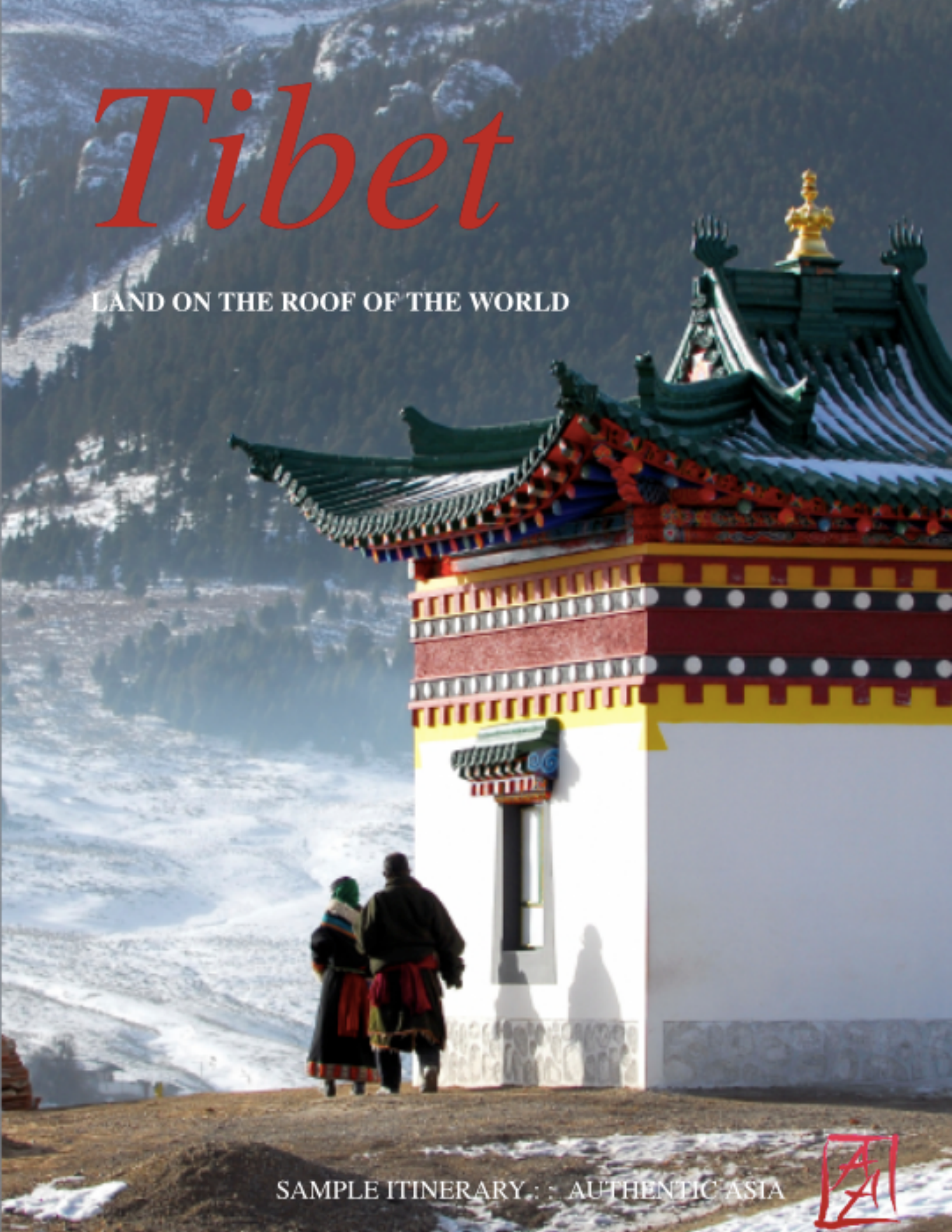
Tibet

LAND ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD



SAMPLE ITINERARY : : AUTHENTIC ASIA

Located at an altitude of 3,000 meters, Tibet is literally home to "castles in the sky". From the Potala Palace in Lhasa, once the seat of the Dalai Lama, to Ganden Monastery that long ago housed 5,000 monks and on to the beautiful Newari architecture of Gyantse's Khumbum, the great sites of Tibet, often shrouded in a colorful blur of prayer flags, are breathtaking. This journey will take the traveler from Lhasa along the southern route to Gyantse, passing by the turquoise waters of Yamdrok Lake and finally on to the prosperous Buddhist town of Shigatse, ruled in the past by the Panchen Lama.

Day 1 | Tsedang

A morning flight across the majestic Himalayas takes you to Lhasa. Upon arrival drive to Tsedang, the largest town located in the Yarlung Valley, known as the cradle of Tibetan civilization. In the late afternoon set out to visit Yumbu Lakhang, once built as the first fortified house in Tibet for the first Yarlung King. During the 7th century it was converted to a monastery. The monastery is situated on a hilltop with its spires thrusting into the sky offering a magnificent view of the surrounding villages, hills, and rivers. Final stop for the day is at Tandruk Monastery which houses statues of Jambeyang and Guru Rinpoche as well as an original thangka made up of 30,000 pearls.

Accommodations: Tsedang Hotel

Day 2 | Tsedang

Begin your day with a visit to Samye, Tibet's first Buddhist monastery, founded in the eighth century by King Trisong Detsen and Padmasambhava with the assistance of his female disciple, the yogini Yeshe Tsogyal.

Samye is located on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River and at the foot of Hepori, one of Tibet's sacred mountains. Along with the Jokhang in Lhasa, Samye is considered the most potent monastic "power place" in Tibet.

For the adventurers in the group, we will offer an optional hike to the Chimphu Caves where Yeshe Ysogyal led the 25 adepts in a 12-year retreat and attained realization. Since that time Chimphu has served as a long term meditation retreat site for men and women practitioners alike and, to this day, you can find people sitting quietly in mediation practice in the caves.

Accommodations: Tsedang Hotel

"The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page."

- St. Augustine

Day 3 | Lhasa

Depart Tsedang and drive to Lhasa.

Explore the city beginning at the Jokhang Temple, dating back to the seventh century when it was built by King Songtsen Gampo in order to house the image of Akshobhya Buddha, offered to the King by his Nepalese wife, Bhrikuti. Since its founding, the Jokhang has been enlarged and embellished, particularly during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama. A visit to the Jokhang is a moving experience as pilgrims come from far away just for a chance to prostrate on hands and knees around the palace.

Afterwards, there will be plenty of time to stroll through the Barkhor, the mercantile area of the city and one of the circumambulation routes around the Jokhang.

Accommodations: Shangri-La Hotel

Day 4 | Lhasa

Set out on an excursion to Ganden Monastery, one of the most spectacular as well as the most tragic of the sacred sites in Tibet. The history of Ganden Monastery dates back to Tsongkhapa who was born in 1357 in the northeastern province of Tibet. While still young, he was recognized as possessing unusual spiritual qualities and as a young man was sent to Central Tibet to further his understanding of Buddhism in the more cultured region of the country.

Tsongkhapa spent most of his life traveling from place to place but finally decided to found his own monastery. He selected Mt. Drokri, a mountain upstream from Lhasa and called the monastery "Ganden" which is the Tibetan name for the Pure Land of Tushita, where the future Buddha Maitreya currently resides. Tsongkhapa died in Ganden in 1419. During his lifetime he was regarded as a remarkable spiritual figure whose genius and saintliness held him above the sectarian differences of his time. Over the following centuries Ganden Monastery grew into a secluded center of learning and contemplation and at one time housed more than five thousand monks. Great effort has been made to recreate the monastery exactly the way it was before the Cultural Revolution during which it was badly destroyed. Return to Lhasa in the afternoon.

Accommodations: Shangri-La Hotel

Day 5 | Lhasa

This morning, visit the Potala Palace located on a hill which dominates the city. Although the Potala Palace dates back to the 8th century, construction of the present palace began in 1645 during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Potala was completed in 1694 twelve years after the Dalai Lama's death. Built of wood, earth and stone, the Potala has 13 stories containing a maze of rooms, over 1,000 of them with 10,000 shrines.

From here, continue on to the Tibetan Medical Center (Mentsi Khang). Tibetan medicine is an ancient tradition of healing that traces its origins back to the Buddha himself. The Tibetan Medical Center and its doctors see up to 600 hundred patients a day.

In the afternoon depart for Sera Monastery, where an attempt is being made to recommence the traditional course of study for which the monastery is renowned. Arrive in time to attend the traditional debate, the daily, lively event in which monks debate questions surrounding the Buddhist doctrine. Watch the hand and body movements, an integral part of the debate ritual!

Accommodations: Shangri-La Hotel

"We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us."

- Anonymous

Day 6 | Gyantse

Today, take the Southern route to Gyantse. It is a spectacular drive and you will stop at the top of the pass for a wonderful view of the Turquoise Lake. Continue on to Gyantse in time to visit the great monastic complex of the city which includes the famous Kumbum, considered by many to be the finest example of 15th century Newar art in the world. The Newar people of Nepal's Kathmandu Valley, especially their fresco painters were honored and much sought after as artists in Tibet. The Kumbum in Gyantse is certainly one of the most magnificent buildings in Tibet.

Accommodations: Yeti Hotel.

Day 7 | Shigatse

Depart in the morning for Shigatse. Just outside of Shigatse, stop for a visit to Zhalu Monastery, a Sakya/Kagyu monastery founded in the eleventh century. It was the first of the major monasteries built by noble families of Tsang during Tibet's great revival of Buddhism. For centuries it was renowned as a center of scholarly learning and psychic training. Its mural paintings were considered to be the most ancient and beautiful in Tibet. Here you will find exquisite examples of mandalas, still in a good state of preservation.

Arrive in Shigatse in the afternoon.

Accommodations: Tshi Chuta Hotel

Day 8 | Shigatse

The day begins at Tashilunpo Monastery, which was founded in 1447 by Gendun Drup, a disciple of Tsongkhapa who was subsequently recognized as the First Dalai Lama. Tashilunpo became the official seat of the Panchen Lama, the chief spiritual and temporal authority of Tsang. It is a beautiful monastery, with red buildings of varying heights and crowned with gleaming, golden roofs.

After lunch there will be some free time to visit the Shigatse Market, where many lovely Tibetan souvenirs can be found.

Accommodations: Tshi Chuta Hotel

Day 9 | Lhasa

Take the Northern Route back to Lhasa and arrive in the early afternoon. Check-in at the Shangri-La Hotel. Remainder of the day at leisure.

Accommodations: Shangri-La Hotel

Day 10 | Departure

Transfer to airport for your departure flight.

End of services.

The above is a sample itinerary which covers the highlights and also takes you off the beaten path. We would be happy to discuss your individual travel preferences and amend the itinerary accordingly.

Pricing is dependent on your choice of accommodations, time of the year that you will be traveling, the final itinerary, and the number of people in your group.

Should you wish to discuss your individual travel plans to Tibet please do feel free to reach to us via e-mail at info@authenticasia.net or by phone at 1. 888.586.9958.