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A large, detailed image of a Chinese lion dance mask, primarily red with yellow and black accents, featuring large eyes and sharp teeth. The mask is set against a background of blurred red and yellow floral patterns.

# Chinese culture: traditions, customs and lifestyle





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# Contents

**01** Introduction

**02** Chinese History

**03** Chinese systems of  
thought and ethics

**04** Education in China

**05** China's geography and  
main tourist attractions

**06** Languages spoken in  
China

**07** China's cultural  
heritage

**08** Chinese literature

**09** Festivals

**10** Gastronomy

**11** Names, totems and  
astrology

**12** Public transport

**13** Work and leisure

**14** Housing

**15** University life in China

# 01 Introduction



China has a large territory, a large population, a varied topography and climate, and a complex ethnic composition.

In Chinese society, historical changes have had a great influence on modernisation. Traditional Confucian thought and traditional Chinese art have a strong importance in society.



The national flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC)

Great Wall of China

Source: @wirestock freepik.es



To know more:

[China's national territory](#)

[China's topography, geomorphology and geography](#)

[China's topography](#)

[China's climate](#)

[China's ethnic composition](#)

[Chinese society](#)

[Confucian thought](#)


[Traditional Chinese art](#)





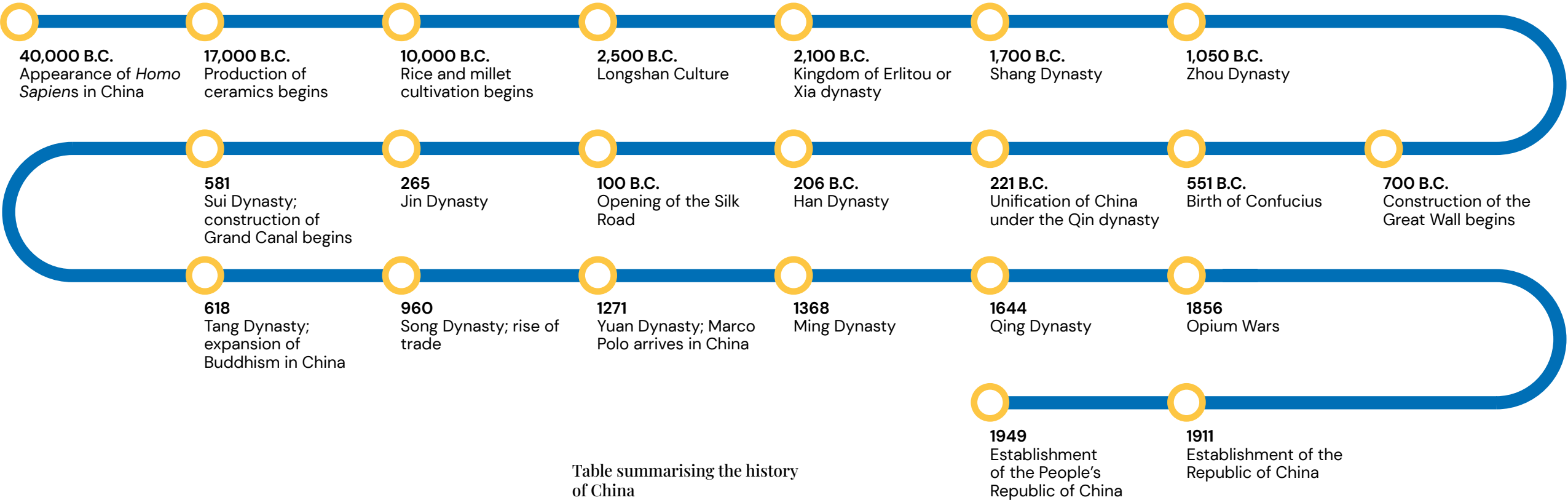
# 02 Chinese History

According to legend, Pangu created the universe and Nüwa created humans. Chinese civilisation is thought to have originated along the famous Yellow River and the Yangtze River. China’s history includes a period in which it was ruled by dynasties of sacred kings, followed by an imperial period in which it was ruled by a series of feudal dynasties. After a series of wars, the modern People’s Republic of China was established.



To know more:  
[culturachina.net](http://culturachina.net)

We recommend this book: *A Brief History of Chinese Civilisation*, Conrad Schirokauer and Miranda Brown, Wadsworth Publishing Co Inc (2012).



## 03 Chinese systems of thought and ethics



Confucius

Source: sohistoria.com

儒家：人与自然、孝道、尊老爱幼、有教无类，道家：无为而治，和佛家：乐善好施

Translation: "Confucianism: human beings and nature, filial piety, respect the old and love the young, teach without distinction. Taoism: rule by inaction. Buddhism: benevolent and charitable."

Traditional Chinese ideology consists of comprehensive systems of thought totally independent of Western philosophy. The three pillars of Chinese thought are Confucianism, created by Confucius and Mencius, Taoism, founded by Laozi and Zhuangzi, and Buddhism, which was introduced from ancient India and developed under the Chinese dynasties for centuries.

The predominant ideology in Chinese history is Confucianism, whose representative figures are Confucius, Mencius and Zhu Xi.

### 3.1 Confucianism

Confucius had such a strong influence on Chinese history that echoes of his thought have reached from 553 B.C. to the present day.

In his 50s, he began to travel throughout China, and during this journey, his ideas became widely known, especially in the form of aphorisms. The table below highlights some of the Confucian concepts that continue to have a great impact on China's national character and the Chinese approach to personal morality.





# 03 Chinese systems of thought and ethics

The concept “harmonious coexistence between nature and humans” (天人合一).

Source: *The Four Books* (四书) (ancient canonical works on Confucianism)

Concept	Interpretation	Impact on today’s society
Harmony between nature and mankind (天人合一)	Man is a part of nature. Nature and man were originally one. However, due to the various rules and moral codes established by man, man has lost his original nature and has become incompatible with nature. The goal of human spiritual cultivation is to break down these barriers imposed on man, liberating human nature and returning it to its natural state, helping people reach a spiritual state in which "nature is us, and we are nature".	This concept has influenced modern movements that advocate living in harmony with nature, protecting the environment and following a sustainable development path.
The Great Unity (大同)	This is a utopian vision of the world in which there is no private property, everyone works for the good of society rather than personal gain, the elderly, the sick and the disabled are cared for by society, children are educated by society, and all who are able to work have the opportunity to give free rein to their talents; there is no privileged class or hereditary wealth, and all who hold public office are elected by the masses.	This concept is closely linked with socialism and the realisation of the Chinese Dream. It has influenced modern movements advocating attention and assistance for minorities in all respects to promote the advancement of civilisation.
Ren (仁) (benevolence)	For Confucius, ren means exerting self-control and treating others with respect and compassion. For Mencius, ren means benevolent government based on free trade, welfare measures for the needy, light taxes and conservation of natural resources.	<p>This concept still has relevance for the moral cultivation of today’s young generation.</p> <p>The ruling class is called upon to respect the people, rule them with virtue and refrain from arbitrary torture and tyranny. Besides alleviating class conflict while maintaining the power of the ruling class, it is to some extent conducive to the improvement of the workers’ standard of living and the smooth running of the domestic economy.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;</p>



Statue of Confucius (bronze)  
Source: Wikipedia



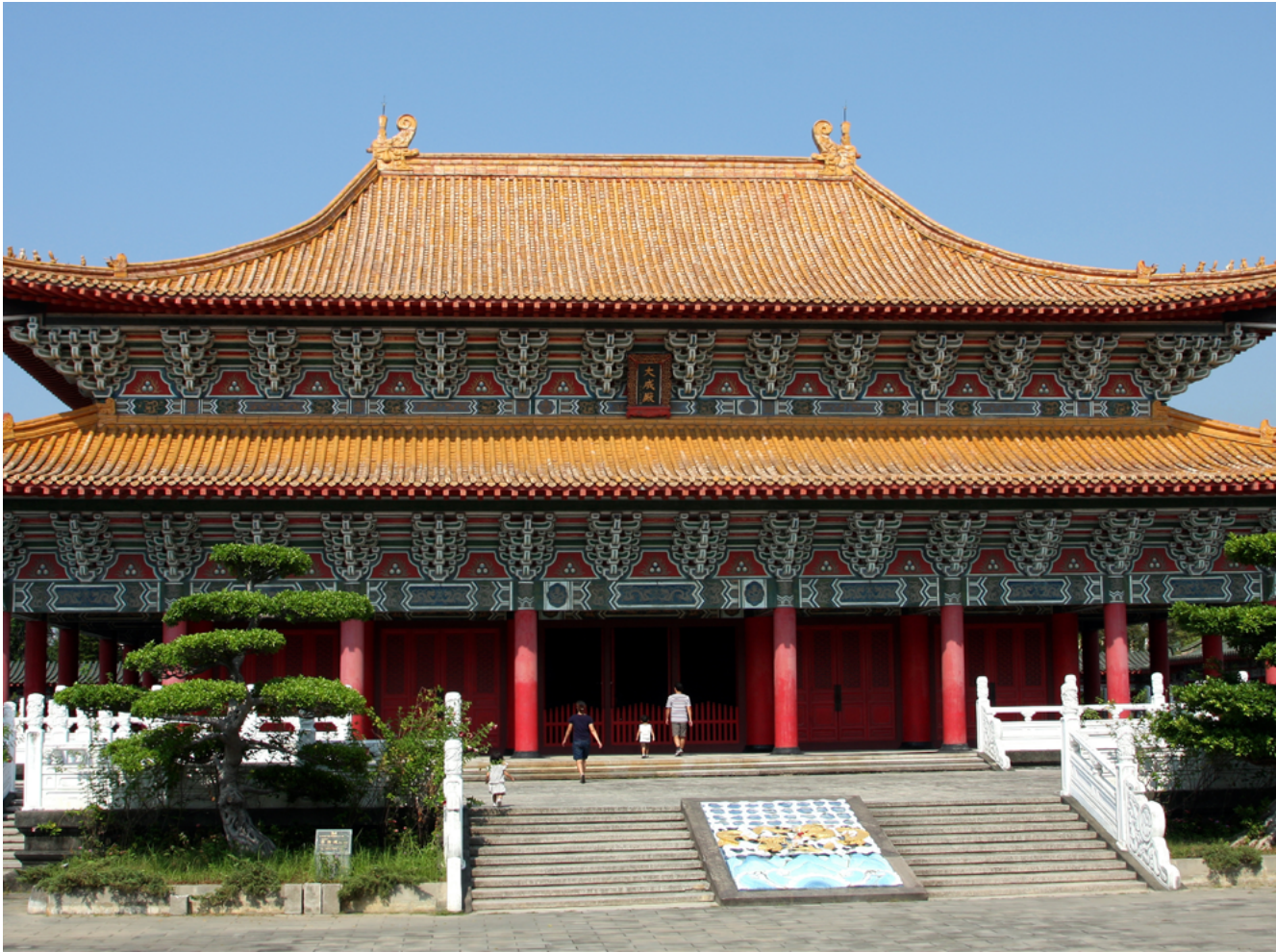
# 03 Chinese systems of thought and ethics

>> The concept “harmonious coexistence between nature and humans” (天人合一).

Concept	Interpretation	Impact on today’s society
Universal education without discrimination (有教无类)	This is the concept that education should be made available to all, regardless of wealth, class, intellectual ability or perceived moral status.	This concept is the foundation of the modern principle of universal education. It dictates that the educational process should focus on teaching people according to their individual differences and enabling them to reach their full potential.
The Doctrine of the Mean (中庸之道)	Also known as the “golden mean” and the “middle way”, this doctrine aims to avoid extremes, maintaining balance and harmony in order to direct the mind towards a state of constant equilibrium. At its heart lies the principle “do as you would be done by”.	This concept informs modern principles of self-discipline and living harmoniously in a well-ordered society.

Source: *The Four Books* (四书) (ancient canonical works on Confucianism)

Confucian temple  
at Lotus Lake  
Source: Wikipedia





## 03 Chinese systems of thought and ethics

### 3.2 Systems of thought underpinning modern Chinese society

Today, the philosophy espoused by the Chinese Communist Party determines the development of the country, just as Mao Zedong's thoughts and Deng Xiaoping's theories influenced China's development in the past.

Xi Jinping's thoughts on socialism now set the tone for the new era.



Confucius and a traditional Confucianism lesson  
Source: sohu.com



More information (in Spanish) on the Chinese religions can be found:

[La religión en la antigua China: un crisol de creencias](#)

The Chinese follow the Middle Way (中庸之道), believing that harmony is necessary in all things, and by being humble when treating others.



More information (in Spanish) on the Doctrine of the Mean can be found:

[Doctrina de la medianía](#)

Sample of a calligraphy of the  
Datong theme

Source: nankai.edu.cn



## 03 Chinese systems of thought and ethics

The Chinese attach great importance to family and kinship. Respect for elders and love for the young is a traditional virtue of the Chinese people.



The traditional family  
Source: La fábrica del mundo

### The traditional family

In the traditional scale of values in ancient China, great importance was attached to the formation of large families, with grandparents and parents as the pillars, and children and grandchildren below them. For ordinary people, such families, in which three, four or even five generations lived together, were the ideal, and splitting them up was considered shameful. Governed by a strict patriarchal principle, their hierarchical structure was rigorous. Hence, the heads of the family had absolute authority to deal with family affairs and the younger generations generally had no right to decide their own fate or express their personal opinions.

The advice “have children to take care of you in old age” summarises the logic that guarantees the well-being of the elderly: parents bring children into the world and raise them; when the parents are older, the children must show them filial piety and take responsibility for supporting them.

### The modern family

Since the 20th century, but especially since 1949, the prototype of the Chinese family has undergone major changes, including a diversification of its structure and a reduction in the number of family members. Indeed, today, in both urban and rural areas, young people prefer to have small families. In the cities, most families consist of a couple and one or two children, while in the countryside, households including three or more generations predominate.

The Chinese uphold the tradition of respecting elders and loving children. In today’s society, although the older generation does not usually live together with the younger generation, the two remain in close contact. The care of the elderly by adult children is a responsibility stipulated by law. Family affection is deeply rooted among the Chinese, which explains why they maintain a very intimate relationship not only between parents and children, but with siblings, aunts, uncles and nephews and nieces.

The Chinese family  
Source: Turismo de Beijing





# 04 Education in China

## 4.1 The transformation of education in China since 1949

Since the Revolution of 1949, many changes have taken place in Chinese society, especially in the area of education. Eight rounds of reforms have been carried out in the basic education curriculum. The classroom teaching situation has been greatly improved and high-quality education has been developed. According to 吴恒山 (2018), the main thrust of this transformation can be summarised as follows.

- Education has shifted from being teaching-centered to learning-centered.
- There has been a shift from knowledge-oriented teaching to basic literacy-oriented teaching.
- Previously described as “difficult, complicated, biased and old”, the curriculum is now “scientific and rich”.
- Teaching methods have moved away from one-way indoctrination towards multidirectional interaction.
- In recent years, digitisation, the rise of the internet and “big data”, along with online learning technologies, have accelerated the change in teaching methods.

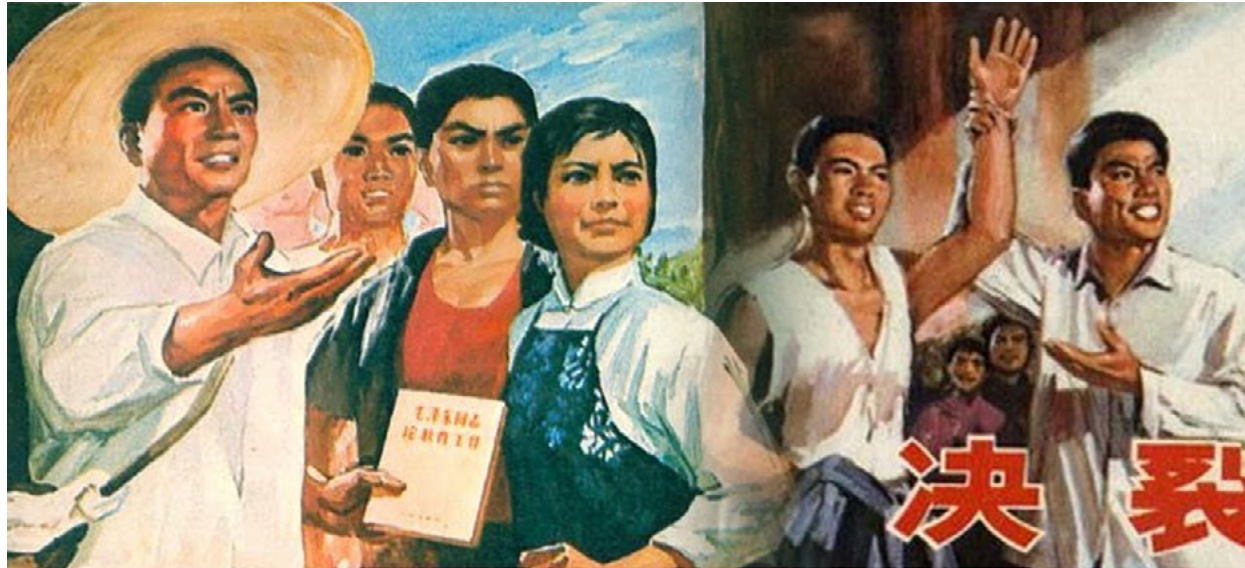
Date	Event
1949	China begins its transition from semi-colonial and semi-feudal education to a new democratic education system.
1952	China establishes a new basic education curriculum.
1982	Introduction of compulsory universal primary education
1986	The recently-enacted Law on Compulsory Education is amended to include the requirement that all children receive nine years of compulsory education.
2002	The government formally declares its objective of "actively promoting the balanced development of schools at the compulsory education stage".
2014	The State Council issues the <i>Implementation Opinions on Deepening the Reform of the Examination and Registration System</i> , with the aim of improving the fairness of the college entrance examination system.

Table summarising major changes in China’s education system  
Source: Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China



## 04 Education in China

A film that can help to understand the changes in China's education systems is *Breaking with Old Ideas* (1975).



## Breaking with Old Ideas

### 4.2 Problems affecting China's education system

On the other hand, it should be noted that the distribution of educational resources has always been unequal in China. This has always been a major obstacle to the development of the country's education system. It should be emphasised that China has a huge population, and not enough schools. This is a significant structural problem.

Development has been uneven, with wide disparities between regions, between urban and rural areas and between schools. As a result, the quality of education is variable, and the supply of educational resources is insufficient.

Even today, large cities end up with the best educational resources, so students in less developed areas are less likely to receive high-quality education. Students from these areas have to work harder to pass exams, and are more likely to be taught in an old-fashioned, rigid style in the classroom.





## 05 China's geography and main tourist attractions

Map of China

Source: mapamundi.online



China's vast national territory extends over 9.6 million square kilometers. Generally speaking, the country's topography descends from the west to the east, and the population is concentrated in the east. China's highest point is Mount Everest and its two main rivers are the Yangtze River and the Yellow River.



05 China's geography and  
main tourist attractions

Climate map of China





## 05 China's geography and main tourist attractions



Terracotta warriors (top) and  
gardens (bottom right)

Source: th.bing.com

In terms of foreign and domestic tourism, China's most popular attractions are the Great Wall, the Terracotta Army, the Forbidden City and the Classical Gardens of Suzhou. All four are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

**The Great Wall.** More than 21,000 kilometers long, this fortification was built in the 5th century BC for protection against invasion. It continued to be expanded and rebuilt until the 15th century.

**The Terracotta Army.** Dating from the 3rd century BC, this collection of more than 8,000 life-size terracotta warriors, along with horses and chariots, can be found in the city of Xian.

**The Forbidden City.** Located in the centre of Beijing, this is a walled palace complex composed of more than 90 palaces and courtyards, 980 buildings, four gates and a 52-meter moat. It was used as the residence of emperors for hundreds of years and in 1925 became the Palace Museum, which houses one million valuable art objects.

**The Classical Gardens of Suzhou.** Suzhou is home to masterpieces of classical Chinese garden design dating from the 11th and 19th centuries. These gardens seek to recreate natural landscapes in miniature and reflect in their meticulous design the profound metaphysical importance of natural beauty in Chinese culture.



To know more:  
the top ten places to visit in China (Spanish)  
[skyscanner.es](https://www.skyscanner.es)



## 06 Languages spoken in China

China is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural country, with 56 officially-recognised ethnic groups, more than 80 languages and more than 30 scripts in use within its national territory.

The languages of China are derived from a number of unrelated language families, principally the Sino-Tibetan, the Tai-Kadai, the Austro-Asiatic, the Altaic and the Indo-European.

The official language used throughout the country is Standard Mandarin Chinese or Putonghua. Additional official languages are used in specific autonomous regions and special administrative regions. Many variants and dialects are also used on a daily basis in the PRC.

Ethnolinguistic map of the PRC

Source: commons.wikimedia.org





## 06 Languages spoken in China

### 6.1 The standard spoken and written Chinese language

According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language promulgated on October 31, 2000, Standard Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) is the national spoken language, and the national written language is Standard Chinese, also known as Simplified Chinese. The traditional Chinese written language continues to be used in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

The promulgation of the law mentioned above prompted a nationwide Standard Mandarin learning boom at the turn of the millennium. To promote the general adoption of Standard Mandarin, Standard Chinese characters and the Hanyu Pinyin phonetic transcription system, teachers in schools and universities were required to teach in Standard Mandarin, and public service providers were also required to use the language.

State-run classes and proficiency examinations were arranged to ensure that everyone learned the standard spoken and written language and transcription system.



Source: @freepik



## 06 Languages spoken in China

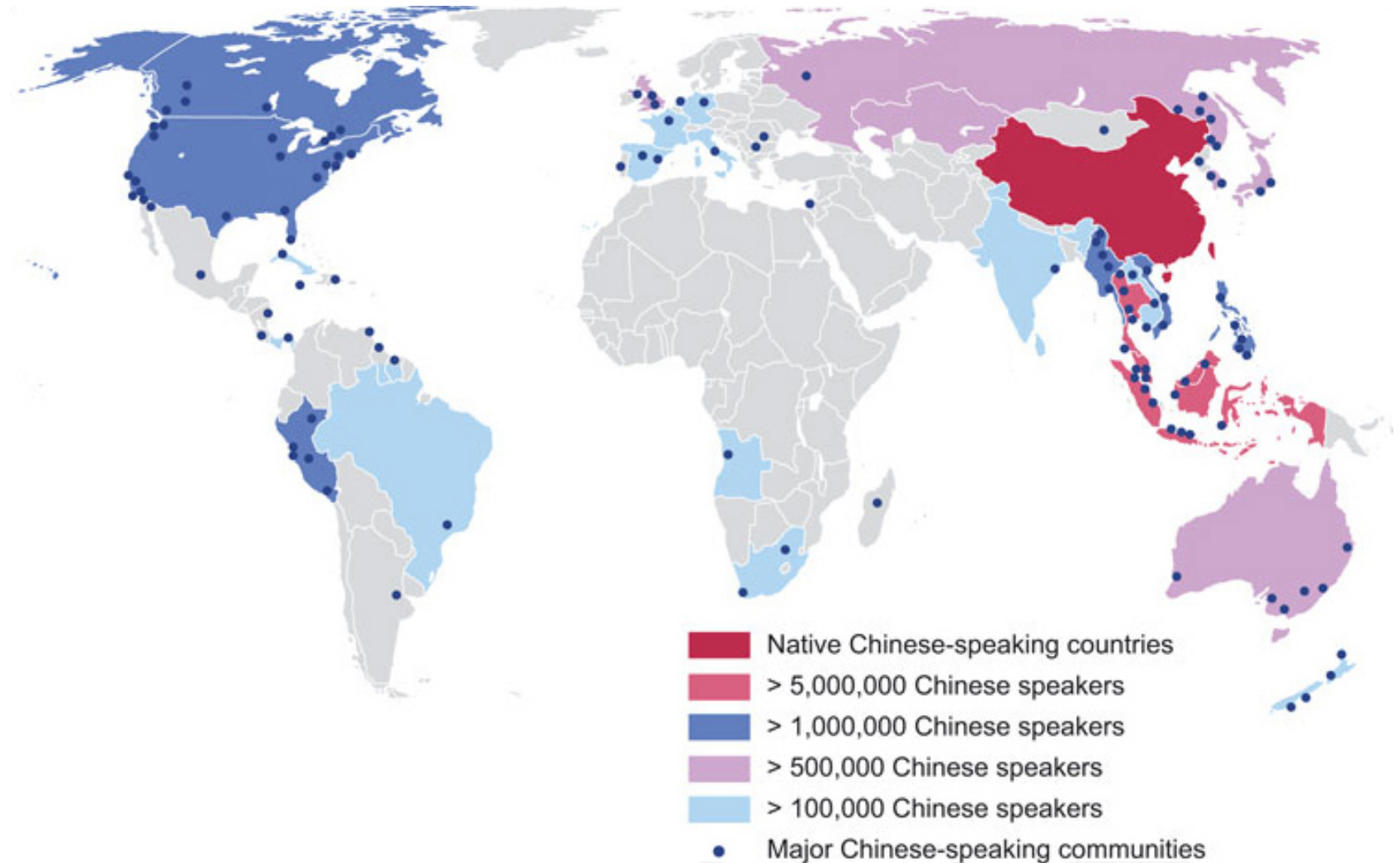
By helping to reduce internal language barriers and promoting social interaction, this national language standardisation programme has had a significant positive impact in economic, political and cultural terms. It has been conducive to the creation of a unified domestic market, facilitating the circulation of goods between regions.

Because China is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-dialectal country with a large population, the widespread use of Standard Mandarin facilitates communication between ethnic groups and regions, helping to maintain national unity and strengthening the cohesion of the Chinese nation.

Mandarin is also spoken outside the PRC, in Singapore, Malaysia and other jurisdictions, making it the language with the most native speakers in the world (Berengueras, 2012).

The Chinese-speaking world

Source: th.bing.com





06 Languages spoken in China

6.2 Other official languages spoken in autonomous regions and special administrative regions of the PRC

As shown below, some autonomous regions and special administrative regions also use their own official languages in addition to Standard Mandarin.

China’s language laws also state that the spoken and written languages of all ethnic groups should coexist equally, that any form of linguistic discrimination is prohibited, that all ethnic groups are free to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and that the state encourages all ethnic groups to learn one another’s spoken and written languages. Accordingly, in the autonomous regions and special administrative regions, regional official languages are used alongside Standard Mandarin in the public sphere.

Autonomous region or special administrative region	Official languages
Tibet Autonomous Region	Standard Mandarin, Tibetan
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region	Standard Mandarin, Uyghur
Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	Standard Mandarin, Mongolian
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	Standard Mandarin, Zhuang
Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region	Standard Mandarin
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	Standard Mandarin, English
Macao Special Administrative Region	Standard Mandarin, Portuguese

Source: yinjiang.gov.cn

Yak in the Nepal region  
Source: @kamchatka freepik.es



# 06 Languages spoken in China

## 6.3 Dialects widely used in the PRC

Including Mandarin, the ten most widely-used dialects of Chinese are shown in the table below.

These dialects differ both morphologically and phonologically. They are listed in descending order by total number of native speakers.



To know more about the Chinese:  
More information about languages spoken in China  
[studycli.org Languages spoken in China de chi](https://studycli.org/Languages-spoken-in-China-de-chi)

	Dialect	Number of speakers	Areas in which the dialect is spoken
1	Mandarin	850 million	Throughout the PRC, especially in Beijing
2	Wu (吴语)	80 million	Shanghai City, Southern Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Southern Anhui, Northwestern Jiangxi, Fujian Pucheng
3	Min (闽语)	75 million	Fujian, Taiwan
4	Yue/Cantonés (粤语)	70-80 million	Guangdong (Guangdong), Hong Kong, Macao, Guangxi, Hainan
5	Jin (晋语)	65 million	Shanxi, central-eastern Neimenggu, northern Shaanxi, eastern Heibe, northern Henan
6	Gan (赣语)	50 million	Middle and northern Jiangxi, eastern Hunan, southeastern Hubei, southwestern Anhui and northwestern Fujian.
7	Hakka (客家话)	50 million	Eastern and northern Guangdong, western Fujian, southern Jiangxi, northwestern Taiwan and southeastern Guangxi.
8	Xiang (湘语)	40 million	Most of Hunan and northeastern Guangxi
9	Hui (徽语)	5 million	Trifinio of Anhui, Zhejiang and Jiangxi provinces
10	Pinghua (平话)	2 million	Part of Guangxi

Source: sohu.com





# 07 China's cultural heritage

The four most important  
Chinese inventions are  
the compass, gunpowder,  
papermaking and printing,  
each representing a  
watershed moment in the  
history of science and  
technology.



The four Chinese inventions: paper, the printing  
press, the compass and gunpowder

Source: baidu.com



07 China’s cultural heritage



Source: th.bing.com/

China’s traditional martial arts, collectively known as wushu or kunfu encompass a wide range of fighting styles including Taiji, Shaolin and many more. They are practiced for body development and general fitness.

Porcelain originated in China. This ceramic material has a wide range of uses and high artistic and technical value.

Both classical Chinese painting and Chinese calligraphy use the “four treasures of writing”, namely brushes, ink, paper and inkwell. Traditional painting genres include landscapes and flower-and-bird pictures, while painting styles range from freehand to highly meticulous. Chinese calligraphy includes at least seven styles.

Source: pl.ifengimg.com/



Source: baidu.com/

Source: baidu.com/





## 07 China's cultural heritage



Traditional Chinese opera is a form of musical theatre with roots in the country's early history.

Although there are over three hundred branches and genres, the best known is Peking Opera and the oldest is Kunqu.



To learn more about traditional chinese opera:

[CCTV戏曲](#)



Peking Opera: *Farewell to my concubine* (top)  
Kunqu: *The Peony Pavilion* (bottom)

Source: Ópera de Pekín Kunqu



Source: nipic.com

The art of knot-tying is an ancient Chinese craft dating back to the Tang Dynasty (618 to 907 A.D.) Using a single piece of thread or rope, knots are tied into shapes of varying complexity, each with its own symbolic meaning. Traditional decorative knots are used today as ornaments, gifts for special occasions and embellishments on clothing. Knots tied in dark red cord are thought to bring good luck.



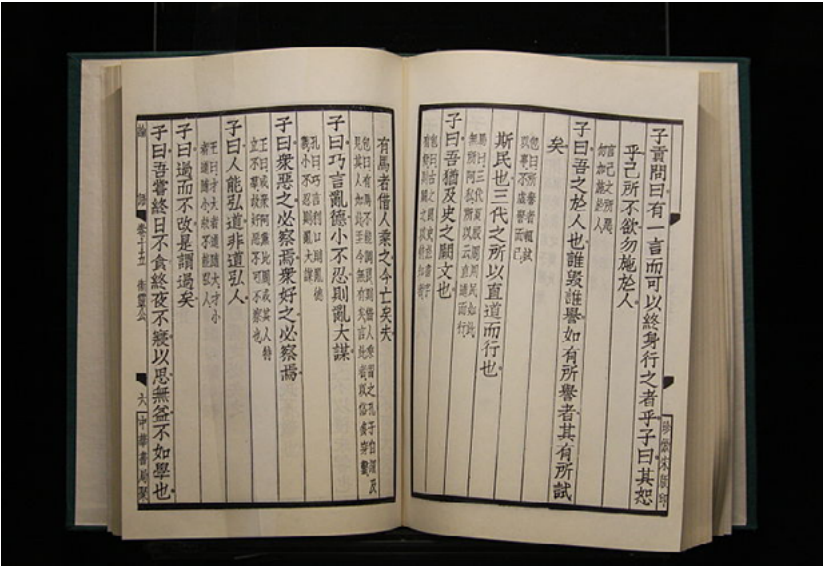
To know more:

[How to make a Chinese knot](#)

[History of Chinese Knots, Types, and Their Meanings](#)



08 Chinese literature



Analectas, by Confucio  
Source: ja.m.wikipedia.org

The history of Chinese literature stretches back well over two thousand years to the religious and philosophical texts of the Zhou Dynasty (1045-255 BC). The earliest anthology of Chinese poetry dates back to between the 11th and 6th century BC. The canonical works of Confucianism known collectively as the Four Books and the Five Classics date from before 300 BC.

The Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) is regarded as the golden age of Chinese poetry. Alongside the emergence of new poetic forms, this period saw a revival of interest in the literature of the ancient world.

China's first novels date from the 14th century, which saw the publication of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (attributed to Luo Guanzhong) and *Water Margin* (attributed to Shi Nai'an). These, together with the 16th-century *Journey to the West* (attributed to Wu Cheng'en) and the 18th-century *Dream of the Red Chamber* (by Cao Xueqin) are regarded by many as China's four great classical novels.

Famous contemporary Chinese writers include Mo Yan, winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature and author of works such as *The Garlic Ballads* and *Red Sorghum*, and science fiction writer Liu Cixin, author of *The Three-Body Problem*, for which he won the 2015 Hugo Award.



Mo Yan  
Source: suerma.com



Liu Cixin  
Source: sohu.com

To know more:

[Chinese literature](#)

[About writer Mo Yan \(Nobel Prize 2012\)](#)





09 Festivals



Source: viajedechina.com

China’s four major festivals are the Spring Festival (also called Chinese New Year), the Qingming Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Festival	Length of public holiday	Date	Overview
New Year's Day	1 day	1st January	This public holiday marks the beginning of a new year based on the Gregorian calendar.
Chinese New Year	3 days	Determined by the Chinese lunar calendar, the date varies by year, but always falls between January 21st and February 20th.	This is China’s most important festival.
Qingming Festival	1 day	Determined by the Chinese lunar calendar, the date varies by year, but falls on April 3rd, 4th or 5th	This day is devoted to remembering and honouring the dead.
Dragon Boat Festival	1 day	Determined by the Chinese lunar calendar, the date varies by year, but falls between late May and early June.	A traditional Chinese festival featuring activities such as dragon boat racing, and celebrated with special food
Mid-Autumn Festival	1 day	Determined by the Chinese lunar calendar, the date varies by year, but falls between mid-September and early October.	Broadly similar to harvest festivals in Europe
National Day	7 days	October 1st to 7th	Celebration of the founding of the PRC

Calendar of important public holidays in China

Source: viajchinaexperto.com





# 09 Festivals



Chinese New Year  
Source: tusviajes.net

## Chinese New Year.

Celebrated throughout the country, this is China's biggest festival. Celebrations begin on the first day of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar, and end on the fifteenth with the Lantern Festival.

During this period, millions of people travel to their hometowns to spend the holiday with their families.



Red lanterns  
Source: live.staticflickr.com



To know more about the Chinese New Year:  
[supercurioso.com](http://supercurioso.com) [studycli.org](http://studycli.org)





# 09 Festivals



Grave Sweeping and Ancestor Worship

Source: : fjnet.com

**Qingming Festival.** Celebrated around April 5th, the Qingming Festival has its origins in the ancestral beliefs and spring rituals of ancient times. Also known as Tomb-Sweeping Day, its main focus is the honouring of the dead.

The Qingming Festival is celebrated around 5 April in the Gregorian calendar.

The Qingming Festival is an ancient traditional festival and is also one of the “twenty-four solar terms”.

The “24 solar terms” are a product of ancient agricultural civilisation, and have a long history of association with the “dry branches of time” and the eight trigrams. They not only guided agricultural production, but also influenced clothing, food, housing and transport and transport, and even their cultural attitudes.



To know more about the Qingming Festival:

[Little Chinese Learners](#)

**National Day.** Officially known as the National Day of the People’s Republic of China, this celebration of the foundation of the PRC is observed on October 1st. The associated public holiday lasts seven days and is known as Golden Week.

During the holiday period, public places feature decorations on festive and patriotic themes. A variety of state-organised celebrations are held, including military parades, firework displays and concerts.



Flag-raising ceremony and military parade

Source: studycli.org



To know more about the Chinese National Day holiday:

[es.taohmetal.com](#)

09 Festivals



Imaginary Chinese dragon  
Source: aike.baidu.com

**Dragon Boat Festival.** This festival combines the worship of gods and ancestors, prayers for good luck and protection from evil spirits, celebration and entertainment, and food. It originated in the worship of natural celestial phenomena, which are traditionally associated with dragons.

Rice dumplings are typically eaten at the festival. In Jiangsu and Zhejiang, it is also customary to consume the “five yellow foods”, namely yellow fish, cucumber, eel, salted duck eggs (or alternatively, soybeans) and yellow rice wine.

In 2009, the Dragon Boat Festival was added to UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Five Yellows  
Source: gim2.baidu.com



Rice dumplings are a festive food of the Dragon Boat Festival (粽子)  
Source: th.bing.com



To know more about the Dragon Boat festival:

[Dragon Boat Festival](#)





# 09 Festivals



Appreciating the Moon — Family gathering

Source: viaje-a-china.com

**Mid-Autumn Festival.** This festival has become a colorful and precious cultural heritage, in which the fullness of the moon symbolises family reunion.

Celebrated on the 15th day of the 8th month of the Chinese lunar calendar (falling at a variable date between mid-September and early October), it is a time for families to get together to view the moon and eat mooncakes.



To know more about the Mid-Autumn Festival:

[Mid-Autumn Festival](#)



Mooncakes

Source: baike.baidu.com



# 10 Gastronomy



Hotpot (huoguo)

Source: vinid.net



Family dinner

Source: n.sinaimg.cn

China's world-famous cuisine is an important part of the culture and has a long history. A huge variety of techniques are used. The ideal Chinese meal achieves a harmony of appearance, aromas, flavours and nutrition. Some of the most popular Chinese dishes include *huoguo* (hotpot), *tofu*, *baozi* (steamed buns), *jiaozi* (dumplings) and Beijing roast duck. The most popular drink is tea.

Chopsticks are used for eating solid food, while soups and other liquids are eaten with a spoon (traditionally made of ceramic). At formal banquets, guests share meals, sometimes using shared chopsticks. Otherwise, everyone uses their own pair of chopsticks.

The carbohydrate component of a meal is typically rice or wheat.



Baozi

Source: imgs.jczjw.co

**Breakfast:** Is usually eaten at around eight a.m.

Each region has its own local preferences for breakfast dishes. Baozi, youtiao and soy milk are popular throughout the country, while southerners have the custom of morning tea.

**Lunch:** Tends to be eaten around noon.

**Dinner:** Is typically eaten between six and seven in the evening.

Chinese people like to drink hot water with meals.

Soy milk and youtiao

Source: new.qq.com





## 11 Names, totems and astrology



Chinese zodiac

Source: thebeijingcenter.org

The most common Chinese surnames are written using a single character, although there are some surnames consisting of two characters. Normally, the surname is passed down from the father to the child, although it can be passed down from the mother or other family member in some cases. Given names typically consist of several characters with a positive meaning.

The totems of the Chinese nation are the dragon and the phoenix, both of which are symbols of power, nobility and honour, and emblems of good fortune and success. The Chinese think of themselves as “descendants of the dragon”.

Chinese astrology is based on a repeating twelve-year cycle in which each year is assigned an animal. The reputed attributes of each animal are thought to influence the events of the year concerned, and characteristics of persons born in that year. This system is known as the Chinese zodiac.



Dragon and Phoenix

Source: nipic.com



To know more:

[Chinese Zodiac](#)





# 11 Names, totems and astrology



Karaoke

Source: easyviajar.com

The working week is five days (Monday to Friday) with an 8-hour workday, which is common throughout China. In general, work starts at 9 am and ends at 5 pm.

In private companies it is common for employees to work overtime, but in public companies this is not so common.

Due to the hectic working day and little free time, people do not have too many leisure activities.

On the other hand, young people generally choose to have dinner with friends on weekends.

So, the way young people meet is mainly to eat together, go to karaoke, sing, play games and drink in bars.

Currently there are a good number of “university for seniors” in China. However these are not a university in the traditional sense. It is a unified place where older people can enrol in a variety of courses at very low tuition costs. The teaching content mainly includes health, cooking, arts, etc.



Hulusi, a traditional Chinese musical instrument  
named after its gourd-like shape

Source: bking.cdn.bcebos.com

12

Public transport

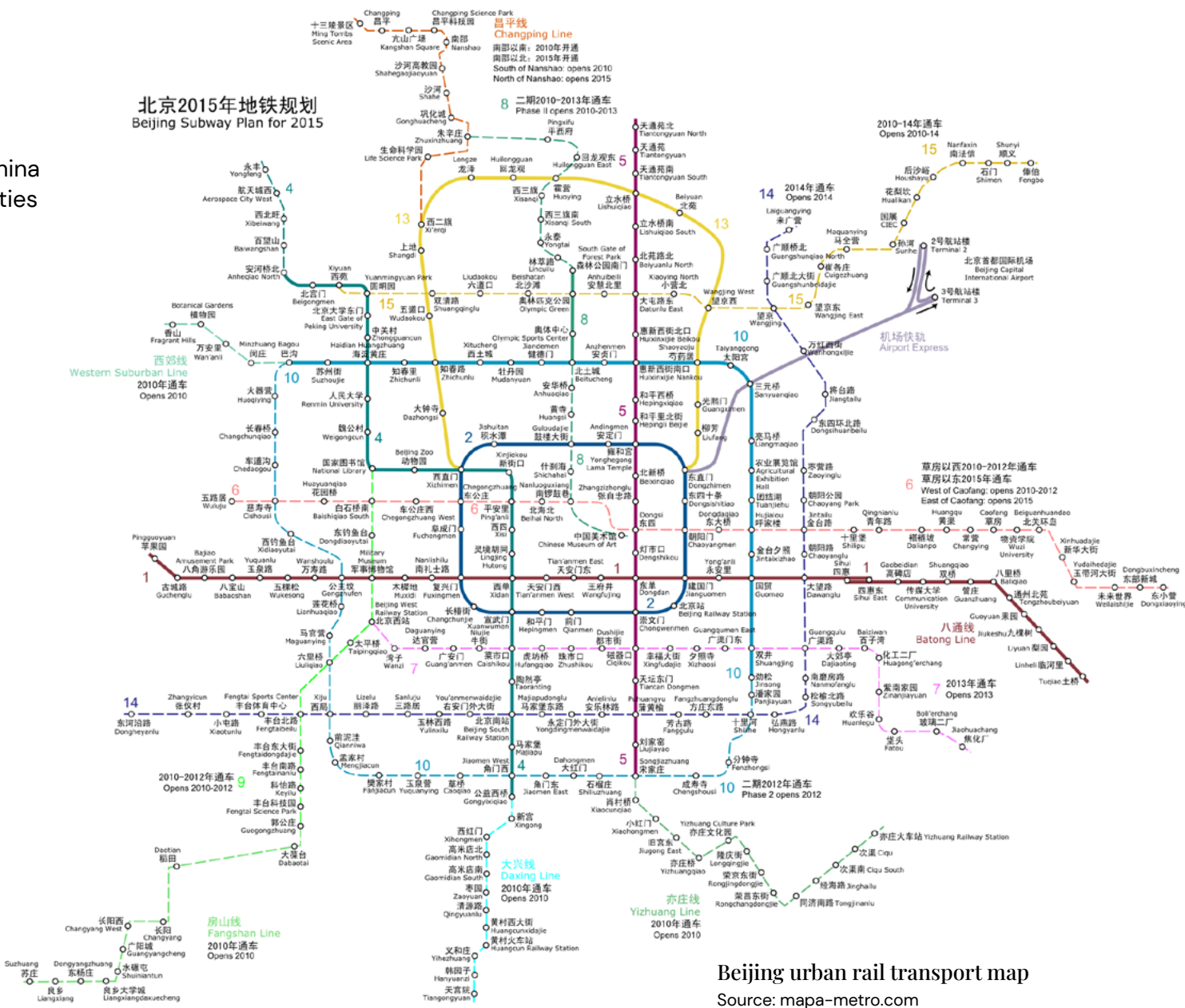


The subway entrances  
Source: West\_Station



Subway  
Source: n.sinaimg.cn

In mainland China there are 41 cities with subways.





# 12 Public transport

On public transport, young people give up their seats to the elderly, children, pregnant women and the disabled.

Bicycle-sharing systems are also used in many cities.



Bus  
Source: gimg2.baidu.com



Bicycle sharing  
Source: sohu.com





# 13 Work and leisure

Chinese society has moved away from the traditional system in which the man of the house was the family's breadwinner, typically handing over his salary to his wife, who would run the household economy and care for the children. Today, most married women work outside the home, just like men.

China's standard working week is from Monday through Friday, with an eight-hour workday starting at nine a.m. and ending at five p.m. In private companies it is common for employees to work overtime. In the public sector, this is less usual.

Socialising and entertainment tend to take place mainly at weekends.

Young people get together to eat out, go to karaoke, sing, play games and drink in bars. Children's leisure time is largely spent in parks and playgrounds, usually supervised by their parents.

Since the 1980s, China has had special universities for senior citizens. Retirees can enroll in a variety of courses at very low tuition costs. Classes cover subjects including health, cooking, art, playing traditional musical instruments and much more.

Older people can often be seen doing physical exercises in public parks, and singing and dancing together in public squares.



Senior people exercising in free public sports facilities in the park

Source: okstar.cn

## Outdoor life

Widely used by people of all ages to walk their dogs and take their exercise, parks usually feature public toilets and refreshment stands selling bottled water and snacks.

There will typically be a guard house, with a guard available to provide park users with help if needed. Larger parks may be equipped with restaurants and tea houses, playgrounds for children, sports equipment for senior citizens, artificial lakes with paddle boats, extensive lawns and more.



Guang chang wu

Source: washingtonpost





# 13 Work and leisure



Baijiu liquors

Source: elcomidista.elpais.com

## Drinking culture

In China, alcoholic drinks are traditionally consumed at parties, celebrations and events such as weddings and funerals.

Over time, a specific concept of Alcohol Table Culture (酒桌文化) develops in Chinese society, and the origin of the toast is an ancient custom inherited from patriarchal society.



Toast

Source: cnn.com

There is a social hierarchy in the toast: the subjects toast to the ruler, sons to their fathers, brothers to their brothers, subordinates for their superiors and juniors to their elders.

As in Europe, beer, cocktails and so on are often drunk with friends in the evening (it is not typical to drink alcohol during the day).

Traditional drinking customs involve a series of toasts, and it is seen as impolite not to drink a toast proposed by the host.

Due to this social pressure, guests can find themselves drinking more than they would like. In a business context, the host tends to be someone in a position of power over the guests, and the pressure to drink can easily become coercive.

The toxic nature of this forced drinking culture has drawn criticism in recent years.

## Parades and demonstrations

In China, parades may not be held without the prior permission of the authorities, and may be held for celebration only. Demonstrations are against the law.

## Socialist values

The core socialist values to which Chinese people aspire are prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendliness.



# 14 Housing

If they can afford it, Chinese people prefer to buy an apartment rather than rent. Children typically live with their parents until they get married or move away for work. In some families, parents, children and grandparents live together. In the city it is rare that cousins also live together; however, in the countryside it can happen.



Standard housing  
Source: gimg2.baidu.com



Floor plan of a  
typical apartment  
Source: y.qichejiashi.com





# 14 Housing

## Access to public healthcare



West China Hospital  
Source: gimg2.baidu.com

China's health insurance system provides coverage for illness, maternity and the basic needs of the disabled and mentally handicapped.

Everyone has a health insurance card containing a chip that is used to confirm their identity and pay their health insurance bill when visiting a doctor or pharmacy.



Social Security card  
Source: bking.cdn.bcebos.com



Health insurance card  
Source: bking.cdn.bcebos.com01



# 14 Housing

## Local government

Local government bodies at all levels throughout the country are organs of state administration under the unified leadership of the State Council and are all subordinate to the State Council.

## The police



Source: [img2.baidu.com](http://img2.baidu.com)





# 15 University life in China



Tsinghua University  
Source: Topuniversities.com

To enter a university, high school graduates have to sit the National Unified Examination for Admission to Universities and General Colleges, which takes place on June 7th and 8th every year. There are six exams in total, three being compulsory (Chinese, mathematics and English or another foreign language such as Spanish, French or Japanese), and three being optional (selected from a range including geography, politics, history, biology, physics and chemistry). The exam results are made available about 20 days later. Having received their grades, candidates can start applying to their preferred universities. While waiting to hear the results of their university applications, they spend the summer having fun, travelling or working summer jobs.

New students usually begin their university life with military training in September. This compulsory training varies slightly depending on the province or university in question, and is intended to stimulate patriotic enthusiasm, promote the spirit of revolutionary heroism, improve physical fitness, instill self-discipline and teach basic military knowledge and skills.

The training period typically lasts at least 15 days, and up to a month in some cases. The days begin with morning exercises, and the daily routine includes drill training, cleaning, learning basic combat skills, and boxing. Evenings are spent attending lectures on national defense and learning military songs, among other activities.



Military training  
Source: sohucs.com



# 15 University life in China

Having completed their military training, the new students begin their university studies. Along with the classes in their degree subject, they attend compulsory classes in physical education, English, history and ideology. They also take elective courses, choosing from a range of subjects including film and television production, East Asian culture, love and marriage, software studies and much else. Compulsory classes typically take place from eight in the morning until noon, and between two and six in the afternoon, while elective classes are held between six and ten in the evening.

A bachelor's degree course typically lasts three or four years. In the final year, students begin internships, write their dissertation, start job-searching or prepare to apply for a master's degree course.



University lecture  
Source: isacteach.com



Self-service tray  
Source: gimg2.baidu.com/bandeja

All universities have their own canteens serving meals and snacks. There are special canteens for ethnic minorities who do not eat pork.

Canteen meals are low in price and a range of regional dishes is usually available.

The 3 meals are usually eaten at these times:

<b>Breakfast:</b>	6:30 to 8:30 AM
<b>Lunch:</b>	11:00 to 12:30 PM
<b>Dinner:</b>	5:30 to 8:30 PM



Canteen  
Source: gimg2.baidu.com/cantina





# 15 University life in China



University residence hall

Source: [gimg2.baidu.com/residencia](http://gimg2.baidu.com/residencia)

University halls of residence typically have dormitories with rooms accommodating groups of four to six students. There are separate dormitories for boys and girls, with a resident university staff member on each floor. An eleven p.m. curfew is typical. In the halls of residence, roommates often study together.

Studying is generally carried out independently, but discussions are sometimes held in class. During lectures and in the library, students refrain from conversation to avoid disturbing others, but converse freely in the canteen and other public areas.

Assignments include essays, book reviews, film reviews, presentations, research and so on. Assessment and grading systems vary, but obviously the final degree examinations are all-important. The written examination format is much the same as in Europe. Some courses use open-book exams. Plagiarism is explicitly prohibited, and has serious consequences if committed.

Each university has its own website, which students can use to choose courses, view their grades, and even contribute their evaluations of courses and the performance of professors and lecturers.

Each class group is assigned a tutor or academic assistant who is responsible for providing academic and administrative guidance and pastoral support. In many cases, the tutor will organise an online group chat in which all students in the class will participate.



Students bedroom

Source: [gimg2.baidu.com/dormitorios](http://gimg2.baidu.com/dormitorios)



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