

TIBET



Unveil the mysteries of Tibetan Buddhism and culture in Lhasa and Shigatse with stops in Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai

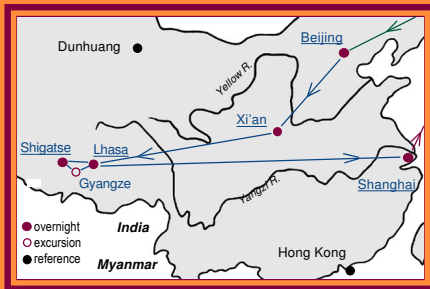
Locked away in its mountain fortress of the Himalayas, Tibet (Xizang or 'Western Treasure' in Chinese), has always exercised a unique hold on the imagination of the outside world intrigued by life on the 'Roof of the World'.

With its increased exposure to modernity and economic development, the magical Buddhist kingdom is more accessible than ever before for today's travelers. Yet, Tibet still retains much of the mystery that entranced early adventurers to the region. The spiritual life of most Tibetans is still centered on a unique type of Buddhism that incorporates elements of the region's indigenous Shamanistic "Bon" religion as well as esoteric practices of Tantric Buddhism from India.

Tibet draws many types of visitors, from sightseers to mountaineers, scholars to trekkers, pilgrims and soul-searchers. The Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Drepung Monastery, and Sera Monastery together house the sacred treasures of Lhasa, dating back centuries.

12 Days (Tour Code-CTB)

This tour departs on Wednesdays and returns on Sundays. There are five tour departures during the year and the dates fall in May, June, July, September, and October. Please refer to the [Dates & Prices](#) or [Access China Tours](#) website for 2010 and 2011 "Tour Dates", the current "Tour Land Price", "Single Supplement Cost", and "International Air Cost". Or call 1-800-788-1399.



Day 1 Depart North America

Fly to China from your nearest airport and via the best routing.

Day 2 Arrive Beijing

Arrive at Beijing Capital Airport, one of the largest and newest in the world. You are met by ACT service staff and transferred by vehicle to your hotel. Meet your fellow travelers at the Evening Reception and learn more about the upcoming activities.

<Evening Reception>

The Peninsula Beijing

Day 3 Beijing

Your tour in Beijing starts in **Tiananmen Square** – the world's largest. Visit the futuristic '**Egg**' - **National Performing Arts Center**. Next, tour the **Forbidden City**, magnificent imperial palaces of Ming and Qing dynasties which were built almost 600 years ago.

After lunch, take an excursion to the extraordinary **Great Wall** of China.



The more rugged and scenic Mutianyu section better exemplifies the Ming era defensive wall construction.

Return to hotel for relaxation. Enjoy a welcome banquet featuring Peking Duck this evening.

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The Peninsula Beijing

Day 4 Beijing → Xi'an

After breakfast in hotel, transfer to airport and fly to Xi'an, an ancient capital of China.

Upon arrival, visit the extraordinary 2,200-year-old **Terracotta Warriors** of China's first Emperor - Qin Shihuang, discovered by local farmers in 1974. This archaeological site is a stunning exhibition of more than 7,000 ancient terracotta life-size statues of Qin soldiers, officers, horses, chariots and other artifacts.

Tonight, enjoy a special Xi'an Cuisine Dinner in an elite local restaurant.

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Sofitel on Renmin Square

Day 5 Xi'an → Lhasa

Morning tour of the massive ancient **City Walls** and the **Big Goose Pagoda**, which was first built in the Tang Dynasty and has since survived centuries of war and earthquakes.

Transfer to airport to board an early afternoon flight to Lhasa, capital of Tibet Autonomous Region. The scenery over the snowy mountains is simply breathtaking. Upon arrival at Gonggar Airport, you are met by your local Tibetan guide and transferred to hotel for check-in and altitude acclimation.

You are now on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Lhasa's elevation is 3,650 meters (about 12,000 feet) above sea level. It takes some time for most people to adjust to the thin and dry air, so be sure to slow down, drink plenty of water, and avoid exertion.

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Four Points By Sheraton

Day 6 Lhasa

Begin your sightseeing at the magnificent **Jokhang Monastery**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This golden-roofed shrine is 1,300 years old. Its labyrinth of rooms contains a beautiful golden statue of Buddha Sakyamuni, the most venerated in Tibet. Many of the finest Tibetan art are on display here illuminated by yak butter candles.

Exiting the Jokhang, you emerge in the center of the fascinating **Barkhor** area, lined with the stalls of a big outdoor street market selling all manner of goods including saddles, thangka paintings, turquoise and silver jewelry, blankets, felt chuba robes, fur pelts, carpets, and tin utensils.

Next, see the **Sera Monastery**, founded in 1419 by Sakya Yeshe, a prominent disciple of Tsongkhapa,





founder of the Yellow Hat Sect (Gelupa) of Tibetan Buddhism. We may also witness some young monks practicing debating skills in the courtyard. A large portion of the Tibetan male population have devoted their lives to practicing as Buddhist monks.

Enjoy a **Tibetan Song and Dance Performance** after dinner this evening.

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Four Points By Sheraton

Day 7 Lhasa

Today, after breakfast we visit the monumental **Potala Palace**, another UNESCO World Heritage Site.

An imposing white and ochre fortress with gilded roofs, Potala Palace has heralded the marvels of the holy city to travelers for over three centuries. Once the seat of Tibetan government and winter residence of the Dalai Lama, the great 13-storey hilltop palace encloses over 1,000 rooms, private quarters as well as prayer halls, chapels and shrines where monks chant and devotees offer ceremonial scarves or yak butter lamps. When you reach the top level, the view of the city sprawling below is fantastic.

Take an afternoon excursion to the extraordinary **Drepung Monastery**, which was founded in 1416 by Jamyang Choje, a leading disciple of Tsongkhapa. Visit a **Tibetan family** in an old neighborhood and hear their life stories.

Back to the hotel, the balance of the day is free for your own relaxation or exploration in the city.

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Four Points By Sheraton

Day 8 Lhasa → Shigatse

Leave Lhasa today and travel by vehicle with your guide to Shigatse. This journey goes through **high mountain passes** and along the beautiful shorelines of azure **Yamdruk Tso Lake**. You have opportunity to visit several Tibetan villages on the way.

Arrive at Gyangze in the afternoon and visit the historic **Gyangze Dzong**, the fortress where three hundred Tibetans put up a fierce fight against the invading British-Indian troops led by Major Francis Younghusband in 1904. All but three were killed in the futile struggle to keep out invaders.

If time permits, also tour **Gyangze Kumbum** for its fine architecture and 15th century murals.

Continue this long journey by high alpine road and arrive in Shigatse before dusk. Check in at your hotel and have dinner before rest for the day.

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Shigatse Hotel

Day 9 Shigatse

Shigatse is the second largest city in Tibet and it is a popular destination for both pilgrims and tourists. This city is even higher than Lhasa, sitting at 3,850 meters (12,650 feet) in the Yalongzangbu valley.

After breakfast, head west of the town to view the gleaming golden roofs of the magnificent **Tashilunpo Monastery**. The traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, it was founded in 1447 by Gendun Drup, Tsongkhapa's nephew and disciple, who was later recognized as the first Dalai Lama. The monastery has some of the most

fabulous chapels outside Lhasa.

In the afternoon, visit a local **carpet factory** where exquisite Tibetan carpets are produced by hand. Tour the **Samdrubse Dzong**, an ancient fortress destroyed during the Cultural Revolution that has now been restored through private donations. Finish the day with a stroll in the town's **market** and wander through the **alleyways** of the old section of the city before a local cuisine dinner.

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Shigatse Hotel

Day 10 Shigatse → Shanghai

After breakfast, travel by vehicle towards Lhasa following the national highway winding through towering peaks and the tranquil valley scenery of the Yaluzangbu River. If time permits, we will visit a **Tibetan village** and its temples on the way.

Arrive in Lhasa Gonggar Airport in the afternoon and fly back across the width of central China to Shanghai via Chengdu.

Shanghai is China's most cosmopolitan city. Met by your local tour guide and transfer to hotel upon arrival. Dinner is on your own.

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Four Seasons Shanghai

Day 11 Shanghai

Start your exploration in Shanghai by visiting the exquisite **Yuyuan Garden**, **old town market** and the European Art-Deco architecture of the **Bund**. Look across the Huangpu River at the towering buildings of the Pudong Economic District.

After lunch, visit **Shanghai Museum**. Its galleries



contain world-class collections of ancient Chinese art and artifacts dating back millennia.

Enjoy free time for your own exploration. Tonight, enjoy a special Shanghai Cuisine farewell Dinner.

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Four Seasons Shanghai

Day 12 Return Home

Enjoy breakfast in your hotel. Transfer to airport and board your homebound flight. Arrive in North America on the same day.

