

INFORMATION PACK

20-25 OCT 2021

YUSHU & KHAM TIBET

*Tibetan Culture
Immersion in Qinghai*



The Hutong
Travel

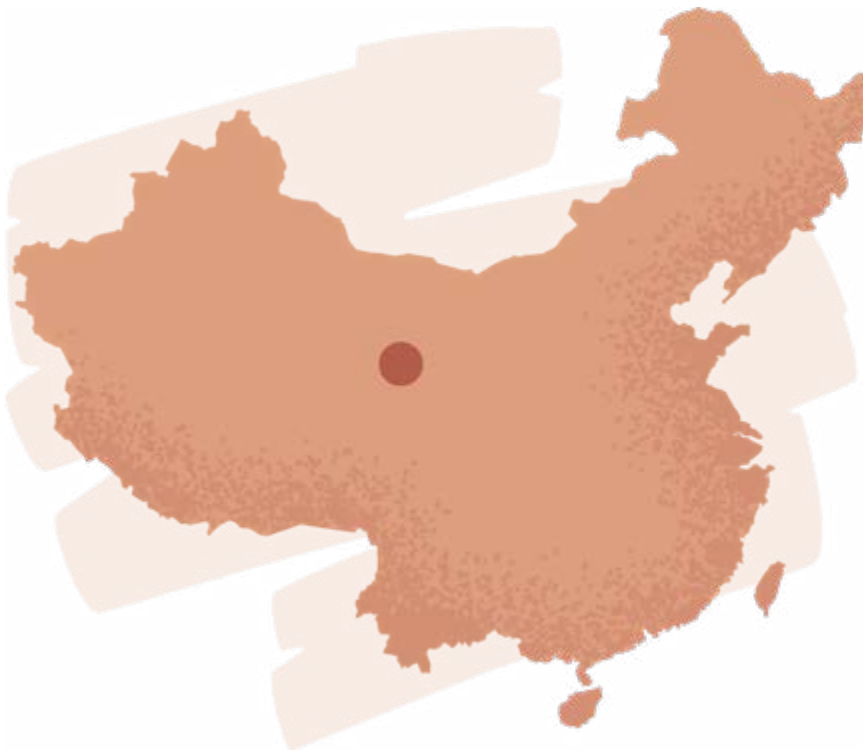


Contents

- 03** Introduction
- 04** Map & Details
- 05** Destinations at a Glance
- 08** Itinerary
- 11** Important Information
- 12** A Bit About Us



Introduction **Yushu & Kham Tibet**



Home to thousands of yaks and the nomads that tend them, Qinghai province used to belong to the Tibetan kingdom. Its history still breathes in the many monasteries that dot the province's windswept plains and soaring red-rock mountains, offering both astounding natural beauty and exceptional cultural windows for those willing to stray into China's more remote regions to find them.

Our week-long trip can't possibly cover all that Qinghai has to offer, but we will certainly enjoy the highlights. A cross between wilderness and cultural exploration, our journey will take us to national parks, secluded temples, and village stays in a quest for authentic immersion.

While Qinghai is known as the Gateway to Tibet, the area's unique culture is also influenced by its large Muslim population and proximity to Mongolia.

Still undisturbed by the furor of tourism, Qinghai 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 4000m, and also for the chance to create memories that will last a lifetime.

Tibetan Plateau

Map & Details

DEPARTURE DATE

20th October, 2021
(Wednesday)

RETURN DATE

25th October, 2021
(Monday)

PRICE

RMB 9,900
(does not include airfare)

SIGN-UP PROCESS

To express your interest and reserve your space, please email travel@thehutong.com.

Our team will provide a registration form to complete, give updated travel information, and answer any questions you may have.



Destinations at a Glance

The Hutong's Kham Tibet trip gives travellers the chance to experience choice locations of this amazing province. We will visit the following places.

Yushu

Yushu is a town in Qinghai Province located on high rolling grasslands at 3,700 metres, in the traditional Kham Area of the Tibetan Plateau. Although it is outside the Tibet Autonomous Region, inhabitants are mostly Tibetan, with many merchants are Han Chinese who have moved from eastern China to take advantage of business investment opportunities. The area has a population of over 250,000, and is the fourth largest city in Qinghai Province. Its placement in southwestern Qinghai makes it not only a cultural center but an important area for ecological preservation for a watershed that feeds some 1 billion people.

Nangchen

Get ready for a bumpy ride! After centuries of remote isolation, Nangchen still sees very few tourists and those who make it out here are in for some of the most beautiful and wild terrain in all of the Tibetan Plateau. Nangchen is definitely not a luxury destination, but do expect to be amazed by the grandiose scenery and lots of wildlife. As home to Himalayan Golden Monkeys, Blue Sheep, Wild Ass, and Tibetan Antelope, Nangchen is a nature lover's paradise. It is also the perfect location to engage local Tibetan nomadic life and learn what life is like for yak herders in the mountains.

Tibetan Plateau Itinerary

DAY 1 // Arrival

In the afternoon, we will meet you in the Yushu YUS Batang airport after baggage claim and then transfer to our hotel in Yushu. Right on the valley of the Batang River and a significant part of the Yangtze River watershed, the city seat itself is called Gyegu. This is the heartland of the Kham Tibetan nomads in the high grasslands of the Tibetan Plateau. Yushu will be the start and finish of our tour and sits at 3,600 meters.



DAY 2 // Yushu

In the morning we will explore one of the greatest Buddhist pilgrimage sites in all of Kham Tibet. The Gyanak Mani temple has the largest collection of hand carved prayer stones in Tibet. Everyday, thousands of worshippers make a religious pilgrimage around millions of hand-engraved prayer stones. After an authentic Tibetan lunch in Yushu, we will spend the afternoon in Jyeku Monastery with majestic views of Yushu and the surrounding areas.



DAY 3 // Princess Wensheng

Today we will visit the sacred Buddhist temple dedicated to Princess Wensheng of the Tang Dynasty, who in 641 married the then ruler of the Tibetan Kingdom, Songtsen Gampo, in a move for political unification. This is an excellent place for our afternoon hike around the mountain, totally covered in a blanket of brightly colored prayer flags. From a distance the mountain appears to have been the home to a giant spider who has woven its all encompassing web from mountain top to mountain top. Afterwards, we will drive to Nangchen for a locally sourced Tibetan dinner and then it's a free evening to rest or walk the Tibetan markets.



DAY 4 // Gar Monastery

Today we will explore Gar Monastery, situated in the alpine forests of southern Qinghai. The monastery is home to several hundred monks, is surrounded by evergreen trees, and is one of the best places in Nangchen county to go hiking. Even though the monastery is located above 4200 meters, there are plenty monkeys in the area. The old prayer wheels in the upper monastery are said to be over 700 years old.





DAY 5 // Gyodrag Monastery

On our drive back to Yushu, we will visit Gyodrag monastery, the second largest of the Kagyu monasteries in Nangchen. As we explore this remote monastery, we will enjoy the original, unique style of architecture. As we make our way back to Yushu in the afternoon, we will stop for some short hikes along the way, before settling into our hotel and our final celebration dinner.



DAY 6 // Departure

After breakfast, we will have the morning to relax and enjoy Yushu Gesar square, before our transfer to Yushu Batang airport.



Cultural Tidbits

Qinghai, literally translating to “Blue Sea”, draws its name from the immense salt-water lake at its centre, the largest of its kind in China. The province is also home to the origins of the Yellow, Yangtze, and Lantsang Rivers, cascading from fountainheads of more than 6,000 meters (~21,000 ft) above sea level.

Its population includes almost forty ethnic groups, with national minorities accounting for nearly 50% of the five million who live there. Both Buddhism and Islam are very alive in the province, as witnessed by the many temples and mosques that draw devotees and tourists alike.

Until 1928, Qinghai was part of the Tibetan Kingdom and still retains much Tibetan influence on its culture, language, religion and lifestyle. Many locals are of Tibetan ethnicity and still lead essentially nomadic lives raising yaks on the grasslands beneath broad blue skies.

Important Information **Fitness, Altitude & Difficulty**

While we're not preparing for a marathon hike, Qinghai's rugged terrain and steep altitude will still provide plenty of opportunities for physical challenge. Flying into Yushu will bring us to a height of 3,600 metres (~12,000 ft) above sea level and our day trips to Nangchen will take us up to 4,200 metres (~13,800ft). These altitudes are roughly the same as if you would fly into Lhasa or visit Shigatse and Yamdrok Lake in Tibet. 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; as long as you are in good health, stay hydrated, and get enough sleep, you should experience little discomfort due to altitude.

Apart from your physical condition (training beforehand is not essential, but would help as we'll be spending plenty of time on our feet), it is important to note the packing requirements for this trip. Qinghai is known for its variable weather conditions, so bringing suitable gear will keep you happy and comfortable in the mountains. If you have any questions about equipment or would like recommendations on what to bring or buy, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Above all, keep in mind that we'll experience one of the more remote destinations in China, a neighbour to Tibet and Mongolia and far off the beaten track. Amongst everything else you'll pack, a wide smile and open heart are the most important items on the list. At The Hutong, we care about going the extra *lǐ*, because that one step further makes the rewards all the sweeter.



Important Information

Meet Your Guides



Ben Cubbage // Trip Leader

Ben has lived on and extensively travelled the Tibetan Plateau since 2010. He has a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and has spent considerable time teaching organic agriculture and sustainable development in Africa.

Ben has extensive trekking experience, having completed the 4,240 km Pacific Crest Trail, thru-hiked Appalachian Trail and guided trips to the base camp of Mt. Everest, the headwaters of the Yellow River, and the base of Amnye Machen.



Jeremiah Jenne // Historian in Residence

Historian Jeremiah Jenne will also be accompanying the group. Jeremiah has taught late imperial and modern Chinese history in Beijing for over 15 years.

Jeremiah will be leading discussions on the history of this region and its relationship with past dynasties.



Sangye // Local Partner

A nomad in the Langmusi grasslands, Sangye is our local partner in Qinghai and Gansu.

He is passionate about sharing Tibetan culture with visitors, and helping to develop eco-tourism in the region to benefit local communities.

藏
高
原

Important Information Essentials

Arrival & Departure

This trip will begin in Yushu. We will arrange a pick-up at Yushu Batang Airport, as well as provide necessary details if you are arriving a day or two earlier by train or plane.



Accommodation

We'll be staying in a nice comfortable hotel in Yushu on the first and last night of the trip. The rest of the time, we have more varying standards, mostly Tibetan boutique hotels with lots of charm and local flavor.



Hiking & Elevation

Given Qinghai's average altitude of 3,000 metres, it's best to be prepared for altitude sickness. We recommend that you visit a travel medical doctor and ask about possible medication to combat its effects. Hikes can range between 3,000 to 4,000 meters in elevation and can be tailored to be easy or more challenging depending on the preferences of the group. If you feel any discomfort, you can always opt out of hiking or activities on that day.



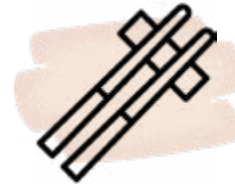
Flights

The Hutong will recommend flights, and can help purchase tickets upon request, though we find it's often easiest for participants to book on their own. If we do help you purchase your ticket, we will not mark up flights. Please let us know your preference. If you have to cancel your flight or change your schedule, the terms and fees of the final booking will ultimately be the responsibility of the traveler.



Meals & Snacks

We will be enjoying local cuisine throughout our journey, often prepared in a villager's home in a cosy family environment. Given the nomadic culture of the people, sheep and yak products, including meat, milk and yoghurt, form staples of the local diet. Some meals during the hiking parts of our journey will be served picnic-style, including sandwich staples and basic Western food, however there will be plenty of opportunity to explore a variety of snacks and local delicacies.



To keep up your energy on the hikes, we recommend you bring along some of your personal favourites as well, such as granola bars.

Serendipity

Hutong trip leaders travel regularly to destinations to develop relationships with local contacts to provide the most authentic cultural experiences possible. As such, trip itineraries are subject to change, pending the discovery of an even better activity or destination. Itineraries may also be subject to change due to weather, traffic, or government policies.



Tibetan Nomadic Culture



Our program takes participants 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.

October Weather

Most of the areas we travel to are between 3,500 meters and 4,000 meters in elevation. Yushu, in southern Qinghai at 3,600 m is generally clear and springy in the early fall with daytime temperatures of 10 to 20 Celsius, depending on the elevation. The high altitude sun can be pretty intense so make sure you have lots of sunscreen, a sun hat, and sunglasses. Nights at higher altitudes can be around 0 to 5 Celsius so you will still need a good down jacket, a nice rain jacket, and cozy sleeping clothes.



Health & Covid-19



We recommend that you visit a travel medical doctor or consult with the CDC and ask about the following vaccinations: typhoid, polio, tetanus and Hepatitis A.

A Covid-19 test may be required prior to trip departure depending on current travel guidelines. We will notify you in advance of the trip if this is the case.

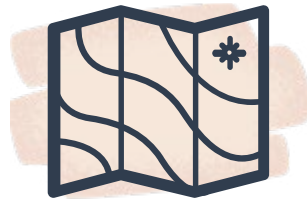
People



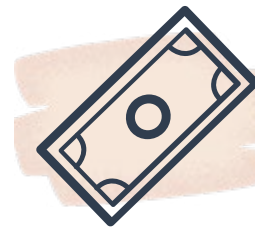
Tibetan people have their own distinctive cultural traditions. Along our route, you'll meet many of our knowledgeable local partners who'll happily share with you their cultures and traditions, meaning we're all sure to learn a lot and have some great conversations along the way.

Guides

Our Tibetan Golden Week Adventure comes fully-equipped with English-speaking guides who are familiar with the terrain and extremely knowledgeable about the area's culture, industry, and history. We also work very closely with amazing local guides who know and love the area; they help to provide all kinds of wonderful experiences.



Money & Extra Expenses



ATMs can be found in Yushu, but are hard to find in the smaller villages and towns. In most places you won't need money, except for snacks or drinks. There will be several stops along the way for local keepsakes, in which case you may wish to have a little bit of money; no more than a few hundred RMB should be sufficient, unless you'd like to stock your tea collection (in which case, you can spend as much as you like). Of course, you can always pay with Wechat or Alipay, too.

Important Information

Packing List

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Please use your own judgment when packing and keep packing to a minimum.

ESSENTIAL ITEMS

- ☐ Passport with valid visa
- ☐ 1x 60L backpack or small suitcase for clothes (backpack is preferable)
- ☐ 1x 25L day bag
- ☐ 1L reusable water bottle (second, collapsible bottle recommended)
- ☐ 1x sleeping bag
- ☐ 1x pair sturdy backpacking boots or hiking shoes
- ☐ 1x rain jacket (Gore-Tex preferable)
- ☐ 1x pair of rain pants (Gore-Tex preferable)
- ☐ 10x COVID-19 protective masks

TOILETRIES & MEDICATION

- ☐ Toothbrush & toothpaste
- ☐ Small personal first aid kit
- ☐ Anti-diarrhea medicine
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ A quick-dry towel
- ☐ Insect repellent



CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

- ☐ 4x t-shirts
- ☐ 2x short-sleeve shirts (wicking material)
- ☐ 2x long-sleeve shirts (wicking material)
- ☐ 2x pair of comfortable shorts
- ☐ 2x pair of durable long trousers
- ☐ 1x warm sweater, wool or fleece
- ☐ 1x insulated jacket for mornings & evenings
- ☐ 8x underwear
- ☐ 8x socks
- ☐ 1x protective hat, preferably wide-brimmed
- ☐ 1x pair of gloves
- ☐ 1x athletic shoes
- ☐ Sunglasses

OPTIONAL/MISCELLANEOUS

- ☐ Ear plugs
- ☐ Flip flops
- ☐ Headlamp or flashlight with extra batteries
- ☐ Bandana
- ☐ Pocket knife (don't pack in carry-on)
- ☐ Energy snacks (energy bars, trail mix, etc.)
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Chargers

*I was not a fan of
group tours before I
experienced a Hutong
tour.*

*Now, I'm looking for
my next one.*

Richard Carter

Trip Participant (2021)





The Hutong
**A Bit
About Us**

The Hutong creates unforgettable travel experiences throughout China for students from International Schools, and for people of all ages from around the world. Since 2009, we have run educational, and adult-travel, programs to off-the-beaten-track destinations across China. From the rainforests of southern Yunnan to the grasslands of the Mongolian steppe, all of our programs are meticulously researched and planned to optimize cultural exchange and to offer fun, innovative, and immersive experiences.

As well as being a licensed travel operator across Greater China, The Hutong is at heart a transformative education company. We partner with leading schools to build programs that incorporate learning objectives and life skills, all the while maintaining absolute professionalism and an impeccable safety record. From our team of international educators to our travel specialists, each and every Hutonger shares a passion for providing exceptional learning experiences.

Hutong programs engage with global issues and leave participants with broadened horizons, a renewed sense of their strengths and abilities, and incredible memories. No matter where we go, we aim to make a positive impact on the communities we visit and on the groups we lead.



The Hutong
Sharing Culture, Sharing Knowledge



Contact Information

thehutong.com
travel@thehutong.com

The Hutong Courtyard

1 Jiudaowan Zhongxiang
Beixinqiao, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

中国北京东城区北新桥九道湾中巷1号

Social Media

Facebook / Instagram / Wechat:
thehutong