

return to homepage – www.nepalmakalu.com



Trip Overview –

It is a great adventure in history, in landscape and in the faiths of Asia. In the heart of the highest mountains on earth, Mount Kailash rises to an altitude of 6,714 metres, and is one of the most elegant and entrancing peaks in Tibet. For the traveller, this is a dream destination, almost inaccessible until just a few decades ago because of bad roads, political prohibitions, and the presence of bandits. But no Westerner has ever felt lonely in the area around Mount Kailash.

Because of its religious associations, many Hindu and Buddhist ascetics, hermits and pilgrims have been drawn to the area of the mountain for the past two thousand years or so to see it, offer prayers, absolve sins, circumambulate it and to practice austerities and meditation. South of Mount Kailash, across the base of the majestic Mount Gurla Mandhata, are the two lakes Mansarovar and Rakkshas Tal (lake). They are the highest bodies of fresh water in the world, with Mansarovar (330 sq. km), at 4,558 meters, about fifteen meters higher than Rakshas Tal.

Itinerary -

Day 01 Arrive in Kathmandu. Transfer to Hotel

Day 02 Kathmandu sightseeing. Hotel / **(B / D)**
Welcome dinner with live Nepali cultural show at evening.

Day 03 Kathmandu sightseeing. Hotel **(B)**

Day 04 Fly to Nepalgunj. Hotel (B)

Day 05 Fly to Simikot. Trek to Yakba Khola (4-5 hours, 270m ascent, 980m descent). (B / L / D)

It will be a bit of climb from the Simikot airstrip. Continue past the fields and rough rocky trails till a large rock. The trek then descends steeply through forests. Just by side is the village of Mekh. Be especially careful here as local kids think it's funny to make arrows on the trail and send you off into the bushes. Stay on a main trail to reach campsite at Yakba Khola.

Day 06 Trek to Chumsa Khola (5-6 hours, 740m ascent, 230m descent) (B / L / D)

Climb up the trail, a long route to reach Dharapuri. Trek along the river side and down to Chachera. There are many beautiful sites alluring trekkers to stay there. But we continue above Kermi for about an hour and reach a hot spring. It is still a long climb over a ridge into a big valley with walled potato and buckwheat fields. The trail leaves out a bit as it makes a long traverse through a sparse pine forest to a mani wall and rock cairn on a ridge. Make switchbacks down past a meadow to an extensive growth of wild marijuana and nettles on the bank of the Chumsa Khola at 2830m. The trail crosses the stream on an impressive, long suspension bridge built in 1994. There are excellent camp sites alongside the stream.

Day 07 Trek to Muchu (4-5 hours, 260m ascent, 160m descent) (B / L / D)

Climb a steep, rocky ridge and drop back towards the fast-flowing, light-grey waters of the Humla Karnali. Climb over another ridge, and then descend to Yalbang Chaur. Above this sandy meadow the Humla Karnali valley narrows and the sides become quite steep. Continue the trek and you can see a bridge over the Humla Karnali and a ridiculously steep trail on the opposite side. Climb over the ridge at 2930m and descend gradually to the extensive fields surrounding Yangar. After the ups and downs for more about one hour you will reach a new suspension bridge at 2800m that will take you across the south bank of the Humla Karnali and a big, rocky camp site beside the river.

Day 08 Trek to Torea (4 hours, 710m ascent, 70m descent) (B / L / D)

Climb above the river to a stream, rock-hop across it and ascend past apricot orchards. You will get across a village and then drop into a ravine and climb to a chorten on the opposite site that offers a good view of upper part of the valley and of Tumkot village also known as Mota gompa. The trail further is easy and enjoyable reaching down to the Tumkot Khola. Continue further and then the path levels out as it ascends to a cairn at 3310m, then descends gently at Torea.

Day 09 Trek to Tharo Dunga (4 hours, 570m ascent, 60m descent) (B / L / D)

From Torea the trail ascends to a stream then contours up past fields of amaranth and wild roses to a small cairn at 3660m. Rounding the ridge you can see the extensive fields of Yari. Follow the trek to the huge valley of the Jhyakthang Chu and climb gently to Yari, a compact settlement of houses below the trail at 3670m. To the west of the village a trail leads to Sarpa La. From Yari the trade route climbs the broad valley to the source of the village's extensive irrigation system. We reach at Tharo Dhunga at 4000m where there are many good camp sites.

Day 10 Trek to Sher (4-5 hours, 560m ascent, 860m descent) (B / L / D)

The trail climbs steadily from the camp to a meadow and stream at 4160m and another meadow, Sipsip, near the foot of the pass at 4330m. A short distance below the pass you will round a ridge for a view of the Tibetan plateau, the Humla Karnali and the green barley fields of Sher far below. From here will be steep descent, pebbles, and dusty drop in the Humla Karnali at 3720m. A stone pillar that marks the Nepal – Tibet is just across a long Swiss-built suspension bridge, perhaps one of the most information border crossing in the world. Climb 150m to the Sher.



Cross the border, and drive to Taklakot

Complete the trans-border formalities. Our Tibet crew will be waiting with the land cruiser to meet us. The time is now 2 hours and 15 minutes ahead of Nepal, so set your watch forward.

From the Nepal border at Sher the road makes a long descent to a stream and some mills, then follows the Humla Karnali to Khojarnath (3790m), 10km from the border. Khojarnath is the first large village in Tibet and boasts an important gompa of the Sakya sect. This gompa escaped most of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, although the silver statues and other items described by early travelers have been disappeared. In the same compound is the Rinzin Zangpo gompa, said to be more than 1000 years old.

The road climbs over a 4000m pass. The route then passes Kangtse, which has a gompa on a nearby hill. Ford the Kangtse Chu and the Gejin Chu and drive on to Gejin and Kirang villages before reaching taklakot (3930m), 26km from Sher.

Day 11 Drive to Darchen (B / L / D)

It is a 100 km or 3 hour drive from Taklakot to Darchen, during which, weather permitting, we will have our first view of Mount Kailash just past the Gurla La. The road passed through the isthmus between the holy Rakshas Tal and Manasorovar and crosses the Barka plain to Darchen. We'll have the afternoon to do some shopping at the Tibetan bazaars, pack for the kora, and perhaps take a short acclimatization walk up the ridge below Kailash to some prayer-flag festooned ridges.

Day 12 Trek to Tarboche & Chuku Gompa (B / L / D)

After a leisurely breakfast, we meet our team of yaks and the local 'drokpa' yak drivers who will escort us around the kora, yak bells ringing. Tarboche is marked by a tall flagpole adorned with thousands of fluttering, multi-colored prayer flags and kata scarves strung out in radiating lines from the pole. To the west of the Tarboche is the Chorten Kangnyi, and auspicious but somewhat repulsively-decorated archway (you'll see...). Perched above Tarboche is the Sky Burial Site of 84 Mahasiddhas, a spot revered for once having been the burial site for lamas, and containing numerous sacred springs, cairns, and power places. Pilgrims lie down on a flat rock strewn with old clothes, bones, tsampa bowls and personal belongings and visualize their death. We set up our first camp just across the bridge from Chuku Gompa, and have the rest of the day to wander up the valley to the gompa, perched

above the valley at 4780m, where pilgrims will be doing koras and rubbing parts of their body against worn areas of rock, shiny with butter, to start the kora off in an auspicious manner. Inside is a revered marble statue called Chuku Opame and a silver-inlaid conch shell with silver wings which was said to have flown here from afar, and a 'trulku', or reincarnated lama, resides in a cozy (but dung-smoke filled) room in the gumpa. A blessing by the local lama is an extremely good start for the kora.

Day 13 Trek to Dira-puk (B / L / D)

From Tarboche and Chuku Gumpa, we follow the Lha Chu river through a serene, meadow-lined valley, hopping over small streams, the west face of Mount Kailash towering above us. The river enters a narrow canyon with high, steep cliffs and spectacular waterfalls. Midway along the trek at the second prostration point the secret entranceway to the Inner Kora is visible to the right. One must complete 13 koras to enter inside. Continuing up the valley, the north face of Kailash comes into view just as we reach the 13th century monastery at Dira-puk. There are two routes to the camp from the convergence of the valleys, and we have the choice of crossing a small moss bridge and following a small path to the gumpa, which has awesome views of the north face of Kailash, or continuing on along the main trail. We camp opposite the river from the gumpa, immediately below the massive north face of Kailash. A sunset walk up to the ridge overlooking the north face is a must!



Day 14 Trek to Mani Camp (over the Drolma La) (B / L / D)

We now leave the Lha Chu Valley just as the sunrise turns the snow peaks gold and pink, and enter the Drolma Chu Valley, heading up towards the 5,630 meter Drolma La. Although the altitude makes the trekking difficult, the masses of pilgrims performing their acts of devotion along the way are continuously intriguing. Those extremely devout pilgrims prostrate themselves the entire way around Kailash, kneeling down and extending their bodies and hands in front of them in prayer (and marking the beginning of the next prostration). The trail is lined with sacred sites: butter, coin & flag-covered rocks, rocks with footprints of saints, rocks to climb over, under or through, hillsides of discarded clothes as offerings and other significant sites. It's a tough climb to the prayer-flag festooned summit, but it's all worth it from the top as juniper incense burns and thousands of colorful prayer flags send prayers out into the surrounding valleys. We take the lead from the many pilgrims up top and stop for lunch before the descent to the east valley. Below us lies the Lake of Compassion, Thukpe Dzingbu, one of the highest lakes in the world. We will camp in the valley below the pass at the eastern face of Mount Kailash at a camp called Mani camp.

Day 15 Trek to Darchen, Drive to Tarboche. (B / L / D)

Another couple of hours of bright early morning trekking along a boulder-filled river brings us to Zutul-puk Gumpa (4790m), with Milarepa's meditation cave and imprints of his hand, food and head prints. A monk with a Polaroid takes photos of the Tibetan pilgrims in all their finery for 5 RMB! Afterwards, it's an easy walk along some impressive gorges and around many mani stones and mani walls back to the Barka plains and dusty Darchen where our jeeps await us. The kora is finished - we've erased our sins, endured extremely cold nights and mornings, crossed one of the highest passes in the world, met countless fellow pilgrims, sent

prayers of peace out to the world. Congratulations! Now on to Tarboche by jeep, where we will set up camp in preparation for the Saga Dawa festival the next day.

Day 16 To Chiu Gompa and Lake Manasarovar (B / L / D)

Another couple of hours of bright early morning trekking along a boulder-filled river brings us to Zutul-puk Gompa (4790m), with Milarepa's meditation cave and imprints of his hand, food and head prints. Afterwards, it's an easy walk along some impressive gorges and around many mani stones and mani walls back to the Barka plains where our jeeps await us. We will pack up camp and drive along the beautiful bluffs near Lake Manasarovar to Chiu (or bird) Gompa, spectacularly situated on a craggy cliff side along the northwest shores of the lake, and where the ubiquitous Guru Rimpoche left behind a meditation cave and reputedly spent the last seven years of his life. We set up camp right on the shores for perhaps the ultimate Tibetan sunset.

Day 17 Drive to Parayang (4700 meters) (292 kms / 08 to 09 hrs) (B / L / D)

It's a 300 km drive through wild country from Lake Manasarovar to Parayang. We cross wide plains, shallow rivers and pass by a few local truck stops with makeshift tea houses. Passing the stunning Mayum-tso lake, we climb to the Mayum La, where we are rewarded by a magnificent mountain panorama. The scenery along this section is some of the most beautiful of the entire journey, and a distant storm drifting in back of Tibetans, horses and sheep is a surreal sight. The kids will be out at the camp sight to welcome us to our sand dunes camp site at Parayang ... as will the village dogs! This is a wonderful spot to watch sunset and roll down the soft, dun-colored sand with the village kids.



Day 18 Drive to Saga (4600 meters) (252 kms / 07 to 08 hrs) (B / L / D)

From Parayang we drive another 255 km east, shouting "La Gyalo" or "La So So So" (roughly translated "May the gods be victorious!") as we crest the passes marked with prayer flags and cairns. The panoramas are some of the most beautiful on our journey, with the high mountains bordering Nepal on our right, and pebbly streams, small lakes, small Tibetan villages and soft hills surrounding us. We traverse this amazing Tibetan landscape, crossing more high passes, and the landscape gently transforms to a plateau of high-altitude desert sand dunes. There's time to climb up to the wind-sculpted ridges and gaze over a bordering lake below extensive ripples of peaks. We camp near Saga, though time permitting, we might make it a bit further along.

Day 19 Drive to Lhatse (4080 meters) (200 km / 06 hrs) (B)

A drive of 200 km through the high plains of Tibet, soft, beautiful and photogenic. Just before arriving in the dusty truck stop of Lhatse, we cross the Brahmaputra River, which originates from Kailash. We'll camp in or near Lhatse, depending on time and campsites.

Day 20 Drive to Shigatse (3900 meters) (157 km / 05 hrs) (B)

From here, the roads are quite good, and usually paved, and our 157 km drive to Shigatse, past lovely Tibetan villages where the spring planting will be in full force, is a scenic one. Shigatse is the second largest city in Tibet, with perhaps the best preserved but controversial monastery, the Tashilhunpo gumpa. This Gelugpa gumpa, home to the Panchen Lama (now in exile in India), is one of the largest functioning monasteries in Tibet and there is much to explore within its surrounding walls. We will take a few hours for a visit in the late afternoon or early morning before heading to Lhasa. Camping is finished, and we head to a hotel for the night.

Day 21 Drive to Lhasa (3650 meters) (B)

Another day of smooth driving through the wonderful landscapes of central Tibet and towards our final destination of Lhasa, one of Kim's favorite cities in Asia, despite the Chinese presence there. We stay in the heart of old Lhasa at the beautiful, Tibetan-styled Hotel, where the character of the city is still very Tibetan.

Day 22 & 23 - Lhasa (B)

Over the following days we visit most of the important sites in and around Lhasa with our Tibetan guide. Late afternoons will be free for you to discover the endlessly fascinating bazaars, walk koras around the Jokhang with the myriad other pilgrims, or sit in the Barkor square, immersing yourself in the exoticism of Lhasa. There is also the option of additional tours to places such as the Tibetan Medical Centre, Ganden Monastery or Tsurphu Monastery at a slight extra cost, although after our last few weeks, a bit of rest in Lhasa is usually the top choice.

The Jokhang is the holiest temple in Tibet and shelters the sacred Jowo Sakyamuni statue. Shuffle among the pilgrims, butter lamps permeating the air, and find gruesome Gods in hidden annexes. There is always a procession of devout Tibetans through the complex. After walking the holy inner circle, complete a circuit of the Barkhor, the market surrounding the Jokhang, for good luck. It is the best market to shop for all things Tibetan, and just about anything else you ever wanted as well.

Drepung and Sera Monasteries – Sera is one of the best preserved monasteries in Tibet, renown for its lively debating sessions in the courtyard each afternoon. Within its whitewashed walls and golden roofs, several hundred monks live and study. Drepung was founded in the 14th century and was once the largest gumpa in the world with a population of around 10,000 monks. These days the figure has been reduced to several hundred, but there is still much of interest to see here, as the structure escaped relatively unscathed during the Cultural Revolution.

Norbulingka – Norbulinka is the summer palace of the Dalai Lama, set in a quiet and relaxing garden which used to house the Dalai Lama's pets. One particularly interesting mural inside depicts the history of Tibet and all the Dalai Lamas.

Potala Palace - The magnificent white, black, red and gold Potala Palace dominates the skyline of Lhasa. It was the winter quarters of the Dalai Lama, housing jewel-encrusted gold and silver stupas of previous Dalai Lamas, numerous grand state rooms and many important chapels. There has been a palace on this site since the 5th or 6th century, but the present palace was constructed in the 17th century.

Day 24 Flight to Kathmandu. Hotel (B)

It's a two-hour drive to the Gonggar Airport from Lhasa. The spectacular flight takes us right across the main Himalayan range and provides us with magnificent mountain views of most of the highest peaks in the world if the weather is nice. The flight arrives in Kathmandu on 0930 in the morning. Transfer to Hotel

Day 25 Final Departure (B)

We drop you to airport.

Please Note:

Our itinerary is dictated by road and bridge conditions, and the location of good camp spots. The drivers, guides and sherpas decide where we camp so the itinerary is approximate only.

Legend: B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D= Dinner (Included items)

Cost: please e-mail us at makaluadv@wlink.com.np , info@nepalmakalu.com

Included Services:

01. All Nepal part transportations by private vehicle.
02. Five star Hotel de L' Annapurna in Kathmandu (twin sharing, breakfast, taxes included).
03. All applicable entrance fees / English speaking guide / transportation during the sightseeing.
04. Airfare: Kathmandu - Nepalgunj - Simikot.
05. Hotel in Nepalgunj (including breakfast, and taxes).
06. Special trekking permit to trek in to Simikot area (necessary!).
07. Tibet Travel Permit Fee, Tibet Visa Fee, All Monastery Entrance Fees and other charges as needed.
08. Accommodation on Hotels / Guesthouses at Tibet wherever mentioned in itinerary (BB, Twin Sharing).
09. Organized Camping Trek arrangements (including world class camping equipments).
10. Three times meals prepared by our professional kitchen crew (during the trekking period).
11. Daily wages, insurance, transportation, and all expenses of Nepalese Crew / Tibet Crew.
12. Yak / Yak men for the trekking part to carry your baggage / equipments.
13. All Tibet part transportations by Private Land Cruisers.
14. Support truck to carry the equipments available all times while in Tibet.
15. Airfare: Lhasa – Kathmandu.

Excluded Serviced:

01. Airport Taxes.
02. Expenses of Personal Nature such as Bar Bill, Laundry Bill, Telephone Bill, Mineral Water, beverages etc.
03. Nepal Entry & Re-entry visa fees.
04. Personal Travel / Medical / Accident Insurance / Rescue & Evacuation - if needed.
05. Extended days / services when added / required due to Natural events.