

Mt. Everest *The Kangshung Face*



30 Days
Including 13 days of Rigorous Trekking

May 7 to June 5, 2005
September 24 to October 23, 2005

Geographic
EXPEDITIONS

Why GeoEx?

- ◆ We send more travelers to Tibet than any other American company. As InnerAsia Expeditions, we negotiated the first visas to the Tibetan backcountry. Our experience, from Lhasa to the remotest areas, is matchless.



- ◆ We are in partner- and friendship with the Tibetan man who pioneered adventure travel there, and use only Tibetan guides and drivers.
- ◆ This is perhaps our signature trip. We originated it, we have carefully honed it over the years, we are fervent about it.
- ◆ Our Director for Tibet, Sanjay Saxena, and his staff--the whole company, for that matter--are deeply committed to Tibetan tourism. We know the country better than anyone, and are eager to back up this claim!

There isn't much literature on the eastern approaches to Mount Everest because so few people have been there. Everest's East, or Kangshung, Face was first seen by outsiders during the Mount Everest Reconnaissance of 1921. Though it was immediately apparent to the tweed-coated British that the immense ice face was beyond their climbing ability, they fell in love with the three magnificent valleys - the Kama, Kangshung, and Kharta - which radiate from the mountain.

Six English expeditions between 1921 and 1938 attempted Everest from the grand, yet barren Rongbuk Valley on the mountain's north side. When they tired of the Rongbuk's dry rocks, they would slip over a high pass discovered by George Mallory and bask in the warmth and greenery of the eastern valleys.

As the English had a monopoly on Everest, they were the only ones to visit its eastern reaches (though as we'll see in a moment, they weren't shy about singing its praises). After the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1951, westerners were barred from the Tibetan side of the mountain (the east and northern faces), and attention focused on the southern approach, through newly opened Nepal (which the British found to be the key to the summit in 1953). In 1981, the first expedition in 43 years attempted the Kangshung Face, and two years later an expedition led by Geographic Expeditions' Medical Advisor, Dr. Jim Morrissey, made the first ascent.

Now, about those praises. Recent visitors have continued the custom, notably Ned Gillette and Jan Reynolds, who wrote in Everest Grand Circle that "The Kangshung was a valley like no other. It opened to spectacular vistas normally reserved for those on mountain tops.... It was vast untraveled country, wild and untamed, with no trace of other Western visitors. It was a place that few knew - certainly one of the most magnificent, unspoiled valleys in the entire Himalaya." But the most extensive description of the area was written by a man who had roamed the Himalaya and Karakoram as a pioneer, the inimitable Sir Francis Younghusband.

In 1926, in The Epic of Mount Everest Younghusband wrote:

[/i>The Kama Valley...must be the most beautiful valley in the whole Himalaya [today we call the upper reaches of the Kama the Kangshung Valley].... The beauty in the Kama Valley lay in this, that it came straight down from Mount Everest, which filled in all the

upper part; that it ran directly under the mighty cliffs of Makalu, a mountain not 2000 feet lower and even more beautiful than Everest; and that its fall was so rapid that while these two great peaks were in full view it had yet descended to altitudes where luxuriant vegetation was possible.... Right opposite the climbers as they [ascended toward the East Face] were the dazzling cliffs of Makalu and Chomolonzo dropping almost sheer 10,000 feet into the valley below and now powdered white with fresh fallen snow - a spectacle of perhaps unequalled mountain glory.

To have discovered a valley of such varied mountain, tree, and flower-beauty would alone have been a distinction to any expedition. For many a year it will be only but a few who will ever visit that secluded spot.

But it will be satisfaction to man to know that hidden there at the back of the Himalaya is a treasure for him to enjoy in times to come; and that it is one of those treasures which can never be exhausted, but which have the surprising quality that the more they are drawn upon the more there is to draw."

Later Younghusband discusses a possible rival to the Kama-Kangshung, the Karakoram's Shaksgam Valley north of K2 (contemporary mountain wanderers say much the same thing about the Baltoro Glacier to the south of K2):

"There is indeed another valley that may rival even this in mountain splendour. For it descends to 12,000 feet just under K2, the second highest mountain, and under its companion peaks of 27,000 and 26,000 feet in height. But this Shaksgam Valley...is much further north and much further removed from monsoon influence. The air is crisp and dry and cold, not soft and moist. There are no green pastures, no herds of cattle, no gentians and primulas, no combination of the lovely with the sublime."

The Kangshung area is so beautiful for three reasons. First, it's set amidst close and gorgeous mountains - three of the earth's five highest peaks: Everest, Lhotse, and Makalu, and their satellites: Chomolonzo, Pethangtse, and an icy brood of others, rise unremittingly and sharply above a relatively low base elevation. Second, this area is geographically more a part of Nepal than Tibet, meaning that it's far lusher than the Tibetan Plateau. We enter the region from the Himalayan

rain shadow, a high barren plateau deprived of moisture by the high mountains. A couple of days into the trek, we cross a 16,000-foot pass, drop down, and suddenly we're in lush forest; above us a civilization of ice and cold rock. Third, it is rarely visited.

But the hike to the East Face of Everest - which some of us unabashedly call “The World's Most Beautiful Trek” - is only the centerpiece of a wonderful month-long journey into the heart of Tibet and Nepal.

Days 1 & 2

USA TO BEIJING Trip members will fly from their respective hometowns to Chicago or San Francisco and connect to Beijing. Departing USA on day 1, you arrive Beijing late on day 2. Those arriving Beijing on the group flight will be met upon arrival and transferred to our hotel. Those arriving on different days and times (and have not made private arrangements with GeoEx) will need to make their own way to the hotel. We recommend arriving a day or two earlier in order to get over jetlag, as well as, giving you the opportunity of exploring this historic City.

The Palace Hotel

Day 3

BEIJING TO LHASA After an early breakfast we will transfer to the airport in time to board our flight to Gongkar Airport in Tibet via Chengdu. The sector from Chengdu to Lhasa is considered one of the world's most astonishing flights. In his magnificent book Mountains of the Middle Kingdom the late climber and photographer Galen Rowell describes flying over:

“hundreds of snow peaks in all directions, a vision off the scale of my experience...I saw distant peaks that looked Everest-sized. They rose on the horizon behind an ocean of lesser whitecaps...more miles of more jagged peaks, with a greater feeling of height, than anything I knew existed on the planet.”

Just out of low-lying Chengdu, we will pass Minya Konka (called Gongga Shan by the Chinese). At 24,783 feet, it is the highest mountain in China proper. Then we cross the mountainous ocean of the Hengduan Range and over the gloomy valleys of three of Asia's greatest rivers, the Salween, the Mekong, and the Yangtze (these mountains are so young that the rivers carved through them as they were rising). To the left, as you begin to fly over the Tibetan Plateau, is Namcha Barwa (25,439 feet), earth's highest unclimbed mountain, and the eastern rampart of the Himalaya (the western end of the chain is thirteen hundred miles away at Nanga Parbat, 26,650 feet).

We swoop down to the plateau and land at Gongkar Airport, a couple of hours outside Lhasa. We're met at Gongkar by Geographic Expeditions' representative and hop into

Landcruisers or a minibus for the approach to the Holy City. Along the way we'll stop for pictures and scan the huge countryside for the first sight of the Potala Palace.

In 1904 L. Austen Waddell described in Lhasa and its Mysteries “hurrying on to catch a glimpse of the sacred city,” and seeing:

“The vast panorama [of Lhasa] in its beautiful mountain setting burst upon our view, and we gazed with awe upon the temples and palaces of the long-sealed Forbidden City, the shrines of the mystery which had so long haunted our dreams, and which lay revealed before our eyes at last...here was...the long-sought, mysterious Hermit City, the Rome of Central Asia, with the residence of its famous god-king, and it did not disappoint us.” [Devout and purple words from a man with 622 British soldiers at his back, come to help Francis Younghusband bully the Dalai Lama, but that's another story.]”

In Lhasa we stay at the Lhasa Hotel. All hotels in Tibet are First Class at best, so do not expect luxurious settings. Nonetheless it is a good hotel and a very comfortable one at that. Enjoy a quiet afternoon and evening acclimating to Lhasa's nearly 12,000-foot elevation.

Lhasa Hotel (B, L, D)

Days 4 - 6

EXPLORING LHASA (11,972 feet) We have three full days to leisurely explore this fabled city with our Tibetan guides. Lhasa means “country of the gods,” and for followers of Mahayana, or Great Vehicle Buddhism, it was literally so. The Dalai Lama, old Tibet's secular and religious head, is the physical incarnation of the country's patron, Chenrezig (or Avalokitesvara), the very principle of compassion on earth. Mahayana is an extremely complex and profound philosophy, and one of the subtexts of this story-filled journey will be getting acquainted with its deities, saints, and Buddhas as we roam Tibet's temples and monasteries.

Tibet's spiritual and governmental nexus was the Potala Palace. In 1845 the Abbe Huc, one of the first westerners to visit Tibet, wrote in Travels in Tartary, Tibet, and China that “The palace of the Tale [Dalai] Lama merits, in every respect, the celebrity which it enjoys throughout the world.” Giuseppe Tucci, a fervent student of Tibet, visited Lhasa in the late 1940s. In To Lhasa and Beyond he wrote:

“Towards noon we reached the Potala. Rather than a palace, this is a hill in itself, an outgrowth of the rock underlying it, as irregular

and whimsical as nature's work, yet built with such inner consistency that each corner and each line falls in with a necessary plan, as it were, and gives you the impression of order where waywardness prevails. It has grown with the stone like a diamond sticking to its matrix.”

As we walk out of our hotel, and as we wander Lhasa's streets, we'll constantly look up for different views of the “gravely majestic” palace (now often obscured or reflected in the mirrored glass of other high-rise buildings.)

In Secret Tibet, one of the finest books ever written on the country, Fosco Maraini wrote:

“Architecture is perhaps the form of art in which the spirit of this country has found its most original outlet. It is certainly the aspect of Tibetan culture which is most in harmony with its vast surfaces, its elementary, Babylonian lines, its grandiose and solemn proportions, its buttresses, and the tendency to build walls sloping inwards, suggesting a man standing with his legs apart, firmly planted on rock or on the ground. It is a courageous and noble architecture, simultaneously suggesting both a fortress and a monastery. It is not just an expression of brute strength; there is mind behind it, a desire for religious isolation, a sublime sense of beauty, with no trace whatsoever of frivolity or the baroque. It has the same beauty as the horizons and colors of these high plateaux. The Potala at Lhasa, the Buddhist Vatican, [combines] in the happiest and most consummate manner all the best characteristics of the Tibetan architectural style.”

We will visit the Potala and explore the grandest of its myriad rooms, its audience halls and the immense, jeweled burial chortens of past Dalai Lamas, its chamber after chapel after shrine of statuary, frescoes, and paintings (called thangkas). Atop the Palace, overlooking *God's Country*, we'll visit the apartments of the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas.

In The Last Dalai Lama Michael Harris Goodman describes the otherworldly life of the young Dalai Lama and his brother in the early 1940s:

“Their favorite pastime was exploring the innermost recesses of their home, one of the largest buildings on earth. With their attendants in tow they wandered through endless mazes of winding, gloomy corridors that connected the Potala's more than one thousand rooms, assailed by an atmosphere redolent with the scent

of incense, the stench of rancid butter, and the acrid fumes of yak-dung fires.”

The great key that opened the doors of mystery for the Tibetans is Buddhism, which arrived in the country in the mid-600's. The very symbol of the coming of the Buddha Dharma to Tibet is a statue brought to Tibet by the Chinese wife of Songsten Gampo, the country's first Buddhist king. The statue, called Jo Rimpoche (Precious Lord), represents Sakyamuni, the historic Buddha (who was born in what is now Nepal in circa 563 B.C.)

The Jo Rimpoche is housed in Tibet's holiest temple, the Jokhang. “An endless, three-stories high flight of chapels surrounds [the statue],” Tucci wrote, “decorated with the smiling and sneering Buddhist pantheon. Blissful and terrific gods fill the shade of the cells and peer unexpectedly out of their mystery.”

No place in Tibet attracts so many pilgrims, so much spiritual longing. When we visit the Jokhang we may want to join the line of smiling and helpful devotees as it winds through side chapels to the Precious Lord. In Altar of the Earth Peter Gold gives a picture of this wonderful scene (and of the deep attraction Buddhism has for some westerners):

“Lhasa urbanites, nomads, village farmers, monks and nuns all press together now gracefully and calmly. They create an overwhelming sensory brew of mumbling and cantillating sounds; fermented body and yak butter aromas; and woolen and silk, turquoise and coral bedecked forms in quest of an enlightened mind...the air feels electric on entering the shrine of the Jo Rimpoche. The pilgrim's demeanors are reverently intense as they leave money and, temporarily, their butter lamps upon the altar before the sacred statue. The Jo glows with that light which can only come from flame being reflected off gold and jewels. All shuffle clockwise around it.... Here, perhaps more than anywhere I have been.....does the totally consuming nature of the religion shine forth. Here is evidence of an entire nation working toward enlightenment so as to help all other beings gain the necessary awareness to join them there.”

The Jokhang is circled by the Barkhor, Lhasa's old market. Much has changed in Tibet since the Abbe Huc's visit, but the Barkhor still has the air of a medieval bazaar.

Huc wrote that:

“All is excitement, and noise, and pushing, and competition, every single soul in the place being ardently occupied in the grand business of commerce. Commerce and devotion incessantly attracting to Lhasa an infinite number of strangers, render the place a rendezvous of all the Asiatic peoples; so that the streets, always crowded with pilgrims and traders, present a marvelous variety of physiognomies, costumes, and languages.”

In today's Barkhor we may bargain good-naturedly for dorjes, phurbas, thangkas, and other religious tools, for Tibetan hats and boots, books, turquoise jewelry, everyday exotica, wall hangings, and maybe even some Yak butter. We'll get to know the proud, red-tasseled Khampas from eastern Tibet, the monks, mendicants, and pilgrims who circumambulate the Jokhang, and enjoy bantering with the astute and engaging merchants of this bit of old Tibet.

A number of excursions are possible to monasteries outside of Lhasa. We have the flexibility of exploring all of them or just a few.

Visit Tibet's two greatest monasteries, Drepung (due west of Lhasa) and Sera (just North). Drepung once housed 10,000 monks, and Sera almost as many. If we are lucky, we'll quietly ease into a dark columned hall to see and hear the lilting, booming chanting of the sutras, or perhaps sit under a willow tree and watch as the monks engage in theatrical debate.

Just below Drepung Monastery is the Nechung Monastery. Nechung Dorje Drayang Ling Monastery has an important place in Tibetan history it is the seat of the State Oracle of Tibet. The oracle is the medium through whom Dorje Drakden (Nechung), the principal protector of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government, communicates with His Holiness and the Kashag (cabinet). Major decisions of the state are also made in consultation with the Nechung Oracle. The Oracle (known as Kuten La) currently resides in Dharamsala, India.

Time permitting also visit the Norbulinka, where the Dalai Lamas lived in the summer, enjoying informality impossible in the Potala

Lhasa Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 7

LHASA TO GYANTSE (12,956') As we head southwest on the well-maintained dirt road to Gyantse, we may think of Tucci's melancholy goodbye: "Departing from [Lhasa] is like seeing a dreamt-of image vanish, without knowing if it will ever appear again."

Our route follows the Kyi Chu (sometimes called the Lhasa River) to the Tsangpo, the highest river in the world. We cross the Tsangpo and begin a hairpin ascent to the 15,700 foot Khampa La ("la" means pass in Tibetan). Then a thousand feet down to Yamdrok Lake. Waddell wrote that "The light silvery streak of the great Yamdrok Lake gleamed amongst dark-blue hills, whilst the tall poles of the prayer-flags, projecting over the roofs of the village [Nakartse], looked like the masts of fishing boats at anchor on the lake - the famous "ring lake" of the older maps of Central Asia, a vast inland sea without an outlet."

We usually have a picnic lunch by the lake. Though the motor road dates from the Chinese annexation, the route is an old and much-used one. In 1936 Spencer Chapman wrote in Lhasa: the Holy City, "All day we rode along the lake. I kept a rough check of the pack animals going south: about 1250 passed us today, of which nearly half were yaks."

We head westward along the lake, through grand, treeless landscapes, toward a lovely 23,000-foot snowy peak with the delightful name Nindingdzonka. Waddell described the countryside:

"[We followed a track which was] easy and gradual along the bank of the river, which gathered up fresh feeders from every side valley where glacier-clad peaks shot into view. Some of the ice-cornices were exquisitely beautiful in form and in their delicate shades of cobalt and pale green, and several old ruined keeps, perched boldly against the sky, like the familiar ancient castles of the Rhine, added a romantic suggestiveness of the blood-feuds of warlike chiefs and freebooting lords, to the picturesqueness of this wild valley."

After crossing the Karo La (16,432 feet) we descend to the green farmland of the Nyang Chu Valley and Gyantse, just under 13,000 feet. Gyantse was historically Tibet's third largest city (after Lhasa and Shigatse). Despite a Chinese presence in the city, it has a fine, old-fashioned feel to it, though the hotel is new.

In the afternoon, or perhaps tomorrow morning, we'll visit the Palkhor Chiode, a walled monastery complex in which, unusually, each of the four major sects of Tibetan

Buddhism - the Gelug, Nyingma, Sakya, and Kagyu - had temples and small monasteries. The Palkhor Chode suffered horribly during the Cultural Revolution, but its centerpiece, the Kum Bum, was inexplicably spared. Maraini's tribute holds true today:

"The Kum Bum is one of the most famous temples and one of the most interesting monuments in Tibet. If the Potala is the Vatican of Upper Asian Buddhism, the Kum Bum is its Assisi; it is a sanctuary not only for the faithful, for those for whom the myth is alive, but for the whole of humanity, for the men of all times and all countries who believe in beauty and bow before the mystery of inspiration.

The Kum Bum is very striking, even from a distance. The whole of the upper part is gilded and glitters in the sun, and the rest of the building is white or painted in vivid colors. When you go nearer you see that two big, enigmatic eyes are painted on the dome; these give it personality and presence. The Kum Bum is essentially a chorten, a pagoda. As a piece of architecture it certainly lacks the slender, lyrical quality of Japanese pagodas, which are delicate timber tracteries, rhythmical poems of roofs and spirals. The Kum Bum is Tibetan; that is to say, it is static and massive, like a mountain or the pyramids. It could be Egyptian or Aztec; solid rock, carved and painted by the hand of man. Like the Potala, it marvelously expresses the final, immutable, hierarchical feeling of Tibetan civilization."

Gyantse Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 8

GYANTSE TO SHIGATSE (12,792') We follow the Nyang Chu northwest for a few hours, past spangled plow-yaks and waving kids, to Shigatse. Like many places in Tibet, Shigatse's name has two spellings. The early westerners who visited Tibet, most of them English, listened to the local pronunciations and rendered them Shigatse, Shekar, Namcha Barwa, etc. The Chinese likewise heard, and transliterated into their language, and then, following the Pinyin system of romanization, came out with spellings like Xigaze, Xegar, and Namjagbarwa. Confusion can arise from these differing spellings, and neither is vastly more correct than the other, since both are approximations. We have taken to using the old spellings, but address this issue on an ad hoc basis, that is, we use what we think people will best understand.

As we approach Shigatse we may see, like Sven Hedin more than 80 years ago, "Its golden roofs shining fierily in the rays of the evening sun." Hedin was probably Central

Asia's greatest knockabout. He never made it to Lhasa, though, despite years of trying. After the Viceroy of India, the inimitable Lord Curzon, dispatched Younghusband, Waddell, and all those soldiers to bully the Dalai Lama in 1904, he sent a note to his friend Hedin. "I am almost ashamed," Curzon wrote in his heartbreakingly imperial way, "to have taken the virginity of the bride you so ardently desired."

Shigatse's immense Tashilumpo monastery is the seat of Tibet's second highest incarnation, the Panchen Lama. We'll check into Shigatse's large, modern, and slowly moldering hotel before visiting the walled monastery complex, a rambling warren of chapels, shrines, and halls linked by mysterious alleyways and steep staircases. At the center of the monastery is a courtyard which was used as a theater for religious dances. In Trans-Himalaya Hedin describes sitting:

"...on the second tier of an open-aired theater...like a rectangular market-place surrounded by open platforms or terraces supported by colonnades of wooden pillars.... Everywhere...the people swarmed. From our elevated vantage point we looked down on a sea of heads, a conglomeration of human beings, a mosaic of vivid, glaring colours, an exhibition of national costumes, among which the Tibetan dress was certainly the most conspicuous, but the eye lighted on figures hailing from Bhutan and Sikkim, Nepal and Ladak, while Chinese merchants and pilgrims from the grassy steppes of Mongolia were easily distinguishable. [Hedin's description of this polyglot crowd, and Abbe Huc's description of Lhasa as "a rendezvous of all the Asiatic peoples," confounds the Forbidden City quasi-myth. In fact Lhasa and Tibet were forbidden, but basically only to westerners. This was partly because the English and the Chinese, who vied for hegemony over Tibet, wanted it that way, and partly because the Tibetans had good sense.]"

Just off the great courtyard is Tashilumpo's chanting hall. We'll visit the dark and evocative hall and its side altars, and look into an adjacent kitchen where tremendous vats of yak butter tea are kept bubbling. With some luck, we may witness a scene Hedin renders in perhaps the most lyrical passage he ever wrote:

"[The monks] now intone a chant. It is subdued, deep, and slow; it quavers in religious enthusiasm beneath the dark vaults of the gallery.... The murmuring voices are silent and the chant swells up crescendo and then falls again, and seems to die out in some distant underworld, as though the singers had reached the portals of Nirvana. Enthralling, mystical, full of yearning is this...wonderful hymn. Nothing of the kind

have I heard - neither in the chanting in the Isaac Cathedral in St. Petersburg nor that in the Uspenski Sobor, the Cathedral of Moscow - has made a deeper impression on me; for the chant is grand and powerful, and yet at the same time soothing as a cradle song, intoxicating as wine, and sedative as morphia."

After visiting Tashilumpo, we can walk back to the hotel through the somewhat modern town of Shigatse, stopping for some interesting shopping in its old market.

Shigatse Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 9

ACCLIMATIZATION HIKE / SHIGATSE Armed with our cameras and packed lunch, we take a day excursion to help us acclimate to the higher elevation. A one hour drive brings us to our trail head at Ja village. After exploring the village we start our 4 – 5 hour hike to Ngor monastery. Hiking on trails similar to what we will encounter in the Everest region we climb steadily to Chak La a pass at 14,700 ft before we descent a thousand feet to Ngor Monastery. Ngor was founded in 1429 by Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo, a scholar from the Sakya Monastery. This monastery had been completely destroyed during the “cultural revolution: but an enthusiastic renovation project has brought it back to life with 40 resident monks.

Our vehicles will meet us at the monastery and drive us back to Shigatse.

Shigatse Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 10

SHIGATSE TO SHEKAR (14,268 feet) Leaving Shigatse, we drive due west through spectacularly twisted landscapes, cross the Lakpa La (17,121 feet), and at the end of a long day arrive in the small town of Shekar (at an elevation just 223 feet lower than Mount Whitney, the tallest mountain in the contiguous United States). During the 1920s, the first expeditions to nearby Mount Everest stopped at Shekar. J.B.L. Noel, in Through Tibet to Everest wrote of "Shekar Dzong, the 'Monastery of the Shining Crystal,' which no explorer before the Everest Expedition [of 1921] had ever seen." Shekar's guesthouse is famously dismal, though roughly serviceable. But the fantastic monastery, battlements climbing to the top of an arrowhead peak, is an archetypal Tibetan aerie. Most of its buildings have been destroyed in The Chinese Revolution, but its battered and proud walls remain. If time and energy permit, some of us will make our way out of the Chinese-built modern town, through a charming old village, and up to the Crystal Monastery's lovingly rebuilt temple.

In Shekar we will meet our Sherpas, who have come up from Nepal to accompany us on trek. To the best of our knowledge, only one other American adventure travel company

offers a trek to the Kangshung Face of Everest, and we are the only company that offers the matchless service of Nepalese Sherpas.

The Sherpas will bring tents, sleeping bags, pots, pans, stoves, utensils, and food, everything we will use on trek. They will help set up and break camp, do all the cooking and washing up, and provide us with the friendly and genteel service veterans of treks in Nepal remember with great affection. *Shekar Guest House (B,L,D)*

Day 11

SHEKAR TO KHARTA (12,500 feet) From Shekar the road turns south and crosses the 17,000 foot Pang La. If the weather is good, this is one of the finest mountain vistas on earth. Spread out in front of us is the long crest of the Himalaya, from Makalu (27,817 feet) to Everest (29,128) and Lhotse (27,916) to Gyachung Kang (25,980), to Cho Oyu (26,714), and to the west, Shisha Pangma (26,286).

The road snakes down to the Zakar River Valley and branches off southwest to the Rongbuk Valley and southeast to the village of Kharta. We head through alpine desert country, past some stunning sharp peaks, to the village headquarters at Kharta, where we finalize our arrangements for yaks and yak drivers, and drive a short way up the Kharta Valley to a riverside camp.

The altitude here is a mere 12,500 feet. The air is moister than it has been on the high plateau, as warm air is being sucked upward through the nearby valleys that lead into Nepal. One of those valleys is that of the Arun River, one of Nepal's great watercourses.

Camp on the Kharta River (B,L,D)

Days 12 - 24

ON TREK Our days on trek begin with the Sherpa team serving coffee and tea in our tents, followed by breakfast. We usually set off on the trail before our yak-train gets going (the rumbling yaks will carry everything but what we put into a pack for use during the day). After a few hours of hiking, we stop for lunch. A couple of more hours to camp, stupendous views, dinner, and to bed. This is the daily routine for most trek days.

As Himalayan treks go, this is not one of the more difficult. Days are usually not long (five to six hours at the most), distances not great, and the altitudes not tremendous (relatively speaking, of course!). In Nepal we often trek against the grain of the country, that is, going east-west, up and down drainages that run north-south; four and five thousand foot days are not uncommon (total gain and loss, that is). On the Kangshung trek we often follow contours; our greatest daily altitude gain is probably not more than 2500 feet.

A few notes before we get into more detailed descriptions of the route. One: the altitudes given here cannot be authoritative. Extensive topographic work hasn't been done everywhere in the region, and so we rely on altimeters, which vary quite a bit.

Two: We have picked the best time of year for the trek and most trips. Since we began operating this trek in 1983, we have had excellent weather. However, some past trips have encountered rain and one trip had a significant snowstorm. Be prepared for mountain weather!

Three: the following itinerary is subject to variation due to weather, local conditions, and inspired trekkers.

Day 1 begins with a gentle hike up the Kharta Valley, passing prosperous farmhouses and fields. After lunch we turn south and ascend to our camp in what the English called the Valley of Lakes (14,000 feet). The morning of **Day 2** is spent walking up this chain of alpine lakes, reminiscent of marvelously magnified Colorado timberline country, to our camp below the Shao La (15,300 feet). From here, if the weather allows, we have a stupendous view of the immense massif of Makalu and Chomolongo. The Shao La is the boundary of the rain shadow. We reach the pass in early morning and as we descend on **Day 3**, tundra gives way to stunning green, gold, and pastel red vegetation: juniper, silver fir, mountain ash, and rhododendron. We make camp near the mouth of a superb side valley that plunges a thousand feet to the Kama River (13,280 feet). Across the Kama Valley, wonderfully foreshortened, is a soaring buttress called the Kasho Ri, and above that, the citadel of Makalu.

Day 4 begins with a steep winding climb through a Japanese wood-block forest. We contour above the Kama Valley, through dwarf rhododendron and blue primula, looking down-valley deep into Nepal, across to the looming mountain wall, dripping with hanging glaciers, and ahead for our first views of Everest. We camp near a pretty lake at 14,500 feet; just over a rise peek the summits of Chomolongo (25,551 feet), Lhotse, and Everest. On **Day 5**, we continue contouring to a spot called Sakyatang on the best map of the area, the "Mount Everest Region" 1:100,000 map published by the Royal Geographic Society (more on this map at itinerary's end). From here we look directly into the Kangshung Valley, named for the glacier that begins at the foot of Everest. Without turning the head but a smidgen, here are three of the world's five highest mountains. The summit of Mount Everest is only 18 miles away.

From Sakyatang we drop down to the confluence of the Kangshung and Kama valleys, cross a bridge, and hike into the Kangshung, camping in a clearing in dense foliage at about 14,150 feet. Lt. Col. C.K. Howard-Bury, who led the first expedition into these parts, wrote in Mount Everest: the Reconnaissance, 1921: "It was very curious to see fir

trees, birch, and juniper, and a very luxuriant vegetation growing on either side of the ice and the moraines beneath it."

Day 6 takes us into the heart of the "valley like no other." We ascend gradually on a pleasant trail through willows and windflowers, then steeply up and across a landslide - caused a decade ago by the slow collision of the Kandongshung Glacier with the mountainside we're walking on to a meadowy morainal shelf above the tumbling gray mass of the Kangshung Glacier. A couple of hours further on is our high camp, Pethang Ringmo.

Pethang Ringmo was discovered by George Mallory and G.H. Bullock on that first expedition. When Howard-Bury joined them there he found:

"...a most delightfully sunny spot at 16,400 feet, right under the gigantic and marvelously beautiful cliffs of Chomolonzo...separated from us by the Kangshung Glacier, here about a mile wide. Everest from here is seen to fill up the head of the valley with a most formidable circle of cliffs overhung by hanging glaciers."

We can spend **Day 7** wandering and exploring in this incredible place. Some of us will want to get closer to the gargantuan East Face. Depending on the weather and other factors, our trip leader will decide if it is possible to hike to "Land's End". The walk takes a couple of hours along the grassy shelf and ends up overlooking the glacier at just over 17,000 feet. Only the daunting glacier separates us from the immense Kangshung wall. The summit of Everest is just over eight horizontal and two and a third vertical miles away. We're nearly encircled by mountains: (from the right) Khartse, the mass of Everest (the long northeast ridge, the summit of the world, the south summit, the South Col), then Lhotse's daunting triad, Peak 38, pure and astounding Pethangtse, Chago, behind it Makalu, and the three peaks of Chomolonzo. Yet more ambitious is a climb to a 19,000-foot summit (dependent upon weather and other factors) northeast of Land's End. It's topped by a thin cairn we erected on what may have been a modest, but satisfying first ascent. Just below the summit, we were shocked out of our high-altitude torpor by a blue sheep streaking across the rocks.

We break camp on **Day 8** and head down the valley to a leafy riverside camp (14, 000 feet). On **Day 9** we climb steeply to a point near Sakyetang, then contour northward, the whole Everest extravaganza just in back of us, and ascend to a camp next by an austere lake at 16,385 feet. The sunrise from this camp can be almost frighteningly spectacular; in a few intense moments Everest and the whole panoply of peaks change from cold pewter to rose, to gold, to blinding white. Above the camp is the 17,600 foot Langma La, which we climb on **Day 10** in a couple of hours for last views of Chomolungma, Goddess Mother of the World, and her towering court. From Langma La we descend a couple of thousand feet (passing a rare rock glacier on the way), back into Tibet, as it were, to

camp (14,000 feet). On the morning of **Day 11**, we descend to the Kharta Valley, farmhouses, fields, yaks, and kids, into the riverside camp where we began (12,500 feet).

As we noted above, this itinerary is subject to change. In fact, there are two extra days built into it. There may be a need to layover at one of the camps because of weather, or the group might want to spend an extra day at Pethang Ringmo (quite possible). Alternatively, a full day can be spent in the Tingri Plain.

Camp

Day 25

KHARTA TO RONGBUK (16,498 feet) **OR THE TINGRI PLAIN** (14,240 feet)
Before leaving Kharta we'll choose between a side trip to Rongbuk Monastery and Everest's North Face Base Camp environs, or to the ethereal Tingri Plain. We can spend one or two nights at our Rongbuk or Tingri, depending on how we used our extra days on trek.

If we decide to visit Rongbuk and the North Face, we'll drive north, then veer west just before the Pang La. In Everest 1933 Hugh Ruttledge wrote of coming at last into the storied valley:

“The approach was dramatic. At the moment we were walking up the rough, snow-covered track, in the valley which seemed to lead to nowhere in particular. At the next moment a last corner was turned and there was the monastery, with its great chorten; and beyond, the wind-torn but still impenetrable mists behind which we knew was Mount Everest.”

Until the Tibetan backcountry was opened to outsiders in the early 1980s, few westerners had ever seen the Rongbuk. Almost all were members of the seven British climbing expeditions that attempted the mountain from Rongbuk base camps from 1921 to 1939. An exception was Earl Denman, one of a handful of eccentrics who entered Tibet in disguise and attempted the mountain solo. Denman, unlike the famed and tragic Maurice Wilson, got back to tell his story in Alone to Everest:

“It was not until rounding the final bend that the monastery and Everest came into view [Denman wrote]. The mountain rose almost sheer from the valley in an unclimable wall of rock, too steep to hold much snow. High ridges blocked the valley in to the west and east. It was a massive cul-de-sac....The river, which originated in the Rongbuk glacier on Everest, ran through a forty-foot gorge to the west. The monastery stood to the east, with a village of small stone houses, slightly behind and to the north. Scattered prayer flags were set in the mountainside behind the

monastery and village. A monastery at 16,000 feet, almost in the shadow of the world's highest mountain! Here, I thought are people who understand mountains, people who revere them."

The Dza-rong monastery (to give it its little-known correct name) was largely destroyed during the madness of the Cultural Revolution (or perhaps before), but a small nunnery and temple is being built on the site and prayer flags again fly in the shadow of Chomolungma, Goddess Mother of the World.

If we continue on to the Tingri Plain we'll cross the Pang La and drop back down towards the main road. Galen Rowell camped here after visiting the Rongbuk approach to Everest in 1981 (this was the first time Americans had been allowed into the Tibetan backcountry). In Mountains of the Middle Kingdom he wrote:

"What we found on the plains of Tingri was the Tibetan camp of our dreams. We set up tents by a stream that snaked through a green meadow. The meadow wove its way around low hills until it ran into the Himalayan crest, thirty miles distant through invisibly clear air. A tremendous gap led into [the Sherpa villages of] Nepal. This pass, the Nangpa La, appeared to cut so deeply into the massifs of Cho Oyu and Gaurisankar that even I, who had seen the glaciers and rubble from the Nepal side, imagined that a carpet of grassland parted the snows.

Yaks and sheep wandered peacefully. Here...I understood why Tibetans believe that their homeland, barren and cold though it may be, is the most wonderful place on earth. [The writer of this itinerary, three times a visitor to the Kangshung Face, was with Rowell at Tingri and has since returned six or seven times. It is indeed a "camp of dreams"]."

To the southeast is Everest. From here it appears as "a prodigious white fang excrescent from the very jaws of the earth," as George Mallory, who died near its summit in 1924, called it. Then Gyachung Kang, connected by a long ridge - probably the highest on earth - to the beneficent mass of Cho Oyu, followed by the Nangpa La gap, Menlungtse, and Gaurishankar, Nepal's holy mountain. *Camp (B,L,D)*

Day 26

TINGRI TO ZHANGMU (7,544 feet) Most great journeys have a dramatic flourish near the end. Today we begin ours, the heart stirring drive from Central to South Asia, through the greatest mountains on earth, out of the barren Tibetan Plateau to the lush foothills of Nepal.

Past the Tingri Plain we curve south to the cave of Milarepa, Tibet's beloved saint-hermit-trickster (who had wonderful taste in views). From here we ascend to a lofty, rolling plateau. Just ahead of us are the spiky peaks of the Langtang Himal. There is a sudden connection here with Nepal, as these are the great peaks one sees from the Kathmandu Valley. As we have an epically gorgeous lunch atop the Lalung La (16,564 feet), we look to the west at massive Shisha Pangma (26,390 feet, the fourteenth highest mountain in the world and the highest mountain entirely within Tibet).

Now we begin to drop. We loop downward, following a trickle of melt-water, gradually ennobled by runoff from the peaks we are squeezing through. Utter barrenness gives way to scrub vegetation and low bushes. We drive through the town of Nyalam (12,300 feet), and soon begin to see trees, the first in days. The melt-water trickle is a torrent now; the Nepalese below call it the Bhotia Khosi, the Tibetan River. It cuts a deep slash through the Himalaya (like the great rivers we flew over on the way to Lhasa, it predates the range, and eroded through it as the mountains were rising). The air moistens, thickens. Ribbony waterfalls turn to mist along the steadily steepening gorge's jungley walls. As we round a sharp corner we look out into the soft foothills of Nepal, hazy and warm.

We reach the end of the road near Zhangmu (or Khasa) by mid-afternoon. In the mid-1980's a tremendous landslide closed the road just above the town. This section has been repaired, but the nature of the terrain and the annual monsoon suggest that problems may be encountered again and again over the years. In the event that the road does wash out above Zhangmu eager porters, well organized by our Sherpas, will carry our baggage as we hike for an hour or so down a steep trail to our hotel. Zhangmu is a unique conglomeration of Tibet, China, and a rich palate of Nepalese castes and tribes, an amazing, dirty, hustling, and colorful bordertown perched insouciantly on the side of a profound gorge. Greeting the Tibetans with "Tashi delay!" and "Namaste!" for the Nepalese, we walk through the town to our hotel. We open our room windows to the humid, scented air of 7500 feet (we've come down more than 9000 feet since lunch). Below is a bridge across the Bhotia Khosi. We can just make out a red and yellow, mid-span line: the Tibet-Nepal border.

Zhangmu Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 27

ZHANGMU TO KATHMANDU As all of China is on Beijing time (here we're about three normal times zones away from the Chinese capital), we rise early, and down below, across the Friendship Bridge, it will be more than three clock hours earlier. We pass through customs just outside our hotel in the mid-morning (Beijing time!). Porters will carry our baggage down through a steep no-man's land to the Nepalese border.

The walk takes about two hours, depending on the condition of the road. In good conditions this is a nice Nepalese mini-trek, following the gentle switchbacks of a disused motor road. If that road is blocked, we'll take the trail down, passing and being passed by a stream of cheery, unbelievably heavily laden porters, who disdain gentle slopes. (Note that while these roads - and the roads on the Nepal side - are subject to closure, the landslides that close them almost always occur during the summer monsoon. Both the Chinese and the Nepalese work hard to keep the Nepal-Tibet linkage open, and when we travel this way in the spring and fall the danger from landslides will be minimal, even if the effects of the slides are still felt. When a road is closed to motor traffic, we set out on foot, with porters and our Sherpas, and usually not for more than a few hours.)

At the bridge we show our passports to one last soldier of the People's Liberation Army, walk a dozen yards, and we are in Nepal. Waiting for us there will be a charming fellow who will say something like "Are you with the Geographic Expeditions group? Hello! I am Ravi, your guide. Welcome to my country. Have you had a good trip? Would you like a cold drink? Now we will drive to Kathmandu."

Which we do, passing up and down and through the sculpted terraces and sweet villages of the Nepalese foothills. The drive takes three to four hours under good conditions and if we're lucky, we'll get a view back to the towering Langtang Himal, on the other side of which, high up in another world, we had lunch yesterday.

Gradually traffic gets more intense, the villages become towns, the temple spires higher. We enter the Kathmandu Valley, passing through Bhaktapur into the city proper. We stay at one of the most welcome hotels in the world, the famous Yak & Yeti.

Yak & Yeti Hotel (B)

Day 28

KATHMANDU Nepal's capital is a delight to the senses and the imagination. For centuries Kathmandu was forbidden to outsiders and since it opened to the world in the early 1950s it has been one of the world's most eagerly sought travel destinations.

In the morning we'll visit Kathmandu's old and current heart, Durbar Square and Hanuman Dhoka - a beguiling complex of buildings, temples, and courtyards, thronged with street merchants, wandering holy men, polynational birds of passage, pilgrims, wide-eyed rustics in from the hills, and businessmen worshipping at any of a score of little shrines. We will then head up to the 2,500 year-old shrine at Swayambhunath, a pacific and fascinating mixture of Hindu and Buddhist piety.

The afternoon will be free.

Yak & Yeti Hotel (B)

Days 29 & 30

KATHMANDU TO USA We'll transfer to Kathmandu's airport in the morning (Day 29) to begin the journey home. There are several routes back to the USA from Kathmandu, all of which entail an overnight stop enroute. (Hotel accommodations in Bangkok, Beijing or elsewhere on the way home are not included in land cost. As always, Geographic Expeditions will be happy to arrange this for you, as well as an extension to Thailand's marvelous beaches if you wish, a fine place to relax post-trek). The next morning (Day 30) you can continue on to the USA, reaching the States the same day you leave Asia after re-crossing the international dateline.

* * * * *

TRIP GRADE: Rigorous Trekking

The hiking will require that participants be in top physical condition. There is no technical mountaineering on this trip but past hiking and camping experience are prerequisites for participation. This trip is NOT recommended for first time trekkers. Anyone with a history of medical problems, particularly cardiac or respiratory, should consult a doctor before considering this trek. Release of liability and a medical certificate are required. Details of past trekking experience will also be required.

Be advised that trekking will be at altitudes up to more than 17,000 feet and that the area is remote and isolated. This trek is scheduled at the optimum time for weather and views, but the trek is subject to snowfall, storms, ice, rain, wind and other high mountain hazards. Circumstances may mean that some days could be long and arduous for some people. Unlike in most of the Himalayan regions, emergency evacuation by helicopter in Tibet is not possible. Communication equipment (satellite phones, radios, etc.) are illegal in Tibet without a special permit which is not available for treks. In the event of an emergency during the trek, rescue or evacuation must be carried out by the trek leader and Sherpa staff with possible limited help from the yak drivers. There are portions of the trail that could be washed out and may be narrow, steep, slippery, and precipitous. In some sections, a fall from the trail could be disastrous or fatal.

It is important to understand that there are other factors that make travel in China, Tibet and Nepal uniquely difficult. Service and accommodations have improved tremendously but you will still encounter problems with plumbing (in Zhangmu not much thereof and in Shekar, a total lack thereof), mediocre meals (except on trek when our Sherpas will ensure a reprieve), indifferent staff, and rigorous schedules. Flexibility and a sense of humor are mandatory.

DEPARTURE DATES 2005

May 7 to June 5, 2005
September 24 to October 23, 2005

2005 LAND COST

\$6090 (13 - 16 full-paying members)
\$6990 (10 - 12 full-paying members)

INTERNAL ASIA AIRFARE

\$300 Beijing/Lhasa
\$375 Kathmandu/Bangkok
(Fare subject to change by airlines)

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$ 710

A Note Regarding Tier Pricing

Our land costs are based on a full or almost full group and are tier priced for the smaller group size. As you can imagine, our expenses are higher with a smaller group than with a full one. In order to operate a trip with a smaller number of participants, we charge a little more to cover fixed costs. The higher land cost will be noted on your initial invoice and then deducted at the time of your final documents if the group has reached the larger size. If for any reason the group falls below the minimum number of participants, the small group surcharge as noted above will be billed to you at the time of your final documents.

We have found that participants prefer to pay a bit more as opposed to having the trip canceled. Trip physicians, guests or staff of Geographic Expeditions (i.e. travel writers/photographers/leaders-in-training are not included in determining the tier price.

A Note Regarding Single Supplement

Costs are based on twin occupancy. We do not like to charge an additional amount for the single traveler and will make every effort (if you so desire) to match you with a same sex roommate. If no one is available with whom you can share, we must ask that you pay the single supplement charge.

INCLUDED IN LAND COST

While in Beijing:

- Group arrival and departure transfers
- Accommodations as mentioned in the above itinerary

While in China & Tibet:

- All hotels and guesthouse accommodations as indicated in the itinerary.
- All meals after arrival in Lhasa
- All ground transportation using 4-wheel drive Toyota Land cruisers
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as outlined in the day-to-day itinerary).
- The services of a Tibetan interpreter and guide.
- All camping supplies (client tents, dining tents, toilet tents, kitchen equipment, etc) sleeping bags and pads.
- The services of Nepali Sherpas during our camping and hiking days (includes all expenses) in the Everest Base Camp area.
- All tips/gratuities to drivers, local guides, and Sherpa Trekking Team.
- Permit fees (including permit to BC, Everest Area fee, Everest road tax)

While in Nepal:

- Ground transport from the border
- Accommodations at the Yak & Yeti Hotel with breakfast only
- Sightseeing as indicated in the itinerary
- Group transfer to the airport

Throughout the trip:

- The services of a Geographic Expeditions Trip Leader
- Geographic Expeditions' Medical and Accident Insurance & Assistance Plan
- Complimentary extra large Geographic Expeditions duffel bag

NOT INCLUDED IN LAND COST

- International airfare USA/Beijing and Kathmandu/USA
- Internal Asia airfare (noted separately)
- Lunch & dinner in Beijing and Kathmandu
- Hotel accommodations and meals enroute
- Airport taxes
- Passport and visa fees
- Excess baggage charges
- Items of a personal nature such as liquor, laundry, mail, phone calls and cables
- Trip cancellation, travel delay, or baggage insurance. (Note: This optional coverage is highly recommended and can be purchased through Geographic Expeditions)
- Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond the control of Geographic Expeditions

International Air and Enroute Stopovers

The land cost does not include your international transportation from your home city and charter flights within China or Nepal. Geographic Expeditions has a **full-service, in-house, air ticketing department** with many years of experience arranging complex travel to remote destinations. Unless you are working with a travel agent or specify otherwise, we will assume that you want us to make all domestic and international air reservations according to the trip itinerary.

We will try to secure the best possible fare for you and request that you notify us immediately of any pre- and post-trip extension plans. Our air department will be happy to assist you with these arrangements and with any other additional extensions you may wish to add to your trip itinerary. Early reservations ensure the most desired airlines, routings, seating, and departure times.

If you are not using Geographic Expeditions for your air travel (including using frequent flyer tickets), it is essential that you give us your air schedule at least 60 days prior to your departure, so that we may confirm your arrival and departure hotels.

Sample United Airlines roundtrip midweek tour fares as of August 30, 2004:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| San Francisco-Beijing / Bangkok-San Francisco | \$945.00 |
| New York-Beijing / Bangkok-New York | \$1095.00 |
| Chicago/Beijing/Chicago | \$1058.00 |

*Fares quoted are base fares without taxes/security charges

*Fares quoted are for shoulder or mid-season only

Please contact **Herbert Fong** in our air department soon to reserve your space or for further air information.

Refunds For Unused Portions of Trip

No refunds can be made for any accommodations, services, or features not taken. If cancellation occurs while the trip is in progress, there will be no refund for any unused portion.

*****Important Note*****

While we endeavor to make the itinerary as accurate as possible, it should be considered as an approximate schedule of activities rather than a rigid schedule of events. Trip itineraries are subject to revision due to weather, trail conditions, government restrictions and other reasons beyond our control. In addition, frequent reconnaissance of routes

sometimes determines a better routing - we do our best to ascertain that the most beautiful and best route possible is taken into the area.

Terms and Conditions of this trip are contained in the Travelers Information section of the catalogue insert on pages 1 and 2 and on the Limitation of Liability on the trip application.

Maps and Books

The best map of the Kama-Kangshung is the "Mount Everest Region" 1:100,000 map published by the Royal Geographic Society. (Unfortunately the National Geographic's relatively new 1:50,000 "Mount Everest" map doesn't cover much of this area. That map, by the way, is a kind of case study in the problems and politics of place naming in China-Tibet, as is the Society's excellent but sometimes controversial "People's Republic of China" 1:6,000,000 map).

As we noted, the literature is rather thin, due to the secluded nature of the Kama-Kangshung. Mount Everest: the Reconnaissance, 1921 gives the fullest description of the first exploration. Sir Francis Younghusband's The Epic of Everest (1926), as quoted above, is also very good. Reynolds and Gillette's Everest Grand Circle is worth looking at, especially for Chomolungma buffs. Stephen Venable's recent Everest Kangshung Face is a mind-curdling account of an East Face climb with good descriptions of the approaches. We send general Tibet-China and Nepal reading lists to all our trip participants.

(Though it doesn't mention the Kangshung proper, Rowell's Mountains of the Middle Kingdom is perhaps the finest contemporary book on mountain exploration and climbing in China and Tibet.)

Unfortunately these books, with the exception of Grand Circle, Mountains of the Middle Kingdom, and the Venable's book, are collector's items. Many good libraries will have one or the other, though. There are a number of excellent rare and current mountain and Central Asian exploration book and map sellers in the United States. We recommend: Michael Chessler Books in Evergreen, Colorado, (800) 654-8502; Marco Polo Books, (615) 377-9796; Gregory Gamradt, (612) 537-0359; and Yak and Yeti Books, (301) 977-7285.

The People Organizing Your Trip at Geographic Expeditions

Sanjay Saxena, Director for India, Nepal and Tibet programs, is a native of New Delhi. Son of a brigadier general in the Indian Army, fluent in Hindi/Urdu, Nepali, and English, Sanjay has lived and traveled all over the subcontinent. His deep, insider's knowledge of his homeland and his talent for creating handcrafted itineraries to traditional and little-seen destinations make him one of the travel world's ranking India specialists.

A graduate in physics from Delhi University, Sanjay began his Himalayan mountaineering career at the age of 15 after attending the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. A professional guide since 1979, Sanjay has led trekking and touring groups to all the Himalayan countries and many regions of India including Arunachal Pradesh, Kashmir, Ladakh, Zaskar, Garhwal, Sikkim and Rajasthan. In the winter of 1991/1992, he and David Breashears led the first “western descent” of a 200-mile white water stretch on the Brahmaputra River in India, starting at the Tibetan border. This was filmed for the BBC series “Classic Adventures” and was shown on the A&E network in the US.

An accomplished photographer, Sanjay has led photographic culture tours in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Mongolia, Venezuela and Iran. He also operates and leads our Solar Eclipse tours. Sanjay is the recipient of the “Top Travel Specialist” Award for Tibet, from Condé Nast for the years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005. He can be emailed at sanjay@geoex.com.

Heather Bohner is Geographic Expedition’s Country Manager for India, Tibet, & S.W. China. For Heather, travel is a requirement for living. Her thirst for the globe has led her to live in Europe and Asia. An avid student of Eastern philosophy, Heather studied in India for a semester abroad, did research in Nepal and lived in a Buddhist monastery in Bodhgaya. She has traveled extensively throughout India.

Heather graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a degree in Eastern philosophy. She enjoys hiking, biking and taking her yellow Labrador named “Wrigley” to the beach. She can be emailed at heather@geoex.com.

Trip References

If you would like a list of unfiltered references from past trips, please contact **Heather Bohner**.

Geographic Expeditions

Geographic Expeditions is a professional travel management corporation, which provides a broad range of travel and location management services for individuals, travel agents and corporations. It also supplies an array of location and marketing support services and specializes in remote locations and complex logistics. The company has operations throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Pacific.

Geographic Expeditions was organized in 1981 (as InnerAsia Expeditions) to develop and operate specialized travel programs in central Asia. It was the first American company to negotiate protocols with the Chinese government to operate tours into Tibet and western China. Nepal, India and Bhutan were added soon thereafter. It has pioneered travel in Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, Vietnam, Burma, Patagonia and remote sections of the former Soviet Union.

Over the years, Geographic has expanded from its Central Asian roots to the rest of the world. Currently the company provides travel services for approximately 4,500 passengers a year.

Geographic has acted as tourism development consultants to numerous governments and non-governmental organizations. Another expanding and significant area of Geographic's services is location consultation and management for a grand variety of companies such as ABC Television, Boeing, Sotheby's, Walt Disney Company, ESPN, BBC, *Travel and Leisure*, National Geographic Society, Fox Broadcasting, HarperCollins, and CBS Television to name a few. The company also arranges special interest trips for a variety of non-profit organizations such as The American Museum of Natural History, Audubon Society, Stanford Alumni Association, Tibet House, World Monuments Fund, University of Chicago, Houston Museum of Science, Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, Outward Bound, California Culinary Academy, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Nature Conservancy and many, many more.

Operating Standards

The staff of Geographic Expeditions is dedicated to preserving the character of the lands and cultures we visit. We invite you to call us for a description of the steps we are taking to promote environmental and cultural preservation.



Additional Questions?

Please Call
(800)777-8183
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Pacific Time

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