



# Gānsù

POP 26.4 MILLION

## Includes ➔

Lánzhōu	825
Línxià	829
Xiàhé	830
Lángmùsì	836
Wǔwēi	838
Zhāngyè	840
Jiāyùguān	842
Dūnhuáng	845
Tiānshuǐ	851
Píngliáng	853

## Best Landscapes

- ➔ Yǎdān National Park (p850)
- ➔ Singing Sands Mountain (p850)
- ➔ Road to Bǐnglíng Sì (p828)
- ➔ Gānjiā Grasslands (p835)
- ➔ Lángmùsì (p836)

## Best Buddhist Sites

- ➔ Mògāo Caves (p848)
- ➔ Zhāngyè Great Buddha Temple (p840)
- ➔ Bǐnglíng Sì (p828)
- ➔ Labrang Monastery (p831)
- ➔ Màiījī Shān (p852)

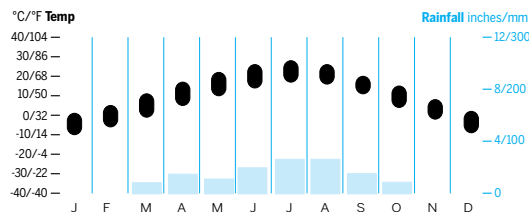
## Why Go?

Synonymous with the Silk Road, the slender province of Gānsù (甘肅) flows east to west along the Héxī Corridor, the gap through which all manner of goods once streamed from China to Central Asia. The constant flow of commerce left Buddhist statues, beacon towers, forts, chunks of the Great Wall and ancient trading towns in its wake.

Gānsù offers an entrancingly rich cultural and geographic diversity. Historians immerse themselves in Silk Road lore, art aficionados swoon before the wealth of Buddhist paintings and sculptures, while adventurers hike to glaciers, ride camels through the desert and tread along paths well worn by Tibetan nomads. The ethnic diversity is equally astonishing: in Línxià, the local Hui Muslims act as though the Silk Road lives on; in Xiàhé and Lángmùsì a pronounced Tibetan disposition holds sway, while other minority groups such as the Bao'an and Dongxiang join in the colourful minority patchwork.

## When to Go

### Lánzhōu



**Feb & Mar** Join the Tibetan pilgrims for the magnificent Monlam Festival in Xiàhé.

**Apr & May** Before the full heat of summer switches on.

**Sep & Oct** For crisp northern Gānsù autumnal colours, blue skies and cooler climes.

## History

Although the Qin dynasty had a foothold on eastern Gānsù, the first significant push west along the Hēxī Corridor came with the Han dynasty. An imperial envoy, Chang Ch'ien, was dispatched to seek trading part-

ners and returned with detailed reports of Central Asia and the route that would become known as the Silk Road. The Han extended the Great Wall through the Hēxī Corridor, expanding their empire in the process. As trade along the Silk Road grew, so did the small way stations set up along its



## Gānsù Highlights

- 1 Peruse the astonishing **Mògāo Caves** (p848)
- 2 Relax and explore the venerable Buddha Caves at the Horse Hoof Monastery, **Mǎtí Sì** (p841)
- 3 Camp beneath the stars amid the vast dunes of the **Singing Sands Mountain** (p850) near Dūnhuáng
- 4 Go with the Tibetan flow around the **Labrang Monastery** (p831) *kora* in Xiàhé
- 5 Hike to your heart's content through the fantastic scenery around **Lángmùsì** (p836)
- 6 Stand head-to-head with the vast **Sleeping Buddha** (p840) of Zhāngyě
- 7 Feel the Gobi wind in your hair as you stand on the ramparts of **Jiāyùguān Fort** (p842) in Jiāyùguān
- 8 Ride through a mesmerising terraced landscape on the road to **Bínglíng Sì** (p828)
- 9 Walk in a dried-out desert lake and witness the setting sun melt over the dunes at **Yādān National Park** (p850)