhasa.

**Accommodation:** Kyichu Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner



### Day 4: Drive Lhasa - Testing (3,580 m | 160 km | 3 hrs)

After our leisurely breakfast today, we will drive about 3 hours to Tsedang Town in the Yarlung Valley. This region is the birthplace of Tibetan Civilization, as well as has played an important role in the development of Tibetan Buddhism. Upon arrive we will check in to our hotel.

This afternoon we visit the three most important sites in and around Tsedang. There are two historical and influential sites are waiting for us to visit - Yumbulakang and Trundruk monastery. Yumbulakang is known as Tibet's first palace. It has a very long history of over 2,000 years, and boasts many rare sculptures and paintings from ancient times. While visiting Trundruk monastery, we will see a stunning Tangkha of Pearls decorated with a total of 29,026 pearls. Overnight stay in Tsedang.

**Accommodation:** Tsedang Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

### Day 5: Day Excursion to Samye Monastery (3,580 m | 40 km | 2 hrs) | Chimpuk Hermitage Hike

Renowned for being the oldest Buddhist Monastery in Tibet, Samye Monastery to the northwest of Tsedang, on the northern side of the Yarlung Tsangpo River (Brahmaputra). A distance of just 25 kilometers, the road distance is around 40 kilometers, as we will need to cross the river before traveling west to Samye.

Samye Monastery is an important religious site that was constructed in the late 8th Century, and the place where Buddhism was first established in Tibet. The Monastery has an atmospheric setting in a barren valley surrounded by sand dunes and mountains. The central building of the monastery is a fusion of architectural styles combining Tibetan, Chinese and Indian influences.

Following our tour of the monastery, we set out on a challenging but rewarding hike up to the Chim-puk Hermitage (optional), which is located on the hills nearby Samye Monastery. Chimpu or Chimpu hermitage is one of the most sacred place in Tibet. It is said to be the Indian master Guru Rinpoche's speech. This is where the Indian Master taught the Twenty-Five Disciples and where numerous disciples had profound realizations. Today, there are still over 50 or more yogis, men and women, living in the cave and doing retreat.

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The Chim-puk Hermitage is made up of a warren of caves on the hillside. 108 is a sacred number in many Eastern religions, including Buddhism, and it is said that there are 108 meditation caves, 108 spring mouths, and 108 sky burial grounds. The hermitage can be reached by a scenic uphill hike. The hike is around 7km each way, and can be taken at our own pace. Depending on how fast we wish to move, a round trip will take approximately 5-6 hours. We should be back to our hotel returned not before by early evening. Overnight stay in Tsedang. (Please note this trek is at high altitude and should only be undertaken by those who are fully acclimatized to the thin air.)

**Accommodation:** Tsedang Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

### Day 6: Drive Tsedang - Gyantse (3,950 m | 309 km | 5 hrs)

The real adventure begins today. We will travel along picturesque Friendship Highway crossing over Karo la (5,010 m), Kambala (4,794 m) colorful Yamdrok lake and the Tibetan country. Appreciate the majestic views of Yamdrok lake, a deep blue body of water renowned for its unique beauty, and the Nazin Kang Sang glacier standing proud at 7,252 m. Driving about 261 km, we will enter the town of Gyantse, a stunning example of a traditional Tibetan village filled with beautiful stone farmhouses. Gyantse is the third largest city in Tibet and it's also known as the granary of Tibetan plateau. Overnight stay in Gyantse.

**Accommodation:** Gyantse Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

### Day 7: Drive Gyantse - Xigatse (3,900 m | 90 km | 1.5 hrs)

This morning, we'll venture the jewels of Gyantse, the Gyantse Dzong and the Kumbum monastery. Gyantse Dzong is a historical fort built in the 14th century, and overlooks Gyantse and the surrounding Nyang Chu Valley. The Kumbum rises 35 km above the town, and is crowned by a golden dome. The grounds boast a

chorten (stupa), several chapels and a stunning collection of Tibetan Buddhist murals, which inspired the name of the complex. The word 'Kubum' means 100,000 images in Tibetan.

After lunch, we continue driving another 90 km to Shigatse. Enroute, we stop at Shalu monastery (optional); the structure embodies the Han, Tibetan and Indian styles of architecture. Following a brief look at Shalu, the journey continues to Shigatse, the second largest city of Tibet with perhaps the best preserved but controversial monastery, the Tashilhunpo Gompa. Tashilhunpo Monastery of Gelugpa order, home to the Panchen Lama, is one of the largest functioning monasteries in Tibet. The main chapel - Maitreya Chapel poses a giant 26 meter high sculpture of Maitreya Buddha (the future Buddha). Overnight Gyantse.

Panchan Lama's Thashilumpu Monastery: It is the seat of Panchen Lama, founded in 1447 by Gedun Drup, the first incarnation of Dalai Lama and a disciple of Tsong Khapa. It is the largest monastery in Xigatse proper, which once housed almost 4000 monks. The main chapel- Maitreya Chapel poses a giant 26 meter high sculpture of Maitreya Buddha (the future Buddha). Overnight stay in Gyantse.

**Accommodation:** Xigatse Hotel or Hotel Manasarovar

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner



### Day 8: Drive Xigatse - Xegar (4,050 m | 244 km | 5-6 hrs)



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We continue along the Friendship Highway. Beyond the small town of Lhatse we cross the highest pass on our journey, the Gyamtso La, 5220m. From here we descend to some of the most spectacular panoramas of the drive. As the landscape opens into vast plains, many monasteries and camps of nomadic herders become visible in the distance.

En-route we take the opportunity to visit Sakya Monastery (optional), the seat of the Sakya or Sakyapa school of Tibetan Buddhism, it was founded in 1073 by Konchok Gyelpo. Its powerful abbots governed Tibet during the whole of the 13th century after the downfall of the kings until they were eclipsed by the rise of the new Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. There is also preserved in this temple the largest book in the world in the great library written in gold letters; the pages are six feet long by eighteen inches in breadth. Overnight stay in Xegar.

**Accommodation:** Chomolungma Hotel  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

### Day 9: Drive Xegar - Rongbuk (4,980 m | 68 km | 1.5 hrs)

Shortly after leaving Xegar, we turn off the Friendship Highway and head south over the Pang La pass 5,150 m towards the main Himalayan range. The view from the top is incredible with uninterrupted views stretching from Makalu to Shishapangma, and including Everest. Below the pass, Everest initially is hidden from view, but as we turn the corner into the upper Rongbuk Valley it reappears, more impressive than ever. The view here are stupendous on a clear day.

In Rongbuk, make the pilgrimage to Rongbuk Monastery, a Buddhist pilgrimage site founded in 1902 by a Nyingmapa Lama. Rongbuk is claimed to be the highest monastery in the world. Venture the cluster of meditation huts used by monks and hermits for over 400 years and feel the powerful spirit of Tibetan Buddhism. In addition to the huts, hermits retreated to the many caves that dot the cliff walls around the monastery and valley below. Explore the

very paths used by hermits – ancient trails lined with hundreds of carved stones that embody sacred syllables and prayers. We may capture this accomplishment with our camera while keeping ourselves busy with short treks which will help us in acclimatizing to the high altitude. Overnight stay in Rongbuk.

**Accommodation:** Everest View Hotel  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

### Day 10: Day Trek to Everest Base Camp (5,250 m | 4-5 hrs)

Today we only spend two to three hours on short trek to Everest Base Camp. One can also take horse cart to Everest base camp & back (optional). Our aim is to get to the base camp as slowly as possible in order to avoid any kind of high altitude problems. On our way back, we enjoy the beautiful mountain landscape that Tibet so proudly boasts.

Alternative - this is a good place to read a book: just how often do you get a chance to sit and read at 5,000 m and with the stunning view of Everest's north face. Overnight stay in Rongbuk.

**Accommodation:** Everest View Hotel  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner



### Day 11: Drive Rongbuk - Saga (4,640 m | 430 km | 6-7 hrs)

Today, the road continues across the plain with stunning Himalayan views in the South, including the

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worlds'14th highest peak Mt. Shishapangma (8,012 m), and Turquoise Lake Peiku tso (4,590 m). As we drive west we are very likely to see wild animals like wild Tibetan Ass, Tibetan Antelope etc. The route then follows a narrow gorge before climbing to a pass and dropping steeply down to a bridge crossing over the Yarlung Tsangpo and arrive Saga the last biggest town on the southern route. Overnight stay in Saga.

**Accommodation:** Xibu Yizhan Hotel Saga  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

### Day 12: Drive Saga - Lake Manasarovar (4,750 m | 450 km | 7-8 hrs)

Today we will be driving through the most panoramic scenery crossing the three tributaries of river Yarlung Tsangpo and passing by the vast lake Kongyu Tso to Lake Manasarovar crossing Mayumla-la (5,151 m) pass. After crossing Mayumla-la pass the road drops down to a marshy plain to the settlement of Hor Qu. From here it is 1 hour more hours to Chiu Village. Chiu (Little Bird) Monastery enjoys a fabulous location atop a craggy hill overlooking the sapphire blues of Lake Manasarovar and enshrines a cave said to have been used by Guru Rinpoche at the end of his life. There is a hot spring behind the monastery and a small pond for bathing close to the village. We will spend a night in local guest house in the Chiu village.

**Accommodation:** Chiu Monastery Guest House  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner



### Day 13: Drive Lake Manasarovar - Darchen (4,560 m | 33 km | 1 hr)

We will explore the Chiu village and visit the monastery in the morning.

After lunch an hour drive will bring us to Darchen about thirty-three kilometres north of Chiu Monastery. Darchen is a forgettable little village with many waste scattered all around with many pilgrims tents. We have to overnight here to organise our Kora (circuit) of Mt. Kailash. We will explore the village and visit the important Tibetan Medical School. Overnight stay in Darchen.

**Accommodation:** Himalya Kailash Hotel  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner



### Day 14: Holi Mt. Kailash Kora | Trek Darchen - Dira-Puk Monastery (5,210 m | 5-6 hrs)

In the morning we drive to the road head at Darchen where we start our Kora trek around Mount Kailash. We start our circuit trek around Holi Mt. Kailash heading west and climbing the ridge to the series of prayer flags and marks the first views of the Holi Mt. Kailash's southern or sapphire face. From here the more rounded profile of Mt. Nanda devi (7,816 m) in India can be seen to east of Mt. Kamet. In the south the vast Barkha plain spreads out, the Mt. Gurla Mandata (7,728 m) rises off to the south-east, Mt. Api and other peaks in Nepal to the south and twin, sharp humps of Mt. Kamet (7,756 m) in India off to the south-west. From this point we head north and enter the Lha Chu valley passing through the Tarboche flagpole.

From Tarboche and Chuku Gompa, we follow the Lha Chu River through a serene, meadow-lined valley,

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hopping over small streams, the West face of Mount Kailash towering above us. The river enters a narrow canyon with high, steep cliffs and spectacular waterfalls. Midway along the trek at the second prostration point the secret entranceway to the Inner Kora is visible to the right. One must complete 13 koras to enter inside. Continuing up the valley, the north face of Kailash comes into view just as we reach the 13th century monastery at Dira-puk. There are two routes to the camp from the convergence of the valleys, and we have the choice of crossing a small moss bridge and following a small path to the gumpa, which has awesome views of the north face of Kailash, or continuing on along the main trail. We overnight at the monastery guest house at the river side with the stunning view of the massive north face of Kailash. A sunset walk up to the ridge overlooking the north face is a must!

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 1:5 Trek Dira-Puk Monastery - Zutul-Puk Monastery (4,790 m | 6-7 Hrs) Day 18: Depart Chengdu

After our light breakfast we will continue climbing gradually through a moraine to a meadow at 5,210 m. Only a short distance past Jorok Donkhang is Shiva-tsal (5,330 m), a rocky expanse dotted with stone cairns draped with items of clothing. Pilgrims are supposed to undergo a symbolic death at this point, leaving their old life behind along with an item of clothing to represent it. A drop of blood or a lock of hair might be even better. If we really decide to drop dead at this point this is a very meritorious place to die.

We will continue climbing rock cairns to final emerge at Drölma-la (5,630 m) pass. To the south we will have last glimpse of the north face of Holy Mt. Kailash. At this point Pilgrims perform a circumambulation, pasting money on to the Drölma Do, Drölma's Rock with butter, stooping to pass under the lines of prayer flags and chanting the Tibetan pass-crossing mantras ki ki so so, la gyalo (ki ki so so

-long life and happiness invocation, la gyalo – 'the gods are victorious') as they go. From the pass we will make a steep descend via Gauri Kund (5,608 m) lake; (one of its Tibetan names translates as the Lake of Compassion) to the Lha Chu valley at 5,150 m, where we will lookout for the footprints which, pilgrims believed belonged to the Buddha. We continue trekking along the Lha Chukhir river and in about couple of hours we should be at Zutul-puk Monastery (4,790 m) for overnight, where there is a cave in which saint Milerepa is said to have meditated.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



### Day 16: Zutul-Puk Monastery - Mayum La Base (5-6hrs) Day 18: Depart Chengdu

Our final day's walk will only takes two hours. It's an easy walk along some impressive gorges and around many mani stones and mani walls back to the Barka plains and dusty Darchen where our jeeps await us. The kora is finished - we've erased our sins, endured extremely cold nights and mornings, crossed one of the highest passes in the world, met countless fellow pilgrims, sent prayers of peace out to the world. Congratulations! After the permit check-up we will drive to back to Mayum La base for overnight.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 17: Mayum La Base - Saga (4,640 m)



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From Mayumla , we drive another 325 km east, shouting 'Ki ki so so, Lha gyalo' (roughly translated 'May the gods be victorious!') as we crest the passes marked with prayer flags and cairns. The panoramas are some of the most beautiful on our journey, with the high mountains bordering Nepal on our right, and pebbly streams, small lakes, small Tibetan villages and soft hills surrounding us. We traverse this amazing Tibetan landscape, crossing more high passes, and the landscape gently transforms to a plateau of high-altitude desert sand dunes. There's time to climb up to the wind-sculpted ridges and gaze over a bordering lake below extensive ripples of peaks. We overnight in Saga, though time permitting, we might make it a bit further along towards Lhasa.

**Accommodation:** Xibu Yizhan Hotel Saga  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner



## Day 18: Drive Saga - Shigatse (3,900 m)

We take a long, wonderful day of jeeping through the high plains of Tibet, soft, beautiful and photogenic. Just before arriving in the dusty truck stop of Lhatse, we cross the Brahmaputra River, which originates from Kailash. From here, to Shigatse, past lovely Tibetan villages where the spring planting will be in full force, is a scenic one. Shigatse is the second largest city in Tibet, with perhaps the best preserved but controversial monastery, the Tashilhunpo gompa. This Gelugpa gompa, home to the Panchen Lama, is one of the largest functioning monasteries in Tibet and there is much to explore within its surrounding walls. We will take a few hours for a visit in the late afternoon or early morning before heading to Lhasa. We stay at a nice hotel in Shigatse, and head out for

a good dinner and a few cold beers in the evening. Overnight stay in Shigatse.

**Accommodation:** Shigatse Hotel  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 19: Lhasa (3,650 m)

Another day of smooth driving through the wonderful landscapes of central Tibet and towards Lhasa, one of Krishna's favorite cities in Asia, despite the Chinese presence there. We stay in the heart of old Lhasa at the beautiful, Tibetan-styled Hotel near the Jokhang Temple and Barkhor square (or at a Tibetan hotel of a similar standard), where the character of the city is still very Tibetan. After a quick look at the Barkhor Square, most atmospheric at dusk (and early morning) when all the pilgrims are doing their koras of the square and Jokhang Temple, we will walk across the square to the infamous Dunya Cafe for dinner and a few much-deserved beers after sunset. Overnight stay in Lhasa.

**Accommodation:** Kyichu Hotel  
**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 18: Depart Tibet

Transfer to airport for your homeward-bound flight.

**Meal:** Breakfast

### Includes

- Airport (pick up/drop off) transfers by private A/C vehicle
- Twin-Sharing accommodation in all Hotel/Inn as mentioned
- Daily breakfast throughout the trip, other meals as mentioned in the itinerary
- Beijing-Xining train fare
- All sightseeing and long distance transportation in private air-condition vehicle



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- Entrance fees & permits as needed for monuments & monasteries,
- All applicable government taxes

### Excludes

- International flight tickets
- Visa fee
- Travel insurance
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal clothing and equipment
- Tips for trip leader/guide, driver, hotel staff and porters
- Items of personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, laundry, and other unforeseen expenses
- Items/services not listed in "included"
- Extra expenses/payment for 'Optional' activities/programs if participated

### Accommodation

#### Kyichu Hotel, Lhasa

The Kyichu Hotel is named after the Kyichu River, which in Tibetan is known as "the river of happiness". A tributary of the Yarlung Tsangpo (also known as Brahmaputra), and the cradle of the ancient Tibetan civilization, the river meanders through the fertile valley in which the fabled and formerly forbidden city of Lhasa is situated.



#### Tsedang Hotel, Tsedang

Welcome to Tsedang Hotel, your Nedong County "home away from home." Tsedang Hotel aims to

make your visit as relaxing and enjoyable as possible, which is why so many guests continue to come back year after year. You'll enjoy relaxing rooms that offer air conditioning, and you can stay connected during your stay as Tsedang Hotel offers guests free wifi.

#### Gyantse Hotel

You can't get more central and convenient than the well-established Gyantse Hotel. The imposing Gyantse Dzong, one of the best preserved dzongs in Tibet, is within walking distance, and Gyantse's iconic 15th century monastery, Pelkor Chode is less than two kilometres away. Views over the medieval town, the dzong and surrounding scenery can be enjoyed from the hotel's upper floors.



#### Shigatse Hotel

Shigatse Hotel is located in the south of the Shigatse town, on the Middle Shanghai Road and about to Tashilhunpo Monastery. It is a good base to explore the surrounding scenic spots including the Sakya Temple, Tashilhunpo Monastery and the Qomolangma Natural Protection Area. It is built in typical Tibetan architecture and inside decorated in popular Tibetan tradition with modern equipment.

#### Qomolangma Hotel, Shegar

Qomolangma Hotel is the best local hotel in Tingri which has dozens of standard rooms with private bath room. Rooms are modern and clean, especially the newer and fresher superior rooms. Hot water is only available from 7am to 7pm and heating units at times can be unreliable due to frequent power cut offs.

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### Rongbuk Monastery Guesthouse, Rongbuk

Very basic accommodation of Rongbuk Monastery Guesthouse is reminiscent of the spartan interiors of monastic cells but plenty of blankets are provided to keep you cosy during the chilly Himalayan nights. Bathroom facilities are the sparsest element, with hot water available but no showers, and basic toilets in a separate block a short walk away.

### Xibu Yizhan Hotel, Saga

The Xibu Yizhan Hotel is an ideal spot for travelers wanting to discover the city. The Xibu Yizhan Hotel offers a pleasant stay in Saga for those traveling for business or leisure. This hotel makes a great place to kick back and relax after a long day of sightseeing. This Saga hotel offers parking on site.

### Himalaya Kailash Hotel, Darchen

Himalaya Kailash Hotel is the best hotel available in Darchen at the moment. The guestrooms are spacious and comfortable in Tibetan design. The hotel hall and guestroom are all covered with Tibetan carpets. Some of the guestrooms have ventilation systems, fresh air systems, automatic sprinkler systems, and fire control systems. Hotel has Chinese and Western buffet restaurants, cafes.

### Group/Individual

On this trip you will be traveling privately with your family & friends. Our representative/tour partner will look after your transfers to and from the airport and will be around to answer other questions you may have about your trip.

### Accommodation – Hotel, Resort

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a fine heritage hotel in another or a family-run guesthouse or lodges in a smaller town. Accommodation in remote areas tend to be basic and may not have western amenities.

### Single Accommodation

Single (room) supplement is provided on request (single supplement charge applies) and are subject to availability.

### Food & Transport

All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 19 dinners are included.

Food is generally cheap in Tibet and you can avoid the spicier regional food if you wish.

Gastronomically the trip can be divided into two parts: 'tourist hotels' and 'local hotels'. In tourist hotels the breakfast is normally a buffet, with a huge spread of Chinese and western food, including coffee, juice, breads, cakes, fruit, eggs, bacon and a wide variety of noodle and stir-fried dishes. In the local hotels, breakfast includes rice porridge, dumplings, eggs, noodles, etc. Lunches and dinners are taken in local restaurants where the food is heavily flavoured with ginger, garlic bamboo shoots and chilli.

Vegetarians are well catered for but please inform us before departure of any special dietary requests. Please note that in Tibet/China the availability of certain specialized products for restricted diets, e.g. gluten-free or dairy-free, is minimal or non-existent and we strongly recommend you bring these specialized dietary items from home. Strict vegetarians may find the diet rather limited to stir fried vegetables and eggs as all the soups are made with meat stock.

For airport, sightseeing transfers, and for long drives we use a private air-con car, jeep, van depending upon group size. Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

### Weather

Generally, Tibet has a cold and dry climate with low humidity and strong sunshine due to the high altitude and clear skies. The weather in Tibet varies greatly between regions and seasons. In general, the summer months of June to August are the warmest

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and most humid, with temperatures ranging from 15°C (59°F) to 25°C (77°F). The winter months from December to February are the coldest, with temperatures ranging from -10°C (14°F) to 10°C (50°F). Tibet also experiences a rainy season from June to September, with the heaviest rainfall in July and August. However, due to Tibet's high altitude, the amount of rainfall is relatively low, and the region is generally considered to be quite dry.

### Baggage Allowance

At time of writing the standard weight limit is one checked baggage is 25kg (55lb) and hand baggage 7kg (15lbs). We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage. Luggage allowances for both hand and checked luggage are subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure.

## ESSENTIAL/PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Passport & Visas

All nationalities require a passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit.

The information below is primarily for EU passport holders, but nearly all nationalities require a visa to enter China, which must be obtained prior to departure. For Tibet a Tibet Travel Permit (TTP) is required, which is a separate document issued by the Tibet Tourism Bureau. In order to obtain a TTP, you must first obtain a Chinese visa and then apply for the TTP through a registered travel agency in China. It's important to note that the visa application process

can take several weeks, so it's recommended to apply well in advance of your planned travel dates.

We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

**Please note:** Visa regulations can change without notice, therefore please check the current regulations or contact us.

### Vaccination & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements for China/Tibet. However, recommended vaccinations are: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid, Japanese encephalitis, rabies, meningitis, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis), chickenpox, shingles, pneumonia, and influenza. The risk of malaria is slight, but you may wish to consult your GP or travel health clinic for further advice. You will also need a yellow fever vaccination certificate if you're arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever transmission or transiting for more than 12 hours through a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Please confirm your vaccine recommendations and requirements with your doctor or travel clinic.

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Dengue (a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes) risk is present throughout the country at elevations below 2300 m. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available, so take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites.



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### Local Time

UTC/GMT + 6 hours.

### Electricity

Tibet (China) operates on 220V and 50 Hz. There are three plug types in Tibet – A, C, & I. Plug type A has two flat parallel pins whereas C has two round pins. And plug I has three flat pins in triangular pattern.

### Money

The official currency in China mainland and Tibet is Renminbi (RMB) or Chinese Yuan (CNY). Yuan is the basic unit and is divided into 10 jiao/mao or 100 fen. There are banknotes in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 yuan and coins in denominations of 1 yuan, 1 and 5 jiao, 2 and 5 fen. At the time of this publication (May 2023) the approximate exchange rates are 8 Yuan for one Euro and 7 Yuan for 1 US\$.

### ATM | Credit Cards

Throughout the major cities/towns of Tibet you will find ATMs. Many (but not all) ATMs accept Visa/MasterCard that will allow you to withdraw money from your account at home.

Please do not rely wholly on ATM machines while in abroad sometimes they are broken or run out of cash.

Credit cards are still not widely accepted/used in Tibet except in larger shops, handicraft stores and hotels in major cities.

You may want to notify your bank before leaving home and tell them where you plan to travel. They should put a note/remark on your account so that any withdrawal transactions would not be flagged as fraudulent.

### Extra Expenses & Spending Money

You will need to bring some extra money to cover drinks, laundry, souvenirs and any other personal

expense, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Though it totally depends on individual but generally an approximate amount of US\$200 per person, per week should be sufficient (more if you enjoy a few beers); however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount. Or if you are the one frugal with money probably allocating less would also be suffice.

Optional Tours may be offered in some city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each optional tour/activity will be arranged locally by our local partner/guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

### Tipping

Tipping in Tibet is not a traditional practice, and it is not expected in most situations. It's generally uncommon and can even be considered rude or embarrassing in some circumstances so when taking a taxi, enjoying a refreshing drink or tucking into a delicious meal there's no requirement to leave any gratuities.

However, tipping has become more common in recent years, especially in areas frequented by tourists or in upscale establishments or your guide, driver. So, if you do want to leave a tip, a small amount of cash is sufficient, and it should be given discreetly and graciously.

### Itinerary Change

In case of some unusual events/incidents the order of programs (sightseeing, excursions etc.) might have to change in order to accommodate the local situations. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements while maintaining the overall integrity of your trip.

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The domestic airlines may change their schedule frequently and, in such cases, our local partner/guide will inform you about the changes.

### Travel Insurance

We highly recommend to choose/get an insurance plan/policy that covers your needs. And please make sure to keep/carry a hard-copy of your travel insurance documents on your person while on tour. It's prudent to check thoroughly the inclusions and procedure to file claims prior to purchasing insurance coverage. *travel-to-nature Asia* will not be responsible for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to purchase appropriate travel insurance from the date of booking.

### Important Information

On all guided trips although our leaders/guides are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorize them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.

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