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## Tashi Lhunpo Monastery Fact Sheet

- Tashi Lhunpo Monastery is the seat of the Panchen Lama, the second-most important spiritual leader of Tibet.
- The first Dalai Lama founded the monastery in 1447 in Shigatse, Tibet.
- It is one of the four great monasteries of Central Tibet and was supervised by the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas of the Gelugpa (also “Gelukpa” or “Yellow Hat”) sect. It has produced thousands of renowned scholars of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy and Vajrayana practice.
- In 1959, 5,000 monks lived at the monastery, and another 2,000 affiliated monks lived outside Tibet.
- The Communist Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1980 severely damaged Tibet’s monastic institutions, and many scriptures, statues, and images were lost or destroyed. Many monks were killed or imprisoned; only 250 monks were able to follow the Dalai Lama into exile. Tashi Lhunpo was spared some of the worst damage.
- The monastery is currently the largest functioning monastery in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and is open to tourists.
- In 1972, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery was reestablished in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, under the patronage of the 14th Dalai Lama.
- More than 300 monks live at the new monastery, and they come from Tibet and other Himalayan regions.
- The influx of new Tibetan refugees to India is straining the reestablished monasteries in exile. Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in exile is one of the poorest of the reestablished monasteries.
- Because the 10th Panchen Lama did not leave Tibet, many of the senior monks of original Tashi Lhunpo also did not leave. The lack of these senior monks has curtailed development of the new monastery.
- Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in exile ([www.tashilhunpo.org](http://www.tashilhunpo.org)) is a nonprofit charitable organization that provides monks with the same Buddhist philosophical study as the original monastery.
- The new monastery also provides young monks with a modern education in Tibetan language and literature, Hindi, Chinese, English, math, science, and social studies.
- Monks can complete higher studies, including the six-year Gelugpa examination and Vajrayana studies.
- The Panchen Lama–Tashi Lhunpo Project (<http://www.honorpanchenlama.org/>) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Montrose, California, that is under the direction of Khen Rinpoche Geshe Kachen Lobzang Tsetan. Its mission is “to secure the traditions of Tashi Lhunpo, in anticipation of the release and rightful return of the Panchen Lama to his seat at this great scholastic monastery.”

Sources: Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. <http://tashilhunpo.org/about-tashi-lhunpo-monastery>; Mayhew, B., Kelly, R., & Bellezza, J. V. (2008). *Tibet*. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet; Panchen Lama–Tashi Lhunpo Project. <http://www.honorpanchenlama.org/mission/>.