Destination Himalaya

Tours For The Adventurous Traveler

Photographer's Tibet



The Potala Palace at night © Lewis Kemper

A Photo Cultural Journey with Lewis Kemper

September 24th – October 9th, 2011 16 Days, Moderate High Altitude Touring n the Roof of the World. Locked away for centuries, Tibet has always held a unique place in the human imagination, conjuring an unearthly realm beyond our reach. What causes our enduring fascination with Tibet? Surely its inaccessibility, mysterious gompas, lunar landscape and tenacious people transfix us. In this isolated land cut off from the world for all but the last century, beauty and strangeness appear in equal measure. Frozen peaks and windy flatlands constitute the landscape of this high desert plateau. Beneath an often crystal-blue sky, the Tibetan people exist in a medieval world. Since the occupation by the Chinese, their endurance has been tested both physically and spiritually. Yet despite the hardships of their daily lives, Tibetans remain tolerant and good-humored. Your encounters with these hardy people will leave you with a profound respect for the culture that binds man and women to the cosmos with such generosity of spirit. The annals of great travel writing are full of the accounts of early explorers, Father Desideri, Abbe Huc, Csoma de Koros, Sven Hedin, Fosco Maraini, Younghusband, Kingdom Ward, dazzled by what they saw, described Tibet in superlatives, just as do travelers of today.



Pilgrims doing prostration at the Jokhang © Lewis Kemper

We begin our journey with three photogenic days in the magical environs of Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, its skyline dominated by the majestic ramparts of the Potala Palace. While in Lhasa, we will visit Tibet's holiest temple, the sacred Jokhang, wander the adjoining Barkhor, the maze of shops and stalls that encircles the Jokhang, and join with Tibetan pilgrims as they ritually circumambulate the Barkhor and Jokhang koras. In the cities of Shigatse and Gyantse, discover the monastery at Tashilhunpo (home of the Panchen Lamas) and the amazing chörten of the Kumbum. We then continue our journey overland to shadows of the world's tallest mountain, the mighty Everest, where we can photograph the majestic north face. We then make the dramatic descent to the Tibetan/Nepali border at Zhangmu, ending our trip in the exotic city of Kathmandu.

1 T 1 N E R A R Y

Days 1 & 2 Saturday & Sunday, September 24th & 25th

USA to CHENGDU Departing the USA, we "lose" a day as we across the International Date Line, arriving in Chengdu in the evening of Day 2. You will be met upon arrival and transferred to your hotel. In the evening we will have an "orientation meeting" with our trip leader – initial talk/discussion on "High Altitude Travel."

Note on international flights: Please inform us if you would like assistance in booking your international air flights. Chengdu is connected with daily flights from all major Far East cities (Bangkok, Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai, Tokyo, etc.) Depending on your choice of international carrier you may be required to depart the USA a day earlier.

Crowne Plaza Hotel

Day 3 Monday, September 26th

TO LHASA (11,975 ft.) You have an early start to the day, as you will be picked up and transferred to the airport for your flight to Lhasa.



sea of peaks – on the flight to Lhasa

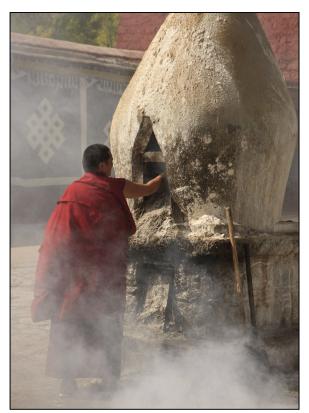
If the weather is clear, the flight (we try and obtain window seats for everyone) from Chengdu to Lhasa will offer spectacularly majestic panoramic views of the eastern ramparts of the Himalayas. China's highest mountain peaks, the 24,783' Minya Konka, and the mighty Namche Barwa (25,439') loom majestically on the horizon, surrounded by countless snow capped peaks and high alpine valleys, climbing vertiginously upwards to the high-altitude Tibetan plateau.

Upon arrival at Gongkar, Tibet's international airport, we will be joined by members of our Tibetan staff for the two-hour drive to Lhasa. We cross the powerful Tsangpo River as we make our way through the beautiful countryside of Ü, the historically rich province of Central Tibet. Winding our way through the stunningly austere Tibetan landscape, we finally enter the environs of Lhasa, Tibet's most populous city. There before us, standing imposingly upon its lofty precipice, is the staggeringly beautiful and instantly recognizable Potala Palace, its regal red and white façade and glittering golden gables towering over the Kyi-chu Valley.

We will have the next few days to spend in and around Lhasa, the legendary Tibetan capital. The goal of many intrepid travelers and explorers, the "forbidden city" of Lhasa will reveal its unique character and enchanting mystique as we visit many of its most significant historical and cultural sites. Upon our arrival in Lhasa, we will check in to our hotel, the Kyi Chu, located in the heart of Lhasa, near to both the Potala Palace and Jokhang Temple.

Tonight we will gather for our group Welcome Dinner.

Kyi Chu Hotel (B on flight, L, D)



Burning juniper incense © Lewis Kemper

Days 4 - 7

Tuesday – Friday, September 27th – 30th EXPLORING LHASA We have four full days to explore and photograph the historic capital of Tibet. We start with a visit to two of the area's most important Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, Drepung and Nechung. We will spend the afternoon exploring the Jokhang and Barkhor area in old Lhasa.

Drepung Monastery, beautifully situated in the unpopulated hills west of Lhasa, is a remarkable place. At one time Drepung was home to 10,000 monks, establishing it as the largest monastic institution in the world. Drepung is a large establishment and it is worth the time to explore in depth. Drepung was founded in 1416, just prior to the establishment of Sera. Notably, Drepung's Ganden Palace was home to the Dalai Lama until the construction of the Potala by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama in the 17th Century.



The great assembly hall at Drepung © Lewis Kemper

Drepung's many colleges, halls and temples extend up the hillside towards the peak of Gephel Ri, encouraging the visitor to wander the many byways that meander through the compound's whitewashed structures. Arguably Drepung's main attraction is the massive, two-story statue of Maitreya, the Future Buddha, which attracts pilgrims from throughout Tibet. Drepung's dramatic location offers splendid views of the Kyi-chu Valley below, including the monastery of Nechung nestled at the foot of the hill below Drepung.

Nechung has achieved notoriety as the residence of the Tibetan State Oracle until 1959. The oracle is the medium through which Tibet's protective deity, Dorje Drakden, communicated with the Dalai Lama's, Tibet's titular heads of state, regarding matters of the utmost importance for Tibet and its people. Indeed, no important decisions would be taken without prior consultation with the Nechung oracle. The oracle left Tibet with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in 1959, and now resides in the Nechung Monastery in Dharamsala, India. Nevertheless, the Nechung Monastery in Tibet is still the residence of a few monks. With its esoteric aura and sometimesgraphic murals and Nechung is certainly worth photographing.



The Potala Palace, Lhasa © Lewis Kemper

Looming over Lhasa and the Kyi-chu Valley is the monumental Potala Palace. A visit to this amazing historical site is certainly a highlight of any trip to Tibet, and we will explore the many chapels, halls and tombs of the Red Palace. Based on the mythical Potala in South India, this more tangible incarnation of the palace was the home of Tibet's god-king, the Dalai Lama.

Begun by the 5th Dalai Lama in the 17th Century, the Potala was the winter residence of the Tibetan spiritual leader from the time of "The Great Fifth" until the current and 14th Dalai Lama, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, occupied it. Now a museum, the Potala is a treasure trove of Tibetan history, its dark and mysterious chapels luring the visitor to discover its many secrets.

We will make a pilgrimage to the Jokhang, Lhasa's sacred religious temple. While the Potala Palace played host to Tibet's affairs of state, Lhasa's second great historic site, the Jokhang temple, is the religious heart and soul of Tibetan Buddhism. The Jokhang, arguably Tibet's holiest religious shrine, was constructed in the 7th Century CE under the guidance of the indomitable King Songtsen Gampo.

As legend has it, Songtsen Gampo's Chinese and Nepalese brides brought the Dharma to Tibet, as well as the holiest Buddhist relic in Tibet, the "Jowo Rinpoche." This golden, bejeweled statue of the Buddha Shakyamuni is the highlight of any visit to the Jokhang. The roof of the Jokhang, with its wonderful golden gables and carvings, offers a magnificent view of the Potala and the busy Barkhor markets below.



The Barkhor (a great place for people photography), is a maze-like warren of shops and stalls that surrounds the Jokhang. Join the Tibetans who travel here to pay homage to the Jokhang as they circumambulate the sacred shrine. Pilgrims journey from throughout Tibet to make prostrations and to complete this ritual kora. Join with these amazing pilgrims as they make their way around this venerable site, and lose yourself amongst the vibrant sites, fantastic smells, and distinctive sounds of the bazaars of the Barkhor. You can also do some shopping and enjoy bartering with the friendly Barkhor merchants.

We will also visit Sera Monastery, located to the north of Lhasa, which is perhaps most famous for the renowned and always lively sessions which take place in the Debating Courtyard. Sera was founded in 1419 by a student of the legendary Tsongkhapa, and was once home to several thousand Gelugs monks.

Although the monastery is populated by far fewer monks these days, Sera, like many other Tibetan monasteries, is reemerging as a prominent center of Tibetan Buddhist studies. After exploring the Main Assembly Hall and many colleges, it is arguably the highlight of any visit to Sera, to relax beneath the shady canopy of the Debating Courtyard's many trees and revel in the sights and sounds as Sera's monks energetically argue the finer points of Buddhist philosophy.

Kyi Chu Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 8 Saturday, October 1st

TO SHIGATSE (12,800 ft.) – TASHILHUNPO CHAM (festival) Departing Lhasa, we head into the wilds of Tibet, crossing the 17,000 ft. plus mountain pass of Shugu La, arriving midafternoon in Shigatse, Tibet's second largest city, and home to the monastery of Tashilhunpo, residence of the Panchen Lama. (Note: If completed in time, we will take the more direct road along the mighty Tsangpo (Brahmaputra River), which will save us about 2 hours driving). The drive from Lhasa to Shigatse is a breathtaking and photogenic journey. We will check into our hotel, before heading out to partake and photograph the Cham dances (masked dances) Tashilhunpo.



At the Tashilhunpo Festival

The Cham festival is held in the main courtyard of Tashilhunpo monastery incorporates a series of masked religious dances and dramas, as well as prayer ceremonies. The performances depict the visions of Buddhist saints present in Bhutanese history. The dances themselves serve as a



means of transmission, meant to educate the audience on Tantric Buddhist principles. The morning of the festival's final day used to include the unfurling of a giant thangka, which now-adays may or may not be permitted by the local Government. Hundreds of Tibetan villagers dressed in their finest congregate at the festival making it an ideal stop for people photography.

Founded in 1447 by another disciple of the great Tsongkhapa, Tashilhunpo was the resting place of the 1st Dalai Lama. The institution has now come to be identified with the Panchen Lama, the second most important spiritual reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism (after the Dalai Lama). Although the "Great Fifth" Dalai Lama identified the original manifestation of the Panchen Lama, a rivalry between the two great figures developed over the course of the following centuries. Controversy continues to shroud the identity of the current Panchen Lama.

Shigatse Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 9 Sunday, October 2nd

IN SHIGATSE (12,800 ft.) – **AT TASHILHUNPO CHAM (festival)** We have the full day to photograph the events surrounding the festival. We will also take time out to explore the monastery complex. Tashilhunpo is a very large complex and, like Drepung, rewards the visitor who takes the time to explore and wander the monastery's byways. One of the highlights of a visit to the monastery is the massive, 75 foot-plus gilded statue of Maitreya.

Shigatse Hotel (B, L, D)



Kumbum detail

Day 10 Monday, October 3rd

IN SHIGATSE / OR EXCURSION TO GYANTSE (13,050 ft) Today we have the choice of continuing to partake in the Cham festival or head to photograph the countryside, nearby farming villages and the Kumbum Chorten. Traveling on the modern road that traverses the fertile green fields and dun-colored hills of the Nyang-chu Valley, we arrive in Gyantse, situated in the fertile and agriculturally productive Nyang-chu Valley with the impressive Gyantse Dzong (fort) sitting stolidly atop its lofty perch. Of course, the highlight of a visit to Pelkor Chöde is the Kumbum, a massive chörten, from which the protective eyes of the Buddha survey the surrounding countryside. The Kumbum (which means "100,000 images" in Tibetan), is blessed with a plethora of amazing Buddhist murals, frescoes and statuary.

Back to Shigatse for the overnight.

Gyantse Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 11 Tuesday, October 4th

TO SHEGAR (14,268 ft.) Leaving Shigatse, we drive due west through spectacular landscapes, crossing the Jia Tsuo La, 17,121 foot high pass before descending to the small town of Shegar (at 14,300 ft. Just as the early Everest expeditions took a break at Shegar, so shall we before heading to Everest's base camp at the crack of dawn tomorrow morning.

Shegar Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 12 Wednesday, October 5th

TO RONGBUK & EVEREST NORTH FACE BASE CAMP (16,700 ft.) A pre-dawn departure from Shegar finds us on the top of Pang La (a 17,000ft pass) at sunrise.

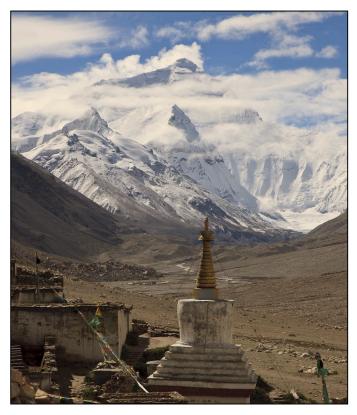


View from Pang-la

Braving the cold we will be afforded an unparallel photographic opportunity as we see the rising sun light up the vast panorama of Himalaya peaks spread in front of us from Makalu (27,817') to Everest (29,028') and Lhotse (27,916') to Gyachung Kang (25,980'), to Cho Oyu (26,714'), and to the west, Shisha Pangma (26,286'). Leaving the Pang-la, the road snakes down to the Zakar River Valley and branches off southwest to the Rongbuk Valley. In *Everest 1933* Hugh Ruttledge wrote of coming at last into the storied valley:

The approach was dramatic. At the moment we were walking up the rough, snow-covered track, in the valley, which seemed to lead to nowhere in particular. At the next moment a last corner was turned and there was the monastery, with its great chorten; and beyond, the wind-torn but still impenetrable mists behind which we knew was Mount Everest.

Until the Tibetan backcountry was opened to outsiders in the early 1980s, few westerners had ever seen Rongbuk. Almost all were members of the seven British climbing expeditions that attempted climbing Everest's Northface from Rongbuk base camps during the 20's.



The Dza-rong monastery (to give it its little-known correct name) was largely destroyed during the madness of the Cultural Revolution (or perhaps before). but a small nunnery and temple is being built on the site and prayer flags again fly in the clean air in the shadow of Chomolungma, Goddess Mother of the Lots of landscape photography opportunities as the views here are simply spectacular and unbelievably profound. Many other peaks cast their shadows on the exquisitely barren and beautiful valley. Every climber who has gone up to Rongbuk has looked up at the hall of inviting mountains lining the valley and wanted to get up there and begin climbing, for the joy of it, for the unique views, and for the history. Weather permitting, we will photograph Everest at sunset and also at moonrise.

Rongbuk Monastery with Everest in the background © Lewis Kemper

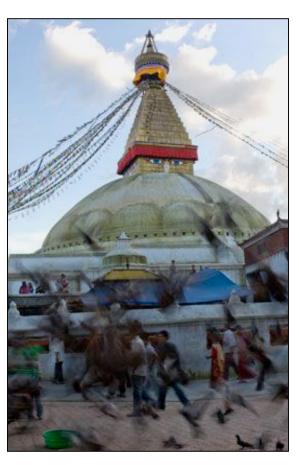
Monastery Guesthouse (B, L, D)

Day 13 Thursday, October 6th

DRIVE TO NEPAL BORDER - ZHANGMU - (7,544 ft.) We will wake up early to photograph Everest at sunrise, before making our drive through the through the Himalaya, from the barren Tibetan Plateau to the lush foothills of Nepal. Leaving the Base Camp we first cross the rolling meadows of Tingri to reach our first pass of the day Lalung-la (16,564') offering spectacular views of Langtang Peaks that are also visible from Kathmandu. Continuing onto Thong-la we are afforded views of Shisha Pangma - 26,390' the fourteenth highest mountain in the world (photo on left).

A steep and dramatic descend past the town of Nyalam (12,300'), we reach the Nepal border at Zhangmu by late afternoon. Zhangmu is a bustling and colorful border town built on the side of a dramatic Bhotia Khosi gorge. From our hotel we will be able to see the "Friendship Bridge" leading to Nepal that we will cross tomorrow.

Zhangmu Hotel (B, L, D)



Day 14 Friday, October 7th

TO KATHMANDU (4,265 ft.) As all of China is on Beijing time (here we're three normal times zones away from the Chinese capital), we'll rise early, and down below, across the Friendship Bridge in Nepal, it will be two hours forty-five minutes earlier! We pass through customs just outside our hotel, while our porters will carry our baggage down through a leafy no-man's land to the Nepalese border. Once we have cleared the formalities of customs, we will make the drive to legendary Kathmandu, Nepal's capital city.

Like Tibet, the legendary locale of Kathmandu conjures images of the ultimate mysterious and exotic travel destination. Located in Central Nepal, the Kathmandu area is the center of Nepali cultural and political life. Indeed, the Kathmandu Valley has been a hub of civilization for over two millennia. Kathmandu is living history, where the modern and ancient continue to mingle. It is an unforgettable experience to wander the mysterious bazaars of old Kathmandu.

"Namaste" is the greeting you will receive from the friendly Nepalese people, a traditional Hindu greeting, derived from Sanskrit, which means "I salute the soul (God?) within you." We will check in to our hotel, the classic Yak & Yeti, before spending the afternoon taking in some of the sites of Kathmandu, including Durbar Square, Hanuman Dhoka, the ancient palace of the Gorkha Kings and the old bazaar.

Tonight we will gather for our Farewell Dinner This evening we will gather for a special Farewell Dinner, as we bring our incredible journey to a close.

Yak & Yeti Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 15 Saturday, October 8th

KATHMANDU TO BANGKOK / OTHER TRANSIT CITY TO CONNECT TO USA We will be transferred to Kathmandu's airport for flights to our respective Asian transit cities for connecting return flights to the USA. s

(B)

Day 16 Sunday, October 9th

RETURN TO USA Depart Bangkok or other transit city and arrive in the USA the same day.

2011 LAND & AIR COST

(per person, twin share)

8 - 14 participants: \$5,400

Single Supplement: \$650

Internal China Airfare

Chengdu – Lhasa: \$260 (subject to change by airline)

INCLUDED IN TOUR COST

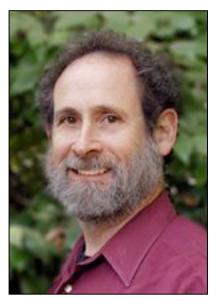
- Best available accommodations as listed in the above itinerary
- All accommodations based on double occupancy
- All taxes and service charges
- All special events listed in the itinerary
- All transportation using non air-conditioned vehicles within Tibet
- All meals after arrival in Tibet through Nepal (Breakfast Day 3 to Breakfast Day 15)
- Special "Welcome and Farewell" dinners
- All arrival/departure airport/hotel transfers
- All entry fees at all temples, museums and monuments on sight seeing excursions
- Tips/gratuity to local staff (guides, drivers, bell boys, etc.)
- Services of Photography Expert, Lewis Kemper
- Services of Destination Himalaya Tibetan Tour Manger
- Destination Himalaya's Medical (\$25,000), Accident and Evacuation Insurance (\$500,000) and Assistance Plan

NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR COST

- International airfare to China (Chengdu) and return from Kathmandu
- Internal China airfare (Lhasa from Chengdu)
- Lunches and dinners in Chengdu or other en route cities
- Items of a personal nature, such as alcoholic beverages, laundry, phone calls, etc.
- Movie or video camera fees
- Tips/gratuity to Tour Leader
- Trip cancellation, travel delay or baggage insurance.
 (Note: This optional coverage is highly recommended and can be purchased through Destination Himalaya)
- Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond Destination Himalaya control

A Word About Your Tour Leader

Teaming up with professional photographer Lewis Kemper, Destination Himalaya is bringing back its highly successful "Photo Cultural Tours." An excellent photographer, Lewis is a skilled teacher, and will assist you in every way, enabling you to bring home wonderful memories, suitable for framing.



Lewis Kemper has been photographing the natural beauty of North America, and its park lands for over 29 years specializing in nature and outdoor photography. His work has been exhibited and published in magazines, books, and calendars worldwide.

Lewis teaches photography for many organizations including Palm Beach Photographic Centre, Santa Fe Workshops, Lepp Institute and BetterPhoto.com. He is the author of The Yosemite Photographer's Handbook, and The Yellowstone Photographer's Handbook. His work has been published in numerous books including publications by The Sierra Club, The National Geographic Society, Little Brown, APA Insight Guides, Sequoia Communications, Prentice Hall, Hyperion Books, Companion Press, Cachuma Press. Currently Lewis is a contributing editor to Outdoor Photographer and PC Photo magazines.

Lewis photographs in color using 35mm and 4 x 5 cameras. He has been named to Canon USA's elite group of photographers, The Explorers of Light. Canon USA has selected 62 photographers to represent Canon and its photographic products.

Trip Grade: Demanding High Altitude Touring

This itinerary is a long overland journey on rough mountain road. On some days, the drives may be as long as 6-7 hours. Because of the nature of mountain roads (subject to closures due to landslides) it may be necessary to revise our schedule before or during the trip. We will keep all members advised to the latest information we obtain. Bathroom facilities during these long drives are frequently nonexistent and limit your privacy to a nearby tree or rock. Anyone who would be uncomfortable in such a situation should not consider this trip.

High Altitude

Please note that we will reach altitudes of more than 16,000 feet as we drive over high passes with sleeping elevations above 11,500 ft. This tour is subject to mountain weather (snowfall, storms, ice, rain, wind) and other high mountain hazards. Unlike most other Himalayan regions, emergency evacuation by helicopter in Tibet is not possible. In the event of an emergency during the tour, rescue or evacuation will be carried out by the tour leader and local staff. Anyone with a medical history of cardiac or respiratory issues, should consult a doctor before considering this tour. Release of liability and a medical certificate, signed by a physician will be required from all participants. Flexibility, a good sense of humor and an adventurous spirit are essential on this tour.

Visas

A China Tourist Visa is required for all foreigners traveling to China/Tibet. China Visa is NOT granted on arrival and must be obtained prior your departure from the USA. Destination Himalaya will obtain the group's "Tibet Travel" permit and any special permits required for the overland journey.

Immunizations and Health Matters

No immunizations are required for entry into China or to return to the USA from China. Several immunizations shots are recommended by the Atlanta Center for Disease Control. A copy of the CDC recommended immunization list and additional health information is included in our "PreDeparture" packet.

Refunds for Unused Portions of Trip

All our pricing is based on group rates and no refunds can be made for any accommodations, services, or features not taken. Please see our "Terms & Conditions" for detailed cancellation and refund policy.

Important Note

Destination Himalaya and its representative in China/Tibet will attempt to adhere to this itinerary as far as possible. Because of the nature of adventure travel, it may be necessary to make changes due to weather, road conditions, government restrictions and other variables beyond our control. Destination Himalaya and its representatives in Tibet/China reserve the right to alter this itinerary as necessary. We will attempt to inform all participants of changes as far in advance as possible. No refund will be given for changes in the field due to the above conditions. Costs incurred by such changes will be the responsibility of the participant.

Please review all Terms of Booking and Details in our current application packet.



Parting view of Everest © Lewis Kemper

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Destination Himalaya is committed to ensuring travel that is both ecologically responsible and culturally sensitive. Ever respectful of nature and of the cultures and communities in which we operate, we maintain the highest standard of low-impact tourism. Our goal is to ensure you receive a warm and heartfelt welcome from the proud people of the Himalayan countries and to help preserve the pristine beauty of nature. Our guiding principle is to show respect for the people, their religions and cultural beliefs, and for the environment in which they live.

Recent Accolades



