

Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Guǎngxī Zhuàngzú Zìzhìqū
广西壮族自治区

47.68 million est. 2007 pop. 236,300 square km

Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is one of China's five Autonomous Regions: administrative divisions where certain ethnic groups—in this case the Zhuang—predominate. It is located on China's southern coast and is famous both in China and around the world for its misty mountain scenery.

The Autonomous Region of Guangxi is located on the southern coast of China. Since 1958 the official name has been the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, named for the Zhuang nationality, the largest of China's fifty-five minority ethnic groups; they constitute a third of the region's population of nearly 48 million (2000 est.). The Zhuang speak a language (in two dialects) that belongs to the Zhuang-Dong/Dai branch of Sino-Tibetan, a relative of Thai.

Guangxi covers an area of 236,300 square kilometers (91,200 square miles, about the size of Romania) and borders on Vietnam and China's Yunnan Province in the west, on Guizhou and Hunan provinces in the north, on Guangdong Province in the east, and on the Gulf of Tonkin in the south. The region is dominated by mountains with peaks over 2,000 meters above sea level in the far west and the far north. Guangxi Zhuang A.R. is traversed by sixty-nine rivers, most of which are tributaries to the Zhu (Pearl) River.

Guangxi has a subtropical monsoon climate, and the rainy season from April to September accounts for 80 percent of the annual precipitation of 1,250 to 1,750 millimeters. Temperatures in January average between 6°

and 15° C, while the July average is between 23° and 28° C. The capital, Nanning (2007 estimated population of 6.83 million) is in the southern central part of Guangxi and is known as the "Green City" because of its array of parks and its subtropical climate. The eastern part of the region became part of the Qin empire (221–206 BCE) in 214 BCE, and after a brief period of independence, was conquered by the Han empire (206 BCE–220 CE) in 112–111 BCE. From the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) onward, the area has been part of various southern administrative divisions, sometimes divided into a Han Chinese region in the east and a Zhuang region in the west. Throughout the centuries, the region has been marked by rebellions against succeeding imperial governments and by tribal warfare between the Zhuang and other minority nationalities that were pushed south by the Chinese migration from the north. The Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864) originated in Guangxi, and later in the nineteenth century the French colonial power in Indochina extended its activities to the region.

Guangxi is one of China's most diversified areas with regard to population. Although the Han Chinese today constitute over 60 percent of the population, there are eleven minority nationalities, of which the Zhuang is the largest by far. Several of these minority groups number fewer than 100,000 people. The most important agricultural crops are rice, millet, and sugarcane, but the region grows a wide variety of crops, including tobacco, tea, fruit, soybeans, sweet potatoes, and peanuts. In the mountains in the northwest, forestry dominates, with pine, fir, oak, and camphor trees. Major industries include textiles, chemicals, machine building, and food and tobacco processing. The scenic areas around Guilin



and Yangshuo in the northeast, featuring dramatic karst (limestone) mountains and underground caves, provide a major source of income through tourism. The image of the improbably steep, misty mountains of Guangxi is famous around the world.

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Further Reading

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