

Indian Diplomacy At Work



KAILASH MANASAROVAR YATRA



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The Kailash Manasarovar Yatra is a pilgrimage that culminates with the visit to Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar which are located in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. Holding significance for the Hindus as the abode of Lord Shiva, the shrine holds religious importance also for the Jains and the Buddhists. The pilgrimage attracts thousands of religious people every year from India, Nepal, Tibet and other parts of the world. The pilgrimage is conducted, among others, by Government of India and private tour operators.

Whether it is the pristine beauty of the region, or its religious significance, or the thrilling nature of the trek through snow covered hilly terrains, challenging weather and beautiful expanses, the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra is an out of the world life changing experience.



MOUNT KAILASH

Mount Kailash (***Gang Renpoche***) is located in a remote and inhospitable area of the Tibetan Himalayas. It is considered a sacred place in four religions: **Bön**, a religion which predates Buddhism in Tibet; **Buddhism**; **Hinduism**; and **Jainism**.

For Hindus, Mount Kailash is the home of the Lord Shiva. For Jains, it is where their first Jain Tirthankara, Rishabhadeva, attained Enlightenment. For Buddhists, it is the navel of the universe. Tantric Buddhists believe that Mount Kailash is the home of the Buddha Demchok who represents supreme bliss. For adherents of **Bön**, it is the abode of the Sky Goddess *Sipaimen*.

LAKE MANASAROVAR

Lake Manasarovar (*Mapam Yum Tso*), situated close to Mount Kailash, is a large freshwater lake at a height of about 4590 metres or 15,060 feet. It is relatively round in shape with a circumference of about 90 km. Its depth reaches a maximum of 90 metres or 295 feet and its surface area is 320 sq km.

As per Hindu scriptures, Lake Manasarovar is a personification of purity, and one who bathes and drinks water from the Lake will go to the Abode of Lord Shiva after death. He or she is believed to be cleansed of all his sins committed over even a hundred lifetimes.





MEA ORGANIZED YATRA

Bilateral Protocol

MEA organizes the Yatra under a Protocol signed between India and China in May 2013. The Yatra is a symbol of friendship between the two countries.

MEA has been organizing the Yatra since 1981 through Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand. Currently, the Yatra is conducted between June and September every year in 18 batches of 60 pilgrims each. It is completed by each batch in 22 days, in addition to 3 days spent in Delhi to complete various formalities before the Yatra begins.

Fitness and Acclimatization

The Yatra involves trekking at high altitudes of up to 18,500 feet, under inhospitable conditions, including extreme cold and rugged terrain, and may prove hazardous for those who are not physically and medically fit. Only those healthy and physically fit should apply to undertake the Yatra.

In the overall interest of safety and security of pilgrims, strict discipline is enforced.

The MEA-organized Yatra is devised scientifically so as to gradually acclimatize pilgrims to be able to withstand harsh weather conditions in high altitudes where breathing becomes difficult due to low oxygen pressure.

Liaison Officer:

A Liaison Officer is attached to each batch. He is responsible to ensure the well-being and safety of the group. Only serving Government officer, equivalent to the rank of Under Secretary to the Government of India and above, is eligible to be appointed as Liaison Officer. The LO is required to qualify prescribed medical examinations.

Eligibility:

An **Indian Citizen**, with an Indian passport valid for at least six months as on 1 September of the Yatra year, aged between 18 and 70 years as on 01 January of the Yatra year, with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 27 or less, who is physically fit and medically healthy, is eligible to undertake the MEA-organized Yatra for religious purpose. **Foreign nationals** are NOT eligible for the Yatra. PIO and OCI card holders are, thus, ineligible.

Selection Process:

Draw through a fair computerized system: Yatris will be selected and assigned to different batches by the Ministry of External Affairs through a fair computer-generated random gender-balanced selection process. A spouse, otherwise eligible for the Yatra, will automatically be selected for the same batch, provided he/she has submitted his/her application; and, this fact is clearly indicated in his/her application form.

Confirmation of Participation

After the draw of lots, selected and wait-listed applicants are required to submit prescribed confirmation slip, with a non-refundable amount of Rs.5,000/- by specified deadline to confirm participation in the Yatra. Confirmed applicants are required to qualify comprehensive medical examinations conducted by the Delhi Heart and Lung Institute (DHLI) and the ITBP Base Hospital in New Delhi.

Additional Medical Test at Gunji

An additional medical test to ascertain reactions to altitude trekking will be conducted by ITBP at Gunji after about 5 days of the Yatra at a height of around 3500 metres.

A Yatri who is found medically unfit here will not be permitted to continue the Yatra. He/she will forfeit all charges levied earlier.

Expenditure:

Estimated cost of the Yatra is Rs.1.5 lakh per Yatri.

Each LO's costs are borne by respective parent Department.

A few of the States Governments - including Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, UP, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Uttarakhand - directly reimburse varied sums of money to their residents to cover part of their Yatra expenses.

Chinese Group Visa:

The pilgrimage is allowed only in groups. Visa is not stamped on passports. Group Visa is granted on paper. Visa fee of Rs.2400 per pilgrim is charged by the Chinese Embassy. MEA obtains the Chinese Group Visa.



NEW ALTERNATE ROUTE THROUGH NATHU LA:

Bilateral MoU

On 18 September 2014, the Governments of India and China agreed to open up an additional route of the Yatra through Nathu La in Sikkim.

The new route is fully motorable, excepting the Kailash Parikrama. It will be implemented from the Yatra-2015. It will be less rigorous. It will cover the Yatra in shorter duration. It is expected to serve a much larger number of pilgrims. Modalities of this route and cost of the Yatra are being worked out.

EXISTING ROUTE THROUGH LIPU PASS:

The traditional route through Lipulekh Pass will also continue to be used. It is replete with exciting nature and pure environment and provides access to places like Jageshwar Temple, Patal Bhuvaneshwar and Narain Ashram, which are of tremendous religious and cultural significance to pilgrims.

For detailed and updated information on MEA-organized Yatra, visit:

<http://mea.gov.in/kmy.htm>

