



## 重庆? Chongqing!

► This is the story of Chongqing, still little known in its own country, and almost ignored around the world. A Southwest China municipality, separated only 15 years ago from the Sichuan Province. A melting pot with an official population of 28'846'200; that is, what the count was in autumn of 2010. Estimates now are at 32 million. That's a lot; that's twice the population of the Netherlands. Or, with its 82'402 km<sup>2</sup>, just about the size of the Republic of Ireland.



► Chongqing has therefore become one of China's four direct-controlled municipalities, others are Tianjin, Beijing and Shanghai, and it serves as the economic centre of the upstream Yangtze area. It is a huge manufacturing centre and a transportation hub for Central China. The area has a subtropical climate with humid conditions almost throughout the year. The summers are known to be the hottest and most humid in China, with temperatures often above 40°; winters are often overcast. In fact, the region is known for little sunshine and for lots of fog instead; some call it even the 'Fog City'. Actually, and despite many efforts by the municipal government, the air quality is very bad and of major concern and the fast-forward industrial development in the region is not helping the matter.



► Chongqing originally has been an important military basis with a huge weapon production; a business which became the origin of the region's substantial industrial growth. Although its export sector is relatively small (due to its inland location), the municipality now has quite a diversified mix, with domestic-oriented goods, such as chemicals, machinery, textiles, electronics, and cars. In fact, Chongqing has become China's third largest motor vehicle producer.



The Three Gorges Dam is the world's largest and lies 660 km to the East of Chongqing; a full-day catamaran trip for those who dare. The internationally disputed dam not only supplies the region with power, but helped bringing major foreign investors into town (i.e. Deutsche Bank Citibank, Ford, Mazda, Carrefour), which in return contributes to the city's double digits economic growth. Yet, with US\$ 4'043 per capita (2010 figure), Chongqing's GDP is still way behind the country's leader, Shanghai (US\$ 10'828).



► The one-time provisional Capital of China (during the Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945) is now working strongly on its infrastructure to become an attractive business and leisure hub in Southwest China. In 2009, the city received 6.1 million visitors; a figure expected to rise fast in the coming years, because of the increase of business travellers, but also because of a growing international awareness. So, some of the leading international hotel chains are already in town, railroad tracks connect with the rest of China, and the Yangtze river (also called Changjiang) allows upstream river cruising. And in order to expand the offer, the city identified five key tourism projects, which receive special funding from Chongqing Transport Tourism Corporation and other enterprises:

- Longshui Lake
- Hechuan Fishing Town
- Nan'an Guangyang Island
- The Three Gorges
- Changshou Lake (picture)



► Other attractions are Loquat Hill, the Dazu Rock Caving and the Northern Hot Springs Parks. The municipality government of Chongqing now officially aims at becoming a major "Tourist Destination in China" and it will be interesting to see, whether and how the world's biggest city will achieve this.

(More Information: <http://www.at0086.com/ChongqingMTA/>)

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January 3, 2012