

(AMD-002)

**Beijing-Lanzhou-Linxia-Xiahe-Tongren-Xining-Qinghai
Lake-Xining-Zhangye-Jiayuguan-Dunhuang-Beijing (11 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 biggest Tibetan Buddhism center in Amdo area; Labrang Monastery; "Small Mecca of China" Linxia Hui Nationality Autonomous Prefecture; many towering mosques in the counties; Mengda Heavenly Lake Nature Reserve known as "Highland Xishuangbanna in Qinghai"; Kanbula National Forest Park; Qinghai Lake, the largest salty lake in China, and the beautiful pasture view, as well as Hexi Corridor in Gansu Province.

Day 1/Beijing-Lanzhou

Take a flight to Lanzhou, used to be a key point connecting the central China and the western region as well as a vital city on the Silk Road. Lanzhou is the only provincial capital city with the **Yellow River** flowing through. Visit the **Zhongshan Bridge**, the First Bridge over the Yellow River. Then, pay a visit to **Waterwheel Park**, the unique-shaped Water Wheel has a long history and the first reference to it appeared in the Ming Dynasty. Climb up the **White Pagoda Hill**, built to commemorate a Tibetan lama of the Sa-skya-pa Sect of Tibetan Buddhism who died in Lanzhou on his way to Mongolia for an audience with Genghis Khan, overlook Lanzhou city on the hill. Have characteristic **Lanzhou Beef Noodle** for dinner. (D)

Day 2/Lanzhou-Liujiaxia-Xiahe (280km)

Depart from Lanzhou, cross over Danyang Mountain, arrive in **Linxia Hui Nationality Autonomous Prefecture** known as "Small Mecca of China", with many Mosques along the roadside. Pay a visit to **Linxia Mosque**. Passing through Tumen Pass, the obvious dividing line of Gansu temperature and the intercommunion of Chinese Muslim culture and Tibetan Buddhism cultures, reach Labrang Monastery. You can explore the **Tibetan antique shops** as well as the shops providing for the needs of monks and the monastery. (B,L,D)

Day 3/Xiahe-Xunhua (180km)

visit **Labrang Monastery**, 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 you the impressive interior of the Assembly hall and other temples. Cross over Ganjia Grassland dotted with temples, pass by the Former Residence of the 10th Panchen Lama, stretch to **Xunhua Sala Autonomous County** inhabiting Salas. 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. (B,L,D)

Day 4/Xunhua-Lijiaxia (140km)

Drive along the Yellow River to **Mengda Heavenly Lake Nature Reserve**, famed as "Highland Xishuangbanna in Qinghai". The nature reserve, centered around the mountaintop Heavenly Lake (Tianchi) has forests of virgin trees, a large variety of exotic flowers and many wild animals. Jishixia Gorge is mysterious with its winding roads and towering mountains on both sides. It is a flourishing area of natural beauty, contrasting sharply with the great swathes of sterile land that cover Qinghai Province. (B,L,D)

Day 5/Lijiaxia-Xining (150km)

Drive westwards along Yellow River, 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. Proceed to Xining, the capital of Qinghai province, located on the eastern edge of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Taste some **Xining flavored snacks** in night market. (B,L,D)

Day 6/Xining-Qinghai Lake-Xining (380km)

After breakfast, head for Qinghai Lake and view of **Sun-and-Moon Mountain** on the way. Legend that Princess Wencheng left for Tubo for her marriage, she took out the Sun-and-Moon Treasure Mirror to see her homeland Chang'an (Today's Xi'an) when she past the mountain. **Qinghai Lake (Kokonor)**, 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. Drive back to Xining in the

afternoon. (B,L,D)

Day 7/Xining-Zhangye (360km)

Drive northwards crossing over Daban Mountain and entering Menyuan Basin, overlooking Gangshenka Snow Peak which is one peak of the Qilian Snow Mountain, and Qinian Grassland. In every July and August, you will have a chance to be greeted by blooming yellow rape flowers. Today's destination is Zhangye, a famous commercial port on the Silk Road. Pay a visit to the **Giant Buddha Temple**, the largest architectural relic in Gansu Province of the Western Xia (1038-1227) period. The Giant Buddha Temple was built in 1098 to house the Buddha. Roam around the street circled the Giant Buddha Temple. (B,L,D)

Day 8/Zhangye-Jiayuguan (270km)

Drive to Jiayuguan, the western terminal of the world famous Great Wall. Visit **Jiayuguan Pass**, the first pass at the west end of the Great Wall of China and was built during the Ming Dynasty, earned the name "Strategic Pass under the Heaven" as an important communication center in Chinese history. Also visit the **Overhanging Great Wall**, an important part of the defensive work of Jiayuguan Pass. Climb up to the top of the Wall for a bird's eye view of the desert stretching before you, the oasis of Jiayuguan in the foreground, and the snow-capped mountains in the distance. Then, pay a visit to the **Tombs of Wei & Jin Dynasty** to appreciate the largest subterranean art gallery in the world. (B,L,D)

Day 9/Jiayuguan-Dunhuang (420km)

After breakfast, drive over Qiaowan Old Town, and head for Dunhuang, enjoying the scene composed of Qinian Mountain, Gobi, desert and oasis on the way. Dunhuang is the center of trade between China and its western neighbors in ancient time. Take sightseeing of **Echoing-Sand Mountain** and **Crescent Lake**, a natural wonder in the Gobi Desert. Echoing-Sand Mountain has colorful sands ranging from red to yellow, green, black and white. Each time the wind blows, there is a sound from the mountain and when there is a breeze, the sound is like musical instruments, hence the name Echoing-Sand Mountain. Crescent Lake is in the arm of Echoing-Sand Mountain, appearing clear and beautiful. It is amazing that the lake was never buried by sands and never dried up during over two-thousand years. At the foot of the hill you may want to take an optional tour of slow camel ride (at your own expenses). Stay overnight in Dunhuang. (B,L,D)

Day10/Dunhuang (50km)

Begin today's activity with a visit to one of most famous archaeological discovery at the beginning of the 20th century--the **Mogao Grottoes**, also known as Thousand Buddha Cave, which is also the largest, best preserved and richest treasure house of Buddhist art in the world. Then, drive to **Nanhu County**, a local grape producing area and Grape Gallery, overlook Dunhuang sleeping Buddha in the distance. Proceed to visit **Yangguan Pass**, then gateway to the south western region on the way to Silk Road. The beacon tower is all that remains of the pass. A famous Chinese poem of Tang Dynasty mentioned Yangguan pass described as "West of Yangguan Pass you will have no acquaintances".

So going west of Yangguan was considered to be a pretty extreme act of going into a unknown territory. (B,L,D)

Day11/Dunhuang-Beijing

Transfer to the airport and fly back to Beijing. TOUR ENDS! (B)