

Tibet - A Dream Come True

It has been a life's time ambition of mine to visit Tibet and in late June I fulfilled this ambition, travelling with a company called Explore Worldwide. I was in a group of 13 people, 7 of whom were travelling solo. Many of them were seasoned travellers and had been as far as Yemen, Cambodia and North Vietnam. The trip was for 17 days, 4 of which were in Kathmandu and the rest in Tibet. It was a cultural holiday, not a trekking one and we toured around in rather an old bus, which seemed to have lost most of its shock absorbers.

Yak, Yak and Yak!

Tibet was everything I had hoped it would be. The people, like most Buddhists around the world, are the most gentle of people; the women particularly have a childlike sense of humour and are very tactile. The men come across as a little shy and proud, but if you meet them half way, you always get a greeting and a smile. The food was very dull! Without the yak I don't think the Tibetans would have survived. It gives them milk, cheese, butter, meat and skin, which is used for clothes and tents; even its dung is used for fuel in fires as there is no wood grown at such altitudes. A normal meal albeit breakfast, lunch or dinner would be Tsampa, which is roasted barley made into flour and mixed with black tea and yak butter to form dough. These dough balls are then eaten



with noodles and maybe a little yak cheese, which is rock hard and which you have to slowly soften in your mouth before trying to chew and that's about it. I lost 10 pounds in just 14 days on that diet,

plus a little Chinese food, but even that was mainly just rice or noodles with odd bits of chicken or beef, which was mainly bone, skin or gristle.

The Dalai Lama's Palaces

After three days in Kathmandu we were given our group visa and flew to Tibet across the Himalayas. We stayed for three days outside of Lhasa where we visited monasteries and experienced a wonderful two-day religious festival at one of them. In Lhasa we visited the Dalai Lama's summer and winter palaces, one of the most revered temples in Tibet and three other monasteries. Leaving Lhasa, we travelled right across the central plain in full view of the Himalayas all the time. We went from 10,500 feet up to 15,200 feet, which was very hard going as some of the time we were travelling for up to 12 hours at a time over the Himalayas until we eventually arrived back in Kathmandu.

I am giving a talk to **the Wychwood Day Centre** on **3rd November 2005** and to **the Wychwood WI** on **9th March 2006**, when I will be showing some of the 600 pictures I took. Do come along.
David Trollope