

(AMD-001/TE-008) Beijing-Xining-Lijiaxia-Xunhua-Linxia-Xiahe-Tongren-Maqing-Anemaqen Mountain-Guide-Qinghai Lake-Xining-Beijing (15 Days)



Situation of the east Tibetan region of Amdo, is one of the three traditional areas of Tibet, the other two being U-Tsang and Kham. Amdo was and is the home of many important Tibetan Buddhist monk scholars or lamas who had a major influence on both politics and religious development of Tibet, including the 14th Dalai Lama, the 10th Panchen Lama, and the great reformer Je Tsongkhapa. It was traditionally a place of great learning and scholarship and contains many great monasteries including Kumbum Temple (Ta'er Si), the , Labrang Tashi Khyil south of Lanzhou, and the Kirti Monasteries of Ngaba and Tewo (Taktsang Lhamo).

There are many dialects of the Amdo language due to the geographical isolation of many tribal groups. The (Tibetan) inhabitants in Amdo call themselves Amdowa (a mdo pa), and not Böpa (bod pa), which is the Tibetan word of Central Tibetans. The region of Amdo is distributed mainly among the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan.

Amdo is a large area of northeastern Tibet, it encompasses the section from the Yellow River northeastward to Gansu province in China. As Amdo is a large area and consists of a number of different regions, it is difficult to accurately summarize the history of the entire region of Amdo. Each smaller district/region has its own unique and long history.

This adventurous journey leads you to some important monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism in east Tibet. You will be very impressed by the dense religious atmosphere, exotic custom, snow mountains, lakes, peculiar plants and rare wild animals in this highland.

Day 1/Arrival Beijing

Arrive in Beijing, the capital of China. Meet your guide upon arrival and transfer to your comfortable hotel. (No meal)

Day 2/Beijing-Xining

The morning is at leisure. Transfer to the train station, and take train (T151: 14:20-14:39+1) from Beijing to Xining. (B)

Day3:Xining

Arrival in Xining at around 14:39, the capital of Qinghai province, located on the eastern edge of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. After lunch, transfer to steppe area for day excursion. (D)

Day 4/Xining-Lijiaxia

Today's highlight is the visit to **Kanbula National Forest Park** in Jianzha County, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, situated about 131km away from Xining, the

Kanbula National Forest Park faces the Yellow River and is close to Lijiaxia Hydropower Station. The park is featured with its stone peaks of Danxia landform (Danxia landform is named after Danxia Mountain situated in the border area of Renhua and Qujiang counties, the northeast environs of Shaoguan City, Guangdong Province.), forests and man-made sight. It is a "historical documentary" of the evolvement of the rise of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and its climate, carrying a precious value of research on west China's environment evolvement since Cenozoic. Then we drive 40km back to Lijiaxia. (B,L,D)

Day 5/Lijiaxia-Xunhua-Linxia

After breakfast, drive through a landscape dotted with villages inhabited by Tibetan and Muslim farmers who grow wheat, barley and rape, as well as fruit and vegetables. Here is considered as one of the best area for Tibetan agriculture along the Yellow River in Amdo. The Salas live in the Xunhua Sala Autonomous County, with a population of 900,000. They have their own national spoken language, but no written language. Their ancestors were a branch of the Saruks who lived in the 13th century, belonging to the west Turki Oguz tribe in Samarkand. A chieftain named Kharmang led the clan men believing in Islam eastwards to Xunhua, Qinghai, and settled down there and lived and intermarried with the local Tibetans and Hans and multiplied, and becoming an ethnic group. The Salas are mainly engaged in farming and take animal husbandry and gardening as sideline industries. They have preserved much beautiful folklore. Duiwina (camel game), a traditional game showing how their ancestors came to Xunhua from central Asia, is very popular among the Salas.

We will enjoy our lunch in Sala's restaurant, then, drive along the Yellow River to **Mengda Heavenly Lake Nature Reserve**. Jishixia Gorge is mysterious with its winding roads and towering mountains on both sides. Mengda Tian Chi, the Heavenly Lake, surrounded by forests, is at the top of the mountain.

Then along Yellow River to **Dahejia**, a tiny town of Jishi county in Gansu province, Drive 120km (3hours) to **Linxia Hui Nationality Autonomous Prefecture** (Alt: 1500m), which is horned as "Small Hong Kong" by local people as you can buy anything you want in this Moslem city. It's a major congregating area of Chinese Muslim Hui nationality, with many Mosques along the roadsides. (B,L,D)

Day 6/Linxia-Xiahe-Ganjia grassland

From Linxia to Xiahe needs more than an hour, obviously, we will come from Chinese Muslim culture area to Tibet Buddhism culture area. Via Tumen pass, which is the intercommunion of two culture. Visit **Labrang Monastery**. Built in 1709, now it has 1000 monks. It is one of the six most important Gelukpa (the Yellow Sect) monasteries in whole Tibet and a center of Tibetan learning in Eastern Tibet. Our Tibetan guide will show us the impressive interior of the Assembly hall and other temples. We will be introduced to the Buddha images and numerous protective deities. The importance of textiles on the interiors and exteriors of the monasteries will be brought home to us. You can explore the Tibetan antique shops as well as the shops providing for the needs of monks and the monastery. One finds for sale religious Tangkhas, Buddha statues, prayer flags, a range of monks clothing, rolls of cloth, hand-printed sutras as well as a nomadic jewelers. Many of the shopkeepers are Muslims; know locally as Hui Hui, so bargaining is the order of the

day. We can also find many Tibetan nomads who come here for pilgrimage and after their religious practice they buy textiles for their clothing and jewelers along numerous Tibetan shops. Then we drive about 40km to **Ganjia Grassland** and for tented camp. Ganjia is one of the best grassland in Amdo. Stay overnight in Camp. (B,L,D)

Day 7/Ganjia Grassland-Tongren

About 2 hours to Repkong (Alt: 2400m). On the way, we pass grassland, forestry, agricultural land and beautiful red mountain valley, we visit the famous **Tibetan art school**, Sengeshong Magotsang which was funded during the 15th century and after 16th century Repkong became the hometown of Tibetan art in Amdo. All monks here have good training of painting and sculptures and are often invited to make fine art works in many monasteries or private houses by Tibetan in whole Tibet even nowadays. We will visit some of monks' houses. We also visit the **Repkong art Museum**, the best Repkong art collections will be appreciated. **Gomar monastery** built in 1741 and now it has 160 monks inhabited. This small but beautiful monastery is famous for its colorful 7-storey Astronomy (Tib: Dhekor; Sanskrit: Kalachakra) stupa, mainly used for monks to realize and understand time and space to work out every year's new Tibetan calendar and relationship between our globe with universe. The monks and the village people are also renowned for their handcraft application. (B,L,D)

Day 8/Tongren-Zeku-Magen

Drive 300km (8hours) to **Maqen County**(Machen County)(Alt: 3800m). Another wonderful day for picturesque landscape while we drive: grassland with yaks and sheep, nomadic black and white tents. Along the Yellow River valley we will experience the red and blue Mountains with colorful flowers and some barley land and forestry. The scenery is fantastic changeable geographically at every short distance. Machen in Tibetan means: The highest mountain of the Yellow River. The county is the homeland of the Tibetan Golok people, another strong tribe of Tibetan. The Golok means: Marching straight ahead and never turn back your head. (B,L,D)

Day9-10/Maqing- Anemaqen Mountain

Anemaqen Mountain (Mount Anymachen) (6282m), is a very holy mountain in Amdo, and is regarded as a guardian of the Tibetan people. They believe that all suffering and disaster may be avoided by making a holy pilgrimage around this mountain. There are spectacular views of the main peak as well as many different kinds of terrain along this trekking route including riverside meadows, wooded valleys, high passes, interesting rock formations, and highland grasslands.

Trekking route: snow mountain township-climbing base-Anemaqen-climbing base.

Camp at night. Meet with your driver and drive back down from the mountains into Maqen. Visit the local marketplace and explore the town. Stay in Maqen in camp. (B,L,D)

Attention: round the Anemaqen Mountain needs 1 week, for this group, it's only a trekking experience.

Day11/Maqing-Guide

Drive 80km to **Rakya (Rabgya) Monastery**, which is located just at the Yellow River Bank, at foot of Mount Amnye Chunggo (Blue Garuda, a mythological bird normally depicted with an owl-like sharp beak, often holding a snake, and with large powerful wings.). From a distance, the mountain just looks like a huge eagle who protects the monastery. Rabgya monastery is an important branch of Sera monastery in Lhasa, founded at the advice of Dalai Lama 7 in 1769 by a Mongol from Kokonor named Arik Geshe. For centuries, this important monastery along the Yellow River emerged many great lamas and their books have given great achievements to the Tibetan Buddhism. Before 1958 the monastery had more than 1300 monks and now has 500. **Guide** is a beautiful town on the bank of the upper Yellow River. Visit the **Jade Temple** which was built during the Ming Dynasty. Stay overnight in Guide. (B,L,D)

Day12/Guide-Qinghai Lake

Kokonor(Chinese name Qinghai Lake), the biggest holy lake in Tibet and largest salt lake in China, covers an area of 4581 Square KM, four times big as Hong Kong. As early as three thousands years ago, Mongolia and Tibetan nomadic people believed that a hundred per cent of the holy lakes and the holy mountains contain unique treasures or minerals underneath. Those minerals give out a kind of magnetism or spirit to a few special sensitive Masters, like Shaman or Living Buddha, through whom to teach people on how to respect and protect natures in order to receive the good luck waves from those holy mountains and lakes to have a good fate of life. In May of 1578, King of the Mongols, Altan Qan gave the title Dalai Lama 3 to Sonam Gyatso at east shore of Lake Kokonor. The Living Buddha system of Gelukpa started since then. (B,L,D)

Day13/Qinghai Lake-Xining

From Qinghai Lake return to Xining, then drive to **Kumbum Monastery (Ta'er Si)** of Tibet Buddhism Gelukpa-sect, one of the biggest monasteries in Qinghai, which has been well-known for many centuries all over Tibet. It was founded in 1560 to commemorate the birthplace of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelukpa-sect. This will be our first opportunity to see how rich brocades and silks are used as wall hangings in the monasteries as also are appliqué Thangkas. Here, too, we find a large trading area where one can buy everything needed for monastic life, as well as antiques and tourist trinkets for the visiting pilgrims. We stay once again in Xining. (B,L,D)

Day14/Xining-Beijing

Take flight from Xining to Beijing, and transfer to Hotel on arrival. (B)

Day15/Depart from Beijing

Transfer to Airport to board on your homebound flight. TOUR ENDS! (B)