



Chengdu: Capital of China's Largest Province

BASIC INFORMATION ¹		World Rank ²	Similar to
Urban Area Population: 2000	3,500,000	76	Alexandria, Atlanta
Urban Land Area: Square Miles: 2000	135	231	Goteborg, Seville, North Bay (Canada), Odessa (Texas)
Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers: 2000	350		
Population per Square Mile	25,900	142	Seoul-Incheon, Managua, Hyderabad, Tianjin
Population per Square Kilometer	10,000		
<i>Note: Caution should be employed on city population figures in China because of significant definitional differences. See Cities in China and China City Populations Figures: Cautions below.</i>			

12 September 2007

Setting

Chengdu is located 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) inland (west) of Shanghai and 800 miles (1,300 kilometers) northwest of Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Chengdu is in the western part of the Sichuan basin, approximately 35 miles (55 kilometers) from the Daxue Mountains. These mountains have some of the highest peaks in the world. This includes Minya Konka, which at 24,800 feet (7,550 meters) is the tallest peak in the world outside India, Pakistan, Nepal and Tibet. Minya Konka is located 150 miles (250 kilometers) to the southwest of Chengdu

Two rivers, the Jinjiang and Qingshui meet in central Chengdu. They form three sides of a rectangle, enclosing the central business district, with the Jinjiang to the north and east and the Qingsui to the south (Plate 97). The Jinjiang continues flowing eastward from Chengdu and eventually joins the Yangtze.

Chengdu is the capital of China's most populous province, Sichuan. Sichuan has a population of more than 80 million in an area slightly larger than California. Sichuan's population is more than double the population of California. Sichuan used to be even larger. Chongqing, with more than 30 million people, was split off as a provincial level municipality in 1997, a status it shares with Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin.

Sichuan means "red" in Mandarin. Chengdu is located in the "Sichuan Basin" or Red Basin, an agricultural area, famous for its hot Sichuan peppers (Plate 117). These peppers give Sichuan food its distinctive spicy taste, which is certainly on a par with that of India.

Chengdu is also referred to as the "Panda City," because panda bears come from the nearby mountains and the world's largest panda research center is located here.

¹ For definitions of urban terms see <http://www.demographia.com/db-define.pdf>.

² Among urban 707 areas with more than 500,000 population (<http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.com>)



Population, Land Area and Density

Chengdu is the tenth largest urban area on the Chinese mainland, with a population of 3.5 million. It trails only Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Dongguan, Tianjin, Wuhan and Shenyang. The urban footprint of Chengdu covers 135 square miles (350 square kilometers). Chengdu has 25,900 persons per square mile (10,000 per square kilometer) and among the five most dense large urban areas of China.

Economic Progress

This high density is not surprising, given Chengdu's geographical position. The great prosperity gains of China occurred first in the coastal urban areas. As people and businesses occupied greater land areas, population densities have fallen. This is particularly evident in the suburbs that have been developed for new residences and modern commercial and industrial buildings. This progress began later in Chengdu.

The prosperity, however, has come to Chengdu. Any one failing to understand the extent to which China has become a globally integrated economy needs only to visit the Bank of China building, a 38 story structure at the center of the city. In the lobby, there is a huge board providing up to the minute information on movements in the stock market (Plate 104, 105, 107). I would have liked to provide a photograph of this, but was unable to obtain permission.

Housing

Most of Chengdu's housing is multi-story and multi-unit. The older housing, much of it built before the recent prosperity, is lower rise (Plates 111, 113, 118, 182). Much of the newer housing is high-rise and attractive architecturally. Like elsewhere around China, there is considerable construction (Plates 128, 150).

According to a United Nations report, Chengdu has completed a successful slum removal program over the past 15 years. These substandard buildings were located adjacent to the rivers. There is no evidence of them now. Indeed, the most pleasing vistas in Chengdu are along the Jinjiang, where newer development has replaced the slums (Plates 34, 95, 96, 194). Local officials have also developed green spaces along the river that are popular for walking and relaxation (Plates 95-96, 98-99, 192-194).

Central Business District

As is typical of Asian urban areas, high-rise residential and even commercial development is comparatively dispersed. The core, or central business district of Chengdu, however, is more concentrated than other Asian downtowns (Plates 40-58, 60-94, 104-121, 173-176, 182, 185-190). There are a number of buildings between 30 and 40 floors. These buildings are spread around an area of perhaps three square miles, rather than being concentrated together as in new world (US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) central business districts. There is a large number of pre-prosperity mid-rise residential buildings interspersed between the new, much taller commercial buildings. Nonetheless, the central business district covers less than one-half the land area of Wuhan's central business district.

Suburban Commercial Development

There is considerable commercial development, especially in western (Plates 130-132, 141-161) and southern suburban areas. Much of Chengdu's new commercial development is related to information technology. The new commercial areas also have large residential developments, many still under construction. The streets are very wide and traffic volumes are relatively light at this point. The separate bicycle lanes that are provided in the core of the city are not to be found here.

Transport

The newer suburban areas are served by the wide arterial streets --- often 8 to 10 lanes --- that have become typical of Chinese suburban development. Substantial use is made of grade separated intersections (flyovers) throughout the urban area, which speeds traffic flow. Generally, all of Chengdu is served by a high-capacity arterial street grid. Again, as throughout China, many signs are in English (of course, all are in Chinese).



Another indication that Chengdu trails east coast urban area prosperity (and Wuhan) is the relatively large number of bicycles that are observed in traffic. Bicycle traffic remains substantial, and many of Chengdu's main arterial streets have barrier protected lanes for bicycles and the increasing number of motorbikes and motorcycles (Plates 62 & 186). This is especially the case in the central business district and arterial streets in other areas that were developed earlier. Chengdu has a large number of buses and is building a Metro (Plates 67 & 189)

At the same time, it is clear that the automobile is on the ascent in Chengdu. A central business district shopping center has a 10-story parking garage (Plate 63). Large cars and SUVs are to be observed throughout the urban area (Plates 101-103).

The increasing dominance of the car is also illustrated by the large numbers of automobile dealerships. There is a virtual auto dealers row along the airport expressway, with both Chinese and foreign brands, such as Volvo, Mazda, Chrysler, Buick and Toyota (Plates 25-26, 206).

While Chinese urban areas have a reputation for intense air pollution (Plates 15 & 16), this seasoned smog expert (as anyone must be who lived in Los Angeles during the smog peak) that the air smelled better than Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s. This is unlike India, where there are many highly-polluting cars --- or the cores of European cities, where the sheer volume of traffic seems to neutralize the best air pollution control equipment on cars. Here, it appears the larger problem may be industrial air pollution.

There are three roads around Chengdu, the two outermost being full-freeway ring roads. There is also the burgeoning national expressway system that links the urban area to the rest of the nation. By 2020, China intends to have nearly as many freeway miles as the United States.

A Nation of Shopkeepers

The Chengdu central business district has at least two large Carrefour stores (Carrefour is the second largest retailer in the world after Wal-Mart and has more stores in China than Wal-Mart). One store is of a particularly unique design, quite unlike the average hypermarket or supercenter (Plate 73). Ikea has opened a store in the southern suburbs (Plate 163), which could be, in itself, an indication that world-class prosperity has arrived.

In the United States, Chinese students have a reputation for superior academic performance. It is not hard to understand after large bookstores in Chinese urban areas. A large *Xinhua* bookstore is located in the core of Chengdu, not far from the Bank of China building and the Carrefour store. The store provides a substantial capacity of chairs for reading and they are filled. Western bookstores began to provide space for people to read some years ago, but the density of readers is considerably less than at Xinhua.

Further, while England was long known as a nation of shopkeepers, it is hard to believe its entrepreneurship exceeded that of present China. Major streets in large Chinese urban areas are lined with small shops selling everything from food to building materials and electric motors. This is evident throughout Chengdu (Plate 100, 108, 195, 196).

Airport

The airport is located 10 miles (16 kilometers) south of the Chengdu CBD (Plate 20). Like most large airports in China, it is connected to the core of the city by an expressway, which in the case of Chengdu eventually becomes a high capacity arterial street with flyovers for the last few kilometers. Chengdu has one of China's largest airports. The main terminal is relatively new, as is also the case in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou.

Practical Information on China

Air Conditioning: The Chinese seem determined to live in comfort as their American cousins. Virtually all major commercial establishments and residential buildings are air-conditioned. Even the older communist era residential buildings have been retro-fitted with room based air conditioners.

Hotels: Hotel rates are reasonable in China, unlike India. However, like India, three-star hotels are both clean and comfortable. The only problem is that little English is spoken. Nonetheless, the language difficulties can generally be overcome as hotels will usually have access to people who speak English.

Money Exchange: Some western hotels have money exchange services. Other hotels do not. Generally, money must be exchanged at the Bank of China, which has multiple branches throughout Chinese urban areas. The larger branches have somewhat bureaucratic procedures and considerable demand, so it is recommended that more money be exchanged, so that visits to the bank (and time) can be minimized.

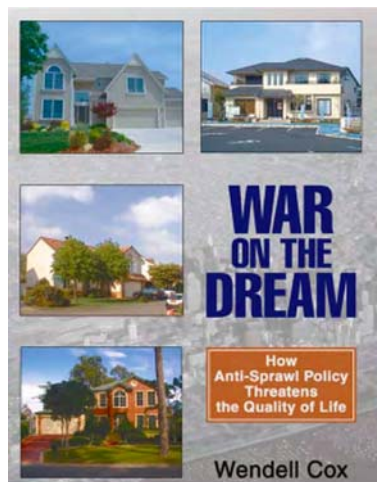
Car Rental: Generally, it is not possible to rent cars in China unless you have a Chinese drivers license. This means that touring is best done by taxicab. It will typically be less expensive to take multiple taxis to specific locations rather than renting taxis for a certain number of hours through hotels.

Air Travel: There has been a proliferation of airlines in China, most owned by the central, provincial or even municipal governments. With a land area larger than the United States, air travel fills a long-distance niche that simply cannot be served by surface modes of transport (cars and trains). Already, the share of personal travel by air in China is nearly double that of Japan and Western Europe and rivals that of the United States (more than 10 percent).

“Cities” in China: The term “city” has many meanings and Chinese usage makes the word even more nebulous. Cities, or municipalities (areas of municipal administration) in China are routinely larger than their urban areas. Some municipalities are considered provincial level (Shanghai, Beijing, Chongqing and Tianjin). Other municipalities are considered sub-provincial (such as Wuhan, Xi’an and Chengdu) and have a degree of autonomy from provincial governments. Chinese municipalities are the largest in the world, both in area and in population. Unlike in China, few, if any, of the world’s largest municipalities are larger than their respective urban areas. Moreover, many municipalities in China are far larger than any reasonable definition of a metropolitan area (labor market area).

China City Population Figures: Cautions: Because of their very large municipalities that have far more rural than urban space city population figures in China are not a reliable indicator of urban populations. For example, the Xi’an municipality has more than 7,000,000 residents, yet the urban area has only 3,000,000 residents. The Chongqing municipality has more than 30,000,000 and covers a land area the size of Indiana. The Chongqing urban area, however, has 3,000,000 people. Comparison data is provided in the figure below for Chengdu, Wuhan and Xi’an.

Comparison of Municipalities (Cities) with Urban Areas: China Examples					
MUNICIPALITY (CITY ADMINISTRATIVE AREA)					
	Population	Land Area (Square Miles)	Density	Land Area (Square KM)	Density
Chengdu	11,000,000	4,700	2,300	12,100	900
Wuhan	8,300,000	3,300	2,500	8,500	1,000
Xi'an	7,300,000	2,900	2,800	10,000	700
URBAN AREA (URBAN AGGLOMERATION OR URBAN FOOTPRINT)					
	Urban Area	Land Area (Square Miles)	Density	Land Area (Square KM)	Density
Chengdu	3,500,000	135	25,900	350	10,000
Wuhan	4,700,000	225	20,900	580	8,050
Xi'an	3,000,000	180	16,700	465	6,450
OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL URBAN AREA					
	Urban Area	Land Area (Square Miles)	Density	Land Area (Square KM)	Density
Chengdu	7,500,000	4,565	1,200	11,750	650
Wuhan	3,600,000	3,075	1,200	7,920	450
Xi'an	4,300,000	2,720	1,600	9,535	450
URBAN AREA SHARE OF MUNICIPALITY					
	Urban Area	Land Area (Square Miles)	Density		
Chengdu	32%	3%	1126%		
Wuhan	57%	7%	836%		
Xi'an	41%	6%	596%		
Urban area estimates by Demographia using maps, and "qu" (wards or districts) data.					



War on the Dream

How Anti-Sprawl Policy Threatens the Quality of Life

By Wendell Cox

To order:

http://www.iuniverse.com/bookstore/book_detail.asp?issbn=0595399487

Summary and Chapter Titles:

<http://www.demographia.com/wod1.pdf>

Urban Tours by Rental Car: About the Series

Urban Tours by Rental Car offers perspectives on urban development obtained by automobile tours through urban areas. Rental cars are not the favored method for visiting cities, especially those outside one's own country. Instead, tourists and urban planners favor packaged tours or local public transport systems. Both are splendid ways for seeing the city as it used to be --- the very reason for most tourist visits. The historical core areas contain monuments, prime government and religious edifices and quaint neighborhoods that are often centuries old. This is particularly important to tourists from the newer urban areas of the American, Canadian or Australian West, where history extends not far before World War II. It is further understandable that few tourists travel thousands of miles to see the newer suburban areas that look very much like home. But most tourists do not profess to be students of the urban area.

For the urban planner interested in understanding the whole urban area, it is not enough to study the core alone, regardless of its architectural attractiveness, romanticism, history or affirmation of an individually preferred life style. No one, regardless of the depth of their education can develop reliable conceptions from an unrepresentative sample, and urban cores are the very essence of unrepresentative samples. Both public transport and packaged tours miss the larger part --- the expanse of sprawling residential and business development that rings virtually all major urban areas. They may be of little interest to many urban planners, but they should be.

Stripping away regional architectural facades, one might as well be in the suburbs of Phoenix, Portland, Perth or Paris. Here, the automobile is king, because no public transport system has been developed that can effectively serve destinations outside the core (at least at a price any society can afford). While public transport market shares are higher in European suburban areas than in the New World, much of the difference is attributable to lower incomes and less automobile access. Indeed, public transport's principal weakness, lack of automobile competitiveness, is itself a contributing factor to the rising motorization occurring from the suburbs of Copenhagen and Nagoya to the suburbs of Lagos and Mumbai. To oversimplify this phenomenon as being a "love affair with the automobile" is the equivalent of saying that Singaporeans or Brazilians have a love affair with air conditioning. Human beings prefer comfort to discomfort and they prefer free time to time over which they have no control.

It is no wonder that tourists return to the United States thinking that all Paris looks like the second arrondissement (less than one percent does) and that urban planners think all of Milan looks like the architectural treasures that surround the Cathedral. In fact, the sprawling suburbs of Europe, Japan, Canada and Connecticut resemble one another in many ways. For any seeking to study the urban area in its entirety -- not just the favored haunts of core-dwelling elites --- there is no alternative to "getting behind the wheel." Thus, *Urban Tours by Rental Car*.



Chengdu Freight Rail Yards

1



Chengdu

2



Chengdu: North

3



Chengdu

4



Chengdu

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Chengdu

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Chengdu

7



Chengdu

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Chengdu

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Chengdu

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Chengdu

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Chengdu

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Chengdu

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Chengdu

14



Chengdu (Picture not Corrected)

15



Chengdu (Picture Corrected)

16



Chengdu

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Chengdu

18



Chengdu

19



Chengdu Airport

20



Chengdu Airport Expressway Toll Booth

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Chengdu Airport Expressway

22



Chengdu Airport Expressway

23



Chengdu Airport Expressway

24



Chengdu Airport Expressway: Auto Dealers Row

25



Auto Dealers Row

26



Chengdu Airport Expressway

27



Residential

28



Chengdu: South

29



Chengdu: South

30



Chengdu: South

31



Chengdu: South

32



Chengdu: South

33



Chengdu: Jinjiang

34



Chengdu: South (Sichuan University)

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Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

57



Aidao Nunnery (Buddhist)

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Aidao Nunnery (Buddhist)

59



Chengdu: CBD

60



Chengdu: CBD

61



Chengdu: CBD

62



Chengdu: CBD

63



Chengdu: CBD (Residences)

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Chengdu: CBD (Residences)

65



Chengdu: CBD

66



Chengdu: CBD (Metro Construction)

67



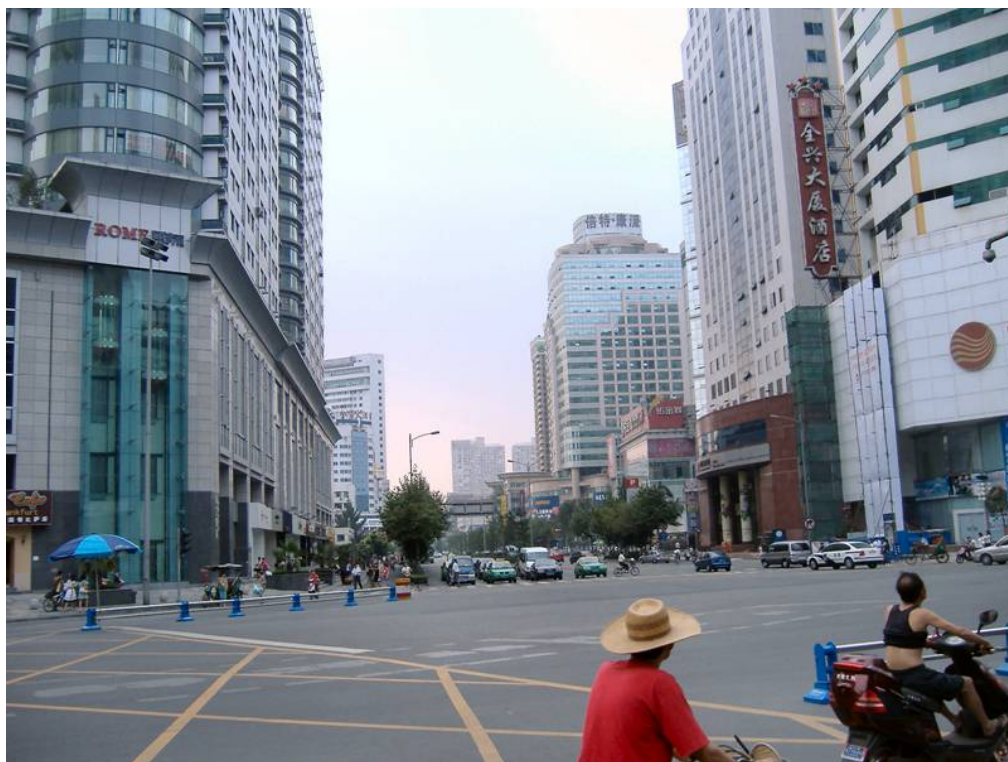
Chengdu:
CBD

68



Chengdu: CBD

69



Chengdu: CBD

70



Chengdu: CBD

71



Chengdu: CBD

72



Chengdu: CBD (Carrefour Store – near lower middle to right)

73



Chengdu: CBD

74



Chengdu: CBD

75



Chengdu CBD

76



Chengdu CBD

77



Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

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Chengdu CBD

91



Chengdu CBD

92



Chengdu: CBD

93



Chengdu: CBD

94



Jinjiang

95



Jinjiang

96

Chengdu
CBD
(Google Earth)



Jinjiang



Jinjiang

99



A Nation of Shopkeepers

100



Chengdu: Large Car

101



Chengdu: Large Car

102



Chengdu: SUV

103



Chengdu: CBD (Bank of China Building)

104



Chengdu: CBD Bank of China)

105



Chengdu: CBD

106



Chengdu: CBD

107



Chengdu: CBD

108



Chengdu: CBD

109



Chengdu: CBD

110



Chengdu: CBD (Residences)

111



Chengdu: CBD

112



Chengdu: CBD (Residences)

113



Chengdu: CBD (Residential Street)

114



Chengdu: CBD

115



Chengdu: CBD

116



Sichuan Peppers

117



Chengdu: CBD (Residences)

118



Chengdu: CBD

119



Chengdu: CBD

120



Chengdu: CBD

121



Chengdu: West

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Chengdu: West

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Chengdu: West

124



Chengdu: West

125



Chengdu: West

126



Chengdu: West

127



Chengdu: West

128



Chengdu: West

129



Chengdu: Western Development Area

130



Chengdu: Western Development Area

131



Chengdu: Western Development Area

132



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

133



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

134



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

135



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

136



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

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Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

138



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

139



Chengdu: Western Development Area

140



Chengdu: Western Development Area

141



Chengdu: Western Development Area

142



Chengdu: Western Development Area

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Chengdu: Western Development Area

144



Chengdu: Western Development Area

145



Chengdu: Western Development Area

146



Chengdu: Western Development Area

147



Chengdu: Western Development Area

148



Chengdu: Western Development Area

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Chengdu: Western Development Area

150



Chengdu: Western Development Area

151



Chengdu: Western Development Area

152



Chengdu: Western Development Area

153



Chengdu: Western Development Area

154



Chengdu: Western Development Area

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Chengdu: Western Development Area

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Chengdu: Western Development Area

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Chengdu: Western Development Area

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Chengdu: Western Development Area

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Chengdu: Western Development Area

160



Chengdu: Western Development Area

161



Chengdu: South

162



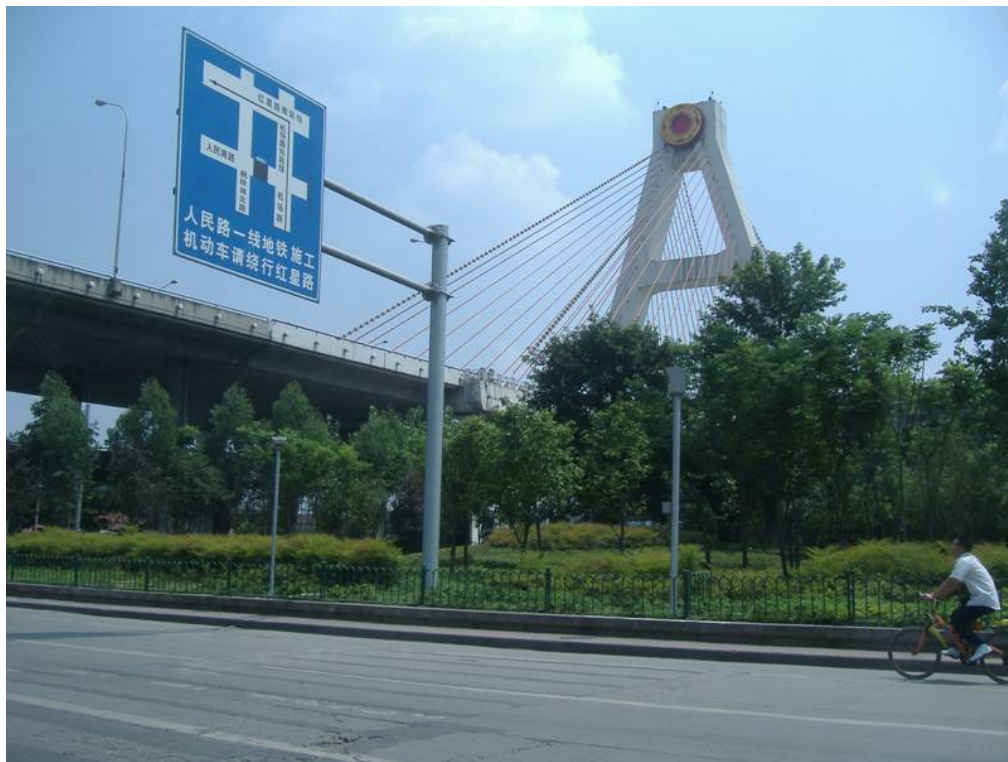
Chengdu: South (Ikea Store)

163



Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: South

165



Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: South

168



Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: South

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Chengdu: South

171



Chengdu: South

172



Chengdu: CBD

173



Chengdu: CBD

174



Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: CBD

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Chengdu: North

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Chengdu: North

178



Chengdu: North

179



Chengdu: North

180



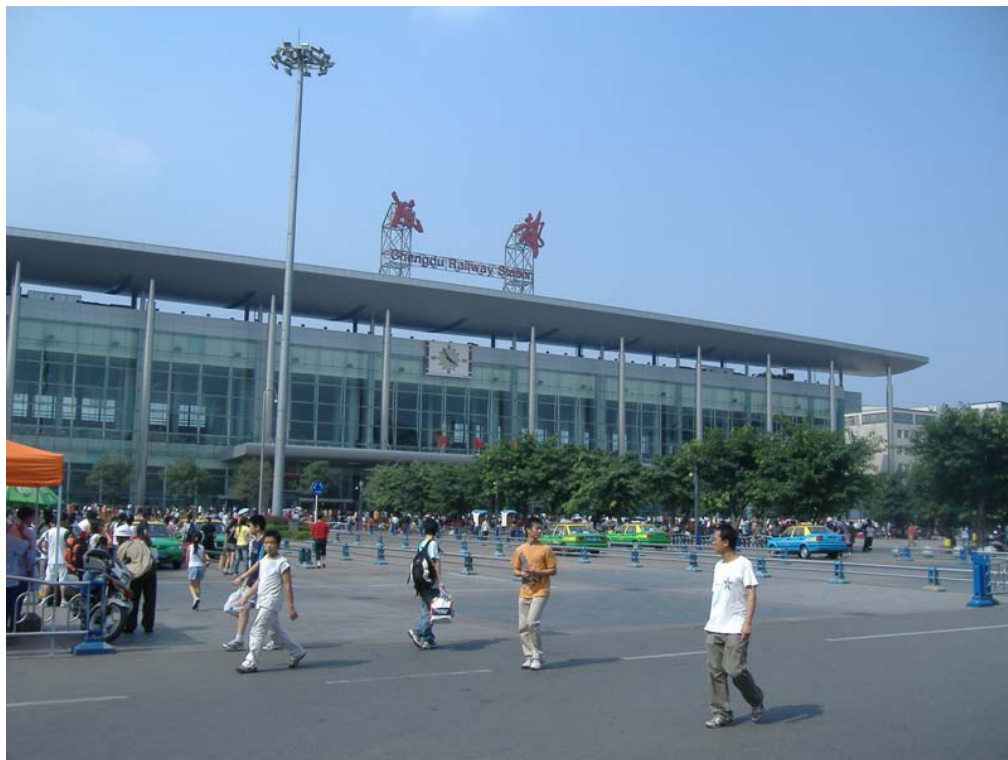
Chengdu: North

181



Chengdu: CBD

182



Chengdu: North (Railway Station)

183



Chengdu: North (Chengdu Bus)

184



Chengdu: CBD

185



Chengdu: CBD: Bicycle & 2-Wheel Moto Lane

186



Chengdu: CBD

187



Chengdu: CBD

188



Chengdu: CBD

189



Chengdu: CBD

190



Aidao Nunnery (Buddhist)

191



Jinjiang

192



Jinjiang

193



Jinjiang

194



Nation of Shopkeepers

195



Nation of Shopkeepers

196



Chengdu: West

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Chengdu: West

198



Chengdu: West

199



Chengdu: West

200



Chengdu: West

201



Chengdu: West

202



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

203



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

204



Chengdu: West: Outside 3rd Ring Road

205



Auto Row

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