

CHINA

Beautiful Landscape



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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II Preface

China is a country located in East Asia to the west of the Pacific Ocean in the eastern hemisphere. With a vast territory accounting for 9.6 million square kilometers, the total land area of China takes up 1/15 of the total land area of the globe and 1/4 of that of Asia. It is equal in size to the entire continent of Europe and is the third largest country in the world after Russia and Canada. China's land borders with other countries total a staggering 20,000 kilometers. In all China has borders with 14 neighboring countries: D.P.R. Korea in the east, Russia and Mongolia in the northeast and north, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan in the west, and India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam in the southwest and south. Chinese ocean territory is as large as 3 million square kilometers, and is one of the largest in the world. The neighboring oceans, including the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the South China Sea, join the Pacific Ocean from north to south. The continental coastline extends for more than 18,000 kilometers, along which many islands, large or small, are scattered. In all there are over 6,500 such islands each with an area of more than 500 square meters, among which Taiwan is the largest followed by Hainan Island. Across the seas China faces South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The distance from the northernmost to the southernmost parts of China is 5,200 kilometers. This immense latitudinal area covers a great number of climates, environments and altitudes. It is one of very few countries with such a large variety of climatic zones within its borders. From Heilongjiang Province in the north to the south, there are in total five climatic zones: a cold temperate zone, a mesothermal zone, a warm temperate zone, a subtropical zone and a tropical zone. Zengmu Ansha, the southernmost point in China, is very close to being in the equatorial climatic zone. On the high plateaus is found an extensive, cold climatic zone. Most of China is located within the temperate, warm temperate and subtropical zones. In general, the lands of China provide a favorable climatic location for habitation with most areas enjoying four distinct

seasons. In some parts of China, one can also find a monsoon climate. From September to the following April, dry and cold winter monsoon winds sweep from Siberia and the Mongolian Plateau. The weather is cold and dry but there is a great difference in temperature between the north and the south. From April to the following September, warm and humid summer monsoons sweep from the ocean. The whole country is characterized by high temperatures and considerable precipitation, with little temperature difference between the north and the south. However, the precipitation differs considerably across different regions from south to north and from east to west. In general, the distribution of annual precipitation becomes less as one moves from the southeastern coast to the northwestern hinterland. The coastal areas of the southeast have an average annual precipitation of more 1,600 mm while the vast region of the northwest has an annual precipitation of less than 50 mm.

The terrain of China slopes from west to east. The terrain in the west is mostly mountainous, with many plateaus and basins, among which the famous Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is known as "Roof of the World". The terrain in the east features mostly plains and hills, which become gradually lower as one moves eastward from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in the north. The west to east sloping terrain causes the major rivers of China to flow into the sea.

China has a wide variety of topographies. There are large criss-crossing mountain ranges, enormous plateaus, endless plains, and basins surrounded by mountains and hills. China is a mountainous country, in which mountainous areas account for some 70 percent of its total land area. Mountainous areas constitute the topographical backbone of the Chinese hinterland, scattered amongst which are plateaus, plains and basins of different shapes and sizes. Most mountain ranges extend from east to west or from northeast to southwest but a small number of mountain ranges run from south to north or from northwest to southeast.

China is characterized by multiple climates and complex topographies. It is home to numerous famous

mountains and large rivers. Some of the natural beauty of the Chinese landscape is among the most spectacular on earth.

The land of China abounds in mountainous and water landscapes. The mountainous landscapes include granite topography of towering mountain peaks and groups of standing stone columns, such as Mt. Qianshan in Liaoning, Mt. Huangshan in Anhui, Mt. Taishan in Shandong, Mt. Huashan in Shaanxi, and Mt. Helanshan in Ningxia; imposing and magnificent metamorphic topography seen in such mountains as Mt. Songshan, Mt. Lushan in Jiangxi and Mt. Wutaishan in Shanxi; sandstone peaks unique to China, such as the enormous Wulingyuan scenery zone in Hunan Province, which extends for hundreds of kilometers of strange mountain and rock formations that form what appears a spectacular natural palace; and lastly unique volcanic lava formations found all over the country. Danxia formations, which are found in more than 350 places, are important geological resources and tourist attractions. The most famous consist of over 200 strange mountains and peaks. The most typical and largest of China's Danxia formations include Mt. Danxiashan in Guangdong, Mt. Wuyishan in Fujian, Mt. Maijishan in Gansu and Mt. Qingchengshan in Sichuan. The unique Yadan formation is to be found in Lop Nor in Xinjiang, Wolho Ghost Town and the Cold Lake and Tsaidam Basin in Qinghai. Karst peaks are beautiful and magnificent. Magnificent karst caves are found mainly in Guangxi, Guizhou and eastern Yunnan. The most famous caves are found in the Guilin and Yangshuo areas of Guangxi, where the mountains and hills are mostly circular or conical in shape as if huge mushrooms are rising from underground. As anyone with a basic knowledge of geology is aware, there are no mountains without caves. Glaciers and mountaineering locations are mostly found on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Landscapes carved by wind and sand are mainly located in the northwestern regions.

China possesses a great number of rivers and lakes. There are more than 2,000 rivers in China. The Yangtze

River is the largest of the rivers in China and one of the longest rivers in the world. Along the river is to be found scenery of unrivalled natural beauty, the most famously, magnificent and mysterious Three Gorges. The Yellow River is the second longest river in China, and is often called the mother river of the Chinese nation. Along the Yellow River is also to be found some amazing natural scenery. The most beautiful river in China is probably the Lijiang River, which is known by many as the "50-Kilometer Gallery", such is the beauty of the landscapes along its banks. The Huangguoshu Falls, located in southwest Guizhou Province, is the largest waterfall in China and one of the most wonderful waterfalls in all the world. In China, the rivers, valleys, lakes, springs, waterfalls and seashores form landscapes whose beauty has taken the breath away and inspired the awe and wonder of countless generations lucky enough to gaze upon them.

Many of the natural landscapes of China are among the great jewels of the world. The Huanglong and Jiuzhaigou scenic areas in Sichuan, the Wulingyuan area in Hunan, and the "Three Parallel Rivers" in Qinghai are officially listed as among the greatest and most beautiful of natural heritages in the world and have all been put under special protection. Mt. Huangshan in Anhui, Mt. Taishan in Shandong, Mt. Wuyishan in Fujian and Mt. Emeishan (Leshan Buddha Statue) of Sichuan are listed as natural and cultural heritages subject to special protection. China's vast territory includes landscapes of enormous variety from the east to the south to the west and to the north. Beautiful, green fertile land stretches away to area south of the Yangtze River, loess plateaus and deserts characterize the northwest, freezing winter landscapes of ice and snow adorn Heilongjiang Province and lush tropical forests dominate Hainan Province, to say nothing of the vast and beautiful Qinghai-Tibet Plateau which consists of icy peaks, snow-capped mountains, and sky-blue lakes and valleys.

According to its different characteristics in terms of topography and culture, China can be divided into four main areas—the northern area, the southern area, the northwestern area and the Qinghai-Tibet area.

II Contents

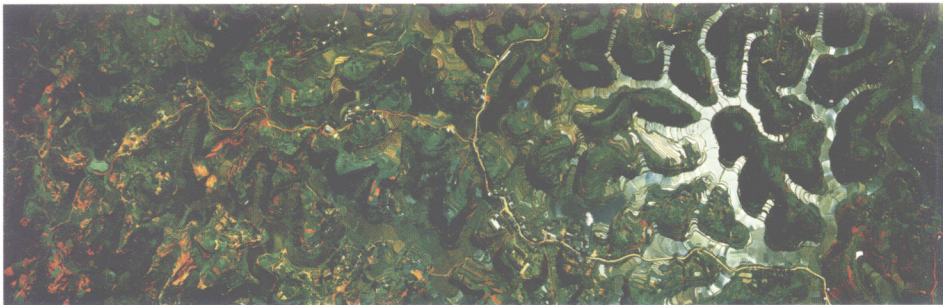


008

Northern Area

054

Southern Area



134

Northwestern Area



200

Qinghai-Tibet Area





Northern Area

The northern area includes the three northeastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning as well as the five provinces downstream of the Yellow River (Hebei, Shandong, Henan, Shanxi and Shaanxi), in addition to the two municipalities of Beijing and Tianjin.

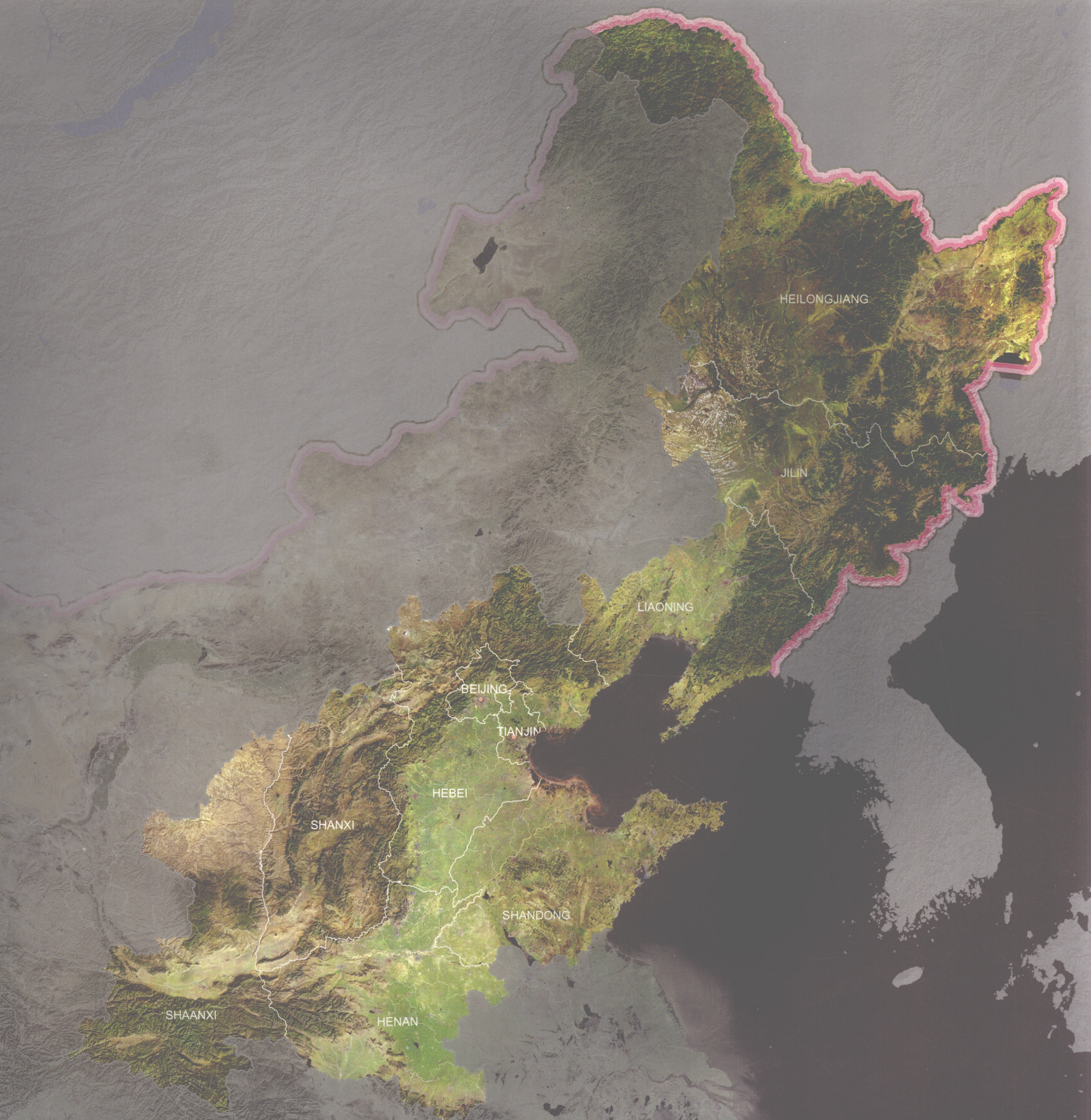
In the northern area, the three northeastern provinces boast advantageous geographic and natural conditions. This area is surrounded from the west, north and east by the Heilongjiang River and the Lesser Hing'an Mountains to the north and the Mt. Changbaishan and the Yalujiang River to the east. In the middle is the Northeastern Plain, the largest plain with the richest soil in China. The Northeastern Plain has four distinct seasons. Its winter is long and cold with only a short frost-free period while the summers are cool and pleasant. It is a good place to escape the extreme heat of summer in other regions. In the mountainous areas of the northeast are found extensive forested areas. The Greater Hing'an mountain range is dominated by large virgin forests, mainly larch trees. The Changbaishan Mountain Nature Reserve, which has been approved by the UN's "Man and Biosphere" nature protection network, contains a mixture of conifer and Chinese pine forest and broad-leaf deciduous forest. In the forest areas of the northeast are to be found numerous examples of stunning natural scenery throughout the four seasons. One can see lush, green trees in spring, flower-dappled mountains and sparkling streams in summer, cool, pleasant, fresh air and multicolored leaves in autumn and purest snowdrifts in winter. The winter of the northeast is uniquely harsh. The snow and ice of Harbin and the rime of Jilin are spectacular sights to see and unique to the northeast. Wuda Lianchi and the volcanic rock formations of the Mt. Changbaishan are also well known beauty spots in the northeast. Moreover, there are also large wetland areas.

The five provinces downstream of the Yellow River together constitute most of the North China Plain and the Loess Plateau. The Mt. Taihangshan separate the North China Plain from the Loess Plateau. This is the birthplace of Huanghe Culture, a most famous representative Chinese civilization. The Yellow River, the very lifeblood of this region, is the second largest river in China. It flows in the shape of "几" and winds slowly towards the sea. In Shanxi Province it narrows to pass through high mountains on

both sides and forms the Hukou Falls, one of the great wonders of the Yellow River due to its violent water flow. The Yellow River runs through flourishing pastures, the magnificent Loess Plateau and the vast North China Plain. The Loess Plateau is large in both area and soil thickness. It covers more than 300,000 square kilometers, with the maximum soil thickness reaching between one and two hundred meters. Its breadth and wildness form a rich topography unique in all the world. The virgin environment of the Loess Plateau includes both forest and grassland. Grasslands grow in great profusion while small areas of forest are found in places of lower altitude. After thousands of years' human activity, the virgin grasslands have been all but destroyed. The loess is rich in calcium carbonate, which is hard when dry but becomes muddy when wet. It flows away with the waters of the Yellow River and consequently the Loess Plateau has experienced serious water loss and soil erosion. This phenomenon has been continuing for an extremely long period of time. According to geologists, it may take thousands of years at least. The middle reaches of the Yellow River run through the Loess Plateau, where large amount of loess is taken into the river. Thus the river becomes a true "yellow river". In areas midstream and downstream of the Yellow River, the weather is most pleasant. It is not too cold in winter and not too hot in summer. The natural scenery alters and transforms with the changing seasons.

In the northern area there are many famous mountains and landscapes dominated by lakes and rivers. Most northern mountains are large and high. The well-known mountainous topographical landscapes include: the Mt. Changbaishan of Jilin, the Mt. Qianshan and Benxi Water Caves of Liaoning, Mt. Taishan and Mt. Laoshan in Shandong, the Mt. Jigongshan and Mt. Songshan of Henan, Mt. Wutai, Mt. Hengshan and Mt. Wulaoshan in Shanxi, Mt. Huashan and Mt. Lishan of Shaanxi, and Mt. Bada—the Thirteen Emperors' tombs of Beijing, the Mt. Yeshanpo and Mt. Cangyanshan in Hebei, and Mt. Panshan in Tianjin. The landscapes dominated by water include: Jingpo Lake and Wuda Lianchi in Heilongjiang, Songhua and Jingyue Lakes in Jilin, the Yalujiang River and Dalian Seashore—Lushunkou sightseeing area and Xingcheng Island of Liaoning, and the beaches of the Shandong Peninsula.





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