

## Climate of China

China's climate varies from bitter cold in winter to unbearable heat in summer. The Yangtze River serves as China's official dividing line between north and south. Given the size and varied landscape of the country, there is no one time in the year when Chinese weather is ideal. Of course, the warmest areas in winter are to be found in the South and Southwest, such as Sichuan, Banna in Yunnan, and Hainan Island. In summer the coolest spots are in the far northeast.

China has a climate dominated by dry seasons and wet monsoons, which make for clear temperature differences in winter and summer. In winter, northern winds coming from high latitude areas are cold and dry; in summer, southern winds from sea areas at lower latitude are warm and moist. Climates differ from region to region because of the country's extensive and complex topography. In the south of the Nanling Mountains, rains are prolific and the temperature is high all year round. In the Yangtze and Huaihe river valleys in the central part of China, there are four distinctive seasons. In northeast China, summer is short but there is much sunshine, while winter is long and cold. Precipitation is limited in northwest China where it is cold in winter and hot in summer. In southwest China of low latitudes, the land is elevated high, and has characteristically vertical seasonal zones.

There's not really an 'ideal' time to visit the country, so use the following information as a rough guide to avoid temperature extremes.

### North

Northern winters, from December to March, can be extremely cold. Beijing generally experiences temperature of  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ , dry and no sun. Further north, temperatures reaching  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  are not uncommon, and you'll see the curious sight of sand dunes covered in snow.

During the summer, from May to August, temperatures in Beijing can hit  $38^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $100^{\circ}\text{F}$ ), coinciding with the rainy season for the city. The best time for visiting the north is spring and autumn. Daytime temperatures range from  $20^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $30^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $68^{\circ}\text{F}$  to  $86^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and drop a lot at night. Precipitation is 6370cm (25-28 inches) per year.

### Central

The Yangtze River valley has long and humid summer with high temperatures from April to October. The city of Wuhan, Chongqing and Nanjing on the Yangtze are China's three famous 'furnaces'.

Winters there, with temperatures dropping well below freezing, can be as cold as in Beijing, particularly as there is no heating in public buildings south of the Yangtze.

It can also be wet and miserable at any time apart from summer. Since it is impossible to choose an ideal time to visit, spring and autumn are probably best. Precipitation averages around 76 cm (30 inches) per year.

### South

Near Guangzhou, the summer is a season of typhoons between July and September. Temperatures can rise to around  $38^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Winters are short, between January and March. It's not as cold as in the north, but you'd better bring warm clothes with you while visiting.

Autumn and spring can be good times to visit, with day temperatures in the  $20^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $68^{\circ}\text{F}$  to  $75^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) range. Sometimes, it can be miserably wet and cold, with rain or drizzle. Precipitation averages 76 cm (30 inches) per year.

### Northwest

It gets hot in summer, dry and sunny. The desert regions can be scorching in the daytime. Turpan, which sits in a depression 150m below sea level, is referred as the 'hottest place in China' with maximums of around  $47^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

In winter this region is as severely cold as the rest of northern China. Temperatures in Turpan during Winter are only slightly more favorable to human existence.

This area of China experiences little rain, and as a consequence, the air is very dry. Summers, however, can exceed  $40^{\circ}\text{C}$ , while winters may drop to  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Precipitation averages less than 10 cm (4 inches) per year.

### Tibet

Undoubtedly, Tibet is one of the harshest places for human existence. It is cool in summer but freezing cold in winter. In Lhasa, the mildest city in Tibet, temperature may exceed  $29^{\circ}$  in summer while plummeting to minus  $16^{\circ}$  in winter! Sun

radiation is extremely strong in Tibet. The sunlight in Lhasa is so intense that the city is called Sunlight City. The thin air can neither block off nor retain heat so that the temperature extremes can be met in daytime and the same night respectively in Tibet. However it is not impossible to visit the holy snow land. April to October is the best time to visit Tibet, out of the coldest months, which are from December to February usually.

The average temperature in north Tibet is subzero and winter arrives in October until the following May or June. July and August are the best time to visit the area, enjoying warm temperature, intense sunshine, beautiful scenery and festive events.

May, June and September is the tourist season in east Tibet. In winter, roads are all blocked by heavy snow. Landslides and rock falls frequently occur, which will make travel difficult.

South Tibet is balmy during May to October. During the period, there are also great festive events held. Hence it is the best time to visit Lhasa, Shigatse and Nyingchi.

Most annual rainfall comes in the rainy season which starts from June to September. Usually it rains at night in Lhasa, Shigatse and Chamdo area. The rainfall may block roads and make travel difficult but the scenery at the time will be the best. From November to the coming May, the wind blows often.