



Earthbound Expeditions

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Lhasa, Driving Out

14 days, from US\$2,947 per person

Duration

14 days

Grade

Moderate to strenuous

Max altitude

5,630 m

Start and end

Kathmandu

On the trail

5 to 8 hours a day

Best season

May to Sep

Accommodation

Guesthouses

Meals

Full board, vegetarian

Group size

5 to 20

Getting there

Fly to Lhasa

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Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Lhasa, Driving Out Overview

One of the most sacred journeys in Asia: walk around Mount Kailash and bathe at Lake Mansarovar on the Tibetan plateau.

Tour overview

This is a pilgrimage rather than a trek, and the difference affects what it requires of you. Ten of the fourteen days are spent flying, driving and acclimatising; three are spent walking the 52 km circuit of Mount Kailash, crossing a 5,630 m pass on the second day. Kailash is sacred to Hindus as the abode of Shiva, to Buddhists as the home of Demchok, to Jains as the place where Rishabhanatha attained liberation, and to followers of Bon as the seat of their spiritual power. Nobody has climbed it, and climbing it is not permitted.

The kora

The kora is fifty-two kilometres over three days, walked anticlockwise by followers of Bon and clockwise by everyone else. Day one is 14 km along a gradually rising valley to Dirapuk, directly below the north face. Day two is the most difficult: 18 km over the Dolma La at 5,630 m, past Gauri Kund lake, followed by a long, steep descent. Day three is 8 km on easy ground to Darchen. Horses and yaks are available for the whole circuit and many pilgrims use them, but everyone walks over the Dolma La, because horses cannot be ridden across it.

Why the altitude makes it demanding

The whole trip is at high altitude, and almost all the height is gained by aircraft and vehicle rather than on foot. You fly from Kathmandu at 1,400 m to Lhasa at 3,656 m in one morning, then drive to 4,350 m at Saga and 4,600 m at Mansarovar, sleeping higher each night. By the time you start the kora, you have spent five nights above 3,600 m without walking to any of them. This is more demanding for acclimatisation than any of our treks, which is why the itinerary is fourteen days rather than ten.

2026, the year of the Horse

The Tibetan Fire Horse year runs from 17 February 2026 to 5 February 2027. A kora walked in a Horse year is believed to carry the merit of thirteen ordinary koras. This happens once every twelve years, and Kailash is much busier as a result. If the merit is important to you, this is the year to go. If you prefer a quieter visit, next year will be less crowded.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	–	–	1,300 m
2	Pashupatinath puja, drive to Nagarkot	–	–	2,175 m
3	Nagarkot sunrise, back to Kathmandu	–	–	1,300 m
4	Fly Kathmandu to Lhasa	1h 35m	–	3,656 m
5	Lhasa, Potala and Jokhang	–	–	3,656 m
6	Drive to Shigatse, Tashilhunpo monastery	6–7 hrs	–	3,900 m
7	Drive to Saga	8–9 hrs	–	4,350 m
8	Drive to Lake Mansarovar	8–9 hrs	–	4,590 m
9	Mansarovar, puja and acclimatisation	–	–	4,590 m

10	Darchen to Dirapuk, kora day one	6–7 hrs	14 km	4,900 m
11	Over the Dolma La to Zuthulphuk	7–9 hrs	18 km	5,630 m
12	Out to Darchen, drive to Saga	3 hrs walking	8 km	4,350 m
13	Drive to Kerung border and Kathmandu	10–12 hrs	–	1,300 m
14	Fly home	–	–	–

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu (1,300 m)

We meet you at the airport and take you to your hotel. In the evening there is a briefing about the tour.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Pashupatinath Temple and drive to Nagarkot (2,175 m)

Morning puja and rituals at Pashupatinath Temple and a visit to the Sleeping Vishnu. Then drive to the hill station of Nagarkot for the views and acclimatisation.

Altitude: 2,175 m On foot: Easy walking, 1–2 hrs Night: Hotel, Nagarkot Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Nagarkot sunrise and return to Kathmandu

Watch the sunrise and mountain views from Nagarkot. On the drive back, visit Doleshwor Mahadev and Patan Durbar Square.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Fly to Lhasa, Tibet (3,656 m)

Early morning flight to the holy city of Lhasa in Tibet. Transfer to the hotel for the night.

Altitude: 3,656 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Lhasa Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Lhasa sightseeing

Visit the Potala Palace, the former residence of the Dalai Lama, and the Jokhang Monastery, and explore the Barkhor market.

Altitude: 3,656 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Lhasa Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Drive to Shigatse (3,900 m)

Drive to Shigatse, the second-largest city in Tibet, and visit Tashilhunpo Monastery, the seat of the Panchen Lama.

Altitude: 3,900 m On foot: None, 6–7 hr drive Night: Hotel, Shigatse Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Drive to Saga (4,350 m)

Drive through colourful landscapes to Saga. Overnight in Saga.

Altitude: 4,350 m On foot: None, 8–9 hr drive Night: Hotel, Saga Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Drive to Lake Mansarovar

Your first views of Lake Mansarovar and Mount Kailash from the Horr Chu Pass. Complete the circuit of the lake by bus and stay overnight on the lakeshore.

Altitude: 4,590 m On foot: None, 8–9 hr drive Night: Guesthouse, Lake Mansarovar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Full day at Lake Mansarovar (puja and havan)

An acclimatisation day with bathing and religious ceremonies, and preparation for the three-day Kailash trek.

Altitude: 4,590 m On foot: Optional 2–3 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Lake Mansarovar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Drive to Darchen and Tarboche, trek to Diraphuk

Drive to Darchen and then to Tarboche (Yama Dwar), and begin a 14 km trek with close views of the north face of Kailash. Horses and yaks are available.

Altitude: 4,900 m On foot: 14 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Dirapuk Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Trek to Zuthulphuk Gompa via Dolma La

The second trekking day covers about 18 km, climbing to the Dolma La Pass (5,600 m) for prayers and descending to Zuthulphuk Gompa. Horses and yaks are available.

Altitude: 4,790 m On foot: 18 km, 7–9 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Zuthulphuk Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Trek from Zuthulphuk to Darchen and drive to Saga

A final 8 km trek completes the circuit, followed by lunch at Darchen and the drive to Saga.

Altitude: 4,350 m On foot: 8 km, 3 hrs Night: Hotel, Saga Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13

Drive to the Kerung border and on to Kathmandu

Drive to the Nepal and China border and complete the immigration procedures. Continue to Kathmandu and stay overnight in a hotel.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, 10–12 hr drive Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 14

Departure

Transfer to the airport for your international flight.

Altitude: 1,300 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- Airport transfers and ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits and national park fees
- Meals as per the itinerary

Not included

- International flights
- Travel and rescue insurance
- Personal trekking gear
- Tips and personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Packing list

No porters, and your main bag stays in the truck

A support vehicle carries everything for eleven of the fourteen days, so there is no porter weight limit. What matters is your daypack for the three kora days: everything else stays in the truck and meets you at Darchen. Keep it to 25 to 30 litres and carry your own water in it.

For the kora

- Worn-in walking boots with ankle support, for three days of walking and the loose descent from the Dolma La
- Trekking poles, even if you do not use them at home
- A daypack of 25 to 30 litres for the three kora days. Everything else stays in the vehicle
- Four pairs of wool socks

For four unheated nights above 4,500 m

- A sleeping bag rated to -15°C. Dirapuk has no heating and is the coldest night of the trip
- A silk or cotton liner, for warmth and because the rooms are shared
- A down jacket, to wear in the evenings as well as on the pass
- Earplugs and an eye mask. You will share a room with several people

Clothing

- Three or four merino or synthetic base layers, not cotton
- Two mid layers, one fleece and one light insulated jacket
- Waterproof jacket and trousers
- Warm hat, liner gloves and insulated outer gloves
- Sunglasses, category 4. The light on the plateau is stronger than on any of our other trips
- Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm with sun protection, in generous quantities

Health

- Diamox if your doctor agrees, plus any medicines you take regularly, in their original packaging
- Personal first aid kit: blister kit, painkillers, rehydration salts, throat lozenges
- A broad-spectrum antibiotic if your doctor will prescribe one. You will be days away from a pharmacy
- Water purification as a backup to the bottled water in the vehicle
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes. There is no shower for four consecutive nights

Documents

- Passport valid for six months, with at least two blank pages, plus three photocopies
- Six passport photographs, for the group visa and the permits
- Printed copies of your Tibet permit and group visa documents, carried separately from your passport
- Travel insurance certificate covering 6,000 m and repatriation
- Chinese yuan in cash. Cards are rarely accepted west of Shigatse

For the pilgrimage

- Prayer flags, if you intend to hang them at the Dolma La, as most pilgrims do
- A container, if you want to take water from Mansarovar home
- Anything you have been asked to carry or leave. Tell your guide at the start rather than at the pass
- A VPN installed before you leave. Many Western internet services are blocked in China

Optional extras

Inner kora at Nandi

from \$220, +1 day

The inner circuit at the south face, which by tradition is walked only by pilgrims who have completed thirteen outer koras. We arrange it for those who have, and we will ask you to confirm this.

Everest Base Camp on the Tibet side

from \$560, +3 days

Rongbuk and the north face of Everest, added on the return journey through Shigatse. It is reached by road and shows a different side of Everest from Nepal.

Two extra nights in Lhasa

\$290, +2 days

Visits to Drepung, Sera and the Norbulingka, and a more gradual start to the altitude. We particularly recommend this extension on this itinerary.

Saga Dawa at Kailash

+\$200 on the price, in the itinerary

The festival marking the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and passing, held at Tarboche below Kailash, when the great flagpole is raised. It falls on the full moon of the fourth Tibetan month, usually in late May or June, and is extremely crowded.

Overland in both directions instead of flying in

saves \$180, +2 days

Drive in via Kerung rather than flying to Lhasa. It takes two days longer and is much better for acclimatisation, but does not include Lhasa.

Single room where available

\$240

For the hotel nights in Kathmandu, Lhasa, Shigatse and Saga. At Mansarovar, Dirapuk and Zuthulphuk only shared rooms are available.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: enepaltrekking.com/kailash-mansarovar-tour