

*Tibet, tips on organizing a climbing trip.* All peaks over 5,500 meters in Tibet officially require a climbing permit, which be issued by the Chinese Tibetan Mountaineering Association. CTMA is the government organization authorized to oversee mountaineering activities in Tibet. In addition to your climbing permit, CTMA also supplies you with logistical support up to base camp. This includes transportation, liaison officer, lodging and yaks, among others. You pay a fee for all these services in addition to the permit. You cannot simply buy the climbing permit and go to the mountain on your own.

When arranging your climb, your team can apply directly to the CTMA or through an agency that specializes in running climbs to the Himalaya. Dealing directly with the CTMA can be laborious, time consuming, confusing, and often more expensive than going through an agency. These agencies have price contracts with the CTMA, have worked with them for years, and are familiar with the CTMA's exact services, quality of services, and working procedures. Furthermore, an agency can organize every other crucial part of a climb from base camp food, cooks, and equipment to high-altitude climbing assistants (Sherpas), tents, and more—many essential services the CTMA does not even offer.

There are companies that work directly with the CTMA in organizing climbs to the Tibetan Himalaya. A handful are Nepalese agencies based out of Kathmandu. Two North American companies, Himalaya Incorporated (Seattle, WA) and my own BlueSheep Adventures (Bellingham, WA), cater to climbers from around the world. BlueSheep specializes in organizing expeditions to mountains in Tibet and China only. Both companies concentrate on high-quality, inexpensive climbs. They cater to pre-organized teams that only require logistical support to individuals that are looking for a fully supported expedition. They also actively support the use of Tibetans on the mountain as high-altitude climbing assistants, cooks, and porters—work traditionally done by Nepalese Sherpas—as a way to assist poor families in Tibet.

If you work directly with an agency in Asia, consider the Nepalese companies Asian Trekking or Global Expeditions. In Lhasa, a good company that offers trekking, though not climbing services, is Windhorse Adventures; the manager, Jampa, speaks excellent English. Contacts: Jampa\_W@hotmail.com or Wha@public.ls.xz.cn; (tel.) + 86-891-6833009; (fax) + 86-891-6836793. Himalaya Incorporated can be reached at: (206) 329-4107; himalayainc@earthlink.net; www.Himalayaclimb.com. My company: Bluesheeptravel.com; 703-593-4799; jotto@bluesheeptravel.com.

You can contact the CTMA directly at East Lingo Rd. #10 Lhasa, Tibet 850000, China; (tel.) + 86-891-6333720; (fax) + 86-891-6336366; (e-mail) ctma@public.ls.xz.cn.

Culturally-oriented maps to most of Tibet can be found at [www.tibetmap.com](http://www.tibetmap.com). The Department of Defense 1:500,000-scale TPC H-10A and H-10B maps cover most of Tibet with 1,000-foot contour intervals. Order from: MapLink, (805) 692-6777, [www.maplink.com](http://www.maplink.com); or Omni Resources, (800) 742-2677, [www.omnimap.com](http://www.omnimap.com).

No matter whom you go through, make sure to verify exactly what is included in the price. Inquire in detail about quality and type of base camp and high-altitude equipment and food; extra potential fees and over-use yak fees; climbing ability, quality, and nationality of the climbing staff (Sherpas), and cooks. You will probably have many other concerns as well. Make sure you get all your questions answered in a satisfactory and clear way.

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