Shaanxi Information

Overview

Shaanxi is located in northern central China. Xi’an is the capital and largest city. It is the 11th largest province in the nation covering 79,000 square miles (205,600 sq km). The provincial population ranks 17th with over 37,050,000 people.

(Note: Shaanxi, with two As, is the conventional method of differentiating between it and its neighbor Shanxi. Technically, pinyin assigns only one A to both, but the tonal difference—and in Chinese, character difference—would not be apparent. The first syllable of Shaanxi is third tone while that of Shanxi is first. Xi’an is two characters and utilizes the apostrophe to clarify this. Thus, it is pronounced Shee-an rather than Shyen.)

Shaanxi Geography

Shaanxi province is a northern central province. The Loess Plateau stretches horizontally through the central portion of the province. The Qinling Mountains run east to west in the province’s south. The Daba Mountains move form the small leg that juts out in the southeast of the province. The Yellow River (Huang He) drops southward from Shaanxi’s northern neighbor Inner Mongolia and forms the province’s eastern border with Shanxi. Shaanxi’s western border is not delineated by any predominate landform and snakes along Gansu and Ningxia. It also borders Sichuan to the south and Henan and Hubei to the east. Chongqing Shi, a provincial level municipality, lies to the south of Shaanxi.

Shaanxi Demographics

Han comprise 99.5% of Shaanxi province. Hui make up 0.4%. Mongolian and Manchu are also present.

Shaanxi History

Shaanxi province is home to one of four major capital cites of Chinese history: modern Xi’an. The famous Silk Road’s eastern end is in modern-day Xi’an. Thirteen Chinese dynasties established their capitals in or near modern Xi’an. Xianyang is now home to Xi’an’s major airport. The Han Dynasty (206 BC – 221 AD) first built its capital in Chang’an just south of the Wei River from Xianyang in modern Xi’an. Daxing, south of the Han capital, was made the capital of the Sui Dynasty (581 AD – 618 AD) in 582. It was the largest city in the world at the time. The destruction of Chang’an came with the defeat of the Tang Dynasty (618 AD – 907 AD).

Legendary monk Xuan Zang returned to Xi’an from India in the 7th century with Sanskrit texts to be translated. The Buddha Sutra is stored in the Great Goose (Da Yan) Pagoda, which remains a popular tourist attraction.

The famous Xi’an Incident that brought the Chinese Communists and Kuomintang together against the Japanese happened in Shaanxi China in 1936.

Shaanxi Industry

Shaanxi province plays an important role in a few Chinese industries, notably, electrical energy. The province’s natural gas fields are the largest in the country and the coal reserves are the nation’s second largest, after Shanxi.