

# Welcome to Tibet

*Tibet offers fabulous monasteries, breathtaking high-altitude treks, stunning views of the world's highest mountains and one of the most likeable peoples you will ever meet.*

## A Higher Plain

For many people, the highlights of Tibet will be of a spiritual nature – magnificent monasteries, prayer halls of chanting monks and remote cliffside retreats. Tibet's pilgrims are an essential part of this appeal, from the local grannies mumbling mantras in temples heavy with the aroma of juniper incense and yak butter, to the hard-core pilgrims walking or prostrating themselves around Mt Kailash. Tibet has a level of devotion and faith that seems to belong to an earlier age.

## The Roof of the World

For travellers nonplussed by Tibet's religious significance, the big draw is likely to be the elemental beauty of the highest plateau on earth. Geography here is on a humbling scale and every view is lit with spectacular mountain light. Your trip will take you past glittering turquoise lakes, across huge plains dotted with yaks and nomads' tents and over high passes draped with colourful prayer flags. Hike past the ruins of remote hermitages, stare up open-mouthed at the north face of Everest or make an epic overland trip along some of the world's wildest roads. The scope for adventure is limited only by your ability to get permits.

## Politics & Permits

There's no getting away from politics in modern Tibet. Whether you see Tibet as an oppressed, occupied nation or simply an underdeveloped province of China, the normal rules for travel in China simply don't apply.

Travel restrictions mean that independent travel is currently not possible, as foreign travellers need to prearrange a tour with a guide and transportation for their time in Tibet. On the plus side, new airports, boutique hotels and paved roads offer a level of travel comfort unheard of just a few years ago. If the rigours of high-altitude Tibet travel have deterred you in the past, now might just be the time to take the plunge.

## The Tibetan People

Whatever your interests, your lasting memories of Tibet are likely to be of the bottle of Lhasa Beer you shared in a Lhasa teahouse, the yak-butter tea offered by a monk in a remote monastery or the picnic shared with a herder's family on the shores of a remote lake. Always ready with a smile and with a great tolerance and openness of heart despite decades of political turmoil and hardship, it is the Tibetan people that truly make travelling in Tibet such a profound joy.



## Why I Love Tibet

By Bradley Mayhew, Author

For me Tibet is a uniquely spiritual place. Those moments of peace, fleeting and precious, when everything seems to be in its proper place, just seem to come more frequently here. Despite the overpowering pace of change and a sobering political situation, underpinning everything for me are the Tibetan people, whose joy and devotion remain deeply inspiring. Tibet is a place that will likely change the way you see the world and remain with you for years to come. And that for me is the definition of the very best kind of travel.

**For more about our authors, see page 352**

Above: Monks walking outside a monastery