



# CHINA'S TIBET

FACTS AND FIGURES  
2006



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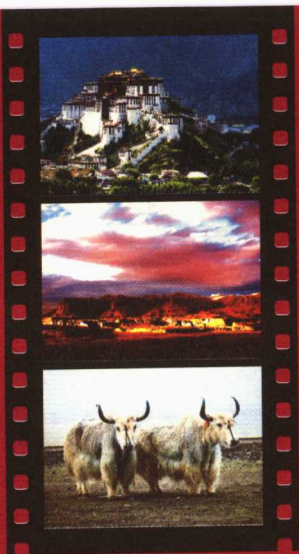
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## GENERAL SURVEY

- Geographical Location
- Administrative Division
- Topography
- Natural Resources

## CHAPTER I: GENERAL SURVEY

### Geographical Location

The Tibet Autonomous Region is situated in the southwestern border area of the People's Republic of China. Lying at 78°25'-99°06' E and 26°50'-36°53'N, it covers an area of more than 1.22 square million km, or one-eighth of China's land area. With a size equal to the total of the five countries including the Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, Tibet is the second largest provincial-level area in China, next only to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. It abuts the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Qinghai Province in the north, Sichuan Province in the east, and Yunnan Province in the southeast. It also has a 3,842 km border with the neighboring countries of Myanmar, India, Bhutan and Nepal as well as Kashmir in the south and west.

### Administrative Division

As one of the five autonomous regions in the People's Republic of China, the Tibet Autonomous Region exercises jurisdiction over one city (Lhasa City), one district directly under the Lhasa city government (Chengguan District), six prefectures (Nagqu, Qamdo, Nyingchi, Shannan, Xigaze and Ngari prefectures), one county-level city (Xigaze City), and 71 counties.



Lhasa is the capital of the region. Xigaze is its second largest city. Other major cities include Zetang Town, Bayi Town, Nagqu Town, Chengguan Town, Shiquanhe Town, Gyangze Town and Zam Town.

### Lhasa City

Located in the central south part of Tibet, Lhasa City lies on the northern bank of the Lhasa River, a tributary of the Yarlung Zangbo River. Covering an area of 31,622 square km, the city is home to more than 30 ethnic groups including Tibetan, Han and Hui, of which Tibetans account for more than 87 percent of the total population. The city enjoys an average annual temperature of 7.5 degrees Centigrade—the January average being minus 2.3 degrees Centigrade and that in July 15.4 degrees Centigrade. It falls into the category of a highland monsoon climate. Its major grain crops include *qingke* barley, wheat and corn, while its economic crops include potatoes, turnips and cabbages. Its medicinal herbs include Chinese caterpillar fungus, caladium, rhodiola root, snow lotus, ginseng fruit, musk and pilose antler. Its wildlife includes wild yaks, wild donkeys, Mongolia gazelles and Tibetan antelopes. Its traditional handicrafts include waist knives, *kardian* cushions, carpets, *bamdian* aprons, wooden bowls, and gold and silver jewelries.

Lhasa has opened more than 200 scenic spots, including some 20 major ones, such as the Potala Palace, Jokhang Monastery, Ramoche Monastery, Norbu Lingka, Zhaibung Monastery, Sera Monastery, Zongjab



*Lhasa is the political, economic and cultural center of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Pictured here is the Potala Palace, the symbol architecture of Tibet, which has been listed as a world cultural relic.*

Lukhang, Gandain Monastery, Curpu Monastery and Razheng Monastery. Its major sceneries include the Nam Co Lake, Yangbajain Geothermal Field, snow peaks of the Nyainqentanglha Mountains, hot springs at Dezhong and Doilung, and nature reserves in Lhunzhub and Meizhukongka.

### Nagqu Prefecture

Nagqu Prefecture lies in northern Tibet abutting Xinjiang and Qinghai. Its total area is 286,500 square km. More than 98 percent of its population is Tibetan and their main livelihood is livestock breeding.

The central and western parts of Nagqu belong to Changtang, lying at an average elevation of over 4,500 meters. Maintaining a primitive ecology, the prefecture is dotted with some 1,000 rippling lakes including Nam Co, Serling Co and Tangra Yumco, as well as many hot springs and geothermal fields. It is richly endowed with minerals, oil and natural gas. There are over 20 animal species subject to State first and second class protection. Major special products include oxen and sheep wool, Cashmere goat wool, caterpillar fungus, snow lotus flower, caladium and musk. Major scenic spots include the Shaten Monastery located in Nagqu County, Arza Lake and Drongyul Township Scenic Area in



*Nagqu Town is the most important farming and livestock breeding area of northern Tibet. It is also the reshipment center for animal products of northern Tibet.*

Jiali County, Nujiang River scenic area and Bomphan Primitive Forests in Biru County, as well as the Batang Monastery of the Bon religion, Lungkar and Lupug monasteries.

### Qamdo Prefecture

Located in eastern Tibet, Qamdo Prefecture abuts Yunnan and Sichuan

provinces to the east, and Qinghai Province to the north. The Sichuan-Tibet, Yunnan-Tibet, Qinghai-Qamdo and other trunk roads meet here. Covering an area of 130,000 square km, this prefecture is home to the Tibetan, Han, Mongolian, Naxi, Lili and Hui ethnic groups.

There are some 80 high peaks each with an elevation of over 5,000 meters in the prefecture. In the river valleys, forests and natural pastures live more than 600 species of wildlife such as snow leopards, pandas, Yunnan golden monkeys and white lipped deer. It is rich in some 1,200 kinds of medicinal herbs including caterpillar fungus, musk and young pilose antler.

Major scenic areas include Qambaling Monastery, Karu New Stone Age Ruins, Zugung County's Meili Snow Mountain, and Zaya County's cliff sculptures and Lunglung stone carvings.

### **Nyingchi Prefecture**

Located in southeastern Tibet, Nyingchi Prefecture is on the middle and lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River. It abuts India and Myanmar to the south. Covering an area of 99,700 square km, it is home to the Tibetan and Han, as well as Moinba and Lhoba ethnic groups.

Under the impact of the warm air current from the Indian Ocean, Nyingchi Prefecture is free from unbearably hot weather in summer and freezing cold in winter. It is blessed with plentiful precipitation and humidity. Forests covering 2.64 million hectares teem with giant spruce trees some more than 200 years old, while the oldest cypress tree is 2,500 years old. Timber reserves exceed 800 million cubic meters. The number of known higher plants reaches some 2,000. The lowest elevation is about 1,000 meters. Some places in the prefecture are suitable for growing rice, oranges, bananas and lemon. Rare wildlife includes Bengal tigers, Yunnan golden monkeys, leopards, bears and antelopes. Native produce include tube of elevated gastrodia, pseudo ginseng, fritillaria, Hongjintian, Chinese caterpillar fungus, glossy ganoderma and other medicinal herbs, as well as more than 120 kinds of fungi. Nang County's Tibetan hats and wooden bowls, Bome's "Qomolangma tea", and Ye'ong Tibetan knives, Zayu's woven bamboo products and Tibetan wooden bowls are famous in China.

Nyingchi boasts eight scenic areas comprising 40 scenic spots. They include

ones acknowledged as outstanding by world tourism organizations, 4A ones recommended by the China National Tourism Bureau, as well as the national forest park known as Basum Co Scenic Area. Others include the Nam-jiagbawa Scenic Area, Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon, Yi'ong Geological Park and Serchila State Forest Park.



*Nyingchi Prefecture is known for its pleasant climate and fertile farmland. Pictured here is farmland in Lunam of Nyingchi.*

### Shannan Prefecture

Located on the middle and lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River, Shannan Prefecture abuts Bhutan and India to the south. Covering an area of some 80,000 square km, it is home to the Tibetan, Han, Hui, Moinba and Lhoba ethnic groups. Tibetans occupy 98 percent of the total population.

As one of the major cradles of the Tibetan race, Shannan has a long history. It has 10 cultural relic sites subject to national protection, including the Tombs of Tibetan Kings, Samye Monastery, Changzhub Monastery, Zhatang Monastery, Jidui Tubo Tombs Group, Leshan Tomb, Lhagyali Imperial Palace Ruins, Namserling Manor, Gyiru Lhakang, as well as holy mountains and holy lakes.

The Yarlung River State Class Scenic Area is the only one of its kind in China. It boasts snow-covered mountains, glaciers, pastures, unspoilt river valley, and places of historic interest. The prefecture has three tourist sites featuring scenic beauty and human interest, namely, Yamzhog Yumco Lake Scenic Area, Samye Scenic Area and Holy Lakes Scenic Area.

Native produces include *pulu* woven woolen fabrics, Tibetan joss sticks and kardian cushions.

Shannan Prefecture is an area with sound transport facilities. Lhasa Gonggar Airport is located in Gyizholing Town of the prefecture's Gonggar County.



*Yak hide rafts shuttling on the Yamzhog Yumco Lake, the holy lake in the eyes of the Tibetans.*

## Xigaze Prefecture

Located in central south part of Tibet, Xigaze Prefecture abuts Bhutan and Nepal. Covering an area of 180,000 square km, it is home mainly to Tibetans. Other ethnic groups found here include the Han, Hui, Mongolian, Naxi, plus Sherpa people.

The prefecture is home to many plateau pastures, fields, forests, and snow-covered peaks. The Qomolangma Nature Reserve boasts the world's highest most intact vertical eco-system. Major places of historical interest include Tashilhunpo

Monastery, Sagya Monastery, ruins of the Zongshan Mountain Resisting the British Invaders Site, Xialhu Monastery, Deqoi Monastery, Zholma Lhakang and other cultural relics units, as well as the Natang Monastery, Rongbu Monastery, Palkor Monastery and the site of the former Parlha Manor.

Xigaze Prefecture is major area for the development of mountaineering in Tibet partly because it boasts five peaks each rising at least 8,000 meters above sea level: Qomolangma (8,844.43 meters), Lho Tse (8,516 meters), Makalu (8,463 meters), Cho Oyu (8,201 meters) and Xixabangma (8,012 meters). In the past two decades or so, China has opened 44 high peaks and mountaineering routes. Foreign mountaineering teams climbing Qomolangma now number over 20 a year.

Native produce of the prefecture includes wooden bowls wrapped in silver,

tea tray and frames, Tibetan carpets, golden thread hats, Tibetan knives and kardian cushions.

### Ngari Prefecture

Located in western Tibet, Ngari Prefecture abuts Kashmir, India and Nepal to the south and west. With the border extending 116 km, the prefecture has over 60 mountain mouths leading to other parts of the world. Of the seven counties under its jurisdiction, three engage entirely in livestock breeding, and four in mixed farming and livestock breeding. It covers an area of 303,000 square km, with relatively low population density.

The prefecture holds an important place in China's cultural and economic exchanges with the west. It is home to ancient civilization of Zhangzhung and the Bon religion.

With an average elevation of 4,500 meters, the prefecture is full of scenic wonders including glaciers, extensive plateau plant coverage, Gobi desert, rippling rivers and lakes, green fields, clay forests, and wildlife. Its Shiqianhe River, Kongquehe River, Xiangquanhe River and Maquanhe River are respectively sources of the Indus, Ganges, Sutlej and Yarlung Zangbo Rivers. It is also home to the sites of many ancient civilizations such as the ruins of Guge Kingdom, Toding Monastery, Donggar Frescos and Ritog Cliff Paintings. In Burang County is the holy mountain of Kangrenboqe, the chief peak of Kangdese Mountains,



*Clay forests constitute the most famous landform in the Ngari Prefecture.*

and the holy lake Mapang Yumco. Both hold an important place in Asian religious history. Ngari Prefecture also has five world-class tourist sites, 18 State class ones, 48 regional level ones. Tourism has grown into a major contributor to local economic growth.

## Topography

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau was the latest to emerge on earth, but it is the largest in size and the highest in elevation, hence its name as "Roof of the World" or the "third pole". Descending from northwest to southeast, the plateau is full of with gullies, glaciers, rocks and Gobi.



*The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, with Tibet as the main body, is the highest of its kind. Pictured here is a distant view of Nyainqentanglha Mountains.*

Under the impact of topography and atmospheric currents, Tibet's climate is varied and diversified. Generally speaking, the climate features frigid and dry air in the northwest and warm and humid air in the southeast. The climatic types from southeast to northwest include tropical, subtropical, plateau temperate, plateau sub-frigid and plateau frigid zones. And the climate undergoes a vertical change from tropical and sub-tropical to temperate, frigid temperate and frigid zones. There is a local saying that "there are four seasons within one mountain" and the "weather changes in a 5-km area" reflecting the diversity.

## Climate

With the rise in elevation, reduced air pressure and density, the oxygen content per-cubic meter of air correspondingly declines. At an elevation of 3,000 meters, the oxygen content is already only 73 per cent of that at sea level, declining to 62-65.4 percent at 4,000 meters, 59 percent at 5,000 meters and 52 percent at 6,000 meters.

Dominated alternatively by westerly wind in winter and southwesterly wind in summer, Tibet has a clear distinction between dry and wet days. Generally speaking, the months from October to April are a dry season while the months from May to September are a wet season, with precipitation during the period accounts for some 90 percent of the annual total. Rainfall is unevenly distributed

### Altitude, Air Pressure, Air Density, Oxygen Content and Boiling Point

Altitud (Meter)	Air Pressure (Millibar)	Air Density (Gram/Cubic Meter)	Oxygen Content		Boiling Point (℃)
			(Gram/Cubic Meter)	(% of Sea Level)	
7000	420	573	133	47	77
6000	481	644	149	52	80
5000	549	719	166	59	84
4000	624	802	186	65	87
3000	707	892	206	73	90
0	1013.2	1292	260	100	100

in different places of Tibet, with a remarkable demarcation line between dry and rainy seasons. Annual precipitation amounts to 5,000 mm in the low-lying area in the southeastern part, dropping to 50 mm in the northwest.

There exists great difference in climate between southern and northern Tibet. Under the impact of warm humid air currents from the Indian Ocean, the valleys in southern Tibet enjoy warm and wet weather, with the annual average temperature fluctuating between 8-16 degrees Centigrade at the height of summer and -16 degrees in the depths of winter. The northern Tibet Plateau enjoys a continental climate, with the annual temperature staying above zero. However, the icing period extends over the bulk of the year. The "hottest" month is July when the average temperature is only 10 degrees Centigrade, however. The period of June-August features warm weather but more rain at night. Spring is windy. March-October is the ideal season for visits and June-September the best season of all.

Tibet boasts more solar radiation than any other part of China, about 100 percent or one-third more than in plains at the same latitude. In addition, Tibet enjoys longer duration of sunshine, reaching 3,021 hours annually in Lhasa. However, it is 1,186.84 hours in Chengdu and 1,932.5 hours in Shanghai. The difference in temperature between day and night is enormous in Tibet; however, so far as the whole year is concerned, the seasonal difference is small. Both the annual average temperature and the highest temperature in Lhasa and Xigaze are 10-15 degrees Centigrade lower than in Chongqing, Wuhan and Shanghai, which lie on a closer latitude. The seasonal difference in temperature in Lhasa, Qamdo and Xigaze is 18-20 degrees Centigrade. In the Ngari area, some 5,000 meters



above sea level, the temperature in August reaches 10 degrees Centigrade or higher during the day, but falls to below zero at night.

## Mountains

On northern Tibet plateau lie the Kunlunshan Mountains and the branch Tanggula Mountain. In southern Tibet, there are the Hengduan Mountains. The Kangdese-Nyainqentanglha Mountains bisect Tibet from east to west. Mountains in the region reach an average elevation of over 4,000 meters. But there are 50 peaks each with an elevation of over 7,000 meters and five each rising above 8,000 meters.

Mountains in the plateau basically extend either from east to west or from south to north. Major ones are as the follows:

**Himalayan Mountains:** Zigzagging through the southern part of the Tibetan Plateau, the Himalayas, the highest and the youngest mountains in the world, comprise many parallel mountains running from east to west. The major part of the Himalayas lies on the border between China and India, and between China and Nepal. Extending some 2,400 km, it is 200-300 km wide. Major peaks have an average elevation of over 6,000 meters. They include the world's highest peak Qomolangma, rising 8,848.13 meters above sea level, towers over surrounding peaks on the Sino-Nepalese border. In this part of the world there are 42 peaks each with an elevation of over 7,000 meters, including four each with an elevation of over 8,000 meters.

**Kunlunshan Mountains:** Kunlunshan runs west-east on the northwestern fringe of the Tibetan Plateau, with an average elevation of 5,500-6,000 meters. It is one of the places perennially covered under snow and with modern glaciers. Muztag, rising 6,973 meters above sea level, is the highest peak in the area.

**Karakorum-Tanggula Mountains:** The major part of the Karakorum Mountains lies on the border between Xinjiang and Kashmir. Running eastward, it forms the Tanggula Mountains at 90°E, marking the border between Tibet and Qinghai. Galadandong is its highest peak. Rising 6,621 meters above sea level, it is the source of the Yangtze River, the longest river in China.

**Kangdese-Nyainqentanglha Mountains:** Lying at the southern edge of the Northern Tibet Plateau, the mountains serve as the border between north and south and southeast Tibet, and the demarcation line for rivers that flow within and out of the region. Kangrinboqe, with an elevation of 6,656 meters, is the main peak of the Kangdese Mountains; and Nyainqentanglha, rising 7,162 meters above sea

