

LOCAL CULTURE AND TRADITIONS IN TIBET

TIBET

INFORMATION

› INTRODUCTION

Due to an extreme climate and high altitude environment, Tibet has developed over the centuries a unique culture -very different from the rest of China- where religion plays an essential role. There is a lot of local tradition and customs in Tibet it's important to acknowledge before planning any trip there.

› TIBETAN CUSTOMS

Walk the Kora: A "Kora" is a walk or trek around a Monastery, temple, stupa or any sacred location. In Tibetan Buddhism, this circumambulation is done in a clockwise direction (except in Bon monasteries where followers walk in anti clockwise destination).

Prostrating: Prostrating is a very common scene in Tibet, especially in front of temples, monasteries and religious sites. Prostrations are done at a minimum in a series of three. To do a prostration, you need to place the palms of your hands together and raise them over your head, then lower them back to your neck and then to your chest.

Following, talking, taking picture or staring at people who are prostrating is very impolite

Prayer Wheels: There are two styles of prayer wheel .The stationary type that typically line the pathway of a Kora (or monastery entrances), and the hand held type carried by pilgrims. Both contain prayers written on a long piece of paper/scrolls and placed within the cylinder. The prayer wheels are always turned in a clockwise direction. Turning a prayer wheel is said to help gain wisdom and to accumulate merit which is good karma and to purify bad karma. While turning the prayer wheel, practitioners will recite the mantra: Om Mani Padme Hum. You can turn the prayer wheels yourself if you want!



LOCAL CULTURE AND TRADITION IN TIBET

INFORMATION

Mani Stones: Mani stone is a type of slate inscribed with a Tibetan prayer. It can be found all along the Kora and most of the times placed together to form a mound or even walls close to sacred places. When locals approach piles of Mani stones, they circle around clockwise as in a mini kora. Please do not take any of these stones.

Stupa/Chorten Stupa/Chortens contain relics, ashes of Buddhist monks or Buddhist scriptures. They are very religious monuments. Local Tibetans and pilgrims will visit these monuments and sometimes do prostrations or walk clockwise around the stupa.

Sticking out your tongue is a sign of respect! It was originally meant to show the person you were meeting that you can be trusted and you are not the reincarnation of an evil king who had a black tongue!



› DIET

Butter tea: Butter tea is part of Tibetan's daily life. They drink it all day! Butter tea is often commonly served to visitors of a Tibetan's house or in Monasteries. It is tradition, that when you are a guest in a Tibetan house and you are offered a cup of tea, accept it with two hands

Tsampa: Tsampa is one of the main foods for Tibetans. Tsampa mixes barley flour with a little butter and tea together.

› IMPORTANT

1. Please do not pictures inside temples
2. As always, ask permission before taking a picture
3. Please do not touch a child on the top of the head