

Tibet Travel Guide

(Version I)

Latest Guide & Tips on May 2013

This is Tibet

A Higher Plain
The Roof of the World
Grandiose Natural Scenery
Vast Plateau Landscape
Breathtaking High-altitude Lakes
Stunning Views of Highest Mountains
Fabulous Monastery Sights
Numerous Ancient Architectures
Unique Folk Cultures
One of the Most Likeable Peoples
A Place Travel Enthusiasts are Eager to Visit
A "Paradise" for Photographers...



**Start Your Tibet Journey with Us &
End Up as Legendary Stories...**





Top Spots of Tibet

Lhasa

The Spiritual and Political Capital of Tibet.

Namtso

"Heavenly Lake" of Tibet, its touching beauty should not be missed by any traveler who visits Tibet.

Everest Nature Reserve

Once-in-a-life journey to experience the earth's highest mountain.

Nyingtri

'Pearl of Tibet Plateau', where the climate is subtropical, rice and bananas are grown, four seasons are seen in the mountains.

Tsedang

The cradle of Tibetan civilization.

Mt. Kailash & Lake Manasarovar

Two of the most far-flung and legendary travel destinations in the world. Many of the pilgrims on the road have been planning a visit all their lives.



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Best Time to Go

Climate is not such a major consideration when visiting Tibet as many people might imagine. For a place nicknamed 'The Land of Snows', there's a surprising lack of snow. Winter is very cold, many restaurants are shut and snow can close mountain passes, but some travelers swear by the winter months. There are few travelers about at this time and Lhasa is crowded with drokpas (nomads).

Spring, early summer and late autumn are probably the best times to visit Tibet. March is a politically sensitive month in the country and there is occasional tightening of restrictions on travelers heading into Tibet at this time, but the weather's pretty good. April brings reliable weather in eastern Tibet and discounts on accommodation and vehicle rental in Lhasa. Mt Everest is particularly clear during April and May.

From mid-July through to the end of September the monsoon starts to affect parts of Tibet. (The months of July and August bring half of Tibet's annual rainfall.) Travel to western Tibet becomes slightly more difficult, the roads to the east are temporarily slashed out and the friendship and sometimes becomes impassable on the Nepal side or on the border itself.

Trips to Mt Kailash can be undertaken from April to October, although September and October are considered the best months. October is also the best time to make a trip out to the east. Lhasa and its environs don't get really cold until the end of November.



Why Travel to Tibet

Tibet, the Roof of the World, remained unknown to the world until the beginning of the 20th century. The massive, snowy land has exerted an awesome draw on travelers and adventurers ever since. Its majestic scenery, mysterious and exotic religious culture, and wonderful people, reward every tourist with an indelible life long memory!

Tibet shows many different faces: unique style life and lonely landscapes, Tibetan Buddhism customs and culture, lovely lakes and rough mountains. For cultural sightseeing, **Lhasa** is ceaselessly thriving, and inevitably, it is the one place that features on every traveler's itinerary. It is not only Tibet's biggest city and capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, but also the place where the world's attention are attracted to. **Mount Everest** is great for hiking in summer. On the way up to Mount Everest we have Rongbuk Monastery, the highest monastery in the world. If condition permits, tourists can even see the sunrise at the monastery. **Mount Kailash** is considered as a sacred place in four religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Bön faith. In Hindu religion, it is considered to be the abode of Lord Shiva.

Oh, and **don't overlook these simple joys of being in Tibet** when planning your itinerary:

- The smell of juniper incense, the low murmur of Tibetan chanting and the warm glow of butter lamps in monasteries everywhere.
- Following a kora (a pilgrimage circuit) with a band of happy pilgrims or scoring a lift in the back of a pilgrim truck.
- Overnighting in a small monastery such as Mindroling, Dorje Drak or Drigung Til.
- Repeatedly wandering the Barkhor (p102), different every time.
- A post-hike thermos of sweet milky tea in a crowded Tibetan teahouse.

There's **Gyantse**, in the Nyang-chu Valley, famed for the largest chörten (stupa) in Tibet, and hiking in Yarlung Tsangbo Valley, widely considered the cradle of Tibetan civilization. Base yourself in **Tsetang** and marvel at the monkey cave in Gangpo Ri or walk the monastery Kora (pilgrim path). Your trip will take you past glittering mountain turquoise lakes and over high passes draped with prayer flags. Find a quiet spot in a prayer hall full of chanting monks, hike past the ruins of remote hermitages or make an epic overland trip along some of the world's wildest roads. The scope for adventure is limitless.

Tibet is a uniquely spiritual place. Those moments of

peace when everything is in its proper place, seem to come more frequently in Tibet, whether inspired by the devotion shown in the face of a Tibetan pilgrim or the dwarfing scale of a beautiful landscape. Tibet can truly claim to be on a higher plain.

Besides fabulous monastery sights, breathtaking high-altitude lake scenery, stunning views of the world's highest mountains, **it offers one of the most likeable peoples you will ever meet.**

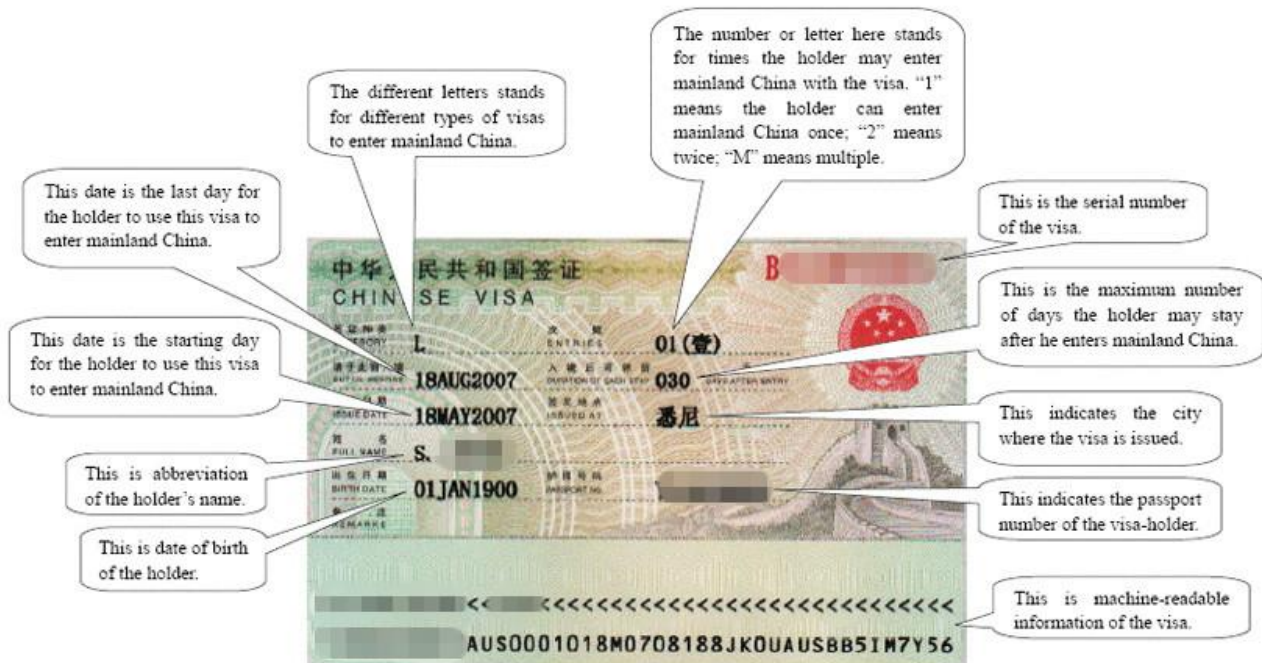
The people here are very devout. You see them circumambulating their sacred places, like the Jokhang Temple and the Potala Palace, to accumulate merit. You see them doing prostrations in front of the Jokhang – they might have a goal of doing a couple hundred thousand prostrations in their lifetime as part of their attempt to reach greater enlightenment. But perhaps the most wondrous is how you see Tibetans continuously in prayer as they are walking down the street or sitting on the park bench, spinning their prayer wheel, running their fingers over their prayer beads, their lips constantly moving as they chant Om Mane Padme Hum.





How to Get Your Chinese Visa

To enter Tibet, or any part of China excepting Hong Kong and Macao (Visitors to Hong Kong, holding passports from the some countries DO NOT need a visa when staying for a specified free period), a valid passport including a standard Chinese entry visa is essential.



1. Apply in your country

Such visas are generally obtainable from most Chinese embassies and consulates. The cost of a standard Chinese tourist visa varies from **US\$12-120** according to the nationality of the applicant and the type of visa required. **Individual visas** may be issued for single or parties of five and over, for the specific duration of a fixed itinerary (single or double entry). **Multiple entry visas** are normally issued for business or educational purposes only, ranging in validity from 6 to 12 months, and are more expensive (US\$120-250). Normally **three working days** are required to process an application from the date of its submission, but express services are also available at a premium. It may be best to obtain it before leaving your home country unless you are taking a package tour to enter Tibet overland from Nepal.

The first rule when applying for a visa as an independent traveler is to expect that **you may be refused a visa if you mention plans to visit Tibet**. There is a trick that when you apply for the Chinese visa, you can't tell the officer that you have the plan for traveling to Tibet; you can only inform them you want to travel to somewhere else of China. Or else the application would become complicated and arduous.

Keep in mind

1. When entering China it is best to have a visa covering the expected duration of stay. **Getting extensions inside China can involve delays and other difficulties.**

2. You need to apply for a double- or multiple entry visa when you need to leave and re-enter mainland China. Please note that, even when you leave for Hong Kong or Macao from mainland China, you still need to have a double- or multiple entry visas.

2. Apply in Hong Kong

It is usually very easy to apply for a China visa in Hong Kong. You can get a visa yourself at: **Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China**

5th Floor, Lower Block

26 Harbor Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong

Tel: +852-25851657 OR +852-25851680 OR +852-25851794

Please Note:

- 1) You need to go there Monday to Friday during business hours.
- 2) 'Fast Process' means: the visa should be processed the same day.

Requirements to obtain a Visa in Hong Kong

- A. One recent passport photo.
- B. Passport which needs to be valid at least more than 3 months.
- C. Call the office before your visit.
- D. China Tourist and Business (F) Visa can be obtained easily in Hong Kong. It can be obtained with the help of a travel agent but at least 3 full working days should be allowed for this procedure.



Travel to Tibet through Nepal

If you entry Tibet from Kathmandu, Nepal, you are required to obtain a Chinese visa in the consulate of P.R China in Kathmandu, the opening time for the Consulate of P.R China in Kathmandu is only available from **9:30am-11:00am** on every **Monday, Wednesday and Friday**. Please note this visa application is compulsory despite you have already had a Chinese visa in your country or not since this is regulated by the border treaty signed between Nepal and China.

China Visa Invitation Letter

团体签证用/For group visa

旅游邀请函
Invitation Letter for Tourist Group

编号/No.: T247713040003

中华人民共和国驻尼泊尔大使馆(总领馆/领事馆/处)
或中华人民共和国外交部驻特别行政区特派员公署:
Chinese Embassy (Consulate General / Consulate / Office) in NEPAL
or the Commissioner's Office of China's Foreign Ministry in SAR:

兹确认 西藏日喀则中国国际旅行社 (邀请单位名称) 邀请的
JOHN GILLIAN CAROLE (姓名) 等 2 人 (名单附后) 将于 20130411
(入境日期) 前往 加德满都、樟木、聂拉木、珠峰大本营、定日、
日喀则、江孜、拉萨、西安 (地点) 旅游, (最长) 停留 7 天, 需
申请 1 (个) 月有效 1 次入境签证。

Duly authorized, I hereinafter confirm that, CITS.SHIGATSE.TIBET
has invited JOHN CAROLE as well as other 2 persons to travel to
Kathmandu, Zhangmu, Nyalam, Everest Base Camp, Tingri, Shigatse,
Gyantse, Lhasa, Xi'an, of China on 20130411 and stay for 7 days, and need to
apply 1 entry (or entries) visa valid for 1 months. Name list of the invited is
enclosed.

团号/Group No. CITS-XGZ-OTC0411

被授权旅游单位名称 西藏自治区旅游局
Name of Duly Authorized Tourism Unit: TIBET TOURISM ADMINISTRATION CHINA

联系人/Contact Person: 联系电话/Tel.: 86 891 6834312
传真/Fax: 86 891 6834637 邮箱/Email: 861967295@qq.com

盖章及负责人签署/Seal and Signature: 2013年3月24日
Year /Month/ Day

China Visa Invitation Letter Name List

被邀请人员名单
Name List of the Invited

外文姓名 Full Name	性别 Sex	出生日期 Date of Birth	国籍 Nationality	护照号码 Passport No.
1 JOHN CAROLE	F	19511101	BRITISH	46 28
2 JOHN TREFOR	M	19510518	BRITISH	46 49
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

被授权旅游单位盖章
Seal of Duly Authorized Tourism Unit

2013年3月24日
Year /Month/ Day

The Chinese visa you get in Kathmandu is a "Group Visa". A "group visa" is not entered in travelers' passports but is a separate sheet of paper issued in duplicate by the Chinese consulate in Kathmandu, listing all members of the group. It usually allows a stay of 15 or 20 days. A "group" may be any number of travelers, and may be just one traveler. One or more travelers entering Tibet together with others may wish to have their own separate group visa so they are able to separate from the others.

团体签证
GROUP VISA

第000057号团体签证, 准予T247713040003团(2)人自2013年04月11日至2013年04月17日在中华人民共和国旅行, 壹次有效。
NO. 000057 GROUP VISA PERMIT T247713040003 GROUP 2 PERSONS FROM 11 APR 2013 TO 17 APR 2013 TRAVELING IN CHINA, ONE TIME VALID.

发证日期
DATE OF ISSUE 07 APR 2013

签署、印章
SIGNATURE, SEAL 付铁胜

备注:

旅游团人员名单
LIST OF TOURIST GROUP

序号 No.	姓名 Name in full	性别 Sex	出生日期 Date of birth	职业 Profession or Occupation	国籍 Nationality	护照号码 Passport No.
1	JOHN CAROLE	FEMALE	19511101		UNITED KINGDOM	46 28
2	JOHN TREFOR	MALE	19510518		UNITED KINGDOM	46 49

名单结束 END OF THE LIST

We have reliable cooperative agency in Kathmandu, with their help, you can easily get your Chinese visa.

CHINA GROUP VISA FEE 2013

Visa Working days	US nationals	Other nationals
Normal 3 visa working days	USD 145.00	USD 55.00
Urgent 2 visa working days	USD 160.00	USD 70.00
Extreme urgent 1 visa working day	USD 180.00	USD 90.00

VISA FEES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE...

Please note that our partner in Nepal need to get all the relative documents including Visa Application letter from TTB and the original passports to apply visa for Tibet Autonomous Region of China in advance, and all these required documents need to be submitted to the consular section of the embassy before 10:30 hrs only on the Visa working days i.e.: Monday, Wednesday and Fridays...

The required Visa Fees must be paid to our partner in Nepal in CASH by the clients before the day of Visa Application.

Tibet Permits

There are three levels of bureaucracy you need to get through to travel in Tibet: **a visa to enter China, a Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) permit** to get into Tibet and **an Alien Travel Permit** to travel to certain regions of Tibet.

Beware that the permit situation is subject to rapid and unpredictable change by the Chinese government, how these rules are interpreted depends on the political climate in Tibet. Don't be surprised if the permit system is radically different from that described in this article. And it's worth checking the current situation with us before you make the decision to travel to Tibet.

1. Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) Permit

A TTB permit is officially required to get into the Tibet Autonomous Province (TAR). Without one you will not be able to board a flight to Tibet and, if checked, you may not be allowed to continue on your bus or train trip. Here are the **Tibet Permit Application Procedures** for your information:

1) **If you visit China for travel, and your visa type is "L"**, Please email us the photo copy of your passport and China Visa 20-30 days before you arrive in China, we will set out to apply for your Tibet Permit upon we receive it. Please be sure that the photos are in large size and clear enough.

2) **If you visit China for business purpose, and your visa type is "F" or "Z"**, please offer a business visiting certificate paper from the company or association in China you pay a visit to that can provide your accurate purpose. This certificate paper should include two parts: 1) Your personal information: your full name, passport number, the purchase of visit, the duration of your visit. 2) the company information, the company full name, address, telephone number, fax number. And this certificate paper must be stamped by this company.

3) **If you resident in China held a resident permit**, please offer your working permit issued by China government or a certificate from your company to prove you are working there. The certificate should include 1) Your personal information: your full name, passport number, the purpose of visit, how long have you been working there, your position in this company; 2) the company information, the company full name, address, telephone number, fax number.

4) **Your Tibet Permit will be issued in 2-5 working days** since we pass your documents to Tibet Tourism Bureau. The Original Tibet Permit will be posted to the city from which you depart to Tibet, please let us know the address, telephone number, the hotel name of your accommodation in that city 15 days before you arrive in China. Or you could go to our branch office in that city you depart to pick up documents in person if you prefer.



2. Aliens' Travel Permits (PSB's)

Tibet is slightly more complicated when it comes to travel permits than elsewhere in China. An Alien Travel Permit (usually just called a 'travel permit') is granted by the PSB (Public Security Bureau) for travel to an area that is officially closed.

Tibet PSB will not issue travel permits to individuals and the travel permits are usually only obtainable through tour operators, for organized tours by four-wheel-drive car. A single permit is normally issued to all the people who are traveling together, the permit naming just one of them and stating how many others are accompanying him; the passports, or at least photocopies of passports and visas, of all persons traveling must be presented in order to obtain a permit.

If you want to do an overland tour from Yunnan, Sichuan or Xinjiang province to Tibet, your Entry Stamp to China is required to apply the PSB before your tour starts.

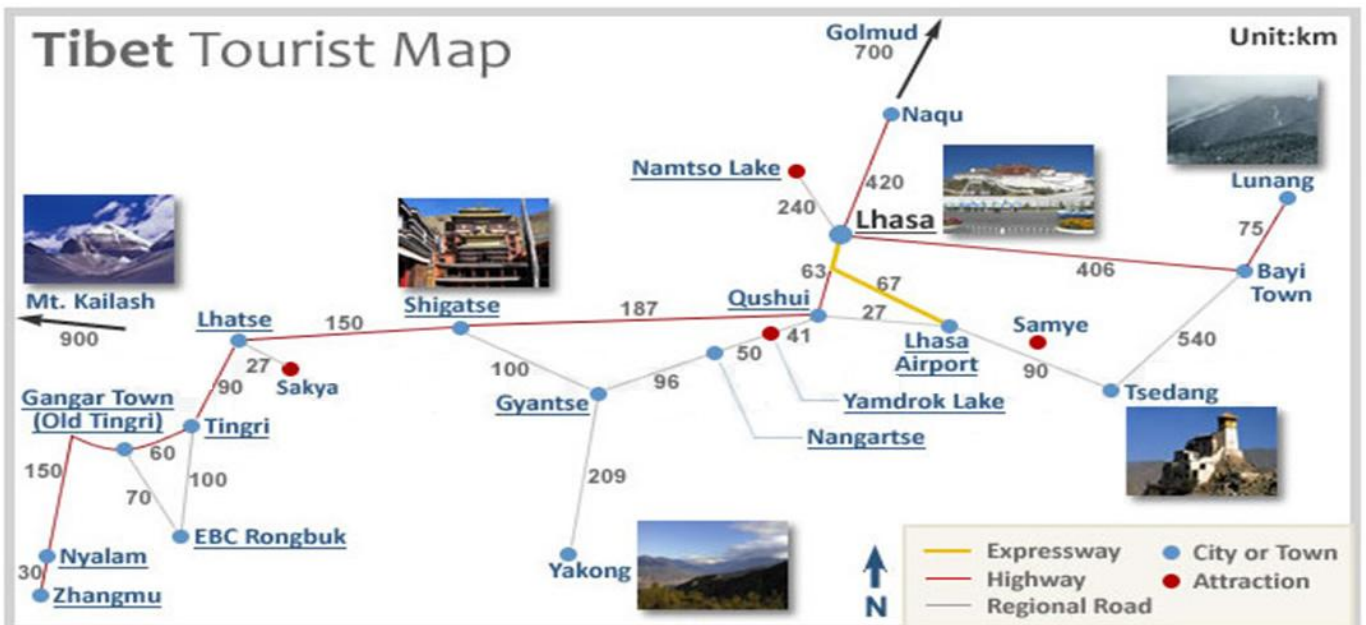
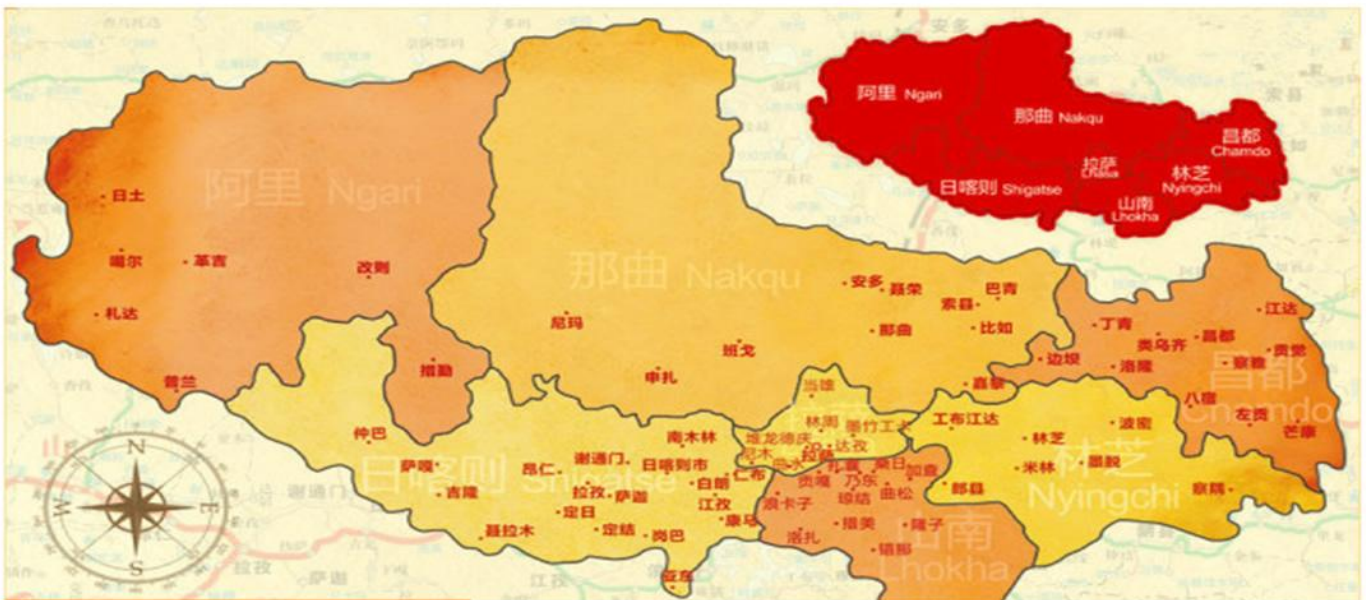
3. Other Permits

Sensitive border areas, such as **Mt. Kailash, the road to Kashgar** and **the Nyingtri region of eastern Tibet**, also require a military permit and a foreign-affairs permit. If you want to do an overland tour from Yunnan, Sichuan or Xinjiang province to Tibet, a military permit is required, too.

For **Tholing** and **Tsaparang** in western Tibet you may also need a permit from the local Cultural Affairs Bureau. Dungkar in western Tibet requires a permit from the Ali PSB.

These will be arranged by us as well, but you need to give us the full information and documents at least 3 weeks prior to your departure.

Useful Maps





How to Get to Tibet

➤ By Train

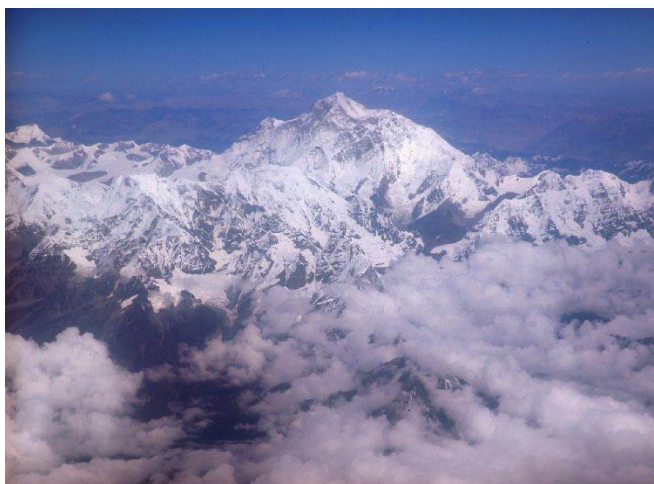
There are a few way of getting to Tibet. The most common way now is to take the train to Lhasa. There are daily trains to Lhasa originating from **Xining, Lanzhou, Chengdu, Beijing, Shanghai** and **Guangzhou**. In addition, the train passes through many other cities along the way. Train tickets during the busy summer tourist season can be extremely difficult to get. For acclimatization purposes, Xining is probably the best option to take the train from as it sits at **2300m/7500 feet** above sea level. It is also the closest major city to Lhasa.



➤ By Air

Another popular way to get to Lhasa is to fly there. There are daily flights to Lhasa from **Chengdu, Xi'an, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing** and a few other major cities. Chengdu offers the most daily flights to Lhasa with at least 6 to 10 flights per day.

There are five airport in Tibet now: **Lhasa Gonggar Airport, Shigatse Peace Airport, Nyingtri Milin Airport, Ngari Kunsha Airport and Chamdo Bamda Airport.**



View from the airplane on the way in to Tibet

➤ Overland Route to Tibet

For those with a spirit of adventure, driving a four wheel vehicle to Tibet may provide you with the experience of a lifetime! Such an expedition is demanding and requires participants to be **in good physical health, time is required to make the journey and it's costly**. Anyone considering this journey should be advised that a lot of courage and determination are required!

There are five major road routes to Lhasa

► Qinghai-Tibet Highway

Xining - 123 km - Daotang River - 196 km - Caka - 484 km - Golmud - 269 km - Wudaoliang - 150 km - Tuotuo Riverside - 91 km - Yanshiping - 100 km - Tanggula Mountain - 89 km - Amdo - 138 km - Nagqu - 164 km - Damxung - 75 km - Yangbajain - 87 km - Lhasa, **1937 km in length**.

► Sichuan-Tibet Highway

Northern Route: Chengdu - 394 km - Kangding - 267 km - Luhuo - 95 km - Garze - 207 km - Dege - 111 km - Gyamda - 228 km - Chamdo - 480 km - Baqing - 256 km - Nagqu - 164 km - Damxung - 162 km - Lhasa, **2121 km in length** with the highest point at Queer Mt. of 4916m, also could via: Chengdu - Ya'an - Kangding - Xinduqiao - Luhuo - Garze - Lhasa.

Southern Route: Chengdu - 147 km - Ya'an - 163 km - Luding - 62 km - Kangding - 149 km - Yajiang - 308 km - Batang - 104 km - Markam - 158 km - Zuogong - 107 km - Bongda - 94 km - Baxoi - 217 km - Bomi - 233 km - Nyingtri - 127 km - Gongbo Gyamda - 206 km - Mozhugongka - 73 km - Lhasa, **2140 km in length** with the highest point at Litang of 4700m.

► Yunnan-Tibet Highway

Kunming - 353 km - Dali - 166 km - Lijiang - 145 km - Zhongdian - 152 km - Deqen - 103 km - Yanjing - 111 km - Markam - 359 km - Baxio - 450 km - Nyingchi - 420 km - Lhasa, **2300 km in length**.

► Xinjiang-Tibet Highway

Yecheng - 69km - Pusa - 88km - Kudidaban - 83km - Mazadaban - 339km - Sweet Water Sea - 110km - Jieshandaban - 177km - Duomaping - 143km - Rutog County - 87km - Shiquanhe town - 331km - Parga - 334km - Zhongba - 145km - Saga - 293km - Lhaze - 157km - Xigaze - 337km - Lhasa, **2743 km in length**.

► Tibet Friendship Highway to Kathmandu

Lhasa - 350 km - Shigatse - 157 km - Shegar (New Tingri) - 60 km - Old Tingri - Nyalam - 30 km - Zhangmu Friendship Bridge (Kathmandu)



Luggage Allowance

Flight Luggage Allowance

➤ Free Baggage Allowance in Weight

On international and regional flights, the free baggage allowance for each published adult-fare or half-fare passenger is as follows:

- **First class fare ticket:** 40 kilogram (88 pounds);
- **Business class fare ticket:** 30 kilogram (66 pounds);
- **Economy class fare ticket:** 20 kilogram (44 pounds).

No free baggage allowance is granted to infants paying 10% of the adult fare. Groups travelling together are able to combine their baggage allowance if they check in together.

➤ Free Baggage Allowance in Piece

Free baggage allowance in piece is applicable only on **China-USA** and **China-Canada** international flight.

According to the class of tickets, the free baggage allowance for each **full-fare of half-fare first-class and business-class passenger** is two pieces, and the sum of the length, width and height of each piece must not exceed 62 in. (158cm).

The free baggage allowance for each **economy-class and discounted tourist-class passenger** is two pieces, and the sum of the length, width and height of each piece must not exceed 62 in. (158cm), but the sum of the length, width and height of the two pieces of baggage must not exceed 107 in. (273cm); the weight of each piece must not exceed 32 kg.

An infant paying 10% of the adult fare is allowed one piece of free baggage, and the sum of its length, width and height must not exceed 45 in. (115cm). In addition, a collapsible infant cart or infant handcart is allowed to be carried free.

For **baggage in excess** of the free baggage allowance in piece, or the sum of the length, width and height of each piece exceeding the prescribed limits, an excess baggage charge should be paid.

➤ Hand Baggage

In addition to free baggage allowance in weight, **each passenger holding a full-fare or half-fare ticket may carry in his own custody the following articles free of charge:** a lady's handbag, an overcoat, a raincoat or a traveling blanket, a walking stick or an umbrella, a small amount of reading material for the trip, a small camera, a pair of small binoculars, infant's food for consumption in flight, an infant's carrying basket, a fully collapsible invalid chair or a pair of braces or artificial limbs. In addition to the free baggage allowance in piece, regardless of the fare class of the ticket, the passenger may also carry unlimited number of pieces of hand baggage that can only be placed under the

passenger seat, and the sum of the length, width and height of all the pieces must not exceed 45 in. (115cm).

➤ Packing of Baggage

The checked baggage should be able to withstand a certain extent of pressure, completely sealed, well locked and firmly tied up. For those baggage not packed in accordance with the requirements, the carrier can refuse to accept for carriage and will not be liable for any damage or breakage thereof.

➤ Prohibited Items

Flammable, explosive, corrosive, poisonous, radioactive, polymerizable and magnetized materials. Passengers are forbidden to carry arms, sharp or lethal weapons.

Train Luggage Allowance

➤ Carry-on baggage allowance

It is allowed to take a certain amount of carry-on baggage for free:

- Children (children with free ticket included): 10 kg (22 pounds)
- Diplomat: 35 kg (77 pounds)
- Other passengers: 20 kg (44 pounds)

The total length of each item cannot exceed 160 cm. Rod-shaped baggage should not exceed 200 cm in length and 20 kg (44 pounds) in weight.

Note: The above limitation is not applicable to wheelchair, which can be brought onto the train for free. If the baggage exceeds the allowed amount (either by weight or size), please use the baggage transportation service.

➤ Prohibited Items:

- Items whose transportation is prohibited or limited by the government.
- Dangerous goods, ammunition.
- Animals and goods (goods with revolting smell included) which will affect public hygiene.
- Items which may harm other passengers in the train, such as knives (fruit knife included).
- Baggage that exceeds the limitation of the regulation.

➤ Limited Items:

- Less than 5 gas lighters.
- Less than 20 boxes of matches.
- Items like enamel and hair dye, less than 20 ml.
- Items like alcohol less than 100 ml.
- Items like styling mouse, insecticide and air-refresher, less than 600 ml.
- Less than 20 newborn poultries.



Food & Drinking

Sample the taste- What to Eat in Tibet

Tibet is unlikely to become a hot destination for foodies. Though you won't starve, Tibetan food will probably not be a highlight of your trip. Tibetan food, like Tibetan people and their culture, has a very distinct character. Many people have given Tibetan cuisine a bad reputation while others like it and think it's not that bad. Whether it's tasty or not, you need to try it yourself. Even if you have explored all Tibet attractions, your trip to Tibet is never complete without trying Tibetan food.

Tibetan people have unique food and drink due to the high altitude, harsh climate, their religious belief and ethnic customs. Their diet mainly consists of meat, milk and other high protein food to help them fight the cold. Tibetans eat a lot of yak meat and mutton but they don't eat horse, dog, donkey or even fish.

✧ Beef and Mutton

Beef (yak meat) is the most popular meat eaten by Tibetans. Beef and mutton contain high protein which is helpful in fighting the cold. Many Tibetans often eat raw meat, while others boil beef and mutton with ginger, salt and spices. Dried beef and mutton strips are also popular in Tibet. The dried meat can be difficult to chew but tastes good. Additionally, the dried meat can be stored and are useful when traveling long distance.

✧ Tsampa

Tsampa (糌粑) is the staple food in Tibet. Tibetan people eat tsampa at every meal and bring it as a ready-made food when traveling. Tsampa is a dough made with roasted barley flour and ghee (yak butter).

There are 2 basic methods to make and eat tsampa. One is to make dough with butter tea. The other is to make porridge with beef or mutton, and vegetables. The former one is salty while the latter is added with sugar to give it a sweet taste.



Tsampa with Raw Yak Meat (in the bowl)

✧ Tibetan Noodle (Thenthuk or Thukpa)

Tibetan noodle (藏面) is usually served with simple vegetable and brews. Those who live in cities of Tibet prefer to have Tibetan noodles and sweet tea as their breakfast. Some say Tibetan noodle soup is the most enjoyable for the meal as the soup tastes nice together with a bit shallot.



Yak Thukpa - Tibetan Noodle Soup

✧ Tibetan Sausages

Tibetan people are fond of varied sausages, including meat sausage, blood sausage, flour sausage, liver sausage, lung sausage, etc.



Tibetan Blood Sausages

✧ Ginseng Fruit Rice

Ginseng fruit rice (人参果饭) is considered as a lucky food by Tibetans and they eat ginseng fruit rice during festivals especially the Tibetan New Year Festival. Ginseng fruit rice is made with rice, ginseng fruit, butter tea and sugar. Ginseng fruit is rich in nutrition and benefits a lot to your digestive system.



✧ Momo

Momos (藏饺) are Tibetan dumplings which are made with either meat or vegetables. The half-moon-shaped momo can be either steamed or fried and served with chili sauce.

✧ Milk Curd and Yogurt

Tibetan people eat all kinds of dairy products, including ghee (butter), cheese, yogurt, and milk curd. Milk curd or named milk sediment (奶渣) is solidified sediments of boiled milk, which tastes sour. Tibetans bring it when traveling to avoid environmental inadaptability. Milk curd can be eaten as snacks or used to make Tibet buns. Besides, fried milk curd tastes good too.

Chill with a Drink- What to drink in Tibet

The local beverage that every traveler ends up trying at least once is yak-butter tea. Tea houses are an important social venue in Tibet, and offer a chance to sit down and relax. The tea houses in the town offer sweet tea, or salted; in the villages you may only have the option of salt tea. The line between a tea house and a restaurant is blurred and many also offer thukpa. And also have a try of the chang, a fermented barley beer. It has a rich, fruity taste and ranges from disgusting to pretty good.

✧ Butter Tea

Some visitors call the butter tea "yak butter tea", but actually there is no such thing as "yak butter tea". Why? Because yaks are male and they can't produce milk. Females, called "dri", produce milk. ☺

Butter tea (酥油茶) is another staple of Tibetan meal. To put it simply, the butter tea is boiled tea added with ghee and salt. Tibetan people drink butter tea to keep themselves warm and it usually drank whiling eating tsampa. Some say the butter tea tastes more like soup rather than tea. Tibetans usually serve tea in small bowls instead of cups. Modern Tibetans use an electric blender to mix them to provide you butter tea.



Butter tea

✧ Tibetan Sweet Tea (Tibetan Milk Tea)

Tibetan sweet tea (藏式甜茶) is another popular tea in Tibet. How to make it? Boil milk with brick tea and sugar added. Tibetan milk tea is better acceptable by visitors than butter tea as it smells more pleasant and the taste is not that strong.

✧ Tibetan Barley Wine (Chang)

The Tibetan brew is known as chang, a fermented barley beer. It has a rich, fruity taste and ranges from disgusting to pretty good. Connoisseurs serve it out of a jerry can. Those trekking in the Everest region should try the local variety, which is served in a big pot. Hot water is poured into the fermenting barley and the liquid is drunk through a wooden straw – it is very good. Sharing chang is a good way to get to know local people, if drunk in small quantities. The taste of Chang differs from one to another due to the brewing method and duration.



Chang - Tibetan wine made from highland barley

The main brands of beer available in Tibet are snow and Lhasa Beer, as well as the usual suspects like Budweiser. Lhasa Beer is brewed in Lhasa, originally under German supervision and now in a joint venture with Carlsberg. Look out also for Lhasa Ice Beer and Tibet Spring Green Barley Beer. Domestic beer costs around Y5 in a shop, Y8 in most restaurants and Y12 in swanky bars.

Supermarkets in Lhasa stock several types of Chinese red wine, including Shangri-La, produced in the Tibetan areas of northeast Yunnan using methods handed down by French missionaries at the beginning of the 19th century. A bottle costs around Y50.



Shopping

It is said that a trip to Tibet is never complete without a shopping spree.

Tibet has vast and rich variations of local arts and crafts. **Tibetan carpets, carvings, local snacks**, as well as **Buddhist items** are available for visitors. So it could be said that Tibet is a great place for shopping. For visitors to Tibet, there are an uncountable number of specialties for them to choose from.

What to Buy

Thangka: A thangka is a Tibetan scroll painting that has strong ties to Buddhism and features distinctive ethnic flavor. They have been popular in Tibet for centuries. Some Thangkas are charming portraits of a Buddha, some are colorful representations of Tibetan customs, and some are portraits of the history of Tibet. Thangka paintings can be made using a wide variety of techniques: silk tapestry with cut designs, hand painted, color printing, embroidery, brocade, and pearl inlaid.

Tibetan Crafts: Normally crafted from such raw materials as gold, silver, copper, wood, bamboo, as well as bones, Tibetan crafts are not only useful, but aesthetically pleasing. Tibetan silver crafts make great souvenirs from Tibet. Tibetan silver ornaments make use of precious stones like agate, rubies and sapphires, and are usually carved with Sanskrit.

Tibetan Carpets and Textiles: Woven with bright and harmonious colors, Tibetan carpets are durable and beautifully crafted. The hand woven, Tibetan woolen Pulu cloth comes in many colors and is used for making clothes, shoes, and caps. It is incredibly warm, as well as beautiful.

Tibetan Knives: For Tibetan people, knives are not only a tool and a weapon, but also an adornment. It is a time-honored traditional handicraft that is an integral part of Tibetan's daily lives. This is especially true of knives carried by Tibetan women that tend to be more decorative and delicate. They are particularly famous for their intricately designed silver sheaths.

Tibetan Medicine: Lots of tourists like to buy traditional Tibetan medicine for its herbs such as saffron, aweto and snow lotus. Tibetan doctors and their traditional medicines made by secret methods attract much curiosity, and some tourists also like to pay the traditional doctors a visit for treatment during their tour.

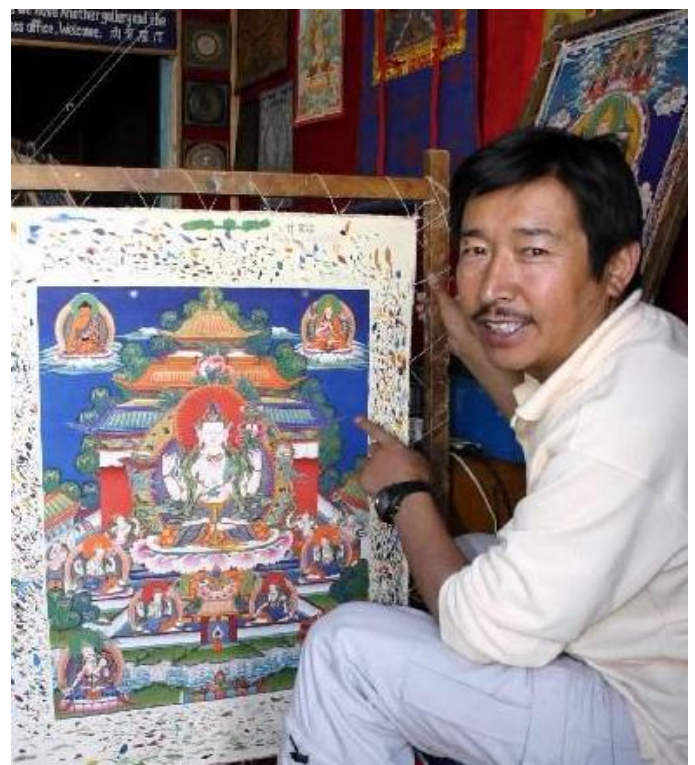
Tibetan traditional arts and crafts are too numerous to mention. **To get a better understand of exactly what there is to buy in Tibet, it is best to explore the local markets to do some shopping on your own.**

Where to Buy

Barkhor Street is the famous commercial center of Tibet. It is located outside of Jokhang Temple. Over 120 handicraft and artwork shops and over 200 individual booths are set up on Barkhor Street each day. It is **a must-go place for all souvenir shopping**. Tibetan rugs, knives, broadswords, traditional clothes, gold and silver jewelry and all sorts of traditional handmade craftwork can easily be found in this street. One tip, Tibetan beads especially are very expensive, so don't forget to bargain with the vendors, whatever you buy! You can also find fabulous food on Barkhor Street. It's a good idea to go shopping on Barkhor Street in the morning or evening, because local people always value highly their first customer and their last one.

Besides simply shopping, Barkhor Street is **a great place to people watch**. This circular street is a stop for pilgrims, and is also where local people do some of their shopping, so it gives visitors a great chance to see local people living their lives.

This street offers a lot of choices, but it is important to shop around before deciding on a purchase. Many vendors sell similar items, and some places are more expensive than others. When deciding to buy a piece, be sure to bargain. It is expected, and it will help insure that visitors do not get cheated. There are no set prices, so if you find something you want, think what it is worth to you, and stick to that price. Most of the items for sale in Tibet cannot be found anywhere else in the world.





Where to Stay - FAQs on Lodging

Q1: What are the hotels like in Tibet? Is shower or bath available in hotels in Tibet? Should I take a tent and a sleeping bag with me?

A: Accommodation conditions in Tibet have been greatly improved due to rapidly developing tourism in Tibet. In most cities and counties in Tibet, there are hotels and guest houses for lodging, but the equipment and service may be inferior to those of the other places of China. Even some famous international chain hotels in Lhasa, like Sheraton and Jardine, the service standard and facilities of most 3, 4 even 5 star hotels are not what you would expect from the same rating hotels in Beijing or Shanghai.

Most of the standard rooms of the starred hotels in Lhasa have private washrooms with water heaters. In the guest houses there are own public bathrooms with fixed time service. Usually internet service is available in the business center or the separate internet bar in the hotels, and private internet service may be offered in the luxury rooms of a hotel. However, in some remote areas, the internet is not accessible due to the limited condition. Coffee is uncommon in the rooms, but many hotels have a separate cafe.

In Lhasa and Shigatse, starred hotels are more than other cities of Tibet. In Lhasa, accommodation ranges from guest houses to five star hotels. Except for the golden weeks of May Day Holiday, National Holiday and Shoton Festival, the hotels are not difficult to book. In Shigatse, Gyantse, Tsedang and Nyingtri, the highest standard is three stars. In Tingri, Zhangmu and Nagchu, the highest are two stars while in other smaller or remote areas, accommodation is mainly in guest houses, usually having a public bathroom with squat toilet. Therefore, when travelling to remote areas where only guest houses are available, you should bring a sleeping bag to keep warm and clean. You can bring a tent if you would like to camp for the night, such as at Namtso Lake.

In the off-season, most hotels go out of business due to fewer travelers. But in the high season, the prices are about 30% higher than those during the low season, sometimes up to twice as much. Besides, if you want to get more close to local life and learn about local customs, Tibetans welcome you to their houses. Nowadays,

Tibetans have opened their own hostels themselves, which are very popular with travelers. In Lhasa, there are many hostels of this kind in the old district, especially around Barkhor Street.

There are many stores in Lhasa running leasing business and it's easy to lease tents and sleeping bags in Lhasa and the cost is calculated by day and the quality of the articles.

Q2: Are there any star hotels in Tibet? Are they short of supply? Are they expensive?

A: In Tibet there are more star hotels in major tourist cities, like Lhasa and Shigatse. There are 40 to 50 star hotels in Lhasa and 10 to 20 in Shigatse. It's easy to book these hotels except during the vacation of May Day, National Day and "Shoton Festival" in August. There are fewer star hotels in other places in Tibet and it's not so difficult to book due to relative fewer tourists. As Tibet is in the plateau, it has obvious different travel seasons. And in off-seasons, the hotels are almost all closed. While in travel peak seasons, the room cost is much higher (about 30% more) than those in main land in China. And in different area or different time periods, the room cost may also increase sharply.

Q3: Are there hostels in Tibet? How about the prices? Are they short of supply?

A: In Lhasa, the hostels mainly locate on East Beijing Road including Banak Shol Hostel, Yak Hotel, Snow Land Hotel, Dong Cuo Youth Hostel, Kirey Hotel and so on. And free laundry and deposit services are provided in Banak Shol Hostel and Kirey Hotel. The prices are not expensive. Usually, it's around 15RMB per bed during off season and around 30RMB per bed during peak season. Yak Hotel and Snow Land Hotel charge higher prices and they are favored by foreign travelers. In travel peak season, it's very hard to lodge in Banak Shol Hostel, Kirey Hotel, Yak Hotel and some other hotels and you may choose others.

Q4: Does the hotel room have access to internet?

A: Some hotel rooms, not all, in Lhasa have access to internet, so you should inquiry your travel advisor for accurate information before making decision. But some hotel has business center where you can use internet service.

Q5: Is there 24-hour hot water running?

A: Due to basic condition in Tibet, sometimes with the poor pressure, the water flow may small and water sometime is not hot but just warm. In remote area, the condition can be even worse.

Q6: What kind of sleeping bag and tent should I choose if I want to camp in Tibet?

Regarding the choice of sleeping bags and tents, you are recommended to choose down-filled sleeping bag which can keep you warm at a temperature of -15°C, and double-layer high-mountain tents which is wind and rain-proof. In the plateau, the wind is usually strong and it is quite cold in the winter evening. Without heating stove, the temperature can be as low as from -5°C to -10°C in the room and normal sleeping bags and tents won't make sense.

Q7: Can the foreigner live in the local Tibetan family?

No, foreigners are not allowed to live in the local Tibetan family, and only could check in the local hotel or hostel which has the certification to host foreign travelers.



High Altitude Sickness

Acute mountain sickness (AMS, also known as altitude sickness) is common at high elevations; relevant factors are the rate of ascent and individual susceptibility. The former is the major risk factor. On average, one tourist a year dies in Tibet from AMS. Make sure that it is not you. Any traveller who flies or buses into Lhasa, where the elevation is just over 3600m, is likely to experience some symptoms of AMS. Take care to acclimatise slowly and take things easy for the first couple of days. Lack of oxygen at high altitudes (over 2500m) affects most people to some extent. The effect may be mild or severe and it occurs because less oxygen reaches the muscles and the brain at high altitude, requiring the heart and lungs to compensate by working harder.

AMS is a notoriously fickle affliction and can also affect trekkers and walkers accustomed to walking at high altitudes. It has been fatal at 3000m, although 3500m to 4500m is the usual range.

➤ ACCLIMATISATION

AMS is linked to low atmospheric pressure. Those who travel up to Everest Base Camp, for instance, reach an altitude where atmospheric pressure is about half of that at sea level.

With an increase in altitude, the human body needs time to develop physiological mechanisms to cope with the decreased oxygen. This process of acclimatisation is still not fully understood, but is known to involve modifications in breathing patterns and heart rate induced by the autonomic nervous system, and an increase in the blood's oxygen-carrying capabilities. These compensatory mechanisms usually take about one to three days to develop at a particular altitude. You are unlikely to get AMS once you are acclimatised to a given height, but you can still get ill when you travel higher. If the ascent is too high and too fast, these compensatory reactions may not kick into gear fast enough.

➤ SYMPTOMS

Mild symptoms of AMS are very common in travellers visiting high altitudes, and usually develop during the first 24 hours at altitude. Most visitors to Tibet will suffer from some symptoms; these will generally disappear through acclimatisation in several hours to several days.

Symptoms tend to be worse at night and include headache, dizziness, lethargy, loss of appetite, nausea, breathlessness and irritability. Difficulty sleeping is another common symptom, and many travellers have trouble for the first few days after arriving in Lhasa.

AMS may become more serious without warning and can be fatal. Symptoms are caused by the accumulation of fluid in the lungs and brain, and include breathlessness at rest, a dry irritative cough (which may progress to the production of pink, frothy sputum), severe

headache, lack of coordination (typically leading to a 'drunken walk'), confusion, irrational behaviour, vomiting and eventually unconsciousness.

The symptoms of AMS, however mild, are a warning; be sure to take them seriously! Trekkers should keep an eye on each other as those experiencing symptoms, especially severe symptoms, may not be in a position to recognise them. One thing to note is that while the symptoms of mild AMS often precede those of severe AMS, this is not always the case. Severe AMS can strike with little or no warning.

➤ PREVENTION

If you are driving up from Kathmandu, you will experience rapid altitude gain. An itinerary that takes you straight up to Everest Base Camp is unwise; plan to see it on your way back if possible. The best way to prevent AMS is to avoid rapid ascents to high altitudes. If you fly or bus into Lhasa, take it easy for at least three days; this is enough for most travellers to get over any initial ill-effects. At this point you might step up your programme by visiting a few sights around town. Within a week you should be ready for something a bit more adventurous, but do not push yourself to do anything that you are not comfortable with.

➤ TREATMENT

Treat mild symptoms by resting at the same altitude until recovery, usually a day or two. Take paracetamol or acetaminophen for headaches. If symptoms persist or become worse, however, immediate descent is necessary. Even 500m can help.

The most effective treatment for severe AMS is to get down to a lower altitude as quickly as possible. In less severe cases the victim will be able to stagger down with some support; in other cases they may need to be carried down.

Whatever the case, any delay could be fatal.

AMS victims may need to be flown out of Tibet as quickly as possible, so make sure you have adequate travel insurance.

The drug acetazolamide (Diamox) is recommended for the prevention of AMS - take 125mg twice a day as a preventive dose. Be aware that even when you are on Diamox, you should not ignore any symptoms of AMS.

However, the use of Diamox is controversial. It can reduce the symptoms, but may also mask warning signs; severe and fatal AMS has occurred in people taking this drug. Travellers should discuss the use of Diamox with a travel health expert. Diamox should be avoided in those with a sulphur allergy, but you can discuss taking a trial of the medication at home if necessary.

Drug treatments should never be used to avoid descent or to enable further ascent (although they can help get people well enough to descend).



Several hotels in Lhasa sell a Tibetan herbal medicine recommended by locals for easing the symptoms of mild altitude sickness. The medicine is known as solomano in Tibetan and hongjingtian in Chinese, though locals also recommend gaoyuanning and gaoyuankang. A box of vials costs around Y20 to Y35; take three vials a day.

Tips to prevent acute mountain sickness

- **Keep a good mood**, don't be too excited or be too worried about high altitude sickness. Before visiting Tibet, get as healthy as possible, both physically and psychologically.
- Take care of yourself and **avoid catching cold** before going to Tibet, and **not to take shower at the first two days** after you are in Lhasa to avoid being cold, or you will easily suffer from altitude sickness under weak physical condition.
- **Do not drink any alcohol on the first two days** when you are in Tibet. **Drink plenty of water** and eat light, high-carbohydrate meals for more energy.
- **Do not run, jump or do some taxing jobs** at the first two days. Being peaceful and **having a good rest** are important.
- **Don't push yourself** when climbing up to passes; rather, take plenty of breaks. You can usually get over the pass as easily tomorrow as you can today. Try to plan your itinerary so that long ascents can be divided into two or more days. Given the complexity and unknown variables involved with AMS and acclimatisation, trekkers should always err on the side of caution and ascend mountains slowly.
- **Once you have the symptoms of altitude sickness**, take some medicine (it is said that it's helpful to have some butter tea if you can adapt to the flavor of it) and don't go higher. Medication and oxygen also help to prevent altitude sickness. Mild altitude sickness symptoms can be treated with proper medication. If medication and oxygen do not relieve the symptoms, go to hospital or evacuate immediately to a safe altitude!
- **Oxygen can help you relieve the symptoms** of altitude sickness, but do not use it too often in Lhasa while your symptoms of altitude sickness are not serious. If you feel chilly or feel very uncomfortable, you should go to the nearest hospital available in the area.
- In addition to the normal medications for traveling it is advisable to bring high altitude medication. Seek suggestions from your doctor.

FAQs

Q1: What should I do if I have high altitude sickness after arriving in Tibet?

A: There are hospitals in many large cities in Tibet. You may adapt to mild high altitude sickness by yourself slowly and you may go to hospital if it is serious. After you have already had high altitude sickness, you should rest well, do not move too much, keep eating, drink some water with black sugar or take some medicine. If the high altitude sickness is pretty severe, you should go to hospital, or descend to some lower places, or leave Lhasa immediately. High altitude sickness shall disappear after you descend to certain altitude and it has no sequel symptoms.

Q2: Is high altitude sickness more serious if going to Tibet by plane than by train?

A: Exactly, but both means have their advantages and disadvantages. You are more likely to have high altitude sickness because you don't have enough time to adapt to the plateau environment gradually if you go by plane. The altitude change is directly from several hundreds meters to more than 3000 meters. While, if you go to Tibet by train, you can adapt your body to the high plateau environment slowly and gradually. Then, you may relieve or avoid high altitude sickness.

Q3: Why cannot people with cold go to Tibet? What should I do if I catch a cold in Tibet?

Your immune system shall be weak if you catch a cold and you may suffer high altitude sickness easily because of it. Besides, severe cold may easily turn to some more serious high altitude diseases, especially pulmonary edema, which is very dangerous. So you are not supposed to travel to Tibet before you get rid of a cold.

While, if you catch a cold in Tibet, things might not be so serious, because your body has already, to some extent, adapt to the plateau environment and you can go to a doctor and take some medicine.

Q4: Who Can't Go to Tibet?

A: It's advisable to have a body check-up or have your doctor's advice before visiting Tibet. Visitors having record of heart, lung, liver, kidney problems must seek medical advice before making the decision to go to Tibet! Generally speaking, the following persons should not go to Tibet:

- Have already caught a cold
- Have severe anemia
- Have high blood pressure or severe heart disease
- Have pneumonia, tuberculosis, tracheitis, or bronchitis

If you are not sure about your body condition, you may have a physical examination. But you are not supposed to do more exercise before going to Tibet, for exercising will give more burdens to your heart and you'll need more oxygen, which may easily cause high altitude sickness.



Festivals & Events

Tibetan festivals are held according to the Tibetan lunar calendar, which usually lags at least a month behind our Gregorian calendar. Coordinating trips with festival dates is a popular practice. But **don't forget to ask around for the exact dates** of many festivals because these are often only fixed by monasteries a few months in advance.

January

Shigatse New Year Festival

Held in the first week of the 12th lunar month.

February/March

Year End Festival

Dancing monks can be seen on the 29th day of the 12th lunar month at Tsurphu, Mindroling and Tashilhunpo in this festival, which is held to dispel the evil of the old year and auspiciously usher in the new one. Families clean their houses in preparation for the New Year. A huge thangka is unveiled the following day at Tsurphu Monastery.

Losar (New Year Festival)

Taking place in the first week of the first lunar month, Losar is a colourful week of activities; Lhasa is probably the best place to be. There are performances of Tibetan drama and pilgrims making incense offerings, and the streets are thronged with Tibetans dressed in their finest. New prayer flags are hung in monasteries and homes.

Chotrul Duchen (Butter Sculpture Festival)

Huge yak-butter sculptures are traditionally placed around Lhasa's Barkhor circuit on the 15th day of the first lunar month. The festival is not currently celebrated in Lhasa, though it is Labrang Monastery in Gansu province.

Monlam Chenmo (Great Prayer Festival)

Held mid-way through the first lunar month (officially culminating on the 25th). Monks from Lhasa's three main monasteries used to assemble in the Jokhang and an image of Jampa (Maitreya) was born around the Bharkhor circuit. The festival was first instituted by Tsongkhapa in 1409 at Ganden Monastery but was outlawed after political demonstrations ended in violence during the 1988 celebrations.

May/June

Birth of Sakyamuni

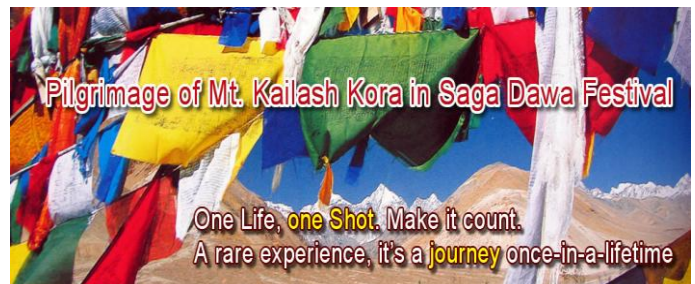
The seventh day of the fourth lunar month sees large numbers of pilgrims visiting Lhasa and other sacred areas in Tibet. Festivals are held around this time at Tsurphu (see next entry), Ganden, Reting and Samye Monasteries.

Tsurphu Festival

Cham dancing (ritual dancing carried out by monks), processions and the unfurling of a great thangka are the highlights of this festival, from the 9th to 11th days of the fourth lunar month.

Saga Dawa (Sakyamuni's Enlightenment)

The 15th day of the fourth lunar month (full moon) marks the date of Sakyamuni's conception, enlightenment and entry into nirvana. Huge numbers of pilgrims walk Lhasa's Lingkhör circuit and visit Mt Kailash, where the Tarboche prayer pole is raised each year.



June/July

Gyantse Horse-Racing Festival

Currently held from the 15th to 18th of the fifth month (ie around Saga Dawa), though authorities are trying to fix the date in the Gregorian calendar to boost tourism. The fun and games include dances, yak races, archery and equestrian events. A large 480-years old thangka is unfurled at sunrise.

Worship of the Buddha

During the second week of the fifth lunar month, the parks of Lhasa, in particular the Norbulingka, are crowded with picnickers.

Dorje Drak Festival

Cham dancing is performed on the 10th day of the fifth Tibetan month at this small monastery.

Tashilhunpo Festival

From the 14th to 16th days of the fifth lunar month, Shigatse's Tashilhunpo Monastery becomes the scene of three days of festivities. A huge thangka is unveiled and cham dances are performed.

Samye Festival

Held from the 15th day of the fifth lunar month (full moon) for two or three days. Special ceremonies and cham dancing in front of the Utse are the main attractions. The monastery guesthouse is normally booked out at this time, so bring a tent. Incense is also burnt on this day throughout Tibet.



August/September

Chokor Duchen Festival

Held in Lhasa on the fourth day of the sixth lunar month, this festival celebrates Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath near Varanasi in India. Many pilgrims climb Gephel Ri (Gambo Utse), the peak behind Drepung Monastery, and also the ridge from Pabonka to the Dode valley, to burn juniper incense. The festival is also called Drukwa Tsezhi.

Guru rimpoche's Birthday

Held on the 10th day of the sixth lunar month, this festival is particularly popular in Nyingmapa monasteries.

Ganden festival

On the 15th day of the sixth lunar month, Ganden monastery displays its 25 holiest relics, which are normally locked away. A large offering ceremony accompanies the unveiling.

Drepung Festival

The 30th day of sixth lunar month is celebrated with the hanging at dawn of a huge thangka at Drepung monastery. Lamas and monks perform opera in the main courtyard.

Shoton (Yogurt Festival)

Held in the first week of the seventh lunar month, this festival starts at Drepung and moves down to the Norbulingka. Lhamo (Tibetan Opera) and masked dances are held, and locals take the occasion as another excuse for more picnics.



September/October

Bathing Festival

The end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth lunar months see local washing away the grime of the previous year in an act of purification that coincides with the week-long appearance of the constellation Pleiades in the night sky.

Horse-Racing Festival

Held in the first week of the eighth lunar month, this festival featuring horse racing, archery and other traditional nomad sports takes place in Damxung and Nam-tso. A similar and even larger event is held in Nagchu a few weeks earlier, from 10 to 16 August.



Onkor

In the first week of the eighth lunar month Tibetans in central Tibet get together and party in celebration of the upcoming harvest.

Tashilunpo

More cham dances, from the ninth to 11th days of the eighth month, at Shigatse's Tashilunpo Monastery.

November/December

Lhabab Duchen

Commemorating Buddha's descent from heaven, the 22nd day of the ninth lunar month sees large numbers of pilgrims in Lhasa. Ladders are painted afresh on rocks around many monasteries to symbolize the event.

Palden Lhamo

The 15th day of the 10th lunar month sees a procession in Lhasa around the Barkhor bearing Palden Lhamo (Shri Deve), protective deity of the Jokhang.

Tsongkhapa Festival

Respect is shown to Tsongkhapa, the founder of Gelugpa order, on the anniversary of his death on the 25th of the 10th lunar month; monasteries light fires and carry images of Tsongkhapa in procession. Check for cham dances at the monasteries at Ganden, Sera and Drepung.

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