

naturejobs

CAREER GUIDE

CHINA

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Those new to China are often overwhelmed by its size and scope. More than 100 Chinese cities now have more than 1 million residents, and 55% of the nation's 1.38 billion people live in urban areas. When the capital Beijing became overcrowded, the government began building a new city, twice the size of Manhattan, next door.

The transport is equally supersized. If you joined China's railway lines together, they would loop around Earth twice. Shanghai's metro system is the longest in the world, and Beijing has the planet's busiest subway, transporting more than 10 million passengers each day. The world's biggest airport is being built 68 kilometres south of Beijing — it will eventually have seven runways.

To scientists contemplating a move to China, the nation's scientific ambitions can seem similarly daunting. By 2049, the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country plans to be a world-leading science and technology power. To this end, China “needs the strategic support of science and technology more urgently than ever before”, said President Xi Jinping in 2016.

Research into everything from space exploration, quantum communication and brain research to big data applications, clean

energy and robots is part of China's plan to evolve from a low-cost manufacturing hub into a modern, innovation-driven economy. As one Chinese neuroscientist told us (see page S4): “Scientists must link their research plans to the government's national demands, rather than purely their own academic interests.” Spending on research and development in China is already far above countries with similar gross domestic product per head. It remains behind only the United States in terms of total spending, a situation that is likely to be reversed by 2020.

This is a country where high levels of investment and ambition are creating exciting career opportunities for scientists. Recruiters are looking for researchers from all disciplines to fulfil China's dreams to become a world leader in artificial intelligence (S10), biotechnology (S19) and commercial innovation (S28).

We also look at the realities of moving a career to China (S14). We talk to scientists who have returned home after living abroad, or made the move with little experience. Their experiences are diverse, but one point is clear: China's science landscape is transforming rapidly. Those interested in being a part of it should start their search now.

Sarah O'Meara
Guest editor

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