

A photograph of the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Lhasa, Tibet. The image shows the ornate facade of the monastery with its traditional Tibetan architectural style, including golden roofs and intricate carvings. The text 'shigatse day eleven to twelve' is overlaid in a white, cursive font.

shigatse
day eleven
to twelve

Tashilhunpo Monastery

Our journey to Shigatse begins by travelling south and climbing the steep Gangbala Mountain Pass (4798 metres). A photographer's dream, there is no better place to view the sparkling sapphire water of the **Yamdrok-Tso Lake**. One of Tibet's three sacred lakes it is the largest fresh water lake at the foot of the Himalayas.

Following the wild Tibetan plateau we traverse the Nojin Kangsang mountain pass (5560 metres) to appreciate the stunning **Kharob Glacier** before heading to the remote town of **Gyantse**, an old trading route to India where we will explore the **Zongshan Fort Ruins** (Hero City). Finally, we reach **Shigatse**, Tibet's second largest city. We head straight to the **Palkhor Monastery**. Built in 1427 it remains virtually unscathed to this day. It is famous for its spectacular Kumbum Stupa that houses about a hundred thousand images of various icons.

At an average altitude of 4400 metres, the **Yangbajain Hot Springs** are among the highest hot springs in the world at a temperature of 30°C. The resort offers the opportunity of a mystical lifetime swimming experience in the warm water of either an indoor or outdoor swimming pool.


We will visit the **Tashilhunpo Monastery**, which was founded in 1447 by the first Dalai Lama.

The drive to Nyingchi, which in Tibetan means 'the throne of the tree of the sun' is thought by many to be one of the most beautiful parts of Tibet.

Passing through the Mila Mountains (5013 metres) we will head to Bayi Town to the mystical giant **Cypress Nature Reserve**. Several hundred giant cypress trees of a special species peculiar to Tibet flourish here. The Bon religious followers believe one of the trees to be the life of GShen Ram Mi Bo, the founder of the Bon religion. This sacred tree is more than 2500 years old, 50 metres high and 18 metres thick.

Nyingchi is often likened to the scenic picture postcards of Switzerland. Comprising snowy mountains, sparkling blue lakes, isolated villages and ancient monasteries it has a distinctive folklore of stories, songs and dances of its own. We will cruise the **Yarlung Tsangpo (Yaluzhangbu) Grand Canyon** the world's longest canyon of 504 kilometres with an average depth of 5000 metres. Located 3000 metres above sea level it is the highest in the world. Its lower reaches encircle the Himalayas. The canyon supports an exceptional ecological system made up of many rare species: Yunnan Iron Cedars, Bangladesh tigers, bear monkeys, fern trees and moss. Its climate ranges from subtropical to Arctic.

Day 16 to 17: Home Sweet Home.

A photograph of the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon, showing a deep, winding river valley surrounded by steep, rugged mountains. The text 'Nyingchi day thirteen to fifteen' is overlaid in a white, cursive font.

Nyingchi
day thirteen
to fifteen

Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon



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As the average altitude of Tibet is 4267 metres, travellers with high blood pressure or heart conditions should consult their doctor before travelling to the region. Travel insurance is strongly recommended, as there are no refunds for unused Tibet arrangements if departing Tibet early due to altitude sickness.

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Potala palace



Kunming/Dali day one to four

The Stone Forest

We start the tour in Kunming in Yunnan Province. Translated it means the Golden Triangle. Sophisticated modern boulevards contrast with old narrow streets lined with traditional houses and shops. Other features include grand parks, hotels, restaurants, open markets and evening food stalls.

We will visit **Western Hill Forest Park** (Xishan Forest Park) to enjoy the panoramic view of the **Dianchi Lake**. Crescent shaped it is the sixth largest fresh water lake in China. Afterwards we will climb the cliff stairway to the impressive **Dragon Gate** (Longmen) visiting the 14th century old Hualing and Taihua Temples. The Dragon Gate was completed in the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911AD).

We will travel to the unique “fairyland” geological region of **The Stone Forest**, where masses of giant limestone rock needles thrust themselves into the sky. Dating back over 200 million years the forest covers an area of over 64,000 acres and is a daunting experience.

Dali is an ancient town that was once an old trading post featuring many historic architectural treasures. Set amongst spectacular mountains near the shores of **Erhai Lake**, we will start the day with a tranquil cruise. **The Three Pagodas** is our first destination, followed by a visit to the walled **Old City of Dali** with its impressive historic town gates and the Foreigners’ Street.

Li Jiang is rich in the Naxi minority culture. The morning market in the Old City is the ideal way to appreciate the Naxi women in their traditional dress. Morning Tai Chi practice is another unforgettable experience that can be experienced in Li Jiang.

Our sightseeing begins at the **Jade Dragon Snow Mountain**. A cable car will take us to the summit (over 4267 metres above sea level) to appreciate the stunning views below and the barely changed lifestyle of the minority groups. We will visit the **Black Dragon Pool Park** (Heilongtan Pool Park) where the snow mountain is mirrored in its crystal-clear water. The park provides a haven for bird and water life and features the Longshen Temple, Deyue Pavilion, Suocui Bridge and Hanyue Stage. The most important attraction is the **Dongba Museum of Naxi Culture**. It was founded in 1984 to protect and highlight the ancient language and writing of the world’s only remaining hieroglyphic writing system. On display there are 10,000 artefacts.

Finally, we explore the narrow streets and shops of the ancient city of **Dayan**, which was built more than 800 years ago. Featuring much of its original architecture and ancient customs the tower square is the perfect place to relax and soak up the atmosphere. Dayan was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997.



Li Jiang day five to seven

Li Jiang Old City

Our journey then heads north to the remote Tibetan frontier traversing through mountain passes offering spectacular views. Our destination is Shangri La (Zhongdian). Translated it means 'sun and moon in heart'. At an altitude of 3000 metres it is part of the mystical Himalayas. The scenery is breath taking and at one point Mt Everest's peak may be glimpsed. As the Tibetans are the main ethnic group it is an ideal opportunity to experience their lifestyle, religion and cuisine. Another highlight is the 16 kilometres long and 3,900 metres deep **Tiger Leaping Gorge**, where the mighty Yangtze River has carved out one of the world's deepest chasms (weather permitting).

Here we will gain an in-depth insight into the ancient lifestyle and culture of the mysterious Buddhist Kingdom of Tibet.

Our sightseeing in **Lhasa** begins with a visit to the majestic Potala Palace, the former home of the **Dalai Lama**. It is the keeper of significant Buddhist treasures including religious and cultural art. For centuries, it has symbolised Tibetan Buddhism. It is the highest palace in the world, dramatically sitting on top of Red Hill, which overlooks central Lhasa. It was originally built in the seventh century by the Tibet King, Songtsen Gampo as a gift for his bride. When the dynasty collapsed the ancient palace was almost destroyed by wars. It was



Shangri La
day eight
and nine

Yangtze River

re-built in 1645 in the Qing Dynasty as the 7th Dalai Lama's Winter Palace. It took 50 years to complete and stands 13 storeys high. Recently, the Potala Palace was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

We will visit the 1300 years old **Jokhang Monastery** famous for its gilded roof. Built on six acres of parkland, it is one of the most important spiritual structures in Tibet and is the ultimate pilgrimage destination for Tibetan families. Legend has it that the Jokhang Monastery brought Buddhism to Tibet. It houses Tibet's most sacred and famous possession, the original statue of Jowo Shakyamuni Buddha. Later we walk the **Barkhor Prayer Circuit**, a circular street, where pilgrims either walk or crawl around the Jokhang Monastery. Located in the old Tibetan Quarter, it is Lhasa's oldest street and the centre of Tibet's economy, culture, religion, art and folk craft.

The **Norbulingka Summer Palace** (Treasure Park), which is situated in the largest man-made garden in Tibet awaits us next. Built in the 1740's by the 7th Dalai Lama it reflects the religious and cultural beliefs of the Tibetan people. It was recently added to the Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Finally, we will enjoy the views of the Lhasa Valley from Pawang Ka.



Lhasa
day ten

Potala Palace