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## Heart of Tibet

September 28 - October 9, 2019 (12 days)

**Dream-like and enchanting, the Tibetan Plateau is a place of desolate beauty and spectacular snowcapped peaks.** Crystal-clear air, a pristine environment, and the ever-changing light will surely leave you breathless. It is truly a magical realm, with equally impressive people, and it holds a special place in the heart of trip leader Cathy Ann Taylor. On this cultural journey, you'll delve deep into Tibet's heart and soul as you explore ancient monasteries and impressive cultural monuments, mingle with the Tibetan people in lively bazaars and at popular pilgrimage sites, and encounter the arid yet haunting scenery of the vast Tibetan Plateau.

### TRIP DETAILS

Moderate ▶ Cultural explorations at high altitude, rugged road travel, light walking, maximum elevation 17,100'; accommodations in hotels

## ITINERARY

(You will likely need to leave the U.S. on September 26 or 27 depending on the routing in order to arrive in Chengdu on September 28.) If you arrive a day early you can do the optional panda tour.

### Day 1, September 28 ▶ Chengdu, China

Arrive in Chengdu, China, and transfer to the hotel.  
Chengdu Airport Hotel

### Day 2, September 29 ▶ Lhasa, Tibet (11,800')

Early morning transfer to the Chengdu airport and fly to Gongkar, Tibet. Upon arrival in Gongkar, you will be met by your local guide and driver and transferred one hour to our hotel in Lhasa, the “sacred city” of Tibet. Upon arrival, there will be a trip briefing with trip leader Cathy Ann Taylor. In the afternoon, we’ll start our explorations of this wondrous city with a visit to the Jokhang, Tibet’s holiest Buddhist temple, and a walk in the Barkhor, a pilgrimage circuit around the Jokhang that also serves as Lhasa’s principal bazaar. Overnight at hotel. (41 miles; 1 hour driving.)  
B,L,D...Kyichu Hotel



### Days 3-4, September 30 - October 1 ▶ Lhasa, Tibet

We have two full days to explore Lhasa. Among the monuments we visit are the 13-story Potala Palace, reputed to have as many as 1,000 rooms, with hundreds of exquisite *thangkas* (scroll paintings) and frescoes. It is the residence of the Dalai Lamas and eight of them are buried here. We also visit Sera and Drepung monasteries, Norbulingka, the traditional summer palace of the former Dalai Lamas, and Drak Yerpa, a holy cave retreat just outside of Lhasa that once housed up to 300 monks.  
B,L,D each day...Kyichu Hotel

### Day 5, October 2 ▶ Gyantse (12,956')

We set off on our journey across the Tibetan Plateau, crossing the Khampa La (15,915'), to arrive at the historic outpost of Gyantse (12,956'). Along the way we explore Yamdrok Tso, a breathtakingly beautiful sacred lake surrounded by snowy mountains. Overnight at hotel. (162 miles; 4-5 hours driving.)  
B,L,D...Gyantse Hotel

### Day 6, October 3 ▶ Gyantse | Shigatse (12,792')

We explore Gyantse’s octagonal 15th-century Kumbum Stupa, a mandala-shaped monastery whose five stories represent the five steps to enlightenment. There are 108 halls with Buddha shrines and frescoes (108 is an auspicious number in Buddhism). We then continue across the Tibetan Plateau for 5 hours to Shigatse (12,792'), Tibet’s second largest city. After settling into our hotel, we explore

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Tashilhunpo Monastery, founded by the first Dalai Lama in the 15th century. Tashilhunpo contains a remarkable assemblage of artwork, including a 26-meter-tall bronze image of Buddha, *thangkas*, frescoes, and statues. Overnight at hotel. (55 miles; 1-2 hours driving.)

B,L,D...Tashi Chota Hotel



**Day 7, October 4 ▶ Shigatse | Shegar (14,300')**

In the morning we drive over the Lakpa La (17,100') to mountain-ringed Shegar (14,300'), the starting point for many expeditions to Everest. (147 miles; 5-6 hours driving.)

B,L,D...Everest Hotel

**Day 8, October 5 ▶ Rongbuk (16,340') and Everest Base Camp (17,600')**

Today's 4-hour drive to Rongbuk brings us over the Pang La, a high mountain pass at 17,076 feet. We'll enjoy beautiful views from the Pang La, toward Makalu (27,817'), Lhotse (27,916'),

Everest (29,035'), and Shishapangma (26,286') (weather permitting). From Rongbuk Monastery, we'll view the grand, rugged and starkly magnificent North Face of Everest as it looms ahead and fills up the valley on our approach. Rongbuk is reputed to be the highest monastery in the world. Overnight at basic guesthouse. (67 miles; 3-4 hours driving.)

B,L,D...Rongbuk Guesthouse or similar

**Day 9, October 6 ▶ Shigatse**

We make the long return drive to Shigatse. Overnight at hotel. (238 miles; 7-8 hours driving.)

B,L,D...Tashi Chota Hotel

**Day 10, October 7 ▶ Lhasa**

Drive to Lhasa. The rest of the day is free to relax or wander on your own to the Barkhor. Overnight at hotel. (168 miles; 5-6 hours driving.)

B,L,D...Kyichu Hotel

**Day 11, October 8 ▶ Chengdu**

Transfer to the Gongkar airport and fly to Chengdu. Overnight at hotel. (41 miles; 1 hour driving.)

B,L,D...Chengdu Airport Hotel

**Day 12, October 9 ▶ Depart from Chengdu**

Transfer to the airport for departure on homeward-bound flights.

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## LAND COST

\$8865 per person (3-15 members)

\$10565 per person (2 members)

\$750 single supplement

## OPTIONAL PANDA TOUR

\$95 per person (6-10 members)

\$150 per person (3-5 members)

\$190 per person (2 members)

(cost includes guide and lunch)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations

\*Should you choose to pay with credit card there will be a service charge of 3%, the fee we incur from the bank.

Note—Prices listed are subject to change. We are occasionally faced with unavoidable cost increases due to fuel increases, costs of services or currency fluctuations that we cannot absorb. We will, however, do everything we can to keep prices the same as published.

## LAND COST INCLUDES...

- Expert leadership, including English-speaking Tibetan guide
- Accommodations in hotels
- Meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Chengdu/Lhasa/Chengdu flights
- Ground transportation throughout, including Tibet travel and road permits
- All monastery and sightseeing entrance fees
- Airport transfer in Chengdu for Lhasa flight
- Oxygen for emergency use

## LAND COST DOES NOT INCLUDE...

International airfare to Chengdu and return; China visa fee; trip insurance (we urge you purchase the optional trip insurance offered by Cattara, which includes trip cancellation insurance); meals not noted on the itinerary; optional tipping to leader and local guide; excess baggage charges; cost of medical immunizations; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

## TRIP PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation .....25% of land cost

120 days prior to departure .....25% of land cost

90 days prior to departure.....Balance

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## CANCELLATION FEE SCHEDULE

From time of reservation

until 90 days prior to departure .....25% of land cost  
89-60 days prior to departure.....50% of land cost  
59 days or fewer prior to departure.....100% of land cost

## EXPERT LEADERSHIP

Expert leadership is the key to every successful trip. Cattara attracts knowledgeable and gifted leaders who are passionate about guiding trips and truly enjoy sharing the experience with others. They understand the cultures and traditions they work in and are a fountain of information. In addition to making sure everything runs smoothly and safely, Cattara guides enhance your experience by being educators, companions, and the best of friends.

## TRIP LEADER



**Cathy Ann Taylor**, a high altitude trekking & cultural guide for the last 29 years, will be leading his trip. Cathy Ann has trekked all over Nepal, Tibet, India and Bhutan, with well over 200 trips in the Himalayas (she still considers the Himalayas her “second home”)! She has also hiked extensively in the European Alps (Tour du Mont Blanc—five times, The Haute Route, Gran Paradiso, and the Dolomites—two times), the Georgian Caucasus—four times, South America (14 trips in Peru, 1 in Patagonia), and Uganda & Rwanda—three times. A devout hiker and mountain biker, she leaves no trail undiscovered, and her passion for the mountains, caring nature, and boundless energy are renowned. Her experience, knowledge, positive attitude (she can find the good in anything!), and her wonderful rapport with the local staff will enhance your experience. With the help of caring and like-minded individuals she has been able to manage the sponsorship of nineteen remote village children, all of whom are in boarding school in Nepal or in universities in India, Nepal, and the United States. She consistently gets rave reviews from members of her groups and has quite a following. Cathy Ann is active in the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners and has participated in sixteen expeditions, including Mount McKinley, Mount Cho Oyu, Mount Fuji, Mount Shasta, and Mount Rainier, which helped increase awareness of breast cancer (she alone has raised over \$750,000 for the cause!). Cat’s special trekking program, Sacred Treks, benefits Breast Cancer Prevention Partners (formerly the Breast Cancer Fund). Past trips include Bhutan, Mont Blanc, Peru, Everest, Ladakh, Mustang, Georgian Caucasus, Sikkim, Dolomites, Cordillera Blanca, and Annapurna Sanctuary treks, and the program has raised over \$750,000. Cathy Ann has also been active in the American Himalayan Foundation and has helped raised \$20,000 for their STOP Girl Trafficking project. She has also reached the summit of Ama Dablam (22,500') in Nepal and Argentina's Aconcagua (22,834'), the highest peak in South America. Cathy Ann received an honorable mention in *Hooked on the Outdoors* magazine's Outdoor Person of the Year Awards, and also received a letter of recognition for her fundraising and environmental work from Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

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## PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS

This trip is moderate in nature. There are a couple of days with drives of 5-6 hours and shorter drives on the other days, and some city explorations on foot. The highest elevation you will encounter is the Pang La at 17,076 feet with a possible trip to Everest Base Camp by bus at 17,600'. Being at high altitude can be very physically taxing and may create discomfort. You may experience symptoms of illness that you do not experience while exercising at sea level, such as shortness of breath, restlessness or sleeplessness at night, and headaches. You should be aware of the demands and risks imposed by very high altitude and be in excellent underlying health. While traveling in Tibet, you should drink a lot of water—this helps to avoid dehydration. The prescription drug Acetazolamide (Diamox) can also help acclimatization, prevent acute mountain sickness, and treat mild cases of mountain sickness. It is also very helpful for altitude insomnia and should be used in preference to sleeping pills or Valium, which are dangerous at altitude. Consult with your physician for advice on exploring at high altitude and any prescription medications you may need. We recommend you have a thorough physical exam and evaluation to uncover any general medical problem that might flare up while traveling in the remote areas of Tibet, where medical care may be many days away.

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

In addition to a passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of completion of the trip, you will need visas for mainland China. You can apply for your Chinese Visa at the Chinese Consulate: <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zmzlljs/t84229.htm>. If you prefer to use a visa service you will find many by searching on the internet, one in particular we have found reliable is CIBT: <http://cibtvisas.com/>. **When applying for your Chinese Visa do not mention that you are going to Tibet.** You must have a copy of your air itinerary when submitting your application. We will also provide you with a hotel confirmation and China itinerary to submit with your visa application. We will be arranging your Tibet permits separately. A good tip is to make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport and carry it separately from your passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, a photocopy will help the local consulate speed up authorization for replacement. Also bring several spare passport photos—they're handy in case of unexpected visa or permit requirements.

How to answer specific questions on your Chinese visa application:

**2.2** Multiple

**2.5** 2-3 days in Chengdu (some of you are spending 2 days some 3)

**2.6** The Chengdu Airport hotel - address: No. 1, 2nd North Road Shuangliu county Chengdu, Sichuan

In Chinese the name of hotel is Kong Gang hotel.

**2.7** Self

**2.8** SICHUAN CHINA YOUTH TRAVEL SERVICE

Add : 822 Xiyatu building 69 Xi an South road Chengdu Sichuan China

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PO Box 1366 ~ Sausalito, CA 94966  
Phone/Fax (415) 331-9539 ~ cathyann@cattara.com

Tel : 0086-28-66690013 Fax : 0086-28-87771072

Mobile : 13183834355

Note—Most countries requiring visas require a completely blank page on which to stamp the visa, so your passport should contain at least one blank page for each country you plan to visit.

## AIR TRAVEL

Airfare is not included in the land cost of the trip. For air reservations, please contact the airlines directly, either by phone or via the Internet. Plan your arrival in Chengdu any time on Day 1 (September 28). Many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling, but please check with us before purchasing or obtaining your tickets. We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule. Note—Names on air tickets and passports must match!

## MEDICAL MATTERS

No vaccinations are currently required to enter China/Tibet, but immunizations for typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A, and polio are *recommended*. These regulations and recommendations change frequently, so please check with your local health department or the CDC for more information ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)).

Please advise us of any pre-existing medical conditions that may affect your health on the trip (recent injuries or surgeries, chronic illnesses, etc.). Hospital facilities for serious medical emergencies may be far away and evacuation can be difficult (and expensive).

To avoid intestinal problems while on the trip, do not drink tap water or even use it to brush your teeth—drink bottled water only.

We recommend you bring your own personal first-aid kit, which should include antibiotics (Cipro or other), Diamox for high altitude, pain killers, and allergy medicines if you are prone to allergic reactions. The leader will also carry a basic kit for emergencies, but will not have any prescription medications.

## MONEY MATTERS

You should bring enough money for any souvenirs you may buy. Depending on how much of a shopper you are, \$500-\$600 in cash is usually enough for incidentals and souvenirs. You should bring an additional amount for optional gratuities to the trip leader and local guide & driver. (At least US \$550 is recommended for the trip leader; at least \$250 toward a group tip for the Tibetan guide and driver, preferably paid in local currency or USD.) Credit cards (Visa, MasterCard) are also accepted at some of the hotels and some of the shops in Lhasa. The local currency in China/Tibet is the *Renminbi* (“people’s money”), with the basic unit currency known as the *Yuan*.

## WEATHER & CLIMATE

At this time of year, daytime temperatures at altitudes of about 12,000 to 17,000 feet can range between 35° to 75°F; nighttime temperatures can range between -5° to 50°F depending on the altitudes.

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## WHILE ON THE TRIP

Our accommodations are the best available on the Tibetan Plateau. They are generally small simple hotels that accommodate hikers in the summer months, and closed during the winter. They have a homey atmosphere and serve delicious food that is reflective of the region. While comfortable, most of them do not sport all the amenities, such as hair dryers, internet access, and the like. We are confident you will enjoy the experience.

## INCIDENTALS

**Laundry:** Laundry service is available at the Kyichu Hotel in Lhasa, but you may just wish to hand wash a few items yourself. Synthetic fabrics are the easiest to wash, and they dry quickly.

**Electricity:** Tibet is on the 220V system. Sockets are usually the three-pin variety, but they vary. If you are planning to use something like a hairdryer or electric shaver, bring a converter and a selection of plug adapters (you can buy these in drugstores or travel specialty stores in the U.S.).

**Time Zones:** Tibet is 15 hours ahead of California and 12 hours ahead of New York. That means if it's 8:00pm in Lhasa, it's 8:00 a.m. in New York and 5:00 a.m. in California.

**Environmental Responsibility:** We ask you to carry out whatever you carry in, including non-biodegradable items such as batteries, flashlight bulbs, empty plastic containers, and so on. Tibet does not have the proper facilities to process this kind of waste and your throwaways will end up in the river or tossed down a hillside.

## SHOPPING

Lhasa is a fun place to shop—street vendors and emporiums are everywhere you look. Craft items to buy include beautiful hand-woven Tibetan carpets, sweaters, brass and copperware, semi-precious gemstones, Tibetan prayer wheels, and *thangka* paintings. You'll need to sharpen your bargaining skills to get the best deal.

# WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT LIST

### Packing Notes

It's best to go as light as possible and take only the essentials. Excess baggage can be a burden, not only to you but to support personnel.

Always bring all irreplaceable items, such as camera, medications, important documentation, and trekking boots in your carryon luggage.

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### *Luggage*

- Duffel bag, large enough to hold all your clothes and gear. It should have a full-length zipper (for easy access). Wheeled duffels are OK to bring, but hard-shelled suitcases are not advisable (they are difficult to load compactly in the vans).
- Daypack with a capacity of about 2,000-2,500 cubic inches, with a good padded waist belt. It can double as your carryon bag.\*
- Spare roll-up duffel (optional). This is essential if you wish to bring home those great souvenirs! It should be lockable.

### *Clothing Notes*

Because you will be going to higher elevations, the weather will be cold part of the time. Nighttime temperatures are likely to fall below freezing many nights in a row; sometimes even daytime temperatures (at least in the shade) can be close to freezing.

Bring comfortable clothing that will protect you from cold and wet weather. Synthetic fabrics (such as synthetic, wool, or fleece) are the most effective barriers against the cold. They provide the best insulation, are light in weight, wick away perspiration, and dry quickly if wet. (Cotton garments are not good in cold or wet mountain conditions.) Even though we won't be trekking it'll be nice to have warm layers for the higher altitudes.

Layering is the way to go. Your innermost layer could be long underwear. The middle layer can be a synthetic turtleneck or wool shirt, and pants. The outermost layer should be a synthetic or down jacket, and/or a good quality Gore-Tex wind/rain parka and over-pants.

We suggest men and women dress in comfortable, loose-fitting long pants. It is culturally insensitive to wear skin-tight pants or skimpy shorts and tops—please do not go bare-chested or show any signs of nudity.

We haven't included quantities for each item listed. Use your own judgment, based on the expected weather conditions, your personal needs, and the overall weight restrictions for your luggage.

### *Underwear*

- Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry.
- Thermal underwear (one light weight, one medium weight), top and one light weight bottom of a polyester-type, fabric. Wool and wool/synthetic blends are also suitable. You can use them to sleep at night and as layers for maximum warmth.

### *Socks*

- Light weight hiking socks (synthetic or wool/synthetic).
- Athletic socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for your walking (not hiking) shoes

### *Shirts*

- Long-sleeved, synthetic or wool shirts.

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- Short-sleeved, synthetic T-shirts (for warmer days).

#### *Pants*

- Full-length pants, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric.
- Fleece pants, ideal for relaxing at the hotel or layering for warmth.

#### *Outerwear*

- Medium-weight jacket of synthetic fabric, such as fleece.
- Medium-weight down or synthetic-fill jacket (10-12 oz. of down or 15-20 oz. of fiberfill).
- Rain/wind shell (must fit over bulky clothing).
- Rain/wind pants, preferably with full-length side zipper (must fit over your other pants).
- Gloves

#### *Head Gear*

- Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chin strap to keep it from blowing off.
- Fleece or wool hat.

#### *Footwear*

- Comfortable lightweight hiking boots.
- Comfortable walking shoes for touring around Lhasa and other towns.

#### *Other Items*

- Water bottle, 1 quart capacity.
- Toiletry kit—biodegradable soap, toothbrush, etc.
- Purell hand sanitizer for quick hand washing and hygiene (a must!).
- Personal medical kit.
- Throat lozenges (antiseptic menthol or hard candies), about 30 of them. Good for soothing sore or dry throats at altitude.
- Body lotion for dry skin at higher altitudes.
- Ace bandage or brace if you're prone to sore knees or ankles.
- Sunglasses (100% UVA/UVB protected). For high altitudes, it's good to have glasses with a special dark lens and side shields that block reflected UV.
- Spare pair of prescription glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contact lenses.
- Sunscreen lotion and lipstick of SPF 25 or higher (UVA and UVB protection).
- Small headlamp with spare batteries.
- Ziploc bags are great for small items and camera gear; nylon stuff sacks are also handy.
- Small padlocks or combination locks for your duffels.
- Extra passport photos. Keep them with your travel documents as you may need them throughout your journey.
- Money belt or neck pouch to store cash.

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*Optional Travel Accessories*

- Camera and plenty of memory cards and extra batteries.
- Pair of compact binoculars.
- Powdered electrolyte mixes for your water.
- Reading and writing material.

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