



# Gānsù

POP 25.9 MILLION

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Mǎzìlù Beef Noodles (p836)
- ➔ Nirvana Restaurant & Bar (p842)
- ➔ Zhāixíng Gé (p856)
- ➔ Zhengning Lu Night Market (p836)
- ➔ Happy Homemade Yunnan Taste (p847)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Nirvana Hotel (p842)
- ➔ Silk Road Dūnhuáng Hotel (p855)
- ➔ Bean Sprout Hostel (p850)
- ➔ Boke Youth Hostel (p846)

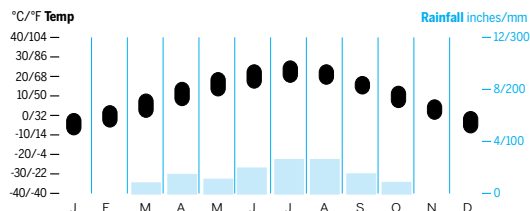
## Why Go?

Synonymous with the Silk Road, the slender province of Gānsù (甘肅) flows east to west along the Héxī Corridor, the gap through which goods and ideas once streamed between China and 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 geographical diversity. Historians immerse themselves in Silk Road lore, art aficionados swoon before the wealth of Buddhist paintings and sculptures, while adventurers hike through desert rockland, ascend sand dunes and tread along high-mountain paths well worn by Tibetan nomads. The ethnic diversity is equally astonishing: throughout the province, 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, Zhang Qian (Chang Ch'ien), was dispatched to seek

trading partners 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



## Gānsù Highlights

- 1 Mògāo Grottoes (p858)**  
Viewing one of the most important Buddhist sites on the Silk Road.
- 2 Bīnglíng Sì (p837)**  
Gazing up at the giant Buddha carved into a desert cliff at this remote temple.
- 3 Zhāngyē Dānxiá National Geopark (p851)**  
Photographing the rainbow of desert colours on these Martian-like hills.
- 4 Màiǐ Shān Grottoes (p862)**  
Ascending nerve-rattling catwalks for a peek inside these Buddhist caves.
- 5 Singing Sands Mountain (p860)**  
Stargazing over dunes with a glass of Mogao wine in hand.
- 6 Labrang Monastery (p839)**  
Going with the Tibetan flow around the *kora* at Gānsù's most important monastery.
- 7 Lángmùsì (p845)**  
Hiking to your heart's content around this chilled-out Amdo town.
- 8 Jiāyùguān Fort (p852)**  
Feeling the Gobi wind in your hair standing on the ramparts of this ancient mud fortress.
- 9 Yādān National Park (p860)**  
Witnessing the setting sun melt over eerie desert rock formations.