

Highlights of Tibet

8 days | Starts/Ends: Lhasa



Discover the highlights of Tibet - the rooftop of the world, locked away in its Himalayan fortress! Discover enchanting Lhasa - home to the famous Potala Palace and Jokhang Monastery, the spectacular Yam Drok Lake, Gyantse's Kumbum, Tashilunpo Monastery in Shigatse and Yumbulakhang, the oldest palace in Tibet.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Tsedang - Discover Yumbulakhang, the oldest palace in Tibet
- Lhasa - Marvel at the iconic Potala Palace and visit the sacred Jokhang Temple, Drepung, Sera and Norbulinka Monasteries
- Yam Drok Lake - Take in spectacular views of this beautiful sacred lake, surrounded by snow capped mountains
- Gyantse - See Khumbum Stupa, the largest chorten of its kind in Tibet, and visit Pelku Chode monastery
- Shigatse - Explore the striking Tashilunpo Monastery, seat of Panchen Lama and stroll around the free market of Shigatse.

What's Included

- Breakfast daily
- 7 nights - standard accommodation
- Arrival and departure airport transfer on day 1 and day 8
- Guided sightseeing in Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse and Tsedang
- Private chauffeur driven vehicles
- English speaking local guide during scheduled sightseeing
- Entrance fees to all included sites
- Tibet travel permit. Note: Tibetan travel permits are only issued from mainland China ie Beijing or Chengdu or from Kathmandu in Nepal, therefore prior to travelling to Lhasa you will need to spend a minimum of two days in one of these cities in order for us to arrange the permit for you

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa.
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Lhasa

Lhasa. Arrive at Lhasa Gongkar Airport where you will receive a warm Tibetan welcome by our representative at the airport. Transfer to Lhasa (approx 70kms), soaking up the wonderful mountain scenery en route. Check into your hotel and spend the remains of

the day at leisure, to acclimatise. **Overnight - Lhasa**

Day 2 : Drepung & Sera Monastery

Today enjoy a guided tour of the autonomous region's capital. Visit the 15th century Drepung Monastery, which was formerly one of the largest monasteries in Tibet, once housing 10,000 monks and bustling Barkhor Street. Continue on to explore the Sera Monastery which is still a working retreat, 600 years after its foundation as a main teaching monastery, and it's one of the three great Gelukpa 'universities' once housing more than 5500 monks. **Overnight - Lhasa (B)**

Day 3 : Potala Palace & Jokhang Temple



On another full day of sightseeing in the fabled city of Lhasa, 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

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1645 under the 5th Dalai Lama. This immense building is a masterpiece in design, 13 storeys 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.

The highlight of the day is a visit to Jokhang Temple, the most sacred and important temple in Tibet and also the most captivating. There is an electric atmosphere at the temple as crowds of pilgrims travel around the chapels, praying and prostrating themselves. Then continue on to 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. **Overnight - Lhasa (B)**

Day 4 : Yamdrok Tso Lake



Lhasa (via Yamdrok Tso Lake) - Gyantse. After breakfast depart Lhasa and journey to Gyantse. En route visit the Drolma Lhakang Temple, which is associated with the Buddhist teachings of Atisha (a revered Bengali scholar). You'll also stop at the elevated view point of Kampa La to soak up the incredible views of the spectacular scorpion shaped Yamdrok Lake. Yamdrok is one of Tibet's three sacred lakes and according to local mythology, it is the transformation of a goddess. At over 72kms in length, with electric blue water and surrounded by snow capped mountains, it's an incredible sight to behold. Continuing your journey, drive

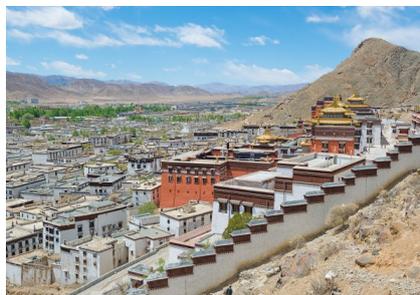
alongside Yamdrok lake for about an hour to reach Gyantse. Upon arrival spend the remains of the day at leisure. **Overnight - Gyantse (B)**

Day 5 : Gyantse



Gyantse - Shigatse. Today after breakfast, visit Kumbum and Pelku Chode, two of the prime sightseeing spots in Gyantse. The giant, gold domed Kumbum stupa was founded in 1427 by a Gyantse prince, it has 9 floors and contains 77 chapels. Pelku Chode is the Monastery inside the same compound of Kumbum. Bidding farewell to Gyantse you'll drive on to Shigatse, Tibet's second most important city. **Overnight - Shigatse (B)**

Day 6 : Shigatse



Shigatse - Tsedang. After breakfast enjoy a tour of Tashilunpo Monastery, which is the largest Yellow Hat sect monastery in Tibet and the seat of the Panchen Lamas. Tashilunpo contains chortens, temples and the Panchen Lamas palace, and at its peak it was home to 4,000 monks. The monastery is a striking red, white and black Tibetan structure with a golden roof. Within the monastery there is a 5 story temple, which contains a 26 meter high sitting statue of the Maitreya Buddha, cast from 6,700 ounces of gold and over 115,000 kg of copper, making it the biggest copper Buddhist statue in the world. After the sightseeing and strolling around the

free market, journey to Tsedang. **Overnight - Tsedang (B)**

Day 7 : Yumbulakhang Palace

Tsedang - Lhasa. This morning visit Samye Monastery which was founded in the 8th century during the reign of King Trisong Detsen, with the help of the Indian Buddhist masters Padmasambhava and Shantarakshita, whom the king had invited to Tibet to help spread Buddhism. The first Tibetan monks were ordained here after examination, and are referred to as the Seven Examined Men. Over the centuries Samye has been associated with various schools of Tibetan Buddhism and today Tibetans of all traditions come to worship here.

Continue on to explore Yumbulakhang, the oldest palace in Tibet. It was believed that King Nyatri Tsenpo descended from heaven to build this palace in 2nd century BC and myths says it is the founding of Tibetan civilization. Yumbulakhang is constructed at the perfect crest of the hill divided into three different components; the tower, the chapel and monk's quarters.

Not far from Yumbulakhang is Tandruk Monastery, situated at the road side. It's said that renowned figures in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, such as Padmasambhava and Milariba, had practiced Buddhism nearby after it was built and the remaining relics are sacred land for the devotees. After a tour of the monastery travel back to Lhasa. **Overnight - Lhasa (B)**

Day 8 : Lhasa

After breakfast transfer to Gongkar Airport for your onward flight. (B)

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Tibet Country Guide

Visa Requirements

All nationalities require a China visa and Tibet permit to enter Tibet. Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy before

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travel. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from Tibet.

Entering Tibet From China

If you are travelling on our 'Take Me To Tibet' group tour or travelling to China and Tibet on a private tour with us, we will arrange the Tibet permit on your behalf and the cost of the permit is included in your tour price. Once your booking has been confirmed we will contact you with the documentation required for you to obtain your China visa. It is your responsibility to obtain your China visa prior to departure and then the Tibet permit will be issued in China and given to you on tour.

Entering Tibet From Nepal

It is only possible to enter Tibet from Nepal with a visa and permit issued by the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu. If you are travelling to Nepal and Tibet with us the China visa/Tibet permit will be arranged for you by On The Go. You will require 3 passport photos in order to obtain your Tibet permit and Nepal visa and it's a good idea to have a spare one. Before booking your flights and trip to Tibet please contact your travel agent or one of our consultants for the most up to date Tibet visa information.

Upon booking you will need to advise us of your international flight details and you will also need to provide us with the following: a coloured scanned copy of your passport information and photo page and a completed China Visa form. We will provide you with the form which you will need to print it out, fill in by hand and attach a passport photo. Then create a colour scanned copy of the completed visa form with photograph and email it back to us in PDF format.

The cost of the Tibet visa/permit is not included in the price of our tours that start in Nepal and is to be paid directly by you to our representative in Kathmandu upon arrival on day 1.

The current cost of a Tibet visa/permit on a one day visa service is:

British, Australian and EU passport holders: USD \$120

USA passport holders: \$220

If you are spending several days in Nepal before travelling into Tibet it may be possible for us to use a 3 or 5 working day embassy visa service in Kathmandu, at a lower cost. Contact us for further details.

Currency in Tibet

The currency in Tibet is the Chinese Yuan (CNY)

Pound Sterling, US Dollars or other major currencies can be exchanged locally at the Bank of China in Zhangmu, Shigatse and Lhasa. Many hotels also have exchange facilities. There are ATMs in Lhasa and Shigatse and credit cards may be accepted in large hotels, shops and restaurants. It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Voltage & Time

Standard voltage is 220 volts, 50Hz AC. Primary sockets generally require Continental or European plugs, of the two round pin variety, or 2 flat pin similar to those found in America. We recommend that you pack a universal travel adaptor. You will need a voltage converter, and plug adaptor in order to use U.S. appliances.

Tibet is 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Meantime (GMT) and does not observe Daylight Saving.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Tibet from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Diphtheria, Tetanus, Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Rabies and Polio are strongly recommended. You may also be advised to take anti-Malarial medication.

WATER

As tap water is not safe to drink in Tibet, only drink bottled mineral water which is readily available in hotels, shops and restaurants.

Altitude Sickness

An altitude of over 3,000 meters is defined as high altitude and given parts of Tibet are higher than this level, it is possible to experience differing degrees of symptoms which include headaches, nausea, dizziness, fatigue and shortness of breath. These symptoms will usually decrease in severity during acclimatization and mild cases of altitude sickness should not interfere with light activity. It is important not to over exert yourself if travelling to altitude and drink plenty of fluids and eat carbohydrate food to keep the body properly hydrated. Please report any symptoms of Altitude Sickness immediately to your tour leader.

Climate in Tibet

Central Tibet is generally mild from April to November, making it the best time to visit. Due to the high altitude it is rarely scorching, but the sun's rays are very strong. From December to February/March it becomes very cold and temperatures regularly drop below freezing. Travel during these months is not advisable. Tibet does not have a typical monsoon season, but May to September are the months with the highest rainfall (which mostly occurs in the evenings).

Style of Trip

Local guides provide sightseeing and assistance at each port of call, the tours are not escorted throughout by a tour leader. On flights you will therefore travel without a guide and will be met upon arrival at your destination and transferred to your hotel. In Chitwan National Park guiding will be provided by the lodges own expert jungle guides. Transportation is a combination of internal flights and private air conditioned vehicles.

Group Size

The number of travelers participating our Tibet tours and treks varies from week to week. Our maximum group size in Tibet is 15, with an average of 2 - 6 travelers on each departure.

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Entrance Fees

On our Tibet group tours, entrance fees are not included must be budgeted for by you. The total cost of the entrance fees which need to be paid locally, as noted under 'Exclusions' on the first page of these Trip Notes. Entrance fee amounts can change and as such upon arrival, your tour leader will highlight the exact total entrance fee cost for your tour. Entrance fees are to be paid in CNY and they will be collected on day 2 of your tour.

Temple Etiquette

Please take particular care when visiting religious places, such as temples and monasteries. Dress and behave appropriately - don't wear shorts or sleeveless tops and do not smoke or hold hands. Shoes and hats should be removed. Within temples no carvings, statues or deities should be touched. Photography is prohibited in certain sections of most sacred sites and please do not attempt to be photographed with Buddhist monks. If in doubt ask your local guide for further information.

Food in Tibet

Tibetan food consists mainly of barley, meat and dairy products. Staple foods include; Yak butter which is refined from the milk of cattle and goats and 'tsamba' which is made of roasted barley, ground with flour and mixed with a little tea, butter, curds and sugar to add flavour. 'Tubo' is a common evening dish; a type of gruel made from dried meat, tsamba and wheat flour. Tibetans are limited to only being able to eat things that grow at over 4000m, which means vegetables are very scarce and people in the higher altitudes eat a lot more meat instead. In winter beef and mutton is cut into strips and air dried in order to preserve it, it is then barbecued or eaten raw.

In Lhasa there are numerous restaurants and noodle places serving national dishes and also Indian, Western and Nepali cuisine. A tasty specialty are 'momos,' which are tiny steamed or fried dough parcels containing meat or vegetables.

Shopping in Tibet

Shopping in Lhasa is a popular tourist activity and Barkhor Street Bazaar is the best place for it. In Barkhor there are lots of stalls, selling a wide range of goods including; Yak wool jumpers, silver ornaments, jewellery and handicrafts. Tibetan incense is a good souvenir, Tibetans use it to worship Buddha and drive away evil spirits. Thangkas (religious scrolls) are also very popular, the higher quality ones have a hand-painted image (rather than printed) in the middle, with very detailed backgrounds. The quality of Thangkas can vary dramatically, so take care when purchasing one.

It is a good idea to buy any practical items you may need in Lhasa before you travel to more remote towns. There are departments stores which will supply all of your everyday goods. In the markets, small shops and stalls, you should barter and generally try to cut the asking price by 50 percent.

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