

高原

Highland



Culture Tour



English

Highlands

Up on the roof of the world, the air is bracing, the mountains towering, the people resilient and the culture fascinating. For long centuries, Tibet has captivated the world at large; outsiders are intrigued by its mysterious and colourful religion, stunning scenery and sheer isolation.

Even in the 21st century, Tibet and its neighbouring Chinese highlands provinces have been little touched by outside-world influences. Ancient monasteries populated by richly-robed monks have complex and elaborate daily ceremonies - conducted against a backdrop of jagged mountains.

This is the region where the current Dalai Lama was born, into a simple peasant family. The spiritual leader spent childhood time in the Ta'er Lamasery, near Xining, an elaborate and extensive hillside complex of temples which houses members of the Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

But even this fabulous enclave is overshadowed by the mightiest lamasery of them all, the grand Potala Palace in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, a glorious piece of architecture that houses endless rooms and corridors. Its store of cultural treasures and religious significance have earned it a much-coveted World Heritage Site listing.

This is a very special part of the world, where deep spiritual faith helps counterbalance the harshness of nature. People are used to extremities here, witnessing nature at its most raw, and are pragmatic people, not much impressed by the materialism or consumerism of the modern world.

But for all the arduousness of their daily lives, these are hospitable, warm-hearted and cheery folk, not given to grumbling and ever willing to welcome strangers and visitors into their humble homes or settlements.

Stunning sights are never far away up here: a short mountain drive from our starting point of Xining is the magnificent Qinghai Lake, the largest salt-water lake in China, with shores that play host to flocks of richly-plumed birds.

The deep blue of the lake itself contrasts with the snowy white of the mountains and the swaying green grass of the pasture lands. Artists are invariably inspired by the sheer beauty of this little-populated environment; the only human presence consists of land-travellers to Tibet and roaming nomads.

In fact it is the vastness and variety which usually have most impact on overseas visitors. Deserts and mountains feature in the same landscape; Tibetans, Kazakhs, Uygurs and Mongolians share the same territory; modern air-conditioned coaches whisk visitors past camel-pulled carts and donkey-led waggons.

Advanced civilisations, which thrived as long as ten centuries ago, left cities that stand to this day. Jiaohe, high on a hilltop, is a fortress carved out of sheer rock, while Gaochang is a flat, grid-system metropolis with wide streets and clearly defined buildings and temples. The Gobi Desert city of Turpan, one of the lowest and driest places on Earth, is an oasis which is renowned for supplying juicy melons and grapes to the rest of China.

These are key stopping places on the ancient Silk Road, resting points for camel trains heading west, around the deserts and across the majestic Pamir mountains, into the territory which is present-day Pakistan. The ultimate destination for the prized China-made cloth was the courts of the West - Rome, Damascus and Constantinople.

Precious metals and crafts were swapped between the different cultures. Many influences can be found in the fabulously worked pieces of gold jewellery, silver artefacts and braided costumes produced by local artisans.

The Highlands region offers a smorgasbord of cultural and ethnic treats, which can be witnessed first hand, thanks to the convenience of modern transportation and the easing of restrictions in once-forbidden areas. It is a marvel of diverse cultures and rich traditions managing to survive and adapt in the modern world.

Itinerary One 11 Days Qinghai & Tibet (CZ)

- 1** Hong Kong / Guangzhou Direct Train
Guangzhou / Xining Approx. 2.5 hours flight
Meet at the Guangzhou Station and transfer to the domestic airport to connect with a flight to Xining - the capital of Qinghai Province.
Accommodation at the Silk Road Tsongkha Hotel (D)
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- 2** Xining
Visit the Ta'er Lamasery, the birthplace of the founder of the Yellow Sect. Mural paintings, butter flowers and embossed embroideries are famed as "Three Extremely Excellent Arts" of the Ta'er Lamasery. Travel to the Sun & Moon Hills and the Qinghai Lake - China's largest inland salt water lake and artists' paradise, renowned for its mirrored pastel sunrise, azure beauty at midday and the indigo blues of sunset - a natural scenery of vastness, beauty, mystery and quietness.
Accommodation at the Tent Guesthouse or similar (B,L&D)
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- 3** Xining / Chaka Coach
Visit a yurt by the lakeside and have a glimpse of Tibetan life style. Onward to the pasture and the Chaka Salt Lake - a typical chloride salt lake.
Accommodation at the Chaka Guesthouse or similar (B,L&D)
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- 4** Chaka / Golmud Coach
Travel through the Xiangride Oasis town and experience the mysterious mirage of Gobi desert. The Xining-Golmud-Lhasa highway is 1,907 kilometers long with the average elevation above 4,000 meters, running through the mountains of Kunlun and Tanggula. This highway is the highest highway in the world, passing through five mountains above 5,000 meters high.
Accommodation at the Golmud Guesthouse or similar (B,L&D)
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- 5** Golmud / Tuotuo River Coach
Mt. Kunlun, also known as the Forefather of Mountains in China. Travel via the Kunlun Pass. Enjoy the scenery of the Kunlun River and First Bridge over the Source of the Yangtze.
Accommodation at the Tuotuo Guesthouse or similar (B,L&D)
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- 6** Tuotuo River / Nagqu Coach
Nagqu is known as the Northern Plateau in Tibet, with Qinghai-Tibet Highway conveniently passing by. Enjoy the scenery of grasslands and Tanggula Pass.
Accommodation at the Nagqu Guesthouse or similar (B,L&D)
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- 7** Nagqu / Lhasa Coach
Pass by the Yangbajain Geothermal (Spring bath area) before proceed to the solar city - Lhasa, meaning the "Holy Land" in Tibetan language. Arrival to Lhasa, 3,700 meters above sea level, the capital of Tibet Autonomous Region.
Accommodation at the Lhasa Hotel or similar (B,L&D)
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- 8** Lhasa
Visit the "World Cultural Heritage" Potala Palace, the headquarters of the Dalai Lamas and a treasure house of traditional Tibetan culture. Scattered over the mountain is one of the three major Monasteries of the Yellow Sect. - the Deprung Monastery, built by a famous disciple of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Ge-lug-pa Sect. Onward to the "Jewel Garden" Norbu Lingka - the summer palace built by the 7th Dalai. Enjoy souvenirs-shopping at the Barkhor, a pilgrim circuit, an astounding jamboree and a Tibetan-style stock exchange.
Accommodation at the Lhasa Hotel or similar (B,L&D)
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- 9** Lhasa / Gyangze / Xigaze Coach
Walk around the Baiju Monastery - the headquarter for 3 sects, the Sa-kya-pa, Ka-tam-pa and Ge-lug-pa which is a rare phenomenon in Tibet. Afternoon travel to Lake Yamzhog Yum - one of the 3 holy lakes in Tibet with snow-capped mountains, islands, pastures, wild animals and plants, hot springs and monasteries.
Accommodation at the Shangdong Building or similar (B,L&D)
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- 10** Xigaze / Lhasa Coach
Guided through the Tashilhunpo Monastery - built by the 1st Dalai, houses the seat for the Panchen Lama and enshrines a gilded-bronze Buddha of Qiangba, the largest of its kind in the world. Visit the birthplace of Tibetan culture - the Yarlung Zangbo River Valley and a handicraft centre.
Accommodation at the Lhasa Hotel or similar (B,L&D)
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- 11** Lhasa / Chengdu Approx. 2 hours flight
Chengdu / Hong Kong Approx. 2 hours flight
Take a flight to Chengdu to connect a flight back to Hong Kong. (B)

Itinerary Two 11 Days Pamir Plateau (CZ/PK)

- 1** Hong Kong / Guangzhou Direct Train
Guangzhou / Urumqi Approx. 5 hours flight
Meet at the Guangzhou Station and transfer to the domestic airport to connect a flight to Urumqi - the capital of Xinjiang Autonomous Region.
Accommodation at the Hoi Tak Hotel or similar (D)
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- 2** Urumqi - Turpan Coach
Cruise around the Heavenly Lake which is surrounded by alpine meadows and rugged snow-capped mountains densely covered in fir, pine and cypress. Drive to the Oasis town of Turpan, visiting the Emin Minaret, a typical Uygur architecture; and the Karez - an amazing irrigation system which made Turpan a rich oasis. After dinner, enjoy a Uygur dance performance.
Accommodation at the Silk Road Turpan Oasis Hotel (B,L&D)
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- 3** Turpan - Urumqi Coach
Urumqi - Kashgar Approx. 1.5 hours flight
In the morning, visit the Ancient City of Jiaohe - a UNESCO "Natural Heritage" site. Drive past the Flaming Mountain, made famous by the story of the Monkey King, to visit the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves. Return to Urumqi and browse the Regional Museum with exhibits on archaeological treasures from the Silk Road including 3000-year-old mummies. Fly to Kashgar.
Accommodation at the Seman Hotel or similar (B,L&D)
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- 4** Kashgar
Look for your favourite souvenirs at the Bazaar, a major open market in Kashgar. Visit the Abakh Hoja's Tomb (Fragrant Concubine of Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong), the Aidakh Mosque and a Uygur family.
Accommodation at the Seman Hotel or similar (B,L&D)
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- 5** Kashgar / Tashkurgan Coach
Start the day with tour to the Karakuli Lake at 3,800 meters, a pristine spot 196 kilometers from Kashgar. Horses, yaks and camels graze on the rich pasturage. Drive to Tashkurgan.
Accommodation at the Pamir Guesthouse or similar (B,L&D)
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- 6** Tashkurgan / Pakistan Sust / Gulmit Coach
After the Customs and Immigration formalities, enjoy lunch before drive to Gulmit.
Accommodation at the Silk Route Lodge or similar (B,L&D)
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- 7** Gulmit / Karmadbad / Gulgit Coach
The 400-years-old palace of the Mirs of Hunza - the Baltit Fort was inhabited until 1960. Built on a cliff edge with stones, sun-dried mud and timber, the architecture of Baltit, as at Altit Fort, reflects a Tibetan influence. Enjoy a breath-taking view from the top of the fort, with a ravine behind and the Ultar glacier glinting in the sunshine.
Accommodation at the Serena Hotel Gilgit or similar (B,L&D)
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- 8** Gulgit / Besham Coach
On the way to Besham, stop at Chilas, the ancient caravan trail over the Babusar Pass into India and on the Indus trail of Besham. Standing under the shadow of the world famous Nanga Parbat, Chilas was left with many rock engravings by travellers.
Accommodation at the PTDC Motel Besham or similar (B,L&D)
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- 9** Besham / Rawalpindi Coach
Visit Taxila, the archaeologist's paradise, on the way to Rawalpindi. There are a museum and eight sites scattered around a very short radius. Among the best preserved are Sirkap, Jaulian (the University) and Mohra Moradu.
Accommodation at the Pearl Continental Hotel or similar (B,L&D)
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- 10** Rawalpindi / Islamabad Coach
Look at the traditional craftsmen working at the the silver and gold Raja (King) Bazaars in the old city of Rawalpindi. Continue along the main street linking the Twin cities - Murree Road, before arriving at the gleaming new capital. Pass by shining new buildings and park areas to stop at the Shakar Parian, "Sweet Hills" for a bird's eye view of Islamabad and the Shah Faisal Mosque, the landmark of Islamabad.
Accommodation at the Pearl Continental Hotel or similar (B,L&D)
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- 11** Islamabad / Hong Kong Approx. 9.5 hours flight
Take a flight back to Hong Kong. (B)



— 行程一 十一天青藏高原
Itinerary One - 11 Days Qinghai & Tibet

— 行程二 十一天帕米尔高原
Itinerary Two - 11 Days Pamir Plateau

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