

We are specialized in Tibet Travel

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TIBET TRAVEL

The snowland you must go in your lifetime



Tibet is located in southwest China with Tibetans as the main local inhabitants. It is situated on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which is called the "roof of the world". Tibet fascinates tourists from home and abroad with its grandiose natural scenery, vast plateau landscape, charming holy mountains and sacred lakes, numerous ancient architectures and unique folk cultures, and the wonders created by the industrious and brave people of various nationalities in Tibet in the course of building their homeland. Tibet is not only a place that many Chinese and foreigners are eager to visit, but also a "paradise" for photographers.



Top Spots of Tibet

Lhasa

The Spiritual and Political Capital of Tibet.

Namtso

"Heavenly Lake" of Tibet, its touching beauty should not be missed by any traveler who visits Tibet.

Everest Nature Reserve

Once-in-a-life journey to experience the earth's highest mountain.

Nyingtri

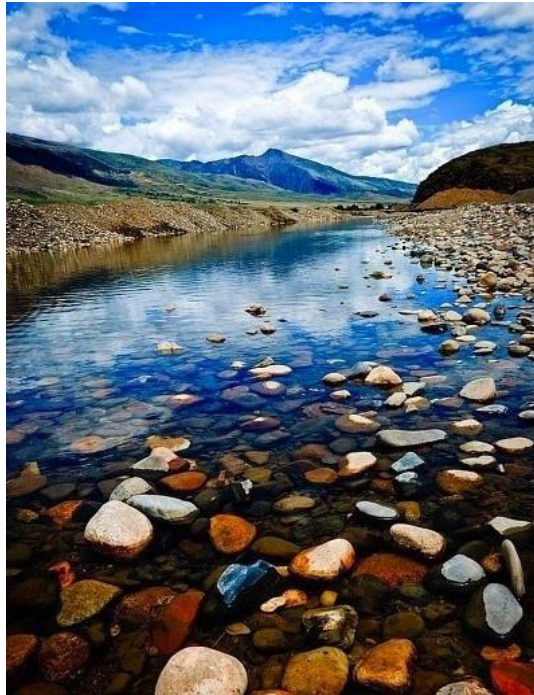
'Pearl of Tibet Plateau', where the climate is subtropical, rice and bananas are grown, four seasons are seen in the mountains.

Tsedang

The cradle of Tibetan civilization.

Mt. Kailash & Lake Manasarovar

Two of the most far-flung and legendary travel destinations in the world. Many of the pilgrims on the road have been planning a visit all their lives.



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Best Time to Go

Climate is not such a major consideration when visiting Tibet as many people might imagine. For a place nicknamed 'The Land of Snows', there's a surprising lack of snow. Winter is very cold, many restaurants are shut and snow can close mountain passes, but some travelers swear by the winter months. There are few travelers about at this time and Lhasa is crowded with drokpas (nomads).

Spring, early summer and late autumn are probably the best times to visit Tibet. March is a politically sensitive month in the country and there is occasional tightening of restrictions on travelers heading into Tibet at this time, but the weather's pretty good. April brings reliable weather in eastern Tibet and discounts on accommodation and vehicle rental in Lhasa. Mt Everest is particularly clear during April and May.

From mid-July through to the end of September the monsoon starts to affect parts of Tibet. (The months of July and August bring half of Tibet's annual rainfall.) Travel to western Tibet becomes slightly more difficult, the roads to the east are temporarily slashed out and the friendship and sometimes becomes impassable on the Nepal side or on the border itself.

Trips to Mt Kailash can be undertaken from April to October, although September and October are considered the best months. October is also the best time to make a trip out to the east. Lhasa and its environs don't get really cold until the end of November.

Why Travel to Tibet

Tibet, the Roof of the World, remained unknown to the world until the beginning of the 20th century. The massive, snowy land has exerted an awesome draw on travelers and adventurers ever since. Its majestic scenery, mysterious and exotic religious culture, and wonderful people, reward every tourist with an indelible life long memory!

Tibet shows many different faces: unique style life and lonely landscapes, Tibetan Buddhism customs and culture, lovely lakes and rough mountains. For cultural sightseeing, Lhasa is ceaselessly thriving, and inevitably, it is the one place that features on every traveler's itinerary. It is not only Tibet's biggest city and capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, but also the place where the world's attention are attracted to. Mount Everest is great for hiking in summer. On the way up to Mount Everest we have Rongbuk Monastery, the highest monastery in the world. If condition permits, tourists can even see the sunrise at the monastery. Mount Kailash is considered as a sacred place in four religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Bön faith. In Hindu religion, it is considered to be the abode of Lord Shiva.



Oh, and don't overlook these simple joys of being in Tibet when planning your itinerary:

- The smell of juniper incense, the low murmur of Tibetan chanting and the warm glow of butter lamps in monasteries everywhere.
- Following a kora (a pilgrimage circuit) with a band of happy pilgrims or scoring a lift in the back of a pilgrim truck.
- Overnighting in a small monastery such as Mindroling, Dorje Drak or Drigung Til.
- Repeatedly wandering the Barkhor (p102), different every time.
- A post-hike thermos of sweet milky tea in a crowded Tibetan teahouse.



Potala Palace

There's Gyantse, in the Nyang-chu Valley, famed for the largest chörten (stupa) in Tibet, and hiking in Yarlung Tsangbo Valley, widely considered the cradle of Tibetan civilization. Base yourself in Tsetang and marvel at the monkey cave in Gangpo Ri or walk the monastery Kora (pilgrim path). Your trip will take you past glittering mountain turquoise lakes and over high passes draped with prayer flags. Find a quiet spot in a prayer hall full of chanting monks, hike past the ruins of remote hermitages or make an epic overland trip along some of the world's wildest roads. The scope for adventure is limitless.

Tibet is a uniquely spiritual place. Those moments of peace when everything is in its proper place, seem to come more frequently in Tibet, whether inspired by the devotion shown in the face of a Tibetan pilgrim or the dwarfing scale of a beautiful landscape. Tibet can truly claim to be on a higher plain.

Besides fabulous monastery sights, breathtaking high-altitude lake scenery, stunning views of the world's highest mountains, it offers one of the most likeable peoples you will ever meet. The people here are very devout. You see them circumambulating their sacred places, like the Jokhang Temple and the Potala Palace, to accumulate merit. You see them doing prostrations in front of the Jokhang – they might have a goal of doing a couple hundred thousand prostrations in their lifetime as part of their attempt to reach greater enlightenment. But perhaps the most wondrous is how you see Tibetans continuously in prayer as they are walking down the street or sitting on the park bench, spinning their prayer wheel, running their fingers over their prayer beads, their lips constantly moving as they chant Om Mane Padme Hum.



Flowers in Sera

How to Get Your Chinese Visa

To enter Tibet, or any part of China excepting Hong Kong and Macao (Visitors to Hong Kong, holding passports from the some countries DO NOT need a visa when staying for a specified free period), a valid passport including a standard Chinese entry visa is essential.



1. Apply in your country

Such visas are generally obtainable from most Chinese embassies and consulates. The cost of a standard Chinese tourist visa varies from US\$12-120 according to the nationality of the applicant and the type of visa required. Individual visas may be issued for single or parties of five and over, for the specific duration of a fixed itinerary (single or double entry). Multiple entry visas are normally issued for business or educational purposes only, ranging in validity from 6 to 12 months, and are more expensive (US\$120-250). Normally three working days are required to process an application from the date of its submission, but express services are also available at a premium. It may be best to obtain it before leaving your home country unless you are taking a package tour to enter Tibet overland from Nepal.

The first rule when applying for a visa as an independent traveler is to expect that you will be refused a visa if you mention plans to visit Tibet. There is a trick that when you apply for the Chinese visa, you can't tell the officer that you have the plan for traveling to Tibet; you can only inform them you want to travel to somewhere else of China. Or else the application would become complicated and arduous.

Keep in mind

1. When entering China it is best to have a visa covering the expected duration of stay. Getting extensions inside China can involve delays and other difficulties.

2. You need to apply for a double- or multiple entry visa when you need to leave and re-enter mainland China. Please note that, even when you leave for Hong Kong or Macao from mainland China, you still need to have a double- or multiple entry visas.

2. Apply in Hong Kong

It is usually very easy to apply for a China visa in Hong Kong. You can get a visa yourself at:

Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China
5th Floor, Lower Block
26 Harbor Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: +852-25851657 OR +852-25851680 OR +852-25851794

Please Note:

- 1) You need to go there Monday to Friday during business hours.
- 2) 'Fast Process' means: the visa should be processed the same day.

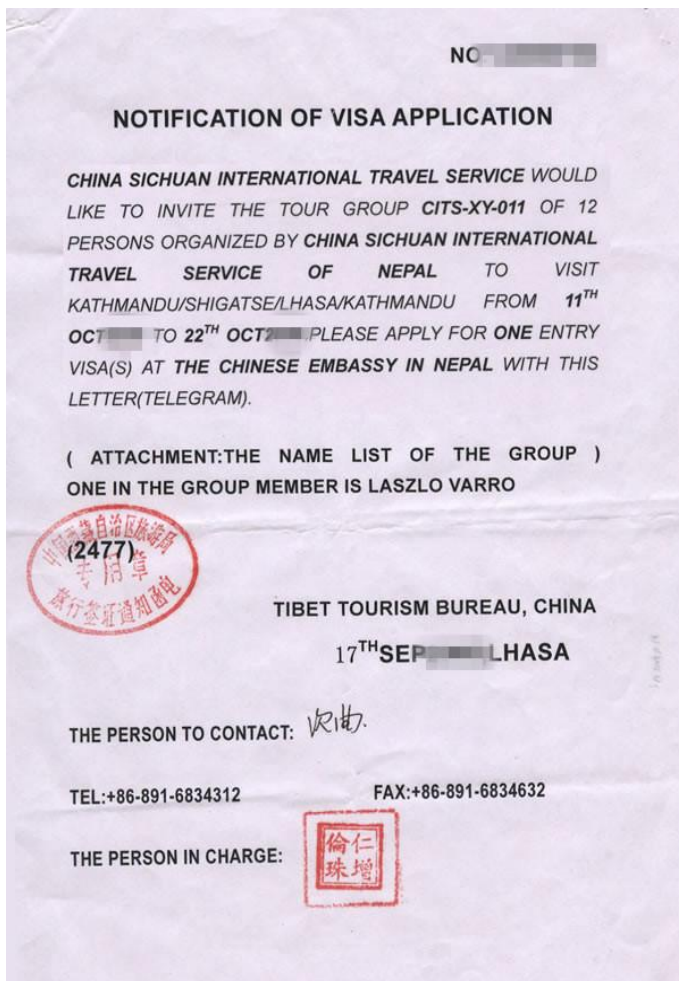
Requirements to obtain a Visa in Hong Kong

- A. One recent passport photo.
- B. Passport which needs to be valid at least more than 3 months.
- C. Call the office before your visit.
- D. China Tourist and Business (F) Visa can be obtained easily in Hong Kong. It can be obtained with the help of a travel agent but at least 3 full working days should be allowed for this procedure.

Travel to Tibet through Nepal

If you entry Tibet from Kathmandu, Nepal, you are required to obtain a Chinese visa in the consulate of P.R China in Kathmandu, the opening time for the Consulate of P.R China in Kathmandu is only available from 9:30am-11:00am on every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Please note this visa application is compulsory despite you have already had a Chinese visa in your country or not since this is regulated by the border treaty signed between Nepal and China.

The Chinese visa you get in Kathmandu is a "group visa". A "group visa" is not entered in travelers' passports but is a separate sheet of paper issued in duplicate by the Chinese consulate in Katmandu, listing all members of the group. It usually allows a stay of 15 or 20 days. A "group" may be any number of travelers, and may be just one traveler. One or more travelers entering Tibet together with others may wish to have their own separate group visa so they are able to separate from the others.



团体签证

GROUP VISA

第 002561 号团体签证, 准予 V20072251 团 (3) 人自 2007 年 6 月 12 日至 2007 年 6 月 25 日, 在中华人民共和国旅行, 壹次有效。

No. 002561 group visa, valid for single entry, permits V20072251 group consisting of (3) persons to travel in PRC from 12 Jun 2007 to 25 Jun 2007.

发证日期 11 JUN 2007 签署、印章
Date of issue Signature, Seal

备注:

人员名单

LIST OF GROUP

序号 NO.	姓名 Name in full	性别 Sex	出生日期 Date of birth	职业 Profession or Occupation	国籍 Nationality	护照号码 Passport No.
1	TYULEMISSOVA ZHANNA	FEMALE	19800614		KAZAKHSTAN	N3027636
2	MAMBETOV YERLAN	MALE	19801025		KAZAKHSTAN	N3342704
3	ANDOSSOVA ALIYA	FEMALE	19800524		KAZAKHSTAN	N4584041

名单结束 END OF THE LIST

We have reliable cooperative agency in Kathmandu, with their help, you can easily get your Chinese visa. The visa application fee is as follows:

Normal: (visa to be delivered in 05 days from the day of visa application) (ex: applying on Monday- get on Friday)

US\$ 70.00 including stationeries (photocopies, paper works etc) + service charges (for the citizens except U.S nationals)

US\$ 155.00 including stationeries + service charges (for US citizens)

Urgent: (Visa to be delivered in 03 days from the day of Visa application) (ex: applying on Wednesday- get on Friday)

US\$ 90.00 including stationeries (photocopies, paper works etc) + service charges (for the citizens except U.S nationals)

US\$ 175.00 including stationeries + service charges (for US citizens)

Top Urgent: (Visa to be delivered in a same day i.e.: applying either on Monday, Wednesday or Friday and get on the same day)

US\$ 125.00 including stationeries (photocopies, paper works etc) + service charges (for the citizens except U.S nationals)

US\$ 210.00 including stationeries + service charges (for US citizens)

Please note that our partner in Nepal need to get all the relative documents including Visa Application letter from TTB and the original passports to apply visa for Tibet Autonomous Region of China in advance, and all these required documents need to be submitted to the consular section of the embassy before 10:30 hrs only on the Visa working days i.e.: Monday, Wednesday and Fridays...

The required Visa Fees must be paid to our partner in Nepal in CASH by the clients before the day of Visa Application.

Tibet Permits

There are three levels of bureaucracy you need to get through to travel in Tibet: a visa to enter China, a Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) permit to get into Tibet and an Alien Travel Permit to travel to certain regions of Tibet.

Beware that the permit situation is subject to rapid and unpredictable change by the Chinese government, how these rules are interpreted depends on the political climate in Tibet. Don't be surprised if the permit system is radically different from that described in this article. And it's worth checking the current situation with us before you make the decision to travel to Tibet.

1. Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) Permit

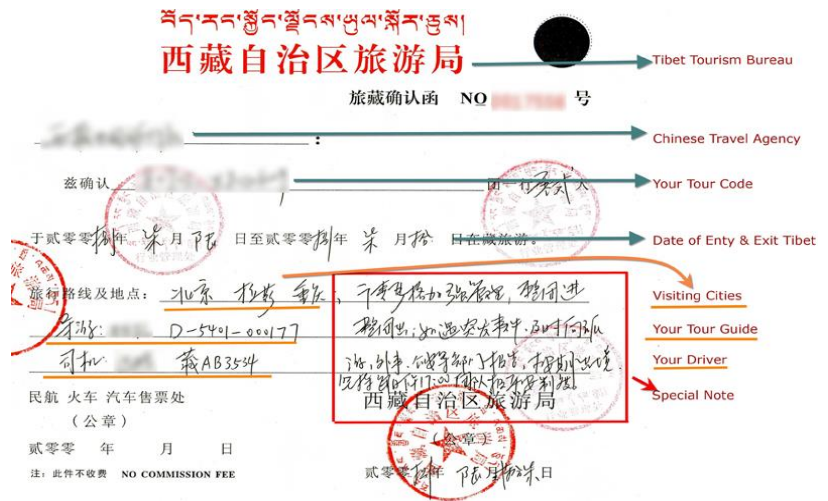
A TTB permit is officially required to get into the Tibet Autonomous Province (TAR). Without one you will not be able to board a flight to Tibet and, if checked, you may not be allowed to continue on your bus or train trip. Here are the **Tibet Permit Application Procedures** for your information:

1. If you visit China for travel, and your visa type is "L", Please email us the photo copy of your passport and China Visa 20-30 days before you arrive in China, we will set out to apply for your Tibet Permit upon we receive it. Please be sure that the photos are in large size and clear enough.

2. If you visit China for business purpose, and your visa type is "F" or "Z", please offer a business visiting certificate paper from the company or association in China you pay a visit to that can provide your accurate purpose. This certificate paper should include two parts: 1) Your personal information: your full name, passport number, the purchase of visit, the duration of your visit. 2) the company information, the company full name, address, telephone number, fax number. And this certificate paper must be stamped by this company.

3. If you resident in China held a resident permit, please offer your working permit issued by China government or a certificate from your company to prove you are working there. The certificate should include 1) Your personal information: your full name, passport number, the purpose of visit, how long have you been working there, your position in this company; 2) the company information, the company full name, address, telephone number, fax number.

4. Your Tibet Permit will be issued 2-5 working days since we pass your documents to Tibet Tourism Bureau. The Original Tibet Permit will be posted to the city from which you depart to Tibet, please let us know the address, telephone number, the hotel name of your accommodation in that city 15 days before you arrive in China. Or you could go to our branch office in that city you depart to pick up documents in person if you prefer.



2) Aliens' Travel Permits (PSB's)

Tibet is slightly more complicated when it comes to travel permits than elsewhere in China. An Alien Travel Permit (usually just called a 'travel permit') is granted by the PSB (Public Security Bureau) for travel to an area that is officially closed.

Tibet PSB will not issue travel permits to individuals and the travel permits are usually only obtainable through tour operators, for organized tours by four-wheel-drive car. A single permit is normally issued to all the people who are traveling together, the permit naming just one of them and stating how many others are accompanying him; the passports, or at least photocopies of passports and visas, of all persons traveling must be presented in order to obtain a permit.

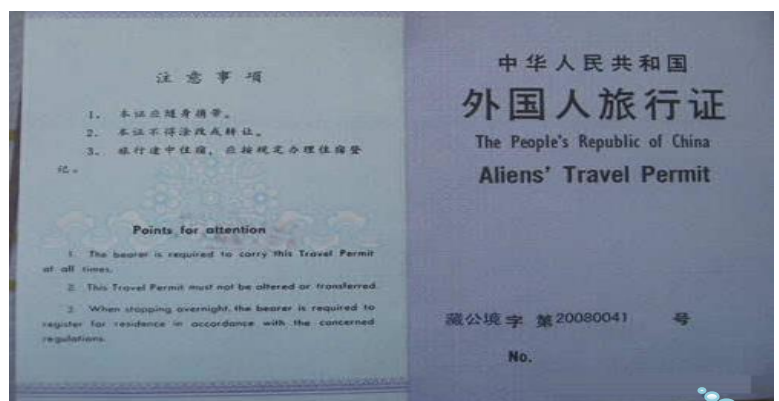
If you want to do an overland tour from Yunnan, Sichuan or Xinjiang province to Tibet, we need your Entry Stamp to China to apply the PSB before your tour starts.

3) Other Permits

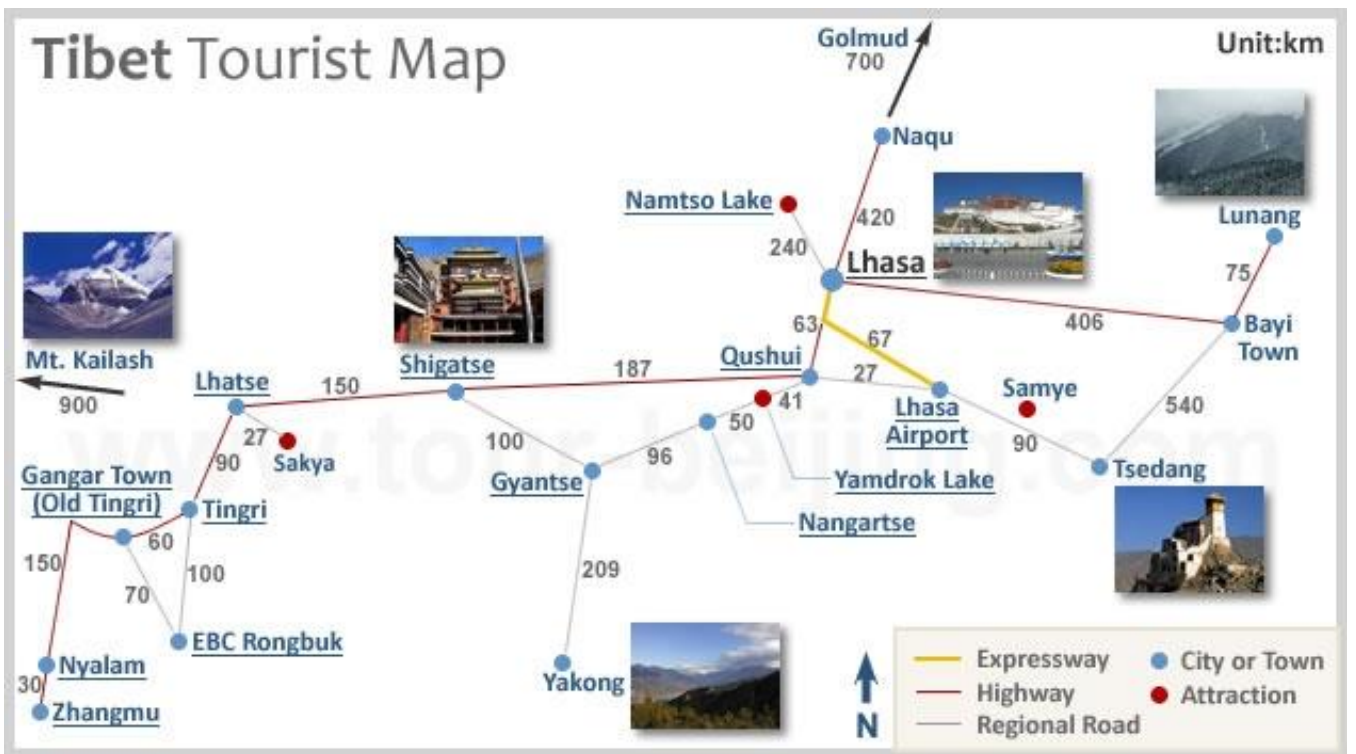
Sensitive border areas, such as Mt Kailash, the road to Kashgar and the Nyingtri region of eastern Tibet, also require a military permit and a foreign-affairs permit. If you want to do an overland tour from Yunnan, Sichuan or Xinjiang province to Tibet, a military permit is required, too.

For Tholing and Tsaparang in western Tibet you may also need a permit from the local Cultural Affairs Bureau. Dungkar in western Tibet requires a permit from the Ali PSB.

These will be arranged by us as well, but you need to give us the full information and documents at least 3 weeks prior to your departure.



Useful Maps



How to Get to Tibet

By Train

There are a few way of getting to Tibet. The most common way now is to take the train to Lhasa. There are daily trains to Lhasa originating from Xining, Lanzhou, Chengdu, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. In addition, the train passes through many other cities along the way. Train tickets during the busy summer tourist season can be extremely difficult to get. For acclimatization purposes, Xining is probably the best option to take the train from as it sits at 2300m/7500 feet above sea level. It is also the closest major city to Lhasa.



By Air

Another popular way to get to Lhasa is to fly there. There are daily flights to Lhasa from Chengdu, Xi'an, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing and a few other major cities. Chengdu offers the most daily flights to Lhasa with at least 6 to 10 flights per day.

There are five airport in Tibet now: Lhasa Gonggar Airport, Shigatse Peace Airport, Nyingtri Milin Airport, Ngari Kunsha Airport and Chamdo Bamda Airport.



View from the airplane on the way in to Tibet

Overland Route to Tibet

For those with a spirit of adventure, driving a four wheel vehicle to Tibet may provide you with the experience of a lifetime! Such an expedition is demanding and requires participants to be in good physical health, time is required to make the journey and it's costly. Anyone considering this journey should be advised that a lot of courage and determination are required!

There are five major road routes to Lhasa. They are the Nepal-Tibet Friendship highway, Sichuan-Tibet highway, Qinghai-Tibet highway, Xinjiang-Tibet highway, Yunnan-Tibet highway.

Qinghai-Tibet Highway

Xining - 123 km - Daotang River - 196 km - Caka - 484 km - Golmud - 269 km - Wudaoliang - 150 km - Tuotuo Riverside - 91 km - Yanshiping - 100 km - Tanggula Mountain - 89 km - Amdo - 138 km - Nagqu - 164 km - Damxung - 75 km - Yangbajain - 87 km - Lhasa, 1937 km in length.

Sichuan-Tibet Highway

Northern Route: Chengdu - 394 km - Kangding - 267 km - Luhuo - 95 km - Garze - 207 km - Dege - 111 km - Gyamda - 228 km - Chamdo - 480 km - Baqing - 256 km - Nagqu - 164 km - Damxung - 162 km - Lhasa, 2121 km in length with the highest point at Queer Mt. of 4916m. also could via: Chengdu - Ya'an - Kangding - Xinduqiao - Luhuo - Garze - Lhasa.

Southern Route: Chengdu - 147 km - Ya'an - 163 km - Luding - 62 km - Kangding - 149 km - Yajiang - 308 km - Batang - 104 km - Markam - 158 km - Zuogong - 107 km - Bongda - 94 km - Baxoi - 217 km - Bomi - 233 km - Nyingtri - 127 km - Gongbo Gyamda - 206 km - Mozhugongka - 73 km - Lhasa, 2140 km in length with the highest point at Litang of 4700m.

Yunnan-Tibet Highway

Kunming - 353 km - Dali - 166 km - Lijiang - 145 km - Zhongdian - 152 km - Deqen - 103 km - Yanjing - 111 km - Markam - 359 km - Baxio - 450 km - Nyingchi - 420 km - Lhasa, 2300 km in length.

Xinjiang-Tibet Highway

Yecheng - 69km - Pusa - 88km - Kudidaban - 83km - Mazadaban - 339km - Sweet Water Sea - 110km - Jieshandaban - 177km - Duomaping - 143km - Rutog County - 87km - Shiquanhe town - 331km - Parga - 334km - Zhongba - 145km - Saga - 293km - Lhaze - 157km - Xigaze - 337km - Lhasa, 2743 km in length.

Tibet Friendship Highway to Kathmandu

Lhasa - 350 km - Shigatse - 157 km - Shegar (New Tingri) - 60 km - Old Tingri - Nyalam - 30 km - Zhangmu Friendship Bridge (Kathmandu)

Luggage Allowance

For your convenience, we suggest you bring one large suitcase and one carry-on bag.

Flight Luggage Allowance

Free Baggage Allowance in Weight

On international and regional flights, the free baggage allowance for each published adult-fare or half-fare passenger is as follows: First class fare ticket: 40 kilogram (88 pounds); Business class fare ticket: 30 kilogram (66 pounds); Economy class fare ticket: 20 kilogram (44 pounds). No free baggage allowance is granted to infants paying 10% of the adult fare. Groups travelling together are able to combine their baggage allowance if they check in together.

Free Baggage Allowance in Piece

Free baggage allowance in piece is applicable only on China-USA and China-Canada international flight. According to the class of tickets, the free baggage allowance for each full-fare or half-fare first-class and business-class passenger is two pieces, and the sum of the length, width and height of each piece must not exceed 62 in. (158cm). The free baggage allowance for each economy-class and discounted tourist-class passenger is two pieces, and the sum of the length, width and height of each piece must not exceed 62 in. (158cm), but the sum of the length, width and height of the two pieces of baggage must not exceed 107 in. (273cm); the weight of each piece must not exceed 32 kg. An infant paying 10% of the adult fare is allowed one piece of free baggage, and the sum of its length, width and height must not exceed 45 in. (115cm). In addition, a collapsible infant cart or infant handcart is allowed to be carried free. For baggage in excess of the free baggage allowance in piece, or the sum of the length, width and height of each piece exceeding the prescribed limits, an excess baggage charge should be paid.

Hand Baggage

In addition to free baggage allowance in weight, each passenger holding a full-fare or half-fare ticket may carry in his own custody the following articles free of charge: a lady's handbag, an overcoat, a raincoat or a traveling blanket, a walking stick or an umbrella, a small amount of reading material for the trip, a small camera, a pair of small binoculars, infant's food for consumption in flight, an infant's carrying basket, a fully collapsible invalid chair or a pair of braces or artificial limbs. In addition to the free baggage allowance in piece, regardless of the fare class of the ticket, the passenger may also carry unlimited number of pieces of hand baggage that can only be placed under the passenger seat, and the sum of the length, width and height of all the pieces must not exceed 45 in. (115cm).



Packing of Baggage

The checked baggage should be able to withstand a certain extent of pressure, completely sealed, well locked and firmly tied up. For those baggages not packed in accordance with the requirements, the carrier can refuse to accept for carriage and will not be liable for any damage or breakage thereof. Prohibited Items: The following items are prohibited and cannot be carried in checked or carry-on luggage: Flammable, explosive, corrosive, poisonous, radioactive, polymerizable and magnetized materials. Passengers are forbidden to carry arms, sharp or lethal weapons.

Train Luggage Allowance

Carry-on baggage allowance Each passenger is allowed to take a certain amount of carry-on baggage for free. •Children (children with free ticket included): 10 kg (22 pounds) •Diplomat: 35 kg (77 pounds) •Other passengers: 20 kg (44 pounds) •The total length of each item cannot exceed 160 cm. •Rod-shaped baggage should not exceed 200 cm in length and 20 kg (44 pounds) in weight. Note: The above limitation is not applicable to wheelchair, which can be brought onto the train for free. If the baggage exceeds the allowed amount (either by weight or size), please use the baggage transportation service.

Prohibited Items:

The following items are prohibited on board the train:

1. Items whose transportation is prohibited or limited by the government.
2. Dangerous goods, ammunition.
3. Animals and goods (goods with revolting smell included) which will affect public hygiene.
4. Items which may harm other passengers in the train, such as knives (fruit knife included).
5. Baggage that exceeds the limitation of the regulation.

Limited Items:

Regulation on the amount of the followings that can be brought onto train:

1. Less than 5 gas lighters.
2. Less than 20 boxes of matches.
3. Items like enamel and hair dye, less than 20 ml.
4. Items like alcohol less than 100 ml.
5. Items like styling mouse, insecticide and air-refresher, less than 600 ml.
6. Less than 20 newborn poultries.

Food & Drinking

Sample the taste- What to Eat in Tibet

Tibet is unlikely to become a hot destination for foodies. Though you won't starve, Tibetan food will probably not be a highlight of your trip. Tibetan food, like Tibetan people and their culture, has a very distinct character. Many people have given Tibetan cuisine a bad reputation while others like it and think it's not that bad. Whether it's tasty or not, you need to try it yourself. Even if you have explored all Tibet attractions, your trip to Tibet is never complete without trying Tibetan food.

Tibetan people have unique food and drink due to the high altitude, harsh climate, their religious belief and ethnic customs. Their diet mainly consists of meat, milk and other high protein food to help them fight the cold. Tibetans eat a lot of yak meat and mutton but they don't eat horse, dog, donkey or even fish.

Beef and Mutton

Beef (yak meat) is the most popular meat eaten by Tibetans. Beef and mutton contain high protein which is helpful in fighting the cold. Many Tibetans often eat raw meat, while others boil beef and mutton with ginger, salt and spices. Dried beef and mutton strips are also popular in Tibet. The dried meat can be difficult to chew but tastes good. Additionally, the dried meat can be stored and are useful when traveling long distance.

Tsampa

Tsampa (糌粑) is the staple food in Tibet. Tibetan people eat tsampa at every meal and bring it as a ready-made food when traveling. Tsampa is a dough made with roasted barley flour and ghee (yak butter).

There are 2 basic methods to make and eat tsampa. One is to make dough with butter tea. The other is to make porridge with beef or mutton, and vegetables. The former one is salty while the latter is added with sugar to give it a sweet taste.



Tsampa with Raw Yak Meat (in the bowl)

Tibetan Noodle (Thenthuk or Thukpa)

Tibetan noodle (藏面) is usually served with simple vegetable and brewis. Those who live in cities of Tibet prefer to have Tibetan noodles and sweet tea as their breakfast. Some say Tibetan noodle soup is the most enjoyable for the meal as the soup tastes nice together with a bit shallot.



Yak Thukpa - Tibetan Noodle Soup

Tibetan Sausages

Tibetan people are fond of varied sausages, including meat sausage, blood sausage, flour sausage, liver sausage, lung sausage, etc.



Tibetan Blood Sausages

Momo

Momos (藏饺) are Tibetan dumplings which are made with either meat or vegetables. The half-moon-shaped momo can be either steamed or fried and served with chili sauce.

Ginseng Fruit Rice

Ginseng fruit rice (人参果饭) is considered as a lucky food by Tibetans and they eat ginseng fruit rice during festivals especially the Tibetan New Year Festival. Ginseng fruit rice is made with rice, ginseng fruit, butter tea and sugar. Ginseng fruit is rich in nutrition and benefits a lot to your digestive system.

Milk Curd and Yogurt

Tibetan people eat all kinds of dairy products, including ghee (butter), cheese, yogurt, and milk curd. Milk curd or named milk sediment (奶渣) is solidified sediments of boiled milk, which tastes sour. Tibetans bring it when traveling to avoid environmental inadaptability. Milk curd can be eaten as snacks or used to make Tibet buns. Besides, fried milk curd tastes good too.

Chill with a Drink- What to drink in Tibet

The local beverage that every traveler ends up trying at least once is yak-butter tea. Tea houses are an important social venue in Tibet, and offer a chance to sit down and relax. The tea houses in the town offer sweet tea, or salted; in the villages you may only have the option of salt tea. The line between a tea house and a restaurant is blurred and many also offer thukpa. And also have a try of the chang, a fermented barley beer. It has a rich, fruity taste and ranges from disgusting to pretty good.

Butter Tea

Some visitors call the butter tea "yak butter tea", but actually there is no such thing as "yak butter tea". Why? Because yaks are male and they can't produce milk. Females, called "dri", produce milk. ☺



Butter tea

Butter tea (酥油茶) is another staple of Tibetan meal. To put it simply, the butter tea is boiled tea added with ghee and salt. Tibetan people drink butter tea to keep themselves warm and it usually drank while eating tsampa. Some say the butter tea tastes more like soup rather than tea. Tibetans usually serve tea in small bowls instead of cups. Modern Tibetans use an electric blender to mix them to provide you butter tea.

Tibetan Sweet Tea (Tibetan Milk Tea)

Tibetan sweet tea (藏式甜茶) is another popular tea in Tibet. How to make it? Boil milk with brick tea and sugar added. Tibetan milk tea is better acceptable by visitors than butter tea as it smells more pleasant and the taste is not that strong.



Tibetan Sweet Tea

Tibetan Barley Wine (Chang)

The Tibetan brew is known as chang, a fermented barley beer. It has a rich, fruity taste and ranges from disgusting to pretty good. Connoisseurs serve it out of a jerry can. Those trekking in the Everest region should try the local variety, which is served in a big pot. Hot water is poured into the fermenting barley and the liquid is drunk through a wooden straw – it is very good. Sharing chang is a good way to get to know local people, if drunk in small quantities. The taste of Chang differs from one to another due to the brewing method and duration.

The main brands of beer available in Tibet are snow and Lhasa Beer, as well as the usual suspects like Budweiser. Lhasa Beer is brewed in Lhasa, originally under German supervision and now in a joint venture with Carlsberg. Look out also for Lhasa Ice Beer and Tibet Spring Green Barley Beer. Domestic beer costs around Y5 in a shop, Y8 in most restaurants and Y12 in swanky bars.

Supermarkets in Lhasa stock several types of Chinese red wine, including Shangri-La, produced in the Tibetan areas of northeast Yunnan using methods handed down by French missionaries at the beginning of the 19th century. A bottle costs around Y50.



Chang - Tibetan wine made from highland barley

Shopping

It is said that a trip to Tibet is never complete without a shopping spree. Tibet has vast and rich variations of local arts and crafts. Tibetan carpets, carvings, local snacks, as well as Buddhist items are available for visitors. So it could be said that Tibet is a great place for shopping. For visitors to Tibet, there are an uncountable number of specialties for them to choose from.

What to Buy

Thangka: A thangka is a Tibetan scroll painting that has strong ties to Buddhism and features distinctive ethnic flavor. They have been popular in Tibet for centuries. Some Thangkas are charming portraits of a Buddha, some are colorful representations of Tibetan customs, and some are portraits of the history of Tibet. Thangka paintings can be made using a wide variety of techniques: silk tapestry with cut designs, hand painted, color printing, embroidery, brocade, and pearl inlaid.

Tibetan Crafts: Normally crafted from such raw materials as gold, silver, copper, wood, bamboo, as well as bones, Tibetan crafts are not only useful, but aesthetically pleasing. Tibetan silver crafts make great souvenirs from Tibet. Tibetan silver ornaments make use of precious stones like agate, rubies and sapphires, and are usually carved with Sanskrit.

Tibetan Carpets and Textiles: Woven with bright and harmonious colors, Tibetan carpets are durable and beautifully crafted. The hand woven, Tibetan woolen Pulu cloth comes in many colors and is used for making clothes, shoes, and caps. It is incredibly warm, as well as beautiful.

Tibetan Knives: For Tibetan people, knives are not only a tool and a weapon, but also an adornment. It is a time-honored traditional handicraft that is an integral part of Tibetan's daily lives. This is especially true of knives carried by Tibetan women that tend to be more decorative and delicate. They are particularly famous for their intricately designed silver sheaths.

Tibetan Medicine: Lots of tourists like to buy traditional Tibetan medicine for its herbs such as saffron, aweto and snow lotus. Tibetan doctors and their traditional medicines made by secret methods attract much curiosity, and some tourists also like to pay the traditional doctors a visit for treatment during their tour.

Tibetan traditional arts and crafts are too numerous to mention. To get a better understand of exactly what there is to buy in Tibet, it is best to explore the local markets to do some shopping on your own.



Where to Buy

Barkhor Street is the famous commercial center of the high land. Over 120 handicraft and artwork stores and 200 or so market stands in the Barkhor Street: it is a must-go place for all souvenir shopping. Tibetan rugs, knives, broadswords, traditional clothes, gold and silver jewelry and all sorts of traditional handmade craftwork can easily be found in this street. One tip, Tibetan beads especially are very expensive, so don't forget to bargain with the vendors, whatever you buy! You can also find fabulous food on Barkhor Street.

It's a good idea to go shopping on Barkhor Street in the morning or evening, because local people always value highly their first customer and their last one.

Barkhor Street is the famous commercial center of Tibet. It is located outside of Jokhang Temple. Over 120 handicraft and artwork shops and over 200 individual booths are set up on Barkhor Street each day. It is a must-go place for all souvenir shopping. Besides simply shopping, Barkhor Street is a great place to people watch. This circular street is a stop for pilgrims, and is also where local people do some of their shopping, so it gives visitors a great chance to see local people living their lives. This street offers a lot of choices, but it is important to shop around before deciding on a purchase. Many vendors sell similar items, and some places are more expensive than others. When deciding to buy a piece, be sure to bargain. It is expected, and it will help insure that visitors do not get cheated. There are no set prices, so if you find something you want, think what it is worth to you, and stick to that price. Most of the items for sale in Tibet cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

Where to Stay - FAQs on Lodging

Q1: What are the hotels like in Tibet? Is shower or bath available in hotels in Tibet? Should I take a tent and a sleeping bag with me?

A: Accommodation conditions in Tibet have been greatly improved due to rapidly developing tourism in Tibet. In most cities and counties in Tibet, there are hotels and guest houses for lodging, but the equipment and service may be inferior to those of the other places of China. Even some famous international chain hotels in Lhasa, like Sheraton and Jardin secret, the service standard and facilities of most 3, 4 even 5 star hotels are not what you would expect from the same rating hotels in Beijing or Shanghai.

Most of the standard rooms of the starred hotels in Lhasa have private washrooms with water heaters. In the guest houses there are own public bathrooms with fixed time service. Usually internet service is available in the business center or the separate internet bar in the hotels, and private internet service may be offered in the luxury rooms of a hotel. However, in some remote areas, the internet is not accessible due to the limited condition. Coffee is uncommon in the rooms, but many hotels have a separate cafe.

In Lhasa and Shigatse, starred hotels are more than other cities of Tibet. In Lhasa, accommodation ranges from guest houses to five star hotels. Except for the golden weeks of May Day Holiday, National Holiday and Shoton Festival, the hotels are not difficult to book. In Shigatse, Gyantse, Tsedang and Nyingtri, the highest standard is three stars. In Tingri, Zhangmu and Nagchu, the highest are two stars while in other smaller or remote areas, accommodation is mainly in guest houses, usually having a public bathroom with squat toilet. Therefore, when travelling to remote areas where only guest houses are available, you should bring a sleeping bag to keep warm and clean. You can bring a tent if you would like to camp for the night, such as at Namtso Lake.

In the off-season, most hotels go out of business due to fewer travelers. But in the high season, the prices are about 30% higher than those during the low season, sometimes up to twice as much.

Besides, if you want to get more close to local life and learn about local customs, Tibetans welcome you to their houses. Nowadays, Tibetans have opened their own hostels themselves, which are very popular with travelers. In Lhasa, there are many hostels of this kind in the old district, especially around Barkhor Street.

There are many stores in Lhasa running leasing business and it's easy to lease tents and sleeping bags in Lhasa and the cost is calculated by day and the quality of the articles.

Q2: Are there any star hotels in Tibet? Are they short of supply? Are they expensive?

A: In Tibet there are more star hotels in major tourist cities, like Lhasa and Shigatse. There are 40 to 50 star hotels in Lhasa and 10 to 20 in Shigatse. It's easy to book these hotels except during the vacation of May Day, National Day and "Shoton Festival" in August. There are fewer star hotels in other places in Tibet and it's not so difficult to book due to relative fewer tourists. As Tibet is in the plateau, it has obvious different travel seasons. And in off-seasons, the hotels are almost all closed. While in travel peak seasons, the room cost is much higher (about 30% more) than those in main land in China. And in different area or different time periods, the room cost may also increase sharply.

Q3: Are there hostels in Tibet? How about the prices? Are they short of supply?

A: In Lhasa, the hostels mainly locate on East Beijing Road including Banak Shol Hostel, Yak Hotel, Snow Land Hotel, Dong Cuo Youth Hostel, Kirey Hotel and so on. And free laundry and deposit services are provided in Banak Shol Hostel and Kirey Hotel. The prices are not expensive. Usually, it's around 15RMB per bed during off season and around 30RMB per bed during peak season. Yak Hotel and Snow Land Hotel charge higher prices and they are favored by foreign travelers. In travel peak season, it's very hard to lodge in Banak Shol Hostel, Kirey Hotel, Yak Hotel and some other hotels and you may choose others.

Q4: Does the hotel room have access to internet?

A: Some hotel rooms, not all, in Lhasa have access to internet, so you should inquiry your travel advisor for accurate information before making decision. But some hotel has business center where you can use internet service.

Q5: Is there 24-hour hot water running?

A: Due to basic condition in Tibet, sometimes with the poor pressure, the water flow may small and water sometime is not hot but just warm. In remote area, the condition can be even worse.

Q6: What kind of sleeping bag and tent should I choose if I want to camp in Tibet?

Regarding the choice of sleeping bags and tents, you are recommended to choose down-filled sleeping bag which can keep you warm at a temperature of -15°C, and double-layer high-mountain tents which is wind and rain-proof. In the plateau, the wind is usually strong and it is quite cold in the winter evening. Without heating stove, the temperature can be as low as from -5°C to -10°C in the room and normal sleeping bags and tents won't make sense.

Q7: Can the foreigner live in the local Tibetan family?

No, foreigners are not allowed to live in the local Tibetan family, and only could check in the local hotel or hostel which has the certification to host foreign travelers.

High Altitude Sickness

Acute mountain sickness (AMS, also known as altitude sickness) is common at high elevations; relevant factors are the rate of ascent and individual susceptibility. The former is the major risk factor. On average, one tourist a year dies in Tibet from AMS. Make sure that it is not you. Any traveller who flies or buses into Lhasa, where the elevation is just over 3600m, is likely to experience some symptoms of AMS. Take care to acclimatise slowly and take things easy for the first couple of days. Lack of oxygen at high altitudes (over 2500m) affects most people to some extent. The effect may be mild or severe and it occurs because less oxygen reaches the muscles and the brain at high altitude, requiring the heart and lungs to compensate by working harder.

AMS is a notoriously fickle affliction and can also affect trekkers and walkers accustomed to walking at high altitudes. It has been fatal at 3000m, although 3500m to 4500m is the usual range.

ACCLIMATISATION

AMS is linked to low atmospheric pressure. Those who travel up to Everest Base Camp, for instance, reach an altitude where atmospheric pressure is about half of that at sea level.

With an increase in altitude, the human body needs time to develop physiological mechanisms to cope with the decreased oxygen. This process of acclimatisation is still not fully understood, but is known to involve modifications in breathing patterns and heart rate induced by the autonomic nervous system, and an increase in the blood's oxygen-carrying capabilities. These compensatory mechanisms usually take about one to three days to develop at a particular altitude. You are unlikely to get AMS once you are acclimatised to a given height, but you can still get ill when you travel higher. If the ascent is too high and too fast, these compensatory reactions may not kick into gear fast enough.

SYMPTOMS

Mild symptoms of AMS are very common in travellers visiting high altitudes, and usually develop during the first 24 hours at altitude. Most visitors to Tibet will suffer from some symptoms; these will generally disappear through acclimatisation in several hours to several days.

Symptoms tend to be worse at night and include headache, dizziness, lethargy, loss of appetite, nausea, breathlessness and irritability. Difficulty sleeping is another common symptom, and many travellers have trouble for the first few days after arriving in Lhasa.

AMS may become more serious without warning and can be fatal. Symptoms are caused by the accumulation of fluid in the lungs and brain, and include breathlessness at rest, a dry irritative cough (which

may progress to the production of pink, frothy sputum), severe headache, lack of coordination (typically leading to a 'drunken walk'), confusion, irrational behaviour, vomiting and eventually unconsciousness.

The symptoms of AMS, however mild, are a warning; be sure to take them seriously! Trekkers should keep an eye on each other as those experiencing symptoms, especially severe symptoms, may not be in a position to recognise them. One thing to note is that while the symptoms of mild AMS often precede those of severe AMS, this is not always the case. Severe AMS can strike with little or no warning.

PREVENTION

If you are driving up from Kathmandu, you will experience rapid altitude gain. An itinerary that takes you straight up to Everest Base Camp is unwise; plan to see it on your way back if possible. The best way to prevent AMS is to avoid rapid ascents to high altitudes. If you fly or bus into Lhasa, take it easy for at least three days; this is enough for most travellers to get over any initial ill-effects. At this point you might step up your programme by visiting a few sights around town. Within a week you should be ready for something a bit more adventurous, but do not push yourself to do anything that you are not comfortable with.

TREATMENT

Treat mild symptoms by resting at the same altitude until recovery, usually a day or two. Take paracetamol or acetaminophen for headaches. If symptoms persist or become worse, however, immediate descent is necessary. Even 500m can help.

The most effective treatment for severe AMS is to get down to a lower altitude as quickly as possible. In less severe cases the victim will be able to stagger down with some support; in other cases they may need to be carried down. Whatever the case, any delay could be fatal.

AMS victims may need to be flown out of Tibet as quickly as possible, so make sure you have adequate travel insurance.

The drug acetazolamide (Diamox) is recommended for the prevention of AMS - take 125mg twice a day as a preventive dose. Be aware that even when you are on Diamox, you should not ignore any symptoms of AMS.

However, the use of Diamox is controversial. It can reduce the symptoms, but may also mask warning signs; severe and fatal AMS has occurred in people taking this drug. Travellers should discuss the use of Diamox with a travel health expert. Diamox should be avoided in those with a sulphur allergy, but you can discuss taking a trial of the medication at home if necessary.

Drug treatments should never be used to avoid descent or to enable further ascent (although they can help get people well enough to descend).

Several hotels in Lhasa sell a Tibetan herbal medicine recommended by locals for easing the symptoms of mild altitude sickness. The medicine is known as solomano in Tibetan and hongjingtian in Chinese, though locals also recommend gaoyuanning and gaoyuankang. A box of vials costs around Y20 to Y35; take three vials a day.

Tips to prevent acute mountain sickness

- Keep a good mood, don't be too excited or be too worried about high altitude sickness. Before visiting Tibet, get as healthy as possible, both physically and psychologically.
- Take care of yourself and avoid catching cold before going to Tibet, and not to take shower at the first two days after you are in Lhasa to avoid being cold, or you will easily suffer from altitude sickness under weak physical condition.
- Do not drink any alcohol on the first two days when you are in Tibet. Drink plenty of water and eat light, high-carbohydrate meals for more energy.
- Do not run, jump or do some taxing jobs at the first two days. Being peaceful and having a good rest are important.
- Don't push yourself when climbing up to passes; rather, take plenty of breaks. You can usually get over the pass as easily tomorrow as you can today. Try to plan your itinerary so that long ascents can be divided into two or more days. Given the complexity and unknown variables involved with AMS and acclimatisation, trekkers should always err on the side of caution and ascend mountains slowly.
- Once you have the symptoms of altitude sickness, take some medicine (it is said that it's helpful to have some butter tea if you can adapt to the flavor of it) and don't go higher. Medication and oxygen also help to prevent altitude sickness. Mild altitude sickness symptoms can be treated with proper medication. If medication and oxygen do not relieve the symptoms, go to hospital or evacuate immediately to a safe altitude!
- Oxygen can help you relieve the symptoms of altitude sickness, but do not use it too often in Lhasa while your symptoms of altitude sickness are not serious. If you feel chilly or feel very uncomfortable, you should go to the nearest hospital available in the area.
- In addition to the normal medications for traveling it is advisable to bring high altitude medication. Seek suggestions from your doctor.

FAQs:

Q1: What should I do if I have high altitude sickness after arriving in Tibet?

A: There are hospitals in many large cities in Tibet. You may adapt to mild high altitude sickness by yourself slowly and you may go to hospital if it is serious. After you have already had high altitude sickness, you should rest well, do not move too much, keep eating, drink some water with black sugar or take some medicine. If the high altitude sickness is pretty severe, you should go to hospital, or descend to some lower places, or leave Lhasa immediately. High altitude sickness shall disappear after you descend to certain altitude and it has no sequel symptoms.

Q2: Is high altitude sickness more serious if going to Tibet by plane than by train?

A: Exactly, but both means have their advantages and disadvantages. You are more likely to have high altitude sickness because you don't have enough time to adapt to the plateau environment gradually if you go by plane. The altitude change is directly from several hundreds meters to more than 3000 meters. While, if you go to Tibet by train, you can adapt your body to the high plateau environment slowly and gradually. Then, you may relieve or avoid high altitude sickness.

Q3: Why cannot people with cold go to Tibet? What should I do if I catch a cold in Tibet?

Your immune system shall be weak if you catch a cold and you may suffer high altitude sickness easily because of it. Besides, severe cold may easily turn to some more serious high altitude diseases, especially pulmonary edema, which is very dangerous. So you are not supposed to travel to Tibet before you get rid of a cold.

While, if you catch a cold in Tibet, things might not be so serious, because your body has already, to some extent, adapt to the plateau environment and you can go to a doctor and take some medicine.

Q4: Who Can't Go to Tibet?

A: It's advisable to have a body check-up or have your doctor's advice before visiting Tibet. Visitors having record of heart, lung, liver, kidney problems must seek medical advice before making the decision to go to Tibet! Generally speaking, the following persons should not go to Tibet:

- Have already caught a cold
- Have severe anemia
- Have high blood pressure or severe heart disease
- Have pneumonia, tuberculosis, tracheitis, or bronchitis

If you are not sure about your body condition, you may have a physical examination. But you are not supposed to do more exercise before going to Tibet, for exercising will give more burdens to your heart and you'll need more oxygen, which may easily cause high altitude sickness.

Festivals & Events

Tibetan festivals are held according to the Tibetan lunar calendar, which usually lags at least a month behind our Gregorian calendar. Coordinating trips with festival dates is a popular practice. But don't forget to ask around for the exact dates of many festivals because these are often only fixed by monasteries a few months in advance.

January

Shigatse New Year Festival

Held in the first week of the 12th lunar month.

February/March

Year End Festival

Dancing monks can be seen on the 29th day of the 12th lunar month at Tsurphu, Mindroling and Tashilhunpo in this festival, which is held to dispel the evil of the old year and auspiciously usher in the new one. Families clean their houses in preparation for the New Year. A huge thangka is unveiled the following day at Tsurphu Monastery.

Losar (New Year Festival)

Taking place in the first week of the first lunar month, Losar is a colourful week of activities; Lhasa is probably the best place to be. There are performances of Tibetan drama and pilgrims making incense offerings, and the streets are thronged with Tibetans dressed in their finest. New prayer flags are hung in monasteries and homes.

Chotrul Duchen (Butter Sculpture Festival)

Huge yak-butter sculptures are traditionally placed around Lhasa's Barkhor circuit on the 15th day of the first lunar month. The festival is not currently celebrated in Lhasa, though it is Labrang Monastery in Gansu province.

Monlam Chenmo (Great Prayer Festival)

Held mid-way through the first lunar month (officially culminating on the 25th). Monks from Lhasa's three main monasteries used to assemble in the Jokhang and an image of Jampa (Maitreya) was born around the Barkhor circuit. The festival was first instituted by Tsongkhapa in 1409 at Ganden Monastery but was outlawed after political demonstrations ended in violence during the 1988 celebrations.



May/June

Birth of Sakyamuni

The seventh day of the fourth lunar month sees large numbers of pilgrims visiting Lhasa and other sacred areas in Tibet. Festivals are held around this time at Tsurphu (see next entry), Ganden, Reting and Samye Monasteries.

Tsurphu Festival

Cham dancing (ritual dancing carried out by monks), processions and the unfurling of a great thangka are the highlights of this festival, from the 9th to 11th days of the fourth lunar month.

Saga Dawa (Sakyamuni's Enlightenment)

The 15th day of the fourth lunar month (full moon) marks the date of Sakyamuni's conception, enlightenment and entry into nirvana. Huge numbers of pilgrims walk Lhasa's Lingkhor circuit and visit Mt Kailash, where the Tarboche prayer pole is raised each year.

June/July

Gyantse Horse-Racing Festival

Currently held from the 15th to 18th of the fifth month (ie around Saga Dawa), though authorities are trying to fix the date in the Gregorian calendar to boost tourism. The fun and games include dances, yak races, archery and equestrian events. A large 480-years old thangka is unfurled at sunrise.

Worship of the Buddha

During the second week of the fifth lunar month, the parks of Lhasa, in particular the Norbulingka, are crowded with picnickers.

Dorje Drak Festival

Cham dancing is performed on the 10th day of the fifth Tibetan month at this small monastery.

Tashilhunpo Festival

From the 14th to 16th days of the fifth lunar month, Shigatse's Tashilhunpo Monastery becomes the scene of three days of festivities. A huge thangka is unveiled and cham dances are performed.



Samye Festival

Held from the 15th day of the fifth lunar month (full moon) for two or three days. Special ceremonies and cham dancing in front of the Utse are the main attractions. The monastery guesthouse is normally booked out at this time, so bring a tent. Incense is also burnt on this day throughout Tibet.

August/September

Chokor Duchon Festival

Held in Lhasa on the fourth day of the sixth lunar month, this festival celebrates Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath near Varanasi in India. Many pilgrims climb Gephel Ri (Gambo Utse), the peak behind Drepung Monastery, and also the ridge from Pabonka to the Dode valley, to burn juniper incense. The festival is also called Drukwa Tsezhi.

Guru rimpoche's Birthday

Held on the 10th day of the sixth lunar month, this festival is particularly popular in Nyingmapa monasteries.

Ganden festival

On the 15th day of the sixth lunar month, Ganden monastery displays its 25 holiest relics, which are normally locked away. A large offering ceremony accompanies the unveiling.

Drepung Festival

The 30th day of sixth lunar month is celebrated with the hanging at dawn of a huge thangka at Drepung monastery. Lamas and monks perform opera in the main courtyard.

Shoton (Yogurt Festival)

Held in the first week of the seventh lunar month, this festival starts at Drepung and moves down to the Norbulingka. Lhamo (Tibetan Opera) and masked dances are held, and locals take the occasion as another excuse for more picnics.



Ceremony in Shoton Festival



September/October

Bathing Festival

The end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth lunar months see local washing away the grime of the previous year in an act of purification that coincides with the week-long appearance of the constellation Pleiades in the night sky.

Horse-Racing Festival

Held in the first week of the eighth lunar month, this festival featuring horse racing, archery and other traditional nomad sports takes place in Damxung and Nam-tso. A similar and even larger event is held in Nagchu a few weeks earlier, from 10 to 16 August.

Onkor

In the first week of the eighth lunar month Tibetans in central Tibet get together and party in celebration of the upcoming harvest.

Tashilunpo

More cham dances, from the ninth to 11th days of the eighth month, at Shigatse's Tashilunpo Monastery.

November/December

Lhabab Duchon

Commemorating Buddha's descent from heaven, the 22nd day of the ninth lunar month sees large numbers of pilgrims in Lhasa. Ladders are painted afresh on rocks around many monasteries to symbolize the event.

Palden Lhamo

The 15th day of the 10th lunar month sees a procession in Lhasa around the Barkhor bearing Palden Lhamo (Shri Deve), protective deity of the Jokhang.

Tsongkhapa Festival

Respect is shown to Tsongkhapa, the founder of Gelugpa order, on the anniversary of his death on the 25th of the 10th lunar month; monasteries light fires and carry images of Tsongkhapa in procession. Check for cham dances at the monasteries at Ganden, Sera and Drepung.

What to Pack

Deciding what to pack is not always easy, but do try to remember this principle: Pack the minimum!

The type of clothing you bring depends on which parts of Tibet you are traveling to. Casual attire is recommended. Warm clothing is a must to ensure a comfortable tour. You can count on experiencing the sudden onset of foul weather as well as temperature extremes while in Tibet. Wearing several layers of clothing that can be easily added or removed is the wise choice since temperatures may vary greatly within a single day. A down coat is necessary for those who are traveling beyond Lhasa and Shigatse into more remote areas such as the Everest Camp. A windbreaker plus a sweater will work nicely for strolling around Lhasa in summer. During the peak tourism season, frequent rainfall makes waterproof clothing and raingear absolute necessities. Other essentials to pack include four or five pairs of cotton or woolen underwear, four or five pairs of woolen socks, long sleeve cotton or lightweight wool shirts and T-shirts. Women should avoid skirts or dresses. Comfortable, sturdy sneakers, walking shoes, or hiking boots are also recommended. Don't forget to bring along a warm hat as well as one or two pairs of warm mittens or gloves.

A large backpack is not a good choice unless you intend to trek to remote areas. A belt bag or alike should be brought along to keep important certificates and travel documents safely with you at all times. Miscellaneous items you may wish to bring along include maps of the areas that you plan on visiting; sufficient amount of money since ATMs are few in the more remote areas; all necessary toilet items including small packages of tissues and either a battery operated shaver or razor; plastic bags, a flashlight, extra batteries, sewing kit, lighter, and a pocket knife. Don't forget your camera and enough storage cards. Good quality sunscreen or sun block, sunglasses and lip balm are essential to protect you from sunburn that can occur easily at these high elevations.

When traveling to remote areas of Tibet it is a good idea to pack some food, snacks, and drinking water. It is not always easy to find food or drinkable water in these areas. Bring a sturdy padlock with you since some of the rooms in the hostels located in the more remote areas do not come equipped with locks on the doors. Candles may also be useful in these hostels.

It is a good idea to take a good quality multivitamin to supplement your diet since a supply of vegetables and fruits may not be readily available. A first aid kit including aspirin, antibiotics and AMS medication is highly recommended.

There is really a lot to remember but if you forget something many of these items are available in Lhasa.

Tips on Clothes and Shoes during Tibet journey

Clothes

The temperature difference in a single day is big. In Lhasa, the temperature in July arrives at 30 degrees centigrade at daytime, but falls to 10 degrees centigrade at night. Sometimes it will snow or sleet at night, so you'd better take some down garments (those with hats will better), woolen sweaters, warm gloves, warm and wind-proof shoes and socks. Wearing several layers of clothing that can be easily added or removed is the wise choice since temperatures may vary greatly within a single day.

Most hotels in Tibet have no central heating. The air-conditioners in single rooms do not work well in the cold night. In winter, from November to next March, of course you need bring down jackets, warm sweaters, gloves, warm pants, woolen hats. It is very cold in the morning and evening. In summer, wearing a T-shirt in day time but the Jacket is necessary at hotel in the morning and evening.

During the peak tourism season, April, May, September and October, you need to prepare T-shirts, overcoats and jeans, warm sweaters. Besides, frequent rainfall in this season makes waterproof clothing and raingear absolute necessities.

Even in summer, a down coat is necessary for those who are traveling beyond Lhasa and Shigatse into more remote areas such as the Everest Camp. A windbreaker plus a sweater will work nicely for strolling around Lhasa in summer.

Other essentials to pack include four or five pairs of cotton or woolen underwear, four or five pairs of woolen socks, long sleeve cotton or lightweight wool shirts and T-shirts. Women should avoid skirts or dresses.

Also, whenever you visit Tibet, if your plan includes overnight at Everest Base Camp or Namtso Lake, or a several days outdoor trek in mountain area, to keep warm is very important. The winter clothes are a must. However, you do not need to worry too much about clothing, you can buy any kind of clothes you need in Lhasa and clothes is quite cheap.

Shoes

It is very important to have a strong comfortable pair of boots, especially your travel covers remote area and you have to walk for a long distance. For example, if your travel reaches Everest Base Camp, you need to cover 8 km from Rongpuk Monastery to EBC and back. Lightweight boots are fine, but Tibet can be wet and we will do extensive walking, so make sure your shoes fit well and are suitable for cold and puddles. You should also have a pair of comfortable and tough sandals.

Dos & Don'ts

Tibetan people are friendly and easy to get along with. However, Tibetans have different ways of behavior in many aspects due to their unique culture and religion. It's good to have some knowledge about Tibetan customs, ethics and etiquette beforehand. And be sure to respect local customs and be polite.

In Daily Life

- Make sure that you do not step on threshold when you enter a house or a tent.
- When you call or address somebody by name, please add "la" after the name for politeness. It's an equivalent of "Mr." or "Sir" and "madam".
- When you are asked to sit down, please cross your legs. Do not stretch your legs towards others.
- When somebody presents you something, you should accept it by both hands. While presenting gift to others, hold the gift by both hands higher than your head.
- When the host presents you a cup of wine, before you start sipping, you should dip your ring finger in the wine and flick the wine into the sky, in the air and to the ground to express your respect to the heaven, the earth and the ancestors respectively. After you take the first sip, the host would like to fill up the cup again and you will take another sip. If the host fills your cup with wine again, then you should bottom it up.
- Tibetan people don't eat horse, donkey and dog meat and in some areas fish, too. So, please respect their dietary habit.
- It's not polite to clap your palms and spit behind the Tibetan people. Tibetan people stretch out their tongue to greet you. It's also a courtesy to put their hands palm to palm in front of the chest.
- Eagles are the sacred birds of Tibetan people. You should not drive them away or injure them. On the outskirts, you should not drive or disturb the sheep or cows with green, red and yellow cloth strips on.
- Don't pay to take a photograph of someone, and don't photograph someone if they don't want you to. If you agree to send a photograph of someone, please follow through on this.
- Dress responsibly. Short skirts and shorts are not a suitable option, especially at religious sites. Wearing shorts in Tibet (even when trekking) is akin to walking around with 'TOURIST!' tattooed on your forehead.
- Since more and more tourists are going to Tibet, more and more Tibetan people get used of seeing the "Big Noses" (western people) with jeans, sun glasses and some of them with shorts, the above rules are not obeyed so strictly as before. But we still suggest you take the above advices and travel to behave well.

Visiting Monasteries & Temples

Most monasteries and temples extend a warm welcome to foreign guests and in remote areas will often offer a place to stay for the night. Please maintain this good faith by observing the following courtesies:

- Always circumambulate Buddhist monasteries and other religious objects clockwise, thus keeping shrines and chortens (stupas) to your right.
- Don't take prayer flags or mani (prayer) stones.
- Refrain from taking photos during a prayer meeting. At other times always ask permission to take photos, especially when using a flash. The larger monasteries charge photography fees, though some monks will allow you to take a quick picture for free. If they won't, there's no point getting angry; you don't know what pressures they may be under.
- Don't wear shorts or short skirts in a monastery.
- Take your hat off when you go into a chapel (though there's generally no need to remove your shoes).
- Smoking inside the monasteries is not allowed. It's also banned to touch the statues of Buddha and religious articles and take pictures of.
- Be aware that women are generally not allowed in protector chapels (gonkhang); always ask before entering.



Money & Credit Card

ATMs

Several ATMs in Lhasa and Shigatse accept foreign cards. The Bank of China accepts Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club, American Express and Plus. The Agricultural Bank accepts Visa, Plus and Electron. Check before trying your card as many ATMs can only be used by domestic account holders.

The maximum amount you can withdraw per transaction is Y2000 with the Bank of China and Y1000 with the Agricultural Bank. Cards are occasionally eaten, so try to make your transaction during bank hours.

Credit Cards

You'll get very few opportunities to splurge on the plastic in Tibet, unless you spend a few nights in a top-end hotel. Most local tours, train tickets and even flights out of Lhasa still can't be paid for using a credit card. The few shops that do accept credit cards often charge a 4% surcharge.

The Lhasa central branch of the Bank of China is the only place in Tibet that provides credit card advances. A 3% commission is deducted.

Currency

The Chinese currency is known as Renminbi (RMB) or 'people's money'. The basic unit of this currency is the yuan, and is designated in this book by a 'Y'. In spoken Chinese, the word kuai is almost always substituted for the yuan. Ten jiao (commonly known as mao) make up one yuan.

RMB comes in paper notes in denominations of one, two, five, 10, 20, 50 and 100 yuan; and one, two and five jiao. Coins are in denominations of one yuan and five jiao. But please note that, coins are not acceptable in Tibet even for tipping.

China has a problem with counterfeit notes. Very few Tibetans or Chinese will accept a Y100 or Y50 note without first subjecting it to intense scrutiny, and many will not accept old, tattered notes. Check the watermark when receiving any Y100 note.

Exchanging Money

In Tibet, the only place to change foreign currency and travellers cheques is the Bank of China. Top-end hotels in Lhasa have exchange services but only for guests. Outside of Lhasa, the only other locations to change money are in Shigatse, Zhangmu, Purang (cash only) and Ali, and at the airport on arrival. If you are travelling upcountry, try to get your cash in small denominations: Y100 and Y50 bills are sometimes difficult to get rid of in rural Tibet.

The currencies of Australia, Canada, the US, the UK, Hong Kong, Japan, the euro zone and most of the rest of Western Europe are acceptable at the Lhasa Bank of China. The official rate is given at all banks and most hotels, so there is little need to shop around for the best deal. The standard commission is 0.75%.

The only place in Tibet to officially change RMB back into foreign currency is the central Lhasa branch of the Bank of China. You will need your original exchange receipts. You cannot change RMB into dollars at Gongkar airport.

Moneychangers at Zhangmu (by the Nepal border) will change yuan into Nepali rupees and vice versa. Yuan can also easily be reconverted in Hong Kong and, increasingly, in many Southeast Asian countries.

International Transfers

Getting money sent to you in Lhasa is possible but it can be a drag. One option is by using the Bank of China's central office in Lhasa. Money should be wired to the Bank of China, Tibet/Lhasa branch, 28 Linkuo Xilu, bank account No 90600668341, SWIFT code BKCHCNBJ900. Double-check wiring instructions with the bank beforehand.

The second option is via Western Union (www.westernunion.com), which can wire money via the Express Mail Service at Lhasa's main post office.

Security

A moneybelt or pockets sewn inside your clothes is the safest way to carry money.

Keeping all your eggs in one basket is not advised - you should keep an emergency cash stash of small-denomination notes in US dollars apart from your main moneybelt, along with a record of your travellers cheque serial numbers, emergency contact numbers and passport number.

Taxes

Although big hotels may add a tax or 'service charge' of 10% to 15%, all other taxes are included in the price tag, including airline departure tax.

Travellers Cheques

Besides the advantage of safety, travellers cheques are useful to carry in Tibet because the exchange rate is higher (by about 3%) than it is for cash. The Bank of China charges a 0.75% commission to cash travellers cheques. Cheques from the major companies such as Thomas Cook, Citibank, American Express and Bank of America are accepted.

Useful Words & Numbers

Where 'Tashi Delek' means Good Luck

The two principal languages of Tibet are Tibetan and Chinese Mandarin. Tibetan has some tricky sounds for English speakers, it's hard to master in a short time. However, learning some greetings and daily-used Tibetan words can be fun and helpful when shopping in Tibet or meeting emergencies. It will be much appreciated by the Tibetans you encounter on your travels.

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

English	Tibetan	Chinese Pinyin
Hello.	tashi dele	nin hao
Goodbye.(when staying)	kalee pay	zai jian
Goodbye.(when leaving)	kalee shu	zai jian
Thank you.	tujay chay	xie xie
Sorry.	gonda	dui bu qi
I want ...	nga la ... go	wo xiang...
good	yag-po	hao de
What's your name?	kerang gi tsenla kare ray?	nin jiao shenme mingzi
My name is ... - and yours?	ngai ming-la ... sa, a- ni kerang-gi tsenla kare ray?	wo jiao...-nin ne?
Is it OK to take a photo?	par gyabna digiy-rebay?	zheli keyi paizhao ma?
Where are you from?	kerang loong-pa ka-ne yin?	nin cong nar lai?
I'm from ...	nga ... ne yin	wo laizi...
Australia	autaliya	ao da li ya
Canada	canada	jia na da
France	farensi	fa guo
Germany	jarman	de guo
New Zealand	shinshilen	xin xi lan
UK	injee loongpa	ying guo
USA	amerika	mei guo

ACCOMMODATION

English	Tibetan	Chinese Pinyin
Where's a ...?	...kabah yoray?	...zai nar?
guesthouse	dhon khang	zhao dai suo
hotel	dru-khang	bin guan/jiu dian
Do you have a room available?	khang mi yobay?	nimen you fangjian ma?
How much is it for one night?	tsen chik la katso ray?	duo shao qian yi wan?
I need some hot water.	ngala chu tsapo go	wo xu yao xie re shui

HEALTH & EMERGENCIES

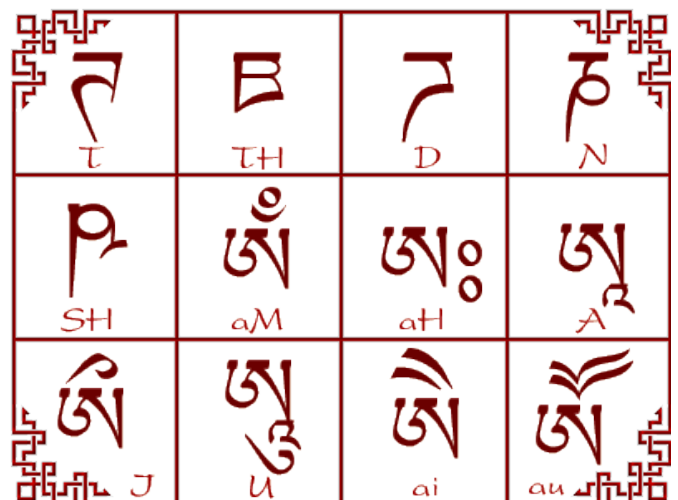
English	Tibetan	Chinese Pinyin
Help!	rog nangda!	jiu ming a!
Fire!	may bahgi!	qi huo la!
Thief!	kuma du!	zhua xiao tou!
Go away!	phah gyuk!	zou kai!
I'm ill.	nga nagidu	wo bing le.
It's an emergency.	za dagpo ray!	jin ji qing kuang!
Call a doctor!	amchi kay tongda!	qing jiao yisheng!
Call the police!	korsoong-wa kay tongda!	qing jiao jingcha!
I'm lost.	nga lamga lasha	wo mi lu le.
Where are the toilets?	sangcho kabah yoray?	qing wen cesuo zai nar?
hospital	menkhang	yi yuan
diarrhoea	droko shewa	fu xie
fever	tsawa	fa shao

DIRECTIONS

English	Tibetan	Chinese Pinyin
Where is the ...?	... kabah yo ray?	...zai nar?
I'm looking for ka-bah yo-may mik tagiyo	wo zai zhao...
right	yeba	you bian
left	yonba	zuo bian
straight ahead	shar gya	zhi zou

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

English	Tibetan	Chinese Pinyin
Do you speak English?	injeeke shing gi yo pe?	ni hui shuo yingyu ma?
Dose anyone here speak English?	kayrang injikay shing-gi yobay	zher you ren hui shuo yingyu ma?
I don't understand.	ha ko masong	wo ting de dong.
I understand.	ha kosong	wo ting bu dong.



SHOPPING & SERVICES

English	Tibetan	Chinese Pinyin
I'd like to buy ...	nga ... nyondo yo	wo xiang mai...
How much is it?	gong katso ray?	duo shao qian?
It's expensive.	gong chenpo resha	tai gui le.
I don't like it.	loh doh masong	wo bu xi huan.
I'll take it.	te nyogi yin	wo jiu mai zhei ge.

TIME & DATES

English	Tibetan	Chinese Pinyin
What's the time?	chutso katso ray?	jidian?
... hour ... minute	chutso ... karmadian...fen
When?	kadu?	shen me shi hou?
now	tanda	xian zai
today	tering	jin tian
tomorrow	sangnyi	ming tian
yesterday	kaysa	zuo tian
morning	shogay	zao chen
afternoon	nyin goong gyab la	xia wu
evening/night	gongta	wan shang

TRANSPORT

English	Tibetan	Chinese Pinyin
I want to go to ...	nga ... la drondo yo	wo yao qu...
Can I get there on foot?	phagay gompa gyabnay leb thoobki rebay?	zou lu neng dao ma?
Where is the bus going?	mota-di kabah dohgi ray	zhe tang che shi dao nar de?
Is this bus going to (Ganden Monastery)?	mota di (ganden gompa) dohgi rebay?	zhe tang che dao (gandan si) ma?
What time do we leave?	ngatso chutso katso dohgi yin?	wo men shenme shihou zou?
What time do we arrive?	ngatso chutso katso lepgi ray?	wo men shenme shihou dao?
Where can I hire a bicycle?	kanggari lahsa kabah yo ray?	zai nar keyi zu dao zixingche?
How much per day?	nyima chik-la gong katso ray?	duoshao qian yi tian?
What time is the ... bus?	mota ... chutso katsay dohgi ray?	...banche shenme shihou lai?
next	jema-te	xia
first	tangpo-te	tou
last	thama-te	mo
airport	nam-tang	ji chang
bicycle	kang gari	zi xing che
bus	chicho langkho/mota	gong gong qi che
porter	dohpo khukhen	ban yun gong
yak	yak	mao niu

Useful Telephone Numbers

Here we provide the telephone numbers for emergency, weather broadcast, and other useful Tibet numbers that are frequently used by Tibet tourists. Area codes for major cities in Tibet are also available.

General Numbers:

Police: 110	Fire: 119
Ambulance: 120	Weather Forecast: 12121
Local Phone Number Inquiry: 114	Consumer Complain: 12315

Tibet Hospitals (TAR = Tibet Autonomous Region):

People's Hospital of TAR:	Lhasa People's Hospital Emergency Center: 0891-98120
0891-6332462	

Tibet Transportation:

Gonggar Airport Information Desk: 0891-6182220	Bus Station of TAR: 0891-6824469
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Tibet Area Codes:

Lhasa: 0891	Shigatse (Xigaze): 0892
Lhoka (Shannan): 0893	Nyingchi: 0894
Chamdo (Qamdo): 0895	Nagqu (Nakchu): 0896
Ngari (Ali): 0897	

Tips for Photographing or Videoing in Tibet



In Tibet, it is not wise to casually ask a local person to take photos for you or take pictures of others. Before snapping, consult your tour guide. Or else, you may have trouble with local Tibetan.

In high mountain areas, shoot the beautiful scenery after you find a safe place to stay. It is extremely dangerous to take pictures while walking for you might tumble down from the cliff.

Besides, photography of military or government buildings may result in a penalty. You should seek permission from local authorities before taking photographs.

Photographing or videoing protests, or carrying letters or packages from Tibetan to be posted in other countries, could be regarded as provocative by authorities in Tibet and elsewhere in China.

Top Experiences

1 Mt Kailash, Western Tibet

Worshipped by more than a billion Buddhists and Hindus, Asia's most sacred mountain rises from the Barkha plain like a giant four-sided 6714m chorten. Throw in the stunning nearby Lake Manasarovar and a basin that forms the source of four of Asia's greatest rivers, and who's to say this place really isn't the centre of the world? Travel here to one of the world's most beautiful and remote corners brings an added bonus: the three-day pilgrim path around the mountain erases the sins of a lifetime.

2 Potala Palace, Lhasa

There are moments in travel that will long stay with you-and your first view of the iconic Potala Palace is one such moment. Even surrounded by a sea of Chinese development, the towering, mysterious building dominates Lhasa; it's simply hard to take your eyes off the thing. A visit to the former home of the Dalai Lamas is a spiralling descent past gold-tombed chapels, reception rooms and prayer halls into the bowels of a medieval castle. It's nothing less than the concentrated spiritual and material wealth of a nation.



3 Jokhang Temple, Lhasa

The atmosphere of hushed awe is what hits you first as you inch through the dark, medieval passageways of the Jokhang (Click here). Queues of wide-eyed pilgrims shuffle up and down the stairways, past medieval doorways and millennium-old murals, pausing briefly to top up the hundreds of butter lamps that flicker in the gloom. It's the beating spiritual heart of Tibet. Welcome to the 14th century.

4 Views of Mt Everest

Don't tell the Nepal Tourism Board, but Tibet has easily the best views of the world's most famous mountain. While two-week-long trekking routes on the Nepal side offer up only occasional fleeting glimpses of the world's most famous mountain. While two-week-long trekking routes on the Nepal side offer up only occasional fleeting glimpses of the peak, the view of Mt Everest's unobstructed north face framed in the prayer flags of Rongphu Monastery or from a tent at the Base Camp will stop you in your tracks.



Sunrise of Hoh Xil, photo from Tibet train

5 Samye Monastery

Tibet's first monastery (Click here) is a heavily symbolic collection of chapels, chortens and shrines arranged around a medieval Tibetan-, Chinese- and Indian-style temple called the Utse. The 1200-year-old site is where Guru Rinpoche battled demons to introduce Buddhism to Tibet and where the future course of Tibetan Buddhism was sealed in a great debate. The location on the desert-like banks of the Yarlung Tsangpo is also superb.

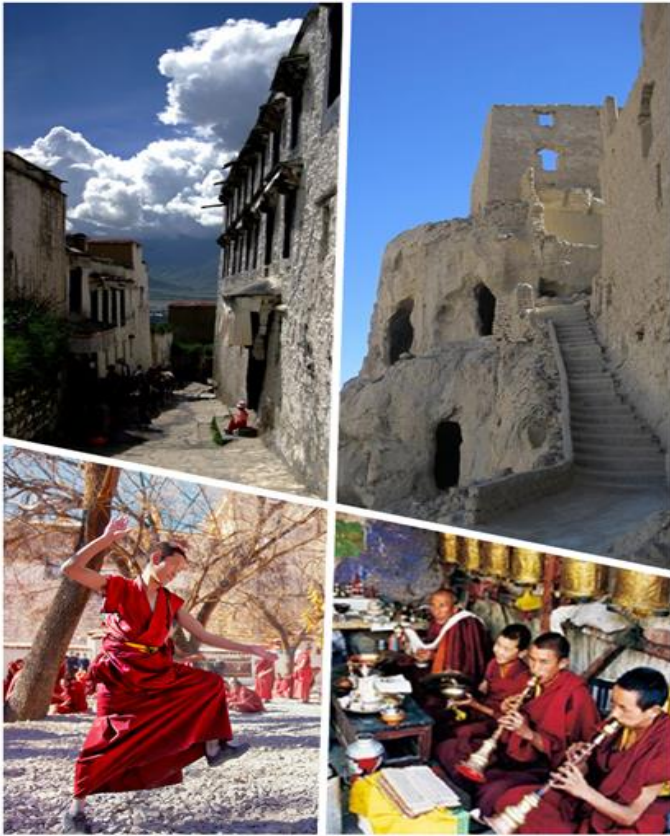
6 Riding the Rails to Lhasa

For all its faults, China's railway to Tibet (the world's highest) is an engineering wonder and a delightful way to reach the holy city. Pull up a window seat to view huge salt lakes, plains dotted with yaks and herders'tents, and hundreds of miles of desolate nothing, as you inch slowly up onto the high plateau. Peaking at 5072m may send you diving for the piped oxygen, but it's still a classic rail trip.

7 Yak-Butter Tea

Some people prefer to call it 'soup', others liken it to brewed socks and sump oil. However you describe it, your first mouthful of yak- butter tea is the signal that you have finallyreached Tibet. Our favourite thing about the Tibetan national drink is the view from the rim: a monk's quarters, a herder's yak-hair tent or a teahouse full of card-playing Tibetan cowboys. Definitely our cup of tea...





8 Sera & Drepung Monasteries, Lhasa

Lhasa's great religious institutions of Sera and Drepung are more than just monasteries- they are self-contained towns. A web of whitewashed alleyways climbs past medieval kitchens, printing presses and colleges to reach giant prayer halls full of chanting, tea-sipping red-robed monks. Don't miss the afternoon debating, an extravagant spectator sport of Buddhist dialectics and hand slapping.

9 Saga Dawa Festival

The line between tourist and pilgrim can be a fine one in Tibet, none more so than during the Saga Dawa Festival (Click here), when thousands of pilgrims pour into Lhasa to visit the city and make a ritual procession around the 8km Lingkor path. Load up on small bills and juniper incense before joining the pilgrims past chapels and prostration points, or travel west to Mt Kailash for the mountain's biggest annual

10 Guge Kingdom, Western Tibet

The spectacular lost kingdom of Guge (Click here) at Tsaparang is quite unlike anything you'll see in central Tibet; it feels more like Ladakh than Lhasa. There comes a point when you are lowering yourself down a hidden sandstone staircase or crawling through an inter-connected cave complex that you stop and think: 'This is incredible!' What's really amazing is that you'll likely have the half-forgotten ruins to yourself. Rank this as one of Asia's great travel secrets.

11 Ganden Monastery

A two hour-drive from Lhasa takes you to the stunning location of Ganden, set in a natural bowl high above the braided Kyichu Valley. Brought back to life after nearly total destruction in the Cultural Revolution, the collection of

restored chapels centres on Tsongkhapa's tomb, and offers a delightful kora path that will soon have you breathing hard from the altitude.

12 Ganden- Samye Trek

Tibet is one of those places you really should experience at the pace of one foot in front of the other. This classic four-day trek (Click here) between two of Tibet's best monasteries takes you past herders' camps, high alpine lakes and a Guru Rinpoche hermitage, as well as over three 5000m-plus passes. Hire a horse for a wonderful wilderness trek, with just the marmots for company.

13 Namtso

Just a few hours north of Lhasa, spectacular Nam-tso (Click here) epitomises the dramatic but harsh scenery of northern Tibet. This deep blue lake is fringed by prayer flag- draped hills, craggy cliffs and nesting migratory birds, all framed by a horizon of 7000m peaks. It's cold, increasingly developed and devastatingly beautiful.

14 Gyantse Kumbum

The giant chorten at Gyantse (Click here) is unique in the Himalayas. As you spiral around and up the snail shell- shaped building, you pass dozens of alcoves full of serene painted buddhas, bloodthirsty demons and unrivalled Tibetan art. Finally you pop out onto the golden eaves, underneath all-seeing eyes, for fabulous views of Gyantse fort and old town.





15 Riwoche Tsuglhakhang, Eastern Tibet

Tibet is large enough to hold some hidden wonders. You'll have to overland for days to reach it and then haggle with the caretakers to let you in, but this dramatic, towering and remote temple (Click here) in eastern Tibet feels like it's marooned in an earlier age. Enjoy the fact that you're among only a handful of foreigners to see it.

16 Adding Your Prayer Flags to a High Pass

Crossing a spectacular high pass, fluttering with prayer flags, to view an awesome line of Himalayan peaks is an almost daily experience in Tibet. Join your driver in crying a breathless 'so, so, so' and throwing colourful squares of paper into the air like good-luck confetti, as the surrounding multicoloured flags flap and crackle in the wind. Better still, bring your own string to the pass and add them to the collection for some super-good karma.

17 Barkhor Circuit, Lhasa

You never quite know what you're going to find when you join the centrifugal tide of Tibetans circling the Jokhang Temple on the Barkhor Circuit. Pilgrims and prostrators from across Tibet, stalls selling prayer wheels and turquoise, Muslim traders, Khampa nomads in shaggy cloaks, women from Amdo sporting 108 braids, thangka artists and Chinese military patrols are all par for the course. It's a fascinating microcosm of Tibet and an awesome backdrop for some souvenir shopping.

18 Koras & Pilgrims

All over Tibet you'll see wizened old pilgrims twirling prayer wheels, rubbing sacred rocks and walking around temples, monasteries and sometimes even entire mountains. It's a fantastic fusion of the spiritual and physical, and there are few better ways of spending an hour than joining a merry band of pilgrims on a monastery kora. En route you'll pass rock paintings, sacred spots and probably be invited to an impromptu picnic. See [Click here](#) for some of our favourites.

19 Lhasa to Kathmandu by 4WD

Organising a 4WD trip across Tibet is the quintessential traveller experience. It's hard to know what's toughest to overcome: the labyrinthine permit system, the terrible toilets or the rigours of bouncing around on a Tibet road for two weeks. Your reward is some wild and wholly Tibetan countryside, a satisfying sense of journey and a giant slice of adventure, until you finally drop off the plateau into the moist, green oxygen-rich jungles bordering Nepal.

20 Ngan-tso & Rawok-tso

Tibet is not short on spectacular, remote, turquoise-blue lakes. Of these, none surpasses the crystal-clear waters, sandy beaches and snowcapped peaks of these twin lakes, more reminiscent of the Canadian Rockies than anything on the high plateau. Stay overnight at a hotel on stilts above the lake and explore nearby glaciers during the day.



Lhasa & Around

Why Go?

Lhasa, the remote abode of the Dalai Lamas, object of devout pilgrimage and heart and soul of Tibet, is a city of wonders. Lhasa is so much more accessible than it was years ago. While you will see a new airport, roads, million-dollar condos, and monks with cell phones, you can still appreciate the beauty of the Tibetan plateau, the shimmering blue sky against the mountains, and the beautiful, soulful Tibetan people.



Changtang Grassland

Your first hint that Lhasa is close is the Potala, a vast white-and-ochre fortress soaring over one of the world's highest cities.

While the Potala dominates the skyline, the Jokhang, some 2km to the east, is the real spiritual heart of the city. An otherworldly mix of flickering butter lamps, wafting incense and prostrating pilgrims, the Jokhang is the most sacred and alive of Tibet's temples. It is here and the encircling Barkhor pilgrim circuit that most visitors first fall in love with Tibet.

For all its modernization Lhasa remains a fantastic cultural hybrid, its streets bustling with a diverse mix of people. As the gateway to the 'real' Tibet, out in the countryside, Lhasa deserves at least a week to see all the sights, soak up the backstreets and organize the adventures that beckon at the city limits.

When to Go?

The major festivals of Saga Dawa (spring) and Losar (winter) bring huge numbers of pilgrims to the city, and the August Shotun festival is also a major draw. Accommodation can be tight during the first weeks of May and October and the months of July and August, when Chinese tourists flock to the city.

What to See?

As the holy land of Tibetan Buddhism and the capital city of Tibet, Lhasa owns many well preserved Buddhist constructions. The grand and mysterious palaces and monasteries like the Potala Palace, Ganden Monastery, Drepung Monastery, and Jokhang Temple are some of the most visited attractions in Lhasa. With its purity and solemn as symbols of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Namtso Lake's touching beauty should not be missed by any traveler to Tibet. For tourists who are willing to learn about

Tibetan essence and sample the local culture, Barkhor Street is an ideal place to go. There are many more attractions that worth your visit in Lhasa.

Where to Stay?

Accommodation in Lhasa can be divided into Tibet-style accommodation in the central Barkhor area and less conveniently located upmarket digs on the outskirts of town. But the service in all these hotels is friendly and thoughtful. Our guide to hotels in Lhasa will help you find the hottest deals whether you're looking for luxury Lhasa resorts, or a cheap stay. The hotel reviews cover room and hotel amenities, hotel services, as well as restaurant, nightclub and so on. We also offer you to enjoy lucrative hotel deals in Lhasa Hotels at discounted rates.

Permits

Lhasa is currently the only part of Tibet that doesn't require you to hire pricey transportation. The only time you will be asked for your Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) permit is when you check in to a hotel. No other permits are required for the city or surroundings. At the time of research you had to visit the main monasteries of Drepung, Sera, Ganden and the Jokhang (but not the Potala) in the company of your guide, but other parts of the city were fine to explore by yourself. You could contact us, a Tibet local operator to help you (www.tibettour.org).

Highlights

- Follow monks, mendicants and fellow pilgrims around the Barkhor, Lhasa's fascinating medieval pilgrim circuit.
- Join the shuffling lines of awed pilgrims around the glowing shrines of the Jokhang, Tibet's holiest temple.
- Go down into the bowels of the Potala, the impressive but spiritless citadel of the Dalai Lamas.
- Take in a prayer meeting or some monk-debating at Sera and Drepung, two of the largest and most intact of Tibet's great monasteries.
- A day out to Ganden Monastery and test your sin on its fascinating kora.
- Explore the traditional whitewashed architecture, teashops and craft workshops of Lhasa's backstreets on our Old Town Walking Tour.
- Track down one of Lhasa's off-the-beaten-track temples, such as the Meru Nyingba Monastery or Tengye Ling.
- Get a taste of the northern Changtang at the turquoise waters, snowy peaks and nomads' tents of stunning high-altitude Lake Namtso.
- Marvel at the turquoise waters of Yamdrok-tso, one of Tibet's most sacred lakes.

Recommend Two-day Tour in Lhasa

Day 01 Lhasa highlights escorted tour

Highlights: go for a visit to Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Barkhor Street

After breakfast, we go to the Potala Palace, a golden feather upon the roof of the world, which Tibetans proudly claim to be the prime miracle since the creation of this world. It is visible from any distance, with the golden roof shinning in the sun, spend one hour wondering around the inside of this magnificent building exploring the rooms previously used by the Dalai Lama and the many Buddhist icons within.

In the afternoon we go inside of the Jokhang. The Jokhang, like most of the larger temple structures have numerous individual temples within it dedicated to specific enlightened beings, protectors, high lamas, or saints. Images, both sculpted and painted, are everywhere. Every inch of wall and ceiling is brightly painted with images of clouds, beings, mandalas, or decorative patterns. Colorful silk banners, three stories high, hang in various places. Color, pattern, and images crowd in around you. The central image inside the building is a 30-foot high gilded image of Maitreya Buddha.

Then stroll around the back alleys of the Barkhor area of Old Lhasa. The streets smelled of yak butter and incense while hordes of pilgrims shuffled along the main Kora (circumambulations) around Jokhang Temple. If someone just walked at a normal pace, one kora would take about 15-20 minutes.



Day 02 Drepung and Sera Monastery

Highlights: the huge monastic institutions of Drepung and Sera lie on the edge of town, a short hiking into Tibet nature, catch the famous debate sessions of the monks in the afternoon.

In the morning have a tour for Drepung, the ever largest monastery with more than 10 thousand monks, Buddhist debates often occur there. Seen from afar, its grand, white construction gives the monastery the appearance of a heap of rice. As such, it was given its name which, in the Tibetan language, means Monastery of Collecting-Rice. Learn about the lives of Tibetan monks there.

The afternoon is spent touring Sera Monastery, have a little hike for the beautiful valley scenery nearby and picnic there, in the afternoon, visit Sera monastery, which was created in 1419 and has always been an important Buddhist seminary. As rose are planted everywhere in the monastery, it is also called "the court of wild rose". Today still 200 lamas live in there. Catch the famous debate session of the monks before returning back to Lhasa.



Chill with a drink

The local beverage that every traveler ends up trying at least once is yak-butter tea. Tea houses are an important social venue in Tibet, and offer a chance to sit down and relax. The tea houses in the town offer sweet tea, or salted; in the villages you may only have the option of salt tea. The line between a tea house and a restaurant is blurred and many also offer thukpa. And also have a try of the chang, a fermented barley beer. It has a rich, fruity taste and ranges from disgusting to pretty good.



Bars

There's not a great deal in the way of entertainment options in Lhasa. In the evening most travelers head to one of the restaurants in the Tibetan quarter and then retire to the roof of the Yak or Banak Shol hotels for a cold Lhasa Beer.

Makye Amye (0086-891-632 8608; Barkhor; drinks Y8-23, mains Y20-38)

The past is tastier than the present at this watering hole overlooking the Barkhor. If the stories are to be believed, this was once a drinking haunt of the licentious sixth Dalai Lama, who met the famed Tibetan beauty Makye Amye here and composed a famous poem about her. Tour groups and Chinese tourists are drawn to the views of the Barkhor from the window tables and fine rooftop terrace, but the food is just so-so.

Dunya (100 Beijing Donglu; beer Y12)

The upstairs bar at this popular restaurant is a favorite of both local expats and tour groups. Friday's happy hour means a Y2 discount between 7pm and 9.30pm.

Music Kitchen (Yinyue Chufang; 0086-891-681 2980; 77 Beijing Xilu; beer Y12-15)

Part of a string of bars and restaurants across from the Lhasa Hotel, this Tibetan-owned place was one of the city's first and still boasts Tibetan-owned place was one of the city's first and still boasts some of the best music in town, with live bands at the weekend, a full dinner menu, and

just the right aroma of late-night booze and depravity.

Teahouses & Cafes

Summit Cafe (Dingfeng Meiyishu Kafeidian; 0086-891-691 3884; www.thetibetsummitcafe.com; 1 Danjielin Lu; coffee Y15-25; open time: 7.30am-10pm)

With authentic espresso coffee and smoothies, sofas that you could lose yourself in, free Wi-Fi and melt-in-your-mouth desserts, this American-style coffeehouse is caffeine nirvana for Starbucks-addicts and latte lovers. It's in the courtyard of the Shangbala Hotel, off Zangyiyuan Lu.

There are several Tibetan teahouses around town where you can grab a cheap cup of cha ngamo (sweet tea). Most of them are grungy Tibetan-only places, blasted by high-decibel kung fu videos, but there are a few exceptions. **Turquoise Dragon Teahouse** (cnr Beijing Donglu & Xiaozhaosi Lu) is a Tibetan-style place with a fine balcony overlooking Beijing Donglu. The bustling local **teahouse** (Zangyiyuan Lu) underneath the Tashi Takgay Hotel is very central and full of colour, though the **Ani Sangkhung Nunnery teahouse** (29 Linkuo Nanlu) is probably the nicest for a quiet cup of tea.

Lhasa's Nightlife Guide

Best Nangma?

For nangma, the recommend place is Gyelpo's Nangma (Beijing Donglu; 7pm-2am). The seating is good, the floorshow and singers are the best in town and there's never any fighting here. Gyelpo was a famous dancer on Tibet TV. It's a great place to meet friends and it's cheaper than the discos, but get a seat before 9pm. Nearby JJ Nangma (Beijing Donglu) is flashier and has a younger crowd.

Best Bars?

Bars change really frequently in Lhasa. Easy Day (Lawei Yangguang Cheng A-47, Deji Beilu; beer Y10-15; 5pm-6am) has a lounge feel with dim lights and some live jazz and blues, and there are half a dozen other bars nearby. Qipingmi Bar (beer Y8-10; Beijing Xilu; 4pm-4am) is a small, busy bar that has great music, from Chinese pop to the Eagles. Bangda (Beijing Donglu; 6pm-5am) is bigger and busier, with outdoor courtyard seating during the day.

Best Club?

Queen (Deji Beilu; 10pm-5am) is the biggest and best disco and the bouncers keep things in check. It's still known by its old name Babila. It's popular with young people and students and people here love to dance with foreigners! The music is mostly techno, Lady Gaga, Korean pop; you know, good beats. The people are very fresh.

Central Tibet

Why Go?

It is Tibet's heartland and has almost all the landscapes you'll find across the plateau, from sand dunes and wide rivers to soaring peaks and alpine forests. Due to its proximity to Lhasa, it is the first taste of rural Tibet that most visitors experience, and exploring the region on foot is the best way to appreciate its scenery - fine walking opportunities abound, from day hikes to overnight treks. It is also the traditional power centre of Tibet, and home to its oldest buildings and most historic monasteries. A thousand-year-old temple or hilltop fort seems to lie around every bend in the road. Some of its best-known destinations are crowded in high season, so consider getting off the beaten path [] there are endless valleys along the Yarlung Tsangpo river to explore. Head up one and you'll feel like you have Tibet all to yourself.

When to Go?

Pilgrims converge on Tsurphu in May/June to take part in a festival of cham dancing, religious devotion and bouts of Tibetan-style drinking games. Festival season at Samye Monastery comes in June/July. Take part in the party then trek over the mountains to Ganden Monastery. Serene Lake Nam-tso comes alive in September for an annual horse festival. It's a good time to see horse racing and horse games before the cold sets in.

What to See?

With most of its major sights relatively close to Lhasa, and the rich culture of this region, Central Tibet draws the crowds. This is no reason to avoid it. The Tibetans trace the very birth of their nation to the valleys of the Yarlung and Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra), in particular the Monkey Cave above Tsetang. The nearby Yumbulagang Palace is claimed as Tibet's oldest building. Centuries later Guru Rinpoche meditated at caves in Sheldak and Chimphu and battled demons on the bank of the nearby Yarlung Tsangpo, before founding Tibet's first monastery at nearby Samye. It was from the Yarlung Valley that the earliest Tibetan kings launched their 6th-century unification of the plateau and it is in the nearby Chongye Valley that they lie buried.

It's not all ancient history. With a gorgeous turquoise hue, Nam-tso, an immense salt-water lake, is far and away the region's most popular natural attraction. The dramatic desert landscapes of the Yarlung Tsangpo, Tibet's most important river, are a surreal highlight. Mysterious Lhamo La-tso, a hard-to-reach lake southeast of the capital, is the only place where access remains a real challenge.

For those wanting to explore Tibet by themselves, there's fantastic scope for independent exploration. The valleys of the Yarlung Tsangpo shelter a wealth of monasteries that rarely see a foreigner. Reting Monastery remains one of the most serene in Tibet. Travellers with limited time have discovered a gem of a destination in Drigung Til

Monastery and the hot springs at nearby Tidrum. U is best experienced on foot, whether on day hikes to side monasteries or on the classic multiday treks from Ganden to Samye, or Tsurphu to Yangpachen. With most of the sights in this chapter not requiring those pesky travel permits, this is the place to get out of the Land Cruiser, stick your thumb out and go exploring.

Where to Stay?

There are a wide range of choices in accommodation in Tsedang, Tibetan-style, hostels, starred hotels from 3 or 4 star ones. Most of them offer reasonably good accommodations and facilities. But in other places in U, there are only local guesthouses available. If you want to travel some off-the-beaten paths, it's better to take your own sleep bags with you.

Permits

Travel in Lhasa prefecture (central and northern U) only requires the standard Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) permit. This includes such places as Tsurphu, Nam-tso, Reting, Drigung Til, Lhundrub and Nyemo. Most of the Yarlung Tsangpo Valley (formally Shannan prefecture) requires an additional permit, the aliens permit issued by Public Security Bureau (also called PSB permit), and you can expect your papers to be scrutinised particularly in Tsetang and possibly Samye. Lhamo La-tso requires five permits which need to be organized at least 15 days in advance of your trip.

Best Places to Stay

- ▶ Drigung Til Monastery
- ▶ Tidrum Nunnery
- ▶ Samye Monastery

Highlights

- Soak up the fabulous location and spectacular circular complex of Samye, Tibet's first monastery.
- Hike the Yarlung Valley, including the iconic Yumbulagang-the first building in Tibet-and the ruins of Rechung-puk.
- Overnight at one of central Tibet's peaceful monasteries-either beside the sand dunes of Dorje Drak, beneath the juniper-clad hills of Reting or at the vibrant monastic centre of Mindroling.
- Soak your worries away in the picture-perfect hot springs of Tidrum Nunnery.
- Squeeze, drag and giggle yourself silly through the sacred cave complexes of Drak Yangdzong, an adventurous overnight pilgrim destination.
- Get a taste of the northern Changtang at the turquoise waters, snowy peaks and nomads' tents of stunning high-altitude Lake Namtso.

Everest Region

Why Go?

The great overland trip across Tibet - from Lhasa to the Nepali border via Gyantse, Shigatse and Mt Everest Base Camp - passes straight through Tsang. Most of the highlights of the region lie right along (or close to) the Friendship Hwy, making cross-country travel a relatively straightforward process. A great variety of sights and activities are experienced along the way, from hardcore treks in the Everest region to a smorgasbord of ancient Tibetan monasteries and historic towns. For many travellers, Tsang is either the first or last place they experience in Tibet, and the ride either up or down from Nepal is a border crossing for the ages.

When to Go?

The best time of the year to visit Tsang is from May to June, when views of Mt Everest are usually clear before the monsoon brings cloud cover. This is also an excellent time for trekking in the Himalayas. The colourful three-day festival at Tashilhunpo takes place in June or July (dates change each year) and culminates in the unrolling of a massive thangkas. Visit Gyantse for the horse racing and archery festival in June (dates change each year), which includes traditional games, folk singing, picnics and much swilling of barley beer.

What to See?

With most of its major sights relatively close to Lhasa, and on or near the paved Friendship Hwy, the traditional province of Tsang draws the crowds. This is no reason to avoid it. After all, this is the region that has Everest, the highest mountain in the world, the Gyantse Kumbum, Tibet's most stunning architectural wonder, and many of the country's most important monasteries. The latter include the fortress-like Sakya Monastery, seat of the first Tibetan government with a lama ruler, and Tashilhunpo, seat and burial site of the Panchen Lamas. Getting off the tourist path is relatively easy, though if you're travelling by Land Cruiser tour you should arrange this from the start. Phuntsoling and Shalu monasteries are two very worthwhile diversions. Both are intensely atmospheric, highly photogenic and have important places in Tibetan history.

Tsang doesn't hurt for outstanding scenery, either. There's Everest, of course, but also the turquoise waters of Yamdrok-tso, the snaking valleys of the Yarlung Tsangpo, wide mead-owlands dotted with whitewashed villages, and stunning views from passes that get up to 5100m. The adventurous take this all in slowly by cycling down the Friendship Hwy, or trekking: Everest Base Camp to Tingri is the most popular trekking route in Tsang, though there are others.

After Shegar and the turn-off for Mt Everest, the attractions dry up. Though most travellers are headed for Kathmandu, a round trip from Lhasa should allow you to see more in a short time. How short? A week

is bare minimum, while three weeks gives time for day hikes out to little-visited monasteries, one longer trek and (well-deserving) repeat visits to the larger monastic compounds.

Where to Stay?

There are a wide range of choices in accommodation through the journey, Tibetan-style, hostels, starred hotels from 3 or 4 star ones. Most of them offer reasonably good accommodations and facilities, except the Everest region. There is no "real" hotel in Mt. Everest. Travelers have three choices: 1) camping by yourself; 2) Stay in Tent Guest House in Base Camp; 3) stay in the Rongbuk Monastery Guesthouse.

Permits

Most of Tsang's sights involve detours from the Friendship Hwy and you need permits to visit these areas. At the time of writing the only way to get permits was by travelling with an organised 4WD tour. Special trekking permits are needed if you plan to trek in the Everest region beyond the base camp. Trekking permits for Camp III (also known as Advanced Base Camp or ABC) are issued by the China Tibet Mountain Association. Trekkers will need help from an agency to get the permits.

Getting Around

The main road through Tsang, the Friendship Hwy, is paved almost all the way to the Nepali border. The southern route via Yamdrok-tso has a brand-spankin' new paved highway that winds its way over Kamba-la to Yamdrok-tso and onto Shigatse. 4WD trips (the usual way to travel through the region) take this more scenic route. Public transport runs along the Northern Friendship Hwy as far as Shegar. The Qinghai-Tibet train from Lhasa to Shigatse is not due for completion until 2014.

Highlights

- Look out for flying monks at the mysterious Shalu Monastery.
- Climb the dazzling Gyantse Kumbum, a monumental chorten with mural-filled chapels.
- Worship before a 26m gold Buddha at Tashilumpo Monastery, a walled complex the size of a village.
- Absorb the holy atmosphere inside ancient Sakya Monastery.
- Scale the ruins and mighty cliffs of Shegar Dzong, a fort and monastery in the Himalayan shadows
- Get off the beaten track at photogenic Phuntsling Monastery, set at the base of a monstrous sand dune.
- Sleep in nomad tents and gaze upon the north face of Mt. Everest.
- Get your Bon on at the Bonpo monastery Yungdrungling.

Recommend Itineraries

For most travellers, visiting Tsang means a straight shot from Lhasa to the Nepali border, with stops at Gyantse, Shigatse and Mt Everest. This journey takes about eight days if done at a reasonable pace.

From Lhasa, head out on the Southern Friendship Hwy, which takes you over the Kamba-la pass to the shores of Yamdrok-tso, then on to Nangartse and Gyantse. You'll need a full day in Gyantse before you can move on to Shigatse. West of Shigatse the next obvious stop is Lhatse, but there are two worthy side trips on the way - Sakya Monastery and Phuntsoling Monastery. From Lhatse it's on to Baber and Shegar, a key stop before heading on to Everest Base Camp (EBC). Back on the main highway there is old Tingri and Nyalam before you finally reach the border town of Zhangmu. The best hike in the region is from old Tingri to EBC (or vice versa), which will add another four days to your journey.

If you are in a hurry, it's quicker to take the Northern Friendship Road when travelling between Lhasa and Shigatse but going this way you'll miss Gyantse, one of the highlights of Tsang. Any way you go you'll find good facilities along the way and relatively easy drives as the Friendship Hwy is entirely paved. The exception is the Everest region, which has dirt roads and basic accommodation.

Tibet Essences with Mt. Everest Adventure

Tibet » Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse, Mt. Everest

- ◇ Duration: 7 Days
- ◇ Max Altitude: 5,150 meters (16,896 feet)
- ◇ Both Private tour & Small group tour are available

Day 01 Lhasa highlights escorted tour

Highlights: Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Barkhor Street

Day 02 Drepung and Sera Monastery

Highlights: the huge monastic institutions of Drepung and Sera lie on the edge of town, a short hiking into Tibet nature, catch the famous debate sessions of the monks in the afternoon.

Day 03 Lhasa-Gyantse-Shigatse

Highlights: Yamdrok Yumtso Lake, Pelkor Monastery & Kumbum Stupa, Tashilumpo Monastery

Day 04 Shigatse to Rongbuk Monastery

Highlights: drive from Shigatse to Shegar, then continue to Rongbuk Monastery

- If you plan to out of Tibet from Lhasa:

Day 05 Drive back to Shigatse

Highlights: after the magnificent views of Mt. Everest, we drive back to Shigatse

Day 06 Drive back to Lhasa

Highlights: enjoy the breathtaking views along the way back to Lhasa

- If you continue to Kathmandu:

Day 06 Snake down to Zhangmu

Highlights: after enjoy the fabulous views of Mt. Everest, snake down to Zhangmu

Day 07 See you off at Nepalese Border

Highlights: finish the tour at the border, cross the bridge to Nepal side yourselves



Kailash & Manasarovar

Why Go?

Vast, thinly populated and with an average altitude of over 4500m, Ngari is Tibet's wild west, a rough and ready frontier occupying one of the remotest corners of Asia. For most travellers the main attractions of what is likely to be a three-week overland trip are the almost legendary destinations of Mt Kailash and Lake Manasarovar. Indeed, many of the pilgrims on this road have been planning a visit all their lives. For those less fussed by the spiritual significance of Mt Kailash, getting to one of the most isolated and beautiful corners of high Asia is likely to be an attraction in itself.

When to Go?

May to June and mid-September to early October are the best times to head to Ngari, though June and July see huge convoys of Indian pilgrims booking out entire hotels on their way to Mt Kailash. April to October is best for the Drolma-la pass on the Kailash kora, as it's normally blocked with snow during other months. The festival of Saga Dawa in May/June is a particularly popular time to visit Mt Kailash, and hundreds of pilgrims and tourists descend on the mountain. Some find the pilgrim atmosphere a highlight; others find the large numbers of trekking groups off-putting.

What to See?

Vast, scarcely populated and with an average altitude of over 4500m, Ngari is a frontier in one of the remotest corners of Asia. The main attractions are a mountain and a lake - but what a mountain and what a lake! Sacred Mt Kailash and Lake Manasarovar are two of the most far-flung and legendary travel destinations in the world. Many of the pilgrims on the road have been planning a visit all their lives.

The landscape of Ngari is dominated by the Himalaya range to the south and the huge salt lakes of the Changtang plateau to the north. In between are immense stretches of yellow steppe, dusty badlands, sandy deserts, and the mineral-rich trans-Himalayan ranges stained purple, rust and green. For those not overly fussed by the spiritual significance of Mt Kailash, going to one of the most isolated and beautiful corners of the globe is likely to be an attraction in itself.

Permits

Foreigners require a fistful of permits: an Alien Travel Permit, military permit, Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) permit, foreign affairs permit... As a local operator, we could organise all of these for you but it will take a week minimum. You may need to stop in Shigatse to process your Alien Travel Permit and may further need to get this endorsed in Darchen or Ali, depending on the direction of travel. This is particularly true if you wish to visit off-the-beaten-track places like Gurugyam Monastery. As you travel through the region your guide will need to register you with the Public Security Bureau (PSB) in some towns (such as Tsochen).

Western Tibet is a politically sensitive area and is periodically closed to foreigners, due either to political unrest on the Mt Kailash kora or military tension along the contested borders of China, India and Pakistan.

Where to Stay?

Hotels in Nagri are a kind of poor. Most of them are local guesthouses. Baths are only available in Shiquanhe Town. We recommend you take your own sleeping bags, for self-sanitation and keeping warm.

Best Views

- Humla Karnali Valley from Shepeling (Simbaling) Monastery
- Tagyel-tso, or anywhere along the northern route
- Mt Kailash floating over the waters of Rakshas Tal

Best Places off the Beaten Track

- Gossul Monastery
- Ruins of Shangshung in the Khyunglung Valley
- Old Rutok

What to Bring?

Warm clothes are essential, even in summer. The sun is strong and days can be hot, especially in a 4WD, so do bring something light to wear. A sleeping bag is recommended, since many of the villages, towns and hotels in western Tibet are dusty, dirty, depressing places so a tent gives you the flexibility to camp out in some of the most glorious scenery on the planet. A tent is also useful (though not essential) if you are doing the Kailash kora. A face-mask can be useful to keep out the copious dust.

Supplies are now easy to get in all the settlements of the west but consider bringing luxuries like instant porridge, muesli (with powdered milk), chocolate, cheese and dehydrated foods from home. A snack supply gives you the flexibility to stop for a picnic lunch somewhere beautiful (or when the car breaks down).

The only places to change money in Ngari are banks in Ali and, less

Highlights

- Join the pilgrims looking to erase the sins of a lifetime on the three-day trek around holy Mt. Kailash.
- Hike the sandy shores of sacred Lake Manasarovar, or just marvel at the turquoise waters and snowcapped-mountain backdrop.
- Camp anywhere in this otherworldly landscape, but especially by the lakes Tagyel-tso, Dawa-tso and Peiku-tso.
- Explore the ruins of an ancient kingdom at Tsaparang, one of Asia's unknown wonders.
- Spot wild asses, gazelle and blue sheep on the northern route to Ali.

Recommend Itineraries

From Lhasa there are two approaches to Ngari: a southern route and a northern. Both follow the same road west to Lhatse and beyond to Raka. About 6km past Raka the routes split, with the southern route continuing west and the northern route heading north. The southern route is the more popular one, largely because it is the fastest way to Mt Kailash. Although there are no stellar attractions on the longer northern route, the scenery is grander, traffic lighter and wildlife richer than the southern route.

The Xinjiang-Tibet Hwy is one of the highest, remotest and most spectacular roads in Asia. The route passes through the remote and disputed Aksai Chin region; with the unpredictability of breakdowns, it can take several days or more to travel the 1100km from Yecheng to Ali. The very few hardy adventurers who make this road do so mostly in a rented 4WD, and it's not cheap as you'll likely have to pay for the vehicle to travel all the way from Lhasa to Yecheng and back. Buses run every few days between Ali and Yecheng but foreigners are not officially allowed on them.

If you're coming to/from Kathmandu via the Friendship Hwy, a shortcut to/from Saga (via beautiful Peiku-tso) will shave a full day's travel off your trip. It is also possible to enter Ngari on a four-day trek from Simikot in the Humla region of western Nepal to Purang on the Chinese border near Mt Kailash. This route is open only to tour groups that trek in from Humla, which is a restricted region.

Recommend Itinerary I

Pilgrimage of Mt. Kailash Kora

Tibet » Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse, Mt. Kailash, Lake Manasarovar

- ◇ Duration: 12 Days
- ◇ Max Altitude: above 5,000 meters
- ◇ Both Private tour & Small group tour are available

Day 01 Lhasa highlights escorted tour

Highlights: Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Barkhor Street

Day 02 Drepung and Sera Monastery

Highlights: the huge monastic institutions of Drepung and Sera lie on the edge of town, a short hiking into Tibet nature, catch the famous debate sessions of the monks in the afternoon.

Day 03 Drive to Shigatse via Gyantse, 360km

Highlights: Yamdrok Yumtso Lake, Pelkor Monastery & Kumbum Stupa

Day 04 Shigatse to Saga, 450km, 8-9hrs

Highlights: Tashilunpo Monastery, views of ass several lakes, towns and high plateau nomadic sites along the way

Day 05 Drive to Lake Manasarovar, 500km, 8-9hrs

Highlights: Lake Manasarovar

Day 06 Drive to Darchen (4560m), 30km

Highlights: fabulous views of Mt. Kailash in distance,

Day 07 Start Kailash Circuit Trekking, 10 hours/ 20km/ 200m ascent

Highlights: Darchen to Dirapuk monastery

Day 08 Trekking: 6-7 hours/ 18km/ 550m ascent/ 600m descent

Highlights: Diraphuk to Zutulpuk monastery

Day 09 Trekking: 3-4 hours/ 14km/ 150m descent

Highlights: Zutulpuk to Darchen

Day 10 Drive back to Saga

Highlights: Drive back to Saga from Darchen

Day 11 Continue to Lhatse

Highlights: Drive back to Lhatse from Saga

Day 12 Drive back to Lhasa

Highlights: continue drive forward to Lhasa



Eastern Tibet (Kham)

Why Go?

Kham is the face you never knew Tibet had: a land of raging rivers and deep gorges, alpine forests and rolling grasslands, outspoken monks and rebel cowboys. Compared with the rest of this largely barren land, it's a world apart.

It's still part of the Tibetan plateau, but Kham is where Tibet begins its descent towards the subtropical Sichuan basin, and the landscapes here represent both extremes: one day you'll drive over a breathtakingly high mountain pass, the next you'll slide your way through rainforest on a mud-bath road. This is off-the-beaten-track adventure travel at its most exhilarating, and the chances are you'll be the only foreigner in sight.

Kham gains much of its charm from its people. Khampas dressed in sheepskin cloaks and with braided hair cruise the region on motorbikes. It can sometimes feel like America's Wild West, only with the cowboys and buffalos replaced by Khampas and yaks.

When to Go?

May and June are the best months to travel in eastern Tibet. There's hardly any rain, temperatures are at their most comfortable and much of the landscape is covered in blankets of bright-yellow rapeseed flowers. If you're here in early August, try to pop in on the Nagchu Horse Festival; well worth a look if you're on the Northern Route. And don't discount coming in winter (November-February). Temperatures are warmer than you'd think (apart from in the Nagchu region, of course), there's hardly any rain and usually not another tourist in sight.

What to See?

The eastern region of Tibet, known as Kham, is a land apart. Its climate, geography, flora and fauna all lend it a unique, almost magical atmosphere. In this region, you could take a perfect photo of Draksum-tso, a sublime alpine lake with a fairy-tale island monastery. View the magnificent scenery from Nyingtri to Pomi, climbing from lush subtropical forest to alpine valleys and snowy passes. Picnic by the stunning turquoise waters of Rawok-tso, a mirror lake fringed with snow-capped peaks. Peer up in awe at the towering statues of the remote Riwoche Tsuglhakhang. Clamber up wooden ladders to cliff-top shrines at the amazing Tsedru Monastery, Tibet's most spectacularly sited monastery. Follow the pilgrims around the charming Lamaling Temple, shaped like Guru Ringpoche's celestial paradise. Join the monks in a debate at Chamdo's Galden Jampaling Monastery, one of the largest monastic communities in Tibet.

Where to Stay?

Compared with any other place in Tibet, the facilities in Nyingtri hotels are very perfect. Most favorable hotels in Nyingtri are based in Bayi

Town. The hotels in Nyingtri are surely comfortable and up to your taste and standard, it is no need to worry about accommodations when you travel in Nyingtri. But beyond Nyingtri, the accommodation become poorer, in some simple place, there are only local budget guesthouses available.

Permits

Military presence is strong in eastern Tibet, and this has for a long time been a heavily restricted area for general travel. Since 2008 the whole of the Chamdo and Nyingtri regions (an area which covers almost all of eastern Tibet, save the area closest to Lhasa) have been closed to foreigners.

Foreign visitors needed three permits to travel in eastern Tibet: an Alien Travel Permit, a military permit and a Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) permit. These permits were registered at the Public Security Bureau (PSB), Foreign Affairs Office and Military Office. They also needed to be shown at a number of checkpoints along the Sichuan-Tibet Hwy. As a local operator we will organise all these permits for you (and the registration process), but it will take a minimum of 15 days.

Getting There & Around

Lhasa is the logical place from which to launch an expedition to Kham. It's the closest gate-way city and permits are relatively hassle-free to acquire, as long as you are on an organised tour. The most popular routes are the loop route along the southern road to Chamdo and back along the northern road to Lhasa, and the one-way shot along the southern road between Lhasa and Zhongdian (and vice versa) or Chengdu. The most remote and least travelled route into the region is the northeastern route from Qinghai to Riwoche, via the towns of Yushu (Jyekundo) and Nangchen.

Highlights

- Take a perfect photo of Draksum-tso, a sublime alpine lake with a fairy-tale island monastery.
- View the magnificent scenery from Nyingtri to Pomi, climbing from lush subtropical forest to alpine valleys and snowy passes.
- Picnic by the stunning turquoise waters of Rawok-tso, a mirror lake fringed with snow-capped peaks.
- Peer up in awe at the towering statues of the remote Riwoche Tsuglhakhang.
- Clamber up wooden ladders to cliff-top shrines at the amazing Tsedru Monastery, Tibet's most spectacularly sited monastery.
- Follow the pilgrims around the charming Lamaling Temple, shaped like Guru Ringpoche's celestial paradise.
- Join the monks in a debate at Chamdo's Galden Jampaling Monastery, one of the largest monastic communities in Tibet.

Who we are

Our Story

Welcome to CITS Tibettravel.Org, One of the top 10 online Tibet Tour Operators in China! We offer many choices of Tibet tours leading you to explore the special beautiful scenery in the snow land and the ancient Tibetan civilization. We have more than 10 years experience on organizing Tibet tour for travelers come from abroad, By the end of 2010, we have provided our services to more than 8000 foreign travelers. Different from other travel agencies in China, We not only offer Tibet Group Tours and tailor-made private tours at best deals, but also offer the train tickets booking services for who dreams go to Tibet by train.

Our Mission

"To perfect the service, to make your trip in Tibet an unforgettable good memory in your life time is the goal we are pursuing. We've been at Tibet travel industry for more than 10 years, growing from the little start-up into one of the top 10 online Tibet Tour companies in China, while we know that we still have a lot to do."

- We are committed to become Tibet much more reachable for travelers from around the world
- We work to let our clients' Tibet dream take flight, and introduce them to real Tibet
- We manage to provide the most exciting travel, adventure, and discovery programs in Tibet at unequaled value
- We aim to exceed the expectation of our clients in every single detail
- We strive for 100% customer satisfaction
- We motivate our staff by encouraging entrepreneurial spirit and innovation at all levels.
- We try our best to create satisfied staff and satisfied associates, only in this way, there could be satisfied clients
- We work to give back to Tibet, and support environment friendly solutions

We keep our promises: **our customer satisfaction is guaranteed.**



Our Value

Open and Courageous Communication

Asking for and giving frank, honest and open feedback is critical for all of us to break down barriers, continuously improve what we do, and drive a successful business. We must each communicate in a direct, candid and respectful manner that reflects our true thoughts and convictions. We believe that recognizing our weaknesses and asking for help is a sign of strength.

Teamwork

The concept of teamwork is extremely important to the success of any team. Teamwork and unselfishness create the backbone of a great team, without them a team cannot realistically compete. The team working as one cohesive unit is going to be the key in their success.

Thriving in Change

In these times of rapid change, global competition, and high volatility in the travel industry, we must be prepared to change course and move forward. Being well organized may sometimes be less important than moving quickly. The goal is for each of us to maximize our effectiveness, and ultimately our success, in an unpredictable and ever-changing environment.

Speed

We must be fast, flexible, and as time competitive as possible to keep us ahead of our competition and be a leader in our industry. We must continuously take our speed to new levels if we are to achieve the aggressive corporate goals we have set.

Quality

Our decisions must be made and actions taken in accordance with high standards of quality and service. Quality can be subjective, and in our business quality often involves a compromise between speed and perfection. When the level of quality required is in question, we will operate to the high standards expected by our customers.

Our Advantages

It's more than just traveling

You may be a seasoned explorer or a first timer, with a group or going solo, but one thing's for sure – when you travel with us you'll experience more. Our Tibet tours include heaps of extras, from exceptional accommodation & flavored local meals, to experiences that are unique & showcase the local's Tibet. They're also about amazing optional activities, a great team, local ways to get around & Tibetan guides for that essential in-depth local experience. Exploring Tibet with Tibettravel.org is more than just travelling- it's about taking a journey, a journey of discovery, a journey where you scratch beneath the surface to get the real story, get to know the locals & experience more for less.

Only Tibettravel.Org includes more

Travelling in Tibet is an experience like no other. There's so much you need to see, so we make sure you experience it all. From the iconic sights, like Potala Palace and Mt. Everest, to those authentic local experiences that make Tibet so unique, we show you more. We also give you more bang for your buck - with TibetTour you get more included as part of your tour than going any other way.

Adventure Travel-the Path of Dreams

Adventure travel with TibetTravel.org is a journey beyond the familiar, one that takes you into the very heart of a destination—to meet people where they work and live. We invites you to explore the meandering routes, the intriguing detours, the slower paths where you can breathe deeply, absorb new sensations, encounter authentic cultures, and make new connections. What you'll discover is not simply a destination, but a joyful awareness of the moment that reminds you, "This is not just an ordinary trip—it's a true adventure."

Discover the wonder of the road less traveled

The holy Potala Palace, the magnificent Mt. Everest, and turquoise Yamdok Lake, after decades of helping travelers discover wonders like these, we certainly understand why these are "musts" on your itineraries—they are marvels that every traveler will thrill to behold. While you can journey with us to many of Tibet's top travel attractions, we also take you to many lesser-known locales—unique and wonder-filled destinations where few travelers go. But we also know that sometimes, the most extraordinary travel experiences occur in the most ordinary places—the unassuming villages, family homes, schools, temples, and farms that comprise the heart of Tibet. We can show you to the coolest hidden corners and off-the-beaten-paths that you could never find in any guidebook.

Local Ways to Get Around

Tibet with TibetTravel.org is a way to travel unlike any other. We love to go local and with local ways to get around, you will too. You'll get a real taste for how the locals get around, with pedicab, bike, tractor rides, boats, overnight trains and more.

Meet local people where they live, work and play

When you travel, getting the local experience is essential. During your journey with us, you'll meet people from all walks of life, visiting them where they work, where they worship, where they learn, and where they live. Perhaps you'll find yourself admiring the handiwork at a women's weaving cooperative, or lending a hand during the local rice harvest, or sing a song with children in a Tibet orphanage, or enjoy a private cooking in a Tibet family. Through unique activities that are built into your trip, you'll enjoy personal connections that might only take a moment to form, but can last a lifetime in your memories.

Resident Tour Guides share their world

Our Tibet travel consultant in Lhasa and Chengdu work hard behind the scenes to provide a standout experience for you. But we know that the real standouts of any Tibettravel experience are our dedicated tour guides, who will open the doors to new cultures for you. These exceptional men and women are all English-speaking Tibetan locals, because we feel strongly that no one can show you the true soul of a place better than an insider. Your tour guides' wonderful command of local history, culture, and nature will enrich your experience, and you can also depend on their resourcefulness and skills in group dynamics. But what you will love about them is their sense of caring, their good humor, and the way their passion for their homeland enhances your own appreciation for it.

Discover the real Tibet

Go inside Tibet like only a local can & experience more, with guided bike tours, walking tours & cool local ways to get around. Our teams take you inside the real Tibet with overnight stays in local guesthouses.



Our Small Group Tours

Small Group, Big Discovery

Are you a single or a couple wishing to travel in Tibet, but can't afford the high private tour rates, or you don't like the high group tour numbers? Journey with our small group tour and watch your Tibet dreams take flight.

The perfect group size

Less than 12 people per tour means it's the perfect size for getting around. It's about getting that intimate experience but with enough people to meet other like-minded travelers. Get ready to make new friends from around the world.

Small groups provide the most personal and rewarding experience

Slipping into the flow of local life without disrupting it, you'll get a more authentic view. And as you explore natural habitats, you'll tread softly, getting as close as possible to native wildlife. Your tour guide will be able to focus on your needs and give you the personal attention you deserve.

A reasonable budget that is known in advance

With accommodation and transport at group discount rates, and sharing the guide fees and services charge with other group members, Tibet becomes much more reachable to all of these travelers. You'll find the price of our small group tours are unbeatable, even you are going solo. Now, Tibet is not far beyond, it is just around the corner!

Great companionship-traveling with people just like you

Traveling with people just like you with same interests, people who are determined to get the most out of every minute, who are ready for some fun, adventure, and to explore this fascinating island. They are therefore very social occasions where the group is often bonded by the common adventurous experiences. You'll revel in a level of spontaneity and camaraderie that just isn't possible in big groups.

Hassle-free holidays with a travel guide who is always there to assist you

If you have accommodation and transport already arranged, and a tour guide to help organise activities, this can take a lot of the hassle out of travel in Tibet. You won't have to queue for tickets, lug around your backpack looking for a hotel, or wait two days for a train. Everything is taken care of for you. Better still, the price is comparable to doing it on your own. What you will see and experience in two weeks on this tour of Tibet may take you up to double this time to achieve on your own.

A variety of alternative options for activities, make the most of your free time...

No journey is complete without some time to explore, relax and go your own way. When you travel with us, the only things that are fixed are your destinations. Want to venture out & explore the local markets, grab a bite & soak up the sun? Want to do something more active, or relax? The choice is yours.



Contact Us

Contact Information

Reservation Office Hours

Monday - Friday 9:00am - 6:00pm (PEK)

For information on specific departure dates, up-to-the-minute availability, and customized pricing, visit the “[Tibet Tours](#)” section of our website to plan your trip and schedule a convenient time for us to call you.

[Search Trips Now](#)

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Here we are