



TIBETAN VILLAGE PROJECT AUSTRALIA INC.

ABN: 98 504 209 907

PO BOX 417

BLACK ROCK

VICTORIA, 3193

AUSTRALIA

[www.tvpaustralia.org.au](http://www.tvpaustralia.org.au)

## An Adventure in Tibet

**18<sup>th</sup> April to May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015.**

*This itinerary is correct at the time of publishing, however, there are some situations that may change and we cannot guarantee that the itinerary as set out below. What we do promise, is an adventure that you will not forget. We do have a "Plan B" in case we cannot get to Lhasa, however, we work on the premise that we will get our permits for Lhasa.*

*You will be meeting some lovely people, you will be made welcome in people's homes and you will be travelling to remote places where few westerners have seen before.*

### **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>, April**

Arrive in **Chengdu**. You will be met by Don, the group leader, and transferred to the Traffic Inn which is our accommodation in Chengdu.

### **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup>, April**

After breakfast, we will visit the world famous Giant Panda Breeding Centre in Chengdu. The pandas are most active in the morning so you will have plenty of photo opportunities!!



In the afternoon you may like to rest at the hotel or do a couple of hours of supply shopping. The hostel at the back of the Traffic Hotel has a small internet café if you wish to catch up

on some emails. We will have our trip orientation and welcome dinner tonight at a well-known Tibetan restaurant.

## Monday 20<sup>th</sup>, April

Today we fly from Chengdu to **Kangding** (flight is approximately 2 hrs duration) and then drive to **Tagong**. The beautiful town of Tagong is known for its grasslands, chortens, colourful prayer flags on the surrounding hills and mountains and the beautiful Tagong Monastery. Built in 641, the monastery is one of the oldest monasteries in Tibet. It is known as the “small Jokhang” According to a local legend, Princess Wencheng, the Chinese bride of Tibetan king Songsten Gampo, was in Tagong enroute to travelling to Lhasa in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when a precious statue of Jowo Sakyamuni Buddha dropped off one of the carts in her entourage. A replica of the statue was carved on the spot where it landed and the monastery built around it. You will be able to see the statue in the hall (the original statue is housed in the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa).



Today we will also visit the teachers and children at Tagong Orphanage, another TVPA project. Two TVPA sponsors in Melbourne fund the salary of two of the teachers at the school.



This evening the group will enjoy a very special experience, a homestay with a Tibetan family who have become treasured friends of TVPA.

## Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup>, April

If you rise early this morning, you may like to join the local Tibetans on their kora. We will explore the town and in the Afternoon, we will visit the Gomba, (Nunnery) in the area and visit the meditation caves.

We will then travel to Bata-Dora to stay in with a Tibetan family, enjoying the hospitality for which they are famous.



**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup>, April**

Today we drive to **Suhurong** and visit Dr Drolma in the Medical Clinic supported by TVPA. TVPA has supported the clinic for many years and recently donated five hospital grade beds which can be adjusted to make life comfortable for the patients. TVPA has plans to further assist the local community to expand the facility over the next couple of years.



Another highlight of our trip to Suhrong will be visiting the students at the village school and the new student accommodation built with the assistance of our TVPA sponsors. The school currently provides education to 52 children. A number are local children while others are boarders from more remote areas in Kham who would not have had the opportunity of an education unless TVPA provided them with full board and lodging. TVPA plans to build another dormitory to house additional students so education can be provided for up to 300 children. During our visit we will be taking supplies for the school and students.





We will also be visiting the local monastery and monastery school which is supported by TVPA. We will be taking supplies for the school and participate in some games and activities with the young boys who board at the school. This is always one of the highlights of our trips.



This evening we will be staying in the monastery guest house and have an opportunity to interact with some of the monks.



**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup>, April**

Today, you may choose to participate in an optional short grasslands hike/walk, visit a local nunnery or relax!



**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup>, April**

We leave Suhurong after lunch and head back to Bata-Dora for another home stay.

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup>, April**

Today we drive back to Kangding and fly back to Chengdu to stay overnight in Chengdu.

After dinner you may like to go for a walk to enjoy the lights of Chengdu including the Anshun Bridge (Marco Polo Bridge) which crosses the Jin River. Meaning "Peaceful and Fluent" the bridge was constructed in 2003 as a replacement of the old bridge which was destroyed by a flood in the 1980s. In the 13th century, Marco Polo wrote about several bridges in China and the Anshun Bridge was one of them.



**Friday 24<sup>th</sup>, April**

Rest day in Chengdu.

There are a variety of places to visit in Chengdu including the People's Park, Wenshu Temple, Jian Street and the Tibetan Quarter. Before exploring Chengdu it is a good idea to purchase the map of Chengdu from the hostel located directly behind the Traffic Inn Hotel. The hotel and all the major tourist sites are clearly marked on the map. The staff in the hostel are very helpful and will write in Chinese for you the name of the sights you wish to visit as well as the Traffic Hotel. This can be helpful to show taxi drivers as they often do not speak



or read English. You will have also an opportunity to do some washing!

### **People's Park**

The People's Park provides an interesting insight into the culture and recreational activities of the Chinese people. The Park is filled with children playing and local people practising traditional dances, tai chi and calligraphy, playing majong and relaxing in the tea houses.



**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April**

### **Wenshu Temple**

This temple is the largest and best-preserved Buddhist temple in Chengdu. The monastery is thought to have been built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and was called Xinxiang Temple. In 1681, during the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Cidu, a Buddhist monk, came to the temple. He built a simple hut between two trees and for several years lived an ascetic life there. Legend has it that when Cidu was being cremated the statue of Wensu (Bodhisattva Manjusri in Sanskrit) appeared in the flames. As the local people regarded Cidu as the reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjusri, Xinxiang Temple became known as the Wenshu Monastery.

At the back of the temple is a tea house and vegetarian restaurant. The tea house, with bamboo chairs and tables and good local green teas, is a great place to relax!



## **Sunday 26th, April**

This morning we fly to **Lhasa**, Tibet's capital which is situated in a small valley 3,600 m above sea level, making it one of the highest cities in the world. The duration of the flight is approximately 2 hrs.

We will be staying in the centrally located Yak Hotel which is only a few minutes walk from the Barkhor. This afternoon it is advisable to take things easy, rest and acclimatise.

## **Monday 27th, April**

Today we will acclimatize as well as visit some of the important Lhasa sites. Some of the group may also choose to rest and acclimatise,

### **Potala Palace**

The Potala Palace is one of the highlights of a visit to Lhasa. Perched on Red Hill overlooking the town, this massive structure gracefully dominates the landscape and is a true architectural wonder. The palace was founded in 1645 during the reign of the great 5th Dalai Lama. The Palace is divided into two main complexes: the outer white building that housed the administration, and the Red Fort, where chapels, tombs and the living quarters of the Dalai Lama were located. The Potala was inscribed on the UNESCO Heritage List in 1994.



### **Jokhang Temple**

The Jokhang Temple is the spiritual heart of Tibet and is Tibet's most sacred temple. Pilgrims circle the temple day and night, some of them having traversed the extremes of the Tibetan landscape on foot to get here. The temple was built here in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by King Songtsen Gampo when he moved his capital to Lhasa. The Jokhang was originally designed by Nepalese craftsmen to house a Buddha image brought by a Nepalese queen (the King had three Tibetan wives, a Nepalese queen and a Chinese queen). In 2000 the Jokhang was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as an addition to the Potala Palace. Outside the Jokhang are flagstones where pilgrims gather to prostrate (unfortunately, this area is getting smaller each year). The rooftop of the

Jokhang provides excellent views of Lhasa rooftops and the Potala.



### **The Barkhor**

The Barkhor is a devotional circuit, surrounding the Jokhang Temple, where you will see pilgrims who have often come on foot from remote areas of Tibet to visit the Temple. It provides an excellent introduction to the old town of Lhasa.



The Barkhor also houses a market bazaar where people bargain for Buddha images, woodcarvings, carpets, prayer wheels, clothing etc.



### **Sera Monastery**

Sera Monastery, 4km north of Lhasa, is famous for its monastic debating. We may be able to watch the debating in the afternoon of our visit (sometimes the debating is cancelled or not open to the public). The monastery was once one of Lhasa's two great Gelupa monasteries, second to Drepung, housing over 5,000 monks.





### **Tuesday 28th, April**

Today we drive to Samye. En route to Samye we will spend some time with Dr Ugyen at his clinic in Cheda Shol. TVPA assisted Dr Ugyen to establish as clinic over 5 years ago. Dr Ugyen now sees a few thousand patients each year and is renowned for his tireless work. TVPA pays Dr Ugyen's rent, a stipend and funds for medical supplies and the manufacturing of traditional Tibetan medicine.

Samye sits at 3,650m on the north bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo and is the site of Tibet's first monastery. Samye is unusual as it is fully enclosed by a wall with gates at the wall of the compass points. During our time in Samye we will visit the Samye Monastery and a feel of the "old Tibet." We will stay overnight in Samye.



### **Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April**

This morning we will visit Dr.Rinchen's clinic at Samye. TVPA pays Dr Rinchen a stipend and assists with the costs of making traditional medicine manufacturing. After our visit we will drive back to Tsedang where we will spend the night and visit the first palace, or first centre of power in Tibet, Yumbu Lhakang. We can then enjoy a soothing hot shower at the hotel in Tsedang!

### **Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April**

Today we drive to the airport and fly to Chengdu. Our driver will pick us up from the airport and transfer us to the Traffic Hotel.

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May**

Today we have a rest day in Chengdu. You will have an opportunity to do some washing before you go home and do any last minute shopping.

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May**

Today we fly home! An airport drop off will be organised for you from the Traffic Hotel. Saying good-bye to each other is the sad part of the trip! However, you will have made some wonderful friends that you will keep for a long time afterwards. Just think, you will then go home to your own bed, hot shower and real coffee!

**Who is this trip for?**

The trip is for anyone with a sense of adventure who would like to experience an adventure in Tibet. It is also for people who don't mind a bit of "roughing it." Some of our accommodation will be very basic and toilets are certainly not five star!!

It is important to note that TVPA is a non-political charitable organisation. Our trips are not suitable for anyone who has been involved in "Free Tibet" demonstrations, lobbying or other Tibetan related political activities, either in Australia or overseas. The reason is twofold. Firstly, having someone in the group with a background in political activities could jeopardise the group's ability to obtain a travel permit to Tibet. Secondly, TVPA has worked very hard for over a decade to establish sustainable humanitarian projects in Tibet. It is important these projects are not compromised in any way.

**How much will the trip/tour cost?**

The trip will cost AUD\$3,195 per person.

The above cost is from Chengdu to Chengdu. Flights to and from Australia are additional to those quoted above and are normally around \$1,400. TVPA recommends the travel services of Meg from Go Explore The World (tel: 0425 753 349) - knows Tibet and China very well and has helped TVPA for many years. Meg can organise your flights as well as your visa to travel to China.

We may be offering an optional 4 days in Lijiang and Shangri-La, this will be extra. TBA.

**What does the tour cost include?**

The tour cost includes:

- Travel permits to Tibet.
- Entrance ticket fees for all sightseeing spots listed in the program.
- Private transportation in Tibet ranging from a 4WD land cruiser to mini-bus according to the group size (Includes fuel).
- Private English speaking local Tibetan guide.
- Accommodation including the Traffic Inn Hotel in Chengdu, a family guesthouse in Tagong, Suhurong Monastery, the Yak Hotel in Lhasa, Samye Monastery Hotel in Samye and Yulong hotel in Tsedang.
- Airport pick-up and drop-off services throughout the trip except last day in Chengdu.
- Full board & meals throughout the trip except last two days in Chengdu.
- Round trip flights from Chengdu to Kangding.
- Round trip flights from Chengdu to Lhasa.
- Oxygen canisters: 2 canisters for each person.

- Lodging and meals for guide and drivers.
- First aid kit.
- Liability travel insurance.

### **What does the tour cost exclude?**

The tour cost excludes:

- Travel insurance. It is recommended your travel insurance covers both trip cancellation and emergency evacuation. All group participants will be provided with information on insurance available through Rotary Australia Worldwide Community Services which is significantly cheaper than commercial travel insurance.
- Expenses of a personal nature (alcoholic beverages, laundry, phone calls, souvenirs etc.).
- International flights from Australia to Chengdu.
- Meals that are not specified in the itinerary.
- Optional gratuities for the guide and driver:
- Spending money. I normally suggest about A\$500, but there are not many places to spend except in the main centres. If you do run short, I normally have some funds and can loan you until you get home.
- Optional trip to Shangri-La and Lijiang.

### **What do I need to take?**

All group participants will be given a comprehensive list of things to take on your trip.

### **Any questions?**

All questions are welcome! Please contact Don Cullen on 0421 088 576 or email Don at [donjcullen@gmail.com](mailto:donjcullen@gmail.com) if you have any questions or require further information.

Don Cullen  
Chairperson  
Tibetan Village Project Australia Inc.  
[donjcullen@gmail.com](mailto:donjcullen@gmail.com)