

# LHASA & BEYOND ART & CULTURE TOUR OF TIBET WITH KALSANG DAWA 2009 - SAMPLE ITINERARY

## Day 1

Arrive in Chengdu in afternoon (Vancouver-HongKong-Chengdu), overnight at 3 star hotel.

## Day 2

Fly to Lhasa in the morning. Transfer to hotel (1.5 hours drive) in Tibetan quarter. Rest and acclimatize to the altitude during the afternoon.

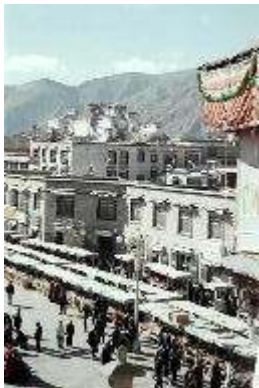
**Lhasa** literally means "place of the gods", although ancient Tibetan documents and inscriptions demonstrate that the place was first called Rasa, which means "courtyard place" or "goat place". Its altitude is about 3,650 m (12,000 ft), making it one of the highest cities in the world. Lhasa is the capital of Tibet and traditional seat of Dalai Lama.

## Day 3

**Jokhang Temple** is in the heart of old Lhasa, most sacred temples in Tibet established in 7<sup>th</sup> century by King Songtsen Gampo, the King who brought Buddhism to Tibet. Jokhang temple is a four-story construction, with roofs covered with gilded bronze tiles. The architectural style is based on the Indian vihara design, and was later extended resulting in a blend of Indian, Nepalese, and Tang Dynasty styles. Walk around, contemplate, meditate and take in the architectural history of this remarkable temple. Learn about the historic construction, style and use of the temple.



Next, visit **Barkhor Bazaar** is located in the center of old Lhasa. Barkhor Street is the oldest street in Lhasa. Being a circular in shape, Barkhor pilgrims use the road circumambulate around the Jokhang Temple. Traditional Tibetan houses line the street, and narrow lanes lead to hidden restaurants and shops. Have a traditional Tibetan meal, discover some of Kalsang's favourite spots, people watch and enjoy the colourful sights of items of sale, including religious objects, Tibetan costumes, food, etc.



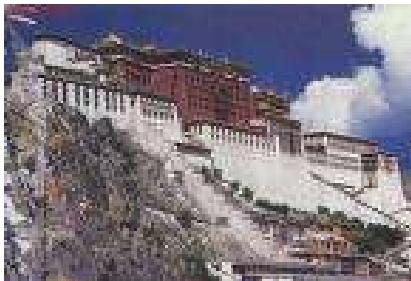
In the afternoon, visit a **furniture painting studio**. Furniture in Tibet is either secular or religious in nature. The intended use of an object dictates the symbolism and style of artistry. In secular objects, artists are not bound by iconographic symbolism, and their work reflects the diverse character of people in the regions of Tibet. Auspicious pieces contain pictorial representations of popular Buddhist stories and symbolism. Learn about regional styles, techniques, and symbolism with in the furniture painting tradition, and understand the use sacred furniture in Buddhist cultural and religious life.



## Day 4

After breakfast, visit **Potala Palace** - a cardinal landmark and a structure of massive proportion. This symbol of Tibet, an architectural gem built in the colossal monastic style of Central Tibet by Gyelwa Ngapa, the fifth Dalai Lama, in the 17th century, stands 300m above the valley atop the hill called Marpo Ri. The thousand rooms in Potala date from 1645 when the fifth Dalai Lama began erecting a palace that would serve as a sacred and administrative center. It served many succeeding Dalai Lamas and as one of Tibet's most impressive and enduring monuments, the

Chinese Army of Red Guards protected it during the Cultural Revolution. As a result many of its chapels and treasures are intact, virtually unchanged since the 17th century Norbulingka Palace. Enjoy a guided tour through Potala and take in the fantastic view of the city.



**Norbulingka** is the summer palace of His Holiness Dalai Lama. The 8th Dalai Lama designated it as a summer retreat but the majority of the buildings were not erected until the reigns of 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas. Every year as the chill air warmed, the Dalai Lama would leave Potala in a grand procession for six months residence in the Norbulingka. It is worth a visit and the park is a great place to be at festival times and public Holidays.



## Day 5

Start the day with a visit to **Drepung Monastery** - About 8km to the west of central Lhasa, Drepung, one of the world's largest monastery was built in 1416 by Jamyang Choje a pupil of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa Sect. Drepung literally means "Rice Mountain," after the famous and very large Danayakataka Stupa in South India where Buddha originally taught the Kalachakra Tantra. Prior to 1959 Drepung ranked as Tibet's largest monastery, sometimes with a population exceeding 10,000 monks. It also served as the residence of the early Dalai Lamas, until the Potala Palace was constructed in 1645. The second and third and the fourth Dalai Lama lived and were entombed here. Suffering only minor damage during the Cultural Revolution Drepung has plenty of historical relics, Buddhist scriptures and arts.



In the afternoon, drive to **Sera Monastery**, the 15th century sprawl of golden roofs and whitewashed walls is situated on a mountain slope, few miles north of Lhasa city. This monastery belongs to the Gelugpa sect and is one of the three great monasteries of Tibet, the other two being Drepung & Ganden. Sera was hard hit during the cultural revolution owing to its resident's active participation in the 1959 uprising. The highlight of the visit to Sera would be to witness the monks debating out in the courtyard.

## Day 6

**Pha Bong Kha Pilgrim Trail** - is about 15 mins drive away from Lhasa and offers wonderful view of the Lhasa city. Songsten Gampo meditated here for three years and later Padmasambhava, Atisha and Je Tsongkhapa have all meditated here in this cave. The monastery is build on top of a rock that houses the cave. Left of Pha Bong Kha is a sky burial site . Our trek today is will follow a pilgrim's trail with a sprawling view of Lhasa city. From Pha Bong Kha we go up up the mountain and to Tashi Choling temple, Taktsang Simbu Nunnery & cave, Sera Utse Monastery. Kaa Tsang Shar-nub monastery is below the trail and our pilgrim walk ends in Phurbu Cho hermitage.



## Day 7

Take off on a unique 2-day stay in a remote nomad settlement, two hours from Lhasa in **Drikung valley**. In this picturesque plateau area, rarely visited by foreigners, our group will be hosted by a Tibetan family. We will sleep comfortably in traditional nomadic tents, enjoy day hikes to remote monasteries and stuppas, watch yaks peacefully graze, and eat real home-made Tibetan dishes!



We will visit **Ganden Monastery** on the way. Ganden, the 15th century is built on top Mount Drokri after a prayer festival by Tsongkhapa and was the main centre of the Gelukpa order. Ganden in Tibetan means "Tushita," the Pure Land where the future Buddha Maitreya resides. Within a year seventy buildings had been completed, but it was not until 1417 that the main hall of the monastery was consecrated. During the cultural revolution Ganden suffered major damages and all the buildings were destroyed. Reconstruction has been going on to restore all the buildings. There is a nice 45 minutes kora around Ganden.



In the afternoon, we will visit nomadic homes on the other side to river and then in the evening soak in the famous medicinal **hot springs at Terdrom Nunnery**.

## Day 8

Drikung has old village houses that lies on the Kyi Chu's left bank. There's also a monastery known as **Drikung Til**. It is one of the most outstanding monasteries of the region east of Lhasa. Since it is the greatest of all Drikungpa monasteries, it has a fascinating and extensive complex. Hence, you can explore the buildings, hermitages and chapels. Near the monastery complex is a sacred site used for sky-burials. It is a particularly hallowed place and Tibetan families have for centuries traveled long distances to bring their dead here.



In the morning we will visit Drikung monastery and if we get the permission we will also visit the sky burial site above the monastery. Please note that no photography is allowed in the sky burial site. We will go back to the guest house for lunch.

In the afternoon we will visit the nearby sprawling **Terdrom Nunnery**. There are several hikes up to the meditation caves here.

## Day 9

After breakfast, depart for **Yarlung river** and board the ferry for an hour across the river followed by a 20 minutes drive in a bus or truck to **Samye monastery**.



Built in the mid-8th century; Samye is first formal Buddhist Monastery for the monks in Tibet. The magnificent and unique Central Hall is three-stories high. The first floor is of the Tibetan architectural style, the second the Han style and the third the Indian style. The halls in the monastery house many statues and murals. The

monastery has bronze bells, carved marble lions and tablets marking the development of Buddhism. All these are valuable cultural relics. As described in historical books, this monastery is considered "an unimaginable construction and incomparable monastery." Visit monks as they rehabilitate sacred sculptures.



Return the same route and to our bus and drive to Tsetang (200 kms. 5 hours drive & 2 hours on ferry).

**Tsetang** has had many "firsts", for instance, the first king Nyatri Tsenpo, the first palace Yumbu Lhakang, the first temple Tradruk, the first cropland Syarisotang, the first Tibetan Opera Pakhapu and the first Buddhist scripture Pangkong Chagya are all credited to Shannan. Here is also the place where King Songtsan Gampo united Tibet and once lived with Princess Wencheng. The Tangka made and embroidered by Princess Wencheng herself is still kept in Tradruk Temple, which is a great treasure house of culture and art. Overnight in Yarlung Hotel in Tsetang.



## Day 10

Drive to **Yumbulagang**, (30km round trip) the first palace as well as one of the earliest constructions in Tibet. You will enjoy a bird's eye view of beautiful Yarlung Valley. The palace is said to have been built specially for the first Tibetan king, Nyetri Tsanpo who was believed descending from heaven in 2 B.C.



Also visit **Tradruk Monastery**, (70km round trip), one of earliest Buddhist temples in Tibetan history. Built in 541 A.D., it is said that King Songtsan Gampo established the temple in order to prosper his Kingdom and later it became the winter palace of King Songtsan Gampo and Princess Wencheng in Shannan. Of all the treasures and relics kept in this monastery, the pearled Tangka--"Avalokitesvara at his Rest" is the most remarkable one.

Visit the **Tombs of Tibetan Kings**-situated on Muchong Hill opposite to Chong-gye County. It is the only one of the Tibetan King's tomb complex as well as the 29th and the 40th Tsenpo' tombs stretching a history of 1300 years.

## Day 11

After breakfast we drive to **Mindroling Monastery** and continue to **Gyantse** via Kampa La Pass 4793m.

On the way, we will visit the famous turquoise lake, **Lake Yamdrok Yum**, one of the three holy lakes in Tibet. Yamdrok means 'upper pasture' and Yum means 'green jade' in Tibetan. Yamdrok Lake is situated in the Lhoka area, covers 621 square km with elevation of 4441m. This is the largest lake on the northern slope of the Himalayas. Enjoy the beautiful views and take a short walk.



In Gyantse, we will visit **Mindroling Monastery** - one of the two major Nyingmapa centers in Central Tibet. The monastery is large and impressive. Most of the vast complex has been destroyed in the 1960s. Despite the damage, its handsome building constructed of beautifully dressed stones are among the finest in the country. The monastery dates back to the 10th century.

## Day 12

Visit **Gyantse's Pelkor Choede Monastery**- and the justifiably famous **Kumbum monastery** with its extraordinary architecture, within the same complex. Also visit **Palcho Monastery**. Its' remarkable feature accommodates the three sects of Tibetan Buddhism in one monastery coexisting in peace with each other. The three sects are: the Sakya, the Kagyu and the Gelug. The full name of the Palcho Monastery is "The Auspicious Wheel Joy Monastery." According to the historical records, this monastery was built in 14th or 15<sup>th</sup> century. It consists of the Assembly Hall, the 100000-Buddha pagoda, dratsangs and an enclosure wall.



After lunch, drive 90 kms, 2 hours to **Shigatse**, an ancient city on the Plateau of which its history can be traced back to more than 500 years. With its altitude of 3800m, Shigatse covers a total area of 182000sq.km in 18 counties and is the second largest city after Lhasa. With population of 635200 under its jurisdiction,

Shigatse is historically named 'Nyangme' which means -the lower reaches of the Nyangchu River- in Tibetan.

Before reaching Shigatse we will visit **Shalu Monastery** which is a detour from the main road. Shalu is the only monastery in Tibet known to possess a significant collection of 14th century Newari style murals, moderated and enhanced by the artistic sensibilities of the Yuan Dynasty of China. Arniko, master painter from Kathmandu valley, pioneered this unique art that later came to full flower in the Chinese capital. The architecture of Shalu is a rare combination of Chinese and traditional Tibetan elements.



Overnight in in Shigatse.

## Day 13

After breakfast, visit the great **Tashilhunpo Monastery** , the seat of the Panchen Lama, second only in importance to the Dalai Lama. Located on the south slope of the Nyimari hill in the west of the city of Xigatse, the Tashilunpo Monastery , known as one of the six major monasteries of the Gelug Sect, was originally built in 1447. It is the largest monastery in the Tsang area. Tsongkhapa's 8th disciple, Gendun Drupa, the 1st Dalai Lama, built it with financial aid from the Pakdru regime. Its numerous halls contain a 21.6-meter wooden statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha and elaborate, jewel encrusted relic. The monastery was expanded and renovated by the 4th, 5th and 6th Panchens.



Drive back to **Lhasa** (4 hours)

## Day 14

After breakfast, visit **Tibetan thangka school** and **carpet factory** in Lhasa's artists' quarter. Learn about traditional techniques, materials and symbolisms in Buddhist thangkas. Learn about rock and minerals, native to Tibet, that are used in Tibetan art.



**Tibetan carpets** have a history of over 600 years. Situated to the west of Tibet University Lhasa Carpet Factory is one of the remarkable enterprises in Tibet Autonomous Region. Hundreds of experienced weavers use old-styled vertical looms to weave carpets of incredible complexity. Learn about the process of natural dyeing, preparation of wool, technique of weaving and symbolism in patterns.



Fly to Chengdu at 4pm. Arrive at 6pm and stay overnight.

## Day 15

Depart for HongKong-Vancouver in morning

### **Includes:**

2 domestic flights: Chengdu-Lhasa return ticket

Food: All meals (3 x day)

Accommodation: 14 nights accommodation at 3 star hotel or the best available hotel (double occupancy)

Travel: Coaches and 4x4 travel to/from airport, in Lhasa and beyond

Entrance fees: Entrance fees for all sites indicated in the program

Information: Pre-tour information, reading list about Tibetan art and history

**Does not include:**

International flight: Vancouver- Chengdu – return ticket

Insurance: Travel & health insurance

Visas: Visas for China & Tibet Autonomous regions

Personal items: Alcohol, bottled beverages, a-la-carte orders (meals other than specified), room service, laundry service.

Tips: Tips for local service