

# CHINA

## Location

East Asia.

## Area

9,596,960 sq km (3,705,406 sq miles).

## Population

1.3 billion (CIA, 2008). Roughly a fifth of the world's population lives in China.

## Population Density

135.5 per sq km.

## Capital

Beijing (Peking).

Population: : 16.3 million (2007), estimated 17 million in 2008. Chongqing is the largest urban area, with a population of more than 31 million. Shanghai has a population of over 18 million and, as of 2004, 11 other cities had a population of over 2 million and 23 cities had a population of 1 to 2 million. At China's current rate of urbanization, it is predicted that by 2025, the nation will have 219 cities with more than 1 million inhabitants.

## Government

People's Republic. China comprises 23 provinces (China considers Taiwan its 23rd province), five autonomous regions, two special administrative regions and four municipalities directly under central government.

## Language

The official language is Mandarin Chinese. Among the enormous number of local dialects, large groups speak Cantonese, Shanghaiese (also known as Shanghainese), Fuzhou, Hokkien-Taiwanese, Xiang, Gan and Hakka dialects in the south. Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang, which are autonomous regions, have their own languages. Translation and interpreter services are good. English is spoken by many guides and in hotels. Many taxi drivers do not speak English, even in big cities.

## Religion

China is officially Atheistic, but the stated religions and philosophies are Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. There are 100 million Buddhists and approximately 60 million Muslims, 5 million Protestants (including large numbers of Evangelicals) and 4 million Roman Catholics, largely independent of Vatican control.

## Time

GMT + 8. Despite the vast size of the country, Beijing time is standard throughout China.

## Electricity

220 volts AC, 50Hz. Two-pin and three-pin sockets are generally in use. However, most 4 to 5 star hotels are also wired for the use of 110 volt appliances.

## Head of Government

Premier Wen Jiabao since 2003.

## Head of State

President Hu Jintao since 2003.

## Telephone

Country code: 86. Public telephones are becoming harder to locate - your best bets are in post offices and at roadside kiosks. There is a three-minute minimum charge for international calls. The cheapest way to call internationally is to buy a pre-paid calling card, available from most convenience stores and in hotels in units of ¥20, 50, 100 and 200.

## Mobile Telephone

China has the most mobile phone users in the world, backed by a very sophisticated mobile communications system that now covers the entire country. Roaming agreements exist with most major international mobile phone companies. Alternatively, you can buy a prepaid GSM SIM card (from China Mobile stores) that allows you to use your mobile like a local phone with a new number. You'll need your passport to register.

## Internet

The number of Internet users in China reached 253 million in 2008. Internet cafes can be found in most towns and cities, and Wi-Fi is increasingly available at hotels and cafes in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Hangzhou and other major cities. Shanghai is slated to have city-wide Wi-Fi by the World Expo in 2010. Beijing routinely blocks access to sites run by the banned spiritual movement Falun Gong, rights groups and some foreign news organizations. Postings by bloggers are closely monitored.

## Media

China's media is tightly controlled by the country's leadership. The industry has been opened up in the areas of distribution and advertising but not in editorial content. Access to foreign news providers is limited and re-broadcasting and the use of satellite receivers is restricted; shortwave radio broadcasts are jammed and websites are blocked. In general, the press reports on corruption and inefficiency among officials, but the media avoids criticism of the Communist Party's monopoly on power. Hong Kong so far has retained its editorially free media. Each city has its own newspaper, usually published by the local government, as well as a local Communist Party daily.

Agreements are in place which allow selected channels (including stations run by AOL Time Warner, News Corp and the Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV) to transmit via cable in Guangdong province. In exchange, Chinese Central TV's English-language network is made available to satellite TV viewers in the USA and UK. Beijing says it will only allow relays of foreign broadcasts that do not threaten 'national security' or 'political stability'. All foreign-made TV programs are subject to approval before broadcast.

## Post

Service to Europe takes from between two days and one week. Tourist hotels usually have their own post offices. All postal communications to China should be addressed 'People's Republic of China'.

**Post office hours:** Mon-Fri 0800-1900.

## Press

- National newspapers include *The People's Daily* and *The Worker's Daily*, with many provinces having their own local dailies as well.
- News agencies include the state-run Xinhua and Zhongguo Xinwen She (aimed mainly at overseas Chinese nationals).
- The main English-language daily is the *China Daily*.
- Local English-language listings magazines in the bigger cities tend to be more entertaining and a good source of information about local events.

## Radio

- China National Radio is state run.
- China Radio International is a state-run external broadcaster with programs in more than 40 languages.

Below are listed the Public Holidays for the January 2011-December 2011 period.

**1 Jan** *New Year.*

**14 Feb**

**16 Feb** *Spring Festival, Chinese New Year.*

**5 Apr** *Qing Ming (Tomb Sweeping) Festival.*

**1 May**

**3 May** *Labor Day.*

**16 Jun** *Dragon Boat Festival.*

**22 Sep** *Mid-Autumn Festival.*

**1 Oct**

**3 Oct** *National Day.*

**1 Jan** *New Year.*

**3 Feb**

**5 Jan** *Spring Festival, Chinese New Year.*

**5 Apr** \* *Qing Ming (Tomb Sweeping) Festival.*

**1 May**

**2 May** *Labor Day.*

**6 Jun** *Dragon Boat Festival.*

**1 Oct**

**3 Oct** *National Day.*

**12 Oct** *Mid-Autumn Festival.*