Orient Odyssey – Journeys beyond the ordinary™

18 Day Hidden Tribes, Shangri-la and Tibet

An unique in-depth exploration of rural life in China, spin beyond the normal tourist-trod paths for some extraordinary looks at the ethnically diverse villages and tribes, and less-visited scenic wonders

- Guiyang – The ancient Jiaxiu Pavilion, serene Qianling Lake, and the impressive Hongfu Monastery
- Kaili – Home of many Miao ethnic minority tribes and their unique costumes, folk songs and ceremonies
- Anshun – Sky Dragon Garrison Fortress: an unspoiled, authentic Ming Dynasty village frozen in time
- Huangguoshu Waterfall – The magnificent fall is the largest in Asia with roaring water thundering down 250 ft
- Kunming – “The city of eternal spring”, interesting cliff side temples at Western Hill, scenic lake Dian and Cui
- Stone Forest – An unique geological wonder formed 270 million years ago, situated close to a Sani minority village
- Dali – The serene Lake Erhai, Three Pagodas, Bai Ethnic Minority Museum, and the busy Old Town
- Lijiang – Naxi minority old town, bustling market square, Naxi folk music orchestra, highland meadow on Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Sacred Yufeng Temple, Ma Palace, Black Dragon Pool, and mysterious Dongba Culture
- Tiger Leaping Gorge – The breathtaking scenery of roaring water and high cliffs, and mighty Yangtze’s first bend
- Tibet – Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Bakhor Street, the sacred Sera and Drepung Monastery, and Norbulinka,
- Chongqing – China’s largest metropolitan, the Panda Zoo, General Stillwell Museum, and spicy Sichuan cuisine

Special Highlights- We cut no corners!

Featuring multiple popular and less known UNESCO World Heritage and Culture Sites throughout

Upgraded luxurious 4 - 5 star hotels in many destinations exclusively for 2011

Exploration of the unique costumes, and life styles of ethnic minority tribes rarely discovered by outsiders

Marvel at unspoiled sacred grounds, holy temples and the magnificent palaces of Dalai Lama

Carefully planned logistics enable travelers to experience rarely seen Monk Debate in Tibetan Temples

Experience the beauty of Shangri-la with turquoise snow ranges and razor sharp cliffs

Unique “People to People Contacts®” opportunities throughout the journey

Interaction with locals to obtain true insight of local life, visits to farmers, city homes and schools

Miao tribal village ceremonies, ancient Grand Opera, Naxi Folk Music Orchestra, Yi Minority Dance,

Local flavor delicacies of Sour Fish Soup, Cross Bridge Noodles and Steam Pot Chicken

Enjoy our signature True All Inclusive© value

There are no last minute surprises, optional tours, hidden costs……

This tour is all inclusive - all listed sightseeing, shows, and daily meals are included

Tour Cost Includes:
1. Guided comprehensive sightseeing, admission and culture shows as per specified
2. Luxury accommodations - luxurious 5 star, and local best 4 star hotel room and surcharges
3. Daily meals, special local flavor dishes, and banquets as per specified
4. China domestic transportation via air, bus, train and cruisers as per specified
5. Professional certified English speaking guide handpicked by our operation office
6. Round trip transfers and luggage handling

Tour Cost Does Not Include:
1. Tipping, Travel Insurance, China single entry visa fee and handling
2. Any misc. charge with personal natures that are not mentioned in the itinerary

Call ORIENT ODYSSEY 1-800-637-5778

1385 Gulf Road, Suite 203, Point Roberts, WA 98281, E-mail: info@orientodyssey.com Web: www.orientodyssey.com
Orient Odyssey – Journeys beyond the ordinary™

Tour Name:  Hidden Tribes, Shangri-la and Tibet  
Tour Code:  GST - 2012

To Book
1. Choose the month / date you prefer to travel from the list below.
2. Call ORIENT ODYSSEY at 1-800-637-5778, or complete and submit the TOUR RESERVATION FORM.
3. We are proud of our small group policy. Our group size is 10 – 18. Prices shown below reflect the cost of China land arrangement. It does not include int’l airfare between USA and China. Upon request, we can secure your int’l flight from any major US gateways with our preferred contract, or you may arrange your own air ticket by using mileage credits. Enjoy the flexibility.
4. Take the popular Private Journey option! For $43 per person per day extra, this trip can be operated as an exclusive private tour. Whether you are a couple or a group of friends, you will be accompanied exclusively by a private English speaking guide, a private chauffeur and a private car / bus throughout the journey. Enjoy the optimum personal attention and unparalleled flexibility. You can choose your own departure date, alter the sightseeing details on-the-go, upgrade hotels and flights, or even add or cancel meal arrangements at wish. On a Private Journey, personalization and flexibility is the norm! Spaces for this popular option are extremely limited. Please inquire at time of booking!

2012 GST Departures – Enjoy Maximum Flexibility
*Or Choose Your Own Traveling Date on a Private Journey

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Important Remark:
1. China domestic tax and fees of $198 per person is extra.
2. Sample contract round trip int’l airfare for USA – Shanghai – USA (low season Apr, Sep, Oct, Nov): From Los Angeles: $477 + US tax $108 + fuel surcharge $280 = total $865 per person. From New York: $620 + US tax $108 + fuel surcharge $280 = total $1008 per person. Special preferred contract rate from other major US gateways are available. For other months – May, Jun, Jul, Aug, and Dec. fares are more expensive. Sample fares quoted above are subject to change without notice, and are subject to the availability of special on sale class. Actual fares might be less. Booking are based on first come first serve. Since this program ends in Chongqing, we will also assist you to arrange the connecting domestic flights to Shanghai on your exit day as follows: Chongqing – Shanghai one way = Preferred contract rate $160 + tax / fuel $32 per person.
3. Prices quoted are in US dollars. Tour payment can be made by check, money order, or credit cards – Orient Odyssey accepts Visa, Master, Amex and Discover.
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18 Day

Hidden Tribes, Shangri-la and Tibet

Tour Code: GST - 2012

Operated by Orient Odyssey

Day 01 USA – Shanghai
Depart from Los Angeles, New York, or any other major US gateways. Enjoy in-flight meals and services. Move your watch one day ahead as you fly cross the international dateline. F

Day 02 Arrive in Shanghai
Your flight will land in Shanghai Pudong International Airport. After immigration and customs, you will be greeted by our representative. The transfer to the city center includes a 7 minutes thrilling journey onboard the worlds’ fastest Maglev (Magnetic Levitation) Train, reaching 311 mph. Check-in at the 5 star, luxurious, newly renovated, Ocean Hotel Shanghai. F

Day 03 Shanghai - Guiyang
We board Juneyao Airlines’ flight H01209, departing at 10:50 a.m., reaching Guiyang at 1:45 p.m.. Rarely featured in conventional tour packages, Guizhou (meaning “precious state”) has long been a remote backwater of China’s southwest. Its relative isolation has made the region one of the best-kept secrets in China. Its stunning landscape is characterized by limestone karst hills, jagged peaks and terraced rice fields. Colorful ethnic minority cultures have made Guizhou a paradise for many anthropologists and photographers. During our stay we will see towering mountains, plunging ravines, spectacular rock stratum, and graceful limestone caves. Here has Asia’s largest waterfall and is home to over 17 ethnic minority groups, each with own legacy of ancient culture, dress-style, food, primitive folklore and colorful dances. Guiyang, the provincial capital, an old walled city was built during the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644), according to the rules of ancient geomancy (south of the mountain and north of the river). A scenic drive will take us to the serene Qianling Lake, glistening like a pearl amidst a blue blur of mountains cocooned under a blanket of pines and cypresses. We will enjoy a leisurely stroll in the three-hundred-years old Hongfu Monastery, then follow a footpath tucked away in a cluster of ancient trees twisting and turning downhill towards the lakeside. It is frequent to encounter wild monkeys on this route. Our next stop is the 500 years old Jiaxiu Pavillion. Built in 1589, the majestic tower is connected by floating “jade bridge”. We will then check-in at the 4.5 star, deluxe, Ramada Palaza Miracle Hotel Guiyang, one of the best properties in town. B/F/D

Day04 Guiyang - Kaili
After breakfast, we drive through the beautiful countryside with its terraced hillsides and quaint towns on our way to Kaili, the center of Miao culture in eastern Guizhou. After check-in at the 4 star, local best, deluxe, Grand Dragon Hotel, we head to the fascinating Qingman Village, home to the Miao ethnic minority tribes. The
origins of the Miao people are uncertain, leading to numerous theories among scholars. Some put their original homeland as Mongolia, Tibet, or even Lapland, but it is widely believed that they lived in the Yellow River valley 4,500 years ago. The Miao have their own story. Local legend has it that they originated from the eggs of a butterfly. The butterfly emerged from a maple tree (maple is now a sacred tree that cannot be cut down), and married a bubble. The butterfly laid twelve eggs that were looked after by a jiyu, a mythical bird, until they hatched after many years. Finally, the eggs gave life to a water buffalo, a Miao man called Jiang Yang, a dragon, a snake, an elephant, a tiger and a thunder god, as well as abstract phenomena like disasters, calamities and ghosts. Today, the butterfly, jiyu bird and other animals are kept alive in the colorful and whimsical Miao embroidery. Other scholars believe Miao’s history dates back 4,000 years during the legendary fight between Yellow Emperor and Chiyou, a local tribal chief. It is believed that the Miao are the descendants of Chiyou’s defeated troops. They are mountain dwellers who built uniquely shaped wooden structures on stilts with balustrades. A large Miao village often contains over 1,000 families, with dwellings in overlapping rows and lines, covering an entire mountain slope. Though rarely visited by outsiders, Miao are among the most hospitable ethnic groups. Today we will be welcomed by village girls in their intricate silver headdresses and beautiful embroidered costumes, glistening and jingling whenever they move. They are eager to sing to us and share their plentiful rice wine. Take care to sip very little from each cup, as one may encounter as many as 16 to 20 cups on our way in! Guests will then be entertained in the “Bronze Drum Square” by colorful ethnic music and dances. Especially noteworthy is the traditional Lusheng, a music instrument made of Bamboo with hollow sounds. The largest Lusheng are usually played by the most respected elder. Through special arrangements by Orient Odyssey’s “People to People Contact” program, we stroll on a village trail amidst the beautiful rice fields to a school and the tribal leader’s house, where we can interact with farmers, students and teachers. Late afternoon we continue on a beautiful drive to Shiqiao village, where we can observe the ancient technique of paper making still in use today. Tonight we savor on a special local style dinner featuring the delicious Sour Fish Soup and other delicacies! B/L/SD

*Based on local weather, road condition and logistics, we might visit different tribal villages than the ones mentioned in the itinerary. All of them feature spectacular costumes, welcome ceremonies, music and dances, and heart-warming hospitality. School visits and observing classes in session might not always be possible due to school schedules.

Day05 Kaili - Anshun
The morning program takes us to the Jidao Miao Tribal Village. There are many different groups of Miao, each having distinct costumes, dialects, and customs. Local Han Chinese have given them names that are usually descriptive of and related to the women’s dress or hairstyle. Thus there are the Black, Red, and White Miao, Cock Miao, describing the shape of the headdress, Side Comb Miao because of the position of the hair
They can also be named according to where they live, hence Mountain or River Miao, or by the skirts they wear, Long or Short Skirt Miao. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Japanese anthropologist, Torii Ryuzo, devised a new system of classification. He recorded five main groups – White, Black, Red, Flowery, and Blue Miao – along with a number of subgroups. Miao scholars believe they should be classified more scientifically and according to the name they give themselves in their own language.

After the village visit, we embark on a magnificent drive through deep mountain valleys lined with rice terraces, rivers and verdant peaks. The highlight of the day will be “a stroll back in time” to the Sky Dragon Garrison Fortress, “Tianlong Tunbao”. Residents of the fortress wear long blue robes, speak a distinctive language. The fortress was established in the Ming Dynasty (around 1413) when the imperial court sent an army to control the indigenous people. These soldiers, originally from central and eastern China, settled in and flourished in their ever expanding fortress. Self sufficient and separated from the outside society, they have meticulously maintained a 600-year tradition of culture, dress, architecture, art, and lifestyle! When first discovered, historians were amazed to see an authentic ancient Ming Dynasty village in every detail. All the houses here are made with stone including the walls, door frames, and window panals. The roofs are thin and flat stone tiles. We will walk on the winding cobble stone alleys that cleverly connect the household, and witness the performance of Ground Opera, the “living fossil” of an ancient art form exclusively preserved here. It can be traced back thousands of years to military rituals that sought to boost the soldiers’ morale to fight the enemy. During the performance actors tie embroidered war costumes around their waists, set fighting flags at their back, and cover their face with a black veil. Wooden masks decorated with pheasant feathers are placed on their foreheads. Clear high pitched melodies is backed up by exciting drum beatings. Many fancy fighting postures are presented during the performance. Tonight we will stay at the 4 star, local best, deluxe, Grand Waterfall Hotel, the best property in town. B/L/D

Day06 Anshun – Huangguoshu Water Fall - Guiyang
After breakfast, we head to the magnificent Huangguoshu Water Fall, Asia’s largest with a height of 250 feet and a width of 280 feet. As the roaring Baishui River leaps out of the mountain into giant fractures, it breaks into five columns that tumble down to the base. Upon hitting the bottom of the cliff, it sends up geysers of droplets forming into dense fog. One can easily spot a rainbow here. We hike to the “Water Curtain Cave” behind the falls and get closer to the action. The cave, a 134 meters long corridor, has six unique naturally formed “windows” through which the falls can be watched, heard and touched! Listening to its thundering voice and stretching your hands to touch the columns of the cascading water is certainly an unforgettable experiences! After lunch, a spectacular drive takes us through the verdant mountain valleys to the Dragon Palace, an mysterious underground river that threads its
way through 20 mountains and many caves of varying sizes. We board a small wooden sampan and nose our way along a zigzagging water lane. Sometimes we enter gigantic caves with ceilings filled with stalactites; other times we travel along the lanes so narrow that the boat can barely pass. We will savor the serene experience - only the dripping water, the oars, and the folksongs sang by our boat handler will disturb the peace. We then return to Guiyang in the evening and overnight again at the deluxe Ramada Plaza Miracle Hotel Guiyang. B/L/D

Day07 Guiyang – Kunming (6,200 feet)
Our Air China flight CA1751 will depart at 11:05 a.m., arriving in Kunming at 12:10 p.m. Check-in at the 5 star, luxurious, Grand Park Hotel Kunming. Welcome to Yunnan; “South of the Clouds”, a magnificent patchwork of minority cultures stitched into a lush and dreamy landscape. Its north is overlooked by the roof of the world – Tibet; the jungles of Myanmar encroach from the west, while the flavors of Laos and Vietnam spill over from the south. Yunnan is still as it was in Marco Polo’s day “a land fertile in rice and wheat…… (with a capital) very great and noble, in (which) are found merchants and artisans, with a mixed population.” At least 22 minority races reside in Yunnan today, including Tibetans, Yi, Naxi, Mongols, Lahu, and Lisu – the greatest concentration of minority nationalities of any province in China. Kunming lies adjacent to the temple and willow adorned Green Lake, surrounded by mountains at an altitude of more than 6,200 feet, and is often called “the city of eternal spring” for its salubrious climate. We first visit the Western Hills, a band of sheer cliff faces, rising 2,000 ft above the shore of Lake Dian, with a series of paths, stairways, and tunnels that carved into the faces of the cliff, spiraling ever upward to the Dragon’s Gate at summit. On route we check out the cliffside grottoes with Buddhist carvings and various temples, including Huating Temple, Taihua Temple and Taoist Pavilion of Sanqinge. Here we take in the magic bird’s eye view of the lake Dian Chi. This evening is free for us to explore the city at own leisure. This is a great walking town, especially the northern part of the city, whose cobbled alleyways evoke the old China. B/F/D

Day08 Stone Forest Excursion
Today’s excursion calls the visit to the legendary Stone Forest, a myriad of pinnacles reputed by ancient Chinese to be “the most fantastic scenery under heaven”. This geological wonder is composed of closely knit outcrops of dark gray limestone karst that have weathered into various shapes since their formation 270 million years ago beneath the sea. When seen from a distance, the vast area of jagged stones dotted with green trees and colorful flowers has the look of a unique forest. Viewed up close, the oddly shaped rocks seem to take on a life of their own. The journey to the “forest” is as beautiful as the landscape that surrounds it. Scattered around are villages populated by several ethnic minorities. We will stop at a Sani minority village and study the “Yi” people’s colorful ethnic dress and unique life style. We then drive back to Kunming and enjoy a leisurely stroll at Cuihu, the Green Lake, with scenic views of ornate boats and bright pavilions. Time permitting, we may visit the flower gardens to watch the Tai Chi devotees at their art, or visit the 700-year-old Bamboo Temple, festooned with statues of Buddhist notables. Tonight we enjoy a special festive dinner featuring delicious local flavor dishes: Cross-bridge Noodles and Steam-pot Chicken. B/L/SD

Day09 Kunming – Dali (7,200 ft)
After breakfast we transfer to the airport for a short flight northwest, China Southern Airlines’ flight CZ3481 departs at 11:00 a.m., arriving in Dali at 11:50 p.m. Dali is located at
the crossroads to Burma and Tibet with an exquisite setting, strategically pinched in a narrow band between the beautiful lake of Erhai and the spectacular snowcapped Cangshan Mountain Range. This fertile plain was first cultivated over 3,000 years ago by ancestors of the Bai people, who remain the primary ethnic group in the area. They found the Kingdom of Nanzhao in the 8th century, which wielded significant influence over all of southwest China and southeast Asia in its day. The Kingdom of Dali replaced that of the Nanzhao and existed as an autonomous entity until Kuyblai Khan’s Mongolian army imposed its rule in 1253. Today we first visit the Bai Ethnic Minority State Museum. Bai in Chinese means “White”, and Bai people refer to themselves as descendants of the White King. However, white is by no means the dominant color of dress. Bai women favor blue or red, and most still prefer colorful ethnic dresses to modern ones. We stroll amongst the traditional houses of the bustling bazaar of Old Town, pass under the imposing South Gate. The narrow streets of Dali’s tiny neighborhoods feature low dark shops with merchants offering an amazing variety of exotic wares. Then we stop at a Catholic Church still in use today, comfortably tucked in a traditional Chinese style building. Influences of western religion reached here as early as the late Ming Dynasty. Afternoon we drive to Lake Er-Hai (Ear Lake, named after its shape) for a boat ride to enjoy the tranquil sceneries. A photo stop is planned for the famed Three Pagodas, where we take in the beautiful view of three brick towers set against the snowcapped peaks, ancient city walls, and the azure blue Lake. Visitors are no longer allowed to go up the towers, so it is better to take pictures from afar. Tonight we check-in at the 5 star, luxurious, Grand Bay View International Hotel Dali. B/F/D

Day10 Dali – Lijiang (Dayan Old Town) (7,872 ft)
After breakfast, we depart for Lijiang via an ancient tea trading road through beautiful scenery and numerous small villages. We drive through lush, flower-laden grasslands and dense forests. On route we enjoy fascinating stops at villages where we can see the unique Bai architecture. Stroll in the Bai Minority Bazaar and enjoy a “Three Course Tea” show with ethnic singing and dancing. In Zhoucheng Village we take a short stop at a local cottage industry producing the batik textiles for which the Bai are known. Around noon time we will arrive in the frontier town of Lijiang, translated as “Beautiful River”, as it was so named by Kublai Khan in 1254. This rugged and isolated town nestles at just under 8,000 feet in a broad valley, that ascends from 7,500 feet in the south to 10,000 feet in the northwest. The Old Town of Lijiang - Naxi town of Dayan, has been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO for its historic architecture and dramatic landscape. Frozen in time and retaining its original lay-out and traditional architectural style, Dayan is the best and last of its kind in the country. Majority of Lijiang’s inhabitants are Naxi (Nakhi), a group said to have derived from an ancient northeastern Tibetan tribe called the “Qiang” eons ago. The Naxi culture evolved in relative isolation for the last 2,000 years. Naxi’s original religion, “Dongba”, resembles the nature worship and other concepts of pre-Buddhist Tibet. It has aroused the interests of scholars around the world because the manuscripts were written with Naxi’s own pictographic script. In daily life Naxi women seems to be responsible for all the work – hauling, marketing, most of the field work, and managing the family’s money. We
first check-in at the 5 star, luxurious, Treasure Harbour International Hotel, before venturing out to explore the Old Town, a maze of traditional architecture. Once past the waterwheel at the entrance to Lijiang’s Old Town, we will find ourselves transported into a world of narrow cobblestone streets and canals of clear snowmelt, unchanged since the Ming Dynasty almost a thousand years ago when the town was founded. The canals are lined with weeping willows and breeched by decorative arched bridges meandering through the old city. Lijiang is an idyllic place for strolling. We will begin with the lively Old Market Square, perhaps stopping for tea and conversation at one of many teahouses in town. After dinner we enjoy unforgettable traditional Naxi Folk Music Orchestra Performance. Naxi men have always known to maintain a musical tradition. The first classical Naxi orchestra was founded under Kublai Khan’s patronage. Amazingly, the techniques and notes were passed on successfully from generation to generation by written records in pictographs. Tonight’s music you will hear literarily has remain unchanged for at least seven centuries! B/L/D

Day 11 Lijiang

Today’s highlight is the visit to the majestic Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. Standing grandly at 18,355 ft, it has never been conquered by man. Today many of its ravines, creeks, cliffs and meadows still have Naxi names and are the setting for the myths and legends of these people who have made the plain their homeland for over a thousand years. From White Water Creek, an impressive cable car ride takes us up to the steep slope of Yunshanping, a delightful meadow at 10,827 ft (based on local weather and logistics, we might visit another highland meadow “Maoniuping” instead). We take a leisurely stroll and enjoy the magnificent view of green grasslands, tall firs, and glittering snow. After our descend, we go to the sacred Yufeng Temple, dedicated to Tibetan Buddhism. If we are lucky we may meet and be blessed by one of the “Living Buddhas” himself, or by the senior monks or the abbot. The next stop is Baisha Village, once an important post and a bustling trade station on the Southern Silk Road which linked China and Tibet with Southeast Asia and on to Europe. We come here to see the vivid colors and intriguing figures in the hidden ancient murals. For remaining of the afternoon we enjoy free activity to explore the town at our own pace. This region is commonly believed to be the exact place described as the mythical Shangri-la in James Hilton’s novel “The Lost Horizon”. The geographic location, climate and other details are all an unbelievably accurate match to the descriptions in the novel. B/L

Day 12 Tiger Leaping Gorge

This morning we embark on a magnificent drive north, through unspoiled highlands and mountains. Horses roam freely, boys herd goats, and wildflowers grace the roadside as it switchbacks up and down. The scenery is outstanding: the road traverses the vast Lijiang valley into a topographical maze of verdant ridges, lavishly textured wheat fields lined with drying haystacks in artful array, and massive gorges punctured by waterfalls and rivers colored by the rich red earth.
of the surrounding hillsides. We travel along the **Golden Sand River**, the beginning of the mighty Yangtze. We will stop for the amazing view of the spectacular “**First Bend**” where the Yangtze, cutting through several mountains, changes its directions in several 90 degree turns. We then stop at the quiet ancient town “**Shigu**”, meaning the “**Stone Drum Town**”. Stroll her old cobblestone alley surrounded by centuries-old buildings and bridges. We continue our journey to the stupendous **Tiger Leaping Gorge**, one of the deepest and the most spectacular gorges in the world. The gorge is 12 miles long, with a natural drop of 623 feet. Legend says a fleeing tiger once escaped a hunter by leaping across the 98 ft gap (the narrowest point of the gorge) to safety. A thunderous roar can be heard miles away as water cascade through the narrow riverbed. We will be able to follow ancient pathways to descend to the bottom of the gorge, and enjoy a magnificent close-up view of sharp cliffs and roaring rushing water! This evening we return to Lijiang.  

**Day13 Lijiang - Chongqing**

This morning our first stop today is the **Mu Palace**, the palatial residence of the then tribal leader Mu, showcasing the best of the ancient ethnic architecture. Next we visit the **Black Dragon Pool** where we take in the majestic scenery of the **Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (“Yulongxueshan”)** being reflected in the calm waters of the lake between an arched marble bridge and a three storey pavilion. We then tour the **Dongba Culture Research Institute and Museum**, where now a days Naxi scholars translate the old religious manuscripts. It is also the home to a remarkable collection of Naxi relics and cultural displays. In the afternoon **China West Air** flight PN6012 will depart at 4:00 p.m., arriving in Chongqing at 5:30 p.m.. Local representatives will greet us and take us to the 5 star, luxurious, **Hotel Harbour Plaza Chongqing** to enjoy a restful night. Get ready for tomorrow’s morning flight and the exciting journey to Tibet, “Roof of the World”! 

**Day14 Chongqing - Lhasa, Tibet (11,811 ft)**

After an early breakfast we will go to the airport and board the flight to Tibet. **Sichuan Airlines’** flight 3U8633 departs at 11:35 a.m., arriving in **Lhasa**, the spiritual heartland of Tibet at 2:15 p.m.. The flying journey itself, is an unforgettable experience with breathtaking 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. In 1981 the great climber, photographer, and writer **Galen Rowell** made his first journey to Tibet and the northern side of Mount Everest (it was on this trip the first time Americans had been allowed into the Tibetan backcountry). In his magnificent book **Mountains of the Middle Kingdom**, written shortly after his return, Galen described flying on a similar route and seeing “……hundreds of snow peaks in all directions, a vision off the scale of my experience…… I saw distant peaks that looked Everest-sized. They rose on the horizon behind an ocean of lesser witecaps…… more miles of more jagged peaks, with a greater feeling of height, than anything I knew existed on the planet”. Half way on our flight to Lhasa we pass the great white citadel of Minya Konka (called Gongga Shan by the Chinese). At 24,783 feet, it is the highest
mountain in China proper. We then fly over the Hengduan Range and the deep, gloomy valleys of three of Asia’s greatest rivers, the Salween, the Mekong, and the Yangtze. As we near the Plateau we will likely catch sight of another impressive peak, 25,439-foot Namcha Barwa, the easternmost rampart of the Himalaya. (The western end of the chain is Nanga Parbat, thirteen hundred miles away in northern Pakistan). We will land in Tibet at Gongkar International Airport at a lofty 12,129 feet. Our Tibetan guide will greet us and accompany us on a long but scenic drive along the mighty Lhasa river to the city. On route, we will enjoy Orient Odyssey’s “People to People Contact” program and randomly stop at a Tibetan village and / or a school, where we can have some opportunities to interact with Tibetan peasants, teachers and students. Along the way we can take pictures of traditional Tibetan houses, Buddhist murals, and the spectacular landscape of rivers, highlands and mountains. Upon arrival, we check-in at the deluxe, 5 star, Jardin Secret Hotel Lhasa, one of the newest luxury properties in the region. This afternoon 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 (11,811 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). Lhasa means “country of the gods”, and for followers of Vajrayana Buddhism, it was literally so; here, after all, dwelled the Dalai Lama, the very incarnation of Chenrizig, or Avalokiteshvara, the essence of compassion for all sentient beings. Vajrayana (the Tibetan form of the Mahayana, or Great Vehicle branch of Buddhism) is an extremely complex and profound philosophy, and one of the subtexts of our story-filled journey will be getting acquainted with its deities, saints, and Buddhas as we roam Lhasa’s temples and monasteries. Lhasa 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. After the rest, we head out for a leisurely evening stroll on the bustling street of Lhasa, to our dinner restaurant.

Day 15 Lhasa & Surrounding Area

The unforgettable day begins with a visit of the majestic Potala Palace. Its imposing presence dominates the entire city. The 13-story structure was Tibet’s spiritual and governmental nexus. In 1845, the Abbe Huc, one of the first westerners to visit Tibet, wrote in 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”. As Robert Thurman, perhaps the West’s greatest interpreter of Tibetan Buddhism, has written, “Tibetan architecture sought to instill a sense of exaltation, security, and delight in a person’s nervous system. Thus the Potala expresses to the beholder that it is the residence of the bodhisattva of compassion: It is powerful yet inviting, secure and stable, yet fantastic and delightful”. Built in the 7th century, the Potala Palace contains over 1,000 rooms. Its ceilings are supported by more than 15,000 columns. It has numerous ceremonial halls, small chapels and meditation halls, each featuring centuries-old wall paintings, carvings, and ancient Buddhist scriptures written in 24 karat gold. We will see
eight vaults of deceased Dalai Lamas, all were lavishly decorated with gold, diamonds, turquoise, corals, and pearls. We marvel the grandest of Potala’s myriad rooms, its audience halls, the immense, jeweled burial chortens of past Dalai Lamas, and its chamber after chapel after shrine of statuary, frescoes, and thangkas. Atop the Palace, grandly overlooking the country of the gods, we will visit the apartment of the 14th Dalai Lama, who came here as a young kid from eastern Tibet after being recognized as the reincarnation of his predecessor, called the Great Thirteenth. Exiting the palace, we head to Tibet’s holiest temple, the Jokhang. It was often referred to by early Western visitor as Lhasa’s cathedral. “An endless, three story high flight of chapels surrounds the statue,” the pioneering Tibetologist Guiseppe Tucci wrote, “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.” Built by King Songsten 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 himself. No place in Tibet attracts so many pilgrims and so much spiritual longing every day. 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. Much has changed in Tibet since the Abbe Huc’s visit, but the Barkhor still has the air of a medieval bazaar. In today’s Barkhor we can bargain good-naturedly for dorjes, phurbas, thangkas, and other religious implements, for Tibetan hats and boots, books, turquoise jewelry, everyday exotica, wall hangings and maybe even some yak butter. 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 get to know the proud, red-tasseled Khampas from eastern Tibet, the monks, mendicants, and pilgrims who circumambulate the Jokhang, and enjoy bantering with the astute and engaging merchants of this bit of old Lhasa. Take our time to brose in this area and experience the heartbeat of Tibet!  

Day 16  Lhasa & Surrounding Area  

The highlight of the day is an excursion to two of the most sacred grounds of central Tibet; Drepung Temple and Sera Monastery. Both of them were once home to over ten thousand Lamas, and were served as the primary religious educational centers and pillars of the theocratic state. If we are lucky, we might arrive during their prayer session. They will simply quietly ease inside to hear the lilting, booming chanting of the sutras by hundreds or thousands. We can go behind the scenes to the temple kitchen to learn
how 5,000 dishes were prepared at every meal. Enjoy the magnificent collection of priceless murals, carvings, and crafts inside the hall. Please feel free to chat with monks, who are always eager to answer our questions. **Orient Odyssey** had carefully planned our tour logistics so we can join in the right time to observe the rarely seen theatrical monk debate. In the back yard of the monastery, hundreds of monks engage in their daily debate about Buddhist philosophy, using interesting ritualistic body and arm movements to present their points. In the afternoon we head to the Norbulinka, “Precious Stone Garden”. It is the Dalai Lama’s exquisite and beloved summer palace. It is from his holiness went into exile in 1959 and was still unable to return. In his living quarter, we can see the magnificent wall paintings in the audience hall, describing in great detail the experiences of the 14th Dalai Lama, framed by legends from the lives of the Buddha and Tsongkapa. 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……. Today’s last program is arranged through Orient Odyssey’s “People to People Contact”, we will visit a Tibetan family. Sip the yak butter tea, chat with household members to explore the authentic local life.

**Day17 Lhasa – Chongqing**

This morning, as we reminisce about our visit to the “roof of the world”, **Air China** flight CA4419 departs at 10:40 a.m., arriving in Chongqing at 12:55 p.m.. Welcome to the mountain city of Chongqing – China’s largest metropolitan with a population of over 30 millions. We first head to the Panada section of the Chongqing Zoo, part of China’s nation-wide ambitious conservation effort to save the endangered species. The facility is known for its relatively large adult Panda collection, and its 2 hectares well maintained ground dedicated exclusively to the Pandas, and a world acclaimed successful breeding programs for the Pandas (one mother has had three). Eighty percent of the world’s 1,000 remaining giant pandas reside in this region. Today we may see up to half a dozen of pandas wandering through a semi-natural domain of bamboo groves and forest. If the timing is right, we can even observe the Panda behavior during feedings. The next stop is General Stillwell’s Museum. During WWII, Chongqing was China’s wartime Capital. **General Stillwell** was the commander of the US Forces in China including the famous “Flying Tigers”, which was also based in Chongqing. General’s formal residence is now a museum where one can trace Sino-
American wartime friendship through an interesting collection of rarely seen photos, documents, correspondences, and reminiscent of that era. Tonight we enjoy a farewell dinner featuring special local flavor of spicy Sichuan Cuisine! Overnight at the 5 star, deluxe, Hotel Harbour Plaza Chongqing, one of the most luxurious properties in the city. B/F/SD

Day18  Chongqing – USA
After breakfast, you still have some free time to explore or savor the memory of your thrilling journey to the Hidden Tribes, Shangri-la and Tibet. Our guide will escort you to the airport and assist your check-in for your homebound international flight, and arrive back to USA on the same day due to international dateline. B/F

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Featured luxury hotels and cruisers:
1. Ocean Hotel Shanghai
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3. Grand Dragon Hotel Kaili
4. Grand Waterfall Hotel Anshun
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6. Grand Bay View Int’l Hotel Dali
7. Treasure Harbor Int’l Hotel Lijiang
8. Harbour Plaza Chongqing
9. Jardin Secret Hotel Lhasa
10. Harbour Plaza Chongqing

Sample int’l flight schedule from Los Angeles:
UA877  Los Angeles – Shanghai  1302 / 1815+1
UA878  Shanghai – Los Angeles  2010 / 1620

Sample int’l flight itinerary from New York:
CO87  New York Newark – Shanghai  1100 / 1340+1
CO88  Shanghai – New York Newark  1545 / 1620

*Flight schedules are subject to change without notice.
*Departures from other major US gateways are available upon request.