



Húnán

POPULATION 66 MILLION

Includes ➔

Chángshā	466
Sháoshān	470
Héng Shān	472
Zhāngjiǎjiè	474
Fènghuáng	478
Hóngjiāng Old Town	482

Best Scenery

- ➔ Zhāngjiǎjiè (p474)
- ➔ Héng Shān (p472)
- ➔ Yuèlù Mountain (p467)
- ➔ Déháng's Liúshā Falls (p478)

Best for Chinese History

- ➔ Fènghuáng (p478)
- ➔ Hóngjiāng old town (p482)
- ➔ Mao's childhood home (p471)
- ➔ Chángshā's Old City Walls (p466)

Why Go?

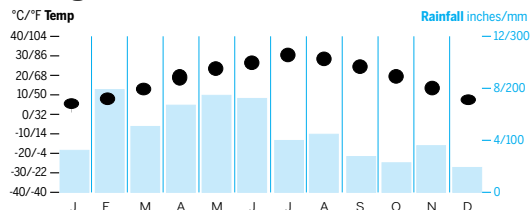
Communist Party cadres might wax lyrical about the sacred standing of Húnán (湖南) in the annals of Chinese history, being as it is the birthplace of Mao Zedong, but it is Húnán's dramatic scenery that is the real draw.

A magnificent landscape of isolated mountain ranges and jagged, karst peaks covers more than 80% of the province. The most astonishing example is found at the phantasmagorical Zhāngjiǎjiè; one of China's most surreal national parks. Here, as in other parts of the province, geological marvels rise up majestically from green vales fed by tributaries in the fertile Yangzi River basin.

People have long made a home amid Húnán's natural wonders, taming the rocky slopes into terraces of lush fields, and their distinctive cultures live on in charming villages and towns, the most alluring being the historic riverside settlement of Fènghuáng.

When to Go

Chángshā



Apr & May After a chilly (though not freezing) winter, spring brings welcome warmth, and mountain flowers.

Sep & Oct Temperatures cool after a scorching summer. Autumnal leaves enliven Zhāngjiǎjiè.

Dec–Feb Tour groups disappear from Fènghuáng. Zhāngjiǎjiè is sometimes brushed with snow.



Húnán Highlights

1 Hike among the otherworldly peaks of **Zhāngjiǎjiè** (p474), one of China's most spectacular national parks

2 Settle in at a riverside guesthouse in ancient **Fēnghuáng** (p478)

3 Sample authentic, chilli-laden *xiāng cài* (Húnán cuisine) in food-loving **Chángshā** (p466)

4 Ascend the sacred slopes of **Héng Shān** (p472)

5 Join the masses paying homage to Chairman Mao in **Shǎoshān** (p470)

6 Wander the Qing-dynasty merchant streets of the rarely visited **Hóngjiāng** old town (p482)