



Essential Tibet 2020



Essential Tibet

Tibet Sampler

Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 8 Days

Your choice of dates, suggested start day: Saturday

Fly to the holy city of Lhasa high on the Tibetan Plateau. Admire the treasures of Tibetan culture on the “Roof of the World” and respond to the atmosphere of centuries of Buddhist practices. The highlights of this stirring journey are the holy city of Lhasa and the remote monasteries and sacred refuges hidden in the heart of the forbidding Tibetan Plateau.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive Lhasa, Tibet • Tsetang
Day 2	Tsetang • Lhasa
Day 3	Lhasa
Day 4	Lhasa
Day 5	Lhasa • Gyantse via Yamdrok Lake
Day 6	Gyantse • Shigatse
Day 7	Shigatse • Lhasa
Day 8	Depart Lhasa



Tour Highlights

Tsetang	Samye Monastery, Yumbulagang
Lhasa	Barkhor Street and market area, Jokhang Temple, Sera Monastery, Norbulingka (Dalai Lama's summer palace) and "Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace" (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
Gyantse	Gyantse Dzong (fortress and inactive monastery), Pelkhor Chode Monastery, Kumbum Stupa
Shigatse	Tashilhunpo complex, seat of the Panchen Lama, Jamkhang Chenmo – 86-foot-tall statue of Maitreya Buddha

Daily Itinerary

Important note: Please see note following Day Eight for information about the required Tibet Permit, which may necessitate an en route overnight at additional expense.

Day One

Arrive Lhasa, Tibet • Tsetang

Arriving at Lhasa's **Gongkar Airport** (Gongkar is reputed to be the most remote airport from its primary city in the world), transfer to the city of **Tsetang**. The views from the air on this flight into Gongkar are usually spectacular; be sure to take a look at the mountains below. The huge Tibetan Plateau, with an average elevation of two-and-a-half miles, has been home to humans for at least 11,000 years. Its people were originally nomadic herders, following their goats and yaks from the summer pastures in the high, hidden valleys to the wind-combed grasslands of the steppe in winter.

Nomads gradually settled in the "City of the Sun," Lhasa, building the massive Potala Palace on an outcropping above the city. Embracing Buddhism's guiding principle of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, Tibetans tried to protect their lands from contact with the rest of the world, but were ultimately unable to do so.

While some travelers are unaffected by the altitude, even those in the best of shape can feel the effects of the change in elevation. It is strongly recommended to take it easy this first day as the travel and touring schedule is rigorous over the next several days.

Meals: D – Tsetang Hotel or similar



Day Two
Tsetang • Lhasa

Touring begins this morning with a visit to **Samye Monastery**. Built in the 8th century by King Trisong Detsen, Samye was one of the first monasteries in Tibet. Explore the mandala created by the elliptical-walled compound, which contains beautiful temples and *stupas* placed in specific sites surrounding the main temple. The complex is a structural representation of the Buddhist cosmological order. Conceived by the renowned Indian masters, Padmasambhava and Santarakshita, the main temple is the only surviving temple in Tibet whose three floors were constructed in the differing styles of Tibet, India, and China. **Please note:** *Samye Monastery is a remote destination that is not often frequented by travelers. The road conditions between Tsetang and Samye are improving, but may still be challenging. Expect rough roads for a good portion of the drive.*

Built in the 7th century and considered the oldest building in Tibet, **Yumbulagang** served as Tibet's first palace. According to a folktale, the first Tibetan King, Nvatri Tsanpo, descended to the Tsantang Plains by a heavenly ladder, and the people built Yumbulagang as his palace. The fifth Dalai Lama changed its function from the summer palace of Songtsen Gampo to a Buddhist monastery, and most who visit come as pilgrims to the nearby Geer Spring, said to cure many diseases. The original building was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, so it has been faithfully reconstructed to maintain its ancient feel. The ground floor of Yumbulagang honors early Tibetan kings, and the first floor displays the statues of Avalokitesvara and Sakyamuni, backed by beautiful murals telling the early history of Tibet. At the highest point, the watchtower provides a panoramic view of the valley.

The average altitude of the Tibetan Plateau is 15,000 feet, earning it the nickname "**Roof of the World.**" According to legend, the father of all Tibetans was a monkey and the mother was an ogress. Ancient Tibetans believed in the *Bon*, a shamanistic religion, but in the 7th century, the great Tibetan ruler



Songtsen Gampo was persuaded by his Buddhist wives to convert to Buddhism. Under his reign, the first official code of law and the Tibetan alphabet were established. The Dalai Lama, a title that means "Ocean of Wisdom," was the spiritual and political leader of Tibet from the 17th century on. As one western writer explained, "[The Dalai Lamas] are not gods; nor are they 'living Buddhas'... They are the embodiment of the souls of men who were saintly during their first incarnations..."

Prior to 1949, Tibetans enjoyed a relative degree of autonomy under Chinese and then British



(1904-1913) rule. In 1949, the Chinese Communist government sent troops into Tibet to “liberate [their] brothers in Tibet from imperialist oppression.” They saw Buddhist monasteries as an oppressive institution living off the labor of the peasants, and so they set out to eliminate religion from Tibet. In 1959, the Dalai Lama and his family fled to India. Subsequently, more than 80,000 Tibetans have joined the refugee communities he established in Nepal, Bhutan, and India.

Arrive in **Lhasa** this evening and check into the hotel.

Meals: B, L – *Thangka Hotel or similar*

Day Three

Lhasa

Touring today begins with one of Lhasa’s most iconic sites, **Potala Palace**, the “Sacred Place” of Buddhism. The palace rises in red, white, and gold splendor high above Lhasa, dominating the landscape and watching over every aspect of local life. Although built in the 8th century, the majority of the present structure dates from the 17th century during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama.

A massive structure made of stone, wood, and earth, this **UNESCO World Heritage Site** rises 13 stories toward the sky and runs nearly 1,150 feet across the hillside from east to west. A maze of over 1,000 rooms and thousands of altars and statues, Potala Palace consists of two main buildings. The eastern section served as the Dalai Lama’s residence and administrative center, and the Red Palace, the main sacred section, includes numerous chapels, shrines, *stupas*, tombs, and libraries.

Continue with a stroll through the gardens of 18th century **Norbulingka**, or “Jeweled Garden,” known today as the People’s Park. This was the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas, and was used by the young lamas until they were 18, when they moved to the Potala Palace. Begun in

1740, the parks around the palace are beautiful and extensive. Norbulingka was added to the **UNESCO World Heritage List** as an extension of the Potala Palace.



Today’s touring ends with a visit to Jokhang Temple. The **Jokhang Temple** has been the most sacred site in Tibet since the 7th century. It shelters the Jowo Sakyamuni, a 6th century statue of the Buddha at the age of 12 brought from China by the new wife of King Songtsen Gampo. Buddhist pilgrims come from everywhere to circumambulate the temple, some prostrating themselves at every step. Yak butter candles sputter in the entranceway, and murals and gilded carvings adorn the shrines. Encircling the Jokhang Temple is **Barkhor**, the old market of Lhasa. A visit affords a wonderful opportunity to interact with Tibetan people and bargain for turquoise jewelry, carpets, yak wool boots, and Tibetan fur hats trimmed with brocade.

Meals: B, L, D – *Thangka Hotel or similar*



Day Four

Lhasa

Take a drive outside the city to 7th century **Pabonka Monastery**, built by King Songtsen Gampo, probably before the Jokhang Temple. It is said that all seven of Tibet's first monks meditated here at one time or another. Pabonka was constructed atop a flat-topped granite outcropping to the west of Sera Monastery. Just a short drive down the hill from Pabonka is the small **Chupsang Nunnery**, where some 80 nuns chant and meditate in an out-of-the-way valley.

Continue to **Sera Monastery**, a center of Tibetan learning dating from the 15th century. Sera is an active monastery and home to about 400 monks. The statuary here shows the strong link between Tibetan and western Buddhism, with figures showing distinct Indian and Nepalese characteristics.

Return to Lhasa for dinner and overnight.

Meals: B, L – *Thangka Hotel or similar*

Day Five

Lhasa • Gyantse via Yamdrok Lake

Leave today for the **Tibetan countryside**. The route follows the Lhasa River to the **highest major river in the world**, the Tsangpo. Cross the Khampa La Pass at 15,700 feet and continue down to Yamdrok Lake. About halfway between Lhasa and Gyantse, beautiful blue-green **Yamdrok Lake** is said to be a goddess incarnate. One of three sacred lakes in Tibet, Yamdrok is shaped like a fan coral, with many bays and inlets on its mountainous shores. It lies at 14,500 feet, and may be visited by pilgrims at any time of year.



After crossing 16,500-foot Karo La Pass, the road descends into the Nyang River Valley and into Gyantse. Almost two-and-a-half miles high, the Tibetan town of Gyantse is set in a crescent of hills rising from the river valley. These hills are spiked with the jagged teeth of the 14th-century wall that surrounds the city's Pelkhor Monastery. The old parts of the town near the wall have retained much of their original appearance.

Drive up to the **Gyantse Dzong**, or fortress, which dominates the city's

skyline, seemingly perched precariously on top of Gyantse's central hill. Built in the 14th and 15th centuries, it once served as the city's administrative and government center; its stone walls were the site of a famous siege by British troops in 1904. Commanded by Francis Younghusband, British forces eventually overran the Tibetan forces, who fought bravely but were woefully outgunned. In the shadow of the fortress, the old town's cobblestone streets and winding alleys remain intact.

Meals: B, L (picnic), D— *Gyantse Yeti Hotel or similar*



Day Six

Gyantse • Shigatse

Take time this morning for more discoveries in **Gyantse** before setting out to Shigatse. Explore the **Pelkhor Chode Monastery**, just a short distance outside of town. Founded in the early 15th century, the complex originally housed 15 monasteries and accommodated three different Buddhist sects harmoniously within its compound. Today, monks from the Gelugpa, or “Yellow Hat,” sect alone maintain its many statues and paintings, most of which date back to the time of its founding. The remarkable **Kumbum Stupa** is the highlight of the Pelkor Chode Monastery compound.

A *kumbum* is a type of *stupa*, or shrine, built to house many small chapels on its ascending tiers. The term also means “having 100,000 images.” The Gyantse Kumbum has seven tiers with 70 chapels and thousands of frescoes, statues, and paintings of aspects of the Buddha and his followers. Climb to the glittering gold dome that caps the *stupa* for an incredible view of medieval Gyantse and the surrounding countryside.



The drive to Shigatse takes another couple of hours this afternoon. The second largest city in Tibet and capital of Shigatse prefecture, **Shigatse** is also the second most important trade center in Tibet, well-situated on the ancient caravan route from Lhasa to west Tibet. Because of its relative proximity to India, Shigatse was one of the first Tibetan towns visited by Westerners.

Shigatse has been the traditional home of the Panchen Lama since the 16th century. Today, there are two proclaimed Panchen Lamas – one designated by the Chinese and one by the Dalai Lama. The boy designated by the Dalai Lama has since disappeared.

Touring includes **Tashilhunpo Monastery**. The first Dalai Lama founded Tashilhunpo in 1477, and it has since served as the seat of the Panchen Lama. Once inhabited by several thousands of monks, today Tashilhunpo houses roughly 800. The monastery contains the tombs of the Panchen Lamas, most notably the 10th Panchen Lama, whose 1989 burial used 547 kg of gold. Tashilhunpo’s best-known monument is its **86-foot statue of the seated Maitreya Buddha**. Steps and cobbled alleys connect the halls, chapels, and other structures here, and the imposing exterior of white, red, and black topped with a golden roof makes the monastery a visual marvel even from afar.

Meals: B, L, D – *Shigatse Van Ray International Hotel or similar*

Day Seven

Shigatse • Lhasa

Drive back to Lhasa today, with **photo stops** en route. Enjoy a free afternoon in Lhasa and a farewell dinner in the capital.

Meals: B, L, D – *Thangka Hotel or similar*



Day Eight Depart Lhasa

After breakfast at the hotel, the tour concludes with transfers to the airport.
Meals: B



Please note: A Tibet Travel Permit is required before boarding any flight to Tibet. The Permit cannot be delivered to the U.S. prior to your tour, which means that you may have to add an en-route night in a gateway city such as Beijing, at additional expense, in order to ensure delivery of the Permit. Please contact us for information or questions

Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Saturday of your choice in 2020. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. one or two days prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Private Journey Prices

Departure dates in April, May, June & October 10-31:

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,695 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$545

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, \$6,095



Departure dates in July, August, September and October 1-9:
2 traveler minimum, from \$3,795 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$585
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, \$6,295

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Hotels upgraded in Lhasa and Shigatse to the Lhasa St. Regis and the Qiaomulangzong Hotel respectively (or similar). No upgrades available in Tsetang and Gyantse.

Departure dates in April, May, June & October 10-31:
2 traveler minimum, from \$4,095 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$945
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, \$6,795

Departure dates in July, August, September and October 1-9:
2 traveler minimum, from \$4,395 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$1,150
Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, \$7,395

Flexible Essential trip prices vary by season and start day, and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Additional nights and solo traveler prices are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.

Your Private Journey Includes

- Accommodations per the itinerary. **Please see above for Hotel Upgrade Prices.** All room types, even in upgraded properties, are standard entry-level doubles or twins. Please call for room category upgrade pricing and information.
- 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 5 dinners, per the itinerary. Some meals are left independent to give travelers a chance to explore on their own.
- Arrival/departure airport transfers. MIR will arrange for all travelers to be met on arrival and seen off on departure whether we make your flight arrangements or not, provided you arrive and depart on the tour start/end dates in the tour start/end city.
- Ground transportation throughout itinerary by private vehicle.
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary.
- Special events, excursions, and cultural performances per the itinerary.
- Services of experienced, English-speaking local guides, drivers, and other staff.
- Bottled water at group meals.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
- Customized visa application and instruction kit (please note, visa fees are not included in the tour price).
- Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates, and more.

Not Included

- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.



- Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
- Gratuities to local guides, drivers, porters and other service personnel.
- Baggage handling
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Flexible Essential Private Trips are compact, well-designed private tour itineraries – researched and ready to book on the dates you choose. They work perfectly as brief overviews of a country or as effortless extensions to group tours – great for solo travelers, couples, or private parties who prefer to travel independently but appreciate a savvy, pre-designed program.



Start Planning Next Year Now

2021 Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 8 Days

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Please call if you're ready to book now.

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Saturday of your choice in 2021. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Private Journey Prices – 2021

Departure dates in April, May, June & October 10-31:

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,795 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$595

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, \$6,195

Departure dates in July, August, September and October 1-9:

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,895 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$645

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, \$6,395

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Hotels upgraded in Lhasa and Shigatse to the Lhasa St. Regis and the Qiaomulangzong Hotel respectively (or similar). No upgrades available in Tsetang and Gyantse.

Departure dates in April, May, June & October 10-31:

2 traveler minimum, from \$4,195 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$995

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, \$6,895

Departure dates in July, August, September and October 1-9:

2 traveler minimum, from \$4,495 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$1,195

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, \$7,495

Flexible Essential trip prices vary by season and start day, and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Additional nights and solo traveler prices are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

While the accommodations are generally comfortable, superior tourist-class hotels, please keep in mind that remote parts of Tibet such as Gyantse and Shigatse (and to a lesser extent Lhasa itself) may not be up to the standards North American travelers expect. In general, services in this region are improving; nevertheless, you may encounter problems with plumbing, bureaucratic service, road conditions, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces and steps, availability and style of public restrooms, and the variety of locally



available foods. You will travel in some areas which, relatively speaking, have seen few travelers, and the infrastructure is not yet fully developed.

While this program is designed to be comfortable for travel in this region, it is rated as **rigorous touring** due to the daily walking involved, the length of some overland rides, and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases with tall, uneven steps. In particular, staircases at Potala Palace in Lhasa are notorious for their length, steepness, and unevenness of the steps. Other monastery/temple visits will also require negotiating steep and narrow stairways for travelers who want to visit the upper stories.

The average elevation in Tibet is over 10,000 feet, with higher elevations on some of the drives. High altitudes can cause difficulty even in healthy travelers, including headaches, shortness of breath, and other serious complications.

Please note: Due to the high elevations in Tibet, those with a history of medical problems, particularly cardiac or respiratory, must consult a doctor before considering this trip.

Every effort has been made to make the information in this schedule accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We will do our best to inform you in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in this part of the world, this may not always be possible. Only those willing to accept these conditions should consider joining this program.

Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to China here:
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/china-travel-advisory.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information:
<https://step.state.gov/step/>

Weather

Tibet's climate is arid year round, with the exception of the rainy summer months. Because of the elevation, winter weather can be bitterly cold and windy, but rarely snowy. In the summer months of June-August, the temperature gets warm, but not too hot, with the average temperature in the 60s-70s during the day, and down to the 40s at night. Winter (December-February) temperatures stay around freezing. Spring and fall are still cool, with daytime temperatures ranging from 40-65 degrees Fahrenheit, and still quite cold – from the 20s-30s – at night. *Please note: July and August tend to be rainy in Lhasa, and rainstorms can be intense, though often quite short in duration.*

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. This information comes from weatherbase.com and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region of Tibet you will be visiting.



International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carrier for this tour is Air China, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from several cities across the U.S. to Tibet via Beijing. **Please note:** Air itineraries may require an overnight stop in Beijing on the outbound and/or on the return, which MIR is happy to book for you **at additional expense**.

Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

Visas

At the time of writing, U.S. passport holders require one visa for this tour: Chinese. You may also need a visa for any additional country you fly via to join the tour.

An estimate of current visa costs for U.S. passport holders, based on standard processing time, is \$279. Your exact visa fees may differ as visa costs can depend on a number of factors, such as state of residence, processing time, and return shipping. Visa fees are always subject to change.

Standard processing in the Chinese visa section is expected to take five to ten business days. Travelers should prepare to be without their passports for that amount of time. If you plan to travel extensively in the time leading up to your MIR tour, you may need to obtain a second valid passport or use expedited processing, depending on your plans. Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding the timeline for visa processing.

Extensive pre-tour paperwork is necessary to apply for this visa. A valid passport with six months validity from the end of the tour is also required.

In the past some travelers have made their own visa arrangements instead of using MIR's preferred provider for their visa processing; either using their own visas service or attempting to process directly with the embassies/consulates. We strongly recommend you discuss it with us before choosing an alternate visa processing method, to help avoid difficulties and visa problems. **In the event that you plan to process visas without going through MIR's preferred provider, please contact us first so we can pass you detailed instructions with critical trip-specific information.**

Pre- and Post- Tours

MIR can arrange for a pre- or post-tour extension in Beijing or elsewhere in China, or a post-tour stay in Siberia or Eastern Russia. MIR can book hotels, make train reservations, etc. Call us for more information.



Also Nearby...

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Essential Siberia, 7 days. Near the shores of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, survey the Mongolian, Cossack, Buryat and Buddhist heritage of southern Siberia, and admire its overwhelming natural beauty.

Small Group Tours

China's Silk Road & Tibet: Route of Monks & Merchants, 18 days. Trace the path of ancient traders and adventurers on this overland journey across Western China and into Tibet. Experience Kashgar's Sunday Animal Market, where merchants sell everything from ducks to sheep. Visit Turpan's lush Grape Valley, and Dunhuang's UNESCO-listed Mogao Caves. Ride the high-altitude train from Xining to the Tibetan Plateau, exploring the sacred cities of Gyantse, Shigatse, and Lhasa, "City of the Sun."

Mongolia to Moscow: A Trans-Siberian Railway Adventure, 17 days. Travel on regularly scheduled Trans-Siberian trains over a dramatic and variegated route that offers limitless opportunities to meet the diverse local people – Mongol, Buryat and Russian. Experience the rolling green hills and nomadic traditions of Mongolia, Siberia's UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal and endless *taiga* forest on your way to the booming capital, Moscow. The July departure of this program features Naadam Festival in Ulaanbaatar.

Siberia & Mongolia: Spirits and Nomads, 16 days. Beautiful and exotic, Siberia and Mongolia are worlds away from the traditional beaten path. Explore the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar, then fly to the red sands of the Gobi Desert. Celebrate a local Naadam Festival, far from the glitz and ruckus of the capital. In Siberia, take to the waters of great Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest lake on earth, and ride a section of the fabled Trans-Siberian Railway.

Mongolian Explorer: The Gobi & Beyond with Naadam Festival, 14 days. Mongolia: The name conjures up images of vast grasslands, wind-swept steppe and endless sky. Here, an empire built on horseback galloped across two continents, leaving behind the names Genghis and Kublai Khan. Follow their lead, using the horsepower of modern vehicles to cover the incredible distances at the heart of Mongolia. End in the capital, where the skills of that nomadic army are preserved at the extraordinary Naadam Festival.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary):

Flexible Essential Tours



Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750;

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.

References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.





Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books such as *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.


More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

MIR Corporation
85 South Washington Street, Suite 210
Seattle, WA 98104
800-424-7289, 206-624-7289
Fax: 206-624-7360
info@mircorp.com
www.mircorp.com

Sellers of Travel: Washington#601-099-932, California# 2082306-40

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