

ARTS MIDWEST WORLD FEST

Study Guide China Language and Culture



Beauty & Melody

Beauty and Melody offers a true banquet of Chinese music and culture. Using traditional instruments, the ensemble evokes the classical and folk music of ancient dynasties while offering a modern perspective on this charming and exotic musical heritage. Established in 2001, Beauty and Melody is composed of talented young women all of whom have studied in major music conservatories throughout China where they grew not only into professional musicians, but also into accomplished vocalists and dancers. The ensemble's instruments include the flowing and gentle sounds of bamboo flutes and wind pipes, the beauty of stringed instruments like the ruan and pipa, and the magnificent strength of suona and percussion instruments. Beauty and Melody is based in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, and has traveled worldwide including a special performance at the United Nations in 2005. Learn more at <http://www.artsmidwestworldfest.org>.

How much do you know about China?

China is a huge country with more than a billion people and one of the oldest civilizations on earth so there's a lot to learn! Use the Internet and other resources for the following activities (see the last page of this guide for some helpful Web sites) :



China's Flag

- locate the major geographical features of China or Sichuan Province on a map
- create a travel brochure that would highlight the benefits of travel to China or the Sichuan Province
- create a comparison chart between another country and China or between China's provinces
- create a list of questions about China or the Sichuan Province for further exploration

Peppers and Pandas

Sichuan Province is one of the largest (and most inaccessible) provinces in China. It has a population of 87 million people and covers a vast and varied area of 187,000 square miles. Sichuan is surrounded by mountain ranges that form a natural basin. It is a large province, about the size of France but with a much higher population. Known as the 'rice bowl' of China, it is very heavily farmed, as the warm climate and access to water from its many rivers make irrigation easy. The Sichuan (Szechwan) cuisine is widely praised for its use of chili and spices.

Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan and its cultural and industrial center. Chengdu was one of the first centers of printing in China and has been famous for its luxurious satins, brocades and lacquer ware since the 13th century. Chengdu is also home to the Chengdu Giant Panda Research Base which has evolved into China Panda City, now encompassing a museum as well as the Chengdu Zoo.

Learn more about the musicians and listen to their music online at <http://www.artsmidwestworldfest.org>

As one of the largest provinces, Sichuan is one of China's richest zones of biodiversity and has more than 15 minority ethnic groups living side by side with the Han people, who are the majority people of China. Among these are the Yi, Hui, Quian, Tibetan and Miao people. Each of these minorities has its own charm, ethnic style, culture and folk customs.

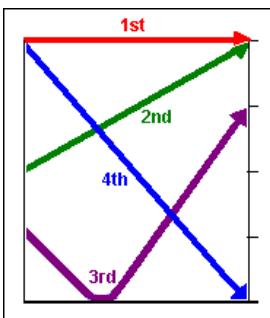


Sichuan Province

Language

China is increasingly accessible to the foreign visitor and has the fastest growing economy in the world. Language and culture are closely linked and learning about Mandarin Chinese will help give an appreciation of the cultural heritage of China. Taken together there are more native speakers of Chinese than any other language—more than one billion people. Compare this to Spanish, the second most widely spoken language in the world, with 400 million speakers, or to English, third largest, with 375 million native speakers.

You don't have to learn Chinese characters to learn to speak Chinese. The pronunciation is not related to the writing of Chinese words (characters). Pinyin is a method of writing Chinese in the roman alphabet. Hanyu pinyin spells the sound, and includes tone marks to help give the correct pronunciation. Tones are the changes of the pitch in pronunciation of a syllable. There are four tones in Mandarin Chinese. Each Chinese word (character) carries a tone. This diagram helps visualize the pitches of the four tones:



Tone	Mark	Description
1st	dā	High and level.
2nd	dá	Starts medium in tone, then rises to the top.
3rd	dǎ	Starts low, dips to the bottom, then rises toward the top.
4th	dà	Starts at the top, then falls sharp and strong to the bottom.
Neutral	da	Flat, with no emphasis.

Diagram & Chart from: <http://www.wku.edu/~shizhen.gao/Chinese101/pinyin/tones.htm>

Can you learn a few common phrases in Mandarin?

Hello	nǐ hǎo	Please	qǐng
Goodbye	zài jiàn	Thanks	xiè xiè
Yes	shì de	My name is...	wǒ de míng zì jiào...
No	bù shì	What is your name?	nǐ jiào shén me míng zì?

The various dialects of China are not mutually intelligible but the written language is shared between them all. Although you do not need to learn to read Chinese characters to speak the language, by doing so you open the door to an enormously diverse and rich literature. In fact, the earliest record of writing was in Chinese characters although very different in form from modern characters (of which there are many thousands).

Additional Resources

World Factbook: China

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>

China Internet Information Center

<http://www.china.org.cn/>

Easy to follow lessons for how to speak and write Mandarin Chinese

<http://www.clearchinese.com/>