

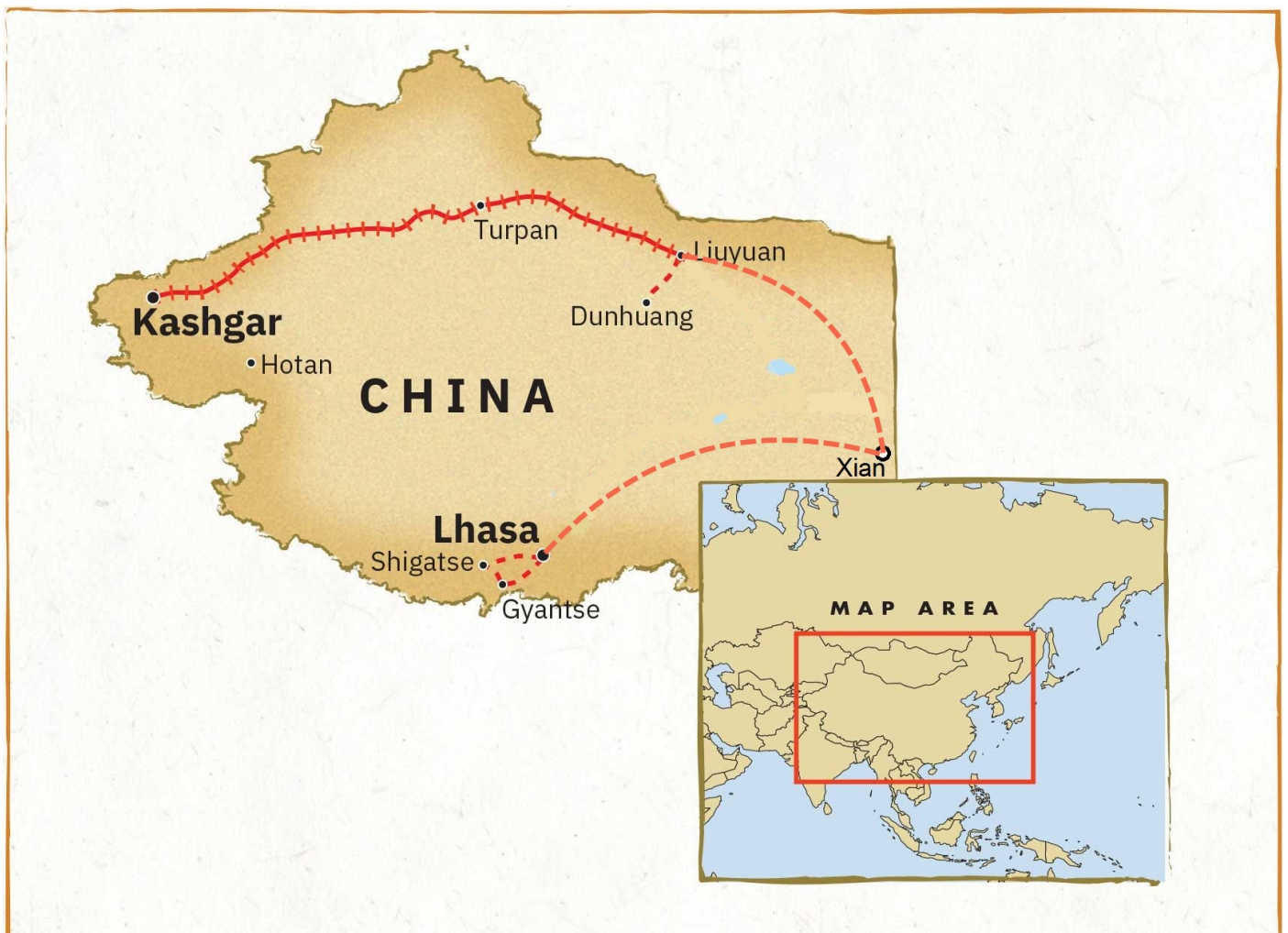


China Old Silk Road & Tibet Tour 2026

22 Captivating Days | \$19,870 per person, share twin

16 April – 7 May, 2026

Escorted from New Zealand by Mandy Page



0800 868 748 | info@toursdirect.co.nz

www.toursdirect.co.nz



Request an extensive **Free Information Pack** which contains the full itinerary, tour inclusions, tour discounts and T's & C's.

April 2026

Thu 16 Auckland – Beijing
Economy Airfares included

This evening we depart Auckland on our Air China flight to Beijing.

Fri 17 Beijing – Kashgar
Hotel *****

We arrive at Beijing airport this morning and have the use of an airport lounge before we board our flight to Kashgar. When we arrive we will be met and transferred to our hotel for a well deserved rest.

Kashgar, is China's westernmost city; being 2,000 year's old means Kashgar is unlike any other place in China. The fabled city greeted Marco Polo and countless Silk Road travellers as they entered the Middle Kingdom. While its previous glory as a trading centre has all but disappeared, Kashgar retains the exotic air and immense appeal of medieval Asia. Hemmed in by the desert and the Pamir Mountains, the Kashgar of today is a rich mix of peoples and cultures.

Its population is made up in great part by the Turkic Uyghur people prevalent in western China rather than the majority Han Chinese.

Both the northern and southern caravan routes around the Taklamakan Desert converged at the Kashgar oasis.



Sat 18 Kashgar

Meals: B, L

*Id Kah Mosque**Uyghur Handicraft Street**Abakh Khoja Tomb*

After a leisurely breakfast at the hotel, we will spend the day exploring the city with our local guide.

We will stop at the **Id Kah Mosque**, the biggest mosque in China. Originally built on a smaller scale in 1442, the complex today includes a shady courtyard, a hall of prayer and a gate tower. This is where Muslims from all over the province come to celebrate festivals and holy days.

Another stop will be **Uyghur Handicraft Street**.

Called "Ancient Art Street," this street is famed for its hundreds of stalls and workshops selling Uyghur pottery, gold and silver jewelry, silk fabrics, ethnic clothing, and folk instruments. We will take time to wander among the finely crafted goods, punctuated at intervals by street-food vendors. For lunch we will refuel at a local street food eatery. Here is our chance to sample local street food such as kebab and nan bread (safe and hygienic).

To end the day we will visit the **Abakh Khoja Tomb**; a great example of the Central Asia's ornamental and architectural style. This beautiful mausoleum shelters the remains of five generations of the same family. The site is also known as the Fragrant Concubine's Tomb, in memory of Abakh Khoja's granddaughter, Iparhan.
chach.

Sun 19 Kashgar

Meals: B, D

*Kashgar Animal Market**Night Food Market*

After breakfast at the hotel we meet our local guide to spend the morning exploring more of the city. We are going to take in the **Kashgar Animal Market**, where you can find anything from a herd of fat-tailed sheep to horses and camels ready for a test drive, to yaks brought down from the surrounding mountains.

Tonight we are off to the **Night Food Market** located across from the Id Kah Mosque in the Old Town; it is a fantastic place to sample traditional Uyghur fare. Little stalls sell plates of fried fish, plov, hand-pulled noodles and dumplings, grilled kebabs, and steaming bowls of goat's head soup, among many other delicious and exotic treats.

Dinner is at the lively night food market.

Mon 20 Kashgar – overnight train – Turpan

Meals: B, L, D

Overnight Train

*Kashgar's Old Town**Gaotai Ancient Homes*

As always we start the day with a hearty breakfast before checking out and meeting our guide. On the programme today is a visit to **Kashgar's Old Town**; here we will walk up ancient dirt lanes between mud-brick Uyghur houses with ladders leading up to the roofs and the houses above. Sadly, in recent years, much of the Old Town has been demolished and replaced with more modern, tourist-friendly architecture. While lacking the history and authenticity of the original town structure, the "New" Old Town still manages to preserve plenty of the charm of old-time Kashgar.

The **Gaotai Ancient Homes** are in the oldest section of Kashgar, with some 600 Uyghur houses, mosques, and workshops that have been passed down from generation to generation.

For more than 1,000 years, Kashgar Uyghurs have made their homes and livelihoods in this 14-acre cliffside area, producing hats, scarves, handicrafts and pottery in their workshops while raising families in the ancient mud-brick houses and "hutongs" (neighborhoods). Here are preserved the living customs, culture, architecture and traditions of Kashgar's Uyghur ethnic minority.

Lunch is at a local restaurant and we can enjoy a meal of traditional favourites.

This afternoon we will transfer to the railway station to board our overnight train to Turpan.

Tue 21 Turpan

Meals: B, L, D

Hotel ****

*Karez Irrigation System**Turpan Museum*

We wake up this morning to a new city, Turpan.

With our local guide we visit the thriving bazaar, where one can buy the fabulous fruits and nuts the area is known for, as well as traditional clothing and hand-crafted knives.

Turpan is also known for its 2,000-year-old irrigation system, **Karez**, which still brings glacial meltwater down from the Tien Shan Mountains in underground gravity-fed pipelines and wells. This water has made it possible for the Turpan Basin to be called the "Valley of Fruits"; so a must-see spot.

To get a better understanding of the city's long history we will take in the **Turpan Museum**; built in 1990, exhibits include cultural artifacts ranging from the Paleolithic Age until the present day.

*Tue 21 continued**Jiaohe**Emin Minaret*

Near Turpan is the ruined city of **Jiaohe**, built in the 2nd century and eventually abandoned after it was decimated by the Mongols in the 13th century. Located 10 km west of Turpan, Jiaohe stands on an island surrounded by two small rivers. "Jiaohe" literally means confluence of two rivers.

Our last interest spot is the **Emin Minaret**, built of wood and mud-brick in 1777. The minaret looms over the Uyghur Mosque near Turpan; the graceful tapering minaret shows the fusion of Islamic and Uyghur styles of architecture and decorative art.

Tonight, dinner is at a local restaurant.

Wed 22 Turpan

Meals: B, L, D

*Tuyugou Valley**Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves**Flaming Mountains*

After breakfast we head off into the countryside today to see some of the surrounding villages and landscapes.

Tuyugou Valley is a quiet area in Xinjiang with traditional Uyghur villages set against a backdrop of mountains and desert. The villages have mud-brick houses, narrow streets, and orchards that have been cultivated for generations. Daily life here follows traditional customs, with locals engaged in farming and small-scale trade. The valley also has historical sites, including ancient Buddhist caves and Islamic landmarks, showing the region's long cultural history.

In 366 CE a Buddhist monk from India scooped out the compacted red sand of a riverbank to form the first of the **Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves**, 55 km from modern-day Turpan. Pilgrims began to arrive to see the wonderful fresco of the Buddha that he painted in his cave, and stayed to dig and decorate more caves. Although some of the finest frescoes were cut away and shipped to Europe by early 20th-century explorers Van de Coq and Bartus, and others defaced by Muslims objecting to the depiction of human forms, many remain on the walls of the labyrinth.

Also outside Turpan are the **Flaming Mountains**; red sandstone gullies of the barren mountains absorb the heat of the sun and radiate it back out into the Turpan Basin, making it the hottest place on earth. Hidden in these red hills is Grape Valley, where one of China's most famous grapes is grown.

Wed 22 continued

The underground **Tombs of Astana** have protected the bodies of the residents of ancient Gaochang since the 3rd century. The extreme conditions of the Turpan depression, the hottest and driest place in China, have helped to preserve everything in the burial vaults, including the food for the trip into the afterlife. Books, linen and silk clothing, small figurines, coins, and sometimes murals surrounded the bodies, which are as well preserved as Egyptian mummies.

Thu 23 Turpan – Liuyuan – Dunhuang

Meals: B, L, D

Hotel ****

Train

Mingsha Sand Dunes

Camel Ride

Crescent Moon Lake

This morning we check out of the hotel before heading to the railway station. We board the train to Liuyuan and have lunch onboard.

On arrival we are met by our guide and driver for our transfer to Dunhuang.

The oasis town of **Dunhuang** was founded during the Han Dynasty in 111 BC. It was one of four Chinese garrisons meant to control the trade routes to the west. Situated at the western end of the Hexi Corridor, which snakes between North Mountain and Qilian Mountain, Dunhuang became one of the most important towns on the Silk Road. The road from Xian divided here into two routes around the Taklamakan Desert.

A must do in this area is a visit to the **Mingsha Sand Dunes**. The place got its name from the ringing sound the sand makes as the wind shifts, or when you slide down the dunes. Some 5 km from Dunhuang, Mingsha is a great place to interact with local people.

At the foot of Mingsha Mountain is **Crescent Moon Lake**; here water bubbles up in the midst of desert sand dunes, as it is fed by an underground spring, and maintains its shape in spite of the shifting sands.

At the sand dunes you can take a short camel ride.

Tonight, dinner is on the rooftop of our hotel. We can enjoy a glass of wine and take in the views of the surrounding sand dunes.

Fri 24 Dunhuang

Meals: B, L

*Jade Gate Pass**Han Dynasty Great Wall Remains**Western Thousand Buddha Caves**Shazhou Night Market*

Whispers of the Old Silk Road will be on our agenda today as we start the day with a visit to the **Jade Gate Pass** (Yumen Pass). Merchants travelling west on the old Silk Road passed out of China through the Jade Gate Pass, the final outpost on the west end of the Hexi Corridor. Today a huge block of rammed earth is all that remains of the last frontier post.

Near the Jade Gate are the **Han Dynasty Great Wall Remains**. Although the wall has crumbled to ruins from disrepair and natural erosion, it still offers a fascinating look at the original construction of the Great Wall before the Ming dynasty's restorations, which took place in the eastern portion over 1,000 years later.

We also have on our itinerary the **Western Thousand Buddha Caves**; dug into a cliff overlooking the Dang River, about 10km west of the main Mogao Caves. The ten caves that can be viewed include frescoes and large vividly painted statues. And finally we visit the **Shazhou Night Market** where there is an inviting array of handicrafts, jade, jewelry, artwork and a huge selection of street food. Little stalls sell plates of hand-pulled noodles, shish kebab, and apricot peel water, among many other delicious treats.



Sat 25 Dunhuang – Xian

Meals: B, L

Hotel ****

Mogao Caves

After breakfast we check out, meet our guide and visit the **Mogao Caves**, 40 km southeast of Dunhuang.

Traditionally it is believed that a Buddhist monk on a pilgrimage to India in the 4th century carved the first one at the place where he had a vision of a thousand Buddhas. Until the 14th century other travellers, pilgrims and artists carved more caves, decorating them with frescoes and painted statues. The resulting 500 or so grottoes present a thousand-year study in the development of Buddhist art in China. The earliest carvings and frescoes are reminiscent of Indian art, while later dynasties' artists used different techniques and portrayed figures of their Chinese contemporaries. The caves became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

The caves were lost to memory from the 14th to the 19th centuries, when a Daoist monk rediscovered them and guarded them carefully. Upon hearing the story of these magnificent caves, the explorer Sir Aurel Stein went to see them, and was successful in talking the monk into parting with many of the frescoes, which he cut from the walls and shipped back to England. Stein also discovered a hidden chamber filled with Buddhist scrolls, including the Diamond Sutra, now on display in the British Museum.

In the afternoon we fly to Xian where we are met and transferred to our hotel.

Xian is the capital of Shaanxi Province and the eastern terminus of the great Silk Road. Under the ancient name Chang'an, Xian was home to 11 Chinese dynasties and is one of China's oldest cities. At its peak in the 8th century, over a million people lived in Xian.

Sun 26 Xian

Meals: B, L, D

*Terracotta Warriors**Legend of Camel Bell Show*

You cannot get to Xian without saying Hello to the **Terracotta Warriors** – part of the tomb of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang. At the Terracotta Army Museum we have the unique opportunity to see how terracotta figures are made and to create our own.

Later on we attend the **Legend of Camel Bell Show**, a large-scale theatrical performance that brings the history of the ancient Silk Road to life. Featuring dance, acrobatics, music, and impressive visual effects, the show tells the story of merchants, travellers, and cultural exchanges along this historic trade route.

Mon 27 Xian

Meals: B, D

*Xian City Walls**Big Wild Goose Pagoda**Youngxingfang Food Court**Great Mosque**Muslim Quarter*

Xian is a beautiful city; some wonderful sights are on our itinerary for today.

Let's start the day with a visit to the top of **Xian City Wall**, one of the largest defensive fortifications in the world, and the only city walls in China that are completely intact and unbroken. Rising 12 metres tall, 15 metres wide (even thicker at the bottom for sturdiness), and surrounded by a dry moat, the nearly 14-km long walls encompass the entire ancient city in a rectangle – perfect six centuries ago for defending against the enemy, and perfect today for walkers, cyclists, and marathoners who enjoy panoramic views of Xian's historic buildings on one side and the modern city on the other side.

Another important site is the 60 metre **Big Wild Goose Pagoda**; it was built in 652 during the Tang Dynasty to house sacred Buddhist texts and artifacts gathered in a 17-year journey to India. 50 monks helped to translate the Sanskrit texts into Chinese.

Yongxingfang Food Court is a destination for experiencing authentic Shaanxi cuisine and local street food. Located in a traditional-style marketplace, it offers a wide variety of regional specialties, including biang biang noodles, roujiamo (Chinese hamburger), dumplings, and spicy lamb skewers.

Persian merchants brought Islam to China along the Silk Road during the 7th century. The **Great**

Mosque, founded in the 8th century, combines elements of both Islamic and Chinese architecture. The buildings remaining today are probably from the 18th century. Prayers are held here five times a day, as this is an active mosque.

Near the mosque is the **Muslim Quarter** where we can stroll, shop, and sample delicious street food; it's a busy area of narrow streets lined with shops selling Muslim/Chinese specialties.

Local people say that if you leave Xian without seeing the Terra Cotta Soldiers or having a **Dumpling Dinner**, then you can't really say you have been here. The city is famous for the many shapes, colours and flavours of its dumplings and travellers are encouraged to try as many as possible.

Tue 28 Xian – Lhasa

Meals: B

Airfares

Hotel ****

This morning we check out and head to the airport for our flight to Lhasa.

When we arrive in Tibet we will be met and transfer to our hotel. There will time late this afternoon to explore the local area with your Tour Leader or have a rest.

Lhasa is the capital of Tibet. The city has a population of just under a million people and sits at an elevation of around 3,650 metres above sea level. Lhasa is home to the Potala and Norbulingka palaces, which the Dalai Lama used as his winter and summer palaces (respectively) from the 18th century until exile in 1959. The city is also dotted with a variety of important temples and pilgrimage sites, the most important of which is Jokhang Temple.

Wed 29 Lhasa

Meals: B, L, D

*Barkhor Market**Jokhang Temple*

Time to explore Lhasa as we start with **Barkhor Market**, the old market of Lhasa. This visit gives us a wonderful opportunity to interact with Tibetan people and bargain for turquoise jewelry, carpets, yak wool boots, and Tibetan fur hats trimmed with brocade.

We may not like it, however we have to at least try the salty yak butter tea, perhaps Tibet's most famous beverage. Locals in Lhasa are also fond of sweet tea. Tibetan sweet tea is brewed with black tea, milk, and sugar and we are going to try it at a local tea house. The tradition originated in the Indian Subcontinent, as Nepali and Indian traders in Tibet brought their tastes and recipes with them.

Part of today will be a visit to the **Jokhang Temple**, the most sacred site in Tibet since the 7th century. It is the place that shelters the Jowo Sakyamuni, a 6th-century statue of the Buddha brought from China by the new wife of King Songtsen Gampo. Buddhist pilgrims come from all over to circumambulate the temple, some prostrating themselves at every step. Yak butter candles sputter in the entranceway and murals and gilded carvings adorn the shrines.

Lunch is at a local restaurant where we taste local Tibetan food.

Wed 29 continued

Sera Monastery

Located just outside of the city is **Sera Monastery**, a centre of Tibetan learning dating from the 15th century. Sera is an active monastery and is home to about 400 monks. The statuary here shows the strong link between Tibetan and Indian Buddhism, with figures showing Indian characteristics.

As we enter the courtyard of crushed stone we can observe the monks of Sera at their regular debates. The younger monks sit on the ground, each with an older monk above him, grilling him on Buddhist doctrine and philosophy. Each question is presented with great thoughtfulness and special gestures, and when it's time for the seated monk to answer, the standing monk claps sharply. If the answer is judged to be wrong or incomplete, the standing monk berates the seated monk. This is serious study for the monks, though it may seem a noisy and chaotic spectacle to observers.

We end the day with a traditional Tibetan dinner accompanied by lively singing and dancing.



Thu 30 Lhasa

Meals: B, L

*Dzongyab Lukhang Park**Potala Palace**Norbulingka**Tibetan incense workshop*

A day for trees and palaces as we begin with **Dzongyab Lukhang Park**, situated behind the Potala Palace. The park's focal points are Lukhang Temple, and a small lake created during the construction of the Potala Palace. The park makes for a pleasant, leafy place to stroll, people watch, and gaze up at the Potala Palace. Locals often come here to exercise, practice tai chi, or participate in Tibetan circle dancing (called gorshey in Tibetan).

No visit to Tibet is complete without a visit to the **Potala Palace**. This iconic building rises in red, white, and gold splendour high above Lhasa, dominating the landscape and watching over every aspect of local life. The majority of the present structure dates from the 17th century, during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama. A massive structure made of stone, wood and earth, this UNESCO World Heritage Site rises 13 stories towards the sky and runs nearly 350 metres across the hillside from east to west. A maze of over a thousand rooms and thousands of altars and statues, Potala is made up of two main buildings. The eastern section served as the Dalai Lama's winter residence and administrative centre, and the Red Palace, the main sacred section, includes numerous chapels, shrines, stupas, tombs and libraries.

After lunch we will stroll through the gardens of the 18th-century **Norbulingka** or Jeweled Garden, known today as the People's Park. This was the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas, and was used by the young Dalai Lamas until they were 18, when they moved to the Potala Palace. Begun in 1740, the parks around the palace are beautiful and extensive. Norbulingka was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List as an extension of the Potala Palace.

Time for some hands-on experience as we join a **Tibetan incense workshop**. Guided by local artisans, we'll learn the ancient process of blending natural herbs, spices, and medicinal plants to create fragrant incense.

May 2026

Fri 1 Lhasa – Gyantse

Meals: B, L, D

Hotel ****

*Yamdrok Lake**Karola Glacier**Visit with local Tibetan Family**Gyantse Dzong*

This morning we are heading to Gyantse, exploring various sights along the way. The journey will take approximately 5.5 hours.

About halfway between Lhasa and Gyantse is beautiful blue-green **Yamdrok Lake**, said to be a goddess incarnate. One of three sacred lakes in Tibet, Yamdrok is shaped like a fan coral, with many bays and inlets on its mountainous shores. It lies at 4,400 metres and is visited by pilgrims all year long.

Several hours from Yamdrok Lake, spectacular **Karola Glacier** is visible from the road, and close

enough to walk right up to. In some seasons, nomads pitch camp here with their yaks.

Lunch will be on the way.

Today we will take the opportunity to **visit a local Tibetan family** and learn about the customs and traditions of the region.

Situated at over 3,980 metres above sea level, the Tibetan town of **Gyantse** is set in a crescent of hills rising from the Nyang River valley. These peaks are spiked with the jagged teeth of the 14th-century wall that surrounds the city's Palkhor Monastery. The old parts of the town near the wall have retained much of their original appearance. Gyantse's best-known monument is the 15th-century Kumbum, a fabled shrine and place of Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage.

Gyantse's Dzong, or fortress, dominates the city's skyline, seemingly perched precariously on top of the city's central hill. Built in the 14th and 15th century, it once served as the city's administrative and government centre. Its stone walls were the site of a famous siege by British troops in 1904. Commanded by Francis Younghusband, the British forces eventually overran the Tibetan forces, who fought bravely but were woefully outgunned. In the shadow of the fortress the old town's cobblestone streets and winding alleys remain intact.

Dinner tonight will be at a local restaurant where we can try traditional favourites.

Sat 2 Gyantse – Shigatse

Meals: B, L, D

Hotel ****

*Kumbum**Pelkhor Chode Monastery*

Before the end of this trip we will be able to recognise stupas, shrines, dzongs and palaces. Today's highlight stupa is **Kumbum**, a type of stupa, or shrine, built to house many small chapels on its ascending tiers. The term also means, "having 100,000 images." The Gyantse Kumbum has seven tiers with seventy chapels and thousands of frescoes, statues and paintings of aspects of the Buddha and his followers.

Climb to the glittering gold dome that caps the stupa for an incredible view of medieval Gyantse and the surrounding countryside.

Today we are moving on to Shigatse, a journey which will take about 2.5 hours.

Along the way we will visit the **Pelkhor Chode Monastery**.

Founded in the early 15th century, the Pelkhor Chode Monastery originally housed 15 monasteries and accommodated three different Buddhist sects harmoniously within its compound. Today, monks from the Golugpa sect alone maintain its many statues and paintings, most of which date back to the time of its founding. Bullet holes remain in the monastery walls from early 20th century British attacks.

The second largest city in Tibet and capital of Shigatse prefecture, **Shigatse** is the second most

important trade centre in Tibet, lying on the ancient caravan route from Lhasa to west Tibet. It was one of the first Tibetan towns to be visited by Westerners, because of its proximity to India. Shigatse has been the traditional home of the Panchen Lama since the 16th century. Today there are two proclaimed Panchen Lamas, one designated by the Chinese and one by the Dalai Lama.

*Sat 2 continued**Old Market Shigatse*

The first Dalai Lama founded **Tashilhunpo Monastery** in 1477 and it has since served as the seat of the Panchen Lama. Once inhabited by several thousands monks, today Tashilhunpo houses roughly 800 monks. The monastery contains the tombs of the Panchen Lamas, most notably the 10th Panchen Lama, whose 1989 burial stupa used 547 kg of gold.

Tashilhunpo's best-known monument is its 25 metre statue of the seated Maitreya Buddha. Steps and cobblestone alleys connect the halls, chapels and other structures here, and the imposing exterior of white, red and black topped with its golden roof makes it a visual marvel even from afar.

Located just outside the walls of Tashilhunpo Monastery is the **old market of Shigatse**, where you can find all kinds of handmade Tibetan goods and foodstuffs. Enjoy an opportunity to interact with the locals, and browse among the colourful stalls and tables brimming with prayer wheels, rosaries, traditional Tibetan cloaks called chuba, and fresh yak butter, and cheeses.

Sun 3 Shigatse – Lhasa

Meals: B, L

Hotel ****

Chupsang Nunnery

It's back to Lhasa today; the journey will take about seven hours.

About a thirty-minute downhill walk from Pabonka Monastery is the small **Chupsang Nunnery**, where some 80 nuns chant and meditate in an out-of-the-way valley. If we're lucky, we may get the opportunity to venture into the kitchen and enjoy sweet tea with the nuns and ask them questions.

Mon 4 Lhasa – Beijing

Meals: B, D

Airfares

Hotel *****

This morning we transfer to the airport to fly to Beijing; we are met and taken to our hotel.

Multi-faceted **Beijing**, modern capital of China, is the country's most important city and its political and historical centre. A city of contradictions, Beijing's skyscrapers overshadow traditional narrow alleys (hutongs), and the remnants of Imperial China sit alongside five-star hotels and Western brand-name stores. Beijing's numerous landmarks, ranging from the UNESCO Sites of the Temple of Heaven and the Forbidden City, to Tiananmen Square with its Great Hall of the People and Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, tell the long history of China, as well as the short history of the People's Republic. Beijing is home to around 22 million people and is located in the northeast of the country, midway between the Yellow Sea and Mongolia.

Tue 5 Beijing

Meals: B, L, D

Great Wall

The Great Wall of China is one of those iconic sights which most people want to visit at least once in their life. Today is the day!

We drive 145 km northeast of Beijing to visit a section of the **Great Wall** in the mountains of Luanping Country.

Constructed around 1570, this section of the wall shows the artistry of the Ming Dynasty and is about 12 km long, with 67 towers. Restorations to the original wall begin to disappear as we near the Simatai section to the east.

Tonight we will get to eat a special dinner of probably the single most well-known Chinese dish, **Peking Duck** (Beijing kaoya), a northern specialty. This sweet roasted whole duck is served sliced with pancakes, onions and plum sauce, and usually makes another appearance later in the meal as soup. The process of making Peking duck is a relatively long one. After slaughter, the duck is dried and the skin actually inflated to make for a crispy, evenly cooked roasted duck. The premium slices of meat and skin are served with pancakes and sauce, while a portion of the meat is usually stir-fried and brought out separately.

Finally the bones and meat remnants are used to make soup (served, as is the Chinese tradition, at the end of the meal).

Wed 6 Beijing

Meals: B, L

Temple of Heaven

More highlights are in store for us today!

First stop is the **Temple of Heaven**, built in 1420 during the Ming Dynasty as a place of prayer and sacrificial offerings. Each year at the Winter Solstice the emperors, as the Sons of Heaven, would offer sacrifices and prayers of thanks, and at other special times would send petitions for good harvests. The ceremonial temple grounds and the buildings have symbolic meanings sacred to the early Chinese. A five-hundred-year-old cypress tree still grows here.

*Wed 6 continued**Tiananmen Square**The Forbidden City*

Then we go to **Tiananmen Square** (Gate of Heavenly Peace), one of the largest public squares in the world. Located on the square is the Monument to the People's Heroes and Chairman Mao's Memorial Hall. On the west side of the square is the massive Great Hall of the People, and on the east side is the equally large Chinese History Museum. To the north is the Forbidden City, where fourteen Ming and ten Qing emperors ruled China.

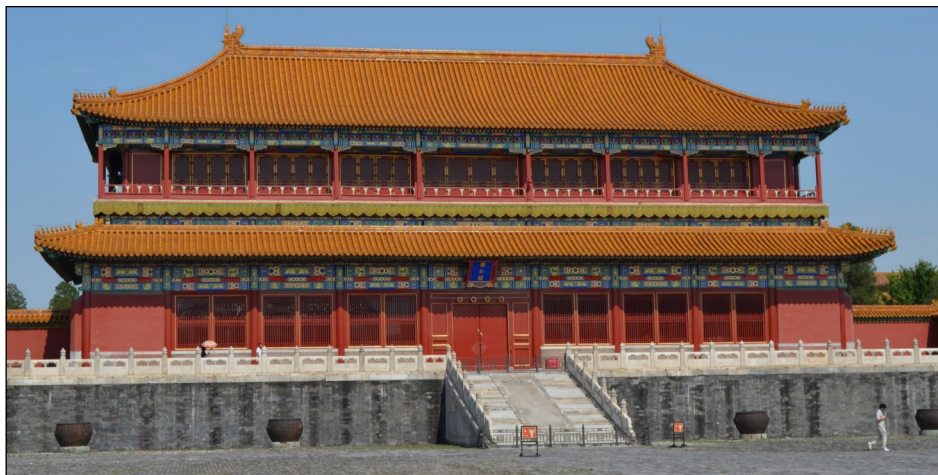
As we are this close it would be rude not to visit **The Forbidden City**. It exceeds 250 acres, making it the largest palace complex in the world. This is where the emperors, as sons of heaven, would communicate with the gods. Built by the third Ming Emperor, Yongle, the Forbidden City includes hundreds of buildings, reception halls, gates, private apartments and gardens.

Late this evening we transfer to Beijing airport.

Thu 7 Beijing – Auckland

We have a very early flight to Auckland this morning and arrive this evening.

Home to New Zealand with special memories of our time in China and Tibet.



**Request a Free
Information Pack
with even more details
of this exciting tour**

Book Now