

By: [Gita Whitei](#), Science Editor

## [The Fastest Raising Mountains](#)

### *Between China and Tibet*

The Sino-Tibetan mountainous chain, also called the "the Alps of Sichuan", are located between Tibet and China. The highest peak is Gongga (7,556 m or 25,186 ft), China's highest peak outside Himalaya, located in the Hengduan Mountains. The Sino-Tibetan chain is the place on Earth where the terrestrial crust experiences its highest rising rhythm: 12 cm (4.8 in) per year, much faster than in Himalaya, Andes, Rocky or Alps. That is why the slopes are extremely steep and the isolated mountains have pyramidal shapes. The ridges are extremely narrow and the valleys can be 5,500 m (18,330 ft) deep. This is the point where Kun-Lun and Himalaya mountains join, after surrounding the Tibetan Plateau (Qinghai-Xiziang) to the north and to the south, respectively. Many larger rivers of south and eastern Asia, like Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, Salween, Menam, Yangtze, Dujiang, Mekong and Huang He, originate in the valleys of these mountains. To the southeast, other mountain chains spread: Indo-Burmese, Burmese, Malay and Annamite. The monsoons enter into the steep valleys of the Sino-Tibetan Mountains via Indochina, bringing rich rainfall during the summer and maintaining high temperatures most part of the year. This results into a rich local flora: from wet tropical forests at the base of the mountains to evergreen subtropical forests (including Podocarpus, a coniferous typical for the Southern Hemisphere and tropical mountains, but also palms of the genera Calamus and Trachycarpus) as altitude increases, then temperate forests (including the relict gymnosperm Ginkgo and magnolia trees), coniferous forests (with a rich [bamboo](#) thicket), subalpine scrubs and alpine pastures. The highest peaks are covered by perennial snow and glaciers. The most famous animal of these mountains is the [giant panda](#) (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*). With all the tough relief of these mountains, people have managed to practice agriculture, making terraces on the scree cones, a work that required a huge effort.