



**CENTRAL TIBET TOUR WITH A TREK TO THE BASE CAMP OF THE  
NORTH FACE OF Mt. EVEREST  
(Duration: 12 Nights / 13 Days)**

### **Introduction**

**TIBET-** a sacred land of myths and mysteries inhabited by the ever smiling people, has not only exerted a magnetic pull upon travelers for centuries but also spies, missionaries, scholars, geographers, mystics, soldiers and cranks, etc. Yet, few intrepid, serious and determined have been able to make it.

Tibet was opened to tourism in 1985. Before this, it avoided influence from the West and this country developed its unique culture and religion independently. Since the spiritual leaders governed Tibet, monasteries and religious institutions were the backbone of power so the importance and prestige were shown by the size and magnificent architecture of these buildings. Tibetan Buddhism contains many elements of their older religion, "Bon Po" which worshipped the sky, moon, sun, fire, soil and even evil spirits and this is why a monastery such as Tashilhumpo contains thousands of unique statues, paintings (thangka), religious and historical books that to visit in detail would take weeks. Pilgrims who often travel long distances to fulfill their vows crowd the Monasteries and wishes and their emotions show that religion still holds a very important place in their daily lives.

**TIBET-** extremely remote and isolated by the most formidable Himalayan ranges is a fascinating world of timeless splendour, unique tradition and breathtaking scenery awaits all travelers to the Roof of the World.

### **ITINERARY**

**Day 01:** Transfer to airport and fly Kathmandu / Lhasa. Upon arrival, met by representatives and drive to Lhasa.

The rest of the day is free for acclimatization.

#### **Overnight at the Hotel.**

**Day 02:** Sightseeing tour of **Potala Palace:** This legendary palace built atop a single hill is synonymous with Tibet. First foremost king, Songtsen Gampo, it was expanded to its present structure during the 17th century by the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. This 13 storey, 1000 room citadel served as the headquarters of the former "church-state" of Tibet and was home to successive Dalai Lama who, from the latter half of the 18th century, used it as their Winter Palace.

**PM:** After lunch visit the **Jokhang Temple** : Situated in the heart of old Lhasa, it houses Tibet's most precious religious relic, a golden



Shankyamuni Buddha which was brought as a gift by the Chinese Princess Wen Cheng on the occasion of her wedding to the Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo. Surrounding the Jokhang Temple is the bustling **Barkhor** market place, which is the religious and social focus of Lhasa. This is the spiritual centre of Tibet and the heart of Lhasa.

#### **Overnight at the Hotel.**

#### **Day 03: AM: Sightseeing tour of Drepung Monastery**

Drive 8 kms west of Lhasa to Drepung Monastery. Said to be the largest monastery in the world housing over 10,000 monks, it was founded in 1416 by the disciple of Te Tsonkhapa, founder of the Yellow Hat Gelukpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The second, third and the fourth Dalai Lamas lived and were entombed here. Drepung in Tibetan means 'Richmond'.

**PM:** Sightseeing tour of **Sera Monastery**. Sera Monastery lies 5 kms -3 miles- north of Lhasa and has one of Lhasa's prettiest settings. Once a community of more than 5,000 monks, it was a virtually extinguished by the Chinese. The restored monastery sits below the brow of hill on which Tsongkhapa built a hermitage and spent several years meditating. One of the monk's disciples began building Sera in 1419, completing it a few years later.

Also visit the The **Norbulingka**, The 'Jewel Park' as it is known in Tibetan, was built in the 18th century and served as the Summer Palace of the Dalai Lamas. This colorful garden landscape was the site of picnic and public gatherings. The palaces are richly decorated, creating an atmosphere of peaceful repose.

#### **Overnight at the Hotel.**

#### **Day 04: Drive Lhasa / Gyantse via lake Yamdrok. 261 Km.**

Full day picturesque drive crossing over Karola (5,010m), Kamba La (4,794m), colourful Yamdrok Lake and the Tibetan lifeline river Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo). **Yamdrok Tso or Turquoise Lake** is a lake of a glaring blue that radiates a near mystical charm. It is about 240 kms in circumference and is more like an Island sea. There are Yak herders around and the lake itself supports a population of scale less fish in its non saline waters. It is about 124 kms from Lhasa.

Another 140 kilometers drive brings us to Gyantse, a pastoral town between Lhasa and Xigatse. It is 264 km Southwest of Lhasa (8 hours drive). It still retains the charm of a traditional Tibetan town untouched by modern expansion. It made world headlines in 1904 when Colonel Young husband, who led British Expedition to Tibet, defeated the Tibetan army there. As a cross-road on the principle trade route to India, it used to be renowned for the excellence of its carpets. The compound, encircled by



an impressive wall, once contained 19 monasteries, presided over by the still intact fortress perched atop a nearby mountain.

#### **Overnight at the Hotel.**

**Day 05:** Sightseeing tour of **Kumbum**, one of the most unique and magnificent buildings in Tibet consisting of 6 storeys complete with a Buddhists Hall and a prayer hall. It has 112 chapels and its walls are adorned with religious paintings. Built in the 15th century, it has withstood all battles and revolutions since.

Also visit the **Pelkhor Chode Monastery**: Located near the Khumbum, it was founded in the 15th century. It has been remarkably well preserved and many of the statues and paintings inside it date back to the time of its founding.

Later drive for 90 Kms. (2 Hours) on a dirt road to Xigatse, the second largest town in Tibet and the capital of Tsang, lying 354km west of Lhasa at an altitude of 3810 m. Upon arrival check into the Xigatse Hotel.

Late afternoon sightseeing tour of Panchen Lama's **Tashilumpo Monastery**. Founded in 1447 by Gendun Drup, the first Dalai Lama. It is the seat of the Panchen Lama who is second to the Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhist Hierarchy. The 5th Dalai Lama in declared that his teacher, then the Abbot of Tashilhunpo, who a manifestation of the Buddha Amitabha and the Pancen Rinpochhe. Tashilhunpo has one of the world's largest status - a 9 storeyed gilded bronze statue of Maitriya, the future Buddha.

#### **Overnight at the Hotel.**

**Day 06:** **Drive Xigatse to Xegar. (244 Km).**

Start the scenic drive from **Xigatse**, which is the second largest town in Tibet and the capital of Tsang, lying 354km west of Lhasa at an altitude of 3810 m. crossing over Gyatchu La (5,220m), the highest pass en-route to Lhasa from where a road to Mt. Kailash bifurcates to the west. From here drive to Xegar. **Xegar is** also called New Tingri, surrounded by Mountains, is another town that lies in the shadow of a great fortress. Even in ruins it is majestic. Seeming to grow out of the craggy brown rock, its sinuous wall bristles with watchtowers like stegosaurus spines. Isolated in 1855 by marauding Nepalese in search of booty, the Gurkhas cut off the dzong's water supply and settled in for a long siege. Shegar proper has little to recommend it except the highest post office in China.

#### **Overnight at the Hotel.**

**Day 07:** **Start the trek to Yalung Drok 5 ½ hrs.**



Meet the Sherpa Staff from Nepal, The Yak and yak men from Tibet and commence trek to the Base Camp of the North Face of Mt. Everest. Immediately after the bridge east of the town, turn right along a rough track which runs along the base of the line of hills on the left. This track heading south in the direction of Mt. Everest goes all the way to the village of Zamphuk beyond the Lamna La Pass. From the village to the Everest Base Camp is only one more day. This track, following the right (east) bank of the Ra Chu, provides the easiest access to the mountain.  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour after Dingri, pass the village of Razam (also Rizong) some distance on your left. It is possible to hire Yaks here. Turn right out of the village and follow a rather obscure part of the track. Langpe can be seen on the east side of the Ra Chu Valley at the base of the sandy hill. A branch of the Ra Chu is on the right. In one hour reach the entrance of a very wide valley on your left. Along the southern most of the wall is a trail that leads east up the Lamar La via the village of Nelung which is  $3 \frac{1}{2}$  hours from Dingri.

Continue along the track. After passing the wide valley ( $1 \frac{3}{4}$  hours) notice the thin wedge of a ridge on the right. This is prominent landmark of the Dingri Plain, which runs north to south. At its northern most tip is the village and the monastery of Cholung.  $1 \frac{1}{4}$  beyond it is Lunja (Langja), a friendly place with yaks for hire. (A short distance beyond the village is the turn off, on the right, to Ding La and Ding valley, which eventually also leads to the Everest Base Camp via Pasum and Chdzong.) One option is to stay in the village house. Another is to continue below a ruin on the left and climb over a low ridge; about 2 Km down the track at the base of a plateau is a grassy campsite beside the river. This is Yalung Drok ( $\frac{3}{4}$  hour). Above the camp, about 1 hour away, climb up the slopes for good views of the Dingri valley and Dingri itself. No large peaks are visible and Cho Oyu is hidden from view.

### **Overnight Camp at Yalung Drok**

#### **Day 08:**

#### **Trek from Yalung Drok / Lamdu Drok $4 \frac{1}{2}$ Hrs.**

Lunga is the last village on the Dingri Plain. Until Zampuk (Zangbo) is reached (beyond the Lama La) there is no habitation except for the occasional nomad camp. Follow the track above camp, contouring slightly above the base of the hills on the east side of the Ra Chu. Continue along the base of the hills on the North side of the river by means of a footpath; this will avoid unnecessary river crossings. After  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour the valley broadens into an open plain. The track has already crossed the river to the south side of this plain (if you follow the track without any shortcuts, ford the river 3 hours from the day's start). An indistinct footpath veers into a side valley to the northeast, across marshy ground. Take this longer route which skirts a low ridge and which has access to water and grazing. 1 hour from this marshy area is the Lamdu Drok campsite near a stone corral and stream. Another possible campsite is 1 hour away, across the slaty ridge and into the next valley.



### **Overnight at camp.**

#### **Day 09: Trek from Lamdu Drok / Zamphuk - 6 Hrs.**

Head up the valley towards the obvious col in the distance. Follow a poorly defined trail that contours along the base of some low hills on the right. Climb towards the col and after  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour reach the top of a black, slaty ridge. Descend into the river valley. Follow it along its east side, below sprees slopes. 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour from Lamdu reach a stone corral on the right. Here the trail ascends to the Lamna La Pass after only  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour of climbing. The track can be seen the south. There is no trail bug head generally down towards from the summit cairn. The valley is wide and bends towards the east. After 2 hours cross the stream to the left side of the valley and hike to a rocky promontory (a gentle climb through rocks on a clear track). Beyond the promontory is the village of Zamphuk (or Zangbo) sited high above the Zamphuk valley. If you are feeling energetic, climb over the ridge of the hills to the south for a magnificent view up the Rongbuk valley. In its upper reaches is the Everest base camp and the Rongbuk Monastery.

At its head is the North face of Mount Everest. There is an obscure yak trail over these hills, crossing a pass, which also leads to the valley; use this only in good weather. Due to the altitude there is no cultivation in Zamphuk; the villagers rely on animal husbandry for a living. Many of the yaks used for Everest expeditions come from here. There are possible camping sites before the village near a stone corral or further east, down the valley after Zamphuk. The Rongbuk valley is a further 3 hours away.

### **Overnight at Camp.**

#### **Day 10: Trek from Zamphuk / Rongbuk Monastery -6 Hrs.**

Descend from the village to rejoin the track from Dingri. Follow this to the southeast along the Zamphuk River to its confluence with the large Dzakar Chu (1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour), which in its upper stretches is known as the Rongbuk Chu. Before the confluence ford to the right (south) bank of the Zamphuk.

Then follow the left (north) bank of the Dzakar upstream (to the south-west). In  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour the ruins of the cave monastery of Chophuk, sited within high cliffs, can be seen. Follow the base of the cliffs, ascend a small gorge then descend to a wooden bridge (1hour), which spans the Rongbuk River. Cross it to its right (east) bank to join the dirt road linking Peruche with Rongbuk Monastery. Walk up the road (due south) to the large Peyul (Nepal) Chorten 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours). The Rongbuk Monastery is 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour more from here.

### **Overnight at camp.**

#### **Day 11: Trek from Rongbuk Monastery / Everest Base Camp- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ Hrs.**



Follow the dirt road south; the Dzakar Chu, now much reduced in volume, is on your right. Soon the valley broadens and the road leaves the river to continue its ascent on the other side, swerving to avoid a rockslide. At the base of the slide is *chorten*; at its top are the ruins of the Samdrupo Nunnery (a small chapel has been rebuilt). The Everest Base Camp is just beyond some moraine hills.

The rest of the afternoon is free to explore this area. If you are sufficiently acclimatized, it is possible to take a couple of short excursions beyond the Base Camp. One is to climb the moraines of the Central Rongbuk Glacier, immediately south of the camp, to some small glacier pools. The other is to trek to the Qianjing glacier. Head up a small canyon east of the Base Camp to a rough track that crosses a vast lateral moraine 200 m above camp. Follow this south on a relatively level platform high above the Central Rongbuk Glacier. At the end of the moraine is the Qianjing Glacier, about 4 hours from the Base Camp. To the south are the fine views of the Everest North Face.

#### **Overnight at Camp**

**Day 12:** After breakfast drive from Everest Base Camp / Zhangmu.

#### **Overnight at the Hotel**

**Day 13:** After breakfast, complete border formalities and drive to the Friendship Bridge. Upon arrival, complete Nepalese Immigration and met by representatives from Nepal and drive to Kathmandu (5 Hours)

**\*\*End of Arrangements\*\***