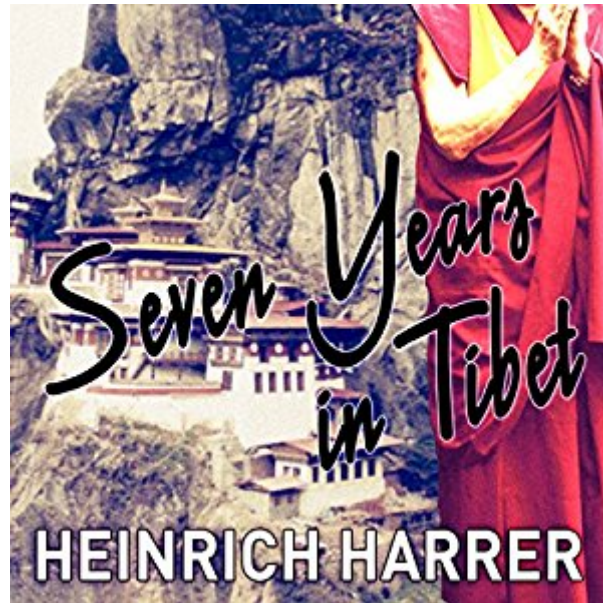


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# Seven Years In Tibet



## Synopsis

A landmark in travel writing, this is the incredible true story of Heinrich Harrer's escape across the Himalayas to Tibet, set against the backdrop of the Second World War. Heinrich Harrer, already one of the greatest mountaineers of his time, was climbing in the Himalayas when war broke out in Europe. He was imprisoned by the British in India but succeeded in escaping and fled to Tibet. Settling in Lhasa, the Forbidden City, where he became a friend and tutor to the Dalai Lama, Heinrich Harrer spent seven years gaining a more profound understanding of Tibet and the Tibetans than any Westerner before him. *Seven Years in Tibet* was translated into 53 languages, became a best seller in the United States in 1954, and sold three million copies.

## Book Information

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Whispersync for Voice: Ready

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Best Sellers Rank: #2 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Asia > China #2

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## Customer Reviews

The story of a dramatic escape by Heinrich Harrer and his climbing associate Peter Aufschnaiter from an Indian internment camp after their arrest by the British when they were attempting to climb Nanga Parbat, at the outbreak of World War II. The book details their journey across Tibet including their near demise with the Khampas, before reaching Lhasa and in my view, discovering a way of looking at life very different to our own. The book then goes on to cover Heinrich Harrer's relationship with the Young Dalai Lama and the Dalai Lama's enthusiasm to learn more about the world he lived in. The book also provides an insight into life in Lhasa before the coming of the Chinese. Finishing with the onset of the Chinese occupation and the flight of the Dalai Lama, I found this to be a very well written book and it can be seen throughout the book how the very personality

of the author changes from how I would describe as something not to far short of arrogance at the beginning to someone who cared very much about a people who just wanted to be able to get on with a way of life that had lasted for centuries and which to a great degree they were content with, but due to circumstances beyond their control, they were unable to do. I read this book after visiting Tibet myself in 1998 and the contrast between the Tibet described in the book and that which I saw was a sharp one. Heinrich Harrer himself returned to Tibet in 1982 and observed the changes himself (detailed in 'Return to Tibet', more of a thesis than a story, but nevertheless essential reading after 'Seven Years in Tibet'), noting the loss of much he had held dear when he was there in the 1940's. If you Heinrich Harrer's true story of Tibet, read the book - the film adaptation does not fit the storyline of the book and Heinrich Harrer himself is portrayed in a much poorer light early in the film than the book, which I feel is not fair. Another glaring error is that the film shows Heinrich Harrer in Lhasa after the Chinese arrive - Heinrich Harrer and the inaugurated Dalai Lama had already left Lhasa before the Chinese arrival.

Three months after finishing and putting down the book, I'm still so inspired by the whole Heinrich Harrer tale and his experience in Tibet. This is the coming about of the second review of the book. The book starts off at the outbreak of World War II. Heinrich Harrer and his mountain climbing associates, while attempting the Nanga Parbat mountain, were arrested by the British and were imprisoned in Indian internment camp located near the border with Tibet. After securing enough life necessities and supplies, Harrer and his friend Peter Aufschnaiter escaped and set out for the Indian-Tibetan border. The road to Lhasa was strenuous, arduous, and painful. Harrer and Aufschnaiter struggled with winter blizzard, depleting supplies, mountain sickness, and even risk of robbers. They had to obtain license upon arrival in unexplored territory. They risked the refusal to enter Tibet without a permit. They risked their life as their supplies won't last for the trip. Upon arrival into the country, they were greeted with curiosity, meticulousness, guard, and warmth. They were housed in government mansion; treated sumptuous Tibetan meal; tailored expensive hand-crafted embroidered wardrobe. From day to day throng of visitors came visit these newly-arrived foreigners. Heinrich Harrer lived in Lhasa for almost 5 years. He performed plumbing and other technical services for his friends and government officials. He taught children how to read and write English. He introduced ice-skating to Tibetans by sticking a knife underneath the boots. The most significant portion of this book is the detailed yet sentimental description of Harrer's relationship with the young Dalai Lama. Harrer recalled spending days and days at Dalai's summer palace and in Potola Palace teaching him English, talking to him about politics and building the first "home

entertainment center". They even made a film together and showed the film to the monks. Harrer was even permitted to film the Dalai procession in New Year. Harrer had built a deep friendship with Dalai and his people, one of which Harrer never had expected. Harrer stayed in Tibet until the time when the Chinese was ready to take over Tibet. This book is filled with heart warming anecdotes, scenes of Tibetan lives and people. It has tremendously inspired me to visit Tibet one day and experience for myself. Highly recommended.

Not being a writer, Harrer has created a very pleasant book describing his years as a prisoner in India, his escapes, and his travels through Tibet as he and his companion Aufschnaiter try to reach Tibet's forbidden city, Lhasa. The narrative is smooth, making the reader walk with them as they deceive Tibet's authorities and thieves, finding friendship among the nomads, spending months across the country. Reaching Lhasa, the story changes to the way of life of the Tibetans, and his own, as he comes to consider Tibet his new home. He is able to picture the religious festivities, the fundamentals of their budhaism, the social skills, the way the people see their God-king, the Dalai Lama. The only part of the story I think is not well developed enough is his relationship with the Dalai Lama, he spends only the last final two chapters with it. The end of the book is a little too quick, which represents the way he was forced by the chinese to leave Tibet. A very good book, and one can learn a lot about Tibet with it. The real stuff, not the kind of things you hear when some fancy movie star says he's budhist.

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