NINGBO
(Excerpts from TravelChinaGuide.com)

Lying in the east of Zhejiang, Ningbo sits at the mid-point of the Chinese coastline, towards the south of the Yangtze Delta. It covers an area of 9365 square kilometers (3616 square miles), of which 1033 square kilometers (399 square miles) constitutes the city's bustling urban centre.

Ningbo is one China's oldest cities, and has witnessed the rise and fall of numerous dynasties. It also represents the birthplace of Hemudu Culture, which itself has a history of over 7000 years. These early civilizations lived and thrived in the area, and have contributed greatly to make Ningbo what it is today; an economically-developed, modern city with a profound cultural foundation.

Ningbo is a city with strong Buddhist connections and boasts a number of visually-impressive, historical temples. The 1700 year-old Asoka Temple houses the rare Buddhist relics of Sakyamuni, who is the founder of Buddhism; the Tiantong Temple, with a history of over 1600 years, is renowned for its fantastic scenery and subtle architectural style; and the Baoguo Temple boasts one of the best-preserved wooden structures of its type in China. Other Buddhist temples in the city include the Qita Temple, the Tianfeng Pagoda and the Xiantong Pagoda.

Due to its location in the coastal region, an area with a subtropical monsoon climate, Ningbo is subject to temperate and humid weather. The mean annual temperature is 16.2°C (61.16°F). The region has four distinct seasons which guarantee tourists a different holidaying experience depending on the time of year they visit. Season-specific resorts such as the Tianhe Scenic Area in Tiantai Mountain and Xuedou Mountain Scenic Area in Xikou Town cater for the summer season, while resorts such as the Nanxi Hot Springs are
suited more to winter visits. However, to the north of Ningbo run a series of beautiful lakes, including the Dongqian Lake, the West Lake and the Tai Lake, which are perfect for year-round visits.

Although the city is striving towards modernization, the passion of the local people for producing traditional handicrafts remains undiminished. Hand-plaited bamboo vases, screens and animal figurines are particularly popular. The ancient Gu Mu Xiangqian, bamboo root carving and bamboo sculpture all reveal the local characters of craft in Ningbo.

Ningbo has been an important port city for foreign trade since the Song Dynasty (960-1279). After the Opium War (1840-1842), it became one of the top-five ports in China, successfully utilizing its favorable location for water transport. Today, despite its well-developed economy and infrastructure, it remains surrounded by charming natural scenery.