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11 days Amdo Tibetan Monlam festival tour

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Xining
Tongren
Xiahe
Langmusi
Aba
Lixian
Chengdu

Embrace the area's religious atmosphere and nuances as you travel to Amdo on the Monlam Festival. You'll glimpse the sacred thangka unveiling, enjoy the cham dances, and join in the annual ritual.

Type
Private
Duration
11 days
Theme
Family focused, Festival, Natural scenery
Trip code
TFT-07
Price
From £ 1,032 per person

Itinerary

Monlam Festival, also known as the Great Prayer Festival, is the most important and grandest event for Tibetan Buddhists, taking place in the Amdo Tibetan region for almost 2 weeks since Jan. 3rd of the lunar calendar. The festival has a history dating back to 1409 when Tsong Khapa, founder of the Gelugpa Sect, organized a prayer meeting at Jokhang Temple. During the Monlam Festival, millions of pilgrims from rural areas pour to monasteries to join in the greatest religious celebration for prayer.

There is no time of year that's better to experience the Tibetan culture and religion than during the Monlam Festival. This 11-days tour takes you to jump into a variety of Tibetan monasteries in Amdo, including Tongren, Langmusi, Luqu, and Aba, to join in the largest and liveliest festival with countless pilgrims and monks, and experience diverse religious prayer rituals. From "sunning of the Buddha", cham dances, the jewelry show to butter flowers sculptures, the festival shows off the best of the religious cultures and artistic treasures of Tibetan people.

Day 01 :

19 Feb. 2021: Xining - Rebkong [Tongren, 2,200m], 140KM, 2-3 hours' drive



Upon arrival at Xining airport or train station, be greeted by the local guide and driver. Driving along a pleasing road to Rebkong (Tongren), the hometown of Thangka art, we will be able to see the canyon and the Yellow River on the way. Stay overnight at Rebkong.

Day 02 :

20 Feb. 2021: Rebkong Monlam Festival

In the morning, drive about 10km to **Gomar Monastery** where we will join with local Tibetans and monks, experiencing the “thanks-giving breakfast” and witnessing the highlight of the Monlam Festival - the unveiling of Buddha's thangka (a giant sacred painting on cloth depicting Buddha). Afterward, drive to **Lower Wutun Monastery** to participate in the pilgrimage circuit with monks who will carry a statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha, and make the Kora around the monastery. Stay overnight at Rebkong.

Day 03 :

21 Feb. 2021: Rebkong Monlam Festival

We will have **another full day at Rebkong to explore Lower Wutun Monastery and Gomar Monastery**. In the morning, head to Lower Wutun Monastery to appreciate the Cham dance, a lively religious ceremony performed by monks costumed as deities and Dharma protectors. In the afternoon, drive to Gomar Monastery again to join in the pilgrimage circuit with monks who will carry a statue of Maitreya. Stay overnight at Rebkong.

Day 04 :

22 Feb. 2021: Rebkong Cham Dance - Xiahe [2,800m], 110KM, 2.5 hours' drive



In the morning, proceed to enjoy the **Cham dance**. This hours-long ritual normally includes 3 parts: a parade of monks dressed in festival costume, cham mask dance with slow and repetitive movements, and a fire offering ritual. After the Cham dance, join in a huge procession with local Tibetans. In the late afternoon, drive to Xiahe. Stay overnight at Xiahe.

Day 05 :

23 Feb. 2021: Xiahe - Langmusi [3,340m], 210KM, about 4 hours' drive

In the morning, head to visit the **Labrang Monastery**, one of the six great Tibetan monasteries of Gelugpa order (Yellow Hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism), which houses the largest number of monks outside of Tibet. Follow local pilgrims for the kora around the monastery. Then continue the driving to Langmusi, a small town on the border of Gansu province and Sichuan province. Stay overnight at Langmusi.

Day 06 :

24 Feb. 2021: Langmusi Monlam Festival - Luqu [3,500m], 90KM, 2 hours' drive

Today is the **"Grandest day" of the Monlam Festival taking place in Langmusi**. Get up early to go to Kirti monastery to participate in the ceremony of sunning-Buddha with a giant thangka unfolding. Monks will perform mysterious rituals in front of the thangka, and local Tibetans will surround the giant Thangka to get blessed. The ceremony comes to an end when the thangka is carried into the monastery, then we will drive to Luqu, a nomadic town, which is famous for breeding horses in Tibetan areas. Stay overnight at Luqu.

Day 07 :

25 Feb. 2021: Luqu - Ngawa [Aba, 3,290m], 260KM, about 4-5 hours' drive

In the morning, leave Luqu for **Xicang Monastery** to appreciate the jewelry show, which is celebrated to admire nature and pray for good luck for the coming year. The show begins with a parade of handsome young men who will wear jewelry and be armed with swords or spears, leading the local Tibetans for a kora around the monastery. After the parade, we will also enjoy the cham dance. In the afternoon drive to Ngawa (Aba), a treasure land to know more about Tibetan culture, religion, and Buddhism. Stay overnight at Ngawa.

Day 08 :

26 Feb. 2021: Ngawa (Aba) Monlam Festival

In the morning, we will head to **Nangshuk Monastery**, the largest Bon monastery in Tibet, to join in the prayer ceremony in the Tutelary Hall. Then appreciate the cham dance which is normally available from 10:00 until 18:00. Before the Cham dance, local Tibetans will burn incense offering in front of the protector monastery, which is one of the most important and highlights of the Monlam Festival in Nangshuk Monastery. Then we will see the parade of horses' caravans and the Cham dance. There are a few differences between the Bon masks and the Buddhist masks as far as visual appearance, but the meaning behind Bon & Buddhist mask dances can be hugely different. In the evening, head to the **Gomang Monastery** where the butter flower festival is taking place. Stay overnight at Ngawa.

Day 09 :

27 Feb. 2021: Ngawa (Aba) Monlam Festival

We will have another day to appreciate the Cham dance at **Nangshuk Monastery**, which is a particular festival in the Tibetan region. You can also visit the Bon College and Hospital in the monastery. After enjoying the Cham dance, we will visit **Tokden Monastery** which is located east of Nangshuk Monastery. The monastery also has a mask dance ten days before the one in Nangshuk Monastery. Stay overnight at Ngawa.

Day 10 :

28 Feb. 2021: Ngawa (Aba) - Lixian [1,900m], 390KM, about 7-8 hours' drive



Today we will have a long drive to Lixian. En route, you'll enjoy the landscape of the Tibetan plateau. Stay overnight at Lixian.

Day 11 :

1 Mar. 2021: Lixian - Chengdu, 230KM, about 3 hours' drive



In the morning, we will take a stroll in the ancient **Taoping Qiang village**, a complex of the most well-preserved watchtowers and folk houses, where we can appreciate the Qiang embroidery, enjoy the music and dance of the Qiang minority and experience the original life and rich culture of Qiang people. Afterward, drive to Chengdu airport for your flight to the next destination. End the trip with WindhorseTour!

Inclusions

Tour notes:

All of our tours can be customized to suite your requirements, interests and budget. It is our specialty! Please feel free to contact us.

The tour price is based on 3 star standard hotels. At your request we can provide pricing for different levels of service such as budget hostel, luxury 4 star standard hotels or deluxe 5 star standard hotels.

Please note prices are based in CNY.

General inclusions:

2 bottles of mineral water provided daily.

All required government taxes and fees.

Domestic travel accident insurance.

If you have any questions please inquire with one of our Travel Advisors.

Meals allowance for your guide and driver.

Please contact one of our Tour Advisors to get a custom quotation made to your requirements.

3 Stars hotel (shared twin room, private bathroom and daily breakfast)

All entrance tickets as noted in the tour's itinerary.

Local Tibetan guide fluent in English, Chinese or Japanese that is certified by the state tourism build. (If your native language is not listed please let us know, we are certain we can assist your needs.)

Airport and/or train station pick-up and drop-off.

Transportation will be provided via a comfortable and clean car, minivan or tourist bus depending upon the groups size.

General exclusions:

Personal expenses such as laundry, drinks, internet access, fax, telephone calls etc.

Tips for your guide and driver.

Flight and/or railway ticket(s) to the first city of the tour and departure from the last city of the tour.

Meals not specified in the itinerary.

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