Dear Members & Friends:

The Tibetan Plateau has for centuries been a place of fascination for Western naturalists and explorers. Nowhere else in the world even comes close to putting so much terrain so high into the sky. Tibet is also home to a free-spirited pastoralist people with a distinctive Tantric Buddhist spirituality. Expansive grasslands in the eastern part nurture some of the richest alpine plant communities in the world.

The Tibetan highlands—beyond the Himalaya range and west of Sichuan’s panda country—form a resplendent tapestry of rolling hills, meadows, lakes surprisingly large and often a sky of deep blue with endless puffy clouds. Local people still accompany their herds of yak, camping in traditional tents of canvas and felt. Birders and plant enthusiasts tend to be well-rewarded for their efforts.

Our itinerary begins with an introduction to the fascinating city of Chengdu including the giant panda breeding center. We will then visit China’s spectacular Jiuzhaigou National Park. We then begin our overland journey through the eastern part of Tibet (actually situated today in the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai). We will cross the Ruoergai grasslands including a high elevation nature reserve that provides breeding habitat for Greylag Geese and rare Black-necked Cranes. We will also visit Labrang...
Monastery, an important center of Tibetan Buddhist Learning.

From Xining, we’ll take the overnight train across the Tibetan Plateau to Lhasa, historic center of the Tibetan world and currently the capital of the “Tibetan Autonomous Region.” Lhasa has numerous sacred sites including Jhorkang Temple, a destination for pilgrims from all over Tibet, the Potala, winter palace of the Dalai Lama, and Ganden Monastery situated dramatically on a ridge that overlooks the Lhasa Valley.

We will also travel north onto the high plateau and to Namco Lake, one of Tibet’s largest lakes situated in a basin at over 15,000 feet. Here the air is extraordinarily clear, providing extravagant views of glaciated peaks that encircle the basin.

Although Tibet is quite high, we have arranged the itinerary so that we will spend most of our time at moderate elevations, 11,000 to 12,000 feet. We anticipate that group members will be well-acclimatized. Our highest elevation overall is the pass that leads to Namco at 16,900 feet.

Since we will cross the pass briefly in the course of a day’s travel, we do not anticipate that his will present any altitude problems, even if it will most likely set a few personal altitude records.

We sincerely hope that you will be able to join us in Tibet in 2018!

Sincerely,

Margaret M. Betchart
President
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
For AAAS Travels, Sigma Xi & ACS Expeditions

Overview (con’t.)

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Leadership

Leading this expedition will be Dr. Chris Carpenter and David Huang.

Chris has been a popular leader of China Expeditions for Betchart Expeditions since 1994 as well as trips to Tibet, Xinjiang & Hunza, Indonesia, and Vietnam. He has a Ph.D. from UC Davis in California, and has been leading expeditions throughout Asia for Betchart since 1994.

David has been leading China expeditions for Betchart Expeditions since 1994. David graduated from Nankai University in Tianjin with a degree in Tourism and English Language and then worked promoting tourism in Yunnan Province. He speaks excellent English. He has led Betchart groups throughout China and Tibet, including the Silk Road, Xinjiang, Yunnan, and Sichuan Provinces, and Hunza in northern Pakistan.

Chris and David look forward to sharing the heritage of Tibet with you.
ITINERARY

Days 1/2  USA to Hong Kong.
Depart from Los Angeles on Cathay Pacific Airways for Hong Kong, crossing the International Date Line en route.

Day 3  Chengdu.
Arrive in Hong Kong this morning, and take a connecting flight to Chengdu. Transfer to the Tianfu Hotel. Enjoy a walking tour along Chengdu’s Fujiang River and welcome dinner.

Days 4/5  Chengdu to Jiuzhaigou National Park.
This morning, we will visit the giant panda breeding center in Chengdu, one of the most important locations for panda breeding and conservation in Sichuan. After lunch, we will fly to Chuanzu in the Min Shan Mountains and visit China’s spectacular Jiuzhaigou National Park. This UNESCO World Heritage site has remarkably clear lakes and an excellent system of boardwalks and buses for exploration. New Jiuzhaigou Hotel (2 nights).

Day 6  Ruoergai Grasslands.
This morning, we will drive from Jiuzhai to Ruoergai, ascending to the eastern rim of the Tibetan Plateau and crossing an important watershed divide from the catchment of the Yangtze to the Yellow River. This area has astonishingly beautiful, high elevation grassland landscapes. Along the way, we will visit the small Tibetan town of Sedi and enjoy a picnic lunch in the alpine grasslands. Ruoergai is a newly refurbished city—buildings are brightly painted, but many people on the streets are traditional Tibetans from the grasslands in town to shop. Kaidefeng at Ruoergai.

Day 7  Hua Hu Lake to Hezuo.
Today we’ll traverse grasslands and small mountain ranges from Ruoergai to Hezuo with stops en route at points of interest. Hua Hu Lake makes up part of the 1670 sq km Ruoergai National Wetland Reserve, set at 3,400 to 3,700 m (11,200-12,100 feet) elevation. It is important breeding habitat for black-necked cranes, and many other waterfowl; the lakeshore marshes are accessible by boardwalk. Kirti Monastery and Xiannu Valley in Langmusi provide good walking and a very scenic lunch stop. This evening we will stay in Hezuo, the county seat, in a very remote area of the Tibetan Plateau. Shaoma Hotel, Hezuo.

Day 8  Labrang.
Descending from the grasslands to the valleys of Gansu, we enter an area where Muslims and Tibetans have lived side by side for many centuries. Our destination today is Labrang Monastery, one of the largest and most important monasteries in Eastern Tibet with about 600 monks. The complex includes several colleges that focus on subjects like philosophy and Tibetan medicine. Explore the monastery in the company of one of the monks and take a walk in the Tibetan village of Ley-de. Xunhua Hotel.

Day 9  Labrang & Xining.
Today we will drive across high grasslands of Gansu Province which are ecologically distinct from those of Western Sichuan to Xining, capital city of Qinghai Province, via the Yellow River crossing. We will pass from a predominantly
Tibetan to a Muslim region as the landscape changes from grassland to semi-arid steppe and arid river valley with wind eroded red sandstone formations in the valley of the Yellow River, and some picturesque villages. We may take an afternoon walk along old canals in Xunhua on the Yellow River and beside mud-walled homes of the Salar people. The Salar, unlike many of China’s other Muslim people, trace their ancestry to the Middle East. Qinghai comprises the northeastern part of the Tibetan Plateau. Xining has long been an important trading center where Tibetan, Chinese and Turkic cultures intermingle. This evening, we will explore the Shuijin free market, in the vanishing remnants of the old Muslim part of town.

**Day 10  Pari Takster.**
This morning we will visit the village of Pari Takster, which was the birthplace and original home of the 14th (current) Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama was born here in 1935 and was recognized as the Dalai Lama in 1940, when he was four and one-half years old. He became the leader of the Tibetan government in exile in 1959 when he and many followers fled after a failed revolt against the Chinese. A widely respected figure worldwide, he was awarded the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. Afternoon at leisure, then board the overnight train to Lhasa. Accommodations in soft sleepers on the train.

**Day 11  Tibetan Plateau to Lhasa.**
Today we will journey by train across the Tibetan Plateau to Lhasa. This train route was recently completed—and was long sought after by the Chinese as a way to tie Tibet more closely to China. We will enjoy seeing the vast landscapes and grasslands en route to Lhasa. The Tibet Cang-Gyan Hotel (5 nights).

**Days 12/14  Lhasa.**
We will explore Lhasa for the next three days. Our visits will include the majestic Potala, former winter palace of the Dalai Lama, and Norbulingka, his summer palace. Also explore Barkhor, the fascinating old section of Lhasa, and Jorkang Temple, the ultimate destination for pilgrims.

On our third day in Lhasa Valley, we will venture out to Ganden Monastery set on a ridge top to the east. In the Lhasa valley, the Tibetan people
still practice traditional farming methods. En route to these monasteries, we will have superb opportunities to see the life and flora of the Tibetan countryside.

Day 15  Namco Lake.
Morning drive northward out of Lhasa Valley to the high Tibetan Plateau. We will traverse extensive grasslands along the Qinghai-Lhasa Highway, then cross a pass at nearly 17,000 feet to spectacular Namco Lake. This lake is situated at 15,500 feet elevation, covers many hundreds of square miles and is encircled by grasslands and the glaciated snow mountains of the Nyenchin Tangthla. En route, enjoy a picnic lunch and possibly visit a family of seasonal nomads.

Days 16/17  Lhasa to Chengdu & home.
Take flight to Chengdu and overnight at *Tianfu Hotel*. Farewell dinner in celebration of our journey. Fly to Hong Kong and home, arriving on the same day.

Responsibility
Betchart Expeditions Inc., the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, and the American Chemical Society (ACS) act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels, and exercise every care possible. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substiute another leader of similar expertise if the original leader is unable to join the tour prior to departure, in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner’s risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance.

Yes! I/we want to join the Explore Tibet Expedition, July 15-31, 2018, offered by AAAS Travels, Sigma Xi, ACS Expeditions & The Planetary Society. Please reserve ________ space(s). As a deposit, I/we enclose a check for $___________($500 per person) payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) __________________________ Age __________________________

Name(s) __________________________ Age __________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

City __________________________ State __ Zip __________

City __________________________ State __ Zip __________

Phone: Home (______) __________________________

Phone: Home (______) __________________________

Work (______) __________________________

Work (______) __________________________

Email Address _____________________________________________________

Email Address _____________________________________________________

Membership: ___ AAAS ___ Sigma Xi ___ ACS ___ Planetary Society

Accommodations Preference:

___ Twin  ___ Single  Twin Share: ___ with a friend or

___ Nonsmoker  ___ Smoker  ___ assign a roommate

Signature __________________________________ Date __________

Signature __________________________________ Date __________

Please Mail To: Tibet Expedition 2018
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Montebello Road
Cupertino, CA 95014-5435

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Map by April Milne.
Explore Tibet!
Including the Eastern Tibetan Plateau & Juizhaigou National Park!
July 15-31, 2018

COSTS & CONDITIONS

Trip Fee: $4,595 per person twin share plus air fare from Los Angeles, $1,395 to Chengdu, round trip and in-tour flights Chengdu/Juizhai and Lhasa/Chengdu $495 per person.

Expedition Fee Includes:
Land transport; group airport transfers; accommodations twin share; tips to drivers and local guides; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

Expedition Fee Does Not Include: International air fare (quoted separately); in-tour flights, China visa fee; gratuities to expedition leaders; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, snacks, personal insurance, or foreign airport departure taxes.

What to Expect: This expedition is planned for travelers who would enjoy exploring the heritage of Tibet, from the grasslands of the Eastern Tibetan Plateau to the Tibet heartland around Lhasa. The group will travel 4 to 7 hours by bus or van on each of several days. On traveling days, we will take time for both planned and spontaneous stops to walk, photograph and talk with local people. Walks will be at a leisurely pace suitable for discovery; binoculars are suggested. We will take the overnight train from Xining to Lhasa.

Weather is pleasant in Tibet during the summer with midday temperatures in the 70s to upper 80s and some rain. Our itinerary starts in the lower eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau where we will reach elevations of 12,500 feet.

We will acclimatize as we drive from lower to higher elevations. Around Lhasa, we will stay no higher than 12,000 feet, and we will drive over one 16,900 foot pass. This expedition will be a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure who would enjoy a chance to explore rich cultural and natural areas on the Tibetan Plateau. (No smoking in vehicles, during lectures, or meals, please.)

Accommodations: Are in comfortable and reasonably clean Chinese and Tibetan hotels based on twin share. Expect a good bed, showers, Western style toilets, and carefully prepared food. A couple of hotels are modest, but are the best available for small towns. On the overnight train to Lhasa, we will be in soft sleepers, four to a compartment with share bathroom facilities. Single accommodations are available for a supplement of $795 (no singles are available on the train.)

Reservations, Deposits, & Payments: Please mail a deposit of $500 pp with the completed reservation form to:

Explore Tibet 2018
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Montebello Road
Cupertino, CA 95014-5435

The balance is due 60 days before departure.

Questions: Please call Taunya DeYoung
Betchart Phone: (800) 252 4910
Fax: (408) 252 1444
Email: betchartextaunya@gmail.com
On the Web: www.betchartexpeditions.com

Cancellations & Refunds:
The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of $100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the $100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.