GANSU
PRAYERS ON THE PLATEAU

JUNE 9 - JUNE 15 2019

PREPARED BY THE HUTONG FOR
VICTORIA SHANGHAI ACADEMY, HONG KONG
KEY CONCEPTS

TEAMWORK

Our aim is to help students develop leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills under challenging circumstances while also improving their understanding of team dynamics. The Hutong's carefully planned culinary activities will test students' abilities to work effectively as a team. By the end of the program they will understand and be able to identify the benefits and challenges of TRUE collaboration.

PHYSICAL CHALLENGE

To offer students a rewarding physical challenge that pushes personal and physical growth. The Gansu program will test their tenacity and move them beyond their perceived comfort zones, all in the spirit of a safe, controlled and mediated adventure. By the end of the course students will have developed a greater appreciation for and ability to exert themselves physically, mentally and emotionally. Gansu offers the chance for true adventure. Be prepared for challenges of every kind, whether it's carrying your own gear up a hard hike or breathing at an altitude of more than 3000m, Gansu will be a journey through wilderness and national parks.

NOMADIC CULTURE & HISTORY

Home to hundreds of yaks and the nomads that tend them, Gansu is one of the three provinces that used to belong to the Tibetan kingdom. Its history still breathes in the many monasteries that dot its windswept plains and soaring red-rock mountains, making Gansu a place that offers both astounding natural beauty and exceptional cultural windows for those willing to stray into one of China's more remote regions to find them.

TIBETAN BUDDHISM & TRADITIONS

While Gansu is known as the Gateway to Tibet, its unique culture is also influenced by its large Muslim population and proximity to Mongolia. We will be visiting secluded temples and monasteries where we will have the chance to learn about traditional paintings known as thangka and traditional means of worship and prayer. We will have the chance to meet some monks on our journey and learn about the significance of Tibetan Buddhism to the local people of Gansu and their culture.
Home to hundreds of yaks and the nomads that tend them, Gansu used to belong to the Tibetan kingdom. Its history still breathes in the many monasteries that dot its windswept plains and soaring red-rock mountains, making this region a place that offers both astounding natural beauty and exceptional cultural windows for those willing to stray into one of China’s more remote regions to find them.

Our week-long trip will begin in and finish in Gansu’s provincial capital Lanzhou. A cross between wilderness and cultural exploration, our journey will take us to secluded temples, remote gorge and mountain hikes and both a Tibetan village and nomadic tent homestay in a quest for authentic immersion. While this region is known as the Gateway to Tibet, its unique culture is also influenced by its large Muslim population and proximity to Mongolia and Sichuan.

Still undisturbed by the furor of tourism, Gansu still offers the chance for true adventure. Be prepared for challenges of every kind, whether picking up a new phrase in Tibetan or breathing at an altitude of more than 3000m, and also for the chance to create memories that will last a lifetime.
## ITINERARY & DAILY SCHEDULE

Meals provided indicated in schedule as Breakfast (B), Lunch (L), and Dinner (D)

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<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
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| Day 1   | Hong Kong - Lanzhou | **Evening**  
Afternoon Flight from Hong Kong to Lanzhou  
Airport Pick-Up  
Lanzhou Niu Rou Mian Dinner + Introductions  
Hotel Check-In |
| June 9  | Accommodation: Ibis Hotel  
Meals: D |
| Day 2   | Lanzhou - Baoma | **Morning**  
Breakfast at Hotel  
Transfer from Lanzhou to Baoma (~4 hour drive)  
Check in and intro at Baoma  
**Afternoon**  
Lunch at Snowy Mountain Cafe: Yak Burgers and Fries  
Tibetan Monastery Scavenger Hunt & Tour  
Tenzin Dolma Thangka Art workshop  
**Evening**  
Dinner  
Debrief and Gratitude  
Lights Out |
| June 10 | Accommodation: Hotel  
Meals: B, L, D |
| Day 3   | Baoma - Langmusi | **Morning**  
Breakfast in Baoma  
Short Thangka Wall Hike  
Drive to Langmusi (~3 hour drive)  
**Afternoon**  
Lunch at Sichuan restaurant  
Red Rocks Hike (~5 hours)  
**Evening**  
Dinner at Leisha’s Restaurant  
Debrief and Reflection  
Return to Hotel. Students need to pack 3 bags:  
1.) Day pack for the all day hike on May 29  
2.) Garbage bag for the nomad tent stay with warm and sleeping clothes  
3.) All other clothes, items can go into larger suitcase or backpack  
Lights out |
| June 11 | Accommodation: Hotel  
Meals: B, L, D |
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| Day 4     | Langmusi       | **Morning**  
Breakfast at hotel  
Hike through Langmusi Gorge to Huagai God mountain - Peak is 4200m (~4 hours)  
Picnic Lunch on Mountain  
**Afternoon**  
Hike 3 hours to Tibetan Village (Hike is 15 km total)  
Arrive Trailhead in town, meet the bus, transfer to Village  
Settle into nomadic tents. Help the nomads gather the sheep back to the tent.  
**Evening**  
Dinner with nomads  
Debrief and Reflections, Lights out |
| June 12   |                |                                                                                                       |

| Day 5     | Langmusi - Hezuo | **Morning**  
Breakfast in nomadic tents. Learn how to make yak butter, cheese, and yoghurt  
Nomad activities rotation, 2 groups:  
A.) “Sheep Roundup” Lasso a sheep or a tent stake in ground  
B.) “The Slingshot” Use dried yak dung to try to hit targets With a Tibetan slingshot  
**Afternoon**  
Make yak dumplings, roll dough, mix meat  
Eat lunch with nomadic families  
Depart Nomadic tents, Transfer to Hezuo (~3 hours)  
**Evening**  
Dinner + Hotel Check-In  
Reflections and Lights Out |
| June 13   |                |                                                                                                       |

| Day 6     | Hezuo - Lanzhou | **Morning**  
Breakfast in Hezuo Hotel  
Walk around Hezuo Monastery kora with pilgrims  
Tour Milarepa Temple. Sketching activity for students  
**Afternoon**  
Lunch in Hezou Transfer to Lanzhou  
Settle into Shambala hotel  
Final Group Dinner  
Final Reflections & Celebrations |
| June 14   |                |                                                                                                       |

| Day 7     | Lanzhou - Hong Kong | **Morning**  
Breakfast in Shambala Hotel  
Depart Hotel to drive 70 minutes to Lanzhou LHW airport  
Airport Drop Off, students return to Hong Kong |
| June 15   |                |                                                                                                       |
MONASTERIES

Home to fascinating cultural artefacts such as traditional paintings known as thangka, we’ll also delve into the religious significance of Tibetan Buddhism in the local culture and watch monks engage in Buddhist-style debates. The tradition of clapping hands during debates symbolises the bringing together of practice (the right hand) and wisdom (the left hand), to achieve deep understanding and clarity.

TIBETAN NOMADIC CULTURE + LIFESTYLE

Our program takes students through the remote regions of Amdo Tibet into the high grasslands and monasteries that are the heartbeat of Tibetan nomadic culture. Eat a cup of tart yak yoghurt, walk under the tall golden spires of monastery halls and giant Buddhas, and trek through rugged mountains to discover how nomads have kept their ways alive for centuries in the midst of an often unforgiving high-altitude environment. With the opportunity to stay with Tibetan nomads, we’ll have insight into their daily routines and lifestyle and learn to appreciate the richness of their culture.

TREKKING ON THE GRASSLANDS

Gansu’s rugged terrain and steep altitude will provide plenty of opportunities for physical challenge. While there is always a risk of mild altitude sickness, we have built the itinerary specifically to ensure that with good health, things should go smoothly. Every effort is made to ensure your wellbeing and safety, and as long as you stay healthy, hydrated, and get enough sleep, you should experience little discomfort due to altitude.
TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

YAKS + WILDLIFE

Yaks play a significant role in Tibetan people’s daily life. Tibetan people rely on yak milk for cheese, as well as for butter for the ubiquitous butter tea and offerings to butter lamps in monasteries. Yak meat is high in protein with only one-sixth the fat of regular beef. In the summer months it is dried, but in winter it is often eaten raw. Yak leather is used as their coats and tents. The outer hair of the yak is woven into tent fabric and rope, and the soft inner wool is spun into chara (a type of felt) and religious practices. Yak hide is used for the soles of boots and the yak’s heart is used in Tibetan medicine. Yak dung is required as a fundamental fuel, left to dry in little cakes of the walls of most Tibetan houses. In fact, so important are yaks to Tibetans that the animals are individually named just like children.

TIBETAN NOMADIC TENT STAY

We will be staying with nomadic families in black yak hair tents with an earthy fireplace in the middle and carpets and cushions all around for sitting and sleeping. By staying with local families, participants will have the chance to interact with their generous hosts by engaging in a cooking workshop to learn how to make some of their traditional dishes along with other traditional nomadic cultural activities like grinding barley powder for their traditional breakfast called “tsampa”, weaving yak hair to make rope and the chance to hear a trick or two herding sheep and yaks.
TRIP HIGHLIGHTS:

LABRONG MONASTERY

Labrong Monastery is the largest monastery in the traditional Tibetan region of Amdo. Established in 1709, Labrang housed over 4000 monks at its peak, but now only has around 1500 monks with another couple of hundred lay students. Located in the Gansu Part of Amdo, Labrang is considered the cultural heart of Amdo Tibetan culture along with nearby town of Rebkong. Labrang is one of the “Great Six” Gelukpa sect monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism.

Labrang Monastery is an important pilgrimage destination for Tibetans living across the Amdo region. Though religious pilgrims come throughout the year, the most popular time pilgrims arrive in Labrang is the weeks before and after Losar, or Tibetan New Year. Large festivals take place in Labrang during Losar each year. A huge Thangka (a huge Buddhist painting) is displayed on the Thangka Wall near the monastery and many thousands of Tibetans are in attendance. Each day during Losar thousands of pilgrims walk the kora (pilgrimage circuit) around the monastery. The pilgrimage circuit is lined with thousands of prayer wheels.
VALUES AND CHALLENGES

Throughout our programs, we challenge students to not only push their boundaries and explore their surrounding culture but we encourage them to take responsibility for their actions through embracing sustainable travel, making good decisions and supporting their classmates. These notions are born out of our own company Core Values:

1. Be a good egg!
2. Embrace diversity!
3. Light a spark!
4. Go the extra ‘li’ (mile)!
5. Seek challenge!
6. Smile more!

We like to challenge students to adopt these practices and award those who demonstrate such values during the trip, through initiatives such as:

THE CHOPSTICK CHALLENGE

Each student is given their very own set of sustainable bamboo chopsticks with a stylish pouch to keep them in. Why? Forests are being chopped down for producing chopsticks – 20 million trees per year to produce 80 billion disposable chopsticks for China alone. To discourage deforestation and wasteful consumption we avoid using disposable chopsticks and encourage responsibility for possessions. Students who demonstrate best sustainability practices will earn the ‘Golden Chopstick Award.’

THE HUTONG HELMSMAN

Mao Zedong was known as “The Great Helmsman” because of his ability to steer the PRC to the right course of action. At The Hutong, we will choose our Helmsmen and Helmswomen based on who has lived up to the Hutong’s Core Values that day, thereby helping steer us to a more successful trip. We typically have each teacher choose someone from his or her group, and by the end of the trip each student ends up being recognized for their positive contributions.
REFERENCES

We have been running innovative, custom-crafted educational tours since 2009 with responsible professionalism and while maintaining an exemplary safety record. We encourage all new partners to contact references for an unbiased perspective on their experiences with The Hutong. Below is a list of top administrative contacts for international schools that we regularly run programs for. We are also happy to provide contact information of teachers who have been trip leaders on our programs, and with whom we have worked closely.

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Head of Secondary School, British School of Nanjing

Fred Runkel fred.runkel@sh.ycef.com
Co-Principal, YCIS Shanghai

“The Hutong is the best group I have had the opportunity to work with in my 16 years of doing Week Without Walls programs. They are safety oriented, engaging to students, understand the importance of building solid relationships, great communicators, detail oriented, problem solvers, and an all around fun group of people work with.”

Craig Gingerich, Concordia International School Shanghai

“In 32 years of teaching, I have accompanied many school trips all over the world and used many companies. This trip was one of the best and The Hutong deserve to be ranked at the top!”

Beryl Scott Rous, Utahloy International School Guangzhou
ABOUT THE HUTONG

At The Hutong, we offer a range of interactive, educational, unique, and fun activities to students and school groups of all different ages. Our interactive programs are designed to broaden participants’ understanding of Chinese culture and allow them to experience an authentic side of China. We aim to adapt our programs and work closely with schools and teachers to create customized cultural activities for various Grade Levels and subject areas. By incorporating grade and subject-specific learning targets into the design of our onsite and offsite excursions, The Hutong strives to offer top-notch activities that are engaging and relevant.

Combining our staff’s expertise in both tourism and education, we have been running unique and creative study tours to off-the-beaten-track destinations since 2009, with thorough professionalism and maintaining an impeccable safety record. We aim to broaden students’ horizons by exposing them to memorable experiences throughout China. Our typical educational tours focus on a combination of cultural immersion and outdoor education. We place an important emphasis on experiential learning. We do not just visit tourist spots, but we experience the places we visit and take a step deeper. The majority of our team has a background in both travel and education and this is where we look to excel.

Each year we expand our destinations and topics. Our goal is to work closely with schools to incorporate their curriculum and learning objectives in our educational travels, and give the students and staff exceptional experiences. The Hutong is happy to propose customized offsite programs that build upon the units of inquiry taught in your school.

The Hutong places particular emphasis on experiential learning, and works increasingly to give its students the opportunity to service the communities they visit. Students who attend Hutong trips engage with global issues by collaborating to plan and execute community service programs. They leave the trip with a renewed sense of their strengths and abilities, as well as a more solid understanding of ethical tourism and global development.
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