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*The International Campaign for Tibet works to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet. ICT was founded in 1988 and has offices in Washington DC, Amsterdam, Berlin and Brussels.*





## INTERPRETING TIBET: A POLITICAL GUIDE TO TRAVELING IN TIBET



*A report by the International Campaign for Tibet  
Washington, DC | Amsterdam | Berlin | Brussels  
[www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)*

## **INTERPRETING TIBET: A POLITICAL GUIDE TO TRAVELING IN TIBET**

July 2008

Dear Reader:

Since March, a tidal wave of protests against Chinese mis-rule in Tibet has swept across the entire Tibetan plateau – the most significant uprising in more than 40 years. These developments transformed the political landscape and the consequences remain uncertain. The Chinese authorities responded to the protests with a brutal crackdown and, in an unprecedented move, sealed off almost the entire plateau to tourists and visitors. Although the first foreign tourists were admitted to the Tibet Autonomous Region on June 25, there are stringent restrictions in place, more than ever before.

Our travel guide to Tibet was published before the unrest and crackdown occurred, but its findings are still relevant to our understanding of Tibet today, and we hope it will be useful as tourists begin to return to Tibet.

What began on March 10 with a group of monks from Drepung monastery peacefully marching to the center of Lhasa to mark the anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising has resulted in untold numbers of deaths and disappearances and a near police state throughout the Tibetan plateau. Over 100 protests followed the initial March 10th demonstration, the result of long simmering tensions and Chinese mis-rule in Tibet. Chinese government officials cite “security concerns” for closing the region to foreigners; however, protests following the unrest in Lhasa on March 14th have been peaceful or targeted at symbols of state control, such as government buildings and police vehicles. Monks, nuns, students, farmers, and nomads have demonstrated for the Dalai Lama’s return and basic rights and freedoms for Tibetans.

Despite the Chinese government’s best efforts to minimize the magnitude of these demonstrations, reporting only 28 fatalities and closing off the area to foreign media, their reaction belies a new international perception of the gravity of Tibet’s situation. Protests continue, largely in reaction to the heavy handed government response and the enforced “patriotic education” campaign. This campaign often forces monks and nuns to denounce the Dalai Lama, dispatches security forces to destroy images of the Dalai Lama, and in many instances places monasteries under lockdown. Disappearances and arbitrary arrests continue in Tibet while Beijing finishes preparations for the 2008 summer Olympics.

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### **COVER PHOTO**

Contemporary Lhasa - juxtaposition of the ancient and modern, with the Potala Palace, former home of the Dalai Lama in Tibet. Chinese language signboards, with the Tibetan language either absent or in small type, are increasingly predominant. Photo: ICT

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TIBET

TIBET AS DEFINED BY CHINA AFTER 1965

### NOTE ON GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS

Tibet was traditionally comprised of three main areas: Amdo (north-eastern Tibet), Kham (eastern Tibet) and U-Tsang (central and western Tibet). The Tibet Autonomous Region (Chinese: *Xizang Zizhiqu*) was set up by the Chinese government in 1965 and covers the area of Tibet west of the Yangtze River, including part of Kham, although it is often referred to now as ‘central Tibet’ in English. The rest of Amdo and Kham have been incorporated into Chinese provinces, and where Tibetan communities were said to have ‘compact inhabitancy’ in these provinces they were designated Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties. As a result most of Qinghai and parts of Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces are acknowledged by the Chinese authorities to be ‘Tibetan’. The term ‘Tibet’ in this report is used to refer to all these Tibetan areas currently under the jurisdiction of the People’s Republic of China.

# Introduction

Tibet, once known as a ‘forbidden kingdom’, a remote Shangri-la in the clouds, is now more accessible to travelers than ever before. No longer do tourists have to endure the long and arduous journey along treacherous mountain roads – a journey made even harder by Chinese officialdom trying to control or simply prevent the outside world from seeing any evidence of the destruction visited upon Tibet under China’s rule. Now tourists can enter Tibet from Chengdu in Sichuan, Xining in Qinghai, or Kathmandu in Nepal by air – and the Qinghai-Lhasa train that opened in July 2006 has made the plateau even more accessible.

This report explores the ethical questions of visiting Tibet, a country under Chinese occupation, and offers a perspective for the traveler to Tibet who wants to be informed about the reality of their destination, as opposed to the propaganda and the mythology.

The main reason a campaign to discourage people from traveling to Tibet has not taken hold – as happened with South Africa during the apartheid years, for example – is because the Dalai Lama, the religious and temporal leader of Tibet, encourages tourists to bear witness to what was happening to Tibet, Tibetan culture and the Tibetan people. Today, Beijing has designated tourism as a ‘pillar industry’ in Tibet, one which it is hoped will spur

rapid economic development in Tibet with tourists coming from mainland China and from abroad.

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army invaded Tibet in 1949-50 and China formally assumed military and administrative control in 1951. Since then, China’s position has remained unchanged; that Tibet has been and always will be part of China, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Tibet was recognized as an independent state from 1911 to 1950 under international law, and had its own flag, its own currency, and its own system of government amongst other trappings of a modern independent state.

In 1959, the Dalai Lama fled into exile. The Chinese authorities attempted to fill the void in Tibet with extremist political dogma and Chairman Mao’s ‘cult of personality’. While China has remained politically intransigent on the question of Tibet’s past status, it has been acknowledged that ‘mistakes’ were made in the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. During that time thousands of Tibetan monasteries and nunneries were destroyed, monks and nuns disrobed, imprisoned or worse, and Tibetan culture was derided as ‘backwards’ and ‘primitive’ and in need of ‘modernization’ by China.

The few intrepid travelers who made it to Tibet in the 1980s were generally aware of the situation



Tibetan prayer flags near Ganden Monastery. *Photo: Eva Bartlett*

there before they set out on their journey – at least, as aware as they could be in light of the authorities’ attempts to block information flow on Tibet. It is notable that there are very few accounts of travel to Tibet by non-Chinese writers in the last 50 years and more which do not dwell on the Chinese state’s oppression of the Tibetan people and the destruction of Tibetan culture.

Foreigners traveling in Tibet in the late 1980s returned home with news of brutal tactics to disperse peaceful demonstrations by monks and nuns in Lhasa and sometimes with photographs and film of the demonstrations – incontrovertible evidence of the Tibetan people’s deep-seated resentment of China’s rule of Tibet, as well of the Chinese authorities’ inability to address that

resentment with anything other than armed force. In this way, foreigners became involved in bearing witness to Tibet’s political struggles.

The situation today is entirely different. In contemporary Lhasa, it is now entirely conceivable that a tourist who is not informed about the political realities may be unaware of any oppression at all. They will note the Tibetans arriving on pilgrimage, making prostrations before shrines, lighting incense and visiting the temples. They will observe the broad boulevards, the apparently thriving commercial enterprises and the gleaming new office buildings.

Tourists may understand that the devotional element of Tibetan Buddhist religion is still

thriving in Tibet, but may fail to grasp that the survival of the Buddhist culture, so critical to Tibetan identity, is facing its most severe crisis. It may also not be apparent that behind the modern urban façade, a growing underclass of Tibetans are increasingly marginalized and impoverished, without access to even basic healthcare and education. China's economic policies, imposed from the top-down, are resulting in a dramatic and irreversible change to Tibetan people's lives with little or no consideration for the differences between Tibetan and Chinese culture and traditions. Characterizing this problem, a recent traveler to Tibet commented that they "stayed in a hotel that has fake Tibetan architecture, something that the Chinese have gotten very good at, taking the elements of Tibetan buildings, such as the roof border, and painted on the wooden beams, and painted on the black window surrounds...this fools [many others] on the tour."

In Lhasa, travelers prepared to observe more closely will see the beggars on the streets, the pervasive presence of the Chinese military, and note too that most of the traders are actually Chinese rather than Tibetan. A harmless looking radio transmitter is actually there to jam Tibetan language broadcasts from foreign radio stations such as Voice of America, Voice of Tibet and Radio Free Asia. The ornate curlicues on the façade of a building may be in the Tibetan style, but they cannot hide the absence of genuine Tibetan architecture – less than three per cent of the 'Tibetan quarter' of Lhasa remains following the demolition and transformation of Lhasa into a Chinese city.



Lhasa is fast becoming a modern Chinese city, at the expense of local Tibetans. *Photo: ICT*

That strange vertical monument you will see in the Potala Palace Square, opposite the Dalai Lama's former home, is meant to be a representation of the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet. The location of this structure, just opposite the Dalai Lama's home, is intended to send a political message. Similarly, it is no coincidence that the tower block that dominates the skyline over the Jokhang Temple in central Lhasa is the headquarters of the Public Security Bureau, symbolizing the state's ever watchful presence over Tibetan lives.

This alternative guide to Tibet will hopefully enable you, the traveler, to understand more of the reality of Tibet today and to decrypt China's representations.

The disappearance from Lhasa of its distinctive Tibetan character has been accompanied by relentless official propaganda, which for many



Statue of King Gesar, a legendary warrior famous throughout Central Asia, remains a cultural icon in modern Tibet. This statue is in the Tibetan area of Jyekundo, capital of Yushu Prefecture. *Photo: ICT*

Tibetans has uncomfortable similarities with the inflammatory language of the Cultural Revolution. (It should be noted that the word ‘propaganda’, which has negative and almost Stalinist connotations in English and other languages, is largely synonymous with the term ‘marketing’ in Chinese and is widely used.)

Tibetan people are constantly told in the papers, on television and radio and on posters in monasteries and temples of the official Chinese assertion that Tibet is part of the ‘motherland’ and has been for centuries; they are informed that the Chinese Communist Party – precisely the same organization which devastated Tibet before and during the Cultural Revolution and which continues to venerate the political leaders who inspired that destruction – is the savior and liberator of Tibet. The top Chinese government official in Tibet, Zhang Qingli, even claimed in

March 2007 that the Communist Party is the “real Buddha” for Tibetans.

One of the largest statues of Chairman Mao in the entire People’s Republic of China presides over a small town close to Lhasa airport in Tibet. Standing more than 21 feet (7 meters) high on a pedestal, the message to the tourist is an unequivocal “Welcome to China”; to the Tibetan, the message is an equally unequivocal “This is China”.

The statue was built using money supplied by a Chinese province under the rubric of the ‘Western Development Strategy’, a development plan begun in 2000 which the central Chinese government claims is intended to raise the living standards of people living in the impoverished areas of the western People’s Republic of China, including Tibet. The statue is a prime example of the main motivation for encouraging ‘development’ in Tibet: by asserting that Tibet is China’s domain, justification of enormous resource extraction and the orchestrated migration of hundreds of thousands of Chinese migrants into Tibet is made that much easier.

As a foreign tourist, you are also the target of propaganda when you go to Tibet, although the messaging is generally far more subtle than that endured by Tibetans. In official publications and material for foreign tourists, Tibet is almost invariably referred to as ‘China’s Tibet’ (the very assertion indicates Beijing’s insecurity on this point: Shanghai is not referred to as ‘China’s Shanghai’, after all); emphasis is placed on the “unity of the nationalities”, meaning Tibetans and Chinese in

this context, although as a tourist to Lhasa you will immediately notice that Tibetans are second-class citizens and that there is practically no social or even economic interaction between Tibetans and Chinese. It really is a divided city.

You will undoubtedly hear and read on many occasions that Tibet was “peacefully liberated” by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army. Actually, thousands of Tibetan soldiers died trying to resist the People’s Liberation Army’s advance through eastern Tibet towards Lhasa in 1950. Chinese historians have noted that Tibetan peasants applauded Chinese troops who entered their villages, but the historians apparently didn’t realize that in parts of Tibet people customarily clap their hands to ward off evil spirits.

Foreign travelers to Tibet should bear in mind that they have the right to question, analyze and agree or disagree with the propaganda they see and hear. Ordinary Tibetans do not.

Bear in mind too when you see and hear political propaganda that over the years in Tibet, untold thousands upon thousands of Tibetans have been through prisons and labor camps because they chose to question or reject official propaganda; countless others died in incarceration or in resistance against the Chinese.

The Tibetan people have a deep and profound sense of loyalty to the Dalai Lama. However, under Chinese rule any public sign of devotion by Tibetans to the Dalai Lama has in effect been criminalized – particularly in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) which is roughly

analogous to the central Tibetan region of U-Tsang. The Chinese authorities are so determined to wipe out all vestiges of loyalty to the Dalai Lama among Tibetans that it is forbidden to even display his photograph in public. Even so, you are still likely to see his picture on display, if you look carefully. Tibetans express their feelings in careful and subtle acts of dissent.

Tibetans live in a climate of fear. Sophisticated and comprehensive security policies ensure control over every aspect of their everyday lives. Even with the best of intentions, tourists can sometimes put Tibetans into situations of danger and vulnerability.

This guide will urge you not to be taken in by one of the largest and best-funded propaganda machines the world has ever seen, the Chinese Communist Party. It will attempt to supply you with the tools to make up your own mind about what you see when you go to Tibet, and how to ensure that your presence in Tibet is not detrimental to the Tibetan people, and that the Tibetan people may even derive some direct benefit. ■

# Why go to Tibet?

Tibet has been a source of deep fascination for travelers ever since foreigners started to travel there from the 16th century onwards. Its sheer remoteness from the rest of the world has proved to be an irresistible draw for intrepid explorers hoping to make their mark on the last expanses of uncharted territory on earth. The same attraction has been felt by travelers in more recent decades too, for whom a journey to ‘the roof of the world’ was a physical and mental challenge of endurance. The reward of seeing some of the most spectacular scenery on the planet infused with Tibet’s rich and profound Buddhist culture made the challenge more than worthwhile to the traveler.

Tibet is a vast and thinly populated plateau roughly the size of western Europe. It is surrounded and criss-crossed by towering mountain ranges which include many of the world’s highest and most formidable peaks. The plateau itself largely consists of vast rolling plains speckled with lakes and rivers. Lhasa, Tibet’s capital city at 11,800 feet (3600 meters), stands at a higher elevation than the summit of Mount Hood in the United States – 11,250 feet (3429 meters) – and at about the same elevation as the summit of the highest mountain in the Glarus Alps in Switzerland, Mount Tödi at 11,857 feet (3614 meters).

Mythology, folklore and fiction have contributed to building an image of Tibet which is deeply



Tibetan prayer wheels and flags, believed to carry blessings in the wind. *Photo: Eva Bartlett*



Nomads on motor-bikes in an area of Amdo, eastern Tibet, now incorporated into Qinghai province. Under Chinese policies of urbanization, more and more Tibetan nomads are required to settle in towns. *Photo: ICT*

appealing to tourists from all over the world. 'Shangri-la' is a term coined by the British writer James Hilton, writing in the disillusioned post-World War I period, to describe a remote mountain land ruled by lamas who knew the secret of eternal youth. Its association with Tibet continues even today; and China has even appropriated the term to describe a large Tibetan area of Yunnan province in order to attract more tourists.

However, as most tourists to Tibet will see – and especially those who only take the train to Lhasa – this romanticized image is not, and has never been, an accurate reflection of the reality, much as Tibetan culture is undeniably precious and of value.

Once in Lhasa and away from the newer, more modernized parts of the city – which resemble any other city in mainland China – there is much for tourists to see. The Potala Palace, probably the most recognizable building in Tibet and the traditional home of the Dalai Lamas, dominates the Lhasa skyline; the Dalai Lamas' winter palace, the Norbulinka; and Ganden, Sera and Drepung monasteries, three of the most important monasteries in the Gelugpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, a tradition commonly known as the 'yellow hat' school, to which the Dalai Lama belongs.

According to China's official statistics 2.5 million tourists (mostly Chinese) went to Tibet in 2006, which was an increase of over 40% on the previous year. Official estimates claim as many as 4 million tourists will visit Tibet in 2007, a figure which Tibet's tourism bureau concedes is likely to put



A religious encampment in the eastern Tibetan area of Kham, now incorporated into China's Sichuan province. Given the increased restrictions and control of religious practice in monasteries and nunneries, more Tibetans are attempting to connect directly with religious teachers and their practice in encampments outside more established monastic institutions.  
*Photo: ICT*

enormous strain on tourism amenities such as hotels, restaurants and transport facilities.

In the May Day holiday in 2007 – a national one week vacation – 340,000 tourists went to Tibet between May 1 and 7 alone, which represented a 32% increase on the previous year according to official statistics, a dramatic increase which is almost entirely attributable to the railway.

Official sources claim that around 93% of these tourists are from mainland China, while a small fraction – just over 10,000 in 2006 – are people the press describe as “compatriots” from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and the rest are foreigners. Tourists are flocking to Lhasa in such numbers that daily quotas are in place for the number of tourists permitted to visit the Potala

*“I think you must go [to Tibet] yourself, and spend some time, not only in towns but in the countryside. Go to the countryside, and with a translator, if possible one who speaks Tibetan, if not, then one who speaks Chinese. Go there. Study on the spot. Then I think you will get a real answer.*

*“But information which I am receiving, from time to time, from Tibet, from a variety of Tibetans – some are Chinese officials, party members – several thousand now I have met in the last 20 years... all expressing sad, sadness, complaint, resentment. Also some Chinese who know about Tibet are also very critical about their own government policy.*

*“But the best answer is that you should go there, and study.”*

The Dalai Lama in response to a question by Vancouver’s Mayor Sam Sullivan on repression in Tibet.

— Vancouver Sun, Friday, September 8, 2006.

Palace and the Jokhang Temple, two of the most important religious sites in all of Tibet. An official report claimed in March 2007 that there are plans to build a miniature version of the Potala Palace in Lhasa to try and satisfy tourist demand.

Tourism is indeed proving to be a ‘pillar industry’ as planned by the Chinese authorities. In 2006, tourism accounted for 9.5% of the TAR’s GDP,

an important source of independent revenue for the TAR for whom 90% of its annual expenditure comes from central government subsidies.

There are obvious things for tourists to see when they go to Lhasa. However, less obvious to the tourist is what is missing from Tibet – and not just the thousands of destroyed monasteries, nunneries and temples and the traditional society they served: the absence of the Dalai Lama is palpable. When you visit places like the Potala Palace and the Jokhang Temple, not to mention the monasteries and temples in Lhasa and beyond, the essential ingredient in these institutions, the motivation for many of them to be built in the first place – the Dalai Lama – is gone from Tibet. The head of the entire institution of Tibetan Buddhism to which these palaces, monasteries and temples are dedicated is in exile, and the Chinese authorities have basically decreed it is illegal to publicly express devotion to him.

With the enforced and continued absence of the Dalai Lama, the traditional Tibetan culture being marketed to you, the traveler to Tibet, may still have a certain mystique and be rich in picturesque and evocative imagery and iconography. But you should be under no illusion when you go to Tibet that the trappings of Tibetan Buddhism you see around you are being controlled to the extent that they are becoming less and less relevant to the people for whom they should mean the most – the Tibetan people. You are witnessing one of the great religions of the world in drastic decline, and with it the culture of the Tibetan people.

## SHOULD YOU GO TO TIBET?



Chinese flag flying outside the Potala Palace; former home of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. *Photo: ICT*

Over the years, ICT has been repeatedly asked by independent travelers whether or not they should go to Tibet. The main concern is that by spending money in Tibet, tourists are worried they are supporting the regime which has been the cause of so much damage to Tibetan culture.

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile based in Dharamsala, India, are not opposed to tourism in Tibet on the basis that it allows an “opportunity for foreigners to see the real conditions in Tibet.” There has never been an

organized travel boycott of Tibet as there is with Burma and as there used to be with South Africa during apartheid. ICT believes instead that the decision to travel to Tibet or not must be made by the travelers themselves. This guide aims to help make this decision easier.

### **BUY FROM TIBETANS**

To support Tibetans, Tibetan culture and the Tibetan economy, buy from Tibetan-owned shops and stalls as consistently as you can. There are increasing numbers of non-Tibetan traders in

### YULU DAWA TSERING

*Yulu Dawa Tsering (1930-2002) was a reincarnated lama from Lhasa who prior to the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1951 devoted his life to Buddhist study. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for participating in the Lhasa Uprising in 1959, and spent 20 years in Lhasa's notorious Drapchi prison before being released in 1979. By 1982 he was teaching Buddhist philosophy at Tibet University and had been co-opted onto a Chinese government political advisory body.*

*In 1987, Yulu Dawa Tsering spoke on camera to an Italian tourist, explaining the human rights situation and describing poverty in Tibet. Yulu Dawa Tsering and another monk who spoke on camera were later accused of having "viciously vilified the policies adopted by the Chinese Communist Party and the People's government" and "spreading counter-revolutionary propaganda". Yulu Dawa Tsering was sentenced to another 10 years imprisonment, also served in Drapchi.*

*He was finally released in 1994 but was kept under almost constant supervision until his death in 2002. His last years were plagued with poor physical and mental health resulting from his many years in incarceration and the abuse he suffered there.*

Lhasa selling Tibetan-style goods which were actually made in mainland China. Many of these shops and stalls can be seen around the Barkhor in central Lhasa. As you'll see however, it will be next to impossible to only spend your money at

Tibetan-owned establishments.

### AVOID BUYING ANTIQUES

Much of Tibet's artistic treasures have already been destroyed or plundered and there continues to be systematic theft of Tibet's artistic heritage. Please leave antiques in Tibet. Since it is difficult to tell what is antique and what is not, a useful rule of thumb is that if someone tries to sell you something secretly, don't buy it. Stick to the public stores and stalls.

### HELP PROTECT TIBET'S WILDLIFE

Do not buy wild animal products, especially anything from an endangered species – if you see leopard skins, tiger skins or antelope horns on sale, please take a photograph and send the image to ICT when you get home (ICT's contact information is listed at the back of this guide). The trade in rare pelts is illegal under Chinese and international law, but Beijing's enforcement has been inadequate at best. Animal pelts used to be a traditional decoration on Tibetan costumes. However, during a religious teaching ceremony held in India in January 2006, the Dalai Lama stressed the importance of wildlife protection and compassion towards animals. He condemned the Tibetan tradition of wearing fur and its effect on Tibet's dwindling wildlife as well as on India's already severely endangered tiger population, as 'shameful'. Almost overnight, people all over Tibet stopped wearing fur and burnt what pelts they had in individual or group ceremonies, carried out peacefully and without a political agenda. Their actions were praised by conservationists worldwide.

### AVOID PUTTING TIBETANS AT RISK



Tourists in Tibetan dress at Kumbum monastery in Amdo, now part of Qinghai province. Chinese tourists are more and more attracted to Tibet's exotic culture and frequently dress in Tibetan outfits on visits to monasteries. *Photo: ICT*

The behavior of foreigners has on occasion been the cause of Tibetans being detained, formally arrested and imprisoned. Remember, you will be traveling in what is effectively a police state with a tense political climate. While tour guides can expect – and are trained – to field all sorts of difficult political questions, you are urged to use common sense and to simply not raise any sensitive topics with ordinary Tibetans, particularly if your conversation can be overheard.

If a Tibetan seeks to talk about the political situation

in Tibet with you, or give you information which is politically sensitive and which they want you to take out of Tibet, be as sure as you can that your interaction is private. It is vital that you protect that person's identity: if you need to note down what was said to aid your memory, do not note down the person's name and what they said except in a way that only you can understand. If you want to pass the information on when you get home, please contact ICT in strictest confidence using the contact details at the back of this guide.

### SUGGESTED GIFTS FOR TIBETANS

It is customary for Tibetans to give small denominations to beggars, pilgrims, or at temples, which is a practice you can choose to follow or not. Consider donating to a charitable organization, school, or monastery, or perhaps give to parents and not directly to children. The following are items that would be useful and appreciated.

#### FOR ADULTS:

- Vitamins;
- Donate non-prescription medicines (such as aspirin or an antacid) to a clinic;
- Basic first aid items (plasters, bandages, antiseptic preparations);
- UV protection sun glasses;
- Shoes, boots and other protective clothing you may have bought for Tibet but might not use again;

#### FOR CHILDREN:

*(be sure to give things to the parents)*

- Children's multivitamins;
- Toothbrushes;
- Pens, pencils and paper;
- Elementary Tibetan language books (available in Europe and the US through specialist publishers such as Snow Lion, or with the advice of the Latse Library in New York);
- Elementary English-language books;
- Games, toys;
- Shoes, hats, gloves, warm clothes.

The movements of foreign tourists are monitored in Tibet not only through administrative methods such as permits and hotel registrations, but also by numerous plain-clothed officials, both Chinese and Tibetan. It is best to avoid showing curiosity about the status of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, or indeed the status of Tibet in the People's Republic of China simply for the safety of Tibetans you may talk to.

### AVOID PUTTING YOURSELF AT RISK

As a foreigner, there is little political risk for you in traveling in Tibet. China is acutely concerned about its international reputation, and tourism is a pillar industry of great importance to the economy in Tibet. However, that is only if you 'play by the rules' when you're there. If you, as a foreigner, stage a political protest against any aspect of China's rule of Tibet, then there is always the risk that you will be dealt with harshly and with the full weight of the Chinese law.

The risk, of course, is substantially greater for any Tibetans who have been employed as your driver, or guide, or even someone you spoke to in a tea shop. While the likelihood for a foreigner is that they would be deported following several uncomfortable nights in detention, the Chinese authorities are known to relentlessly pursue people suspected of having been in touch in any way with foreigners who have transgressed China's sensitive laws on political protest. If the Chinese security apparatus considers that a Tibetan withheld information for any reason which may have stopped you from making your protest, then that Tibetan is guilty of a serious crime under Chinese law.

In cases where people are under even the slightest suspicion – someone who you asked to take your picture posing in front of the Potala Palace days before your actual protest, for example – those suspicions are entered onto the file that police keep for everyone in the PRC, and will be taken into account if that person ever falls foul of the law again.

The PRC also has many military bases throughout Tibet, and the new railroad will make troop deployment to the border areas easier. Tourists will often see large convoys of military vehicles – sometimes as many as between 100-200 trucks, and sometimes even including tanks with caterpillar tracks – underlining China’s strong military presence in the occupied region. You should exercise caution with regard to taking photographs of any military convoys; this would be regarded as highly sensitive and could potentially lead to temporary detention, questioning or at least the seizure of the camera. Sometimes in Tibet, tourists have experienced difficulties even when taking pictures of buildings or areas that they may not know to be politically sensitive. For instance, one foreign tourist was challenged by security personnel while taking photographs of the new Lhasa railway station soon after it was constructed and before the railway’s opening.

Security is comprehensive and often invisible on every level. For instance, you should assume that everything you send by e-mail and everything you say over a phone line is being monitored.

## **WHY DOES THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT WANT YOU TO GO TO TIBET?**

The Chinese authorities are attempting to maximize the economic potential for tourism in Tibet at the same time as trying to control what tourists see there, and how tourists understand what they allowed or encouraged to see.

This is relatively easily achieved with the large and growing numbers of tourists from the Chinese mainland. Chinese tourists to Tibet have been brought up on the officially approved versions of China’s history, which barely feature Tibet at all in the mainland’s school curricula. The average Chinese tourist to Tibet would not necessarily be aware of the Tibetan people’s legacy of resistance and opposition to Chinese government policies and practice in Tibet, although they are possibly aware of the official propaganda that the Dalai Lama is a “splittist” in league with “anti-China hostile forces abroad”.

Foreign tourists to Tibet usually have more money to spend than Chinese tourists, and are an important demographic for the tourism industry in Tibet. A five-star hotel, the St Regis, is due to open in Lhasa in 2008 with rooms starting at \$400 a night, catering almost exclusively to foreign guests. Such amenities are a far cry from the days when almost the only foreign tourists in Tibet were back-packers on a budget for whom the rigors of travel were half the fun if not an actual badge of honor. The luxury end of the tourist market is to be further catered for with the future introduction of luxury carriages on a train service running all the way from Shanghai.

But while foreign tourists may have more money – and the Chinese authorities may have the goods and services to reap that money – foreign tourists to Tibet have generally, although by no means universally, heard and sympathized with Tibetan nationalist versions of history which the Chinese government would dismiss as “reactionary”.

One way in which the Chinese authorities try to make sure that you, the tourist to Tibet, understand their version of the situation is by strictly vetting who can and who cannot work as a tour guide in Tibet.

### **“TO ARDENTLY LOVE TIBET’S TOURISM INDUSTRY” – THE POLITICIZATION OF TOURISM AND TOUR GUIDES**

Working as a tour guide for foreign tourists in Tibet used to be a good source of income for many Tibetans. Both foreign tourists and tourists from mainland China generally prefer to have a Tibetan person showing them the sights of Lhasa and elsewhere because they naturally speak with a degree of authority that Chinese guides may not have. However, starting in 2002 there were mounting official suspicions that Tibetan tour guides taken on by foreign tourists in particular were straying from the officially sanctioned version of Tibet’s history, particularly those Tibetans who had spent any time in Dharamsala, India where the Tibetan government in exile and the Dalai Lama are based.

Chinese president Hu Jintao, himself a former Party secretary in the TAR, reportedly issued “important instructions on developing the contingent of

tourism workers in Tibet” and around 160 tour guides were dismissed in early 2003 when they were unable to produce confirmation from their local home governments that they had never been to India.

The dismissed tour guides were replaced with people drafted from various Chinese provinces. The tourism bureau in the TAR explained that Chinese tour guides “speak a foreign language and Tibet has a shortage of tour guides who speak a foreign language” – without acknowledging, of course, that many of the Tibetans who had spent time in India went home with a degree of proficiency in English. Tour guides recruited in mainland China are required to speak “minor languages” such as Japanese, French, German and Hindi.

There was a commitment in 2003 that the TAR would receive as many as 100 tour guides from China each year. Seventy tour guides arrived in Lhasa in April 2007, and were told by a Party representative at the tourism bureau that they had to “ceaselessly raise their political qualities, to maintain political awareness, to quickly enter their role, be a good foreign ambassador for the people and to perform well their duties of introducing Tibet and propagandizing Tibet.”

If you choose to hire a tour guide when you go to Tibet, there is a strong chance that they will be Chinese and – as with Tibetan tour guides too – trained to provide you with a very proscribed version of what you see. Foreign tourists have been known to engage in debate with their guides about Tibetan history or about the Dalai Lama;

good advice might be to expect to hear political propaganda but not to hope that you alone can convince a tour guide to abandon their views on Tibet – even if they might privately dismiss the view they are required by the authorities to present.

A Chinese writer who has spent a great deal of time in Tibet has concluded: “The authorities should understand that when travelers come to Tibet, they don’t come to listen to the Chinese government’s political propaganda, they come to see Tibet with their own eyes. If the authorities use tour guides as a political tool to force-feed tourists, it will not go down too well.”

If you insist on being assigned a Tibetan tour guide, be aware of the additional political pressure they are under; be aware that what for you might be a friendly conversation might for them be straying into difficult areas where they are extremely prone to saying something “wrong” within earshot of someone willing to report them; and be aware too that by hiring – and tipping! – a Tibetan tour guide, your money is more likely to better serve Tibetan interests in Tibet. If you are travelling with a tour operator from outside of China, tell them you want a Tibetan guide - and you could also give your tour operator a copy of this report. ■



# The Train to Lhasa

The views seen from the window of the train as it runs from Golmud in Qinghai to Lhasa in the TAR will be one of the most memorable features of a visit to Tibet. The city of Golmud itself is not particularly picturesque, but as the train pulls out it begins a steep ascent up into the spectacular snow-capped Kunlun Mountains of Qinghai. After crossing through a mountain pass 5072 meters (16,640 feet) above sea level on the boundary between Qinghai Province and the TAR, the train then descends through rolling grasslands and mile-long tunnels and on past lakes and rivers and into Lhasa itself. The bus from Golmud to Lhasa takes about four days, weather permitting and barring mudslides, rock falls or avalanches blocking the road; the train takes 13 hours.

The railroad is an astonishing feat of engineering. Built at an estimated cost of \$4.1 billion, more than half of its 1142 km (710 miles) length stands on ground which is sometimes frozen and sometimes not. Engineers therefore had to design the rail bed to tolerate the ground sinking and rising as much as a foot in places with the winter freeze and summer thaw. In some stretches, liquid nitrogen is pumped around the foundations to keep them stable. Much of the route passes through areas prone to seismic activity, such as the 8.1 earthquake which shook the Kunlun Mountains in 2001. There are 675 bridges at a total length of 160 km (100 miles) along the line – that is, almost one in seven miles of the line is raised off the ground. Eighty percent of the line is at an elevation of more than 4000 meters above sea level, where the air gets so thin that the workers building it had to take gulps of pressurized oxygen. The lack of oxygen at even higher elevations – only 35% of

that found at sea level – means that three diesel locomotives are needed to provide enough power to pull the carriages. The carriages themselves are constructed much like the body of an aircraft, sealed off from the thin air outside with oxygen available inside, and windows treated to block the fierce ultra-violet rays.

No one would deny the monumental technological achievement of building the line through some of the most challenging terrain and conditions imaginable. However, less than a month into its operation, Chinese engineers reported that cracks were appearing in concrete footings on some of the bridges; less than a year into its operation and Chinese engineers were saying that global warming could melt the permafrost upon which much of the track is built, rendering it unsafe within just a decade.

### **WHY WAS THE RAILROAD BUILT?**

The Chinese government describes the Qinghai-Tibet railway as the ‘center piece’ of the Western Development Strategy, a development blueprint which Beijing claims is designed to bring economic development in the impoverished western areas of the PRC to levels comparable with those along China’s wealthy eastern seaboard.

Like the large statue of Chairman Mao erected close to Lhasa airport as part of the Western Development Strategy, the railroad to Lhasa is first and foremost a statement of China’s presence in Tibet. As the then Chinese president Jiang Zemin said in 2001: “Some people advised me not to go ahead with this project because it is not commercially viable. I said this is a political



Chinese mobile phone store in Lhasa. Most new businesses are run by Chinese migrants looking for opportunities in Lhasa.  
*Photo: ICT*

decision.” And as Wang Derong, a chief architect of China’s transportation planning told *Fortune* magazine in June 2006, a month before the line went into operation: “One of the most important reasons [for the railroad] is political stability. They [government officials] don’t try to hide that purpose.”

Another ‘success’ of the Western Development Strategy often touted by Beijing is a natural gas pipeline which runs from Xinjiang in the far west of the PRC 4000 km (2485 miles) all the way to Shanghai on the east coast. Natural gas is reportedly not taken from the pipeline until

it crosses Shaanxi Province, more than 1000 miles from the source of the gas and the people in Xinjiang who are supposed to have benefited from it.

It is worth noting that the Chinese term for the Western development strategy, ‘xibu da kaifa’, – is more accurately and more commonly translated as ‘exploitation’ of the West.

As a traveler to Tibet, you will see for yourself that the Western Development Strategy is patently not aimed at developing the western

regions of the PRC – including Tibet – for the benefit of the people who live there. Rather, the Western Development Strategy first and foremost is aimed at further enriching China’s wealthy eastern seaboard and inner hinterland by using the western PRC’s mineral and energy resources.

Before the Western Development Strategy was implemented, the TAR and other parts of Tibet had some of the lowest indicators in the entire PRC for health and education, and scored badly too in other areas such as average incomes and longevity. The railroad has already been the harbinger of what the regional government calls “leap-over style” economic development in the TAR and in Lhasa in particular, where modern supermarkets and five-star hotels are already appearing. But beneath that façade, the same levels of poverty among Tibetan people are set to remain.

As a visitor to Tibet, you will also see that the secondary beneficiaries of the Western Development Strategy are the migrant workers and temporary residents there, whose numbers are set to increase exponentially with the line in full operation. More and more people are going to Tibet from mainland China to stay for a few months or years to make what money they can before returning to their home areas in the Chinese mainland. Like the railroad, they too leave no lasting benefit for the Tibetan people themselves.

Some six months after the railroad went into operation, the Dalai Lama expressed serious concerns about the number of homeless people,

A Tibetan former government worker was extremely pessimistic about the prospects for Tibet as a result of the railroad into Lhasa, and even as a former government official, extremely cynical about the government’s motives for building it:

*“I would say that the railway is made for more Chinese people moving to Tibet and also to create a better way for taking more Tibetan minerals to China. The railway is like a tsunami engulfing Tibet; the railway, like a tsunami, will wash away Tibetan traditions, culture and minerals.”*

the unemployed and prostitutes arriving in Lhasa from mainland China, further eroding the character of the city and marginalizing its Tibetan residents. Members of the Tibetan exile community in India describe the new influx of people as ‘the second invasion of Tibet’.

A frequent traveler in Tibet who is also a tour guide commented that it is important for tourists in Tibet to maintain a balanced approach towards Chinese migrant workers. “Many of them come from Sichuan Province, one of the most populated province in China, and are only trying to escape poverty for themselves and their families,” said the tour guide. “They’re not told by the government to go to Tibet, but neither are they discouraged. Tibet is needed as a pressure valve for all the unemployed and under-employed people in Sichuan and elsewhere. Tibet may be paying the price for China’s problems, but those problems

aren't the fault of the people going to Tibet to try to make a living.”

The immense cost of building and maintaining the railroad is obviously not for the benefit of tourism alone. Tourism in Tibet is a “pillar industry”, a term used by the Chinese authorities when identifying industries to provide a spur to economic development. Other so-called pillar industries are traditional Tibetan handicrafts with an “ethnic flavor” – Tibetan daggers, costumes and jewelry, for instance, which is closely associated with the tourism industry; Tibetan medicinal products, in particular certain medicinal plants which only grow in the plateau’s rarified conditions; and of course, mining.

Tibet’s vast mineral wealth was one of the reasons the Chinese government decided to build the railroad in the first place. For instance, the line passes close to important gold reserves in Nagchu (Chinese: Naqu) in the TAR, to copper reserves in Kyegudo (Ch: Yushu) in Qinghai, and there

are plans to extend the line south from Lhasa into Shigatse Prefecture (Ch: Rikaze diqu) close to one of the of the largest copper deposits in the PRC in Shetongmon County (Chinese: Xietongmen xian).

Preliminary results of a mineral survey of the Qinghai-Tibet plateau were released in early 2007, showing for example that there were verified reserves of 14 million tons of copper on the plateau with the possibility of as much as 30 to 40 million tons more in a long belt running west to east across the TAR from Ngari Prefecture (Ch: Ali diqu) close to Mount Kailash – one of the holiest sites in Tibetan Buddhism – all the way over to traditionally Tibetan parts of northern Yunnan Province.

Article Nine of the Chinese Constitution rules that all natural resources – from tress to coal to water and gold – are all the inalienable property of the state. China desperately needs all the natural and mineral resources it can exploit given its size and



A Tibetan early in the laying of tracks for the world’s highest altitude railway, running to Tibet from China. Most workers on the railroad were Chinese, with Tibetans doing largely unskilled manual labor. *Photo: ICT*



A woman stands on the platform of the new Lhasa railway station. The arrival of the railway to Lhasa has changed the face of tourism in Tibet. Each platform is more than eight meters wide - approximately the width of three trucks parked next to each other. *Photo: ICT*

rate of development, and Tibet is an important part of that bigger picture.

The Tibetan people see little or no benefit from mining activities in Tibet – or indeed from any of the “pillar industries” in Tibet, nor are they adequately involved in decision-making on development of their land. In Tibet, observe how many Tibetan people are getting any kind of benefit – direct or indirect – just from tourism

for instance, whether it’s Tibetan people owning souvenir stalls or Tibetan people owning and running tourist agencies. You could even start on the train to Lhasa: how many staff on the train are Tibetan? How many passengers are Tibetan?

You should also be able to see this in the other “pillar industry” of Tibetan handicrafts on sale in Lhasa and elsewhere in Tibet: most of it is being sold by Chinese traders who according

to some reports seen by ICT, obtain their stock from factories in mainland China. Another “pillar industry” in Tibet, collecting plants used in Tibetan medicine, can be lucrative. But increasingly, Chinese companies are involved in the production and promotion of Tibetan medicine, providing further competition to local Tibetans.

As a tourist, you are unlikely to see – or probably even want to see – a working mine. But be aware that the majority of people working Tibet’s mines are from mainland China. By the Chinese government’s own admission, even the people who built the railroad were nearly all from mainland China – you may have noticed a clue above: a Tibetan worker, genetically adapted to living at altitude, would be unlikely to need to gulp oxygen.

Tibetan construction workers on the railroad were generally paid less than the Chinese workers, and carried out the manual labor that required little skill. A nomad whose family raised livestock close to the railroad in Nagchu Prefecture (Ch: Naqu diqu) in the TAR told ICT, “Tibetan workers were not paid as good a salary as the Chinese workers even though the Tibetan workers had to do all the hard jobs such as work with stone and the earth. Therefore not many people from our place would go to the railway construction site.”

There isn’t even employment for Tibetans to process all of the minerals and ores loaded onto the trains in Tibet. It is nearly all freighted out and distributed for processing – grading, smelting – at installations in mainland China. Therefore, the

lowest possible value and added value generated by Tibet’s “pillar industry” of mining actually stays in Tibet.

And then there is also the environmental destruction wrought upon Tibet’s extremely fragile high-plateau ecology. While some of the major mining projects in Tibet are state run and at least claim (accurately or otherwise) to implement measures to cause as little environmental destruction as possible, other projects are small private enterprises either with no license at all, or with a license obtained through corruption or through low-level officials. Illegal mining wreaks havoc on the environment; mountainsides are dug up, trees uprooted and rivers polluted.

A major reason why the Tibetan people benefit so little from development strategies in Tibet is because they are not involved in any meaningful way in the planning processes for those development plans.

The nature of the ‘political decision’ to build the railroad was underscored when the terminus station in Lhasa was planned and built. In a deeply potent symbol of how secondary the Tibetan people and their welfare was in the railroad’s planning, an entire Tibetan village of approximately 100 families was demolished and the inhabitants moved out wholesale to a settlement around 2.5 km away. They had no choice about the relocation area, and they lost all of their family land and farming plots. Only a few families received small amounts of compensation.

Similarly, a nomad from an area of central Tibet near to one of the main railway stations along the

line said that construction work for the railroad had damaged the grasslands, leaving many without a livelihood, and with no compensation: “There is a mountain in our county which was bought by the Chinese railway authorities who paid 80,000 yuan (\$10,400) to our county government. The Chinese railway workers dug out rocks from the mountain and used them for the railway construction. But before they dug out the mountain, they made proper roads on our grassland which is worse. After they made the roads they brought a lot of vehicles to carry the rocks and because so many vehicles went on the roads all the time, the earth became very hard and compacted; and after they’d used all the rocks and stopped coming in vehicles over the grasslands, local people in our place tried to replant grass on the roads, but the grass never grew because the earth is too hard. We lost huge areas of our grassland and nobody was compensated.”

In some areas of Tibet, you may see new housing complexes by roadsides, or near to mining sites or other development projects. While the housing often looks modern and pleasant, it is worth bearing in mind that these might be the new homes of herders or villagers who have been settled here and removed from the traditional rural homes or tents on the nomad pastures, from livelihoods that have sustained them for centuries. Sometimes, while the homes look brand new, they may not have electricity, and there may be no amenities nearby. What you are witnessing is part of China’s long-term strategy of control (it is easier to manage a population with fixed addresses) and to absorb Tibet into the People’s Republic of China – urbanization (both in the creation of new towns and expansion of existing ones) and

the resettlement of nomadic herders. While the stated official intention is to prevent degradation of the grasslands and to lift nomads out of poverty, the reality is that this is, in most cases, achieving the opposite. ■



# Tibetan Buddhism as a tourist attraction

*The Chinese Communists are deeply mistrustful of religion, seeing the Dalai Lama's leadership as another pole of authority that threatens their exercise of power in Tibet. Soon after the revolution in China in 1949 they moved to 'liberate' Tibet from what they regarded as the repressive and exploitative oppressors in Tibetan society: the monastic system and the aristocracy. There is little doubt that actually, Tibet was indeed a desperately poor and deeply unequal society, but reform was underway, pioneered by the 13th Dalai Lama and others. There were also Tibetans who initially saw promise and hope for a more egalitarian and humane society in China's plans for Tibet, but even the most ardent Tibetan communists were soon disillusioned and despairing of Tibet's fate under Chinese rule.*

## RELIGION AND POLITICS

In Lhasa, the major tourist attractions are the many monasteries and temples, the Potala Palace, the traditional home of the Dalai Lama, and the Norbulinka, the Dalai Lama's summer palace. When you visit these places in Lhasa – or Buddhist sites anywhere else in Tibet – remember that Chinese Communist Party members and



Photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on an offering table in eastern Tibet. Photos of the Dalai Lama, along with the 10th and 11th Panchen Lamas, can still be seen in Tibet despite the risks. *Photo: Eva Bartlett*

government workers are supposed to be atheists. If they show any sign of practicing Buddhism – carrying rosary beads, for example, or wearing a religious talisman even under their clothes – they are liable to be dismissed from their job. They cannot even go into a temple or a monastery “for religious purposes” because as communists they are expected to promote atheism. Officials in Tibet actively discourage lay-people from expressing their faith. In one instance officials explained to US government officials visiting Tibet that “fervent religious practice” is “an impediment to economic modernization”.

The Dalai Lama, who fled into exile in 1959, is revered and worshipped by the vast majority of Tibetans as the living embodiment of the bodhisattva of compassion. As accounts and evidence of China’s destruction of Tibet emerged over the ensuing years and decades, the exiled Dalai Lama became the figurehead for all Tibetans, and international concerns for the fate of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. A leader respected worldwide for his integrity and moral and religious authority, the Dalai Lama continues to command undiminished loyalty among Tibetans both in exile and in Tibet, despite consistent Chinese attempts to undermine his influence.

*“I have never understood why a person like the Dalai Lama was honored with [the Nobel Peace Prize]. What has he done for peace? How much guilt does he bear toward the Tibetan people! How damaging is he for Tibet and China! I cannot understand why so many countries are interested in him.”*

*“The current Dalai Lama is the 14th. We do not know how much longer he will live. We believe that good people live longer while bad people live shorter lives.”*

— Zhang Qingli, TAR Chinese Communist Party Secretary, age 55, August 16, 2006.

The Dalai Lama’s criticisms of China’s actions in Tibet continue to be invariably tempered with his insistence that opposition to China’s actions in Tibet must first and foremost be non-violent. The success of his insistence on peaceful opposition has been remarkable given the levels of oppression in Tibet, and the fact that Tibet has remained overwhelmingly free of political violence is directly attributable to his influence upon the Tibetan people. The Dalai Lama’s insistence that the Tibetan struggle should be peaceful contributed to his winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

However, Beijing describes the Dalai Lama as the “chief splittist”, and a “wolf in lama’s clothing”, dismissing his calls for genuine autonomy, in which Tibetans would exercise greater control over everyday affairs while remaining part of China, as

a ploy to gain Tibet’s independence. A key element of the Chinese government’s policy in Tibet is to undermine his influence both in the wider society and in religious institutions.

Anyone who expresses any support or devotion to the Dalai Lama is also described by the Chinese authorities as “splittist” (someone who wants to separate Tibet from China) and part of the “Dalai clique” which is supported by “foreign hostile anti-China forces”.

Ordinary Tibetans are therefore faced with a dangerous dilemma: the Dalai Lama, who is held in the highest possible awe by the vast majority of Tibetans, is vilified and condemned in the strongest terms by the Chinese authorities; if a Tibetan Buddhist – a monk, nun or a lay-person – publicly expresses any kind of devotion or loyalty to him, they are potentially committing a crime under Chinese law. China’s courts are empowered to pass anything up to a life sentence against people who “plot or carry out the scheme of splitting the state” – which can also include a simple act of loyalty to the Dalai Lama.

Monks and nuns can serve prison sentences for expressing loyalty to the Dalai Lama. Most of those held in central Tibet used to be held in the notorious Drapchi Prison in a Lhasa suburb, but now political prisoners are most often held in Chushur Prison on the main road south from Lhasa towards Shigatse.

Zhang Qingli, the most senior Chinese politician in the TAR, has referred to a “life or death” struggle against the “Dalai clique”, and has described the

Dalai Lama as “the biggest obstacle hindering Tibetan Buddhism from establishing normal order.” This intense political suspicion of religion in Tibet and the hostility towards the Dalai Lama shown by the Chinese authorities permeates almost all aspects of institutionalized Buddhism in Tibet. If indeed the Chinese authorities are involved in a “life or death” struggle for the loyalties of the Tibetan people, then the front line is in the monasteries, nunneries and temples of Tibet.

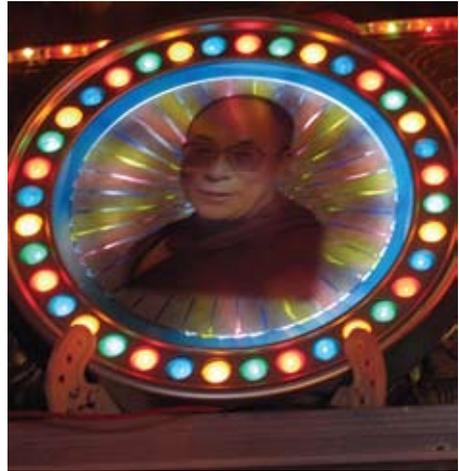
### **WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?**

All of the above is just to tell you that when you, the tourist, visit a monastery, nunnery or temple in Tibet, the monks and nuns and even the lay-people you will see there are under extraordinary political pressure.

Under no circumstances should you attempt to engage anyone at a monastic institution in a conversation about religious freedom, the Dalai Lama, or Tibet’s political status. If you do, you could put that person in an extremely awkward and dangerous position. Some of the monks and nuns spoken to by ICT claim to be adept at deflecting political questions asked by their institution’s management committee, by feigning ignorance or giving simple and evasive answers.

*“You can see [religious freedom] in Tibet, where people make pilgrimages to the temples, turn their prayer wheels and pray to Buddha.”*

— Zhang Qingli, TAR Chinese Communist Party Secretary, August 16, 2006.



A secret image of the Dalai Lama on a shrine in eastern Tibet.  
*Photo: ICT*

However, as mentioned above, having to criticize or denounce the Dalai Lama breaks one of the most solemn vows a Tibetan monk or nun ever makes; putting someone in the position of having to do so for the benefit of a tourist or for a plain-clothed police officer in earshot – you will see them – would be an enormous and unnecessary burden on them.

Even if a monk or nun voluntarily says to you that the Dalai Lama is a “splittist” for example, and tells you that the Tibetan people renounce him, there is the possibility that this monk or nun will have been assigned to the role of talking to foreign tourists by the institution’s management committee. If you try to argue with them, you could be forcing them to debate a point they cannot defend, and they could get into trouble if they are seen to fail to defend it adequately.

*“Every nation on earth teaches its people to love their motherland. We are organizing patriotic education everywhere, not just in the monasteries. Those who do not love their country are not qualified to be human beings. This is a matter of common sense.”*

— Zhang Qingli, TAR Chinese Communist Party Secretary, August 16, 2006.

Many of the 2500 to 3500 Tibetans who make the dangerous journey across the Himalayas from Tibet into exile are monks and nuns. If you take the train to Lhasa, or if you fly into Lhasa or another city in Tibet, spare a moment's thought for the thousands of Tibetans who every year cross the Himalayas on foot to India – over some of the most inhospitable terrain on the planet – to leave the very same Tibet that you are entering. They are leaving to have an audience with the Dalai Lama in India, or to pursue their religious studies, or to go on pilgrimage, many with every intention of returning to their homes and families in Tibet when they are finished – repeating the journey in the opposite direction. They cannot legally do any of these things while in Tibet under Chinese law, so instead they choose to leave at great personal risk to themselves to pursue the religious freedoms denied to them at home.

Despite the crisis facing the survival of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet, the devotional element of religious practice is evident all over Tibet; in the prayer flags fluttering on mountain passes, the

elderly ladies circumambulating the Jokhang, monks and nuns lighting butter-lamps. But as we have seen, this cannot be interpreted as indicators that the Tibetan people enjoy religious freedom.

Let's start with the pilgrims you'll see in Lhasa, the people who travel sometimes hundreds of miles on foot to pray at the Jokhang Temple in the center of Lhasa – the holiest shrine in Tibetan Buddhism (and a very popular tourist attraction).

According to ICT's sources, as of 2006 there actually appeared to be more people taking the pilgrimage to Lhasa than at any other time in recent history. However, this apparent relaxation on one aspect of religious devotion in Tibet needs to be understood in the broader context of the Chinese government and communist party's practices and policies.



Tibetan herders move yaks across the Nangpa Pass, a route well traveled by Tibetan refugees heading across the Himalayas to Nepal. *Photo: ICT*



#### **THE PANCHEN LAMA**

Gedun Choekyi Nyima was taken with his family from their home in Tibet by the Chinese

authorities shortly after he was identified by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. His whereabouts have not been made public since then. In 1996, the Chinese government confirmed to a meeting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that it was holding the boy and his family in “protective custody”. In November 2002, a senior official in the TAR government reported that Gedun Choekyi Nyima was “living a very happy life, is now 5 feet and 3 inches tall and weighs 143 pounds, studies well at school, and his parents and entire family are happy.” Beijing has allowed no independent confirmation of his or his family’s well-being or whereabouts. Having been missing for 12 years, Gedun Choekyi Nyima turned 18-years old on April 25, 2007.

The careful observer will note telling details: a police station near the entrance of the major monasteries in Lhasa, Drepung for instance, from where plain-clothed officers circulate in the monastery posing as tourists but searching for signs of dissent. And then there’s the focus on tourism as a part of monastic duties, taking Tibetans away from their religious practice. And, most importantly, the absence of obvious images of the leader of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama.

#### **CHINA’S LOST BATTLE FOR TIBETAN HEARTS AND MINDS**

The Chinese authorities have banned anyone under the age of 18 from receiving a religious education – not to mention becoming ordained

as a monk or nun, as was the tradition for young children in traditional Tibet. By the time a young man becomes a monk therefore, he is already many crucial years behind in his religious studies. You will often see monks in monasteries who look – and probably are – under 18, but they are not legally registered, which means they cannot take part in certain activities and studies, and are at constant risk of being expelled.

The authorities have also all but stopped senior religious teachers at monasteries being promoted or replaced, meaning that there is no one to pass on knowledge of Buddhism to a younger generation. This is partly achieved by weeding out anyone with religious standing who is perceived

to have any loyalty to the Dalai Lama. To help achieve this, there is a system of rewards and punishments where monasteries and their lamas who demonstrate a commitment to the official anti-Dalai Lama policies are given privileges such as being permitted to admit more monks to the monastery.

If you go to Sera Monastery in Lhasa, you might be invited to attend (upon paying an entrance fee) a religious debate among a group of monks. Debating philosophies expounded in Tibetan religious texts has traditionally been a key element of scholarly Buddhist learning, and the dramatic claps to accentuate a point make the debates quite a spectacle.

As a tourist, you should be aware of three things if you see a debate taking place at Sera Monastery or anywhere else: first, because the monks have had barely any formal religious education (through no fault of their own of course), the content of the debates is not as advanced as it should be in most cases – impressive though it may be to watch.

Second, some of those dressed in monks' robes may not have received official permission to attend the monastery, and so their status is uncertain. These monks (they would consider themselves to be monks because of their vows, not the permission of the state) are allowed to stay at the monastery at their own expense, but they are not permitted to take part in religious activity (the debates are a tourist attraction, not a religious activity).

And third, the authorities strictly limit the number

of monks that can join a monastery. Traditionally, Sera Monastery was a major seat of Buddhist learning and home to more than a thousand monks. See how many monks or nuns you can see if you go to Sera or any of the other major institutions in Tibet. There are monasteries and nunneries in Tibet once home to hundreds of monks or nuns at the center of a thriving community where now, as few as 15 clergy or less are permitted to live and study.

One of the most contentious aspects of the Chinese authorities' attempts to control religion in Tibet – as far as monks and nuns are concerned – is the system of “patriotic education” in monasteries and nunneries. In Tibetan, the system is officially known as “Love the Country, Love Religion”. In every monastic institution in Tibet, there is a ‘Democratic Management Committee’, which in effect is a branch of the Chinese Communist Party. It runs the institution and it implements “patriotic education”.

The first demand made of every monk and nun in Tibet – who all undergo regular and compulsory “patriotic education” – is to denounce the Dalai Lama. ICT has received numerous accounts of monks and nuns having to read aloud a prepared statement renouncing any loyalty to him, which they then have to sign and apply a finger print before giving it back to the Democratic Management Committee to put in their personal file.

This is a devastating requirement for any monk or nun. The very first vow a monk or nun makes, their very first step in their ordained lives to which they



Tibetan pilgrims at the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa. *Photo: Eva Bartlett*

have committed themselves, is to vow to honor without the slightest reservation their religious teacher – the Dalai Lama. Once that most solemn vow is broken, Tibetans believe, it can never be repaired. Recognizing their anguish, the Dalai Lama has advised that because of the dangers they face if they fail to denounce him, Tibetans should simply do so and hold their loyalty to him in their heart instead.

While it is a cause of great despair for so many Tibetans in Tibet today, and for some, reason enough to escape into exile, don't be surprised if you fail to recognize this type of underlying oppression in the Tibetan monasteries you may visit. Even one veteran reporter who recently

visited Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, seat of the Panchen Lama, which has been a center for dissent and is now under strict political control, was captivated by its exotic mystique saying: "... I was in a reverie taking photos and videos. The place felt alive and authentic."

As tourists to Tibet are probably aware before they go there, reincarnation is central to the continuation and development of Tibetan Buddhism. However, the avowedly atheist Chinese state insists on having control over the system, seeking to justify this by saying that the Qing Dynasty in Beijing was involved in recognizing reincarnations, and therefore the Communist government should also be involved. They fail to point out that the Qing

## FESTIVALS AND MEMORIALS

*When planning your trip to Tibet, note that travel restrictions can be imposed at different times due to factors the traveler may not be aware of, such as sensitive political anniversaries, and the concerns of the authorities over tourism at a particular time. For the Chinese government, security and political 'stability' will always be a higher priority than dollars from tourism. The list below is a selection of dates and holiday periods when travel can be difficult, and when tourists may want to be vigilant for increased police and/or military presence and possible - although highly unlikely - expressions of resistance or protest from Tibetans.*

**February** – the Chinese New Year, which falls on a different date in the western calendar each year. Chinese people traditionally make the journey back to their homes at the Chinese New Year, so travel can be difficult in China at this time of year.

**February** – Losar, the Tibetan New Year. The date on the western calendar of Losar changes each year.

**March 5** – the anniversary of major street protests in Lhasa in 1988 and 1989, during which hundreds of Tibetans were killed and thousands arrested.

**March 10** – Tibetan National Uprising Day, commemorating the 1959 uprising against Chinese rule of Tibet, which led to the deaths and imprisonment of thousands of Tibetans.

**April 25** – birthday of Gedun Choekyi Nyima the 11th Panchen Lama recognized by the Dalai Lama in 1995 and who immediately disappeared into Chinese custody. He has not been seen since.

**Early May** – the May Day holiday is a seven-day state holiday in the People's Republic of China, marked by a large demand on tourist facilities – transport and hotels in particular.

**May to June** – the Saga Dawa festival, commemorating the anniversary of the enlightenment and death of Buddha, noted for the number of pilgrims traveling to Lhasa.

**July 6** – Birthday of the 14th Dalai Lama. Celebrations of this occasion are banned in Tibet.

**September 1** – the anniversary of the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965. The actual anniversary is September 9, but this also happens to be the date of Chairman Mao's death in 1976, and is regarded therefore as an inappropriate date for celebrations.

**September 27** – the anniversary of major street demonstrations in Lhasa in 1987.

**October 1** – the anniversary of a major street demonstration also in 1987 when police fired upon unarmed demonstrators. More than 21 protests ensued over the following year and a half with more than 2000 people believed arrested and 100 killed by police gunfire.

**October 1** – National Day in the PRC, marking the anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the conclusion of the revolution.

**December 10** – anniversary of The Dalai Lama being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989; also International Human Rights Day and the anniversary of a major street protest in Lhasa in 1988.



Chinese soldiers in Lhasa, 2006. *Photo: ICT*

Dynasty and all other imperial dynasties were founded on the Mandate of Heaven – that the emperor of China was heaven-ordained – and even that some Qing emperors in Beijing revered the Dalai Lamas in distant Tibet. Nor do they stress the fact in this context that the Chinese government advocates atheism and dismisses many religious practices as “superstition”.

Tibetans are deeply resentful that an atheist state should seek to control reincarnation, a belief system that is fundamental to Tibetan Buddhist culture.

In 1995 a six-year old boy, Gedun Choekyi Nyima was recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th

reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, a position central to the institution of Tibetan Buddhism. The boy disappeared into Chinese custody three days later and has never been publicly seen since. The atheist Chinese government conducted its own ‘religious’ ritual, and chose a boy called Gyalsen Norbu, who is the son of Party members.

Gyalsen Norbu is described by people in Tibet as the “Gya Panchen”, meaning “Chinese Panchen”, or by some, even, as “fake Panchen”. He is being groomed by the Chinese state to be a “patriotic lama” and the speeches he makes during his rare public appearances in Beijing and Tibet focus heavily on the importance of patriotism in Buddhist practice. Few Tibetans take him seriously; their loyalty is to Gedun Choekyi



Group of Tibetans on the dangerous journey into exile across the Nangpa Pass into Nepal. *Photo: ICT*

Nyima, who turned 18 on April 25, 2007, after more than a decade in custody.

The controversy around China's installation of a "patriotic" Panchen Lama over the Dalai Lama's choice of reincarnation has for many Tibetans come to epitomize China's political domination – and even desecration – of Tibetan Buddhism.

In monasteries and nunneries in Tibet, generally the more revered a person is, the higher their portrait is hung compared to other portraits on the shrine, although there are other considerations

of symmetry and balance when giving a portrait prominence. If you see a portrait of the Dalai Lama on a shrine in Tibet, do not bring any attention to it. Instead, be aware that you are witnessing a subtle form of Tibetan dissent against Chinese religious policies, and a courageous expression of undiminished loyalty despite political pressure. ■

# Hidden Past and Present

The picture depicts a Chinese worker, who had worked at the Lhasa railway station during its construction, posing in Tibetan dress for a souvenir photo in front of the monument 'Tribute to the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet' which dominates the Potala Square. *Photo: ICT*



Lhasa has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. The Potala Palace, which in living memory had a small village at the foot of the hill on which it stands, now rises from a city of some 200,000 people with red light districts, sprawling residential neighborhoods practically indistinguishable from each other in their uniformity – almost exclusively Chinese – and a small and dwindling traditional neighborhood in the center of the city around the Jokhang Temple.

Tibetans in Tibet and in exile say that while some urban development in Lhasa has been welcome – better amenities such as water and electricity provision – the development of Lhasa has been so rapid, and carried out from the top down in

Beijing that nearly all of the traditional fabric and religious atmosphere of Lhasa – which actually means 'holy city' in Tibetan – is gone.

An important detail of Lhasa's skyline is the modern 13-floor building which is the headquarters of the TAR Public Security Bureau. Completed in February 2002, the building interrupts the Lhasa skyline, standing in direct opposition to the Potala Palace according to Tibetan geomancy. Whether a deliberate move on the part of the Chinese authorities or not, the building can be seen – and is regarded by Tibetans in Lhasa – as a symbol of Chinese control over the Tibetan capital and thus a direct challenge to the authority of the Dalai Lama.

Similarly, Lhasa railway station is a large brick-red and white structure that is intended to resemble the

architecture of the Potala Palace. Many Tibetans in Lhasa are angered by this appropriation of one of their most important religious and cultural symbols for a building that has led to such an upheaval in their lives and is symbolic of Beijing's concept of 'progress' and fast-track development in Tibet.

You will see a number of Chinese monuments in Lhasa, and none are more prominent than the large concrete edifice standing in the Potala Square opposite the Potala Palace, commemorating the 'peaceful liberation of Tibet', the Chinese description of the invasion of Tibet from 1949-50, that led to the deaths of many thousands of Tibetans and Chinese control over their land.

The Jokhang Temple in the center of Lhasa and the Barkhor around it – a winding cobbled walkway, now heavily commercialized, which pilgrims follow when ritually circling the temple – have been the focus of numerous public protests by Tibetans, particularly in the late 1980s. If you go there, look up: the Barkhor and the streets around it are dotted with numerous video surveillance cameras.

A large area in front of Jokhang Temple was cleared and paved in 1985 to build a square – the Barkhor Square – to mark the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the TAR. This also facilitates easier access to the Barkhor and the rest of the Tibetan neighborhood by police and military vehicles - the authorities are well aware that in the late 1980s, some Tibetans were able to escape arrest following protests in the warren of streets in the Barkhor.

The Jokhang Temple is the holiest site in Tibetan Buddhism. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Chinese military were billeted there and pigs were slaughtered on the temple floor. Nearly all of the statues and other items of devotion you can see are replacements of the originals which were damaged or destroyed before and during the Cultural Revolution.

However, travelers should guard against viewing all expressions of Tibetan identity and opinion as signs of resistance, especially in urban areas with large Chinese populations. In his book, 'Lhasa: Streets With Memories', Robert Barnett, a Tibetologist at Columbia University and frequent visitor to Lhasa, notes that Lhasa "belongs to an older world, one that is generally seen by outsiders in the way we see many ancient things: as unitary, undivided, and homogeneous" and that "explanations other than those offered by visitors must be sought in order to explain the apparent anomalies and contradictions in outsiders' perceptions of Tibet." (Columbia University Press, 2006). While travelers often find Tibet difficult to unravel, not even all Tibetans agree on how to interpret things, demonstrating the complexity of modern Tibet. For example, some Tibetans claim that a monument to the founding of the TAR – a statue of two golden yaks outside the Norbulinka, the Dalai Lama's summer palace – can be interpreted as a lament that the Dalai Lama is not in Tibet: one yak faces the Norbulinka, the other faces Dharamsala where the Dalai Lama is now based, interpreted as the yaks yearning for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. Others have given the yaks the names of two Tibetan officials known to be loyal to the Communist Party, as a way of



The presence of security personnel at monasteries and nunneries is particularly visible during political and patriotic education campaigns as in this photo taken at a Tibetan monastery in Sichuan province (a gun holder is visible on the belt of one of the security officials). *Photo: ICT*

poking fun at these two individuals.

### **THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN TIBET**

As this report has shown, the Chinese authorities –

and of course to some extent the Tibetan people too – see an important opportunity to raise significant amounts of revenue in Tibet from tourism. As a tourist, you will be in a position to see for yourself what impact tourism is having on Tibetan culture and the Tibetan people. The choices you make when you're there should have some effect on

how the industry in Tibet develops – at least, how the tourism industry caters to foreign tourists as opposed to the much larger number of Chinese tourists in Tibet.

Tourists have the opportunity of a unique insight into modern Tibet, if they so choose, an insight which allows them not only to bear witness to the fate of the Tibetan people under Chinese rule, but also to bear witness to how the Chinese government – a rising superpower on the world stage – chooses to conduct itself in the treatment of some of the most vulnerable people within the borders of the PRC.

At a very basic level, in Lhasa and elsewhere in Tibet try to be aware of how involved Tibetan people are in the local economy, how many restaurants, market stalls and shops are owned or run by Tibetans, and even how many taxi drivers are Tibetan; try to see how much of the Tibetan language you see on signs in Tibet, on storefronts and on the banners bearing Party slogans. The tourism industry in Tibet as you'll see is largely based on marketing Tibet's "ethnic flavor" and the mysticism it has in the imaginations of people the world over, including China. It may be striking to you therefore how little of the trade is in the hands of the Tibetan people themselves.

## **RELIGION AND TOURISM**

One of the main tourist attractions in Tibet is the religious culture. There is a terrible irony in the fact that the Chinese authorities are trying to market Tibet as a tourist destination based largely on the interest people have in traditional Tibetan Buddhism, at the same time as the Chinese

government goes to extraordinary lengths to control and undermine Tibetan religious belief.

Monastic institutions in Tibet – monasteries, nunneries and temples – can no longer rely on their local communities for support. The Chinese authorities have ordered that religious institutions have to "lessen the burden" on the communities who used to contribute voluntarily or through a system of taxation to the institutions' upkeep in return for spiritual guidance. Tourism has been identified as a main stream of revenue for monastic institutions, and as a tourist to Tibet you are likely to be keen to want to visit one or more monasteries while you're there.

You may be more than a little surprised, however, to observe the extent to which tourism has taken hold of some monasteries, and how secondary the monastery's original function as a seat of learning and a focus for the community has become.

For instance, Kumbum Monastery in northern Tibet – now in Qinghai Province – is a major seat of Buddhist learning. However, religious life there is deeply affected by the large numbers of Chinese tourists. A newly built settlement outside the gates of the monastery compound is home to a large number of Chinese traders who make their living selling souvenirs to the busloads of tourists who arrive on a regular basis. Trade outside the monastery appears to be unregulated and does not appear to provide any obvious benefit to the monastery itself. Most of the items on sale have very little to do with Buddhism – such as electronic gadgets and toys – or if they are related to Buddhism they are from Chinese Buddhist



Tour group visiting Kumbum. With the resurgence of religion in China, Tibet has seen a dramatic increase in Chinese tourists visiting monasteries and holy places . *Photo: ICT*

traditions.

Inside the compound of the monastery, photographers have set up stands in an area of a courtyard where scripture teachings used to take place, offering to take pictures of tourists wearing gaudy replicas of traditional Tibetan costumes. The monastery's tour guides are all Chinese, speaking Chinese to the overwhelmingly Chinese tourists, but they too wear replicas of traditional Tibetan costumes.

ICT has received reports of monasteries in eastern

Tibet – in Sichuan Province – actually being contracted out to Chinese tour companies. A Tibetan writer in Lhasa said in an online posting of a monastery in Kham:

“As soon as you enter the monastery you see company employees wearing all kinds of maroon uniforms looking not quite like monks; they look more like tour guides but they're actually sales assistants. They first give a simple overview of the monastery, and then turn on the sweet talk to try and get tourists to buy *katag* [a white silk scarf traditionally presented as a greeting to visiting

guests] and incense, exaggerating what benefits the incense will bring and what disasters will befall [them] if they don't buy and burn incense. Each stick of incense is 200 yuan [\$26], around a meter long with the girth of a bowl. Incense like this was never burnt in Tibetan monasteries and people think it is very strange. People are urged to buy a statue of the Buddha, and more exaggerations are made about where the statue came from and what good karma and fortune it can bring. The most calculated bit of business though is getting tourists to buy *thangka* [traditional Tibetan religious paintings] – not to take them home but rather to leave them at the monastery as a kind of meritorious act. The *thangka* is then sold to another tourist, and another and another and another.”

The same writer goes on to describe what effect tourism has on the religious life of the monastery:

“The monastery has become very lax since being contracted out. The management used to be very strict, and monks who didn't take part in recitals were fined. But now none of the monks read scriptures, saying that seeing as the *tulku* [a reincarnate monk, often a monastery's head lama] contracted the monastery out for money, where is the need to recite scriptures? It's obvious therefore that even if some benefit can be obtained over a short period of time, the price paid is an irrecoverable loss in comparison. There are several monasteries in Chinese areas which have adopted this contracting out model, and it's the main reason for the over-commercialization of monasteries in Chinese areas. It's starting to spread

into Tibetan areas now, and the results could be disastrous.” ■

## WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR TIBET

Many people who have travelled to Tibet have contacted ICT on their return to ask what they can personally do to help the Tibetan people. The following are suggestions which you may want to consider:

- Sign up for ICT's action network to take online actions at [www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org).
- Join a Tibet support group or set up your own to inform local people in your region about the Tibetan issue;
- Write to your government representatives about Tibet and ask them to raise the issue of Tibet in your national legislature or parliament;
- Ask your government to actively support the dialogue process between representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government on the future statue of Tibet.

In addition, you may want to contribute to ICT's work or donate at [www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org). Or you may want to consider donating time and/or money to other organizations working on the Tibet issue, all of which have differing views, differing approaches and differing needs from their staff, volunteers, and donors. You are advised to research each group before deciding which one you would

# Appendices

like to actively support. You can find a group near you through the International Tibet Support Network at [www.tibetnetwork.org](http://www.tibetnetwork.org) or check the other websites listed in this guide.

*Below is a list of terms and references that will help you understand the current situation in Tibet. If you travel there armed with common phrases, a little historical understanding, and a willingness to question what you see, you will be much more likely to see beyond China's representations and into the lives of real Tibetans.*

## 1. Chinaspeak

*(Adapted from Michael Buckley's 'Tibet: the Bradt Travel Guide' (Bradt Travel Guides, UK, 2006). Website: [www.himmies.com](http://www.himmies.com))*

China's Tibet: to reinforce the idea that Tibet is not a separate country, 'China' is almost invariably appended to 'Tibet' in official publications in some way or another. Look out for "China's Tibet" as well as "Tibet, China".

Counter-Revolutionary: anyone who opposes official policies on religion and the status of Tibet in particular and is therefore regarded as an enemy of the state; the term also refers to a crime "committed with the goal of overthrowing the political power of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist system". Despite an official repeal of this crime in 1997, those previously convicted of it still languish in prison. Because the default

status of information is 'secret' unless made public by relevant Party, government and security officials, the Constitution ensures the criminality of sharing "state secrets". Now prisoners continue to be convicted under the charge "endangering state security" by doing things such as owning a book by the Dalai Lama or the outlawed Tibetan national flag, or even singing songs of freedom in a prison can be described as "plotting to split the nation".

The Dalai: an abbreviated term often used by Chinese officials and news outlets when referring to the Dalai Lama. The term is considered insulting by Tibetans because it deliberately omits the recognition that the Dalai Lama is in fact a lama. Followers of the Dalai Lama in Tibet and in exile are called the 'Dalai Clique'.

Foreign hostile anti-China forces: a general all-purpose term for anyone seen to assist or guide the "Dalai" in his "splittist" activities. The 'foreign forces' are not always specified, but they're popularly thought to be the USA, the UK, and Germany in particular. After the Dalai Lama received the Nobel Peace Prize, Norway was added to the blacklist even though the Nobel Institute is independent of the Norwegian government.

Internal affairs: Chinese shorthand for "back off, it's a domestic problem", which means "don't meddle in our affairs".

Minority nationality: refers to non-Han Chinese, including Tibetans. The term ‘minority nationality’ is being seen less and less in official translations into English of government statements, probably because it suggests the concept of a ‘nation’ other than China. Instead, it is being replaced with the term ‘ethnic minorities’.

The Motherland: refers to the entire territory controlled by the People’s Republic of China, including Tibet, Inner Mongolia, East Turkistan (Xinjiang), Taiwan, border areas in dispute with Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and India, and various islands in the Sea of Japan.

Patriotic education: a political campaign aimed at undermining the influence of the Dalai Lama in monasteries, nunneries and the wider community. It is known in Tibetan as *rgayl khces ring lugs bsam blo’I slob gso*, literally meaning ‘love your country, love religion’. This underlines the basic message of the campaign - that loyalty to the state is a prerequisite to being a good monk or nun. Sometimes monasteries are closed to tourists while a patriotic education campaign is in progress.

Peaceful liberation: a reference to the entry of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) into Tibet in 1950 – thousands of Tibetans died in armed battles with the PLA during the course of the ‘peaceful’ liberation; a common refrain by Tibetans is “liberated us from who, from what, for what?”

Splittists: a common Chinese term, along with ‘separatist’, for those advocating genuine autonomy or independence for Tibet, in other words, ‘splitting’ it from the Motherland. Other well-known ‘splittists’ are active in Xinjiang, Inner

Mongolia, and Taiwan.

## 2. Website Resources

International Campaign for Tibet  
[www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)

International Tibet Support Network  
[www.tibetnetwork.org](http://www.tibetnetwork.org)

The Dalai Lama  
[www.dalailama.com](http://www.dalailama.com)

## Tibetan Government-In-Exile

Tibetan-Government-In-Exile  
[www.tibet.com](http://www.tibet.com)

Central Tibetan Administration  
[www.tibet.net](http://www.tibet.net)

## 3. Religious Repression

“The Communist Party as Living Buddha: The Crisis Facing Tibetan Religion under Chinese Control”

International Campaign for Tibet  
April 26, 2007  
<http://savetibet.org/documents/document.php?id=226>

“When the Sky Fell to Earth: the New Crackdown on Buddhism in Tibet”

International Campaign for Tibet  
July 8, 2004  
<http://www.savetibet.org/news/publications/religionreport2004.php>

#### **4. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway**

“Political repression intensifies as Tibet railway opens”

International Campaign for Tibet

June 30, 2006

<http://www.savetibet.org/documents/document.php?id=180>

“Crossing the Line: China’s Controversial Railway in Tibet”

International Campaign for Tibet

September 2, 2003

<http://www.savetibet.org/documents/document.php?id=34>

#### **5. History**

“Freedom in Exile” by the Dalai Lama (Abacus, 1998).

“The Dragon in the Land of Snows” by Tsering Shakya (Columbia University Press, 1999).

“In Exile From the Land of Snows” by John Avedon (Harper Perennial, 1997).

“The Struggle for Modern Tibet: The Autobiography of Tashi Tsering” by Tashi Tsering, Melvyn Goldstein and William Siebenschuh (East Gate Books, January 2000).

“Lhasa: Streets With Memories” by Robert Barnett (Columbia University Press, 2006)

#### **6. Travel**

“Tibet: the Bradt Travel Guide”, by Michael Buckley, (Bradt Travel Guides, UK, 2006)

“Tibet Handbook: A Pilgrimage Guide”, by Victor Chan (Moon Publications 1994)

“Tibet Handbook: With Bhutan” by Gyurme Dorje (2nd edition, Footprint Handbooks, June 1999)

“Lonely Planet: Tibet” by Michael Khon and Bradley Mayhew (6th edition, Hawthorn, May 2005)

“Lonely Planet Tibetan Phrasebook” by Melvyn C Goldstein (2nd edition, Hawthorne, June 1996)

“On This Spot: Lhasa” by the International Campaign for Tibet (2001) [www.savetibet.org/store](http://www.savetibet.org/store)