



West Nepal to Tibet, Mt Kailash 'Kora', drive across Tibet to Kiyrong and return to Kathmandu

with

AHF Directors

Peter Hillary and Simon Balderstone

A Himalayan and Tibetan trekking, driving, helicopter adventure with Peter Hillary and Simon Balderstone for the Australian Himalayan Foundation.

Moderate Level of physical activity

- 17 day trip including 12 days of heli, trek and driving expedition
- 5 nights hotels in Kathmandu, 11 nights in guest houses/lodges
- Helicopter from Simikot to Hilsa on the Tibetan border at 3500 metres
- Visit Lake Mansarover in Tibet and complete a 3 day 'kora' on foot or pony (at extra charge) around the sacred Mt Kailash.
- Drive east across the plateau of Tibet along the northern edge of the Himalayas to Kiyrong (or Zhangmu) then head south through the Himalayas and down to Kathmandu.
- Trek and travel with Peter Hillary and Simon Balderstone (Read more about Simon and Peter below on page 5.)

Itinerary Dates

Trip begins in Kathmandu Sunday 30th August, 2020

Return to Kathmandu Tuesday 15th September, 2020

The AHF West Nepal, Mt Kailash kora, Tibet adventure.

A journey in summer. Helicopters operate during the monsoon season to transport pilgrims through the mountains to reach Mt Kailash so this is a time of festivals and activity for the local farmers. This is a special time to be in both Nepal and Tibet – the fields are green and there are flowers everywhere.

We spend three days exploring fascinating Kathmandu and getting our visas for China and the Mt Kailash circumambulation. From Kathmandu we fly to Nepalgunj and then to Simikot in the far northwest of Nepal, followed by a helicopter flight over remote mountain villages to reach the border station of Hilsa at 3500 metres altitude.

We cross the border into Tibet and will be met by our Tibetan vehicles – from here we stay in Tibetan lodges. From Lake Mansarover we will drive to Darchen to commence a three-day trek or 'kora' around the Mt Kailash. The mountain is sacred to all Hindus and Buddhists and is a magnificent, icy dome-shaped peak above the Mansarover Lake. Following the kora we drive east across the barren Tibetan plateau past turquoise lakes and little Tibetan villages with the mighty Himalayas to our southern side. We will turn to the south, cutting right through the Himalayas – an incredible drive! – down to the China / Nepal border at either Kiyrong or Zhangmu. From Kiyrong or Zhangmu we drive back to Kathmandu.

This journey is an incredible mixture of travel in western Nepal, a helicopter flight through the Himalayas crossing from the green valleys of Nepal to the arid zone of Tibet and the beautiful peak of Mt Kailash, followed by a drive across the roof of the world on the northern side of the Himalayas before turning south from the Tibetan Plateau to plunge through the Himalayas and return to Kathmandu.

Simikot in west Nepal to Mt Kailash in Tibet to the border at Kiyrong to Kathmandu.

SIMIKOT / MOUNT KAILASH / EBC NORTH / KIYRONG ITINERARY

PLEASE NOTE It takes three full days in Kathmandu to get Chinese visas for the Tibet tour. You must arrive in Kathmandu on Sunday 30 August.

Day 01 Arrive **Kathmandu**, meet/transfer to hotel Yak & Yeti, passport collection for Tibet visa.
Note: Tibet permit fee USD\$200 for American and US\$100 for Australian citizens.

Day 02/03 In **Kathmandu** at Yak & Yeti.
It is compulsory that all passports are submitted to the Chinese Embassy for two full nights before we can get our visas and depart for west Nepal.

Day 04 In **Kathmandu** at Yak & Yeti.
Collect Tibet permits in the afternoon.

Day 05 **Kathmandu – Nepalganj**. Take the scheduled flight to Nepalgunj. Overnight at a hotel with air conditioning.

Day 06 **Nepalganj – Simikot** (Alt. 2,856 m). Fly by chartered flight or scheduled Twin Otter (both of 45 minutes duration) north over the western Terai plains, the Mahabharata Range, the Babai and Bheri River valleys, then follow the Karnali River to Simikot. Upon arrival at Simikot, we will go to the Immigration Office to get our permits. General sightseeing in Simikot. Overnight at local hotel/guest house.

Day 07 **Simikot to Hilsa** (Alt. 3,500 m) and on to **Purang**.
Fly by helicopter to the northwest Nepal town of Hilsa. Five people to each helicopter and **maximum 15kg baggage per person**. From here we trek over the border and enter into Tibet. Here we will be met by our Tibetan guide and motor transport. We go through all the formalities involving passports, visas and permits at the Tibetan immigration office. We load up our luggage and start the drive to Purang, an important administrative base. Overnight at local hotel/guest house.

Day 08 Acclimatisation day in **Purang, Tibet**.
Morning exploration in Purang, an ancient trading point on the trans-Himalayan commercial route where Nepali and Tibetan traders have been doing business for centuries. Behind the old town is a huge cliff-face with many caves where Tsegu monastery is located. Time permitting, a quick visit to this “gompa” is well worth the effort as is the Nepali bazaar situated on a slight slope beneath the towering ruins of the now defunct fortress -monastery of Shepeling.

Day 09 Drive to **Lake Manasarovar** (Alt. 4,558m). Driving northwards towards Lake Manasarovar, we pass through dry, high altitude country past Mount Gurla Mandata (25,242 ft./7694m), the highest peak in western Tibet, and over the Gurla-La Pass. We then traverse the narrow strip of land between Rakshash Tal (Demon Lake) on the left and holy Manasarovar on the right. These two lakes, said to be shaped like the sun and the moon, are said to have associations with the forces of light and darkness. Manasarovar is regarded as the “heart of the world”, the axis mundi and the centre of Asia by Buddhists, Hindus, Jains and followers of other spiritual traditions. It is the highest body of fresh water in the world. From near it originate great rivers in the four cardinal directions: the Indus (north), the Brahmaputra, in Tibet known as the Tak Tsangpo (east), the Karnali, or the Map Chhu, leading to the Ganges in India (south), and the Sutlej, or Langchen Tsangpo (west). In the distance, one can see the awesome white dome of holy Mount Kailash.

We drive on to Chiu Monastery on the north-western corner of Lake Manasarovar, a lovely place revered by Buddhists because it was the last resting place of Padma Sambhawa (also known as Guru Rimpoche), who brought Buddhism to Tibet. In the afternoon, we explore the area, including the temple. Overnight in a guest house near the monastery.

Day 10 Morning exploration of Mansarovar Lakes and drive to **Darchen** (Alt. 4,620m), gateway to Mount Kailash. 6/7 hours.

We drive to the road junction at Barka Qu, turn left and north-east, turn right at a fork further up to reach Darchen. Darchen, till recently a small settlement of Drokpas (nomadic herders), is at the base of the southern slope of this most sacred mountain. Darchen is where we see the many pilgrims begin their clockwise circumambulation of Mount Kailash.

Near Darchen are two “gompa” or monasteries situated around 2 hours walk from each other, Serlung gompa and Gyandrak gompa (alt 5010m), the first monastery to be founded in the Mount Kailash region. To the west along the Lha Chhu River is Darpoche where the annual Saga Dawa festival is held. In the afternoon, we explore the village and the tented shops which sell necessities to pilgrims. **Overnight at Guest House Darchen.** (NB. There is an option to ride a pony on the Kailash kora trek at extra cost.)



The famous profile and form of Mt Kailash.

- Day 11** Trek to **Dri-ra Phuk** “gompa” (Alt. 4,920 m). Trekking time: 6-7 hours.
We start off on the “kora”, the wide pilgrim path by first heading north-west along the Lha-Chhu (Divine River) valley. We pass the Choku monastery across the river on the left, and behind Kailash’s sheer northern face to Dri-ra-Phuk monastery, where we will spend the night. From here, we get spectacular views of the great north face of Mount Kailash, with its distinctive horizontal striations and deep couloir running down the centre of the face giving the mountain it’s characteristic and sacred appearance. Overnight at lodge.
- Day 12** Trek over Drolma-La Pass (Alt. 5,400m) to **Dzutrul-phuk** monastery. Trekking time: 7-8 hours.
Leaving Dri-ra Phuk in the morning, we ascend through stark and rocky terrain for about 6.4km (4 hours) to the Drolma-la Pass, the highest point en route. At the pass, a massive boulder sits festooned with thousands of prayer flags. Mount Kailash rises majestically to the right. Having crossed Drolma-La, we descend down into the green Lham-chhu River Valley, past Gauri Kund (the Bathing Pool of the Compassionate) and then on to Dzutrul-Phuk monastery. Overnight at lodge.
- Day 13** We end our trek at **Thungso** where we will meet our transport again and drive beyond Paryang (Alt. 4500m). Along the route we can get magnificent views of the Barka plains spread out between Mt Kailash and Manasarovar and Rakshash (Demon) Lakes. Overnight guest house/hotel beyond Paryang.

Day 14 Drive to **Saga** (Alt. 4,200m). The road to Saga is on tarmac, about 245 km and takes about 8 hours (with a stop for food) to reach Saga and go on briefly to our guest house at the small town of Sang which has a nunnery on the hillside.

Day 15 Drive to **Kyirong** (2700m). It is a paved road from Saga to Kiyrong so it is a comfortable drive for 5-6 hours with views of Cho Oyu, Himal and, Mt Sishapangma in the distance. After crossing Gunthang La pass (5236m) we descend towards Kyirong which will take about an hour to drive. Overnight in Kyirong. (We may cross through the Himalayas via Zhangmu instead of Kyirong - this will depend on road conditions and Chinese authorities)



Heinrich Harrer of Seven Years in Tibet wrote: "The name Kyirong means "the village of happiness," and it really deserves the name. I shall never cease thinking of this place with yearning, and if I can choose where to pass the evening of my life, it will be in Kyirong." Drawing of Kiyrong from May 1855 by HA Oldfield. RGS.

Day 16 Kyirong – Rashauna border (approx. 16km) to **Kathmandu** by 4WD vehicles. Drive down to the Chinese/Nepal border for about an hour, pass through Chinese immigration and after a few minutes of walking across a bridge we enter Nepal. We will complete formalities at Nepal immigrations and customs offices located 2 kms away at Timmure and drive along the Trisuli river for 45 minutes to arrive at Syabrubesi (the gateway of Langtang Valley). We then continue driving to Kathmandu via Dunche, Ramche, Kalikasthan and descend to Betrawati in Nuwako District. Driving time approx. 7-8 hrs depending on road condition. Overnight at Yak & Yeti Hotel in Kathmandu.

Day 17 Depart the next day for Kathmandu airport and flights home. **Flights should be booked for after midday.**

COST USD \$8,500 (Minimum of ten trekkers for the trek to proceed.)

Plus a donation to the AHF of AUD \$10,000

Single room supplement: USD\$1100 (Yak & Yeti in KTM, hotels and lodges in Nepal and Tibet)

Inclusions:

- Transfers airport/hotel/airport.
- Hotel Yak & Yeti (5 Star) on Bed & Breakfast basis. Shared rooms.
- Domestic flights to Nepalgunj and to Simikot
- Lodges and small hotels in Nepal and Tibet on all-inclusive basis (breakfast, lunch and dinner) Shared rooms.
- Tibet guide
- Official fees for Nepal and Tibet
- Peter Hillary and Simon Balderstone to guide the trek.

Not included in the cost:

- International airfares & taxes
- Nepalese & Chinese Visa Fees
- Medical inoculations & personal medical kit
- Any extra hotel nights
- Lunch & dinner during Kathmandu stay
- Single supplement for hotel rooms and lodges
- Personal equipment & clothing
- High risk medical and evacuation insurance including emergency rescue evacuation & helicopter if needed
- Items of any personal nature such as drinks, telephone calls, laundry and camera fees (where required)
- Optional pony cost for the kora around Mt Kailash
- Tips to trekking staff.

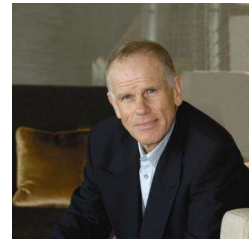
Simon Balderstone and Peter Hillary:

Simon and Peter are directors of the Australian Himalayan Foundation and Simon has been the chair of the board since its inception. They are both passionate about the AHF's work in the Himalayas and they will share this with you during the adventure.



Simon Balderstone: Chair of the AHF. Simon is a journalist, author, Director of a consultancy company and Adviser to the Olympic movement. He was a former Prime Ministerial adviser, SOCOG Board member, General Manager and a member of the First Australian Everest Expedition in 1984.

Peter Hillary: Director of the AHF. As the son of Sir Edmund Hillary and literally raised on a diet of expeditions and adventures, Peter is a life-long adventurer having summited Everest twice, traversed Antarctica to the South Pole and managed the first high-altitude traverse of the entire Himalayan range. Peter is an expedition leader, public speaker, leader of philanthropic missions, author and photographer.



Note:

Itinerary: *The itinerary is a guide to the tour only as it may be varied due to weather and unforeseen contingencies.*

Flights: *When trekking in the Himalayas flights can be unreliable due to unfavourable weather and local issues.*

Insurance: *Travel insurance must cover emergency helicopter evacuation in case of accident. Check with your insurer to make sure you are covered for emergency evacuation, as this is a requirement for you to join this trek.*

AUSTRALIAN HIMALAYAN

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