



Tiānjīn & Héběi

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Best Architectural Beauties

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Best Off the Beaten Track

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Why Go?

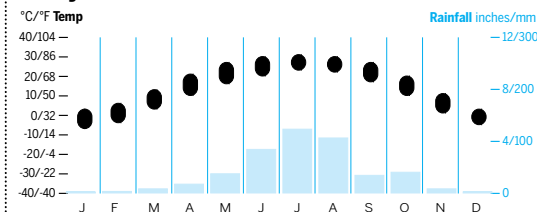
Běijīng's breadbasket, Héběi (河北) is a slow-moving panorama of grazing sheep, brown earth and fields of corn and wheat. Cosmopolitan Tiānjīn (天津) may put on a dazzling show, but the true charms of this region are its time-worn, earthy textures and its deep-rooted historical narrative.

Héběi offers the ideal chance to disengage from Běijīng's modernity and frantic urban tempo, and experience a more timeless China without having to travel too far. Wander through ancient settlements and walled towns, skirt the wild edges of the former Manchuria and journey to the majestic 18th-century summer retreat of the Qīng emperors in Chéngdé.

There are temples galore to explore, rarely visited stretches of the Great Wall and remote towns and villages whose ancient rhythms and rural seclusion make them the perfect retreats for those prepared to venture slightly off the beaten track.

When to Go

Tiānjīn



Feb It's bitterly cold, but Chinese New Year temple fairs in Zhèngdìng will warm your spirits.

Apr & May Héběi starts to thaw out after the big winter freeze. Comfortable temperatures.

Sep & Oct Autumn is Héběi's most pleasant season; not too hot, not too cold.



Tiānjīn & Héběi Highlights

- 1 Visit the staggering collection of imperial buildings at the Qing-dynasty getaway of **Chéngdé** (p141)
- 2 Explore the 1500-year-old Lóngxīng Temple in the pagoda-peppered town of **Zhèngdīng** (p138)
- 3 Step back in time as you walk the cobbled streets of the

Ming-dynasty 'stone village' of **Yújiāocūn** (p139)

- 4 Venture off the beaten track to the walled village of **Jímíngyì** (p149), China's oldest surviving postal station
- 5 Hike some of the less-visited stretches of the Great Wall at the Ming garrison town of **Shānhǎiguān** (p135)

- 6 Sip Italian coffee and quaff a German beer or two in the European-inspired cityscape of laid-back **Tiānjīn** (p129)
- 7 Be one of the few tourists to hunt down the seemingly long-forgotten **Iron Lion of Cāngzhōu** (p140), China's oldest cast-iron sculpture