

*See the Total Solar Eclipse July 22, 2009*

# TIBET & Total Solar Eclipse



*Come Explore With The Planetary Society! • July 8-24, 2009*

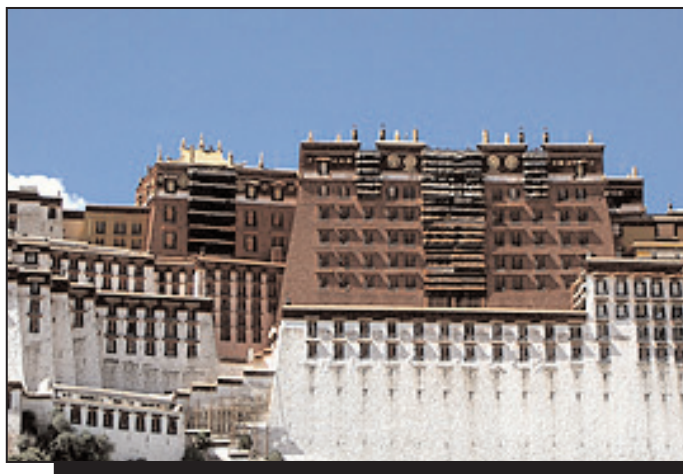
Dear Members:

We invite you to explore Tibet in 2009 and see the **Total Solar Eclipse July 22, 2009**, south of Shanghai.

Centerline of totality for this Eclipse arcs from India across Bhutan and China. We will see the eclipse south of Shanghai, near Hangzhou, reputedly Marco Polo's favorite city in China. While we cannot guarantee eclipse viewing, the area is on the path of totality with a good probability of clear skies! It will be an excellent location for viewing the eclipse.

Our adventure will begin with a visit to **Chengdu**, vibrant capital city of Sichuan. We will then fly west to explore the cultural heart of **Tibet**. The Tibetan Plateau has long been a place of fascination for Western naturalists and explorers.

Our first destination in Tibet will be **Tsedang** near some of the oldest villages and sacred sites in Tibet. They pre-date Buddhism in this area by more than a thousand years. From Tsedang, we will follow the Yarlung Tsangpo and Kyichu rivers upstream to **Lhasa**, historic center of the Tibetan world.



Lhasa is renowned for its sacred sites, each with distinctive esoteric rituals, colorful iconography, and profound spiritual significance to the Tibetan people. These include **Jorkang Temple**, the **Potala** and **Norbulinka Palace**, the winter and summer residences of the Dalai Lama, and **Ganden Monastery**, poised dramatically on a ridge that overlooks the upper reaches of the Lhasa Valley.

We will also explore **Namco Lake** which lies in a basin at 15,500 feet elevation. Here the air is extraordinarily clear, offering luminous vistas of glaciated peaks that encircle the basin. Semi-nomadic families live here during summer in felt tents, tending their herds of yaks and ponies.

We will then fly to **Hangzhou**, an historic city south of Shanghai, considered to have some of the best feng shui of any city in China. It is situated on West Lake, one of China's most revered bodies of water. We will drive a short distance to reach our site for the **Total Solar Eclipse**. It will be a fascinating experience!

Although the Tibetan Plateau is quite high, we will spend most of our time at moderate elevations. Lhasa, our highest overnight destination, is 11,700 feet above sea level. After a few days, most visitors acclimatize and do fine at these elevations. Our highest point overall is the pass that leads to Namco Lake at 16,900 feet. Since we will cross the pass after having spent a week in Tibet, we do not anticipate any major altitude problems, even though this excursion probably will set a few personal altitude records for our travelers!

We hope that you will join us to explore Tibet and the 2009 Total Solar Eclipse. Space is limited, so please let us know right away.

Best regards,

Dr. Louis Friedman  
Executive Director



THE  
PLANETARY  
SOCIETY

# Itinerary

## Days 1/2 — USA to Hong Kong

Depart from Los Angeles International Airport on Cathay Pacific Airways for Hong Kong, crossing the International Date Line en route.

## Day 3 — Chengdu

Arrive in Hong Kong this morning, and take a connecting flight to Chengdu. Transfer to the *City Garden Hotel* (2 nights). Enjoy a walking tour along Chengdu's Fujiang River and welcome dinner.

## Day 4 — Chengdu Pandas

This morning, we will visit the giant panda breeding center in Chengdu, one of three locations for panda breeding and conservation in Sichuan. Naturalistic surroundings enable us to view pandas acting much as they would in the wild. For a donation, it is possible to see and hold young pandas. In the afternoon, we'll visit Huaihua Park and the classically landscaped garden that commemorates one of Chengdu's famous residents, the Tang Dynasty Poet Du Fu. Later, we'll enjoy an amusing performance of traditional Sichuan Opera.

## Day 5 — Lhasa & Tsedang, Tibet

This morning, we will fly from Chengdu to Lhasa, Tibet, heart of the Tibet Autonomous Region. After we arrive at Konggur Airport. We will then drive to ancient Tsedang. We will pass alongside the high peaks of the Nyenchen Tanglha Mountains (some exceed 23,000 feet in elevation) and continue downstream past the confluence of the



Yarlung Tsangpo River to the town of Tsedang. When the ancestral Tibetans first settled the Tibetan Plateau, it is thought they came to Tsedang first. It is easy to see the allure of this sunny and fertile valley. *Zedang Hotel* (2 nights).

## Day 6 — Chonggye-Valley of the Kings

Today, we will explore Chonggye, where Tibet's early rulers are entombed in the "Valley of the Kings". Here, an earthen terrace is said to hold the burial chamber of Songtsen Gampo and his two wives, Chinese and Nepali. The view from the terrace is memorable, of wheat fields, hillside monasteries, and encircling peaks. After lunch, we will walk or ride ponies to the hilltop castle of Yambu Lhakang, a structure that predates Buddhism in Tibet by nearly 1,000 years and is one of the first fortified castles in Tibet.

## Day 7 — Lhasa-Barkor Square

Today, we will depart for Lhasa, traditional cultural focus and modern urban center of Tibet. We will stay near Barkor Square in the old (Tibetan) part of Lhasa (5 nights), so it will be easy to walk in this fascinating, picturesque neighborhood. In Barkor Square, crowds follow Lhasa's most important *kora* (pilgrimage circuit), marked by four incense burners at the far corners. We will move along with the pilgrims and may discover ancient prayer wheels or workshops for *thankas* (religious paintings) en route, plus a fascinating profusion of humanity, from children to monks, shopkeepers, and pilgrims.

## Day 8 — Lhasa-Museum & Jorkang Temple

Today, we will visit the Provincial Museum. The exhibits here are an attempt to document China's claim over Tibet. Afternoon visit to Jorkang Temple. The spiritual heart of Tibet, it houses the most revered Buddha image in all of Tibet, brought here by King Songtsen Gampo's Chinese wife in the 7th century AD. The Jorkang was constructed in the bed of Lake Worhang after it was drained. Legend says a demoness lived in Lake Worhang and Princess Wencheng wanted the lake drained and a Buddhist temple constructed to eliminate the life-blood of the demoness. The temple is an extraordinary site, with incense heavy in the air.

## Day 9 — Lhasa-Potala & Norbulinka Palace

We will explore two classic Tibetan sites today, the iconic Potala Palace, and Norbulinka, a landscaped garden-temple complex that served as the Dalai Lama's summer palace. The Potala is the most compelling image in Tibet, situated high on the "red hill" Marpo Ri, overlooking all of Lhasa. It was the seat of the Tibetan government, until the Chinese takeover in the late 1950's, and was the winter home of the Dalai Lamas for the last 200 years. In past times, a grand procession from the Potala to the summer residence was one of the local highlights of the year. In 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama escaped from the Norbulinka disguised as a soldier during the

## The Total Solar Eclipse July 22, 2009



A total solar eclipse takes place when the Sun, Moon, and Earth are perfectly aligned and the Moon is the right distance from Earth. When the Moon passes in front of the Sun, it will cast a shadow on a portion of the Earth. When the Moon completely covers the Sun, we will see a Total Solar Eclipse. The moving shadow of the Moon on Earth creates the eclipse path. The duration of totality for this eclipse will be 5 minutes 48 seconds.

### Path of the July 22, 2009 Total Solar Eclipse



Chinese takeover. We will also see the New Summer Palace, built by the 14th Dalai Lama in the 1950's, with murals of Tibetan history.

#### Day 10 — Ganden Monastery

Today, we will visit the Ganden Monastery, a place of great importance to the ascendant Gelukpa (Yellow Hat) Sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Of great spiritual (and political) significance to the Tibetan people, the temple occupies a hilltop. We will try to time our visit to coincide with the monks late morning chanting. Enjoy a picnic lunch in a meadow with a panoramic view of the Monastery.

#### Day 11 — Namco Lake

Today, we will visit the high Tibetan Plateau, skirting the 23,000-foot glacier-covered Nyenchen Tanglha mountains and crossing a pass to Namco Lake, which sits in a shallow basin at 15,500 feet. The expansive beauty of Namco Lake is extraordinary. Those who wish can walk a looping path around rock formations at its eastern end. The lake covers hundreds of square miles and is encircled by grasslands and the glaciated mountains of Nyenchen Tanglha. En route we'll have an opportunity to visit a family of seasonal nomads.

#### Days 12/13 — Lhasa to Hangzhou.

Today we will take flights from Lhasa via Chengdu to Hangzhou and the *Lakeside Hotel*. Situated next to a lake encircled by mountains, Hangzhou is widely considered to be the most beautiful city in China. It is reputed to have been Marco Polo's favorite. The protected scenic area of Xihu (West Lake) has been celebrated throughout China's long history. On Day 13, we'll explore the area including the Zhejiang Museum and the Liuhe Pagoda, overlooking the Qiantang River. We will then drive closer to our eclipse-viewing site near Yanguan, driving through towns that served during the pre-Communist years as traditional mercantile centers for close-knit clans of Zhejiang businessmen. *Haining Hotel (2 nights)*.

#### Day 14 — Yanguan

Yanguan is at the mouth of the Qiantang River. It is known locally for its tidal bore, a solitary wave which sometimes comes in on the New Moon. It may be possible to see this phenomenon associated with the Solar Eclipse. This afternoon will be free to explore Yanguan's well-preserved old town, which includes aristocrat's homes and temples. This evening there will be a special presentation about the eclipse.

#### Day 15 — TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE

We will depart early for our eclipse-viewing site, situated on the centerline of totality of this rare celestial display. All participants will receive eclipse-viewing glasses. The Total Solar Eclipse will be at approximately 9:30 am local time. We'll look for special phenomena of the Total Eclipse. As the Moon slowly comes between the Sun and the Earth, you will see the dark crescent of the Moon cross the Sun and slowly advance to block all of the Sun's direct rays. Just



before the Moon blocks the Sun, the sunlight passes through lower surface features of the Moon, creating a phenomenon called "Baily's Beads." Sometimes the depression of the Moon is so great that it produces a larger phenomenon, called the "Diamond Ring."

During the Total Eclipse, the rays of the Sun produce a corona, or crown of light radiating outward behind the dark globe of the Moon. This rare event can be seen only with a Total Solar Eclipse. The sky will remain blue but will be much darker. The air temperature will drop noticeably, and the activity and singing of birds will lessen dramatically. It will be an extraordinary experience! Then depart for Shanghai for overnight. *Shanghai Hotel (2 nights)*.

#### Day 16 — Shanghai

Today we will explore tree-shaded streets of Shanghai's old French Quarter or take a river boat excursion on the Pudong River with contrasting views of the historic Bund Riverfront and the modern Pudong district of Shanghai. Enjoy a farewell dinner in celebration of our journey followed by an acrobatic performance.

#### Day 17 Shanghai to Home.

There will be free time this morning for shopping and exploring the busy streets of Shanghai. After lunch, we will transfer to the airport for our return flight to the U.S. Cross the International Date Line and arrive in the USA the same day.



## Reservations

#1088

**Yes!** I/we want to join the **Tibet & Total Solar Eclipse Expedition, July 8-24, 2009** offered by **The Planetary Society**. Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ space(s). As a deposit, I/we enclose a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$500 per person) payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: H (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ W (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: Planetary Society AAAS Sigma Xi ACS

Accommodations Preference:

\_\_\_ Twin \_\_\_ Single \_\_\_ Twin Share \_\_\_ with a friend or

\_\_\_ Nonsmoker \_\_\_ Smoker \_\_\_ assign a roommate

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Mail To:**

**The Planetary Society Tibet 2009 Eclipse Expedition**  
**Betchart Expeditions Inc.**  
**17050 Montebello Road**  
**Cupertino, CA 95014-5345**

## Costs & Conditions

**Tibet Trip Fee:** \$4,195 per person plus airfare of approximately \$1,495 + fuel surcharge + tax Los Angeles to Chengdu, China, with return from Shanghai, plus in-tour flights \$995 per person.

**Expedition Fee Includes:** Land transport; airport transfers; accommodations; all meals; tips to drivers and local guides; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership; administration.

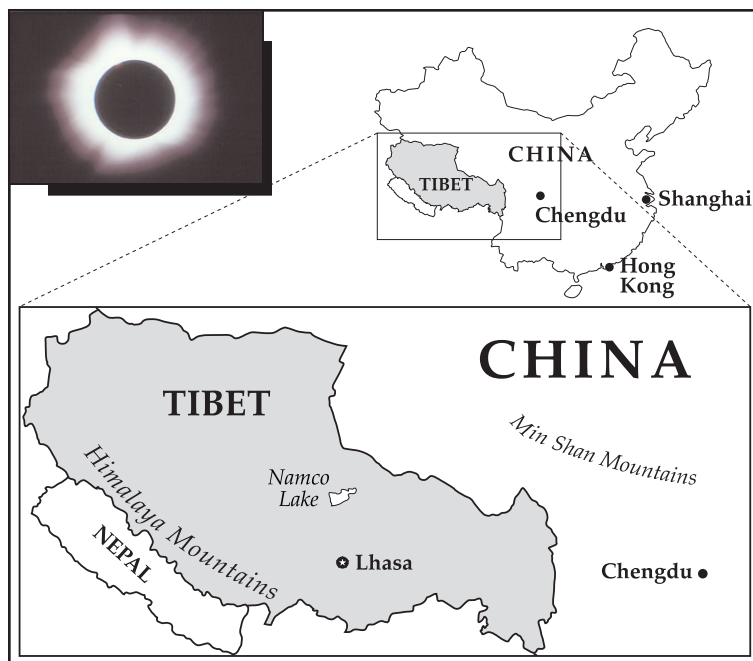
**Expedition Fee Does Not Include:** International air fare (quoted separately); in-tour flights; China visa fee; gratuities to leaders; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, snacks; personal insurance; foreign airport departure taxes.

**What to Expect:** This expedition is planned for travelers who would enjoy seeing the Total Solar Eclipse and exploring the heritage of the heartland of Tibet around Lhasa. We will fly to Hangzhou, China (near Shanghai), to see the Total Solar Eclipse on July 22, 2009.

Leading the expedition will be excellent guides with experience in Tibet. The group will travel 4 to 7 hours by bus or van on each of several days. On traveling days, we will take time for both planned and spontaneous stops to walk, photograph, and talk with local people. Walks will be at a leisurely pace suitable for discovery; binoculars are suggested.

Weather is pleasant in Tibet during the summer, with midday temperatures in the 70s to upper 80s and some rain. We will acclimatize as we adjust to the elevation. Around Lhasa, we will stay no higher than 11,700 feet and will drive over one pass at 16,900 feet. Most nights will be spent between 10,500 and 11,700 feet. This expedition will be a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure who would enjoy a chance to see the Total Solar Eclipse and to explore fascinating areas of Tibet. There is some possibility cloud cover could obscure the eclipse. Please be flexible concerning time schedules, hotels, food, bumpy roads, and mechanical breakdowns. With this in mind, we will have a grand adventure of discovery. (No smoking in vehicles or during lectures or meals, please.)

**Airfare & Airline Ticketing:** International flights are on Cathay Pacific Airways. *Please phone Betchart Expeditions at*



*(800) 252-4910 for further information. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE + FUEL SURCHARGE.*

**Accommodations:** Are in comfortable and reasonably clean Chinese and Tibetan hotels based on twin share. Expect a good bed, showers, western-style toilets, and carefully prepared food. Between hotels, some Asian toilets or bush toilets may be available (some "clean" and some not). Single accommodations are available for a supplement of \$750.

**Reservations, Deposits, & Payments:** To reserve a place on this expedition, please mail a deposit of \$500 per person with the completed reservation form to: **The Planetary Society Tibet 2009 Eclipse Expedition, Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435.** Balance of land fee is due 90 days before departure.

**Cancellations & Refunds:** The initial deposit is refundable up to 90 days before departure, less a handling fee of \$100 per person. There is no refund after the 90-day period unless your place is resold, then only the \$100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.

*Photographs by Dennis Schmitt, Don Nelson, Chris Carpenter, and Virginia Smith-Rader*

*For reservations, please contact*  
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