

Country profile: China

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Geography

China is an oriental country with a history of more than 2500 years. The area of china is about 9.6 million square kilometers, which is generally equal to the area of The United States, a little bigger than US. It is the third largest country in the world, next to Canada and Russia. With just over 1.3 billion people, china is the world's largest and most populous country. To deal with its population explosion, China imposed its strict and harshly enforced one-child policy in the 1980s.

There are 34 administrative divisions (provinces) in China, including 4 municipalities, 22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 2 special districts (Hong Kong and Macao), and Taiwan. The 4 municipalities are Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjian and Chongqing. These four cities are administered directly by the central government. Beijing is the capital of China; While Shanghai is the biggest city.


China is situated in eastern Asia, bounded by the Pacific in the east. The border stretches over 22,000 kilometers on land and the coastline extends well over 18,000 kilometers, washed by the waters of the Bohai, the Huanghai, the East China and the South China seas. The Bohai Sea is the inland sea of China. There are 6,536 islands larger than 500 square meters; the largest is Taiwan, with a total area of about 36,000 square kilometers, and the second, Hainan. The South China Sea Islands are the southernmost island group of China.

The climate of China varies greatly. The northern zone has summer daytime temperatures of more than 30 degrees Celsius and winters of Arctic severity. The central zone has a temperate continental climate with very hot summers and cold winters. The southern zone has a subtropical climate with very hot summers and mild winters. Due to a prolonged drought and poor agricultural practices, dust storms have become usual in the

spring in China. Dust has blown to southern China and Taiwan, and has even reached the West Coast of the United States. Water, erosion, and pollution control have become important issues in China's relations with other countries.

Nearly every major plant found in the tropical and temperate zones of the northern hemisphere can be found in China. In all, more than 7,000 species of woody plants have been recorded, of which there are 2,800 timber trees and over 300 species of gymnosperms. The rare ginkgo tree, cathaya tree, and metasequoia, long extinct elsewhere, can still be found growing in China. Among flowering plants, 650 of the 800 known varieties of azalea occur in China, while 390 of the 450 known varieties of primrose and about 230 of the 400 known varieties of gentian are also found there. The tree peony, which originated in Shandong Province, appears in 400 varieties.



Giant Panda  is the most celebrated wild animal of China. Most of Panda now live in Sichuan Province, southwest of China. The Giant Panda is an endangered animal; an estimated 2,000 pandas live in the wild and over 180 were reported to live in captivity by August 2006 in mainland China.

Other fauna unique to China include the golden-haired monkey, found in remote parts of Shaanxi, Gansu, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Yunnan; the northeast China tiger, found in the Lesser Hinggan ling and Changbai mountains along the Korean border; the Chinese river dolphin and Chinese alligator, both found along the middle and lower Yangtze River; the rare David's deer and the white-lipped deer, the latter found mainly in Qinghai Province and Tibet; a rare kind of white bear found in Hubei Province; and the lancelet, an ancient species of fish representing a transitional stage between invertebrate and vertebrate development, now found only in Fujian Province. In addition, more than

1,000 species of birds have been recorded. Among the rarer kinds are the mandarin duck, the white-crowned long-tailed pheasant, golden pheasant, Derby's parakeet, yellow-backed sunbird, red-billed leiothrix, and red-crowned crane

Government / Citizenship

After 8 years Sino-Japanese War, causing around 10 million Chinese civilian deaths, and its victory in the Chinese Civil War, the Communist Party of China, led by Mao Zedong, gained control of most of the Mainland China. On October 1, 1949, they established the People's Republic of China. From 1979, China began implementing a series of political and economic reforms advocated by Deng Xiaoping that eventually formed the foundation for mainland China's rapid economic development starting in the 1990s.



The "Five-Starred Red Flag" is the national flag of China. The current design uses red as its background and bright yellow for its stars. The red background symbolizes the blood shed throughout the revolution. The yellow color mainly symbolizes the Chinese people as "Yellow People" and was partly inherited from the previous flag color of Soviet Union which was also a combination of red and yellow, in which case the yellow symbolizes the brightness of the communist future. The larger star symbolizes the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the four smaller stars that surrounds the big star symbolize the four classes of Chinese that were considered unitable by Mao at that historical time; these are the Workers, Peasants, Petty Bourgeoisie, and National Bourgeoisie .

Standard Mandarin is the official language of China. Also, there are many dialects in different states of China. National holidays are as below:

The New Year's Day	Jan 1		1 day holiday
The Spring Festival	Normally Jan or Feb	in	7 days holiday
The International Women Day	Mar 8		1/2 day holiday for women only
The Labor Day	May 1		7 days holiday
The Chinese Youths' Day	May 4		1 day or 1/2 day off for young people
The International Children's Day	Jun 1		1 day or 1/2 day off for school children
The Birthday of the CCP	Jul 1		CCP members usually celebrated through meetings
The Birthday of the People's Liberation Army	Aug 1		Celebrated by the army
The National Day	Oct 1		7 days holiday

The Capital of China----Beijing



International relations

China has established Diplomatic Relations at ambassadorial level with 165 countries. China has “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, peaceful coexistence. China adopted a policy of “one country, two systems” in order to provide a framework for the successful negotiation with Great Britain for the return of Hong Kong and adjacent territories in 1997 and with Portugal for the return of Macau in 1999; both were given special administrative status. Furthermore, China became an advocate of arms control and assumed a more-constructive, less-combative stance in many international organizations.

China’s admission into the World Trade Organization in 2001 was considered a significant step in its further integration into the global economy. Added to that was the international prestige that accompanied Beijing's selection to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games.

China and USA are major trade partners and have common interests in the prevention and suppression of terrorism and in preventing nuclear proliferation. Chinese pronunciation of the United States is "mei-guo", meaning "Beautiful Country".

Economy

China’s official currency is Renminbi. (1 Dollar=7.5 RMB). The base unit of the renminbi is the yuan. The largest denomination of the renminbi is the 100-yuan. The portrait on the note is Mao Zedong, who is first Chairman of The Republic of China.



From 1979 to 2005, China's Gross Domestic Products had been growing at the annual rate of over 9%. In the past three years, China's GDP maintained growth around 8%, making China one of the fastest growing economies in the world. China's GDP grew up to 13.65 trillion RMB Yuan (equal to 1.65 trillion US dollars) in 2004, up 9.5% over 2003. Among countries in the world, China now ranks the third in GDP, only after the United States and the European Union. Although China is among the top economic powers with its GDP of over 1300 billion US dollars, ranking the third in the world, the per capita economic possession in China is still not high due to its huge population (over 1.3 billion).

China now trades with 227 countries and areas in the world. It is also worth noting that foreign funded enterprises are playing a bigger role in China's foreign trade. In 2002, import and export volume of these enterprises (approximately 400,000) reached 766.5 billion US dollars. It is indicated that with further opening and more market mechanism in its economy, China is getting more and more interdependent with the world economy. Foreign-invested enterprises play a significant role in China's economy, accounting for 27 percent of value-added production, 4.1 percent of national tax revenue, and more than 58 percent of foreign trade. According to the PRC press, companies from 190 countries and regions have invested in China, including 450 of the world's Fortune 500 companies. By the end of 2005, Foreign-invested enterprises in China employed more than 24 million PRC citizens. The contracted foreign investment reached 69 billion US dollars, and the foreign direct investment actually utilized was about 47 billion US dollars. Besides Hong Kong and Taiwan, investors from the United States, Japan, South East Asia and Europe are very active in the field.

China's reform and opening policies have not only facilitated the country's economic growth, but also produced substantial benefit for foreign partners and made constructive contribution to trade and economic development in Asia and Pacific in particular and across the world in general.

While China's economy has been increasing rapidly in the last 20 years; its environment degraded largely. China's polluted environment is largely a result of the country's rapid development and consequently a large increase in primary energy consumption. For example, In Nov, 2005, Songhuajiang River in Harbin, capital of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province was polluted seriously. The toxic benzene-contaminated water of the river arrived in Harbin early Nov. The river was polluted due to blasts at a chemical plant in neighboring Jilin Province. Harbin, home to a population of 9 million including 3.8 million in the urban area, has cut off water supply in the urban area.



The Economic Capital of China---Shanghai

Culture

The Chinese Culture, a culture that has evolved for thousands and thousands of years, contains rare beauty and enchantment with history. Chinese culture is rich in customs, traditions and superstitions.

Family life has always been extremely important to Chinese culture as Chinese lived in large family units. As many as 100 or more relatives lived together under the rule of the oldest male. The ideal was "five generations under one roof." However, those who lived this way were mainly families of rich rural landowners, wealthy merchants, and

government officials. Among the common people, most households consisted of only parents and children, but some also included grandparents and uncles. Chinese families traditionally valued sons far more than daughters. A husband could divorce his wife if she failed to give birth to sons. In some cases, daughters were killed at birth because they were considered useless, for females could not continue the family name. Only men were expected to work outside the home as wives stayed home to do housework, cook, and attend to the children.

Relationships within families were extremely formal in Traditional China. Family honor was emphasized greatly as members of the family, especially of the younger generation, were expected to "know their place" in society and to give the family name a good reputation. Parents also expected their children to show unquestioning obedience. A father could legally kill his children if they disobeyed him. Marriages were arranged by parents, much of which were decided when the children were infants. Most brides and grooms did not see or know each other until the wedding day.

China's spring festival: The Spring Festival is the most important festival for the Chinese people and is when all family members get together, just like Christmas in the West. All people living away from home go back, becoming the busiest time for transportation systems of about half a month from the Spring Festival. Airports, railway stations and long-distance bus stations are crowded with home returnees. The Spring Festival falls on the 1st day of the 1st lunar month, often one month later than the Gregorian calendar. It originated in the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600 BC-c. 1100 BC) from the people's sacrifice to gods and ancestors at the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one.

Food and drink: Chinese food can be roughly divided into the Northern and Southern styles of cooking. In general, Northern dishes are oily without being cloying and the flavors of vinegar and garlic tend to be more pronounced. Pasta also plays an important role in Northern cooking; noodles, ravioli-like dumplings, steamed stuffed buns, fried meat dumplings, and steamed bread is the favored flour-based treats. The cooking styles of Peking, Tientsin, and Shantung are probably the best known styles of

Northern Chinese cuisine. An elaborate, stuffed chicken symbolizes the Chinese wish for plenitude and satisfaction. Representative of the Southern cooking styles are: Szechwan and Hunan cuisine which are famous for their liberal use of chili peppers; the Kiangsu and Chekiang styles which emphasize freshness and tenderness; and Cantonese food which tends to be somewhat sweet and full of variety. Rice and rice products such as rice noodles, rice cakes, and rice congee are the usual accompaniments to Southern style cooking.



Jiaozi (Chinese Dumplings) is a traditional Chinese Food, which is essential during holidays in Northern China. Chinese dumpling becomes one of the most widely loved foods in China. Chinese dumpling is one of the most important foods in Chinese New Year. Since the shape of Chinese dumplings is similar to ancient Chinese gold or silver ingots, they symbolize wealth. Traditionally, the members of a family get together to make dumplings during the New Year's Eve. They may hide some coins in one of the dumplings. The person who found the coin will likely have a good fortune in the New Year. Chinese dumpling is also popular in other Chinese holidays or festivals, so it is part of the Chinese culture.

Making dumplings is really a team work. Usually family members will join the work. Most Chinese started to make dumplings when they were a kid in family, they know how to make dumplings. Especially good at making dumplings, particularly making skins, which is the hardest part of making dumplings. Culture or tradition. Chinese dumpling is often the food for sending off friends or family members away. I guess this is another tradition.



Huoguo (Hotpot) is a very popular cuisine in China, especially in Sichuan Province. A Sichuan **hotpot** is markedly different from the types eaten in other parts of China. Quite often the differences lie in the meats used, the type of soup

Also known as "Hotpot" , Huoguo is a very popular cuisine in China, especially in Sichuan Province. City of Chengdu and Chongqing are especially famous for their different kinds of Huoguo. It is more like a self-cooking way of eating. The pot with soup base--usually very spicy, made of dozens of staples--is placed in the center of the table with a stove underneath keeping it boiling. People put vegetable, meat and many other things into it to cook and eat with sesame oil, mashed garlic, sesame sauce, Sichuan pepper, etc. Huoguo Buffet is very popular. The Soup Base is the first important thing about Huoguo. Different restaurants might develop different kinds of soup base flavor to win in the competition. Fish, chicken, pork, mutton, beef, rabbit, frog could all be used as the material.

Huoguo could be used to distinguish from simply Hotpot in case when people refer to the Northern Style Hot Pot in China, Shuan Yangrou (Instant-Boiled Mutton) could be viewed as the representative of this kind of food. It's not focused on the soup base.



Tea culture.

Chinese people are believed to have enjoyed tea drinking for more than 4,000 years. Tea was first discovered by the Chinese. During the mid-T'ang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), a man named Lu Yu created the first compendium in the world on tea, the Tea Classic. This work helped to popularize the art of tea drinking all across China.

Tea is made from the young, tender leaves of the tea tree. The differences among the many kinds of tea available are based mainly on the roasting and fermentation of the tea leaves. The longer is the fermentation, the darker is the color. Depending on the length of the roasting and the degree of the fermentation, the fragrance can range from floral to fruity to malty. Teapots are very important in the process of tea drinking. The material, figure, and other factors all contribute to the feeling of tea drinking. Usually smaller teapots are used to steep tea, and bigger teapots are used to drink. The full aroma and sweetness of the tea can be brought out when using a small teapot to steep tea. This particular way was formed in 16th century, and people still do the same today.

Tea is China's national drink. It contains vitamins, tea derivatives, essential oils, and fluoride. It is a diuretic attributed with the properties of improving the eyesight and increasing alertness, so Chinese believe that frequent tea drinkers enjoy an increased life span. Its medical properties and benefits to the human body have actually been scientifically proven, and tea has come to be generally recognized as a natural health food.