



Pilgrimage to Tibet - Mount Kailash

23 Days Ex-Kathmandu

May 24th - June 15th 2012

- 12-day journey across **Tibet to Holy Mount Kailash**
 - Breathtaking **flight across the Himalaya**
 - 4-Day **Holy Pilgrimage** around Mt Kailash
 - **Mount Everest Base Camp**
 - 2-Day **Adventure Camp in Himalayan Foothills**

Welcome to the Himalayan Exposure way of travel. We are determined to show you a fantastic experience in a truly magical part of the world. Himalayan Exposure trips have been developed to provide quality, passionate and fun trips for those with a desire to explore remote and wonderful cultures and destinations.

By nature of the regions we are travelling through Himalayan Exposure trips are demanding. Days in the Himalaya are often long and hard but the breathtaking scenery and the rich cultural diversity are more than adequate compensation. Our itinerary has been timed, we believe, to allow everyone to experience the magic at their own pace as well as allowing for the often unforgiving nature of the mountain environments. Roads may be blocked or completely washed away, buses may break down and almost everything will be running late. But it's all part of the fun so pack your sense of adventure and climb aboard.

Itinerary

The itinerary attached is correct at the time of printing. At times logistical needs mean changes have been made to allow for these. For the latest itinerary please refer to the itinerary as listed on our website at www.himalayanexposure.com.

Important Note

It is important that you understand that Himalayan Exposure offer extreme adventure holidays in remote regions of Tibet. The standard of services – accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, medical facilities and other factors - will not be of the standard you are used to at home or could expect to find on a conventional holiday. By joining Himalayan Exposure you are accepting those risks and dangers.

In addition to the above considerations, passengers travelling on Himalayan Exposure's Pilgrimage to Mount Kailash need to be aware that this particular itinerary is extremely challenging...Long days of travel mixed with harsh climatic conditions and high altitudes will test the resolve of even the hardest traveller. You will need to be prepared for anything.

Raising Awareness

This trip is about experiencing a country and a culture, and people which are extremely beautiful and magical. Although it is a holiday, this trip is designed to raise each and every person's awareness regarding the plight of this fascinating country and people. It is the hope that after you return from the trip that you will continue to raise awareness in your own community about the situation in Tibet.

For further information try some of these websites:

www.tibet.com, www.tibetinfo.com, www.freetibet.org

or email us at burger@himalayanexposure.com and we can provide a great deal of background information for you.

Trip Grade: Very Challenging

This trip has been graded Very Challenging for a number of reasons. It involves multiple days of long vehicle travel and **sub-standard** accommodation. **Adjusting to the altitude** of Lhasa is a challenge in itself and the harsh environment on the Tibetan Plateau affects people differently. There is a three-day trek around sacred Mt Kailash reaching heights of 5600m. And in Tibet, where a walk up the stairs of the hotel becomes a challenge your fitness will be tested. Besides the trekking, how challenging you find the trip will also depend a lot on your previous travel experiences.

Please also read the 'Important Note' above carefully

Accommodation:

Hotels/Guesthouses 18 nights, Tented Camps 4 Nights: Please note that the **accommodation on this trip is, at times, very basic.**

The accommodation for the most part is comfortable but basic. In the cities– Kathmandu, Lhasa, Shigatse – accommodation is quite comfortable. Across the plateau things get really basic and there'll be a few, maybe many days where there'll be no showers, it'll be cold and it'll just be a room, a bed and not much else. For the most part accommodation will be twin share but there may be occasions where it'll be dorm accommodation when we travel across to Mount Kailash and back to Nepal.

Meals

8 Breakfasts, 2 Lunches, 2 Dinners

No other meals are included as part of this itinerary

Activities included

Tibet Travel Permit

Entrance Fee, Potala Palace, Lhasa

Entrance Fee, Drepung Monastery

Entrance Fee, Sera Monastery

Entrance Fee, Jokhang Monastery

Entrance to Tashilhunpo Monastery, Shigatse

Entrance to Sakya Monastery, Sakya

Entrance Fees, Ganden Monastery

Entrance Fees for Everest National Park

Entrance Fees for Kailash Kora

All trek support for trek around Kailash Kora; Day 15 – Day 17

Other Notes/Flights

- Please allow approx. US\$450 cash for flights to be purchased en route

- It is advised that travellers are very fit to be able to cope with the extreme conditions of the Tibetan Plateau especially during the trek around the Mt Kailash pilgrim circuit.

- When arriving at Lhasa, at an altitude of 3600m, you are likely to feel the effects of altitude deprivation. Your guide will advise on the best course of action upon arrival. Travelling at altitudes of over 5000m at times you may experience altitude deprivation at different stages throughout the journey.

- Please note that this is a demanding, overland travel trip, which is suitable for the experienced traveller. The effects of altitude, long days travel in old 4WDs over extremely rough roads, accommodation in shared dormitories that vary in quality from the basic to very basic and the possibility of severe and sudden climate changes means that this is definitely not a trip for the armchair traveller. Be prepared for no showers for several days, and in the event of a landslide blocking the road you may be required to walk, carrying your own luggage for unspecified distances.

- **Tibet Permit: We will arrange for a permit allowing your entry into Tibet.** To do this it is essential that Himalayan Exposure obtain a photocopy of the details on the front page of your passport and your occupation (at least 30 days before departure). Please make sure that you are not issued with a new passport after you have forwarded this information to us, as the whole group may be refused entry into Tibet if there are any errors.

- It is likely that you will lose yourself to every emotion possible during this trip.

Responsible Travel

It is important to realize that to travel and visit other countries and cultures is an honour and a PRIVILEGE. We at Himalayan Exposure want to ensure that our visit provides a productive and positive interaction with both the people and the natural environment. We realize we have great power to change people's lives for the better at a grass roots level and in this way we will make a difference. Please read more at www.himalayanexposure.com/rt

We feel there is limited value in going to Tibet just for the tourist sights, many of them as there are. The uncritical and uninformed observer may fall easy victim to the propaganda that the Tibetan people face, which seeks to limit or distort what the visitor sees of Tibet. At Himalayan Exposure we want to see Tibet for the Tibetans, their culture and the land they so cherish. We are very aware of the ethics involved by travelling to Tibet and have based our decision to go there after thorough consideration of all the issues involved. We recommend all our travellers to be informed and aware of at least some of the issues existing with Tibet's struggle for independence.

Safety

There can be no compromise on safety when travelling through Asia or anywhere for that matter. Himalayan Exposure takes every precaution to ensure the safety of its travellers while travelling in remote destinations.

In Tibet the travel is very challenging with harsh climatic conditions and altitude posing differing problems for all travellers. Your group leader will be well trained in the mountain environments you will encounter and will guide you as to the best course of action to help each individual adjust adequately during the course of the trip.

For more information on Himalayan Exposure's safety policy please see www.himalayanexposure.com/safety.htm

Spending Money

You will need to allow enough money for meals not included as part of the itinerary, drinks, shopping and additional sightseeing. We recommend allowing US\$15 per day for food and drink. This is a liberal estimate and you can easily get by on a lot less. Please note that for this trip no meals are included as part of your itinerary.

We estimate allowing an additional US\$300 – 400 for meals and other activities.

Money

The currency of China and Tibet is Chinese Yuan (CNY): Approx US/AUS\$1=6.5 CNY, €1=9 CNY, £1=10.5 CNY

The currency of Nepal is Nepalese Rupee: Approx (NR): US/AUS\$1=75 NR, €1=100 NR, £1= 115 NR

The best thing to have is US dollars or Sterling cash or travellers checks. Credit card services are available in the major cities – Kathmandu, Lhasa – but not anywhere else. Major credit cards are accepted in Lhasa and Kathmandu only. Withdrawals are subject to a 4% service charge.

Visas

You are responsible for arranging your Nepalese visa before leaving home or on arrival in Nepal. You can get your Nepalese visa on entry also but check with your travel agent and your local Nepalese embassy before departing to ensure this procedure has not changed.

Nepal: In Nepal, 3 day free visas are now granted upon arrival. For this trip you will need 2 visas but both should be free. We suggest arriving with a passport photo and US\$30 to pay for the visa (if required), but it should be free.

Chinese Visa: Current visa regulations from Nepal state that travellers wishing to enter Tibet from Kathmandu need to apply for their Chinese visa at the Chinese Embassy in Nepal. Your tour leader will arrange your visa once you arrive in Kathmandu. The cost is US\$115. You will be asked to pay your group leader for your Chinese visa when you arrive in Nepal. Himalayan Exposure will arrange any additional permits required for this trip including your permits to Tibet and your Chinese visa. This will be organised by Himalayan Exposure. Please **do not** undertake this process before the trip. To facilitate the arrangement of your Chinese/Tibet visa please provide Himalayan Exposure with a copy of the front page of your passport well in advance of the trip departure.

Laundry

Facilities are offered by most hotels for a charge. While in more remote locations, if you want your clothes washed, you'll have to do it yourself. We strongly recommend bringing non-polluting/biodegradable soap for this purpose.

Departure Tax

From Nepal/Kathmandu international departure tax is 600 Rupee to India and other nearby countries, and 1100 rupee to all other international destinations. These are very susceptible to change. Please check with you group leader and your airline before departure

Travel Insurance

Your trip cost does not include personal travel or medical insurance. Himalayan Exposure insist you take out personal insurance cover for all trips. It is your responsibility to make sure suitable insurance has been taken out for your trip. For all trips it is essential to ensure your insurance covers you for emergency evacuation. You will not be allowed to participate in the trip until evidence has been sighted by your group leader.

Health and Fitness

There are no specific health requirements regarding entry into China or Nepal. You should consult your doctor before you depart for up to date information and prescriptions for vaccinations for any reasonably foreseeable illnesses whilst travelling in Asia. It is recommended that all travellers carry a small first aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements. Please be aware that for legal reasons Himalayan Exposure representatives are prohibited from administering any type of drug whatsoever. Please be adequately prepared.

This trip is a particularly challenging trip on the traveller physically as well as mentally. **Please ensure you are prepared as adequately as possible for this adventure.**

Climate

The days travelling in the cars and sightseeing can be very warm despite the altitude. There are times where it will get very cold, like below 0°C (32°F). This is possible both at night and during the day. Prepare for very cold weather. Bring plenty of warm clothes. Shorts are not appropriate in Tibet, but in Nepal the weather will be very hot as they come into summer and you may like a pair of shorts. For the rest of the trip it will be quite cool.

What to Take

Himalayan Exposure trips often travel at a pretty rapid rate and you are on the move a great deal. The smaller you pack the better. Having said that there are some essential requirements to ensure you stay warm in the mountains. The regions through which we travel are by nature cold throughout the year. All travellers will require enough warm clothes to keep them warm at temperatures below 0°Celsius. Thermal underwear is essential as is a fleece and waterproof/windproof pants and jacket, gloves and a warm hat.

Checklist

- Travel documents: passport, visa, travel insurance, air tickets
- Health requirements arranged
- Money: travellers cheques/cash/credit card
- First Aid kit
- Camera (spare batteries and film)
- Day pack to carry your personal needs during the day
- Sarong or travel shammy
- Mosquito repellent
- Refillable water bottle able to take boiling water!
- Ear plugs can be useful if you are a light sleeper
- Inner sheet/sleeping sheet is advisable if you like to use them for sometimes ordinary accommodation.
- **Warm clothes.** It is recommended to bring Thermal under wear and a fleece jacket, hat and gloves. It will be VERY COLD at times in Tibet.
- Puritabs, iodine or water filter; some form of water purification method.
- Sleeping Bag (Rated to at least -10°C)
- Good/comfortable hiking shoes
- Sunscreen (30+), Lip balm and Sunglasses; due to harsh sunlight and exposure to UV at high altitudes
- Tampons are difficult to buy in Tibet and China
- Torch/flashlight
- A scarf or face mask for dust whilst driving in Tibet
- Enormous sense of adventure

Joining/Finishing Point

Hotel Harati, 289 Ikhapokhari Chhetrapati
Kathmandu, Nepal Tel: (+977 1) 257758 or 263527. Fax : (+977 1) 263469.

Joining Instructions

Note: You will be provided with a transfer upon arrival. Below is information in the unlikely event that your transfer is not there

There is no airport bus service available at Tribhuvan, Kathmandu's International Airport, so it's a matter of taking a taxi. This is very easy. There are two pre-paid taxi booths inside the terminal, one on each side as you exit the baggage claim area. They have fixed rates of about 350-400rps to anywhere in the Thamel area. If you wish to entertain the masses you can step outside into the massed ranks of drivers, touts and hangers on. Bargaining is the order of the day here and if you are good you may be able to get a taxi for 300 rps - a massive saving of around 80cents. It's a 20 to 50 minute journey depending on the time of day and the traffic levels.

Please Note:

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Itinerary

Travelling through Tibet is one of the most **mystical journeys in Asia today**. The contrast of the high mountains, the endless valleys, the colour of the people, and the strength of their faith. It is a land where beauty is defined in abstract terms, and where magic abounds in the form of toothless smiles and strong hearted souls.

To travel to Tibet is a journey of epic proportions and one not to be taken lightly. The days are long and hard, the environment breathtaking and trying. Without a doubt you will be moved one way or the other.

Our journey begins in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Kathmandu is a wonderful city to explore but we don't spend a great deal of time there on this adventure. For this reason it is worth adding a day or two to the beginning or end of your trip to fully explore the wonders of the Kathmandu Valley. We will undertake a tour of the old city before having a free afternoon. On day 3 a short but spectacular **trans-Himalayan flight** transports us physically to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, and figuratively to another world. Lhasa is the sight of ancient temples steeped in mystery and reverence. Pilgrims travel for thousands of miles just to set eyes on the holiest temple in the land, the Jokhang, and walk through the halls of the most famous Tibetan building, the Potala Palace.

We have 3 days in the capital to see the sights and begin to try to comprehend and understand the culture that makes Tibet such a beautiful place. We'll use these days visiting some of the highlights around the capital and getting acclimated to the thin air that prevails on the Tibetan Plateau. We'll take day trips to **Sera and Drepung Monasteries**, visit the enduring **Potala Palace** and head out of town to one of Lhasa's most spectacular monasteries, **Ganden**. Travelling to Tibet is about feeling the spirituality, and experiencing the faith. It is nothing you can read or see, you just have to join the flow of pilgrims on their journeys. We'll also need the time in Lhasa to acclimatise to the higher altitude and prepare ourselves for the journey ahead.

Departing Lhasa on the morning of day 7 we begin our long journey west heading toward the town of Gyantse. It is a spectacular day long drive past **hanging glaciers** and the azure waters of **Yamdruk Tso**. We'll overnight Gyantse visiting Pelkor Chode Monastery the following morning before continuing onto the town of **Shigatse**. Shigatse is Tibet's second largest city. During our stay in Shigatse we are going to take a short trip out of town to visit a farm set up to train disabled children under the projects set up by Braille Without Borders (www.braillewitouthborders.org). We'll visit the great monastery of **Tashilhunpo**, home of the Panchen Lama, second only to the Dalai Lama in terms of rank in Tibetan beliefs. A sad story surrounds the plight of the current Panchen Lama and we'll learn more about that while we are there.

From Shigatse the drive west begins in earnest as we cross the vast high altitude desert towards what is, the centre of the world for many faiths. From Shigatse it will take us the better part of three days to reach the Sacred slopes of Mount Kailash in Western Tibet. We'll overnight in the **Sakya** valley before two days of travel bring us to the base of this everlasting peak. Herds of yak will watch will wonder what the rush is about as we drive by. A word of warning though, the days of driving are long and often tiring. The roads in Tibet are better than they once were and adventurers of the past will recall the dusty roads of yesteryear. With recent improvements the days shouldn't be so hard but it is still not the most comfortable of thoroughfares to travel upon. The **landscape is breathtaking** and some consolation to the long travel.

Mount Kailash, rising to a height of 6714 metres, has drawn pilgrims to itself for centuries. The **navel of the world** for exponents of many faiths – Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Bon – Mount Kailash is truly a phenomenal piece of architecture in both a physical and a spiritual sense.

The **Saga Dawa Festival** is one of the largest festivals in the Buddhist Calendar and it is celebrated with particular vigour at Mount Kailash. This particular departure has been designed to coincide with this event but also allows much more time to explore the sacred environs around Kailash. We'll arrive the day before the festival and take a walk to a nearby monastery (time permitting) in the Inner sanctum of Mount Kailash before joining the hordes of pilgrims for the festival the following day, June 4.

The word 'kora' means any route which circles a sacred site, and the Kailash Kora is the most sacred. At 53kms in length at an average altitude of around 5000m, **the Kailash Kora** is not an easy trek. Snow can fall on the passes even in summertime, accommodation is basic and there is a 5600m pass to conquer en route. This journey is certainly not for the faint hearted. On day one of our trek we'll join pilgrims celebrating the sacred circumambulation of the holy mountain staying in basic guesthouses beneath its great flanks along the way.

Upon completing the kora we move onto the shores of the endless **holy lake, Lake Manasarovar**. It is a beautiful place to rest and recuperate while trying to understand all that we have seen and experienced.

On Day 16 we start the long drive back east toward Nepal but not before setting our sights on the highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest. We'll drive to the vicinity of **Mount Everest Base camp** staying overnight to witness a spectacular sunrise and weather permitting an even more spectacular sunrise. From such heights we head down, down from the plateau to the town of Kodari and the Nepalese border. It is a **spectacular drive**, especially our last day in Tibet when we descend from over 5000 metres to the warmth and green of the valleys below at around 1000m altitude.

Arriving in Nepal once again the air is thick and lush with the smell of the trees and the rush of the raging rivers as they descend through the valleys from the heights of the Tibetan Plateau. To complete this AMAZING adventure we have two nights resting, relaxing or going all out wild (depending on your energy levels) at **The Last Resort** (www.thelastresort.com.np). Here we stay in luxurious safari tents and while the time away listening to the sound of the river drift by, or of your friends screaming as they launch themselves off the 160 mt high **Bungy Jump over the Bhote Khosi** river. There's also conjoying, hiking, rafting or simply lazing in a hammock. It is entirely up to you.

A short 3-hour drive from the border returns us to **Kathmandu** where we have our final night. But the experience will envelop you for sometime to come. Day 23 is departure day and you are free to leave at any time.

Note:

Some of you will be arriving early in Kathmandu due to logistical reasons and the fact we need to arrange our Tibet travel permits and associated visas. During that time there will be some optional activities and day trips available to anyone who may be interested to explore a little of the Kathmandu valley. You are also free to simply wander the streets of the city and get lost in the wonderful Nepalese culture that exists around every corner. The choice will be yours.

Indicative Itinerary

May 24, Day 1. Arrive Kathmandu
May 25, Day 2 Kathmandu
May 26, Day 3. Fly Kathmandu - Lhasa
May 27, Day 4 Lhasa – Acclimatise. Visit Drepung & Sera Monasteries
May 28, Day 5 Lhasa – Visit Potala Palace & Jokhang
May 29, Day 6 Lhasa – Day trip to Ganden Monastery
May 30, Day 7 Lhasa to Gyantse via Yamdrok Tso
May 31, Day 8 Drive to Shigatse, Visit Braille Without Borders Farm (www.braillewithoutborders.org)
June 1, Day 9 Visit Tashilhunpo monastery, Drive to Sakya
June 2, Day 10 Drive to Paryang
June 3, Day 11 Drive to Darchen/Kailash
June 4, Day 12 Kailash, **SAGA DAWA FESTIVAL**
June 5, Day 13 Trek Day 1: Kailash Kora
June 6, Day 14 Trek Day 2: Kailash Kora
June 7, Day 15 Trek Day 3: Kailash Kora – Lake Manasarovar
June 8, Day 16 Lake Manasarovar, Chiu Gompa
June 9, Day 17 Drive to Saga
June 10, Day 18 Drive to Mount Everest Base Camp
June 11, Day 19 Drive to Zhangmu
June 12, Day 20 Depart Tibet for The Last Resort (www.thelastresort.com.np)
June 13, Day 21 The Last Resort
June 14, Day 22 Drive to Kathmandu
June 15, Day 23 Depart Kathmandu

NB: This itinerary is not set in stone but is rather a general idea of what we plan to achieve. All travellers need to be open minded and flexible to **sudden, unexpected changes** to plans and itineraries as a **result of weather and road conditions**, the **health of all group members** and **other extra-ordinary events** which, given the extreme nature of the regions this adventure takes you to, are more likely to occur on this trip more than on any conventional adventure holiday.

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Updates

Please note that from time to time our dossiers are updated. Please check our website for the most up to date dossier.

Trip dossier: TK1101 Version 2.0

Updated: 18/10/11

Updated Info/Changes

Oct 2011 – Starting/Finishing dates changed. Starting 2 days later, May 24th rather than 22nd.

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