

LESHAN 乐山

Approximately 1.4 million people live in and around the city of Leshan in southern Sichuan Province. The 1990 Chinese census listed 1.07 million people in Leshan, which is actually a combination of four different towns and districts in one official administrative area. In 1990, more than 488,000 people lived in the Shizong ('Central City') area of Leshan, 315,000 inhabited the Wutongqiao District, 210,000 lived in the Shawan District, and an additional 56,000 made their homes in the Jinkouhe District of Leshan. For the purposes of this book, we have combined the four different administrative regions into the one profile.

Population:
1,070,095 (1990)
1,438,100 (2000)
1,932,600 (2010)

Province:
Sichuan

Major Ethnic Groups:

Han 99.4%
Yi 0.4%
Hui 0.1%
Manchu 0.1%

Christians:
2,000 (0.2%)

Leshan has quickly become an industrial and tourist hub in the past few decades. The city can be horribly polluted at times, with waste and gas from the city's many plastic factories choking the airways and the waterways. At other times, after a rainy or windy day, Leshan transforms to become quite pleasant. The city's inhabitants are almost entirely Han Chinese, except for several thousand Yi people, almost all of whom live in the Jinkouhe District. The majority of Yi people (also known as Nosu), live to the south of Leshan in the Daliangshan ('Big Cold Mountains'). Leshan is one of the last cities on the Sichuan plain before the mountains, which for centuries saw warfare between the Chinese and the Yi, who

frequently kidnapped Chinese and took them as slaves.

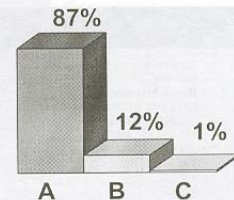
Leshan is famous all over China as the site of the world's tallest Buddha statue. Measuring an imposing 71 meters (233 feet) high, the Grand Buddha is carved into the side of a cliff overlooking the confluence of the Dadu and Min rivers. The sheer size of the idol is impressive. Its ears are 7 meters (23 feet) long, and even its toes measure 8.5 meters (28 feet) in length. Work on the statue commenced in



731 AD, by a monk named Haitong. The work was completed in 803, after Haitong's death. Tens of thousands of Chinese and foreign tourists come to Leshan every month just to view the Buddha. Many



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

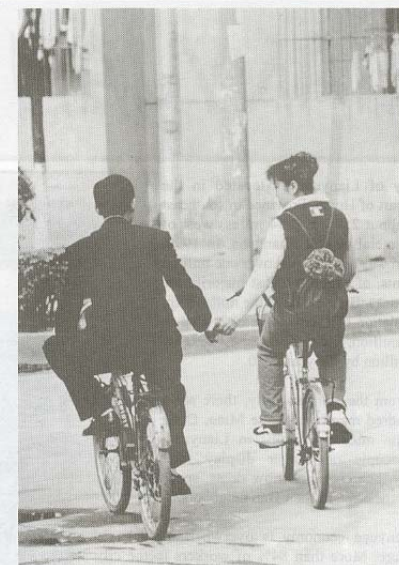
also climb nearby Mt. Emei, one of China's four most important religious sites. At 3,099 meters (10,165 feet) above sea-level, Mt. Emei is a testing climb. There were once more than 70 Buddhist temples operating on the mountain, in addition to monasteries and nunneries.

For those Christians inclined to intercession and warfare at spiritual strongholds, there are few places in China more important than Leshan and Mt. Emei. For centuries these places have been a focal point of people's attention, keeping them trapped in spiritual blindness and oblivious to their need of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the Grand Buddha in Leshan, there are numerous temples, museums and other historical sites in the area, most which can be reached by boat. At the Oriental Buddha Park there is a newly-made 170 meter (557 feet) long reclining Buddha, said to be the longest statue in the world.

Although Catholic missionaries are known to have commenced work in Sichuan Province in 1640, the first Protestant workers to enter the province were Griffith John and Mr. Wylie on a scouting trip in 1868. In 1877 John McCarthy of the China Inland Mission settled down in Chongqing, much further east than Leshan. In the late 1800's the C.I.M. commenced work in Leshan, followed by the Canadian Methodists and the American Baptists.

There are just a few small churches among Leshan's 1.4 million needy souls. One Christian publication sums up the Leshan church: "Since 1949, the ministry of the church has languished in isolation and suffered greatly from the lack of leadership and pressures from leftist policies. Even now, many Christians seem not to have shaken off the fright from the past. The church is quite weak and works haltingly." (Bridge: Church Life in China Today, May-June 1985, p.9)



A Chinese couple out for a romantic bicycle ride in Leshan, home of the world's largest idol. The vast majority of people in Leshan have yet to hear the Gospel for the first time.

Pray for Leshan

- 1 Ask God to raise up prayer and intercession teams to travel to Leshan for spiritual warfare against the powerful principalities and strongholds that keep the people of the area trapped in darkness.
- 2 Pray the small and fragmented church in Leshan would be blessed spiritually and numerically by the Holy Spirit, giving them a burden and a vision for the souls of the lost in their city.
- 3 Pray people from all around the world who come to Leshan to worship idols would instead hear the Truth from local believers.

Overview of Leshan

Pronunciation : "Leh-shahn"
Old Spelling : Le-shan, Jiading (former name)
Location : Sichuan Province, southwest China
Population : 1,070,095 (1990 census)
Males : 546,902 (51.11%)
Females : 523,193 (48.69%)
Households : 289,338
Average household : 3.70 people
Divorced people : 4,965
% of population : 0.46%
Centurians (1990) : 44 people aged 100 or more
Immigrants to City : 7,725 per year
From same province : 6,843 (88.6%)
From other provinces : 882 (11.4%)

Employed people : 683,587 (63.8% of total population)
Main Industries : Agriculture 66.3%; Industrial 17.0%; Professional 5.8%
Educational : University: 0.6%
Attainment : High School: 47.7%
(highest level) : Primary School: 46.7%
attended) : Never attended any level of school: 5.0%
Population under 15 : 19.9%
Adult Literacy : 85% (men 90%; women 80%)
Major Nationalities : Han 1,064,518
Yi 4,270
Hui 678
Manchu 260
Miao 93
Others (17 groups): 276
Christians : 2,000 (0.2%)