

Kham - East Tibet Itinerary



Day 1

Our caravan of insight and adventure begins as we depart for *China*.

Day 2

Arrive in *Chengdu* and transfer to hotel. We have an early dinner and rest from our international flight. Overnight Chengdu.

Day 3

Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan Province and is the economic, political, and cultural center in South-West China. After breakfast we will explore *Wenshu Monastery* which dates back to the Tang dynasty. This is Chengdu's largest and best preserved temple. It is a very active temple with many worshippers coming each day to pray and make offerings. After lunch we will take a short drive outside of Chengdu to explore *Baoguang Monastery – Monastery of Devine Light*. This is another active monastery and was founded in the 9th century and houses a beautiful white Jade Buddha statue. Before we return to Chengdu we will visit *Zhaojue Temple*, a Tang Dynasty building dating back to the 7th century. Overnight Chengdu.

Day 4

After breakfast we depart Chengdu to *Leshan*. Leshan is home to *Da Fo, the Grand Buddha*, a towering rock carved image of the Future Buddha Maitreya. Carved into a cliff overlooking the Dadu He and Min He rivers, it is the world's largest rock carved Buddha measuring 232 feet tall. We will also explore *Wuyou Monastery* that dates back to the Tang dynasty. This monastery has a fantastic collection of Buddhist sacred art. Overnight Leshan.

Day 5

After breakfast and thousands of miles of travel, our exciting tour of East Tibet actually begins as we depart for *Kangding*. We have a spectacular mountain drive where we begin to see our first Tibetans and Tibetan-related peoples herding yaks, sheep, and goats on the high Kangba Plateau grasslands. Kangding is a large town nestled in a steep river valley. When arriving in Kangding, one begins to feel they are at the end of the Chinese world and beginning of the Tibetan. Overnight Kangding

Day 6

In the morning after breakfast we will visit two of Kangding's most important monasteries. We begin our day at *Nanwu Gompa*, the areas most active monastery with 80 lamas in residence. The monks are very friendly at this monastery and enjoy our group exploring their gompa. We will also visit *Ngachu Gompa* built in 1654 that has a fantastic collection of sacred art. We then depart Kangding for Lhagang. On our drive out of Kangding we see *Miyak Gongkar Mountain*, the highest mountain in Kham at 24,783 feet. Overnight Lhagang.

Day 7

After breakfast we explore *Lhagang Monastery* one of Kham's most sacred gompas. It is believed that when the Chinese Princess Wen Cheng, on her way to Lhasa in the 7th century to

marry King Songsten Gampo, she stayed here. Legend tells us that the Shakyamuni Buddha image that she was bringing to Lhasa actually spoke here and requested to stay in this idyllic setting. This monastery has a fantastic collection of sacred art and houses a beautiful giant 1000 arm Avalokitesvara statue. We then continue on yet another breathtaking drive through the green alpine meadows surrounded by snow capped peaks on our way to **Kandze**. Kandze is an old but very busy market town surrounded by the massive giants of the **Chola Shan Mountain Range**. Overnight – Kandze

Day 8

In the morning we visit the 540 year old **Kandze Monastery**, the regions largest monastery with more than 500 monks. This Gumpa has a beautiful collection of small golden Shakyamuni statues in its main prayer hall and an entire floor to ceiling 3 story sculpture of the entire Tibetan Buddhist pantheon! After lunch we will explore **Den Gumpa**, the oldest temple of Kandze. This gumpa contains a revered image of the great protector Mahakala in the form of Prajnananatha. At the end of the day there will be free time to walk through this lively market town. Overnight Kandze.

Day 9

Early departure after breakfast for a day trip to one of the most important monasteries in Kham - **Dzogchen Gumpa** founded in 1684. It is a major pilgrimage site and is one of the largest Nyingma monasteries in Kham. The monastery has a stunning setting at the foot of a glacier valley. Over centuries, this monastery attracted some of Tibet's greatest literati and meditation masters. Dzogchen Gumpa became famous for its surrounding caves where many great meditation masters spent their lives in retreat. We will spend the entire day exploring this fantastic monastery. Overnight – Kandze.

Day 10

We depart Kandze for **Dege** on one of the most spectacular drives on our Kham tour as we see the towering snow capped peaks of the **Chola Mountain** and **Xinhua Glacier**. On the way we will stop at one of the most pristine and holy lakes in Kham – **Yihun La-tso**. This glacier filled turquoise alpine lake is surrounded by the massive glaciers of the 19,558 feet Trola Peak. The lake is surrounded by many giant rocks with sacred mantras carved into them. This place is drop-dead gorgeous! We will have a picnic lunch here. Overnight – Dege.

Day 11

Dege is home to one of the most important monasteries in all of Tibet and is held in great esteem with the Potala and Sakya Monastery in importance and sacredness. For centuries Dege's Printing House has produced the majority of Tibet's literature. In fact, some say that Dege houses over 217,000 engraved woodblocks that include ancient texts on astronomy, geography, music, medicine, and the entire history of Indian Buddhism with 555 woodblock plates written in Hindi, Sanskrit and Tibetan. We will spend the morning exploring **Dege Pharkong** (printing house). After lunch we will visit **Gonchen Gumpa**, one of the oldest and largest monasteries in Dege dating back over 1000 years where we will see many devout Tibetans circling the gumpa while spinning prayer wheels and reciting mantras. Overnight Dege

Day 12

Early morning departure south of Dege into the Jinsha Jiang, a series of forested side valleys that hide some of Kham's largest and most important monasteries. We will visit the 12th century



Kathok Gompa, a Nyingmapa Monastery that is filled with many ancient works of sacred art. At Kathok monastery we will have the rare opportunity to meet and receive a lecture from one of the greatest living masters in Tibet – Moksha Rinpoche. After Kathok Gompa we then proceed to Peyul. Overnight - Peyul

Day 13

One of the many highlights of the trip takes place in **Pelyul** as we visit **Namgyal Jangchubaling Monastery**. Here we will meet Karma Kuchen, the 6th Karma Kuchen in that lineage of reincarnated lamas who is the son of Dorge Namgyal Anak, a personal friend. We will request a teaching and blessing from Karma Kuchen who is one of the highest Nyingma lamas in Kham. Overnight Pelyul

Day 14

Morning departure back to Kandze. In the late afternoon we will visit **Yachen Gompa**, one of the largest monasteries in all of Tibet with 8,000 monks and nuns. This monastery is a small city of maroon and saffron robes and lots of smiling faces! Many of these monks and nuns have never seen westerners before and are very friendly and curious to meet us. Here will have the opportunity to visit their humble and private living quarters. Overnight - Drango

Day 15

After breakfast we drive to **Denpa** and take a look at our last glimpses of the beautiful scenery of East Tibet – stone villages, prayer flags, chortens, high mountain passes and the Khampa nomads. Overnight Denpa

Day 16

Before departing Denpa, we visit a small monastery at the base of the sacred mountain Moerduo Shan called **Daisibao Gompa**. On our drive to Wolong we will stop and climb a few of the Qiang stone watch towers (gudiao). Overnight Wolong.

Day 17

After breakfast we visit **Wolong Nature Reserve**. This reserve is estimated to have some 3,000 different kinds of plants and is home to panda's, golden monkeys, musk deer and snow leopards. Here we will visit the China Research and Conservation Center for the Giant Panda where will have the opportunity to see many of these beautiful pandas. After lunch we drive to Chengdu. Overnight Chengdu

Day 18

Entire day is free to rest and shop and prepare for our return flight back to the States. Overnight Chengdu.

Day 19 – Our trip comes to its end as we depart Chengdu on our flight home.

