

# Sudurpashchim Province of Nepal: A Comprehensive Overview

## 1 Introduction

Sudurpashchim Province, also known as Far-West Province, is one of Nepal's seven provinces, established under the constitution adopted on September 20, 2015. Located in the far-western region, it borders China's Tibet Autonomous Region to the north, Karnali and Lumbini provinces to the east, and India's Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh to the west and south. Spanning approximately 19,999.28 km<sup>2</sup>, or 13.55% of Nepal's total area, the province is a region of remarkable geographical diversity, rich cultural heritage, and historical significance. Its capital is Godawari, with Dhangadhi as the largest city and temporary administrative hub. This article explores the province's geography, history, culture, languages, festivals, attractions, economy, education, and lifestyle.

## 2 Geography

Sudurpashchim Province features a diverse topography, encompassing three major regions: the Himalayas, hills, and Terai plains. The province covers 19,999.28 km<sup>2</sup>, with the following terrain distribution:

- Mountainous: 7,932.834 km<sup>2</sup> (40.60%)
- Hilly: 6,748.7706 km<sup>2</sup> (34.54%)
- Terai: 4,857.3954 km<sup>2</sup> (24.86%)

The elevation ranges from 109 m in the Terai to 7,132 m at Api Peak, the highest point. Major rivers, including the Karnali, Seti, and Mahakali, are vital for agriculture and potential hydropower. Key geographical features include:

- **Mountains:** Api (7,132 m, Darchula), Saipal (7,031 m, Bajhang), Jethi Bahunani (6,850 m, Darchula/Bajhang), Bobaye (6,808 m, Darchula), Nampa (6,755 m, Darchula), Om Parvat (5,590 m, Darchula).
- **Rivers:** Karnali, Seti, Mahakali, Chamelia, Budhiganga, Darganga, Surnaya, Dhikgaad, Hoparigaad, Rangoon, Doteli Gaad, Spalgaad.

The province's location makes it strategically important for trade with India and China. Its ecosystems range from alpine meadows to fertile plains, supporting

biodiversity and tourism.

### 3 History

Sudurpashchim's history dates back to ancient kingdoms. The Katyuri Kingdom (9th–13th century) was a significant power in the western Himalayas. After its disintegration, the Doti Kingdom emerged in the 13th century, ruled by the Raikas, descendants of Niranjan Malla Dev. In the 16th century, Mughal Emperor Akbar's army, led by Hussain Khan, failed to conquer Ajemeru (now Dadeldhura). The region was unified under the Gorkha Kingdom in the 18th century, becoming part of modern Nepal. In 1790, Raja Deep Shahi established the Khairgarh-Singhai State in the Terai under British India. Until 2015, the region was the Far-Western Development Region. It became Province No. 7 in 2015 and was renamed Sudurpashchim Province in September 2018, with Godawari as the capital.

### 4 Administrative Structure

Sudurpashchim is divided into nine districts, each subdivided into municipalities and rural municipalities:

Table 1: Districts of Sudurpashchim Province

| District   | Key Features                               |
|------------|--|
| Achham     | Hilly, home to Baidyanath Dham             |
| Baitadi    | Hilly, cultural and religious significance |
| Bajhang    | Himalayan, includes Saipal mountain        |
| Bajura     | Himalayan, home to Badimalika Temple       |
| Dadeldhura | Hilly, historical Ajemeru                  |
| Darchula   | Himalayan, includes Api mountain           |
| Doti       | Hilly, historical Doti Kingdom             |
| Kailali    | Terai, includes Dhangadhi (largest city)   |
| Kanchanpur | Terai, includes Shuklaphanta National Park |

The province has 33 municipalities, including one sub-metropolitan city (Dhangadhi), and 54 rural municipalities. It operates under a parliamentary system, with a Chief Minister and a Governor appointed by Nepal's President. The Dipayal High Court serves as the judicial authority.

### 5 Demographics

The province has a population of approximately 2,552,517 (2011 census), or 9.63% of Nepal's total population. Demographic details include:

- **Gender:** 51.7% female, 48.3% male

- **Ethnic Groups:** Chhetri (44.09%), Tharu (17.15%), Hill Brahmin (11.9%), Kami (7.22%), Thakuri (4.4%), Damai (2.56%), Magar (2.18%), Sarki (1.67%), Lohar (1.17%), Sanyasi (1.01%), Other Khas Dalit (3.15%), Others (2.5%)
- **Religion:** Hinduism (97.23%), Christianity (1.1%), Buddhism (1.1%), Islam (0.2%), Prakṛti (0.22%), Other/Not Religious (0.15%)
- **Urbanization:** 59.67% urban population

This diversity shapes the province’s cultural and social fabric.

## 6 Culture and Festivals

Sudurpashchim is a cultural mosaic, influenced by its ethnic diversity. The Chhetri and Tharu communities dominate, each with distinct traditions. Festivals include:

- **Makar Sakranti:** Celebrated in Achham with cultural dances, marking the winter solstice.
- **Dashain and Tihar:** Major Hindu festivals with local variations.
- **Indigenous Festivals:** Maghe Sankranti and Baisakh Purnima reflect agricultural and spiritual traditions.

The Tharu community is known for vibrant folk dances and music, performed during festivals and weddings. Traditional art forms and community gatherings strengthen cultural bonds.

## 7 Languages

The province is linguistically diverse, with official languages including Nepali, Doteli, and Tharu (Rana). Other languages include Baitadeli, Achhami, and Bajhangi. The 2011 census distribution is:

Table 2: Language Distribution in Sudurpashchim Province (2011)

| Language  | Percentage |
|-----------|------------|
| Doteli    | 30.45%     |
| Nepali    | 30.18%     |
| Tharu     | 17.01%     |
| Baitadeli | 10.65%     |
| Achhami   | 5.58%      |
| Bajhangi  | 2.64%      |
| Others    | 3.49%      |

Nepali serves as the lingua franca for official communication.

## 8 Economy

Agriculture is the economic mainstay, with crops like rice, wheat, and maize grown in the Terai. Tourism is growing, driven by natural and cultural attractions. Remittances from migrant workers, particularly in India and Gulf countries, are significant. The province contributes 6.9% to Nepal's GDP, with a growth rate of 3.56% in 2020/21 ([Nepal Outlook](#)). Financial institutions include 315 commercial banks, 45 development banks, 6 finance companies, 389 microfinance companies, and 29,886 cooperatives. Challenges include limited infrastructure, but efforts are underway to improve connectivity and healthcare.

## 9 Education

Education is progressing, with a literacy rate of 72.1%. The province has 3,167 schools serving 537,457 students (277,186 girls, 260,271 boys) and 11,840 teachers. Key institutions include Kailali Multiple Campus in Dhangadhi, established in 1991. Challenges include limited access in remote areas and a shortage of trained teachers. Recent initiatives aim to expand educational infrastructure.

## 10 Major Attractions

Sudurpashchim offers diverse attractions:

- **Religious Sites:** Baidyanath Dham (Achham), a Shiva shrine at the Budhi Ganga and Saraswati rivers' confluence; Shaileshwari Temple; Badimalika Temple (Bajura).
- **Natural Attractions:** Khaptad National Park, Ghodaghodi Lake (Ramsar site), Shuklaphanta National Park (home to rhinos and tigers), and mountains like Api and Saipal.
- **Cultural Sites:** Traditional villages showcasing Tharu and Chhetri heritage.

These sites highlight the province's tourism potential ([Nepalog](#)).

## 11 Lifestyle

Rural life centers on agriculture, with communities engaged in farming and animal husbandry. Urban areas like Dhangadhi offer diverse opportunities. The society is patriarchal, with strong community bonds reinforced by festivals and rituals. Challenges include limited access to healthcare and education in remote areas, leading to migration. Despite this, residents maintain a deep connection to their cultural heritage.

## 12 Conclusion

Sudurpashchim Province is a region of immense potential, blending natural beauty, cultural richness, and historical significance. Its diverse geography, from Himalayan peaks to Terai plains, supports unique ecosystems and tourism opportunities. While challenges like infrastructure and access to services persist, ongoing development efforts promise a brighter future. The province's vibrant culture, linguistic diversity, and resilient communities make it a vital part of Nepal's identity.