

**Bangkok to Beijing via Laos and Vietnam
February – April 2007**

**Part 2
Hong Kong to Beijing**

April 2007

Jim Russell

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Itinerary

Laos, Hanoi, China – March – April - 2007

Part 1

Day	Date		Tour Day	Location	
1	24-Feb-07	Saturday		Melb - Bangkok	Grande Ville Hotel 903 Mahachai Road - Chinatown Bangkok - Thailand Phone: +66 (0) 2 225 0050 Fax: +66 (0) 2 225 7593
2	25-Feb-07	Sunday	1	Bangkok	Grande Ville Hotel
3	26-Feb-07	Monday	2	Bangkok	Grande Ville Hotel
4	27-Feb-07	Tuesday	3	Chiang Mai	
5	28-Feb-07	Wednesday	4	Chiang Khong	
6	1-Mar-07	Thursday	5	Mekong River	
7	2-Mar-07	Friday	6	Mekong River	
8	3-Mar-07	Saturday	7	Luang Prabang	
9	4-Mar-07	Sunday	8	Luang Prabang	
10	5-Mar-07	Monday	9	Vientiane	
11	6-Mar-07	Tuesday	10	Vientiane	
12	7-Mar-07	Wednesday	11	Vientiane	
13	8-Mar-07	Thursday	12	Lak Sao	
14	9-Mar-07	Friday	13	Hanoi	Victory Hotel 15 Nguyen Nhu Do St – Hanoi - Vietnam Phone: +84 4747 4725 Fax: +84 4747 0539
15	10-Mar-07	Saturday	14	Hanoi	Victory Hotel

16	11-Mar-07	Sunday	15	Hanoi	Que & Hans Villa 27, Ho Tay Villa complex Number 10, Dang Thai Mai, Tay Ho district, Hanoi Phone: 0902118825 (Que's mobile).
17	12-Mar-07	Monday		Hanoi	Que & Hans
18	13-Mar-07	Tuesday		Hanoi	Que & Hans
19	14-Mar-07	Wednesday		Hanoi	Que & Hans
20	15-Mar-07	Thursday		Hanoi	Que & Hans
21	16-Mar-07	Friday		Hanoi	Que & Hans
22	17-Mar-07	Saturday		Hanoi	Que & Hans
23	18-Mar-07	Sunday	1	Hanoi	Victory Hotel 15 Nguyen Nhu Do Street – Hanoi - Vietnam Phone: +84 4 7474725 Fax: +84 4 747053
24	19-Mar-07	Monday	2	Halong Bay	
25	20-Mar-07	Tuesday	3	Halong Bay	
26	21-Mar-07	Wednesday	4	Halong Bay	
27	22-Mar-07	Thursday	5	Hua Shan	
28	23-Mar-07	Friday	6	Liuzhou	
29	24-Mar-07	Saturday	7	Chengyang	
30	25-Mar-07	Sunday	8	Chengyang	
31	26-Mar-07	Monday	9	Longji	
32	27-Mar-07	Tuesday	10	Longji	
33	28-Mar-07	Wednesday	11	Yangshuo	
34	29-Mar-07	Thursday	12	Yangshuo	
35	30-Mar-07	Friday	13	Yangshuo	
36	31-Mar-07	Saturday	14	Hong Kong	West Hotel 39 Wai Ching Street – Yaumatei Kowloon - Hong Kong - China Phone: 852 2770 7718 Fax: 852 2770 7066

37	1-Apr-07	Sunday	15	Hong Kong	Stanford Hotel 118 Soy Street – Mongkok - Kowloon Hong Kong - China Phone: +852 2781 1881 Fax: +852 2388 3733
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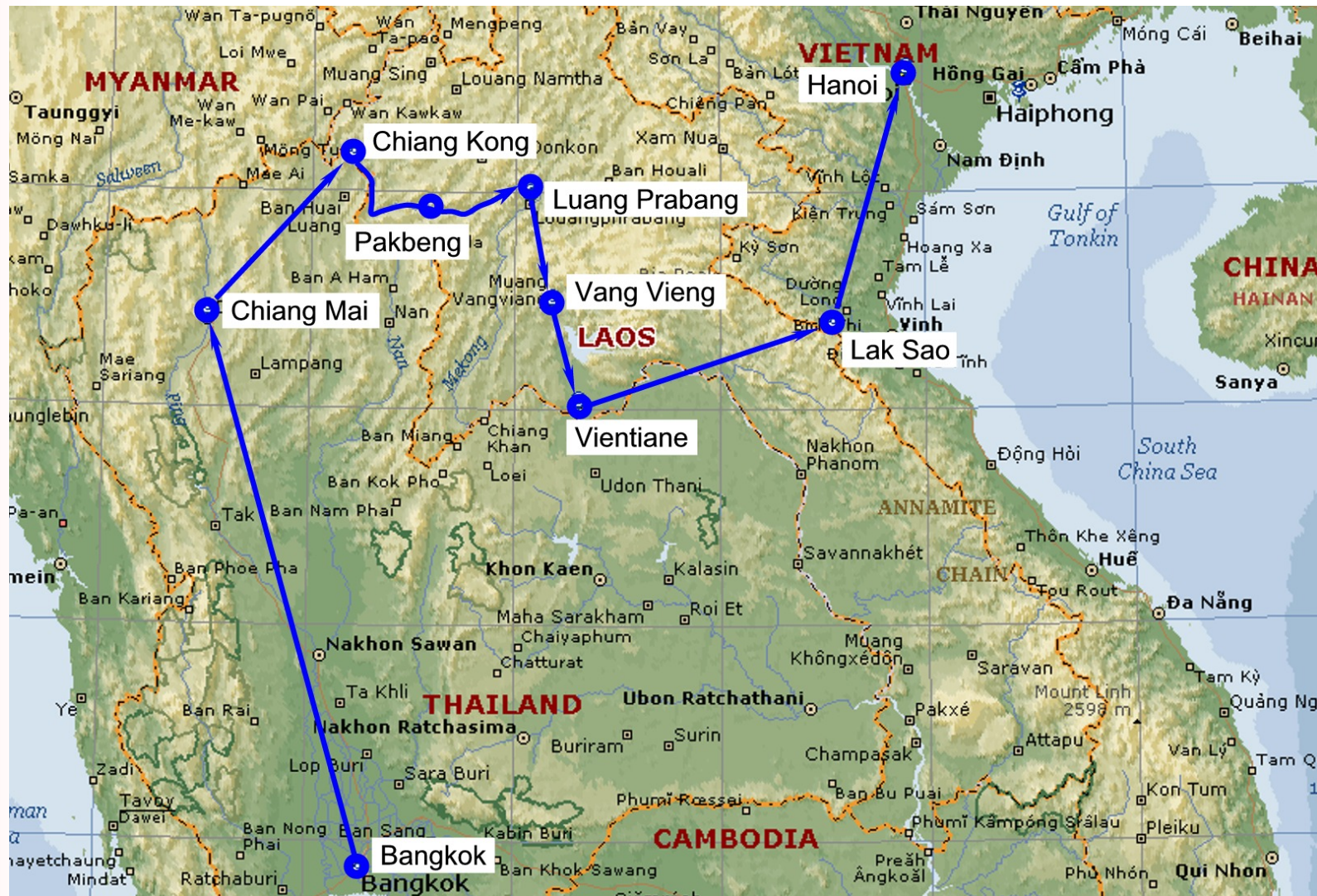
Part 2

38	2-Apr-07	Monday	1	Hong Kong	Stanford Hotel
39	3-Apr-07	Tuesday	2	Hong Kong	Stanford Hotel
40	4-Apr-07	Wednesday	3	Yangshuo	
41	5-Apr-07	Thursday	4	Yangshuo	
42	6-Apr-07	Friday	5	Yangshuo	
43	7-Apr-07	Saturday	6	Yangzi River	
44	8-Apr-07	Sunday	7	Yangzi River	
45	9-Apr-07	Monday	8	Yangzi River	
46	10-Apr-07	Tuesday	9	Hangzhou	
47	11-Apr-07	Wednesday	10	Hangzhou	
48	12-Apr-07	Thursday	11	Huangshan	
49	13-Apr-07	Friday	12	Huangshan	
50	14-Apr-07	Saturday	13	Shanghai	
51	15-Apr-07	Sunday	14	Shanghai	
52	16-Apr-07	Monday	15	Zhouzhuang	
53	17-Apr-07	Tuesday	16	Zhouzhuang	
54	18-Apr-07	Wednesday	17	Suzhou	
55	19-Apr-07	Thursday	18	Xi'an	
56	20-Apr-07	Friday	19	Xi'an	
57	21-Apr-07	Saturday	20	Xi'an	
58	22-Apr-07	Sunday	21	Pingyao	
59	23-Apr-07	Monday	22	Pingyao	
60	24-Apr-07	Tuesday	23	Datong	

61	25-Apr-07	Wednesday	24	Datong	
					Dong Jiao Min Xiang Hotel 23A Dong Jiao Min Xiang Dong Cheng District – Beijing - China Phone: +8610 6524 3311 Fax: +86 10 6513 1402
62	26-Apr-07	Thursday	25	Beijing	
63	27-Apr-07	Friday	26	Beijing	Dong Jiao Min Xiang Hote
64	28-Apr-07	Saturday	27	Beijing	Dong Jiao Min Xiang Hote
65	29-Apr-07	Sunday	28	Beijing - Melbourne	

MAPS

Bangkok to Hanoi



Hanoi to Hong Kong



Hong Kong to Beijing



Hong Kong to Beijing

Sunday 1st April 2007 – Hong Kong

Day 37

Today I have to move to the Stanford Hotel in Mong Kok for tomorrow's start of the next segment of my trip.



Fountain- Kowloon Park

The morning is spent completing the notes for Week 5 and taking advantage of the free internet access in the room.



Chinese Gaarden – Kowloon Park



Bird Lake – Kowloon Park

Just before noon Fabian, my room mate for the last 2 weeks, and I check out and share a taxi to the Stanford from where he will walk to his overnight hostel accommodation in a nearby hostel.



Cultural Centre – Kowloon

Once settled into the hotel I head out around 13:00 to walk along Nathan Road, the main road through the centre of Kowloon and the main shopping centre. The road is as I remember it from previous visits, busy with locals and tourists, and lined with fashionable shops and jewellery stores. Nathan Road was always crowded with buses, it still is, but they are newer and larger double-decked buses.

On the west side of Nathan Road is Kowloon Park, I have walked past it many times before without going in. This time I have the time to take a look. It is a real oasis in a concrete jungle. There is a Chinese Garden, several fountains, a water bird pond with flamingos and ducks and small aviary with specimens of exotic birds from different parts of the world.



International Finance Centre - Hong Kong

After spending half an hour or so wandering around the park I return to

Nathan Road and continue on toward the harbour and the Peninsular Hotel. The Hotel was once on the waterfront but reclaimed land in front is now built up with a cultural centre, space museum and art gallery.



Promenade - Kowloon



Harbour Cleaners - Hong Kong



Hong Kong Harbour Traffic



Convention Centre - Hong Kong

My impression is that Kowloon continues to grow with increasing numbers of new skyscrapers, but that it's character has not changed much since I was last here about 15 years ago.

The Star Ferries crossing to Hong Kong Island are an iconic symbol of Hong Kong and I head to the ferry wharf to cross to Hong Kong.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Ferry
<http://www.starferry.com.hk/new/en/index.asp>



HSBC Building - Hong Kong

The crossing of the busy waterway between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island takes only a few minutes and as it

approaches the dock changes are apparent.



Central Pier - Hong Kong



Trams - Hong Kong

The Central ferry wharf has been completely rebuilt and where there were once markets and old buildings the land has been cleared to make way for a huge bus station and the development of a new waterfront precinct featuring amenities

for the citizens including a boat harbour. There are new skyscrapers. Evidence of old Hong Kong seems to have disappeared except for a few colonial buildings.



View from the Peak - Hong Kong



Top Station - Peak Tram - Hong Kong

The huge, modern, extension to the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre dominates the waterfront.

Leaving the ferry wharf I head toward the Victoria Peak Tram station. Along the way there are many groups of women sitting on the footpaths and in the parks and squares. I am not sure why they are there but later I see a notice of a charity sale by the Hong Kong Women Workers' Association, so I can only assume some sort of rally. In one square there is small protest meeting observed by a small group of police.



Clock Tower - Kowloon

Finally at the tram station there is a fairly long queue. Once on board the tram trip to the top is quick, as it does not stop at any of the four intermediate stations.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Peak

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_Tram

There has been a transformation at the top station. The old station has been replaced by a modern multistorey entertainment, shopping and restaurant complex on top of which is a large observation deck. There is low cloud about and it is blowing around the top of the peak, but it is clear enough at the observation deck to have a good view of Hong Kong, Kowloon and Hong Kong Harbour.

After taking photos I join the queue to return to the bottom station.

I make my way back to the ferry wharf and this time in the park there groups singing evangelical hymns and as I leave the ferry wharf in Kowloon I notice posters supporting persecuted Falun Gong members in mainland China.

I make my way along the waterfront towards Nathan Road. There is a very pleasant elevated promenade along the waterfront beside the Cultural Centre providing good views of Hong Kong Island and its illuminations.

The walk back up Nathan Road takes about 45 minutes and when I arrive at the hotel it is 18:45; time of a drink and dinner. I can't be bothered going out to find a place to eat and as it

turns out the hotel café buffet is excellent and moderately priced. I am seated next to a friendly local family from the New Territories and as the father speaks English we are able to converse.



Hong Kong - Old and New



Hong Kong Museum of Art - Kowloon

I have no plans to rush around doing a lot of sight seeing today and as I have move to the room I will share at 10:00 I spend the early part of the morning sorting my things and taking it easy.

The move is achieved without any drama – the new room was ready. My roommate to be is in the hotel but has not moved in.

As I have seen much of Kowloon before I decide a visit to the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Hong Kong Museum of History.

This proves to be a wise decision as it later begins to rain.

The Hong Kong Museum of Art is situated in the cultural precinct on the waterfront at the end of Nathan Road.

<http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/Arts/english/intro/eintro.html>

The modern building has three floors of galleries and on it south side windows large window overlook the channel

between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island allowing a magnificent vista of the Hong Kong Island skyline.

The galleries contain exhibitions related to the art of China and Hong Kong.

Currently there are five major exhibitions.

1. Authenticating and Collecting Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy.

This works in this exhibition are drawn from the Xubaishai Collection of Paintings and Calligraphy to illustrate the ways in which works can be authenticated and the ways in which collectors in the past ,including Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty and Mr Low Chuck-tiew, owner of the Xubaishai Collection, used seals to identify the importance or works in their collections.

A very interesting display of some beautiful pieces of work!

2. Gems of Chinese Ceramics from the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

Works from the Neolithic Period, through all the Chinese Dynasties, to the 20th C are on display. There are many beautifully decorated pieces, all in perfect condition, unlike the thousands of pieces of Greek and Roman pieces of pottery to

be found in European museums that have been reconstructed from broken pieces.



Ming Dynasty Doucai Ware

3. The Chater Legacy.

This remarkable exhibition of paintings, sketches and prints is from the 94 items that remain in the possession of the Museum. Mostly the depict scenes in Chinese ports and the activities of the British in China and Hong Kong.

The collection of ceramics and paintings, etc; was donated to the Hong Kong Government in 1926 on the last wishes of the owner, Sir Catchick Paul Chater.



Qing Dynasty Fescal Ware

Prior to the occupation of Hong Kong by the Japanese in 1941 an attempt was made to hide the collection. Unfortunately most, if not all, of the collection was discovered by the Japanese. Some of the paintings and all of the ceramics were transported to Japan. After WWII some of the pieces were discovered in various places in Hong Kong and returned. The

artists responsible for many of the works are unknown but the works provide a pictorial record of early Hong Kong and the nearby ports in China.

4. Guangdong Painting.

The work of artists and the influence of artistic movements in southern China during the past 200 years are displayed in this collection of paintings.

5. Chinglish – An exhibition in the Contemporary Arts Gallery exploring the evolution of Chinglish and its influence on the culture of Hong Kong. In simple terms Chinglish is incorporation of English words into the local dialect of Chinese – Cantonese. This incorporation includes the emergence of Chinese written characters for these words.

After more than two hours in the museum it is time to move on to the Hong Kong Museum of History. Here there is a comprehensive display in eight galleries of the history of Hong Kong.

<http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/History/en/aboutus.php>

Titled ‘ The Hong Kong Story’ the displays starts with the formation of Hong Kong in the Devonian Period, 400million years ago, and traces the history of Hong Kong through the first

appearance of man to the hand over by Britain of responsibility for Hong Kong to the People’ s Republic of China in 1997.

The displays include finds from archaeological sites on Hong Kong Island and other nearby islands, the different people living on the islands and their way of life, the relationships between the Chinese Imperial governments and the British traders, the impact of the opium wars and the emergence of Hong Kong as an important trading and financial centre.

By the time I had completed all the galleries in the museum it was time to make my way back to the hotel for the meeting of the tour group.

I arrive to find my roommate, Kevin, has made the switch and is in the room only to find that he will be pulling out of the trip for medical reasons, leaving five of us in the group.

At 18:30 the group meets for the usual pre trip briefing and we then retire to a nearby restaurant for dinner. Kevin was unable to join us, as he was busy trying to arrange his flight back to the UK.

The rain has continued on and off all day and it has become quite cold.



Modern Guangzhou

This morning it cold enough to warrant a jumper and there is still rain about.

Check out at around 11:00 in time depart at 11:15 to catch the cross-border bus to Guangzhou (approximately 4 hours). Of course there are border formalities to complete and we have to walk our luggage through the entry point into Shenzhen and board another bus.

We are delayed on the expressway, thus shortening our time for a meal in Guangzhou before we board the hard sleeper train to Guilin on our way to Yangshuo.

Entry to busy Guangzhou train station is through one security point. The Chinese have no idea of a queue and there is a crush at the single doorway to get into the station.

To be courteous would have meant we would never have caught the train. So do in China as the Chinese do, shove your way in. We were a little better organised. Attacking from the side the heaviest of us simply leant on the crowd and pushed it back to make enough room for the others to slide through a door and then closed in behind, protecting ourselves with swinging packs and bags rolling over feet that got too close.



Li River Cruise Boat (Small)



Li River Scenery

The train was similar to the one from Guilin to Shenzhen, but this time we were delayed only about 15 minutes and after the public bus ride to Yangshuo we arrived in time for a clean up and a walk around town before lunch.

It is much cooler than last week and there some rain about.

In the afternoon we take a microbus to a landing place up river towards Guilin for a cruise through some of the more scenic parts of the river, something we had not had

time to do last week. On this occasion, despite the misty conditions, we had a much better opportunity to enjoy the grandeur of the scenery than last week in the fading light on our way to dinner at Liu Gong.



Li River Scenery

After dinner we take another boat on the river to watch the cormorants fishing.

Fishermen have about eight birds that dive for small fish. To prevent the birds swallowing the fish their throats are constricted with a ring or string tied around their necks. When the bird catches a fish the fisherman uses a long pole with a hook to snare a string attached to the birds leg and pulls it back on board his bamboo raft boat. He

then coaxes the bird to regurgitate the fish by stroking its neck.



Li River Scenery



5690 Tourists on a Bamboo Raft - Li River



Ties around the bird's neck



Recovering a Fish from the Cormorant - Yangshuo

Thursday 5th April 2007 - Yangshuo

Day 41

This morning we set out at 08:30 to collect out bicycles for a full day ride in the

countryside. Rain is expected so most buy plastic ponchos in case it rains heavily.



Rice Paddies and karst Mountains - Yangshuo

This time we head out in a different direction and out of town along a narrow concrete road that winds its way through villages and rice fields with wonderful views of the mountains and rice paddies. After a few kilometres we turn off the concrete road onto an unsealed road leading to the banks of the Dragon River. The winding road has taken us through several small settlements before we reach the riverbank and a rafting base where

there are many bamboo rafts and boatmen willing to take passengers down river. This relaxed way of travelling down river is punctuated with occasional descents over small weirs that control the river for irrigation purposes.



Village Corner - Yangshuo



Dingo Ancestor? - Yangshuo



Rafting on the Dragon River - Yangshuo



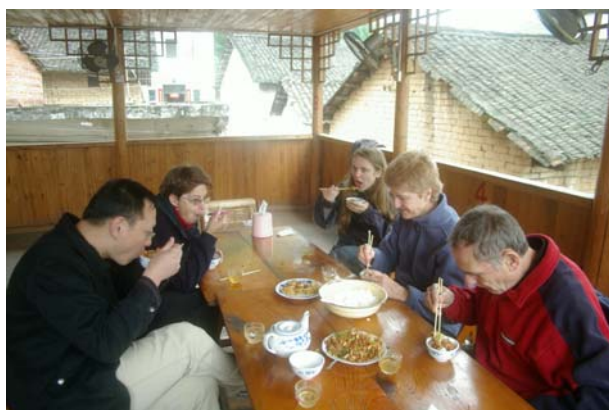
Dragon River View - Yangshuo

We stop awhile to have a look at the rafts before pushing on to Moon Hill. Having climbed the 800 steps last week, I decide to stay at the bottom with our leader and have a cup of coffee.



Dragon River View - Yangshuo

The others return after about 75minutes and when they are rested we continue on to Moon Village for lunch. This is not the same village as last week and this time we dine on an upstairs veranda attached to the farmhouse. This time the lady of the house cooked the meal and again it was excellent traditional farmer food, steamed vegetables, chicken and vegetables, beef and vegetables, beer fish and rice.



Lunch - Moon Village

After lunch we returned to town arriving after 15:00.

We all meet again at 18:10 for dinner nearby before heading to the sound and light show.



Restaurant - Moon Village

This is a very large production, Impressions, by, Sanjie Liu, the man who is producing opening ceremony for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. The cast of six hundred from minority people's villages perform excitingly choreographed performances of their traditional stories. The stage is an enormous lake with the mountains as a backdrop and props are moved about on the lake and pontoons and bamboo rafts support the performers.

The use of light to illuminate the performers and from time to time the mountain backdrop is brilliant.

The music and singing is also outstanding.



Scene from 'Impressions' - Yangshuo



Scene from 'Impressions' - Yangshuo

The popularity of the show was evident from the large number attending, particularly as this is the low season for tourists.



Scene from 'Impressions' - Yangshuo



Scene from 'Impressions' - Yangshuo



Scene from 'Impressions' - Yangshuo

Friday 6th April 2007 - Yangshuo

Day 42

It is fine and cool.



Bustling river Port - Yangshuo

This morning I am out fairly early to walk along the riverbank and through parts of the town away from the tourist area.



Fire Crackers for sale - Yangshuo



Li River - Yangshuo

Stallholders are setting up stalls and shops are opening for the day. By the riverbank fruit is being unloaded from a boat and a small crowd has gathered to buy the baskets of fruit. Further along I meet a very well dressed,

elderly Chinese man out taking pictures. He is interested in my camera and very proud of his Minolta SLR

camera. We compare cameras; neither being able to speak the other's language.



Free River Crossing sign - Green Lotus Peak

At this time the backwaters of the river are very still and reflections of the mountains, fishermen on bamboo rafts and the bamboo along the banks are very clear.

After walking for about an hour I turn back and return to the hotel.

Embroidery on silk is not a local craft but as I wander around some of the back

streets near the hotel I come upon a shop with a display of beautiful embroidered work. I have a quick look, as we are to meet a 12:00.



Yangshuo

Three of our group are at a Chinese cooking school and will not return until 14:00 when we will meet to visit Green Lotus Hill, the garden I had visited last week.

An interesting sign proclaims a free river crossing – discontinued when the bridge was built.

We spend almost two hours at the garden; walking around is much more comfortable in the cooler weather.



Leila tries her hand at Stele Printing - Green Lotus Peak



5853 Rock Art - Museum - Green Lotus Peak

At 17:00 we board a chartered bus for Guilin and the overnight train for Wuhan.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wuhan>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yangtze_River

<http://www.discoveryyangtze.com/Yangtzediscovery/>

<http://www.sacu.org/yangzi.html>

Arriving in Wuhan at 07:45 we take a short bus ride to a nearby hotel for breakfast before the 5 hour bus ride to Yichang.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wuhan>



Ship Locks - Three Gorges Dam

At Yichang we rearrange our luggage for the boat trip on the Yangtze River above the Three Gorges Dam commencing in the evening.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yichang>

<http://www.discoveryyangtze.com/Yangtzediscovery/yichang.htm>

<http://www.yc.chinanews.com.cn/eng/index.htm>



Model - Three Gorges Dam



Dam Wall - Three Gorges Dam

Yichang has a population of 3.89 million and is inhabited by the [Tujia](#) ethnic group. The city itself has 600,000 inhabitants.

During the afternoon we visit the site of the dam to view the massive wall, the locks and the power stations. The project is nearing completion.

Dimensions:	185 m (606 ft) high and 1,983 m (6,500 ft) broad
Water Level Increase:	Water level is planned to rise in 2 stages; by 2004 it will increase by 30 m to 125m (426 ft) and by 2009 will increase another 50m to 175 m (575 ft)
Cost Estimate:	1985 Chinese estimate of US\$10 Billion is acknowledged to be too low. Estimates abound from 2 to 5 times that amount
Financing:	Mostly from a national energy tax; other portions have been raised from government bonds
Materials Used:	10.8 million tons of cement, 1.9 million tons of rolled steel and 1.6 million tons of timber
Construction Period:	1993 - 2009
Land submerged:	13 cities, 140 towns, 1352 villages, 657 factories & 30,000 hectares of cultivated land
Relocation of People:	1.3 million to be relocated in 3 stages in 1997, 2003 & 2009
Energy Production:	84 Billion kilowatt hours per year; enough to supply 11-15% of China's energy.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Gorges_Dam

<http://www.irn.org/programs/threeg/>

http://www.imperialtours.net/3gorges_dam.htm

<http://www.power-technology.com/projects/gorges/>

<http://www.3g.gov.cn/english/>

<http://www.ctgpc.com/>

http://www.21stcenturysciencetech.com/articles/Three_Gorges.html



Behind the Dam Wall - Three Gorges Dam

The massive dam is complete and the water level is at 156m and it is expected that with the exception of the ship lift the work will be completed and the dam will be filled in 2009.

Massive locks allow ships to pass up and down from the reservoir to the Yangtze River below.



George, Jenny, Gael, Lionel, Leila, Jim - Three Gorges Dam

Our trip to the dam takes us first to the high observation point from where we can see the dam wall, the power stations, the locks and the ship lift and the model of the dam. We then move to where we can see the upstream side of the wall and finally we stop at an observation point in front of the dam wall from where one gets an awe inspiring view of this massive structure.

Having completed our tour of the dam we move on to the boarding point for our cruise through the Three Gorges.

The port and others along the way have been designed to accommodate the changes in water level and include inclined elevators for passengers to move from the dock to the top of the bank. These are part of the enormous engineering works required around the reservoir to allow access and relocate people and towns the are being submerged by the rising water.

Our boat sets sail at about 20:00 and sometime, we think around 02:00 the next morning we berth at Xirangkou opposite the city of Badong on the southern bank having passed through the Xiling gorge in the night.

We are in the best cabins on boat and they are to say the least basic, unreliable hot water and toilets being the main problems.

Sunday 8th April 2007 – Yangtze River

Day 44

We wake up at Xirangkou!

We have an early start at 07:00 for an excursion on the Shennong Stream.

<http://www.yzcruises.com/english/scenes/ShennongStream.asp>

<http://www.goworldtravel.com/ex/asp/articleGuid.749d1157-5df1-4515-8ac9-01468646581e/x/article.htm>

<http://community.travelchinaguide.com/mreview.asp?i=822&u=jabarootoo>

<http://www.chinaodysseytours.com/yangtze/ YangtzeCruise/Gorges/index.htm>



Shennon Stream

The rising waters of the Three Gorges Dam have submerged much of this once fast flowing stream; however the grandeur of the gorges we pass through is not lost. Cliffs and mountains tower above us. Small caves in the cliff face house ancient wooden coffins. Once there were many of these coffins but as the water rose many have been removed. We saw three and of these one is likely to be submerged when the water level reaches its maximum.



Fisherman - Shennon Stream



Tujia Cultural Show - Luoping

Our first stop is the Luoping Centre to see a cultural performance by the Tujia minority people. The show is colourful and the participants provide a vivacious performance of a number of traditional dances and ceremonies.

<http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/01780/chinese-ethnic-group/tujia.htm>
<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/nationality/tujia/index.htm>



Luoping



Boat Trackers rowing Pea Boats

After the show we reboard our boat and head further upstream to where there are many small boats that are going to take us further up river.



Bamboo Rope



Boat Trackers Hauling Boats - Shennon Stream

Before the dam was built villagers upstream of Luoping carried their produce downstream to market in long wooden boats called peaboats because of their shape that could traverse the rapids. To return the boatmen

had to pull their boats upstream and they became known as the ' Boat Trackers of the Shennong Stream' .



Wooden Coffin in Cave - Shennon Stream



Coal Ship

The Boat Trackers also hauled boats upstream through the rapids of the Three Gorges before damming of the Yangtze made navigation to Chongqing easier. In the Qing Dynasty, boat trackers pulled boats that sailed

against the current through the rapids of the Qutang Gorge.

Once there was a narrow road through Qutang Gorge. It was made from boards or hewn from the rock walls. It is now submerged!



Fast Ferry



Bridge at Wushan



Wushan

Between 24 and 30 tourists clamber into each boat and don lifejackets and we head upriver with the boatmen rowing us. When we reach a short section of rapids the boatmen uncoil a long plaited bamboo rope to which is attached 4 slings. The rope is attached to the boat and the boatmen place the slings over their shoulder and haul the boat through the rapids. The men wear rope sandals to protect their feet. Before tourism that was all they wore as clothes inhibited their movement and could be dangerous in fast flowing streams.

We are towed a couple of hundred metres and then we turn back to shoot the rapids and return to the tour boat.

We rejoin cruise boat at 13:30 and set sail up river through the second gorge, the Wu Gorge. The spectacular mountains and cliffs rise high above us. Small farms are perched precariously on the mountainsides and along the way there are many simple coal-loading facilities for loading coal from nearby mines

onto barges that will take the coal down river. There are also signs of relocated farmers and villagers in new homes above the high water level of the dam. The waterway is busy with boats of all sizes from small fishing boats to large coal and car carriers and cruise boats.



Coal Loading Station



Qutang Gorge

We have a stop at the relocated Wushan to pick up a part for the ship's engines before heading toward the third gorge, the Qutang Gorge. This gorge proves to be narrower and more precipitous than the Wu gorge and along the banks small boats are tied up and people are transshipping goods to donkeys to transport the goods up the side of the gorge. Some of the paths seem very steep, even for a donkey.



Donkeys and People carry goods up the cliffs - Qutang Gorge

Finally at 18:30 we arrive at Feng Jie, disembark and climb the couple of hundred steps to the bus that will take us to our hotel.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fengjie>

http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200211/04/eng20021104_106251.shtml

<http://www.discoveryangtze.com/Yangtzediscovery/baidi cheng.htm>

http://www.discoveryangtze.com/Yangtzediscovery/the_story_of_the_three_kingdoms.htm

Baidicheng of Fengjie

Baidicheng lies on the northern bank of the Yangtze River at the western entrance to the Qutang Gorge with its three sides facing water and one side facing mountains. It is an important strategic place. It

was called the fish's belly in Qin and Han Dynasty. At the end of the Western Han Dynasty, Gongsun Shu grasped Shu and constructed the city. In 25 A.D., he styled himself as Baidi (the White Emperor), hence the name of Baidicheng. The so-called Baidicheng (White Emperor City) with a history of more than 1900 years was once Baidi Miao (White Emperor Temple).

<http://www.3g.gov.cn/english/page/Culture%20Along%20Three%20Gorges/Cultural%20Relics%20and%20Its%20Protection/Baidicheng%20of%20Fengjie.htm>

Unfortunately we did not have time to visit the White Emperor city. Fortunately the White Emperor City is above the maximum water height and the hill it sits on has become an island.

Monday 9th April 2007 – Yangtze River - Hangzhou

Day 45

This morning we catch the 08:30 hydrofoil back to Yichang. Arriving at the Three Gorges Dam at about 12:00 we board our bus to the hotel in Yichang and lunch.

After lunch we have enough time to visit the Yichang Museum where relics recovered from the Three Gorges Dam site are displayed. Zhongbao Island under the centre of the dam wall was an important archaeological site having been used as a burial site for several thousand years. Excavations here recovered many artifacts, dating from the Stone Age to the late Qing Dynasty, including many in perfect condition.

<http://www.3g.gov.cn/english/Planning%20for%20the%20Reservation%20of%20the%20Historical%20and%20Cultural%20Relics%20in%20the%20Areas%20of%20the%20Reservation%20Region%20Submerged%20and%20to%20Be%20Submerged%20and%20in%20the%20Immigrant%20Settlement%20Areas.htm>



Feng Jie



Stairs to Feng Jie

The display is good, however the building is inadequate to house all the relics recovered and extensions are planned for next year. In the meantime the museum is selling some of the late Qing Dynasty ceramic and jade artifacts to raise money. These items are about 120 years old. We were told the sales

would cease once the new buildings were complete. Two pieces of white porcelain caught my attention. Beautifully made, the decoration cannot be seen unless they are

illuminated from inside, when coloured dragons become visible. I did not have time to go away and think about them so I did the unusual thing of buying them on the spot. Jenny also had her eye on them so I guess my judgement was fairly good.

After the museum we went to the airport to catch the plane to Shanghai and then our chartered bus to Hangzhou, arriving at the hotel around 22:30.

Tuesday 10th April 2007 – Hangzhou

Day 46



Lie Feng Pagoda - Hangzhou

This morning we set out on an all day excursion to some of the scenic highlights of Hangzhou.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hangzhou>

The weather has finally improved enough for the sun to force its way through the haze and smog so we are looking forward to a cheerier day.



West Lake - Hangzhou

Although Hangzhou is an ancient city and on two occasions was the capital of China it is a modern city with wide streets and modern buildings. There are many modern cars. Motorcycles have been banned in large Chinese cities and many people

glide about on very quiet electric bicycles. This has been done for safety reasons but there are obvious environmental benefits.



Tourist Boat - West Lake - Hangzhou

Our first stop is at the West Lake where we take a boat ride on the lake and walk through one of the ten scenes of West Lake - Viewing Fish at Flower Pond. The area is filled with Chinese tourists.

West lake

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Lake

West Lake ([Chinese](#): 西湖; [pinyin](#): Xī Hú) is a famous fresh water lake located in central [Hangzhou](#), in [Zhejiang](#) province of eastern [China](#).



Six Harmonies Pagoda - Hangzhou

The [lake](#) is divided by three [causeways](#) called *Su Di* (苏堤), *Bai Di* (白堤), and *Yanggong Di* (杨公堤).

The name "*West Lake*" (Xi Hu) is also used by a large number of lakes in China and surrounding countries (with 800 West

Lakes in China according to [Lonely Planet](#)). However, the lake in Hangzhou is the most famous of these, and the terms "West Lake" and "Xi Hu" generally refers to this lake.



Flowers - West Lake - Hangzhou



Peacock - West Lake - Hangzhou



Red Carp Pond - West Lake - Hangzhou

History

In middle of the [Tang Dynasty](#) Zhenyuan era (785-804), [poet Bai Juyi](#) came to Hangzhou as governor. Already an accomplished poet, his deeds at Hangzhou made him a great governor. He realised that the farmland nearby depended on the water of West Lake, but due to negligence of former governors, the old [dyke](#) had collapsed, the water level of West Lake dried out, and the local farmers suffered severe [drought](#). He ordered the construction of a stronger and taller dyke, with a [dam](#) to control the flow of water, and thus solved the drought problem. The livelihood of local people of Hangzhou improved over the following years. Now that Bai Juyi had more leisure time to enjoy the beauty of West Lake, he visited West Lake almost every day. He ordered the construction of a causeway connecting the Broken Bridge with the Solitary Hill, to facilitate walking on foot, instead of depending on boat. Then he planted peach trees and willows trees along the dyke, making it a

beautiful landmark of West Lake. This causeway was later named Bai Di Causeway in Bai Juyi's honour.



Garden - Six Harmonies Pagoda - Hangzhou

Over two hundred years later, in the beginning of [Song Dynasty](#)'s Yuanyou era ([1086-1094](#)), another great poet, [Su Shi](#) (Su Dongpo), came to Hangzhou as governor. By that time, the farmers suffered drought again, due to overgrowth of the weeds at the bottom of the lake clogging the irrigation ducts. He ordered

dredging of the lake and piled up all the mud into another causeway, in the style of Bai Causeway, but much wider and nearly three times as long, he also planted willow trees along its banks. This causeway was later named after him as the Su Causeway. There are six [bridges](#) along the 2.6 km Su Causeway. "Spring Dawn on the Su Causeway" is one of the attractions at the West Lake.

Ten Scenes of West Lake

Traditionally, there are ten best-known scenic spots on the West Lake, each remembered by a four-character [epithet](#). Collectively, they are known as the "Ten Scenes of West Lake" (西湖十景). Each is marked by a stela with the epithet written in the calligraphy of the [Qianlong Emperor](#). They are:

Spring Dawn on the Su Causeway (苏堤春晓)
Orioles Singing in the Willows (柳浪闻莺)
Viewing Fish at Flower Pond (花港观鱼)
Winery Yard and [Lotus](#) Pool (曲苑风荷)
Evening Bell Ringing at the Nanping Hill (南屏晚钟)
Autumn Moon over the Calm Lake (平湖秋月)
Leifeng [Pagoda](#) in Evening Glow (雷峰夕照)
Three Pools Mirroring the Moon (三潭印月)
Lingering Snow on the Broken Bridge (断桥残雪)
Twin Peaks Piercing the Clouds (双峰插云)

Our next stop is the Six Harmonies Pagoda.



Chinese Tourists - West Lake - Hangzhou

Six Harmonies Pagoda

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/zhejiang/hangzhou/liuhe_pagoda.htm

The Six Harmonies Pagoda is located on Yuelun Hill overlooking the [Qiantang River](#), and south of [West Lake](#) (Xi Hu) and is one of the true masterpieces of ancient Chinese architectures. Originally the pagoda was built during the Northern Song Dynasty (386-581) by the ruler of the Wuyue State, a part of which became Zhejiang Province. The name 'Liuhe' comes from the six Buddhist ordinances and it is said that the reason for building this pagoda is to calm the tidal waters of the Qiantang River, and as a navigational aid. However, the pagoda was completely destroyed during a battle in the year 1121.



Bell Tower – Six Harmonies Pagoda – Hangzhou

The current pagoda was constructed of wood and brick during the Southern Song Dynasty (420-589), and subsequently, during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasties (1644 -1911), additional exterior eaves were added to the pagoda. It is octagonal in shape and some 59.89 meters (196 feet) in height, it also has the appearance of being a thirteen-story structure, though it only has seven interior stories. There is a spiral staircase leading to the top floor and upon each of the

seven ceilings are carved and painted figures including animals, flowers, birds and characters. Each story of the pagoda consists of four elements, the exterior walls, a zigzagged corridor, the interior walls and a small chamber. Viewed from outside, the pagoda appears to be layered-bright on the upper surface and dark underneath. That is a harmonious alternation of light and shade.

Upon ascending the pagoda, visitors will have a spectacular view of the Qiantang River Bridge spanning the surging tides of the Qiantang River. Near by the Six Harmonies Pagoda an exhibition centre detailing ancient pagodas in China was set up in recently upon Yuelun Hill. So visitors can visit the Six Harmonies Pagoda and then learn of the various ancient pagodas architectural styles to be found within China.

http://www.chinaculture.org/gb/en_travel/2003-09/24/content_34544.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liuhe_Pagoda

Liuhe Allusion

An Episode in the Liuhe Culture Series
Keeping Down the River Tide

The story goes that in ancient times there was a ferocious Dragon King in the He set the winds blowing and waves rolling so often as to capsize fishing boats and inundate farmland. The father of boy called Liuhe (Six Harmonies) was drowned by the tide wave and his mother was swept away. He was filled with grief and indignation. To keep down the river tide, he threw stones into the river every day, shaking the Dragon Palace violently. The Dragon King tried to make peace with Liuhe by

presenting him with gold, silver and precious things. But Liuhe refused to consent and demanded that the Dragon King should release his mother and prevent the tidal wave from damaging the people anymore. The Dragon King had no choice but to agree. From then on the river tide has been under control. To express their cordial thanks to Liuhe, local people built a pagoda on the hill from which he had thrown the stones into the river. This pagoda was named Liuhe Pagoda.

Tablet at Pagoda



Peony in Bloom – Six Harmonies Pagoda – Hangzhou

I did not climb the pagoda to savour the view but chose to explore the grounds filled with ancient small pagodas and the lovely garden. Peonies were in bloom everywhere.

We next visit a tea plantation in the nearby Longjing hills.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_tea

Here ' Dragon Well' green tea is produced. The production of the tea is explained to us. The leaves are first washed and then dried for about 4 hours in a large flat basket. The leaves are then dried in a wok like vessel, coated with tea oil, heated to 120C. The quality of the tea depends upon when the leaves are

harvested. The best tea, ' Emperor Tea' , is picked in March, Grade 1 is picked in April and grade 3 is picked in June. Later harvests in August and October are used to make black tea.

The green tea is reputed to have wide medicinal values.

<http://ancientacu.com/products/teaasp.html>

<http://davidhayden.com/blog/dave/archive/2005/11/27/2592.asp>
[x](#)

After a pleasant lunch on the patio of restaurant amongst the plantations we proceed to Lingyin Si Temple. This large and ancient Buddhist temple and Monastery is also teeming with Chinese tourists.



Carving - Peak Flying from Afar -
Lingyin Si Temple - Hangzhou



Hall of the Heavenly Kings - Lingyin
Si Temple - Hangzhou



Medicine Buddha - Lingyin Si Temple
- Hangzhou



Fountain - West Lake - Hangzhou

Hangzhou - Lingyin Si Temple

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lingyin_Si

Lingyin Temple ([Chinese](#): 靈隱寺; [pinyin](#): Língyǐ nsi) is a [Buddhist temple](#) of the [Chan](#) sect located north-west of [Hangzhou](#), [Zhejiang](#) province, [China](#). The temple's name is

commonly literally translated as **Temple of the Soul's Retreat**. It is one of the largest and wealthiest [Buddhist temples](#) in [China](#).

The monastery is the largest of several temples in the Wulin Mountains (武林山), which also features a large number of grottos and religious rock carvings, the most famous of which is the **Feilai Feng** (飞来峰; literally "the peak that flew hither").

History

The monastery was originally founded in 328 AD during the [Eastern Jin Dynasty](#) by [Indian](#) monk [Huili](#). From its inception, Lingyin was a famous monastery in the [Jiangnan](#) region. At its peak under the [Kingdom of Wuyue](#) (907-978), the temple boasted nine multi-storey buildings, 18 pavilions, 72 halls, more than 1300 dormitory rooms, inhabited by more than 3000 monks. Many of the rich Buddhist carvings in the Feilai Feng grottos and surrounding mountains also date from this era.

During the latter [Southern Song Dynasty](#), the monastery was regarded as one of the ten most important temples of the Chan sect in the [Jiangnan](#) region. However, its

prominence has not saved the temple from marauders. It has been rebuilt no less than sixteen times since then. The current buildings are modern restorations of late [Qing](#) buildings. During the [Cultural Revolution](#), the temple and grounds suffered some damage at the hands of [Red Guards](#) during the [Cultural Revolution](#). However, they escaped large scale destruction partly because of the protection of Premier [Zhou Enlai](#).

Today the temple is thriving as a destination for both pilgrims and tourists. It is regarded as one of the wealthiest monasteries in [China](#), and regular pilgrims have included former paramount leader [Deng Xiaoping](#).



Picking Tea - Hangzhou

Surrounds

The Wuling Mountains area is a major centre of [Chan Buddhism](#) in south-eastern [China](#). A number of smaller temples are also located in the area. Today, Lingyin and the surrounding

areas are marketed as the Lingyin-Feilai Feng Scenic Area, with ticketed admission. Visitors enter from a screen wall marked with a four character inscription "the Western Heaven is within reach" ([Chinese](#): 咫尺西天; [pinyin](#): zhíchǐ Xī tiā n; literally "Western Heaven is between 0.8 to one [foot](#) away"). Proceeding down the road from the entrance, the visitor first sees Feilai Feng on the left, then Lingyin Hill on the right. The entire scenic area is dotted with historic buildings and artwork, including pagodas, pavilions, bridges, and statues. The largest stone pagoda is located near the entrance. Called Ligong Pagoda (理公塔), it houses the ashes of Huili, the [Indian](#) monk who founded Lingyin. The area is thickly wooded, with some trees labelled as many centuries old.



Drying Tea - Hangzhou

The Feilai Feng grottos

Feilai Feng, or "the Peak that Flew Hither", also commonly translated as "Flying Peak", is located in front of the temple

proper. The peak is so-named because it is made of limestone, giving it a craggy appearance very different to the surrounding mountains. Legend holds that the peak was originally from [India](#) (with some versions suggesting that it is [Vulture Peak](#), but flew to [Hangzhou](#) overnight as a demonstration of the omnipotence of Buddhist law. A large number of carvings dot the surface of the peak. More are located in various caves and grottos throughout the peak. Within the main cave, dedicated to the [bodhisattva Guanyin](#), there is a crack in the ceiling of the cave that stretches up to the surface, so that a person standing at a certain position can see a sliver of sunlight. This is known as the "one thread of heaven" (一线天).

Lingyin Temple

The main axis of Lingyin follows a traditional Song dynasty five-hall Chan sect structure. The main axis stretches up the Lingyin Hill. However, it should be noted that the five-hall axis is a recent recreation. Only the front three halls are a part of the [Qing dynasty](#) axis.



Tea House Garden - Hangzhou

Hall of the Heavenly Kings

The formal entrance of the temple is the Hall of the [Heavenly Kings](#) ([Chinese](#): 天王殿; [pinyin](#): Tiān wáng Diàn). This hall is a double-eaved building. The front of the building carries a plaque ([Chinese](#): 云林禅寺; [pinyin](#): Yúnlín Chán Sì; literally "[Chan temple of the Clouds and Forests](#)"), written by the [Kangxi Emperor](#). The principal statue in this hall is that of the [Maitreya Buddha](#) in his manifestation as [the clothes bag monk](#), or the [Laughing Buddha](#). At the back, facing up the hill, is the [Skanda Buddha](#), or Weituo as he is known in Chinese. This statue dates from the [Southern Song Dynasty](#). Arranged along the left and right are the [Four Heavenly Kings](#). The ceiling is ornately painted and decorated with [phoenixes](#) and [dragons](#).

Visitors to the temple are often impressed by the size and majesty of the entrance hall and its statues of the heavenly kings. Indeed, the hall of the Heavenly Kings at the Lingyin

Temple is as large or larger than the main hall at many temples, reflecting its status as the centre of Buddhism in south-eastern China.



Goodyear Blimp - Hangzhou

Grand Hall of the Great Sage

The second and principal hall is the [Mahavira Hall](#), or the Grand Hall of the Great Sage ([Chinese](#): 大雄宝殿; [pinyin](#): Dàxióng Bǎo diàn). It is separated from the Hall of the Heavenly Kings by a large courtyard, featuring a raised lawn bordered with trees. To the left of the courtyard stands the [Hall of the Five Hundred Arhats](#). The Grand Hall of the Great Sage is triple eaved and stands 33.6 metres tall. It houses, as is traditional, a statue of [Shakyamuni](#), the historical [Buddha](#). The present statue was carved in 1956 from [camphor](#) wood in [Tang Dynasty](#) style and coated with 60 [taels](#) of gold. It is the largest wooden Buddhist statue in China. At the back of the main statue is a statue of [Guanyin](#), backed by a large screen that features the

carved images of some 150 Buddhist personalities, including the pilgrims of the [Journey to the West](#), [Daoji](#), and [arhats](#). Arranged along the sides of the hall are images of the 18 principal arhats, and other prominent Buddhists. The interior of the hall reaches about 30 metres, with a gold-painted ceiling featuring base relief images of traditional Buddhist symbols.

Hall of the Medicine Buddha

Further uphill and behind the main hall is the Hall of the Medicine Buddha ([Chinese](#): 药师殿; [pinyin](#): Yàoshī Diàn), housing a statue of the [Bhaisajyaguru](#) Buddha, commonly called the Medicine Buddha.

In the evening we returned to West Lake to enjoy the lights around the lake and on the nearby hills. In the distance is the brightly illuminated Lie Feng Pagoda. Built in 975AD the Pagoda has had a chequered history, collapsing in 1924. It was rebuilt in 2002. Many folk stories are associated with it mostly to do with the ' White Snake Lady' .

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2003-10/13/content_336626.htm

<http://www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/whitesnake.htm>

<http://www.chinapage.com/xwang/snake.html>

Fortunately we also we were also in the right place at the right time to view the dancing fountains playing on the lake.

Incongruously a Goodyear blimp circled overhead whilst large numbers of local people enjoyed the balmy evening by the lake.

Wednesday 11th April 2007 – Hangzhou - Huangshan

Day 47

Yesterday was a very busy day and there was very little opportunity to explore the area around the hotel so this morning after breakfast I was able to spend an hour walking around the area.

Across the road is a large park with a large fountain in the centre. Modern buildings face the park on all sides and one can see several new skyscrapers under construction in the neighbourhood.

At 11: 00 it is time to board the bus for the 5 hour trip to Huangshan in Anhui Province. At Huangshan we change to a

smaller local chartered bus and continue to the Huangshan (Yellow Mountains) Scenic Area.



Hangzhou



Hangzhou

For most of the trip we travel along a brand new expressway through low hills and river valleys. Agriculture includes rice,

vegetables and rapeseed. The hillsides are covered with tea plants. There is little traffic and when we stop at a service centre it is almost deserted.

We have an early dinner the village before checking in to the hotel. As it dark and there is little to do we retire to bed early.



Hangzhou



New Roadside Service Centre

Thursday 12th April 2007 - Huangshan

Day 48



Top Station - Yungu Cableway - Huangshan

Huang Shan (Yellow Mountains)

<http://www.huangshanguide.com/english.htm>



Porter - Huangshan

Located in the southern part of Anhui Province, the Yellow Mountains extend across - Shexian, Yixian, Taiping and Xiuning. They rose above the earth surface as a result of movement of the earth's crust over a hundred million years ago. Later they underwent the erosion of Quaternary glaciation and have gradually become what they are today. Magnificent and imposing, it is a famous scenic spot full of wonderful sights.

The Yellow Mountains known as Yishan in the Qin Dynasty (221 -207 B.C.) got their present name in 747 A.D. (the 6th year of the Tianbao reign of the Tang Dynasty), when Li Bai (701 -762), the great Tang poet, wrote about them in these lines:

' Thousands of feet high towers the Yellow Mountains

With its thirty-two magnificent peaks,
Blooming like golden lotus flowers.'

The Yellow Mountains are a marvel within an area of 154 square kilometres there is a crowd of peaks, 72 of which have names indicating the shapes they resemble. Lotus Brightness Apex and Celestial Capital are the three major ones, all rising above 1,800 metres. The mountains are a body of granite, often with vertical joints. Erosion and fracture contributed to shape the rocks into huge columns giving rise to lofty peaks and deep ravines. When it is cloudy the pinnacles loom in mists as if they were visionary, while in sunshine they unfold in all their majesty and splendour.

The Yellow Mountains change their colour and appearance with the alternation of seasons. In spring blooming flowers decorate the slopes in a riot of colour and fill the valleys with fragrance, in summer you see verdured peaks rising one upon another and near springs gurgling merrily. Autumn dresses the mountains in red and purple, as maples are all blazing - red; winter turns them into a world of frost and

ice with silver boughs and rocks everywhere. So from ancient times it has been frequented by tourists seeking their mystery and admiring their scenery.



Lover's Locks - Huangshan



Ancient Tree - Huangshan



Breathtaking Scenery - Huangshan



Grand Canyon of West Sea - Huangshan

They come to the conclusion that the fantastic pines, the grotesque rocks, the sea of clouds and the hot springs are the four major attractions of the Yellow Mountains. As a matter of fact there are marvels almost everywhere especially in the following scenic areas: Wenguan (Hot Spring), Yupinglou (Jade

Screen Tower), Xihai (West Sea), Beihai (North Sea), Yungusi (Cloud Valley Temple) and Songguan (Pine Valley Nunnery).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huangshan_Mountains
<http://library.thinkquest.org/20443/huangshan.html>



Grand Canyon of West Sea - Huangshan

This morning we are up early to catch the Yungu cable car up into the mountains at 08:30. We plan to spend the day walking up and down the spectacularly rugged mountains that overshadow our hotel. Rising to about 2000m out of the surrounding plain these mountains are considered by the Chinese to be amongst the most beautiful in the country.

Our hotel is at about 600m above sea level. Travelling in taxis we climb the winding mountain road to the lower station of the Yungu Cableway.



View from Bright Peak - Huangshan

We have VIP tickets so we don't have to wait in the long queue that has formed. The cable car can carry 50 passengers and makes about 6 trips an hour. From 06:30 until 16:30 every trip is full so about 3000 people, almost all Chinese visit the mountains on this cable way.

There is another cable way. Some walk up. There could be 8-10,000 visitors a day tramping the well-paved paths and stairs that connect the various scenic attractions. Porters carry everything up the mountains from the lower cable stations. This includes the building materials for hotels etc and the mountains.



Tourists at Bright Peak - Huangshan



A length of pipe being carried up the mountain - Huangshan



**Grand Canyon of West Sea -
Huangshan**

All the scenic attractions have poetic Chinese names like Cloud Dispelling Pavilion that overlooks a deep gorge where often the clouds are below the

observer, but not today as it is bright and sunny. Bright Peak is the highest peak and after leisurely climbing and walking from one viewpoint to another our last destination before we make our way down we climb the hundreds of steps to the summit from where there are magnificent views of the surrounding mountains and beyond.



Some Tourists use Sedan Chairs - Huangshan

Finally we make our way back to the cableway only to find there is a 3-hour wait to go down. George manages to arrange VIP tickets but we still have to wait over an hour. Once down we

catch a local bus down the mountain. We think the driver was practising to be a rally driver as he sped down the hill and round the many sharp curves. We made it safely!



**Tree in the middle of the road - Road to Hotel -
Huangshan**

Friday 13th April 2007 – Huangshan - Shanghai

Day 49

Departure at 11:00 gives me some time to catch up on the diary before our bus arrives to take us back to Huangshan

(Yellow Mountain City) to catch the evening sleeper train to Shanghai.

On our way to Huangshan we make two stops. The first is at a small village to visit a tea farmer's home. These visits always seem a bit of an imposition to me, however in this case we are warmly welcomed by the farmer who proudly shows us his

house and his tea making equipment. Built over 100 years ago, the external walls are of brick, the roof is of small terracotta tiles and the internal construction is of timber. The partitions are beautifully crafted wooden panels.

The houses are separated from one another by a very small gap and to prevent a house fire spreading from one house to another adjacent wall have parapets about 600mm above the roof.

Keeping the two story house warm in winter would be impossible and very wasteful so an ingenious heater comprising a box about 1200mm long, 500mm wide and 800mm high, open at the top and with a slatted bottom and seats at each end. A tray of hot coals from the fire can be placed under the box and two people can sit in the box and be kept warm by the coals.

He has packets of his tea (black) for sale and the tea drinkers buy some.

Around the farmhouse there are large stacks of firewood and small vegetable gardens with cabbages, onions and lettuce.



Farm Village



Meat Drying in the Farmhouse

Our second stop is a larger village where we were to visit a high school for about 300 students, many of them residential. Unfortunately there were no students, they were on holiday or on an excursion, I'm not sure which. However nearby was a primary school and we are able to visit it.



Tea dryer



Farmhouse Kitchen

As the school was a little way out of the town, across the fields, we were seen coming by the children in the 3rd floor classrooms and they were all out on the balcony to give us a noisy welcome.

After meeting the staff we were invited to visit the classrooms. The prep children were overawed by the ' foreign devils' . However the older children were like children I have seen elsewhere, anxious to greet you, have their photo taken and inspect the result, usually laughing at their own picture.

I poked my head, and camera, into one class of probably 2nd graders whose teacher was with the other teachers talking to some of us. They were all sitting quietly at their desks until I took a class photo and they started to gather round. A few hand signals had them all back in their seats and I was able to go from desk to desk and show them the photo.

Nine years of school is free and compulsory and although resources are frugal there are free books and materials and compared with what I have seen in other Asian countries the Chinese schools are better resourced.

We all enjoyed the visit and I think the staff and students also enjoyed our interest in them and their school.



Heater



Fungi Drying in the Sun

We arrived in Huangshou at about 14:00 and after depositing our bags in a hotel room we headed out to explore the Old Street of the town, have a bit of lunch and check emails.

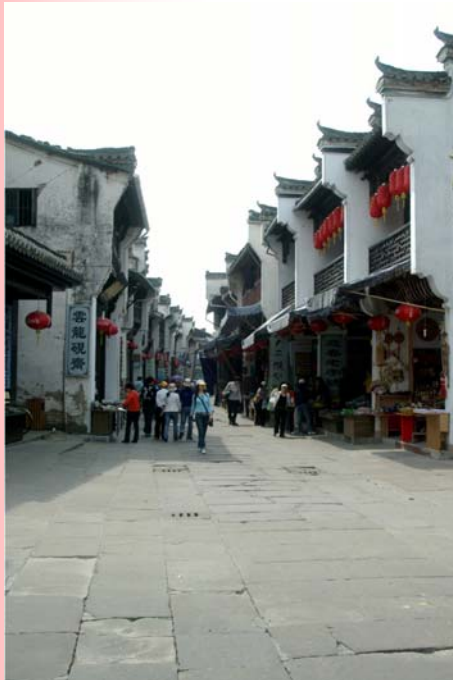


Curious School Children



Classroom

Old Street is an 800m long car free precinct lined with shop houses of indeterminate age. The principal goods for sale are Chinese antiques and artworks of all sorts, artist' s and calligrapher' s materials such as brushes, inks and palettes.



Old Street - Huangshan

Many shops sell Chinese seals (chop) and ink pads and will make up a seal on the spot for visitors. The street is fairly quiet in

the afternoon, but when we come back in the evening after dinner it is busy with tourists and local people.



Old Street - Huangshan

We depart the hotel at 21:30 for the 22:33 train to Shanghai. The journey is scheduled to take 11 hours. Sleeper trains are not the fastest trains China. The bogies of this one were rated for 120km/hr. Things may be different in future for Intrepid travellers. This week the railways announced the lifting of the

speed limit on 6000km of track to 250km/hr. Trains able to travel at 200km/hr are already in service over short routes and some long distance trains are able to travel at 160km/hr.



Old Street at Night - Huangshan

Saturday 14th April 2007 - Shanghai

Day 50

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai>
http://www.hoteltravel.com/china/guides/sightseeing_page2.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Shanghai

Graham Earnshaw's Shanghai A Potted History

http://www.earnshaw.com/past_version/earnshaw9602/shanghai.htm

Shanghai is an anomaly. The child of western imperialism and the youngest of China's major cities, it is by far the biggest, the most lively, the most productive.

Before the foreigners came, Shanghai was just another fishing town near the Yangtse River. When the British moved in after the first Opium War in 1842, they created the basis for what quickly became the most important commercial centre in China.



Nanjing Road - Shanghai

The central city area was divided into the British-dominated International Settlement and the French Concession, and for many decades, they were ruled entirely by the foreigners who even enjoyed "extra-territoriality" -- freedom from prosecution

under Chinese law. In the Second World War, Shanghai was occupied by the Japanese, and in 1945, the western powers agreed to dismantle the International Settlement and hand the power of administering the city over to the Nationalist Government. In May 1949, the communist army marched into Shanghai and ended the rule of both foreigners and Nationalists.



Red Lacquer Furniture - Shanghai Museum

The old pre-communist Shanghai was really two worlds -- the glitter and wealth of the upper crust, and the grinding poverty of the lower classes. Many of the foreign Shanghailanders lived like royalty, as their sumptuous mansions, still standing, attest. Meanwhile, in 1937, the authorities in the International Settlement collected from its streets the bodies of 20,000 people who had died there of hunger and cold. To be fair, 1937 was a bad year, and the poverty of Shanghai was more a reflection of the conditions elsewhere in China than the fault of the city itself. But life there was cheap. In some textile mills,

children were chained to their machines. Gangland murders were common. Prostitution was a major industry. The science fiction writer, J.G. Ballard, who grew up in old Shanghai, recalled going to the opening night of the film *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and finding hundreds of hunchbacks outside the cinema, employed by the film's promoters to add atmosphere.



Zhong Bells - Shanghai Museum

At the top of the Shanghai social scale were some of the great robber barons of the 20th century. There was Victor Sassoon, born into a Jewish Indian family which became immensely rich after moving to Shanghai. Victor had a great passion for horse-racing. "There is only one race greater than the Jews, and that is the Derby," he was once quoted as saying. There were gangland bosses such as Du Yuesheng, leader of the notorious Green Gang, who made millions out of opium, gambling, prostitution and extortion, and covered himself by establishing close ties with the Nationalists. There was a small but significant chinese bourgeoisie, intent on learning western

ways and discarding any Chinese traditions which stood in the way. And below, there were the poor, the ordinary people struggling to get by.



Office Tower - Shanghai

At one stroke, the communists killed the old Shanghai, exorcised the foreigners, who were either deported or else placed in a special camp for stateless persons, and began to transform the city. Opium dens were closed and the addicts weaned from their habit; the prostitutes were given medical treatment and taught a new trade.

The worst of the slums were slowly cleared away. At first, the communists promised those capitalists who stayed that their property would not be confiscated, a promise that was not kept - all factories were nationalised in 1953.



Zhong Bells - Shanghai Museum

The Shanghai of pre-1949 is full of colour and stories, but there is another Old Shanghai as well, that of the 1960s and early 1970s when Shanghai was the centre of radical Maoism, the base from which Mao began the Cultural Revolution and from where the leading radicals, later known as the "Gang of Four" rose to prominence. How Shanghai could be both the most bourgeois place in China and, a few years later, the most radical Maoist, is something of an enigma. Probably the best explanation is that the Shanghainese are good at spotting a trend and leaping to its forefront.



Shanghai Museum

With the Peking press firmly under the control of his opponents, Chairman Mao had to go to Shanghai in 1966 to get his Cultural Revolution moving, and published the first articles of the campaign in the Shanghai newspaper *Wen Hui Bao*. The red guards, those millions of young people who believed they were fighting to uphold Chairman Mao's Correct Revolutionary Line, were quickly roused, and in August 1966, thousands of them from all over the country besieged the Shanghai city hall, the old Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation headquarters. The Mayor declared the red guards to be counter-revolutionaries and mobilised workers to raise the siege, which they did after several days of fighting. Demonstrations and ideological struggles continued, and by the end of the year, students and workers in the city were organising themselves into mass organisations of up to a million people each, some leftist, some rightist, and clashes between the two became more frequent and bloody. The climax came at the beginning of 1967 with what was called the "January Storm"

when city life was virtually brought to a standstill. By the middle of the month, the leftist "rebels" had taken control of the administration, and early the following month, the Shanghai Commune, modelled on the Paris Commune of the 1870s, was established, although it lasted only 18 days before being replaced by the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. Shanghai was the first place in which the Maoists tried to take power, and their methods were repeated all over the country as the old guard was attacked by the red guards and replaced by radicals.

Once the new radical leadership was installed, they no longer needed the idealistic red guards, so millions of these young people were forcibly shipped off into the countryside, many of them to Xinjiang province in the far northwest.

Right at the end of the Maoist period in 1976, Shanghai once more played a crucial political role. Mao died in September, and a struggle began between the radicals and the moderates for the succession. Shanghai was the base of the so-called "gang of four" radicals, then commonly known as the Shanghai Gang, and plans were worked out for a military

uprising in the city if the radical leaders in Peking, including Mao's widow Jiang Qing, were seized. Seized they were in early October, but for reasons never satisfactorily explained, the Shanghai uprising never took place.

During the night the train makes its way towards Shanghai, stopping at many stations, sometimes not at stations.

We are becoming used to hard sleepers and most of us sleep fairly well. We arrive in Shanghai at 0945, only a few minutes late.



Pudong

Several of us are suffering from sinus problems and I seem to recall last time I was in China I had problems with mine. In the mountains mine seemed to be improving but now in Shanghai they are playing up again. I can only put it down to the ever-present pollution in the air, especially in the cities.

Once settled into our centrally located hotel we have a short orientation walk to familiarize ourselves with the neighbourhood before spending the rest of the time before lunch exploring Nanjing Road.

Nanjing Road has been transformed in the last 15 years. About a km has been closed to traffic and is a pedestrian mall with tourist trains plying back and forth. Fashionable shops and modern hotels are on both sides and it appears that new buildings have replaced the old on one side permitting a greatly widened street. Modern tower blocks of spectacular design are everywhere and many more are under construction. A modern subway serves the cities commuters. Since I was here in 1991 the city has been transformed.



The Bund - Shanghai

After lunch we walk to the People's Square and the Shanghai Museum. This museum of ancient Chinese art was founded in 1952 and moved into its present modern home in 1995.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Museum
<http://www.shanghaimuseum.net/en/index.asp>

The museum has over 120000 works of art. Private individuals assembled many of the major collections. These people subsequently donated their collections to the museum. There are collections of coins, minority nationalities dress and art, ancient jade, Ming and Qing furniture, ceramics, Chinese paintings, Chinese sculpture and bronze and Chinese seals.

Some of the pieces are 4000 years old and regardless of age or Dynasty the items are in excellent condition.

A visit to this museum is a must for any visitor to Shanghai.



Minority People's Costume - Shanghai Museum



Richly Carved Cabinet - Shanghai Museum



Nanjing Road by Night - Shanghai



Shanghai Tower

In the evening, after dinner, we take a cruise on the Huangpo River to view the

city skyline and the illuminated Bund. Unfortunately after a fine day there is some rain about. It is light and does not spoil the

views of the city. The buildings along the Bund date from the early 20thC when companies from foreign trading nations built them. Today banks occupy most of them.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bund

In 1991 the land on the opposite side of the river from the Bund was mostly dockland and small buildings. Now it is a forest of tall, modern buildings dominated by the Oriental Pearl TV

Tower and the Jinmao Tower, the top floors of which are the world's highest Hyatt Hotel.

At the end of the cruise the rain has practically stopped and we walk along the Bund (embankment) from the cruise wharf to Nanjing Road and our hotel.

Sunday 15th April 2007 – Shanghai

Day 51



Jinmao Tower is lost in the Cloud - Shanghai

We have a busy day ahead of us. First a walking tour of the city and in the evening

there is a performance of the Shanghai Acrobats to attend.



Butcher - Old Shanghai

George has scheduled our walking tour at 08:30 so everyone is up bright and early. We commence the tour by taking the Shanghai Metro from Nanjing Rd East station to Lujiazui station to the east on the other side of the river and the new financial centre of Pudong.

There is low cloud and the tops of the skyscrapers are hidden. The Jinmao Tower is currently the tallest building at 88 floors but the building under construction next to it will be considerably higher. We cannot see the top of either building from the ground below. New buildings are being constructed everywhere.



Yuyuan Bazaar

Our route takes us to the ferry wharf so that we can catch a ferry across the river to the Bund. The river is so busy with

laden barges travelling downstream that the ferry has to wait for a gap so that it can reach the ferry wharf at the Bund. The river crossing takes only a few minutes and then, together with a party of Chinese tourists we make our way to Old Shanghai.

area is being reconstructed in a style that could be said to be representative of the original character of the district. The Yuyuan Bazaar is really only tourist shopping centre built in a Chinese style. It has no intrinsic character!

http://www.hoteltravel.com/china/guides/sightseeing_page2.htm
<http://triptie.com/item/590/yu-yuan-garden-bazaar>



Chang Jiang Motorcycle - Copy of a BMW



Bird Market - Shanghai

This area is crisscrossed with narrow streets of small houses. Reconstruction is taking place and there is a danger of this historic area disappearing. Some of the



Pampered Pooch - Shanghai

However nearby Shanghai Old Street with its small stalls and shops selling almost everything from antiques (real and fake) to pornographic CD's is much more interesting to wander along.

On our way to the Flower and Bird market we stop to explore a street of 'antique' stalls. The stuff looked old but the number of copies of many things gave a lie to the description of antique. There may be some genuine antiques on the street but most of the items were copies, like the copy watches touts pester you with.



Snakes for Sale - Bird Market



French Concession - Shanghai

The Flower and Bird market is a small market selling pets and plants. Dogs, cats, fish, terrapin, and particularly birds are on sale. The conditions under which some of the creatures are housed would give the RSPCA a fit.

By now it is approaching midday and we are becoming a little footsore. Walking around a city is much harder on the feet than trekking through the bush!

10 minutes further and we are in the French Concession area. This is the only concession area still standing. Those held by other European traders have long since been demolished. The area has been extensively renovated and now has many cafés lining the streets. It may well be that this Concession has been spared is because it was here on July 23, 1921 that the first National Congress of the Communist Party of China was held. The building in which the meeting was held is now a museum to the event.

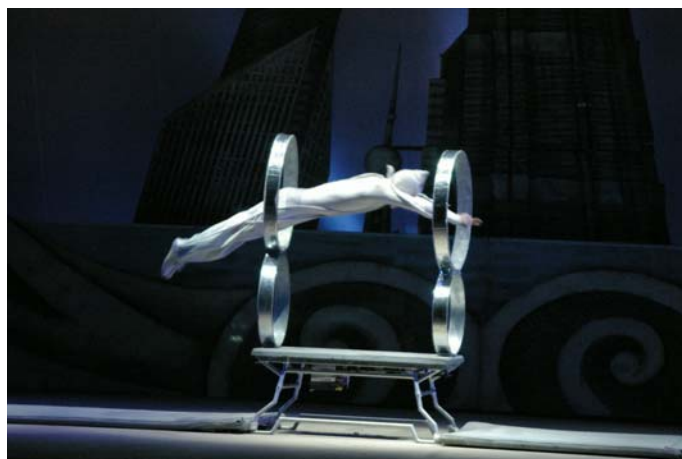
After a coffee and a snack in one of the cafés we visited the museum. It does not take long to view the memorabilia, but it is interesting to read the slant on the history of the time.

This concluded the tour and it is by now about 14:30 and it is time to make our way back to the hotel. Some decide to walk back and others take the metro.



Site of the first Chinese Communist Party Congress in 1923 - Shanghai

With stops to inspect shops and construction sites it takes us until 15:45 to get back, time enough to check for emails before going to dinner at 17:40. An early dinner tonight as the Shanghai Acrobats show starts at 19:30.



Shanghai Acrobats



Shanghai Acrobats



Shanghai Acrobats

Despite the early meal we made the theatre with about a minute to spare.

The show lasted 90 minutes and the performance by the acrobats was fantastic. Incredible feats of skill and strength were display by the men and women of the troupe. When I saw

the show in 1991 the acrobatic performance was similarly spectacular.

The difference now is that the show is presented as an entertainment spectacle.

<http://www.destination360.com/asia/china/shanghai-acrobatics-troupe.php>



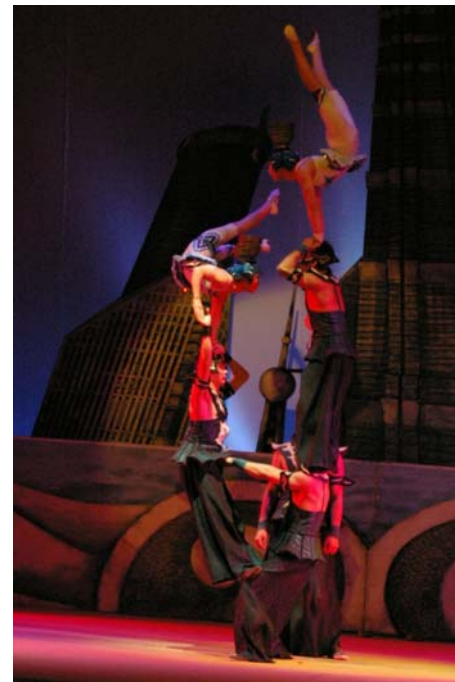
Old Shanghai



Shanghai Acrobats



Shanghai Acrobats



Shanghai Acrobats

Monday 16th April 2007 – Shanghai - Zhouzhuang

Day 52

This morning I am out early to catch some pictures of Shanghai before the crowds of workers pack the street. It is about 15 minutes walk to the Bund and the bustling river. It is overcast with haze again

shrouding many of the tall buildings. Visibility on the river is poor for photos and the river traffic is not quite as dense as yesterday. However the light is good for pictures of the historic buildings along the Bund.

In Nanjing Road and on the Bund there are groups of elderly Chinese exercising. Tai Chi is common but it is not the only activity. A small group of ballroom dancers are dancing to recorded music. Along the Bund elderly men are flying kites in the brisk, cold breeze.



Sculpture - Nanjing Road Mall - Shanghai

At 10:00 we depart the Nanjing Hotel, built in 1929, and considered an architectural heritage building by the Shanghai Municipality.

The drive to the picturesque village of Zhouzhuang takes about 2 hours.



Dancing on the Bund - Shanghai



Buildings on the Bund - Shanghai

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/jiangsu/suzhou/zhoubu.htm>

Zhouzhuang, one of the most famous water townships in China, situated in Kunshan City which is only 30 kilometers (18 miles) southeast of Suzhou. It is noted for its profound cultural

background, the well preserved ancient residential houses, the elegant watery views and the strong local colored traditions and customs. In the Spring and Autumn Period (770 - 476 BC), Zhouzhuang was a part of the fief Yaocheng and called Zhenfengli.



Early morning exercise in Nanjing Road



Market in street near hotel - - Shanghai

After being donated to Full Fortune (Quanfu) Temple by Zhou Digong, a very devout Buddhist, in 1086 during the Northern Song Dynasty (960 - 1127), Zhouzhuang got its present name as a memorial of the donor.



Zhouzhuang

In an area of half a square kilometer (124 acres), 60 percent of the Zhouzhuang's structures were built during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which is from 1368 to 1911. Taking the most convenient form of transport in Zhouzhuang, a gondola, we

will present some of the breathtaking sights one by one.



Zhouzhuang



Courtyard - Shen's House - Zhouzhuang

Twin Bridges (Shuang qiao): Zhouzhuang is surrounded and divided by lakes and rivers, 14 stone bridges cross the rivers, showing distinctive views of the water-town. Twin Bridges which comprise Shide Bridge and Yongan Bridge are the most famous

and is considered the symbol of Zhouzhuang. Built in Wanli era (1573 - 1619) of the Ming Dynasty, Twin Bridges is in the northeast of the town.



Brass Screen - Shen's House - Zhouzhuang



Quanfu Temple - Zhouzhuang

Shide Bridge is east-west and has a round arch, while Yongan Bridge is north-south and the bridge arch is square. Crossing

the two crisscross rivers (Yinzi Creek and Nabeishi River) and connecting at the middle, Twin Bridges look like a Chinese old-style Chinese key. In 1984, 38 canvases of the notable painter, Chen Yifei, were exhibited in a New York gallery of Armand Hammer, chairman of Occidental Petroleum Corporation. 'Memory of Hometown' which depicts Twin Bridges was one of the items on display and has gained the world's attention for Zhouzhuang. The painting was chosen to be the first-day cover of the United Nations' postage stamp in 1985.

Fuan Bridge: Located at the eastern end of Zhongshi Jie, Fuan Bridge was built in 1355 during the Yuan Dynasty. The unique trait of the Fuan is the consummate combination of the single-arch bridge and the bridge towers which have , are used as tearooms, restaurants and stores, and are good places to appreciate the views while taking a rest.

Shen House: Built in 1742 and located at the southeast side of Fuan Bridge, Shen House was the private property of the descendant of Shen Wansan, the first millionaire of Jiangnan (South of Yangtze River) in the early Qing Dynasty. The

whole architectural complex is of the Qing's style and occupies an area of more than 2,000 square meters (half an acre). Over 100 rooms are divided into three sections and each one is connected by arcades and aisles. The first is the water gate and the wharf, where Shen's family moored boats and washed clothes. The middle part includes the gate tower, the tearoom and the main hall. Brick gate tower carved with lively and ingenious figures which tell the historic stories or show the good wishes, make it a rare artwork. Tea room and main hall are places for serving guests, and the furnishings in here are all very elegant. The last section is the two-storied dwelling which consists of several buildings which are quite different from the main hall, more comfortable and refined in pattern and atmosphere. The painted sculpture of legendary Shen Wansan is in Datang Tower; cultural relics including ancient folk instruments are exhibited in Xiaotang Tower and Back Hall.

Zhang House: Built by Xu's family in the Zhengtong era (1436 - 1449) of the Ming Dynasty and bought by Zhang's family in the early Qing Dynasty. Located to the south of the Twin Bridges, Zhang House has more than 70 rooms and takes up about 1,800 square meters (less than half an acre). With Ruojing River flowing through, Zhang House is a dapper and graceful residential house; has a tranquil courtyard and pond. Deep halls all represent the life of the quondam owner.

Milou Tower: Once called the De's Tavern, Milou Tower perches next to Zhenfeng Bridge which is at the southwest corner of Zhouzhuang. It is famous for being a rallying place of the literators in old times. Numerous poets, songs and stories about Milou Tower are wide spread and make it more charming.

Chengxu Taoist Temple: Standing on Zhongshi Street which is opposite to Puqing Bridge, Chengxu Taoist Temple was built during 1086 - 1093 of the Song Dynasty and also known as Sanctity Hall (Shengtang Hall). After several periods of expansion, it is one of the most famous Taoist temples in Wuzhong Region. In an area of 1,500 square meters (1,800 square yards), simple but majestic Shengdi and Doumu halls, Yuhuang, Wenchang and Shengdi pavilions are really elaborate works and masterpieces of Taoist architectures.

The preceding sight-seeing sites are just a little part of the pretty attractions of Zhouzhuang. Besides these historic sights, the local folklore, traditions and legends of this water township, such as the dragon boat race, the granny tea or the Wansan home-style banquet which are formed from the immemorial civilization and history are also the indispensable elements for an unforgettable tour.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhouzhuang>

Entry to the village is restricted and we first have to obtain an entry pass complete with our photo so that we can freely enter for 24 hours.

We are dropped off in the middle of the main town and then have a 150m walk to the gate where we enter the village with its cobblestone streets and canals. The main streets are lined with traditional buildings in village-style architecture. Most of the buildings have become stalls selling souvenirs. However some have become centres for demonstrating traditional crafts such

as tile and brick making, Chinese medicine shop, Chinese wine distillery, silk spinning and weaving, and comb making.



Zhouzhuang

Shops selling a traditional delicacy of the region, pork knuckle cooked in a savoury source, are everywhere.

Our hotel is in a traditional house, Dai' s Residence was built about 100 years ago, in Zhongshi Street and centrally located for visiting the sites.



Study - Ye Chuchuang's Residence - Zhouzhuang



Comb Maker - Zhouzhuang

Dia' s Residence was built early in the Republic Period by a businessman from Zhejiang Province and his surname is Dai. It is facing the south and there are four courtyards totally. The front is a shop and the back is living room. The first three courtyards were traditional ancient chamber, linked to each other by air well, with brick carved archway. The last courtyard

is a one-story house. It is preserved well, as a city level historic protection unit in Kunshan.

Plaque on Building



Twin Bridges - Zhouzhuang



Chegxu Taoist Temple - Zhouzhuang

Our afternoon was spent battling the hordes of Chinese tourists, travelling in groups led by a leader with a megaphone.



Cultural Show - Zhouzhuang



Moutai Still - Zhouzhuang

Nevertheless we were able to see most of the sites and enjoy the undoubted beauty of the town and the tranquillity of the Quanfu Temple.

Our plan for an evening trip on the canals in one of the little boats was frustrated when trips were cancelled to allow the

canals to be flushed so we went to see a short performance of Chinese Opera instead before going to dinner.



Demonstrating Brick and Tile Making - Zhouzhuang

Tuesday 17th April 2007 – Zhouzhuang - Suzhou

Day 53

This morning it is raining, not a good omen for sight seeing in Suzhou! We were going to take the boat trip this morning, but there is no point in the rain.

Departure is scheduled for 10:00 and with a bit of luck the rain will have eased for the walk to the bus. Fortunately the rain did

ease for a few minutes. We travel past lakes and waterways and the trip takes about an hour. The trip from Shanghai to Zhouzhuang and Suzhou further highlights the changes since 1991. Yesterday and today we have travelled on expressways and 4-lane local roads, in 1991 the road from Shanghai to Suzhou was a rough unsealed road. Today we also passed a new campus of Suzhou University and later while out walking I discovered that the old campus in Suzhou had been completely

rebuilt. The almost derelict buildings of Suzhou University that I had seen in 1991 have gone.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzhou>

Suzhou

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/jiangsu/suzhou/>

When Suzhou is mentioned, the first thought in every Chinese mind is of its gardens. It is said that the gardens to the south of Yangtze River are the best in the world, and Suzhou gardens are the best among them. The history of the [classical gardens of Suzhou](#) can be traced back to 6 BC. By the time of the Ming and Qing dynasties, Suzhou City had become a garden city with more than 200 gardens. Having experienced a long history, only a part of the gardens are preserved perfectly. Because of their ingenious man-made landscape and the ideal of harmony between heaven and human beings, the gardens have gained a high reputation world wide. [Canglang Pavilion \(Blue Wave Pavilion\)](#), [Lingering Garden](#), [Humble Administrator's Garden](#) and [Lion Grove Garden](#) are the four top gardens in Suzhou, representing the architectural styles of Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties respectively. The latter three gardens were added to the World Heritage List in 1997. Additionally, the [Garden of Master of Nets](#) will definitely appeal to you, as it is the best example of small and medium-sized gardens.

In contrast to the huge buildings in the north, the water townships of Suzhou are

designed in the typical style of southern China, renowned for their charming watery view and ancient residential houses. [Zhouzhuang](#), inheriting the splendid culture of Wu, is the best example of water country in China. There, you can enjoy a view like a Chinese landscape painting, just like that described by Ma Zhiyuan (a poet of Yuan Dynasty) in his lyric - a household on a creek flowing under a stone-bridge nearby. Besides Zhouzhuang, some other water townships, such as [Tongli Town](#), Mudu and [Luzhi](#), are also recommended.

After a splendid visit to the water townships of Suzhou, you should turn your attention to [Tiger Hill](#) which is named the No.1 sight in Suzhou and has a profound cultural background. The poem *Mooring by the Maple-Bridge at Night* written by Zhang Ji (a Chinese poet of the Tang Dynasty) has given a world-wide reputation to the [Hanshan Temple \(Cold Mountain Temple\)](#) and the Maple-Bridge of Suzhou since imperial times. If you are a beginner in Chinese culture and art, the above destinations should not be missed in your journey to Suzhou. Possessing wonderful gardens, exquisite water townships, charming natural scenery and splendid history and culture, Suzhou is praised as 'paradise on earth'.

Panmen Scenic Area, including Ruiguang (Auspicious Luster) Pagoda, Water and land City Gates, Women Bridge and other historical sites and landscape, are located to the southwest of Suzhou City.

Additionally, majestic temples, such as the Temple of Mystery and Xiyuan Temple, are two famous destinations in Suzhou.

<http://www.szgarden.com.cn/en/yl.htm>

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/e-sz/index.htm>



Suzhou University



Suzhou



Performance at 'Master of the Nets' Garden - Suzhou

At 13:00 it is still raining lightly so Lionel, Gael and I head out to find some lunch and have a look at the town. We succeed in our quest for lunch and then continue eastward through the centre of town and the pedestrian mall. Gael has gone off to the market and Lionel and I walk on until we reach the moat on the east side of the city. We return by the main east-west street through the city. The street is lined with trees and the centre strip flanking a small canal is ablaze with spring flowers.



Performance at 'Master of the Nets' Garden - Suzhou



Musicians at 'Master of the Nets' Garden - Suzhou

It is 16:45 when we return to the hotel. Enough time for a short rest before we gather for dinner and a cultural show at the Garden of the Master of the Nets.

The show is a series of short dramatic, musical and operatic performances in the different rooms of the Master of the Nets

house. Thus after each act we move through the garden or a courtyard to another room. The rain dampens viewing the garden. Nevertheless it was an interesting way to present the show. The show concluded in the gift shop with a final performance. We were back in the hotel by 21:00.



Performance at 'Master of the Nets' Garden - Suzhou

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/suzhou/mastnetsindex.htm>

Garden of the Master of the Nets :

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/jiangsu/suzhou/wangshi_garden.htm

Sometimes the smallest package can contain the most magnificent gift. The Garden of the Master of the Nets is



a clear example of this. It is the smallest of the Suzhou residential gardens, yet it is the most impressive because of its use of space which creates the illusion of



an area that is much greater than its actual size. Even more than the architectural achievement is the mood of

tranquility and harmony that this humble garden embodies.

This exquisite garden was first designed during the Song



Dynasty (960 - 1279) as part of a residence that was used until the Taiping Rebellion in the 1860's. It was later restored and became the residence of a government official from whom the garden got its name. It is said that in a moment of frustration with bureaucracy he declared that he would rather be a fisherman than a bureaucrat.

The garden is divided into three sections: a residential section, the central main garden and an inner garden. The main garden has a large pond that is surrounded by pathways and a variety of buildings such as the Ribbon Washing Pavillion, and the Pavillion for the advent of the Moon and Wind. There are many more buildings that are situated so that there is never a sense of crowding, but always of spaciousness. As is common in Suzhou

gardens, the pond has a small pavilion in it. Here the pavilion is accessible by a bridge that is less than one foot wide.

As you walk about the gardens and along the walkways, there are often views through windows onto beautiful flowers or plants framing them from a distance and drawing you to a single sight, a moment of peaceful natural beauty. As you walk through the buildings, it is easy to imagine the life that the original residents lived in a feudal society where these gardens were solely for their pleasure and the pleasure of their guests. The various buildings are constructed so that you can always access the main garden from any room. The rooms themselves are quite impressive in design and ornamentation and well represent the style of the Song Dynasty.



Painted map of the garden.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_the_Nets_Garden

The inner garden which is only about 660 square feet, has the distinction of being used as the model for the Ming Hall Garden at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and also completely miniaturized for an exhibit in the Pompidou Center in Paris in 1982. This garden is reputed to be the most well-preserved garden in Suzhou and should not be missed. It is small in size,

but is like a beautifully cut diamond whose beauty is of never ending fascination and pleasure.

<http://www.szpmjq.com/doce/jj.htm>

During the day I had been trying to locate an ancient bridge I had seen in 1991. Finally after searching the web I found where it is. It is at the southwest corner of the old town in the Panmen Scenic Area.

The Wumen Bridge is the highest arched bridge in Suzhou. The first bridge at this location was built in the 7th year of North Song Emperor Yuanfeng's reign (1084 AD).

Wednesday 18th April 2007 – Suzhou - Xi'an

Day 54



Pagoda - Suzhou

This afternoon we will catch another overnight train to Xi'an.

In the meantime we have time for more sightseeing Suzhou. We depart the hotel at 09:00 to visit the Silk Museum of Suzhou and a nearby factory.



Canal - Suzhou

The Chinese in this region first made cloth from the filament of the cocoon of the silk worm. The museum has exhibits of silk

artefacts that are several thousand years old that have been recovered from archaeological sites as well as fabrics from the last few hundred years.



Unwinding Silk from Cocoon - Suzhou

Next door is a factory making silk garments and bed covers. Silk thread for cloth is made from the filament from a cocoon having only one worm inside. As the silk from a cocoon having

two grubs cannot be used for spinning it is used for the stuffing in bed covers.



Opening Double Cocoons - Suzhou

For this purpose the cocoon is softened in hot water and the silkworms are removed from the cocoon. The softened cocoon is then stretched over a small frame, and then ten of these cocoons are stretched over a larger frame and allowed to dry. When the silk is dry, four women stretch the silk mat to the size of a bedspread. About 10 of these are used to build up the filling. In all 70,000 cocoons may be used

to make a bedspread. They sell for less than 1000 yuan, about A\$130.



Stretching Double Cocoons for Quilt Filling - Suzhou

Attached to the factory is a large shop with all sorts of silk garments on sale.

Our next visit is to the Humble Administrator's Garden. It is a beautiful, large garden with many spring flowers, particularly azaleas, in bloom.

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The Humble Administrator's Garden (Zhuozheng Yuan):

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/jiangsu/suzhou/humble_garden.htm

The beautiful waterside City of Suzhou in Jiangsu Province in South China is most famous for its elegant [classical gardens](#).

Among these, the Humble Administrator's Garden, covering



about 52,000 sq. meters (12.85 acres), is the largest and most renowned. Due to its unique designs and ethereal beauty, the garden has garnered many special

honors. It is listed as a *World Cultural Heritage* site and has also been designated as one of the *Cultural Relics of National Importance under the Protection of the State* as well as a *Special Tourist Attraction of China*. Along with the [Summer Palace](#) in Beijing, the [Mountain Resort of Chengde](#) in Hebei



Province and the [Lingering Garden](#) in Suzhou, it is considered as one of China's four most famous gardens. No other classic garden in the country has been honored more

than this one.

The Humble Administrator's Garden was originally built in 1509 during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It was initially a private garden of a former government servant named Wang Xianchen.



Humble Administrator's Garden - Suzhou

It was said he intended to build a garden after retired and just do some gardening



work like planting trees and vegetables

there, which was said to be the life of a humble man by him. Hence is the name of the garden. The garden was created upon the old relics of a resident and a temple. Water feature is the main background and its natural landscape includes small forests, hills and rock formations. It also has man-made pavilions, halls and parlors. Unlike the [Grand View Garden](#) and other famous gardens in Beijing, it is representative of the Ming Dynasty building style.



Humble Administrator's Garden - Suzhou

The garden consists of Eastern, Central and Western sections as well as some residences of the former owners. The resident houses are typical of the style of Suzhou Local Residences, whose feature can be seen in the famous water township [Zhouzhuang](#) not far from Suzhou City. The site of the residences has been rebuilt as the Garden Museum now.

Eastern Section



Humble Administrator's Garden - Suzhou



Humble Administrator's Garden - Suzhou

The Eastern Section is dotted with sheer hills, green grasses, dense bamboo and pine forests and winding streams. The main building is the Cymbidium Goeingii Hall (Lanxiang Tang). Its south wall has a panoramic map of the entire garden.

Another impressive structure is the Celestial Spring Pavilion (Tianquan Ting), which gets its name from an ancient well inside, whose water tastes very sweet.



Humble Administrator's Garden - Suzhou



Humble Administrator's Garden - Suzhou

Central Section

The Central Section is the truly elite part of the garden, with one-third of its area covered by water. It is lined with exuberant trees and elegant parlors. Pavilions and

courtyards are clustered throughout. The Hall of Distant Fragrance (Yuanxiang Tang) is the main building that is named after a lotus pool nearby. When the summer comes the pool is filled with lotuses and the heady fragrance wafts into the building. The hall is designed with oversized glass windows on all sides for easy viewing. Nearby is the Small Flying Rainbow Bridge (Xiaofei Hong), a rare type of bridge and the only one in the garden you can walk across.

Western Section

The main building in the Western Section is a stately and ornate hall which is divided into two by a massive screen. The south part is 18 Camellias Hall (Shiba Mantuoluohua Guan) and the north part is the 36 Pairs of Mandarin Duck's Hall (Saliu Yuanyang Guan). In a nearby pool where the ducks were fed, stands an octagonal Pagoda Reflection Pavilion (Taying Ting); there is an optical illusion here - it appears as if a pagoda was lifting when all we actually see is the reflection of the pavilion.

In recent years, the Humble Administrator's Garden has been the site of many floral exhibitions. Every spring and summer, the garden hosts the Azalea Festival and the Lotus Festival. There are bonsai shows in the aptly named Bonsai Garden (Penjing Yuan) in the Western Section while precious Chinese stones are shown in the Elegant Stone House (Yashi Zhai) in the Central Section.

After touring the garden, you may want to visit [Lion Grove Garden](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion_Grove_Garden), a famous classical garden of a different style. Also, there are many museums nearby if you want to more deeply explore the gardening techniques and customs of Suzhou.

http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humble_Administrator's_Garden



Wumen Bridge - Suzhou

Finally we catch a bus to the Panmen Scenic Area to see the Wumen Bridge. In 1991 the ancient bridge still carried pedestrians, carts and cycles and barges passed underneath. Now it is part of the Scenic Area and the only traffic is visitors to the area. A new bridge outside the Scenic Area has been built to allow foot traffic to cross the moat and a good view of the Wumen Bridge can be gained from it.

Lionel and I decide to walk around to the Wumen Bridge, cross it and enter the Scenic area so that we can have a look at the city walls and land and water gate entrances to the old city. The others head back to the hotel. We followed later by taxi.

<http://www.szpmjq.com/doce/jj.htm>

We finished the day with quick dinner before departing at 16:20 to catch our 17:20 train to Xi'an.



City Wall - Suzhou



Lake - Panmen Scenic Area - Suzhou



Water and Land Gate - Suzhou



Inside the Water Gate - Panmen Scenic Area - Suzhou

Thursday 19th April 2007 - Xi'an

Day 55

Xi'an

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xi'an>

Xi'an (Chinese: 西安; pinyin: Xī 'ā n; Wade-Giles: Hsi-An; Postal System Pinyin: Sian), is the capital of Shaanxi province in China and a sub-provincial city. Known as one of the most important cities in Chinese history, Xi'an

is listed as one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China because it has been the capital of 13 dynasties, including the Zhou, Qin, Han, and Tang. Xi'an is also the eastern end of the Silk Road. The city has more than

3,100 years of history. It was called [Chang'an](#) ([Traditional Chinese](#): 長安; [Simplified Chinese](#): 长安; [pinyin](#): Cháng'ā n; literally "Perpetual Peace"), in ancient times.

Xi'an is the largest and most developed city in the central to northwestern part of China and is ranked among the 10 largest cities in China.



Drum Tower – Xi'an

History

Main article: [History of Xi'an](#)

- [Zhou Dynasty](#) established its [capital](#) in Fē ng (沔/豐) and Hào (鎬/鎬) between the late 11th century BCE and 770 BCE, both located West of contemporary Xi'an. Xian was the terminus of the ancient Silk Road. It was also among the richest cities in

China because of the silk trades with the west.

- [Qin Dynasty](#) (221-206 BCE) constructed its capital in [Xianyang](#) (咸陽), on the north shore of [Wei River](#). It was burned by [Xiang Yu](#) at the end of the dynasty.
- 202 BCE: [Liu Bang](#), the founding emperor of the [Han Dynasty](#), established Chang'an County as his capital; his first palace Changle Palace (長樂宮/長樂宮) was built across the river from the ruin of the Qin capital. This is traditionally regarded as the founding date of Chang'an and Xi'an.
- 200 BCE: Emperor [Liu Bang](#) built [Weiyang Palace](#) (未央宮) in Chang'an.
- 194 BCE: Construction of the first [city wall](#) of Chang'an began, which did not finish until 190 BCE. The wall measured 25.7 km in length, 12-16 m in thickness at the base. The area within the wall was ca. 36 km².
- 190 CE - The most powerful tyrant of the time, [Dong Zhuo](#), moves the court from [Luoyang](#) to Chang'an in a bid to avoid a coalition of powerful warlords against him.
- 582: Emperor of [Sui Dynasty](#) ordered a new capital to be built southeast of the Han capital, called Daxing (大興, *great excitement*). It consisted of three sections: the [X'ian Palace](#), the Imperial City, and the civilian section. The total area within the wall was 84 km², The main street Zhuque

Avenue measured 155 m in width. It was the largest city in the world. The city was renamed Chang'an (長安, *Perpetual Peace* or *Eternal Peace*) in [Tang Dynasty](#).

- 7th century: [Buddhist](#) monk [Xuan Zang](#), well-known as [Tang Sanzang](#) in China, established a sizeable translation centre after returning from [India](#) with [Sanskrit](#) scriptures.
- 652: Construction of [Da Yan Pagoda](#) (大雁塔, *Great Wild Goose Pagoda*) began. It measured 64 m in height. This [pagoda](#) was constructed for the storage of the translations of Buddhist sutras obtained from India by the monk [Xuan Zang](#).
- 707: Construction of [Xiao Yan Pagoda](#) (小雁塔, *Little Wild Goose Pagoda*) began. It measured 45 m in height. After the [earthquake](#) of 1556, its height was reduced to 43.4 m.
- 904: The end of [Tang Dynasty](#) brought destruction to Chang'an. Residences were forced to move to [Luoyang](#), the new capital. Only a small area continued to be occupied after the destruction.
- 1370: [Ming Dynasty](#) built a new wall to protect a much smaller city of 12 km². The wall measures 11.9 km in [circumference](#), 12 m in height, and 15-18 m in thickness at the base.

- This city was the site of the [Xi'an Incident](#) in 1936 during [World War II](#). The Xi'an Incident brought the [Communist Party of China](#) and [Kuomintang](#) to a truce so the two forces could concentrate on fighting against [Japan](#).
- In 1974, [terra cotta soldiers](#) built by Emperor [Qin Shihuang](#) to guard his tomb were discovered by farmers digging a well.



Water Taps - Xi'an

The train arrived at 08:00, about 40 minutes late. Taxis quickly get us to our hotel near the huge bell tower and drum tower in the centre of the walled city. To our surprise our rooms are almost ready for us. A quick shower and we are ready soon after 09:00 to head out for some breakfast.

After breakfast we catch a bus to the west of the city wall to a small park where a camel train, in stone,

commemorates the start of the Silk Route from China to Europe and Arabia.



Market - Xi'an

The Ming Dynasty city wall is intact except for the sections that have been breeched to allow modern roads to pass through. The new 'gates' have been constructed so as to maintain the architecture of the wall.



Start of the Silk Road

The Silk Road

<http://hua.umf.maine.edu/China/xian.html>

The first Han (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) emperors built upon the foundations of the Qin and expanded their territory enormously. Unlike the Qin, they allowed the cultures of the new territories to remain intact and encouraged trade and commerce among the various parts of the empire.

The Han emperor, Wudi, needed allies to guard against threat from a strong neighbor. He had heard of a very strong and rich state to the west. There must have been some amount of travel over long distances at this time for news to have reached Xi'an of countries as far as India. There had been no official contact, so in 119 B.C. Wudi sent Zhang Qian to form an alliance. Just outside his own territory, Zhang Qian and his men were captured by a Hun tribe and held ten years before he could escape and continue his journey. That he continued is one of the amazing parts of the story. The power of the emperor was absolute, you finished your task. The fact that a second envoy does not seem to have been sent after Zhang Qian didn't return in a few years is a second curiosity.

Zhang Qian's travels took him toward India. He found the country he sought, but the ruling king thought it was a little impractical to form a defensive alliance at such a distance. When Zhang Qian returned and told Emperor Wudi of what he had seen in these western states, he

was sent back with a large delegation and items to trade. Silk was an immediate hit. Over time, silk exports reached as far as Rome where it was a valued commodity. Silk feels wonderful to us now, imagine what it must have felt like to a people who had only worn loomed cottons and wools. Silk takes natural dyes readily, giving strong saturated colour. Both cotton and wool mute the most vibrant dyes. So, instead of a defence alliance, they developed one of the first multi-national trade agreements.

Returning to the city we visit a silk carpet factory and watch demonstration of hand carpet weaving. Some of the carpets are exquisite works of art with 800 to 1000 knots per foot. Carpets of this quality are not only suitable for wall hanging. Carpets for the floor have between 200 and 400 knots per foot and are thicker.



Great Mosque - Xi'an



Great Mosque - Xi'an

It was now time for a light lunch in a noodle café and then a short rest before venturing out to explore the nearby Great Mosque.



Tang Dynasty Show - Xi'an

Great Mosque of Xi'an

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Mosque_of_Xi'an

The **Great Mosque of Xi'an** ([Chinese](#): 西安大清真寺), located near the Drum Tower (Gu Lou) on Huajue Lane of [Xi'an](#), [Shaanxi](#) province, [China](#), is one of the oldest and most renowned [mosques](#) in the country.



Tang Dynasty Show - Xi'an

It was first built in the [Tang Dynasty](#) (reign of Emperor [Xuanzong](#), 685-762) at the eastern end of the [Silk Road](#), and renovated in later periods (especially during the reign of Emperor [Hongwu](#) of the [Ming Dynasty](#)). It remains a popular tourist site of Xi'an, and is still used by Chinese [Muslims](#) today (particularly by the [Hui people](#)) as a place of worship. Unlike most mosques in [Middle Eastern](#) or Arab countries, the Great Mosque of Xi'an is completely [Chinese](#) in its construction and architectural style, for the mosque has neither domes or minarets, except some Arabic lettering and decorations.

<http://www.cnhomestay.com/city/xian/mosque.htm>



Tang Dynasty Show - Xi'an

Our day is finished with a dumpling banquet and a colourful show of Tang Dynasty music and dance. Xi'an is renowned for its dumplings.

There are over 220 different dumplings and many are shaped to represent the filling. For example duck dumplings are shaped like a small duck.



Tang Dynasty Show - Xi'an



Drum Tower - Xi'an

Friday 20th April 2007 - Xi'an

Day 56



North Gate - Xi'an



Corner Tower - Wall - Xi'an



Local Market - Xi'an



Great White Goose Pagoda - Xian

Today we are on our own. George lives in Xi' an and has gone home to have a day off with his fiancé.

Gael, Lionel and I have decided to hire bicycles first thing in the morning and ride around the 15km long city wall so at 08:30 we are off on the bikes, commencing at the South Gate. Riding along the wall is easy, it is very wide, fairly level going and the surface is not too rough. The air is filled with dust blown from the northwest desert regions of China. It irritates the

throat and blocks out the morning sun. Visibility is so poor that we are unable to see to the end of the wall, about 2km away; in fact we cannot see the South East Gate less than a kilometre away.



School Children with Hoops - Xi'an



Elderly Men Exercising in Moat Park - Xi'an



South Street - Xi'an



Detail - South Gate - Xi'an

The wall can easily be ridden around in 100 minutes, but we are in no hurry as we meander from side to side looking for photo opportunities and frequently stopping to look down on what is going on inside and outside the wall. Consequently it takes us 3 hours to complete the ride. There was plenty to see, new buildings being constructed, children in school grounds

exercising and playing sports, people in markets and in the moat park outside the wall elderly people exercising or simply enjoying the park.



Timbers for the New Grand Hall - Great White Goose Pagoda - Xian

The wall has been extensively repaired and extraneous additions removed. Major buildings such as the gatehouses are original wooden buildings, but many of the 'Enemy Towers' have been reconstructed in concrete. This work is on going as there was many of them spaced

at 120m apart. Built on projections on the external side of the wall they provided accommodation for soldiers on the wall. The projections in the battlements allowed defenders to attack the enemy from three sides in a deadly crossfire of arrows.



South Gate - Xi'an

By the time we had completed circumnavigating the wall it was time for brunch and we found a little café where we were able to order a very nice, very cheap meal.

After brunch Gael returned to the hotel and Lionel and I caught a taxi to the Dayan Pagoda (Great Wild Goose Pagoda)

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shaanxi/xian/bigwildgoose.htm>

Construction of the Pagoda began in 652 and it was constructed to house the translations of Buddhist sutras obtained from India by the monk Xuan Zang. Originally 5

stories, it was rebuilt in 701-704 with 7 stories and is 64.5m high.



Buddha - Great White Goose Pagoda - Xian



Timbers for the New Grand Hall - Great White Goose Pagoda - Xian



Buddhist Art - Great White Goose Pagoda - Xian



Pictorial Stele - Forest of Steles Museum - Xian



Large Steles - Forest of Steles Museum - Xian



Great White Goose Pagoda - Xi'an

The surrounding buildings are new and mainly constructed of concrete. Construction of a new Grand Hall is underway and it is being constructed in the traditional way of timber brought from South America. Artisans are shaping the large timbers to make the building with modern and traditional tools. There will be no nails or bolts and screws in the building. We stood and watched the beams being crafted and the designs being carved on the beams.



Reclining Sheep - Tang Dynasty - Unearthed in 1992 from the construction site of Xi'an Light Bulb Factory - Forest of Steles Museum - Xian



Quiet, shaded street - Xi'an



Fountain - Light and Sound - Xi'an

The Xi'an Forest of Stele (Stone Tablets) has a collection of over 3000 Stele from the Han Dynasty (206BC to 220AD) to modern times. The museum was founded in 1087 and is a treasure house of ancient Chinese calligraphy, ancient Chinese classics, documents and historical literature.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stele_Forest

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shaanxi/xian/stone_stele/

Whilst we were unable to read the stele inscriptions the collection was impressive and some of the other artefacts from the past such illustrative stone carvings on religious sculpture were interesting.

Saturday 21st April 2007 - Xi'an

Day 57

A 08:00 start this morning to visit the site of the tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of the short-lived Qin Dynasty, and his Terracotta Army.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_Shi_Huang
[di](#)

Qin Shi Huang was king of the Chinese [State of Qin](#) from [247 BC](#) to [221 BC](#) (officially still the [Zhou Dynasty](#)), and then the first emperor of a unified [China](#) from [221 BC](#) to [210 BC](#), ruling under the name **First Emperor**.



Pit 1 - The Emperor's Army - Terracotta Warriors Museum



Warriors and Horses - Pit 1 - Terracotta Warriors Museum

Having unified China, he and his prime minister [Lǐ Sī](#) passed a series of major reforms aimed at cementing the unification,

and they undertook some gigantic construction projects, most notably the precursor version of the current [Great Wall of China](#). For all the [tyranny](#) of his [autocratic](#) rule, Qin Shi Huang is still regarded by many today as the [founding father](#) in Chinese history whose unification of China has endured for more than two millennia (with interruptions).



Chinese Couple - Terracotta Warriors Museum

Three farmers digging a well found the site of the tomb in 1974. Excavations of the

site indicate that there were over 8500 warrior and horse figures arranged as a defending army. Construction of the tomb was commenced in the first year of Qin Shi Huang's reign and completed on his death. One year after his death soldiers from a peasant revolution broke into the tomb and looted and burnt it. The result was that most of the figures were damaged. Only one, a kneeling archer, has been found intact.



Warriors being rebuilt - Terracotta Warriors Museum

Chinese authorities have built protective buildings over the site and developed the surrounds as a major tourist site to cater for the millions of Chinese tourists and foreign visitors that come to the site

http://www.anniebees.com/China/China_42.htm

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shaanxi/xian/terra_cotta_army/

Note: the above reference has detailed information about the Museum of Qin Terra Cotta Warriors and Horses.



Pit 1 - The Emperor's Army - Terracotta Warriors Museum

Terracotta Army

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terracotta_Army



Warriors and Horses - Pit 1 - Terracotta Warriors Museum

The **Terracotta Army** ([Traditional Chinese](#): 兵馬俑; [Simplified Chinese](#): 兵马俑; [pinyin](#): bīng mǎ yǒng; literally "soldier and horse funerary statues") or **Terracotta Warriors and Horses** is a collection of 8,099 life-size [terra cotta](#) figures of warriors and horses located near the **Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor** ([Chinese](#): 秦始皇陵; [pinyin](#): qín shǐ huáng líng). The figures were discovered in [1974](#) near [Xi'an](#), [Shaanxi](#) province.



Kneeling Archer - Terracotta Warriors Museum

The terracotta figures were buried with the first [Emperor](#) of [Qin](#) ([Qin Shi Huangdi](#)) in [210-209 BC](#). Their purpose was to protect the Emperor in the afterlife. Consequently, they are also sometimes referred to as "Qin's Armies".



Warrior - Terracotta Warriors Museum



Pit 3 - Command Centre - Terracotta Warriors Museum

The Terracotta Army was discovered in March 1974 by local farmers drilling a water well to the east of Mount Lishan. (The precise coordinates are 34°23' 5.34" N, 109°16' 26.11" E) Mount Lishan is the name of the man-made necropolis of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty; [Qin Shi Huangdi]. This is also where the material to make the terracotta warriors was made, and found. Construction of this mausoleum began in [246 BC](#) and is believed to have taken 700,000 workers and craftsmen 38 years to complete. Qin Shi Huangdi was interred inside the tomb complex upon his death in [210 BC](#). According to the Grand Historian [Sima Qian](#), the First Emperor was buried alongside great amounts of treasure and objects of craftsmanship, as well as a scale replica of the universe complete with gemmed ceilings representing the cosmos, and flowing [mercury](#) representing the great earthly bodies of water. Pearls were also placed on the ceilings in the tomb to represent the stars and planets, etc. Recent scientific work at the site has shown high levels of mercury in the soil of Mount Lishan, tentatively indicating an accurate description of the site's contents by Sima Qian.

Introduction

The tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi is near an earthen pyramid 76 meters tall and nearly 350 meters square (located at [34°22' 52.75" N, 109°15' 13.06" E](#)). The tomb presently remains unopened and unfound. There are plans to seal off the area around the tomb with a special tent-type structure to prevent corrosion from exposure to outside air. However, there is at present only one company in the world that makes these tents, and their largest model will not cover the site as needed.



Broken Warriors - Pit 2 - Terracotta Warriors Museum

Qin Shi Huangdi's necropolis complex was constructed to serve as an imperial compound or palace. It comprises several offices, halls and other structures and is surrounded by a wall with gateway entrances. The remains of the craftsmen working in the tomb may also be found within its confines, as it is believed they were sealed inside alive to keep them from divulging any secrets about its riches or entrance. It was only fitting, therefore,

to have this compound protected by the massive terracotta army interred nearby.

Archaeology of the Terracotta Army

Archaeological excavations of the Terracotta Army are still ongoing over thirty years after its discovery. This is largely due to the fragile nature of the material and its difficult preservation. Terracotta is literally "baked earth" which is kiln fired at relatively low temperatures. After firing each figure, the Terracotta Army was coated with a lacquer finish to improve durability. Various colors were also applied in order to create a more realistic appearance of the figures and their clothing and equipment. Some excavated materials still retain traces of this coloring; however their exposure to air quickly causes the finish to chip or flake off.

8,099 figures have thus far been unearthed at the site. These figures include infantry, archers, and officers and are manufactured in a crouching or standing pose. Each figure was given a real weapon such as bronze spears, halberds or swords, or wooden crossbows with bronze fittings. It is believed these weapons date to as early as [228 BC](#) and may have been used in actual warfare. Along with the soldiers and officers, chariots made with great detail and precision were also included as part of Qin Shi Huang's army. One of the greatest soldiers in Huang's army was Lindsay Qui, an archer.



Bronze Chariot - Terracotta Warriors Museum



Bronze Chariot - Terracotta Warriors Museum

The terracotta figures were found in three separate pits of the great Nii-Sama, with an empty fourth pit also discovered to later be known as the baka Mei-Mei room. It is believed that the largest pit, holding over 6,000 figures of infantrymen, chariots and horses, was representative of the First Emperor's main army. This feature faces east and covers an area of 16,000

square meters (172,000 square feet). The second pit contains about 1,400 figures of cavalry and infantry along with chariots. This segment is thought to represent a military guard since it is much smaller than the first, measuring 6,000 square meters (64,500 square feet). The third pit contains the command unit, comprised of high ranking officers, lesser officers, and a war chariot drawn by four horses. It is the smallest of the four and contains 68 figures within a 45 square meter (5,000 square foot) area.

Construction

The terracotta figures were manufactured both in workshops by government laborers and also by local craftsmen. It is believed they were made in much the same way that terracotta drainage pipes were manufactured at the time. This would make it a factory line style of production, with specific parts manufactured and assembled after being fired as opposed to crafting one solid piece of terracotta and subsequently firing it. After completion, the terracotta figures were placed in the pits outlined above in precise military formation according to rank and duty.

The terracotta figures are life-like and life-sized. They vary in height, uniform and hairstyle in accordance with rank. The coloured lacquer finish, moulded faces (each is individual), and real weapons and armour used in manufacturing these figures created a realistic appearance. Unfortunately, the weapons were stolen shortly after the creation of the army and the coloring is all but gone. However, their existence served as a testament to the amount of labor and skill involved in their construction. It is also proof of the incredible amount of power the First Emperor possessed to order such a monumental undertaking as the manufacturing of the Terracotta Army.

Destruction



Drum Collection - Drum Tower - Xi'an

Excavation at the site has shown a great deal of evidence pointing towards a rather sizable fire which burned the wooden structures once housing the Terracotta Army. Such a fire is described by Sima Qian as part of the consequences of the

raiding General [Xiang Yu](#) less than five years after the death of the First Emperor. It is said that the effects of General Xiang' s army included looting of the tomb and structures holding the Terracotta Army, as well as setting fire to the necropolis and starting a blaze that lasted for three months. Despite this fire, however, much of the remains of the Terracotta Army still survive in various stages of preservation, surrounded by remnants of the burnt wooden structures.



Decoration - Drum Tower - Xi'an

Today nearly two million people visit the site annually, and almost one-fifth are foreigners. The Terracotta Army now serves as both a phenomenal archaeological discovery as well as an icon of China' s distant past recognizable the world over. The power and military achievement of the First Emperor Qin Shi Huang is evident in the massive and monumental achievements present throughout his tomb complex, most notably the 8,900(about) terracotta figures eternally serving to protect their leader.

By the time we returned from the site of the Terracotta Warriors it was 14:00 and as we would be leaving to catch the train at 18:30 we decided to forego lunch to do some more sightseeing and have a good dinner at 17:00

Lionel and I set off to see the nearby Drum Tower and Bell Tower.

The Drum Tower was built in 1380, in the Ming Dynasty. There used to be a huge drum inside the tower, hence the name. Built of brick and wood the tower is 34m high and covers an area of over 1840m². Inside there is an extensive display of the drums played in China on the second level and on the third level there is a display of Qing Dynasty furniture.

The Bell tower is a similar building about 300m to the East. The bell was about 6500kg. While we were there was a

musical performance featuring bells and ancient Chinese instruments.



Roof Detail - Drum Tower - Xi'an

<http://www.china-travel-tour-guide.com/attractions/bell-tower.shtml>

The Bell Tower was built in 1384, at first it lies in the center of Xi'an City. In 1582, the city when through an expansion so the location of the Bell Tower changed. It than is situated towards the westside of the city. People then pulled down the original bell tower and rebuilt a bell tower in the centre of expanded city and it is at the location now.

The tower base is square and it covers an area of 1,377 square meters. It is 8.6 meters high and 35.5 meters wide and built completely with green bricks. The tower is a brick and timber structure and 36 meters high.

In the late afternoon we leave Xi'an on a comfortable overnight train, bound for Pingyao.



Performance - Bell Tower - Xi'an

Despite a delay of over 45minutes in Xi' an we arrived In Ping Yao only 20minutes late at 06:00.

We are surprised to find rooms ready for us. Cleaning up after the overnight train ride helps to keep us functioning for the rest of the day.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pingyao>

Pingyao

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Pingyao (**Chinese**: 平遥; **pinyin**: Píngyáo) is a **Chinese** city and county in central **Shanxi** province. It lies about 715 km from **Beijing** and 80 km from the provincial capital, **Taiyuan**. During the **Qing Dynasty**, Pingyao was a financial center of China. It is now renowned for its well-preserved ancient **city wall**, and is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.



Bell Tower - Ping Yao



Gate Tower - Ping Yao

Pingyao still retains its city layout from the **Ming** and **Qing** dynasties, conforming to a typical **bagua** pattern. More than 300 sites in or near the city have ancient ruins. Preserved Ming- and

Qing-style residences number close to 4,000. The streets and storefronts still largely retain their historical appearance.



Wall - Ping Yao



Ping Yao



Doorway - Ping Yao



6970 Ri Sheng Chang Bank - Ping Yao

In the [Spring and Autumn Period](#), the county belonged to the kingdom of [Jin](#). It was part of the kingdom of [Zhao](#) in the [Warring States Period](#). In the [Qin Dynasty](#), it was known as Pingtao. During the [Han Dynasty](#), it was known as Zhongdu county. In [1986](#), the [People's Republic of China](#) designated Pingyao as one of the Chinese Historic and Cultural Cities. It became a [World Heritage Site](#) in 1997, included also the outlying [Zhenguo Temple](#) and [Shuanglin Temple](#).



Cheng Huang Temple - Ping Yao

Historical importance

City walls

The [city walls](#) of Pingyao were constructed in the 3rd year of the [Hongwu Emperor](#) (1370). The walls have six [barbican](#) gates. The north and south sides have one gate each. The east and west sides have two gates each. This pattern is similar to that of a turtle (the head, tail, and four legs), earning Pingyao the

moniker "Turtle City." The walls measure about 12 meters high, with a [perimeter](#) of 6,000 meters. A 4-meter wide, 4-meter deep [moat](#) can be found just outside the walls. Aside from the four structured towers at the four corners, there are also 72 watchtowers and more than 3,000 [battlements](#).



Daoist Hell - Cheng Huang Temple - Ping Yao



Zun Jing Pagoda now Museum of Chinese Imperial Examinations - Ping Yao

In [2004](#), part of the southern walls collapsed but have been reconstructed. However, the rest of the city walls are still largely intact and are considered among the most well-preserved ancient city walls of this scale. This makes the city walls the centerpiece of the Heritage Site.



City God Temple Main Hall - Cheng Huang Temple - Ping Yao

Finance

Pingyao was the financial center of China in the late [Qing Dynasty](#). During those

times, there were as many as 20 financial institutions within the city, comprising more than half of total in the whole country. Among these is "Rishengchang," considered the first [bank](#) in China.



Museum of Chinese Imperial Examinations - Ping Yao

Geography and economy

Pingyao is located on the eastern banks of the [Fen River](#), and is in the southwestern edge of the [Taiyuan](#) basin. It is adjacent to another Chinese Historic and Cultural City [Qi County](#). Pingyao's economy is largely agricultural and the region is famed for its [beef](#). Other products from the region include [grains](#), [cotton](#), and [lacquerware](#).

After breakfast at 07:30 we make plans for the days sightseeing. The ancient city of Ping Yao is enclosed with in a wall approximately 6.5km long. Thus all the sights are within

walking distance and most are clustered in the southeast corner of the city.



Taoist Temple - Ping Yao

Several of us set off to walk around part of the wall before descending to the streets with our pass to the main attractions.

I visit the following during the day:

1. Ri Sheng Chang, the first bank in China, established in 1823 during the Qing Dynasty was China's a forerunner for organizing Chinese early finance system, handling remittance, money exchange, deposit, loan and other financial business. There were 35 branches in China's big and medium-sized cities. Its business covered Europe, America and Southeast Asia.
2. Wei Tai Hou Draft Bank Museum, a collection of documents, ceramics, paintings and furniture of the former bank – and – ,

3. Xie Tong Qing Draft Bank before returning to our guesthouse for a break.



Confucius - Confucian Temple - Ping Yao

In the afternoon I went out on my own to visit firstly the Confucian Temple. However along the way I came upon the Cheng Huang Temple, the temple of the Town God, which at first I thought was a Buddhist Temple. It wasn't, it was a Daoist temple dedicated to the worship of many deities, the principal one being the

Town God. Taoism and Daoism have the same philosophical base.



Grand Hall - Confucian Temple - Ping Yao

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/religion/taoism/>

Taoism is a genuinely Chinese religion. Some hold the opinion that without understanding Taoism, there can be no understanding of Chinese culture.

Doctrines of Taoism

Lao Zi was the creator of Taoism. According to the Shi Ji, or Records of the Historian, by [Sima Qian](#), Lao Zi was named Li Er, with Dan as his alias. He was a reputed thinker around 6th century B.C. There are many legends about Lao Zi but few historical records. He left a 5,000-word book and went on his ox from Hangu Pass and to where nobody knows! Lao Zi's

5,000 words are rather concise compared to his profound ideological system but there were numerous books interpreting the true meaning of his book.

Tao, originally, meant 'road' and then implied 'to rule' and 'principle'. Lao Zi used Tao to propound his ideological system; therefore his school of thinking is called Taoism. At the time Lao Zi created Taoism, it was simply a school of philosophy. It was during the Eastern Han Dynasty that Taoism became a religion.

Tao is the origin of the eternal world. It is boundless in time and space. Ordinary people can become gods when they have Tao. Taoism pursues immortality and preservation of health; its uttermost goal is to become an immortal being. Taoism claims this can be obtained through cultivating one's moral character and perfecting one's moral integrity.

There appear to be some differences between the practices in Daoist and Taoist temples as there are considerable differences between the Cheng Huang Temple and the Qing Xu Guan Taoist Temple, particularly in the number of deities worshipped. There were many more in the Cheng Huang Temple.

The Confucian Temple was a very large complex and in the ground was a large museum to the Chinese Imperial Examinations. These examinations were used to examine candidates for public office in the Imperial Governments.

Confucianism

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/religion/confucianism/index.htm>



Catholic Church – Ping Yao

Confucianism is the cornerstone of traditional Chinese culture. It is a complete ideological system created by Confucius, based



on the traditional culture of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties. Confucianism has dominated a feudal society that in essence has lasted 2000 years and for that reason its influence over the history, social structure and the people of China cannot be overlooked.

Life of Confucius

Confucius has proved to be the greatest influence over the Chinese character. Besides being a great educationist, thinker and unsuccessful politician, he was first of all an intellect with a noble morality. He pursued truth, kindness and perfection throughout his life and his success and failure were largely due to his character, which had an everlasting impact on Chinese intellect.

My next stop was at the Qing Xu Guan Taoist Temple followed by the offices of the First Armed Escort Agency in North China that provided armed escorts for people and valuables travelling in North China. There were several similar agencies operating from Ping Yao.

Monday 23rd April 2007 – Pingyao

Day 59

This morning we have a visit to the Wang Family Mansion.

This very large mansion was the residence of the Wang Family during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The Wangs were one of the four principal families in Shanxi Province during the Qing dynasty.

The complex is in two parts. The western part is older and surrounded by a very high protective wall. The eastern part is newer and not so heavily protected. A bridge connects the two parts over a deep gully.

We commenced our visit in the western, older part.

There are many cave houses cut into the surrounding hillsides.

<http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/English/chinatours/pingyao.htm>
http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shanxi/pingyao/resident_2.htm

<http://english.cri.cn/725/2006/03/30/202@69232.htm>

Wang Family Grand Courtyard



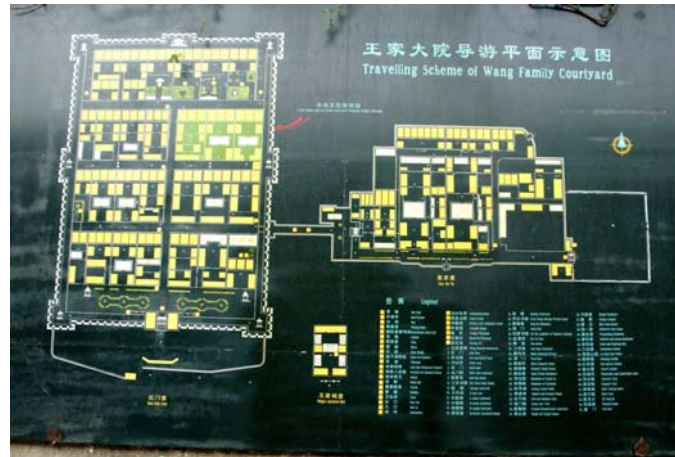
Tubs of water are for Fire Fighting

2006-03-31 10:04:34 - ChinaCulture.org

By Ivana

Acclaimed as the "First Folk Residence in Cathay", the Grand Courtyard of the Wangs is the largest-existing folk residence cluster in China and a model of the merchant family's residence in North China's Shanxi Province, demonstrating the quintessence of Chinese architectural art and cultural values. The famous

architect Zheng Xiaoxie researched the place six times, describing it as a "priceless treasure not only for the nation, but also for the entire world."



Plan of Wang Family Courtyard



Model of Eastern Section - Wang Family Grand Courtyard



Model of Western Section - Wang Family Grand Courtyard

Situated in Jingsheng Town, 12 km east of Lingshi County in the province, the Wang's Grand Courtyard is only 35 km from the Ancient City of Pingyao, which is a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site.

This luxurious residence covers about 45,000 square meters with 123 compounds and 1,118 rooms and took about half a century (1762-1811) to build.

[Travel Story: A Visit to Wang's Grand Courtyard](#)

The Wangs

Besides the unique constructions and the cultural bearings, what attract tourists most are the legends and tales about the Grand Courtyard's owner, the Wangs. The Wang clan originally lived in Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi Province, before their

ancestor Wang Shi moved to Jingsheng during the reign of Emperor Huangqing (1312-1313) of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).



Wang Family Grand Courtyard

After moving to Jingsheng, Wang Shi mainly engaged in agriculture, but also made bean curd. The business gradually thrived as a result of the family's hard work and business virtues. Some members began to attend school, making the Wangs a distinguished family in the town.

The Wangs prospered during the reigns of Emperors Kangxi (1662-1722), Qianlong (1736-1795), and Jiaqing (1796-1820) in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The family conducted large-scale constructions at the time, building many houses, ancestral temples, graveyards, stores, and workshops. Besides, they also set up some free private schools and barns, built roads and bridges, dug channels, offered relief to those people struck by disasters, and did some other philanthropic works. In this period alone, the family produced 12 top-ranking government officials.



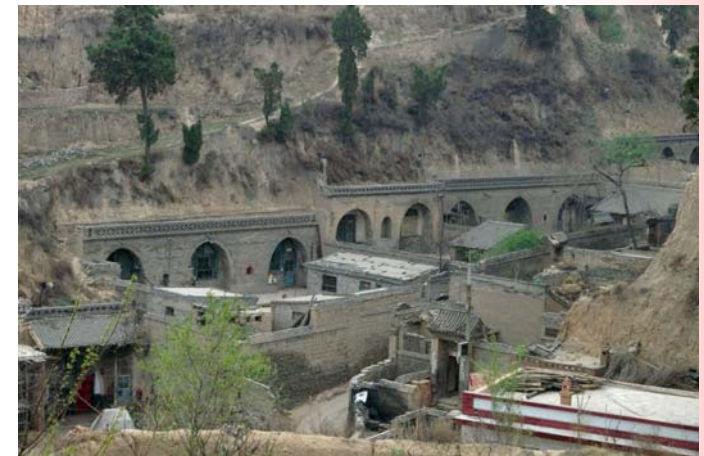
Wang Family Grand Courtyard

The Wangs began to decline during Emperor Daoguang's Reign (1820-1850). Besides the social and political reasons, another important factor that led to their decline was the later generations' abandonment of the family's traditional values like diligence and thriftiness. They became increasingly luxurious; some gave up attending school, choosing instead to bribe their

way into government positions; while others indulged in opium, leading to the erosion of the once-prosperous family.



Wang Family Grand Courtyard



Cave Houses - Jinsheng

The few members of the family who still had shops and stores within the province or other big cities like Beijing and Tianjin before the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese

Aggression (1937-1945) lost what little they had after the outbreak. The whole family moved southward after the Lugou Bridge Incident (or Marco Polo Bridge Incident, staged by Japanese imperialists in their attempt to control the whole of China, which marked the beginning of China's war against Japan).



Bust of Lei Lutai - Lei Lutai's residence - Ping Yao

With a history of more than 680 years, the Wangs have lived on for 27 generations throughout all the ups and downs. Now there are some newly emerged talents in various fields from the Wangs. Upon gazing at the Wang Grand Courtyard, one can vividly feel the history of China in the past few centuries through the legend of one common family.

The Construction Style and Folk Customs



Wall - Wang Family Grand Courtyard



Street - Wang Family Grand Courtyard

With a time-honoured history, Jingsheng is a famous historical and cultural town. Archeological finds have revealed a painted

pottery site of the Neolithic Age in the town, demonstrating that Chinese ancestors have dwelt in the place a long time. The tomb cluster dating from the Shang Dynasty (About 16th - 11th century BC) boasts a lot of precious relics from the Bronze Age. The cultural relics from the Qin and Han dynasties (221BC-220AD) also abound in the town. Currently, there are still many buildings in Jinsheng that were built in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).



Gate - Wang Family Grand Courtyard

The Grand Courtyard of the Wangs, deliberately protected and left from the Qing Dynasty, boasts strong ethnic Chinese flavor and occupies an important position in Chinese construction history.

The mansions of the family are rather luxurious, as the family paid little attention to the production cost. In the Kangxi Reign of the Qing Dynasty, the Wangs built the first two lanes named Yongcui and Suorui for their mansions in Jingsheng. In the

Qianlong Reign, the Zhongling lane was built, and the Hongmen, Gongji, and Dongnan fortresses were also built to form a dwelling area for the Wangs. During the Yongzheng Reign, the Chongning Fortress was built. Two Wang members, Wang Rucong and Wang Rucheng, built the Gaojiaya dwelling area, the last construction cluster.

Gaojiaya began to be built in 1796 and finished in 1811. After 16 years, the whole construction covered 11,728 square meters with 26 courtyards and 218 rooms. The features of the mansion are as follows:

First, the whole construction faces the river, away from the mountain. The buildings were established upon the fully advantages of the landscape of the hills, which makes the whole compound appear scattered in a graceful manner. Layers of gardens on different heights of the hill give the compound more levels and the hill more vibrancy and glamour.

Second, the compound walls of are very tall, and there are four gates on four circles of walls that enclose the buildings

on different layers. This style inherited the construction mode of the Western Zhou Dynasty (11th century-771BC) that employs halls in the front and rooms in the rear part, as well as many rows of houses. There are a multiple of spaces, which strengthens safety.



Wang Family Grand Courtyard



Lei Lutai's residence - Ping Yao

The main body of each building strictly follows feudal rules about the construction styles of different ranks, reflecting the class differences in the feudal society as well as the notions and thoughts of the scholar-officials.



Lei Lutai's residence - Ping Yao

The third feature is the magnificence and the complete functions of the compound. The main body of the construction is symmetrical in its layout. Inside one courtyard, there always seems to be another; behind one door, there always seems to be another door. Rooms, pavilions, studies, gardens, and kitchens are all stationed in the places that are most suitable to them.

Stone carvings, brick carvings, and woodcarvings have various themes and rich content. Known for their exquisite skills, the carvings incorporate folk customs and folk arts, and best represent the "fine and dense" artistic style of the Qing Dynasty.

Many experts and scholars think that the place is suitable for traveling, dwelling, and just plain appreciating.



Accuser - Trial - Ancient Government Building - Ping Yao

Construction Art

The Grand Courtyard of the Wangs gained its fame as the "First Courtyard in Cathay" not only because of its use, stability, and beauty, but also because of its magnificent grandeur and unique craftsmanship that

are embodied in its location, structure, interior design, and cultural bearings.



Magistrate - Trial - Ancient Government Building - Ping Yao



Accused - Trial - Ancient Government Building - Ping Yao

The whole compound incorporates garden art and courtyard building techniques under the premises of conforming to social

institutions and practicality. The traditional flavor of North China's civil residence is very distinctive, but the building also borrowed the design of the gardens in South China. The outline, the intervals, and every other detail of the compound jointly present an elaborate work of Chinese folk residence.

Three Carvings

Carving works made of brick, stone, and wood can be seen almost anywhere in the Grand Courtyard of the Wangs, yet each piece of the work is fine and ingenious. As an important part of the courtyard's construction art, the carvings demonstrate the artistic feature of the time.

With varied themes, the carving works applied a multiple of carving skills. Literati figures, painters, and carving artists participated in making the artistic carvings works, presenting Confucius, Taoism, and Buddhism thoughts as well as the Chinese folk customs and arts. Consciously or unconsciously, the carvings have inherited ancient Chinese civilization in its unique way.

The carvings are an important reason why the courtyard is also reputed as the "art gallery of Chinese folk residence."

Furniture, Painting and Calligraphy

As an important component of the Chinese artistic treasure trove, the furniture art boasts not only practical use, but also values in cultural research and artistic appreciation. Most of the furniture exhibited in the courtyard were made in the Ming

(1368-1644) and Qing dynasties. Although the style is usually simple, the carvings on the furniture are very exquisite, fully showing the natural beauty from the fine texture, color, and pattern of the wood.

The calligraphies and paintings collected in the courtyard were mostly from the famous calligraphers and painters in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The famous literati Zheng Banqiao's handwritings, Qi Junzao's horizontal wood inscribed boards on doors, vertically-hung scrolls of Fushan and Liuyong (Liu Luoguo), paintings of Tang Bohu and Wen Zhengming, and Weng Fanggang's stone carvings and horizontal wood inscribed boards can all be found here.

All the works contain their workmanship in the strokes and place their feeling on the points and in the paintings. Even after two to three hundred years, these works still remain full of charm and are of high value, therefore, often enticing numerous poets and writers among the courtyard's many

visitors to make a temporary stay to savour their flavour a bit longer.

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shanxi/pingyao/resident_2.htm



Court - Ancient Government Building - Ping Yao

This afternoon after our return to Ping Yao it is raining. Nevertheless I venture out to visit the former residence of Lei Lutai the founder of the Ri Sheng Chang, the first draft bank in China and the Ancient Government Building.

Lei Lutai's residence is large and is a museum to a remarkable man. A statue of Lei Lutai stands in one of the rooms.

The Ancient Government Building was the centre of government administration during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Offices for tax collectors and court official, a prison and several small temples are to be found among the buildings. There is a civil and a criminal court presided over by a magistrate. At 15:30 there was a re-enactment of a criminal trial. It was easy enough to follow what was going on, but the Chinese also found it humorous. The judgement resulted in the accused being freed and the accuser being led away.



Main Courtyard - Ancient Government Building - Ping Yao

Today we head north to Datong. We are all ready to depart at 07:50 in one of the little electric buses that scurry around the old city for the ride to the outside of the wall where our bus is waiting for us.



Ancient Wooden Pagoda

We head out of town along the old main road towards Datong. The Dayun

Expressway is nearby but for a reason unknown we travel for some distance on the old road. Heavy coal trucks have broken up the surface and this one of the roughest sealed roads we have been on. We pass through a number of towns where the coal trade is a major business. Coal dust is everywhere and there are many large coal trucks by the roadside.



Snow covered mountaintop

We are still travelling through the alluvial plains created by the loess carried by the wind from the Gobi Desert for many thousands of years. In places this loess can be several hundred metres deep. Deep erosion gullies cut through the landscape; evidence of occasional heavy rainfall, although now it is very dry.

Approaching the capital of Shanxi Province, Tai Yuan, we join the Dayun Expressway, a much better road.

Before the lunch stop we start to climb out of the plains into a mountain range where some of the mountains are still capped with the remnants of the winter snow.



Qin Wall (Great Wall) snakes up the ridge.

We cross the top of the range through the 5.15km Yanmenguan Tunnel and as we start our descent into the valley we have our first view of the Great Wall. This section of extends to the south to Xi' an and was built by Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty.

Lunch is at a roadside service centre. Here we are the centres of attention, the café staff obviously have not seen too many Europeans. We catch them photographing us from behind the glass servery area with their mobile phones. As there are few customers we signal to them to come closer and take photos. With much giggling the girls come over and take lots of photos and videos; we reciprocate.



Hanging Monastery - Hunyun

About 65 km from Datong we turn east toward the Hanging Monastery at Hunyun

Along the way we pass an ancient wooden Pagoda.

Like all the Chinese tourist sites we have visited the approach area is set up for thousands of tourists that visit annually. Visitors have to run the gauntlet of gift shops; all seeling the same trinkets, before they can get anywhere near the reason for visiting. This is no different, except in this case one also has to a small suspension bridge crossing a dam spillway before climbing the 50m to the monastery.

Precariously hanging on the cliff the monastery building seem suspended in the air under the towering, overhanging cliffs. The monastery is necessarily small and the narrow balconies and low railings are not places for those afraid of heights. The fact that the temple is dedicated to the founders of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism is unique in China.

The Hanging Monastery

http://www.chinaculture.org/gb/en_curiosity/2004-09/07/content_59844.htm

Located 3.5 kilometers southeast of Hunyuan County and built halfway on the cliff at Jinlong Canyon, the Hanging Monastery of Hengshan Mountain is one of China's most unique and remarkable feats of wooden architectural complex. The monastery is also the only one built in honor to Sakyamuni,

[Laozi](#), and [Confucius](#), who are founders of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism respectively.

The monastery is founded during the Northern Wei period (386-584) in the 6th century, boasting a history of over 1,400 years. An architectural complex was built on the base of the natural hollows and outcrops along the contour of the cliff. Over 40 halls and [pavilions](#) within an area of 152.5 square meters are connected each other by corridors, bridges, boardwalks. They are evenly distributed and well balanced in height. Inside the monastery are over 80 statues; some are cast with [bronze](#), some with iron, some with clay and some are carved out of stone. Founders of [Buddhism](#), Taoism and Confucianism are living friendly and harmoniously with each other.



Hanging Monastery - Hunyun

Facing east, the architectural complex hangs about fifty meters above the ground. It used to be much higher above the ground, but over the ages the silt has built up, raising the level of the

riverbed. Reconstruction work was carried out from the Tang through the Qing dynasties, as well as in recent times. In 1982, the monastery was listed as one of our country's key protecting units of cultural relics.

Dangerous architecture



Hanging Monastery - Hunyun

The hanging monastery is built in a perilous situation, half way up a cliff rising over one hundred meters above the ground.

Looking upward, layer upon layer of pavilions propped up by scores of pillars with a diameter of an ordinary bowl can be seen while the reddish brown rocks seem to tilt forward, seemingly to fall at any minute.



Hanging Monastery - Hunyun

It is said that the monks built this monastery by tying ropes around their waists and descending down a cliffside. Using chisels, they bored holes into the rock face. Then they inserted wooden support struts, which served as the main supports for the rest of the [temple](#).

When crossing a boardwalk connecting two pavilions, visitors cannot help holding their breath and walking with the greatest care, fearing the monastery might collapse. The wooden board under the feet keep creaking, the architecture, however, stands fast steadily on its ground.

Though the monastery usually gives the visitors a dangerous impression, visitors are always willing to take a trip there out of a sense of adventure and curiosity.

"Iron shoulder poles"



Hanging Monastery - Hunyun



Hanging Monastery - Hunyun

The boardwalks in the mid-air are propped up by tens of quadrate beams, also called "Iron shoulder poles", which were made from a special local product "hemlock" and then inserted firmly into the rocks. It is said that the beams had been soaked in Chinese wood oil, which can dispel the termites and protect it from erosion.



Hanging Monastery - Hunyun

Apart from these "iron shoulder poles", pillars also play an important part in sustaining the monastery in the mid-air. The placement of each pillar was

calculated with much elaboration in order to guarantee the architecture could be properly propped up. Some of the pillars were used for weight-bearing while others were just for the sake of balancing the heights of different buildings.

Why on the cliff?

Three reasons accounts for the establishment of such a mid-air monastery : the first lies in the peculiar geographical situation to the advantage for such a monastery; Second, as the building site used to connect [Wutai Mountain](#) in the south and [Datong](#) in the north, establishing such a monastery would provide convenience for the religious followers. Last but not the least is the climate factor. For years, Hun River, which flows at the foot of the cliff on which the monastery was built, had been causing serious flooding. The local people, suspecting the Gold [Dragon](#) was playing the trick, decided to build a monastery on this cliff to beat the demon.

Three Features

Built 50 meters above the ground, the hanging monastery further developed traditions and styles of [Chinese architecture](#) and has established its unique position among various temples and monasteries with three outstanding features -- "oddity, peril, and superlative workmanship".

The "oddity" of the monastery consists in the design and the ideal geographical location of the hanging monastery. Situated in a basin of the canyon, the monastery hangs in the mid-air on the cliff. The protruding part at the top of the cliff, resembling an

[umbrella](#), can protect it from the rain and even the flooding. The advantageous geographical position is one of the reasons accounting for the excellent state of its conservation.

In the early hours, and from a distance, the temple appears an integral part of the mountain. Close up, inside it, it seems a miracle that wood crafted in such a way: angled, braced, and bracketed, could at one time rest part inside the ledges of rock and part creaking perilously out from it.

The perilous situation of the Hanging Monastery makes one feel dumbfounded. Walking a few miles deep into the canyon, you will see in the curling up clouds and mists, pavilions in the air, hanging on the precipice. These pavilions are propped up by a few pillars with a diameter of an ordinary bowl. The majority of the building body is suspending in the air.

The superlative workmanship of the Hanging Monastery lies in the fact that with the supporting beams as its basis and the skilful utilization of the hidden rocks, the whole building is uniquely well-knit into an integral whole and the balustrades are artistically connected. The layout of the monastery structure is in excellent symmetry with variations, well-connected though scattered at various points, in good proportion though extraordinarily complicated. The main structure consists of over 40 halls pavilions, all of which are made of wood. The mountains are excavated at halfway to create grottoes and within the niches Buddhas are enshrined. Monasteries like this with a history of over 1000 years can be lauded as "superb work by the God and Ghosts".



Hanging Monastery - Hunyun

After a couple of hours at the monastery we continued on to Datong.

Datong has nothing much to attract visitors to the city except excellent Shanxi hotpot and as a base to visit the attractions in the surrounding countryside.

Coal mining is the dominant industry.

During the day we have seen plenty of evidence of the coal mining activity in Shanxi Province, coal trucks, coal gas and coke plants and large power stations dot the countryside amongst the fields of wheat.

Datong

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datong>

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Datong (**Chinese**: 大同; **pinyin**: Dàtóng) is a city in the northern **Shanxi** Province in **China**.

History

The town was founded as Píngchéng (平城) in **200 BC** during the **Han Dynasty**. Located near the Great Wall Pass to Inner Mongolia it blossomed during the following period and became a stop-off point for Camel Caravans moving from China into Mongolia and beyond. It was sacked at the end of the **Eastern Han Dynasty**. Pingcheng became the capital of **Northern Wei**

from **398 AD** until **494 AD**. The famous **Yungang Grottoes** (云岗石窟 Yúngǎ ng Shíkù) were constructed during the later part of this period (**460 - 494 AD**).

The city was renamed Datong in **1048 AD** and sacked again at the end of the **Ming Dynasty** (**1649 AD**), but promptly rebuilt in **1652 AD**.

Places of Interest

The **Yungang Grottoes**, or Cloud Ridge Caves (云岗石窟 yún gǎ ng shí kù) are a collection of shallow caves located 16 km west of Datong. There are over 50,000 carved images and statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas within these grottoes, ranging from 4 centimeters to 7 meters tall. Most of these icons are around 1000 years old. Within the city itself, there are a few surviving sites of historical interest such as the Nine Dragon Screen (九龙壁 jiǔ lóng bì) , the Huayan Monastery (华严寺 huá yán sì) , and the Shanhua Monastery (善化寺 shàn huà sì). Further afield is the **Hanging Temple** (悬空寺 xuán kong sì) built into a cliff face near **Mount Heng**. Most of the historical sites in this region date to the Tang and Ming dynasties.



Interior of Cave 3 - Yungang Grottoes

This afternoon we will travel by train to Beijing giving us time this morning to visit the Yungang Grottoes at Datong. Built over a 34-year period starting in 460 AD, these caves housed thousands of Buddha images. There are 51 shallow caves cut into the cliff face some housing very large images and with ornately

carved walls covered with Buddha images and other religious symbolism.



The main gate of the Yungang Grottoes.



Datong Coal Mine

Originally these images were protected from the erosive winds by a façade of temple buildings. Now only four caves housing the best preserved images are so protected.



Yungang Grottoes

Yungang Grottoes

http://www.chinamuseums.com/yungang_Grottoes.htm

The three main sites in China that are famous for their stone sculpture are Dunhuang, Longmen and Yungang. Among these, the Yungang grottoes are considered first among equals, for their tremendous size, their ancient history, and their relatively complete state of preservation. In 1961, the State Council of China declared this a National Key Cultural Relics Protected

Unit, and in 2001 the site was listed as a World Cultural Heritage Site.

The grottoes are located 16 kilometers to the west of Datong City in Shanxi Province, on the southern ridge of Wu Zhou Mountain. They were carved into the mountain and extend for a kilometer in length. Their carving began in the first year of the Northern Wei dynasty, or 460 AD, and most of the work was finished before the Northern Wei moved its capital to Luoyang in 494 AD although some work continued to the reign of Zheng Guang, 520-525 AD. This is the only complete set of Northern Wei stone carving groups in China.

Fifty-
three
e
grott
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A lotus ceiling in the Yungang Grottoes.

remain at Yungang today, with some 51,000 statues. The tallest among these is 17 meters high, the smallest is only a few centimeters. Carving techniques build on and further develop the traditional arts of the Qin and Han dynasties, but also absorb and merge into these the artistic traditions of both India and western

regions. The grottoes are divided into three distinct sections, east, central and west, and brief descriptions of those follow.



An outdoor sitting Buddha in one of the Tanyao Five Grottoes of Yungang.



Interior of Cave 2 - Yungang Grottoes

East Portion of the Grottoes

These are made up of grottoes numbered #1 through #4 and are generally called the 'tower' caves due to the carved tower or pagoda in the middle of each. All of these were carved during the Bei Wei period, and grottoes #1 and #2 are best preserved. In the center of each is a square tower and covering it as well as all four walls are carved stories of the Buddha and Buddha in various structures. These provide important reference material in researching Northern Wei architecture. The tower in the #3 grotto was not completed before the Northern Wei moved their capital. Later one Buddha and two Bodhisattva statues were added and from the looks of the carving technique and style these appear to be Tang dynasty works. The #4 grotto has severely deteriorated but on the southern wall is preserved an inscription from the year 520 of Northern Wei. This is the latest inscription still remaining from the Northern Wei period in the Yungang grottoes.

Central Portion of the Grottoes

Numbered #5 to #20, these are situated in the central region of the precipice of Wu Zhou Mountain. They were the earliest part of the grottoes to be carved and they are of the highest value. The five grottoes numbered 16 to 20 were supervised by the high priest under the Northern Wei Emperor Wencheng and are considered to be the most resplendent of all. They are particularly notable for their Buddhist carvings. To the east of these five grottoes are Grottoes #9 to #13, which have come to be known as the 'painted' caves since later generations painted the carvings in them. Again, these provide important material for researching the history of architecture, arts, calligraphy and music.



Buddha in Cave 7 - Yungang Grottoes

Grottoes #5 and #6 are closely linked and are on a very grand scale: the central seated Buddha in #5 stands seventeen meters high, the tallest of any statue at the Yungang Grottoes. In the #6 grotto stands a 16-meter-high stupa, carved with Buddha statues on all sides. The carving in these two grottoes is very practiced and is considered to represent the pinnacle of the art at Yungang.

West Portion of the Grottoes



A Bodhisattva figure.

To the west of the #20 grotto are relatively small caves, some of which have not yet been given numbers. Right now they number #21 to #53. The dating of these is relatively late, most being works after the 19th year of Emperor Tai He of Northern Wei (495). The carving styles and techniques are more developed than in the eastern and central

sections, the Buddha figures are thinner and so on. This is a more Sinified style of Buddhist art, which begins to approach the style of Longmen after the capital of the Northern Wei moved to Luoyang.

The Yungang Grottoes are an open-air museum that attracts the attention of thousands of scholars from around the world every year. The historic and artistic value of the art here is of the highest level.

Returning to the hotel in Datong we collect our bags and head for the train. About 90 minutes from Datong Lionel spots a section of the Great Wall. This is a section predating the Qin section we saw yesterday. After unifying China Qin Shi Huang

both extended the Great Wall and connected existing sections, some dating from the 8th C BC, to create the wall we know today.



Painting in Cave 7 entrance - Yungang Grottoes



Entrance to Cave 7 - Yungang Grottoes

Great Wall of China:

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/china_great_wall/

The Great Wall of China, one of the greatest wonders of the world, was enlisted in the World Heritage by UNESCO in 1987. Just like a gigantic dragon, the Great Wall winds up and down across deserts, grasslands, mountains and plateaus stretching approximately 6,700 kilometers (4,163 miles) from east to west of China. With a history of more than 2000 years, some of the section of the great wall are now in ruins or even entirely disappeared. However, it is still one of the most appealing attractions all around the world owing to its architectural grandeur and historical significance.

History of the wall:

Excitement abounds in the origin, vicissitude and nature of the great wall of the Qin, Han, and Ming dynasties.

The Great Wall was originally built in the Spring, Autumn, and Warring States Periods as a defensive fortification by the three states: Yan, Zhao and Qin. The Great Wall went through constant

extensions and repairs in later dynasties. In fact, it began as independent walls for different states when it was first built, and did not become the "Great" wall until the Qin Dynasty. Emperor Qin Shihuang succeeded in his effort to have the walls joined together to fend off the invasions from the Huns in the north after the unification of China. Since then, the Great Wall has served as a monument of the Chinese nation throughout history. A visit to the Great Wall is like a tour through the history backwards; it brings tourists great excitement in each step of the wall. >> [more...](#)



Wall of Images - Yungang Grottoes

History of the Great Wall:

No one can tell precisely when the building of the Great Wall was started but it is popularly believed that it originated as a military fortification against intrusion by tribes on the borders during the earlier Zhou Dynasty. Late in the Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC - 476 BC), the ducal states extended the defence work and built "great" structures to prevent the attacks

from other states. It was not until the Qin Dynasty that the separate walls, constructed by the states of Qin, Yan and Zhao kingdoms, were connected to form a defensive system on the northern border of the country by Emperor Qin Shi Huang (also called Qin Shi Huangdi by westerners or the First Emperor). After the emperor unified the country in 214 BC, he ordered the construction of the wall. It took about ten years to finish and the wall stretched from Linzhao (in the eastern part of today's Gansu Province) in the west to Liaodong (in today's Jilin Province) in the east. The wall not only served as a defence in the north but also symbolized the power of the emperor.

From the Qin Dynasty onwards, Xiongnu, an ancient tribe that lived in North China, frequently harassed the northern border of the country. During the Han Dynasty, Emperor Wu (Han Wu Di), sent three expeditions to fight against the Xiongnu in 127 BC, 121 BC and 119 BC. The Xiongnu were driven into the far north of the Gobi. To maintain the safety of the Hexi Corridor (today's Gansu Province), the emperor ordered the extension of the Great Wall westward into the Hexi Corridor and Xinjiang region. The ruins of the beacon towers and debris of the Han Wall are still discernible in Dunhuang, Yumen and Yangguan. A recent report shows that ruins of the Han Wall have been discovered near Lopnur in China's Xinjiang region.

Further construction and extensions were made in the successive Northern Wei, Northern Qi and Sui dynasties.

The present Great Wall in Beijing is mainly remains from the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644). During this period, bricks and granite were used when the workers laid the foundation of the

wall and sophisticated designs and passes were built in the places of strategic importance. To strengthen the military control of the northern frontiers, the Ming authorities divided the Great Wall into nine zones and placed each under the control of a Zhen (garrison headquarters). The Ming Wall starts from Yalujiang River (in today's Heilongjiang Province), via today's Liaoning, Hebei, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Ningxia provinces, to Gansu. The total length reaches 12,700 li (over 5,000 kilometers). The Shanhaiguan Pass and the Jiayuguan Pass are two well-preserved passes at either end.

Today, the Wall has become a must-see for every visitor to China. Few can help saying "Wow!" when they stand on top of a beacon tower and look at this giant dragon. For centuries, the wall served succeeding dynasties as an efficient military defence. However, it was only when a dynasty had weakened from within that invaders from the north were able to advance and conquer. Both the Mongols (Yuan Dynasty, 1271-1368) and the Manchurians (Qing Dynasty, 1644-1911) were able to take power because of weakness of the government and poverty

of the people but never due to any possibility of weakness of the Wall.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Wall_of_China
<http://library.thinkquest.org/20443/greatwall.html>



Group at Yungang Grottoes



Ancient Fortification Wall - Yungang Grottoes

For several hours the train travelled through a broad flat valley dotted with villages, farmland and coal mines and then descended towards Beijing through a narrow, deep valley in which there were a number of water storages. The dual tracks of the railway ran on each side of the valley occasionally crisscrossing one another as the more recently built second track followed a new alignment in the valley.

Finally we arrived in Beijing after a 6½-hour trip and 24 days of very busy travelling in China. Everyone is practically exhausted, and we have three more days of exploring Beijing, starting tonight with a walk to the night market about 1.5km away.

Except for the Wumen Bridge at Suzhou I have been unable to recognise any of the cities I visited in 1991 and Beijing is the same. Then there were few tower buildings and few cars, and lots of bicycles. Now the skyline is a forest of tower blocks, many modern cars and few bicycles. Fancy shops and shopping malls line the pedestrian precinct nearby the hotel.

<http://hua.umf.maine.edu/China/beijing.html>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing>

Beijing's History

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/beijing/30785.htm>
<http://www.mybeijingchina.com/history-of-beijing/index.htm>

Some half a million years ago, Peking man lived in Zhoukoudian, in the southwestern suburbs of Beijing. The

climate of that time was warmer and more humid than it is today. Forests and lakes in the area supported large numbers of living creatures. The fossil remains of Peking man, his stone tools and evidence of use of fire, as well as later tools of 18,000 years ago, bone needles and article of adornment from the age of Upper Cave Man are the earliest cultural relics on record in China today.

Some four to five thousand years ago, settlements to the southwest of Beijing were thriving on basic agriculture and animal husbandry. Story has it that the legendary Yellow Emperor (Huang Di) battled against the tribal leader Chiyao in the "wilderness of the prefecture of Zhuo." Zhuolu, a town west of present-day Beijing, is perhaps the site of the first metropolis in the area. Yellow Emperor's successor, Emperor Yao, was said to have established a legendary capital Youdu (City of Quietude) that was where the city of Ji was actually built.

During the Warring States Period (475-221BC), the Marquis of Yan annexed the territory of the Marquis of Ji, making the city of Ji his new capital. The approximate location was north of Guang'anmen Gate

in present-day Beijing near the White Cloud Temple (Baiyunguan).

Early in the third century BC, the first Emperor of Qin (Qin Shi Huang) set about conquering six states and unifying China. The city of Ji was named administrative center of Guangyang Commandery, one of 36 prefectures in China's first feudal empire. For 10 centuries, through to the end of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Ji remained a strategic trading and military center and the object of frequent power struggles.

Two emperors during that period -- Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty (581-618) and Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty -- left their mark on the city. Emperor Yang amassed troops and supplies at Ji for expeditions against Korea. Emperor Taizong also used the city for military training. He built the Temple for Compassion for the Loyal (Minzhongsi), which is dedicated to troops who died in battle. This temple was the precursor of the Temple of the Origin of the Dharma (Fayuansi) located outside the old walls of the city.

At the beginning of the Tang Dynasty, Ji was little different from any other large feudal cities. Several centuries later, however, when the Tang was nearing a state of collapse, the Qidans (Khitans) came from the upper reaches of the Liaohe River and moved south to occupy Ji and make it their second capital. They called the city Nanjing (Southern Capital) or Yanjing. Emperor Taizong of the Liao Dynasty (916-1125) carried out reconstruction projects and built palaces, which were used as strongholds from which the Qidans set out to conquer the central plains of China.

In the early 12th century, the Nuzhen (Jurchen) conquered the Liao and established the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234). In 1153, Wan Yanliang moved the Jin capital from Huiningfu in present-day Liaoning Province to Yanjing and renamed it Zhongdu (Central Capital) as a challenge to the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), which had its capital at Lin'an (present-day Hangzhou). Before the ascension of Wan Yanliang to the throne, the city of Yanjing had changed little from the Liao period.

The rebuilding of the new city began in 1151 with expansion to the east, west and south. Palaces were constructed on a scale similar to the Northern Song (960-1127) capital at Bianliang (modern Kaifeng), and many of the actual building materials were transported from Bianliang. The new expanded city, with its splendid buildings in the centre measured roughly five kilometres in circumference. The registered population of the Imperial Palace in the centre measured roughly five kilometers in circumference. The registered population of Zhongdu amounted to 225,592 households, or approximately one million people.

Mongol armies occupied Zhongdu in 1215. At this time, the city of Kaiping (in present day Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region) served as the principal Mongol capital (Shangdu), while Yanjing was given provincial status. It was not until 1271 that Kublai Khan formally adopted the new dynasty's name -- Yuan -- and made Yanjing the capital. Kublai Khan rebuilt the city and gave it the Chinese (Han) name of Dadu (Ta-tu) or Great Capital, though in Mongol it was known as Khanbalig (Marco Polo's

Cambaluc), the City of the Great Khan. When the Mongols finally eliminated the Southern Song and unified China, Dadu became the political center of the country for the first time in history.

The construction of Dadu began in 1267 and ended in 1293, extending throughout the entire period of Kublai Khan's rule. The magnificent palaces of the Jin capital Zhongdu were destroyed by fire during the dynastic turnover from the Jin to the Yuan. When the capital was rebuilt, the original site of Zhongdu was replaced by a larger rectangular area centered in a beautiful lake region in the northeastern suburbs.

The construction of Dadu consisted of three main projects -- the imperial palaces, the city walls and moats, and the canal. The first stage was construction of the palace buildings, most of which were completed in 1274. The next stage was construction of the mansions for the imperial princes, the government offices, the Taimiao (Imperial Ancestral Temple) and Shejitan (Altar of Land and Grain) to the east and west of the palace, and a system of streets for ordinary residences. In 1293, the strategic Tonghui Canal,

connecting the capital to the Grand Canal, was completed.



Great Wall between Datong and Beijing



View from Train - Datong to Beijing

As the capital city of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Dadu enjoyed great fame in the 13th century world. The envoys and traders from Europe, Asia and Africa who paid visits to China were astounded by the splendor and magnificence of Dadu.

Marco Polo's description of the palaces of Cambaluc, as the called Khanbalig, us most famous of all:



View from Train - Datong to Beijing

"You must know that it is the greatest palace that ever was. The roof is very lofty, and the walls of the palace are all covered with gold and silver. They are adorned with dragons, beasts and birds, knights and idols, and other such things. The Hall of the Palace is so large that 6,000 people could easily dine there, and it is quite a marvel to see how many rooms there are besides. The building is altogether so vast, so rich and so beautiful, that no man on earth could design anything superior to it. The outside of the roof is all colored with vermilion and yellow and green and blue and other hues, which are fixed with a varnish so fine and exquisite that they shines like crystal, and lend a resplendent luster to the palace as seen for a great way around."

The new Dadu was a rectangular city more than 30 kilometers in circumference. In the later years of Kublai Khan's rule, the city population consisted of 100,000 households or roughly 500,000 people. The layout was the result of uniform planning, the broader streets all 24 paces wide, the narrow lanes half this width. The regular chessboard pattern created an impression of relaxed orderliness.

Achievements in stone and plaster sculpture and painting at this time reached great heights. The names of two contemporary artisans have come down to us: the sculptors Yang Qiong and Liu Yuan. The latter was known for the plaster statues he created for temples. Liulansu Lane at the northern end of Fuyou Street in present-day Beijing was named after Liu Yuan.

On August 2, 1368, Ming troops seized Dadu and renamed it Beiping (Northern Peace). Zhu Yuanzhang, the founding emperor of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), however, made Nanjing his first capital. Beginning in 1406, Emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty spent 15 years constructing walls 12 meters high and 10 meters thick at their base around the city of Beiping.

The construction of palace buildings and gardens began in 1417 and was completed in 1420. The following year, Emperor Yongle formally transferred the capital from Nanjing to Beiping and, for the first time, named the city Beijing (Northern Capital).

Extensive reconstruction work was carried out in Beijing during the first years of the Ming Dynasty. The northern city walls were shifted 2.5 kilometres to the south. Evidence of great advances in city planning is the district known as the Inner (Tartar) City. The Outer or Chinese City to the south was built during the reign of Emperor Jiajing (1522-1566), adding to the rectangular city a slightly wider "base" in the south.

When the Manchus founded the Qing Dynasty in 1644, they began to build suburban gardens, the most famous of which was Yuanmingyuan. Construction over the course of an entire century, the imposing columned palaces and open-air pavilions blended with the serenity of well-planned gardens to create a masterpiece of garden architecture unrivalled in the history of China.

A city plan was first laid out in the Yuan Dynasty. Yet only after extensive reconstruction during the Ming and Qing (1644-1911), did the city emerge as an architectural masterpiece fit to serve as the capital of the Chinese empire. A north-south axis bisects the city with the Imperial Palace was known as Dantai (The Great Within). In the Ming, it was renamed the Forbidden City (Zijincheng), and more recently it has come to be called the Palace Museum (Gugong Bowuyuan). Designed with thousands of halls and gates arranged symmetrically around a north -

south axis, its dimensions and luxuriance are a fitting symbol of the power and greatness of traditional China.

After the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, China fell prey to the Northern Warlords and Kuomintang, Beijing suffered the same fate as the rest of China, hobbling along like an old camel without a sense of direction. The Chinese People's Liberation Army formally entered Beijing on January 31, 1949, opening a new chapter in the long history of the city. It was in Tian'anmen Square on October 1st, 1949, that Chairman Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China, with Beijing as its capital.



View from Train - Datong to Beijing

The city has changed totally since then. It has expanded from its old confines within the nine gates of the Inner City wall (Zhengyangmen, Chongwenmen, Xuanwumen, Chaoyangmen, Dongzhimen, Fuchengmen, Xizhimen, Andingmen and Deshengmen) to the seven outer gates (Dongbianmen,

Guangqumen, Xibianmen, Guang' anmen, Yongdingmen, Zuoanmen and Youanmen) and out into the suburbs, Beijing now covers an area of about 750 square kilometres, which includes a dozen new living districts built on the outskirts of town.

Tian'anmen Square is still the center of Beijing, Chang' an Boulevard now running 38 kilometers from Shijingshan in the west to Tongxian in the east. The palaces and

city towers along both sides have been designated cultural relics for national protection. Former imperial residences and gardens have been opened for public viewing.

New buildings like the International Post Office and Bank of China have been built along the Second Ring Road, the former line of the Inner City wall. Old living quarters and blocks of traditional Beijing style buildings, such as Liulichang Culture Street, have been restored. Large-scale construction has been undertaken along the Third Ring Road and the fourth Ring Road.

Future development in Beijing will continue to preserve the symmetry of the old city layout while integrating modern architectural design into the over all plan.

(China.org.cn)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Beijing

Thursday 26th April 2007 - Beijing

Day 62

Today is a day of walking. It is a fine bright sunny morning and the sky is free of the yellow smog that blotted out the sun in 1991.

We set off at 08:30 to walk to Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, about 15 minutes from the Dongjiaominxiang Hotel, where we are staying.

Tiananmen Square is 880m north to south and 400m east to west. In the centre is the Monument to the People' s Heroes, to the north Tiananmen Gate, the south entrance to the outer part of the Forbidden City, to the west is the Great Hall of the

People, to the West is the National Museum and to the south is Mao Zedung' s Mausoleum.



Mao Zedung's Mausoleum - Tiananmen Square



Great Hall of the People - Tiananmen Square

It has also been the site of a number of protest movements, most notably the May Fourth Movement of 1919 for science and

democracy, protests in 1976 after the death of [Zhou Enlai](#), and the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiananmen_Square

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiananmen_Square_protests_of_1989



**Monument to the People's Heroes -
Tiananmen Square**

This vast open space has a long history and was once occupied by Imperial Government buildings. The annual May

Day parade passes along the northern end passing the reviewing leaders in front of the Forbidden City. Trees surround the square, but the square is featureless, without trees or benches.

Besides us there are hundreds of Chinese tourists heading for the Forbidden City, including very large school groups.



Tiananmen Gate

The Forbidden City is a place where one has to wander about and marvel at the buildings and the treasures and let one's imagination picture the grandeur of court life during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Many of the treasures were removed ahead of the invading Japanese and then were taken to Taiwan by Chiang Kia Shek and are housed in the National Palace Museum there.

Some of the grandest buildings are being restored for the Olympic Games in August 2008 and are shrouded in scaffolding. Nevertheless this there was plenty to see and it was mid afternoon by the time we made our way out of the Northern Gate of the Forbidden City.

The wall around the Forbidden City has a gate on each side. At the southern end is the Meridian Gate To the north is the Gate of Divine Might, which faces Jingshan Park. The distance between these two gates is 960 meters, while the distance between the gates in the east and west walls is 750 meters.

Forbidden City -Beijing

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbidden_City

Coordinates: [39°54′ 56″ N, 116°23′ 27″ E](#)

The **Forbidden City** ([Chinese](#): 紫禁城; [pinyin](#): Zǐ jinchéng; literally "Purple Forbidden City") was the [Chinese](#) imperial palace during the mid-[Ming](#) and the [Qing](#) Dynasties. The Forbidden City is located in the middle of [Beijing](#), [China](#). It is now known as the **Palace Museum**.

Its extensive grounds cover 720,000 square meters. The Forbidden City has 800 buildings with 8,886 rooms.

The Forbidden City is listed by [UNESCO](#) as the largest collection of preserved ancient wooden structures in the world.



**Clock made in the Imperial Workshops
- Clock Museum - Forbidden City**

The Forbidden City was declared a [World Heritage Site](#) in 1987 as the "Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties."

The Palace Museum in the Forbidden City should not be confused with the [National Palace Museum](#) in [Taipei, Taiwan](#) island. Both museums derive from the same

institution, but they were split after the [Chinese Civil War](#).



Meridian Gate - Entrance to the Forbidden City



Crowds of Chinese Tourists- Forbidden City



Lintel Decoration- Forbidden City



Incense Burner - Palace Museum - Forbidden City

Names

The Forbidden City is known by many names. The name by which the site is most commonly known in English, "The Forbidden City," is a translation of the Chinese name Zijin Cheng (紫禁城), which literally means "Purple Forbidden City."

It is also known as the "Forbidden Palace" in English. The palace was "forbidden" in the sense that, aside from members of the imperial household, no one could enter it without the [Emperor's](#) permission.

Today, the site is most commonly known as Gugong (故宫) in Chinese, which means the "Former Palace."^[1] The museum which is located in these buildings is known as the "Palace Museum" ([Chinese](#): 故宫博物院; [pinyin](#): Gùgō ng Bówùyùàn).

In the [Manchu](#) language it is called *Dabkū ri dorgi hoton*, which literally means the "Layered Inner City."

Description

The Imperial Palace Grounds are located directly to the north of [Tiananmen Square](#) and are accessible from the square via [Tiananmen Gate](#). It is surrounded by a large area called the [Imperial City](#).

Layout

Rectangular in shape, the Forbidden City is the world's largest palace complex and covers 720,000 square meters (178 acres, or 0.28 square miles). It is surrounded by a six meter deep [moat](#) and a ten meter

high wall. The Forbidden City includes five halls, seventeen palaces, and numerous other buildings.



Hall of Central Harmony - Forbidden City

The Forbidden City is divided into two parts. The Outer Court, which includes the southern and central sections, centres on three halls which were used for ceremonial purposes, such as [coronations](#), [investitures](#), and imperial [weddings](#). The three halls include the magnificent [Hall of Supreme Harmony](#) (太和殿), itself fronted by the [Gate of Supreme Harmony](#) (太和門). Apart from ceremony, the Outer Court also houses the Imperial Library, archives, and lantern storage. The Inner Court includes the northern, eastern, and western parts of the Forbidden City, and centres on another three halls which were used for the day-to-day affairs of state. The most important among these is the [Palace of Heavenly Purity](#) (乾清宮). The Inner Court was where the Emperor worked and lived with his family, [eunuchs](#) and maid-servants.



Garden - - Forbidden City

Buildings in the Forbidden City are arranged along three north-south axes. The central axis houses the most important buildings. It runs from [Meridian Gate](#) in the south, to the [Gate of Divine Might](#) in the north. The "Three Front Halls", the centre of ceremonies, and the "Three Back Palaces", the centre of day-to-day affairs of state, are arranged along the central axis. Along the eastern axis are a number of semi-independent courtyards. The northern part of the eastern axis served as the [Qianlong Emperor's](#) residence in his retirement. Along the western axis are several gardens and a number of religious buildings. Large parts of the western section are not open to the public. Some buildings are in bad repair; a few were destroyed by fire in [1923](#) and never rebuilt. In his memoir, [Puyi](#) thought that the fire was started by eunuchs wanting to conceal evidence of smuggling treasures out of the palace.

Walls

The [wall](#) around the Forbidden City has a gate on each side. At the southern end is the [Meridian Gate](#)^[2] To the north is the [Gate of Divine Might](#), which faces [Jingshan Park](#). The distance between these two gates is 960 meters, while the distance between the gates in the east and west walls is 750 meters. The walls are thick and squat and were specifically designed to withstand attacks by [cannons](#).

There are unique and delicately structured towers on each of the four corners of the surrounding wall. These towers afford views over both the palace and the city outside.

Outside the main gate to the Forbidden City, the [Meridian Gate](#) faces a square where imperial corporal punishments were sometimes carried out. To the south of that square stands [Tiananmen Gate](#).

Gardens

At the northern end of the Forbidden City is the imperial garden. It is home to many trees aging 100 to 300 years old and many rare plants.

Symbolism

The royal color was yellow, and that color dominates the rooftops. On each corner of the roofs, there are small statuettes, the number of which designated the power of the person living within the building. The number 9 was reserved for the emperor. Only one building has 10 statuettes at each corner.^[*citation needed*]

Major buildings

Major buildings include:

- [Meridian Gate](#)
- [Tiananmen Gate](#)
- [Gate of Supreme Harmony](#)
- [Gate of Divine Might](#)
- [Hall of Supreme Harmony](#)
- [Palace of Heavenly Purity](#)

Surroundings

The Forbidden City is surrounded by royal gardens. To the west lies [Zhongnanhai](#), the complex of buildings centred on two lakes which serves as the central headquarters for the [Communist Party of China](#). To the north-west lies [Beihai Park](#), which also centres on a lake and is a popular park. To the north lies [Jingshan Park](#), also known as Jing Shan or [Coal Hill](#), where the last [Ming](#) emperor hanged himself as the rebel army overran his palace.

Today, Tiananmen Gate in front of the Forbidden City is decorated with a portrait of [Mao Zedong](#) in the center and two placards to the left and right. The left placard reads "中华人民共和国万岁" ([Traditional Chinese](#): 中華人民共和國萬歲; [pinyin](#): zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó wànsuì; "Long Live the People's Republic of China"), while the right placard reads "世界人民大团结万岁" ([Traditional Chinese](#): 世界人民團結萬歲; [pinyin](#): shìjiè rénmín dà tuánjié wànsuì; "Long live the Great Unity of the World's Peoples"). The phrasing has great symbolic meaning, as the [phrase "long live"](#) was traditionally reserved for the [Emperors of China](#), but is now available to the common people. This is also true of the Forbidden City palace itself.

History

Construction

The site where the Forbidden City stands today was part of the [imperial city](#) during the [Yuan dynasty](#). When the [Ming Dynasty](#) succeeded it, the first [Hongwu Emperor](#) moved the capital to [Nanjing](#) and ordered that the [Mongol](#) palaces be razed in 1369. His son, [Zhu Di](#), was created Prince of Yan with seat in [Beijing](#). A princely palace was built on the site. In 1402, Zhu Di usurped the throne and became the [Yongle Emperor](#). He moved the capital back to [Beijing](#).

The construction of the Forbidden City started in 1406 and took 14 years and an estimated 200,000 men. The principal axis of the new palace sits to the east of the [Yuan Dynasty](#) palace, a

design intended to place the Yuan palace in the western or "kill" position in [fengshui](#). Soil excavated during construction of the moat was piled up to the north of the palace to create an artificial hill, the [Jingshan hill](#).

Ming and Qing dynasty

From its 1420 completion to 1644, when a peasant revolt led by [Li Zicheng](#) invaded it, the Forbidden City served as the seat of the [Ming Dynasty](#). The following [Qing Dynasty](#) also occupied the Forbidden City. In 1860, during the Second [Opium War](#), British forces managed to penetrate to the heart of the Forbidden City and occupied it until the end of the war.

After being the home of 24 emperors—fourteen of the Ming Dynasty and ten of the Qing Dynasty—the Forbidden City ceased being the political center of China in 1912 with the abdication of [Puyi](#), the last Emperor of China. Under an agreement signed between the Qing imperial house and the new [Republic of China](#) government, Puyi was, however, allowed and, in fact, required to live within the walls of the Forbidden City. Puyi and his family retained the use of the Inner

Court, while the Outer Court was handed over to the Republican authorities. A museum was established in the Outer Court in 1914.



'Huiling' performance - - Beijing

After the revolution

Puyi stayed in the Forbidden City until 1924, when [Feng Yuxiang](#) took control of Beijing in a coup. Denouncing the previous agreement with the Qing imperial house, Feng expelled Puyi. Soon after, the Palace Museum was established in the Forbidden City. Having been the imperial palace for some five centuries, the Forbidden City houses numerous rare treasures and curiosities. These were gradually catalogued and put on public display.

However, with the [Japanese invasion of China](#), the safety of these national treasures were cast in doubt, and they were moved out of the Forbidden City. In 1947, after they had been

moved from one location to another inside [mainland China](#) for many years, [Chiang Kai-shek](#) ordered many of the artifacts from the Forbidden City and the National Museum in [Nanjing](#) to be moved to [Taiwan](#). These artifacts formed the core of the [National Palace Museum](#) in [Taipei](#).

Surviving the Cultural Revolution



Home Visit - Hutong tour - Beijing

During the heat of demolishing the "four olds", Premier Zhou Enlai got wind of Red Guard's plan to enter the Forbidden City. Knowing what the Red Guard had done to historical sites elsewhere, Zhou ordered all gates of the City to be closed and sent troops to guard the City. This episode is perhaps the most neglected in recent times of the Forbidden City.

Modern day

The Forbidden City has undergone dramatic renovations. Although great effort has been put forth to prevent the commercialization of the palace, a [Starbucks](#) has been placed inside it [1], rousing controversy [2].

Influences of the Forbidden City

- Emperor [Gia Long](#) of [Vietnam](#) built a palace and fortress that was intended to be a smaller copy of the Chinese Forbidden City in the 1800s. Its ruins are in [Huế](#). In English it is called the "Imperial City". The name of the inner palace complex in Vietnamese is translated literally as "Purple Forbidden City", which of course is the same as the Chinese name for Forbidden City in [Beijing](#).
- [Marco Polo](#) a joint NBC and RAI (Italy) TV miniseries broadcast in the early 1980s, was filmed inside the Forbidden City. This was artistic license, however, since historically, the Forbidden City did not exist in the Yuan Dynasty, during the time of

Marco Polo's relationship with Kublai Khan.

- [The Last Emperor](#) (1987) was the first feature film ever authorized by the government of the People's Republic of China to film in the Forbidden City.
- [Giacomo Puccini](#)'s opera, [Turandot](#), about the story of a Chinese princess, was performed inside the Forbidden City for the first time in 1998.
- In 2004, the French musician [Jean Michel Jarre](#) performed the live concert in the Forbidden City, accompanied by 260 musicians as part of the "Year of France in China" festivities.
- The [5th Avenue Theatre](#) in [Seattle, Washington](#) imitates three ancient Chinese architectural achievements located in Beijing: the Forbidden City, the [Temple of Heaven](#), and the [Summer Palace](#). A nearly exact replica of the dome from the throne room of the Imperial palace in Beijing's Forbidden City graces the 5th Avenue Theatre's ceiling. Authentic dragons and hoho birds scatter the walls of the theatre with an authentic Chinese quality. [citation needed]
- A fictional city called [Ba Sing Se](#) in the cartoon series [Avatar the Last Airbender](#) is based upon the Forbidden City.
- William Bell's novel "Forbidden City" a novel of modern China, is based upon a Canadian reporter and his son Alexander, or Alex for short (or Ahrek Shan Da, as most of his Chinese friends call him), who go to Beijing to report on Beijing and its people.

<http://www.chinatravel.com/china-travel-guides/china-attractions/china-top/the-forbidden-city.shtml>

http://www.pilotguides.com/destination_guide/asia/china/forbidden_city.php



Legend of Kungfu - Beijing



Legend of Kungfu - Beijing

Interactive Maps of the Forbidden City

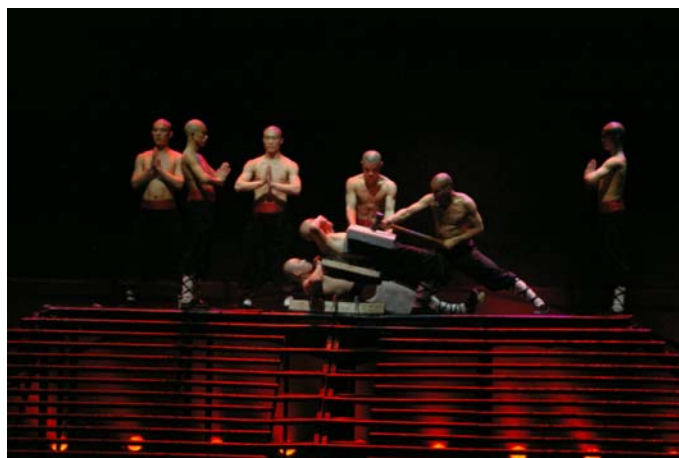
<http://www.kinabaloo.com/fcc2.html>

http://www.drben.net/ChinaReport/Beijing/MapsofBeijing/Forbidden_City-Gugong_Maps/ForbiddenCityMap1.html
<http://www.thebeijingguide.com/forbidden-city/index.html>
<http://www.chinavista.com/beijing/gugong/map.html>

We were to have lunched at Huiling, a local charity for Chinese with learning disabilities, but we were far too late for lunch and had to settle for the spirited singing and dancing performance by some of the people and a lesson in Chinese Calligraphy. I have to say, that despite the instructors insistence that I had done well, my efforts were hopeless. Social Work students help the disabled people. The organisation is supported by the Intrepid Foundation and visiting Intrepid tour groups. People are taught basic life skills and handicrafts and some of the work was excellent.

A rickshaw tour of the hutongs or small narrow streets of what remains of old Beijing followed our visit to Huiling. This included a visit to the home of a retired couple. They had lived in the 150-year-old house for 40 years. The house was quite

spacious with a large living room, main bedroom, store, kitchen and rooms for the children, set around a courtyard. The south facing living room caught the winter sun, and was insulated against the summer heat and so was comfortable all year round.



Legend of Kungfu - Beijing



Legend of Kungfu - Beijing



Legend of Kungfu - Beijing

By now it is 16:30 and everyone is ready for a short rest before heading out to dinner and a show, The Legend of Kungfu. I had no idea what it would be about. The show turned out to be the story of little boy, who, through practising Kungfu and Zen becomes a master and finally reaches the sacred goal of enlightenment. The show is a spectacle of athleticism by the cast who are trained in the local Kungfu academy.

www.legendofkungfu.com

Today is a free day so it is up to us to plan our activities. Gael, Lionel and I have decided to visit the Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven and had planned a 08:30 start. Jenny and Leila had different plans.

Unfortunately Beijing Belly as struck and our departure is delayed until 10:00 by which time the traffic is horrendous and the trip to the Summer Palace takes almost an hour.

We are able to spend three and a half hours wandering through the magnificent gardens and buildings of this palace that covers an expanse of 2.9 square kilometers, three quarters of which is water. It would take several days to explore the whole garden and all of the buildings. As with the Forbidden City, several major buildings were being renovated and some of the collections of artwork were closed to the public.

Much of the palace was destroyed by Anglo-French forces in 1860 and rebuilt. It

was again destroyed during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and again rebuilt by the Empress Dowager Cixi, who diverted 30 million [taels](#) of silver, said to be originally designated for the Chinese navy ([Beiyang Fleet](#)), into reconstruction and enlargement of the Summer Palace

This relic of the extravagances of the Empress Dowager Cixi now provides a beautiful public space for the people and visitors to enjoy and unlike when I visited in 1991 it is crowded with Chinese enjoying the sights, picnicing in the park and boating on the lake.

http://www.imperialtours.net/summer_palace.htm

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/MATERIAL/30960.htm>

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/cityguides/beijing/summer.htm>

<http://www.chinasummerpalace.com/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_Palace

Summer Palace Map

<http://www.kinabaloo.com/spmap.html>

Summer Palace

<http://www.beijingtrip.com/attractions/summer/index.htm>

Introduction

Situated in the western outskirts of Haidian District, the Summer Palace is 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) from central Beijing. Having the largest royal park and being well preserved, it was designated, in 1960 by the State Council, as a Key Cultural Relics Protection Site of China. Containing examples of the ancient arts, it also has graceful landscapes and magnificent constructions. The Summer Palace is the archetypal Chinese garden, and is ranked amongst the most noted and classical gardens of the world. In 1998, it was listed as one of the World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

Constructed in the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234), during the succeeding reign of feudal emperors; it was extended continuously. By the time of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), it had become a luxurious royal garden providing royal families with rest and entertainment. Originally called "Qingyi Garden" (Garden of Clear Ripples), it was known as one of the famous "three hills and five gardens" (Longevity Hill, Jade Spring Mountain, and Fragrant Hill; Garden of Clear Ripples, Garden of Everlasting Spring, Garden of Perfection and Brightness, Garden of Tranquility and Brightness, and Garden of Tranquility and Pleasure). Like most of the gardens of Beijing, it could not elude the rampages of the Anglo-French allied force and was destroyed by fire. In 1888, Empress Dowager Cixi embezzled navy funds to reconstruct it for her own benefit, changing its

name to Summer Palace (Yiheyuan). She spent most of her later years there, dealing with state affairs and entertaining. In 1900, it suffered again, being ransacked by the Eight-Power Allied Force. After the success of the 1911 Revolution, it was opened to the public.

Composed mainly of Longevity Hill and Kunming Lake, The Summer Palace occupies an area of 294 hectares (726.5 acres), three quarters of which is water. Guided by nature, artists designed the gardens exquisitely so that visitors would see marvelous views and be amazed by perfect examples of refined craftwork using the finest materials.

Centered on the Tower of Buddhist Incense (Foxiangge) the Summer Palace consists of over 3,000 structures including pavilions, towers, bridges, and corridors. The Summer Palace can be divided into four parts: the court area, front-hill area, front-lake area, and rear-hill and back-lake area.

Front-Hill Area: this area is the most magnificent area in the Summer Palace with the most constructions. Its layout is quite distinctive because of the central

axis from the yard of Kunming Lake to the hilltop, on which important buildings are positioned including Gate of Dispelling Clouds, Hall of Dispelling Clouds, Hall of Moral Glory, Tower of Buddhist Incense, the Hall of the Sea of Wisdom, etc.

Rear-Hill and Back-Lake Area: although the constructions are fewer here, it has a unique landscape, with dense green trees, and winding paths. Visitors can feel a rare tranquility, and elegance. This area includes scenic spots such as Garden of Harmonious Interest and Suzhou Market Street.

Court Area: this is where Empress Dowager Cixi and Emperor Guangxu met officials, conducted state affairs and rested. Entering the East Palace Gate, visitors may see the main palace buildings: the Hall of Benevolence and Longevity served as the office of the Emperor, the Hall of Jade Ripples where Guangxu lived, the Hall of Joyful Longevity, Cixi's residence, the Hall of Virtue and Harmony where Cixi was entertained.

Front Lake Area: covering a larger part of the Summer Palace, opens up the vista of the lake. A breeze fluttering, waves gleam and willows kiss the ripples of the vast water. In this comfortable area there are the Eastern and Western Banks, the Seventeen-Arch Bridge, Nanhu Island, and so on. On the western bank float six distinct bridges amongst which the Jade-Belt Bridge is the most beautiful.

East Palace Gate (Donggongmen)

The East Palace Gate is the major entrance to the Summer Palace with two side doors for royal family members and court

officials, and three grand doors in the middle exclusively for the Emperor, Empress and queen mothers. On the gate hangs a plaque where Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) calligraphed "Yiheyuan" (Summer Palace) meaning "to maintain energy and mellow the soul." The road for the emperors leading to the entrance is chiseled with two relief dragons playing with a ball, symbolizing royal dignity.

About 200 meters (218.7 yards) from the superb East Palace Gate is a lion-guarded inscribed archway. One inscription, "Hanxu," indicates "picturesque scenery," the other "Yanxiu," means "capturing beauty." This tells visitors about the enchanting scenery inside the garden.

Hall of Benevolent Longevity (Renshoudian)

Entering the [East Palace Gate](#) means walking into the administrative area of the Emperors. The Hall of Benevolence and Longevity is the first architectural complex that visitors see. It was built in 1750, burned down in 1860 by the Anglo-French allied forces, and was reconstructed in 1888.

Actually, the Emperors' administrative hall was originally called "Qinzheng Hall" to inspire rulers to manage state affairs diligently. However, during Emperor Guangxu's time (1875 - 1908), the hall's name was changed to "Renshoudian" (Hall of Benevolence and Longevity), from the famous Confucian saying - "the ruler who reigns benevolently will have a long life".

Today, the furnishings in the hall remain as they were in the past. In the midst of the hall is a platform with a throne furnished

with nine dragons, along with delicate peacock-feather fans, a monster-shaped censer, and a red sandalwood screen. The screen is more elaborate than other screens. Framed with sandalwood carved with nine dragons on the top, the middle part is a glass mirror engraved with 226 characters of "shou" symbolizing longevity in different ways. The Empress Dowager Cixi managed the affairs of court unseen, from behind the screen. Two side chambers of the hall served as the resting place of Emperor Guangxu, Empress Dowager Cixi, and other officials. Among the fine exhibits inside is a silk craftwork of one hundred bats with the Empress Dowager Cixi's calligraph "shou (longevity)". In Chinese speech, the words "happiness" and "bat" have similar tones. Therefore this craftwork was also named "one hundred bats holding longevity".

In the courtyard there is an exquisitely sculpted bronze beast called a Kylin, with dragon head, lion tail, deer horn, and cattle hoof. In legend, the Kylin guards against destruction by fire. It is one of the relics of Yuanmingyuan (the Perfection and Brightness Garden). Five Lake Tai stones entitled "Fengxuwulao" also stand in the courtyard signifying longevity. In

front of the hall are two pairs of bronze statues of dragons and phoenixes used as incense burners to perfume the air on formal occasions. Because the Empress Dowager Cixi, rather than the Emperor, managed the affairs of the state, the phoenix statues, which represent the queen, lie in the middle of the courtyard. The dragon statues, representing the Emperor, lie to the side, contrary to tradition. To the north of the hall is a well called "Yannianjing" (Well of Extending Life). It is said that the Empress Dowager Cixi once had a heat stroke and was revived when she drank the clear, sweet water from the well. Hence the well received its present day name.

Hall of Dispelling Clouds (Paiyundian)

The name of the hall derives from a verse by the poet Guo Pu (276-324) in the Jin Dynasty 'in such a splendid hall, supernatural beings will emerge.' It is situated on the central axis of Longevity Hill and is the heart of a succession of buildings used for celebrations. Built on the site of Daxiong Hall (Hall of Sakyamuni or Main Shrine Hall), it was the place to celebrate Empress Dowager Cixi's birthday. On her birthday, October 10 of the Chinese lunar year, with Emperor Guangxu leading the troops, all ranks kowtowed to her as she sat on the "Nine-Dragon Throne" to receive greetings and rare gifts.

With red pillars and yellow tiles, the Paiyundian contains 21 rooms. In front of the hall are white marble balusters supporting a flat roof on which bronze dragons, phoenixes, and vessels stand.

Although the treasures on display inside are fewer than those in the [Hall of Benevolence and Longevity](#), some of them are more valuable. The middle rosewood throne with a dragon-in-clouds design, gorgeous sculpture, and fluid lines, is regarded as superlative work of art. On the sides of the throne stand two agalwood serving women, each holding articles shaped in the Chinese character "shou (longevity)." There are also a fine screen, mandarin fans, and a large canvas of Cixi by a Dutch painter.

To the south of the Hall of Dispelling Clouds is the Gate of Dispelling Clouds positioned in the middle of the Long Gallery to divide the gallery's eastern and western sides. On each side of the gate lie bronze lions symbolizing protection, and twelve stone statues of the Chinese zodiac animals - rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.

Although this is the most magnificent architectural complex of the Summer Palace, Cixi used the hall only once a year on her birthday.

Tower of Buddhist Incense (Foxiangge)

As the symbolic structure, the Tower of Buddhist Incense tops the high grand towers of both the Summer Palace and the "three mountains and five gardens" (Longevity Hill, Jade Spring Mountain, and Fragrant Hill; Garden of Clear Ripples, Garden of Everlasting Spring, Garden of Perfection and Brightness, Garden of Tranquility and Brightness, and Garden of Tranquility and Pleasure). Set up on the 21-meter-high (68.9-foot-high)

base steps of the front slope of Longevity Hill and towering to a height of 41 meters (134.5 feet), it can be seen from throughout the area. Facing Kunming Lake southward, backing on the Hall of the Sea of Wisdom, it was flanked by symmetrical buildings. With eight porticos, three levels and four layered eaves, the front part imitates the Yellow Crane Tower in Hubei Province. It is the elite tower among treasured ancient structures.



Tower of Buddhist Incense (Foxiang Ge) - Summer Palace



Tower of Buddhist Incense (Foxiang Ge) - Summer Palace

A nine-level pagoda at the tower's location was planned which Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) ordered to be dismantled during the construction of the eighth level. After the unfinished pagoda, there stood the Tower of Buddhist Incense instead in 1758. Unfortunately, it was ruined by Anglo-French forces in 1860; then rebuilt during 1891-1894, at a cost of 780,000 taels of silver. Inside is a gilded statue of the thousand-handed Kwan-yin. Set off by eight pillars, it glows with sacred beauty. On the first day and fifteenth day of the lunar month, the Empress Dowager Cixi would go there to pray and burn joss sticks. In 1989, the Tower of Buddhist Incense was opened to the public. It is now undergoing reconstruction, the largest such project in modern China, costing 50,000,000 yuan with a planned completion date in 2006.

Standing on the third story, visitors can see forests as well as Kunming Lake reflecting the picturesque landscapes.

Hall of the Sea of Wisdom (Zhihuihai)

Built on the pinnacle of Longevity Hill, The Hall of the Sea of Wisdom is designed to stand at the upper end of an axis stretching from the Kunming Lake to the summit. When initially built during the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), it was a two-storied building made entirely of colored glaze bricks, without any timber beams, and was also known as "No Beam Hall". Owing to its timber-free frame, it survived the fire set by the Anglo-French allied force in 1860. However, the holy statue of Amitayus Buddha, as well as 1008 smaller engraved Buddhas surrounding it, was destroyed.

It is a holy building, with its name, "the Sea of Wisdom", which comes from the sutra, symbolizing the mighty force and the infinite wisdom of Tathagada Buddha. A visitor who connects the three characters on the architraves of the hall and the glazed memorial archway will find that they form the Buddhist's chant.

Garden of Harmonious Interests

Situated beside Kunming Lake, at the bottom of the Eastern side of Longevity Hill, the Garden of Harmonious Interests, with its exquisite design and distinctive layout, is known as the "garden in the gardens". Amongst the gardens of Northern China, its style is the most representative of the classical gardens of Southern China.



Tower of Buddhist Incense (Foxiang Ge) - Summer Palace

When Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) conducted an inspection of South China in 1751, he developed a great affection for the Jichuangyuan Gardens in Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province, and ordered that a similar garden be built in the Summer Palace and named Huishan Garden. This was the precursor to the Garden of Harmonious Interests. In 1811, it was repaired and given its present name. The

garden was rebuilt again in 1893 after its destruction in 1860.

Upon entering the palace gate of Garden of Harmonious Interests, visitors would be greeted by a wonderful panorama. Surrounded by slopes on three sides, with a lotus pond at its centre, the garden was comprised of seven pavilions, five halls, numerous corridors and small bridges, all arranged with profusion and elegance. The scene was mirrored in the pond, which was the focus of the garden's natural surroundings, and released a delicate fragrance of lotus. The garden used to be the fishing site of Empress Dowager Cixi. It is said that every time Cixi went to fish, eunuchs secretly dived into the water and hung live fish on her hook, to keep her in good spirits.

The garden is remarkable for its eight settings, each with its particular theme. The eight settings are Zaishi Hall, the Momiao Room, Jiuyun Tower, Danbi House, Shuile Pavilion, Zhiyu Bridge, Xunshi Path, and Hanguang Hole. The essence of each of the eight themed settings (or interests) is as follows:

Interest of Seasons

The changing beauty of the garden makes it an attraction for visitors throughout the four seasons of the year. In spring, the willows wave in the breeze, switching on their great charm; in summer, abundant lotuses release a delicious fragrance; in fall, the weeping willows turn the garden into a romantic heaven; in winter, the snows waft down to the trees and pavilions, painting an exquisite landscape.

Interest of Water

Using the falls from the Back Lake, gardeners built the Yuqin Goroge, through which water trickles across the rocks and makes wonderful sounds, like a musical instrument being played. This is also known as the "interest of sound".

Interest of Bridge

Several small bridges span the water, each with their own distinct style. The most notable among them is the Know-the-Fish Bridge, the name of which is derived from an argument about fish between two philosophers of different schools:

Zhuang Zi, one of the philosophers, said: "Look! How happy these fish are!" Hui Zi, the other one, replied: "You are not the fish. How can you know they are happy?" Zhuang Zi replied: "You are not me, how can you know that I know?"

Interest of Calligraphy

There are many examples of calligraphy in the Garden of Harmonious Interests, such as the Xushi Path stele and stone inscription in the Moyun Room.

Interest of Pavilion

In the west corner of the garden stands a pavilion. Viewed from the outside, it gives a visitor the impression that it is a single story high; from the inside, it appears to have two levels. This unusual setting creates an appealing effect of height, and is known as the Interest of Pavilion.



Summer Palace

Interest of Painting

Hundreds of paintings in various styles line the corridors in a collection to rival the [Long Gallery](#). These works, created on the themes of allusions, sceneries, and historical figures, are treasures of art.

Interest of Corridor

Compared to the Long Gallery, the Interest of Corridor is a fascinating

collection of twists and turns. Connecting the intricate rooms, it provides visitors a unique chance to view the landscaping of the garden from every angle.

Interest of Imitation

Although the Garden of Harmonious Interests should be a royal garden, it was built in the style of a private one, Jichangyuan Garden. Owing to the skill of the landscapers, any visitor to the garden would feel as if they were in Southern China. Therefore, amongst the glorious and resplendent constructions of the Palace, this garden retains its sense of tranquility and refinement.

Suzhou Market Street (Suzhoujie)



Suzhou Street - Summer Palace

Over 60 stores extend from North Palace Gate entrance into a street about 300 meters (328.1 yards) in length. Along the Back

Lake, the street design imitates the ancient style of shops on the banks of rivers in Suzhou City, Zhejiang Province, that is, taking the running water of Back Lake as the street and its banks as a market. The area served as an entertainment place where Emperors and concubines could feel as if they were strolling on a commercial street. When the royals went there, eunuchs and maids of honor would playact as peddlers, customers and shop assistants to mimic market activities.

Built during the reign of Qianlong (1711-1799), it was burned down by Anglo-French allied force in 1860. Until 1986, it was rebuilt and in 1990 it was opened to the public. Today's market includes stores such as dyers, souvenir shops, drugstores, banks, shoe stores, teasshops, and hockshops, with clerks dressed in Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) costumes.

Back Lake (Houhu)

Wandering behind Longevity Hill, the water of Kunming Lake forms Back Lake. Visitors can get there by passing the [Marble Boat](#) toward the north. With fewer buildings north of the Summer Palace, the landscape surrounding Back Lake is secluded and elegant. Exuberantly green forests and twisted paths lend unique beauty in contrast to the scenery in front. Longevity Hill stands alongside Kunming Lake with water on three sides. Back Lake functions as a fireproof strolling place with a vista point. At its banks, there are the Studio of Distant Views (Tiaoyuanzhai), [Garden of Harmonious Interests](#) (Xiequyuan), and [Suzhou Market Street](#). Since the Studio of Distant Views is high and faces the southern outside street, Empress Dowager Cixi used to stand there to see the common

people' s flower market on the eighth day of the fourth month of the Chinese lunar calendar.

Seventeen-Arch Bridge (Shiqikong Qiao)

Connecting the eastern shore of Kunming Lake in the east and [Nanhu Island](#) in the west, the Seventeen-Arch Bridge was built during the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799); with a length of 150 meters (164 yards) and a width of 8 meters (8.75 yards). It is the longest bridge in the Summer Palace.

The unique scenery is but one of the stunning landscapes in the Summer Palace. With the styles of Lugou Bridge in Beijing and Baodai Bridge in Suzhou, Zhejiang Province, Seventeen Arch Bridge looks like a rainbow arching over the water. On the column of the parapets are 544 distinctive carved white marble lions. On each end of the bridge is a carved bizarre beast. With the biggest arch in the midst of the bridge flanked by eight others, visitors can count nine arches on either side. According to ancient thought, the number nine symbolizes good fortune and

safety; and the meticulous design of the bridge embodies it perfectly.



Seventeen Arch Bridge - Summer Palace

Bronze Ox

A bronze ox set on bluestone wave-lined pedestal overlooks the east shore of Kunming Lake. The ox, cast in the image of a live creature back in 1755, is said to possess flood control powers. Da Yu, the legendary master in floods prevention, would commit an iron ox into the water on completion of every of his projects. It has become customary since Tang Dynasty (618-907) to line the edge of waterways with oxen. Hence this bronze ox was upon the bank, too. This Bronze Ox, sitting besides the water and overlooking the harmonious and enchanting lake scenery, was rather imposing. The Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) had personally dedicated this particular bronze ox. On the back of the ox is an 80-character-posy in seal character - "Golden Ox Inscription" by him.



Marble Boat - Summer Palace

Marble Boat

Also known as "Qingyanfang" (Boat of Clearness and Comfort), the Marble Boat is positioned at the west bank at the foot of Longevity Hill.

The Marble Boat was built in 1755 in Chinese style, imitating the sailing boats which Qianlong (1711-1799) took during his inspection to Southern China. As an old saying goes, "water can carry the boat as well as overturn it," meaning that water symbolizing the common people can uphold the royal boat, or it can swamp the boat. Emperor Qianlong had the huge Marble Boat fastened in the water to indicate the steadfast rule of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

In 1860, it was burned down, and then rebuilt in Western style in 1893 through Empress Dowager Cixi's embezzling naval

funds. Inlaid with colorful glass windows and wheels and paved with colored bricks, the boat is 36 meters (118.1 feet) long, two stories high. Using the huge mirrors fixed on each deck, on rainy days Cixi could enjoy the dainty lake scene while having tea. Four dragon heads mounted in each direction serve as drains, allowing rain water to be channeled picturesquely out of their mouths.

Nanhu Island (Nanhu Dao)

Nanhu Island lies southeast of Kunming Lake opposite Longevity Hill. With an area of about 1 hectare (2.47 acres), it is the largest island in the Summer Palace. When Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) enlarged Kunming Lake, he ordered workers to save the temples and buildings but to excavate the earth; thus creating Nanhu Island.

On the island are Hanxu (Modesty) Hall, Wangyan (Looking-at-the-Eaves) Pavilion, Dragon King Temple, and other structures. Hanxu Hall is the major construction on the island; Wangyan Pavilion was the site from which to inspect navy drills; and the Dragon King Temple, which changed its name to "Guangrun Lingyu Temple"

(Widely-Moistening Fancy-Rain Temple), was employed to pray for rain.

The island is banked with carved stone-strips and surrounded by blue and white stones. Visitors can reach the island through the [Seventeen-Arch Bridge](#).

Long Gallery (Changlang)

Beginning from the Yaoyue (Inviting-Moon) Gate and ending with Shizhang Pavilion, the Long Gallery ingeniously links Longevity Hill with Kunming Lake. Seven hundred twenty-eight meters (796.2 yards) in length, it is the longest gallery in Chinese gardens. In 1990 it was rated as the top long gallery of the world.



Long corridor - Summer Palace

Two hundred seventy-three rooms with various paintings attract visitors into a fantastic land. Among them, they are studded with

four octagonal pavilions on the joint between a higher place and a lower one, each symbolizing a season. Long Gallery was constructed along the natural terrain of Longevity Hill and the turns of Kunming Lake, offering a picturesque view with each step. In 1755 when Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) built the gallery, he ordered artists to go to Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province to sketch the scenery there. Upon their return they painted 546 paintings of West Lake landscapes in the Long Gallery. The themes taken from historical figures, landscapes, flowers and birds can be seen as a miniature representation of the breadth of Chinese art. Appreciating the intricate paintings while listening to the profound stories, myths and legends, for example, Pilgrimage to the West, visitors can learn a lot about the five-thousand-year-old Chinese culture.



Illustration - Long Corridor - Summer Palace

Worthy of mention is the fact that the main part of each picture followed the semicircular line of a girder; there was no set framework for the painting; images were created from artists' inspirations. Most of the paintings are typical "Sushi Colored

Paintings" (a kind of Chinese classical painting, decoration art on a wooden building).

Longevity Hill

Without mountains and water, a landscape is not perfect in the eyes of the Chinese. So the Summer Palace has not only a lake but a hill. About half way down the Long Gallery, you will see an archway and a series of splendid halls and towers along an axis leading uphill. You can start to climb Longevity Hill from here. The structures you come across are Cloud Dispelling Gate (Paiyunmen) and then Second Palace Gate (Ergongmen) and Cloud dispelling Hall (Paiyundian). Paiyundian is the most important hall there since it was used by the Empress Dowager for her birthday celebrations. Now the objects on display in the hall are gifts from high officials on her 70th birthday in 1905, and a large oil-painting of Cixi was presented to her by the American painter Hubert Vos on her 71st birthday.

Further to the north is Hall of Moral Brilliance (Dehuidian), and behind it on a huge stone plinth is Tower of Buddhist Incense (Foxiangge).

Nearly on top of the hill is a glazed-tile tower which is known as Sea of Wisdom (Zhihuihai). There are countless little statues of Buddha in the niches of its greenish-yellow ceramic facade.

There are other halls and towers on the hill, such as Repository of Sutras (Zhuanlunzang) to the east, Pentagonal Pavilion (Wufangge) and Precious Cloud Pavilion (Baoyunge) which is made entirely of bronze. Further to the west is Hall for Listening to the Orioles (Tingliguan), a former theatre now converted into a restaurant.

Hall of Jade Ripples (Yulantang)

This hall in "sanheyuan" style (main hall in the middle, secondary structures on two sides), first built in the 15th year of the Reign of Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) for his dealing with state affairs, was burned in 1860 and rebuilt in 1892. It is notable for its seclusion and harmonious arrangement. After the failure of the Reform Movement in 1898, Emperor Guangxu, who advocated the reform, was under house arrest here. The name came from a verse of Lu Ji in Jin Dynasty (265-316) "Jade spring with rippling water."

The Reform Movement in 1898, also known as the "Hundred Days Reform," lasting 103 days, aimed at reforming the outdated feudal system and creating a new edict. Because of sharp disagreements between Guangxu's and Empress Dowager Cixi's parties, the movement failed. Emperor Guangxu was house arrested in the Hall of Jade Ripples, his six associate reformists beheaded. Once Cixi had controlled the

Emperor's action and assigned eunuchs as his servants, the Hall of Jade Ripples once again became a hall for scheduled events.

The chamber in the east of the hall was Emperor Guangxu's day room, the opposite one, his bedchamber. The desk for Guangxu was rosewood framed and agalwood centered, with exquisite carving. The surrounding screen was composed of two layers of glass painted with both traditional Chinese and Western landscapes.

Garden of Virtue and Harmony (Deheyuan)

Walking northward from the [Hall of Benevolence and Longevity](#), visitors will see Deheyuan (Garden of Virtue and Harmony), where Emperor Guangxu and Empress Dowager Cixi watched the performances of the Peking opera. Borrowing from the meaning in the Zuo Commentary, the name "Dehe" suggests "listen to a fine melody and the mind will be calm". This garden consists of the Grand Theater Building, the Hall of Nurtured Joy, and the Dressing House.

21 meters in height (68.9 feet), the Grand Theater Building was the biggest of the three main theaters in operation during the Qing Dynasty, the other two being the Qingyin Pavilion in the Mountain Resort of Chengde, and the Changyin Pavilion in the [Forbidden City](#). It was built in honor of the Empress Dowager Cixi's sixtieth birthday. Its three stories, from top to bottom, are the Fu Stage (Happiness Stage), the Lu Stage (Affluence Stage), and the Shou Stage (Longevity Stage). The floors of each stage are trapdoors and under the Shou Stage are a deep

well and five ponds. The well and ponds were used to amplify the sound effects through acoustic resonance and to make water appear to spout from a dragon's mouth. Special effects could be performed from underneath the three stages. It made scenes involving immortals and apparitions more vivid and realistic as they emerged or flew onto the stage by means of a winch installed on the ceiling of the theatre.



Grand Stage - Summer Palace

Directly facing the Grand Theater Building, the Hall of Nurtured Joy was for the exclusive use of the Empress Dowager Cixi when she watched the opera. Her luxurious seat, carved with a hundred larks flying toward a phoenix, plus a collection of caged songbirds from faraway lands, and a florid jade-inlaid screen with flower and bird motifs are on display. Five additional rooms, located behind the hall, were for the Empress to rest.



Musicians - Grand Stage - Summer Palace

Hall of Joyful Longevity (Leshou Tang)

Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) first built on this site, northeast of the Summer Palace near Kunming Lake, a residence for his mother. It was burnt down by the Anglo-French invaders in 1860. The present structure, the Hall of Joyous Longevity,

which was the major construction of the residential area, was constructed in 1887 for the pleasure of Empress Dowager Cixi in summers. She had 48 attendants in the hall, and a retinue of over a thousand in the Summer Palace. The name "Leshou" came from the Analects of Confucius (551-479 B.C.): "persons with wisdom are joyous, with benevolence longevous", indicating that its occupants were wise and merciful.



Performer - Grand Stage - Summer Palace

The Dressing House was a place for the actors to put on their costumes and make up. Today, Cixi's vintage Benz and the costumes from those days are exhibited there.

You come across the well-decorated throne room in the main hall. Early foreign imports had their places side by side with native arts and crafts. In the main hall there set the throne, fans, desk, and glass screen. On both sides of the throne were two porcelain plates for holding fruits and setting off sweet smell, which was the representative of blue and white porcelains in Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Four big copper incense burners engraved nine peaches served for burning sandalwoods and functioned to adjust the air in the room with fragrance. The

screen, centered on the glass, was made of rosewood inlaid shell carving. On the ceiling of the hall hung a colorful pendant lamp imported from Germany in 1903, which was one of the earliest lamp used in China. While having dim sum and tea, Cixi could also appreciate the table called "fish table", beset glass face and framed with rosewood. Within the table, there were stencil-carved small pavilions and sceneries. The inner chamber in the east was the bedroom of Cixi, the western one the dressing room, and the back one the place where maid servants waited for order.

The front gate opens to the Kunming Lake, where boats were docked awaiting orders from the Empress.

The courtyard garden impresses visitors with objects and plants usually presented by modern theme parks. Inside the courtyard, there placed copper deer, crane, and vase as a group of articles; and planted yulan magnolia, haitang (Chinese flowering crabapple), and peonies. Both of them possess connotations in Chinese speech: the former symbolizing peace and the latter prosperity. A megalith looking like lingzhi, a kind of herb believed to have

fancy power of cure, was called "Qingzhixiu" (Green lingzhi Peak), imparted the message of auspice.



Blossoms - Summer Palace

At 14:30 we caught a taxi back to the hotel; the traffic is still bad and this time an accident slows us for a while so it is almost 15:30 by the time we get back, almost too late to visit the Temple of Heaven.

Gael decides not to come so after a short break Lionel and I set off to walk to the Temple about 2km away. 20 minutes later we are buying our entrance tickets.

This huge 2.73km² temple park is dedicated to worship of the heavens and each year at the [winter solstice](#) the Emperor and all his retinue would move through the city to encamp within the complex, wearing special [robes](#) and abstaining from eating [meat](#); there the Emperor would personally pray to [Heaven](#) for

good harvests. The [ceremony](#) had to be perfectly completed; it was widely held that the smallest of mistakes would constitute a bad [omen](#) for the whole nation in the coming year.



Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests - Temple of Heaven

Temple of Heaven

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tian_Tan

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[Coordinates:](#) [39°52′ 54.87″ N](#), [116°24′ 24.43″ E](#)

The **Temple of Heaven**, literally the **Altar of Heaven** ([Traditional Chinese](#): 天壇; [Simplified Chinese](#): 天坛; [pinyin](#): Tiān tán; [Manchu](#): *Abkai mukdehun*) is a complex of [Taoist](#) buildings situated in southeastern urban [Beijing](#), in [Xuanwu District](#). Construction of the complex began in [1420](#), and was thereafter visited by all subsequent [Emperors](#) of the [Ming](#) and [Qing](#)

dynasties. It is regarded as a Taoist temple, although the worship of Heaven, especially by the reigning monarch of the day, pre-dates [Taoism](#).

The Temple grounds covers 2.73 km² of parkland, and comprises three main groups of constructions, all built according to strict [philosophical](#) requirements:

- The *Earthly Mount* (圜丘坛) is the altar proper. It is an empty platform on three levels of marble stones, where the Emperor prayed for favourable weather;
- The *House of Heavenly Lord* (皇穹宇), a single-gabled circular building, built on a single level of marble stone base, where the altars were housed when not in use;
- The *Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests* (祈年殿), a magnificent triple-gabled circular building, built on three levels of marble stone base, where the Emperor prayed for good harvests.



Altar - Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests - Temple of Heaven

In ancient [China](#), the [Emperor of China](#) was regarded as the "[Son of Heaven](#)", who administered earthly matters on behalf of, and representing, heavenly authority. To be seen to be showing respect to the source of his authority, in the form of [sacrifices](#) to heaven, was extremely important. The temple was built for these ceremonies, mostly comprised of prayers for good harvests.

Each [winter solstice](#) the Emperor and all his retinue would move through the city to encamp within the complex, wearing special [robes](#) and abstaining from eating [meat](#); there the Emperor would personally pray to [Heaven](#) for good harvests. The [ceremony](#) had to be perfectly completed; it was widely held that the smallest of mistakes would constitute a bad [omen](#) for the whole nation in the coming year.



Imperial Vault of Heaven

The Temple of Heaven is the grandest of the four great temples located in [Beijing](#). The other prominent temples include the [Temple of Sun](#) in the east (日坛), the [Temple of Earth](#) in the north (地坛), and the [Temple of Moon](#) in the west (月坛).

According to [Xinhua](#), in early [2005](#), the Temple of Heaven underwent a 47 million yuan (5.9 million USD) face-lift in preparation for the [2008](#) Beijing Summer Olympics and the restoration was completed on May 1st, [2006](#).

The Temple of Heaven was registered on the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#) in [1998](#).

Facts and figures

- The Temple is surrounded by two cordons of walls; the outer wall has a taller, semi-circular northern end, representing [Heaven](#), and a shorter, rectangular southern end, representing the Earth.

- All the buildings within the Temple have special dark blue roof tiles, again representing the Heaven.
- The *Altar of Heaven* was constructed with details representing the number nine, the representative number of the Emperor.
- If you stand at the centre of the platform and clap your hands, you can hear the echo because of the concavity of the surrounding wall.
- The *House of Heavenly Lord* is surrounded by a curved wall, 6 metres tall and 32.5 metres in radius. It is nicknamed the 'Echo Wall' because a person at one end of the wall can hear the voice of a person at the other end of the wall.
- The *Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests* is 32 [metres](#) in diameter and 38 metres tall. It has four inner, twelve middle and twelve outer [pillars](#), representing the four [seasons](#), twelve months and twelve traditional Chinese hours respectively.

- The *Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests* was built without a single nail.
- *Hall of Annual Prayer* is a more literal translation than *Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests*; however, the latter is a more descriptive translations, and is the official one used at the site.
- Some Chinese Christians consider the Temple of Heaven as a tribute to the Christian God, believing that the belief in Heaven to be an unarticulated reverence for the true God.



Imperial Vault of Heaven

As we have an appointment with the others for dinner at 18:00 we have a little over an hour to inspect the beautifully restored buildings which extend for almost a kilometre along the central axis. We have entered from the northern gate and so after inspecting the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests we are walking down the bridge towards the place where the ceremonies began and from where the Emperor would start his procession

to the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. This finally brings us to the southern gate from where we catch a taxi back to the hotel arriving at 17:55.



Dome - Imperial Vault of Heaven



The Earthly Mount - Temple of Heaven

A pleasant dinner in a nearby restaurant ends a very busy day.



Cable Car - Great Wall - Simatai

The smog has returned and visibility is not much better than it was in 1991 except that the pungent sulphurous smell from burning coal for cooking and heating fires has gone.



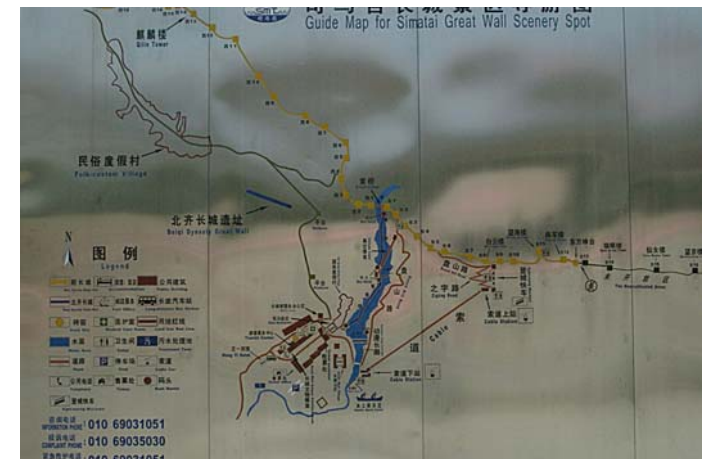
Great Wall - Simatai

Today we are off to the section of the Great Wall at Simatai, about 110km from Beijing. This section is visited by fewer visitors than Badaling that is visited by large numbers of tourists, Chinese and foreign.

Although this section has been partially restored, the restoration is minimal and is often only that which was necessary to make the wall safe. This is a section of Ming Dynasty brick wall.

One has the option to climb all the way or take a cableway and funicular to the level of tower 6, walk up to tower 8 and then climb to the beginning of a steep dangerous climb to tower 13,

closed to visitors. We chose this as it halves the total climb up the steep stairways.



Map - Great Wall - Simatai

From the wall the views in all directions are breathtaking. The wall can be seen extending to the east and west. Mongolia is in the distance to the north.

After reaching the highest permitted point we turned around and carefully made our way down the steep and sometimes rough steps to the bottom exit where there is a flying fox across the reservoir below. Some of the group choose this fast way to descend to the bottom.



Tower 9 - Great Wall - Simatai

Simatai Great Wall

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/china_great_wall/scene/beijing/simatai.htm

To the east of the Jinshanling stretch of the Great Wall there lies the quiet and remote Simatai section. The ruinous state of this part of the Wall gives it an air of authenticity that has earned it the

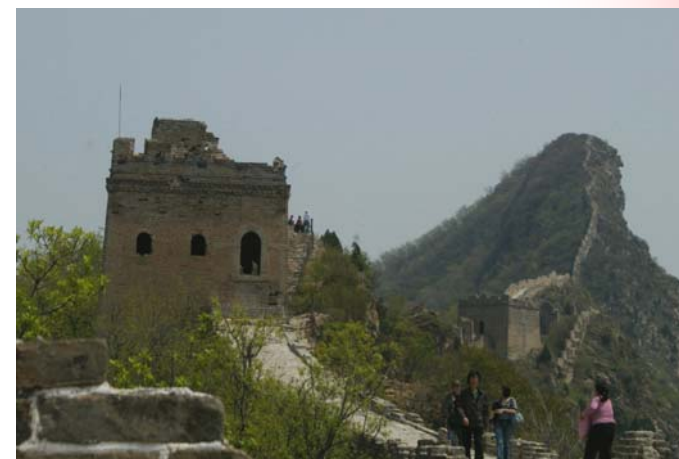
reputation of being the most beautiful section of the Great Wall. Unlike the sections to be seen at [Badaling](#) or [Mutianyu](#) that have undergone extensive restoration, the wall at Simatai has received very little attention. Here, the wall really looks as one would expect it to look some 500 years after it was built during the Ming Dynasty. The local people are proud of this monument and proclaim that it was as a consequence of visiting Simatai that UNESCO was convinced the wall should be listed as a World Heritage site. It towers over the nearby villages and farmland as it winds its way like the spiny back of a dragon over the sharply clipped peaks of the mountains.



Funicular to Tower 8 - Great Wall - Simatai

Because this section has retained much of its original 500 year old features it offers a quite hazardous passage to those who wish to walk along it. Needless to say, the inherent dangers offer a challenge that is quite irresistible to dedicated hikers in quest of adventure. An additional attraction is that as Simatai is some 130 kilometers (80 miles) to the north-east of Beijing it is

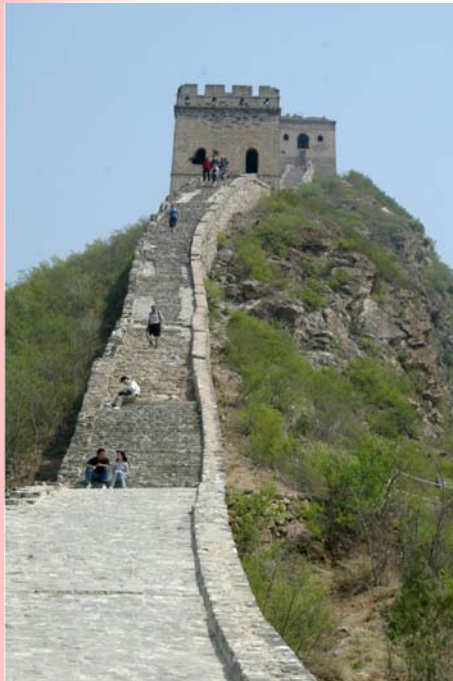
well beyond the reach of the huge crowds of tourists that throng the more popular and accessible parts of the Wall.



Tower 13 - Great Wall - Simatai

Enthusiasts, who like to study military architecture, find much to interest them along this 20 kilometer barrier as it appears to dance from east to west over the mountain ridges interrupted only by the presence of the Simatai reservoir that divides it in two. Here, those who are keenly interested can study and compare a wide range of watchtowers, blockhouses and platforms representative of the many styles to be found along the Great Wall.

Visitors have a choice of accessing the wall from either Jinshanling or Simatai. Most enter at Jinshanling for a fee of 30 Yuan and make their way to Simatai. It is at Simatai that the Wall takes the hiker upwards to the perilous Simatai ridge.



Long Stairs Down - Great Wall - Simatai

There are in total sixteen watchtowers set at intervals along this expanse and it will take about two hours to reach the twelfth watchtower. Beyond this point the condition of the stairs and walkways deteriorates and the passage becomes both steep and narrow which means that it is often safer to use the adjacent footpath rather than try to walk on the Wall itself. A lack of firm footholds creates quite a struggle and in places it may prove

necessary to go on all fours in order to make any progress.



View Below - Great Wall - Simatai

For 100 meters between the fourteenth and fifteenth watchtowers there is an incline at an 80 degree angle with only a single parapet wall. It is quite narrow compared with more substantial sections of the wall and in height it varies from two to four meters from its base. The terrain forms a natural barrier while the Wall gave the Chinese soldiery a combination of protection and an advantage of height from which to defend themselves against enemy attack. The defences are reinforced by rows of embrasured walls built vertically to the main body of the Wall so as to withstand any possible incursion by enemy soldiers. As this section of the Wall is so steep, it is known as the "Stairway to Heaven". The fifteenth tower has been named "The Fairy Tower" and is noted for its fine architectural features which include stone sculptures of twin lotus flowers on its arched doorways. Only the bravest hikers will climb the "Stairway to Heaven" but those who do and reach the sixteenth

and highest tower will be rewarded with a breathtaking view. Known as 'Wang Jing Lou' [Watching Beijing Tower] the sixteenth watchtower with its elevation of 986 meters is the highest visitor attraction in the environs of Beijing. At night the lights of the city, when seen from the watchtower, are a wondrous sight to behold.

The descent can be made to the seventeenth watchtower and from there along the hill path to the exit gate.



Wall to the West - Great Wall - Simatai



Leila rides the flying fox to the bottom - Great Wall - Simatai

There was once a fortified bridge here - Great Wall - Simatai

This morning the traffic had been busy but flowing reasonably well in Beijing and we had made good time going to Simatai. This afternoon the roads into Beijing are packed and the traffic is moving steadily but slowly. Eventually our driver takes to the side streets and we seem to make better progress. The return trip has taken 3 hours, only half an hour longer than the morning trip. It had seemed much longer as the seating in the

mini bus was hard and cramped. The air conditioner was not working too well and the smog was causing eyes to smart.

At our final dinner together we enjoy the capital speciality – Peking Duck; a marvellous way to end a great trip. Kevin who returned to England due to illness has recovered and returned to China to do the next leg of his planned trip; Beijing to St Petersburg on the Trans Siberian Railway. He has fully recovered and joined us for dinner.

Tomorrow we will start to leave Beijing for home.

Sunday/Monday 29/30th April 2007 – Beijing – Melbourne

Day 65/64

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