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Welcome to Sinopolis

In a recent article Jonathan Woetzel of McKinsey complained to the Financial Times that foreigners often see China as one undifferentiated mass. This, he said, was wrong, noting that the differences between places like Harbin and Hainan were as great as those between Helsinki and Athens. China's "mega cities are starting to become economically like little countries," he added.

The editorial team at Week in China has shared this view for quite some time, and early last year we began planning a new product explicitly designed to offer deeper insights on these individual cities. We decided to call it Sinopolis, a play both on the term for the original Greek city states and the term 'Sino' (i.e. China).

Knowledge of Beijing and Shanghai is already quite strong, so our goal was to create a series of individual guides about China's other, less well-known major cities. No one would be stupid enough to claim to understand America if the only two cities they knew about were New York and Los Angeles. By the same token, there is far more to China than Beijing and Shanghai.

Our first Sinopolis is on Hangzhou, a city with an ancient heritage, but which is also home to one of China's most dynamic companies: Alibaba. We selected Hangzhou for a number of reasons. To name just a couple: it is the capital of China's most entrepreneurial province and its iconic scenery has made it a cultural hub for millennia.

Our choice was inadvertently lucky. When we were almost done with our research it was announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping that Hangzhou would be the host city for this year's G20 meeting of international leaders. That obviously makes it a destination of even more interest to Week in China readers.

We have set out to produce a city guide that is of interest to a businessperson. Inevitably there are aspects of what we have done which would overlap with more traditional tourist guide books, particularly in the first two sections on orientating your way round.

However, the latter five sections of this Sinopolis guide seek to give an overview of the key industries and companies that generate Hangzhou's GDP, as well as a sense of how the local economy is doing (for example, how busy were the shopping malls we visited). Likewise our section on the property market – the knowledge of which is critical to understanding any Chinese city's economy – offers some case studies on how much bang for their buck homebuyers enjoy in Hangzhou.

We hope you find this edition of Sinopolis of interest, and not just if you have a trip to Hangzhou already planned. And if a Hangzhou visit wasn't on your agenda, we hope after reading this it's something you at least tag onto your next Shanghai visit (we include a suggested itinerary for a day trip in the Tourism section).

"China's mega cities are starting to become economically like little countries"



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HANGZHOU

Our guide to the city hosting this year's G20

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