

China Today

China, the most populous country and the second-largest economy in the world, is a vast, dynamic nation that continues to grow and evolve in the 21st century. This collection from *theAtlantic* is only a small view of the people and places in China over the past several weeks with images of tremendous variety, including astronauts, nomadic herders, [replica European villages](#), pole dancers, and RV enthusiasts.



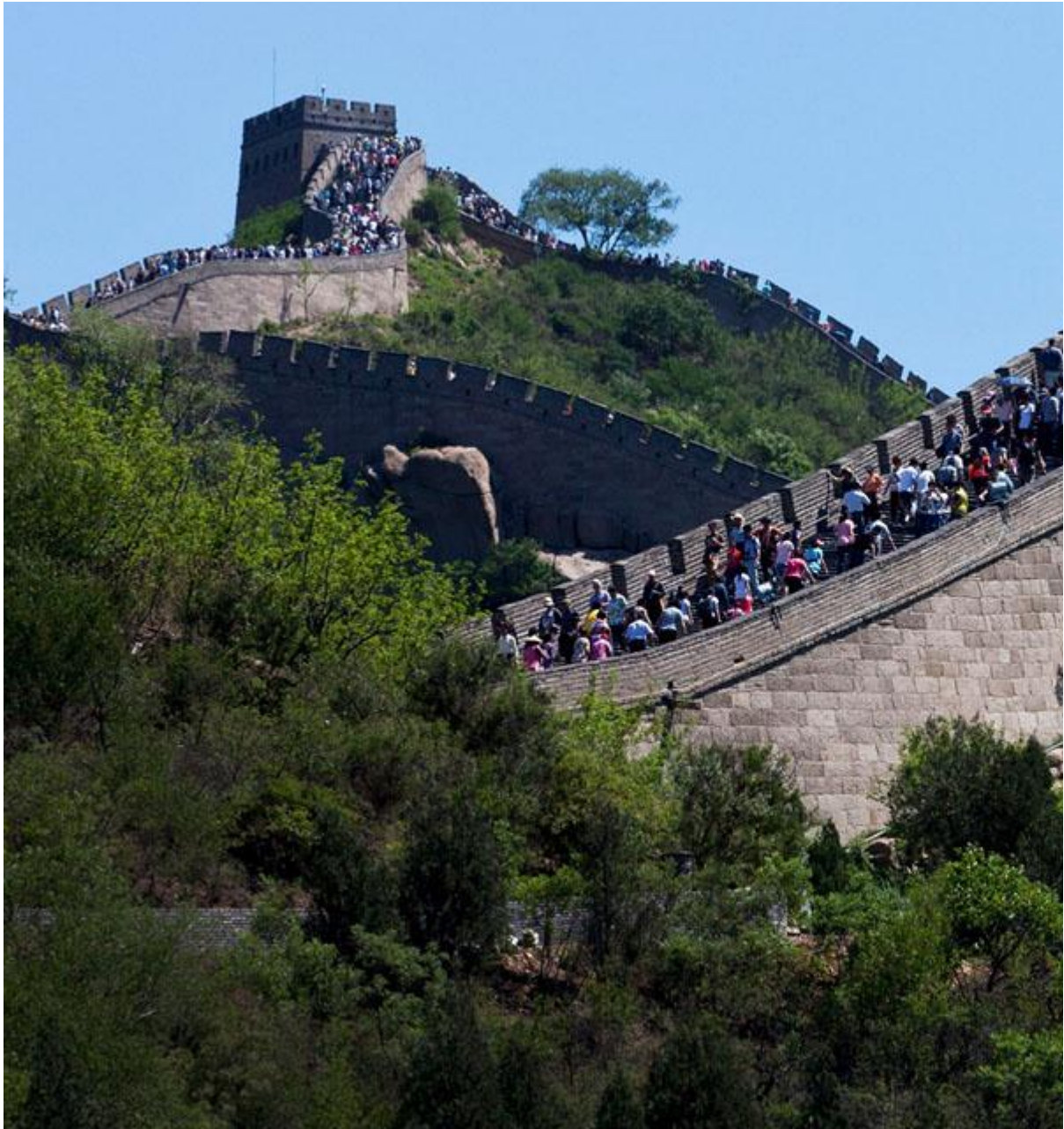
Liu Yang, China's first female astronaut, waves during a departure ceremony at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, Gansu province, on June 16, 2012. China sent its first woman taikonaut into outer space this week, prompting a surge of national pride as the rising power takes its latest step towards putting a space station in orbit within the decade. Liu, a 33-year-old fighter pilot, joined two other taikonauts aboard the Shenzhou 9 spacecraft when it lifted off from a remote Gobi Desert launch site. (Reuters/Jason Lee)



The Shenzhou-9 manned spacecraft, Long March-2F rocket, and escape tower wait to be transferred to the launch pad at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, Gansu province, on June 9, 2012. (Reuters/China Daily)



The Long March II-F rocket loaded with a Shenzhou-9 manned spacecraft carrying Chinese astronauts Jing Haipeng, Liu Wang and Liu Yang lifts off from the launch pad in the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, on June 16, 2012. China launched the spacecraft putting its first woman, 33-year-old female fighter pilot Liu Yang, in orbit. (Reuters/Jason Lee)



Tourists line the Great Wall of China during a weekend at Badaling, north of Beijing, on June 2, 2012. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)



A vendor puts on a mask while awaiting customers in Beijing, on May 14, 2012.
(AP Photo/Vincent Thian)



Part of the vast skyline of Beijing, China, seen on June 12, 2012. Beijing is the capital of the People's Republic of China and one of the most populous cities in the world, with a population estimated at over 19 million people as of 2010. (Lintao Zhang/Getty Images)



A contestant takes part in a pole dancing competition held in Beijing, on May 26, 2012. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)



A vegetable seller reaches to collect money from a customer in her stall at a market in central Beijing, on June 1, 2012. China's inflation rate in May is likely to fall to around 3.2 percent from a year earlier due to a decline in vegetable prices state media reported this week, with China's annual economic growth expected by analysts to fall to 7.9 percent in the second quarter, the first dip below 8 percent since 2009. (Reuters/David Gray)



A multi-million dollar replica of France's historic Chateau Maison-Laffitte, the Beijing Laffitte Chateau, photographed on June 12, 2012. The Chateau, a luxury hotel, spa and wine museum, is located on the outskirts of Beijing. (Lintao Zhang/Getty Images)



A bridge crosses a canal that flows through the center of the Florentia Village in the district of Wuqing, located on the outskirts of the city of Tianjin, on June 13, 2012. The shopping center, which replicates old Italian-style architecture, covers an area of some 200,000 square meters, and was constructed on a former corn field at an estimated cost of US\$220 million. (Reuters/David Gray)



Pedestrians walk down an alley that resembles a Florentine-style street in the Florentia Village in the district of Wuqing, on June 13, 2012. The shopping center copies old Italian-style architecture with Florentine arcades, a grand canal, bridges, and a building that resembles a Roman Colosseum. (Reuters/David Gray)



A construction worker walks with a ladder in the replica village of Austria's UNESCO heritage site, Hallstatt, in China's southern city of Huizhou, on June 1, 2012. Metals and mining company China Minmetals Corporation spent \$940 million to build this controversial site and hopes to attract both tourists and property investors alike, according to local newspaper reports. (Reuters/Tyrone Siu)



Chinese people enjoy a barbecue dinner next to their recreational vehicles (RVs) during a camping trip at a RV park on the outskirts of Beijing, on April 14, 2012. Chinese buyers bought an estimated 1,000 RVs last year. Experts, however, say the RV business in China is about to take off, benefiting domestic manufacturers and foreign makers alike. The RV China Association expects sales to increase 40 percent between 2012 and 2015 to close to 4,000. (Reuters/Soo Hoo Zheyang)



Students stretch during a training session at a gymnastic course at Shenyang Sports School in Shenyang, Liaoning province, on May 9, 2012. Some 60 students, between the ages of 6 to 15, undergo a nine-year gymnastic program that includes foundation courses and gymnastic training courses at Shenyang Sports School. Those who are deemed to be outstanding may be selected to join the national team, according to local media. (Reuters/Stringer)



A Chinese ethnic minority dancer performs a song and dance routine entitled, "Colourful Guizhou" in Guiyang, Guizhou province, on June 10, 2012. (STR/AFP/Getty Images)



An ethnic Uighur man lies on a couch as he keeps an eye on his belongings at his newly-demolished house, which made way for a residential complex in Aksu, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, on May 13, 2012. (Reuters/Stringer)



Kazakh nomads herd their livestock in a caravan across a plain in Altay, far west China's Xinjiang region, on June 2, 2012. The Altay, known in Chinese as the Aletai region, is situated in the most northern part of Xinjiang, sharing a border on the east with Mongolia and on the west with Russia. (AFP/Getty Images)



A woman plants rice in Yingjiang, near the Myanmar border, in Yunnan Province, China, on May 26, 2012. Many still expect that the lifting of U.S. and European Union economic sanctions against Myanmar will boost trade from China's industrial regions through Ruili and other border areas in Yunnan, a mostly mountainous province that has close ties with all its Southeast Asian neighbors. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)



Farmers herd a flock of ducks along a street towards a pond as residents drive next to them in Taizhou, Zhejiang province, on June 17, 2012. (Reuters/China Daily)



A patient is stung by a bee as he receives an apitherapy treatment at a hospital in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on June 18, 2012. Apitherapy is one of the ancient methods of curing diseases by using honey, pollen, bee bread, propolis, royal jelly, apilarnil and bee venom. The therapy is claimed to be of use in several types of arthritis, neurological problems such as insomnia, migraine headaches, and neuritis, and skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, and herpes. (Reuters/China Daily)