

# Tibet Tour

including a meditation retreat in Taiwan

# Roof of the world

## 3 April - 20 April 2009



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Tibet is no longer just the land of dreams. It is also a centre of political controversies with international repercussions. Its ancient world culture creates a headache for the authorities, but is still a source of inspiration for many people. This tour through a breathtaking landscape of soaring mountains and deep blue lakes will also bring us into direct contact with the everyday life of Tibetans: sturdy nomads, devoted pilgrims, meditating monks and modern citizens.

# Itinerary

## 4 April

Arrival in Beijing. Our journey by train begins in the evening.

## 5-6 April



We travel on the world's highest railway, at an altitude of up to 5072 m. Our route initially follows the Silk Road westwards, then climbs up to the Tibetan high plateau, passing the huge saltwater lake Kokonor, before entering the vast snowclad Kuntun and Tanggula mountains. Our train cabins will have oxygen generators and windows with UV protection. More than 550 km of the railway is built on permafrost, and we will traverse 681 bridges and 11 tunnels. From spectacular viewpoints we will observe immense mountains, glittering lakes and the sources of some of the world's longest rivers. We can expect occasional sightings of local birds and animals, as well as nomads with their yaks. In the evening, we arrive in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.

## Lhasa

## 7 April



In the middle of the lively market area and pilgrim circuit Barkhor lies the Jokhang temple, which according to Tibetan mythology is the centre of the universe, built in the 7th century by the nomad king Songtsen Gampo. Pilgrims travel on foot for weeks or months to get here, prostrating themselves between every step.



## 8 April

In the morning we visit the Potala Palace, residence of successive Dalai Lamas from the 17th century until the flight to India in 1959. The palace is 400 m long and reaches a height of several hundred metres. It contains more than a thousand rooms, and the outer walls are up to 5 m thick. After lunch, we visit the enormous and politically important monastic complex Ganden outside Lhasa.

## 9 April



We walk from the Pawangka monastery to a meditation cave nearby. Afterwards some of us travel on by coach, while others walk along the mountain ridge overlooking the entire city. We meet again at the Sera monastery, where we may see monks engaged in a form of spiritual training that involves logical debate accompanied by intense gesticulation and clapping.

## Along the Brahmaputra

## 10 April

We travel by boat on the river Brahmaputra and visit Tibet's first monastery, Samye, established in 775. In the Yarlung valley, the first Tibetan royal dynasty ruled from before the common era. We visit Tibet's oldest building, the royal palace Yambulagang, as well as the pre-Buddhist royal tombs of Chongye.

## Shigatse

### 12 April

In the Shalu temple, we will have an opportunity to admire fabulous murals and other artistic treasures. In the old capital Shigatse, we visit the gigantic Tashilhunpo monastery, established by the first Dalai Lama in 1447, and the residence of the Panchen Lama, traditionally the second most powerful religious leader in Tibet. The statue of Maitreya Buddha is 26 m high and made from 279 kg of gold and 150 tons of copper and brass.

### 13 April

On our way back to Lhasa, we will visit the Yungdrungling monastery, which belongs to the Bön religion of pre-Buddhist Tibet. If we have time, we will also visit the Tsurphu monastery, where the young Karmapa Lama resided until his spectacular flight to India in 1999. The following morning, we fly from Lhasa to Taipei.

## Meditation retreat in Taiwan

### 14 - 19 April

Meditation retreat at the Fuhsing Youth Activity Center in Taoyuan county outside Taipei, near what used to be Chiang Kai-shek's holiday resort, with a panoramic view of forests, lakes and mountains. Long meditations above the 3-hour level provide deep relaxation and initiate basic processes of inner change. Guidance groups in English, Mandarin, Spanish and Scandinavian. Evening seminars in English with Mandarin translation, built on questions from the participants. Abundant time for activities and excursions.



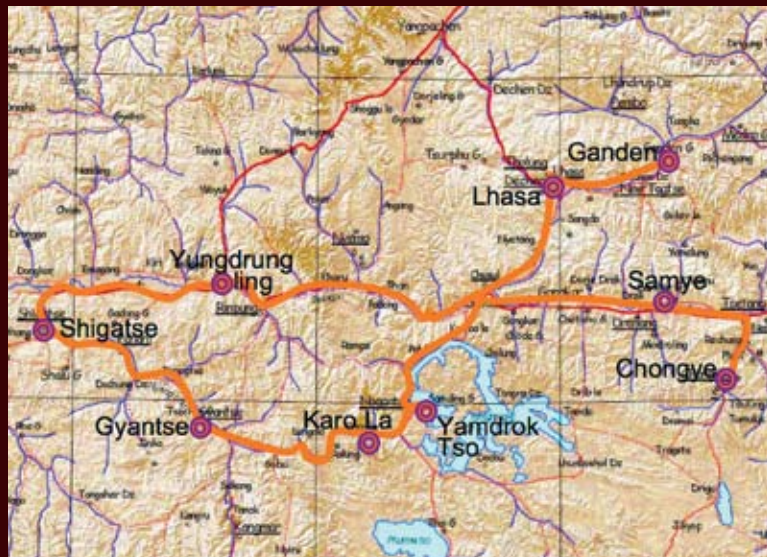
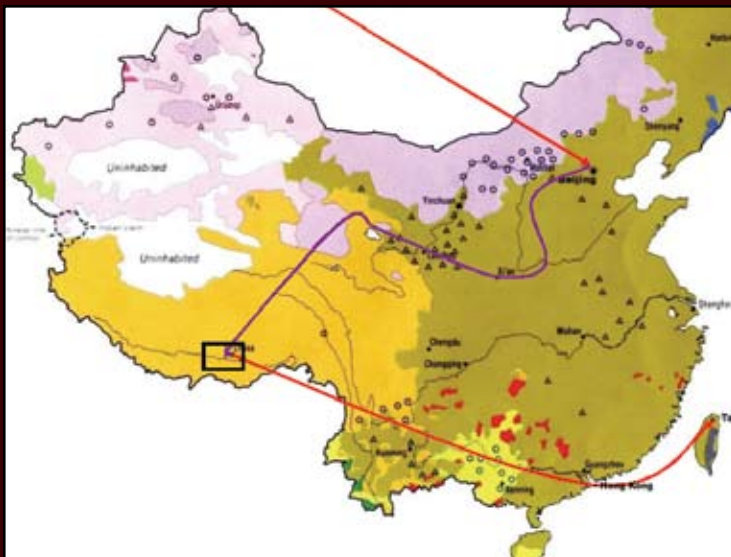
The retreat is arranged by Acem International in collaboration with Acem Taiwan. Seminars by Acem's founder, Are Holen.



### 11 April

After viewing the emerald green lake Yamdrok Tso, we cross the mountain pass Karo La, surrounded by mountains more than 7000 m high, arriving at the town of Gyantse in the afternoon. Here we will participate in local life, climb to the top of the Gyantse Fort, which was occupied by the British Younghusband expedition in 1904, and visit Gyantse Kumbum, a four-storey pagoda formed as a three-dimensional image of the Buddhist cosmos.





As many have pointed out, tourists are good for Tibet. Their presence tends to reduce existing tensions, and they gain an understanding of the country which they then take back to other parts of the world. As far as possible, Acem Travels will seek arrangements that profit local Tibetans economically.

The tour is led by Dr. Halvor Eifring, Professor of Chinese at the University of Oslo and initiator in Acem. He started Acem activities in Taiwan in 1984 and first visited Tibet in 1986. He has arranged three Acem Travels tours of China and Taiwan. Karen Breen is in charge of the tour administration.

Everybody who has learnt Acem Meditation may participate, as may children of meditators from 10 years upwards. Tibet is a fascinating place for all age groups. The retreat venue in Taiwan facilitates many youth activities and provides opportunities for young participants to learn Acem Meditation. Changes in programme and prices may occur due to circumstances beyond our control.

## Registration

Email [info.travels@acem.com](mailto:info.travels@acem.com) now to indicate your interest. You will be contacted as soon as formal registration is possible, after Tibet has been reopened for tourists. In the unlikely event of this not happening by October, the tour will be postponed to 2011. Limited participation.

## Price

EUR 2950 (child/teenager accompanying fully paying adult EUR 2450), of which a deposit of EUR 650 is paid at registration.



The price includes all transportation in China, Tibet and Taiwan, guiding by the tour leader and local Tibetan guides, board (lactovegetarian) and lodging (double room), overnight stay in simple berth on the train from Beijing to Lhasa, entrance fees for all tourist attractions, and course fee for the retreat in Taiwan. The price does not include travel to Beijing or return from Taipei.

For single room add EUR 620 (only Tibet). A limited number of soft sleeper beds on the train from Beijing to Lhasa will be available for an extra fee of EUR 125.

Fee for learning Acem Meditation at the retreat (for children of meditating participants) EUR 50.

## Sightseeing in Beijing

Prior to the Tibet tour, Acem Travels offers extra sightseeing in Beijing starting on 29 March, including the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, the Summer Palace, the Great Wall, etc. Tour leader is Karen Breen, with local English-speaking guide. Price to be announced. Indicate your interest now.

## Acem Travels

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