



The Kham Riders (Shamalong Festival)

CHINA

A wonderful **horseback trail in Tibet**, discover a historical region full of stunning scenery and ancient tradition. Your specialist guide will introduce you to Tibetan nomads and you will attend the Shamalong Festival where local Khampas riders dress up in all their finery. You will experience camping in remote locations where your belongings are carried by yaks.

Pack Trip	14 days / 8 days riding	From £3,278	
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ITINERARY

Highlights

- Unique chance to be involved in the equestrian Shamalong festival amongst the Tibetan highlands
- Complete immersion in local culture as we work directly with Tibetans in the Tagong valley
- Spend two nights with a family of nomadic herders in their camp
- A variety of accommodation: camping, nomad camps, Buddhist monastery, mountain retreat and guesthouse

Day 1 — 1 : MEET IN CHENGDU - DANBA or RONGMI - No riding

Morning meet-up in Chengdu and drive to Kangding (around a 4-hour drive, depending on road conditions). This small mountain city is at an altitude of 2600m and is mainly ethnic Han Chinese with a notable Tibetan presence and flair, particularly in its shops, restaurants and temples. For centuries it has been the meeting place of Tibetan and Chinese culture, and has served as a tea and yak hide trading centre. It serves as last outpost before the wild Tibetan mountains and passes of the Chengdu-Lhasa highway and the Tibetan region of Kham. Spend the night above the city at a hot springs guesthouse (3100m).

Day 2 — 2: KANGDING - RIVERSIDE CAMPSITE - 5 hours riding



Today is the first day of your trail ride in Tibet. The trail will take you through a deep gorge surrounded by lush forests. After approx. five hours in the saddle, you will reach your riverside campsite at 3300m.

Day 3 — 3: ZHAKRA YIMSTO - 6 hours riding



Ride up and over a high pass into a land of high lakes. Then camp

below in the low forest. Please note that this area passes through a park with a road and tourists.

Day 4 — 4: ZHAKRA YIMSTO - ZHAKRA HOT SPRINGS - 3 hours riding

Camp

Today's ride takes you into the valley to camp at the Zhakra Hotsprings. The afternoon is spent at your leisure, and you can enjoy these medicinal springs surrounded by prayer flags or, those who prefer, can hike up the hills. Overnight at camp at 4100m.

Day 5 — 5: ZHAKRA HOT SPRINGS - GYERGO NUNNERY - 7-8 hours riding

Monastery

Ride out over the high Griffon Pass (4900m) with stunning views of sacred Mount. Zhakra, 5900m. The day's ride itinerary will follow paths, across hilly, forested land, to the nunnery at Gyergo, one of the main temples in the valley, at a height of 3900m.

Today is a long day in the saddle over very steep terrain. Some riders will prefer to lead their horse on foot. Enjoy the nuns chanting this afternoon, and stay in a nunnery hut at 3900m.

Day 6 — 6: HIGH PLATEAU - 7 hours riding

Nomad camp

Ride up into the high nomad areas. Another lovely day on the horse to end at the home camp of our guides. We will settle in to spend the night at this camp (4200m), to be wined and dined by nomads, and experience their traditional way of life. Opportunity for nomad tent stay for interested guests.

Day 7 — 7: DASHIKA NOMAD CAMP - YIBEI LAKE - 3 hours riding

Camp

This morning you will take a break from riding and you will spend the day at the family camp in Dashika. This will be an opportunity for you to immerse yourself in the lives of these nomads - gathering in yaks and their calves and learning the skills of yak milking, cheese and butter processing, and yak fibre spinning for string and rope.

The afternoon sees you back in the saddle for a ride to Yibei Lake, a high sinkhole (cenote) lake at 4450m. During the 3 hour ride across the high plateau, you will see many nomad camps dotted across the area. Yibei is also a great lake to go swimming in - but always a little cold! Overnight camping (4450m).

Day 8 — 8: YIBEI LAKE - RAGNI LAKE - 5 hours riding

Camp

The day's ride will take you to a high lookout to the west, which will give you a fantastic view across wolf and gazelle country and the Lhagang plateau's highest reaches. You will stop for your lunch at a lookout, at 4600m, with unique views of isolated religious retreats nestled in the far-reaching mountains. You will then descend on horseback to discover the sacred Ragni Lake, the site of many legends and home of lammergyer birds that make their nests in the cliff sides. You will spend the night camping close to the lake, at 4200m.

Day 9 — 9: RAGNI LAKE - GENUP TEMPLE - 5 hours riding

In contrast to the isolation of the previous days' riding, today you will set out across one of the most populated plateaus in the Tagong region, the Lhagang plateau. This region also hosts a local religious festival - which you may happen upon - where you will experience the monks singing hymns and chanting from their richly decorated tents.

The ride's destination is the Genup temple, an old nomadic temple in the region. This small, remote temple hosts a community of monks every summer. Conveniently situated high up in the mountains, it overlooks the valley and the tranquil atmosphere will no doubt lead you to feel connected to the religious past of Tibet. After visiting the temple, say goodbye to the horses and guides and drive to Khampa Nomad Ecolodge. Overnight at the ecolodge.

Day 10 — 10: KHAMPA NOMAD ECOLODGE - No riding

Today is a rest day. Spend the day at the Ecolodge. Enjoy the sauna, tubing in the river, hot showers, and a hike into the hills. Overnight at the ecolodge.

Day 11 — 11: KHAMPA - SHAMALONG - No riding


Leave early this morning for the Shamalong Horse Festival. Prepare to be completely immersed in Tibetan tradition at an equestrian festival that brings

together the proud Khampas riders of the Tagong region. In the morning, the horses are blessed with juniper smoke and then the races begin. Although the Tibetan horses are small, the ground shakes and emotions are high! You will be a spectator to long, short and stunt races. This is also an opportunity for the Tibetan nomads to show their wealth in a spectacle of colourful traditional clothing. Participants wear colourful, shiny outfits and hats whilst ladies wear jewellery made from jade, amber, coral, ivory, silver and gold.

It is a true honour to be able to observe this festival which is still extremely rare and secretive. Your guide will help you with the local way of life so that you can completely immerse yourself in the warm Tibetan hospitality.


You will once more camp near the race site for the night (4100m).

Day 12 — 12: SHAMALONG - CHENGDU - No riding

 Buddhazen hotel

Drive to Chengdu directly from the Festival, which is a 6-8 hour drive. Overnight in a hotel.

Day 13 — 13: CHENGDU - No riding

 Buddhazen hotel

The day will be yours to do with as you wish in Chengdu. It might be possible to arrange a visit to the Giant Panda Breeding Centre (which usually welcomes babies in the summertime), the QingYangGong Daoist Temple, or the Tibetan quarter. Enjoy a last dinner and spend the night at the hotel.

Day 14 — 14: DEPARTURE FROM CHENGDU - No riding

You will be transferred to the airport for your flight back home. Your flight home should arrive today, depending on your flights and destination.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
24/07/2025	06/08/2025	£3,278	Open

Price details

- International flights are not included but can be booked upon request.
- Rates are per person, based on two riders sharing a twin room or tent, and shared communal rooms in guesthouses.
- Groups are composed of 4 - 8 guests plus guides.
- The ride can also be booked for 3 riders with a small group supplement of \$660 / €610 / £510 per person and for two people with a supplement of \$925 / €855 / £715 per person. Once the group has reached 4 people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.
- There is a single supplement of \$1,025 / €950 / £790 if we are unable to find a sharer for you.
- Rider weight limit is 85 kg. Heavier riders please contact us.
- A visa is required to enter China and is your responsibility.

Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

Price includes

SUPPORT TEAM

1 English and Tibetan speaking tour leader

LOGISTICS

1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle

1 cook and a team of Tibetan horsemen

Team of yaks for the transport of luggage

INLAND TRANSPORT

Minibus to and from Chengdu

Airport transfers

ACCOMMODATION

Camping - two-man tents and foam mattresses

Local standard 4-star hotel room in Chengdu (double/twin room)

Guesthouse accommodation - sharing a room with 2-5 people

MEALS

Full board during the ride - excludes meals when travelling to/from Chengdu

EXTRA EQUIPMENT

First aid kit

Fees for activities included in the programme

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Drinks and personal extras

TRANSPORT

Visa fees (must be obtained in advance)

EXTRAS

Tips for the local team

EXTRAS

Small group supplement - see above for the details

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurance are not included in the above listed price. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend taking out an insurance policy as soon as your trip is booked to cover you in case of cancellation

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Single tent/room supplement

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

You will ride the local Khampas Tibetan horses which are in good condition. They are small, strong, resilient and ideal for the altitude and difficult terrain. You will ride using local leather saddles which have additional covers to provide extra comfort.

Guide & local team

A local tour guide will welcome you in Chengdu. Once you reach Tagong you will meet your riding team. Your expedition leader is a Tibetan who married an American so their understanding of Tibetan and Western cultures is excellent.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

This mountainous trail is open to all riding abilities, from beginners to experienced riders. Most of the riding is in single file and the terrain means that the pace is slow. The horses are not difficult to ride although some will be more spirited than others. You have to be sensible with your bags and rainwear, for example, don't put your coat on when mounted as the horses won't be used to it and might be startled.

Rider weight limit is 85 kg. Heavier riders please contact us.

PACE

The ride is walking only - not just because of the altitude but because your belongings are carried by yaks who accompany you each day.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

The horses are groomed and saddled for you by your Tibetan team.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

You need to be physically fit. You need to be prepared to accept sometimes unfavourable weather conditions - it can be cold at altitude and it may rain.

This ride takes place in a mountainous environment between 3,800m and 4,800m. All nights are spent at an altitude of 4,000m or lower. The altitude is increased gradually to help you acclimatise but you must respect the advice of your guide. You should speak to your doctor before joining the trip particularly if you have any medical conditions relating to your heart, blood pressure or respiratory system. You should prepare for the holiday by increasing your endurance training - fast walking, jogging, cycling, swimming etc.

Previous experience of adventurous travel is recommended.

Please note access to medical facilities is limited and helicopter evacuation is not possible in the mountains - in certain cases evacuation may be by motorcycle and horseback until you can reach an ambulance.

Visiting a new country offers the opportunity to meet other cultures with different mentalities, therefore it is important to accept these differences and respect the local way of life.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

We recommend taking your own stirrup leathers with you - this is because Tibetan's ride very short and there may not be enough length to be comfortable.

We also recommend taking some leather laces so you can tie your coat behind your saddle.

We recommend our riders to wear a helmet to the correct standard and you should bring your own to ensure a proper fit

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

You will stay in a variety of accommodation. On some nights you will be camping in two-man tents (mattresses provided but you must bring own sleeping bag). On other nights you might be staying in a monastery, a mountain retreat or a guesthouse. During the ride and when camping, you will have access to different types of washing facilities - bathrooms with running water or rivers for both washing and laundry. You should ride knowing that you will be exploring some very remote parts of the country and that the accommodation will be basic.

In Chengdu you will be staying in a local hotel.

MEALS

The meals are predominantly Chinese and Tibetan. The base is rice, accompanied by many dishes of vegetables and meats - with some spices and peppers. Meals are essentially savoury and there is no dessert, so we recommend that sweet lovers bring their own supply of biscuits.

During the trail:

Breakfast: coffee, tea, powdered milk, bread, jam, eggs or Chinese food (noodles, fried rice etc)

Lunch: Light picnic (bread, sausage, yoghurt)

Dinner: Rice, vegetables, meat - fragrant Chinese and Tibetan cuisine

In towns and villages you will eat in local restaurants.

Water:

Take care not to drink water from unknown sources. Mineral water is provided at every meal whilst on the trail, or you can refill your bottles using boiled water (or bring water purification tablets). In restaurants it might be possible to get beer or fizzy drinks.

CLIMATE

Rides are run during the summer season (June to September) when daytime temperatures are warm but the evenings and mornings can be cold. July and August are the hottest months with minimum and maximum temperatures of 22 and 30c in Chengdu. Temperatures at altitude can be much cooler and the mountains are the perfect place to escape the summer heat.

TIPS

If you are happy with the service that you receive from the local team then you may wish to leave a tip. To remain consistent with the standard of living in China we recommend a tip of c. £50 per rider which can be distributed amongst all of the staff.

PACKING LIST

Please pack in accordance with local religious and traditional cultures - it is important to keep your shoulders and knees covered when meeting local populations. Please do not wear shorts or strappy tops in towns and villages.

The maximum weight limit on this ride is 17kg per person due to the fact that we are using pack animals. We recommend packing in waterproof packing cubes or duffel bags.

Head

- Equus Journeys strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet and that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. There are many lightweight options available nowadays
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana
- Warm hat for cold nights when camping

Upper body

- Thermals (long or short sleeved)
- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and are an extra layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Warm fleece or jumper (and a spare in case one gets wet)
- Warm and waterproof jacket - it can rain at any time of year and the evenings can be particularly cold

Legs

- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Thermals
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans or tracksuit bottoms
- Waterproof over trousers
- Lightweight, comfortable trousers for non-riding days

Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps as an extra layer against inclement weather. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Waterproof shoes/boots can be useful for abundant dew in the mornings or when it rains
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for moving around the camp in the evenings
- Several pairs of warm, thick socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun, cold or rain whilst riding. Waterproof gloves can be particularly useful

Nightwear

- Sleeping bag. You need at least a comfort factor down to minus 5 celsius, but would recommend at least minus 8 or 10 celsius.
- Sleeping bag liner - silk, cotton or fleece - adds an extra layer
- Self-inflating mattress such as a Thermarest (a thin pad is provided but an additional layer may be welcome)
- Pyjamas or tracksuits or thermals for sleeping in

Other useful items

- Swimsuit - for swimming/bathing in rivers

- Towels - lightweight camping ones will both dry and pack more easily
- Small backpack for accessing items required during the day (carried by support crew)
- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding
- Headtorch or small torch for moving around camp at night - bring spare batteries and bulbs
- Water bottle (2 litres or 2 x 1 litre)
- Wet Wipes or equivalent (for when washing facilities aren't available)
- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it with
- Small plastic bags for rubbish
- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

In your hold luggage

- Any liquids, such as shampoo, moisturiser, deodorant unless they are less than 100ml and all bottles can fit in a small, clear, plastic ziplock bag. We recommend biodegradable washing products where possible.
- Swiss army knife (or equivalent)

In your hand luggage

- Any valuables, such as your camera, ipod, ipad etc.
- Your riding hat

Medical kit

- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent, preferably containing deet
- Any medication you regularly take
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Eye drops
- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhoea medication
- Re-hydration sachets
- Water purification tablets
- Antiseptic wipes
- Handwash gel

Our Recommendations

- Please don't take a hard sided suitcase. Your luggage should be soft sided with a capacity of 60-80 litres. We recommend taking a backpack or similar. The luggage limit on the ride is 15kg per person.
- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bumbag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (camera, sunscreen, lipbalm etc)
- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!
- Tall riders may benefit from taking a pair of long stirrup leathers with them (the local stirrups are adjustable but are sometimes limited in length)
- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals
- Please take your rubbish home with you. There are no recycling facilities in Tibet, so take your used batteries, aerosols etc back home and dispose of them appropriately. Try to leave excess packaging material at home before travelling
- You may wish to take some photographs or postcards of your home with you to show your hosts. You may also wish to take some crayons, colouring books etc for the children. Be careful not to take card games as these are frowned upon by the adults, who use them for gambling.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. **Travel light.** It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when flying a plane or driving a car!).
2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#) .