

Shang Shung Institute UK: Insight Tours Pilgrimage in Eastern Tibet

From: August 3rd to August 21st

Trip Duration: 19 days 19 nights

Starting: Chengdu, China

Finishing: Chengdu, China

Trip Grading: Regular itinerary, moderate walking

Accommodation: Hotels

Trip's cost: 3000US\$ per person (on a two person sharing basis)

Single room supplement: 700us\$

DAY 1 (August 3rd)

Activities: Chengdu (500m above sea level)

Airport pickup and hotel transfer. Rest and acclimatization. Dinner at a private restaurant club in the famous Wangjiang bamboo park, where we admire a tea ceremony and a Chinese “pipa” and harp concert while tasting specialities of Sichuan cuisine. Legend says that paper was invented in this park where dozens of varieties of bamboo grow and elders practice the ancient art of Kung Fu every evening. Our guide will briefly introduce the upcoming trip. After dinner those who wish to can go for a traditional foot massage near our hotel, to relax after the long flight.

Overnight: Chengdu

DAY 2 (August 4th)

Activities: Chengdu (500m above sea level)

In the morning we will go to the Giant Panda Research and Breeding Base, a world-renowned attraction to see the endangered national animal that symbolizes China. We'll enjoy the park and lake there. After lunch we will go to visit Baoguang Monastery– The Monastery of Divine Light. This monastery was founded in the 9th century and houses a beautiful white Jade Buddha statue and relics of Buddha Shakyamuni. It is also famous for its statues of the 500 Arhats, where visitors choose their favorite one and based on that a divination of their future is made.

DAY 3 (August 5th)

Activities: Chengdu to Dartsedo (2560m)

Distance: 340km

Drive time: 7hrs

After breakfast we will travel for around seven hours. On the way we will visit the famous Iron Bridge built by the Mahasiddha Thangtong Gyalpo and stop for lunch. We will arrive in Kangding in the evening and can stretch our legs and explore the historical border town. Hopefully we can watch and participate in traditional Tibetan dances in the evening in public squares. This is the traditional border town of the Tibetan regions, historically an important trade and cultural exchange center.

Overnight: Dartsedo

DAY 4 (August 6th)

Activities: Dartsedo to Bamei (3450m)

Distance: 130km

Drive time: 4-5 hours

In the morning we'll visit Dorje Drak monastery. Then we drive to Ragnaka (Xinduqiao in Chinese), a very scenic photographic place which is reached by passing the first pass of Tsedo mountain. We then drive to Lhagang monastery, said to have been built around A.D. 652, when the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo ordered 108 monasteries to be built all around Tibet. We continue our trip to Bamei.

Overnight: Bamei

DAY 5 (August 7th)

Activities: Bamei to Ganzi (3400m)

Distance: 249 km

Drive time: 6 hours

Drive to Ganzi via Tawu (in Chinese *Daofu* and *Luhuo*). Along the way, we pass through spectacular Yak Valley, regarded as the biggest Natural Bonsai Garden on earth, then cross Yala Snow Mountain, Longdeng Grassland, Yuke Grassland and rural farmland sceneries. Ganzi is situated on flat ground and here Tibetan traders gather to do business. We'll explore the town in the afternoon and glimpse at scenes of local life.

Overnight: Ganzi

DAY 6 (August 8th)

Activities: Ganzi to Dzogchen Monastery (4020m)

Distance: 147 km

Drive time: 4 hours

After breakfast we will take a day trip to one of the most beautiful lakes in Tibet— Yihun lhatso. This is one of Tibet's most sacred lakes that is filled by a glacier and is surrounded by the massive glaciers of the 19,558 feet Trola Peak. The lake is surrounded by many giant rocks with sacred mantras carved into them. In the afternoon we proceed to Dzogchen monastery.

Overnight: Dzogchen

DAY 7 (August 9th)

Activities: Dzogchen (4020m)

Distance: 0 km

Drive time: 0 hours

One of the largest Nyingma monasteries in Kham, Dzogchen Monastery is recognized as the main pilgrimage site of Shakyamuni's relics in Tibet. It stands at an altitude of 4023m, in the hidden Valley of Rudog Kyitram. The monastery was founded in 1684-1685 on the advice of the 5th Dalai Lama. We will meet with the 7th Dzogchen Rinpoche and also Dzogchen Khyentse (a modern day mahasiddha 'crazy yogi') and visit the place where Dza Patrul Rinpoche practiced Todgal. Along the way we will see the hut of the late Lama Kadi who realised rainbow body in 2012. We will see sacred caves where many meditators still practice. At a sacred spot in the open grasslands we can hang our lungta prayer flags and enjoy a nomad style picnic.

Overnight: Dzogchen

DAY 8 (August 10th)

Activities: Dzogchen (4020m)

We stay in Dzogchen and in the early morning we hike to sacred lakes connected with Guru Padmasambhava who practiced here and we will visit his cave. For the ones who are not tired, we will have a special group in the afternoon heading up mountainous paths where many terma treasure sites were discovered. We then arrive at the top where the third volcanic lake is located. Besides the stunning view, we will see the cave where Patrul Rinpoche meditated for many years. In the evening we descend back to the valley where we enjoy a good rest and watch the students of the orphanage performing Tibetan dances and songs.

Overnight: Dzogchen

DAY 9 (August 11th)

Activities: Dzogchen to Galenting and Derge (3200m)

Distance: 148 km

Drive time: 6 hours

We'll visit Galenting, the seat of Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Wangchuk, Chogyal Namkhai Norbu's paternal uncle and hopefully meet the reincarnation of Khyentse Rinpoche's master, Kunga Palden. We'll visit the meditation hall and will have the opportunity to do a meditation session there. Next, we will drive up the Trola mountain pass (5050m) and continue to Derge. Historically the former Kingdom of Derge was a center of arts and culture. Before having dinner we'll visit a temple built as a homage to Thangtong Gyalpo and explore the town.

Overnight: Derge

DAY 10 (August 12th)

Activities: Derge

Drive Time: 0 hours

In the morning we will visit the renowned UNESCO protected woodblock printing house, where you can see Buddhist texts printed in the traditional manner, without the use of modern machinery. We'll then walk to the nearby Derge Gonchen monastery, where Chogyal Namkhai Norbu studied at a young age. In the afternoon we'll explore the town and see workshops and typical daily life scenes.

Overnight: Derge

DAY 11 (August 13th)

Activities: Derge to Palyul (3025m)

We drive for about 5hrs along the Jinshajiang River to Palyul (Baiyu). We can make a turn and take the side-valley road to visit the village of Hepo en-route, which is known for the metal crafts, especially in the art of making knives, swords and silver bowls. In the afternoon we arrive in the ancient Palyul a pleasant town located along the banks of Dingchu River, overlooked by the monastery, one of the 6 main Nyingma monasteries. It was founded in 1665. We explore the monastery, situated on a hill dotted with beautiful wooden houses.

DAY 12 (August 14th)

Activities: Palyul to Adzom Gar and on to Yarchen (4000 m)

Distance: 160 km

Drive time: 5 hrs

We will drive to Adzom Gar, the seat of Adzom Drugpa with its ancient and original monastery. The monastery is one of the few that was not destroyed and reconstructed because during the cultural revolution the army used it as a store house for food and ammunition, therefore we can

admire the original building. Later we will visit Yachen Gar, the monastic seat of the late Lama Achuk, who realised rainbow body in 2011. There is an impressive gold colour stupa we can visit.
Overnight: Yarchen

DAY 13 (August 15th)

Activities: Yarchen to Nyarong (3300m)

Distance: 300 km

Drive time: 7 hrs

On the way we will visit the place where Nyala Pema Duddul realised rainbow body. Nyarong was once notorious for its feared Khampa brigands.

Overnight: Nyarong

DAY 14 (August 16th)

Activities: Nyarong (3300 m)

Distance: 40 km

Drive time: 3 hours

Nyala Pema Duddul established Kalzang monastery, located in Nyarong. We will visit the retreat place of Nyala Pema Duddul beside the holy mountain of Lhang lhang Drak, where he also revealed many termas.

DAY 15 (August 17th)

Activities: Nyarong to Danba (2100m)

Distance: 268 km

Drive time: 6-7 hrs

We start our drive in the morning and stop in Tawu for lunch and enjoy a walk around Tawu valley. We continue our drive to Danba and arrive in the evening. Overnight: Danba

DAY 16 (August 18th)

Activities: Danba to Guergou

Distance: 250 km

Drive time: 5 hrs

Danba is a charming town sitting in the canyon dotted with dozens of Qiang and Tibetan villages, along with numerous soaring stone watchtowers perched on the surrounding hills and cliffs. We'll drive up the hill to Jiaju Zangzhai, a restored traditional Tibetan village where we can stroll around and meet with local Gyarong Tibetan families. In the afternoon we will drive through Gyarong (Aba) Tibetan prefecture and reach Guergou in the late evening.

DAY 17 (August 19th)

Activities: Guergou to Dujiangyuan

Driving distance: 160 km

Drive time: 4 h

In the morning we relax in a luxurious hot springs resort and those who want can enjoy a massage. Then we get on the road again and on the way we'll stop to admire typical architectural features of towns in Wenchuan. In the late afternoon we reach Dujiangyuan, a popular tourist spot. We'll visit the Unesco site of the water irrigation system built in 256 BC and that is still functioning today!

Overnight: Dujiangyuan

DAY 18 (August 20th)

Activities: Qingchengshan

Driving distance: 70

Drive time: 1.5 hours

We explore Qingcheng mountain, where Taoism was founded and visit the temple and enjoy the breathtaking view. In the afternoon we return to Chengdu.

DAY 19 (August 21st)

Activities: Chengdu

Driving distance: 10 km

Drive time: 1 hour

This is our last day and some may want to go shopping or rest and pack. After lunch we visit the Chengdu museum and have our farewell dinner.

Included in Tour:

Private tours with expert guide and local English speaking guide

A/C transport throughout the tours, all transfers

Entrance fee to any applicable tourist sites

Meals as indicated

Other tour related services stated in the itinerary

Government tax & Service charge

Hotel accommodation

Excluded from Tour:

International flight ticket

Visa

Other meals not mentioned

Tips & personal expenses

Laundry

Travel insurance

Anything not stated above