

Hangzhou

Hángzhōu 杭州

7.86 million est. 2007 pop.

Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province, is a city near the East China Sea coast with a rich history; its Zhejiang University is considered one of the best in China. Hangzhou's green tea (Longjing tea) is renowned for its high quality. Tourists and surfers know the city as the location of the world's largest tidal bore, the so-called Qiantang Dragon.

Hangzhou has long been regarded as one of the most beautiful cities in China; there is a popular Chinese saying that “above the earth, there is the heaven, on the earth, there are Suzhou and Hangzhou” 上有天堂, 下有苏杭. It is located on the Fuchun River near Hangzhou Bay on China's east coast, north of the Qiantang River, and is situated at the southern end of the Grand Canal, the world's longest artificial river.

The city of Hangzhou was founded about 2,200 years ago during the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) and is listed as one of the seven ancient capitals of China. When the capital of the Song dynasty, Kaifeng, was captured by the Jin (an ethnic-minority dynasty ruled by the Jurchens) in 1126, the Song court fled south to set up the capital in Hangzhou, which they named Linan. The Song capital remained there until the Mongol invasion conquered China in 1276 and set up its capital in contemporary Beijing.

Hangzhou is a city famous for its natural beauty: The Qiantang River to the south and West Lake (*Xihu*) to the west surround the city environment with the



The multistoried Liuhe Pagoda in Hangzhou, reconstructed in 1165 after the original was destroyed in warfare in 1121, during the Song Dynasty. PHOTO BY JOAN LEBOLD COHEN.



Aerial view of Hangzhou. The city is renowned for its rich history, natural beauty, economic resources, and several prominent universities. PHOTO BY JOAN LEBOLD COHEN.

tranquil scenery of water and hills. The traveler Marco Polo (1254–1324) described Hangzhou as one of the most splendid cities in the world when he passed through during the thirteenth century. The West Lake covers an area of six square kilometers and is surrounded by scenic hills, temples, and pagodas. Across the lake are two beautiful dikes with willow trees and bridges: Su Ti (Su Dike) was built by Su Zhi, and Bai Ti (Bai Dike) was built by Bai Juyi. Both men were famous Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) poets.

On the Qiantang River, the world's largest tidal bore, or wall of water, can race across Hangzhou Bay when conditions are right. When the tide is coming in, the bay's tunnel shape can create a spectacular wavelike bore from 1.5 meters to 4.5 meters high (although it has been measured as high as nine meters) that sweeps past Hangzhou. This unique natural occurrence, referred to as the

Qiantang Dragon, has become very popular with seasonal tourists, especially during autumn, when the tides tend to be strongest. The river tides in the Qiantang River have taken place twice a day since time immemorial. Because



of the moon's gravitational pull, the biggest tides take place in the first four days of a month in the lunar calendar, and then again from the sixteenth day to the nineteenth day.

Hangzhou Bay also is now spanned by the world's longest over-ocean bridge, the Hangzhou Bay Bridge. After five years of construction, the 36 kilometer bridge opened in 2008, linking the cities of Shanghai and Ningbo and cutting travel time between the two from four hours to two.

Economically, Hangzhou is famous for the production of tea and the silk and textile industries. Hangzhou is best known for growing some of the finest green tea in China—Longjing tea, which means “Dragon Well” tea. The most famous, Xi Hu Long Jing, is from the West Lake region.

Hangzhou also is the center of the silk industry. The

biggest company, Dujingsheng Silk Company, has a museum in Hangzhou that explains the silk-making process, from silk worms on the leaves of mulberry trees to the manufacture of silk cloth. There are also exhibits on the art of silk weaving that include a vivid portrait of Chairman Mao Zedong in silk.

Hangzhou has two famous national universities (Chinese Academy of Art and Zhejiang University), ten public universities, and two private universities. (A national university is funded at the national level; public universities are funded by the provincial and municipal levels.)

Zhejiang University, founded in 1897, is one of China's most prestigious comprehensive universities. The British academic and sinologist Joseph Needham visited Zhejiang University in 1944, calling it the “Cambridge of the East.” From 1952 to 1998, however, Zhejiang University was split up into a number of single-discipline

Gateway at West Lake Island in Hangzhou. PHOTO BY JOAN LEBOLD COHEN.





Pagoda at the scenic West Lake area of Hangzhou. Marco Polo described Hangzhou as one of the most splendid cities in the world when he passed through during the thirteenth century.

PHOTO BY JOAN LEBOLD COHEN.

institutes based on the government policy that readjusted China's tertiary education system in 1952. In 1998, the new Zhejiang University was established, combining four major universities: Zhejiang University, Hangzhou University, Zhejiang Agricultural University, and Zhejiang Medical University. Since then, Zhejiang University has become a comprehensive university with twenty-five colleges and schools.

According to a 2008 national ranking by the China Academy of Management, Zhejiang University is third after Tsinghua University and Peking University; a 2007 ranking by the École National Supérieure des Mines de Paris placed Zhejiang University first in China and number thirty-four worldwide. The notable alumni and faculty of Zhejiang University include many officials of the Chinese Communist Party, government ministers, university presidents, and Nobel Prize winners. Notable faculty have included Chang Chi-Yun (1900–1985), the Minister of Education of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and founder of the Chinese Cultural University in Taiwan; and Noble Prize laureate (Physics, 1957) Tsung-Dao Lee (b. 1926).

Teh-Kuang CHANG

Further Reading

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