In general, information available as of 1 January 2003 was used in the preparation of The World Factbook 2003.

This page was last updated on 18 December, 2003.
For centuries China stood as a leading civilization, outpacing the rest of the world in the arts and sciences. But in the 19th and early 20th centuries, China was beset by civil unrest, major famines, military defeats, and foreign occupation. After World War II, the Communists under MAO Zedong established a dictatorship that, while ensuring China's sovereignty, imposed strict controls over everyday life and cost the lives of tens of millions of people. After 1978, his successor DENG Xiaoping gradually introduced market-oriented reforms and decentralized economic decision-making. Output quadrupled by 2000. Political controls remain tight while economic controls continue to be relaxed.

**Geography**

**China**

Location: Eastern Asia, bordering the East China Sea, Korea Bay, Yellow Sea, and South China Sea, between North Korea and Vietnam

Geographic coordinates: 35 00 N, 105 00 E

Map references: Asia

Area: total: 9,596,960 sq km
land: 9,326,410 sq km
water: 270,550 sq km

Area - comparative: slightly smaller than the US

Land boundaries: total: 22,147.34 km
border countries: Afghanistan 76 km, Bhutan 470 km, Burma 2,185 km, Hong Kong 30 km, India 3,380 km, Kazakhstan 1,533 km, North Korea 1,416 km, Kyrgyzstan 858 km, Laos 423 km, Macau 0.34 km, Mongolia 4,677 km, Nepal 1,236 km, Pakistan 523 km, Russia (northeast) 3,605 km, Russia (northwest) 40 km, Tajikistan 414 km, Vietnam 1,281 km

Coastline: 14,500 km

Maritime claims: contiguous zone: 24 NM
exclusive economic zone: 200 NM
continental shelf: 200 NM or to the edge of the continental margin
territorial sea: 12 NM

Climate: extremely diverse; tropical in south to subarctic in north

Terrain: mostly mountains, high plateaus, deserts in west; plains, deltas, and hills in east

Elevation extremes: lowest point: Turpan Pendi -154 m
highest point: Mount Everest 8,850 m (1999 est.)

Natural: 
resources: coal, iron ore, petroleum, natural gas, mercury, tin, tungsten, antimony, manganese, molybdenum, vanadium, magnetite, aluminum, lead, zinc, uranium, hydropower potential (world's largest)

Land use:

- arable land: 13.31%
- permanent crops: 1.2%
- other: 85.49% (1998 est.)

Irrigated land: 525,800 sq km (1998 est.)

Natural hazards: frequent typhoons (about five per year along southern and eastern coasts); damaging floods; tsunamis; earthquakes; droughts; land subsidence

Environment - current issues: air pollution (greenhouse gases, sulfur dioxide particulates) from reliance on coal produces acid rain; water shortages, particularly in the north; water pollution from untreated wastes; deforestation; estimated loss of one-fifth of agricultural land since 1949 to soil erosion and economic development; desertification; trade in endangered species


Geography - note: world's fourth-largest country (after Russia, Canada, and US); Mount Everest on the border with Nepal is the world's tallest peak;

People

China

Population: 1,286,975,468 (July 2003 est.)

Age structure:

- 0-14 years: 23.1% (male 155,473,656; female 141,737,406)
- 15-64 years: 69.5% (male 461,223,219; female 433,154,970)
- 65 years and over: 7.4% (male 44,954,643; female 50,431,574) (2003 est.)

Median age:

- total: 31.5 years
- male: 31.2 years
- female: 31.7 years (2002)

Population growth rate: 0.6% (2003 est.)

Birth rate: 12.96 births/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Death rate: 6.74 deaths/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Net migration
rate: -0.23 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.09 male(s)/female
under 15 years: 1.1 male(s)/female
15-64 years: 1.06 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.89 male(s)/female
total population: 1.06 male(s)/female (2003 est.)

Infant mortality rate:
total: 25.26 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 25.65 deaths/1,000 live births (2003 est.)
male: 24.91 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 72.22 years
male: 70.33 years
female: 74.28 years (2003 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.7 children born/woman (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate: less than 0.1% (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS: 850,000 (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - deaths: 30,000 (2001 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Chinese (singular and plural)
adjective: Chinese

Ethnic groups: Han Chinese 91.9%, Zhuang, Uygur, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, Buyi, Korean, and other nationalities 8.1%

Religions: Daoist (Taoist), Buddhist, Muslim 1%-2%, Christian 3%-4%
note: officially atheist (2002 est.)

Languages: Standard Chinese or Mandarin (Putonghua, based on the Beijing dialect), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaise), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka dialects, minority languages (see Ethnic groups entry)

Literacy: definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 86%
male: 92.9%
female: 78.8% (2003 est.)

Government China

Country name: conventional long form: People's Republic of China
conventional short form: China
local short form: Zhong Guo
abbreviation: PRC
local long form: Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo

Government type: Communist state

Capital: Beijing

Administrative divisions: 23 provinces (sheng, singular and plural), 5 autonomous regions* (zizhiqu, singular and plural), and 4 municipalities** (shi, singular and plural); Anhui, Beijing**, Chongqing**, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guangxi*, Guizhou, Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Nei Mongol*, Ningxia*, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanghai**, Shanxi, Sichuan, Tianjin**, Xinjiang*, Xizang* (Tibet), Yunnan, Zhejiang; note - China considers Taiwan its 23rd province; see separate entries for the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau

Independence: 221 BC (unification under the Qin or Ch’in Dynasty 221 BC; Qing or Ch’ing Dynasty replaced by the Republic on 12 February 1912; People's Republic established 1 October 1949)

National holiday: Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China, 1 October (1949)

Constitution: most recent promulgation 4 December 1982

Legal system: a complex amalgam of custom and statute, largely criminal law; rudimentary civil code in effect since 1 January 1987; new legal codes in effect since 1 January 1980; continuing efforts are being made to improve civil, administrative, criminal, and commercial law

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Executive branch: 

chief of state: President HU Jintao (since 15 March 2003) and Vice President ZENG Qinghong (since 15 March 2003)

elections: president and vice president elected by the National People's Congress for five-year terms; elections last held 15-17 March 2003 (next to be held mid-March 2008); premier nominated by the president, confirmed by the National People's Congress

head of government: Premier WEN Jiabao (since 16 March 2003); Vice Premiers HUANG Ju (since 17 March 2003), WU Yi (17 March 2003), ZENG Peiyan (since 17 March 2003), and HUI Liangyu (since 17 March 2003)
cabinet: State Council appointed by the National People's Congress (NPC)
election results: HU Jintao elected president by the Tenth National People's Congress with a total of 2,937 votes (4 delegates voted against him, 4 abstained, and 38 did not vote); ZENG Qinghong elected vice president by the Tenth National People's Congress with a total of 2,578 votes (177 delegates voted against him, 190 abstained, and 38 did not vote); 2 seats were vacant

Legislative
branch: unicameral National People's Congress or Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui (2,985 seats; members elected by municipal, regional, and provincial people's congresses to serve five-year terms)
elections: last held NA December 2002-NA February 2003 (next to be held late 2007-NA February 2008)
election results: percent of vote - NA%; seats - NA

Judicial branch:
Supreme People's Court (judges appointed by the National People's Congress); Local Peoples Courts (comprise higher, intermediate and local courts); Special Peoples Courts (primarily military, maritime, and railway transport courts)

Political parties and leaders:
Chinese Communist Party or CCP [HU Jintao, General Secretary of the Central Committee]; eight registered small parties controlled by CCP

Political pressure groups and leaders:
no substantial political opposition groups exist, although the government has identified the Falungong sect and the China Democracy Party as potential rivals

International organization participation:
APEC, ARF (dialogue partner), AsDB, ASEAN (dialogue partner), BIS, CDB, ESCAP, FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM (observer), ISO, ITU, LAIA (observer), MINURSO, MONUC, NAM (observer), OPCW, PCA, SCO, UN, UN Security Council, UNAMSIL, UNCTAD, UNESCO, IFC, UNHCR, UNIDO, AfDB, UNIKOM, UNITAR, UNMEE, UNMIBH, UNMOVIC, UNTSO, UNU, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, WTrO

Diplomatic representation in the US:
chief of mission: Ambassador YANG Jiechi
consulate(s) general: Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco
FAX: [1] (202) 328-2582
telephone: [1] (202) 328-2500
chancery: 2300 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008

Diplomatic representation from the US:
chief of mission: Ambassador Clark T. RANDT, Jr.
embassy: Xiu Shui Bei Jie 3, 100600 Beijing
mailing address: PSC 461, Box 50, FPO AP 96521-0002
telephone: [86] (10) 6532-3831
FAX: [86] (10) 6532-6929
consulate(s) general: Chengdu, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Shenyang

Flag description:
red with a large yellow five-pointed star and four smaller yellow five-pointed stars (arranged in a vertical arc toward the middle of the flag) in the upper hoist-side corner

Economy - overview:
In late 1978 the Chinese leadership began moving the economy from a sluggish, Soviet-style centrally planned economy to a more market-oriented system. Whereas the system operates within a political framework of strict Communist control, the economic influence of non-state organizations and individual citizens has been steadily increasing. The authorities switched to a system of household and village responsibility
in agriculture in place of the old collectivization, increased the authority of local officials and plant managers in industry, permitted a wide variety of small-scale enterprises in services and light manufacturing, and opened the economy to increased foreign trade and investment. The result has been a quadrupling of GDP since 1978. In 2003, with its 1.3 billion people but a GDP of just $5,000 per capita, China stood as the second-largest economy in the world after the US (measured on a purchasing power parity basis). Agriculture and industry have posted major gains, especially in coastal areas near Hong Kong and opposite Taiwan, where foreign investment has helped spur output of both domestic and export goods. The leadership, however, often has experienced - as a result of its hybrid system - the worst results of socialism (bureaucracy and lassitude) and of capitalism (windfall gains and growing income disparities). China thus has periodically backtracked, retightening central controls at intervals. The government has struggled to (a) collect revenues due from provinces, businesses, and individuals; (b) reduce corruption and other economic crimes; and (c) keep afloat the large state-owned enterprises, many of which had been shielded from competition by subsidies and had been losing the ability to pay full wages and pensions. From 80 to 120 million surplus rural workers are adrift between the villages and the cities, many subsisting through part-time low-paying jobs. Popular resistance, changes in central policy, and loss of authority by rural cadres have weakened China's population control program, which is essential to maintaining long-term growth in living standards. Another long-term threat to growth is the deterioration in the environment, notably air pollution, soil erosion, and the steady fall of the water table especially in the north. China continues to lose arable land because of erosion and economic development. Beijing says it will intensify efforts to stimulate growth through spending on infrastructure - such as water control and power grids - and poverty relief and through rural tax reform aimed at eliminating arbitrary local levies on farmers. Accession to the World Trade Organization helps strengthen China's ability to maintain strong growth rates but at the same time puts additional pressure on the hybrid system of strong political controls and growing market influences. China has benefited from a huge expansion in computer internet use. Foreign investment remains a strong element in China's remarkable economic growth.

**GDP:**

- Purchasing power parity - $5.989 trillion (2002 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:**

- 8% (official data) (2002 est.)

**GDP - per capita:**

- Purchasing power parity - $4,700 (2002 est.)

**GDP - composition by sector:**

- Agriculture: 15.2%
- Industry and construction: 51.2%
- Services: 33.6% (2001)

**Population below poverty line:**

- 10% (2001 est.)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

- Lowest 10%: 2.4%
- Highest 10%: 30.4% (1998)

**Distribution of family income - Gini index:**

- 40 (2001)
Inflation rate (consumer prices): -0.8% (2002 est.)

Labor force: 744 million (2001 est.)

Labor force - by occupation: agriculture 50%, industry 22%, services 28% (2001 est.)

Unemployment rate: urban unemployment roughly 10%; substantial unemployment and underemployment in rural areas (2002 est.)

Budget:
- revenues: $224.8 billion
- expenditures: $267.1 billion, including capital expenditures of $NA (2000)

Industries: iron and steel, coal, machine building, armaments, textiles and apparel, petroleum, cement, chemical fertilizers, footwear, toys, food processing, automobiles, consumer electronics, telecommunications

Industrial production growth rate: 12.6% (2002 est.)

Electricity - production: 1.42 trillion kWh (2001)

Electricity - production by source:
- fossil fuel: 80.2%
- hydro: 18.5%
- other: 0.1% (2001)
- nuclear: 1.2%

Electricity - consumption: 1.312 trillion kWh (2001)

Electricity - exports: 10.3 billion kWh (2001)

Electricity - imports: 1.55 billion kWh (2001)

Oil - production: 3.3 million bbl/day (2001 est.)

Oil - consumption: 4.975 million bbl/day (2001 est.)

Oil - exports: NA (2001)

Oil - imports: NA (2001)

Oil - proved reserves: 26.75 billion bbl (37257)

Natural gas - production: 30.3 billion cu m (2001 est.)
Natural gas - consumption: 30.3 billion cu m (2001 est.)
Natural gas - exports: 0 cu m (2001 est.)
Natural gas - imports: 0 cu m (2001 est.)
Natural gas - proved reserves: 1.29 trillion cu m (37257)

Agriculture - products: rice, wheat, potatoes, sorghum, peanuts, tea, millet, barley, cotton, oilseed; pork; fish
Exports: $325.6 billion f.o.b. (2002 est.)
Exports - commodities: machinery and equipment; textiles and clothing, footwear, toys and sporting goods; mineral fuels
Exports - partners: US 21.5%, Hong Kong 18%, Japan 14.9%, South Korea 4.8% (2002)

Imports: $295.3 billion f.o.b. (2002 est.)
Imports - commodities: machinery and equipment, mineral fuels, plastics, iron and steel, chemicals
Imports - partners: Japan 18.1%, Taiwan 10.5%, South Korea 9.7%, US 9.2%, Germany 5.6% (2002)

Debt - external: $149.4 billion (2002 est.)

Economic aid - recipient: $NA

Currency: yuan (CNY)
Currency code: CNY
Fiscal year: calendar year

Communications - China

Telephones - main lines in use: 135 million (2000)
Telephones - mobile cellular: 65 million (January 2001)
Telephone system:

*general assessment*: domestic and international services are increasingly available for private use; unevenly distributed domestic system serves principal cities, industrial centers, and many towns

*domestic*: interprovincial fiber-optic trunk lines and cellular telephone systems have been installed; a domestic satellite system with 55 earth stations is in place

*international*: satellite earth stations - 5 Intelsat (4 Pacific Ocean and 1 Indian Ocean), 1 Intersputnik (Indian Ocean region) and 1 Inmarsat (Pacific and Indian Ocean regions); several international fiber-optic links to Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Russia, and Germany (2000)


Television broadcast stations: 3,240 (of which 209 are operated by China Central Television, 31 are provincial TV stations and nearly 3,000 are local city stations) (1997)

Internet country code: .cn

Internet Service Providers (ISPs): 3 (2000)

Internet users: 45.8 million (2002)

Transportation China

Railways: total: 71,600 km

*standard gauge*: 68,000 km 1.435-m gauge (14,600 km electrified)

*narrow gauge*: 3,600 km 1.000-m and 0.750-m gauge local industrial lines (2002)

Highways: total: 1,402,698 km

*paved*: 314,204 km (with at least 16,314 km of expressways)

*unpaved*: 1,088,494 km (2000)

Waterways: 110,000 km (1999)

Pipelines: gas 13,845 km; oil 15,143 km; refined products 3,280 km (2003)

Ports and harbors: Dalian, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Haikou, Huangpu, Lianyungang, Nanjing, Nantong, Ningbo, Qingdao, Qinhuangdao, Shanghai, Shantou, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Wenzhou, Xiamen, Xingang, Yantai, Zhanjiang (2001)

Merchant marine: total: 1,817 ships (1,000 GRT or over) 18,047,962 GRT/27,035,740 DWT

*ships by type*: barge carrier 2, bulk 348, cargo 824, chemical tanker 28, combination bulk 10, combination ore/oil 2, container 150, liquefied gas 28, multi-functional large-load carrier 6, passenger 6, passenger/cargo 47, petroleum tanker 267, refrigerated cargo 26, roll on/roll off 21, short-sea passenger 42, specialized tanker 8, vehicle carrier 2

*note*: includes some foreign-owned ships registered here as a flag of convenience:
Croatia 1, Germany 1, Hong Kong 16, Japan 2, Panama 2, South Korea 1, Spain 1, Taiwan 9, Tanzania 1, Turkey 1 (2002 est.)

Airports:
500 (2002)

Airports - with paved runways:
total: 351
over 3,047 m: 32
2,438 to 3,047 m: 108
1,524 to 2,437 m: 143
914 to 1,523 m: 29
under 914 m: 39 (2002)

Airports - with unpaved runways:
total: 149
over 3,047 m: 4
2,438 to 3,047 m: 1
1,524 to 2,437 m: 25
914 to 1,523 m: 48
under 914 m: 71 (2002)

Military

China

Military branches:
People's Liberation Army (PLA): comprises ground forces, Navy (including naval infantry and naval aviation), Air Force, and II Artillery Corps (strategic missile force), People's Armed Police Force (internal security troops, nominally a state security body but included by the Chinese as part of the "armed forces" and considered to be an adjunct to the PLA), militia

Military manpower - military age:
18 years of age (2003 est.)

Military manpower - availability:
males age 15-49: 375,520,255 (2003 est.)

Military manpower - fit for military service:
males age 15-49: 206 million (2003 est.)

Military manpower - reaching military age annually:
males: 10,973,761 (2003 est.)

Military expenditures - dollar figure:
$55.91 billion (FY02)

Military expenditures - percent of GDP:
4.3% (FY02)

Transnational Issues

China

Disputes -
international: involved in complex dispute over the Spratly Islands with Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, and possibly Brunei; claimants in November 2002 signed the "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea", a mechanism to ease tension but which fell short of a legally binding "code of conduct"; much of the rugged, militarized boundary with India is in dispute, but the two sides have participated in more than 13 rounds of joint working group sessions on this issue; India objects to Pakistan ceding lands to China in 1965 boundary agreement that India believes are part of disputed Kashmir; China, as well as Taiwan, claims Japanese-administered Senkaku-shoto (Diaoyu Tai) islands; negotiations with Tajikistan resolved the longstanding boundary dispute; China and Kazakhstan have resolved their border dispute and are working to delimit their large open borders to control population migration, illegal activities, and trade; Kyrgyzstan's constitutional court rules that 1,270 sq km ceded to China in 2000 delimitation agreement were legally transferred; certain islands in Yalu and Tumen rivers are in uncontested dispute with North Korea and a section of boundary around Mount Paektu is indefinite - China objects to illegal migration of North Koreans into northern China; China continues to seek a mutually acceptable solution to the disputed alluvial islands with Russia at the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri rivers and a small island on the Argun river as part of the 2001 Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation; boundary agreements signed in 2002 with Tajikistan cedes 1,000 sq km of Pamir Mountain range to China in return for China's relinquishing claims to 28,000 sq km; demarcation of land boundary with Vietnam continues but maritime boundary and joint fishing zone agreement remains unratified; China occupies Paracel Islands also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan

Illicit drugs: major transshipment point for heroin produced in the Golden Triangle; growing domestic drug abuse problem; source country for chemical precursors and methamphetamine

This page was last updated on 18 December, 2003