



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **China bans foreigners from visiting Tibet Autonomous Region until April**

<http://www.savetibet.org/china-bans-foreigners-from-visiting-tibet-autonomous-region-until-april/>

February 19, 2019

Tibet tour operators have announced that the ‘annual closure’ of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) to foreigners began this year on Jan. 30 and will last until April 1, with one operator recommending that foreigners plan to “begin the Tibet trip no earlier than April 1 because of the Tibet permits restriction policy recently.”<sup>1</sup>

Every year since 2008, the TAR has been closed off to tourists for at least one month, coinciding with the anniversary of the March 10 Uprising in 1959 and protests in 2008.

In 2018, authorities closed the TAR to foreigners from Feb. 10 to April 1, according to tour operators.

Access to Tibet for foreign tourists can also be restricted at other times, depending on the political climate.

This most recent development is part of the overall policy of the Chinese government to restrict access to Tibet for independent observers in order to maintain an iron grip in the region while at the same time avoiding any form of external scrutiny. Even when the TAR is not completely closed off, foreigners can have access only after applying for a special permit and can visit the region only through state-controlled tours.

On Feb. 4, 2019, Freedom House, an independent think tank that monitors and ranks annually the level of freedom and democracy globally, ranked Tibet as the second least free region of the world, behind only Syria.

The Chinese government routinely blocks access to Tibet for foreign journalists, NGOs, diplomats and foreign citizens of Tibetan heritage.

In 2019, Tibetans around the world will commemorate the 60th anniversaries of the March 10, 1959 Tibetan National Uprising in Lhasa, Tibet’s capital city, and the Dalai Lama’s flight into exile alongside a large number of Tibetan refugees.

In a sign of Beijing’s propaganda efforts, the Chinese authorities have announced that this year they will observe the 60th anniversary of the “Democratic Reforms” in Tibet, as well as the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, which coincided with China’s invasion of Tibet.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.tibettravelexpert.com/travel-tips/tibet-travel-permits-visa/> as well as <https://www.thelandofsnows.com/tibet-closed-in-march/>

At the end of 2018, the US Congress passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which calls for access to Tibet for American officials, journalists and tourists on par with the access their Chinese counterparts have to the US.

By once again shutting down foreign access to Tibet at this time of the year, the Chinese government is demonstrating its unwillingness both to uphold human rights standards and to implement the principle of reciprocity in its relations with other nations.

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) urges Chinese authorities to put an end to the closure and isolation of the Tibet Autonomous Region, to guarantee the fundamental freedoms of all Tibetans and to allow unfettered access to Tibet. ICT also calls on the United States to fully implement the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act and to hold accountable the Chinese officials responsible for blocking access to Tibet.