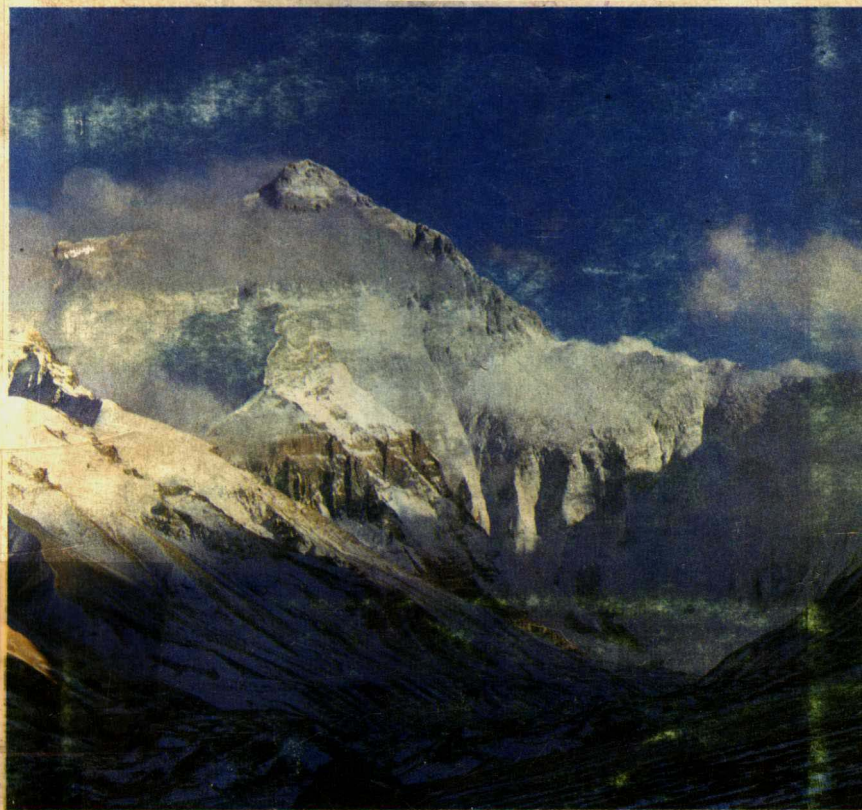


China Handbook Series

GEOGRAPHY



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS BEIJING



CHINA HANDBOOK SERIES

GEOGRAPHY

Compiled by
the *China Handbook* Editorial Committee

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS BEIJING

EDITOR'S NOTE

More than 30 years have elapsed since the birth of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. "What is China really like today?" many people abroad wish to know. To answer this question, we plan to compile and publish a voluminous *China Handbook*, in which we intend to introduce the New China in every field of its activities. Emphasis will be on the process of development during the past three decades, the accomplishments, and the problems that still remain. The book will contain accurate statistics and related materials, all of which will be ready references for an interested reader.

To enhance the usefulness of the forthcoming volume, we plan to publish 10 major sections separately at first, so that we shall have an opportunity to take into consideration the opinions of our readers before all the composite parts are put together, revised and published as one volume. These separate sections are:

- Geography
- History
- Politics
- Economy
- Education and Science
- Literature and Art
- Sports and Public Health
- Culture
- Life and Lifestyles

Tourism

Here, we wish particularly to point out the following:

First, the statistics listed in each separate book exclude those of Taiwan, unless otherwise indicated.

Second, the statistics are those compiled up to the end of 1980.

The *China Handbook* Editorial Committee

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Chapter One

TERRITORY

1. AREA, POSITION AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

Area China's land area covers approximately 9.6 million square kilometres, which is nearly one-fifteenth of the world's land, and which makes China — next to the Soviet Union and Canada — the third largest country in the world.

Position Lying in the northern half of the eastern hemisphere, China is situated in the eastern part of Asia on the west coast of the Pacific Ocean.

From north to south, the territory of China extends 5,500 kilometres from the centre line of the main navigation channel of the Heilong River north of the town of Mohe in Heilongjiang Province to the Zengmu Reef of the Nansha Islands in the South China Sea (near Latitude 4°N.). From west to east, it measures 5,200 kilometres, stretching from the Pamirs west of Wuqia County in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to where the main navigation channels of the Heilong and the Wusuli rivers meet in Fuyuan County, Heilongjiang Province. The time variation between the westernmost and easternmost regions is a little more than four hours.

Neighbouring countries With a land boundary exceeding 20,000 kilometres in length, China is bordered by

12 countries: Korea in the east; Viet Nam, Laos and Burma in the south; India, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the southwest and west; the Soviet Union in the northwest and northeast; and the People's Republic of Mongolia in the north. It faces Japan to the east across the East China Sea, and the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia to the southeast and south across the South China Sea.

China has concluded boundary treaties or protocols — thus solving specific boundary problems left over by history — with Burma, Nepal, Mongolia, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

2. SEAS

Washed by seas in the east and southeast, China's coast along its mainland is one of the longest of any country in the world, running 18,000 kilometres from the mouth of the Yalu River on the Chinese-Korean border in the north to the mouth of the Beilun River on the Chinese-Vietnamese border in the south. The island coasts, of course, make China's total coastline even longer.

The eastern part of the Chinese mainland is flanked from north to south by the Bohai, the Huanghai, the East China and the South China seas, all of which merge with the Pacific Ocean. Of these, the South China Sea is a deep-sea basin, the rest are on the shallow continental shelf. The eastern coast of Taiwan Island is bounded directly by the Pacific.

South of Hangzhou Bay, the coast is mountainous except for the Zhujiang River Delta, the Hanjiang River Delta, the Leizhou Peninsula and to their west, Beibu

Bay — all of which have flat coasts. North of the Hangzhou Bay, most of the coast is flat, broken by mountainous shorelines in the Shandong Peninsula, the Liaodong Peninsula and the Liaoxi Mountain Area. Flat coasts stretch along western Taiwan and northern Hainan while mountainous coasts line Taiwan's eastern shore and Hainan's southern shore. The mountainous coasts throughout China are favoured with many islands and big, deep natural harbours. The flat coasts — even and straight with gentle and smooth terrain — provide wide possibilities for developing marine fishery, salt industry, aquaculture and offshore mining industry.

Famous ports are, from north to south, Dalian, Qinhuangdao, Tianjin, Yantai, Qingdao, Lianyungang, Shanghai, Wenzhou, Xiamen, Guangzhou, Zhanjiang, Haikou and Beihai, as well as Jilong and Gaoxiong in Taiwan.

The Bohai, the sea passage for the northern provinces and the maritime gateway to the nation's capital, Beijing, is an inland sea carved into the land mass in the north, enclosed by the Shandong and Liaodong peninsulas with the Bohai Straits in its east its only passage to the Huanghai Sea. It is the smallest of China's seas — 300 nautical miles long from northeast to southwest and 187 nautical miles wide from west to east, covering an area of 77,000 square kilometres. With an average depth of only 18 metres, most of the sea is frozen in winter. The Bohai fishing ground abounds in giant prawns as well as crabs and yellow croakers. The sea may be divided into five areas: the Liaodong Bay, the Bohai Bay, the Laizhou Bay, the Central Shallow-Sea Basin and the Bohai Straits. The Bohai has a smooth floor covered with silt and mud carried down by the Huanghe (Yellow River), Haihe,

Liaohe and Luanhe rivers. Its maximum depth, at Laotieshan, Dalian, is 78 metres.

The Huanghai (Yellow Sea) is a half-closed shallow sea. Its boundaries are marked by the mouth of the Yalu River in the north and, in the south, by the northern edge of the East China Sea, and run from the north nook of the Changjiang (Yangtze River) estuary to the southwestern tip of Korea's Cheju-do Island. Linked with the Bohai through the Bohai Straits in the northwest, it is adjacent to Liaoning, Shandong and Jiangsu provinces in the west and to the Korean Peninsula in the northeast. With a total area of 380,000 square kilometres, it is situated on the continental shelf. Its maximum depth, to the north of Cheju-do Island, is 140 metres; its average depth 44 metres. There are numerous sand bars off the coast of northern Jiangsu. Flowing into the Huanghai are the Huaihe River and its tributaries, the Yalu River, and the Daedong River of Korea. The Huanghai (Yellow Sea) got its name from the fact that its water along the coast is a yellow caused by the enormous amount of silt and mud carried by the Huanghe (Yellow River) which flowed into it from northern Jiangsu for upwards of 600 years (A.D. 1194-1855). The indented coasts along the Liaodong and Shandong peninsulas and the Korean Peninsula are studded with harbours and islands.

The East China Sea, east of the mainland, leads the country's sea areas in resources. Contiguous to the Huanghai in the north, Japan's Ryukyu Islands in the east, and the South China Sea on the southern edge of the Taiwan Straits in the south, it has an area of 770,000 square kilometres and an average depth of 370 metres, wide in the north and narrow in the south. The part of its bottom on the line from Taiwan to the northwest of the Wudao

Islands is basically part of the continental shelf, while southeast of the line is the continental slope and trench. Its deepest point is at the Okinawa Trench, whose maximum depth is 2,719 metres. Strung out along its zigzag mainland coastline are a labyrinth of bays and islands. The biggest bay is Hangzhou Bay and the major islands are Taiwan Island, the Zhoushan Archipelago, the Penghu Islands and Diaoyu Island. Diaoyu and a few other islands are on a 100-nautical-mile continental shelf northeast of Taiwan, separated from Japan's Ryukyu Islands by a natural line of demarcation, the Okinawa Trench. More than 40 rivers exceeding 100 kilometres in length flow into the East China Sea, notably the Changjiang, the Qiantang, the Oujiang, the Minjiang and the Zhuoshuixi.

The South China Sea lies adjacent to Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian and Taiwan in the north, and is marked off from the East China Sea at the southern tip of the Taiwan Straits. It is separated from the Pacific Ocean by the Philippine Islands in the east and from the Indian Ocean by the Greater Sunda Islands in the south, and borders on the Indo-China and Malay peninsulas in the west. With an area of 3.5 million square kilometres and an average depth of 1,212 metres, it is a fairly large deep-sea basin which averages more than 3,500 metres in depth at its centre, the deepest point being 5,559 metres. Linked with the Pacific and Indian oceans by the Bashi Channel, the Sulu Sea and the Straits of Malacca, it is an approach to many of the world's key ports and is therefore a vital seaway between China and other countries. Principal rivers flowing into the South China Sea include the Zhujiang and the Hanjiang, as well as the Hongha (Red), the Mekong and the Chao Phraya (Menam) rivers on the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. Hainan Island, Huangyan Island and

the four groups of islands — the Dongsha, Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha — are China's important islands in the South China Sea. The South China Sea has an average annual temperature of 25° to 27°C. and abounds in fish, prawns and rare marine products.

Straits There are three straits off China's shores. They are, from north to south, the Bohai, the Taiwan and the Qiongzhou.

The 57-nautical-mile-wide Bohai Straits, situated between the Liaodong and Shandong peninsulas, are the entrance to the Bohai Sea. The Miaodao Islands divide the straits into several channels. The deepest, the Laotieshan Channel in the north, is the main entrance of the Huanghai to the Bohai Sea.

The Taiwan Straits, between Fujian and Taiwan provinces, control the seaway between China's north and south. They are 300 kilometres long from northeast to southwest and 150 kilometres wide, the narrowest part being only 135 kilometres. Most of the straits is less than 60 metres deep, the average depth being 80 metres. To the southeast is the Penghu island group, which consists of 64 small islands. Situated where the cold and warm currents meet, the Taiwan Straits teem with fish.

The Qiongzhou Straits, sandwiched between the Leizhou Peninsula and Hainan Island southwest of Guangdong Province, are 15-30 kilometres wide and average 44 metres in depth.

The continental shelf China's nearshore continental shelf is one of the widest in the world. Like the mainland surface, the nearshore floor, generally speaking, slopes from northwest to southeast, forming a gentle continental shelf zone that is a natural extension of the mainland into the sea topographically and geologically, while outside

that zone is a topographically complicated continental slope, trench or deep-sea basin zone. The continental shelf zone occupies a large area off China's coast: the floors of the Bohai and Huanghai seas are entirely on the continental shelf while two-thirds of the East China Sea and more than half of the South China Sea are on the continental shelf. The nearshore continental shelf is richly endowed with oil and natural gas.

The breadth of the territorial sea On September 4, 1958, the Government of the People's Republic of China declared the breadth of China's territorial sea to be 12 nautical miles. This provision applies to all territories of the People's Republic of China, including the Chinese mainland and its coastal islands, as well as Taiwan and its surrounding islands, the Penghu Islands, the Dongsha Islands, the Xisha Islands, the Zhongsha Islands, the Nansha Islands and all other islands belonging to China which are separated from the mainland and its coastal islands by the high seas. China's territorial sea along the mainland and its coastal islands takes as its baseline the line composed of the straight lines connecting certain base-points on the mainland coast and on the outermost of the coastal islands; the water area extending 12 nautical miles out from this baseline is China's territorial sea. The water areas inside the baseline, including the Bohai and the Qiongzhou Straits, are Chinese inland waters, and the islands inside the baseline are China's inland islands.

3. ISLANDS

China's vast sea area has more than 5,000 islands, with a total area of 80,000 square kilometres. Over 90

per cent of these are less than one square kilometre in area.

About 60 per cent of China's islands are in the East China Sea, 30 per cent in the South China Sea, and 10 per cent in the Bohai and Huanghai seas. Most of them are situated off the coasts of Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong provinces.

China's islands can be divided into three types, based on how they were formed: (1) rock islands — more than 90 per cent of the country's islands including Taiwan and Hainan formed directly from the action of the geological structure of the mainland and continental shelf; (2) alluvial islands — mainly at the mouths of the Changjiang, Zhujiang and some other rivers — formed out of the mud and silt carried down by these rivers as they flow into the sea; (3) coral islands, such as the Dongsha, Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha island groups, built up from the deposits of tropical marine organisms.

Taiwan Island, southeast of the mainland, is bounded by the Pacific in the east and faces Fujian Province in the west across the Taiwan Straits. Three hundred and ninety-four kilometres long from north to south and 144 kilometres wide from west to east, it covers an area of 35,788 square kilometres of which one-third is plain and the rest mountainous. The largest island in China, Taiwan Island belongs to the country's Taiwan Province proper.

Hainan Island, known for its tropical crops in its year-round tropical climate, is on the continental shelf in the north of the South China Sea facing the Leizhou Peninsula of Guangdong Province in the north across the Qiongzhou Straits. With an area of 34,380 square kilometres, it is the second largest island in China. Its topography is low on four sides and high in the centre from

which radiate the island's rivers. Twenty per cent of the island is mountainous, 15 per cent hilly and 65 per cent is plain and tableland. Two major ports, Haikou and Yulin, are along its 1,440-kilometre coastline. The Hainan Administrative Region is under the jurisdiction of Guangdong Province.

Chongming Island, the third largest island in China, lies at the mouth of the Changjiang River bounded by the East China Sea in the east. With an area of 1,083 square kilometres, it is also the largest alluvial island, having been formed by the mud and silt deposits of the Changjiang River. With a maze of rivers and streams and a fertile soil, the island has well-developed agriculture, animal husbandry and fishery. Chongming County comes under the administration of Shanghai Municipality.

The Changshan Islands, an important fishing centre in the north of Huanghai Sea on the east side of Liaoning Province's Liaodong Peninsula, consist of the Greater Changshan Island, the Lesser Changshan Island, Guanglu, Zhangzi and about 50 other islands, the Greater Changshan being the largest among them. The island group, administered in the name of Changhai County, is under the jurisdiction of Dalian City, Liaoning Province.

The Miaodao Islands, the entrance to the Bohai Sea, are scattered over the Bohai Straits, at the confluence of the Bohai and Huanghai seas, consisting of Changshan, Daqin, Huangcheng and some 30 other islands. Administered under the jurisdiction of Changdao County, Shandong Province, the island group is a major fishery base in the northern sea area.

The Zhoushan Archipelago, China's leading fishing ground and the largest of China's offshore island groups with more than 600 islands, is on the East China Sea

outside Hangzhou Bay, to the northeast of Zhejiang Province. Zhoushan Island, the largest among them, has an area of 524 square kilometres to make it the fourth largest in China. Other major islands include Liuheng, Taohua, Zhujiajian, Jintang and Daishan. The Shengsi Islands are one of the island groups in the Zhoushan Archipelago. The Zhoushan Archipelago has four counties, Dinghai, Putuo, Daishan and Shengsi, all under the administration of Zhejiang Province. Located where warm and cold currents meet, the sea surrounding the Zhoushan Archipelago is shallow and has a plentiful supply of food for the fish brought by the Changjiang and Qiantang rivers. Large and small yellow croakers, cuttlefish and hairtails are its best-known marine products. With its scenic peaks and temples, Putuo Island, or Putuo Hill, is one of the four sacred hills of Chinese Buddhism.

The Dawanshan Islands, 150 in all, are situated at the Zhujiang estuary in Guangdong Province. Originally extensions of mountains on the mainland, as the mountains sank they became submerged in sea water and finally detached from the mainland.

The Penghu Islands, southeast of the Taiwan Straits, are composed of 64 volcanic islands, the largest among them Penghu, Yuweng and Baisha. The Penghu Islands are under the jurisdiction of Taiwan Province.

The South China Sea Islands, under the administration of Guangdong Province, include more than 200 coral islands, reefs, shoals and sand bars. Besides Huangyan Island, four island groups are named after their geographical locations in the South China Sea: Dongsha (East Islands), Xisha (West Islands), Zhongsha (Central Islands) and Nansha (South Islands).