



## Spirit of Tibet.

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**NEPAL & CHINA | 10DAYS / 9NIGHTS**

Route: Round-trip from Kathmandu to Lhasa

Type of tour: Culture and nature

Departure days: Wednesday

## TOUR OVERVIEW

Experience being on top of the world for ten spellbinding days in Nepal and Tibet. Discover mysterious, enchanting and remote lands that were virtually cut off from the rest of the world until very recently; lands inhabited by gentle, friendly and pious Buddhists who have been moulded by the often harsh and unforgiving climactic and geographical conditions. This tour is both an adventure and a spiritual journey during which you will see some of the most breathtaking landscapes, imposing palaces and magnificent monasteries in the planet. Tibet was only opened to tourism three decades ago so be prepared to expect a bit of adventure regarding hotel accommodation and other services.

## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

**DURATION: 10 days / 9 nights**

**Start & finish destination**  
Kathmandu

**Destinations**

1. Lhasa	3. Shigatse
2. Gyantse	4. Tsedang

**Kathmandu:** Visit the top cultural and historical sites in the Nepalese capital, including Durbar Square, the Pashupatinath Temple, the stupa of Boudhanath and the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Patan

**Lhasa:** Explore the Tibetan capital over three magical days, visiting the Jokhang Temple, the Sera Monastery, Barkhor Market, the Potala palace and the Drepung Monastery

**Gyantse:** Pause en route to take in the views of Lake Yamdrok and Mout Noijin Kangsang before continuing to Gyantse's Kumbum Monastery, Palkhor Chode Temple and dzong fortress

**Shigatse:** Visit the historic Shalu Monastery en route and the Tashilumpho Monastery in the city as well as exploring Tibet's second city with a guided tour

**Tsedang:** Discover the area known as the 'cradle of Tibetan civilisation' with visits to Yungbulakang Palace and Tradruk Monastery as well as enjoying stunning landscapes of spectacular ranges, beautiful lakes and river valleys

## DON'T MISS

**Taste of Tibet:** Made from fermented barley, millet or rice, chang is a mildly alcoholic brew that looks like milk but tastes like ale, and is drunk cold in summer or piping hot in winter

**Drepung Monastery:** See nuns and monks chant and perform religious discourses in this beautifully decorated and landscaped university monastery, the largest in Tibet

**Khumbum Gompa:** Tibet's most revered stupa is built in the style of a 108-sided mandala and houses an impressive array of Buddhist frescoes within its 112 chapels

## DAY BY DAY

### DAY 1 | KATHMANDU

Arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport, meet and greet by Malla Travel & Trek representative and transfer to your hotel in Kathmandu. Rest of the day at leisure.

- **Overnight in hotel in Kathmandu.**

### DAY 2 | KATHMANDU – PATAN – KATHMANDU (10km – 30 mins)

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a guided tour of **Durbar Square**, the historic heart of the city. Admire famous attractions such as **Kumari Bahal**, a building richly decorated with beautiful woodcarvings, which is home to the Royal Kumari, a child who is a 'living goddess' and a manifestation of the deity, Durga. Nearby is **Hanuman Dhoka**, the former

royal palace, whose Nassal Chowk courtyard was the coronation site of the Shah kings and contains some of the finest wood carvings you'll see anywhere. The 14th century **Jagannath Mandir** is the oldest temple in the area, its steps carved with inscriptions in a various languages. Close by, **Taleju Mandir** is one of the largest and finest temples in the Kathmandu valley and is dedicated to the patron deity of the former royal family, the wrathful Taleju Bhawanu. See also the most ancient and enigmatic of the valley's holy shrines is the golden-spired stupa of **Swayambhunath**, which sits atop a wooded hill in the west of the city and boasts dramatic views over it and the valley. Lunch is at your own arrangement.

The afternoon is dedicated to exploring Durbar Square in **Patan**, a historic city just a few kilometres south of central Kathmandu. This traditionally Buddhist bastion – they make up about one-sixth of Nepal's population – is a veritable Oriental treasure trove where Buddhism and Hinduism meet, creating a fascinating architectural landscape in the Newar style. **Durbar Square** is considered to be one of the finest urban streetscapes in the world, the centrepiece being the **palace of the Malla monarchs**, who ruled Nepal for six centuries. Wander this stunning complex, which boasts a series of beautiful courtyards with ornamented windows and colonnaded arcades, temples and shrines, all noted for their exquisite carvings. Contemplate the square's **Krishna temple** and **Rudra Varna Mahavihar** Buddhist monastery before returning to the hotel in Kathmandu.

- **Overnight on a bed-and-breakfast basis in hotel in Kathmandu.**

### DAY 3 | KATHMANDU – LHASA (90 mins flight time, 65km – 1 hr)

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer to Tribhuvan International Airport to catch a flight to Lhasa, during which you can enjoy awe-inspiring views of Mt Everest and the Himalayas. Arrival at Lhasa Gonggar Airport, meet and greet by Malla Travel & Trek representative and, after immigration formalities, transfer to your hotel in **Lhasa**. The rest of the day is at your own leisure. You are advised, however, to rest and take it easy. Drink plenty of fluids and let your body get used to Lhasa's high altitude of 3,600 metres above sea level. You can go around the hotel area for light walk and sightseeing. Dinner at your own arrangement.

- **Overnight on a bed-and-breakfast basis in hotel in Lhasa.**



### DAY 4 | LHASA

Settle down for breakfast at the hotel before a morning briefing on the day's programme, which takes in three of Lhasa's most famous landmarks. Begin with a guided tour of the **Jokhang Temple**, whose origins can be traced back to the seventh century. It is considered to be the most sacred temple in Tibet, a power place without equal. Hear all the stories and legends associated with Jokhang, which means 'House of the Buddha', such as why the main gate faces west towards Nepal. The temple is renowned for its irreplaceable collection of sculptures, prayer wheels and other religious items. Architecturally, the complex blends Tibetan, Nepalese, Indian and Chinese styles, which are spread out over a vast area. Continue to **Sera Monastery**, which has nestled at the foot of Mount Purbochok since 1419. Today, some 500 monks reside here but at the height of its prestige as a scholarly retreat, as many as 6,000 would meditate, debate and celebrate the teachings of Buddha. The most important structures inside the monastery are the Great Assembly Hall – which has five sensational chapels – the three zhangs (Buddhist colleges) and the 29 khangtsens (dormitories). At the **Great Assembly Hall**, you can observe the monks debating their knowledge of the scriptures. Head back to town to the **Barkhor market**, where you can appreciate the colour and vibrancy of Lhasa life. Browse the stalls packed with myriad Tibetan handicrafts, Buddhist artefacts, carpets, paintings, spices etc and maybe find a souvenir or two to take home. Lunch and dinner at your own arrangement.

- **Overnight on a bed-and-breakfast basis in hotel in Lhasa.**

### DAY 5 | LHASA

The shadow of the **Potala palace** looms large over Lhasa and after three days in the capital, the time has finally come to visit this 13-storey, 1,000-room fortress that crowns Marpo Ri (Red Mountain) and rises more than 300 metres above the city. A limited number of visitors per day is allowed in the palace so the order of the sightseeing may change but the schedule is for the guided tour to take place after breakfast at the hotel. To explore the Potala's hundreds of halls and 10,000 shrines is an overpowering experience; a spiritual, cultural and educational journey into the very soul of this kingdom of heaven. As you are guided through the historic chambers of the palace, you will see Tibetan art at its best –

just a fraction of the 200,000 statues here. The Potala has two main sections: the **White Palace**, which was the official residence of Tibet's spiritual leaders, and the **Red Palace**, which is dedicated to the study of Buddhism and prayer. In the White Palace, you can see the tombs of eight lamas and the monks' assembly hall. Lunch is at your own arrangement. The day's other visit is to the **Drepung Monastery**, some 10km west of central Lhasa. The Dalai Lamas lived here until the fifth Dalai Lama built the Potala, and as such it boasts a wealth of treasures. This is a beautifully landscaped monastery and you can observe nuns and monks debating, chanting and performing religious discourses.

- **Overnight on a bed-and-breakfast basis in hotel in Lhasa.**

#### **DAY 6 | LHASA – GYANTSE (265km – 4 hrs)**

Rise early for the start of what promises to be an unforgettable journey. Depart Lhasa after breakfast at the hotel, heading south-west along the Friendship Highway towards the 4,970 metre **Khamba La pass**. Pause briefly afterwards to savour the views of the sacred **Lake Yamdrok** and the 7,191 metre **Mount Noijin Kangsang**, whose snowcapped summit rises majestically behind the lake. Continue through the 5,045 metre **Karo La pass** to **Gyantse**, a historic Nyantg Chu valley town nestling at the foot of a walled fortress (dzong) dating from the 14th century. Get a feel for this picturesque town with a visit to the **Kumbum Monastery** and **Pelkor Chode Temple** complex. The Kumbum's large golden-domed stupa – the most revered in Tibet – houses many small chapels decorated with an impressive array of Tibetan Buddhist murals. Kumbum means '100,000 holy images' and this nine-storey stupa is built in the style of a 108-sided mandala and houses 112 chapels within. Walk along the pathway flanked by golden prayer wheels that leads to the temple, and feel the spirituality that permeates this holy site, which is home to about 30 monks from three sects. Continue to the dzong and enjoy the panoramic views over the city and valley before heading to the hotel after another amazing day of sightseeing. Lunch and dinner at your own arrangement.

- **Overnight on a bed-and-breakfast basis in hotel in Gyantse.**



#### **DAY 7 | GYANTSE – SHIGATSE (90km – 1 hr)**

Bid farewell to Gyantse after breakfast and take once more to the Friendship Highway. En route to Shigatse take a detour to visit the **Shalu Monastery**. This thousand-year-old retreat was once one of the most prestigious monasteries for scholarly learning. It boasts some priceless frescoes of the Lord Buddha and of Mandalas in the chapels. Continue to **Shigatse**, the second largest city in Tibet and situated 3,900 metres above sea level. Shigatse is dominated by the Dzong palace, which guards over the city from the crown of a large hill. It is the residence of the Panchen Lama, second in rank to the Dalai Lama. Continue to the western outskirts to visit the famous **Tashilumpho Monastery**, which hides 39 chapels behind its high walls. Particularly impressive is the huge gilded **Maitreya Chapel**. Afterwards, visit colourful local markets for shopping and sightseeing. Lunch and dinner at your own arrangement.

- **Overnight on a bed-and-breakfast basis in hotel in Shigatse.**

#### **DAY 8 | SHIGATSE – TSEDANG (350km – 6 hrs)**

After breakfast at the hotel, depart for **Tsedang**, driving north along the River Yarlong valley. Pass by the 7,191 metre **Noijin Kangsang** holy mountain as well as one of highest and most popular railway lines in the planet and through remote villages. Stop en route at Dranang to visit the **Samye Gompa**, one of the most magnificent monasteries in Tibet. Dating from the eighth century, it was designed to be an earthly representation of the universe. Continue to Tsedang for check-in at the hotel. Lunch and dinner at own arrangement.

- **Overnight on a bed-and-breakfast basis in hotel in Tsedang.**

#### **DAY 9 | TSEDANG**

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a day exploring the main attractions in Tsedang and its hinterland. Visit Yungbulakang Palace, whose colourful name means 'the palace on the leg of a doe'. The castle is famed for the legends associated with it and its collection of statues of ancient Tibetan kings as much as its imposing location atop a hill overlooking the city. The views of Tsedang from the palace are awe-inspiring. Continue to the Tradruk Monastery in the outskirts to admire its priceless collection of Tibetan art, including a thangka decorated with 30,000 pearls as well as

gemstone such diamonds, sapphires and rubies, and a 'talking' statue. Legend has it that the monastery was founded after an ancient called on a giant falcon to slay a five-headed dragon, hence its name, which means 'falcon conquering a dragon'. Lunch at own arrangement. Farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

- **Overnight on a bed-and-breakfast basis in hotel in Tsedang.**

## **DAY 10 | TSEDANG – LHASA AIRPORT (65km – 1 hr)**

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before departing Lhasa with for transfer to the airport for your onward travel arrangements.

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### END OF SERVICES

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## **INCLUDED**

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### TOUR GUIDE:

- Operated with English-speaking guide/escort

### ACCOMMODATION:

- Two nights on a bed-and-breakfast basis Kathmandu and seven nights on a bed-and-breakfast basis in Tibet

### MEALS:

- Breakfast from day 2 to day 10 and farewell dinner on day 9

### TRANSPORT:

- All necessary arrival and departure transfers by either mini-van, mini-bus or coach, depending on number of guests

### ENTRANCE FEES AND ACTIVITIES:

- Admission to all major monuments and sightseeing attractions mentioned above, Tibet Travel Permit, briefing by Tibet expert, information pack and gift pack with prayer flag or string of flag and paper prayer lungta (for use in temples and high passes, where use is believed to bring good fortune and long life)

## **NOT INCLUDED**

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- Nepal and Tibet visa fees (see Terms and conditions below)
- Expenditures of a personal nature, drinks and meals or items not stated explicitly in the programme
- Any alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, mineral water, camera/video camera fee (if any)
- Any tour manager from Nepal for Tibet tour
- Any visit not mentioned in the programme
- Optional tours and activities
- Travel Insurance, any loss or extra cost arising due to unforeseen circumstances such as flight delays, accidents, etc

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Acclimatisation is very important due to the very high altitude at which most of Tibet is. You may be likely to experience some of the minor symptoms and discomforts of altitude sickness (AMS) such as headaches, mild nausea and loss of appetite, until your body adjusts to the elevation. This can take from a few hours to a couple of days, depending on the individual. Do not exert yourself and drink plenty of non-alcoholic liquids. It is very important to drink at least 4-5 litres of liquids daily to avoid any altitude sickness; this is probably the best remedy. We suggest that you consult with your GP or a specialist on whether medication may be advisable for you.