

# TIBET SEEKS BALANCE BETWEEN NATURE AND TOURISM



The Chinese Tibet Autonomous Region wants to put environmental protection measures before the development of tourism. Nature and tourism need to coexist in balance.

The tourism industry in the region has developed rapidly in recent years and has become a growth driver, said Qizhala, the chairman of the local government.

Tourism contributes to Tibet's GDP with at least 30%, according to him. **The number of tourists from home and abroad arriving in Tibet annually is expected to reach 30 million**, compared to 10 million in 2012 and 20 million in 2015.

Despite the incredible tourism boom, the local government has always emphasized environmental protection. Experts have also advised to balance environmental protection, nature and tourism. Efforts are being made to prevent "blind development and overdevelopment," as described by Qizhala.

The region plans to reduce the number of tourists who want to visit vantage points near glaciers, such as Qomolangma mountain. A cap on visits to Mount Qomolangma is set to be established and implemented in 2019.

"We always have to keep an eye on the minimum standard of environmental protection," Qizhala said. Since 2009, a total of 9.6 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) has been invested in environmental protection in the region. Last year alone, 1.14 billion yuan was invested.

In order to protect wildlife better, a mechanism was introduced in 2015 to provide compensation to farmers and shepherds who have suffered wildlife losses. So far, 85 million yuan has been spent on it.

Regarding the future, Yao Tandong, director of the Institute for the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau suggests that **more national parks be built to make better use of tourism resources and protect the environment.**

The region is considering setting up four national parks. These include Tibet's largest lake, the mountain Qomolangma, the Yarlung Zangbo, and the earth forest of the Kingdom of Guge. Once these scenic national parks have been established, consistent planning for their protection can be implemented to minimize the environmental damage caused by tourism, Qizhala concluded.

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