



## China Fast Facts

### Population:

1,306,313,812 (July 2005 est.) (China)  
6,898,686 (July 2005 est.) (Hong Kong)

### Capital:

Beijing (China)  
Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China

### Currency:

yuan (CNY) (China)  
Hong Kong dollar (HKD) (Hong Kong)

### Language(s):

A single written language with many different spoken versions/dialects. The official dialect is Mandarin (Putonghua, based on the Beijing dialect). Other dialects include Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaiese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka dialects, minority languages (China)

Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin)  
and English (Hong Kong)

### Major Events:

1 October (1949) Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China  
1 July 1997 is celebrated as Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day

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## Online Resources

**China's Official Gateway to News and Information**  
<http://www.china.org.cn/>

**Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the U.S.**  
<http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/>

**Financial Aid for Study in Asia**  
<http://www.iie.org/programs/freeman-asia/>

**Study in Hong Kong**  
<http://www.iiehongkong.org/studyhk.htm/>

**Lonely Planet:**  
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>

**World InfoZone:**  
<http://www.worldinfozone.com/>

**CIA Factbook:**  
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

**Gilman International Scholarship Program**  
<http://www.iie.org/gilman/>

**National Security Education Program**  
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# China at a Glance...

As one might expect of a country as large as China, it is a place of many contrasts. The country's long history and expansive geography have produced a diverse population and an inspiring sweep of historical and cultural sights, while China's dynamic present provides a vibrant study for international students.



China's prestigious history begins over 4,000 years ago as one of the four great ancient civilizations. The Xia dynasty, the first of many, was followed by many others, which alternated between uniting and dividing China in times of peace and war. Starting in the 16th century, European missionaries and traders sought access to China, resulting in many years of conflict. Following the Opium War in the late 19th century, the United Kingdom gained a 99 year lease on Hong Kong, which fully reverted to China in 1997. Mao Zedong founded the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. Under Deng Xiaoping, China opened up economically to the West in the early 1980s and that opening has dramatically accelerated in recent years. Today, China is experiencing strong economic expansion and is the fastest growing economy in the world, predicted by some to outperform the US economy within 50 years. As a major economic power in Asia, China exerts enormous influence on its neighbors and worldwide, sharing borders with countries in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Russia, and North Korea.

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With a population of 1.28 billion, China's cities are densely populated and pulsate with the energy of bustling, vibrant metropolises. Beijing is the center of the country politically, culturally, and historically, and contains some of China's better-known landmarks including the Forbidden City. For students interested in exploring the economic and financial center of China, they may well look to Shanghai, which is reinventing itself as a financial powerhouse, not only for China, but the world as well.



Another place of keen historical and economic interest is Hong Kong. Hong Kong was under the control of the British through 1997, and became an important trade center and the Asian base for many multinational corporations. As such it provides a fascinating look at western and eastern culture truly meeting and intertwining. It has been noted (in Syracuse University's Handbook for study abroad students) that Hong Kong "has more cellular phones per capita than anywhere else on earth, and yet more than 70 percent of Hong Kong is still rural, with traditional villages and country parks to balance the skyscrapers and neon lights." Hong Kong is a very multicultural city with a vibrant economy built on banking, finance, textiles, and electronics as well as shipping and communications. Whether you are pursuing classes or an internship there, Hong Kong provides great opportunities to immerse yourself in the Chinese culture as well as truly experience a global economy and environment.

China has more to offer than cities, however. The natural landscapes of China are as stunning as the cityscapes and extremely varied given the country's vast size. The Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau boasts waterfalls, gorges, underground caverns, and limestone pinnacles. Inland China offers the 'Oasis of Fire' (the Turpan Depression) and the shifting salt lakes of the Taklamakan Desert.

The impact of China on the world cannot be overstated. China has a rich cultural tradition from its literature to its philosophy and religion, and contributed to the West an array of ideas, inventions and activities including merit-based examinations for civil servants, fireworks, ceramics, calligraphy, noodles, golf, football, ice cream, and much more.

Today China's economy is the fastest growing in the world, and it is a major producer of iron, steel, coal, machinery, automobiles, petroleum, chemicals, telecommunications, and textiles. High tech research centers are producing breakthrough work in computers, telecommunications and other scientific/technical fields.

China's higher education system was severely affected by the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s-70s, but has dramatically expanded and improved more recently, with its world-class universities now receiving international students from around the globe. Today, Chinese universities are showing the same explosive growth and expansion as the country's economy as enrollment increases both domestically and internationally. Some of the best-known universities in China include Peking University, Tsinghua University, Shanghai Jiatong University, Fudan University, and Zhongshan University, as well as Chinese University of Hong Kong and University of Hong Kong. China also offers interesting specialized institutions for international students such as the Beijing Language and Culture University, which offers international students a good chance to focus on Chinese language and culture and the Beijing Drama School, which offers students traditional Chinese music and opera classes.



Students will find in China an intriguing study of a great historical culture being transformed into a booming modern economy while retaining Communist government leadership. All of that is set against a backdrop of stunning landscapes, vibrant cities, and cultural monuments that would provide enough stimulation and excitement to last a lifetime.