



Níngxià

POP 6.4 MILLION

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Best Historic Sites

- ➔ Western Xia Tombs (p860)
- ➔ Hèlán Mountain rock carvings (p860)
- ➔ Xūmí Shān (p864)
- ➔ Shuǐ Dòng Gōu (p861)

Best Temples

- ➔ Qīngzhēn Dà Sì (p864)
- ➔ Gāo Temple (p862)
- ➔ Guāngzōng Sì (p862)
- ➔ Yánfú Sì (p861)

Why Go?

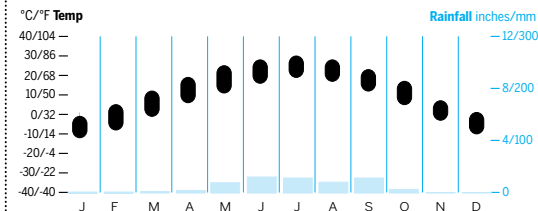
With its raw landscape of dusty plains and stark mountains, sliced in two by the Yellow River (Huáng Hé), there is a distinct *Grapes of Wrath* feel to Níngxià (宁夏). Outside the cities, it's a timeless landscape where farmers till the yellow earth just like their ancestors did.

Yet Níngxià was once the frontline between the empires of the Mongols and the Han Chinese and there is a host of historic sites here, ranging from little-seen Buddhist statues to the royal tombs of long-past dynasties, as well as ancient rock carvings that predate any emperor. And as the homeland of the Muslim Hui ethnic minority, Níngxià is culturally unique, too.

Then there's the chance to camp out under the desert sky, or float down the Yellow River on a traditional raft. But best of all, Níngxià sees few foreign visitors so it seems like you have the place all to yourself.

When to Go

Yinchuān



Jun Warm, dry nights will give you a thirst for some local night-life and Níngxià wine.

Oct It's cooling down and time to play Lawrence of Arabia in the little-visited Tengger Desert.

Nov The Yellow River festival in Yinchuān features concerts and folk dancing.

Níngxià Highlights

- 1 Visit the imperial **Western Xia Tombs** (p860) outside Yínchuān, a rare reminder of this long-extinct culture
- 2 Raft down the Yellow River or slide down the sand dunes at desert playground **Shāpōtǒu** (p863)
- 3 Explore the little-seen Buddhist grottoes with hundreds of statues at **Xūmí Shān** (p864)
- 4 Check out the utterly unique rock carvings at **Hèlán Shān** (p860), which date back thousands of years
- 5 Hop on a camel and trek into the **Tengger Desert** (p864) for an overnight stay
- 6 Investigate Mongol culture at lonely sites around **Bayanhot** (p861), **Guǎngzōng Sì** (p862) and **Yánfú Sì** (p861)
- 7 Get way off the beaten track at Tóngxīn's marvellous Ming-era **Great Mosque** (p864)

