



Tiānjīn & Héběi

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Lerthai Center (p143)
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Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Qǐ Wàng Lóu (p151)
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Why Go?

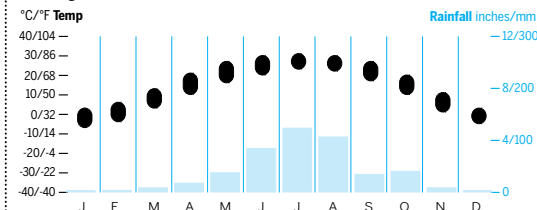
Běijīng's breadbasket, Héběi (河北) is a slow-moving panorama of grazing sheep, brown earth and fields of corn and wheat. Cosmopolitan Tiānjīn may put on a dazzling show, but the true charms of this region are its time-worn, earthy textures and its deep-rooted historical narrative.

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 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 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 Chéngdé (p147) Visiting the staggering collection of imperial buildings at the Qing dynasty's summer resort.

2 Zhèngdìng (p145) Exploring the remarkable, 1500-year-old Lóngxíng Temple and other ancient temples and pagodas.

3 Yújiācūn (p147) Walking the cobbled streets of this little-known Ming dynasty 'stone village'.

4 Tiānjīn (p135) Enjoying the cultural riches of the former foreign concession port.

5 Jímíngyì (p155) Venturing off the beaten track to China's oldest surviving postal station.

6 Shānhǎiguān (p152) Hiking the crumbling, less visited stretches of the Great Wall outside this Ming garrison town.