

Tibet Highway: Yunnan-Tibet

(THY-002)

Kunming-Dali-Lijiang-Zhongdian-Deqin-Yanjing-Mangkang-Bangda-Basu-Nyingchi-Tsedang-Lhasa-Gyantse-Shigatse-Lhasa (23 Days)

Yunnan-Tibet Highway, also called Dian-Zang Road (Dian is the abbreviation for Yunnan Province, Zang is the abbreviation for Tibet), is the fourth trunk line from hinterland to Tibet. This highway is famed as charming and graceful travel.

Yunan-Tibet Highway was opened to traffic in 1974. It starts from Xiaguan of Yunnan in the south, traverses Jianchuan, Zhongdian and Deqin to Mangkang of Tibet and covers a distance of 714 km. It joins the south part of Sichuan-Tibet Road in the north. The whole road runs through

the China-Burma Basin and the Hengduan Mountain Range with the highest point - the pass of Hongla Mountain at 4,300 meters above sea level. The road leads through spectacular landscape, with thick forests and mild and humid climate on the way. As the Hengduan Mountain Range is cut by Lancang River and Jinsha River with many high mountains and deep valleys, and the road goes up and down in elevations through the mountains and valleys, you can experience different kinds of climates and landscapes on the way.

Day 1/Arrive in Kunming

Arrive in Kunming, know as "The City of Eternal Spring". Pick up from the airport and transfer to the hotel on arrival. (D)

Day 2/Kunming-Stone Forest-Kunming

Today's highlight is to visit the **Stone Forest** (Shilin). The Stone Forest is in **Lunan Yi Nationality**, which is about 120km from Kunming. This area offers visitors a unique landscape of stark limestone pillars twisted and sculpted by wind and water erosion some 270 million year ago. From a distance, these stone pillars look indeed like a dense forest; hence the name of Stone Forest. It covers an area of 350 square kilometers, yet only about 11.92 square kilometers have been developed as scenic landscape open to the public. Drive back to Kunming in the afternoon. (B,L,D)

Day 3/Kunming

After breakfast, visit **Kunming Municipal Museum**, a local comprehensive museum with an area of 5,000 sq meters. The exhibitions in the five regular halls are Dinosaur Fossil

Exhibition, Bronze Culture Exhibition, Sutra Exhibition of Dizang Temple and Kunming City Exhibition. Then, take sightseeing of **Dragon Gate**, the magnificent scenic place in **Western Hill**. A stone archway was built at the entrance with the inscription Dragon Gate at the top. The view of Dianchi Lake below is a thrilling sight from this breathtaking building on the cliff. Then, pay a visit to **Qiongzhu Temple**, a famous Buddhist temple with its most outstanding artistic feature and surrounding bamboo forest. Walk around the **Flower and Bird Market** at Jingming Street, where is an interesting places either for a leisurely stroll or to purchase some lovely things. (B,L,D)

Day 4/Kunming-Dali

Drive to Dali, a historically and culturally famous city of China, which is renowned for her historical interests. Dali City stands against Cangshan Mountain in the west and adjoins Erhai Lake in the east, and is embraced by undulating hills around. Visit **Xizhou Village**, located 18 kilometers north of Dali, faces Erhai on the east. It grew and flourished in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) along with the fortunes of Dali renowned tea merchants that traded to Tibet. It is not only a historically famous city but also a typical commercial center of Bai Ethnic Nationality. Enjoy the **Three Flavors of Tea with Bai People's Performances** in Xizhou Old Town. (B,L,D)

Day 5/Dali

Take a **cruise on Erhai Lake**, meaning "sea shaped like an ear". In a sunny day, the crystal waters of Erhai Lake and the snow mantled Cangshan Mount radiate with each other. Then, pay a visit to **Three Pagodas of Chongsheng Monastery**, classic Buddhist pagodas of the Tang Dynasty and are regarded as the symbol of Dali. From distance, the three pagodas are like three huge pens, standing among the continuous green mountains and emerald fields. The styles of the three pagodas are similar. Walk around the **Dali Ancient Town**, characterized by the dwelling houses of the Bai Minority, which can be dated back to the year 1382 during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and rank as one of the most noted historical and cultural cities in China. (B,L,D)

Day 6/Dali-Jianchuan-Lijiang

After breakfast, drive to Lijiang and visit Jianchuan on the way. Pay a visit to **Shizhong Mountain Stone Cave**. Shibao Mountain is located in the midst of a picturesque landscape, with a broad view comprising rows of mountain peaks, tranquil valley, dense forest, and deep-buried ancient temple houses from the woods. Shizhong Mountain Stone Caves, just like gem as bright as Dunhuang in Gansu, Yungang in Shanxi, Longmen in Henan, and Dazu in Sichuan. Walk around **Sideng Street in Shaxi**, the only surviving fair market of the ancient tea-horse merchant's track, incredibly the complete theatre and its performing stage, temples, village gate are all well-preserved. Proceed to Lijiang, an old city in beautiful surroundings in northwest Yunnan, blessed with beautiful scenery. (B,L,D)

Day 7/Lijiang

Visit the **Suhe Tea and Horse Old Town** where is a well-preserved example of a town along the ancient tea and horse route, **Baisha Murals** in Baisha Naxi village, an artistic Crystallization combining the Naxi, Tibetan, Bai and Han styles and **Black Dragon Pool**

where is a wonderful place caters to the habitude of the Naxi who loves the nature very much. Then, walk along **Lijiang Old Town**, one of UNESCO's protected world Heritage Sites. It is a well-preserved old city residing Naxi Nationality. With Sifang Street at the core, the entire city spreads out in all directions, and is crisscrossed by a labyrinth of flagged streets and alleyways. (B,L,D)

Day 8/Lijiang

Take a cable car to visit **Spruce Plateau**, situated half way up the **Jade Dragon Snow Mountain**, at an altitude of 3,100 meters. As its name implies, Spruce Plateau is a pasture surround by a forest of gigantic and straight spruces. Visit **Yufeng Temple**, located at the southern foot of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. It is one of Scarlet Sect lamaseries in Lijiang. Enjoy **Dongba Religion Dance** in the evening. (B,L,D)

Day 9/Lijiang-Zhongdian

After breakfast, depart from Lijiang and drive west to visit the **Stone Drum Village**, named after a drum-shaped marble plaque, standing at the First Bend of the Yangtze River. Go on driving to visit the **Tiger Leaping Gorge**, located on the upstream of the Yangtze River in Yunnan, honored as the deepest and most marvelous gorges in the world. From the top of the gorge you look down the steeply angled (70-90 degrees) mountain sides to the rushing Jinsha River with its 18 frothing rapids more than 200 meters below. Arrive in Zhongdian in the late afternoon, known as Shangri-La which was described as a heaven away from the turbulent mundane world in James Hilton's novel "The lost Horizon" in 1933. Shangri-La, a Tibetan word, means "land of sacredness and peace". (B,L,D)

Day10/Zhongdian

Begin today's sightseeing with a visit to **Napahai Lake**, located 8km to the northwest of Zhongdian County. It is the ideal habitation for black-necked cranes. From September to March of the next year, these rare birds have been staying here for about half a year. Then, visit **Songzanlin Lamasery**, the largest Tibetan Buddhist Temple in Yunnan Province, and also one of the famous monasteries in the Tibetan area. The temple was made after the Potala Palace in Lhasa, hence it has another name "Second Potala Palace", a spiritual place that invites you to discover the mystery and traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Then, pay a visit to **Dukezong Ancient Town**. Dukezong means "City of White Stone" in Tibetan, engendered an epithet as "City of Moonlight". The market turns out to be pretty amazing. It carries almost everything Tibetan you can think of. You will also have a chance to visit **Tibetan family** and try home-made Yak Butter tea and Tibetan Cheese. (B,L,D)

Day11/Zhongdian-Deqin

After breakfast, drive along Jinsha River to Deqin, a town located in the Hengduan Mountains in Yunnan province, 80% of its 55,000 inhabitants are Tibetan. Getting closer to Deqin, numerous small shrines and prayer flags dot the road, all in view of Meili Snow Mountain, a holy place of pilgrimage for Tibetan Buddhists, and the first of the eight great divine mountains in the Tibetan region. Its main peak is Kang Karpo, 6,740 meters above sea level, the highest peak in Yunnan Province. The **Feilai Temple** affords stunning views

of all of Meili's peaks. (B,L,D)

Day12/Deqin-Yanjing-Mangkang

After breakfast, drive along the Lancang River, the longest river flowing from north to south in China. It will take about 4 hours to reach Yanjing, an old town in south Tibet near the border with Yunnan and it is famed for its century-old salt pans. Pay a visit to **Yanjing Cathedral**, the only catholic church in Tibet. Proceed to Mangkang in the afternoon, the interchange of the south and north Sichuan-Tibet lines. Mangkang means wonderful place in Tibetan, the terrain is complicated with north-south rolling mountains and valleys. (B,L,D)

Day13/Mangkang-Bangda-Basu

Depart from Mangkang and span over the winding Lancang River and cross over the highest mountain on Sichuan-Tibet Lines - Dongda Mountain, the altitude is 5,008 meters. Proceed to Bangda and view of **Bangda Grassland** and **Bangda Airport** which located the highest altitude in the world. After passing Bangda, climb over the most precipitous Nujiang Mountain, and go down to Nujiang riverside after finishing the famous Seventy-two Bends. Stay overnight in Basu, at altitude of 3,910 meters. Basu means "Village at the foot of Warrior Mountain" in Tibetan. Snow Mountains, primary forests and lyrical landscape combine together, greets you on the way. (B,L,D)

Day14/Basu-Ranwu-Bomi

Drive to Ranwu and take sightseeing of **Ranwu Lake**, 3,850 meters above the sea level, which has a water area of 22 square kilometers. The lake is surrounded by many scenic highlights, e.g. the Gangrigabu Snow Mountain in the southwest, the Azhagongla Glacier in the south and the Bosula Peak in the northeast. The green grassland around the lake, the sky-blue lake water and the white snow mountains constitute a very pretty watercolor. Go ahead to Bomi, means grandfather in Tibetan, located in the neighboring area between Himalaya and Nyainqentanglha Mountain of east Tibet. (B,L,D)

Day15/Bomi-Nyingchi (Bayi)

After breakfast, go ahead of Nyingchi and drive through virgin forest to Tongmai, the last natural barrier on Sichuan-Tibet Highway. Climb over Sejila Mountain, and you will see the warrior-like grand Peak of Nanjiabawa when coming by the mountain pass of Seqila on sunny days. Go down to Nyingchi County lied at Nyang River lower valley. Stay overnight in Bayi Town, the seat of Nyingchi Administration. The town is surrounded by a thick, beautiful forest. The most impressive is the Forest of Great Cypresses. (B,L,D)

Day16/Nyingchi-Tsedang

Depart from Bayi Town, and head for **Basum Lake Scenic Zone**, and sightseeing of the chanting view of Nyang River, the largest one of Yaluzhangbujiang River (Yalung Tsangpo) among its five tributes. Basum Lake, an stunning alpine lake at the middle and upper reaches of the Ba River, is about 3,538 meters above sea level. The blue, limpid lake water reflects the verdant and picturesque snow-capped mountains around the lake combine into a charming scene. Then, drive along Yaluzhangbujiang River (Yalung

Tsangpo) heading for Tsedang, viewing of scenes of valley and land fields, and the lush alpine forests. Stay overnight in Tsedang. (B,L,D)

Day17/Tsedang-Lhasa

Today's highlight is the visit of **Yonbulakhang, Changzhu Temple**. Yonbulakang is the earliest palace in Tibet, on the Zhaxiciri Mountain. The first impression of Yonbulakhang gave people is always very big built, precipitous and uncommon, because surrounded by the wilderness and field ridge. Changzhu Temple, located at the south bottom of Gongri Mountain, is famous for its "Pearl Tangka", on which paints the image of Kwan-yin Bodhisattva. Thangk is two meters long, 1.2 meters wide. Totally, cost 26 liang pearl, and it's also embedded with diamonds, coral and other precious jewelry. Then, drive to Lhasa. (B,L,D)

Day18/Lhasa

The first day of sightseeing starts from Lhasa's cardinal landmark- **Potala Palace**, a structure of massive portions. Its towering image has already appeared on various occasions, but your first sight of the Potala will still be an awe-inspiring moment. It takes at least a good 2-hour to visit those rooms, halls and chapels. Some 2km to the east of the Potala is the most revered religious structure and the holiest temple in Tibet - **Jokhang Temple**. Bustling with worshippers and redolent with mystery, the Jokhang is an unrivalled experience. The quadrangle of streets surrounding the Jokhang is the **Barkhor Market** - Lhasa's most interesting pilgrimage circuit. This area of the Old Town is both the spiritual heart of Lhasa and the main commercial district for Tibetans. (B,L,D)

Day19/Lhasa

Sightsee of the Drepung Monastery, Sera Monastery and Norbulingka in Lhasa. **Drepung Monastery**, the largest and richest monastery in Tibet, was founded in 1416 by a disciple of Tsong Khapa under the patronage of a noble family and later enlarged by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Nowadays it stands as Tibet's most important and largest monastic university in Tibet. **Norbulingka Park** (Treasure Garden) was built in the 1740s during the reign of the seventh Dalai Lama. Later it was renovated and enlarged and became the Dalai Lama's Summer Palace. **Sera Monastery** is located a few miles to the north of Lhasa, is one of the three largest monasteries.

Day20/Lhasa-Gyantse

Drive from Lhasa to Gyantse (at 4,040 meters above sea level), and pass by **Yamdroktso Lake** for sightseeing. Yamdroktso Lake is one of the four holy lakes of Tibet, and legend has it that if the lake ever disappears, it will mark the end of Tibet. In Gyantse, visit **Palkor Monastery**, the symbolic architecture of Gyantse. On one side of the Palkor Monastery stands a white tower - **Kumbum Stupa**. It is said that there are altogether more than 100,000 Buddha statues engraved on the tower; hence the name "One Hundred-Thousand-Buddha Tower". (B,L,D)

Day21/Gyantse-Shigatse

Proceed to Shigatse and visit **Tashihunpo Monastery**, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama to perform their political and religious tasks. Tashihunpo's magnificent outside may make you gasp in admiration, its inside just offers you more religious tranquility and sincerity. This monastery houses the world's largest copper Buddha figure which is decorated with numerous luxurious jewels. (B,L,D)

Day22/Shigatse-Lhasa

Drive back to Lhasa, the following is at leisure to explore the city. (B)

Day23/Depart from Lhasa

Transfer to the airport and fly out of Lhasa. TOUR ENDS! (B)