

Tibet at a glance



The historic map of Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion

Tibet lies at the centre of Asia, with an area of 2.5 million square kilometers. The earth's highest mountains, a vast arid plateau and great river valleys make up the physical homeland of 6 million Tibetans. It has an average altitude of 13,000 feet above sea level.

Tibet is comprised of the three provinces of Amdo (now split by China into the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu & Sichuan), Kham (largely incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan and Qinghai), and U-Tsang (which, together with western Kham, is today referred to by China as the Tibet Autonomous Region).

The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) comprises less than half of historic Tibet and was created by China in 1965 for administrative reasons. It is important to note that when Chinese officials and publications use the term "Tibet" they mean only the TAR.

Tibetans use the term Tibet to mean the three provinces described above, i.e., the area traditionally known as Tibet before the 1949-50 invasion.

Despite over 40 years of Chinese occupation of Tibet, the Tibetan people refuse to be conquered and subjugated by China. The present Chinese policy, a combination of demographic and economic manipulation, and discrimination, aims to suppress the Tibetan issue by changing the very character and the identity of Tibet and its people.

Today Tibetans are outnumbered by Han Chinese population in their own homeland.

SIZE	2.5 million sq. km.
CAPITAL	Lhasa
POPULATION	6 million Tibetans and an estimated 7.5 million Chinese, most of whom are in Kham and Amdo.
LANGUAGE	Tibetan (of the Tibeto-Burmese language family). The official language is Chinese.
STAPLE FOOD	Tsampa (roasted barley flour)
NATIONAL DRINK	Salted butter tea
TYPICAL ANIMALS	Wild yak, Bharal (blue) sheep, Musk deer, Tibetan antelope, Tibetan gazelle, Kyang (wild ass), Pica
TYPICAL BIRDS	Black necked crane, Lammergeier, Great crested grebe, Bar-headed goose, Ruddy shel duck, Ibis-bill
MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS	Rampant deforestation in Eastern Tibet, poaching of large mammals
AVERAGE ALTITUDE	14,000 ft.
HIGHEST MOUNTAIN	Chomo Langma (Mt. Everest) 29, 028 ft.
AVERAGE RAINFALL	Varies widely. In the west it is 1 mm in Jan. to 25 mm in July. In the east, it is 25-50 in Jan. and 800 in July
AVERAGE TEMPERATURE	July 58 f; Jan. 24 f.
MINERAL DEPOSITS	Borax, uranium, iron, chromite, gold
MAJOR RIVERS	Mekong, Yangtse, Salween, Tsangpo, Yellow
ECONOMY	Tibetans: predominantly in agriculture and animal husbandry. Chinese: predominantly in government, commerce and the service sector.
PROVINCES	U-Tsang (Central Tibet), Amdo (N.E. Tibet), Kham (S.E. Tibet)
BORDERING COUNTRIES	India, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, China
NATIONAL FLAG	Snow lions with red and blue rays. Outlawed in Tibet.

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADER	The 14th Dalai Lama. In exile in Dharamsala, India.
GOVERNMENT IN EXILE	Parliamentary
GOVERNMENT	Communist
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE P.R.C.	Colonial
LEGAL STATUS	Occupied

[[Homepage](#)]

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