

China's Factory Cities and What Each One Makes



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A city-by-city guide to what China's main factory cities make, from Shenzhen electronics to Yiwu's market and Foshan's tiles and furniture, using official Chinese and World Bank figures. It also explains why there is no single count of Chinese factories and how a buyer should choose a city.

The Short Version

- China made 27.4% of the world's manufacturing value in 2025, about nine times India's 3.0%.
- China's advantage now is density, not cheap labour: fabric, components, moulds and port sit a truck ride apart.
- Yiwu and Guangzhou's markets give range, but booths are mostly traders. A factory gives control.
- China counts only firms above 20 million yuan revenue, so its factory count cannot be compared directly with India's.
- Start with your product, then decide whether you need a market or a maker.

A Brazilian buyer told a reporter in Yiwu in 2025 that he'd bought US\$215,000 of Christmas and festive gifts there, because "you can find whatever you need in the shortest time possible" ([Global Times, April 2025](#)). That's the China most buyers picture - one city, endless booths, everything under one roof.

The real picture is a set of cities that each do one thing very well. In this piece I'll walk through the ones that actually make things, what each is known for and what the official numbers say about them.



One honest caveat up front. I work in India and SourcingFrom's deep research is Indian, so my view on China comes from official Chinese statistics, the World Bank and buyers who've done both countries, not from years on Chinese factory floors. Where I'm reasoning rather than reporting, I'll say so.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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- 01** China made 27.4% of the world's manufacturing value in 2025, about nine times India's 3.0%. China's manufacturing value added was US\$4.82 trillion against a world total of US\$17.60 trillion, and India's was US\$0.53 trillion. (Sourced from official data: World Bank, manufacturing value added, 2025, our arithmetic)
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02 One Chinese city now out-produces most countries. Shenzhen's industrial firms above the size threshold turned over 5.4 trillion yuan in 2024, the first Chinese city past five trillion. (*Shenzhen figures via [China News Service, Feb 2025](#)*)

03 "How many factories in China" has no single answer. China counts only firms with over 20 million yuan in revenue, and there were more than 501,000 of them in mid-2024. India counts registered factories of any revenue and had 2,60,061 in 2023-24. The two numbers measure different things. (*MIIT at a State Council briefing, July 2024 · Reported. [MoSPI ASI 2023-24](#)*)

What we don't know yet

- A total count of Chinese factories of every size. No official series publishes one.
- First-hand buyer accounts from each Chinese city. Our forum research so far covers India.

1. Why China Is Still the Benchmark

Before the cities, a sense of scale. China's manufacturing sector added about US\$4.82 trillion of value in 2025, which is 27.4% of the world's total on the World Bank's figures ([World Bank](#), our arithmetic). Manufacturing is about a quarter of China's whole economy, 24.7% in 2025, against 13.5% in India ([World Bank, manufacturing % of GDP](#)).



The output numbers are just as blunt. In 2024 China made 1.669 billion mobile phones and 31.56 million motor vehicles, 13.17 million of them new energy vehicles (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024 communiqué), and its goods exports came to 25.45 trillion yuan (same source).

So where does China's edge really come from? Not cheap labour, and it hasn't for a while, because China's income per person was US\$14,230 in 2025, about five times India's (World Bank, GNI per capita). The edge is density. The fabric market, the zipper maker, the mould shop and the port sit a truck ride apart, so a factory can change a component in days rather than weeks, and every city below is one piece of that machine.

2. Shenzhen for Electronics and Now Cars

Shenzhen is China's biggest factory city by output. Its industrial firms above the size threshold turned over 5.4 trillion yuan in 2024, the most of any

Chinese city for years running, and its goods trade was 4.5 trillion yuan, also first in the country ([China News Service, Feb 2025, Reported](#)). It built 22.3% of China's new energy vehicles that year too (same source).

This is where you go for consumer electronics, components and anything with a circuit board. The component markets and the contract makers sit side by side, which is why prototyping there is so quick.

My honest view – Shenzhen is brilliant if your product is electronic and your order is big enough to matter to a factory that also builds for global brands. If you're a small buyer with a first run of a few hundred units then you'll mostly deal with trading companies and smaller workshops. That's fine, as long as you know which one you've got.

3. Dongguan, the Old "World Factory", Moving Up

Dongguan earned the "world factory" name on shoes, toys, furniture and garments. Manufacturing is still more than half of its economy and the city is pushing hard into machines and electronics. Its firms above the size threshold added over 435 billion yuan of value in the first ten months of 2024, and smartwatch output rose 92.9% over the same stretch ([Xinhua, Dec 2024, Reported](#)). Spending on technology upgrades went from 12.5 billion yuan in 2014 to 67 billion yuan in 2023 (same source).



What does that mean for you? If you buy labour-heavy goods like soft toys or cut-and-sew then Dongguan is the city whose costs have moved the most, and its factories are the likeliest to be steering towards automated, higher-value work. That's one reason buyers of those goods started looking at other countries. Buy parts and machined goods, though, and Dongguan is getting better at them, not worse.

4. Guangzhou for Garments, Markets and the Canton Fair

Guangzhou is the capital of Guangdong and a city of well over three trillion yuan of output ([China Daily, Feb 2025](#)). For a buyer it matters for three reasons - fashion and garment making, huge wholesale markets and the China Import and Export Fair, better known as the Canton Fair, which it hosts twice a year.

Here's the catch I'd flag. Guangzhou's markets are wonderful for seeing range and dreadful for knowing who made what. The person behind a stall is almost always a trader, and plenty of traders are excellent, but you'll want to know which workshop cut your order before you reorder in bulk. It's the same question I tell buyers to ask in Indian markets, and it's in know who makes it.

5. Yiwu Is the Market, Not the Factory

Yiwu is the one everyone's heard of. Its International Trade City has 75,000 booths showing more than 2.1 million kinds of goods, and the city's trade reached 668.93 billion yuan in 2024, up 18.2% (Global Times, April 2025, Reported). More than 300,000 foreign nationals pass through, and over 21,000 live there doing business (same source).

The honest bit is simple. Yiwu is a market town, and most booths are showrooms for makers in the surrounding province of Zhejiang and further afield.

That makes it the best place on earth to buy 40 small product lines in a week and a poor place to control the quality of any one of them. Our Brazilian buyer's festive order is the classic Yiwu purchase, wide, seasonal and forgiving. For a single product you'll sell for years, you'll eventually want the factory behind the booth.

6. Ningbo, the Port That Pulls Everything In

Ningbo-Zhoushan is the busiest cargo port in the world. It moved 1.37 billion tonnes in 2024, first globally for the 16th year running, and 39.3 million containers (TEU), third in the world (China Daily, Jan 2025).

Ningbo makes things too. It's a big centre for household appliances, moulds and plastics, and its port is the natural gateway for Yiwu's goods. The point for you is freight – a supplier near Ningbo or Shanghai sits on some of the most frequent sailings in the world, so your transit options are wide. India can't match that yet, and you should price it in when you compare.

7. Foshan for Furniture, Ceramics and Appliances

Foshan sits next to Guangzhou and makes the things that go inside a house. Its Shunde district is home to Midea, one of the world's largest appliance makers, which reported more than 400 billion yuan in revenue for 2024 ([Midea annual report](#), Reported). It's also China's big name for furniture showrooms and ceramic tiles.

Foshan is the Chinese city I'd compare most directly with India, because tiles are a category where India is already a serious rival. India was the EU's largest non-EU supplier of ceramic tiles in 2025, at 38.4% of extra-EU imports ([Eurostat](#), our count, in [why India](#)). If you buy tiles, don't default to Foshan.

8. Suzhou and Its Industrial Parks

Suzhou is the quiet giant. It passed two trillion yuan of GDP in 2024 ([China Daily, Feb 2025](#)), and much of that comes from foreign-invested plants in large industrial parks making electronics, precision parts and equipment. Even back in 2013 its industrial output was over three trillion yuan, second only to Shanghai at the time ([36Kr](#), Reported).

For a small or mid-size buyer, Suzhou is less a place to find a supplier and more a sign of how deep China's component base runs. Plenty of the parts inside goods you buy elsewhere were made in parks like these.



9. The Specialist Towns for Shoes and Fabric

China's density shows best in its one-product towns. Jinjiang, in Fujian, made over 1.2 billion pairs of shoes in 2024, which Chinese official data puts at about 20% of world output ([China Daily, Apr 2025, Reported](#)). Keqiao, in Shaoxing, runs China Textile City, where trading passed 400 billion yuan in 2024 ([Keqiao district government](#), Supplier-stated by the market's own government).

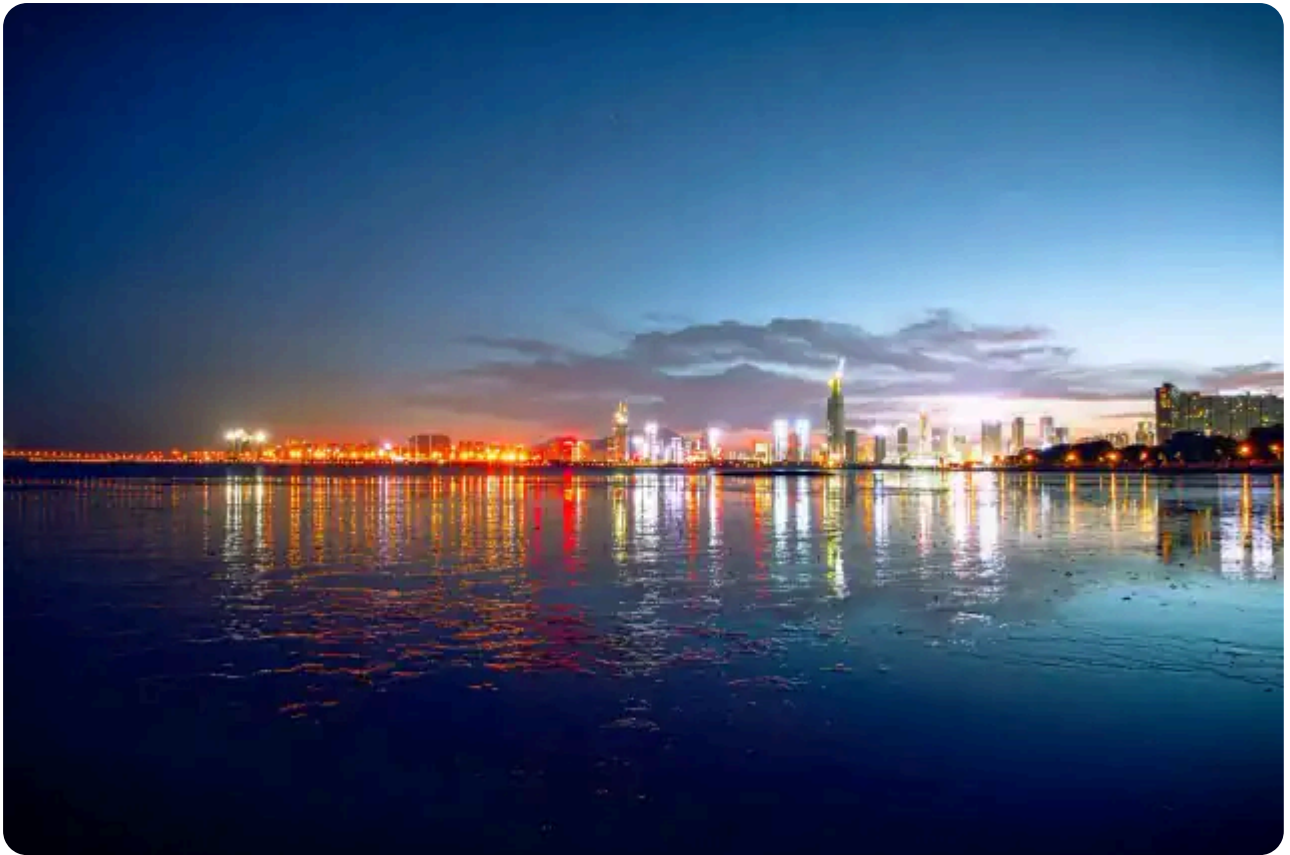
Why should a fabric market matter if you buy finished garments? Because it's the reason a Chinese garment maker can swap a fabric in a day. That speed is what buyers miss most when they move a product elsewhere, so it's the first thing to test, and the method is in [China+1: how to test a second country](#).

10. How Many Factories Are There in China?

People search for one number and there isn't one. China's statistics count "industrial enterprises above designated size", which means firms with over 20 million yuan of revenue a year ([National Bureau of Statistics](#)). The industry ministry put that at more than 501,000 firms in mid-2024 (MIIT at a State Council Information Office briefing, July 2024, Reported). Every smaller workshop sits outside that count, and there are a great many of them.

India's Annual Survey of Industries, for comparison, counted 2,60,061 registered factories in 2023–24, with an average of 92 people each ([MoSPI, ASI 2023–24](#)). That's a registration count rather than a revenue threshold, so please don't divide one by the other and call it a ratio. The fair reading is that China's formal factory base is several times bigger, and both countries have a huge layer of small workshops the headline numbers never see.

City	Known for	Market or maker
Shenzhen	Electronics, components, new energy vehicles	Maker
Dongguan	Shoes, toys, furniture, garments, now machines and electronics	Maker
Guangzhou	Garments, wholesale markets, Canton Fair	Mostly market
Yiwu	Small goods across 2.1 million kinds	Market
Ningbo	Port, appliances, moulds, plastics	Maker and gateway
Foshan	Appliances, furniture, ceramic tiles	Maker
Suzhou	Electronics, precision parts, equipment in industrial parks	Maker
Jinjiang and Keqiao	Shoes and fabric	Specialist towns



11. What I'd Tell a Buyer Choosing a City

Start with your product, not the city. Electronics point to Shenzhen and Dongguan, home goods to Foshan and Ningbo, shoes to Fujian and garments to Guangdong and Zhejiang. Then decide whether you need a market or a maker, because Yiwu and Guangzhou's markets give you range while a factory gives you control. Most buyers need range first and control later.

And be honest with yourself about why you're looking. If it's tariffs or concentration risk then compare the Chinese city with its nearest equivalent elsewhere before you move anything. I've set the main Chinese hubs against their Indian counterparts in [China vs India factory cities](#), and the Indian map is in [India's factory cities](#). Already planning a move? Read [moving manufacturing from China to India](#).

Our Brazilian buyer was right to go to Yiwu for a season of festive gifts. He'd be wrong to buy a hero product there for five years without ever meeting the factory, and once you know which of the two you're doing, China's cities make a lot more sense.