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Qinghai Amdo Motorbike Trip

- 13 days self-drive motorbike tour in Qinghai province
- Explore the traditional Tibetan state of Amdo
- Off-road and dirt road motorcycling across Tibetan grasslands
- Cross several mountain passes at altitudes above 4'000m
- Get in touch with local Tibetan nomad families
- Visit influential Tibetan Buddhist monasteries such as Labrang in Xiahe



QINGHAI AMDO OFF-ROAD, DIRT ROAD AND TIBETAN GRASSLAND MOTORBIKE TOUR

Explore the province of Qinghai and the traditional Tibetan region of Amdo on this extraordinary self-drive motorbike trip! From Xining - the capital of Qinghai province - ride your motorcycle to Qinghai Lake, along the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau through majestic scenery, across high mountain passes and over the Tibetan grasslands. Accommodation will be basic but this unique experience and the scenery will more than make up for it!

- Travel date: April to October
- Destinations: Xining, Qinghai Lake, Gonghe, Xinhai, Maduo, Xiahe, Tongren
- Duration: 13 days
- Starting in: Xining
- Ending in: Xining
- Group size: min. 2 participants, max. 8 participants

QUICK TOUR INTRODUCTION: QINGHAI PROVINCE

The province of Qinghai is named after the enormous Qinghai Lake. It is located on the northeastern part of the Tibetan Plateau. It borders Gansu in the northeast, the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in the northwest, Sichuan in the southeast, and Tibet Autonomous Region in the southwest. Most of Qinghai is part of the traditional provinces of Kham and Amdo of Tibet. It is the birthplace and home to many influential Tibetan figures in history, including Tsongkapa (the greatest commentator in the history of Buddhism) and many of the Dalai Lamas. The Yellow River (Huang He) originates in the middle of the province, while the Yangtze and Mekong have their sources in the southern part.

The province of Qinghai boasts a population of 5.2 million, among which the Han accounts for 54.5%. Other groups include the Tibetans 20.87%, Tu, Hui, Salar and Mongols. Qinghai's culture is heavily influenced by Tibet, given the close proximity as well as a shared history.



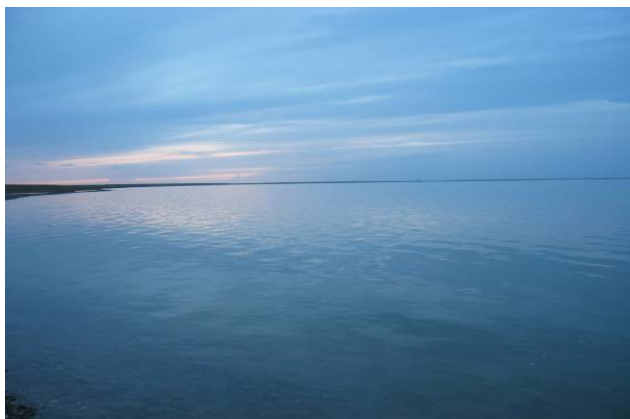
DAY 1 BEIJING / SHANGHAI / HONG KONG - XINING (D)

You fly to Xining, the capital of Qinghai province. Upon arrival, you will be picked up at the airport by our guide and transferred to the hotel. In the evening we will have a welcome dinner and discuss the itinerary of the days ahead.

Please [contact us](#) if you want to fly to Xining from another city within China so we can create an individual offer for you.

DAY 2 XINING - QINGHAI LAKE - CHABCHA (GONGHE) (B/L/D)

From Xining we drive on the highway to Qinghai Lake - the largest saltwater lake in China, located in the west of Xining city in Qinghai in a depression of the Tibetan Plateau. It is famous for its fauna, especially its abundance of birds and fish. The lake is located at the crossroads of several bird migration routes across Asia. Many species use Qinghai as an intermediate stop during migration. At its northeast end are the "Bird Islands" (Cormorant Island and Egg Island), which have been bird



sanctuaries of the Qinghai Lake Natural Protection Zone since 1997. Qinghai Lake is 5,694 km², or 2,278 square miles large, and 360 km (220 miles) in circumference. Twenty-three rivers and streams empty into it.

On the way we will pass the mountain of "Moon and Sun" (or Riyue Shan in Chinese) and drive along Amdo nomad grasslands to the north side of the lake. In the afternoon we ride up to the mountains at an altitude of approximately 3'700 meters to get a breath-taking view of the whole lake and finally reach Chabcha (or Gonghe in Chinese), where we will stay overnight.

DAY 3 GONGHE - XINHAI (B/L/D)

Today we drive to Xinhai along the Santana plateau, visit the Derkar Zertsong Monastery and stay overnight in Xinhai.

DAY 4 XINHAI - MADUO (B/L/D)

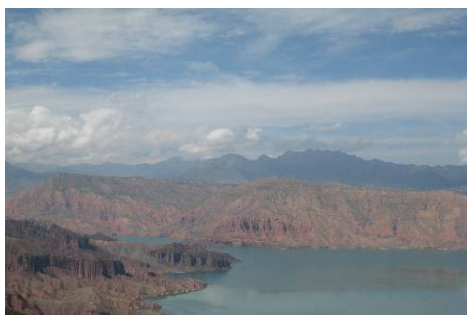
From Xinhai we continue our trip along the plateau and across several mountain passes (up to 4'400 meters) to Hua Ri Xia and visit two lakes on the way - one nearby the road and the second one about 50 kilometers off-road. We then drive on to Mardot (or Maduo in Chinese) to stay overnight at an altitude of about 4'300 meters.

DAY 5 MADOU - YELLOW RIVER - HUA RI XIA (B/L/D)

We ride on dirt roads to the source of the Yellow River (Huanghe in Chinese), visit two lakes at an altitude of 4'000 meters and return to Hua Ri Xia in the afternoon.

DAY 6 HUA RI XIA - MACHEN (DAWU) (B/L/D)

Today we will be driving on wilder dirt roads along Mount Animachen to Machen (or Dawu) and need to pass a mountain peak at an altitude of 4'876 meters. On the way to Machen, we visit several temples in Chi Har Na.

**DAY 7 MACHEN (DAWU) - DARLAG (DA RI) (B/L/D)**

We continue our ride from Machen to Darlag (or Da Ri in Chinese) along the grasslands of Amdo Golog (Guo Luo in Chinese) and visit nomad families and monasteries on the way.

DAY 8 DARLAG (DA RI) - JUK DRIL (JIU ZHI) (B/L/D)

Along the grasslands of Amdo Golog, we drive to Juk Dril and visit several monasteries and towns on the way, as well as stupas in Perma county and Nian Bo Yetse Lake, which is one of the holy lakes in the Tibetan area.

DAY 9 JUK DRIL (JIU ZHI) - MAQU (B/L/D)

On our way to Maqu we drive on wild dirt roads and see a lot of Tibetan nomad families living in black or white tents along the road.

DAY 10 MAQU - LABRANG MONASTERY IN XIAHE (B/L/D)

We drive past several Tibetan nomad or farmer villages to Labrang (Labulangsi in Chinese) Monastery - one of the six great monasteries of the Geluk (Yellow Hat) school of Tibetan Buddhism -



located in Xiahe County in Gansu province. We visit Labrang Monastery and stay overnight in Xiahe.

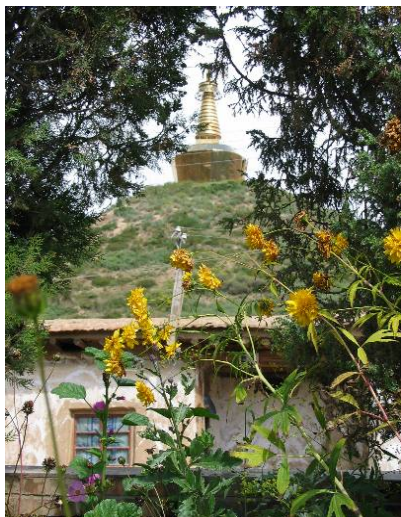
DAY 11 LABRANG - REBKONG (TONGREN) - DOWI (XUNHUA) (B/L/D)

From Labrang we drive across the grasslands of Ganjia to the town of Rebkong, also know as Tongren in Chinese, and visit some families as well as Tangka painting monasteries. Tangkas are painted or

embroidered Buddhist banners used in monasteries or for family altars and sometimes carried by monks in ceremonial processions. Then we drive to Dowi or Xunhua in Chinese, where we will stay for the night.

DAY 12 XUNHUA - ZILANG (XINING) (B/L/D)

We drive back to Zilang (Xining) along Raza Canal and Larmar mountain pass - the last mountain pass (3'789 meters) we need to cross on our trip. On the way we will visit the Sha Chong Monastery -



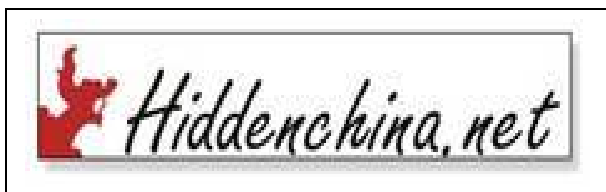
an important monastery in Tibetan history where Tsongkapa used to study before he went to Lhasa and founded the Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism in the 14th century.

DAY 13 XINING - BEIJING / SHANGHAI / HONG KONG (B)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home. End of trip.

For inquiries and bookings please contact Mr. Roman Lange:

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RATES

Rates in standard twin rooms, single supplement on request

From Beijing and Shanghai:

Number of Persons	Rate per Person	Rate per Person	Rate per Person	Rate per Person
	CNY	EURO	USD	CHF
2-8	on request	on request	on request	on request

From Hong Kong:

Number of Persons	Rate per Person	Rate per Person	Rate per Person	Rate per Person
	CNY	EURO	USD	CHF
2-8	on request	on request	on request	on request

Prices subject to change due to exchange rate fluctuations.

Prices based on the value of the Chinese Yuan CNY.

**INCLUDED**

- experienced tour guide for all days, English/Chinese-speaking
- return flight tickets Beijing/Shanghai/Hong Kong - Xining (economy class) incl. airport taxes
- accommodation in basic but clean hotels
- full board except on day 1 and day 13 (described as B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- local motorbikes
- entrance fees to sightseeing spots mentioned in the itinerary

NOT INCLUDED

- personal expenses such as laundry, tips etc.
- petrol and spare parts
- transports not mentioned in the itinerary (such as taxis in the evening, etc.)
- drinks and all meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- expenses for medical care
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies

INSURANCE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTICIPANT

HIDDENCHINA.NET GMBH RECOMMENDS THAT YOU PURCHASE TRAVEL CANCELLATION INSURANCE

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Traveling in China, especially off the beaten tracks and in rural areas, can be adventurous and also carries a certain amount of surprises and risks. HiddenChina.net ensures that in every situation we and our guides arrange for a maximum of comfort for our clients. All HiddenChina.net guides are carefully chosen and selected for their real-world abilities and experience; this allows us to manage the unexpected that is encountered along our tours. We hereby state that a voyage in China requires a degree of patience, adaptation and tolerance. Additionally, due to lack of infrastructure in the rural areas there is often a lack of western sanitary standards. Clients of HiddenChina.net accept – upon contract signing - that they are aware of these circumstances in China, and accept that in order to keep the client(s) security and comfort at a maximum during the trip, incidental changes may occur.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHINA TRAVELERS

Traveling in vastness of China is always an adventure. Quality of service can range from the international standards of 5-star hotels in the big cities, to “very poor” in remote villages. While traveling in China, even with an organized tour, clients have to be ready for the unexpected (e.g. due to natural disasters such as landslides, flooding, and weather) or other surprises. In hotels for 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 be aware of 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 a 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 and you will achieve your goal much faster. Also try to react calmly in stress situations and stay friendly. Be reassured that for every problem in China there is a solution, it is up to you how effective you will get to this solution. Being angry and aggressive is counterproductive, in most cases.

SECURITY

Large cities in China are extremely safe! Chinese people have to fear severe punishment when being caught by the authorities in illegal matters especially 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, you will find that China's large cities are much safer than practically all European and North American cities. A single woman has nothing to fear when walking even at 4 o'clock in the morning.

HEALTH

It is also recommended to visit your house doctor or general practitioner before you go on a China trip and take the necessary vaccinations. Your doctor will inform you what you will need; you may also want to consult your country's national health authority. For travelers going to south China, it is also recommended to carry a supply of malaria remedies. The avian influenza is a serious issue in Asia and has been the focus of the World Health Organization (WHO) for several years. As a traveler should also consider taking appropriate medicines under the advice of their physician and buy some common incidental remedies (e.g. Tamiflu, appropriate cold medicines) before the trip begins.

We at HiddenChina.net will always take particular care to introduce you to clean restaurants with high quality standards. However, when traveling in China and especially when eating a lot of local food, carrying a supply of remedies for stomach problems is highly recommended. Your body will have to deal with a wide range of new foods, spices and other ingredients in China and also adjust to different bacteria (micro flora) than found in Europe's and North America's clean environments. When going on a China trip of a few weeks, you may have to reckon with stomach problems at least once. It is recommended that you take appropriate pharmaceuticals which are rich in salt and minerals and give you back the elements you may lose during a bout of diarrhea or intestinal discomfort. 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, e.g. Imodium, Pepto-Bismol. Always carry convenient packets of tissues and toilet paper with you, as you will not 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. In all instances of traveling to China, we recommend getting specific, up-to-date advice from your doctor on appropriate vaccinations and medications.

CLIMATE

China has several different climatic zones. From high altitude, to sub-tropic, and desert, China has every environment. Depending on your date of arrival in China, you might be traveling in the rainy season. In southern China this season usually begins late May or early June and lasts into August. This is a serious problem in China and this year alone in the provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou heavy flooding took the life of several hundred local people. However, we will adapt your tour according to the season and avoid the areas with heavy rain, or other such weather related problems.

LUGGAGE

Most airlines allow you to check baggage of 20 kg (economy class); please refer to your airline for specific allowances. The Chinese Border Control does not allow certain food products such as cheeses, meats, pornographic, or political material. Please ensure that your "Swiss army knife" and other "dangerous products" are checked with your luggage and not in your hand luggage/carry-on luggage.

China offers you a wide range of shopping possibilities. If you plan to go for extensive shopping, take a minimum of belongings. However, do not worry if you forget something, almost everything you need for daily life, can be bought much cheaper in China (see chapter below). Please be aware that many customs authorities, like the ones in Paris and Milan, can fine you heavily if they discover fake, brand name products from China in your luggage. Copied brand name products such as Yves St Laurent, Gucci, Prada, etc. are openly available in most major cities.

SHOPPING

Except for imported luxury goods more or less everything is cheaper in China than in Europe and North America; clothes especially can be bought at very low prices. Many shopping areas offer fake/copy products (sometimes of extremely good quality), however, prices are not always indicated and you will have to bargain about the price (see chapter below). Please note that when buying a fake/copy product, you can get into trouble in Customs especially at major airports such as Paris, London, or Milan. The campaign against fake/copy products is now at a point which authorities can or will take away your purchase and possibly fine you heavily. For golf lovers, there is a wide range of possibilities to buy high-quality whole golf sets at a ridiculously low price. Similarly, you can have your suits tailor-made, buy ties, silk products, pearls, etc. all at very low prices. For most Europeans and North Americans, DVD's are of special interest. For a DVD in China you pay between ¥8-10 (about 1 EURO) and ironically most of the movies are available here even before they are shown in European and American cinemas. The advantage of DVD's is that they take only a little space and weight in your luggage, but be aware that in most cases you are buying illegally copied and distributed products.

Credit cards in China are only accepted in major stores, 3-star hotels and upwards, and western restaurants. Cash can be withdrawn conveniently at ATM's at the Bank of China. Please note that these are hard to find in remote areas. Money can be changed most reliably at major branches of the Bank of China or in western hotels; you will 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 viewed as "big dollar signs" and accordingly the first price given by many shop keepers will be set 400–500% above the final price they will sell his or her merchandise. So when the vendor asks for ¥100, you can set your offer to ¥20-25. Then it depends on your bargaining skills as to what price you will finally pay. A simple trick is, when an item seems too expensive for you, walk away from the vendor. If he or she doesn't follow you, you know that your bid was too low. Please also keep in mind that staying friendly and smiling when bargaining is the best approach. Once you have agreed for a price, you have to buy the product, otherwise you and the vendor will lose face. Note: the Chinese Yuan (¥), is also called RMB within China.

LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Even in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, it is most unlikely that you find English-speaking taxi drivers or shop assistants. We recommended that you take a phrase book with you, so that you can

show what you need to express. Chinese people are mostly friendly and curious towards foreigners and they are also very proud of their country and culture. However, some of their 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 difficult place. You also often see Chinese people spitting accompanied by rather obvious throat-clearing noises. The best way to get around these differences in social graces is to ignore them and accept it as part of the culture; for even in China they also say “Ru Xiang Sui Su!”, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. On the other hand for the smoker, China is a paradise, as it is more or less acceptable everywhere to smoke and cigarettes are extremely cheap. Social drinking in China is also noteworthy as you might be invited to test your skills. Even modest social contact can include unexpected rounds of drinks, as the Chinese find this is an opportunity to be more indulgent than most European or North Americans. The easiest way to avoid unwanted drinking without losing face is to tell your hosts that due to “health” problems you’re not allowed to drink.

TIPPING

Although China is - especially away from the big cities - a very poor country, tipping only exists in 5-star surroundings of the big cities. In restaurants, taxis, and smaller inns and hotels tipping is a “no-no” (except in 5-star hotels). However, the other exception is for tour guides and drivers of organized tours, these individuals should be tipped. Most guides and drivers are roughly paid 10 Euro per day and rely on the additional tip income. This is acceptable because with Chinese tour groups (which often go shopping) the guides and drivers usually get a commission from the shops. European tour groups usually do not visit as many shops as Chinese tourists, for European tour groups then the 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 inexpensive souvenirs with you from your home country, for example watches or picture postcards.

SMALL TALK AND CONVERSATION

Small talk in China is a bit different than in Europe and North America, but similarly there are 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, job, and about family. The Chinese are very family oriented, so don’t feel embarrassed when people ask you rather private questions, it is 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 an awkward direct question (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 can explain how expensive life in Europe is.

Topics which should be avoided at all costs are all political-related discussions such as the Cultural Revolution, criticism of the system or Chairman Mao, the “Tibet” and “Taiwan” questions, human rights, and the treatment of 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. For the sake of social tact, it is wise to hide these questions in compliments and be as subtle as possible (see also the chapter about “Face”). Please note that young Chinese (below 30) are much more open to discuss critical and inflammatory topics than people above 30.

Please also note that Chinese people may tend to physically touch you, which should not be taken as 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 polite means –to feign a hearty fit of coughing does the trick (SARS is still in Chinese people's mind).

TRAFFIC, TAXI AND SUBWAY

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. Subways are the most convenient way to get around town as you will not get stuck in traffic jams. In Beijing, tickets for lines 1 and 2 cost 2 Yuan for however far you are going. All signs and announcements in the subway system are in Chinese and English.

In the cities, taxis are quite convenient as well. You can, compared to Europe, basically take a taxi anytime and everywhere at a very low price. Be wary of taxis found at major tourist sites as there are also unofficial drivers trying to make extra money. We at HiddenChina.net recommend that you always take a licensed taxi, however, if you take a taxi that has no meter (make sure that the driver in taxis with a taximeter always puts it on), be sure to negotiate the rate before you get into the vehicle. Even in taking this precaution, some drivers will still try to make you pay an extra fee at the end of your ride. 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 it is a good habit to take a bilingual map, a taxi card, or a guidebook with you. A convenient method is to tell the reception staff in the hotel to write down the addresses for you so you can show it to the driver. Please note that highway toll fees/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 (RMB) 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 (rolls of film can be bought and developed on the 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. Ladies please note: tampons and similar hygiene products are rarely available in China outside of the major cities.