

**Tibet Highways: Xinjiang-Tibet**

(THX-001) Urumqi-Kashgar-Yecheng-Dahongliutan-Rutog-Banggong Co Lake-Shiquanhe-Zanda (Zhada)-Manasarovar Lake-Darchen (Taqing)-Mt. Kailash-Darchen-Paryang-Saga-Shigatse-Gyantse-Lhasa (21 Days)



Xinjiang-Tibet highway is famed as the “Road Paved on the Heaven”. Compared with other three highways to Tibet, this one is most difficult.

The highway starts from Yecheng, a city in southern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region; passes by Gar County in Tibet and reaches Shiquanhe Town locating in Ngari Prefecture of Tibet; the road traverses several mountains, five of which soaring more than 5,000m high above sea level. Among them, the highest is Jieshan Daban Mountain (Jieshan Pass) at an altitude of 6,035m. Also, you will appreciate the spectacular view of the heavenly holy Mountain Kailash, which is called the “Center of the World”, and to feel the overwhelming charm of the holy lake

Manasarovar. Though the road condition of this highway is poor and difficult, the holy mountains and lakes attract many pilgrims to go there.

Pre- and post travel is also tailor-made up to your requests.

**Day 1/Arrive in Urumqi**

Arrive in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China’s most western province. Meet your guide at the airport and transfer to the hotel. (D)

**Day 2/Urumqi-Kashgar**

Today’s highlight is sightseeing of **Heavenly Lake** (Tianchi Lake), a moraine lake hemmed in by majestic snow-crowned peaks west of Bogda Mountain. Have a **boat ride** on the lake, enjoying the stunning and pristine scene. Walk around **Erdao Qiao Market**. Take an evening flight to Kashgar, an oasis city in the Xinjiang. (B,L,D)

**Day 3/ Kashgar**

Pay a visit to **Id Kah Mosque**, a grand Islamic structure located in the center of the city of Kashgar. Also visit the **Apak Hoja Tomb**, a tomb of the descendants of an Islamic sage. The legend goes that among the Hoja descendants buried here, there was a lady, Yiparhan by name, who was one of the concubines of the Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong. She was called Xiangfei (Fragrant Imperial Concubine) because of the rich delicate fragrance of flower sent forth by her body. After she died, her remains were escorted back to Kashgar by her sister-in-law Sudexiang and were buried in the Apak

Hoja Tomb. So, some people call the tomb "the Tomb of Xiangfei". Then, roam through the local **colorful Bazaar** (the Sunday Bazaar is said to be the largest bazaar in Central Asia). (B,L,D)

#### **Day 4/Kashgar-Yecheng**

Drive to Yecheng, the name of both the oasis and the town, and is situated on the southern rim of the Taklamakan Desert. Enjoy the scenery of Southern Xinjiang. Visit the **Bazaar** around the Jama Mosque, which was dated back to 15th century. Xinjiang-Tibet Highway starts from Yecheng. (B,L,D)

#### **Day 5/Yecheng-Dahongliutan**

Begin our ascent tour of Xinjiang-Tibet Highway in the morning, passing **Mazar Pass**, **Heika Pass** and **Xaidulla**, which are famous passes around the world. It will about 10 hours to cover 487km, and maybe you could overlook K2 in the distance. K2, also named as Chogori Peak, is 8,611 meters above sea level. It is visible on the Chinese-Pakistan border. You will enjoy the view of the blue sky, endless mountains on the way. Stay overnight in Dahongliutan (4200m). (B,L,D)

#### **Day 6/Dahongliutan-Rutog**

Continue our journey to Rutog, today will drive about 9 hours, 358km in total. Depart from Dahongliutan, and drive through **Khitai Pass**, and **Quanshuigou**, also called "Dead man's Hill" at 5200 meters above sea level. Keep on crossing over **Jieshan Pass**, the highest pass on the road, then enter into Tibet. Stay overnight in Rutog. (B,L,D)

#### **Day 7/Rutog-Banggong Co Lake-Shiquanhe**

The bus is driving in Ngari Prefecture, with spreading alpine meadow and pasture coming into sight. Proceed to visit **Banggong Co Lake**, meaning "The long, Narrow Enchanting Lake" in Tibetan. The eastern part of the lake belongs to China, while the western part is in Indian Kashmir. In addition, water in the Chinese part is fresh water, teeming with fish. When in the Kashmir part, water becomes salty. Arrive in Shiquanhe in the afternoon and have a rest. (B,L,D)

#### **Day 8/Shiquanhe-Zanda (Zhada)**

Shiquanhe, gained its name as it locates by the Shiquan River, is an axis of transportation, economy, culture and border trade in western Tibet. When the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway opened for transportation, military camps and simple public facilities were built. Drive to Zanda (Zhada), it will take about 9 hours driving on the 300-kilometer-long unpaved road. You will be greeted by the view of vast grassland and great snow mountains. (B,L,D)

#### **Day 9/Zanda (Zhada)-Manasarovar Lake**

Drive from Zanda to the shore of Manasarovar Lake. Stop to visit **Guge Kingdom Ruins**. The Guge Kingdom was founded in about 10<sup>th</sup> century by a descendant of King Glang Darma, who fled from Lhasa after the collapse of the Tupo Kingdom. Large-scale of archeological work began in 1985. In the following years of the excavation, lots of houses, cave dwellings, monasteries and stupas were found on the mountain where the ruins are

situated. Stay overnight on the shore of Manasarovar Lake, a fresh-water lake in Tibet. Lake Mansarovar is a place of pilgrimage, attracting religious people from India, Tibet and the neighboring countries. (B,L,D)

#### **Culture and Information Links**

Guge was an ancient kingdom in Western Tibet. the ruins of Guge Kingdom are located 1,900km westwards from Lhasa within Tibet Autonomous Region of China, not too far from Mt. Kailash.

The Guge Kingdom was founded in about 10<sup>th</sup> century by the great-grandson of King Glang Darma (the last King of Tibetan Kingdom of Tubo), who fled from Lhasa after the collapse of the Tupo Kingdom. The kingdom played an important role in the second renaissance in Tibet and survived for about 700 years before disappearing mysteriously in the 17th century.

Large-scale of archeological work began in 1985. In the following years of the excavation, a lot of sculpture works and mural paintings were unearthed. Houses, cave dwellings, monasteries and stupas were found on the mountain where the ruins are situated. Most of the sculptures are gold or silver Buddhist statues, among which the best one is a statue called Guge Silver Eye (Yinyan in Chinese). The murals are preserved in good condition, although they are hundreds of years old. The themes of the murals include every aspects of the social life of that time. A chapel on the summit of the mountain houses a mural depicting male and female Buddhas bringing the Tantric cultivation (civilization) together, while the lower part displays purgatory with naked, enchanting Dakins flanking each side. The artistic and aesthetic value of Guge murals is deemed comparable with that of Mogao Caves (located in Gansu Province, China).

#### **Day10/Manasarovar Lake-Darchen (Taqing)**

Today's highlight is to visit **Manasarovar Lake**, "Mapam Yumco" in Tibetan, meaning the "Eternal and Invincible Jade Lake" named to mark the victory of Buddhism over the local Bon Religion in the 11th century. It is Tibet's most sacred lake and is holy to both Buddhists and Hindus. As per Hindu mythology, one who touches the earth of Manasarovar will go to the paradise of Brahma. One who drinks the water from the lake will go to the heaven of Lord Shiva. There are 8 monasteries existing on the shore nowadays. Then, continue to head for Darchen, suitable at 4,000 meters high, it is the closest town to Mt. Kailash, the kora round Mt. Kailash both starts and ends here. Prepare for the pilgrimage journey to Mt. Kailash. (B,L,D)

#### **Day11-13/Pilgrimage in Mt. Kailash**

3-day trekking in Mt. Kailash, regarded in many sects of Hinduism as Paradise, the ultimate destination of souls and the spiritual center of the world. The sacred peak of Mount Kailash (6,658 m) is the final destination for many travelers to Tibet, ranging from tourists to Buddhist pilgrims and other followers of spiritual traditions from far and beyond. Pilgrims of several religions believe that circumambulating Mt. Kailash on foot is a holy ritual that will bring good fortune. The peregrination is made in a clockwise direction by Hindus and Buddhists. Followers of the Jain and Bon religions circumambulate the mountain in a counterclockwise direction. The path around Mount Kailash is 52km long:

Darchen<-2km->Two-leg Buddhism Pagoda  
 (ChoSen Kang-nyi)<-3km->Sexiong<-6km->Chogu Monastery<-11km->Drirapuk  
 Monastery<-3km->Sky Burial Platform<-3km->Dolma La Mountain  
 Mouth<-6km->Lham Chukhir<-8km->Camping Base<-2km->Zutrupuk  
 Monastery<-6km->Exit<-3km->Darchen

塔钦-2KM-双腿佛塔-3KM-色雄-6KM-曲古寺-11KM-止热寺-3KM-天葬台-3KM-卓玛拉山口  
 -6KM-门曲河边-8KM-露营点-2KM-祖楚寺-6KM-出口收费处-3KM-塔钦

#### Day14/Darchen (Taqing)-Paryang

Drive to Paryang, another town in Western Tibet. In the higher altitudes you would be able to enjoy an uninterrupted view of the Himalayas bordering India and Nepal, also the view of featured Tibetan houses and the vivid flocks and herds wandering under the snow mountains. (B,L,D)

#### Day15/Paryang-Saga

Drive to Saga from Paryang across the vast dry plains, taking about 9 hours covering 282km. Saga, meaning "Happy Land" in Tibetan, is situated along the Tsangpo River. Stay overnight in Saga. (B,L,D)

#### Day16/Saga-Shigatse

Drive to Shigatse for the whole day. You will enjoy the grand view of Mt. Shishapangma (8021 m), Gauri Shanker and other high mountains on the way. (B,L,D)

#### Day17/Shigatse-Gyantse

Shigatse, meaning "the Fertile Land", is the second largest city in Tibet. Pay a visit to **Tashihunpo Monastery**, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama to perform their political and religious tasks. Tashihunpo's magnificent outside may make you gaps in admiration, its inside just offers you more religious tranquility and sincerity. This monastery houses the world's largest copper Buddha figure which is decorated with numerous luxurious jewels. Then, head for Gyantse for overnight. (B,L,D)

#### Day18/Gyantse-Lhasa

In Gyantse (at 4,040 meters above sea level), visit **Palkor Monastery**, the symbolic architecture of Gyantse. On one side of the Palkor Monastery stands a white tower - **Kumbum Stupa**. It is said that there are altogether more than 100,000 Buddha statues engraved on the tower; hence the name "One Hundred-Thousand-Buddha Tower". Proceed to Lhasa and pass by **Yamdrotso Lake** for sightseeing. Yamdrotso Lake is one of the four holy lakes of Tibet, and legend has it that if the lake ever disappears, it will mark the end of Tibet. (B,L,D)

#### Day19/Lhasa

The whole day of sightseeing starts from Lhasa's cardinal landmark- **Potala Palace**, a structure of massive portions. Its towering image has already appeared on various occasions, but your first sight of the Potala will still be an awe-inspiring moment. It takes at least a good 2-hour to visit those rooms, halls and chapels. Some 2km to the east of the

Potala is the most revered religious structure and the holiest temple in Tibet - **Jokhang Temple**. Bustling with worshippers and redolent with mystery, the Jokhang is an unrivalled experience. The quadrangle of streets surrounding the Jokhang is the **Barkhor Market** - Lhasa's most interesting pilgrimage circuit. This area of the Old Town is both the spiritual heart of Lhasa and the main commercial district for Tibetans. The rest of day is free.

(B,L,D)

#### **Day20/Lhasa**

Sightsee of the Drepung Monastery, Sera Monastery and Norbulingka in Lhasa. **Drepung Monastery**, the largest and richest monastery in Tibet, was founded in 1416 by a disciple of Tsong Khapa under the patronage of a noble family and later enlarged by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Nowadays it stands as Tibet's most important and largest monastic university in Tibet. **Norbulingka Park** (Treasure Garden) was built in the 1740s during the reign of the seventh Dalai Lama. Later it was renovated and enlarged and became the Dalai Lama's Summer Palace. **Sera Monastery** is located a few miles to the north of Lhasa, is one of the three largest monasteries. (B,L,D)

#### **Day21/Depart from Lhasa**

Transfer to the airport and prepare to fly out of Lhasa. TOUR ENDS! (B)