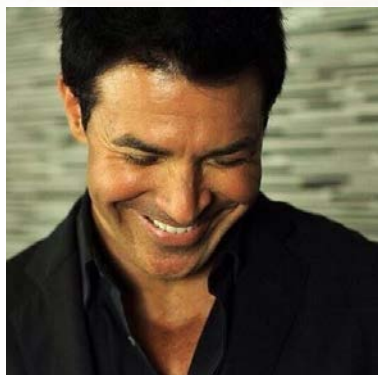


Mindfulness Meditation Pilgrimage to Tibet

with Michael Gregory



Leadership: Michael Gregory is the Director of Mindfulness Meditation Centers throughout the US. He has led hundreds of meditation retreats on almost every subject matter related to Dharma, in addition to leading meditative pilgrimages throughout Thailand, Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, and India. Michael was ordained as a monk in the Thai Forest tradition, the Burmese Mahasi tradition, and then was ordained in the Tibetan tradition by H.E. Gylatsab Rinpoche at Rumtek monastery in Sikkim. He has practiced in the Thai Forest tradition of Ajahn Chah, the Anapanasati tradition of Buddhadasa Bhikku, and the Jhana traditions of Mahasi Sayadaw and Pa Auk, as well as extensive experience in the Tibetan tradition.

Michael is appreciated for a teaching style that de-centralizes the role of a guru, institutional spirituality, as well as the usage of rites and rituals. He encourages every being to empower themselves by finding the pure and unlimited potential of this very moment.

Overview: We'll begin in Chengdu, one of China's most exciting and progressive cities. Our journey ends in Nepal's ancient city of Kathmandu, nestled at 4600 feet in the Himalayan foothills. In between, we visit Lhasa home of the exquisite Jokhang temple and majestic Potala Palace, Gyantse, Shigatse, Everest Base Camp and then take the rough, twisting road down into Kathmandu.

Distinct from a luxury vacation or sightseeing tour, our journey is meant as an immersion into the Buddhist worldview, a contemplative pilgrimage — providing an 'opportunity of a lifetime' to connect directly with the Tibetan tradition. Throughout our journey, we will experience Tibet's culture as we explore the variety of ways in which Buddhist practitioners express themselves. Prepare to enter the stream of countless pilgrims who have traveled to Lhasa over hundreds of years to circumambulate, pray, meditate, make offerings, and receive blessings at these venerated monuments imbued with power and meaning.

This pilgrimage is being coordinated by Effie Fletcher of Himalayan High Treks on behalf of Michael Gregory and the Mindfulness Meditation Centers.

Tibet Guide

Pemba Tashi is HHT's principal Tibetan trekking and pilgrimage guide. His extensive mountain and trail experience combines with his easy humor and an ability to help explain many complex cultural and Buddhist-oriented subjects to travelers. He is an ideal interpreter of this ancient and fascinating mountain region.



Day 2 (September 9, 2019):

Following breakfast, enjoy a full day in Chengdu. We first visit the world's largest park for the giant panda — with more than 150 giant pandas. It is a 40-minute drive to reach the park, located in the north side of the city. Enjoy two to three hours at the center, strolling through its bamboo forest, with an early lunch at a Sichuan hotpot restaurant.

Wenshu Temple (also called Manjushri Temple) is one of China's most-famous and best-preserved Buddhist temples. It is found in a unique place in downtown where people relax in their spiritual world within a solemn and holy place.

We also walk through city streets to visit People's Park for a glimpse of Chengdu's daily life. Enjoy a local Tai Chi class. After an early dinner, enjoy an evening at the Shufeng Yayun Teahouse. Arrive early (by about 7:30) for the 8:00 p.m. show, a one-of-a-kind cultural performance including acrobats, dancers, and puppets that continues for an hour and a half before we return to the hotel for another early night. Overnight at Tibet Hotel, Chengdu. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



Day 3 (September 10, 2019):

Today after breakfast we will transfer to the airport and fly to Lhasa Gonggar Airport, located at 11,713 feet — over 10,000 feet higher than Chengdu. Your acclimatization begins upon arrival! Our flight time should be about 2.5 hours. We will be met on arrival to transfer 50 miles in about one hour to our hotel and check-in. You will have free time to rest or explore before dinner. The hotel is in the middle of the city and centrally located so taking a walk around is a good possibility just don't overdo it. Ideally, you should drink lots of fluid and rest. Overnight Tsetang Hotel (four-star) at 10,170 ft. (Breakfast, Dinner)



Day-To-Day Itinerary Detail

Pre-trip Days: Fly to our meeting point in Chengdu, China. Travelers from the Americas 'lose' one day crossing the international date line. If you wish to arrive early, we can arrange an early airport transfer and accommodations with advance notice. Please note that you must arrive in Chengdu, China by September 9, 2018.

Day 1 (September 8, 2019):

Group arrival day in Chengdu, China. Our staff will wait for your arrival outside the secured area of the Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport — after you collect your luggage and proceed through China customs. Look for our guide holding a sign that says "Himalayan High Treks." You will transfer to your hotel for check-in.

Chengdu, at only 1,640 feet of altitude, is the capital of the Sichuan province, located in southwest China. It's known as the 'land of abundance', the hometown of the Giant Panda, the city of Brocade, and Sichuan cuisine.

You'll enjoy an early dinner at an excellent Sichuan restaurant and catch-up on your rest after your long travel to China. Overnight at Tibet Hotel, Chengdu. (Dinner)



Day 6 (September 13, 2019):

Today we explore Lhasa including the Jokhang Temple and the majestic 13-story, 1,000-room Potala Palace. Tibetans, in general, consider Jokhang Temple as the most sacred and important temple in Tibet. Jokhang is run by the Gelug school, but worshipers from all Buddhist sects visit the temple. The oldest part of the temple was built in 652 by Songtsen Gampo. During the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Red Guards attacked the Jokhang and for a decade there was no worship in Tibetan monasteries. Renovation of the Jokhang began in 1972 and was mostly complete by 1980. Its architectural style is a mixture of Indian, Tibetan, and Nepalese design.

Potala Palace is named after Mount Potalaka, the mythical abode of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. The 5th Dalai Lama started its construction in 1645 after one of his spiritual advisers, Konchog Chophel, suggested that the site was ideal as a seat of government — situated as it is between Drepung and Sera monasteries and the old city of Lhasa. It is thought to overlay the remains of an earlier fortress called the White or Red Palace, built by Songtsän Gampo in 637. The external structure was built in three years, while the interior, together with its furnishings, took 45 years to complete. The Potala Palace became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. Overnight Shangri-La Hotel. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



Day 7 (September 14, 2019):

Day trip to Drigung Thil (14,649 feet) about 75 miles north-east of Lhasa. Founded in 1179 traditionally Drigung Thil Monastery was the main seat of the Drikung Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The monastery was destroyed in 1959 but has been partially rebuilt. Approximately 250 monks are in residence. Note: the monastery can be visited for sure but the burial site cannot be guaranteed as it depends on local permission. We will try our best to include it. It is said that bodies dispatched here will not fall down into the “three bad regions.” Drive back to Lhasa and overnight Shangri-La Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 4 (September 11, 2019):

Our first days at high altitude will involve only gentle touring and exploration. First, we visit Tsedang and then continue with a scenic drive to the first monastery in Tibet—Samye Monastery. Continue on to Lhasa (11,995 ft) with a total drive time of three to four hours and check in at Shangri-La Hotel (five-star) and later enjoy a special buffet dinner at the hotel. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 5 (September 12, 2019):

After breakfast this morning, we will visit Drepung Monastery (literally “Rice Heap” Monastery). Drepung is the largest of all Tibetan monasteries and is located on the Gambo Utse mountain, five kilometers from Lhasa. It was founded in 1416 by Jamyang Choge Tashi Palden (1397–1449). It was known for the high standards of its academic study and was called the Nalanda of Tibet, a reference to the great Buddhist monastic university of India.

After lunch, we visit the Sera Monastery (“Wild Roses Monastery”). It is one of the “great three” Gelug University monasteries of Tibet, found two kilometers north of Lhasa. Sera Monastery is a complex of structures with the Great Assembly Hall and three colleges, founded in 1419 by Jamchen Choje (1355–1435). During the 1959 revolt in Lhasa, Sera Monastery suffered severe damage but was later restored. In 2011, according to local sources, there were about 300 monks in residence. We later return to our hotel with dinner on your own. Overnight Shangri-La Hotel. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)





Day 8 (September 15, 2019):

This morning after breakfast we will drive about four hours to Gyantse. On the way, we'll stop at Yamdrok Lake (at 14,570 feet), one of the three large sacred lakes in Tibet. It is over 45 miles long and surrounded by snow-capped mountains. According to local mythology, Yamdok Yumtso Lake is the transformation of a goddess.

Around 56 miles to the west of the lake lies the Tibetan town of Gyantse. We then visit the visit Phalkhor monastery and the Kumbum Stupa, designed by Newari architects from Nepal. The Phalkhor has a special influence over Buddhism in Tibet, owing to its unity of Gelugpa, Sakyapa and Bhutan sects. The Kumbum is truly incredible.

Gyantse Dzong (or Gyantse Fortress) is one of Tibet's best-preserved dzongs, perched high above Gyantse on a huge outcrop of grey-brown rock. The fortress was constructed in 1390 to guard the southern approaches to the Tsangpo Valley and Lhasa. The town was surrounded by a wall almost two miles long, with an entrance on its eastern side.

After our visit we check-in at our hotel for overnight and enjoy dinner. Overnight Gyantse Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 9 (September 16, 2019):

Today after breakfast, we drive first to Shalu Monastery founded in 1040 by Chetsun Sherab Jungnay. For centuries it was renowned as a center of scholarly learning and is still known for its wonderful mural paintings, considered to be the most ancient and beautiful in Tibet. Shalu was the first of the major monasteries to be built by noble families of the Tsangpa during Tibet's great revival of Buddhism and was an important center of the Sakya tradition. Continue about an hour to Shigatse (12,800 feet). The Tashi Lhunpo Monastery was founded in 1447 by the 1st Dalai Lama and is a historic and culturally important monastery

in Shigatse, the second-largest city in Tibet. The monastery was sacked when the Gorkhas invaded Tibet and captured Shigatse in 1791 before a combined Tibetan and Chinese army drove them back to the outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal. Located on a hill in the city center, the full monastery name in Tibetan means "all fortune and happiness gathered here" or "heap of glory."

Tashi Lhunpo founder Gedum Drup was later recognized as the first Dalai Lama. The main statue of this monastery is the Maitreya Buddha made from 600 pounds of gold and measuring eight feet in height. It at one time housed over 4,000 monks and had four Tantric colleges each with its own Abbot. In 1960, the monastery was dismantled by the Chinese army, although less damage was inflicted on this monastery than on others around Tibet. During the 1960s, many senior lamas and monastics left Tibet and helped re-establish monasteries in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The late Panchen Lama did not leave Tibet and consequently many of the senior lamas from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery remained inside Tibet.

A Ngang morning chanting ceremony accompanied by sacred musical instruments is led by the few remaining monks of the temple. Pilgrims may circumambulate the hall but travelers and photographers should be extremely sensitive to the sacred atmosphere. We will check-in st our hotel and enjoy dinner. Overnight Tashi Choeda Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)





Day 12 (September 19, 2019):

Drive to Kyirong in about five hours. Continue on the Friendship highway for about one hour and 40 minutes, then turn right towards Peigu Tso lake with spectacular views of Shishapangma (26,289 ft.) on the left side. After another hour enjoy a view of Peigutso lake and Khangpongchen. Continue through a small valley towards Gongtang la (pass) and continue down hill to Kyirong valley (Mangyul)to reach Zongkar county. Then drive down to Lower Kyirong valley. With luck we'll see the sacred Mt. Riwopepar and some of Milarepa's caves (Zong). Continue on to reach Kyirong at about 9000 ft. Check in and overnight at Phuntsok Rabsal Hotel, Kyirong. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 10 (September 17, 2019):

Drive to Shegar via Sakya Monastery and Gyatso La Pass the highest point on your trip at 17,218 ft. After driving about 90 miles in three hours we reach the monastery. It is the seat of the Sakya (or Sakyapa) school of Tibetan Buddhism founded in 1073, by Konchok Gyelpo. Sakya's powerful abbots governed Tibet during the 13th and the 14th centuries. After a couple hours of driving brings us to Shegar we can stop to visit the fort depending on how everyone is feeling. Shegar is also known as New Tingri as it is a recently built town. None of its accommodations are particularly nice. Overnight Shegar Hotel. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 11 (September 18, 2019):

Today the drive is about seven hours total. Along the way, you'll cross two passes: Tsuo La (14,760 feet) and Lhakpa La (17,121 feet). You'll visit a Tibetan village along the way, pass farms and continue on to Chomolungma (Everest) National Park headquarters. The gray, gold and red strips seen on many houses indicate each family's devotion to the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism. Drive to Everest Base Camp. Note: we'll set up at Tibetan style tent at Tingri overlooking the mountains where we can drink hot tea and meditate. Overnight at Snow Leopard Guest House in Old Tingri (This is the most basic "hotel" on our journey. Be prepared to rough it.) (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



Day 13 (September 20, 2019):

Borderlands. After breakfast, bid a fond goodbye to your Tibetan guide and driver and begin Chinese immigration formalities. Once complete, you will travel downhill to a bridge to cross at Kyirong to the Nepal side of the border. (The old border crossing at Zhangmu was closed after the Nepal earthquakes in 2015.) Kyirong is a new border crossing which opened in 2017. You should arrive in Nepal at about 10:00 AM, Nepal time. Here you will be welcomed by our Nepal drivers and transferred by four-wheel drive vehicles to Kathmandu. It's a rough but scenic five-hour drive as you pass many waterfalls, valleys and lush fields along the way to Kathmandu. Overnight Hyatt Regency Hotel in Kathmandu. Free time on arrival. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)





Important Note:

This itinerary is only meant as a guide to the plan of our trip. Changes can occur as we go and are based on local conditions, acclimatization, health and fitness levels, etc. Times and elevations noted here are all rounded off. Be aware that conditions in Tibet are very rugged. Roads are unpaved and vehicle maintenance can be required at any time. This will be an amazing experience if you are flexible and can cope with occasionally rugged conditions. There can be abrupt weather changes, rustic toilet facilities and exposure to the elements.

Tibet tourism is controlled by the Chinese government and is completely subject to the authority of local tourism authorities. Changes in their regulations may cause cancellations or rerouting.

Travel Details:

When arranging your flights to and from our Tibet travel points, please note these dates and logistics: All participants must arrive in Chengdu, China no later than September 8, 2019. You should not depart Kathmandu earlier than September 22, 2019. Please ask any questions before purchasing your international tickets. Flight times to Chengdu will vary greatly based on your origin city as well as the airline(s) being chosen. For some, air travel starting from the U.S. could begin two days before the meeting date in Chengdu. Crossing the International Date Line can make it seem as if you 'lose' a day flying but on your return home, you may arrive on the same day, often just hours later than the local time of your departure. You are welcome to travel early or stay for extra days at the end. We can arrange additional nights at any of our hotels or guest houses for you. Contact us with your specific interests and budget — we can help make it happen!

Day 14 (September 21, 2019):

Optional off the beaten track sightseeing in and around Kathmandu. Final celebration dinner at the Hyatt. (Breakfast, Dinner)

Day 15 (September 22, 2019):

Depending on your departure schedule, you should have free time after breakfast then an on-time transfer to the airport for your flight departing Kathmandu. (Breakfast)





Land Cost Includes:

- All transfers by good vehicles with driver.
- English speaking guide as needed.
- Twin share room accommodation with breakfast and any other meals mentioned in the itinerary.
- Entry fees at monuments visited as part of the tour.
- Assistance as needed to be provided by us and our agents in Nepal, China, and Tibet.
- All applicable government taxes.

Land Cost Does Not Include:

- Any expenses of a personal nature such as telephone, laundry, aerated drinks or bottled water, items ordered through room service, mini bar etc.
- Meals apart from breakfast included at the hotels or as specified in the itinerary.
- Camera fees are not included in the cost.
- The cost incurred in obtaining the required visas or travel insurance or in case of any hospitalization or evacuation.
- Tip and gratuities paid to drivers, guides, bellboys etc.
- Any airfares.

Cost & Registration Details:

Michael Gregory is making the final determination about who can participate in the trip. Please check with Davita Moodley by texting 831-234-5735 if you need clearance.

Land cost is dependent on group size which will be from 10-15 (\$6495), 15-20 (\$5995), 20-25 (\$5495) participants.

The deadline for sign-up is June 8, 2019. Late sign-ups may be

accepted if there is space available, with a service charge of \$100.

If you would prefer to have a private room you'll be charged a single supplement of \$1190-1055, depending on group size.

Early Registration Discount: We'll offer a \$200 discount to each person who signs up and pays in full by April 8 (or a \$100 discount for those who sign-up with a \$500 deposit by April 8 and pay for the for the trip by the regular payment deadline of June 8, 2019).

Round-trip airfare to Chengdu and return from Kathmandu is estimated at \$1675 from Tampa (on Jet Blue and Cathay Pacific Airlines) and \$1560 from Colorado (on United and Cathay Pacific Airlines) departing the U.S. on the afternoon/evening of Friday, September 6th and returning early afternoon on Monday, September 23. One way Chengdu to Lhasa airfare on Tuesday, Sept. 10.

Payment for any added services may be required at the time the service is received. Please refer to the "Our Policies" section of our website or the booking information section of our application form for more information.

Effie Fletcher, Himalayan High Treks, CST 2085690-40
February 2019

