



"See World Differently"

Extension and Pre tour Program

CN20 - Soul of Tibet – 9Days

Detailed Day by Day Itinerary

Day 1: Fly from Lhasa to Tsedang



A spectacular flight above the Tibetan Plateau brings us to Tibet– Gonggar airport. A Swan Travel local Tibetan guide meets you in the **Gonggar airport** as the Swan Travel service begins. During our drive from the airport into **Tsedang** town, our guide will educate us about the area and offer some insights into Tibet’s long and recently tragic history and we will make a few stops. Since we have just made a sudden ascent from the lowlands to an altitude of over 3,600 meters (11,808 ft), the afternoon is left free for acclimatization.

If energy permits, we can visit **Yumbu Lagan or Changzhu Monastery**. Yumbu Lagan is a reconstruction of Tibet’s oldest palace originally established on this site by the founder of the Yarlung dynasty, Nyatri Tsenpo, during the 1st century BC. It houses the statues of the three-world Buddhas and Tsanpos of various historical stages including the reign of Nyatri Tsanpo, Lhatu Turi Niantan, Rabajin, Songtsan Gambo and Trisong Detsen.

Changzhu Monastery was built in the seventh century and has been repaired in various historical periods. A legend says after Songtsan Gambo established its capital in Lhasa, he came and stayed here together with Princess Wen Cheng who planted the willow trees around the monastery. The monastery houses a precious Thangka picture of a Buddha inlaid with pearls and gems.

Overnight: Tsedang Hotel (3-star)

Meals: D

Day 2: Tsedang, Samye Monastery, and Hidden Chapels

After breakfast, we will drive along the Tsangpo river to visit the fantastic **Samye Monastery**, believed to be Tibet’s first monastery, built between 775 and 779. The original building is no longer intact due to damage caused by wars and natural disasters, but the monastery has been rebuilt each time and still remains the symbol of Tibet’s national identity. Its main building is a three-story tower with an interior influenced by Tibetan, Han and Indian styles. The wide expanse of the river and sand dunes give an almost eerie sense of remoteness here.



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After lunch, we drive back to **Lhasa** which at an elevation of more than 11,860 feet, is one of the world's highest cities. As the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, this vibrant and fascinating city has been the center of Tibet's political, religious, economic and cultural activities ever since the Fifth Dalai Lama moved the capital here in 1642. A city of contrasts, Lhasa offers the visitor an up-close look at some of Tibet's richest cultural wonders—in the midst of modern Chinese influences.

Upon arrival, we stroll onto **Barkhor Street**. This is the *kora*, or pilgrimage route, around the Jokhang Temple's circumference. Poking your head into local Tibetan markets, your eyes feast on strangely clad clansmen from Tibet's outlying regions as you peruse the wares of the many antique and thangka shops. We also visit some small chapels hidden behind the bustling Barkhor street, where we observe lamas lecturing without the disturbance of the outside world.

Overnight: Kyichu Hotel(3-star)

Meals: B, L, D

Day 3: Lhasa, Potala Palace, Drepung Monastery and NGO Visit



This morning's destination is the famous **Potala Palace**, an immense structure stacked atop Marpo Ri (Red Hill) high above the Lhasa Valley. Built on the site of a destroyed 7th-century palace, the Potala has housed each of the successive Dalai Lamas and served as the headquarters of the Tibetan government since its construction in 1645. The palace was the winter residence of the 14th Dalai Lama until he was exiled to India in 1959. The massive complex is comprised of the secular White Palace and the sacred Red Palace along with

their ancillary buildings including dormitories for the large staff of each Dalai Lama, schools, chapels, a printing house and tombs. It contains more than 10,000 shrines, 200,000 images and 1,000 rooms. The palace was shelled during the 1959 uprising against the Chinese, but suffered only minor damage.

After lunch, we visit the **Drepung Monastery**. Situated at the foot of the Mountain Gambo Utse, the Drepung Monastery is known as the most important monastery of Gelugpa school in Tibetan Buddhism and also as the largest-scale monastery among the ones of the same kind. The Drepung Monastery houses many cultural relics, which adorn the monastery and make it a superb monastery to visit. While visiting the monastery, we are blessed with the opportunity to have a private half-hour conversation with the master lama, the head of the monastery.



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After our monastery visit, we drive back to Lhasa to visit a **Tibetan carpet factory** and showroom, where weavers still use old-style vertical looms to create carpets in the traditional style. Back to the city, we visit the **Dropenling Handicraft Development Center**, a workshop and gallery that showcases handicrafts made in Tibet, by Tibetans. Established by the Tibet Poverty Alleviation Fund, Dropenling seeks to provide economic incentives to preserve traditional Tibetan crafts and culture. At the center we will see artisans making statues and thangkas.

Overnight: Kyichu Hotel (3-star)

Meals: B, L, D

Shodun Festival in Drepung Monastery



When the summer retreat for their intensive training is over, monks are served yoghurt. This is said to be the origin of Shodun, which is also called the "Yoghurt Festival." At Drepung Monastery there are Cham dances and the grand Thangka is unveiled early in the morning. After devoutly viewing the Thangka, the people go onto the Norbulinka and other popular spots for a picnic. Shodun is also known as the "Tibetan Opera Festival".

Dates:

2008 Aug. 30

2009 Aug. 20

Day 4: Jokhang Temple, Tibetan Medicine and Tibetan Family Visit

Our day gets off to an early start with a visit to the nearby **Jokhang Temple**, the spiritual heart of Tibet. Each day, pilgrims from all across Tibet journey to this holiest of temples, some even prostrating themselves with each step throughout their trek until they reach the doorsill. Upon arrival, the pilgrims display their piety by reciting sacred mantras, kindling the continuously lit chömay (butter lamps) honoring deities with white scarves and spinning prayer wheels. With a history that stretches back more than 1,300 years, Jokhang was built by King Songsten Gampo to house two Buddha images belonging to his two wives—Princess Wen Cheng (daughter of Emperor Taizong of Tang China) and Princess Bhrikuti of Nepal. It is said that Princess Wencheng chose the site of Jokhang Temple—Lake Wothong, because she believed that the lake is a witch's heart. She insisted that a temple must be built on top of it to purge its evil. The lake was filled in, but according to some people a deep pool still exists beneath the temple. Aside from the palace's intriguing past, pilgrims are drawn to the palace because it houses the



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statue of Jowo Sakyamuni (depicting the historical Buddha at age 12), which is believed to be one of the most precious objects in Tibetan Buddhism.

Stepping out of the temple, we head to the **Tibetan hospital** where we meet a Tibet Medication expert who will educate us on Tibetan Medication history, theory and practices.

Afterwards, we visit a **local Tibetan** at his **home** where he makes a living by traditional crafting Tibetan furniture. We also have the opportunity to converse with the family members and get a more personal and grounded understanding of their daily life.

Overnight: Kyichu Hotel (3-star)

Meals: B, L, D

Day 5: Pabongka Monastery and Sera Monastery

In the morning, we shuttle the short distance to the ancient and seldom-visited **Pabongka Monastery**. Local legend claims that the surrounding land was home to two divine tortoises, a male and a female—which now exist as two granite boulders at this site. Carved into a rock at the entrance to the temple, you'll see the mantra *Om mani padme hum*. In rough translation, the phrase says "Hail to the jewel in the lotus," referring to the Buddhist belief that all people inherently possess the qualities necessary to achieve spiritual enlightenment, taking in wonderful views of the entire city of Lhasa in the process. Embarking on our walk, we follow a trail up to the **Tashi Chöling hermitage** for fantastic views of the Lhasa Valley. We will continue up the ridge and along the flanks of Phurbu Chok to the Sera Tse hermitage and then to the Dode Valley. Depending on how we are feeling, we can take a short, easy walk to a nearby **nunnery**.

Afterwards, we explore the **Sera Monastery**. One of the three main Gelupka monasteries in Lhasa, Sera is an important spiritual center for Buddhist monks. Inside the monastery, we stroll among the vast temples and college complexes, and mingle freely with monks going about their daily duties. We then visit the printing center, where sutra texts are still printed by hand on the traditional Tibetan long paper. We have a chance to print our own as well. We then proceed to the animated debate courtyard. At the debate courtyard Tibetan monks energetically challenge each other's view and interpretation of the scripture, simultaneously honing their understanding of Tibetan Buddhism and debating skills. When the monk's point is made, he claps his hand loudly in front of his opponent to signal this opponent to respond. The lively debate provides an excellent contrast to the introspective side of Lhasa.

Overnight: Kyichu Hotel (3-star)

Meals: B, L, D



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Day 6: Lhasa to Shigatse

Today we head to the second largest city in Tibet, Shigatse. On our drive to Shigatse, we stop for a picnic lunch by the **Yamdruk Tso Lake** (4408 m), one of the three holiest lakes in Tibet. There, we enjoy the vista of the lake's pincer-shaped expanse of turquoise water, surrounded by the mysterious Mt. Donang Sangwari (5,340 m) on the peninsula beyond, and the snow peaks of Nojin Gangzang (7,191 m) in the distance. According to Tibetan legends, the lake is a fairy that descended to earth. As a significant sacred lake, many Tibetans believe that the lake's colors have spiritual meanings. Thus pilgrims would visit the lake prior to making important decisions. We walk around the lake before continuing our drive to **Shigatse**. Upon arrival to the city, if time permits, we visit the local market and walk the **Kora of Tashilunpo Monastery**.

Overnight: Shigatse Hotel (3-star)

Meals: B, L, D

Day 7: Shigatse Day Hike



Today is predominantly a **hiking day**. We drive to a village named Chack, where we embark on our easy trek towards Ngor village, which takes around 5 hours. Enroute we enjoy a moderate climb to the Chack-La pass at 4470 m and savor the stunning views of the Ngor monastery below and the Narthang monastery in the distance. Founded by one of the Sakya masters in the year 1429, the Ngor monastery established a sub-order with a distinctive school of Buddhist thought. E

route, we visit a local Tibetan family and learn about their rural daily life in contrast to the life of Tibetans in Lhasa.

We spend the night camping near the Tibetan village. If the weather is clear, we can mesmerize ourselves as we gaze under the starlight of the Roof of the World.

Overnight: Camping

Meals: B, L, D

Day 8: Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and Back to Lhasa

After breakfast, we drive back to Shigatse and visit the **Tashi Lhunpo Monastery**. Founded by the first Dalai Lama in 1447 and later presented to the Pachen Lama, the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery is the biggest monastery in the Tsang area as the seat of the Panchen Lama, belonging to the Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. Its significance lies in its "inhabitants"—this monastery holds the tomb of the first Dalai Lama and the



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tombs of the successive Panchen Lamas. The monastery is also the fourth largest monastery in Tibet.

After lunch, we drive six hours back to Lhasa. If time permits, we can do our last shopping at Barkhor Street.

Overnight: Kyichu Hotel (3-star)

Meals: B, L, D

Day 9: Fly Back Home

After breakfast, we transfer to the Lhasa Gonggar airport for your return flight. Swan Travel service ends at the airport.



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Quotation for Program(Base on 2pax)

2008

Land Prices (CAD)

Dates	11-19May, 08	07-15Sep, 08	12-20Oct, 08	28-Aug-05Sep, 08 (Festival)
Land cost: 2pax	From 2,430	From 2,430	From 2,430	From 2,600
Single supplement	340	340	340	360

Flights

Call for international air.

Call for tailor-made your private journey

Discount

Additional discount of \$200 applies for children under 12 sharing a triple with two adults. The discount is for the child only.

Additional discount of \$100 applies for traveler who requests half-board service which is no dinner arrangement.

Price includes:

- Domestic economy flights and airport taxes.
- Land transfers for whole trip
- All accommodations on a twin-sharing basis, at the hotels specified in the itinerary where available
- All admissions and activity expenses as noted on itinerary
- Meals, drinking water, and soft drinks during meals as program indicates
- All programs as per itinerary
- Private tour guide and driver
- Tour leader service along the whole trip

Price excludes:

- Discretionary gratuities for drivers, local guides, and staff
- Expenses of personal nature, e.g. mini-bar, laundry, telecommunications, alcoholic beverages etc.
- Travel insurance
- Excursions not included in the itinerary
- International flights and airport taxes
- GST