

## China Fast Facts

**Formal name:** People's Republic of China (PRC)

**Capital:** Beijing



**Constitution:** After the founding of the PRC, four Constitutions have been formulated successively in 1954, 1975, 1978 and 1982. The present Constitution was

adopted in 1982 and amended four times, most recently on March 14, 2004.

**Top legislative power:** The National People's Congress ("NPC") and its Standing Committee. Representing the people and all levels of people's congresses in China, the NPC supervises all state-



level institutions. Its powers include electing the President of China.

**Head of State:** President Hu Jintao elected March 15, 2003.

**Top administrative body:** The State Council, which is the cabinet or chief administrative

body of the PRC that includes the heads of all governmental agencies. Headed by Premier Wen Jiabao.

**Military:** The People's Liberation Army ("PLA") includes the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Second Artillery Force. Jiang Zemin is chairman of the Central Military Commission of China, the country's top military agency and commander of its armed forces.

**National flag:** Red flag with five stars.



**National emblem:** Tian'anmen Gate tower under five stars, encircled by ears of grain and with a gear wheel below.



**Other Symbols:**  
**Animal:** The giant panda is considered a Chinese national treasure. Just over 1,000 survive in the wild, most of them

in Sichuan Province. The giant panda is one of more than 100 species of wild animals found only in China, including three endangered monkey species that are almost as rare as the panda: the black leaf monkey, the Guizhou golden monkey or

snub-nosed monkey and the Yunnan golden monkey.

**Flower:** China does not have an "official" national flower, but the tree peony can be regarded as a national favorite. The tree peony (mudan) received the most votes in an unofficial survey conducted in 1994 in every district in China asking people to select a national flower. Other ornamental plants originating in China include the azalea and rhododendron, camellia, gardenia, hibiscus, chrysanthemum, etc.

**Bird:** More bird species live in China than any other place in the world. Shaanxi Province's red ibis is also a national treasure. Only some 1,500 of this highly endangered bird species exist. Other cranes found in China include the Siberian white, common, black-necked, sarus, hooded, white-naped, and demoiselle.

**Tree:** The oldest tree in the world is China's ginkgo, which first appeared during the Jurassic Age some 160 million years ago.

**National anthem:** March of the Volunteers, written in 1935, with lyrics by the poet Tian Han and music by the composer Nie Er, honoring those who went to the front to fight the Japanese invaders in northeast China in the 1930s. Decided upon as the provisional national anthem of the new China on September 27, 1949, at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference ("CPPCC"), the song was officially adopted as the national anthem of the PRC on December 4, 1982, by the NPC.

**National Day:** Chinese celebrate October 1 as National Day in honour of the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.

**Other national holidays:** Spring Festival (the celebration of Chinese New Year, generally between the last 10-day period of January and mid-February) and International Labour Day (May 1). Major holidays in China are occasions for family reunions and travelling. Starting in October 1999, China's three official holidays became "Golden Weeks" each with seven days vacation made possible by working four extra days before the commencement of the holiday and afterwards.

**Land size:** China has a landmass of 9,600,000 sq km, making it roughly the same area as the continental United States. The area of cultivated land in China was 123.5 million ha at the end of 2003, a decrease from 126 million hectares the previous year.

**Location:** In the east of the Asian continent, on the western shore of the Pacific Ocean.

**Border countries:** Korea, Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

**Climate:** Extremely diverse; tropical in the south to subarctic in the north.

**Geography:** Mountains, high plateaus, and deserts in the west; plains, deltas, and hills in the east. The highest mountain in China is the highest mountain in the world: Mount Qomolangma. The mountain towers above all others at 8,848 m or 29,035 feet.

**Population:** China is the world's most populous country with a population estimated at about 1.294 billion by the end of 2003, one-fifth of the world's total. This figure does not include the Chinese living in the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions, and Taiwan Province.

**Population density:** The population density is about 135 people per sq km, roughly four times greater than that of the U.S.

**Population ethnicity:** 91.6 percent of Chinese people are Han. The non-Han population includes 55 ethnic minorities, of which the major groups are the Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uygur, Yi, Tujia, Mongolian, and Tibetan.

**Population distribution:** Most of the population of China lives in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, Yangtze River and Pearl River valleys, and the Northeast Plain. In 2000 a "go-west" campaign was launched by the government to help its relatively backward western and central areas catch up with more affluent eastern China.

**Religions:** The number of religious worshippers in China is estimated at well over 100 million, most of whom follow Buddhism. Other major religions are Daoism, Islam and Christianity in both its Catholic and Protestant forms.

**Languages:** Standard Chinese or Mandarin (Putonghua, based on the Beijing dialect), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, and Hakka dialects, as well as minority languages. In 1958, the First National People's Congress approved, at its Fifth Session, the adoption of the Pinyin (Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet) for spelling Chinese names and places in Roman letters, but the Pinyin system was not popularly

used until the late 1970s. Pinyin is now widely seen in China, and it replaces earlier Romanization spelling systems.

**Health:** China provides wide access to primary health care and child immunizations. Average life expectancy was 71.8 years in 2002, having risen from 35 years on the eve of Liberation in 1949.

**Economy:** China's economy has boomed since 1978, as a result of sweeping economic reforms. GNP grew from \$128 billion in 1980 to \$745 billion in 1998. China's economy continues to grow rapidly, with a GDP real growth rate of 8 percent in 2002, and an annual industrial production growth rate of 11.6 percent between 1979 and 2000.

**Political parties:** The Communist Party of China ("CPC") is the country's sole political party in power. Hu Jintao became general secretary of the CPC at its 16th National Congress in November 2002. Founded in July 1921, the CPC today has more than 67 million members. There are eight other parties.

**Top advisory body:** The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference ("CPPCC"). Representing all ethnic groups and a broad range of political and special interest groups, the CPPCC provides advice on social issues and exercises democratic supervision over the government.

**Administrative divisions:** China is made up of 23 provinces, five autonomous regions, four municipalities directly under the Central Government, and the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao. The 23 provinces are Anhui, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guizhou, Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Taiwan, Yunnan, Zhejiang; the five autonomous regions are Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Xinjiang and Tibet; the four municipalities are Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai and Tianjin.



**Currency:** Renminbi (RMB)/yuan

**International organization participation:** The African Development Bank Group, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation ("APEC"), ASEAN Regional Forum, Asian Development Bank, Association of Southeast Asian Nations ("ASEAN"), Bank for International Settlement, China Development Bank, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Chamber of Commerce, International Development Association, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Finance Corporation, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Hydrographic Organization, International Labor Organization, International Monetary Fund ("IMF"), International Maritime Organization, International Criminal Police Organization ("INTERPOL"), International Olympic Committee, International Standardization Organization ("ISO"), International Telecommunication Union, Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, United Nations, UN Security Council, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ("UNESCO"), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, UN Truce Supervision Organization, United Nations University, World Health Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, World Meteorological Organization, World Tourism Organization and World Trade Organization.

**Staple food:** Rice. China is one of the original centers of rice cultivation, the pioneer of hybrid rice and the world's largest producer of rice. The year 2004 was designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Rice.

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