

TOP OF THE WORLD TIBET TO TOUR 2012

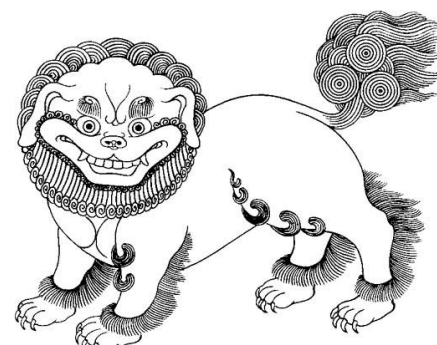
FURTHER INFORMATION

Thank you for your interest in the Top of the World Tour to Tibet 2012.

This will be the fourth trip to Ganzi by a group from Australia under the guidance of Geshe Sonam Thargye. The overwhelming response from previous tourists has been one of joy and gratitude for such a unique experience, plus delight in the contact with the Tibetan people and their culture.

The following information is designed to give potential travellers a little more detail about the trip, the conditions you will encounter and basic requirements. It is just a brief overview however.

More detailed information about what specific needs for the trip etc. will be provided for confirmed participants at a later date.



TOUR CONSIDERATIONS

The trip is graded 'moderate' which means that, while it is relatively straight forward, there may be some challenging elements.

The main one is the altitude. You will be travelling to elevations of up to 4000m. Getting around is a bit more strenuous and takes more effort at high altitude until you acclimatise. The trip up to Ganzi is taken over three days to allow time for your body to adjust. Most of our travellers have adjusted well and have had no difficulty.

Another is the uphill walking. Tibet is a mountainous country and monasteries and nunneries are almost always situated on hills. But you can walk at your own pace. It is to your advantage if you are as fit and healthy as possible before travelling.

TOUR COSTS

\$ 5450

Single supplement - extra cost approx \$400

Deposit required by **January 28, 2012** (non-refundable)

Final payment (inc. single supplement where applicable) due **April 1, 2012**

Tour costs include:

- Return airfares Melbourne – Chengdu
- Airport Transfers
- Twin share hotel accommodation
- Sichuan Banquet on night of arrival
- All breakfasts included
- Bus travel/ transport as per Itinerary
- Entrance fees to sightseeing/excursions as listed on the itinerary
- Sichuan Opera performance ticket

Tour costs DO NOT include:

- Chinese Visa – to be organized by individual travellers (guidelines provided).
- Travel Insurance (compulsory) – policy number to be provided prior to departure.
- Lunch & dinner most days – cheaper to organize at local restaurants as we go; usually about \$3-5 per meal.
- Personal spending – souvenirs, shopping, personal needs.
- Camera fees – some public buildings and temples ask for a small donation eg \$1-2 for taking interior photos.
- Tips – restaurants, taxis etc.

If the tour is cancelled by the organisers due to unforeseen circumstances, tourists will be refunded in full.

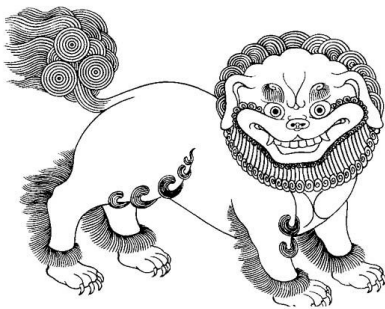
ITINERARY

A detailed itinerary is available for downloading.

The journey up to Ganzi and back again is absolutely spectacular and worth the ticket price on its own. Apart from the glorious mountain scenery, there are a wealth of chance encounters such as meeting herds of yaks and yak cowboys on the road, meeting the villagers and children along the way, some interesting 'bush' toilets, and stops at roadside shrines.

But the stay in Ganzi living amongst the local people and meeting all the nuns and children make it a truly exhilarating experience.

Travelling in this remote region can present some interesting challenges, and it may be necessary to make small changes to the itinerary in response to unpredictable circumstances such as inclement weather or local road conditions. Decisions about such changes must necessarily be made on the spot, but tour participants will be included in decision-making regarding any changes to plan.



ACCOMMODATION

Tourists will be booked into 3-4 star hotel accommodation while travelling around China/Tibet. However 3-4 stars in China is not necessarily equivalent to 3-4 star accommodation in western countries. This level of hotel accommodation has nevertheless been found to be quite comfortable with clean beds, hot water and western toilets. There may be times, on the road, when squat toilets are the only available option. This is an unavoidable facet of travelling in the east. All accommodation will be on a twin-share basis, unless you choose to book a single supplement to secure a room to yourself.

Tourists are also offered the unique experiences of a homestay in a Tibetan village with a Tibetan family, and also an overnight stay at a Nunnery. The accommodation at both is simple and quite 'rustic', but for many past tourists, a highlight of the trip.

We will also be arranging one or two nights' camping out near a village, and at one of the nunneries. All camping gear will be provided locally. This will depend on local conditions.

WEATHER

It will be summer time in China. Generally the weather will be mild to warm with temperatures ranging from low to high 20s. Chengdu and Leshan are likely to be warmer and quite humid. Tibet/Ganzi will be cooler and less humid with temperatures around the mid 20s during the day, but it can drop as low as 5-10 during the night.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Flight bookings to China are still awaiting final confirmation. Participants will be advised as soon as the final flight itinerary is available.

The tour group members will need to make their own way to the departure point, Melbourne International Airport, Tullamarine; this includes interstate travellers, who will need to make their own arrangements for getting to the airport by the required time.

VISA

At this time **all nationalities require a visa for travel in China**. It is the responsibility of each individual to arrange a Chinese visa. You will be applying for a standard 30 day tourist visa single entry. (Details supplied later)

PASSPORT

It is the responsibility of each individual traveller to ensure that they have a valid passport that meets the passport requirements of the country issuing the visa. In the case of China the main requirements are – at least 6 months validity on the passport and two empty pages.

Our organisers will require evidence of a valid passport including passport number and expiry date with your booking or as soon as possible afterwards.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is **compulsory** for all people joining the tour to take out travel insurance. From our side this covers everyone in case of illness or accident requiring hospitalisation or repatriation.

The trip cost does not include personal travel or medical insurance. It is your responsibility to make sure suitable insurance has been taken out for your trip. We will require details of your policy at a later date.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Travelling in Asian countries presents particular challenges, but these can be overcome or minimised by taking some simple precautions. We will have plenty of advice based on experience from previous tours and travellers about ways to maintain peak health.

Apart from altitude sickness in high altitude locations, the major irritants to health are the dryness of the air and the possibility of digestive tract ailments.

VACCINATIONS

China doesn't officially require any immunisations for entry. You are advised to discuss health issues related to travelling in Asia with your doctor, and at the appropriate time to seek advice about vaccinations and/or suitable medications to include in your travel pack. More advice on this will be provided at a later date.

MEALS

Breakfasts are included in the tour price. Lunches and dinner costs are not included.

Food in China & Tibet can be a real adventure, which is why we encourage people to venture out and purchase lunch & dinner independently. This way you have the flexibility to try different foods that appeal to your individual tastes. Food prices are very low; generally no more than \$3-5 per meal. Tourists will always be advised of suitable places to eat. In many cases the whole group may choose somewhere to go for a meal together. Vegetarians will find they are very well catered for in China and Tibet.

TOUR GUIDANCE

The tour will be under the care and direction of Geshe Sonam Tharbye who has hosted all three previous tours. Geshe Sonam is a genial and innovative tour guide. He knows these areas very well, can introduce the traveller to places you would not usually have access to, and in his sphere remarkable things happen. Geshe is something of a celebrity in his home town, and members of his family and the wider community all 'pitch in' to help when the tour group arrives in Tibet. This includes such things as setting up camp, helping organise laundry runs, to accompanying tourists and helping with shopping including bartering for jewellery or other souvenirs.

BOOKING

Download a booking form from either the NJP website www.njp.org.au or the Drol Kar Buddhist Centre website www.drolkarbuddhistcentre.org.au, fill in your details and send it with your deposit to the address provided.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any other questions about the trip, please don't hesitate to contact **Cheryl** - 0425 765757; **Helen** – 52661788; or Email njprojects@gmail.com

But keep in mind ...

This data is designed to enable you to make the initial decision about whether to make the journey to Tibet in 2012. There is much more specific information to be provided to everyone who books in for the tour.

We hope to see you on the Road to Ganzi.