Discover TIBET!... Explore the Tibetan Plateau from Western Sichuan to Tibet! July 22–August 7, 2012

Costs & Conditions

Tibet Trip Fees: $4,185 per person twin share — air fare of approx. $1,550 • fuel surcharge — tax Los Angeles to Chengdu, China, round trip, and round trip flights $795 per person.

Expedition Fee Includes: Land transport, airport transfers, accommodations, all meals in Sichuan and Tibet, tips to drivers and local guides; entrance less; baggage handling, leadership, administration.

Expedition Fee Does Not Include: International air fare (quoted separately), international air from Hong Kong, entry visa, foreign airways, land transport, airport transfers, accommodations, all meals in Sichuan and Tibet, tips to drivers and local guides; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

What to Expect: This expedition is planned for travelers who would enjoy exploring the cultural heritage and natural history of Tibet, from the grasslands of the Eastern Tibetan Plateau to the Tibetan 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. Walks will be at a leisurely pace, suitable for discovery; binoculars are suggested. We will take the overnight train from Xining to Lhasa. We will also visit Labrang Monastery, an important center of Tibetan Buddhist Learning.

Their 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 journey through the eastern part of Tibet (actually situated today in the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai). We will cross the Ruogai 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 “Tibet Autonomous Region.” Lhasa has numerous sacred sites including Jokhang 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 extra-vagant 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 this 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 2012!

Sincerely,

Margaret M. Betchart
President
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
For AAAS Travels, Sigma Xi & ACS Expeditions
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 drive from Jiuzhaigou to Ruoergai, according 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 Sel ‘ei 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. sunshine Hotel at Ruoergai.

Day 6 Ruoergai Grasslands.
This morning, we will drive from Jiuzhaigou to Ruoergai, according 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 Sel ‘ei 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. sunshine Hotel at Ruoergai.

Day 7 Hua Hu Lake to Hezuo.
Today we’ll traverse grasslands and small mountain ranges on the eastern border of Qinghai Province. As we cross from a predominantly Tibetan to a Muslim region as the landscape changes from grassland to semi-arid and arid river valley with wind eroded red sandstone formations in the valley of the Yellow River, and some picturesque villages. We will visit the ancient town of Hezuo in the morning and enjoy a picnic lunch at a remote, small Tibetan village. This evening, we will stay in Hezuo, the county seat, in a very remote area of the Tibetan Plateau. Shang Ba La 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. Labulang 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 and arid river valley with wind eroded red sandstone formations in the valley of the Yellow River, and some picturesque villages. We will visit the ancient town of Hezuo in the morning and enjoy a picnic lunch at a remote, small Tibetan village. This evening, we will stay in Hezuo, the county seat, in a very remote area of the Tibetan Plateau. Shang Ba La Hotel, Hezuo.

Day 10 Pari Ta’kster.
This morning we will visit the village of Pari Ta’kster, which was the home 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 1943 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.

Responsibility

Days 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. Kyichu 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 way, through the Hana Highway. Buses will cross 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 Nyenchen Tangha. 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.
**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 Jiuzhaigai 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 Chuanzhu in the Min Shan Mountains and visit China’s spectacular Jiuzhaigai National Park. This UNESCO World Heritage site has remarkably clear lakes and an excellent system of boardwalks and buses for exploration. Jiuzhaigai Hotel | 2 nights.

**Day 6 Ruoergai Grasslands.**
This morning, we will drive from Jiuzhaigai 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. Sunshine Hotel 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 3,780 m (11,200-12,100 feet) elevation. It is an important breeding habitat for black-necked cranes, and many other waterfowl. The lakeshores are marshy with boardwalks. Kirti Monastery and Xianbu 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. Shang Ba La 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. Labulang Hotel.

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**Accommodations in soft sleepers on the overnight train.**
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**Days 16/17 Lhasa to Chengdu & home.**
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**RESPONSIBILITY**

Betchart Expeditions Inc. is the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society, and American Chemical Society (ACS) member, and is subject to all of their policies and regulations. Membership: AAAS Sigma Xi ACS Planetary Society

**RESERVATIONS**

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

**Accommodations Preferences:**

- Twin Single
- Twin/Shared with a friend or roommate
- Non-smoker
- Smoker

**Signature:**

**Please Mail To:** Tibet 2012
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Melbonado Road
Cupertino, CA 95014-5435

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Photographs courtesy of Chris Carpenter & Ted Elliman. Map by April Milne.

| Yes! I/we want to join the Tibetan Plateau Expedition, July 22–August 7, 2012, offered by AAAS Travels, ACS & Sigma Xi Expeditions. Please reserve ___ space(s). | No! I am unable to join at this time.

**As a deposit, I/we enclose a check for $_____ ($500 per person) payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.**

**Name(s):**

**Address:**

**City State Zip**

**Phone: Home: ___ Work: ___**

**Email Address:**

**Signature:**

**Please Mail To:** Tibet 2012
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Melbonado Road
Cupertino, CA 95014-5435

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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 pastoral 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.

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[Signature]

Margaret M. Betchart
President
Betchart Expeditions Inc.

For further information:
Please phone Renee Apostolou at (800) 252-4910 or write Renee Apostolou at 17020 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435 for further information. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.