

# The Himalayan Terrain Of Tibet

## Sit Back And Enjoy The Drive

By Ian Stalker

Tibet's Shangrila Tours has a four-wheel-drive itinerary for those who are truly willing to set their sights high. In fact, they can set their sights so high they will be able to spot the loftiest point on the planet. The company has week-long Toyota Land Cruiser expeditions from Lhasa, Tibet, to Kathmandu, Nepal, that can detour en route to visit the base camp used by climbers wanting to scale Mount Everest from its Tibetan side.

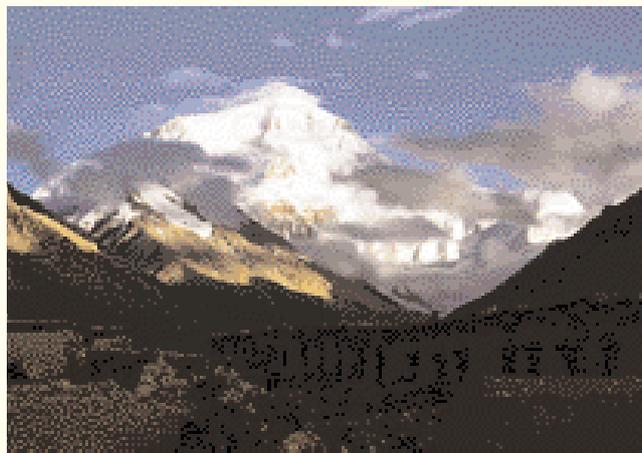
Those detours have people travel the 100 kilometre road leading from the Friendship Highway, which links Lhasa with Nepal, to the base camp, found eight kilometers from 8,848 metre high Everest.

The land cruisers, which have provided drivers and an English-speaking guide, will work their way over a 5,220-metre pass on the way to the camp deep in the Himalayas.

Shangrila Tours' clients will spend a couple of hours at the camp, and, even from eight kilometers, receive a dramatic view of the world's highest peak, says Shangrila Tours' Dho Kho.

"Everest is right in front of you. You're [seemingly] at the foot of Everest. It's huge," he says of the mountain Tibetans call Qomolangma or Third Goddess.

Those visiting the camp – found at an altitude of 5,200 metres – may encounter climbers, April, May, September and October being the most popular months



for scaling Everest.

Visitors can also have their pictures taken by an Everest marker that identifies the mountain by its Tibetan name.

A Buddhist monastery found at 4,980 metres – reportedly making it the highest monastery in the world – with a guesthouse that travellers can overnight in is found on the way to the base camp. The guesthouse is the highest point travelers can overnight at.

Kho says the four-wheel-drive land cruisers are well suited for the journey, traveling roads that are paved in some areas, but which can be dusty in others. Tibetan roads can have rough stretches, he adds.

The trips from Lhasa are available throughout the year, with most tourists opting for summer travel.

Wintertime visitors face weather that will likely be cold, but shouldn't be extreme, except for higher passes, where people

stay in their vehicles except for quick stops to take pictures. Wintertime Everest base camp visits aren't recommended because of possible ice on the roads. Kho suggests that tourists just sit back and let their drivers worry about the road conditions in the Himalayan terrain. "The tourist's work is to enjoy the scenery and think where to stop for pictures," he adds.

Those wanting further information can visit [www.shangrilatours.com](http://www.shangrilatours.com). ■