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Tour from Qinghai to Sichuan  
visiting Yushu and Litang with Lhasa  
Extension



**TOUR THROUGH KHAM AND AMDO TIBETAN AREAS OF QINGHAI AND SICHUAN**

- Travel date: 22 July – 6 August 2013 / 6 – 9 August
- Destinations: Xining, Qinghai Lake, Maduo, Yushu, Serxe, Dege, Palyu, Xinlong, Litang, Xinduqiao, Danba, Chengdu / Lhasa
- Duration: 16 days / 4 days
- Starting in: Xining
- Ending in: Chengdu / Lhasa
- Group size: 2-16 Pax / 6 Pax minimum with all the same Nationality

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

**22 JULY 2013: XINING – QINGHAI LAKE (D)**

Upon arrival (all clients MUST arrive before 14:00 in Xining) tour starts with our guide and driver at Xining Airport. Drive directly to Qinghai Lake which is China's largest salt water lake. On the way visit Kumbum (Taer) Monastery, one of the most important monasteries in the area. Overnight in 2-3\* Hotel at the shore of the lake.

**23 JULY 2013: QINGHAI LAKE – MADUO (B/L/D)**

In the morning we have a look at the lake and then take on the long but scenic drive to Maduo, which is already on 4500 meters above sea level. The area is rich in wild life and we will see a lot of deer and with some luck also the Tibetan Antelope "Chiru". We drive deep into the Grasslands of Amdo and home of the Golok Nomads.

Overnight in basic guesthouse.

**24 JULY 2013: MADUO – ELING AND TSALING LAKE – MADUO (B/L/D)**

Today we do a day trip in the source area of the Yellow River. The drive takes us around 3 hours each way on this high altitude plateau. At the lake area we will see some small monasteries and settlements, but there is not much tourism going on in the area.

In the afternoon drive back to Maduo.



**JULY 2013: MADUO – YUSHU (B/L/D)**

Today's drive takes us from Maduo first to Xiewu and the Tongtian River. On the way we may visit some nomad families and enjoy their home made milk products (milk, cheese, yoghurt and Yak butter tea). After a stop at the Dangka Monastery we will arrive in the late afternoon in Yushu.

Overnight in basic hotel (1-2\* level).



**26TH JUL 2013: YUSHU (B/L/D)**

Today is dedicated for the Horse Festival. If the Horse Festival doesn't take part, we will visit the surroundings of Yushu.

**27 JULY 2013: YUSHU – SERXU (B/L/D)**

Today we leave Yushu and drive to Serxu to visit the local monastery which holds the second largest Maitrea (Buddha of the Future) in a Tibetan area.

Overnight in a basic hotel (1\*)

**28 JULY 2013: SERXU – DERGE (B/L/D)**

Today's drive takes us first to Manigango where we will have a short walk to the glacier lake. The surrounding mountains are close to 6000 meters and the lake offers a stunning vista. From Manigango, we drive on until we reach Derge.

Overnight in a basic hotel (1\*)

**29 JULY 2013: DEGE – PALYU (B/L/D)**

In the morning we visit first the local Parkhang printing house which was founded in 1729 and boasts a fantastic collection of religious and scholar works. From Derge the roads leads us along Jinshajiang River to the town of Palyu. On the way we will stop at a small Tibetan village which is famous in the area for its knife production. Arrived at Palyu visit of the monastery which overlooks the area from a hill. In the afternoon time to visit the town and have a walk.



Overnight in a basic hotel (1\*)

**30 JULY 2013: PALYU – XINLONG (B/L/D)**

After breakfast we drive eastwards and pass through densely forested canons. This area is not often visited and will visit on the way the desolated Yarchen Monastery which holds the Nyingmapa sect. From the we continue through the gorges to Xinlong where we visit the local Bon sect temple.

Overnight in a basic hotel (1\*)

**31 JULY 2013: XINLONG – LITANG (B/L/D)**

From Xinlong we drive along Yarlung River southwards. The scenery changes now from alpine to hilly grasslands and we reached again an altitude of over 4000 meters. Litang is home of the famous horse festival and birthplace of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. The last time the horse festival was held was in 2008 and since then was cancelled year by year due to political reasons.

Overnight in basic 1-2\* Hotel

**1 AUGUST 2013: LITANG (B/L/D)**

Today is Festival day and if it's on, we recommend to get up very early to see the preparations for the festival. Tibetan clans from all over Kham and Amdo (and sometimes even further) come to Litang to celebrate the festivities. In the beginning there is usually a huge parade where the clans from all over the Tibetan areas show their traditional costumes. In the afternoon there will be the horse and yak races and the mostly young riders will pace their animals without saddles towards victory.



If there is time we visit in the late afternoon the Litang Chode. For those who want to enjoy the atmosphere, you can also stay on the festival area and mingle with the locals. We strongly recommend though not to get involved or argue with drinking locals, since the Tibetan temper is somewhat hot and fists fly before a misunderstanding is resolved.

Overnight in Litang

**2 AUGUST 2013: LITANG – XINDUQIAO (B/L/D)**

Today's drive will take us over a few mountain passes well beyond 4000 meters and you will encounter stunning vistas. Especially from Gaoershi Pass we will be able to see Minyar Gongka (provided we have good weather) which is with 7556 m. one of the highest peaks in the area.

Also Xinduqiao offers a great view, mainly on Gonggashan, another majestic peak in the area.

Overnight in basic 1\* Hotel

**3 AUGUST 2013: XINDUQIAO – DANBA (B/L/D)**

Tour through Qinghai and Sichuan visiting Yushu and Litang

After breakfast we leave Xinduqiao and pass through vast grassland and gorges. On the way we visit Tagong Monastery which is beautifully located in front of Yala Snow Mountain (5820m) and Geda Shambaling Monastery which was in 1729 founded by the 7<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and a nearby town was birthplace of the 11<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.

Arrived in Danba we will drive a little bit further to stay overnight in a small village where the view is much better than in the town.

Overnight in basic guesthouse

<b>4 AUGUST 2013</b>	<b>DANBA</b>	<b>(B/L/D)</b>
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Today we recommend to get up early to enjoy (if good weather) the sunrise over Mt. Modor. If the weather is bad, the fogs and clouds will cover the area in a mysterious atmosphere. We spend the rest of the day discovering the area partially on foot and see the ancient watchtowers the area is famous for.

Overnight in basic guesthouse

<b>5 AUGUST 2013</b>	<b>DANBA – CHENGDU</b>	<b>(B/L/D)</b>
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A long drive takes us back to Chengdu

Overnight in 4\* Hotel in Chengdu

<b>6 AUGUST 2013</b>	<b>CHENGDU – XXX</b>	<b>(B)</b>
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Transfer to the airport for your flight back.



Important Notes:

### **Horse Festivals Yushu and Litang**

The area is famous for the Tibetan horse and culture festival which is usually held from 26-28 July in Yushu and from 1-3 August in Litang. However, since the devastating earthquake in Yushu in 2009, no festival has been held there and in Litang it's due to political reasons that the festival has been cancelled form year to year. Due to the power shift of the Chinese government in fall 2012, it remains to be seen how the situation develops and if the festivals will be held. Ususally in Litang the locals have anyway some small scale celebrations. Of course we cannot guarantee the visit of the festivals. With booking the tour, you are aware of the situation and in case of a short term cancellation of the festivals, you agree that the cancellation policy remains as below stated.

### **Political situation**

In the past years the area has seen unrest and political issues. The area can be shut down by the local authorities without warning and it can happen that during the tour areas are suddenly shut down and we have to do a detour or find an alternative route. With booking the tour you are aware of this danger and have no claim to ask compensation for areas which haven't been able to visit as foreseen.

### **Road conditions**

The roads are sometimes in bad conditions and mud slides can block routes which demand a detour or an alternative route. Daily driving times can be up to 7 hours based on normal conditions.

### **Altitude Sickness**

Many areas on the tour are well above 4000 meters and so will be some of the overnights. In high altitude, people may suffer from headache, stomach problems, dizziness and generally feel bad. People with heart conditions are not allowed to join the tour or do this on their own risk. It is necessary that you consult prior to the tour your doctor and check your health status.

### **Accommodation**

Between Xining and Chengdu, the accommodation is very basic and hotels have very low standards. Also the bathrooms in the hotels may be in bad shape and far away from your usual standard. On the way there are only squat toilets and sitting toilets are more or less impossible to find. Also there may be hotels where the showers do not work and the rooms are not too clean.

### **Food**

The food will be basic local fare and can be monotonous. However, we always take you to the best available restaurants. Nevertheless we strongly recommend to take a supply of medication on the way in case of belly problems.

**RATES PER PERSON**

**RATE FOR 2-3 PEOPLE GROUP: RMB26'900 / CHF 3980**

**RATE FOR 4-8 PEOPLE GROUP: RMB 21'600 / CHF 3180**

**RATE FOR 9 – 16 PEOPLE GROUP: RMB 16'800 / CHF 2480**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: RMB 2800 / CHF 420**

**INCLUDED SERVICES:**

- English speaking local tour guides at every day
- All overnights in Double or Twin Room
- All meals as per itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- all highway fees as mentioned in the itinerary
- all transfers mentioned in the itinerary in private car with driver as follows: Mitsubishi 4\*4 Jeep for 2-3 Pax, 17-seater Minibus for 4-8 Pax, 17-seater Minibus for 9+ Pax with additional Mitsubishi 4\*4 Jeeps (3 Passengers per Jeep, excluding driver)
- entrance fees to above mentioned attraction
- 2 bottles of water (0.5 ltr / bottle) per person and day
- Emergency oxygen bottle

**NOT INCLUDED:**

- Flights to Xining and from Chengdu
- International flights
- personal expenses such as laundry, tips for driver and guide etc.
- drinks and all meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- expenses for medical care
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies (REGA membership is recommended)

**INSURANCE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTICIPANT!**

**Lhasa Extension:**

**6 AUGUST 2013: CHENGDU – LHASA (B/L/D)**

After breakfast Transfer to the airport and flight to Lhasa, where you will be picked-up by our local guide and coach. Drive around 2 hours to Lhasa and check-in.

In the afternoon visit Jokhang Temple, Barkhor area and have a stroll in downtown. In the early evening go for a local dinner and transfer back to the hotel.

Overnight in 5\* St. Regis Hotel Deluxe Room.

**7 AUGUST 2013: LHASA (B/L)**

In the morning visit first the Ramoche Temple and the Potala Palace (please be aware that the visiting time of the Potala Palace is mostly limited to 1 hour due to government regulations). After a hearty local lunch we will visit in the afternoon Norbulingka, the summer Palace of the Dalai Lamas.



Individual evening. You can either have dinner at the hotel or go to downtown area for dinner. Guide and driver will take you to dinner.

**8 AUGUST 2013: LHASA (B/L)**

Today we will visit the monasteries outside of Lhasa. Before lunch it will be the Drepung complex with the Nechung Monastery and in the afternoon Sera Monastery and the Pawangka Gompa.

Individual evening. You can either have dinner at the hotel or go to downtown area for dinner. Guide and driver will take you to dinner.

**9 AUGUST 2013: LHASA – XXX (B)**

Transfer to the airport for your flight back home.



**RATES PER PERSON (MINIMUM 6 PEOPLE):**

**IN DOUBLE DELUXE ROOM: RMB 12'800 / CHF 1'980**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: RMB 6'500 / CHF 990**

**Included Services:**

- English speaking local tour guide at every day
- Flight Chengdu – Lhasa in Economy Class
- Tibet Travel Permit
- Overnight 3 nights in 5\* St. Regis Deluxe Room
- Meals according to the itinerary
- All entrance fees to the mentioned sights
- Transfer in 19-seater Coach
- Oxygen bottles for emergency

**Excluded Services:**

- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal expenses like minibar in the hotel, laundry, meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- personal expenses such as laundry, tips for driver and guide etc.
- drinks and all meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- expenses for medical care
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies (REGA membership is recommended)





### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

Traveling in China, especially off the beaten tracks and in rural areas, can be adventurous and carries also a certain amount of surprises and risks. HiddenChina.net ensures that in every situation we and our guides are trying to get out a maximum of comfort for our clients. All our guides are carefully chosen and selected by their abilities and experience. Nevertheless, there might be surprises. We hereby express that a voyage in China needs patience, adaptation and tolerance. In addition due to lack of infrastructure, in rural areas in China there is often a lack of western sanitary standards. Clients of hiddenChina.net accept - upon signing a contract - to be aware of these circumstances, and accept changes which may occur in order to keep security and comfort of the clients according to the circumstances to a maximum during the trip.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHINA TRAVELERS**

Traveling in China is always an adventure. Quality of service can range from “top” in selected 5\* Hotels in the big cities to “very poor”. While traveling in China, even with an organized tour, the clients have to be ready for unexpected changes (e.g. due to natural disasters such as landslides or flooding) or other surprises. In hotels by example, it can happen that you will get phone calls in the middle of the night, offering you a special massage service. The following chapters will tell you more about what you should consider when traveling in China.

### **FACE**

You may have heard it before and for the experienced China traveler it's a “must know”: In China, everything is about “giving and losing face”. Chinese people are very proud of their culture, food and traditions. Respect this fact and try not to bring a Chinese into an embarrassing situation, as he or she might lose his face in front of coworkers, friends, family members or even the authorities. Try to be polite, smile and - especially to English speaking Chinese - always praise their language skills. Chinese can be considered as reactive people. If you treat Chinese people in an arrogant and harsh way, you will be treated the same way. When you feel cheated, try to solve the situation in a gentle and charming way. You will achieve your goal much faster. Also try to react calmly in stress situations and stay friendly. For every problem in China there is a solution. It's up to you how effective you will get to this solution. Being angry and aggressive is contra productive in the most cases.

### **SECURITY**

Especially large cities in China are extremely safe. Chinese people have to fear severe punishment when being caught by the authorities in illegal matters when foreigners are involved. However, be aware that pick pocketing happens everywhere, so keep an eye on your belongings and never leave your luggage unattended. When going out at night, China's large cities are much safer than practically all European cities. A single woman has nothing to fear when walking in a dark alley even at 4 o'clock in the morning.

## **HEALTH**

It is also recommended to visit your house doctor before you go on a China trip and make all the necessary vaccinations. Your doctor will inform you what you will need. For travelers going to south China, it is also recommended to carry a supply of Malaria remedies. As the avian influenza is getting more and more a serious issue in Asia and a pandemic outbreak will happen sooner or later, the traveler should also consider buying a box of “Tamiflu” before the trip begins.

When traveling in China and especially when eating a lot of local food, a supply of remedies for stomach problems is highly recommended. We will always take care of taking you to clean restaurants with high quality standards. However, your body will have to deal with a wide range of unknown food, spices and other ingredients in China and also with different bacteria and viruses than in Europe’s clean environment. When being on a 3 week China trip, you have to reckon with stomach problems at least once. To cure them it is recommended to take pharmaceuticals, which are rich in salt and minerals and give you back the elements you will lose during a diarrhea. From our longtime China experience, one of the best remedies is to eat well-boiled Chinese mushrooms and bananas as well as to drink tomato juice. On many of our private trips, this helped much better than the Western medication like e.g. Imodium. Always take toilet paper with you, as you won’t find any in public toilets! Travelers going to high altitude areas such as Tibet are also recommended to take a supply of Diamox in case of altitude sickness. Please get advice from your doctor.

## **CLIMATE**

China has several different climatic zones. From high-altitude to sub-tropic and desert climate, there is everything. Depending on your date of arrival in China, you might be traveling in the rainy season. E.g. in southern China, this time mostly starts late May / early June and lasts until August. This year, in the provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou heavy flooding took the life of several hundred local people. However, we will adapt the trip according to your travel time and avoid the areas with heavy rain.

## **LUGGAGE**

Most airlines allow you to check-in 20 kg of luggage (economy class). It is not allowed to take nutrition products (cheese, meat) as well as pornographic material. Please ensure that your “Swiss army knife” and other “dangerous products” are checked in with your luggage and not in the hand luggage.

China offers you a wide range of shopping possibilities. So if you plan to go for extensive shopping, take a minimum of luggage to China. However, whenever you forgot something, don’t worry, more or less everything you need in daily life, can be bought much cheaper in China (see chapter below). Be aware that many customs authorities like the ones in Paris and Milan can fine you heavily when finding out that you try to import faked products from China such as Yves St Laurent bags, Gucci items or Prada clothes.

## **SHOPPING**

Except for imported luxury goods and high-end electrical equipment such as beamers or imported laptops, more or less everything is cheaper in China than in Western Europe. Especially clothes can be bought at a very low price. Many shopping areas offer faked products (sometimes in extremely good quality). However, in many places where no prices are indicated you have to bargain about the price (see chapter below). Please note that when buying a faked product, especially at the airport in Paris, you can get into trouble. The fight against faked products is now at a point, that authorities can or will take away your purchase and will heavily fine you. For the golf lovers, there is a wide range of possibilities to buy whole golf sets at a ridiculously low price. Have your suits tailor-made, buy ties, silk products, pearls etc. at a very low price. For most Europeans, DVD's are of special interest. For a DVD you pay between 8 and 10 RMB (about 1 EURO) and most of the movies are available even before they are shown in European cinemas. The advantage is that DVD's take away only little space and weight. But be aware that in many cases you are buying illegally copied and distributed products.

Credit cards are only accepted in major stores, 3\* hotels and upwards and western restaurants. Money can be withdrawn at ATM's at the Bank of China. Please note that these are hard to find in remote areas. Money can be changed at major branches of the Bank of China or in western hotels. Please note that you need to show your passport for changing money.

## **BARGAINING**

As mentioned in the "shopping" chapter, in many places you have to bargain for your price. Western tourists are mostly looked at as "big dollar signs" and accordingly the price will be set 400 – 500% above the price the vendor is ready to sell his or her merchandise. The first rule is to go below the first offered price. So when the vendor asks for 100 RMB, you can set your offer to 20-25 RMB. Then it depends on your bargaining skills at what price you will get it. A simple trick is, when it seems too expensive for you, to walk away from the vendor. If he or she doesn't follow you, you know that your bid was too low. Please also note, always stay friendly and smile when bargaining. Once you agreed for a price, you have to buy the product. Otherwise you and the vendor will lose face.

## **LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR**

Even in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, it is most unlikely that you find English speaking taxi drivers or personnel in the shops. Therefore it is recommended to take a phrase book with you, where you can show what you need. Chinese people are mostly friendly and curious towards foreigners. However, Chinese are also very proud of their country and culture and some behavior will be strange for travelers who come to China for the first time. In many places (even sometimes in public buses) people smoke a lot and for the non-smoker, China can be a terrible place. You also often see Chinese people spitting accompanied by strange noises. The best way to get around it is to ignore it and live with it. For the smoker on the other hand China is a paradise, as it is more or less everywhere allowed to smoke and cigarettes are extremely cheap, although some foreign brands might be faked. Please also note that you might be invited to test your drinking skills. The easiest way to avoid it without losing face is to tell your hosts that due to liver problems you're not allowed to drink.

## **TIPPING**

Although China is - especially away from the big cities - a very poor country, tipping only exists in the 5\* surroundings of the big cities. In restaurants or taxis and hotels (except 5\* hotels) tipping is a no-no. However, tour guides and drivers of organized tours should be tipped. Most guides and drivers are roughly paid with 10 Euro per day and rely on additional income. With Chinese tour groups (which often go shopping) the guides always get a commission in the shops, where they make most of their salary. As European groups usually do not visit as many shops as Chinese tourists, guides and drivers have to rely on tips.

Generally a tip of RMB 30 per person and day is reasonable. When you are in a tour group it is recommended that the group collects the tips and hands it to the guides and drivers in an envelope. It is also very helpful to take some souvenirs with you, like for example watches or picture postcards from your home country.

## **SMALL TALK AND CONVERSATION**

Small talk in China is a bit different than in Europe, but there are also topics which should be avoided and topics which are perfect for small talk.

One of the most common greetings in China is “Ni chi fan le ma?” which literally means “Have you eaten yet?” This emphasizes the importance of eating in China, and it is much more a social event than in the West, therefore food is always a welcomed topic.

In some cases you also might be confronted with rather private questions such as about your marital status and about family. The Chinese are very family oriented, so don't feel embarrassed when people ask you rather private questions, it's just small talk. Sometimes, especially in business surroundings, people also might ask you about your salary, which is quite normal in China. Here you can escape (if you don't want to tell the truth) by telling some fictional figure, or when telling the truth and your counterpart's eyebrows rise, you explain how expensive the life in Europe is.

Topics which should be avoided at all costs are all political related such as the Cultural Revolution, critics against the system or chairman Mao, the Tibet and Taiwan question, human rights or how to treat animals. If you want to have answers to these questions you might do it through your guide. Do not overload your guide with too many hard questions in the beginning though. Tactically it is wise to hide these questions in some compliments and be as subtle as possible (see also the chapter about “face”). Please note that young Chinese (below 30) are more open to discuss critical topics than people above 30.

Please also note that Chinese people tend to touch you, which is not a sign of homosexuality but just a sign of sympathy. In such a situation, when you feel uncomfortable, don't react in a rude or harsh way; just try to escape the contact by elegant means. Mostly a hearty fit of coughing does the trick (SARS is still in Chinese people's mind).

## **TRAFFIC AND TAXI**

The public transport system in China is basically quite convenient. Every major city has an airport; there are many train routes (even though there is mostly only one train per day between two destinations) and public buses. Public buses are very cheap although the comfort is sometimes a bit poor.

In the cities, the most convenient public transport is the taxi. You can, compared to Europe, basically take a taxi anytime and everywhere at a very low price. Be careful that on major tourist sites there are also drivers trying to make extra money. When a taxi has no taximeter (make sure that the driver in taxis with a taximeter always puts it on), negotiate the rate before you get into the vehicle. However, some drivers will still try to make you pay an extra fee at the end. Just tell him that you pay the negotiated price, nothing more, and nothing less. Please also note that most drivers don't speak English. So take a bilingual map, a taxi card or a guidebook with you. Tell the reception in the hotel to write down the addresses for you so you can show it to the driver. Please note that highway fares have to be paid by the customer and not the driver (for example, in Beijing the fee for the airport expressway is 10 Yuan for passenger cars). This fee will be added to the amount shown on the taximeter.

## **USEFUL THINGS TO TAKE ON A CHINA TRIP**

Several Swiss army knives, a compass, 9:55 pharmaceuticals (see health chapter), a first-aid kit, tape, watches (not too expensive), money clip, camera (films can be bought and developed on spot for a very reasonable price), deodorant (rarely available in China), sunglasses, altimeter (for Tibet and Himalaya tours), GPS, safety belt for money, literature, guidebooks, credit-/bank card and a lot of patience.

For ladies: tampons are rarely available in China.