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20 days China Silk Road tour and Tibet explorer

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Kashgar
Turpan
Dunhuang
Xiahe
Tongren
Xining
Lhasa
Shigatse
Lhasa

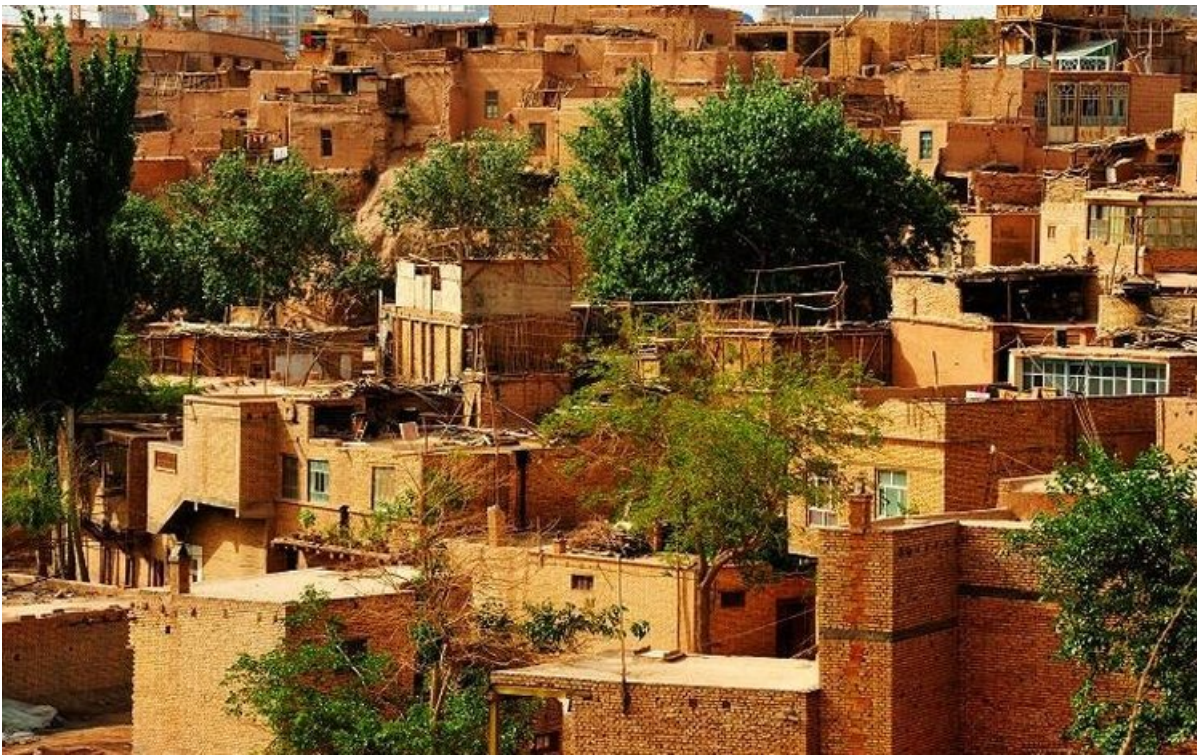
Enjoy this great Silk Road tour package with our professional service. Feel the difference between the Islamic culture of Uyghurs and the Buddhist culture of Tibetans. Visit the heritages and enjoy the unspoiled natural landscape of three lakes.

Type
Private
Duration
20 days
Theme
Culture and Heritage, Overland, Photography
Trip code
SRTT-03
Price
From \$ 2,399 per person
\$ 2,180
you save \$ 218 (10%)

Itinerary

This West China tour starts with a memorable Silk Road trip, where you can explore the ancient civilizations in Xinjiang and Gansu province. Next up with a comfortable train ride on the highest plateau of the world from Xining to Lhasa. Visit the famous monasteries in and around Lhasa to learn about the Tibetan Buddhism and make a day excursion to the holy lake of Tibet, Namtso Lake. This tour helps you get an in-depth understanding of West China.

Day 01 :
Arrive Kashgar



Start your wonderful journey with a flight to Kashgar via Urumqi. Located in the west of Xinjiang, Kashgar is a famous border city which has more than 2,000 years history. Upon arrival, the local guide and driver will pick you up at the airport and drive you to the hotel. The rest of the day is left flexible to have a break.

Day 02 :

Day Excursion to Karakul Lake - Drive Back to Kashgar



Morning drive to the **Karakul Lake**, which is located 196 km. (122 mi.) from Kashgar, near the junction of the Pamir, Tianshan, and Kunlun Mountain ranges. The drive will take over 3 hours, but the scenery along the way is breathtaking. Karakul Lake is a plateau lake at the foot of "the Father of Glaciers" – Muztagata Mountains, and people believe that it was formed from the glacial movements.

Once get to the lake, spend couple hours to walk along the lake and view the picturesque scenery. The lake is so clarity as you can even clearly see the reflection of the snow mountains surrounding the lake in the water. The air is so fresh as you can even smell the soil mixed with flowers fragrant. Immerse yourself in the unspoiled natural landscapes of Karakul Lake before you drive back to Kashgar in the late afternoon.

Day 03 :

Kashgar City Tour - Take overnight train to Turpan (B)

Spend today to visit the highlights in Kashgar city. Kashgar is one of the largest gathering residences of Uighurs as you can explore their unique culture with a visit here. The first spot is **Sunday Market**, which is an ancient market attracts locals and

merchants from all over Xinjiang and nearby countries such as Pakistan and Kirghizstan. The market is jammed with many small shops for selling numerous commodities, traditional scarves, leathers, clothes, and souvenirs. Walk around this market for some really good bargains.

Next up with a visit to the Apak Khoja Tomb, which houses the coffins of five generations of the Apak Khoja family, including what is purported to be the body of Xiang Fei, a famous concubine in Qing Dynasty. The pillars in the Tomb decorated beautifully and its designs are especially outstanding.

After lunch, have some free time to walk around the old Kashgar town. Then visit the **Kah Mosque**, which is the largest and busiest mosque in China, as well as a must see sight for travelers. At midday on every Friday over 10,000 Muslims will gather here to pray and study the Koran. In the evening, take the overnight train from Kashgar to Turpan (T9528, 18:50-08:07am+1day, 13.5hours).

Day 04 :

Arrival at Turpan - Turpan One Day Tour

Turpan, an oasis city located 183 km (114 mi) from Urumqi, is an important city on a branch of the ancient Silk Road from Kumul to Kashgar and is also one of the centers of Uighur culture. Upon arrival in Turpan, you will be transferred to your hotel for a short rest, followed by the exploration of Turpan city.

First head to visit the **Karez Well**, a unique irrigation system of wells connected by underground channels invented and built by ancient farmers from the various ethnic minorities of Turpan. It is regarded as one of the three great ancient projects in China. Here, you are allowed to walk along the channels below ground for a firsthand view, most of which are still maintained and functioning now.

Then drive to the **Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves** for learning about the Buddhism culture along the ancient Silk Road. These caves were built on the legendary Flaming Mountains, which are the barren, eroded, red sandstone hills in Tian Shan Mountain range. Stop at here for seeing the memorable spectacle of the hills looking like a fiery dragon.

Next up with a visit to **Tuyuk Village**, a traditional village of vineyards, orchards, narrow streets and irrigation channels tumbling between ancient mud brick houses and shady trees.

The final stop today will be **Gaochang City**, another famous ancient ruin in Turpan. Along with Jiaohe, Gaochang also stands in the boundless desolate Gobi desert of Xinjiang. Due to the dry and hot weather, the ancient city of Gaochang has been well preserved as you can clearly see the outline of this city.

Day 05 :

Turpan City Tour - Train to Dunhuang

Today you will have half day to explore Turpan, firstly head to visit the **Ruins of Jiaohe**, located 8 km (5 mi) west of Turpan. This is an ancient city over 2,300 years old. The once prosperous city has declined over time, and now you can only see the magnificent ruins, surrounded by desert and mountains.

Then head to the **Sugong Pagoda**, which was built by the ruler of Turpan Prefecture to honor his father in 1811. The architectural style of this pagoda displays the typical design of Uyghur features.

Take afternoon train to Dunhuang (D2706, 12:13-15:48, 3.5 hours). Upon arrival, you will be picked up and transfer to your hotel in Dunhuang, the rest day is on your own to explore Dunhuang on your own.

Day 06 :

Dunhuang Cultural Tour

Today, you will explore the highlights of Dunhuang. First, visit the **Mogao Grottoes**, a World Heritage Site on the Silk Road. Constructed from the 4th to the 14th centuries, this ancient Buddhist site now contains 492 decorated cave temples, 45,000 sq. m. (11 ac.) of wall paintings, and over 2,400 colored sculptures. These precious treasures form a rich heritage of classical Chinese art. In the afternoon, you will have a **camel ride to Mingsha Hill and Crescent Spring** where you can choose to participate in some sports activities on the sand dune and also witness the sunset over the desert, which is both spectacular and majestic. Stay overnight in Dunhuang.

Day 07 :

Day Excursion to Yumenguan Pass - Train to Lanzhou

Drive to **Yumenguan Pass** in the morning and visit the **Great Wall of the Han Dynasty**. Compared with the Ming Dynasty Great Wall in Beijing, the Great Wall at Yumenguan Pass is much more ancient. Over 2,000 years, it has witnessed the prosperity of business transactions along the Silk Road. Now, the Great Wall has lost its original function of serving as a post station for businessmen, military generals, and ambassadors. Only the eroded rectangular castles and beacon towers sparsely scattered in silence in the Gobi desert, speaking volumes about its past and glory.

In the afternoon, drive back to Dunhuang to catch the overnight train to Lanzhou (about 14.5 hours). You will arrive in Lanzhou tomorrow morning.

Day 08 :

Drive to Xiahe - Xiahe Sightseeing



Upon arrival in Lanzhou, be greeted and driven to Xiahe, a county famous for its grassland. The county is 190 km. (118 mi.) from Lanzhou, and the drive will take about 3.5 hours. Once you get there, the rest of the day is free to explore this town or take a break, tomorrow you will visit the grassland.

Day 09 :

Xiahe Highlights Tour

Morning make an excursion to the Sangke Grassland. Stop at **Labrang Monastery** for a visit as you drive to the grassland. Even it is not located in Tibet, you still can find out the Tibetan architectural style at every corner of this monastery.

Afterwards, spend couple hours to enjoy the breathtaking scenery of **Sangke Grassland**. The grassland got its name from the summer-blooming Sangke flowers that form a natural carpet extending to the far horizons. Sangke Grassland is also famous for its Tibetan amorous feelings, explore the nomadic life of the Tibetan people and experience Tibetan food while visiting there.

Day 10 :

Drive from Xiahe to Tongren - Tongren Highlights Tour

After breakfast, say farewell to Xiahe as you drive to the last destination, Tongren. Stop at **Ganjia Grassland** to visit the Tibetan nomads. After 3 hours of drive, arrive Tongren at noon, the whole afternoon you will visit two famous sights in this city, Thangka Artists Village and Upper Wutun Monastery.

Thangka is a Tibetan silk painting with embroidery, usually depicting a Buddhist deity. During your visit in Thangka Artists Village, you will see numerous beautiful thangkas and learn how to draw them. Next up head to the **Upper Wutun Monastery**, a classically styled temple which is filled with ancient Tibetan treasures.

Day 11 :

Tongren Sightseeing - Drive to Xining



Have a visit to **Rongwu Monastery**, another Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Tongren in this morning. After lunch, drive through many breathtaking grasslands to Xining, the capital of Qinghai province. The drive will take over 3.5 hours, upon arrival, be met by your local guide and assisted to check in the hotel.

Day 12 :

Xining Sightseeing - Train to Lhasa

Today you will visit **Kumbum Monastery** in Xining city. The monastery is about 27 km. (18 mi.) southwest of Xining downtown, and it is regarded as one of the two most important Tibetan Buddhist monasteries outside Tibet itself. Local people and many Tibetan Buddhists believe that the monastery was originated from a pagoda that marked the birthplace of Tsong Kha-pa, the founder of Gelugpa Sect in 1379.

In the afternoon, take the overnight soft-sleeper train for your journey to Lhasa. The Cabins are pressurized and double glazed for the comfort of the passengers as it ascends into the high altitude of Tibet.

Day 13 :

Arrive Lhasa

On the train to Lhasa, you will have a perfect glimpse of the magnificent Tibetan Plateau, see groups of nomads with their yaks and the cruel but beautiful Kekexili Nature Reserve. Arrive Lhasa in the afternoon, then be assisted to your hotel by the local guide to take a good rest for acclimatizing the high altitude.

Day 14 :

Lhasa City Tour

Since today is your first day of sightseeing on the highest plateau of the world, you will only be arranged to visit two highlights within Lhasa City, Potala Palace and Jokhang Temple, two of which are regarded as the landmarks of Lhasa. In the morning, head to the **Potala Palace**, which is an architectural miracle even by modern standards. The palace once was the chief residence of the Dalai Lamas. It rises 13 stories and contains more than 1,000 rooms. However, it is not simply one building with many rooms, you can see various different palaces all built into one, magnificent and mysterious.

In the afternoon, visit **Jokhang Temple** at the heart of Lhasa. The temple has over 1,300-year history, and is considered to be the spiritual center of Tibet, attracting millions of Tibetan Buddhism believers and travelers every year. The circuit around the temple is called Barkhor, it is a popular devotional place for pilgrims and locals. The street is also the largest market where you can see lots of shops selling traditional souvenirs. Walk along the street for some good bargains.

Day 15 :

Lhasa Monasteries Tour

Lots of Tibetan people believe in their unique Tibetan Buddhism, and there are many monasteries for them to learn the Buddhism Scripture. Today you will visit two near Lhasa city, Ganden Monastery and Sera Monastery. Morning drive to **Ganden Monastery** which is located 36 km. (22 mi.) from Lhasa. This monastery is one as well as the first of the great three Gelugpa Sect monasteries. Now there are about 170 monks living and studying here. Ganden Monastery is famous for its Kora. While walking along the path, you will see many pilgrims and monks offering prayers, rubbing holy rocks and prostrating themselves.

In the afternoon, head to the **Sera Monastery** for a visit. This monastery is well known for its debating tradition. The debating is usually set within a stone walled natural courtyard every afternoon, where you will see some monks clap their hand and debate the Buddhism scriptures.

Day 16 :

Drive to Gyantse - Gyantse City Tour

Start today with a drive to Gyantse, a small town which is noted for its wood and wool productions. The drive will take 6 to 7 hours, and you will see numerous breathtaking landscapes along the way. First stop at Kambala Pass for viewing the spectacular scenery of Yamdrok Lake, which is one of the three holy lakes in Tibet. In clear weather, you will see the lake is a fabulous shade of deep turquoise.

Next up with a drive along the Friendship Highway, which is a road from Lhasa to Kathmandu, Shortstops at Kara La Pass (5,100 m) which is overlooked by Mt. Nyenchen Kangsa glacier. Upon arrival in Gyantse in the afternoon, visit the stupa, **Gyantse Kumbum**, the largest kumbum which has 9 tiers and, according to the Buddhist tradition, 108 chapels. Afterwards, take a walk around the old town of Gyantse to witness the life of local people.

Day 17 :

Drive to Shigatse - Shigatse City Tour

Continue your overland trip in Tibet by driving from Gyantse to Shigatse in the Morning. The drive takes about 1.5 hours, once you get there, head to the famous **Tashilhunpo Monastery**, which once was the seat of the Panchen Lama. The monastery is also famed for its Grand Hall, which houses the opulent tomb of the fourth Panchen Lama.

In the afternoon, take a walk to the **Old City Market** in Shigatse city. Compared with Barkhor Area in Lhasa, the souvenirs in this market tend to be much cheaper. Walk around here and see if there are anything you want to buy.

Day 18 :

Drive to Namtso Lake - Namtso Lake Sightseeing



Say farewell to Shigatse as you will drive to **Namtso Lake** in the morning. Namtso Lake is the third lake you will visit in this tour, and along with Yamdrok tso Lake, it is also listed as one of the three holy lakes in Tibet. Once get there, take several hours to walk along the lakeside and enjoy the charming natural scenery of this highest salt lake of world. Namtso Lake is also called as sky lake by locals as you will see the majestic Nyenchen Thanglha snow mountain ranges and Northern Tibetan grassland in distance. You will spend the night at a local tent guest house by the lakeside of Namtso.

Day 19 :

Namtso Lake Sightseeing - Drive Back to Lhasa



You need an early breakfast to see the spectacular scenery of the Sunrise in Namtso Lake. After that, spend some time to hike on Tashi Dor, which is a peninsula in Namtso Lake. Next up with a 4-hour drive back to Lhasa city. En route you will stop to visit one nomad family, explore the local life and enjoy some local food.

Day 20 :
Departure from Lhasa



After breakfast, be assisted to the airport and ready for the departure. Wish you have a pleasant journey home. If you have any requirements on this tour, please let us know and we can adjust it to meet all your needs.

Inclusions

Tour notes:

Please note prices are based in CNY.

General inclusions:

2 bottles of mineral water provided daily.

All required government taxes and fees.

All required Tibet permits and domestic travel documents.

Where possible 3 star hotels will always be provided, if the city or town does not have then the local guest house or monastery guest house will be provided (i.e. tent / dormitory bed, no private bathroom etc.)

The hotel accommodation is based on two persons sharing one standard twin room with private facilities in all relevant locations. If a single client requests a twin room alone, the single room supplement will be charged.
Local Tibetan guide fluent in English, Chinese or Japanese that is certified by the state tourism build. (If your native language is not listed please let us know, we are certain we can assist your needs.)
Airport and/or train station pick-up and drop-off.
All domestic flight and train tickets. Economy-class for flights and soft sleeper / seat for train tickets.
Transportation will be provided via a comfortable and clean car, minivan or tourist bus depending upon the groups size.
Meals as remarked in the itinerary. (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)

General exclusions:

Personal expenses such as laundry, drinks, internet access, fax, telephone calls etc.
Tips for your guide and driver.
Optional Attractions that are not specified in the itinerary.
Flight and/or railway ticket(s) to the first city of the tour and departure from the last city of the tour.
Meals not specified in the itinerary.

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