



Namtso-The Heavenly Lake Trek

6 nights camping, 5 nights hotel

Highest Altitude

Kong La (5,240m, 17187ft)

Trip Grade

Difficult, 6-7 hours hiking daily

Land Cost (Subject to change)

2-3 pax: US\$ 1850, 4-5 pax: US\$ 1290

6-9 pax: US\$ 1120 Single Room/Tent Supp: US\$ 290

Internal Air

Beijing-Lhasa: US\$ 155 for one way, US\$ 610 for roundtrip

Chengdu-Lhasa: US\$ 220 for one way, US\$ 440 for roundtrip

Dates

- Apr 5-16, 2008
- May 15-26, 2008
- Jun 8-19, 2008
- Jul 17-28, 2008 (Coincides Zamling Chisang)
- Aug 12-23, 2008 (Coincides Ganden Thangka Festival)
- Aug 28– Sep 8 2008 (Coincides Shoton Festival)
- Oct 12-23, 2008



Namtso, known as the "Heavenly Lake", is the largest saltwater lake in Tibet. Located some 4,590 m above sea level, it is situated at the edge of the severely-weathered Chang Thang Plateau to the north of Lhasa. The loop walk across the Nyanchen Thang-la Mountains to the pebbled shores of Namtso takes 7-8 days.

While we get acclimatized in Lhasa, we tour the monasteries and temples and palaces of Dalai Lamas before we head up on the trail. Our Trek starts at the Damshung valley via Lagaen-la, 5,180m above sea level, and then to the mystical environs of Tashi-Do heritage and the vast Namtso. The final leg of the loop enters a remote region of the Nyanchen Thang-la range. We have to cross the Kong-la pass 5,240m above sea level, and wind through the deep glacial valley on the return to Damshung area. Namtso is also inhabited by large flocks of birds both resident and migratory.

While the lake is accessible by well paved road, we follow the ancient salt trade caravan route. We walk through the glaciated valleys and the mountains of Nyechen Tangla range and interact with the nomadic herdsmen on the way.

Day 01: Arrival in Lhasa Airport

You can fly to Lhasa airport from Beijing or Chengdu or Kathmandu. Flights from other cities are routed via Chengdu.

Upon arrival at the airport, you are met by your guide and transferred to Lhasa City. Check in hotel and take rest for acclimatization. Accommodation in Dhog Gu or similar hotel of Tibetan décor and hospitality.

Day 02 Sightseeing of Lhasa

Explore the highlights of Lhasa such as Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute (Mentsekhang) and Barkhor Street.

Potala Palace of the Dalai Lama is an immense structure, its interior space being in excess of 130,000 square meters. Fulfilling numerous functions, the Potala was first and foremost the residence of the Dalai Lama and his large staff. In addition, it was the seat of Tibetan government, where all ceremonies of state were held; it housed a school for religious training of monks and administrators; and it was one of Tibet's major pilgrimage destinations because of the tombs of past Dalai Lamas.

The Jokhang Monastery, an example of the earliest architecture in Tibet, can claim to be the center around which the city of Lhasa developed. Located on Barkhor Street, Lhasa, it faces west and has four stories with the roofs covered with gilded bronze tiles. It was built in Tang Dynasty architectural style with characteristics of Nepalese and Indian architecture. A golden statue of the young Buddha Sakyamuni at age 12 brought to Tibet by Princess Wen Cheng from Chang'an, capital of the Tang Dynasty, is enshrined in the center. The statues of Songtsen Gampo, Princess Wencheng and Princess Chizun, another wife of the Tibetan King are enshrined in side halls.

Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute (Mentsekhang): Built in 1916, Mentsekhang was originally the place of research for Tibetan medicine and calendar calculations for the former Tibetan local government. After a large expansion in 1980, Mentsekhang became the center for the treatment, training, research and production of Tibetan medicine. Tibetan medicine has come with a history of more than 2300 years, from the experiences of Tibetan people as they fought against diseases and assimilated their local treatments with traditional medicine of the Chinese, In-

dian, Nepalese and even Sri Lankan. Doctors do use traditional methods to diagnose in the hospital.

Barkhor Street Barkhor, a circular street at the center of Old Lhasa, is the oldest street in a very traditional city in Tibet.

It is a place where Tibetan culture, economy, religion and arts assemble and a place to which a visit must be paid. The sacred pilgrim path of Barkhor is also a marketplace where shaggy nomads, traders, robed monks and chanting pilgrims join together. Clustered shops and stalls sell printed scriptures, cloth prayer flags and other religious vessels, jewelry, Tibetan knives, ancient coins and other Tibetan relics.

Day 03 Sightseeing of Lhasa

Norbulingka Palace, Jokhang Temple, Barkhor Street, Drepung and Sera Monasteries.

Situated in the western suburbs of Lhasa, *Norbulingka* Park was built in the middle of the 18th century during the reign of the 7th Dalai Lama and served as the Summer Palace of Dalai Lamas where they handle political affairs, practiced religious activities and spent holidays. Traditionally the Dalai Lamas would leave the Potala Palace every spring and spend the summer in Norbulingka. *Lingka* in Tibetan means a beautiful place with trees and lawns, and *Norbu* means treasure.

Drepung Monastery, situated to the west of Lhasa city, was the largest and richest of the three major Yellow Sect monasteries in Lhasa, and it also became the most powerful. As the most powerful of the "Gelukpa" monasteries, Drepung had seven colleges and, at its height, housed over 10,000 monks. It owns many splendid murals, elaborate statues and other rich treasures. A giant golden statue of Buddha "Jiangba Tongzhenma" sits near the precious conch shell.

Sera Monastery, the last of the three principal Yellow Sect monasteries was the last to be built in Lhasa. Sera means "Hailstone" in Tibetan, and legend tells that it hailed during the foundation of this famous monastery. Sera comprise a great sutra chanting hall, a college and 32 sections. It once housed nearly 10,000 monks, and is proud of its glorious history during the Ming Dynasty.

Day 04: Ganden Monastery Excursion.

Ganden monastery is located about 25 miles east of Lhasa. Ganden was the first Gelugpa monastery and has re-

mained the main seat of the order ever since and may be for this reason, it suffered most at the hands of the red guards. Ganden is an interesting place to wander aimlessly about in. The sheer ochre walls of many of the buildings make great backdrops for photographs. Its good idea to take warm up hike of the kora of the monastery which takes about one hour to complete. This circuit begins at the south west corner of monastery. A large rocky cleft draped with prayer flags marks the start of this scenic circuit Ganden! The views over the Lhasa River Valley from this 4,500 meter high (~14,500 feet) vantage point are inspiring, their beauty paying rich tribute to Tsongkhapa's prudence in locating his monastery here. This walk will also introduce many aspects of a Tibetan pilgrimage route. Return drive to your hotel in Lhasa.

Day 05: Begin trek

Drive 3-4 hrs, trek 2 hr.

After breakfast at your hotel, we start out on Lhasa-Qinghai Highway and drive 50 miles north to Yangpachen, a geothermal hot springs area. From here, we drive another 40 miles along a magnificent valley with spectacular mountain scenery to the windblown, roadside town of Damxung (13,550 ft). At Damxung, we leave the highway and turn west along a jeep track past the abandoned airfield about four miles to a valley from where we'll begin our trek toward Namtso Lake (15,060 ft). After settling in, we encourage you to hike to Kyangra Gumpa, situated just above our camp (one hour).

Day 06: Acclimatization day.

3-4 hrs hiking

Today, we will have an acclimatization hike of about 1,000 ft above our camp and enjoy the magnificent views of the grasslands.

Day 07: Trek to the herder's camp

7-8 hours hiking

The day starts with a gentle ascent to a glaciated valley and then follow a narrow gorge, and as we trek ever higher the vegetation becomes sparse and gives way to scrub and dry, rocky terrain. We'll hike past hummock fields and piles of rock to isolated high meadows populated by blue poppies, daisies, delphiniums, sweet peas, and clover, and reach a herder's camp at about 15,500 ft. The trek involves five river crossings on foot. Be careful! Water can be quite high

and swift, but the crossings are short.

Day 08 Cross Kong La (17,000ft)

6-7 hours trekking

We continue to follow the river as we make our way up the immense valley. The scenery changes to a broad basin of red hills and green meadows intersected by large, rolling moraines. Climb up and cross the Kong La (17,000'), the highest pass on our trek. As we descend we'll be greeted by the spectacularly beautiful Namtso Lake, China's second largest saltwater lake with a surface area of 798 square miles. Descend to camp at an elevation of

Day 09 To Tashi Do and Namtso Lake

7-8 hours hiking

We will leave the meadows and the river behind and continue down, soon to cross gravel wash spilling from the hillsides. We will continue to descend over the grassy alluvial plain and pass a few herders' camps. Visit the nomads' camps and enjoy the picnic lunch overlooking the lake. Then, we'll follow the shore of the lake to Tashi Dhor (Holy Rock) at the head of the peninsula poking out into Namtso Lake and the Tashi Dhor hermitage with its unusual twin pillars of rock and cave temples. Camp at the foot of the cliffs or by the wind-protected *mani* walls (boulders with carved inscriptions) between the Tashi Dhor hills.

Day 10 Rest and exploration day at Tashi Dhor

1-3 hrs trekking (optional)

You have an extra day to enjoy the serene beauty of the lake and superb views of the snowy Nyenchen Thanglha peaks that can be seen across the blue waters of Namtso Lake. You will explore the Tashi Dhor hermitage on the shores of the lake. You will also visit its remarkable monastery, grottos, cave temples, and twin limestone watch-towers. Take short kora hikes around the two auspicious rocks-known as Tashi Dhor Chung and Tashi Dhor Chen, the first one takes about an hour and half and the second two to three hours respectively to complete.

Day 11 Drive back to Lhasa

4-4½ hours driving

Scenic drive to Lhasa, enjoying views of the mountains and landscapes dotted with nomadic tents. If the weather is clear, we may see the Nyenchen Thangla range.

Day 12 Depart Lhasa

Early morning departure for the airport and fly to connecting city for your flight back home.

Tour Cost Includes

Accommodation on twin sharing in hotels and guest-houses as indicated in the itinerary
Daily Breakfast and a welcome dinner with cultural performance.
During camping, 3 meals a day prepared by a cook
All transfers and sightseeing as on itinerary by a 4WD jeep and a supporting vehicle for gears and supplies
Service of English speaking local guides
Sightseeing admission fees
Tibet permits processing
Internal airfare booking

Tour Cost Excludes

Chinese visa fee
International Airfare. On request, we can search airfare and book it for you.
Internal Airfare has to be booked through us. Quotation separately given and is subject to change.
Lunch and Dinner
Drink, tip and other expenses of personal nature like laundry, phone calls, usage of vehicle for shopping etc
Extra expenses due to nature and unforeseen events such as flight delay or cancellation, illness, natural calamities which are beyond our control.
Emergency medical transportation or evacuation.
Travel Insurance

Important notes on Itinerary

Although we will do our very best to adhere to the itinerary and its schedule, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities, and trip routing, rather than an inflexible schedule of Events. It is likely that there will be changes in the itinerary in terms of anything from the exact hotel used to the villages we may stop in for the night. Tour Guides and our crew will do everything to ensure that you are inconvenienced as little as possible.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a Wind Horse Holidays trip is subject to the conditions stated in the Participant Information Form, which includes the Agreement and Release from Liability and the Booking Conditions. We urge you to read

this information carefully, and to call us if you have any questions.

Maximum Group Size

We try to make our group size small so that we can pay attention to each and every participant and provide personalized services as far as possible. Maximum group size is 9 and we guarantee the trip for a minimum sign up of 2 participants.

Activity Level

Wind Horse Holidays trips are crafted for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. As this is a challenging trek, it's expected that all participants are healthy and physically and mentally strong and have some trekking experience. The trek requires in average 6 hours walking through steep and rocky trails, mostly at elevations above 14,500 feet. In addition, high altitude may create discomfort and symptoms of illness such as breathlessness, restless, disorientation, sleeplessness and headaches. It's important that you have no complaints about heart and lungs. The itinerary allows you enough time for acclimatization but you are advised to start several months ahead some power exercises like jogging, cycling, swimming, aerobics or some indoor exercises. It's an advantage to have hills in your area where you can practice hiking. There are a few long drives, so a tolerance for traveling long distances on rugged roads is essential.

Equipment & Clothing

When we receive your booking, we send you a full tour dossier, which contains a suggested gear and clothing list. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us and we will be pleased to offer advice.

Passport and Visa

Your passport validity should be more than 6 months at the time of traveling and there should be enough blank pages for entry and departure seals. You will obtain Chinese visa beforehand and provide us a copy of your passport and Chinese visa for permit processing. Warning: Do not disclose about your Tibet intention for some good reason. As you have to enter China within 90 days from the date of issue, make sure that your visa does not expire before your travel date. Entering Tibet is not leaving China. If you intend to fly back to mainland China after your trip concludes in Kathmandu, you must have a multiple entry visa.

You will collect a copy of Tibet entry permit from our representative at Beijing or Chengdu or can be shipped to your address, time permitting, at an extra cost.

If your travel to Tibet begins from Kathmandu, Your Chinese visa/Tibet entry permit, which is called "Group Visa" and that comes in a letter size sheet with list of participants are obtained from Chinese embassy of Kathmandu. The visa has to be pre-processed through booked tour, though. So, you must have at least a couple of days in Kathmandu for visa work before your flight to Lhasa. Nepal visa can be obtained at the port of entry. Two passport size photographs have to be submitted along with trip application. A 60 days valid, single entry visa costs US\$ 30 that you have to pay in cash dollars, preferably in exact amount. Travelers visiting Nepal for 3 days or less will get gratis visa.

Guide and Crews

The trip is led by local English speaking Tibetan Guide whom you meet upon arrival at Lhasa airport. We will send a Nepali cook and assistants for kitchen and camping arrangement.

Booking Formalities

Booking

We request USD 200 deposit (Non refundable) plus internal airfare costs in order to process the booking. Upon receipt of your booking, we will get back to you with status of air and hotels. Normally, the final payment is due 90 days prior departure but if the suppliers need payment earlier, we may contact you accordingly.

Cancellation Charges

91 day prior departure: Forfeiture of deposits
Between 90-60 days prior departure US\$400 per person or 25% of the total trip cost whichever is higher.
Between 59-45 days prior to departure US\$ 600 per person or 50% of the land cost whichever is higher, will be charged.
Between 44-30 days prior to departure US\$ 800 per person or 75% of the land cost whichever is higher will be charged.
Cancellation within 30 days prior departure results into 100% charge of the land cost.

Purchase Insure America's Travel Guard Policy to protect yourself from the cancellation charges, in case if you have to cancel the trip for any unavoidable circumstances like accident, illness, and death in the family. For more information, please, visit http://www.windhorsetours.com/travel_insurance.php

Trip applications can be downloaded from following link..

<http://www.windhorsetours.com/reservation.php>