

TRAVEL SAWY

MYSTIC MAGIC

CSS Latha relives her experiences at the magnificent Kailash Mansarovar.

Shree Jagadgurur, Yashwantrao Kailash

To visit Kailash Mansarovar, one of the most sacred spots in the world, is indeed an opportunity of a lifetime. So when I get the chance, after joining the Isha Yoga Center, to go for a two-week sojourn to this holy place, led by the master, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, I am ecstatic!

LANDING SITE

We opt to travel from Kathmandu and are booked at the Crown Palace hotel at Soaltee in Kathmandu. On the first day after we reach, we have a preparatory sitting with Sadhguru regarding the details of our journey. After all, tackling an altitude of 15,000 meters above sea level and a weather that grows

grimmer at every step, at times dipping below 0°C, is indeed a daunting task.

From Kathmandu, we cross the 'Friendship Bridge' or the Indo-China Gate where the Chinese scrutiny includes testing our body temperatures too! After getting a 'positive' clearance, we pass through the Gate into Chinese controlled Tibet for immigration clearance. From there on, we mount a sturdy Toyota Land Cruiser that revs smoothly through 2,200 miles to Mansarovar, Kailash and back!

STUNNING LANDSCAPE

The drive along the rugged landscape is ethereal and though it's night, the sheer beauty of the land keeps me glued to the window of our car. Time flies admiring nature's beauty. As we halt at our assigned

tryst, our tents in colourful hues are already ready and so is hot delicious Indian veggie food, thanks to the Nepali *shepas* who accompany us throughout the journey.

We halt at a place called Saga for two days. This is essential, we are told, to get us acclimatized to the altitude and weather.

SLOW AND STEADY

After two days, we move on to our destination — Mansarovar. The altitude is obviously a problem for us greenhorns, but Sri Jaggi offers us simple yet sensible techniques to deal with it. 'Stalk around in slow motion' is his mantra.

We reach Mansarovar and the first view of it is heady! So breathtaking is its beauty that we stand awestruck, watching the calm blue lake reflecting the many colours of the sunset.

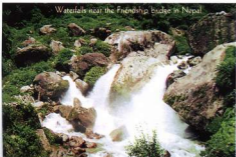
We have a 2.30 a.m. meditation session by the lake. It is Guru Purnima (full moon night), and we sit there on a guided meditation trip with Sadhguru, after a session of yogic preparation. The intense cold sends a chill down our spines, despite the layered thermal wear. I take a dip in the freezing cold water and feel distilled inside out.

LOFTY SHOW

Mount Kailash is our next destination. Incidentally, Kailash Parbat can be viewed from Mansarovar. We reach the base from where we have to trek 10 kilometers. I, however, opt to ride a pony. Trekking up to Kailash is a stupendously intense process, moreso as it is very difficult to breathe in the high altitude. Reaching there, we meditate atop the snowy peak. Despite the extreme cold, our spirits are soaring and energy levels, full-on. It is indeed the most beautiful moment of my life!

PHOTOGRAPHS: CSS LATHA

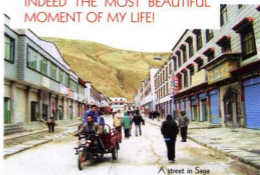
Waterfalls near the Friendship bridge in Nepal



BLISSFUL!

We go back to Kathmandu and spend a day visiting the Pashupathinath temple. It feels like the two-week journey has come to an end too soon. Back home, I feel a sense of peace. It is very rare that one gets an opportunity to experience bliss. ☺

DESPITE THE EXTREME COLD, OUR SPIRITS ARE SOARING AND ENERGY LEVELS, FULL-ON. IT IS INDEED THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MOMENT OF MY LIFE!



A street in Saga

FACT FILE

- Kailash Mansarovar is located at a distance of 865 kms from Delhi.
- The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is one of the most sacred pilgrimages in India. Mount Kailash, near the Indo-Tibet border, is sacred to four religions — Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and the Tibetan Bonpo faith.
- It is considered one of the most arduous treks of the world. The Government of India, in tandem with the Government of China, makes arrangements for the Yatra from India.
- The journey takes one through the Himalayas in both India and Tibet. The best time for the Yatra is from mid-May to mid-October.

Enroute Kailash

