

PANORAMIC CHINA

INNER MONGOLIA

The Horseback People



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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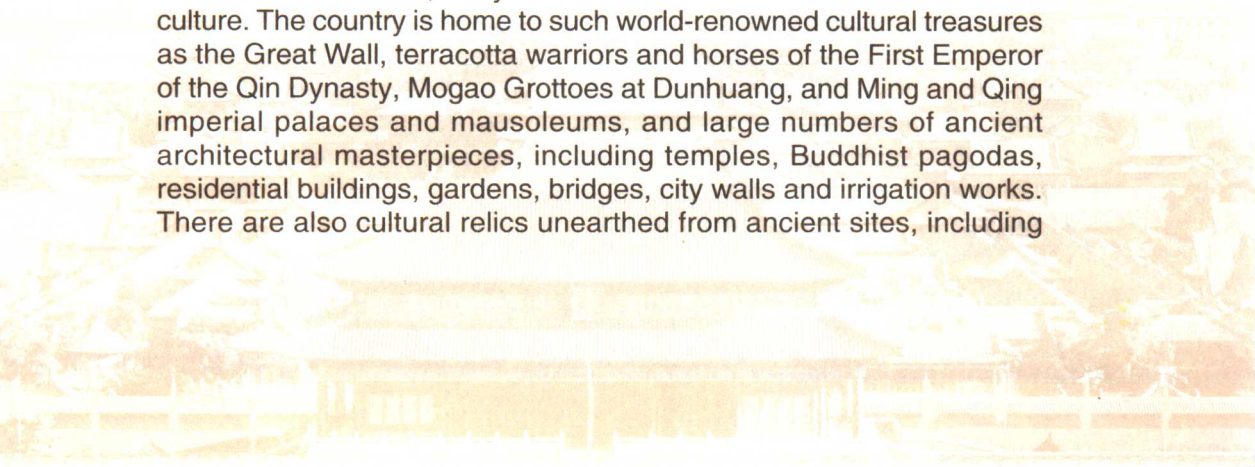
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Introduction

China has 23 provinces, four municipalities directly under the Central Government, five autonomous regions and two special administrative regions. Due to geographical and topographical differences and climatic variations, each area has its own unique natural scenery. The mountains in the north of the country are rugged and magnificent, the waters in the south are clear and turbulent, the Gobi in the northwest shines brilliantly in the sunlight, the hills in the southeast are often shrouded in floating fog, green waves of sorghum and soybean crops undulate over the vast fields of the northeast, and the mountains in the southwest, with sequestered villages and terraced fields, look tranquil and picturesque.

There are 56 ethnic groups in China. The Han, making up the overwhelming majority of the population, mainly live in the eastern and central parts of the country, while many ethnic groups with smaller populations live in the west. In China, all ethnic groups, regardless of size, are equal and respect each other. Each ethnic group has its own folk customs, religious beliefs and cultural traditions, and most use their own language and script. Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where ethnic minorities live in compact communities. All the ethnic groups call themselves “Chinese.” They are courteous and friendly. In the ethnic-minority areas, the quiet environment, quaint buildings, exquisite fashions, unsophisticated folk customs and hospitality of the local people hold a great appeal to visitors from afar.

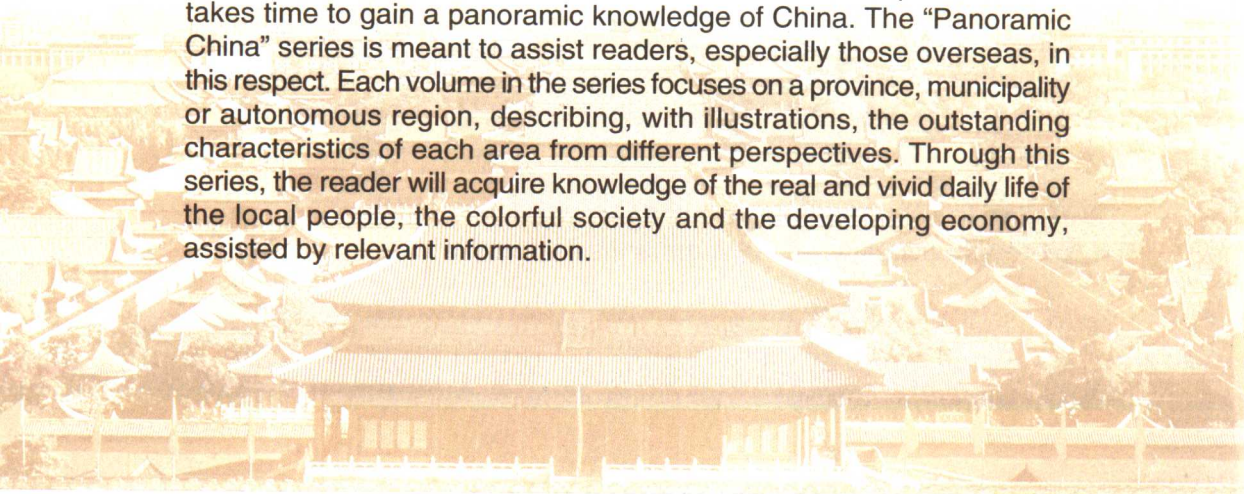
China boasts 5,000 years of recorded civilization and a brilliant culture. The country is home to such world-renowned cultural treasures as the Great Wall, terracotta warriors and horses of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, and Ming and Qing imperial palaces and mausoleums, and large numbers of ancient architectural masterpieces, including temples, Buddhist pagodas, residential buildings, gardens, bridges, city walls and irrigation works. There are also cultural relics unearthed from ancient sites, including



painted pottery, jade ware, bronze ware, large and ornate tombs and foundations of historical buildings, and many more as yet undiscovered. The museums of China's various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions house thousands of cultural relics and works of art, among which are treasures rare in the world, displaying the long history of China and the splendid Chinese culture from different aspects. The strong, deep-rooted Chinese culture has always influenced the mentality and moral standards of the Chinese people, having developed continually in pace with the civilization. A careful study of today's Peking opera, kunqu opera, shadow plays, calligraphy, painting, paper-cutting, and even the flower-shaped steamed buns on the kitchen range of farmers will reveal elements of traditional Chinese culture as well as replications of the art of the past.

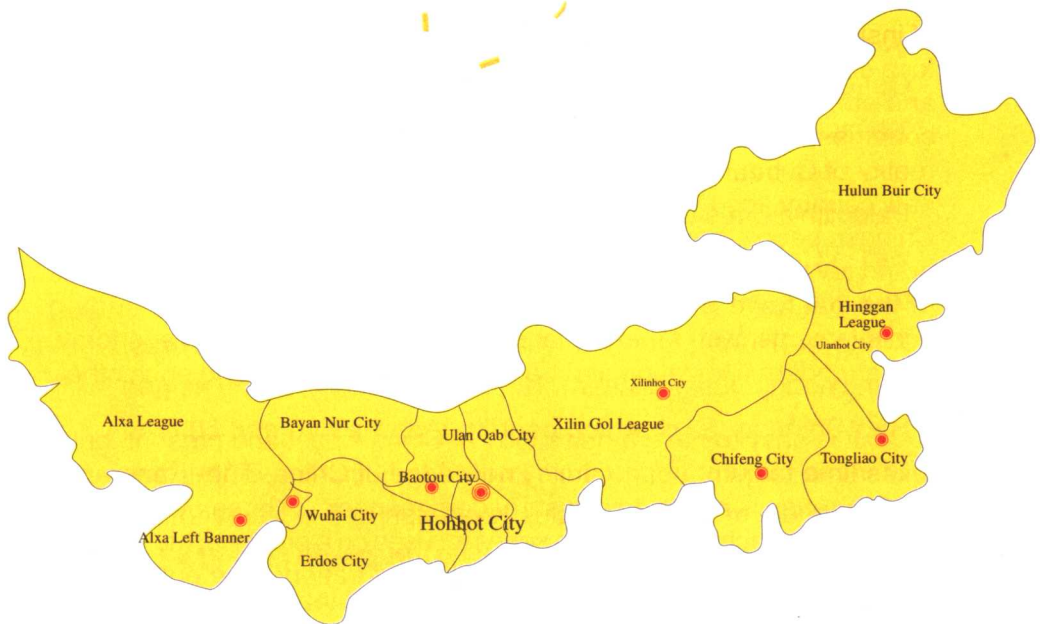
Like other countries of venerable age, China has suffered grievous calamities. During the century and more before the 1950s, the Chinese people made unrelenting struggles for the prosperity of the country, and national independence and liberation. A large number of insightful people and revolutionaries, cherishing all kinds of dreams for a strong China, studied the ways of the West in a quest for prosperity and strength, and borrowed the revolutionary experience of foreign countries. At last, the Communist Party of China, proceeding from the reality of China, and relying on the working people, founded a brand-new country, the People's Republic of China, in 1949. Since then, the Chinese people have made persistent efforts and explorations for the grand revitalization of the Chinese nation. The Chinese people's efforts in the past two decades and more have resulted in outstanding achievements, with rapid social progress, a well-developed economy, and a modern civilization and traditional culture enhancing each other.

It is easy to have a quick look at China's past and present, but it takes time to gain a panoramic knowledge of China. The "Panoramic China" series is meant to assist readers, especially those overseas, in this respect. Each volume in the series focuses on a province, municipality or autonomous region, describing, with illustrations, the outstanding characteristics of each area from different perspectives. Through this series, the reader will acquire knowledge of the real and vivid daily life of the local people, the colorful society and the developing economy, assisted by relevant information.





Location of Inner Mongolia
Autonomous Region within China



Administrative Map of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

Preface

Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region lies along China's northern border. Its shape is that of a galloping horse or a flying eagle; as chance would have it, the horse and the eagle are the two animals both worshipped by the Mongolian ethnic group, known as "the horseback people." Established on May 1, 1947, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was China's first autonomous region for a minority people.

With its long history, Inner Mongolia is one of the birth-places of Chinese civilization. It is dotted with cultural sites going back to the Paleolithic Era — the Dayao Culture, the Culture of the "Hetao People," the Hongshan Culture, the Xiajiadian Culture and the Jalai Nur Culture. There are numerous sites bearing witness to prehistoric human activity — a Paleolithic Era stone implement making site, the earliest stone wall in China and cliff drawings in the Yinshan Mountains. History has seen a succession of ethnic groups on this land — Xiongnu (Huns), Donghu, Xianbei, Wuhuan, Chi-le, Turks, Dangxiang, Qidan (Khitan), Nuzhen (Jurchen), Mongols and Han Chinese, all of which contributed to a rich and colorful Chinese culture. In particular, with the unification of the various Mongol tribes by Genghis Khan during the 13th century, the Mongol people came onto the world stage, adding a further splendid chapter to the annals of the Chinese nation and its culture.

Inner Mongolia is vast, covering an area of 1.183 million square kilometers, an eighth of China's total area. Long and narrow, it slopes from northeast to southwest, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Mongolia lying north of its 4,200 kilometer-long borderline. In the north, west and south, Inner Mongolia borders on the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Hebei, Shanxi, Sha'anxi, Gansu and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Since the region stretches across the northeast, north and northwest of the country, it takes two hours from the time when the people at the easternmost tip of the region see the first rays of the sun to the time when the whole region is in daylight. The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has twelve leagues/cities under its jurisdiction — the cities of Hohhot, Baotou, Wuhai, Chifeng, Tongliao, Erdos, Hulun Buir, Ulan Qab and Bayan Nur, and the leagues of Hinggan, Xilin Gol and Alxa, which in turn administer 101 banners/counties/cities/districts. Its total population is 23.8 million, averaging twenty persons per square kilometer.

Inner Mongolia is richly endowed with mineral and other natural resources and, therefore, dubbed as a "treasure house," which, as a popular saying goes, stores "forests in the east, iron in the west, grain in the south and animals in the north, and in fact, resources everywhere." "Forests in the east" is a reference to the Greater Hinggan Range, an important timber-producing center. Inner Mongolia leads China in terms of area

under forestation, which stands at 20.8 million hectares. "Iron in the west" refers to the Baotou Iron and Steel Complex and the related industrial system in western Inner Mongolia. This group corporation has a capacity of producing 7.5 million tons of steel and iron respectively. Rare earth, machine building, electronics and other industrial sectors in Inner Mongolia have made great strides in development. "Grain in the south" refers to the farming areas in southern Inner Mongolia — the plain south of the Yinshan Mountains on the "Great Bend of the Yellow River," the Western Liaohe River Plain and the area south of the Greater Hinggan Range. These areas produce a variety of grains and industrial crops in quantity, hence their "granary" label. They are also important producers of sugar beet, oil-bearing crops and potatoes. "Animals in the north" is a reference to China's important animal husbandry centers in northern Inner Mongolia. Inner Mongolia has 880,000 square kilometers of pasture, ranking the first among China's five major grazing lands. Hulun Buir and Xinlin Gol are among Inner Mongolia's better known grasslands, and present an idyllic scene in the summer. "Resources everywhere" is a reference to Inner Mongolia's extremely abundant mineral reserves. So far, 134 varieties of minerals have been found in 4,100 locations. The region is among the country's top ten in terms of reserves for 67 types of minerals and the top three for 31 types. Its mineral resources have a potential economic value of 13 trillion yuan, ranking third in China. It has 12 petroleum and natural

gas bearing basins, with a combined reserve of one trillion cubic meters of natural gas. The Sulige Natural Gas Field is the world's single largest natural gas field. Inner Mongolia has proven coal reserves of 223.4 billion tons, which is forecast to reach one trillion tons, the second largest reserve in China. Its rare earth reserves account for 90 percent of China's total and 76 percent of the world total.

It has many tourist attractions to offer: from east to west, forests on the Greater Hinggan Range, the forest steppe and meadow steppe of Hulun Buir, the typical steppe of Xilin Gol, the desert steppe of Urad, the Alxa Gobi Desert, the Badain Jaran Desert, the Tengger Desert, the Ulan Buh Desert, the Hobq Desert and lakes such as the Hulun Nur, the Buir Nur, the Dali Nur, the Uliangsu Nur, the Hasu Nur and the Juyan Nur.

In the new millennium, the economic development of Inner Mongolia has been on the fast track. The region has topped the country for three successive years in terms of growth rate in such economic indicators as GDP, revenue and investment in fixed assets. It has presented a situation marked by economic and social progress, stability in border areas and climbing living standards. The various ethnic groups living on the vast grasslands are like members of a united and harmonious big family building their homeland through their concerted efforts. ■





Grasslands — homeland of the Mongols since time immemorial



A route through desert landscape — one aspect of Inner Mongolia

