

Sceneries and Activities

Beijing

Beijing, also known as Peking, is the capital and the second largest city of China. It has around 17 million residents living in an area of 16,800 sq km. Mandarin Chinese is the language spoken in Beijing, with Beijing's dialect being the standard form of Mandarin.

Beijing has four defined seasons. Summer and winter are the two longest seasons, while fall and spring are the shortest. The climate varies according to the season, with autumn being the most pleasant time to visit. Autumn is usually clear with cool temperatures, while winter is dry and, at times, bitterly cold, with temperatures dropping below 5 degrees F (-15 °C). Spring is usually dry but very windy (it is a good idea to protect your eyes to keep out blowing debris), while the summer is rainy and hot, with temperatures at times soaring above 100 degrees F (38 °C).

As the capital city of the People's Republic of China, Beijing is the nation's political and cultural center and also a center for international contacts.

The recorded history of Beijing as a city can date back to more than 3,000 years ago. During the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (11th century -771 B.C.), the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) and the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.), Beijing was the capital city of the State of Yan, which was ruled by dukes or princes under the emperor. From the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.) and the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.) to the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), Beijing was a major city and also a strategic point in northern China.

When the Qidan (Khitans) people founded the Liao Dynasty (907-1125), they established Beijing, which was then under their occupation and was called Jiuzhou, as the secondary capital under the name of Nanjing (southern capital). Afterwards, the dynasties of Jin (1115-1234), Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) all chose Beijing as their capital city.



In 1928, the Nanjing-based nationalist government of the Republic of China designated Beijing as the Beiping Special Municipality. In 1930, the municipality was renamed as Beiping / Peking City.

On September 27, 1949, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference decided that the newborn People's Republic of China would base its capital in Beiping and renamed the city as Beijing.

The Forbidden City (Gugong)

The universally accepted symbol for the length and grandeur of Chinese civilization is undoubtedly the Great Wall, but the Forbidden City is more immediately impressive. A 720,000 sqm (7,750,008 sqft.) complex of red-walled buildings and pavilions topped by a sea of glazed vermilion tile, it dwarfs nearby Tian'an Men Square and is by far the largest and most intricate imperial palace in China. The palace receives more visitors than any other attraction in the country (over seven million a year, the government says), and has been praised in Western travel literature ever since the first Europeans laid eyes on it in the late 1500s. Yet despite the flood of superlatives and exaggerated statistics that inevitably go into its description, it is impervious to an excess of hype, and it is large and compelling enough to draw repeat visits from even the most jaded travelers. Make more time for it than you think you'll need.



Forbidden City (Gugong)

The Forbidden City stands in the center of Beijing. It is protected by high walls and a moat on all four sides and consists of dozens of halls and courtyards. The emperors of two dynasties, the Ming and the Ching (Qing), lived here with their families and hundreds of court ladies and palace eunuchs. From their throne in the Forbidden City they governed the country by holding court sessions with their ministers, issuing imperial edicts and initiating military expeditions.



Forbidden City (Gugong)

In Chinese the Forbidden City is called Purple Forbidden City. "Purple" doesn't refer to the color of the buildings or walls, but has a mythological origin. It is said that the Emperor of Heaven has his palaces in the region of the North Star, of which purple is the symbolic color. The abode of the temporal emperor, therefore, is supposed to have the same color. The Purple Forbidden City was inaccessible to the common people. Even the highest civil and military officers could not enter it without good reason.

The Forbidden City was completed in 1420 during the Ming Dynasty. It was the home of 24 emperors of the Ming and Ching dynasties. Naturally it was the scene of many important events affecting the course of Chinese history, including political struggles and palace coups, some of them extremely tragic.

After the republican revolution of 1911, the last emperor of the Ching Dynasty, then still a child, abdicated the next year. But he and his family and their entire entourage were allowed to stay in the palaces. They were finally expelled by republican troops in 1924. The Forbidden City was renamed as the Palace Museum and opened to the general public.

The Great Wall



The Great Wall of China is the longest structure ever built. It is about 4,000 miles long, and it was built entirely by hand. About 1, 200 - 1, 500 miles of the Great Wall were built during the reign of Emperor Qin Shi Huang (Qin Dynasty). The Great Wall crosses northern China from the east coast to the central part of China.

The Chinese built walls along their borders as early as the 600's B.C. During the Shang and Zhou dynasties, walls were built between Chinese regions which were fighting with each other. Walls were also built to protect China from outside invaders.

Emperor Qin Shi Huang of the Qin dynasty (221 - 206 B.C.) is regarded as the first ruler to think of the idea of the Great Wall. He thought of connecting existing, older walls with sections of new wall. The building of the Great Wall continued into the Han and Sui dynasties.

Emperor Qin Shi Huang ordered the building of the Great Wall to keep the enemy (the Mongols) from attacking his empire. The northern part of his empire did not have many people in it, so enemy invaders could move in easily. The people in that region were also nomadic which meant they moved from place to place.

Emperor Qin Shi Huang stated that the wall should be six horses wide at the top, eight horses wide at the bottom and five men high. The emperor's soldiers grabbed criminals, troublemakers, musicians, teachers, writers, artists, and humble peasants to help build the Great Wall. In all, about one million people marched north to build the Great Wall.

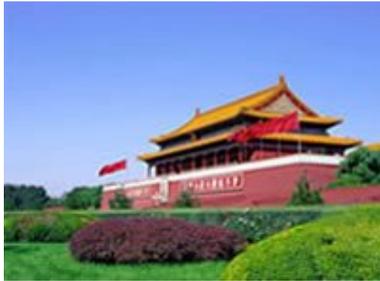
Every one hundred yards, the workers built watchtowers two stories high. From the watchtowers, the Mongols could be seen in approaching, and warning signals could be sent. This prevented the Mongols from making surprise attacks.

The Chinese worked throughout the day and night. Workers who complained or who tried to run away were buried alive. Many Chinese spent the rest of their life building the Great Wall. Many times, dead Chinese were buried in the wall. The Great Wall is sometimes called the "Long Graveyard" because so many people died while building the wall.

The wall wound up and down the mountains. It was built with dirt, stone and bricks. At the top of the wall, a roadway paved with three layers of brick connected the watchtowers. The roadways were wide enough to hold ten soldiers side by side.

The Great Wall was so strong that the Mongols did not threaten China again for more than one thousand years. The last improvements to the wall were made between 1368 A.D. to 1644 A.D. Today, much of the wall lay in ruins. The wall no longer serves the purpose of defending China, but it does attract many tourists.

Tiananmen Square



Tiananmen

This is the world's largest public square, the size of 90 American football fields (40 hectares/99 acres), with standing for 300,000 people. It is surrounded by the Forbidden City in the north, the Great Hall of the People in the west, and the museums of Chinese History and Chinese Revolution in the east. In the center of the square stands the Monument to the People's Heroes (Renmin Yingxiong Jinian Bei), a 37m (124-ft.) granite obelisk erected in 1958, engraved with scenes from famous uprisings and bearing a central inscription (in Mao's handwriting): THE PEOPLE'S HEROES ARE IMMORTAL. The twin-tiered dais is said to be an intentional contrast to the imperial preference for three-tiered platforms; the yin of the people's martyrs contrasted with the yang of the emperors.

Tian An Men (Gate of Heavenly Peace) was the main entrance to the Forbidden City during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Built in 1417, it was first named the Cheng Tian Men, meaning that emperors obeyed the order of Heaven in ruling the country. Destroyed by fire twice, it was rebuilt in 1651 during the Qing Dynasty and renamed Tian An Men. It is also honored as the "Gate of the Nation."

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties grand ceremonies were held at Tian An Men. Composed of the rostrum and gate tower, the building is 34.7 meters high and has five watchtowers. Supported by nine huge columns, the building has a splendid colorful roof of glazed tiles. With painted pillars and carved beams, the hall of Tian An Men Rostrum looks majestic. Sixty huge columns, representing the Earthly Branches designate years, months, days and hours and the Heavenly stems to designate marks of order, stand in perfect harmony to demonstrate the permanent stability of the nation. Tian An Men, a masterpiece of China's ancient architectural art, represents the superb skill and artistic talent of the Chinese people.



Tiananmen

On October 1st, 1949, Chairman Mao Ze Dong declared the founding of the People's Republic of China on the Tian An Men Rostrum, thus opening a new chapter in the history of China. In the new period of reforms and opening, Tian An Men, with its long history and rich culture, attracts people from all over the world.

The Summer Palace

The Summer Palace, one of the finest examples garden architecture in China, is located in the northwest suburbs of Beijing. The 100-odd examples of traditional architecture in the park include pavilions, terraces, temples, pagodas, waterside gazebos, covered corridors, stone bridges and the famous marble boat. The palace occupies a total area of 290 hectares, three quarters of which is made up of shallow lakes.

This dominion of palace temples, gardens, pavilions, lake and corridors was once a playground for the imperial court. Royalty came here to elude the insufferable summer heat that roasted the Forbidden City. The tranquil Kunming Lake takes up three-quarters of the park.



The Summer Palace

The Summer Palace with its cool features - water, gardens and hills - was the palace of choice for vacationing emperors and Dowager Empresses. It was badly damaged by Anglo-French troops during the Second Opium War (1860) and its restoration became a pet project of Empress Dowager Cixi, the last of the Qing dynasty rulers. Money earmarked for a modern navy was used for the project but, in a bit of whimsical irony, the only thing that was completed was the restoration of a marble boat. The boat now sits at the edge of the lake in all its immobile and nonmilitary glory. The Palace's full restoration was hampered by the disintegration of the Qing dynasty and the Boxer Rebellion.

The place is packed to the gunwales in summer, with Beijing residents taking full advantage of Kunming Lake, which takes up three-quarters of the park. The main building is the lyrically named Hall of Benevolence and Longevity, while along the north shore is the Long Corridor, so named because it's, well, long. There's over 700m (2300ft) of corridor, filled with mythical paintings and scenes. If some of the paintings have a newish patina, that's because many of the murals were painted over during the Cultural Revolution.



The Summer Palace

The Ming Tombs

The Ming Dynasty lasted from 1368 to 1644. The first Ming emperor had his tomb built in Nanjing, the town which he had chosen for his capital. As his eldest son died early, he was succeeded by his grandson, who became the second emperor. His fourth son, the Prince of Yan, was guarding the northern frontier near Beijing with an army 100,000 strong. The second emperor attempted to weaken his forces but was met with counter-attacks. After a 3-year war he was ousted and lost track of completely. So, the fourth son became the third emperor, Emperor Yongle, of the Ming Dynasty.



As a frontier commander, he was aware that a peaceful northern frontier was of great importance to the Ming Palace, he chose this valley to build his tomb. All his successors followed his example and had their tombs built here, except one who was dethroned and buried in the western suburb. Out of the sixteen emperors, thirteen lie here with their empresses and concubines.

Ming Tombs

The site was chosen with the greatest care, with geomancy taken into account. The tombs are located about 50 kilometers to the north of Beijing. They are scattered over a basin approximately 40 square kilometers in area, screened by mountains on three sides and open to the Beijing Plain in the south. The road leading to the tombs is guarded by the Tiger Hill on the left and the Dragon Hill on the right. It was a forbidden ground except for those who were officially in charge of its upkeep. It was not allowed to cultivate land, cut wood or to take stones from here. No one could enter it on horseback, even the emperor himself had to dismount at the gate.

Sacred Road

This road was known as Shendao, meaning "the way of the spirit." The body of the dead was carried over the route at funeral ceremony. It is 7 kilometers long, from the Memorial Arch to the gate of the main tomb.

Memorial Arch

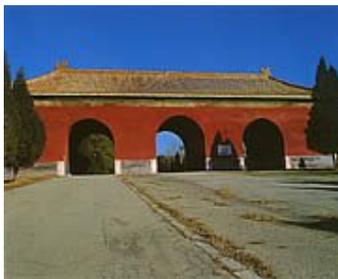
Built of white marble, was erected in 1540. It is 12 meters high and 31 meters wide, and has 5 arches supported by 6 pillars with beautiful bas-relief carvings of lions, dragons and lotus flowers. Double lintels link the six pillars. The roofing is made of round marble tiles, with upturned corners. "The way of the spirit" used to pass beneath the Memorial Arch.



Ming Tombs Memorial Arch

Big Red Gate

The Big Red Gate was built in 1426. It used to have three huge wooden doors. The central opening was used by the dead emperor alone, and living ministers and imperial family members had to use one of the side openings when they came to pay homage to the deceased emperors.



Ming Tomb Big Red Gate

Tablet House

About 500 yards (A yard is equal to 0.914 meter.) from the Big Red Gate stands the Tablet House built in 1435. A marble column, known as Huabiao, stands at each corner of the Tablet House. A huge tablet, 7 meters high, stands in the middle of the house on the back of a tortoise. The front side bears an inscription by the fourth Ming emperor. On the reverse side is an inscription carved during Qing Emperor Qianlong's reign. It described the reconstruction of the Ming Tombs in 1785 and commented on the rules and styles of the Ming Tombs.

Stone animals and Statues

Stone animals and statues are found at the entrance to imperial tombs from the Han Dynasty onwards, but none of the group is as famous as that of the Ming Tombs.

The avenue starts with two columns, called Wangzhu in Chinese, one on each side. They are hexagonal, carved with a cloud design, and the top is shaped like a round cylinder. The animals are lions, Xiezhi, camels, elephants, Qilin and horses, one kneeling and the other standing, twelve on each side and twenty-four in all. Xiezhi was a mythical beast or the feline family, said to be able to distinguish right and wrong. Qilin was a sort of imaginary animal with a scaly body, a cow's tail, deer's hooves and horns on its head.

With "the way of the spirit" turning slightly, the statues appear: two military officers wearing sabres, two civilian officials and two ministers of merit. Six statues on each side and twelve in all.

These animals and statues all date from the 15th century. It is interesting to compare them with those at the tomb of the first Ming emperor in Nanjing, which are scarcely any older and yet much less fine.



Underground Palace of Dingling

The Underground Palace of Dingling amidst pines and cypresses is the tomb of Emperor Wanli, the 13th Ming Emperor. He was born in 1563, and was chosen and named crown prince when he was six years old. He ascended the throne at the age of 10 and ruled for 48 years until he died in 1620.

Dingling is the only one of the Ming Tombs excavated so far. Excavation work took more than two years from 1956 to 1958. You may find the following background information interesting.



Ming Tomb

Emperor Wanli had two wives. The first wife Empress Xiaoduan died only a few months before his death. The second wife Empress Xiaojing died in 1612, eight years before and was buried in a nearby tomb reserved for imperial concubines. The first wife had no son while the second wife had one. He succeeded Emperor Wanli and died 29 days after his succession. He left the throne to his son. As Xiaojing was the second wife, she was not entitled to the privilege of sharing the Emperor's tomb. When her grandson became emperor, she was promoted to the rank of Empress Dowager, and it was decided that her body be moved into the tomb.

The construction of the tomb and the underground palace started in 1584 when Emperor Wanli was only 22 years old. Six years and 8 million taels of silver were spent on it. The bricks were brought from Shandong Province, the stone from the nearby county of Fangshan, and the wood from the southern provinces.

In 1644 when the Ming Dynasty collapsed, the buildings were damaged in a peasant uprising and were not restored until the reign of Qing Emperor Qianlong. They were burned down again at the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1956, the tomb was opened. It was the first time that an imperial tomb was excavated in China in a scientific way. Dingling is now a museum made up of three sections: the Underground Palace and two exhibition rooms. The objects on display are mostly originals. The trip to the Ming Tombs certainly gives us a better understanding of the Ming Dynasty art, the tomb structure and the Emperor's extravagance in building the tomb.

Luoyang, Henan Province

Located in the western part of China's central Henan Province, Luoyang is one of China's seven ancient capitals. Comprised of six city districts and eight counties, Luoyang occupies an area of 15,492 square kilometers, with a total population of 6.16 million, 1.4 million urban. Luoyang city proper covers an area of 544 square kilometers.

White Horse Temple



White Horse Temple

Luoyang served as the capital for nine dynasties over a period of more than 1,500 years. 96 emperors from the prehistoric Xia Dynasties, through Shang, Western and Eastern Zhou, Cao Wei, Sui, Later Liang, Later Tang and Later Jin Eastern Han established their seat of power there. Luoyang's importance in history means that it has significant influence in China's cultural heritage and has many historical sites. Although the political upheavals in the last century destroyed some of its grand historical heritage, Luoyang still retains many of its significant ancient landmarks which are the main tourist draw cards.

Longmen Grottoes



Longmen Grottoes

In and around Luoyang, visitors will find the White Horse Temple, the first Buddhism temple in China, Longmen Grottoes, a place renowned as a treasure house of Buddhist culture and art. The natural scenery around this area is also fascinating.

The Shaolin Temple

In the past, Shaolin was first known as a religious court and Buddhist school. As time elapsed, Shaolin Kungfu, the best of Chinese Wushu, had become famous all over China, until present day where it is famous throughout the entire world.



Shaolin Kungfu

Xi'an, Shanxi Province

City Wall of Xian

The City Wall of Xian was established in the 3rd year of Hongwu Period of the Ming Dynasty(1370 A.D.) in a rectangular form with a perimeter of 13.79 km and an area of 11.47 square km. It's 12 meters tall, 14 meters wide at the top and 18 meters thick at the base with 18 gates and a surrounding moat, being the only best preserved large ancient fortress in China.



Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang began to enlarge the wall built initially during the Tang dynasty (618 -907), creating the modern Xian City Wall. It is China's best preserved ancient city wall and one of the largest ancient military defensive systems in the world.

The wall was originally built with layers of dirt, with the base layer consisting of lime and glutinous rice extract. The wall was restored three times, starting from the 16th century until the 20th century. The wall has four gates and stands 12 meters (40 feet) tall, 12-14 meters (40-46 feet) wide at the top and 15-18 meters (50-60 feet) thick at the bottom. It covers 13.7 kilometers (8.5 miles) in length with a deep moat surrounding it. It has a rampart at every 120 metre, a total of 98 ramparts. Each rampart is equipped with a sentry building.

North Gate

Anyuan Gate, at the end of Welcome Avenue, is the must entry gate to the City from the airport and the central station. According to the historic records, when the honoured guests arrived at the gate, several armored guards would stand on the both sides, chanting "Open the Gate" at the same time and pulling the 2 scarlet doors out, meanwhile, guided by the ladies with lanterns in their hands, the officers would present the "welcoming wines" and issue the "visa" to every guest, then the guests would be allowed to walk on the red carpet, guarded by the officers and ladies to enter the city, then another officer would chop his "visa" with a scarlet seal. This is truly the special welcome ceremony of the Tang Dynasty.

South Gate

The south gate, named Yongning, is the most beautifully decorated one. It is located next to the Bell Tower, center of the city. Important ceremonies organized by the Provincial Government are usually held in the south gate square.



At night, on the Suspension - bridge Square outside the south gate of the City Wall, a mysterious scene is revealed before your eyes: banners and flags are fluttering, red lanterns are hung. Trumpets are blown; drums are beaten, accompanied by elegant and majestic music. The mighty guards of honor march out to host the guests, followed by civil and military officials, foreign envoys and beauties holding lanterns. Women in the style of Tang Dynasty beauties dance gracefully as they present their honored guests with flowers and fruits.

The classical marching-in ceremony begins. The war drums and the military marches are resumed. The guards of honor start to perform. The envoys shout unanimously, "Our honored guests are kindly invited to enter the gate". Led by the beauties, the guests walk through the

imperial passage, across the suspension bridge and enter the gate. They are expected to participate in the signing ceremony for entering the city within the City Wall. After that, they ascend the City Wall to appreciate the night view of Xi'an.

The classical marching-in ceremony imitating the ancient times introduced by Xi'an City Wall Renovation and Protection Committee is a kind of tourist program devised on the basis of Chinese traditional reception rites and the rites practiced in the Tang Dynasty, it fully demonstrates the hospitality of Xi'an people towards distinguished guests. Joining the ceremony. One can experience personally the elements of the Chinese history and culture. The marching-in ceremony is really a grand ceremony held in the city of rites

Bell Tower

In the downtown area of Xi'an at the intersection where the North, South, East and West Streets meet, stands a magnificent classical building, with carved beams and painted rafters. It is known as the Bell Tower. It has gained its name from the function it used to perform, to tell the time in the morning. Ever since its establishment, the tower has become the symbol of Xi'an. Now it is a historic monument in Shaanxi Province.

The Bell Tower was first built in 1384, in the Yingxiang Temple which used to be located in the center of the city. The tower was moved to its present place in 1582 as a result of the city's expansion program.



There have been various legendary tales about the Bell Tower.

In the Ming Dynasty, tens of thousands of people were killed in several earthquakes on Central Shaanxi Plain. People said that a gigantic dragon in the huge undercurrent that flowed beneath the city caused all those quakes. When the governor of the city heard this, he ordered all the smiths in the city to make a chain 300 meters long to chain the dragon at the bottom of the undercurrent, right in the center of the city. He then ordered 5,000 skillful craftsmen to build the tower over the place where the dragon was chained so that it would be weighed down to the bottom of the undercurrent forever, and to stop forever, its evil spells.

The tale may sound absurd; however, it is not without reason. The first emperor of the Ming Dynasty was born into a poor family. His parents died when he was young. He had to work as a shepherd, herding sheep for the rich landowners. Later, he went to a temple and became a monk. When he ascended the throne, he was afraid of being deposed by someone of "real dragon" (i.e. royal descent). Therefore, he ordered bell towers to be built all over the country to repress the "dragon spirits". Xi'an has been the site of imperial capitals ever since ancient times. Just as popular then as now, the saying that the "dragon spirits" must be running rampant here comes from this belief. This made Zhu Yuanzhang, the Emperor, all the more afraid. Therefore, the Bell Tower in Xi'an was not only built earlier, but also taller than the other ones in the country.

The square-shaped base of the tower occupies an area of 1,337.4 square meters and is 8.6 meters high and 35.5 meters wide. The base was completely laid with blue bricks. The building proper is a mixed structure of bricks and wood, and it is 36 meters high. Three stories of eaves are seen from the exterior of the buildings. The interior of the building is only two stories. The eaves are supported by colorful dougong -- a unique Chinese architectural style of brackets

inserted on the top of columns and crossbeams. They not only made the whole building firm, but also look artistic. In fact, the dougong architecture has a long history, dating far back to the Shang Dynasty (1600-1100 B.C.). A comparatively complete design of dougong can still be seen, from the engravings on bronze wares dating back to the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.).

Since 1949, the Municipal Government of Xi'an has launched three repair programs on the tower. As a result, the tower now looks as great and magnificent as when it was first built hundreds of years ago. Today, if you climb the tower by way of its wooden stairs, you will command an extensive view over the whole city. If you are lucky to go on a fine day, your eyesight might reach as far as Zhongnan Mountain in the far southern suburb of the city.

Big Wild Goose Pagoda

Situated in the Da Ci'en Temple, about four kilometers from the urban center, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda is one of the famous Buddhist pagodas in China.

Originally built in 589 A.D. in the Sui Dynasty, the temple was named Wu Lou Si Temple. It was not until 648 A.D. when Emperor Li Zhi, then still a crown prince, sponsored a repair project on the temple. This was a symbol of thanksgiving to his mother for her kindness, after she had suffered an early death. The temple then assumed the present name Temple of Thanksgiving. The Emperor Gaozong was said to pay homage to the temple twice a day by looking in its direction from the Hanyuan Palace. The temple, with 13 separate courtyards, contained 1,879 magnificent-looking rooms altogether and was a place of grand extent in the Tang Dynasty. However, it went into gradual decay after the downfall of the Tang Dynasty. The halls and rooms that have survived the age are structures that were built in the Ming Dynasty.

The Tang Regime gave orders to build a chamber for the translation of Buddhist scriptures in an effort to have the then widely renowned Master Xuanzang (Monk Tripitaka) agree to be the head of the temple.



The Wild Goose Pagoda was finished in 652 A.D. Its five-storey are 60 meters in height. The decay of the earth-cored pagoda caused the new construction of a 10-storey pagoda from 701 to 704. However, the winds of war, in the years to come, reduced the pagoda almost to ruins, which in turn resulted in the construction of a 7-storeyed, 64-meter-high structure today.

The multi-storey pagoda was an architectural marvel. It was built with layers of bricks but without any cement in between. The bracket style in traditional Chinese architecture was also used in the construction of the pagoda. The seams between each layer of bricks and the 'prisms' on each side of the pagoda are clearly visible. The grand body of the pagoda with its solemn appearance, simple style and high structure, is indeed a good example of ancient people's wisdom and talent.

Pictures of the Heavenly King and of Buddha are on the door frame and horizontal bars on four sides of the pagoda's base. These stone sculptures display peak workmanship, and show vivid shapes and smooth lines. They now serve as an important source of material for the study of painting and sculpture of the Tang Dynasty. Out of these artistic works, the one on

the horizontal bar of the west door is the most precious. It is a rare piece of art, now used for the study of the Tang architecture.

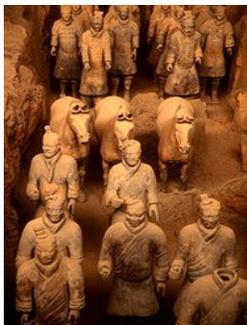
Inside the temple where the pagoda is situated, there are two small buildings: the one on the east side houses a bell, and the one on the west side a drum. The bell, an iron cast from the Ming Dynasty, weights 15 tons. Together with the drum, the bell was used to strike time for the monks in the temple.

Inside the Great Hall of the Buddha in the temple there are three incarnations of Sakyamuni. The one in the middle is called Dharmakaya. The one on the west side is called Bao Shen Buddha, and the one on the opposite side is called Ying Shen Buddha.

In the Doctrine Chamber stands the Amitabha Buddha. On the wall at the east side of the chamber, there are three rubbings. The one in the middle is called Xuanzang (Monk Tripitaka) carries the Scriptures to Chang'an.

In the Tang Dynasty, every successful candidate who passed the imperial examinations would have to climb up the Big Wild Goose Pagoda and wrote poems and inscriptions there. This ritual would symbolize a soaring career in the future. The fashion of writing poems and leaving inscriptions on the horizontal bars over different doors and stone frame-works by the successful candidates of the imperial examinations went on as far as the Ming Dynasty. These poem sand inscriptions have survived till this day as a fine mirror to the city's past.

Terra Cotta Warriors



The Terra Cotta Warriors and Horses are the most significant archeological excavations of the 20th century. Work is ongoing at this site, which is around 1.5 kilometers east of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum, Lintong County, Shaanxi province. It is a sight not to be missed by any visitor to China.

Upon ascending the throne at the age of 13 (in 246 BC), Qin Shi Huang, later the first Emperor of all China, had work begun on his mausoleum. It took 11 years to finish. It is speculated that many buried treasures and sacrificial objects had accompanied the emperor in his after-life. A group of peasants uncovered some pottery while digging for a well nearby the royal tomb in 1974. It caught the attention of archeologists immediately. They came to Xi'an in droves to study and to extend the digs. They had established beyond doubt that these artifacts were associated with the Qin Dynasty (211 --206 BC).

The State Council authorized to build a museum on site in 1975. When completed, people from far and near came to visit. Xian and the Museum of Qin Terra Cotta Warriors and Horses have become landmarks on all travelers' itinerary.



Life size terracotta figures of warriors and horses arranged in battle formations are the star features at the museum. They are replicas of what the imperial guard should look like in those days of pomp and vigor.

The museum covers an area of 16,300 square meters, divided into three sections: No. 1 Pit, No. 2 Pit, and No. 3 Pit respectively. They were tagged in the order of their discoveries. No. 1 Pit is the largest, first opened to the public on China's National Day, 1979. There are columns of soldiers at the front, followed by war chariots at the back.

No. 2 Pit, found in 1976, is 20 meters northeast of No. 1 Pit. It contained over a thousand warriors and 90 chariots of wood. It was unveiled to the public in 1994. Archeologists came upon No. 3 Pit also in 1976, 25 meters northwest of No. 1 Pit. It looked like to be the command center of the armed forces. It went on display in 1989, with 68 warriors, a war chariot and four horses.



Altogether over 7,000 pottery soldiers, horses, chariots, and even weapons have been unearthed from these pits. Most of them have been restored to their former grandeur.

The Terracotta Warriors and Horses is a sensational archeological find of all times. It has put Xian on the map for tourists. It was listed by UNESCO in 1987 as one of the world cultural heritages.

[Shanxi Provincial History Museum](#)

The Shanxi Provincial History Museum, a massive modern museum up to the national standard, is located one kilometer northwest of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda. It is a magnificent architectural complex in the Tang Dynasty style. It covers an area of 70,000 square meters, with the construction area of 5,000 square meters. It collects the highlights of the Shaanxi culture and shows a development of the Chinese civilization.

The architecture of the Museum is simple, unsophisticated, elegant and unique in style. It combines the construction of the ancient Chinese palaces and courtyard buildings, harmonious and graceful in hue, and demonstrates the Chinese traditional architectural style. It also has local characteristics and epoch-making essence.



The Museum possesses a treasure of 113,000 historic and cultural artifacts unearthed in Shaanxi, and it covers an area of 1,100 square meters for exhibition.

The Museum has established a science and technology center for the preservation of cultural relics. It has an advanced technology of examination and laboratory test and the means of repair and restoration. To promote international cultural exchanges, it has also set up a computer-controlled, international symposium hall where six different languages can be employed in the spontaneous interpretation.

In the Preface Hall of the museum, the massive picture that faces you show the surging and roaring Yellow River and the Vast Loess Plateau, which are the natural habitat of the Shaanxi residents and the cradle of Shaanxi ancient civilization as well.

The giant lion in the center was originally erected in front of Shunling, the Mausoleum of the mother of Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty. Its exquisite craftsmanship and imposing

look rank it the " No.1 Lion in the Orient". China's ancient stone lions and the technique of its sculpturing were introduced into the country from Afghanistan. So this lion is not only representative of the Shaanxi civilization, but also the product of the cultural exchange between the East and the West.

The Shaanxi History Museum offers a full display of historic relics mainly excavated in the province. The exhibition can be divided into seven sections which emphatically reveal the Han, Wei, Jin, North and South, Sui, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties. The exhibition vividly and systematically depicts Shaanxi history, ranging from 1,150,000 years ago up to the year 1840. In Chinese history, eleven dynasties established their capitals in Shaanxi Province, lasting more than 1000 years. It is the area that was made the country's capital by more dynasties and for longer periods of time than any other places in China. In a way, the ancient history of Shaanxi is a highly condensed version of Chinese history

Shanghai

Shanghai is a fascinating metropolis for tourists from both home and abroad. At the sight of the bustling Huangpu River and the magnificent Suzhou Creek, You will soon have a series of fantastic reveries.



Shanghai is situated at 31 14' north latitude and 121 29' east longitude. Bordering Jiangsu Province on the west, Shanghai is washed by the East China Sea on the east and Hangzhou bay on the south. North of city, Yangtze River pours into the East China Sea. It also assumes the central location along China's coastal line. Owing to its advantageous geographic location and easy accesses to a vast hinterland, Shanghai has now become an excellent sea and river port.

Today, encouraged by the instruction of late senior leader Deng Xiaoping, Shanghai undergoes a great change every three years in addition to achieving a change every year. With a tremendous success achieved in reform and development, this world-known metropolis has now become not only China's center of economy, finance, trade and navigation, but also an international metropolis on the western bank of the Pacific Ocean, noted for its having an intriguing, unique blend of Chinese and Western cultures. In short, Shanghai has turned itself into an open, fashionable and dynamic metropolis. Just like Yulan (magnolia, the symbol flower of the city) in bloom, Shanghai is full of life and vitality, and, at the same time, just as a pacemaker, it strides forward day and night in high spirits.

The scenic spots in Shanghai are really too many for the eye to take in. Built in different periods of time and in various architectural styles of the world, the grand complex of high-rise buildings on the either bank of the Huangpu River is reputed as "the International Fair of World Architecture". On the eastern bank of the river, there are rows upon rows of high-rise structure dominating the skyline, including the Oriental TV Tower and the 88-storey Jinmao Building. Standing on the observation deck, you will soon have a superb panorama view of Shanghai's spectacular development over the previous years. At the core part of this world-famous metropolis, there are many attractive scenic spots, such as the People's Square,

the Shanghai Museum, the Municipal Exhibition Hall of Shanghai Urban Construction and Shanghai Grand Theatre.

Yu (Yuyuan) Garden, Shanghai

Yu Garden, a classical garden in downtown Shanghai, boasts a history over 400 years. Each pavilion, hall, stone and stream in the garden is expressing the quintessence of South China landscape design from Ming and Qing Dynasty. Over forty spots, divided by dragon walls,



wound corridors and beautiful flowers, form an unique picture featuring one step, one beauty; every step, every beauty.

Located on Anren Street, Yu garden was built during the reign of Jiajing of the Ming Dynasty (1577), 400 hundred years from now. It is a residential garden built by Pan Yunduan, minister of finance in Sichuan Province in the Ming Dynasty. Pan built the garden to “please his parents and let them enjoy themselves in their late years”. In ancient Chinese “Yu” means “pleasing”, hence the name of the garden. The garden is typical of the gardening art south of the Changjiang River and is famed as “a wonder of beauty in southeast China”. It is still a famous

classical garden in south China. At the end of the Ming Dynasty the garden was deserted. It was rebuilt in the 25th year of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1760).

Yu garden is reputed to be the most beautiful garden south of the Yangtze River. Built beside the Temple of the City God and covering only five acres, it follows the Suzhou garden design of a world in microcosm, with 30 pavilions linked by corridors, artificial hills, bridges over lotus pools, groves of bamboo and walls occupied by stone dragons. The surrounding bazaar is packed with traditional and modern shops, restaurants and temples.

The Bund, Shanghai

The Bund is the best-known landmark in Shanghai. On this stretch of Zhongshan Road East lies the most important buildings left from colonial Shanghai including the Peace Hotel, the Bank of China, and Shanghai Gold Exchange. Externally these buildings have been well preserved and stand proud in their original grandeur. Internally they have been renovated to house some major financial institutions as well as Shanghai's most expensive and luxurious hotels, restaurants and bars.

One of the key features of the Bund is the contrast it provides.

On the West side of Zhongshan Road sits the historic European style buildings, the oldest of which is the Jin Jiang hotel built in 1906, this is called 'Puxi' . Just opposite on the Eastern side of the river is the area called 'Pudong' where Shanghai's most modern constructions can be seen. These include the Pearl TV Tower and the Jing Mao Tower. These ultra-modern even space age looking buildings form the most famous view of Pudong's Lu Jia Zui which has come to symbolize Shanghai today.



Both tourists and local Shanghainese alike gravitate towards the Bund as the heart of central Shanghai. Most people come for leisure, yet the Bund is actually home to many of the largest financial institutions of the city, and of China. Though Lujiazui is an important financial center

of the city, Zhongshan Road E is considered China's Wall Street. Thus the Bund symbolizes Shanghai's rising star as China's fastest developing city, and is fittingly reminiscent of Shanghai's heyday in the 1930's.

Bund No 3: The Shanghai Club established by English residents in 1861, used to be an important social intercourse place. It was rebuilt in January, 1910 on the site of the old building. 6 Ionic columns were added to the middle part between the second and third story, which created a three-dimensional effect. The Ionic orders, Baroque ceilings and elaborate decorations enhance the artistic beauty and define the building as a representative work of English Renaissance.

Bund No 13: The Customs House was finished in 1927. Its architectural style is a combination of European classicism and modernism. The Greek-style Ionic columns can be easily seen in the front of the main entrance. On top of the building stands a clock tower, designed along the lines of Big Ben in London. It is the biggest clock tower in Asia. At night, the tower is ablaze with light and the hands of clock can be clearly seen from quite a distance away, while the sound travels across kilometers of Shanghai bustle. Now the Customs house is on the list of historic sites under national protection.

Although these classical-style buildings were neither designed by one designer nor constructed during the same period of time, they more or less share the same architectural style. The coordinated outline reflects a sense of luxury and elegance. The architecture on the Bund has been nicknamed a World Architecture Exposition and is considered to be a part of human cultural heritage.

Jin Mao Tower, Shanghai's Landmark



Jin Mao Tower

As the tallest building in China and the third tallest building in the world, Jin Mao Tower is located in the Lujiazui Finance and Trade Zone in Pudong. It is an intelligent building offering services for business, hotel, recreation, sightseeing and shopping. Jin Mao Building is a symbolic architecture of Shanghai in marching to the 21st century. Its height is only next to that of the Twin-Tower Building in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and the Sears Tower in Chicago, U.S.A.

It overlooks the Oriental Pearl TV Tower in the distance, and next to the tunnel on Yanan Road, East, and will soon be reached by No 2 Subway. It covers a total construction area of 290,000 square meters and is 420.5 meters high. It has 88 stories above the ground, three stories underground and a six-story annex. From the third to the 50th floor are offices and starting from the 53rd floor, the building is occupied by the Grand Hyatt hotel. The 88th floor is the highest and largest sightseeing hall in China. It's able to accommodate over a thousand visitors. There are two elevators with a speed of 9.1m/sec transport visitors in 45 seconds from the first basement to the sightseeing floor. Here, looking around and to the far distance, one can have a whole view of new Shanghai. Jin Mao Tower is not only a new tourist attraction, but also a window through which people from other parts of the world may get a better understanding of Shanghai and Pudong.

Xintiandi, Shanghai

Located in central Shanghai just south of Huaihai Zhong Road, Xintiandi is a redevelopment of a once rundown part of town based on the layout of an old Shanghainese neighborhood.

Now it is a state-of-the-art warren of upscale shops, bars and restaurants based on the theme of "where old meets new". Here you find the oddly complimentary combination of the traditional houses of old Shanghai (the 'Shikumen') hosting ultra modern restaurants, bars and shops. The exterior of these Shikumen style houses of 1920's Shanghai have been tastefully restored, whilst inside they have been fully renovated to accommodate the tastes of the modern Westerner.



Xintiandi, Shanghai

Moreover Xintiandi is most famous for its nightlife when the Western style bars open their doors for business. No doubt every Westerner that comes to Shanghai will pay at least one visit here, if not more. The complex also includes a museum of Shanghainese architecture and a restored school where the Chinese Communist Party held its first congress in 1921, now also a museum.

Suzhou



Suzhou is a historic and cultural ancient city as well as a scenic tourist city which is famous in China and in the world. Dotted with beautiful classical gardens full of poetic sceneries, the city has been reputed as the "garden city" over the centuries.

The history of Suzhou's gardens can be traced as far back as the Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC - 476 BC). Distinctive gardens continued to appear throughout the subsequent dynasties, but it was during the Ming (1368 - 1644) and Qing (1644 - 1911) that the garden art of Suzhou was at its zenith. The unique garden construction art reached to such a height as described that the gardens are natural but elegant, meandering but exquisite, and like a big world hidden in a nut.

The prospering city and its outskirts were dotted with exquisite private gardens. Dozens of them, such as Zhuozheng (Humble Administrator's) Garden, Liuyuan (Lingering) Garden, Wangshi (Master of Net) Garden and Huanxiu (Embracing Beauty) Mountain Villa, are still well preserved today.



Zhuozheng Garden



Chinese silk embroidery

Acrobatics

Beijing's culture is today a complex reflection of China's history and its position in a rapidly changing world. Full of contradictions and spectacular exclamations, it's a city partially frozen in time as well as light-years ahead. As culture is everything, not just the art and grandiosity of its heyday, there is much to see, and enjoy.

The history of acrobatics in China can be traced back to the Neolithic period (more than 5,000 years ago). It is believed that acrobatics grew from self-defense skills the people practiced and demonstrated during their leisure time, but this is not certain.

Over time, acrobatics was developed into a performance art and became known worldwide through performances along the Silk Road.



Whether old or young, educated or illiterate, an appreciation simply requires you to see. There is no language barrier or cultural border.

One thinks of the Chinese saying, "one minute on a stage costs a performer ten years of training," when watching the skill and determination of Chinese acrobats.

The prestigious China Acrobatic Circus has secured another impressive feather in its cap by scooping the Golden Clown award at the 28th International Monte Carlo Circus Festival.



A series of eye-popping feats of acrobatic brilliance won over judges impressed by the 13-strong Chinese troupe's bowl-balancing, magic and dance skills.

The use of traditional red Chinese fans on stage added to the visual appeal of a stunning sequence of performances. The Golden Clown is the third top prize brought home by the China Acrobatic Circus from international contests in the past three years. In 2003, a rope walk performed by Zhang Fan won the French Republic President Award.

China Acrobatic Circus also won the Crystal Award at the French Macy International Circus Festival. Delighted circus director Sun Lili said: "More and more Chinese are now proud of our breathtaking acrobatics." Such spectacular performances can be enjoyed every evening at Universal Theatre.

Kungfu

Kungfu (also known as Wushu or martial arts) is one of the typical demonstrations of traditional Chinese culture. It is a sport which utilizes both brawn and brain.

The theory of Kungfu is based upon classical Chinese philosophy, while the skills of Kungfu consist of various forms of fighting: fist fights, weapon fights, and other fighting routines and unarmed combats.

Kungfu is not only a sporting exercise but also an artistic form. It is used to cure illness as well as for self-defense and is a comprehensive form of culture of the human body.

Kungfu enjoys a long history and great popularity in China. Thanks to its uniqueness and charisma originating from traditional oriental culture, Kungfu is captivating the attention of more and more people in other nations.

Characteristics

As one of the earliest and long-lasting sports, Kungfu has developed its own characteristics over time. Major characteristics are listed below:



1. A fight stressing the use of legs.

Because of its long history incorporating differences in culture, ideology, region and usages, Kungfu has developed into a great variety of schools and styles. While some schools emphasize the use of fists and hand technique, others emphasize leg technique and footwork. Some take interest in the variation of acts whereas others prefer simplicity. Some focus on keeping opponents at arm's and leg's length while others like to fight in close contact. The assortment of schools and styles displays the colorful features of Kungfu and gratifies the various needs of people.

2. Kungfu includes the use of many weapons.

Chinese ancients named the Kungfu arsenal the "Eighteen Arms," but there are many more in use. Almost all fights are accompanied by weapon usage of one kind or another. The combination of fist fights and weapon usage allows for a fuller and more efficient application of Kungfu skills while sharpening the insight of combat and control and enriching the program of Kungfu exercise.

3. The combination of offence and defence is the essence of Kungfu. Implications of offence and de-fence permeate the complete gamut of Kungfu exercise. They are fully demonstrated in both practice and real combat. Even a solo practice implies the atmosphere of offence and defence against an imaginary opponent in time and space. Kungfu masters have systematically summed up the traditions of offence and defence and established a set of theories and techniques on combat.

4. The movement of the human body is only the external display of Kungfu. Kungfu is by no means limited to the external movement, but also emphasizes the full display of the internal temperament, mental attitude and potential of the human being. The practice of Kungfu not only strengthens the bones and muscles but also the internal organs and intelligence. Coordination and cooperation are called for with each and every movement of the hand, eye, body, foot and form of movement. Kungfu stresses that the mind directs the circulation of air flow within the body and that the inner circulation of air generates the external strength, so demonstrating the combination of external and internal forces. Cultivating air flows inside the body in order to improve the basic structures inside the body is an important purpose of Kungfu exercises.

5. Ingenious applications of substantial and insubstantial blows are incorporated in the movements and forces of Kungfu. Motion and stillness alternate with each other, while hardness and softness supplement one another, greatly enhancing the artistic expression and the practicality of Kungfu, and demonstrating its inclusive and equilibristic nature. Once in action, the movements can be as fast and forceful as a gust of wind, while being still, the body looks as steady as a mountain. Hard blows are like lightning and thunderclaps, whereas soft punches are like breezes delicately caressing willow twigs. Human feelings and abilities are clearly demonstrated through the rhythmic movements of opening and closing, and the emotions excited in doing exercises.

Functions

Kungfu boasts versatile functions, of which the most outstanding are:

(1) Moral Cultivation

As a human practice which stresses cultivation of moral characters and demonstration of spirit and temperament, Kungfu is conducive to developing good manners and conduct. It also helps adjust one's psychology. The moral characters and etiquette are held in esteem by all schools of Kungfu masters.

(2) Offence and Defence

Kungfu practitioners can master various offence and defence techniques of armed and unarmed combat for self defence through a great number of training exercises. Many of the Kungfu techniques can also be utilized in military and police training programs.

(3) Curative Effect

Tai Chi Quan, one of the traditional schools of Chinese shadow Chuan, and the various still standing exercises emphasize the adjustment of one's breathing, thinking and psychology. These exercises have been proven to have good curative and rehabilitative effects on sufferers of chronic diseases of many kinds. As these exercises help strengthen the coordination of the human body and its immunity, they are ideal for preventing and curing diseases.



(4) Health Improvement

The practice of the basic exercises and routines of Kungfu are effective methods for improving the pliability of the joints and the suppleness of the back and legs. The generation of energy, the jumping and leaping and the changes from one stance to another, all help enhance human strength and speed of movement. Kungfu, therefore, can be taken as the basic exercise for other sporting activities.

(5) Artistic Effect

The graceful movement of the body, especially the typical oriental charm revealed during exercises and practice of Kungfu, has an impressive artistic effect and provides visual delight.

(6) Intelligence

While stressing the development of physical prowess, Kungfu also emphasizes the exercise of thinking. By adjusting various human functions, Kungfu also helps improve the nervous system and is therefore good for intellectual development.

The Arts of Chinese Cuisine

Essential to your Beijing dining experience is a brief tour of the many establishments offering Peking Duck: a delicious, lightly-smoked, rich meal complimented by pancakes, dipping sauce, vegetable filling and irresistible slivers of juicy meat, fat and crispy skin. Peking Duck is said to originate from Inner Mongolia and was first served in a Peking restaurant in 1855. The original recipe for Peking Duck includes a description of how to build and fire the oven for smoking the bird!



The Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant leads the popular duck front, and you'll find many of them in Beijing. Bianyifang Restaurant features another way of roasting duck that is also delicious.

Put simply, a taste of Peking Duck is every bit as important as a visit to Tian'anmen Square.

Peking roast duck is a signature dish in China's capital city, but there's more than one way to roast a duck, and that has opened a door to competition in a field that is hotly contested by some of Beijing's most famous Time Honored Brands (laozihao).

One of these is 600-year-old Bianyifang, a Peking roast duck restaurant with a difference, located on Chongwenmen Dajie near the Hademen Hotel in Chongwen District.

But what is the difference?

The Peking roast duck tradition is divided into two schools, roast duck made using a "closed" oven (where the heat radiates from inner-oven walls) and roast duck made using "half-open" ovens (where the duck is hung over a heating source such as a wood fire). Unlike some of its famous competitors, Bianyifang's product is representative of the closed-oven type; its taste is easily recognizable by experienced Beijingers. It is made without using an open fire, and involves a specially made soup that fills the duck while it's cooking. That is, the duck roasts outside and boils inside during the cooking process. Tan outside and tender inside, fat, but not greasy, closed-oven roast ducks enjoy a reputation as a green food.



That is the major reason why Bianyifang is considered irreplaceable and has survived during its long history in China.

Beijing's laozihao restaurants, whatever their products or methods, seem to transcend the marketing chaos of modern food service chains. Their names are instantly recognizable, durable, and

epitomize quality. These are super brands, and when one thinks kaoya (Peking roast duck), names like Bianyifang are the ones that come to mind.

It is said that eating roast duck in Beijing is like attending a fine symphony. Peking roast duck symbolizes the ancient capital city much in the same way that Coca-Cola evokes an identity with the United States wherever it is served.

For kaoya lovers, an evening at Bianyifang is a treasured experience, where people engage in fine dining, instead of stuffing themselves with microwaved fast foods. You have to be patient to savour a famous Peking roast duck, and its eating should be regarded as a grand occasion.

A proper presentation of the duck is an important part of the evening. You will never see Beijingers digging into a fine roast duck, tearing the leg or wings off with abandon, which is an injustice to the duck and the roast duck tradition.

Instead, a skilled chef clad in a pure white gown, smiling, will elegantly and swiftly slice the duck into bite-sized pieces, featuring just the right amount of skin and meat. Like snowflakes, they are piled on a clean porcelain plate and readied for you.



Hotpot



Dumpling



Soup Dumpling



Soy bean Milk & Chinese Donut



House-hold Breakfast