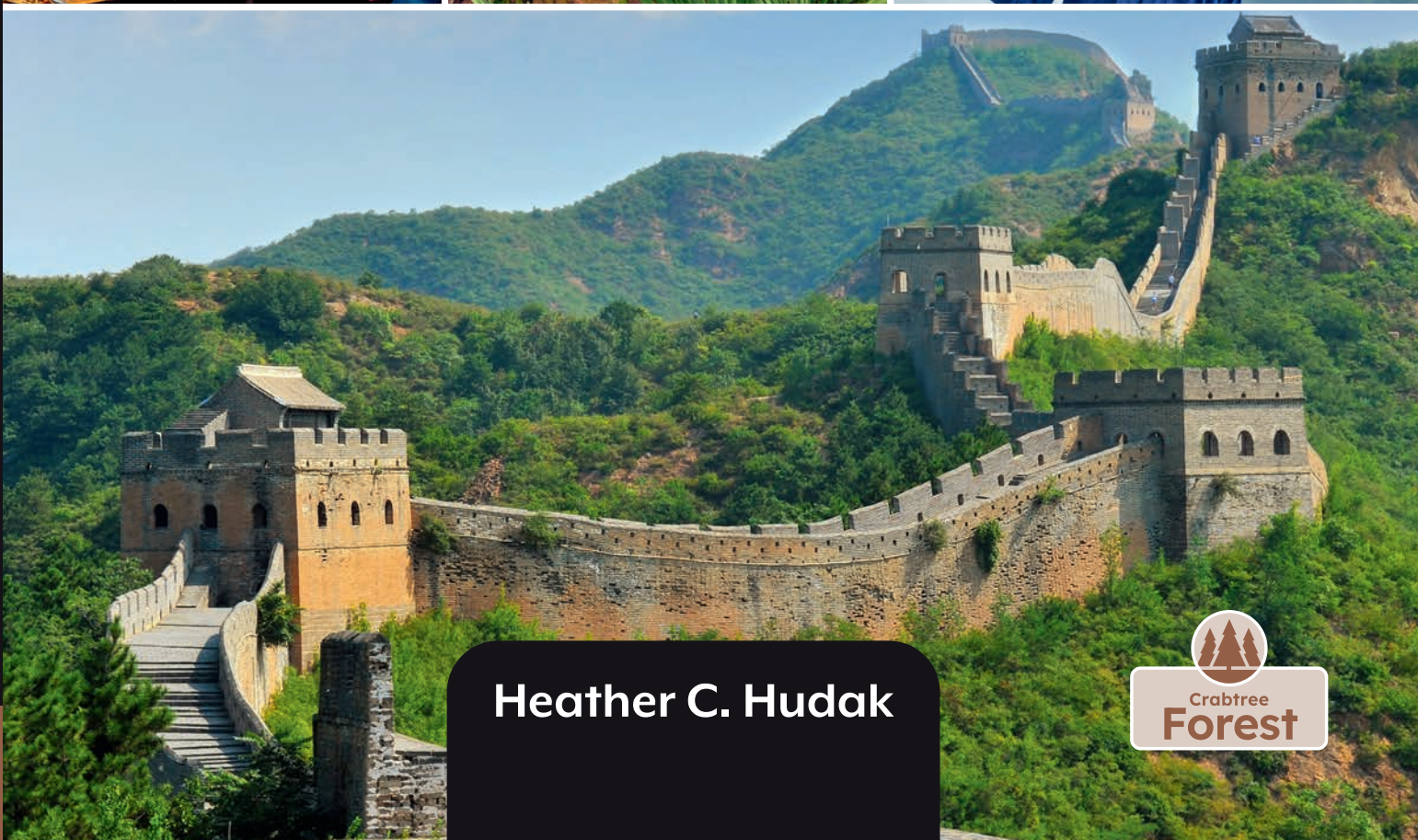
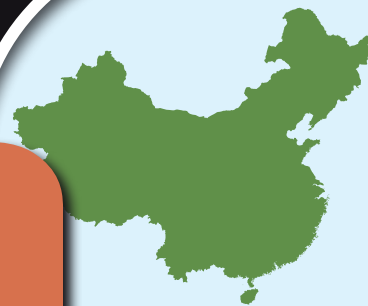


FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHY

Focus on

China



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Crabtree
Forest



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Introduction

In Beijing, both ancient wonders and contemporary ways of life meld together. The city dates back about 3,000 years. It has been the capital of China for eight centuries. Today, with nearly 22 million residents, Beijing is the second most **populous** city in the People's **Republic** of China. It is also the eighth most populous city in the world.

Daily life is fast-paced in Beijing. Workdays are long, and people have limited time off. Grandparents often care for their grandchildren while their parents are at work. However, life slows down at night. Beijing has many modern shops, restaurants, and nightclubs where people can spend their leisure time.



Famous landmarks in Beijing include the Temple of Heaven (above), the Forbidden City (right top), and the Summer Palace (right).



Beijing's modern skyline almost looks like science fiction when contrasted with its ancient past.



Traditional courtyard homes are called siheyuan in Beijing. The alleys surrounding them are called hutongs.



Battling Smoggy Skies

Since the mid-1900s, Beijing has become highly **industrialized**. As a result, air quality is poor due to heavy pollution. Smog often fills the skies. It can be so **bad** that school and outdoor activities, such as sports, are sometimes canceled. It's also common to see people **wearing masks** as they go about their **day** in an effort to protect their lungs from damage. Beijing's fast **economic** growth in the **late 1900s** led to the streets becoming overcrowded with vehicles. Traffic is tangled, with heavy **carbon emissions**. To help solve the problem, Beijing has used a license lottery since 2011 to **limit** the number of vehicles on the road. This means just a small percent of drivers can win a chance to register their vehicle.

Public Transport

Most people in Beijing rely on public transportation systems to get around the city. There are hundreds of bus routes and more than two dozen subway lines. They are continually improved to help combat the growing traffic and transportation problem.

Despite the push to modernize the city, Beijing is home to some of the oldest and most important historic sites in the world. In old Beijing, mazes of winding alleyways called *hutongs* surround *siheyuan*, or neighborhoods of traditional courtyard residences—some of them built in the late 1200s. Many of these were destroyed over the last century to make way for newer buildings. But the Chinese government has now designated some as culturally protected areas.

Mountains to Deserts

China is the largest country on the continent of Asia and the fourth-largest country in the world in terms of size. Only Russia, Canada, and the United States are larger. China is nearly the size of the entire European continent. The **topography** of China includes everything from mountains to lowlands and plateaus to deserts and deltas.

China is located in East Asia. It shares borders with 14 countries—Russia, North Korea, and Mongolia to the north, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Pakistan to the south, and Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan,

and Kazakhstan to the west. The East China Sea and Yellow Sea border China to the east. To the southeast, China is bordered by the South China Sea.

China has the second-largest population in the world. It accounts for about one-fifth of the total global population. The country is considered **ethnically homogenous**, meaning that the majority of people share a common culture and heritage. However, there are many ethnic and language groups across the country. The **Han people** are the largest of these groups, and the **Beijing dialect** of Mandarin is the country's official language.



The rainbow mountains of Quilian are in Zhangye National Geopark in Gansu, a province in northwest China. They get their color from the mineral deposits in the sandstone surface.



Farmland in Anhui, a province in eastern China



Camels being led through the Singing Sand Dunes in Dunhuang, northwestern Gansu province.



AT A GLANCE

- **OFFICIAL NAME:** The People's Republic of China (PRC)
- **NATIONAL CAPITAL:** Beijing
- **POPULATION:** 1.412 billion
- **OFFICIAL LANGUAGE:** Mandarin Chinese
- **LAND AREA:** 3.693 million square miles (9.567 million sq. km)

The Land

From an **administrative** perspective, China is divided into 23 provinces. China claims Taiwan as a province but does not govern it. It also governs four municipalities: Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Tianjin. These cities are so large that they have been given the same rights as the provinces, and they report

directly to the central government. China also has five **autonomous** regions. These are places where the culture, customs, and language are distinct from the Han people that make up the majority of the country. In addition, China has two special administrative regions: Hong Kong and Macau.



The Crescent Moon Spring in north-central Gansu province is an oasis in the Gobi Desert. An oasis is an area in a desert where water and plants are found.

Geographic Regions

In addition to administrative divisions, China is separated into three key geographic regions: eastern, central, and western. Eastern China consists mainly of plains and lowlands. This region is situated along coastlines and is known for its fertile soils. As a result, it has the best agricultural lands. The western region is the largest, and it accounts for more than 60 percent of China's land. The landscape there is one of extremes. It consists mainly of mountains and hills, but there are also deserts and plateaus. This area has very little farmable land because it is either too high, too cold, or too dry. The landlocked central region lies between the western and eastern regions. It is rich in natural resources.

These wheat fields are located near the Qinling-Huaihe Line that unofficially divides northern and southern China. Regions to the north are temperate in climate and regions to the south are subtropical and tropical.



The eastern Pamir Mountains near Kashgar, in the northwest Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China