

13 Day Ultimate Tibet

With Panda Reserve & train ride between Beijing and Lhasa

USA – Shanghai – Chengdu – Giant Panda Research and Breeding Center - Tsetang – Lhasa & Surrounding Area – Shigatze – Gyantze – Yamdrok Lake – Lhasa – Beijing – USA

*****Escorted SMALL group with min. of 10 and max. of 18 passengers*****
Premium service with professional guides, deluxe hotels and sumptuous meals
 Private journeys with VIP service of a private guide, a private chauffeur and a car can also be arranged at extra cost

It is a rare traveler who has not dreamed of visiting Tibet. For centuries it was "furthest goal of travel", and it remains one of the most beguiling places on earth.

From the surprisingly verdant forests of the southeast, to the vast, high-altitude desert and remote slopes

We explore the birthplace of the Tibetan nation and site of the tombs of the early Religious Kings

Marvel at sacred grounds, spiritual ceremonies, turquoise lakes and sparkling Himalayan giants

Explore the fresco and sculpture filled monasteries few westerners ever set foot in

The icing on the cake is the UN sponsored Giant Panda Preservation & Breeding Center in Chengdu

And a magnificent train ride between Lhasa and Beijing

2009 Departure Dates	Tour Cost (US\$)				Land Only Includes domestic flights	Single Room Supplement
	Per person double occupancy departing from					
	Los Angeles San Francisco		New York			
	Tour Cost	Cash Discount Price	Tour Cost	Cash Discount Price		
Apr9, May21, Sep3, 17, Oct15, 09	3560	3360	3750	3550	2787	648
Jun 11, Jul 16, Aug 13, 2009	3730	3530	3920	3720	2787	648

US tax of \$98, Int'l flight fuel surcharge \$290, and China domestic air tax \$89 per person is extra
 Rates for departures from other major US gateways are available upon request.

Enjoy Cash Discount Price and save \$200 per person!

To qualify, you must be the first 10 passengers booked on your tour / departure

Initial deposit can be paid by check or credit card

Remaining balance of the tour cost must be paid by check or money order only

Operated by *Orient Odyssey*



*B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner, F-In flight meals,
 SL / SD-Special local flavor meal or banquet*

Day01 USA – Shanghai

Depart from Los Angeles, San Francisco, or New York. Enjoy award winning in-flight meals and services. Move the watch one day ahead as we cross the international dateline. *Prices for departing from other major gateway cities are available upon request. F

Day02 Arrive in Shanghai

We will arrive in Shanghai in the evening. After immigration and customs, the representative will greet and accompany us to the 4 star, airport hotel: *Shanghai Airlines Travel Hotel*. Enjoy a restful night to recover from jetlag and get ready for tomorrow's exciting adventure. F

Day03 Shanghai – Chengdu

This morning we depart via *Shanghai Airlines'* flight FM9405 at 8:55 a.m., reaching Chengdu at 12:05 p.m.. Our guide will greet and accompany us to the 5 star, luxurious, *Samsara Hotel Chengdu*, one of the newest deluxe property in town. The history of Chengdu can be traced back 2,000 years. Despite the rapid economic development, in contrast to other Chinese urban centers, Chengdu has preserved a traditional serene atmosphere. First we tour the United Nation sponsored Giant Panda Research and Breeding Center. We will witness the ambitious conservation effort to save the endangered species. Eighty percent of the world's 1,000 remaining giant pandas reside in this province. We will see dozens of pandas wandering through a semi-natural domain of bamboo groves and forest. A theatre presents a movie about the evolution, habits, habitats and conservation of Pandas. We can even observe baby Pandas and cubs up close. It is the only place in the world where one can view the activities of young Pandas. Next, through *Orient Odyssey's* "People to People Contact" program, we visit one of many traditional teahouses scattered across the city where locals recline on bamboo armchairs, play mahjong and socialize. Sample Sichuan-style afternoon tea and interact with local residences. Savor the unique panorama of Chinese social life, observing people playing cards, reading newspapers, practicing Sichuan opera, or playing Chinese chess. Our program ends at Wangjianglou – the Park of Riverview Pavilion.



experience not to be missed!

B/F/D

Day04 Chengdu – Tsetang / Yarlong Valley

After an early breakfast we will transfer to the airport and board the flight to Tibet. *Air China'* flight CZ4403 departs at 8:20 a.m., arriving in Lhasa, the spiritual heartland of Tibet at 10:25

a.m.. The flying journey itself is an unforgettable experience, with impressive scenes of snowcapped mountains over the Tibetan Plateau, the earth's highest ecosystem, and one of the last remaining great wildernesses and the source of Asia's greatest rivers. We fly over the great white citadel of Gongga Shan (24,783 ft), the Hengduan Range, and the massive, deep, valleys of some of Asia's greatest rivers, the Mekong, and the Yangtze. As we near the Plateau we can also see the 25,439-foot Namcha Barwa, the easternmost rampart of the Himalaya. Upon arrival at Gongkar Airport (a lofty 12,129 feet), we will be met by our Tibetan guide and driver. A scenic drive takes us along the mighty Lhasa river. On route, we will enjoy *Orient Odyssey's* "People to People Contact" program and stop at a Tibetan village and a school, where we have the opportunity to interact with Tibetan peasants, teachers and students. Take pictures of traditional Tibetan houses, Buddhist murals, and the spectacular landscape of rivers, highlands and mountains. After arriving at the deluxe, 4.5 star, *Yalonghe Hotel*, one of the newest luxury properties in the region, we rest for couple of hours. It is important not overexert ourselves on the first day in Tibet. A good rest is necessary to acclimate to the high altitude (11,000 feet). Should the need arises, oxygen and Chinese herbal medicines are available at the hotel, which can help easing symptoms of AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness).



Yarlong Valley is considered the cradle of Tibetan civilization. It was from Yarlong that the early Tibetan kings unified Tibet in the 7th century and their massive burial mounds still dominate the area around Chongye. The Yarlong Tsangpo, one of the highest major river on earth, flows to the north, while the 13,630 ft Mount Gongpo Ri looms to the southeast. The Valley is the mythical birthplace of the Tibetan people. The town of Tsetang is said to have been built on the spot where *Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara* descended from heaven in the shape of a monkey and with the help of a female demon, produced the first Tibetan. Today we will visit the 7th century Trandruk (Changzhu) Monastery. Trandruk is one of Tibet's 12 "demoness subduing" temples. Trandruk pins down the demoness' left shoulder. In order to build the monastery here, it was said that the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo had first to take the form of a hawk (tra) in order to overcome a local dragon

(druk), a miracle which is commemorated in the monastery's name. The highlight of the day will be a tour of the magnificent [Yumbulakang Dzong](#), a fine, tapering finger of a structure that sprouts from a craggy ridge overlooking the patchwork fields of the Yarlong Valley below. We will enjoy the breathtaking birds' eye views. The founding of Yumbulakang stretches back



into legend and myth. The standard line is that it was built for King Nyentri Tsenpo, a historic figure who has long since blurred into mythology. Legend has him descending from the heavens and being received as a king by the people of the Yarlong Valley. More than 400 Buddhist holy texts

(known collectively as the "Awesome Secret") are said to have fallen from the heavens at Yumbulakang in the 5th century. Today we can observe the murals depicting the magical arrival of the texts. Most historians and archeologists believe it was built in the 7th century by King **Songtsen Gampo** who united the Tibet. Today it serves as a chapel and is inhabited by around eight monks who double as guards. It is considered the oldest building in Tibet. [B/L/D](#)

Day05 Tsetang

After breakfast, we head out to explore [Samye](#), Tibet's first monastery, located on the north side of the [Yarlong Tsangpo](#) – the "[Holy River](#)" near



Tsetang, surrounded by barren mountains and dramatic sand dunes. We first take a ferry ride across the mighty Yarlong Tsangpo (the Holy) River then head

to the sacred site. It is said that Samye was founded by the Indian Buddhist proselytizer **Padmasambhava**, reverently called **Guru Rinpoche**, or **Precious Teacher**, around 770 A.D.. He is considered to be the founder of

Tibetan Buddhism who, is said to have succeeded in winning over the demon gods of the Bon religion. Many of the demon



gods in Tibetan monasteries refer back to such Bon gods. The monastery was built on a [mandala foundation](#) that reflects the cosmic view

of Tibetan religion. The [main temple](#) stands in the centre and symbolizes the mythical Buddhist peak of Mount Meru. Four [smaller chapels](#) were erected on the four cardinal points of the compass. Precious

artifacts here include the [lotus footprints of Lord Buddha](#) himself and the [earliest Buddhist scripture](#), many written in gold



powders, brought to Tibet 1,300 years ago. This is considered to be one of the most sacred grounds in Tibet. In old days, important annual religious ceremonies, with mask dances and elaborate ritual were performed here, and were frequently attended by Dalai Lama himself.

Day06 Tsetang - Shigatze

Bidding farewell to Tsetang, we take the "[middle road](#)" or "[northern road](#)" (based on logistics and local road condition) along the [Yarlong Tsangpo](#) to Shigatze. It is a long and scenic drive, passing through vast, breathtaking Tibetan landscape rarely seen by tourists. See lush virgin pastures frequently crossed by groups of nomads. The highest mountain pass is at 17,388 ft where the glacier covered summit can be seen. Tibet has long been hidden from the rest of the world, historically difficult to reach behind a wall of the world's highest mountains. For centuries it was the unreachable dream of innumerable explorers and adventurers. We arrive in Shigatze around noon. Check-in at the superior, local best, [Shigatze Hotel](#). After lunch, we explore the immense [Tashilunpo Monastery](#) on the slope of [Neseri Mountains](#).

Built in 1447, here is the seat of one of Tibet's highest incarnation, the Panchen Lama



(whose current identity is the subject of a dismaying controversy between the Chinese and the Tibetan government in exile). The Great Fifth Dalai Lama bestowed the title of Panchen Lama on his teacher who was from this monastery. While the Dalai Lama is said to be an incarnation of the Tibetan deity Avalokiteshvara, the Panchen Lama is worshipped as the incarnation of the Buddha Amithaba, and is therefore higher up in the heavenly hierarchy. The latent conflict of hierarchy was constantly manipulated by the Russians, British and Chinese in their colonial rivalries. In Tashilunpo's hey days in 17th and

18th centuries, nearly 4,000 monks lived here. We whirl through [the walled monastery complex](#), [chapels](#), [shrines](#), and [halls](#) linked by [mysterious alleyways](#) and [steep staircases](#). We explore the center courtyard where religious dances are performed on festival days. We tour the dark and evocative [chamber](#) and its many [side altars](#), as well as a distinctive red building called the [Jamkhang Chenmo](#), which houses a massive yet lyrical [90-ft tall statue of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future](#). Carved with 6,700 ounces of gold and 115,000 kilograms of copper, it is the largest copper statue in the world. We also see [the memorial of the fourth Panchen Lama](#). Erected in 1662, it is decorated with 3,000 ounces of gold, 15 tons of silver and innumerable precious stones. The gilded roofs tower over the entire compound, where magnificent Thangkas are revealed on festival days. [B/L/D](#)



Day07 Shigatze – Gyantze – Yamdrok Lake - Lhasa

In the morning we drive along the [Nyang Chu](#) (“chu” means river) to [Gyantze](#). Gyantze is



Tibet’s third largest town (after Lhasa and Shigatze). Its exposed location – on the road from Shigatze to Lhasa and on the trading route to India,

Sikkim and Bhutan – made here one of the most important trading centers. In 1910, an English diplomat compared the market of Gyantze with Oxford Street in London: “*One could buy Scotch whisky and Swiss watches here*”. Today we focus our visit at the most significant feature in town, [the Pelkor Chode](#), or [Baiju Monastery](#),

home of the magnificent [Kum Bum Dagoba](#). The layout of the Kum Bum is in the shape of a three dimensional mandala. The central structure at the tip is a chapel for the original Buddha. The stupa was erected as early as 1414, took over 10 years to complete, and had survived centuries of historical turbulence.



Inside the tower wall are tens of thousands of [beautiful murals](#) and [scriptures](#) with unique artistic features combining the traditional art style of Tibet, India and other countries. After lunch, we venture on the “[southern route](#)” to Lhasa. This is an even more breathtaking experience as we pass small villages, fertile valleys, cattle herds and many yaks – the Tibetan oxen that climb up the steepest slopes with surprising skill to graze. Continue the eastward



drive we reach the [spectacular Karo La pass](#) (la means pass) at 16,432 ft, above the famed, tranquil, and turquoise

colored [Yamdrok Yumtso](#) (tso means lake), one of the most beautiful lakes in Tibet. Yamdrok, literally mean “[The Lake of the Swans](#)”, and is shaped like a Swan who is about to fly and is stretching her wing. We drive along the lake shore, enjoy a stop for a water front picnic. Savor the spectacular scenery of the tranquil lake and snow capped mountains. We then embark on a sharp descent through [Kampa La pass](#) at 15,748 ft. Suddenly the Yarlong Valley appears beneath us. The scenic road then winds along the banks of the mighty Yarlong Tsangpo River, to Kyichu (Lhasa River), then to Lhasa. In the evening we check-in at the 5 star, deluxe, [Xinding Hotel Lhasa](#), one of the newest luxury properties in the region. Lhasa, the very name conjures up lofty and romantic images, rose to prominence in the 7th century AD when the great ruler Songtsen Gampo established his capital here and began to construct the spectacular [Potala Palace](#). Some of the most precious Buddhist relics, carvings and paintings were brought into Tibet as dowries for his Chinese and Nepali wives. Literarily means “country of the gods”, Lhasa is home of the [Dalai Lama](#), the [incarnation of Avalokiteshvara](#), the essence of compassion for all sentient beings. Tonight we enjoy a leisurely stroll on the bustling street on the way to our dinner restaurant. Tonight we enjoy a leisurely stroll on the bustling street on the way to our dinner restaurant. [B/L/D](#)

Day08 Lhasa and Surrounding Area

Our unforgettable day begins with a visit of the majestic [Potala Palace](#). Its gold-clad roofs greet from afar. Stood on Marpori, the Red Mountain, the Potala Palace was built in the 7th century by

King Songtsen Gampo. Then after the completion in 1645, the Dalai Lamas resided here as religious and secular rulers. The section called White Palace was constructed first; half a century later, the red Palace was completed, rising like a huge tower from the sea of white-painted buildings. **Abbe Huc**, wrote in 1845 in



his book *Travels in Tartary, Tibet, and China*, “The palace of the Tale (Dalai) Lama merits, in every respect, the celebrity which it enjoys through the

world”. The Potala Palace contains over 1,000 rooms, ceilings supported by more than 15,000 columns, numerous [ceremonial halls](#), [small chapels](#) and [meditation halls](#), each featuring [centuries-old wall paintings](#), [carvings](#), and [ancient Buddhist scriptures written in 24 karat gold](#). There are eight vaults of deceased Dalai Lamas. They were lavishly decorated with gold, diamonds, turquoise, corals, and pearls. At roof of the Potala, we can enjoy a breathtaking view of the valley and city below. Here we also visit [the apartment of the current Dalai Lama](#), who came here as a young boy from eastern Tibet after being recognized as the reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion. Next we go to [Tibet’s holiest temple, the Jokhang](#). Built by King Songtsen Gampo in 647 A.D., it is full of magnificent carvings and paintings, and is home to the [7th century Jobo Buddha statue](#),



which is said to be one of the only three in the world blessed by Lord Buddha. The golden Jobo statue is richly decorated with jewels and usually covered with brocade and silk bands. At the feet of the Buddha, lamps made of heavy silver and filled with yak oil burn continually. **Guissepe Tucci** once wrote “An endless, three story high flight of chapels surrounds (the statue), decorated with the smiling and sneering Buddhist pantheon. Blissful and terrific gods fill the shade of the cells and peer unexpectedly out of their mystery.” The [Jokhang](#) is circled by [Barkhor Street](#), a sacred ritual path where pilgrims and traders gather every day. To gain merit, the pilgrims prostrate themselves in the dust and circle around the Jokhang; others turn their

prayer wheels. The street throbs with action from dawn to dusk. We [observe Tibetans](#) in colorful traditional robes chanting with their prayer wheel in hand; vendors selling their wares from religious crafts to daily needs; monks meditating at the side of the road; housewives and store keepers doing the cleaning; kids on their way to school. We will take our time to brose in this area and experience the heartbeat of Tibet! **B/L/D**



Day09 Lhasa and Surrounding Area

Today we enjoy an excursion to two of the great monasteries of central Tibet; [Drepung Temple](#) and [Sera Monastery](#), both are considered among the most sacred. Each of them was once home to over ten thousand Lamas, and were the primary religious educational centers and pillars of the theocratic state. If we are lucky, we will see lamas’ morning [chanting of the sutras](#). Go behind the scenes we head to [the temple kitchen](#) where once 5,000 dishes were prepared at each meal. We will see spectacular collection of priceless murals, carvings, and crafts. Feel free to chat with monks, who are always eager to answer our questions. **Orient Odyssey** had



carefully planned the tour logistics so we will arrive at the right time to observe the rarely watched theatrical [monk debate](#). In the back yard of the

monastery, hundreds of monks debate about Buddhist philosophy, using ritualistic body and arm movements to present their points. This afternoon we will also visit [Norbulinka](#), “[Precious Stone Garden](#)”. It is the Dalai Lama’s exquisite and beloved summer palace from where his holiness went into exile in 1959. We will see the [magnificent wall paintings](#) in [the audience hall](#), describing in detail the experiences of the 14th Dalai Lama, framed by legends from the lives of the Buddha and Tsongkhapa. We also visit his holiness’ [meditation room and bedroom](#), and the striking [God King’s throne](#) in [the reception hall](#). The furniture has been untouched from the moment his holiness left the building in 1959. The clock on the wall was stopped and pointed at the very minute of his departure. The big radio in the

living room is set on the station his holiness listened the very night he left his homeland. Tonight, through special arrangement of ***Orient Odyssey's "People to People Contact"*** program, we visit a Tibetan family and enjoy an in-depth exploration of authentic local life. We will sip the yak butter tea, and interact with household members. B/L/D

Day10 Lhasa – Beijing via Train

Our train T28 will leave Lhasa at 8:30 a.m.. The spectacular journey of 4,064 kilometers (2,524 miles) will take 47 hours and will be like no other train rides in the world. At the formidable



Tanggula Pass of 16,640 ft above sea level, our train rides on the world's highest rail track.

We then pass the 4,390 ft long Fenghuoshan Tunnel at an altitude of 16,093 ft. It is the highest rail tunnel in the world. 80 kilometers northwest of Lhasa, at 13,990 ft above sea level, our train will enter the massive Yangbajing Tunnel at a length of 3,345 meter (10,975 ft). This railway was inaugurated on July 1, 2006. Within the Tibet Autonomous Region, 80% of the track is at an altitude of more than 13,124 ft. There are 675 bridges. 550 km (342 miles) of the railway is laid on permafrost – soil at or below freezing point of water permanently. There were and are many technical difficulties for such a railway on permafrost soil. In the summer the uppermost layer thaws, and the ground becomes muddy. Chinese engineers dealt with this problem by building elevated tracks with foundation sunk deep into the ground, building hollow concrete pipes beneath the track to keep rail bed frozen, and using metal sun shades. Similar to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline



System, portions of the track are also passively cooled with ammonia based heat exchangers. Our journey will be in the comfort of ***Deluxe Soft Sleeper Class***, the highest class available. Each air conditioned compartment has four beds (two upper, two lower) and a large picture window. Outside the compartment there is a lounge, also with picture windows, where passengers can stroll, sit and mingle with fellow travelers. The carriages for this railway are specially designed and built by

Bombardier, a Montreal based aerospace company. The carriages are pressurized, and have an oxygen supply for each passenger. While onboard the train, meals are not included. Passengers can order Chinese culinary delights in the comfort of the dining car, attend by several master chefs who will cook on order at meal time. B

Day11 Onboard the train Tibet / Beijing

The train journey between Lhasa and Beijing is considered one of the most spectacular in the world, passing majestic landscapes from snow capped highlands to Gobi deserts..... The air in Tibet is much thinner, having 35% to 40% less oxygen than at sea level. Not only the train carriages have to be specially designed, several



oxygen factories were also built along the railway. At this altitude in this latitude, water in toilets must be heated to prevent

freezing. The environmental impact of the new railway remains to be an on going concern. The increase in passenger traffic will result in greater tourism and economic activity on the Tibetan Plateau. On your train, garbage and junks are collected into two sealed containers in every car and not chucked on the tracks. They are taken out after arriving at the terminus. The effects of this railway on wild animals such as Tibetan antelope and plants are being reduced as much as possible. Thirty three overpasses were constructed specifically to allow continued animal migration. We continue on our journeys, stopping in Golmud, Xining, Lanzhou, and Xian, passing mountains, grasslands, villages, farms, small towns, markets, and majestic, unspoiled and breathtaking sceneries. B

Day12 Arriving in Beijing

Our train reaches Beijing at 7:34 a.m.. The guide will greet us on the platform and accompany us to check-in at the 4.5 star, deluxe, ***Comfort Suites by Choice Hotels***, a luxurious all suite property with a central location. Remaining of the day is free to explore, rest or pack at our own pace. Savor the memory of our **Ultimate Tibet Expedition**.

Day13 Beijing - USA

After breakfast, we board our homebound flight, arriving in USA on the same day. B/F

***Optional Extension**

Our programs are flexible! You can extend your stay in Beijing to explore more historic highlights, or shop for antiques at local markets. Or, travel on to Hong Kong, Macau, or even Silk Road! Please contact us for more information.

***International Flights**

Orient Odyssey features *Northwest / Delta Airlines, China Eastern Airlines, Asiana Airlines* or *Korean Airlines* as the international carrier for this package. Based on your departure cities and tour logistics, Orient Odyssey reserves the right to secure other major international carrier for your journey. Flight arrangements will be finalized at least 60 days before departure.

*Sample int'l flight schedules are as follows – note schedules are subject to change:

From Los Angeles (LAX):

DEP:	NW001	Los Angeles – Tokyo	1255 / 1630
	NW025	Tokyo – Shanghai	1840 / 2105
RTN:	NW030	Beijing – Tokyo	0855 / 1405
	NW002	Tokyo – Los Angeles	1545 / 0915

From San Francisco (SFO):

DEP	NW027	SFO – Tokyo	1340 / 1705
	NW025	Tokyo – Shanghai	1840 / 2105
RTN	NW030	Beijing – Tokyo	0855 / 1405
	NW028	Tokyo – SFO	1600 / 0915

From New York (JFK):

DEP	NW1561	New York – Detroit	0900 / 1107
	NW025	Detroit – Shanghai	1415 / 2105
RTN	NW088	Beijing – Seattle	0930 / 0540
	DL162	Seattle – New York	1233 / 2100

***Note**

Fuel surcharges and taxes are subject to change. Due to lowered fuel cost, actual fuel surcharge might be less than quoted. Updated and accurate amount will be advised before the final payment due date. Tour cost is quoted based on current foreign exchange rate as of Dec 1, 2008. Price is guaranteed once full payment is received.

Kindly refer to General Terms & Conditions

For inquiry, please feel free to call

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