

Insider Mandala Tour 22 Tage with Ruth & Flaviu



From Samye to Mt. Kailash - Manasarovar Lake & Tirthapuri

The Holy Mountain

1200 km west of Lhasa, in one of the most inaccessible areas of Tibet, the 6714m high Mount Kailash rises like a glacial dome from the Trans-Himalayas. Mount Kailash is not only geographically one of the most important mountains in Asia - it is the source of the great rivers Indus, Sutlej, Karnali and Brahmaputra - but also mythologically, the even pyramid of ice and stone is the center of the earth. For the Hindus, Mt. Kailash is the throne of the god Shiva and his wife Parvati. In Sanskrit, Kailash means "shining crystal". Tibetan Buddhists see Mt. Kailash as the body aspect of the mandala of Chakrasamvara, the embodiment of supreme bliss and emptiness. They call the mountain Kang Rinpoche, "the snow jewel". Every devout Tibetan tries to complete the kora - the ritual circumambulation of the mountain - at least once in their life, thereby purifying the karma of an entire lifetime.

Insider journey

In the spirit of insider travel, we will spend 11 days at Mt. Kailash and Lake Manasarovar area. This time gives us the opportunity to get to know very different facets of this area. We will also visit the hospital project in Darchen and the beautifully situated Gyang Drag monastery at Mt. Kailash, where Ruth and Flaviu worked from 1999 - 2009.

Thanks to the short hiking stages, the trip is also suitable for people who have difficulty with long hikes. At the same time, the sporty ones have the opportunity to visit viewpoints and holy places in the surrounding area.

The focus is on friendship, so that you can take in the sacred places, the vastness and the silence together in a relaxed state of mind. You will be accompanied from Lhasa by Ruth and Flaviu from Switzerland. Thanks to their many years of activity on the holy Mt. Kailash, they will guide you to known and unknown places of power in this area. We will visit their project work and friends on site.

Expedition or inner cleansing

Every trip to Mt. Kailash has the character of an expedition. The long car/bus journeys require patience, tolerance and low expectations. In return, we see the most beautiful and untouched landscapes and meet wonderful people.

A pilgrimage offers the chance to consciously encounter the past and what has been left behind instead of forgetting and repressing it. A trip to Mt. Kailash is therefore often the opposite of the typical vacation where you want to "switch off". In the vast high desert, unprocessed things can come up, you can turn to them, look at them and resolve them.

Tour guide

Ruth & Flaviu Huber, a Swiss couple who worked at Mt. Kailash from 1999 - 2009. In the first three years they worked on the Mt. Kailash project in Darchen, helping to build a hospital and a school for Tibetan medicine. In recent years, they have completely rebuilt the oldest monastery - Gyang Drag Gompa - on Mt. Kailash in cooperation with the local Rinpoche. Richly blessed by these wonderful places and its people, they have been leading annual pilgrimages on various routes to their second home since 2003. From 2013-2020 they were active in a Tibetan Buddhist meditation center in Graubünden (CH). In the meantime, they live in the mountains of Ticino.

The couple has extensive knowledge of the sacred places on Mt. Kailash and Lake Manasarovar.

This trip is designed for people who want to gain a deeper insight into the sacred places and thus into Tibetan Buddhism. You will be accompanied by a lovely couple who have deep friendships and connections with the local people.

Special tours are aimed at people who do not want to worry about travel organization and want to be sure to see all the important sights along the way. This tour includes a full service standard and gives time to enjoy and experience. During the tour you will be looked after by professionals: your tour guides, a Tibetan guide, Sherpas, cook and drivers.

Number of participants: Small group Minimum 7, maximum 10-12 people

Duration: August 30 - September 20, 2025

Price Tibet 7 - 9 PAX 4460 € (1 = 7.6 CNY) 10 and more PAX 3570 €

Single room supplement: For a surcharge of € 430 we can book a single room for you in hotels (12 times) and a single tent on the Kora.

Included in the price: Tibet: airport transfer Samye/ Lhasa, drive to Kailash, Manasarovar and back with private transport and escort truck (see itinerary); all permits and road tolls in Tibet; Tibetan guide, driver and cook; from Saga two vegetarian meals (breakfast and dinner) daily (12.5 days), as well as a picnic lunch back to Saga; all entrance fees, mountain circumambulation and grassland fee; yaks and yak guides for your luggage; camping equipment; overnight stays in Hotel: Samye x3; Gyantse x1; Sakya x1; Saga x2; Darchen x4; Shigatse x1; Lhasa 1x; all other overnight stays in pilgrim rest houses or in tents.

Not included in the price: Visa fees for China/Tibet - this year most European nations (DE & CH ...) free Visa for 30 days on arrival!; fees for horses for passenger transportation; costs for emergency repatriation; all meals up to Saga (7 days) and from Saga to Lhasa (2.5 days); costs for alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks in restaurants; costs for public shower or bath in hot springs; personal expenses; insurance; tips (if the team performs well, we recommend approx. 3-5€ per day).

Dates:

30. August 2025: Arrival in Beijing/ airport pick up, permit and flight ticket handover, then onward flight to Lhasa

20. September 2025: Return flight from Lhasa to Chengdu, then continue home

Brief description of the itinerary

Day 0: Departure from home

Day 1: Beijing - LXA / Flight to Gonggar Airport, continue to Samye /H.

Day 2: Samye / Visit Samye Monastery, excursion to Hepo Ri possible, acclimatize /H.

Day 3: Samye / Excursion to Chimpu Caves to acclimatize /H.

Day 4: Samye / Excursion to Guru Rinpoche Cave to acclimatize /H.

Day 5: Drive to Gyantse via Yamdrok lake with a monastery visit/H.

Day 6: Visit Gyantse Monastery and Kumbum Stupa, then drive to Sakya via Shigatse /H.

Day 7: Visit Sakya Monastery, then drive to Saga /meeting with Sherpa team /H.

Day 8: Drive to Darchen /Darchen H.

Day 9: Visit to the hot springs in Tirthapuri /Darchen H.

Day 10-13: Mt. Kailash 4 day kora /camping

Day 14: Visit Sirlung - Gyang Drag Monastery day trip, drive to Chiu/ Chiu G.H.

Day 15-19: Kora/ time at Manasarovar Lake/ camping/ G.H.

Visit to the hot springs in Chiu Gompa possible

Day 19: Drive from Chiu to Saga /H.

Day 20: Saga - Shigatse via Tagden Phuntsokling / say goodbye to Sherpa team /H.

Day 21: Shigatse-Lhasa H.

Day 22: Jokhang - drive to Gonggar Airport / flight home



Detailed description of the itinerary

Day 0: Departure from home. We will send you the right flight link as soon as possible, so that the whole group can arrive together and get to know each other. **Please note that luggage will be checked through to Lhasa (LXA).**
Important; Under no circumstances should you have any batteries, e.g. in flashlights etc., in your checked baggage, otherwise your luggage will get stuck in Beijing!

Day 1: Arrival/stop on August 30th in the morning in Beijing. You will be met at the airport after immigration/passport control by Roger's partner agency and taken to the domestic airport. The Tibet permit will be handed over and you will be helped at the airport with your onward flight. Ruth & Flaviu welcome you at Lhasa airport.
We then approach this first day in Tibet very calmly. We drive 143 km from Gonggar Airport via Tsedang to Samye, where we will acclimatize over the next few days. Drive 3-4 hours. Overnight at the hotel.



Day 2: In the morning we visit the Samye main temple, the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, which was built in the 8th century. We deliberately have a short programme so that we can adjust to the high altitude and acclimatize. In the afternoon, a short excursion to Hepo Ri is possible, where you have a wonderful view of the Samye Mandala - this was built according to Indian cosmology and is one of the most magnificent monasteries in Tibet.

Day 3: Visit to the heart of Samye - the Chimpu Caves. This is where Guru Rinpoche gave his first teachings to Yeshe Tsogyal and his main disciples (25 in total). These caves are seen as an aspect of enlightened speech.

Day 4: Today we will visit one of the most important Guru Rinpoche caves. We will spend the night in a simple guesthouse near Yeshe Tsogyal's birthplace.



Day 5: Drive from Tsogyallhatso to Gyantse with a visit to a monastery, over the Kambala Pass (4794m) to Yamdrok Tso (Scorpion Lake, 4488m), then on over the Karola Pass (5045m) past a beautiful glacier to Gyantse (3950m), approx. 6 hours. Overnight stay in the hotel .



Day 6: In the morning we visit the Gyantse Monastery and the Kumbum Stupa with its unique statues and wall mandalas. Then about 5 hours drive (280km) via Shigatse to Sakya (4050m). Overnight stay in monastery hotel.



Day 7: Today we visit the Sakya Monastery. This monastery was built by Khon Khonchog Gyalpo (1034-1102) in 1073. After this impressive visit to the monastery it is then a 7-8 hour drive (346km) to Saga (4600m). Here we meet our Sherpas and enjoy the good food that they will prepare for us from now on! Overnight stay in a hotel.

Day 8: Today we cross the Maryumla Pass (5216m) to Darchen. Herds of wild donkeys, gazelles, individual hares and again and again the nimble little whistlinghares accompany us on the journey. At the large prostration site we see Mt. Kailash and Lake Manasarovar for the first time. From there it is only a short drive to Darchen, where we will spend the night in a nice hotel.



Day 9: From Darchen we drive to Tirthapuri (approx. 70 km). Tirthapuri is the third important pilgrimage site for the Tibetans in the Kailash Mandala. This small and hot jewel touches all visitors and completes the Kora trilogy.

In the afternoon we return to Darchen and prepare for the Mt. Kailash Kora.

Day 10: Today we start with the Mt. Kailash Kora. From Darchen we walk to the Tarboche flagpole - this place symbolizes the navel of the universe.

From this point, the Valley of the Gods opens up.



The trail leads along the Lha-Chu River, with the option of visiting the Chuku Monastery, which is located slightly higher up. The imposing rock towers and peaks represent various deities of the Kailash Mandala. Afterwards we continue and reach the north side of Mt. Kailash, where we will camp directly below the Dirapuk Monastery (4900m) and enjoy the unique view of the north face of Mt. Kailash.



Day 11: This is a rest day on Mt. Kailash “North Face”. This day offers us the opportunity to consciously take in this impressive place.



There are many ways to spend this free day: a visit to the Diraphuk Monastery - the famous Yogi Gyalwa Gotsangpa meditated here for a long time in a cave, a hike to the north face of Mt. Kailash, a walk into a side valley, or simply enjoying the power of the mountain from the campsite below the Dirapuk Monastery.

Day 12: Today we cross the Drolma La Pass (5630m), another highlight of the pilgrimage. We will feel our bodies, the thinner air may be noticeable for some. But on the pass, the effort is forgotten and after a refreshing break, we descend the pass and follow the pilgrims path to our campsite, which is just before the Zutulphuk Monastery (4790m)



Day 13: We hike further along the valley via Zutulphuk Monastery and enjoy the trail that leads us back to Darchen. With a view of the wide plain with Lake Rakshastal and the Gurla Mandata, we say goodbye to our yakpas (yak guides) here at the end of the valley. They are now heading home. After the silence of nature, we return to the village of Darchen with all its different sensory impressions. This completes another circle.

The traditional Tibetan hospital and the associated school, where Ruth & Flaviu actively worked from 1999 to 2001, are well worth a visit. Today it is possible to gain an impression of the production, diagnosis and treatment of Tibetan medicine. We also have the opportunity to stroll around the village and perhaps find something nice for our loved ones at home, or simply exchange experiences with our fellow travelers.

Day 14: Today we start our day trip from the village via Sirlung Monastery to Gyang Drag Monastery (situated at 5100m), where Ruth & Flaviu have helped to completely rebuild this oldest monastery on Mt Kailash. The monastery stands imposingly on the hill like a small castle. Nestled in this landscape, we enjoy the view of the vast plain and can see Lake Rakshastal in the distance with the border mountains of Nepal and India. We linger with the monks and learn about the interesting history of this place. A very nice day trip. In the afternoon we continue to the holy Manasarovar Lake.

Day 15- 18: We spend the next 4 1/2 days at the holy lake Manasarovar, immersing ourselves in the different moods of the mandala.



We will spend the nights in tents or in simple guesthouses in fantastic locations. These days are one of the most valuable gifts you can make yourself. It gives you the opportunity to reflect on your own life and work, and to find new inspiration and strength for what lies ahead. At the end of our time at Lake Manasarovar, we can meditate in the powerful Guru Rinpoche cave, have time to walk along the beach or simply enjoy and reflect. A visit to Chiu Monastery or a dip in the hot springs are also possible.

- Day 19: We say goodbye to our friends at the lake and drive back to Saga. On the way we also say farewell to Mt. Kailash and Lake Manasarovar, which we can see for the last time today. We will see and experience the landscape from a new perspective on the return journey. In Saga, we enjoy our last evening with our Sherpas and spend the night in the hotel.
- Day 20: From Saga we take a different route back to Shigatse (540 km, approx. 10 hours) and visit one of the most important monasteries of the Kalachakra/Jonang tradition. We enjoy the evening in Shigatse, the second largest city in Central Tibet. We eat in restaurants again and spend the night in a hotel.
- Day 21: From Shigatse we enjoy the return journey through small villages and the impressive Brahmaputra Gorge to Lhasa. In the afternoon we visit the Barkhor, walk around the main temple Jokhang with the many Tibetan pilgrims and can shop for gifts and souvenirs if we like.
- Day 22: At the end of this richly blessed journey we visit the Jokhang Temple in the morning and with the blessing of the Jowo (main statue of Tibet) we then drive to Gonggar airport and start our journey home.



General information

Please note

- We do not accept any liability or additional costs due to landslides, spills or other problems caused by weather or politics.
- You are responsible for your own health. Our generous travel arrangements allow for sufficient acclimatization.
- Overnight stays are partly in shared rooms, during the Kailash Kora in 2-person tents. We assume that you are willing to share accommodation/tent with others (whether male or female).
- We reserve the right to adjust the tour price upwards if the Euro depreciates significantly against the Chinese Yuan (RMB).
- We recommend travel cancellation insurance.

Visa and passport information

New; only in 2025 will almost all European countries (and many more) receive a 30-day free visa "on arrival", so travelling is particularly easy and Pleasant this year!

~~We will provide you with an itinerary in Chinese so that you can apply for the China Visa at home 2-3 months in advance and then email us a scan of it.~~ All other permits will be done in Beijing/Chengdu and Lhasa. Further information and instructions will follow.

Passport validity

The passport must be valid for at least another 6 months upon entry.

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May all sentient beings be happy!