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Tibet – Rooftop of the World Itinerary

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 temple, 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 has 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 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 evening we return to the Jokhang and chant with the monks. 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. At Drepung we have the rare opportunity to receive a lecture from the abbot of the monastery on Buddhist philosophy. Overnight Lhasa

Day 7

Our day begins with a visit to one of the most famous Tangkha (scroll) painting studios in Lhasa. Here you will learn the timeless tradition of Tibetan Buddhist sacred painting. In the afternoon we will then visit a statue making foundry and learn the ancient *Lost Wax* process of statue making. Sacred art plays such an important role in Tibetan Buddhism and you will learn all about it at these foundries and studios so that



you can fully appreciate the masterpieces of centuries-old sacred art in the monasteries that we visit. Overnight Lhasa

Day 8

Early morning departure for Shigatse. On the outskirts of Lhasa, we will offer our services at a Tibetan orphanage and school. This orphanage is a non-profit organization that educates and takes care of many of Tibet's homeless children. For many, this is one of the highlights of the trip! We then take a beautiful drive through the Tibetan countryside to Shigatse. Before Shigatse, we will explore Shalu Monastery, located a few miles east of Shigatse. This beautiful small 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. Shalu is a treasure house of Buddhist art and is one of my most favorite sites in Tibet. Overnight Shigatse.

Day 9

We depart Shigatse on a beautiful drive through the Tibetan countryside to Tingri. During our drive we see many nomads herding their yaks as we cross the high mountain passes on our way to Everest. Overnight Tingri.

Day 10

Early morning departure for Mount Everest. We are treated to one of the most spectacular mountain drives in Tibet. Driving through small remote villages we come to one of the highest mountain passes that offers us our first magnificent view of the massive Himalayan range including Mount Everest. With our first glimpse 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 – the world's highest monastery. Overnight Everest.

Day 11

We depart Everest and drive back to Shigatse where we will 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 brilliant collection of sacred Buddhist art especially with its 86 foot-high statue of the future Buddha Maitreya. Overnight Shigatse.

Day 12

After breakfast, 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 75 interlocking chapels and more than 100,000 sacred images. The entire Indo-Tibetan Buddhist pantheon is contained in this extraordinary structure. We will also visit Pelkor Chode Monastery. 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 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, shop and prepare for our next day return flight back to the States. Overnight Beijing.

Day 17

Homeward Bound. We depart Beijing for the States.