



DESIGNATED UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN CHINA

Essential Places to Visit

There is more to the rich tapestry of Chinese History than the invention of paper. Here is a small example of what China harbours – and these have been designated UNESCO world heritage sites.

THE GREAT WALL

One of the most renowned projects of the world. Construction of the wall began around the 7th-4th century BC during the Spring and Autumn Period. At that time, feudal states built walls for self-defence against nomadic tribes. In 211 BC, Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty, after unifying China, had the walls linked up, reinforced and extended. Renovations were carried out with local geographic conditions during the succeeding dynasties, creating many enchanting sights. The total length of the Great Wall is 6,700 km, traversing 8 provinces municipalities and autonomous regions. Its historic and strategic importance is matched only by its architectural value.

THE PALACE MUSEUM

As known as the former Forbidden City, built between 1406 and 1420 in the centre of Beijing city proper. It had been the imperial residence of 24 emperors of the Ming and Qing (1368-1911 AD) dynasties. One of the largest and best-preserved palace complexes in the world, it has become the Palace Museum since the 1950s. Here are collected around a million rare and valuable objects. Covering an area of 720,000 square meters, the Palace has a total floor space of some 150,000 square meters with 9,999

room units. The Throne Hall – Hall of Supreme Harmony – is China's tallest ancient palace building of timber, where during the reign of the Ming and Qing emperors all the important national ceremonies took place. With yellow tiles over red walls, gilded doors behind vermilion colonnades, and carved white marble balustrades around, the palace halls in symmetrical array represent the acme of China's ancient architectural art. About one million pieces of rare cultural relics and art works are housed in the museum.

PEKING MAN SITE AT ZHOUKOUDIAN

In 1929, a well-preserved skull of a primitive man was excavated on Dragon Bone Hill near the town of Zhoukoudian in the suburbs of Beijing. Scientific identification showed that the discovery belonged to a new type of ape man who lived about five hundred thousand years ago. This type of man was later named by anthropologists Homo Erectus Pekinensis or Peking Man. The discovery represents a milestone in the study of early man. Up to the present, fossil remains of Peking Man unearthed at Zhoukoudian belonged to upwards of 40 persons. They provide important material for anthropological and palynological studies.

THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN

The Temple of Heaven in the southern part of Beijing occupies an area of 270 hectares. Started to be built in 1420, it was the place where

the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties worshipped heaven and prayed for abundant harvests. The Temple consists of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, the Imperial Vault of Heaven, the Circular Mound Altar, the Echo Wall and the Thrice-Reechoing Stone. Of exquisite architectural workmanship, the Temple of Heaven is the largest existing ancient architectural group for worshipping in China.

THE SUMMER PALACE

15 kilometres northwest of Beijing city centre, the Summer Palace is one of China's largest and best-preserved imperial gardens. It occupies an area of 290 hectares, four-fifths of which are water surface. It is a masterpiece of Chinese landscape garden design, integrating the natural landscape of hills and open water with manmade features such as pavilions, halls, palaces, temples and bridges into a harmonious and aesthetically exceptional whole.

MAUSOLEUM OF THE FIRST QIN EMPEROR

The Mausoleum of the first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) is located 36 kilometres east of Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi Province, and 5 kilometres east of Lintong County. The entire mausoleum occupies an area of eight square kilometres and the mound stands 55 meters high. It is the first and largest imperial mausoleum in China.

Since 1974, three vaults containing terra-cotta figures have been found 1.5 kilometres east of the

mausoleum. Eight thousand terracotta warriors, hundreds of chariots and ten thousand pieces of actual weaponry have been unearthed from the three vaults. The terracotta figures of warriors and horses are simple in style, but highly realistic and animated. And each warrior has different features and facial expression. In 1980, two sets of large bronze chariots and horses were excavated west of the mausoleum. Discovery of the buried legion has aroused great interest all over the world, making it “the eighth wonder of the world”.

TEMPLE, CEMETERY AND FAMILY MANSION OF CONFUCIUS IN QUFU

The Temple, Cemetery and Family Mansion of Confucius, a great Chinese philosopher, political thinker and educator of the 6th-5th century BC, is located in Qufu, Shandong Province. The Temple was first built in his commemoration in 478 BC, a year after Confucius death.

It was constantly rebuilt and expanded in succeeding dynasties. Today, it comprises more than 100 buildings. The Cemetery contains Confucius' tomb, and the remains of more than 100,000 of his descendants.

The Family Mansion was the place where Confucius direct descendants lived. It consists of halls, office buildings, studies, residential buildings and corridors with 463 halls and rooms all told. This complex of monuments at Qufu has maintained its outstanding artistic and historic character due to the devotion of successive Chinese emperors over more than 2,000 years.

THE ANCIENT CITY OF PINGYAO

Pingyao is an exceptionally well preserved example of a traditional Han Chinese city, founded in the 14th century. Its urban fabric is an epitome of the evolution of architectural styles and town planning in imperial China over five centuries.

Of special interest are the imposing buildings associated with banking, for which Pingyao was the centre for the whole of China in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

MT. EMEI AND LESHAN GIANT BUDDHA

Situated at the confluence of Minjiang River, Qingyi River and Dadu River, on the western slope of Lingyun Mountain east of Leshan city, the sitting giant Buddha, Meitrya is carved into a cliff overlooking the three rivers. As the popular saying goes: “The mountain is a Buddha, the Buddha is a mountain,” it is also the biggest stone Buddha in the world. Carving started in 713 under the Tang Dynasty, and lasted until its completion in 803. It is 71 meters tall. Its shoulders are 24 meters wide, and its head is 11.7 meters high. Its ears are seven meters long and its nose, 5.6 meters long. Its ear hole can accommodate two men standing abreast. Its instep can hold more than 100 seated people.