

Pilgrimage to Kailash

Mount Kailash has been regarded by Hindus and Buddhists alike as the 'navel of the universe' for thousands of years. Its mystical importance is undoubtedly related to its extraordinary geographical location, marking one of the high points of the Tibetan plateau, from which flow four of the great rivers of the Indian sub-continent. Below it, Mansarovar, where a ritual bath will deliver a pilgrim to Brahma's paradise; a drink of its water relinquishes the sins of a hundred lifetimes. Now there's a good reason to visit in itself !

Our journey begins with a magnificent flight from Kathmandu across the Himalayan mountain range to Lhasa, where we spend several days visiting the city's main landmarks including the Potala Palace, home of the Dalai Lamas, and the Jokhang Temple. From Lhasa we have a spectacular drive westwards across the desolate Tibetan Plateau to Lake Mansarovar and further on to Mount Kailash. We will meet Tibetan pilgrims at Darboche, below Mount Kailash, to join them for the challenging trekking circuit (kora) around the mountain. The trek ends with a spectacular road journey across the Himalayas back to Kathmandu.

Duration : **23 days/22 nights** – (2 nights Kathmandu, 17 nights in Tibet (**11 nights camping**), 2 nights Kathmandu)

Accommodation: Comfortable 3-4 star Hotel in Kathmandu, Comfortable accommodation in Lhasa and other Tibetan towns & camping elsewhere in Tibet.

The price for this itinerary is as follows:

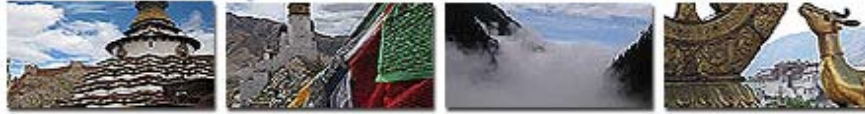
US \$ TBC per person travelling based on minimum of 6 persons on a sharing basis,
US \$ TBC single supplement.

Optional upgrade to Deluxe Heritage Hotel in Kathmandu (Dwarika's Hotel): US\$ 250.00 per adult/150 per child.

Tibet visa fees are extra and details will be advised at the time of booking.

This itinerary can also be arranged on a private basis to suit your own dates (Note that flights to Lhasa operate on a Tuesday or a Saturday and this should be borne in mind when considering dates). We are also pleased to quote for a modified version of this itinerary which may be shortened or lengthened depending on your exact requirements.

Price Includes:	Price Excludes:
X4 nights bed and breakfast accommodation at Shangri-la Hotel. Hotel accommodation Lhasa on a twin sharing/bed & Breakfast basis as per the itinerary, elsewhere in Tibet on a full board basis. Camping arrangements as mentioned in the itinerary with provision of sleeping tents and mattresses. Private 4-wheel drive vehicle throughout with an English speaking guide All monasteries entrance fees/All the necessary permits All sightseeing as per the itinerary One way Airfare for the sector of Kathmandu/ Lhasa.	lunch and dinner arrangements in Kathmandu and Lhasa personal insurance price rises beyond our control (e.g.; increase in permit fees, airfares) charges for unexpected expenses such as landslides at the border which may result in additional expenses to hire porters etc personal expenses such as gratuities, laundry etc. personal clothing and equipment international departure airport tax international airfare Nepal and Tibet visa fees



ITINERARY

Day 01: *Arrival in Kathmandu*



Upon arrival you will be met and assisted by an Escape 2 Nepal representative and transferred to Shangri-la Hotel which is located 15 minutes from the airport and 5-10 minutes from the tourist district of Thamel.

This Hotel provides comfortable accommodation and excellent facilities as well as one of Kathmandu's best gardens.

Day2: In Kathmandu

A pre-trip briefing will be conducted today in which maps and other general information will be distributed. This will also offer you the ideal opportunity to ask any last minute questions that you may have. Half day sightseeing tour of Kathmandu.

A half day sightseeing tour of Kathmandu City will also be arranged.

About Kathmandu: Once a traditional medieval city of breathtaking Newari architecture, Kathmandu is now fully grown into an urban capital with a population of one & half-million people. Nevertheless, it has not lost its magic, especially in the ancient, narrow streets and in countless temples and shrines where Buddhist and Hindu iconography mix in fantastic ways. Bodha is a 1,400-year-old stupa that attracts pilgrims from across Buddhist Asia. At Bodha, we see pilgrims circling the stupa to make a *kora*, turning the stupa's giant prayer wheels as they go. With new monasteries sprouting up all around it, Bodha is rapidly becoming a world center of Tibetan Buddhist study. Swayambu is an ancient Buddhist temple with commanding views of the valley. We make a steep climb of 300 steps to reach this stupa. Swayambu was established as a shrine around 500 BC and by the 13th century AD, had become an important center of Buddhist learning. Its eyes, painted on four cardinal points, keep watch over the Kathmandu Valley. Pashupatinath, with its triple-roofed temple, burning ghats, and wandering sadhus (holy men) along the sacred Bagmati, is one of four major sites of Shiva worship on the subcontinent. Its temples and ghats are set along the Bagmati because the waters of this river eventually river flow south to join the mighty Ganges, holy river of India. Entrance to Pashupatinath's inner temple precinct is for Hindus only, but from the outside, we are able to see the huge structure of Nandi, the bull, and a smaller statue of Hanuman. Overnight Shangri-la Hotel.

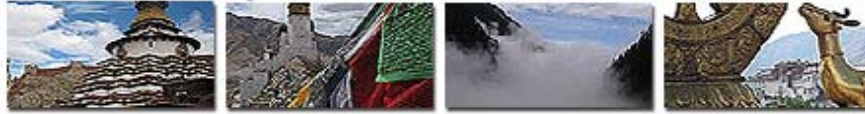


Day 3: Kathmandu- Lhasa, Tibet

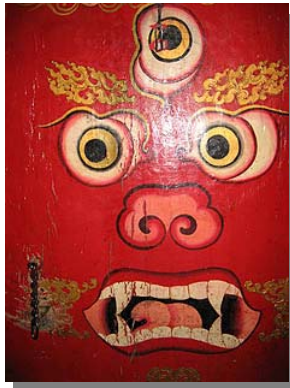
Transferred to the International airport for the flight to Lhasa. This spectacular flight, on a China Southwest Airlines Boeing 757, takes us right across the main Himalayan range and provides us with magnificent mountain views. After landing at Gonggar Airport with the altitude of 3600m above sea level and meeting our Tibetan guide, it is a further 2 hour drive by Land cruiser jeep along with the Yarlung Tsangpo River to Lhasa where we will check in to the Hotel Kyichu. The hotel is one of Lhasa's better properties..... with a Tibetan deco and friendly service. It is advisable to rest and take it easy for the remainder of the day due to Lhasa's altitude. However, for those feeling up to you can a take a stroll to the nearby

Bharkor Market place located close to the hotel.

Overnight in Lhasa Kyichu Hotel



Day4 & 5: Lhasa (11,830') In Lhasa, we spend two days exploring, joining pilgrims who gather at the candle-lit altars at the Jokhang (Tibet's most sacred temple), walking in the Barkhor, a pilgrimage circuit that encircles the Jokhang, and visiting some of the massive, ancient monasteries of the Lhasa Valley. We also hope to visit some of the many small temples tucked off the main thoroughfare, places other travelers rarely visit. Overnight in Lhasa Kyichu Hotel...



Breakfast each day and see our recommendations for a variety of restaurants located close to the hotel.

Lhasa & the Lhasa Valley: Tibet's enormous Potala Palace is a striking thousand-room monument that dominates the Lhasa skyline. From the roofs of the Potala, the view over Lhasa is unforgettable, and it is on the roof terraces that we can visit the Dalai Lama's residences and courtyard. Eight Dalai Lamas are buried in this famous building. The original parts of the Potala date back to the 7th century. We also visit Drepung Monastery, a former Buddhist university cradled in rock ridges five miles west of Lhasa. Drepung was once the

largest and most powerful of the six great Gelugpa religious centers in Tibet. The kora (pilgrim trail circling a sacred place) around Drepung offers a panoramic one-hour walk with views of the Lhasa Valley and the monastery grounds. There is always something interesting to observe at Tibetan monasteries and temples, and we are likely to see monks engaging in ritual philosophical debates or chanting prayers and pilgrims in their devotional activities. We visit the Jokhang, Tibet's most sacred temple, a place that draws multitudes of pilgrims from all over the country. It houses Tibet's most revered statue, a magnificent image of Jowo Sakyamuni. We also walk in the Barkhor, a pilgrimage circuit that encircles the Jokhang and serves as Lhasa's central bazaar, where we find everything from precious Kham amber to prayer flags. One afternoon, we visit Norbulingka ("Jewel Park"), official summer residence for the Dalai Lamas and their families since the mid-18th century. Norbulingka is a park-like enclave surrounded by trees, ponds, and pavilions on the outskirts of Lhasa. The current Dalai Lama lived here until he fled to India in 1959 and his residential quarters have been left untouched, remaining furnished they were at that time.



Day6: Lhasa- Gyantse .

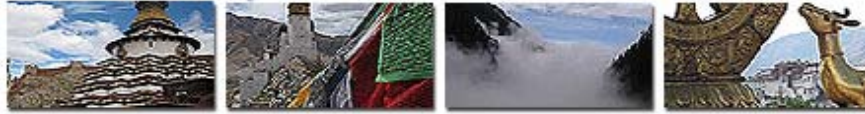


Today we drive to Gyantse about 270km and cross three passes, from the top of the first pass Kampala pass (4640m), you will have a good view of the Yamdok Yumtso, which is the one of the holy lakes in Tibet, and about 800 square Kilometers, then driving along the lakes and through the Nangartse courtyard cross the second pass Karola over 5000m and from where you will have a spectacular view of the of the Nyanchen Kangsang Glacier and then cross the third pass Simila pass and drive to Gyantse, in Gyantse you will visit the Pelkor Chode monastery and Kumbum Stupa which dates back to the 15th century.

Overnight in Gyantse Hotel

Day7: Gyantse- Shigatse

We drive to Shigatse about 90km with paved road, and drive along the Nyangchu valley , which is one of the most fertile valley in Tibet and get in Shigatse, where you visit one of the great Gelugpa monastery Tashilunpo, which is the seat of the Panchen Lama and founded in 15th century by the Gedun Drub, or the first incarnation of the Dalai lama, after visit the monastery is also a nice to do the Kora around the monastery and end of the Kora get to the free market or the local market. **Overnight in Shigatse Hotel.**



Day8: Shigatse - Tasang Gonpa



We drive from Shigatse to Tasand Gonpa, about 250km, enroute you'll drive through the Lhatse county after about 180km, then from Lhatse to camp along with Langtso and Nyamring Tso, Camp at Tasang Gonpa where there is a small gonpa with caves above the mountain.

Day9; Tasang Gonpa - Saka,

Today we drive about 210km, this day we have about three passes and all over 4500m and the last pass is about over 5000m and camp after Saka.

Day10: Saka to Drongpa

Today we drive about 145km, this day you will have about three passes and around 4500m, enroute not far from the Saka you will see a monastery above the right side of the mountain, Dargyeling Monastery, which is a Gelugpa monastery, then drive to camp.

Day11: Drongpa to Punsum

Today we drive 140km, this day you will have two passes to cross and over 4600m and enroute Paryang, a small town with few guesthouses, then drive to camp at Punsum.

Day 12: Punsum to Seralung Today we drive about 220km, and we have two passes and drive along the Mayum Tsangpo and cross Macula pass(5280m), and drive to the second pass which is also called as a ChaktseKhang (prostrating place), where you will see the first view of the Mount Kailash, then drive on to Seralung and Camp.



We visit the seralung monastery, which is said to be as the east gate of the lake Mansarovar, then drive to Darchen about 60km.

Day13: Begin of the Kora for Kailash, trekking to Derapuk.

An hour or so after leaving the village we ascend a low ridge and the first of four prostration sites. Pilgrims perform body prostrations at these stations, first touching their joined hands to the head, the mouth and the heart in quick succession before reclining on the ground, face down with arms extended over the head in an act of complete devotion.

Ahead is the magnificent desert valley of the Lha Chhu and Serzhong, the site of a religious festival on Saga Dawa. One of the highlights of today is a visit to Chhoku Gompa which clings to the side of an immense cliff face at 4820m. We walk on through the afternoon to camp in pleasant meadows by the side of a river.

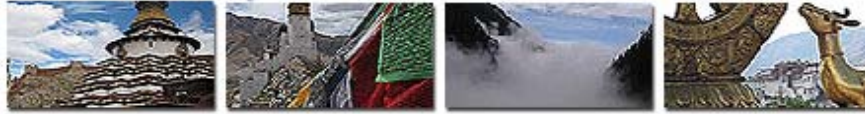


Day14: Trekking from Derapuk to Zuchipuk, and cross the Dromala pass over 5400m and camp at Zuchipuk.

Day 15: Zuchipuk to Darchen.

Day 16: Drive Darchen to Lake Mansarovar with 60km.

Day 17: Mansarovar to Drongpa about 320km.



Day 18: Drongpa to Saka about 170km..

Day 19: Contingency day

Day 20: Saka / Shishapangma / Nyalam.

This day is the very nice driving, from Saka you will cross the Yarlung Tsangpo and then drive in the remote and cross about three passes and you will see the lake Pelkutso, with Himalaya range and after a while you will be enjoying particularly fine views of massive Shishapangma (26,397'), which is over 8000m, among the Himalaya range which is only the one to the Tibet-side, then you will get on the main way which is also the friendship highway, driving to the pass Tong La over 5000m, from where you will also have a wonderful view of the Himalaya range, this is also the last pass from Lhasa to Border, then drive to Nyalam and camp just after the Nyalam. (12,200'), just 21 miles from the Nepal/Tibet border town of Khasa.

Overnight at camp...BLD

Day 21: Nyalam/ Khasa, Tibet / Kathmandu, Nepal about 30km.



We continue our winding descent into the welcoming greenery of Nepal, passing through the immigration formalities at Khasa, crossing the "friendship bridge" across the Sun Kosi and driving the twisting road through the Sun Kosi Valley to the Kathmandu Valley. This is a beautiful drive through traditional farms and across rushing rivers. Arriving in Kathmandu in the late afternoon after a long day on the road, we settle into the Nepali-owned Shangri La Hotel, a 4-star accommodation with a tranquil, award-winning garden. Our hotel is only a 20-minute walk from the bustling bazaar of the Thamel district. Dinner is on your own tonight. **Overnight at hotel...BL**

Day 22: Day in Kathmandu

Today enjoy a leisurely lunch at the exclusive Shivapuri Heights Cottage in the hills just north of Kathmandu.

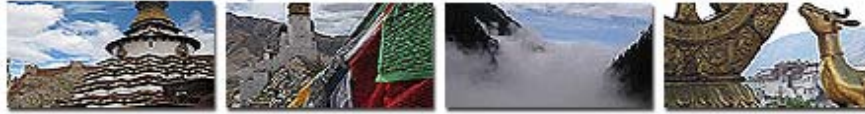
Overnight at the Shangri-la Hotel.

Day 23: International flight

Transfer to the International airport for your final departure from Kathmandu.



Note: Road conditions between Nepal and Tibet may deteriorate at certain times of the year resulting in routings having to be revised which may entail additional costs.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRAVEL IN TIBET

The following information is very important and we urge you to read it carefully.

Travel in Tibet is a true adventure. Tibet's long isolation, rugged travel conditions, and the fact that tourism is still relatively new here all make for exciting but unpredictable travel. Traveling here may have its uncertainties and difficulties, but the warm, devout Tibetan people, the stark beauty of the landscape, and the fascination of the culture, with its many beautiful monasteries, make our trip in Tibet an experience of a lifetime. Flexibility and an open mind on your part will make the trip more enjoyable for all participants.

Tibet is an occupied country that has undergone a campaign of cultural destruction at the hands of the Chinese Communist government. This is very clear from the physical evidence of ruined monasteries, the stories of brutality recounted by the Tibetans, and the major presence of army and public security personnel. The Tibetan people have a strong commitment to the independence of their country, and resentment towards the Chinese is still strong. The demonstrations that occurred in Lhasa are an indication of this; the state of martial law that was imposed at that time was lifted in the early 1990s, and now tourists are able to travel and visit all the major points of interest there.

All arrangements within Tibet are handled through a local government-recognized tour agency, and we cannot assume responsibility for the quality of services or adherence to our trip itinerary within Tibet. You may have experienced excellent services in other parts of China, but the standard of operation in Tibet is not comparable. We will do everything possible to ensure that the trip meets your expectations, but the following points should be clearly understood:

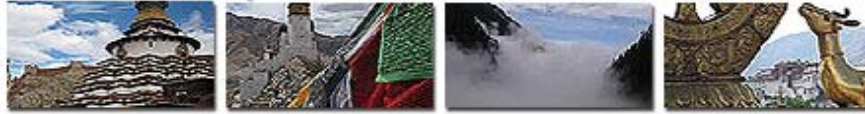
1) Government Regulations: The Chinese government may make last-minute changes in their tourist regulations, possibly in response to political developments or demonstrations in Tibet. It is possible, though unlikely, that trips in Tibet could be canceled at the last minute.

2) Itinerary Changes: Trip itineraries may be changed due to weather, government restrictions, and transportation problems caused by road conditions or vehicle breakdowns, or other circumstances beyond our control. As trip itineraries may be significantly changed at any time, we cannot guarantee that you will visit each destination described in the trip itinerary. We will do everything possible to run each trip exactly as planned, but no one should go to Tibet with just one destination in mind. For example, on one trip, unannounced military maneuvers prevented a group from visiting Rongbuk and Everest Base Camp, and an alternative trek route in Central Tibet, which was enjoyed by all, was substituted.

3) Additional Costs: We are not responsible for any additional costs required by changes in the itinerary or in flight schedules (such as additional flights, hotel nights or meals not included in the scheduled trip itinerary). Payment for any such additional services will be required at the time received, and everyone should bring extra funds in the form of travelers checks, cash, or credit cards (American Express or Visa) for such emergencies.

4) Quality of Services: Despite working with the best tourism operators in Tibet, and booking what we consider to be the best hotels, the quality of hotels, hotel food, and vehicles can vary considerably. While our groups are normally provided with comfortable Japanese minibuses or 4WD vehicles and the best available hotels, we cannot guarantee either of these. Vehicle maintenance can be required at any stage of your journey. There are no first-class hotels anywhere in Tibet, but we always try to obtain the best possible. Under these circumstances, we cannot assume responsibility for the quality or conditions of lodging or vehicles.

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5) Road Conditions: Travel conditions in Tibet are extremely rugged. Most roads are unpaved (except near Lhasa), creating rough and uneven surfaces that often mean very bumpy and dusty traveling conditions. Flash floods, landslides and mudslides often result in delays or late arrivals, so the potential of having to ford rivers or walk through considerable sections of rocky, muddy or slippery roads does exist.

6) Medical Services: You should be aware that medical services are extremely limited in Tibet except in the city of Lhasa. In the event of illness requiring evacuation, there are risks involved. Depending upon the point where we are in the itinerary, an evacuation may take several days. You should bring an ample supply of any prescription medicines you know you need.

7) Commitment to the group: The support of the group is a key element in making these difficult trips successful and enjoyable experiences for all group members. It is the responsibility of each group member to contribute to the well being of the group as a whole, through patience, understanding, and the willingness to help out as needed. It is very difficult to break off from the group except for extreme medical emergencies. This means that the entire group must enter and leave Tibet together on the same flight. You must be fully committed to traveling with the group regardless of any changes that occur in the trip itinerary.

Travel in Tibet is still one of the world's true adventures. With a positive, flexible attitude, your trip to Tibet will be most rewarding and enjoyable!