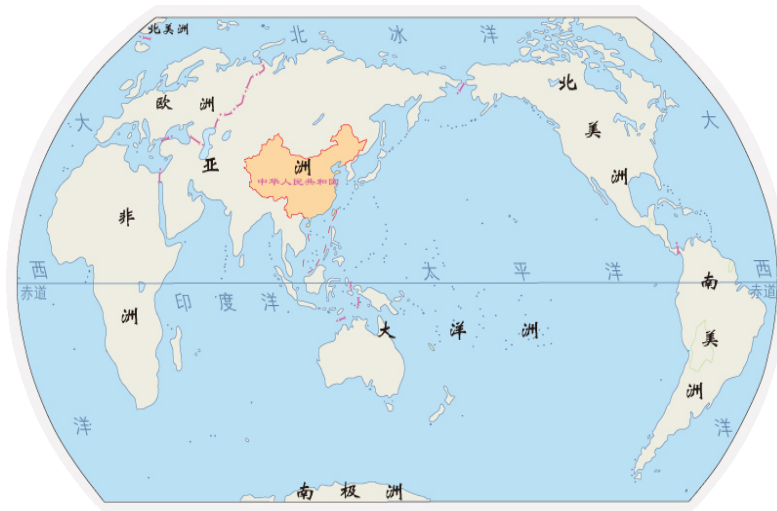


# Chapter One Land and People

## Lesson 2 Overview of Chinese Human Geography

### Geography of China



Location of China

### Location

China is located in eastern Asia, on the west coast of the Pacific Ocean. The land area is about 9.6 million square kilometers, the coastline of the eastern and southern continents is more than 18,000 kilometers, and the water area of the inland sea and the frontier sea is about 4.7 million square kilometers.

China's land area accounts for about 1/15 of the world's total land area, second only to Russia and Canada, ranking third in the world. The northernmost point is on the center line of the main channel of the Heilongjiang River north of the Mohe City in Heilongjiang

Province. The southernmost point is near the Zengmu Shoal of the Nansha Islands in Hainan Province. The distance between the north and the south is about 5,500 kilometers and the latitude is about 50 degrees.

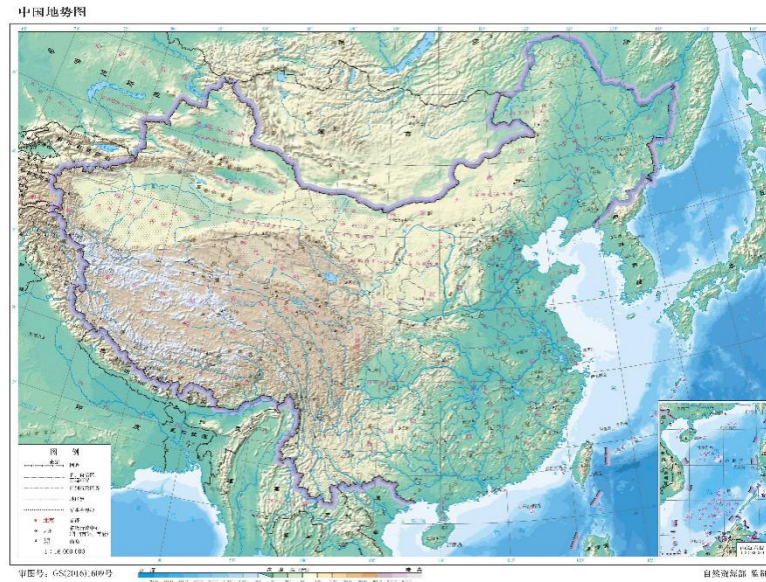
The easternmost point is at the confluence of the main channel of Heilongjiang and Wusuli River, and the westernmost point is on the Pamir Plateau. China's east-west distance is about 5,200 kilometers, the longitude is about 62 degrees, and the time difference is more than 4 hours. The domestic time is based on the East Eight Districts, which is the "Beijing time."

The sea around the edge of the Chinese mainland, from north to south, is the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the South China Sea. They are curved in the east and southeast of the Chinese mainland.

There are 7,600 large and small islands in the sea, of which Taiwan Island is the largest with an area of about 35,800 square kilometers.

China borders 14 countries: North Korea to the east, Mongolia to the north, Russia to the northeast, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to the northwest, and Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Bhutan to the west and southwest. Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam are connected to the south.

## **Topography**



## Topographic map of China

China is a country of varied topographical features with highlands in the west and plains in the east. Taking a bird's-eye view of China, the terrain descends from the west to east like a four-staircase:

The first stair is the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, with an average altitude of more than 4,000 meters, known as the "roof of the world". The Himalayas, located on the southwestern border of China, are the highest mountains in the world. The main peak, Everest, is 8844.43 meters above sea level and is the highest peak in the world.

The second stair has an average altitude of 1000-2000 meters. On this stair, there are many large plateaus and basins, including Inner Mongolia Plateau, the Loess Plateau, the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, the Tarim Basin, the Junggar Basin and Sichuan Basin. The Turpan Basin is in the eastern part of Mount Tianshan, with a low-lying terrain in the middle. The bottom of Aydingkol Lake in the basin is 155 meters below sea level,

which is the lowest point on the Chinese land.

The third stair is mostly below 500 meters above sea level, with many plains, hills and low mountains. From north to south, there are the Northeast Plain, the North China Plain, and the Middle-Lower Yangtze Plain. In addition, there are staggered hills and low mountains.

The fourth stair is to the east of the third stair. It is a continental shelf and island belt extending from the Chinese mainland to the ocean. The water depth here is mostly within 200 meters, which is relatively smooth and rich in marine resources.

## **Climate**

China has a vast territory and complex and diverse climate types. Due to the location of the land and sea, the continental monsoon climate is significant. The same period of rain and heat is conducive to the growth of crops.

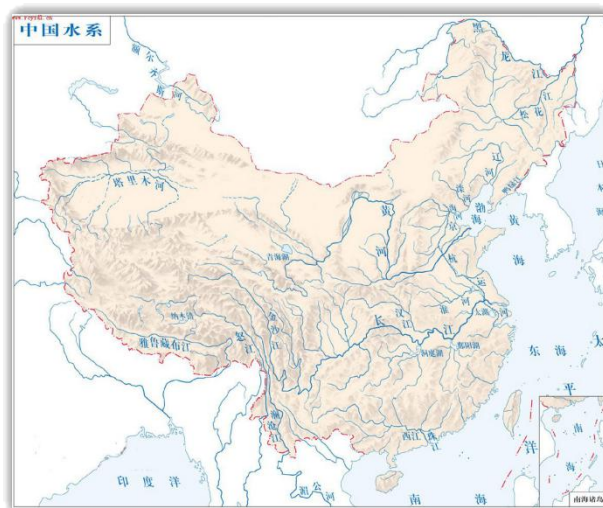
Due to different latitudes, from south to north, China (except the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region) crosses five temperature zones including tropical, subtropical, warm temperate, middle temperate and cold temperate zones. Among them, the area of subtropical zone, warm temperate zone and middle temperate zone accounts for 70% of the national area.

**Temperature** China is located in the eastern part of the Asian continent and has a

significant monsoon climate. Most areas are affected by the summer monsoons of the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. The summer is hot and rainy, and most areas are generally hot; the winter is cold and rainy, and the temperature difference between the north and the south is particularly large.

**Rainfall** The distribution of precipitation is uneven, and the annual average precipitation varies greatly from place to place. The average annual precipitation in the southeastern coastal areas can reach more than 1500 mm; while the average annual precipitation in the northwest inland is less than 200 mm.

## Resources of China



Distribution of rivers in China

## Water resources

The main characteristics of water resources are large total amount and less per capita number; the spatial and temporal distribution of water resources is uneven, with more

south and less north, and more east and less west.

**River water resources** The longest river in China is the Yangtze River, with a total length of about 6,300 kilometers, making it the third largest river in the world. It flows through 11 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. It is one of the main artery of water transportation between eastern and western China and known as the “Golden Waterway”.

The second largest river in China is the Yellow River, with a total length of 5,500 kilometers. It is the most heavily silt-laden river in the world. The Yellow River catchment area is an important base for grains in China. It is also known as the “Mother River”.

**Lake water resources** China is a country with many lakes. The middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau are the two regions with the largest number of lakes in China. The middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River are the areas with the most concentrated freshwater lakes in China, mainly Poyang Lake, Dongting Lake, Taihu Lake, Hongze Lake, etc., of which Poyang Lake in the north of Jiangxi Province is the largest with an area of 3,960 square kilometers; and The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is the main distribution area of saltwater lakes, including Qinghai Lake, Namco Lake and Qilinco Lake, etc. Among them, Qinghai Lake in the northeast of Qinghai Province is the largest with an area of 4,630 square kilometers and is the largest lake in China. The distribution of lake water in China shows a trend of decreasing from south to north, and gradually decreasing from east to west. In the humid eastern plains, the lake

water is abundant, and in the arid and semi-arid areas in the northwest, the lake water is relatively scarce.

The largest lake in China: Qinghai Lake in the northeast of Qinghai Province, with an area of 4,630 square kilometers;

The highest known lake in China: Kashun Lake in the northern Tibetan Plateau, located at an altitude of 5556 meters;

The lowest known lake in China: Aydingkol Lake in the Turpan Basin in Xinjiang, located 154 meters below sea level and a water depth of less than 1 meter;

The deepest known lake in China: Tianchi in the northeast, with a depth of 373 meters;

The clearest lake in China: Sayram Lake in Xinjiang, with a transparency of more than 12 meters.

## **Land resources**

The four basic characteristics of China's land resources are: the absolute amount of land is large, but the per capita occupancy is small; the land type is complex and diverse, and the proportion of cultivated land is small; the land use situation is complex, and the productivity varies significantly among regions; the land is unevenly distributed, and

protection and development issues are prominent.

By the end of 2016, China had a total cultivated area of 13,495.66 hectares (2,024 million mu), second only to the United States, Russia and India, ranking fourth in the world.

China's total forest area is about 208 million hectares, ranking fifth in the world. Forest coverage and per capita forest area are lower than the world average.

China has nearly 400 million hectares of natural grassland, covering 2/5 of the country's land area, second only to Australia. China is rich in grassland resources and has formed four major pastoral areas, of which Inner Mongolia grassland is China's largest natural pasture.

### **Mineral resources**

Almost all the 171 minerals already known in the world are found in China and are abundant in reserves.

There are three basic characteristics of China's mineral resources: the total amount of resources is relatively large and the types of minerals are relatively complete; the amount of resources per capita is small, and the supply and demand of some resources are unbalanced.



In the exploration and development of mineral resources, it is faced with contradictions and problems. For example, the waste phenomenon and environmental pollution in the development and utilization of major mineral resources are still prominent.

### **Animal and plant resources**

China is one of the countries with the largest and richest species of wildlife in the world. There are 6481 species of vertebrates alone, accounting for about 10% of the world's vertebrates.

Giant pandas is known as the “National Treasure of China”. It belongs to national first-class protected animals and mainly live in the southwestern part of China. The number of panda is very rare, and its body color is black and white.

China has a rich variety of plants, with more than 30,000 plants, ranking second in the world after Malaysia and Brazil.

Almost all major plants in the cold, warm and hot temperate zones of the Northern Hemisphere can be seen in China. There are more than 4,000 kinds of plants that can be used for medicine in China. Ginseng in Changbai Mountain, safflower in Tibet, wolfberry in Ningxia, etc. are all valuable traditional Chinese medicine materials. There are many kinds of flowers and plants in China, among which peony is called "the king of flowers"

and is loved by Chinese people

## **Population, nationalities, language and characters of China**

China is a country with a large population and 56 ethnic groups. At the same time, China is also a multi-language, multi-character country with more than 100 languages and 29 characters. The common language of the country is Mandarin and standardized Chinese characters.

### **Population of China**

China is the country with the most population in the world. The total population of China's mainland is 1.39 billion people, and the top three provinces are Guangdong Province, Shandong Province, and Henan Province. The population is more in the east and less in the west.

### **Population development**

China's population development mainly presents the following characteristics:

1. The total population grows steadily
2. The population quality has improved significantly
3. The aging process is accelerating
4. Urban population continues to be centralized

## 5. Increasing gender imbalance

### **Population policies**

China has adopted different population policies in different periods. In 1982, in order to control the population in a planned manner, the Chinese government implemented a "family planning" policy, which advocates late marriage, late childbirth, fewer births and better births. This policy stipulates that a couple can only have one child, so it is also called the "One-child Policy". Since 2011, in order to promote the balanced development of China's population and deal with the problem of aging, China has gradually implemented the "two-child policy." Until 2015, China realized the nationwide liberalization of the "two-child policy."



A photo of China's ethnic groups

### **Nationalities**

China is a unified multi-ethnic country with a total of 56 ethnic groups, of which the Han nationality has the largest population. The distribution of ethnic groups in China has formed a distribution pattern with the Han nationality as the main body, and various

ethnic groups of slightly live together, the northwest, southwest and northeast regions are the most concentrated areas of ethnic minorities in China, and the province with the largest ethnic minority species in China is Yunnan Province.

The Han people is the main nationality of China and the most populous nation in the world. The traditional festivals of the Han nationality include the Spring Festival, the Lantern Festival, the QingMing Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Qixi Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival, and the Double Ninth Festival. The Spring Festival is the most solemn festival of the year.

Zhuang people is the most populous ethnic minority in China, mainly living in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan Province. In addition, there are also Zhuang nationalities in Guangdong, Guizhou, and Hunan. Zhuang people love to sing, and Zhuang Township is known as the "sea of songs."

The Hui people mainly live in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. There are settlements in many cities across the country, with the characteristics of large-scale dispersion and small-scale concentration. The Hui people have a strong Islamic color in their habits of eating, clothing, naming, adult ceremony, marriage, funeral, and festivals. Gurbon Festival, Eid al-Fitr, and Saint Ji Day are the three major festivals of the Hui people.

The Dai people are mainly distributed in Yunnan Province. The Dai people generally

believe in the Hinayana Buddhism. The Lunar New Year Songkran Festival is the grandest festival.

The Mongolian people mainly live in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The Mongolian generation lived on nomads and was known as the "Horseback Nationality" and "Prairie Pride". The "yurt" is the traditional housing of Mongolian herders, and their robes are their traditional costumes. Traditional festivals include the White Festival, Nadam, and so on.

### **Chinese language and characters**



Chinese characters

Chinese is the most used language in the world and one of the six official working languages of the United Nations. Modern Chinese has the distinction between Mandarin and dialect.

The dialects of modern Chinese are usually divided into seven categories: Northern dialect, Wu dialect, Xiang dialect, Gan dialect, Hakka dialect, Cantonese dialect, and Min

dialect.

Chinese characters have been recorded for more than 5,000 years. Since the Shang Dynasty, Chinese characters have undergone physical changes such as hieroglyphic, the seal form, the official form, the cursive form, the regular form and the running form, and gradually evolved into modern Chinese characters.

The number of Chinese characters is huge, and there are more than 3,000 commonly used. Behind every Chinese character, there are very interesting stories.

Chinese characters are an important tool for carrying culture. In ancient China, there were a large number of books written in Chinese characters, and also produced cultural achievements such as poetry and couplet, and formed a unique Chinese calligraphy art.

### **Exercises:**

Part I Based on the text, answer the following questions.

1. Can you describe the geographical location of China?
2. How many ethnic groups are there in China? Which is the most populous one?
3. Which is the longest river in China?

Part II Group discussion

1. Do you like the weather in China? Which is your favourite season?

2. Like most countries in the world, China also has many dialects. Do you think dialects need to be protected?