

# Lhasa 拉萨

Lhasa - the name itself stirs up the imagination of many. For more than 300 years Lhasa was the elusive target for travelers, explorers and missionaries alike. Missionaries went to extraordinary lengths to try to enter the forbidden city, even disguising themselves as hermits and pilgrims to deceive Tibetan border guards.

Although the population of Lhasa is officially given as only 141,000, experts note this figure does not include the massive number of Chinese military personnel based in the city. The number of Chinese military and government employees may number about 70,000. Some Tibet-

watchers have also claimed the Chinese authorities purposely fail to count many of the Chinese immigrants who have flooded into Lhasa over the past 20 years, and claim the Chinese now outnumber the Tibetans in this city at the very heart of the Tibetan world.

Lhasa stands an imposing 3,760 meters (12,330 feet) above sea level. Many visitors caught unawares suffer from the potentially-deadly altitude sickness after their arrival.

Lhasa was founded in 633 AD under the leadership of King Songtsan Gampo. In Tibetan, Lhasa means "the land of the gods" or "holy place." It is considered the capital of Tibetan Buddhism by

## *Population:*

139,822 (1990)  
141,360 (2000)  
142,900 (2010)

## *Province:*

Tibet (Xizang)

## *Major Ethnic Groups:*

Tibetan 69.0%  
Han 28.9%  
Hui 1.7%  
Manchu 0.1%

## *Christians:*

400 (0.3%)

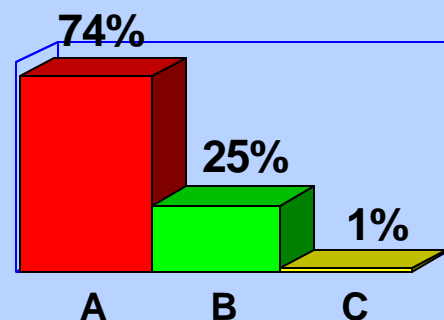
millions of devotees around the world. The thousand-room Potala Palace dominates the Lhasa skyline. It contains the tombs of former Dalai Lamas, and was once the seat of power of the Tibetan nation. The Jokhang Temple, one mile to the east of the Palace, is considered the spiritual heart of the city.

The Chinese military took control of Lhasa in 1950. The young Dalai Lama fled to northern India where he remains to this day. More than 100,000 Tibetans followed as refugees. Although the Chinese propaganda machine strongly deny wrongdoing in their "liberation" of Tibet,

estimates of Tibetan deaths range from 600,000 to three million. In 1962 the Dalai Lama summarized some of the ways the Tibetan people have been persecuted: "Tens of thousands of our people have been killed, not only in military actions, but individually and deliberately. They have been killed without trial... Fundamentally they have been killed because they would not renounce their religion. They have not only been shot, but beaten to death, crucified, burned alive, drowned, vivisectioned, starved, strangled, hanged, scalded, buried alive, disemboweled and beheaded. These killings have been done in public. Men and women have been killed while their own families were forced to watch, and small children



## Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



A = have never heard the Gospel or the Name of Christ  
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians  
C = Adherants to any form of Christianity



have even been forced to shoot their parents.” (Gyatso Tenzin, *My Land and My People*, 1962)

Although Lhasa has been seen as an unpenetrable citadel against Christianity, encouraging signs have emerged in recent years. Today there are several small house churches in the city, attended primarily by Han Chinese migrants but also by a handful of Tibetan converts. Dozens of Chinese house church evangelists have moved to Lhasa, from where they pray and witness at every opportunity. Some have had good success, despite the obvious Tibetan hostility against Chinese people, while others have been beaten and at least one killed by Tibetan monks after he tried to witness to monks inside the grounds of a temple.

There are also faithful foreign Christians living in Lhasa, hoping to shed the light of the Gospel wherever they can. Western believers face strong opposition on three different fronts: from the government, from the Tibetan lamas, and from the pro-Tibet foreigners. Numerous Western “tract bombing” teams come through Lhasa every year, conducting mass literature evangelism. One longterm worker has said that every Tibetan home in one part of Lhasa already has a stack of Gospel tracts. Few Tibetans can understand them.

## Pray for Lhasa

- 1** Pray the strong demonic forces in Lhasa will collapse and bow their knees to the Name of Jesus Christ.
- 2** Ask God to abundantly bless all Christians ministering in Tibet.
- 3** Pray for the health and unity of house church evangelists living in Lhasa.

## Overview of Lhasa (based on 1990 census)

**Pronunciation** : “La-sah”  
**Old Spelling** :  
**Location** : central Tibet (Xizang) Region, W China  
**Population** : 139,822 (1990 census)  
**Males** : 76,338 (54.60%)  
**Females** : 63,484 (45.40%)  
**Households** : 32,121  
**Average Household** : 4.4 people  
**Divorced People** : 1,762  
**% divorced of Population**: 1.26  
**Centurions (1990)** : 4 people aged 100 or more  
**Immigrants to City** : n/a  
**From same province**: n/a  
**From other provinces**: n/a

**Employed People** : 74,799 (53.5% of total population)  
**Main Industries** : Professional 18.0%, Government 14.7%  
**Education** : University: 8.5%  
**(highest level** : High School: 33.6%  
**attended):** : Primary school: 32.9%  
**Never attended any school:** 25.0%  
**Population under 15:** 31,980 (22.9%)  
**Adult Illiteracy** : 26.7% (men 17.6%; women 38.4%)  
**Major Nationalities** : Tibetan 96,431  
**Han** 40,395  
**Hui** 2,351  
**Manchu** 105  
**Others** 540 (29 groups)  
**Christians (2003)** : 400 (0.3%)