

# e-Lingua 1/2025

JANUARY 2025

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA  
CAWANGAN PULAU PINANG KAMPUS BERTAMBAH  
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UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang



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# An unforgettable trip to Tibet (September 12, 2024 - September 22, 2024)

By: Hoe Foo Terng



As I am approaching retirement age, I want to use up my seven days of religious leave. It has been a long-standing wish to go to Tibet to worship Buddha.

I started preparing in March – looking at various itineraries, enquiring from travel agencies, applying for religious leave and securing permission from the chancellery for an overseas trip. The application for the religious leave was a hassle because the university's computerised leave application system was not designed to accommodate the application of religious leave by non-Muslims. After many attempts, the application had to be done manually i.e. filling out the printed form and submitting it by post.



The trip to Tibet lasted 12 days, covering 5 of the 6 Tibetan areas in China. The Tibetan area that I didn't go to was the Mount Everest climbing base at the Ali Tibetan area. During the trip, I spent a lot of time traveling on the 318 National Highway to Tibet. One of the most important itineraries in the visit to Tibet was to visit the life-size statue of a 12-year-old Sakyamuni Buddha in the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa. The statue which was more than 2500 years old was consecrated by Lord Buddha himself. Lord Buddha once said seeing that statue would be like seeing his true self. I also went around the Jokhang Temple with other believers to fulfil my long-cherished wish to worship and circumambulate the Buddha statue. When visiting Tibet, the Potala Palace is another must-go-to place. You can see the magnificent red and white palace, the huge Dalai Lama's golden pagoda, ancient Buddha statues, and the beautifully painted murals. These are the arts and crafts and buildings that you must see in your life. Visiting the Kumbum Monastery, the birthplace of Master Ning Zong'epa in Xi'ning, and remembering the life of the great reformer of Tibetan Buddhism was another unforgettable experience.





Altitude sickness is the most common problem among Tibetan tourists. Fortunately, I didn't feel much discomfort even though I had a mild altitude sickness. Many places in Tibet are more than 2,200 meters high – Lhasa is more than 3,600 meters, and Shigatse is more than 3,800 meters. Fortunately, it takes a lot of time to go up and down the mountain by bus, so you won't feel drastic changes in altitude. The train from Tibet to Xining takes almost 22 hours. On this journey, you will travel at an elevation of more than 4,000 meters, so altitude sickness will be more severe.

My trip to Tibet coincided with the Mid-Autumn Festival. Looking at the moon from a place of higher elevation made me feel that the moon was somewhat different from the one that I usually see in Penang. Maybe it was a psychological effect. There are many glaciers and lakes in Tibet. The scenery of large glaciers and gem-coloured lakes is amazing. Wearing Tibetan clothes for photo-shoots will also leave you with some beautiful memories of the trip.

