



TibetanGuide

M I M A D H O N D U P

MT. KAILASH PILGRIMAGE KORA – SAGA DAWA FESTIVAL 2024 –

Tashi delek! Tibetan Guide Travel Tours is your trustworthy boutique travel agency based in Lhasa that offer bespoke guided tours across the Tibetan Plateau. Being a Tibetan owned business and with highly experienced Tibetan drivers and tour guides, we well know our traditions and mother land. We are confident that you would not be disappointed if you choose our services; safety and customer satisfaction is our priority. We have our own tourism license and one of the few authorised to receive foreign groups and apply for their Tibet Travel Permit without any intermediary.

Proposed itinerary

May 13th, 2024.

Day 1: Lhasa arrival [3650m]

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Welcome to Lhasa! Your English-speaking Tibetan guide and driver will warmly welcome you and accompany you to your hotel. Lhasa is one of the highest cities in the world. We understand that the high altitude of Tibet can be challenging for some, so we recommend taking your time to acclimate. Rest assured, we will provide all the necessary support to ensure your well-being. Remember to drink plenty of water and take a good rest to minimise any altitude sickness symptoms. Get ready to embark on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure! *Overnight in Lhasa.*

May 14th, 2024.

Day 2: Lhasa sightseeing

[B, -, -]

At the assigned time, we'll begin our tour by visiting the iconic Potala Palace. Built in the 17th century by the fifth Dalai Lama, this magnificent palace offers breathtaking views of the entire city and is home to the private quarters of the Dalai Lama, numerous grand state rooms, and chapels. Afterward, we'll visit the revered Jokhang Temple, founded in the 7th century by Songtsen Gampo, which is considered the most sacred monastery in Tibet. Immerse yourself in the rich cultural heritage of this magical land: take a stroll through the vibrant Barkhor old quarter and follow pilgrims from all over the Tibetan plateau on a kora around the Jokhang Temple. Kora is a term used in Tibetan Buddhism that refers to the practice of circumambulating around a sacred site, such as a temple, stupa or mountain, as a way of showing devotion and accumulating merit. The practice involves walking clockwise around the site, often while reciting mantras, prayers or other sacred texts. It is also believed to bring good fortune and blessings to those who undertake it. *Overnight in Lhasa.*

May 15th, 2024.

Day 3: Lhasa sightseeing

[B, -, -]

Today we'll visit Drepung and Sera monasteries. After breakfast, we'll venture to the outskirts of Lhasa to witness the grandeur of the Drepung Monastery, the largest in Tibet, which once housed 7000 monks. Along with the monasteries of Ganden and Sera, Drepung is one of the three great centers of Tibetan Buddhist education in the Gelugpa school, also known as the Yellow Hat Sect. Founded in the 15th century, it was the former residence of the Dalai Lama before the construction of the majestic Potala Palace. In the afternoon, you'll be mesmerised by the famous debates of the Sera Monastery, where the monks engage with vibrant energy in intellectual discourse and challenge each other's understanding of Buddhist philosophy. It's a truly awe-inspiring experience not to be missed! *Overnight in Lhasa.*

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May 16th, 2024.

Day 4: Ganden Monastery and Drak Yerpa Hermitage day trip [140Km]

[B, -, -]

We will begin the day with a visit to Ganden Monastery, located atop a hill in the Kyichu valley, 50 km from Lhasa. It is the main seat of the Gelug Sect and was founded by Tsongkhapa in 1409. You can also do a kora around the monastery, which offers peaceful views of the typical Tibetan landscape. After lunch, we'll head to the off-the-beaten-path complex of Drak Yerpa meditation caves and temples, one of the most holy pilgrimage sites since the 7th century. The visit takes about 2-3 hours of walking on a hillside. We'll then return to Lhasa for some free time. Today activities will improve our acclimatisation to high altitude. *Overnight in Lhasa.*

May 17th, 2024.

Day 5: Lhasa – Tsedang [180km, 3575m]

[B, -, -]

Let the adventure begin! We will head South-East towards the Yarlung Valley, the cradle of Tibetan civilization. Today's plan includes exploring the region where the ancient Tibetan kings unified Tibet in the 7th century. Our first stop will be at Tsedang, the fourth most important city in Tibet, where we will visit the Yumbulagang Palace which dominates the valley from the top of a hill. Considered as the first construction in Tibet, resembles a medieval fortress. Next, we will visit the Samye Monastery (8th century), the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. The monastery's unique architecture forms a gigantic mandala, following the structure of the universe according to Buddhist cosmology. If time permits, we will also visit the Temple of Traduk today. *Overnight in Tsedang.*

May 18th, 2024.

Day 6: Tsedang – Gyantse [280Km, 3980m]

[B, -, -]

Early breakfast to get ready for an exciting day: we'll start driving West towards Tsang region to ascend the Kampa-la Pass [4797m], where you'll witness the stunning Mt. Noiijin Kangsang [7206m] and the breathtaking turquoise waters of holy lake Yamdrok-Tso. An unreal sight that will leave you spellbound all along the way to the Karo-la Pass [5050m], where you'll marvel at the glacier that majestically hugs the roadside. The final stop will be the charming Gyantse town, home to the Kumbum Stupa inside Pelkor Chode Monastery, renowned for its exquisite Tibetan art paintings. From the top of the Kumbum, you'll also be treated to a magnificent view of the majestic Gyantse Dzong fortress overlooking the valley. *Overnight in Gyantse.*

May 19th, 2024.

Day 7: Gyantse – Sakya [250Km, 4320m]

[B, -, -]

Our first destination today is the historic Shalu Monastery. Built in the 11th century, the monastery was partially destroyed by an earthquake in the 14th century and then rebuilt, resulting in a blend of architectural styles. Shalu Monastery boasts an impressive collection of Buddhist art and sculptures that are well-preserved. It was a renowned center of learning for various tantric practices and techniques, and some of these skills were described in Alexandra David-Néel's book, "Magic and Mystery in Tibet," which impressed the world. Back to the Friendship Highway, we'll take you to the stunning Sakya Monastery, the principal seat of the Sakyapa Sect founded in 1073 and one of the four major Schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Its powerful abbots governed Tibet during the whole of the 13th century until they were eclipsed by the rise of the Gelugpa Sect. With its unique Mongolian architecture, this monastery stands out from any other you've seen before. The lucky ones may get to witness the sunset from atop the monastery walls, accompanied by the hypnotising sound of the monks playing their dungcheng, a traditional long Tibetan horn. *Overnight in Sakya.*

May 20th, 2024.

Day 8: Sakya – Rongbuk (Mt. Everest) [230Km, 5000m]

[B, -, -]

Another thrilling day! We'll reach one of the major highlights of our trip, near Mt. Everest North Base Camp [5200m]. The journey to Rongbuk involves crossing the high passes of Gyatso-la [5220m] and Pang-la [5150m]. Gyatso-la gives the opportunity to view Mt. Everest and the Himalayas for the first time; and from the top of the Pang-la you'll enjoy amazing views of several peaks like Makalu, Lhotse, Cho Oyu, and Mount Everest. The Rongbuk Monastery is located at the foot of the Everest, and the highest monastery in the world. You'll spend the night at the tourist camp site located a few Kilometres from the real EBC used by climbing expeditions, where you'll have direct views of Mt. Everest (Qomolangma). Since 2018 tourists are not allowed to visit the EBC due to environmental protection and now there is a eco-bus shuttle to access Rongbuk. *Overnight at simple guesthouse tent (dorm bed without bathroom). Sleeping bag is recommended.*

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May 21st, 2024.

Day 9: Rongbuk – Saga [300Km, 4490m]

[B, -, -]

Start your day early to enjoy the sunrise view of Mt. Everest summit [8848m] on the horizon. After breakfast, we will visit Rongbuk Monastery for a final look of the Mt. Everest North Face. Our journey continues as we drive towards the Northwest, crossing high passes with enchanting views of the surrounding Himalayan peaks such as Cho Oyu and Shishapangma, and the wild and stunning Peikutso lake. *Overnight in Saga.*

May 22nd, 2024.

Day 10: Saga – Darchen [490Km, 4670m]

[B, -, -]

Today early morning, we'll enter the semi-nomadic regions of Tibet's far west. You will keep your eyes out of the window to see the authentic Tibetan landscapes throughout the long drive, as we traverse through the biggest and highest plateau in the world. Following west the Yarlung Tsampo river, also known as the Brahmaputra in India, we'll arrive to little town of Darchen, nestled at the foot of Mount Kailash. This is where you'll prepare yourself for the upcoming trek around the holy mountain. *Overnight in Darchen.*

May 23rd-25th, 2024.

Days 11-13: Mt. Kailash Kora during Saga Dawa Festival [52Km, max. altitude 5630m]

[-, -, -]

We begin the Pilgrimage Kora of Mount Kailash, the most sacred mountain in Asia. Tibetans and Hindu people from all over the World come here for religious reasons. First we'll go to an important pilgrimage area called Tarpoche where Saga Dawa Festival is held every year on the 15th day of the 4th month in the Tibetan calendar to celebrate the day Lord Buddha Sakyamuni was born, achieved enlightenment and passed away. Saga Dawa is the most significant festival in Tibet and for this reason we all tibetans are willing to visit Mt. Kailash and complete its kora during this time. Our trekking plan is as follows:

Day 11: Trek to Dira-Puk Monastery [20Km, 5-6h, 5050m]. *Overnight at guesthouse dormitory, no bathroom.*

Day 12: Trek to Zutul Puk Monastery, [18Km, 6-8h, 4820m]. *Overnight at guesthouse dormitory, no bathroom.*

Day 13: Trek to Darchen [14Km, 3-4h, 4670m]. *Overnight in Darchen.*

May 26th, 2024.

Day 14: Darchen – Guge Kingdom [250Km, 3740m]

[B, -, -]

Scenic and adventurous journey to the Tibetan Wild West with unique landscapes en route to the tranquil oasis town of Tholing (Zanda). You'll become an explorer while visiting the Tsaparang citadelle, Guge's latest capital, of greater significance in the history of Buddhist art. Its remarkable wall murals display close links with Ladakh and Kashmir. You'll uncover hidden cave dwellings, twisting paths, and tunnels that connect the palaces, immersing yourself in a fascinating and ancient world. We will end the day at Tholing Monastery, once the most significant monastic complex in western Tibet. As we stand over the first capital of Guge, the skyline comprises a vast sweep of the Ladakh Himalaya. *Overnight in Tholing.*

May 27th, 2024.

Day 15: Tholing – Mapam Yumtso lake [275Km, 4600m]

[B, -, -]

Today begins the end of your tibetan journey through the most sacred Buddhist monasteries and greatest mountains on earth. After breakfast, we'll drive back to lake Manasarovar (also known as Mapam Yumtso in Tibetan), one of the three most sacred lakes in Tibet. Hindus believe that whoever bathes in it will clean all their sins and bring good karma. Before reaching the lake, we'll take a short detour to Tirthapuri, a place where pilgrims traditionally bathe in the hot springs after completing the kora of Mt. Kailash. *Overnight at the shores of Manasarovar lake, near Chiu Gompa.*

May 28-29th, 2024.

Days 16-17: Mapam Yumtso lake – Saga – Shigatse [935Km]

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You'll start your day by watching the sunrise over the holy waters of Lake Manasarovar. Afterwards, we'll visit the Chiu Monastery before continuing our journey East towards Shigatse, after stopping for a night in Saga. We'll travel through arid landscapes of sand dunes and wonderful views of the Himalaya Range and the Tibetan Plateau. *Overnight in Saga and Shigatse.*

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May 30th, 2024.

Day 18: Shigatse – Lhasa [272Km, 3650m]

[B, -, -]

Our last day of our Tibetan traverse goes along the Yarlung Tsampo (Brahmaputra) River. This is the most direct route to Lhasa and part of the Friendship Highway. As early as possible, we'll be visiting the Tashilhunpo Monastery, built in the 15th century by the first Dalai Lama and currently the seat of the Panchen Lama. On the way, we'll make a short stop to learn how traditional Tibetan incense is made. Free time for the rest of the day in Lhasa. *Overnight in Lhasa.*

May 31st, 2024.

Day 19: Tibet departure

Enjoy your last hours in Tibet exploring Lhasa on your own until your guide and driver meet you at the hotel to transfer you to the airport. *End of our services.*

Consider extending your trip visiting holy Namtso lake in North Lhasa (250Km, 3 hours drive, one way). Or even take a relaxing day in Lhasa on your own!

Please, contact us for further information about any available extension of your trip.

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PRICE : **Contact us for the latest available rates.** Discounted price from November 1st to March 31st.
– Single room occupancy available at additional cost (hotels only).

TOUR : Lhasa visits order might change depending on your travelling dates.
The max group size is 12 people.

Day 01 Lhasa arrival [3650m].

Day 02 Lhasa sightseeing: Potala Palace & Jokhang Temple.

Day 03 Lhasa sightseeing: Drepung, Nechung & Sera monasteries.

Day 10 Ganden Monastery and Drak Yerpa Hermitage active day trip [140Km].

Day 05 Lhasa – Samye/Tsedang [180km, 3575m]: Yumbulagang Palace, Samye Monastery, Traduk Temple.

Day 06 Samye/Tsedang – Gyantse [280Km, 7h, 3980m]: Yamdrok-tso lake, Karo-la glacier, Pelkor Chode Monastery.

Day 07 Gyantse – Sakya [250Km, 4320m]: Shalu & Sakya Monasteries.

Day 08 Sakya – Everest North Face at Rongbuk [230Km, 5000m]: Eco-bus service to Rongbuk Monastery, Everest Base Camp (when access allowed again).

Day 09 Rongbuk – Saga [300Km, 4490m]: Mt. Cho Oyu, Mt. Shishapangma, Peiku-tso lake.

Day 10 Saga – Darchen [490Km, 4670m]: Prepare the trek.

Days 11-13 Mt. Kailash Kora [52Km, max. altitude 5630m]

Day 14 Darchen – Guge Kingdom [250Km, 3740m]: Tholing Monastery, Tsaparang Citadel.

Day 15 Zanda – Manasarovar Lake [275Km, 4600m]: Tirthapuri Monastery & hot springs.

Days 16-17 Manasarovar lake – Saga – Shigatse [935Km]: Chiu Monastery, Sand dunes, Tibetan landscape.

Day 18 Shigatse – Lhasa [272Km, 3650m]: Tashilhunpo Monastery.

Day 19 Tibet departure.

ACCOMMODATION :

Lhasa 5 nights, House of Shambhala Heritage Hotel, Tibetan style boutique hotel in the Barkor Tibetan Old Quarter, a few steps from Jokhang Temple.

Tsedang 1 night, Vienna International Hotel 4*.

Gyantse 1 night, Nyangchu Manor House Hotel 4*.

Sakya 1 night, Yuan Mansion Hotel 3*.

Rongbuk (Everest) 1 night, Mt. Everest Tourist Camp Dormitory Tent or Rongbuk Monastery Guesthouse.

Saga 2 night, Champions League Boutique Hotel, MuLinSen Hotel or similar.

Darchen 2 nights, Himalaya Kailash Hotel.

Mt. Kailash Kora 2 nights, basic guesthouse dormitory room without bathroom.

Tholing (Zanda) 1 night, Ganggadisi Hotel 4*.

Manasarovar lake 1 night, basic guesthouse dormitory room without bathroom.

Shigatse 1 night, Gesar Hotel 4* (new building).

INCLUDED :

All necessary travel permits in Tibet.

All entrance fees to temples, monasteries and palaces.

All environmental fees to lakes, glaciers and National Parks.

Accommodation on shared twin room basis with breakfast described in the itinerary above (hotels only).

Experienced Tibetan guide in Tibet (English language).

Transportation in Tibet (Airport / train station group pick up & drop off).

Driver and guide's food and accommodation.

Vehicle fuel, tools and vehicle repairs (if necessary).

Porters / yaks to carry baggage during Mt. Kailash Kora (horse riding available for additional cost)

Oxygen tank & bottled mineral water available in the group vehicle.

Welcome dinner.

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NOT INCLUDED :

China VISA

Plane or train tickets in / out of Tibet.

No breakfast at Saga, Darchen and Zanda hotels; and all guesthouses.

Meals, drinks and any other personal expenses.

Horse for personal use during Kailash Kora (must be used by 1 person only). Personal porters.

Extra expenses incurred due to unexpected natural events (delays, road washouts, snowfall...)

Tips to guide and driver, but this totally depends on you.

Anything not specified in the "included" section.

By joining this tour, you agree to our booking conditions, terms and policies