

Section 1

The Geography of China

As you read, look for



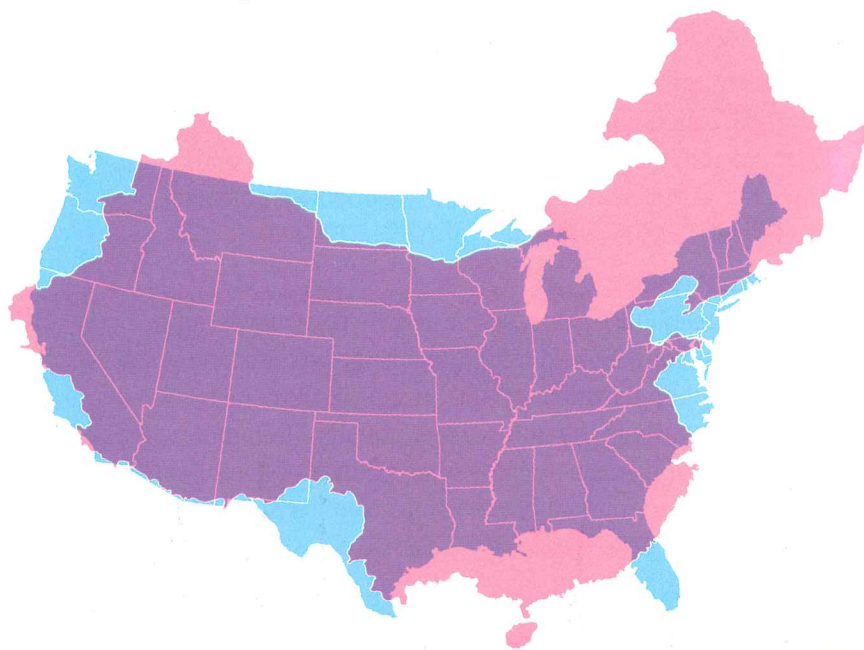
- ▶ problems associated with rivers in China;
- ▶ where most people live in China;
- ▶ where the industrial centers of China are located;
- ▶ size of the population;
- ▶ terms: **monsoon season, Three Gorges Dam, acid rain, Han, Mandarin.**



Location and Size of China

On a map of Asia, China is easy to find. Its large size causes it to stand out because it covers most of Eastern Asia. China is located in both the eastern and northern hemispheres.

Fourteen countries border China. To the north of China are Russia and Mongolia. On the west lie Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. To the south are India, Nepal, Bhutan, Malaysia, Laos, and Vietnam. The Korean Peninsula connects to China in the northeast corner, with North Korea sharing a border with China. In addition to being surrounded by fourteen other countries, China is also bordered by several bodies of water. The South China Sea is to the southeast of China and separates China from the Philippines. To the east of China is the East China Sea. Finally, the Yellow Sea separates China from South Korea. All of these seas are part of the western Pacific Ocean.



Above: Huangshan is an iconic mountain range in eastern China.

China is one of the largest countries in the world in area and the largest in population. In area, it is the fourth-largest country, and it is about 3.7 million square miles. That makes it slightly smaller than the United States.

Physical Features of China

China is home to two large deserts, the Gobi and the Taklamakan. Located in the center of the country, these desert areas are harsh and dry. The Taklamakan Desert is over 600 miles long, making it one of the longest deserts in the world. The Gobi Desert is one of the hottest and one of the coldest places in the world and is mainly covered by sand and rocks. Few people live in these regions, and many of those who do live as nomads and animal herders.

Most of China's more than 1.3 billion people live in the areas of the country that have the milder climates, which are in the southeastern and eastern parts of China. Here are found the great river valleys and the most fertile farmland. Two major rivers flow through China. The Huang He, or Yellow River, begins in the mountainous plateau of Tibet. It flows toward the east and finally empties into the Yellow Sea. The yellow dust blowing out of the Gobi Desert is picked up by the Huang He and carried along as loess (silt), giving both the river and the sea a yellowish color. Loess is also deposited along the river's banks, creating rich soil for the farmers in the area. The river is also used for transporting people and goods. Even though the Huang He benefits the people of China, it also frequently floods.

The other major river in China is the Chang Jiang, or Yangtze River. It also begins in the Tibetan plateau and travels east, ending in the East China Sea. The Chang Jiang is over 3,400 miles long, making it China's longest river and the fourth-longest river in the world. The river travels through fertile farmland and is one of China's main transportation routes. One of China's most important ports, Shanghai, is located at the mouth of the river. The Chang Jiang and Huang He are connected by the Grand Canal, which is one of the world's oldest and longest canal systems.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Temperatures can drop to -40°F in winter in the Gobi Desert. Summer highs can top 120°F .



Above: The Yangtze River flowing in a valley. **Background:** Sand dunes of the Gobi desert.



The Himalayan Mountains are the tallest mountains in the world. In fact, they are so tall that the snowcapped peaks can be seen from space. They form the southern border of China, separating China from India. In addition to being a natural trade barrier, the Himalayas block any moisture that might come from the Indian Ocean. As a result, the land north of the Himalayas is very dry.

Climate of China

The climate of China is very diverse and can vary significantly from one location to another. Wind currents from both the Arctic north and the Pacific east influence the climate throughout the year. For example, parts of eastern China experience heavy rain during the **monsoon season** (a season when prevailing winds bring heavy rains) in the summer. This heavy rain can cause devastating floods. China's climate is overall cooler in the north and becomes warmer and more tropical the further south and east you are. As you know, the Gobi Desert and the Taklamakan Desert are located in the northern and western parts of China. That part of China naturally has a desert climate. Other parts of northern and western China have climates that are more moderate, and some farming is possible. In the eastern parts of China, you would find a climate similar to that of Georgia—humid subtropical. These areas are where most of the farming in China takes place.

Natural Resources of China

Since China is such a large country, it has a variety of natural resources available throughout the country. One of the most important natural resources is arable land. Over half of China's land is used for agriculture. China also has the potential to generate a lot of hydroelectric power. In fact, it could be the world's leading country for hydroelectric power. In 2012, China finished building the largest hydroelectric dam in the world. The **Three Gorges Dam** is located on the Yangtze River and produces the most hydroelectric power in the world. China also has deposits of other energy sources like petroleum, natural gas, and coal. China also has many mineral deposits that include mercury, iron ore, tin, and manganese.

Top: Rice terraces in the Guangxi region. **Above:** The Three Gorges Dam, a major hydroelectric energy source for China. **Background:** The north side of Mt. Everest in the Himalayan Mountains.