



## Golog Amdo

**Day 1:** Pickup from The Chengdu airport and transfer to hotel

**Day 2:** This Day we will drive from Chengdu to Barkam

**Day 3:** Drive from Barkam to Nyawa, overnight in Nyawa

**Day 4:** Drive from Nyawa to Chederl

**Day 5:** Chekder - Nyenbo Yurtse

**Day 6:** Nyenbo Yurtse - Darai Taling monastery, overnight in Dari

**Day 7:** Dari

**Day 8:** Golog Machen

**Day 9:** Amnye Machen - Huashixia

**Day 10:** Huashixia - Maduo

**Day 11:** Maduo - Ngoring Lake/Yellow River Source Area - Maduo

**Day 12:** Maduo - Qinghai lake

**Day 13:** Qinghai Lake - Xining

**Day 14:** Xining airport and end tour

## Summary

Golog Tibet Autonomous Prefecture (མགོ་ལོག་བོད་རིགས་རང་སྐྱོང་ཁུལ་) is located in southeastern Qinghai province, in the Amdo region of Tibet. Over 90% of the 125,000 people who live in Golog are Tibetan. Most of the people in Golog are nomadic with many of them living in traditional style Tibetan tents. Most of Golog is well above 4000m / 13,120 feet so summers are short and winters are long and cold. Golog is famous across the Tibetan Plateau as being the home of Amnye Machen, one of the 4 main holy mountains of Tibet. Each year, thousands of pilgrims make their way to Amnye Machen to make a pilgrimage around the mountain. The trek around the mountain takes around 7 days. Amnye Machen rises to 6282m / 20,605 feet and is the highest mountain in Amdo.

Another famous holy mountain in Golog is Nyenbo Yurtse. Nyenbo Yurtse is located in the remote far eastern corner of Golog prefecture and stands at 5369m / 17,611 feet high. This mountain sees very few foreign travelers, but is possibly the most beautiful place in all of the northern Tibetan Plateau. A deep fresh water lake sits at the base of the mountain. Several rivers run into the lake from the surrounding craggy peaks. The area around Nyenbo Yurtse is excellent for hiking.

Another highlight of the tour is visiting the source of the Yellow River at 4,300 meters above sea level. The Yellow River is the second longest in China with a total length of over 5400kms / 3400 miles. From its source to its winding banks along the Tibetan Plateau, the entire Yellow River area is stunning. It offers everything from high snow-capped mountains, to grasslands filled with yaks to farmlands. The Tibetan culture in this area is some of the best preserved in all of Tibet.

## Detailed Itinerary

### **Day 1: Pickup from The Chengdu airport and transfer to Hotel**

Pick up from airport in Chengdu (CTU).

Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan Province and is a city of 12 million people at 500 meters in elevation. Chengdu was first established in 311 BC and still carries much of this ancient influence as a place of cultural significance and a gateway to Tibet, bearing such nicknames as “City of the Hibiscus” and “City of the Turtle”.

In the afternoon, we will eat at a Tibetan restaurant in Chengdu's Tibetan Quarter, or Little Lhasa. This area is located in the south-west of Chengdu, near the First Ring Road.

### **Day 2: Chengdu - Barkam - 450km**

After breakfast, we ascend from this city of 12 million onto the grasslands of the Tibetan Plateau in Barkam. 6-8 hours of driving total, but we will stop for pictures along the way.

### **Day 3: Drive from Barkam to Ngawa - 200 km**

Today we will drive for 5 hours to see the expansive, lush, beautiful grasslands, and the yaks that graze in them. During the drive we will stop at a nomad tent to enjoy local tea and Tibetan cuisine. While we are stopped, we will have a chance to photograph the rolling grasslands that support thousands of horses, sheep, and yaks and this unique pastoral culture.

Sleep in hotel in Ngawa

### **Day 4: Drive from Ngawa to Jigdril - 70km**

In the morning we will take in the sights and smells of Ngawa town (called Aba in Chinese). We will start our journey in Sichuan province and then cross the border to Jigdril town in Qinghai province.

After a full day of visiting nomad areas and having lunch in a nomad tent, we will sleep in Jigdril town.

### **Day 5: Jigdril - Nyenbo Yurtse**

Nyenbo Yurtse is a largely undiscovered hidden gem of Tibetan Plateau. Its isolated location means that very few foreign travelers have experienced this amazing region. Nyenbo Yurtse is a sacred peak to the people of eastern Tibet because it is revered as the birthplace of the Golog Tibetan tribes. Altogether, there are 14 peaks here rising above 5000 meters/16,400 feet. The highest mountain at Nyenbo Yurtse looms above the nearby blue lakes at 5369 meters/17,615 feet. This mountain range is dominated by tall craggy, snow-covered peaks with numerous turquoise-colored lakes. We will hike 1-2 hours to visit one of these stunning lakes and have a picnic lunch here as we watch the wind wash the waves against the lakeshore.

We will return to a hotel near the mountain and sleep there.

### **Day 6: Nyenbo Yurtse - Darai**

As we travel across the Plateau for 5 hours we will stop at 2 small monasteries for insights into Tibetan Buddhism. In the afternoon we will arrive in Darai town, just 25 km from the monastery and a hub of nomad activity. From here you can see the pristine waters of the upper Yellow River. If you want to see traditional Tibetan clothes including the long robes and ornate coral and turquoise jewelry this is the place! We will spend the afternoon getting familiar with the town and exploring the delights of this well-preserved nomad town.

### **Day 7: Darai Taling monastery**

Darai town is just 25 km from the main county monastery, Darai Taling. Darai Taling is a gorgeous monastery with more than 300 monks that is part of the Nyimapa Sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

### **Day 8: Golog Machen**

Machen is the capital of Golog Prefecture and is the biggest town of the Golog people, with a population of around 10,000 people. Just outside of town there is a temple with colorful prayer flags that covers an entire hill. We will hike through these flags to see a beautiful view of Machen town from the quiet space on top of the hill. We will sleep in a hotel in Machen.

### **Day 9: Amnye Machen - Huashixia**

Today will take us out of the nomad town of Machen to the highest and most beautiful mountain in all of Amdo Tibet, Amnye Machen.

The entire Amnye Machen range is an eastern extension of the Kunlun Mountains, a major mountain system of Asia. The Amnye Machen range runs in the general northwest-to-southeast direction in eastern Qinghai Province and the southwestern corner of Gansu Province.

The existence of the ridge results in one of the great bends of the Yellow River. The Amnye Machen Peak (the highest point of the range) is located in Machen County of Golog Prefecture. Its elevation is 6,282 meters (20,605 ft). It is ranked number 23 in height among the mountain peaks of China. In 1929, botanist/explorer Joseph Rock

traveled to the region and incorrectly measured the mountain at more than 9000 meters. For some time, Rock and few others mistakenly thought this was the tallest mountain in the world!

Amnye Machen may not be higher than Mount Everest, but it is nonetheless stunning! Here you can see pilgrims walking the holy kora around the mountain to achieve greater merit in Buddhism. Along the road to Huashixia we will stop to photograph the spectacular glacier that runs up the ridge to the main peak of Amnye Machen. This will most certainly be a highlight of our tour and will take your breath away as we stop on a high pass at 4,200 meters with colorful prayers flags at the base of the mountain.

After a long day of travel through the rugged, high altitude mountains we will sleep in the small town of Huashixia in a very basic hotel.

### **Day 10: Huashixia - Maduo, 200km**

Huashixia sits at 4050m / 13,284 feet. Huashixia is a small town with not a lot to do, but it serves as a good place to stay the night and get a good meal. Accommodation is limited to inexpensive guesthouses. We will travel from this place through the barren, windswept grasslands to Maduo, the highest nomad town in Amdo at 4,272 meters that can see snow any day of the year. The area around Maduo town has an annual mean temperature of -4 Celcius and the ecosystem there bears the imprint of glaciation with U-shaped valleys and large moraines. On the journey we stand a good chance to stop and see Tibetan Wild Asses galloping through the high grasses of the rugged plateau plains. Fortunately, we will have already spent 10 days acclimatizing to this elevation.

### **Day 11: Maduo - Ngoring Lake/Yellow River Source Area - Maduo**

Travel 110km from Maduo to Ngoring Lake. This expansive blue alpine lake is one of the most beautiful and one of the most unknown lakes in Tibet. The road from Maduo to the lake is rough and in bad condition but we can stop often to spot the wildlife that survives at these high conditions including Wild Ass, Tibetan Antelope, and the rare, flat-faced Tibetan Fox. Though it is only 110km, it takes 4 or 5 hours to reach. Ngoring Lake and the lake next to it, Kyaring Lake, are two of the main lakes that are considered to be the source of the Yellow River. The Yellow River is the second longest in China with a total length of over 5400kms /3400 miles. From its source all the way through the Tibetan Plateau, the Yellow River area is stunning. It offers everything from high snow-capped

mountains, to grasslands filled with yaks to farmlands. The Tibetan culture in this area is some of the best preserved in all of Tibet.

These lakes, Ngoring Lake and Kyaring Lake, also offer important lessons in Tibetan history as the home to the wife of King Gesar, a great warrior king of Tibet.

The remote temple of Tsowar Kartse Dokha is found near the western shore of Ngoring Lake at 4,300m. It has many stupas and huge stacks of hand carved Tibetan scriptures made from stone, called mani stones. Even in this remote location, it is possible to see some Tibetan pilgrims and worshippers here who have made a long and difficult journey to these holy places.

After a long, satisfying day out in the open, untouched plains at the source of the Yellow River, we will head back to the town of Maduo to warm up with a good, hot meal and a nice hotel and a shower.

### **Day 12: Maduo - Chapcha**

Depart Maduo in the morning to drive through the town of Chapcha, a lively Tibetan town that is the gateway to the shores of Qinghai Lake, the pride and namesake of Qinghai Province. In all we will be on the road about 5 hours as we start to descend in elevation from Maduo to 2,862 meters/9,391 feet.

Sleep in a hotel in Chapcha

### **Day 13: Qinghai Lake - Xining**

In the morning, we will visit the shores of Qinghai Lake - a massive lake that stretches over 100km in width from east to west. Qinghai Lake is the largest lake in China (although it feels more like an ocean) and as such is a great way to find the very middle of China's huge land mass because it appears readily from space on every modern map. It is a high altitude salt lake seated at 3,205 m (10,515 feet) and is home to nomads who herd yaks and sheep in the wild, barren grasslands arounds its icy banks. It is a brilliant turquoise color - especially against the dry, brown mountains that surround its southern edge.

This will make for an excellent last full day on the Tibetan Plateau. From here we will drive 230km to Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province at an elevation of 2,500 meters.

Xining has a population of 2.5 million and, like Chengdu, is considered a gateway to the Tibetan Plateau.

**Day 14: Xining airport and end tour**

After a great journey together we will say our goodbyes at the Xining airport.