

itinerary

Tibet – Rooftop of the World

Day 1

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

Day 2

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

Day 3

Full day of exploring Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China. Beijing is a city with a history stretching back more than two thousand years. We explore some of the treasures of this magnificent city such as **The Forbidden City and the Great Wall of China**. Overnight Beijing

Day 4

Depart the colorful city of Beijing on a flight to **Lhasa**, the heart and soul of Tibet and once the centuries old home of the Dalai Lamas. Transfer to hotel. We will spend our first three nights in Tibet in Lhasa exploring the temples, monasteries and palaces. On our first day, we will browse Lhasa's ancient market and bazaar – the **Barkhor**, where we will see pilgrims from all over Tibet circumambulating Tibet's holiest temples, the Jokhang. Overnight Lhasa

Day 5

We begin our day of exploring Lhasa at the **Potala** – the Pure Land of Avalokitesvara – the embodiment of compassion and the former winter residence of the Dalai Lamas. Constructed in the 17th century by the great Fifth Dalai Lama, this fantastic masterpiece of Tibetan architecture has more than 1000 rooms that include a collection of sacred Buddhist art second to none. Centuries of sacred art – statues, stupas and paintings are contained in the many shrines, temples and prayer halls. The history of Tibet is portrayed here in the Potala, on its walls and altars in this magnificent former palace. In the afternoon, we visit **Sera Monastery**, north of Lhasa. This Gelugpa monastery was once the home to 5,000 monks. Founded in 1419, Sera houses a superb collection of sacred art. The highlight of our visit to Sera is experiencing the monks perform their afternoon debates. Overnight Lhasa

Day 6

In the morning after breakfast, we visit the **Jokhang Temple**, Tibet's holiest of temples. The Jokhang houses a beautiful gold Buddha statue, a gift from the Chinese Princess Wen Cheng in 641 AD. For centuries, pilgrims have traveled from all over Tibet to prostrate themselves at the doorsteps of Tibet's most sacred temple. In the afternoon, we visit **Drepung Monastery** to the west of Lhasa, which was built in 1416. Drepung was once the world's largest monastery with a population of 10,000 monks. The prayer hall in this fantastic structure is filled with ornate statues, beautiful murals and scroll paintings. Overnight Lhasa

Day 7

Early morning departure for Shigatse. On the outskirts of Shigatse, we will visit **Shalu Monastery**, located a few miles east of Shigatse. This beautiful monastery, with its Chinese style green tiled roofs, dates back to the 11th century. Shalu is noted for its 14th century murals that fuse Chinese, Mongol and Nepalese styles. Overnight Shigatse.



Day 8

We depart Shigatse on a beautiful drive through the Tibetan countryside to the monastic town of Sakya. Sakya is one of Tibet's most important historic sites. We will explore **Sakya Monastery** that was founded in 1073. The Sakyta monastery has one of the most beautiful prayer halls in all of Tibet. Our visit to Sakya gives us a wonderful window into Tibetan rural life. Overnight Tingri.

Day 9

We depart Tingri for **Mount Everest**. We experience a spectacular mountain drive through beautiful Tibetan villages and observe a mountainous terrain that defies words. With our first glimpse of Everest, we come to understand why the Tibetans refer to it as **Chomolungma**, the Mother Goddess of the world. We have a full day to explore the base camp and also **Rongphu Monastery**. Overnight Everest.

Day 10

We depart Everest and drive back through the Tibetan countryside to the small town of Lhatse. Overnight Lhatse.

Day 11

Early morning departure for Shigatse. In the afternoon we visit **Tashilhunpo Monastery**, once the seat of the Panchen Lama, who was declared an incarnation of the Buddha Amitabha by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Tashilhunpo houses a fabulous collection of sacred Buddhist art especially with its 86 foot-high statue of the future Buddha Maitreya. Overnight Shigatse.

Day 12

We leave Shigatse for the town of Gyantse. In Gyantse we will explore the **Kumbum**, a tiered stupa that was constructed in the 14th century with over 70 interlocking chapels and more than 100,000 sacred images. The entire Indo-Tibetan Buddhist pantheon is contained in this fantastic structure. In the afternoon we visit **Pelkor Chode Monastery** and the **Gyantse Dzong** (fortress). Overnight in Gyantse

Day 13

An early morning departure for Tsedang. As we travel through the spectacular Tibetan countryside, we arrive in the afternoon at **Yumbulagang**, perhaps the oldest building in Tibet. Yumbulagang sits atop a craggy ridge overlooking the Yarlung Valley. It is a great example of Tibetan architecture that dates back more than 2000 years. Overnight in Tsedang.

Day 14

After breakfast, we depart for **Samye**, Tibet's oldest Buddhist monastery established in 767 by the great Indian master Padmasambhava. To reach Samye, we must cross over the Brahmaputra, Tibet's lifeline river. We cross the river by ferry on one of the most beautiful experiences of our trip in Tibet. The fantastic views of the surrounding mountains are absolutely breathtaking! When we arrive at Samye we are treated to a fantastic collection of Tibet sacred art. The building itself is a remarkable example of Buddhist architecture as it is built as a mandala or sacred model of the universe. Overnight in Tsedang.

Day 15

Our wonderful adventure of Tibet comes to its conclusion as we have our last look at the Tibetan countryside as we travel to Gongar Airport for our return flight to Beijing. Arrive in Beijing and transfer to hotel. Overnight Beijing.



Day 16

Full free day in Beijing to rest and shop before our next day return flight back to the States.
Overnight Beijing.

Day 17

Homeward Bound. We depart Beijing for the States.

