



KAILASH & THE GUGE KINGDOM DURING SAGA DAWA

MAY 11-JUNE 4, 2010

Sacred sites and stunning landscapes!

The tour is timed for the full moon on first night of the kora.

Also includes overnight at Everest Base Camp



Magnificent temples, mountain passes, snow-capped peaks, nomad camps, pilgrims - this is truly a journey to stir the senses and nourish the soul. Explore the holy city of Lhasa - a city of marvels where history and art, commerce and religion meld into an unforgettable experience. Marvel at the great monastic complexes of Gyantse, Shigatse and Sakya. The 3-day circumambulation of the world's most sacred mountain is tough, but cleanses you of the sins of a lifetime - relax afterwards beside Lake Manasarovar, legendary source of the four great rivers of South Asia.

The road to Tholing, once the most important monastic complex in western Tibet, is one of the most awesome sights in a region of awesome sites. Below - perched above the Sutlej River - stands the first capital of Guge whilst the skyline comprises a vast sweep of the Ladakh Himalaya.

Of all the destinations in Asia, this is the most sacred and sublime. Saga Dawa is one of the most important of all Tibetan Festivals - commemorating both the enlightenment and the earthly death of the Shakyamuni Buddha - and Mount Kailash is the most important place to celebrate as the 13 meter flag pole at Tarboche is replaced.

Detailed Itinerary

May 11 Arrival in Chengdu, the bustling capital of Sichuan Province. You will be met at the airport on arrival and transferred to your hotel.

May 12-15 Lhasa

Fly to Lhasa. Upon arrival met at airport and transfer to hotel (1 hr drive).

Colorful and historic, the holy city of Lhasa lies in a small valley 3700 meters above sea level. During our time in the heart of Tibet, we visit the Potala Palace, the Jokhang, the huge university monasteries of Drepung and Sera and the Barkhor pilgrim circuit. One day independent.

May 16 Gyantse

Leaving Lhasa behind it is a long, yet spectacular drive to Gyantse. From the top of the Kamba Pass (4794m) the views of the turquoise lake, Yamdrok-Tso are unforgettable. The road winds down towards it and we travel along its shores, stopping at the small town of Nangartse for lunch, before climbing again to the Karo La (5054) and the glaciers of Mt Nojin Kangtsang, reaching Gyantse in the late afternoon. Once of major importance as a trading center on the routes between India, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and China, its imposing fort, Gyantse Dzong, dominates views of the town. It is also the site of Pelkor Choede and the fascinating Gyantse Kumbum.

May 17-18 Shigatse

From Gyantse we follow the Nyang-chu valley towards Shigatse, Tibet's second largest town. It is also the site of Tashilhunpo Monastery, seat of the Panchen Lama and one of the most important monasteries of the Gelukpa order.

May 19 Sakya/Lhatse

Sakya, once the political power of Tibet is the last stop before we set out to fully experience the splendor, enormity and isolation of western Tibet as the camping section of our trip begins.

May 20-22 Western Tibet - magnificent valleys, herds of grazing yak, goats and sheep, passes topped by prayer flags and few permanent settlements mark our journey towards Tibet's ancient heartland.

May 20 Drive to Saga 4600m, 8 hrs. Camp.

May 21 Drive to Paryang 4750m, 8 hrs. Camp.

May 22 Drive to Lake Manasarovar 4560m, 8 hrs. Camp.

May 23-26 Guge Kingdom

En-route to Guge the dramatically situated gompa and hot springs at Tithapuri are closely linked to Padmasambhava and are traditionally visited in conjunction with a Kailash kora. The road into Tholing, once the most important monastic complex in western Tibet, is one of the most awesome

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sights in a region of awesome sites. Below stands the first capital of Guge while the skyline comprises a vast sweep of the Ladakh Himalaya. Guge's later capital at Tsaparang is of even greater significance in the history of Buddhist art, its fantastic wall murals displaying evidence of close links with Ladakh and Kashmir.

May 23 Drive to Tirthapuri 4320m. Camp
May 24 Drive to Tsada 3650m. Guge GH
May 25 Drive to Tsaparang / Tsada. Guge GH
May 26 Drive to Darchen 5 hrs. Camp

May 27 Saga Dawa Festival

May 28-30 Kailash Kora

The giant snow-topped pyramid of Kailash stands apart and distinct from those around it, dominating the landscape. Along with Lake Manasarovar it was the heart of ancient Zhangzhung and soul-mountain of the pre-Buddhist Bonpo. To the Bon it is called Yungdrung Gu Tse (Nine-Storey Swastika Mountain) and is the place where their legendary founder, Tongpa Shenrab descended from heaven to earth. In the 11th century however Naro Bonchung 'lost' both Kailash and Lake Manasarovar to Milarepa in a contest of magical powers. To complete a kora (circumambulation) is the goal of every Tibetan; a single kora cleans the sins of a lifetime whilst 108 guarantee enlightenment.

May 28 trek Dira Phuk 5210m/5 hrs. Camp
May 29 trek Drolma-La 5636m; trek Zutrukphuk 4810m/9 hrs. Camp
May 30 trek Darchen 4675m 3 hrs. Drive Chiu Gompa 4560m. Camp

May 31-June 1 Saga-Lao Tingri-Rombuk & Everest Base Camp

Having completed our kora we retrace our steps as far as Saga before turning south via Paiko Tso (lake) to the small town of Lao Tingri, our base for venturing into [Qomolangma National Park](#). Some of the most stunning views of the mountain are from the tiny Rhongphu monastery (5000m) seven kilometers below Everest Base Camp.

June 2 Zhangmu

At Nyalum we reach the edge of the Tibetan Plateau and the road descends sharply towards the Nepal border, some 40kms and 2000 meters below. Moisture returns to the air, the colors change, trees appear, lush green vegetation and the Bote Khose river thunders below as we spend a final night in Zhangmu.

June 3 Kathmandu

From Kodari, the Nepalese side of the border, the road continues its winding descent, towards Kathmandu. Rich in cultural and artistic heritage blending the traditional and the modern, Kathmandu is a vibrant, chaotic, colorful city. The markets, bazaars and narrow streets are home to holy men, sacred cows, bicycles, street sellers... you name it, it's here. Transfer to Fuji Hotel.

June 4 Transfer to airport for departure onward or home.

Price: \$TBA per person; Single Supplement: \$XXX, Plus Flight (estimates) Kathmandu-Lhasa: \$400 Or Chengdu-Lhasa \$xxx
prices are subject to change due to currency exchange rate fluctuation

Includes

- Accommodation twin share: Chengdu, Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse.
- Other accommodation twin or multi share as available.
- All camping equipment (except sleeping bag) while camping
- Meals: all meals while camping (12 days); allow \$10 per day for meals not included
- Transport as per itinerary
- All airport transfers
- Sightseeing as per itinerary (including entry fees)
- Experienced Tibetan guide in Tibet
- Tibet entry permit
- Yaks or porters to carry personal gear & camping equipment on Kailash kora.

Not Included

- Personal expenses such as drinks, postage, laundry
- Meals on non-camping portion of the trip
- International flights and departure taxes
- International flights Chengdu-Lhasa or Kathmandu-Lhasa and departure taxes
- Visa and passport fees
- Travel insurance
- Emergency evacuation
- Tips and gratuities
- Costs arising from unforeseen events (eg. landslides)

NOTE: If arriving in Kathmandu, cost of hotel in Kathmandu is not included in the tour price. You would need to arrive May 9.

Accommodation: Chengdu, Kathmandu, Lhasa, Gyantse and Shigatse on a twin-share basis with either shared or private facilities. Days 11-21 camping. Camping equipment supplied including 2-man tents, kitchen, dining & toilet tents. Sleeping bags not provided.

Transport in Nepal is by private vehicle. Transport in Tibet is by private 4WD landcruiser. Landcruiser drivers have made the trip many times, speak varying amounts of English and will always know the best places to stop for photos.

Food: In Kathmandu restaurants of every style and price-range abound. Chengdu is famous as the home of Sichuan Hotpot. In Lhasa there is also quite a variety, although not as extensive as Kathmandu. Elsewhere in Tibet the variety is much more limited. All meals are provided while camping, prepared by our cook.

Guides and drivers: You will be met at Gongkar airport on arrival and accompanied in Tibet by an English speaking guide. All guides in Tibet are licensed and controlled by the Tibetan Tourist Board and vary enormously in fluency and knowledge. We recommend that you take a guidebook with you to supplement the information provided by your guide. For this trip we suggest you consider 'The Tibet Guide' by Stephen Batchelor (Wisdom Books), 'Tibet' (Odyssey Guides) or Lonely Planet 'Tibet'. Drivers have generally made the trip many times and speak varying amounts of English.

Extend your trip: If you wish to stay longer in Kathmandu after your trip, we can book extra nights accommodation for you, please advise us when you make your booking. Or if you wish to indulge yourself, relax and recover from the rigors of the journey consider spending a night or two at Dhulikhel, only 1 hour drive from Kathmandu. Dhulikhel commands stunning views of the mountains and is surrounded by small Newari villages. All rooms have private balconies and facilities and there is a rooftop restaurant area as well. If pre-booked you can be dropped here on the way from the border to Kathmandu on the last day of your trip. We also operate trekking trips throughout Nepal as well as 2 and 3 day excursions to Chitwan National Park and white water rafting trips. We would be happy to supply details - or browse our website for ideas. www.spirit-of-india.com

Visas and Permits: All travelers will require visas for The People's Republic of China and Nepal, and entry and travel permits for the Tibetan Autonomous Region. When your booking is confirmed we will provide you with details necessary to apply for your visa. Our destination partner will apply for the Tibet permits on your behalf. Single entry visas for Nepal are available on arrival at Kathmandu airport and all land borders. The visa is valid for 60 days. For stays of 3 nights or less the visa is free, but 1 photo is still required.

Joining from Chengdu: You should obtain a China tourist visa in your home country or Hong Kong prior to arrival in China. This visa should be valid for the entire time that you will be in China (including Tibet). On your visa application you should mention Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Guilin as places you will visit. Do not mention Lhasa or Tibet on your visa application or it will be refused.

Joining from Kathmandu: It is only possible to enter Tibet from Nepal with a visa issued by the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu. The visa will be issued once you arrive in Kathmandu - it takes one full day. The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu issues visas on Monday, Wednesday and Friday only so you must plan your arrival to allow for this. Chinese Visa Cost: \$198 for US passport holders (subject to change). Travel Permits are required for Tibet. We will apply for your permit on your behalf.

Flights: Air China operates between Chengdu and Lhasa 3-5 times daily, depending on demand. Air China operates between Lhasa and Kathmandu and flights fill quickly. While your ticket will not be issued before your travel permit, seats may be booked well in advance. Your full name, nationality and passport number are necessary to make the booking. Kathmandu has daily flights to Bangkok & Hong Kong on Thai and to major European cities on KLM, Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, Qatar and Gulf Air. There are weekly flights to Hong Kong and to Osaka via Shanghai on Royal Nepal Airlines.

Packing for your Trip

- Comfortable shoes & warm socks
- Fleece jacket or equivalent. It can get cold, even in summer
- Comfortable, informal clothing (shorts & singlet tops are not appropriate)
- Hat - sun is very strong
- Gloves & scarf - wool or fleece
- Thermal Underwear
- Sarong - a multitude of uses
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Sewing kit
- Money belt
- Toiletries (including lip slave and moisturizer)
- Torch / flashlight - headlamp style is ideal
- Swiss Army Knife
- First Aid Kit
- Small Towel
- Small umbrella or light rain jacket (June-August particularly)
- Sheet sleeping bag (you may feel more comfortable in some of the more basic guesthouses where laundry is not a priority)