

Mt Kailash, Western Tibet

Worshipped by more than a billion Buddhists and Hindus, Asia's most sacred mountain (p175) rises from the Barkha plain like a giant four-sided 6714m chörten. Throw in the stunning nearby Lake Manasarovar and a basin that forms the source of four of Asia's greatest rivers, and who's to say this place really isn't the centre of the world? Travel here to one of the world's most beautiful and remote corners brings an added bonus: the three-day pilgrim path around the mountain erases the sins of a lifetime.

Potala Palace, Lhasa

There are moments in travel that will long stay with you – and your first view of the iconic Potala Palace (p52) is one such moment. Even surrounded by a sea of Chinese development, the towering, mysterious building dominates Lhasa; it's simply hard to take your eyes off the thing. A visit to the former home of the Dalai Lamas is a spiralling descent past gold-tombed chapels, reception rooms and prayer halls into the bowels of a medieval castle. It's nothing less than the concentrated spiritual and material wealth of a nation.

