

Sacred – Saga Dawa Festivals, Mt. Kailash & Kyunglung Kingdom with Roger – Special Tour



Holy Mount Kailash

The most sacred mountain in the Tibetan Buddhist world is also considered by many to be the centre of the universe. Uncannily symmetrical, this remote and remarkable peak is located in the far west of Tibet, 1200 km from Lhasa. Mt. Kailash (6714m) is not only geographically one of the most important mountains in Asia, it is also the source of four major rivers, namely, the Indus, Sutlej, Karnali and Tsang Po which nourish Asia with water. In Sanskrit Kailash means ‘luminous crystal’. Hindus believe Mt. Kailash to be the abode of Lord Shiva and his wife Parvati. Tibetan Buddhists call the mountain Kang Rinpoche, the ‘Jewel of Snow’, and regard it as the body mandala of Korlo Demchog and his consort, Dorje Phagmo (Chakrasambhava and Vajravahni). A pilgrimage to this great sacred and magical landscape is the most precious of pilgrimages for both Tibetan and Indian people, a journey they hope to experience at least once in a lifetime.

Mt. Kailash & Kyunglung/ Shangshung Kingdom with Roger

The Tibetans say that a complete pilgrimage should include the three holy places Mt. Kailash, Manasarovar and Thirthapuri. We will visit these three places during Saga Dawa, the most important festival in Tibet, which marks Buddha’s birth, enlightenment and death. Many Tibetans visit Mt. Kailash during this time and all over Tibet are festivities.

From Kathmandu (or main land China) we fly to Lhasa and then drive through the West of Tibet to Shang Shung. The mysterious old Kingdom of Shang Shung -According to several scientists and explorers, this is the site of the former pre-Buddhist Bön-kingdom Shang Shung, cradle of the Tibetan culture with its spectacular location in an impressive landscape. After that, we see Thirthapury and visit beautiful Lake Manasarovar. Then the core of this journey follows: an unhurried four-day circuit trek (kora) among Tibetan pilgrims around holy Mt. Kailash. We enjoy silence and nature, spectacular panoramic views, as well as interaction within the group. Due to Saga Dawa time the most sacred month in the Tibetan calendar we will witness many festival activities especially in Gyanste and also in Lhasa! This gives us the opportunity to experience authentic activities such as Fire pujas, Sand mandalas and lama dances and on top of that Giant Thangkas displays.

Expedition or Inner Purification

All trips to Mt. Kailash have expedition character. Long drives require a lot of patience, tolerance and little expectations. In return we will see some of the most untouched and beautiful landscapes and we are likely to meet genuinely nice people.

An excursion through vast open spaces may cause deep personal inner experiences. Therefore, this journey is generally quite the opposite of a usual holiday or trek, where one seeks to forget about home and past. The journey gives us the chance to have a conscious look at whatever comes up at that moment.

Tour Leader & Tour Operator:

Roger Pfister, Swiss, born in 1960 has been based in Boudhanath, Kathmandu in Nepal since 1995. During this time he has owned and operated Snow Jewel, leading expeditions to remote locations in Nepal and Tibet. In addition, he has worked for over five years as a volunteer for the British operated not-for-profit ROKPA Nepal. Roger has practiced extensively in both the Tibetan and Theravada traditions, completing annual Vipassana retreats in Thailand at Wat Ram Poeng and in India at Bodgaya and Sarnath with Christopher Titmuss. During his time in Nepal, he spent two years in intensive study at Ka-Nying Shedrup Ling, the official seat of very venerable Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche, as well as Pullahari Monastery under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso Rinpoche. His inaugural trip to Mt. Kailash was during the spring of 1996 and since then he has made over 100 circuits of the mountain and 14 of Lake Manasarovar.



Special Tours; Special Tours are designed for people who want to leave the effort of making arrangements to others. We plan to see the most important sights along the way. It meets a full service standard and gives you the time you need to experience and enjoy your journey. Throughout the tour, you will be taken care of by professionals: your tour leader, a Tibetan guide and drivers, part of the tour with Sherpas and cook.

Group Size: Minimum 7, maximum 15 people.

Duration: 19 days trip + 5 days stay (including arrival day) in Kathmandu for visa procedure. Entry from Main land China is possible. (Alternative entry from Chengdu main land China is on the 23rd May in CTU, you need much less time, ask for the details)

Price: 23'000 CNY approximately €uro 2'980 plus flight approx. 3-350 €uro KTM- LXA

Included: 2 day programme in Kathmandu with Nepali guide, Transfer & Flights from Kathmandu to Lhasa and then drive in a private vehicle to Mt. Kailash, Lake Manasarovar back to Nepalese border and Kathmandu with private transport and support truck (see itinerary); all permits and road tolls in Tibet; Western guide (Roger) local guide, drivers and sherpa cooks; two vegetarian meals daily (breakfast and dinner) and picnic lunch during the time from Saga onwards up to KTM; all fees for sightseeing, Kailash circuit, grassland fee, yak and yak driver for your luggage; camping gear; Hotel in Lhasa x5, Gyanste, Sakya, & Saga x2; all other overnight stays in basic accommodation (pilgrim guesthouses) or tents.

Excluded: visa fee for Tibet; visa for Nepal; Hotel & Transfer in Nepal, Food up to Saga where we meet the lovely Sherpas; horse and horse driver for personal ride; cost for visa split from the group visa in case of an emergency; alcohol and soft drinks when eating in

restaurants; cost for public shower or bath in hot springs; airport transfer and hotel in Kathmandu; personal expenses; insurances; tips for crew.

Note: We would be pleased to organise airport pick-up and If want us to book a room in a Monastic G.H. cost is: Single 20\$ double 28\$, Airport transfer 10\$ per PAX.

Dates 2018

- 20 May: Arrival in Kathmandu; hand over of passport and filled in visa form.
 21 May: Free day/ Tibet visa process.
 22 May: Tibet visa process Group meeting and briefing for the tour 11 AM / Free day /
23 May: Excursion 5-7 h Nagi Gompa with Sherpa guide
24 May: Excursion to Pharping & Swajambunath by Car with Sherpa guide

Itinerary – Short:

- Day 1: Kathmandu – Lhasa by Flight / H. **25. May**
 Day 2: Lhasa; Barkhor, acclimatization /H.
 Day 3-5: Lhasa; Visit Potala, Lhukang + Jokhang /H
 Day 6: Via Yamdroktso - Gyantse / H.
 Day 7: Gyantse – festival / H.
 Day 8: Gyantse Festival - Sakya.
 Day 9: Sakya – Saga **Meet the Sherpas for Dinner**
 Day 10: Saga - Menshi
 Day 11: Thirhapury – Kyunglung excursion / G.H.
 Day 12: Thirhapury – Chiu gompa – Darchen / G.H.
 Day 13-15: Kailash Kora / trekking / camp
 Day 16: Kailash Kora / Dachen
 Day 17: Drachen - Saga / G.H.
 Day 18: Saga – Kyirong - Resuwa / H.
 Day 19: Resuwa – Kathamndu

Itinerary - Detailed

- Day 1:** Early morning transfer to airport, flight to Lhasa with beautiful Everest view. In Lhasa the Tibetan guide will pick you up from Gongar airport and bring you to the Yak hotel. Right in the middle of the Tibetan old part of the city, just 5 minutes' walk from Potala and Jokhang.
- Days 3-5:** Lhasa -Sightseeing: by foot we will explore Lhasa and visit the heart of Tibet - the Jokhang Temple and the Potala Palace of the Dalai Lamas. And other less famous places but more important temples.
- Day 6:** From Lhasa we drive via Kambala Pass (4794m) along Yamdrok Tso (Scorpion Lake, 4488m) and Karola pass (5045m) with a beautiful glacier. Later on we will reach Gyantse's monastery with the famous Kumbum. Hotel; double room with shower (240km, 5h). **Gyantse Festival;** Just after arrival we will go to the Monastery to admire the 3 three Sand mandalas and Lamadances.
- Day 7:** **Gyanste festival:** We can visit the dismantling of the Mandalas early in the morning as well as a fire Puja to dispel obstacles ... will visit the Kumbum and the monastery which holds most precious 14 century clay statues with Yoga mudras (postures).

- Day 8:** Morning early we will see the unrolling of the Gyant thankas and make the big kora of the monastery with the pilgrims right to the bottom great the Thanka . After breakfast we drive through Shigatse to Sakya where we can take walk in the old village. Hotel. (310km, 5-6h).
- Day 9:** Morning 9 Am we will visit the Sakya monastery, afterwards travel on to Saga. We drive through a magnificent hill landscape. (8h drive 460 Km). Overnight in simple pilgrim's guesthouse. (Public bath). **Here we meet the Sherpas and the support truck with the camping equipment coming from Nepal and have vegetarian food cooked by the lovely Sherpas, all the way till we are back in KTM.**
- Day 10:** 9-10h drive (549km) from Saga via Drachen to Monsier (4560m). We cross several high passes and enter the high dessert of Western Tibet - through beautiful landscape from Paryang to Darchen. After crossing the Mayumla pass (5216m), we drive along the shores of Gung Gyu lake, before getting the first glimpse of the holy Mt. Kailash. Now only 1 hour drive till we reach Monsier. We stay overnight basic pilgrim guesthouse (public bath).
- Day 11:** Day excursion to Kyunglung, with the famous Garuda Valley which is considered the entrance to the Shangrila (hidden paradise). According to several scientists and explorers, this is the site of the former pre-Buddhist Bön-kingdom Shang Shung, cradle of the Tibetan culture. We can explore the ruins of the ancient city and enjoy the spectacular atmosphere. On the way back we visit Thirthapury - holy hot springs we walk the small kora around the idyllic monastery complex.
- Day 12:** Just 70km drive to Lake Manasarovar and we can visit the famous Chiu monastery and have a bath in the hot springs before we head over to Darchen. We stay in a Guesthouse (public Bath) at the foot of Mount Kailash.
- Day 13:** Beginning of the Kailash kora. This is a medium trek (20km, 6-8h), slightly uphill. From the south, we reach Tarpoche, the so-called centre of the universe. Then, we pass Chuku monastery (those who have lots of energy can go for a short visit) and the west face of Kailash. Our camp is right below Dirapuk monastery at 4900m with awesome views of Mt. Kailash's north face.
- Day 14:** Rest day at Mt. Kailash's north face for acclimatisation. Those who like, can visit the Dirapuk monastery (famous yogi Gyalwa Gotsangpa meditated there in a cave for long time), make an excursion to the north face (2h), stroll into a side valley (1-2h) or simply enjoy Mt Kailash's power in the camp right below Dirapuk monastery at 4900m.
- Day 15:** This day is the core of the kora. This is a difficult trek (15km, 8-10h), where we need the energy reserves built up the day before. For the first 2-5h, we slowly ascend towards the Tara-Pass/Drölma-La (5630m). After a break we steeply descend to the valley (1-2h). From here it is another 2-3h slightly downhill to the camp, just 3km before Zutulpuk monastery (4790m).
- Day 16:** This day is fairly easy (11km, 3-4h). We pass Zutulpuk monastery and hike slightly downhill back to Darchen (Public bath)
- Day 17:** Drive back to Saga We stay at the same places as on the way in

Day 18: 5h drive to Kyirong, we descend the high desert and enter the green. Along the way we visit the enlightenment cave of Milarepa. In Lower Kyirong/Rasuwa we leave the Tibetan crew and cross the border and walk one kilometre to our hotel in Nepal.

Day 19: 7-8h drive to Kathmandu end of service. **End of service. 12. June:**

Earliest departure next day.

General Information

Please Note

- We will not be responsible for extra cost incurred by landslides, road blockages and other weather-related or political problems.
- You are responsible for your own health. Our arrangements are designed to allow sufficient time for acclimatisation.
- Accommodation will occasionally be in shared rooms (small dormitories). During the Kailash kora we stay in tents for two people each. We assume your preparedness to share rooms/tents with others, regardless of gender.
- We reserve the right to increase the tour price should the Euro in relation to the Chinese Yuan (RMB) depreciate significantly.

Visa and Passport Information

Visa Nepal

Is best applied upon arrival in Nepal. You will need a passport photo. At arrival you get a 30 day or 90 day multiple-entry visa valid from the date of entry. The visa costs US\$ 40 or US\$ 100, respectively.

Tibet Group Visa

Will be obtained in Kathmandu. For this, we need one passport photo and a filled out visa form. Please download, print and fill out: <http://snowjewel.com/visalinks.html>. The visa costs US\$ 114 in cash, payable upon arrival when handing over the passport. (US citizens must pay US\$ 198.)

Passport Validity Minimum 6 months from date of entry.

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May all beings be happy!