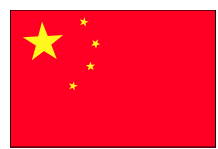


China



The People's Republic of China is a country in Asia. Mandarin Chinese is the main spoken language and their currency is the Chinese Yuan (¥).

With a population of 1.3 billion, China has more people living in it than any other country on Earth. About a third of the population lives in cities. The rest of the people live in the countryside.

One-third of China's land area is made up of mountains. The tallest mountain on Earth, Mount Everest, sits on the border between China and Nepal in the west of the country in the Himalayan Mountains and is 8,848 metres tall.

China has thousands of rivers. The Yangtze and the Yellow Rivers are the most important. At 3,915 miles long, the Yangtze is the world's third largest river. One of the largest dams in the world, the Three Gorges Dam is on this river. It was completed in 2008 and was built to provide: flood control, irrigation (water) for farmlands and electricity.

The capital city of China is Beijing, meaning "the northern capital" in the Chinese language. Many people from different cities and countries come to Beijing to look for better chances to find work, with nearly 15 million people living there. The Forbidden City, now known as the Palace Museum, was home to many of China's emperors but is now an art museum. Dust storms from the deserts around the city cause many visibility and breathing problems - the local weather office has been known to make their own rainfall to help stop them!

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China, meaning that it can make it up its own laws and use a different currency (the Hong Kong Dollar). It is a water city with different islands to explore and is one of the richest and highly developed places in the world. As there are lots of mountains in Hong Kong which can't be built on, it also has lots of country parks and nature reserves.

China is the original birth place of Eastern martial arts, called Kung Fu.

China is the world's largest producer of rice. It is grown as a wetland crop in paddy fields - fields flooded to supply water during the growing season.

The Dragon Boat Festival is celebrated each year to remember the death of Qu Yuan in about 278BC. The people loved him so much that they did not want the fish to eat his body so they made and threw rice dumplings into the river for them instead and rowed dragon boats in the river to move them away. Such practices, eating rice dumplings and holding dragon boat races, are still done today.

The Great Wall of China stretches for about 5,500 miles and was built to protect the northern borders of the Chinese Empire against attacks by enemy groups. Whilst some parts of it have been preserved and renovated for tourists, in many parts it is in disrepair and full of graffiti.

The giant panda lives in the misty mountains of southwest China and nowhere else on Earth. They eat bamboo and usually live near stands of the woody evergreen plant. Pandas have been hunted and only about 1,600 remain in the wild.