



Tsang

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Includes ➔

Yamdruk-tso	126
Nangartse	127
Gyantse	128
Shigatse	134
Phuntsoling	143
Sakya	146
Lhatse	149
Baber & Shegar	150
Everest Region	151
Tingri	156
Nyalam	156
Zhāngmù (Dram) ...	158

Best off the Beaten Track

- ➔ Shegar Dzong (p150)
- ➔ Samding Monastery (p127)
- ➔ Tsechen Monastery (p132)

Best Hikes

- ➔ Rongphu (p153) to Rong Chong ruins, Everest region
- ➔ Tashilhunpo kora (p137), Shigatse
- ➔ Ridge behind Samding Monastery (p127)

Why Go?

The great overland trip across Tibet – from Lhasa to the Nepali border via Gyantse, Shigatse and Mt Everest Base Camp – goes straight through Tsang, passing most of the highlights of the region along the Friendship Hwy. Along the way are fantastic day walks, several multiday treks, an adventurous detour to the base of Mt Everest and a scattering of ancient Tibetan monasteries and historic towns. Dozens of smaller monasteries away from the highway offer adventurers plenty of scope to go exploring off the beaten track. For most travellers, Tsang is either the first or last place they experience in Tibet, and the setting for two of Asia's great mountain drives: out to far western Tibet and across the Himalayas to Nepal.

When to Go

- ➔ The best time of year to visit Tsang is from May to June: views of Mt Everest are usually clear before the monsoon brings cloud cover and this is an excellent time for trekking. Travel along the Friendship Hwy is possible year-round.
- ➔ The colourful three-day monastery festival at Tashilhunpo takes place in June or July (specific dates change each year) and culminates in the unrolling of a massive thangka. Visit Gyantse for the Dhama horse racing and archery festival (from 20 June), which includes traditional games, folk singing, picnics and much swilling of barley beer.



Tsang Highlights

1 Scaling the walled ruins and mighty cliffs of **Shegar Dzong** (p150), a fort and monastery on an improbably picturesque crag.

2 Winding through the inside of the dazzling **Gyantse Kumbum** (p129), a monumental chörten with mural-filled chapels.

3 Soaking up the holy atmosphere and towering gilded statues inside impressive **Sakya Monastery** (p147).