

ZHANGYE 张掖

Zhangye City is one of the few large cities in Gansu Province, and the largest located north of Wuwei. It's population of approximately 580,000 is dominated by the Han Chinese, with small yet significant communities of Hui, Manchu, Tibetans, Yugur and Mongols. Zhangye has a noticeably smaller population of Hui Muslims than most other cities and towns in Gansu Province.

Zhangye experiences dry and cold winters, with temperatures plummeting to around 0 degrees F. (-18°C). In the summer the temperature is moderate to hot.

Zhangye is a potential gateway city to the small Yugur minority group (not to be confused with the large Uyghur nationality of Xinjiang). The 12,000 Yugurs are zealous followers of Tibetan Buddhism. They live on grasslands in and around Sunan County west of Zhangye. The Yugur are divided into two distinct ethno-linguistic groups: one who speak a Mongolian language and the other who speak a Turkic language.

Long ago, Zhangye was an important garrison town and a stop on the Silk Road. Marco Polo is rumored to have spent a year here during his famous travels in the 13th century. Photographs taken in the early 1900's show Zhangye to be an old city surrounded by a high wall, but

Population:
433,569 (1990)
582,700 (2000)
783,120 (2010)

Province:
Gansu

Major Ethnic Groups:

Han 99.4%
Hui 0.3%
Manchu 0.1%
Tibetan 0.1%

Christians:
4,500 (1.0%)

these were demolished long ago and little evidence remains of Zhangye's former glory.

Zhangye was also one of the most remote outposts of the Chinese empire. Beyond the Great Wall at Jiayugan lay vast deserts and plateaus inhabited by violent Turkic and Tibetan tribes. Because of its strategic position on the Silk Road, many religions entered China through Zhangye, including Islam, Buddhism and Christianity.

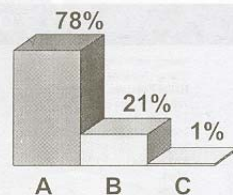
Near the center of the town, on Renzhu Xijie Road, is the Giant Buddha Temple. This temple houses a 34 meter (111 feet) long sleeping Buddha. Made of clay, it is believed to be the largest of its kind in China and was built during the Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227 AD).

Today, Zhangye is a major stop on the train line between Lanzhou and Urumqi. North of Zhangye, on the road to Jiayugan, is the Chinese Long March rocket-launching site. Foreigners are not supposed to be able to buy bus tickets for this route, to keep them from stumbling across the high security military area.

Many tourists use Zhangye as a starting point to get to the Tibetan village of Mati, 83 miles (135 km) south. Mati, nestled in the foothills of the imposing Qilianshan



Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



A = have never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians
C = Adherents to any form of Christianity

Mountains, contains Horse's Hoof Temple which is built into a steep cliff-face and only accessible via an intricate passageway through caves. Just outside Mati are the Thousand Buddha Caves, another significant cultural and religious stronghold stemming from the introduction of Buddhism into China down the Silk Road.

Zhangye is one of the least evangelized cities of its size in China. Although some significant breakthroughs have occurred in Gansu in recent years, most of the church growth has taken place in the southern and eastern parts of the province, and in the capital city of Lanzhou. The northern and north-central areas of Gansu have largely been ignored and few people have any awareness of Christianity. Today, only about 1% of the population of Zhangye are Christians. Small Protestant and Catholic communities do exist, but are difficult to locate. The overwhelming majority of believers are women aged over sixty. Few youth in Zhangye have ever been challenged with the Gospel. Most have no idea of Christianity or the Person of Jesus Christ. Local government officials do not seem to mind elderly people following Jesus, as they know the movement will subside when that generation passes away. What they greatly fear is the Gospel perpetuating by spreading to the youth of the city.

Being a major communication hub for travel in China's northwest, it is hoped that evangelists and lay believers visiting the city will be instrumental in seeing Christ exalted in Zhangye. Cities like Zhangye, however, are among the least desired locations for seminary graduates to move to. There is a standing joke among Chinese students that they dread being posted to New Zealand. In Chinese, New Zealand is *Xin-xi-lan*, which also sounds like the Chinese nicknames for the three remote provinces of Xinjiang, Tibet (Xizang) and Gansu (Lanzhou).



Zhangye is a gateway city to reach the small Yugur minority. The 12,000 Yugurs, who are Tibetan Buddhists, are divided into two language groups—one speaking Mongolian and the other Turkic.

Pray for Zhangye

- 1 The ancient city of Zhangye has long been neglected by both foreign missionaries and Chinese evangelists. Pray God would soon be glorified above the people of Zhangye.
- 2 Ask God to convict those seminary students who refuse to take up positions in the hard places of northwest China. Pray they would be willing to go wherever the Holy Spirit leads them.
- 3 Pray the youth of Zhangye would soon hear the Gospel and be able to make an intelligent decision to accept or reject Christ.

Overview of Zhangye

Pronunciation : "Jung-yeh"
Old Spelling : Chang-yeh
Location : Gansu Province, northwest China
Population : 433,569 (1990 census)
Males : 223,137 (51.46%)
Females : 210,432 (48.64%)
Households : 101,934
Average household : 4.25 people
Divorced people : 1,800
% of population : 0.41%
Centurions (1990) : 2 people aged 100 or more
Immigrants to City : 2,544 per year
From same province : 1,926 (75.7%)
From other provinces : 618 (24.3%)

Employed people : 269,729 (62.2% of total population)
Main Industries : Agriculture 81%; Industrial 6.4%; Professional 4.6%
Educational : University: 0.3%
Attainment : High School: 37.9%
(highest level : Primary School: 43.8%
attended) : Never attended any level of school: 18.0%
Population under 15 : 25.7%
Adult Literacy : 82% (men 87%; women 74%)
Major Nationalities : Han 431,311
Hui 1,419
Manchu 183
Tibetan 176
Yugur 175 : Others (15 groups): 305
Christians : 4,500 (1.0%)