

## China: Xinjiang Province

### Climate

Geographers have identified seven climate zones in China, from the winter winds blowing down from Siberia in the northeast, to the warm and humid areas near the Pacific Ocean.

Summers in the mountain ranges and semi-desert lowlands of northern Xinjiang are warm, with July temperatures topping off around 90°F. In the winter, winds whip down from Siberia, making Xinjiang's climate bitterly cold, around -5°F.

### Language

Mandarin is the official language of China. There are several other prominent regional dialects spoken throughout the country, such as Cantonese and Shanghaiese. There are also other languages spoken by ethnic minorities, including Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uygur (pronounced wee-ghur).

Despite the various dialects and minority languages, there are more native speakers of Chinese than any other language in the world – more than one billion people. Spanish, the second most widely spoken language, has only 400 million native speakers, and English, the third most widely spoken language, has 375 million native speakers.

### Religion

There are five religions recognized by the Chinese government. Buddhism and Taoism are the most popular of these religions, although there are also many people who practice Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

### Currency

The Renminbi is the official currency of China. Its name means “people’s currency,” and the primary unit of renminbi is the yuán. Rather than different presidents on each banknote, the Chinese use portraits of Mao Zedong in different colors. The current exchange rate is \$1 = ¥6.29. In China, the average cost of a McDonald’s Big Mac is ¥14.70 (or \$2.33).

### Famous Landmarks

One famous site in China is the Great Wall. More than 5,500 miles long, the Great Wall is one of the seven great wonders of the world and can even be seen from outer space.

The Silk Road, another famous historical landmark, was a network of routes used in ancient times by the Chinese and Europeans as a means of transport, trade, and communication. Extending 4,000 miles, the Silk Road gets its name from the lucrative Chinese silk trade, which began during the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD). China’s beautiful silk, ceramics, jade, and other products were sent to central Asia and Europe along routes through what is now the province of Xinjiang.

### References

"Uighur." Encyclopædia Britannica Online School Edition (accessed November 16, 2011).

"East Asia." Lands and Peoples. Grolier Online (accessed November 16, 2011).



Map of China, with the Chinese flag (inset)



The Great Wall of China. Photo by Jakub Halun from [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GreatWallChina.jpg).