

Exploring Tibetan Paths

Yunnan and Tibet

September 14-28, 2013



Witness the human kaleidoscope of ethnic minorities in China's rugged far west Yunnan province, before our journey to Tibet, a legendary land shrouded in an air of mystique to this day.

Highlights

- Meet a **local shaman**, a **language expert**, an **architectural historian**, and a **writer and explorer** in Yunnan.
- Experience **sacred sites** of Buddhism, like the **Jokhang temple** and the **Potala Palace** in Lhasa.
- Speak with a **professor** and a **local craftsmen** in Tibet.
- Watch the debates at the majestic **Sera Monastery** in Lhasa.
- Learn about the **nomadic way of life**; try yak butter tea during a **home visit**; and meet with **contemporary artists in Lhasa**.
- Experience the dramatic landscapes – **Tiger Leaping Gorge**, the **Tibetan plateau**, and the lakes of the Himalayas.
- Visit the **Shanghai Museum**; take the **high-speed Maglev train**; and take an **architectural tour** of the Bund with a prominent **historian**.



What to Expect

To enjoy this program, travelers must be in good health and able to walk 1-2 miles a day. Stairs at monasteries and temples usually do not have hand rails and involve several flights. Drives are 3-5 hours between cities, *usually* on well-maintained, paved roads. As we are at high altitudes and in remote locations where good medical care isn't always available, travelers will need to have a doctor complete a medical form and purchase basic medical evacuation insurance. At high altitudes, the sun's rays are much stronger, while temperatures usually drop significantly at night. We stay in boutique hotels in major cities, or the best 3 or 4-star local hotels.

Trip Details

Dates: September 14-28, 2013

Group Size: Pricing is based on a minimum of 10 travelers and a maximum of 20

Cost: \$6,795 double occupancy; \$1,465 single room supplement

Included: Activities and entrance fees as specified; group arrival and departure transfers; in-country transportation; economy class airfare from Shanghai to Lijiang, Zhongdian to Lhasa, and Lhasa to Shanghai; accommodations as specified (or similar); meals (B,L,D) per itinerary; bottled water on the bus; beer and wine at the welcome and farewell dinners; guest speakers; WildChina tour leader; local guides; Commonwealth Club rep with 15 or more participants; gratuities to local guides, drivers and for all group activities; pre-departure materials.

Not included: International air to Shanghai; Chinese visa; alcoholic beverages except at welcome and farewell dinners; travel insurance (recommended, information will be sent upon registration); Wild China tour leader gratuity; items of a purely personal nature.

Itinerary

Friday, September 13

Travelers depart on independent flights to Shanghai.

Saturday, September 14

SHANGHAI

Independent arrivals into Shanghai. This evening gather for a tour orientation followed by a free evening. Once a fishing village, the destiny and fortunes of Shanghai changed forever when the British opened their first concession here in 1842, followed by the French and Japanese. By the 30's, Shanghai had achieved international status and became known as the "Paris of the East."

Langham Xintiandi Shanghai

Sunday, September 15

SHANGHAI

Explore the **Shanghai Museum** with expert Liang Wei, and marvel at the bronze, ceramic, calligraphy, painting, and sculpture collections. At the Huangpu River waterfront enjoy lunch at **M on the Bund**, followed by a **walking tour** with **architectural expert Peter Hibbard**. Our welcome dinner is at **Xintiandi**, a retail area with shops housed in old *shikumen* buildings restored to their original appearance.

Langham Xintiandi Shanghai (B,L,D)

Monday, September 16

SHANGHAI / LIJIANG

Stroll through **Yu Garden**, the most celebrated classical Chinese garden in Shanghai, before flying to China's stunning, rugged west. The town of **Lijiang** sits in the shadow of **Jade Dragon Snow Mountain**, at an altitude of 7,874 feet. Wander across the quaint bridges and narrow canals of the town, a UNESCO World Heritage site and the historic capital of the Naxi people. Its key position on the Ancient Tea and Horse Caravan Trail made it a cultural and commercial hub for the exchange of goods and ideas between southwestern China and Tibet, Burma, and India. The region is home to several ethnic minorities besides

the Naxi, all with languages, religions and cultures that are quite distinct. *Crown Plaza Lijiang (B,L)*

Tuesday, September 17

LIJIANG

Travel by four-wheel drive vehicles through **Wenhai Valley** to a remote Yi village. **Meet with the shaman**, or *Bimo*, to hear his perspectives on local life, the challenges posed by development and his animist faith. Continue to Puji village for a hike to **Puji Temple**, one of five existing monasteries in Lijiang. Meet with a monk for a short **meditation session**. Visit the home of **Guo Dalie** a specialist on the Naxi culture and Dongba language. Dinner in a local home includes **Naxi music** and traditional cuisine.

Crown Plaza Lijiang (B,L,D)

Wednesday, September 18

LIJIANG / ZHONGDIAN

Explore Lijiang's morning market before our drive to Zhongdian. En route visit an elementary **school** near **Lashi Lake**, the primary water source for the large downstream population of Lijiang. Critical to the biological diversity of the region, Lashi Lake is home to two ethnic minority groups and the endangered black-necked crane. Continue to **Tiger Leaping Gorge** – one of the world's deepest canyons through which the mighty Yangtze flows. A 45-minute walk to a viewpoint affords fantastic views of the gorge.

Songtsam Retreat Hotel (B,L)

Thursday, September 19

ZHONGDIAN

Experience **Songzanlin Monastery**, one of the largest Tibetan monasteries in Yunnan. The snow covered peaks, combined with the chanting and incense from the Tibetan monasteries, bring to life the "Shangri-La" described in Hilton's *Lost Horizon*. Sit down with one of the **resident lamas** to learn about the history and workings of the monastery. After lunch, share tea with author and explorer **Jeff Fuchs** who will introduce us to the **Ancient Tea & Horse Caravan Road** that once passed through here.

Songtsam Retreat Hotel (B,L,D)

Friday, September 20

ZHONGDIAN

Explore **Napa Lake** and the **Lake Marshlands**, which serve as the wintering grounds for the black-necked crane, a species revered by the locals. In **Gonjo artisan village**, attend a handicraft workshop on the painting of traditional lacquer wooden boxes. Join a family for an **authentic Tibetan dinner** in their home. Expect yak to feature on the menu, as well as singing and dancing.

Songtsam Retreat Hotel (B,L,D)

Saturday, September 21

ZHONGDIAN / LHASA

Early morning flight to **Lhasa**, one of the world's highest cities with an elevation of approximately 11,860 feet. This capital has been the center of Tibet's political, religious, economic and cultural activities ever since the Fifth Dalai Lama moved the capital here in 1642. Relax or take an optional visit to **Barkhor Street** – a bustling market with countless local vendors who line the narrow lanes of old Lhasa. Hear from a **professor** who gives a brief lecture on **Tibetan culture**.

Sheraton Four Points Lhasa (B,L,D)

Sunday, September 22

LHASA

Experience the **Potala Palace**. First built in 631 A.D. by King Songtsen Gampo to celebrate his marriage to Princess Wencheng, the palace was reconstructed and expanded at the end of the 17th century by the fifth Dalai Lama. For the next 300 years it served as the winter residence of each Dalai Lama and the religious and political center of Tibet. Continue to **Jokhang Temple**. Built in the 7th century by Gampo, it is considered by many

Tibetans to be the most sacred temple and is home to the Jowo Shakyamuni, a scripture done by the Buddha at age twelve. (Those interested, may join the early morning pilgrims in the traditional *kora* at Jokhang.) Meet with members of the **Choephel Artists' Guild**, a co-op of Tibetan and Chinese painters, who are re-defining tradition and modernity to create a progressive Tibetan voice.

Sheraton Four Points Lhasa (B,L,D)

Monday, September 23

LHASA

Explore off the beaten path **Pabongka Monastery**, then take a short (30-minute) hike to the **Chupsang Nunnery**, part of Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Finally visit **Sera Monastery**, which today remains one of Tibet's three best university monasteries where over 500 monks study and practice this highly animated method of **debating** in the monastery courtyard.

Sheraton Four Points Lhasa (B,L,D)

Tuesday, September 24

LHASA / GYANTSE

Depart for Gyantse and experience the beautiful dramatic Tibetan landscape. En route stop at **Samding Monastery**, the seat of Samding Dorjee Phakmo, the highest re-incarnation of the female in Tibetan Buddhism, and **Ralung Monastery**, the seat of Dukpa Kagyupa order – one of the most sacred and oldest monasteries in Tibet. Arrive to Gyantse for dinner.

Yeti Hotel (B,L,D)

Wednesday, September 25

GYANTSE

Vist **Palchoe Monastery**, known also as Pelkor Chode, with its unique blend of Han, Tibetan, and Nepali architectural

styles. The impressive entrance hall boasts 48 pillars, with frightening murals depicting death. On the grounds is **Kubum**: a three-dimensional mandala (series of circles within a square) that represents the Buddhist cosmos. Doubling also as a stupa, the Kubum houses relics and statues of Buddhist deities.

Yeti Hotel (B,L,D)

Thursday, September 26

GYANTSE / LHASA

Depart Gyantse for our drive across the **Tibetan plateau** with dramatic views of the Himalayas. Visit a local family in **Pedi Village** and enjoy a picnic lunch in a village near **Yamdruk Lake**. The villagers are nomads and farmers; they subsist by growing barley, potatoes, radish, and rearing yaks, sheep, goats, cows, and horses. Return to Lhasa for **farewell dinner** at a local Tibetan restaurant.

Sheraton Four Points Lhasa (B,L,D)

Friday, September 27

LHASA / SHANGHAI

Visit the **Dropenling Handicraft Development Center**, a workshop and gallery. Established by The Tibet Poverty Alleviation Fund, Dropenling seeks to provide economic incentives to preserve traditional Tibetan crafts and culture. See artisans creating statues and *thangkas*. After lunch, **fly to Shanghai** for a free evening and dinner on your own.

Langham Xintiandi Shanghai (B,L)

Saturday, September 28

SHANGHAI

After breakfast, take the fastest train in the world, the **Maglev**, to Shanghai's Pudong International Airport, for flights home.

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Yunnan and Tibet

Reservation Form September 14-28, 2013



Phone: (415) 597-6720

Fax: (415) 597-6729

NAME 1 _____

NAME 2 _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

HOME PHONE _____ CELL _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

SINGLE TRAVELERS ONLY: If this is a reservation for one person, please indicate:

- I plan to share accommodations with _____
- OR I wish to have single accommodations.
- OR I'd like to know about possible roommates. I am a smoker / nonsmoker.

PAYMENT:

Here is my deposit of \$_____ (\$1,000 per person) for _____ place(s).

Enclosed is my check (make payable to *Commonwealth Club*). OR Charge my deposit to my Visa MasterCard

CARD# _____ EXPIRES _____

AUTHORIZED CARDHOLDER SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Mail completed form to: Commonwealth Club Travel, 595 Market St., 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, or fax to (415) 597-6729. For questions or to reserve by phone call (415) 597-6720.

I/We have read the Terms and Conditions for this program and agree to them.

SIGNATURE _____

Terms and Conditions:

The Commonwealth Club (CWC) has contracted Wild-China (WCT), to organize this tour.

Reservations: A \$1,000 per person deposit, along with a completed and signed Reservation Form, will reserve a place for participants on this program. The balance of the trip is due 90 days prior to departure and must be paid by check.

Cancellation and Refund Policy: Notification of cancellation must be received in writing. At the time we receive your written cancellation, the following penalties will apply:

- 91 days or more prior to departure: \$250 per person
- 90-60 days to departure: \$1,000 deposit
- 59-1 days prior to departure: 100% fare

Tour can also be cancelled due to low enrollment. Neither CWC nor WCT accepts liability for cancellation penalties related to domestic or international airline tickets purchased in conjunction with the tour.

Trip Cancellation and Interruption Insurance: We strongly advise that all travelers purchase trip cancellation and interruption insurance as coverage against a covered un-

foreseen emergency that may force you to cancel or leave trip while it is in progress. A basic medical evacuation policy is required. A brochure describing coverage will be sent to you upon receipt of your reservation.

Medical Information: Participation in this program requires that you be in good health. It is essential that persons with any medical problems and related dietary restrictions make them known to us well before departure. A medical form must be completed in order to participate.

Itinerary Changes & Trip Delay: Itinerary is based on information available at the time of printing and is subject to change. We reserve the right to change a program's dates, staff, itineraries, or accommodations as conditions warrant. If a trip must be delayed, or the itinerary changed, due to bad weather, road conditions, transportation delays, airline schedules, government intervention, sickness or other contingency for which CWC or WCT or its agents cannot make provision, the cost of delays or changes is not included.

Limitations of Liability: CWC and WCT its Owners, Agents, and Employees act only as the agent for any transportation carrier, hotel, ground operator, or other suppliers of services connected with this program ("other providers"), and the other providers are solely responsible and liable for

providing their respective services. CWC and WCT shall not be held liable for (A) any damage to, or loss of, property or injury to, or death of, persons occasioned directly or indirectly by an act or omission of any other provider, including but not limited to any defect in any aircraft, or vehicle operated or provided by such other provider, and (B) any loss or damage due to delay, cancellation, or disruption in any manner caused by the laws, regulations, acts or failures to act, demands, orders, or interpositions of any government or any subdivision or agent thereof, or by acts of God, strikes, fire, flood, war, rebellion, terrorism, insurrection, sickness, quarantine, epidemics, theft, or any other cause(s) beyond their control. The participant waives any claim against CWC/WCT for any such loss, damage, injury, or death. By registering for the trip, the participant certifies that he/she does not have any mental, physical, or other condition or disability that would create a hazard for him/herself or other participants. CWC/WCT shall not be liable for any air carrier's cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a nonrefundable ticket to or from the departure city. Baggage and personal effects are at all times the sole responsibility of the traveler. Reasonable changes in the itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well-being of the passengers.