



Western Tibet (Ngari)

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Best Views

- ➔ Humla Karnali Valley from Shepeling (Simbaling) Monastery (p185)
- ➔ Tagyel-tso (p168), or anywhere along the northern route
- ➔ Mt Kailash floating over the waters of Rakshas Tal (p175)

Best Places off the Beaten Track

- ➔ Gossul Monastery (p177)
- ➔ Ruins of Shangshung (p178) in the Khyunglung Valley
- ➔ Old Rutok (p184)

Why Go?

Vast, thinly populated and with an average altitude of over 4500m, Ngari is a rough and ready frontier occupying one of the remotest corners of Asia. For most travellers the main attractions of what is likely to be a two- or three-week overland trip are the almost legendary destinations of Mt Kailash and Lake Manasarovar. Indeed, many of the Tibetan and Indian pilgrims on this road have been planning a visit all their lives. For those less fussed by the spiritual significance of Mt Kailash, travelling over the Changtang (the high plateau), with its endless steppes and impossibly high snow-capped peaks, is likely to be an attraction in itself.

Freshly paved roads and a new airport are opening up the region in a way unimaginable a mere decade ago. There's no escaping mass Chinese tourism now, but the faster routes do open up all sort of possibilities for detours to still-off-the-beaten track destinations.

When to Go

- ➔ May to June and mid-September to early October are the best times to head to Ngari, though June and July see huge convoys of Indian pilgrims booking out entire hotels on their way to Mt Kailash.
- ➔ April to October is best for the Drölma-la pass on the Mt Kailash kora, as it's normally blocked with snow during other months (though you wouldn't be permitted into the region during these other months in any case).
- ➔ The festival of Saga Dawa in May/June is a particularly popular time to visit Mt Kailash, and hundreds of pilgrims and tourists descend on the mountain. Unfortunately, this is also a potentially sensitive time due to the Chinese government's control over the area, so the region may be closed to foreign travellers.



Western Tibet (Ngari) Highlights

1 Joining fellow pilgrims and erasing the sins of a lifetime on the three-day trek around sacred **Mt Kailash** (p173).

2 Hiking the sandy shores of holy **Lake Manasarovar** (p175), or just marvelling at the turquoise waters and snow-capped mountain backdrop.

3 Camping on the shores of the spectacular otherworldly lakes of **Tagyel-tso** (p169), **Dawa-tso** (p169) and **Peiku-tso** (p166).