

4 Days Qinghai & Chaka Salt Lakes

Trip overview

Embark on a soul-stirring 4-day journey to the heart of the Tibetan Plateau. This private tour takes you from the vibrant cultural melting pot of **Xining** to the "Highland Sapphire," **Qinghai Lake**, and the dreamlike "Mirror of the Sky," **Chaka Salt Lake**. Whether you're cruising across turquoise waters or capturing perfect reflections on the shimmering salt flats, every moment is a photographer's dream. Discover a world where deep blue skies meet pristine white landscapes in an unforgettable highland escape.

- **Durations:** 4 Days
- **Destinations:** Xining - Chaka Salt Lakes - Xining
- **Tour inquiry:** <https://asiachinatour.com/4-days-qinghai-and-chaka-salt-lakes/>

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Xining – Gateway to the Plateau & Multi-Ethnic Heritage

Welcome to Xining! Upon your arrival at Xining Caojiapu International Airport (XNN), your **private guide and chauffeur** will greet you at the arrival hall. You'll be escorted in a comfortable private vehicle to your downtown hotel for a smooth check-in.

At an average altitude of **2,260 meters (7,415 ft.)**, Xining serves as the breathtaking gateway to the Tibetan Plateau. Far from being just a modern provincial capital, this "Cool City" is a vibrant tapestry of cultures woven over thousands of years.

Morning/Afternoon: Architectural Wonders at Dongguan Mosque

Our exploration begins at the **Dongguan Mosque**, the largest and most influential mosque in Qinghai Province. Here, you will witness a fascinating architectural dialogue between Islamic traditions and Han Chinese aesthetics.

- **The Evolution:** Originally built in 1380 AD, the mosque recently underwent a restoration that returned it to its classic Chinese imperial style—featuring majestic square columns, upturned eaves, and intricate golden-blue patterns reminiscent of ancient temples.

- **The Details:** Step inside to discover a world of exquisite Islamic calligraphy and complex geometric art.
- *Note:* If your visit falls on a Friday during *Jumu'ah* (congregational prayer), you will witness an awe-inspiring gathering of thousands of local Muslims in traditional white caps (observation from the exterior only during prayer times).

Late Afternoon: Sensory Journey through Lower Nanguan Street

Next, we dive into the local life at **Lower Nanguan Street**. This 400-meter bustling artery is the soul of Xining's food scene.

- **The Market:** Wander through stalls overflowing with fresh plateau fruits and local produce.
- **The Flavors:** Follow the aroma of charcoal-grilled **lamb skewers**, freshly baked **Naan bread**, and steaming **beef offal soup**. Don't miss the local specialty—a unique sweet and sour fermented milk tea made from oats or wheat.

After soaking in the sights and flavors of Xining, your team will escort you back to your hotel to rest and acclimate to the altitude.

- **Accommodation:** Hampton by Hilton Xining Jiaboyuan (4-star)

Day 2: Xining - Qinghai Lake - Chaka Salt Lake

This morning, we depart to explore the "Twin Jewels" of the plateau: **Qinghai Lake** and **Chaka Salt Lake**. After a hearty breakfast, your private guide and driver will lead you on a **2-hour scenic road trip** toward the planet's second-largest saltwater lake. As we ascend, you'll be mesmerized by the **fertile, emerald grasslands** where herds of yaks and sheep graze against a backdrop of rolling peaks. Along the way, witness the **vibrant prayer flags** dancing in the wind—a local tradition for good fortune. You will also pass the legendary **Sun Moon Mountain**, where the courageous **Princess Wencheng** paused in the 7th century. Legend says her homesick tears formed the **Daotang River**, which you can still see winding through the valley today. Soon, we arrive at **Erlangjian**, the most picturesque sanctuary of Qinghai Lake.

Unique Experience: Cruise on the Sapphire Qinghai Lake Upon entering the scenic area, your guide will escort you to the wharf for an **exclusive 30-minute cruise** (available May–Oct) to the **Erlangjian Peninsula**. This is the most breathtaking way to experience the "Highland Gem." From your window seat, watch the water transform into **gem-like hues** as the sunlight dances on the surface. Upon landing, you'll be greeted by **vibrant ecosystems** where flocks of black-headed gulls soar above the turquoise waves. Stroll along the sandy trails to the tip of the peninsula, where the earth pierces the deep blue, and immerse yourself in the **serene grandeur** of the plateau. After our exploration, a shuttle bus will bring us back to the exit.

In the afternoon, we continue with a **2.5-hour drive** to **Chaka Salt Lake**. As the blue horizon fades, please take a moment to adjust your breathing; we will ascend to altitudes reaching **3,600**

meters (11,800 ft.) before descending to the salt lake basin at **3,100 meters (9,800 ft.)**. Upon arrival in Chaka Town, your guide will assist with a smooth check-in at your hotel.

Dinner Recommendation: (At your own expense) Thriving on the edge of this natural wonderland, **Chaka Town** offers a warm welcome to travelers. We highly recommend trying **Kang Pot Mutton**, a savory local specialty where tender mutton is pan-fried with potatoes, onions, and aromatic spices like aniseed and chili. For those seeking familiar flavors, options like **Dicos** are also available. Please note that due to the remote location, local restaurant prices may be slightly higher than in the city.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Chaka Evening Maple Hotel (4 stars)

Day 3: Chaka Salt Lake - Xining

This morning, your guide and driver will accompany you to explore **Chaka Salt Lake**, famously dubbed **China's "Mirror of the Sky."** This natural wonder features shallow, crystal-clear waters over a pristine white salt crust, creating a magical illusion that reflects the azure sky with perfect clarity. Standing here, you'll feel as though you've stepped into a **boundless, pure white world** where the horizon disappears.

Upon entering the scenic area, you have two ways to explore:

- **The Active Route:** A 3 km (1.9 mi) walk to the core sights, taking about 45 minutes and passing four scenic stops.
- **The Popular Route (Recommended):** Board a **slow, retro train** to the final stop. Here, you can rent shoe covers to step directly into the lake. Walking back allows you to capture perfect reflections and feel the **breath-taking vastness** of the salt flats.

At the second stop, don't miss the **giant salt sculptures**. These massive artworks depict Chinese legends, mythologies, and delicate pagodas, making you feel as if you've wandered into a **salt-carved fairytale**. After your exploration, relax on a **3.5-hour private transfer** as we escort you back to Xining.

Visit Tips:

1. **Additional Costs:** Please note that the retro train fare (**CNY 50** per trip) and shoe cover rental (**CNY 10** per pair, plus a **CNY 50** deposit) are not included.
2. **Weather Dependent:** The iconic "mirror" effect is highly dependent on sunny weather and calm winds.
3. **Protection:** The white salt flats cause **intense reflections**. Please wear sunglasses and apply high-SPF sunscreen generously to prevent sunburn.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Hampton by Hilton Xining Jiaboyuan (4 stars)

Day 4: Xining See-off & Kumbum Monastery

After breakfast, your guide and driver will meet you in the hotel lobby for a final cultural pilgrimage to the **Kumbum Monastery (Ta'er Monastery)**. As the centerpiece of Tibetan Buddhism in Northwest China and one of the **six most important monasteries** of the Gelug School, this sacred site is a masterclass in spiritual devotion and architectural splendor.

The name "Kumbum" translates to "**the White Pagoda Temple**," as it was famously built around a legendary white pagoda marking the birthplace of **Je Tsongkhapa**, the revered founder of the Gelug School. To embrace the local traditions, remember to **circle the pagoda clockwise three times** for good luck and merit.

The monastery's skyline is dominated by the "**Great Golden Roof Hall**," featuring a stunning three-tiered roof crafted from over **365 kg of pure gold**. Inside, your guide will unveil the monastery's most famous treasure: the **colorful butter sculptures**. These vivid depictions of Buddhas and Buddhist stories are a breathtaking fusion of faith and extreme craftsmanship. To keep the butter from melting, monk artists must work in temperatures near **0°C (32°F)**, frequently dipping their hands in ice water to keep them cool enough to sculpt—a true testament to their religious devotion.

After soaking in the spiritual atmosphere of this ancient sanctuary, your **4-day Xining tour package** comes to an end. Your private team will escort you to the **airport or train station** according to your travel schedule. We wish you a safe and happy journey!

Looking for more? If you'd like to extend your adventure into the **heart of Tibet** or trace the **ancient Silk Road** that once connected China and Europe, please **connect with your travel consultant** to tailor your next legendary journey!

Meals: Breakfast

Booking Policy

Cancellation Policy

Cancellation by Customer

- Cancellation received before 60 days: FREE of charge
- Cancellation received from 30 days to 59 days prior arrival date: 20% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 15 days to 29 days prior arrival date: 40% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 7 days to 14 days prior arrival date: 70% of total rate
- Cancellation received less than 7 days prior arrival date or No show: 100% of total rate

Children Policy

The rate for children applicable for one child sharing a twin or double cabin with two adults.

- For infant (<04 years old): Free of Charge
 - 04 - 11 years old without bed: 50% adult rate
 - 04 - 11 years old with extra bed: 75% adult rate
 - Above 11 years old with extra bed: 100% adult rate
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