

## Tibet (Xizang)

### Introduction of Tibet

Tibet (Xizang), the Roof of the World, remained unknown to the world until the very beginning of the 20th century. Locked away in its Himalayan fortress, Tibet has long exercised a unique hold on the imagination of the West. The massive, snowy land has exerted an awesome draw to travellers and adventurers ever since.

Her majestic and grand scenery, mysterious and exotic religious culture, and wonderful people reward every tourist with an indelible life long memory! Adventure on the road is never short on the beautiful Trans Himalayan drive, through mountain, passes, promising a panorama of a cultural and scenic diversity unsurpassable anywhere. It culminates on an arid plateau - a veritable treasure trove of architectural masterpieces. Its name the 'Roof of the World' is no idle statement. The valley bottoms of Tibet are higher than the highest mountains elsewhere. Its snow-covered plateaus are the highest in the world. And apart from Mt Everest, which Tibetans see from 'the other side', many a mountain ranges are over 15,000 feet.



### Lhasa

Lhasa, the heart and soul of Tibet and an object of devout pilgrimage, is still a city of wonders. "Lhasa" in Tibetan means "the land of gods" and is the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

### Problems of High Altitude

Travelling in Tibet is an adventure involving high altitude and could be strenuous. While most visitors have only minor effects from the altitude, we advise specially the guests with known heart or lungs or blood diseases to consult their doctor before travelling. Mild headache, fever, loss of appetite or stomach disorder can take place in a process of acclimatization.

Advice for better acclimatization is to drink 4 litres of water minimum a day, do not exhaust yourself too much, breathe deeply and take rests more than usual. General physical fitness is important for participation in all trekking trips.

There is no particular age limit guideline for travel to Tibet as such, except that children below 8 years or elderly people over 70 years are not advised to participate in strenuous activities, such as trekking. All travellers to Tibet are advised to consult with their family doctor and obtain a medical certificate for trip participation.

As a rule of thumb, those with high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetic patients are advised not to participate in trekking trips. All trekking participants are advised to have adequate insurance cover against illness, natural calamities, political instability, emergency rescue and evacuation or any other eventualities that may occur during the course of their trip.

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is common at high altitudes, and depends on the elevation, the rate of ascent and individual susceptibility. Most visitors to Tibet will suffer from at least some symptoms that will generally disappear through acclimatization 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 sleeping for the first few days after arriving in Lhasa.

### To prevent acute mountain sickness

Drink extra fluids. The mountain air is dry and cold and moisture is lost as you breathe.

Evaporation of sweat may occur unnoticed and result in dehydration.

Eat light, high-carbohydrate meals for more energy.

Avoid alcohol as it may increase the risk of dehydration, and don't smoke.

Avoid sedatives.

Don't push yourself when climbing stairs or up to passes, rather take plenty of breaks.

Avoid catching cold before you entering Tibet.

### Tibet Travel Permit

All foreigners except citizen's of China (including Hong Kong, and Macau), are required to obtain a visa and special permit before travelling to Tibet.

In addition to the visa, it is necessary to obtain an aliens' travel permit better known as the "Tibet Travel Permit" for travel in Tibet.



The Chinese government prohibits individual travellers. The Chinese embassy will only issue visas to travellers on group tours i.e. if there is a single tourist or a tourist group of less than 5 pax then they will have to join a group in order to get a visa.

Special note: You'll need a visa to enter China, a permit to go to Tibet. They'll check them at the airport and checkpoints.

### China Visa from Kathmandu, Nepal

Nowadays it is possible to get a 30 days tourist visa in Kathmandu, Nepal. The visa processing days are Monday, Wednesday & Friday only. The passport must be deposited on any of these days between 10 to 11 am & will be returned after a week. They normally take 7 working days, but the same can be issued within 3 or 1 working day by paying an urgent fee, but again this is at the discretion of the Visa Officer. At times the visa processing has taken longer / or the passport not returned on time by the embassy.

Hence to avoid such instances it is best advised that travellers get a normal China Entry Visa and permit the local China travel operator/coordinator to get the Tibet Travel Permit.

### Climate in Tibet

The Tibetan climate is not as harsh as many people imagine it to be. It is suitable for travel to Tibet from April to the beginning of November, with the best times being August and September. But if you only wish to visit Lhasa, you can go there anytime of the year.

Sun radiation is extremely strong in Tibet. The sunlight in Lhasa is so intense that the city is called Sunlight City. The thin air can neither block ultra violet radiation nor retain heat so that the temperature extremes can be met in daytime and conversely the same at night. May, June and September are the tourism season in east Tibet.

Most annual rainfall comes in the rainy season that starts from June to September. Usually it rains at night in Lhasa, Shigatse and Chamdo area. The rainfall may block roads and make travel difficult; however, the scenery at this time is considered the best.

Here is some more specific information in different areas:

### Weather of Lhasa

Lhasa /Shigatse /Lhatse /Tingri /Nyalan: The Friendship highway is basically in good conditions year around. From December to February, the frozen road can sometimes be troublesome. Try to avoid August - landslides are frequent in the rainy season.

### Mt. Everest Area

Early May and early October are the best time to visit Mt. Everest. Due to the clear weather, you have great chance to see Mt. Everest's true face (if you are lucky). From December to February, you'd better not to go to this area because it is extremely cold.

### Ali (Mt.Kailash)

Even without climate restrictions, this area is already inhospitable. Heavy rain and snow could make the journey worse. However, for those determined tourists, the appropriate time is May, June, July, September and October.

### Eastern Tibet

Avoid this area in July or August (the rainy season) as roads may be impassable due to wash-outs and landslides. In winter, the road could be frozen.

### Northern Tibet

With the average altitude of 4,500m, this area offers very limited time for tourists. Summer (July to August) is the prime time to enjoy the great plain in northern Tibet.

## What to bring for a trip to Tibet

Tibet is cold in winter, cool in summer and generally dry, receiving only 450 millimetres of rain or snow. The most pleasant months for tourism are from April to October.

Clothing should be simple and consist of layers that can be added or removed as the temperature varies during the day. A warm windbreaker and “*stout*” comfortable shoes are especially recommended. Formal attire such as a necktie or dress is never needed - trousers and sweaters are the style.

Lhasa now has many pharmacies selling Tibetan, Chinese and some westerns medicines, but it is advisable to bring your own comprehensive first-aid kit, sunglasses with good ultra-violet protection, sun block and lip cream and a good broad-beam flashlight are important because many interesting sights are poorly lit.



## Medicines

Suggested First Aid Kit for foreign travellers:

- Analgesics (Aspirin or similar) for pain or fever.
- Antibiotics-consider if you are travelling well off the beaten track.
- Cold and flu tablets, throat lozenges and nasal decongestant
- Multivitamins-consider for long trips, when dietary vitamin intake may be inadequate
- Scissors, tweezers and thermometer

## Sunburn

It is very easy to get sunburn in Tibet. Sunburn can be more than just uncomfortable. Among the undesirable effects are premature skin ageing and possible skin cancer in later years.

Sunscreen ( UV lotion) with a high sun protection factor( SPF>30) , good quality sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat are good means of protection.

Those with a fair complexion should bring reflective sunscreen (containing zinc oxide or titanium oxide) with them. Apply the sunscreen to your nose and lips and note how many hours it works.

## Clothing

The temperature during daytime is around 10-25°C in Lhasa, but the night temperature may drop to 0°C. When visiting the lakes or mountains, down-jacket is needed.

Try to dress in black or other dark coloured clothes. Lhasa can be very dusty.

The following list is a suggested packing list for your tour in Tibet:

- Jacket: a fibre-pile jacket is ideal for evening.
- Sweater: Wool or wool mix with a high neck for extra warmth.
- Headwear: Wool or fibre-pile ski cap or balaclava for warmth. A lightweight brimmed hat is good for sun protection. Inexpensive broad brimmed straw and felt hats are sold in Tibet's city markets.
- Scarf: wool or silk is best .
- Mittens or gloves: wool, pile, or polypylene are best.
- Bandanna or handkerchief: Bring several.
- Cotton underwear: four or five pairs.
- Socks: at least three pairs.
- Shirts: A long-sleeve shirt made of wool, flannel, or chamois, or a track-suit top. A long-sleeve stay-free cotton shirt for warmer temperatures. Bring two or three T-shirts as well.
- Pants: For men, one pair of loose-fitting wool pants, wool knickers, or fibre-pile pants, and one pair of light-weight cotton pants. Women should wear a midcalf dress or skirt, though pants and knee-length knickers with socks are also acceptable. **Shorts are neither appropriate** nor acceptable at any time in Tibet for men or women.
- For quiet moments. Journal, reading book, writing materials:
- Camera: You will regret to your dying day if you do not bring one.
- Binoculars: Good for observing birds, wildlife, and distant scenery.
- Money pouch or belt: Safer than a wallet for keeping your passport, money, and valuable papers.
- Pictures from home: Personal photographs of your children, pets, city, house, and so on are a great way to communicate with local people.
- Snack foods: Nuts, chocolate bars, granola bars, dried fruit, hard candies, beef jerky, and flavoured drink mixes are much-appreciated trail treats.

## Hotels in Tibet

### Lhasa Hotel (4 star)

Lhasa Hotel is located in the centre of this Holy-Land which is 3600m above the sea level. It is only ten minutes drive from the the magnificent Potala Palace. Just next door to the hotel is Norbulingka-the Summer Palace for Dalai Lama.

The airport is 90km away from the city, a spectacular drive across breathtaking scenery. Lhasa Hotel has 468 comfortable rooms and suites, all with private bathrooms, colour TV, in-house movies.

Add: 1 Minzu Rd, Lhasa. Tel: (0891) 6832221  
Fax: (0891) 6835796

### Tibet Hotel Lhasa (4 star)

Tibet Hotel is a luxurious 4-star hotel of traditional Tibetan style, under the administration of Tibet Tourism Bureau. The hotel is constructed in all granite in shape of Potala Palace. It stands near Potala Palace and Norbulingka (the summer place for Dalai Lama) with comfortable environment and convenient transportation. Tibet Hotel has 258 rooms and suites including 2 deluxe president suites, 8 deluxe suites, 5 deluxe business suites, 220 standard rooms, 20 single rooms and 3 special rooms for the disabled. All these rooms are equipped with private bathroom, central air conditioner, in-room safe, TV, refrigerator, etc..

Add: 64 middle Beijing Rd., Lhasa Tel: (089) 6834966 Fax: (089) 6836787

### Minzhu Garden Hotel [Grand Hotel Tibet] (4 star)

Located in the golden area of Lhasa, Grand Hotel Tibet (Lhasa) is a modernized hotel with business function. With Potala place and Jokhang Monastery on the east, and Norbulingka on the west, the hotel is a desirable choice for both tourists and businessmen. Grand Hotel Tibet has 5 buildings including East, West, North, Main and VIP. All rooms are well-equipped with private bathroom, central air conditioner, IDD & DDD, with hot water available round-the clock.

Add: 196 Middle Beijing Rd., Lhasa Tel: (089) 6826096 Fax: (089) 6832195

### Shangbala Hotel (3 star)

The foreign catering hotel Shangbala is located in downtown Lhasa, near Barkhore Bazaar, with the resplendent Jokhang Temple on the east and the



world-renowned Potala Palace on the west. Hence, the ideal place to stay for excursions and sightseeing, also with

easy access to all great attractions.

Shangbala has the same meaning as Shangrila in Tibetan language. As a popular folk song goes: there is a beautiful land admired by people, where birds twitter and flowers blossom year round. Iris known as Shangbala, an abode of the immortals, no grief, no distress...

Add: 1 Danjilin Rd., Lhasa Tel: (0891) 6323888  
Fax: (0891) 6323577

### Yak Hotel, Lhasa

Yak Hotel is located in the Old Town of Lhasa, which is 5 minutes walking from Jokhang Temple, Ramoche Temple and Barkhore Area. It has 62 rooms and 185 beds, with hot water available 24-hour every day.

Add: 100 Beijing Rd.(E), Lhasa. Tel: (0891) 6323496 Fax: (089) 6336906

### Shigatse Shandong Mansion (3 star)

Shigatse Shandong Mansion is a bright gem of the snow-capped plateau. It's listed in the Guinness World Records as the highest mansion in the city of highest elevation. It symbolizes the friendship between Han and Tibetan. It's main body composed of 10 floors, including 111 standard rooms. They are equipped with private bathroom, central air conditioner, satellite TV, automatic smoke detector and so on.

Add: 5 Beijing Rd. (N), Shigatse Tel: (0892) 8826139 Fax: (0892) 8826139-1234

### Wutse Hotel, Shigatse (3 star)

Wutse Hotel is a foreign tourist hotel invested by Wuzi Trade Co. Ltd, Tibet. It is situated in Sichuan South Road of Shigatse City in Tibet. It is only several minute's walk away from

Tashilumbu Temple in the centre of the city. It also has tranquil surroundings and is a right choice for you. The hotel covers 8,000mm of size, its construction area being 6,200mm. The main building is a three-floor one designed and decorated according to international three-star level. It has 80 deluxe rooms, 2 deluxe suites, 12 deluxe single-bed rooms and three-bed rooms, with 200 beds in total. There are restaurants offering Chinese, Tibetan and Western food; 200 seats in total. There is a multifunctional conference hall and business centre. The whole construction is characterized by Tibetan and modern style. It also has the late Tibetan style and can offer you the best service.

Add: Sichuan South Road, Rikaze City. Tibet 857000

Tel: 0892-8838999-8888 / 0892-88386668886

#### Gyangtse Hotel (3 star)

Built in 1988, Gyangtse Hotel is located in the ancient Gyangtse city, with unique Tibetan traditional style and quality service. Gyangtse Hotel has 120 rooms of standard, deluxe and single, in both Western and Tibetan style: Sometimes there are local dance and singing performances. The shopping centre there is full of traditional arts and crafts.

Add: 8 Yingxiong Rd. (S), Gyangtse Tel: (0892) 8172222 Fax: (0892) 8172366

#### Tsedang Hotel (3 star)

Tsedang is the capital town of Shannan area as well as a major tourist destination in Tibet with its mild climate, rich natural resources and the birthplace of Tibetans. Tsedang Hotel is the largest hotel located in this area. Tsedang Hotel has 118 rooms of variety including president suites, standard rooms and economic rooms. All rooms are equipped with private bathrooms, central air conditioner, IDD & DDD, TV etc... Dishes served here are mainly in Canton flavour, featuring Tibetan snacks.

Add: 21 Naidong Rd. Tsedang Tel: (0893) 7821668 Fax: (0893) 7821688

#### Nyching Fujian Hotel (3 star)

Is a joint venture invested Nyching Government and Fujian Government. It is located in the new zone of Nyching. It is 108 Rooms of variety including president suites, standard rooms and

economic rooms. All rooms are equipped with private bathrooms, central air conditioner, IDD & DDD, TV etc... Dishes served here are Chuan flavor, featuring Tibetan snacks.

#### Tibet Dingri Zhufeng Hotel

Tibet Dingri Zhufeng Hotel is 100 km from the base camp of the world famous Quomolangma Peak Mt Everest), and 120 km from Gemagou Valley-reputed as the most beautiful valley on earth. The hotel has 180 beds, divided into standard room, Tibetan standard room, top-grade economic room and ordinary economic room. Moreover, Responding to the remoteness and high elevation of the area, the hotel also provide with necessities of traffic, communication and medical treatment for emergency caused by high altitude sickness and anoxia.

Tel: (0891) 6829313, 013908911275

### Attractions in Tibet

#### Potala Palace, Lhasa

The Potala Palace is the landmark of Lhasa and Lama Buddhism. Surrounded by a wall three meters high, the thirteen-story palace is 110 meters tall, has 999 rooms and over ten thousand pillars. Its 90,000 square meters of floor space was built on an area of 102, 880 square metres.



Once winter residence of the Dalai Lama this architectural wonder of the world, which can be seen from all

directions for miles around is built on the escarpment of Red Hill and rises more than 300 metres above the valley floor. Begun during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama in 1645 and completed in 1693, the Potala remained the centre of political and religious power for the Dalai Lama.

The round towers outside are believed to be fortifications, which according to a legend are really wings that will fly the Potala to safety from a future, devastating flood.

Today, the Potala Palace is a state museum with 35 caretaker monks, but for thousands of pilgrims, remains a beloved



shrine. The Potala consists of two Palaces - one Red and the other White with one small portion in between. Tour groups are brought by bus up the Red Hill to enter the Red Palace. Otherwise visitors and pilgrims can approach through the Sho Village. A steep flight leads to the White Palace. The approaches to both entrances are decorated with mani-stones, small carins, prayer-flags and knotted garlands of yak hair left by pilgrims as devotional offerings.

The white buildings on either side are called the White Palace and were built three hundred years ago by the fifth Dalai Lama as living quarters. The central building is called the Red Palace and was built by the disciples of the fifth Dalai Lama, it contains mourning halls and libraries.

The Sunlight Hall is flooded with sunlight throughout the year. The Eastern Sunlight Hall was the residence of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, and Western Sunlight Hall was lived in by the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Now these luxurious halls house valuable peals, jewels, and antiques.

Mural art is an intrinsic part of the architecture of Potala Palace. Every room, no matter how small, is decorated with colourful, vivid murals. The 698 murals along the painted second-floor corridor are the most extraordinary, depicting Buddhist stories and the unique scenery, customs, and legends of ancient Tibet.