

Background: Hebei Province

Baoding is a historic city in Hebei Province in the northern part of China. Baoding literally translates as ‘protecting the capital’ as it guards the southern approach to Beijing.

The city has been historically important since the 13th century and was the capital of Hebei Province until 1968 when it was moved to Shijiazhuang.

The city has an urban population of 2.2 million. This is a small city in Chinese terms. The wider Baoding prefecture totals 11.2 million.

Baoding has an industrial heritage which in the past, unfortunately, gave it the unwanted title of “the most polluted city in China”. The city’s industrial base is now solar panels, electronics, wind turbine manufacture and it is home to Great Wall Motors, China’s largest producer of SUVs.

There are a number of historic buildings in the city – the Governor’s Palace and the ancient Lotus Garden being the most famous. It also has the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, built after the Boxer Rebellion massacre of Catholics in 1900. Baoding was occupied by the Japanese from 1937 to 1945 during the Second Sino-Japanese War (referred to by the Chinese as ‘The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression’).

The city is rapidly moving from being Beijing’s ‘south gate’ to becoming its ‘back garden’. A new city – Xiong’an – is being developed between Beijing and Baoding to house new industries and service businesses, and to take on back-office functions previously carried out in the capital. The development includes the new Beijing Daxing airport, the world’s largest. Our students are from Baoding High School (also known as Baoding No.1) which has relocated to a new campus on the outskirts of the city to better service these new developments. The school has a student population of about 7,000 (a medium sized school in Chinese terms).

Baoding has 5 universities and 12 higher education colleges. The universities include the long-established Hebei Agricultural University (1902) and Hebei University (1921).

The majority of the population live in modern high-rise apartment complexes. There is a low level of diversity, with the vast majority of the population being Han Chinese.