



*The local Kazak people living in a yurt*

# BEAUTIFUL XINJIANG

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Xinjiang (shin'jyāng), the largest province in northwest China, covers about one sixth of China's land. People have lived here for generations and their way of life is well preserved. It is rich in national features; landscapes are unique and beautiful. You can see snow-capped mountains while standing in very hot land, and deserts with oases. Resourcefully rich and ethnically diverse, this province attracts many travelers. It is an ideal place for taking pictures of folk customs and also an excellent choice when photographing picturesque landscapes.

Historical and cultural tourism in Xinjiang is most attractive for its unique charm. The Silk Road, which runs across Xinjiang horizontally, is known to the whole world. It is vast in territory and scarce in population with many areas left untouched by modernization. The landscape is incredibly diverse, as you travel across the province, the scenery changes from desert to lush green Alpine hills in one hour, and to valleys

and Turkish settlements in the next. There are so many magnificent and natural wonders such as the great basin, Junggar; the vast desert, Taklamakan; the long continental river, Tarim and the largest and highest alpine lake Sayram Lake—all concentrated in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang has a desert climate with a very low annual rainfall. The weather is so changeable that one could experience the four seasons within the span of one day. At the foot of a mountain, it is the hot summer, but it will change into spring and autumn as one travels upwards of the mountain, and at last a snowcapped winter can be seen at the top of the mountain. There is a great temperature variation between day and night. Keep the rapid changes in temperature in mind when packing clothing or in other words, prepare for all the seasons.

Autumn is the golden season to visit Xinjiang, when the days are long and the sky is clear and temperature is not too hot. Supplies should



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Taking carriage to bazaar



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A veiled woman in Xinjiang

include tents, sleeping sacks, long fur boots, sun block and sufficient drinking water ready for a long journey. Do not wear contact lenses due to the hot dry weather. If not planning to join a tour group, it is suggested to hire a jeep to tour the area, as public buses are infrequent. For photographic equipment, if possible, include a complete range of lenses— *especially ultra-wide-angle lens and telescopic lens*, which will be used frequently. A wide variety of lenses will enhance your photographic opportunities allowing you to consider many different compositions.

Xinjiang is a region of many minority groups in China including the Uygur: the major ethnic group found there. They love dancing, singing and playing their own unique musical instruments. They dress with resplendent costumes and their folk customs are very colorful. They are hospitable people; visitors are invited to dance with them



Nomadic life by Keketuohai Swamp



*Primitive herding life*

and entertained with their traditional food and the sweet fruits, which were planted and harvested.

During the Nadam Festival (between July and August), there are a variety of merry-making activities. The Mongolian and Kazak herdsmen gather on the lakeside grassland to hold their traditional ethnic activities such as horseracing, wrestling, or picking up a sheep while galloping on horseback. The festival is very interesting and entertaining.

The Kazaks is one of the minorities in China that live on nomadic pasturing— grazing sheep and cattle. This nomadic clan moves or *transfers* from pasture to pasture for optimal grazing conditions—moving their herds and flocks while riding horseback and carrying simple traveling bags on camels. Their nomadic and simple lifestyle has attracted the attention of modern civilizations and is a favorite subject among many photographers. The *pasturing-transferring*



*Morning in village*

as well as the beautiful, natural landscape is a photographer's paradise. From September to the beginning of October is the best time to shoot the pasture-transferring as herdsmen are moving to their migrant destinations. You can observe at a high mountain; herdsmen, family after family, riding their camels while driving crowds of sheep towards a lake; such a large scale of migration will last half a month from morning till night.

The photographic opportunities are plentiful in beautiful Xinjiang. So many things to see, you may find a need for a return trip to this beautiful and picturesque region.

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*Little brothers  
outside their yurt*