

# Henan Province

Hénán shěng 河南省

93.6 million est. 2007 pop. 167,000 square km

**Henan Province, in the north-central part of the country, is China's most densely populated province. It is known as the cradle of Chinese civilization, with evidence pointing to its inhabitation during China's Neolithic period (12,000–2,000 BCE). Several ancient imperial capital cities are located in the province, which is about the size of the state of Wisconsin but with approximately seventeen times the population.**

**H**enan Province, in north-central China, covers an area of 167,000 square kilometers (64,000 square miles, slightly smaller than the state of Wisconsin). It is bordered by Hebei Province to the north, Shandong Province to the northeast, Shanxi Province to the northwest, Anhui Province to the southeast, Hubei Province to the south, and Shaanxi Province to the west. Henan has a population of more than 93 million and is China's most densely populated province. The capital and largest city in the province is Zhengzhou, with an estimated 2007 population of 7.36 million. Primarily an agricultural province rich with mineral deposits, Henan has used its abundant resources to develop textile, light industry, lead, coal, power, metallurgy and chemical industries.

The Han people make up the majority of the population (99 percent). There is also a sprinkling of Muslim Hui people. Most people speak one of several

dialects of Mandarin, collectively known as the Henan dialect.

Henan Province has had a long history of flooding, owing to the Huang (Yellow) River, which runs through the North China Plain in the central and eastern sections of the province. For thousands of years, people have built dams and dikes in an effort to lessen the devastating effects of annual floods. The floods have also deposited large quantities of rich silt, making Henan one of China's most fertile regions. Henan is hot in the summer (average temperature in July, 27° C, 81° F) and cold in the winter (average temperature in January, 0° C, 32° F). Rainfall averages 1,250–1,750 millimeters (49–69 inches) per year.

Henan is known as the cradle of Chinese civilization. Archeologists have found evidence that Henan was inhabited as far back as the Neolithic period, (12,000–2,000 BCE in China). Recent excavations have unearthed artifacts dating back to the Shang dynasty (1766–1045 BCE).

Several cities in Henan have been prominent in Chinese history. Anyang, in the north, was the first capital of the Shang dynasty. Luoyang, in the west, served as imperial capital of the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770–221 BCE). And Kaifeng, in the northeast, was the imperial capital during the Five Dynasties period (907–960 CE) and the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126 CE). The province is a major producer of wheat, tobacco, and cotton. Textile, electricity, and high-tech industries help drive the local economy. Zhengzhou, at the crossroad of several major railroad lines that transverse China, is one of the key points of China's national transportation system. Within the city



are several important economic and high-tech development zones and a major export processing area.

Henan Province's economy is not as open as other provinces and has had problems attracting foreign investment. Structural weaknesses, underdeveloped transportation links and a weak private sector contribute to Henan Province's underdevelopment. The economy is dominated by agriculture, mining and manufacturing interests. Further complicating development is the concentration of the manufacturing sector in six industries: petrochemicals, food processing, nonferrous metals, automobiles, textiles and machinery. Even though Henan Province is a major railway transit hub, the province lacks the infrastructure to sustain economic growth.

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## Further Reading

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