

# Xīnjiāng 新疆



Home to eight million Uighurs, the massive and restive 'New Frontier' in far-flung northwest China has stronger cultural and ethnic ties to Central Asia than to the Han Chinese. Here, the language is not just a different dialect, it's a completely different linguistic family; and it's no longer about whether you dip your dumplings in soy sauce or vinegar, it's how you want your mutton cooked.

Xīnjiāng's countless minorities and its crucial geopolitical location keep this restless land a political thorn in the side of Běijīng. On the other hand, Xīnjiāng is also a golden goose, with its sheer territorial expanse (one-sixth of China's territory), abundant natural resources (including 30% of China's oil reserve) and a hyper-rich Silk Road legacy. Billions of yuan have been invested in the region's infrastructure to establish a 'modern Silk Road', followed by an influx of Chinese seeking opportunities of every make and model.

One short step away from the new New Frontier, however, and you get back to the old – way back. Along the Silk Road, the old towns, the camel trading, the blowing sands, the kebabs, the lively and beautiful mosques, and the unsurpassed hospitality of the Uighurs are as timeless as ever. In the north, the nomads have settled a bit, but it's not unusual to see them on horseback shepherding in search of water or, on occasion, moving their entire family.

Of course, many a visitor comes here to rack up points in the world of adventure travel, and rightfully so. Pamir and Heaven Mountains, Karakoram Hwy, Taklamakan Desert – Xīnjiāng has them all.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Try your luck bargaining for camels and carpets along the ancient **Silk Road** (p836)
- Intoxicate yourself in the dramatic scenery of the **Karakoram Hwy** (p834)
- Stroll the alleys in the timeless Uighur village of **Tuyoq** (p827) near Turpan, with a break for grapes amid the unbearable hotness of being
- Lose yourself in a maze of adobe houses in the old town of **Kasghar** (p830)
- Touch the azure skies while mesmerised by the 360-degree view of the stunning Heaven Mountains at the **Bayanbulak Grassland** (p845)



■ POPULATION: 20.3 MILLION

XINJIANG



The external boundaries of India on this map have not been authenticated and may not be correct.



MONGOLIA

INNER MONGOLIA

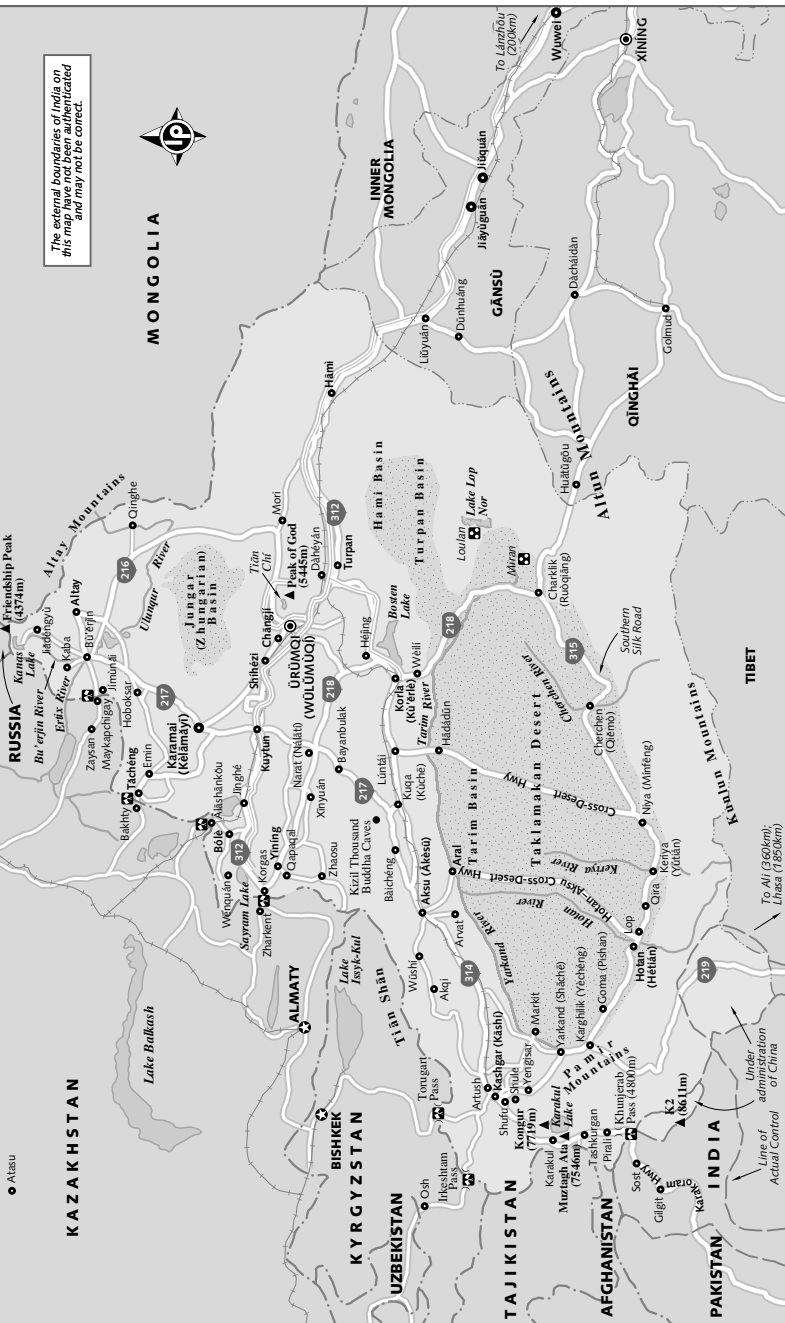
GANSU

TIAN MOUNTAINS

QINGHAI

TIBET

Kunlun Mountains  
To Ali (3160km)  
Lhasa (1850km)



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● Altai

KAZAKHSTAN

KYRGYZSTAN

UZBEKISTAN

TAJIKISTAN

AFGHANISTAN

PAKISTAN

INDIA

Line of Actual Control  
Under administration of China