Architecture:
Of historic interest are Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Sear Monastery, and Norbulingku. These last two are world heritage sites. Many important buildings were destroyed during China’s Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. Some of the destroyed buildings have been restored. Tourism helps to raise funds to restore old buildings. The Tibetans revere their old buildings.

History:
The culture of Lhasa is influenced by the Buddhist religion. The Empire of Tibet began in the 7th century under Songtsan Gampo. He built a palace in the location of today’s Potala Palace. Gampo converted to Buddhism. Only later after his death was the city associated with Buddhism. In the 17th century Lhasa became the administrative headquarters of both Tibet and Buddhism. In the 1950s China invaded Tibet. Many thousands of Tibetans were killed. The Potala Palace was stormed and the young Dalai Lama escaped capture and fled to India. Today Chinese outnumber Tibetans in Lhasa 2:1. The Chinese exert a strong influence and control over Lhasa.

Culture:
Traditional dances are still popular in Lhasa and can be seen at local restaurants in the city.

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Geography and Climate for the “Sunlight” City
City boundaries include 30,000 km. The elevation of the city is 11,800 ft. Lhasa sits in a basin surrounded by the Himalaya Mtns. The air in Lhasa contains only 68% of the oxygen level found at sea level. The Kyi River runs through the southern part of the city. Roads are not well developed in Lhasa. Marshlands run through the eastern part of the city. Lhasa has a cool semi-arid climate with frosty winters and mild summers. The city is protected from the harsh climate by the Himalaya Mountains.

Lhasa is called the sunlight city because it gets plenty of sunshine
Cuisine of Lhasa:

The foods of Lhasa include traditional Tibetan, Indian, and Chinese specialties. Traditional Lhasa foods include tsampa—a barley flour concoction mixed with butter; and eaten with every meal with buttered tea; bone soup. Popular meats are beef and mutton. Tibetans make wine from barley and while weak, it will put you to sleep quickly if you drink too much. Hand pulled noodles are cheap and popular. Mashed yak meat is served blood red and considered a good meal on a cold evening. Visitors should be wary of the strong spices in Tibetan foods. Also watch for raw meats in some dishes. India, Nepal, and China all have a strong influence on the cuisine of Lhasa and Tibet. The Tibetans especially enjoy spice Szechuan food from China.

Spicy and simple!

Travel to Lhasa: Pack for fun and cold!

Flight costs: $1,412. Two layovers. 29 hours in air.
Leave from Philadelphia (PHL). Economy class.
USAir to Beijing, China on China Air to Lhasa Airport (LXA). Take shuttle to hotel.
Room booked at the traditional style Tibet Hotel

Lhasa. Deluxe room. Stay includes banquet style meals, cable/color TV, spa, and airport shuttle. $103 per night. Hotel is close to Potala Palace. Be sure to visit souvenier shop for moderately priced presents to take home. Western style amenities including air-conditioning and refrigerator.

A Week in Lhasa, Tibet

Day One: On the way from airport to the city stop at Neitang Buddha for pictures. Check in to hotel. Make reservations for tour of Potala Palace. Take taxi to Barkor Street for shopping. Dinner at Hotel. Day Two: Morning visit to Potala Palace. Afternoon go to Jokhang Temple. Day Three: Taxi to Drepung Monastery. Lunch in downtown Lhasa then visit Lhasa Carpet Factory. Dinner on Barkor Street. Day Four: Take taxi (two hour round trip) out to Gandan Monastery. On way back stop at the Tibetan Museum. Be sure to visit souvenir shop for moderately priced presents to take home. Day Five: Day hike to lower base of Mount Kailash. Lunch at village café. Then visit Yangpachen geothermal springs for a dip and refreshing spa treatment. Evening performance of dance and traditional songs at Norbolingka Summer Palace. Day Six: All day trip to Namsto (Heavenly) Lake, the highest salt water lake in the world. Overnight stay at Zhaxi Temple and visit to wild yak sanctuary. Back to Lhasa in the morning for afternoon flight home.

Languages of Lhasa:

U-Tsang, Kham, and Ladakh dialects, Sherpa, Hindi, Mandarin, Hindi, Nepalese

Religions:

Tibetan Buddhism
Hinduism
Islam
Christianity

The Tibetan railway is the highest rail line in the world. It connects east China to Tibet and brings thousands of tourists to Tibet each year.