



CHINA

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

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Welcome to China

China. The name alone makes you want to get packing. It's going places, so jump aboard, go along for the ride and see where it's headed.

China is vast. Off-the-scale massive. A riveting jumble of wildly varying dialects and climatic and topographical extremes, it's like several different countries rolled into one. Take your pick from the ethnic mix of the southwest, the yak-butter illuminated temples of Xiàhé, a journey along the dusty Silk Road or getting into your glad rags for a night on the Shàngǎi tiles. You're spoilt for choice: whether you're an urban traveller, hiker, cyclist, explorer, backpacker, irrepressible museum-goer or faddish foodie, China's diversity is second to none.

And few countries do the Big Outdoors like the Middle Kingdom. China's landscapes span the range from alpha to omega: take your pick from the sublime mist-wreathed peaks of Huángshān or the impassive deserts of Gānsù, island-hopping in Hong Kong or biking between the fairy-tale karst pinnacles around Yángshuò. Swoon before the rice terraces of the south, take a selfie among the gorgeous yellow rapeseed of Shèxiàn or hike the Great Wall as it meanders across mountain peaks. Get lost in green forests of bamboo or, if you really want to show off to your friends back home, hike through one of the world's deepest and most dramatic canyons – Tiger Leaping Gorge in Yúnnán.

It's all there, ready and waiting.

“Off-the-scale massive...
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Karst landscapes along the Lǐ River, near Yángshuò (p190), Guǎngxī;
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Oriental Pearl TV Tower, Pūdōng
(p125), Shànghǎi
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The Great Wall

China's greatest engineering feat meanders across the north of the land

Spotting it from space is both tough and pointless: the only place you can truly put the Great Wall (p68) under your feet is in China. Select the Great Wall according to taste: perfectly chiselled, dilapidated, stripped of its bricks, overrun with saplings, coiling splendidly into the hills or returning to dust. Top: Jinshānlíng (p76); Above: Bādǎlíng (p77)

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Gānsù & the Silk Road

Boasting ancient Buddhist artefacts, geographic diversity and adventures galore

An impressive length of the historic Silk Road runs through Gānsù province (p254), dotted with sublime fragments of Buddhist civilisations, including the outstanding Mògāo Grottoes (pictured; p258), and leading to the mighty desert fort of Jiāyùguān (p262), while also guiding travellers to the atmospheric Tibetan Buddhist enclave of Xiàhé and Labrang Monastery (p260).

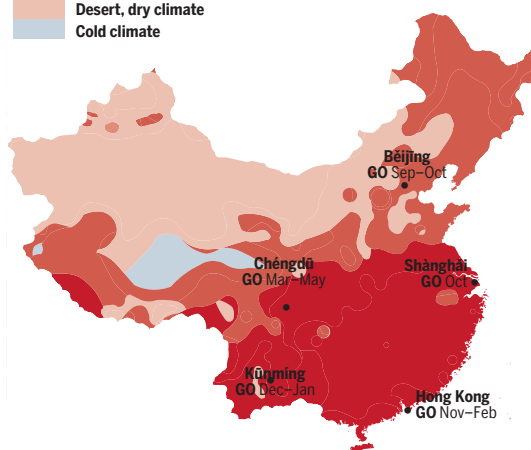
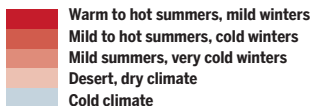
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Plan Your Trip

Need to Know



When to Go



High Season (May–Aug)

- Prepare for summer downpours and tourist crowds.
- Accommodation prices peak during the first week of the May holiday period.

Shoulder (Feb–Apr, Sep & Oct)

- Expect warmer days in spring, cooler days in autumn.
- Optimal season in the north, with fresh weather and clear skies.
- Accommodation prices peak during holidays in early October.

Low Season (Nov–Feb)

- Domestic tourism at a low ebb, but things are busy for Chinese New Year.
- Bitterly cold in the north and at altitude, and only warm in the far south.

Currency

yuán (元; ¥)

Language

Mandarin, Cantonese

Visas

Needed for all visits to China except Hong Kong, Macau and trips of less than 72 hours to a number of cities including Běijīng, Shànghǎi, Xī'ān, Guílín, Chéngdū, Kūnmíng and Chóngqīng.

Money

Credit cards in big cities accepted, elsewhere less widely accepted. ATMs in cities and towns.

Mobile Phones

Pay-as-you-go SIM cards can be bought locally for most mobile phones.

Time

GMT/UTC plus eight hours