

WHERE IN THE WORLD?



YFU Information

Quick Facts:

Area: 9,596,960 sq km

Population:

1,284,303,705
(July 2002 est.)

Capital: Beijing

Languages: Standard Mandarin, Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaiese)

Religion: officially atheist, Daoist (Taoist), Buddhist, Muslim 1-2%, Christian 3-4% (est.)

Currency: Yuan (CNY)

YFU China's web site: www.gogbal.org.cn



Introduction

China is one of the world's oldest civilizations. The written history of China can be traced back nearly 4,000 years.

China's ancient civilization and vast territory combine to give visitors the opportunity to see some of the world's rare historical sites and attractions. Some shining examples include: the Great Wall, the largest structure ever built, which was erected entirely by hand and has a total length of nearly 4,000 miles; the Temple of Heaven and the Forbidden City in Beijing, which are resplendent and magnificent; the Sesham Grand Buddha, which might be the highest stone statue in the world with a height of 71 meters; China's temples, pagodas, ancient tombs and murals, all displaying exotic grandeur; the famous Three Gorges of Changjiang River, characterized by their rapids, sheer cliffs, and steep mountains on either side; and Guilin which has been acclaimed as "the mountains and waters which are the finest under heaven."

Short Facts

Area: 9,596,960 sq km slightly smaller than the United States, China covers more than a fifth of Asia. It includes some of the driest deserts and highest mountains in the world, and it also contains over 1,500 rivers. China's natural environment is a rich source for

wildlife. The giant panda, golden-haired monkey, Yangtze dolphin and crocodile are some of its species.

Climate: Because of the size of the country it has a range of climates. As the greater part of China lies in the temperate-zone, seasonal differences are evident, but the climate is generally mild. In winter, China's climate tends to be cold and dry with frequent northerly winds and little rainfall. In the summer, it tends to be hot and humid with frequent southerly winds and plenty of rain. Seasonal winds called monsoons greatly affect the climate.

Population: Almost all of the people have Asian ancestry. About three-quarters of the population live in rural areas and the rest in urban areas.

Language: Chinese is not a single language, but rather a language family. While the Chinese languages are frequently unintelligible to each other when spoken, they are identical in written form. Also, they have a common language ancestor, so they are similar to one another. The most widely spoken of the Chinese languages is Mandarin, employed by 70% of the population. Other major forms of Chinese include Cantonese, Shanghaiese, and Fukiense. Written Chinese conforms to Mandarin, which is considered the standard dialect. Written in pictorial characters only, as opposed to phonetically, Chinese is one of the most difficult systems to learn. Pinyin, or usage of the Roman alphabet to spell the pronunciation of Chinese characters, has aided in literacy.

Religion: Throughout most of China's history, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism were the major religions. Christianity was never accepted by many Chinese people. While religion is discouraged by the communist government of China, it has played an important part in traditional Chinese life.

Government: The Chinese government is denominated by three organizations: the Communist Party, the military, and the State Council. Of these three organizations, the Communist Party holds the greatest control.

History: In ancient history, China was divided into many small states. Beginning in 221 B.C. and until 1911 A.D., some form of a centralized, bureaucratic government ruled. During this time great cities were built and magnificent works of art and literature were created. In 1912, China became a republic, but in 1949 the Chinese Communists overthrew those in power and established a Communist government. In 1989, a large demonstration against the government, held in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, was crushed. The Chinese Communist Party acted quickly at this time to repress any movements calling for more democracy, but now are looking for ways to incorporate parts of the reform movement as they try to make China economically viable in the 21st. century.

Economy: The national government still exercises much control of the economy,



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Greater China



but in 1978 they started moving from the Soviet-style centrally planned economy. The backbone of the economy is still agriculture. The Communist government has achieved an impressive record of economic growth and continues efforts to sustain it.

Education: In 1986, the Chinese government passed a law that required all children to attend school for at least six years. Schools emphasize political values, national consciousness and scientific subjects. Children enter elementary school at six or seven years of age and attend until about the age of twelve. After completing elementary school, children plan to attend middle school for six years. About two third's of China's children begin middle school, but most drop out before graduation. Those who wish to attend an institution of higher learning must pass an entrance examination. China has over 1,000 institutions of higher learning, including both universities and colleges.

Family life: Family life has always been important in Chinese culture. Relationships within Chinese families have become more democratic than they were in the past. The marriage law of 1950 -- the first major law of the Communist government -- asserted the equality of wives with their husbands. Also, the mobilization of women into the work force has encouraged a stronger female voice to take part in family decisions. The most important factor in determining a family's standard of living is the location of residence. Families in urban areas maintain a higher standard of living than those in rural areas, even though Chinese cities are overcrowded. In the countryside, families tend to be extended, whereas city-dwelling families tend to be nuclear. With the problems of overpopulation in China, the government has been promoting a campaign for one-child families. Enticing rewards go to

couples who comply; stringent punishments are placed on those who do not.

Food: The Chinese have a saying that they will eat anything with four legs that is not a table. Most of the Chinese cooking is about doing ingenious things with a limited number of basic ingredients. The cuisine is divided into four regional categories: Beijing, Mandarin and Shandong, with steamed bread and noodles as staples; Cantonese and Chaozhou, which consists of lightly cooked meats and vegetables; Shanghainese is the home of "red cooking" and wuxi spare ribs; and finally Sichuan, which is spicy and with lots of chili.

Recreation: As a result of its ancient culture, China has a variety of recreational activities. Some 3,000 opera troupes are active in China, including the famous Beijing Opera, which combines singing, dancing, music, symbolic gestures, and acrobatic stunts, all performed in elaborate costumes. China also has a long tradition of unique singing and dancing outside of the Opera, as well as a strong history in acrobatics. In addition, China has many traditional national festivals. Popular sports and traditional arts include the martial arts, boxing, wrestling, archery, fencing, soccer, tennis, ping-pong, basketball, track and field, and swimming.

YFU Greater China

YFU exchanges with the PRC began in 1992, when six American teenagers and a flight leader spend twenty days of the summer in China on a combination homestay and educational travel program. YFU's exchange with the PRC is organized in cooperation with China Advocates, an educational organization with offices in San Francisco, California, USA, and Beijing, PRC. The YFU Greater China National Office in Beijing is also the head office for Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Common Phrases

English	Mandarin
Good Morning	Zao an
Good Evening	Zao ban
How are you?	Ni hau ma?
My name is _____	Wo xing _____
Please	Ching
Thank you	Xie Xie
Goodbye	Zai Jien

Exchanges with: France, Germany, Korea, Switzerland, and the USA

Youth For Understanding
International Educational Services Inc.
6400 Goldsboro Road, Suite 100
Bethesda, MD 20817
U.S.A.

©2003 Youth for Understanding
International Exchange