

China

(also see separate Taiwan entry)

Geography

Location: Eastern Asia, bordering the East China Sea, Korea Bay, Yellow Sea, and South China Sea, between North Korea and Vietnam

Area:

total area: 9,596,960 sq km

land area: 9,326,410 sq km

Land boundaries: total 22,143.34 km, Afghanistan 76 km, Bhutan 470 km, Burma 2,185 km, Hong Kong 30 km, India 3,380 km, Kazakhstan 1,533 km, North Korea 1,416 km, Kyrgyzstan 858 km, Laos 423 km, Macau 0.34 km, Mongolia 4,673 km, Nepal 1,236 km, Pakistan 523 km, Russia (northeast) 3,605 km, Russia (northwest) 40 km, Tajikistan 414 km, Vietnam 1,281 km

Coastline: 14,500 km

Maritime claims:

continental shelf: claim to shallow areas of East China Sea and Yellow Sea

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: extremely diverse; tropical in south to subarctic in north

Terrain: mostly mountains, high plateaus, deserts in west; plains, deltas, and hills in east

Natural resources: coal, iron ore, petroleum, mercury, tin, tungsten, antimony, manganese, molybdenum, vanadium, magnetite, aluminum, lead, zinc, uranium, hydropower potential (world's largest)

Land use:

arable land: 10%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 31%

forest and woodland: 14%

other: 45%

Irrigated land: 478,220 sq km (1991 - Chinese data)

Environment:

current issues: air pollution from the overwhelming use of high-sulfur coal as a fuel, produces acid rain which is damaging forests; water shortages experienced throughout the country, particularly in urban areas; future growth in water usage threatens to outpace supplies; water pollution from industrial effluents; much of the population does not have access to potable water; less than 10% of sewage receives treatment; deforestation; estimated loss of one-fifth of agricultural land since 1957 to soil erosion and economic development; desertification; trade in endangered species
natural hazards: frequent typhoons (about five per year along southern and eastern coasts); damaging floods; tsunamis; earthquakes; droughts

Note: world's third-largest country (after Russia and Canada)

People

Population: 1,203,097,268 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 26% (female 151,266,866; male 167,234,782)
15-64 years: 67% (female 391,917,572; male 419,103,994)
65 years and over: 7% (female 39,591,692; male 33,982,362) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.04% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 17.78 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 7.36 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 52.1 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 68.08 years
male: 67.09 years
female: 69.18 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.84 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Chinese (singular and plural)
adjective: Chinese

Ethnic divisions: Han Chinese 91.9%, Zhuang, Uygur, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, Buyi, Korean, and other nationalities 8.1%

Religions: Daoism (Taoism), Buddhism, Muslim 2%-3%, Christian 1% (est.)

note: officially atheist, but traditionally pragmatic and eclectic

Languages: Standard Chinese or Mandarin (Putonghua, based on the Beijing dialect), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka dialects, minority languages (see Ethnic divisions entry)

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1990)

total population: 78%

male: 87%

female: 68%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: People's Republic of China
conventional short form: China
local long form: Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo
local short form: Zhong Guo

Capital: Beijing

Independence: 221 BC (unification under the Qin or Ch'in Dynasty 221 BC; Qing or Ch'ing Dynasty replaced by the Republic on 12 February 1912; People's Republic established 1 October 1949)

National holiday: National Day, 1 October (1949)

Constitution: 4 December 1982

Legal system: a complex amalgam of custom and statute, largely criminal law; rudimentary civil code in effect since 1 January 1987; new legal codes in effect since 1 January 1980; continuing efforts are being made to improve civil, administrative, criminal, and commercial law

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: red with a large yellow five-pointed star and four smaller yellow five-pointed stars (arranged in a vertical arc toward the middle of the flag) in the upper hoist-side corner

Economy

Overview: Beginning in late 1978 the Chinese leadership has been trying to move the economy from the sluggish Soviet-style centrally planned economy to a more productive and flexible economy with market elements, but still within the framework of monolithic Communist control. To this end the authorities switched to a system of household responsibility in agriculture in place of the old collectivization, increased the authority of local officials and plant managers in industry, permitted a wide variety of small-scale enterprise in services and light manufacturing, and opened the economy to increased foreign trade and investment. The result has been a strong surge in production, particularly in agriculture in the early 1980s. Industry also has posted major gains, especially in coastal areas near Hong Kong and opposite Taiwan, where foreign investment and modern production methods have helped spur production of both domestic and export goods. From 60 to 100 million surplus rural workers are adrift between the villages and the

cities, many barely subsisting through part-time low-pay jobs. Popular resistance, changes in central policy, and loss of authority by rural cadres have weakened China's population control program, which is essential to the nation's long-term economic viability. One of the most dangerous long-term threats to continued rapid economic growth is the deterioration in the environment, notably air pollution, soil erosion, and the steady fall of the water table especially in the north.

Industries: iron and steel, coal, machine building, armaments, textiles and apparel, petroleum, cement, chemical fertilizers, consumer durables, food processing, autos, consumer electronics, telecommunications

Agriculture: accounts for almost 30% of GDP; among the world's largest producers of rice, potatoes, sorghum, peanuts, tea, millet, barley, and pork; commercial crops include cotton, other fibers, and oilseeds; produces variety of livestock products; basically self-sufficient in food; fish catch of 13.35 million metric tons (including fresh water and pond raised) (1991)

Illicit drugs: illicit producer of opium; bulk of production is in Yunnan Province (which produced 25 metric tons in 1994); transshipment point for heroin produced in the Golden Triangle

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 65,780 km

Highways:

total: 1.029 million km

Inland waterways: 138,600 km; about 109,800 km navigable

Pipelines: crude oil 9,700 km; petroleum products 1,100 km; natural gas 6,200 km (1990)

Ports: Aihui, Changsha, Dalian, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Harbin, Huangpu, Nanning, Ningbo, Qingdao, Qinhuangdao, Shanghai, Shantou, Tanggu, Xiamen, Xingang, Zhanjiang

Airports:

total: 204

Defence Forces

Branches: People's Liberation Army (PLA), which includes the Ground Forces, Navy (includes Marines and Naval Aviation), Air Force, Second Artillery Corps (the strategic missile force), People's Armed Police (internal security troops, nominally subordinate to Ministry of Public Security, but included by the Chinese as part of the "armed forces" and considered to be an adjunct to the PLA in war time)