



Shaanxi (Shǎnxī)

POP 37.3 MILLION

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Best Historic Sites

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- » Tomb of Emperor Jingdi (p367)
- » Big Goose Pagoda (p359)
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Best Museums

- » Forest of Stelae Museum (p357)
- » Shaanxi History Museum (p359)
- » Xiányáng City Museum (p366)
- » Yán'ān Revolution Museum (p372)

Why Go?

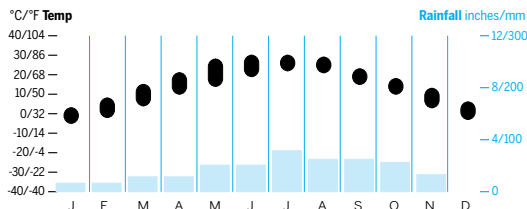
Shaanxi (陕西) is where it all started for China. As the heartland of the Qin dynasty, whose warrior emperor united much of China for the first time, Shaanxi was the cradle of Chinese civilisation. Later on, Xī'ān was the beginning and end of the Silk Road and a buzzing, cosmopolitan capital long before anyone had heard of Běijīng.

Shaanxi's archaeological sites makes it an essential destination. Around Xī'ān there's an excavated Neolithic village and numerous royal graves; chief among them the tomb of Qin Shi Huang and his private army of terracotta warriors. Shaanxi has its share of contemporary history too; the caves around Yán'ān were the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) base in the 1930s and '40s.

Xī'ān is an emergent travellers hub, with good nightlife, museums, ancient pagodas and a fascinating Muslim Quarter. Set aside time to get into the rural areas, with its fascinating villages barely touched by modern life and mountains that were once home to hermits and sages.

When to Go

Xī'ān



Apr & May Spring breezes and the ideal time to climb Huà Shān.

Sep & Oct The rain's stopped and it's still warm, so hit Xī'ān's sights.

Dec Avoid the crowds and maybe get the Terracotta Warriors all to yourself.

Shaanxi Highlights

- 1 See what an emperor takes with him to the grave at the extraordinary **Army of Terracotta Warriors** (p364)
- 2 Admire Xi'an's distinctively named **Big Goose Pagoda** (p359), the centrepiece for a stunning sound and light show
- 3 Watch the sun rise over the Qinling Mountains from atop Taoism's sacred western peak, **Huà Shān** (p368)
- 4 Explore the old town of **Hánchéng** (p370), a quaint quarter of buildings that date from the Yuan, Ming and Qing eras
- 5 Take a different look at China's past by gazing down on the enthralling excavations at the **Tomb of Emperor Jingdi** (p367)
- 6 Get lost wandering the backstreets of Xi'an's ancient **Muslim Quarter** (p356)
- 7 Check out the **cave** (p372) where Mao Zedong lived in Yan'an and the red tourists who flock to see it
- 8 Hop on a bike and ride atop Xi'an's glorious **city walls** (p373), a pretty 14km loop of the city

