Tour Code
HH1

ADVENTURESABROAD

ESSENTIAL HIMALAYA

Ladakh, Bhutan, Nepal & Tibet

23 days

Created on: 29 Oct, 2026

Day 1 Arrive in Delhi

Welcome to India! Despite its recent transformation into a cosmopolitan hub for global business and technology, Delhi remains surprisingly green, with extensive gardens, parks, and protected woodlands softening the urban sprawl. This vast metropolis serves as both the nation's capital and a living monument to millennia of history, where Mughal fortresses stand beside modern infrastructure and ancient bazaars pulse with contemporary commerce.

This evening we gather with fellow travellers for our first meal together, preparing for an extraordinary journey across the Himalayan kingdoms.

Overnight in Delhi (airport area hotel).

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Delhi - Fly to Leh, Ladakh: Arrival & Acclimatisation

Early this morning we fly to Leh at 3524 m/11,562 ft elevation, one of the world's most spectacular commercial flights. The aircraft climbs over the Greater Himalaya before descending into the small mountain-ringed airport serving Ladakh's capital.

Leh reveals its Tibetan character immediately: residents wear traditional dress including distinctive stove-pipe hats and felt boots with turned-up toes. The Royal Palace dominates the townscape, its tiered structure deliberately echoing Lhasa's Potala Palace. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, large chortens, prayer flags snapping in the wind, and mud-brick houses with flat roofs create a dramatic cultural contrast to the heat and chaos we left behind in Delhi. The architecture deliberately echoes forms we'll encounter repeatedly as we climb higher into the Himalaya: prayer flags, chortens, gompas clinging to mountainsides.

The remainder of the day allows for essential acclimatisation to the dramatic altitude change. Your Tour Leader will likely suggest an easy orientation walk through Leh's colourful markets and central hub, keeping exertion minimal while bodies adjust to the thin air.

Overnight in Leh.

NOTE: The order of Leh area sightseeing may vary due to weather and logistical considerations. Your Tour Leader will space activities strategically to account for the sudden elevation change.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Leh: Alchi Monastery & Likir Gompa

Today we drive across Ladakh's arid high plateau to Alchi, one of the region's largest ancient monastic complexes and an important Buddhist centre. Founded in the 11th century by Rinchen Zhangpo, an early Tibetan preacher who spread Lamaistic Buddhism throughout this region, Alchi currently undergoes major restoration work under UN sponsorship. The 1,000-year-old paintings inside the main temple rank among the oldest surviving examples of their kind, distinctly different from murals in later-built gompas.

We return toward Leh via the confluence where the grey Indus River meets the blue waters of the Zanskar River flowing from the remote Greater Himalaya. We also visit Likir Gompa, magnificently set on an isolated ridge overlooking Likir village. Founded in the 14th century, this monastery belongs to the Yellow Hat Sect and holds special significance: the head lama here is the younger brother of the Dalai Lama. Likir Gompa ranks among Ladakh's oldest and best-maintained monasteries.

Overnight in Leh.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Leh: Hemis Gompa & Stok Gompa

Early this morning we drive east along the Indus Valley toward Hemis Gompa, dramatically hidden in a mountain cleft approximately 50 km/31 mi from Leh. Situated on the Indus River's west bank, Hemis ranks as Ladakh's wealthiest and largest monastery. The complex houses a gigantic thangka, one of the world's largest and certainly one of Ladakh's most important religious artifacts. Founded approximately 350 years ago by Stagtshang Rinchen, who came to Ladakh at King Singe Namgyal's invitation, the monastery remains an active centre of Buddhist practice.

Returning toward Leh, we stop at Stok Gompa, dating to the 14th century. Hidden behind a screen of trees about 2 km/1.2 mi south of the palace, Stok's small monastery features crumbling old stupas, though its dominant feature rises 200 m/656 ft above: a brand-new gilded Buddha visible from most of the village. Bright frescoes depicting the Guardians of the Four Directions adorn the monastery's veranda. The monastery's library houses a complete set of the Kangyur, the 108 volumes containing Buddha's teachings, making this an important repository of Buddhist scholarship.

Overnight in Leh.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Leh: Khardung La Pass & Leh Palace

This morning we take a jeep excursion up the hairpin switchbacks leading to Khardung La Pass at 5470 m/17,946 ft, the world's highest vehicular-accessible pass. The climb provides stunning views of the Zanskar Range and Indus Valley, with frequent yak sightings on high pastures below the pass. Built at tremendous human and financial cost by the Indian Army following Chinese incursions after Tibet's occupation in the late 1950s, this road crosses the Ladakh Range and provides access to the Nubra Valley and Karakoram region.

Later we explore Leh Palace, a striking nine-storey structure perched on a hill overlooking the town. Built in the 17th century by King Sengge Namgyal, this palace served as the royal residence until the 1830s. The design blends Tibetan, Indian, and Mughal influences, with upper floors housing the royal family and lower floors used for stables and storage. The exterior combines sun-dried bricks with wooden frames, reflecting traditional Tibetan-style architecture through sloping walls and narrow windows.

Inside, we wander through deserted halls that once buzzed with royal life. Though faded, the murals offer glimpses into the past, depicting religious motifs and scenes from Ladakhi culture. UNESCO currently undertakes restoration work to preserve the palace's historical authenticity. From the upper floors and balconies, we enjoy panoramic views across Leh and surrounding landscapes, appreciating the town's strategic importance in this high mountain valley.

Overnight in Leh.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Leh - Fly to Delhi

Today we fly from Leh back to Delhi. If time permits, we enjoy some sightseeing in Delhi this afternoon, making the most of our return to lower elevations before tomorrow's onward journey.

Overnight in Delhi (likely an airport area hotel).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Delhi - Paro, Bhutan - Drive to Thimphu

Today we fly to Bhutan, one of the Himalaya's most exclusive destinations. Our descent into Paro ranks among aviation's most thrilling approaches as the aircraft glides into the valley between towering peaks. Red chillies drying on farmhouse roofs come into view as we descend, and crisp mountain air greets us upon landing. Where Ladakh's monasteries stood exposed on barren ridges, Bhutan tucks its

dzongs into forested valleys — different landscapes, shared devotion.

We drive approximately one hour to Thimphu at 2320 m/7,612 ft, the nation's capital. En route we see the Iron Bridge Builder Monastery perched on the opposite hillside and cross the Chuzom confluence where stupas in three distinct styles (Bhutanese, Nepalese, and Tibetan) mark the meeting of rivers.

Thimphu presents an engaging mix of traditional and developing: small cafes, bookshops, and handicraft stores line streets where residents wear traditional gho and kira dress. The compact town centre accommodates approximately 100,000 people and lends itself well to exploration on foot. Built along traditional architectural lines and established as capital only in the 1950s, Thimphu serves as Bhutan's administrative centre while maintaining its distinctive character.

Overnight in Thimphu.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Thimphu: Tashichho Dzong & Thimphu Tsechu Festival

This morning we visit the impressive Tashichho Dzong, Bhutan's traditional summer capital and current seat of government. The present building, reconstructed on the site of a dzong erected by Ngawang Namgyal in 1641, retains many features of the original fortress-monastery. This imposing structure houses all government departments and ministries, the King's throne room, the National Assembly chambers, and the nation's largest monastery with over 2,000 monks in residence.

Our departure coincides with the Thimphu Tsechu, an annual festival held at Tashichho Dzong. For three days, masked dancers perform elaborate ceremonies reflecting the deeply rooted religious sentiments of the Bhutanese people. Many dances depict stories of good triumphing over evil, the day of judgement, and moral teachings central to Buddhist philosophy. The pageantry, intricate costumes, and spiritual devotion create an unforgettable spectacle unique to Bhutan's living Buddhist culture.

Overnight in Thimphu.

NOTE: Occasionally we include a festival in another location should announced dates prove suboptimal for our itinerary. The overall experience remains consistent as all tsechus operate on similar concepts with comparable ceremonies, costumes, and customs.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Thimphu - Dochula Pass - Punakha Dzong

This morning we depart Thimphu via the spectacular Dochula Pass at 3031 m/9,944 ft, climbing steeply through forests of pine and cedar with panoramic Himalayan views when weather permits. The drive to Punakha covers 77 km/48 mi and takes approximately three hours.

Today's journey takes us deep into Bhutan's heartland, offering insight into a way of life that has changed remarkably little over centuries. Modern development has brought improved education, healthcare, and electricity to remote areas, yet the small farm-based economy that has sustained local populations for generations remains largely intact. Located at a relatively low 1300 m/4,265 ft elevation in a rain shadow, the Punakha Valley produces most of Bhutan's commercially-grown oranges and fruits. Despite favourable growing conditions, the valley's population remains remarkably sparse. Until recently, Punakha served as Bhutan's winter capital and continues as the winter headquarters of the Je Khenpo (Head Abbot) and his monks.

Upon arrival we visit Punakha Dzong, arguably Bhutan's most beautiful fortress-monastery. This magnificent structure straddles an island at the confluence of the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers (male and female tributaries). We've seen monasteries guard mountain passes in Ladakh; here in Bhutan, they guard river valleys. The architectural vocabulary changes, but the principle holds: devotion expressed through placement, not just construction. Built as Bhutan's second dzong, it served as the capital and seat of government until the mid-1950s. All of Bhutan's kings have been crowned here, and the dzong remains the winter residence of the monastic body. Recent magnificent restoration befits its status in Bhutanese history.

Overnight in Punakha.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Punakha - Paro: Paro Dzong & Valley Touring

Today we travel by road to Paro at 2280 m/7,480 ft, set in what many consider the most beautiful of Bhutan's main valleys. Paro Dzong dominates the landscape, perched above the glacial Paro Chu River. This particularly important and historic fortress-monastery has played a central role in Bhutanese history since its initial construction.

Paro thrives as an agricultural valley and hosts some of Bhutan's holiest Buddhist sites. Before roads were built, most of Bhutan's trade flowed through Paro, either from Tibet via Tremo La or from the south via Haa. The valley extends from Jumolhari on the Tibetan border to Chuzom, where the Thimphu and Punakha rivers meet.

The town presents an engaging mix of traditional architecture interspersed with handicraft stores, cafes, and galleries. Situated below the dzong, the town centre is accessible via a traditional cantilever bridge. Chortens (prayer shrines) stand alongside the bridge near Ugyen Pelri Palace. We visit the local monastery at one end of town and, if fortunate, may observe an archery match at the field near Ugyen Pelri Palace, as archery remains Bhutan's national sport and a common community activity.

Overnight in Paro.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Paro: Kyichu Lhakhang, National Museum & Tiger's Nest Viewpoint

This morning we visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of Bhutan's oldest and most beautiful temples, situated among paddy fields a short drive from town. This temple is venerated as being as holy as the monastery in Lhasa. Nearby, the small Dumtse Lhakhang was built in Tibetan style, and legend claims it flew here from Tibet.

We visit the Paro National Museum, housed in a 17th-century watchtower above the dzong (currently, exhibits are viewed in an adjoining building while the tower undergoes repairs). Opened in 1968, the museum features a renowned collection of fine arts, paintings, and bronzes. Displays include textiles, jewellery, handicrafts, and a chapel on the top floor containing a "tree" depicting main figures from the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Beautiful panoramic views extend across Paro Valley from this elevated position.

We also visit Rinpung Dzong, which serves as headquarters for both local government and the monastic body. At some point during our Paro visit, we drive up the valley to view the famed Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) monastery from a viewpoint. Originally built in the 8th century and reconstructed after a devastating 1998 fire, this iconic monastery clings impossibly to a sheer cliff face 900 m/2,953 ft above the valley floor. Built where devotion met altitude, Tiger's Nest makes literal what we've felt abstractly since Leh: the Himalaya pulls the sacred upward.

Overnight in Paro.

NOTE: Those interested in hiking to Tiger's Nest monastery should consult with your Tour Leader upon arrival. The excursion requires a bus ride followed by a 6-7 hour hike over steep terrain at approximately 2700 m/8,858 ft elevation. Your Tour Leader can provide details and assist with arrangements, including the required special permit.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Paro, Bhutan - Kathmandu, Nepal: Durbar Square & Swayambhunath

Today we fly from Paro to Kathmandu at 1,310 m/4,297 ft, Nepal's capital city.

Wedged between the high Himalaya and the steamy Indian plains, Nepal serves as Asia's very watershed. The country's cultural landscape equals its physical diversity, with peoples belonging to numerous distinctive ethnic groups speaking a host of languages. Massive mountains, golden temples, fluttering prayer flags, Buddhist stupas, and extraordinarily welcoming people make Nepal unforgettable.

Kathmandu reveals itself as an eminently liveable city where pagodas dominate open squares and narrow alleys wind between wooden buildings with intricate fretwork screens. Thousands of years of culture unfold through historic temples and monasteries belonging to both Hindus and Buddhists.

After settling into our hotel, we visit Durbar Square, Kathmandu's central meeting area and a profusion of temples reflecting architectural

styles dating from the 11th century onward. This UNESCO World Heritage site was where kings were crowned and ruled. The area comprises three loosely linked squares including the Royal Palace with its gilded gates and elaborate statues. The square throngs with visitors mingling among stalls displaying Nepalese and Tibetan handicrafts.

We continue to Swayambhunath Temple at approximately 1400 m/4,593 ft, Nepal's most significant centre of Buddhist worship. This UNESCO World Heritage site, also known as the Monkey Temple due to its large resident monkey population, has occupied this hilltop location since at least the 5th century. The temple buildings offer excellent views across Kathmandu and its valley.

This afternoon we visit Patan, located just 5 km/3 mi from Kathmandu. Despite such proximity, Patan's preserved character distinguishes it as distinctly different. Patan's Durbar Square contains some of Nepal's finest examples of Newari architecture.

Overnight in Kathmandu.

NOTE: During our Nepal stay, travellers booked on tour code HH1 with Tibet will complete bureaucratic requirements for our Tibet permits through the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu. This process requires at least three days, so we'll explore Nepal's cultural treasures while permits are finalised.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Bhaktapur, Pashupatinath & Boudhanath - Drive to Nagarkot

Today we explore historic Bhaktapur at approximately 1400 m/4,593 ft, a UNESCO World Heritage Site founded in the 12th century. This ancient city contains remarkable Hindu and Buddhist religious sites and art, though the tragic 2015 earthquake caused terrible devastation. Whole streets of traditional houses were lost, and while only a few temples were completely destroyed, the disaster's scars remain clearly visible. Full recovery will require years of dedicated restoration work.

Beyond Bhaktapur, we explore additional Kathmandu Valley sites. Pashupatinath at 1330 m/4,364 ft ranks as perhaps Nepal's most important Hindu temple and one of the subcontinent's most significant Shiva temples, drawing numerous devotees from across India annually. Boudhanath at 1350 m/4,429 ft, among South Asia's largest stupas, has become Tibetan Buddhism's focal point in Nepal. The white mound looms 36 m/118 ft overhead. Located on the ancient trade route to Tibet, this stupa provided a resting place where Tibetan merchants offered prayers for centuries. When refugees fled Tibet in the 1950s, many settled around Boudhanath, establishing numerous gompas and creating Nepal's "Little Tibet." This remains the valley's best location for observing Tibetan lifestyle: monks in maroon robes, prayer wheels spinning, and devotees performing ritual prostrations as they circumambulate the stupa.

Our destination today is Nagarkot at 2195 m/7,201 ft, positioning us perfectly for tomorrow's sunrise viewing.

Overnight in Nagarkot.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Nagarkot Sunrise & Chandragiri Hill Panorama

Before dawn we rise to witness sunrise over the Himalaya from Nagarkot, a popular hill station east of Kathmandu. The viewpoint tower sits at 2195 m/7,201 ft elevation, providing one of the region's best panoramic views encompassing eight mountain ranges stretching from Annapurna in the west to Makalu in the east. On exceptionally clear days, Mount Everest becomes visible. Weather permitting, we hope to view the Central Himalayan ranges, including the Langtang and Rolwaling ranges.

On our return drive to Kathmandu this afternoon, we ascend Nepal's newest cable car up Chandragiri Hill to approximately 2550 m/8,366 ft for more impressive Himalayan vistas. Opened in 2016, this exciting 10-minute journey carries us to the summit where panoramic views of the snow-capped Himalaya unfold before us. We spend time enjoying this spectacular setting before descending. From these viewpoints, the peaks that separate Nepal from the Tibetan plateau stand impossibly close and impossibly distant — visible, yet beyond reach for most who've come here across the centuries.

This afternoon provides free time in Kathmandu for independent exploration or relaxation.

Overnight in Kathmandu at 1310 m/4,297 ft.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Kathmandu - Trans-Himalayan Flight to Lhasa, Tibet

Today we fly to Tibet on a remarkable trans-Himalayan flight passing directly by the Everest group of peaks. In slightly over one hour, we cross terrain that once required months for trade caravans to navigate. The landscape transforms below us: Nepal's green terraced hillsides give way to the high, barren plateau. This flight completes a pattern we've been following since Leh — we've encountered Tibetan Buddhist forms at the Himalaya's edges: Ladakh's wind-scoured gompas, Bhutan's valley dzongs, Kathmandu's Boudhanath stupa built by Tibetan traders. Now we arrive at the cultural heartland from which those traditions radiated outward: Lhasa at 3650 meters, on the roof of the world. On clear days, as many as eight of the world's fourteen peaks exceeding 8000 m/26,247 ft become visible. We fly over deep-blue Yamdrok Lake before landing at Gonggar Airport at approximately 3570 m/11,713 ft, some 85 km/53 mi south of Lhasa.

Upon arrival we drive along the flat Yarlung Tsangpo River valley to our hotel in Lhasa. The remainder of the day allows acclimatisation to the high altitude, essential for comfortable activity in coming days. This represents the tour's second major altitude transition, ascending over 2,300 m/7,500 ft from Kathmandu in just over an hour.

Referred to as the "Roof of the World," Tibet feels both mystical and profoundly spiritual, as if we've entered an entirely different realm. Overnight in Lhasa.

NOTE: Occasionally we must fly to Lhasa on Day 16 due to changeable flight schedules. If this occurs, we add sightseeing in Nepal today (Old Town of Kirtipur, Khokana, and Bungamati) and adjust the Tibet itinerary so no listed sites are missed. Your Tour Leader will brief you of any changes while on tour.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Lhasa: Jokhang Temple & the Barkhor Circuit

We begin our day at Jokhang Temple at 3650 m/11,975 ft, the religious and geographical centre of Lhasa and the most important temple in the world for all sects of Tibetan Buddhism. Pilgrims from across Tibet, many having walked hundreds of kilometres to visit the Jokhang once in their lives, queue for hours to enter and perform ritual circuits in prostration before its sacred shrines. Joining them through dark hallways filled with low chanting and lit only by butter lamps creates a moving experience. In Leh and Paro and Kathmandu, we've walked among pilgrims. Here at the Jokhang, we understand where their journeys begin and end. The main image worshipped here is Jowo Rinpoche, a gilded Buddha Shakyamuni statue said to have been modelled during his lifetime.

The Jokhang is encircled by the Barkhor, an 800 m/2,625 ft flagstone pathway serving as both sacred circumambulation route and Tibet's largest bazaar. Day and night, Tibetans walk clockwise around it, earning religious merit while shopping, people-watching, and chatting with friends. Here we encounter people from across Tibet: striking tall Khampa men from the east with elaborate knives and red tassels wrapped in their hair, Golok women with hair plaited in 108 tiny braids, nomad families bundled in sheepskins. The Barkhor represents Tibet's true beating heart.

Overnight in Lhasa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Lhasa: Potala Palace & Sera Monastery

This morning we visit the magnificent Potala Palace, once the seat of Tibetan government and winter residence of the Dalai Lamas. The Potala stands as Lhasa's cardinal landmark, though the site's first recorded use dates to the 7th century AD. The palace reached its full glory during the 17th-century reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Rising 117 m/384 ft high across 13 storeys and constructed entirely of wood, earth, and stone, the Potala contains over 1,000 rooms. Leh's palace deliberately echoed this one. The Potala is the original — 13 storeys, 117 meters high, visible for miles across the plateau.

This afternoon we visit Sera Monastery, one of the most important Gelugpa (Yellow Hat sect) monasteries. Located at the foot of Tatipu Hill

in Lhasa's northern suburbs, Sera ranks as one of three famous monasteries alongside Drepung and Ganden. The monastery hosts the famous monk debates on some weekday afternoons. During this ritual question-and-answer session, senior monks quiz juniors with much grimacing, clapping, and mock threatening. Though seemingly entertaining to visitors, these debate rituals constitute serious business, serving as an important component of monks' training in theosophical questions of Tibetan Lamaistic Buddhism.

Overnight in Lhasa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Lhasa: Drepung Monastery & Norbulingka

This morning we visit Drepung Monastery, located at the foot of Mount Gephel. Dating to 1416, this was once Tibet's largest monastery, housing over 10,000 monks at its peak. Today Drepung accommodates approximately 700 monks and attracts pilgrims and visitors from around the world. With numerous mansion-like buildings and zigzagging alleys, the monastery resembles an impressive city unto itself. Both Drepung and Sera suffered varying degrees of damage during the Cultural Revolution's turbulent days but have since been restored, and monks have returned.

This afternoon we visit Norbulingka, the Dalai Lama's summer palace and current site of a museum. The name means "Treasure Garden" in Tibetan. First built in 1751, it borrowed architectural styles from inland China while maintaining local ethnic and religious features. Norbulingka served as traditional summer palace and residence beginning with the Seventh Dalai Lama, and now ranks as Tibet's largest garden.

Nearby, the Tibet Museum houses a rich collection including prehistoric cultural relics, statues, imperial jade seals, gifts granted by emperors, colourful thangkas, and various Sanskrit and Tibetan scriptures. Folk art displays include unique Tibetan handicrafts, costumes, and jewellery crafted from gold, silver, and jade, alongside fine Chinese pottery.

Overnight in Lhasa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Lhasa - Gyantse - Yamdrok Tso Lake - Shigatse

An early departure takes us across the high Tibetan plateau toward Shigatse. We pass colourful rock carvings of Buddha as we leave Lhasa's outskirts, following the Yarlung Tsangpo River which, upon entering India, becomes the Brahmaputra. From Kamba La Pass at 4794 m/15,728 ft, spectacular views unfold across the blue waters of sacred Yamdrok Tso Lake at 4400 m/14,436 ft. The lake lies surrounded by snow-capped peaks, and in the distance, Holy Mount Nyenchen Khangsar rises to 7191 m/23,593 ft, the highest mountain near Lhasa. At nearly 5000 meters, this is the highest we'll reach. The air is impossibly thin, the light sharp and clean. This is the altitude Tibetan Buddhism was born into.

We cross the mighty Yarlung Tsangpo River and follow Yamdrok Tso's twisting northern bank for hours before climbing to Karo La Pass, flanked by gigantic peaks including 7260 m/23,819 ft Nazin Kang Sa.

Continuing toward Shigatse, we stop at Gyantse, famous for its multi-tiered stupa known as the Kumbum. The sprawling Pelkor Chode Monastery compound houses this monumental chorten filled with fine paintings and statues. Palkhor lies at Dzong Hill's foot and is renowned for its Kumbum containing 108 chapels across four floors. The multi-storey Kumbum Stupa wears a golden dome and umbrella, surrounded by chapels filled with unique religious statues and murals.

We arrive in Shigatse at 3900 m/12,795 ft, Tibet's second-largest city and seat of the Panchen Lama.

Overnight in Shigatse.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 20 Shigatse Area Sightseeing

Today we visit Shigatse's main attraction, Tashilhunpo Monastery. Located on a central hill, the monastery's full Tibetan name means "all fortune and happiness gathered here." Standing at the entrance, we see grand buildings with golden roofs and white walls rising before us. The remarkable Thangka Wall, nine floors high, was built by the First Dalai Lama in 1468. The images are so massive they're easily visible from Shigatse City. Main structures include the Maitreya Chapel, Panchen Lama's Palace, and Kelsang Temple.

Tashilhunpo has served as the Panchen Lama's seat since the Fourth Panchen Lama took charge. The Panchen Lama ranks as Tibet's second most important spiritual leader after the Dalai Lama. Approximately 800 lamas currently reside here, maintaining this important centre of Tibetan Buddhism.

Overnight in Shigatse.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 21 Shigatse - Lhasa

Today we retrace our route back to Lhasa for our final night in Tibet. Travelling by road from Shigatse to Lhasa offers an immersive experience, allowing connection with Tibetan landscape and culture impossible to achieve by other means. The journey provides opportunities to observe rural Tibetan life, small villages, and the dramatic high-altitude scenery that defines this remarkable region. Tomorrow we descend, carrying what we've seen.

NOTE: We do not end our tour in Lhasa as visa regulations require all group members to depart Tibet (China) on the same flight on the same day.

Overnight in Lhasa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 22 Lhasa, Tibet - Fly to Kathmandu, Nepal

Today we fly back to Kathmandu, completing our circuit of the Himalayan kingdoms. The trans-Himalayan flight provides a final opportunity to view the world's highest peaks from above. The same peaks we crossed two weeks ago. This time we carry the knowledge of what lies beyond them.

This evening we convene for our farewell dinner, sharing memories of an extraordinary journey through Ladakh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Tibet.

Overnight in Kathmandu.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 23 Departure

This morning we depart Kathmandu, our journey through the Himalayan kingdoms complete.

From Delhi's plains to Ladakh's high desert monasteries, from Bhutan's fortress valleys to Nepal's sacred temples, from the Tibetan plateau's spiritual heartland back to Kathmandu's vibrant streets — we've traced a vertical arc across the Himalaya. Not just altitude gained and lost, but a pattern followed to its source and carried back down. The prayer flags we saw in Leh make more sense now. So do the chortens in Paro, the stupas in Kathmandu. They were always pointing upward, toward the plateau where thin air and devotion meet. We followed them all the way. Now we descend, but the mountains remain.

Bon Voyage! Namaste! Tashi Delek!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast