

Overview of Shaanxi

The Government Website of Shaanxi Province

General Introduction

The name "Shaanxi" means Land West of the Shanguan Pass. This pass in Henan province, now part of Shanzhou District of Sanmenxia city, was considered to be the place where the Yellow River left the Loess Plateau and entered the North China Plain, although its exposed nature meant that the Hanguguan and Tongguan Passes to its west were more strategically important.

Because the Chinese pronunciation of Shaanxi and its eastern neighbor Shanxi differ only in tone, their spelling differs only by tone marks. The authorities therefore adopted the special official spelling "Shaanxi" for occasions when such marks are omitted.

Shaanxi lies in Northwest China. It covers an area of over 205,000 km² with about 38 million people. Xi'an—which includes the sites of the former Chinese capitals Fenghao and Chang'an—is the provincial capital. Xianyang, which served as the Qin capital, is located nearby. The other prefecture-level cities into which the province is divided are Ankang, Baoji, Hanzhong, Shangluo, Tongchuan, Weinan, Yan'an and Yulin.

Shaanxi comprises the Wei Valley and much of the surrounding fertile Loess Plateau, stretching from the Qinling Mountains and Southern Shaanxi in the south to the Ordos Desert in the north. Along with areas of adjacent Shanxi province and Henan province, it formed the cradle of Chinese civilization, with its Guanzhong region sheltering the capitals of the Zhou, Qin, Han, Jin, Sui, and Tang dynasties. It does not include the full territory of the Yellow River's Ordos Loop, with the Great Wall of China separating it from the grasslands and deserts of Inner Mongolia.

Geography

The geography of the area is described as being part of the Ordos Desert in the north along the border with Inner Mongolia, the Loess Plateau in the central part of the province, the Qinling Mountains running east to west in the south central part, and subtropical climate south of the Qinling Mountains. In between the Loess Plateau and the Qinling Mountains lies the Wei River Valley, or Guanzhong, a cradle of early Chinese civilization.

Going clockwise, Shaanxi borders Shanxi (E, NE), Henan (E), Hubei (SE), Chongqing (S), Sichuan (SW), Gansu (W), Ningxia (NW), and Inner Mongolia (N). In terms of number of bordering provincial-level divisions, Shaanxi ties Inner Mongolia.

Due to its large span in latitude, Shaanxi has a variety of climates. Under the Köppen climate classification, the northern parts, including the Loess Plateau, have either a cold arid or cold semi-arid, with cold and very dry winters, dry springs and autumns, and hot summers. The area known as Guanzhong is mostly semi-arid, though there are a few areas with a humid subtropical climate, with cool to cold winters, and hot, humid summers that often see early-season heatwaves. The southern portion is much more humid and lies in the humid subtropical zone, with more temperate winters and long, hot, humid summers. Annual mean temperature is

roughly between 8 to 16 °C (46 to 61 °F), with January temperatures ranging from –11 to 3.5 °C (12.2 to 38.3 °F) and July temperatures ranging from 21 to 28 °C (70 to 82 °F).

Economy

As of the mid-19th century, Shaanxi exported animal skins, wine, liquor, and musk. Money loans were also common, with Shaanxi business people involved in the Guangzhou loan business. Shaanxi commonly imported European animal skins, watches, Chinese language books, and cloth. The fossil fuel and high technology sectors compose the two largest industries in Shaanxi province. The province ranked third in China for production of coal, natural gas and crude oil. As the home of several of the leading universities and research institutes in Western China, Shaanxi province also plays a major role in China's burgeoning aircraft and aerospace industries, producing more than 50% of the R&D and manufacturing equipment for the country's domestic commercial air industry. Nominal GDP for 2011 was 1,239 billion RMB (US\$196.7 billion) and GDP per capita was 21,729 RMB (US\$3,179), ranking 17th in the PRC.

Population

Nearly all the people in Shaanxi are ethnic Han Chinese, with pockets of Hui population in the northwestern region (adjacent to Ningxia). Shaanxi Province is one of the centers of ancient Chinese civilization. The central part of Shaanxi, known as Guanzhong, where the provincial capital Xi'an is located, is more populated compared to the northern part. At the end of 2016, it has a permanent resident population of 38,1262 million.