



Shānxī

POP 35.7 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Ancient Towns & Villages

- ➔ Píngyáo (p358)
- ➔ Guōyù (p365)
- ➔ Lǐjiāshān (p363)
- ➔ Qìkǒu (p363)

Best Temples

- ➔ Xiǎntóng Temple (p354)
- ➔ Tǎyuán Temple (p354)
- ➔ Huáyán Temple (p348)
- ➔ Hanging Monastery (p352)

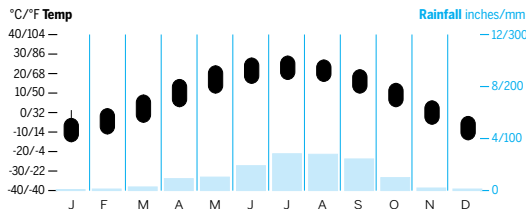
Why Go?

Waist-deep in handsome history, Shānxī (山西) has a plethora of interesting sights but it unfortunately takes some patience to see through the pollution and coal dust that pervades much of the province. Most travellers start with the walled city of Píngyáo. Basing yourself here and jumping to Píngyáo's surrounding sights is practically all you need. You'll encounter time-worn temples, traditional Qing-dynasty courtyard architecture and some of the warmest people in the Middle Kingdom.

The mountain vastness of Wútái Shān, however, reveals Shānxī's other great source of magic, a Buddhist leaning that fashions classical monastic architecture, a disposition further concentrated in the astonishing Buddhist cave sculptures at Yúngāng and at the Hanging Monastery. Add in the time-warp walled village of Guōyù and the still-inhabited cave dwellings of Lǐjiāshān, and you could find yourself spending more time here than you had planned for.

When to Go

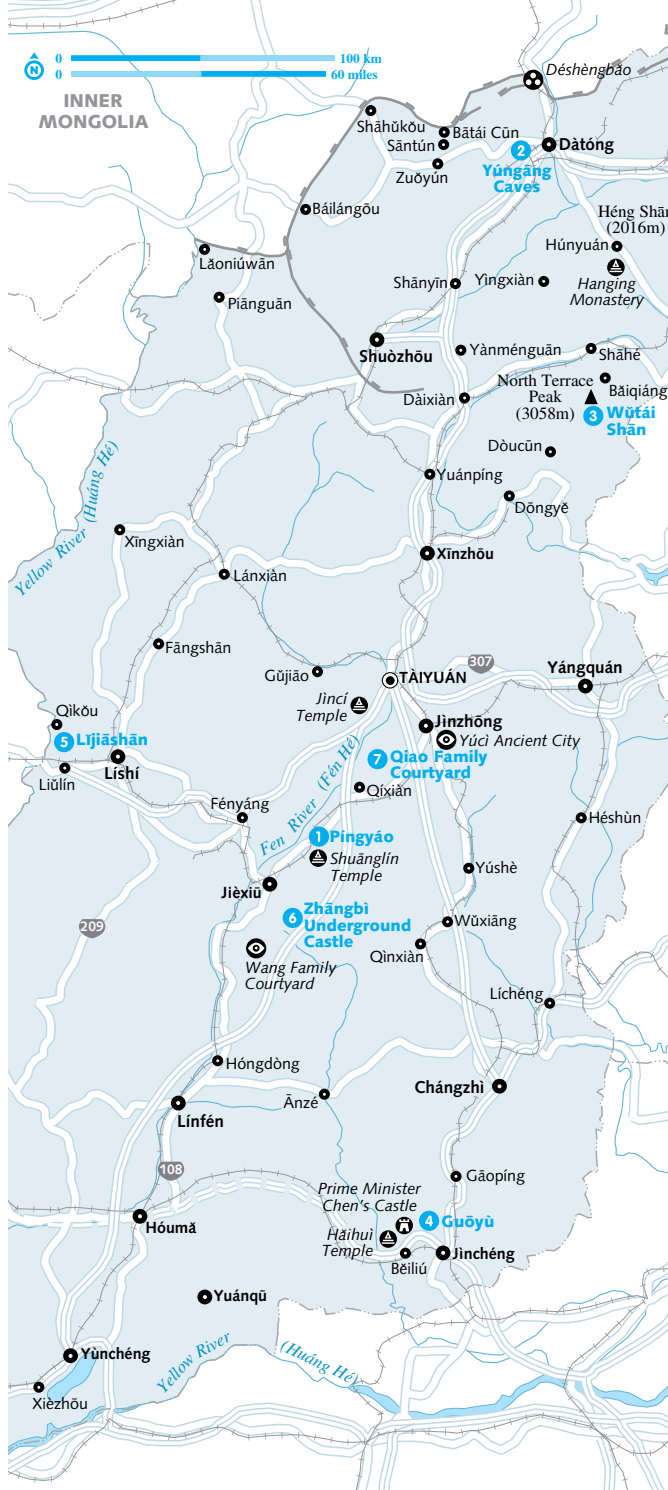
Dàtóng



May Get a jump on the sapping summer months.

Late May–early Sep For trips to cooler, mountainous Wútái Shān.

Late Sep Enjoy the comfortable start of the lovely Shānxī autumn.



Shānxī Highlights

- 1 Wander the cobblestone ancient streets of time-warped **Pingyáo** (p358)
- 2 Discover the grandeur of the Buddhist statues at the **Yúngāng Caves** (p351)
- 3 Hang up your traveller's hat in the monastic enclave of **Wútái Shān** (p352)
- 4 Journey to the still-inhabited historical walled village of **Guōyù** (p365) in Shānxī's remote southeast
- 5 Experience 'old' China with an overnight stay at the Ming-dynasty cave network of **Lǐjiāshān** (p363)
- 6 Go subterranean at the fascinating **Zhāngbi Underground Castle** (p362)
- 7 Explore some of China's best-preserved courtyard architecture at the **Qiao Family Courtyard** (p357)