

HIMALAYAN ADVENTURE – TIBET TO NEPAL, 22 DAYS

This document was designed to be read in conjunction with our other pre-departure information provided after you have made a booking with Wendy Wu Tours. It aims to provide a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in sightseeing or travelling during the tour. All passengers should read this dossier to confirm their ability to complete the tour. This is not your Final Itinerary and therefore does not mention all the sites visited.

The Himalayan Adventure – Tibet to Nepal itinerary is one of our most unique and adventurous group tours; travelling along one of the worlds' highest roads and crossing the border from Tibet into Nepal. This is largely an undeveloped part of the world. It is essential that all passengers recognise the demands of factors such as basic facilities, travelling at altitude and cultural differences. The rewards of seeing and experiencing these lands is immeasurable and can only be enhanced by an adventurous spirit.

Changes and updates

We ask that you keep in mind that the distances, times, standards of service and accommodation mentioned throughout your itinerary and Tour Dossier could change by the time of your departure. You will have noticed that this group tour only has departures twice a year and Wendy Wu Tours uses the feedback from our passengers and guides from each tour, and news from our land operators to keep our information to you as up to date as possible. In the interim months between tours, things in the remote areas tend to change quickly and without notice. For example, construction and roadwork tends to be carried out on a massive scale compared to Australia – there may be new roadwork projects or roads may be improved after being completed before the expected date, new hotels or guesthouses may have popped up, or been knocked down.

Tour grade – Active paced tour

This is defined in our brochure as: “Refers to programs where personal involvement is necessary, which travel to remote areas and that may contain areas of high altitude, between 3,000 and 5,200m. These tours may involve some hiking. Accommodation on these tours may be in simple hostels or camps in remote areas.”

Participants need to have a good level of fitness and be able to walk over uneven surfaces without assistance. Sightseeing may involve walking and/or travelling over rough roads for extended periods. Of course, our local guides always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance, but they cannot be expected to cater for passengers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Some difficult aspects of this itinerary involve areas of high altitude and very long driving distances. The section below also has estimates of driving times, distances and the altitude reached each day.

Altitude

AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness) occurs in

some people when they travel to altitudes over 3,000m [9,840ft]. Mild symptoms of AMS include dizziness, fatigue, nausea or loss of appetite, breathlessness or headache. These usually develop over the first 36hrs at altitude and not immediately on arrival. AMS symptoms are experienced by people of varying ages and levels of fitness, and usually the symptoms will subside after a day or so. If symptoms worsen, you should seek medical advice and descend in altitude immediately.

It is recommended to drink more (water, non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated drinks), exercise to improve your aerobic fitness before departure and avoid exertion after arriving over 3,000m. These are generally considered to be excellent ways to prevent or alleviate the severity of mild AMS. If you smoke, your doctor will probably also advise you to stop several weeks before your tour. If you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your doctor before undertaking this tour. Take this Tour Dossier with you to the appointment to explain the altitude at which you will be travelling.

The highest point of altitude reached on this tour is in the Tibetan cities of Lhasa (approx 3595m), Shigatse (approx 3900m), Shegar (approx 4342m), New Tingri (approx 4400m), Everest Base Camp (approx 5200m) and Tibet/Nepal Border (approx 2,300m).

Drinking Water

Be very careful of local water, especially ice served in drinks. Bottled drinking water is readily available to buy (roughly 4-5 Chinese Renminbi (RMB) and 25 Nepalese Rupees or 48 AUD cents) and you should get into the habit of buying a large bottle or two every day. Soft drinks and beer are also readily available. All drinks, including water are at your own cost. Please also be aware of milk as it will more than likely be unpasteurised.

Dogs in Tibet

Dogs, once raised as guard dogs by

nomadic Tibetans, can be a nuisance in the streets of cities and small towns nowadays. They are treated quite differently to how we would treat our domestic pets and tend to fight on the streets, especially at night. It is advisable to keep your distance from any dogs and bring some earplugs so you're not disturbed during the night.

Appropriate dress

When visiting temples, both men and women should dress in non-revealing clothes. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women.

When visiting some temples, you may not be able to wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses or shoes.

Some religious sites require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. It is recommended that you bring along shoes that can easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot ground.

Group size

In most cases, the group size will operate with a minimum of 10 passengers.

Tipping

As with most countries, tipping is a way of life in China and Nepal. For our passengers' convenience we ask for a compulsory amount to be paid at the beginning of our group tours to cover tipping for guides, drivers, restaurant staff etc. Approximate tipping amounts can be found in our brochure and/or website. Exact tipping amounts will be stated in your final documentation, approximately 3 weeks before departure.

Itinerary changes

1. Order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.
2. **Potala Palace in Lhasa:** In late 2006, the Tibetan Govt imposed a new system of allocating entrance tickets to the Potala Palace. To limit the number of

tourists inside at any one time tickets must be bought in advance and are valid for a set time of day. Our local office will buy the tickets for our passengers, so you do not have to queue for them. Please note that this may affect the order of sightseeing for the rest of Lhasa too.

3. There have been small alterations to the routing on Days, 8, 9, 10 and 11 to what is in the 2010/11 brochure. These changes have been made in an effort to ensure that the long driving distances are as comfortable as possible.
4. There is ongoing extensive road construction taking place within the Tibetan region which may affect travelling times and durations.

Meals

This itinerary travels through some regions where few foreign tourists visit. Hence you may come across some hotels and restaurants in the regional areas that are unaccustomed to catering for western travellers. However in the bigger cities and towns there is usually a wider selection of restaurants available.

In Sichuan Province, the cuisine (known as *Szechwan* in the West) is distinguished by its use of ginger, chilli and the “Sichuan peppercorn” called fagara. Each meal will usually have some mild dishes for those who don’t enjoy eating hot or spicy food, but please bear in mind that the majority of local specialty dishes will be hot. If your group finds there are not any mild dishes served, please inform your National Escort/Local Guide so that they may resolve the problem for the next meal.

In Tibetan areas, produce is limited, usually barley, wheat, yak meat and milk are produced locally and anything else must be trucked in from other parts of China. Local dishes include simple vegetable noodle soups (*thugpa*) or dumplings called *momo*. Simple, new restaurants are becoming more common but even in the larger towns the staff may not be used to serving groups, and this can obviously mean that you may need to wait a while to be served.

In Nepalese areas, the food differs from one culture to another. However, you can expect vegetarian based dishes; typically a dish called *daal bhat tharkari*, which translated literally means lentil soup, rice and curried vegetables. Chicken, mutton or pork is also typically served in most hotels. Newari (culture from the Kathmandu Valley) food is quite spicy with chilli a favourite while Nepali food is not as spicy.

There will be **limited western dishes for breakfast**. Typical breakfast dishes may include cold vegetable/ pickle dishes, bean curd noodles, soups, *congee* (rice porridge), steamed buns with pork or sweet

red bean paste and green tea. You may also be served fruit, a fried egg, or toast – although the bread tends to be very sweet and unlike the bread we have in Australia. Black tea, fresh milk and coffee is not often available but can usually be requested. Please note that long driving distances or local conditions may delay/alter your mealtime.

Although there will be more than adequate food provided at mealtimes, you might like to bring some snacks with you from either Australia, or small supermarkets in Lhasa. These might include tea/coffee bags, drinking chocolate, instant soups or noodles, biscuits, energy bars, milk powder sachets, vegemite and anything else you cannot live without. You may also find small shops and market stalls where you can buy a surprising amount of snacks such as instant noodles and muesli bars. Make sure anything you buy is safe and clean – dried fruit, nuts or unwashed fruit, etc are not a good idea!

Within monasteries

The interior of many monasteries is quite dark and usually lit by yak butter candles. Please remember to walk slowly and carefully, let your eyes adjust to the darkness and watch your step. Always walk in a clockwise direction along pilgrim circuits, around shrines, alters, temples and prayer wheels. If you are unsure of suitable and respectful behaviour within such places, please ask your local guide’s advice.

Accommodation in remote areas

To enable us to complete this amazing journey we will be staying in varying levels of accommodation allowing us to enjoy the areas to the best capacity. You can expect to be staying in **locally classed** properties ranging from 4-5* properties with some 3* in China and Tibet.

It is not essential to bring a sleeping bag; bed linen is provided at each type of accommodation and is adequate for the night temperatures. However, bringing a “sleep sheet” insert to use under the guesthouse’s linen is a very good idea.

Finding your way

Many of the places in this region have several different names – so you may find it confusing when researching the route or looking at a map. None of these are incorrect as such; there are many languages and cultures in this region. For example, one town may have four different names used in the Chinese, Tibetan and Indian languages. The Tibetan name is frequently spelt phonetically when translated by English speakers, so ‘x’ becomes ‘sh’. The result could be six different names for one place. Some examples are;

Shigatse - Xigaze

Tashilhunpo - Zhanshilunbu Si

Yarlung Tsampo - Brahmaputra River

Tibet – Xizang

Fort – Dzong

Monastery – Gompa

Shrine - Chorten - Stupa

Electricity

When staying in some properties consider that most buildings may only have a few hours of electricity each day, from either the town’s supply or a generator, therefore the supply of electricity can be unreliable.

This could impact on your ability to charge batteries for video or digital cameras and as such we recommend that you rely on your electrical devices (video cameras, digital cameras, shavers, etc) with replaceable batteries. You will be able to recharge batteries/electrical devices at some places, but not all. You need to bring back up batteries just in case. Shops and markets in this region may not stock reliable or genuine batteries, so it is better to bring them from Australia. We recommend you also bring a torch, as electricity can be turned off during the night.

The electricity voltage in Nepal is 230 volts. The plugs normally used are 3 and 2 pin round plugs as illustrated below;



Two round pins



Three round pins

You can buy adaptors, also known as conversion plugs from hardware, department and Duty Free stores all over Australia.

NB: Times and distances listed in this section are approximations only.

Day 1-2: Australia/Chengdu

2 nights at 3(to 4) star hotels

You will be met at Chengdu airport in the arrivals hall by your Local Guide and/or National Escort from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer (approx 30mins) to your hotel. This evening, when the whole group has arrived, a tour introduction will be held in the hotel. There will not be food or drinks served at this meeting; it is simply a chance for your group to meet and learn more about travelling in China.

Day 3: Chengdu

The Panda Reserve is located only 10km from the city centre. It is not guaranteed that you will be able to see the feeding of the younger pandas, as this only happens at the very start and end of each day.

Sightseeing here involves at least 1½ hrs walking. Afterwards drive 2.5hrs to Leshan to see the Grand Buddha carving. From the bus park, we walk to board the small cruise boat to view the Buddha from the river. Spend at least 2hrs at Leshan before driving back to Chengdu in the evening (2.5hrs).

Day 4: Chengdu to Lhasa

3 nights at 3(to 4) star hotels / limited western dishes for breakfast
Lhasa altitude 3650m

Transfer (30min drive) to the airport for your morning flight to Lhasa (flight duration 2hrs). Drive 2 hrs (95kms) north to the city of Lhasa and check in to the hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure to allow for acclimatisation to the higher altitude; you are advised to rest and drink fluids.

Day 5-6: Lhasa

Over the next 2 days you will be able to explore some of the most sacred places and sights in Tibet, amongst the procession of pilgrims and bustle of the capital city. Sightseeing at *all* of the monasteries and palaces involves climbing many steps and walking over uneven surfaces in dim light.

Day 7: Lhasa to Shigatse via Gyantse

1 night at 3 star hotels /
Shigatse altitude 3900m [12,800f]

Drive south along the Northern Friendship Highway to Shigatse, a major town which has been developed by the Central Government to become the second largest city in Tibet. On the way we visit the Gyantse Kumbum inside the Pelchor Monastery. Sightseeing here involves 2 to 3 hrs walking and steep stairs – you should also bring a torch for the monastery as it is very dark inside. Total driving today is 8hrs / 248kms.

Day 8: Shigatse to Shegar

1 night at Hotel Shegar /
Shegar altitude 4342 m [14,245 f]

Sightseeing at Tashilhunpo Monastery involves walking over steep uneven ground inside the monastery. Afterwards drive 3-4 hrs (290 km) to Shegar and transfer to hotel.

Day 9: Shegar to Old Tingri

1 night at Tourist class hotel in Old Tingri
Old Tingri altitude 4400 m

There is an early rise today, to what will be a very long day. Drive from Shegar to Old Tingri (220 kms). After crossing the Guela Pass we continue to Passum. This stretch of driving offers magnificent panoramic views of the eastern Himalaya, dominated by the Langtang Range, Dorje Lhakpa Range, Cho oyo (the 6th highest), Everest itself, Lhotse (4th highest peak), Makalu (5th highest), and Kanchenjunga (3rd highest) in the order from west to east from Nepal. A plaque on the pass shows which is which. Afterwards drive onto

Paduk/Pasum and finally to the monastic village of Rongphu. The first views of Everest appear approx 30 mins before arrival at Rongphu. Here there will be a visit to the Rongphu Monastery, the highest monastery in the world. Afterwards we begin the excursion to Mt Everest Base Camp. You can either choose to walk up to the base camp; this usually takes 2 hrs in one direction. Alternatively you can go up on the bus. You will have plenty of time to explore base camp @ 5200m and see the nearby Rhongpu Glacier – the base camp itself is dry and barren but the views of the north face of Everest more than compensate. The highest post box in the world is also here.

[N.B: A simple boxed lunch and water will be provided on this day and can be enjoyed whilst at the Base Camp.]

Day 10: Old Tingri to Zhangmu

1 night at Tourist class hotel in Zhangmu
Zhangmu altitude 2250 m

Travel approximately 5.5 hrs (180km) to Zhangmu, on a downhill slope where you will stay overnight. Weather permitting you may be able to view the panoramic white tops of the Himalayas. Stop for lunch en route at Nyalam, (30km from Zhangmu).

Day 11: Zhangmu to Kathmandu

3 nights at Shangrila Hotel in Kathmandu (subject to change)/Kathmandu altitude 1330 m [4,363 f]

Early morning rise to drive 3-4 hrs (130km) to Kathmandu, depending on local road conditions a there is ongoing roadwork on this stretch. The scenery here is spectacular as you transcend from the dry Tibetan Plateau to the green hills of Nepal.

[N.B: At the border you will have to walk carrying your bags down a sealed road for approximately 500m to the Chinese Immigration building.]

Here your Tibet guide will locate the Go India staff member who will assist with the border crossing. This person will have porters with them, who will take your main luggage and put them through X-ray machines and out the other side over the Friendship Bridge; they will then be loaded onto the bus. The entire group should clear the immigration procedures and met outside the door by the Nepalese guide.

You will then walk over the friendship bridge dividing Tibet and Nepal and directed to the Nepal Immigration building. This is a 5-10 min easy walk. Each person will need to complete an immigration form, have their passport stamped and then make their way to the bus a couple of minutes walk away. You will then be taken to your hotel to check in for the next 3 nights.

Day 12: Kathmandu to Patan

Patan altitude 1330 m

Drive 5km south to Patan for leisurely sightseeing of approximately 2 hrs on foot. Return to Kathmandu.

Day 13: Kathmandu to Bhaktapur

Bhaktapur altitude 1330 m

Day trip to Bhaktapur, a drive of 1hr (12 km) to the east of Kathmandu along a winding road. Bhaktapur is prohibited to traffic, making it an ideal place to explore by foot. There will be 1hr of leisurely walking through the town.

Day 14: Kathmandu to Pokhara

1 night at The Landmark Hotel /
Pokhara altitude 915 m

Drive 6 hrs (210km) to Pokhara. The tour around this small town consists of very easy walking and offers breathtaking scenery of the Himalaya Region.

Day 15-17: Pokhara to Chitwan National Park

3 nights at the Island Jungle Resort /
Chitwan National Park altitude 200 m

Drive 5hrs to Chitwan National Park along roads that are well sealed and offer beautiful scenery on both sides of the road. Upon arrival check into the hotel. A naturalist guide will hold an induction meeting and provide information on all the options available to you during your time here. These include elephant safaris, jungle walks, canoe rides and bird watching. These activities are included in the tour cost; however you may like to consider additional tipping for the guides for each activity.

Day 18: Chitwan National Park to Daman

1 night at The Everest Panorama Resort /
Daman altitude 2500 m

We depart Chitwan National Park for the scenic hill country, a drive of approximately 6hrs (165 km). The outdoor activities on offer here include; a village hike, monastery walk, pony rides, mountain biking, bird watching and sunset walks.

Day 19: Daman to Kathmandu

2 nights at Shangrila Hotel in Kathmandu /
Drive back to Kathmandu, a journey of 4 hrs (80km). Remainder of this day is at your leisure.

Day 20: Kathmandu –Dhulikhel

Morning tour at leisurely pace taking in sites of Kathmandu. At Kumari Temple, photographing the temple is strictly prohibited and non – Hindu's are not allowed inside. At Thamel markets please watch your valuables. Afternoon sightseeing is easy at Dhulikhel town and the nearby market area.

Day 21: Depart Kathmandu

Any time before your flight departure is at your leisure.

Updated: 15th February 2010