

WestChina

Adventure Tours

in association with



Lhasa – Kathmandu

- Travel from the center of Tibetan Buddhism in Lhasa to the birthplace of Buddhism in Nepal
- Gain an insight into the religious and spiritual way of life in this very unique part of the world
- Spend one night at the base camp of Mt. Everest
- Follow the pilgrimage paths to explore numerous holy Buddhist sites, shrines, temples, monasteries and small villages



SPIRITUAL TOUR FROM LHASA TO KATHMANDU

This tour will lead you from the capital of Tibet – the center of Tibetan Buddhism with its world-famous Potala Palace and Jokhang Temple - to the birthplace of Buddhism and capital city of Nepal with its many Buddhist and Hindu temples, palaces and shrines, like for example the two most important Buddhist stupas “Swayambhounath” and “Boudhanath” and the two famous Hindu shrines “Pashupatinath Temple” and “Changu Narayan”.

This trip is specially designed for people, who want to have a unique religious experience in this spiritual part of the world with its snowcapped mountains, holy sites and pilgrimage paths.

On this trip you will enjoy the view onto the picturesque mountain ranges, spend one night at the base camp of Mt. Everest, camp beside the earliest Buddhist temple in Tibet and the turquoise Holy Lake (4408m) and gain an insight into the religious and spiritual way of life of the Tibetan and Nepalese people.

- Best Travel Date: May – October
- Destinations: Lhasa, Samye Monastery, Yamdrok Tso, Shigatse, Tingri, Rongbu, Base Camp of Mt. Everest, Zhangmu, Kathmandu
- Duration: 9 days
- Starting in: Lhasa
- Ending in: Kathmandu
- Group size: min. 6 pax, max. 10 pax

QUICK INTRODUCTION

Lhasa is the traditional capital of Tibet and the capital of Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. It is also the traditional seat of the Dalai Lama. Lhasa literally means "place of the gods", although ancient Tibetan documents and inscriptions demonstrate that the place was first called Rasa, which means "courtyard place" or "goat place". Its altitude is about 3,650 m, making it one of the highest cities in the world, and its population about 200,000.

Lhasa lies in an area known as the "Lhasa Valley"; even though the average altitude of the valley is well over 3,000 m the mountains around it rise to 5,500 m. The Kyi (or Kyi Chu) River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra River, runs through the city.

The city of Lhasa contains three concentric paths used by pilgrims to circumambulate the sacred Jokhang Temple, many of whom make full or partial prostrations along these routes in order to gain spiritual merit. The innermost, the Nangkor, is contained within the Jokhang temple, and surrounds the sanctuary of the Jowo Shakyamuni, the most sacred statue in Tibetan Buddhism. The middle circumambulatory, the Barkor, passes through the old town and surrounds the Jokhang temple and various other buildings in its vicinity. The outer Lingkor encircles the entire traditional city of Lhasa.

Kathmandu is the capital city of Nepal and it is also the largest city in Nepal. It stands at an elevation of approximately 1'350 m. It is an urban and suburban area of about 1.5 million inhabitants in the tri-city area in the Kathmandu valley in central Nepal, along the Bagmati River. The two other cities are Patan and Bhaktapur.

DAY 1 LHASA (L/D)

After arrival at the airport you will be picked up by our guide and transfer to your hotel in Lhasa. The drive from the airport to the hotel will take about two hours. Enjoy the view onto Yarlung Tsangpo - the major river in Tibet - and the snowcapped mountains. We will take a few breaks on the way so you can take pictures of holy shrines and of the lovely villages.

The rest of the afternoon is free to rest and for acclimatization. If you feel up to it, you can stroll up the Barkhor in the old town which is within walking distance from your hotel. This would be an exciting first glance into the spiritual side of Lhasa.

In the evening you will enjoy a welcome dinner with a Tibetan cuisine buffet, while you watch a Tibetan performance.



DAY 2 LHASA (L/D)

In the morning we will visit the Potala Palace. Your English-speaking Tibetan guide will answer all your questions about the splendid world of Buddhism. The Potala Palace was the chief residence of the Dalai Lama until the 14th Dalai Lama fled to Dharamsala, India after a failed uprising in 1959.

The site was used as a meditation retreat by King Songtsen Gampo, who in 637 built the first palace there, which was incorporated into later buildings. The construction of the present palace began in 1645 under the fifth Dalai Lama Lozang Gyatso. In 1648, the Potrang Karpo (White Palace) was completed, and the Potala was used as a winter palace by the Dalai Lama from that time. The Potrang Marpo (Red Palace) was added between 1690 and 1694.



In the afternoon, we will drive to the Sera Monastery, which is one of the "great three" Gelukpa university monasteries of Tibet. The other two are Ganden Monastery and Drepung Monastery. It was founded in 1414, by Jamchen Choje (Sakya Yeshe), a disciple of Tsong Khapa. Visit the sutra printing room and watch the monks practice debating.

This evening your guide will help you to choose one of the many cozy restaurants in this fascinating town.

DAY 3 LHASA - SAMYE (B/L/D)

In the morning, we make our way into the absolute heart of Tibet – Jokhang Temple. People travel for days even months to worship the temple as to get away of their sins. An English-speaking lama will guide us through the holy temple.



Jokhang temple was constructed by King Songtsen Gampo starting in the year 639. This temple has remained a center of Buddhist pilgrimage for centuries. In the past several centuries the temple complex was expanded and now covers an area of about 25,000 sq. meters. Jokhang temple complex has several decorated shrines and rooms. The main hall of the temple houses the Jowo Shakyamuni Buddha statue, perhaps the single most venerated object in Tibetan Buddhism. There are also statues of King Songtsan Gambo and his two famous foreign brides, Princess Wen Cheng (daughter of Emperor Taizong of Tang China) and Princess Bhrikuti of Nepal.

After lunch we will go shopping. The Barkhor Street around the Jokhang Temple has a variety of Tibetan goods. You should also make your way to Chongsaikang Market just around the corner, which is the busiest local market in the old town where you find a lot of fancy goods and handcrafts sold by very interesting people.

Later we will drive three hours to Samye Temple, the earliest Buddhist monastery in Tibet. Built during the reign of the Tibetan King Trisun Detsan in the middle of the 8th century, it has a history of more than 1,200 years. Located at the foot of Habort Mountain on the north bank of the Yarlung Zangbo River in Chanang County, it looks spectacular and magnificent.

It boasts many Tibetan cultural relics and historical artifacts. After the completion of the construction, the first batch of Tibetans was tonsured and became monks. Samye Monastery therefore became the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet.

The central building of Samye, its foremost feature, comprises a mixture of architectural styles: the ground and first floors were originally Tibetan in style, the second floor was Chinese and the third floor was Indian. We stay overnight at the temple inn or camp in the fields beside Yagong River.

DAY 4 SAMYE - YAMDROK TSO (B/L/D)

The beauty of Tibet can only be deeply and thoroughly appreciated on its roads. We will continue our drive to the holy lake of Yamdrok Tso (4408 m), located on the southern Tibetan Plateau which is over 72 km long. The lake is surrounded by many snowcapped mountains and is fed by numerous small streams. The lake does have an outlet stream at its far western end.



Enjoy the unforgettable vista of its turquoise water, with the mysterious Mt. Donang Sangwari (5,340m), the snow peaks of Nojin Gangzang (7,191m) in the distance. This is one of the three holy lakes in Tibet and many Tibetans believe that the life of Tibet will no longer continue when the lake dries up. We will hike around the lake and spend the night camping on its shore.

DAY 5 YAMDROK TSO - SHIGATSE (B/L/D)

With spectacular views of the snow mountains, the road along the Yarlung-Tsangpo river leads us into the second largest city of Tibet – Shigatse with a population of 80,000. It is located at the confluence of the Yarlung Tsangpo (or Brahmaputra) and Nyangchu rivers in west Tibet and was the ancient capital of U-Tsang province. Visit Tashilhunpo Monastery, feel the fiesta atmosphere of religious celebration and watch a most exotic Tibetan dance (only in June and September).



Tashilhunpo Monastery was built in 1447 and is a historic and culturally important monastery. The monastery is the traditional seat of successive Panchen Lamas, the second highest ranking tulku lineage in the Gelukpa tradition (a tulku is a Tibetan Buddhist lama or other religious figure who has consciously decided to be reborn, often many times, in order to continue his or her religious pursuits).

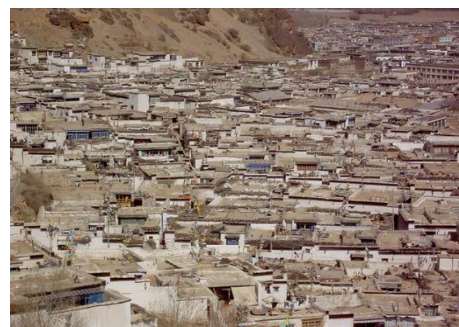
This monastery was originally built by Gedun Drub the First Dalai Lama, financed by donations from local nobles. Later Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen, the Fourth Panchen Lama and the first Panchen Lama to be recognized as such by the rulers of Mongolia, made major expansions to the monastery. Since then all Panchen Lamas have resided at Tashilhunpo, and have managed to expand it gradually.

Afterwards we join the Tibetans circumambulating the temple. The path leads to a village at the foot of the mountain, where you gain insight into the life of the villagers and their curious kids. We will stay overnight in a hotel in Shigatse (2/3-stars).

DAY 6 SHIGATSE - TINGRI (B/L/D)

Today we hit the roads again and drive towards one of transit cities in southern Tibet – Tingri. We will visit Sakya Temple on the way. Sakya is one of four major schools (Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu and Gelug) in Tibetan Buddhism. This temple was the monastery of this tradition built by Khon Konchog Gyalpo (1034-1102) in 1073. The Sakya tradition developed during the second period of translation of Buddhist scripture from Sanskrit into Tibetan in the late eleventh century.

After arrival in Tingri - often used as a base by mountain climbers preparing to ascend Mount Everest or Cho Oyu – we stay overnight at a simple, but clean guesthouse.



DAY 7 TINGRI - RONGBU - BASE CAMP MT. EVEREST (B/L/D)

The Rongbu Temple at the foot of Mount Everest is the world highest temple; it is only 40 kilometers to the peak and serves as the headquarters of north side climbing because the base camp is only eight kilometers away. The north side of Qomolangma (Tibetan name for Mt. Everest) has 217 glaciers, and the Rongbu glacier is the biggest.

After lunch, we will hike to the base camp and spend the night camping in the mountains.

DAY 8 BASE CAMP MT. EVEREST - RONGBU - ZHANGMU (B/L/D)



Enjoy the sunrise in the morning and after breakfast, we will head our way back to Rongbu Temple and on to Zhangmu.

Zhangmu, also known as Kasa, lies on a mountainside 10km inland from the Friendship Bridge that spans the Bhotekoshi (the Sun Koshi) River. This small town has become a major trading post between Tibet and Nepal. The subtropical climate endows the small town with warm, humid weather and beautiful scenery throughout the year.

According to an agreement between the Chinese and Nepalese governments, people living within 30 kilometres of the border may cross the border freely. You will see hundreds of Chinese and Nepalese merchants conduct business under this agreement every day.

The town is built along a winding road that is lined with private homes, shops, restaurants and government buildings. We will stay overnight in a basic, but clean guesthouse.

DAY 9 ZHANGMU - KATHMANDU (B/L/D)

You will leave Zhangmu in the morning. After a few hours you will reach the border. Our Nepalese driver and guide who will drive you to the final destination of this trip – Kathmandu – will meet you there after you have gone through customs.

[Contact us](#) per mail for a tailor-made itinerary.

Our other ethnic minorities' discovery tours in China:

[13 days Guangxi - Guizhou](#)

RATES

RATE PER PERSON IN TWIN: ON REQUEST

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: ON REQUEST

INCLUDED SERVICES:

- experienced tour leader and local tour guides for all days, English/Chinese-speaking
- all transfers as mentioned in the itinerary
- in the cities accommodation in selected hotels in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary
- outside the cities accommodation in simple but clean guesthouses in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary
- on camping trips, tent (double occupancy), Karrimat mats or similar, sleeping bags will be provided. However it is suggested to bring your own sleeping bag for sanitary purposes.
- all meals except on free afternoons/evenings (outlined as B,L,D: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)
- entrance tickets for attractions and activities as stated in the itinerary
- trekking gear except personal clothing on trekking + camping tours

NOT INCLUDED:

- international flights
- expenses of personal nature such as laundry, tips, etc.
- alcoholic drinks, food and beverages other than those provided
- tips for drivers, tour guides or leaders
- personal clothing on trekking tours
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies (REGA membership is recommended)

INSURANCE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTICIPANT!

IMPORTANT NOTE

Traveling in China, especially off the beaten tracks and in rural areas, can be adventurous and carries also a certain amount of surprises and risks. HiddenChina.net ensures that in every situation we and our guides are trying to get out a maximum of comfort for our clients. All our guides are carefully chosen and selected by their abilities and experience. Nevertheless, there might be surprises. We hereby express that a voyage in China needs patience, adaptation and tolerance. In addition due to lack of infrastructure, in rural areas in China there is often a lack of western sanitary standards. Clients of hiddenChina.net accept - upon signing a contract - to be aware of these circumstances, and accept changes which may occur in order to keep security and comfort of the clients according to the circumstances to a maximum during the trip.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHINA TRAVELERS

Traveling in China is always an adventure. Quality of service can range from “top” in selected 5* Hotels in the big cities to “very poor”. While traveling in China, even with an organized tour, the clients have to be ready for unexpected changes (e.g. due to natural disasters such as landslides or flooding) or other surprises. In hotels by example, it can happen that you will get phone calls in the middle of the night, offering you a special massage service. The following chapters will tell you more about what you should consider when traveling in China.

FACE

You may have heard it before and for the experienced China traveler it's a “must know”: In China, everything is about “giving and losing face”. Chinese people are very proud of their culture, food and traditions. Respect this fact and try not to bring a Chinese into an embarrassing situation, as he or she might lose his face in front of coworkers, friends, family members or even the authorities. Try to be polite, smile and - especially to English speaking Chinese - always praise their language skills. Chinese can be considered as reactive people. If you treat Chinese people in an arrogant and harsh way, you will be treated the same way. When you feel cheated, try to solve the situation in a gentle and charming way. You will achieve your goal much faster. Also try to react calmly in stress situations and stay friendly. For every problem in China there is a solution. It's up to you how effective you will get to this solution. Being angry and aggressive is contra productive in the most cases.

SECURITY

Especially large cities in China are extremely safe. Chinese people have to fear severe punishment when being caught by the authorities in illegal matters when foreigners are involved. However, be aware that pick pocketing happens everywhere, so keep an eye on your belongings and never leave your luggage unattended. When going out at night, China's large cities are much safer than practically all European cities. A single woman has nothing to fear when walking in a dark alley even at 4 o'clock in the morning.

HEALTH

It is also recommended to visit your house doctor before you go on a China trip and make all the necessary vaccinations. Your doctor will inform you what you will need. For travelers going to south China, it is also recommended to carry a supply of Malaria remedies. As the avian influenza is getting more and more a serious issue in Asia and a pandemic outbreak will happen sooner or later, the traveler should also consider buying a box of “Tamiflu” before the trip begins.

When traveling in China and especially when eating a lot of local food, a supply of remedies for stomach problems is highly recommended. We will always take care of taking you to clean restaurants with high quality standards. However, your body will have to deal with a wide range of unknown food, spices and other ingredients in China and also with different bacteria and viruses than in Europe’s clean environment. When being on a 3 week China trip, you have to reckon with stomach problems at least once. To cure them it is recommended to take pharmaceuticals, which are rich in salt and minerals and give you back the elements you will lose during a diarrhea. From our longtime China experience, one of the best remedies is to eat well-boiled Chinese mushrooms and bananas as well as to drink tomato juice. On many of our private trips, this helped much better than the Western medication like e.g. Imodium. Always take toilet paper with you, as you won’t find any in public toilets! Travelers going to high altitude areas such as Tibet are also recommended to take a supply of Diamox in case of altitude sickness. Please get advice from your doctor.

CLIMATE

China has several different climatic zones. From high-altitude to sub-tropic and desert climate, there is everything. Depending on your date of arrival in China, you might be traveling in the rainy season. E.g. in southern China, this time mostly starts late May / early June and lasts until August. This year, in the provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou heavy flooding took the life of several hundred local people. However, we will adapt the trip according to your travel time and avoid the areas with heavy rain.

LUGGAGE

Most airlines allow you to check-in 20 kg of luggage (economy class). It is not allowed to take nutrition products (cheese, meat) as well as pornographic material. Please ensure that your “Swiss army knife” and other “dangerous products” are checked in with your luggage and not in the hand luggage.

China offers you a wide range of shopping possibilities. So if you plan to go for extensive shopping, take a minimum of luggage to China. However, whenever you forgot something, don’t worry, more or less everything you need in daily life, can be bought much cheaper in China (see chapter below). Be aware that many customs authorities like the ones in Paris and Milan can fine you heavily when finding out that you try to import faked products from China such as Yves St Laurent bags, Gucci items or Prada clothes.

SHOPPING

Except for imported luxury goods and high-end electrical equipment such as beamers or imported laptops, more or less everything is cheaper in China than in Western Europe. Especially clothes can be bought at a very low price. Many shopping areas offer faked products (sometimes in extremely good quality). However, in many places where no prices are indicated you have to bargain about the price (see chapter below). Please note that when buying a faked product, especially at the airport in Paris, you can get into trouble. The fight against faked products is now at a point, that authorities can or will take away your purchase and will heavily fine you. For the golf lovers, there is a wide range of possibilities to buy whole golf sets at a ridiculously low price. Have your suits tailor-made, buy ties, silk products, pearls etc. at a very low price. For most Europeans, DVD's are of special interest. For a DVD you pay between 8 and 10 RMB (about 1 EURO) and most of the movies are available even before they are shown in European cinemas. The advantage is that DVD's take away only little space and weight. But be aware that in many cases you are buying illegally copied and distributed products.

Credit cards are only accepted in major stores, 3* hotels and upwards and western restaurants. Money can be withdrawn at ATM's at the Bank of China. Please note that these are hard to find in remote areas. Money can be changed at major branches of the Bank of China or in western hotels. Please note that you need to show your passport for changing money.

BARGAINING

As mentioned in the "shopping" chapter, in many places you have to bargain for your price. Western tourists are mostly looked at as "big dollar signs" and accordingly the price will be set 400 – 500% above the price the vendor is ready to sell his or her merchandise. The first rule is to go below the first offered price. So when the vendor asks for 100 RMB, you can set your offer to 20-25 RMB. Then it depends on your bargaining skills at what price you will get it. A simple trick is, when it seems too expensive for you, to walk away from the vendor. If he or she doesn't follow you, you know that your bid was too low. Please also note, always stay friendly and smile when bargaining. Once you agreed for a price, you have to buy the product. Otherwise you and the vendor will lose face.

LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR

Even in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, it is most unlikely that you find English speaking taxi drivers or personnel in the shops. Therefore it is recommended to take a phrase book with you, where you can show what you need.

Chinese people are mostly friendly and curious towards foreigners. However, Chinese are also very proud of their country and culture and some behavior will be strange for travelers who come to China for the first time. In many places (even sometimes in public buses) people smoke a lot and for the non-smoker, China can be a terrible place. You also often see Chinese people spitting accompanied by strange noises. The best way to get around it is to ignore it and live with it. For the smoker on the other hand China is a paradise, as it is more or less everywhere allowed to smoke and cigarettes are extremely cheap, although some foreign brands might be faked. Please also note that you might be invited to test your drinking skills. The easiest way to avoid it without losing face is to tell your hosts that due to liver problems you're not allowed to drink.

Please visit our website www.hiddenchina.net for more information.

TIPPING

Although China is - especially away from the big cities - a very poor country, tipping only exists in the 5* surroundings of the big cities. In restaurants or taxis and hotels (except 5* hotels) tipping is a no-no. However, tour guides and drivers of organized tours should be tipped. Most guides and drivers are roughly paid with 10 Euro per day and rely on additional income. With Chinese tour groups (which often go shopping) the guides always get a commission in the shops, where they make most of their salary. As European groups usually do not visit as many shops as Chinese tourists, guides and drivers have to rely on tips.

Generally a tip of RMB 30 per person and day is reasonable. When you are in a tour group it is recommended that the group collects the tips and hands it to the guides and drivers in an envelope. It is also very helpful to take some souvenirs with you, like for example watches or picture postcards from your home country.

SMALL TALK AND CONVERSATION

Small talk in China is a bit different than in Europe, but there are also topics which should be avoided and topics which are perfect for small talk.

One of the most common greetings in China is “Ni chi fan le ma?” which literally means “Have you eaten yet?” This emphasizes the importance of eating in China, and it is much more a social event than in the West, therefore food is always a welcomed topic.

In some cases you also might be confronted with rather private questions such as about your marital status and about family. The Chinese are very family oriented, so don't feel embarrassed when people ask you rather private questions, it's just small talk. Sometimes, especially in business surroundings, people also might ask you about your salary, which is quite normal in China. Here you can escape (if you don't want to tell the truth) by telling some fictional figure, or when telling the truth and your counterpart's eyebrows rise, you explain how expensive the life in Europe is.

Topics which should be avoided at all costs are all political related such as the Cultural Revolution, critics against the system or chairman Mao, the Tibet and Taiwan question, human rights or how to treat animals. If you want to have answers to these questions you might do it through your guide. Do not overload your guide with too many hard questions in the beginning though. Tactically it is wise to hide these questions in some compliments and be as subtle as possible (see also the chapter about “face”). Please note that young Chinese (below 30) are more open to discuss critical topics than people above 30.

Please also note that Chinese people tend to touch you, which is not a sign of homosexuality but just a sign of sympathy. In such a situation, when you feel uncomfortable, don't react in a rude or harsh way; just try to escape the contact by elegant means. Mostly a hearty fit of coughing does the trick (SARS is still in Chinese people's mind).

TRAFFIC AND TAXI

The public transport system in China is basically quite convenient. Every major city has an airport; there are many train routes (even though there is mostly only one train per day between two destinations) and public buses. Public buses are very cheap although the comfort is sometimes a bit poor.

In the cities, the most convenient public transport is the taxi. You can, compared to Europe, basically take a taxi anytime and everywhere at a very low price. Be careful that on major tourist sites there are also drivers trying to make extra money. When a taxi has no taximeter (make sure that the driver in taxis with a taximeter always puts it on), negotiate the rate before you get into the vehicle. However, some drivers will still try to make you pay an extra fee at the end. Just tell him that you pay the negotiated price, nothing more, and nothing less. Please also note that most drivers don't speak English. So take a bilingual map, a taxi card or a guidebook with you. Tell the reception in the hotel to write down the addresses for you so you can show it to the driver. Please note that highway fares have to be paid by the customer and not the driver (for example, in Beijing the fee for the airport expressway is 10 Yuan for passenger cars). This fee will be added to the amount shown on the taximeter.

USEFUL THINGS TO TAKE ON A CHINA TRIP

Several Swiss army knives, a compass, pharmaceuticals (see health chapter), a first-aid kit, tape, watches (not too expensive), money clip, camera (films can be bought and developed on spot for a very reasonable price), deodorant (rarely available in China), sunglasses, altimeter (for Tibet and Himalaya tours), GPS, safety belt for money, literature, guidebooks, credit-/bank card and a lot of patience.

For ladies: tampons are rarely available in China.