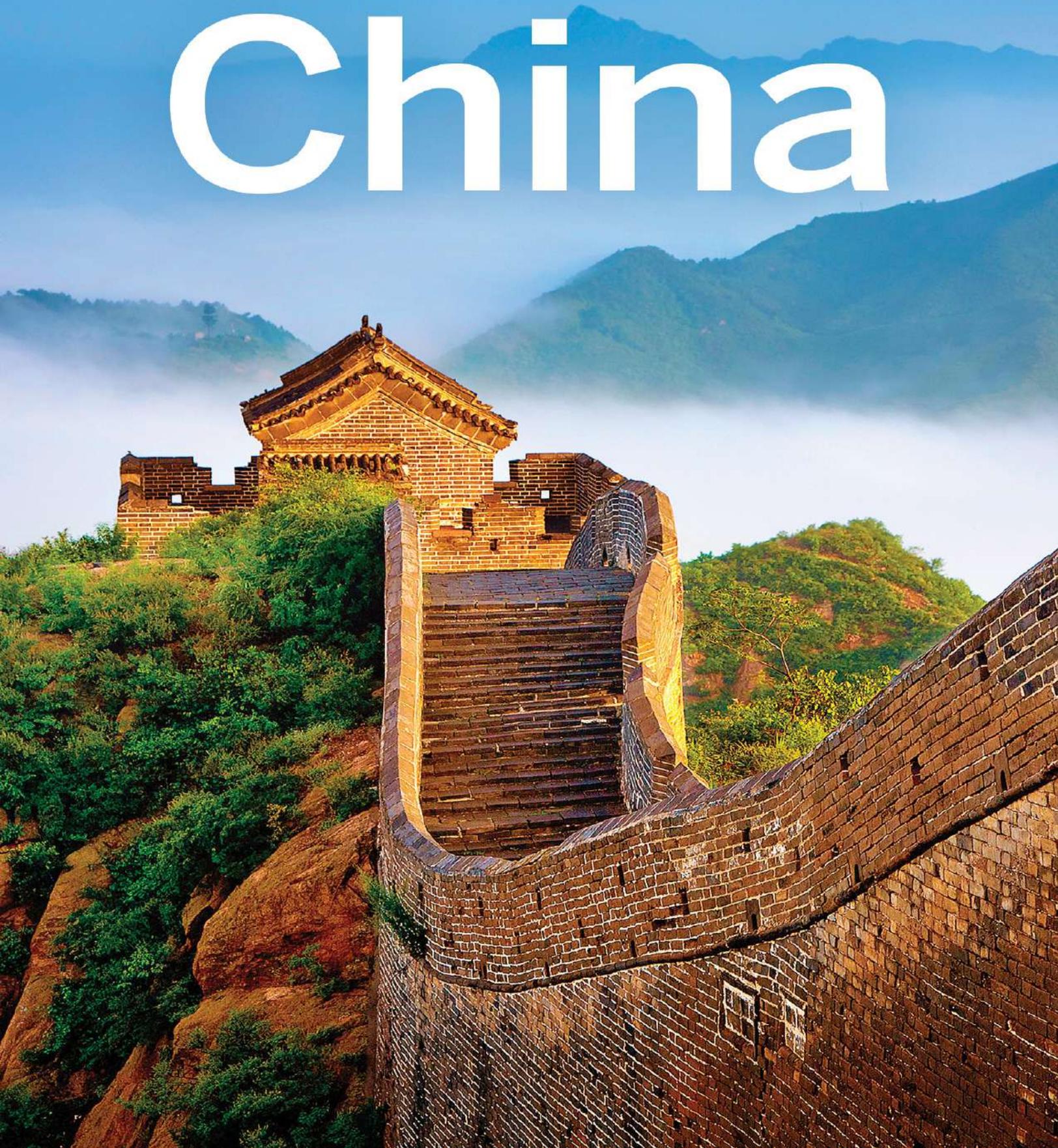


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China



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China



How to Use This eBook

4 easy-to-use sections

1

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Your planning tool kit

Photos & suggestions to help you create the perfect trip.

2

ON THE ROAD

Your complete guide

Expert reviews, easy-to-use maps and insider tips.

3

UNDERSTAND

Get more from your trip

Learn about the big picture, to make sense of what you see.

4

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Your at-a-glance guide

Vital practical information to help you have a smooth trip.

Look for these symbols to quickly identify listings:

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Sights |  Eating |
|  Activities |  Drinking |
|  Courses |  Entertainment |
|  Tours |  Shopping |
|  Festivals & Events |  Information & Transport |
|  Sleeping | |

All reviews are ordered in our authors' preference, starting with their most preferred option. Additionally:

Sights are arranged in the geographic order that we suggest you visit them, and within this order, by author preference.

Eating and Sleeping reviews are ordered by price range (budget, midrange, top end) and within these ranges, by author preference.

These symbols give vital information for each listing:

-  Must-visit recommendation
-  Sustainable or green recommendation
- FREE** No payment required

- | | |
|--|---|
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For symbols used on maps, see the Map Legend at the end of this eBook.

To get the most out of the maps in this guide, use the zoom function on your device, or visit <http://media.lonelyplanet.com/ebookmaps> to grab a PDF of the maps.

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0 200 km
0 250 miles



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Behind the Scenes

Our Writers

Welcome to China

Whether it's your first visit or your twentieth, China is so big, so diverse and so fast-changing, it's always an adventure.

Breathtaking Antiquity

Let's face it: the world's oldest continuous civilisation is bound to pull an artefact or two out of its hat. There isn't history at every turn – three decades of perpetual development and socialist town-planning have taken their toll – but travel selectively in China and rich seams of antiquity await exploration. With tumble-down chunks of the Great Wall, mist-wreathed, temple-topped mountains, quaint villages, water towns and sublime Buddhist cave statues, China insists on a few requirements: a well-made pair of travelling shoes and a strong stomach for long-distance wayfaring.

Stupendous Scenery

Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong are portraits of modern Chinese wherewithal and ambition, but it's the big outdoors that should top your list. From the placid mountain lakes of Tibet, the impassive deserts of Inner Mongolia to island-hopping in Hong Kong or cycling between fairy-tale karst pinnacles around Yangshuo, China's landscapes are beguiling. Swoon before the rice terraces of the south, size up some awesome sand dunes in Gansu or trace the Great Wall as it meanders across mountain peaks, get lost in forests of bamboo, sail through dramatic river gorges or, when your energy fails you, flake out for a tan on a distant beach.

Cuisine

Treat yourself by trading your meagre local Chinatown menu for the lavish

Middle Kingdom cookbook. Wolf down Peking duck, size up a sizzling lamb kebab in Kaifeng or gobble down a bowl of Lanzhou noodles on the Silk Road. Spicy Hunan or Sichuan dishes really raise the temperature but don't forget about what's cooking along China's frontier lands – always an excellent excuse to get off the beaten path. Culinary exploration is possibly the most enticing aspect of Middle Kingdom travel: you'll return with stimulated taste buds and much cherished gastronomic memories.

Diversity

China is vast. Off-the-scale massive. A riveting jumble of wildly differing dialects and climatic and topographical extremes, it's like several different countries rolled into one. Take your pick from the tossed-salad ethnic mix of the southwest, the yak-butter illuminated temples of Xiahe, a journey along the dusty Silk Road, spending the night at Everest Base Camp or getting into your glad rags for a night on the Shanghai tiles. You're spoiled for choice: whether you're an urban traveller, hiker, cyclist, explorer, backpacker, irrepressible museum-goer or faddish foodie, China's diversity is second to none.



Night-time skyline, Shanghai
JEAN-PIERRE LESCOURRET / GETTY IMAGES ©

Why I Love China

By Damian Harper, Author

A passion for Chinese martial arts saw me enrolling for a four-year degree in modern and classical Chinese at university in London back in the 1990s. They were fun days, when travelling China was testing but exciting in equal measure. Must-see hotspots like Pingyao were unheard of and Shanghai's Pudong was a cocktail-free flatland. I could say it's the fantastic food, the awesome landscapes, the fun of train travel, the delightful people or pitching up in a small town I've never been to before, and I wouldn't be lying. But it's the Chinese language I still love most of all.



China's Top 30

Forbidden City

Not a city and no longer forbidden, [Beijing's enormous palace](#) is the be-all-and-end-all of dynastic grandeur with its vast halls and splendid gates. No other place in China teems with so much history, legend and good old-fashioned imperial intrigue. You may get totally lost here but you'll always find something to write about on the first postcard you can lay your hands on. The complex also heads the list with one of China's most attractive admission prices and almost endless value-for-money sightseeing.



CZQS2000 – STS / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Great Wall

Spotting it from space is both tough and pointless: the only place you can truly put [the Great Wall](#) under your feet is in China. Select the Great Wall according to taste: perfectly chiselled, dilapidated, stripped of its bricks, overrun with saplings, coiling splendidly into the hills or returning to dust. The fortification is a fitting symbol of those perennial Chinese traits: diligence, mass manpower, ambitious vision and engineering skill (coupled with a distrust of the neighbours).



Top Experiences

Tiger Leaping Gorge

Picture snowcapped mountains rising on either side of a gorge so deep that you can be 2km above the river rushing across the rocks far below. Then imagine winding up and down trails that pass through tiny farming villages, where you can rest while enjoying views so glorious they defy superlatives. Cutting through remote northwest Yunnan for 16 km, [Tiger Leaping Gorge](#) is a simply unmissable experience. Hikers returning from the gorge invariably give it glowing reviews.



ELIZABETH PHUNG / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Shanghai

More than just a city, Shanghai is the country's neon-lit beacon of change, opportunity and sophistication. Its sights set squarely on the not-too-distant future, Shanghai offers a taste of all the superlatives China can dare to dream up, from the world's highest observation deck to its fastest commercially operating train. Whether you're just pulling in after an epic 44-hour train trip from Xinjiang or it's your first stop, you'll find plenty to indulge in here. Start with [the Bund](#), Shanghai's iconic riverfront area where it all began.



SCOTT E BARBOUR / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Yangzi River

Snow melting from the world's 'third pole' – the high-altitude Tibet–Qinghai plateau – is the source of China's mighty, life-giving Yangzi. The country's longest river, the Yangzi surges west–east across the nation before pouring into the Pacific Ocean. It reaches a crescendo with the Three Gorges, carved out throughout the millennia by the inexorable persistence of the powerful waters. The gorges are a magnificent spectacle and a [Yangzi River cruise](#) is a rare chance to hang up your travelling hat, take a seat and leisurely watch the drama unfold.



Little Three Gorges, Daning River
JOHN HENSALL / ALAMY ©

Top Experiences

Mt Kailash, Western Tibet

Worshipped by more than a billion Buddhists and Hindus, Asia's most sacred mountain ([Click here](#)) rises from the Barkha plain like a giant four-sided 6714m-high *chorten* (stupa). Throw in stunning nearby Lake Manasarovar and a basin that forms the source of four of Asia's greatest rivers, and it's clear that this place is special. Travel here to one of the world's most beautiful and remote corners brings a bonus: the three-day pilgrim path around the mountain erases the sins of a lifetime.



HIROYUKI NAGAOKA / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Hiking Longji Rice Terraces

After a bumpy bus ride to northern Guangxi, you'll be dazzled by one of China's most archetypal and photographed landscapes: the splendidly named [Longji \(Dragon's Backbone\) Rice Terraces](#). The region is a beguiling patchwork of minority villages, with layers of waterlogged terraces climbing the hillsides. You'll be enticed into a game of village-hopping. The most invigorating walk between Ping'an and Dazhai villages offers the most spine-tingling views. Visit after the summer rains when the fields are glistening with reflections.



KEREN SU / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

China's Cuisine

Say *zaijian* (goodbye) to that Chinatown schlock and *nihao* (hello) to a whole new world of food and flavour. For Peking duck and dumplings galore, Beijing's a good place to start ([Click here](#)), but you don't have to travel far to find that China truly is your oyster, from the liquid fire of a Chongqing hotpot to the dainty dim sum of Hong Kong. You'll see things you've never seen before, eat things you've never heard of and drink things that could lift a rocket into space.



CHINESE CUISINE
LARS RUECKER /GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Diaolou in Kaiping

If you only have time for one attraction in Guangdong, Kaiping's *diaolou* ([Click here](#)) should be it. Approximately 1800 outlandishly designed watchtowers and fortified residences are scattered higgledy-piggledy in the farmland in Kaiping, a town not far from Guangzhou. These sturdy bastions built in the early 20th century may not be what you'd typically expect in the Middle Kingdom, but they inspire awe with their eccentric fusion of foreign and domestic architectural styles. Greek, Roman, Gothic, Byzantine and baroque – you name it, they've got it.



Top Experiences

French Concession, Shanghai

[The French Concession](#) is Shanghai sunny-side up, at its coolest, hippest and most alluring. Once home to the bulk of Shanghai's adventurers, revolutionaries, gangsters, prostitutes and writers – though ironically many of them weren't French – the former concession (also called Frenchtown) is the most graceful part of Puxi. The Paris of the East turns on its European charms to maximum effect here, where leafy streets and 1920s villas meet art deco apartment blocks, elegant restaurants and chic bars.



KYLIE MCLAUGHLIN / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Huangshan & Hui Villages

Shrouded in mist and light rain more than 200 days a year, and maddeningly crowded most of the time, [Huangshan](#) has an appeal that attracts millions of annual visitors. Perhaps it's the barren landscape, or an otherworldly vibe on the mountain. Mist – a fickle mistress – rolls in and out at will; spindly bent pines stick out like lone pins across sheer craggy granite faces. Not far from the base are the perfectly preserved Hui villages including [Xidi](#) and [Hongcun](#). Unesco, Ang Lee and Zhang Yimou were captivated – you will be too.



Village of Hongcun
MELINDACHAN / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Hiking in Jiuzhaigou National Park

Strolling the forested valleys of [Jiuzhaigou National Park](#) – past bluer-than-blue lakes and small Tibetan villages, in the shadow of snow-brushed mountains – was always a highlight of any trip to Sichuan province, but an excellent new ecotourism scheme means travellers can now hike and even camp their way around this stunning part of southwest China. Guides speak English and all camping equipment is provided, so all you need to bring is your sense of adventure and a spare set of camera batteries.



Rhinoceros Lake in Jiuzhaigou National Park
FENG WEI PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Terracotta Warriors

Standing silent guard over their emperor for more than 2000 years, the [terracotta warriors](#) are one of the most extraordinary archaeological discoveries ever made. It's not just that there are thousands of the life-sized figures lined up in battle formation; it's the fact that no two of them are alike – each one is animated with a distinct expression. This is an army and one made up entirely of individuals. Gazing at these skilfully sculpted faces brings the past alive with a unique intensity.



Top Experiences

The Li River & Cycling Yangshuo

It's hard to exaggerate the beauty of Yangshuo and the Li River area ([Click here](#)), renowned for classic images of mossy-green jagged limestone peaks providing a backdrop for weeping willows leaning over bubbling streams, wallowing water buffaloes and farmers sowing rice paddies. Ride a bamboo raft along the river and you'll understand why this stunning rural landscape has inspired painters and poets for centuries. Another popular way to appreciate the scenery is a bike tour along the Yulong River.



HAIBO BI / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Lhasa

The holy city of [Lhasa](#) is the perfect introduction to Tibet, and just arriving here can make the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. The spectacular prayer halls of the [Potala Palace](#), the medieval [Jokhang Temple](#) and the monastic cities of Drepung and Sera are the big draws, but don't miss the less-visited chapels and pilgrim paths. The whitewashed alleys of the old town hold the real heart of the Tibetan quarter, and you could spend hours here wandering around backstreet handicraft workshops, hidden temples and local teahouses.



Sunrise over the Potala Palace
MERTEN SNIJDERS / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

The Silk Road

There are other Silk Road cities in countries such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, but it's in China where you get the feeling of stepping on the actual 'Silk Road', with its pervasive Muslim heritage and fragments from ancient Buddhist civilisations. Travel by bus and experience the route as ancient traders once did – kilometre by kilometre, town by town. [Kashgar](#) is the ultimate Silk Road town and remains a unique melting pot of peoples, but [Hotan](#) is equally special: a rough-and-tumble town still clinging to bygone days.



Jiayuguan Fort, one of the Silk Road's defining sights
JOSA – FUSTE RAGA / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Pingyao

Time-warped [Pingyao](#) is a true gem: an intact, walled Chinese town with an unbroken sense of continuity to its Qing-dynasty heyday. Pingyao ticks most of your China boxes with a flourish: imposing city walls, atmospheric alleys, ancient shopfronts, traditional courtyard houses, some excellent hotels, hospitable locals and all in a compact area. You can travel the length and breadth of China and not find another town like it. Step back in time and spend a few days here, it's unique.



YANN LAYMA / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Labrang Monastery

If you can't make it to Tibet, visit the Gansu province town of Xiahe, a more accessible part of the former Tibetan region of Amdo. One moment you are in Han China, the next you are virtually in Tibet. Here, [Labrang Monastery](#) attracts legions of suntanned Tibetan pilgrims who perambulate single-mindedly around the huge monastery's prayer-wheel-lined *kora* (pilgrim path). As a strong source of spiritual power, the monastery casts its spell far and wide, and with great hiking opportunities plus an intriguing ethnic mix, it's a fascinating corner of China.



CHRISTIAN KOBER / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Beijing's Hutong

To get under the skin of the capital, you need to lose yourself at least once in its enchanting, ancient alleyways ([Click here](#)). *Hutong* are Beijing's heart and soul; it's in these alleys that crisscross the centre of the city that you'll discover the capital's unique street life. Despite its march into the 21st century, Beijing's true charms – heavenly courtyard architecture, pinched lanes and a strong sense of community – are not high-rise. It's easy to find that out; just check into a courtyard hotel and true Beijing will be right on your doorstep.



Top Experiences

Yungang Caves

Buddhist art taken to sublime heights, these 5th-century [caves](#) house some of the most remarkable statues in all of China. Carved out of the harsh yellow earth of Shanxi and surrounded by superb frescoes, the statues inside the caves represent the highpoint of the Tuoba people's culture and draw on influences from as far away as Greece and Persia. Marvel at how the pigment clinging to some of them has miraculously survived 1500-odd years, and admire how sacred the statuary remains to followers of Buddhism.



Top Experiences

Practise Taichi in Wudang Shan

An ethereal form of moving meditation to some, an awesome arsenal of martial-arts techniques to others, taichi is quintessentially Chinese. Daily practice could add a decade or more to your lifespan or give you some handy moves for getting on those crowded buses. And it's not all slow-going: Chen style has snappy elements of Shaolin boxing and it'll give you a leg-busting workout. Join classes in the hills of Taoist Wudang Shan ([Click here](#)), the birthplace of taichi, and put some magic and mystery into your China adventure.



LOOK DIE BILDAGENTUR DER FOTOGRAFEN GMBH / ALAMY ©

Top Experiences

Yuanyang Rice Terraces

Hewn out of hills that stretch off into the far distance, the rice terraces of [Yuanyang](#) are testimony to the wonderfully intimate relationship the local Hani people have with the sublime landscape they live in. Rising like giant steps, the intricate terraces are a stunning sight at any time of year. But when they are flooded in winter and the sun's rays are dancing off the water at sunrise or sunset, they're absolutely mesmerising and some of the most photogenic spectacles that China has to offer.



FENG WEI PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Cruising up Victoria Harbour

A buzzer sounds, you bolt for the gangplank. A whistle blows, your boat chugs forward. Beyond the waves, one of the world's most famous views unfolds – Hong Kong's skyscrapers in their steel and neon brilliance, against a backdrop of mountains. You're on the [Star Ferry](#), a legendary service that's been carrying passengers between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula since the 19th century. Ten minutes later, a hemp rope is cast, then a bell rings, and you alight. At only HK\$2, this is possibly the world's best-value cruise.

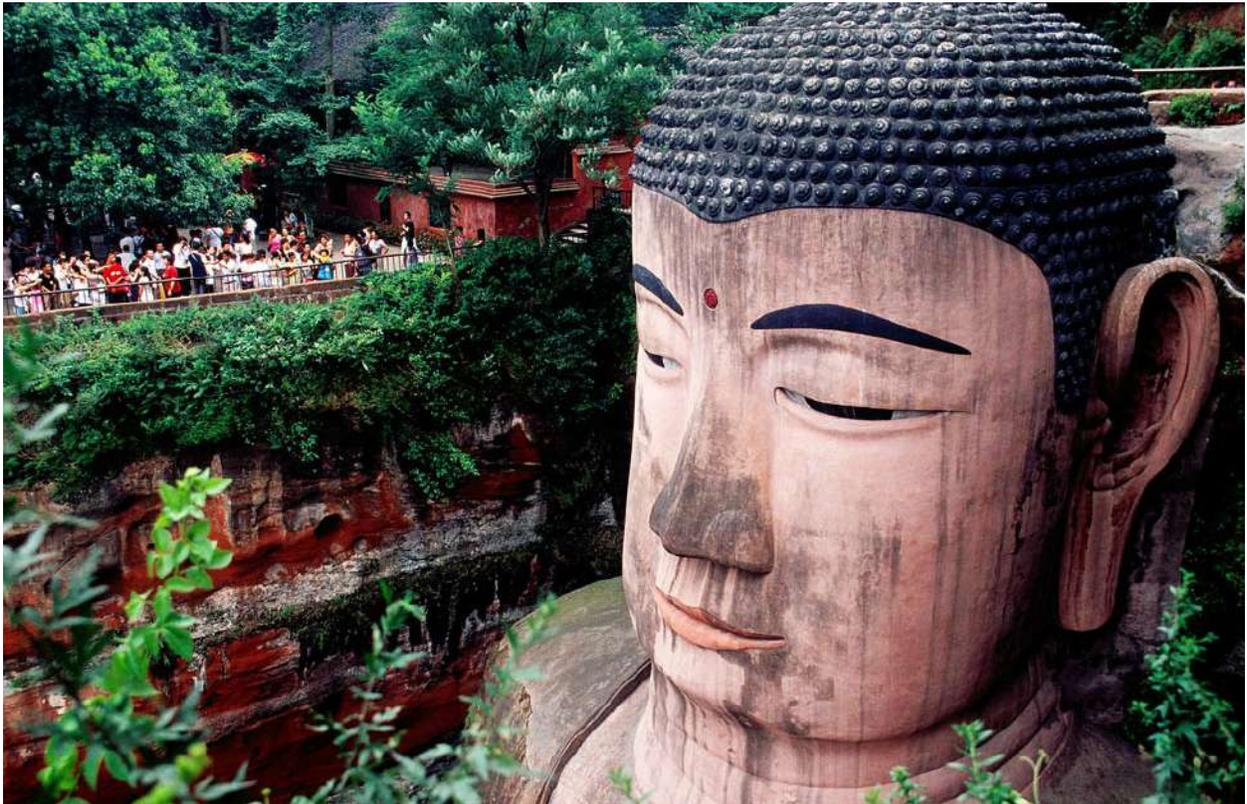


COTSEBASTIEN / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Grand Buddha, Le Shan

You can read all the stats you like about Le Shan's [Grand Buddha statue](#) – yes, its ears really are 7m long! – but until you descend the steps alongside the world's tallest Buddha statue and stand beside its feet, with its toenails at the same level as your eyes, you can't really comprehend just how vast it is. Still not impressed? Consider this, then: the huge stone statue was carved painstakingly into the riverside cliff face more than 1200 years ago.



KRZYSZTOF DYDYNski / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Fujian Tulou

Rising up in colonies from the hilly borderlands of Fujian and Guangdong, the stupendous *tulou* roundhouses house entire villages, even though occupant numbers are way down these days. The imposing and well-defended bastions of wood and earth – not all circular it must be added – can be most easily found in the Fujian counties of Nanjing and Yongding ([Click here](#)). Do the right thing and spend the night in one: this is a vanishing way of life, the pastoral setting is quite superb and the architecture is unique.



FOTOTRAV / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Tai Shan

A visit to China just isn't complete without scaling a sacred mountain or two, and antediluvian [Tai Shan](#) in Shandong province is the granddaddy of them all. Climb the Taoist mountain and you'll live to 100, they say, even if you feel you are going to drop dead with exhaustion on the gruelling Path of 18 Bends (lightweights can hitch a ride on the cable car instead). The views are outstanding and with Tai Shan's mountainous aspect in the east, summit sunrises are the order of the day.



O. LOUIS MAZZATENTA / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Dunhuang

Where China starts transforming into a lunar desertscape in the far west, the handsome oasis town of [Dunhuang](#) is a natural staging post for dusty Silk Road explorers. Mountainous sand dunes swell outside town while Great Wall fragments lie scoured by abrasive desert winds, but it is the [magnificent caves](#) at Mogao that truly dazzle. Mogao is the cream of China's crop of Buddhist caves, and its statues are ineffably sublime and some of the nation's most priceless cultural treasures.



VIEW STOCK / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Zhangjiajie

Claimed by some to be the inspiration behind Pandora's floating mountains in the hit film *Avatar*, [Zhangjiajie](#)'s otherworldly rock towers do indeed seem like they come from another planet. Rising from the misty subtropical forests of northwest Hunan, more than 3000 karst pinnacles form a landscape so surreal it is, arguably, unmatched by any other in China. Raft along a river, hike to your heart's content, or just spend hours filling up the memory card on your camera.



FENG WEI PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Fenghuang

Houses perched precariously on stilts, ancestral halls, crumbling temples and gate towers set amid a warren of back alleys full of shops selling mysterious foods and medicines – it's enough on its own to make the ancient town of [Fenghuang](#) an essential stop. Add in the seductive setting on either side of the Tuo River and the chance to stay at an inn right by the water, and you have one of the most evocative towns in the land.



YVES ANDRE / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top Experiences

Cycling Hainan

The same blue skies and balmy weather that make China's only tropical island ([Click here](#)) ideal for a do-nothing holiday, make it superb for exploring on a bicycle. Hit the east for picturesque rice-growing valleys, spectacular bays and some of Asia's finest beaches. And don't miss the sparsely populated central highlands, a densely forested region that's home to the island's original settlers, the Li and the Miao. Here, even the road more frequently taken is still not taken by many at all.



Sanya Bay
VINNYP IMAGES / ALAMY ©

Need to Know

Currency

yuan (¥)

Language

Mandarin, Cantonese

Visas

Needed for all visits to China except Hong Kong, Macau and 72-hour or under trips to Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Xi'an, Guilin, Chengdu, Chongqing, Dalian and Shenyang.

Money

ATMs in big cities and towns. Credit cards less widely used; always carry cash.

Mobile Phones

Inexpensive pay-as-you-go SIM cards can be bought locally for most mobile phones. Buying a local mobile phone is also cheap.

Time

GMT/UTC +8

When to Go



Chinese New Year.

→ → Weather is bitterly cold in the north and at altitude, and only warm in the far south.

Useful Websites

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com/china) Destination information, hotel bookings, traveller forum and more.

Ctrip (www.english.ctrip.com) Hotel booking, air ticketing.

Sinocism (www.sinocism.com) An indispensable regular newsletter on China.

Chinasmack (www.chinasmack.com) Human-interest stories and videos.

Tea Leaf Nation (www.tealeafnation.com) Chinese social media pickings.

Popupchinese (www.popupchinese.com) Excellent podcasts (great for learning Chinese).

Important Numbers

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Ambulance | ☎120 |
| Fire | ☎119 |
| Police | ☎110 |
| Country code (China/ Hong Kong/ Macau) | ☎86/852/ 853 |
| International access code | ☎00 |
| Directory assistance | ☎114 |

Exchange Rates

| | | |
|------------------|-------|------|
| Australia | A\$1 | ¥5.3 |
| Canada | C\$1 | ¥5.4 |
| Euro zone | €1 | ¥7.6 |
| Hong Kong | HK\$1 | ¥0.8 |
| Japan | ¥100 | ¥5.3 |
| NZ | NZ\$1 | ¥4.8 |
| UK | UK£1 | ¥9.7 |
| USA | US\$1 | ¥6.1 |

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Daily Costs

Budget: Less than ¥200

- → Dorm Beds: ¥40–60
- → Food markets, street food: ¥40
- → Internet, bike hire or other transport: ¥20
- → Free museums

Midrange: ¥200–1000

- → Double room in a mid-range hotel: ¥200–600
- → Lunch and dinner in local restaurants: ¥80–100
- → Drinks in a bar: ¥60
- → Taxis: ¥60

Top end: More than ¥1000

- → Double room in a top-end hotel: ¥600 and up
- → Lunch and dinner in excellent local or hotel restaurants: ¥300
- → Shopping at top-end shops: ¥300

➡➡ Two tickets to Chinese opera: ¥300

Opening Hours

China officially has a five-day working week. Saturday and Sunday are public holidays.

Banks, offices, government departments Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm or 6pm, some closing for two hours midday. Many banks also open Saturday and Sunday.

Post offices usually daily.

Museums generally stay open on weekends; may shut one weekday.

Travel agencies usually daily.

Shops 10am to 10pm daily.

Internet cafes typically 24 hours, some only 8am to midnight.

Restaurants around 10.30am to 11pm; some shut between 2pm and 5pm or 6pm.

Bars open late afternoon, close around midnight.

Arriving in China

[Beijing Capital Airport](#) Airport Express train services run every 10 minutes. The Airport Bus runs to central Beijing every 10 to 20 minutes. A taxi will cost ¥80 to ¥100.

[Shanghai Pudong International Airport](#) Maglev trains run every 20 minutes. Metro Line 2 links the airport with Hongqiao Airport. The Airport Bus runs every 15 to 25 minutes. A taxi to central Shanghai will cost ¥160.

[Hong Kong International Airport](#) Airport Express trains run every 12 minutes. A taxi to Central will cost about HK\$300.

Getting Around

Transport in China needs considerable pre-planning due to the distances involved and periodic shortages of tickets.

Air Affordable and excellent for long distances, but delays are common.

Train Very reasonably priced, apart from high-speed rail which is more expensive, and very efficient.

Bus Cheaper and slower than trains but crucial for remote destinations.

Car China is too large and there are too many restrictions to make this a viable option.

First Time

Checklist

- ➡➡ Check the validity of your passport
- ➡➡ Make any necessary bookings (for accommodation and travel)
- ➡➡ Secure your visa and additional permits well in advance
- ➡➡ Check what clothing you will need
- ➡➡ Check the airline baggage restrictions
- ➡➡ Organise travel insurance
- ➡➡ Check if you can use your mobile/cellphone
- ➡➡ Work out your itinerary
- ➡➡ Inform your credit/debit card company

What to Pack

- ➡➡ Passport
- ➡➡ Credit card
- ➡➡ Phrasebook
- ➡➡ Money belt
- ➡➡ Travel plug
- ➡➡ Medical kit
- ➡➡ Insect repellent
- ➡➡ Mobile (cell) phone charger
- ➡➡ Sunscreen
- ➡➡ Sunhat and shades
- ➡➡ Waterproof clothing
- ➡➡ Torch
- ➡➡ Pocketknife
- ➡➡ Earplugs

Top Tips for Your Trip

- ➔ ➔ Be patient and understand that many things you take for granted – orderly queues, international levels of English ability, personal space – may not exist.
- ➔ ➔ Try to learn at least a few words of Chinese to help you interact better with local people.
- ➔ ➔ Treat China as an adventure, rather than purely as a holiday.

What to Wear

You can pretty much wear casual clothes throughout your entire journey in China, unless dining in a smart restaurant in Shanghai, Beijing or Hong Kong, when you may need to dress less casually. In general, trousers (pants) and shirts or tees for guys, and dresses, skirts or trousers for women will serve you well nationwide; shorts and short sleeves are generally fine in summer, but don long trousers and long sleeves in the evenings to keep mosquitoes at bay. A sunhat can be invaluable. A thin waterproof coat and sturdy shoes are a good idea for all-weather hiking and sightseeing. Winter is a different ball game up north and especially at altitude: you'll need several layers, thick shirts, jerseys and warm coats, jackets, gloves, socks and a hat.

Sleeping

It's generally always a good idea to book your accommodation in advance, especially in the high season and when visiting big ticket destinations, such as Hangzhou, at weekends. See p000 for more accommodation information.

- ➔ ➔ **Hotels** Range from two-star affairs with very limited English and simple rooms to international-level five-star towers and heritage hotels.
- ➔ ➔ **Hostels** Exist across China in growing numbers, usually offering both dorm beds and double rooms and dispensing useful travel advice.

➔ ➔ **Homesteads** In rural locations, you can often find double rooms in converted houses, with meals also provided.

Money

➔ ➔ **Credit Cards** Credit and debit cards are increasingly accepted in tourist towns and big cities, particularly Visa and MasterCard. Ask if bars and restaurants take cards before ordering.

➔ ➔ **ATMs** There are 24-hour ATMs available at Bank of China and ICBC branches.

➔ ➔ **Changing Money** You can change money at hotels, large branches of Bank of China, some department stores and international airports. Some towns don't have any money-changing facilities, so make sure you carry enough cash.

Bargaining

Haggling is standard procedure in markets and shops (outside of department stores and malls) where prices are not clearly marked. There's no harm in coming in really low, but remain polite at all times. In touristy markets in Shanghai and Beijing, vendors can drop as low as 25% of the original price.

Tipping

Tipping is never expected at cheap and many midrange restaurants. In general there is no need to tip if a service charge has already been added, so check. Hotel porters may expect a tip; taxi drivers do not.

Etiquette

China is a pretty relaxed country regarding etiquette, but there are a few things you need to be aware of:

- ➔ ➔ **Greetings & Goodbyes** Shake hands, but never kiss someone's cheek. Say 'Nihao' as you greet someone and 'Zaijian' to say goodbye.
- ➔ ➔ **Asking for Help** To ask for directions start by saying 'Qing wen....' ('Can I ask...'); say 'Duibuqi...' (sorry) to apologise.
- ➔ ➔ **Religion** Dress sensitively when visiting Buddhist (especially in Tibet) and Taoist temples, churches and mosques.
- ➔ ➔ **Eating & Drinking** Help fill your neighbour's plate or bowl at the dinner table; toast the host and others at the table; at the start of dinner, wait till toasting starts before drinking from your glass; offer your cigarettes around if you smoke; always offer to buy drinks in a bar but never fight over the drink/food tab if someone else wants to pay.
- ➔ ➔ **Gestures** Don't use too many hand movements or excessive body language.

Booking Ahead

Reserving a room, even if only for the first night of your stay, is the best way to ensure a smooth start to your trip. These phrases should see you through a call if English isn't spoken.

| | | |
|---|-----------|-------------------------------|
| Hello | 你好 | Nihǎo |
| I would like to book a room | 我想订房间 | Wǒ xiǎng dìng fángjiān |
| a single room | 单人间 | dānrén jiān |
| a double room | 双人间 | shuāngrén jiān |
| My name is... | 我叫... | Wǒ jiào... |
| from... to... (date) | 从...到... | cóng... dào... |
| How much is it per night/person? | 每天/个人多少钱? | Měi tiān/gè rén duōshǎo qián? |
| Thank you | 谢谢你 | Xièxie nǐ |

Language

It is entirely possible to travel around China hardly hearing any English at all. Tourist industry employees across the land are more likely to speak English; in the big cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and of course Hong Kong, English is more widely spoken and understood, but generally only among educated Chinese. In smaller towns and the countryside, English is often of little or no use (the vast majority of Chinese do not speak the language at all).

If You Like...

Imperial Architecture

Crumbling dynasties have deposited an imposing trail of antiquity across north China from vast imperial palaces to the noble ruins of the Great Wall and altars reserved for the emperor.

[Forbidden City](#) China's standout imperial residence in Beijing, home to two dynasties of emperors and their concubines.

[Summer Palace](#) An epic demonstration of traditional Chinese aesthetics with all essential ingredients: hills, lakes, bridges, pavilions and temples.

[Imperial Palace](#) Manchu splendour in Shenyang within the former Manchurian heartland of Liaoning province.

[Xi'an](#) Shaanxi home of the Terracotta Warriors, an imposing Ming city wall and traces of the city's famous Tang apogee.

[Chengde](#) Summer bolt hole of the Qing emperors, with palatial remains and a riveting brood of Tibetan-style temples.



Kunming Lake, Summer Palace, Beijing
GAVIN HELLIER / GETTY IMAGES ©

The Great Wall

The Wall most famously belongs to Beijing, but fragments create a ragged band across a lot of north China, trailing from the North Korean border to the wind-scoured deserts of China's wild west.

[Jiankou](#) (Hou Jiankou Changcheng admission ¥20) Beijing's prime chunk of ruin, a sublime portrait of disintegrating brickwork, overgrown with trees and set against a magnificent mountain panorama.

[Gubeikou](#) Loads of trekking options at this Great Wall crossroads accessible from Beijing.

[Zhuangdaokou](#) Little-visited length of wall near Beijing packing supreme views and hiking opportunities.

[Huanghua Cheng](#) Excellent hiking opportunities along some of the most authentic sections of wall to be found around Beijing.

[Jiayuguan Fort](#) Confront weathered slogans from Mao's Cultural Revolution lashed by the Gansu desert winds.

Extremes

China has more than enough extremes to satisfy thrill-seekers, or just the plain inquisitive. From the world's highest mountain to its fastest trains and biggest Buddhist statues, take your pick from China's extremes.

[Beihongcun](#) China's northernmost village in Heilongjiang, where winter temperatures can freeze mercury.

[Turpan](#) China's hottest spot and the world's second-lowest depression, where the thermometer has topped 48°C.

[Grand Buddha, Le Shan](#) The world's tallest Buddha can make you feel truly Lilliputian.

[Everest Base Camp](#) Rise early for dramatic images of the world's highest mountain in the morning sun.

[Shanghai Maglev](#) The world's fastest commercially operating high-speed train.

Ancient Settlements

Traditional China can be glimpsed in its picturesque, ancient villages and towns. Ming- and Qing-dynasty architecture, narrow lanes and superlative *fengshui* combine in a pastoral aesthetic complemented by a relaxed rural tempo.

[Pingyao](#) China's best-looking, best-preserved walled town – by a long shot – warrants thorough exploration.

[Hongcun](#) Within easy reach of Huangshan, this delightful Anhui village is a primer in the Huizhou style.

[Wuyuan](#) Take time off to village-hop in the gorgeous Jiangxi countryside and dream of abandoning urban China for good.

[Fujian Tulou](#) Explore the fortress-like earthen ‘roundhouses’ of Fujian, distinctive for their imposing enormity.

[Xinye](#) This effortlessly charming village is designed with an eye for traditional Chinese harmony and balance.

Urban Extravaganzas

Among China’s most dynamic cities is Shanghai, where glittering skyscrapers overlook Maglev trains, and cashed-up consumers shop in chic malls, drink at elegant cocktail bars and dine at fashionable restaurants.

[Shanghai](#) The city that everyone – architects, fashionistas, cocktail connoisseurs, urban travellers – is talking about.

[Hong Kong](#) Poised between China and the West, the ex-British colony continues to plough its own lucrative furrow.

[Beijing](#) Engaging blend of ancient capital and modern metropolis in China's leading city.

[Hangzhou](#) One of China’s most attractive cities with the sublime and romantic West Lake at its heart.

Boat Trips

China is cut by some dramatic and breathtaking rivers, including the mighty Yangzi. Hop on a riverboat and ease into a totally different experience of China’s landscapes.

[Three Gorges](#) China’s most awesome river panorama.

[Li River](#) The dreamlike karst landscapes of northeast Guangxi.

[Star Ferry, Hong Kong](#) The short but iconic ferry hop across Victoria

Harbour from Tsim Sha Tsui.

[Evening river cruise, Chongqing](#) Before getting all misty on the Yangzi, experience Chongqing's nocturnal, neon performance.

[Qingyuan boat trip, Guangdong](#) Lazily float along the Bei River, past secluded Feilai Temple and Feixia monastery.

Great Food

With its novel flavours, and unexpected aromas and tastes, China is a culinary travel adventure. Head west for zing, zest and spice, north for hearty and salty flavours, east for fresh and lightly flavoured seafood, and south for dim sum.

[Peking duck](#) Once bitten, forever smitten, and only in Beijing.

[Chongqing hotpot](#) Sweat like never before over China's most volcanic culinary creation.

[Xiaolongbao](#) Shanghai's bite-sized snack packs a lot of flavour (but watch out for the super-heated meat juice).

[Dim Sum](#) Head to Hong Kong for the very best in China's bite-size delicacies.

Museums

Urbanisation means that museum collections can be the clearest window onto China's past, and they are ubiquitous, covering everything from ethnic clothing to Beijing tap water or Buddhist artefacts.

[Palace Museum](#) The official and highly prosaic name for the Forbidden City, China's supreme link to its dynastic past.

[Shanghai Museum](#) A dazzling collection of ceramics, paintings, calligraphy and much more at the heart of Shanghai.

[Poly Art Museum](#) Bronzes and Bodhisattvas in Beijing.

[Hong Kong Museum of History](#) Entertaining, resourceful and informative.

[Nanjing Museum](#) A lavish celebration of Chinese culture's big hitters, with astounding exhibitions.

Sacred China

From the esoteric mysteries of Tibetan Buddhism to the palpable magic of its holy Taoist mountains, to the disparate collection of Christian churches, mosques and shrines, China's sacred realm is the point at which the supernatural and natural worlds converge.

[Puning Temple, Chengde](#) Be rendered speechless by China's largest wooden statue, a towering effigy of the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy.

[Labrang Monastery](#) Tap into the ineffable rhythms of south Gansu's place of pilgrimage for legions of Tibetans.

[Gyantse Kumbum](#) An overwhelming sight and monumental experience, the nine-tiered *chorten* is Tibet's largest stupa.

[Qinglong Dong](#) Climb through Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian realms in this cliffside labyrinth in riverside Zhenyuan.

[Wudang Shan](#) Commune with the spirit of Taoist martial arts in the birthplace of taichi.

Hiking

Despite urban encroachment, China is one of the world's most geographically varied and largest nations, with stupendous hiking opportunities amid breathtaking scenery.

[Tiger Leaping Gorge](#) Yunnan's best-known and most enticing hike is not for the faint-hearted.

[Longji Rice Terraces](#) Work your way from Dazhai to Ping'an through some of China's most delicious scenery.

[Wuyuan](#) Follow the old postal roads from village to village in the drop-dead gorgeous Jiangxi countryside.

[Langmusi](#) Excellent options in most directions from the charming monastic town on the Gansu–Sichuan border.

[Ganden to Samye](#) An 80km, four- to five-day high-altitude hike between these two Tibetan monasteries.

Ethnic Minorities

Han China hits the buffers around its far-reaching borderlands, where a colourful patchwork of ethnic minorities preserves distinct cultures, languages, architectural styles and livelihoods.

[Tibet](#) Explore this vast region in the west of China or jump aboard our itinerary through the easier-to-access regions outside the Tibetan heartland.

[Dehang](#) (admission ¥60; 🕒 7am-10pm, performances at 10am, 3pm & 7.30pm) This Miao village in Hunan finds itself delightfully embedded in some breathtaking scenery.

[Lijiang](#) Yunnan's famous home of the blue-clothed Naxi folk.

[Kashgar](#) Dusty Central Asian outpost and Uighur China's most famous town, on the far side of the Taklamakan Desert.

Stunning Scenery

You haven't really experienced China until you've had your socks blown off by one of its scenic marvels. China's man-made splendours have lent cities such as Shanghai head-turning cachet, but Mother Nature steals the show.

[Yangshuo](#) You've probably seen the karst topography before in picture-perfect photographs; now see the real thing.

[Huangshan](#) When suffused in their spectral mists, China's Yellow mountains enter a different dimension of beauty.

[Jiuzhaigou National Park](#) Turquoise lakes, waterfalls, snow-capped mountains and green forests: all this and more.

[Chishui](#) Trek past waterfalls and through ancient forests dating to the

Jurassic.

[Yuanyang Rice Terraces](#) Be transfixed by the dazzling display of light and water.

Month by Month

TOP EVENTS

Monlam Great Prayer Festival, February or March

Naadam, July

Beijing International Literary Festival, March

Spring Festival, January, February or March

Luoyang Peony Festival, April

January

North China is a deep freeze but the south is far less bitter; preparations for the Chinese New Year get under way well in advance of the festival, which arrives any time between late January and March.

Spring Festival

The Chinese New Year is family-focused, with dining on dumplings and gift-giving of *hongbao* (red envelopes stuffed with money). Most families feast together on New Year's Eve, then China goes on a big week-long holiday. Expect fireworks, parades, temple fairs and lots of colour.

Ha'erbin Ice & Snow Festival

Heilongjiang's good-looking capital Ha'erbin is all aglow with rainbow lights refracted through fanciful buildings and statues carved from blocks of ice. It's outrageously cold, but hey, this is the peak season.

Yuanyang Rice Terraces

The watery winter is the optimum season for the rice terraces' spectacular combination of liquid and light. Don't forget your camera, or your sense of wonder.

February

North China remains shockingly icy and dry but things are slowly warming up in Hong Kong and Macau. The Chinese New Year could well be firing on all cylinders, but sort out your tickets well in advance.

Monlam Great Prayer Festival

Held during two weeks from the third day of the Tibetan New Year and celebrated with spectacular processions (but not in Lhasa or the Tibetan Autonomous Region due to political tensions), with huge silk *thangka* (Tibetan sacred art) unveiled and, on the last day, a statue of the Maitreya Buddha conveyed around; catch it in Xiahe.

Lantern Festival

Held 15 days after the spring festival, this celebration was traditionally a time when Chinese hung out highly decorated lanterns. Lantern-hung Pingyao in Shanxi is an atmospheric place to soak up the festival (sometimes held in March).

March

China comes back to life after a long winter, although high-altitude parts of China remain glacial. The mercury climbs in Hong Kong and abrasive dust storms billow into Beijing, scouring everything in their path. Admission prices are still low-season.

Beijing Book Bash

Curl up with a good book at the Bookworm cafe for Beijing's international literary festival, and lend an ear to lectures from international and domestic authors. Also earmark Shanghai for its international literary festival in the Bund-side Glamour Bar or the Man Hong Kong International Literary Festival.

Fields of Yellow

Delve into south Chinese countryside to be bowled over by a landscape saturated in bright yellow rapeseed. In some parts of China, such as lovely Wuyuan in Jiangxi province, it's a real tourist draw.

April

Most of China is warm so it's a good time to be on the road, ahead of the May holiday period and before China's summer reaches its full power. The Chinese take several days off to pass the Qingming festival, a traditional date for honouring their ancestors and now an official holiday period.

A Good Soaking

Flush away the dirt, demons and sorrows of the old year and bring in the fresh at the Dai New Year, with its vast amount of water at the water-splashing festival in Xishuangbanna. Taking an umbrella is pointless.

Paeon to Peonies

Wangcheng Park in Luoyang bursts into full-coloured bloom with its peony festival: pop a flower garland on your head and join in the floral fun.

Third Moon Festival

This Bai ethnic minority festival is another excellent reason to pitch up in the lovely north Yunnan town of Dali. It's a week of horse racing, singing and merrymaking which begins on the 15th day of the third lunar month (usually April) and ends on the 21st. The origins of the fair lie in its commemoration of a fabled visit by Guanyin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, to the Nanzhao Kingdom.

Formula One

Petrol heads and aficionados of speed, burnt rubber and hairpin bends flock to Shanghai for some serious motor racing at the track near Anting. Get your hotel room booked early: it's one of the most glamorous events on the Shanghai calendar.

May

China is in full bloom in mountain regions such as Sichuan's Wolong Nature Reserve. The first four days of May sees China on vacation for one of the three big holiday periods, kicking off with Labour Day (1 May).

Buddha's Birthday in Xiahe

A fascinating time to enjoy the Tibetan charms of Gansu province's Xiahe, when Buddhist monks make charitable handouts to beggars and the streets throng with pilgrims. Buddha's Birthday is celebrated on the 8th day of the fourth lunar month, usually in May.

Circling the Mountain Festival

On Paoma Shan, Kangding's famous festival also celebrates the birthday of Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha, with a magnificent display of horse racing, wrestling and a street fair. Buddha's Birthday is celebrated on the 8th day of the fourth lunar month, which usually occurs in May.

Great Wall Marathon

Experience the true meaning of pain (but get your Great Wall sightseeing done and dusted at the same time). Not for the infirm or unfit (or the cable car fraternity). See www.great-wall-marathon.com for more details.

June

Most of China is hot and getting hotter. Once-frozen areas, such as Jilin's Heaven Lake, are accessible – and nature springs instantly to life. The great China peak tourist season is cranking up.

Festival of Aurora Borealis

The Northern Lights are sometimes visible from Mohe in Heilongjiang, in the ultra-far north of China not far from the Russian border. Even if you don't get to see the (often elusive) multicoloured glow, the June midnight sun is a memorable experience.

Dragon Boat Festival

Head to Zhenyuan or the nearest large river and catch all the water-borne drama of dragon boat racers in this celebration of one of China's most famous poets. The Chinese traditionally eat *zongzi* (triangular glutinous rice dumplings wrapped in reed leaves).

Dhama Festival

This three-day festival in Gyantse in Tibet kicks off on June 20th for horse racing, wrestling, archery, yak races and more.

Shangri-la Horse Racing Festival

In mid- to late-June, the north Yunnan town of Shangri-la lets go of the reins

with this celebration of horse racing, coupled with singing, dancing and merriment on the southeastern fringes of Tibet.

July

Typhoons can wreak havoc with travel itineraries down south, lashing the Guangdong and Fujian coastlines. Plenty of rain sweeps across China: the 'plum rains' give Shanghai a big soaking, and the grasslands of Inner Mongolia and Qinghai turn green.

Yushu Horse Festival

This spectacular horse festival wasn't held for several years since the devastating 2010 Yushu earthquake, but has galloped back to the high-altitude grasslands of Qinghai for equine fun and frolics, kicking off on the 25th July.

Torch Festival, Dali

Held on the 24th day of the sixth lunar month (usually July), this festival is held throughout Yunnan by the Bai and Yi minorities. Making for great photos, flaming torches are paraded at night through streets and fields, and go up outside shops around town.

Mongolian Merrymaking

Mongolian wrestling, horse racing, archery and more during the week-long Naadam festival on the grasslands of Inner Mongolia at the end of July, when the grass is at its summer greenest.

Dalian International Beer Festival

Xinghai Square in the Liaoning port city is steeped in the aroma of hops and ale and strewn with beer tents in this 12-day celebration of more than 400

international and Chinese beers from a plethora of breweries.

August

The temperature gauge of the ‘three ovens’ of the Yangzi region – Chongqing, Wuhan and Nanjing – gets set to blow. Rainstorms hit Beijing, which is usually way hotter than 40°C; so is Shanghai. So head uphill to Lushan, Moganshan, Huangshan or Guoliangcun.

Litang Horse Festival

Occasionally cancelled in recent years (restrictions on travel may suddenly appear) and also shrunk from one week to one day, this festival in West Sichuan is a breathtaking display of Tibetan horsemanship, archery and more.

Qingdao International Beer Festival

Slake that chronic summer thirst with a round of beers and devour a plate of mussels in Shandong’s best-looking port town, a former German concession and home of the famous Tsingtao beer brand.

September

Come to Beijing and stay put – September is part of the fleetingly lovely *tiangao qishuang* (‘the sky is high and the air is fresh’) autumnal season – it’s an event in itself. It’s also a pleasant time to visit the rest of North China.

Tai Shan International Climbing Festival

Held annually since 1987, this festival at the sacred Taoist mountain of Tai Shan in Shandong draws hundreds of trail runners, mountain bikers, climbers

and worshippers of all ages and abilities.

Mid-Autumn Festival

Also called the moon festival, locals celebrate by devouring daintily prepared moon cakes – stuffed with bean paste, egg yolk, walnuts and more. With a full moon, it's a romantic occasion for lovers and a special time for families. It's on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month.

International Qiantang River Tide Observing Festival

The most popular time to witness the surging river tides sweeping at up to 40km per hour along the Qiantang River in Yanguan is during the mid-autumn festival, although you can catch the wall of water during the beginning and middle of every lunar month.

Confucius' Birthday

Head to the Confucius Temple in Qufu for the 28 September birthday celebrations of axiom-quipping philosopher, sage and patriarch Confucius.

October

The first week of October can be hellish if you're on the road: the National Day week-long holiday kicks off, so everywhere is swamped. Go mid-month instead, when everywhere is deserted.

Hairy Crabs in Shanghai

Now's the time to sample delicious hairy crabs in Shanghai; they are at their best – male and female crabs eaten together with shots of lukewarm Shaoxing rice wine – between October and December.

Miao New Year

Load up with rice wine and get on down to Guizhou for the ethnic festivities

in the very heart of the minority-rich southwest.

November

Most of China is getting pretty cold as tourist numbers drop and holidaymakers begin to flock south for sun and the last pockets of warmth.

Surfing Hainan

Annual surfing competition in Shimei Bay and Sun and Moon Bay in Hainan as the surfing season gets under way and hordes of Chinese flee the cold mainland for the warmer climes of the southern island.

Itineraries

Northern Tour



4 WEEKS

Beijing is fundamental to this tour, so you'll need at least five days to do the Forbidden City, size yourself up against the Great Wall, wander like royalty around the Summer Palace and lose your bearings within the city's *hutong* (narrow alleyways). The splendour of the **Yungang Caves** outside Datong should put you in a Buddhist mood, sharpened by a few nights on monastic **Wutai Shan**. We recommend a three-day stopover in **Pingyao**, an age-old walled town you imagined China *should* look like. The historic walled city of **Kaifeng** in Henan was the traditional home of China's small community of Chinese Jews and has some remarkable night markets; move on to **Luoyang** and the Buddhist spectacle of the Longmen Caves and the Shaolin Temple,

also within reach. Four days' sightseeing in **Xi'an** brings you face-to-face with the Army of Terracotta Warriors and gives you time for the Taoist mountain of **Hua Shan**. Xi'an traditionally marked the start of the Silk Road which you can follow through Gansu province all the way to the oasis-town of **Dunhuang**, and beyond.

Itineraries

Yangzi River Tour



4 WEEKS

After exploring north Yunnan's ancient Naxi town of **Lijiang**, pick up the trail of the Jinsha River (Gold Sand River, which spills down from Tibet and swells into the Yangzi River) on a breathtaking multiday hike along **Tiger Leaping Gorge**. Rest your worn-out legs before discovering the scattered villages and old towns around Lijiang, including **Shaxi** and **Shuhe** on the old Tea-Horse Road, and being blown away by the magnificent views of Yulong Xueshan. Also consider (warmer months only) a trip from Lijiang northeast towards west Sichuan and the gorgeous **Lugu Hu** on the provincial border, where you can spend several days unwinding by the lakeside. During the

winter months this entire area is snowbound, so you may have to fly on from Lijiang. An afternoon bus from Lugu Hu runs to **Xichang** in Sichuan, from where you can reach **Yibin** and then **Chongqing**; alternatively, return to Lijiang to fly to Chongqing, home of the spicy and searing Chongqing hotpot and gateway to the Three Gorges. Detour by bus to the stunning landscapes and natural beauty of **Chishui** on the Guizhou border to relax, unwind and explore the region before returning by bus to urban Chongqing. You'll need around three days in Chongqing for the sights in town and for a journey to the Buddhist Caves at **Dazu** and a trip to the Yangzi River village of **Songji** to keep a perspective on historic, rural China. Then hop on a cruise vessel or passenger boat (or even a bus followed by hydrofoil) to **Yichang** in Hubei through the magnificent **Three Gorges**. Journey from Yichang to the Yangzi River city of **Wuhan** via the walled town of **Jingzhou**, where it's worth spending the night. After two days in Wuhan, jump on a bus to **Lushan** in Jiangxi province, from where you can reach **Nanjing** or make your way to **Huangshan** in the Yangzi River province of Anhui. Alternatively, travel direct to Nanjing and thread your way to **Shanghai** via a delightful string of canal towns – Suzhou, Tongli, Luzhi and Zhujiajiao. Explore Shanghai and consider launching yourself into the East–South Rural Tour.

Itineraries

Silk Road Tour



5 WEEKS

This breathtaking journey takes you along the ancient Silk Road. From the southernmost extents of the Silk Road at **Xi'an**, discover one of imperial China's most iconic remains at the Army of Terracotta Warriors and, for a major workout, climb the precipitous Taoist mountain of **Hua Shan** – just don't look down. Back in Xi'an, explore the Muslim Quarter to feast on local Hui specialities – one of the culinary high points of China travel – and climb atop the imposing city walls. Hop aboard the train to **Lanzhou** but get off in southeast Gansu at **Tianshui** for the remarkable Buddhist grottoes at verdant Maiji Shan. From Lanzhou you have the option to disengage temporarily

from the Silk Road to ramble along the fringes of the Tibetan world in the Buddhist monastic settlements of **Xiahe** and **Langmusi**. The Hexi Corridor draws you on to the ancient Great Wall outpost of **Jiayuguan**, via the Silk Road stopover town of **Wuwei**, and the Great Buddha Temple with its outsize effigy of a reclining Sakyamuni in **Zhangye**. Stand on the wind-blasted ramparts of Jiayuguan Fort, the last major stronghold of imperial China, and tramp alongside westerly remnants of the Great Wall. The delightful oasis outpost of **Dunhuang** is one of China's tidiest and most pleasant towns, with the mighty sand dunes of the Singing Sands Mountains pushing up from the south, a scattered array of sights in the surrounding desert and some excellent food. The town is also the hopping-off point for China's splendid hoard of Buddhist art, the spellbinding Mogao Caves. From Dunhuang you can access the mighty northwestern Uighur province of Xinjiang via the melon-town of **Hami** before continuing to **Turpan** and **Urumqi**; consider also spending the night in a yurt or camping on the shores of mountainous **Tian Chi**. Thread your way through a string of Silk Road towns by rail to the Central Asian outpost of **Kashgar**, or reach the distant Uighur town via the Marco Polo-journeyed Southern Silk Road along the cusp of the Taklamakan Desert. From Kashgar, hatch exciting plans to conquer the Karakoram Highway or, in the other direction, work out how to get back into China proper.

Itineraries

Itineraries

Coastal China



4 WEEKS

From **Beijing**, zip on the high-speed train to face-lifted **Tianjin** en route to the Ming dynasty garrison town of **Shanhaiguan** on the edge of Manchuria. Beyond the ancient port town of **Xingcheng** and around the coast lies urbane **Dalian**, where you can ponder trips to the North Korean border at **Dandong**, or the ferry crossing to **Yantai** en route to a two-day sojourn around breezy **Qingdao**, the eye-catching Shandong port city. Cashing in on dashing **Shanghai** is crucial – allow five to six days to tick off surrounding sights, including a trip to the cultured former southern Song dynasty capital of **Hangzhou**. Work your way south around the coast to **Xiamen** (Amoy) to capture some of the magic of **Gulang Yu**, using the port town as a base to explore the roundhouses around **Yongding**. Conclude the tour feasting on dim sum and getting in step with the rhythms of **Hong Kong** before surrendering to the Portuguese lilt of **Macau**, or go further along the coast to the sleepy port town of **Beihai** in Guangxi and bounce over the sea in a boat to the volcanic island of **Weizhou** (admission Y90).

Itineraries

Big Ticket Tour



2 WEEKS

After four days satiating yourself on **Beijing's** mandatory highlights – the Forbidden City, Tian'anmen Square, the Summer Palace, the Great Wall and the city's charming *hutong* (alleyways) – hop on the high-speed G-class train across north China from Beijing West to **Xi'an** to inspect the famed Terracotta Warriors, walk around the city's formidable Ming dynasty walls and climb the granite peaks of Taoist **Hua Shan**. Then climb aboard the 11-hour overnight high-speed D-class sleeper to pulsating **Shanghai**, which pulls into town before 8am. After three days sightseeing, museum-going, shopping and sizing up the sizzling skyscrapers of Pudong, detour for a day to the former southern Song dynasty capital of **Hangzhou**, before flying from either Hangzhou or Shanghai to **Guilin** for some of China's most serene and ageless panoramas, the breathtaking karst landscapes of **Yangshuo**. For a fitting and natural conclusion to your journey, fly straight from Guilin to **Hong Kong**, or to Guangzhou or Shenzhen to make your way south across the border to the former British territory. Squeeze in a day for exploring **Macau** to add a Portuguese complexion to your voyage.

Itineraries

East-Southwest Rural Tour



2 WEEKS

From **Shanghai**, head to **Zhujiajiao** in the municipality's rural west to catch its canal-side charms; to further the canal-town mood, the water towns of Jiangsu and north Zhejiang – including **Tongli**, **Luzhi** and **Wuzhen** – are within easy reach. From either **Suzhou** or **Hangzhou**, bus it to **Tunxi** in Anhui province to spend several days exploring the delightful ancient Huizhou villages of **Yixian** and **Shexian** and to scale gorgeous Huang Shan. Bus it again across the border to Jiangxi province for two or three days' fabulous hiking from village to village in the gorgeous rural landscape around **Wuyuan**. Take the bus to Nanchang and then a high-speed train to Changsha, the Hunan provincial capital, from where you can fly or take the train to the stunning karst panoramas of **Zhangjiajie**. Jump on a bus to the funky rivertown of **Fenghuang**, from where it's a hop, skip, and a bus-then-train jump via Huaihua through the backdoor into Guizhou and the scenic riverside town of **Zhenyuan**. **Kaili** and the rest of the province lies beyond.

Itineraries

Southwest China

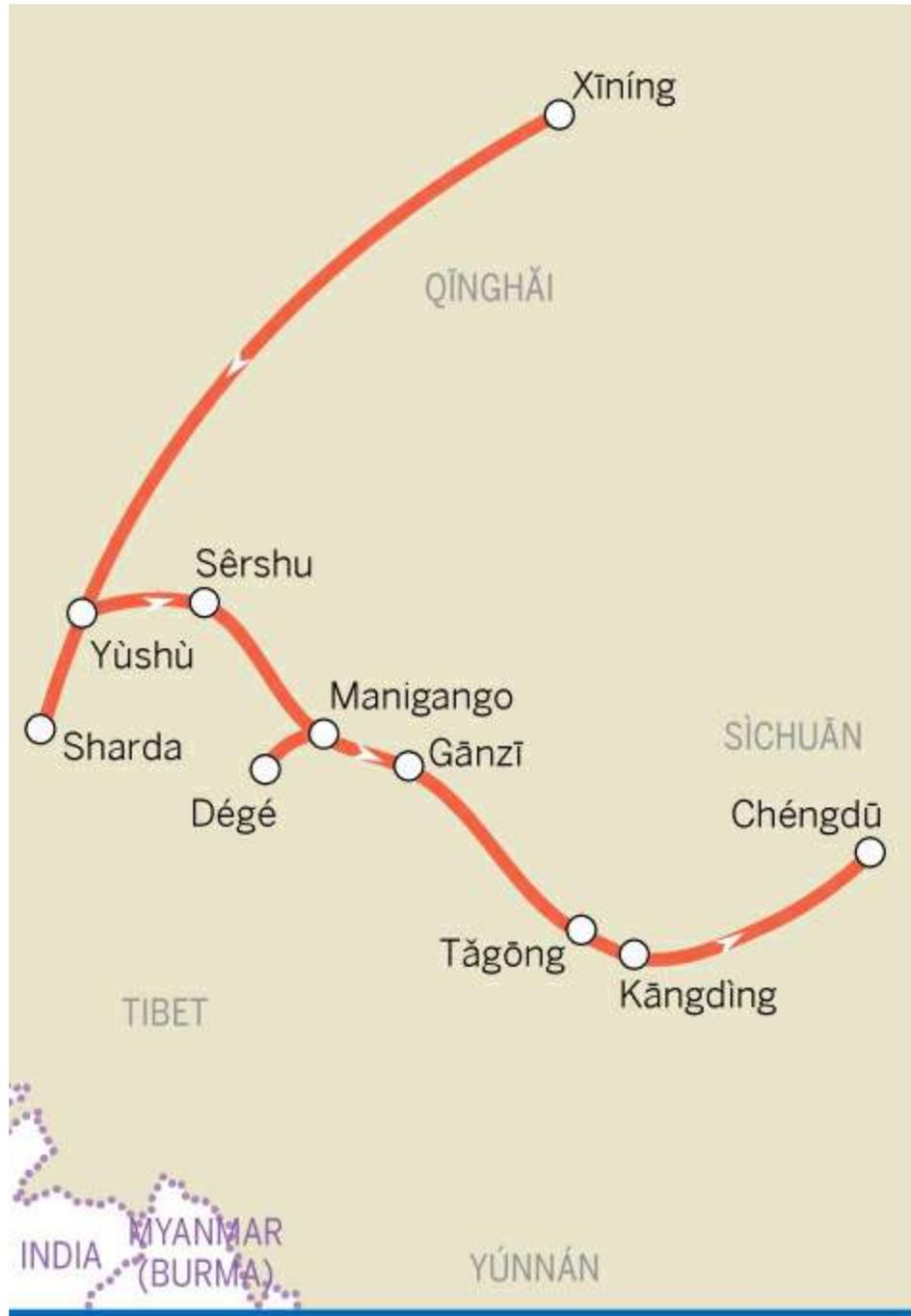


3 WEEKS

Four days' wining and dining in **Hong Kong** and **Macau** should whet your appetite, before you head inland to **Guilin** and three days' immersion in the dreamy karst landscape of **Yangshuo**. Join a local tour from Yangshuo to delightful **Huangyao** before backtracking to Guilin and journeying north to the **Longji Rice Terraces** and the wind-and-rain bridges and ethnic hues of **Sanjiang**. Creep over the border to explore the minority-rich villages of eastern Guizhou, including **Langde**, **Shiqiao**, **Longli**, **Basha** and **Zhaoxing**, before continuing to **Guiyang** and on by train to the capital of Yunnan province, **Kunming**. Spend a few days in Kunming before penetrating north Yunnan to explore **Dali**, **Lijiang** and **Shangri-la (Zhongdian)**. Consider exploring the border area with Sichuan at the remote **Lugu Hu**, from where you can head into Sichuan. In the other direction, the fertile **Xishuangbanna** region lies in the deep south of the province, where Yunnan's Southeast Asian complexion comes to the fore. You will be rewarded with a profusion of ethnic villages and countless hiking opportunities around China's southwest borders.

Itineraries

Qinghai to Sichuan



10 DAYS

This colossal, rough-and-ready journey draws you through stunning landscapes from Xining to Chengdu. The scenery is sublime but do this trip only in summer (it's too cold even in spring), and take cash and lots of food with you (you won't be able to change money). Prepare also for bus breakdowns, irregular transport connections, simple accommodation and high altitudes. The bus journey from **Xining** to **Sharda** in the former Tibetan kingdom of Nangchen, where monasteries and dramatic scenery await, takes 20 to 24 hours. From Sharda you can continue to Sichuan via the Tibetan trading town of **Yushu** (Jyekundo). You can also fly direct (or take the bus) from Xining to Yushu to continue to Sichuan from there, and you can stay in Yushu as it has officially reopened after the 2010 earthquake. Buses from Yushu run to **Sershu** (Shiqu Xian) in northwest Sichuan, where bus connections run through some stunning scenery past **Manigango** (perhaps with a side trip to Dege), the Tibetan town of **Ganzi** (check ahead to see it's open) and on past **Tagong** to **Kangding** (Dardo) along the Sichuan–Tibet Hwy, from where you can head west in the direction of Tibet or east to **Chengdu**.

Itineraries

Tibet Fringes Tour



3 WEEKS

Travel permits are required for the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), a land periodically inaccessible to foreigners and an arduous undertaking at the best of times. This tour immerses you in more accessible areas, rich with the colour of Tibet. Only undertake the tour in the warmer summer months; other times can be dangerous. From **Lanzhou** in Gansu province, head southwest to **Langmusi** and **Xiahe**, before passing awesome scenery by bus or taxi into **Qinghai** via the monastery town of **Tongren**. Pick up a *thangka* (Tibetan sacred art) and continue by bus to **Xining**, then fly to **Chengdu** in Sichuan and take the bus to **Kangding**, or fly to Kangding via Chengdu. The long, overland bus route from Xining to Kangding is also possible via Yushu in south Qinghai. (Allow an extra week if taking this route.) Yushu has officially re-opened after the 2010 earthquake and transport connections are available. From Kangding you can journey by bus west to the stupendous scenery around **Litang**, with some breathtaking hiking opportunities, or travel south by minivan to **Xiangcheng** and on to **Shangri-la (Zhongdian)** and the gorgeous Tibetan region of north Yunnan. From Shangri-la take a bus to high-altitude **Deqin**, enveloped in gorgeous mountain scenery.

Itineraries

Northeast Tour



10 DAYS

With **Beijing** as a start point, hop on a train to stylish **Dalian**, but plan to spend a few days exploring the historic walled coastal towns of **Shanhaiguan** and **Xingcheng** en route. You'll need several days for Dalian's sights, including the historic port of **Lushun** and an adorable coastline. Border watchers will be keen to get to **Dandong**, on the border with North Korea, for its peculiar frisson. Take a boat tour along the Yalu River, dine on North Korean food and visit Tiger Mountain Great Wall. Consider a trip by rail and bus to **Heaven Lake** in **Changbai Shan** (the largest nature reserve in China) via **Tonghua**. Straddling the North Korea border, the volcanic lake is a stunning sight (only accessible mid-June to September). Alternatively, take the train to **Shenyang** and visit its Qing dynasty Imperial Palace and the tomb of Huang Taiji, founder of the Qing dynasty. Hop on a bus or a train to **Ha'erbin** to wonder at the city's Russian and Jewish ancestry. If you've really picked up momentum and can't stop, carry on to China's 'North Pole Village' to try to catch the aurora borealis in **Mohe** or to bask in the summer's midnight sun.

Itineraries

Beijing to Mongolia



1 WEEK

After exhausting the superb sightseeing, and wining and dining choices, in **Beijing**, jump aboard a train to **Hohhot** in Inner Mongolia where a late-July arrival should coincide with the Naadam festivities at Gegentala to the north, when the grasslands are turning green. Explore Hohhot's lamaseries and temples and make a trip to the grasslands outside town for a taste of the epic Inner Mongolian prairie. From Hohhot you can either take the train direct to **Ulaanbaatar** in Mongolia; or an alternative route to Mongolia is to first journey by bus from Hohhot to Lanqi and **Shangdu** – vanished site of Kublai Khan's celebrated palace at Xanadu – and then on to **Haila'er** in the far north of Inner Mongolia, towards the border with Mongolia and Russia. The grasslands outside Haila'er are a real highlight, so consider spending the night under the stars in a yurt on the prairie. If you are Russia-bound, you can enter the country via the nearby trading town of **Manzhouli** on the border. Alternatively, jump aboard a flight to **Choibalsan** in eastern Mongolia.

Off the Beaten Track



JULY 1ST GLACIER

High up in the Qilian Shan range at 4300m, this glacier provides a cooling escape from the deserts of Gansu. Avoid winter visits unless you're totally hardcore.

KHARA KHOTO

Hunt out this ruined and remote Tangut city in the northwest of the Badain Jaran Desert in Western Inner Mongolia. It was once buried by centuries of dust storms and today is embedded in a sublime landscape.

GÜBĒIKŌU

The Coiled Dragon and Crouching Tiger Mountain are less-visited stretches of the Great Wall at Gübèikōu; off-the-beaten track but not too far from Běijīng. Perfect for day trips.

KOGURYŌ SITES

Scattered outside Ji'an, the ruins, stone pyramids and tombs of the ancient Korean Koguryo kingdom dot a striking landscape of remote fields, terraces and green hills.

HIGHWAY 219

The repaved Xinjiang-Tibet highway is China's remotest road and an awesome route through the largely uninhabited expanses of Aksai-Chin.

TALAM KHANG GUESTHOUSE

This small, remote temple-stay in West Sichuan matches rustic accommodation with a beautiful setting of snowcapped mountains and grasslands, a hot spring and the nearby monastery of Darjay Gomba.

NŪ JIĀNG VALLEY

This epic gorge in Yunnan - pinched between Gaoligong Shan, Myanmar, Tibet and Biluó Shān - is the stunning habitat of a rich and vibrant diversity of fauna and flora.

XĪNYĒ

A calm and unhurried portrait of geomantic harmony and architectural balance, the beautiful Zhèjiāng village of Xinye is a delightful retreat from the chaos of modern China.

CĀNGZHŌU'S IRON LION

Standing proud but battered (and missing the Buddhist statue that once rode it), Cangzhou's Iron Lion - China's oldest and largest cast iron sculpture - was devised to calm the seas in a distant corner of Hébèi province.



Regions at a Glance

The high-altitude, far west of China, including Tibet, Qinghai and west Sichuan, gradually and unevenly levels out as it approaches the prosperous and well-watered canal-town provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and the metropolis of Shanghai in the east. The lion's share of scenic marvels and hiking territory belongs to the mountainous interior of China, while in the mighty northwest, peaks and deserts meet in dramatic fashion. Minority culture is a speciality of the west and southwest, and of the remote border regions. Different cuisines range across the entire nation, from the hardy northeast to the warm jungles of the far southwest.



Beijing

Beijing's imperial pedigree (and the Great Wall) assures it a rich vein of dynastic history, balanced by splendid seams of temple and *hutong* (narrow alleyway) architecture. Wining and dining is a further attraction as the capital is home to a resourceful restaurant scene.



Tianjin & Hebei

Tianjin's spruced-up foreign concession streetscapes echo stylish Shanghai, and some standout pagodas and temples can be found in Hebei, where the rural side of China – peppered with rustic village getaways – comes to the fore.



Shandong

Shandong groans under the weight of its historical heavy-hitters: Confucius' revered home and tomb at Qufu and sacred Tai Shan. Then, of course, there is the home of Tsingtao beer, Qingdao, today a breezy, laid-back port city.



Shanghai

Shanghai exudes a unique style unlike anywhere else in China. There's plenty to do, from nonstop shopping and skyscraper-hopping to standout art, fantastic eats and touring the city's elegant art deco heritage.



Jiangsu

Jiangsu is awash with cute-as-pie canal towns – from Tongli to Suzhou – all reachable as day trips from neighbouring Shanghai. The provincial capital, Nanjing, has history in spades, with its fabulous Ming wall and epic past as former national capital.



Zhejiang

Flushed with water and vaulted with bridges, the canal town of Wuzhen is full of traditional charm. Hangzhou is one of China's most appealing cities, while stunning pastoral escapes abound further south, including the gorgeous villages of Xinye and Zhuge.



Fujian

Fujian is Hakka heartland and home to the intriguing *tulou* – massive packed stone, wood and mud structures once housing hundreds of families. Gulang Yu, a tiny and hilly island off Xiamen, is decorated with crumbling colonial

villas, each one distinctive.



Liaoning

In history-rich Liaoning, imperial relics contend with the legacy of Russian and Japanese colonialism. The North Korean border at Dandong is a sobering contrast to the wild beer festival at Dalian.



Jilin

Boasting China's largest nature reserve, and a top ski destination, Jilin exerts a pull on the nature lover. On the trail of the exotic? Head to Ji'an for the

ruins of the ancient Korean Koguryo empire.



Heilongjiang

Fire and ice are the highlights in this province where volcanic explosions have left one of China's most mesmerising landscapes, and the winter's bitter climate provides the raw materials for a spectacular ice sculpture festival.



Shanxi

Repository of one of China's most superlative Buddhist grottoes, Shanxi also brings you one of its most magical Buddhist mountains with Wutai Shan.

History is on all sides: from the intact walled city of Pingyao to the Hanging Monastery, a jaw-dropping, gravity-defying piece of temple architecture.



Shaanxi

A treasure trove of archaeological sites is scattered across the plains surrounding Shaanxi's capital, Xi'an, where there are museums galore. Blow off all that ancient dust with a trip to Hua Shan, one of China's five holy Taoist peaks.



Anhui

The amazing Unesco-listed Hui villages of Hongcun and Xidi are some of China's best-preserved. But let's not forget that mountain, Huangshan. Its soaring granite peaks have inspired a legion of poets and painters.



Henan

Henan's overture of dynastic antiquity is balanced by some excellent mountain escapes and the quirky allure of Nanjiecun, China's last Maoist collective. The province's *wushu* (martial arts) credentials come no better: the Shaolin Temple is here.



Hubei

Slashed by the mighty Yangzi River, history-rich Hubei is one of the gateways to the Three Gorges, but Taoist martial artists may find themselves mustering on Wudang Shan, home of taichi and scenic views.



Jiangxi

Communists herald it as the mythic starting point of the Long March, but it's the spectacular mountain scenery and hiking trails past preserved villages and terraced fields that should pop Jiangxi into your travel plans.



Hunan

Home to one of China's most noteworthy ancient towns, Fenghuang, as well as the sacred mountain of Heng Shan, the other-worldly karst peaks of Zhangjiajie, and secluded Miao and Dong villages.



Hong Kong

This culinary capital offers the best of China and beyond, while a seductive mix of vintage and cutting-edge fashion attracts armies of shoppers. Meanwhile, leafy mountains, shimmering waters, skyscrapers and tenements make an unlikely but poetic match.



Macau

Marrying flavours from five continents, Macanese cooking is as unique as the cityscape, where Taoist temples meet baroque churches on cobbled streets with Chinese names. It's also a billionaire's playground where casino-resorts and other luxuries vie for space.



Guangdong

A strong gastronomic culture offers travellers the chance to savour world-renowned Cantonese cuisine. Guangdong's seafaring temperament has brought the region diverse, exotic architectural styles, including the World Heritage-listed watchtowers of Kaiping.



Hainan

When it comes to golden-sand beaches and warm clear waters, this tropical island doesn't disappoint. An ideal cycling destination, Hainan attracts in-the-know adventurers with its good roads, balmy winters and varied landscape.



Guangxi

Much famed for its out-of-this-world karst landscape, Guangxi offers the adventure-loving traveller lush green valleys, charming folksy villages and countless walking, cycling and rafting opportunities.



Guizhou

With more than a third of the population made up of minorities, and more folk festivals than anywhere else in China, you can party here with the locals year-round. For nature lovers, there's an abundance of waterfalls; for old-town watchers, there's lovely Zhenyuan.



Yunnan

Yunnan is the province that has it all: towering Himalayan mountains, tropical jungle, sublime rice terraces and over half of China's minority groups. To top it off there's historic, little-visited villages like Nuodeng and

Heijing, gorgeous and ancient Lijiang, fantastic trekking and great food.



Sichuan

One province; three regions. Stay in central or southern Sichuan for steamy bamboo forests and cute Ming-dynasty villages. Head north for stunning lakes set among alpine-esque mountain scenery. Venture west for remote Tibetan plateau grasslands and towering peaks.



Chongqing

A unique city with a unique location, hilly Chongqing hugs cliffs overlooking

the Yangzi, bursts with old-China energy, offers some fascinating day trips and is home to hotpot – the spiciest dish on the planet.



Xinjiang

Bazaars, kebabs and camels are just a few of the icons that hint at your arrival in Central Asia. Ancient Silk Road towns include Turpan, Kashgar and Hotan, while hikers gravitate to Kanas Lake and the Tian Shan range.



Gansu

Gansu is all about diversity: colourful Tibetan regions in the southwest, Inner

Mongolia alongside the north, and a rich accumulation of Silk Road culture through the middle. Think deserts, mountains, Buddhist artefacts, camels, yaks, pilgrims and nomads.



Ningxia

In the designated homeland of the Hui, visit the great tombs of the Xixia, nomadic rock art and the enormous Buddhas of Xumi Shan. For camel trekking or sliding down the sand dunes, head for the Tengger Desert.



Inner Mongolia

Ride a famed Mongolian horse at a yurt camp near Hohhot and Haila'er and sit down to a Mongolian hotpot. Further-flung western Inner Mongolia is a hard-to-reach landscape of towering sand dunes, desert lakes and ancient sites.



Qinghai

Vast and remote, the best parts of Qinghai – way up on the Tibetan plateau – are for those who like their travel rough. Need a hot shower and a coffee every morning? If so, go somewhere else.



Tibet

The 'Roof of the World' is a stunningly beautiful high plateau of turquoise lakes, desert valleys and Himalayan peaks, dotted with monasteries, yaks and sacred Buddhist sites. Tight and ever-changing travel regulations can easily derail travel plans, though.

Regions at a Glance



Rickshaw ride, Beijing
DAJ / GETTY IMAGES ©

Beijing

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[Courses](#)

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[Drinking & Nightlife](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[Shopping](#)

Beijing



Population 21 million / 🇨🇳010

Why Go?

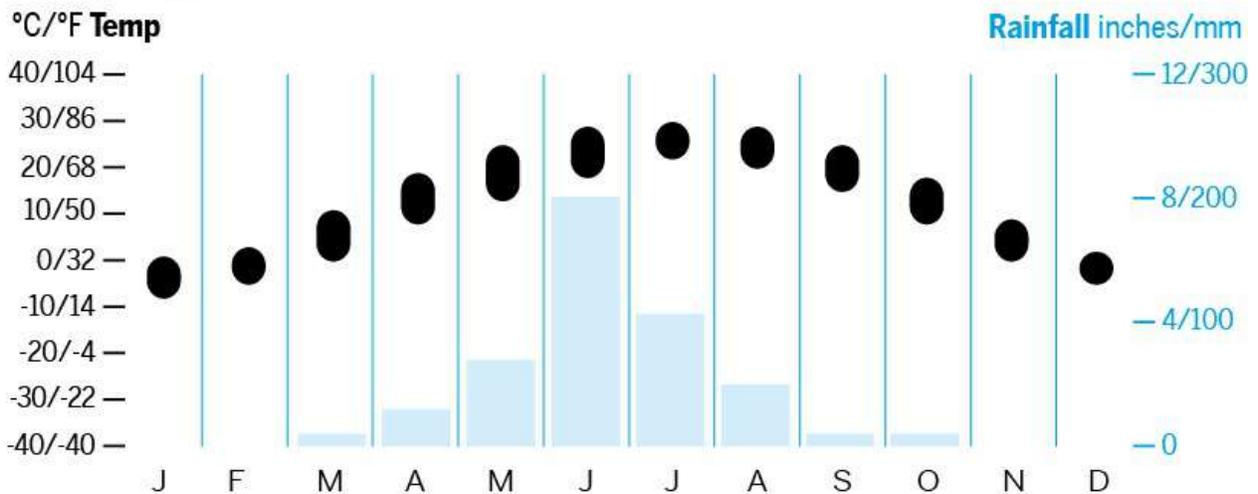
Inextricably linked to past glories (and calamities) yet hurtling towards a power-charged future, Beijing, one of history's great cities, is as complex as it is compelling.

Few places on Earth can match the extraordinary historical panorama on display here – there are six Unesco World Heritage sites in this city alone, just one less than the whole of Egypt. But this is also where China's future is being shaped: Beijing is the country's political nerve centre, a business powerhouse and the heartbeat of China's rapidly evolving cultural scene.

Yet for all its gusto, Beijing dispenses with the persistent pace of Shanghai or Hong Kong. The remains of its historic *hutong* (alleyways) still exude a unique village-within-a-city vibe, and it's in these most charming of neighbourhoods that locals shift down a gear and find time to sit out front, play chess and watch the world go by.

When to Go

Běijīng



- ➔ **Sep–Oct** Gorgeously fresh after the scorching summer, with blue skies and fewer tourists.
- ➔ **May** Warming up after the winter freeze. Windy but usually dry and clear.
- ➔ **Dec–Feb** Dry as a bone and brutally cold, but the streets are pleasantly quiet.

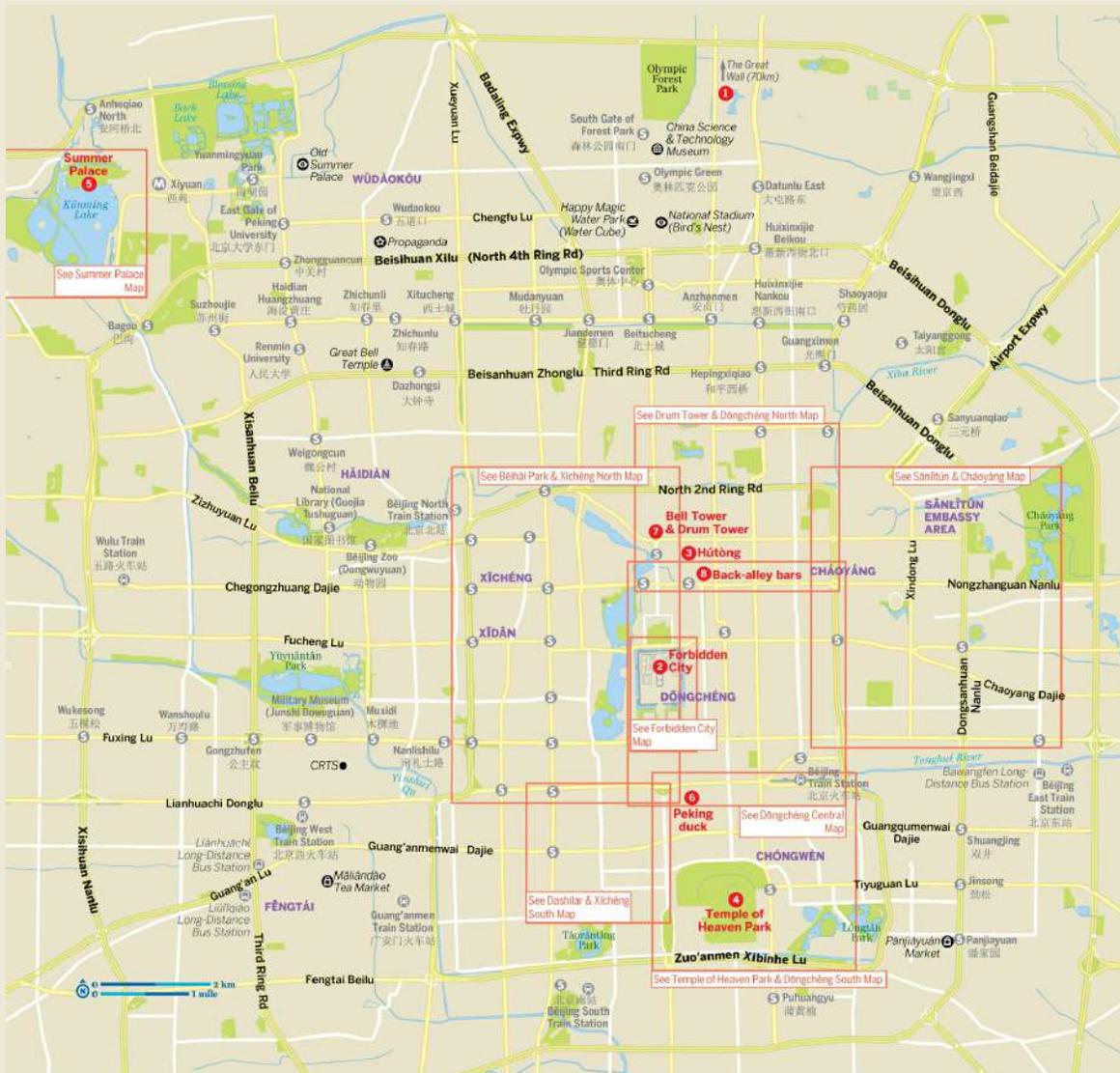
Best Places to Eat

- ➔ [Little Yunnan](#)
- ➔ [Baihe Vegetarian Restaurant](#)
- ➔ [Zhang Mama](#)
- ➔ [Duck de Chine](#)
- ➔ [Royal Icehouse](#)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ [Courtyard 7](#)
- ➔ [Graceland Yard](#)
- ➔ [Jingshan Garden Hotel](#)
- ➔ [Temple Hotel](#)
- ➔ [Great Wall Box House](#)

Beijing Highlights



- 1 Hike your way along an unrestored 'wild' section of China's most famous icon, the [Great Wall](#)
- 2 Marvel at the might and splendour of the [Forbidden City](#), the world's largest palace complex and home to 24 consecutive emperors of China
- 3 Lose yourself in the city's warren of historic **hutong** (alleyways [Click here](#)), or follow our absorbing *hutong* walking tour ([Click here](#))

- 4 Beijing is blessed with a host of splendid royal parks, but the highlight is the unmissable [Temple of Heaven Park](#)
- 5 Enjoy a taste of imperial high life by wandering the sumptuous gardens, temples, pavilions and corridors of the [Summer Palace](#)
- 6 Scoff [Peking duck](#), the capital's signature dish, in the restaurants where it originated
- 7 Climb the magnificent [Drum Tower](#) or its charming counterpart, the [Bell Tower](#), and look over the grey-tiled rooftops in the alleys below
- 8 Down a beer or catch some live music in one of Beijing's **back-alley bars**. [Jiang Hu](#) is a good place to start

History

Although seeming to have presided over China since time immemorial, Beijing (literally, Northern Capital) – positioned outside the central heartland of Chinese civilisation – only emerged as a cultural and political force that would shape the destiny of China with the 13th-century Mongol occupation of China.

Chinese historical sources identify the earliest settlements in these parts from 1045 BC. In later centuries Beijing was successively occupied by foreign forces: it was established as an auxiliary capital under the Khitan, nomadic Mongolic people who formed China's Liao dynasty (AD 907–1125). Later the Jurchens, Tungusic people originally from the Siberian region, turned the city into their Jin-dynasty capital (1115–1234) during which time it was enclosed within fortified walls, accessed by eight gates.

But in 1215 the army of the great Mongol warrior Genghis Khan razed Beijing, an event that was paradoxically to mark the city's transformation into a powerful national capital. Apart from the first 53 years of the Ming dynasty and 21 years of Nationalist rule in the 20th century, it has enjoyed this status to the present day.

The city came to be called Dadu (Great Capital), also assuming the

Mongol name Khanbalik (the Khan's town). By 1279, under the rule of Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, Dadu was the capital of the largest empire the world has ever known.

The basic grid of present-day Beijing was laid during the Ming dynasty, and Emperor Yongle (r 1403–24) is credited with being the true architect of the modern city. Much of Beijing's grandest architecture, such as the Forbidden City and the iconic Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests in the Temple of Heaven Park, date from his reign.

The Manchus, who invaded China in the 17th century to establish the Qing dynasty, essentially preserved Beijing's form. In the last 120 years of the Qing dynasty, though, Beijing was subjected to power struggles, invasions and ensuing chaos. The list is long: the Anglo-French troops who in 1860 burnt the Old Summer Palace to the ground; the corrupt regime of Empress Dowager Cixi; the catastrophic Boxer Rebellion; the Japanese occupation of 1937; and the Nationalists. Each and every period left its undeniable mark, although the shape and symmetry of Beijing was maintained.

Modern Beijing came of age when, in January 1949, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered the city. On 1 October of that year Mao Zedong proclaimed a 'People's Republic' from the Gate of Heavenly Peace to an audience of some 500,000 citizens.

Like the emperors before them, the communists significantly altered the face of Beijing. The *pailou* (decorative archways) were destroyed and city blocks pulverised to widen major boulevards. From 1950 to 1952, the city's magnificent outer walls were levelled in the interests of traffic circulation. Soviet experts and technicians poured in, bringing their own Stalinesque touches.

The past quarter of a century has transformed Beijing into a modern city, with skyscrapers, shopping malls and an ever-expanding subway system. The once flat skyline is now crenellated with vast apartment blocks and office buildings. Recent years have also seen a convincing beautification of Beijing, from a toneless and unkempt city to a greener, cleaner and more pleasant place, albeit one heavily affected by ever-increasing pollution.

Sadly, as Beijing continues to evolve, it is slowly shedding its links to the past. More than 4 million sq metres of old *hutong* courtyards have been demolished since 1990; around 40% of the total area of the city centre. Preservation campaign groups have their work cut out to save what's left.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators refer to a standard twin room (sleeping) and a meal for one (eating).

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥400

\$\$ ¥400 to ¥1000

\$\$\$ more than ¥1000

EATING

\$ less than ¥40

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥100

\$\$\$ more than ¥100

Climate

In winter, it's glacial outside (dipping as low as -20°C) and the northern winds cut like a knife through bean curd. But the air can be clear at this time and the city unusually quiet. Arid spring is much more comfortable (unless there is a sand storm in town), but it only lasts for a month or so around May. From May onwards the mercury surges above 30°C , reaching the 40s in late summer. Sporadic downpours help clear the air for a day or two – this is often a smog-filled time of the year. Beijing becomes cooler and clearer in autumn (end of September to early November), which is the best time to visit.

DON'T MISS

CLOCK EXHIBITION HALL

The **Clock Exhibition Hall** (Zhongbiao Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); admission Y10; ⌚ 8.30am-4pm summer, 8.30am-3.30pm winter) is one of the unmissable highlights of the Forbidden City. Located in the **Hall for Ancestral Worship** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (Fengxian Dian) – just off to the right after the Three Great Halls – the exhibition contains an astonishing array of elaborate timepieces, many of which were gifts to the Qing emperors from overseas. Exquisitely wrought and fashioned with magnificently designed elephants and other creatures, they all display astonishing artfulness and attention to detail. Time your arrival for 11am or 2pm to see the **clock performance** in which choice timepieces strike the hour and give a display to wide-eyed children and adults.

Language

Beijinghua, the Chinese spoken in the capital, is seen by purists as the finest variety of the Chinese language. Although standard Mandarin is based on the Beijing dialect, the two are very different in both accent and colloquialisms.

BEIJING IN...

TWO DAYS

Stroll around the incense smoke-filled courtyards of the [Lama Temple](#) before hopping over the road to the even more laid-back [Confucius Temple](#). Grab a coffee and lunch at [Cafe Confucius](#) before walking through the **hutong alleys** to the ancient [Drum and Bell Towers](#) and finishing off the day with a meal in [Dali Courtyard](#).

Get up early to enjoy the [Temple of Heaven Park](#) at its magical, early-morning best: filled with opera-singing locals rather than photo-snapping tourists. Grab lunch at [Old Beijing Zhajiang Noodle King](#) before walking via [Tian'anmen Sq](#) to the [Forbidden City](#). Finish the day by tucking into Beijing's signature dish – roast duck – at China's most famous restaurant [Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant](#).

FOUR DAYS

Follow the itinerary above, but save plenty of energy for the trip of a lifetime on day three: your journey to **The Great Wall**. There are plenty of options, from a quick half-day jaunt at touristy [Badaling](#) to a strenuous hike along wild, unrestored sections such as [Gubeikou](#) or [Jiankou](#). [Mutianyu](#) makes a good option for families. Pack a picnic and don't expect to get back to the city until nightfall.

Hop on the subway on day four to visit the [Summer Palace](#). You could spend the

day here or make side trips to the [Botanic Gardens](#), [Old Summer Palace](#) or [Fragrant Hills Park](#), all of which are close. Return for an early evening meal so that you have time to catch a show – **Peking Opera** or **acrobatics** – on your final evening.

Sights

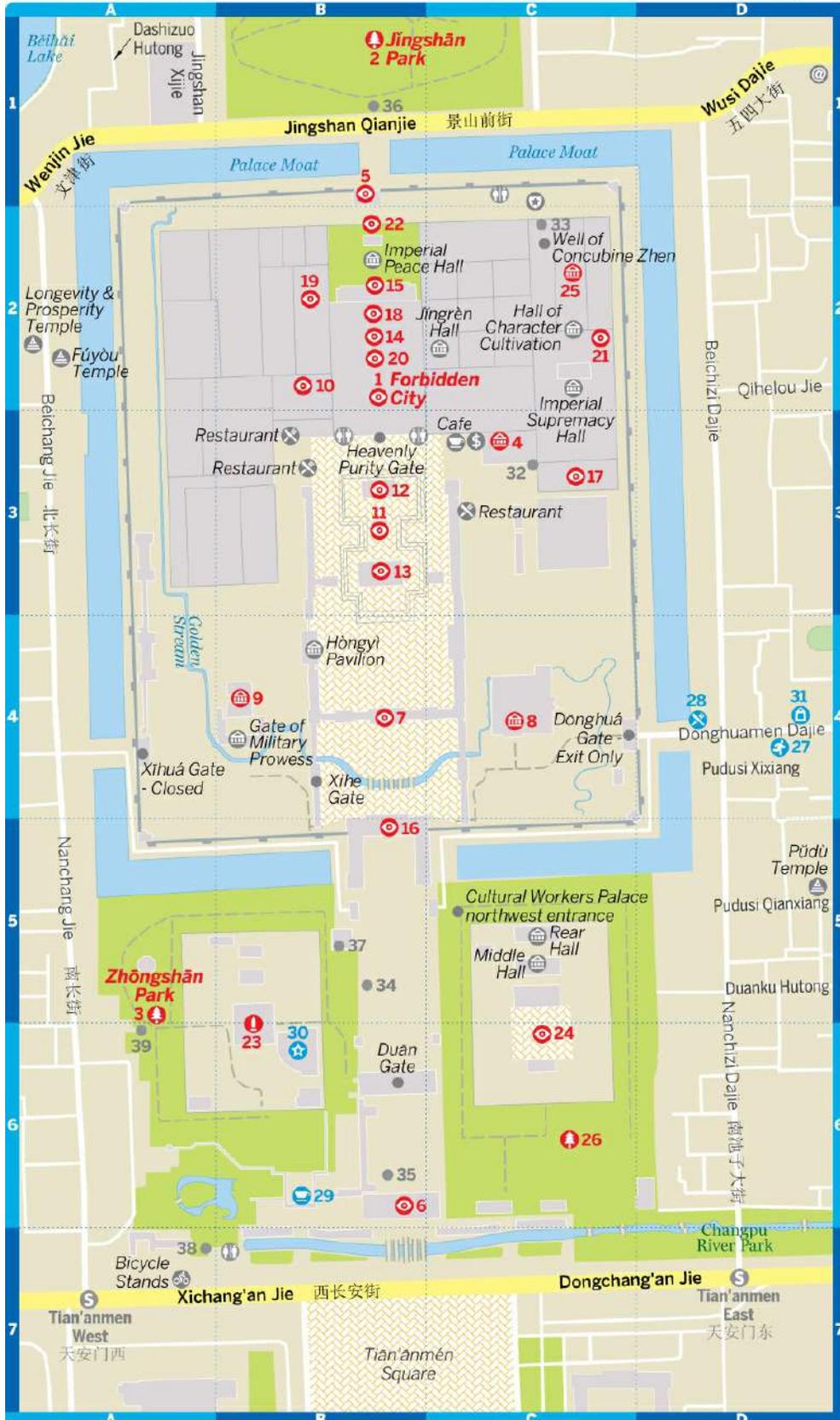
Historic **Dongcheng District** (Dongcheng Qu) is the largest of Beijing's central districts and by far the most interesting for visitors. For convenience, we've split it into north, central and south neighbourhoods. Dongcheng Central has the lion's share of top-name sights, including the Forbidden City. A fascinating network of imperial *hutong* (alleyways) fans out north and east from here. Dongcheng North is also a fabulously historic, *hutong*-rich neighbourhood, and arguably the most pleasant area in which to base yourself. Dongcheng South is dominated by the wonderful Temple of Heaven Park.

Chaoyang District (Chaoyang Qu) sprawls east from Dongcheng and is home to the majority of Beijing's foreign embassies, as well as most of its expat population. The area lacks history and character, but it does contain some of the capital's best international restaurants, bars and shops, many of which are in the area known as Sanlitun.

West of Dongcheng, **Xicheng District** (Xicheng Qu) has strong historical links. We've split it into north and south neighbourhoods. The north includes the city's lovely central lakes, at Houhai and within Beihai Park. The south includes the backpacker-central neighbourhood of Dashilar.

Outlying **Haidian District** (Haidian Qu) is the capital's main university area, but it also includes some great day-trip destinations, including the hugely attractive Summer Palace.

Forbidden City



Forbidden City

Top Sights

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Forbidden City | B2 |
| 2 | Jingshan Park | B1 |
| 3 | Zhongshan Park | A5 |

Sights

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 4 | Clock Exhibition Hall | C3 |
| 5 | Gate of Divine Prowess - exit only | B1 |
| 6 | Gate of Heavenly Peace | B6 |
| 7 | Gate of Supreme Harmony | B4 |
| | Hall for Ancestral Worship | C3 |
| 8 | Hall of Literary Glory | C4 |
| 9 | Hall of Martial Valour | B4 |
| 10 | Hall of Mental Cultivation | B2 |
| 11 | Hall of Middle Harmony | B3 |
| 12 | Hall of Preserving Harmony | B3 |
| 13 | Hall of Supreme Harmony | B3 |
| 14 | Hall of Union | B2 |
| 15 | Imperial Garden | B2 |
| 16 | Meridian Gate - Forbidden City entrance | B5 |
| 17 | Nine Dragon Screen | C3 |
| 18 | Palace of Earthly Tranquillity | B2 |
| 19 | Palace of Gathered Elegance | B2 |
| 20 | Palace of Heavenly Purity | B2 |
| 21 | Pavilion of Cheerful Melodies - Opera House | C2 |
| 22 | Shunzhen Gate | B2 |
| 23 | Square Altar | B6 |
| 24 | Supreme Temple | C6 |
| 25 | Treasure Gallery | C2 |
| 26 | Workers Cultural Palace | C6 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 27 | Dragonfly Therapeutic Retreat | D4 |
|----|---|----|

Eating

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 28 | Brian McKenna @ The Courtyard | D4 |
|----|---|----|

Drinking & Nightlife

29 [Laijinyuxuan Teahouse](#) B6

Entertainment

30 [Forbidden City Concert Hall](#) B6

Shopping

31 [Celadon Story](#) D4

Information

32 [Entrance to Complete Palace of Peace & Longevity](#) C3

33 [Exit of Complete Palace of Peace & Longevity](#) C2

34 [Forbidden City Ticket Office](#) B5

35 [Gate of Heavenly Peace Ticket Office](#) B6

36 [Jingshan Park South Entrance](#) B1

37 [Northeast Gate](#) B5

38 [South Gate](#) A7

39 [West Gate](#) A6

Forbidden City & Dongcheng Central

★ Forbidden City

HISTORIC SITE

(Zijin Cheng  ;  8500 7114; www.dpm.org.cn; admission Nov-Mar ¥40, Apr-Oct ¥60, Clock Exhibition Hall ¥10, Hall of Jewellery ¥10, audio tour ¥40;  8.30am-4pm May-Sep, 8.30am-3.30pm Oct-Apr, closed Mon;  Tian'anmen West or Tian'anmen East)

Ringed by a 52m-wide moat at the very heart of Beijing, the Forbidden City is China's largest and best-preserved collection of ancient buildings, and the largest palace complex in the world. So called because it was off limits for 500 years, when it was steeped in stultifying ritual and Byzantine regal protocol, the otherworldly palace was the reclusive home to two dynasties of imperial rule until the Republic overthrew the last Qing emperor.

Today, the Forbidden City is prosaically known as the Palace Museum

(Gugong Bowuguan), although most Chinese people simply call it Gu Gong (ancient palace).

In former ages the price for uninvited admission was instant execution; these days ¥40 or ¥60 will do. Allow yourself the best part of a day for exploration or several trips if you're an enthusiast.

Guides – many with mechanical English – mill about the entrance, but the automatically activated audio tours are cheaper (¥40; more than 40 languages) and more reliable. Restaurants, a cafe, toilets and even ATMs can be found within the palace grounds. Wheelchairs (¥500 deposit) are free to use, as are pushchairs/strollers (¥300 deposit).

Entrance

Tourists must enter through **Meridian Gate** (Wu Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a massive U-shaped portal at the south end of the complex, which in former times was reserved for the use of the emperor. Gongs and bells would sound imperial comings and goings, while lesser mortals used lesser gates: the military used the west gate, civilians the east gate. The emperor also reviewed his armies from here, passed judgement on prisoners, announced the new year's calendar and oversaw the flogging of troublesome ministers.

Through Meridian Gate, you enter an enormous courtyard, and cross the **Golden Stream** (Jin Shui) – shaped to resemble a Tartar bow and spanned by five marble bridges – on your way to the magnificent **Gate of Supreme Harmony** (Taihe Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). This courtyard could hold an imperial audience of 100,000 people. For an idea of the size of the restoration challenge, note how the crumbling courtyard stones are stuffed with dry weeds, especially on the periphery.

First Side Galleries

Before you pass through the Gate of Supreme Harmony to reach the Forbidden City's star attractions, veer off to the east and west of the huge courtyard to visit the Calligraphy and Painting Gallery inside the **Hall of Martial Valour** (Wu Ying Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and the particularly good Ceramics Gallery, housed inside the creaking **Hall of Literary Glory** (Wen

Hua Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)).

Three Great Halls

Raised on a three-tier marble terrace with balustrades are the Three Great Halls, the glorious heart of the Forbidden City. The recently restored **Hall of Supreme Harmony** (Taihe Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is the most important and largest structure in the Forbidden City. Built in the 15th century and restored in the 17th century, it was used for ceremonial occasions, such as the emperor's birthday, the nomination of military leaders and coronations. Inside the Hall of Supreme Harmony is a richly decorated **Dragon Throne** (Longyi), from which the emperor would preside over trembling officials. The entire court had to touch the floor nine times with their foreheads (the custom known as kowtowing) in the emperor's presence. At the back of the throne is a carved Xumishan, the Buddhist paradise, signifying the throne's supremacy.

Behind the Hall of Supreme Harmony is the smaller **Hall of Middle Harmony** (Zhonghe Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which was used as the emperor's transit lounge. Here he would make last-minute preparations, rehearse speeches and receive close ministers. On display are two Qing-dynasty sedan chairs, the emperor's mode of transport around the Forbidden City. The last of the Qing emperors, Puyi, used a bicycle and altered a few features of the palace grounds to make it easier to get around.

The third of the Great Halls is the **Hall of Preserving Harmony** (Baohe Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), used for banquets and later for imperial examinations. The hall has no support pillars. To its rear is a 250-tonne marble imperial carriageway carved with dragons and clouds, which was transported into Beijing on an ice path. The emperor used to be carried over this carriageway in his sedan chair as he ascended or descended the terrace. The outer housing surrounding the Three Great Halls was used for storing gold, silver, silks, carpets and other treasures.

A string of side halls on the eastern and western flanks of the Three Great Halls usually, but not always, house a series of excellent exhibitions, ranging

from scientific instruments and articles of daily use to objects presented to the emperor by visiting dignitaries. One contains an interesting diorama of the whole complex.

Lesser Central Halls

The basic configuration of the Three Great Halls is echoed by the next group of buildings. Smaller in scale, these buildings were more important in terms of real power, which in China traditionally lies at the back door.

The first structure is the **Palace of Heavenly Purity** (Qianqing Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a residence of Ming and early Qing emperors, and later an audience hall for receiving foreign envoys and high officials.

Immediately behind it is the **Hall of Union** (Jiaotai Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which contains a clepsydra – a water clock made in 1745 with five bronze vessels and a calibrated scale. There's also a mechanical clock built in 1797 and a collection of imperial jade seals on display. The **Palace of Earthly Tranquillity** (Kunning Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) was the imperial couple's bridal chamber and the centre of operations for the palace harem.

Imperial Garden

At the northern end of the Forbidden City is the **Imperial Garden** (Yu Huayuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a classical Chinese garden with 7000 sq metres of fine landscaping, including rockeries, walkways, pavilions and ancient cypresses. Before you reach the **Gate of Divine Prowess** (Shenwu Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), the Forbidden City's north exit, and **Shunzhen Gate** (Shunzhen Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which leads to it, note the pair of bronze elephants whose front knees bend in an anatomically impossible fashion, signifying the power of the emperor; even elephants would kowtow before him.

Complete Palace of Peace and Longevity

A mini Forbidden City, known as the **Complete Palace of Peace and Longevity** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (Ning Shou Quan Gong) was built in the northeastern corner of the complex, mimicking the structure of the great halls

of the central axis. During the Ming dynasty this was where the empress dowager and the imperial concubines lived. Now it houses a series of quieter courtyard buildings, which contain a number of fine museum exhibitions, known collectively as the **Treasure Gallery** (Zhen Bao Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); entrance ¥10).

The complex is entered from the south – not far from the Clock Exhibition Hall. Just inside the entrance, you'll find the beautiful glazed **Nine Dragon Screen** (Jiulong Bi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), one of only three of its type left in China.

Visitors then work their way north, exploring a number of peaceful halls and courtyards before being popped out at the **northern end** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) of the Forbidden City. Don't miss the **Pavilion of Cheerful Melodies** (Changyin Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a three-storey wooden opera house, which was the palace's largest theatre. Note the trap doors that allowed actors to make dramatic stage entrances.

Western & Eastern Palaces

About half a dozen smaller palace courtyards lie to the west and east of the Lesser Central Halls. They should all be open to the public, although at the time of research many of the eastern ones were closed for extensive renovation. It was in these smaller courtyard buildings that most of the emperors actually lived and many of the buildings, particularly those to the west, are decked out in imperial furniture. The **Hall of Mental Cultivation** (Yang Xin Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is a highlight, while the **Palace of Gathered Elegance** (Chu Xiu Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) contains some interesting photos of the last emperor Puyi, who lived here as a child ruler at the turn of the 20th century.

Forbidden City

WALKING TOUR

After entering through the imperious Meridian Gate, resist the temptation to dive straight into the star attractions and veer right for a peek at the excellent **Ceramics Gallery 1** housed inside the creaking Hall of Literary Glory.

Walk back to the central complex and head through the magnificent Gate of Supreme Harmony towards the Three Great Halls: first, the largest – the **Hall of Supreme Harmony 2**, followed by the **Hall of Middle Harmony 3** and the **Hall of Preserving Harmony 4**, behind which slopes the enormous Marble Imperial Carriageway.

Turn right here to visit the fascinating **Clock Exhibition Hall 5** before entering the **Complete Palace of Peace & Longevity 6**, a mini Forbidden City constructed along the eastern axis of the main complex. It includes the beautiful **Nine Dragon Screen 7** and, to the north, a series of halls, housing some excellent exhibitions and known collectively as The Treasure Gallery. Don't miss the **Pavilion of Cheerful Melodies 8**, a wonderful three-storey opera house.

Work your way to the far north of this section, then head west to the **Imperial Garden 9**, with its ancient cypress trees and pretty pavilions, before exiting via the garden's West Gate (behind the **Thousand Year Pavilion**) to explore the **Western Palaces 10**, an absorbing collection of courtyard homes where many of the emperors lived during their reign.

Exit this section at its southwest corner before turning back on yourself to walk north through the Gate of Heavenly Purity to see the three final Central Halls – the **Palace of Heavenly Purity 11**, the **Hall of Union 12** and the **Palace of Earthly Tranquility 13** – before leaving via the North Gate.



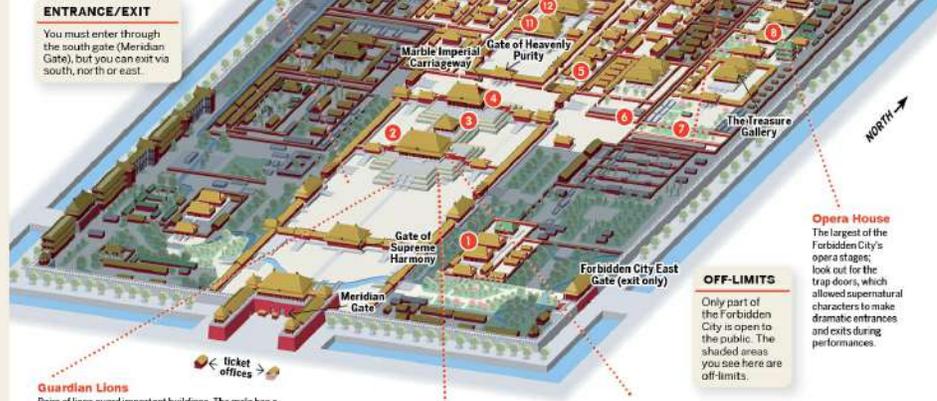
Water Vats
More than 300 copper and brass water vats dot the palace complex. They were used for lighting fires and in winter were prevented from freezing over by using thick quilts.



Kneeling Elephants
At the northern entrance of the Imperial Garden are two bronze elephants kneeling in an anatomically impossible fashion, which symbolise the power of the emperor; even elephants knelt before him.



Nine Dragon Screen
One of only three of its type left in China, this beautiful glazed dragon screen served to protect the Hall of Imperial Supremacy from evil spirits.



ENTRANCE/EXIT

You must enter through the south gate (Meridian Gate), but you can exit via south, north or east.

Guardian Lions
Pairs of lions guard important buildings. The male has a paw placed on a globe (representing the emperor's power over the world). The female has her paw on a baby lion (representing the emperor's fertility).



Dragon-Head Spouts
More than a thousand dragon-head spouts encircle the raised marble platforms at the centre of the Forbidden City. They were – and still are – part of the drainage system.



Roof Guardians
The imperial dragon is at the tail of the procession, which is led by a figure riding a phoenix followed by a number of mythical beasts. The more beasts, the more important the building.



OFF-LIMITS

Only part of the Forbidden City is open to the public. The shaded areas you see here are off-limits.

Opera House
The largest of the Forbidden City's opera stages; look out for the trap doors, which allowed supernatural characters to make dramatic entrances and exits during performances.

Tian'anmen Square

SQUARE

(Tian'anmen Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); **S** Tian'anmen West, Tian'anmen East or Qianmen) **FREE**

Flanked by stern 1950s Soviet-style buildings and ringed by white perimeter fences, the world's largest public square (440,000 sq metres) is an immense flatland of paving stones at the heart of Beijing. If you get up early, you can watch the flag-raising ceremony at sunrise, performed by a troop of People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers drilled to march at precisely 108 paces per minute, 75cm per pace. The soldiers emerge through the Gate of Heavenly Peace to goosestep impeccably across Chang'an Jie; all traffic is halted. The same ceremony in reverse is performed at sunset.

Here one stands at the symbolic centre of the Chinese universe. The

rectangular arrangement, flanked by halls to both east and west, to some extent echoes the layout of the Forbidden City: as such, the square employs a conventional plan that pays obeisance to traditional Chinese culture, but many of its ornaments and buildings are Soviet-inspired. Mao conceived the square to project the enormity of the Communist Party, and during the Cultural Revolution he reviewed parades of up to a million people here. The ‘Tian’anmen Incident’, in 1976, is the term given to the near-riot in the square that accompanied the death of Premier Zhou Enlai. Another million people jammed the square to pay their last respects to Mao in the same year. Most infamously, in 1989 the army forced prodemocracy demonstrators out of the square. Hundreds lost their lives in the surrounding streets, although contrary to widespread belief, it is unlikely that anyone was killed in the square itself.

Despite being a public place, the square remains more in the hands of the government than the people; it is monitored by closed circuit TV cameras, Segway-riding policemen and plain-clothes officers. The designated points of access, security checks on entry and twitchy mood cleave Tian’anmen Square from the city. A tangible atmosphere of restraint and authority reigns.

All this – plus the absence of anywhere to sit – means the square is hardly a place to chill out (don’t whip out a guitar), but such is its iconic status that few people leave Beijing without making a visit. In any case, there’s more than enough space to stretch a leg and the view can be breathtaking, especially on a clear blue day or at nightfall when the area is illuminated.

Gate of Heavenly Peace

HISTORIC SITE

(Tian’anmen [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥15, bag storage ¥2-6; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm;

S Tian’anmen West or Tian’anmen East)

Hung with a vast likeness of Mao Zedong, and guarded by two pairs of Ming stone lions, the double-eaved Gate of Heavenly Peace, north of [Tian’anmen Square](#), is a potent national symbol. Built in the 15th century and restored in the 17th century, the gate was formerly the largest of the four gates of the Imperial City Wall, and it was from this gate that Mao proclaimed the

People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949. Today's political coterie watches mass troop parades from here.

Climb the gate for excellent views of the square, and peek inside at the impressive beams and overdone paintwork; in all there are 60 gargantuan wooden pillars and 17 vast lamps suspended from the ceiling. Within the gate tower there is also a fascinating photographic history of the gate and Tian'anmen Square, although captions are in Chinese only.

There's no fee for walking through the gate, en route to the Forbidden City, but if you climb it you'll have to pay. The [ticket office](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is on the north side of the gate. For [Forbidden City tickets](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), keep walking about 600m further north.

Front Gate

HISTORIC SITE

(Qian Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥20, audio guide ¥20; 🕒 9am-4pm Tue-Sun; **S** Qianmen)

Front Gate actually consists of two gates. The northernmost is the 40m-high Zhengyang Gate (Zhengyang Men Chenglou), which dates from the Ming dynasty and which was the largest of the nine gates of the Inner City Wall separating the inner, or Tartar (Manchu) city from the outer, or Chinese city. With the disappearance of the city walls, the gate sits out of context, but it can be climbed for decent views of the square and of Arrow Tower, immediately to the south.

Partially destroyed in the Boxer Rebellion around 1900, the gate was once flanked by two temples that have since vanished.

Inside the upper levels are some fascinating **historical photographs**, showing the area as it was at the beginning of the last century, before the city walls and many of the surrounding gates and temples were demolished. Explanatory captions are in English as well as Chinese.

[Zhengyang Gate Arrow Tower](#) (Zhengyangmen Jianlou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), directly south, can't be climbed. It also dates from the Ming dynasty and was originally connected to Zhengyang Gate by a semicircular enceinte

(demolished last century).

Dōngchéng Central



Dongcheng Central

Top Sights

1 [Zhihua Temple](#) G5

Sights

2 [Beijing Railway Museum](#) B8

3 [Chairman Mao Memorial Hall](#) B7

4 [Former Foreign Legation Quarter](#) B7

5 [Former French Post Office](#) C7

6 [Front Gate](#) B8

7 [Galaxy Soho](#) G4

8 [National Museum of China](#) B7

9 [Poly Art Museum](#) G1

10 [Shijia Hutong Museum](#) E4

11 [Southeast Corner Watchtower & Red Gate Gallery](#) G8

12 [Tian'anmen Square](#) B7

13 [Zhengyang Gate Arrow Tower](#) B8

Activities, Courses & Tours

14 [Bike Beijing](#) C4

15 [Jingshan Table Tennis Park](#) B2

16 [Milun Kungfu School](#) D5

Sleeping

17 [Beijing City Central International Youth Hostel](#) F7

18 [Beijing Saga International Youth Hostel](#) F4

19 [City Walls Courtyard](#) B2

20 [Cote Cour](#) E4

21 [Feel Inn](#) C5

22 [Hulu Hotel](#) E4

23 [Jingshan Garden Hotel](#) B3

24 [Temple Hotel](#) C2

Eating

25 [Beijing Dadong Roast Duck Restaurant](#) E5

26 [Crescent Moon Muslim Restaurant](#) F2

27 [Donghuamen Night Market](#) C5

28 [Little Yunnan](#) C3

29 [Man Fu Lou](#) B2

30 [Royal Icehouse](#) A2

31 [Zuo Lin You She](#) C2

Drinking & Nightlife

32 [Alley Coffee](#) B3

33 [Le Grenadier](#) A2

Shopping

34 [Beijing apm](#) D5

35 [Foreign Languages Bookstore](#) D5

36 [Oriental Plaza](#) D6

Information

37 [East Gate](#) B3

38 [State Administration of Cultural Heritage](#) C3

39 [West Gate](#) A3

National Museum of China

MUSEUM

(Zhongguo Guoji Bowuguan  ; en.chnmuseum.cn; Guangchangdongce Lu, Tian'anmen Sq, audio guide ¥30, cafe coffee from ¥20, tea from ¥10, pastries & sandwiches ¥10-20;

 9am-5pm Tue-Sun, last entry 4pm;  Tian'anmen East) **FREE**

Beijing's premier museum is housed in an immense 1950s building on the eastern side of Tian'anmen Sq, and is well worth visiting. The **Ancient China** exhibition on the basement floor is outstanding. You could easily spend a couple of hours in this exhibition alone. It contains dozens and dozens of stunning pieces, from prehistoric China through to the Qing dynasty, all displayed beautifully in modern, spacious, low-lit exhibition halls.

Chairman Mao Memorial Hall

MAUSOLEUM

(Mao Zhuxi Jiniantang  ; Tian'anmen Sq; bag storage ¥2-10, camera storage

¥2-5;  7.30am-1pm Tue-Sun;  Tian'anmen West, Tian'anmen East or Qianmen) **FREE**

Mao Zedong died in September 1976 and his memorial hall was constructed

on the southern side of Tian'anmen Sq soon afterwards. This squat, Soviet-inspired mausoleum lies on Beijing's north-south axis of symmetry on the footprint of Zhonghua Gate (Zhonghua Men), a vast and ancient portal flattened during the communist development of Tian'anmen Sq. Mao is still revered across much of China, and you'll see some people reduced to tears here at the sight of his mummified corpse.

★ Jingshan Park

PARK

(Jingshan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jingshan Qianjie; adult ¥2, in summer ¥5; 🕒 6am-9.30pm; **S** Tian'anmen West, then bus 5)

The dominating feature of Jingshan – one of the city's finest parks – is one of central Beijing's few hills; a mound that was created from the earth excavated to make the Forbidden City moat. Called Coal Hill by Westerners during Legation days, Jingshan also serves as a feng shui shield, protecting the palace from evil spirits – or dust storms – from the north. Clamber to the top for a magnificent panorama of the capital and princely views over the russet roofing of the Forbidden City.

On the eastern side of the park a locust tree stands in the place where the last of the Ming emperors, Chongzhen, hung himself as rebels swarmed at the city walls. The rest of the park is one of the best places in Beijing for people-watching. Come early to see (or join in with) elderly folk going about their morning routines of dancing, singing, performing taichi or playing keepie-uppies with oversized shuttlecocks. In April and May the park bursts into bloom with fabulously colourful peonies and tulips forming the focal point of a very popular flower fair (admission ¥10). The park has three gates: the **south** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is directly opposite the Forbidden City's north gate (exit only), the **west** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) leads towards Beihai Park's east gate, while the **east gate** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) has a couple of nice cafes outside it.

★ Zhongshan Park

PARK

(Zhongshan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); adult ¥3, Spring Flower & Tulips Show ¥10;

🕒 6am-9pm; 📍 Tian'anmen West)

Named after Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yatsen), the father of modern China, this peaceful park sits at the southwest corner of the Forbidden City and partly looks out onto the palace's moat (you can rent pedal-boats here) and towering walls. A refreshing prologue or conclusion to the magnificence of the Forbidden City, the park was formerly the sacred Ming-style Altar to the God of the Land and the God of Grain (Shejitan), where the emperor offered sacrifices. The **Square Altar** (wuse tu; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) remains, bordered on all sides by walls tiled in various colours.

Near the park's south entrance stands a towering dark-blue-tiled *pailou* (traditional Chinese archway) with triple eaves that originally commemorated the German Foreign Minister Baron von Ketteler, killed by Boxers in 1900. Just off to the right (east) is the 100-year-old [Laijinyuxuan Teahouse](#). North of here, also in the eastern section of the park, is the [Forbidden City Concert Hall](#). As with Jingshan Park, April and May is a beautiful time to visit thanks to the hugely colourful Spring Flower and Tulips Show. The **northeast exit** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) of the park brings you out by Meridian Gate, from where you can enter the Forbidden City. The **south exit** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) brings you out near Tian'anmen Sq. There is also a **west gate** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)).

Workers Cultural Palace

PARK

(Laodong Renmin Wenhua Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 tennis court 6512 2856; park entrance ¥2, tennis court per hour ¥80, Supreme Temple ¥10; 🕒 6.30am-7.30pm, tennis court 6am-11.30pm; 📍 Tian'anmen East)

Despite the prosaic name and its location at the very heart of town, this reclusive park, between Tian'anmen Sq and the Forbidden City, is one of Beijing's best-kept secrets. Few visitors divert here from their course towards the main gate of the Forbidden City, but this was the emperor's premier place of worship and contains the **Supreme Temple** (Tai Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥10), with its beautifully carved interior roofing.

★ Zhihua Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Zhihua Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 5 Lumicang Hutong; adult ¥20, audio guide ¥10, Wed free;

 8.30am-4.30pm, closed Mon;  Jianguomen or Chaoyangmen)

Beijing's surviving temple brood has endured casual restoration that often buried authenticity. But this rickety nonactive temple, hidden down a rarely visited *hutong*, is thick with the flavours of old Peking, having eluded the Dulux treatment that invariably precedes entrance fee inflation and stomping tour groups.

You won't find the coffered ceiling of the **Zhihua Hall** (it's in the USA), and the Four Heavenly Kings have vanished from **Zhihua Gate** (Zhihua Men), but the **Scriptures Hall**, off to one side of the central courtyard, encases a unique, eight-sided, Ming-dynasty wooden library topped with a seated Buddha and a magnificently unrestored ceiling. The highlight, the **Ten Thousand Buddhas Hall** (Wanfo Dian), is right at the back of the complex, and is an enticing two floors of miniature niche-borne Buddhist effigies and cabinets for the storage of sutras. Its entrance is dominated by three stunning, wood-carved deities (a 6m-tall Tathagata Buddha, flanked by Brahma and Indra). Unfortunately, visitors are no longer allowed to climb to the 2nd floor of this hall.

Try to time your visit to coincide with the free, 15-minute, **musical performance** which takes place in Zhihua Hall at 10am and 3pm each day. Performers use traditional Chinese instruments associated with Buddhist worship.

Note the surreal juxtaposition of this 15th-century temple with the swirling, space-age curves of the **Galaxy Soho** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) buildings, which now loom over this historic *hutong* neighbourhood.

Former Foreign Legation Quarter

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  Chongwenmen, Qianmen or Wangfujing)

The former Foreign Legation Quarter, where the 19th-century foreign powers flung up their embassies, schools, post offices and banks, lies east of

Tian'anmen Sq. Apart from the Beijing Police Museum, the **former French Post Office** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (now a Sichuan restaurant), and some of the Legation Quarter buildings (now high-end restaurants and members clubs), you can't enter any of the buildings, but a stroll along the streets here (Dongjiaomin Xiang, Taijichang Dajie and Zhengyi Lu) gives you a hint of the area's former European flavour.

Poly Art Museum

MUSEUM

(Baoli Yishu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6500 8117; www.polymuseum.com; 9th fl, Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie; admission ¥20, audio guide ¥10; 🕒 9.30am-5pm, closed Sun; 📍 Dongsì Shítiao)

This small but exquisite museum displays a glorious array of ancient bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, a magnificent high-water mark for bronze production. Check out the intricate scaling on the 'Zun vessel in the shape of a Phoenix' or the 'You with Divine Faces', with its elephant head on the side of the vessel. The detailed animist patterns on the *Gangbo You* are similarly vivid and fascinating.

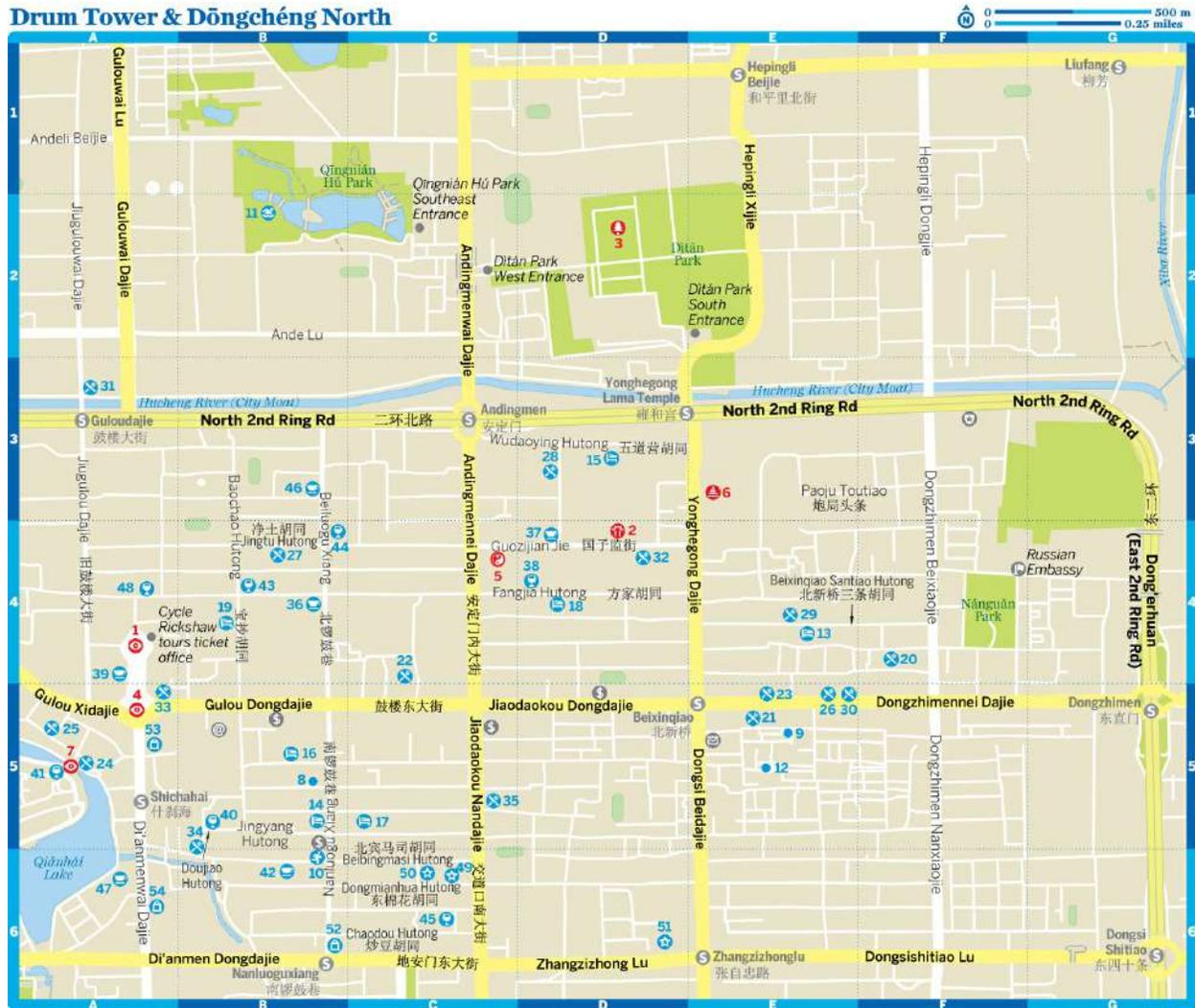
Shijia Hutong Museum

MUSEUM

(Shijia Hutong Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 24 Shijia Hutong; 24 🕒 9.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Housed in a pleasant, renovated double-courtyard, which used to be a local kindergarten, this small museum uses old photos, maps and artefacts, as well as some scale models, to explain the history of Shijia Hutong, and of Beijing's *hutong* districts in general. There are excellent English captions throughout, and the large-scale model of the whole local neighbourhood, with Shijia Hutong at its core, is particularly interesting to muse over.

Drum Tower & Dōngchéng North



Drum Tower & Dongcheng North

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Bell Tower | A4 |
| 2 | Confucius Temple & Imperial College | D4 |
| 3 | Ditan Park | D2 |
| 4 | Drum Tower | A5 |
| 5 | Fire God Temple | C4 |
| 6 | Lama Temple | E3 |
| 7 | Silver Ingot Bridge | A5 |

🚶 Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|
| 8 | Black Sesame Kitchen | B5 |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 9 | Culture Yard | E5 |
| 10 | Mao'er Laoli Health Club | B6 |
| 11 | Qingnian Hu Park | B2 |
| 12 | The Hutong | E5 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 13 | 161 Lama Temple Courtyard Hotel | E4 |
| 14 | Beijing Downtown Backpackers | B5 |
| 15 | Confucius International Youth Hostel | D3 |
| 16 | Courtyard 7 | B5 |
| 17 | DuGe | C5 |
| 18 | Nostalgia Hotel | D4 |
| 19 | Orchid | B4 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 20 | Baihe Vegetarian Restaurant | F4 |
| 21 | Chongqing Kongliang Huoguo | E5 |
| 22 | Dali Courtyard | C4 |
| 23 | Ghost Street | E5 |
| 24 | Kao Rou Ji | A5 |
| 25 | Liji Fengwei Meishi Canting | A5 |
| 26 | Little Sheep | E5 |
| 27 | Rong Tian Sheep Spine | B4 |
| 28 | Stuff'd | D3 |
| 29 | Tan Hua Lamb BBQ | E4 |
| 30 | Xiao Yu Shan | E5 |
| 31 | Xinmin Food Market | A3 |
| 32 | Xu Xiang Zhai Vegetarian Restaurant | D4 |
| 33 | Yaoji Chaogan | A5 |
| 34 | Yi Long Zhai | B5 |
| 35 | Zhang Mama | C5 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 36 | Black-tea Tea Room | B4 |
| 37 | Cafe Confucius | D4 |
| 38 | El Nido | D4 |
| 39 | Essence | A4 |
| 40 | Great Leap Brewing | B5 |
| 41 | Houhai Bar Strip | A5 |
| 42 | Irresistible Cafe | B6 |
| 43 | Mado | B4 |

| | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 44 | Mai | B4 |
| 45 | Mao Mao Chong Bar | C6 |
| 46 | Other Place | B3 |
| 47 | Tangren Teahouse | A6 |
| | Three Trees Coffee | B5 |
| 48 | Za Jia | A4 |

★ Entertainment

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 49 | Jiang Hu | C6 |
| 50 | Penghao Theatre | C6 |
| 51 | Yugong Yishan | D6 |

🛒 Shopping

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 52 | Nanluogu Xiang | B6 |
| 53 | Ruifuxiang | A5 |
| 54 | Tian Yi Goods Market | A6 |

Drum Tower & Dongcheng North

Drum Tower

HISTORIC SITE

(Gulou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gulou Dongdajie; admission ¥20, both towers through ticket ¥30;

 9am-5pm, last tickets 4.40pm;  Shichahai or Gulou Dajie)

Along with the older-looking Bell Tower, which stands behind it, the magnificent repainted Drum Tower used to be the city's official timekeeper, with drums and bells beaten and rung to mark the times of the day.

Originally built in 1272, the Drum Tower was once the heart of the Mongol capital of Dadu, as Beijing was then known. It was destroyed in a fire before a replacement was built, slightly to the east of the original location, in 1420. The current structure is a Qing-dynasty version of that 1420 tower.

You can climb the steep inner staircase for views of the grey-tiled rooftops in the surrounding *hutong* alleys. But you can't view the Bell Tower as the north-facing balcony has been closed. It's well worth climbing the tower,

though, especially if you can time it to coincide with one of the regular drumming performances, which are played on reproductions of the 25 Ming-dynasty watch drums, which used to sound out across this part of the city. One of the original 25 drums, the **Night Watchman's Drum** (Genggu), is also on display; dusty, battered and worn. Also on display is a replica of a Song-dynasty water clock, which was never actually used in the tower, but is interesting nonetheless.

The times of the **drumming performances**, which only last for a few minutes, are posted by the ticket office.

Bell Tower

HISTORIC SITE

(Zhonglou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gulou Dongdajie; admission ¥20, both towers through ticket ¥30; 🕒 9am-5pm, last tickets 4.40pm; 📍 Shichahai or Gulou Dajie)

The more modest, grey-stone structure of the Bell Tower is arguably more charming than its resplendent other half, the Drum Tower, after which this area of Beijing is named. It also has the added advantage of being able to view its sister tower from a balcony.

Along with the drums in the Drum Tower, the bells in the Bell Tower were used as Beijing's official timekeepers throughout the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, and on until 1924. The Bell Tower looks the older of the two, perhaps because it isn't painted. In fact both are of similar age. The Bell Tower was also built during the Mongol Yuan dynasty, in 1272, and was rebuilt in the 1440s after being destroyed in a fire. This current structure was built in 1745.

Like the Drum Tower, the Bell Tower can also be climbed up an incredibly steep inner staircase. But the views from the top are even better here, partly because the structure is set back more deeply into the surrounding *hutong*, and partly because you can get great photos of the Drum Tower from its viewing balcony. Marvel too at the huge, 600-year-old, 63-tonne bell suspended in the pleasantly unrestored interior. Note how Chinese bells have no clappers but are instead struck with a stout pole.

Inside the tower, on the ground floor (south side), is the **Bell Tower Tea**

House, where you can sample a selection of Chinese teas (per person per hour ¥50) as well as buy tea and tea sets.

The Drum & Bell Sq, between the two towers, is a great people-watching area in which to while away some time even if you don't climb either of the two towers. There are a handful of excellent bars and cafes here too, some with rooftop views over the square. Both towers are lit up beautifully come evening. Note: the square was undergoing wholesale renovations at the time of research.

Lama Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Yonghe Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 28 Yonghegong Dajie; admission ¥25, English audioguide ¥50; 🕒 9am-4.30pm; 📍 Yonghegong-Lama Temple)

This exceptional temple is a glittering attraction in Beijing's Buddhist firmament. If you only have time for one temple (the Temple of Heaven isn't really a temple) make it this one, where riveting roofs, fabulous frescoes, magnificent decorative arches, tapestries, eye-popping carpentry, Tibetan prayer wheels, Tantric statues and a superb pair of Chinese lions mingle with dense clouds of incense.

The most renowned Tibetan Buddhist temple outside Tibet, the Lama Temple was converted to a lamasery in 1744 after serving as the former residence of Emperor Yong Zheng. Today the temple is an active place of worship, attracting pilgrims from afar, some of whom prostrate themselves in submission at full length within its halls.

Resplendent within the **Hall of the Wheel of the Law** (Falun Dian), the fourth hall you reach from the entrance, is a substantial bronze statue of a benign and smiling Tsong Khapa (1357–1419), founder of the Gelugpa or Yellow Hat sect, robed in yellow and illuminated by a skylight.

The fifth hall, the **Wanfu Pavilion** (Wanfu Ge), houses a magnificent 18m-high statue of the Maitreya Buddha in his Tibetan form, clothed in yellow satin and reputedly sculpted from a single block of sandalwood. Each of the Bodhisattva's toes is the size of a pillow. Behind the statue is the Vault of Avalokiteshvara, from where a diminutive and blue-faced statue of

Guanyin peeks out. The Wanfu Pavilion is linked by an overhead walkway to the Yansui Pavilion (Yansui Ge), which encloses a huge lotus flower that revolves to reveal an effigy of the Longevity Buddha.

Don't miss the collection of bronze Tibetan Buddhist statues within the **Jietai Lou**, a small side hall. Most effigies date from the Qing dynasty, from languorous renditions of Green Tara and White Tara to exotic, Tantric pieces (such as Samvara) and figurines of the fierce-looking Mahakala. Also peruse the collection of Tibetan Buddhist ornaments within the **Banchan Lou**, another side hall, where an array of *dorje* (Tibetan sceptres), mandalas and Tantric figures are displayed along with an impressive selection of ceremonial robes in silk and satin.

The street outside the temple entrance heaves with shops piled high with statues of Buddha, talismans, Buddhist charms, incense and keepsakes, picked over by a constant stream of pilgrims.

Confucius Temple & Imperial College

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Kong Miao & Guozijian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 13 Guozijian Jie; admission ¥30, audio guide ¥30; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm; 📍 Yonghegong-Lama Temple)

An incense stick's toss away from the Lama Temple, China's second-largest Confucian temple has had a refit in recent years, but the almost otherworldly sense of detachment is seemingly impossible to shift. A mood of impassiveness reigns and the lack of worship reinforces a sensation that time has stood still. However, in its tranquillity and reserve, the temple can be a pleasant sanctuary from Beijing's often congested streets – a haven of peace and quiet.

Antediluvian *bixi* (mythical tortoise-like dragons) glare from repainted pavilions while lumpy and ossified ancient cypresses claw stiffly at the Beijing air. There's a stone 'forest' of 190 stelae recording the 13 Confucian classics in 630,000 Chinese characters at the temple rear. Also inscribed on stelae are the names of successful candidates of the highest level of the official Confucian examination system.

Next to the Confucius Temple, but within the same grounds, stands the

Imperial College, where the emperor expounded the Confucian classics to an audience of thousands of kneeling students, professors and court officials – an annual rite. Built by the grandson of Kublai Khan in 1306, the former college was the supreme academy during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. On the site is a marvellous, glazed, three-gate, single-eaved decorative archway called a *liuli paifang* (glazed archway). The Biyong Hall beyond is a twin-roofed structure with yellow tiles surrounded by a moat and topped with a splendid gold knob. Its stupendous interior houses a vermillion and gold lectern.

Some of Beijing's last remaining *pailou* (decorated archways) bravely survive in the tree-lined street outside (Guozijian Jie) and the entire area of *hutong* here is now dotted with small cafes, cute restaurants and boutique shops, making it an ideal place to browse in low gear. At the western end of Guozijian Jie stands a diminutive **Fire God Temple** (Huoshen Miao; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), built in 1802 and now occupied by Beijing residents.

Nanluogu Xiang

STREET

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  Nanluoguxiang)

Once neglected and ramshackle, strewn with spent coal briquettes in winter and silent bar the hacking coughs of shuffling old-timers and the jangling of bicycle bells, the funky north–south alleyway of Nanluogu Xiang (literally ‘South Gong and Drum Alley’, and roughly pronounced ‘*nan-law-goo-syang*’) has been undergoing evolution since 1999 when **Passby Bar** first threw open its doors, and was the subject of a complete makeover in 2006. Today, the alley is an insatiably bubbly strip of bars, wi-fi cafes, restaurants, hotels and trendy shops.

It is also a victim of its own success, though. Come here on a summer weekend to experience more people than you thought could possibly fit onto one street! With that in mind, don't miss exploring the quieter alleys, which fan out from the main lane and house Qing-dynasty courtyards as well as hidden cafes, shops, restaurants and bars.

Ditan Park

PARK

(Ditan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); park admission ¥2, altar ¥5; 🕒 6am-9pm;

S Yonghegong-Lama Temple)

Directly north of the Lama Temple, but cosmologically juxtaposed with the **Temple of Heaven** (Tiantan), the **Altar of the Moon** (Yuetan), the **Altar of the Sun** (Ritan) and the **Altar to the God of the Land and the God of Grain** (Shejitan), Ditan is the Temple of the Earth. The park, site of imperial sacrifices to the Earth God, lacks the splendour of Temple of Heaven Park but is certainly worth a stroll if you've just been to nearby Lama Temple.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

BEWARE THE RICKSHAW HUSTLERS!

Pushy rickshaw and taxi touts wait at the north gate of the Forbidden City to try to take advantage of weary visitors exiting the complex. It's always fun to take a rickshaw ride, but be very clear when negotiating a fare with them. As a guide, it should cost about ¥20 per rickshaw to get from here to the Drum Tower.

A common trick is for them to say 'three'. You think they mean three yuan (a bargain!). They insist later that they meant three hundred! It's probably best just to avoid them altogether by walking a few hundred metres in any direction, then hailing a passing cab.

Alternatively, turn left as you exit the north gate and walk to the nearby bus stop. From here, bus 124 goes to the Drum Tower, while buses 1 and 2 both do circuits of the Forbidden City, looping back south to Qianmen, at the southern tip of Tian'anmen Sq.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

AIRPOCALYPSE

Beijing's air pollution has become notorious worldwide, but in 2013 it reached epic proportions. One week in January was dubbed 'Airpocalypse' after levels of pollution were described as the worst on record.

In that week, the measurement of the smallest, most dangerous type of particle matter (commonly known as PM2.5) reached more than 600 micrograms per sq metre, and at some monitoring stations was as high as 900. To put it in perspective,

most cities in Europe and the US have average PM2.5 readings of less than 50, which is the level deemed 'good' by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Beijing's air isn't always terribly polluted, and travellers who arrive during spells of beautiful blue skies may well wonder what all the fuss is about, but the long-term stats do not bode well. Between April 2008 and March 2014, Beijing experienced just 25 'good' days.

Travellers who are sensitive to pollution might want to consider buying a smog mask for their visit. You can find advice on which masks to buy on the excellent website **Air Quality Index China** (www.aqicn.org), which also publishes real-time pollution readings for Beijing and other cities. Places in Beijing that stock good quality masks include **Torana Clean Air** (www.toranacleanair.com), which has two branches in the city. If you have kids in tow, you might want to buy their masks from home, as good-quality children's masks that fit properly are harder to find here.

Temple of Heaven Park & Dongcheng South

★ Temple of Heaven Park

PARK

(Tiantan Gongyuan  ; 📍6701 2483; admission park/through ticket high season ¥15/35, low season ¥10/30, audio tour ¥40 (deposit ¥100); 🕒 park 6am-8pm, sights 8am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, park 6am-8pm, sights 8am-5pm Nov-Mar; 📍Tiantandongmen)

A tranquil oasis of peace and methodical Confucian design in one of China's busiest urban landscapes, the 267-hectare Temple of Heaven Park is absolutely unique. It originally served as a vast stage for solemn rites performed by the emperor of the time (known as the Son of Heaven), who prayed here for good harvests and sought divine clearance and atonement. Strictly speaking, it's an altar rather than a temple – so don't expect burning incense or worshippers.

Surrounded by a long wall and with a gate at each compass point, the arrangement is typical of Chinese parks, with the imperfections, bumps and wild irregularities of nature largely deleted and the harmonising hand of man accentuated in obsessively straight lines and regular arrangements. This effect is magnified by Confucian objectives, where the human intellect is imposed on the natural world, fashioning order and symmetry. The resulting balance and harmony have an almost haunting – but slightly claustrophobic – beauty.

Police whirl about in electric buggies as visitors stroll among old buildings, groves of ancient trees and birdsong. Around 4000 ancient, knotted cypresses (some 800 years old, their branches propped up on poles) poke towards the Beijing skies within the grounds.

Seen from above, the temple halls are round and the bases square, in accordance with the notion ‘Tianyuan Difang’ – ‘Heaven is round, Earth is square’. Also observe that the northern rim of the park is semicircular, while its southern end is square. The traditional approach to the temple was from the south, via Zhaoheng Gate (Zhaoheng Men); the north gate is an architectural afterthought. The highlight of the park, and an icon of Beijing in its own right, is the **Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests** (Qinian Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); admission ¥20), an astonishing structure with a triple-eaved purplish-blue umbrella roof mounted on a three-tiered marble terrace. The wooden pillars (made from Oregon fir) support the ceiling without nails or cement – for a building 38m high and 30m in diameter, that’s quite an accomplishment. Embedded in the ceiling is a carved dragon, a symbol of the emperor. Built in 1420, the hall was reduced to carbon after being zapped by a lightning bolt during the reign of Guangxu in 1889; a faithful reproduction based on Ming architectural methods was erected the following year.

Continuing south along an elevated imperial pathway, you soon reach the octagonal **Imperial Vault of Heaven** (Huang Qiong Yu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which was erected at the same time as the Round Altar, but with its shape echoing the lines of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. The hall contained tablets of the emperor’s ancestors, employed during winter solstice ceremonies.

Wrapped around the Imperial Vault of Heaven is **Echo Wall** (Huiyin Bi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). A whisper can travel clearly from one end to your friend’s ear at the other – unless a cacophonous tour group joins in (get here early for this one).

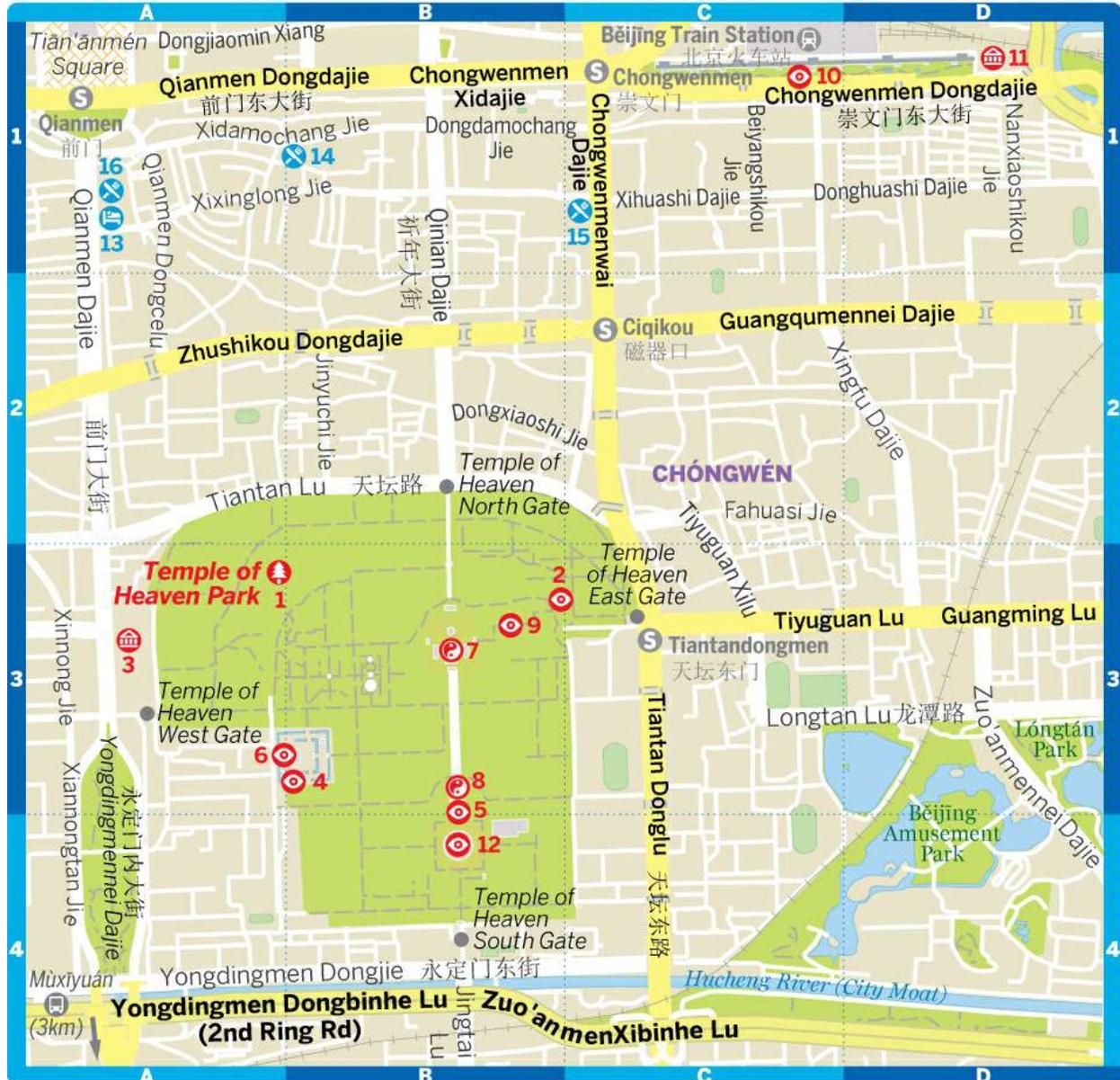
Immediately south of Echo Wall, the 5m-high **Round Altar** (Yuan Qiu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) was constructed in 1530 and rebuilt in 1740. Consisting of

white marble arrayed in three tiers, its geometry revolves around the imperial number nine. Odd numbers possess heavenly significance, with nine the largest single-digit odd number. Symbolising heaven, the top tier is a huge mosaic of nine rings, each composed of multiples of nine stones, so that the ninth ring equals 81 stones. The stairs and balustrades are similarly presented in multiples of nine. Sounds generated from the centre of the upper terrace undergo amplification from the marble balustrades (the acoustics can get noisy when crowds join in).

Off to the eastern side of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, and with a green-tiled tow-tier roof, the **Animal Killing Pavilion** (Zaisheng Ting; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) was the venue for the slaughter of sacrificial oxen, sheep, deer and other animals. Today it stands locked and passive but can be admired from the outside. Stretching out from here runs a **Long Corridor** (Chang Lang; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), where locals sit out and deal cards, listen to the radio, play keyboards, practise Peking opera, try dance moves and kick hacky-sacks. Just north of here is a large and very popular exercise park.

In the west of the park, sacrificial music was rehearsed at the **Divine Music Administration** (Shenyue Shu; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), while wild cats inhabit the dry moat of the green-tiled **Fasting Palace** (Zhai Gong; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)).

Temple of Heaven Park & Dōngchéng South



Temple of Heaven Park & Dongcheng South

📍 Top Sights

1 [Temple of Heaven Park](#)

A3

📍 Sights

2 [Animal Killing Pavilion](#)

B3

3 [Beijing Natural History Museum](#)

A3

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 4 | Divine Music Administration | B3 |
| 5 | Echo Wall | B3 |
| 6 | Fasting Palace | A3 |
| 7 | Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests | B3 |
| 8 | Imperial Vault of Heaven | B3 |
| 9 | Long Corridor | B3 |
| 10 | Ming City Wall Ruins Park | C1 |
| 11 | Red Gate Gallery | D1 |
| 12 | Round Altar | B4 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|-------------------------|----|
| 13 | Emperor | A1 |
|----|-------------------------|----|

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 14 | Liqun Roast Duck Restaurant | B1 |
| 15 | Old Beijing Zhajiang Noodle King | C1 |
| 16 | Qianmen Qianjude Roast Duck Restaurant | A1 |

Beijing Railway Museum

MUSEUM

(Beijing Tielu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6705 1638; 2a Qianmen Dongdajie, 2a admission ¥20; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 Qianmen)

Located in the historic former Qianmen Railway Station, which once connected Beijing to Tianjin, this museum offers an engaging history of the development of the capital and China's railway system, with plenty of photos and models. Its lack of space, though, means it doesn't have many actual trains, although there is a life-size model of the cab of one of China's high-speed trains to clamber into (¥10).

Beijing Natural History Museum

MUSEUM

(Beijing Ziran Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6702 7702; 126 Tianqiao Nandajie; admission ¥10; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun, last entry 4pm; 🚏 Qianmen or Tiantandongmen)

The main entrance to this overblown, creeper-laden museum is hung with portraits of the great natural historians, including Darwin and Linnaeus. The

contents range from dinosaur fossils and skeletons, including a *Mamenchisaurus jingyanensis* (a vast sauropod that once roamed China) to creepy-crawlies, an aquarium with Nemo-esque clown fish and an exhibition on the origins of life on earth.

TIME WILL TELL FOR THE DRUM AND BELL

Despite five years of opposition from local residents and heritage-preservation campaigners, controversial plans to redevelop the hutong-rich neighbourhood surrounding the Drum & Bell Towers looked to be finally going ahead at the time of research.

The original plan to transform the area into the 'Beijing Time Cultural City', complete with an underground mall, was, thankfully, scrapped. At the time of research, it was still unclear what the precise development plans were, but demolition had already begun.

The local district government was saying it wanted to restore the Drum & Bell Square to its "original appearance" by using maps of the Qianlong period (18th century), though details remained vague. Although none of the buildings slated for demolition was more than 70 or 80 years old, critics argue that gentrifying the area to look like it did during its prosperous Qing-dynasty heyday would smack of inauthenticity. Perhaps most worrying is the very real chance that it will also tear the heart and soul out of the community in what has, for so many years, been one of the city's most charming residential neighbourhoods.



City Walk Hutong

START NANLUOGUXIANG SUBWAY STATION

END DRUM & BELL SQUARE

LENGTH 2KM; ONE HOUR

This leisurely stroll explores some of the historic alleyways that branch off Beijing's most famous hutong, Nanluogu Xiang.

Exit the subway station and turn right into Chaodou Hutong. Starting at No 77, the next few courtyards once made up the **1** former mansion of Seng Gelinqin, a Qing-dynasty army general. Note the enormous baogushi (drum stones) at the entranceway to No 77, followed by more impressive gateways at Nos 75, 69, 67 and 63. After No 53 turn left up an unmarked winding alleyway then left onto Banchang Hutong.

At No 19, turn right through an unusual **2** hallway gate, a connecting passageway

leading to Dongmianhua Hutong. Turn right here, then left down an unnamed alley, which is signposted to Penghao Theatre.

Turn left onto Beibingmasi Hutong and cross Nanluogu Xiang into historic **3** Mao'er Hutong. Stop for a drink at Irresistible Cafe, or just admire the entranceways, if the gates are open, to the charming courtyards at Nos 5 and 11. Further on, No 37 was the **4** former home of Wan Rong, who would later marry China's last emperor, Puyi.

Next, turn right down Doujiao Hutong and wind your way (past Great Leap Brewing) to Fangzhuanchang Hutong then Nanxiawazi Hutong, with its small **5** fruit & veg street-market, and continue north to Guloudong Dajie. Turn left here and then, just before you reach the imperious red-painted **6** Drum Tower, turn right into Caochang Hutong. Continue down the lane beside Sea Love Cafe, then take the second left: you'll see the magnificent grey-brick **7** Bell Tower in front of you. Follow this wonderfully winding alley (slated for redevelopment) to the back of the Bell Tower, then walk around the tower to see how the controversial plans to redevelop the **8** Drum & Bell Square are going.

SANLITUN & CHAOYANG

Dongyue Temple

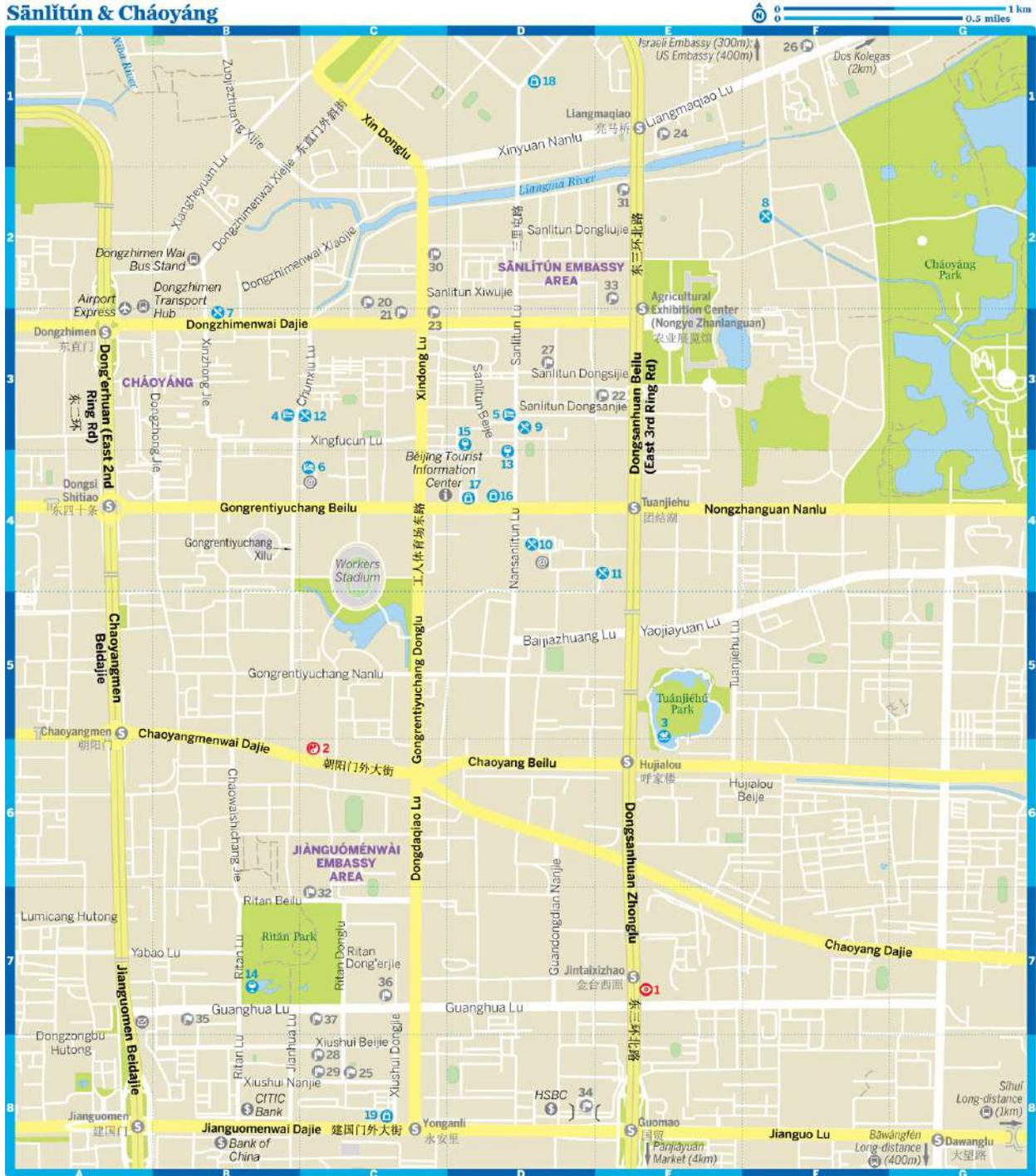
TAOIST TEMPLE

(Dongyue Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 141 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie; adult ¥10, with guide ¥40;

 7.30am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-4.30pm Nov-Mar, closed Mon year-round;  Chaoyangmen or Dongdaqiao)

Dedicated to the Eastern Peak (Tai Shan) of China's five Taoist mountains, the morbid Taoist shrine of Dongyue Temple is an unsettling, albeit fascinating, experience and one of the capital's most unique temples. An active place of worship tended by top-knotted Taoist monks, the temple's roots go all the way back to the Yuan dynasty. A visit here takes you into a world entirely at odds with the surrounding glass and steel high-rises.

Sānlitún & Cháoyáng



Sanlitun & Chaoyang

 Sights

1 [CCTV Building](#)

E7

2 [Dongyue Temple](#) C6

Activities, Courses & Tours

3 [Tuanjiehu Park swimming pool](#) E5

Sleeping

4 [Holiday Inn Express](#) B3

5 [Opposite House Hotel](#) D3

6 [Sanlitun Youth Hostel](#) C4

Eating

7 [Baodu Huang](#) B3

8 [Baoyuan Dumpling Restaurant](#) F2

9 [Bocata](#) D3

10 [Bookworm](#) D4

[Carmen](#) D4

11 [Duck de Chine](#) E4

12 [Jingzun Peking Duck](#) C3

Drinking & Nightlife

[Apothecary](#) D4

[First Floor](#) D4

[Migas Bar](#) D4

13 [Nali Patio](#) D4

14 [Stone Boat](#) B7

15 [Tree](#) D3

Shopping

16 [Sanlitun Village](#) D4

17 [Sanlitun Yashow Clothing Market](#) D4

18 [Sanyuanli Market](#) D1

19 [Silk Market](#) C8

Information

20 [Australian Embassy](#) C2

21 [Canadian Embassy](#) C3

22 [French Embassy](#) E3

23 [German Embassy](#) C3

24 [Indian Embassy](#) E1

| | |
|---|----|
| 25 Irish Embassy | C8 |
| 26 Japanese Embassy | F1 |
| 27 Laotian Embassy | D3 |
| 28 Mongolian Embassy | C8 |
| 29 Mongolian Embassy (Visa Section) | C8 |
| 30 Nepalese Embassy | C2 |
| 31 Netherlands Embassy | E2 |
| 32 North Korean Embassy | C7 |
| 33 Pakistan Embassy | E2 |
| 34 South Korean Embassy | D8 |
| 35 Thai Embassy | B7 |
| 36 UK Embassy | C7 |
| 37 Vietnamese Embassy | C7 |

Ritan Park

PARK

(Ritan Gongyuan Ritan Lu; admission free; 🕒 6am-9pm; 📍 Chaoyangmen or Jianguomen)

Meaning ‘Altar of the Sun’, Ritan (pronounced 'rer-tan') is a real oasis in the heart of Beijing's business district. Dating back to 1530 and one of a set of imperial parks which covered each compass point – others include the Temple of Heaven and Temple of Earth (Ditan Park) – the altar is now little more than a raised platform. But the surrounding park is beautifully landscaped and a great place to tune out from the surrounding mayhem.

Activities include dancing, singing, kite flying, rock-climbing (¥25 per hour or ¥60 per day), table tennis and pond fishing (¥5 per hour). Otherwise, just stroll around and enjoy the flora, or head to one of the park's cafes; the standout one is **Stone Boat** (Shifang Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6501 9986; beers & coffee from ¥25, cocktails from ¥40; 🕒 10am-10pm Apr-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Mar ; 📍 Jianguomen), located by a large pond artfully strewn with rocks.

CCTV Building

ARCHITECTURE

(Yangshi Dalou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 32 Dongsanhuan Zhonglu; 📍 Jintaixizhao)

Shaped like an enormous pair of trousers, and known locally as Da Kucha, or Big Underpants, the astonishing CCTV Tower is an architectural fantasy that

appears to defy gravity. It's made possible by an unusual engineering design which creates a three-dimensional cranked loop, supported by an irregular grid on its surface. Designed by Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren, the building is an audacious statement of modernity (despite its nickname) and a unique addition to the Beijing skyline.

WORTH A TRIP

798 ART DISTRICT

A vast area of disused factories built by the East Germans, **798 Art District** (798, Qi Jiu Ba Yishu Qu [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Jiuxianqiao Lu & Jiuxianqiao Beilu; 🕒 galleries 10am-6pm, most closed Mon; 📞 403 or 909), also known as Da Shanzi, is Beijing's leading concentration of contemporary art galleries.

The industrial complex celebrates its proletarian roots in the communist heyday of the 1950s via retouched red Maoist slogans decorating gallery interiors and statues of burly, lantern-jawed workers dotting the lanes. The voluminous factory workshops are ideally suited to art galleries that require space for multimedia installations and other ambitious projects.

You could easily spend half a day wandering around the complex. Signboards with English-language maps on them dot the lanes.

Galleries

Some are more innovative than others. Highlights include:

BTAP

GALLERY

(Ceramics Third Street; 🕒 10am-6pm, Tue-Sun)

One of 798's original galleries.

UCCA

GALLERY

(798 Road; 🕒 10am-7pm Tue-Sun)

A big-money gallery with exhibition halls, a funky shop and a small cinema screening films most days.

Pace

GALLERY

(797 Road; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun)

A wonderfully large space holding some top-quality exhibitions.

Galleria Continua

GALLERY

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); just south of 797 Road; ☎11am-6pm, Tue-Sun)

Long-established gallery that shows lots of foreign artists.

Eating & Drinking

Most places have fresh coffee, free wi-fi, Western food and English menus.

Happy Rooster

CHINESE

(cnr of 7 Star Rd and Ceramics First St; ☎9.30am-9pm)

Cheapest decent Chinese restaurant in 798. Has picture menu, plus coffee and wi-fi.

At Cafe

CAFE

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎5978 9943; 798 Road; Mains from ¥38; ☎10am-Midnight)

798's first cafe and still a popular hangout for both artists and visitors. It serves Western standards like pasta and pizza, as well as good coffee (from ¥28). The outside terrace is fine for a drink in the evening.

Timezone 8

CAFE

(☎5978 9917; 798 Road; Mains from ¥55, sushi from ¥32; ☎7am-2am)

Cool cafe and the best spot to eat in 798, Timezone no longer has its attached bookshop but continues to pack people in with its huge sandwiches, burgers and all-day breakfasts, as well as a sushi bar. In the summer, the outside terrace gets jammed.

Getting There & Away

From Exit C of Dongzhimen subway station, take Bus 909 (¥2) for about 6km northeast to Dashanzi Lukou Nan, where you'll see the big red 798 sign. Buses run until 8.30pm.

A further extensive colony of art galleries can be found around 3km northeast of 798 Art District at **Caochangdi**. Bus 909 continues here.

Beihai Park & Xicheng North

Beihai Park

PARK

(Beihai Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍6403 1102; admission high/low season ¥10/5, through ticket high/low season ¥20/15; 🕒 park 6am-9pm, sights until 5pm; **S** Xisi or Nanluogu Xiang)

Beihai Park, northwest of the [Forbidden City](#), is largely occupied by the North Sea (Beihai), a huge lake that freezes in winter and blooms with lotuses in summer. Old folk dance together outside temple halls and come twilight, young couples cuddle on benches. It's a restful place to stroll around, rent a rowing boat in summer and watch calligraphers practising characters on paving slabs with fat brushes and water.

The site is associated with Kublai Khan's palace, Beijing's navel before the arrival of the Forbidden City. All that survives of the Khan's court is a large jar made of green jade in the [Round City](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (Tuancheng), near the southern entrance. Also within the Round City is the **Chengguang Hall** (Chengguang Dian), where a white jade statue of Sakyamuni from Myanmar (Burma) can be found, its arm wounded by the allied forces that swarmed through Beijing in 1900 to quash the Boxer Rebellion. At the time of writing, the Round City was closed to visitors.

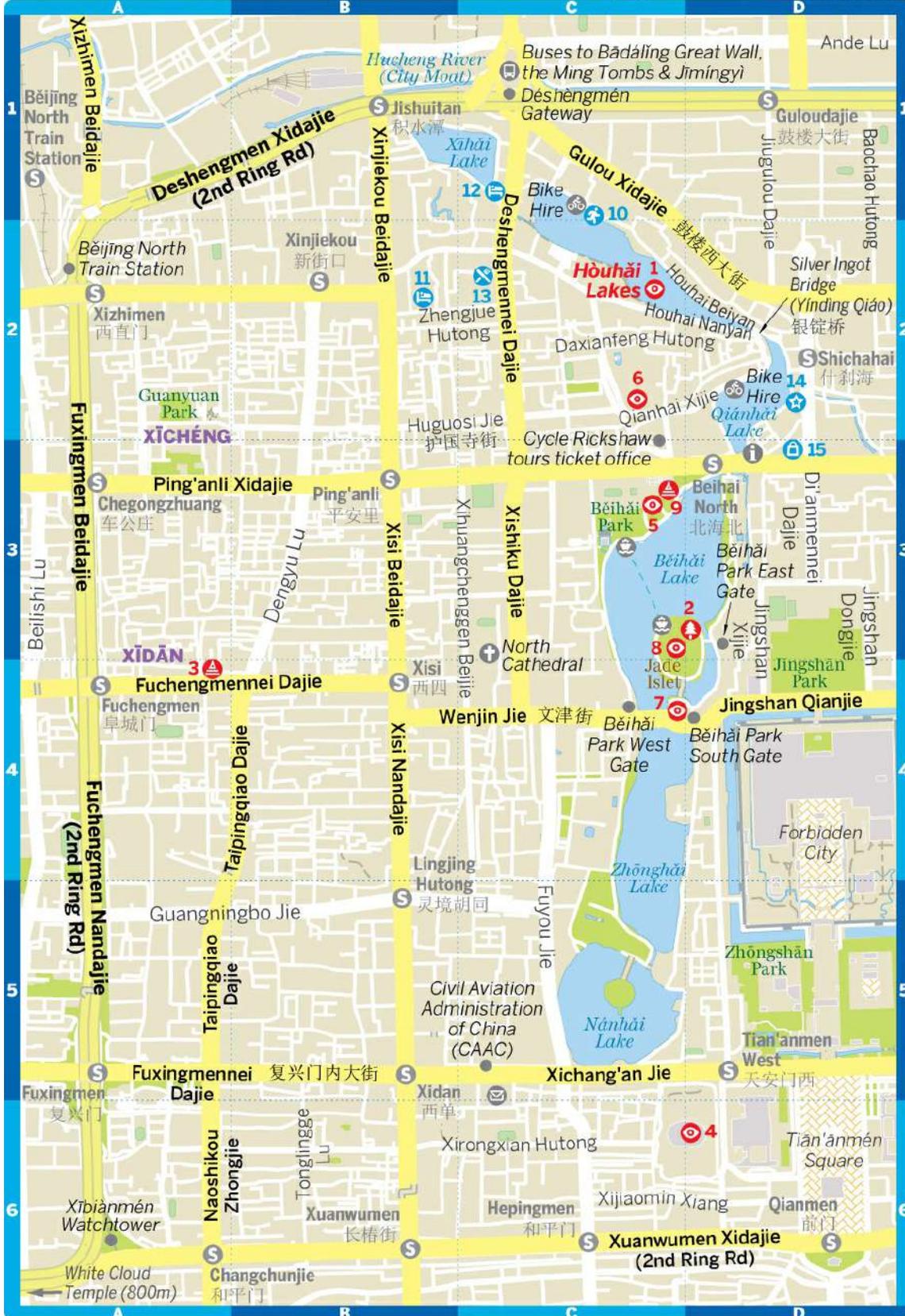
Attached to the North Sea, the South (Nanhai) and Middle (Zhonghai) Seas to the south lend their name to Zhongnanhai (literally 'Middle and South Seas'), the heavily-guarded compound less than a mile south of the park where the Chinese Communist Party's top leadership live.

Topping **Jade Islet** (Qiongdao) on the lake, the 36m-high Tibetan-style **White Dagoba** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (Baita) was built in 1651 for a visit by the Dalai Lama, and was rebuilt in 1741. Climb up to the dagoba via the **Yong'an Temple** (Yong'an Si).

Xitian Fanjing ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (Western Paradise), situated on the northern shore of the lake, is a lovely temple (admission to which is included in the park ticket). The nearby **Nine Dragon Screen** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (Jiulong Bi), a 5m-high and 27m-long spirit wall, is a glimmering stretch of coloured glazed tiles depicting coiling dragons, similar to its counterpart in the Forbidden City. West, along the shore, is the pleasant **Little Western**

Heaven (Xiao Xitian), a further shrine.

Běihǎi Park & Xīchéng North



Beihai Park & Xicheng North

Top Sights

1 [Houhai Lakes](#) C2

Sights

2 [Beihai Park](#) D3

3 [Miaoying Temple White Dagoba](#) A4

4 [National Centre for the Performing Arts \(NCPA\)](#) D6

5 [Nine Dragon Screen](#) C3

6 [Prince Gong's Residence](#) C2

7 [Round City](#) C4

8 [White Dagoba](#) C3

9 [Xitian Fanjing](#) C3

Activities, Courses & Tours

10 [Houhai Exercise Park](#) C1

Sleeping

11 [Graceland Yard](#) B2

[Red Lantern House](#) B2

12 [Sleepy Inn](#) C1

Eating

13 [Rundeli Food Market](#) C2

Entertainment

14 [East Shore Jazz Cafe](#) D2

Shopping

15 [Three Stone Kite Shop](#) D3

(Houhai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  Shichahai, Nanluogu Xiang or Jishuitan) **FREE**

Also known as Shichahai but mostly just referred to collectively as ‘Houhai’, the Houhai Lakes are comprised of three lakes: Qianhai (Front Lake), Houhai (Back Lake) and Xihai (West Lake). Together they are one of the capital’s favourite outdoor spots, heaving with locals and out-of-towners in the summer especially, and providing great people-spotting action.

During the day, senior citizens meander along, use the exercise machines scattered along the lakeshore, fish, fly kites or just sit and chew the fat. At night, the area turns into one of the more popular nightlife areas, as the restaurants, bars and cafes that surround the lakes spring into life. This is a night out, Chinese style, so be prepared for neon lights galore, and plenty of karaoke being blasted out onto the surrounding lanes. Meanwhile, as the midday sun disappears, the lakes become a mass of pedalos circling round and round.

It’s great fun, and even if you find parts of the lakes too hectic - **Silver Ingot Bridge** (Yinding Qiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is a major bottleneck - it’s easy enough to escape the crowds, by exploring the many *hutong* that run both east and west of the lakes, or to just venture further northwest towards the quieter Xihai Lake. It’s particularly good to cycle around and numerous places by the lakeshores hire out bikes by the hour (¥10 per hour, ¥200 deposit). There are many spots to rent pedalos too (¥80 per hour, ¥300 deposit), if you want to take to the water. Some locals swim in the lakes, even in midwinter!

The lakes look majestic in winter, when they freeze over and become the best place in Beijing to ice skate (usually for around six weeks in January and February). Qianhai Lake is most popular, although some people skate on Houhai Lake too; local vendors set themselves up with all the gear you need. You have to pay to enter the ice-skating area (weekday/weekend & evenings ¥15/¥20). If you want to rent ice skates and the like, you also have to buy a rental swipe card from kiosks by the entrance gates. The card will have a ¥200 deposit on it. You then get back any money you don’t use. Skates (¥20 per day), chair sleds (¥20 per day), ice bikes (¥40 per hour) and even ice

bumper cars (¥20 per 10 minutes) can all be rented. There is also a giant ice slide (¥5 per go).

Prince Gong's Residence

HOUSE, HISTORIC BUILDING

(Gongwang Fu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8328 8149; 14 Liuyin Jie; admission ¥40, tours incl short opera show & tea ceremony ¥70; 🕒 7.30am-4.30pm Mar-Oct, 8am-4pm Nov-Mar; 🚇 Ping'anli)

Reputed to be the model for the mansion in Cao Xueqin's 18th-century classic *Dream of the Red Mansions*, the residence is one of Beijing's largest private residential compounds. It remains one of the capital's more attractive retreats, decorated with rockeries, plants, pools, pavilions and elaborately carved gateways, although it can get very crowded with tour groups.

★ Capital Museum

MUSEUM

(Shoudu Bowuguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6339 3339; www.capitalmuseum.org.cn; 16 Fuxingmenwai Dajie; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚇 Muxidi) **FREE**

Behind the riveting good looks of the Capital Museum are some first-rate galleries, including a mesmerising collection of ancient Buddhist statues and a lavish exhibition of Chinese porcelain. There is also an interesting chronological history of Beijing, an exhibition that is dedicated to cultural relics of Peking opera, a fascinating Beijing Folk Customs exhibition, and displays of ancient bronzes, jade, calligraphy and paintings.

Bring your passport for free entry. The small teahouse on the 2nd floor sells tea sets (from ¥500) as well as serving tea (from ¥15 per cup).

Come out of Exit C1 of Muxidi subway station (Line 1), and you'll soon see the museum on your right (200m).

Miaoying Temple White Dagoba

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Miaoying Si Baita [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6616 0211; 171 Fuchengmennei Dajie; adult ¥20; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚇 Fuchengmen, then bus 13, 101, 102 or 103 to Baita Si)

Originally built in 1271, the Miaoying Temple slumbers beneath its huge, distinctive, chalk-white Yuan-dynasty pagoda, which towers over the

surrounding *hutong*. It was, when it was built, the tallest structure in Dadu (the Yuan-dynasty name for Beijing), and even today it is the tallest Tibetan-style pagoda in China.

The temple has been under extensive renovation for some years, and was still closed at the time of research, but previous highlights of a visit here included the diverse collection of Buddhist statuary: the Hall of the Great Enlightened One (Dajue Baodian), for example, glittered splendidly with hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist effigies. After you finish here, exit the temple and wander the tangle of local alleyways for street-market action and earthy shades of *hutong* life.

National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA)

CONCERT HALL

(Guojia Dajuyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6655 0000; www.chncpa.org/ens; admission ¥30, concert tickets ¥100-400; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Tian'anmen West)

Critics have compared it to an egg (although it looks more like a massive mercury bead), while modernists love it to bits. The NCPA, also known as the National Grand Theatre, is a surreal location in which to catch a show.

Examine the bulbous interior, including the titanic steel ribbing of interior bolsters (each of the 148 bolsters weighs 8 tonnes), and tour the three halls. See the website for details on concerts.

THE LOST CITY WALLS OF BEIJING

As Beijing develops relentlessly, it's increasingly hard to believe that as recently as 40-odd years ago the capital was still surrounded by the city walls that protected it from invaders for over 500 years.

Two walls once guarded Beijing: an outer wall and an inner wall. Now, nothing is left of the original outer wall, while only a few remnants of the inner city wall remain. Their absence is perhaps the most conspicuous chunk of lost heritage in Beijing.

A few gateways survive (and a few more have been rebuilt from scratch), but the most notable epitaph to the walls is the **Ming City Wall Ruins Park** (Ming Chengqiang Yizhi Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chongwenmen Dongdajie; 🕒 24hr;

📍 Chongwenmen). It runs next to a partly restored 2km-stretch of the Ming inner-city wall, which rises to a height of around 15m.

The park extends to the **Southeast Corner Watchtower** (Dongnan Jiaolou & Hongmen Hualang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6527 0574; www.redgategallery.com; admission ¥10; 🕒8am-5.30pm; 📍Jianguomen or Chongwenmen), a splendid Ming-dynasty fortification, punctured with 144 archer's windows. The highly impressive interior has some staggering carpentry. On the 1st floor is the superb Red Gate Gallery. An exhibition on the 2nd floor details the history of Beijing's city gates and includes some fascinating old photographs. On top of the wall, off to one side of the watchtower, there's a small cafe serving coffee and snacks.

WORTH A TRIP

WHITE CLOUD TEMPLE

★ White Cloud Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Baiyun Guan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6346 3887; 9 Baiyunguan Jie; adult ¥10; 🕒8.30am-4.30pm; 📍Muxidi)

Once the Taoist centre of northern China, **White Cloud Temple** was founded in AD 739, although most of the temple halls date from the Qing dynasty. It's a lively, huge and fascinating complex of shrines and courtyards, tended by Taoist monks with their hair gathered into topknots.

Near the temple entrance, worshippers rub a polished stone carving for good fortune. The halls at the temple, centre of operations for the Taoist Quanzhen School and abode of the China Taoist Association, are dedicated to a host of Taoist officials and marshals. The Hall of the Jade Emperor celebrates this most famous of Taoist deities, while Taoist housewives cluster earnestly at the Hall to the God of Wealth to divine their financial future. Depictions of the Taoist Hell festoon the walls of the Shrine Hall for the Saviour Worthy.

Drop by White Cloud Temple during the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) and you will be rewarded with the spectacle of a magnificent temple fair (miaohui).

The temple is about a 1km-walk from Muxidi subway station (Line 1). Come out of Exit C1, walk past the Capital Museum, then turn right down Baiyun Lu. After crossing the canal, take the second left, down Baiyunguan Jie, and the temple will be on your left.

Dashilar & Xicheng South

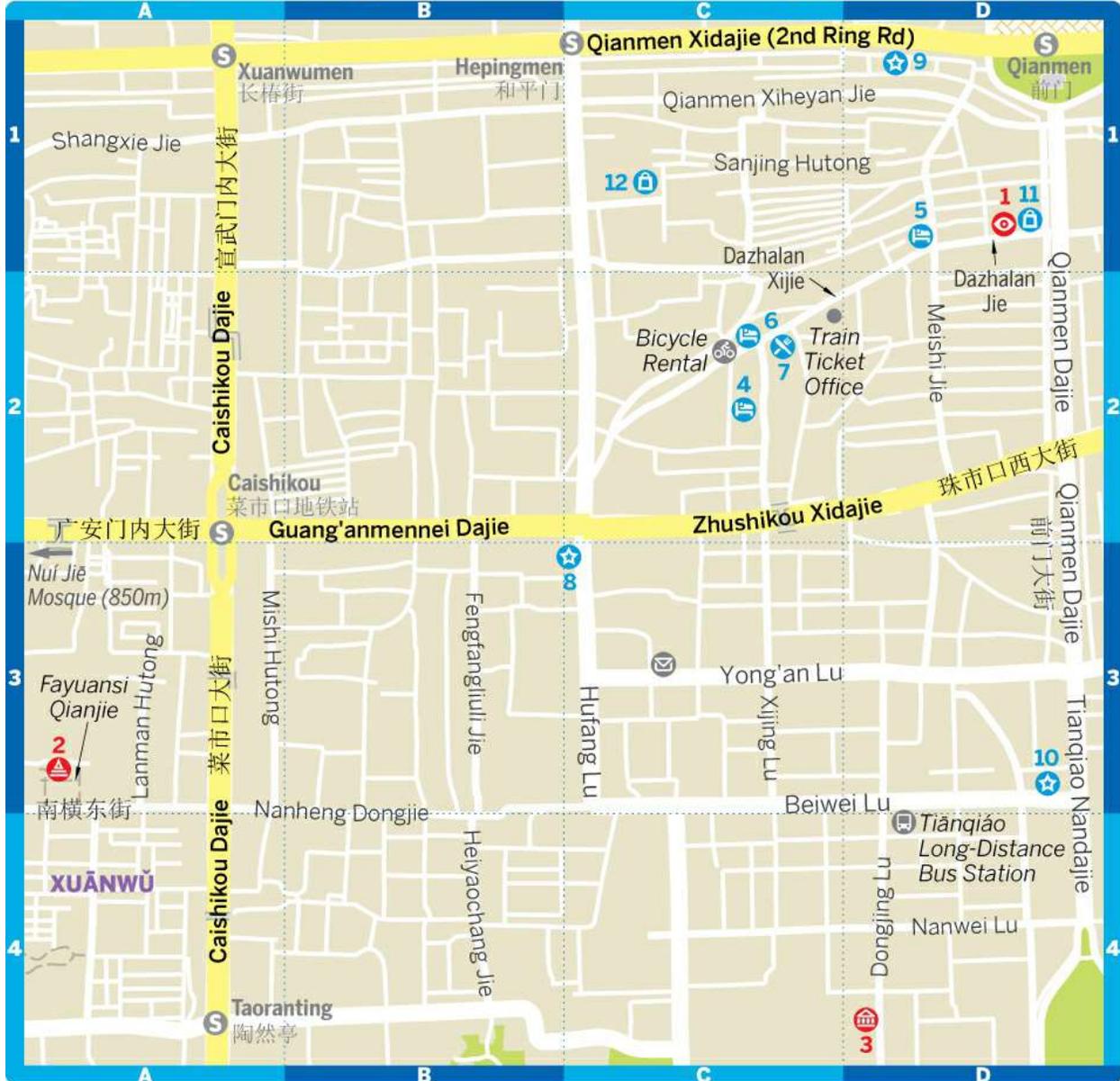
Dashilar

HISTORIC SHOPPING STREET

(Dazhalan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); [S](#) Qianmen)

This centuries-old shopping street, also known as Dazhalan Jie, is just west of Qianmen Dajie. While a misjudged makeover has sadly robbed it of much of its charm, many of the shops have been in business here for hundreds of years and still draw many locals. Some specialise in esoteric goods – ancient herbal remedies, handmade cloth shoes – and most make for intriguing window shopping.

Dashilar & Xichéng South



Dashilar & Xicheng South

Sights

- 1 [Dashilar](#) D1

- 2 [Fayuan Temple](#) A3

- 3 [Xiannong Altar & Beijing Ancient Architecture Museum](#) D4

Sleeping

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| 4 | Leo Courtyard | C2 |
| 5 | Qianmen Hostel | D1 |
| 6 | Three-Legged Frog Hostel | C2 |
|  Eating | | |
| 7 | Liu Family Noodles | C2 |
|  Entertainment | | |
| 8 | Huguang Guild Hall | C3 |
| 9 | Lao She Teahouse | D1 |
| 10 | Tianqiao Acrobatics Theatre | D3 |
|  Shopping | | |
| 11 | Ruifuxiang | D1 |
| 12 | Yuehaixuan Musical Instrument Store | C1 |

Niujie Mosque

MOSQUE

(Niujie Libai Si [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6353 2564; 88 Niu Jie; adult ¥10, admission for Muslims free;  8.30am-sunset;  Caishikou)

Dating back to the 10th century and lively with worshippers on Fridays (it's closed to non-Muslims at prayer times), Beijing's largest mosque is the centre of the community for the 10,000 or so Hui Chinese Muslims who live nearby. Look out for the **Building for Observing the Moon** (Wangyuelou), from where the lunar calendar was calculated.

Fayuan Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Fayuan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 7 Fayuansi Qianjie; adult ¥5;  8.30-4pm;  Caishikou)

Infused with an air of reverence and devotion, this lovely temple dates back to the 7th century. The temple follows the typical Buddhist layout, with drum and bell towers. Do hunt out the unusual **copper-cast Buddha**, seated atop four further Buddhas ensconced on a huge bulb of myriad effigies in the Pilu Hall (the fourth hall).

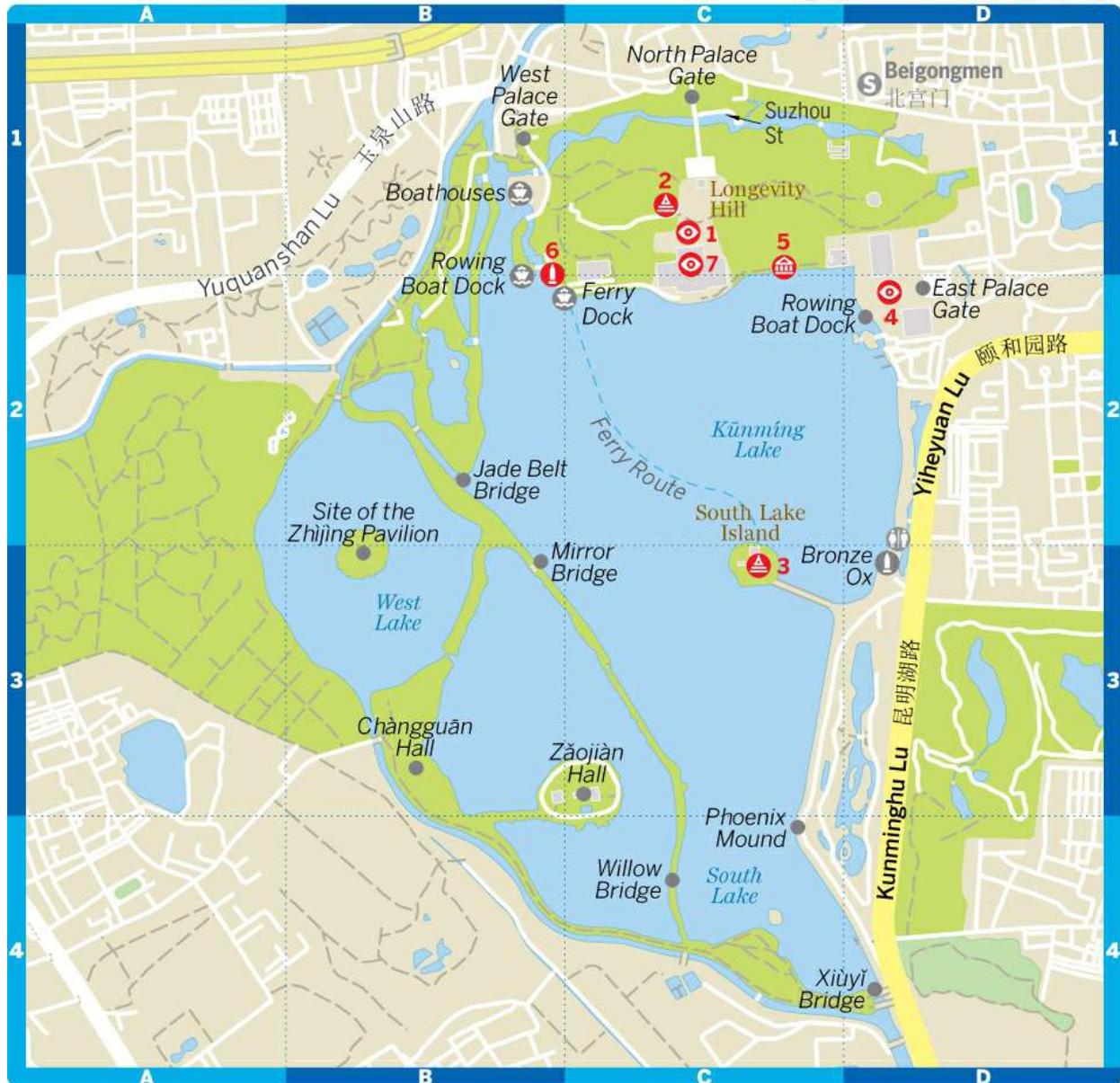
Xiannong Altar & Beijing Ancient Architecture Museum

MUSEUM

(Xiannongtan & Beijing Gudai Jianzhu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6304 5608; 21 Dongjing Lu; admission ¥15; 🕒9am-4pm; 📍Taoranting)

This altar – to the west of the Temple of Heaven – was the site of solemn imperial ceremonies and sacrificial offerings. Located within what is called the **Hall of Jupiter** (Taisui Dian) – the most magnificent surviving hall – is the excellent Beijing Ancient Architecture Museum, which informatively narrates the elements of traditional Chinese building techniques.

Summer Palace



Summer Palace

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Buddhist Fragrance Pavilion | C1 |
| 2 | Buddhist Temple of the Sea of Wisdom | C1 |
| | Cloud Dispelling Hall | C1 |
| 3 | Dragon King Temple | C3 |
| 4 | Hall of Benevolence and Longevity | D2 |

[5 Long Corridor](#)

C1

[6 Marble Boat](#)

B1

[7 Summer Palace](#)

C1

Summer Palace & Haidian

Summer Palace

HISTORIC SITE

(Yihe Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 19 Xinjian Gongmen; ticket ¥20, through ticket ¥50, audio guide ¥40; 🕒 7am-7pm, sights 8am-5pm summer, 8.30am-4.30pm winter; 🚶 Xiyuan or Beigongmen)

As mandatory a Beijing sight as the Great Wall or the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace was the playground for emperors fleeing the suffocating summer torpor of the old imperial city. A marvel of design, the palace – with its huge lake and hilltop views – offers a pastoral escape into the landscapes of traditional Chinese painting. It merits an entire day's exploration, although a (high-paced) morning or afternoon exploring the temples, gardens, pavilions, bridges and corridors may suffice.

The domain had long been a royal garden before being considerably enlarged and embellished by Emperor Qianlong in the 18th century. He marshalled a 100,000-strong army of labourers to deepen and expand **Kunming Lake** (Kunming Hu), and reputedly surveyed imperial navy drills from a hilltop perch.

Anglo-French troops vandalised the palace during the Second Opium War (1856–60). Empress Dowager Cixi launched into a refit in 1888 with money earmarked for a modern navy; the marble boat at the northern edge of the lake was her only nautical, albeit quite unsinkable, concession. Foreign troops, angered by the Boxer Rebellion, had another go at torching the Summer Palace in 1900, prompting further restoration work. By 1949 the palace had once more fallen into disrepair, eliciting a major overhaul.

Glittering Kunming Lake swallows up three-quarters of the park, overlooked by **Longevity Hill** (Wanshou Shan). The principal structure is the

Hall of Benevolence and Longevity (Renshou Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), by the east gate, housing a hardwood throne and attached to a courtyard decorated with bronze animals, including the mythical qilin (a hybrid animal that only appeared on earth at times of harmony). Unfortunately, the hall is barricaded off so you will have to peer in.

An elegant stretch of woodwork along the northern shore, the **Long Corridor** (Chang Lang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is trimmed with a plethora of paintings, while the slopes and crest of Longevity Hill behind are adorned with Buddhist temples. Slung out uphill on a north-south axis, the **Buddhist Fragrance Pavilion** (Foxiang Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and the **Cloud Dispelling Hall** (Paiyun Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) are linked by corridors. Crowning the peak is the **Buddhist Temple of the Sea of Wisdom** (Zhihui Hai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) tiled with effigies of Buddha, many with obliterated heads.

Cixi's **marble boat** (Qingyuan Chuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) sits immobile on the north shore, south of some fine **Qing boathouses** (chuan wu [GOOGLE MAP](#)). When the lake is not frozen, you can traverse Kunming Lake by ferry to **South Lake Island** (Nanhu Dao), where Cixi went to beseech the **Dragon King Temple** (Longwang Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) for rain in times of drought. A graceful 17-arch bridge spans the 150m to the eastern shore of the lake. In warm weather, pedal boats are also available from the dock.

Try to do a circuit of the lake along the West Causeway to return along the east shore (or vice versa). It gets you away from the crowds, the views are gorgeous and it's a great cardiovascular workout. Based on the Su Causeway in Hangzhou, and lined with willow and mulberry trees, the causeway kicks off just west of the boathouses. With its delightful hump, the grey and white marble Jade Belt Bridge dates from the reign of emperor Qianlong and crosses the point where the **Jade River** (Yuhe) enters the lake (when it flows).

Towards the North Palace Gate, **Suzhou Street** (Suzhou Jie) is an entertaining and light-hearted diversion of riverside walkways, shops and

eateries, which are designed to mimic the famous Jiangsu canal town.

Old Summer Palace

HISTORIC SITE

(Yuanming Yuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 28 Qinghua Xilu; adult ¥10, through ticket ¥25, map ¥6; 🕒 7am-6pm; 📍 Yuanmingyuan)

Located northwest of the city centre, the Old Summer Palace was laid out in the 12th century. The ever-capable Jesuits were later employed by Emperor Qianlong to fashion European-style palaces for the gardens, incorporating elaborate fountains and baroque statuary. In 1860, during the Second Opium War, British and French troops torched and looted the palace, an event forever inscribed in Chinese history books as a low point in China's humiliation by foreign powers.

Most of the wooden palace buildings were burned down in the process and little remains, but the hardier Jesuit-designed European Palace buildings were made of stone, and a melancholic tangle of broken columns and marble chunks survives. Note: to see these remains, you need to buy the more expensive through ticket.

The subdued marble ruins of the **Palace Buildings Scenic Area** (Xiyanglou Jingqu) can be mulled over in the **Eternal Spring Garden** (Changchun Yuan) in the northeast of the park, near the east gate. There were once more than 10 buildings here, designed by Giuseppe Castiglione and Michael Benoist. The buildings were only partially destroyed during the 1860 Anglo-French looting and the structures apparently remained usable for quite some time afterwards. However, the ruins were gradually picked over and carted away by local people all the way up to the 1970s.

The **Great Fountain Ruins** (Dashuifa) themselves are considered the best-preserved relics. Built in 1759, the main building was fronted by a lion-head fountain. Standing opposite is the **Guanshuifa**, five large stone screens embellished with European carvings of military flags, armour, swords and guns. The screens were discovered in the grounds of Peking University in the 1970s and later restored to their original positions. Just east of the Great Fountain Ruins stood a four-pillar archway, chunks of which remain.

West of the Great Fountain Ruins are the vestiges of the **Haiyantang Reservoir** (Haiyantang Xushuichi Taiji), where the water for the impressive fountains was stored in a tower and huge water-lifting devices were employed. The metal reservoir was commonly called the Tin Sea (Xihai). Also known as the Water Clock, the **Haiyantang**, where 12 bronze human statues with animal heads jetted water for two hours in a 12-hour sequence, was constructed in 1759. The 12 animal heads from this apparatus ended up in collections abroad and Beijing is attempting to retrieve them (four can now be seen at the Poly Art Museum). Just west of here is the **Fangwaiguan**, a building that was turned into a mosque for an imperial concubine. An artful reproduction of a former labyrinth called the **Garden of Yellow Flowers** is also nearby.

The palace gardens cover a huge area – 2.5km from east to west – so be prepared for some walking. Besides the ruins, there's the western section, the Perfection & Brightness Garden (Yuanming Yuan) and, in the southern compound, the 10,000 Springs Garden (Wanchun Yuan).

Bus 331 goes from the south gate (which is by Exit B of Yuanmingyuan subway station) to the east gate of the Summer Palace before continuing to the Botanic Gardens and eventually terminating at Fragrant Hills Park.

Beijing Botanic Gardens

GARDENS

(Beijing Zhiwuyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); adult ¥5, through ticket ¥50; 🕒 6am-8pm summer (last entry 7pm), 7.30am-5pm winter (last entry 4pm); 🚏 331, 📍 Xiyuan or Yuanmingyuan, then)

Exploding with blossom in spring, the well-tended Beijing Botanic Gardens, set against the backdrop of the Western Hills and about 1km northeast of Fragrant Hills Park, makes for a pleasant outing among bamboo fronds, pines, orchids, lilacs and China's most extensive botanic collection.

Containing a rainforest house, the standout **Beijing Botanical Gardens Conservatory** (Beijing Zhiwuyuan Wenshi; admission with through ticket; 🕒 8am-4.30pm) bursts with 3000 different varieties of plants.

About a 15-minute walk from the front gate (follow the signs), but still within the grounds of the gardens, is **Sleeping Buddha Temple** (Wofo Si;

adult ¥5, or entry with through ticket; 🕒 8am-4.30pm summer, 8.30am-4pm winter). The temple, first built during the Tang dynasty, houses a huge reclining effigy of Sakyamuni weighing 54 tonnes; it's said to have 'enslaved 7000 people' in its casting. Sakyamuni is depicted on the cusp of death, before his entry into nirvana. On each side of Buddha are arrayed some sets of gargantuan shoes, gifts to Sakyamuni from various emperors in case he went for a stroll.

On the eastern side of the gardens is the **Cao Xueqin Memorial** (Cao Xueqin Jinianguan; 39 Zhengbaiqi; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm summer, 9am-4pm winter), where Cao Xueqin lived in his latter years. Cao (1715–63) is credited with penning the classic *Dream of the Red Mansions*, a vast and prolix family saga set in the Qing period. Making a small buzz in the west of the gardens is the little **China Honey Bee Museum** (Zhongguo Mifeng Bowuguan), open 8.30am to 4.30pm March to October.

WORTH A TRIP

FRAGRANT HILLS PARK

Fragrant Hills Park

PARK

(Xiang Shan Gongyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); summer/winter ¥10/5, through ticket ¥15; 🕒 6am-7pm; 📍 331, **S** Xiyuan or Yuanmingyuan, then)

Easily within striking distance of the Summer Palace are Beijing's Western Hills (Xi Shan), another former villa-resort of the emperors. The part of Xi Shan closest to Beijing is known as Fragrant Hills Park. Beijingers flock here in autumn when the maple leaves saturate the hillsides in great splashes of red.

Scramble up the slopes to the top of **Incense-Burner Peak** (Xianglu Feng), or take the **chairlift** (one way/return ¥60/120, 9.30am to 3.30pm). From the peak you get an all-embracing view of the countryside, and you can leave the crowds behind by hiking further into the Western Hills.

Near the north gate of Fragrant Hills Park, but still within the park, is the excellent **Azure Clouds Temple** (Biyun Si; adult ¥10; 🕒 8am-4.30pm), which dates back to the Yuan dynasty. The **Mountain Gate Hall** (Shanmen) contains two vast protective deities: Heng and Ha, beyond which is a small courtyard and the drum and bell towers, leading to a hall with a wonderful statue of Milefo – it's bronze, but coal-black with age. Only his big toe shines from numerous inquisitive fingers.

The **Sun Yatsen Memorial Hall** (Sun Zhongshan Jinian Tang) contains a statue

and a glass coffin donated by the USSR on the death of Mr Sun (the Republic of China's first president) in 1925. At the very back is the marble **Vajra Throne Pagoda** (Jingang Baozuo Ta), where Sun Yatsen was interred after he died, before his body was moved to its final resting place in Nanjing. The **Hall of Arhats** (Luohan Tang) is well worth visiting; it contains 500 luohan statues (those freed from the cycle of rebirth), each crafted with an individual personality.

Southwest of the Azure Clouds Temple is the Tibetan-style **Temple of Brilliance** (Zhao Miao), and not far away is a glazed-tile pagoda. Both survived visits by foreign troops intent on sacking the area in 1860, and then in 1900.

There are dozens of cheap restaurants and snack stalls on the approach road to the north gate of the park, making this your best bet for lunch out of any of the sights in this part of the city.

At the time of writing it was expected that sometime after 2015 the subway will extend here via the Summer Palace and Botanic Gardens.

Activities

Cycling

Beijing is flat as a pancake and almost every road has a dedicated cycle lane, meaning cycling is easily the best way to see the city; it's especially fun to explore *hutong* areas by bike. Most hostels rent bikes. There are also bike rental depots around the Houhai Lakes. Look out too for the city's **bike-sharing scheme**. Details of how to use it can be found on the very useful, independently created website www.beijingbikeshare.com.

Essentially, you need to take your passport, a ¥400 deposit and an ordinary Beijing travel card (with at least ¥30 credit on it) to one of five bike-share kiosks (open 9.30 to 11.30am and 1.30pm to 4pm, Monday to Friday) in order to register. The two most handy kiosks are by Exit A of Dongzhimen subway station and by Exit A2 of Tiantandongmen subway station. Once registered, you can swipe your travel card to unlock any bike any time at one of more than 100 bike stations scattered across the city, before returning it to any other bike station. The first hour is free. Subsequent hours are ¥1.

(Kangduo Zixingche Zulin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6526 5857; www.bikebeijing.com; 34 Donghuangchenggen Nanjie, 🕒 9am-6pm; 📍 China Museum of Art)

Rents a range of good-quality bikes, including mountain bikes (¥200), road bikes (¥400) and ordinary city bikes (¥100), and runs guided bike tours around the city (half-day tours from ¥300 per person) and beyond, including trips to the Great Wall (¥900 to ¥1800 per person).

Kite Flying

A quintessential Chinese pastime, kite flying is hugely popular in Beijing. Top spots include the northeast portion of Temple of Heaven Park and the east gate of Ditan Park. Sadly, you are no longer allowed to fly kites in Tian'anmen Square.

Three Stone Kite Shop

KITES

(Sanshizhai Fengzheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8404 4505; 25 Di'anmen Xidajie, 🕒 9am-9pm; 📍 Nanluogu Xiang)

Kites by appointment to the former Qing emperors; the great-grandfather of the owner of this friendly store used to make the kites for the Chinese royal family. Most of the kites here are handmade and hand-painted, although the selection is limited these days, now that the owner uses half his shop to display other, admittedly attractive, souvenirs.

Massage

Dragonfly Therapeutic Retreat

MASSAGE TREATMENTS

(Youting Baojian Huisuo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6527 9368; www.dragonfly.net.cn; 60 Donghuamen Dajie, 🕒 11am-11pm; 📍 Tian'anmen East)

Ideal for a foot massage after hours of walking around the Forbidden City, this popular boutique has a variety of treatments designed to help you de-stress. The two-hour Hangover Relief Massage (¥358) is self-explanatory, but for real pampering go for the Royal Delight (¥538), in which two masseurs

get to work at the same time. A standard, hour-long body or foot massage costs ¥188.

Mao'er Laoli Health Club

MASSAGE

(Mao'er Laoli Zuliao Baojian Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 3 Mao'er Hutong; 🕒 11am-midnight)

Located intriguingly inside part of an old courtyard off historic Mao'er Hutong, this small massage parlour is great value. Half-hour foot massages are just ¥49, while one-hour full-body massages start from ¥89. They also provide cupping therapy (¥39) and, if you dare, Tibetan 'fire-dragon' therapy (¥59) – actual flames are used. Not much English spoken, but their massage menu has English translations.

The sign outside No 3 Mao'er Hutong is in Chinese only, but has the word 'massage' on it. Walk through the gateway, and continue on through a beautiful old carved gateway into the back courtyard where you'll find the place on your left.

Swimming

Locals swim daily in the [Houhai Lakes](#) – even in icy midwinter! If that's not clean enough for you, head to the outdoor leisure pools at [Qingnian Hu Park](#) (Qingnian Hu Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Qingnianhu Lu, off Andingmenwai Dajie, adult/child ¥40/30; 🕒 6am-10pm May-Sep; **S** Andingmen), [Tuanjiehu Park](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) or [Chaoyang Park](#) (Chaoyang Gongyuan).

Happy Magic Water Park

SWIMMING

(Shuilifang Xishui Leyuan Olympic Green, off Beichen Lu, water park entrance adult/child ¥200/160, swimming only ¥50; 🕒 10am-8pm; **S** Olympic Green)

Unlike most of the 2008 Olympics venues, Beijing's National Aquatics Centre, aka the Water Cube, has found a new lease of life post-Olympics. The otherworldly, bubble-like structure now houses Beijing's largest indoor water park. It's a fave with children, who can negotiate neon plastic slides, tunnels, water jets and pools, all set alongside elaborate, surreal underwater

styling.

Table Tennis

China's national sport can be played all over the capital at free-to-use, outdoor tables in parks, squares and housing estates. If you fancy being on the wrong end of a ping-pong thrashing, head to **Jingshan Table Tennis Park** (Dongcheng Quanmin Jianshen Diyi Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jingshan Houjie,

 6am-10pm;  Nanluoguxiang or Beihai North). **Houhai Exercise Park** ([MAP](#)

[GOOGLE MAP](#)) also has tables. Pick up a cheap table tennis bat (paddle) on the 2nd floor of **Tian Yi Goods Market** (Tianyi Shangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 158 Di'anmen Waidajie,  9am-7.30pm;  Shichahai).

Courses

Chinese Language

Culture Yard

LANGUAGE COURSES

(Tianjing Yueyang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  8404 4166; www.cultureyard.net; 10 Shique Hutong,  10am-7pm, closed Sun;  Beixinqiao)

Tucked away down a *hutong*, this cultural centre focuses on Chinese classes. Its main program is a six-week course (¥3600), but you can tailor courses to suit your needs. Its 'Survival Chinese' course (four two-hour classes for ¥400) is ideal for tourists.

Martial Arts

Milun Kungfu School

MARTIAL ARTS

(Beijing Milun Chuantong Wushu Xuexiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  138 1170 6568; www.kungfuchina.com; 33 Xitangzi Hutong, per class ¥100, 8-class card ¥600;  7-8.30pm Mon & Thu, 5-6.30pm Sat & Sun;  Dengshikou)

Runs classes in various forms of traditional Chinese martial arts from a

historic courtyard near Wangfujing shopping district. In summer, typically in August, classes are held in Ritan Park. Has set-time drop-in classes, but can arrange individual schedules too. Instruction is in Chinese, but with an English translator.

Cuisine

Black Sesame Kitchen

COOKING COURSES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 136 9147 4408; www.blacksesamekitchen.com; 3 Heizhima Hutong, off Nanluogu Xiang;)

Runs popular cooking classes with a variety of recipes from across China. No sign; walk-in guests are not encouraged as this is a residential courtyard. Pre-booking essential. You can also eat here (set menu ¥300 per person) – it gets rave reviews – but again you must pre-book.

The Hutong

CULTURAL CENTRE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 159 0104 6127; www.thehutong.com; 1 Jiudaowan Zhongxiang Hutong, off Shique Hutong, 🕒 9am-9pm; 📍 Beixinqiao)

Hidden down a maze of alleys, this well-run cultural centre organises a variety of classes and tours, but the main speciality is Asian cuisine.

Sleeping

Hutong-rich Dongcheng North is Beijing's most pleasant neighbourhood to stay in, although Dongcheng Central has some great digs too. Dashilar, in Xicheng South, is ground zero for budget backpackers, although there are good hostels throughout the capital.

Frustratingly, some of the very cheapest hotels do not accept foreigners.

If you want familiar Western-friendly luxury, international five-star hotel chains such as **Intercontinental** (www.ihg.com), **Hilton** (www.hilton.com), **Hyatt** (www.hyatt.com), **Westin** (www.starwoodhotels.com) and **Ritz-Carlton** (www.ritzcarlton.com) are well represented in Beijing.

Forbidden City & Dongcheng Central

Feel Inn

HOSTEL

(Feifan Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 139 1040 9166, 6528 7418; beijingfeelinn@gmail.com;
2 Ciqiku Hutong, off Nanheyan Dajie; dm ¥50-80, tw ¥240-300; 🌐 @ 📶)

A small, understated hostel with a hidden, backstreet location, Feel Inn is tucked away amongst the alleys containing the little-known Pudu Temple, and yet is just a short walk from big-hitters such as the Forbidden City, Tian'anmen Sq and the shops on Wangfujing Dajie. Has simple, clean rooms, a small bar-restaurant, and wi-fi throughout.

Beijing Saga International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Beijing Shijia Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6527 2773;
www.sagayouthhostelbeijing.cn; 9 Shijia Hutong, dm ¥70, d with/without bathroom from ¥259/200, tr
¥319; 🌐 @ 📶; 🚶 Dengshikou)

Enjoying an interesting location on historic Shijia Hutong, this friendly hostel is a grey block, but the inside compensates with some character and staff members are helpful towards travellers. Rooms are basic but well kept, and it has a decent restaurant-cum-bar. Rents bikes (¥50) and does Great Wall trips.

Beijing City Central International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Beijing Chengshi Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8511 5050, 6525 8066;
www.centralhostel.com; 1 Beijingzhan Jie, 4-8 bed dm ¥60, s/d with shared bathroom ¥138/178, d ¥298-
348; 🚶 🌐 @ 📶; 🚶 Beijing Railway Station)

The first youth hostel you hit after exiting Beijing Train Station, this place is a decent choice if you can't be bothered to lug your heavy rucksack to nicer parts of the city. Rooms are pretty basic, but clean and spacious enough, and there's a large bar-cafe area with free wi-fi, internet terminals, pool tables and Western food.

★ Jingshan Garden Hotel

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Jingshan Huayuan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8404 7979;

www.jingshangardenhotel.com; 68 Sanyanjing Hutong, off Jingshan Dongjie; r ¥650-750; 📶 @ 📶)

This delightful, unfussy, two-storey guesthouse has bright spacious rooms surrounding a large, peaceful, flower-filled courtyard. First-floor rooms are pricier, but brighter than the ground-floor ones, and some have views of Jingshan Park from their bathrooms. Walking down Sanyuanjing Hutong from the direction of Jingshan Park, turn right down the first alleyway, and the hotel is at the end.

City Walls Courtyard

HOSTEL

(Chengqiang Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6402 7805; www.beijingcitywalls.com; 57 Nianzi

Hutong, dm/s/tw ¥100/240/480; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Nanluoguxiang)

This quiet hostel is on the pricey side for sure, but it's still an attractive choice because of its peaceful courtyard atmosphere and fabulous *hutong* location – authentically hidden away from more touristy areas in one of the city's most historic neighbourhoods. All rooms have private bathrooms.

The maze of alleyways can be disorientating: from Jingshan Houjie, look for the *hutong* opening just east of Jingshan Table Tennis Park. Walk up the *hutong* and follow it around to the right and then left; the hostel is on the left-hand side.

Hulu Hotel

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Hulu Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6543 9229; www.thehuluhotel.com; 91 Yanyue Hutong,

off Dongsu Nandajie; r ¥798, ¥898 & ¥1198)

A stylish new addition to Beijing's ever-growing brood of courtyard hotels, Hulu's converted *hutong* space is minimalist throughout, with cool grey-painted wood beams, slate-tiled bathrooms and a cleverly renovated courtyard that combines its old-Beijing roots with a modern, comfortable design. The atmosphere is laid-back, and the young staff speak excellent English. There are three grades of room (size increases with price), all of which have large double beds – no twins.

★ Temple Hotel

HERITAGE HOTEL

(Dongjing Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8401 5680; www.thetemplehotel.com; 23 Shatan Beijie, off Wusi Dajie; d ¥2000 ste ¥3000-4500)

Unrivalled by anything else on the Beijing hotel scene, this unique heritage hotel forms part of a renovation project that was recognised by Unesco for its conservation efforts. A team spent five years renovating what was left of Zhizhu Si (Temple of Wisdom), a part-abandoned, 250-year-old Buddhist temple, and slowly transformed it into one of the most alluring places to stay in the capital.

★ Cote Cour

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Beijing Yanyue Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6523 3958; www.hotelcotecourbj.com; 70 Yanyue Hutong, d/ste incl breakfast ¥1166/1995; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Dengshikou)

With a calm, serene atmosphere and a lovely magnolia courtyard, this 14-room *hutong* hotel makes a charming place to rest your head. The decor is exquisite – especially in the suite – and there’s plenty of space to relax in the courtyard or on the extensive rooftop – perfect for a candle-lit evening drink.

Drum Tower & Dongcheng North

Beijing Downtown Backpackers

HOSTEL

(Dongtang Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8400 2429; www.backpackingchina.com; 85 Nanluogu Xiang, dm ¥75-85, s ¥160, tw 160-210, ste ¥300; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Beixinqiao)

Downtown Backpackers is Nanluogu Xiang’s original youth hostel and it hasn’t forgotten its roots. Rooms are basic, therefore cheap, but are kept clean and tidy, and staff members are fully plugged in to the needs of Western travellers. Rents bikes (per day ¥20) and runs recommended hiking trips to the Great Wall (¥280), plus a range of other city trips. Rates include breakfast.

Nostalgia Hotel

HOTEL

(Shiguang Manbu Huaijiu Zhuti Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6403 2288;

www.sgmbhotel.com; 46 Fangjia Hutong; r summer ¥388-408, winter ¥360-380)

A good-value option if you don't fancy staying in a youth hostel, this funky hotel is housed in a small arts zone on trendy Fangjia Hutong. Rooms are dotted with retro knick-knacks, and have a different hand-painted mural in each. The bathrooms sparkle.

Staff on reception speak English, and there's lift access, but no restaurant. To find it, enter the small arts zone named after its address (46 Fangjia Hutong) and walk to the far left corner of the complex.

Confucius International Youth Hostel

HUTONG HOSTEL

(Yongshengxuan Qingnian Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6402 2082; 38 Wudaoying Hutong; dm/s/d/tw ¥80/120/138/158)

One of the cheapest places that's open to foreigners in this area, Confucius has a handful of simple, no-frills rooms off a small, covered courtyard. No restaurant.

161 Lama Temple Courtyard Hotel

COURTYARD HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8401 5027; beijing161lthotel@hotmail.com; 46 Beixinqiao Santiao; r ¥440 & 550)

This hotel-cum-hostel, located on a *hutong* which comes alive with restaurants in the evening, has 11 rooms, each themed on a different tourist sight in Beijing. Rooms have a huge photo-mural to match their theme, and are small but spotless; the bathrooms likewise. The higher-category rooms come with a traditional wooden tea-drinking table, which can double up as an extra single bed.

There's a small cafe in reception and some cute courtyard seating.

★ Orchid

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Lanhua Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8404 4818; www.theorchidbeijing.com; 65 Baochao Hutong, d ¥700-1200; 📶 @ 📶; 📶 Gulou Dajie)

Opened by a Canadian guy and a Tibetan woman, this place may lack the history of other courtyard hotels, but it's been renovated into a beautiful space, with a peaceful courtyard and some rooftop seating with distant views of the Drum and Bell Towers. Rooms are doubles only, and are small, but are tastefully decorated and come with Apple TV home entertainment systems.

They also do Great Wall tours, and can organise taxis for city tours (half-/full day ¥400/600) or Great Wall trips (¥700). Hard to spot, the Orchid is down an unnamed, shoulder-width alleyway opposite Mr Shi's Dumplings.

★ DuGe

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Duge Siheyuan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6445 7463; www.dugecourtyard.com; 26 Qianyuan Ensi Hutong, r small/large ¥897/1817; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Nanluoguxiang or Beixinqiao)

This 19th-century former residence was originally home to a Qing-dynasty minister before being converted by a Belgian-Chinese couple into an exquisite designer courtyard hotel. Each of the six rooms is decorated uniquely with modern and artistic touches blended with overall themes of traditional China. Some of the wood furniture – four-poster beds, decorative Chinese screens – is beautiful.

Rooms are set around small, romantic, bamboo-lined courtyards, but space is at a premium – the small rooms really are small.

★ Courtyard 7

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Siheyuan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6406 0777; www.courtyard7.com; 7 Qiangulouyuan Hutong, off Nanluogu Xiang; r ¥900-1500; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Nanluoguxiang)

Immaculate rooms, decorated with traditional Chinese furniture, face onto a series of different-sized, 400-year-old courtyards, which over the years have been home to government ministers, rich merchants and even an army general. Despite the historical narrative, rooms still come with modern comforts such as underfloor heating, broadband internet, wi-fi, and cable TV.

The *hutong* location – down a quiet alley, but very close to trendy Nanluogu Xiang – is also a winner. Breakfast included.

Temple of Heaven Park & Dongcheng South

Emperor

HOTEL

(Huangjia Yizhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6701 7791; www.theemperor.com.cn; 87 Xianyukou St, Qianmen Commercial Centre, r ¥1200; 📶 📶 📶; 📍 Qianmen)

Brand new, this modernist hotel comes with a spa and a roof-top pool that enables you to laze in the sun while enjoying fine views over nearby Tian'anmen Sq. The cool, all-white rooms aren't huge, but the price is reasonable for a hotel of this quality and the location is perfect. Service is attentive and the atmosphere laid-back.

Sanlitun & Chaoyang

Sanlitun Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Sanlitun Qingnian Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5190 9288; www.itisbeijing.com; Chunxiu Lu, 4/6 bed dm ¥80/70, d/tw with/without bathroom ¥280/220; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Dongshishitiao or Dongzhimen)

Sanlitun's only decent youth hostel, this place has efficient, amiable staff and is always busy. Rooms and dorms are functional and clean, although the shared bathrooms are a little pungent. Great Wall tours are available, as is bike hire (¥30 per day). There's an outdoor terrace for the summer and a good-value bar-restaurant area with a pool table.

Holiday Inn Express

HOTEL

(Zhixuan Jiari Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6416 9999; www.holidayinnexpress.com.cn; 1 Chunxiu Lu, r ¥598; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Dongshishitiao or Dongzhimen)

There are 350 comfortable rooms at this well-located place with more personality than most chain hotels. Bright, pastel-coloured, clean rooms come with excellent beds (we love the big puffy pillows!). All are equipped with wide-screen TVs, free wi-fi and internet access via a cable. The lobby has Apple computers for the use of guests. Staff members are friendly and speak

some English.

★ Opposite House Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Yushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6417 6688; www.theoppositehouse.com; Bldg 1, Village, 11 Sanlitun Lu, 1 r ¥2300-3100; 🚶 🏠 @ 📶 🚰; 📍 Tuanjiehu)

With see-all open-plan bathrooms, American oak bath tubs, lovely mood lighting, underfloor heating, sliding doors, complimentary beers, TVs on extendable arms and a metal basin swimming pool, this trendy Swire-owned boutique hotel is top-drawer chic. The location is ideal for shopping, restaurants and drinking. No obvious sign. Just walk into the striking green glass cube of a building and ask.

Beihai Park & Xicheng North

Sleepy Inn

HUTONG HOSTEL

(Li She [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6406 9954; 103 Deshengmennei Dajie; dm/tw ¥100/298; 📶)

Facilities aren't as good here as in other larger hostels, but the location by Xihai Lake is lovely, and staff members are friendly. Rooms are simple but clean, there's bike rental and free wi-fi (although no computer terminals). Has a small cafe, but no restaurant. Heading south along Deshengmennei Dajie, turn right at the stone bridge (but don't cross it) and Sleepy Inn is on the right after 50m.

Red Lantern House

HUTONG HOSTEL

(Fanggu Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8328 5771; www.redlanternhouse.com; 5 Zhengjue Hutong, 5 4-6 bed dm ¥85, d ¥220; 🏠 @ 📶; 📍 Jishuitan)

Clean and simple rooms around a pleasant, covered courtyard, and a fantastic, nontouristy, *hutong* location make this welcoming hostel a sound choice. All rooms come with shared bathrooms. If you want private bathrooms, or if this place is full, ask to see its laid-back, but less charming sibling, Red Lantern House East Yard. It's a couple of minutes' walk away in

an alley off Zhengjue Hutong, with doubles and triples for ¥330 and ¥420.

★ Graceland Yard

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Juepin Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 159 1115 3219; www.graceland-yardhotel.com; 9 Zhengjue Hutong; s/d/tw/ste ¥599/699/799/1000, loft ¥899; @ 📶)

Graceland is an exquisitely renovated courtyard hotel, housed within the grounds of the abandoned, 500-year-old Zhengjue Temple. Each of the eight rooms is slightly different – there are singles, doubles, twins, a couple of fabulous loft rooms and a suite – but each is decorated with style, using traditional Buddhist-themed furnishings. There's no restaurant – not even breakfast – but you're not short of eateries in the surrounding *hutong*.

Dashilar & Xicheng South

★ Qianmen Hostel

HOSTEL

(Qianmen Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6313 2369, 6313 2370; www.qianmenhostel.net; 33 Meishi Jie, 33 6-8 bed dm ¥70, 4-bed dm ¥80, with/without bathroom d & tw ¥280/240, tr ¥380/300; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Qianmen)

A five-minute trot southwest of Tian'anmen Sq, this heritage hostel with a cool courtyard offers a relaxing environment with able staff. The rooms are simple and not big but, like the dorms, they are clean, as are the shared bathrooms, and all were being upgraded at the time of writing. There's a decent cafe to hang out in too.

Three-Legged Frog Hostel

HOSTEL

(Jingyi Shi Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6304 0749; 3legs@threeleggedfroghostel.com; 27 Tieshu Xiejie, 27 6-bed dm with bathroom ¥65, 10-bed dm ¥55, d & tw ¥220, tr ¥270, f ¥339; 📶 @ 📶; 📍 Qianmen)

The name is a mystery but the decent-sized six-bed dorms with bathrooms are an excellent deal, while the rooms are compact but clean. All are set around a cute courtyard that's pleasant in the summer. It has a helpful owner

– it's geared to foreign travellers – and a communal area out front that does Western breakfasts and evening beers.

Leo Courtyard

HOSTEL

(Shanglin Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8316 6568; www.leohostel.com; 22 Shanxi Xiang, 22 4-bed dm without bathroom ¥60, 8/10-bed dm with bathroom ¥55/60, d/tw ¥140/160, tr ¥180; 📶; 📶; 📍 Qianmen)

It's a superb, historic, warren of a building with a racy past featuring courtesans and the imperial elite, but like most courtyard hotels the rooms are a little old-fashioned and the dorms on the small side. However, the once-sleepy staff have upped their game and are now helpful and the bathrooms are clean. It's down an alley off Dazhalan Xijie.

Eating

Eating out will almost certainly be a highlight of your trip here. Beijing has a staggering 60,000 restaurants, and between them they cater to all tastes and all budgets. True to its north China roots, Beijing cuisine is warming, fatty and filling, with generous amounts of garlic finding its way into many dishes. The adventurous can sample some unusual stuff here – boiled tripe, tofu paste, sour soy milk... Just be sure to leave your table manners at home; Beijingers like mealtimes to be raucous affairs, with plenty of drinking, smoking and shouting to accompany their hearty platters.

Forbidden City & Dongcheng Central

★ Crescent Moon Muslim Restaurant

XINJIANG

(Xinjiang Wanwanyueliang Weiwu'er Musilin Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 16 Dongsi Liutiao Hutong., dishes from ¥18; 🕒 11am-11pm; 📍 Dongsi Shitiao)

You can find a Chinese Muslim restaurant on almost every street in Beijing. Most are run by Hui Muslims, who are Han Chinese, rather than ethnic-

minority Uighurs from the remote western province of Xinjiang. Crescent Moon is the real deal – owned and staffed by Uighurs, it attracts many Beijing-based Uighurs and people from Central Asia, as well as a lot of Western expats.

It's more expensive than most other Xinjiang restaurants in Beijing, but the food is consistently good, and it has an English menu. The speciality is the barbecued leg of lamb (¥128). The lamb skewers (¥6) are also delicious, and there's naan bread (¥5), homemade yoghurt (¥12) and plenty of noodle options (¥18 to ¥25). You can also get Xinjiang tea (¥30 per pot), beer (¥15) and wine (¥95).

Zuo Lin You She

BEIJING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 50 Meishuguan Houjie, dumplings per liang ¥6-7, dishes ¥10-30;

 11am-9.30pm;  National Art Museum)

This small, no-frills restaurant focuses on Beijing cuisine. The speciality is *dalian huoshao*, golden-fried finger-shaped dumplings stuffed with all manner of savoury fillings; we prefer the pork ones, but there are lamb, beef and veggie choices too. They are served by the *liang*, with one *liang* equal to three dumplings, and they prefer you to order at least two *liang* (*er liang*) of each filling to make it worth their while cooking a batch.

Other specialities include the pickled fish (*su ji yu*), the spicy tofu paste (*ma doufu*) and the deep-fried pork balls (*gan zha wanzi*), while filling bowls of millet porridge (*xiao mi zhou*) are served up for free. No English sign (look for the wooden signboard), and no English spoken, but most parts of the menu have been translated into English.

Donghuamen Night Market

STREET FOOD

(Donghuamen Yeshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Dong'anmen Dajie, snacks ¥5-15;  4-10pm;

 Wangfujing)

A sight in itself, the bustling night market near Wangfujing Dajie is a veritable food zoo: lamb, beef and chicken skewers, corn on the cob, smelly *doufu* (tofu), cicadas, grasshoppers, kidneys, quail eggs, snake, squid, fruit,

porridge, fried pancakes, strawberry kebabs, bananas, Inner Mongolian cheese, stuffed eggplants, chicken hearts, pita bread stuffed with meat, shrimps – and that's just the start.

★ Little Yunnan

YUNNAN

(Xiao Yunnan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6401 9498; 28 Donghuang Chenggen Beijie; mains ¥20-60; 🕒10am-10pm)

Run by young, friendly staff and housed in a cute courtyard conversion, Little Yunnan is one of the more down-to-earth Yunnan restaurants in Beijing. The main room has a rustic feel to it, with wooden beams, flooring and furniture. The tables up in the eaves are fun, and there's also some seating in the small open-air courtyard by the entrance.

Dishes include some classic southwest China ingredients, with some tea-infused creations as well as river fish, mushroom dishes and *la rou* (cured pork – south China's answer to bacon). They also serve Yunnan rice wine and the province's local Dali Beer. Has an English sign and a well-translated English menu.

Man Fu Lou

MONGOLIAN, HOTPOT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 38 Di'anmennei Dajie; raw ingredients ¥10-50; 🕒11am-10pm)

This grand-looking but inexpensive 20-year-old hotpot restaurant serves up Mongolian hotpot – the nonspicy, lamb-based version which hails from the steppes, but has been adopted as a Beijing speciality. Here each diner gets their own, mini, conical brass pot in which to boil their food. Choose the clear broth (*qing tang*; ¥12), which isn't spicy, then pick portions of raw ingredients from the menu (in English and with photos).

Each person should also order a small bowl of sesame-paste dipping sauce (*xiao liao*), which you dip your cooked food into before eating it. There should be a pot of chilli oil (*lajiao you*) on your table (if not, ask for it), which can be mixed into the sesame paste to spice things up a bit.

Brian McKenna @ The Courtyard

FUSION

(Makenan Sihexuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6526 8883; www.bmktc.com; 95 Donghuamen Dajie, set menus from ¥588; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-10pm; 📍 Tian'anmen East or Dengshikou)

This 10-year-old classic of the Beijing fine-dining scene has been given a new lease of life by UK-born chef Brian McKenna. Courtyard still enjoys its peerless location, housed in a Qing-dynasty building beside the Forbidden City moat, but McKenna has revamped the interior (there are more tables with a view of the moat now) and the menu (with some innovative new creations, such as his chocolate terracotta warrior).

Beijing Dadong Roast Duck Restaurant

PEKING DUCK

(Beijing Dadong Kaoyadian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8522 1111; 5th fl Jinbao Place, 88 Jinbao Jie, 5 roast duck ¥268; 🕒 10am-11pm; 📍 Dengshikou)

Ultramodern Dadong sells itself on being the only restaurant that serves Peking duck with all the flavour of the classic imperial dish, but none of the fat – the leanest roast duck in the capital. For some it's hideously overpriced and far from authentic. For others it's the best roast duck restaurant in China.

Drum Tower & Dongcheng North

Yaoji Chaogan

BEIJING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 311 Gulou Dongdajie, mains ¥8-20; 🕒 6am-10.30pm; 📍 Shichahai)

Proper locals' joint, serving Beijing dishes in a noisy, no-nonsense atmosphere. The house speciality is *chaogan* (pig's liver stew; ¥6 to ¥9). This is also a good place to try *zha guanchang* (garlic-topped deep-fried crackers; ¥6) and *ma doufu* (spicy tofu paste; ¥10).

Its steamed pork dumplings (*baozi*; ¥3 for two) are excellent, and are perfect for breakfast with a bowl of *xiaomi zhou* (millet porridge; ¥2) or locals' favourite *douzhi* (soy milk; ¥2). It also does a decent bowl of Beijing's best-known noodle dish, *zhajiang mian* (¥12). No English menu or English sign.

Zhang Mama

SICHUAN

(Zhang Mama Tese Chuanweiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 76 Jiaodaokou Nandajie, mains ¥10-20;

 10.30am-10.30pm;  Beixinqiao)

The original Zhang Mama, on nearby Fensiting Hutong, was such a hit with Beijingers they were forced to also open this new, larger branch with two floors. At the smaller, original branch you have to wait up to an hour for a table. Here, they've cut that down to about 15 minutes. It's worth the wait. This is arguably Beijing's best-value Sichuanese restaurant.

The speciality is *mala xiangguo* (¥48 to ¥58), a fiery, chilli-laced broth with either chicken (*xiangguo ji*), prawns (*xiangguo xia*) or ribs (*xiangguo paigu*) simmering away inside, and with a variety of vegetables added into the mix. One pot is enough for two or three people. Also worth trying here is the *dandan mian* (spicy dry noodles; ¥8) and the rice meals; the classic being the *gongbao jiding gaifan* (spicy chicken with peanuts; ¥12), lip-tinglingly delicious, thanks to the generous sprinkling of Sichuan peppercorns. No English menu, so don't be shy about pointing to what fellow diners are eating. Chances are it'll be spicy, but delicious.

Yi Long Zhai

XINJIANG

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Mao'er Hutong & Doujiao Hutong, mains ¥15-30;  11am-midnight;

 Shichahai)

Bright and boisterous, this no-frills restaurant specialises in the Turkic-influenced cuisine of Xinjiang province, in west China. So expect lots of tasty lamb dishes. The *kao yang tui* (grilled leg of lamb; ¥25) is excellent, as are the *yang rou chuan* (lamb skewers; ¥3). There's also a good selection of noodle dishes (¥12 to ¥18) in the photo menu.

Another signature dish here is the *da pan ji* (literally, 'big plate chicken'; ¥70), which is enough to feed four or five hungry mouths, especially when the sauce is mopped up with some *kao nang* (naan bread; ¥5). If there's only two or three of you, go for the small portion (*xiao pan ji*; ¥40), which is still massive. Has patio seating out front in summer.

Rong Tian Sheep Spine

HOTPOT

(Rongtian Tuguo Yangjiezi Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 8 Jingtū Hutong, off Beiluogu Xiang, sheep spine per jin ¥35, other ingredients ¥8-12; 🕒 10.30am-10pm; 📍 Guloudajie)

Hidden down a quiet hutong, this locals' favourite serves mouthwateringly good sheep-spine hotpot. Order your sheep-spine chunks (*putong yangxiezi*) by the *jin* (500g). Two *jins*' worth (*er jin*) is normally about right. They will then come ready-cooked in a boiling broth – the longer you leave them to simmer, the juicier they get. You then add other raw ingredients to cook in the broth like a standard Chinese hotpot.

Our favourite extras include sweet potato (*hong shu*), tofu blocks (*xian doufu*), mushrooms (*mu'er*), Oriental radish (*bai luobo*) and Chinese spinach (*you mai cai*). Complimentary fresh noodles are thrown in at the end, to soak up the juices. When you're ready for them, say '*fang mian*' (put the noodles in). No English sign or menu, and no English spoken.

Tan Hua Lamb BBQ

BARBECUE

(Tan Hua Kao Yangtūi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 63 Beixinqiao Santiao, lamb per jin ¥52, side dishes ¥2-18; 🕒 11am-midnight; 📍 Beixinqiao)

Meat-loving Beijingers flock to this raucous joint where you roast a leg of lamb on your own personal table-top barbecue spit before hacking away at the meatiest bits with a rudimentary, long-handled knife and fork. Tables spill out onto the lively *hutong*, creating a party atmosphere of multi-barbecue revelry.

Order your leg of lamb (*yang tui*) by the *jin* (500g). Three *jin* (*san jin*) is enough for two or three people. You'll then be given a selection of free cold dishes as accompaniments, plus a cumin-based dry dip to roll your lamb slices in. Other popular side dishes include barbecued naan bread (*kao nang*; ¥6), soy fried rice (*jiang you chao fan*; ¥10) and noodle-drop soup (*geda tang*; ¥12).

★ Baihe Vegetarian Restaurant

CHINESE, VEGETARIAN

(Baihe Sushi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 23 Caoyuan Hutong, mains ¥25-60, tea per cup/pot from ¥16/45; 🕒 11am-10pm; 📍 Dongzhimen or Beixinqiao)

This peaceful, tastefully furnished, courtyard restaurant, which also serves as a delightful teahouse, has a wonderful air of serenity – it's not uncommon to see monks from nearby Lama Temple coming here for a pot of tea. The all-vegetarian menu (with English translations) includes imaginative mock-meat dishes as well as more conventional vegetable dishes and a range of tasty noodles.

With courteous service, this is one of Beijing's more soothing dining experiences; and it's nonsmoking throughout. There's also a separate and extensive tea menu – customers are welcome to come here just to sample the tea. To get here, walk north on Dongzhimen Beixiaojie from the junction with Ghost Street for 100m, then turn left into the first *hutong*. The restaurant is on the right, although the sign is in Chinese only.

Stuff'd

WESTERN

(Sai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Jianchang Hutong, off Guozijian Jie, sausages ¥50, pies ¥60, pizza ¥60, home-brewed ale ¥40; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-10pm, closed Tue)

Handmade sausages and home-brewed beer. What more could you want? This cute little sister branch of nearby Vineyard Cafe has a more rustic feel to it; almost like an English pub, only housed in a restored Chinese *pingfang* (bungalow). Lunchtimes are all about the sausages and ale, but the evening menu also includes pies and pizza.

Xu Xiang Zhai Vegetarian Restaurant

VEGETARIAN

(Xu Xiang Zhai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 26 Guozijian Jie, buffet ¥68, mains ¥30-80; 🕒 buffet 11.30am-2pm & 5.30-9pm, a la carte 1.30-3.30pm & 7.30-9pm; 📍 Yonghegong Lama Temple)

The lunchtime and early-evening set-price buffet is very popular here, and good value. There's an elaborate selection of beautifully presented mock-meat creations, plus other standard vegetable dishes, representing vegetarian cuisine from across China. And it's all served in an elegant dining hall on the

historic *hutong* Guozijian Jie. The a la carte menu is in English and is also decent value.

Dali Courtyard

YUNNAN

(Dali [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8404 1430; 67 Xiaojingchang Hutong, Gulou Dongdajie, set menu ¥150; 🕒 midday-2pm & 6-10.30pm; 📍 Andingmen)

The charming *hutong* setting in a restored courtyard makes this one of Beijing's more pleasant places to eat, especially in summer (in winter they cover the courtyard with an unattractive temporary roof). It specialises in the subtle flavours of Yunnan cuisine. There's no menu. Instead, you pay ¥150 (drinks are extra), and enjoy whatever inspires the chef that day. He rarely disappoints.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

BEIJING MENU

The following are all classic Beijing dishes, many of which you'll only find at places specialising in Beijing cuisine. Try [Zuo Lin You She](#), [Yaoji Chaogan](#) or [Baodu Huang](#). Many roast duck restaurants will have some of the other Beijing specialities as well as Peking duck.

Peking Duck (kao ya) Beijing's most famous dish, the duck here is fattier but much more flavoursome than the roast duck typically served in Chinese restaurants in the West. Like back home, though, it also comes with pancakes, cucumber slices and plum sauce.

Zha Jiang Mian Very popular noodle dish found in many regions, but a favourite in Beijing; thick wheat noodles with ground pork and cucumber shreds mixed together in a salty fermented soybean paste. Chilli oil (lajiao you) is a popular optional extra.

Dalian Huoshao Finger-shaped fried dumplings with a savoury filling.

Ma Doufu Spicy tofu paste.

Zha Guanchang Deep-fried crispy crackers served with a very strong garlic dip.

Chao Ganr Sauteed liver served in a gloopy (glutinous) soup.

Bao Du Boiled tripe, usually lamb. Sometimes served in a seasoned broth.

Yang Za Similar to bao du, but includes an assortment of sheep's innards, not just tripe, and is always served in a broth.

Rou Bing Meat patty, usually filled with pork or beef, before being lightly fried.

Jiao Quan Deep-fried dough rings, usually accompanied with a cup of dou zhi.

Dou Zhi Sour-tasting soy milk drink.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

GHOST STREET

For a close-up look at how Beijingers treat their restaurants as party venues and not just places for a meal, take a trip to **Ghost Street** (Gui Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  Beixinqiao).

This 1.4km strip of Dongzhimennei Dajie is home to over 150 restaurants. It never closes, making it one of Beijing's most buzzing streets, and it's especially fun on Friday and Saturday nights. Most styles of Chinese cuisine are represented, but it's best known for its hotpot and spicy seafood restaurants.

The giant **Xiao Yu Shan** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 195 Dongzhimennei Dajie, 🕒 10.30am-6am) is always jammed with people cracking open crayfish and shrimp. For classic Mongolian hotpot, try **Little Sheep** (Xiao Fei Yang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 209 Dongzhimennei Dajie, 🕒 9am-4am), which sources its mutton from Inner Mongolia. For the spicier, Sichuan version of hotpot, cross the road to **Chongqing Kongliang Huoguo** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 218 Dongzhimennei Dajie, 218 pot from ¥35, dipping ingredients ¥7-20; 🕒 9.30am-3am).

Sadly, Ghost Street's signature red lanterns, which for years lined both sides of the street, were torn down by overzealous local officials in 2014 – they were a fire risk, apparently.

Temple of Heaven Park & Dongcheng South

Old Beijing Zhajiang Noodle King

NOODLES

(Lao Beijing Zhajiang Mian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 56 Dongxinglong Jie, noodles from ¥18, other dishes from ¥28; 🕒 10.45am-10pm;  Chongwenmen)

Faux old-school Beijing style – look for the two rickshaws parked outside the entrance – but always busy (especially at lunchtime) with locals sampling the signature noodles with bean paste sauce on offer here. The sauce, scallions and your choice of meat or vegie options come on the side and you mix them

with the noodles.

★ **Liqun Roast Duck Restaurant**

PEKING DUCK

(Liqun Kaoyadian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6702 5681, 6705 5578; 11 Beixiangfeng Hutong, roast duck for 2/3 people ¥255/275; 🕒10am-10pm; 📍Qianmen)

As you walk in to this compact courtyard restaurant, you're greeted by the fine sight of rows of ducks on hooks glowing in the ovens. The delectable duck on offer is so in demand that it's essential to call ahead to reserve both a bird and a table (otherwise, turn up off-peak and be prepared to wait an hour).

Inside, it's a little tatty (no prizes for the toilets) and service can be chaotic, but the food more than makes up for that. Buried away in east Qianmen, the approach to the restaurant is through a maze of crumbling *hutong* that have somehow survived total demolition; look for the duck signs pointing the way.

Qianmen Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant

PEKING DUCK

(Qianmen Quanjude Kaoyadian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6701 1379; 30 Qianmen Dajie, roast duck ¥296; 🕒11am-1.30pm, 4.30-8pm; 📍Qianmen)

The most popular branch of Beijing's most famous destination for duck – check out the photos of everyone from Fidel Castro to Zhang Yimou. The duck, while not the best in town, is roasted in ovens fired by fruit-tree wood, which means the birds have a unique fragrance, as well as being juicy, if slightly fatty.

BEIJING'S HUTONG

Beijing's medieval genotype is most discernible down the city's leafy hutong (narrow alleyways). The spirit and soul of the city lives and breathes among these charming and ragged lanes where a warm sense of community and hospitality survives. Criss-crossing chunks of Beijing within the Second Ring Rd, the hutong link up into a huge and enchanting warren of one-storey dwellings and historic courtyard homes. Hundreds of hutong survive but many have been swept aside in Beijing's race to build a modern city. Identified by white plaques, historic homes are protected, but for many others a way of life hangs in a precarious balance.

After Genghis Khan's army reduced the city of Beijing to rubble, the new city was redesigned with hutong. By the Qing dynasty more than 2000 such passageways riddled the city, leaping to around 6000 by the 1950s; now the figure has drastically dwindled to somewhere above 1000. Today's hutong universe is a hotchpotch of the old and the new: Qing-dynasty courtyards are scarred with socialist-era conversions and outhouses while others have been assiduously rebuilt.

Hutong nearly all run east–west so that the main gate faces south, satisfying feng shui (wind/water) requirements. This south-facing aspect guarantees sunshine and protection from negative principles amassing in the north.

Old walled siheyuan (courtyards) are the building blocks of this delightful universe. Many are still lived in and hum with activity. From spring to autumn, men collect outside their gates, drinking beer, playing chess, smoking and chewing the fat. Inside, scholar trees soar aloft, providing shade and a nesting ground for birds. Flocks of pigeons whirl through the Beijing skies overhead, bred by locals and housed in coops often buried away within the hutong.

More venerable courtyards are fronted by large, thick red doors, outside of which perch either a pair of Chinese lions or drum stones. To savour Beijing's courtyard ambience, down a drink at [Irresistible Cafe](#) or [Great Leap Brewing](#), devour a meal at [Dali Courtyard](#) and sleep it all off at [Courtyard 7](#). Alternatively, follow our leisurely Hutong Walking Tour ([Click here](#)).

[Bike Beijing](#) does guided cycle tours of hutong areas.

Sanlitun & Chaoyang

Baoyuan Dumpling Restaurant

DUMPLINGS

(Baoyuan Jiaozi Wu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6586 4967; 6 Maizidian Jie, mains from ¥28, dumplings from ¥13; 🕒 11.15am-10.15pm; 📍 Liangmaqiao or Agricultural Exhibition Centre)

Fun for the kids – but also tasty enough for parents – this excellent dumplings restaurant dazzles diners with a huge selection of multicoloured *jiaozi* (boiled dumplings), including many vegetarian options. The dough dyes are all natural (carrots make the orange; spinach the green) and only add to the flavour of the fillings; as good as any in Beijing.

Dumplings are ordered and priced by the *liang* (about 50g). One *liang* gets you six dumplings. Not much English spoken, but there's an English sign and menu, and it's nonsmoking.

Baodu Huang

BEIJING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 15 Dongzhimenwai Dajie, mains ¥18-35; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5-9pm;

📍 Dongzhimen)

Be prepared to queue at this no-nonsense apartment-block restaurant (look for the green sign with four yellow characters), where locals gobble and slurp their way through the authentic Beijing-grub menu. The speciality is *baodu* (boiled lamb tripe; ¥18 or ¥35 depending on portion size). If you can't stomach that, then plump instead for a delicious *niurou dacong roubing* (beef and onion fried patty; ¥8).

The blanched vegetables are popular side dishes; choose from *chao baicai* (blanched cabbage; ¥6), *chao fensi* (blanched glass noodles; ¥6) or *chao dong doufu* (blanched tofu; ¥6). And if you haven't ordered a meat patty, grab a *zhima shaobing* (roasted sesame-seed bun; ¥1.5) instead. True Beijingers will also nibble on *jiao quan* (deep-fried dough rings; ¥1), washed down with gulps of *dou zhi* (sour soy milk). But you may prefer to go for a bottle of *piji* (local beer; ¥5). No English spoken, no English menu, no English sign.

Bocata

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 6417 5291; 3 Sanlitun Lu, sandwiches from ¥28, coffee from ¥22;

🕒 11.30am-midnight; 📶; 📍 Tuanjiehu)

Great spot for lunch, especially in summer, located slap-bang in the middle of Sanlitun's bar street and opposite Beijing's trendiest shopping area. As the name suggests, there's a Spanish/Mediterranean theme to the food, with Iberian ham and cheeses and decent salads (from ¥28), as well as great chips, but most punters go for the fine sandwiches on ciabatta.

The coffee, juices and smoothies go down a treat, too, and the large, tree-shaded terrace is very popular when the sun is out.

Jingzun Peking Duck

PEKING DUCK

(Jingzun Kaoya [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 6417 4075; 6 Chunxiu Lu, mains ¥36-96; 🕒 11am-

10pm; 📍 Dongzhimen or Dongsì Shitiao)

Very popular place to sample Beijing's signature dish. Not only is the bird here extremely good value at ¥128 including all the trimmings but, unusually for a roast duck restaurant, you can also sit outside on a wooden-decked terrace. There's also a big choice of dishes from across China, all decent, if you're not in the mood for duck.

Carmen

SPANISH

(Kamen [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6417 8038; Nali Patio north side, 81 Sanlitun Lu, mains from ¥70; 🕒 noon-1am; 📍 Tuanjiehu)

Beijing's busiest tapas joint is a long, narrow space with tables hugging the walls. It's not the place for an intimate meal, but there's a great range of tapas, Spanish ham and cheeses and Mediterranean-inspired mains, including the huge paella (¥199), which can easily feed four. Strong wine list. It's around the corner from the popular terrace courtyard Nali Patio.

There's live music from 7.30pm every night.

Bookworm

CAFE

(Shuchong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6586 9507; www.beijingbookworm.com; Bldg 4, Nansanlitun Lu, mains from ¥60; 🕒 9am-Midnight; 📶; 📍 Tuanjiehu)

A combination of a bar, cafe, restaurant and library, the Bookworm is a Beijing institution and one of the epicentres of the capital's cultural life. Much more than just an upmarket cafe, there are 16,000-plus books here you can browse while sipping your coffee. The food is reasonably priced, if uninspired, but there's a decent wine list.

Duck de Chine

PEKING DUCK

(Quanyaji [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6521 2221; Courtyard 4, 1949, near Gongrentiyuchang Beilu, mains ¥78-488; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5.30-10.30pm; 📍 Tuanjiehu)

Housed in a reconstructed industrial-style courtyard complex known as 1949, this very slick and stylish operation incorporates both Chinese and French duck-roasting methods to produce some stand-out duck dishes, including a

leaner version of the classic Peking roast duck (¥238). The mix of expats and moneyed locals who flock here argue it's the best bird in town.

The service is as good as it gets in Beijing, while the wine list is lengthy and expensive. Alternatively, the pumpkin infused with sour plums makes a delicious accompaniment. Book ahead.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

PICNIC SUPPLIES

Western-style supermarkets are on the rise, but thankfully there are still some atmospheric food markets in Beijing where you can stock up on fresh fruit and unusual snacks as you watch locals pick their favourite frogs and fish.

Rundeli Food Market (Rundeli Caishichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 4 Sihuan Hutong, off Deshengmennei Dajie; 🕒7am-7pm), also known as Sihuan Market (Sihuan Shichang), is close to the Houhai Lakes, while **Xinmin Food Market** (Xinmin Caishichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jiugulou Waidajie, 🕒5am-noon) is north of the Drum Tower.

Near Sanlitun, **Sanyuanli Market** (Sanyuanli Caishichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shunyuan Jie, 🕒5am-7pm) has a great range of imported foodstuffs alongside all the usual Chinese favourites.

Beihai Park & Xicheng North

Liji Fengwei Meishi Canting

CHINESE, MUSLIM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Ya'er Hutong; mains ¥20-40, snacks ¥1-10; 🕒breakfast dumplings 5am-9am, main restaurant 10am-11pm)

Known simply as Liji (pronounced 'lee jee'), this popular place has two outlets close to each other on Ya'er Hutong, both of which serve great-value Chinese Muslim dishes and snacks.

The first one you come to, if walking from Silver Ingot Bridge, is the main sit-down restaurant (look for the long, green-and-yellow sign). It has an English menu, including grilled skewers, lamb dishes and noodles, and is basic but clean. Further on is a smaller, older branch, which specialises in

boiled tripe (*baodu*) and has an adjacent takeaway-dumplings stall, which is very popular at breakfast time: try the beef and onion dumplings (*niurou dacong baozi*; ¥2 each). They also roast very good sesame-seed buns (*shaobing*; ¥1 each), which you can have filled with lamb (*shaobing jia rou*; ¥7 each).

★ Royal Icehouse

SHANDONG

(Huangjia Bingjiao Xiaoyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6401 1358; 5 Gongjian Wuxiang, Gongjian Hutong; 5 mains ¥30-60; 🕒11.30am-2pm & 5.30-9.30pm)

Tucked away in the *hutong* running alongside the east wall of Beihai Park, this intriguing restaurant is located inside one of the city's former royal ice houses – where, before the days of refrigeration, massive blocks of ice were stored for use in the imperial court during summer.

You can walk down into the underground ice cellars (which now keep the wine cool); look for the red arched door.

The main restaurant is decked out in old-Beijing paraphernalia; look for the homemade *baijiu* (sorghum liquor) hanging in pig's bladders. The food is imperial cuisine, but with a heavy Shandong influence (the original chef was from Shandong province), so there is some crossover in dishes. All are very well done, though. The menu is in English. Specialities include: sauteed tofu with ham and pea, braised chicken in chilli sauce, and a dish called 'the fifth pot', which is a pork and vegetable stew. To find the restaurant, walk south down Gongjian Hutong from Di'anmen Xidajie, turn right into 5 Gongjian Wuxiang and you'll see it straight ahead of you.

Kao Rou Ji

CHINESE, MUSLIM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Qianhai Dongyan; mains ¥40-80; 🕒1st fl 11am-10pm, 2nd fl 11am-2pm & 5-8.30pm)

They do good-value roast duck here (¥118), and a range of China-wide dishes, but it's the mutton that everyone comes for – and the lake views from the 2nd floor.

This place has been around for years (it featured in our very first edition of *Lonely Planet China*, in 1984), and its choice location, overlooking Qianhai Lake, makes it as popular as ever. It's pricier than it should be, but the atmosphere is fun, and the English menu with photos makes ordering easy. Bag a table by the window on the 2nd floor (only open until 8.30pm), and order the roast mutton (¥98), a hot plate from heaven. If you're stuck for cash, fill up on freshly roasted sesame-seed buns (¥2 each), called 'sesame cakes' on the menu.

Dashilar & Xicheng South

Liu Family Noodles

NOODLES

(Liu Jiaren Daoxiaomian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 6 Tieshuxie Jie; noodles from ¥8; 🕒 11am-3pm & 5-10pm; 📍 Qianmen)

A rarity in this area: a restaurant that welcomes foreigners without trying to overcharge them. On the contrary, the prices couldn't be much lower, while the friendly owner is keen to practise her (limited) English. Choose from a selection of tasty noodle and cold dishes. To find it, look for the black sign with 'Best Noodles in China' written in English.

Drinking & Nightlife

There are three or four top spots for a night out in Beijing. **Sanlitun** ([Map Click here](#);), loud, brash and relatively expensive, is where expats and Chinese party-goers go when they want to drink all night long. Here you'll find the city's best cocktail bars, biggest night clubs and seediest dives. Head to Sanlitun Lu or the Workers Stadium.

Nanluogu Xiang ([Map Click here](#);), is far more laid back than Sanlitun. This historic *hutong*, and the network of lanes branching off it, houses smaller bars – some in converted courtyards – that are better for a drink and a chat rather than dancing. The city's coolest live-music venues are in this area too. Head to Nanluogu Xiang, Beiluogu Xiang, Baochao Hutong, or the

square between the Drum & Bell Towers.

At **Houhai Lakes** (Map [Click here](#);) there's a noisy but undoubtedly fun strip of bars, located attractively on the banks of Houhai and Qianhai Lakes and specialising in neon-lit guitar bars with karaoke on tap. More popular with Chinese drinkers than foreigners.

The once quiet residential lane of **Fangjia Hutong** (Map [Click here](#);), just south of the Confucius Temple, has recently become another drinking hotspot with quirky, laid-back bars similar to those found in the Nanluogu Xiang area.

Drum Tower & Dongcheng North

★ Great Leap Brewing

BAR, BREWERY

(Dayue Pijiu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.greatleapbrewing.com; 6 Doujiao Hutong, beer per pint ¥25-50; 🕒 2pm-midnight; **S** Shichahai)

Beijing's original microbrewery, this refreshingly simple courtyard bar, run by American beer enthusiast Carl Setzer, is housed in a hard-to-find, but beautifully renovated, 100-year-old Qing-dynasty courtyard and serves up a wonderful selection of unique ales made largely from locally sourced ingredients. Sip on familiar favourites such as pale ales and porters or choose from China-inspired tipples like Honey Ma, a brew made with lip-tingling Sichuan peppercorns.

El Nido

BAR

(59, Wushijiu Hao Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 59 Fangjia Hutong, beers from ¥10; 🕒 6pm-late; **S** Andingmen)

Friendly pint-sized bar, with more than 100 types of imported beer. There's no drinks menu; just dive into the fridge and pick out whichever bottles take your fancy. Prices for the foreign beers start at ¥30, while Harbin beer costs just ¥10 a bottle. There's also some imported liquor, including a number of different types of absinthe.

There's some street-side seating out the front, but if it gets too packed (it really is tiny) then try walking up the road to No 46, where there's a bunch of bars and cafes in a small cul-de-sac.

Za Jia

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.zajia.cc; Hong En Temple, Doufuchi Hutong, 🕒 1pm-2am; **S** Guloudajie)

Built into the entrance gate of Hong En Guan, a 600-year-old former Taoist temple – most of which is now a household goods market – beautiful Za Jia is a cafe by day (coffee from ¥25), bar by night (beer from ¥20). The interior is as cool as it is unique, with split-level seating reaching up into the eaves, and the atmosphere is friendly and relaxed.

Mao Mao Chong Bar

BAR

(Mao Mao Chong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 12 Banchang Hutong, beers from ¥35, cocktails ¥40-50; 🕒 7pm-midnight, closed Mon & Tue; **S** Nanluoguxiang)

This small but lively expat favourite has a rustic interior, good-value cocktails and a no-smoking policy. Its pizzas (¥40 to ¥65) also get rave reviews.

Mai

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 40 Beiluogu Xiang, cocktails from ¥45, beers from ¥30; 🕒 6pm-2am; **S** Guloudajie)

This area's first proper cocktail bar, Mai is funky, friendly and housed in a beautifully renovated part of an old courtyard building. Most importantly, though, the manager mixes very good cocktails.

Mado

BAR

(Ma Duo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 60 Baochao Hutong; beers from ¥15; 🕒 summer 2pm-2am, winter 7pm-2am; **S** Shichahai or Guloudajie)

Friendly, no-frills bar with good-priced drinks and a large roof terrace.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

HUTONG CAFES

Scattered around the narrow lanes of Beijing's hutong neighbourhoods are dozens of cute, independently-run cafes. Some are housed in converted courtyards. Most have free wi-fi, fresh coffee (from ¥20), Chinese tea, well-priced local beer (from ¥15) and a small selection of mostly Western food (dishes from ¥30). Here are some of our favourites:

Irresistible Cafe

CAFE

(You Huo Kafeiting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 14 Mao'er Hutong, ☹️ 11am-midnight, closed Mon & Tue; 📶)

Large courtyard. Czech beers. Good, healthy food.

Cafe Confucius

CAFE

(Xiu Guan Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 25 Guozijian Jie, ☹️ 8.30am-8.30pm; 📶)

Buddhist themed. Very friendly.

Other Place

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Langjia Hutong, ☹️ noon-midnight; 📶)

Cool staff. Cool tunes. Cool courtyard. No food.

Essence

CAFE

(Cuiyin Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 47 Zhonglouwan Hutong, off Drum & Bell Square; ☹️ 10am-10pm)

Top-quality coffee. Small roof terrace with Drum Tower views.

Le Grenadier

CAFE

(Shiliushu Xia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 7 Youqizuo Hutong, off Di'anmen Neidajie; ☹️ 11am-9pm, closed Wed)

Quiet location. Cheap coffee. Rooftop seating. French cuisine.

Three Trees Coffee

CAFE

(San Ke Shu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 89 Nanluogu Xiang; ☹️ 9.30am-10pm)

Cosy bohemian retreat from Nanluogu Xiang's shopping frenzy.

Alley Coffee

CAFE

(Xunchang Xiangmo Kafei Ting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Jingshan Dongjie & Shatan Houjie, ☎ 8.30am-11pm; 📶; 📍 Nanluoguxiang or National Art Museum)

Perfect for a coffee break after a visit to the Forbidden City or Jingshan Park, this cute, traveller-friendly courtyard cafe, diagonally opposite Jingshan Park's east gate, has friendly English-speaking staff and does fresh coffee (from ¥25), cold beer and a mix of Chinese and Western food, including breakfast fry-ups (until 11am). Also rents bikes (per day ¥50, deposit ¥600) and has free wi-fi.

Sanlitun & Chaoyang

Nali Patio

BAR

(Nali Huayuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); off Sanlitun Lu,)

Sanlitun's current drinking hotspot, Nali Patio is a small square surrounded and overlooked by clusters of hugely popular bars and restaurants. The big favourite is **Migas** (Mi Jia Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5208 6061; 6th fl Nali Patio, 81 Sanlitunbei Lu, 6 beer from ¥30, cocktails from ¥60, mains from ¥98; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm, bar 6pm-late; 📶; 📍 Tuanjiehu), a three-in-one venue which houses a good-quality Spanish restaurant, a cosy indoor bar and a wildly popular roof terrace bar.

Apothecary (Jiu Shu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5208 6040; www.apothecarychina.com; 3rd fl Nali Patio, 81 Sanlitunbei Lu, 3 cocktails from ¥65; 🕒 6pm-late; 📶; 📍 Tuanjiehu) is Beijing's best cocktail bar, while Saddle Cantina offers a decent pub vibe, and terrace seating. Most places are open from around midday until the early hours.

Just round the corner from Nali Patio, behind Saddle Cantina, is **First Floor** (Yi Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6413 0587; Ground fl, Tongli Studios, Sanlitun Houjie; beer from ¥20, cocktails from ¥40; 🕒 10am-2am; 📍 Tuanjiehu), which is another popular pub-like venue, and **Tree** (Shu Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6415 1954; 43 Sanlitun Beijie, beers from ¥20; 🕒 10am-2am; 📍 Tuanjiehu), which does dozens of Belgian beers plus great pizza.

Beihai Park & Xicheng North

Houhai Bar Strip

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Silver Ingot Bridge; 🕒 midday-late)

For a peek at how moneyed Beijingers party the night away, take a stroll around the neon-lit bars lining the lakes either side of Silver Ingot Bridge (Yinding Qiao).

Fabulously located, and with roof terraces overlooking the lakes, these potentially peaceful drinking holes are transformed into noisy guitar bars and karaoke joints come evening, and fitted with speakers facing out onto the lakeshore. Inside, punters sing songs, play dice games or just down shots until they have to be carried home. All the bars are similar, so it's best just to walk around and see which one takes your fancy. Drinks prices start high, but can be negotiated. The further you walk away from Silver Ingot Bridge, the quieter the bars become.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

TOP TEAHOUSES

★ **Laijinyuxuan Teahouse**

TEAHOUSE

(Laijinyuxuan Chashe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); inside Zhongshan Park; Zhongshan Gongyuan tea from ¥38 per cup; 🕒 9am-9pm)

This 100-year-old teahouse, set inside the grounds of Zhongshan Park, has a large terrace in the east corner of the park and is a pleasant place to sample a cup of China's finest. A number of well-known writers, intellectuals and revolutionaries used to hang out here. These days it's mostly tourists, of course.

You'll pay around ¥180 to ¥380 for a pot, but you can get a cup for less than ¥40, which, as always, can be topped up with hot water as many times as you wish. The traditional Chinese biscuit-cakes (¥20 for four) are tasty accompaniments. English tea menu.

Tangren Teahouse

TEAHOUSE

(Tangren Chadaoyin Chaxuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 15 Qianhai Nanyan; tea from ¥40 per cup; 🕒 9.30am-1am)

Commanding fine views across Qianhai Lake from its rooftop terrace, this cute teahouse is on a quieter stretch of the lake, away from the noisier bars, and is a delightful spot in which to sample Chinese tea.

Prices are high – you even have to pay extra for the spring water your tea is brewed in (from ¥10 per cup) – but the location, service and ambience compensate. The wooden decor is attractive, as is the tea menu – a bamboo scroll – which is translated into English. Teas are listed to the left of the tea type (oolong, green, black etc) they belong to.

Black-tea Tea Room

TEAHOUSE

(Xiangkou Hongchaguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 65 Beiluogu Xiang; tea from ¥28 per cup; 🕒 10am-10pm, closed Mon)

Despite the name, this place does plenty of other Chinese teas besides black tea and is a welcoming little teahouse. The tea menu is translated into English, but one half of the couple who runs the place speaks some English so can talk you through things too. They also sell a small selection of teas and are happy for you to taste before you buy.



Entertainment

Forbidden City & Dongcheng Central

Forbidden City Concert Hall

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(Zhongshan Gongyuan Yinyue Tang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6559 8285; Zhongshan Park, tickets ¥30-880; 🕒 performances 7.30pm; 📍 Tian'anmen West)

Located on the eastern side of Zhongshan Park, this is a wonderfully romantic venue for performances of classical and traditional Chinese music. It's also the best acoustically.

Drum Tower & Dongcheng North

★ Jiang Hu

LIVE MUSIC

(Jiang Hu Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, admission ¥30-50; 🕒 7pm-2am,

closed Mon; **S** Nanluoguxiang)

One of the coolest places to hear Chinese indie and rock bands, Jiang Hu, run by a trombone-playing, music-loving manager, is housed in a small courtyard and packs in the punters on a good night. Intimate, cool, and a decent spot for a drink in a courtyard, even when no bands are playing. Beers from ¥25.

Yugong Yishan

LIVE MUSIC

(**MAP** **GOOGLE MAP**; 📞 6404 2711; www.yugongyishan.com; 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, West Courtyard, 3-2, admission from ¥50; 🕒 7pm-2am; **S** Zhangzizhonglu)

Reputedly one of the most haunted places in Beijing, this historic building has been home to Qing-dynasty royalty, warlords and the occupying Japanese army in the 1930s. You could probably hear the ghosts screaming if it wasn't for the array of local and foreign bands, solo artists and DJs who take to the stage here every week.

Penghao Theatre

THEATRE

(Penghao Juchang **MAP** **GOOGLE MAP**; 📞 6400 6452; www.penghaotheatre.com; in an alley beside 35 Dongmianhua Hutong, tickets from ¥50; **S** Nanluoguxiang)

Students from the nearby drama academy sometimes perform here, in this small informal nonprofit theatre, tucked away down a narrow, unnamed alleyway between Dongmianhua Hutong and Beibinmasi Hutong. The venue, which doubles as a cafe (drinks only), is enchanting, and has some lovely rooftop seating areas, shaded by a 200-year-old tree which slices through part of the building.

Performances are mostly modern drama, and are sometimes (but not always) held in English as well as Chinese. Check the website for details. Some English spoken.

Sanlitun & Chaoyang

★ Dos Kolegas

LIVE MUSIC

(Liangge Hao Pengyou [GOOGLE MAP](#); 21 Liangmaqiao Lu, admission ¥30, beer from ¥15;

🕒 8pm-2am Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun; 🚏 909, 📍 Liangmaqiao then)

Tucked away to the side of Beijing's drive-in cinema, a couple of kilometres northeast of Sanlitun, this fabulously bohemian venue has a large garden with patio seating and offers evening barbecues alongside some excellent live music. This is a great place to hear local bands (punk, rock, metal), especially in the summer when the whole gig moves outdoors.

Beihai Park & Xicheng North

★ East Shore Jazz Cafe

JAZZ

(Dong'an [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8403 2131; 2 Shichahai Nanyan, 2., 2nd fl beers from ¥30, cocktails from ¥45; 🕒 3pm-2am; 📍 Shichahai)

Cui Jian's saxophonist, whose quartet play here, opened this chilled venue just off Di'anmen Waidajie and next to Qianhai Lake. It's a place to hear the best local jazz bands, with live performances from Wednesdays to Sundays (from 10pm), in a laid-back, comfortable atmosphere.

Dashilar & Xicheng South

Tianqiao Acrobatics Theatre

ACROBATICS

(Tianqiao Zaji Juchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6303 7449; 95 Tianqiao Shichang Lu Jie, tickets ¥180-380; 🕒 performances 5.30pm & 7.15pm; 📍 Taranting)

West of the Temple of Heaven Park, this 100-year-old theatre offers one of Beijing's best acrobatic displays, a one-hour show performed by the Beijing Acrobatic Troupe. Less touristy than the other venues, the theatre's small size means you can get very close to the action. The high-wire display is awesome. The entrance is down the eastern side of the building.

Huguang Guild Hall

PEKING OPERA

(Huguang Huiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6351 8284; 3 Hufang Lu, tickets ¥180-680, opera

museum ¥10; 🕒 performances 8pm, opera museum 9am-5pm; 📍 Caishikou)

The most historic and atmospheric place in town for a night of Peking opera. The interior is magnificent, coloured in red, green and gold, and decked out with tables and a stone floor, while balconies surround the canopied stage. Opposite the theatre there's a tiny opera museum displaying operatic scores, old catalogues and other paraphernalia.

Lao She Teahouse

PERFORMING ARTS

(Laoshe Chaguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6303 6830; www.laosheteahouse.com; 3rd fl, 3 Qianmen Xidajie; 3 evening tickets ¥180-380; 🕒 performances 7.50pm; 📍 Qianmen)

Lao She Teahouse, named after the celebrated writer, has daily and nightly shows, mostly in Chinese, which blend any number of traditional Chinese performing arts. The evening performances of Peking opera, folk art and music, acrobatics and magic (7.50pm to 9.20pm) are the most popular. But there are also tea ceremonies, frequent folk-music performances and daily shadow-puppet shows.

Shopping

With much of the nation's wealth concentrated in Beijing, shopping has become a favourite pastime of the young and the rising middle class in recent years. Whether you're a diehard shopaholic or just a casual browser, you'll be spoiled for choice.

Forbidden City & Dongcheng Central

Locals, out-of-towners and tourists haunt Wangfujing Dajie, a prestigious, partly pedestrianised shopping street that's been given a much-needed makeover in recent years and now sports some slick shopping malls, such as

Oriental Plaza (Dongfang Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8518 6363; 1 Dongchang'an Jie, 🕒 10am-10.30pm; 📍 Wangfujing) and **Beijing apm** (Xindong'an Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 9am-10pm), as well as plenty of tacky

souvenir outlets. You'll also find the well-stocked **Foreign Languages Bookstore** (Waiwen Shudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 235 Wangfujing Dajie, 🕒 9.30am-9.30pm; **S** Wangfujing) here.

★ **Celadon Story**

CERAMICS

(Qingci Gushi Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 49 Donghuamen Dajie; 🕒 10am-7pm)

This lovely little porcelain shop sells exquisite examples of China's famous, jade-like, pale-green celadon porcelain. You can pick up small tea cups for ¥30. Whole tea sets start from around ¥300. Staff speak English and are unobtrusive. There are a couple of other tea shops along this stretch of road, selling tea, tea sets and other tea paraphernalia.

CON 'ARTISTS' & TEAHOUSE SCAMS

Beware pesky 'art students' and English students around Wangfujing Dajie, Tian'anmen Sq and other tourist areas. They drag Western visitors to exhibitions of overpriced art or extortionately priced teahouses; the latter may cost ¥2000 or more. If approached by over-friendly girls wanting to speak English, refuse to go to a place of their choosing.

Drum Tower & Dongcheng North

The wildly popular *hutong* [Nanluogu Xiang](#), and the many lanes branching off it, contain an eclectic mix of clothes and gifts, sold in trendy boutique shops. It can be a pleasant place to shop for souvenirs, but avoid summer weekends when the shopping frenzy reaches fever pitch and you can hardly walk down the street for the crowds.

Sanlitun & Chaoyang

Chaoyang district has some of the swankiest malls in town, many of which can be found in the eye-catching shopping zone known as **Sanlitun Village** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 19 Sanlitun Lu, 🕒 10am-10pm; **S** Tuanjiehu). The district is also

home to two of the city's most popular (and crowded) multi-floor indoor clothing markets, the **Silk Market** (Xiushui Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 14 Dongdaqiao Lu; 🕒 9.30am-9pm; 📍 Yong'anli) and **Sanlitun Yashow Clothing Market** (Sanlitun Yaxiu Fuzhuang Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 58 Gongrentiyuchang Beilu; 🕒 10am-8.30pm; 📍 Tuanjiehu), both of which will test your bartering skills, and your patience, to the full.

DON'T MISS

PANJIAYUAN MARKET

Hands down the best place in Beijing to shop for yishu (arts), gongyi (crafts) and guwan (antiques) is **Panjiayuan Market** (Panjiayuan Guwan Shichang [GOOGLE MAP](#); West of Panjiayuan Qiao, 🕒 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 4.30am-6pm Sat & Sun; 📍 Panjiayuan). Some stalls open every day, but the market is at its biggest and most lively on weekends, when you can find everything from calligraphy, Cultural Revolution memorabilia and cigarette ad posters to Buddha heads, ceramics, Qing dynasty-style furniture and Tibetan carpets.

Panjiayuan hosts around 3,000 dealers and up to 50,000 visitors a day, all scoping for treasures. The market is chaotic and can be difficult if you find crowds or hard bargaining intimidating. Make a few rounds to compare prices and weigh it up before forking out for something.

To get here, come out of Exit B at Panjiayuan subway station (Line 10), then walk west for 200 metres to find the main entrance to the market.

Dashilar & Xicheng South

Dashilar & Xicheng South is one of the capital's most enjoyable neighbourhoods for shopping. Apart from Dashilar itself, Liulichang (meaning 'glazed-tile factory') is Beijing's best-known antiques street, even if the goods on sale are largely fake.

★ Yuehaixuan Musical Instrument Store

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

(Yuehaixuan Menshibu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6303 1472; 97 Liliuchang Dongjie, 🕒 9.30am-6pm; 📍 Hepingmen)

Fantastic, friendly emporium that specialises in traditional Chinese musical instruments, such as the zither-like *guzheng* (some of which come with elaborate carvings on them), the *erhu* and *banhu* (two-string Chinese violins), and *gu* (drums). It does great gongs and has many esoteric instruments from Tibet and Mongolia, too. It's on the eastern side of Liliuchang.

Ruifuxiang

SILK, CLOTHING

(Ruifuxiang Sichoudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍6303 5313; 5 Dazhalan Jie, 🕒9.30am-8pm; **S** Qianmen)

Housed in a historic building on Dashilar, this is one of the best places in town to browse for silk. There's an incredible selection of Shandong silk, brocade and satin-silk. The silk starts at ¥168 a metre, although most of the fabric is more expensive. Ready-made, traditional Chinese clothing is sold on the 2nd floor.

Ruifuxiang also has an outlet at **Dianmenwai Dajie** (Ruifuxiang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 50 Di'anmen Waidajie, 🕒10am-8.30pm; **S** Shichahai).

WORTH A TRIP

MALIANDAO TEA MARKET

The largest tea market in Beijing, **Maliandao** (Maliandao Chacheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍6334 3963; 11 Maliandao Lu, 🕒8.30am-6pm; **S** Beijing West Railway Station) is home to, if not all the tea in China, then an awful lot of it. Although it's mostly for wholesalers, this is a great place to wander for anyone interested in tea; the vendors are normally happy to let you sample some. The market is located 1km south of Beijing West Train Station; walk south out of the subway station, turn left at the main road, then right onto Maliandao Lu.

i Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafes (*wangba*) are everywhere but rarely have English signs, so memorise the characters . They are generally open 24/7 and cost from ¥3 to

¥5 per hour. You must show your passport, and you may be photographed at the front desk. We've marked some internet cafes on our maps with the @ icon.

All hotels and hostels we've reviewed in this chapter provide internet access of some sort, and numerous bars, cafes and restaurants around Beijing have free wi-fi.

MAPS

English-language maps of Beijing can be grabbed for free at most big hotels and branches of the Beijing Tourist Information Center, but the scale is sometimes too large to navigate accurately, especially in *hutong* areas. The [Foreign Languages Bookstore](#) and other bookshops also have maps.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Pharmacies (*yaodian*) are identified by a green cross and are widespread.

A consultation with a doctor in a private clinic will cost ¥500 and up, depending on where you go. It will cost ¥10 to ¥50 in a state hospital.

Beijing Union Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Xiehe Yiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞6915 6699, emergency 6915 9180; 53 Dongdan Beidajie, Dongcheng; 🕒24hr)

A recommended hospital, open 24 hours and with a full range of facilities for inpatient and outpatient care, plus a pharmacy. Head for **International Medical Services** (Guoji Yiliao Bu 📞6915 6699), a wing reserved for foreigners which has English-speaking staff and telephone receptionists.

Beijing United Family Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Hemujiia Yiliao [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞4008 919191, 24hr emergency hotline 5927 7120; www.unitedfamilyhospitals.com; 2 Jiangtai Lu, Chaoyang; 🕒24hr)

Can provide alternative medical treatments, along with a comprehensive range of inpatient and outpatient care. There is a critical care unit. Emergency room staffed by expat physicians.

MONEY

ATMs (*qukuanji*) taking international cards are in abundance, including at the airport. Carry cash at all times as credit cards are much less widely accepted than you'd expect.

Foreign currency and travellers cheques can be changed at large branches of most banks, at the airport and in top-end hotels.

For international money transfers, branches of **Western Union** ( 800 820 8668; www.westernunion.com) can be found at post offices across town.

Banks

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang ;  6513 2214; 19 Dong'anmen Dajie., Dongcheng District)

By the Donghuamen Night Market, this is one of dozens of branches around Beijing with money-changing facilities.

HSBC

BANK

(Huifeng Yinhang ;  6526 0668, nationwide 800 820 8878; www.hsbc.com.cn;
1st fl, Block A, COFCO Plaza, 8 Jianguomennei Dajie, Dongcheng;  9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat)

One of 12 branches in the capital.

CHINA POST

Most **post offices** (*youju*) are open daily between 9am and 6pm. We've marked some on our Beijing maps.

Letters and parcels marked 'Poste Restante, Beijing Main Post Office' will arrive at the **International Post Office** (Guoji Youdian Ju ;

 6512 8114; Jianguomen Beidajie, Chaoyang;  8.30am-6pm).

Both outgoing and incoming packages will be opened and inspected. If you're sending a parcel, don't seal the package until you've had it inspected.

➔ **Express Mail Service** (EMS; *kuaidi*) is available for registered deliveries to domestic and international destinations from most post offices. Prices are very reasonable. Alternatively, **FedEx** (Federal Express,, Lianbang Kuaidi

GOOGLE MAP; 📍 6438 5560, toll-free landline 800 988 1888, toll-free mobile phones 400 886

1888; www.fedex.com/cn; Room 101, Tower C, Lonsdale Center, 5 Wanhong Lu, Chaoyang, C101
🕒 9am-9pm Mon-Sat) is near the CBD, and also has self-service counters in Kodak Express shops around town.

PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

PSB Main Office

POLICE

(Beijingshi Gong'anju Churujing Guanlichu **GOOGLE MAP**; 📍 8402 0101, 8401 5292; 2

Andingmen Dongdajie, Dongcheng; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat)

The Foreign Affairs Branch of the local PSB – the police force – handles visa extensions. The visa office is on the 2nd floor, accessed from the north second ring road. You can also apply for a residence permit here.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Hotels often have tourist information desks, but the best travel advice for independent travellers is usually dished out at youth hostels. **Beijing**

Tourist Information Centers (Beijing Luyou Zixun Fuwu Zhongxin 🕒 9am-5pm) have branches across town, including at **Beijing train station** (**GOOGLE MAP**;

📍 6528 4848; 16 Laoqianju Hutong), **Capital Airport** (📍 6459 8148; Terminal 3, Capital

Airport), in **Chaoyang** (Beijing Luyou Zixun Zhongxin **GOOGLE MAP**; 📍 6417 6656;

Gongrentiyuchang Beilu), on **Wangfujing Dajie** (**GOOGLE MAP**; 269 Wangfujing Dajie,,

Wangfujing 🕒 9am-9pm) and at the **Houhai Lakes** (**GOOGLE MAP**; 49 Di'anmenxi

Dajie,, Houhai Lakes). English skills are limited and information is basic, but you can grab free maps. The detailed map of the hutong surrounding Houhai Lakes, which is given out at the Houhai branch, is particularly useful.

Getting There & Away

As the nation's capital, getting to Beijing is straightforward. Rail and air connections link the city to virtually every point in China, and fleets of buses head to abundant destinations from Beijing. Using Beijing as a starting point to explore the rest of the country makes perfect sense.

AIR

Beijing's [Capital Airport](#) has direct air connections to most major cities in the world and every major city in China. Prices vary depending on when you fly and when you book, but as a rough guide, expect to be able to find seats for between ¥600 and ¥1200 for any internal one-way flight from Beijing.

If for some reason you can't get online, you can also purchase tickets in person at the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (Zhongguo Minhang, Aviation Bldg., Minhang Yingye Dasha [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6656 9118, domestic 6601 3336, international 6601 6667; 15 Xichang'an Jie; 🕒 8.30am-6pm), close to Xidan subway station. Otherwise, check the following websites for good deals:

C-trip

TRAVEL AGENCY

(www.ctrip.com)

eBookers

TRAVEL AGENCY

(www.ebookers.com)

eLong

TRAVEL AGENCY

(www.elong.net)

Travel Zen

TRAVEL AGENCY

(www.travelzen.com)

BUS

Beijing has numerous long-distance bus stations, including the following.

Bawangfen Long-Distance Bus Station (Bawangfen changtu keyunzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 17 Xidawang Lu) is in the east of town, 500m south of Dawanglu subway station. Destinations include:

- ➔ **Baotou** ¥130 to ¥150, 12 hours, 6pm
- ➔ **Changchun** ¥221, 12 hours, 9am, noon, 6pm and 9pm
- ➔ **Dalian** ¥211 to ¥276, 8½ hours, 11am, noon, 2pm and 10pm

- ➔ **Ha'erbin** ¥301, 14 hours, 6pm
- ➔ **Shenyang** ¥165, nine hours, frequent (8am to 10pm)
- ➔ **Tianjin** ¥40, two hours, 10am and 5pm

Sihui Long-Distance Bus Station (Sihui Changtu Qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#));

 6557 4804; Jianguo Lu) is in the east of town, 200m east of Sihui subway station. Destinations include:

- ➔ **Baotou** ¥130 to ¥150, 12 hours, 10.30am, 1.30pm and 2.30pm
- ➔ **Chengde** ¥56 to ¥74, four hours, frequent (5.10am to 5.30pm)
- ➔ **Dandong** ¥180, 12 hours, one daily (4pm)
- ➔ **Jixian** ¥19 to ¥24, two hours, frequent (5.10am to 7.30pm)

Liuliqiao Long-Distance Bus Station (Liuliqiao Changtuzhan; [GOOGLE MAP](#));

 8383 1716) is in the southwest of town, with its own subway stop.

Destinations include:

- ➔ **Chengde** ¥85, four hours, frequent (5.40am to 6.40pm)
- ➔ **Datong** ¥100 to ¥132, 4½ hours, frequent (7.10am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Hefei** ¥299, 13 hours, one daily (1.45pm)
- ➔ **Luoyang** ¥129 to ¥149, 10 hours, six daily (8.30am to 10pm)
- ➔ **Shijiazhuang** ¥75 to ¥90, 3½ hours, frequent (6.30am to 8.55pm)
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥479 to ¥519, 30 hours, two daily (11am and 11.30am)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥259, 12 hours, one daily (5.45pm)
- ➔ **Zhengzhou** ¥129 to ¥149, 8½ hours, nine daily (8.30am to 8.30pm)

BUSES TO/FROM THE MONGOLIAN BORDER

Cheaper than the train and easier to snag tickets for, the sleeper bus to the Mongolian border at Erlian is a viable budget option for overlanders heading to Mongolia.

Numerous buses (¥180, 12 hours) leave at around the same time (between 4pm and 5pm) from **Muxiyuan Bus Station** (Muxiyuan qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#));

Dahongmen Lu;) ; turn left out of Exit D of Liujiayuan subway station and keep walking straight for about 1km. Just before the road goes under Muxiyuan Bridge, bear left, then left again down Dahongmen Lu and the bus station will be on your right after 500m. You can't pre-book tickets, but turning up anytime before 3pm should guarantee you a berth.

From Erlian you can catch a bus (¥50, 1.30pm & 3pm) or a shared jeep or minivan (same price) over the border to Zamyn Uud, from where you can catch a train to Ulaanbaatar (5.35pm and, on some days, 9.25pm).

Arriving in Beijing from the Mongolian border (usually in the early hours of the morning), buses will drop you near, but not in, Muxiyuan Bus Station. From the drop off, it's a 1.5km walk to Liujiayuan subway station; walk down the steps in front of you and turn right along the main highway. The first subway of the day is at 5.45am. If you need to take a taxi, avoid the black cabs that hustle passengers at the bus drop-off (they won't use meters), and hail a genuine blue-and-yellow painted taxi from the main road. At night, using the meter, it should cost around ¥40 to get to the Drum Tower from here.

TRAIN

When buying tickets at train stations, arm yourself with a few key Chinese phrases, or better still have a Chinese person write down what you want so you can show the ticket seller. Increasingly, ticket sellers at the three main stations speak a bit of English, but don't bank on it.

Many hotels and hostels can buy train tickets for you, for a commission, of course. Official **train ticket offices** (*huochepiao daishouchu*) are dotted around town and charge a very reasonable ¥10 commission per ticket. But although they have an English sign, English-language skills are usually nonexistent.

[China DIY Travel](#) is transparent and reliable, and can pre-book train tickets for you, China-wide.

It's usually best to buy train tickets in advance, but if travelling on bullet trains to relatively nearby destinations such as Tianjin or Shijiazhuang, you can simply turn up at the station and buy a ticket for the next available train. You'll rarely have to wait more than an hour.

Beijing has three major train stations for long-distance travel: Beijing Train Station, Beijing West Station and Beijing South Station, all of which are

connected to the subway system.

Beijing Train Station (Beijing Zhan  5101 9999) The most central of Beijing's main stations is mainly for T-class trains (*tekuai*), slow trains and trains bound for the northeast. Slower trains to Shanghai also leave from here. Most fast trains heading south now depart from Beijing South Train Station or Beijing West Train Station.

Approximate travel times and typical train fares (hard-sleeper unless indicated):

- **Dalian** Z-series train, soft-sleeper ¥372 to ¥388, 10½ hours (8.27pm)
- **Dalian** K-series, ¥239 to ¥255, 12 hours (8.06pm)
- **Datong** K-series, ¥99 to ¥107, six hours (frequent)
- **Ha'erbin** D-series, soft-seat ¥306, 10 hours (10.02am, 1.51pm and 3.15pm)
- **Ha'erbin** T-series, ¥261 to ¥279, 12 hours (6.18am, noon, 6.57pm and 9.23pm)
- **Jilin** T-series, ¥244 to ¥261, 12 hours (4.55pm)
- **Shanghai** T-series, soft-sleeper ¥476 to ¥497, 14 hours (7.33pm)

Beijing West Train Station (Beijing Xi Zhan  :  5182 6253) This gargantuan station accommodates fast Z-series trains, such as the following (fares are soft-sleeper unless indicated):

- **Changsha** ¥504 to ¥527, 13 hours (6.01pm)
- **Fuzhou** ¥426 to ¥456, 20 hours (2.47pm)
- **Hankou (Wuhan)** ¥407 to ¥427, 10 hours (8.49pm)
- **Lanzhou** Z- and T-series, hard-sleeper ¥322 to ¥388, 17 hours (five trains daily)
- **Nanchang** Hard-sleeper ¥296 to ¥407, 11½ hours (12.02pm, 2.06pm and 8.16pm)
- **Wuchang (Wuhan)** Hard-sleeper ¥261 to ¥279, 10 hours (8.55pm and 9.55pm)

- ➔ **Xi'an** Z- and T-series, hard-sleeper ¥254 to ¥288, 11 to 12 hours (eight trains daily)
- ➔ **Xi'an** G-series, 2nd-class seat ¥515, five to six hours (seven trains daily)
- ➔ **Kowloon (Hong Kong)** ¥584 to ¥611, 24 hours (train Q97, 1.08pm)

Other typical train fares for hard-sleeper tickets, and approximate travel times:

- ➔ **Changsha** T- and K-series, ¥322 to ¥343, 14 hours (frequent)
- ➔ **Chengdu** T- and K-series, ¥389 to ¥486, 26 to 31 hours (9am, 11.08am, 6.29pm and 9.52pm)
- ➔ **Chongqing** T- and K-class trains, ¥389 to ¥456, 25 to 30 hours (five daily)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** T- and K-class trains, ¥426 to ¥456, 21 hours (five daily)
- ➔ **Guiyang** T- and K-series, ¥465 to ¥487, 29 hours (3.58pm and 4.57pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** T-series, ¥536 to ¥575, 38 hours (6.26am and 4.31pm)
- ➔ **Shenzhen** T- and K-series, ¥434 to ¥464, 24 to 29 hours (8.12pm and 11.45pm)
- ➔ **Shijiazhuang** D-series, 2nd-class seat, ¥81 to ¥86, two hours (frequent)
- ➔ **Urumqi** T-series, ¥536 to ¥585, 34 hours (10.01am and 3.18pm)
- ➔ **Xining** T-series, ¥353 to ¥428, 20 to 24 hours (11.56am, 4.37pm and 8pm)
- ➔ **Yichang** K-series, ¥310 to ¥331, 21½ hours (11.11pm)

Beijing South Station (Beijing Nanzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)) This ultra-modern station accommodates high-speed bullet trains to destinations such as Tianjin, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Qingdao.

- ➔ **Fuzhou** D-series, 2nd-class seat ¥765, 15 hours (8.13am)
- ➔ **Hangzhou** G-series, 2nd-class seat ¥538 to ¥629, six hours (frequent)
- ➔ **Ji'nan** G-series, 2nd-class seat ¥184 to ¥194, 1½ hours (frequent)
- ➔ **Nanjing** G-series, 2nd-class seat ¥445, four hours (frequent)
- ➔ **Qingdao** G- and D-series, 2nd-class seat ¥249 to ¥314, five hours

(frequent)

➔ **Shanghai (Hongqiao station)** G-class trains, 2nd-class seat, ¥553, 5½ hours (frequent)

➔ **Suzhou** G-series, 2nd-class seat ¥523, five hours (frequent)

➔ **Tianjin** C-series, ¥54 to ¥63, 30 minutes (frequent)

Beijing North Station (Beijing Beizhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 5186 6223) This small station is connected to Xizhimen subway station.

➔ **Hohhot** K-series, hard-sleeper ¥129 to ¥136, nine hours (11.47pm)

➔ **Badaling Great Wall** hard-seat ¥6, 75 minutes (frequent)

TRAIN TO TIBET

For Lhasa (Lasa) in Tibet (Xizang), the T27 (hard-seat/hard-sleeper/soft-sleeper ¥360/763/1186, 44 hours) leaves Beijing West at 8pm, taking just under two days. In the return direction, the T28 departs Lhasa at 1.48pm and arrives at Beijing West at 8.19am. See ([Click here](#)) for more details.

INTERNATIONAL TRAINS

MONGOLIA

Two direct weekly trains leave from Beijing Train Station to the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar (Wulanbatuo): the **Trans-Mongolian Railway train K3** goes via Ulaanbaatar en route to Moscow, and leaves every Wednesday (hard-sleeper/soft-sleeper/deluxe ¥1222/1723/1883, 11.22am, 27 hours). Meanwhile the **K23** service has a train which leaves on Tuesdays (¥1222/1723/1883, 11.22am, 27 hours).

In the other direction, the **K4** leaves Ulaanbaatar at 7.15am on Tuesday and arrives in Beijing at 11.40am on Wednesday. The **K24** departs from Ulaanbaatar at 7.15am on Thursday and reaches Beijing the following day at 11.40pm.

RUSSIA

The Trans-Siberian Railway runs from Beijing to Moscow (Moskva) via two routes: the **Trans-Mongolian Railway train K3** (¥3496/5114/5604; 11.22am) and the **Trans-Manchurian Railway train K19** (hard-sleeper/deluxe ¥3891/6044; 11pm). The K19

leaves Beijing Train Station every Saturday at 11pm. It arrives in Moscow on Friday at 5.58pm.

The return **K20** leaves Moscow at 11.45pm on Saturday and arrives in Beijing on Friday at 5.46am.

VIETNAM

There are two weekly trains from Beijing to Hanoi (Henei). The **T5** (M2 in Vietnam) leaves Beijing West Train Station at 3.57pm on Thursday and Sunday, arriving in Hanoi at 8.10am on Saturday and Wednesday.

In the other direction, the **T6** (M1 in Vietnam) leaves Hanoi at 6.30pm on Tuesday and Friday and arrives at Beijing West at 12.07pm on Friday and Monday. Only soft-sleeper tickets (¥2081) are available.

NORTH KOREA

There are four weekly services to Pyongyang (Pingrang; hard-sleeper ¥1017, soft-sleeper ¥1476). The **K27** and **K28** both leave twice a week from Beijing Train Station, meaning there's a train on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. Each train leaves at 5.27pm and arrives the following day at 7.30pm.

Return trains leave from Pyongyang at 10.10am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday and arrive the following day in Beijing at 8.31am.

VISAS, TICKETS & TOURS

Visas aren't available at these border crossings. Ensure you arrange yours beforehand.

You can only buy international tickets through travel agencies in Beijing, not at train stations. For Mongolia, Russia and North Korea, buy tickets at the helpful office of the state-owned **CITS** (China International Travel Service, Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe;

GOOGLE MAP; 📍6512 0507; 9 Jianguomennei Dajie, Beijing International Hotel, Dongcheng; 🕒9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun), housed round the back of the left-hand side of the lobby of the Beijing International Hotel (Beijing Guoji Fandian), one block north of Beijing Train Station. Trans-Siberian/Mongolian/Manchurian tickets can be bought from home, using **Intourist Travel** (www.intourist.com), which has branches in the UK, the USA, Canada, Finland and Poland.

For Vietnam, buy tickets at the office of **CRTS** (China Railway Travel Service, Zhongguo Tiedao Luxingshe **GOOGLE MAP**; 📍5182 6541; 20 Beifengwo Lu, 🕒9am-4pm). There's no English sign, but it's opposite the easy-to-spot Tianyou Hotel (Tianyou Daxia). Walk straight out of Exit C1 of Military Museum subway station, take the first right and CRTS will be on your left (10 minutes).

For help with booking a tour to North Korea, Beijing's leading tour company to the

area is [Koryo Tours](#).

Getting Around

TO/FROM CAPITAL AIRPORT

The **Airport Express** (jichang kuaigui [GOOGLE MAP](#); one way ¥25), also written as ABC (Airport Beijing City), is quick and convenient and links Terminals 2 and 3 to Beijing's subway system at Sanyuanqiao station (Line 10) and Dongzhimen station (Lines 2 and 13). Operating times are as follows: Terminal 3 (6.21am to 10.51pm), Terminal 2 (6.35am to 11.10pm), and Dongzhimen (6am to 10.30pm).

There are 11 different routes for the airport **shuttle bus** (jichang bashi one way ¥15-24), including those listed here. They all leave from all three terminals and run from around 5am to midnight.

- ➔ **Line 1** To Fangzhuang, via Dabeyao for the CBD (guo mao)
- ➔ **Line 2** To Xidan
- ➔ **Line 3** To Beijing Train Station (Beijing Zhan), via Dongzhimen, Dongsishi and Chaoyangmen
- ➔ **Line 7** To Beijing West Train Station (xi zhan)
- ➔ **Line 10** To Beijing South Train Station (nan zhan)
- ➔ **Coach service to Tianjin** (¥82, 2½ hours, 7am to 11pm hourly)

A **taxi** should cost ¥80 to ¥100 from the airport to the city centre, including the ¥10 airport expressway toll; bank on 40 minutes to one hour to get into town. Ignore unofficial drivers who may approach you as you exit customs and join the line for an official cab. When you get into the taxi, make sure the driver uses the meter (*da biao*). Have the name of your hotel written down in Chinese to show the driver. Very few drivers speak any English.

TAKEN FOR A RIDE

A well-established illegal taxi operation at the airport attempts to lure weary travellers into a ¥300-plus ride to the city, so be on your guard. If anyone approaches you offering a taxi ride, ignore them and join the official queue for a taxi outside.

TO/FROM NANYUAN AIRPORT

The very small **Nanyuan Airport** (Nanyuan Jichang, NAY  6797 8899; Jingbeixi Lu, Nanyuan Zhen, Fengtai District,,) feels more like a provincial bus station than an airport, but it does service quite a few domestic routes. Airport facilities are limited to a few shops and snack stalls, and don't expect to hear much English.

The **shuttle bus** (jichang bashi) goes to Xidan (¥18, 1½ hours, 9am to last flight arrival) via Qianmen. You can pick up the subway at either destination.

A **taxi** is around ¥60 to the Tian'anmen Sq area. Ignore drivers who approach you. Use the taxi queue. Make sure the driver uses the meter (da biao).

SUBWAY

Massive and getting bigger every year, the **Beijing subway system** (ditie www.bjsubway.com; per trip ¥2;  6am-11pm) is modern, safe and easy to use. At the time of writing, plans had been announced to move from the current ¥2 flat fare to a distance-based pricing system, so fares may well have risen by the time you read this. Get hold of a **travel card** (jiaotong yikatong; refundable deposit ¥20) if you don't fancy queuing for tickets each time you travel. If fares do go up, the card will get you a discount as with all bus journeys within the municipality of Beijing.

TAXI

Taxis (*chuzuche*) are everywhere, although finding one can be a problem during rush hour, rainstorms and between 8pm and 10pm – prime time for people heading home after eating out.

Flag fall is ¥13 and lasts for 3km. After that it's ¥2 per kilometre. Drivers also add a ¥1 fuel surcharge. Rates increase slightly at night.

Drivers rarely speak any English so it's important to have the name and

address of where you want to go written down in Chinese characters. Remember to keep your hotel's business card on you so you can get home at the end of the night.

Most Beijing taxi drivers are honest and use the meter (*da biao*). If they refuse, get out and find another cab. The exception is for long, out-of-town trips to, say, the Great Wall, where prices are agreed (but not paid for!) beforehand.

CAR

The **Vehicle Administration Office** (cheguansuo  6453 0010; 1st fl, Terminal 3;  9am-6pm) on the 1st floor of Terminal 3 – look for the 'Traffic Police' sign – issues temporary driving licences for use in Beijing municipality.

Applicants must be between the ages of 18 and 70 and must hold a temporary Chinese visa (three months or less). The straightforward process takes about 30 minutes and costs ¥10. Once you have the licence, you can hire a car from **Hertz** (www.hertzchina.com), which has an office just along the corridor. Self-drive hire cars (*zijia*) start from ¥230 per day (up to 150km per day), with a ¥10,000 deposit. A car-with-driver service (*daijia*) is also available (from ¥660 per day).

BUS

Beijing's buses (*gonggong qiche*) have always been numerous and dirt cheap (from ¥1), but they're now easier to use for non-Chinese-speakers, with swipe cards, announcements in English, and bus stop signs written in pinyin as well as Chinese characters. Nevertheless, it's still a challenge to get from A to B successfully, and the buses are still as packed as ever, so you rarely see foreigners climbing aboard. At the time of writing, Beijing's government had indicated that fares would rise in the near future.

If you use a travel card, you get 60% discount on all journeys. Useful routes:

- ➔ **2** Qianmen, north on Dongdan Beidajie, Dongsì Nandajie, Dongsì Beidajie, Lama Temple
- ➔ **5** Deshengmen, Di'anmen, Beihai Park, Xihuamen, Zhongshan Park,

Qianmen

- ➔ **20** Beijing South Train Station, Tianqiao, Dashilar, Tian'anmen Sq, Wangfujing, Dongdan, Beijing Train Station
- ➔ **52** Beijing West Train Station, Muxidi, Fuxingmen, Xidan, Gate of Heavenly Peace, Dongdan, Beijing Train Station, Jianguomen
- ➔ **103** Beijing Train Station, Dengshikou, China Art Gallery, Forbidden City (north entrance), Beihai Park, Fuchengmen, Beijing Zoo

Around Beijing

The Great Wall

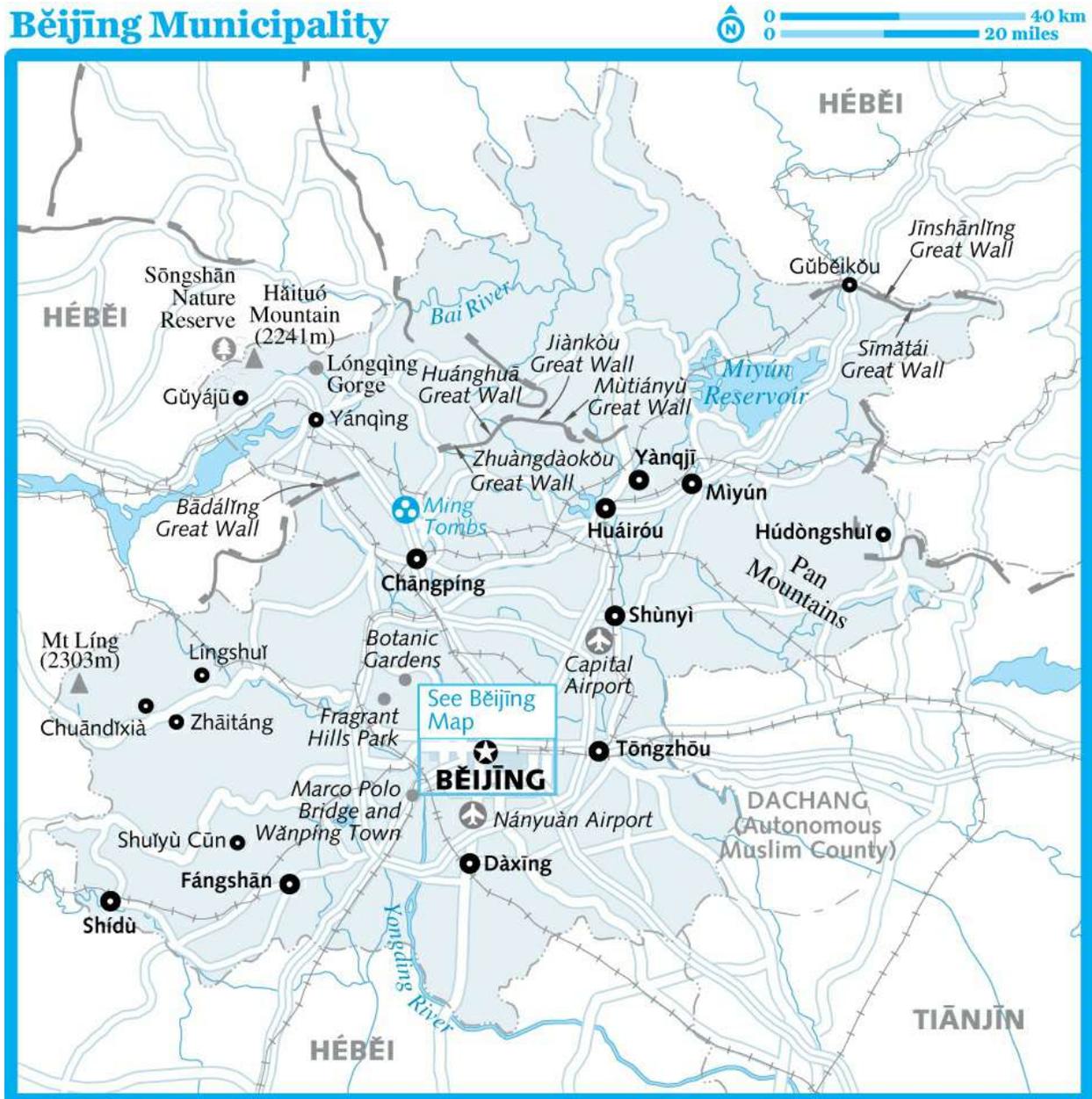
Ming Tombs

Chuandxia

Marco Polo Bridge & Wnping
Town

Around Beijing

As well as the following, remember that a number of places covered in Tianjin & Hebei, including [Jimingyi](#), [Cangzhou's Iron Lion](#), and the city of [Tianjin](#) itself, are easy trips from Beijing.



THE GREAT WALL

See ([Click here](#)) for trips to the Great Wall from Beijing.

MING TOMBS

The Unesco-protected Ming Tombs (Shisan Ling) is the final resting place for 13 of the 16 Ming-dynasty emperors and makes for a fascinating half-day trip. The scattered tombs, each a huge temple-like complex guarding an enormous burial mound at its rear, back onto the southern slopes of Tianshou Mountain. Only three of the 13 tombs are open to the public, and only one has had its underground burial chambers excavated, but what you are able to see is impressive enough and leaves you wondering how many priceless treasures must still be buried here.

Chang Ling ([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission ¥50, audio guide ¥50), the resting place of the first of the 13 emperors to be buried here, contains the body of Emperor Yongle (1402–24), his wife and 16 concubines. It's the largest, most impressive and most important of the tombs. Seated upon a three-tiered marble terrace, the standout structure in this complex is the **Hall of Eminent Favours** (Ling'en Dian), containing a recent statue of Yongle, various artefacts excavated from Ding Ling, and a breathtaking interior with vast *nanmu* (cedar wood) columns. As with all three tombs here, you can climb the **Soul Tower** (Ming Lou) at the back of the complex for fine views of the surrounding hills.

Ding Ling ([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission ¥65, audio guide ¥50), the resting place of Emperor Wanli (1572–1620) and his wife and concubines, is at first sight less impressive than Chang Ling because many of the halls and gateways have been destroyed. It's the only tomb that has ever been opened, but many of the priceless artefacts were ruined after being left in a huge, unsealed storage room that leaked water. Other treasures – including the bodies of Emperor Wanli and his entourage – were looted and burned by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. However, it is the only tomb where you can climb down into the vast but now empty burial chambers. The small **Museum of the**

Ming Tombs (Ming Shisanling Bowuguan; free admission), just past the Ding Ling ticket office, contains a few precious remaining artefacts, plus replicas of destroyed originals.

Zhao Ling ([GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥35) is the smallest of the three, and many of its buildings are recent rebuilds. But it's much less visited than the other two and thus more peaceful; the **fortified wall** (*bao cheng*) surrounding the burial mound at the back is unusual in both its size and form. The tomb, which is the resting place of Emperor Longqing (1537–72), is located at the end of the small and eerily quiet village of Zhaoling Cun.

The road leading up to the tombs is a 7km stretch called **Spirit Way** (Shendao admission ¥35), about 1km of which is a ticketed tourist sight.

Commencing from the south with a triumphal triple archway, known as the **Great Palace Gate**, the path passes through Stele Pavilion, which contains a giant *bixi* bearing the largest stele in China. From here, the site's famous guard of 12 sets of giant stone animals and officials ensues.

Eating

Ming Chang Ling Restaurant

CHINESE

(Ming Chang Ling Canting [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chang Ling Ming Tomb; 🕒 8.30am-3pm)

Simple, but clean restaurant, with an English menu, just beside the Chang Ling ticket office.

Getting There & Away

Beijing's subway should reach here by 2015. Until then, bus 872 (¥9, one hour, 7.10am to 7.10pm) leaves from the north side of **Deshengmen gateway** (Map [Click here](#);) and passes all the sights, apart from Zhao Ling, before terminating at Chang Ling. Last bus back is at 6pm.

It's easy to bus-hop once you're here. Get off the 872 at Da Gong Men bus stop, and walk through the triple-arched Great Palace Gate that leads to the Spirit Way. After walking the length of Spirit Way, catch bus 67 from Hu

Zhuang bus stop (the first bus stop on your right) to its terminus at Zhao Ling (¥1); walk straight on through the village to find the tomb. Then, coming back the way you came, catch another 67, or walk (2km; left at the end of the road, then left again) to Ding Ling, from where you can catch bus 314 to Chang Ling (¥1).

CHUANDIXIA

Nestled in a valley 90km west of Beijing and overlooked by towering peaks, the Ming-dynasty village of Chuandixia (entrance ¥35) is a gorgeous cluster of historic courtyard homes with old-world charm. The backdrop is lovely: terraced orchards and fields with ancient houses and alleyways rising up the hillside. Two hours is more than enough to wander around the village because it's not big, but staying the night allows you to soak up its historic charms without the distraction of all those day-trippers.

There are **Maoist slogans** to track down and **temples** in the surrounding hills, but the main attraction here is the **courtyard homes** and the steps and alleyways that link them up. Many of the homes are Qing-dynasty, while others remain from Ming times. Some have been turned into small restaurants or guesthouses, meaning you can eat, drink tea or even stay the night in a 500-year-old Chinese courtyard.

Sleeping & Eating

Restaurant and guesthouse signs are clearly labelled in English, so places are easy to spot. Your best bet is to simply wander round and find what best suits you. Most restaurants have English menus. Specialities here include walnuts, apricots and roast leg of lamb.

Guchengbao Inn

INN

(Gu Chengbao Kezhan  136 9135 9255; r ¥100, with attached bathroom ¥120; mains ¥20-40)

This 400-year-old building is perched high above much of the village and enjoys fine views from its terrace restaurant. Rooms are in the back courtyard

and are basic but charming. Each room has a traditional stone *kang* bed, which sleeps up to four people and can be fire-heated in winter.

The shared bathroom has no shower, but one new room comes with a small shower room and lovely views. Guchengbao Inn is in the top left-hand corner of the village as you look up from just past the right-hand bend in the road.

Cuan Yun Inn

INN

(Chuanyun Kezhan 23 Chuandixia Village, mains ¥20-40; 🕒 6.30am-8.30pm)

The best place to sample roast leg of lamb (*kao yang tui*; ¥200). On the right of the main road as you enter the village. Photo menu.

Getting There & Away

Bus 892 leaves frequently from a bus stop 200m west of Pingguoyuan subway station (come out of Exit D and turn right) and goes to Zhaitang (¥16, two hours, 6.30am to 5.50pm), from where you'll have to take a taxi (¥20) for the last 6km to Chuandixia. There's one direct bus to Chuandixia, which leaves Pingguoyuan at 7am. The direct bus back to Pingguoyuan leaves Chuandixia at 6.40am, but there are also two buses that go from Chuandixia to Zhaitang (9.30am and 3.30pm; ¥3). The last bus from Zhaitang back to Pingguoyuan leaves at 5pm. If you miss that, you're looking at around ¥200 for a taxi.

MARCO POLO BRIDGE & WANPING TOWN

The star attraction here is the famous 900-year-old Marco Polo Bridge (Lugou Qiao), but the unexpected bonus is the chance to see, at one end of the bridge, the enormous, war-torn, Ming-dynasty walls of the once heavily guarded Wanping Town (Wanping Cheng).

Marco Polo Bridge

BRIDGE

(Lugou Qiao ¥20; 🕒 9am-6pm)

Described by the great traveller himself, this 266m-long, multi-arched granite

bridge is the oldest bridge in Beijing and is decorated beautifully with 485 individually carved stone lions, each one different. Dating from 1189, although widened in 1969, it spans the Yongding River, and was once the main route into the city from the southwest.

Despite the praises of Marco Polo, the bridge wouldn't have rated more than a footnote in Chinese history were it not for the famed Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which ignited a full-scale war with Japan. On 7 July 1937 Japanese troops illegally occupied a railway junction outside Wanping. Japanese and Chinese soldiers started shooting, and that gave Japan enough of an excuse to attack and occupy Beijing.

Wanping Town

CITY WALLS

(Wanping Cheng) **FREE**

An astonishing sight, given that you are still within the confines of Beijing's 5th Ring Rd, this double-gated, Ming-dynasty walled town is still lived in today. Although few of its original buildings still stand (residents live in newish brick bungalows these days), its 2km-long, 6m-high, battle-scarred town walls date from 1640.

You can't walk on the walls, but you can walk around them or inside; enter via the West Gate, which is beside Marco Polo Bridge, or the East Gate, at the other end of the town's only proper road. On the outside of the southern wall, you can see scars from the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in the form of huge bullet holes.

Museum of the War of Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression

MUSEUM

(Zhongguo Renmin Kang Ri Zhanzheng Jinianguan entry free with passport, audio guide ¥120; 🕒 9am-4.30pm) **FREE**

This modern propaganda-driven museum, on the north side of the main road in Wanping Town, is dedicated to the July 7th Incident (as it's called here) and the ensuing war with Japan. Includes English captions.

i Getting There & Away

Bus 662 comes here from Changchunjie subway station (Line 2). Come out of Exit A1 and the bus stop is in front of you on the right. Get off the bus at Lu Gou Xin Qiao bus stop (¥1, 30 minutes) then turn right, beside a petrol station, and bear left to follow the road to bridge and the West Gate (400m).

Dawayao subway station (Line 14) is about a 1km walk from the East Gate of Waping Town. Come out of Exit A, turn left at the junction and walk alongside the highway for about 600m before turning right down Chengnei Jie, which leads to the walls.

The Great Wall

Visiting the Wall

Mutianyu

Gubeiku

Jiankou

Zhuangdaokou

Jinshanling

Badaling

The Great Wall

He who has not climbed the Great Wall is not a true man.

Mao Zedong

China's greatest engineering triumph and must-see sight, the Great Wall (Wanli Changcheng) wriggles haphazardly from its scattered Manchurian remains in Liaoning province to wind-scoured rubble in the Gobi desert and faint traces in the unforgiving sands of Xinjiang.

The most renowned and robust examples undulate majestically over the peaks and hills of Beijing municipality – what we focus on here – but the Great Wall can be realistically visited in many other north China provinces.

Great Wall History

The 'original' wall was begun more than 2000 years ago during the Qin dynasty (221–207 BC), when China was unified under Emperor Qin Shi Huang. Separate walls that had been constructed by independent kingdoms to keep out marauding nomads were linked together. The effort required hundreds of thousands of workers – many of whom were political prisoners.

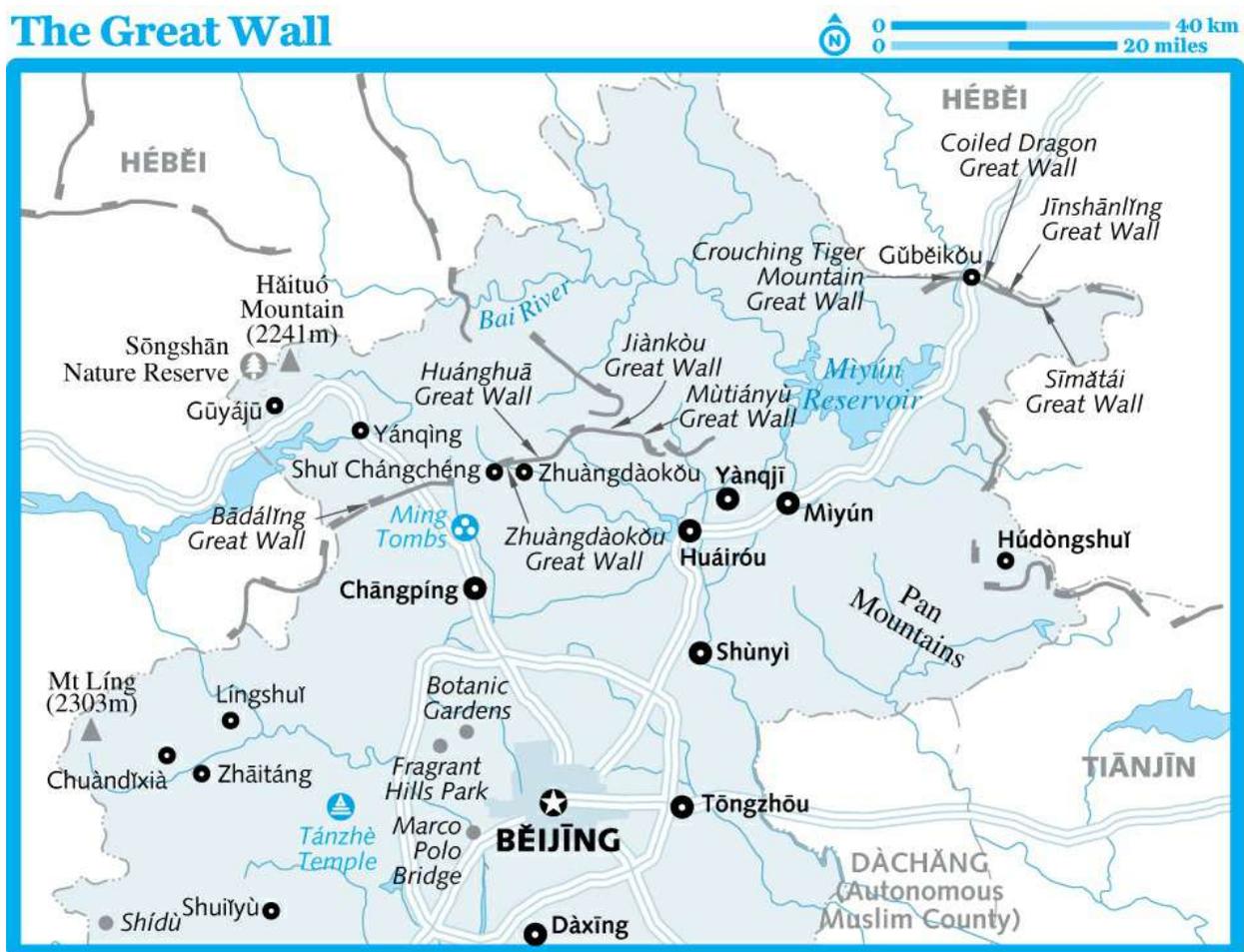
Ming engineers made determined efforts to revamp the eroding bastion, facing it with some 60 million cubic metres of bricks and stone slabs. This project took more than a century, and the cost in human effort and resources was phenomenal. The picture-postcard brick-clad modern day manifestations of the Great Wall date from Ming times.

The wall occasionally served its impractical purpose but ultimately failed as an impenetrable line of defence. Genghis Khan dryly noted, 'The strength of a wall depends on the courage of those who defend it'. Sentries could be bribed. Despite the wall, the Mongol armies managed to impose foreign rule on China from 1279 to 1368, and again the bastion failed to prevent the Manchu armies from establishing two and a half centuries of non-Chinese

rule over the Middle Kingdom. The wall did not even register with the 19th-century European ‘barbarians’ who simply arrived by sea, and by the time the Japanese invaded, it had been outflanked by new technologies (such as the aeroplane).

The wall was largely forgotten after that. Mao Zedong encouraged the use of the wall as a source of free building material, a habit that continues unofficially today. Without its cladding, lengthy sections have dissolved to dust and the barricade might have vanished entirely without the tourist industry.

The Great Wall



VISITING THE WALL

The heavily reconstructed section at **Badaling** is the most touristy part of the Wall. **Mutianyu** and **Jinshanling** are also restored sections. These can feel

less than authentic, but have the advantage of being much more accessible (with cable cars, handrails etc). **Huanghua Cheng** and **Zhuangdaokou** are part-restored, part-'wild' and offer some short but challenging hikes. Unrestored sections of 'wild wall' include **Gubeikou** and **Jiankou**, but there are many others. All of the above can be reached using public transport (you can even get to Badaling by train!), although some people choose to hire a car to speed things up. Staying overnight by the Wall is recommended.

Tours run by hostels (¥250-300 per person), or by specialist tour companies (up to ¥1000 per person), are far preferable to those run by ordinary hotels or general travel companies, which often come with hidden extras, such as a side trip to the Ming Tombs or a gem factory. Most of the Beijing hostels we've reviewed run decent Great Wall trips. The following reputable companies and associations run recommended trips to the Wall:

Bespoke Beijing (www.bespokebeijing.com)

Great Wall Hiking (www.greatwallhiking.com)

China Hiking (www.chinahiking.cn)

Beijing Hikers (www.beijingshikers.com)

Bike Beijing (www.bikebeijing.com) For cycling trips.

Beijing Sideways (www.beijingsideways.com) For trips in a motorbike sidecar.

MUTIANYU

Mutianyu (Mutianyu Changcheng adult/student ¥45/25; 🕒 7am-6.30pm, winter 7.30am-5.30pm) is a recently renovated stretch of wall, which sees a lot of tourists but is fairly easy to reach. It's also well set up for families.

Famed for its Ming-era guard towers and excellent views, this 3km-long section of wall is largely a recently restored Ming dynasty structure that was built upon an earlier Northern Qi-dynasty edifice. With 26 watchtowers, the wall is impressive and manageable, and although it can get crowded, most souvenir hawking is reserved to the lower levels.

From the ticket office, there are three or four stepped pathways leading up

to the wall, plus a **cable car** (lan che; one-way/return ¥60/80, children half-price), a **chairlift** (suodao; combined ticket with toboggan ¥80) – called a 'ropeway' on the signs here – and a **toboggan ride** (hua dao; one-way ¥60), making this ideal for those who can't manage too many steps or who have kids in tow.

Sleeping & Eating

Mutianyu has a branch of **Subway** (just down from the car park). There are also lots of fruit and snacks stalls. Up by the main entrance is **Yi Song Lou Restaurant** (Yi Song Lou Canting mains ¥20-60; 🕒 8.30am-5pm), which does OK Chinese food.

Brickyard Eco Retreat

GUESTHOUSE

(Wa Chang 📍 6162 6506; www.brickyardatmutianyu.com; Beigou Village, Huairou District r ¥1480-1980, ste ¥3990; ❄️ 📶 🌿)

A 1960s glazed-tile factory renovated into a beautiful guesthouse, sporting five lovingly restored rooms, each with views of the Great Wall. Rates include breakfast, use of a spa, and shuttle services to the Wall and surrounding villages. Brickyard is in Beigou village (Beigou Cun), about 2km from the Mutianyu Great Wall. Reservations essential.

Getting to Mutianyu

➔ **Bus** From Dongzhimen Wai Bus Stand (Map [Click here](#); Dongzhimenwai Qichezhan), bus 867 makes a special detour to Mutianyu twice every morning (¥16, 2½ hours, 7am and 8.30am, 15 March to 15 November only) and returns from Mutianyu twice each afternoon (2pm and 4pm).

Otherwise, go via Huairou: from Dongzhimen Transport Hub (Dongzhimen Shuniuzhan; Map [Click here](#)) take bus 916 (the character is 'kuai', and means 'fast') to Huairou (¥12, one hour, 6.30am to 7.30pm). Get off at Mingzhu Guangchang bus stop, then take the first right to find a bunch of minivans waiting to take passengers to Mutianyu (per person ¥10-20, 30

minutes). After around 1pm, you'll probably have to charter your own van (¥60 one-way).

Return minivans start drying up around 6pm. The last 916 back to Beijing leaves Huairou at around 7pm. If you miss that, catch a taxi from Huairou to Shunyi subway station (Shunyi Ditie Zhan; about ¥100) on Line 15, or all the way back to Dongzhimen (¥220).

➔ **Taxi** Around ¥600 to ¥700 return day trip from Beijing.

➔ **Warning!** If taking bus 916 to Huairou, ignore the tout who almost always gets on this bus at Nanhua Shichang bus stop and tries to lure foreign tourists onto an expensive minibus tour to the Great Wall. He sometimes wears a bus-driver shirt to aid the scam.

TAXIS AND CAR HIRE

Miles Meng

TAXI

(☎137 1786 1403; www.beijingtourvan.blog.sohu.com)

Mr Sun

TAXI

(Sun Xiansheng ☎136 5109 3753)

Only speaks Chinese but is very reliable and can find other drivers if he's busy. Does round trips to the Great Wall from ¥600.

Hertz

CAR HIRE

(Hezi ☎800 988 1336, 5739 2000; www.hertzchina.com; 🕒8am-8am Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun)

GUBEIKOU

The historic, far-flung village of **Gubeikou** was once an important, heavily guarded gateway into Beijing from northeast China. The village, split into two sections by a ridge, with the Great Wall running along it and a small tunnel running through it, contains plenty of old courtyard homes and half a

dozen small **temples** (¥20 combined ticket). Various stretches of the Wall meet in and around the village in a kind of Great Wall crossroads that gives you lots of hiking options ([Click here](#)). One short stony stretch of wall dates from the far-off Northern Qi Dynasty (AD 550–577). The other stretches are Ming.

There are two main sections of Wall: the **Coiled Dragon** (Pan Long; admission ¥25), which runs along the ridge that cuts Gubeikou Village in two and which eventually leads to Jinshanling Great Wall, and **Crouching Tiger Mountain** (Wo Hu Shan), on the other side of the Chao He River (walk through the tunnel, cross the river bridge, and follow the steps you'll soon see on your right). Both make for fabulous hiking, although Crouching Tiger is extraordinarily steep.

Sleeping & Eating

All the tourist accommodation is in the recently redeveloped southern half of the village (before the Gubeikou Tunnel), now called the **Folk Customs Village** (it's less twee than it sounds). Get off the bus immediately before the tunnel (if you miss the stop, you can walk back through the tunnel from the next stop), and walk through the archway on the right. There are dozens of **nongjiayuan** (village guesthouses), so there's no need to book anything (unless you want to stay at Great Wall Box House). Just turn up and look for one you like. They all have English signage, but very little English is spoken. Expect to pay ¥80/120/150 for a single/double/triple occupancy in a simple room with bathroom. All guesthouses also do food (mains ¥20-40).

★ **Great Wall Box House**

GUESTHOUSE

(Tuan Yuan Kezhan  8105 1123; <http://en.greatwallbox.com>; No 18 Dongguan, Gubeikou Village; weekday/weekend, incl dinner dm ¥180/200, s ¥200/220, tw ¥500/550)

Run by a young, friendly, English-speaking Chinese couple called Joe and Sophie, this wonderful place is housed in a 100-year-old courtyard building that was an abandoned chessboard factory before being lovingly renovated by

Joe. Rooms surround a long, well-tended garden-courtyard, and are large (the dorm is enormous), bright and spotlessly clean. Incredibly, a small, overgrown section of the Great Wall runs along one side of the property.

Getting to Gubeikou

➔ **Bus** Take bus 980 from Dongzhimen Transport Hub (Dongzhimen Shuniuzhan; Map [Click here](#)) to its terminus at Miyun Bus Station (Miyun Qichezhan; ¥15, 90 minutes, 6am-7pm). The (kuai) means fast. Come out of the bus station, cross the road and turn right to find the bus stop for bus 25. The (Mi) stands for Miyun. Then take bus 25 to Gubeikou (¥9, 70 minutes). The last 25 back to Miyun leaves at 5.30pm. The last 980 back to Dongzhimen is at 7pm.

➔ **Taxi** Around ¥1000 to ¥1200 return day trip from Beijing.

CAMPING AT THE GREAT WALL

Strictly speaking, camping on the Great Wall is not allowed. However, many people do it; some of the watchtowers make excellent bases for pitching tents or just laying down a sleeping bag. Remember: don't light fires and don't leave anything behind. You'll find fun places to camp at Zhuangdaokou, Jiankou and Gubeikou.

There are plenty of places to buy camping equipment in Beijing, but one of the best in terms of quality and choice is **Sanfo** (Sanfu Huwai [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍6201 1333; www.sanfo.com; 3-4 Madian Nancun, 3 🕒9am-9pm). There are branches across the city, but this location stands out because it has three outlets side by side, as well as a few smaller cheaper camping shops next door. Turn right out of Exit D of Jiandemen subway station (Line 10) and walk south for about 800m, then cross under the 3rd Ring road and the camping shops will be on your right.

JIANKOU

For stupefying hikes along perhaps Beijing's most incomparable section of 'wild wall', head to the rear section of the **Jiankou Great Wall** (Hou Jiankou Changcheng), accessible from **Xizhazi village** (Xizhazi Cun), via the town of

Huairou. Tantalising panoramic views of the Great Wall spread out in either direction from here, as the crumbling brickwork meanders dramatically along a mountain ridge; the setting is truly sublime. This section of the wall is completely unrestored, so it is both dangerous and, strictly speaking, illegal to hike along it. Make sure you wear footwear with very good grip, and never attempt to traverse this section in the rain.

Xizhazi village is actually a collection of five hamlets (*dui*) strung out along a valley, to the left of which is a forested ridge, along the top of which runs the Great Wall. You can access the Wall from a number of points along this valley. If you're aiming to hike all the way to Mutianyu Great Wall ([Click here](#)), turn left when you hit the Wall. The Wall here has various features that have been given names according to their appearance. They include: **Ox Horn** (Niu Jiao Bian; 90-minute walk to Mutianyu), which performs a great sweeping, 180-degree U-turn; **Sharp North Tower** (Zheng Bei Lou; 3½ hours to Mutianyu), which is the highest tower you can view to your left when standing in hamlet No 5; **Arrow Nock** (Jiankou; six hours), a low pass in the ridge; and **Upward Flying Eagle** (Yingfei Daoyang; nine hours), consisting of three beacon towers, two of which (the wings) stand on the highest point of the mountain above the lower middle one (the eagle's head).

The H25 bus terminates at the end of the valley road, at Hamlet No 5 (Wu Dui). From here you can access pathways to Upward Flying Eagle (beyond the village) and Arrow Nock (back towards hamlet No 4). Before the bus gets that far, though, it passes through a decorative archway at the entrance to the valley. Here you'll have to get out to buy an **entrance ticket** (¥25) to the scenic area. Hamlet No 1 (Yi Dui) is just through this archway, to your left. You can walk from here to the Ox Horn in about 90 minutes.

Sleeping & Eating

(📍 6161 1794, 136 9307 0117; Xizhazi Village No 1; r ¥100; 📶 📶)

The first *nongjiayuan* (farmers-style courtyard) you come to as you enter Hamlet No 1 of Xizhazi village. Rooms are set around a vegetable-patch courtyard, and are simple, but have private bathrooms. Food menu (mains ¥25 to ¥50) includes some photos. No English.

Zhao Shi Shan Ju

GUESTHOUSE

(📍 6161 1762, 135 2054 9638; www.jkwall.com (Chinese only); r ¥100-220; 📶 📶)

The last property in the valley (in Hamlet No 5 of Xizhazi village), this place is a favourite for Chinese hikers (not much English is spoken here). Has a large shaded terrace dining area with fine Great Wall views. Rooms are neat and clean and sleep two to four people. Most have attached bathrooms. Keep walking along the main road beyond where the bus terminates, and you'll see it up to your right. Food menu (mains ¥20 to ¥40) has photos.

Getting to Jiankou

➔ **Bus** Take bus 916 from the Dongzhimen Transport Hub (Dongzhimen Shuniuzhan; Map [Click here](#)) to its terminus at Huairou Bus Station (Huairou Qichezhan, ¥12, 90 minutes, 6.30am to 7.30pm). Turn left out of the station, right at the crossroads and take bus 862 from the first bus stop to Yujiayuan (¥2; five stops), then take the H25 to Xizhazi (70 mins, ¥8). Note, the H25 only runs twice a day; at 11.30am and 4.30pm. The return H25 bus leaves Xizhazi at 6.30am and 1.15pm, so you can't do this in a day trip on public transport alone.

➔ **Taxi** Around ¥700 to ¥900 return day trip from Beijing. From Huairou to Xizhazi Village, expect to pay at least ¥120 one-way.

ZHUANGDAOKOU

The small village of **Zhuangdaokou** has access to a rarely visited, unrestored section of 'wild wall'. It's also possible to hike over to Huanghua Cheng Great Wall on a restored section from here, although few people do this –

surprising, considering how straightforward it is.

The bus should drop you off at the far end of Zhuangdaokou village, where the road crosses a small stream. Pick up some water and snacks at the small shop near here, then turn right and follow the lane along the stream and up behind the houses until it meets a rocky pathway that leads up the Wall. Once at the Wall (20 minutes), turn right for the one-hour walk to Huanghua Cheng ([Click here](#)), or left to commence a tough, two-hour hike along a crumbling stretch of shrub-covered Wall towards Shui Changcheng ([Click here](#)).

Sleeping & Eating

Zaoxiang Yard

GUESTHOUSE

(Zaoxiang Tingyuan  135 2208 3605; r ¥80-150)

This modest guesthouse is housed in a 70-year-old courtyard building, which has some traditional features such as wooden window frames and paper window panes, as well as more recent add-ons such as a shower room and a dining area (you can also eat in the courtyard; English menu; mains ¥20 to ¥50). One room has a private bathroom. It's on your right on the main road, just before where the bus drops you off. There are three other guesthouses on the pathway leading up to the Great Wall.

Getting to Zhuangdaokou

➔ **Bus** From Dongzhimen Transport Hub (Dongzhimen Shuniuzhan; [Click here](#)) take bus 916 to Huairou (¥11, one hour, 6.30am to 7.30pm). Get off at Nanhuayuan Sanqu bus stop, then walk straight ahead about 200m (crossing one road), until you get to the next bus stop, which is called Nanhuayuan Siqu. The H21 bus from here to Shui Changcheng stops at Zhuangdaokou (¥8, one hour, every 30 minutes until 6.30pm). The last 916 bus from Huairou back to Beijing leaves Huairou at around 7pm.

➔ **Taxi** Around ¥700 to ¥800 return day trip from Beijing.

JINSHANLING

The **Jinshanling** (Jinshanling Changcheng ☎0314 883 0222; summer/winter ¥65/55) section of the Great Wall is a completely restored stretch, but it's so far from Beijing that it sees far fewer tourists than other fully restored sections. It contains some unusual features such as barrier walls (walls within the Wall), and each watchtower comes with an inscription, in English, detailing the historic significance of that part of the Wall. The landscape here can be drier and starker than at Jiankou or even nearby Gubeikou, but it's arguably more powerful, and it leaves you in no doubt that this is remote territory. This is the finish point of an adventurous 6½-hour hike from Gubeikou.

Hiking (in either direction) on the restored section of the Wall here is straightforward. There's an east gate and a west gate (about 2km apart), which means you can do a round trip (90 minutes) without backtracking; from the east gate, turn right at the Wall to find the west gate, then right again once back down on the road. If you need it, there's a **cable car** (lan che; one way/return trip ¥30/50) by the west gate ticket office.

Eating

Beside the east gate entrance (Dongmen), is a hotel lobby-like **cafe** (coffee ¥30, beer ¥12, mains ¥20-60) with an English menu and friendly staff who do their best with limited English.

Getting to Jinshanling

➔ **Bus** A direct bus takes you from Wangjing West subway station (Line 13) to a point about 30 minutes' walk from the Jinshanling east-gate ticket office. Come out of Exit C of the subway station and look over your right shoulder to see the red sign for the 'Tourist Bus to Jinshanling Great Wall' (Jinshanling Changcheng luyou banche), from where there are half-hourly buses to Jinshanling (¥32, 90 minutes, 7.30am-4pm). From the bus drop-off point (a service station on a highway), walk back under the highway and keep going

for about 2km to the east-gate ticket office. Note, when you return (turn right out of the east gate area), the bus will pick up passengers from the same side of the highway it dropped you off at; not from the side which has a police station beside it. Last bus back leaves the service station at 4.20pm.

➔ **Taxi** Around ¥1000 to ¥1200 return day trip from Beijing.

BADALING

The mere mention of its name sends a shudder down the spine of hardcore Wall walkers, but **Badaling** (Badaling Changcheng adult/student ¥45/25; 🕒 6am-7pm summer, 7am-6pm winter) is the easiest part of the Wall to get to (you can even get here by train!) and as such, if you are really pushed for time, this may be your only option. You'll have to put up with huge crowds of tourists, a lot of souvenir hawkers and a Wall that was completely renovated in the 1980s and so lacks a true sense of historical authenticity. The Badaling Wall is highly photogenic, however, and has good tourist facilities (restaurants, disabled access, cable cars etc).

There is a **cable car** (lan che; one-way/return ¥80/100) from the bottom of the west car park, and a **toboggan ride** (¥30; called a 'sliding car' on the signs here), which descends to the east car park. There is also disabled access. **ATMs** can be found in the west car park.

Eating

There are dozens of restaurants on the main drags leading up to the entrance to the Wall. Most are fast-food outlets or snack stalls. Just up from the west car park, between a KFC and a Subway, try **Yong He King** (Yonghe Dawang mains ¥15-30; 🕒 10am-9pm), for the Chinese version of fast food: rice meals, dumplings and noodles.

Getting to Badaling

➔ **Bus** The 877 (¥12, one hour, 6am to 5pm) leaves for Badaling from the

northern side of the **Deshengmen gateway** (Map [Click here](#);), about 500m east of Jishuitan subway station. It goes to the east car park at Badaling. From there, walk uphill a little, turn left through a covered souvenir-shop strip, then left again.

➔ **Train** Getting here by train is the cheapest and most enjoyable option.

Badaling train station is a 1km-walk downhill from the west car park; come out of the train station and turn left. Morning trains (¥6, 70-80 minutes) leave from **Beijing North Train Station** (Map [Click here](#); Beijing Beizhan), which is connected to Xizhimen subway station, at the following times from Tuesday to Thursday: 6.12am, 8.34am, 10.57am and 12.42pm; and at the following times from Friday to Monday: 6.12am, 7.58am, 9.02am, 10.57am and 1.14pm and 1.35pm. Afternoon trains return at 1.40pm, 3.08pm, 5.30pm, 7.34pm and 9.33pm (Tue-Thurs); and at 1.40pm, 3.52pm, 4.14pm, 5.30pm, 8.06pm and 9.31pm (Fri-Mon).

➔ **Taxi** Expect to pay around ¥600 to ¥700 for a round trip.

TOP GREAT WALL HIKES

JIANKOU'S OX HORN TO MUTIANYU

Two hours (plus one hour climb to the Wall) Unrivalled for pure wild-wall scenery, the Wall at Jiankou is very tough to negotiate. This short stretch, which passes through the 180-degree U-turn known as the Ox Horn, is equally hairy, but it soon links up with an easier, restored section at Mutianyu. Access the Wall from Hamlet No 1 in Xizhazi Village (Xizhazi Cun Yidui; see [Click here](#)). It takes an hour to reach the Wall from the village; from the sign that says 'this section of the Great Wall is not open to the public', follow a narrow dirt path uphill and through a lovely pine forest. When you reach a small clearing, go straight on (and down slightly), rather than up to the right. Later, when you hit the Wall, turn left. You'll climb up to and round the Ox Horn before descending (it's very slippery here) all the way to Mutianyu where cable cars, toboggan rides and transport back to Beijing await.

ZHUANGDAOKOU TO HUANGHUA CHENG

One hour (plus 20-minute climb to the Wall) A short hop rather than a hike, and on a mostly restored part of the Wall, but this comes with stunning views by a reservoir once you reach the summit of your climb. Access the Wall from

Zhuangdaokou Village ([Click here](#)). When you reach the Wall, turn right and keep going until you eventually descend to the main road by the reservoir. You can pick up buses, such as the H14, to Huairou from here (until 6pm).

ZHUANGDAOKOU TO SHUI CHANGCHENG TO HUANGHUA CHENG

Two hours (plus 20-minute climb to the Wall) Climb up to the Wall from Zhuangdaokou Village ([Click here](#)) and turn left at the Wall to be rewarded with this dangerous but fabulous stretch of crumbling bastion. The Wall eventually splits at a corner tower; turn left. Then, soon after, you'll reach another tower from where you can see the reservoir far below you. Here the Wall crumbles down the mountain and is impassable. Instead of risking your life, take the path that leads down to your left, just before the tower. This path eventually links up with the Wall again, but you may as well follow it all the way down to the road from here, where you'll be able to catch the H21 bus back to Huairou from the lower one of the two large car parks.

THE COILED DRAGON LOOP

2½ hours This scenic but manageable hike starts and finishes in the town of [Gubeikou](#) and follows a curling stretch of the Wall known as the Coiled Dragon. From the Folk Customs Village (the southern half of Gubeikou) walk up to the newly reconstructed **Gubeikou Gate** (Gubeikou Guan), but turn right up a dirt track just before the gateway. You should start seeing yellow-painted blobs left over from a marathon that was run here; follow them. The first section of Wall you reach is a very rare stony stretch of **Northern Qi Dynasty Wall** (1500 years old!). It soon joins up with the Ming-Dynasty bricked version, which you then continue to walk along (although at one stage, you need to follow yellow arrows down off the Wall to the left, before rejoining it later). Around 90 minutes after you set off, you should reach a big sweeping right-hand bend in the Wall (the coil), with three towers on top. The first and third of these towers are quite well preserved, with walls, windows and part of a roof (great for camping in). At the third tower (called **Jiangjun Tower**), turn left, skirting right around it, then walk down the steps before turning right at a point marked with a yellow 'X' (the marathon went straight on here). Follow this pathway all the way back to Gubeikou (30 minutes), turning right when you reach the road.

GUBEIKOU TO JINSHANLING

6½ hours This day-long adventure takes in some ancient stone Wall, some crumbling unrestored brick Wall and some picture-perfect, recently renovated Wall, as well as a 90-minute detour through the countryside. Bring plenty of water and enough food for lunch.

Follow the first part of our Coiled Dragon Loop hike, but instead of leaving the Wall just after **Jiangjun Tower**, continue along the Wall for another hour until you reach

the impressive **24-window Tower** (there are only 15 windows left). Here, follow the yellow arrows off the Wall to avoid a military zone up ahead and walk down through the fields for about 25 minutes. Take the first right, at another yellow arrow, beside a vegetable plot, and climb the path back towards the Wall. After about half an hour you'll pass **Qing Yun Farmhouse**, where you may be able to buy food and drinks (but don't bank on it). It's a 25-minute climb up to the Wall from here (at the fork, the left path is easier). At the Wall, walk through the cute doorway to get up around the other side of the tower, then continue along the Wall to the restored section at Jinshanling. You'll have to buy a Jinshanling Wall entrance ticket (¥65) off a lady at **Xiliang Zhuandao Tower** from where it's about 30 minutes to **Little Jinshan Tower** (for the path or cable car down to the west gate), or about 90 minutes to **East Tower with Five Holes** (for the path down to the east gate, from where it's a 30-minute walk to the bus back to Beijing).

Tianjin & Hebei

Tianjin & Hebei Highlights

Tianjin

Tianjin

Hebei

Shijiazhuang

Around Shijiazhuang

Chengde

Shanhaiguan

Jimingyi

Tianjin & Hebei



Pop 110 million

Why Go?

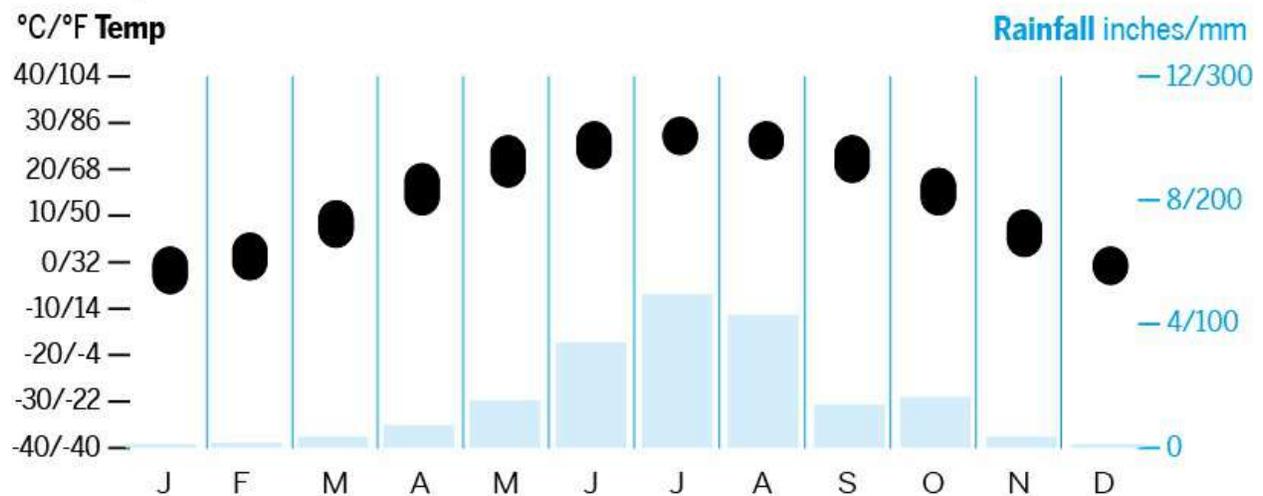
Beijing's breadbasket, Hebei is a slow-moving panorama of grazing sheep, brown earth and fields of corn and wheat. Cosmopolitan Tianjin may put on a dazzling show, but the true charms of this region are its time-worn, earthy textures and its deep-rooted historical narrative.

Hebei offers the ideal chance to disengage from Beijing's modernity and frantic urban tempo, and experience a more timeless China without having to travel too far. Wander through ancient settlements and walled towns, skirt the wild edges of the former Manchuria and journey to the majestic 18th-century summer retreat of the Qing emperors in Chengde.

There are temples galore to explore, rarely visited stretches of the Great Wall and remote towns and villages whose ancient rhythms and rural seclusion make them the perfect retreats for those prepared to venture slightly off the beaten track.

When to Go

Tiānjīn



- ➔ **Feb** It's bitterly cold, but Chinese New Year temple fairs in Zhengding will warm your spirits.
- ➔ **Apr & May** Hebei starts to thaw out after the big winter freeze. Comfortable temperatures.
- ➔ **Sep & Oct** Autumn is Hebei's most pleasant season; not too hot, not too cold.

Best Architectural Beauties

- ➔ [Longxing Temple](#)
- ➔ [Puning Temple](#)
- ➔ [Putuozongcheng Temple](#)
- ➔ [Jiao Shan Great Wall](#)
- ➔ [Jiumenkou Great Wall](#)
- ➔ [Yujiacun](#)

Best Off the Beaten Track

- ➔ [Yujiacun](#)
- ➔ [Jimingyi](#)
- ➔ [Cangzhou's Iron Lion](#)
- ➔ [Zhaozhou Bridge](#)

Tianjin & Hebei Highlights



① Visit the staggering collection of imperial buildings at the Qing-dynasty getaway of **Chengde**.

② Explore the remarkable, 1500-year-old Longxing Temple in the pagoda-peppered town of **Zhengding**.

- 3 Step back in time as you walk the cobbled streets of the little-known Ming-dynasty 'stone village' of [Yujiacun](#).
- 4 Venture off the beaten track to the remote walled village of [Jimingyi](#), China's oldest surviving postal station.
- 5 Hike some of the less-visited stretches of the Great Wall at the Ming garrison town of [Shanhaiguan](#).
- 6 Sip Italian coffee and quaff a German beer or two in the European-inspired cityscape of laid-back [Tianjin](#).
- 7 Be one of the few tourists to hunt down the seemingly long-forgotten [Iron Lion of Cangzhou](#), China's oldest cast-iron sculpture.

Language

Hebei is a Mandarin-speaking region, but areas furthest from Beijing have pronounced regional accents and a distinctive argot.

Getting There & Around

Beijing and Tianjin are the most convenient bases for exploring the province. Shijiazhuang is also a well-connected transport hub. High-speed 'bullet' trains will whizz you between cities, but buses are best for reaching smaller towns and villages.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this region:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥250 (for a room)

\$\$ ¥250 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥40 (for a meal for one)

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

TIANJIN

Tianjin

☎022 / Pop 9.8 million

Forever being compared with Beijing (if anything, it's more like Shanghai), the former foreign concession port of Tianjin is a large, booming, yet laidback city, with a pleasant river promenade and some charming European-flavoured neighbourhoods. It's an easy day trip from the capital, but you may want a couple of days to explore the city properly.

History

Tianjin rose to prominence as a grain-storage point during the Mongol Yuan dynasty. The city found itself at the intersection of both inland and port navigation routes, and by the 15th century the town had become a walled garrison.

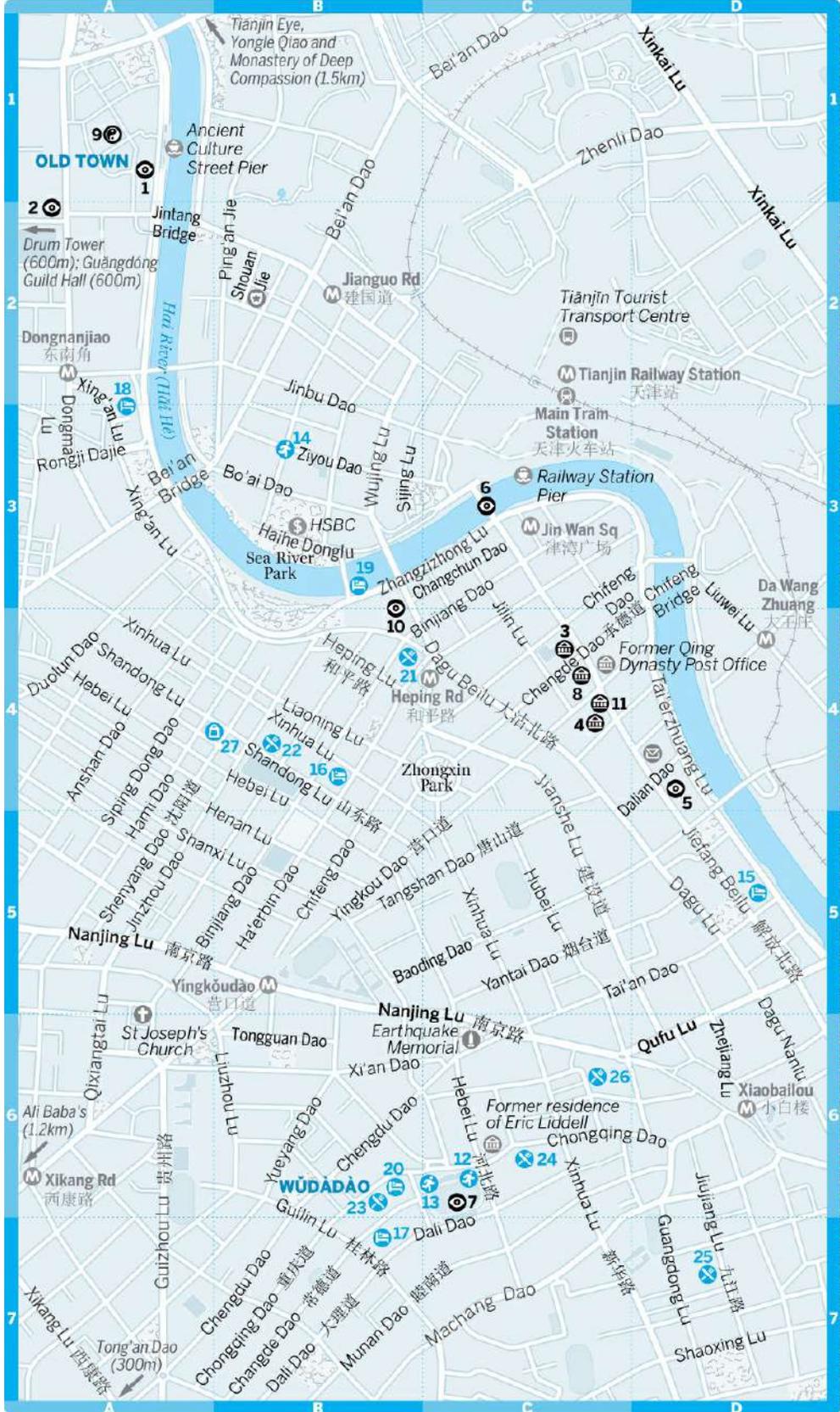
During the foreign concession era, the British and French settled in, joined by the Japanese, Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Italians and Belgians between 1895 and 1900. Each concession was a self-contained world, with its own prison, school, barracks and hospital. During the Boxer Rebellion, the foreign powers levelled the walls of the old Chinese city.

Tianjin was established as a municipality of China in 1927.

The Tangshan earthquake of 1976 killed nearly 24,000 people in the Tianjin area. The city was badly rocked, but escaped the devastation that virtually obliterated nearby Tangshan, where 240,000 people died.

Central Tiānjīn

0 500 m
0 0.25 miles



Central Tianjin

Sights

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1 | Ancient Culture Street | A1 |
| 2 | Confucius Temple | A2 |
| 3 | Former French Municipal Administration Council Building | C4 |
| 4 | Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank Building | C4 |
| 5 | Jardine Matheson & Co Building | D4 |
| 6 | Liberation Bridge | C3 |
| 7 | Minyuan Plaza | C6 |
| 8 | Sino-French Industrial and Commercial Bank | C4 |
| 9 | Tianhou Temple | A1 |
| 10 | Tianjin World Financial Centre | B4 |
| 11 | Yokohama Specie Bank Ltd | C4 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 12 | Bicycle Rental | C6 |
| 13 | Horse-drawn Carriages | C6 |
| 14 | Open-topped bus tours | B3 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 15 | Astor Hotel | D5 |
| 16 | Cloudy Bay Hostel | B4 |
| 17 | Min Yuan 33 | B7 |
| 18 | Orange Hotel | A3 |
| 19 | St Regis Tianjin | B3 |
| 20 | Three Brothers Youth Hostel | B6 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 21 | Goubuli (Jinta branch) | B4 |
| 22 | Goubuli (main branch) | B4 |
| 23 | Jinfu Lou | B6 |
| 24 | Qing Wang Fu Bistro | C6 |
| 25 | Shaguo Li | D7 |
| 26 | YY Beer House | C6 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 27 | Shenyangdao Antiques Market | B4 |
|----|---|----|

Sights

The grandiose vista that greets visitors as they exit Tianjin's Main Train Station signals the city's intent to rise even further. Facing you across **Liberation Bridge** (Jiefang Qiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is a lengthy and ostentatious sweep of rebuilt red and orange Sino-European pomposity in brick, splendidly illuminated at night. To the west the glittering, 337m-tall **Tianjin World Financial Centre** (Jinrong Dasha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a singularly bold statement of glass and steel, towers over the river.

Treaty Port Area

South of the station across Liberation Bridge was the British concession. The rebuilt riverside facade is an impressive sight at night, but walk further south along Jiefang Beilu to see original, imposing, hundred-year-old European buildings, which once housed the city's international banks.

Buildings of note, all on Jiefang Beilu, include the former **French Municipal Administration Council Building** (Yuan Faguo Gongyiju Dalou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Jiefang Beilu), built in 1924; the **Sino-French Industrial and Commercial Bank** (Zhongfa Gongshang Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), dating from 1932; the **Yokohama Specie Bank Ltd** (Hengbin Zhengjin Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), dating from 1926; the former **Qing Dynasty Post Office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (1878), the **Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank Building** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and the **Jardine Matheson & Co Building** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)).

Old Town

Originally enclosed by a wall, Tianjin's reconstructed old town centres on the

rebuilt **Drum Tower** (Gu Lou [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chengxiang Zhonglu; admission free, but must collect ticket from booth opposite; 🕒 9am-11.30am & 1.30-4.30pm), which houses some old photos of the area. Decorated with pailou (ornate archways), the pedestrianised shopping street to the north of the Drum Tower is good for souvenirs.

Opposite the Drum Tower you'll find one of the few buildings of any genuine age in the 'old town': the **Guangdong Guild Hall** (Guangdong Huiguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 31 Nanmenli Dajie; admission ¥10; 🕒 9am-4.30pm), built in 1907. It's a lovely courtyard complex, centred on a beautiful, ornate, wooden hall which holds popular Peking opera performances on Sunday afternoons ((¥20 to ¥50, 2.30 to 4pm). Don't miss poking your head into the back courtyard, with its fading murals by the south entrance. The historic (but also largely rebuilt) Confucius Temple is also nearby.

Between the **Confucius Temple** (Wen Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Dongmennei Dajie; admission ¥30; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) and the river is **Ancient Culture Street** (Guwenhua Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). Another largely rebuilt section of the old walled town, it's even better for shopping than the Drum Tower area, and is stuffed with vendors flogging Chinese calligraphy, paintings, tea sets, paper cuts and chops. Look out for the famous *Tianjin niren* (chubby childlike clay figures that make cute souvenirs). The fascinating Taoist **Tianhou Temple** (Tianhou Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun), Tianjin's version of the shrine dedicated to the goddess of sailors that is found in every Chinese seaport, is also here.

To get to the Drum Tower, walk north from Exit D of Gulou metro station. From the Drum Tower, turn right (east) for the Confucius Temple and the river.

Wudadao

The area of Wudadao (Five Large Roads) is rich in the villas and pebble-dash former residences of the well-to-do of the early 20th century. Consisting of five roads in the south of the city – Machang Dao, Changde Dao, Munan

Dao, Dali Dao and Chengdu Dao – the streetscapes are European, lined with charming houses dating from the 1920s and before.

The centrepiece is **Minyuan Plaza** (Minyuan Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 83 Chongqing Dao;) – rebuilt in 2012 on the site of a 90-year-old stadium, designed by former British Olympian Eric Liddell, who used to live and work in Tianjin ([Click here](#)).

Other Sights

Monastery of Deep Compassion

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Dabei Chanyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 40 Tianwei Lu; admission ¥5; 🕒 9am-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar)

Tianjin's most important Buddhist temple – built in three stages from 1436 to 1734 – was always noted for its Sakya Hall (Shijia Baodian). Sadly, the hall seemed to be being entirely rebuilt when we were last here. The large hall behind it (also rebuilt) used to house a huge, golden multi-armed statue of Guanyin, whose eyes would follow you around the hall. The statue has now been moved to the smaller Great Compassion Hall, in a side courtyard.

The monastery is close to the Tianjin Eye, on the east side of the river.

Tianjin Eye

FERRIS WHEEL

(Tianjin Zhi Yan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yongle Qiao; adult/child ¥70/35; 🕒 9.30am-9.30pm Tue-Sun, 5-9.30pm Mon)

To get the city's transformation in perspective, or for a night-time angle on Tianjin, ride this huge Ferris wheel which straddles the Hai River.

ERIC LIDDELL

Olympic champion, rugby international and devout Christian, Scotsman Eric Liddell is best known as the subject of the 1981 Oscar-winning film *Chariots of Fire*, but few know about his connection to Tianjin. He was born here in 1902 before being educated in Scotland and then embarking on a short but astonishing sporting career.

He was capped seven times by the Scotland rugby union team and won gold in the 400m at the 1924 Paris Olympics. Famously, he pulled out of his favoured event – the 100m – because, as a Christian, he refused to run on a Sunday. A year later, he returned to Tianjin to follow his true passion as a Christian missionary, and he stayed in China until his death in 1945 in a Japanese internment camp in Shandong province. While in Tianjin, he lived at 38 Cambridge Road (now Chongqing Dao; look for the plaque), and he helped build the Minyuan Stadium, also in Cambridge Road, in 1926. It's said that he based its design on Stamford Bridge (Chelsea Football Club's home ground and his favourite running track back in Britain). The stadium was demolished in 2012 before being reincarnated as [Minyuan Plaza](#). It still has a running track (which is free to use), but the building itself is now a leisure and restaurant complex from where tourists can rent bicycles or hop on horse-drawn carriages for tours of the surrounding concession-era streets.

Activities & Tours

Taking **cruise-boat tours** (per person day/evening ¥80/100) along the Hai River is very popular, especially at night. There are three main boat docks; by the **Train Station** (Tianjin Zhan Matou [GOOGLE MAP](#)); per person day/evening ¥80/100), by **Ancient Culture Street** (Guwenhua Jie Matou [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and by the **Tianjin Eye** (you chuan per person day/evening ¥80/100). Your boat will pass all three, but you'll only be allowed to get off at the one you got on at. The round trip takes about 50 minutes. Daytime boats leave hourly from 9am to 5pm. The two evening tours leave at 7.30pm and 8.30pm.

In summer, 45-minute **open-topped bus tours** (shuangceng changpeng guanguang bashi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Marco Polo Square, per person ¥25) leave roughly hourly from Marco Polo Square between 10am and 7pm. They pass a number of main sights, including the Old Town and the Tianjin Eye, before looping back to Marco Polo Square.

The quiet, tree-lined streets of Wudadao are ideal for cycling. You can **rent classic bicycles** (zu zixingche [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Minyuan Plaza; Minyuan Guangchang first hour free, after that ¥5 per 30 minutes; deposit ¥400; 🕒 9am-8pm) from one corner of Minyuan Plaza.

From another corner of Minyuan Plaza, tourists can take 30-minute tours

of the neighbourhood in [horse-drawn carriages](#) (Ma Che [MAP](#))

[GOOGLE MAP](#); Minyuan Plaza,, Minyuan Guangchang per person ¥50).

Sleeping

★ [Three Brothers Youth Hostel](#)

HOSTEL

(Gesa Guoji Qingnianlushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 022 2723 9777; gesahostel@163.com; 141 Chongqing Dao, dm/s/d ¥80/138/238)

Friendly hostel, with a laidback atmosphere and a pleasant location right in the middle of historic Wudadao. The small, covered front yard of the 90-year-old building has been turned into a cafe area, while simple but clean rooms are upstairs at the back. Take Bus 951 from the Main Train Station and get off at Guilin Lu, which intersects Chongqing Dao.

[Cloudy Bay Hostel](#)

YOUTH HOSTEL

(Yunwu Zhiwan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 022 2723 0606; cloudybayhostel@hotmail.com; 120 Harbin Dao; dm ¥60-100)

Young and friendly, Cloudy Bay is housed in a four-storey building that's been renovated Greek-island-style – whitewashed walls, blue-paint trim, splashes of mosaic tiling. The theme carries over into the cool roof-top terrace (beers from ¥10), although stops short of Mediterranean views. Apart from one private room (¥480), all rooms are dorms, including a female-only dorm.

[Orange Hotel](#)

HOTEL

(Juzi Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 022 2734 8333; www.orangehotel.com.cn; 7 Xing'an Lu, d from ¥319, with river view from ¥339; 📶 📶)

Good value with stylish, unfussy rooms, some of which have river views. Accessed from the rear, via an alley running off Xing'an Lu. Bicycles available to rent.

★ Astor Hotel

HOTEL

(Lishunde Dafandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 022 2331 1688; www.luxurycollection.com/astor; 33 Tai'erzhuang Lu, d ¥1035; 🚫🔒@📶🚰)

China's oldest foreign-run hotel, the Astor dates back to 1863, when it was opened by British missionary John Innocent. From the imposing, marbled lobby and solid wooden furniture, to the staff dressed in formal morning coats, there's an old school feel to the place that's hard to find elsewhere.

Make sure you ask for a room in the historic wing, rather than the modern wing and you'll be rewarded with a four-poster bed, parquet flooring and bundles of charm. The fascinating **Astor House Museum** (¥50) is free for guests.

★ Min Yuan 33

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Minyuan Sansan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 022 2331 1626; minyuan33.com; 31-33 Changde Dao, 31-33 r ¥880-1300)

Located in a beautifully renovated stretch of 100-year-old town houses, this Tianjin trendsetter has minimalist, all-white rooms with stripped-wood furniture and flooring, and tons of space.

The same owners run the Malaysian restaurant, **Cafe Sambal**, and the cosy cafe, **31 Cups**, both of which are next door.

St Regis Tianjin

HOTEL

(Tianjin Ruiji Jinrongjie Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 022 5830 9999; www.stregis.com/tianjin; 158 Zhangzizhong Lu, d ¥1035-1298; 🚫🔒@📶🚰)

The last word in luxury in Tianjin. Rooms can be nabbed for as little as ¥700 through their website.

Eating

Jinfu Lou

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 143 Chongqing Dao; dumplings ¥3-4 each; 🕒 7am-2pm; 🍴)

Simple, but clean dumplings joint run by a friendly guy who doesn't speak English, but does have an English menu. There's only five things on it, mind, and they're all dumplings (including veg options). No English sign, but it's next to the easy-to-spot Three Brothers Youth Hostel.

Shaguo Li

PAN-CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 022 2326 0075; 46 Jiujiang Lu, dishes ¥30-80; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-8.30pm)

Of all Tianjin's restaurants, this is the one the locals recommend. They flock here for the speciality pork spare ribs in a sweet barbecue sauce, so tender that they pull apart at the touch of a chopstick; the small portion (¥68) is easily enough for two people.

Goubuli (Jinta branch)

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 34 Dagu Beilu; mains ¥30-60; 🕒 7.30-10am & 10.30am-9pm; 🍴)

Tianjin's most famous restaurant chain is a mixed bag. The trademark *baozi* (steamed dumplings), including veg options, are big, juicy and delicious. They're also seriously overpriced (¥46 for eight). Prices for other dishes are more reasonable, but you can't come here without trying the dumplings. English menu with photos. The **main branch** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 77 Shandong Lu, dishes ¥26-70; 🕒 9am-10pm) is walking distance from this one, but the staff are less friendly.

Qing Wang Fu Bistro

BISTRO

(Qingwangfu Tingyue Kafei Huayuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 022 5835 2500; www.qingwangfu.com; 55 Chongqing Dao; mains ¥50-150; 🕒 11am-9pm (lunch menu 11am-2pm); 🍴)

Top-notch international cuisine served in the lush, lawned garden of the 1922 mansion, Qing Wang Fu. Lunchtime set menus are ¥68 and ¥98.

YY Beer House

THAI

(Yueyuan Taicanting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎137 5233 4520; 3 Aomen Lu, dishes ¥30-80, beer ¥30; 🕒11am-10pm)

Despite the name, this cosy, atmospheric place is actually a Thai restaurant with a wide range of flavoursome dishes from the land of smiles. It does, though, have some craft beers too. It's tucked away down a quiet street behind Nanjing Lu.



Drinking

The rooftop terrace at [Cloudy Bay Hostel](#) is a decent place for a cheap drink.

Ali Baba's

BAR

(Ali Baba [GOOGLE MAP](#); Bld 4, Weihua Nanli, off Tong'an Dao; beers from ¥10, mains ¥20-50; 🕒11am-3am)

One of Tianjin's longest-running bars, this expat-friendly, slightly gritty, student hang-out has an unlikely location – hidden away in the middle of a housing estate – but is ever popular. Faintly bohemian, and somewhat eccentric, it's a fun place to drink into the early hours, and they do food too.

Come out of Exit A2 of Wujiayao subway station and walk north along Qixiangtai Lu for about 300m then turn left down Tong'an Dao. After passing the road called Wujiayao Si Haolu, take the first lane on your left, and Ali Baba's is up on the right. Alternatively, you can walk from Wudadao (about 1.5km); walk southwest along Chengdu Dao then turn right up Tong'an Dao, from where it's a 600m walk to the left turn for the bar.



Shopping

Binjiang Dao, between Nanjing Lu and Dagu Beilu, is one huge long pedestrianised shopping strip. Nanjing Lu has more modern shopping malls, though.

In markets, look out for *Tianjin niren* – cute, chubby, childlike clay figures, which are the city's trademark souvenir. You can get them in Ancient Culture Street, as well as in the lobby of the main branch of the restaurant Goubuli.

Shenyangdao Antiques Market

MARKET

(Shenyangdao Guwu Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Shenyang Dao & Shandong Lu;

 8am-5pm)

Best visited on Sunday, this antiques market is great for a rifle through its stamps, silverware, porcelain, clocks, Mao badges and Cultural Revolution memorabilia.

Information

A handful of 24-hour **internet cafes** can be found above the shops around the Main Train Station concourse. There are foreign-friendly **ATMs** inside and outside the station.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang 80-82 Jiefang Beilu)

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 153 Jiefang Beilu)

HSBC

BANK

(Huifeng Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Ocean Hotel, 5 Yuanyang Guangchang)

There's an HSBC ATM inside the International Building, at 75 Nanjing Lu.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju/Churujing Guanliju [GOOGLE MAP](#);  022 2445 8825; 19 Shouan Jie)

Tianjin International SOS Clinic

HOSPITAL

(Tianjin Guoji Jinji Jiuyuan Yiliao Zhensuo 📞022 2352 0143; Sheraton Tianjin Hotel, Zijinshan Lu)

From Tianta metro station, walk southeast along Zijinshun Lu and the Sheraton is on your left after about 1km.

WORTH A TRIP

SHI FAMILY COURTYARD

In Yangliuqing suburb, 20km west of central Tianjin, is the marvellous **Shi family residence** (Shi Jia Dayuan 47 Yangliuqing Guyi Jie, 47 admission ¥27; 🕒9am-5pm Apr-Oct, 9am-4.30pm Nov-Mar), a vast warren of courtyards and enclosed gardens.

Formerly belonging to a prosperous merchant family, the restored residence (originally built in 1875) contains a theatre and 278 rooms, some of which are furnished. Take bus 153 (¥2; 90 minutes) from Tianjin's West Train Station, which is on the metro.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Tianjin Binhai International Airport (Tianjin Binhai Guoji Jichang 📞022 2490 2950) is 15km east of the city centre and has flights to all major cities in China, plus a few international destinations, including Singapore, Moscow and Seoul. Buy tickets through www.elong.net or www.english.ctrip.com.

BOAT

The nearest passenger port is the [Tianjin International Cruise Home Port](#), 70km east of the city.

There's a ferry every other evening to **Dalian** (¥260-880, 12 hours, 8pm) in Liaoning province. It leaves on even numbers in the month (the return comes back on odd numbers). Boarding starts at 6pm. Tickets can be bought on the day of travel at the port.

There used to be a Thursday ferry to **Incheon** (Renchuan; from ¥1300, 27 hours, 11am) in South Korea (Hanguo), but at the time of research this had been suspended. It should be up and running again by the time you read this,

but not necessarily on a Thursday. The weekly ferry to **Kobe** (Shenhu) in Japan (Riben) had been suspended indefinitely.

To get to the cruise port, take metro Line 9 to Citizen Plaza Station (Shimin Guangchang; ¥11; one hour), then Bus 513 to the last stop (Dongjiang Youlun Mugang; ¥2; 40 minutes; 7am-5pm). The last bus back from the port is at 6pm.

BUS

Tianjin has a number of long-distance bus stations. Note, buses to Beijing are few and far between these days, now that everyone uses the bullet train.

Tianhuan Bus Station (Tianhuan keyunzhan ☎022 2305 0530; cnr Hongqi Lu & Anshan Xidao), about 4km southwest of the centre, can be reached on local Bus 50 from the Main Train Station; get off at chuanranbing yiyuan bus stop:

- ➔ **Beijing** (Bawangfen bus station) ¥40, two hours, twice daily (7am and 2pm)
- ➔ **Cangzhou** ¥45, 1½ hours, every 40 minutes from 6.30am to 6.30pm
- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥120, five hours, one daily (10.20am)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥170, nine hours, one daily (8.30am)
- ➔ **Shanghai** sleeper ¥300, 13 hours, one daily (6.30pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an** sleeper ¥300, 17 hours, every other day (3.30pm)

Tianjin West Bus Station (Tianjin Xizhan Keyunzhan ☎022 2732 1282; Xiqing Dao), about 1km west of the Tianjin Eye, uses West Railway Station (xi zhan) metro stop on Line 1:

- ➔ **Datong** ¥180, eight hours, one daily (8.30am)
- ➔ **Qinhuangdao** (for Shanhaiguan) ¥100, four hours one daily (noon)
- ➔ **Shijiazhuang** ¥130, five hours, hourly from 7.30am to 6.30pm

TRAIN

Tianjin has four train stations: Main, North, South and West, all of which are connected to the metro system. Most trains, including bullet trains to Beijing, leave from Main Train Station. South Train Station is used for bullet trains to

east-coast cities like Shanghai.

Bullet trains between here and Beijing make day trips extremely feasible. No need to pre-book; just turn up and buy a ticket on the next available train. You rarely have to wait more than an hour (except on Sunday evenings). The last train back to Tianjin leaves Beijing at 10.43pm.

Note, for some destinations, including Shijiazhuang and Xi'an, it can be quicker to take bullet trains from Beijing.

Main Train Station (Tianjin Zhan)

- ➔ **Beijing** C-class bullet ¥55, 30 minutes, every 10 minutes (6.17am to 10.53pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** G-class bullet ¥266, 4½ hours, three daily (2.42pm, 3.50pm and 5.59pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** (Hongqiao Station) K/T-class hard-sleeper ¥290, 14 hours, three daily (8.33pm, 11.05pm and 11.17pm)
- ➔ **Shanhaiguan** G-class bullet ¥130, 1½ hours, 13 daily (7.30am to 5.30pm)
- ➔ **Shijiazhuang** hard seat ¥63, 4 to 6 hours, 15 daily (7am to 9.46pm)
- ➔ **Wuhan** G-class bullet ¥493, 7 hours, two daily (9.32am and 11.48am)
- ➔ **Xi'an** K-class hard sleeper ¥300, 18 hours, five daily (1.42am, 2.18am, 2.51am, 11.54am and 4.52pm)

South Train Station (Tianjin Nanzhan)

- ➔ **Hangzhou** G-class bullet ¥495, 5½ hours, 10 daily (8.01am to 3.41pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** D/G-class bullet ¥259, 4½ hours, six daily (7.46am to 2.20pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** (Hongqiao Station) G-class bullet ¥516, five hours, 20 daily (9am to 6pm)

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The metro Line 2 extension to the airport was under construction at the time of research.

An **airport shuttle bus** (*jichang bashi*; ¥15, 40 minutes, every 30min 6am-7.30pm) leaves from the **Tianjin Tourist Transport Centre** (Tianjin Luyoujisan Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#)), outside the north exit of the Main Train Station.

➔ **Taxis** to the airport cost around ¥60.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Tianjin's easy-to-use **metro** (*ditie*) has four lines and runs from around 6.30am to 10pm. Ticket machines (tickets ¥2 to ¥5) have bilingual instructions.

Local **buses** (tickets ¥2 to ¥4) run from 5am to 11pm.

TAXI

Flag fall is ¥9 for the first 3km, then ¥1.70 per kilometre thereafter.

HEBEI

Shijiazhuang

☞ 0311 / Pop 2.65 million

An archetypal Chinese city, and the provincial capital of Hebei, Shijiazhuang is a frantic, prosperous and sprawling railway-junction settlement with little sense of history. It does, however, make a comfortable base from which to explore gems such as Zhengding and Yujiacun.

Shíjiāzhuāng



Shijiazhuang

Sights

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1 Hebei Provincial Museum | D2 |
| 2 People's Square | C1 |

Sleeping

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 3 Huiwen Hotel | A2 |
| 4 Silver Spring Hotel | A2 |

Eating

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 5 Chengde Huiquan | A2 |
| 6 Tudari | A1 |

Drinking & Nightlife

- | | |
|------------------------|----|
| 7 Cafe | C1 |
|------------------------|----|

Information

- | | |
|--|----|
| 8 Bank of China | A1 |
| 9 Public Security Bureau | A2 |
| 10 Tianyu Wangba | A2 |

Transport

| | |
|--|----|
| 11 Bus 148 to New Train Station | A2 |
| 12 Bus 30 to South Bus Station | A2 |
| 13 Long-Distance Bus Station | A2 |

Sights

People's Square (Renmin Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) comes alive early morning (with legions of taichi practioners) and early evening (when group dancers descend en masse).

Hebei Provincial Museum

MUSEUM

(Hebei Sheng Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhongshan Donglu; 🕒 9am-5pm (last entry 4pm) Tue-Sun) **FREE**

It's a colossus of a building; a shame that inside there are far more photos than there are exhibits. Worth a visit, nonetheless.

Sleeping

Like other cities in Hebei, foreigners are barred from staying in many of the cheaper hotels here.

Silver Spring Hotel

HOTEL

(Yinquan Jiujiu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0311 8598 5888; 12 Zhanqian Jie; d from ¥198; 📶 @ 📶)

Smart, good-value business hotel with welcoming staff and bright, modern rooms. You get good discounts if you buy a lifetime membership card (*huiyuan ka*) for ¥28. Breakfast costs ¥18. Free wi-fi.

Huiwen Hotel

HOTEL

(Huiwen Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0311 8786 5818; 6 Zhanqian Jie, s/tw from ¥358/480; 📶 @ 📶)

This ageing hotel has a bit more character than Silver Spring, and the rooms are very spacious. Also has welcoming staff and wi-fi throughout. Rates include breakfast. After discounts, single and twin rooms go for as little as ¥208 and ¥258 respectively.

Eating & Drinking

A couple of cute, independently run **cafes** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhengdong Lu; 🕒 11am-10pm) on tree-lined Zhengdong Lu have proper coffee, cold beer and patio seating.

Tudari

KOREAN

(Tudali [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Jinqiao Beijie; mains ¥20-30; 🕒 10am-11pm)

A bustling, spotless Korean eatery that's open later than most Shijiazhuang restaurants. Tasty hotpots, including the ever-popular *shiguo banfan* (¥25; meat, rice, vegetables and egg served in a clay pot), spicy salads and many different barbecued skewer options. Photo menu.

★ Chengde Huiguan

HEBEI

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 12 Zhanqian Jie, mains ¥20-60; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5.30-9pm)

Specialising in northern Hebei cuisine, this fine place, just around the side of Silver Spring Hotel, is actually two restaurants in one. Ignore the slightly stuffy, posh one on the right and head instead to the more proletarian canteen-like restaurant on the left, where prices are more reasonable, but the food is just as good.

Has a photo menu with some handy Pinyin labelling.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jinqiao Beidajie)

Round the back of Dongfang City Plaza Shopping Centre.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Gongli Jie & Zhongshan Xilu; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Yuhua Xilu;)

Tianyu Wangba

INTERNET

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ¥3-5; 🕒 24hr)

You'll need a Chinese ID card to get online, but staff will usually lend you one of theirs.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Shijiazhuang's airport is 40km northeast of town, and has flights to all major cities in China.

BUS

Buses to Beijing were fewer and slower than usual at the time of research, due to massive road reconstruction. They usually take four hours, and run at least hourly. The following are just some of the numerous services that leave from the **Long-Distance Bus Station** (shijiazhuang keyun zongzhan [MAP](#)

[GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhanqian Jie):

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥83, five hours, three daily (8.55am, 10.15am and 12.15pm)
- ➔ **Chengde** ¥160, seven hours, four daily (8am, 9.30am, 11.30am and 2.30pm)
- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥115, four hours, every 40 minutes (7.20am to 5.30pm)

➔ **Tianjin** ¥130, four hours, every 40 minutes (7.30am to 6pm)

Bus services to Zhengding and Zhaozhou Bridge depart from **South Bus Station** (nanjiao keyunzhan ☎0311 8657 3806), 6km southeast of the centre; to get there from central Shijiazhuang, take bus 30 from outside the former train station on Jiefang Guangchang (Liberation Square).

TRAIN

If you don't mind waiting an hour or so, there's no need to book for Beijing; just turn up at the station and buy a ticket.

Shijiazhuang's new **Train Station** (huochezhan Zhonghuanan Dajie;) is about 3km south of the more central former train station, which is no longer in operation; the area around the former train station is now known as **Jiefang Guangchang** (Liberation Square). A few trains also stop at or depart from **Shijiazhuang North Train Station** (Shijiazhuang Beizhan Taihua Jie;).

To get to the centre from the new Train Station, come out of the station's west entrance, turn left, and take Bus 148 (¥1) two stops to changtu qichezhan bus stop.

Services, from the new Train Station unless otherwise stated, include:

- ➔ **Beijing West** G-class bullet ¥129, 1½ hours, every 30min (6.30am to 10pm)
- ➔ **Chengde** hard seat/sleeper ¥75/138, 10 hours, two daily (8.57am and 8.20pm)
- ➔ **Datong** hard seat/sleeper ¥90/164, 6-10 hours, three daily (3.53am, 4.56pm and 8.51pm, plus two daily from North Train Station at 1.59pm and 7.06pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** T-class hard-sleeper ¥400, 20 hours, six daily (12.14pm to 8.42pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou South** (from North Train Station) G-class bullet ¥785, 8 hours, seven daily 9.08am to 2.28pm)
- ➔ **Ji'nan** K-class hard seat ¥47, 4½ hours, two daily (6.23am and 7.10am)

- ➔ **Luoyang** G-class bullet ¥250, 2½ hours, nine daily (8.28am to 5.30pm)
- ➔ **Luoyang** K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥75/138, 8½ hours, 11 daily (7.45pm to 1.22am)
- ➔ **Nanjing** Z-class hard sleeper ¥223, 8½ hours, one daily (10.35pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** Z-class hard sleeper ¥280, 11 hours, one daily (10.35pm)
- ➔ **Shanhaiguan** T-class hard seat/sleeper ¥81/148, 7 hours, three daily (1.31am, 11.45am and 3.40pm)
- ➔ **Tianjin** T/K-class hard seat ¥55, four to six hours, 20 daily (7.12am to 1.31am)
- ➔ **Xi'an** G-class bullet, ¥409, four hours, 12 daily (8.28am to 6.59pm)
- ➔ **Zhengzhou** G-class bullet ¥190, two hours, every 15 minutes (8.20am to 9pm)

Getting Around

The **Airport Bus** (*jichang daba*; ¥20, 90 minutes, 4.30am to 8.30pm) leaves every 30 minutes from the new Train Station; come out of the west entrance and turn right.

A taxi to the airport is about ¥150.

Shijiazhuang's first metro line is due to open in 2017.

Around Shijiazhuang

Zhengding

 0311 / Pop 130,300

Its streets littered with needy Taoist soothsayers and temple remains, the once walled town of Zhengding is an appetising – albeit incomplete – slice of old China. From atop Zhengding's reconstructed South Gate, you can see the silhouettes of four distinct pagodas jutting above the sleepy town.

Affectionately known as the town of ‘nine buildings, four pagodas, eight great temples and 24 golden archways’, Zhengding has tragically lost many of its standout buildings and archways – Pingyao it isn’t – but enough remains to lend the place an air of faded grandeur. And in Longxing Temple, Zhengding can lay claim to having one of the finest temples in northern China.

Zhengding is an easy day trip from Shijiazhuang.

Sights

Bus 177 from Shijiazhuang stops at all the sights, but you may as well start at the best of the lot – Longxing Temple, aka Dafo Temple – then slowly walk your way back to South Gate.

From Longxing Temple turn right and walk about 500 metres to reach Tianning Temple (on your right). From here, continue along the same road then, at the crossroads, turn left down Yanzhao Nandajie to reach Kaiyuan Temple (on your right). From here, continue a little further south down Yanzhao Nandajie then turn left down Linji Lu to reach Linji Temple. Walking further south on Yanzhao Nandajie, you'll soon reach Guanghui Temple (on your left) and finally South Gate.

Opening hours are from 8am to 5.30pm.

★ Longxing Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(109 Zhongshan Donglu; admission ¥50)

Considering its age – almost 1,500 years old – we think this is one of the most impressive temples in northern China. It's certainly Zhengding's star attraction.

More popularly known as **Dafo Temple** (Dafo Si), or ‘Big Buddhist Temple’, the complex contains an astonishing array of Buddhist statuary, housed in some stunning temple halls.

The time-worn bridge out front constitutes a handsome historical prelude. Dating way back to AD 586, the temple has been much restored and stands

divided from its spirit wall by Zhongshan Donglu.

You are greeted in the first hall by the jovial Milefo (the laughing Buddha). The four Heavenly Kings flanking him in pairs are disconcertingly vast.

Beyond the ruined **Hall of Sakyamuni's Six Teachers** is the **Manichaeon Hall**, an astonishingly voluminous hall flagged in smoothed stone with amazing carpentry overhead, a huge gilded statue of Sakyamuni and delectable Ming frescoes (bring a torch) detailing Buddhist tales. At the rear of the hall is a distinctly male statue of the goddess Guanyin, seated in a lithe pose with one foot resting on her/his thigh (a posture known as *lalitasana*) and surrounded by *luohan* (disciples freed from the cycle of rebirth).

The **Buddhist Altar** behind houses an unusual bronze Ming-dynasty two-faced Buddha, gazing north and south. Signs say 'no touching' but it's evident that its fingers and thumb have been smoothed by legions of worshippers. There are two halls behind the Buddhist Altar. On the left is the **Revolving Library Pavilion** (Zhuanlunzang Ge), which contains a highly unusual revolving octagonal wooden bookcase for the storing of sutras, and some stele on the back of snarling *bixi* (a mythical tortoise-like dragons). Opposite stands the **Pavilion of Kindness**, containing a fabulous, 7.4m-high statue of Maitreya (the future Buddha), one hand aloft.

The immense **Pavilion of Great Benevolence** (Dabei Ge) contains Longxing Temple's real drawcard: a 21.3m-tall, bronze colossus of Guanyin. Cast in AD 971 and sporting a third eye, the effigy is wonderful, standing on a magnificently carved base from the Northern Song. Examine the carvings which include myriad characters and musicians, including Buddhist angels and a woman blowing a conch.

Circumambulated by worshippers, the **Hall of Vairocana** at the rear of the complex contains a four-faced Buddha (the Buddha of four directions), crowned with another four-faced Buddha, upon which is supported a further set. The entire statue and its base contain 1072 statues of Buddha.

The **gardens** right at the back contain scattered temple remains, including some *very* old stele, plus a triple-arched stone *pailou*, dating from 1591.

Tianning Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Tianning Si Zhongshan Donglu; admission ¥15)

The remains of this temple contain the 41m-high Tang-dynasty **Lofty Pagoda** (Lingxiao Ta) – also called Muta or Wooden Pagoda. Originally dating from AD 779, the pagoda was restored in 1045, but is still in fine condition.

Kaiyuan Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Kaiyuan Si Yanzhao Nandajie; admission ¥20)

This temple originally dates from AD 540 but was destroyed in 1966, the first year of the Cultural Revolution.

Little remains apart from a **Bell Tower** and its drawcard dirt-brown **Xumi Pagoda** (Xumi Ta). Dating from 636AD, this well-preserved and unfussy, nine-eaved structure, is topped with a spire. Its round arched doors and carved stone doorway are particularly attractive, as are the carved figures on the base. You can enter a shrine at the bottom of the pagoda, but you can't climb up inside.

Also displayed, near the entrance, is a colossal stone **bixi** – China's largest – with a vast chunk of its left flank missing (as well as the stele it would have once carried), and its head propped up on a plinth. Dating from the late Tang era, the creature was excavated in 2000 from a street in Zhengding.

Linji Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Linji Si Linji Lu) **FREE**

This active monastery is notable for its tall, elegant, carved brick **Chengling Pagoda** (also called the Green Pagoda), topped with an elaborate lotus plinth plus ball and spire.

In the Tang dynasty, the temple was home to one of Chan (Zen) Buddhism's most eccentric and important teachers, Linji Yixuan, who penned the now famous words, 'If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!'

Guanghai Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Guanghai Si Yanzhao Nandajie; admission ¥15)

Nothing remains of this temple except **Hua Pagoda** (Hua Ta), dating from around 800 AD. It's an unusual Indian-style pagoda decorated with lions, elephants, sea creatures and *pusa* (Bodhisattvas; those worthy of nirvana who remain on earth to help others attain enlightenment).

City Walls

HISTORIC SITE

(Chengqiang)

Although not immediately obvious, Zhengding was once a walled city. These days much of what remains of its 24km-long city wall is just an earthen mound, but at the southern end of Yanzhao Nandajie, **Changle Gate** (Changle Men Yanzhao Nandajie; admission ¥15), also known as Nan Men (South Gate), has been rebuilt to give you some idea of the city wall's former magnificence.

You can climb on top of the gateway, although more fun perhaps is to clamber up onto the earthen wall nearby and explore some of its original remains. The original wall (which dates back to the Northern Zhou; 557 to 581 AD) was made up of an outer wall (*yuecheng*) and an inner wall (*neicheng*), with enceintes (*wengcheng*).

Eating

There are plenty of dumplings joints along Yanzhao Nandajie (look for the steamer baskets piled high). Expect to pay less than ¥10 for one basket (*yi ti*), enough for two people, and a bowl of rice porridge (*zhou*), or a beer.

Also look out for *lu rou huoshao* (donkey-meat pastry pockets), a Hebei speciality, and a delicious lunchtime snack.

Information

There's an **ICBC** (ICBC,, Gongshang Yinhang cnr Zhongshan Donglu & Yanzhao Nandajie) with an ATM a couple of hundred metres past Tianning Temple.

i Getting There & Around

Zhengding is an easy day trip from Shijiazhuang. Take Bus 30 (¥2) from beside the former train station to the [South Bus Station](#), then take bus 177 (¥2, one hour, 6.50am-8.50pm), which passes through South Gate and the other temples before reaching Longxing Temple (Dafo Temple; Dafo Si).

From Longxing Temple, you can then walk to all the other temples before catching bus 177 back to Zhengding from South Gate.

Yujiacun

Pop 1600

Also known as **Stone Village** (Shitou Cun), and hidden in the hills near the Hebei–Shanxi border, is the peaceful little settlement of **Yujiacun** (admission ¥20). Nearly everything, from the houses to furniture inside, was originally made of stone. As such, Yujiacun is remarkably well preserved: bumpy little lanes lead past traditional Ming- and Qing-dynasty courtyard homes, old opera stages and tiny temples.

This is also a model Chinese clan village, where 95% of the inhabitants all share the same surname of Yu. One of the more unusual sights is inside the **Yu Ancestral Hall** (Yushi Zongci), where you'll find the 24-generation family tree, reaching back over 500 years. There are five tapestries, one for the descendants of each of the original Yu sons who founded the village.

Another oddity is the three-storey **Qingliang Pavilion** (Qingliang Ge), completed in 1581. Supposedly the work of one thoroughly crazed individual (Yu Xichun, who wanted to be able to see Beijing from the top), it was, according to legend, built entirely at night, over a 16-year period, without the help of any other villagers. It was certainly built by an amateur architect: there's no foundation, and the building stones (in addition to not being sealed by mortar) are of wildly different sizes (some as large as 2m), giving it a higgledy-piggledy look that's quite uncommon in Chinese architecture.

Other buildings worth hunting down are the **Guanyin Pavilion** (Guanyin Ge) and the **Zhenwu Temple** (Zhenwu Miao). Near the primary school is the

Stone Museum (Shitou Bowuguan) displaying local items made of stone.

Yujiacun is dissected by a small village road, where the bus will drop you. The ticket office, the Stone Museum and Xingshui Yuan guesthouse are to the right of the road; all the other sights we've mentioned are to the left.

You may have to get someone at the ticket office to open the sights you wish to see, as their doors are often padlocked.

Sleeping

Given the mission it took to get here, you'll want to stay the night – it's definitely worth it. As the sun sets, the sounds of village life – farmers chatting after a day in the fields, clucking hens, kids at play – are miles away from the raging pace of modern Chinese cities.

Xingshui Yuan

GUESTHOUSE

( 0311 8237 6517, 134 7311 0485; Yujiacun; per person ¥40)

One of four or five *nongjia le* (village guesthouses) in Yujiacun, this typically simple courtyard guesthouse has guest rooms in an old stone outhouse, although the main house itself is a white-tiled renovation. No English spoken, but a friendly welcome.

Meals in the courtyard cost around ¥10-20, depending on what you have. Dishes on offer include: *hele* (buckwheat noodles with a preserved-vegetable sauce – a local speciality), *nongjia doufu* (village-style tofu) and *chao benjidan* (fried free-range eggs).

Getting There & Away

Prepare yourself for a three-hour, quadruple-bus mission. From Shijiazhuang, take bus 17 (¥2) from Jiefang Guangchang (Liberation Square) two stops to Xinbai Guangchang bus stop, then take bus 9 (¥2) to Xiwang Bus Station (Xiwang Keyunzhan). From there, take one of the frequent buses to the small town of Jingxing (¥11, one hour, 6.30am to 7pm), from where you can catch a bus to Yujiacun (¥7, one hour, 12 daily, 7.35am to 6.35pm).

Tell the driver on the Jingxing bus that you want to go to Yujiacun and he'll drop you by the place where the Yujiacun buses leave from.

Note, the last bus back from Yujiacun leaves at 3.30pm – all the more reason to stay the night.

Zhaozhou Bridge

China's oldest-standing **bridge** (admission ¥40) has spanned the Jiao River (Jiao He) for 1400 years. In Zhaoxian County, about 40km southeast of Shijiazhuang and 2km south of Zhaoxian town, this is the world's first segmental bridge (ie its arch is a segment of a circle, as opposed to a complete semicircle) and predates other bridges of its type throughout the world by 800 years. In fine condition, and now part of a riverside, landscaped park, it is 50.82m long and 9.6m wide, with a span of 37m. Twenty-two stone posts are topped with carvings of dragons and mythical creatures, with the centre slab featuring a magnificent *taotie* (an offspring of a dragon). The bridge is also known as 'Safe Crossing Bridge' (Anji Qiao).

To get here from Shijiazhuang, take bus 30 from beside the former train station to [South Bus Station](#), then take a bus to Zhaoxian (¥11, one hour, frequent). Get off at **Shi Ta**, a slim stone pagoda in the middle of the road, where you turn right to walk the final 2km, or take dinky local Bus 2 (¥1). The last bus back to Shijiazhuang swings past Shi Ta at about 7pm.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

CANGZHOU'S IRON LION

Battered and bruised, but still standing proud in a long-forgotten corner of southeast Hebei, **Cangzhou's Iron Lion** ((Cangzhou Tie Shizi Cangzhou; admission ¥20) is the oldest and largest cast-iron sculpture in China. Cast way back in 953 AD, it weighs in at around 40 tonnes, and stands almost 6m tall, but unsurprisingly for a creature that is more than 1000 years old, it is a shadow of its former self. The lion lost its tail in the 17th century; its snout and belly were damaged in a storm 200 years later; and the bronze statue of the bodhisattva Manjusri, which once sat on top of the lotus flower on its back, is thought to have been stolen many centuries ago.

Despite today being almost 100km from the coast, in ancient times Cangzhou was a large seaport, which suffered from flooding and tsunamis. The Iron Lion was built to protect the city from sea spirits, and was known back then as Zhen Hai Hou, the Roaring Sea-calmer.

These days, it cuts a rather lonely figure, standing in an otherwise empty courtyard surrounded by farmland, 15km from the modern city of Cangzhou. But the site used to be the centrepiece of ancient Cangzhou, a walled settlement established in the far-off Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD). Incredibly, part of the **ancient city wall**, thought to have been built at the beginning of the Han Dynasty – so more than 2,200 years ago – can still be seen a short distance from here.

Your entrance ticket (¥20) comes with another ticket (¥10) for entry to a nearby courtyard, which looks like a temple, but is in fact just a small museum – called the **Iron Money Warehouse** (Tie Qian Ku). It briefly details the history of ancient Cangzhou, although in Chinese only. However, the lane opposite the museum leads through farmland, and across a river to the southern section of the old, earthen city wall, 1.5km away. It's still around 5m tall here, and you can walk along it in places. It once stretched for almost 10km around the city.

You can make a day trip here from either Beijing or Tianjin. High-speed trains to Cangzhou West Station (Cangzhou Xi Zhan) run roughly half-hourly from Beijing South Train Station (¥95, one hour, last train back 10.30pm) and roughly hourly from Tianjin South Train Station (¥40, 30 minutes, last train back 9pm). From Cangzhou West, take bus 16 to its terminus at Cangzhou Main Train Station (huoche zhan; ¥2; 30 minutes), then bus 901 (¥3, 35 minutes). Tell the driver you want tie shizi (pronounced "tee-air shur zuh") and he'll show you where to get off. Then follow the signposted lane beside the bus stop for about 1km and the Iron Lion will be on your right, with the Iron Money Storehouse museum on your left.

When you're on Bus 16, consider stopping off at the huge, brand new **Cangzhou Museum** (bowuguan 🕒9am-4pm Tue-Sun), a couple of stops from Cangzhou West Train Station.

Chengde

📍0314 / Pop 479,703

Built on the banks of the Wulie River, and surrounded by forested hills, Chengde is a small, pleasant city which just happens to have an extraordinary history.

This was the summer playground of the Qing-dynasty emperors; beginning

with Emperor Kangxi, the Qing Court would flee here to escape the torpid summer heat of the Forbidden City (and occasionally foreign armies) and to be closer to the hunting grounds of their northern homelands.

The Bishu Shanzhuang (Fleeing-the-Heat Mountain Villa) is a grand imperial palace and the walled enclosure it lies within houses China's largest regal gardens. Beyond the grounds is a remarkable collection of politically chosen temples, built to host dignitaries such as the sixth Panchen Lama. The Imperial Villa, the gardens and the eight temples are all, quite rightly, Unesco protected.

History

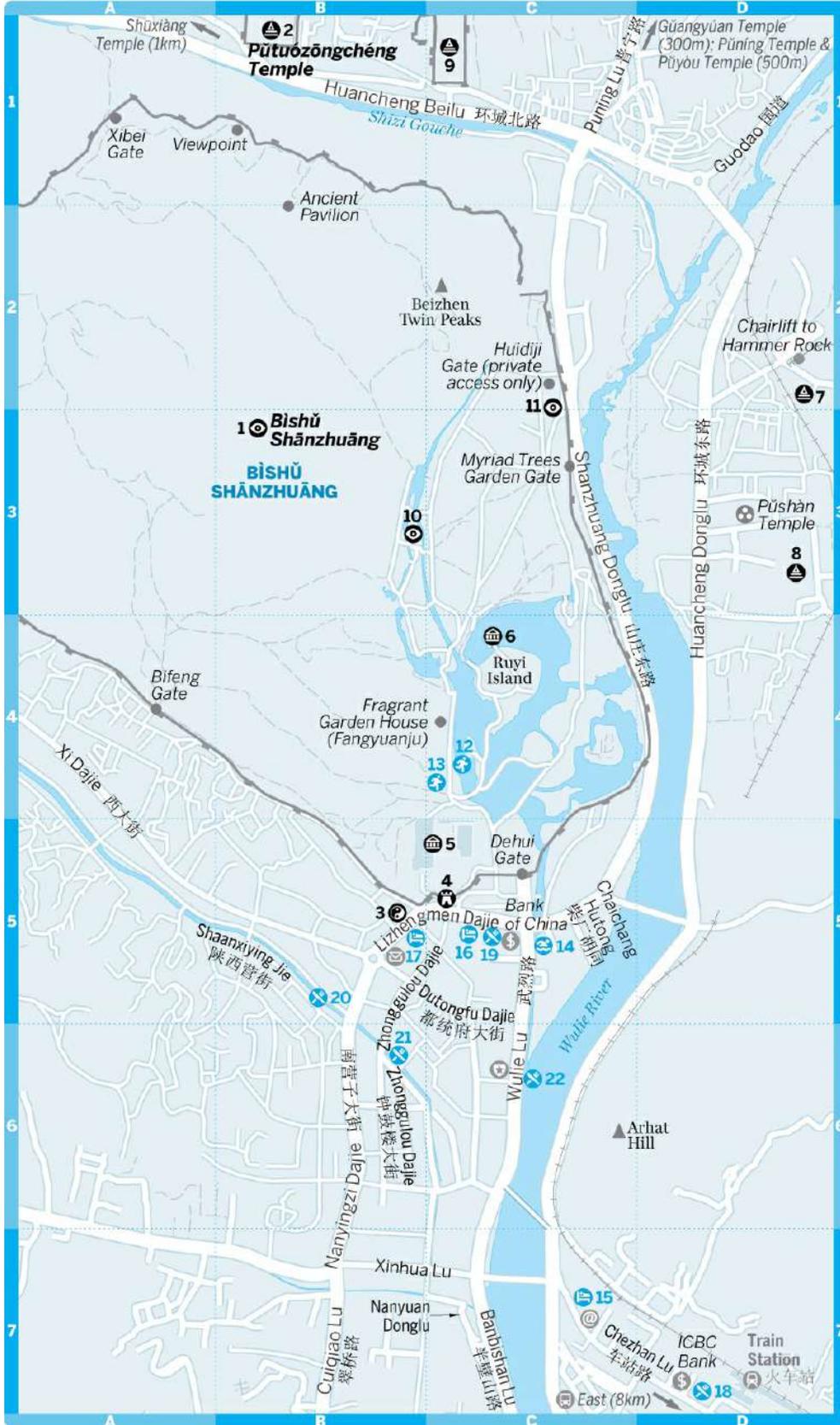
In 1703, when an expedition passed through the Chengde valley, Emperor Kangxi was so enamoured with the surroundings that he had a hunting lodge built, which gradually grew into the summer resort. Rehe – or Jehol (Warm River; named after a hot spring here) – as Chengde was then known, grew in importance and the Qing court began to spend more time here, sometimes up to several months a year, with some 10,000 people accompanying the emperor on his seven-day expedition from Beijing.

The emperors also convened here with the border tribes – undoubtedly more at ease here than in Beijing – who posed the greatest threats to the Qing frontiers: the Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs and, eventually, the Europeans. The resort reached its peak under Emperor Qianlong (1735–96), who commissioned many of the outlying temples to overawe visiting leaders.

Emperor Xianfeng died here in 1861, permanently warping Chengde's *feng shui* and tipping the Imperial Villa towards long-term decline.

Chéngdé

0 500 m
0 0.25 miles



Chengde

Top Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Bishu Shanzhuang | B3 |
| 2 Putuozongcheng Temple | B1 |

Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 3 Guandi Temple | B5 |
| 4 Lizheng Gate | C5 |
| 5 Main Palace | C5 |
| 6 Misty Rain Tower | C4 |
| 7 Pule Temple | D2 |
| 8 Puren Temple | D3 |
| 9 Temple of Sumeru, Happiness & Longevity | C1 |
| 10 Wenjin Pavilion | B3 |
| 11 Yongyousi Pagoda | C2 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| 12 Boat-Rental Area | C4 |
| 13 Bus Tours | C4 |
| 14 Swimming Pool | C5 |

Sleeping

| | |
|---|----|
| 15 Huilong Hotel | C7 |
| 16 Mountain Villa Hotel | C5 |
| 17 Yiyuan Binquan | B5 |

Eating

| | |
|--|----|
| 18 Da Qing Hua | D7 |
| 19 Da Qing Hua (Lizheng Gate branch) | C5 |
| 20 Shaokao stalls | B5 |
| 21 Tsingdao Beer Garden | B6 |
| 22 Wulie River Beer Garden | C6 |

Sights

★ Bishu Shanzhuang

HISTORIC SITE

(Imperial Villa [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); Lizhengmen Dajie; admission Apr-Oct ¥120, Nov-Mar ¥90;  palace 7am-6pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5.30pm Nov-Oct)

The imperial summer resort is composed of a main palace complex and vast parklike gardens, all enclosed by a handsome 10km-long wall. The entrance price is steep (as it is with all the main sights here in Chengde), and it gets packed with tourists here in summer, but the splendid gardens provide ample opportunity to take a quiet walk away from the crowds.

A huge spirit wall shields the resort entrance at Lizhengmen Dajie. Through **Lizheng Gate** (Lizheng Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), the **Main Palace** (Zheng Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is a series of nine courtyards and five elegant, unpainted halls, with a rusticity complemented by towering pine trees. The wings in each courtyard have various exhibitions (porcelain, clothing, weaponry), and most of the halls are decked out in period furnishings.

The first hall is the refreshingly cool **Hall of Simplicity and Sincerity**, built of an aromatic cedar called nanmu, and displaying a carved throne draped in yellow silk. Other prominent halls include the emperor's study (Study of Four Knowledges) and living quarters (Hall of Refreshing Mists and Waves). On the left-hand side of the latter is the imperial bedroom. Two residential areas branch out from here: the empress dowager's **Pine Crane Palace** (Songhe Zhai), to the east, and the smaller **Western Apartments**, where the concubines (including a young Cixi) resided.

Exiting the Main Palace brings you to the gardens and forested hunting grounds, with landscapes borrowed from famous southern scenic areas in Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jiaying, as well as the Mongolian grasslands.

The double-storey **Misty Rain Tower** (Yanyu Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), on the northwestern side of the main lake, served as an imperial study. Further

north is the **Wenjin Pavilion** (Wenjin Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), built in 1773. Don't miss the wonderfully elegant 250-year-old **Yongyousi Pagoda** (Yongyousi Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which soars above the fragments of its vanished temple in the northeast of the complex.

Most of the compound is taken up by lakes, hills, forests and plains. There are magnificent views of some of the outlying temples from the northern wall.

Just beyond the Main Palace is the start-point for **bus tours of the gardens** (huanshan che [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); one hour, including three short stops; per person ¥50). Further on you'll find a place for **boat-rental** (chuzu xiaochuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); per hr ¥50-90, deposit ¥300).

Almost all of the forested section is closed from November to May because of fire hazard in the dry months, but fear not: you can still turn your legs to jelly wandering around the rest of the park.

Tourists can exit by any of the gates, but can only buy tickets to enter at Lizheng Gate.

Guandi Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Guandi Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 18 Lizhengmen Dajie; admission ¥20; 🕒 7am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Oct)

The heavily restored Taoist Guandi Temple was first built during the reign of Yongzheng, in 1732. For years the temple housed residents but is again home to a band of Taoist monks, garbed in distinctive jackets and trousers, their long hair twisted into topknots. Note the original 300-year-old beamwork in the ceiling of the final hall.

Eight Outer Temples

Skirting the northern and eastern walls of the Bishu Shanzhuang, the **Eight Outer Temples** (*wai ba miao*) were, unusually, designed for diplomatic rather than spiritual reasons. Some were based on actual Tibetan Buddhist

monasteries but the emphasis was on appearance: smaller temple buildings are sometimes solid, and the Tibetan facades (with painted windows) are often fronts for traditional Chinese temple interiors. The surviving temples and monasteries were all built between 1713 and 1780; the prominence given to Tibetan Buddhism was as much for the Mongols (fervent Lamaists) as the Tibetan leaders.

★ Puning Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Puning Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); Puningsi Lu; admission Apr-Oct ¥80, Nov-Mar ¥60; 🕒 8am-6pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-5pm Nov-Mar)

With its squeaking prayer wheels and devotional intonations of its monks, Chengde's only active temple was built in 1755 in anticipation of Qianlong's victory over the western Mongol tribes in Xinjiang. Supposedly modelled on the earliest Tibetan Buddhist monastery (Samye), the first half of the temple is distinctly Chinese (with Tibetan buildings at the rear).

Enter the temple grounds to a stele pavilion with inscriptions by the Qianlong emperor in Chinese, Manchu, Mongol and Tibetan. The halls behind are arranged in typical Buddhist fashion, with the **Hall of Heavenly Kings** (Tianwang Dian) and beyond, the **Mahavira Hall** (Daxiong Baodian), where three images of the Buddhas of the three generations are arrayed. Some very steep steps rise up behind (the temple is arranged on a mountainside) leading to a gate tower, which you can climb.

On the terrace at the top of the steps is the dwarfing **Mahayana Hall**. On either side are stupas and square block-like Tibetan-style buildings, decorated with attractive water spouts. Some buildings have been converted to shops, while others are solid, serving a purely decorative purpose.

The mind-bogglingly vast gilded **statue of Guanyin** (the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy) towers within the Mahayana Hall. The effigy is astounding: over 22m high, it's the tallest of its kind in the world and radiates a powerful sense of divinity. Hewn from five different kinds of wood (pine, cypress, fir, elm and linden), Guanyin has 42 arms, with each palm bearing an eye and each hand holding instruments, skulls, lotuses and other Buddhist

devices. Tibetan touches include the pair of hands in front of the goddess, below the two clasped in prayer, the right one of which holds a sceptre-like dorje (vajra in Sanskrit), a masculine symbol, and the left a dril bu (bell), a female symbol. On Guanyin's head sits the Teacher Longevity Buddha. To the right of the goddess stands a huge male guardian and disciple called Shancai, opposite his female equivalent, Longnu (Dragon Girl). Unlike Guanyin, they are both coated in ancient and dusty pigments. On the wall on either side are hundreds of small effigies of Buddha.

Occasionally, tourists are allowed to climb up to the first-floor gallery for a closer inspection of Guanyin.

Housed within the grounds, on the east side, is the **Puyou Temple** (Puyou Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-6pm). It is dilapidated and missing its main hall, but it has a plentiful contingent of merry gilded *luohan* in the side wings, although a fire in 1964 incinerated many of their confreres. The ticket price includes admission to Puyou Temple.

Puning Temple has a number of friendly lamas who manage their domain, so be quiet and respectful at all times.

Take bus 6 (¥1) from in front of [Mountain Villa Hotel](#).

★ Putuozongcheng Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Putuozongcheng Zhimiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shizigou Lu; admission Apr-Oct ¥80, Nov-Mar ¥60; 🕒 8am-6pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-5pm Nov-Mar)

Chengde's largest temple is a not-so-small replica of Lhasa's Potala Palace and houses the nebulous presence of Avalokiteshvara (Guanyin). A marvellous sight on a clear day, the temple's red walls stand out against its mountain backdrop. Enter to a huge stele pavilion, followed by a large triple archway topped with five small stupas in red, green, yellow, white and black.

Fronted by a collection of prayer wheels and flags, the **Red Palace** contains most of the main shrines and halls. Look out for the marvellous sandalwood pagodas in the front hall. Both are 19m tall and contain 2160 effigies of the Amitabha Buddha.

Among the many exhibits on view are displays of Tibetan Buddhist objects and instruments, including a kapala bowl, made from the skull of a young girl. The main hall is located at the very top, surrounded by several small pavilions and panoramic views.

The admission ticket includes the neighbouring Temple of Sumeru, Happiness and Longevity.

Bus 118 (¥1) goes here from in front of [Mountain Villa Hotel](#).

Temple of Sumeru, Happiness & Longevity

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Xumifushou Zhimiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); Shizigou Lu; admission Apr-Oct ¥80, Nov-Mar ¥60;

 8am-6pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-5pm Nov-Mar)

This huge temple was built in honour of the sixth Panchen Lama, who stayed here in 1781. Incorporating Tibetan and Chinese architectural elements, it's an imitation of the Panchen's home monastery Tashilhunpo in Shigatse, Tibet. Note the eight huge, glinting dragons (each said to weigh over 1000kg) that adorn the roof of the main hall.

The admission price includes entry to the neighbouring Putuozecheng Temple.

Bus 118 (¥1) goes here from in front of [Mountain Villa Hotel](#).

Pule Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Pule Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); admission incl Hammer Rock ¥50;  8am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-4.30pm Nov-Mar)

This peaceful temple was built in 1776 for the visits of minority envoys (Kazakhs among them). At the rear of the temple is the unusual Round Pavilion, reminiscent of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests at Beijing's Temple of Heaven Park. Inside is an enormous wooden mandala (a geometric representation of the universe).

It's a 30-minute walk to **Hammer Rock** (Qingchui Feng) from Pule Temple – the club-shaped rock is visible for miles around and is said to resemble a kind of musical hammer. There is pleasant hiking and it offers

commanding views of the area. If you don't fancy the hike, take the [chairlift](#) ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) instead.

Bus 10 (¥1), from in front of [Mountain Villa Hotel](#), will take you to the chairlift (return ¥50) for Hammer Rock.

Guangyuan Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Guangyuan Si [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Unrestored and inaccessible, the temple's rounded doorway is blocked up with stones and its grounds are seemingly employed by the local farming community. The temple is a couple of hundred metres southeast of Puning Temple. To get here, walk north up Puning Lu, turn right at Puning Temple and continue for about 300 metres.

Puren Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Puren Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Built in 1713, this is the earliest temple in Chengde, but is not open to the public.

Shuxiang Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Shuxiang Si [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Surrounded by a low red wall, with its large halls rising on the hill behind and huge stone lions parked outside, this temple seems to be permanently closed. Just to the west of Shuxiang Temple is a military zone which foreigners are not allowed to access, so don't go wandering around.

Activities

The west bank of the Wulie River has a popular promenade with plenty of shade, and makes for pleasant strolls. Locals meet at various spots along here for singing and dancing in the early evening.

There's an outdoor [swimming pool](#) (Chengde youyongguan [MAP](#))

GOOGLE MAP; Wulie Lu; ¥30; 🕒 9am-5pm & 7-9pm) on Wulie Lu.

Sleeping

Yiyuan Binguan

HOTEL

(**MAP** **GOOGLE MAP**; 📞 0314 589 1111; 7 Lizhengmen Dajie; r from ¥460)

Rooms with and without a window can be had for ¥200 and ¥160 respectively, if you show enough disinterest. They are modern and functional, although the windowless ones are quite small. Not much English spoken. Buses 13 and 29 come here from the train and bus stations.

Huilong Hotel

HOTEL

(Huilong Dasha Jiudian **MAP** **GOOGLE MAP**; 📞 0314 761 0360, 0314 252 8119; Huilong Plaza, Xinjuzhai, Chezhan Lu, tw from ¥260; 🚫 📶 @ 📶)

Formerly Ming's Dynasty Hostel, this well turned-out budget hotel is good value. It no longer has its youth-hostel perks (common area, reliable travel advice), but some staff do speak English, and the rooms are very comfortable and well-equipped for the price (TV, wi-fi, modern bathroom).

Turn right out of the Train Station and it's a five-minute walk, or take bus 13, 24 or 29 from East Bus Station.

Mountain Villa Hotel

HOTEL

(Shanzhuang Binguan **MAP** **GOOGLE MAP**; 📞 0314 209 5500; 11 Lizhengmen Dajie, common/standard/deluxe ¥380/780/980; 📶 @)

This huge hotel offers pole position for a trip to Bishu Shanzhuang. The standard and deluxe rooms are super smart, and are discounted to ¥580 and ¥680 respectively. The common-standard rooms are in a building out the back, but are tattier than cheaper rooms in other hotels.

Buses 13 and 29 link nearby Guandi Temple with the Train Station and the East Bus Station.

Eating

Chengde is famous for wild game – notably *lurou* (venison) and *shanji* (pheasant), a reminder of its past as an imperial hunting base, but don't expect to see too much on the menus these days. On summer nights, do as the locals do and head for Shaanxiying Jie where a busy night market on either side of the canal includes a number of stalls offering **shaokao** (Street barbecues; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); skewers from ¥3; 🕒 7-10pm), point-and-choose streetside barbecues. Just south of here, the **Tsingdao Beer Garden** (Qingdao pijiu huayuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) has food stalls as well as beer. There's also a **small beer garden** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); skewers from ¥2; 🕒 noon-10pm) on the Wulie River that does *shaokao* too.

★ Da Qing Hua

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 241 Chezhan Lu, mains from ¥20; 🕒 10.30am-9.30pm; 🍴)

The finest dumpling house in Chengde, this excellent establishment has a big choice of juicy *jiaozi* (boiled dumplings; ¥14-28 per serving) with some unusual fillings, including veg options and pan-fried dumplings. There's a huge range of other dishes too – even some 'Emperor Dishes' such as venison.

The fresh, pinewood interior is a delight to eat in, and the English menu comes with photos too. There is **another branch** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Lizhengmen Dajie; mains from ¥20; 🕒 10.30am-9.30pm) by Lizheng Gate.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 4 Dutongfu Dajie)

Also on Xinsheng Lu and Lizhengmen Dajie; 24-hour ATMs.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Lizhengmen Dajie & Dutongfu Dajie; 🕒 8am-6pm)

ICBC Bank

BANK

([GOOGLE MAP](#); Chezhan Lu)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0314 202 2352; 9 Wulie Lu; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Xiandai Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Xiandai Wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chezhan Lu; per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr)

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses for Chengde leave Beijing hourly from Liuliqiao Bus Station (¥85, four hours, 5.40am to 6.40pm). From Chengde, they leave every half-hour for Beijing (¥85, four hours, 6.20am to 6.40pm) from the Train Station car park.

Services from Chengde's **East Bus Station** (qiche dongzhan), 8km south of town, include:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥85, four hours, every 20 minutes (6am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Dalian** ¥224, 14 hours, one daily (3pm)
- ➔ **Qinhuangdao** (for Shanhaiguan) ¥110, three hours, six daily (7.30am, 8.05am, 8.30am, 10am, 1pm and 4pm)
- ➔ **Tianjin** ¥120, six hours, three daily (6am, 8.50am and 2pm)

TRAIN

The three fastest trains from **Beijing Train Station** (hard seat ¥35-40) take 4½ to five hours and leave at 7.56am, 12.20pm and 2.03pm. Return services leave Chengde at 5.45am, 7.45am and 7.15pm.

- ➔ **Shenyang** hard seat ¥45-75, hard sleeper ¥96/145, 12/13 hours, two daily (7.02am and 5.31pm)
- ➔ **Shijiazhuang** hard seat/sleeper ¥75/138, 9/10 hours, two daily (1.13pm)

and 10.01pm)

Getting Around

A taxi from the Train Station to the Bishu Shanzhuang should cost around ¥10.

Buses 13, 24 and 29 link East Bus Station with the Train Station; 13 and 29 carry on to Guandi Temple.

Shanhaiguan

 0335 / Pop 19,500

The drowsy walled town of Shanhaiguan marks the point where the Great Wall snakes out of the hills to meet the sea.

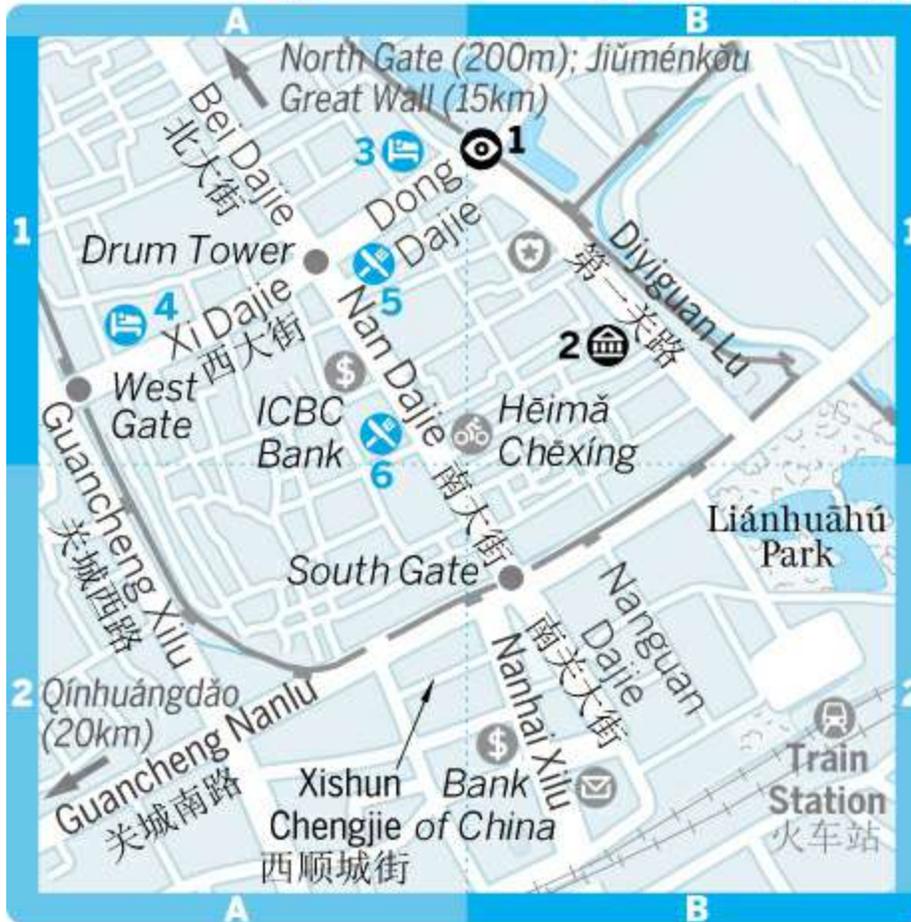
Hugely popular with domestic tourists, Shanhaiguan has, in recent years, sold some of its soul for a rebuild of the old town's central sections. The effect has been to render it more than a little sterile in places, although thankfully a few pockets of original buildings remain in the alleys running off the main streets.

Likewise, the ticketed sections of the Great Wall here have been heavily restored (and in some cases completely rebuilt), but there is still an accessible stretch of original earthen Great Wall here that can be explored.

History

Guarding the narrow plain leading to northeastern China, the Ming garrison town of Shanhaiguan and its wall were developed to seal off the country from the Manchu, whose troublesome ancestors ruled northern China during the Jin dynasty (AD 1115–1234). This strategy succeeded until 1644, when Chinese rebels seized Beijing and General Wu Sangui opted to invite the Manchu army through the impregnable pass to help suppress the uprising. The plan worked so well that the Manchus proceeded to take over the entire country and establish the Qing dynasty.

Shānhǎiguān



Shanhaiguan

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | First Pass Under Heaven | B1 |
| 2 | Great Wall Museum | B1 |

🏠 Sleeping

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 3 | Jingshan Hotel | A1 |
| 4 | Shanhai Holiday Hotel | A1 |

🍴 Eating

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 5 | Ertiao Xiaoxiang Jiaoziquan | A1 |
| 6 | Lanzhou Zhengzong Niurou Lamian | A1 |

Sights

Great Wall Museum

MUSEUM

(Changcheng Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Diyiguan Lu; 🕒 9am-4pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This impressive museum provides a comprehensive history of the Wall in this region and includes interesting scale models of the walled town and surrounding Great Wall locations. Plenty of photos and artefacts, as well as OK English captions.

First Pass Under Heaven

HISTORIC SITE

(Tianxia Diyi Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Dong Dajie & Diyiguan Lu; entrance ¥50; 🕒 7am-5.30pm)

The town wall's east gate, which the Great Wall once linked up with on its way from the mountains down to the sea, has been tarted up for tourism. This was Shanhaiguan's principal watchtower – two storeys with double eaves and 68 arrow-slit windows – and is a towering 13.7m high.

Several other watchtowers can also be seen and a *wengcheng* (enceinte) extends out east from the wall. You can walk along a small stretch of the wall here.

★ Jiao Shan

GREAT WALL

(admission ¥30, cable car one-way/return ¥10/20; 🕒 7am-sunset)

Albeit a heavily restored section of the Great Wall, Jiao Shan does nevertheless offer an excellent opportunity to hike up the Wall's first high peak; a telling vantage point over the narrow tongue of land below and one-time invasion route for northern armies. The views are fabulous on a clear day.

It's a steep 20-minute clamber from the base, or a cable car (*suodao*) can yank you up. To leave behind the crowds, continue beyond the cable car

station, to Qixian Monastery (Qixian Si) or even further to Sweet Nectar Pavilion (Ganlu Ting).

Bus 5 (¥2) goes here from the train station, but it's an easy, 3km-walk (or cycle) north of town. Just follow the road straight on from Shanhaiguan's North Gate.

More fun than just following the road, though, is to approach Jiao Shan on an original, overgrown stretch of **earthen Great Wall**, which still creeps its way through farmland from Shanhaiguan to Jiao Shan. Most of its Ming brickwork has long since been pillaged, but there's still a scattering of bricks, including a couple of collapsed watchtowers. To take this route, walk straight on from North Gate and then, after the bridge that goes underneath the highway, take the first right and follow the road for a couple of hundred metres. Turn left up the pathway beside the iron bridge and clamber up the wall beside you wherever you feel you're able to – there's at least one overgrown path that leads up to the top. You can walk on this earthen wall all the way Jiao Shan, where you'll have to clamber down to the ticket office to enter the restored section.

Old Dragon Head

WALL

(Laolongtou admission ¥60; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm)

Famous across China (although a little over-hyped if we're being honest), Old Dragon Head, 4km south of Shanhaiguan, is where the Great Wall meets the sea. It's photogenic for sure, but bear in mind that what you see now was reconstructed in the late 1980s – the original wall crumbled away long ago.

It acts more like a small beach resort these days. In fact, you can jump in and actually swim around the Great Wall here. The water is filthy, though, so it's not surprising that the speedboat rides (¥80 per person) are more popular. Bus 25 (¥1) goes here from Shanhaiguan's South Gate.

Sleeping

Local authorities have stipulated that almost all of the hotels in Shanhaiguan

are not allowed to accept foreigners these days. This includes all the cheap family-run guesthouses (*luguang*) inside the town walls, which used to make staying here so much fun. Luckily, there are still a couple that do welcome foreign guests.

Jingshan Hotel

HOTEL

(Jingshan Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0335 513 2188/46; 1 Dong Dajie, tw/tr from ¥220/240; 🏠 📶)

The cheapest place in town that accepts foreigners, and it's decent value. Housed in a pleasant, reconstructed, two-storey courtyard complex, rooms are neat and comfortable and come with private bathrooms. There's wi-fi in the lobby. Not much English spoken.

Shanghai Holiday Hotel

HOTEL

(Shanghai Jiari Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0335 535 2888; www.shanghai-holiday.com; Bei Madao, d & tw ¥880, discounted to ¥480; 🏠 @ 📶)

A newly built, traditional-style four-star hotel with attractive rooms, pleasant staff, a restaurant and a bar.

Eating

Ertiao Xiaoxiang Jiaoziguan

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Ertiao Xiaoxiang, off Nan Dajie; dumplings per portion ¥20; 🕒 7am-7pm)

Housed in a 200-year-old *pingfang* (bungalow), this small, family-run joint does delicious golden-fried dumplings (*jianjiao*) with a range of fillings, including pork and cabbage (*baicai zhurou*), egg and chives (*jiucaijidan*), pork and courgette (*jiaogua zhurou*), egg and courgette (*jiaogua jidan*) and pork and fennel (*huixiang zhurou*). No English, but a friendly welcome.

If walking south from the Drum Tower, look for the sign saying "" (meaning dumpling restaurant) pointing down the first alley on the left.

Lanzhou Zhengzong Niurou Lamian

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nan Dajie; noodles ¥8-20; 🕒 7am-9pm)

Does a range of tasty noodle dishes, including: pulled noodles with beef (*niurou lamian* – the restaurant speciality), pulled noodles with lamb (*yangrou lamian*), pulled noodles with Chinese cabbage (*qingcai lamian*), pulled noodles with egg (*jidai lamian*), braised beef noodles (*hongshao niuroumian*) and knife-sliced beef fried noodles (*niurou chao daoxiaomian*).

Has photos of much of the menu plastered across two walls. No English.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nanhai Xilu; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

Foreign exchange facility.

China Post

POST

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nanhai Xilu; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

Heima Chexing

BICYCLE RENTAL

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 12-1 Nan Dajie; 12-1 ¥20 per day; 🕒 6am-7pm)

ICBC Bank

BANK

(Gonghang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nan Dajie)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 505 1163; Diyiguan Lu;)

Opposite the entrance to First Pass Under Heaven, on the corner of a small alleyway.

Getting There & Around

There are a number of G- and D-class bullet trains (and many more slower ones) linking **Beijing** and Shanhaiguan (2½ hours, ¥93). Four leave from Beijing Main Station between 7am and 10am. Another leaves Beijing South at 8.42am. There are also three or four afternoon fast trains. Among the many trains going back to Beijing, there are seven high-speed trains between 5pm and 9pm.

Alternatively, even more high-speed trains go from Beijing to the nearby city of Qinhuangdao (¥90, two hours 20minutes hours regularly from 7am to 9pm), 18km from Shanhaiguan. Buses from Beijing's Bawangfen station also run to Qinhuangdao (¥110, 4hrs).

There's no long-distance bus station in Shanhaiguan. Qinhuangdao's coach station, where the nearest **long-distance buses** arrive, is diagonally opposite its train station. From outside the train station, take bus 8 (¥1) a couple of stops to Ba San Dong Li bus stop, then take Bus 33 (¥2, 30 minutes) to Shanhaiguan's South Gate.

Buses leave Qinhuangdao's coach station for Beijing's Bawangfen station (¥110, 4hrs) at 7am, 8am, 9am, 10am, 12pm, 2pm and 3.30pm, and for Beijing Capital Airport (¥140, 4½ hours) on the hour every hour from 5am to 3pm, and at 5pm. There are also numerous direct buses from Qinhuangdao to Chengde (¥110, 3 hours), although most of them leave before noon, and there's one bus to Dalian (¥150, 10am, 7 hours).

Qinhuangdao's small airport has flights to Dalian, Shanghai, Qingdao and Xi'an.

Taxis in Shanhaiguan are ¥5 flag fall. Motor-rickshaws cost ¥2 to ¥3 for trips within town.

JIUMENKOU GREAT WALL

Jiumenkou Great Wall

WALL

(Jiumenkou admission ¥80)

In a mountain valley 15km north of Shanhaiguan stretches the only section of the Great Wall ever built over water. Normally the wall stopped at rivers, as they were

considered natural defence barriers on their own. At Jiumenkou Great Wall, however, a 100m span supported by nine arches crosses the Jiujiang River, which we can only guess flowed at a much faster and deeper rate than it does today (or else the arches would function more like open gates).

Much effort has gone into restoring this formidable-looking bridge and on both sides the wall continues its run up the steep, rocky hillsides. Heading left, you can quickly see where the wall remains unrestored on the opposite side. Sadly, access to this area is blocked but the distant sight of crumbling stone watchtowers truly drives home the terrible isolation that must have been felt by the guardians of frontier regions such as this.

No buses head to the wall from Shanhaiguan. A taxi costs around ¥35 one-way – ask the ones gathered outside the **South Gate**. A return trip will cost more like ¥100 including waiting time.

Jimingyi

Pop 1000

An ancient snapshot of China, the sleepy hamlet of Jimingyi is a delightful surprise to find amid the scruffy northern Hebei countryside. This walled town, established during the Yuan dynasty (AD 1206–1368), is China's oldest surviving post station. It stands as an historic reminder of a system that endured for 2000 years and enabled the officials in the Forbidden City to keep in touch with their far-flung counterparts around China. Whipped by dust storms in the spring and with archaic, fading Mao-era slogans still visible on walls, Jimingyi sees few visitors and feels a long, long way from the gleaming capital – much further than the 140km distance would suggest.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, this was a place of considerably more bustle and wealth, as evidenced in the numerous surviving temples and its town wall. Many of its courtyard houses remain too, albeit in dilapidated condition.

There has been a flurry of activity in Jimingyi recently, with the town walls and gates newly restored, as the local government attempts to boost its appeal as a tourist destination. There is now also an **admission fee** (¥40), which you must pay if you want to gain access to any of the notable

buildings.

Sights

As well as the main sights, other small temples that can be visited include the **Temple of the God of Wealth** and the **Temple of the Dragon King** (Longwang Miao). You will find the occasional *yingbi* (spirit wall) standing alone, its courtyard house demolished, and a few ancient stages. Adding to the time-capsule feel are the numerous slogans from the Cultural Revolution daubed on walls that seem to have been simply left to fade.

Confucius Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wenchang Gong)

Meandering along the baked-mud-wall warren of Jimingyi's courtyard houses takes you past scattered temples, including this simple Ming-dynasty temple which, like many Confucius temples, also doubled as a school.

Taishan Temple

TEMPLE

(Taishan Xinggong)

This temple's simply stunning Qing murals, depicting popular myths (with the usual mix of Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian figures), were whitewashed – some say for protection – during the Cultural Revolution. A professor from Qinghua University helped to uncover them; you can still see streaks of white in places.

City Walls

HISTORIC SITE

(Dong Men)

Jimingyi's walls have been restored so you can now climb them and walk along the top of them. Ascend the **East Gate** for fine views of the town, surrounding fields and Jiming Mountain, which overlooks the town to the northwest. Across town is the **West Gate**; the **Temple of the Town Gods** (Chenghuang Miao), overgrown with weeds and in ruins, stands nearby.

Temple of Eternal Tranquility

TEMPLE

(Yongning Si)

The largest and oldest temple in the area sits atop **Jiming Mountain** (Jiming Shan), which overlooks the town to the northwest. It's still an active monastery and a large and lively festival is held here during April each year. It takes three to four hours to hike to the top from the town (the path is easier round the back of the mountain). A road goes about halfway up so you can sometimes thumb a lift for all but the last section.

Sleeping & Eating

It's possible to visit Jimingyi as a day trip from Beijing, but spending the night allows you time to explore properly, and to enjoy the slower pace of rural life before returning to Beijing's luxuries. There's a handful of restaurants and *nongjiayuan* (village guesthouses) on Da Jie, the road running east–west at the south end of town. Expect to pay ¥30 per bed and about the same for a meal. Bear in mind they eat a lot of donkey (*lu rou*) in these parts.

Baile Kezhan

VILLAGE GUESTHOUSE

( 137 8533 9336; Da Jie; rooms ¥60-70)

Simple but clean restaurant and guesthouse on the south side of Da Jie, with small but tidy rooms off the tiny courtyard out the back. Has a common shower room. Look for the purple and pink signage.

The restaurant menu (mains ¥15-35) is in Chinese only. Specialities include *kele jichi* (chicken wings marinated in coca-cola), *xiaoji dun yemogu* (stewed chicken with wild mushrooms) and *Guanting Hu Huoyu* (Guanting Lake fish). You'll also find standard dishes such as *zhajiang mian* (pork and beanpaste noodles), *xihongshi chaojidan* (scrambled eggs and tomatoes), *suanla tudousi* (shredded fried potato) and *jiachang doufu* (homestyle tofu).

Getting There & Away

Jimingyi can be reached from the small mining town of **Xia Huayuan**, 5km away. To get to Xia Huayuan, take Bus 880 (2½ hours; ¥32; with travel card ¥24) from beside Deshengmen Gateway in Beijing. Then take a minivan (per person ¥1.5) to the local bus station (qichezhan), then take the small bus to Shacheng, which goes past Jimingyi (5 minutes, ¥3).

Bus 880 leaves from Deshengmen Gateway on the half hour, every hour from 5.30am to 5.30pm. The return leaves Xia Huayuan on the hour every hour from 5am to 5pm.

Three trains (10.40am, 2.37pm and 2.41pm) leave each day from Beijing West Train Station to Xia Huayuan. The cheapest and quickest is the 2.37pm (¥10, 3 hours).

Come out of Xia Huayuan train station and turn right to walk to Jimingyi (4km) or flag down the Shacheng bus (¥3).

There are four trains returning to Beijing (7.09am, 8.41am, 10.17am and 4.44pm). The first goes to Beijing North Station, the second to Beijing Main, the other two to Beijing West.

Shandong

Ji'nan

Around Ji'nan

Zhujiayu

Tai'an & Tai Shan

Qufu

Qingdo

Lao Shan

Getting There & Away

Yantai

Shandong



Pop 95.8 million

Why Go?

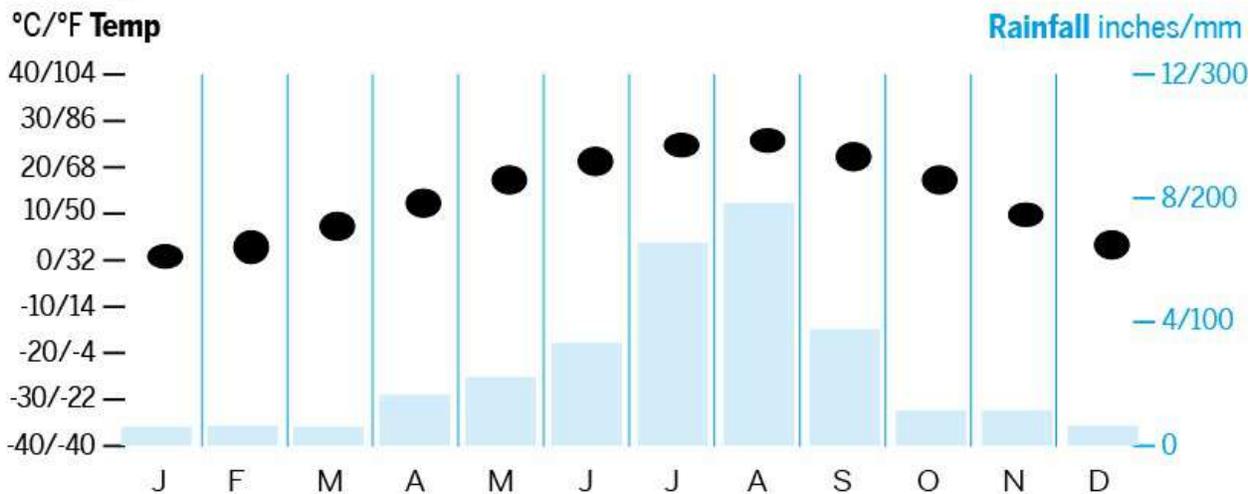
Steeped in natural and supernatural allure, the Shandong peninsula on China's northeastern coast is the stuff of legends. Its captivating landscape – a fertile flood plain fed by rivers and underground springs, capped by granite peaks and framed in wild coastline – can't help but inspire wonder.

A lumpy-headed boy named Confucius was born here and grew up to develop a philosophy of virtue and ethics that would reach far beyond his lectures under an apricot tree. Three centuries later China's first emperor Qin Shi Huang would climb Tai Shan, Shandong's highest peak, to proclaim a unified empire in 219 BC.

But this place is more than its past. The energetic seaside city of Qingdao ranks among the best places to live in Asia. This is Shandong's real draw: you can climb mountains, explore the legacies of kingdoms of old, and still have time to hit the beach.

When to Go

Qīngdǎo



- ➔ **Jun–Aug** Cool sea breezes and the beer festival make summer the time to explore Qingdao.
- ➔ **Sep–Oct** Sacred Tai Shan is gloriously shrouded in mist for just part (not all) of the day.
- ➔ **Dec–Jan** Dress warmly and ascend Shandong’s frosted peaks in the dry winter.

Best Historical Sights

- ➔ [Tai Shan](#)
- ➔ [Confucius Mansion](#)
- ➔ [Zhujiayu](#)
- ➔ [Penglai Pavilion](#)

Best Places for a Dip

- ➔ [Shilaoren Beach](#)
- ➔ [Wangfu Pool](#)
- ➔ [Nos 2 and 3 Bathing Beaches, Qingdao](#)
- ➔ [No 1 Beach, Yantai](#)

Shandong Highlights



- ➔ Climb the slopes of [Tai Shan](#), where stones speak the wisdom of millennia.
- ➔ Chill in [Qingdao](#) with a pitcher (or bag) of China's most famous beer.
- ➔ Visit ancient [Qufu](#), hometown of the sage Confucius.
- ➔ Be charmed by village life in venerable [Zhujiayu](#).
- ➔ Hike [Lao Shan](#), with its magical springs.
- ➔ Savour the ocean breezes in the port city of [Yantai](#).
- ➔ Discover the legends of immortals and pirates at [Penglai Pavilion](#).

History

Shandong's tumultuous history is tied to the capricious temperament of the

Yellow River, which crosses the peninsula before emptying into the Bo Sea. The ‘Mother River’ nurtured civilisation but when unhinged left death, disease and rebellion in its wake. After a long period of floods followed by economic depression and unrest, the river again devastated the Shandong plain in 1898.

Europeans had also arrived. After two German missionaries died in a peasant uprising in western Shandong in 1897, Germany readily seized Qingdao, Britain forced a lease of Weihai, and soon six other nations scrambled for concessions. These acts coupled with widespread famine emboldened a band of superstitious nationalists, and in the closing years of the 19th century, the Boxers rose out of Shandong, armed with magical spells and broadswords to lead a rebellion against the eight-nation alliance of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the USA. After foreign powers violently seized Beijing in 1900, the Empress Cixi effectively surrendered and Boxer and other resistance leaders were executed. The Qing dynasty would soon collapse.

It was not until Japan's surrender in WWII that Shandong emerged from decades of war and recovered its cities. In 1955, engineers began an ambitious 50-year flood-control program, and 1959 marked Shandong's last catastrophic flood, though now China's economic boom threatens to suck the Yellow River dry.

Today Ji’nan, the provincial capital, and the prospering coastal cities of Yantai and Weihai, all play a supporting role to Qingdao, the province’s headliner.

Language

Standard Mandarin is the primary language spoken in Shandong, but regional varieties of northern Mandarin often pop up in casual conversation. The characteristic drawls of the three most common dialects, Jilu, Zhongyuan and Jiaoliao, are each distinctive.

Getting There & Around

Shandong is linked to neighbouring and distant provinces by both bus and rail. Ji'nan is the transport hub, with rail connections to all major towns and cities in Shandong. The high-speed rail now links Ji'nan, Taishan, Qufu and Qingdao to Beijing and Shanghai. Buses also reach every corner of the province.

With South Korea and Japan just across the water, there are direct international flights through three airports – Ji'nan, Qingdao and Yantai. Ferries also sail from Qingdao to South Korea (Incheon) and Japan (Shimonoseki), and from Yantai to Incheon.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥75

\$\$ ¥75 to ¥200

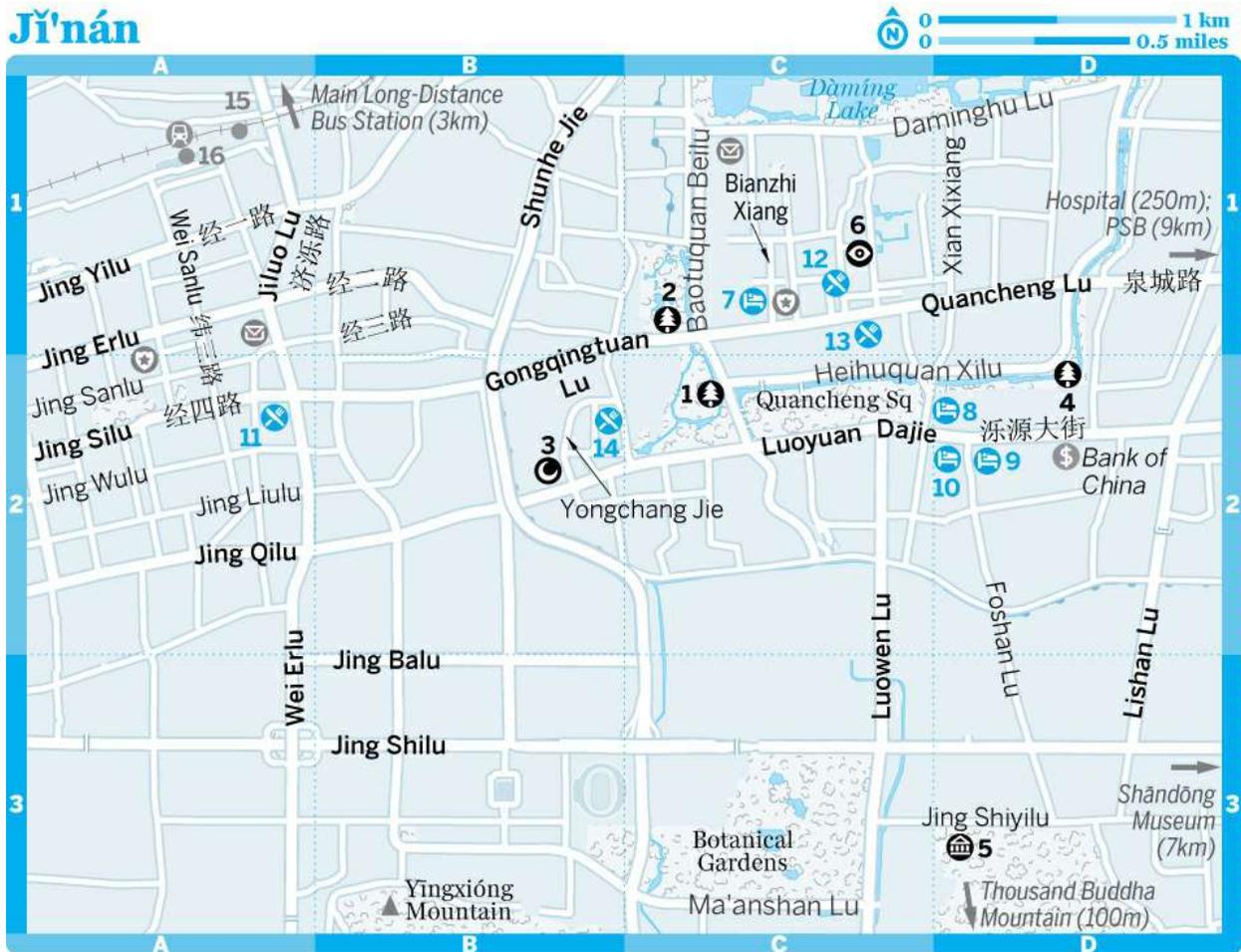
\$\$\$ more than ¥200

JI'NAN

 0531 / Pop 3.5 million

Ji'nan is Shandong's busy capital city, serving as the transit hub to other destinations around the province. On its surface, the city is in flux, but beneath the dusty construction and sprawl are 72 artesian springs, which gently roil in azure pools and flow steadily into Daming Lake.

The train stations are to the west. The heart of the city, encircled by the Hucheng River, is tourist friendly, with shiny shopping districts on Quancheng Lu and Quancheng Sq.



Ji'nan

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Baotu Spring | C2 |
| 2 | Five Dragon Pool Park | C1 |
| 3 | Great Southern Mosque | B2 |
| 4 | Huancheng Park | D2 |
| 5 | Ji'nan Museum | D3 |
| 6 | Wangfu Pool | C1 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 7 | Chengbei Youth Hostel | C1 |
| 8 | Silver Plaza Quancheng Hotel | D2 |
| 9 | Sofitel Silver Plaza | D2 |
| 10 | Yuquan Simpson Hotel | D2 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 11 | Daguan Gardens | A2 |
| 12 | Furong Jie | C1 |
| | Fushun Jujiachang Restaurant | C1 |
| | Luxi'nan Flavor Restaurant | A2 |
| 13 | Seasons Minghu | C1 |
| 14 | Yinhuchi Jie | B2 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 15 | Airport Shuttle | A1 |
| | Airport Shuttle | D2 |
| 16 | Plane/Train Ticket Office | A1 |

Sights

Thousand Buddha Mountain

MOUNTAIN

(Qianfo Shan 18 Jingshi Yilu; admission ¥30, cable car one way/return ¥20/30, luge ¥25/30; ⌚ 5am-9pm; 🚏 K51)

Beginning in the Sui dynasty (581–618), the pious carved Buddhas into this mountain southeast of the city centre. The oldest are at **Xinguochan Temple** (admission ¥5; ⌚ 7.30am-4.30pm), the golden-roofed complex near the **cable car** and **luge** drop-off on the mountaintop. On the rare clear day looking south, you can spot Tai Shan, the anthill in the distance.

Ji'nan Museum

MUSEUM

(Ji'nan Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8295 9204; www.jnmuseum.com; 30 Jing Shiyilu;

audio tour ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 K51) **FREE**

North of Thousand Buddha Mountain's main entrance, the Ji'nan Museum has a small, distinctive collection that includes paintings, calligraphy, ceramics, Buddhist figures from the Tang dynasty and a delightful boat carved from a walnut shell.

Shandong Museum

MUSEUM

(Shandong Bowuguan 📍 8505 8201; www.sdmuseum.com; 11899 Jingshi Lu; audio tour ¥30;

🕒 9am-4pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 115, 202, 18) **FREE**

The enormous new provincial museum – a 7km slog east of the city centre – surveys local culture from the mesolithic age to the present. Its collection began as one of the first organised museums in China in 1904. On display are oracle bones, Qi and Lu kingdom pottery, Han tomb murals and clothing worn by the Kong clan (Confucius' descendants).

Great Southern Mosque

MOSQUE

(Qingzhen Nan Da Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 47 Yongchang Jie; 🚏 K50, 101) **FREE**

Ji'nan's oldest mosque has stood in one form or another in the centre of town since 1295. Cover arms and remove hats before entering. A lively Hui (Muslim Chinese) neighbourhood is to the north.

Parks

Strolling among the swaying willows and quiet waterways of Ji'nan's particularly lovely parks is a pleasant escape from the urban din. The most central include the most famous of them all **Baotu Spring** (Baotu Quan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Baotuquan Nanlu; admission ¥40; 🚏 K51); **Huancheng Park** (Huancheng Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Nanmen Jie) where Black Tiger Spring empties into the old city moat, the Hucheng River; and **Five Dragon Pool** (Wulongtan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 18 Kuangshi Jie, admission ¥5; 🚏 5, 101), a serene study of local life, where elders paint calligraphy on the steps and kids chase the goldfish.

In a quiet alleyway off the walking street Furong Jie (turn right at the police stand), the neighbourhood comes to soak in spring-fed **Wangfu Pool** (Wangfu Chizi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). The waters are a brisk 18°C year round, so indulge frequently in barbecue and beer at one of the nearby stands.

All the springs eventually flow into **Daming Lake** (Daming Hu admission ¥30), the largest park with paddle boats, temples, and islands to explore.

Activities

Open-air, motorised **boats** ( 8690 5886; per stop ¥10;  every 20min 9am-5pm) circle clockwise around the lovely Hucheng River and the south side of Daming Lake, making 10 stops at major sights including Baotu Spring, Black Tiger Spring, Five Dragon Pool and Quancheng Sq, as well as rising and falling several storeys via two fascinating locks. It takes about 1½ hours for the full circuit.

Sleeping

Budget hotels with rooms for around ¥180 are clustered around the main train station, though not all cater to foreigners and rooms vary greatly. Look first.

Chengbei Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Chengbei Guoji Qingnian Lushu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  8691 7661; w454488201@gmail.com; 111 Bianzhi Xiang, off Quancheng Lu; dm ¥40-45, d ¥120;    3, 5, K50)

In a town low on cheap rooms, this youth hostel in a small, converted courtyard residence is your best option. The dorms and common bathrooms are decent, but the one available double room is just a mattress on the ground. There's a small bar, solid travel advice, organised biking trips to interesting sites in and around Ji'nan, and hiking gear on loan.

To get here, follow the flow of traffic, turn right off Quancheng Lu down Bianzhi Xiang, a small alley, and at the police station turn left down an even smaller alley. The hostel is through the gate with the red horse.

Silver Plaza Quancheng Hotel

HOTEL

(Yinzuo Quancheng Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8629 1911; 2 Nanmen Jie; d/tr incl breakfast ¥360/385; 🚫🚰📧)

You know this is a Chinese business hotel from the blinding Euro-style bling in the lobby. Professional staff and a prime spot overlooking Quancheng Sq make up for that and the compact rooms with stained tile ceilings. Shell out for an upgrade in the renovated B-wing.

Sofitel Silver Plaza

HOTEL

(Suofeite Yinzuo Dafandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8981 1611; www.sofitel.com; 66 Luoyuan Dajie; r from ¥612, plus 10% service charge; 🚫🚰📧🚰)

The city's first five-star hotel is in the commercial district and is still the best option, though we wish standard rooms were as spacious as the lobby promises.

Eating

Ji'nan is a famed centre of [Lu cuisine](#), characterised by bold flavours brought out by cooking over a high heat with plenty of oil and spices. Most of the best eating is had in the city's streets and alleys.

Furong Jie

STREET FOOD

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); dishes from ¥10; 🚏3, 5, K50)

Off Quancheng Lu's shopping strip, Furong Jie is a pedestrian alley crammed with restaurants and food stalls. [Fushun Jujichang Restaurant](#) (Fushun Jujichang Fanguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎188 0640 9638; 112 Furong Jie; most dishes ¥8-28; 🕒9.30am-2.30pm & 5-10pm) is a popular stop, with all of Lu cuisine's greatest hits pictured on its menu.

Yinhuchi Jie

STREET FOOD

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; dishes from ¥10)

Evenings are smoky on Yinhuchi Jie in the Hui district near the Great Southern Mosque. Hawkers fan the flames of charcoal grills lining the street, roasting up all manner of *shaokao* (barbecue on a stick). They make crisp scallion pancakes and fresh noodles too.

Daguan Gardens

STREET FOOD

(Daguan Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Jing Silu; dishes from ¥10)

About 1km south of the main train station is this dandified enclave of modern eateries. **Luxi'nan Flavor Restaurant** (Luxi'nan Laopaifang [MAP](#)

[GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 8605 4567; 2 Daguan Yuan; dishes ¥28-98; 🕒 11am-2.30pm & 5-10pm),

inside the north gate, is the place for a refined take on Lu cuisine, like sweet and spicy cabbage with glass noodles, or lamb (braised or sauteed), accompanied by sesame cakes – not rice. Chinese menu with pictures.

The alley nearby, **Wei Erlu**, is a messy strip of noodle, *shaokao* and lamb soup carts (serving beer for ¥4!) that buzzes until late.

Seasons Minghu

CANTONESE

(Siji Minghu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 6666 9898; 7th fl, Parc66, 188 Quancheng Lu; mains from ¥38, dim sum from ¥18; 🕒 11am-10pm)

The dandy waiters at this elegant restaurant on the top of the Parc66 mall don gloves while serving southern Chinese classics, including dim sum, salt-baked chicken and durian cakes. Watch out when ordering fish, which can be priced up to ¥998 per *jin* (600g)!

Information

ATMs

ATM

(Zidong Qukuan Ji)

Available in the lobbies of larger hotels like the Sofitel and Crowne Plaza. There are plenty of full-service banks around town.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 22 Luoyuan Dajie; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Currency exchange/24-hour ATMs accepting foreign cards.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju 📍 8508 1000, visa inquiries ext 2459; 777 Shuhuaxi Lu; 🕒 9am-noon & 2-4.40pm Mon-Fri)

About 9km or a ¥18 taxi ride east of the city centre.

Shandong Provincial Qianfo Shan Hospital International Clinic

(Qianfo Shan Yiyuan Guoji Yiliao Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8926 8018, 8926 8017; www.sdhospital.com.cn; 16766 Jinshi Lu; 🕒 8-11am & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri) HOSPITAL

English and Japanese spoken. Take bus K51 or K68 to the Nankou stop on Lishan Lu.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Ji'nan's Yaoqiang Airport is 40km from the city and connects to most major cities, with daily flights to Beijing (¥769, one hour), Dalian (¥502, one hour), Guangzhou (¥897, 2½ hours), Ha'erbin (¥523, two hours), Seoul (¥1034, one hour 40 minutes), Shanghai (¥612, 1½ hours), and Xi'an (¥821, 1½ hours).

BUS

Ji'nan's most convenient station is the **main long-distance bus station** (Changtu Zong Qiche Zhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8594 1472; 131 Jiluo Lu) about 3km north of the train station, though buses to destinations within the province also leave from the **bus station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8830 3030; 22 Chezhan Jie) directly across from the train station.

Some buses departing regularly from the main long-distance bus station:

➔ **Beijing** ¥129, 5½ hours, six daily (9am, 10.40am, 12pm, 1.40pm, 2.20pm and 9pm)

- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥109, 4½ hours, hourly (7.20am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Qufu** ¥45, two hours, every 50 minutes (6.50am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥266, 12 hours, four daily (9am, 3pm, 6pm and 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Tai'an** ¥25, two hours, every 30 minutes (6.45am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Tianjin** ¥124, 4½ hours, three daily (10.50am, 1.40pm and 9pm)
- ➔ **Yantai** ¥167, 5½ hours, hourly (6.30am to 9.30pm)

TRAIN

Ji'nan is a major hub in the east China rail system and has several busy train stations. Most travellers can rely on the **main train station** (*huoche zong zhan*), a 4km ride on Bus 3 (¥2) from the city centre.

Lines at the station's ticket office can be slow. Ticket offices only charge ¥5 commission and are all around the train station square, including the **plane/train ticket office** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8610 9666; Quancheng Hotel lobby, 115 Chezhan Jie; commission ¥5; 🕒 plane 7.30am-10pm, train 8am-8pm) in the Quancheng Hotel lobby. [Chengbei Youth Hostel](#) can also book tickets.

Some express trains (second-/first-class seat) departing from the main train station:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥195/330, two hours, frequently (7.15am to 8.02pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥120/145, two hours 40 minutes, every 10 minutes (7.20am to 8.20pm)
- ➔ **Qufu** ¥60/100, 40 minutes, four daily (7.26am, 9.22am, 11.09am and 7.08pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥399/674, four hours, four daily (9.40am, 12.08pm, 4.37pm and 7.08pm)
- ➔ **Tai'an** ¥30/50, 24 minutes, five daily (7.26am, 9.40am, 12.08pm, 12.32pm and 5.22pm)
- ➔ **Weifang** ¥65/80, one hour 20 minutes, every 20 minutes (7.20am to 8.20pm)

Some regular trains (seat/hard sleeper) departing:

➔ **Xi'an** ¥149/264, 13 to 18 hours, six daily (9.20am, 11.21am, 3.45pm, 5.04pm, 5.58pm and 10.35pm)

➔ **Yantai** ¥75/138, six to eight hours, five daily (1.27am, 6.43am, 7.39am, 11.02am and 3.50pm)

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Airport shuttles ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞96888; adult ¥20; 🕒hourly 6am-6pm) connect the main train station and the **Yuquan Simpson Hotel** (Yuquan Senxin Dajjudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Luoyuan Dajie) with Ji'nan's Yaoqiang airport. The shuttle also runs directly to Tai'an (¥80, two hours, five daily, 11.30am, 2pm, 4.30pm, 5.30pm and 8pm).

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus 15 or 84 (¥1) connects the main long-distance bus station with the main train station. Bus K51 (¥2) runs from the main train station through the city centre and then south past Baotu Spring Park to Thousand Buddha Mountain.

TAXI

Taxis cost ¥8 for the first 3km then ¥1.75 (slightly more at night) per kilometre thereafter.

AROUND JI'NAN

Zhujiayu

Zhujiayu

HISTORIC SITE

(📞8380 8158; admission ¥40; 🕒tickets 8am-5pm)

Eighty kilometres east of Ji'nan is one of Shandong's oldest hamlets, [Zhujiayu](#). Its intact structures mostly date back to the Ming and Qing dynasties, and many have been recently spruced up to serve as movie and

soap-opera sets, but strolling the stone-paved streets is still a journey back in time.

Zhujiayu and its bucolic panoramas of rolling hills can be explored in an easy day trip. You can wander on your own, though there are official, Chinese-speaking guides (¥60) and eager long-time residents (¥30) ready to show you around. Posted maps are in English.

Ongoing updates have added a parking lot and official tourist centre, where you buy your ticket and, behind the centre, access the main gate. In a bid to get kids' attention away from their mobile phones, there is also a half-hour, immersive **movie experience** (incl entry ¥80; 🕒 10am Mon-Fri, 10am & 2pm Sat & Sun) loosely based on the harrowing journeys of Shandong natives seeking opportunity.

Follow the Ming-dynasty, double-track ancient road (*shuanggui gudao*) to the Qing-dynasty **Wenchang Pavilion** (Wenchang Ge), an arched gate topped by a single-roofed shrine where teachers would take new pupils to make offerings to Confucius before their first lesson. On your left is **Shanyin Primary School** (Shanyin Xiaoxue), a series of halls and courtyards with exhibits on local life.

Walk on to see the many ancestral temples, including the **Zhu Family Ancestral Hall** (Zhushi Jiaci), packed mudbrick homesteads, and quaint, arched *shiqiao* (stone bridges). The **Kangxi Overpass** (Kangxi Shuang Qiao) is one of the earliest examples in the world of such a traffic structure and dates from 1671. A further 30-minute climb past the last drystone walls of the village will take you to the gleaming white **Kuixing Pavilion** (Kuixing Lou) crowning the hill.

The humble restaurants in the village cook up excellent fare from local ingredients. At **Lao Yi Min Restaurant** (Lao Yi Min Caiguan 📞 138 8498 9061; dishes ¥14-21), about 100m past the large Mao portrait, the genial owners take their dog hunting for wild rabbit (¥40 per *jin*) and forage for fresh mushrooms and greens in the hills.

If you want to stay overnight, look for flags posting " (*nongjiale*; a guesthouse or homestay). The basic but clean **Gucun Inn** (Gucun Jiujiu 📞 8380

8135; dm ¥30, d with bathroom ¥100; 📶) is set in a courtyard home with a spirit wall decorated with cranes and peacocks. The friendly owners also cook up meals (mains ¥15 to ¥38; English menu) using their garden-grown ingredients. Pass under the Kangxi Overpass and take the low road at the split, then follow the bend to the left.

To get here from Ji'nan, catch bus K301 (¥14, 1½ hours, 7am to 6.30pm) to the Jishi Xueyuan stop in front of a large technical college. From there catch bus 9 (¥1) to the large white gate marking the village drop-off. It's another 2km walk (locals offer lifts) to the tourist centre. Taxis from the college will go the whole way for ¥15. Returning to Ji'nan, reverse the process or flag down a bus across from the white gate on the main road. Buses back after 5pm are rare.

TAI'AN & TAI SHAN

📍0538 / Pop 1.1 million

In China, where sacred mountains are a dime a dozen, the one that matters most is **Tai Shan** (www.taishangeopark.com; adult/student & senior Feb-Nov ¥127/60, Dec-Jan ¥102/50). Its fellow Unesco World Heritage Sites Emei Shan and Huangshan may be higher and more photogenic, respectively, but Tai Shan has been worshipped since at least the 11th century BC. To scholars and poets, it is known as Dong Yue, the Eastern Great Mountain, one of China's five most sacred peaks.

Qin Shi Huang, the First Emperor, chose its summit to proclaim the unified kingdom of China in 219 BC. From its heights Confucius uttered the dictum 'The world is small'; Mao lumbered up and declared 'The east is red'. Seventy-one other emperors and countless figures also paid this mountain their respects. It inspired their poetry and prose inscribed in tablets, boulders, caves and cliffs all over the slopes. Pilgrims still make their way up the steps as a symbol of their devotion to Taoist and Buddhist teachings – and perhaps to earn a long life.

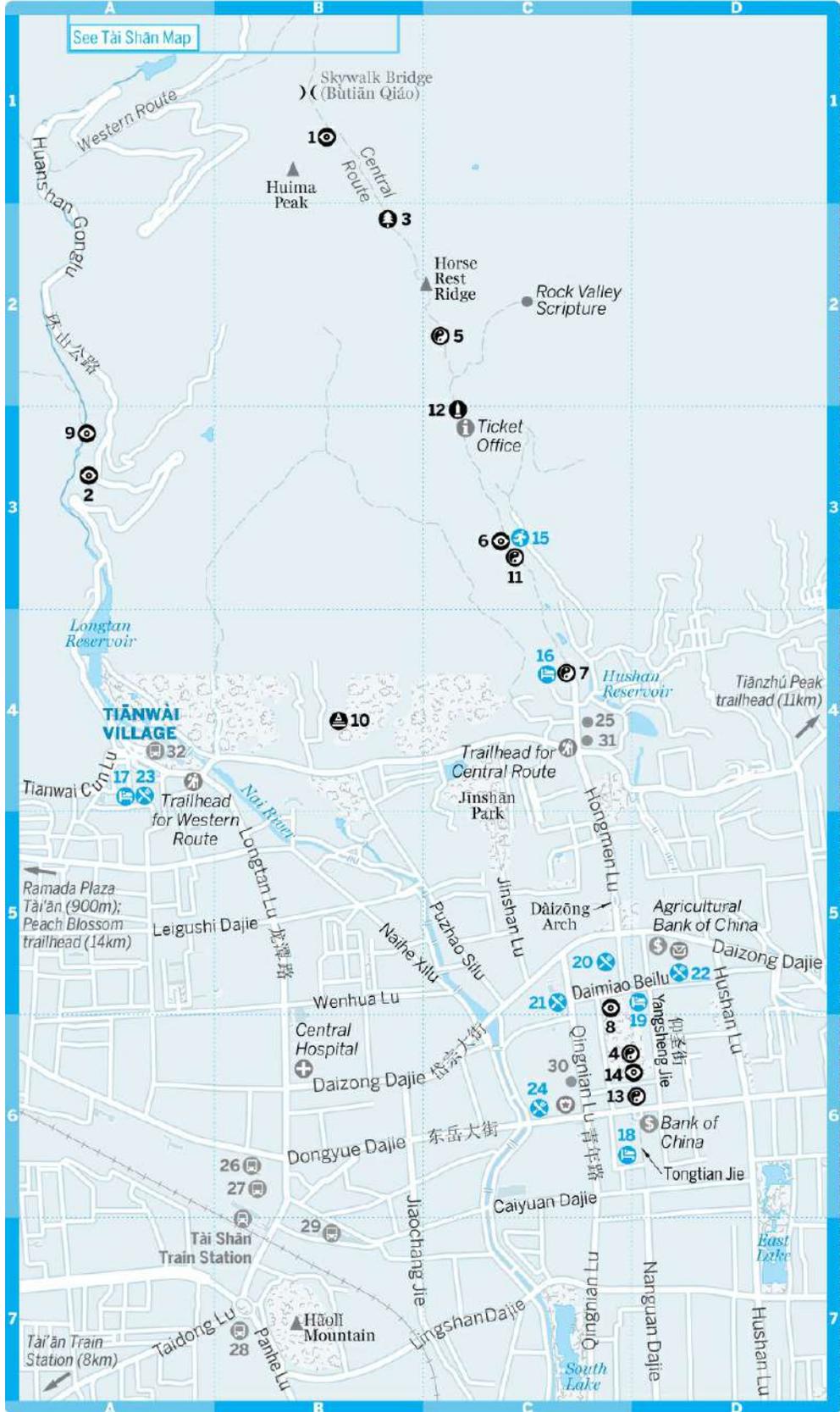
The gateway to Tai Shan's sacred slopes is the village of Tai'an, which has

had a tourist industry in full swing since before the Ming dynasty. In the 17th century, historian Zhang Dai described package tours that included choice of lodging (enormous inns with more than 20 kitchens and hundreds of servants, opera performers and courtesans), a post-summit congratulatory banquet, plus an optional sedan-chair upgrade (climbing tax not included).

Since you will need at least a full day to explore the mountain, spending the night in Tai'an or at the summit is advised.

Autumn, when humidity is low, is the best time to visit; early October onwards has the clearest weather. In winter temperatures dip below freezing and many summit guesthouses have no hot water. Tourist season peaks from May to October. Definitely avoid holidays.

Tài'ān



Tai'an

Sights

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 1 | Balking Horse Ridge | B1 |
| 2 | Black Dragon Pool | A3 |
| 3 | Cypress Cave | B2 |
| 4 | Dai Temple | C6 |
| 5 | Doumu Hall | C2 |
| 6 | First Gate of Heaven | C3 |
| 7 | Guandi Temple | C4 |
| 8 | Hou Zai Gate | C5 |
| 9 | Longevity Bridge | A3 |
| 10 | Pervading Light Temple | B4 |
| 11 | Red Gate Palace | C3 |
| 12 | Wanxian Tower | C3 |
| 13 | Yaocan Pavilion | D6 |
| 14 | Zhengyang Gate | D6 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 15 | Geoheritage Scenic Area | C3 |
|----|---|----|

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 16 | Hongmen International Youth Hostel | C4 |
| 17 | Ramada Plaza Tai'an | A4 |
| 18 | Taishan International Youth Hostel | C6 |
| 19 | Yuzuo Hotel | D5 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 20 | A Dong de Shuijiao | C5 |
| 21 | Beixin Snack Street | C5 |
| 22 | Dai Bei Market | D5 |
| 23 | Dongzun Court | A4 |
| 24 | Night Market | C6 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 25 | Airport Shuttle | C4 |
| | Bus 16 (Peach Blossom Valley) | B6 |
| 26 | Bus 19 (to Tianzhu Peak Trailhead) | B6 |

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 27 | Bus 3 (Central or Western Route) | B6 |
| 28 | Long-Distance Bus Station (Old Station) | B7 |
| 29 | Tai Shan Bus Station | B7 |
| 30 | Train and Plane Ticket Bookings | C6 |
| 31 | Train and Plane Ticket Office | C4 |
| 32 | Western Route Tianwai Village Bus Stop | A4 |

Sights & Activities

Dai Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Dai Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.daimiao.cn/English; Daimiao Beijie Lu; adult/child ¥30/15;

 8am-6pm summer, to 5pm winter)

This magnificent Taoist temple complex is where all Tai'an roads lead, being the traditional first stop on the pilgrimage route up Tai Shan. The grounds are an impressive example of Song-dynasty (960–1127) temple construction with features of an imperial palace, though other structures stood here 1000 years before that.

Many visitors enter from the north through **Hou Zai gate** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), but entering from the south through **Zhengyang gate** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) allows you to follow the traditional passage through the main temple and up Hongmen Lu to the start of Tai Shan's central route ascent.

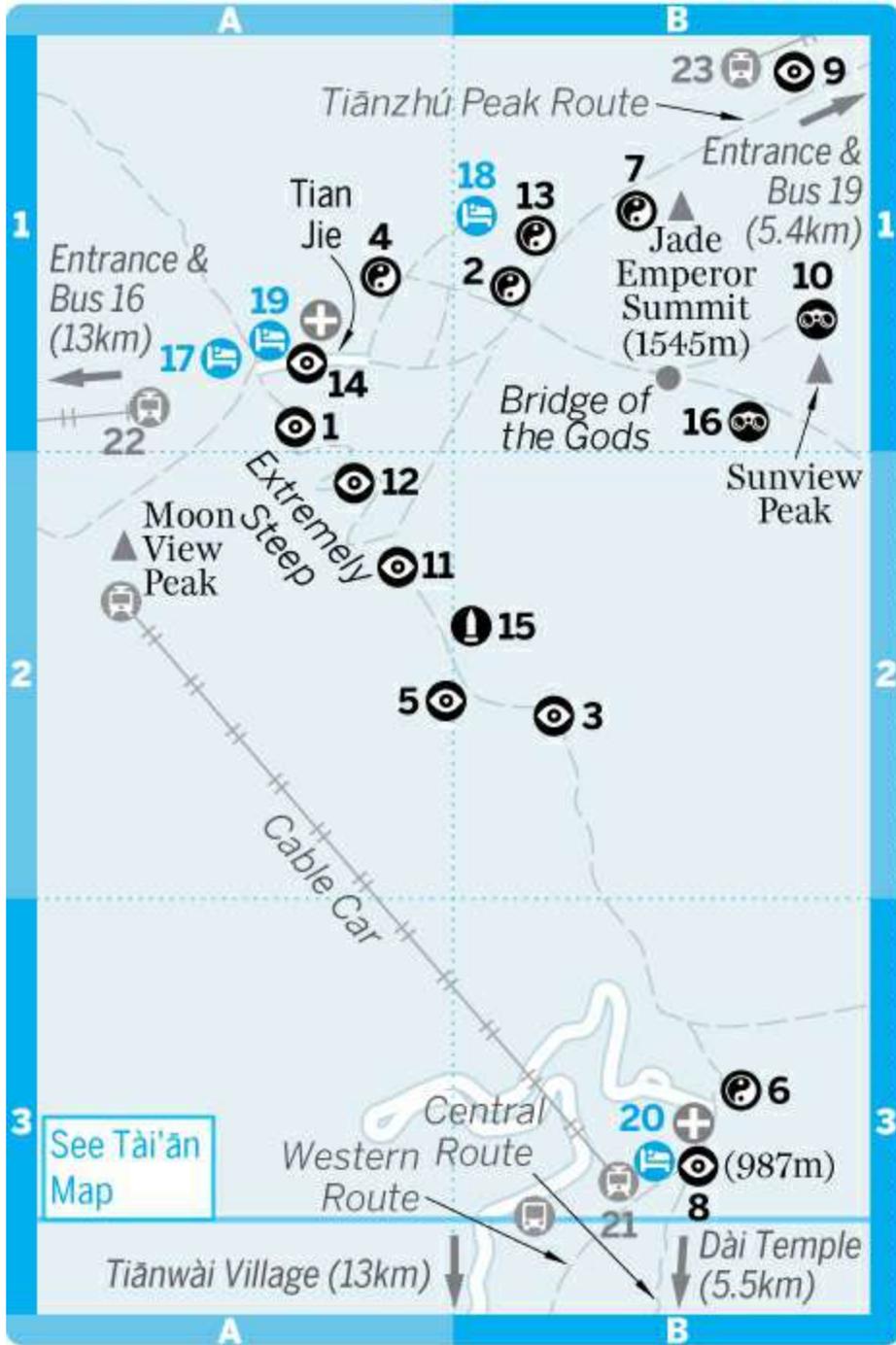
From the south end, two lions watch cars pass by on Dongyue Dajie, flanking the splendid *paifang* (ornamental arch). Beyond this and the Zhengyang gate, **Yaocan Pavilion** (Yaocan Ting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6.30am-6pm) contains a hall dedicated to deities including Bixia, the daughter of Tai Shan, who became the focus of worship by the 11th century, and Songzi Niangniang, her attendant to whom couples wanting children dutifully pay respects.

Between the buildings, the courtyards are filled with prized examples of poetry and imperial records. Fossilised-looking *bixi* (the mythical tortoise son

of the dragon), dating from the 12th century onward, carry stelae on their backs documenting everything from the civil exam process to emperors' birthdays. The Han Emperor Wudi himself is said to have planted some of the massive, twisting trees in the **Cypress Tree Pavilion** 2100 years ago.

The main hall is the colossal, twin-eaved, nine-bay-wide **Hall of Heavenly Blessing** (Tiankuang Dian shoe covers ¥1), which dates to AD 1009. The dark interior houses an exquisite, 62m-long Song-dynasty mural depicting Emperor Zhenzong as the Lord of Tai Shan, the god of longevity to whom the entire complex is dedicated. Before exiting, scale the walls over the Hou Zai gate to see what's in store for your pilgrimage up the mountain.

Tài Shān



Tai Shan

🎯 Sights

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1 | Archway to Immortality | A1 |
| 2 | Azure Clouds Temple | B1 |
| 3 | Cloud Step Bridge | B2 |
| 4 | Confucius Temple | A1 |
| 5 | Five Great Pines | A2 |
| 6 | God of Wealth Temple | B3 |
| 7 | Jade Emperor Temple | B1 |
| 8 | Midway Gate to Heaven | B3 |
| 9 | North Gate to Heaven | B1 |
| 10 | North Pointing Rock | B1 |
| 11 | Opposing Pines Pavilion | A2 |
| 12 | Path of 18 Bends | A2 |
| 13 | Qingdi Palace | B1 |
| 14 | South Gate to Heaven | A1 |
| 15 | Ten-Thousand Zhang Tablet | B2 |
| 16 | Zhanlu Terrace | B1 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 17 | Nan Tian Men Binguan | A1 |
| 18 | Shenqi Hotel | B1 |
| 19 | Xianju Binguan | A1 |
| 20 | Yuyequan Hotel | B3 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 21 | Main Cable Car | B3 |
| 22 | Peach Blossom Park Cable Car | A1 |
| 23 | Rear Rocky Recess Cable Car | B1 |

Climbing Tai Shan

There are four routes up to the highest peak (1532m) that can be done on foot: **Central route**, historically the Emperor's Route, winds 8.9km from Dai Temple to the summit and gains 1400m in elevation; **Peach Blossom Park route** climbs 13km on the west side; and the least travelled 5.4km **Tianzhu Peak route** goes up the back of the mountain from the east. **Western route** follows the 14km shuttle-bus route and converges with the Central route at the halfway point (Midway Gate to Heaven), from where it's another 3.5km

up steep steps to the summit.

If this sounds like too much for your knees, cover the Western route by bus to Midway Gate to Heaven and then take the cable car to South Gate to Heaven near the summit. Reverse the journey or nab a bus to get back down.

Sights on the mountain close around 5pm. Weather can change suddenly and the summit gets very cold, windy and wet, so bring warm layers and rain gear. You can buy rain ponchos and, at the top, rent overcoats (¥30).

As with all Chinese mountain hikes, viewing the sunrise is considered an integral part of the experience. You can either do a night hike or, easier, stay overnight at one of the summit guesthouses to greet the first rays of dawn.

Central Route

This has been the main route up the mountain since the 3rd century BC, and over the past two millennia a bewildering number of bridges, trees, rivers, gullies, inscriptions, caves, pavilions and temples have become famous sites in their own right. Although the central route is well paved, don't underestimate the challenge of its 7000 steps. Figure at least six hours from Dai Temple to get to the top.

Tai Shan functions as an outdoor museum of antiquities. Two of the most prized are **Rock Valley Scripture** (Jingshi Yu [GOOGLE MAP](#)), in the first part of the climb, a massive inscription of a Buddhist text that was once hidden behind a waterfall, and **North Prayer Rock** (Gongbei Shi), a huge boulder pointing skywards and a site of imperial sacrifices to heaven, at the summit.

Purists begin with a south–north perambulation through Dai Temple, 1.7km south of the actual ascent, in accordance with imperial tradition, but there is no shame in starting at the bus stop by **Guandi Temple** (Guandi Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥10), the first of many dedicated to the Taoist protector of peace. Passing **First Gate of Heaven** (Yitian Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) marks the start of the incline, though the **ticket office** (Shoupiao Chu [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎806 6077; 🕒24hr) is still a way further at

Wanxian Tower ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). The **Red Gate Palace** (Hong Men Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission ¥5; 🕒 8am-5pm) is the first of a series of temples dedicated to Bixia, the compassionate daughter of the god of Tai Shan. She wears a headdress adorned with phoenixes and is accompanied by nine attendants including the Goddesses of Children and of Eyesight.

Take a detour into the **Geoheritage Scenic Area** (Dizhi Yuanqu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) for a look at unusual radial rock formations that mesmerised Confucius himself. Back on the main path is the Buddhist **Doumu Hall** (Doumu Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), first constructed in 1542 under the more magical name ‘Dragon Spring Nunnery’. The back of the temple yard offers a quiet view of a triple waterfall, best seen in July and August. Prayers are written on the ribbons festooning the pines. Continue through the tunnel of cypresses known as **Cypress Cave** (Bo Dong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) to **Balking Horse Ridge** (Huima Ling [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which marks the point where Emperor Zhenzong had to dismount and continue by litter because his horse refused to go further.

The **Midway Gate to Heaven** (Zhong Tian Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) marks the point where some travellers, seeing the stairway disappearing into the clouds, head for the cable car. Don’t give up! Rest your legs, visit the small and smoky **God of Wealth Temple** (Caishen Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and stock up on snacks. (If you need them, 24-hour **first-aid stations** are at both the Midway and South Gate.)

If you decide to catch a ride, the **main cable car** (kongzhong suodao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; one way/return ¥100/200; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm 16 Apr-15 Oct, 8.30am-5pm 16 Oct-15 Apr) is a 15-minute ride to **Moon View Peak** (Yueguan Feng) at the South Gate to Heaven. Be warned: peak season and weekend queues can take two hours. Also, the cable car stops when there is any risk of lightning.

If you continue on foot you’ll come next to **Cloud Step Bridge** (Yunbu Qiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), once a modest wooden bridge spanning a torrent of waterfalls, and the withered and wiry **Wudafu Pine** (Wudafu Song), under which Emperor Qin Shi Huang, overtaken by a violent storm, found shelter.

Across the valley, each character carved in the **Ten-Thousand Zhang Tablet** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), dated 1748, measures 1m across.

You'll pass **Opposing Pines Pavilion** (Duisong Ting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and then finally reach the arduous **Path of 18 Bends** (Shibapan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a 400m extremely steep ascent to the mountain's false summit; climbing it is performed in slow motion as legs turn to lead. If you have the energy, see if you can spot the small shrine dedicated to the Lord of Tai Shan's grandmother along the way. There is an alternate route to the Azure Clouds Temple here via another steep, narrow staircase to the right. If you continue on the main route, at the top is the **Archway to Immortality** (Shengxian Fang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), once believed to bestow immortality on those dedicated enough to reach it. Emperors made sure to get off their huge litters and walk through.

The final stretch takes you to the **South Gate to Heaven** (Nan Tian Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), the third celestial gate, which marks the beginning of the summit area. Bear right on Tian Jie, the main strip, and pass through the gate to reach the sublimely perched **Azure Clouds Temple** (Bixia Ci [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-5.15pm), dedicated to Bixia. The iron tiling of the temple buildings is intended to prevent damage by strong winds, and *chiwen* (ornaments meant to protect against fire) decorate their bronze eaves.

You have to climb higher to get to the **Confucius Temple** (Kong Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), where statues of Confucius, Mencius, Zengzi and other Confucian luminaries are venerated. The Taoist **Qingdi Palace** (Qingdi Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is right before the fog- and cloud-swathed **Jade Emperor Temple** (Yuhuang Ding [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which stands at the summit, the highest point of the Tai Shan plateau. Inside is an effigy of the Jade Emperor, who governs all mortal realms.

The main sunrise vantage point is the **North Pointing Rock** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); if you're lucky, visibility extends over 200km to the coast.

At the summit, you can see another side of the mountain by descending via

the Tianzhu Peak or Peach Blossom Park route.

Tianzhu Peak Route

The route through the **Tianzhu Peak Scenic Area** (Tianzhu Feng Jingqu) offers a rare chance to experience Tai Shan without crowds. It's mostly ancient pine forest, ruins and peaks back there, so consider combining it with the Central route for an entirely different view.

If you ascend this way, get an early start to the trailhead, which is 15km by bus 19 (¥2) from Tai Shan Train Station. The challenging climb itself can take five hours.

It's 5.4km from the trailhead to the **Rear Rocky Recess Cable Car** (Hou Shiwu suodao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 833 0765; one way ¥20; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Apr-Oct, closed 16 Oct-15 Apr), which takes you from the back of the mountain to the **North Gate to Heaven** (Bei Tianmen [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) cable-car stop (Bei Tianmen suodao zhan) and views of Tianzhu Peak – when it's running. Call in advance.

Peach Blossom Park Route

A third route to the summit passes through a scenic valley of striking geological formations and trees that explode with colour in early spring and fall. It makes for an especially pleasant descent.

Near the South Gate to Heaven, take Peach Blossom Park **cable car** (Taohua Yuan suodao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 833 0763; one way/return ¥100/200; 🕒 7.30am-5pm) down to Peach Blossom Valley. This cable car operates infrequently, so call ahead. From the cable car drop-off it is another 9km on foot or by bus (one way ¥30, departs when full 6am to 6pm and midnight to 2am) to reach the park exit and bus 16 back into town.

Western Route

The most popular way to descend is by **bus** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); one way ¥30; 🕒 6am-6pm & midnight-2am peak, 7am-6pm off-peak) via the Western route. These buses are also handy for night hikes up to catch the sunrise. They zip every 20 minutes (or when full) between Tianwai Village and Midway Gate to Heaven, not stopping in between.

Walking the route is not always pleasant as the poorly marked footpath and road often intercept or coincide, but it rewards you with a variety of scenic orchards and pools. At the mountain's base, **Pervading Light Temple** (Puzhao Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥5; 🕒 8am-5.30pm) is a serene Buddhist temple dating from the Southern and Northern dynasties (420–589). The main attraction is **Black Dragon Pool** (Heilong Tan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), just below **Longevity Bridge** (Changshou Qiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). The mythical pool is fed by a small waterfall and said to conceal grand carp palaces and herbs that turn humans into beasts.

Festivals & Events

Trail runners and stair steppers converge to race up the Central route for the **International Climbing Festival** (www.zgjqdh.com/zt/tsgjdsj/index.shtml) every September.

Sleeping

Tai'an

There are many midrange options in town, mostly clustered around the Taishan train station. Ask for discounts.

Hongmen International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Hongmen Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 808 6188; www.yhachina.com; 89 Hongmen Lu; dm ¥45-65, s & d ¥188, tr ¥218; 📶; 🚶 K3, K37)

In a red courtyard building, formerly part of the Guandi Temple next door, this new hostel offers the best of all worlds – the mountain within a few steps, a cafe-bar and bright rooms with all necessary conveniences including wi-fi. The very knowledgeable staff organise night climbs and advise about how to take in the sights to the fullest.

Taishan International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Taishan Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 628 5196; 65 Tongtian Jie; dm ¥50-70, s & d ¥188; 📶 @ 📶; 🚏 1, 4, 7, 8, 17)

Tai'an's first youth hostel has clean spartan rooms with pine furnishings and old propaganda posters. Bike rental, free laundry and a bar on the 4th floor make this a pleasant experience. Look for the pair of arches just off Tongtian Jie. Discounts get rooms down to ¥128.

Yuzuo Hotel

HOTEL

(Yuzuo Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 826 9999; www.yuzuo.cn; 50 Daimiao Beilu; s & d ¥780, ste ¥1680; 📶 @ 📶; 🚏 4, 6)

This pretty hotel next to the Dai Temple's north gate was purposely kept to two storeys out of respect for its neighbour. Deluxe rooms are decked out imperial style; cheaper rooms are rather ordinary. The attached bakery and restaurants serve Taoist food (12 courses ¥168 per person). Discounts of 50% make this a good deal.

Ramada Plaza Tai'an

HOTEL

(Dongzun Huameida Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 836 8888; www.ramadaplazataian.com; 16 Yingsheng Donglu, s & d ¥1160-1400, ste ¥1960-3360; 🚫 📶 @ 📶; 🚏 8)

The town's first five-star hotel is in the northwest and has all the usual comforts plus fantastic views of the main attraction. Discounts of 40%.

On the Mountain

Look for signs posting (*rujia*) or (*bingguan*) at the summit area along Tian Jie

for inns starting from ¥120 and going *way* up on weekends. Rates provided here don't apply to holiday periods, when they can triple. Try asking for discounts.

Yuyequan Hotel

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎822 6740; Midway Gate to Heaven; s & d ¥200-300, ste ¥600; ❄️)

The only thing going at the Midway Gate to Heaven has drab but tidy rooms facing an indoor courtyard. Plenty of food options on the 1st floor and next door. Discounts of 50%.

Xianju Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎823 9984; 5 Tian Jie; tw ¥100-360, d & tr ¥420-700; ❄️)

By the South Gate to Heaven, this two-star hotel has decent rooms. Some even have large windows overlooking greenery. Discounts of 30%.

Nan Tian Men Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎833 0988; 1 Tian Jie; d without/with bathroom ¥680-780/980, tr ¥880-980; ❄️ @)

Located smack bang before you turn onto Tian Jie, this is the easiest place to reach at the summit on weary legs. Rooms are a bit beaten up but still clean and airy. There's 24-hour hot water.

Shenqi Hotel

HOTEL

(Shenqi Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎822 3866; fax 826 3816; s & d ¥1200-1800, ste ¥6000; ❄️ @)

The only hotel on the actual summit and prices reflect that. The priciest mountain-view, standard rooms have new everything and were the first on the mountain with hot water in the winter. The restaurant serves Taoist banquet fare (from ¥26).

Eating

There are three busy food streets in Tai'an. The **night market** (ye shi; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 🕒 5.30pm-late) on the Nai River's east bank has many hotpot stalls. Pick your ingredients (thinly sliced meats, fish balls, vegetables, tofu etc) and take a seat at a low table. Meals cost about ¥28 and a large jug of beer is ¥8. Vendors on **Beixin Snack Street** (Beixin Xiaochi Buxing Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) set up carts for lunch (except Saturday) and dinner. Look for *mantou* (steamed buns), various meats on skewers, fried chicken and more. Hawkers serve similar delights by the temple at **Dai Bei Market** (Daibei Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), but expect tourist prices.

There is no food shortage on Tai Shan itself; the Central route is dotted with stalls and restaurants, with clusters at the cable cars. Prices rise as you do; expect to pay double the usual.

A Dong de Shuijiao

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 139 5489 8518; 31 Hongmen Lu; mains from ¥20; 🕒 9am-10pm)

This centrally located restaurant serves up northern Chinese staples including *shuijiao* (dumplings). There are a wide range of fillings including lamb (*yangrou*; ¥34 per *jin* – enough for two) and vegetarian tofu (*doufu*; ¥18 per *jin*). The English menu is challenging, so be prepared to point.

Dongzun Court

CHINESE

(Dong Zunge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 836 8222; 16 Yingsheng Donglu; mains from ¥28; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-8.30pm)

This tablecloth affair at the Ramada Plaza has an entire room dedicated to live freshwater fish and shrimp (priced by the *jin*) and freshly made spring-water bean curd (¥38).

Information

Agricultural Bank of China

BANK

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 22 Daizong Jie; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Currency exchange and 24-hour ATM accepts foreign cards.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 116 Tongtian Jie; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm)

Currency exchange and 24-hour ATM accepts foreign cards.

Central Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Zhongxin Yiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 822 4161; 29 Longtan Lu)

Limited English.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 232 Daizong Dajie; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 827 5264; cnr Dongyue Dajie & Qingnian Lu; 🕒 visa office 8.30am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, or by appointment)

The visa office is on the east side of the shiny grey building.

Getting There & Away

Whether by road or track, most routes pass through Ji'nan, 80km north.

Buses and trains are cheapest. Another option is picking up the **airport**

shuttle ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 850 2600; 26 Hongmen Lu; adult ¥80; 🕒 5.30am,

8.30am, 10am, 1.30pm, 4.40pm) in front of the Taishan Hotel; it connects to Ji'nan's

Yaoqiang airport, taking two hours.

Buy train and plane tickets at the Hongmen Lu **ticket office** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 218 7989; 22 Hongmen Lu; commission ¥5; 🕒 8am-6pm), or at the **ticket office** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 plane 218 3333, train 611 1111; 111 Qingnian Lu; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm) on Qingnian Lu. Hostels can also help. Tickets sell out

quickly so book early. Bear in mind that bus and train agents sometimes refer to Tai'an and Tai Shan interchangeably.

BUS

The **long-distance bus station** (changtu qichezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)):

 218 8777; cnr Tai'shan Dalu & Longtan Lu), also known as the old station (*lao zhan*), is just south of the train station. Buses regularly depart for these destinations:

- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥27, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥126, 5½ hours, five daily (6am, 8am, 8.40am, 2.30pm and 4pm)
- ➔ **Qufu** ¥23, one hour, every 30 minutes (7.20am to 5.20pm)
- ➔ **Weihai** ¥165, seven hours, two daily (7.20am and 9am)
- ➔ **Yantai** ¥150, six hours (7.20am)

TRAIN

Two train stations service this region. **Tai Shan Train Station** ( 688 7358; cnr Dongyue Dajie & Longtan Lu) is the most central, but express trains only pass through **Tai'an Train Station** ( 138 0538 5950; Xingtaotiezhan Lu), sometimes referred to as the new station (*xin zhan*), 9km west of the town centre.

Some regular trains (seat/hard sleeper) departing from Tai Shan Train Station:

- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥13/64, one hour, frequent (24 hours)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥69/126, five to seven hours, hourly (12.28am to 2.52pm)
- ➔ **Qufu** ¥19/29, 1½ hours, two daily (6.05am and 10.50am)

Express trains (second-/first-class seat) departing from Tai'an Train Station:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥214/359, two hours, hourly (7.48am to 9.21pm)
- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥30/50, 18 minutes, frequent (7.48am to 10.14pm)
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥254/429, 2½ hours, every 30 minutes (7.24am to 8.05pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥149/194, three hours, six daily (11.14am, 12.54pm, 3.10pm, 5.14pm, 5.46pm and 6.32pm)

➔ **Shanghai** ¥374/634, 3½ hours, every 30 minutes (7.24am to 7.45pm)

Getting Around

Buses connect [Tai Shan Train Station](#) with access points to the mountain, mostly from 6.30am to 7.30pm during peak season and to 5.30pm otherwise.

Bus 3 (¥2) Runs until 11pm during peak season, going in one direction to the Central route trailhead and the other to Tianwai Village (Tianwai Cun).

Bus 4 (¥2) Also runs until 11pm during peak season; runs to Dai Temple and around the town centre.

Bus 16 (¥2) Connects to Peach Blossom Valley.

Bus 19 (¥2, 50 minutes) Runs from Dongyue Dajie across from the Tai Shan Train Station to Tianzhu Peak trailhead.

Taxis cost ¥6 to ¥7 for the first 3km and ¥1.50 (slightly more at night) per kilometre thereafter. It costs ¥12 from the Tai Shan Train Station or ¥26 from the Tai'an Train Station to the Central route trailhead.

Frequent buses run up and down the mountain between Tianwai Village and Midway Gate to Heaven. Cable cars reach the summit area from Midway Gate to Heaven, Peach Blossom Park and Rear Rocky Recess.

CONFUCIUS: THE FIRST TEACHER

Born into a world of violent upheaval, Confucius (551–479 BC) spent his life trying to stabilise society according to traditional ideals. By his own measure he failed, but over time he became one of the most influential thinkers the world has known. Confucius' ideals remain at the core of values in east Asia today.

Confucius was born Kong Qiu, earning the honorific Kongfuzi, literally 'Master Kong', after becoming a teacher. His family was poor but of noble rank, and eventually he became an official in his home state of Lu (in present-day Shandong). At the age of 50, he put a plan into action to reform government that included routing corruption. This resulted in his exile, and he spent 13 years travelling from state to state, hoping to find a ruler who would put his ideas into practice. Eventually, he returned to his home town of Qufu and spent the remainder of his life expounding the wisdom of the Six Classics (The Book of Changes, Songs, Rites, History, Music and the Spring and Autumn Annals). Taking on students from varied backgrounds, he

believed that everyone, not just aristocracy, had a right to knowledge. This ideal became one of his greatest legacies.

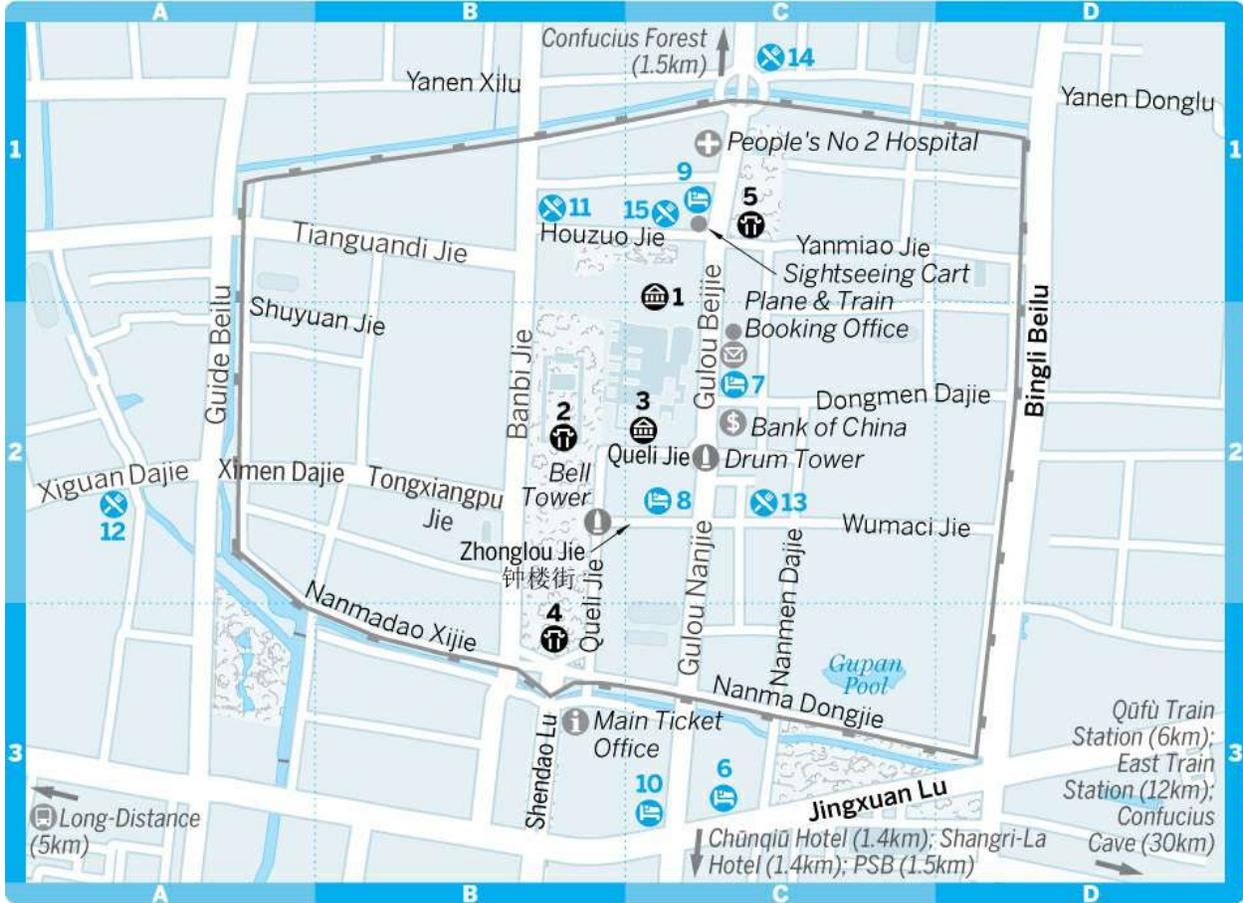
Confucius' teachings were compiled by his disciples in *The Analects* (, Lunyu), a collection of 497 aphorisms. Though he claimed to be merely transmitting the ideals of an ancient golden age, Confucius was in fact China's first humanist philosopher, upholding morality (humaneness, righteousness and virtue) and self-cultivation as the basis for social order. 'What you do not wish for yourself,' he said, 'do not do to others.'

QUFU

 0537 / Pop 302,805

Home town of the great sage Confucius and his descendants the Kong clan, Qufu is a testament to the importance of Confucian thought in imperial China to this day.

Viewing the main sights within the city walls of ancient Qufu, a Unesco World Heritage Site, will take a full day.



Qufu

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Confucius Mansion | C1 |
| 2 | Confucius Temple | B2 |
| 3 | Entrance to Confucius Mansion | C2 |
| 4 | Entrance to Confucius Temple | B3 |
| 5 | Yan Temple | C1 |

🏠 Sleeping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 6 | Chunqiu Hotel | C3 |
| 7 | Fuyuan Hotel | C2 |
| 8 | Quli Hotel | C2 |
| 9 | Qufu International Youth Hostel | C1 |
| 10 | Shangri-La Hotel | C3 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 11 | Mu'en Lou Halal Food & Drink | B1 |
| 12 | Muslim Quarter | A2 |
| 13 | Night Market | C2 |
| 14 | Street Vendors | C1 |
| 15 | Yu Shu Fang | C1 |

Sights

The principal sights – Confucius Temple, Confucius Mansion and Confucius Forest – are known collectively as ‘San Kong’ (‘Three Kongs’). The **main ticket office** (shoupiaochu [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is on Shendao Lu just outside the Confucius Temple’s main entrance. You can buy admission to the individual sights, but the **combination ticket** (per person ¥150), grants access to all three Confucius-related sights.

From 15 November to 15 February, admission to individual sights is ¥10 cheaper than listed (the combined ticket stays the same) and sights close about a half-hour earlier.

Confucius Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Kong Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission included in combination ticket or ¥90; 🕒 8am-5.10pm)

China’s largest imperial building complex after the Forbidden City began as Confucius’ three-room house. After his death in 478 BC, the Duke of the Lu state consecrated his simple abode as a temple. Everything in it, including his clothing, books, musical instruments and a carriage, was perfectly preserved. The house was rebuilt for the first time in AD 153, kicking off a series of expansions and renovations in subsequent centuries. By 1012, it had four courtyards and over 300 rooms. An imperial-palace-style wall was added. After a fire in 1499, it was rebuilt to its present scale.

Like shrines to Confucius throughout Asia, this is more museum than altar.

Over 1000 stelae documenting imperial gifts and sacrifices from the Han dynasty onwards as well as treasured examples of calligraphy and stone reliefs are preserved on the grounds. Look for a *bixi*, mythical tortoise, bearing the **Cheng Hua stele** (Chenghua bei), dedicated by the Ming emperor in 1468, which praises Confucius in a particularly bold, formal hand. The characters are so perfect that copies were used to teach penmanship. The **Shengji Hall** (Shengji Dian) houses 120 famed Tang-dynasty paintings depicting Confucius' life immortalised as carvings.

The temple has nine courtyards arranged on a central axis. Halfway along rises the triple-eaved **Great Pavilion of the Constellation of Scholars** (Kuiwen Ge), an imposing Song-dynasty wooden structure. A series of gates and colossal, twin-eaved stele pavilions lead to the **Apricot Altar** (Xing Tan), which marks the spot where Confucius taught his students under an apricot tree.

The heart of the complex is the huge yellow-eaved **Dacheng Hall** (Dacheng Dian), which in its present form dates from 1724. Craftspeople carved the 10 dragon-coiled columns so expertly that they were covered with red silk when Emperor Qianlong visited, lest he feel that the Forbidden City's Hall of Supreme Harmony paled in comparison. Inside is a huge statue of Confucius resplendent on a throne. Above him are the characters for '*wanshi shibiao*', meaning 'model teacher for all ages'.

South of **Chongsheng Hall** (Chongsheng Ci), which was once the site of the original family temple, the **Lu Wall** (Lu Bi) stands where Confucius' ninth generation descendant hid Confucius' writings in the walls of his house during Emperor Qin Shi Huang's book-burning campaign around 213 BC. The texts were uncovered during an attempt to raze the grounds in 154 BC, spurring new schools of Confucian scholarship and long debates over what Confucius really said.

Confucius Mansion

MUSEUM

(Kong Fu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); admission included in combination ticket or ¥60; 🕒 8am-5.15pm)

Next to Confucius Temple is this maze of living quarters, halls, studies and more studies. The mansion buildings were moved from the temple grounds to the present site in 1377 and vastly expanded into 560 rooms in 1503. More remodelling followed, including reconstruction following a devastating fire in 1885.

The mansion was for centuries the most sumptuous private residence in China, thanks to imperial sponsorship and the Kong clan's rule, which included powers of taxation and execution, over Qufu as an autonomous estate. They indulged in 180-course meals, and kept servants and consorts. Male heirs successively held the title of Duke Yan Sheng from the Song dynasty until 1935.

Confucius Mansion is built on an 'interrupted' north-south axis with administrative offices (taxes, edicts, rites, registration and examination halls) at the entrance (south) and private quarters at the back (north). The **Ceremonial Gate** (Chongguang Men) was opened only when emperors dropped in. The central path passes a series of halls, including the **Great Hall** (Da Tang) and **Neizhai Gate** (Neizhai Men), which separated the private and public parts of the residence and was guarded at all times.

The large '*shou*' character (longevity) within the single-eaved **Upper Front Chamber** (Qian Shang Fang) north of Neizhai Gate was a gift from Qing Empress Cixi. The Duke lived in the two-storey **Front Chamber** (Qian Tang Lou).

East just before the Neizhai Gate is the **Tower of Refuge** (Kui Lou), not open to visitors, where the Kong clan could gather if the peasants turned nasty. It has an iron-lined ceiling on the ground floor and a staircase that could be yanked up.

Confucius Forest

CEMETERY

(Kong Lin admission included in combination ticket or ¥40; 🕒 8am-5.20pm)

About 2km north of town on Lindao Lu is the peaceful Confucius Forest, a cemetery of pine and cypress covering 200 hectares bounded by a 10km-long wall. Confucius and more than 100,000 of his descendants have been buried

here for the past 2000 years, a tradition still ongoing.

When Confucius died in 479 BC he was buried on the bank of the Si River beneath a simple marker. In the Western Han dynasty, Emperor Wudi deemed Confucianism the only worthy school of thought, and the **Tomb of Confucius** (Kongzi Mu) became a place of pilgrimage. Today the tomb is a simple grass mound enclosed by a low wall and faced with a Ming-dynasty stele. Pairs of stone guardians stand at the ready. The sage's son and grandson are buried nearby, and scattered through the forest are dozens of temples and pavilions.

A slow walk through the parklike cemetery can take a couple of hours, though Confucius' tomb is just a 15-minute walk from the entrance (turn left after the carts). Open-air **shuttles** (one way/return ¥10/20) allow you to hop on and off in the forest.

Sightseeing carts (diandong luyou che [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Houzuo Jie & Gulou Dajie; one way/return ¥10/15; 🕒7.40am-6pm) depart for the forest from the corner of Houzuo Jie and Gulou Dajie. Otherwise take a pedicab (¥10) or bus 1 (¥2) from Gulou Beijie. Walking takes about 30 minutes.

Yan Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Yan Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yanmiao Jie; admission ¥50; 🕒8am-5.10pm; 🚏1, 3)

This tranquil temple northeast of Confucius Mansion is dedicated to Confucius' beloved disciple Yan Hui, whose death at age 32 caused the understated Confucius 'excessive grief'. The main structure, **Fusheng Hall** (Fusheng Dian), has a magnificent ceiling decorated with a dragon head motif. Outside a *bixi* carries a stele that posthumously granted Yan the title of Duke of Yanguo (in both Han and Mongol script) in AD 1331.

Confucius Cave

PARK

(Fuzi Dong admission ¥50; 🕒8.10am-5pm)

About 30km southeast of Qufu, this cave on Ni Shan is where, according to legend, a frighteningly ugly Confucius was born, abandoned and cared for by

a tiger and an eagle before his mother realised he was sent from heaven and decided to care for him. The gravitas is a bit hokey, but the sight offers a chance for some fresh air.

Buses for Ni Shan (¥8) leave regularly from the long-distance bus station. A taxi there is about ¥40.

CONFUCIUS SAYS...

'Our greatest glory is not in never failing but in rising every time we fall.'

'Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.'

'Rotten wood cannot be carved, nor are dung walls plastered.'

'Study the past if you would divine the future.'

'We take greater pains to persuade others that we are happy than in endeavouring to think so ourselves.'

'He who wishes to secure the good of others has already secured his own.'

Festivals & Events

Every morning at 8am, following a recitation, a costumed procession raucously walks up Shendao Lu from Jingxian Lu to the main gate to officially open the city.

Confucius Temple holds two major festivals a year: **Tomb Sweeping Day** (usually 5 April; celebrations may last all weekend) and the **Sage's Birthday** (28 September), both involving elaborate, costumed ceremonies. The city also comes alive with craftspeople, healers, acrobats and peddlers during annual fairs in the spring and autumn.

Sleeping

★ **Qufu International Youth Hostel**

HOSTEL

(Qufu Guoji Qingnian Lushe  ;  441 8989; www.yhaqf.com; Gulou Beijie; dm/tw/tr ¥45/128/158;   )

The best deal in town, this friendly hostel at the north end of Gulou Beijie has rooms so clean you can smell the fresh linen. There's bike rental, ticket bookings and a cafe-bar (cocktails from ¥18) serving Chinese and Western fare. Dorms have four to eight beds and share a nice bathroom. Only fault? Hot water can be scarce in the mornings.

Fuyuan Hotel

HOTEL

(Fuyuan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 138 6372 3660; 8 Gulou Beijie; incl breakfast s ¥198, d ¥208, tr ¥238; 🚰 📶)

Smack-bang in the middle of the old town, the courteous staff here make up for the worn edges. Go for the 2nd-floor rooms, and avoid the stuffy, windowless economy rooms. Discounts up to 40%.

Chunqiu Hotel

HOTEL

(Chunqiu Da Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 505 1888; www.chunqiuhotel.com; 13 Chunqiu Zhonglu; incl breakfast r ¥298-398, ste ¥598; 🚰 🚰 📶)

Just outside the old city walls, this subdued business hotel is a favourite of bureaucrats (government buildings are next door); you'll meet them in the morning breakfast buffet line. Rooms on the 7th floor and up have views of the park. Discounts available.

Queli Hotel

HOTEL

(Queli Binshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 486 6400; www.quelihotel.com; 15 Zhonglou Jie; incl breakfast s ¥398-598, d/ste ¥568/2288; 🚰 📶)

The four-star Queli was once the fanciest hotel in town. A recent refurb dusted off the fading photos of the visiting dignitaries on the walls, but some rooms are still nicer than others. Look first. Discounts of 20%.

Shangri-La Hotel

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 505 8888; www.shangri-la.com; 3 Chunqiu Lu; incl breakfast r ¥805-1035, ste ¥2288; 🚰 🚰 📶 🚰)

A luxury hotel fit for a major city but priced for a small one. Take advantage of the slick, top-end facilities, kids' activities and impressive buffets (no lines!) before it has to start cutting corners.

WORTH A TRIP

HOME OF THE SECOND SAGE

Twenty-three kilometres south of Qufu is **Zoucheng** (also called Zouxian,), where the revered Confucian scholar Mencius (Mengzi; c 372–289 BC) was born. Like Confucius, Mencius was raised by a single mother and grew up to travel the country trying to reform government. His belief that humanity is by nature good formed the core of all his teachings, including his call to overthrow self-serving rulers. Not surprisingly, his criticism made him unpopular among those in power, but a thousand years after his death Mencius' work was elevated a step below Confucius'.

Zoucheng today is a relaxed town with fewer tourist hassles than Qufu. Tickets (¥40) get you into the two adjacent main attractions and are sold at both. **Mencius Temple** (Meng Miao incl Mencius Family Mansion ¥40; 🕒8am-5.50pm) originally dates to the Song dynasty and bears the marks of past anti-Confucian mood swings, though restoration is in progress. With few visitors around to cut in, you can stand in the shade of ancient gnarled cypresses and absorb the serene surroundings. The twin-roofed **Hall of the Second Sage** (Yasheng Dian) looms in the centre of the grounds. A small shrine next to it is dedicated to Mencius' mother, the 'model for all mothers'. West of the temple, **Mencius Family Mansion** (Meng Fu incl Mencius Temple ¥40; 🕒8am-5.50pm) exhibits the family's living quarters, including teacups and bedding left by Mencius' 74th-generation descendant, who lived there into the 1940s.

Zoucheng is an easy bus ride from Qufu. Bus C609 (¥3, 35 minutes, 6.30am to 6.30pm) departs from Confucius Temple's main entrance and drops off at **Zoucheng Museum** (📞0537 525 3301; 56 Shunhe Lu; 🕒8.30am-5.30pm), less than a kilometre from the sights (just walk, keeping the river on your left).

Eating

The local speciality is Kong-family cuisine, which, despite its name, is the furthest thing from home cooking since it developed as a result of all the imperial-style banquets the family threw.

Restaurants skip the pageantry nowadays, but for still less formal fare visit

the **street vendors** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; dishes from ¥2; 🕒 from 5pm) on the corner just outside the north city gate, or at the Wumaci Jie **night market** (yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Wumaci Jie & Gulou Nanjie; snacks from ¥3, dishes from ¥9; 🕒 from 5pm). Vendors make noodles, grill skewers of meat, and serve *jianbing guozi* (¥3 to ¥5), a steaming parcel of egg, vegetables and chilli sauce wrapped in a pancake. Stalls displaying raw meat and produce cook it to order; just point at what you want. The **Muslim Quarter** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Xiguan Dajie;) outside the western gate is the place to feast on noodles and lamb.

Mu'en Lou Halal Food & Drink

MUSLIM

(Muen Lou, Qingzhen Canyon [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 448 3877; Houzuo Jie; mains ¥15-60; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm & 5-8.30pm)

A friendly Hui family runs this simple place behind the Confucius Mansion, serving house specialities like beef spiced with cumin, star anise and turmeric (*nanqian niurou pian*; ¥68) and tongue-numbing, spicy tofu (*mala doufu*; ¥12).

Yu Shu Fang

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 441 9888; www.confuciusfood.com; 2nd fl, Houzuo Jie; banquet per person ¥138-500; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5-8.30pm)

'Food can never be too good, and cooking can never be done too carefully', Confucius himself said. This restaurant of private rooms behind the Confucius Mansion takes this to heart, serving fine teas (*tie guanyin*) from ¥38 per pot and Kong-family banquet meals (*tao can*).

The most basic set involves six or so small cold dishes, followed by about 16 more hot dishes – from soup to vegetables, braised sea cucumber, spicy chicken and so on in quick succession. There's no English menu but ordering is easy (just pick a price). Reservations recommended, and some dishes can be ordered a la carte (from ¥38).

Information

ATMs accepting foreign cards are along and around Gulou Beijie. Internet cafes are often restricted to Chinese nationals. Try around Wumaci Jie (look for ‘ ’ signs; per hour ¥2 to ¥5), or surf at Qufu International Youth Hostel.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 96 Dongmen Dajie; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm)

Foreign exchange and ATM.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gulou Beijie; 🕒 8am-6pm summer, 8.30am-5.30pm winter)

Near the Drum Tower.

People's No 2 Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Di'er Renmin Yiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 448 8120; 7 Gulou Beijie)

Next to the Qufu International Youth Hostel.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 443 0007; 1 Wuyutai Lu; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri)

About 1.5km south of the city walls. Can help with initial paperwork for lost passports, but for more you'll have to go to Jining.

MAKING COPIES

For millennia, everything from imperial decrees to poetry, religious scriptures and maps were preserved by carving them into stone. This was done either as an inscription (yin-style) or a relief (yang-style). Copies were made by applying ink to the stone and pressing rice paper onto it, or by tamping a damp sheet of paper into the crevices and allowing it to dry, before patting ink onto the paper's surface. Over time, even stone would wear and the clearest, best-made prints became works of art themselves. Unfortunately, this prompted unscrupulous collectors to damage carvings to ensure they had the very best copy. These are the gouges and scratches you see in many of the most prized tablets and stelae.

Getting There & Away

Buy plane and train tickets at the **booking office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#);  150 5377 1869; commission ¥5;  8.30am-noon & 2-6pm) next to China Post. Qufu International Youth Hostel also books tickets (¥15 to ¥20 commission).

AIR

Jining Qufu Airport is 80km southwest of Qufu's old town and connects to Beijing (¥617, 1½ hours), Chengdu (¥1167, two hours), Guangzhou (¥877, 2½ hours), Shanghai (¥868, two hours), Xi'an (¥674, 55 minutes) and a handful of other cities. There are no direct buses from the airport to old town Qufu. You have to transfer to a bus or taxi at the bus station in Jining about 50km away, so flying into Ji'nan is about as convenient.

BUS

Qufu's **long-distance bus station** (changtu qichezhan  441 2554; Yulong Lu & Yulan Lu;) is 3km west of the city walls. There is a **left luggage office** (¥2;  6am-6pm) available here.

Buses regularly depart for these destinations:

- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥44, three hours, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥134, five hours, five daily (8.30am, 9.30am, 1.30pm, 2.20pm and 4.40pm)
- ➔ **Tai'an** ¥23, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes

TRAIN

Trains are the most convenient transport. Catch express trains at the **East Train Station** ( 442 1571), 12km east of the walled city. **Qufu Train Station** ( 442 1571; Dianlan Lu) is closest to the walled city (6km east), but only regular trains stop there. If tickets are sold out, try **Yanzhou Train Station** ( 346 2965; Beiguan Jie), 16km west of Qufu, which is on the Beijing–Shanghai line and has more frequent regular trains.

Some express trains (second-/first-class seat) departing from East Train

Station:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥244/409, 2½ hours, frequently (7.26am to 9.01pm)
- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥60/100, 30 minutes, frequently (7.26am to 9.52pm)
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥224/379, two hours, frequently (7.53am to 9.15pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥179/244, 3½ hours, five daily (9.11am, 2.49pm, 4.54pm, 5.25pm and 5.43pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥344/584, 3½ hours, frequently (7.53am to 8.11pm)
- ➔ **Tianjin** ¥190/320, two hours, hourly (7.26am to 7.22pm)

Some regular trains (seat/hard sleeper) departing from Qufu Train Station:

- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥29/45, 2½ hours, three daily (8.08am, 5.22pm and 8.39pm)
- ➔ **Yantai** ¥72/139, 9½ hours, two daily (9.49am and 11.42pm)

Getting Around

Bus K01 connects the long-distance bus station to Qufu's main gate (¥2) and the east train station (¥3). A taxi from within the walls is about ¥40 to the east train station and ¥20 to the long-distance bus station. Bus 1 (¥2) traverses the old town along Gulou Beijie to Confucius Forest.

Ubiquitous pedicabs (¥6 to ¥8 within Qufu, ¥10 to ¥20 outside the walls) are the most pleasant way to get around. Take one (or a regular taxi) to the Qufu train station, as there are no direct buses.

Minibuses (¥5 to ¥7) connect the main gate to Yanzhou train station from 6.30am to 5.30pm; otherwise, a taxi costs about ¥50.

Tired ponies pull brightly decorated carts (¥50) from Queli Jie to the Confucius Forest.

QINGDAO

 0532 / Pop 3.5 million

Offering a breath of fresh (ocean) air, Qingdao is a rare modern city that has managed to preserve some of its past. Its blend of concession-era and modern

architecture puts China's standard white-tile and blue-glass developments to shame. The winding cobbled streets and red-capped hillside villas are captivating. There is also plenty to enjoy in the city's diverse food scene, headlined by the ubiquitous hometown beer Tsingtao.

Qingdao is rapidly expanding into a true multi-district city, but for now most of the fun is in or around Shi'nán district, the strip of land along the sea.

History

Before catching the acquisitive eye of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Qingdao was a harbour and fishing village known for producing delicious sea salt. Its excellent strategic location was not lost on the Ming dynasty, which built a defensive battery – nor on the Germans who wrested it from them in 1897. China signed a 99-year concession, and it was during the next decade the future Tsingtao Brewery was opened, electric lighting installed, missions and a university established, and the railway to Ji'nán built.

In 1914 Japan seized control with a bombing assault on the city. When the Treaty of Versailles strengthened Japan's occupation in 1919, student demonstrations erupted in Beijing and spread across the country in what became known as the May 4th Movement. After a period of domestic control, the Japanese took over again in 1938 and held on until the end of WWII.

In peacetime, Qingdao became one of China's major ports and a flourishing centre of trade and manufacturing (home to both domestic and international brands). It seems to hold a permanent spot on the list of Asia's most liveable cities.

Qingdao



Qingdao

📍 Sights

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1 | Chinese Navy Museum | C4 |
| 2 | Governor's House Museum | C2 |
| 3 | Huilan Pavilion | B3 |
| 4 | Little Fish Hill | D3 |
| 5 | Little Qingdao | B4 |
| 6 | No 1 Bathing Beach | D4 |
| 7 | No 6 Bathing Beach | A3 |
| 8 | Protestant Church | C3 |
| 9 | Qingdao City Art Museum | C3 |
| 10 | Qingdao TV Tower | F2 |
| 11 | Signal Hill Park | C3 |
| 12 | St Michael's Cathedral | B2 |
| 13 | Taiping Hill | F3 |
| 14 | Tianhou Temple | B3 |
| 15 | Tsingtao Beer Museum | E1 |
| | Zhan Bridge | B3 |
| 16 | Zhanshan Temple | G3 |
| 17 | Zhongshan Park | E3 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 18 | 798 Youth Hostel | C4 |
| 19 | Hengshan No 5 Hostel | C3 |
| 20 | Kaiyue Hostelling International | B2 |
| 21 | Oceanwide Elite Hotel | B3 |
| 22 | Qingdao International Youth Hotel | D3 |
| 23 | Wheat Youth Hostel | B2 |
| 24 | YHA Old Observatory | C2 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 25 | Chun He Lou | B2 |
| | Firewood Court | B2 |
| 26 | Huangdao Market | B2 |
| 27 | Ma Jia Lamian | B2 |
| 28 | Wangjie Shaokao | B2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 29 | Beer Street | E1 |
| 30 | Flower House Coffee Shop | C2 |
| | Luka Garden Cafe & Bistro | C3 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----|
| 31 | Jimolu Market | B1 |
| 32 | Parkson | B2 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 33 | Airlines Hotel (Airport Shuttle) | B2 |
| 34 | Train Station (Airport Shuttle) | A3 |
| 35 | Xin Tianqiao Hotel | A2 |

Sights

Most sights in the Shi'nan district are squeezed into Old Town (the former concession area), with the train and bus stations, historic architecture and budget accommodation, and Badaguan, a serene residential area of parks,

spas and old villas.

East of Shandong Lu rises the modern city, with the central business district (CBD) to the north and the latest in retail and dining in Dongbu, closer to the water to the south. Further east still is the developing Lao Shan district, anchored by the Municipal Museum, Grand Theatre and International Beer City (site of the annual International Beer Festival).

Governor's House Museum

MUSEUM

(Qingdao Deguo Zongdu Lou Jiuzhi Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8286 8838; 26 Longshan Lu; admission summer/winter ¥20/13, multilingual audio tour ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm; 🚏 1, 221)

East of Signal Hill Park stands one of Qingdao's best examples of concession-era architecture – the former German governor's residence constructed in the style of a German palace. The building's interior is characteristic of Jugendstil, the German arm of art nouveau, with some German and Chinese furnishings of the era.

It was built in 1903 at a cost of 2,450,000 taels of silver by an indulgent governor, whom Kaiser Wilhelm II immediately sacked when he saw the bill. In 1957 Chairman Mao stayed here with his wife and kids on holiday. So did defence minister Lin Biao, who would later attempt to assassinate Mao.

St Michael's Cathedral

CHURCH

(Tianzhu Jiaotang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8286 5960; 15 Zhejiang Lu; admission ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun; 🚏 1, 221, 367)

Up a hill off Zhongshan Lu looms this grand Gothic- and Roman-style edifice. Completed in 1934, the church spires were supposed to be clock towers, but Chancellor Hitler cut funding of overseas projects and the plans were scrapped.

The church was badly damaged during the Cultural Revolution and the crosses capping its twin spires were torn off. Devout locals buried the crosses for safe keeping. In 2005, workers uncovered them while repairing pipes in

the hills, and they have since been restored.

Tianhou Temple

TEMPLE

(Tianhou Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 19 Taiping Lu; 🕒 8am-6pm; 🚏 25) **FREE**

This small restored temple dedicated to the patron of seafarers has stood by the shore since 1467. The main hall contains a colourful statue of Tianhou, flanked by fearsome guardians. There is also **Dragon King Hall** (Longwang Dian), where a splayed pig lies before the ruler of oceans, and a shrine to the God of Wealth.

Protestant Church

CHURCH

(Jidu Jiaotang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 15 Jiangsu Lu; admission ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm; 🚏 1, 221, 367)

On a street of German buildings, this copper-capped church was designed by Curt Rothkegel and built in 1908. The interior is simple and Lutheran in its sparseness, apart from some carvings on the pillar cornices. You can climb up to inspect the clock mechanism (Bockenem 1909).

Huashi Lou

BUILDING

(Huashi Lou [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8387 2168; 18 Huanghai Lu; admission ¥8.50; 🕒 9am-6pm; 🚏 26, 231, 604)

This granite and marble villa built in 1930 was first the home of a Russian aristocrat, and later the German governor's hunting lodge. It is also known as the 'Chiang Kaishek Building', as the generalissimo secretly stayed here in 1947. While most of the rooms are closed, you can clamber up two narrow stairwells to the turret for a great view.

It's located on the east end of No 2 Bathing Beach at the southern tip of Zijinguan Lu in Badaguan.

Tsingtao Beer Museum

BREWERY, MUSEUM

(Qingdao Pijiu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8383 3437; 56-1 Dengzhou Lu; admission

¥60, English guide ¥60; 🕒 8.30am-6pm; 🚏 1, 205, 221, 307, 308)

For a self-serving introduction to China's iconic beer, head to the original and still operating brewery. On view are old photos, preserved brewery equipment and statistics, but there are also a few fascinating glimpses of the modern factory line. The aroma of hops is everywhere. Thankfully, you get to sample brews along the way.

After the tour, there's more to sip all along **Beer Street** just outside. If you're taking a bus, get off at the '15' (*shiwu zhong*) stop. A taxi from Old Town costs ¥15.

Qingdao City Art Museum

MUSEUM

(Qingdao Shi Meishuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8288 8886; <http://qdmmsg.sdgw.com>; 7 Daxue Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm; 🚏 1, 25, 221, 367) **FREE**

Contemporary works are on display in this compact museum housed in its own architectural masterpiece, a 1930s structure reflecting an eclectic mix of architectural styles from deco to Byzantine, Islamic and imperial Chinese.

Little Qingdao

LIGHTHOUSE, ISLAND

(Xiao Qingdao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 26 Qinyu Lu; admission summer/winter ¥15/10; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm; 🚏 6, 26, 202, 231, 304)

In the shape of a *qin* (a stringed instrument) jutting into Qingdao Bay, this former island was connected to the mainland in the 1940s. The Germans built the white lighthouse in 1900 on the leafy promontory. It is an excellent spot for watching the city come to life in the morning, and there's free entry from 6am to official opening.

Chinese Navy Museum

MUSEUM

(Zhongguo Haijun Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8286 6784; www.hjbgw.com; 8 Caiyang Lu; admission ¥50; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm; 🚏 26, 202, 501)

Adjacent to Little Qingdao lighthouse, this museum's main attractions are the rusty submarine and destroyer anchored in the harbour. There are also, of

course, displays on Chinese naval history.

Municipal Museum

MUSEUM

(Qingdao Shi Bowuguan 📞8889 6286; <http://qingdaomuseum.com>; 51 Meiling Lu; 🕒9am-5pm, closed Mon; 🚏230, 321) **FREE**

This massive collection of relics anchors the budding cultural zone about 13km east of Old Town in Lao Shan district. It has the usual broad span of exhibits expected in a big-city museum, ranging from the prehistoric to the industrial age. Collections of folk-art woodcuts and intriguing coins pressed with Kyrgyz script stand out.

WORTH A TRIP

A PRIVATE COLLECTION OF ANCIENT CARVINGS

Han Dynasty Brick Museum

MUSEUM

(Chong Hanxuan Han Huaxiang Zhuan Bowuguan 📞8861 6533, 158 6552 0097; <http://zhangxinkuan.com>; Binhai Dadao Kutao, inside 409 Hospital; adult/student ¥40/free; 🕒8-11.30am & 2-5.30pm)

Thirty years ago, Zhang Xinkuan was a young army officer laying a road in Henan province when he noticed the huge granite slabs they were smashing into gravel were covered in exquisite carvings. Thus began his life's pursuit to save more than 5000 of these relics from the Han dynasty, now housed in his truly unique, private museum at the southwestern foot of Lao Shan.

Zhang put his entire life savings into finding these carvings, which document ancient Chinese life, mostly in backyards, kitchens and even pigsties in Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, Jiangsu and Sichuan, where more than 2000 years ago they were made to decorate palaces, ancestral halls and tombs.

There are carvings of prancing deer, ladies in long flared skirts and hunters in Persian-style robes in five main galleries. Many have been captured as ink rubbings, which are available for purchase. Call ahead and the man himself might show you around.

Take bus 119 to the last stop, Taidong 1409 Hospital (—), about an hour from downtown Qingdao.

Beaches

Qingdao has very pleasant beaches, though they are sometimes afflicted with blue-green algae blooms and litter. Chinese beach culture is low-key, with men sporting the skimpy swimwear and women covering up – even under Spandex ski-masks. Swimming season (June to September) means hordes of sun-seekers fighting for towel space on weekends. Shark nets, lifeguards, lifeboat patrols and medical stations are on hand.

There are ways to enjoy the water without jumping in. If you give in to touts, 20-minute rides around the bay are ¥10 to ¥40, depending on the boat. Or stroll the **Binhai boardwalk** (*Binhai buxingdao*), which stretches 30km along the city's shoreline.

No 6 Bathing Beach

BEACH

(Di Liu Haishui Yuchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  25, 202)

Closest to the train station is the No 6 Bathing Beach, a short strip of sand and tidepools, next to **Zhan Bridge** (Zhan Qiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a pier reaching into the bay. At its tip, the eight-sided **Huilan Pavilion** (Huilan Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 12 Taiping Lu; admission ¥4;  8am-5pm) is constantly packed to the rafters. If the pavilion looks familiar, that's because it's on every Tsingtao beer label.

No 1 Bathing Beach

BEACH

(Di Yi Haishui Yuchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  304)

South of tree-lined Badaguan, No 1 Bathing Beach is a very popular spot, perhaps for its snack stalls and kiddie toy selection, but more likely for its muscle beach.

No 2 Bathing Beach

BEACH

(Di Er Haishui Yuchang [GOOGLE MAP](#);  214)

Once reserved only for the likes of Mao and other state leaders, this sheltered

cove just east of Badaguan has calm waters good for a swim. Take bus 214 directly, or bus 26 to the Wushengguan stop to first wander past the villas and sanitoriums scattered in Badaguan's wooded headlands down to the sea.

No 3 Bathing Beach

BEACH

(Di San Haishui Yuchang [GOOGLE MAP](#) :  26, 202)

On the eastern side of Taiping Cape in Badaguan is this cove with dedicated swim lanes, paddle boats and gentle waves.

Shilaoren Beach

BEACH

(Shilaoren Haishui Yuchang  301)

On the far east side of town in Lao Shan district, this 2.5km-long strip of clean sand is Qingdao's largest and has the highest waves in town (decent for bodyboarding). The 'Old Stone Man' from which the beach gets its name is the rocky outcrop to the east. Take bus 301 (¥2, 50 minutes) or taxi (¥45) from Old Town.

Golden Sand Beach

BEACH

(Jinsha Tan  2)

For wide open spaces of sand, sea and sky, there's Golden Sand Beach on the western peninsula of Huangdao district. An undersea tunnel linking Huangdao and Shinan puts it within easy reach of Old Town.

Take the red double-decker sightseeing bus 2 (¥15, 50 minutes) by the train station at 9am, 11am or 1.30pm, or tunnel bus 3 (3; ¥2) from in front of the Municipal Hospital on Jiaozhou Lu in Old Town to the terminus and then transfer to bus 18 (¥1). A taxi the whole way costs ¥70 including toll.

Parks

Within central Qingdao, **Zhongshan Park** (Zhongshan Gongyuan [MAP](#))

[GOOGLE MAP](#) :  24hr;  25, 26) is the crown jewel, a vast 69 hectares of lakes, gardens, walking paths and an amusement park for kids. It's the sight

of lively festivals in the spring and summer. In the park's northeast rises hilly **Taiping Shan** (Taiping Shan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) with a **cable car** (one way/return ¥60/80; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm) to the **TV Tower** (Dianshi Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8361 2286; admission depending on view ¥50-100) at the top. The tower was under renovation when we visited. Also within the park is Qingdao's largest temple, **Zhanshan Temple** (Zhanshan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-4pm), an active Buddhist sanctuary. When you get off the cable car at the temple, look for a round concrete dome on the right. This is the entrance to a bunker, which the Germans used as a wine cellar, and today houses a wine bar.

Many parks with ticket booths, including **Little Fish Hill** (Xiaoyushan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8286 5645; 24 Fushanzi Lu; admission ¥10; 🕒 6am-8pm) by No 1 Bathing Beach and **Signal Hill Park** (Xinhao Shan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 5872 5906; 16 Longshan Lu; viewing platform ¥15; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm) in Old Town, are free to wander in after 6.30pm.

QINGDAO'S MOST FAMOUS EXPORT

The beer of choice in Chinese restaurants around the world, Tsingtao is one of China's oldest and most respected brands. Established in 1903 by a joint German-British corporation, the Germania-Brauerei began as a microbrewery of sorts using spring water from nearby Lao Shan to brew a Pilsener Light and Munich Dark for homesick German troops. In 1914 the Japanese occupied Qingdao and confiscated the plant, rechristening it Dai Nippon and increasing production to sell under the Tsingtao, Asahi and Kirin labels. In 1945 the Chinese took over and gave the brewery its current name. At first, only China's elite could afford to drink it, but advertisements touting Tsingtao as a health drink boosted its appeal ('It's not only harmless, it strengthens the body!'). In 2014 the world drank more than 181 million kegs of the golden brew.

Festivals & Events

Lantern Festival

NEW YEAR

The city glows at the end of the Chinese New Year/Spring Festival in February/March.

Cherry Blossom Festival

CULTURAL

The cherry blossoms explode with colour in Zhongshan Park around April.

International Beer Festival

BEER

(www.qdbeer.cn)

The city's premier party draws more than three million tipplers every August.

International Sailing Week

SPORTS

(www.qdsailing.org)

Watch (or join) the regattas and windsurfing by the Olympic Sailing Center every August/September.

Sleeping

Old Town has excellent budget and midrange options. The CBD and Dongbu have the top-end international chains but a lot less soul. Rates increase by as much as 30% in July and August.

★ Wheat Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Maizi Qingnian Lushe  ;  8285 2121; www.qdmaizi.com; 35 Hebei Lu; dm ¥80-100, r without/with bath ¥300/398;   )

The Maizis fell in love with backpacking and each other in western China, and this top-notch hostel (and an adorable daughter) is the result of their partnership. It's in a beautiful, restored *liyuan*, the courtyard apartments of 1920s Qingdao, within a 10-minute walk of the train station. They designed this to provide all the services a weary traveller could possibly hope for.

Rooms are spotless with nostalgic details and creaky hardwood floors (if

only there was more than one common shower room on busy mornings). There's a modern library and entertainment lounge, plus a bar where you can pick up good travel advice. Discounts of 50%.

YHA Old Observatory

HOSTEL

(Aoboweite Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8282 2626; www.hostelqingdao.com; 21 Guanxiang Erlu; dm ¥80-90, r without/with bath from ¥398/428, discounted to ¥168/198;



Perched on a hill in a working observatory, this hostel has unbeatable views of the city and bay. Take them in with a drink in hand in the pleasant rooftop Sunset Lounge. Staff provide all the usual hostel services, plus they organise outings around town and Lao Shan. Comfort levels vary – some doubles have nicer bathrooms.

Renovations were about to begin when we visited. Book in advance.

Kaiyue Hostelling International

HOSTEL

(Kaiyue Guoji Qingnian Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8284 5450; kaiyuehostel@126.com; 31 Jining Lu; dm ¥55-75, r without bath ¥70-150, with bath ¥100-300; 🚻 📶)

This hostel in a historic church at Sifang Lu and Jining Lu has a lively congregation. They come to worship in the slick new bar and restaurant (Jinns' Cafe), which serves great pizza (from ¥55) and desserts on the ground floor. The rooms above need the equivalent revamp, though dorms are clean.

There's good travel advice, bike rental (¥10) and a free beer each night. Book in advance.

Hengshan No 5 Hostel

HOSTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8288 9888; <http://hengshan5.com>; 5 Hengshan Lu; dm/r ¥60/175; 🚻 📶)

On a short street south of the Governor's House Museum, this bright and cheery hostel in a white, three-storey mansion was once the servants' quarters. Beds and bunks are similar (tidy, pine frame, reasonably soft). In

the garden, sunny Luka Garden Cafe & Bistro serves fantastic coffee and Kiwi fare, and feels like home on the patio.

798 Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Qijiuba Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8079 8798; www.798hostel.com; 19 Laiyang Lu; dm ¥80-100, r without bath ¥240-360; 🏠 📶; 🚗 26, 316, 501)

With [No 1 Bathing Beach](#) just across the street, these rooms are the most affordable seaside option in Qingdao. Downstairs dorms can be musty, but above-ground rooms and common showers are clean. Don't expect much help from the front desk. The hostel's two other branches aren't quite as nice. Discounts of 50%. No English spoken.

Qingdao International Youth Hotel

HOTEL

(Qingdao Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8286 5177; 7a Qixia Lu; dm ¥80, r ¥450-600; 🏠 @ 📶; 🚗 31, 220, 312, 321)

Despite the name, this place in Badaguan feels more like a B&B. Rooms (and bathrooms) in this converted mansion are cavernous. There's some dust on the yesteryear charm, but there is a shared kitchen and discounts of 60%. Some English.

Villa Inn

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Meishu Jiaqi Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8387 8025; villainn@163.com; 21 Tianlin Huayuan, off Donghai Xilu; 21 d from ¥300, breakfast ¥20; 🏠 📶; 🚗 312, 317)

In a quiet enclave of ocean-side villas, this teeny 15-room hotel is great for couples. The luxe rooms each have one large bed only; the nicest look out at the ocean (¥900), though only the very top-floor room (¥1300) has a panoramic floor-to-ceiling window. No matter. The shore is just steps away. Discounts of 50%.

The hotel is a 10-minute walk to Donhai Xilu. Some English spoken.

Sea View Garden Hotel

HOTEL

(Haijing Huayuan Dajiudian  8587 5777; 2 Zhanghua Lu; r ¥900-1700, ste from ¥1360;

   ;  231, 232)

With all the five-star competition, this hotel on the water in Dongbu distinguishes itself with beyond professional service. Refreshments, hot towels and even unsolicited delivery of homemade soup to ease a cough – we could get used to this, assuming our credit cards don't max out. Fortunately, the service charge is already included and discounts up to 40% are available.

China Community Art & Culture

HOTEL

(Laozhuancun Gongshe Wenhua Yishu Jiudian ;  8576 8776; 8 Minjiang Sanlu; s from ¥288, d from ¥598, ste ¥1008;  228, 402, 604)

With silk lanterns illuminating the hallways, ceramic bowls serving as sinks, wood-floor showers and antique furnishings, each sumptuously decorated room in this polished hotel in the heart of Dongbu has the feel of a courtyard residence. There's a fantastic restaurant on premises. Discounts of 10%. Some English.

Oceanwide Elite Hotel

HOTEL

(Fanhai Mingren Jiudian  ;  8299 6699; www.oweh.com; 29 Taiping Lu; d without/with sea view ¥1160/1560, ste ¥2800, plus 10% service charge incl breakfast;  ;  220, 312, 321)

This dignified five-storey hotel benefits from a superb seafront location overlooking (if you opt for the pricier sea-view rooms) Zhan Bridge and Qingdao Bay. Little touches like complimentary snacks put it leagues ahead of its neighbours. Low-season prices for doubles drop to ¥500.

Eating

Qingdao's kitchens have no problem satisfying all tastes. The waterfront area from No 6 to No 1 Bathing Beach is brimming with restaurants – priced for tourists. The **Dongbu** neighbourhood of **Hong Kong Garden** (Xianggang

Huayuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚏 222, 231) around Xianggang Zhonglu is jam-packed with hip, international eateries: Korean, Japanese, Thai, Italian and Russian are just some of the cuisines on offer.

For the staple local seafood, stick to the streets. The **Taidong** neighbourhood between Taidong Yilu and Taidong Balu in Shibeidistrict north of Old Town is packed with restaurants, street markets and carts. Take bus 2, 222 or 217. For the quintessential Qingdao meal, buy a *jin* of clams – in local-speak *gala* (from ¥18) – and take it to a street-side stall with “ (*jia gong*) on its sign. They’ll cook up your catch for ¥5, and pour a bag of fresh Tsingtao beer for ¥8 more. (Pints and pitchers also available if you want to be fancy.)

Huangdao Market

STREET FOOD

(Huangdao Lu Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); meals from ¥8; 🕒 7am-late; 🚏 228, 231)

In the heart of Old Town, this long-standing, frenetic street market is chock-a-block with vendors selling (depending on the time of day) squirming seafood, fried chicken, pancakes, fruit, soy milk...it’s all cheap, so just stop when something catches your fancy. Nearby **Zhifu Lu** has sit-down, curbside joints (look for a “ – *jia gong* – sign) that will prepare whatever seafood you bring them for ¥5.

Firewood Court

STREET FOOD

(Pichaiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); meals from ¥14; 🕒 6am-10pm; 🚏 2, 228)

Off Zhongshan Lu, an archway with a plaster motif ‘1902’ leads to a vast warren of food stalls and the **Jiangning Assembly Hall**, a long-time draw for renowned performers that still puts on musical acts. The whole place is rather done up, but at least that means prices are labelled and eateries have picture menus. Watch out for less-than-fresh offerings.

Chun He Lou

SHANDONG

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8282 4346; 146-150 Zhongshan Lu; meals from ¥48; 🕒 11am-3.30pm & 5-9.30pm; 🚏 2, 228)

This Lu cuisine institution, which was founded in 1891, makes legendary pot stickers (*guotie*) and crispy, fragrant chicken (*xiangsu ji*). The top-floor tables have the most atmosphere and get the full attention of the chefs. Downstairs is a fast-food version and take-out counter for dumplings.

Ma Jia Lamian

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 44 Gaomi Lu, near Yizhou Lu; noodles ¥8-14; 🕒 9am-11pm; 📞 222, 308)

This Old Town hole-in-the-wall isn't as done up as its neighbors, but the Hui family that runs it makes a variety of handmade noodles and skewers without shortcuts. You can taste the effort. The beef noodle soup (*niurou mian*) is savoury and good, but you can't go wrong and it's all cheap.

Bottomless refills of soup and raw garlic or chilli sauce for accompaniment.

Wangjie Shaokao

ROAST GRILL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 113 Zhongshan Lu; skewers ¥3-12; 🕒 10am-9.30pm)

Qingdao's famous meat skewers will require your undivided attention. Join the throng outside this street-side stand gorging on lamb (*yangrou*), cuttlefish (*youyu*) and chicken hearts (*jixin*), and toss your spent skewers in the bucket. There's a sit-down restaurant around the corner.

China Community Art & Culture

SHANDONG, SICHUANESE

(Laozhuancun Gongshe Wenhua Yishu Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 8077 6776; 8 Minjiang Sanlu; mains from ¥48, eight-course set meal ¥68; 🕒 11.30am-10pm; 📞 228, 312)

This lovely restaurant next to its namesake hotel is in a stylised Hakka roundhouse (the sort once mistaken by the CIA for missile silos). The kitchen turns out sophisticated regional cuisine from Shandong and Sichuan.

Everything from the mushrooms to water for the tea is locally sourced from Lao Shan.

Canvas

INTERNATIONAL

( 8565 5688; 63b Zhangzhou Yilu; meals from ¥48;  9.30am-10.30pm Sun-Thu, 9am-2am Fri & Sat)

The owners' craving for al dente pasta inspired this stylish bistro in Hong Kong Garden. The pasta is great, but the burger with blue cheese, rocket and tomato hits the spot. Decent wines from ¥28 per glass.

Cafe Yum

INTERNATIONAL

( [GOOGLE MAP](#);  8388 3838; 9 Xianggang Zhonglu; buffet breakfast/lunch/dinner ¥159/193/274;  6-10am, 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-9.30pm)

All-you-can-eat buffets go on all day in the swish Shangri-La Hotel. They're pricey but the international spreads are a glutton's paradise. Did we mention the all-you-can-drink beer? Reservations recommended.



Drinking & Nightlife

Qingdao wouldn't be Qingdao without Tsingtao, the beer that bears its name. The first stop for any committed tipplers should probably be the many drinking holes along **Beer Street** (Pijiu Jie  [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dengzhou Lu;  221, 301), where you can sample the delicious dark, unfiltered *yuanjiang*, which is hard to find elsewhere.

The youth hostel bars are pleasant, particularly **Sunset Lounge** on the top of YHA Old Observatory and **Jinns' Cafe** in Kaiyue Hostelling International.

Luka Garden Cafe & Bistro

CAFE

(Luguo Huayuan Kafei  [GOOGLE MAP](#);  185 0024 2021; <http://lukagardencafe.com>; 5 Hengshan Lu;  8.30am-9pm; 

In a city where new coffee shops open up daily, here in the garden of Hengshan No 5 Hostel there's excellent java a-brewing (from ¥25). There's also food inspired by barista Matt's New Zealand roots, from legit meat pies (¥62) to fresh lamb chops (¥120) and fish and chips (¥52).

Flower House Coffee Shop

CAFE

(Fanhua [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8279 1712; 59 Jiangsu Lu; coffee from ¥16, whisky from ¥40; 🕒10am-9pm; 📶)

Coffee, tea and whisky are on hand to accompany your afternoon or evening in this charming reading room set in a Qingdao flat as it might have looked a few decades ago. The carefully curated books in Chinese, German and English are for sale and your perusing pleasure. Look for the small staircase alley off Jiangsu Lu.

Club New York

BAR

(Niuyue Ba [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8573 9199; 2nd fl, 41 Xianggang Zhonglu; beer from ¥28; 🕒7pm-2am; 🚗208, 216)

Despite the overpriced drinks, this expat favourite overflows with revellers and sports fans when there's a match on TV. Take advantage of happy hour, which is any time before 9.30pm and after midnight. There's a live band most nights (9pm to 1am) and an incongruously classy sushi bar (11.30am to 9pm) adjoining. Above the Overseas Chinese International Hotel lobby in Dongbu.

Spark Cafe & Brewery

BAR, BREWERY

(Kafei Niangjiu Chang [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8578 2296; 35 Donghai Xilu, May 4th Sq.;)

Grab a seat on a long wooden bench in this crowded watering hole on the east edge of the Municipal Government square. There's all manner of drinks – beer (including the house 'dark' and 'light' microbrews at ¥35 a pint), cocktails, coffee, tea and milkshakes. Sister restaurant the Diner brings over burgers and sausage platters (¥55 to ¥75).



Entertainment

Broadway Cinemas

CINEMA

(Bailaohui Yingcheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.b-cinema.cn; 88 Aomen Lu; tickets from ¥60)

Domestic and Hollywood blockbusters on the 3rd floor of Marina City shopping mall in the CBD.

Qingdao Grand Theatre

THEATRE

(Qingdao Dajuyuan  8066 5555; www.qingdaograndtheatre.com; 5 Yunling Lu;  230, 321)

North of Shilaoren in the Lao Shan district, the city's grand performing arts centre puts world-class theatre, music, dance, comedy and kiddie acts on its three stages.



Shopping

Qingdao's main shopping drags are in Dongbu, around Xianggang Zhonglu, but there are plenty of other places to spend.

Book City

BOOKS

(Shu Cheng ; 67 Xianggang Zhonglu at Yan'erdao Lu;  9am-7pm)

Vast aisles of Chinese media and some in English.

Carrefour

DEPARTMENT STORE

(Jialefu ;  8584 5867; 21 Xianggang Zhonglu;  8.30am-10pm;  12, 26, 304)

Massive general store at Nanjing Lu and Xianggang Zhonglu.

Culture Street

ANTIQUES

(Wenhua Lu ; Changle Lu btwn Lijin Lu & Huayang Lu;  8am-4pm)

'Antiques' and handicrafts sold in front of a tidy row of concession architecture north of Old Town. The most vendors come out on Saturday and Sunday.

Jimolu Market

MALL

(Jimolu Xiaoshangpin Shichang  ; 45 Liaocheng Lu;  9am-5.30pm)

A four-storey bargain bonanza north of Old Town. Pearls, fake Chanel,

clothing, shoes, backpacks, jade, wigs – all for the haggling.

Jusco

DEPARTMENT STORE

(Jiashike [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8571 9630; 72 Xianggang Zhonglu; 🕒 8.30am-10pm; 🚏 33, 304)

Food court and supermarket at Fuzhou Nanlu and Xianggang Zhonglu.

Marina City

MALL

(Baili Guangchang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6606 1177; 88 Aomen Lu; 🕒 10am-10pm)

International brands plus an ice rink.

Parkson

MALL

(Baisheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 44 Zhongshan Lu; 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm Sun-Thu, to 10pm Fri & Sat)

Multi-level shopping and a supermarket.

Information

ATMs are easy to find in Qingdao.

Skip the travel agencies and consult with one of the city's excellent hostels for travel advice.

Useful websites include **That's Qingdao** (www.thatsqingdao.com) and **Red Star** (www.myredstar.com), an online entertainment guide and monthly magazine available in hostels, bars and foreign restaurants.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 68 Zhongshan Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

On Zhongshan Lu at Feicheng Lu in Old Town. Also in the tower at the intersection of Fuzhou Nanlu and Xianggang Zhonglu in the CBD. Branches have currency exchange and 24-hour ATMs.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng)

On the west edge of **Taidong** (23-1 Taidong Yilu; 🕒 8.30am-6pm), north of Old Town. Also by the ICBC tower in the **CBD** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 119 Nanjing Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4.30pm Sat & Sun).

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 general hotline 6657 0000, visa inquiries 6657 3250, ext 2860; 272 Ningxia Lu; 🕒 9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri)

Take bus 301 from the train station to the Xiaoyao Lu stop and cross the street to the terracotta-coloured building with the flag on top.

Qingdao Municipal Hospital, International Clinic

HOSPITAL

(Qingdao Shili Yiyuan Dongyuan Qu, Guoji Menzhen [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 emergency 8278 9120, international clinic 8593 7690, ext 2266; 5 Donghai Zhonglu; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, by appointment Sat; 🚗 210, 317)

BORDER CROSSING: QINGDAO TO JAPAN & SOUTH KOREA

International boats cross the Yellow Sea from Qingdao's **Passenger Ferry Terminal** (Qingdaogang keyunzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 8282 5001; 6 Xinjiang Lu), a kilometre north of Old Town along Xinjiang Lu.

Orient Ferry ([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 8387 1160, 8593 8919; www.orientferry.co.jp; Office, HiSense Plaza, 17 Donghai Xilu; 1410 incl breakfast dm ¥1340-1450, r from ¥1660, student tickets discounted by ¥200) sails twice weekly for Shimonoseki, Japan (36 hours, Monday and Thursday, check in by 3.30pm, departs 9pm), while **Weidong Ferry Company** ([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 8280 3574; www.weidong.com; 4 Xinjiang Lu, next to Qingdao Passenger Ferry Terminal; dm ¥750, r ¥890-1370) operates boats from Qingdao to Incheon, South Korea (18 hours, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, check in by 3pm, departs 5pm), as well as from Yantai and Weihai. The cheapest tickets are usually for spots on the floor in large carpeted rooms, so upgrade at least one level if you want privacy.

Buy advance or same-day tickets at the passenger ferry terminal and from some ticket offices like the [Xin Tianqiao Hotel](#) around town. The ferry terminal also exacts a ¥30 exit fee per passenger.

Getting There & Away

A handy ticket office sells air, train and ferry tickets on the ground floor of the **Xin Tianqiao Hotel** (Qingdao Xin Tianqiao Bingguan Shoupiaochu 

;  air & boat 8612 0222, train & bus 8612 0111; 47 Feicheng Lu; usual commission ¥5;  7.30am-9pm), near the train station. Otherwise, hostels can help.

AIR

Qingdao's **Liuting International Airport** ( booking & flight status 8471 5139, hotline 96567; www.qdairport.com) is 30km north of the city. There are flights to most large cities in China, including daily services to Beijing (¥710, 1¼ hours), Shanghai (¥440, 1¼ hours) and Hong Kong (¥1587, three hours). International flights include daily flights to Seoul (¥1035), Tokyo (¥2165) and four weekly flights to Osaka (¥1795).

Book tickets online with hostels' help, directly through the airport's hotline or via airline offices (many are on Xianggang Zhonglu).

BUS

Among Qingdao's many bus stations, the **long-distance bus station** (changtu qichezhan ;  400 691 6916; 2 Wenzhou Lu) in the Sifang district, north of most tourist sights, best serves most travellers. A limited number of buses also depart for provincial destinations, including Yantai (¥83, four hours, hourly, 6am to 5.30pm), directly across from the train station.

Daily direct buses from the long-distance bus station:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥218, 11 hours, five daily (6am to 8.10pm)
- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥310, 12 hours, two daily (6pm and 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Hefei** ¥276, 10 hours, three daily (8am, 5pm and 7.10pm)
- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥109, 4½ hours, every 30 minutes (6.50am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Qufu** ¥96, six hours, two daily (6.50am and 3.30pm)

- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥298, 11 hours, hourly (5pm to 9pm)
- ➔ **Tai'an** ¥128, six hours, five daily (6am, 8.30am, 12.30pm, 2pm and 3.30pm)
- ➔ **Weihai** ¥104, four hours, every 40 minutes (6.30am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Yantai** ¥85, four hours, every 40 minutes (6am to 7pm)

TRAIN

All trains from Qingdao pass through Ji'nan except the direct Qingdao to Yantai and Weihai trains. Buy tickets at the **train station** ([MAP](#))

[GOOGLE MAP](#);  9510 5175; 2 Tai'an Lu), which has a 24-hour ticket office on the hectic east side (bring your passport). The west side is less crowded. Booking offices around town collect a service charge, typically ¥5. Tickets tend to sell out early in peak season.

Express trains (second-/first-class seat) depart for:

- ➔ **Beijing South** ¥314/474, 4½ to five hours, 13 daily (5.32am to 5.07pm)
- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥117/140, 2½ to three hours, hourly (5.32am to 7.50pm)
- ➔ **Qufu** ¥179/244, three hours, three daily (6.23am, 8.31am and 4.21pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥518/818, 6½ hours, four daily (6.55am, 9.26am, 1.55pm and 4.35pm)
- ➔ **Tai'an** ¥149/194, three hours, four daily (6.57am, 9.19am, 9.32am and 2.38pm)
- ➔ **Weifang** ¥52/62, one hour, frequently (5.32am to 7.50pm)

Regular trains (seat/hard sleeper) depart for:

- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥55/106, five to six hours, every 30 minutes (6.39am to 7.32pm)
- ➔ **Tai Shan** ¥69/126, 5½ to seven hours, eight daily (6.39am to 5.37pm)
- ➔ **Weifang** ¥29/80, 2½ hours, 10 daily (6.39am to 7.19pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥190/334, 19 to 24 hours, three daily (9.48am, 10.56am and noon)
- ➔ **Yantai** ¥38/57, four hours, one daily (2.46pm)

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Bright blue **airport shuttles** (jichang bashi  8286 0977; tickets ¥20) follow three routes through town. Shuttles leave hourly from the train station's south lot and then **Airlines Hotel** ( ;  96567; 77 Zhongshan Lu) in Old Town from 5.30am to 8.40pm; the **Civil Aviation Building** (; 30 Xianggang Xilu) across from the Carrefour from 6am to 9pm; and the CBD's **Century Mandarin Hotel** (10 Haijiang Lu) from 6.45am to 4.45pm. A taxi to/from Shinan district is ¥80 to ¥120.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

From the train station, buses 26 and 501 head east past Zhongshan Park and continue north on Nanjing Lu and east along Xianggang Lu, respectively. From the long-distance bus station, buses 210 and 362 go to Old Town and Shilaoren, respectively. Bus 5 connects the long-distance bus and train stations. Bus 2 (¥15) goes west to Huangdao district. Most city buses cost ¥1 to ¥2, but onboard conductors issue tickets for further destinations. Plan your trip with www.qdjjt.com (in Chinese).

For ocean sights, bus 304 (¥7, two hours, from 6.30am) picks up at the Zhan Qiao stop by No 6 Bathing Beach and stops at all the biggies, ending at Dahedong in Lao Shan.

Outside the train station, red double-decker **sightseeing buses** (one stop/unlimited ¥10/30, depart 8am onwards) also pass the sights along the water, going east to Shilaoren or Lao Shan's various gates.

The first line of the highly anticipated underground metro, scheduled to open in late 2015, will ease some of Qingdao's gridlock.

TAXI

Flag fall is ¥9 or ¥12 for the first 6km and then ¥2.10 (slightly more at night) per kilometre thereafter, plus a ¥1 fuel surcharge. If your driver takes detours, it's because many city streets are restricted from 7am to 10pm.

LAO SHAN

Lao Shan

MOUNTAIN

(child, student & senior half price, park shuttle ¥40; 🕒 7am-4.30pm)

A quick ride 28km east from Qingdao, an arresting jumble of sun-bleached granite and hidden freshwater springs rises over the sea. It's easy to understand why [Lao Shan](#) has attracted spiritual pilgrims throughout the centuries. It's a great place to recharge over a weekend today.

In his quest for immortality, Emperor Qin Shi Huang ascended these slopes (with the help of a litter party of course), and in the 5th century, Buddhist pilgrim Faxian landed here returning from India with a complete set of Buddhist scriptures. Lao Shan has its share of religious sites, but it is most steeped in Taoist tradition. Adepts of the Quanzhen sect, founded near Yantai in the 12th century, cultivated themselves in hermitages scattered all over the mountain.

Paths wind past ancient temples (and ruins), bubbling springs trickling into azure pools, and inscriptions left by Chinese poets and German alpinists. For the most part, routes are paved but there are plenty of opportunities to off-road as well (look for red flags tied to branches marking trails).

There are a number of ways to enter the park. **Dahedong gate** to the south is the main one and the start of the picturesque hike to [Jufeng](#) (admission Apr-Oct ¥120, Nov-Mar ¥90), the highest point at 1133m above sea level. If you take the [cable car](#) (suo dao; one way/return ¥40/80) part way up the mountain, it's another four hours up steps past temples and a spring to the stone terrace at the peak and awe-inspiring views of mountains, sky and sea.

An easier route is the loop through [Beijiushui Scenic Area](#) (admission Apr-Oct ¥130, Nov-Mar ¥100), a canyon area at the north end of the park, which is mostly flat and takes a couple of hours to traverse. The path winds beside and across clear, blue streams before reaching **Chaoyin Waterfall**, which in the wet season roars like the ocean tide. (In drier months, the water falls in pieces, hence its ancient name, Fish Scales Waterfall.)

On the east side, **Yangkou Scenic Area** (admission Apr-Oct ¥90, Nov-Mar ¥60) offers an opportunity to ascend by foot or **cable car** (one way/return ¥45/80) past wind- and water-carved granite. There's a 30m scramble in total darkness up a crevice to the top of **Looking for Heaven Cave** and then upward still for views of the sea. The hike takes about three hours.

About halfway between Dahedong and Yangkou is Lao Shan's oldest and grandest temple, **Taiqing Palace** (Taiqing Gong admission ¥30; 🕒 closes 5.30pm), established by the first Song emperor around AD 960 to perform Taoist rites to protect the souls of the dead. Devotees in blue and white still live here, and many credit their good health to drinking from the **Spring of the Immortals**, which feeds into the grounds. The massive ancient ginkgo, cedar and cypress trees also apparently benefit your health.

Sleeping & Eating

If you want to extend your stay, pick-your-own seafood restaurants and a range of guesthouses line the main road hugging the coast.

Yangkou Holiday Hotel

HOSTEL

(Yangkou Dujia Binguan 📞 8282 2626, English 186 6394 2253; dm ¥50, r with private bath ¥150)

The local branch of Qingdao's Old Observatory youth hostel overlooks a picturesque fishing village. Staff are mostly hands-off but they sometimes organise off-trail hikes in the park. Rooms are spartan but reasonably comfortable. Big student groups often stay here. It's about 50m past the Yangkou gate, on the left across from the fishing harbour.

Abalone Island Hotel

HOTEL

(Baoyu Dao Jiudian 📞 130 6128 0055, 6770 3411; Shazi Kou, Liuqing River Village; r ¥280-380; 📶 @)

About 4km from the Dahedong gate on Lao Shan's south end, Abalone Island Hotel has a handful of simple rooms (some with ocean views) above an excellent seafood restaurant, which serves its namesake abalone. To get here,

take local bus 104 or 113 to the Liuqinghe stop, then walk another kilometre, keeping the ocean on your right. No English spoken.

Seagrass House

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

( English 186 6394 2253; Quanxin He; r incl meals from ¥1200;  )

Set in former rangers' quarters by a crystal clear stream and surrounded by mountains and sea, this little hotel is the most sophisticated option in the park. Rooms are elegantly rustic; some have plush mattresses set on *kang*, platforms heated on chilly nights. All meals are included and highlight Lao Shan-sourced ingredients.

There are also grass cabanas on the sandy beach nearby and, of course, mountains within easy reach. Take bus 106 or 618 to the Quanxin He stop.

Getting There & Away

From Qingdao, red double-decker sightseeing buses (one stop/unlimited ¥10/30) stop at sights along the water going east to Yangkou (departing 8am to 3pm, returning 2pm to 3pm), and go directly to Dahedong (departing 9am to 3pm, returning 1pm to 5pm) and Beijiushui (departing 8.40am, returning 3pm). Another option is bus 304 (¥7, two hours, from 6.30am), which picks up at the Zhan Qiao stop by No 6 Bathing Beach and ends at Dahedong. Private tour buses to Lao Shan (return from ¥40) ply Qingdao's streets from 6am onwards but stop at 'sights' on the way to the mountain and back.

Private cars and taxis aren't allowed within park boundaries, but park shuttles (unlimited rides ¥40) at each gate cover the routes. There are also local buses (¥2).

WORTH A TRIP

WEIFANG

The birthplace of kites offers unusual diversions for an easy day trip from Qingdao.

Kite Museum

MUSEUM

(📞0536 825 1752; 66 Xingzheng Jie; admission ¥30, English audio tour ¥20; 🕒8am-6pm May-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Apr)

As you'd expect, this museum tells the story of kites – from the first one, a bamboo magpie fashioned 2400 years ago in Weifang by Lu Ban (he's the winged figure in front of the museum), to their use in warfare, meteorology, hunting, cartography and eventually the study of electricity.

Kites of various styles, including some of the smallest and largest in the world, constructed by mostly master makers are also on display. At the height of the Cultural Revolution, those who carry on the tradition had to learn in secret.

To get here from the train station, take bus 2 (¥1) to Kite Sq stop or a taxi (¥7). From the bus station, take a taxi (¥7).

Shihu Garden

HISTORIC SITE

(Shihu Yuan 📞0536 832 1749; 49 Hujia Paifang Jie; adult/student ¥30/20; 🕒8.30am-5.30pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Oct-May)

This Ming dynasty courtyard home belonged to Ding Shanbao, a Jiangsu merchant who at one time owned half the town. In 1885, he restored the property as his private residence and put the focus on its garden, considered a masterpiece of Suzhou-style design with an unusually compact arrangement of the requisite pond, bridge, pavilion and surrounding rockery.

For kicks, Shanbao designed some structures in the living quarters smaller than the usual dimensions and then named the property 'Ten Tablet Garden', meaning pocket-sized. (Tablets used by officials to record edicts on were generally made of strips of bamboo – so even a stack of 10 was not so large.) The 67 well-preserved structures have since served as a backdrop for many a docudrama. The oldest is **Yanxiang Lou**, sleeping quarters built 400 years ago and converted into a library.

The surrounding old streets, in the middle of restoration when we visited, also make for an interesting stroll.

Take bus 3 or 62 (¥1) from the train or bus station, respectively.

International Kite Festival

CULTURAL

(www.wfyilin.com)

In late April every year, delegations from 30 countries fly in for two days of kite competitions, races, demos and general revelry in the giant open field on Fuyan Shan, 16km southwest of the city.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses depart Qingdao every half hour (¥57, three hours, 6.40am to 5.30pm). Express trains are easier though (D seat ¥55, 90 minutes, 5.32am to 7.50pm); these leave frequently, and the last one returns at 9.47pm.

YANTAI

📍0535 / Pop 1.8 million

The sleepy portside town of Yantai somehow has one of the fastest-developing economies in China – no small feat in a country of exponential growth. It managed to court foreign investment in its high-tech industry while building itself into a popular beach resort. A new tunnel connects the old district of Zhifu with the booming Laishan district to the southeast. For now, this is still a place where you can take things easy. With Penglai Pavilion not far away, the town makes for a relaxing two-day sojourn.

History

Starting life as a defence outpost and fishing village, Yantai's name literally means 'Smoke Terrace': wolf-dung fires were lit on the headlands during the Ming dynasty to warn villagers of Japanese marauders. Yantai was thrust under the international spotlight in the late 19th century when the Qing government, reeling from defeat in the Opium War, signed over the city to the British and French, who established a treaty port here. The rest of the eight-nation alliance followed with outposts, which remained until the province was captured by the Japanese in WWII. After the war, China kept Yantai's ports open for foreign trade.

Yántái



Yantai

Sights

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Changyu Wine Culture Museum | D2 |
| 2 | Yantai Folk Custom Museum | C2 |
| 3 | Yantai Hill Park | C1 |
| 4 | Yantai Museum | B2 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 5 | Coast International Youth Hostel | C1 |
| 6 | Golden Gulf Hotel | C1 |
| 7 | Shandong Machinery Hotel | D2 |
| 8 | Tonghui Hotel | A1 |
| 9 | Waitinn | A1 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 10 | Food Stalls | A2 |
| 11 | Rongxiang Haixian | C1 |
| 12 | Shide Wu | C1 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|--------------------------|----|
| 13 | Joy City | B1 |
|----|--------------------------|----|

Information

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|---|----|
| 14 Civil Aviation Hotel ticket centre | A2 |
| 15 Yantai Shan Hospital | C2 |

Transport

| | |
|---|----|
| 16 Airport shuttle | A1 |
| 17 Long-Distance Main Bus Station | A1 |
| 18 Train Station | B1 |
| 19 Weidong Ferry Company | B1 |
| 20 Yantai Traffic Tourism Group | A1 |

Sights

Yantai Hill Park

PARK

(Yantaishan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥50, lighthouse admission ¥10; 🕒 7am-6pm)

This quaint park of stone paths, leafy gardens and ocean vistas is also a museum of Western treaty port architecture.

Stroll by the former **American Consulate Building**, which retains some original interior features and contains an exhibit on Yantai's port days. Nearby, the former **Yantai Union Church** dates from 1875, and now serves as the office for a wedding-planning company. The former **British Consulate** overlooks the bay with its annexe surrounded by an overgrown English garden. At the top of the hill is the Ming-dynasty **Dragon King Temple**, which in 1860 was co-opted as military headquarters for French troops. Wolf-dung fires burned continuously along the smoke terrace above, beginning in the 14th-century reign of Emperor Hongwu. Behind the temple, the lighthouse houses a **maritime museum**. In the west of the park, the 1930s-built **Japanese Consulate** is an austere brick structure with a 'torture inquisition room'.

Yantai Folk Custom Museum

MUSEUM

(Yantai Minsu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Yulan Jie; 🕒 8.30-11.30am & 1.30-4.30pm;

🚗 43, 46) **FREE**

It's really architecture on display at this museum, a guild hall built between 1884 and 1906 by arrivals from Fujian. In the centre of the courtyard is a spectacularly intricate, decorated gate. Supported by 22 pillars, it's adorned with hundreds of carved and painted figures, phoenixes and other beasties, depicting classic folk tales including *The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea*.

The centerpiece is the **Hall of the Heavenly Goddess**, where the goddess Tianhou, the patron of seafarers, is surrounded by a set of tin instruments in the shapes of gourds and tiny mice, crawling dragons and dragon heads.

Yantai Museum

MUSEUM

(Yantai Shi Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 623 2976; 61 Nan Dajie; 🕒 9am-4pm, closed

Mon; 🚗 43, 46) **FREE**

The sparkling new museum traces the historical development of the Jiaodong peninsula, where Yantai currently stands, from the prehistoric age and successive kingdoms to the present day. There's a display on the 'Shell Mound' culture (a glimpse at a neolithic civilisation's trash) and a wonderful collection of rare porcelain. English descriptions.

Changyu Wine Culture Museum

MUSEUM

(Zhangyu Jiuwenhua Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 56 Dama Lu; admission incl tasting ¥50;

🕒 8am-5.30pm)

The unexpected Changyu Wine Culture Museum introduces the history of China's oldest and largest Western-style winery, which produces grape wines as well as brandy and a Chinese 'health liquor'.

Cheong Fatt-Tze, dubbed China's Rockfeller, founded the winery in 1894, after overhearing that Yantai's climate might suit vineyards at a party at the French consulate. Tastings of Changyu's (so-so but improving) wines are in the atmospheric, old wine cellar.

WORTH A TRIP

PENGLAI PAVILION

Penglai Pavilion

HISTORIC SITE

(Penglai Ge admission ¥140; 🕒 6.30am-6.30pm summer, to 5pm winter)

About 75km northwest of Yantai perched on a bluff overlooking the waves, the 1000-year-old [Penglai Pavilion](#) is closely entwined with Chinese mythology and the Taoist legend of the Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea.

The route up to the pavilion passes the grounds of an ancient naval base and a series of temples. The pavilion itself is unassuming as its restored exterior is rather similar to surrounding structures. Inside is a collection of prized inscriptions left by famous visitors since the Song dynasty, and a beautiful modern rendering of the Eight Immortals by Zhou Jinyun. There are many versions of the story, but in this one the immortals, who came from different walks of life, shared drinks at the pavilion before crossing the Bo Sea using unique superpowers.

After the pavilion, zip across the bay by **cable car** (one way/return ¥30/50; 🕒 8am-5.10pm) for cliffside walks overlooking the Bo and Yellow Seas. There are also **museums** (open 7.30am to 5.30pm) dedicated to ancient shipbuilding, regional relics and Qi Jiguang, a local-born Ming-dynasty general who battled pirates.

If you arrive after a heavy rain, keep an eye on the marine layer where mirages have appeared every few years. Long ago, this earned Penglai a reputation as a gateway to immortal lands and compelled Emperor Qin Shi Huang to send ships in search of islands of immortality further east.

Penglai is an easy day trip by bus from Yantai (¥24, 1½ hours, frequently, 5.30am to 6.30pm), with the last returning at 7.30pm/6pm summer/winter. The bus station (166 Zhonglou Beilu) is a 15-minute walk to the park. Taxi drivers will go for ¥9 but sometimes stop elsewhere first.

Beaches

Bus 17 (¥2) conveniently runs along Yantai's coastline passing a number of sandy strips and tide pools in between the main beaches that are worth jumping off for.

No 1 Beach

BEACH

(Diyi Haishui Yuchang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚌 17)

One of Yantai's two main beaches, No 1 Beach is a long stretch of soft sand in a calm bay.

No 2 Beach

BEACH

(Di'er Haishui Yuchang 17)

About 6km east of the old town, No 2 Beach is rocky in parts but surrounded by lively tide pools.

Laishan Beach

BEACH

(Laishan Haishui Yuchang 17)

This vast expanse of golden sand in the developing district 11km east of the old town attracts clam diggers and sunbathers alike. Get off at the Huanghai City Flower Garden stop.

DALIAN–YANTAI UNDERSEA TUNNEL

Two decades in the making, the blueprints are almost done for China's next epic infrastructure project: a ¥220-billion tunnel 100ft under the bottom of the Bo Sea that will trace Yantai's coastline before curving north to Dalian in Liaoning province.

At 123km long, the Dalian–Yantai tunnel will be longer than the two previous record-holders – the Seikan Tunnel (between Honshu and Hokkaido in Japan) and the 'Chunnel' (between Britain and France) – combined. More importantly, it will cut a seven-hour boat ride or a 1400km road trip down to a 40-minute high-speed-train ride or a quick drive, linking China's north and south like never before.

The tunnel is actually three – one channel each for cars, trains and maintenance – plus many more vertical ventilation pipes bored through the ocean floor. Building it will rely on engineering that hasn't been tested before, and critics point out that the tunnel could disturb two active fault lines. Architects counter with the argument that it will all be accounted for in the plans. The tunnel is slated to open before 2020.

Sleeping

Many hotels are clustered around the train and bus stations where it's noisy and dull. It's much more pleasant on the charming old streets around

Chaoyang Jie's north end.

Coast International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Hai'an Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 623 0655, English 188 6550 0973; 41 Chaoyang Jie; dm ¥50-60, s & d ¥198; 📶 @ 📶)

Smack in the heart of Yantai's charming old town is this cheery, new hostel with a bright common room with wi-fi and evening movies, a coffee bar and an open kitchen. In between mixing drinks and weekend barbecues, staff lead walking tours of the neighbourhood and bike rides to Yangma Island (bike rental ¥20), plus they can help book tickets.

The dorms are clean, but management also opens up some double rooms to backpackers at a discounted rate (¥90 per person). Discounts of 20% from November to June. Some English spoken.

Shandong Machinery Hotel

HOTEL

(Shandong Jixie Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 621 4561; 162 Jiefang Lu; s & d ¥320-480, ste ¥580; 📶 @ 📶)

With Korean and Japanese restaurants, and an international ticketing office on the premises, staff here know how to cater to non-Mandarin-speaking guests. The Asian-decor rooms have nicer details (wooden soaking tubs) than the Western ones, but all are way nicer than the building exterior suggests. Discounts up to 30%. Look for the 'SD MACH' sign on the rooftop.

Waitinn

HOTEL

(Weite Fengshang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 212 0909; www.waitinn.com; 73 Beima Lu; tw & d ¥288-328, tr ¥358; 📶 @ 📶)

Opposite the train station, this refurbished hotel is a decent place to, as it were, wait in. Rooms are large, comfortable and equipped with flat-screen TVs. Add breakfast for ¥15 and ask for a discount. Another **branch** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 658 0909; 35 Qingnian Lu) is right by the bus station.

Golden Gulf Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinhaiwan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 663 6999; fax 663 2699; 34 Hai'an Lu; s & d incl breakfast ¥990-1280; ❄️📶)

The city's first five-star hotel has a superb sea and parkside location, and bright, well-maintained rooms.

Eating & Drinking

South of Yantai Hill, the old town pedestrian streets branching off Chaoyang Jie are crammed with vendors serving some of the freshest seafood and tastiest street food in these parts. There is also a range of international restaurants, bars, cafes and even an Irish pub or two, though some shutter outside of summer.

There's a small cluster of snack **food stalls** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nan Dajie; snacks from ¥2; 🕒 noon-9pm) along the park next to the Parkson department store in the heart of the shopping district, and a good variety of restaurants in the new, luxury **Joy City** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 150 Beima Lu; 🕒 10am-10pm) shopping mall.

Xiangfu Rouding Shuijiao

DUMPLINGS

([GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 155 0545 3700; Fulai Lijie; mains from ¥20; 🕒 10.30am-2pm & 4.30-9pm; 🚗 6)

At the south end of Fulai Lijie by the elementary school, this tiny restaurant draws foodies from afar with its speciality dumplings (*shuijiao*), particularly the ones filled with tender *bayu* (¥28 per *jin*, enough for two), a locally caught mackerel.

★ Rongxiang Haixian

SEAFOOD

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 155 0663 3177; 25-1 Fumin Jie, at Haiguan Jie; 25-1, meals from ¥60; 🕒 11am-1pm & 5-8.40pm)

At this perpetually packed local institution, the seafood is

crawling/swimming/blinking in the back room where you put in your order. Quick-tongued staff toss out price per *jin* and suggested cooking methods as you point – clams, ¥38, spicy (*lachao*); crab, ¥38, ginger scallion (*jiangcong*); abalone, ¥71, sauteed without chilli (*qing chao*); and so on.

Everything is in Chinese, so if intimidated, tell them your overall budget, point and just go with it. Then grab the first table you find.

Shide Wu

JAPANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 621 6676; 23 Hai'an Jie; meals ¥120; 🕒 11am-1pm & 5-9.30pm)

Chef Hao lived in Japan for a decade before opening up this place with his wife. Now it's a popular spot for sashimi (from ¥38), fried pork cutlets (¥30), and udon and ramen (¥26 to ¥36). The soothing wood decor balances out the Japanese TV turned up full blast.

BORDER CROSSING: YANTAI AND WEIHAI TO SOUTH KOREA

Shandong's coastline offers easy access to international cities across the Yellow Sea. Boats regularly depart from Yantai's **Passenger Ferry Terminal** (Yantai Gang Keyunzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 624 2715; 155 Beima Lu) for Incheon, South Korea.

Weidong Ferry Company ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 660 3721; www.weidong.com; 155 Beima Lu, next to Yantai Passenger Ferry Terminal; dm ¥750, r ¥890-1370) sails three times a week from Yantai (16 hours, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, departs 6pm). Tickets sell out, so book in advance by phone or at the ticket office next to the ferry terminal. Plan to check in early, generally before 3pm, as customs and other inspections are required.

Weidong Ferry (📍 0631 522 6173; 48 Haibin Beilu; Weihai dm ¥750, r ¥890-1370) also sails from Weihai (Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, departs 7pm) from the **passenger ferry terminal** (Weihai Gang Guoji Keyun Matou 📍 0631 523 6799; www.whport.com.cn; 288 Shu Gang Lu; 288, Weihai). Buses from Yantai's long-distance main bus station (¥38) make the 70km drive to Weihai's station every 25 minutes from 6am to 6pm, then you transfer to bus K01 for the 10km drive north to the ferry terminal.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 166 Jiefang Lu;)

ATM accepts all cards. Full-service branch at Beima Lu and Dahaiyang Lu opens from 8.30am to 4.20pm.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beima Lu & Dahaiyang Lu, across from train station;

 8am-noon & 1-5pm)

Another **branch** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) is at 28 Hai'an Jie.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(Gong'anju  629 7046; 7 Chang'an Jie;  8-11.30am & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri;  17)

Office for entry-exit visas in Laishan district.

Yantai Shan Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Yantai Shan Yiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  660 2001; 91 Jiefang Lu)

Chinese-speaking only.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Yantai **Laishan International Airport** ( 624 1330) is 20km south of town.

Book tickets at the **Yantai Traffic Tourism Group** (Yantai Jiaoyun Guoji

Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  665 1110; Tonghui Hotel lobby, 67 Xi Dajie; , no commission;

 8am-6pm) or the Civil Aviation Hotel **ticket centre** (Yantai Guoji Jichang Shoupiao

Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  658 3366; 78 Dahaiyang Lu;). [Coast International](#)

[Youth Hostel](#) can also help.

There are regular flights to Beijing (¥690, one hour), Shanghai (¥790, 1½ hours), Guangzhou (¥1930, three hours), Seoul (¥1116, one hour) and Osaka (¥2388, 1½ hours).

Airport shuttles ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 629 9146; tickets ¥10) run hourly from 6.15am to 8.45pm, arriving in about 30 minutes at **Tonghui Hotel** (Tonghui Da Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 67 Xi Dajie;), a five-minute walk from the long-distance main bus station, and the Civil Aviation Hotel ticket centre to the south. The return ride departs from Tonghui Hotel every 20 minutes from 6am to 7pm, and from the Civil Aviation Hotel about hourly from 6am to 8.30pm.

BOAT

Purchase tickets for ferries to Dalian (seat ¥180, bed ¥210 to ¥1200, seven hours, 7.45am, 9am, 12.40pm, 3.30pm, 8pm, 9.30pm and 11.30pm) at the **Yantai Harbour Passenger Transit Terminal** (Yantaigang Keyunzhan 📍 650 6666; www.bohaiferry.com; 155 Beima Lu) or ticket offices east of the train station or in the bus station.

BUS

From the **long-distance main bus station** (changtu zong qiche zhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 666 6111; 86 Xi Dajie & Qingnian Lu) there are buses to numerous destinations:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥246, 13 hours, one to two daily (8.45am and 3pm)
- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥175, 5½ hours, every 30 minutes (5am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Penglai** ¥24, 1½ hours, frequently (5.30am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥85, four hours, every 30 minutes (5am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥308, 12 hours, one to two daily (5pm and 8.40pm)
- ➔ **Tianjin** ¥198, 11 hours, one to two daily (10am and 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Weihai** ¥38, one hour, frequently (6am to 6pm)

TRAIN

Regular trains (seat/hard sleeper) depart from Yantai **train station** (huochezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 9510 5175; Beima Lu) for:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥129/231, 15 hours, one daily (11.25pm)

- ➔ **Ji'nan** ¥75/138, 7½ hours, 10 daily (9.25am to 11pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥38/57, five hours, one daily (8.27am)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥181/322, 21 hours, one daily (9.40am)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥198/349, 24 hours, one daily (3.15pm)

i Getting Around

Bus 17 runs along the coast from the train station and ferry terminal to the city's beaches. Bus 6 runs along Beima Lu from the old town to the bus station. Bus 10 reaches Laishan district's main streets.

Taxi flag fall is ¥8 for the first 6km and ¥1.80 (slightly more at night) per kilometre thereafter. It's about a ¥50 ride from the airport.

Shanghai

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[Eating](#)

[Drinking & Nightlife](#)

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[Shopping](#)

Shanghai



☎ 021 / Pop 24 million

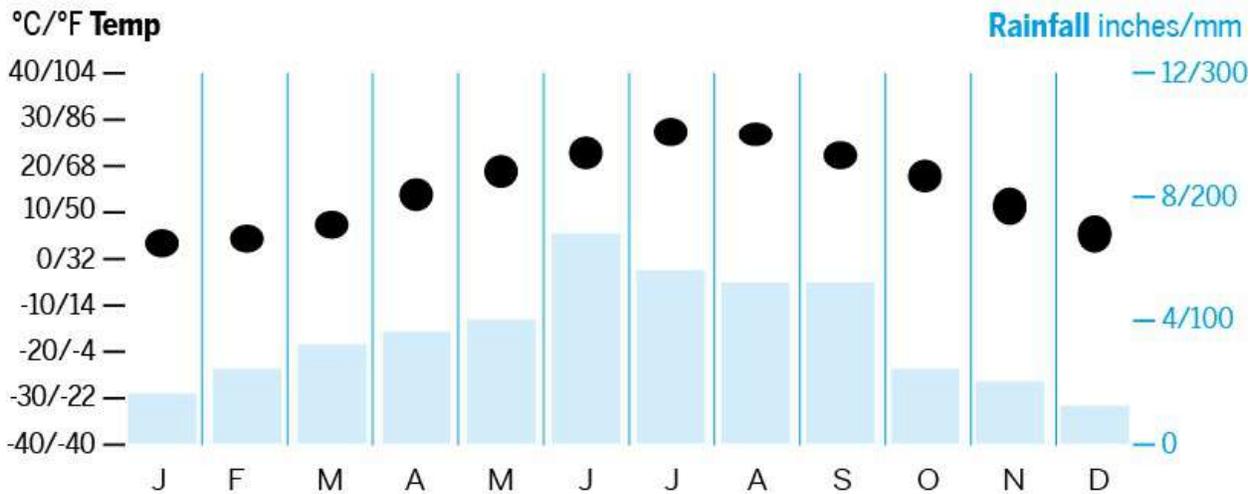
Why Go?

You can't see the Great Wall from space, but you'd have a job missing Shanghai. One of the country's largest and most vibrant cities, Shanghai somehow typifies modern China while being unlike anywhere else in the land. Shanghai *is* real China, but – rather like Hong Kong or Macau – just not the China you had in mind.

This is a city of action, not ideas. You won't spot many Buddhist monks contemplating the dharma, oddball bohemians or wild-haired poets handing out flyers, but skyscrapers will form before your eyes. Shanghai best serves as an epilogue to your China experience: submit to its debutante charms after you've had your fill of dusty imperial palaces and bumpy 10-hour bus rides. From nonstop shopping to skyscraper-hopping to bullet-fast Maglev trains and glamorous cocktails – this is Shanghai.

When to Go

Shànghǎi



- ➔ **Feb** Visit Yuyuan Gardens for the lantern festival, two weeks after Chinese New Year.
- ➔ **Apr & May** March is chilly and 1 May is chaos, but otherwise spring is ideal.
- ➔ **Oct** The optimal season: neither too hot nor too rainy.

Best Places to Eat

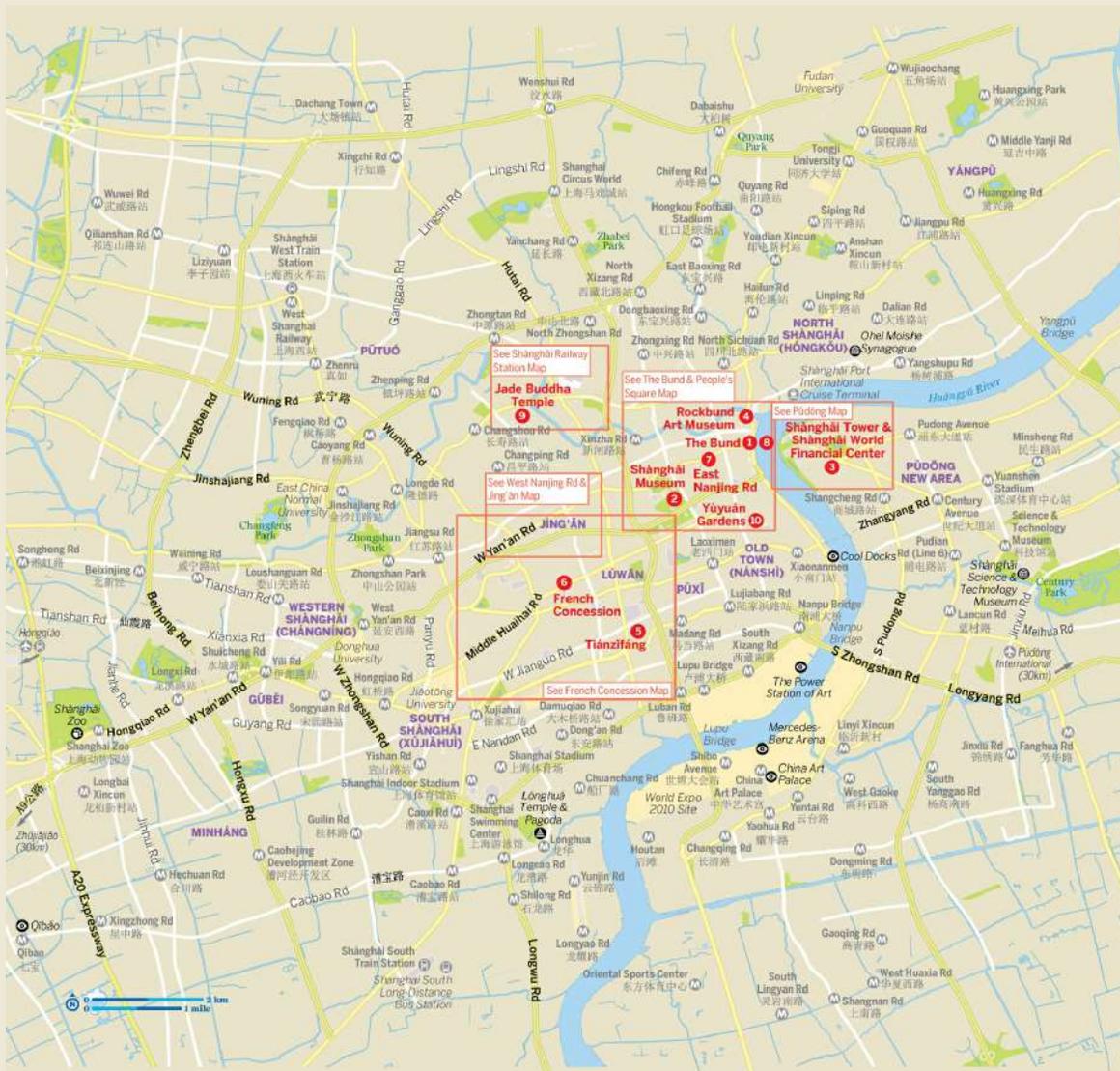
- ➔ [Jian Guo 328](#)
- ➔ [Din Tai Fung](#)
- ➔ [Lost Heaven](#)
- ➔ [Fu 1039](#)
- ➔ [Commune Social](#)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ [Fairmont Peace Hotel](#)
- ➔ [Urbn](#)

- ➔ [Mandarin Oriental Pudong](#)
- ➔ [Magnolia Bed & Breakfast](#)
- ➔ [Le Tour Traveler's Rest](#)

Shanghai Highlights



- 1 Stroll down the [Bund](#) promenade or raise an evening glass to phosphorescent Pudong
- 2 Load up on Chinese culture's greatest hits at the [Shanghai Museum](#)
- 3 Admire the curvature of the earth from atop the [Shanghai Tower](#) or the [Shanghai World Financial Center](#)
- 4 Catch up with the latest trends in contemporary Chinese art at the [Rockbund Art Museum](#)

- 5 Weave through a forest of shoppers' elbows in the charming *shikumen* warren of [Tianzifang](#)
- 6 Put on your best shoes and step out into the [French Concession](#)
- 7 Plunge into the neon-lit swell of [East Nanjing Road](#)
- 8 Dine at some of Shanghai's signature [Bund restaurants](#), all with showstopping views as standard
- 9 Fathom the fantastic at Shanghai's most sacred shrine, the [Jade Buddha Temple](#)
- 10 Eke out a quiet pocket and sit down within the [Yuyuan Gardens](#)

History

As the gateway to the Yangzi River (Chang Jiang), Shanghai (the name means 'by the sea') has long been an ideal trading port. However, although it supported as many as 50,000 residents by the late 17th century, it wasn't until after the British opened their concession here in 1842 that modern Shanghai really came into being.

The British presence in Shanghai was soon followed by the French and Americans, and by 1853 Shanghai had overtaken all other Chinese ports. Built on the trade of opium, silk and tea, the city also lured the world's great houses of finance, which erected grand palaces of plenty. Shanghai also became a byword for exploitation and vice; its countless opium dens, gambling joints and brothels managed by gangs were at the heart of Shanghai life. Guarding it all were the American, French and Italian marines, British Tommies and Japanese bluejackets.

After Chiang Kaishek's coup against the communists in 1927, the Kuomintang cooperated with the foreign police and the Shanghai gangs, and with Chinese and foreign factory owners, to suppress labour unrest. Exploited in workhouse conditions, crippled by hunger and poverty, sold into slavery, excluded from the high life and the parks created by the foreigners, the poor

of Shanghai had a voracious appetite for radical opinion. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was formed here in 1921 and, after numerous setbacks, 'liberated' the city in 1949.

The communists eradicated the slums, rehabilitated the city's hundreds of thousands of opium addicts, and eliminated child and slave labour. These were staggering achievements; but when the decadence went, so did the splendour. Shanghai became a colourless factory town and political hotbed, and was the power base of the infamous Gang of Four during the Cultural Revolution.

Shanghai's long slumber came to an abrupt end in 1990, with the announcement of plans to develop Pudong, on the eastern side of the Huangpu River. Since then Shanghai's burgeoning economy, leadership and intrinsic self-confidence have put it miles ahead of other Chinese cities. Its bright lights and opportunities have branded Shanghai a Mecca for Chinese (and foreign) economic migrants. In 2010, 3600 people squeezed into every square kilometre, compared with 2588 per sq km in 2000 and by 2014, the city's population had leaped to a staggering 24 million. Over nine million migrants make Shanghai home, colouring the local complexion with a jumble of dialects, outlooks, lifestyles and cuisines.

Language

Spoken by more than 13 million people, the Shanghainese dialect (Shanghaihua in Mandarin) belongs to the Wu dialect. Fewer and fewer local people speak Shanghainese properly due to the spread of Mandarin, which virtually everyone speaks fluently.

Climate

Shanghai's winters are cold and damp while summers are hot, humid and sapping, with sudden epic rains. Try to catch the weather in between: April to mid-May is probably the best time to visit, along with autumn (late September to mid-November).

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used for this region:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥500

\$\$ ¥500 to ¥1300

\$\$\$ more than ¥1300

EATING

(based on meal)

\$ less than ¥60

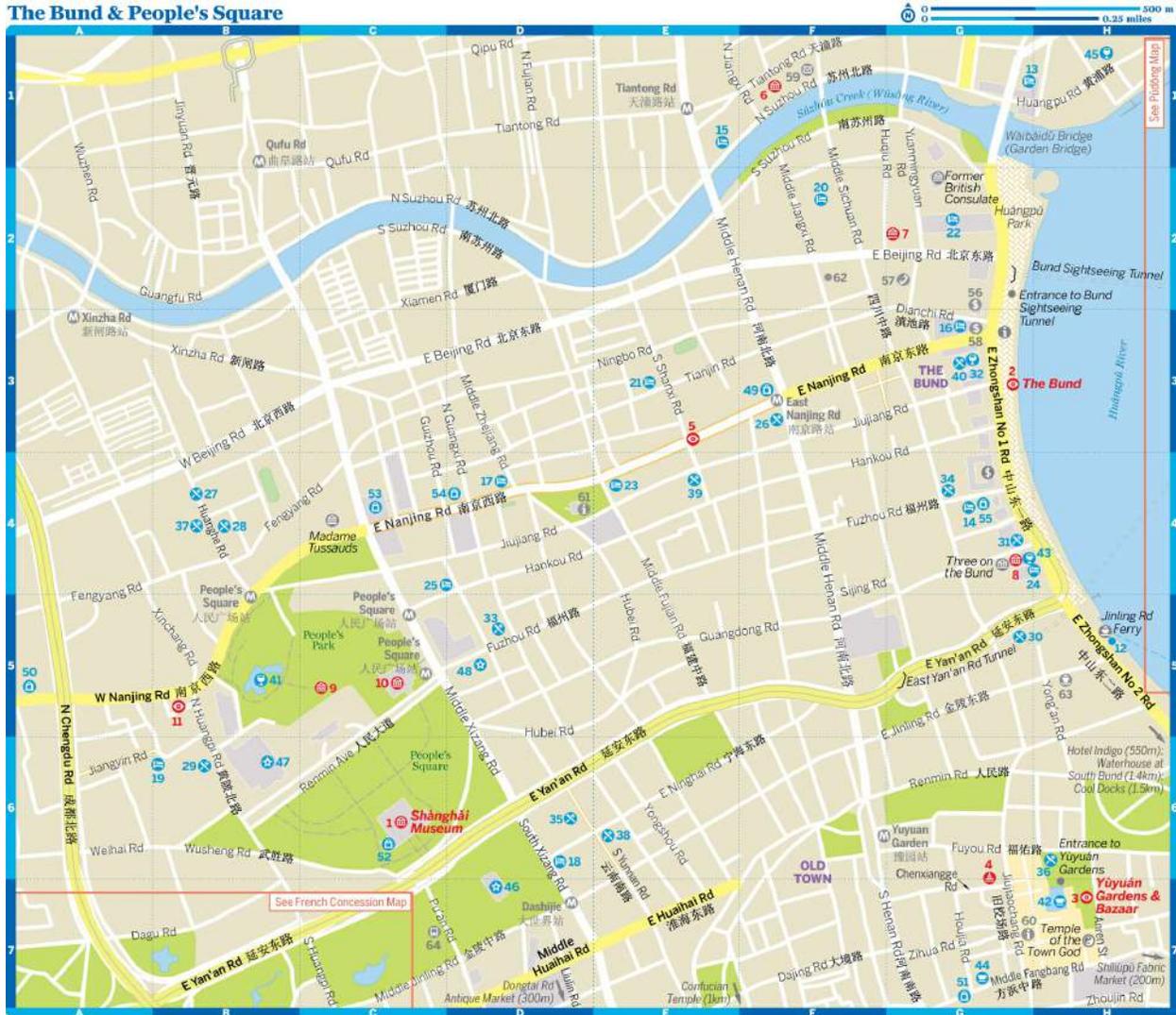
\$\$ ¥60 to ¥160

\$\$\$ more than ¥160

Sights

Shanghai municipality covers a vast area, but the city proper is more modest. Broadly, central Shanghai cleaves into two zones: Puxi (west of the Huangpu River) and Pudong (east of the Huangpu River). History, personality and charm are in Puxi, where you find the Bund (officially named East Zhongshan No 1 Rd), the former foreign concessions, the principal shopping districts, and Shanghai's trendiest bars, restaurants and nightclubs. Pudong – the financial, skyscraper hub – is modern but charmless, with sights falling into the observation deck/skyscraper towers/museums bag.

The Bund & People's Square



The Bund & People's Square

📍 Top Sights

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1 Shanghai Museum | C6 |
| 2 The Bund | G3 |
| 3 Yuyuan Gardens & Bazaar | H7 |

📍 Sights

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 4 Chenxiangge Nunnery | G6 |
| 5 East Nanjing Road | E3 |
| 6 Post Museum | F1 |
| 7 Rockbund Art Museum | G2 |

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 8 | Shanghai Gallery of Art | G4 |
| 9 | Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA Shanghai) | C5 |
| 10 | Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall | C5 |
| 11 | Tomorrow Square | B5 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 12 | Huangpu River Cruise | H5 |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 13 | Astor House Hotel | G1 |
| 14 | Captain Hostel | G4 |
| 15 | Chai Living Residences | E1 |
| 16 | Fairmont Peace Hotel | G3 |
| 17 | Jinjiang Inn | D4 |
| 18 | Marvel Hotel | D6 |
| 19 | Mingtown E-Tour Youth Hostel | B6 |
| 20 | Mingtown Hiker Youth Hostel | F2 |
| 21 | Mingtown Nanjing Road Youth Hostel | E3 |
| 22 | Peninsula Hotel | G2 |
| 23 | Sofitel Hyland Hotel | E4 |
| 24 | Waldorf Astoria | H4 |
| 25 | Yangtze Boutique Shanghai | C4 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 26 | Hongyi Plaza | F3 |
| 27 | Huanghe Road Food Street | B4 |
| 28 | Jiajia Soup Dumplings | B4 |
| 29 | Kebabs on the Grille | B6 |
| | Lobby, Peninsula | G2 |
| 30 | Lost Heaven | G5 |
| 31 | M on the Bund | G4 |
| 32 | Mr & Mrs Bund | G3 |
| 33 | Nanxiang Steamed Bun Restaurant | D5 |
| 34 | Shanghai Grandmother | G4 |
| | South Memory | F3 |
| 35 | Wu Fang Zhai | D6 |
| 36 | Wuyue Renjia | H6 |
| 37 | Yang's Fry Dumplings | B4 |
| 38 | Yunnan Road Food Street | E6 |
| 39 | Yuxin Chuancai | E4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 40 | Bar Rouge | G3 |
| 41 | Barbarossa | B5 |
| | Glamour Bar | G4 |
| 42 | Huxinting Teahouse | H7 |
| | Long Bar | H4 |
| 43 | New Heights | G4 |
| 44 | Old Shanghai Teahouse | G7 |
| | Sir Elly's Terrace | G2 |
| 45 | Vue | H1 |

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| | Fairmont Peace Hotel Jazz Bar | G3 |
| 46 | Shanghai Concert Hall | D7 |
| 47 | Shanghai Grand Theatre | B6 |
| 48 | Yifu Theatre | D5 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| | Amy Lin's Pearls | A5 |
| 49 | Apple Store | F3 |
| 50 | Han City Fashion & Accessories Plaza | A5 |
| 51 | Old Street | G7 |
| 52 | Shanghai Museum Art Store | C6 |
| 53 | Shanghai No 1 Department Store | C4 |
| 54 | Shanghai No 1 Food Store | D4 |
| 55 | Suzhou Cobblers | G4 |

Information

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 56 | Bank of China | G2 |
| 57 | China Mobile (Bund) | G2 |
| 58 | Citibank | G3 |
| 59 | Main China Post Office | F1 |
| 60 | Tourist Information & Service Centre | G7 |
| 61 | Tourist Information & Service Centre | D4 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 62 | Bund Train Ticket Office | F2 |
| 63 | Domestic Boat Tickets Shop | H5 |
| 64 | Pu'an Rd Bus Station | C7 |

The Bund

The area around the Bund is the tourist centre of Shanghai and is the city's most famous mile. Extensively renovated **Yuanmingyuan Rd**, west of the north end of the Bund, is home to some art deco landmark architecture and further imposing concession-era buildings.

★ The Bund

ARCHITECTURE

(Waitan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); East Zhongshan No 1 Rd;  East Nanjing Rd)

Symbolic of concession-era Shanghai, the **Bund (Waitan)** was the city's Wall St, a place of feverish trading and fortunes made and lost. Originally a towpath for dragging barges of rice, the Bund (an Anglo-Indian term for the embankment of a muddy waterfront) was gradually transformed into a grandiose sweep of the most powerful banks and trading houses in Shanghai. The optimum activity here is to simply stroll, contrasting the bones of the past with the futuristic geometry of Pudong's skyline.

The majority of art deco and neoclassical buildings here were built in the early 20th century and presented an imposing – if strikingly un-Chinese – view for those nosing by boat into the busy port city. Today it has emerged as a designer retail and restaurant zone, and the city's most exclusive boutiques, restaurants and hotels see the Bund as the only place to be. Evening visits are rewarded by electric views of Pudong and the illuminated grandeur of the Bund. Other options include taking a boat tour on the Huangpu River or relaxing at some fabulous bars and restaurants. Huangpu Park, at the north end of the promenade, features the modest Bund History Museum, which contains a collection of old photographs and maps.

East Nanjing Road

ARCHITECTURE

(Nanjing Donglu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  East Nanjing Rd)

Linking the Bund with People's Sq is East Nanjing Rd, once known as

Nanking Rd. The first department stores in China opened here in the 1920s, when the modern machine-age – with its new products, automobiles, art deco styling and newfangled ideas – was ushered in. A glowing forest of neon at night, it's no longer the cream of Shanghai shopping, but its pedestrian strip remains one of the most famous and crowded streets in China.

Shanghai's reputation as the country's most fashionable city was forged in part here, through the new styles and trends introduced in department stores such as the Sun Sun (1926), today the **Shanghai No 1 Food Store** (Shanghai Shi Diyi Shipin Shangdian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 720 East Nanjing Rd;  People's Sq), and the Sun Company (1936), now the **Shanghai No 1 Department Store** (Shanghai Shi Diyi Baihuo Shangdian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 800 East Nanjing Rd; 🕒 9.30am-10pm;  People's Sq). Today it's shops such as the vast **Apple Store** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.apple.com/cn; 300 East Nanjing Rd; 🕒 10am-10pm;  East Nanjing Rd) that dominate the shopping landscape. The pedestrianised section of the road is an assault course of fake-watch sellers, clinging purveyors of 'massagee' and English-speaking girls who encourage you to spend a king's ransom on cups of tea. Small 'train' tourist buses roll from one pedestrianised end to the other (¥5).

Rockbund Art Museum

MUSEUM

(Shanghai Waitan Meishuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.rockbundartmuseum.org; 20 Huqiu Rd; adult ¥15; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun;  East Nanjing Rd)

Housed in the former Royal Asiatic Society building (1933) – once Shanghai's first museum – this private space behind the Bund focuses on contemporary Chinese art, with rotating exhibits year-round and no permanent collection. One of the city's top modern-art venues, the building's interior and exterior are both sublime. Check out the unique art deco eight-sided *bagua* (trigram) windows at the front, a fetching synthesis of Western modernist styling and traditional Chinese design.

The interior is all textbook deco lines and curves, including the fine staircase. Head to the rooftop terrace for excellent views, despite the hulking

form of the Peninsula hotel blocking out much of Lujiazui. A cafe on the top floor dispenses free cups of tea.

Post Museum

MUSEUM

(Youzheng Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2nd fl, 250 North Suzhou Rd; 2 🕒 9am-5pm Wed, Thu, Sat & Sun, last entry 4pm; [M](#) Tiantong Rd) **FREE**

This fascinating museum in the stunning Main Post Office building explores postal history in imperial China, which dates back to the 1st millennium BC. The system used an extensive pony express to relay messages; Marco Polo estimated there were 10,000 postal stations in 13th-century China. Check out the collection of pre- and post-Liberation stamps (1888–1978) in a special climate-controlled room; the 250cc Xingyue motorbikes used by postal workers to burn up and down Shanghai's roads; and a mechanised mail sorter.

Shanghai Gallery of Art

GALLERY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.shanghaigalleryofart.com; 3rd fl, 3 on the Bund, 3 East Zhongshan No1 Rd; 🕒 11am-7pm; [M](#) East Nanjing Rd) **FREE**

Take the lift up to the 3rd floor of 3 on the Bund to this neat and minimalist art gallery for glimpses of current directions in highbrow and conceptual Chinese art. It's all bare concrete pillars, ventilation ducts and acres of wall space; there are a couple of divans where you can sit to admire the works on view.

SHANGHAI IN...

ONE DAY

Rise with the sun for early morning riverside scenes on **the Bund** as the vast city stirs from its slumber. Then stroll down East Nanjing Rd to **People's Sq** and either the [Shanghai Museum](#) or the [Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall](#). After a dumpling lunch on Huanghe Rd food street, hop on the metro at People's Sq to shuttle east to Pudong. Explore the fun and interactive [Shanghai History Museum](#) or contemplate the Bund from the breezy Riverside Promenade, then take high-speed lifts to some of the world's highest observation decks, in the [Shanghai Tower](#) or [Shanghai World](#)

[Financial Center](#). Stomach rumbling? Time for dinner in the French Concession, followed by a nightcap on the Bund if you want to go full circle.

TWO DAYS

Beat the crowds with an early start at the Old Town's **Yuyuan Gardens** before poking around for souvenirs on Old St and wandering the alleyways. Make your next stop **Xintiandi** for lunch and a visit to the **Shikumen Open House Museum** (Shikumen Wulixiang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xintiandi North Block, Bldg 25; 25 adult/child ¥20/10; 🕒 10.30am-10.30pm; [M](#) South Huangpi Rd, Xintiandi). Taxi it to [Tianzifang](#) for the afternoon, before another French Concession dinner. Caught a second wind? Catch the acrobats, hit the clubs or unwind with a traditional Chinese massage or some Shanghai jazz.

People's Square

Once the site of the Shanghai Racecourse, People's Sq is the modern city's nerve centre. Overshadowed by the dramatic form of **Tomorrow Square** (Mingtian Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 399 West Nanjing Rd; [M](#) People's Sq), the open space is peppered with museums, performing arts venues, leafy People's Park and crowds.

★ Shanghai Museum

ART MUSEUM

(Shanghai Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.shanghaimuseum.net; 201 Renmin Ave;

🕒 9am-5pm; People's Sq) **FREE**

This must-see museum escorts you through the craft of millennia and the pages of Chinese history. It's home to one of the most impressive collections in the land: take your pick from the archaic green patinas of the Ancient Chinese Bronzes Gallery through to the silent solemnity of the Ancient Chinese Sculpture Gallery; from the exquisite beauty of the ceramics in the Zande Lou Gallery to the measured and timeless flourishes captured in the Chinese Calligraphy Gallery.

Chinese painting, seals, jade, Ming and Qing furniture, coins and ethnic costumes are also on offer, intelligently displayed in well-lit galleries. The building itself is designed to resemble the shape of an ancient Chinese *ding*

(Chinese cauldron with three legs) vessel. Photography is permitted in some galleries and the audio guide is well worth the Y40 (deposit Y400 or your passport). The excellent museum shop sells postcards, a rich array of books, and faithful replicas of the museum's ceramics and other pieces. There are a few overpriced shops and teahouses inside the museum, as well as a snack bar, a cloakroom and an ATM. Expect to spend half, if not most of, a day here and note that the entrance is from East Yan'an Rd. Get here early as only 8000 people are allowed in daily.

Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall

MUSEUM

(Shanghai Chengshi Guihua Zhanshiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 100 Renmin Ave, entrance on Middle Xizang Rd; adult ¥30; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun, last entry 4pm;  People's Sq)

Some cities romanticise their past; others promise good times in the present. Only in China are you expected to visit places that haven't even been built yet. The highlight here is the 3rd floor, where you'll find an incredible model layout of the megalopolis-to-be, plus a dizzying Virtual World 3-D wraparound tour. Balancing out the forward-looking exhibits are photos and maps of historic Shanghai.

Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA Shanghai) MUSEUM

(Shanghai Dangdai Yishuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.mocashanghai.org; People's Park; admission adult/student ¥50/25; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri-Sun;  People's Sq)

This nonprofit museum collection has an all-glass home to maximise natural sunlight when it cuts through the clouds, a tip-top location in People's Park and a fresh, invigorating approach to exhibiting contemporary artwork. Exhibits are temporary only; check the website to see what's on. On the top floor there's a funky restaurant and bar with a terrace.

Old Town & South Bund

Known to locals as Nan Shi (Southern City), the Old Town is the most traditionally Chinese part of Shanghai, bar Qibao. Sections of the Old Town

have been bulldozed over the past decade to make room for developments but tatty charm survives along the neighbourhood's narrow and pinched alleyways.

★ Yuyuan Gardens & Bazaar

GARDENS, BAZAAR

(Yuyuan & Yuyuan Shangcheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Anren Jie; admission low/high season ¥30/40; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm, last entry at 5pm; [M](#) Yuyuan Garden)

With their shaded alcoves, glittering pools churning with fish, pavilions, pines sprouting wistfully from rockeries, and roving packs of Japanese tourists, these **gardens** are one of Shanghai's premier sights – but become overpoweringly crowded at weekends. The spring and summer blossoms bring a fragrant and floral aspect to the gardens, especially in the luxurious petals of its Magnolia grandiflora, Shanghai's flower. Other trees include the Luohan pine, bristling with thick needles, willows, ginkgos, cherry trees and magnificent dawn redwoods.

The Pan family, rich Ming-dynasty officials, founded the gardens, which took 18 years (1559–77) to be nurtured into existence before bombardment during the Opium War in 1842. The gardens took another trashing during French reprisals for attacks on their nearby concession by Taiping rebels. Restored, they are a fine example of Ming garden design.

Next to the garden entrance is the **Huxinting Teahouse** (Huxinting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tea upstairs/downstairs: ¥50/35; 🕒 8.30am-9.30pm), once part of the gardens and now one of the most famous teahouses in China.

The adjacent bazaar may be tacky, but it's good for a browse if you can handle the push and pull of the crowds and vendors. The nearby Taoist Temple of the Town God is also worth visiting. Just outside the bazaar is **Old Street** (Lao Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Middle Fangbang Rd; [M](#) Yuyuan Garden) (Lao Jie), known more prosaically as Middle Fangbang Rd, a busy street lined with curio shops and teahouses.

Chenxiangge Nunnery

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Chenxiang Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 29 Chenxiangge Rd; admission ¥10; 🕒 7am-5pm;  Yuyuan Garden)

Sheltering a community of dark-brown-clothed nuns from the Chenhai (Sea of Dust) – what Buddhists call the mortal world, but which could equally refer to Shanghai’s murky atmosphere – this lovely yellow-walled temple is a tranquil refuge. At the temple rear, the **Guanyin Tower** guides you upstairs to a glittering effigy of the male-looking goddess within a resplendent gilded cabinet.

Confucian Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wen Miao [GOOGLE MAP](#); 215 Wenmiao Rd; adult/student ¥10/5; 🕒 9am-5pm, last entry 4.30pm;  Laoximen)

A modest and charming retreat, this well-tended temple to Confucius is cultivated with maples, pines, magnolias and birdsong. The layout is typically Confucian, its few worshippers complemented by ancient and venerable trees, including a 300-year-old elm. The main hall for worshipping Confucius is **Dacheng Hall** (Dacheng Dian), complete with twin eaves and a statue of the sage outside.

Cool Docks

ARCHITECTURE

(Laomatou [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.thecooldocks.com; 479 South Zhongshan Rd;  Xiaonanmen)

The riverside Cool Docks consist of several *shikumen* (stone-gate houses) surrounded by red-brick warehouses, near (but not quite on) the waterfront. Now full of restaurants and bars and all lit up at night, the Cool Docks' isolated positioning (it lacks the central location and transport connections of Xintiandi in the French Concession) has hobbled ambitions. Although high-profile and trendy restaurant, bar and hotel openings have helped give it a much-needed lift, it remains an entertainment backwater.

Power Station of Art

GALLERY

(Shanghai Dangdai Yishu Bowuguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Lane 20 Huayuangang Rd; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-

Sun; **M** South Xizang Rd) **FREE**

Hosting the Shanghai Biennale, the Power Station of Art in the disused Nanshi Power Plant has seen some thought-provoking exhibitions. Check to see what is showing.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

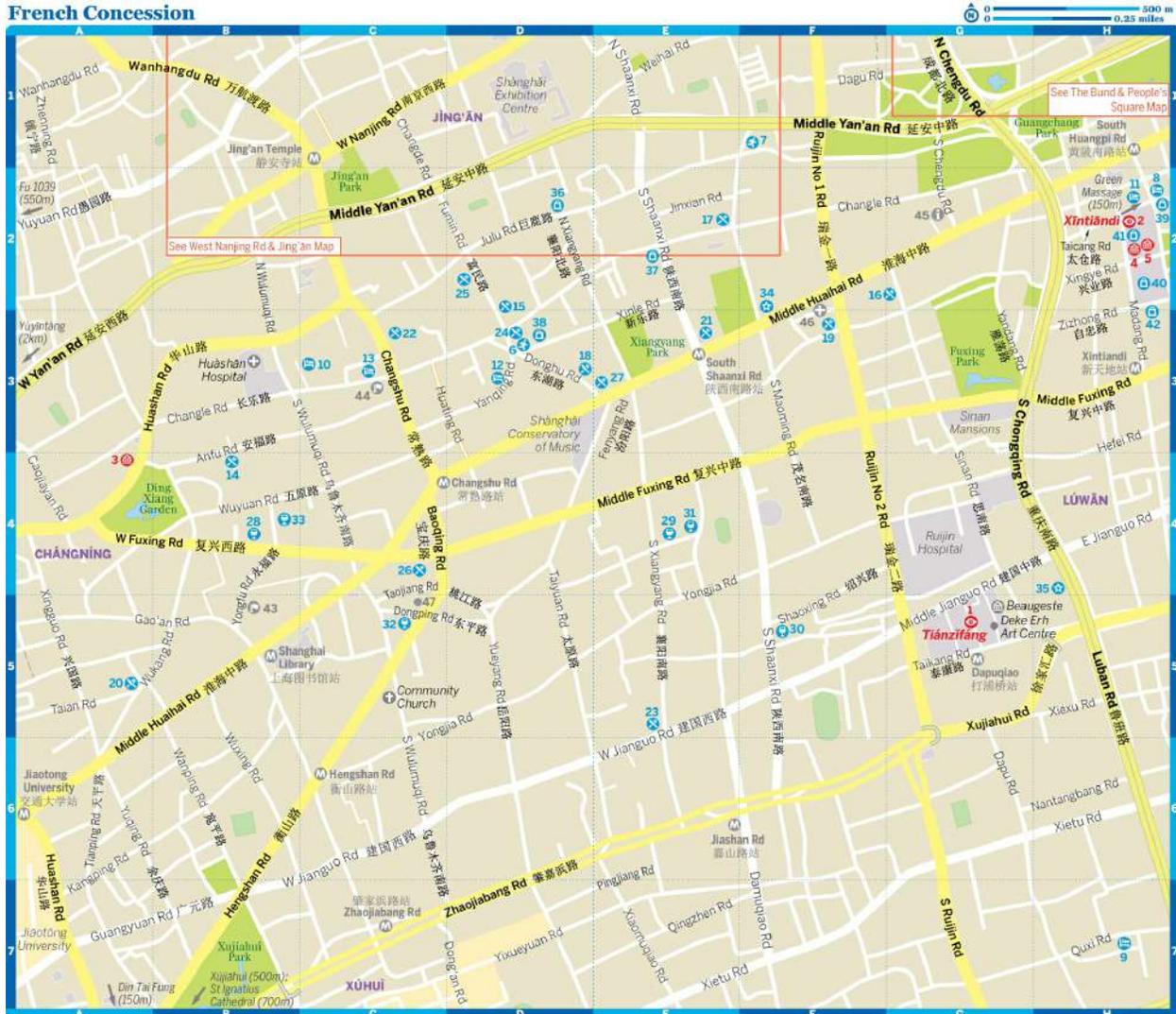
CONFUCIUS TEMPLE BOOK MARKET

In line with Confucian championing of learning, a busy secondhand market of (largely Chinese language) books is held in the Confucius temple every Sunday morning (admission ¥1; 7.30am to 4pm). There are some genuine finds, if you can read Chinese.

French Concession

Once home to the bulk of Shanghai's adventurers, revolutionaries, gangsters, prostitutes and writers, the French Concession is the most graceful part of the city. The cream of Shanghai's old residential buildings and art deco apartment blocks, hotels and edifices are preserved here, while commercial Huaihai Rd teems with shoppers.

French Concession



French Concession

📍 Top Sights

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|----|
| 1 | Tianzifang | G5 |
| 2 | Xintiandi | H2 |

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|---|--|----|
| 3 | Propaganda Poster Art Centre | A4 |
| 4 | Shikumen Open House Museum | H2 |
| 5 | Site of the 1st National Congress of the CCP | H2 |

🚶 Activities, Courses & Tours

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|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 6 | Dragonfly | D3 |
| 7 | Longwu Kung Fu Center | F1 |

Sleeping

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|----|--|----|
| 8 | Andaz | H2 |
| 9 | Blue Mountain Youth Hostel | H7 |
| 10 | Kevin's Old House | C3 |
| 11 | Langham Xintiandi | H2 |
| 12 | Magnolia Bed & Breakfast | D3 |
| 13 | Quintet | C3 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 14 | Baker & Spice | B4 |
| 15 | Baoluo Jiulou | D2 |
| 16 | Cha's | G2 |
| | Coffee Tree | A5 |
| 17 | Di Shui Dong | E2 |
| 18 | EIEfante | D3 |
| | Farine | A5 |
| 19 | Fengyu Shengjian | F3 |
| 20 | Ferguson Lane | A5 |
| 21 | Food Fusion | E3 |
| 22 | Fortune Cookie | C3 |
| 23 | Jian Guo 328 | E5 |
| 24 | Noodle Bull | D3 |
| 25 | Pho Real | D2 |
| 26 | Pho Real | C4 |
| 27 | Spicy Joint | E3 |
| | Vedas | C3 |
| | Xibo | C3 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| | Bell Bar | |
| 28 | Boxing Cat Brewery | B4 |
| 29 | Cafe des Stagiaires | E4 |
| 30 | Dean's Bottle Shop | F5 |
| 31 | Dean's Bottle Shop | E4 |
| 32 | Shanghai Brewery | C5 |
| 33 | Shelter | B4 |

★ Entertainment

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|----|--------------------------------|----|
| 34 | Cathay Theatre | F2 |
| 35 | MAO Livehouse | H4 |

🔒 Shopping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| | Annabel Lee | H2 |
| 36 | Brocade Country | D2 |
| | Chouchou Chic | |
| | Esydragon | G5 |
| 37 | Garden Books | E2 |
| | Harvest | G5 |
| | Joma | G5 |
| | La Vie | G5 |
| | Link Shanghai | G5 |
| 38 | NuoMi | D3 |
| | Pilingpalang | G5 |
| | Shanghai 1936 | |
| | Shanghai 1936 Men's Store | G5 |
| | Shanghai Code | G5 |
| 39 | Shanghai Museum Shop | H2 |
| | Shanghai Tang | H2 |
| 40 | Simply Life | H2 |
| | Tianzifang | G5 |
| | Unique Hill Gallery | |
| | Urban Tribe | G5 |
| 41 | Xintiandi | H2 |
| 42 | Xintiandi Style | H3 |
| | Zhenchaln Tea | |

Information

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 43 | German Consulate | B5 |
| 44 | New Zealand Consulate | C3 |
| 45 | Tourist Information & Service Centre | G2 |
| 46 | Watson's | F2 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 47 | French Concession West Train Ticket Office | C5 |
|----|--|----|

★ Xintiandi

AREA

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.xintiandi.com; 2 blocks btw Taicang, Zizhong, Madang & South Huangpi Rds;  South Huangpi Rd, Xintiandi)

With its own namesake metro station, Xintiandi has been a Shanghai icon for a decade or more. An upscale entertainment and shopping complex modelled on traditional alleyway (*longtang*) homes, this was the first development in the city to prove that historic architecture makes big commercial sense. Elsewhere that might sound like a no-brainer, but in 21st-century China, where bulldozers were always on standby, it came as quite a revelation.

Well-heeled shoppers and al fresco diners keep things lively until late, and if you're looking for a memorable meal, to wet your whistle in a dapper bar or to browse through some of Shanghai's more fashionable boutiques, you're in the right spot. The heart of the complex, divided into a pedestrianised north and south block, consists of largely rebuilt traditional shikumen houses, brought bang up-to-date with a stylish modern spin. But while the layout suggests a flavour of yesteryear, you should not expect much in the cultural realm. Xintiandi doesn't deliver any of the lived-in charm of Tianzifang or the creaking, rickety simplicity of the Old Town. Beyond two worthwhile sights – the Shikumen Open House Museum and the Site of the 1st National Congress of the CCP – it's best for strolling the prettified alleyways and enjoying a summer evening over drinks or a meal.

★ Tianzifang

AREA

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.tianzifang.cn; Taikang Rd;  Dapuqiao)

Xintiandi and [Tianzifang](#) are based on a similar idea – an entertainment complex housed within a warren of traditional *longtang* (alleyways) – but when it comes to genuine charm and vibrancy, Tianzifang is the one that delivers. This community of design studios, wi-fi cafes and boutiques is the perfect antidote to Shanghai's oversized malls and intimidating skyscrapers. With some families still residing in neighbouring buildings, a community mood survives.

There are three main north–south lanes (Nos 210, 248, 274) criss-crossed by irregular east–west alleyways, which makes exploration slightly disorienting and fun. Among the art galleries is Beaugeste, a forward-thinking photography gallery (only open at the weekends, by appointment at other times). The real activity is shopping, and the recent explosion of creative start-ups makes for some interesting finds, from ethnic embroidery and hand-wrapped *pu-erh* (fermented dark tea) teas to retro communist dinnerware. Elsewhere, a growing band of cool cafes, restaurants and bars, such as Bell Bar, can sort out meals and drinks and take the weight off your feet.

Site of the 1st National Congress of the CCP

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Zhonggong Yidahuizhi Jinianguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xintiandi North Block, 76 Xingye Rd;

 9am-5pm;  South Huangpi Rd, Xintiandi) **FREE**

On 23 July 1921 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in this French Concession building (then 106 rue Wantz). In one fell swoop this fact transformed an unassuming *shikumen* block into one of Chinese communism's holiest shrines. Beyond the communist narcissism, there's little to see, although historians will enjoy ruminating on the site's historic momentousness.

Propaganda Poster Art Centre

GALLERY

(Shanghai Xuanchuanhua Yishu Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6211 1845; Room B-0C, President Mansion, 868 Huashan Rd; B-0C admission ¥20;  10am-5pm;  Shanghai Library)

If phalanxes of red tractors, bumper harvests, muscled peasants and lantern-jawed proletariats fire you up, this small gallery in the bowels of a residential block should intoxicate. The collection of 3000 original posters from the 1950s, '60s and '70s – the golden age of Maoist poster production – will have you weak-kneed at the cartoon world of anti-US defiance.

The centre divides into a showroom and a shop selling posters and postcards. Once you find the main entrance, a guard will pop a small business card with a map on it into your hands and point you the way. Head around the back of the apartment blocks to Building B and take the lift to the basement.

It's a good idea to phone ahead (they speak some English) before heading out here to make sure it's open. The exhibition rounds off with a collection of cigarette posters from the 1920s.

West Nanjing Road & Jing'an

Lined with sharp top-end shopping malls, clusters of foreign offices and a dense crop of embassies and consulates, West Nanjing Rd is where Shanghai's streets are paved with gold, or at least Prada and Gucci.

But head north of West Nanjing Rd and you're plunged into a grittier and more absorbing section of Jing'an, which extends until reaching [Shanghai Railway Station](#).

West Nanjing Rd & Jìng'ān



West Nanjing Rd & Jing'an

Sights

1 [Jing'an Temple](#) B3

Sleeping

2 [Le Tour Traveler's Rest](#) A1

3 [Puli](#) B3

4 [Urbn](#) A2

Eating

5 [Jen Dow Vegetarian Restaurant](#) A3

6 [Sumerian](#) C1

7 [Wagas](#) C2

Drinking & Nightlife

8 [Spot](#) B2

Entertainment

9 [Shanghai Centre Theatre](#) C2

Information

10 [Australian Consulate](#) C2

[Canadian Consulate](#) C2

[Irish Consulate](#) C2

11 [Shanghai Cultural Information & Booking Centre](#) C1

12 [UK Consulate](#) C2

13 [US Consulate](#) D2

★ Jade Buddha Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Yufo Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Anyuan & Jiangning Rds; admission high/low season ¥20/10;

 8am-4.30pm;  19 from Broadway Mansions along Tiantong Rd,  Changshou Rd)

One of Shanghai's few active Buddhist monasteries, this temple was built

between 1918 and 1928. The highlight is a transcendent Buddha crafted from pure jade, one of five shipped back to China by the monk Hui Gen at the turn of the 20th century. In February, during the Lunar New Year, the temple is very busy, as some 20,000 Chinese Buddhists throng to pray for prosperity.

Festooned with red lanterns, the first courtyard is located between the Hall of Heavenly Kings and the twin-eaved Great Treasure Hall, where worshippers pray to the past, present and future Buddhas. Also within the main hall are splendidly carved luohan (arhats), lashed to the walls with wires and a copper-coloured statue of Guanyin at the rear. Follow the right-hand corridor past the Hall of Heavenly Kings and the Guanyin Hall to arrive at the Jade Buddha Hall. The absolute centrepiece of the temple is the 1.9m-high pale green jade Buddha, seated upstairs. Photographs are not permitted. Near the Jade Buddha Hall downstairs are the Hall of Manjusri Bodhisattva, to whom students pray before exams, and the Hall of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, lord of the Buddhist underworld. Both halls stand before the Ancestral Hall. At the rear of the temple is the peaceful Jingyi Pool (jingyi tan) which swarms with Koi and multicoloured floating artificial lotus blooms, its floor glittering with coins.

A large vegetarian restaurant is attached to the temple around the corner.

★ M50

GALLERY

(M50 M50 Chuangyi Chanye Jijuqu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 50 Moganshan Rd;  Shanghai Railway Station) **FREE**

Edgier Beijing still dominates the art scene, but swanky Shanghai's own gallery subculture is centred on this complex of industrial buildings down graffiti-splashed Moganshan Rd. Although the artists who originally established the M50 enclave are long gone, it's worth putting aside a half-day to poke around the galleries. There's a lot of mass-produced commercial prints, but there are also some challenging and innovative galleries. Most galleries are open from 10am to 6pm; some close on Monday.

The most established gallery here, **ShanghART** (Xianggena Hualang; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.shanghartgallery.com; Bldg 16 & 18, M50; M5018  Shanghai Railway

Station) has a big, dramatic space to show the work of some of the 40 artists it represents. The forward-thinking and provocative island6 focuses on collaborative works created in a studio behind the gallery; it has a smaller gallery on the first floor of building seven. Other notable galleries include **Other Gallery** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Bldg 9, M50: M50  Shanghai Railway Station) and OFoto, featuring China-related photography exhibitions. Across the street is m97, another innovative photography gallery. For paint and art materials, artists can drop by well-stocked **Espace Pebeo** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); <http://en.pebeo.com/Pebeo>; 1st fl, Bldg 0, M50 Moganshan Rd; M501  9.30am-6pm;  Shanghai Railway Station). For photo-developing courses and prints, pop into **Dark Room** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6276 9657; Rm 107, Bldg 17, 50 Moganshan Rd; M50107  Shanghai Railway Station).

Jing'an Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Jing'an Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1686-1688 West Nanjing Rd; 1686-1688 admission ¥50;  7.30am-5pm;  Jing'an Temple)

Its roof work an incongruous, shimmering mirage amid West Nanjing Rd's soaring skyscrapers, Jing'an Temple is a much-restored sacred portal to the Buddhist world that partially, at least, underpins this metropolis of 24 million souls. There are fewer devotees than at the neighbourhood's popular Jade Buddha Temple, but over a decade's restoration has fashioned a workable temple at the very heart of Shanghai. Its spectacular position among the district's soaring skyscrapers makes for eye-catching photos while the temple emits an air of reverence.

Pudong New Area

On the east side of the Huangpu River, the colossal concrete and steel Pudong New Area (Pudong Xinqu) is best known for the skyscraper-stuffed skyline of Lujiazui, one of China's most photographed panoramas. The best time to visit is at night when the neon effect is intoxicating and towers are lit up like TV screens. The next big-ticket Pudong sight will be the **Shanghai**

Disney Resort, due to open by early 2016.

Pūdōng



Pudong

Top Sights

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Shanghai Tower | C3 |
| 2 | Shanghai World Financial Center | C3 |

Sights

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 3 | Jinmao Tower | C3 |
| 4 | Oriental Pearl TV Tower | B2 |
| 5 | Riverside Promenade | A2 |
| 6 | Shanghai History Museum | A2 |
| 7 | Shanghai Ocean Aquarium | B2 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | |
|---|----|
| Huangpu River Cruise (Pudong) | A2 |
| 8 Pearl Dock | A2 |

Sleeping

| | |
|---|----|
| Grand Hyatt | C3 |
| 9 Mandarin Oriental Pudong | C1 |
| 10 Park Hyatt | C3 |
| 11 Ritz-Carlton Shanghai Pudong | B2 |

Eating

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 12 South Beauty | A2 |
| 13 Sproutworks | A2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| Cloud 9 | |
| Flair | B2 |

★ Shanghai World Financial Center

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Shanghai Huanqiu Jinrong Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5878 0101; <http://swfc-shanghai.com>; 100 Century Ave; observation deck adult 94th fl/94th, 97th & 100th fl ¥120/180, child under 140cm ¥60/90; 🕒 8am-11pm, last entry 10pm;  Lujiazui)

Although trumped by the adjacent Shanghai Tower as the city's most stratospheric building, the awe-inspiring 492m-high Shanghai World Financial Center is an astonishing sight, even more so come nightfall when its 'bottle opener' top dances with lights. There are three observation decks here on levels 94, 97 and 100, with head-spinningly altitude-adjusted ticket prices and wow-factor elevators thrown in.

The top two (located at the bottom and top of the trapezoid) are known as Sky Walks. It's debatable whether the top Sky Walk (474m) is the best spot for Shang-high views, though. The hexagonal space is bright and futuristic, and some of the floor is transparent glass, but the lack of a 360-degree sweep

– windows only face west or east – detracts somewhat. But you get to look down on the top of the Jinmao, which might be worth the ticket price alone. A clear, smog-free day is imperative, so check the weather and pollution index up front.

If you want to make a meal (or a cocktail) of it, or if lines are long, you can sashay into restaurant/bar 100 Century Avenue on the 91st floor instead. Access to the observation deck is on the west side of the building off Dongtai Rd; access to the Park Hyatt is on the south side of the building.

★ Shanghai Tower

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Shanghai Zhongxin Dasha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.shanghaitower.com.cn; cnr Middle Yincheng & Huayuanshiqiao Rds;  Lujiazui)

China's tallest building dramatically twists skywards from the firmament of Lujiazui. The 121-storey 632m-tall Gensler-designed Shanghai Tower topped out in August 2013 and was set to fully open in 2015. The spiral-shaped tower will house office space, entertainment venues, retail outlets, a conference center, a luxury hotel and 'sky lobbies'. The gently corkscrewing form – its nine interior cylindrical units wrapped in two glass skins – is the world's second-tallest building at the time of writing.

The twist is introduced by the outer skin of glass which swivels though 120 degrees as it rises, while atrium 'sky gardens' in the vertical spaces sandwiched between the two layers of glass open up a large volume of the tower to public use. The tower is sustainably designed: as well as providing insulation, the huge acreage of glass will vastly reduce electrical consumption through the use of sunlight. The tower's shape furthermore reduces wind loads by 24%, which generated a saving of US\$58m in construction costs. Before the tower even went up, engineers were faced with building the 61,000 m³ concrete mat that would support its colossal mass in the boggy land of Pudong. Uppermost floors of the tower will be reserved for that obligatory Shanghai attraction - the world's highest skydeck above ground level - with passengers ferried skywards in the world's fastest lifts (40mph), designed by Mitsubishi (and the world's tallest single-lift elevator). Visitors

will be able to gaze down on the both the Jinmao Tower and Shanghai World Finance Center below. A six-level luxury retail podium will fill the base of the tower.

Jinmao Tower

BUILDING

(Jinmao Dasha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍5047 5101; 88 Century Ave; adult/student/child ¥120/90/60; 🕒8.30am-9.30pm; 🚇Lujiazui)

Resembling an art deco take on a pagoda, this crystalline edifice is a beauty and by far the most attractive of the Shanghai World Financial Center (SWFC), Shanghai Tower, Jinmao Tower triumvirate. It's essentially an office block with the high-altitude **Grand Hyatt** (Jinmao Junyue Dajjudian [MAP](#)

[GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍5049 1234; www.shanghai.grand.hyatt.com; Jinmao Tower, 88 Century Ave; d from ¥2000-2450; 📶@📶; 🚇Lujiazui) renting space from the 53rd to 87th floors. You can zip up in the elevators to the 88th-floor **observation deck**, accessed from the separate podium building to the side of the main tower (aim for dusk for both day and night views).

Shanghai History Museum

MUSEUM

(Shanghai Chengshi Lishi Fazhan Chenlieguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍5879 8888; Oriental Pearl TV Tower basement; admission ¥35, English audio tour ¥30; 🕒8am-9.30pm; 🚇Lujiazui)

The entire family will enjoy this informative museum with a fun presentation on old Shanghai. Learn how the city prospered on the back of the cotton trade and junk transportation, when it was known as 'Little Suzhou'. Life-sized models of traditional shops are staffed by realistic waxworks, amid a wealth of historical detail, including a boundary stone from the International Settlement and one of the bronze lions that originally guarded the entrance to the HSBC bank on the Bund.

Oriental Pearl TV Tower

BUILDING

(Dongfang Mingzhu Guangbo Dianshi Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍5879 1888; 🕒8am-10pm, revolving restaurant 11am-2pm & 5-9pm; 🚇Lujiazui)

Love it or hate it, it's hard to be indifferent to this 468m-tall poured-concrete tripod tower, especially at night, when it dazzles. Sucking in streams of visitors, the Deng Xiaoping-era design is inadvertently retro, but socialism with Chinese characteristics was always cheesy back in the day. The highlight is the excellent [Shanghai History Museum](#), in the basement. You can queue up for views of Shanghai, but there are better views elsewhere and the long lines are matched by a tortuous ticketing system.

Boat tours on the Huangpu River operate from the **Pearl Dock** (Mingzhu Matou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Century Ave; tickets ¥100), next to the tower.

Shanghai Science & Technology Museum

MUSEUM

(Shanghai Kejiguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6862 2000; www.sstm.org.cn; 2000 Century Ave; adult/student/child under 1.3m ¥60/45/free; 🕒 9am-5.15pm Tue-Sun, last tickets 4.30pm; **M** Science & Technology Museum)

You need to do a huge amount of walking to get about this seriously spaced-out museum but there are some fascinating exhibits, from relentless Rubik's-cube-solving robots to mechanical archers. There's even the chance to take penalty kicks against a computerised goalkeeper.

Riverside Promenade

WATERFRONT

(Binjiang Dadao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 6.30am-11pm; **M** Lujiazui)

Hands down the best stroll in Pudong. The sections of promenade alongside Riverside Ave on the eastern bank of the Huangpu River offer splendid views to the Bund across the way. Chicely positioned cafes look out over the water.

Shanghai Ocean Aquarium

AQUARIUM

(Shanghai Haiyang Shuizuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5877 9988; www.sh-aquarium.com; 1388 Lujiazui Ring Rd; adult/child ¥160/110; 🕒 9am-6pm, last tickets 5.30pm; **M** Lujiazui)

Education meets entertainment in this slick and intelligently designed aquarium that children will love. Join them on a tour through the aquatic

environments from the Yangzi River to Australia, South America, the frigid ecosystems of the Antarctic and the flourishing marine life of coral reefs. The 155m-long underwater clear viewing tunnel has gobsmacking views. Feeding times for spotted seals, penguins and sharks are between 9.45am and 11.10am and 2.15pm and 3.40pm.

China Art Palace

MUSEUM

(Zhonghua Yishugong [GOOGLE MAP](#); 205 Shangnan Rd; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun;  China Art Museum) **FREE**

This 160,000 sq metre five-floor modern-art museum has invigorating international exhibitions and the inverted red pyramid building is a modern icon of Shanghai; however, the permanent Chinese art collection is prosaic and there's lots of propaganda. Occasional quality surfaces, such as *Virgin*, by Xiang Jing, a moving, tender and comic sculptural work depicting awakening sexuality, while the Shanghai and Paris gallery looks absorbingly at the influence of impressionism on Shanghai art.

Captions are clumsily translated. From the Shanghai Power Station of Art, hop on bus 1213.

Mercedes-Benz Arena

ARENA

(Meisaidesi Benchi Wenhua Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.mercedes-benzarena.com)

Galactically styled UFO structure of an arena at 2010 World Expo site.

North Shanghai (Hongkou)

Originally the American Settlement before the Japanese took over, Hongkou welcomed thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing persecution.

★ Ohel Moishe Synagogue

MUSEUM

(Moxi Huitang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 62 Changyang Rd; admission ¥50; 🕒 9am-5pm, last entry 4.30pm; Dalian Rd)

This synagogue was built by the Russian Ashkenazi Jewish community in

1927 and lies in the heart of the 1940s Jewish ghetto. Today it houses the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, a moving introduction to the lives of the approximately 20,000 Central European refugees who fled to Shanghai to escape the Nazis. Slip a pair of shower caps over your shoes to look at the synagogue itself (in the main building) and the exhibitions upstairs.

1933

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Shanghai 1933 Laochangfang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 10 Shajing Rd;  Hailun Rd)

This vast concrete former abattoir is one of Shanghai's unique buildings, today converted to house boutiques, bars, shops and restaurants. An extraordinary place built around a central core, its structure is a maze of flared columns, sky-bridges (across which cattle would be led to slaughter), ramps, curved stairwells – and jostling photo opportunities. The shops are not of much interest, but a well-positioned branch of trendy Noodle Bull makes the most of its concrete setting.

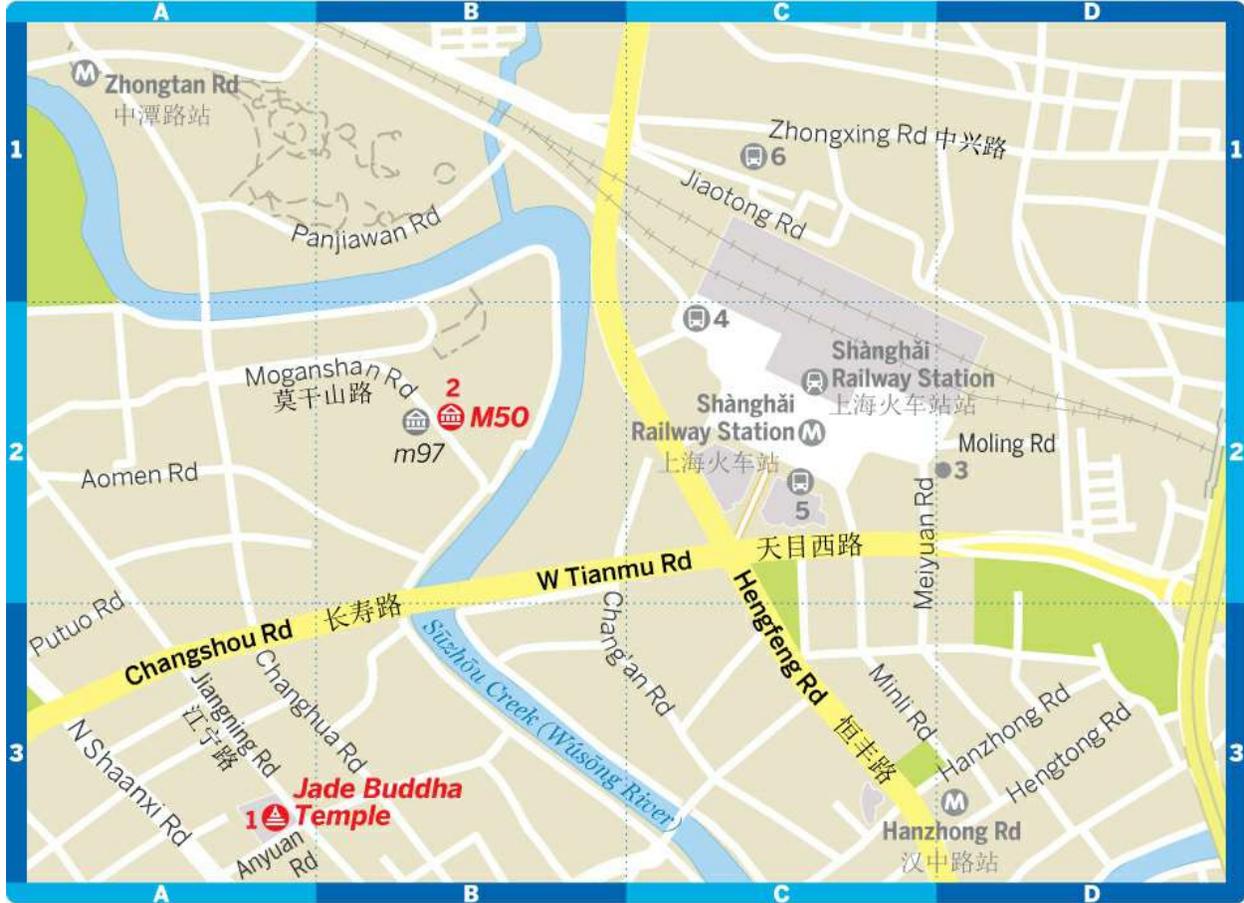
Duolun Road Cultural Street

STREET

(Duolun Wenhua Mingren Jie [GOOGLE MAP](#);  Dongbaoxing Rd)

This pleasantly restored but sleepy street of fine old houses, just off North Sichuan Rd, was once home to several of China's most famous writers (as well as several Kuomintang generals), when the road was known as Doulean Rd. Today it is lined with art-supply stores, curio and Burmese jade shops, galleries, teahouses and cafes. The main appeal of the street is its galleries and antique shops, including [Dashanghai](#).

Shànghǎi Railway Station



Shanghai Railway Station

🎯 Top Sights

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| 1 Jade Buddha Temple | A3 |
| 2 M50 | B2 |

🎯 Sights

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| island6 | B2 |
| OFoto | B2 |
| Other Gallery | B2 |
| ShanghART | B2 |

👤 Activities, Courses & Tours

- | | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Dark Room | B2 |
|---------------------------|----|

Shopping

[Espace Pebeo](#)

B2

Transport

| | |
|--|----|
| 3 Advance Train Ticket Booking Office | D2 |
| 4 Bus 941 to Hongqiao Airport | C2 |
| 5 Bus to Pudong International Airport | C2 |
| 6 Shanghai Long-Distance Bus Station | C1 |

Xujiahui & South Shanghai

Originally a Jesuit settlement dating back to the 17th century, Xujiahui today is more characterised by shopping malls, while south Shanghai sprawls to the Longhua Temple and Pagoda and beyond.

St Ignatius Cathedral

CHURCH

(Xujiahui Tianzhujiatang [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6438 4632; 158 Puxi Rd;  9-11am & 1-4pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun;  Xujiahui)

The dignified twin-spired St Ignatius Cathedral (1904) is a major Xujiahui landmark. A long span of Gothic arches, its nave is ornamented on the outside with rows of menacing gargoyles; note how the church spires find reflection in much of the more recently built local architecture. The original stained glass was destroyed in the Cultural Revolution, but the vivid colours of the recent red, azure and purple replacements (with archaic Chinese inscriptions from the Bible) are outstanding.

Longhua Temple & Pagoda

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Longhua Si & Longhua Ta [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6457 6327; 2853 Longhua Rd; admission ¥10;  7am-4.30pm;  Longhua)

Southeast from Xujiahui, Shanghai's oldest and largest monastery is named after the pipal tree (longhua) under which Buddha achieved enlightenment.

The much-renovated temple is said to date from the 10th century, its five main halls commencing with the **Laughing Buddha Hall**; note the four huge Heavenly Kings, each in charge of a compass point. The temple is particularly famed for its 6500kg bell, cast in 1894.

A large effigy of Sakyamuni seated on a lotus flower resides within the main hall – the **Great Treasure Hall**.

Other halls include the **Thousand Luohan Hall**, sheltering a huge legion of glittering arhat. Also within the temple is a vegetarian restaurant and a further imposing structure – the **Sanshengbao Hall** – with a golden trinity of Buddhist statues.

Opposite the temple entrance rises the seven-storey, 44m-high **Longhua Pagoda**, originally built in AD 977. Sadly, visitors are not allowed to climb it.

The best time to visit is during the Longhua Temple Fair, in the third month of the lunar calendar (usually during April or May).

West Shanghai

West Shanghai is mainly of interest for long-term expats and those on business, although the village of Qibao is worth a visit.

★ Qibao

VILLAGE

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 2 Minzhu Rd, Minhang district; admission high/low season ¥45/30; 🕒 sights 8.30am- 4.30pm;  Qibao)

When you tire of Shanghai's incessant quest for modernity, this tiny town is only a hop, skip and metro ride away. An ancient settlement that prospered during the Ming and Qing dynasties, it is littered with traditional historic architecture, threaded by small, busy alleyways and cut by a picturesque canal. If you can somehow blot out the crowds, Qibao brings you the flavours of old China along with huge doses of entertainment.

There are nine official sights included in the through ticket, though you can also skip the ticket and just pay ¥5 to ¥10 per sight as you go. The best of the

bunch include the **Cotton Textile Mill**, the **Shadow Puppet Museum** (performances from 1pm to 3pm Wednesday and Sunday), **Zhou's Miniature Carving House** and the **Old Wine Shop** (still an active distillery and a good lunch spot). Half-hour **boat rides** along the canal slowly ferry passengers from Number One Bridge to Dongtangtan and back. Also worth ferreting out is the **Catholic Church** (50 Nanjie), adjacent to a convent off Qibao Nanjie, south of the canal.

Wander along Bei Dajie north of the canal for souvenirs; Nan Dajie south of the canal is full of snacks and small eateries such as No 14, which sells sweet tangyuan dumplings, and No 19, which is a rarely seen traditional teahouse.

Courses

Learn how to balance your yin and yang with the following courses.

The Kitchen At...

COOKING COURSE

(📍) 6433 2700; www.thekitchenat.com; Changshu Rd)

Great culinary school offering courses in regional Chinese and Western cuisines; good for both long-term residents and short-term visitors.

Longwu Kung Fu Center

MARTIAL ARTS

(Longwu Gongfu Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6287 1528; www.longwukungfu.com; 1 South Maoming Rd; 1-/2-/3-month lesson ¥100/450/700; [M](#) South Shaanxi Rd)

Hone your rusty Wing Chun *bong sao*, brush up on your Taekwondo *poomsae* or simply learn a few taichi moves to help slip aboard the bus at rush hour. The largest centre in the city, it also offers children's classes on weekend mornings and lessons in English.

SHANGHAI FOR CHILDREN

Shanghai may not top most kids' holiday wish list, but the new **Shanghai Disney**

Resort park in Pudong, due to open in late 2015, will add an instant must-see attraction to the city. And the following sights will keep the family entertained.

Observation deck at the [Shanghai Tower](#), [Shanghai World Financial Center](#) or [Jinmao Tower](#)

[Shanghai History Museum](#)

[Shanghai Ocean Aquarium](#)

[Science & Technology Museum](#)

[Shanghai Zoo](#)

[Acrobatics shows](#)

[Bus tours](#)

Note that, in general, 1.4m (4ft 7in) is the cut-off height for children's tickets. Children under 0.8m (2ft 7in) normally get in for free.

Tours

From boats to bikes to buses, organised tours offer a great introduction to Shanghai.

BOHDI

CYCLING

([GOOGLE MAP](#));  5266 9013; www.bohdi.com.cn; tours ¥220)

Night-time cycling tours on Tuesdays from March to November and trips around the region.

Huangpu River Cruise

CRUISE

(Huangpu Jiang Youlan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 219-239 East Zhongshan No 2 Rd; 219-239 tickets ¥128;  East Nanjing Rd)

The Huangpu River offers intriguing views of the Bund, Pudong and riverfront activity. The night cruises are arguably more scenic, though boat traffic during the day is more interesting – depending on when you go, you'll pass an enormous variety of craft, from freighters, bulk carriers and roll-on roll-off ships to sculling sampans and massive floating TV advertisements.

Most cruises last 90 minutes and include not one, but two trips up to the International Cruise Terminal and back.

Huangpu River Cruise (Pudong)

BOAT TOUR

(Huangpujiang Youlanchuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Pearl Dock, tickets ¥100; 🕒 10am-1.30pm; **M** Lujiazui)

Forty-minute cruises departing hourly in Pudong.

Insiders Experience

DRIVING TOUR

(📞 138 1761 6975; www.insidersexperience.com; from ¥800)

Fun motorcycle-sidecar tours of the city for up to two passengers, setting off from the Andaz in Xintiandi (but can pick up from anywhere, at extra cost).

Newman Tours

TOUR

(Xinman 📞 138 1777 0229; www.newmantours.com; from ¥190)

Bund tour, gangster tour, ancient Shanghai tour, ghost tour and a host of other informative and fun walking jaunts around the city. Also covers Hangzhou and Suzhou.

Shanghai Sightseeing Buses

BUS TOUR

(Shanghai Luyou Jisan Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2409 5555; www.chinassbc.com; 2409 South Zhongshan No 2 Rd; 🕒 6.30am-7pm; **M** Caoxi Rd)

Daily tours from Shanghai Stadium to nearby canal towns (eg Tongli, Nanxun). Convenient but less fun than visiting on your own.

GOING FOR A RIDE

Tickets for the handy hop-on, hop-off open-top **City Sightseeing Buses** (Dushi Guangguang 📞 40082 06222; www.springtour.com; tickets ¥30; 🕒 9am-8.30pm summer, to 6pm winter) last 24 hours and are, besides touring Shanghai's highlights, a great way to get around the city centre and Pudong. A recorded commentary runs in eight languages: just plug in your earphones (supplied). Buses have their own stops across central Shanghai, including the Bund, the Old Town and People's Sq. **Big Bus Tours** (Shanghai Guangguangche 📞 6351 5988; www.bigbustours.com; adult/child US\$48/32) also operate hop-on, hop-off bus services, lassoing in the top sights along 22 stops across

two routes. Tickets are valid for 48 hours and include a one-hour boat tour of the Huangpu River plus admission to the 88th-floor observation tower of the Jinmao Tower.

Festivals & Events

Lantern Festival

CULTURAL

A colourful time to visit Yuyuan Gardens. People make *yuanxiao* or *tangyuan* (glutinous rice dumplings with sweet fillings) and some carry paper lanterns on the streets. The Lantern Festival (*yuanxiao jie*) falls on the 15th day of the first lunar month (usually in February/March).

Shanghai International Literary Festival

LITERARY

(Shanghai Guoji Wenxue Yishu Jie)

Held in March or April, this highly popular festival (Shanghai Guoji Wenxue Yishu Jie) for bibliophiles is staged in the Glamour Bar, with international and local authors in attendance.

Formula 1

SPORT

(www.formula1.com; 2000 Yining Rd, Jiading;  Shanghai International Circuit, Line 11)

The slick new Shanghai International Circuit hosts several high-profile motor-racing competitions, including the hotly contested Formula 1 in April.

Dragon Boat Festival

SPORT

Celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month (23 June 2012, 12 June 2013, this festival (*Duanwu Jie*) sees dragon boats raced along Suzhou Creek and, more importantly for most, *zongzi* (glutinous rice dumplings steamed in bamboo leaves) go on sale everywhere.

Sleeping

Shanghai's sleeping options are excellent at both ends of the spectrum, though quality in the midrange market remains patchy. In general, hotels fall into five main bags: luxury skyscraper hotels, historic old villa hotels, boutique hotels, Chinese chain hotels and hostels. There's a handful of B&Bs, though these are relatively scarce.

The most central neighbourhoods are the Bund and People's Sq. If you'd rather be based in a more residential area, consider the French Concession and Jing'an, where unique choices exist. Pudong is perfect for panoramas and high-altitude rooms, with a price tag.

Discounts off rack rates are standard outside holiday periods. Four- and five-star hotels add a 10% or 15% service charge (sometimes negotiable).

The Bund & People's Square

★ Mingtown E-Tour Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Mingtang Shanghai Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6327 7766; 57 Jiangyin Rd; dm ¥50, d without/with bathroom ¥160/260, tw ¥240; 📶 @ 📶; 🚇 People's Sq)

One of Shanghai's best youth hostels, E-tour has fine feng shui, a historic alleyway setting and pleasant rooms. But it's the tranquil courtyard with fish pond and the superb split-level bar-restaurant with comfy sofas that really sell it, plus there's a free pool table and plenty of outdoor seating on wooden decking.

There are both women-only and mixed dorms.

★ Mingtown Nanjing Road Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Mingtang Shanghai Nanjing Lu Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6322 0939; 258 Tianjin Rd; dm ¥50, s ¥150, d ¥200-270, tr ¥250; 📶 @ 📶; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

This sociable and friendly Mingtown hostel is located halfway between the Bund and People's Sq, a short hop from the nearest metro station. The six-bed dorms each have a private bathroom, laminated wood flooring and simple particle-board decor; perks include laundry, a kitchen, ground-floor

bar-restaurant, a DVD room and a pool table.

Mingtown Hiker Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Mingtang Shanghai Luxingzhe Qingnian Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6329 7889; 450

Middle Jiangxi Rd; dm without/with window ¥50/55, s/d ¥160/220; 📶 @ 📶; 🚶 East Nanjing Rd)

This justifiably popular hostel is just a short stroll from the famous esplanade, on the southern corner of the grand old Hengfeng Building. It offers tidy four- and six-bed dorms with pine bunk beds and clean communal shower facilities, plus decent private rooms, including cheapies with shared bathrooms.

There's a pool table, movies, a bar-restaurant and a useful noticeboard in the lobby. Wi-fi in the lobby only.

Captain Hostel

HOSTEL

(Chuanzhang Qingnian Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6323 5053; 37 Fuzhou Rd; dm ¥75, r

from ¥358; 📶 @ 📶; 🚶 East Nanjing Rd)

Despite being hands-down the least friendly youth hostel in Shanghai, this naval-themed backpackers' favourite still reels in punters with its fantastic location and decent rooftop bar. There's a microwave, washing machine and lobby cafe, but all bathrooms are communal. Wi-fi is in the communal area only.

Jinjiang Inn

HOSTEL

(Jinjiang Zhixing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.jinjianginns.com; 680 East Nanjing Rd; d from ¥300;

📶 @ 📶; 🚶 People's Sq)

Located in the former Shanghai Sincere Department Store (which opened in 1917), the erstwhile East Asia Hotel has been grabbed by the folk at Jinjiang Inn and re-presented with smartish rooms with showers. It's often booked out due to its prime location.

★ Marvel Hotel

HOTEL

(Shangyue Qingnianhui Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 3305 9999;

www.marvelhotels.com.cn; 123 South Xizang Rd; d ¥1080-1280, ste ¥1580; 📶 @ 📶; 🚇 Dashijie)

Occupying the former YMCA building (1931) just south of People's Sq, the Marvel is one of the city's better midrange hotels. Beyond the chintzy corridors, the brown and cream rooms offer a reassuring degree of style. The building resembles Beijing's Southeast Corner Watchtower (although the blurb compares it to Qianmen), with a traditional hammerbeam ceiling.

Sofitel Hyland Hotel

HOTEL

(Suofeite Hailun Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6351 5888; www.sofitel.com; 505 East Nanjing Rd; d ¥1150-2110; 📶 📶; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

Rising up halfway along East Nanjing Rd, the Sofitel is a solid choice for those insisting on location without breaking the bank. The uncluttered and cool lobby area is dominated by open space and geometric lines. Standard rooms are rather dated, with a crisper and more modern finish in the executive rooms.

Facilities include a spa, two restaurants, a bar and a French bakery.

★ Fairmont Peace Hotel

HISTORIC HOTEL

(Fei'ermeng Heping Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6321 6888; www.fairmont.com; 20 East Nanjing Rd; d ¥2300-3800; 🚫 📶 📶; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

If anywhere in town fully conveys swish 1930s Shanghai, it's the old Cathay, rising imperiously from the Bund. Renamed the Peace Hotel in the 1950s and reopened in 2010 after a protracted renovation, it's reaffirmed its position as one of the city's most iconic hotels. Rooms are decked out in art deco elegance, from light fixtures down to coffee tables.

The entire hotel is cast in the warm, subdued tints of a bygone era. Expect all the luxuries of a top-class establishment, though note that wi-fi and broadband access cost an extra ¥99 per day for guests. Standard rooms come without a view, deluxe rooms with a street view and suites with the coveted river view. The hotel is also home to a luxury spa, two upscale restaurants

and several bars and cafes. Even if you're not staying here, it's worth popping in to admire the magnificent lobby (1929), or taking in an evening show at the jazz bar.

★ Peninsula Hotel

LUXURY HOTEL

(Bandao Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2327 2888; www.peninsula.com; 32 East Zhongshan No 1 Rd; d/ste ¥2800/5400; 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

This spiffing hotel at the Bund's northern end combines art deco motifs with Shanghai modernity. It's a grade above many other market rivals, with TVs in the tub, well-equipped dressing rooms (with fingernail driers), valet boxes for dirty clothes, Nespresso machines and fabulous views across the river or out onto the gardens of the former British consulate. Lacquer fittings in rooms create a sumptuous, yet restrained, elegance.

★ Astor House Hotel

HISTORIC HOTEL

(Pujiang Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6324 6388; www.astorhousehotel.com; 15 Huangpu Rd; d/tw ¥1280-1680, 'celebrity' r ¥2080, ste ¥2800-4800; 📶 @ 📶; 🚇 Tiantong Rd)

Stuffed with history (and perhaps a ghost or two), this august old-timer shakes up an impressive cocktail from select ingredients: a location just off the Bund; old-world, Shanghai-era charm; great discounts; and colossal rooms. The original polished wooden floorboards, corridors and galleries pitch the mood somewhere between British public school and Victorian asylum.

★ Waldorf Astoria

LUXURY HOTEL

(Huaer Daofu Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6322 9988; www.waldorfastoriashanghai.com; 2 East Zhongshan No 1 Rd; d/ste ¥3100/4600; 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

Grandly marking the southern end of the Bund is the former Shanghai Club (1910), once the Bund's most exclusive gentlemen's hang-out. The 20 original rooms here have been reconverted to house the Waldorf Astoria's premium suites, six of which look out onto the Huangpu River. Behind this

heritage building is a new hotel tower, with 252 state-of-the-art rooms.

Yangtze Boutique Shanghai

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Langting Yangzi Jingpin Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6080 0800;

www.theyangtzehotel.com; 740 Hankou Rd; d ¥1300-1800; ❄️ 📶; 🚇 People's Sq)

Originally built in the 1930s, this art deco gem has been splendidly refurbished. In addition to period decor, rooms feature deep baths, glass-walled bathrooms (with Venetian blinds) and even tiny balconies – a rarity in Shanghai. Check out the sumptuous stained-glass oblong and recessed skylight in the lobby, above a deco-style curved staircase.

The worn carpet in the foyer and on the stairs points to a high volume of traffic and the hotel is frequently booked out. The hammam and sauna in the fabulous Chuan spa are complimentary for guests; breakfast is served in the Italian restaurant, Ciao. Wi-fi costs extra.

Chai Living Residences

APARTMENT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5608 6051; www.chailiving.com; Embankment Bldg, 400 N Suzhou Rd; 3 days/1 week/1 month apt from ¥3300/6000/13,500; ❄️ 📶; 🚇 Tiantong Rd)

If you need a stylish Shanghai address, you can't get much better than one of these 16 luxurious, beautifully appointed and individually styled apartments in the Embankment Building. The block is a living, breathing residential Shanghai block, and bumping into tenants merely adds authentic charm (although the grotty lift is a real shocker for some).

There's a minimum three-day stay – just enough time to fully savour the outstanding views (none lower than the fifth floor) and decor of each apartment, each with sound-proof German windows. Apartments range from 40 to 200 sq metres, with daily maid service, underfloor heating, kitchens with Nespresso coffee machines and tantalising river views.

Old Town & South Bund

★ Waterhouse at South Bund

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Shuishhe Shishang Sheji Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6080 2988; www.waterhouseshanghai.com; 1-3 Maojiayuan Rd, Lane 479, South Zhongshan Rd; 1-3 d ¥1100-2800; ❄️📶; 🚇 Xiaonanmen)

There are few cooler places to base yourself in Shanghai than this awfully trendy 19-room, four-storey South Bund converted 1930s warehouse right by the Cool Docks. Gazing out onto supreme views of Pudong (or into the crisp courtyard), the Waterhouse's natty rooms (some with terrace) are swishly dressed. Service can be wanting, though, and it's isolated from the action.

Hotel Indigo

HOTEL

(Yingdige Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.hotelindigo.com; 585 East Zhongshan No 2 Rd; d ¥1,430; ❄️📶🚰; 🚇 Xiaonanmen)

With its quirkily designed lobby – chairs like birdcages; tree branches trapped in cascades of glass jars; sheets of metal riveted to the wall; modish, sinuously shaped furniture; and funky ceiling lights – towering Hotel Indigo is a stylish South Bund choice. Chic and playful guestrooms are about colourful cushions and whimsical designs, with lovely rugs and spotless bathrooms.

Note that accommodation either looks out onto the Old Town (so-so) or the river (stellar). Service is very helpful and the infinity pool is a dream. Regular discounts tame prices by up to 60%.

French Concession

Blue Mountain Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Lanshan Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6304 3938; www.bmhostel.com; 2nd fl, Bldg 1, 1072 Quxi Rd, French Concession East; 1 dm ¥50-65, d ¥130-200, tr ¥240, q ¥280; ❄️@📶; 🚇 Luban Rd)

Although slightly out of the action, this excellent hostel is almost next door to Luban Rd metro station, so transport is sorted. Rooms are clean and simple with pine furniture and flooring, TV and kettle. There are women-only, men-

only and mixed 4-to-8 bed dorms, and there's a wi-fi-enabled bar-restaurant area with free pool table, free movie screenings and a kitchen with microwave.

★ **Magnolia Bed & Breakfast**

B&B

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 138 1794 0848; www.magnoliabnbshanghai.com; 36 Yanqing Rd, French Concession West; r ¥702-1296; 📶 @ 📶; 🚇 Changshu Rd)

Opened by Miranda Yao of the cooking school [The Kitchen at...](#), this cosy little five-room B&B is located in a 1927 French Concession home. It's Shanghai all the way, with an art deco starting point followed by comfort and stylish design. While rooms are on the small side, they are high-ceilinged and bright. It's a true labour of love.

There are discounts for stays of seven nights or more. There's no front desk, so phone ahead before visiting.

★ **Quintet**

B&B

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6249 9088; www.quintet-shanghai.com; 808 Changle Rd, French Concession West; d incl breakfast ¥850-1200; 🚫 📶 📶; 🚇 Changshu Rd)

This chic B&B has six beautiful double rooms in a 1930s townhouse that's not short on character. Some of the rooms are small, but each is decorated with style, incorporating modern luxuries such as large-screen satellite TVs and laptop-sized safes, with more classic touches such as wood-stripped floorboards and deep porcelain bathtubs.

Staff members sometimes get a BBQ going on the roof terrace and there's an excellent restaurant on the ground floor. No sign – just buzz on the gate marked 808 and wait to be let in. Be aware there is no elevator.

★ **Kevin's Old House**

B&B

(Laoshiguang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6248 6800; www.kevinsoldhouse.com; No 4, Lane 946, Changle Rd, French Concession West; 4 ste ¥1180-1280; 📶 📶; 🚇 Changshu Rd)

Housed in a secluded 1927 four-storey French Concession villa, this lovely

boutique hotel is an elegant yet affordable place to stay. Six suites are spread throughout the house, each decorated with care, featuring wooden floorboards, traditional Chinese furniture, stylish artwork and a few antiques. There's an upright piano in the entrance. Suites usually go for around ¥950.

★ **Langham Xintiandi**

LUXURY HOTEL

(Xintiandi Langting Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2330 2288; xintiandi.langhamhotels.com; 99 Madang Rd, French Concession East; r/ste ¥1600/1840; 📶 📶 📶; 🚇 South Huangpi Rd)

Xintiandi has become a magnet for luxury hotels, and they don't come much nicer than this one. Its 357 rooms all feature huge floor-to-ceiling windows, plenty of space to spread out in, and an attention to the minute details that make all the difference: Japanese-style wooden tubs in suites, heated bathroom floors, internet radio and white orchids.

★ **Andaz**

LUXURY HOTEL

(Andashi Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2310 1234; <http://shanghai.andaz.hyatt.com>; 88 Songshan Rd, French Concession East; r ¥1820-2820; 📶 📶 📶; 🚇 South Huangpi Rd)

Housed in a tower with retro '70s style windows, this fab hotel's design-led lobby – a trendy pronouncement of metal latticework – suggests an art space, a sensation that persists when you hunt for the open-plan reception (it's on the right). Along curving corridors, guestrooms are cool and modern, with sinks and bathtubs that glow in different colours and monumental flat-screen TVs.

West Nanjing Road & Jing'an

★ **Le Tour Traveler's Rest**

HOSTEL

(Letu Jing'an Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6267 1912; www.letourshanghai.com; 319 Jiaozhou Rd; dm ¥70, d ¥260-280, tr/q ¥360/360; 📶 @ 📶; 🚇 Changping Rd)

Housed in a former towel factory, this fabulous youth hostel leaves most

others out to dry. You'll pass a row of splendid *shikumen* (stone-gate houses) on your way down the alley to get here. The old-Shanghai textures continue once inside, with red-brick walls and reproduced stone gateways above doorways leading to simple but smart rooms and six-person dorms (shared bathrooms).

Double rooms are not very spacious, but they have flatscreen TVs and they're clean. Rooms are between ¥10 and ¥30 pricier on Fridays and Saturdays. The ground floor has a ping pong table, a pool table and wi-fi, all of which are free to use, and there's a fine rooftop bar-restaurant with outdoor seating. Bicycles can also be rented here.

Down an alley off Jiaozhou Rd

★ **Urbn**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5153 4600; www.urbnhotels.com; 183 Jiaozhou Rd; r from ¥1500; ❄️; **M** Changping Rd)

China's first carbon-neutral hotel not only incorporates recyclable materials and low-energy products where possible, it also calculates its complete carbon footprint – including staff commutes and delivery journeys – and off-sets it by donating money to environmentally friendly projects. Open-plan rooms are beautifully designed with low furniture and sunken living areas exuding space.

Puli

LUXURY HOTEL

(Puli Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 3203 9999; www.thepuli.com; 1 Changde Rd; d from ¥3880; ❄️ 📶 🌊; **M** Jing'an Temple)

With open-space rooms divided by hanging silk screens and an understated beige-and-mahogany colour scheme accentuated by the beauty of a few well-placed orchids, the Puli is an exquisite choice. The Zen calm and gorgeous design of this 26-storey hotel make another strong case for stylish skyscrapers. Book ahead for discounts of up to 60%.

Pudong New Area

★ Mandarin Oriental Pudong

HOTEL

(Shanghai Pudong Wenhua Dongfang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2082 9908; www.mandarinoriental.com; 111 South Pudong Rd; d from ¥3800; 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚇 Lujiiazui)

Slightly tucked away from the Lujiiazui five-star hotel melee in a sheltered riverside spot, the 362-room Mandarin Oriental is a visual feast, from the beautiful oval chandeliers in the lobby to the multicoloured glass murals (depicting forests) and gorgeous dining choices. All five-star expectations are naturally met, but it's the meticulous service that ices this cake.

Sumptuous rooms aside, there's a 24-hour pool and gym, spa and delicious views. The address may seem a bit stranded, but it's a short walk to the heart of Lujiiazui and there's a complimentary shuttle bus within the area.

★ Ritz-Carlton Shanghai Pudong

LUXURY HOTEL

(Shanghai Pudong Lisi Kaerdun Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2020 1888; www.ritzcarlton.com; Shanghai IFC, 8 Century Ave; d from ¥2800; 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚇 Lujiiazui)

From the stingray-skin effect wallpaper in the lift to its exquisite accommodation and stunning al fresco bar, the deliciously styled 285-room Ritz-Carlton in the Shanghai IFC is a peach. The beautifully designed rooms – a blend of feminine colours, eye-catching art deco motifs, chic elegance and dramatic Bund-side views – are a stylistic triumph.

★ Park Hyatt

LUXURY HOTEL

(Boyue Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6888 1234; www.parkhyattshanghai.com; Shanghai World Financial Center, 100 Century Ave; d from ¥2500; 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚇 Lujiiazui)

Spanning the 79th to 93rd floors of the towering Shanghai World Financial Center, this soaring hotel sees Pudong's huge buildings (bar the Shanghai Tower) dwarfing into Lego blocks as lobby views graze the tip of the Jinmao Tower. Smaller than the Grand Hyatt, it's a subdued but stylish 174-room affair with a deco slant, high-walled corridors of brown-fabric and grey-stone

textures.

Rooms are luxurious, with nifty features (mist-free bathroom mirror containing a small TV screen, automatically opening toilet seats). All come with huge TVs, free wi-fi, free fresh coffee, deep bathtubs, leather chaise lounges, sumptuous beds and outrageously good views. Accessed from the south side of the tower.

Eating

Shanghai cuisine itself is generally sweeter than other Chinese cuisines, and is heavy on fish and seafood. *Shengjian* (fried dumplings) and *xiaolongbao* (Shanghai's steamed dumpling) are copied everywhere else in China but are only true to form here. Make sure to reserve at fancier places.

The Bund & People's Square

A Bund address is the crown jewels in Shanghai, luring international superchefs and cashed-up diners. While the settings are often spectacular and the views are knockout, there's less diversity and charm than in the French Concession. For a handy line up of affordable Asian restaurants a mere stone's throw from the waterfront, pop into **Hongyi Plaza** (Hongyi Guoji Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 299 East Nanjing Rd, meals from ¥30; East Nanjing Rd).

★ Yuxin Chuancai

SICHUANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6361 1777; 5th fl, Huasheng Tower, 399 Jiujiang Rd; 5 dishes ¥20-98; 🕒11am-2.30pm & 5-9.30pm; 📶; 🚇East Nanjing Rd)

In the top league of Shanghai's best Sichuan restaurants, Yuxin is a dab hand in the arts of blistering chillies and numbing peppercorns. All-stars include the 'mouthwatering chicken' starter (*koushui ji*), or opt for the simply smoking spicy chicken (*lazi ji*), the crispy camphor tea duck (half/whole ¥38/68) or catfish in chilli oil.

Shanghai Grandmother

CHINESE

(Shanghai Laolao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6321 6613; 70 Fuzhou Rd; dishes ¥25-55;

🕒 10.30am-9.30pm; [M](#) East Nanjing Rd)

This packed eatery is within easy striking distance of the Bund and cooks up all manner of home-style dishes. You can't go wrong with the classics here: braised eggplant in soya sauce, Grandmother's braised pork, crispy duck, three-cup chicken and *mapo doufu* (tofu and pork crumbs in a spicy sauce) rarely disappoint.

South Memory

HUNANESE

(Wang Xiang Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6360 2797; 6th fl, Hongyi Plaza, 299 East Nanjing

Rd; 6 dishes ¥29-88; [M](#) East Nanjing Rd)

This popular Hunan place is a chopstick's throw from the waterfront with a range of spicy drypots (served in a personal mini wok), including favourites such as bamboo shoots and smoked pork, and chicken and chestnuts. Also on the menu are other *xiangcai* (Hunanese) classics (such as steamed pork served in a bamboo tube); it's absolutely jammed at lunchtime and only early birds get window seats.

Nanxiang Steamed Bun Restaurant

DUMPLINGS

(Nanxiang Mantou Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2nd fl, 666 Fuzhou Rd; 2 steamer 8 dumplings ¥25-

50; [M](#) People's Sq)

This pleasant branch of Shanghai's most famous dumpling restaurant overlooks Fuzhou Rd and can be slightly less crowded than other branches.

★ Lost Heaven

YUNNAN

(Huama Tiantang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6330 0967; www.lostheaven.com.cn; 17 East Yan'an

Rd; dishes ¥50-210; 🕒 noon-2pm & 5.30-10.30pm; [M](#) East Nanjing Rd)

Lost Heaven might not have the views that keep its rivals in business, but why go to the same old Western restaurants when you can get sophisticated Bai, Dai and Miao folk cuisine from China's mighty southwest? Specialities

are flowers (banana and pomegranate), wild mushrooms, chillies, Burmese curries, Bai chicken and superb *pu'er* (pu-erh) teas, all served up in gorgeous Yunnan-meets-Shanghai surrounds.

★ Mr & Mrs Bund

FRENCH

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 6323 9898; www.mmbund.com; 6th fl, Bund 18, 18 East Zhongshan No 1 Rd; 6 mains ¥150-800, 2-/3-course set lunch ¥200/250; 🕒 lunch 11.30am-2pm Mon-Fri, dinner 6-11pm Fri & Sat, 6-10.30pm Sun-Thu, night 10.30pm-2am Tue-Thu, 11pm-2am Fri & Sat; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

French chef Paul Pairet's casual eatery aims for a space that's considerably more playful than your average fine-dining Bund restaurant. The mix-and-match menu has a heavy French bistro slant, but reimagined and served up with Pairet's ingenious presentation. But it's not just the food you're here for: it's the postmidnight meals (discounted), the Bingo nights and the wonderfully wonky atmosphere. Reserve.

★ M on the Bund

EUROPEAN

(Mishi Xicanting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 6350 9988; www.restaurantgroup.com/mbund/home.html; 7th fl, 20 Guangdong Rd; 7 mains ¥128-288, 2-course set lunch ¥188, light lunch menu ¥118; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

M exudes a timelessness and level of sophistication that eclipses the razzle-dazzle of many other upscale Shanghai restaurants. The menu ain't radical, but that's the question it seems to ask you – is breaking new culinary ground really so crucial? Crispy suckling pig and a chicken tajine with saffron are, after all, simply delicious just the way they are.

The art deco dining room and 7th-floor terrace are equally gorgeous. Finish off with drinks in the Glamour Bar downstairs and reserve well in advance. It's also heavenly for a spot of afternoon tea (from ¥88 to ¥138).

★ Lobby, Peninsula

BRITISH

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; <http://shanghai.peninsula.com>; 32 E Zhongshan No 1 Rd; 1/2 persons

¥290/540; 🕒 2-6pm; 📶; 🚇 E Nanjing Rd)

Afternoon heritage tea for smart/casually attired visitors in the sumptuous Peninsula lobby is a decadent delight, with gorgeously presented scones, macarons, clotted cream, jam, cookies, tea, of course, and live piano tinklings. For ¥440, a glass of champers is thrown in.

In the evenings, a live jazz band takes over. You can dine here all day a la carte from 6am to midnight.

PEOPLE'S SQUARE FOOD STREETS

The following two streets are lined with an amazing variety of Chinese restaurants, each with its own speciality.

Huanghe Road Food Street (Huanghe Lu Meishi Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚇 People's Square) With a prime central location near People's Park, Huanghe Rd covers all the bases from cheap lunches to late-night post-theatre snacks. Huanghe Rd is best for dumplings – get 'em fried at **Yang's** (Xiaoyang Shengjian Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 97 Huanghe Rd; 4 dumplings ¥6; 🕒 6.30am-8.30pm; 🚇 People's Sq) (No 97) or served up in bamboo steamers across the road at **Jiajia Soup Dumplings** (Jiajia Tangbao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 90 Huanghe Rd; 🕒 7am-10pm).

Yunnan Road Food Street (Yunnan Lu Meishi Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚇 Dashijie) Yunnan Rd has some great speciality restaurants and is just the spot for an authentic meal after museum hopping at People's Square. Look out for Shaanxi dumplings and noodles at No 15 and five-fragrance dim sum at **Wu Fang Zhai** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 28 Yunnan Rd; 🕒 7am-10pm).

Old Town & South Bund

★ Wuyue Renjia

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 234 Fuyou Rd; 🕒 8am-9.30pm; 🚇 Yuyuan Garden)

Right next to KFC north of the Yuyuan Gardens, this upstairs place doesn't look particularly appealing but it serves typical Old Town fare and it's a well-known family name in Shanghai. They serve up excellent and filling bowls of Suzhou noodles. Choose between *tang* (soupy) and *gan* (dry) noodles; in

either case, the flavouring comes on a side plate.

Try the noodles with meat and pickled vegetables (*zhacai rousi mian*; ¥10;) or the spicy meat noodles in red oil (*hongyou larou mian*; ¥13;).

★ Kebabs on the Grille

INDIAN

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6152 6567; No 8, Cool Docks, 505 South Zhongshan Rd; 8 mains ¥45-125, set lunch Mon-Fri ¥58; 🕒 11am-10.30pm; 🚇 Xiaonanmen)

This immensely popular and busy Cool Docks restaurant is a genuine crowd-pleaser, and has alfresco seating by the pond outside. The Boti mutton (barbecued lamb pieces) is adorable. There's a delicious range of tandoori dishes, live table-top grills, vegetarian choices, smooth and spicy daal options, plus an all-you-can-eat Sunday brunch (¥150). Another central branch can be found west of **People's Sq** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 3315 0132; 227 North Huangpi Rd, inside Central Plaza; dishes ¥60-90, set lunch ¥48-58; 🚇 People's Sq).

Char

STEAK

(Qia Canting [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 3302 9995; www.char-thebund.com; 29th-31st fl, Hotel Indigo, 585 East Zhongshan No 2 Rd; 29-31 steaks from ¥438, burgers ¥298, mains from ¥188; 🕒 6-10pm; 📶; 🚇 Xiaonanmen)

Char has become a Shanghai steakhouse sensation. Park yourself on a sofa against the window or in a comfy chair facing Lujiazui for optimum views. Or keep one eye on the open kitchen to see how your Tajima Wagyu rib-eye steak, grilled black cod or seafood tower is coming along. There's a choice of six different steak knives. Book ahead.

The views continue in spectacular fashion from the terrace of the supremely chilled-out upstairs **bar** (Qia Jiuba [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.char-thebund.com; 30th fl, Hotel Indigo, 585 East Zhongshan No 2 Rd; 30 🕒 5pm-1.30am Mon-Thu, to 2.30am Fri & Sat, 2pm-1am Sun; 🚇 Xiaonanmen).

French Concession

★ Jian Guo 328

SHANGHAINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 328 West Jianguo Rd; mains from ¥12; 🕒 11am-9.30pm;  Jiashan Rd)

Frequently rammed, this boisterous two-floor MSG-free spot tucked away on Jianguo Rd does a roaring trade on the back of fine Shanghai cuisine. You can't go wrong with the menu, but for pointers the deep-fried spare ribs feature succulent pork in a crispy coating while the eggplant in casserole is a rich, thick and thumb-raising choice, high on flavour.

★ Noodle Bull

NOODLES

(Henniu Mian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6170 1299; unit 3b, 291 Fumin Rd; 3b noodles ¥28-35; 🕒 11am-midnight; ;  Changshu Rd, South Shaanxi Rd)

Noodle Bull is the bees-knees: far cooler than your average street-corner noodle stand (minimalist concrete chic and funky bowls), inexpensive, and boy is that broth slurpable. It doesn't matter whether you go vegetarian or for the roasted beef noodles (¥38), it's a winner both ways. Vegetarians can zero in on the carrot-and-cucumber-sprinkled sesame-paste noodles (¥32), which are divine.

★ Spicy Joint

SICHUANESE

(Xinxianghui [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6470 2777; 3rd fl, K Wah Center, 1028 Middle Huaihai Rd; 3 dishes ¥12-60; 🕒 11am-10pm; ;  South Shaanxi Rd)

If you only go to one Sichuan joint in town, make it this one, where the blistering heat is matched only by its scorching popularity. Dishes are inexpensive by the city's standards; favourites include massive bowls of spicy catfish in hot chilli oil, an addictive garlic-cucumber salad, smoked-tea duck and chilli-coated lamb chops.

Be forewarned that the wait can be excruciatingly long at peak times; you'll need a mobile number to secure a place in the queue.

Cha's

CANTONESE

(Cha Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 30 Sinan Rd; dishes ¥20-55; 🕒 11am-1.30am;  South Shaanxi Rd)

This rammed Cantonese diner does its best to teleport you to 1950s Hong Kong, with old-style tiled floors, whirring ceiling fans and even an antique Coca-Cola ice box to set the scene. You'll need to wait to get a table, so use the time wisely and peruse the menu of classic comfort food (curries, sweet-and-sour pork) in advance.

Fortune Cookie

AMERICAN CHINESE

(Qianyu Bing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6093 3623; www.fortunecookieshanghai.com; 4th fl, 83 Changshu Rd; 4 mains from ¥36; 🕒 11.30am-10pm Sun-Thu, to 11pm Fri & Sat;  Changshu Rd)

Selling coals to Newcastle and fridges to Eskimos was always high-risk, but Fortune Cookie's owners have cashed in on the nostalgic expat demand for Chinatown staples and the curiosity of Shanghai diners. Now you don't have to fly to the US to find Brooklyn *kung po* chicken, tofu chop suey, *moo shu* pork, orange chicken or sweet-and-sour pork.

Baker & Spice

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 195 Anfu Rd; mains from ¥40; 🕒 6am-10.30pm; 📶;  Changshu Rd)

Its wooden table a solitary slab of rustic wholesomeness, this bakery-cafe serves stuff the doctor did and didn't order, all lovingly presented: sandwiches on dense, fibre-rich bread; cellophane packed nuts; yoghurt cups; muffins; pain-au-chocolates; tarts; cakes; and sizeable vanilla custard Berliners. A couple of box tables are flung outside for sun-catching.

Fengyu Shengjian

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 41 Ruijin No 2 Rd, cnr Nanchang Rd; mains from ¥5; 🕒 6am-10pm;  South Shaanxi Rd)

If you thought Shanghai dining was all white linen tablecloths, steaming hand towels and perfectly formed waitresses in cheongsam clutching gold-

embossed menus, think again. Chow down on fine *xiaolongbao* (dumplings; ¥6), *shengjian* (fried dumplings; ¥5) and *miantiao* (noodles; ¥8) with the hard-working proletariat at Fengyu, where plastic trays, fixed furniture and zero English rule.

Pay at the entrance and join the queue.

★ Di Shui Dong

HUNANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6253 2689; 2nd fl, 56 South Maoming Rd; 2 dishes ¥28-128; 🕒 11am-12.30am; [M](#) South Shaanxi Rd)

Until the chilled lagers arrive, the faint breeze from the spreading of the blue-and-white tablecloth by your waiter may be the last cooling sensation at Di Shui Dong, a rustic upstairs shrine to the volcanic cuisine of Hunan. Loved by Shanghainese and expats in equal measure, dishes are ferried in by sprightly peasant-attired staff to tables stuffed with enthusiastic, red-faced diners.

★ ElEfante

MEDITERRANEAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 5404 8085; www.el-efante.com; 20 Donghu Rd; 🕒 11am-3pm & 6-10.30pm Tue-Sun; [M](#) South Shaanxi Rd)

Willy Trullas Moreno's latest Shanghai creation sits squarely at the heart of the French Concession – in the same spot as his first venture – with a choice patio and romantic 1920s villa setting. It's tantalising Mediterranean menu with tapas-style dishes has pronounced Spanish and Italian inflections, and has local gastronomes buzzing.

Food Fusion

MALAYSIAN

(Ronghe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 8th fl, Parkson Plaza, 918 Middle Huaihai Rd; 8 dishes ¥30-168, lunch sets from ¥38; 🕒 10am-11pm; [M](#) South Shaanxi Rd)

Up on the 8th floor of one of Huaihai Rd's numerous shopping malls you'll find this hopping Malaysian option. Join the thronging office workers filling the lift and ascend to aromas of coriander, star anise, nutmeg, cinnamon and

ginger. Crowd-pleasing classics include *rendang* beef, chilli-flecked *laksa* (coconut curry noodle soup), chicken satay, fish curry, *roti canai* and Nyonya desserts.

Baoluo Jiulou

SHANGHAINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6279 2827; 271 Fumin Rd; dishes ¥58; 🕒 11am-3am; 🚇 Changshu Rd, Jing'an Temple)

Gather up some friends to join the Shanghainese at this expanded, highly popular Fumin Rd venue. It's a great place to get a feel for Shanghai's famous buzz. Try the excellent baked eel (*baoluo kaoman*) or pot-stewed crab and pork.

Ferguson Lane

ITALIAN, FRENCH

(Wukang Ting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.fergusonlane.com.cn; 378 Wukang Rd; mains ¥48-130; 🚇 Shanghai Library, Jiaotong University)

On those rare days when Shanghai's skies are cloud-free, the secluded Ferguson Lane courtyard fills up in the blink of an eye with sun-starved diners. There are several tempting options here, including the **Coffee Tree** (

[MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Ferguson Lane, 376 Wukang Rd; mains from ¥50; 🕒 9am-10pm; 📶;

🚇 Shanghai Library), which features panini, pasta, salads and organic coffee, and

Farine ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); <http://farine-bakery.com>; Ferguson Lane, 378 Wukang Rd; 1

🕒 7am-8pm; 🚇 Shanghai Library, Jiaotong University), for breads and pastries.

Pho Real

VIETNAMESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 166 Fumin Rd; noodles from ¥52, set lunch ¥60-70; 🕒 11am-2pm & 6-10pm; 🚇 Changshu Rd, Jing'an Temple)

This pint-sized eatery, overhung with woven fishing traps suspended from the ceiling, does a brisk trade in *pho* (beef noodle soup flavoured with mint, star anise and coriander), spring rolls and good-value set lunches. Round it all out with a chilled Saigon lager (¥40). It only seats about 20, with no reservations, so pitch up early and prepare to wait.

There's another branch at **1465 Fuxing Rd** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎6437 2222; 1465 Fuxing Rd; 🕒11am-2pm & 6-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3.30pm & 6-10pm Sat-Sun; **M**Changshu Rd), which does take reservations.

Xibo

CENTRAL ASIAN

(Xibo Xinjiang Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎5403 8330; www.xiboxinjiang.com; 3rd fl, 83 Changshu Rd; 3 mains ¥35-92; 🕒noon-2.30pm & 6pm-midnight; **M**Changshu Rd)

Trust Shanghai to serve up a stylish Xinjiang joint, because this isn't the type of place you're likely to find out in China's wild northwest. But who's complaining? When you need a mutton fix, beef skewers or some spicy 'big plate chicken', Xibo will do you right (and the restaurant donates healthily to charities in West China).

Vedas

INDIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.vedascuisine.com; 3rd fl, 83 Changshu Rd; 3 mains from ¥68; 🕒11.30am-2pm & 6-10.30pm; ❄️; **M**Changshu Rd)

Vedas hides the sterility of its modern tower-block setting with good-looking woodwork, warm service and a generous menu of full-flavoured Indian dishes. The delightful Bombay prawn curry (¥88) is piquant and creamy in equal measure, while the basmati rice is cooked to perfection and arrives in steaming abundance.

West Nanjing Road & Jing'an

★ Jen Dow Vegetarian Restaurant

CHINESE, VEGETARIAN

(Rendao Sucai Xiaochi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 153 Yuyuan Rd; mains from ¥18; 🕒9am-midnight; 🍴; **M**Jing'an Temple)

Your body is a temple, they say, so treat it with respect by dining at this fab ground-floor meat-free eatery slung out behind the Jing'an Temple. You can slurp up a vast, tasty bowl of noodles densely sprinkled with crisp and fresh mushroom, bamboo shoots, cabbage and carrots for a mere ¥18 – it's a meal

in itself.

Also at hand are vegetarian hotpots and a host of other choices, plus egg tarts and other baked delicacies at the door. Order fast-food style from the counter. Upstairs, the smarter 2nd floor – with glass jars of herbs and dried grains lining the walls – is a civilised and tasty choice, and has a Chinese and Western menu. The blistering and salty *mapo doufu* (tofu and pork crumbs in a spicy sauce) hits the Sichuan nail squarely on the head, with mushrooms in place of meat, and the sizzling seafood bake with melted cheese is crisp and filling. Service is efficient; the only fly in the ointment is the Richard Clayderman musak.

The 3rd floor is smart self-service; 4th floor is exclusive set meals.

★ Sumerian

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 415 North Shaanxi Rd; mains from ¥20; 🕒 7.30am-7.30pm; 📶;

M West Nanjing Rd)

Run by a bright and sunny Californian and a sprightly Chinese, good-looking Sumerian packs a lot into a small space, with bagels, pumpkin soup, roasted vegetable salads, wraps and stand-out coffees (Mexican Pluma Real Organic, Colombian Popayan decaf) on the menu.

Wagas

CAFE

(Wogesi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); B11A, Citic Sq, 1168 West Nanjing Rd; 11A mains ¥48-60; 🕒 7am-10pm; 📶; **M** West Nanjing Rd)

Express sandwiches are half-price before 10am weekdays; there are after-6pm deals; and you can hang out here for hours with your tablet and no one will shoo you away – need we say more? Hip Wagas is the best and most dependable of the local cafes, with chilled beats, tantalising wraps, salads and sandwiches, and prices displayed on an overhead blackboard menu.

★ Commune Social

TAPAS

(Shishe [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.communesocial.com; 511 Jiangning Rd; mains ¥58-398; 🕒 noon-

2.30pm & 6-10.30pm Tue-Fri, noon-3pm & 6-10.30pm Sat, till 3pm Sun;  Changping Rd)

Dividing neatly into upstairs cocktail bar with terrace, downstairs open-kitchen tapas bar and dessert bar, this natty Neri & Hu–designed Jason Atherton venture blends a stylish, yet relaxed, vibe with some sensational international dishes, exquisitely presented by chef Scott Melvin. It's the talk of the town, but has a no-reservations policy, so prepare to queue.

★ Fu 1039

SHANGHAISE

(Fu Yao Ling San Jiu ;  5237 1878; 1039 Yuyuan Rd; dishes ¥60-108;  Jiangsu Rd)

Set in a three-storey 1913 villa, Fu attains an old-fashioned charm. Foodies who appreciate sophisticated surroundings and Shanghainese food on par with the decor, take note – Fu is a must. The succulent standards won't disappoint: the smoked fish starter and stewed pork in soy sauce are recommended, with the sauteed chicken and mango and the sweet-and-sour Mandarin fish a close second.

The entrance, down an alley and on the left, is unmarked and staff speak little English. There's a minimum charge of ¥200 per head here.

WUJIANG RD FOOD STREET

The original food street (Wujiang Lu Xiuxian Jie) may have been replaced, but on the snack front, Wujiang Rd still has the goods. The first spot to go scavenging is the multistorey building at No 269 (above one of the West Nanjing Rd metro exits). The ever-popular **Nanxiang Steamed Bun Restaurant** and **Yang's Fry Dumplings** are both on the 2nd floor. Down at street level, you'll find plenty of cafes, ramen chains, ice-cream vendors, pastry and chocolate shops and stalls selling more-traditional snacks like roasted chestnuts.

Pudong New Area

★ South Beauty

SICHUANSE, CANTONESE

(Qiao Jiangnan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍5047 1817; 10th fl, Superbrand Mall, 168 West Lujiazui Rd; 10 dishes from ¥20; 🕒11am-10pm; [M](#)Lujiazui)

This smart restaurant with vermilion leather furniture and silky white table cloths on the 10th floor of the Superbrand Mall cooks up classic dishes from fiery Chongqing, Chengdu and the south. The scorching boiled beef with hot pepper in chilli oil (¥48) opens the sweat pores, while the piquant *mapo doufu* (¥38) arrives in a scarlet oily sauce. Divine.

Alternatively, if you don't like it hot, go for the delicious pan-fried scallion buns (¥26). Check the back pages of the menu for the cheaper dishes. You'll need to reserve for the coveted Bund-facing window seats on the terrace. Branches throughout Shanghai.

★ **Baguo Buyi**

SICHUANESE

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍3111 8055; Rm 110, 1368 Shibo Avenue; 110 mains from ¥35; [M](#)China Art Palace)

Pretty much the most authentic Sichuan food in town is cooked up by the diligent chefs at this famous restaurant in the World Expo Site, originally founded in Chengdu. With no concessions to the dainty Shanghai palate, prepare for a spicy firecracker of a meal. Make it an evening visit and catch the spectacularly lit Mercedes Benz Arena next door.

★ **Sproutworks**

HEALTH FOOD

(Doumiao Gongfang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.sproutworks.com.cn; B2-06-07, Superbrand Mall, 168 West Lujiazui Rd; B2 mains from ¥35, lunch sets from ¥50; 🕒10am-10pm; [M](#)Lujiazui)

For a healthy recharge, Sproutworks offers a natural and earthy focus on fresh, wholesome food, in a clean-cut (but rather square) setting. Cleanse your insides with delicious smoothies; load up with brown rice, tasty soups and crisp, panini sandwiches; try freshly tossed salads, fresh juices, homemade desserts and lunch sets. Most dishes are pre-prepared so ready to go.

At the time of writing, a branch was about to open in Xintiandi.

North Shanghai (Hongkou)

★ Guoyuan

HUNANESE

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 524 Dongjiangwan Rd; mains from ¥18; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm & 5-10pm Sat & Sun; 🚇 Hongkou Football Stadium)

The cool lime-green tablecloths do little to tame the tempestuous flavours of this fantastic Hunan restaurant. The *tieban doufu* (sizzling tofu platter; ¥30) here is a magnificent dish, but its fiery flavours are almost eclipsed by the enticing *xiangwei qiezibao* (Hunan aubergine hotpot; ¥20) and the lovely *ziran yangrou* (lamb with cumin; ¥32).

South Shanghai (Xujiahui)

★ Din Tai Fung

SHANGHAINESE

(Ding Tai Feng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 3469 1383; 5th fl, Grand Gateway 66; mains from ¥29; 🕒 10.30am-9pm; 🚇 Xujiahui)

This brightly lit and busy Taiwan-owned restaurant chain may still be peddling its ‘Top 10 restaurants of the world’ mantra after a two-decades-old review in the *New York Times*, but it still delivers some absolutely scrummy Shanghai *xiaolongbao* dumplings. Not cheap perhaps (five for ¥29, or 10 for ¥58), but they’re worth every *jiao*.

Kota’s Kitchen

JAPANESE

(Pitoushi Kaochuanshao Jiuba [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6481 2005; www.kotaskitchen.com; 2905 Xietu Rd; mains from ¥35, skewers from ¥15; 🕒 6pm-1am; 🚇 Shanghai Stadium, Shanghai Indoor Stadium)

This entertaining, funky, very welcoming and bijou Beatles-themed Japanese yakitori restaurant-bar cooks up some enticing grilled meat skewers, perfectly accompanied by a heady range of homemade *shochu* spirits. The effect is an enticing blend of 1960s musical nostalgia and Japanese culinary skill: book ahead.



Drinking & Nightlife

Shanghai is awash with watering holes, their fortunes cresting and falling with the vagaries of the latest vogue. Drinks are pricier here than in the rest of China, retailing from around ¥40 (beer) or ¥60 (cocktails) at most places, so happy-hour visits (typically 5pm to 8pm) can be crucial. There's a high turnover of clubs, so check listings websites and magazines for the latest.

The Bund & People's Square

★ Long Bar

BAR

(Lang Ba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6322 9988; 2 East Zhongshan No 1 Rd; 🕒 4pm-1am Mon-Sat, 2pm-1am Sun; 📶; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

For a taste of colonial-era Shanghai's elitist trappings, you'll do no better than the Long Bar. This was once the members-only Shanghai Club, whose most spectacular accoutrement was a 34m-long wooden bar. Foreign businessmen would sit here according to rank, comparing fortunes, with the taipans (foreign heads of business) closest to the view of the Bund.

★ New Heights

BAR

(Xin Shijiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6321 0909; 7th fl, Three on the Bund, 3 East Zhongshan No 1 Rd; 🕒 11.30am-1.30am; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

The most amenable of the big Bund bars, this splendid roof terrace has the choicest angle on Pudong's hypnotising neon performance. There's always a crowd, whether for coffee, cocktails or meals (set meals from ¥188).

★ Bar Rouge

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 021 6339 1199; 7th fl, Bund 18, 18 East Zhongshan No 1 Rd; 7 ¥100 cover charge after 10pm Fri & Sat; 🕒 6pm-late; 🚇 East Nanjing Rd)

Bar Rouge attracts a cashed-up party crowd who come for the fantastic views from the terrace and the all-night DJ parties. The lipstick-red decor is slick

and the crowd is slicker, so ordinary mortals can sometimes struggle to get served on busy nights.

Sir Elly's Terrace

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 14th fl, The Peninsula Shanghai, 32 East No 1 Zhongshan Rd; 32 🕒 5pm-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat; 📶; **M** East Nanjing Rd)

Offering some of Shanghai's best cocktails, shaken up with that winning ingredient: 270-degree views to Pudong, over Suzhou Creek and down the Bund. Of course it's not cheap, but the views are priceless.

★ Barbarossa

BAR

(Babalusha Huisuo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.barbarossa.com.cn; People's Park, 231 West Nanjing Rd; 🕒 11am-2am; 📶; **M** People's Sq)

Set back in People's Park alongside a pond, Barbarossa is all about escapism. Forget Shanghai, this is Morocco channeled by Hollywood set designers. The action gets steadily more intense as you ascend to the roof terrace, via the cushion-strewn 2nd floor, where the hordes puff on fruit-flavoured hookahs. At night, use the park entrance just east of the former Shanghai Raceclub building (Shanghai Paoma Zonghui).

PUB CRAWL SHANGHAI

Pub Crawl

PUB

(<http://pubcrawlshanghai.com>; ¥150; 🕒 9.30am Thu, Fri & Sat)

Sign up to [Pub Crawl](#) Shanghai to check out the city's bars and clubs.

Old Town

Old Shanghai Teahouse

TEAHOUSE

(Lao Shanghai Chaguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5382 1202; 385 Middle Fangbang Rd; tea from

¥45; 🕒 9am-9pm; 🚇 Yuyuan Garden)

A bit like the attic of an eccentric aunt, this wonderfully decrepit 2nd-floor teahouse, overlooking the throng of Old Street, is a temple to the 1930s, with music on scratched records, period typewriters, aged photos, an old fireplace, sewing machines, electric fans, an ancient fridge, oodles of charm and tea, of course.

French Concession

★ Cafe des Stagiaires

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.cafestagiaires.com; 54-56 Yongkang Rd; 54-56 mains from ¥40; 🕒 10am-midnight; 📶; 🚇 South Shaanxi Rd)

The best bar by far on buzzing Yongkang Rd, this hip oasis of Francophilia spills over with slightly zany Gallic charm. There's a coke bottle chandelier and a (French) geography lesson via the wine list: Languedoc, Provence, Cote du Rhone, Loire, Alsace, Bourgogne, Bordeaux and, *bien sur*, Rest of the World. Each table is regularly stocked with addictive chilli peanuts.

If that's insufficient, sample the quality charcuterie, cheese and pizzas.

★ Shelter

CLUB

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 5 Yongfu Rd; 🕒 9pm-4am Wed-Sat; 🚇 Shanghai Library)

The darling of the underground crowd, Shelter is a reconverted bomb shelter where you can count on great music, cheap drinks and a nonexistent dress code. They bring in a fantastic line-up of international DJs and hip-hop artists; the large barely lit dance area is the place to be. Cover for big shows is usually around ¥30.

★ Boxing Cat Brewery

BREWERY

(Quanjimao Pijiuwu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.boxingcatbrewery.com; 82 West Fuxing Rd; 🕒 5pm-2am Mon-Thu, 3pm-2am Fri, 10am-2am Sat & Sun; 📶; 🚇 Shanghai Library, Changshu Rd)

A deservedly popular three-floor microbrewery, with a rotating line-up of

fresh beers that range from the Standing 8 Pilsner to the Right Hook Helles. But that's not all – the omnipresent restaurateur Kelley Lee has paired Southern classics (gumbo) and sandwiches (Cali-Cajun chicken club) to go with the drinks. Come for a pint; stay for dinner.

★ Bell Bar

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); bellbar.cn; Tianzifang, back door No 11, Lane 248, Taikang Rd; 11

🕒 11am-2am; 📶; 🚇 Dapujiao)

This eccentric, unconventional boho haven is a delightful Tianzifang hideaway, with creaking, narrow wooden stairs leading to a higgledy-piggledy array of rooms to the tucked-away attic slung out above. Expect hookah pipes, mismatched furniture, warped secondhand paperbacks and a small, secluded mezzanine for stowaways from the bedlam outside. It's in the second alley (Lane 248) on the right.

★ Dean's Bottle Shop

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 40 Yongkang Rd; beers from ¥15; 🕒 noon-10pm; 🚇 South Shaanxi Rd)

This well-priced nirvana for lovers of the grain (and, to a lesser extent, grape) has row upon row of imported bottled bliss – Moosehead lager, Old Rasputin, Young's double chocolate, Bombadier ale, pear cider – all at bargain prices. With more than enough labels to test even the most well-travelled palates, it's more shop than bar, but you can sit down.

It's a great start or concluding point to a trawl along the bars of Yongkang Rd. There's another shop on nearby [Shaoxing Rd](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 37 Shaoxing Rd; 🚇 Dapujiao).

Shanghai Brewery

BREWERY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.shanghaibrewery.com; 15 Dongping Rd; 🕒 10am-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; 📶; 🚇 Changshu Rd, Hengshan Rd)

Hand-crafted microbrews, a big range of comfort food, pool tables and sports on TV...this massive two-storey hang-out might have it all. Well, it certainly

has enough to stand out on a strip already bursting with established names. Try the Czech-style People's Pilsner or the Hong Mei Amber Hefeweizen, which start at a mere ¥20 during happy hour (from 2pm to 8pm).

YONGKANG RD BAR STREET

A new bar street suddenly formed largely overnight during 2013 in the French Concession, kicked off by the peerless [Cafe des Stagiaires](#), which still leads the way. The small strip of Yongkang Rd between South Xiangyang Rd and Jiashan Rd was suddenly crammed with bars, making it a convenient Lan Kwai Fong--style (albeit smaller and quieter) catch-all for a night on the Shanghai tiles. However, a pavement curfew at 10pm reigns to appease locals living on the road, who were up in arms over the sudden, noisy transformation of their neighbourhood.

Jing'an

★ Spot

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6247 3579; 331 Tongren Rd; 🕒 11am-late; 📶; 🚇 Jing'an Temple)

The district's upscale watering hole, Spot offers two sections: dining (nonsmoking) and the bar (smoking). It's much slicker than the competition, with fluorescent-coloured chairs, a tank of moon jellyfish, fancy dining options plus live music. But when push comes to shove, it's still a sports bar, best for catching football and rugby matches in the middle of the night.

Pudong New Area

★ Flair

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 58th fl, Ritz-Carlton Shanghai Pudong, 8 Century Ave; 58 cocktails ¥90; 🕒 5am-2am; 📶; 🚇 Lujiazui)

Wow your date with Shanghai's most intoxicating nocturnal visuals from the 58th floor of the Ritz-Carlton, where Flair nudges you that bit closer to the

baubles of the Oriental Pearl TV Tower. If it's raining, you'll end up inside, but that's OK as the chilled-out interior is supercool and there's a minimum price (¥400) for sitting outside.

Cloud 9

BAR

(Jiuchongtian Jiulang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5049 1234; 87th fl, Jinmao Tower, 88 Century Ave; 87 wine from ¥65, cocktails ¥88; 🕒 5pm-1am Mon-Fri, 11am-2am Sat & Sun; [M](#) Lujiazui)

Watch day fade to night as the neon slowly flickers on. After an espresso martini or two, you'll probably find out what it means to be *shanghaied* (in the very best sense of the word). Access to Cloud 9 is through the lobby of the Grand Hyatt.

North Shanghai (Hongkou)

★ Vue

BAR

(Feichang Shimao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 32nd & 33rd fl, Hyatt on the Bund, 199 Huangpu Rd; 32-33 🕒 6pm-1am; [M](#) Tiantong Rd)

Extrasensory nocturnal views of the Bund and Pudong from the Hyatt on the Bund with an outdoor Jacuzzi to go with your raised glasses of bubbly or Vue martinis (vodka and mango puree).

★ Entertainment

There's something for most moods in Shanghai: opera, rock, hip-hop, techno, salsa and early-morning waltzes in People's Sq. None of it comes cheap, however (except for the waltzing, which is free).

Acrobatics

★ Shanghai Centre Theatre

ACROBATICS

(Shanghai Shangcheng Juyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6279 8948; Shanghai Centre, 1376

West Nanjing Rd; tickets ¥180, ¥240 & ¥300;  Jing'an Temple)

The Shanghai Acrobatics Troupe has popular performances here most nights at 7.30pm. It's a short but fun show and is high on the to-do list of most first-time visitors. Buy tickets a couple of days in advance from the ticket office on the right-hand side at the entrance to the Shanghai Centre.

Shanghai Circus World

ACROBATICS

(Shanghai Maxicheng ;  6652 7501; www.era-shanghai.com/era/en/; 2266 Gonghexin Rd; admission ¥120-600;  Shanghai Circus World)

Out on the far northern outskirts of town you'll find this impressive complex. The show – *Era: Intersection of Time* – combines awesome acrobatics with new-fangled multimedia elements. Shows start at 7.30pm. Tickets are available at the door, but booking ahead is advised.

Chinese Opera

Yifu Theatre

CHINESE OPERA

(Yifu Wutai  ;  6322 5294; www.tianchan.com; 701 Fuzhou Rd; tickets ¥30-280;  People's Sq)

One block east of People's Sq, this is the main opera theatre in town and recognisable by the huge opera mask above the entrance. The theatre presents a popular program of Beijing, Kun and Yue (Shaoxing) opera. A Beijing opera highlights show is performed several times a week at 1.30pm and 7.15pm; pick up a brochure at the ticket office.

Live Music

★ Yuyintang

LIVE MUSIC

(; www.yytlive.com; 851 Kaixuan Rd;  9pm-midnight Tue-Sun;  West Yan'an Rd)

Small enough to feel intimate, but big enough for a sometimes pulsating

atmosphere, Yuyintang has long been one of the top places in the city to see live music. Any Shanghai rock band worth its amps plays here, but you can also catch groups on tour from other cities in China and beyond. Rock is the staple diet, but anything goes, from hard punk to gypsy jazz.

Fairmont Peace Hotel Jazz Bar

JAZZ

(Jueshi Ba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6138 6883; 20 East Nanjing Rd; 🕒 5.30pm-2am, live music from 7pm; [M](#) East Nanjing Rd)

Shanghai's most famous hotel features Shanghai's most famous jazz band, a septuagenarian sextet that's been churning out nostalgic covers such as 'Moon River' and 'Summertime' since the dawn of time. There's no admission fee, but you'll need to sink a drink from the bar (draught beer starts at ¥70, a White Lady is ¥98).

The original band takes the stage from 7pm to 9.45pm; to get the pulse moving, a 'sultry female vocalist' does her bit from 9.45pm.

MAO Livehouse

LIVE MUSIC

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.mao-music.com; 3rd fl, 308 South Chongqing Rd; 3 [M](#) Dapuqiao)

One of the city's best and largest music venues, MAO is a stalwart of the Shanghai music scene, with acts ranging from rock to pop to electronica. Check the website for schedules and ticket prices.

TICKETS

Tickets for all of Shanghai's performing-arts events can be purchased at the venues where the performances take place. Tickets are also available from **Smart Ticket** (www.smartshanghai.com/smartticket) and the **Shanghai Cultural Information & Booking Centre** (Shanghai Wenhua Xinxi Piaowu Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6217 2426; www.culture.sh.cn; 272 Fengxian Rd; 🕒 9am-7pm; [M](#) West Nanjing Rd), which is directly behind the Westgate Mall on West Nanjing Rd. It often has tickets available when other places have sold out.

Classical Music & Theatre

★ Shanghai Grand Theatre

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(Shanghai Dajuyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6386 8686; www.shgtheatre.com; 300 Renmin Ave; [M](#) People's Sq)

Shanghai's state-of-the-art concert venue hosts everything from Broadway musicals to symphonies, ballets, operas and performances by internationally acclaimed classical soloists. There are also traditional Chinese music performances here. Pick up a schedule at the ticket office.

Shanghai Concert Hall

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(Shanghai Yinyue Ting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6386 2836; www.shanghaiconcerthall.org; 523 East Yan'an Rd; ¥80-480; [M](#) People's Sq, Dashijie)

A decade or so ago, the government shunted all 5650 tonnes of this classic 1930s building 66m away from busy East Yan'an Rd to a quieter park-side setting, a relocation that actually cost more than building a brand-new concert hall. It features smaller-scale concerts plus local and international soloists.

ACUPRESSURE MASSAGE

Shanghai's midrange massage parlours are a must – for the price of a cocktail or three, you get your own set of PJs, some post-therapy tea and Chinese flute music to chill out with. Just don't expect the masseuses to be gentle. As they say: no pain, no gain. Reserve in advance. Beware of offers of massage along East Nanjing Rd, you could be fleeced.

Dragonfly (Youting Baojian Huisuo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎5403 9982; www.dragonfly.net.cn; 206 Xinle Road; massage per 60 mins ¥188; 🕒10am-2am; [M](#) South Shaanxi Rd)

Green Massage (Qinglai Yangshen [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎5386 0222; www.greenmassage.com.cn; 58 Taicang Rd; massages & spa treatments ¥198-318; 🕒10.30am-2am; [M](#) South Huangpi Rd)

Cinemas

Cathay Theatre

CINEMA

(Guotai Dianyingyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 870 Middle Huaihai Rd; tickets from ¥40;  South Shaanxi Rd)

This 1932 art deco theatre is one of the cheaper and more centrally located French Concession cinemas. If you want to know if the film is in the original, ask if it's the *yuanban* version.

Shopping

From mega-malls to independent boutiques and haute couture, Shanghai is once again at the forefront of Chinese fashion and design.

The Bund & People's Square

★ Shanghai Museum Art Store

GIFTS

(Shanghai Bowuguan Yishupin Shangdian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 201 Renmin Ave;  9.30am-5pm;  People's Sq)

Attached to the Shanghai Museum and entered from East Yan'an Rd, this store offers refreshing variety from the usual tourist tat. Apart from the excellent range of books on Chinese art and architecture, there's a good selection of quality cards, prints and slides. The annexe shop sells fine imitations of some of the museum's ceramic pieces, as well as scarves and bags.

There's another branch near **Xintiandi** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 123 Taicang Rd;  11am-7pm;  South Huangpi Rd).

★ Suzhou Cobblers

ACCESSORIES

(Shanghai Qixiang Yishupin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); unit 101, 17 Fuzhou Rd; 101  10am-6.30pm;  East Nanjing Rd)

Right off the Bund, this cute boutique sells exquisite hand-embroidered silk slippers, bags, hats and clothing. Patterns and colours are based on the

fashions of the 1930s, and as far as the owner, Huang Mengqi, is concerned, the products are one of a kind. Slippers start at ¥480 and the shop can make to order.

Old Town

Yuyuan Bazaar is a frantic sprawl of souvenir shops with some choice gift-giving ideas and quality handicrafts, from painted snuff bottles to paper and leather silhouette cuttings, delightful Chinese kites, embroidered paintings, and clever palm and finger paintings, but sadly the hard sell is off-putting. Shops along nearby [Old Street](#) are more ye olde, selling everything under the Shanghai sun from calligraphy to teapots, memorabilia, woodcuts, reproduction 1930s posters and surreal 3D dazzle photos of kittens.

★ Shiliupu Fabric Market

FABRIC

(Shiliupu Mianliao Cheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6330 1043; 2 Zhonghua Rd; 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm; **M** Xiaonanmen)

Having silk shirts, dresses and cashmere coats tailor-made for a song is one of Shanghai's great indulgences. This three-storey building, one of several fabric markets in the city, is conveniently located near the Yuyuan Bazaar. It's a far cheaper source of silk than many shops, with prices no higher than ¥200 per metre.

★ Dongtai Road Antique Market

SOUVENIRS

(Dongtai Lu Guwan Shichang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 5582 5254; Dongtai Rd; 🕒 9am-6pm; **M** Laoximen)

A block west of South Xizang Rd, this market street has more than 100 stalls strewn along both Dongtai Rd and Liuhekou Rd. It's a long sprawl of miniature terracotta warriors, Guanyin figures, imperial robes, walnut-faced *luohan* statues, twee lotus shoes, helicopter pilot helmets and Mao-era knick-knacks, but generally only recent stuff such as art deco (and later) ornaments are genuine.

French Concession

With boutiques on almost every corner, the French Concession is where it's at for shoppers.

★ Tianzifang

CLOTHING, SOUVENIRS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Lane 210, Taikang Rd; Dapuqiao)

Burrow into the *lilong* (alleys) here for a rewarding haul of creative boutiques, selling everything from hip jewellery and yak-wool scarves to retro communist dinnerware. **Shanghai 1936** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Unit 110, No 3, Lane 210; 🕒10am-8pm; Dapuqiao) is the place to pick up a tailored *waitao* (Chinese jacket) or *qipao* (figure-hugging Chinese dress); it also has a nearby **men's store** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Unit 910, No 9, Lane 210; 🕒10am-8pm; Dapuqiao).

Further along is **Harvest** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rm 18, Bldg 3, Lane 210, Taikang Rd, Tianzifang; 3 🕒9.30am-8pm; Dapuqiao), which sells Miao embroidery from southwest China, and the courtyard at No 7, Lane 210 (aka the Yard): look for Himalayan jewellery and tapestries at **Joma** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Unit 6, No 7, Lane 210, Taikang Rd, Tianzifang; 7-6 Dapuqiao) and local fashion designers at **La Vie** (Sheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞6445 3585; Tianzifang, The Yard, No 7, Lane 210, Taikang Rd; 7 🕒10.30am-8.30pm; Dapuqiao). For funky ceramics, cloisonne and lacquer, stop by excellent **Pilingpalang** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); <http://pilingpalang.com>; No 220, Lane 210, Taikang Rd, Tianzifang; 22 🕒10am-9pm; Dapuqiao). Pop into colourful **Link Shanghai** (Dajie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.olinksh.com; No 5, Lane 248, Taikang Rd, Tianzifang; 5 🕒10.30am-9pm; Dapuqiao) for imaginative art work and books and **Shanghai Code** (Shanghai Mima [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); No 9, Lane 274, Taikang Rd, Tianzifang; 9 🕒2.30-9.30pm; Dapuqiao) for vintage spectacle frames. You'll find 1960s propaganda prints and old calendar posters at **Unique Hill Gallery** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.uniquehillgallery.com; No 10, Lane 210, Taikang Rd, Tianzifang; 10 🕒9am-10pm; Dapuqiao). The vibrant and colourful selection of crafts at **Esydragon** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞021 6467 4818; No 51, Lane 210,

Taikang Rd, Tianzifang; 51 Dapuqiao) makes for excellent gifts; **Zhenchalin Tea** (Zhenchalin  ; No 13, Lane 210, Taikang Rd, Tianzifang; 13  10am-8.30pm; Dapuqiao) has Chinese herbal teas in nifty packaging. Other stand-out stores are **Chouchou Chic** ( ; No 5, Lane 248, Taikang Rd; 5 Dapuqiao) and **Urban Tribe** ( ; No 14, Lane 248, Taikang Rd; 14 Dapuqiao).

★ Xintiandi

CLOTHING, ACCESSORIES

( ; www.xintiandi.com; 2 blocks btwn Taicang, Zizhong, Madang & South Huangpi Rds; South Huangpi Rd, Xintiandi)

There are few bargains to be had at Xintiandi, but even window-shoppers can make a fun afternoon of it here. The North Block features embroidered accessories at **Annabel Lee** (Anli Jiaju  ; Xintiandi North Block, Bldg 3; 3  10.30am-10.30pm; South Huangpi Rd, Xintiandi), high-end fashion from **Shanghai Tang** (Shanghai Tan  ; Xintiandi North Block, Bldg 15; 15 South Huangpi Rd) and home furnishings at **Simply Life** (Yiju Shenghuo  ;  6387 5100; Xintiandi North Block, Unit 101, 159 Madang Rd; 101  10.30am-10pm; South Huangpi Rd, Xintiandi) and a few scattered souvenir shops. The South Block has not one, but two malls, including **Xintiandi Style** (Xintiandi Shishang  ; 245 Madang Rd;).

★ Nuomi

CLOTHING

(Nuomi  ; www.nuomishanghai.com; 196 Xinle Rd;  11am-10pm; Changshu Rd)

This Shanghai-based label seems to do everything right: gorgeous dresses made from organic cotton, silk and bamboo; eye-catching jewellery fashioned from recycled materials; a sustainable business plan that gives back to the community; and even an irresistible line of kids' clothes.

Brocade Country

HANDICRAFTS

(Jinxiu Fang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 616 Julu Rd; 🕒 10am-7.30pm; 🚇 South Shaanxi Rd)

Peruse an exquisite collection of minority handicrafts from China's southwest, most of which are secondhand (ie not made for the tourist trade) and personally selected by the owner Liu Xiaolan, a Guizhou native. Items for sale include embroidered wall hangings (some of which were originally baby carriers), sashes, shoes and hats, as well as silver jewellery.

Garden Books

BOOKS

(Taofen Xiwen Shuju [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 325 Changle Rd; 🕒 10am-10pm; 📶; 🚇 South Shaanxi Rd)

The ice-cream parlour occupies about as much space as its well-stocked bookshelves. For all those Penguin paperback, gelato-to-go moments.

Jing'an

★ Spin

CERAMICS

(Xuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 360 Kangding Rd; 🕒 11am-8pm; 🚇 Changping Rd)

High on creative flair, Spin brings Chinese ceramics up to speed with its oblong teacups, twisted sake sets and all manner of cool plates, chopstick holders, and 'kung fu' and 'exploded pillar' vases. Pieces are never overbearing, but trendily lean towards the whimsical, geometric, thoughtful and elegantly fashionable.

★ Amy Lin's Pearls

PEARLS

(Aimin Linshi Zhenzhu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Room 30, 3rd fl, 580 West Nanjing Rd; 3 🕒 10am-8pm; 🚇 West Nanjing Rd)

The most reliable retailer of pearls of all colours and sizes. Both freshwater pearls (from ¥80), including prized black Zhejiang pearls (from ¥3000), and saltwater pearls (from ¥200) are available here. The staff speaks English and will string your selection for you. This place sells jade and jewellery, too.

Han City Fashion & Accessories Plaza

CLOTHING

(Hancheng Fushi Lipin Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 580 West Nanjing Rd; 🕒 10am-10pm; **M** West Nanjing Rd)

This unassuming-looking building is a popular location to pick up knock-offs, with hundreds of stalls spread across four floors. Scavenge for bags, belts, jackets, shoes, suitcases, sunglasses, ties, T-shirts and electronics. Amy Lin's Pearls is located here. Prices can be inflated, so bargain hard.

Pudong

★ AP Xinyang Fashion & Gifts Market

SOUVENIRS

(Yatai Xinyang Fushi Lipin Shichang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 10am-8pm; **M** Science & Technology Museum)

This mammoth underground market by the Science & Technology Museum metro station is Shanghai's largest collection of shopping stalls. There's tons of merchandise and fakes, from suits to moccasins, glinting copy watches, Darth Vader toys, jackets, Lionel Messi football strips, T-shirts, Indian saris, Angry Birds bags, Bob Marley Bermuda shorts, Great Wall snow globes: everything under the sun.

Hongkou & North Shanghai

Dashanghai

ANTIQUES

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 181 Duolun Rd; 🕒 9am-5.30pm, to 6pm in summer; **M** Dongbaoxing Rd)

Explore keenly at this Duolun Rd shop, where shelves spill forth with all manner of historic collectables from pre-Liberation China; books and catalogues; 1950s maps of Beijing and Shanghai; genuine posters and authentic memorabilia from the Cultural Revolution; black-and-white-photos; unopened matchboxes and cigarette packs from the 1960s; Republican-era lipsticks; toothbrushes and more.

Information

Free English and bilingual maps of Shanghai are available at airports, tourist information & service centres, bookshops and many hotels. Metro maps (*ditie xianlutu*) are usually available at all stations.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafes are scarce in touristy areas – it's more convenient to get online at your hotel or at a wi-fi hotspot. Otherwise, ask your hotel for the closest *wangba* (internet cafe) and take your passport; there are several around [Shanghai Railway Station](#).

MEDIA

Grab free copies of *That's Shanghai*, *City Weekend* and *Time Out Shanghai* for a plug into what's on in town.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Huashan Worldwide Medical Center

MEDICAL

(Huashan Yiyuan Guoji Yiliao Zhongxin  6248 3986; www.sh-hwmc.com.cn;  8am-10pm)

Hospital treatment and outpatient consultations are available at the 8th-floor foreigners' clinic of Huashan Hospital, with 24-hour emergency treatment on the 15th floor in building 6.

Parkway Health

MEDICAL

(Yijijia Yiliao Baojian Fuwu ; Unit 30, Mandarin City, 788 Hongxu Rd; 30)

With seven locations around town. Offers comprehensive private medical care from internationally trained physicians and dentists. Members can access after-hours services and an emergency hotline.

Watson's

PHARMACY

(Quchenshi  ;  6474 4775; 787 Middle Huaihai Rd;)

The Hong Kong pharmacy **Watson's** can be found in the basements of malls all over town (there's also a branch in Westgate Mall), mainly selling

imported toiletries and a limited range of simple over-the-counter pharmaceuticals.

MONEY

Almost every hotel has money-changing counters. Most tourist hotels, upmarket restaurants and banks accept major credit cards. Twenty-four hour ATMs are everywhere; most accept major cards.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); The Bund; 🕒 9am-noon & 1.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

Right next to the Peace Hotel. Tends to get crowded, but is better organised than Chinese banks elsewhere around the country (it's worth a peek for its grand interior). Take a ticket and wait for your number. For credit-card advances, head to the furthest hall (counter No 2).

Citibank

BANK

(Huaqi Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); The Bund; 🕒 24hr; [M](#) East Nanjing Rd)

Useful ATM open 24 hours.

HSBC

BANK

(Hongkong & Shanghai Bank; Huifeng Yinhang)

Shanghai Centre (Hongkong & Shanghai Bank; West Nanjing Rd); **The Bund** (Hongkong & Shanghai Bank; 15 East Zhongshan No 1 Rd) Has ATMs in the above locations; also an ATM at Pudong International Airport arrivals hall.

POST

Larger tourist hotels have post offices where you can mail letters and small packages – the most convenient option. China Post offices and post boxes are green. The **International Post Office** (Zhongguo Youzheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6393 6666; 276 North Suzhou Rd; 🕒 7am-10pm) is just north of Suzhou Creek.

PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju ; 2895 1900; 1500 Minsheng Rd; 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

Visa extensions in Shanghai are available from the **PSB**.

TELEPHONE

After Skype (www.skype.com) and Viber (www.viber.com), internet phone (IP) cards are the cheapest way to call internationally (¥1.80 per minute to the US), but may not work with some hotel phones. For mobile phone SIM cards, China Mobile shops are ubiquitous; cards can also be bought from newspaper kiosks with the China Mobile sign.

China Mobile (Bund)

TELEPHONE

(Zhongguo Yidong Tongxin  ; 21 Yuanmingyuan Rd; 8.30am-6.30pm;
East Nanjing Rd)

For sim cards, top-up credit and mobile phones.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Your hotel should be able to provide you with maps and most of the tourist information you require. There are also numerous Tourist Information and Service Centres, which are conveniently located near major tourist sights.

The standard of English varies from good to non-existent, but free maps and some information is available. These include: **The Bund** (Luyou Zixun Fuwu

Zhongxin  ; 6357 3718; 518 Jiujiang Rd; 9.30am-8pm); **Jing'an**

(Luyou Zixun Fuwu Zhongxin  ; 5386 1882; 138 S Chengdu Rd; 9am-

8.30pm); **Old Town** (Luyou Zixun Fuwu Zhongxin  ; 6355 5032;
149 Jiujiachang Rd; 9am-7pm)

Shanghai Call Centre

TELEPHONE

(962 288)

This toll-free English-language hotline is possibly the most useful telephone number in Shanghai – it can even give your cab driver directions if you've got a mobile phone.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

STA Travel

TRAVEL AGENCY

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2281 7723; www.statravel.com.cn; Room 1609, Shanghai Trade Tower, 188 Siping Rd; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat; 🚇 Hailun Rd)

Sells train and air tickets, and can issue international student identity cards.

WEBSITES

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com/shanghai) Destination information, hotel bookings, traveller forum and more.

Time Out Shanghai (www.timeoutshanghai.com) Authoritative, in-the-know entertainment listings.

City Weekend (www.cityweekend.com.cn/shanghai) Comprehensive listings website of popular expat magazine. News stories can be weak.

Shanghaiist (www.shanghaiist.com) Excellent source for news and reviews.

Smart Shanghai (www.smartshanghai.com) Quality listings website with forum.

Getting There & Away

With two airports, rail and air connections to places all over China, and buses to destinations in adjoining provinces and beyond, Shanghai's a handy springboard to the rest of the land.

AIR

Shanghai has international flight connections to most major cities.

All international flights (and a few domestic flights) operate out of **Pudong International Airport** (PVG; Pudong Guoji Jichang 📍 6834 1000, flight information 96990; www.shairport.com), with most (but not all) domestic flights operating out of [Hongqiao Airport](#) on Shanghai's western outskirts. If you are making an onward domestic connection from Pudong, it is essential that you find out whether the domestic flight leaves from Pudong or Hongqiao, as the former takes *at least* an hour to reach.

Daily (usually several times) domestic flights connect Shanghai to major cities in China:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥1300, 1½ hours
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥1700, two hours and 20 minutes
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥1300, two hours
- ➔ **Guilin** ¥1250, two hours
- ➔ **Qingdao** ¥800, one hour
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥1350, two hours

You can buy air tickets almost anywhere, including at major hotels, travel agencies and online websites such as ctrip.com and elong.net. Discounts of up to 40% are standard.

BOAT

Domestic boat tickets can be bought from the **domestic boat tickets shop** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6308 9822; 21 East Jinling Rd, 🕒 9am-6pm; **M** East Nanjing Rd) on East Jinling Rd.

Overnight boats (¥139 to ¥499, 11½ hours) to **Putuoshan** depart Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7.30pm from the **Wusong Wharf** (Wusong Matou **M** Songbing Rd), almost at the mouth of the Yangzi River; to reach Wusong Wharf take metro Line 3 to Songbing Rd and then walk or hail a taxi.

A high-speed ferry service (¥258 to ¥352, three hours, 10.10am) to Putuoshan departs daily from Xiao Yang Shan. A bus (price included in ferry ticket; two hours, departs at 8.15am) runs to Xiao Yang Shan from the bus station by Nanpu Bridge.

BUS

Shanghai has several long-distance bus stations, though given the traffic gridlock it's best to take the train when possible.

The vast **Shanghai south long-distance bus station** (Shanghai Changtu Keyun Nanzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5436 2835; www.ctnz.net; 666 Shilong Rd; **M** Shanghai South Railway Station) serves cities in south China, including:

- ➔ **Hangzhou** (main bus station at Jiubao, Hangzhou north bus station and Hangzhou south bus station) ¥68, two hours, regular (7.10am to 7.20pm)
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥96 to ¥105, four hours
- ➔ **Nanxun** ¥47, 2½ hours, eight daily, take the bus for Huzhou (6.50am to 7.28pm)
- ➔ **Suzhou** (south and north bus stations) ¥38, 1½ hours, regular (6.27am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Tunxi/Huang Shan** ¥135, six hours, nine daily
- ➔ **Wuyuan** ¥210, five hours, two daily (9.32am & 6.52pm)
- ➔ **Wuzhen** ¥51, two hours, 11 daily (7.15am to 6.17pm)
- ➔ **Xitang** ¥36, 1½ hours, 20 daily
- ➔ **Xin'anjiang** ¥121, two daily (8.34am & 2.34pm)
- ➔ **Zhouzhuang** ¥29, two daily (8.11am & 1.21pm)

The massive **Shanghai long-distance bus station** (Shanghai Changtu Qiche Keyun Zongzhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6605 0000; www.kyzz.com.cn; 1666 Zhongxing Rd; **M** Shanghai Railway Station), north of Shanghai's train station, has buses to destinations as far away as Gansu province and Inner Mongolia. Regular buses run to Suzhou (frequent) and Hangzhou (frequent), as well as Nanjing (12 daily) and Beijing (¥311, 4pm). Although it appears close to the train station, it is a major pain to reach on foot. It's easiest to catch a cab here.

Shanghai Sightseeing Buses run to the canal towns outside Shanghai.

TRAIN

Many parts of the country can be reached by direct train from Shanghai. The city has three useful stations: the main **Shanghai Railway Station** (Shanghai Huoche Zhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6317 9090; 385 Meiyuan Rd; **M** Shanghai Railway Station), **Shanghai South Railway Station** (Shanghai Nanzhan 📍 9510 5123; 200 Zhaofeng Rd) and the newer **Hongqiao Railway Station** (Shanghai Hongqiao Zhan **M** Hongqiao Railway Station) near Hongqiao Airport. Wherever you're going, make sure to get your tickets as early as possible. If you're arriving in Shanghai,

don't get off at **Shanghai West Railway Station** (Shanghai Xizhan), which is inconvenient for travellers.

You can procure tickets at the station (generally stressful), via your hotel, travel agency (much easier but expect a commission charge), at train ticket offices around town, or using online ticketing providers, such as **China Highlights** (www.chinahighlights.com), which can deliver e-tickets by email.

At the main station there are two ticket halls (*shoupiaoting*): one in the main building (same-day tickets) and another on the east side of the square (advance tickets). One counter will have English speakers; you will need your passport to buy tickets. Hopelessly, the bilingual automated machines (zizhu shoupiaochu) require Chinese ID.

Alternatively, tickets can be purchased for a small commission (¥5) from one of the numerous train ticket offices (huochepiao yushouchu) around town, such as: **Bund** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 384 Middle Jiangxi Rd; 🕒 8am-8pm); and **French Concession** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 12 Dongping Rd; 🕒 8am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 1-5.30pm Sat & Sun).

Prices and times listed following are always for the fastest train. Some trains leaving from Shanghai Railway Station:

- ➔ **Beijing (D class)** seat/sleeper ¥309/696, eight to 11½ hours, three daily
- ➔ **Chengdu** seat/hard sleeper ¥254/464, 35 hours, four daily
- ➔ **Hangzhou (G class)** 2nd/1st class ¥93/148, 1½ hours, four daily
- ➔ **Hong Kong** hard/soft sleeper ¥471/732, 18½ hours, one daily (6.20pm)
- ➔ **Huangshan** seat/hard sleeper ¥93/174, 11½ hours, two daily
- ➔ **Lhasa** hard/soft sleeper ¥841/1310, 48 hours, one every other day (7.36pm)
- ➔ **Nanjing (G class)** 2nd/1st class ¥140/220, two hours, frequent
- ➔ **Suzhou (G class)** 2nd/1st class ¥40/60, 30 minutes, frequent
- ➔ **Urumqi** hard/soft sleeper ¥695/1075, 44 hours, one daily (8.25pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an North (D class)** seat/sleeper ¥338/834, 16 to 20 hours, 10 daily

Some trains leaving from Shanghai South Train station:

- ➔ **Guilin** hard/soft sleeper ¥351/537, 22 hours, four daily
- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥29, 2½ to three hours, frequent
- ➔ **Kunming** hard/soft sleeper ¥533/822, 38 hours, three daily
- ➔ **Yushan (Sanqing Shan)** ¥130, six hours, six daily

Some trains leaving from Hongqiao Train Station:

- ➔ **Beijing (G class)** 2nd/1st class ¥553/933, 5½ hours, very regular (7am to 7.55pm)
- ➔ **Hangzhou (G class)** 2nd/1st class ¥73/117, one hour, very regular (6.20am to 10.36pm)
- ➔ **Qingdao (G class)** 2nd/1st class ¥518/818, 6½ hours, four daily
- ➔ **Shaoxing North (G class)** 2nd/1st class ¥92/150, 1½ hours, 10 daily
- ➔ **Suzhou (G class)** 2nd/1st class seat ¥39/59, 30 minutes, regular
- ➔ **Suzhou North (G class)** 2nd/1st class seat ¥34/64, 23 minutes, very regular
- ➔ **Xiamen North (D class)** 2nd/1st class ¥328/413, eight hours, 13 daily
- ➔ **Zhengzhou (D class)** 2nd/1st class ¥236/379, seven hours, three daily

Getting Around

The best way to get around Shanghai is the metro, which now reaches most places in the city, followed by cabs. Buses (¥2) are tricky to use unless you are a proficient Mandarin speaker. Whatever mode of transport you use, try to avoid rush hours between 8am and 9am, and 4.30pm and 6pm.

Walking from A to B, unless it's a short journey, is generally an exhausting and sometimes stressful experience.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

➔ **Pudong International Airport** handles most international flights and some domestic flights. There are four ways to get from the airport to the city:

taxi, Maglev train, metro and bus.

Taxi rides into central Shanghai cost around ¥160 and take about an hour; to Hongqiao Airport costs around ¥200. Avoid monstrous overcharging by using the regular taxi rank outside the arrivals hall. Regular buses run to Suzhou (¥84, three hours) and Hangzhou (¥100, three hours).

The bullet-fast and time-saving **Maglev** (Cifu Lieche www.smtdc.com; economy one-way/return ¥50/80, with same-day air ticket ¥40, children under/over 1.2m free/half-price) train runs from Pudong International Airport to its terminal in Pudong in just eight minutes, from where you can transfer to the metro (Longyang Rd station) or take a taxi (¥40 to People's Sq). Economy single/return tickets cost ¥50/80, but show your same-day air ticket and it's ¥40 one way. Children under 1.2m travel free (taller kids are half-price). Trains depart every 20 minutes from roughly 6.45am to 9.40pm.

Metro Line 2 runs from Pudong International Airport to Hongqiao Airport, passing through central Shanghai. It is convenient, though not for those in a hurry. From Pudong Airport, it takes about 75 minutes to People's Sq (¥7) and 1¾ hours to Hongqiao Airport (¥8).

There are also numerous **airport buses**, which take between one and 1½ hours to run to their destinations in Puxi. Buses leave from the airport roughly every 15 to 25 minutes from 6.30am to 11pm; they go to the airport from roughly 5.30am to 9.30pm (bus 1 runs till 11pm). The most useful buses are airport bus 1 (¥30), linking Pudong International Airport with Hongqiao Airport, and airport bus 2 (¥22), linking Pudong International Airport with the Airport City Terminal on West Nanjing Rd, east of Jing'an Temple. Airport bus 5 (¥22) links Pudong International Airport with Shanghai train station via People's Sq.

➔ **Hongqiao Airport** is 18km from the Bund, a 30- to 60-minute trip. Most flights now arrive at Terminal 2, connected to the city centre via metro Lines 2 and 10 (30 minutes to People's Sq). Terminal 1 is connected to the centre of town by line 10; shuttle buses run regularly (6am to 11pm) between both terminals, taking 13 minutes. Airport bus 1 (¥30, 6am to 9.30pm) runs to Pudong International Airport; bus 941 (¥6) links Hongqiao Airport with

Shanghai main train station. Taxis cost ¥70 to ¥100 to central Shanghai.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Ferry

The Jinling Rd Ferry (Jinling Lu Lundu Zhan) runs between the southern end of the Bund and the Dongchang Rd dock in Pudong. Ferries (¥2) run roughly every 15 minutes from 7am to 10pm. The Fuxing Rd Ferry (Fuxing Lu Lundu Zhan) runs from Fuxing Rd north of the Cool Docks in the South Bund to Dongchang Rd as well. Ferries (¥2) run every 10 to 20 minutes from around 5am to 11pm.

Metro

The Shanghai metro system, indicated by a red M, currently runs to 14 lines after huge expansion, with further lines and extensions under construction. Lines 1, 2 and 10 are the most useful for travellers. Single-fare tickets cost ¥3 to ¥10 depending on distance, sold from coin-and-note-operated bilingual automated machines (and from booths at some stations); keep your ticket until you exit.

Metro maps are available at most stations; the free tourist maps also have a small metro map printed on them.

TRANSPORT CARD

If you are going to be doing a lot of travelling in Shanghai, it's worth investing in a **transport card** (jiaotong ka), as it can save you queuing and finding change (but does not offer real savings to travellers). Sold at metro stations and some convenience stores, cards can be topped up with credit and used on the metro, most buses and in taxis. Credits are electronically deducted from the card as you swipe it over the sensor at metro turnstiles and near the door on buses; when paying your taxi fare, hand the card to the driver, who will swipe it for you. You'll need to pay a deposit of ¥20, which can be refunded at metro stations. One-day (¥18) and three-day metro (¥45) passes are also sold from information desks.

TAXI

Shanghai's taxis are reasonably cheap, hassle-free and easy to flag down

outside rush hour, although finding a cab during rainstorms is impossible. Flag fall is ¥14 (for the first 3km) and ¥18 at night (11pm to 5am).

Bashi

TAXI

(📍 96840)

Green-coloured Bashi is one of Shanghai's major taxi companies.

Dazhong

TAXI

(📍 96822)

One of Shanghai's main taxi companies is the turquoise-coloured Dazhong.

Qiangsheng

TAXI

(📍 6258 0000)

Gold-coloured Qiangsheng taxis is one of the main taxi companies in Shanghai.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO JAPAN

The **China-Japan International Ferry Company** (Zhongguo Guoji Lundu Youxian Gongsì [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6595 6888, 6325 7642; www.chinajapanferry.com; 18th fl, Jin'an Bldg, 908 Dongdaming Rd, tickets from ¥1300, plus ¥150 fuel surcharge) has staggered departures weekly to either Osaka or Kobe in Japan on Saturdays at 12.30pm. The **Shanghai International Ferry Company** (Shanghai Guoji Lundu [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6595 8666; www.shanghai-ferry.co.jp/english/; 15th fl, Jin'an Bldg, 908 Dongdaming Rd; tickets from ¥1300, plus ¥150 fuel surcharge) has departures to Osaka on Tuesdays at 11am. Both ferry companies are located in the Jin'an Building (908 Dongdaming Rd;), north of the Bund. Fares on all boats (44 hours) range from ¥1300 in an eight-bed dorm to ¥6500 in a deluxe twin cabin. Reservations are recommended in July and August. Passengers must be at the harbour three hours before departure to get through immigration. All vessels depart from the **Shanghai Port International Cruise Terminal** (Shanghai Gang Guoji Keyun Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gaoyang Rd;).

Around Shanghai

Zhujiajiao

Around Shanghai

The most popular day trips from Shanghai are to Hangzhou (a quick zip away on the train) and Suzhou.

ZHUJIAJIAO

Zhujiajiao

VILLAGE

(www.zhujiajiao.com/en; optional ticket incl entry to 4/8/9 sights ¥30/60/80)

Thirty kilometres west of Shanghai, Zhujiajiao is easy to reach and charming – as long as your visit does not coincide with the arrival of phalanxes of tour buses.

What survives of this historic canal town today is a charming tableau of Ming- and Qing-dynasty alleys, bridges and guzhen (old town) architecture, its alleyways steeped in the aroma of chou doufu (stinky tofu).

On the west side of the recently built City God Temple bridge stands the **City God Temple** (Chenghuang Miao Caohe Jie, admission ¥10; 🕒 7.30am-4pm), moved here in 1769 from its original location in Xuejiabang. Further north along Caohe St, running alongside the canal, is the **Yuanjin Buddhist Temple** (Yuanjin Chanyuan Caohe Jie, admission ¥5; 🕒 8am-4pm) near the distinctive Tai'an Bridge (Tai'an Qiao). Pop into the temple to climb the Qinghua Pavilion (Qinghua Ge) at the rear, a towering hall visible from many parts of town.

Earmark a detour to the **Zhujiajiao Catholic Church of Ascension** (Zhujiajiao Yesu Shengtiantang 27 Caohe Jie, No 317 Alley, 317), a gorgeous church with its belfry rising in a detached tower by the rear gate. Also hunt down the **Qing Dynasty Post Office** (admission ¥5).

Of Zhujiajiao's quaint ancient bridges, Fangsheng Bridge (Fangsheng Qiao) is the most photogenic, first built in 1571. Tour boats offer comprehensive tours from various points, including Fangsheng Bridge. Tickets are ¥60/120 per boat for the short/long tour; speed boats (¥40) also

run from the bridge.

Food sellers line Bei Dajie, flogging everything from pig's trotters to plump coconuts, while plentiful cafes have squeezed in along Caohe Jie, Xihu Jie and Donghu Jie. To overnight, a charming choice is the **Cao Tang Inn** (Caotang Kezhan  021 5978 6442; 31 Dongjing Jie; dm ¥100, d ¥300-320;   ) , not far from Fangsheng Bridge. Book ahead.

To reach Zhujiajiao, hop on the direct pink and white Huzhu Gaosu Kuaixian bus (¥12, one hour, every 20 minutes from 6am to 10pm, less frequently in low season) from the **Pu'an Rd Bus Station** (Pu'an Lu Qiche Zhan  ; Pu'an Lu;  Dashijie) just south of People's Sq. Zhujiajiao can also be reached from the bus station in Tongli (¥15, 1½ hours).

Jiangsu

Jiangsu Highlights

Nanjing

Around Nanjing

Suzhou

Around Suzhou

Tongli

Luzhi

Mudu

Tianping Shan & Lingyan Shan

Zhouzhuang

Jiangsu



Pop 78.9 million

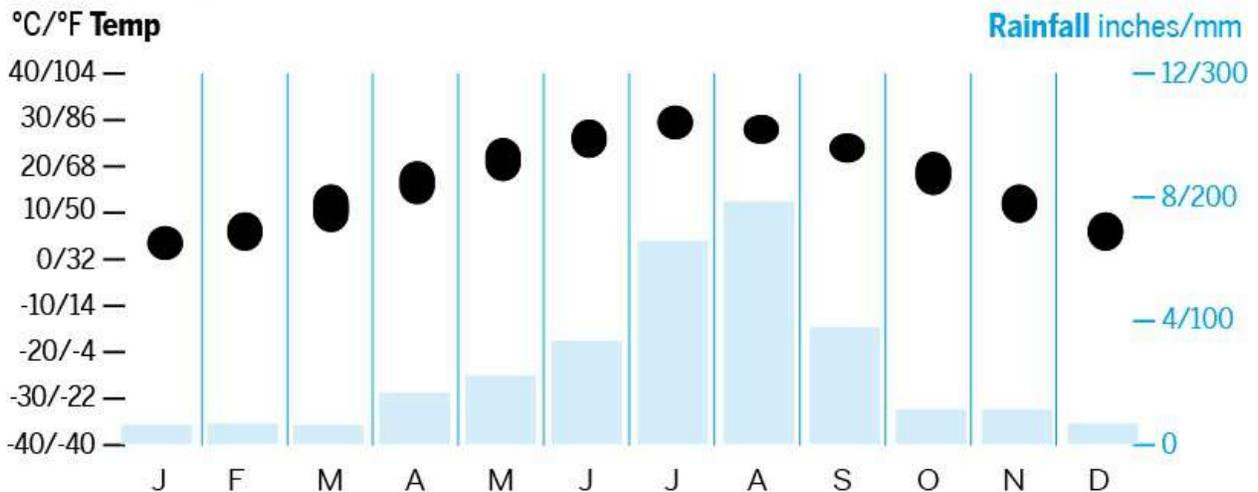
Why Go?

A zip away from Shanghai, Jiangsu is an alluring and easy-to-manage region. The province, which owed its historical wealth to silk and salt production, boasts the Grand Canal as well as elaborate waterways that thread through the Yangzi River (Chang Jiang). It's known throughout China for its cute canal towns, enchanting gardens and sophisticated opera and folk arts.

The charms of the province are so well known that it has attracted domestic tourists in large numbers since the 1990s, much earlier than most other places in the country. Package tourists flock to Suzhou anytime of the year, and you're likely to be rubbing elbows with them in the gardens or any of the famous water towns. But don't be put off. Kick-start your day early, go slightly off the main streets, and you'll see the old-world charm and have the place to yourself. In the provincial capital and university town of Nanjing there's a lot that remains relatively undiscovered by outsiders: Ming-dynasty heritage, leafy parks and fantastic museums.

When to Go

Nánjīng



- **Mar & Apr** Best time to visit the gardens when flowers bloom in early spring.
- **Oct** Mist-shrouded vistas of gardens and canals in autumn.
- **Dec** Snow-covered views of the pretty canal towns of Suzhou in winter.

Best Classical Gardens

- [Garden of the Master of the Nets](#)
- [Humble Administrator's Garden](#)
- [Presidential Palace](#)

Best Museums

- [Nanjing Museum](#)
- [Suzhou Museum](#)
- [Memorial Hall of the Nanjing Massacre](#)

Jiangsu Highlights



- 1 Get a grade A cultural fix at the splendid [Nanjing Museum](#)
- 2 Feast your eyes on the historical artefacts at [Suzhou Museum](#)
- 3 Indulge in the beauty of the [gardens of Suzhou](#)
- 4 Suzhou's charms reach a crescendo along [Pingjiang Lu](#)

- 5 Enjoy tea-tasting and a traditional *pingtan* performance at the [Pingtan Teahouse](#)
- 6 Lose yourself in the alleys and canals of [Tongli](#)
- 7 Four words: [Chinese Sex Culture Museum](#)
- 8 Relax in the charming towns of [Luzhi](#), [Mudu](#) or [Zhouzhuang](#)
- 9 Get some highbrow culture at a [Kunqu opera performance](#)
- 10 Scenic [Ming Xiaoling Tomb](#) is perfect for a stroll

History

Jiangsu was a relative backwater until the Song dynasty (960–1279), when it emerged as an important commercial centre as trading routes were opened up by the Grand Canal. In particular, the south of the province flourished: the towns of Suzhou and Yangzhou played an important role in silk production, overseen by a large mercantile class.

Prosperity continued through the Ming and Qing dynasties, and with the incursion of Westerners into China in the 1840s, southern Jiangsu opened up to Western influence. During the catastrophic Taiping Rebellion (1851–64), the Taiping established Nanjing as their quasi-Christian capital, naming it Tianjing (Heavenly Capital).

Jiangsu was also to play a strong political role in the 20th century when Nanjing was established as the capital by the Nationalist Party until taken over by the communists in 1949, who moved the capital to Beijing.

Today, proximity to Shanghai guarantees southern Jiangsu a fast-growing economy and rapid development, although northern Jiangsu still lags behind.

Getting There & Around

Jiangsu is well connected to all major cities in China. There are numerous flights daily from Nanjing to points around the country, as well as frequent bus and train connections.

Jiangsu has a comprehensive bus system that allows travellers to get around within the province without difficulty, but travelling by train is most

straightforward.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥250

\$\$ ¥250 to ¥800

\$\$\$ more than ¥800

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥70

\$\$\$ more than ¥70

NANJING

☞ 025 / Pop 6.5 million

Many visitors only pass through Nanjing (literally 'Southern Capital') when travelling from Shanghai to Beijing (or vice versa), but the capital of Jiangsu, lying on the lower stretches of the Yangzi River, boasts a surprisingly rich, impressive and extant historical heritage. The major attractions are the echoes of the city's brief, former glory as the nation's capital during its Ming-dynasty apogee and then as the capital of the Republic of China in the early years of the 20th century. A magnificent city wall still encloses most of the city, and elegant republican-era buildings dot the centre.

Nanjing may sprawl today, but the atmosphere is both cultured and relaxed. This famous university town has wide, tree-lined boulevards, chic cafes and excellent museums, set in a beautiful landscape of lakes, forested parks and rivers. The city's pleasant *wutong* trees afford glorious shade on hot days and lend the city a leafy complexion, although summer temperatures are poleaxing.

History

During the Qin dynasty (221–207 BC), Nanjing prospered as a major administrative centre. The city was razed during the Sui dynasty (AD 589–618) but later enjoyed some prosperity under the long-lived Tang dynasty, before slipping once more into obscurity.

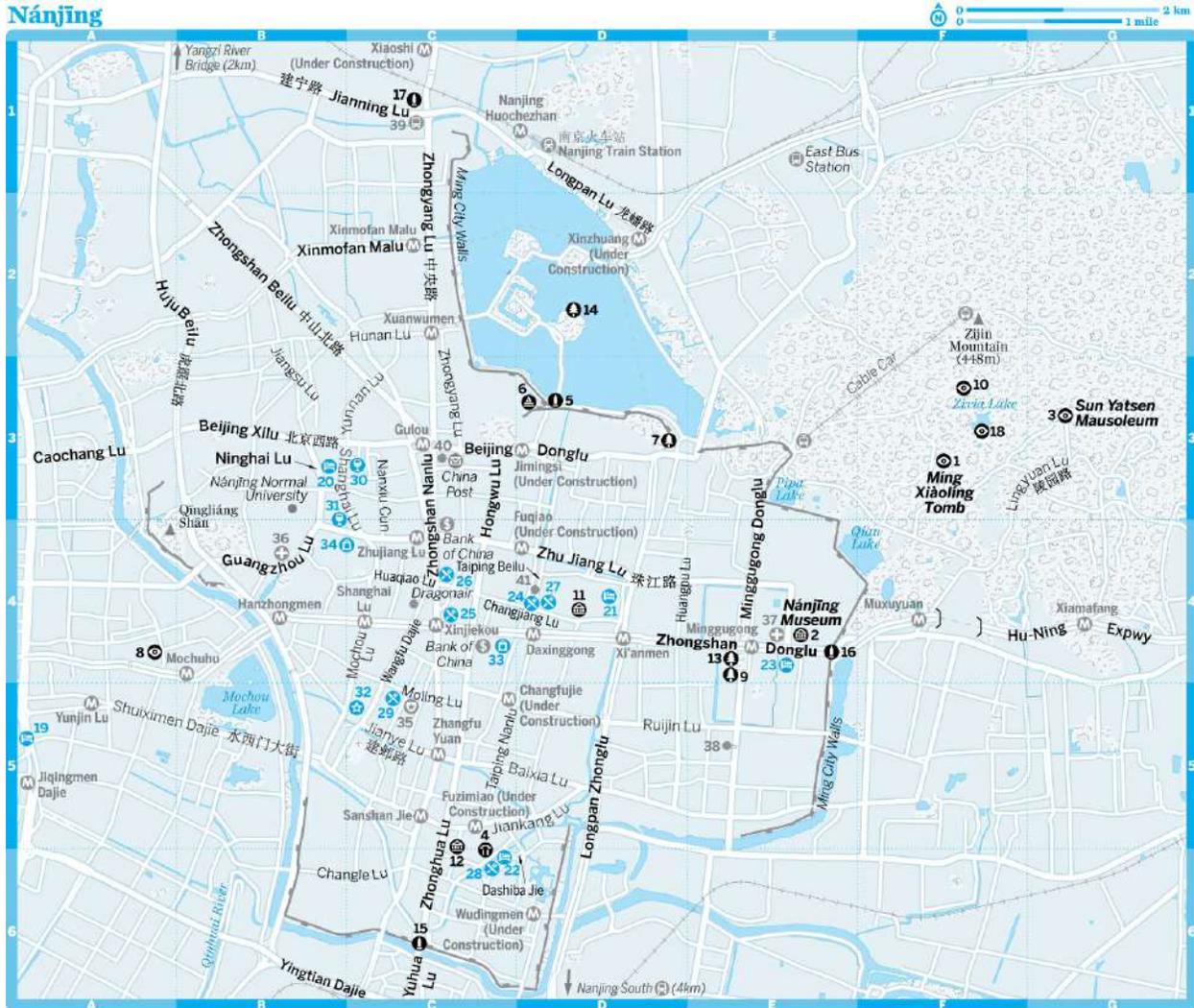
In 1356 a peasant rebellion led by Zhu Yuanzhang against the Mongol Yuan dynasty was successful and in 1368, Nanjing became capital under Zhu's Ming dynasty, but its glory was short-lived. In 1420 the third Ming emperor, Yongle, moved the capital back to Beijing. From then on Nanjing's fortunes variously rose and declined as a regional centre, but it wasn't until the 19th and 20th centuries that the city returned to the centre stage of Chinese history.

In the 19th century the Opium Wars brought the British to Nanjing and it was here that the first of the 'unequal treaties' was signed, opening several Chinese ports to foreign trade, forcing China to pay a huge war indemnity, and officially ceding the island of Hong Kong to Britain. Just a few years later Nanjing became the Taiping capital during the Taiping Rebellion, which succeeded in taking over most of southern China.

In 1864 the combined forces of the Qing army, British army, and various European and US mercenaries surrounded the city. They laid siege for seven months, before finally capturing it and slaughtering the Taiping defenders.

The Kuomintang made Nanjing the capital of the Republic of China from 1928 to 1937. But in the face of advancing Japanese soldiers, the capital was moved to Chongqing in 1937. Nanjing was again capital between 1945 and 1949, when the communists 'liberated' the city and made China their own.

Nanjing



Nanjing

📍 Top Sights

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Ming Xiaoling Tomb | F3 |
| 2 | Nanjing Museum | E4 |
| 3 | Sun Yatsen Mausoleum | G3 |

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|---|--|----|
| 4 | Fuzi Temple | C6 |
| | Imperial Examinations History Museum | C6 |
| 5 | Jiefang Gate | D3 |
| 6 | Jiming Temple | D3 |
| 7 | Jiuhuashan Park | D3 |

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 8 | Memorial Hall of The Nanjing Massacre | A4 |
| 9 | Ming Palace Ruins | E4 |
| 10 | Ming Xiaoling Scenic Area | F3 |
| 11 | Presidential Palace | D4 |
| 12 | Taiping Heavenly Kingdom History Museum | C5 |
| 13 | Wuchaomen Park | E4 |
| 14 | Xuanwu Lake Park | D2 |
| 15 | Zhonghua Gate | C6 |
| 16 | Zhongshan Gate | E4 |
| 17 | Zhongyang Gate | C1 |
| 18 | Zixia Lake | F3 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 19 | Hilton Hotel | A5 |
| 20 | Nanjing Jasmine Youth Hostel | B3 |
| 21 | Nanjing Time International Youth Hostel | D4 |
| 22 | Orange Hotel (Dashiba) | C6 |
| 23 | Orange Hotel (Donghuamen) | E4 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 24 | Cafe 85°C | D4 |
| 25 | Dapai Dang | C4 |
| 26 | Element Fresh | C4 |
| 27 | Nanjing 1912 | D4 |
| 28 | Sculpting in Time | C6 |
| 29 | Taj Mahal | C5 |
| | Wagas | C4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 30 | Behind the Wall | C3 |
| 31 | Brewsell's | B3 |
| | Nanjing Time International Youth Hostel | D4 |
| | Words Bar | D4 |

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 32 | Lanyuan Theatre | C5 |
|----|---------------------------------|----|

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 33 | Foreign Languages Bookstore | C4 |
| 34 | Librairie Avant-Garde | C4 |

Information

| | |
|---|----|
| 35 Exit & Entry Administration Service Center | C5 |
| 36 Jiangsu People's Hospital | B4 |
| 37 Nanjing International SOS Clinic | E4 |

Transport

| | |
|---|----|
| 38 Civil Aviation Administration of China | E5 |
| 39 Nanjing Long-Distance Bus Station | C1 |
| 40 Train Ticket Office | C3 |
| 41 Train Ticket Office | D4 |

Sights

East Nanjing

★ Nanjing Museum

MUSEUM

(Nanjing Bowuyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 321 Zhongshan Donglu; 🕒 9am-noon Mon, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun; **M** Minggugong) **FREE**

This fabulous museum had a massive and lavish expansion in 2013 with a brand new, dramatically modern exhibition block added next to its traditional, temple-style hall. All sleekly designed with lashings of marble and wood, alluring displays abound: from Jiangsu landscape painting, ancient calligraphy (including sutra scrolls from Dunhuang) to sculpture (the Ming-dynasty carved wood Guanyin beneath the atrium is gorgeous) and much more. Look out for two magnificent Han-dynasty jade burial suits among treasures from a royal mausoleum.

On the 3rd floor, there's a spectacular selection of gold and copper Tibetan Buddha statues that belonged to the Qing emperors, as well as some extravagant clocks. Ceramics and Qing-dynasty furnishings round out a stunning collection. Several exhibition halls are temporary and will receive

new collections down the line.

Ming Palace Ruins

PARK

(Ming Gugong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  Minggugong)

The Ming Palace Ruins lie scattered around peaceful but maudlin

Wuchaomen Park (Wuchaomen Gongyuan; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhongshan Donglu;

 6.30am-9.30pm). Built by Zhu Yuanzhang, the imperial palace was reportedly a magnificent structure and template for Beijing's Forbidden City. Clamber atop ruined **Meridian Gate** (*Wu Men*), which once had huge walls jutting out at right angles from the main structure, along with watchtowers. Today the park is filled with locals practising ballroom dancing while saxophonists and other musicians gather in the resonant tunnels beneath the gate.

The ruins lend their name to the nearby metro station (Minggugong).

Presidential Palace

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Zongtong Fu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 292 Changjiang Lu; admission ¥40;  7.30am-5.30pm, to 6pm in summer;  Daxinggong)

After the Taiping took over Nanjing, they built the **Mansion of the Heavenly King** (*Tianwang Fu*) on the foundations of a former Ming-dynasty palace. This magnificent palace did not survive the fall of the Taiping, but there is a reconstruction and a classical Ming garden, now known as the Presidential Palace. Other buildings on the site were used briefly as presidential offices by Sun Yatsen's government in 1912 and by the Kuomintang from 1927 to 1949.

MING CITY WALLS

Beijing will be forever haunted by the 20th century felling of its awe-inspiring city walls. Xi'an's mighty Tang-dynasty wall – which was far, far larger than its current wall – is a mere memory. Even Shanghai's modest city wall came down in 1912.

The same story is repeated across China, but Nanjing's fabulous surviving city wall is a constant reminder of the city's former glories. The wall may be overgrown, but this neglect – in a land where historical authenticity has too often courted destruction

– has helped ensure its very survival.

The most absolute remnant of Nanjing's Ming-dynasty apogee, the imposing, five-storey Ming bastion, which measures over 35km, is the longest city wall ever built in the world. About two-thirds of it still stands.

Built between 1366 and 1393, by more than one million labourers, the layout of the wall is irregular, an exception to the usual square format of these times; it zigzags around Nanjing's hills and rivers, accommodating the local landscape. Averaging 12m high and 7m wide at the top, the fortification was built of bricks supplied from five Chinese provinces. Each brick had stamped on it the place it came from, the overseer's name and rank, the brick-maker's name and sometimes the date. This was to ensure that the bricks were well made; if they broke, they had to be replaced. Many of these stamps remain intact.

Some of the original 13 Ming city gates remain, including the **Zhongyang Gate** (| Zhongyang Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) in the north, **Zhongshan Gate** (Zhongshan Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) in the east, and **Zhonghua Gate** (Zhonghua Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission ¥20; 🕒7am-9pm) in the south. The city gates were heavily fortified; built on the site of the old Tang-dynasty wall, Zhonghua Gate has four rows of gates, making it almost impregnable, and could house a garrison of 3000 soldiers in vaults in the front gate building. When walking through, observe the trough in either wall of the second gate, which held a vast stone gate that could be lowered into place. Horse ramps lead up the side to the wall and also note how the roads immediately north of the gate follow the circular line of the now missing **enceinte** (wengcheng), a further fortification.

You can climb onto the masonry for exploration at several points. Long walks extend along the wall from Zhongshan Gate in the east of the city and it's quite common to see locals walking their dogs or taking post-dinner walks along the weathered path; there is no charge for climbing the wall here.

One of the best places to access the wall is from the rear of Jiming Temple. Walk to **Jiuhuashan Park** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) off Taiping Beilu, looking out over huge **Xuanwu Lake Park** and passing crumbling hillside pagodas along the way. Another access point is at **Jiefang Gate** (Jiefang Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission ¥15; 🕒8.30am-6pm winter, 8am-6pm summer).

South Nanjing

Fuzi Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Fuzi Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Gongyuan Jie; admission ¥30; 🕒9am-10pm; [M](#)Fuzimiao)

The Confucian Fuzi Temple, in the south of the city in a pedestrian zone, was a centre of Confucian study for more than 1500 years. But what you see here today are newly restored, late-Qing-dynasty structures or wholly new buildings reconstructed in traditional style. Today the area surrounding Fuzi Temple has become Nanjing's main shopping quarter and is particularly crowded. The whole area is lit up at night, adding to the kitsch ambience.

Tour boats (*youchuan*) leave from the dock across from the temple itself for 30-minute day (¥60) and evening (¥80) trips along the Qinhuai River (*Qinhuai He*) between 9am and 10pm. From 2014, the area was due to be served by the Fuzimiao metro station on line 3.

Imperial Examinations History Museum

MUSEUM

(Jiangnan Gongyuan Lishi Chenlieguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Jinling Lu; admission ¥20;

 8.30am-10pm;  Fuzimiao)

Not far from the Fuzi temple complex, this museum is a recent reconstruction of the building where scholars once spent months – or years – in tiny cells studying Confucian classics in preparation for civil-service examinations. The exhibition provides valuable insights into the over-exacting culture of Confucian officialdom in dynastic China.

Taiping Heavenly Kingdom History Museum

MUSEUM

(Taiping Tianguo Lishi Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 128 Zhonghua Lu; admission ¥30;

 8am-5pm;  Sanshan Jie)

Hong Xiuquan, the Hakka leader of the Christian Taiping, had a palace built in Nanjing (then named Tianjing or 'Heavenly Capital'), but the building was completely destroyed when Nanjing was taken in 1864, after a long siege. This museum was originally a Ming-dynasty garden complex and housed Taiping officials. Displays of maps show the progress of the Taiping army, Taiping coins, weapons and texts that describe the radical Taiping laws on agrarian reform, social law and cultural policy.

THE RAPE OF NANJING

In 1937, with the Chinese army comparatively weak and underfunded and the Japanese army on the horizon, the invasion and occupation of Nanjing appeared imminent. As it packed up and fled, the Chinese government encouraged the people of Nanjing to stay, saying, 'all those who have blood and breath in them must feel that they wish to be broken as jade rather than remain whole as tile.' To reinforce this statement, the gates to the city were locked, trapping more than half a million citizens inside.

What followed in Nanjing was six weeks of brutality to an extent unwitnessed in modern warfare. According to journalists and historians such as Iris Chang and Joshua Fogel, between 200,000 and 300,000 Chinese civilians were killed, either in group massacres or individual murders during Japan's occupation of Nanjing. Within the first month, at least 20,000 women between the ages of 11 and 76 were raped. Women who attempted to refuse or children who interfered were often bayoneted or shot.

The Japanese, however, underestimated the Chinese. Instead of breaking the people's will, the invasion fuelled a sense of identity and determination. Those who did not die – broken as jade – survived to fight back.

West Nanjing

Memorial Hall of The Nanjing Massacre

MEMORIAL

(Nanjing Datusha Jinianguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 418 Shuiximen Dajie; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Yunjin Lu) **FREE**

In the city's southwestern suburbs, the unsettling exhibits in the Memorial Hall of the Nanjing Massacre document the atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers against the civilian population during the occupation of Nanjing in 1937. They include pictures of actual executions – many taken by Japanese army photographers – and a gruesome viewing hall built over a mass grave of massacre victims.

Detailed captions are in English, Japanese and Chinese, but the photographs, skeletons and displays tell their own haunting stories without words. At times it feels overwhelming but visitors might begin to fathom the

link between the massacre and the identity of the city. Arrive early to beat the surge.

North Nanjing

Jiming Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Jiming Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jimingsi Lu; admission ¥5; 🕒 7.30am-5pm, to 5.30pm summer; [M](#) Jimingsi)

Alongside the city's Ming walls and Xuanwu Lake (Xuanwu Hu) is Buddhist Jiming Temple, first built in AD 527 during the Three Kingdoms period and rebuilt many times. The seven-storey-tall Yaoshifo Pagoda offers views over Xuanwu Lake. Enter the base of the pagoda to the spectacle of hundreds of gold Buddha figures in cabinets. Walk up to the rear of the temple and out onto the **city wall** (admission ¥15; 8am to 4pm) for splendid jaunts along the overgrown ramparts.

The temple also has a small shrine to the Indian monk and godfather to Shaolin boxing Bodhidharma (Damo), illustrated with a solitary shoe ([Click here](#)). This temple is the most active in Nanjing and is packed with worshippers during the Lunar New Year. By 2015 the temple will be served by its own namesake metro station (Jimingsi), on lines 3 and 4.

Xuanwu Lake Park

PARK

(Xuanwuhu Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 7am-9pm; [M](#) Xuanwumen) **FREE**

The vast lake within this lovely, verdant 530-hectare park – backing onto the towering city wall – is studded with five interconnected isles, scattered with bonsai gardens, camphor and cherry-blossom trees, temples and bamboo groves. The entire lake circuit is a whopping 9.5km jaunt. Alternatively, there are boat rides (¥70 per hour), pedalos (¥60 to ¥100 per hour) and buggy rides (¥12).

Yangzi River Bridge

BRIDGE

(Nanjing Changjiang Daqiao [GOOGLE MAP](#);  67,  Shangyuanmen)

Opened on 23 December 1968, the Yangzi River Bridge is one of the longest bridges in China – a double-decker with a 4.5km-long road on top and a train line below. Stirring socialist-realist sculptures can be seen on the approaches. Odds are that you'll probably cross the bridge if you take a train from the north. Probably the easiest way to get up on the bridge is to go through the **Bridge Park** (Daqiao Gongyuan; Baotaqiao Dongjie adult/child ¥12/10;  7.30am-6.30pm;  67).

Catch bus 67 from Jiangsu Lu, northwest of the Drum Tower (*Gulou*), to its terminus opposite the park. The nearest metro station will be Shangyuanmen, which was due to open in 2014.

Zijin Mountain

Dominating the eastern fringes of Nanjing is Zijin Mountain (*Zijin Shan*), or 'Purple-Gold Mountain', a heavily forested area of parks, and the site of most of Nanjing's historical attractions – Sun Yatsen Mausoleum, Ming Xiaoling Tomb, Linggu Temple Scenic Area, Plum Blossom Hill and the Botanic Gardens (*Zhiwu Yuan*). It's one of the coolest places to flee the steamy summer heat. Give yourself a day to explore it properly; discounts exist if tickets to various sights are purchased together.

★ Ming Xiaoling Tomb

TOMB

(Ming Xiaoling [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥70;  8am-5.30pm, to 6.30pm summer;  Y3,  Muxuyuan)

Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398), the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, was buried in the tomb of Ming Xiaoling; he was the only Ming emperor buried outside Beijing. The area surrounding the tomb is the **Ming Xiaoling Scenic Area** (Ming Xiaoling Fengjingqu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). Near the entrance, **Plum Blossom Hill** (*Meihua Shan*) is delightfully garlanded with flowering plum blossoms in spring. A tree-lined pathway winds around pavilions and picnic grounds and ends at scenic **Zixia Lake** (Zixia Hu, [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);

admission ¥10; 🕒 6.30am-6pm), ideal for strolling.

The first section of this magnificent mausoleum is a 618m ‘spirit path’, lined with stone statues of lions, camels, elephants and horses that drive away evil spirits and guard the tomb. Among them lurks two mythical animals: a *xie zhi*, which has a mane and a single horn on its head, and a *qilin*, which has a scaly body, a cow’s tail, a deer’s hooves and one horn.

As you enter the first courtyard, a paved pathway leads to a pavilion housing several stelae. The next gate leads to a large courtyard with the **Linghun Pagoda** (*Linghun Ta*), a mammoth rectangular stone structure. Follow the crowds through a long uphill tunnel to a wall (which children and visitors clamber up!) and a huge earth tumulus (called the **Soul Tower**; *Minglou*), beneath which is the unexcavated tomb vault of the emperor. On the wall are inscribed the characters " (This hill is the tomb of the first Ming emperor').

A combo ticket for the tomb and the Linggu Temple Scenic Area is ¥100.

From Muxuyuan metro station (line 2), it’s a 1.6km walk uphill. Bus Y3 from the city centre also takes you here.

★ Sun Yatsen Mausoleum

MEMORIAL

(Zhongshan Ling [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 6.30am-6.30pm; 🚌 9, Y1, Y2, Y3, [M](#)Xiamafang)

An astonishing sight, Sun Yatsen's tomb lies at the top of an enormous stone stairway – a breathless 392 steps. Reverentially referred to as *guofu* ('Father of the Nation'), Dr Sun is esteemed by both communists and Kuomintang. He died in Beijing in 1925, and had wished to be buried in Nanjing, no doubt with far less pomp than the Ming-style tomb his successors built for him. Within a year of his death, however, construction of this mausoleum began.

At the start of the path stands a dignified marble gateway, with a roof of blue-glazed tiles. The blue and white of the mausoleum symbolise the white sun on the blue background of the Kuomintang flag.

The crypt lies at the top of the steps at the rear of the memorial chamber. A tablet hanging across the threshold is inscribed with the ‘Three Principles of

the People', as formulated by Dr Sun: nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood. Inside is a statue of a seated Dr Sun. The walls are carved with the complete text of the 'Outline of Principles for the Establishment of the Nation' put forward by the Nationalist government. A prostrate marble statue of Dr Sun seals his copper coffin.

Buses 9, Y1, Y2 or Y3 go from the city centre to the Sun Yatsen Mausoleum. A shuttle bus (¥5) resembling a red steam train speeds from here to the Linggu Temple Scenic Area.

★ Linggu Temple Scenic Area

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Linggu Si Fengjing Qu [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥80; 🕒 7am-6.30pm; 🚌 Y2, Y3,

🚇 Zhonglingjie)

The large Ming Linggu Temple complex contains one of the most significant buildings in Nanjing – the **Beamless Hall** (*Wuliang Dian*), built in 1381 entirely out of brick and stone and containing no beam supports. Buildings during the Ming dynasty were normally constructed of wood, but timber shortages meant that builders had to rely on brick. The structure has a vaulted ceiling and a large stone platform where Buddhist statues once sat.

A road runs on both sides of the hall and up two flights of steps to the graceful **Pine Wind Pavilion** (*Songfeng Ge*), originally dedicated to Guanyin as part of Linggu Temple. The ochre-walled temple is home to the **Dabian Juetang** memorial hall, dedicated to Xuan Zang (the Buddhist monk who travelled to India and brought back the Buddhist scriptures). Inside the memorial hall is a statue of the travelling monk, perched aloft, with a cabinet containing a golden model of a pagoda with part of Xuan Zang's skull within it. To his right is a model wooden pagoda, also within a cabinet.

Uphill to the rear of the temple is the colourful **Linggu Pagoda** (*Linggu Ta*). This nine-storey, 60m-high, octagonal pagoda was finished in 1933 under the direction of a US architect, to remember those who died during the Kuomintang revolution. A vegetarian restaurant can be found nearby. Tour buses Y2 and Y3 run to the Linggu Temple from Nanjing Train Station. Alternatively, take the metro to Zhonglingjie station, then hop on tour bus Y2

from a stop a short walk west. Bright red shuttle buses (¥5) resembling steam trains regularly connect the area to the Sun Yatsen Mausoleum.

Festivals & Events

Nanjing International Plum Blossom Festival

CULTURAL

(Meihua Jie)

Held yearly from the last Saturday of February to early March, this festival takes place on Plum Blossom Hill near the Ming Xiaoling Tomb when the mountain bursts with pink and white blossoms.

Sleeping

Most of Nanjing's accommodation is midrange to top end in price. All rooms have broadband internet, and most places can help to book air and train tickets.

★ Nanjing Time International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Nanjing Shiguang Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8556 9053;

www.yhachina.com; 6-5 Yongyuan, Meiyuan Xincun, 6-5 dm ¥60, r ¥180-220; 📶 @; 🚇 Xi'anmen)

Time – for atmosphere alone it's the best in town – is in a republican-era mansion not far from the Presidential Palace. The salubrious neighbourhood guarantees you a good sleep at night. Dorms are spotless and the rooms have a simplistic charm. There's a lot of common area, including a relaxing rooftop terrace.

The hostel is hidden in an alley with lots of twists and turns in the Meiyuan Xincun district. Download a map from the hostel website for directions.

Nanjing Jasmine Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Nanjing Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8330 0517; 7 Hequnxincun, off

Shanghai Lu; dm ¥50-60, r ¥115-238; 📶 @ 📶; 🚏 13, 🚇 Zhujiang Lu)

Staff are morose at this hostel, but the secluded location is good albeit a bit stranded for sightseers, tucked away down an alley off bar-strewn Shanghai Lu. From Nanjing Train Station, take bus 13 to the Wutaishan Beizhan stop on Shanghai Lu and it's a few minutes walk west from there.

Orange Hotel (Dashiba)

HOTEL

(Juzi Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8696 8090; www.orangehotel.com.cn; 26 Dashiba Jie, r ¥328-358; 📶 @)

In a great riverside location, this reliable chain is big bang for the buck. The ultra-modern rooms, with good bedding and lighting, have every gizmo and gadget your computer, tablet or mobile phone might ever need. It's worth paying a few more bucks for the rooms with river-facing balconies. Other pluses include complimentary fruit and free use of the hotel's bikes.

There's another handy branch right next to the old gate of Donghuamen in the east of town.

Orange Hotel (Donghuamen)

HOTEL

(Juzi Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6608 1122; 532-1 Zhongshan Donglu; 532-1 rm from ¥308; 🚇 Minggugong)

Handy branch of Orange Hotel right next to the old gate of Donghuamen and east of the Ming Palace Ruins on Zhongshan Donglu. Rooms are spick and span and the whole hotel presentation is stylish and cool. Free bike use for two hours. Breakfast is ¥15 per person.

★ Hilton Hotel

HOTEL

(Nangjing Wanda Xi'erduan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www3.hilton.com; 100 Jiangdong Zhonglu; d/ste ¥1209/2300; 📶 📶 📶; 🚇 Jiqingmen)

This sleekly polished hotel, opening to a gargantuan marbled lobby with a huge calligraphic dedication and a vast and stylised depiction of Zijin Mountain behind reception, is the town's best choice. Rooms are spacious and modern, there are three restaurants and service is tip-top. It's slightly out of

the action in the southwest of town, but the metro is nearby.

Cheaper rooms are on the lower floors (beneath level 18).

Eating

Main eating quarters include the Fuzi Temple complex and Shiziqiao off Hunan Lu, where you can find snack stands and small eateries. Near the Presidential Palace, **Nanjing 1912** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Taiping Beilu & Changjiang Lu;  Daxinggong) is a compound of shiny neon-lit bars, coffee houses and upscale chain restaurants. In the summer swelter, look no further than branches of **Coco** (branches everywhere) for bubble tea (from ¥7).

★ Dapai Dang

JIANGSU

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 3rd fl, Deji Plaza, 18 Zhongshan Lu; 3 mains from ¥16;  11am-10.30pm;  Xinjiekou)

This hectic and vast place, decorated like a Qing-dynasty eatery, with waiters scurrying around in period garb and lanterns hanging overhead, is deservedly packed out. There's a handy photo-menu for ordering fried dumplings with pork, leek and mushroom (¥12 for three), sliced fish soup with preserved vegetables (¥46), Nanjing fried noodles (¥16) and oodles of other tasty local dishes.

With eight branches in town, it's a big name in Nanjing, but if you arrive during a busy period (such as weekends), you'll have to grab a ticket and wait in line.

Cafe 85°C

CAFE

(85C Bawudu C kafeidian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 35 Taiping Beilu; coffee ¥10;  9am-9pm;  Daxinggong)

For cheap coffee, milk tea, bread and cakes on the go, come to this popular Taiwanese chain.

★ Element Fresh

CAFE

(Xinyuansu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.elementfresh.com; 1st fl, IST Mall, 100 Zhongshan Nanlu; 1 mains from ¥48; 🕒 11am-10.30pm Mon-Thu, 11am-11pm Fri, 9am-11pm Sat & Sun; 📶; **M**Xinjiekou)

This two-floor breath of fresh air in the trendy IST Mall gives the iffy Nanjing cafe culture a good kick in the pants. Everything, from the delectable smoothies to the painted tea-candle shades, sleek design and snappy staff, is an unalloyed joy. There's homemade hummus (¥68), Laotian lettuce wraps (¥55), sandwiches, pasta, Asian classics and much more on the crisp, international menu.

Wagas

CAFE

(Wogesi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); A108, IST Mall, 100 Zhongshan Nanlu; A108 mains from ¥48; 🕒 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10pm Sat & Sun; 📶; **M**Xinjiekou)

With a trendy concrete floor and attracting a similar tablet-toting crowd to Element Fresh next door, this branch of the hip Shanghai cafe can load you up with coffee, cakes, salads, smoothies, pasta and specials (chalked up on the wall).

Taj Mahal

INDIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Moling Lu & Fengfu Lu; mains from ¥40; 🕒 10.30am-3pm & 5-10.30pm; **M**Zhangfu Yuan)

The Taj Mahal doesn't quite pull off its stab at a classy ambience (linen tablecloths), but the menu's a winner. The spiciness of the mutton vindaloo may be slightly moderated to suit lightweight local palates, but it's still delicious. Also on the menu are samosas (¥24), onion bhajia (¥26), seekh kebab (¥48), chicken tikka (¥45), naan (¥13) and a host of other choices.

Sculpting in Time

WESTERN, CAFE

(Diaoke Shiguang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 32 Dashiba Jie; mains ¥50; 🕒 9am-11pm; **M**Fuzimiao)

This charming and seriously spacious cafe is an appealing, relaxed spot with an outdoor terrace overlooking the river. With birdcage lampshades, soft music, cream curtains and comfy chairs, it's a favourite eating and drinking place for a cool but unpretentious crowd. The pastries and cakes make a good afternoon treat.

Drinking & Nightlife

Western-style drinking holes and sports bars congregate along Shanghai Lu.

★ **Brewsell's**

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.brewsells.com; 77-1 Shanghai Lu; beers from ¥28; 🕒 5pm-2am;  Zhujiang Lu)

With well-priced Vedett (¥28) and La Chouffe on tap, Trappistes Rochefort, blue/red Chimay and other Belgian brews cooling down in the fridge, this small, specialist imported beer bar (named after 'Brussels') has expat ale fiends descending in droves for fine beer and table football. Free Belgian fries all night Saturday and offers other nights.

Nanjing Time International Youth Hostel

BAR

(Nanjing Shiguang Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 6-5 Yongyuan, Meiyuan Xincun, 6-5  Xi'anmen)

Although primarily a hostel, the Nanjing Time International Youth Hostel is also a charming choice for a beer, with sofas strewn with throws, small wooden tables, soft lighting, goldfish in bowls, potted plants and relaxing music.

Behind the Wall

BAR

(Da'an [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.behindthewall-nanjing.com; 150 Shanghai Lu; pint ¥30; 🕒 6pm-1am; ;  Gulou)

Doubling as a Mexican restaurant, this atmospheric and timeworn bar divides

into many beer-stained rooms, and a terrace for warmer months. There's draught beer, sangria and hypnotising live Flamenco guitar performances in the evenings from a talented musician. It's literally 'behind the wall'.

Words Bar

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.facebook.com/thewordsbar; 6-6 Yongyuan, Meiyuan Xincun; 6-6
🕒 7.30pm-3am;  Xi'anmen)

Run by a Chinese/French two-man team, this colourful bar alongside the [Nanjing Time International Youth Hostel](#) pairs a secluded location with a literary bent that fosters poetry nights, book readings, word games and other cultured pursuits.



Entertainment

Lanyuan Theatre

CHINESE OPERA

(Lanyuan Juchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8446 9284; 4 Chaotiangong;  Shanghai Lu)

Kunqu, an extant form of Chinese opera originating from Jiangsu, is staged here every Saturday evening. There are English subtitles and tickets are ¥80.



Shopping

The pedestrian area around **Fuzi Temple** has souvenirs, clothing, shoes and antiques for sale.

★ Librairie Avant-Garde

BOOKS

(Xianfeng Shudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 173 Guangzhou Lu; 🕒 10am-9.30pm;  Shanghai Lu)

Housed in a vast and disused bomb shelter, this astonishing indie bookshop has very few foreign-language books, but the underground, left-field ambience makes it a must for bibliophiles. With miles of books and a cavernous concrete floor, it's a Nanjing cultural landmark, loved by students

and literati for its sizeable collection of social science and humanities books.

The shop also has a fine selection of postcards and handmade accessories, as well as a pleasant cafe and plenty of comfortable seating areas. Note the dominating black (Christian) cross as you go up the ramp. It's a 15-minute walk from Shanghai Lu metro station.

Foreign Languages Bookstore

BOOKS

(Waiwen Shudian  ; 218 Zhongshan Donglu;  9am-7pm Mon-Thu, 9am-8pm Fri & Sat;  Daxinggong)

Novels are on the 2nd floor, where there's also a cafe.

Information

INTERNET RESOURCES

➔ **Nanjing Expats** (www.nanjingexpat.com) is a handy expat listings website.

MEDIA

➔ **Nanjing Expats** (www.nanjingexpat.com) and **Map** (www.mapmagazine.com.cn) are handy expat listings magazines, available at restaurants and bars.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Jiangsu People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Jiangsu Sheng Renmin Yiyuan  ;  8371 8836; 300 Guangzhou Lu;  8am-noon & 2-5.30pm)

Runs a clinic for expats and has English-speaking doctors available.

Nanjing International SOS Clinic

MEDICAL

(SOS, Nanjing Guoji SOS Jinji Jiuyuan Zhensuo  ;  8480 2842, 24hr alarm centre 010 6462 9100; www.internationalsos.com.cn; Ground fl, Grand Metropark Hotel, 319 Zhongshan Donglu;  Mingguogong)

MONEY

Most bank ATMs are open 24 hours and take international cards. The banks listed below change major currency and travellers cheques.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 29 Hongwu Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat;  Xinjiekou)

Handily located branch in the centre of town.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 3 Zhongshan Donglu; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat;  Xinjiekou)

Centrally located.

POST

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Zhongshan Nanlu; 🕒 8am-6.30pm;  Gulou)

Postal services and international phone calls.

PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

Exit & Entry Administration Service Center

POLICE

(Gong'anju Churujing Jiedai Dating [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8442 0018; cnr Fengfu Lu & Honggongci; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Sun;  Zhangfu Yuan)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Most hotels have their own travel agencies and can book tickets for a service charge.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Nanjing has regular air connections to all major Chinese cities. The main office for the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC, Zhongguo Minhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍8449 9378; 50 Ruijin Lu) is near the terminus of bus 37, but you can also buy tickets at most top-end hotels.

Dragonair (Ganglong Hangkong [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍8471 0181; Room 751-53, World Trade Centre, 2 Hanzhong Lu) has daily flights to Hong Kong.

BUS

Of Nanjing's numerous long-distance bus stations, **Nanjing Long-Distance Bus Station** (Nanjing Zhongyang Changtu Qichezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍8533 1288; 1 Jianning Lu;), aka Zhongyangmen long-distance station, is the largest, located southwest of the wide-bridged intersection with Zhongyang Lu. Regular buses departing from here:

- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥120, four hours
- ➔ **Hefei** ¥53, 2½ hours
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥68, four hours
- ➔ **Suzhou** ¥70, 2½ hours
- ➔ **Wuxi** ¥57, two hours

Buses departing the **east bus station** (changtu qiche dongzhan):

- ➔ **Yangzhou** ¥38 1½ hours
- ➔ **Zhenjiang** ¥20, 1½ hours

From Nanjing Train Station, take bus 13 north to Zhongyangmen long-distance bus station. Bus 2 from Xinjiekou goes to the **East Bus Station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)). A taxi from town will cost ¥20 to ¥25 to either station.

TRAIN

Nanjing Train Station (📍8582 2222) is a major stop on the Beijing–Shanghai train line. Heading eastward from Nanjing, the line to Shanghai connects with Zhenjiang, Wuxi and Suzhou. Many G and D trains depart or terminate at the **Nanjing South Train Station** (Nanjing Nanzhan), so check when you buy your ticket. G trains to Beijing all depart from Nanjing South

Train Station.

Trains from Nanjing Train Station in the north of town include:

- ➔ **Huangshan (Tunxi)** hard/soft sleeper ¥108/159, six to eight hours, seven daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** G train (main train station, Hongqiao and Shanghai), 2nd/1st class ¥140/220, 1½ to two hours, regular
- ➔ **Suzhou** G train, 2nd/1st class ¥100/160, 80 minutes, regular
- ➔ **Yangzhou** hard/soft seat ¥17/28, 80 minutes, seven daily
- ➔ **Xi'an North** D train 2nd-class seat/soft sleeper ¥279/685, eight hours, one daily (12.35am)

Trains leaving from Nanjing South Train Station include:

- ➔ **Beijing South** G train, 2nd/1st class ¥444/749, 4½ hours, regular
- ➔ **Hangzhou East** 2nd/1st class ¥118/198, 1½ to two hours, regular
- ➔ **Xiamen North** D train, 2nd/1st class ¥360/484, nine to 11 hours, three daily

Try to get tickets via your hotel or the **train ticket office** (huochepiao shoupiaochu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Zhongshan Nanlu; 🕒 8.30am-5pm) on the 3rd floor of the post office, or the **train ticket office** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 35 Taiping Beilu; 🕒 8m-11am & midday-5pm) on Taiping Beilu.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Buses (¥20; 90 mins) run to Nanjing's Lukou airport every 20 minutes between 5.40am and 9pm from the square east of Nanjing Train Station. Most hotels have hourly shuttle buses to and from the airport. A taxi will cost around ¥130. From 2015, the S1 Airport Line express rail link will connect the airport with Nanjing South Train Station (on Line 1).

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Nanjing has an efficient **metro system** that cuts through the city centre. Line

No 1 runs north to south and links both train stations. Line No 2 goes east from Jingtianlu to Youfangqiao in the west. Line 10 opened in 2014, connecting Andemen to Yushan Lu and the new Airport Line is due to start running in 2015. Four other lines are under construction, also expected to commence service by 2015. Tickets are ¥2 to ¥5.

You can get to Xinjiekou, in the heart of town, by jumping on bus 13 from Nanjing Train Station or from Zhongyang Gate. There are also tourist bus routes that visit many of the sights:

➔ **Bus Y1** Goes from Nanjing Train Station and Nanjing Long-Distance Bus Station through the city to the Sun Yatsen Mausoleum.

➔ **Bus Y2** Starts in the south at the Martyrs' Cemetery (Lieshi Mudi), passes Fuzi Temple and terminates halfway up Zijin Mountain.

➔ **Bus Y3** Passes by Nanjing Train Station en route to the Ming Xiaoling Tomb and Linggu Temple.

Many local maps contain bus routes. Normal buses cost ¥1 and tourist buses cost ¥2.

TAXI

Taxi flagfall is ¥9 and it's ¥2.40 for each 3km thereafter. Trips to most destinations in the city are ¥10 to ¥14. Taxis are easy to flag down anywhere in the city; look out for spacious London-style cabs.

AROUND NANJING

Qixia Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Qixia Si admission ¥25 Jan-Sep, ¥40 Oct-Dec; 🕒 7am-5.30pm)

This temple on **Qixia Mountain**, 22km northeast of Nanjing, was founded by the Buddhist monk Ming Sengshao during the Southern Qi dynasty, and remains an active place of worship. Long one of China's most important monasteries, even today it's still one of its largest Buddhist seminaries. Relics believed to be part of the skull of Gautama Buddha were unveiled and

interred here. The mountain's **maple trees** are a major draw in spring when the hills are splashed in crimson and bronze.

There are two main temple halls: the **Maitreya Hall**, with a statue of the Maitreya Buddha sitting cross-legged at the entrance; and the **Vairocana Hall**, housing a 5m-tall statue of the Vairocana Buddha.

Behind Qixia Temple is the **Thousand Buddha Cliff** (*Qianfo Ya*). Several grottoes housing stone statues are carved into the hillside, the earliest of which dates as far back as the Qi dynasty (AD 479–502). There is also a small stone pagoda, **Sheli Pagoda** (*Sheli Ta*), which was built in AD 601, and rebuilt during the late Tang period. The upper part has engraved sutras and carvings of Buddha; around the base, each of the pagoda's eight sides depicts Sakyamuni.

Continue northwards to admire lovely views in the **scenic area** behind the temple. The steep path meanders via an array of pavilions and rocky outcrops: it's serene, so consider bringing lunch and spending time here.

Get to the temple from Nanjing by public bus (*Nan Shang*, ¥2.50, one hour) from a stop by Nanjing Train Station. When you get off the bus, you will be approached by motorcycle taxis that will offer to take you into the temple the 'back' way for ¥10. Be warned, it's an arduous hike up and down a large hill to the temple if you do this.

SUZHOU

 0512 / Pop 1.3 million

Historically, Suzhou was synonymous with high culture and elegance, and generations of artists, scholars, writers and high society in China were drawn by its exquisite art forms and the delicate beauty of its gardens. Like all modern Chinese towns, Suzhou has unfortunately had to contend with the recent destruction of its heritage and its replacement with largely arbitrary chunks of modern architecture.

Having said that, the city still retains enough pockets of charm to warrant two to three days' exploration on foot or by bike. And the gardens, Suzhou's

main attraction, are a symphonic combination of rocks, water, trees and pavilions that reflects the Chinese appreciation of balance and harmony. Adding to the charm are some excellent museums, surviving canal scenes, pagodas and humpbacked bridges (but don't expect much peace and quiet).

History

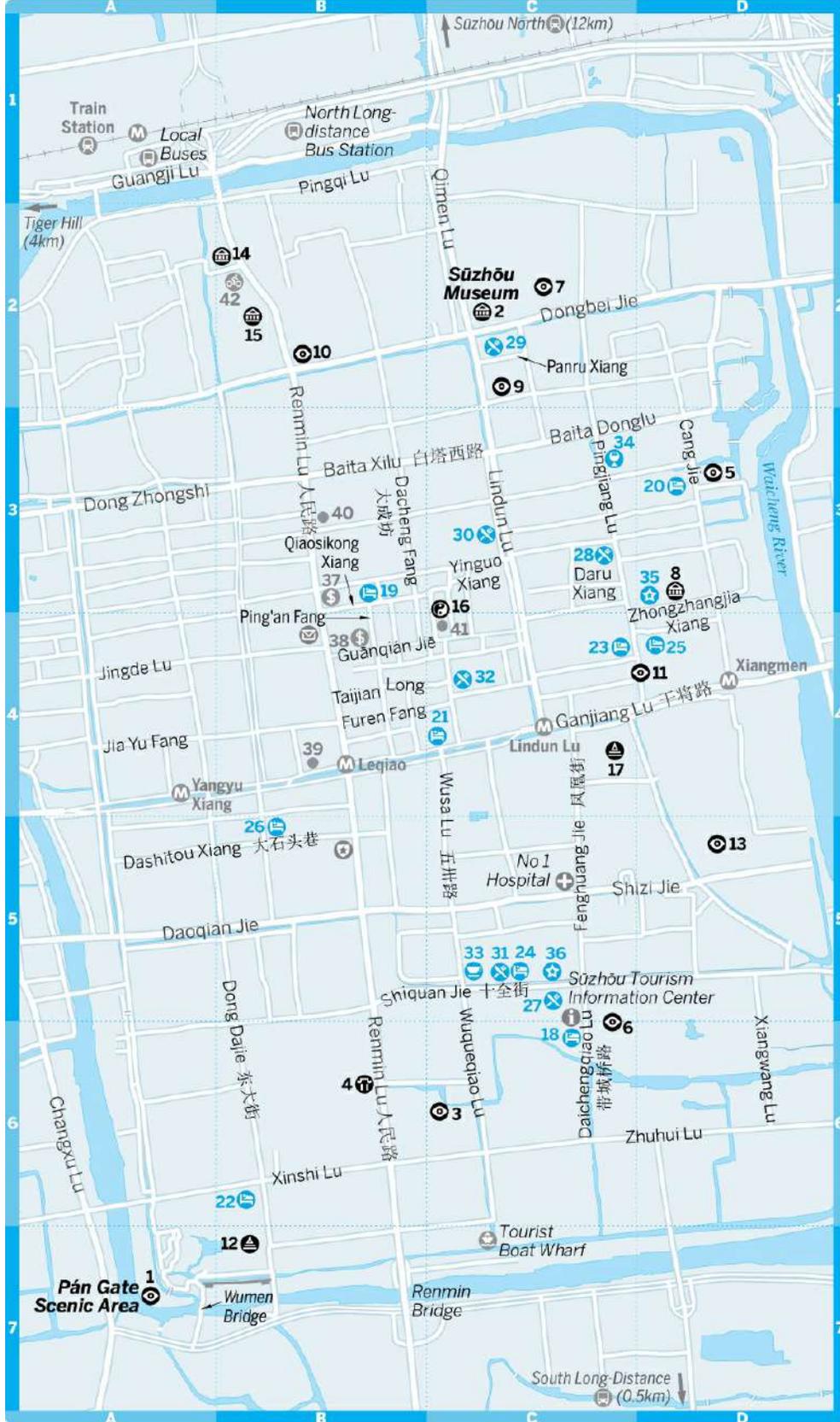
Dating back some 2500 years, Suzhou is one of the oldest towns in the Yangzi Basin. With the completion of the Grand Canal during the Sui dynasty, Suzhou began to flourish as a centre of shipping and grain storage, bustling with merchants and artisans.

By the 14th century, Suzhou had become China's leading silk-producing city. Aristocrats, pleasure seekers, famous scholars, actors and painters arrived, constructing villas and garden retreats.

The town's winning image as a 'Garden City' or a 'Venice of the East' drew from its medieval blend of woodblock guilds and embroidery societies, whitewashed housing, cobbled streets, tree-lined avenues and canals. The local women were considered the most beautiful in China, largely thanks to the mellifluous local accent, and the city was home to a variety of rich merchants and bookish scholars...no doubt drawn by the beautiful women.

In 1860 Taiping troops took the town without a blow and in 1896 Suzhou was opened to foreign trade, with Japanese and other international concessions. Since 1949 much of the historic city, including its city walls, has vanished.

Sūzhōu



Suzhou

Top Sights

| | |
|--|----|
| 1 Pan Gate Scenic Area | A7 |
| 2 Suzhou Museum | C2 |

Sights

| | |
|--|----|
| 3 Blue Wave Pavilion | C6 |
| 4 Confucian Temple | B6 |
| 5 Couple's Garden | D3 |
| 6 Garden of the Master of the Nets | C6 |
| 7 Humble Administrator's Garden | C2 |
| 8 Kunqu Opera Museum | D3 |
| 9 Lion's Grove Garden | C2 |
| 10 North Temple Pagoda | B2 |
| 11 Pingjiang Lu | D4 |
| 12 Ruiguang Pagoda | B7 |
| 13 Soochow University | D5 |
| 14 Suzhou Art Museum | B2 |
| 15 Suzhou Silk Museum | B2 |
| 16 Temple of Mystery | C3 |
| 17 Twin Pagodas | C4 |

Sleeping

| | |
|--|----|
| 18 Garden Hotel | C6 |
| 19 Hotel Soul | B3 |
| 20 Joya Youth Hostel | D3 |
| 21 Marco Polo Suzhou | C4 |
| 22 Pan Pacific Suzhou | B6 |
| 23 Pingjiang Lodge | C4 |
| 24 Pod | C5 |
| 25 Suzhou Mingtown Youth Hostel | D4 |
| 26 Suzhou Watertown Youth Hostel | B5 |

Eating

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 27 Bistronomy | C5 |
| 28 Pingvon | C3 |
| 29 Wumen Renjia | C2 |

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----|
| 30 | Yaba Shengjian | C3 |
| 31 | Yakexi | C5 |
| 32 | Zhuhongxing | C4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|
| 33 | Bookworm | C5 |
| 34 | Locke Pub | C3 |

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| | Garden of the Master of the Nets | C6 |
| | Kunqu Opera Museum | D3 |
| 35 | Pingtan Museum | D3 |
| 36 | Pingtan Teahouse | C5 |

Information

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 37 | Bank of China | B3 |
| 38 | Industrial & Commercial Bank of China | B4 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 39 | China Eastern Airlines | B4 |
| 40 | Lianhe Ticket Centre | B3 |
| 41 | Train Ticket Office (Guanqian Jie) | C4 |
| 42 | Yangyang Bike Rental Shop | B2 |

Sights

High-season prices listed apply from March to early May and September to October. Gardens and museums stop selling tickets 30 minutes before closing, and are best visited early in the mornings before crowds arrive. The gardens were not designed for tour groups, so don't expect too much zen-like tranquility.

★ Suzhou Museum

MUSEUM

(Suzhou Bowuguan  ; 204 Dongbei Jie; audioguide ¥30;  9am-5pm;

 Y5) **FREE**

An architectural triumph, this IM Pei–designed museum is a modern interpretation of a Suzhou garden, a confluence of water, bamboo and clinical geometry. Inside is a fascinating array of jade, ceramics, wooden carvings, textiles and other displays, all with good English captions. Look out for the boxwood statue of Avalokiteshvara (Guanyin), dating from the republican period. No flip-flops.

Humble Administrator's Garden

GARDENS

(Zhuozheng Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 178 Dongbei Jie; high/low season ¥70/50, audioguide free; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm)

First built in 1509, this 5.2-hectare garden is clustered with water features, a museum, a teahouse and at least 10 pavilions such as ‘the listening to the sound of rain’ and ‘the faraway looking’ pavilions – hardly humble, we know. The largest of the gardens, it's often considered to be the most impressive. With zigzagging bridges, pavilions, bamboo groves and fragrant lotus ponds, it should be an ideal place for a leisurely stroll, but you'll be battling crowds for right of way.

North Temple Pagoda

PAGODA

(Beisi Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1918 Renmin Lu; admission ¥25; 🕒 7.45am-5pm)

The tallest pagoda south of the Yangzi, the nine-storey North Temple Pagoda dominates the northern end of Renmin Lu. Part of Bao'en Temple (*Bao'en Si*), you can climb the pagoda (*ta*) for sweeping views of hazy modern-day Suzhou.

The complex goes back 1700 years and was originally a residence; the current reincarnation dates back to the 17th century. Off to one side is **Nanmu Guanyin Hall** (*Nanmu Guanyin Dian*), which was rebuilt in the Ming dynasty with some features imported from elsewhere.

The Chinese plaque outside the hall intones " ('spotless'), revealing Guanyin's state of unblemished purity. At the rear is a thoughtfully composed **garden and rockery**, with a teahouse. Within the temple compound is also the rather unusual **Seven Buddha Hall**.

Suzhou Silk Museum

MUSEUM

(Suzhou Sichou Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2001 Renmin Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm;  Suzhou Train Station) **FREE**

By the 13th century Suzhou was the place for silk production and weaving, and the Suzhou Silk Museum houses fascinating exhibitions detailing the history of Suzhou's 4000-year-old silk industry. Exhibits include a section on silk-weaving techniques and silk fashion through the dynasties, while you can amble among mulberry shrubs outdoors. You can also see functioning looms and staff at work on, say, a large brocade.

Suzhou Art Museum

MUSEUM

(Suzhou Meishuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2075 Renmin Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun;  Suzhou Train Station) **FREE**

There's a dazzling use of daylight and design in this brand new museum, creating a seemingly infinite white space hung with contemporary landscapes, calligraphy and modern art. The interior composition includes a lovely courtyard, sprouting bamboo. It's an element of a large complex that also includes the Suzhou Cultural Center and a theatre.

Lion's Grove Garden

GARDENS

(Shizi Lin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 23 Yuanlin Lu; high/low season ¥30/20; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm)

Constructed in 1342 by the Buddhist monk Tianru to commemorate his master, who lived on Lion Cliff on Zhejiang's Tianmu Mountain, this garden's curiously shaped rocks were meant to resemble lions, protectors of the Buddhist faith. If the Humble Administrator's Garden was crowded, get ready to be pushed along by the tide of tourists here.

Temple of Mystery

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Xuanmiao Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Guanqian Jie; admission ¥10; 🕒 7.30am-5pm;  Lindun Lu or Leqiao)

Lashed by electronic music from the shops alongside, the Taoist Temple of

Mystery stands in what was once Suzhou's old bazaar, a rowdy entertainment district with travelling showmen, acrobats and actors. The temple dates from 1181 and is the sole surviving example of Song architecture in Suzhou. The complex contains several elaborately decorated halls, including the huge **Sanqing Dian** (Three Purities Hall), which is supported by 60 pillars and capped by a double roof with upturned eaves.

The hall is home to three huge statues of **Yuqing**, **Shangqing** and **Taiqing** (the Three Purities); look out for the **one-horned ox** (*dujiao shenniu*) that conveyed Laozi on his travels; there are also shrines to Tianhou, clothed in a pink robe, and the Jade Emperor. Note the antique carved **balustrade** around the hall, which dates to the Five Dynasties period (10th century). The blank **Wordless Stele** stands just east of the hall. The first main hall of the temple now serves as a jewelry showroom.

Twin Pagodas

BUDDHIST TEMPLE, PAGODA

(Shuang Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dinghuisi Xiang; admission ¥8; 🕒 8am-4.30pm; [M](#) Lindun Lu)

Beautifully enhanced with flowering magnolias in spring, this delightful courtyard and former temple contains a pair of sublime pagodas. It's one of the more relaxing, peaceful and composed parts of town. It's also home to the small **Suzhou Ancient Stone Carving Art Museum**.

Pingjiang Lu

STREET

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); [M](#) Lindun Lu or Xiangmen)

While most of the town canals have been sealed and paved into roads, the pedestrianised **Pingjiang Lu** offers clues to the Suzhou of yesteryear. On the eastern side of the city, this canal-side road has whitewashed local houses, many now converted to guesthouses, teahouses or trendy cafes selling overpriced beverages, sitting comfortably side-by-side. Duck down some of the side streets that jut out from the main path for a glimpse at slow-paced local life.

Along the main drag it's all rice wine, Tibetan trinkets, cigar sellers, fried

potatoes, cake, dumplings and ice-cream vendors.

Kunqu Opera Museum

MUSEUM

(Kunqu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 14 Zhongzhangjia Xiang; 🕒 8.30am-4pm) **FREE**

Down a warren of narrow lanes, the small Kunqu Opera Museum is dedicated to *kunqu*, the opera style of the region. The beautiful old theatre houses a stage, musical instruments, costumes and photos of famous performers. It also puts on regular performances of *kunqu*.

Couple's Garden

GARDENS

(Ou Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 6 Xiaoxinqiao Xiang; high/low season ¥20/15; 🕒 8am-4.30pm; **M**Xiangmen)

The tranquil Couple's Garden is off the main tourist route and sees fewer visitors (a relative concept in China), though the gardens, pond and courtyards are quite lovely.

Soochow University

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

(Suzhou Daxue [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Shizi Jie; **M**Xiangmen)

Before the communists took over, this college was China's oldest private university, founded by missionaries of the Methodist church in 1900. The university is still in operation and its beautiful old campus is accessible from the west gate (*ximen*) where you'll see **St Joseph Church**, built in 1881, standing right outside. Inside the leafy campus are ivy-clad colonial buildings, the most notable being the imposing **Clock Tower** and the **Laura Haygood Memorial Hall**.

The Xiangmen metro stop (exit 1) is next to the north gate of the campus, or bus 8 from the train station will drop you off at the west gate.

Garden of the Master of the Nets

GARDENS

(Wangshi Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); high/low season ¥30/20; 🕒 7.30am-5pm)

Off Shiquan Jie, this pocket-sized garden is considered one of Suzhou's best

preserved. Laid out in the 12th century, it went to seed and was later restored in the 18th century as part of the home of a retired official turned fisherman (hence the name). A striking feature is the use of space: the labyrinth of courtyards, with windows framing other parts of the garden, is ingeniously designed to give the illusion of a much larger area.

The central section is the main garden and the western section is an inner garden with a courtyard containing the master's study. Trivia nuts note: the Peony Study was used as the model for the Astor Court and Ming Garden in the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

There are two ways to the entry gate, with English signs and souvenir stalls marking the way: you can enter from the alley on Shiquan Jie; or via Kuojiatou Xiang, an alley off Daichengqiao Lu.

Blue Wave Pavilion

GARDENS

(Canglang Ting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Renmin Lu; high/low season ¥20/15; 🕒 7.30am-5pm)

Originally the home of a prince, the oldest garden in Suzhou was first built in the 11th century, and has been repeatedly rebuilt since. Instead of attracting hordes of tourists, the wild, overgrown garden around the Blue Wave Pavilion is one of those where the locals actually go to chill and enjoy a leisurely stroll. Lacking a northern wall, the garden creates the illusion of space by borrowing scenes from the outside.

A double verandah leads along a canal from the front pavilion. From the outer path, you'll see green space inside and from the inner path you can see views of the water. Look out for a 'temple' whose dark walls are carved with the portraits of more than 500 sages, and the 'pure fragrance house' has some impressive furniture made from the gnarled roots of banyan trees.

Confucian Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wenmiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 613 Renmin Lu; 🕒 6.30am-4pm) **FREE**

The restored Confucian Temple is a haven and place of solitude in a busy town, with several ancient ginkgos (one is 830 years old) and rows of bonsai trees, plus a statue of the temperate sage. The highlight is the fabulous stelae

carved during the Southern Song dynasty (1137–1279). One features a map of old Suzhou, detailing the canal system (much now paved over and blocked), old roads and the city walls.

There's also an astronomy stele from 1190 – one of the oldest astronomy charts in the world.

★ Pan Gate Scenic Area

LANDMARK

(Pan Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Dong Dajie; admission Pan Gate only/with Ruiguang Pagoda ¥25/31; 🕒 7.30am-6pm; 🚏 Y2)

This stretch of the city wall, straddling the outer moat in the southwest corner of the city has Suzhou's only remaining original coiled gate, Pan Gate, which dates from 1355. This overgrown double-walled **water gate** was used for controlling waterways, with defensive positions at the top. From the gate, you can view the exquisite arched **Wumen Bridge** (Wumen Qiao) to the east, the long moat and the crumbling **Ruiguang Pagoda** (Ruiguang Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dong Dajie; admission ¥6), constructed in 1004.

The gate is also connected to 300m of the **ancient city wall**, which visitors can walk along, past old women harvesting dandelions. The gate also backs onto a delightful scenic area, dotted with old halls, bell towers, bridges, pavilions and a lake as well as the small **Wuxiang Temple** (*Wuxiang Ci*). It's far less crowded than Suzhou's gardens and in many ways, more attractive. To get here, take tourist bus Y2 or a taxi.

Garden to Linger In

GARDENS

(Liu Yuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 79 Liuyuan Lu; high/low season ¥40/30; 🕒 7.30am-5pm; 🚏 Y1)

One of the largest gardens in Suzhou, this 3-hectare plot was originally built in the Ming dynasty by a doctor as a relaxing place for his recovering patients. It's easy to see why the patients took to it: the winding corridors are inlaid with calligraphy from celebrated masters, their windows and doorways opening onto unusually shaped rockeries, ponds and dense clusters of bamboo. Stone tablets hang from the walls, inscribed by patients recording

their impressions of the place.

The teahouse is a fantastic spot to recover from crowd overload. Order a cup of *longjing* (dragon well tea; ¥15) and relax. The garden is about 3km west of the city centre and can be reached on tourist bus Y1 from the train station or Renmin Lu.

West Garden Temple

GARDENS

(Xiyuan Si Xiyuan Lu; admission ¥25; 🕒 8am-5pm; 🚌 Y1, Y3)

This magnificent temple, with its mustard-yellow walls and gracefully curved eaves, was burnt to the ground during the Taiping Rebellion and rebuilt in the late 19th century. Greeting you as you enter the stunning **Arhat Hall** (*Luohan Tang*) is an amazing four-faced and thousand-armed statue of Guanyin. Beyond lie mesmerising and slightly unnerving rows of 500 glittering *luohan* (arhats - monks who have achieved enlightenment and passed to nirvana at death) statues, each unique and near life-size.

A vegetarian restaurant serves noodles. The temple is 400m west of the Garden to Linger In. Take Y1 or Y3 from the train station.

Tiger Hill

PARK

(Huqiu Shan 📍 6723 2305; Huqiu Lu; admission high/low season ¥60/40; 🕒 7.30am-6pm, to 5pm winter; 🚌 Y1, Y2)

In the far northwest of town, Tiger Hill is popular with local tourists. The beacon drawing the visitors is the leaning **Cloud Rock Pagoda** (*Yunyan Ta*) atop the hill. The octagonal seven-storey pagoda was built in the 10th century entirely of brick, an innovation in Chinese architecture at the time. It began tilting over 400 years ago, and today the highest point is displaced more than 2m from its original position.

The hill itself is artificial and is the final resting place of He Lu, founding father of Suzhou. He Lu died in the 6th century BC and myths have coalesced around him – he is said to have been buried with a collection of 3000 swords and be guarded by a white tiger. Tourist buses Y1 and Y2 from the train station go to Tiger Hill.

THE GRAND CANAL

The world's longest canal, the Grand Canal (Dayunhe) once meandered for almost 1800km from Beijing to Hangzhou, and is a striking example of China's engineering prowess. Sections of the canal have been silted up for centuries and today perhaps half of it remains seasonally navigable.

The Grand Canal's construction spanned many centuries. The first 85km were completed in 495 BC, but the mammoth task of linking the Yellow River (Huang He) and the Yangzi River (Chang Jiang) was undertaken between AD 605 and 609 by a massive conscripted labour force during Sui times. It was developed again during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). The canal enabled the government to capitalise on the growing wealth of the Yellow River Basin and to ship supplies from south to north.

The Jiangnan section of the canal (Hangzhou, Suzhou, Wuxi and Changzhou) is a skein of canals, rivers and branching lakes. There are boat rides along certain sections of the canal in Suzhou ([Click here](#)) – with all the surrounding modernity, though, the grandness of the project seems to have all but faded.

Tours

Evening boat tours wind their way around the outer canal leaving nightly from 6pm to 8.30pm (¥120, 55 minutes, half-hourly). The trips, usually with *pingtan* (singing and storytelling art form sung in the Suzhou dialect) performance on board, are a great way to experience old Suzhou, passing Pan Gate and heading up to Chang Gate (in the west of the city wall). Remember to bring bug repellent as the mosquitoes are tenacious. Tickets can be bought at the **Tourist Boat Wharf** (Youchuan Matou [GOOGLE MAP](#)) down the alley east of Renmin Bridge, which shares the same quarters with the **Grand Canal Boats** (Huachuan Shoupiaochu [GOOGLE MAP](#)) ticket office. Buses 27 or 94 run to the wharf.

Festivals & Events

Suzhou Silk Festival

CULTURAL

(Sichou Jie)

Every September Suzhou hosts a silk festival. There are exhibitions devoted to silk history and production, and silk merchants get to show off their wares to crowds of thousands.

Sleeping

Hotels in general are terribly overpriced in Suzhou. Get ready to hone your bargaining skills.

★ Suzhou Mingtown Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Suzhou Mingtang Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6581 6869; 28 Pingjiang Lu, 6-bed dm ¥50, rm ¥125-185; 📶 @; 🚇 Xiangmen or Lindun Lu)

This well-run youth hostel with a Thai sleeping Buddha at the door, a charming lobby and rooms and dorms with dark wooden ‘antique’ furniture. The only downside is that rooms aren’t soundproof and hot water can misfire. There’s free internet, free laundry, and bike rental. Rooms are around ¥20 pricier on Friday and Saturday.

Joya Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xiaoya Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6755 1752; www.joyahostel.com; 1/21 Daxinqiao Xiang; 1/21 dm ¥60, s/d ¥180; 📶; 🚇 Xiangmen)

A lovely former residence (built in 1883), this tranquil place (set back from the main Pingjiang Lu drag) has Qing-dynasty charm, with floral lattice windows, many original wooden beams and a wisteria in the courtyard. Rooms are small, but have high ceilings and open out onto courtyards.

Suzhou Watertown Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Suzhou Fushengsiji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6521 8885; www.watertownhostel.com; 7 Dashitou Xiang, Renmin Lu, 6-/4-bed dm ¥50/60, r ¥130-180; 📶 @; 🚇 Leqiao)

Tucked away in an alley off Renmin Lu, this 200-year-old courtyard complex houses an OK hostel. Rooms on the 2nd floor are quieter while ground-floor rooms have better wi-fi reception. Dorms are compact but clean enough.

The cosy Suzhou-styled patio invites you to chill, and big bottles of Qingdao are a mere ¥5. Another plus is that the airport bus station is just a stone's throw away.

Pod

HOTEL

(Buding Jiudian Liansuo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6530 0767; www.podinns.com; 758 Shiquan Jie; r from ¥199)

Simple, clean and snappy, this place has vibrantly styled stack 'em high and rent 'em fast rooms with window and shower (but not much else) at the heart of things along busy Shiquan Jie.

★ Garden Hotel

HOTEL

(Suzhou Nanyuan Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6778 6778; www.gardenhotelsuzhou.com; 99 Daichengqiao Lu; r from ¥1558; 🚗 @ 📶)

Within huge, green grounds, the very popular and recently redone five-star Garden Hotel has lovely, spacious and attractively decorated accommodation. Washed over with Chinese instrumental *pipa* music, the lobby is a picture of Suzhou, with a clear pond, grey bricks and white walls. Serene stuff and an oasis of calm.

Hotel Soul

HOTEL

(Sugeli Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6777 0777; www.hotelsoul.com.cn; 27-33 Qiaosikong Xiang, 27-33 d ¥1680; 🚗 📶)

This 200-room, five-level Philippe Starck-wannabe has a zappy foyer, sharp angles and neon blue lights, but little soul. It is, however, very good value and central. Rooms are huge and dapper, with textured wallpaper, plush beds and tones that make you want to order a martini. You can normally net rooms for ¥418, or ¥460 on Friday and Saturday.

Pan Pacific Suzhou

HOTEL

(Suzhou Wugong Fantaipingyang Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6510 3388; www.panpacific.com/Suzhou; 259 Xinshi Lu, d ¥1268; 🌐 @)

There's a kitschy feel to the exterior of this former Sheraton Hotel, which looks like a faux Forbidden City. But once you step into the lobby, you'll know this is truly a five-star luxury. The 500+ rooms are spacious and stylish, fitted with all the latest gadgets to make you happy. Services are simply impeccable.

A bonus is guests get to enjoy free access to the adjacent Gan Gate Garden.

Pingjiang Lodge

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Suzhou Pingjiang Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6523 2888; www.pingjianglodge.com; 33 Niujia Xiang, d ¥988-1588, ste ¥1888-2588; 🌐 @; 🚇 Xiangmen or Lindun Lu)

Capturing the white-washed walls, canal-side Suzhou aesthetic, this 17th-century, traditional courtyard building has well-kept gardens and 51 rooms bedecked in traditional furniture. Rooms at the pointy end are suites with split-level living spaces; standard rooms are a bit bashed and could do with new carpets. Staff speak (faltering) English. Discounts of up to 50% are available.

Marco Polo Suzhou

HOTEL

(Suzhou Xuanmiao Makeboluo Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6801 9888; www.marcopohotels.com; 818 Ganjiang Donglu, d/ste ¥950/2217; 🌐 @)

Right in the heart of Suzhou, this former Sofitel has been rebranded and still makes the grade. Its 314 rooms are tailored to suit the needs of the business traveller. Leisure visitors also like the spacious rooms with modern furnishings. Discounts knock rooms down to around ¥500.

Eating

Plentiful restaurants can be found along Guanqian Jie, especially down the

road from the Temple of Mystery.

Yaba Shengjian

DUMPLING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 12 Lindun Lu; dumplings ¥12 for eight; 🕒 5.30am-6.30pm)

With great clouds of steam rising from the kitchen, this 60-year-old institution mainly flogs noodles but its handmade *shengjian bao* (pan-fried dumplings), stuffed with juicy pork, are outstanding and flavour-packed. During lunch hours expect to queue for 30 minutes just to order! Protocol: get a ticket, join the line, snag a table and enjoy.

Head to the side for chilli oil and soy sauce. Watch out for the meat juice, it can fly. There's more room and a breeze through the window upstairs. No English menu.

Pingvon

TEAHOUSE

(Pinfang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 94 Pingjiang Lu; dishes from ¥6)

A cute little teahouse perched beside one of Suzhou's most popular canal-side streets, Pingvon serves up excellent dumplings and delicate little morsels on small plates. The tea rooms upstairs are more atmospheric. Try the pine nuts and pumpkin soup (¥6) and the crab *xiaolongbao* (steamed dumplings; ¥10 a portion). Picture menu.

Zhuhongxing

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Taijian Long; mains from ¥15; 🕒 6.45am-8.45pm; **M** Lindun Lu)

Popular with locals, this red-wood furniture bedecked eatery, with several branches across town, has a long history and wholesome, filling noodles – try the scrummy *xiaren mian* (noodles with baby shrimps) or the *xuecai rousimian* (meat and vegetable noodles).

Wumen Renjia

JIANGSU

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6728 8041; 31 Panru Xiang; dishes from ¥30; 🕒 6.30-9.30am, 11am-1.30pm & 5-8.30pm)

Hidden in a quiet alley north of Lion's Grove Garden, this lovely courtyard restaurant attracts a mix of locals and visitors for its subtly flavoured traditional Suzhou cooking. Service can sometimes be a bit slow, but the setting (with traditional Chinese music) is grade A. Reservations essential.

Try the stewed pork balls in brown sauce (¥30), *kungpao* chicken (spicy chicken with chili and peanuts) or any of the plentiful seafood dishes.

Yakexi

UIGHUR

(| Yakexi Jiulou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 768 Shiquan Jie, mains ¥40; 🕒 10.30am-midnight)

The Uighur kitsch atmosphere is entertaining and the Xinjiang staples – lamb kebabs (¥2.50), hot and spicy lamb soup (¥16) and *nang* bread (flat bread; ¥3) – all tasty. Round it off with a bottle of SinKiang beer (¥10) or a sour milk drink (¥8) and dream of Kashgar. No time to sit down? The lamb kebabs are grilled just outside.

Bistronomy

FRENCH

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6572 5632; 711 Shiquan Jie; mains from ¥88; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-9.30pm Tue-Sun)

With low-volume funky beats and two nifty and sleek floors, grey brick walls, drapes, spot lights and white linen tablecloths, this elegant restaurant is a choice stop on Shiquan Jie. Crowd-pullers include cheese fondue (¥118), rich and smooth onion soup (¥58) – in an over-the-top bowl – and braised rack of lamb served with gratin Dauphinois (¥148), and homemade cassoulet (¥138).

The homemade lasagne (¥88) is also excellent. You could go for the monster burger (3kg; ¥198) if you haven't eaten for a few days, or settle for pizzas (from ¥78).



Drinking & Nightlife

There are stacks of trendy cafe-bars scattered along Pingjiang Lu. The nightlife scene on Shiquan Jie is dying as most of the expats' watering holes

have moved to the soulless Suzhou Industrial Park, 9km east of the centre of town (get there on the metro).

Locke Pub

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 240 Pingjiang Lu; 🕒 10am-midnight)

Any place that plays Tom Waits is good in our book. This charming spot has ample space, comfy sofas, homemade ice cream, a whole wall of English books, hot whisky, Leffe, Corona and Guinness, all set in a traditional building along Pingjiang Lu.

Bookworm

CAFE, BAR

(Lao Shuchong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 77 Gunxiu Fang; 🕒 9am-1am)

Beijing's Bookworm wormed its way down to Suzhou, although the book selection isn't as good as Beijing's. The food is crowd pleasing (lots of Western options) and the cold beers include Tsingtao and Erdinger. There are occasional events and books you can borrow or buy. Just off Shiquan Jie.

Entertainment

Regular performances of *kunqu* opera and *pingtan*, two of the exquisite performance arts sung in local dialects, are regularly scheduled at the following places.

Kunqu Opera Museum

CHINESE OPERA

(Kunqu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 14 Zhongzhangjia Xiang; tickets ¥30)

This place puts on performances of *kunqu* at 2pm on Sundays.

Garden of the Master of the Nets

MUSIC

(Wangshi Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); tickets ¥100)

From March to November, music performances are held nightly from 7.30pm to 9.30pm for tourist groups at this garden. Don't expect anything too

authentic.

Pingtan Teahouse

TEAHOUSE

(Pingtan Chaguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2nd fl, 626 Shiquan Jie)

Pingtan enthusiasts get together here to keep the traditions alive. The music usually starts between 8pm and 10pm. Order some tea (the speciality is Yunnan *pu'er*, unlimited serves from ¥100), and pick songs (from ¥45, some lyrics have English translations) for the master to play.

Pingtan Museum

PERFORMING ARTS

(Pingtan Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 3 Zhongzhangjia Xiang; admission ¥4, performance tickets ¥6; 🕒 9.30am-noon & 3.30-5pm)

Almost next to the Kunqu Opera Museum is the Pingtan Museum, which puts on wonderful performances of *pingtan*, a singing and storytelling art form sung in the Suzhou dialect. Two-hour shows are at 1.30pm daily.



Shopping

Suzhou-style embroidery, calligraphy, paintings, sandalwood fans, writing brushes and silk underclothes are for sale nearly everywhere.



Information

Major tourist hotels have foreign-exchange counters.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1450 Renmin Lu)

Changes travellers cheques and foreign cash. There are ATMs that take international cards at most larger branches of the Bank of China.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Renmin Lu & Jingde Lu)

Centrally located.

Industrial & Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(Gongshang Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 222 Guanqian Jie)

24-hour ATM facilities.

No 1 Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Suda Fuyiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 96 Shizi Jie;)

At the heart of Suzhou.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ ext 20593 6522 5661; 1109 Renmin Lu)

Can help with emergencies and visa problems. The visa office is about 200m down a lane called Dashitou Xiang.

Suzhou Tourism Information Center

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Suzhou Luyou Zixun Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6530 5887; www.classicsuzhou.com; 101 Daichengqiao Lu;)

This branch is just north of the Garden Hotel; there are several other branches in town including at bus stations. Can help with booking accommodation and tours.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Suzhou does not have an airport, but **China Eastern Airlines** (Dongfang Hangkong Gongsi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6522 2788; 115 Ganjiang Lu) can help with booking flights out of Shanghai. Buses leave here frequently between 6.20am and 4.50pm for Hongqiao Airport (¥53) and Pudong International Airport (¥54) in Shanghai.

BUS

Suzhou has three long-distance bus stations and the two listed are the most useful. Tickets for all buses can also be bought at the **Lianhe ticket centre** (Lianhe Shoupiaochu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6520 6681; 1606 Renmin Lu; 🕒 bus tickets 8.30-11.30am & 1-5pm; train tickets 7.30-11am & noon-5pm).

The principal station is the **north long-distance bus station** (Qiche Beizhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6577 6577; 29 Xihui Lu;) at the northern end of Renmin Lu, next to the train station:

- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥74, two hours, regular
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥72, 2½ hours, regular services
- ➔ **Wuzhen** ¥36, 90 minutes, regular services, 8.15am-4.30pm
- ➔ **Zhouzhuang** ¥16, one hour, every 40 minutes, 6.45am-5.50pm
- ➔ **Tongli** ¥8, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes, 6am-7pm

The **south long-distance bus station** (Qiche Nanzhan cnr Yingchun Lu & Nanhuan Donglu) has buses to the following:

- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥74, two hours, every 20 minutes
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥72, two hours, every 20 minutes
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥34, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes
- ➔ **Yangzhou** ¥76, two hours, hourly

TRAIN

Suzhou is on the Nanjing–Shanghai express G line. Trains stop at either the more centrally located **Suzhou Train Station** (Suzhou Zhan) or the **Suzhou North Train Station** (Suzhou Beizhan), 12km north of the city centre. Book train tickets on the 2nd floor of the [Lianhe ticket centre](#). There's also a **ticket office** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Guanqian Jie;) along Guanqian Jie across from the Temple of Mystery and another (8am to 8pm) by the Confucian Temple. Another ticket office can be found on the other side of the road from the south long-distance bus station.

- ➔ **Beijing South** 2nd/1st class ¥524/884, five hours, 15 daily

- ➔ **Nanjing** 2nd/1st class ¥100/160, one hour, frequent
- ➔ **Shanghai** 2nd/1st class ¥40/60, 25 minutes, frequent
- ➔ **Wuxi** 2nd/1st class ¥20/30, 15 minutes, frequent

Getting Around

BICYCLE

Suzhou could seriously do with a public bike hire scheme like Hangzhou's, but you can rent a bike from most hostels. The **Yangyang Bike Rental Shop** (Yangyang Chehang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2061 Renmin Lu; ¥25 per day plus ¥200 deposit; 🕒 7am-6pm), a short walk north of the Silk Museum, offers bike rentals.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Convenient tourist buses visit all sights and cost ¥2, passing by the train station.

- ➔ **Bus Y5** Goes around the western and eastern sides of the city and has a stop at Suzhou Museum.
- ➔ **Bus Y2** Travels from Tiger Hill, Pan Gate and along Shiquan Jie.
- ➔ **Buses Y1 & Y4** Run the length of Renmin Lu.
- ➔ **Bus 80** Runs between the two train stations.

Suzhou metro line 1 runs along Ganjiang Lu, connecting Mudu in the southwest with Zhongnan Jie in the east and running through the Culture & Expo Centre and Times Square, in the Suzhou Industrial Park. Line 2 runs north-south from Suzhou North Railway Station to Baodaiqiaonan in the south, via Suzhou Train Station. At present, the metro system is not terribly useful for visitors, but two more lines are under construction.

TAXI

Fares start at ¥10 and drivers generally use their meters. A trip from Guanqian Jie to the train station should cost around ¥15. From Suzhou North Train Station to downtown, the fare is around ¥50 to ¥60. Pedicabs hover around the tourist areas and can be persistent (¥5 for short rides is standard).

AROUND SUZHOU

Suzhou's tourist brochures offer a mind-boggling array of sights around the town. Sadly, not all are great, and noteworthy ones are often overrun by tourists. Go early to avoid the crowds.

Around Sūzhōu



0 10 km
0 5 miles



Tongli

☞ 0512

This lovely **Old Town** (Laochengqu 📍6333 1140; admission ¥100, free after 5.30pm), only 18km southeast of Suzhou, boasts rich, historical canal-side atmosphere and weather-beaten charm. Many of the buildings have kept their traditional facades, with stark whitewashed walls, black-tiled roofs, cobblestone pathways and willow-shaded canal views adding to a picturesque allure. The town is best explored the traditional way: aimlessly meandering along the canals and alleys until you get lost. A restrained carnival atmosphere reigns but the languorous tempo is frequently shredded by marauding tour groups that sweep in like cricket swarms, especially at weekends.

You can reach Tongli from either Suzhou or Shanghai, but aim for a weekday visit.

The admission fee to the town includes access to the best sights, except the Chinese Sex Culture Museum.

Sights

Gengle Tang

HISTORIC BUILDING

(🕒 9am-5.30pm)

There are three old residences in Tongli that you'll pass at some point and the most pleasant is this elegant and composed Ming-dynasty estate with 52 halls spread out over five courtyards in the west of town. The buildings have been elaborately restored and redecorated with paintings, calligraphy and antique furniture while the black-brick faced paths, osmanthus trees and cooling corridors hung with *madeng* lanterns (traditional Chinese lanterns) conjure up an alluring charm.

Pearl Pagoda

PAGODA

(Zhenzhu Ta 🕒 9am-5.30pm)

In the north of town, this compound dates from the Qing dynasty. Inside, you'll find a large residential complex decorated with Qing-era antiques, an ancestral hall, a garden and an opera stage. It gets its name from a tiny

pagoda draped in pearls.

Tuisi Garden

GARDENS

(Tuisi Yuan 🕒 9am-5.30pm)

This beautiful 19th-century garden in the east of the Old Town delightfully translates as the 'Withdraw and Reflect Garden', so named because it was a Qing government official's retirement home. The 'Tower of Fanning Delight' served as the living quarters, while the garden itself is a meditative portrait of pond water churning with koi, rockeries and pavilions, caressed by traditional Chinese music.

Chinese Sex Culture Museum

MUSEUM

(Zhonghua Xingwenhua Bowuguan admission ¥20; 🕒 9am-5.30pm)

This private museum, located east of Tuisi Garden, is quietly housed in a historic but disused girls' school campus and you won't miss it. Despite occasionally didactic and inaccurate pronouncements ('there were globally three abnormal sexual phenomena: prostitution, foot-binding and eunuchs'), it's fascinating, and ranges from the penal (sticks used to beat prostitutes, chastity belts) and the penile (Qing-dynasty dildos), to the innocent (small statues of the goddess of mercy) and the positively charming (porcelain figures of courting couples).

The setting – with a lovely garden and courtyard – is stunning.

Tours

Slow-moving **six-person boats** (¥90 for 25 minutes) ply the waters of Tongli's canal system. The boat trip on Tongli Lake is free, though of no particular interest.

Sleeping & Eating

Guesthouses are plentiful, with basic rooms starting at about ¥100.

Restaurants are everywhere, and food prices here are much higher than Suzhou. Some local dishes to try include *meigancaishaorou* (stewed meat with dried vegetables), *yinyuchaodan* (silver fish omelette) and *zhuangyuangti* (stewed pig's leg).

Tongli International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Tongli Guoji Qingnian Lushe  6333 9311; 10 Zhuhang Jie, dm ¥55, r from ¥110;   )

This youth hostel has two locations. The main one, slightly off Zhongchuan Beilu and near Zhongchuan Bridge, is 300m west of Zhengfu Caotang. With a charming wooden interior, rooms here have traditional furniture (some with four-poster beds), oozing old-China charm. The lobby area is attractive, decked out with international flags and sofas draped in throws.

The **alternative location** (234 Yuhang Jie;) beside Taiping bridge has doubles (¥130) with shared bathroom only.

Zhengfu Caotang

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

( 6333 6358; www.zfct.net; 138 Mingqing Jie, s ¥480, d ¥680, ste ¥1380;   )

The place to stay in town. Each one unique, the 14 deluxe rooms and suites are all aesthetically set with Qing-style furniture and antiques, with four-poster beds in some. Facilities like bathrooms and floor heating are ultramodern.

Getting There & Around

From Suzhou, take a bus (¥8, 50 minutes, every 30 minutes) at the south or north long-distance bus station for Tongli. Electric carts (¥5) run from beside the Tongli bus station to the Old Town, or walk it in about 15 minutes.

Regular buses leave Tongli bus station for Suzhou (¥8), Shanghai (¥32) and Zhouzhuang (¥6, 30 minutes). There is also one bus per day to Nanjing (¥69) and Hangzhou (¥51). For Zhouzhuang, you can also take public bus 263 (¥2).

Luzhi

This charming, minute canal town, only a 25km public bus trip east of Suzhou, is slightly less commercialised than others in the area. The entrance ticket of ¥78 can be skipped if you just want to wander the streets, alleys and bridges – you only have to pay if you enter the tourist sights (8am-5pm), such as the **Wansheng Rice Warehouse** (*Wansheng Mihang*), the **Baosheng Temple** (*Baosheng Si*) and a handful of museums, but these can be safely missed without diminishing its charm.

The humpbacked bridges are delightful. Check out the centuries-old **Jinli Bridge** (*Jinli Qiao*) and **Xinglong Bridge** (*Xinglong Qiao*). Half-hour **boat rides** (¥40) depart from several points, including **Yong'an Bridge** (*Yong'an Qiao*).

The **Luzhi Cultural Park**, a huge, faux Ming-dynasty complex filled with tourist shops and a couple of exhibition halls. Admission is free and the landscaped gardens, ponds, pavilions and an opera stage make it a nice area to amble.

To get to Luzhi, take bus 518 from Suzhou Train Station (¥4, one hour, first/last bus 6am/8pm) or from the bus stop on Pingqi Lu to the last stop. When you get off, take the first right along Dasheng Lu to the decorative arch; crossing the bridge takes you into the back of the old town in five minutes. Hordes of pedicabs will descend upon you offering to take you to the main entrance. Pay no more than ¥5.

The last bus back from Luzhi is at 7.30pm. If you want to continue to Shanghai from Luzhi, buses (¥18, two hours) from the Luzhi bus station run between 6.20am and 5pm.

Mudu

Dating to the Ming dynasty, Mudu was once the haunt of wealthy officials, intellectuals and artists, and even the Qing Emperor Qianlong visited six

times. Today, the village has been swallowed up by Suzhou's growing suburban sprawl. It's not as attractive as Jiangsu's canal towns, but it's straightforward to reach.

The village is free if you merely want to soak up the atmosphere, as entrance fees are for the top sights alone, however they contain most of Mudu's character and history.

Sights

Bangyan Mansion

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Bangyan Fudi Xiatang Jie; admission ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm; 🚇 Mudu)

This dignified complex was the home of the 19th-century writer and politician Feng Guifen. It has a rich collection of antique furniture and intricate carvings of stone, wood and brick – it often serves as a movie set. The surrounding garden is pretty, with lotus ponds, arched bridges, and bamboo.

Hongyin Mountain Villa

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Hongyin Shanfang Shantang Jie; admission ¥40; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm; 🚇 Mudu)

By far the most interesting place in Mudu is this villa, with its elaborate opera stage, exhibits and even an imperial pier where Emperor Qianlong docked his boat. The stage in the centre hall is impressive; honoured guests were seated in front and the galleries along the sides of the hall were for women. The emperor was a frequent visitor and you can see his uncomfortable-looking imperial chair. Operas are still performed here on festival days.

Ancient Pine Garden

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Gusongyuan Shantang Jie; admission ¥20; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm; 🚇 Mudu)

In the middle of Shantang Jie is this courtyard complex known for its intricately carved beams. Look out for wooden impressions of officials, hats, phoenixes, flowers and other designs.

Yan Family Garden

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Yanjia Huayuan cnr Shantang Jie & Mingqing Jie; admission ¥40; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm; 🚇 Mudu)

This beautiful complex in the northwest corner of the village dates to the Ming dynasty and was once the home of a former magistrate. The garden, with its rockeries and a meandering lake, is divided into five sections by walls, with each section designed to invoke a season.

Mingyue Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Mingyue Gusi Shantang Jie; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm; 🚇 Mudu) **FREE**

This large and attractive temple originally dates to the 10th century, but has been largely reconstructed (since last being largely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution). The 1000-arm, four-faced Guanyin statue is worth hunting down – notice the ruler she holds in one of her lower hands, among other ritual objects.

Tours

The most pleasurable way to experience Mudu is along the canal by **boat**. You'll find a collection of traditional skiffs docked outside the Bangyan Mansion. A 10- to 15-minute boat ride is ¥10 per person (¥30 per boat minimum charge).

Getting There & Away

From Suzhou, take metro line 1 to Mudu station then take exit 1 and hop on bus 2, 38 or 622 (all ¥1), 4km (four stops) away from the old town (Mudu Guzhen zhan), .

Tianping Shan & Lingyan Shan

Around 3km from Mudu, scenic **Tianping Shan** (Lingtian Lu; admission ¥25; 🕒 7.30am-5pm) is a low, forested hill about 13km west of Suzhou. It's a

wonderful place for hiking or just meandering along one of its many wooded trails. It's also famous for its medicinal spring waters.

Eleven kilometres southwest of Suzhou is **Lingyan Shan** (Lingtian Lu; admission ¥20; 🕒 8am-4.30pm winter, to 5pm summer), the 'Cliff of the Spirits' that was once the site of a palace where Emperor Qianlong stayed during his inspection tours of the Yangzi River valley. The mountain is today home to an active Buddhist monastery. The exhausting climb to the peak offers panoramic views of Suzhou. On the way up, take the path on the left for an exciting clamber over rough-hewn stone and paths.

Tourist bus 4 goes to Lingyan Shan and Tianping Shan from Suzhou's train station.

Zhouzhuang

Some 30km southeast of Suzhou, the 900-year-old water village of Zhouzhuang is the best known canal town in Jiangsu. It is popular with tour groups, thanks to Chen Yifei, the late renowned Chinese painter whose works of the once idyllic village are its claim to fame.

It does, however, have considerable old-world charm. Get up early or take an evening stroll, before the crowds arrive or when they begin to thin out, to catch some of Zhouzhuang's architectural highlights. Admission to Zhouzhuang is ¥100 (access is free after 8pm); make sure you get your photo digitally added to the ticket at purchase, this entitles you to a three-day pass.

Sights

Twin Bridges

BRIDGE

A total of 14 bridges grace Zhouzhuang, but the most attractive is this pair of Ming-dynasty bridges (*Shuangqiao*) gorgeously standing at the intersection of two waterways in the heart of this canal town. **Shide Bridge** (*Shide Qiao*) is a humpbacked bridge while the connecting **Yongan Bridge** (*Yongan Qiao*)

is the one with a square arch. The bridges were depicted in Chen Yifei's *Memory of Hometown*, which shot the whole town to fame from the 1980s onwards.

It's fun to go under bridge after bridge by **boat**. There are loads on offer, including an 80-minute boat ride (¥180 per boat; six people) from outside the international youth hostel.

Zhang's House

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Zhangting 🕒 8am-7pm)

To the south of the Twin Bridges, this beautiful 70-room, three-hall structure was built in the Ming-era and bought by the Zhang clan in early Qing times as their residence. There's an opera stage to keep the ladies entertained (they were not supposed to leave home or seek entertainment outside). Also note the chairs in the magnificently named Hall of Jade Swallows. Unmarried women could only sit on those with a hollow seatback, symbolising that they had nobody to rely on!

Don't overlook the garden, where boats could drift straight up to the house to its own little wharf. Trek back to the road via the 'side lane', a long and narrow walkway for the servants.

Shen's House

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Shenting Nanshi Jie; 🕒 8am-7pm)

Near Fu'an Bridge, this property of the Shen clan is a lavish piece of Qing-style architecture boasting three halls and over 100 rooms. The first hall is particularly interesting, as it has a water gate and a wharf where the family moors their private boats. You can picture the compound entirely daubed in Maoist graffiti circa 1969 (note the crudely smashed carvings above the doors).

You'll need a separate ticket (¥10) for the **Zouma Lou** (8am-4.30pm) where a further six courtyards and 45 rooms await (a third of the entire building).

Quanfu Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Quanfu Jiagsi 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

It's hard to miss this eye-catching amber-hued temple complex. The 'full fortune' temple was founded during the Song dynasty, but has been repeatedly rebuilt. The structure you see today is an incarnation from 1995, when a handful of halls and gardens were added to the mix. The setting is simply stunning, with willow-lined lakes that seethe with plump goldfish.

Sleeping & Eating

There is a handful of guesthouses in town. Expect to pay ¥80 for a basic room. With eateries at almost every corner, you won't starve, but avoid the local *apo* tea (*apo cha*; old woman's tea) which is extortionate. Sitting canal-side with a Zhouzhuang beer in the evening is the way to go.

Zhouzhuang International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(📞 5720 4566; 86 Beishi Jie, dm ¥45, s ¥120, d ¥140; 📶 @ 📶)

Near an old opera stage, this efficient youth hostel occupies a converted courtyard. It has tidy rooms and a clean (but dim) dorm, and offers free laundry. The hostel owner is a barista, so enjoy a perfect brew in the ground-floor cafe. When it's slow, dorms go for ¥35; singles go for ¥100 and doubles for ¥120 on weekdays.

Zhengfu Caotang

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(📞 5721 9333; www.zfct.net; 90 Zhongshi Jie, d/ste ¥680/1080; 📶 @ 📶)

This lovingly presented five-room boutique hotel – a converted historic residence, restored to within an inch of its life – combines antique furniture with top-notch facilities, wood flooring and a lovely courtyard to fashion the best hotel in Zhouzhuang.

Getting There & Around

From the north long-distance bus station in Suzhou, half-hourly buses (¥16, 1½ hours) leave for Zhouzhuang between 6.55am and 5.20pm. From the bus station in Zhouzhuang, turn left and walk till you see the bridge. Cross the bridge and you'll see the gated entrance to the village. The walk is about 20 minutes; a taxi should cost no more than ¥10. Local bus 263 (¥2) from Tongli runs to Jiangze bus station, a ten-minute walk from Zhouzhuang. There are also buses from Jiangze bus station to Suzhou south long-distance bus station (¥13; first/last 6.33am/4.10pm) and Shanghai Hongqiao bus station. If you want to get to Hangzhou, you will need to go back to Suzhou (frequent) or Tongli (four a day).

Zhejiang

[Zhejiang Highlights](#)

[Hangzhou](#)

[Around Hangzhou](#)

[Wuzhen](#)

[Xin'anjiang](#)

[Around Xin'anjiang](#)

[Putuoshan](#)

Zhejiang



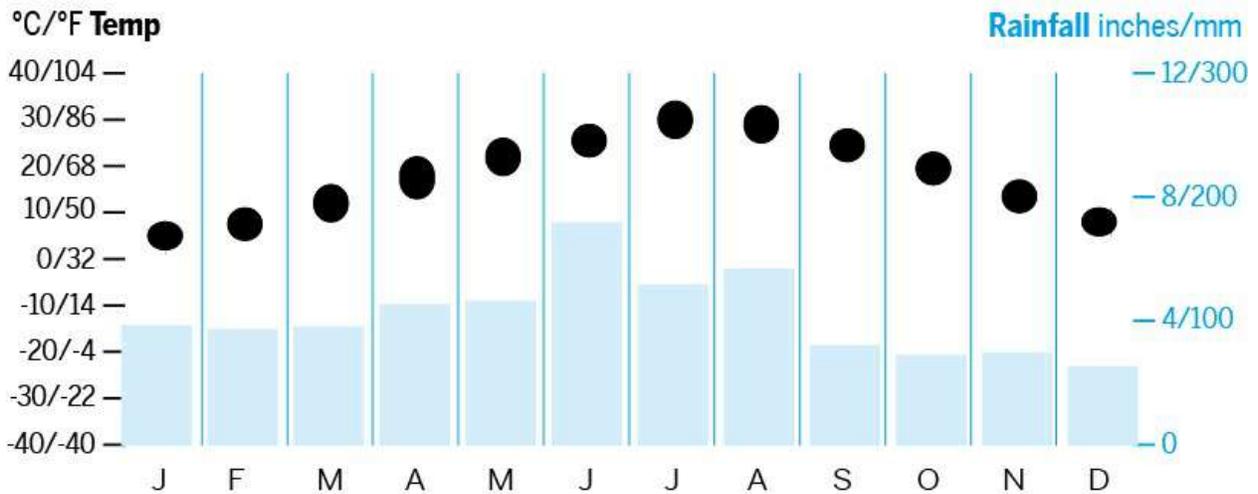
Pop 55 million

Why Go?

Zhejiang's trump card is its handsome and much-visited capital, Hangzhou. But while Hangzhou – a quick zip away on the train from Shanghai – is the front-running highlight, Zhejiang is no one-trick pony. There are the arched bridges and charming canal scenes of Wuzhen, a water town that typifies the lushly irrigated north of Zhejiang with its sparkling web of rivers and canals. The Buddhist island of Putuoshan is the best known of the thousands of islands dotting a ragged and fragmented shoreline while the mist- and tree-cloaked slopes of Moganshan provide refreshing natural air-conditioning when the thermostat in Shanghai is set to blow in the steamy summer months. But it's Zhejiang's ancient villages of Xinye and Zhuge which should demand your attention, for their unhurried portraits of traditional architecture and bucolic rhythms.

When to Go

Hángzhōu



- ➔ **Late Mar–early May** Spring sees low humidity and vegetation turning a brilliant green.
- ➔ **Aug & Sep** Flee the simmering lowland heat to the cooler heights of Moganshan.
- ➔ **Late Sep–mid-Nov** Steal a march on winter and evade the sapping summer in Hangzhou.

Best Escapes

- ➔ [Moganshan](#)
- ➔ [Putuoshan](#)
- ➔ [Xinye](#)
- ➔ [Zhuge](#)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ [Le Passage Mohkan Shan](#)
- ➔ [Four Seasons Hotel Hangzhou](#)

➔ [Mingtown Youth Hostel](#)

➔ [Hofang International Youth Hostel](#)

Zhejiang Highlights



- 1 Hop on a bike for a leisurely circuit of Hangzhou's inimitable [West Lake](#)
- 2 Turn your back on urban China and explore the forested inclines of lush [Moganshan](#)

- 3 Escape to the authentic village charms, ancient architecture and peaceful ponds of [Xinye](#)
- 4 Discover Zhejiang's picturesque canal-town culture at [Wuzhen](#)
- 5 Fathom the ancient fengshui mysteries of [Zhuge village](#)
- 6 Bounce over the waves to the sacred Buddhist island of [Putuoshan](#)

History

By the 7th and 8th centuries Hangzhou, Ningbo and Shaoxing had emerged as three of China's most important trading centres and ports. Fertile Zhejiang was part of the great southern granary from which food was shipped to the depleted areas of the north via the Grand Canal (Da Yunhe), which commences here. Growth accelerated when the Song dynasty moved court to Hangzhou in the 12th century after invasion from the north. Due to intense cultivation, northern Zhejiang has lost a lot of natural vegetation and much of it is now flat, featureless plain.

i Getting There & Away

Zhejiang is well connected to the rest of the country by plane, high-speed train and bus. The provincial capital Hangzhou is effortlessly reached by train from Shanghai and Suzhou, and serves as a useful first stop in Zhejiang. Hangzhou and Putuoshan are both served by nearby airports.

i Getting Around

The province is quite small and getting around is straightforward. Travelling by high-speed train is fast and efficient but buses (and boats) are needed for some destinations; flying to the larger cities is also possible.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this region:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥40

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥100

\$\$\$ more than ¥100

Hangzhou

 0571 / Pop 6.16 million

One of China's most illustrious tourist drawcards, Hangzhou's dreamy West Lake panoramas and fabulously green and hilly environs can easily lull you into long sojourns. Eulogised by poets and applauded by emperors, the lake has intoxicated the Chinese imagination for aeons. The town is religiously cleaned by armies of street sweepers and litter collectors, and its scenic vistas draw you into a classical Chinese watercolour of willow-lined banks, ancient pagodas, mist-covered hills and the occasional *shikumen* (stone gate house) and old *lilong* (residential lane). Despite vast tourist cohorts, West Lake is a delight to explore, either on foot or by bike.

History

Hangzhou's history dates to the start of the Qin dynasty (221 BC). Marco Polo passed through in the 13th century, calling Hangzhou Kinsai and noting in astonishment that Hangzhou had a circumference of 100 miles (161km), its waters vaulted by 12,000 bridges.

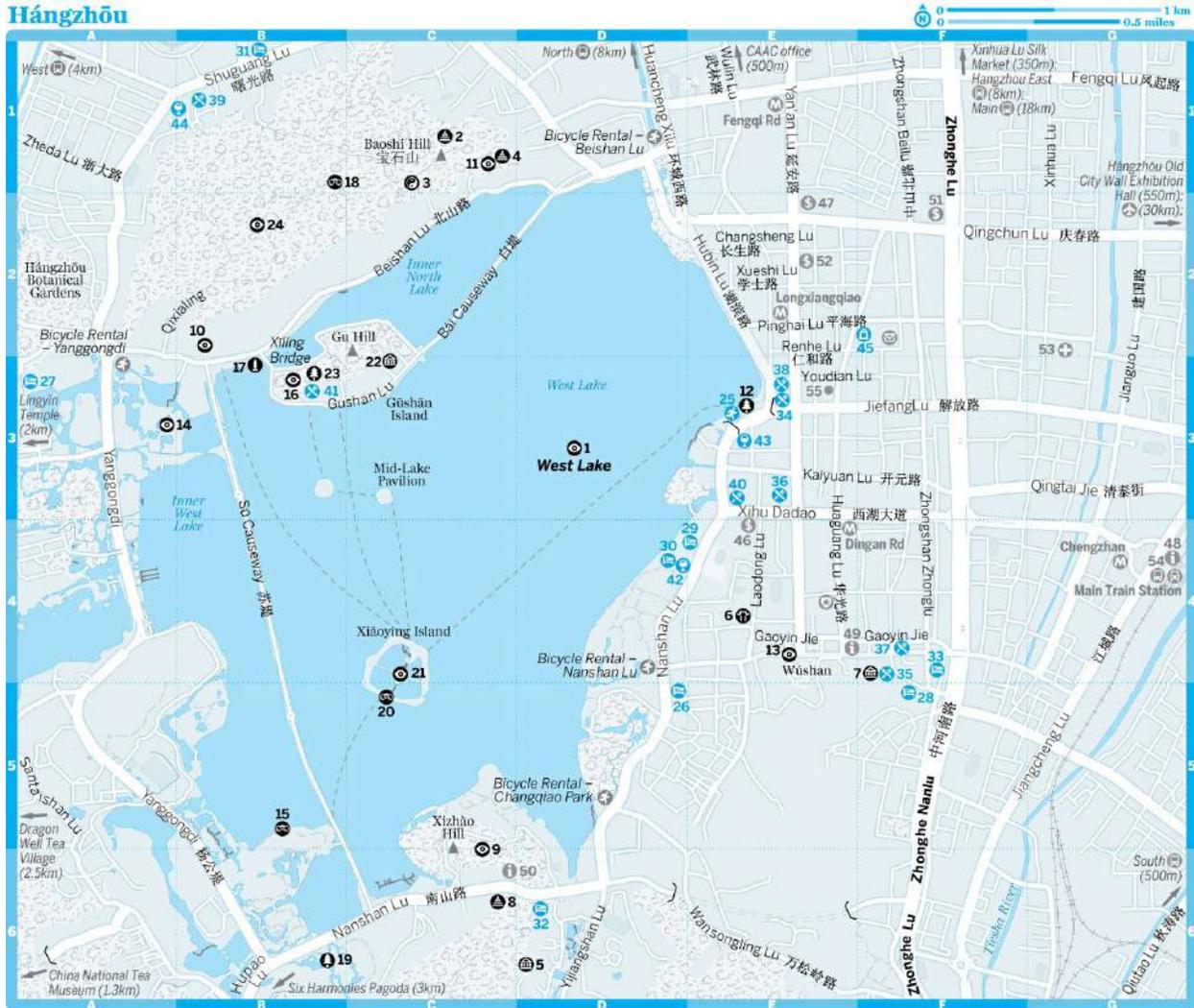
Hangzhou flourished after being linked with the Grand Canal in AD 610 but fully prospered after the Song dynasty was overthrown by the invading Jurchen, who captured the Song capital Kaifeng, along with the emperor and the leaders of the imperial court, in 1126. The remnants of the Song court

fled south, finally settling in Hangzhou and establishing it as the capital of the Southern Song dynasty. Hangzhou's wooden buildings made fire a perennial hazard; among major conflagrations, the great fire of 1237 reduced some 30,000 residences to piles of smoking carbon.

When the Mongols swept into China they established their court in Beijing, but Hangzhou retained its status as a prosperous commercial city. With 10 city gates by Ming times, Hangzhou took a hammering from Taiping rebels, who besieged the city in 1861 and captured it; two years later the imperial armies reclaimed it. These campaigns reduced almost the entire city to ashes, led to the deaths of over half a million of its residents through disease, starvation and warfare, and finally ended Hangzhou's significance as a commercial and trading centre.

Few monuments survived the devastation; much of what can be seen in Hangzhou today is of fairly recent construction.

Hangzhou



Hangzhou

📍 Top Sights

1 [West Lake](#) D3

📍 Sights

2 [Baochu Pagoda](#) C1

3 [Baopu Taoist Temple](#) C1

4 [Big Buddha Temple](#) C1

5 [China Silk Museum](#) D6

6 [Confucius Temple](#) E4

7 [Huqingyu Tang Chinese Medicine Museum](#) F4

8 [Jingci Temple](#) C6

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 9 | Leifeng Pagoda | C6 |
| 10 | Mausoleum of General Yue Fei | B2 |
| 11 | Ming-Dynasty Effigies | C1 |
| 12 | No.1 Park | E3 |
| 13 | Qinghefang Old Street | E4 |
| 14 | Quyuan Garden | A3 |
| 15 | Red Carp Pond | B5 |
| 16 | Seal Engravers Society | B3 |
| 17 | Su Xiaoxiao's Tomb | B3 |
| 18 | Sunrise Terrace | B1 |
| 19 | Taiziwan Park | B6 |
| 20 | Three Pools Mirroring the Moon | C5 |
| 21 | Xiaoying Island | C4 |
| | Yue Fei Temple | B2 |
| 22 | Zhejiang Provincial Museum | C3 |
| 23 | Zhongshan Park | B3 |
| 24 | Ziyun Cave | B2 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 25 | West Lake Cruise Boats | E3 |
|----|--|----|

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 26 | Crystal Orange Hotel | D5 |
| 27 | Four Seasons Hotel Hangzhou | A3 |
| 28 | Hofang International Youth Hostel | F5 |
| 29 | In Lake Youth Hostel | E4 |
| 30 | Mingtown Youth Hostel | D4 |
| 31 | Tea Boutique Hotel | B1 |
| 32 | West Lake Youth Hostel | D6 |
| 33 | Wushanyi International Youth Hostel | F4 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 34 | Bi Feng Tang | E3 |
| 35 | Cafe de Origin | F4 |
| 36 | Carrefour | E3 |
| 37 | Dongyishun | F4 |
| 38 | Grandma's Kitchen | E3 |
| | Green Tea Restaurant | E3 |
| 39 | La Pedrera | B1 |
| 40 | Laomajia Mianguan | E3 |
| 41 | Louwailou Restaurant | B3 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 42 Eudora Station | D4 |
| 43 JZ Club | E3 |
| 44 Maya Bar | B1 |

Shopping

| | |
|---|----|
| 45 Wushan Lu Night Market | F2 |
|---|----|

Information

| | |
|--|----|
| 46 Bank of China - Laodong Lu | E4 |
| 47 Bank of China - Yanan Lu | E2 |
| 48 Hangzhou Tourist Information Centre | G4 |
| 49 Hangzhou Tourist Information Centre | E4 |
| 50 Hangzhou Tourist Information Centre | C6 |
| 51 HSBC | F2 |
| 52 Industrial & Commercial Bank of China | E2 |
| 53 Zhejiang University First Affiliated Hospital | G2 |

Transport

| | |
|--|----|
| 54 Bus Ticket Office | G4 |
| 55 Train Ticket Office | E3 |

Sights

West Lake & Around

★ West Lake

LAKE

(Xihu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

The unashamed tourist brochure hyperbole extolling West Lake is almost justified in its shrill accolades. The very definition of classical beauty in China, West Lake is mesmerising. Methodical prettification has weaved some cunning magic: pagoda-topped hills rise over willow-lined waters as boats

drift slowly through a vignette of leisurely charm. With history heavily repackaged, it's not that authentic – not by a long shot – but it's still a grade-A cover version of classical China.

Originally a lagoon adjoining the Qiantang River, the lake didn't come into existence until the 8th century, when the governor of Hangzhou had the marshy expanse dredged. As time passed, the lake's splendour was gradually cultivated: gardens were planted, pagodas built, and causeways and islands were constructed from dredged silt.

Celebrated poet Su Dongpo himself had a hand in the lake's development, constructing the **Su Causeway** (*Sudi*) during his tenure as local governor in the 11th century. It wasn't an original idea – the poet-governor Bai Juyi had already constructed the **Bai Causeway** (*Baidi*) some 200 years earlier. Lined by willow, plum and peach trees, today the traffic-free causeways with their half-moon bridges make for restful outings.

Lashed to the northern shores by the Bai Causeway is **Gushan Island** (*Gushan Dao*), the largest island in the lake and the location of the **Zhejiang Provincial Museum** (Zhejiang Sheng Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 25 Gushan Lu; audioguide ¥10; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) and **Zhongshan Park** (Zhongshan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). The island's buildings and gardens were once the site of Emperor Qianlong's 18th-century holiday palace and gardens. Also on the island is the intriguing **Seal Engravers Society** (Xiling Yinshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 9am-5.30pm), dedicated to the ancient art of carving the name seals (chops) that serve as personal signatures.

The northwest of the lake is fringed with the lovely **Quyuan Garden** (Quyuan Fenghe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a collection of gardens spread out over numerous islets and renowned for their fragrant spring lotus blossoms. Near Xiling Bridge (Xiling Qiao) is **Su Xiaoxiao's Tomb** (Su Xiaoxiao Mu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a 5th-century courtesan who died of grief while waiting for her lover to return. It's been said that her ghost haunts the area and the tinkle of the bells on her gown are audible at night.

The smaller island in the lake is **Xiaoying Island** (Xiaoying Zhou [MAP](#)

[GOOGLE MAP](#)), where you can look over at **Three Pools Mirroring the Moon** (Santan Yinyue [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), three small towers in the water on the south side of the island; each has five holes that release shafts of candlelight on the night of the mid-autumn festival. From Lesser Yingzhou Island, you can gaze over to **Red Carp Pond** (Huagang Guanyu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), home to a few thousand red carp.

Impromptu opera singing and other cultural activities may suddenly kick off around the lake, and if the weather's fine don't forget to earmark the east shore for sunset over West Lake photos. **Impression West Lake** is a spectacular evening performance on the lake waters near the Yue Fei Temple, usually starting at either 7.15pm or 7.45pm.

The best way to get around the lake is by bike ([Click here](#)). Tourist buses Y1 and Y2 also run around West Lake.

Lingyin Temple

BUDDHIST

(Lingyin Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); Lingyin Lu; grounds ¥35, grounds & temple ¥65; 🕒 7am-5pm)

Hangzhou's most famous Buddhist temple, Lingyin Temple was built in AD 326, but has been destroyed and restored no fewer than 16 times. During the Five Dynasties (AD 907–960) about 3000 monks lived here. The Hall of the Four Heavenly Kings is astonishing, with its four vast guardians and an ornate cabinet housing Milefo (the future Buddha). The **Great Hall** contains a magnificent 20m-high statue of Siddhartha Gautama (Sakyamuni), sculpted from 24 blocks of camphor wood in 1956 and based on a Tang-dynasty original.

Behind the giant statue is a startling montage of Guanyin surrounded by 150 small figures, including multiple *luohan* (arhat), in a variety of poses. The earlier hall collapsed in 1949, crushing the Buddhist statues within, so it was rebuilt and the statue conceived. The Hall of the Medicine Buddha is beyond.

The walk up to the temple skirts the flanks of Feilai Peak (*Feilai Feng*; Peak Flying from Afar), magically transported here from India according to

legend. The Buddhist carvings (all 470 of them) lining the riverbanks and hillsides and tucked away inside grottoes date from the 10th to 14th centuries. To get a close-up view of the best carvings, including the famed ‘laughing’ Maitreya Buddha, follow the paths along the far (east) side of the stream.

There are several other temples near Lingyin Temple that can be explored, including Yongfu Temple and Taoguang Temple.

Behind Lingyin Temple is the Northern Peak (*Bei Gaofeng*), which can be scaled by cable car (up/down/return ¥30/20/40). From the summit there are sweeping views across the lake and city.

Bus K7 and tourist bus Y2 (both from the train station), and tourist bus Y1 from the roads circling West Lake, go to the temple.

Leifeng Pagoda

PAGODA

(Leifeng Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nanshan Lu; adult/child ¥40/20; 🕒 8am-8.30pm Mar-Nov, 8am-5.30pm Dec-Feb)

Topped with a golden spire, the eye-catching Leifeng Pagoda can be climbed for fine views of the lake. The original pagoda, built in AD 977, collapsed in 1924. During renovations in 2001, Buddhist scriptures written on silk were discovered in the foundations, along with other treasures.

Jingci Temple

BUDDHIST

(Jingci Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nanshan Lu; admission ¥10; 🕒 6am-5.15pm summer, 6.30am-4.45pm winter)

The serene yet monastically active Chan (Zen) Jingci Temple was originally built in AD 954 and is now fully restored. The splendid first hall contains the massive, foreboding Heavenly Kings and an elaborate red and gold case encapsulating Milefo (the future Buddha) and Weituo (protector of the Buddhist temples and teachings). The main hall – the **Great Treasure Hall** – contains a vast seated effigy of Sakyamuni (Buddha).

Hunt down the awesome 1000-arm Guanyin in the Guanyin Pavilion, with her huge fan of arms. The temple’s enormous bronze bell is struck 108 times

for prosperity on the eve of the Lunar New Year. There's a vegetarian restaurant attached.

Taiziwan Park

PARK

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Nanshan Lu; 🕒 24hr)

This exquisite and serene park just south of the Su Causeway off West Lake offers quiet walks among lush woodland, ponds, lakes, rose gardens and lawns along a wooden walkway. Just take off and explore. It's heavenly in spring, with gorgeous beds of tulips and daffodils and flowering trees.

Qinghefang Old Street

STREET

(Qinghefang Lishi Wenhua Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Hefang Jie;)

At the south end of Zhongshan Zhonglu is this touristy, crowded and bustling pedestrian street, with makeshift puppet theatres, teahouses and gift and curio stalls, selling everything from stone teapots to boxes of *longxutang* (dragon whiskers sweets), ginseng and silk. It's also home to several traditional medicine shops, including the [Huqingyu Tang Chinese Medicine Museum](#) (Zhongyao Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 95 Dajing Xiang; admission ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-5pm), which is an actual dispensary and clinic.

Confucius Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wenmiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; cnr Fuxue Xiang & Laodong Lu; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

A repository of silence and calm, Hangzhou's Confucius Temple is worth exploring for the main hall and the fabulous painted woodwork of its beams and ceiling. Seated within are imposing figures of Confucius and other Confucian philosophers, including Mencius.

Hangzhou Old City Wall Exhibition Hall

MUSEUM

(Hangzhou Guchengqiang Chenlieguan [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 1st fl, Qingchun Men, Qingchun Lu; 1 🕒 9am-4.30pm Wed-Mon) **FREE**

Hangzhou is famed for its lake, but the lake was a (glorious) appendage to a once-flourishing and magnificent city. The historic city of Hangzhou – directly east of West Lake – has vanished, its monumental city wall long gone. This exhibition hall within the reconstructed gate of Qingchun Men celebrates the vanished bastion. For anyone keen to understand what Hangzhou looked like until the early 20th century, there are photos and testaments to the old city (but no English).

The names of the city gates only survive in place names (such as Qingbo Men and Yongjin Men), but the old city of Hangzhou (and its temples) has been buried beneath endless department stores and malls, leaving virtually nothing behind. This exhibition hall puts that tragic disappearance in its proper context.

Bus K212 from Yan'an Lu passes by.

Hangzhou Botanical Garden

GARDENS

(Hangzhou Zhiwuyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.hzbg.cn; 1 Taoyuan Ling; ¥10; 🕒 7am-5.30pm)

With huge tracts of towering bamboo, flowering magnolias and other delightful plants and trees, these vast gardens make for lovely walks to the northwest of West Lake. You can get here on bus K15, K28 or K82.

Mausoleum of General Yue Fei

TEMPLE

(Yue Fei Mu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beishan Lu; admission ¥25; 🕒 7am-6pm)

This temple is more meaningful for Chinese patriots, rather than foreign visitors. Commander of the southern Song armies, General Yue Fei (1103–42) led successful battles against northern Jurchen invaders in the 12th century. Despite initial successes, he was recalled to the Song court, where he was executed, along with his son, after being deceived by the treacherous prime minister Qin Hui.

In 1163 Song emperor Gao Zong exonerated Yue Fei and had his corpse reburied at the present site.

South of West Lake

The hills south of West Lake are a prime spot for walkers, cyclists and green tea connoisseurs.

China Silk Museum

MUSEUM

(Zhongguo Sichou Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 73-1 Yuhuangshan Lu; 73-1 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun, noon-5pm Mon) **FREE**

This fascinating museum has excellent displays of silk samples, silk making techniques, a room of looms with workers, a textile conservation gallery where you can watch conservationists in action, a superb gallery devoted to silks from Dunhuang, silk embroideries and exhibitions on silkworm anatomy.

China National Tea Museum

MUSEUM

(Zhongguo Chaye Bowuguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); <http://english.teamuseum.cn>; 88 Longjing Lu; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Not far into the hills of Hangzhou, you'll begin to see fields of tea bushes planted in undulating rows, the setting for the China Tea Museum – 3.7 hectares of land dedicated to the art, cultivation and tasting of tea. Further up are several tea-producing villages, all of which harvest China's most famous variety of green tea, *longjing* (dragon well), named after the spring where the pattern in the water resembles a dragon.

You can enjoy one of Hangzhou's most famous teas at the **Dragon Well Tea Village** (Longjing Wenchang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-5.30pm), near the first pass.

Tourist bus Y3 or K27 will take you to the museum and the village.

Six Harmonies Pagoda

PAGODA

(Liuhe Ta 16 Zhijiang Lu; grounds ¥20, grounds & pagoda ¥30; 🕒 6am-6.30pm)

Three kilometres southwest of West Lake, an enormous rail and road bridge spans the Qiantang River. Close by rears up the 60m-high octagonal Six

Harmonies Pagoda, first built in AD 960. The stout pagoda also served as a lighthouse, and was said to possess magical powers to halt the 6.5m-high tidal bore that thunders up Qiantang River. You can climb the pagoda, while behind stretches a charming walk through terraces dotted with sculptures, bells, shrines and inscriptions.

Take bus K4 or 504 from Nanshan Lu.

CRUISING WEST LAKE

Cruise boats (youchuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Hubin Lu; 1½hr, incl. entry to Three Pools adult/child ¥70/35; 🕒7am-4.45pm) shuttle frequently from four **No 1 Park** (Yi Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Hubin Lu;) and three other points (Red Carp Pond, Zhongshan Park and the Mausoleum of General Yue Fei) to the **Mid-Lake Pavilion** (Huxin Ting) and **Xiaoying Island** (Xiaoying Zhou). Trips take 1½ hours and depart every 20 minutes. Alternatively, hire one of the **six-person boats** (xiao chuan; ¥80 per person or ¥160 per boat) rowed by boatmen. Look for them along the causeways. Paddle boats (¥15 per 30 minutes, ¥200 deposit) on the Bai Causeway are also available for hire.

Tours

Just about every midrange and top-end hotel in Hangzhou offers tours to West Lake and the surrounding areas. Tours are also arranged by the [Hangzhou Tourist Information Centre](#).

BAOSHI SHAN WALK

For a manageable and breezy trek into the forested hills above West Lake, walk up a lane called Qixialing, immediately west of the **Yue Fei Temple** (Yue Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beishan Lu; admission ¥25; 🕒7.30am-5.30pm). The road initially runs past the temple's west wall to enter the shade of towering trees, with stone steps leading you up. At **Ziyun Cave** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) the hill levels out and the road forks; take the right-hand fork towards the Baopu Taoist Temple, 1km further, and the Baochu Pagoda. At the top of the steps, turn left and, passing the **Sunrise**

Terrace (Chuyang Tai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), again bear left. Down the steps, look out for the tiled roofs and yellow walls of the charming **Baopu Taoist Temple** (Baopu Daoyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥5; 🕒6am-5pm) to your right; head right along a path to reach it. Come out of the temple's back entrance and turn left towards the Baochu Pagoda and, after hitting a confluence of three paths, take the middle track towards and up **Toad Hill** (Hama Feng), which affords supreme views over the lake, before squeezing through a gap between huge boulders to meet the **Baochu Pagoda** (Baochu Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) rising ahead. Restored many times, the seven-storey grey brick pagoda was last rebuilt in 1933, although its spire tumbled off in the 1990s. Continue on down and pass through a **pailou** – or decorative arch – erected during the Republic (with some of its characters scratched off) to a series of stone-carved **Ming-dynasty effigies** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), all of which were vandalised in the tumultuous 1960s, save two effigies on the right. Turn left here and walk a short distance to some steps heading downhill to your right past the remarkable weathered remains of a colossal stone **Buddha** by the cliff-face (with square niches cut in him) – all that remains of the **Big Buddha Temple** (Dafo Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). Continue on down to Beishan Lu.

Festivals & Events

The International Qiantang River Tide Observing Festival takes place every autumn in Yanguan, outside Hangzhou ([Click here](#)).

Sleeping

Book well ahead in the summer months, at weekends and during the busy holiday periods. Room prices at hostels and some hotels get a significant weekend hike.

Mingtown Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Mingtang Hangzhou Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0571 8791 8948; 101-11 Nanshan Lu; 101-11 dm/s/d, ¥65/200/295; 🏠📶)

With its pleasant lakeside location, this friendly and highly popular hostel is often booked out so reserve well ahead. It has a relaxing cafe/bar, offers

ticket booking, internet access, rents bikes and camping gear and is attractively decked out with orchids.

Hofang International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Hefang Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0571 8706 3299; 67 Dajing Xiang; dm ¥50-60, s/tw/d/tr/q ¥138/208/168-238/260/300; 🌐@📶)

Pleasantly tucked away from the noise down a historic alley off [Qinghefang Old Street](#), this hostel has an excellent location and exudes a pleasant and calm ambience, with attractive rooms, the cheapest of which come with tatami. Note that prices for non-dorm rooms go up by between ¥30 and ¥60 on Friday and Saturday.

Wushanyi International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Wushanyi Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0571 8701 8790; 22 Zhongshan Zhonglu, dm ¥55 rm ¥158-178 d/tr/q ¥248-268/298/358; 🌐@📶)

With a healthy mix of Chinese and Western travellers, this quiet, unhurried and comfy hostel has clean rooms and excellent, helpful staff plus a charmingly tucked-away location off Qinghefang Jie (and not too far from West Lake either). There are female dorms available (¥65) and cheap attic tatami rooms. Note that prices for non-dorm rooms go up by at least ¥30 on Friday and Saturday.

West Lake Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Hangzhou Guoke Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0571 8702 7027; www.westlakehostel.com; 62-3 Nanshan Lu, 62-3 dm ¥50-55, s ¥170, tw ¥210-220; 🌐@)

Set back off the road amid trees and foliage east of Jingci Temple, this is a good bet with decent rooms and comfy lounge-bar area hung with lanterns, and a good sense of character and seclusion; reserve ahead. The kindergarten next door can be very noisy in the morning, especially when the brass bands kick in.

Rates rise between ¥20 and ¥40 at weekends. From the train station take

bus Y2 and get off at the Changqiao stop.

In Lake Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Lihu Xiaozhu Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0571 8682 6700; 5 Luyang Lu, dm ¥70, tw & d ¥328-458; ❄️ 📶)

Well-located a few steps from West Lake off Nanshan Lu, this attractive choice is all Mediterranean arches and ochre shades, with a lovely plant-bedecked interior courtyard. Rooms have wood flooring and tall radiators, six-person dorms (all with shower) are clean and there's a roof terrace for barbecues, a downstairs cafe and bar, and welcoming staff.

The cheapest doubles are a bit smaller and noisier than the others.

Four Seasons Hotel Hangzhou

HOTEL

(Hangzhou Xizihu Siji Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0571 8829 8888; www.fourseasons.com/hangzhou; 5 Lingyin Lu, d ¥3800, ste from ¥8200; 🚶 ❄️ @ 📶 🛋️)

More of a resort than a hotel, the fabulous 78-room, two-swimming pool Four Seasons enjoys a seductive position in lush grounds next to West Lake. Low-storey buildings and villas echo traditional China, a sensation amplified by the osmanthus trees, ornamental shrubs, ponds and tranquillity.

Checking into the gorgeously appointed and very spacious ground-floor deluxe premier rooms throws in a garden; rooms have lovely bathrooms, walk-in wardrobe and hugely inviting beds. The infinity pool alongside West Lake is a dream, as is the outstanding spa. Charges for wi-fi.

Tea Boutique Hotel

HOTEL

(Hangzhou Tianlun Jingpin Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0571 8799 9888; www.teaboutiquehotel.com; 124 Shuguang Lu, d from ¥1098, ste ¥2280; 🚶 ❄️ @ 📶)

The simple but effectively done wood-sculpted foyer area with its sinuously shaped reception is a presage to the lovely accommodation at this hotel where a Japanese-minimalist mood holds sway among celadon teacups, muted colours and – interestingly for China – a Bible in each room.

Double-glazed windows roadside keep the traffic noise low while the wide corridors convey a sense of space the boutique label often lacks. Service is excellent and healthy discounts run between 20% and 40%.

Crystal Orange Hotel

HOTEL

(Juzi Shuijing Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0571 2887 8988; www.orangehotel.com; 122 Qingbo Jie, tw/ste ¥788/1388; 🌐 @ 📶)

Uncluttered and modern business hotel with a crisp and natty interior, Warhol prints in the lobby, glass lift and only four floors, but sadly no views of West Lake from the neat rooms. Discounts of 50%.

Eating

Hangzhou's most popular restaurant street is **Gaoyin Jie**, parallel to [Qinghefang Old Street](#), a long sprawl of restaurants brashly lit up like casinos at night.

★ Green Tea Restaurant

HANGZHOU

(Lucha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 250 Jiefang Lu, mains from ¥20; 🕒10.30am-11pm; [M](#)Longxiangqiao)

Often packed, this excellent Hangzhou restaurant has superb food. With a bare brick finish and decorated with rattan utensils and colourful flower-patterned cushions, the dining style is casual. The long paper menu (tick what you want) runs from salty and more-ish pea soup (¥18), to gorgeous eggplant claypot (¥20), lip-smacking Dongpo Chicken (¥48) and beyond. Seven branches in town.

★ Grandma's Kitchen

HANGZHOU

(Waipojia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 3 Hubin Lu; mains ¥6-55; 🕒lunch & dinner; [M](#)Longxiangqiao)

Besieged by enthusiastic diners, this restaurant cooks up classic Hangzhou

favourites; try the *hongshao dongpo rou* (braised pork), but prepare to wait for a table. There are several other branches in town.

Bi Feng Tang

CANTONESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 256 Jiefang Lu; mains from ¥15; 🕒 10am-9pm Sun-Thu, 10am-10pm Fri & Sat; 📍 Ding'an Rd or Longxiangqiao)

The charcoal and silver piping on the seats is rather garish, but the dim sum is fabulous at this restaurant right in the action by West Lake. Canto classics include: roasted duck rice (¥26), steamed barbecue pork buns (¥20), fried dumplings (¥23), vegetable and mushroom buns (¥15) and deep fried bean curd stuffed with shrimp (¥25) – all lovely.

If the waiting staff hand you a menu chit in Chinese, ask for the picture menu (*tupian caidan*).

Dongyishun

MUSLIM

(Dongyishun; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 101 Gaoyin Jie; mains ¥12-50; 🕒 11am-9pm)

Specialising in food from China's Muslim Hui minority, this busy Gaoyin Jie spot has lamb kebabs (*yang rou chuan*; ¥10 for four), roast mutton (¥40) and roast chicken (¥48) like all the others, but you'll also find hummus, felafel, cheese omelets (¥28) and even cheese spring rolls (¥22). There's a take-out hatch for kebabs and *nang* bread. Picture menu.

Cafe de Origin

CAFE

(Ruijing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 53 Dajing Xiang; mains from ¥15; 🕒 11am-10pm Mon-Fri & 10am-midnight Sat & Sun; 📍 Dingan Rd)

With a pleasant alfresco terrace upstairs and stylish downstairs cafe area, Origin is a good place to relax with a coffee, sink a beer or grab a snack (vegetarians and vegans also catered for).

Laomajia Mianguan

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 232 Nanshan Lu; mains from ¥12; 🕒 7am-10pm)

Simple and popular Muslim restaurant stuffed into an old *shikumen* tenement building with a handful of tables and spot-on *niurou lamian* (beef noodles) and scrummy beef-filled *roujiamo* (meat in a bun, with onion if you want). No English menu.

Carrefour

SUPERMARKET

(Jialefu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 135 Yan'an Lu; 🕒 9am-9pm)

On Yan'an Lu in between Xihu Dadao and Kaiyuan Lu.

La Pedrera

SPANISH, TAPAS

(Bateluo Xibanya Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0571 8886 6089; 4 Baishaquan, Shuguang Lu, tapas from ¥30, meals ¥200; 🕒 11am-11pm)

This fine two-floor Spanish restaurant just off Shuguang Lu bar street has tapas diners in a whirl, paella-aficionados applauding and Spanish-wine fans gratified. Prices may take a sizeable bite out of your wallet, but the convivial atmosphere and assured menu prove popular and enjoyable.

Louwailou Restaurant

HANGZHOU

(Louwailou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0571 8796 9023; 30 Gushan Lu; mains ¥30-200; 🕒 10.30am-3.30pm & 4.30-8.45pm)

Founded in 1838, this is Hangzhou's most famous restaurant. The local speciality is *xihu cuyu* (sweet and sour carp) and *dongpo* pork, but there's a good choice of other well-priced standard dishes.



Drinking

For drinking, Shuguang Lu, north of West Lake, is the place. For a comprehensive list of Hangzhou bars and restaurants, grab a copy of *More – Hangzhou Entertainment Guide* (www.morehangzhou.com), available from bars and concierge desks at good hotels.

★ Maya Bar

BAR

(Maya Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 94 Baishaquan, Shuguang Lu; 🕒 10am-2am)

Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, the Beatles and a mural of a shaman/spirit warrior watch on approvingly from the walls of this darkly lit and rock-steady bar. Just as importantly, the drinks are seriously cheap; Tuesdays and Thursdays see Tsingtao and Tiger dropping to ¥10 a pint (¥20 at other times) and a DJ from 9.30pm.

Eudora Station

BAR

(Yiduoruizhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 101-107 Nanshan Lu; 101-107 🕒 9am-2am)

A fab location by West Lake, roof terrace aloft, outside seating, a strong menu and a sure-fire atmosphere conspire to make this welcoming watering hole a great choice. There's sports TV, live music, a ground-floor terrace, a good range of beers, and barbecues fire up on the roof terrace in the warmer months.



Entertainment

JZ Club

CLUB

(Huang Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0571 8702 8298; www.jzclub.cc; 6 Liuying Lu, by 266 Nanshan Lu; 🕒 7pm-2.30am)

The folk that brought you JZ Club in Shanghai have the live jazz scene sewn up in Hangzhou with this neat three-floor venue in a historic building near West Lake. There are three live jazz sets nightly, with music kicking off at 9pm (till midnight). There's no admission charge, but you'll need to reserve a seat on Fridays and Saturdays.

Smokers get to go upstairs.



Shopping

Hangzhou is famed for its tea, in particular *longjing* green tea, as well as silk, fans and, of all things, scissors. All of these crop up in the [Wushan Lu](#)

night market (Wushan Lu Yeshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Huixing Lu;), between Youdian Lu and Renhe Lu, where fake ceramics jostle with ancient pewter tobacco pipes, Chairman Mao memorabilia, silk shirts and pirated CDs. Qinghefang Old Street has loads of possibilities, from Chinese tiger pillows to t'ai chi swords.

Xinhua Lu Silk Market

SILK

(Xinhua Lu Sichou Shichang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinhua Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm)

For silk, try these silk shops strung out along the north of Xinhua Lu.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Twenty-four-hour internet cafes are in abundance around the main train station (typically ¥4 or ¥5 per hour); look for the neon signs “”.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Zhejiang University First Affiliated Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Zhejiang Daxue Yixueyuan Fushu Diyi Yiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0571 8723 6114; 79 Qingchun Lu)

MONEY

Bank of China - Yanan Lu

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 320 Yanan Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm)

A useful central branch with currency exchange.

Bank of China - Laodong Lu

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 177 Laodong Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm)

Offers currency exchange plus 24-hour ATM.

HSBC

BANK

(Huifeng Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Qingchun Lu & Zhonghe Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm)

Has a 24-hour ATM.

Industrial & Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(ICBC, Gongshang Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 300 Yan'an Lu)

Has a 24-hour ATM.

POST

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Renhe Lu; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

Close to West Lake.

PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju Banzheng Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎️ 0571 8728 0600; 35 Huaguang Lu;

🕒 8.30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri)

Can extend visas.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Asking at, or phoning up, your hostel or hotel for info can be very handy.

Hangzhou Tourist Information Centre

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Hangzhou Luyou Zixun Fuwu Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎️ 0571 8797 8123; Leifeng

Pagoda, Nanshan Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Provides basic travel info, free maps and tours. Other branches include Hangzhou train station and 10 Huaguang Lu, just off Qinghefang Old Street.

Tourist Complaint Hotline

TOURIST INFORMATION

(☎️ 0571 8796 9691)

The Tourist Complaint Hotline can assist visitors with problems or issues during their stay.

Travellers Infoline

TOURIST INFORMATION

(☎0571 96123)

Helpful 24-hour information with English service from 6.30am to 9pm.

WEBSITES

➔ **Hangzhou City Travel Committee** (www.gotohz.com) has current information on events, restaurants and entertainment venues around the city. The news-oriented **Hangzhou News** (www.hangzhou.com.cn/english) website also has travel info, and **More Hangzhou** (www.morehangzhou.com) is a handy website with restaurant and nightlife reviews, forums and classifieds.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Hangzhou has flights to all major Chinese cities (bar Shanghai) and international connections to Hong Kong, Macau, Tokyo, Singapore and other destinations. Several daily flights connect to Beijing (¥1050) and Guangzhou (¥960).

Most hotels will also book flights, generally with a ¥20 to ¥30 service charge. The **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; Zhongguo Minhang ; ☎0571 8666 8666; 390 Tiyuchang Lu; ⌚7.30am-8pm) office is in the north of town.

BUS

All four bus stations are outside the city centre; tickets can be conveniently bought for all stations from the **bus ticket office** (Changtu Qiche Shoupiaochu  ; Chengzhan Lu; ⌚6.30am-5pm) right off the exit from Hangzhou's Main Train Station.

Buses leave Shanghai's South Station frequently for Hangzhou's various bus stations (¥68, 2½ hours). Buses to Hangzhou also run every 30 minutes between 10am and 9pm from Shanghai's Hongqiao airport (¥85, two hours).

Regular buses also run to Hangzhou from Shanghai's Pudong International Airport (¥100, three hours).

Buses from the huge **Main Bus Station** (Keyun Zhongxin  0571 8765 0678; Jiubao Zhijie;) at Jiubao, in the far northeast of Hangzhou (and linked to the centre of town by metro, a taxi will cost around ¥60) include:

- ➔ **Huangshan (scenic zone)** ¥98 to ¥110, four hours, five daily
- ➔ **Ningbo** ¥62, two hours, regular
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥68, 2½ hours, regular
- ➔ **Suzhou** ¥71, two hours, regular
- ➔ **Wuzhen** ¥27 to ¥30, one hour, 16 daily
- ➔ **Xin'anjiang** ¥35 ¥42 two hours, eight daily

Buses from the **South Bus Station** (Qiche Nanzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 407 Qiutao Lu):

- ➔ **Ningbo** ¥62, two hours, every 20 minutes
- ➔ **Shaoxing** ¥25, one hour, every 20 minutes
- ➔ **Xin'anjiang** ¥57 two hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Zhugue** ¥58, two hours, 8.40am & 3.50pm

Buses from the **North Bus Station** (Qiche Beizhan 766 Moganshan Lu):

- ➔ **Anji** ¥27
- ➔ **Nanxun** ¥40, 1½ hours, regular
- ➔ **Suzhou** ¥72, two hours, regular
- ➔ **Tongli** ¥62, two hours, three daily
- ➔ **Wukang** ¥15, one hour, hourly

Buses from the **West Bus Station** (Qiche Xizhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 357 Tianmushan Lu) include:

- ➔ **Huangshan (scenic zone):** ¥98 to ¥110, four hours, five daily
- ➔ **Wuyuan** ¥129, 4½ hours, 9.20am & 1.40pm

- ➔ **Xin'anjiang** ¥57 two hours, every 30 minutes
- ➔ **Xinye** ¥59, 2½ hours, 8.20am & 1.50pm
- ➔ **Zhuge** ¥58, two hours, 2.40pm

TRAIN

The easiest way to travel to Hangzhou from Shanghai Hongqiao Train Station is on the high-speed G class train to **Hangzhou Main Train Station** (Hangzhou Huochezhan 0571 8762 2362; Chengzhan Lu;), east of West Lake. For Beijing, the overnight Z10 (soft sleeper ¥537) departs Hangzhou Main Train Station at 6.05pm, arriving at 7.40am, and the handy T32 (hard/soft sleeper ¥351/¥537) departs at 6.20pm, arriving at 10.21am. Most G class trains to Beijing leave from Hangzhou East Train Station.

G class trains running from the huge new **Hangzhou East Train Station** (Hangzhou Dongzhan Dongning Lu;), linked to the centre of town by metro, include:

- ➔ **Beijing South** 2nd/1st class ¥537/907, six hours, 12 daily
- ➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao Train Station** 2nd/1st class ¥74/118, one hour, regular
- ➔ **Shaoxing North** 2nd/1st class ¥20/34, 20 minutes, regular
- ➔ **Suzhou** 2nd/1st class ¥112/179, 1½ hours, three daily
- ➔ **Xiamen North Train Station** 2nd/1st class ¥306/402, 6½ hours, one daily
- ➔ **Wenzhou South Train Station** 2nd/1st class ¥153/219, three hours, regular

Daily G class high-speed trains from Hangzhou Main Train Station:

- ➔ **Beijing South Train Station** 2nd/1st class ¥629/1056, 6½ hours, two daily
- ➔ **Nanjing South Train Station** 2nd/1st class ¥119/200, two hours 20 minutes, five daily
- ➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao Train Station** 2nd/1st class ¥78/124, 55 minutes, first/last 6.10am/8.26pm, regular

➔ **Suzhou** 2nd/1st class ¥118 to ¥184, 1½ hours, two daily

Daily D class high-speed trains from Hangzhou Main Train Station:

➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao Train Station** 2nd/1st class ¥49/60, one hour 10 minutes, eight daily

➔ **Suzhou** 2nd/1st class ¥75/91, two hours, two daily

A handy **train ticket office** (Huoche piao Shou piao chu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 147 Huansha Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm) is north of Jiefang Lu, just east of West Lake. Other offices are at 72 Baochu Lu (near turning with Shengfu Lu) and 149 Tiychang Lu. Train tickets are also available at certain China Post branches including 10 Desheng Lu and 60 Fengqi Lu. See the China by Train chapter for ways of buying tickets on line.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Hangzhou's airport is 30km from the city centre; taxi drivers ask around ¥100 to ¥130 for the trip. Shuttle buses (¥20, one hour) run every 15 minutes between 5.30am and 9pm from the CAAC office (also stopping at the train station).

BICYCLE

The best way to rent a bike is to use the **Hangzhou Bike Hire Scheme** ( 0571 8533 1122; www.hzzxc.com.cn; ¥200 deposit, ¥100 credit; 🕒 6.30am-9pm Apr-Oct, 6am-9pm Nov-Mar). Stations (2700 in total) are dotted in large numbers around the city, in what is the world's largest network. Apply at one of the booths at numerous bike stations near West Lake; you will need your passport as ID. Fill in a form and you will receive a swipe card, then swipe the pad at one of the docking stations till you get a steady green light, free a bike and Bob's your uncle.

Return bikes to any other station (ensure the bike is properly docked before leaving it). The first hour on each bike is free, so if you switch bikes within the hour, the rides are free. The second hour on the same bike is ¥1, the third

is ¥2 and after that it's ¥3 per hour. Your deposit and unused credit are refunded to you when you return your swipe card (check when it should be returned as this can vary). Note you cannot return bikes outside booth operating hours as the swipe units deactivate (you will be charged a whole night's rental).

Youth hostels also rent out bikes, but these are more expensive.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus

Hangzhou has a clean, efficient bus system and getting around is easy (but roads are increasingly gridlocked). 'Y' buses are tourist buses; 'K' is simply an abbreviation of 'kongtiao' (air-con). Tickets are ¥2 to ¥5. The following are popular bus routes:

- ➔ **Bus K7** Usefully connects the Main Train Station to the western side of West Lake and Lingyin Temple.
- ➔ **Tourist bus Y2** Goes from the Main Train Station, along Beishan Lu and up to Lingyin Temple.
- ➔ **Tourist bus Y3** Travels around West Lake to the China Silk Museum, China National Tea Museum and Dragon Well Tea Village.
- ➔ **Bus K56** Travels from the East Bus Station to Yan'an Lu.
- ➔ **Buses 15 & K15** Connect the North Bus Station to the northwest area of West Lake.
- ➔ **Bus 188** runs to the North Bus Station.

Metro

Hangzhou's new metro line 1 (tickets ¥2 to ¥7; first/last train 6.06am/11.32pm), runs from the southeast of town, through the Main Train Station, the east side of West Lake and on to the East Train Station, the Main Bus Station and the northeast of town. It's not very useful for sightseeing around town. Line 2 is expected to start service in 2016, while other lines are planned.

TAXI

Metered Hyundai taxis are ubiquitous and start at ¥10; figure on around ¥20 to ¥25 from the main train station (queues can be horrendous though) to Hubin Lu.

Around Hangzhou

Qiantang River Tidal Bore

An often spectacular natural phenomenon occurs every month on Hangzhou's Qiantang River, when the highest tides of the lunar cycle dispatch a wall of water – sometimes almost 9m tall – thundering along the narrow mouth of the river from Hangzhou Bay, at up to 40km per hour. Occasionally sweeping astonished sightseers away and luring bands of intrepid surfers, this awesome tidal bore (*qiantang jiangchao*) is the world's largest and can be viewed from the riverbank in Hangzhou, but one of the best places to witness the action is on the north side of the river at **Yanguan**, a delightful ancient town about 38km northeast of Hangzhou.

The most popular viewing time is during the International Qiantang River Tide Observing Festival, on the 18th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar (the same day as the mid-autumn festival), which usually falls in September or October. You can however see it throughout the year when the highest tide occurs at the beginning and middle of each lunar month; access to the park in Yanguan for viewing the tide is ¥25. The [Hangzhou Tourist Information Centre](#) can give you upcoming tide times. To make it a day trip, a through-ticket (¥100) is available in Yanguan to explore the charming historic temples and buildings of the town.

Take a bus (¥25, one hour, 6.30am to 6.50pm) from Hangzhou's Main Bus Station to Haining and change to bus 106 (¥8; 25 minutes) to Yanguan.

Moganshan

📍 0572

A blessed release from the suffocating summer torpor roasting north Zhejiang, this delightful **hilltop resort** (admission ¥80) was developed by 19th-century Europeans from Shanghai and Hangzhou. Refreshingly cool in summer and sometimes smothered in spectral fog, Moganshan is famed for its scenic vistas, forested views, towering bamboo and stone villa architecture; the mountain remains a weekend bolt hole for expat *taitai* (wives) fleeing the simmering lowland heat.

Sights & Activities

The best way to enjoy Moganshan is just to wander the winding forest paths and stone steps, taking in some of the architecture en route. There's Shanghai gangster **Du Yuesheng's old villa** (*Du Yuesheng Bieshu*) – now serving as a hotel – Chiang Kaishek's lodge, a couple of churches (375 Moganshan and 419 Moganshan) and many other villas linked (sometimes tenuously) with the rich and famous, including the **house** (Mao Zhuxi Xiatachu 126 Moganshan) where Chairman Mao rested his chubby limbs.

Apart from the gaunt villa architecture, more recent construction has flung up less attractive villas made of more regular blocks; the genuine older villas are made of irregularly shaped stone. Sadly, many of the original interiors have been ripped out, so much of the period charm is absent. Mock classical porticos have been bolted on to other villas in a clumsy Chinese interpretation of European style.

Containing **Ta Mountain** (*Ta Shan*) in the northwest, the **Da Keng Scenic Area** (*Dakeng Jingqu*) is great for rambling.

Sleeping

Moganshan is full of hotels of varying quality, most housed in crumbling villas; room prices peak at weekends (Friday to Sunday). If you come off-season (eg early spring) you can expect good rates, but be warned that many

hotels either shut up shop or close for renovation over the winter.

★ Le Passage Mohkan Shan

HOTEL

(Moganshanli Faguoshanju 📞0572 805 2958; www.lepassagemoganshan.com; Xianrenkeng Tea Plantation, Ziling Village, d/tr/q ¥4800/5800/6800; 🚫📶🚰)🌿

Le Passage is a lovely and kid-friendly 38-room country-house hotel ensconced within a Moganshan tea plantation. Rooms and bathrooms are big on period charm, with high ceilings. Rates are cheaper per night for a two-evening stay. Pick-up service from Shanghai (¥1300) and Hangzhou (¥500) provided. There's a wine cellar, of course.

Moganshan House 23

HOTEL

(Moganshan Hangliao 23 Hao 📞0572 803 3822; www.moganshanhouse23.com; 23 Moganshan; d & tw weekday/weekend ¥900/1200; @📶)

This restored villa bursts with period charm, from art deco–style sinks black-and-white tiled bathroom floors, wooden floorboards and the original staircase to a lovely English kitchen. It's also kid friendly with a family room, baby chairs and swings in the garden. With only six rooms, book well in advance, especially for weekend stays (when it's a minimum two-night stay).

Breakfast is included in the room price. Also ask about the two other Moganshan properties run by the same owners, House 2 (weekday/weekend d ¥650/975) and House 25 (weekday/weekend villa ¥1200/3600).

Naked Stables Private Reserve

VILLAS

(📞021-6431 8901; www.nakedretreats.cn; 37 Shangxiazhuang, Lanshukeng Village, Fatou, earth hut ¥2600, 2-/3-/4-room tree-top villas from ¥7200/9000/1200; ❄️@🚰)🌿

For unbridled escapism, head for these luxurious and beautifully situated mod-con-equipped tree-top villas and earth huts within a 24-hectare resort in Moganshan; expect serene forest views, infinity pools, a spa and wellness centre, and heaps of eco brownie points.

Eating

Moganshan Lodge

INTERNATIONAL

(Make de Kafeiting  0572 803 3011; www.moganshanlodge.com; Songliang Shanzhuang, off Yinshan Jie;  8.30am-11pm, Thu-Tue; )

This elegantly presented villa, up some steps from Yinshan Jie, does decent enough breakfasts, bacon sandwiches and lunches and coffee, but dinner's the main meal (phone ahead to find out what's the choice of the day) and travel advice is dispensed. Serves only coffee (no meals) on Tuesdays.

Information

The main village (Moganshan Zhen) is centred on Yinshan Jie, where you will find the **China Post** (40 Moganshan;  8.30-11am & 1-4pm), a branch of the PSB (opposite the post office) and several hotels.

Getting There & Away

Wukang (also known as also known as Deqing;) is the jumping-off point for Moganshan. From Hangzhou's north bus station, buses leave for Wukang (¥15, one hour, every 30 minutes) from 6.20am to 7pm; in the other direction, buses run every 30 minutes from 6.30am till 7pm. Don't take a *sanlunche* as they will drop you at the foot of the mountain.

From Wukang minivans run to the top of Moganshan for around ¥80; a taxi will cost around ¥80 to ¥100. Buses from Shanghai South Bus Station run four times a day to Wukang (¥63 to ¥75, four hours, 7.55am, 9.25am, 1.25pm and 2.55pm).

Wuzhen

 0573

Like Zhouzhuang and other water towns in southern Jiangsu, Wuzhen's

charming network of waterways and access to the Grand Canal once made it a prosperous place of trade and silk production.

Sights

With its old bridges, ancient temples, age-old residences, museums and canal-side Ming- and Qing-dynasty architecture, Wuzhen (www.wuzhen.com.cn) is an appetising and photogenic if over-commercialised slice of old China. It's a lovely place to overnight, although you can easily make it a day trip from either Shanghai or Hangzhou.

The old town is divided into two scenic areas: **Dongzha** (admission ¥100; 🕒 7am-5.30pm, till 6pm in summer) and **Xizha** (admission ¥120, ¥80 after 5pm; 🕒 9am-10pm, till 10.30pm in summer); a combined ticket to visit the two areas costs ¥150. Buy your ticket at the **main visitor centre** (Rukou Daqiao Lu; 🕒 8am-5.30pm), where a money exchange and an ATM can be found; you can also take a boat from here across the lake.

Dongzha Scenic Zone

The main street of the Dongzha scenic zone, Dongda Jie, is a narrow path paved with stone slabs and flanked by wooden buildings and workshops embracing all trades from cloth dying to bamboo weaving and tobacco making. Most sights are open from 8am to 5pm. The Dongzha scenic zone is very hectic at weekends and during holiday periods.

Jiangnan Wood Carving Museum

MUSEUM

(420 Dong Dajie; 🕒 8am-5pm)

This fascinating museum contains some outstanding specimens of wood carvings from the region.

Ancient Beds Museum

MUSEUM

(Baichuanguan 212 Dong Dajie; 🕒 8am-5pm)

The Ancient Beds Museum has an intriguing collection of historic beds from the region.

Mao Dun's Former Residence

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Mao Dun Guju Guanqian Jie; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Near the entrance to the Dongzha scenic zone, Mao Dun's Former Residence was the home of the revolutionary writer and author of *Spring Silkworms* and *Midnight*. His great-grandfather, a successful merchant, bought the house in 1885 and it's a fairly typical example from the late Qing dynasty.

Huiyuan Pawn House

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Huiyuan Dangpu Changfeng Jie; 🕒 8am-5pm)

The Huiyuan Pawn House was once a famous pawnshop that eventually expanded to branches in Shanghai.

Xizha Scenic Zone

The Xizha scenic zone is far less packed and in general more pleasant and interesting than the crowded Dongzha scenic zone. Sights include ancestral halls, the **Indigo Fabric Workshop**, the **Zhaoming Academy**, the **Black Pottery Workshop** and the **Yuelao Temple**.

Chinese Footbinding Culture Museum

MUSEUM

(🕒 8am-5pm) **FREE**

This fascinating museum charts the history of footbinding in China with examples of the shoes that constituted, as captions in the museum attest, to 'The Golden Lotus complex that was the freakish mentality of the males at that time'. Periodically banned, including a Taiping prohibition in the 19th century, footbinding was finally abolished in the 20th century. Get the lowdown here.

White Lotus Pagoda

BUDDHIST

(Bailian Ta Shenglian Sq; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Climb up this towering pagoda at the west end of the Xizha scenic zone for excellent views over the Grand Canal.

Activities

Dongshi River Boat Tours

BOATING

(Dongzhi from ¥30 per person, Xizha from ¥60 per person)

Boats leave for trips along the Dongshi River to Xinghua Bridge from the Tourist Boat Quay near [Wuzhen Visitor Centre](#).

Sleeping

Accommodation choices are principally in the Xizha scenic zone, including a youth hostel, B&Bs and inns.

Wuzhen Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(☎ 0573 873 1666; 137 Xizha Jie; r from ¥300; 🏠)

In the Xizha scenic zone, this is a centralised collection of canal-side B&Bs, along Xi Dajie and on the other side of the water, run by families where you are then given a well-presented room with air-con, telephone and bathroom. Non-river rooms are the cheapest. To identify accommodation, look for the characters .

Book at the entrance to the Xizha Scenic Zone or at No 137 Xi Dajie.

Wisteria Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Ziteng Guoji Qingnian Lushe ☎ 0573 8873 1088; 43 Sizuo Jie; 4-/6-/8-bed dm ¥100/80/60)

This ok place has a lovely location on a lovely square opposite the Yida Silk Workshop on the far side of Renji Bridge, but only has dorm rooms. Wi-fi largely in lobby only.

Entertainment

Regular live performances of shadow puppet shows (*piyingxi*) take place in the small **theatre** (Piyingshiyuan Xinghua Lu; 🕒 performances every 10min) off Xinghua Lu. **Martial arts performances** are held on a boat near the [visitor centre](#) every half and hour between 8.30am and 4.10pm.

Getting There & Away

From Hangzhou, buses (¥29, one hour, hourly from 6.35am to 6.15pm) run regularly to Wuzhen from the Main Bus Station.

From Shanghai, buses (¥49, two hours, hourly 7am to 6pm) run from the Shanghai South Bus Station. Four buses (¥34) also run between Wuzhen and Suzhou train station.

Getting Around

From Wuzhen bus station, bus 350 (¥2, 7am to 5.30pm) runs to both the Dongzha and Xizha scenic zones, or you can grab a *sanlunche* (¥10). A free shuttle bus runs (7.40am to 5.20pm) runs every 20 minutes between the Dongzha scenic zone and the Xizha scenic zone.

Xin'anjiang

 0571 / Transport Hub

Also known as Jiande and arrayed along its namesake river of Xin'an Jiang, this pleasant and modern town has little in the way of sights, but provides a gateway to the villages of Xinye and Zhuge. It is famous among holidaying Chinese for the vast **Qiandao Hu** (Thousand Island Lake), the more popular name for the Xinanjiang Reservoir, partitioned off from the town by a nearby dam. You can reach the nearest part of the reservoir by taxi for around ¥40 to ¥50.

Sleeping

Except for pricier places, most hotels in town don't accept foreigners and it's far more charming to overnight in either Xinye or Zhuge.

Peninsula Kaihao Hotel

HOTEL

(Bandao Kaihao Jiudian  0571 6418 5888; 668 Xin'an Donglu; d ¥880-1580, ste ¥2080-18888;

  )

With the plushiest rooms in town, this hotel is not far from the river in the east of Xin'anjiang, but is away from the action. Lovely rooms in the new wing, shabbier carpets in the older wing. Comfort all round and spacious bathrooms. Rooms can dip to ¥528.

Xindongfang Hotel

HOTEL

(Xindongfang Shangwu Dajiudian  0571 6411 0585; 427 Xin'an Donglu; s/d/ste ¥480/580-

980/1280;  )

This marbled hotel is an ok mid-range choice with reasonable rooms, but a rather stranded location in the east of town.

Eating

Night Market

MARKET

(Xin'an Lu;  4-10pm)

For Xinjiang kebabs, seafood, hotpots and dumplings, head to the lively night market just north of Xin'anjiang's hopping **Old Square** (*Lao Guangchang*;) in between Kangle Lu and Caishi Lu off Xin'an Lu in the west of town.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(130 Xin'an Lu; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm)

For foreign exchange plus a 24hr ATM; by Wangjiang Lu.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng cnr of Xin'an Lu and Fuqian Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Jiande Tourist Information Center

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Jiande Luyou Zixun Zhongxin 11 Xin'an Donglu; 🕒 8am-5.30pm, to 7.30pm summer)

For tourist advice and tours.

Getting There & Away

The blue **Main Bus Station** (Xin'anjiang Qichezhan Fuqian Lu;) is at the heart of town, just south of the post office and the intersection with Xin'an Lu. There are seven buses daily (¥35, two hours) to Hangzhou's Main Bus Station and two buses (¥126, 7.30am and 2.05pm, 4¼ hours) to Shanghai's Main Bus Station. There are also regular buses to the Hangzhou South Bus Station (hourly, two hours) and West Bus Station (¥57, every 40 minutes, two hours) can be bought from the separate ticket office adjacent to the main ticket hall.

Buses (¥8, one hour, 7.20am to 5pm) to Xinye depart from the **South Bus Station** (Qiche Nanzhan Baisha Lu;), reachable on bus 2 (¥2) from the bus stop opposite the Main Bus Station on Fuqian Lu. There are also buses direct from Hangzhou's West Bus Station to Qiandaohu (Y61) for trips to the lake.

Around Xin'anjiang

Xinye

Cut with sparkling streams, centred on placid ponds and embraced by silent hills, the astonishingly picturesque village of **Xinye** (8am-4pm; ¥68) is populated by families sharing the surname Ye and an abundance of free-

roaming chickens. The village is laid out in accordance with the traditional five element (*wu hang*) theory, so it's a balanced exercise in feng shui aesthetics. During spring, the village is framed by fields of bright yellow rapeseed. The admission fee covers all the village sights.

Sights

A good place to start, the **Wenchang Hall** (Wenchang Ge 🕒 8am-4pm) contains a portrait of Confucius and an adjacent shrine (*Tudi Ci*) to the village god (for good harvests); an effigy of the monkey god hides away in a further shrine upstairs. Smudged red Maoist slogans add their own narrative. The beautiful, white and elegant seven-storey, brick-built **Tuanyun Pagoda** (Tuanyun Ta 🕒 8am-4pm) right alongside is perhaps the definitive image of the village. Not far away, the **Xishan Ancestral Temple** (Xishan Citang 🕒 8am-4pm) is a peach.

Next to the nearby rectangular Sifang Pond (*Sifang Tang*), the huge white-washed **Jinshi Hall** (Jinshi Tang 🕒 8am-4pm) encloses a cool, voluminous wooden interior.

The **Hall of Good Order** (Youxu Tang 🕒 8am-4pm) is central to the village; its front door does not open so its accessible side door faces out onto pyramid-shaped Daofeng Mountain (Daofeng Shan), across the waters of half-moon shaped South Pond (Nantang), from where eight alleys radiate out through the village. Originally built in 1290 and rebuilt during the Republic, the hall contains some astonishing wood carvings of a deer, small birds and a monkey in the trees. At the end of the day, sit out next to the pond and watch old folk gathering to chat.

The **Shuangmei Hall** (Shuangmei Tang 🕒 8am-4pm) is another lovely wood-panelled affair containing intricate and exquisite carvings above pillars. The **Chongren Temple** (Chongren Tang 🕒 8am-4pm) is charmingly located next to Half Moon Pond (*Banyue Tang*).

Sleeping

Daofeng Renjia Tucaiguan

GUESTHOUSE

( 138 6810 1720; s/d ¥40/80)

Not far from the bus drop off, this guesthouse is one of the few places you can stay in Xinye, with well-kept singles and doubles; it can cook up meals.

Getting There & Away

There are two daily buses (¥8, one hour, 7.20am to 5pm) from Xin'anjiang's South Bus Station.

There is also a direct bus service (¥59, two hours, 8.20am & 1.50pm) from Hangzhou's West Bus Station.

The bus to Zhuge (¥3.5, 30 minutes, four daily, 6.05am, 8.30am, 11.50am and 3.10pm) leaves from the drop off point for buses from Xin'anjiang.

Zhuge

Zhuge (¥100; www.zhugevillage.cn) is an astonishing village, traditionally designed according the *bagua* (eight trigrams) of the i-Ching. It has a rather more commercialised feel than nearby Xinye, but remains a picturesque composition of traditional Chinese village architecture and meticulous feng shui planning.

Sights

From the bus drop off, walk uphill along Gaolong Lu to the village and past the ticket collector; proceed downhill, round the corner and reach the lovely, huge Upper Pond (*Shang Tang*) and the **Shouchun Hall** (Shouchun Tang  7.30am-5pm summer, 8am-4.30pm winter) – one of Zhuge's 18 halls – itself a long sequence of chambers and courtyards alongside rectangular Lower Pond (or *Xia Tang*) and two further halls, the **Dajing Hall** (Dajing Tang  7.30am-5pm summer, 8am-4.30pm winter) – housing a traditional Chinese medicine museum – and, up the steps, the **Yongmu Hall** (Yongmu Tang  7.30am-5pm summer, 8am-

4.30pm winter), a fine Ming dynasty hall with an eye-catching central stone door frame and an exhibition dedicated to local culture. Spot the black trigrams (*bagua*) above some windows of whitewashed houses and stop by the old communist era **cinema** (Dianyingyuan 🕒 7.30am-5pm summer, 8am-4.30pm winter) with its wooden seats, within the self-styled (and vacant) Tourist Reception Center. It's a snapshot of the 1960s.

Eight (the number mirroring the eight trigrams of the *bagua*) lanes radiate from **Zhong Pond** (Zhong Chi) at the heart of the village. The fengshui symbol of the village, the circular pond resembles the Chinese twin-fish, yin-yang taiji diagram, half filled in and the other half occupied with water. Overlooking the water is the splendid **Dagong Hall** (Dagong Tang 🕒 7.30am-5pm summer, 8am-4.30pm winter), a huge, airy space with a pairing of huge black Chinese characters ('Wu' or 'Martial') and ('Zhong' or 'Loyal') on the walls outside. The memorial hall originally dates to the Yuan dynasty; note its two large and smooth drum stones. The **Prime Minister's Temple** (Cheng Xiang Citang 🕒 7.30am-5pm summer, 8am-4.30pm winter), an impressive and massive old hall with some splendid carved cross beams in the roof, is nearby.

Sleeping

Huayuan Gongyu

HOTEL

(📞 0579 8860 0336; 48 Yitai Xiang; r no bath ¥60, s/d ¥288/320)

This quiet choice has an incredibly beautiful Chinese garden out back, decorated with osmanthus, camellias, other flowering trees, ginkgos and potted plants and embellished with magnificent views over the rooftops of Zhuge Cun. Rooms are over two floors in an outside block; rooms upstairs are less damp. It's along an alley just up from Upper Pond.

Eating

Restaurants are dotted around the village, but are squarely aimed at tourists.

For fast-food style chicken and chips, head to **Kendeqi** (Gaolong Lu; set meal ¥11), shamelessly echoing the Chinese name for KFC.

i Information

Zhuge has an **internet cafe** (10 Gaolong Lu; ¥3 per hour; 🕒 24hr), a **post office** (Zhongguo Youzheng Gaolong Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm) and a branch of **ICBC** (Gongshang Yinhang 60 Gaolong Lu;) with a 24-hour ATM. For foreign exchange, you will need to go to the [Bank of China](#) in Xin'anjiang.

i Getting There & Away

Buses from Xinye (¥3.50, 30 minutes) depart at 6.05am, 8.30am, 11.50am and 3.10pm; in the return direction, buses leave at 7.15am, 9.50am, 1.25pm and 4.45pm. The bus drops off at the foot of Gaolong Lu.

Buses for Xin'anjiang (¥10, one hour, eight daily) leave from the **bus station** (330 Guodao; 330). To get to the bus station, walk down Gaolong Lu away from the village and turn right on to the main road; the bus station is a few minutes' walk away on the north side of the road. Buses run to **Hangzhou** (¥50-60, two hours, 7am, 7.15am, 7.30am and 1.35pm), where you can connect to the national rail network.

From Hangzhou south bus station, direct buses (¥58, two hours) to Zhuge leave at 8.40am and 3.50pm; there's also a bus (¥58, two hours) to Zhuge from Hangzhou west bus station at 2.40pm.

Putuoshan

☎0580

The lush and well-tended Buddhist island of Putuoshan – the Zhoushan Archipelago's most celebrated isle – is the abode of Guanyin, the eternally compassionate Goddess of Mercy. One of China's four sacred Buddhist mountains, Putuoshan is permeated with the aura of the goddess and the

devotion of her worshippers. Endless boatloads of visitors, however, frequently upset the island's sacred balance, especially as access has improved in recent years. During holiday periods and weekends things can get rampant (aim for a midweek visit).

Pǔtuóshān



Sights

A crippling **entrance fee** (summer/winter ¥160/140) is payable when you arrive; entry to some other sights is extra.

Images of Guanyin are ubiquitous and Putuoshan's temples are all shrines for the merciful goddess. Besides the three main temples, you will stumble upon nunneries and monasteries everywhere you turn, while decorative archways may suddenly emerge from the sea mist.

The central part of the island is around Puji Temple about 1km north of the ferry terminal, reachable by taking the roads leading east or west from the ferry terminal; either way takes about 20 minutes. Alternatively, minibuses from the ferry terminal run to Puji Temple and to other points of the island.

Puji Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Puji Si admission ¥5; 🕒 5.30am-6pm)

Fronted by large ponds and overlooked by towering camphor trees and Luohan pines, this recently restored Chan (Zen) temple stands by the main square and dates to at least the 17th century. Beyond chubby Milefo sitting in a red, gold and green burnished cabinet in the Hall of Heavenly Kings, throngs of worshippers stand with flaming incense in front of the colossal main hall. Note the seated 1000-arm effigy of Guanyin in the Pumen Hall (*Pumendian*).

Buses leave from the west side of the temple to various points around the island.

Guanyin Cave

CAVE

(Guanyin Dong [GOOGLE MAP](#).)

Crouch with an arched back into this magnificent, smoky and mysterious old grotto with a low, bonce-scraping ceiling to witness its assembly of Guanyins carved from the rock face along with small effigies of the goddess in porcelain and stone, draped in cloth. The cave is located in the south west of

the island.

Buddhism Museum

MUSEUM

(Foijiao Bowuguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 9am-3pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This ambitiously created museum affords an intriguing glimpse into the culture of Buddhism by way of displays of ritual implements, religious objects, ceramics and artefacts.

Duobao Pagoda

PAGODA

(Duobao Ta [GOOGLE MAP](#).)

The oldest structure on the island, the attractive five-storey stone Duobao Pagoda – its name literally means the 'Many Treasures Pagoda' – was built in 1334.

Fayu Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Fayu Chansi [GOOGLE MAP](#); Fayu Lu; admission ¥5; 🕒 5.30am-6pm)

Colossal camphor trees and a huge ginkgo tree tower over this Chan (Zen) temple, where a vast glittering statue of Guanyin sits resplendently in the main hall, flanked by 18 *luohan* effigies. Each *luohan* has a name – for example the Crossing the River *luohan* or the Long Eyebrows *luohan* – and worshippers pray to each in turn. In the hall behind stands a dextrous 1000-arm Guanyin.

Get to the temple by bus from the ferry terminal (¥10), Puji Temple (¥5), cable car (¥10) or Fanyin Cave (¥10).

Foding Mountain

MOUNTAIN

(Foding Shan [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥5, Cable Car one way/return ¥30/50; 🕒 Cable Car 6.40am-5pm)

A lovely, shaded half-hour climb can be made up Foding Mountain – Buddha's Summit Peak – the highest point on the island. This is also where you will find the less elaborate **Huiji Temple** (Huiji Chansi [GOOGLE MAP](#));

admission ¥5; 🕒 5.30am-6.30pm). In summer the climb is much cooler in the late afternoon; watch devout pilgrims and Buddhist nuns stop every three steps to either bow or kneel in supplication. The less motivated take the **cable car** .

The Xiangyun Pavilion (Xiangyun Ting) is a pleasant spot for a breather.

South Sea Guanyin

STATUE

(Nanhai Guanyin [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission ¥6)

The first thing you see as you approach Putuoshan by boat is this 33m-high glittering statue of Guanyin, overlooking the waves at the southernmost tip of the island.

Luojiashan

ISLAND

(admission ¥18)

The very small island of Luojiashan southeast of Putuoshan makes for a fun expedition. The **ferry** (¥68, 25 minutes, 7am, 8am and 1pm, return trip 9am, 10am and 3pm) from the wharf east of the main ferry terminal on Putuoshan includes the entrance fee to the island. Ferry schedules leave you with less than two hours for the island and its temples and pagodas.

One Hundred Step Beach

BEACH

(Baibusha [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 🕒 6am-6pm)

One of Putuoshan's two large beaches – the other is **One Thousand Step Beach** (Qianbu Jinsha [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 🕒 6am-6pm) – both on the east of the island are attractive and largely unspoilt, although periodically you may have to pay for access; swimming (May through August) is not permitted after 6pm, but it's lovely to plonk down on the sand in the early evening in warm weather.

Fanyin Cave

CAVE

(Fanyin Dong [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission ¥5; 🕒 5.30am-6pm)

On the far eastern tip of the island, this cave contains a temple dedicated to Guanyin perched between two cliffs with a seagull's view of the crashing

waves below.

Chaoyang Cave

CAVE

(Chaoyang Dong [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥12)

The sound of the roaring waves in this cave overlooking the sea is said to imitate the chanting of the Buddha.

Sleeping

Most hotels on Putuoshan aim squarely at tour groups and holidaying Chinese, with prices to match. Room rates are generally discounted from Sunday to Thursday.

As you leave the arrivals building, local hotel touts flapping plastic photo sheets of their hotels will descend; these rooms are generally at the cheaper end in a nearby village, not luxurious, but serviceable and more affordable than many other hotels on the island. Alternatively, turn left upon exiting the arrivals building and walk to the cheap guesthouses off Meicen Lu in Xishan Xincun, a short walk over the hill to the west from the ferry terminal. They are all very similar, with standard singles, twins and perhaps triples. Some hotels may not take foreigners, but others should (speaking Chinese helps); rooms go for around ¥100 to ¥150 on a weekday, but rise considerably at weekends; bargain for your room. Look for the characters ‘’, which means rooms are available. A similar assortment of guesthouses are in Longwan Cun, around a fifteen minute walk east of the ferry terminal. Several of the larger hotels have shuttle buses to and from the pier.

Haibian Renjia

GUESTHOUSE

([GOOGLE MAP](#);  0580 669 8035; 77, Bldg 34, Longwan Village; 77 tw/d ¥180-420; )

This very clean budget choice up the steps in Longwan Village and not far from Gold Beach in the southeast of the island has ten rooms with shower (including a sweet attic room with skylight) and a tip-top, clean ambience. There's no English spoken but the owners are hard-working and efficient.

Seaview rooms are ¥260 during the week.

Landison Putuoshan Resort

HOTEL

(Leidisen Guangchang Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 0580 669 0666; www.landisonhotels.com; 115 Fayu Lu; tw & d ¥1588-2588, tr ¥3188, ste ¥3888-8888; 🌳 @ 🏠)

There's an elegant and unhurried charm about this place among the trees that does more than any other place on the island to create a relaxed and enjoyable tempo.

Putuoshan Hotel

HOTEL

(Putuoshan Dajiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 0580 609 2828; www.putuoshanhotel.com; 93 Meicen Lu; tw/d ¥1250-1700/1350-1700, ste ¥2900-5000; 🌳 @ 🏠)

Maximising its feng shui by backing onto a green hill, this is a fine choice with a pleasant and uncluttered feel, agreeable rooms and service to match. Discounts of up to 70% are regular midweek.

Sanshengtang Fandian

HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 0580 609 1277; 121 Miao Zhuang Yanlu; d/tw ¥1000, tr ¥1300, q ¥1500, ste ¥1688; 🌳)

Often full, this traditional-style place is attractively set among trees off a small path near Puji Temple. Rooms are rather musty but generally go for around ¥700 during the week.

Eating

Putuoshan dining is largely seafood and hotel restaurants and therefore expensive, unless you choose noodle joints in the small villages of Xishan Xincun (off Meicen Lu) and also in Longwan Cun, in the southeast. There's a **vegetarian restaurant** (Puji Sucaiguan breakfast ¥5, lunch & dinner ¥10; 🕒 5.30am-7am, 10.30am-noon & 4.15-5.15pm) right by the Puji Temple, serving great value meals. The other temples also have vegetarian kitchens.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 85-7 Meicen Lu; 🕒 8-noon & 1.30-4.30pm)

Forex currency exchange. ATMs (24-hour) taking international cards for the Bank of China and other banks are down the side of the block (which is called 'Financial Street').

China Mobile

TELEPHONE

(Zhongguo Yidong [GOOGLE MAP](#); Meicen Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm)

For mobile phone SIM cards.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 124 Meicen Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm summer, 8am-4.30pm winter)

Clinic

MEDICAL

(Zhensuo 📞 0580 609 3102; Meicen Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(ICBC; Gongshang Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 85-15 Meicen Lu; 🕒 8-11am & 2-5pm)

Forex currency exchange.

Left-luggage Office

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Xingli Jicunchu [GOOGLE MAP](#); Matou; per large luggage piece ¥8; 🕒 6.45am-4.30pm)

At the ferry terminal.

Tourist Service Centre

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Luyou Zixun Zhongxin 📞 0580 609 4921; 🕒 9am-6pm)

Yuanzhou Internet Cafe

INTERNET

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 8 Longsha Lu; ¥8 per hr; 🕒 24hr)

This place is the only internet cafe on the island, on the far side of the Longsha tunnel (walk through the tunnel just north of the Putuoshan Hotel).

i Getting There & Away

The construction of bridges lashing the principle islands of the Zhoushan archipelago to the mainland means you can largely make the trip here by bus from Shanghai or Hangzhou.

Buses from **Hangzhou's Main Bus Station** (¥88 to ¥98, regular, first/last 6am/6.15pm) arrive at Putuo Chengbei Bus Station (*Putuo Chengbei Chezhan*), from where shuttle buses run to Zhujiajian Dock (¥6, every 15 minutes, one hour, 9.40am to 5.40pm). Buy tickets for the shuttle bus from the Zhoushan Putuo Tourist Destination Service Center (*Zhoushan Luyou Mudidi Fuwu Zhongxin*), adjacent to the Putuo Chengbei Bus Station. Bus 27 (¥3, one hour, 5.30am to 8pm) also runs to Zhujiajian Dock from the bus station. Buses also run from here to **Shanghai Nanpudaoqiao** (¥138, five hours, first/last bus 6.30am/6pm, regular) and **Shanghai South Bus Station** (¥130, regular, 1st/last bus 5.50am/6.10pm). Bus 6 connects the wharf at Shenjiamen with Putuo Chengbei bus station, from where you can take a bus to Hangzhou or Shanghai.

The shortest and fastest **ferry** crossing to Putuoshan is from Zhujiajian Wharf (*Zhujiajian Matou*) on the neighbouring island of Zhujiajian. Fast boats (¥25, 7 minutes) from here leave every 30 minutes from 6.20am and 5.20pm, with single sailings afterwards at 5.35pm, 6.30pm, 7.30pm, 8.30pm and 9.50pm. Slower boats (¥22, 15 minutes) also run, but less frequently. Ferries (¥28, fast/slow 15/30 minutes) also cross to Putuoshan from the wharf at Shenjiamen on the island of Zhoushan.

A more sedate way to journey is on the **night boat from Shanghai** that leaves for Putuoshan from Wusong Wharf for the 12-hour voyage. Offering numerous grades of comfort from 4th class to special class, tickets cost ¥139 to ¥499; it's easy to upgrade (*bupiao*) once you're on board. From Shanghai, the boat leaves at 7.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, reaching

Putuoshan at around 8am. In the other direction, it leaves on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 4pm (winter) or 4.40pm (summer), reaching Shanghai at around 6am.

A **fast boat** (¥260 to ¥352) departs Putuoshan for the port of Xiao Yang Shan, south of Shanghai at 1.30pm, where passengers are then bused to Nanpu Bridge; the whole trip takes four hours. The daily ferry from Shanghai to Putuoshan departs from Xiao Yang Shan at 10.10am, connected to Nanpu Bridge (Nanpudaqiao) in Shanghai with a bus that leaves at 8.15am. Tickets for both ferry and bus/ferry services are available at the travel agents from a shop at 21 East Jinling Rd in Shanghai.

On Putuoshan, tickets for all of the above boats and buses can either be bought at the **ticket office** at the jetty/arrivals halls or from the office at 74 Meicen Lu, opposite the Putuoshan Hotel.

The nearest **airport** is at Zhoushan (Putuoshan) on the neighbouring island of Zhujiajian; get the ferry from the dock.

Getting Around

Minibuses zip from the passenger ferry terminal to various points around the island, including Puji Temple (¥5), One Thousand Step Beach (¥8), Fayu Temple (¥10) and the cable car station (¥10). There are more bus stations at Puji Temple, Fayu Temple and other spots around the island serving the same and other destinations. If you're heading to Puji Temple and the sights in the south of the island, walking is fine.

Fujian

[Fujian Highlights](#)

[Xiamen](#)

[Gulang Yu](#)

[Fujian Tulou](#)

[Quanzhou](#)

[Around Quanzhou](#)

[Fuzhou](#)

[Wuyi Shan](#)

Fujian



Pop 37.2 million

Why Go?

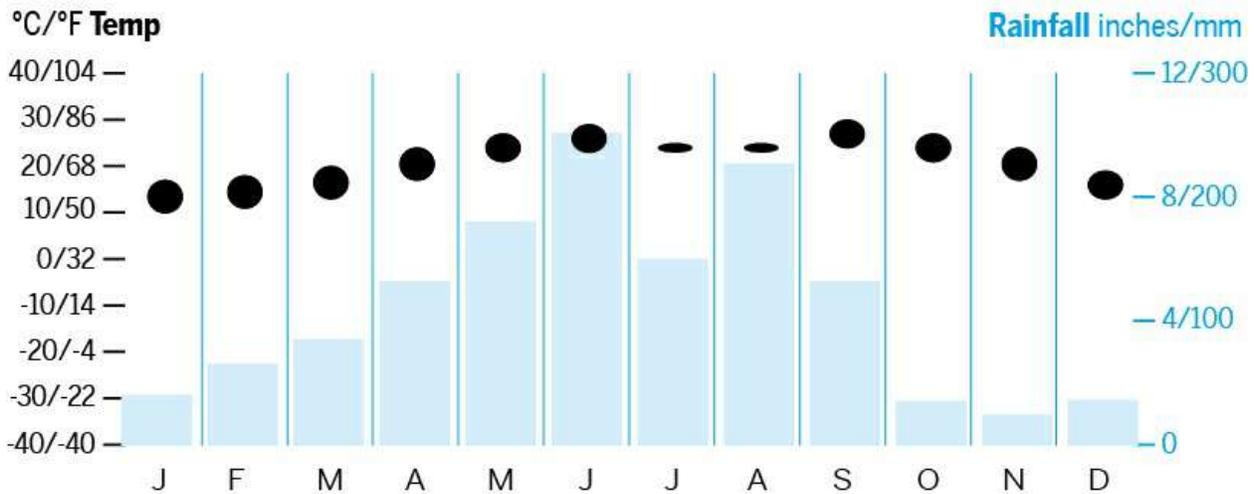
The ancestral home to many overseas Chinese, Fujian on China's southern coast has a strong seafaring disposition and it used to be one of the windows that connected China to the outside world. Once a great emporium in Asia, its multicultural heritage still stands beautifully in Xiamen and Quanzhou, where you can glimpse the region's glorious maritime past.

Other standout attractions are the marvellous *tulou* (roundhouses) in the southwest of the province. Rising like castles on rolling hills, these quirky buildings are Unesco World Heritage-listed. To the northwest, the hill station of Wuyi Shan offers hiking opportunities aplenty.

The cheerful harbour city of Xiamen is a welcoming first port of call. From here, you can hop over to the popular isle of Gulang Yu, or venture to the intriguing Taiwanese outpost island of Kinmen.

When to Go

Xiàmén



- ➔ **Mar & Apr** Beat the summer heat with a springtime visit to the World Heritage-listed *tulou*.
- ➔ **Jun & Sep** Visit the breezy coast of Xiamen and island-hop in summer or autumn.
- ➔ **Oct** Low-season prices and clear mountain air coalesce in the rugged, lush Wuyi Shan.

Best Temples

- ➔ [Nanputuo Temple](#)
- ➔ [Kaiyuan Temple](#)
- ➔ [Guandi Temple](#)

Best Tulou Clusters

- ➔ [Tianluokeng Tulou Cluster](#)
- ➔ [Gaobei Tulou Cluster](#)
- ➔ [Hongkeng Tulou Cluster](#)

➔ [Yunshuiyao Tulou Cluster](#)

Fujian Highlights



① Amble down the alleys in breezy [Xiamen](#), one of China's most attractive cities

② Dream of grand times long gone in [Gulang Yu](#), an island packed with colourful colonial villas

- 3 Explore the region's World Heritage-listed, [Fujian Tulou](#), massive, semi-enclosed earthen edifices that are the ancient equivalents of modern-day condos
- 4 Soak in the lingering traces of China's maritime past in [Quanzhou](#)
- 5 Escape the heat of the plains at the picturesque hill station of [Wuyi Shan](#)
- 6 Float on a raft down the [Nine Twists River](#) and look for boat-shaped coffins in cavities along the rock faces
- 7 Hop over to pretty [Kinmen](#), Taiwan's closest island outpost to China

History

The coastal region of Fujian, known in English as Fukien or Hokkien, has been part of the Chinese empire since the Qin dynasty (221–207 BC), when it was known as Min. Sea trade transformed the region from a frontier into one of the centres of the Chinese world. During the Song and Yuan dynasties the coastal city of Quanzhou was one of the main ports on the maritime Silk Road, which transported not only silk but other textiles, precious stones, porcelain and a host of other valuables. The city was home to more than 100,000 Arab merchants, missionaries and travellers.

Despite a decline in the province's fortunes after the Ming dynasty restricted maritime commerce in the 15th century, the resourcefulness of the Fujian people proved itself in the numbers heading for Taiwan, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. Overseas links that were forged continue today, contributing much to the modern character of the province.

Language

Fujian is one of the most linguistically diverse provinces in China. Locals speak variations of the Min dialect, which includes Taiwanese. Min is divided into various subgroups – you can expect to hear Southern Min

(Minnan Hua) in Xiamen and Quanzhou, and Eastern Min (Dong Min) in Fuzhou. Using Mandarin is not a problem.

i Getting There & Away

Fujian is well connected to the neighbouring provinces of Guangdong and Jiangxi by train and coastal highway. Xiamen and Fuzhou have airline connections to most of the country, including Hong Kong, and Taipei and Kaohsiung in Taiwan. Wuyi Shan has flight connections to China's larger cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. The coastal freeway also goes all the way to Hong Kong from Xiamen. The D class train links Xiamen to Shanghai in eight hours.

i Getting Around

For exploring the interior, D trains are more comfortable and safer than travelling by bus. Wuyi Shan is linked to Fuzhou, Quanzhou and Xiamen by train. There are also daily flights between Xiamen and Wuyi Shan.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used for this region:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥250

\$\$ ¥250 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥40

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥100

\$\$\$ more than ¥100

Xiamen

📍 0592 / Pop 1.9 million

With its quaint historical buildings, neat streets and a charming waterfront district, you can understand why Xiamen, also known to the West as Amoy, is a popular holiday destination for Chinese flashpackers.

The highlight of Xiamen is to visit the tiny island of Gulang Yu, once the old colonial roost of Europeans and Japanese. The seaside gardens, meandering alleys and beautiful colonial villas ooze an old-world charm rarely seen in Chinese cities.

History

Xiamen was founded around the mid-14th century in the early years of the Ming dynasty, when the city walls were built and the town was established as a major seaport and commercial centre. In the 17th century it became a place of refuge for the Ming rulers fleeing the Manchu invaders. Xiamen and nearby Kinmen (Jinmen) were bases for the Ming armies who, under the command of the general Koxinga, raised their anti-Manchu battle cry, ‘resist the Qing and restore the Ming’.

The Portuguese arrived in the 16th century, followed by the British in the 17th century, and later by the French and the Dutch, all attempting, rather unsuccessfully, to establish Xiamen as a trade port. The port was closed to foreigners in the 1750s and it was not until the Opium Wars that things began to change. In August 1841 a British naval force of 38 ships carrying artillery and soldiers sailed into Xiamen harbour, forcing the port to open. Xiamen then became one of the first treaty ports.

Japanese and Western powers followed soon after, establishing consulates and making Gulang Yu a foreign enclave. Xiamen was taken over by Japanese in 1938 and remained that way until 1945.

Xiàmén & Gǔlàng Yǔ



Xiamen & Gulang Yu

📍 Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Bo'ai Hospital | B3 |
| Consulate Inn | B3 |
| 2 Ecclesia Catholica | B3 |
| 3 Former Japanese Consulate | A3 |
| Former Spanish Consulate | A3 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Guancai Lou | A3 |
| 4 Haoyue Garden | B4 |
| 5 Huang Rongyuan Villa | B3 |
| 6 Kaihe Lu Fish Market | B1 |
| 7 Koxinga Memorial Hall | A3 |
| 8 Law Court | A3 |
| 9 Nanputuo Temple | D4 |
| 10 Organ Museum | A3 |
| 11 Overseas Chinese Museum | C3 |
| 12 Sanyi Church | A3 |
| 13 Shuzhuang Garden | A4 |
| 14 Sunlight Rock Park | A3 |
| 15 Xiamen University | D4 |
| Yizu Shanzhuang | A3 |

Sleeping

| | |
|--|----|
| 16 Gulang Yu Lu Fei International Youth Hostel | B3 |
| 17 Hotel Indigo Xiamen Harbour | B2 |
| 18 Liangzhu Boutique Lifestyle Hotel | C1 |
| 19 Lujiang Harbourview Hotel | B2 |
| 20 Miryam Boutique Hotel | A3 |
| 21 Xiamen International Youth Hostel | D3 |
| 22 Xiamen Locanda International Youth Hostel | B3 |
| 23 Yangtao Hotel | A3 |
| 24 Yue Hotel | C3 |

Eating

| | |
|--|----|
| 32/HOW cafe | C1 |
| 25 Dafang Sucaiguan | D4 |
| 26 Huangzehe Peanut Soup Shop | B2 |
| 27 Longtou Fishball | A3 |
| 28 Lucky Full City Seafood Dim Sum | A2 |
| Seaview Restaurant | B2 |
| 29 The Chu Family Coffee | A3 |
| 30 Tianhe Ximen Tusundong | C1 |
| 31 Wutang Shachamian | C3 |

Shopping

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 32 Xinhua Bookshop | B2 |
|------------------------------------|----|

Sights & Activities

The town of Xiamen is on the island of the same name. It's connected to the mainland by a 5km-long causeway bearing a railway, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, road and footpath. The most absorbing part of Xiamen is near the western (waterfront) district, directly opposite the small island of Gulang Yu. This is the old area of town, known for its colonial architecture, parks and winding streets.

Nanputuo Temple

BUDDHIST

(Nanputuo Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Siming Nanlu; 🕒 8am-6pm) **FREE**

This Buddhist temple complex on the southern side of Xiamen is one of the most famous temples among the Fujianese, and is also considered a pilgrimage site by dedicated followers from Southeast Asia. The temple has been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt. Its latest incarnation dates to the early 20th century, and today it's an active and busy temple with chanting monks and worshippers lighting incense.

The temple is fronted by a huge lotus lake. In front of the courtyard is the twin-eaved Big Treasure Hall (Daxiong Baodian), presided over by a trinity of Buddhas representing his past, present and future forms. Behind rises the eight-sided Hall of Great Compassion (Dabei Dian), in which stands a golden 1000-armed statue of Guanyin, facing the four directions.

The temple has an excellent vegetarian restaurant in a shaded courtyard where you can dine in the company of resident, mobile-phone-toting monks. Round it all off with a hike up the steps behind the temple among the rocks and the shade of trees.

Take bus 1 from the train station or bus 21, 45, 48 or 503 from Zhongshan Lu to reach the temple.

Xiamen University

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Xiamen Daxue [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 422 Siming Nanlu; 🕒 Museum open daily 9am-12.30pm & 1.30pm-5pm) **FREE**

Next to Nanputuo Temple and established with overseas Chinese funds, the university has beautiful republican-era buildings and an attractive lake. It's a good place for a pleasant stroll. The **anthropology museum** (Renleixue Bowuguan) in the campus boasts two large 'boat coffins' unearthed from a cliff in Wuyi Shan. The campus entrance is next to the stop for bus 1.

Huli Shan Fortress

BUILDING

(Huli Shan Paotai admission ¥25; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm)

Across Daxue Lu, south of the university, is this gigantic German gun artillery built in 1894. You can rent binoculars to peer over the water to the Taiwanese-occupied island of Kinmen (Jinmen), formerly known as Quemoy and claimed by both mainland China and Taiwan.

Overseas Chinese Museum

MUSEUM

(Huaqiao Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 73 Siming Nanlu; 🕒 9.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

An ambitious celebration of China's communities abroad, with dioramas, street scenes, photos and props.

Kaihe Lu Fish Market

MARKET

(Kaihelu Caishichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Kaihe Lu)

In the old district of Xiamen, this tiny but lively market sells various (weird) sea creatures to a backdrop of qilou (shophouses) and a church. Access from Xiahe Lu.

THE HEYDAY OF AMOY

When you are in Xiamen, get a copy of Old Xiamen, Cradle of Modern Chinese Business & Chinese Business Education, edited by Dr Bill Brown, a long-time local resident from the US. The book explains in a most readable way how Xiamen has historically played a vital role in fostering cultural interactions between the East and the West, and it also has a wonderful collection of old prints, news clips and literary extracts about the city dating back to as early as Marco Polo's time. The affordable

paperback (¥30) is available in **Xinhua Bookshop** (Xinhua shudian [MAP](#))
[GOOGLE MAP](#); 155 Zhongshan Lu; 🕒9am-5pm).

Tours

[China International Travel Service](#) (CITS; Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe) and many larger hotels can help with tours.

Apple Travel

TRAVEL AGENCY

(📞505 3122; www.appletravel.cn; Shop 20, Guanren Lu)

Pricey but can help arrange tours to attractions in Fujian such as Wuyi Shan. Also organises English-speaking guides.

Festivals & Events

Xiamen International Marathon

MARATHON

(Xiamen Guoji Malasong Sai www.xmim.org)

Held in January, this event draws local and international participants. Runners race around the coastal ring road that circles the island.

Dragon Boat Races

DRAGON BOATING

Held in Xiamen at the Dragon Pool (Longzhou Chi) in Jimei every June, they are quite a sight.

Sleeping

Xiamen is a popular, year-round destination in China, so making a reservation well in advance is essential. Hotels are clustered around the harbour and most are midrange, shading top end. Most places offer 40% discounts on weekdays.

Xiamen International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xiamen Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 208 2345; www.yhaxm.com; 41 Nanhua Lu, dm from ¥60, s ¥95-160, d ¥160-240; 📶 @ 📶)

With clean dorms and doubles, this famous hostel is run by an efficient and helpful staff. Reservations essential. Light meals are served in the attached cafe.

Xiamen Locanda International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xiamen Luka Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 208 2918; www.locandahostel.com; 35 Minzu Lu, 4-bed/6-bed dm ¥60/55, s ¥208, d & tw ¥258; 📶 @ 📶)

This friendly hostel can be easily identified by its ochre walls and a lovely courtyard. All rooms are clean and amber-hued. The dorms are compact, though.

Yue Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Yueyaju Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 206 7518; www.yuehotel.com; 21 Nanhua Lu, r ¥340-560; 📶 @ 📶)

Identifiable by two blocks of red-brick houses, this boutique hotel has a dozen well-presented rooms. Ask for one with a balcony. The hotel is just a stone's throw from Xiamen University and Nanputuo Temple.

Liangzhu Boutique Lifestyle Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Liangzhu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 207 1322; www.liangzhu22.com; 22 Huaxin Lu, r ¥398-698; 📶 📶)

Tucked away in a tranquil neighbourhood of 1950s mansions, this quaint old villa has eight chic rooms, every one of which is different. Breakfast is included. The hotel is a bit hard to find as the street numbers are not in sequential order. Look for the chocolate-coloured building not far from [32/HOW cafe](#), or simply give the hotel a call.

Hotel Indigo Xiamen Harbour

HOTEL

(Xiamen Haigang Yindige Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 226 1666; www.hotelindigo.com; 16 Lujiang Dao, d ¥2600-3600; 🚫 ❄️ @)

This chain hotel at the waterfront district has found a balance between funky and kitschy in its design and decor. Both business travellers and tourists will appreciate the central location and the generous number of rooms with sweeping harbour views. Staff are attentive. Discounts of around 50% are available.

Lujiang Harbourview Hotel

HOTEL

(Lujiang Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 202 2922; www.lujiang-hotel.com; 54 Lujiang Dao, s ¥670-730, sea-view d ¥929-1040; ❄️ @)

This 1950s structure has had a thorough revamp and is a great option for a little bit of luxury in the middle of the city. All rooms have modern facilities and quite tasteful furnishings that befit the hotel's four-star billing. The hotel is Xiamen's landmark and all taxi drivers know where it is.

Eating

Being a port city, Xiamen is known for its fresh seafood, especially oysters and shrimps. The alleys on both sides of Zhongshan Lu teem with eateries of all shapes and sizes.

Huangzehe Peanut Soup Shop

SNACKS

(Huangzehe Huasheng Tangdian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 22-24 Zhongshan Lu, snacks ¥4-10; 🕒 6.30am-10.30pm)

Very popular restaurant with basic service and seating, famed for its delectably sweet *huasheng tang* (peanut soup) and popular snacks including *halijian* (oyster omelette) and *zhurou chuan* (pork kebabs). You need to purchase coupons that you hand over when you order food.

Wutang Shachamian

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 68 Minzu Lu, noodles from ¥20; 🕒 6.30am-1pm)

This absolutely no-frills breakfast and early lunch joint serving excellent *shachamian* (satay-inspired noodles) is a perennial local favourite. The ingredients can be customised but a typical bowl will include shellfish, meatballs and pig innards. Let your fingers do the talking.

The shop is identifiable by a long queue out front and the red and blue characters on the front panel.

Seaview Restaurant

DIM SUM

(Lujiang Bilingual Guanhaijing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 7th fl, 54 Lujiang Dao; meals from ¥80; 🕒 10am-10pm)

What's better than sipping tea and enjoying freshly made dim sum on a sun-kissed terrace with sweeping harbour views? This rooftop restaurant in [Lujiang Harbourview Hotel](#) is a choice place to savour Fujianese street snacks in a comfy setting. No English dim sum menu, but you can pick what you want from the cooking stations.

Lucky Full City Seafood

DIM SUM

(Chaofu Cheng 28 Hubin Beilu; dim sum from ¥14, meals from ¥70; 🕒 10am-10pm)

Priding itself on MSG-free dim sum and dishes, this extremely popular restaurant is where you'll have to try your luck or wait at least 30 minutes to get a table. Catch a taxi here: the driver will know where it is. It also has a **branch** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 33 Lujiang Dao; 🕒 8am-2.30am) 200m north of Lundu ferry terminal.

32/HOW cafe

CAFE

(Cherry 32 Cafe; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 32 Huaxin Lu; coffee from ¥45; 🕒 11am-11pm)

This Taiwanese-owned cafe serves arguably the best coffee in town. The very delicate porcelains, the retro phones and clocks on the wall, together with the lovely courtyard, all evoke the mood of grandma's home.

Dafang Sucaiguan

VEGETARIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 209 3236; 3 Nanhua Lu; dishes ¥30-68; 🕒 9am-9.30pm; 🍴)

This cheerfully furnished vegetarian restaurant has a very wide range of delicious dishes including hotpots and mock meat.

NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH!

Fancy aspic dishes, or some jelly with a difference? Tusundong, or sandworm jelly, is one of the best loved appetisers in Fujian. The sandworms are boiled into a jelly mould and the crunchy end product, an aspic dish, is said to be rich in collagen. Locals love eating them with mustard, coriander leaves and turnip slices. You'll find the jelly sold in any street-food joints, but locals all recommend **Tianhe Ximen Tusundong** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 33 Douxi Lu; snacks from ¥10; 🕒 8am-10pm). near the west gate of Zhongshan Park, for its sandworm jelly. If the idea of eating worms is too gross for you, the restaurant also serves delicious octopus and ark clams.



Shopping

Zhongshan Lu is essentially a long shopping strip filled with souvenir shops and the latest fashion brands.



Information

Pickpockets operate around the popular areas in Xiamen. This includes Zhongshan Lu and the ferry to/from Gulang Yu.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 6 Zhongshan Lu)

The 24-hour ATM accepts international cards.

China International Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(CITS., Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe [GOOGLE MAP](#); 335 Hexiang Xilu)

There are several offices around town. The branch on Hexiang Xilu is

recommended.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng ; cnr Xinhua Lu & Zhongshan Lu)

Telephone services available.

City Medical Consultancy

MEDICAL

(Laifu Zhensuo  532 3168; 123 Xidi Villa Hubin Beilu;  8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

English-speaking doctors; expat frequented. Telephone-operated 24 hours.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE STATION

(PSB,, Gong'anju ;  226 2203; 45-47 Xinhua Lu)

Opposite the main post and telephone office. The visa section (, *churujing guanlichu*; open 8.10am to 11.45am and 2.40pm to 5.15pm Monday to Saturday) is in the northeastern part of the building on Gongyuan Nanlu.

What's On Xiamen

TOURIST INFORMATION

(www.whatsonxiamen.com)

Up-to-date information on Xiamen.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air China, China Southern, Xiamen Airlines and several other domestic airlines operate flights to/from Xiamen to all major domestic airports in China. There are innumerable ticket offices around town, many of which are in the larger hotels.

There are international flights to/from Bangkok, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Los Angeles, Manila, Osaka, Penang, Singapore and Tokyo.

BOAT

Fast boats (¥10, 20 minutes) leave for the nearby coastal Fujian town of

Zhangzhou from the passenger ferry terminal (*keyun matou*). Boats run every 15 minutes between 6.30am and 9.30pm. Boats to Kinmen (Jinmen), Taiwan (¥150, 30 minutes, hourly) leave from Wutong ferry terminal (Wutong Matou) between 8am and 6.30pm.

BORDER CROSSINGS: GETTING TO TAIWAN

Ferries ply between Xiamen and Kinmen (Jinmen) Island in Taiwan every 30 minutes between 8am and 6.30pm. You can catch the boat from Wutong ferry terminal (Wutong Matou; ¥160, 30 minutes), 8km east of Xiamen's airport.

Tickets can only be bought an hour before departure time. In Kinmen, visas are issued on the spot for most nationalities. But you need a multiple-entry China visa if you want to return to Fujian.

Wutong ferry terminal can only be reached by taxi. Expect to pay ¥20 to go from the airport to the terminal.

Renminbi is the only currency accepted in the money exchange counters in Kinmen's ferry terminal. From Kinmen, there are flights to other major cities in Taiwan.

Alternatively, you can catch a ferry (¥300, 90 minutes, 9.15am) from Fuzhou's Mawei ferry terminal (Mawei Matou) to Taiwan's archipelago of Matzu (Mazu). From there, you'll find boats to Keelung and flights to other cities in Taiwan.

BUS

There are three major bus stations in Xiamen. **Hubin long-distance bus station** (Hubin changtu qichezhan 58 Hubin Nanlu) serves destinations south of Xiamen and tickets can be bought two days in advance at the ticket booth in the local bus terminal adjacent to Xiamen University at the end of Siming Nanlu.

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥227, nine hours, two daily
- ➔ **Longyan** ¥75, three hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Nanjing** (in Fujian) ¥28, two hours, 11 daily
- ➔ **Yongding** ¥75, four hours, nine daily

Wucun bus station (Wucun Qichezhan 925 Xiahe Lu), directly opposite Xiamen's main train station, serves destinations north of the city, including

Jinjiang (¥33, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes) and Quanzhou (¥38, two hours, every 20 minutes). Note that buses to Fuzhou (¥105, four hours, every 20 minutes) and Wuyi Shan (¥191, nine hours, one daily, 9.30am) leave from the far-flung **Fanghu bus station** (Fanghu Keyun Zhongxin).

TRAIN

Xiamen's main train station is on Xiahe Lu. All trains stop at Xiamen north station 25km north of the city centre. Tickets can be booked through the **train ticketing booth** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 203 8565; cnr Xinhua Lu & Zhongshan Lu) behind the Gem Hotel (Jinhou Jiudian).

- ➔ **Fuzhou** ¥66 to ¥85, two hours
- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥282 to ¥357, seven hours
- ➔ **Quanzhou** ¥21 to ¥25, 30 minutes
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥328 to ¥413, 7½ hours
- ➔ **Wuyi Shan** ¥144 to ¥223, 13½ hours

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Xiamen airport is 15km from the waterfront district. Taxis cost about ¥45. Bus 27 travels from the airport to Diyi ferry terminal (but not vice versa). From the city centre, airport shuttle buses (¥10) leave from Chunguang Hotel, opposite the Lundu ferry terminal.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line 1 links the waterfront to both train stations via Xiahe Lu (¥1). Bus 19 runs to the train station from the ferry terminal (¥1). Buses to Xiamen University leave from the train station (bus 1) and from the ferry terminal (bus 2). Taxis start at ¥8 plus ¥3 fuel surcharge.

WORTH A TRIP

KINMEN, TAIWAN

If you have a multiple-entry China visa, it's worth making a detour to the island of Kinmen (Jinmen) in Taiwan. Lying only 2km off the coast of Xiamen, this peaceful islet was once part of a five-decade political tug-of-war between the mainland and Taiwan, and was subjected to incessant bombings from the mainland throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It wasn't until 1993 that martial law was lifted and people living on this once off-limit frontier island were allowed to travel freely to and from the mainland and Taiwan.

Today, Kinmen is fairly developed and visitor-friendly. The former battlefields and military bunkers are now opened up for tourism. In addition to war relics, the island has tree-lined streets, lakes, a national park, colourful temples and a cluster of well-restored villages dating from the Ming and Qing dynasties, as well as Fujian-style houses (ironically, most of their counterparts back in Fujian have been demolished in the past 30 years). Attractions include **Juguang Tower** (Juguang Lou [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-10pm), built in 1952 to honour the fallen soldiers of Kinmen; the historical **Shuitou Village** (Shuitou Cun) and **Jhushan Village** (Zhushan Cun); and the meandering alleys and market streets in **Kincheng** (Jincheng), the largest city on Kinmen.

All these can be reached by bus from the ferry terminal and are ideal for a day trip.

The size of Kinmen (153 sq km) suggests that a multi-day excursion is possible. It's rewarding to further venture to the cute **Lieyu Island** (Lieyu Xiang), less than 2 sq km in area and a 10-minute boat ride from Kinmen.

Cycling is the best way to see both islands. Bikes can be borrowed free-of-charge for a maximum of three days from most visitor information centres, with a handy one in **Kincheng bus station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)). Free maps are available in all visitor information centres.

Shuitou and Jhushan villages have lots of B&Bs (minsu), and we love **Qin Inn** (Shuitou Yijiaqin 📞 0910-395 565; <http://qininn.tumblr.com>; 63-64 Shuitou Village, 63-64 s/d incl breakfast NT\$1200/2400; 📶📶). Booking ahead is a must. In Kincheng, **Urban@Farm House** (La Place, 📞 886-82-328-337; www.laplace-kinmen.com; 6 Minsheng Lu; d NT\$1700-2400), a 24-room boutique hotel located opposite the bus station, is the place to stay.

On Kinmen island, bus 7 links the ferry terminal with Shuitou village and Kincheng, and bus 3 runs between Kincheng, Jhushan and the airport. Four tourist bus routes – each taking about three hours to complete – serve the island's major sights. Buy tickets at the tourist information centre adjacent to Kincheng bus station. Ferries to Lieyu Island depart from the dock diagonally opposite the ferry terminal every 30 minutes between 6.30am and 9pm.

Note that you need a multiple-entry China visa if you want to go back to Fujian. Otherwise you have to fly to Taipei or Kaohsiung to get one through a travel agent.

For more information on getting here, see Border Crossings: [Getting to Taiwan](#).

Gulang Yu

 0592

The small island of Gulang Yu is the trump card of Xiamen. It's not hard to see why it attracts droves of visitors every day. Just a five-minute boat ride away, you'll find yourself on a breezy islet with warrens of backstreets, set in the architectural kaleidoscope of more than 1000 colonial villas and ancient banyan trees. The area near the ferry terminal tends to get very crowded, but the higher and further you go, the more you have the island to yourself.

The foreign community was well established on Gulang Yu by the 1880s, with a daily English newspaper, churches, hospitals, post and telegraph offices, libraries, hotels and consulates. In 1903 the island was officially designated an International Foreign Settlement, and a municipal council with a police force of Sikhs was established to govern it. Today, memories of the settlement linger in the many charming colonial buildings and the sound of classical piano wafting from speakers (the island is nicknamed 'piano island' by the Chinese). Many of China's most celebrated musicians have come from Gulang Yu, including the pianists Yu Feixing, Lin Junqing and Yin Chengzong.

The best way to enjoy the island is to wander along the streets, peeking into courtyards and down alleys to catch a glimpse of colonial mansions seasoned by local life before popping into one of the many cute cafes for a beer or milk tea.

Sights

Organ Museum

MUSEUM

(Fengqin Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 43 Guxin Lu, admission ¥20;  8.40am-5.30pm)

Housed in the highly distinctive Bagua Lou building is the Organ Museum, with a fantastic collection including a Norman & Beard organ from 1909.

Haoyue Garden

GARDENS

(Haoyue Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥15; 🕒 6am-7pm)

Haoyue Garden is a rocky outcrop containing an imposing statue of Koxingain full military dress.

Sunlight Rock Park

PARK

(Riguang Yan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥60; 🕒 8am-7pm)

Sunlight Rock (Riguang Yan), in Sunlight Rock Park, is the island's highest point at 93m. At the foot of Sunlight Rock is a large colonial building known as the **Koxinga Memorial Hall** (| Zhengchengong Jinianguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8-11am & 2-5pm). Also in the park is **Yingxiong Hill** (Yingxiong Shan), near the memorial hall and connected via a free cable-car ride. It has an **open-air aviary** (admission free) with chattering egrets and parrots, and a terrible bird 'show'.

Shuzhuang Garden

GARDENS

(Shuzhuang Huayuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥30; 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm daily)

The waterfront Shuzhuang Garden on the southern end of the island is a lovely place to linger for a few hours. It has a small *penzai* (bonsai) garden and some delicate-looking pavilions. The piano theme is in full effect at the piano museum housed within the grounds. One piano has its original bill of sale from Melbourne at the turn of the 20th century.

Historic Buildings

Old colonial residences and consulates are tucked away in the maze of streets leading from the pier, particularly along Longtou Lu and the back lanes of Huayan Lu. Some of Gulang Yu's buildings are deserted and tumbledown, with trees growing out of their sides, as residents cannot afford their upkeep.

Southeast of the pier you will see the two buildings of the **former British Consulate** (Yongshun Kasite Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 206 0920; 14-16 Lujiao Lu;

r¥466), currently running as a hotel, above you, while further along at 1 Lujiao Lu is the cream-coloured former Japanese **Bo'ai Hospital** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Lujiao Lu), built in 1936. Up the hill on a different part of Lujiao Lu stands the red-brick **former Japanese Consulate** (Ribenshiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 26 Lujiao Lu), just before you reach the magnificent snow-white **Ecclesia Catholica** (Gulangyu Tianzhutang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 34 Lujiao Lu), dating from 1917. The white building next to the church is the **former Spanish Consulate** (Xibanya shiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). Just past the church on the left is the **Huang Rongyuan Villa** (Huangrongyuan Tang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎257 0510; 32 Fujian Lu; admission ¥118; ⌚8.30am-5pm, seven shows daily) a marvellous pillared building, now the Puppet Art Centre. Other buildings worth looking at include the Protestant **Sanyi Church** (Sanyi Tang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 67 Anhai Lu), a red-brick building with a classical portico and cruciform-shaped interior on the corner of Anhai Lu and Yongchun Lu. Where Anhai Lu meets Bishan Lu is the former **Law Court** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1-3 Bishan Lu), now inhabited by local residents.

Doing a circuit of Bishan Lu will take you past a rarely visited part of the island. **Guancai Lou** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 6 Bishan Lu), a residence built in 1931, has a magnificently dilapidated interior with a wealth of original features. The building stands in stark contrast next to the immaculate **Yizu Shanzhuang** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Bishan Lu), a structure dating from the 1920s.

Sleeping

There's a plethora of accommodation choices in Gulang Yu and most are overpriced. If you opt to stay here, and if you've got a lot of luggage, choose a hotel close to the ferry terminal, as cars aren't allowed on the island.

Gulang Yu Lu Fei International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Gulang Yu Lu Fei Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎208 2678; www.yhalf.cn; 20

Guxin Lu, dm ¥65, s & d ¥260-380; 📶 @ 📶)

Rooms are cute and sparkingly clean, and each has a theme. We love its pastel hues and wrought-iron beds. It's 400m west of the ferry terminal.

Yangtao Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Yangtao Yuanzi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 252 1333; www.yangtaohotel.com; 8 Anhai Lu, r ¥398-698; 📶 @ 📶)

An affordable luxury tucked away in the quieter part of Anhai Lu, this villa-turned-boutique hotel has 19 chic and comfortable rooms. There's a very pleasant courtyard that invites you to slow down for a lazy afternoon.

Miryam Boutique Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Miryam, Miryam Lao Bieshu Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 206 2505; www.miryamhotel.com; 70 Huangyan Lu, r ¥688-1688; 📶 @ 📶)

Miryam is located right below Sunlight Rock and is housed in an opulent Victorian-era mansion. Rooms are ultra-spacious, with antique bits and pieces of furniture to give them character. The food served in the attached restaurant is as dreamy as the surroundings.

Eating

You'll find plenty of great places to eat, especially in the streets off Longtou Lu. Try the shark fishballs and the Amoy pie (a sweet filled pastry).

Longtou Fishball

SEAFOOD

(Longtou Yuwan Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 183 Longtou Lu; meals from ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-8pm)

Pull up a bench and order some local specialities, such as shark fishball noodles (*shayu wan fensi*) or an oyster omelette (*haili jian*), in this nondescript yet perennially popular place. Slurp it down and order some more.

The Chu Family Coffee

CAFE

(Chujiayuan Kafeiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 206 3651; 15 Zhonghua Lu; meals from ¥60;

🕒 11am-9pm)

Behind the red-brick wall is this sleek cafe with a very nice, leafy alfresco area. Caffeine addicts can find their *real* cup of coffee here. The tiramisu is a delight too.

Information

There are various maps for sale (¥10) in cafes and souvenir shops.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Longtou Lu; 🕒 9am-7pm)

Forex and 24-hour ATM.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 102 Longtou Lu; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm daily)

Sells stamps and postcards.

Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Yiyuan; [GOOGLE MAP](#); 60 Fujian Lu)

Has its own miniature ambulance for the small roads.

Xiamen Gulang Yu Visitor Center

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Xiamen Gulang Yu Youke Zhongxin; [GOOGLE MAP](#); Longtou Lu)

Left luggage ¥3 to ¥5.

Getting There & Around

Ferries for the five-minute trip to Gulang Yu leave from **Lundu ferry terminal** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) just west of Xiamen's Lujiang Harbourview Hotel.

The round-trip fare is ¥8 (getting on the upper deck costs an additional ¥1). Boats run between 5.45am and midnight. Waterborne circuits of the island can be done by boat (¥15), with departures every 30 minutes from the passenger ferry terminal off Lujiang Lu between 7.40am and 5pm.

Fujian Tulou

 0597 / Pop 43,000

Scattered all over the pretty, rolling countryside in southwestern Fujian, the remarkable *tulou* are vast, fortified earthen edifices that have been home to both the Hakka and the Minnan (Fujianese) people since the year dot. Today, more than 30,000 survive, many still inhabited and open to visitors.

Forty six *tulou* were together given World Heritage status by Unesco in 2008. Since then, new roads have been added to link the *tulou* areas to the nearest counties and new hotels have been erected. You'll see a convoy of tour buses bringing droves of visitors to some of the most popular *tulou* clusters, but don't be deterred by that. The setting and architectural structure of the *tulou* are simply stunning. If you venture off the beaten path, crowds thin out considerably and some little-known or even nameless *tulou* are the most authentic reflection of rural life in these packed-earth chateaux.

Sights

The most notable of the 30,000-odd *tulou* are lumped into various clusters, and they are in the vicinity of two main counties: Nanjing and Yongding. Only the three most developed clusters: Hongkeng, Tianluokeng and Yunshuiyao are accessible by public transport. However, bus services are neither frequent nor punctual. Booking a tour or hiring a vehicle is recommended if you want to venture off the beaten path and see more.

Hongkeng Tulou Cluster

This cluster is 50km east of Yongding. From Xiamen, three buses (¥63, 3½ hours, 6.50am, 9.10am and 1pm) go directly to the cluster, which is also known as Tulou Minsu Wenhucun. Admission is ¥90.

Zhencheng Lou

TULOU

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This most visited *tulou* is a grandiose structure built in 1912, with two concentric circles and a total of 222 rooms. The ancestral hall in the centre of the *tulou* is complete with Western-style pillars. The locals dub this *tulou wangzi*, the prince *tulou*.

Kuiju Lou

TULOU

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Near Zhencheng Lou, this much older, square *tulou* dates back to 1834.

Rusheng Lou

TULOU

()

The smallest of the roundhouses, this late-19th-century, pea-sized *tulou* has only one ring and 16 rooms.

Fuyu Lou

TULOU

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Along the river, this five-storey square *tulou* boasts some wonderfully carved wooden beams and pillars. Rooms are available here from ¥100.

JUST WHAT IS A TULOU?

Tulou, literally mud houses, are outlandish, multi-storey, fortified mud structures built by the inhabitants of southwest Fujian to protect themselves from bandits and wild animals.

Tulou were built along either a circular or square floor plan. The walls are made of rammed earth and glutinous rice, reinforced with strips of bamboo and wood chips.

These structures are large enough to house entire clans, and they did, and still do! They are a grand exercise in communal living. The interior sections are enclosed by enormous peripheral structures that could accommodate hundreds of people. Nestled in the mud walls were bedrooms, wells, cooking areas and storehouses, circling a central courtyard. The later tulou had stone firewalls and metal-covered doors to protect against blazes.

The compartmentalised nature of the building meant that these structures were the ancient equivalent of modern apartments. A typical layout would be the kitchens on the ground floor, storage on the next level and accommodation on the floors above this. Some tulou have multiple buildings built in concentric rings within the main enclosure. These could be guest rooms and home schools. The centre is often an ancestral hall or a meeting hall used for events such as birthdays and weddings. For defence purposes, usually there is only one entrance for the entire tulou and there are no windows on the first three storeys.

It was once believed that these earthen citadels were inhabited solely by the Hakka. They are the people who migrated from northwest China during the Jin dynasty (AD 265–314) to the south to escape persecution and famine, and they eventually settled in Jiangxi, Fujian and Guangdong. While most tulou in the vicinity of Yongding County are inhabited by the Hakka, there are far more tulou in other counties like Nanjing and Hua'an populated by the indigenous Minnan (Fujianese) people. A key distinguishing feature between the Hakka and Minnan tulou is that the former has communal corridors and staircases as well as a central courtyard, while the latter tulou puts more emphasis on privacy, for example each unit has its own staircases and patio.

No matter what type or shape of tulou you're looking at, many of them are still inhabited by a single clan, and residents depend on a combination of tourism and farming for a living. The tulou are surprisingly comfortable to live in, being 'dong nuan, xia liang', or 'warm in winter and cool in summer'. These structures were built to last.

Tianluokeng Tulou Cluster

A pilgrimage to the earthen castles is not complete if you miss Tianluokeng, which is 37km northeast of Nanjing and home to arguably the most picturesque cluster of *tulou* in the region. The locals affectionately call the five noble buildings 'four dishes with one soup' because of their shapes: circular, square and oval.

There's one direct bus (¥47, 3½ hours) to the cluster from Xiamen, leaving at 8.30am.

Make sure your driver, if you've hired one, takes you up the hill for a postcard-perfect view of Tianluokeng.

Cluster admission, which includes entry to Yuchang Lou and Taxia village, is ¥100. A shuttle bus service (¥15) from the cluster's ticket office goes to the above two places, but the vehicle won't leave until it gets 10 passengers.

Yuchang Lou

TULOU

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The tallest roundhouse in Fujiang, this vast five-floor structure has an observation tower to check for marauding bandits and 270 rooms.

Interestingly, this 300-year-old property's pillars bend at an angle on the 3rd floor and at the opposite angle on the 5th floor, and each room and kitchen on the ground floor has its own well.

Taxia

VILLAGE

()

This delightful river settlement boasts several *tulou*-converted guesthouses and it is a great base from which to explore the *tulou* areas.

The highlight of the village is the **Zhang Ancestral Hall** (Zhangshi Jiamiao Taxia Village; 🕒 9am-5pm daily). It is surrounded by 23 elaborately carved spear-like stones, which celebrate the achievements of prominent villagers.

The bus station in Nanjing runs six buses (¥17, 1½ hours) to the village between 8am and 5.30pm.

Gaobei Tulou Cluster

Cluster admission is ¥50.

Chengqi Lou

TULOU

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In the village of Gaobei, this 300-year-old *tulou* has 400 rooms and once housed 1000 inhabitants. It's built with elaborate concentric rings, with circular passageways between them and a central shrine. It's one of the most iconic and photographed *tulou* and it's no surprise that it has been dubbed the king *tulou*.

Wuyun Lou

TULOU

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Deserted and rickety, this square building took on a slant after an earthquake in 1918.

Yijing Lou

TULOU

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The largest rectangular *tulou* in Fujian. The crumbling structure has 281 rooms, two schools and 51 halls. Built in 1851.

Yunshuiyao Tulou Cluster

This cluster, 48km northeast of Nanjing, is set in idyllic surrounds with rolling hills, verdant farms and babbling streams. Six buses leave from Nanjing bus station (¥20; one hour) to Yunshuiyao and seven leave from Nanjing train station (¥25; one hour) between 8.30am and 5.25pm.

Admission is ¥90.

Hegui Lou

TULOU

()

This tallest rectangular *tulou* in Fujian has five storeys and was built on a swamp. It boasts 120 rooms, a school, two wells, and a fortified courtyard in front of the entrance. The mammoth structure was built in 1732.

Huaiyuan Lou

TULOU

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This relatively young *tulou* (built in 1909) has 136 equally sized rooms and a concentric ring that houses an ancestral hall and a school.

Changjiao

VILLAGE

()

Between the Hegui and Huaiyuan *tulou* in the Yunshuiyao Tulou Cluster is this beautiful village (now also called Yunshuiyao) where you can sip tea under the big banyan trees and watch water buffalo in the river. The village has a few guesthouses that offer rooms from ¥100.

Chuxi Tulou Cluster

This lesser-visited yet picturesque cluster is located 48km southeast of Yongding. Admission is ¥70.

Jiqing Lou

TULOU

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This 600-year-old *tulou* (earthen structure) was built without using a single nail and is still pretty intact. It now houses an exhibition hall.

Yuqing Lou

TULOU

()

Built in 1729, this *tulou* with two concentric wings is now a guesthouse.

Zhongchuan Village

VILLAGE

(Zhongchuan Cun)

This village, 17km northwest of the Chuxi Tulou Cluster, is the ancestral home of the Burmese-Chinese businessman Aw Boon Haw, the inventor of the medicinal salve Tiger Balm and owner of the (in)famously quirky Haw Par Villa theme park in Singapore. Here, you'll find another **villa** (Hubao Bieshu admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-5pm), but its scale and decor can't compete with its Singaporean (big) sister. More interesting is his family's **ancestral hall**

(Hushi Jiamiao) 100m behind the villa. The shrine, the spear-like pillars that celebrate the achievements of their family members, and the setting itself are spectacular.

Nanxi Tulou Cluster

Cluster admission is ¥70.

Huanji Lou

TULOU

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Sitting midway between Yongding and Nanjing, this four-storey building is a huge roundhouse with inner concentric passages, tiled interior passages and a courtyard. It also sports a *huiyinbi* – a wall that echoes and resonates to sharp sounds. Some villagers may ask you for a ‘sanitation fee’. It’s not legal. Don’t pay.

Yanxiang Lou

TULOU

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This four-storey *tulou* rises up beautifully next to a river, and is in the same direction as Huanji Lou *tulou*.

Qingyang Lou

TULOU

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Not far from Yanxiang Lou *tulou*, this huge, rectangular, semi-decrepit structure was built between 1796 and 1820.

Sleeping & Eating

There are many hotels in Yongding and Nanjing, but neither town is attractive. We recommend you base yourself in a *tulou*, which will give you a glimpse of a vanishing dimension of life in China. Bring a flashlight and bug repellent. Most families can cook up meals for you. Expect to pay ¥150 for a

two-person meal. Always ask the price before ordering.

Some *tulou* have upgraded their rooms with modern facilities, but most are still very basic – a bed, a thermos of hot water and a fan. You might also find that the toilets are outside.

Most *tulou* owners can also organise a pick-up from Yongding or Nanjing and transport for touring the area.

Qingde Lou

TULOU

( 777 1868, 1890 6951 868; www.qingdelou.com; Taxia Village; d ¥138-168;  )

The 30 rooms in this rectangular *tulou* are modern, with air-con and wi-fi. A few rooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors have shared bathrooms only, but they are clean and comfy.

Fuyu Lou Changdi Inn

TULOU

(Fuyu Lou Changdi Kezhan  553 2800, 1379 9097 962; www.fuyulou.net; Hongkeng Tulou Cluster; d incl breakfast ¥100-150; )

Rooms are basic but comfy. Doubles come with fan and TV. The owners are friendly and speak some English.

Defeng Lou

TULOU

( 775 6669, 1805 0670 878; nr the bridge to Yunshuiyao Tulou Cluster; d ¥128-158;  )

All rooms are now upgraded with ensuite bathrooms. This *tulou* is conveniently located near the bridge to Yunshuiyao and all buses stop in front of it. The *tulou* is identifiable by a big red star above the entrance.

Tulou Sunshine International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Tulou Muyu Yangguang Guoji Qingnian Lushe  777 1348; Taxia Village ; dm ¥40, d ¥130;  )

This HI-affiliated hostel has clean dorms and rooms. Carpool and bike rental can be arranged. Follow the HI signs after you get off the bus at Xueying bridge (Xueying Qiao) in the village.

Getting There & Away

BUS

From Xiamen [long-distance bus station](#), take a bus headed to Nanjing (¥32, two hours, 12 daily between 7am and 5.30pm). Upon arrival, you can either take the respective buses to some of the clusters, or hire a private vehicle to take you there.

Xiamen has seven daily buses to Yongding (¥75, four hours) from 7.10am to 4pm. From there, there are infrequent buses to Gaobei Tulou Cluster.

Yongding can also be accessed by bus from Guangdong and Longyan (¥20, one hour, regular).

TRAIN

Ten high-speed D trains link Xiamen and Longyan via Nanjing (¥27, 35 minutes) daily. Local buses 1 and 2 link the train and bus stations in Nanjing.

Getting Around

The easiest way to see the *tulou* is to book a tour, or hire a vehicle either from Xiamen, Nanjing or Yongding.

If you book a place to stay in one of the *tulou*, most owners can help with transport and they usually arrange pick-up from Nanjing or Yongding.

You'll find taxi drivers in Yongding and Nanjing offering their services for around ¥400 a day (¥700 if you hire for two days), setting off early morning and returning late afternoon. Expect to see two clusters per day.

Amazing Fujian Tulou (www.amazingfujiantulou.com) and **Discover Fujian** (discoverfujian.com) can organise English-speaking guided tours.

Quanzhou

 0595 / Pop 934,500

Most people visit Quanzhou as a day trip from Xiamen, but we recommend

you to spend a couple of days to take in the charm of this underrated city. This port city, an important stop on the maritime Silk Road back in the Song and Yuan dynasties, is actually an enchanting place to delve into for China's maritime past. Back in the 13th century, Marco Polo informed his readers that 'it is one of the two ports in the world with the biggest flow of merchandise'.

Though its heyday is long gone, much of Quanzhou's impressive heritage has been preserved, and evidence of its multiculturalism, especially some fine lingering traces of a former Islamic presence, can still be detected among the city's residents and buildings.

Quánzhōu

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles



Quanzhou

Sights

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Guandi Temple | B3 |
| 2 | Kaiyuan Temple | A1 |
| 3 | Qingjing Mosque | B3 |
| 4 | Tianhou Temple | A4 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 5 | 54 Coffee Inn | A1 |
| 6 | Quanzhou Hotel | A2 |
| 7 | Tiho Cafe & Hostel | A4 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 8 | Anji Kejiawang | B3 |
| 9 | Gucuo Chafang | B3 |
| 10 | Lanshi Zhonglou | B1 |

Information

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 11 | Wenling Nanlu Ticket Office | B4 |
|----|---|----|

Sights

The centre of town lies between Zhongshan Nanlu, Zhongshan Zhonglu and Wenling Nanlu. This is where you'll find most of the tourist sights. The oldest part of town is to the west, where many narrow alleys and lanes, which still retain their traditional charm, are waiting to be explored.

Kaiyuan Temple

BUDDHIST

(Kaiyuan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 176 Xi Jie; admission ¥10;  7.30am-7pm)

In the northwest of the city is one of the oldest temples in Quanzhou, dating back to AD 686. Surrounded by trees, Kaiyuan Temple is famed for its pair

of rust coloured five-storey stone pagodas, stained with age and carved with figures, which date from the 13th century. Behind the eastern pagoda is a **museum** containing the enormous hull of a Song dynasty seagoing junk, which was excavated near Quanzhou in 1974.

The temple's **Great Treasure Hall** (Daxiong Baodian) and the hall behind are decorated with marvellous beams and brackets. The main courtyard is flanked by a row of wizened banyan trees; one is 800 years old! Take bus 2 (¥2) from Wenling Nanlu.

Maritime Museum

MUSEUM

(Quanzhou Haiwai Jiaotongshi Bowuguan Donghu Lu; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

On the northeast side of town, this fabulous museum explains Quanzhou's trading history, the development of Chinese shipbuilding and the kaleidoscope of religions in the port's heyday. The Religious Stone Hall and Islamic Culture Hall are highlights, boasting a beautiful collection of gravestones and reliefs of different religions dating from the Yuan dynasty. Take bus 7 or 203 and alight at Qiaoxiang Tiyuguan.

Qingjing Mosque

MOSQUE

(Qingjing Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 108 Tumen Jie; admission ¥3; 🕒 8am-5.30pm)

Built by the Arabs in 1009 and restored in 1309, this stone edifice is one of China's only surviving mosques from the Song dynasty. Only a few sections (mainly walls) of the original building survive, largely in ruins. The adjacent mosque is a donation from the government of Saudi Arabia.

Lingshan Islamic Cemetery

CEMETERY

(Lingshan Yisilan Shengmu cnr Donghu Lu & Lingshan Lu)

Set at the foot of the mountain of Lingshan, this leafy 'oasis' is truly a hidden gem in Quanzhou and is one of the most intact historic cemeteries in China. Two of Mohammed's disciples are said to be buried here, and you'll also find some granite steles dated from the Ming dynasty. Take bus 7 or 203 and hop off at Shengmuzhan.

Guandi Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Guandi Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tumen Jie) **FREE**

This smoky and magnificently carved temple is southeast of Qingjing Mosque. It's dedicated to Guan Yu, a Three Kingdoms general who was deified as the God of War. Inside the temple are statues of the god and wall panels that detail his life.



Festivals & Events

Lantern Festival

FESTIVAL

This festival is celebrated on the 15th day of the first lunar month. Streets in downtown Quanzhou swell with people after dark, flashing their glow sticks or lanterns and marching to [Tianhou Temple](#) (Tianhou Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Nanmen Tianhou Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm) to pray for prosperity. Most pilgrims come here specifically to *qigui*, that is to touch the gigantic 'rice turtle'. This effigy is created with bags of rice piled into the shape of a turtle, regarded as a sacred animal due to its longevity. The rice will be given away to the crowds at the end of the festival.



Sleeping

There are plenty of nondescript midrange hotels along Wenling Nanlu heading north, as well as some decent accommodation near the old town.

54 Coffee Inn

GUESTHOUSE

(Quanzhou Xinjie Wushisi Kafei Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2287 5167; 54 Xin Jie, dm ¥55, s & d ¥138-158; 🏠 📶)

This cosy guesthouse in a red-brick house has eight well-kept rooms and an inviting courtyard. It's good value but a little hard to find. The entrance to the unmarked Xin Jie is on Xi Jie, about 150m west of the intersection at Zhongshan Zhonglu. From there, walk north for another 150m and the

guesthouse is to your right.

Tiho Cafe & Hostel

HOSTEL

(Tihou Kafei Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎1865 9009 055, 2239 0800; caimj@126.com; 114 Tihou Lu, dm ¥50, s & d ¥108-158; 📶 @)

Located at the western edge of the old town of Quanzhou is this cheery hostel-cum-cafe. The six-bed mixed dorm is small but clean, the rooms have no attached bathrooms but are cosy and relaxing. Catch bus 40 (westbound) from the long-distance bus station and alight at Linzhangmen. A taxi from the train station and the centre of town is around ¥20.

Quanzhou Hotel

HOTEL

(Quanzhou Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎2228 9958; www.quanzhouhotel.com; 22 Zhuangfu Xiang, r from ¥800; 📶 @)

The real draw of this hotel is its good location in the heart of Quanzhou's old town. Rooms in the old wing (Donghui Lou;) are sparse, but rooms in the new wing (Nanxin Lou;) are surprisingly comfy and modern, and the upgrade will only cost you a few more bucks.

The hotel is identifiable by its gaudy, faux-European palace exterior.

Wanda Vista Quanzhou

HOTEL

(Quanzhou Wanda Wenhua Jiudian ☎6829 8888; www.wandahotels.com; 719 Baozhou Lu, d ¥1288-1588; 📶 @ 📶)

Located at the southern edge of Quanzhou city centre, this 322-room giant is arguably the best hotel in the city and is a favourite of many business travellers. Rooms on the upper floors have good views of Jinjiang River. Discounts of 30% available.

Eating & Drinking

You can find the usual noodle and rice dishes served in the back lanes around

Kaiyuan Temple and also along the food street close to Wenling Nanlu. **New Overseas Chinese Village** west of Zhongshan Park and **Yuanhe 1916 Idea Land** on Xinmen Jie are two emerging nightlife areas, full of old-house-turned cafes, bars and restaurants.

Lanshi Zhonglou

HAKKA

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9-21 Dong Jie; meals from ¥25; 🕒 11am-9.30pm)

Locals flock to this unpretentious joint for its famous glutinous rice dumplings. No English menu, but there are pictures of the dishes on the wall. The signature black rice dumplings (heimizong) and rice dumpling with yolk (danhuangzong) are recommended.

Anji Kejiawang

HAKKA

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 461 Tumen Jie; meals from ¥50; 🕒 11am-9pm)

Excellent Hakka dishes are served here. Try the lovely *Kejia niang doufu* (soft cubes of tofu impregnated with crumbs of pork) and the delectable barbequed pork (Chashao).

Gucuo Chafang

TEA

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 44 Houcheng Xiang; tea ¥50-480, snacks from ¥20; 🕒 9am-1am)

This quaint teahouse in the alley behind the Guandi Temple has a refreshing old-time courtyard ambience, paved with flagstones and laid out with traditional wooden halls and bamboo chairs.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9-13 Jiuyi Jie; 🕒 9am-5pm)

Has a 24-hour ATM.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Dong Jie & Nanjun Lu; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

Sells stamps and postcards.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE STATION

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2218 0323; 62 Dong Jie; 🕒 visa section 8-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm)

You can extend your visa here.

Quanzhou Xiehe Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Quanzhou Xiehe Yiyuan; [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tian'an Nanlu)

In the southern part of town.

Getting There & Around

BUS

Both **Quanzhou bus station** (Quanzhou Qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Wenling Nanlu & Quanxiu Jie) and the **long-distance bus station** (Quanzhou keyun zhongxinzhan cnr Quanxiu Jie & Pingshan Lu) further east along Quanxiu Jie have buses to the following destinations:

➔ **Guangzhou** ¥290, nine hours, five daily

➔ **Shenzhen** ¥280, eight hours, four daily

Regular deluxe buses:

➔ **Fuzhou** ¥70, 3½ hours

➔ **Xiamen** ¥37, 1½ hours

Local bus 15 links both bus stations. Bus 2 goes from the bus station to Kaiyuan Temple. Taxi flag fall is ¥7, then ¥1.80 per kilometre.

TRAIN

D trains depart from the high-speed train station (Gaotie Quanzhou Zhan), 15km from the town centre:

➔ **Fuzhou** ¥55, one hour, every 30 minutes

- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥307, 8½ hours, 12 daily
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥21, 45 minutes, every 30 minutes

Buses 17 and K1 run from the high-speed train station to Quanzhou bus station and the long-distance bus station respectively, via Zhonglou, the intersection of Zhongshan Zhonglu and Xijie. Bus 203 links the train station to Maritime Museum and Islamic Cemetery. A taxi from the centre of town to the train station costs ¥50. In town, train tickets can be bought at the Wenling Nanlu **ticket office** (Tielu Huochepiao Daishoudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 166 Wenling Nanlu; 🕒 9am-6pm) or from the **ticket office** (Huoche Shoupiating 675 Quanxiu Jie; 🕒 7am-6pm) just east of the long-distance bus station. There's a ¥5 booking fee.

Around Quanzhou

Not far from Quanzhou there are a few oft-overlooked sights worth exploring.

Chongwu

One of the best-preserved city walls in China can be found in the ancient 'stone city' of **Chongwu** (50km east of Quanzhou; admission ¥46; 🕒 7am-7pm daily). The granite walls date back to 1387, stretch over 2.5km and average 7m in height. Scattered around the walls are 1304 battlements and four gates into the city. The town wall was built by the Ming government as a frontline defence against marauding Japanese pirates, and it has survived the past 600 years remarkably well. You can also walk along the top of the wall at some points.

The ticket includes admission to the adjacent **Chongwu Stone Arts Expo Park** (Chongwu Shidiao Gongyi Bolanyuan admission included with entry to Chongwu), which boasts a large park filled with 500 stone sculptures made by local crafts people, a small beach, a lighthouse and some seafood restaurants. You won't miss much if you skip it.

Frequent buses depart Quanzhou's long-distance bus station (¥13, 1½ hours), taking you past arrays of stone statues (the area is famed for its stone-carving workshop) before ending up in Chongwu. Motorbikes (¥5) will take you from the bus drop-off to the stone city.

Xunpu Village

The fishing village of Xunpu, some 10km southeast of the city centre of Quanzhou, was on the old trade route of the maritime Silk Road and was perhaps the Arabs' first port of call when they set foot in Quanzhou during the Song dynasty. The village, now under encroaching urbanisation, is still fascinating and you'll find some old houses built with oyster shells behind the main road in the village. Meanwhile, the grannies still wear the flamboyant traditional head ornaments that they love to brag about.

The **Mazu Temple** (Mazu Miao) on the knoll in the village is the local centre of worship. It's dedicated to the goddess of seafarers and turns very lively on the 29th day of the first lunar calendar month, the birthday of the protector. All the women in the village will turn out in traditional costumes to join in the annual Mazu procession.

A taxi ride from Quanzhou bus station is about ¥25.

Cao'an Manichaean Temple

Perched on the hill of Huabiao, 19km south of Quanzhou, this quirky **temple** (Cao'an Monijiao Si Huabiao Hill, 19km south of Quanzhou; admission ¥20; 🕒 8am-6pm) is dedicated to Manichaeism, a religion originating in Persia in the third century, combining elements of Zoroastrian, Christian and Gnostic thought, which reached China in the 7th century.

The well-restored stone complex you see today is a rebuild dating to the Yuan dynasty (14th century). The most remarkable relic in the temple is the 'Buddha of Light', a sitting stone statue in the main hall, which is actually the prophet Mani, founder of Manichaeism, in a Buddhist disguise. Manichaeism was considered an illegal religion during the Song period and the religion had

to operate in the guise of an esoteric Buddhist group. Take a closer look at the statue, and you'll find its hairstyle (straight instead of curly), hand gestures and colour combinations are distinctly different from most representations of the Buddha.

From the long-distance bus station in Quanzhou, board a bus to Anhai (¥11) and tell the driver to drop you off at Cao'an Lukou. Then look for the English signage saying Grass Temple and it's a 2km walk uphill. The road is not well-marked so taking a taxi is a recommended alternative. A taxi from Quanzhou is around ¥60.

Anxi

Mountainous Anxi County, 66km northwest of Quanzhou, is home to the famous *Tie Guanyin* (Iron Buddha) tea, an oolong variety known for its thick fragrance and floral sweetness. Fifty-odd tea varieties from China, Taiwan and Japan are cultivated in the visitor-friendly, 11-acre **Anxi Chaye Daguan yuan** (Fengguan Shan, Admission ¥5; 🕒 7.30am-9pm). The theme park-like plantation also includes an oolong tea processing workshop, a museum and several temples.

The long-distance bus station in Quanzhou has frequent buses to Anxi (¥18, one hour). Anxi Chaye Daguan yuan is 3km north of Anxi bus station and motorbikes will take you there for ¥5.

Fuzhou

📍 0591 / Transport Hub

Fuzhou, capital of Fujian, is one of the major transport hubs in southern China. You'll find flights, inter-city/-province trains and buses to most of the destinations you're likely to go to, especially the coastal provinces.

 **Sleeping**

Fuzhou accommodation falls mainly in the midrange and top-end categories. Many hotels offer discounts. If you're stranded in the city, there are some decent options near the train and bus stations.

Juchunyuan Inn Fuzhou

HOTEL

(Fuzhou Juchunyuan Yiguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6303 3888; 22 Gong Xiang, Sanfang Qixiang, d ¥489-525; 🚶 🌳 @ 📶)

A beautiful inn housed in a historic mansion in the pedestrianised Sanfang Qixian area. All 56 rooms are tastefully and modernly appointed.

Shangri-La Hotel

HOTEL

(Xianggelila Dajiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8798 8888; www.shangri-la.com; 9 Xinquan Nanlu, d ¥1250; 🚶 🌳 @ 📶 🚰)

Top-notch service is expected in every Shangri-La, and this classy tower at the heart of town overlooking Wuyi Sq is no exception. A cab from the south long-distance bus station is around ¥20.

Eating

Sanfang Qixian is a popular dining and shopping area lined with Ming-style houses and lanterns.

You'll find small eateries on both sides of **Nanhou Jie**, the main street of the area. Take a cab and ask to be dropped off at the intersection of Yangqiao Donglu and Nanhou Jie. The fare is around ¥20 from the south long-distance bus station.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Fuzhou airport is 45km southeast of the city centre and has daily flights to Beijing (¥1550, 2½ hours), Guangzhou (¥830, one hour), Shanghai (¥780, 70 minutes) and Hong Kong (¥1620, 80 minutes).

Airport buses leave from at least three locations in town: the Apollo Hotel (Aboluo Dajiudian; ¥25) on Wuyi Zhonglu, 400m north of the south long-distance bus station (¥20), has departures every 20 minutes between 5.30am and 10pm; the north long-distance bus station (¥25) near the North Rail Station has departures every hour between 6am and 8pm; the South Rail Station has departures every hour between 12pm and 5pm. The trip takes about an hour.

BUS

The **north long-distance bus station** (changtu qiche beizhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 317 Hualin Lu) is 400m south of the North Rail Station. Services include the following:

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥280, 12 hours, seven daily
- ➔ **Quanzhou** ¥70, two hours, regular
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥280, 10 hours, two daily
- ➔ **Wuyi Shan** ¥100, eight hours, 5.30pm
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥105, 3½ hours, every 20 minutes

The **south long-distance bus station** (changtu qiche nanzhan

[GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Guohuo Xilu & Wuyi Zhonglu) services the following destinations:

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥258, 13 to 15 hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Hong Kong** ¥358, 15 hours, four daily
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥260, 12 hours, five daily
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥105, 3½ hours, every 15 minutes

TRAIN

Fuzhou has a good network of trains to many major cities. D trains leave sometimes from the more centrally located **North Rail Station** (502 Hualin Lu) (Fuzhou Beizhan) and more often from the **South Rail Station** (East of Lulei Village, Canshan District) (Fuzhou Nanzhan) 17km southeast of the town centre:

- ➔ **Quanzhou** ¥55, one hour, every 30 minutes

- **Shanghai** ¥261, 6½ hours, 16 daily
- **Xiamen** ¥81, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes

The North Rail Station also has 10 trains to Wuyi Shan (¥47 to ¥147, 4½ to 6½ hours) daily and one direct G56 express to Beijing (¥765, 10½ hours, 8am).

Wuyi Shan

 0599 / Pop 230,000

With crisp climes and unspoilt scenery, Wuyi Shan is a popular mountain retreat in the northwest corner of Fujian where many Chinese from the plains go to beat the heat. The rivers, waterfalls, mountains and protected forests combine to make it a great place for day hikes and short treks. Try to come midweek or in low season (November, March and April) and you might have the area to yourself. Avoid the area during heavy rain (especially during summer months) even if the hotels and tour organisers advise otherwise.

The scenic part lies on the west bank of Chongyang Stream (Chongyang Xi), and some accommodation is located along its shore. Most of the hotels are concentrated in the *dujiaqu* (resort district) on the east side of the river. The main settlement is Wuyi Shan city, about 10km to the northeast, with the train station and airport roughly halfway in between.

Sights & Activities

Wuyi Shan Scenic Area

MOUNTAIN PARK

(1-/2-/3-day access ¥140/150/160;  7am-5pm)

The entrance to the area is at Wuyi Gong, about 200m south of the Wuyi Mountain Villa. Trails within the scenic area connect all the major sites. Good walks include the 530m **Great King Peak** (Dawang Feng), accessed through the main entrance, and the 410m **Heavenly Tour Peak** (Tianyou

Feng), where an entrance is reached by road up the Nine Twists River.

It's a moderate two-hour walk to Great King Peak among bamboo groves and steep-cut rock walls. The trail can be slippery and wet, so bring suitable shoes.

The walk to Heavenly Tour Peak is more scenic, with better views of the river and mountain peaks. But the path is also the most popular with tour groups. At the northern end of the scenic area, the **Water Curtain Cave** (Shuilian Dong) is a cleft in the rock about one-third of the way up a 100m cliff face. In winter and autumn, water plunges over the top of the cliff, creating a curtain of spray.

Xiamei

ANCIENT VILLAGE

(admission ¥60)

This village dates to the Northern Song dynasty and boasts some spectacular Qing dynasty architecture from its heyday as a wealthy tea-trading centre.

Motorbikes in Wuyi Shan city can take you to Xiamei at ¥50 (roundtrip) for this 12km journey.

Wufu

ANCIENT VILLAGE

(admission ¥60)

Sixty kilometres southeast of Wuyi Shan Scenic Area, this 1700-year-old village got its fame as the hometown of Zhu Xi, a Confucian scholar in the Song dynasty. It's best visited when the lotus in the giant ponds, which are backdropped by some quaint Ming-era architecture, are in full bloom.

Minibuses to Wufu (¥13, two hours) leave from the small bus station next to the long-distance bus station in Wuyi Shan city.

Nine Twists River

RIVER

(Jiuqu Xi boat rides ¥130; 🕒 7am-5pm)

One of the highlights for visitors to Wuyi Shan is floating down the river on **bamboo rafts** (zhupai) fitted with rattan chairs. Departing from Xingcun, a

short bus ride west of the resort area, the trip down the river takes over an hour and brings you through some magnificent gorge scenery, with sheer rock cliffs and lush green vegetation.

One of the mysteries of Wuyi Shan is the cavities, carved out of the rock faces at great heights, which once held boat-shaped coffins. Scientists have dated some of these artefacts back 3000 years. If you're taking a raft down the river, it's possible to see some remnants of these coffins on the west cliff face of the fourth meander, also known as Small Storing Place Peak (Xiaozangshan Feng).

Sleeping

Most of the accommodation in Wuyi Shan is in the midrange category and most is overpriced unless you come here during low season. Hotels are mostly on the east side of the river, while family-run guesthouses and hostels are in the village of Lantang on the relatively quieter west side. The village is 700m north of Wuyi Mountain Villa.

Wuyi Mountain Dawang Peak Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Wuyishan Dawangfeng Qingnian Lushe  520 9518; 46 Lantang Village, dm ¥40, d ¥128-158;  )

The hostel is identifiable by a huge Che Guevara banner hanging on its facade. Rooms have a cosy feeling; dorms are small but clean. Most staff don't speak English. To get there, take bus 5, or pay about ¥30 to ¥40 for a taxi ride from the train station.

Liantian Ke Boutique Hotel

HOTEL

(Liantian Ke Jingpin Jiudian  527 2799; Bldg A, Shuanglin Garden, Dawangfeng Lu, A r ¥238-680;   )

Best bang for your buck in the resort district on the east bank. Rooms are clean, modern and fairly new. Free airport/train-station pickups are provided if advance notice is given.

Wuyi Mountain Villa

HOTEL

(Wuyi Shanzhuang  525 1888; www.513villa.com; Wuyi Gong, d ¥888-988, ste ¥1388-2888; )

Located at the foot of Great King Peak, the villa is considered by the Chinese to be the most prestigious place to stay in Wuyi Shan. Some rooms are dated, but the views are fine. Discounts of 40% available.

Eating

Frogs, mushrooms, bamboo rice and bamboo shoots are the specialities of Wuyi Shan's cuisine. In town, there are food stalls along the streets in the evening. As to be expected, restaurants are overpriced.

Wojia Sifangcai

FUJIANESE

( 525 2758; Dawangfeng Lu; meals from ¥70;  11am-10pm)

This place is famed for using fresh, local produce, and getting a table is never easy, so book ahead. Try the braised chicken soup (*qingdun tuji tang*), stir-fried spare ribs with sweet potatoes (*digua paigu*) or sauteed black fungus with ginkgo (*yinxing mu'er*). The restaurant is 100m east of Xinhua Dajjudian.

Information

Chinese maps of the Wuyi Shan area are available in bookshops and hotels in the resort district. There are some grubby internet cafes in the back alleys south of Wangfeng Lu, charging ¥3 to ¥4 an hour.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang Wujiu Lu;  9am-5pm)

In Wuyi Shan city, this branch has an ATM.

China International Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(CITS., Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe  5134 666; Guolu Dalou, Sangu Jie;  9am-4pm Mon-Sat)

The staff can arrange train tickets and tours.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Wuyi Shan has air links to several cities.

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥1350, two hours, two daily
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥890, 2½ hours, one daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥660, one hour, one daily
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥720, 50 minutes, two daily

BUS

Buses run from the long-distance bus station in Wuyi Shan city.

- ➔ **Fuzhou** ¥100, eight hours, two daily
- ➔ **Xiamen** regular/deluxe ¥191, nine hours, one daily

TRAIN

Direct trains go to Wuyi Shan from Quanzhou (¥148, 12 hours, hourly) and Xiamen (¥149 to ¥232, 12 hours, hourly).

Getting Around

Bus 6 links the long-distance bus station, the train station, the airport, the resort area and Wuyi Mountain Villa.

The resort area is small enough for you to walk everywhere. Expect to pay about ¥15 for a motorised trishaw from the resort district to most of the scenic area entrances. A ride from the train station or airport to the resort district will cost ¥30.

Liaoning

Liaoning Highlights

Shenyang

Dalian

Around Dalian

Dandong

Xingcheng

Liaoning



Pop 43.9 million

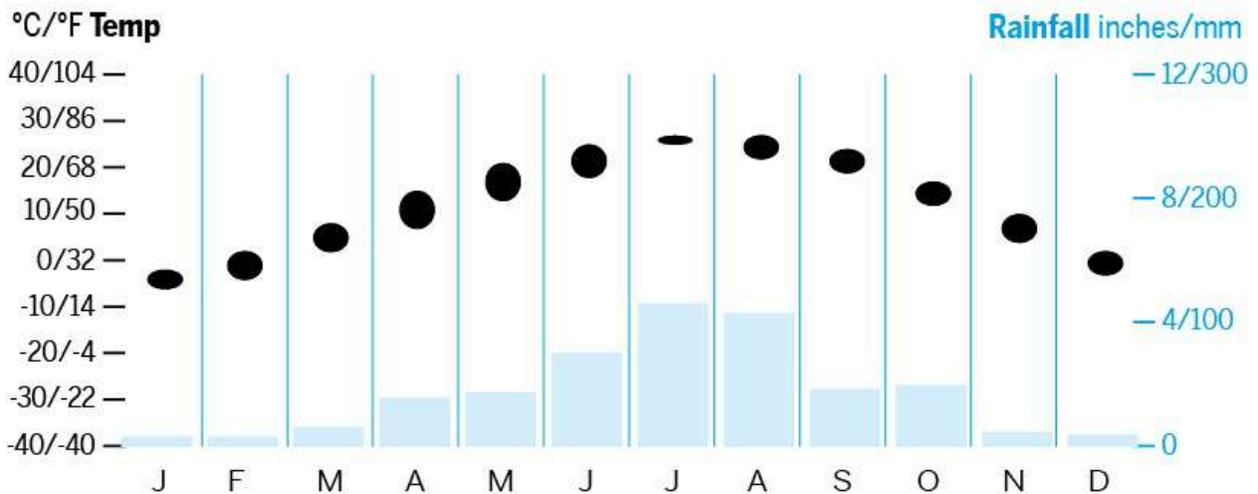
Why Go?

History and hedonism run side by side in Liaoning. Walled Ming-dynasty cities rub up against booming beach resorts, while imperial palaces sit in the centre of bustling modern cities. Nothing quite captures the fun and distinction, however, as much as seaside Dalian with its golden coastline and summer beer festival (or is that bacchanalia?), and former battlegrounds where Russian and Japanese armies wrestled for control of the region in the early 20th century.

Outside of the major cities, Liaoning is largely an expanse of farmland, forest and smokestack towns. The North Korean border runs alongside the province and is an intriguing area. It's as close as you can get to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) without actually going there...though you could go via tour from Dandong if you wanted to. Here, the large Korean population and easy mix of cultures provide a ready example that China is only a land of stereotypes if you never venture far into it.

When to Go

Dàlián



- ➔ **May & Jun** Catch deals on a seaside hotel.
- ➔ **Jun & Jul** Enjoy fresh cherries, mulberries and blueberries at roadside stands everywhere.
- ➔ **Jul & Aug** Have fun at the Dalian International Beer Festival.

Best Walks

- ➔ [Dalian's southwest coastline](#)
- ➔ [North Korean border](#)
- ➔ [Xingcheng's beach](#)

Best Historical Sites

- ➔ [Imperial Palace](#)
- ➔ [North Tomb](#)
- ➔ [Tiger Mountain Great Wall](#)

➔ [Xingcheng Old City](#)

Liaoning Highlights



① Kick back in [Dalian](#) and enjoy the beaches, coastal walkways and beer festival

② Climb the easternmost stretch of the Great Wall at [Tiger Mountain Great Wall](#), near Dandong

- 3 Cruise the Yalu River close to North Korea and experience the mix of Korean and Chinese culture in [Dandong](#)
- 4 Explore the [tomb of Huang Taiji](#), founder of the Qing dynasty, in Shenyang
- 5 Wander the old battlefields and graves of [Lushun](#), fought over by rival Japanese and Russian Empires
- 6 Laze on the beach and stroll the old walled city of historic, little-visited [Xingcheng](#)

History

The region formerly known as Manchuria, including the provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang, plus parts of Inner Mongolia, is now called Dongbei, which means ‘the Northeast’.

The Manchurian warlords of this northern territory established the Qing dynasty, which ruled China from 1644 to 1911. From the late 1800s to the end of WWII, when Western powers were busy carving up pieces of China for themselves, Manchuria was occupied alternately by the Russians and the Japanese.

Language

Nearly everyone in Liaoning speaks standard Mandarin, albeit with a distinct accent. In Dandong and areas close to the North Korean border, it’s quite common to hear Korean spoken.

Getting There & Around

Getting around Liaoning is easy. Shenyang is the province’s transport hub.

AIR

Shenyang and Dalian have domestic and international airports.

BOAT

Boats connect Dalian with Shandong province and South Korea.

BUS

Buses are a speedy alternative to trains.

TRAIN

Rail lines criss-cross the region; connections (including fast D and G trains) link Shenyang with cities south and north.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥40

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

Shenyang

 024 / Pop 6.25 million

The capital of Liaoning province has made enormous strides in overcoming its reputation as an industrial city that could have been the model for William Blake's vision of 'dark satanic mills'. True, Shenyang is still a sprawling metropolis, but subway lines are easing traffic, the urban landscape is fast improving, and there's a buzz on the streets these days that suggests this city's people are growing confident, secure, positive and even a touch urbane.

For the traveller, Shenyang boasts its very own Imperial Palace, a tomb

complex and decent museums, as well as several fine parks. Given its strategic location as a transport hub for the north of China, Shenyang is well worth a stopover on your journey.

History

Shenyang's roots go back to 300 BC, when it was known as Hou City. By the 11th century it was a Mongol trading centre, before reaching its historical high point in the 17th century when it was the capital of the Manchu empire. With the Manchu conquest of Beijing in 1644, Shenyang became a secondary capital under the Manchu name of Mukden, and a centre of the ginseng trade.

Throughout its history Shenyang has rapidly changed hands, dominated by warlords, the Japanese (1931), the Russians (1945), the Kuomintang (1946) and finally the Chinese Communist Party (CCP; 1948).



Shenyang

Sights

1 [Liaoning Provincial Museum](#) C2

Sleeping

2 [Liaoning Binguan](#) A3

3 [Shentie Shenzhan Binguan](#) A3

4 [Vienna International Hotel](#) A3

Eating

5 [Baiyu Chuancheng](#) A2

6 [Carrefour Supermarket](#) C1

7 [Meijin Hotpot](#) A3

8 [View & World Vegetarian Restaurant](#) B3

Drinking & Nightlife

9 [Stroller's](#) B3

Shopping

10 [Taiyuan Jie](#) A3

Sights

Zhongshan Lu and around Zhongshan Sq is littered with historical buildings from the early 20th century and worth strolling along.

Imperial Palace

HISTORIC SITE

(Gugong [GOOGLE MAP](#); 171 Shenyang Lu; admission ¥60;  8.30am-5.30pm, from 1pm Mon, last entry 4.45pm)

This impressive palace complex resembles a small-scale Forbidden City. Constructed between 1625 and 1636 by Manchu emperor Nurhachi (1559–

1626) and his son, Huang Taiji, the palace served as the residence of the Qing-dynasty rulers until 1644. The central courtyard buildings include ornate ceremonial halls and imperial living quarters, including a royal baby cradle.

In all, there are 114 buildings, not all of which are open to the public. Don't miss the double-eaved octagonal **Dazheng Hall** (at the rear of the complex), which has two gold dragons curled around the pillars at the entrance, a deep interior plafond ceiling and an elaborate throne, where Nurhachi's grandson, Emperor Shunzhi, was crowned. At **Chongzheng Hall**, the first large building as you enter, the beams over the entrance portico are all carved in the shape of five-fingered dragons.

Zhong Jie metro station (exit B) drops you off a few minutes north.

North Tomb

HISTORIC SITE

(Bei Ling [GOOGLE MAP](#); 12 Taishan Lu; park/tombs ¥6/50; 🕒 7am-6pm)

Another Shenyang highlight is this extensive tomb complex, the burial place of Huang Taiji (1592–1643), founder of the Qing dynasty. The tomb's animal statues lead up to the central mound known as the Luminous Tomb (Zhao Ling).

In many ways a better-preserved complex than the Imperial Palace, the tomb site is worth a few hours examining the dozens of buildings with their traditional architecture and ornamentation. **Long'en Hall** is a particularly fine structure, and as you circumambulate the base observe the richness of traditional symbols (peonies, vases, lucky clouds) carved in relief.

The North Tomb sits a few kilometres north of town inside expansive **Bei Ling Park**. With its pine trees and large lake, the park is an excellent place to escape Shenyang's hubbub. Locals come here to promenade, sing or just kick back. Beiling Gongyuan metro station is directly outside the park.

Liaoning Provincial Museum

MUSEUM

(Liaoning Sheng Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); SE cnr Government Sq; 🕒 9am-noon & 1-5pm, last entry 3.30pm, Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Three floors of exhibits highlight the region's art and history, from prehistoric times through the late Qing dynasty. English explanations accompany most displays.

18 September History Museum

MUSEUM

(Jiu Yi Ba Lishi Bowuguan 46 Wanghua Nanjie; 🕒 9am-5pm, last entry 4pm, Tue-Sun) **FREE**

There's an obvious propagandic purpose to this museum, but the hundreds of photographs, sculptures, paintings and dioramas recreates a picture of China under Japanese rule. English captions are limited. Bus 325 from the North Train Station stops across the street. The museum is about 2km northeast from the town centre.

THE MUKDEN INCIDENT

By 1931 Japan was looking for a pretext to occupy Manchuria. The Japanese army took matters into its own hands by staging an explosion on the night of 18 September at a tiny section of a Japanese-owned railway outside Mukden, the present-day city of Shenyang. Almost immediately, the Japanese attacked a nearby Chinese army garrison and then occupied Shenyang the following night. Within five months, they controlled all of Manchuria and ruled the region until the end of WWII.

Sleeping

The main train station area is modern and vibrant, and near overloaded with shopping malls, restaurants and cafes of all stripes. With a metro station, it's also convenient for getting around town.

Sanpi Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Sanpi Qingnian Lushe 📞 2251 1133; www.gjqnls.com; 21 Yalu Jiang Jie, dm/tw with shared bathroom ¥55/110; 📶 @ 📶)

To the east of the North Tomb is this laid-back hostel akin to a best friend's basement suite in the suburbs. Which is a bit odd as it's on the 5th floor of an

otherwise unpromising-looking building. The location's not great, but there's laundry and internet and the rooms are organised and clean.

From the South Train Station take bus 279 or from the North Train Station bus 325 to Jianyuan Xiaoqu stop.

Shentie Shenzhen Binguan

HOTEL

(Railway Station Hotel [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2358 5888; 2 Shengli Dajie, r without bathroom ¥60-80, tw with bathroom ¥138-168; 📶 @)

A convenient if ageing place next to the South Train Station. Note that some of the cheaper rooms have no windows.

Vienna International Hotel

HOTEL

(Weiyena Guoji Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8360 8888; 58 Minzu Beijie; d & tw ¥468-576)

The Vienna is a neat little hotel tucked down a small road 150m east of the train station. Smart, clean and bright rooms paired with good service make this a good midrange option. Discounts of 40% available.

Liaoning Binguan

HOTEL

(Liaoning Hotel [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2383 9104; 97 Zhongshan Lu, r incl breakfast from ¥458; 📶 @)

This grand dame dates back to 1927 and is perched across from Mao's statue at busy Zhongshan Sq. The Chairman himself stayed here and it retains many of its period details – the marbled lobby is particularly impressive as is the central stairwell. Rooms are comfortable but could use an update. The outdoor patio serves beer for when the sun deigns to shine. Discounts usually available.

Eating

Both the North and South Train Stations are cheap-restaurant zones. You'll also find lots of reasonably priced restaurants around the Imperial Palace.

Most have picture menus. There's a Tesco supermarket near the Sanpi Youth Hostel.

★ Meijin Hotpot

HOTPOT

(Meijin Huoguo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Taiyuan Beijie & Bei Sanma Lu; ingredients ¥3-20; 🕒 10.30am-2am)

This popular hotpot chain teems with the energy of dozens of diners chowing down on everything from vegies to meat and noodles. Friendly staff can help explain ingredients on the incredibly diverse English menu.

Baiyu Chuancheng

BARBEQUE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 85 Xita Jie; skewers ¥2-12; 🕒 10am-midnight)

It's hard not to get into the whole experience of charcoal grilling your own skewers of juicy meat and veg right at your table. If meat on a stick isn't to your liking, the rest of the street is rife with Korean restaurants.

Laobian Dumplings

DUMPLINGS

(Laobian Jiaoziguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2nd fl 208 Zhong Jie; dumplings ¥16-60; 🕒 10am-10pm)

Shenyang's most famous restaurant has been packing in the locals since 1829. It might be resting on its laurels a little but punters continue to flock here for the boiled, steamed and fried dumplings in an array of flavours: from abalone to cabbage and even curry.

The restaurant is on the 2nd floor of the Laobian Hotel, just across from the B1 exit of Zhong Jie metro station.

View & World Vegetarian Restaurant

VEGETARIAN

(Kuan Xiangzi Sucaiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 202 Shiyi Wei Lu; dishes ¥10-168; 🕒 10am-10.30pm; 🍴)

Peking duck and meatballs are on the menu here, but there won't be any actual meat on your plate. Everything is meat-free at this classy nearly vegan paradise, which claims to be the only non-MSG restaurant in all of northeast

China (an astonishing claim if true).

The restaurant is on one of Shenyang's busy eating streets and you'll find much to sample nearby, including real Peking duck, if you so desire.

Carrefour Supermarket

SUPERMARKET

(Jialefu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beizhan Lu)

You can pack a picnic for your travels here or grab a quick bite from the decent food court. Beside the long-distance bus station.

Drinking

Stroller's

BAR

(Liulangzhe Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 36 Beiwu Jing Jie, drinks from ¥25, food ¥40-170;

 11.30am-late)

This long-running atmospheric pub is popular with both locals and expats and has a decent imported beer selection and the usual pub grub. Take Exit B of Nan Shichang Station, cross the road and head up the side street 150m.

Shopping

Taiyuan Jie

SHOPPING STRIP

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Near the South Train Station is Taiyuan Beijie, one of Shenyang's major shopping streets, with department stores and an extensive underground shopping street (mostly small clothing boutiques). Locals refer to it simply as Taiyuan Jie.

Zhong Jie

SHOPPING STRIP

([GOOGLE MAP](#))

This street, near the Imperial Palace, is another popular pedestrianised

shopping zone that is now glossier than ever. It stretches across both sides of Chaoyang Jie. Expect malls with all manner of shops (local and international) and restaurants.

Information

ATMs can be found all over the city and around Zhongshan Square.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 96 Zhonghua Lu)

Government Sq ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 253 Shifu Dalu) ATMs and currency exchange.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2253 4850; Zhongshan Sq)

There's also a visa office opposite the entrance of the North Tomb.

Getting There & Away

Large hotels can help book airline and train tickets.

AIR

Shenyang Taoxian International Airport has flights to South Korea and Russia as well as the following domestic cities:

➔ **Beijing** ¥950, 1½ hours

➔ **Shanghai** ¥1100, two hours

BUS

The **long-distance express bus station** (changtu qiche kuaisu keyunzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 120 Huibin Jie) is south of Beizhan Lu, about a five-minute walk from the North Train Station and next to the Carrefour Supermarket. Schedules are available at the information counter as you walk in. Buses service the following destinations:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥129, eight hours, 9.10am, 10.10am, 12.40am and 7pm
- ➔ **Changchun** ¥85, 4½ hours, seven per day (8.30am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Dalian** ¥100, five hours, hourly (7.40am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Dandong** ¥84, 3½ hours, every 30 minutes (6am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Ha'erbin** ¥150, 6½ hours, 11am and 1.50pm
- ➔ **Xingcheng** ¥83, 4½ hours, 8.20am and 3pm

TRAIN

Shenyang's major train stations are the North and South Stations. Many trains arrive at one station, stop briefly, then travel to the next. It may be different when departing – always confirm which station you need. Buy sleeper or G/D train tickets (to Beijing or Shanghai) as far in advance as possible. Bus 262 runs between the North and South Train Stations, or take the metro.

South Station Trains

- ➔ **Baihe** (for Changbaishan) hard/soft sleeper ¥100/156, three daily (9.13am, 6.55pm and 8.18pm), 14 hours
- ➔ **Dalian** hard seat ¥57, four to seven hours
- ➔ **Dandong** hard seat ¥44 five hours
- ➔ **Ha'erbin** hard seat ¥78, seven hours
- ➔ **Xingcheng** hard seat ¥54, four to five hours

North Station Trains

- ➔ **Beijing** (D train) ¥207, five hours, frequent
- ➔ **Beijing** hard seat/sleeper ¥96/180, 10 hours
- ➔ **Changchun** (D/G train) ¥115/136, 2½/1½ hours
- ➔ **Dalian** (D/G train) ¥110/177, three/two hours
- ➔ **Ha'erbin** (D/G train) ¥161/245, 3/2½ hours

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 25km south of the city. **Shuttle buses** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); ¥15.50, one hour, hourly) leave from an alley just before the intersection of Zhonghua Lu and Heping Dajie and from the North Train Station. Taxis cost ¥80.

BUS

Buses are cheap, frequent and cover the city, but the subway is easier to navigate.

SUBWAY

With only two lines (Line 1 running east–west and Line 2 running north–south) and one connecting station, Shenyang’s clean and relaxed subway system is easy to figure out. There are stops at both the North and South Train Stations as well as the North Tomb and Zhong Jie (for the Imperial Palace). The average ride costs ¥2 to ¥4. Stations have public toilets.

TAXI

Taxi flagfall starts at ¥9.

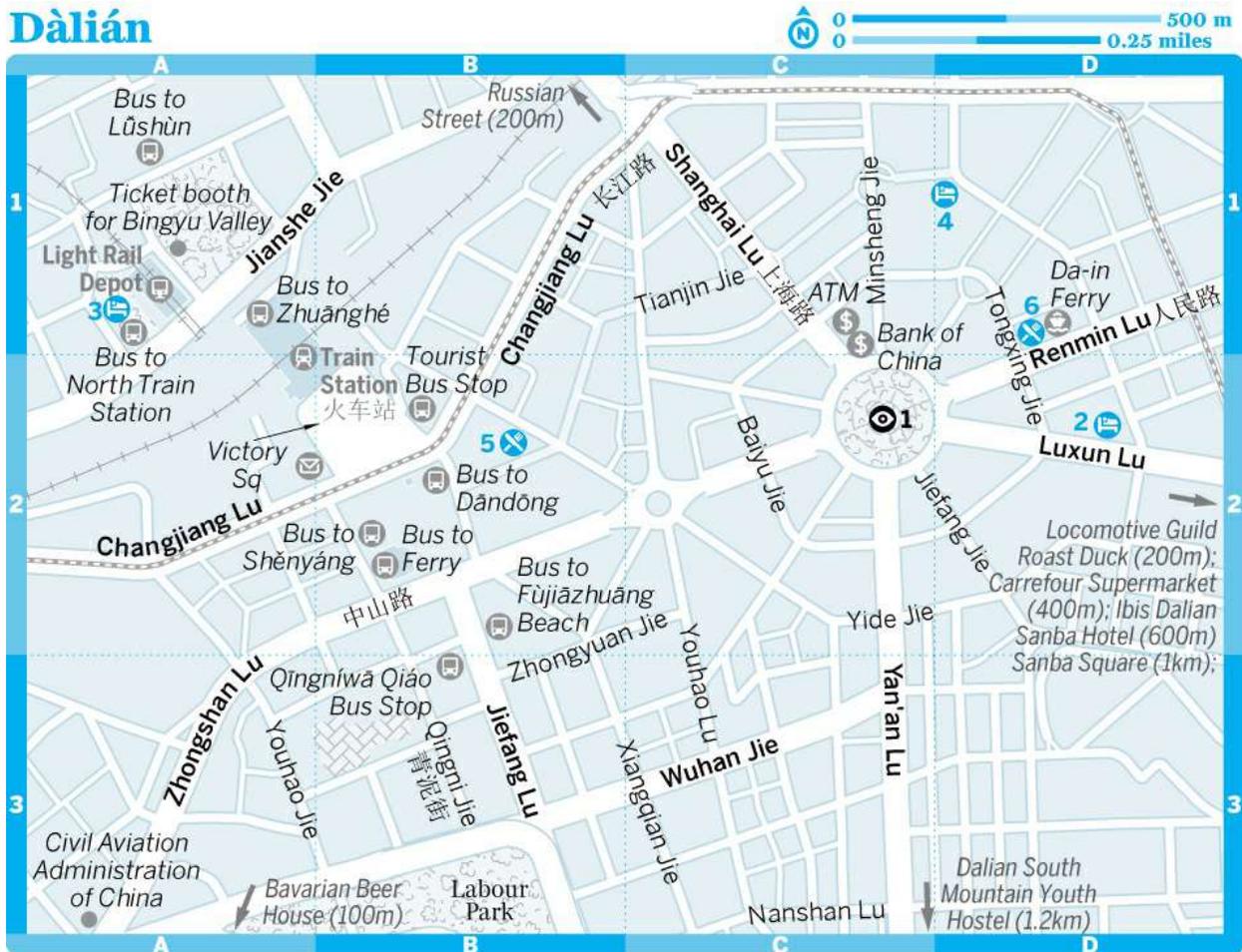
Dalian

 0411 / Pop 6.69 million

Perched on the Liaodong Peninsula and bordering the Yellow Sea, Dalian is one of the most relaxed and liveable cities in the northeast, if not all of China. Tree-lined hilly streets with manageable traffic and fresh air, a surfeit of early-20th-century architecture and an impressive coastline, complete with swimming beaches, are just some of its charms. Toss in a decent restaurant and bar scene and serious shopping, and that frequent Dalian epithet, the ‘Hong Kong of the North’, looks like more than just bluster.

Dalian is a fine place to unwind for a few days. But after lazing on the beaches and strolling along the southwest coastline, pay a visit to the historic

port town of Lushun. The old battlefields and cemeteries offer a rare first-hand glimpse into some of the north's most turbulent days.



Dalian

Sights

1 [Zhongshan Sq](#) C2

Sleeping

2 [Aloft Dalian](#) D2

3 [Hanting Express](#) A1

4 [Home Inn](#) D1

Eating

[5 Night Market](#)

B2

[6 Tiantian Yugang](#)

D1

Sights & Activities

Golden Stone Beach

BEACH

The coast around Golden Stone Beach (*Jinshi Tan*), 50km north of the city, has been turned into a domestic tourism mecca with a number of theme parks and rock formations commanding inflated entrance fees. The long pebbly beach itself is free and quite pretty, set in a wide bay with distant headlands.

To get here take the light rail, known by the locals as Line 3 (*Qinggui Sanhaoxian*), from the depot on the east side of Triumph Plaza, behind the Dalian Train station (¥8, 50 minutes). From the beach station it's a 10-minute walk to the beach, or catch a hop-on/off tourist shuttle bus (¥20), which winds round the coast first before dropping you off at the beach. There's a visitor centre to the right of the train station as you exit, with English-speaking staff if you need help.

Zhongshan Sq

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

(Zhongshan Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

This is Dalian's hub, a 223m wide square with 10 lanes radiating out from a central roundabout designed by the Russians in 1889. With the exception of the Dalian Financial Building, all the other grand structures hail from the early 20th century when Dalian was under the control of the Japanese. Styles range from art deco to French Renaissance.

The **Dalian Binguan**, a dignified hotel built in 1914 and called then the Dalian Yamato Hotel, appeared in the movie *The Last Emperor*.

DON'T MISS

SOUTHWEST COASTLINE

Dalian's southwest coastline is the city's most alluring natural destination. Dramatic headlands, deep bays and sandy beaches are the obvious attraction, but there are also parks, lighthouses and quaint villages, and the longest continuous boardwalk (reportedly at 20.9km) in the world joining them all.

Start your exploration either by taking the tram from downtown to **Xinghai Sq** (Xinghai Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), or a bus to **Fujiazhuang Beach** (Fujiazhuang Haitan). The square, which sports some gaudy architecture, is the site of Dalian's popular beer festival, and is a good place to people watch, fly a kite, or just stroll about. Nearby is a small beach and amusement park.

Fujiazhuang is a popular beach set in a deep bay. Junks float just offshore, small broken islands dot the horizon, and loads of families come here for no other reason than to have fun. Bus 5 leaves from Jiefang Lu (¥1, 20 to 30 minutes) and drops you off across from the beach.

A very pleasant boardwalk (it's really a wooden walkway built alongside the main coastal road) joins Fujiazhuang and Xinghai Sq. From the beach you can continue on this same walkway another 8km to **Laohutan Ocean Park** (Laohu Tan Haiyang Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.laohutan.com.cn; admission ¥210; ☀7.30am-5.30pm), a family-friendly theme park with a polar aquarium. At Laohutan you can catch bus 30 (¥1) to Sanba or Zhongshan Square in central Dalian. You can also do the coastal route via taxi.

Head on from Laohutan to **Fisherman's Wharf** (Yuren Matou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a seaside community built in the style of an early-20th-century American east coast village. The village makes a great backdrop for photos, has a row of pleasant coffee and wine shops, and features a perfect replica of the 1853 German Bremen Port Lighthouse, built with bricks from razed local villages.

Sleeping

Reservations are highly recommended in the summer months, when prices may be 50% more than listed below. The train station area has a number of budget hotels but it's a noisy, frenetic place. Touts will find you if you do need a room: rates start at ¥100 a night.

★ **Dalian Noah's Ark Golden Beach Hostel**

HOSTEL

(Dalian Nuoya Fangzhou Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎3968 4088; www.yhachina.com/ls.php?id=339; 57 Binhai Xilu; dm with/without bath ¥85/80, d & tw ¥280;

 closed winter;  )

There's nothing remotely biblical about the hostel: the architecture, a whitewashed edifice built against a hill and facing the sea, evokes Santorini. Rooms are simple but charming: consider staying in a greenhouse-type glasshouse at the top of the compound! The 2nd-level lounge area is a great spot to have a beer and stare out to sea. YHA membership required to stay here.

Getting here is tough; take bus 5 near the train station at Qingniwa Qiao to the last stop. Walk ahead five minutes through a parking lot and down a slope towards Golden Sand Beach (Jin Sha Tan), pay ¥2 entry and continue towards the seashore and follow it to the right. Pack light as it's a 1km walk. Note you have to pay the ¥2 entry daily if you go in and out of the area.

Dalian South Mountain Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Dalian Nanshan Guoji Qingnian Lushe  ;  8263 1189;

dlnanshan@126.com; 114 Mingze Jie, dm ¥75-85;   )

Tucked away in a quiet hillside neighbourhood is this friendly little hostel with clean, comfortable dorms (but only two bathrooms!). Facilities include self-service laundry and kitchen, as well as computer use and wi-fi. The southwest coastline is a 15-minute bus ride away, numerous parks are within walking distance and the train station can be reached quickly by taxi (¥10).

If you want to catch a bus here contact the hostel for directions.

Ibis Dalian Sanba Hotel

HOTEL

(Dalian Sanba Yibisi Jiudian  ;  3986 5555; www.ibishotel.com.cn; 49 Wuwu Lu, d & tw ¥219;  )

This business hotel is in a fantastic location surrounded by restaurants and markets, but is also a five-minute walk to parks and quiet tree-lined streets. Public buses connect the hotel to the train station and southwestern coast. Rooms are clean and modern and the English-speaking staff are fairly attentive. For best rates book online.

It's located just off Sanba Sq. A taxi from the train station here costs ¥12.

Hanting Express

HOTEL

(Hanting Kuaijie Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6666 2888; 32 Yunyang Jie, r from ¥219; 📶 @ 📶)

Just behind the train station, overlooking the light-rail square, is this tidy business hotel. The hotel entrance is to the back of the building away from the light-rail square.

★ Aloft Dalian

HOTEL

(Dalian Yalexuan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 3907 1111; www.aloft-hotels.com/dalian; 18-1 Luxun Lu, 18-1 r ¥1720-2220; 📶 @ 📶)

This brand-new, swish hotel is borne aloft thanks to a hip charisma lacking in other international chain hotels. Its colourfully decorated rooms are large with good views and plush beds, and the staff are friendly to a fault. The in-house restaurant and lounge area are good too. Discounts tame rack rates to a more reasonable ¥600 range.

Home Inn

HOTEL

(Rujia Kuaijie Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8263 9977; www.homeinns.com; 102 Tianjin Jie, d/tw ¥189/209; 📶 @)

With its brightly coloured and tidy little rooms, free broadband and in-house restaurant serving cheap but tasty dishes, this is a good choice for the city centre. Recently the square around the hotel has seen some impressive urban regeneration, with a fake but good 'old street' opening just 100m away with a number of high-end cafes and bars. There's also a continuous pedestrian-only street/night market extending all the way to the train station.

Eating

There are plenty of small restaurants on the roads leading off Zhongshan Sq

and Friendship Sq. Friendship Sq has numerous malls on it with food courts on the higher floors. The food court in the nearby underground mall in Victory Sq is a good place to eat too (dishes ¥10-20). Both sides of the plaza outside the train station are lined with fruit vendors and shops selling cheap *baozi* (steamed dumplings).

Night Market

MARKET

(Yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Stretching several blocks along Tianjin Jie from the train station to the Home Inn, this outdoor market, open during the evenings, offers outdoor venues to eat barbecued seafood with a beer. There's also a smaller (but better) market around Sanba Sq near the Carrefour Supermarket with outdoor barbecue stalls and seating, in addition to an abundance of fruit stands.

Handu Restaurant

KOREAN

(Handu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 49-1 Wuwu Lu, 49-1 dishes ¥15-90; 🕒 11am-10pm)

Next door to the Ibis Hotel, this fabulous two-storey Korean restaurant decked out in luxe wood and granite fittings lets you barbecue your own meats at the table. There's also a selection of one-dish meals such as *bibimbap* (rice, vegetables and eggs served in a claypot) for those who don't wish to go the whole hog.

Locomotive Guild Roast Duck

ROAST DUCK

(Huochetou Guomu Kaoya [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 17 Luxun Lu; duck ¥197, dishes from ¥20; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5-9pm; 🐾)

We're not sure what locomotives have to do with duck, but the birds here are roasted in a wood-fired oven to delicate crispness before being deftly sliced and presented by your table. Live seafood is also available for those who prefer fish over fowl. Picture menu available.

Tiantian Yugang

SEAFOOD

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 10 Renmin Lu; dishes ¥22-99; 🕒 11am-10pm)

Choose your meal from the near museum-level variety of aquatic creatures at this upscale seafood restaurant. Most dishes are set out in refrigerated displays, making this a rare easy seafood-eating experience in China.

Carrefour Supermarket

SUPERMARKET

(Jialefu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Luxun Lu; 🕒 7.30am-9pm)

Large supermarket with good selection of takeaway food and baked goods.



Drinking & Nightlife

Dalian has the most happening bar and club scene of any city in the northeast. Check out *Focus on Dalian* (www.focusondalian.com) for the latest.

Bavarian Beer House

PUB

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 53 Gao'erji Lu; 🕒 11am-late)

This upscale Bavarian beer pub serves a fantastic range of German beers, including several darks and whites on tap (¥35 for 0.5l). There is outdoor seating so you can enjoy the quiet neighbourhood atmosphere on Gao'erji Lu, and there's a selection of dishes if quenching your thirst builds up a hunger.

BEER MANIA

For 12 days from late July to early August, Dalian stages the **Dalian International Beer Festival**, its very own version of Munich's Oktoberfest. Beer companies from across China and around the world set up tents at the vast Xinghai Sq, near the coast, and locals and visitors flock (more than two million in 2013) to sample the brews, gorge on barbecue and snacks from around China, listen to live music and generally make whoopee. Entrance tickets are a low ¥20 and in 2014 there were 30 beer vendors offering more than 400 brands for sampling. See the festivals page on the China Highlights (www.chinahighlights.com) website for the dates each year.

Shopping

There are malls all over Dalian. Across from the train station there's an enormous underground shopping centre below Victory Sq. South of Victory Sq is a pedestrian plaza lined with upscale department stores. If tacky souvenirs are your thing, Dalian's **Russian Street** (Tuanjie Jie), a pedestrianised street with some of the city's oldest buildings, is a good spot.

Information

There are ATMs all around town. Zhongshan Sq has a number of large bank branches including a **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Zhongshan Sq), where you can change currency.

Dalian Xpat

INFO

(www.dalianxpat.com)

An excellent source of English-language information about restaurants, bars and clubs in Dalian.

Focus on Dalian

INFO

(www.focusondalian.com)

Bilingual site with good articles and restaurant and bar recommendations.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Dalian International Airport is 12km from the city centre and well connected to most cities in China and the region. Tickets can be purchased at the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC, Zhongguo Minhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8361 2888; Zhongshan Lu) or any of the travel offices nearby. In addition to the domestic destinations listed here, there are also flights to Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Hong Kong and Tokyo.

➔ **Beijing** ¥600, 1½ hours

➔ **Ha'erbin** ¥900, 1½ hours

BOAT

There are several daily boats to Yantai (¥180 to ¥500, five to eight hours) and Weihai (¥190 to ¥500, seven to eight hours) in Shandong. Buy tickets at the passenger ferry terminal in the northeast of Dalian or from one of the many counters in front of the train station. To the ferry terminal, take bus 13 (¥1) from the southeast corner of Shengli Guangchang and Zhongshan Lu near the train station.

BORDER CROSSING: DALIAN TO SOUTH KOREA

Da-in Ferry

FERRY

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 Dalian 8270 5082, Incheon 032-891 7100, Seoul 822-3218 6500; www.dainferry.co.kr; 17th fl, 68 Renmin Lu,,)

The Korean-run Da-in Ferry to Incheon in South Korea departs from Dalian on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 4.30pm (¥980 to ¥1900, 16 hours).

BUS

Long-distance buses leave from various points around the train station. It can be tricky to find the correct ticket booths, and they do occasionally move.

➔ **Dandong** ¥100, four hours, nine daily, 6.20am to 2.30pm. Buses leave from stand No 2 on Shengli Guangchang just south of Changjiang Lu.

➔ **Lushun** ¥7, one hour, every 20 minutes. Buses leave from the back of the train station, across the square.

➔ **Shenyang** ¥98, five hours, every two hours. Buses depart from south of Victory Sq.

➔ **Zhuanghe** ¥45, 2½ hours, frequent. Buses leave from in front of the ticket office on Jianshe Jie, the first street behind the train station.

TRAIN

Buy your ticket as early as possible. D and G trains leave from the north station. Get a bus (¥5, regular, 30 mins) there from outside the Hanting Express behind the light-rail station.

- ➔ **Beijing** hard seat/sleeper ¥145/240, 10 to 12 hours
- ➔ **Beijing** (D/G train) ¥213/389, 6½/5½ hours
- ➔ **Changchun** (G train) ¥300, three hours
- ➔ **Ha'erbin** (G train) ¥389, four hours
- ➔ **Shenyang** (G train) ¥170, two hours

Getting Around

Dalian's central district is not large and can be covered on foot. A subway is under construction and will be ready in 2015 or so.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

A taxi to/from the city centre costs ¥30 to ¥60 depending on the time of day. No shuttle buses.

BUS

Buses are plentiful and stops have English signboards explaining the route. There's a tourist bus (¥10, hourly, 8.30am-4.30pm) in front of the train station. It does a hop-on, hop-off loop of the city and the southwestern coast.

TAXI

Fares start at ¥10; most trips are less than ¥20.

TRAM

Dalian has a slow but stylish tram with two lines: the 201 and the 202 (¥1 to ¥2 each). No 201 runs past the train station on Changjiang Lu, while 202 runs out to the ocean and Xinghai Sq (you must take 201 first and transfer).

Around Dalian

Lushun

With its excellent port and strategic location on the northeast coast, Lushun (formerly Port Arthur) was the focal point of both Russian and Japanese expansion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The bloody Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) finally saw the area fall under Japanese colonial rule, which would continue for the next 40 years.

Lushun is worth a visit during any trip to Dalian. While developers are piling on the high-rise apartments, Lushun is still a relaxed town built on the hills. Most sites are related to military history, but there's an excellent museum on Liaoning, as well as a number of scenic lookouts and parks.

As soon as you exit the bus station at Lushun, taxis will cry out for your business. A few hours touring the sights will cost ¥150 (excluding ¥10 car parking fees at some sights). If the driver doesn't have one, pick up a bilingual English–Chinese map at the station newsstand to help you negotiate. We've listed the best sights here. Resist any attempts by taxi drivers to steer you towards sights with admission ¥100 upwards: they are overpriced and underwhelming.

Greater Dàlián



Greater Dalian

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Fisherman's Wharf | D3 |
| 2 | Laohutan Ocean Park | C3 |
| 3 | Xinghai Square | A2 |

🏠 Sleeping

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 4 | Dalian Noah's Ark Golden Beach Hostel | A3 |
| 5 | Dalian South Mountain Youth Hostel | C2 |
| 6 | Ibis Dalian Sanba Hotel | C2 |

🍴 Eating

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 7 | Carrefour Supermarket | C1 |
| | Handu Restaurant | C2 |

[Locomotive Guild Roast Duck](#)

C1

Drinking & Nightlife

8 [Bavarian Beer House](#)

B2

Sights

★ **Lushun Prison**

HISTORIC SITE

(Lushun Ri'e Jianyu Jiuzhi Bowuguan  Tue-Sun 9am-4.30pm, last entry 3.30pm) **FREE**

Lushun's best sight is a cluster of restored red-brick buildings which functioned as a prison from 1902 to 1945. It may have changed hands from the Russians to the Japanese, but its purpose remained unchanged: more than 450,000 prisoners came through its cells. Somber displays, including an unearthed wooden-barrel coffin containing an executed inmate, paint a picture of a working early-20th-century jail.

English captions illuminate the plight of prisoners, torture methods, work camps and more.

Baiwang Shan

HISTORIC SITE

(admission ¥40)

Head to the top of this hill opposite the bus station for panoramic views out to the bay and across the ever-expanding city. The phallic-shaped monument is **Baiwang Shan Ta**, a pagoda erected by the Japanese in 1909 after they took Lushun. Climb to the top up the stairs (made in the USA) for ¥10.

Soviet Martyrs Cemetery

CEMETERY

(Sujun Lieshi Lingyuan  8.30-4.30pm) **FREE**

The largest cemetery in China for foreign-born nationals honours Soviet soldiers who died in the liberation of northeast China at the end of WWII, as well as pilots killed during the Korean War. Designed by Soviet advisers, the

cemetery is heavy with communist-era iconography. A giant rifle-holding soldier guards the front, while inside are memorials to the sacrifice of Soviet soldiers and rows of neatly tended gravestones.

Lushun Museum

MUSEUM

(Lushun Bowuguan 🕒 9am-4pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

The history of Liaoning province is covered in this stylish old museum in two early-20th-century buildings. Among the thousands of artefacts on display are ancient bronzes, coins and paintings, as well as several mummies and a quirky chopstick collection. The area around the museum has a number of other old buildings from the Japanese colonial era and is a great spot for photographs.

The English captions are surprisingly good.

Lushun Railway Station

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Lushun Huochezhan)

Built in 1903 during Russia's brief control of the area, this handsome station was rebuilt in 2005 following the original design. It's worth a visit en route to other sights.

Hill 203

WAR MEMORIAL

(Er Ling San Jingqu admission ¥30)

During the Russo-Japanese War, troops fought like wildcats for control of this strategic hill (when you get up the steep path to the top you'll see why). More than 5000 Russian and 10,000 Japanese soldiers lost their lives in the battle, which eventually went to the Japanese. Afterwards, the victors erected a 10m-high bullet-shaped memorial (constructed from shell casings) which, remarkably, still stands to this day.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Lushun (¥7, one hour) leave every 20 minutes from a stop across the

square at the back of the Dalian Train Station. Buy your ticket from the booth before lining up. Buses from both sides run from early morning to evening.

Bingyu Valley

If you can't travel south to Guilin, Bingyu Valley (Bingyu Gou; admission ¥168) offers a taste of what you're missing. About 250km northeast of Dalian, the valley has tree-covered limestone cliffs set alongside a river; it's similar to Guilin, if not nearly as dramatic. From the entrance a boat takes you along a brief stretch of the river, where rock formations rise steeply along the banks, before depositing you at a dock. From there, you can hire your own little boat or bamboo raft and paddle around the shallow waters, or follow some short trails along the river and up to some lookouts.

The park is increasingly popular with tour groups, who come for the zip lines, tame amusement-park rides, and even jet-skiing. Given the rather small area that you can explore, it can be tough to find any tranquility in this otherwise lovely environment.

In summer, day tours run from the train station area, leaving at 7.30am and returning around 8pm. Buy your ticket (¥238 including transport, lunch and admission fees) the day before from the tourism vans across from the light-rail depot in the back train station area. Your hotel should be able to get you discounted rates. Note that tours sometimes do reverse itineraries (with the boat ride coming last) and you'll find precious little time alone. There are also (optional) add-ons such as cable-car rides and electric-car transport. These aren't terrible but can easily double your tour costs.

It's not really worth coming out here on your own, but you can do so by taking the bus to Zhuanghe from Dalian and transferring to a bus headed to Bingyu Gou. Accommodation is available within the park, but is overpriced for what you get.

Dandong

☞ 0415 / Pop 865,600

The principal gateway to North Korea (Chaoxian) from China, Dandong has a buzz that's unusual for a Chinese city of its size. Separated from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) by the Yalu River (Yalu Jiang), Dandong thrives on trade, both illegal and legal, with North Korea. It handles more than 50% of the DPRK's import/exports and its increasing wealth means that there are now flashy malls stocking luxury brands and even a fast rail connection under construction.

For most visitors to Dandong, this is as close as they will get to the DPRK. While you can't see much, the contrast between Dandong's lively, built-up riverfront and the desolate stretch of land on the other side of the Yalu River speaks volumes about the dire state of the North Korean economy and the restrictions under which its people live.

Dandong is relatively compact and easy to walk around. The river is about 800m southeast of the train station, while the main shopping district is just east of the station.

Dāndōng



Dandong

Sights

1 [Broken Bridge](#) D3

Activities, Courses & Tours

2 [Boat Cruise](#) D2

Sleeping

3 [Life's Business Hotel](#) C1

4 [Luyuan Binguan](#) C2

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Eating

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D1

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[8 Peter's Coffee House](#)

D2

Sights & Activities

North Korean Border

BORDER, PARK

(Bei Chaoxian Bianjie)

For views of the border, stroll along the riverfront **Yalujiang Park** that faces the North Korean city of Sinuiju.

The area's most intriguing sight is the shrapnel-pockmarked **Broken Bridge** (Yalujiang Duanqiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥30; 🕒 7am-6.30pm). In 1950, during the Korean War, American troops 'accidentally' bombed the original steel-span bridge between the two countries. The North Koreans dismantled the bridge less than halfway across the river, leaving a row of support columns. You can wander along the remaining section and get within the distance of a good toss of a baseball to the North Korean shoreline. The Sino-Korean Friendship Bridge, the official border crossing between China and North Korea, is next to the old one, and trains and trucks rumble across it on a regular basis.

To get closer to North Korea, take a 30- to 40-minute **boat cruise** (Guanguang Chuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 7am-6pm) from the tour-boat piers on either side of the bridges. The large boats (¥60) are cheaper than the smaller speedboats (¥80), but you have to wait for the former to fill up with passengers (on average 30 minutes). In the summer you can sometimes see kids splashing about in the river, as well as fishermen and the crews of the boats moored on the other side.

Jinjiang Pagoda

PAGODA

(Jinjiang Ta)

The highest point for miles, this pagoda sits atop Jinjiang Shan in the park of the same name. The views across to North Korea are unparalleled and the park itself (a former military zone) is a well-tended expanse of forested slopes. You can take a taxi to the entrance or easily walk there in 20 minutes from the train station, though it's another steep kilometre uphill to the pagoda.

Museum to Commemorate US Aggression

MUSEUM

(Kangmei Yuanchao Jinian-guan 🕒 9am-4pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

With everything from statistics to shells, this comprehensive museum offers Chinese and North Korean perspectives – they won it! – on the war with the US-led UN forces (1950–53). There are good English captions here. The adjacent North Korean War Memorial Column was built 53m high, symbolising the year the Korean War ended. A taxi to the museum costs ¥10 from downtown.

Tiger Mountain Great Wall

GREAT WALL

(Hushan Changcheng admission ¥60, museum admission ¥10, buy ticket at main entrance booth;

🕒 8am-dusk)

About 20km northeast of Dandong, this steep, restored stretch of the wall, known as Tiger Mountain Great Wall, was built during the Ming dynasty and runs parallel to the North Korean border. Unlike other sections of the wall, this one sees comparatively few tourists. The wall ends at a small museum with a few weapons, vases and wartime dioramas. You can buy tickets at the main entrance booth.

From here two routes loop back to the entrance. Heading straight ahead on the road is the easy way back. But there's nothing to see. It's better to climb back up the stairs a short way and look for a path on the right that drops and then literally runs along the cliff face! There are some good scrambles and in

20 minutes or so you'll get to a point called Yibukua – 'one step across' – marking an extremely narrow part of the river between the two countries. Not far past this you'll reach an area where you can walk back to the entrance.

Buses to the Wall (¥6.50, 40 minutes) run about every hour from Dandong's long-distance bus station. A taxi from town will cost ¥25 and you can usually flag a share taxi back for ¥10.

Speedboat Tours

BOAT TOURS

(Kuaiting Matou per speedboat ¥180)

About 23km northeast of Dandong is a small dock where you can board a speedboat (seats eight) for a thrilling 30-minute ride up the Yalu River. Close to shore, the driver will take you close to a portion of river where you are between two DPRK banks – the mainland on the left and a DPRK military-occupied island on the right.

Side up to waiting DPRK boatmen to buy local smokes, currency and alcohol (though it's cheaper in China!) before zipping back to shore. You can flag passing taxis at Tiger Mountain Great Wall (3km away) to ride up to the dock for ¥5. Alternatively, get a Dandong taxi to take you here directly.

VISITING THE HERMIT KINGDOM

Most tours to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) start with a flight from Beijing into Pyongyang, but Jilin and Liaoning offer a more interesting alternative launching pad. You can visit the Special Economic Zone of Rason from [Yanji](#) in Jilin province or consider taking a train from Dandong all the way to Pyongyang. The following tour agencies organise visas and offer trips designed for Westerners. Check the websites for costs and itineraries. Note that some travel restrictions apply to American and Japanese tourists.

Explore North Korea (www.explorenorthkorea.com) Dandong-based agency.

Koryo Tours (www.koryogroup.com) Large, long-running Beijing-based agency.

Young Pioneer Tours (www.youngpioneertours.com) Offers alternative itineraries into Rason, Namyang, Hoeryong city and Onsong county.

Sleeping

There are many hotels in Dandong, most for around ¥200 a night. High-summer rates may be 30% to 50% more than the prices given here.

Luyuan Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 212 7777; fax 210 9888; cnr Shiwei Lu & Sanjing Jie, dm with shared bathroom ¥60, s with shared bathroom ¥138, d & tw with bathroom from ¥168; 📶 @)

There are reasonable singles and three- and four-bed dorms at this long-running guesthouse on busy Shiwei Lu. The more expensive doubles and twins include internet connections.

Life's Business Hotel

HOTEL

(Laifushi Shangwu Kuaijie Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 213 9555; www.lifeshotel.com; 29 Liuwei Lu, r ¥138-298; 📶 @)

Life's is a smart business hotel popular with North Korean businessmen and within walking distance of the riverfront, restaurants and a Tesco supermarket. Rooms are tidy and comfortable with the ones on higher floors affording river views. Cheaper rooms have no windows.

Zhong Lian Hotel

HOTEL

(Zhong Lian Da Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 233 3333; www.zlhotel.com; 62 Binjiang Zhong Lu, d/tw incl breakfast ¥478/598; 📶 @ 📶)

Directly across from the Broken Bridge is this solid midrange option with large rooms, an even larger marble lobby (with wi-fi) and English-speaking staff. The pricier rooms offer great views of the bridge and river. Discounts available.

FREE TRADE AMONG COMMUNIST ALLIES

It's no exaggeration to say that without China, the North Korean regime would not survive. China has been trading with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

(DPRK) since the 1950s and is now the country's largest trading partner. Almost half of all the DPRK imports come directly from China, and China is the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to the Hermit Kingdom. That China supports its neighbour for its own geopolitical reasons is no surprise – that it does so for economic reasons probably is. However, put simply, Chinese leaders in the northern provinces insist they need market reforms across the border if they are to see their own long-term development plans fully realised.

Dandong is the hub of Sino–North Korean trade, and a free-trade zone between the two countries has been established in North Korea's northeastern cities of Rajin and Sonbong. The area is now known as Rason and is also a warm-water port. Another area where the two nations have made progress is in expanding working visas. In 2013 some 93,300 North Koreans were granted visas for employment in China. This translated to a 17% increase from 2012 and is set to increase further.

Eating & Drinking

On summer nights, the smoke from hundreds of barbecues drifts over Dandong as street corners become impromptu restaurants serving up fresh seafood and bottles of Yalu River beer, the refreshing local brew. One of the best places for barbecue is in the tents on the corner of Bawei Lu and Qijing Jie. More conventional restaurants, including a range of Korean, hotpot and DIY barbecue, as well as comfortable cafes where you can sip coffee and watch how the other half lives, line the riverfront on either side of the bridges. There's also a big **Tesco** (Legou, [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Liuwei Lu & Sanjing Jie; 🕒 8am-9.30pm) supermarket in the east part of town.

Songtaoyuan Fandian

NORTH KOREAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Binjiang Zhonglu; dishes ¥10-78; 🕒 11am-3pm & 5-10pm)

A big part of the experience for many travellers to this region is eating at a North Korean restaurant with reputedly real North Korean waitresses. This locally recommended place sits appropriately enough just a few hundred metres from the Broken Bridge (directly beside SPR Coffee) and has a range of traditional dishes. There's a full picture menu to help you decide.

Peter's Coffee House

CAFE, WESTERN

(Bide Kafei Shi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.peterscoffeehouse.com; 103 Binjiang Zhong Lu;

 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun; )

Down by the riverfront is this friendly cafe run by a long-term Canadian expat family. In addition to its excellent coffee, Peter's serves milkshakes and sodas (¥25), authentic Western baked goods, a fine all-day breakfast (¥32), burgers and sandwiches. This is also the place to go for local information and restaurant recommendations.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 60 Jinshan Dajie)

Has ATM and will change currency. Another **ATM** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) is closer to the river at 77-1 Binjiang Zhonglu.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#);  210 3138; 15 Jiangcheng Dajie)

Getting There & Away

Dandong airport has infrequent flights to a few cities in China; most travellers arrive by bus or train.

BUS

The **long-distance bus station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Shiwei Lu & Jinshan Dajie) is near the train station.

- ➔ **Dalian** ¥100, 3½ hours, nine daily (6am to 2.50pm)
- ➔ **Ji'an** ¥85, seven hours, 8.30am
- ➔ **Shenyang** ¥82, three hours, every 30 minutes (5.10am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Tonghua** ¥82, seven hours, 6.30am and 8.50am

BORDER CROSSING: DANDONG TO SOUTH KOREA

Dandong International Ferry Co

FERRY

(Dandong Guoji Hangyun Youxian Gongsi [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎315 2666; www.dandongferry.co.kr; cnr Xingwu Lu & Gangwan Lu; 🕒8am-5pm)

Dandong International Ferry Co runs a boat to Incheon in South Korea on Tuesday, Thursday at 6pm and 4pm Sunday (¥1010 to ¥1710, 16 hours). Buy tickets at the company's office on Xingwu Lu. A bus to the ferry terminal leaves two hours before departure (¥20) on the respective departure days from the train station.

TRAIN

The train station is in the centre of town. A lofty Mao statue greets arriving passengers.

➔ **Shenyang** seat ¥24 to ¥44, four to five hours

Xingcheng

☎0429 / Pop 560,000

Despite having a bevy of talking points – it's one of only four Ming-dynasty cities to retain its complete outer walls, it has the oldest surviving temple in all of northeastern China and it's an up-and-coming beach resort – Xingcheng has stayed well off the radar of most travellers. Yes, it's still a bit dusty and rough round the edges, but conditions are improving and historians and aficionados will have a field day here.

Xingcheng's main drag is Xinghai Lu Er Duan, where you'll find hotels, restaurants and a **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang) with a 24-hour ATM. From the train station head right, take the first left, and then a quick right to get onto Xinghai Lu Yi Duan. This merges into Er Duan (Section 2) in a kilometre.

Sights & Activities

★ Old City

HISTORIC SITE

(Lao Cheng) **FREE**

Standing like a miniature Pingyao (albeit less polluted or glossy...in a good way), the walled city dates back to 1430 and is the principal reason to visit Xingcheng. Modern Xingcheng has grown up around it, but the Old City still home to around 3000 people.

You can enter by any of the four gates, but the easiest one to find is the south gate (nanmen), which is just off Xinghai Lu Er Duan. There are signs in English and Chinese pointing the way.

In addition to the **City Walls** (Chengqiang admission ¥25; 🕒 8am-5pm), the **Drum Tower** (Gulou admission ¥20; 🕒 8am-5pm), which sits slap in the middle of the Old City, and the watchtower on the southeastern corner of the city are all intact. You can do a complete circuit of the walls in around an hour.

Also inside the Old City is the **Gao House** (Jiangjun Fu admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-5pm), the former residence of General Gao Rulian, who was one of Xingcheng's most famous sons. The impressive and well-maintained **Confucius Temple** (Wenmiao admission ¥35; 🕒 8am-5pm), built in 1430, is reputedly the oldest temple in northeastern China. If you plan on seeing everything, buy the ¥100 pass that grants admission to every paid sight within the walled town.

Beach

BEACH

(Haibin Yuchang)

Xingcheng's beach is pretty enough, with OK sands and calm waters, and is a good place to base yourself away from the messy, frenetic city.

At the entrance, look for a statue honouring **Juhua Nu** (the Chrysanthemum Woman). According to local legend, she changed herself into an island to protect Xingcheng from a sea dragon. This island, **Juhua Dao**, lies 9km off the coast and is home to a fishing community, a small beach and a couple of temples. Daily **ferries** (round trip/including Chinese-speaking guide and local transport ¥90/175; 🕒 depart 8.30am, 10am, 11.30am, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm, return 1pm,

2.30pm, 3.30pm & 5pm) leave from the northern end of the beach, though frequency drops outside of summer.

At the time of research, the beach was undergoing massive upgrading, with new concrete paths and boardwalks being built. Bus 1 (¥1) travels from the bus station through Xinghai Lu to the beach (9km from the city centre) in about 30 minutes. A taxi to the area costs ¥15 to ¥20.

Sleeping

Cheap hotels around the train station won't accept foreigners. The beach is a good place to stay with many of the larger hotels accepting foreigners. Note that rooms in ordinary beach hotels go for hundreds a night during the peak season.

Haiyi Holiday Hotel

HOTEL

(Haiyi Jiari Jiudian  541 0000; 21 Haibin Lu; r & cabin ¥350-400;  )

Set just off the beach, Haiyi has decent (if small) rooms and a good in-house restaurant. Better yet, stay in one of the cute cabins clustered under leafy trees. Off-peak discounts bring rooms to the ¥200 range. To get here, turn left when you hit the beach strip and walk 300m.

Jin Zhong Zi Binguan

HOTEL

( 352 1111; 9 Xinghai Lu Yi Duan, r from ¥398;  )

Right in the heart of the city on a busy intersection of Lu Yi Duan and Lu Er Duan, this hotel offers comfortable rooms, free broadband internet and a good attached restaurant (dishes from ¥16 to ¥36). With the standard discount a double goes for around ¥200.

Eating

Unsurprisingly, seafood is big here. Restaurants line the beachfront, where you can pick your crustacean or fish from the tanks. Prices vary according to

the season so ask before eating. Most beach hotels have attached restaurants with picture menus and fair prices.

The restaurants in the listed hotels serve an excellent range of seafood, meat and vegetable dishes. The busy street leading from the South Gate to the main Lu Er Duan is lined with stalls serving noodles, barbecued meats and vegetables served with plenty of beer. For less dusty environs, head to the food court on the 5th floor of the nearby **Happy Family Mall** (Dajiating Lu Er Duan; dishes from ¥10; 🕒 9.30am-8.30pm) where you'll find delicious hand-made *baozi* and other Chinese staples.

Getting There & Around

Xingcheng is a frequent stop on the Beijing–Ha'erbin line. It can be easier to get a bus out than a train, but head to **Jinzhou South Station** for comfortable D trains to major cities. Note that buses and trains from Xingcheng go to the main station in Jinzhou; there are buses (¥5, 30 minutes) to the South Station out front.

BUS

Xingcheng's **bus station** (Xingcheng shi keyun zhan) is just to the left of the train station.

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥126, 9am
- ➔ **Jinzhou** ¥18, two hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am-3.50pm)
- ➔ **Shanhaiguan** ¥26, two hours, 6.50am
- ➔ **Shenyang** ¥81, 3½ hours, five daily

TRAIN

- ➔ **Beijing** seat/sleeper ¥64/122, six to seven hours, six daily
- ➔ **Jinzhou** seat ¥13, one hour, regular
- ➔ **Shanhaiguan** seat ¥19, 1½ hours, regular
- ➔ **Shenyang** seat ¥47, four hours, regular

Jilin

[Jilin Highlights](#)

[Changbai Shan](#)

[Yanji](#)

[Ji'an](#)

[Beidahu Ski Resort](#)

[Changchun](#)

Jilin



Pop 27.46 Million

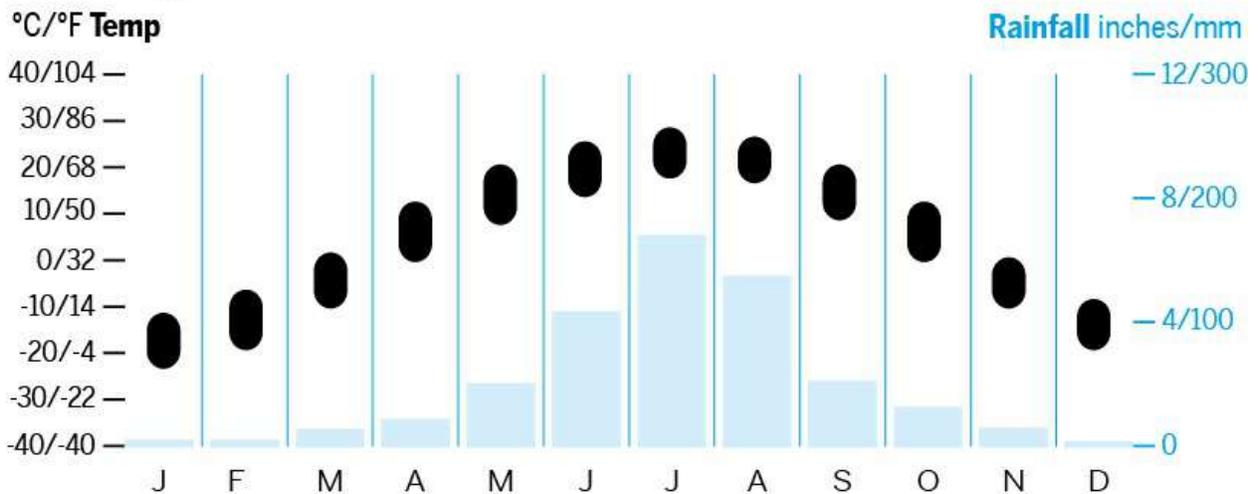
Why Go?

A flirty province, Jilin teases with the ancient and the modern, the artificial and the supernatural. Travellers tired of great walls and imperial facades can explore Japanese-influenced architecture on the trail of the puppet emperor Puyi and the ruins of an ancient Korean kingdom. In fact, much of the far-eastern region comprises the little-known Korean Autonomous Prefecture, home to more than one million ethnic Koreans. Kimchi and cold noodles dominate the menu here and there's an easy acceptance of outsiders.

Although known for its motor cities and smokestack towns, Jilin is also a popular ski destination and boasts China's largest nature reserve. So go for the contrasts? No, go for the superlatives. Heaven Lake, a stunning, deep-blue volcanic crater lake within the country's largest reserve, is one of China's most mesmerising natural wonders. Yes, Jilin can be a little rough around the edges at times, but its rewards are pure polished jewels.

When to Go

Chángchūn



- ➔ **Jun–Sep** Best months to visit Changbai Shan.
- ➔ **Jul–Aug** Countryside around the Korean Autonomous Prefecture at its most bucolic.
- ➔ **Nov–Mar** Ski season at Beidahu Ski Resort.

Best Landscapes

- ➔ [Heaven Lake](#)
- ➔ [Yanji to Baihe](#)
- ➔ [Wandu Mountain City](#)

Best Historical Sights

- ➔ [Puppet Emperor's Palace](#)
- ➔ [Koguryo Sites](#)
- ➔ [Banruo Temple](#)

Jilin Highlights



- 1 Visit China's largest nature reserve, [Changbai Shan](#), with its waterfalls, birch forests and aptly named [Heaven Lake](#)
- 2 Hit the slopes at the [Beidahu Ski Resort](#), one of China's premier skiing spots
- 3 Explore the mysterious remains of the ancient Koguryo kingdom in [Ji'an](#), just across the Yalu River from North Korea
- 4 Go on the trail of Puyi, the last emperor of China, at the

Imperial Palace of Manchu State in [Changchun](#)

5 See China's ethnic Korean culture in [Yanji](#)

History

Korean kings once ruled parts of Jilin and the discovery of important relics from the ancient Koguryo kingdom (37 BC–AD 668) in the small southeastern city of Ji'an has resulted in the area being designated a World Heritage Site by Unesco.

The Japanese occupation of Manchuria in the early 1930s pushed Jilin to the world's centre stage. Changchun became the capital of what the Japanese called Manchukuo, with Puyi (the last emperor of the Qing dynasty) given the role of figurehead of the puppet government. In 1944 the Russians wrested control of Jilin from the Japanese and, after stripping the area of its industrial base, handed the region back to Chinese control. For the next several years Jilin would pay a heavy price as one of the frontlines in the civil war between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Jilin's border with North Korea has dominated the region's more recent history. As of 2012, there were an estimated 200,000 North Korean refugees in China. The Chinese government has not looked favourably on these migrants, refusing to grant them protected refugee status and has deported those discovered by the authorities.

Climate

Jilin is bitterly cold during its long winter, with heavy snow, freezing winds and temperatures as low as -20°C. In contrast, summer is pleasantly warm, especially along the coastal east, but short. Rainfall is moderate.

Getting There & Around

The rail and bus network connects all major cities and towns, but not many daily trains head east. The new airport connects Changbai Shan with

Changchun and other major Chinese cities.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

Changbai Shan

📍 Baihe/Northern Slope 0433 / 📍 Songjianghe/Western Slope 0439

Changbai Shan (Ever-White Mountains), China's largest nature reserve, covers 2100 sq km (densely forested) on the eastern edge of Jilin. By far the region's top attraction, the park's greenery and open space offers a very welcome contrast to Jilin's industrial cities.

The centrepiece of Changbai Shan is the spellbinding Heaven Lake, whose white frozen surface melts into azure waters stretching across an outsized volcanic crater straddling the China–North Korea border come summer. Heaven Lake's beauty and mystical reputation, including its Loch Ness–style monster (*guaiwu*), lures visitors from all over China, as well as many South Koreans. For the latter, the area is known as Mt Paekdu, or Paekdusan. North Korea claims that Kim Jung-il was born here (although he's believed to have entered the world in Khabarovsk, Russia).

At lower elevations, the park's forests are filled with white birch, Korean

pinus and hundreds of varieties of plants, including the much-prized Changbai Shan ginseng. Above 2000m the landscape changes dramatically into a subalpine zone of short grasses and herbs. Giant patches of ice cover parts of the jagged peaks even in mid-June, and mountain streams rush down the treeless, rocky slopes. With the lake at an altitude of nearly 2200m, visitors should be prepared for lower temperatures. It might be sunny and hot when you enter the reserve, but at higher altitudes strong winds, rain and snow are possible.

Changbai Shan has two main recreation areas: the northern slope (Bei Po) and the western slope (Xi Po), and the entrance areas are separated by 100km of road. Visitors to either area are limited to a few sights and a few short walks. Changbai Shan is unfortunately geared towards Chinese tour groups rather than independent travellers, and a multibillion-yuan project has turned the Western region into a luxury sightseeing zone – a Banff of sorts, with hot springs resorts, skiing and golf courses but little hiking or camping.

The Wanda International Ski Resort, about 15km from the local airport has 20 runs over two mountains with some decent hiking in summer. Certainly, the skiing is superlative in the winter. For more information about skiing in the area, see [Click here](#).

Though you can visit most of the year, the best time to see the crater (and be assured the roads are open) is from June to early September. Accommodation is widely available and most travellers stay in the respective scruffy gateway towns of Baihe and Songjianghe.

Northern Slope

The views of Heaven Lake from the **northern slope** (Bei Po; admission ¥125, transport fee ¥85; 🕒 7am-6pm) are the best and most popular. The gateway town for this area, where travellers have to stay, is **Erdao Baihe**, generally known as Baihe. The town is undergoing heavy construction with roads and new buildings being upgraded to meet the increased tourist traffic.

You can see all the sights listed here in a day. Transport will drop you off

at the flashy main entrance where you buy tickets before proceeding to queue for a tourist shuttle to the main transport junction/parking lot. From here you can catch a vehicle or the final 16km trek to Heaven Lake, or a shuttle to the Changbai waterfall and to the other sights listed. Unlimited park bus rides are all included in park's obligatory transportation fee, but the Heaven Lake vehicle is another ¥80 return.

Sights & Activities

Heaven Lake

LAKE

(Tian Chi)

This dormant crater lake, 13km in circumference, was formed around AD 969. It sits at an altitude of 2194m and is surrounded by rocky outcrops and 16 mountainous peaks. You can follow a fixed route that takes you around part of the crater lip with panoramic views of the lake below. Legend has it that the lake is home to a large, but shy, beastie that has the magical power to blur any photo taken of him.

Changbai Waterfall

WATERFALL

(Changbai Pubu)

From the bus stop, walk up to a small **hot spring** where you can soak your feet or buy delicious boiled eggs (cooked in the spring). Past that a 1km trail leads to the viewpoint for the magnificent 68m Changbai Waterfall. In the past you could follow the dramatic-looking caged trail beside the falls up the base of the Heaven Lake, but that route is now officially sealed. And don't bother trying to sneak in; park staff will quickly call you back.

If the 3.5km-long boardwalk running through birch forests from the falls to the Green Deep Pool area is open, it's worth the walk.

Small Heaven Lake

LAKE

(Xiao Tian Chi)

Grab a bus from the waterfall to Small Heaven Lake. Nowhere near the size or majesty of the main crater lake, this is instead a placid lake (or large pond) worth circuiting around. You could venture off into the surrounding forests for a short hike, but don't get lost and be careful not to cross into North Korea! A boardwalk takes you along a fissure stream to the Green Deep Pool.

Green Deep Pool

LAKE

(Lu Yuan Tan)

This large, aptly named pool of water, fed by the Changbai Waterfall, is 450m ahead of the Small Heaven Lake. Cross the bus parking lot and head up the stairs to reach it. Buses run from the waterfall down to the main junction and the Underground Forest.

Underground Forest

FOREST

(Dixia Senlin)

Lying between the park entrance and transport junction, this verdant woodland area, also known as the Dell Forest (*Gudi Senlin*), has a 3km boardwalk through the woods to the forest base and back. Allow at least 1½ hours for the walk. Buses run from here back to the junction and north gate.

Sleeping & Eating

Most people stay in Erdao Baihe, about 20km north of the reserve. The town is divided into several distinct sections: the train station area, the modern Erdao area with the government buildings and new hotels, the Baihe area with shops, and Changqu where the Woodland Youth Hostel and cheap guesthouses are located.

The dusty main drag (Baishan Jie) is a few kilometres from the train station, and the riverside strip (Baihe Dajie) is gradually being turned into a modern luxury village. There's lodging and small restaurants in all areas. There are also overpriced restaurants inside the park.

A taxi from the train station into town costs ¥10. Taxi rides within town

districts cost ¥5.

Erdao Baihe

On your arrival at the train or bus station, touts for cheap guesthouses will likely approach. Many of these guesthouses can be found in the small lanes around town. Private rooms without bathroom go for ¥30 to ¥80. The more expensive rooms sometimes have their own computer.

Woodland Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Wangsong Guoji Qingnian Lushe  571 0800; cbs800@126.com; Wenhua Lu; dm/tw ¥50/220;



Set in a former hotel, the friendly Woodland offers same-sex dorms, clean twins and the usual hostel amenities such as a restaurant (dishes from ¥18 to 88), laundry, wi-fi and travel information. The hostel runs its own return shuttle to the North and Western slopes (¥30 and ¥80 respectively) and also sometimes offers overnight **camping trips** in the park.

To get here from the train or bus station, take a taxi (¥10) or ask about pick up.

Northern Slope

Lanjing Spa Holiday Inn

HOTEL

(Lanjing Wenquan Dujia Jiudian  505 2222, 574 5555; r from ¥1702;  

The top accommodation in the area, this 200-room European-style lodge (with obligatory touches of Chinese kitsch) is just 500m from the north gate entrance but quietly secluded in a wooded setting off the main road. In addition to multiple food and beverage outlets, the inn features a high-end hot spring spa with indoor and outdoor facilities.

Information

The **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang Baishan Jie) is on the main street in Baihe

towards the end of town. It has an ATM.

i Getting There & Away

Public transport only goes as far as Baihe.

Buses leave from the **long-distance bus station** (*keyunzhan*). From the train station head to the main road; the station is across and to the left.

- ➔ **Changchun** ¥127, 6½ hours, 6.10am and 5pm
- ➔ **Songjianghe** ¥8, two hours, 9.10am, 12.30pm and 2pm
- ➔ **Yanji** ¥46, 3½ hours, five daily

Trains from Baihe include the following:

- ➔ **Shenyang** hard/soft sleeper ¥107/160, 14 hours, two daily (5.35pm and 7.10pm)
- ➔ **Songjianghe** seat ¥8, two hours, five daily
- ➔ **Tonghua** hard seat/sleeper ¥24/58, six to seven hours, four daily

i Getting Around

To get to the Northern Slope entrance, take the return shuttle from the Woodland Youth Hostel (¥30, departs 8am and returns 4.30pm). Taxis charge ¥60 to ¥70 (per car) for the one-way trip to the Northern Slope entrance. Returning, it's usually easy to share a taxi back (per person ¥20) but not if you leave past 5.30pm.

THE WESTERN SLOPE

Changbai Shan's **Western Slope** (Xi Po admission ¥125, transport fee ¥85; 🕒 7am-6pm) offers much the same experience as the Northern Slope. The setup is fancier, but as in the north you have little chance of getting away from the crowds here. Once again the view from the crater is the main attraction, though the **Changbai Shan Canyon** (Changbai Shan Daxiagu), a 200m-wide and 100m-deep gorge filled with dramatic rock formations, is worth a look.

The [Woodland Youth Hostel](#) in Baihe has a return shuttle to the western slope for

¥80. Taxis also run the route for ¥200 one way.

The gateway town for the western slope is dusty **Songjianghe**, 40km to the northwest, from where there are buses and trains to Tonghua and Shenyang.

Changbaishan Airport, halfway between the park and Songjianghe, has flights to/from Shanghai (¥1350, 2½ hours), Changchun (¥1000, 45 minutes) and Beijing (¥1330, two hours).

Songjianghe offers midrange accommodation similar to Baihe, while closer to the park a number of resorts have popped up in recent years, including **Days Hotel Landscape Resort** (Lanjingdaisi Dujia Jiudian ☎0433-633 7999; r from ¥850; 📶📶📶), a stylish lodge with a lobby fireplace, high-end eating and drinking venues, and wood, glass and stone decor.

Yanji

☎0433 / Pop 432,000

The relaxed and attractive capital of China's Korean Autonomous Prefecture has one foot across the nearby border with North Korea. About a third of the population is ethnic Korean and it's common to both hear people speaking Korean and to see Korean written on official road signs.

The Bu'erhatong River (*Bu'erhatong He*) that bisects the city has pleasant parks and walkways running alongside worth strolling along. ATMs are all over the city including a 24-hour ATM at the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China (ICBC; *Zhonguo Gongshang Yinhang*) three blocks up from the train station at the corner of Changbaishan Xilu and Zhanqian Jie.

The town is also a launching pad for tours into Rason in North Korea. For more information about visiting North Korea, see [Click here](#).

Sleeping & Eating

There are a few budget hotels around the train station. Head to Guangming Lu near the corner of Renmin Lu for a busy pedestrian street with plenty of restaurants and a street market. Several cool Korean-run coffeeshops line Aidan Lu near the corner of Juzi Lu, a couple of doors down from the old bus

station (*lao keyun zhan*). You can grab a decent sandwich and latte while surfing the net on the free wi-fi.

Baishan Hotel

HOTEL

(Baishan Dasha 📍 258 8888; www.baishan-hotel.com; 66 Youyi Lu, d & tw ¥888-1088; 📶 @ 📶)

Seated just a stone's throw away from the river, the Baishan Hotel is an imposing piece of utilitarian architecture with large, comfortable rooms and friendly, efficient staff. The attached ground-floor restaurant has a large selection of excellent Korean and Chinese dishes (from ¥10). Ask for a river-facing room. Discounts knock prices down to the ¥400 range.

Getting There & Away

The train station and new bus station are south of the river, while the commercial district and old bus station are north. Taxi fares start at ¥5; most rides cost less than ¥10.

Buses to Changchun (¥116, 5½ hours, hourly, 6am to 5pm) leave from in front of the train station or **old bus station** (*lao keyun zhan Aidan Lu*).

Yanji's **new long-distance bus station** (*xin keyun zhan 2319 Changbaishan Xilu*) serves the following destinations:

- ➔ **Erdao Baihe** ¥45, four hours, six daily (6.40am to 2.30pm)
- ➔ **Hunchun** ¥30, two hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 3.50pm)
- ➔ **Mudanjiang** ¥73, five hours, three daily (6.30am, 9.50am, and 12.10pm)

Train service includes the following:

- ➔ **Changchun** hard seat/sleeper ¥70/129, eight to nine hours, five daily

Ji'an

📍 0435 / Pop 240,000

This small city, just across the Yalu River from North Korea, was once part of the Koguryo (*Gaogouli*) kingdom, a Korean dynasty that ruled areas of

northern China and the Korean peninsula from 37 BC to AD 668. Ji'an's extensive Koguryo pyramids, ruins and tombs resulted in Unesco designating it a World Heritage Site in 2004. Archaeologists have unearthed remains of three cities plus some 40 tombs around Ji'an and the town of Huanren (in Liaoning province).

With a drive to capitalise on its Korean heritage's tourism potential, modern-day Ji'an has transformed itself into one of northern China's more pleasant towns, with well-tended parks, leafy streets and a renovated riverfront area where you can gaze across to North Korea. Add in the town's mountain backdrop, excellent Korean food, friendly locals and scenic train or bus rides getting here, and it's a great little stopover on a loop through Dongbei.

Summer evenings are lively in Ji'an, both at the riverside and the park across from the hotel Cuiyuan Binguan, where live amateur performances of traditional song and dance are held most nights.

Sights

The main sights other than the river park are scattered on the outskirts of the city and you'll need to hire a taxi. Expect to pay at least ¥100 for a three-hour circuit. You'll need to negotiate further if you want to linger at the sights.

The **Koguryo sites** (🕒 8am-5pm) are spread around the very lovely green hills surrounding Ji'an. Despite their historical significance, most sites don't have a terrible amount of detail to examine. Many of the tombs are cairns – essentially heaps of stones piled above burial sites – while others are stone pyramids. But there is something magical about the open fields and high terraces they were constructed on that makes you want to linger. The most impressive site, Wandu Mountain City, needs two hours if you want to wander the expansive grounds.

A ¥100 ticket gets you into the four most important sites; you can also buy separate tickets for each sight for ¥30.

★ Wandu Mountain City

RUIN

(Wandu Shancheng)

First built in AD 3, the city became capital of the Koguryo kingdom in 209, after the fall of the first capital, Guonei city (on the site of present-day Ji'an). There's little left of the original buildings, but the layout has been cleared and it's immensely enjoyable scrambling about the terraces and taking in the views that surely must have been a deciding factor in establishing the capital here.

Down on the plains below the city, on a large shelf above the river, sits Ji'an's largest collection of giant stone cairns. Erected after the destruction of Wandu, this vast cemetery for the city's noblemen is so far unaffected by mass tourism. The sight of the massive rock piles in fields of Spanish needle (*Bidens pilosa*) is probably the most photogenic in all Ji'an.

Cemetery of Noblemen at Yushan

TOMB

(Yushan Guizu Mudi)

Scattered about a small gated park lie the stone crypts of various Koguryo-kingdom noblemen. You can enter and explore Tomb No 5 (wait for the guide) via a creepy descent underground. As your eyes adjust to the light in the chilly stone chamber, look for paintings of dragons, white tigers, black tortoises and lotus flowers on the walls and ceilings.

Haotaiwang Stele

TOMB

(Haotaiwang Bei)

Inscribed with 1775 Chinese characters, the Haotaiwang Stele, a 6m-tall stone slab that dates to AD 415, records the accomplishments of Koguryo king Tan De (374–412), known as Haotaiwang. The surface is blackened from a botched restoration effort when it was re-discovered in 1877: to remove the moss covering the surface, locals smeared it with cow dung and set it alight. Tan De's tomb (labelled 'Taiwang Tomb') is on the same site.

Jiangjunfen (General's Tomb)

TOMB

()

One of the largest pyramid-like structures in the region, the 12m-tall Jiangjunfen was built during the 4th century for a Koguryo ruler. The nearby smaller tomb is the resting place of a family member. The site is set among the hills 4km northeast of town.

Ji'an Museum

MUSEUM

(Ji'an Bowuguan Jianshe Lu; ¥70, ¥35 if you show your ¥100 Koguryo ticket; 🕒 8am-5.20pm Tue-Sun)

The sleek but pricey museum sports a brown stone base and glass top with sails that open up like leaves. It features a small display of artefacts from the Koguryo era with good English captions. A lovely park with stone fountains, landscaped gardens, cobbled walkways, lotus ponds and statues is located just next to the museum.

Riverside Plaza

WATERFRONT

This lively modern waterfront park features riverside decks where you can view North Korea across the Yalu River. You can also take a boat ride along the river (¥50, 40 minutes). The park is stretched out along Yanjiang Lu, south of the main Shengli Lu.

Sleeping & Eating

Head to the markets east and west of Liming Jie for fruit, dumplings, bread and barbecue. Tuanjie Lu (the parallel road north of Shengli Lu) is home to Chinese greasy spoons, while Liming Jie offers a number of hotpot and barbecue spots. Jianshe Lu near Shengli Lu has several clean Chinese fast-food joints.

Luming Binguan

HOTEL

(📞 622 1293; 653 Shengli Lu, s/tw without bathroom ¥40/70, d with bathroom & incl breakfast ¥148-158; 🌐 @ 📶)

Friendly staff and well-kept rooms make this Ji'an's best option. It's 500m east of the bus station on the north side of Shengli Lu just before you reach Liming Jie. Look for the English sign reading 'Guesthouse' above the entrance. Some rooms have their own computer.

i Getting There & Around

The main routes to Ji'an are via Tonghua and Baihe (the gateway to Changbai Shan) to the north, and Shenyang and Dandong in Liaoning province to the west and south. If you're travelling to Baihe by bus, you need to change in Tonghua. Don't bother with trains as only there's only one per day to Tonghua.

Shengli Lu runs east–west through town, with the **long-distance bus station** (keyun zhan Shengli Lu) at the west end. The main north–south road is Li Ming Jie, which ends at the river park. There's a Bank of China at the corner of Shengli Lu and Li Ming Jie with a 24-hour ATM. It's easy to get around on foot.

Bus service includes the following destinations:

- ➔ **Changchun** ¥109, 5½ hours, two daily (6.25am and 2.50pm)
- ➔ **Dandong** ¥85, six hours, two daily (7.30am and 9.20am)
- ➔ **Shenyang** ¥98, six hours, two daily (6.20am and 11.20am)
- ➔ **Tonghua** ¥28, two hours, hourly (5am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Baihe** (via Tonghua) ¥76, six hours, 7.30am and 1.30pm

Beidahu Ski Resort

Beidahu Ski Resort

SKIING

(Beidahu Huaxuechang; www.beidahuski.com)

Since it hosted the 2007 Asian Winter Games, Beidahu has established itself as one of China's premier ski resorts. Located in a tiny village 53km south of

Jilin City, the resort has runs on two mountains ranging from beginner to advanced. Though it hasn't turned a profit since 2009, Beidahu is seeing renewed investment resulting in an additional 10km of runs being added each year. For more on skiing here, including tour, transport and accommodation information, see [China Ski Tours](http://www.chinaskitours.com) (www.chinaskitours.com).

THE LITTLE-KNOWN KOREAN AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE

Ask people to list some of China's ethnic minorities and you will hear talk of Tibetans, Uighur, Mongolians, Hui and perhaps the Li or Dai. Mention that China also has almost two million ethnic Koreans, and that the majority live in their own autonomous prefecture along the North Korean border, and you'll likely get some astonished looks.

The **Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture** (Yanbian Chaoxianzu Zizhizhou) is the only minority prefecture in the north of China. While established in 1955, in part as a reward for Koreans who fought on the side of the communists during the Civil War, the region has in fact been settled by Koreans since the 1880s. Today, street signs are officially bilingual, much of the population is bilingual (thanks to state-sponsored Korean-language schools), TV shows and newspapers are in Korean, and ethnic food is ubiquitous.

Over the past decades, however, the percentage of ethnic Koreans has dropped: from 60% in the 1950s to 38% today. In part this reflects the Chinese government's desire to stamp out any potential for irredentism (many Koreans refer to Yanbian as the 'third Korea', after the South and North) by encouraging Han migrants. More positively, it seems to indicate that the well-educated ethnic population experiences little to no discrimination in seeking employment or advancement outside the prefecture. Yanbian may occupy a quarter of all Jilin province (it's about half the size of South Korea), but the population is little more than two million, and opportunities are limited.

For those doing an extensive tour of northern China, consider looping up through Yanbian as you go from Dandong or Changbaishan to Ha'erbin. The regional capital, Yanji, is an attractive laid-back place, loaded with excellent Korean food, and the routes in and out run hour after hour through a bucolic landscape of corn fields, rolling forested hills and little brick villages.

Changchun

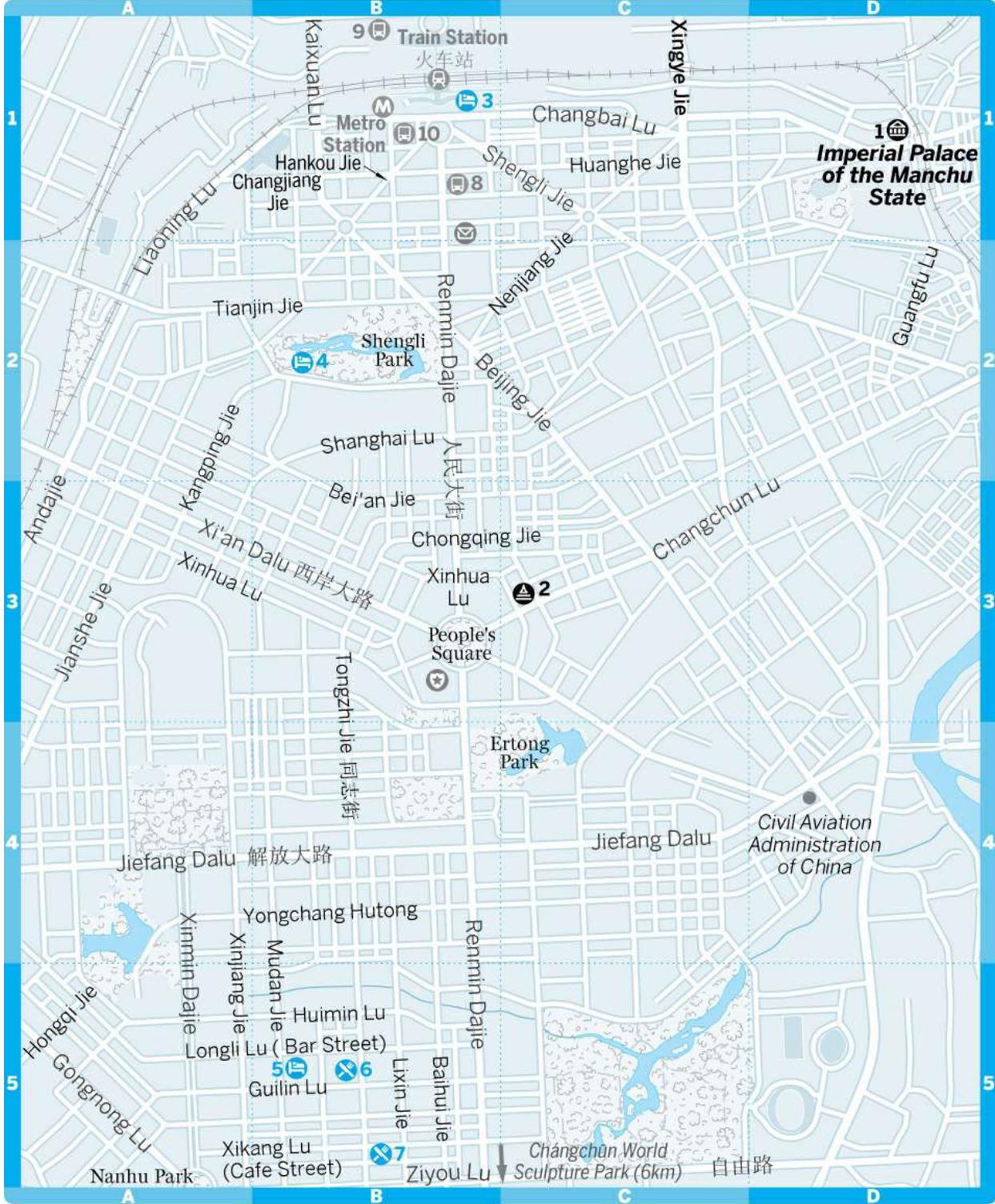
📍 0431 / Pop 7.64 million

The Japanese capital of Manchukuo between 1933 and 1945, Changchun was also the centre of the Chinese film industry in the 1950s and '60s. Visitors expecting a Hollywood-like backdrop of palm trees and beautiful people will be disappointed, though. Changchun is now better known as China's motor city, the largest automobile-manufacturing base in the country.

But for people on the trail of Puyi, China's last emperor, it's an essential stop. There are also a few historic buildings dating back to the early 20th century, mostly along and off Renmin Dajie.

Changchun sprawls from north to south. The long-distance bus station and the train station are at the north end of the city and surrounded by budget hotels. If you plan on more than an overnight in Changchun, however, the southern end is by far a more pleasant neighbourhood to stay in.

Chángchūn



Changchun

📍 Top Sights

1 [Imperial Palace of the Manchu State](#) D1

📍 Sights

2 [Banruo Temple](#) C3

🏠 Sleeping

3 [Home Inn](#) B1

4 [Songyuan Hotel](#) B2

5 [Star Moon Fashion Inn](#) B5

🍴 Eating

6 [M+M](#) B5

7 [Shinza Restaurant](#) B5

Transport

8 [Changchun Long-Distance Bus Station](#) B1

9 [North Bus Station](#) B1

10 [Train Station Bus Stop](#) B1

👁️ Sights

★ [Imperial Palace of the Manchu State](#)

MUSEUM

(Puppet Emperor's Palace, Weiman Huanggong Bowuyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 5 Guangfu Lu; admission ¥80; 🕒 8.30am-4.20pm, last entry 40min before closing)

This is the former residence of Puyi, the Qing dynasty's final emperor. His study, bedroom, temple, his wife's quarters and opium den, as well as his concubine's rooms, have all been elaborately re-created. His American car is also on display, but it's the exhibition on his extraordinary life, told in part with a fantastic collection of photos, that is most enthralling. An English audio guide costs ¥20. A taxi from the train station here costs ¥7.

In 1908, at age two, Puyi became the 10th Qing emperor. His reign lasted

just over three years, but he was allowed to remain in the Forbidden City until 1924. He subsequently lived in Tianjin until 1932, when the Japanese installed him at this palace as the ‘puppet emperor’ of Manchukuo. After Japan’s defeat in 1945, Puyi was captured by Russian troops. In 1950 he was returned to China, where he spent 10 years in a re-education camp before ending his days as a gardener in Beijing. Puyi died in 1967; his story later became the basis for the Bernardo Bertolucci film *The Last Emperor* (1987).

While you're here, look out for the swimming pool (Puyi never used it as an emperor was never allowed to show his body in public) and the dank underground air-raid shelter where he retreated with his family when the bombs fell.

Changchun World Sculpture Park

SCULPTURE

(Changchun Sijie Diaodu Gongyuan Renmin Dajie; ¥20; 🕒 8am-5pm; 📍 66)

Nestled amidst 90 hectare of parklands in the far south of the city, the Changchun World Sculpture Park hosts an impressive array of sculptures from Chinese and international artists. The park is one of Changchun's unsung sights and worth sniffing out. A taxi from People's Sq will cost ¥25 to ¥30.

Banruo Temple

BUDDHIST

(Banruo Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 137 Changchun Lu; 📍 281, 256)

One of the largest Buddhist temples in northeast China, Banruo is a lively place of worship for locals and pilgrims alike. After touring the inner grounds, wander the back alleys to observe the merchants peddling all manner of charms, statues, shrines and incense to the faithful.

Jingyuetan National Forest Park

NATIONAL PARK

(Jingyuetan Guojia Senlin Gongyuan admission ¥30; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

This massive lakeside park on the southeast outskirts of Changchun encompasses more than 90 sq km and is a welcome break from the city. Established in 1934, it features well-tended gardens, pavilions, lookouts and a

20km round-the-lake bike path. Shuttle buses (¥10) take you to the dam, where you can take boat rides. At the front gate there are bike rentals (¥30 per hour).

Take the light rail from the station on Liaoning Lu (¥4, 55 minutes) to Jingyue Gongyuan Station.

Sleeping

There are half a dozen budget hotels within walking distance of the train station, with broadband-enabled rooms going for between ¥140 and ¥180.

Star Moon Fashion Inn

HOTEL

(Xingyue Shishang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8509 0555; www.starmoon.inn.com.cn; 1166 Longli Lu, d from ¥148; ❄️ @ 📶)

For a grey industrial city, Changchun has its share of 'fashion inns' (hip hotels). This modern hotel is in a good location near shops, restaurants and nightlife.

Home Inn

HOTEL

(Rujia Kuaijie Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8986 3000; 20 Changbai Lu, r ¥159-209; 🚫 ❄️ @)

If you need a nonsmoking option near the train station, this branch of the well-run, spotlessly clean nationwide chain is a good choice. Rooms have broadband internet and there's also a computer in the lobby for guest use.

★ Songyuan Hotel

HOTEL

(Songyuan Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8272 7001; www.songyuanhotel.com; 1169 Xinfalu, d & tw ¥498-998; ❄️ @ 📶)

Nestled within its own park grounds, the Songyuan was a former army commander's residence. Today, its heritage buildings now host tourists in plush, well-decorated rooms. Friendly staff and several good in-house

restaurants (Japanese and international) seal the deal. The downside is a slightly inconvenient location. A taxi from the train station costs ¥7.

Eating & Drinking

The area surrounding Tongzhi Jie between Longli Lu and Ziyou Lu is one of the most popular parts of Changchun and is packed with inexpensive restaurants, music and clothing shops. Tree-lined Xikang Lu (west of Tongzhi Jie) is now an unofficial **cafe street**. Most of the dozen or so cafes have wi-fi and offer sandwiches and other simple meals. Guilin Lu is lined with cheap eateries and snack stalls.

M+M

NOODLES

(Mian Mian  ; 2447 Tongzhi Jie; noodles ¥18-20; 🕒 10am-10pm)

You can slurp down your moreish noodles hot or cold, dry or in soup, with meat or without, at this popular 2nd-floor eatery overlooking busy Tongzhi Jie. Beer is ¥5.

Shinza Restaurant

KOREAN

(Yanbian Xinzi Fandian  ; 728 Xikang Lu; dishes ¥12-38; 🕒 9am-midnight)

This comfortable dining establishment offers Korean classics such as *shiguo banfan* (*bibimbap*; rice, vegetables and eggs served in a clay pot) as well as dumplings and filling cold noodle dishes. Korean beers are also available and there's a picture menu to help you order.

Information

There are 24-hour ATMs all over town and in the north bus station.

Changchun Live (www.changchunlive.com) is a useful site started by long-term expats.

Civil Aviation Administration of China

TRAVEL AGENCY

(CAAC., Zhongguo Minhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8298 8888; 480 Jiefang Dalu)

For air tickets and shuttle buses to the airport. It's in the CAAC Hotel.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Changchun Longjia International Airport

AIRPORT

(Changchun Longjia Guoji Jichang)

Has daily flights to major cities including Beijing (¥900, two hours), Shanghai (¥1000, 2½ hours) and Changbai Shan (¥1000, 1 hour).

BUS

The **long-distance bus station** (changtu qichezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 226 Renmin Dajie) is two blocks south of the train station. Buses to Ha'erbin leave from the **north bus station** (keyun bei zhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) behind the train station. Facing the station, head left and take the underpass just past the 24-hour KFC (not to be confused with the non-24-hour KFC to the right of the train station, or the two across the street).

- ➔ **Ha'erbin** ¥76, 3½ hours, 8.30am, 10am and noon
- ➔ **Yanji** ¥116, five hours, hourly, 7am to 5pm
- ➔ **Shenyang** ¥83, 4½ hours, 10am and 2pm

TRAIN

Changchun's **main railway station** (Changchun huoche zhan) serves the following destinations. Avoid getting tickets for Changchun's west station (*xi zhan*), 13km out of town.

- ➔ **Beijing** (D train) seat ¥245, seven hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Beijing** hard seat/sleeper ¥133/245, nine to 14 hours, nine daily
- ➔ **Ha'erbin** (D train) seat ¥111, two hours, 8am and 1.50pm
- ➔ **Shenyang** (G train) seat ¥144, 2½ hours, 17 daily

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 20km east of the city centre, between Changchun and Jilin. Shuttle buses to the airport (¥20, 50 minutes, every 30 minutes from 6am to 7pm) leave from the **CAAC Hotel** (Minhang Binguan 480 Jiefang Dalu) on the east side of town. Taxi fares to the airport are ¥80-100 for the 40-minute trip.

BUS

Bus 6 follows Renmin Dajie from the **train station bus stop** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) all the way to the south part of town. Buses 62 and 362 travel from the train station to the Chongqing Lu and Tongzhi Jie shopping districts.

LIGHT RAIL & METRO

The **Changchun Light Rail** (Changchun Qinggui  6.30am-9pm) service is only useful for getting to [Jingyuetan National Forest Park](#). The station is just west of the train station. Subway lines are being laid but won't be ready for some years yet.

TAXI

Taxi fares start at ¥5.

Heilongjiang

[Heilongjiang Highlights](#)

[Ha'erbin](#)

[Mudanjiang](#)

[Around Mudanjiang](#)

[Wudalian Chi](#)

[Russian Borderlands](#)

Heilongjiang



Pop 38.3 Million

Why Go?

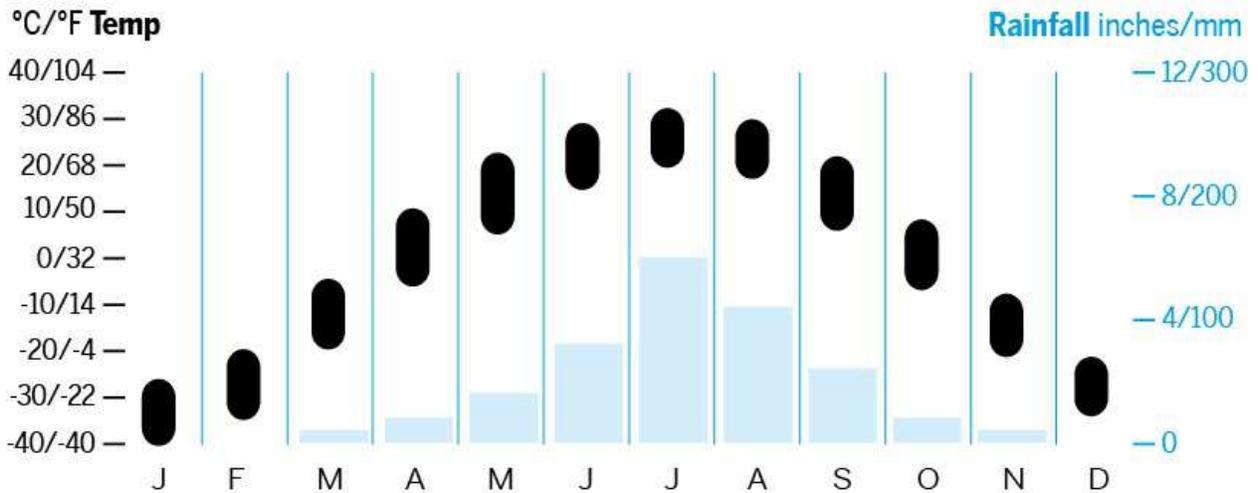
Heilongjiang means Black Dragon River, and this particular coiling dragon is the separating line between China and Russia. Across the province a neighbourly influence is evident in architecture, food and even souvenirs. Capital Ha'erbin's famed cobblestoned streets and European-style facades is ground zero for this hybrid experience.

Of course, it gets cold in China's northernmost province, sub-Arctic cold – but that frigid weather is put to good use in winter, the peak tourist season. Ha'erbin hosts a world-renowned ice sculpture festival and the region has some of China's finest ski runs. It gets busy but it's worth swaddling yourself in layers and joining the crowds.

Outside the cities, Heilongjiang is a rugged, beautiful landscape of forests, lakes, mountains and dormant volcanoes. From Mohe, China's most northerly city, you can access the remote Beijicun and Beihongcun for bragging rights to say you have stood at the very top of the Middle Kingdom.

When to Go

Hā'ěrbīn



- **Jan** Ha'erbin hosts the Ice and Snow Festival.
- **Jun** Mohe holds the Northern Lights Festival.
- **Dec–Mar** Ski season at Yabuli and Wudalian Chi.

Best Landscapes

- [Laohei Shan](#)
- [Beijicun](#)
- [Jingpo Hu](#)

Best Activities

- [Ice and Snow Festival](#)
- [Skiing](#)
- Hiking in [Wudalian Chi](#)

- 3 Walk the brick-lined streets of the historic [Daoliqiu district](#) and explore Ha'erbin's Russian and Jewish past
- 4 Hike to the top of a dormant volcano and through the lava fields of [Wudalian Chi](#)
- 5 Ski and snowboard at [Yabuli](#), one of China's finest ski resorts
- 6 Go on the search for [rare cranes](#) in nature reserves across the north

History

Heilongjiang forms the northernmost part of Dongbei, the region formerly known as Manchuria. Its proximity to Russia has long meant strong historical and trade links with its northern neighbour. In the mid-19th century, Russia annexed parts of Heilongjiang, while in 1897 Russian workers arrived to build a railway line linking Vladivostok with Ha'erbin. By the 1920s well over 100,000 Russians resided in Ha'erbin alone.

Heilongjiang was occupied by the Japanese between 1931 and 1945. After the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power in 1949, relations with Russia grew steadily frostier, culminating in a brief border war in 1969. Sino-Russian ties have improved much in recent years and the two sides finally settled on the border in July 2008, after 40-odd years of negotiation.

Climate

The region experiences long, freezing winters, with temperatures dropping below -30°C . Short summers are warm and humid, especially in the south and east. Temperatures in the mid- to high 30s are possible and afternoon showers are common.

Language

The vast majority of people in Heilongjiang speak northeast Mandarin, which is the same as standard Mandarin, apart from the accent. You're also likely to

hear a lot of Russian. In the far northwest, tiny numbers of the Oroqen, Daur, Ewenki and Hezhen ethnic minorities still speak their own languages. A handful of people can speak Manchu, once the dominant tongue of the region.

Getting There & Around

Ha'erbin is the logistical hub for the region and has extensive links with the rest of China. Buses are often a quicker way of getting around, rather than the slow local trains. If you're headed for Inner Mongolia, direct trains run from Ha'erbin to the cities of Haila'er and Manzhouli.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥150

\$\$ ¥150 to ¥300

\$\$\$ more than ¥300

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

Ha'erbin

 0451 / Pop 4.59 million

For a city of its size, Ha'erbin (Harbin) is surprisingly easygoing. Cars (and even bicycles) are barred from Zhongyang Dajie, the main drag of the historic Daoliqiu district, where most of Ha'erbin's historical buildings can be found. The long riverfront also provides sanctuary for walkers, as does Sun

Island on the other side.

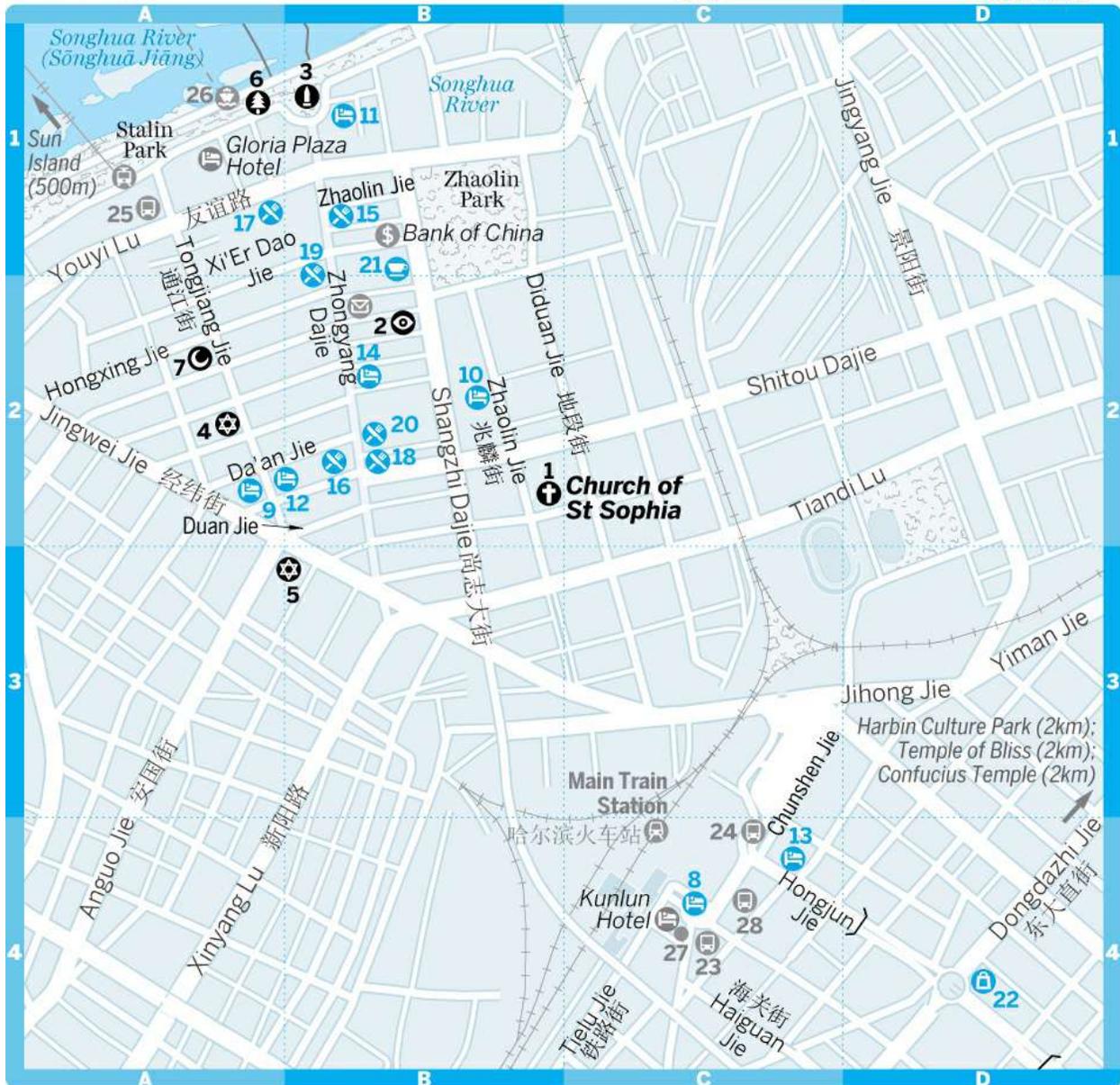
The city's sights are as varied as the architectural styles on the old street. Temples, old churches and synagogues coexist, while deep in the southern suburbs a former Japanese germ-warfare base is a sobering reminder of less harmonious times. Ha'erbin's rich Russian and Jewish heritage makes it worth visiting at any time of year, but winter is tops with the world-class ice sculpture festival turning the frosty riverfront, and other venues, into a multicoloured wonderland.

History

In 1896 Russia negotiated a contract to build a railway line from Vladivostok to both Ha'erbin, then a small fishing village, and Dalian (in Liaoning province). The subsequent influx of Russian workers was followed by Russian Jews and then White Russians escaping the 1917 Russian Revolution.

These days, Ha'erbin, whose name comes from a Manchu word meaning 'a place to dry fishing nets', is an ever-expanding, largely industrial city. While Chinese are the majority, foreign faces are still common on the streets.

Ha'erbin



Ha'erbin

📍 Top Sights

1 [Church of St Sophia](#) B2

📍 Sights

2 [Daoliqiu \(Old Harbin\)](#) B2

3 [Flood Control Monument](#) B1

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 4 | Ha'erbin Main Synagogue | A2 |
| 5 | Ha'erbin New Synagogue | B3 |
| | Jewish Middle School | A2 |
| 6 | Stalin Park | A1 |
| 7 | Turkish Mosque | A2 |

Sleeping

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| 8 | Hanting Express | C4 |
| 9 | Haolin Business Hotel | A2 |
| 10 | Ibis Hotel | B2 |
| 11 | Jindi Binguan | B1 |
| 12 | Kazy International Youth Hostel | B2 |
| 13 | Lungmen Grand Hotel | C4 |
| 14 | Modern Hotel | B2 |

Eating

| | | |
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| 15 | Cafe Russia | B1 |
| 16 | Haerbin Food Market | B2 |
| | Katusha | B1 |
| 17 | Laifubiandan Chongqing Xiao Mian | A1 |
| 18 | Longjiang Xiaochi Jie | B2 |
| 19 | Old Chang's Spring Rolls | B1 |
| 20 | Orient King of Eastern Dumplings | B2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|
| 21 | Ming Tien | B1 |
|----|---------------------------|----|

Shopping

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|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 22 | Hongbo Century Square | D4 |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|

Information

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|--|--|----|
| | Haerbin Train Booking Office | C4 |
| | Harbin Modern Travel Company | B2 |

Transport

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|----|---|----|
| 23 | Airport Shuttle | C4 |
| 24 | Bus stop | C4 |
| 25 | Bus stop to Siberian Tiger Park | A1 |
| 26 | Ferries to Sun Island Park | A1 |

[27 Ha'erbin Railway International Travel Service](#)

C4

[28 Long-Distance Bus Station](#)

C4

Sights

★ Church of St Sophia

CHURCH

(Sheng Suofeiya Jiaotang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Zhaolin Jie & Toulong Jie; admission ¥20;

 8.30am-5pm)

The red-brick Russian Orthodox Church of St Sophia, with its distinctive green onion dome and roosting pigeons, is Ha'erbin's most famous landmark. Built in 1907, the church has traded religion for photographs of Ha'erbin from the early 1900s. Its unrestored interior and dusty chandeliers evokes a faded glamour of yesteryear.

The church is fronted by a large square replete with fountains and sketch artists, and is a popular spot for locals and tourists alike.

Stalin Park

PARK

(Sidalin Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

This tree-lined promenade, dotted with statues, historic buildings, playgrounds and cafes, runs along a 42km-long embankment built to curb the unruly Songhua River and is a pleasant spot to escape the hubbub of the city. The **Flood Control Monument** (Fanghong Shengli Jinianta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) from 1958 commemorates the thousands of people who died in years past when the river overflowed its banks.

Boats rides along the river and to/from [Sun Island](#) also depart from various points along the park.

Sun Island Park

PARK

(Taiyangdao Gongyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); cable car one way/return ¥50/80;  cable car 8.30am-

5pm)

Across the river from [Stalin Park](#) is Sun Island Park, a 38-sq-km recreational zone with landscaped gardens, a ‘water world’, a ‘Russian-style’ town, and various small galleries and museums. It’s a pleasant place to have a picnic, walk or bike (¥60 per hour), though as usual you need to pay extra to get into many areas (too kitsch and not worth the money in our opinion).

Boat across (¥10 return) depart from one of many docks just north of the Flood Control Monument, or catch the nearby cable car.

★ **Siberian Tiger Park**

WILDLIFE RESERVE

(Dongbeihu Linyuan 88 Songbei Jie; admission ¥100; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm, last tour 4pm; 🚌 13, 122)

Here, visitors get the chance to see one of the world’s rarest animals (and largest felines) up close via safari-style tour buses which do a circuit of the enclosures. Finish your visit by walking around large fenced spaces where tigers roam freely. The centre has successfully bred over 1000 cats and watching them play, sleep and mate is fascinating.

The park is 15km north of the city. A taxi from the city centre costs ¥30 to ¥40 one way. A tourist shuttle (¥10 return, hourly) leaves from the top of Tongjiang Jie (at the bus stop before the cable car to Sun Island) and does a loop to/from the park.

The squeamish should avoid buying (live!) chickens (¥60) and even cows (¥2800) to throw to the animals. Chinese visitors also take absolute pleasure in dangling strips of meat (¥20) for tigers to jump up and grab at. While the tigers live in decent conditions with plenty of space to roam, other animals including a lion and liger (a cross between a tiger and lion), live in less-than-stellar enclosures.

Japanese Germ Warfare Experimental Base

MUSEUM

(Qinhua Rijun Di 731 Budui Yizhi Xinjiang Dajie; 🕒 9-11am & 1-3.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This museum is set in the notorious Japanese Germ Warfare Experimental Base (Division 731). Between 1939 and 1945, prisoners of war and civilians were frozen alive, subjected to vivisection or infected with bubonic plague, syphilis and other virulent diseases. Three to four thousand people died here

in the most gruesome fashion. The museum includes photos, sculptures and exhibits of the equipment used by the Japanese. There are extensive English captions and an audio guide is available for ¥15.

The base is in the south of Ha'erbin and takes an hour to get to by bus. In the alley beside the Kunlun Hotel on Tielu Jie, catch bus 338 or 343 (¥2). Get off at the stop called Xinjiang Dajie. Walk back 500m along Xinjiang Dajie and look for the base on the left-hand side of the road. If you get lost, just ask the locals the way to 'Qi San Yi' (731).

Harbin Culture Park

AMUSEMENT PARK

(Ha'erbin Wenhua Gongyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nantong Jie; admission ¥5, rides from ¥30; 🕒 9am-5.30pm)

If culture equals amusement, then the creators of this park have certainly ticked all the right boxes. The gigantic Ferris wheel offers panoramic views of the city and it's worth strolling around the grounds to see the locals having a great time. The park is in between the [Temple of Bliss](#) and the [Confucius Temple](#). Turn left after exiting the Temple of Bliss and enter the park past an atmospheric old Russian church.

DON'T MISS

JEWISH HA'ERBIN

The Jewish influence on Ha'erbin was surprisingly long lasting; the last original Jewish resident of the city died in 1985. In the 1920s Ha'erbin was home to some 20,000 Jews, the largest Jewish community in the Far East at the time. **Tongjiang Jie** was the centre of Jewish life in the city till the end of WWII, and many of the buildings on the street are from the early 20th century.

Ha'erbin New Synagogue

SYNAGOGUE

(Ha'erbin Youtai Xinhuitang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 162 Jingwei Jie; admission ¥25; 🕒 8.30am-5pm)

This synagogue was built in 1921 by the city's Jewish community, the vast majority of whom had emigrated from Russia. Restored and converted into a museum in 2004, the 1st floor is an art gallery with pictures and photos of old Ha'erbin. The 2nd and 3rd

floors feature photos and exhibits that tell the story of the history and rich cultural life of Ha'erbin's Jews.

Ha'erbin Main Synagogue

SYNAGOGUE

(Ha'erbin Yutai Huitang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 82 Tongjiang Jie, Yutai Jiuhuitang;)

The beautiful old Main Synagogue, built in 1909, has been recently refurbished and has reopened as a concert venue with a small museum. Close by is the former [Jewish Middle School](#).

Jewish Middle School

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Yutai Zhongxue [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tongjiang Jie;)

This was the first Jewish middle school in the Far East and most recently housed a Korean (!) school. It has since been immaculately restored as part of a shared compound with the original synagogue.

Turkish Mosque

MOSQUE

(Tu'erqi Qingzhen Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tongjiang Jie;)

Built in 1906, this mosque is no longer operating and is closed to visitors, but you can take a peek from the outside.

Huangshan Jewish Cemetery

CEMETERY

(Huangshan Gongmu)

Located in the far eastern suburbs of Ha'erbin, this is the largest Jewish cemetery in East Asia. There are more than 600 graves here, all well maintained. A taxi here takes around 45 minutes and costs about ¥100.

Old Ha'erbin

The [Daoliqiu district](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), in particular the brick-lined street of **Zhongyang Dajie**, is the most obvious legacy of Russia's involvement with Ha'erbin. Now a pedestrian-only zone, the street is lined with buildings that date back to the early 20th century. Some are imposing, others distinctly dilapidated, but the mix of architectural styles is fascinating. Other nearby streets lined with handsome old buildings include **Shangzhi Dajie** and **Zhaolin Jie**.

Elsewhere in the city, **Hongjun Jie**, heading south from the train station,

and **Dongdazhi Jie** also feature rows of stately old buildings, including a few churches. The latter street, and some of its arteries, also have the dubious reputation of sporting some heady postmodern Russian-style architecture of questionable taste.

In all of these areas, the city has erected plaques on the most worthy buildings giving short English and Chinese descriptions of the date of construction, the architect and the former usage.

Temples

A number of temples are within walking distance of each other in the Nangang district. The first sits off a pedestrian-only street reachable by taxi from the Daoliqiu district for ¥10. For the Confucius Temple, look for an arch down to the right at the start of the pedestrian street. Pass through this and then a second arch on the left. The temple is a 10-minute walk along Wen Miao Jie. You can also cut through the [Harbin Culture Park](#) after the Temple of Bliss en route to the Confucius Temple.

Temple of Bliss

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Jile Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Dongdazhi Jie; admission ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-4pm)

Heilongjiang's largest temple complex has an active Buddhist community in residence, giving it a genuine religious atmosphere despite the ticket sales. There are many large statues here, including Milefo (Maitreya, the Buddha yet-to-come) and the Sakyamuni Buddha. The **Seven-Tiered Buddhist Pagoda** (Qiji Futu Ta) dates from 1924. The entrance to the temple is on the left at the start of the pedestrian street.

Ha'erbin Confucius Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wen Miao 25 Wenmiao Jie; 🕒 9am-3.30pm, closed Wed) **FREE**

This peaceful temple complex was first built in 1929 and is said to be the largest Confucian temple in northeastern China. Most of what you see now, though, is from a recent restoration. The site also houses the fascinating **Minority Cultures Museum** replete with photos and artefacts focusing on

indigenous tribes such as the Ewenki. You need a passport to enter.

From the main gate of the Harbin Culture Park, cross Nantong Dajie and head 1km southeast along Nanhai Lu. You will see the walls of the large compound. Follow it to get to round to the main entrance.

THE GREAT CATS

As with many of the world's powerful wild creatures, size did not give the Amur (Siberian) tiger much of an advantage during the 20th century. The largest feline in the world, topping 300kg for males and capable of taking down a brown bear in a fair fight, was no match for the poachers, wars, revolutions, railway construction and economic development in its traditional territory in Russia, China and Korea. These days it's believed that fewer than 500 of the great cats still prowl the wilds of Russia. Perhaps 20 are divided between Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces in China, and none are left in Korea.

It's a dismal figure, and in 1986 the Chinese government set about boosting numbers by establishing the world's largest [tiger breeding centre](#) in Ha'erbin. Beginning with only eight tigers, the centre has been so successful that the worldwide number of Siberian tigers may now exceed 1000.

The majority of these are in captivity, which makes any wild sighting a cause for celebration. In April 2012 the figurative champagne flowed when an Amur tiger was captured on film for the first time in Wangqing Nature Reserve in Jilin province. Speculation had it that the cat was one of several that appeared in March in Hunchun along the border with Russia. If true it may be evidence the cats are expanding their range south – back into traditional Chinese territory.



Festivals & Events

Harbin Ice & Snow Festival

ICE SCULPTURE

(Bingxue Jie  8625 0068; day/evening ticket ¥150/300;  9.30am-9.30pm)

Ha'erbin's main claim to fame these days is this festival. Every winter, from December to February (officially the festival opens 5 January), Zhaolin Park and [Sun Island Park](#) become home to extraordinarily detailed, imaginative and downright wacky snow and ice sculptures. They range from huge

recreations of iconic buildings, such as the Forbidden City and European cathedrals, to animals and interpretations of ancient legends. At night they're lit up with coloured lights to create a magical effect.

It might be mind-numbingly cold and the sun disappears mid-afternoon, but the festival, which also features figure-skating shows and a variety of winter sports, is Ha'erbin's main tourist attraction – and prices jump accordingly.

The festival takes place in multiple locations. The main venue, Harbin Ice and Snow World, is on Sun Island. The Ice and Snow World exhibits are held in the west end of the island on the north bank of the Songhua River. They are best seen at night, so note that the half-price daytime ticket (good from 9am to noon) does not grant admission to the venue at night.

The Ice Lantern Venue is held in Zhaolin Park and many consider it the least interesting venue. If you do go, go at night when the lanterns are lit.

Hotels and hostels also organise reasonably priced group transport to/from festival locations. Taxis are expensive and hard to flag down during the festival times but you can ride horse carriages, or even use your own feet: the Sun Island venues are actually reachable by crossing the frozen Songhua River (plan on one to two hours). Note that prices for the festival have been skyrocketing recently so don't be surprised if they are even higher than quoted here.

Sleeping

The most convenient places to stay are along Zhongyang Dajie in the Daoliqu district or in one of the many hotels that surround the train station. During the ice and snow festival expect hotel prices to go up by at least 20%.

Kazy International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Kazi Guoji Qingnian Lushe  ;  8469 7113; kazyzcl@126.com; 27 Tongjiang Jie, dm/s/tw with shared bathroom ¥50/60/80, d/tw with bathroom ¥180/160; ;  13)

It may have lost its enviable location in the Main Synagogue up the road, but

this hostel still scores points for its cosy lounge area and friendly staff who are a great source of travel information for the city and province. The eight-bed dorms are better value than the musty (some are windowless) private rooms.

The hostel is popular with Chinese travellers, so book ahead. A taxi will cost you ¥12.

Ibis Hotel

HOTEL

(Yibisi Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8750 9999; www.ibis.com; 92 Zhaolin Jie; d & tw ¥209; 📶 @ 📶)

The spotless rooms and handy location, minutes up the road from the Church of St Sophia and Zhongyang Dajie, make up for the surly, unhelpful front-desk staff. Book online for deals with free (but unspectacular) breakfast.

Jindi Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8461 8013; 16 Dongfeng Jie, s & d ¥218-298, tw ¥458; 📶 @ 📶)

If you're looking for a river view on the cheap, then this is the place. The owners are friendly, rooms are spacious and there's wi-fi available, with computers in the more expensive twins. To get to the hotel, turn right at the very end of Zhongyang Dajie past the [Gloria Plaza Hotel](#) ([GOOGLE MAP](#)). Discounts of up to 30% available.

Haolin Business Hotel

HOTEL

(Haolin Shangwu Liansuo Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8467 5555; 26 Tongjiang Jie, d & tw ¥268-368; 📶 @ 📶)

In the centre of Jewish Ha'erbin, a neighbourhood now loaded with restaurants and barbecue stalls at night, is this business-style express hotel with surprisingly comfortable rooms sporting high ceilings, bright interiors and good modern bathrooms. It's a two-minute walk to Zhongyang Dajie. Expect discounts of 30%.

Hanting Express

HOTEL

(Hanting Kuaijie Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 5180 1177; www.htinns.com; Huochezhan Guangchang Dian, d & tw ¥229-299; 🌐 @ 📶)

This tidy business-style hotel is to the right of the train station square (as you exit the station) on the 24th floor. The entrance is next to a KFC (one of many in the train station area). The wi-fi-enabled rooms are slightly pricey considering its cookie-cutter decor, but it's a handy location for those who need to catch the train.

★ Lungmen Grand Hotel

HISTORIC HOTEL

(Longmen Guibin Lou Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8317 7777; 85 Hongjun Jie, d/tw ¥580/680; 🌐 @)

With its turn of the century old-world styling almost entirely intact (including the marble staircase, dark wood-panelled hallways and the copper revolving door), the Lungmen is one of the most atmospheric top-end options in town. Across from the train station, the hotel lobby opens onto Hongjun Jie and its rows of heritage buildings.

A quick walk up the street's wide pavements takes you into the shopping heart of Ha'erbin. Discounts available.

Modern Hotel

HISTORIC HOTEL

(Madie'er Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8488 4000; www.madieer.cn; 89 Zhongyang Dajie, r incl breakfast from ¥980; 🌐 @ 📶 🚰)

While hardly 'modern', this 1906 construction impressively features some of its original marble, blond-wood accents and art nouveau touches. Spend some time checking out the lobby bar's display of hotel memorabilia before retiring to (thankfully) modern rooms. Note that the entrance to the hotel is around the back. Discounts of up to 30% available.



Ha'erbin dishes tend to be heavy, with thick stewlike concoctions commonly found on the picture menus of a thousand eateries. You'll also find delicious hotpot, barbecued meats and Russian dishes in the tourist areas. Zhongyang Dajie and its side alleys are full of small restaurants and bakeries. Tongjiang Jie has fruit stands, sit-down restaurants and an abundance of outdoor barbecue stalls (with ad hoc seating) set up in the evenings.

In summer, the streets off Zhongyang Dajie come alive with open-air food stalls and beer gardens, where you can sip a Hapi (the local beer), while munching on squid on a stick, *yangrou chuan* (lamb kebabs) and all the usual street snacks.

The year-round indoor **food market** (Xiaochi Cheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 96 Zhongyang Dajie; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm) has stalls selling decent bread, smoked meats, sausages, wraps and fresh dishes, as well as nuts, cookies, fruits and sweets. It's a great place to grab a quick breakfast or to stock up on food for a long bus or train ride.

Just south of the market, on the opposite side of the street, look for the underground **Longjiang Xiaochi Jie** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhongyang Dajie; dishes ¥8-15; 🕒 9am-6pm), a clean modern food court with a range of inexpensive noodle and rice dishes, as well as kebabs.

★ Orient King of Eastern Dumplings

DUMPLINGS

(Dongfang Jiaozi Wang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 81 Zhongyang Dajie; dumpling plate ¥12-38; 🕒 10.30am-9.30pm; 📶)

It's not just the cheap *jiaozi* (stuffed dumplings) that are good at this always busy and ever-expanding chain restaurant: there are also plenty of tasty veggie dishes and draft beer on tap. There's another location near the train station in the Kunlun Hotel. Picture menu available.

Laifubiandan Chongqing Xiao Mian

SICHUAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 134-1 Youyi Lu; noodles ¥8-16; 🕒 9am-10pm)

A cute hole-in-the-wall eatery serving fiery Sichuan noodles to a steady

stream of customers. Pull up a rustic wooden chair and slurp down sweat-inducing *xiao mian* (spicy soup noodles) plain or with *niu rou* (beef). If you can't take the heat, order *qing tang* (clear soup noodles) instead. No one will notice...they're too busy eating!

Old Chang's Spring Rolls

SNACKS

(Lao Chang Chunbing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 180 Zhongyang Dajie; dishes ¥12-38; 🕒 10.30am-9pm)

At this well-known basement spring roll shop, order a set of roll skins (per roll ¥2), a few plates of meat and vegetable dishes, and then wrap your way to one enjoyable repast.

Katusha

RUSSIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 139 4566 6905; 261 Zhongyang Dajie; dishes ¥20-78; 🕒 11am-9.30pm)

A popular Russian-Western restaurant decked out in kitsch Chinese decor. Feast on a range of Russian and Western favourites such as borscht, blini and steak. Russian vodka and beer? Yes and yes. Located diagonally across from the [Flood Control Monument](#) next to the Jindi Binguan.

Cafe Russia

RUSSIAN

(Luxiya Kafei Xi Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 57 Xitoujiao; dishes ¥20-78; 🕒 10am-midnight)

Step back in time at this ivy-covered teahouse-cum-restaurant and cafe. Black-and-white photos illustrating Ha'erbin's Russian past line the walls, while the old-school furniture and fireplace evoke a different era. Sadly, staff seem more interested in napping than serving their signature Russian fare such as borscht and *piroshki* (cabbage, potato and meat puffs). Russian vodka is available, too.

The restaurant is off Zhongyang Dajie in a little courtyard.



Drinking & Nightlife

Ha'erbin has the usual collection of karaoke (KTV) joints. If communal singing isn't your bag, there are a few bars on and off Zhongyang Dajie and Tiandi Lu. Zhongyang Dajie and [Stalin Park](#) also have beer gardens in the summer with cheap drafts and plenty of snack food to enjoy as you watch sports on the big screens. Nightclubs come and go, so you're best off asking for the latest when you arrive.

Ming Tien

CAFE

(Mingdian Xican [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.hrbmingdian.com; 214 Shangzhi Dajie; drinks ¥35-60; 🕒 10am-9pm)

For afternoon tea or coffee head to this slightly over-the-top cafe occupying two floors of a heritage building on Shangzhi Dajie. Enter via the subdued parlour, wind your way up the tree-enshrouding staircase and ease into a big brown leather booth with views of Zhaolin Park. There's an equally eclectic menu ranging from borscht to pizza if you get hungry.

Shopping

Shops along **Zhongyang Dajie** flog imitation Russian and Chinese souvenirs. But there are also department stores, boutiques and many Western clothes chains here. Souvenir shops selling Russian knick-knacks, dolls, binoculars and also vodka and other spirits can be found all over the city.

Locals head to Dongdazhi Jie for their shopping needs, as well as the **Hongbo Century Square** (Hongbo Shiji Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 6.30am-5pm), a huge subterranean shopping complex for men's and women's clothing.

Information

There are ATMs all over town. Most large hotels will also change money. Many midrange and top-end hotels have travel services that book tickets and arrange tours throughout the province.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xi'er Daojie)

Has a 24-hour ATM and will cash travellers cheques. Easy to spot on a side road as you walk up Zhongyang Dajie.

Harbin Modern Travel Company

TRAVEL AGENCY

(Ha'erbin Madie'er Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 89 Zhongyang Dajie)

This travel agency on the 2nd floor of the [Modern Hotel](#) offers one- and two-day ski trips to Yabuli and can handle flight tickets to Mohe and other regions.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Harbin Taiping International Airport (Ha'erbin Taiping Guoji Jichang) has flights to Russia and South Korea as well as the following domestic routes:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥800, two hours
- ➔ **Dalian** ¥700, 1½ hours
- ➔ **Mohe** ¥1600, 3½ hours

BUS

The main **long-distance bus station** (changtu keyun zhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is directly opposite the train station. Buy tickets on the 2nd floor.

- ➔ **Changchun** ¥78, four hours, four daily (noon, 1pm, 2pm, 3pm and 4pm)
- ➔ **Mudanjiang** ¥70 & ¥96, 4½ hours, hourly from 8am to 5pm
- ➔ **Wudalian Chi** ¥91, five to six hours, three daily (9am, 11.30am and 1.30pm). The 1.30pm bus goes to the scenic area while the other two stop at Wudalian Chi Shi, a ¥40 taxi ride from the scenic area.
- ➔ **Bei'an** ¥85 to ¥95, five hours, five daily (7.10am, 8.30am, 12.30pm, 2.20pm and 4.30pm)

➔ **Qiqihaer** ¥97, 3½ hours, six daily (8am, 9am, 10am, noon, 1pm, 2pm and 4pm)

TRAIN

Ha'erbin is a major rail transport hub with routes throughout the northeast and beyond. If you don't want to brave the lines in the **main station** (Ha'erbin zhan 1 Tielu Jie,), buy tickets at the nearby **train booking office** (Tielu Shoupiaochu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tielu Jie; 🕒 7am-9pm) to the left of Dico's (fast food restaurant). Note that the fast D and G trains leave from **Ha'erbin West Station** (Xizhan), 10km from town. A taxi will cost ¥30-40.

- ➔ **Beijing** hard seat/sleeper ¥159/293, 10 to 16 hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Beijing** (D train) seat ¥284, nine hours, four daily
- ➔ **Changchun** (D/G train) seat ¥73/111, two/one hour, regular
- ➔ **Mohe** hard/soft sleeper ¥257/430, 21 hours, 7.44pm
- ➔ **Mudanjiang** hard seat/sleeper ¥52/100, five to seven hours, regular
- ➔ **Shenyang** hard seat/sleeper ¥78/149, six to seven hours
- ➔ **Shenyang** (D/G train) seat ¥161/245, three/two hours, five daily

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO RUSSIA

Trains no longer depart from Ha'erbin East to Vladivostok. Trains do run as far as Suifenhe, however, from where you can make an onward connection to Vladivostok.

Travellers on the Trans-Siberian Railway to or from Moscow can start or finish in Ha'erbin (six days). Contact the **Ha'erbin Railway International Travel Service** (Ha'erbin Tiedao Guoji Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 5361 6721; www.ancn.net; Kunlun Hotel, 7th fl, 8 Tielu Jie; 🕒 9am-5pm) for information on travelling through to Russia.

i Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Ha'erbin's airport is 46km from the city centre. From the airport, **shuttle**

buses ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (¥20, one hour) will drop you at the railway station. To the airport, shuttles leave every 30 minutes from a stand just beside Dico's opposite the train station from 5.30am to 7.30pm. A taxi (¥100 to ¥125) takes 45 minutes to an hour.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Buses 101 and 103 run from the [train station](#) to Shangzhi Dajie, dropping you off at the north end of Zhongyang Dajie (the old street). Buses leave from a stop across the road and to the left as you exit the train station (where Chunshen Jie and Hongjun Jie meet).

Ha'erbin's long-awaited metro has a single line that doesn't serve any of the tourist sights. Construction for further lines are underway.

TAXI

Taxis are fairly plentiful, though they fill up quickly when it's raining. Taxi flag-fall is ¥8.

Mudanjiang

 0453 / Pop 805,000

A pleasant and surprisingly modern small city surrounded by some lovely countryside, Mudanjiang is the jumping-off point for nearby Jingpo Hu (Mirror Lake) and the Underground Forest. Taiping Jie is the main drag in town and runs directly south (opposite) of the train station. There's a **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang) two blocks up with a 24-hour ATM.

Sleeping & Eating

The train station area has a number of good hotels and there is no reason to look further into town. For budget accommodation head right as you exit the station. Just past the station square on Guanghua Jie runs a row of guesthouses. There are at least half a dozen to choose from, all offering similar prices and decent digs: dorm beds go for ¥30, rooms with shared

bathroom for around ¥40 and rooms with their own bathroom (and sometimes even a computer) from ¥80.

There are plenty of cheap restaurants around as well, and also in the alleys off Qixing Jie, which intersects with Taiping Jie half a kilometre up from the train station. Dongyitiao Lu (off Qixing Jie) is a lively pedestrian-only street with a wide range of BBQ, noodle and snack venues open in the evening.

Home Inn

HOTEL

(Rujia Kuaijie Jiudian 📞 6911 1188; 651 Guanghua Jie, r ¥129-179; 🚫🚭📧📶)

Probably the best-value rooms around the train station are in this well-managed chain just to the right as you exit. Top floors are nonsmoking and very quiet despite the location.

★ Sunny Date International Hotel

HOTEL

(Xiluda Guoji Jiudian 📞 6607 777; <http://sunnydatehotel.com>; cnr Guanghua Jie & Dongyitiao Lu; d & tw ¥598-798; 🚭📶)

It's hard not to be impressed (or blinded) by the sunny opulence of the chandelier-lined lobby. Some rooms come equipped with a mah jong table but who cares as all the rooms are top notch with comfy beds, wi-fi and clean bathrooms. The gigantic attached bathhouse is equally opulent. Discounts bring rooms down to as low as ¥228...bargain!

The hotel is located 200m to the left opposite the road as you exit the station. It opens up to the busy Dongyitiao Lu pedestrian street.

Shuanglong Jiaozi Wang

DUMPLINGS

(cnr Qixing Jie & Taiping Jie; dumplings ¥12-38; 🕒 9am-9pm)

There's a wide selection of *jiaozi* here, as well as the usual Dongbei classics. As you turn left off Taiping Jie, the restaurant is the big glass building with the red signboard on the right. There's an English sign out front and a partial picture menu inside to help you order.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Long-distance buses sometimes drop you off near the train station and depart from a long-distance station (*ke chezhan*) a few kilometres away on Xi Ping'an Jie. A taxi to the station costs ¥6.

- ➔ **Dongjing Cheng** ¥18, 1¼ hours, half hourly
- ➔ **Ha'erbin** ¥70 & 96, 4½ hours, hourly (5.30am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Yanji** ¥72, five hours, 6.30am, 11.30am and 2pm

TRAIN

Mudanjiang has rail connections:

- ➔ **Ha'erbin** hard seat/sleeper ¥52/100, five to seven hours, frequent services
- ➔ **Suifenhe** seat ¥20 to ¥30, four to five hours, four daily
- ➔ **Yanji** hard seat/sleeper ¥22/56, six hours, one daily (4.26pm)

SKIING IN CHINA

China's ski industry has all the appearance of a success story. From 20,000 visits to the slopes in 1996, numbers have grown to around 15 million in 2012. There are now over 20 large resorts across the country in areas as diverse as Jilin, Heilongjiang, Yunnan and Hebei provinces, many of them also popular with foreigners and expats.

Building slopes and resorts has been easy: maintaining them while a ski culture develops has not been. In 2012 there was renewed hope, however, as another round of investment hit the industry. This time the focus would be on upping the luxury quotient, and also opening more runs and facilities for absolute beginners.

In China's north, the largest resorts are Jilin's [Beidahu Ski Resort](#) and Heilongjiang's **Yabuli Ski Resort** (Yabuli Huaxue Zhongxin www.yabuliski.com) 200km southeast of Ha'erbin. Yabuli was China's first destination ski resort, and remains the training centre for the Chinese Olympic ski team. Since 2009 the resort has expanded to cover two mountains and now has a good division of advanced, intermediate and beginner runs, as well as a four-star lodge that can reasonably cater to Western guests.

The latest slopes to be developed in the region are at Changbai Shan on the China–North Korean border located about 15km from the new airport. At the [Wanda](#)

[International Resort](#), you'll find 20 runs on two mountains as well as a luxury alpine village offering hotels, restaurants and private condos. Top-notch hotels in the area include the Sheraton and Westin chain of hotels. They offer guest pick-ups from the train station or airport.

Lift tickets in the north average around ¥500 per day on weekends, and a little less on weekdays. Clothing and equipment rental comes to another ¥140. For up-to-date information on all the major ski areas of China, as well as transport and tour advice, see the excellent **China Ski Tours** (www.chinaskitours.com).

Around Mudanjiang

Jingpo Hu

Formed on the bend of the Mudan River 5000 years ago by the falling lava of five volcanic explosions, **Jingpo Hu** (Mirror Lake www.jingpohu.com.cn; admission ¥80), 110km south of Mudanjiang, gets its name from the unusually clear reflections of the surrounding lush green forest in its pristine blue water.

Hugely popular in summer with Chinese daytrippers who come to paddle or picnic by the lakeside, it's a pleasant spot if you hike along the lake to escape the crowds. Shuttle buses (¥12 per trip) run to various sights, and ferries (¥100, 1½hours) make leisurely tours of the lake.

Sights

Diaoshuilou Waterfall

WATERFALL

(Diaoshuilou Pubu)

One of the area's biggest attractions is this waterfall with a 12m drop and 300m span. During the rainy season (June to September), when Diaoshuilou is in full throttle, it's a spectacular raging beauty, but during spring and autumn it's little more than a drizzle.

You can walk to the waterfall from the north gate entrance in about five

minutes. Just stay on the main road and follow the English signs.

Underground Forest

FOREST

(Dixia Senlin admission ¥55, internal shuttle bus ¥30)

Despite its name, the Underground Forest isn't below the earth; instead it has grown within volcano craters that erupted some 10,000 years ago. Hiking around the thick pine forest and several of the 10 craters takes about an hour.

The forest is 50km from Jingpo Hu. Some day tours include it in their itinerary. Otherwise, you have to take a bus from the north gate of Jingpo (¥40 return, one hour), which is doable but very tight if you only have a day at the lake.

Sleeping & Eating

It's pleasant to spend the night in the park and enjoy the lake when the crowds return to their hotels in Mudanjiang.

Jingpo Hu Shanzhuang Jiudian

HOTEL

( 627 0039, 139 0483 9459; r ¥480-580;  )

This hotel sits just back from the water at the first lakeside drop-off point for the shuttle buses. Rooms are very modern, some with lake views and the hotel's restaurant has decent food (if a little overpriced). Discounts can knock prices down to the ¥240 range or less if you choose a room without a view.

Getting There & Away

The easiest way to get to Jingpo Hu is on the one-day tours that leave from the train station in Mudanjiang from 6.30am to 7.30am. Tours cost ¥255 and include transport and admission. If offered, you can add an all-inclusive tour to the Underground Forest for an extra ¥115. Call 139 4533 1797 or book at a booth in front of the train station.

If you want to come here under your own steam, you can get a direct bus

from the Mudanjiang bus station (¥25, 2½ hours, 1.30pm & 2.30pm). If you want an earlier start from Mudanjiang, first go to Dongjing Cheng (¥15, 1½ hours, frequent) then change to a minibus (¥10, 40 to 60 minutes) to the lake. In the late afternoon you can try to get a seat on one of the tour buses directly back to Mudanjiang from the lake (¥30) or head back again via Dongjing Cheng.

Getting Around

The ticket centre for the lake is at the North Gate (Beimen). From here walk about five minutes to a car park for shuttle buses to the lake and ferry dock (get a ticket to the stop ‘Jingpo Shanzhuang’;) and other sights (¥12 per ride). Diaoshuilou Waterfall is just behind this car park.

Wudalian Chi

 0456

Formed by a series of volcanic eruptions, the Wudalian Chi nature reserve boasts one of northern China’s most mesmerising landscapes. It’s a genuine Lost World with vast fields of hardened lava, rivers of basalt, volcanic peaks, azure lakes and the odd little reed-lined pond. You could spend days exploring.

The last time the volcanoes erupted was in 1720, and the lava flow blocked the nearby North River (Bei He), forming the series of five interconnected lakes that give the area its name. Wudalian Chi is about 250km northwest of Ha’erbin, and in addition to the volcanic landscape is home to mineral springs that draw busloads of Chinese and Russian tourists to slurp the allegedly curative waters. So many Russians roll up that the town’s street signs are in both Chinese and Russian.

There’s no real town here, just a long, pleasant tree-lined street called Yaoquan Lu. Everything you want is on a section that runs west of the bus station. The intersection of Yaoquan Lu and Shilong Lu (about 3km from the

bus stop) is the main crossroad and is smack in the middle of the hotel area. Taxis make the trip from the bus station to the hotel area for ¥5 to ¥10.

Some travellers have started to base themselves in Wudalian Chi Shi, a larger town about 20km away and where most buses drop you off from Ha'erbin. Within a short walk of the bus station there are half a dozen hotels and plenty of restaurants. Unless you've got no other choice, it's worth making the effort to base yourself in Wudalian Chi itself.

It's only really viable to visit Wudalian Chi between May and October.

Sights & Activities

For a loop taking in the lakes, volcanoes and caves listed here, most people hire a taxi (¥150). If your time is short, just visit Laohei Shan and you will get most of what the area has to offer.

★ Laohei Shan

VOLCANO

(admission ¥80 plus ¥25 shuttle fee; 🕒 7.30am-7pm May-Oct)

It's a mostly uphill 1km stair climb to the summit of Laohei Shan, one of the area's 14 volcanoes. Do a circuit of the crater lip for panoramic views of the lakes and other volcanoes dotting the landscape. Taxis drop you at the ticket booth from where park shuttle buses take you to a large car park. To the left is the trail up the mountain; to the right is a boardwalk to the aptly named **Shi Hai** (Stone Sea), a magnificent lava field.

Back in the car park smaller green shuttle buses take you to **Huoshao Shan** and the end of the road at another collection of weirdly shaped lava stones. This stretch is one of Wudalian Chi's most enchanting, with lava rock rivers, birch forests, grassy fields, ponds and more wide stretches of lava fields.

Longmen 'Stone Village'

LAVA FIELD

(Longmen Shizhai admission ¥50; 🕒 7am-6pm May-Oct)

At this impressive lava field reminiscent of Middle Earth's Mordor (minus the

orcs), walk through a forest of white and black birch trees on a network of boardwalks, with the lava rocks stretching away in the distance on both sides.

San Chi

LAKE

(boat tour ¥80)

Welcome to Third Lake, the largest of the five interconnected lakes that give rise to the region's name. Here, you can feel the wind whip through your hair on a zippy 40 minute boat ride across the still water.

Wenbo Hu

LAVA FIELD

(admission ¥50; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm)

A long boardwalk takes visitors through a lava field dotted with ponds and informative interpretive boards explaining lava-related phenomenon such as fissures and, of course, the fields itself. The boardwalk ends at a small dock where you transfer to a boat for a slow putter down a reed-lined river. Your taxi will arrange to pick you from where the boat docks.

Beiyinquan

MINERAL SPRING

(admission ¥30; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm)

Tourists and locals flock here to taste the supposedly curative mineral spring water that's piped out through installed taps. Some even use the water to wash their hair! Bring you own bottle and fill up on the good stuff (which tastes like metal-flavoured soda water) and stroll the pretty grounds.

CRANE COUNTRY

Northeastern China is home to several nature reserves established to protect endangered species of wild cranes. **Zhalong Nature Reserve** (Zhalong Ziran Baohuqu admission ¥60; 🕒 8am-5.30pm) near Qiqiha'er is the most accessible and most visited of these sanctuaries. The reserve is home to some 260 bird species, including several types of rare cranes. Four of the species that migrate here are on the endangered list: the extremely rare red-crowned crane, the white-naped crane, the Siberian crane and the hooded crane.

The reserve comprises some 2100 sq km of wetlands that are on a bird migration path extending from the Russian Arctic down into Southeast Asia. Hundreds of birds arrive in April and May, rear their young from June to August and depart in September and October. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of the birds you can see live are in captivity and are periodically released so that visitors can take photos.

The best time to visit Zhalong is in spring. In summer the mosquitoes can be more plentiful than the birds – take repellent! To get to here, head to Qiqiha'er and board bus 306 (¥20, 45 minutes, half-hourly) from Darunfa. Birds are released at 9.30am, 11am, 2pm and 3.30pm.

The **Xianghai National Nature Reserve** (Xianghai Guojia Ziran Baohuqu), 310km west of Changchun in Jilin province, is on the migration path for Siberian cranes, and the rare red-crowned, white-naped and demoiselle cranes breed here. More than 160 bird species, including several of these cranes, have been identified at the **Horqin National Nature Reserve** (Ke'erqin Guojia Ziran Baohuqu), which borders Xianghai in Inner Mongolia. The **Momoge National Nature Reserve** (Momoge Guojia Ziran Baohuqu) in northern Jilin province is also an important wetlands area and bird breeding site.

For more information about China's crane population and these nature reserves, contact the **International Crane Foundation** (www.savingcranes.org) or see the website of the **Siberian Crane Wetland Project** (www.scwp.info).

Sleeping & Eating

Yaoquan Lu, the main east–west drag in Wudalian Chi, has a dozen or more hotels operating from May to October. Some nice new hotels have opened about 500m up the road from the bus station.

For cheap ¥30 beds, contact **Liu Jie** ( 158 4687 3866). This friendly teacher has converted a brand-new apartment on the outskirts of town into a comfortable dorm/hostel. She will organise pick-up to/from the bus station as well as a taxi to see the local sights.

If your hotel doesn't have a restaurant, head to the local places on Guotu Jie, the street parallel to Yaoquan Lu in the area near the Quanshan New Holiday Inn or at the main intersection at Yaoquan and Shilong Lu. There are plenty of greasy-spoon choices (dishes ¥8 to ¥48), largely serving the same five types of local fish the area is famous for. You can also get cheap *jiaozi*, noodles and BBQ. Several grocery stores sell fruit and imported snacks

including real chocolate.

Quanshan New Holiday Inn

HOTEL

(Xinquanshan Jiari Jiudian  722 6999; Yaoquan Lu; d & tw incl breakfast ¥368-690;   )

Unrelated to the Western Holiday Inn chain, this is actually a new Chinese-run hotel located 500m up the road from the bus station just off the main road. Modern rooms are fitted with plush carpets, large comfy beds and wi-fi. The cheaper rooms are windowless but just as comfortable. Discounts bring rooms down to ¥150 during the shoulder season.

★ Wangmaolu Doufu Meishi Dian

DONGBEI

(off Guotu Jie; dishes ¥22-58;  11am-9.30pm)

The locally made tofu is some of the best you'll probably taste in China. It's soft and delicate, and served in a variety of ways: with fish, vegies and such. If you can't decide, take your pick from the picture menu on the wall. It's located off Guotu Jie, the street parallel to the main drag where the Quanshan New Holiday Inn hotel is.

If you get lost, ask locals for directions; it's a famous restaurant.

Information

There is an **ICBC** (Gongshang Yinhang) ATM accepting foreign cards in Wudalian Chi on Guotu Jie.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Both Wudalian Chi and Wudalian Chi Shi have bus stations. Direct buses run from Ha'erbin (¥91, six hours, three daily at 9am, 11.30am and 1.30pm). The 1.30pm bus terminates at Wudalian Chi while the other two terminate at Wudalian Chi Shi. A taxi the rest of the way will cost ¥40.

Buses leave for Ha'erbin from Wudalian Chi (¥91, six hours, 5.40am and 8.10am) and Wudalian Chi Shi (6.50am and 9.30am). There are also buses to

Heihe and Bei'an, the nearest train station, which has connections on to Ha'erbin.

Russian Borderlands

Much of the remote northeastern border between China and Siberia follows the Black Dragon River (Heilong Jiang), known to Russians as the Amur River. In this region it's possible to see Siberian forests and dwindling settlements of northern minorities, such as the Daur, Ewenki, Hezhen and Oroqen.

Major towns in the far north include Mohe and Heihe, the latter a popular shopping destination for people in the province. On the eastern border, Suifenhe is a gateway to Vladivostok.

Mohe, Beijicun (North Pole Village) & Beihongcun

📍0457

China's a big place, and that vastness contains a multitude of landscapes, ecosystems and climates. The country's northernmost town, Mohe, standing amid spindly pine forests and vast bogs, holds the record for the lowest plunge of the thermometer: -52.3°C , recorded in 1956. That same day in the southern extreme at Sanya, a tropical beach paradise of azure waters and coconut palms, the temperature was likely in the high 20s.

Mohe is one of China's most intriguing outliers, sharing not just a border with Russia, but architecture as well. In 1985 the town burned to the ground in a raging forest fire and when it came time to rebuild, Mohe decided to redo the main streets in an imperial-era Russian style with spired domes, pillared entrances and facades with rows of narrow windows.

These days, Mohe and the area is best known for its midnight sun, visible for as long as 22 hours during the annual **Festival of Aurora Borealis** (Beijiguang Jie), held in late June. Oddly, this is one of the few times you can see the northern lights, according to locals. Later in the summer, when there

are more hours of darkness, the lights don't appear. Odds of seeing the aurora are fairly slim with the last spotting in 2012.

Sights

Beijicun

VILLAGE

(North Pole Village admission ¥60)

Further north from Mohe is Beijicun, a sprawling village and recreation area on the banks of the Heilong Jiang, separating China and Russia. The area is fast expanding with a tons of new hotels and resorts under construction.

Beijicun covers an area of forest, meadow-land and bog, with the occasional hamlet, log cabin and Russian-style structure dotting the pretty surroundings. If the mood strikes, you can stand at the top of a map of China that has been etched into a square. Step up on the podium and you are at the official 'most northerly point' one can be within China's 9,671,018 sq km of land. One house has even been labelled **China No 1**, ie China's northernmost house. You can walk east along the river to a point where you can see a Russian village across the water.

Beihongcun

VILLAGE

()

With Beijicun on the tourist radar, intrepid travellers and enterprising locals have opened up a route to the even more northerly village of Beihongcun, 100km away. There's nowhere to go but back south here and while there's not much beyond wooden houses and swathes of farmland, it is a quiet, idyllic spot and lays claim to being China's real northernmost village.

From Beihongcun, you can push across to **Heilong Jiang Diyii Wan**, the first bend in the river. The 800+ steps to the viewing point is well worth the gorgeous panorama of the amazing horseshoe bend.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a number of cheap guesthouses and restaurants down the alleys off Fanrong Xiang in Mohe. Fanrong Xiang is off Zhenxing Jie (the main street).

Mohe International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Mohe Beijicun Luyou Zhijia Guoji Qingnian Lushe  282 6326; dm ¥40, d & tw ¥110;  )

The best place to base yourself is at Beijicun, where this cute farmhouse can organise onward transport to see Beihongcun and the other sights before looping back to Mohe. Rooms are comfortable and you can get home-cooked meals from the attached kitchen. If you ring ahead, a car can pick you up from the train station or airport. You can also rent bicycles here for ¥5 per hour.

Getting There & Around

There are four flights a day from Ha'erbin to Mohe (¥1650, 2½ hours).

Trains from Ha'erbin (hard/soft sleeper ¥275/400, 7.44pm) take 21 hours to reach the northern town. Heading back, a train leaves at 4.45pm.

Mohe's train station is about 2km from the centre of town and it costs ¥10 to get here by taxi. To/from the airport, taxis charge ¥20. Buses for Beijicun (¥25, 1½ hours, 8am and 3pm) leave from Mohe's bus station at the corner of Zhenxing and Zhonghua Jie. Return buses from Beijicun depart at 6.40am and noon.

A good way to visit the area would be to hire a private car or taxi for two days. Expect to pay around ¥350 per day; you can start your trip from Mohe and do all the sights listed in a loop back. You can usually find fellow travellers to share the cost at the Mohe International Youth Hostel.

Shanxi

[Shanxi Highlights](#)

[Datong](#)

[Around Datong](#)

[Wutai Shan](#)

[Taiyuan](#)

[Pingyao](#)

[Around Pingyao](#)

[Qikou](#)

[Jincheng](#)

[Around Jincheng](#)

Shanxi



Pop 35.7 million

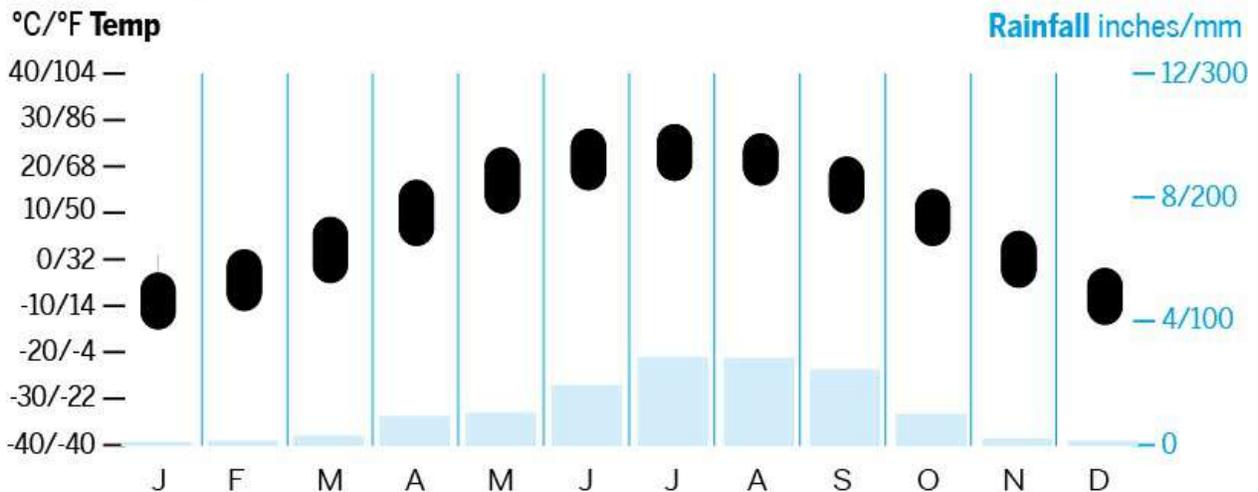
Why Go?

Waist-deep in handsome history, Shanxi has a plethora of interesting sights but it unfortunately takes some patience to see through the pollution and coal dust that pervades much of the province. Most travellers start with the walled city of Pingyao. Basing yourself here and jumping to Pingyao's surrounding sights is practically all you need. You'll encounter time-worn temples, traditional Qing-dynasty courtyard architecture and some of the warmest people in the Middle Kingdom.

The mountain vastness of Wutai Shan, however, reveals Shanxi's other great source of magic, a Buddhist leaning that fashions classical monastic architecture, a disposition further concentrated in the astonishing Buddhist cave sculptures at Yungang and at the Hanging Monastery. Add in the time-warp walled village of Guoyu and the still-inhabited cave dwellings of Lijiashan, and you could find yourself spending more time here than you had planned for.

When to Go

Dàtóng



- ➔ **May** Get a jump on the sapping summer months.
- ➔ **Late May–early Sep** For trips to cooler, mountainous Wutai Shan.
- ➔ **Late Sep** Enjoy the comfortable start of the lovely Shanxi autumn.

Best Ancient Towns & Villages

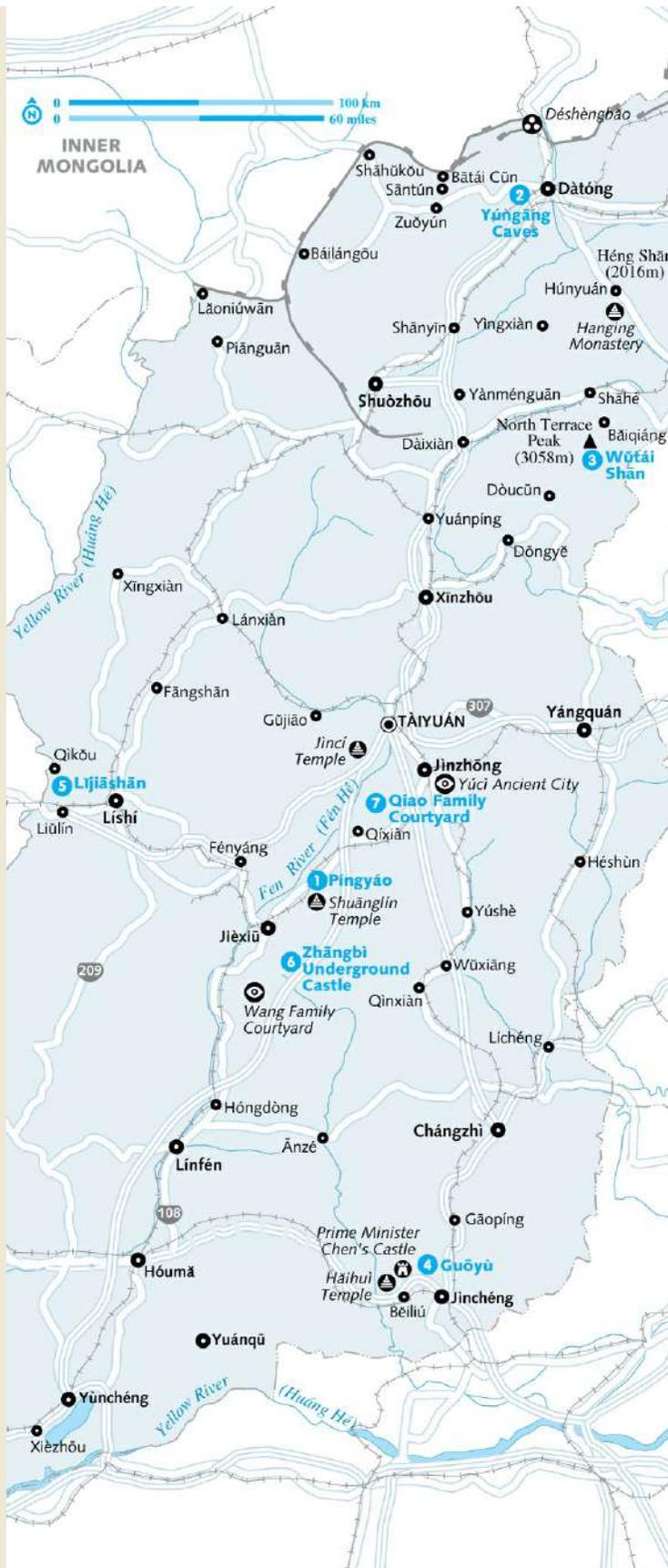
- ➔ [Pingyao](#)
- ➔ [Guoyu](#)
- ➔ [Lijiashan](#)
- ➔ [Qikou](#)

Best Temples

- ➔ [Xiantong Temple](#)
- ➔ [Tayuan Temple](#)
- ➔ [Huayan Temple](#)

➔ [Hanging Monastery](#)

Shanxi Highlights



- ① Wander the cobblestone ancient streets of time-warped [Pingyao](#)
- ② Discover the grandeur of the Buddhist statues at the [Yungang Caves](#)
- ③ Hang up your traveller's hat in the monastic enclave of [Wutai Shan](#)
- ④ Journey to the still-inhabited historical walled village of [Guoyu](#) in Shanxi's remote southeast
- ⑤ Experience 'old' China with an overnight stay at the Ming-dynasty cave village of [Lijjashan](#)
- ⑥ Go subterranean at the fascinating [Zhangbi Underground Castle](#)
- ⑦ Explore some of China's best-preserved courtyard architecture at the [Qiao Family Courtyard](#)

History

Though home to the powerful state of Jin, which split into three in 403 BC, Shanxi really only rose to greatness with the Tuoba, a clan of the Xianbei people from Mongolia and Manchuria who made Datong their capital during the Northern Wei (AD 386–534). Eventually the Tuoba were assimilated, but as China weakened following the Tang collapse, the northern invaders returned; most notable were the Khitan (907–1125), whose western capital was also in Datong.

After the Ming regained control of northern China, Shanxi was developed as a defensive outpost, with an inner and outer Great Wall constructed along the northern boundaries. Local merchants took advantage of the increased stability to trade, eventually transforming the province into the country's financial centre with the creation of China's first banks in Pingyao.

Today Shanxi is best known for its many mines; the province contains one-third of all China's coal deposits and parts of it are heavily polluted.

Climate

Dry as dust, with a mere 35cm of rain a year. It only really rains in July (just 12cm). In Taiyuan, lows of -10°C are not uncommon in January, while summer highs exceed 30°C . Avoid winter as the coal used to warm houses ends up blighting the skies.

Language

Jin is spoken by most Shanxi people. The main difference from Mandarin is its final glottal stop, but it also features complex grammar-induced tone shifts. Most locals also speak Mandarin.

Getting There & Around

Modern railway lines and roads split Shanxi on a northeast–southwest axis, so getting from Beijing to Datong, Taiyuan and Pingyao, and on to Xi'an, is no problem. Beyond that, mountain roads and convoys of coal trucks make it slow going.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥50

\$\$ ¥50 to ¥100

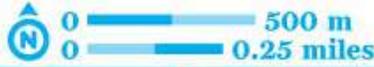
\$\$\$ more than ¥100

Datong

📍0352 / Pop 3.3 million

Its coal-belt setting and socialist-era refashioning have robbed Datong of much of its charm. The city has, however, ploughed mountains of cash – an estimated ¥50 billion – into a colossal renovation program of its old quarter. But even without its pricey facelift, Datong still cuts it as a coal-dusted heavyweight in China's increasingly competitive tourist challenge. The city is the gateway to the awe-inspiring Yungang Caves, one of China's most outstanding Buddhist treasures, and close to the photogenic Hanging Monastery, the world's oldest wooden pagoda, and crumbling earthen sections of the Great Wall.

Dàtóng



Datong

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Sights

Much of Datong's **old town** ([laochengqu](#) [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) has been levelled to restore what was there before. Illogical for sure, but this is China. Renovations were ongoing at the time of writing, with Red Flag Sq completely inaccessible and the area around the **Drum Tower** ([Gu Lou](#) [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) emerging as 'Ye Olde Qing Quarter'.

Buildings rebuilt from the ground up include the **mosque** ([Qingzhen Da Si](#) [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a Taoist temple and many former courtyard houses,

while portions of Huayan Jie, Da Beijie and Da Nanjie have become pedestrian-only shopping streets. The vast cost of the old-town refit has been partially passed onto visitors, with admission prices to key sights doubling or more.

Huayan Temple

BUDDHIST

(Huayan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Huayan Jie; admission ¥80; 🕒 8am-6.30pm; 🚌 38)

Built by the Khitan during the Liao dynasty (AD 907–1125), this temple faces east, not south (it's said the Khitan were sun worshippers) and is divided into two separate complexes. One of these is an active monastery (upper temple), while the other is a museum (lower temple).

Dating to 1140, the impressive main hall of the **Upper Temple** (Shang Huayan Si) is one of the largest Buddhist halls in China with Ming murals and Qing statues within. The rear hall of the **Lower Temple** (Xia Huayan Si) is the oldest building in Datong (1038), containing some remarkable Liao-dynasty wooden sculptures. Side halls contain assorted relics from the Wei, Liao and Jin dynasties. Bus 38 runs here.

Nine Dragon Screen

WALL

(Jiulong Bi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Da Dongjie; admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-6.30pm)

With its nine beautiful multicoloured coiling dragons, this 45.5m-long, 8m-high and 2m-thick Ming-dynasty spirit wall was built in 1392. It's the largest glazed-tile wall in China and an amazing sight; the palace it once protected belonged to the 13th son of a Ming emperor and burnt down years ago.

China Sculpture Museum

GALLERY

(Zhongguo Diaosu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Da Beijie, 🕒 8.30am-11.30am & 2.30pm-5.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This cavernous new museum, built within the northern gate section of the restored city walls, has seemingly endless corridors of excellent contemporary sculpture by Chinese and foreign artists. When you get tired of looking at busts, look out for uncovered sections of the original city walls.

Shanhua Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Shanhua Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nansi Jie; admission ¥50; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Originally constructed in AD 713, Shanhua was rebuilt by the Jin. The grand wooden-bracketed rear hall contains five beautiful central Buddhas and expressive statues of celestial generals in the wings. Look out for an impressive five-dragon screen out the front.

Sleeping

Fly By Knight Datong Highrise Hostel

HOSTEL

(Yeben Datong Kezhan 📞 130 4109 5935; datongfbk@gmail.com; 22nd fl, Unit 14, 15 Yingbin Xijie, 22 dm ¥80-140, s & tw shared bath ¥150-180, d en suite ¥200; 📶)

China's (possibly) priciest hostel is housed within a modern apartment located 1.5km west of the old town. Neat Ikea-furnished bedrooms have been converted into dorms and private rooms. Bathrooms are clean and the English-speaking staff are friendly. The hostel is a ¥10 cab ride from the bus station and old town, and ¥15 from the train station.

Today Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinri Shangwu Juidian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 537 9800; 1029 Weidu Dadao; d & tw ¥219; ❄️ 📶)

This chain hotel located opposite the train station has large and spotless rooms with wooden-panelled flooring (no icky carpets), good bathrooms and is a great spot to decamp after you stumble out of the train station from an overnight journey. Get a room on the higher floor to escape the street noise.

★ Garden Hotel

HOTEL

(Huayuan Dafandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 586 5888; www.gardenhoteldatong.com; 59 Da Nanjie, d & tw incl breakfast ¥1080-1380; 🚻 ❄️ @ 📶)

The large impeccable rooms at this hotel feature goose-down quilts, carved rosewood bed frames, reproduction antique furnishings and superb bathrooms. It has an attractive atrium, Latin American and Chinese restaurants, plus excellent staff. The impressive breakfast spread includes good espresso coffee. Significant discounts (even in high season) knock prices as low as ¥310, making it one of the best-value hotels in China.

Eating

The Chinese restaurant at the Garden Hotel has a picture menu and serves excellent food. You'll also find plenty of restaurants and street stalls in the area near the Garden Hotel.

Dongfang Xiao Mian

NOODLES

(East Wheat, [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yingze Jie, noodles from ¥7; 🕒 7am-10pm)

Forgive the chain-store decor and bear the long queues and you'll soon be in noodle heaven. Steaming bowls of the humble Shanxi speciality is the star here; have it with pork, beef or lamb and pair it with a variety of side dishes such as sliced cucumbers. A beer will help top it all off.

If you're still hungry, you can grab charcoal-grilled lamb skewers (¥3) from the street stall just outside, come evening time.

Tonghe Dafandian

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhanqian Jie; dishes ¥16-40; 🕒 11am-2pm & 6-9pm)

This very popular, bright and cheery spot next to the Hongqi Hotel may look a little intimidating with its big round tables better suited to functions, but solo diners can also pull up a chair. There's a huge range of tasty, well-presented dishes on the picture menu, suiting all budgets.

Pick from a selection of dumplings, soups and vegie dishes, as well as the pricier fish and meat options.

Information

Agricultural Bank of China (ABC)

BANK

(Zhongguo Nongye Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Da Nanjie)

ATM and money exchange.

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC)

BANK

(Gongshang Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Weidu Dadao)

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinjian Beilu; 🕒 8am-6.30pm)

Public Security Bureau

VISA AGENCY

(PSB., Gong'anju Churujing Jiedaichu [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 206 1833; 11 flr, Hualin Xintiandi, Weidu Dadao., 11, 🕒 9am-noon & 3-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Getting There & Away

AIR

Located 20km east of the city, Datong's small airport has flights to Beijing (¥450, one hour), Shanghai (¥1450, 2½ hours) and Guangzhou (¥1650, 4½ hours). Buy tickets at www.ctrip.com or www.elong.net. No public transport goes to the airport. A taxi costs around ¥50.

BUS

Minibuses also run to some of the destinations listed below from outside the train station. Buses from the **south bus station** (xinnan zhan) located 9km from the train station:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥128, four hours, hourly (7.10am to 4.10pm)
- ➔ **Muta** ¥30, 1½ hours, hourly (7.30am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Taiyuan** ¥120, 3½ hours, every 20 minutes (6.50am to 7.30pm)

➔ **Wutai Shan** ¥75, 3½ hours, two daily (8.30am, 9am and 2pm; summer only)

Buses from the **main bus station** (Datong qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍246 4464; Xinjian Nanlu):

➔ **Hanging Monastery** ¥31, two hours, half-hourly (6.30am to 11am)

➔ **Hohhot** ¥65, 3½ hours, hourly (7.20am to 4.20pm)

➔ **Jining (for Deshengbao)** ¥15, one hour, hourly (7.30am to 5.30pm)

TRAIN

Train departures from Datong include the following:

➔ **Beijing** hard seat/sleeper ¥54/108, six hours, 11 daily

➔ **Hohhot** hard seat ¥44, four hours, 16 daily

➔ **Pingyao** hard seat/sleeper ¥68/129, seven to eight hours, four daily

➔ **Taiyuan** hard seat/sleeper ¥46/101, six hours, seven daily

➔ **Xi'an** hard seat/sleeper ¥117/230, 16½ hours, one daily (4.40pm)

Getting Around

Bus routes are being readjusted owing to the massive construction all around town so expect changes. Bus 4 and 15 run from the train station to the main bus station. Bus 30 takes 30 minutes to run from the train station to the new south bus station. Buses 27 and 35 go to the old town from Weidu Dadao.

Taxi flagfall is ¥7.

Around Datong

Yungang Caves

Yungang Caves

CAVES

(Yungang Shiku; 📍0352-302 6230; admission ¥150; 🕒8.30am-5.30pm summer)

One of China's best examples of Buddhist cave art, the 5th-century caves are impressive in scope. With 51,000 ancient statues, they put virtually everything else in the Shanxi shade. Carved by the Turkic-speaking Tuoba, the Yungang Caves drew their designs from Indian, Persian and even Greek influences that swept along the Silk Road. Work began in AD 460, continuing for 60 years before all 252 caves, the oldest collection of Buddhist carvings in China, had been completed.

Pass through the swanky visitors centre and a recreated temple before hitting the caves. At the time of writing, caves 7 to 13 were shut for restoration. That still leaves 40 showcasing some of the most precious and elegant Buddhist artwork in China. Despite weathering, many of the statues at Yungang still retain their gorgeous pigment, unlike the slightly more recent statues at Longmen in Henan. A number of the caves were once covered by wooden structures, but many of these are long gone, although Caves 5, 6, 7 and 8 are still fronted by wooden temples.

Some caves contain intricately carved square-shaped pagodas, while others depict the inside of temples, carved and painted to look as though made of wood. Frescoes are in abundance and there are graceful depictions of animals, birds and angels, some still brightly painted, and almost every cave contains the 1000-Buddha motif (tiny Buddhas seated in niches).

Eight of the caves contain enormous Buddha statues; the largest can be found in Cave 5, an outstanding 17m-high, seated effigy of Sakyamuni with a gilded face. The frescoes in this cave are badly scratched, but note the painted vaulted ceiling. Bursting with colour, Cave 6 is also stunning, resembling a set from an Indiana Jones epic with legions of Buddhist angels, Bodhisattvas and other figures. In the middle of the cave, a square block pagoda connects with the ceiling, with Buddhas on each side over two levels. Most foreign visitors are oblivious to the graffiti in bright red oil paint on the right-hand side of the main door frame within the cave, which reads (Datong Bazhong; Datong No 8 Middle School), courtesy of pupils probably during the Cultural Revolution.

Caves 16 to 20 are the earliest caves at Yungang, carved under the

supervision of monk Tanyao. Examine the exceptional quality of the carvings in Cave 18; some of the faces are perfectly presented. Cave 19 contains a vast 16.8m-high effigy of Sakyamuni. The Maitreya Buddha is a popular subject for Yungang's sculptors, for example in the vast seated forms in Cave 17 and Cave 13; the latter statue has been defaced with graffiti by workers from Hohhot and other miscreants.

Cave 20 is similar to the [Losana Buddha Statue Cave](#) at Longmen, originally depicting a trinity of Buddhas (the past, present and future Buddhas). The huge seated Buddha in the middle is the representative icon at Yungang, while the Buddha on the left has somehow vanished. Past the last set of caves is a new **museum** (9.30am-4.50pm) detailing the Wei Kingdom.

Most of the caves come with good English captions, but there's also an audio guide in English (¥30 with ¥100 deposit). Note that photography is permitted in some caves but not in others.

To get here, take the double decker bus (¥2, 45 minutes) from outside Datong's train station to its terminus. Buses run every 10 to 15 minutes. A taxi from Datong is ¥40 each way.

Great Wall

The Great Wall (Changcheng) is far less spectacular here than the restored sections found near Beijing. Its Ming bricks – too useful for local farmers to leave alone – have all but disappeared, so just picture rammed earthen mounds, parts of which have crumbled away into nothing.

Deshengbao

VILLAGE

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A good place to see some raw wall is little-visited Deshengbao, a 16th-century walled fort almost on the border with Inner Mongolia that is now a small farming village. The fort's north and south gates are still standing, as are parts of its walls. Walk through the village (many of its houses are built out of Great Wall bricks) to the north gate and beyond it you'll see wild wall,

10m-high sections of it.

To get here, catch a minibus to Fengzhen (¥18, one hour) from beside Tonghe Dafandian opposite Datong's train station. The bus will drop you at the turn-off for Deshengbao, from where it's a 1km walk to the south gate. Heading back, return to the highway and flag down any Datong-bound bus.

Hanging Monastery

Hanging Monastery

MONASTERY

(Xuankong Si; admission ¥130; 🕒 8am-7pm summer)

Built precariously into the side of a cliff, the Buddhist Hanging Monastery is made all the more stunning by its long support stilts. The halls have been built along the contours of the cliff face, connected by rickety catwalks and narrow corridors, which can get very crowded in summer. It's a sight to behold, but we hear that the access up into the monastery itself might (understandably) eventually be closed owing to the large number of visitors. Get here soon.

Buses travel here from Datong's main bus station (¥31, two hours). Most will transfer passengers to the monastery into a free taxi for the last 5km from Hunyuan. Heading back, you'll be stung for ¥20 for a taxi (per person) to Hunyuan. If you want to go on to Muta, there are frequent buses from Hunyuan (¥14, one hour), or shared taxis make the run from the monastery car park for ¥50 per person (when full).

Muta

Muta Tower

PAGODA

(admission ¥60; 🕒 7.30am-7pm summer, 8am-5.30pm winter)

Built in 1056, this impressive five-storey tower is the world's oldest and tallest (67m) wooden pagoda. The clay Buddhist carvings it houses, including an 11m-high Sakyamuni on the 1st floor, are as old as the pagoda itself. Due

to its fragile state, visitors can no longer climb the pagoda, but there are photos of the higher floors to the side of the pagoda.

Muta is located in unlovely Yingxian. Buses from Datong's south bus station (¥30, two hours) run to its west bus station (xizhan). From there, get public bus 1 (¥1) to Muta 2km up the road. Hourly buses return to Datong until 6pm, or you can travel onto Taiyuan (¥85, 3½ hours, last bus 2.30pm).

Wutai Shan

📍0350

The mountainous, monastic enclave of Wutai Shan (Five Terrace Mountains) is Buddhism's sacred northern range and the earthly abode of Manjusri (Wenshu), the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. Chinese students sitting the ferociously competitive *gaokao* (university entrance) exams troop here for a nod from the learned Bodhisattva, proffering incense alongside saffron-robed monks and octogenarian pilgrims.

While a powerful sense of the divine holds sway in Wutai Shan, some of the spiritual power is lost beneath the flashing LED lights hung from identikit buildings all selling the same spiritual trinkets. If you can look beyond that, the port-walled monasteries – the principal sources of spiritual power – are able to find further amplification in the sublime mountain scenery.

The forested slopes overlooking the town eventually give way to alpine meadows where you'll find more temples and great hiking possibilities. Wutai Shan is also famed for its mysterious rainbows, which can appear without rain and are said to contain shimmering mirages of Buddhist beings, creatures and temple halls.

There's a steep ¥218 entrance fee for the area – including a mandatory ¥50 'sightseeing bus' ticket (*luyou guanguang chepiao*) for transport within the area, which is valid for three days. Some of the more popular temples charge an additional small entrance fee. Coming in, the bus will stop at a large visitors centre where you buy tickets and re-board after your tickets are

checked. From the main bus station in Wutai Shan, you can jump on a free bus shuttle along the main road to get to different points. Note that your bus coming in might drop you behind the main town area from where you'll need to walk to the main drag.

Avoid Wutai Shan during the holiday periods and high-season weekends; temperatures are often below zero from October to March and roads can be impassable.

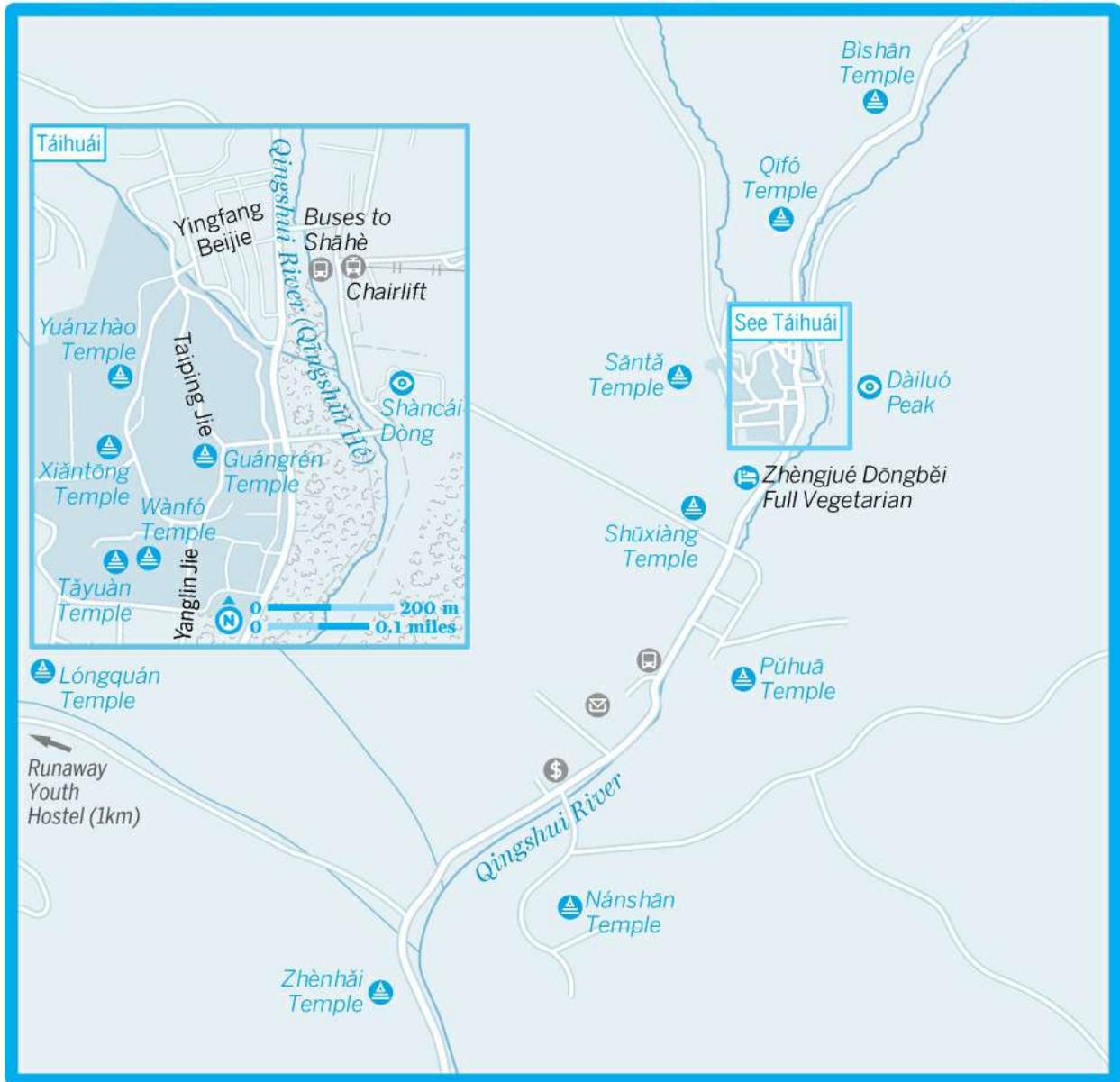
History

It's believed that by the 6th century there were already 200 temples in the area, although all but two were destroyed during the official persecution of Buddhism in the 9th century. During the Ming dynasty, Wutai Shan began attracting large numbers of Tibetan Buddhists (principally from Mongolia) for whom Manjusri holds special significance.

Climate

Wutai Shan is at high altitude and powerful blizzards can sweep in as late as May and as early as September. Winters are freezing with snowfall; the summer months are the most pleasant, but always pack a jacket, as well as suitable shoes or boots for rain, as temperatures fall at night. If you are climbing up the peaks to see the sunrise, warm coats can be hired.

Wūtái Shān



Sights

Enclosed within a lush valley between the five main peaks is an elongated, unashamedly touristy town, called **Taihuai** but which everyone simply calls Wutai Shan. It's here that you'll find the largest concentration of temples, as well as all the area's hotels and tourist facilities. The five main peaks are north (*beitai ding*), east (*dongtai ding*), south (*nantai ding*), west (*xitai ding*)

and central (*zhongtai ding*).

Taihuai Temple Cluster

More than 50 temples lie scattered in town and across the surrounding countryside, so knowing where to start can be a daunting prospect. Most travellers limit themselves to what is called the **Taihuai Temple Cluster** (Taihuai Simiaoqun), about 20 temples around Taihuai itself, among which Tayuan Temple and Xiantong Temple are considered the best. Many temples in Taihuai contain a statue of Manjusri, often depicted riding a lion and holding a sword used to cleave ignorance and illusion.

Tayuan Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Tayuan Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥10; 🕒 6am-6pm)

At the base of **Spirit Vulture Peak** (Lingjiu Feng), the distinctive white stupa rising above, Tayuan Temple is the most prominent landmark in Wutai Shan and virtually all pilgrims pass through here to spin the prayer wheels at its base or to prostrate themselves, even in the snow. Even Chairman Mao did his tour of duty, staying in the **Abbot Courtyard** in 1948.

Beyond the **Devaraja Hall** (Hall of Heavenly Kings), with its candlelit gilded statue of Avalokitesvara (instead of Milefo, who you usually find in this position), at the rear of the **Daci Yanshou Hall** is an altar where worshippers leave canned drinks to Guanyin. Hung with small yellow bells chiming in the Wutai Shan winds, the **Great White Stupa** (Dabai Ta) dates originally from 1301 and is one of 84,000 stupas built by King Asoka, 19 of which are in China. The **Great Sutra-Keeping Hall** is a magnificent sight; its towering 9th-century revolving Sutra case originally held scriptures in Chinese, Mongolian and Tibetan.

Xiantong Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Xiantong Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 6am-6pm) **FREE**

Xiantong Temple – the largest temple in town – was erected in AD 68 and was the first Buddhist temple in the area. It comprises more than 100 halls

and rooms. The **Qianbo Wenshu Hall** contains a 1000-armed, multifaced Wenshu, whose every palm supports a miniature Buddha. The squat brick **Beamless Hall** (Wuliang Dian) holds a miniature Yuan-dynasty pagoda, remarkable statues of contemplative monks meditating in the alcoves and a vast seated effigy of Wenshu.

Further on, up some steps is the blindingly beautiful **Golden Hall**, enveloped in a constellation of small Buddhas covering all the walls. Five-metres high and weighing 50 tonnes, the metal hall was cast in 1606 before being gilded; it houses an effigy of Wenshu seated atop a lion.

Further Temples

You can continue exploring the cluster of temples north beyond Xiantong Temple. **Yuanzhao Temple** (Yuanzhao Si [GOOGLE MAP](#)) contains a smaller stupa than the one at Tayuan Temple. A 10-minute walk south down the road, **Shuxiang Temple** (Shuxiang Si [GOOGLE MAP](#)) can be reached up a steep slope beyond its spirit wall by the side of the road; the temple contains Wutai Shan's largest statue of Wenshu riding a lion. Before you go looking for Father Christmas at **Santa Temple** (Santa Si [GOOGLE MAP](#)) to the west of Taihuai, you should know the name actually means Three Pagoda Temple.

For great views of the town, you can trek, take a **chairlift** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)); one-way/return ¥50/85) or ride a horse (¥50 one-way) up to the temple on **Dailuo Peak** (Dailuo Ding [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥8), on the eastern side of Qingshui River (Qingshui He). For even better views of the surrounding hills, walk 2.5km south to the isolated, fortress-like **Nanshan Temple** (Nanshan Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥4), which sees far fewer tour groups than the other temples and has beautiful stone carvings.

Activities

Opportunities for hiking are immense, but there are no good maps, and no marked trails. Contact the [Runaway Youth Hostel](#) for organised hikes and

mountain-bike rides. Roads lead to the summits of the five main peaks, so you could take a taxi up to one of them before hiking back into town using the road as a bearing. You can find minibuses at the big car park by the chairlift to Dailuo Peak, which run to all five peaks for ¥350 (7.30am departure, return 5pm).

Sleeping

While the place is incredibly touristy, accommodation is fairly basic with most hostels identical in terms of pricing and standard. Touts can lead you to family-run hotels with decent rooms from ¥100. Find one that's close to the main road so you can easily get out to the temples.

★ Runaway Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Runaway, Runaway Guoji Qingnian Lushe  186 3604 2689, 654 9505; 648984355@qq.com; dm ¥50, d & tw ¥128-148;  closed Oct-Apr;  )

The Hubei owner Zhou Jin is a passionate traveller who set up this hostel with his local wife in a quiet southwestern section of the mountain. Enter via a cosy lounge area (equipped with an Xbox) that leads up to clean hotel-standard private rooms and rooftop bunk rooms, all en suite. Ask about organised hikes and mountain-bike rides, several to the peaks.

Call or email for latest directions. At the time of research, you had to take internal shuttle 4 from Zhenhai Temple (Zhenhai Si) to the terminal station (Xixian Huancheng Qu). From here walk up the hill 100m and look for a YHA sign. The hostel is on the left.

Zhengjue Dongbei Full Vegetarian

HOTEL

(Zhengjue Dongbei Quan Suzhai ;  875 3229; d & tw ¥160;  )

The owners of this vegetarian restaurant also run a tight set of rooms on the second floor of the rear compound. Expect clean red-carpeted rooms, immaculate bathrooms, decent mountain views and extremely good food (dishes from ¥50) at the restaurant.

Eating

Loads of small family-run restaurants are tucked away behind hotels and down small alleys off the main strip in Taihuai. *Taimo*, the much-revered Wutai Shan mushroom, is the local treat and you will be steered towards it. Try *taimodun jikuai* (*taimo* stewed chicken) or *taimodun tu ji* (*taimo* stewed wild chicken). Also look out for *taimodun doufu* (*taimo* stewed tofu). Bear in mind, though, that *taimo* dishes are pricey (from ¥200!), and that there are plenty of other options available. Simple dishes such as noodles start at ¥15 and meat dishes from ¥40.

Information

ATMs are found in the visitors centre and along the town's main road. You can pick up an OK tourist map (¥5) from many shops.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng ;  8am-7pm)

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses from **Wutai Shan bus station** (;  654 3101) (qiche zhan):

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥145, five hours, 9am and 2pm
- ➔ **Datong** ¥75, four hours, three daily (8.30am 1pm and 2pm, summer only)
- ➔ **Hanging Monastery** ¥65, three hours, one daily (8.30am)
- ➔ **Taiyuan** ¥74, five hours, hourly (6.30am to 4pm)

Buses () to **Shahe** (¥25, 1½ hours, hourly, 8am to 5pm) leave from the car park by the chair lift to Dailuo Peak.

TRAIN

The station known as **Wutai Shan** is actually 50km away in the town of Shahe from where you can get a minibus taxi the rest of the way from around ¥70. An example route and fare from Beijing is: seat ¥50, six to seven hours, two daily.

Taiyuan

📍 0351 / Pop 4.2 million

Most travellers pass through Shanxi's capital en route to Pingyao, but the city has enough to keep you occupied for a day with its excellent museum and a few atmospheric temples.



Taiyuan

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Chongshan Temple | C1 |
| 2 | Confucius Temple | C1 |

🏠 Sleeping

3 [Taiyuan Wanming Hotel](#) C2

Eating

4 [Food Street](#) A1

5 [SPAR Supermarket](#) D2

6 [Taiyuan Noodle House](#) A2

Information

7 [Agricultural Bank of China \(ABC\)](#) D2

8 [Industrial & Commercial Bank of China](#) B2

Sights

Shanxi Museum

MUSEUM

(Shanxi Bowuguan  878 9555; Binhe Xilu Zhongduan;  9am-5pm Tue-Sun, last entry 4pm) **FREE**

This top-class museum has three floors that walk you through all aspects of Shanxi culture, from prehistoric fossils to detailed local opera and architecture exhibits. All galleries are imaginatively displayed and some contain good English captions. Take bus 6 (¥1) from the train station, get off at Yifen Qiaoxi bus stop across the river and look for the inverted pyramid.

A new geology museum (shaped like a UFO) was being built next door at the time of research.

Twin Pagoda Temple/Yongzuo Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(/, Shuangta Si/Yongzuo Si admission ¥30;  8.30am-5.30pm)

This gorgeous pair of namesake twin pagodas rises up south of the Nansha River in Taiyuan's southeast. Not much of the temple itself is left but the area is well tended with shrubs and greenery; with the wind in their tinkling bells, the highlight brick pagodas are lovely. The 13-storey **Xuanwen Pagoda** (Xuanwen Ta) dates from the reign of Ming emperor Wanli and can be

climbed.

The adjacent pagoda dates from the same period but cannot be climbed. Take bus 820 or 812 from the train station.

Chongshan Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Chongshan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dilianggong Jie; admission ¥2; 🕒 8am-4.30pm)

The double-eaved wooden hall in this Ming temple contains three magnificent statues: Samantabhadra (the Bodhisattva of Truth), Guanyin (the Goddess of Mercy with 1000 arms) and Manjusri (the Bodhisattva of Wisdom with 1000 alms bowls). The entrance is down an alley off Dilianggong Jie behind the [Confucius Temple](#) (Wen Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 3 Wenmiao Xiang; admission ¥30; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), which still has its spirit wall standing guard, as well as a folk art museum.

Sleeping

There are guesthouses offering rooms from ¥50 on Yingze Nanjie. Touts will find you near the train station with offers of cheapies.

Taiyuan Wanming Hotel

HOTEL

(Taiyuan Wanming Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 494 8888; 23 Wuyi Dongjie; tw ¥158-198; 📶 @)

A blast from the past with its old-school *fuwuyuan* (attendants) on each floor, the rooms here are battered and noisy but clean. There's a decent internet connection and an attached restaurant, while the location is fine for the train and main bus stations. Discounts of 10% available.

Jinlin Oriental Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinlin Dongfang Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 839 0666; Yingze Nanjie, d & tw ¥418, ste ¥588; 📶 @ 📶)

Conveniently located across the road from the main entrance of the train

station (on the left as you exit), the Jinlin has clean, quiet and comfortable rooms with discounts of up to 40%. Rates include breakfast and staff are helpful.

World Trade Hotel

HOTEL

(Shanxi Guomao Dafandian  868 8888; www.sxwtc.com; 69 Fuxi Jie, d ¥1258-1578, ste ¥2478;



Its marbled lobby a vast atrium-lit space slung between its two towers (named after and resembling New York's former World Trade Center), this dapper, efficient five-star hotel has the finest rooms and facilities in town, including a gym and spa. You need to pay extra for a view not looking straight into the neighbouring tower. Discounts of 25% available.

DON'T MISS

QIAO FAMILY COURTYARD

This 18th-century complex of courtyards at the **Qiao Family Courtyard** (Qiaojia Dayuan admission ¥72; 🕒8am-7pm) is one of the finest remaining examples of a traditional private residence in northern China. Once home to a celebrated merchant, it's an austere maze of doorways and courtyards that lead onto seemingly endless rooms (there are over 300 of them).

The complex is famous in China for being where Zhang Yimou's lush fifth-generation tragedy *Raise the Red Lantern* was filmed. Appropriately, there are red lanterns hanging everywhere, but there are also many fascinating exhibits of Qing-era furniture and clothes, as well as Shanxi opera costumes and props. Recently installed English signage helps understand Northern Chinese traditions and rites better.

The site is extremely popular with domestic tour groups so get here as early as you can. While the entrance is glossed up, and souvenir and food stalls surround the compound, the residence is still big enough to escape the crowds; you can step through one of the many doorways and they magically disperse.

To get here, catch any bus going to Qixian (¥23, 1½ hours) from Taiyuan's Jiannan bus station. Tell the driver where you're headed and they'll drop you at the main gate. You can also visit from Pingyao (¥26, 45 minutes, every 30 minutes).



Eating

Shanxi is famed for its noodles – including *daoxiao mian* (knife-pared noodles) and *lamian* (hand-pulled noodles) – and vinegar, both in abundance in Taiyuan. *Yangrou tang* (mutton soup) is lapped up by locals for breakfast.

Food Street

CHINESE

(Shipin Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); meals from ¥7; 🕒 11am-2am)

Head to this street lined with all manner of restaurants and outdoor *shaokao* (barbecue) places. You can get noodles here, of course, but also hotpot, dumplings and fried dishes. It gets lively late in the evening, when it's a good place for a beer and a bit of chat with the locals. The street runs north off Zhonglou Jie; look for the Qing-era arch and go through it.

Taiyuan Noodle House

NOODLES

(Taiyuan Mianshi Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 5 Jiefang Lu; noodles ¥6-15; 🕒 11am-9.30pm)

Bustling locals' joint popular for Shanxi's famous vinegar/noodle combo. Classic forms (named after their shape, not ingredients) include *mao'erduo* (cat's ears; ¥10) and *cuoyu* (rolled fish; ¥10). Garnishes include *rouzhajiang* (pork) and *yangrou* (mutton). It also does *shaomai* (¥12). No English menu, but there are pictures.

SPAR Supermarket

SUPERMARKET

(Meitehao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yingze Dajie; 🕒 7.30am-10pm)

Self-caterers can find most anything at this two-level supermarket opposite the train station.

★ Shanxi Huiguan

DONGBEI

(7 Tiyu Lu, dishes ¥18-368; 🕒 11am-9.30pm)

Behind the imposing grey exterior is a refined restaurant serving quality northern Chinese cuisine. There's everything from hotpot to homemade tofu

and of course, noodles, served by eager staff. If you're lucky, you might be able to catch a noodle-making demonstration at dinner time. The picture menu has fairly accurate English translations. A taxi from the train station here costs ¥11.

Information

Agricultural Bank of China (ABC)

ATM

(Zhongguo Nongye Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yingze Nanjie)

ATM next to the Jinlin Oriental Hotel.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yingze Dajie; 🕒 8am-7pm)

Opposite the train station.

Industrial & Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(ICBC., Gongshang Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yingze Dajie)

ATM

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 895 5355; Wuyi Dongjie; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Can extend visas.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Shuttle **buses** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) to the airport (¥15, 40 minutes, hourly from 6am to 8.30pm) run from the side of the Sanjin International Hotel on Wuyi Guangchang. The airport is 15km southeast of downtown Taiyuan; a taxi costs around ¥50.

Destinations include Beijing (¥550), Hangzhou (¥700), Hong Kong

(¥1400), Kunming (¥1440), Nanjing (¥700), Shanghai (¥800) and Shenzhen (¥1190).

BUS

Taiyuan's long-distance **bus station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (*changtu qichezhan*) is 500m south of the train station on Yingze Dajie. Buses travel to the following destinations:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥146, seven hours, three daily (8.30am, 10.30am and 2.30pm)
- ➔ **Datong** ¥117, 3½ hours, every 20 minutes (7am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥409, 17 hours, one daily (2.30pm)
- ➔ **Shijiazhuang** ¥65, 3½ hours, two daily (10.30am and 2.30pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥180, eight hours, five daily (8am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Zhengzhou** ¥156, seven hours, five daily (7am to 5pm)

Buses from the **Jiannan bus station** (Jiannan zhan), 3km south of the train station:

- ➔ **Jiexiu** ¥42, two hours, half-hourly (7.40am to 6.40pm)
- ➔ **Jincheng** ¥114, five hours, every 40 minutes (7am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Pingyao** ¥26, two hours, half-hourly (7.30am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Qixian** ¥23, two hours, half-hourly (7.30am to 7.30pm)

The **east bus station** (*dong kezhan*) has buses to Wutai Shan (¥73, four to five hours, hourly, 6.40am to 6.30pm).

The **west bus station** (*keyun xizhan*) has the following services:

- ➔ **Lishi** ¥70, two hours, frequent (7am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Qikou** ¥79, four hours, one daily (10.30am)

TRAIN

At the time of writing, the area in front of the train station was undergoing massive renovations. Roads and bus routes might change. Sample routes from **Taiyuan Train Station** (*huoche zhan*):

- ➔ **Beijing West G train** ¥223, three hours, regular

- ➔ **Beijing** normal train seat/sleeper ¥80/150, eight to 12 hours, five daily
- ➔ **Datong** hard seat/sleeper ¥46/100, five to seven hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Jincheng** hard seat/sleeper ¥48/108, seven hours, four daily
- ➔ **Pingyao** ¥18, 1½ hours, frequent
- ➔ **Wutai Shan** ¥36, five hours, three daily
- ➔ **Xi'an** hard seat/sleeper ¥105/196, nine to 11 hours, nine daily

High-speed trains depart from the new **Taiyuan South Train Station** (Huoche Nanzhan), 8km south of the old train station in the Beiyong district. The best way to get here is via taxi (¥20, 25 minutes) or bus 861 from the old station.

- ➔ **Beijing West** D/G train ¥145/270, 3½/three hours, 16 daily
- ➔ **Xi'an North** D train ¥155, 3½ hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Zhengzhou East** G ¥280, four hours, 10.35am

Getting Around

Bus 1 (¥1) runs the length of Yingze Dajie. For the Jiannan bus station and the west bus station, take bus 23 or 611 (¥1.50) from Yingze Dajie. For the east bus station take any bus (¥1.50) heading east from Wulongkou Jie. A taxi to Jiannan bus station costs ¥13.

Taxi flagfall is ¥8.

Pingyao

 0354 / Pop 502,000

Pingyao is China's best-preserved ancient walled town and worth a visit if you're spending any time in Shanxi. Anyone with any China mileage under their belt will appreciate the town's age-old charms; charms squandered away – or forever lost – elsewhere across the Middle Kingdom. While other 'ancient' cities in China will rustle together an unconvincing display of old

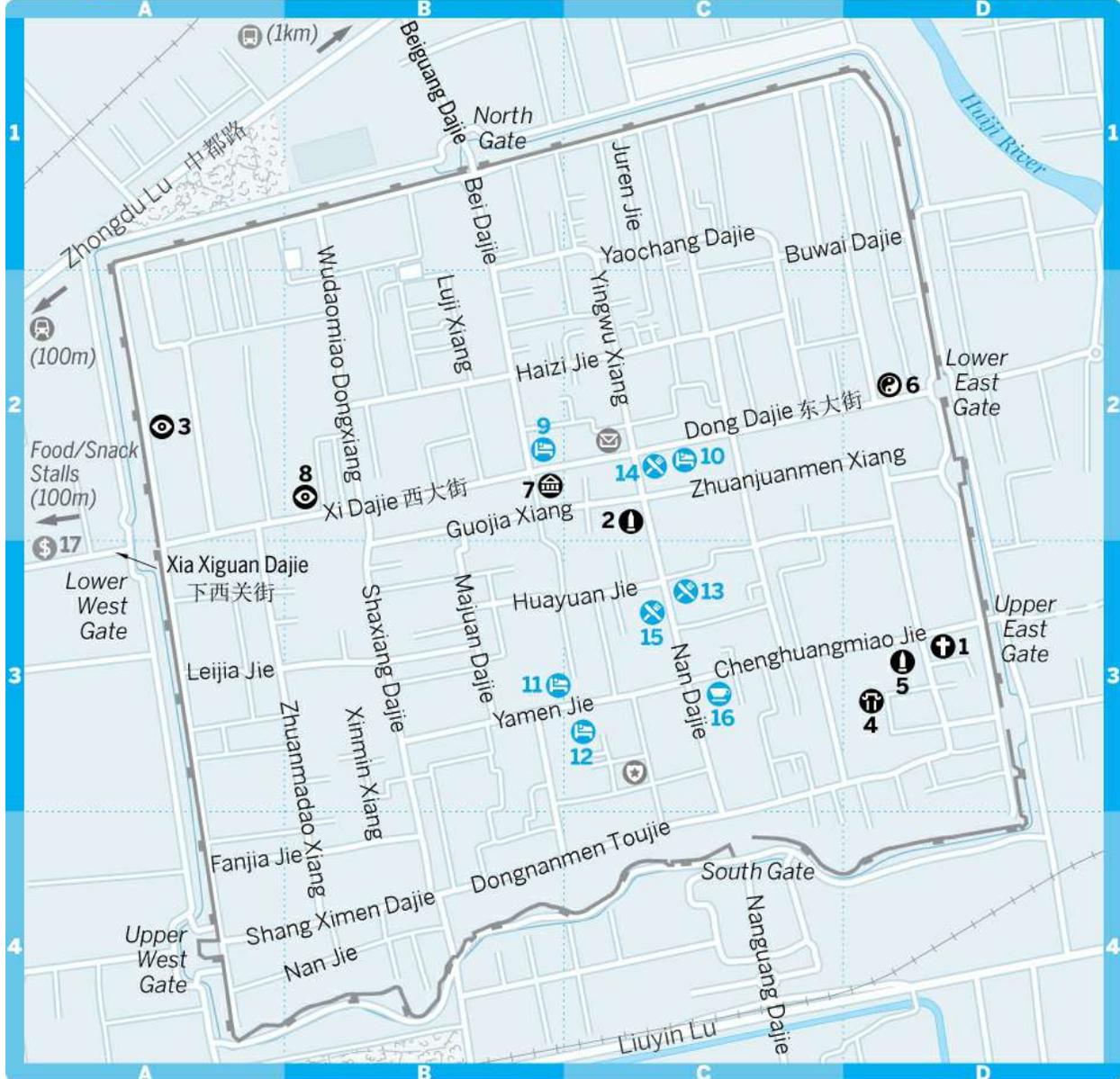
city walls, sporadic temples or the occasional ragged alley thrust beneath an unsightly melange of white-tile architecture and greying apartment blocks, Pingyao has managed to keep its beguiling narrative largely intact: red-lantern–hung lanes set against night-time silhouettes of imposing town walls, elegant courtyard architecture, ancient towers poking into the north China sky, and an entire brood of creaking temples and old buildings.

Pingyao is also a living and breathing community where the 30,000-odd locals who reside in the old town hang laundry in courtyards, career down alleyways on bicycles, sun themselves in doorways or chew the fat with neighbours. Sadly, Pingyao struggles to keep out much of the coal dust that pervades the province. Additionally, cars now throng everywhere apart from the pedestrian-only centre (radiating roughly one block out from Nan, Dong and Xi Dajie), destroying much of the old-world charm. Still, if you've been doing some hard travelling in the hinterlands, it's a great place to catch your breath and kick back for a few days, while Pingyao is also a fine base for day trips to the Wang Family Courtyard and Zhangbi Cun and its 1400-year-old underground castle.

History

Already a thriving merchant town during the Ming dynasty, Pingyao's ascendancy came in the Qing era when merchants created the country's first banks and cheques to facilitate the transfer of silver from one place to another. The city escaped the shocking reshaping much loved by communist town planners, and almost 4000 Ming- and Qing-dynasty residences remain within the city walls.

Píngyáo



Pingyao

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Catholic Church | D3 |
| 2 | City Tower | C2 |
| 3 | City Walls | A2 |
| 4 | Confucius Temple | D3 |
| 5 | Nine Dragon Screen | D3 |

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 6 | Qingxu Guan | D2 |
| 7 | Rishengchang Financial House Museum | B2 |
| 8 | Slogans | B2 |
| | Xietongqing Draft Bank | C2 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 9 | Dejuyuan Guesthouse | B2 |
| 10 | Jing's Residence | C2 |
| 11 | Yamen Youth Hostel | B3 |
| 12 | Zhengjia Kezhan | C3 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 13 | Dejuyuan | C3 |
| 14 | Sakura Cafe | C2 |
| 15 | Tianyuankui Guesthouse | C3 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 16 | Coffee by Shrew | C3 |
|----|---------------------------------|----|

Information

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 17 | Industrial & Commercial Bank of China | A3 |
|----|---|----|

Sights & Activities

Bounded by an intact city wall, gates access the old town at various points in the east, west, north and south. The main drag is Nan Dajie, where you'll find guesthouses, restaurants, museums, temples and souvenir shops galore. If you have even the remotest interest in Chinese history, culture or architecture, you could easily spend a couple of days wandering the pinched lanes of Pingyao, stumbling across hidden gems while ticking off all the well-known sights. It's free to walk the streets, but you must pay ¥150 to climb the city walls or enter any of the 18 buildings deemed historically significant. Tickets are valid for three days and can be purchased from near the gate openings. Opening hours for the sights are from 8am to 7pm in summer and 8am to

6pm in winter.

City Walls

HISTORIC SITE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

A good place to start your Pingyao experience is the magnificent **city walls** (cheng qiang), which date from 1370. At 10m high and more than 6km in circumference, they are punctuated by 72 watchtowers, each containing a paragraph from Sunzi's *The Art of War*.

Part of the southern wall, which collapsed in 2004, has been rebuilt, but the rest is original. Pingyao's **city gates** (chengmen) are fascinating and are some of the best preserved in China; the **Lower West Gate** (Fengyi Men; Phoenix Appearing Gate) has a section of the original road, deeply grooved with the troughs left by cartwheels (also visible at the South Gate).

Rishengchang Financial House Museum

MUSEUM

(Rishengchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 38 Xi Dajie, 🕒 8am-7pm)

Not to be missed, this museum began life as a humble dye shop in the late 18th century before its tremendous success as a business saw it transform into China's first draft bank (1823), eventually expanding to 57 branches nationwide. The museum has nearly 100 rooms, including offices, living quarters and a kitchen, as well as several old cheques.

Xietongqing Draft Bank

MUSEUM

(Xietongqing Piaohao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nan Dajie, 🕒 8am-7pm)

First established in 1856, this former bank had underground vaults protected by live-in guards. After checking out the courtyard displays, descend into the cool (literally) vaults and explore the cave-like rooms filled with stacks of faux gold and silver ingots.

Confucius Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wen Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-7pm)

Pingyao's oldest surviving building is **Dacheng Hall** (Dacheng Dian), dating from 1163 and found in the Confucius Temple, a huge complex where bureaucrats-to-be came to take the imperial exams.

City Tower

TOWER

(Shi Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nan Dajie; 🕒 8am-7pm)

Snap a photo before passing under the tallest building in the old town en route to other sites. Sadly, you can no longer climb its stone steps for city views.

Qingxu Guan

TAOIST TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dong Dajie; 🕒 8am-7pm)

Shanxi dust has penetrated every crevice of the 10 halls that make up this impressive Taoist temple. But that only adds to its ancient aura; it dates back to the Tang dynasty.

Slogans

HISTORIC SITE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 153 Xi Dajie; 🕒 8am-7pm)

Pop into 153 Xi Dajie for two red-blooded slogans from the Cultural Revolution that have survived on buildings within the courtyard. The one on the left intones: ('Industry should learn from Daqing'); the rarer slogan on the right proclaims: ('Earnestly undertake struggle, criticism and reform').

Nine Dragon Screen

MONUMENT

(Jiulong Bi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chenghuangmiao Jie)

The old Pingyao Theatre (Daxitang) has now been converted into a hotel's banquet hall but is fronted by this magnificent stone wall.

Catholic Church

CHURCH

(Tianzhu Tang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Anjia Jie)

With a snow-white statue of the Virgin Mary outside, this historic, if

dilapidated, church is the focal point for Pingyao's Catholics.

Tours

Mr Deng, who runs the Harmony Guesthouse, gives reader-recommended day-long tours of the city for ¥150. He's a great source of local knowledge and can also point you towards some little-visited sites outside town.

Sleeping

Most of the old-town hotels are conversions of old courtyard homes, and finding a bed for the night is not hard. Pingyao courtyards differ from their squarer Beijing equivalents; courtyards in Pingyao are, meaning 'shaped like the character ', and are more rectangular in shape. Pingyao hoteliers are increasingly tuned in to the needs of Western travellers, which means some English is spoken and they can make a passable Western breakfast. Most hotels and hostels will do pick-ups from the train or bus stations.

Upon arrival, touts will direct you to rooms with air-con, private bathrooms and wi-fi from ¥80. If you do take up this option, make sure your guesthouse isn't too far from the central section and don't be afraid to turn down the room. Pingyao's hostels are surprisingly underwhelming considering the city's stature and popularity.

Harmony Guesthouse

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Heyichang Kezhan ;  568 4952; www.py-harmony.com; 165 Nan Dajie, dm ¥50-60, r ¥120 & 280;   )

The dorms and rooms in these two neatly preserved 300-year-old Qing courtyards, as well as in a smaller courtyard down a neighbouring alley, could use an update. However, the English-speaking husband and wife team offer good local information and common areas are cosy. The hostel also offers tours, ticketing, bike rental (¥10 per day), laundry and pick-up.

Private rooms come with traditional stone *kang* beds, wooden bed-top tea

tables and wooden inlaid windows. Dorm accommodation is in the original guesthouse, as well as in the bar just up the road.

Zhengjia Kezhan

COURTYARD HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 568 4466; 68 Yamen Jie, dm ¥35-50, s ¥80, d from ¥140;



With two locations virtually next door to each other, head to the one closest to the Listen to the Rain Pavilion for decent doubles with *kang* beds set around a very pleasant courtyard. The cramped but fresh and clean dorms are under the eaves at the neighbouring courtyard (which also has doubles) but the tiny bathrooms are dark.

There's a good communal area and it sees more Chinese travellers than the other guesthouses, making it a good place to meet the locals.

Yamen Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Yamen Guanshe Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 568 3539; 69 Yamen Jie, dm ¥30-45, s ¥90, d from ¥140; 📞 @ 📶)

Set around a series of courtyards, rooms are larger than many in Pingyao but rather done in; the bathrooms could do with an upgrade. Dorms under the eaves are clean, with OK showers and toilets downstairs. The staff are obliging and all the usual hostel favourites are here: DVD room, ticketing, laundry, free internet, wi-fi, bike hire, pool table and pick-up.

Dejuyuan Guesthouse

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Dejuyuan Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 568 5266; www.pydijy.net; 43 Xi Dajie; s ¥150, d & tw ¥280-488, ste ¥1480; 📞 @ 📶)

Very well-maintained rooms are set around two of the oldest courtyards in Pingyao (400 years old) at this efficient and friendly place. The cheapest rooms are excellent value, while the suites are luxurious and come with tip-top bathrooms. Its restaurant is a fine place to try high-quality local dishes at reasonable prices. Staff can arrange train tickets and tours as well.

★ Jing's Residence

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Jin Zhai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 584 1000; www.jingsresidence.com; 16 Dong Dajie, r ¥1500-3200; 📶 @ 📶)

With the super-hushed atmosphere that's unique to the most exclusive (and expensive) hotels, Jing's is a soothing blend of old Pingyao and modern flair that's squarely aimed at upmarket Western travellers. At 260 years old the former home of a Qing-dynasty silk merchant is sleek and well finished with polished service from the English-speaking staff.

The themed courtyards are picture-perfect, rooms are elegant and stylish (the vast upstairs suites have views over Pingyao's rooftops), while the upstairs bar must be the most sophisticated in all of Shanxi. Its restaurant serves high-priced Western fusion cuisine. There are only 19 rooms here and it's essential to book ahead.

Eating & Drinking

Most guesthouses can rustle up (Western or Chinese) breakfast, lunch and dinner. Pingyao's lanes are stuffed with *xiaochi guan* (hole-in-the-wall restaurants), almost all offering the same dishes at similar prices. For something cheaper and less touristy, head to Xia Xiguan Jie just outside the Lower West Gate, where food stalls offer different varieties of noodles for ¥5 and up, as well *roujiamo* (fried pork or beef with green peppers in bread) and meat and veggie skewers.

Pingyao doesn't have many worthwhile bars, but courtyard hotels provide virtually all you need: bottles of chilled beer and a gorgeous courtyard to sit in to watch the night sky.

Dejuyuan

SHANXI

(Petit Resto; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 82 Nan Dajie mains from ¥25; 🕒 8.30am-10pm)

Traveller friendly, but no worse for that, this welcoming and popular little restaurant has a simple and tasty menu (in English) of northern Chinese

dishes, such as dumplings (¥15), as well as all the local faves. Try the famed Pingyao beef (¥42) or the mountain noodles (¥12). Cold dishes start at ¥8.

★ Tianyuankui Guesthouse

SHANXI

(Tianyuankui Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 568 0069; 73 Nan Dajie, dishes ¥10-68; ⌚ 8.30am-10pm; 📶)

With warm wooden furnishing, friendly staff and free wi-fi, this restaurant has an easygoing vibe that invites travellers to linger over their meals. The English iPad menu has photos of the dishes – a range of traditional favourites such as Pingyao beef sit next to the usual meat, veg and tofu offerings – making ordering a snap.

There are also comfortable rooms (from ¥400) in the rear courtyard compound.

Sakura Cafe

CAFE, BAR

(Yinghuawu Xican Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 6 Dong Dajie; dishes from ¥35, beers from ¥15; ⌚ 9.30am-midnight; 📶)

This dark and moody cafe-bar attracts both locals and foreigners with its daily food and drink specials. It does decent if pricey pizzas (from ¥55), burgers, as well as breakfast, coffee, beers and cocktails. There's another equally popular branch at 86 Nan Dajie.

Coffee by Shrew

CAFE

(Chichi Kafeiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Chenghuangmiao Jie; coffee from ¥23, cakes ¥28, alcoholic drink from ¥35; ⌚ 11am-9pm; 📶)

Behind its green doors is a cute-as-pie cafe serving Pingyao's best espresso, lattes and single-origin brews in a warm setting lined with bookshelves and cosy seats. Come nighttime, swap caffeine for simple cocktails and start up a conversation with the Fujianese owner Shrew.



Shopping

Part of Pingyao's charms lie in its peeling and weatherbeaten shopfronts, yet to be mercilessly restored. Nan Dajie is stuffed with wood-panelled shops selling Pingyao snacks, knick-knacks, faux Cultural Revolution memorabilia, jade, shoes and slippers, and loads more. Look out for red and black Shanxi paper cuts, which make excellent presents.

Information

All guesthouses and hostels have internet and wi-fi access.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xi Dajie; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Industrial & Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(ICBC, Gongshang Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xia Xiguan Dajie)

ATM

Public Security Bureau

POLICE STATION

(PSB, Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 563 5010; off Yamen Jie; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Fri)

Getting There & Away

BUS

Pingyao's **bus station** (| qichexinzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 569 0011) has buses to Taiyuan (¥26, two hours, frequent, 6.30am to 7.40pm), Lishi (¥44, two hours, 8.30am and 12.30pm), Changzhi (¥79, three hours, 7.50am and 1.40pm) and the Qiao Family Courtyard (¥26, 45 minutes, half hourly).

TRAIN

Tickets for trains (especially to Xi'an) are tough to get in summer, so book ahead. Your hotel/hostel should be able to help. Trains depart for the following destinations:

- ➔ **Beijing** D train ¥161, 4½ hours, two daily
- ➔ **Datong** hard seat/sleeper ¥62/123, seven to eight hours, four daily
- ➔ **Taiyuan** ¥18, 1½ hours, frequent
- ➔ **Xi'an** D train ¥136, three hours, four daily

Getting Around

Pingyao can be easily navigated on foot or bicycle (¥10 per day). Bike rental is available all over; most guesthouses offer it and there are many spots along Nan Dajie and Xi Dajie. Rickshaws run to the train and bus stations for ¥10.

Around Pingyao

Most hostels and guesthouses will arrange transport to the surrounding sights. Day tours to the Wang Family Courtyard and Zhangbi Underground Castle are ¥80 per person (excluding the admission price or food) and depart at 8.30pm, returning late afternoon. You can also hire a private car for ¥350 per day.

Shuanglin Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Shuanglin Si admission ¥40; 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm)

Within easy reach of Pingyao, this Buddhist temple surrounded by cornfields, houses a number of rare, intricately carved Song and Yuan painted statues. Rebuilt in 1571, it's an impressive complex of halls and rather more authentic than many restored temples. The interiors of the Sakyamuni Hall and flanking buildings are especially exquisite. A rickshaw or taxi from town will cost ¥40 to ¥50 return, or you could cycle the 7km here (although expect to swallow coal-truck dust if you do).

Zhangbi Underground Castle

CAVES

(Zhangbi Gubao; admission ¥60; 🕒 8am-6.30pm)

This 1400-year-old network of **defence tunnels** are the oldest and longest series of such tunnels in all China. Built at the end of the Sui dynasty and stretching underground for 10km, they were never employed for their intended use against possible attack from Tang-dynasty invaders and subsequently fell into disrepair. Now, 1500m of tunnels on three levels have been restored. You descend as low as 26m in places and tour narrow and stooped subterranean passageways, which were once storage rooms, guardhouses and bedrooms.

Holes cut into the side of shafts leading to the surface indicate escape routes and places where the soldiers stood sentry to spy on would-be attackers. Chinese-speaking guides (included in the ticket price) are compulsory and essential; you don't want to get lost here.

The tour includes a visit to fascinating Zhangbi Cun, a still-occupied Yuan-dynasty farming village above the tunnels. You can wander its cobblestoned streets and temples for free if you don't mind skipping the underground castle.

You can only get here on tour or by private car (per day ¥350). Check with your accommodation in Pingyao.

Wang Family Courtyard

COURTYARD

(| Wangjia Dayuan admission Y66; 🕒 8am-7pm)

More castle than cosy home, this Qing-dynasty **former residence** is grand and has been very well maintained (note the wooden galleries still fronting many of the courtyard buildings). Its sheer size, though, means that the seemingly endless procession of courtyards (123 in all) becomes a little repetitive. It's easiest to join a tour or hire a car here. Four direct buses (¥17, one hour, 7.10am, 8.40am, 12.40pm and 4.20pm) leave from Pingyao's bus station, returning at 10.50am, 12.30pm, 3.50pm and 5.20pm.

Behind the castle walls are interesting and still-occupied **cave dwellings** (*yaodong*), while in front of the complex is a Yuan-dynasty **Confucius Temple** (Wen Miao admission ¥10), with a beautiful three-tiered wooden pagoda.

Qikou

 0358 / Pop 32,000

Separated from neighbouring Shaanxi (Shanxi) province by the fast-flowing and muddy Yellow River (Huang He), this tiny Ming River port found prosperity during its Qing heyday when hundreds of merchants lived here, only to lose it when the Japanese army arrived in 1938. It's well worth visiting for its evocative stone courtyards and cobbled pathways. All wind their way, eventually, up to the Black Dragon Temple, which overlooks the town.

Some of the houses have English captions revealing their former official roles, such as the pawnshop and chamber of commerce. The weekly market on Saturday is a good time to visit, when people from the surrounding villages arrive by tractor and electric cart for a day of shopping. Get here soon as there's a massive construction project in the main town: a cluster of modern houses, a hotel and other tourist amenities are being built.

The main draw here, though, is the nearby ancient village of Lijiashan, a seemingly long-forgotten settlement of hundreds of cave dwellings, some of which remain inhabited today.

Sights

Lijiashan

CAVES

()

An absolute dream for travellers wanting to experience Shanxi's **cave houses** (*yaodong*), this remote, supremely peaceful 550-year-old village, hugging a hillside with terraces of crops running up it, has hundreds of cave dwellings scaling nine storeys. Once home to more than 600 families, most surnamed Li, today's population is around 45.

Almost all inhabitants are elderly: the local school, with caves for classrooms, no longer operates. Some of the stone paths and stairways that

twist up the hill date from Ming times; note the rings on some walls that horses were tied to. These days, the village is popular with artists who have come to walk in the footsteps of the late Chinese painter Wu Guanzhong, a pioneer in modern Chinese painting who found inspiration here. The surrounding countryside offers ample opportunities for hikes and there are now several **homestays** (¥60 including meals) offering basic accommodation for those who wish to get away from it all. People here speak Jin, although most understand Mandarin.

To get here, cross the bridge by Qikou's bus stop and follow the river for about 30 minutes until you see a blue sign indicating Lijiashan. Walk on for about 100m and then take the road up the hill for another 30 minutes and you'll reach the old village. Local cars do a return run for ¥50 to ¥60. If you're planning on staying, you'll need to negotiate a rate or walk out.

Black Dragon Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Heilong Miao)

They say the acoustics of this Ming Taoist temple, with wonderful views of the Yellow River, were so excellent that performances held on its stage were audible on the other side of the river in Shaanxi (Shanxi) province. Sadly, the stage is unused today. You can't miss the temple: from Qikou's main road, head up any number of old cobbled pathways up the hill, via the odd courtyard or two.

CAVE DWELLINGS

People have been living in **cave houses** (yaodong) in Shanxi for almost 5000 years; it's believed that at one stage a quarter of the population lived underground. Shanxi's countryside is still littered with yaodong, especially around the Yellow River area, and Lijiashan is a wonderful example. These days most lie abandoned, but almost three million people in Shanxi (and around 30 million in total in China) still live in caves. And who can blame them? Compared to modern houses, they're cheaper, far better insulated against freezing winters and scorching summers, much more soundproof, while they also afford better protection from natural disasters such as earthquakes or forest fires. Furthermore, with far fewer building materials needed to construct them,

they're a lot more environmentally friendly. So why isn't everyone living in them? Well, although most are now connected to the national grid, the vast majority of cave communities have no running water or sewerage system, turning simple daily tasks like washing or going to the toilet into a mission, and suddenly making even the ugliest tower block seem a whole lot more attractive.

Sleeping & Eating

Some locals offer clean beds (with an outhouse) for around ¥60. Restaurants line the road leading from the bus station towards Qikou Kezhan and offer dishes from ¥15.

Qikou Kezhan

GUESTHOUSE

( 446 6188; d/tw/tr ¥188/218/388;  )

Overlooking the river in Qikou, this historic (the Red Army used it as a base in WWII) and friendly place has comfortable and very large, *yaodong*-style rooms (all with internet connections) with *kang* beds set off two 300-year-old courtyards. Climb the stone stairs and there's a wonderful terrace with great views over the Yellow River.

It's a fine place to enjoy a beer, or the tasty meals cooked up here, under the starry sky. Discounts of 10% available.

Getting There & Away

One bus runs from Taiyuan to Qikou (¥79, four hours, 10.30am). If you miss it, or are coming from Pingyao, you will have to go through Lishi.

Regular buses go from Taiyuan to Lishi (¥70, three hours, half-hourly from 7am to 7.30pm). There are two daily buses from Pingyao (¥44, two hours, 8.30am and 12.30pm). From Lishi's long-distance bus station (*changtu qichezhan*), take bus 5 (¥1, 25 minutes) to the Jinian Bei crossroads where buses to Qikou (¥20, 1½ hours, 7am to 7pm) depart.

There's one daily bus from Qikou to Taiyuan, but it leaves at 5.30am. There are hourly buses to Lishi from Qikou until around 4pm. From Lishi,

there are many buses back to Taiyuan (¥70, from 7am to 8pm), two to Pingyao (¥44, 8am and 1.40pm) and one to Xi'an (¥180, eight hours, 11.30am).

Jincheng

Jincheng has few sights, but this small, little-visited city is the launch pad for a historical adventure into Shanxi's southeast. The surrounding countryside hides some very impressive ancient architecture, making this a rewarding stop, particularly if you are continuing south into Henan.

On Wenchang Dongjie you can find a branch of the Bank of China with an ATM (there are many more around town), and plenty of restaurants.

 0356 / Pop 500,000

Sights

Bifeng Temple

BUDDHIST

(Bifeng Si  6am-6pm) **FREE**

The only sight of note in Jincheng is Bifeng Temple, which sits atop a hill close to the train station. The temple itself is newly built but the nine-storey pagoda dates back to the Ming dynasty.

Sleeping

Most hotels in town are either overpriced or won't accept foreigners.

Sunshine Hotel

HOTEL

(Yangguang Dajiudian  222 9001; 568 Zezhou Lu, d & tw incl breakfast ¥398 & 498;  )

Smart business hotel with clean rooms located just off Wenchang Dongjie. Discounts of 50% available.

Getting There & Around

➔ **Buses** depart from the new east station (keyun dongzhan). Destinations include Taiyuan (¥114, four hours, every 1½ hours, 6.30am to 6.30pm), Pingyao (¥105, five hours, 7am, 8am, 9.30am), Zhengzhou (¥65, 1½ hours, half hourly, 5.40am to 6.20pm), Luoyang (¥50, hourly, 7.20am to 6pm), Xi'an (¥179 to ¥196, seven hours, 8.30am and 10am) and Beijing (¥261, 10 hours, 4pm).

The few **trains** that pass Jincheng shuttle between Taiyuan (hard seat/sleeper ¥54/108, seven hours, four daily) and Zhengzhou (¥30, 3½ hours, three daily).

Buses 2, 3 and 19 (¥1) connect the train station with the east bus station. Bus 5 from the train station travels along the main Wenchang Dongjie. Taxi flagfall is ¥5.

Around Jincheng

Guoyu

This atmospheric walled village (Guoyu Gucheng) is the highlight of a trip to this part of Shanxi. There's no entrance fee and no tourist nonsense (amazingly, many of the domestic tour groups skip the village); just the genuine charm of a historic and still-inhabited Ming-dynasty settlement.

The crumbling remains of this one-time fort's south gate and some of its old walls still stand sentry at the entrance to the village close to the road. Walk 200m and it's as if you've stepped back in time. Narrow alleys and stone streets run past courtyard houses, where the locals sit and chatter in their native dialect.

It's best to wander Guoyu aimlessly, but don't miss **Tangdi Miao** (), a 600-year-old Taoist temple and the village's oldest building. Make sure to climb up to the stage, where there are two very rare Cultural Revolution-era paintings adorned with slogans exhorting the locals to work harder (the

temple was a government building during that time). It's also worth looking inside the former courtyard residence of Minister Chen's grandfather at 1 Jingyang Beilu.

To get here, catch one of the frequent buses headed to Prime Minister Chen's Castle (¥15, 1½ hours, 6am to 6.30pm) from Jincheng's east station. Guoyu is a 10-minute walk south of the castle. Return transport is scarce, so it's best to take a minibus to the small town of Beiliu (¥5, 15 minutes), then catch an ordinary bus back to Jincheng (¥12).

Prime Minister Chen's Castle

Prime Minister Chen's Castle

CASTLE

(Huangcheng Xiangfu admission ¥100; 🕒 8am-6.30pm)

This beautifully preserved Ming-dynasty castle is the former residence of Chen Tingjing, prime minister under Emperor Kangxi in the late 17th century, and co-author of China's most famous dictionary. The Chen family rose to prominence as senior officials in the 16th century and the castle walls were originally constructed to keep revolting peasants out. There are now all the tourist trappings – souvenir sellers, flag-waving guides with microphones – but it remains an attractive maze of battlements, courtyards, gardens and stone archways.

Don't bother buying the pricier ¥120 ticket which includes entry to a nearby garden. Regular buses (¥15) run to the ticket office from Jincheng's east bus station. If there isn't a minibus back to Jincheng, get a minibus to the small town of Beiliu (¥3, 15 minutes) then catch an ordinary bus back to Jincheng (¥10).

FOR REFERENCE – PRIME MINISTER CHEN'S DICTIONARY

Prime Minister Chen Tingjing was undoubtedly a man of many talents. Outside his governmental responsibilities he also inspired as a teacher, poet and musician. His surviving legacy, however, was not one of China's great works of creativity, but a dictionary. Not just any dictionary, mind. China's most famous and most

comprehensive, and the last one ever to be commissioned by an emperor. Named after that emperor, the Kangxi Dictionary was a mammoth undertaking put together by Chen and Zhang Yushu, both of whom died before its completion in 1716. Multi-volumed, and containing 49,030 characters, it was, until 1993, the largest Chinese dictionary ever compiled.

Appropriately enough, Chen's former residence now houses China's only dictionary museum. Among the exhibits are 39 versions of the Kangxi Dictionary, the oldest being a 42-volume, 47,035-character edition of 1827. Modern reprints can be bought in the small dictionary shop, although you might need a spare rucksack to get one back to the hotel!

Haihui Temple

Haihui Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Haihui Si; admission ¥30)

This Buddhist temple, where Minister Chen studied, is dominated by its two magnificent brick pagodas. The 20m-high **Sheli Ta** is almost 1100 years old. Towering above it, the octagonal **Rulai Ta**, built in 1558, can be climbed for an extra ¥10. To get here, take the bus to Prime Minister Chen's Castle but tell the driver you want to get off at Haihui. To continue to the castle or Guoyu, flag a minibus from the main road (¥3).

Shaanxi (Shanxi)

Shaanxi Highlights

Xi'an

Around Xi'an

Hua Shan

Hancheng

Yan'an

Yulin

Mizhi

Shaanxi (Shanxi)



Pop 37.4 million

Why Go?

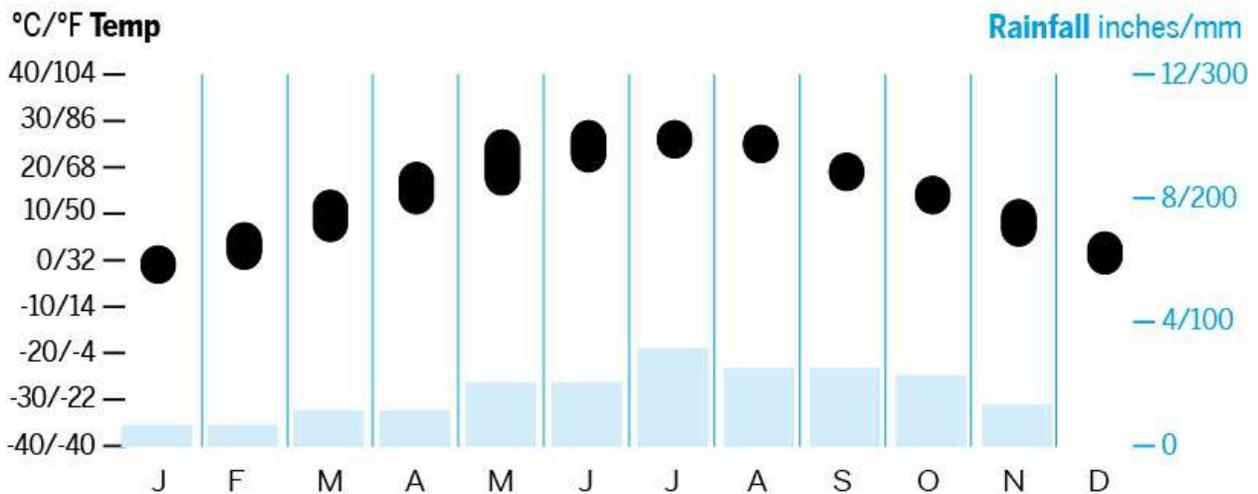
Shaanxi is where it all started for China. As the heartland of the Qin dynasty, whose warrior emperor united much of China for the first time, Shaanxi was the cradle of Chinese civilisation. Later on, Xi'an was the beginning and end of the Silk Road and a buzzing, cosmopolitan capital long before anyone had heard of Beijing.

Shaanxi's archaeological sites make it an essential destination. Around Xi'an there's an excavated Neolithic village and numerous royal graves; chief among them the tomb of Qin Shi Huang and his private Army of Terracotta Warriors. Shaanxi has its share of contemporary history too; the caves around Yan'an were the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) base in the 1930s and '40s.

Xi'an is an emergent travellers hub, with good nightlife, museums, ancient pagodas and a fascinating Muslim Quarter. Set aside time to visit the rural areas, with fascinating villages barely touched by modern life and mountains that were once home to hermits and sages.

When to Go

Xī'ān



- ➔ **Apr & May** Spring breezes and the ideal time to climb Hua Shan.
- ➔ **Sep & Oct** The rain's stopped and it's still warm, so hit Xi'an's sights.
- ➔ **Dec** Avoid the crowds and maybe get the Terracotta Warriors all to yourself.

Best Historic Sites

- ➔ [Army of Terracotta Warriors](#)
- ➔ [Tomb of Emperor Jingdi](#)
- ➔ [Big Goose Pagoda](#)
- ➔ [Yangjialing Revolution Headquarters Site](#)

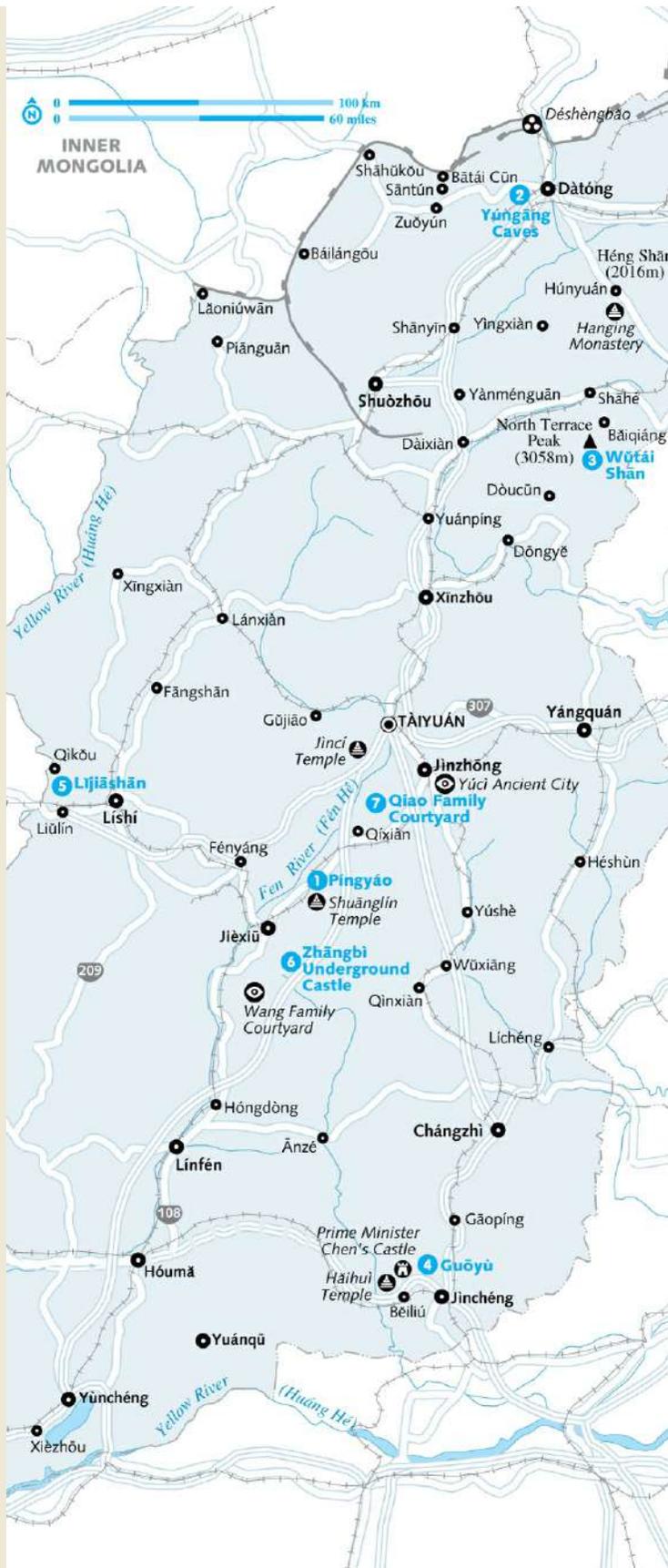
Best Museums

- ➔ [Forest of Stelae Museum](#)
- ➔ [Shaanxi History Museum](#)

➔ [Xianyang City Museum](#)

➔ [Yan'an Revolution Museum](#)

Shaanxi Highlights



- 1 See what an emperor takes with him to the grave at the extraordinary [Army of Terracotta Warriors](#).
- 2 Admire Xi'an's distinctively named [Big Goose Pagoda](#), the centrepiece for a stunning sound and light show.
- 3 Watch the sun rise over the Qinling Mountains from atop Taoism's sacred western peak, [Hua Shan](#).
- 4 Explore the old town of [Hancheng](#), a quaint quarter of buildings that date from the Yuan, Ming and Qing eras.
- 5 Take a different look at China's past by gazing down on the enthralling excavations at the [Tomb of Emperor Jingdi](#).
- 6 Get lost wandering the backstreets of Xi'an's ancient [Muslim Quarter](#).
- 7 Check out the [dugouts](#) where Mao Zedong lived in Yan'an and the red tourists who flock to see it.
- 8 Hop on a bike and ride atop Xi'an's glorious [city walls](#), a pretty 14km loop of the city.

History

Around 3000 years ago, the Zhou people of the Bronze Age moved out of their Shaanxi homeland, conquered the Shang and became dominant in much of northern China. Later the state of Qin, ruling from its capital Xianyang (near modern-day Xi'an), became the first dynasty to unify much of China. Subsequent dynasties, including the Han, Sui and Tang, were based in Xi'an, then known as Chang'an, which was abandoned for the eastern capital of Luoyang (in Henan) whenever invaders threatened.

Shaanxi remained the political heart of China until the 10th century. However, when the imperial court shifted eastward, the province's fortunes began to decline. Rebellions and famine were followed in 1556 by the deadliest earthquake in history, when an estimated 830,000 people died (the unusually high death toll was attributed to the fact that millions were living in cave homes which easily collapsed in the quake). The extreme poverty of the

region ensured that it was an early stronghold of the CCP.

Language

Locals like to joke that Xi'an's dialect is the 'real' standard Mandarin – after all, the city was one of the ancient capitals of China. Those pedantic linguists, however, prefer to classify the Shaanxi dialect as part of the central Zhongyuan Mandarin group. Jin is also spoken in some parts of the province.

Getting There & Around

Xi'an has one of China's best-connected airports. Xi'an is also a hub for road transport and mega-highways spread out in all directions. The nation's high-speed train is expected to connect Beijing and Xi'an by 2014. There are three overnight trains from Yulin to Xi'an, but they sell out quickly so it may be necessary to make this journey by bus.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥190

\$\$ ¥190 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥60

\$\$\$ more than ¥60

📍 029 / Pop 8.5 million

Xi'an's fabled past is a double-edged sword. Primed with the knowledge that this legendary city was once the terminus of the Silk Road and a melting pot of cultures and religions, as well as home to emperors, courtesans, poets, monks, merchants and warriors, visitors can feel let down by the roaring, modern-day version. But even though Xi'an's glory days ended in the early 10th century, many elements of ancient Chang'an, the former Xi'an, are still present.

The Ming-era city walls remain intact, vendors of all descriptions still crowd the narrow lanes of the warrenlike Muslim Quarter, and there are enough places of interest to keep even the most diligent amateur historian busy.

While Xi'an is no longer China's political capital, it's woken up to the potential value of its hallowed history. In the last few years, the city has been campaigning for the Silk Road to be added to the Unesco World Heritage list, and there are continuing efforts to revitalise the Muslim Quarter.

Most people only spend two or three days in Xi'an; history buffs could easily stay busy for a week. Must-sees include the Terracotta Warriors, the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi and the Muslim Quarter, but try to set time aside for the city walls, pagodas and museums. Better still, arrange a side trip to nearby Hua Shan or Hancheng.

Xi'an



Xi'an

Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Bell Tower | D3 |
| 2 Drum Tower | C3 |
| 3 Folk House | C3 |
| 4 Forest of Stelae Museum | D4 |
| 5 Great Mosque | C3 |
| 6 Muslim Quarter | C2 |
| 7 Temple of the Eight Immortals | G2 |
| 8 Xi'an City Walls | A2 |

Sleeping

| | |
|--|----|
| 9 Bell Tower Hotel | D3 |
| 10 Han Tang House | D3 |
| 11 Han Tang Inn | D3 |
| 12 Jano's Backpackers | D4 |
| 13 Jinjiang Inn | F3 |
| Sahara Youth Inn | C3 |
| 14 Shuyuan Youth Hostel | D4 |
| 15 Sofitel | E2 |
| 16 Xiangzimen Youth Hostel | C4 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 17 | Ding Ding Xiang | C4 |
| | Jamaica Blue | D3 |
| 18 | Lao Sun Jia | D3 |
| 19 | Muslim Family Restaurant | C3 |
| 20 | Sanjiemei Jiaozi | D4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 21 | 3 as 4 Bar | C4 |
| 22 | Old Henry's Bar | C4 |
| | The Belgian | D4 |

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|---------------------|----|
| 23 | 1+1 | E3 |
|----|---------------------|----|

Shopping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 24 | Northwest Antique Market | F2 |
|----|--|----|

Information

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 25 | China International Travel Service | D3 |
|----|--|----|

Sights

Inside the City Walls

Muslim Quarter

HISTORIC SITE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

The backstreets leading north from the Drum Tower have been home to the city's Hui community (Chinese Muslims) for centuries. Some believe that today's community took root in the Ming dynasty. The narrow lanes are full of butcher shops, sesame-oil factories, smaller mosques hidden behind

enormous wooden doors, men in white skullcaps and women with their heads covered in coloured scarves.

It's a great place to wander and especially atmospheric at night. Good streets to stroll down are Xiyang Shi, Dapi Yuan and Damaishi Jie, which runs north off Xi Dajie through an interesting Islamic food market.

Great Mosque

MOSQUE

(Qingzhen Dasi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Huajue Xiang, admission Mar-Nov ¥25, Dec-Feb ¥15, Muslims free; 🕒 8am-7.30pm Mar-Nov, to 5.30pm Dec-Feb)

One of the largest mosques in China and a fascinating blend of Chinese and Islamic architecture. The present buildings are mostly Ming and Qing, though the mosque was founded in the 8th century. Arab influences extend from the central minaret (cleverly disguised as a pagoda) to the enormous turquoise-roofed Prayer Hall (not open to visitors) at the back of the complex, and elegant calligraphy gracing most entryways.

Facing west (towards Mecca) instead of the usual south, the mosque begins with a classic Chinese temple feature, the spirit wall, designed to keep demons at bay. The gardens, too, with their rocks, pagodas and archways are obviously Chinese, with the exception of the four palm trees at the entrance.

To get here, follow Xiyang Shi several minutes west and look for a small alley leading south past a gauntlet of souvenir stands.

Forest of Stelae Museum

MUSEUM

(Beilin Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.beilin-museum.com; 15 Sanxue Jie, admission Mar-Nov ¥75, Dec-Feb ¥50; 🕒 8am-6.45pm Mar-Nov, to 5.45pm Dec-Feb, last admission 45min before closing)

Housed in Xi'an's Confucius Temple, this museum holds more than 1000 stone stelae (inscribed tablets), including the nine Confucian classics and some exemplary calligraphy. The highlight is the fantastic sculpture gallery (across from the gift shop), which contains animal guardians from the Tang dynasty, pictorial tomb stones and Buddhist statuary. To get to the museum,

follow Shuyuan Xiang east from the South Gate.

The second gallery holds a Nestorian tablet (AD 781), the earliest recorded account of Christianity in China. (The Nestorians professed that Christ was both human and divine, for which they were booted out of the Church in 431.) The fourth gallery holds a collection of ancient maps and portraits, and is where rubbings (copies) are made, an interesting process to watch.

Bell Tower & Drum Tower

HISTORIC SITE

Now marooned on a traffic island, the **Bell Tower** (Zhong Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); admission ¥35, combined Drum Tower ticket ¥40; 🕒 8.30am-9.30pm Mar-Oct, to 6.30pm Nov-Feb, last admission 30min before closing) sits at the heart of Xi'an and originally held a large bell that was rung at dawn, while its alter ego, the **Drum Tower** (Gu Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beiyuanmen; admission ¥35, combined Bell Tower ticket ¥40; 🕒 8.30am-9.30pm Mar-Oct, to 6.30pm Nov-Feb, last admission 30min before closing), marked nightfall. Both date from the 14th century but the Drum Tower was renovated in 1740 while the Bell Tower was moved and reconstructed in 1582 using the same beams and fixtures from where it stood two blocks west.

Musical performances, included in the ticket price, are held inside each at 9.10am, 10am, 11am, 3pm, 4pm and 5pm. Enter the Bell Tower through the underpass on the north side.

Folk House

HISTORIC SITE

(Gaojia Dayuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 144 Beiyuanmen, admission ¥15, with tea ¥20; 🕒 8.30am-11pm)

This well-rounded historic residence also serves as an art gallery, entertainment centre and teahouse. Originally the home of the Qing bureaucrat Gao Yuesong, it's a fine example of a courtyard home and has been tastefully restored. There are reception rooms, bedrooms, servants' quarters, an ancestral temple and a study (now the teahouse). Admission includes a tour that starts with an optional marionette or shadow-puppet

demonstration (¥15).

As the complex currently belongs to the Shaanxi Artists Association, there's an art gallery here where you can pick up reasonably priced traditional Chinese art. Confusingly, despite the address, this place isn't at No 144, but is about 20m down the street.

DON'T MISS

CITY WALLS

Xi'an is one of the few cities in China where the old **city walls** (Chengqiang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥54; 🕒 8am-8.30pm Apr-Oct, to 7pm Nov-Mar) are still standing. Built in 1370 during the Ming dynasty, the 12m-high walls are surrounded by a dry moat and form a rectangle with a perimeter of 14km.

Most sections have been restored or rebuilt, and it is now possible to walk the entirety of the walls in a leisurely four hours. English-speaking guides from the South Gate charge ¥80 per person. You can also cycle from the South Gate (bike hire ¥40 for 100 minutes, ¥200 deposit). Access ramps are located inside the major gates.

To get an idea of Xi'an's former grandeur, consider this: the Tang city walls originally enclosed 83 sq km, an area seven times larger than today's city centre.

Outside the City Walls

Shaanxi History Museum

MUSEUM

(Shanxi Lishi Bowuguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 91 Xiaozhai Donglu, 🕒 8.30am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, last admission 4.30pm, 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar, last admission 4pm) **FREE**

Shaanxi's museum has plenty of overlap with Xi'an's surrounding sights but makes for a comprehensive stroll through ancient Chang'an. Most exhibits include illuminating explanations in English. Look for the four original terracotta warrior statues on the ground floor. Go early and expect to queue for at least 30 minutes. Bring your passport to claim your free ticket.

The number of visitors is limited to 4000 per day (2500 tickets are distributed in the morning starting at 8.30am and another 1500 in the

afternoon starting at 1.30pm). Take bus 610 from the Bell Tower or bus 701 from the South Gate.

In the Sui and Tang section there are unique murals depicting a polo match; and a series of painted pottery figurines with elaborate hairstyles and dress, including several bearded foreigners, musicians and braying camels.

Big Goose Pagoda

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Dayan Ta [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yanta Nanlu, admission to grounds ¥50, entry into pagoda ¥40;

 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar)

This pagoda, Xi'an's most famous landmark, 4km southeast of the South Gate, dominates the surrounding modern buildings. One of China's best examples of a Tang-style pagoda (squarish rather than round), it was completed in AD 652 to house the Buddhist sutras brought back from India by the monk Xuan Zang ([Click here](#)). His travels inspired one of the best-known works of Chinese literature, *Journey to the West*.

Xuan spent the last 19 years of his life translating scriptures with a crack team of linguist monks; many of these translations are still used today.

Surrounding the pagoda is **Da Ci'en Temple** (Daci'en Si), one of the largest temples in Tang Chang'an. The buildings today date from the Qing dynasty. To the south of the pagoda is a newly developed open-air mall of shops, galleries, restaurants and public art; well-worth a wander. The area also includes a cinema and monorail.

Bus 610 from the Bell Tower and bus 609 from the South Gate drop you off at the pagoda square; the entrance is on the south side. An evening fountain show is held on the square.

Xi'an Museum

MUSEUM

(Xi'an Bowuguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.xabwy.com; 76 Youyi Xilu,  8.30am-7pm Wed-Mon) **FREE**

Housed in the pleasant grounds of the Jianfu Temple is this museum featuring relics unearthed in Xi'an over the years. There are some exquisite

ceramics from the Han dynasty, as well as figurines, an exhibition of Ming-dynasty seals and jade artefacts. Don't miss the basement, where a large-scale model of ancient Xi'an gives a good sense of the place in its former pomp and glory.

Also in the grounds is the **Little Goose Pagoda** (Xiaoyan Ta [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 🕒 8.30am-7pm Wed-Mon). The top of the pagoda was shaken off by an earthquake in the middle of the 16th century, but the rest of the 43m-high structure is intact. Jianfu Temple was originally built in AD 684 to bless the afterlife of the late Emperor Gaozong. The pagoda, a rather delicate building of 15 progressively smaller tiers, was built from AD 707 to 709 and housed Buddhist scriptures brought back from India by the pilgrim Yi Jing. Admission to the grounds is free but climbing up the pagoda requires a ¥30 ticket.

Bus 610 runs here from the Bell Tower; from the South Gate take bus 203.

Temple of the Eight Immortals

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Baxian An [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yongle Lu, admission ¥3; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm Mar-Nov, 8am-5pm Dec-Feb)

Xi'an's largest Taoist temple dates back to the Song dynasty and is still an active place of worship. Supposedly built on the site of an ancient wine shop, it was constructed to protect against subterranean divine thunder. Scenes from Taoist mythology are painted around the courtyard. Empress Cixi, the mother of the last emperor, stayed here in 1901 after fleeing Beijing during the Boxer Rebellion. Bus 502 runs close by the temple (eastbound from Xi Xinjie).

The small [antique market](#) opposite is busiest on Sunday and Wednesday.

MONKEY BUSINESS

Buddhist monk Xuan Zang's epic 17-year trip to India, via Central Asia and Afghanistan, in search of Buddhist enlightenment was fictionalised in *Journey to the West*, one of Chinese literature's most enduring texts. The Ming-dynasty novel gives

the monk Xuan three disciples to protect him along the way, the best-loved of which is the Monkey King.

The novel, attributed to the poet Wu Cheng'en, has inspired many plays and TV shows, including the cult '70s series *Monkey*. More recently, the Gorillaz team of Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett collaborated with opera director Chen Shi-Zheng on a popular 2007 stage version, while a 2014 Steven Chow film had critics applauding its creative interpretation.

Sleeping

If you're arriving by air and have not yet booked accommodation, keep in mind that touts at the shuttle-bus drop-off (outside the Melody Hotel) can often get you discounted rooms at a wide selection of hotels.

All hostels in the city offer a similar range of services, including bike hire, internet, laundry, restaurant and travel services. Ask about free pick-up from the train station and book ahead at the most popular places. In low season (January to March) you can usually get 20% off at hostels.

Shuyuan Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Shuyuan Qingnian Lushe  ;  029 8728 0092; www.hostelxian.com; 2 Shuncheng Nanlu Xiduan, dm ¥40-60, s/d ¥160/180;   ;  Yong Ningmen)

The longest-running hostel in Xi'an, Shuyuan is a converted residence with beautiful courtyards near the South Gate. The cafe serves excellent food and the lively bar in the basement (guests get a free beer voucher) is a popular locals/travellers meeting spot. Rooms are simple but clean and the staff is switched on to the needs of travellers.

The hostel is 20m west of the South Gate inside the city walls. Bus 603 to the main train station runs nearby.

Sahara Youth Inn

HOSTEL

(Sahala Qingnian Kezhan  ;  029 8728 7631; <http://site.douban.com/219529>; 180 Beiyuanmen, dm ¥50-70, tw ¥150; ;  Zhonglou (Bell

Tower))

You'd think staying smack bang in the Muslim Quarter would be noisy, but Sahara is set back around a quiet Chinese courtyard. The beds are firm but rooms are clean and peaceful, and really, you're here for the action outside, which you can see from the rooftop.

Xiangzimen Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xiangzimen Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 029 6286 7888; www.yhaxian.com; 16 Xiangzimiao Jie, dm ¥50, r ¥180-240; 🚫 @ 📶; 🚇 Yong Ningmen)

Set around a series of interconnected courtyards, this hostel is a big, sprawling place with an ever-busy pub known for its smoky and noisy atmosphere. Rooms are clean, modern and warm in winter but avoid the stuffy windowless basement rooms. Take bus 603 from opposite the train station to the South Gate and walk 100m west.

★ Han Tang House

HOSTEL

(Hantang Yi Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 029 8738 9765; www.itisxian.com; 32 Nanchang Xiang, 🕒 dm/s/d/tr ¥60/168/268/338; 🚫 @ 📶; 🚇 Zhonglou (Bell Tower))

A hybrid of sorts, this place has dorms and the vibe of a youth hostel but the look and feel of a three-star hotel. The spotless rooms are decked out with high-quality dark-wood furnishings, slab floors and some of the most comfortable beds in China. It's located down a residential street off Nanxin Jie.

A cafe with good Western food is on the ground floor. If Han Tang House is full, try its popular sister hostel, **Han Tang Inn** (Hantang Yi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 029 8728 7772, 029 8723 1126; www.itisxian.com; 7 Nanchang Xiang, dm ¥40-50, s & d ¥160-200; 🚫 @ 📶), on the same street.

Jano's Backpackers

HOSTEL

(Jienuo Tinyuan Beibao Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 029 8725 6656; www.xian-backpackers.com; 69 Shuncheng Nanlu Zhongduan, South Gate, dm ¥50-60, r without bathroom ¥120,

with bathroom ¥220-260, ste ¥320-390; 📶 @ 📶; 📄 Yong Ningmen)

Set in a little faux *hutong* (narrow alleyway) with artist galleries and cafes nearby, Jano's is a pleasant place to escape bustling Xi'an (though street-facing rooms get pub noise). Rooms are well-maintained and decorated in traditional style, including some with *kang* (heatable beds). Despite the name, it feels more like a small boutique hotel rather than a backpacker hangout. Staff speak English.

Jinjiang Inn

HOTEL

(Jinjiang Zhixing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 029 8745 2288; www.jj-inn.com; 110 Jiefang Lu, d/tw/ste ¥189/219/249; 📶 @ 📄 Zhonglou (Bell Tower))

By Xi'an's standards, the prices are close to budget, but the clean and bright modern rooms, all with ADSL internet connections, make this a better option than most three-star places in town. There's a cheap restaurant here, too.

Sofitel

HOTEL

(Suofeite Renmin Dasha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 029 8792 8888; sofitel@renminsquare.com; 319 Dong Xinjie, d/ste ¥1760/3150; 📶 @ 📶; 📄 Zhonglou (Bell Tower))

Xi'an's self-proclaimed 'six-star' hotel is undoubtedly the most luxurious choice in the city and has a soothing, hushed atmosphere. The bathrooms are top-notch. Cantonese, Japanese and Moroccan restaurants are on-site, as well as a South American-themed bar. Reception is in the east wing. Room rates change daily, so you can score a deal when business is slow.

Bell Tower Hotel

HOTEL

(Xi'an Zhonglou Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 029 8760 0000; www.belltowerhtl.com; 110 Nan Dajie, d ¥850-1080; 📶 @ 📄 Zhonglou (Bell Tower))

Slap in the centre of downtown, this state-owned four-star place is comfortable and handy for the airport bus stop. Some rooms have a bird's-eye view of the Bell Tower and all are spacious and comfortable with cable TV and ADSL internet connections. Low-season discounts up to 30%.

Eating

Hit the Muslim Quarter for tasty eating in Xi'an. Common dishes here are *majiang liangpi* (cold noodles in sesame sauce), *fenzhengrou* (chopped mutton fried in a wok with ground wheat), the 'Chinese hamburger' *roujiamo* (fried pork or beef in pitta bread, sometimes with green peppers and cumin), *caijiamo* (the vegetarian version of *roujiamo*) and the ubiquitous *rouchuan* (kebabs).

Best of all is the delicious *yangrou paomo*, a soup dish that involves crumbling a flat loaf of bread into a bowl and adding noodles, mutton and broth. You can also pick up mouth-watering desserts such as *huashenggao* (peanut cakes) and *shibing* (dried persimmons), which can be found at the market or in Muslim Quarter shops.

A good street to wander for a selection of more typically Chinese restaurants is Dongmutou Shi, east of Nan Dajie.

All the hostels serve up Western breakfasts and meals with varying degrees of success.

Sanjiemei Jiaozi

DUMPLINGS

(Three Sisters Dumplings [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎029 8725 2129; 140 Dongmutou Shi, dumplings ¥13-23; 🕒11am-2.30pm & 5-9.30pm)

Weary diners with dumpling fatigue, let the rustic Three Sisters reinspire you with a twist on classics, well done. Try succulent carrot and lamb dumplings blanketed in crisp peanuts and fried chives. Or for vegetarians, the winning texture of dry and marinated tofu (yes, two types) with the zing of crunchy cilantro and a lashing of chilli. Picture menu.

Ding Ding Xiang

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 130 Nanyuanmen, dishes ¥18-58; 🕒10am-10pm; 🍴)

This is what modern Xi'an is all about. A clean, cafe atmosphere over four floors with aspirational snaps of Europe in scattered picture frames on the

walls while a lively well-dressed crowd peers down onto the street, drinking beer and eating Chinese classics such as hotpots with generous servings. The extensive English picture menu includes excellent veg options.

Muslim Family Restaurant

CHINESE, MUSLIM

(Huiwen Renjia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beiyuanmen, dishes ¥6-58; 🕒 9am-10.30pm)

Deep in the heart of the Muslim Quarter, this fine establishment serves all the classic Muslim dishes and quick dishes for solo travellers like soups and dumplings. There's no English sign so look out for the noodle chef in the open-air kitchen. Picture menu.

Lao Sun Jia

SHAANXI

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8240 3205; 5th fl, 364 Dong Dajie, 5 dishes ¥12-49; 🕒 8am-9.30pm)

Xi'an's most famous, upmarket restaurant (with more than 100 years of history) is well known for its speciality dish – steaming bowls of *yangrou paomo*. The catch here is that the patron is responsible for ripping up the bread before the chefs add the soup. The soup is an acquired taste for most people but the experience is fun.

Many other cold and hot dishes are on display to choose from, so you can just point if you don't speak Chinese. It's located on the 5th floor of a large black glass building.

Jamaica Blue

CAFE

(Lanse Yamajia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 32 Nanchang Xiang, dishes ¥32-49; 🕒 8am-11pm; 📶)

This Australia-based cafe has washed up in a little alley in Xi'an, serving up excellent sandwiches, wraps, Western-style breakfast, pastas, desserts and reliable coffee. Has a friendly English-speaking staff, wi-fi, games and quasi-Irish pub atmosphere. Live music is played nightly from 9pm to 11pm.



Drinking & Nightlife

Xi'an's nightlife options range from bars and clubs to cheesy but popular tourist shows.

The main bar strip is near the South Gate on leafy Defu Xiang – one of the most pleasant parts of Xi'an to stroll through by day. The top end of the street has coffee shops and teahouses. The bars get more raucous the closer to the South Gate you get, but it's still fairly tame.

Clubs get going early in Xi'an, in part because they're as much places to drink as to dance. They are free to get into, but expect to pay at least ¥30 for a beer. Most are located along or off Nan Dajie.

Old Henry's Bar

BAR

(Laohengli Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 48 Defu Xiang, 🕒 8pm-3am; 📶)

A small bar with a pub vibe and live music in the evenings. Always busy and has outside seating.

3 as 4 Bar

BAR

(Tian Tang Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 12 Defu Xiang, drinks ¥20-55)

A hidden world of low lighting and decor that resembles an antique-store boudoir. Extremely popular with Westerners for the pool table, Chinese-inspired cocktails, TV/film projector and the larger-than-life Chinese owner, Samantha. It's 20m west of the intersection with Defu Xiang.

The Belgian

BAR

(Bilishi Kafei Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 69 Shuncheng Nanlu, 🕒 7pm-3am)

A laid-back Western-style bar stocked with around 40 types of imported Belgian beers and pub grub like burgers and fries. The little alley where it sits is developing as a pub street so it's fun to hang out on the patio and people-watch.



Entertainment

Xi'an has a number of dinner-dance shows, which are normally packed out with tour groups; reservations are recommended. They can be fun if you're in the mood for a bit of kitsch.

Fountain & Music Show

LIVE MUSIC

([GOOGLE MAP](#); Dayan Ta Bei Guangchang, 🕒 9pm Mar-Nov, 8pm Dec-Feb)

Some travellers enjoy spending the evening at the free fountain and music show on Big Goose Pagoda Sq; it's the largest such 'musical fountain' in Asia.

1+1

CLUB

(Yijiyi Julebu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2nd fl, Heping Yinzuo Bldg, 118 Heping Lu, 🕒 7pm-late)

The ever-popular 1+1 is a neon-lit maze of a place that pumps out slightly cheesy party tunes well into the early hours. Hip, it is not.

Tang Dynasty

DINNER SHOW

(Tangyue Gong [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 029 8782 2222; www.xiantangdynasty.com; 75 Chang'an Beilu, performance with/without dinner ¥500/220)

The most famous dinner theatre in the city stages an over-the-top spectacle with Vegas-style costumes, traditional dance, live music and singing. It's dubbed into English.

Buses can take you to the theatre 1.5km directly south of the South Gate, or walk five minutes south of South Shaomen metro.

Shaanxi Grand Opera House

DINNER SHOW

(Shange Dajuyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 029 8785 3295; 165 Wenyi Beilu, performance with/without dinner ¥298/198)

Also known as the Tang Palace Dance Show, this is cheaper and less flashy than other dinner-dance shows in town. Wenyi Lu starts south of the city walls. You can get a better price by buying your ticket through a reputable hostel or hotel.

Shopping

Stay in Xi'an for a couple of days and you'll be offered enough sets of miniature Terracotta Warriors to form your own army. A good place to search out gifts is the Muslim Quarter, where prices are generally cheaper than elsewhere.

Xiyang Shi is a narrow, crowded alley running east and west of the Great Mosque where Terracotta Warriors, Huxian farmer paintings, shadow puppets, lanterns, tea ware, Mao memorabilia and T-shirts are on offer.

Near the South Gate is the Qing-style Shuyuan Xiang, the main tree-lined strip for art supplies, paintings, calligraphy, paper cuts, brushes and fake rubbings from the Forest of Stelae Museum.

Northwest Antique Market

MARKET

(Xibei Guwan Cheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dong Xinjie (Shuncheng Donglu), 🕒 10am-5.30pm)

Serious shoppers should visit the Northwest Antique Market, by the Zhongshan Gate. This three-storey warren of shops selling jade, seals, antiques and Mao memorabilia sees far fewer foreign faces than the Muslim Quarter. Dozing street sellers also display their wares south along Shuncheng Donglu.

Temple of the Eight Immortals Antique Market

MARKET

There's a small antique market by the Temple of the Eight Immortals on Sunday and Wednesday mornings.

Information

Pick up a copy of the widely available *Xi'an Traffic & Tourist Map* (¥12), a bilingual publication with listings and bus routes. It's available at the airport and some bookshops. Chinese-language maps with the bus routes are sold on the street for ¥5. Shuyuan Youth Hostel has useful free maps with key bus routes. The English-language magazine *Xianese* (www.xianese.com) is

available at some hotels and restaurants that cater to tourists.

All hostels and most hotels offer internet access, and a number of internet cafes (*wangba*) can be found around the long-distance bus station.

In the event of an emergency, call 120.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang)

Juhuayuan Lu ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 38 Juhuayuan Lu; 🕒 8am-8pm); **Nan Dajie** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 29 Nan Dajie; 🕒 8am-6pm) You can exchange cash and travellers cheques and use the ATMs at both of these branches.

China International Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(CITS,, Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe)

Branch office ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2nd fl, Bell Tower Hotel, 110 Nan Dajie, 🕒 8am-8pm); **Main office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); www.chinabravo.com; 48 Chang'an Beilu, 🕒 8am-9pm) The branch office at Bell Tower Hotel is best for organising tours but the better deals are usually with the hostels.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Bei Dajie; 🕒 8am-8pm)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Keji Lu; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri)

This is on the southeast corner of Xixie 7 Lu. Visa extensions take five working days. To get there from the Bell Tower, take bus K205 and get off at Xixie 7 Lu.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Xi'an's Xianyang Airport is one of China's best connected – you can fly to

almost any major Chinese destination from here, as well as several international ones. Most hostels and hotels and all travel agencies sell airline tickets.

China Eastern Airlines

AIRLINE

(Zhongguo Dongfang Hangkong [GOOGLE MAP](#)  029 8208 8707; 64 Xi Wulu;  8am-9pm)

Operates most flights to and from Xi'an. Daily flights include Beijing (¥840), Chengdu (¥630), Guangzhou (¥890), Shanghai (¥1260) and Urumqi (¥2060). On the international front, China Eastern has flights from Xi'an to Hong Kong (¥1640), Seoul, Bangkok, Tokyo and Nagoya.

BUS

The **long-distance bus station** (changtu qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#) ) is opposite Xi'an's train station. It's a chaotic place. Note that buses to Hua Shan (6am to 8pm) depart from in front of the train station.

Other bus stations around town where you may be dropped off include the **east bus station** (chengdong keyunzhan Changle Lu, ) and the **west bus station** (chengxi keyunzhan Zaoyuan Donglu, ). Both are located outside the Second Ring Rd. Bus K43 travels between the Bell Tower and the east bus station, and bus 103 travels between the train station and the west bus station. A taxi into the city from either bus station costs between ¥15 and ¥20.

Buses from Xi'an's long-distance bus station:

- ➔ **Luoyang** ¥107.50, five hours (10am, noon, 1pm, 3pm)
- ➔ **Pingyao** ¥160, six hours (8am, 9.30am, 10.30am, 12.30pm, 4.30pm)
- ➔ **Zhengzhou** ¥133, six hours, hourly (7am to 4pm)

Buses from Xi'an's east bus station:

- ➔ **Hancheng** ¥69, four hours, half-hourly (8am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Hua Shan** one way ¥40.50, two hours, hourly (7.30am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Yan'an** ¥92.50, five hours, every 40 minutes (8.30am to 5.35pm)

TRAIN

Xi'an's **main train station** (*huoche zhan*) is just outside the northern city walls. It's always busy so arrive early for your departure to account for queues and poor signage. Buy your onward tickets as soon as you arrive.

Most hotels and hostels can get you tickets (¥40 commission); there's also an **advance train ticket booking booth** (Daishou Huoche piao [GOOGLE MAP](#)); Nan Dajie; 🕒 8.50am-noon & 1.30-4.30pm) in the ICBC Bank's south entrance and another **train ticket booth** (Daishou Huoche piao [GOOGLE MAP](#); 14 Lianhu Lu; 🕒 9am-noon & 1.30-4.30pm, to 2.30pm Sat & Sun) at the ICBC north of the Muslim Quarter near Bei Da Jie metro. Much easier than the hectic crowds in the main ticket hall.

Xi'an is well connected to the rest of the country. Deluxe Z trains run to/from Beijing west (soft sleeper only ¥417, 11½ hours), leaving Xi'an at 7.23pm and Beijing at 9.24pm. Several express trains also make the journey (¥265, 12½ hours); departures begin late afternoon. The Z94 to Shanghai departs 5.12pm and arrives 7.42am (hard/soft sleeper ¥333/511, 14½ hours).

From Xi'an's **north train station** (*bei huoche zhan*) high-speed 'bullet' G trains zip to Beijing west (1st/2nd class ¥826/517, 5½ hours, 10 daily), Luoyang (1st/2nd class ¥203/169, 1½ hours), and Wuhan (1st/2nd class ¥516/430, 4 hours, 9 daily), with Shanghai, Lanzhou and other destinations starting in the next several years.

All prices listed below are for hard/soft sleeper tickets.

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥195/302, 16½ hours
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥179/275, 11 hours
- ➔ **Guilin** ¥372/587, 28 hours
- ➔ **Lanzhou** ¥171/261, seven to nine hours
- ➔ **Luoyang** ¥101/156, five hours
- ➔ **Pingyao** ¥120/189, nine hours
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥312/490, 14 to 20 hours
- ➔ **Taiyuan** ¥179/275, nine to 12 hours

- ➔ **Urumqi** ¥466/737, 28 to 35 hours
- ➔ **Zhengzhou** ¥137/205 six to eight hours

Within Shaanxi, there are five trains (including two night trains) to Yulin (hard/soft sleeper ¥136/214, eight to 10 hours) via Yan'an (hard/soft sleeper ¥97/147, three to five hours). Buy tickets in advance. There is also an early morning train to Hancheng (¥33, 4½ hours).

Getting Around

Xi'an's Xianyang Airport is about 40km northwest of Xi'an. Shuttle buses run every 20 to 30 minutes from 5.40am to 8pm between the airport and the Melody Hotel (¥26, one hour). Taxis into the city charge over ¥100 on the meter.

If you're itching to try out the public buses, they go to all the major sights in and around the city. Bus 610 is a useful one: it passes the train station, then onto the Bell Tower, Little Goose Pagoda, Shaanxi History Museum and Big Goose Pagoda. Remember that packed buses are a pickpocket's paradise, so watch your wallet.

Taxi flagfall is ¥6. It can be very difficult to get a taxi in the late afternoon, when the drivers change shifts. If you can cope with the congested roads, bikes are a good alternative and can be hired at the youth hostels.

The Xi'an metro system (, *Xi'an ditie*) started up in 2011 with Line 2, followed by Line 1 in 2013 and Line 3 planned for 2015. Rides cost ¥2 to ¥4 depending on distance. Useful stations on Line 2 include Beihuoche Zhan (North Train Station) and Xiaozhai (near the Shaanxi History Museum). Line 1 has a stop at the Banpo Neolithic Village.

Around Xi'an

The plains surrounding Xi'an are strewn with early imperial tombs, many of which have not yet been excavated. But unless you have a particular fascination for burial sites, you can probably come away satisfied after

visiting a couple of them. The Army of Terracotta Warriors is obviously the most famous site, but it's really worth the effort to get to the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi as well.

Tourist buses run to almost all of the sites from in front of Xi'an's main train station, with the notable exception of the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi.



Sights

East of Xi'an

Army of Terracotta Warriors

HISTORIC SITE

(Bingmayong [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.bmy.com.cn; admission Mar-Nov ¥150, students ¥75, Dec-Feb ¥120, students ¥60; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Mar-Nov, to 5pm Dec-Feb)

The Terracotta Army isn't just Xi'an's premier site, but one of the most famous archaeological finds in the world. This subterranean life-size army of thousands has silently stood guard over the soul of China's first unifier for more than two millennia. Either Qin Shi Huang was terrified of the vanquished spirits awaiting him in the afterlife, or, as most archaeologists

believe, he expected his rule to continue in death as it had in life – whatever the case, the guardians of his tomb today offer some of the greatest insights we have into the world of ancient China.

The discovery of the army of warriors was entirely fortuitous. In 1974, peasants drilling a well uncovered an underground vault that eventually yielded thousands of terracotta soldiers and horses in battle formation. Throughout the years the site became so famous that many of its unusual attributes are now well known, in particular the fact that no two soldier's faces are alike.

The on-site theatre gives a useful primer on how the figures were sculpted. You could also employ a guide (¥150) or try the audio-guide (¥40, plus ¥200 deposit), although the latter is somewhat useless, being difficult to understand and not very compelling. Then visit the site in reverse, which enables you to build up to the most impressive pit for a fitting finale.

Start with the smallest pit, **Pit 3**, containing 72 warriors and horses, which is believed to be the army headquarters due to the number of high-ranking officers unearthed here. It's interesting to note that the northern room would have been used to make sacrificial offerings before battle. In the next pit, **Pit 2**, containing around 1300 warriors and horses, you get to examine five of the soldiers up close: a kneeling archer, a standing archer, a cavalryman and his horse, a mid-ranking officer and a general. The level of detail is extraordinary: the expressions, hairstyles, armour and even the tread on the footwear are all unique.

The largest pit, **Pit 1**, is the most imposing. Housed in a building the size of an aircraft hangar, it is believed to contain 6000 warriors (only 2000 are on display) and horses, all facing east and ready for battle. The vanguard of three rows of archers (both crossbow and longbow) is followed by the main force of soldiers, who originally held spears, swords, dagger-axes and other long-shaft weapons. The infantry were accompanied by 35 chariots, though these, made of wood, have long since disintegrated.

Almost as extraordinary as the soldiers is a pair of bronze chariots and horses unearthed just 20m west of the Tomb of Qin Shi Huang. These are

now on display, together with some of the original weaponry and a mid-ranking officer you can see up close in the open air, in a small museum to the right upon entering the main entrance.

The Army of Terracotta Warriors is easily reached by public bus. From Xi'an Train Station's eastern car park, take one of the air-conditioned green or blue, clearly English-labelled 'Terracotta Warriors' buses (¥8, one hour, every 10 minutes) to the last stop, which travels via Huaqing Hot Springs and the Tomb of Qin Shi Huang. The car park for all vehicles is a 15-minute walk through souvenir stalls from the Terracotta Warriors site, with the ticket kiosk near the parking lot. Electric carts do the run for ¥5. If you want to eat here, go for the restaurants across from the car park. To get back to Xi'an, buses leave from the parking lot.

Huaqing Hot Springs

HISTORIC SITE

(Huaqing Chi [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission Mar-Nov ¥110, Dec-Feb ¥80, children under 1.2m free, cable car one way/return ¥45/70; 🕒 7am-7pm Mar-Nov, 7.30am-6.30pm Dec-Feb)

The natural hot springs in this park were once the favoured retreat of emperors and concubines during the Tang dynasty. It's now an obligatory stop for Chinese tour groups, who pose for photos in front of the elaborately restored pavilions and by the ornamental ponds. Thought a pretty place, it's not really worth the high admission price. You can, however, hike up to the **Taoist temple** on Black Horse Mountain (Li Shan).

The temple is dedicated to Nuwa, who created the human race from clay and also patched up cracks in the sky. There's also a **cable car** to the temple, but note that the stop is outside the park, so you won't be able to get back in unless you buy another ticket.

Tomb of Qin Shi Huang

HISTORIC SITE

(Qin Shihuang Ling [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission free with Terracotta Warrior ticket; 🕒 8am-6pm Mar-Nov, to 5pm Dec-Feb) **FREE**

In its time this tomb must have been one of the grandest mausoleums the world had ever seen. Historical accounts describe it as containing palaces

filled with precious stones, underground rivers of flowing mercury and ingenious defences against intruders. The tomb reputedly took 38 years to complete, and required a workforce of 700,000 people. It is said that the artisans who built it were buried alive within, taking its secrets with them.

Archaeologists have yet to enter the tomb but probes and sensors have been sent inside. Levels of mercury inside exceed 100 times the normal occurring rate, which seems to substantiate some of the legends. Since little has been excavated there isn't much to see but you can climb the steps to the top of the mound for a fine view of the surrounding countryside.

The Terracotta Warriors bus from Xi'an train station stops at the tomb, which is 2km west of the warriors.

Banpo Neolithic Village

ANCIENT VILLAGE

(Banpo Bowuguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission Mar-Nov ¥65, Dec-Feb ¥45; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Banpo is the earliest example of the Neolithic Yangshao culture, which is believed to have been matriarchal. It appears to have been occupied from 4500 BC until around 3750 BC. The excavated area is divided into three parts: a pottery manufacturing area, a residential area complete with moat, and a cemetery.

This village is of enormous importance for Chinese archaeological studies, but unless you're desperately interested in the subject it can be an underwhelming visitor experience.

There are two exhibition halls that feature some of the pottery, including strange shaped amphorae, discovered at the site.

The village is in the eastern suburbs of Xi'an. Bus 105 (¥1) from the train station runs past (ask where to get off); it's also often included on tours.

North & West of Xi'an

Famen Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Famen Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission Mar-Nov ¥120, Dec-Feb ¥90; 🕒 8am-6pm)

This temple dating back to the 2nd century AD was built to house parts of a sacred finger bone of the Buddha, presented to China by India's King Asoka. Although it may feel like a Cecil B DeMille Hollywood movie set, the older section is still worth a visit and you can join the queue of pilgrims who shuffle past the finger bone. The real reason to make the trip out here is the superb **museum** and its collection of Tang-dynasty treasures.

There are elaborate gold and silver boxes (stacked on top of one another to form pagodas) and tiny crystal and jade coffins that originally contained the four separated sections of the holy finger.

In 1981, after torrential rains had weakened the temple's ancient brick structure, the entire western side of its 12-storey pagoda collapsed. The subsequent restoration of the temple produced a sensational discovery. Below the pagoda in a sealed crypt were over 1000 sacrificial objects and royal offerings – all forgotten for over a millennium.

Sensing a cash cow, the local authorities began enlarging the temple complex and it now includes a sprawling modern section featuring a 1.6km long walkway lined with 10 golden Buddhas, eccentric modern sculptures and outsized gates. Shuttle buses (¥20) are on hand to whisk the pious to the main temple, which is topped with an enormous replica of the box in which the finger bone was kept.

Other notable exhibits are ornate incense burners, glass cups and vases from the Roman Empire, statues, gold and silver offerings, and an excellent reproduced cross-section of the four-chamber crypt, which symbolised a tantric mandala (a geometric representation of the universe).

Famen Temple is 115km northwest of Xi'an. Tour bus 2 (¥25, 8am) from Xi'an train station runs to the temple and returns to Xi'an at 5pm. The temple is also generally included on Western Tours.

Xianyang City Museum

MUSEUM

(Xianyang Shi Bowuguan Zhongshan Jie, 🕒 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

More than 2000 years ago Xianyang was the capital of the Qin dynasty. These days, it's just a dusty satellite of Xi'an. Its chief attraction is this

museum, which houses a remarkable collection of 3000 50cm-tall terracotta soldiers and horses, excavated from the tomb of Liu Bang, the first Han emperor, in 1965. Set in an attractive courtyard, the museum also has bronze and jade exhibits and good English captions.

Show your passport for free entry. Buses run every 15 minutes to Xianyang (¥8.50, one hour) from Xi'an's long-distance bus station. Ask to be dropped off at the museum. To get back to Xi'an, just flag down buses going in the opposite direction.

Imperial Tombs

HISTORIC SITES

A large number of imperial tombs (*huang ling*) dot the Guanzhong plain around Xi'an. They are sometimes included on tours from Xi'an, but most aren't so remarkable as to be destinations in themselves. By far the most impressive is the **Qian Tomb** (Qian Ling [GOOGLE MAP](#)); admission incl other imperial tombs Mar-Nov ¥45, Dec-Feb ¥25; 🕒 8am-6pm), where China's only female emperor, Wu Zetian (AD 625–705), is buried with her husband Emperor Gaozong, whom she succeeded.

The long **Spirit Way** (Shendao; outdoor, paved path leading to the tomb) here is lined with enormous, lichen-encrusted sculptures of animals and officers of the imperial guard, culminating with 61 (now headless) statues of Chinese ethnic group leaders who attended the emperor's funeral. The mausoleum is 85km northwest of Xi'an. Tour bus 2 (¥25, 8am) runs close to here from Xi'an train station and returns in the late afternoon.

Nearby are the **tomb of Princess Yong Tai** (Yong Tai Mu) and the **tomb of Prince Zhang Huai** (Zhang Huai Mu), both of whom fell foul of Empress Wu, before being posthumously rehabilitated. Other notable tombs are the **Zhao Tomb** (Zhao Ling [GOOGLE MAP](#)), where the second Tang emperor Taizhong is buried, and the **Mao Tomb** (Mao Ling [GOOGLE MAP](#)), the resting place of Wudi (156–87 BC), the most powerful of the Han emperors.

WORTH A TRIP

TOMB OF EMPEROR JINGDI

Tomb of Emperor Jingdi

TOMB

(Han Yangling [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission Mar-Nov ¥90, Dec-Feb ¥65; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Mar-Nov, to 6pm Dec-Feb)

This tomb, which is also referred to as the Han Jing Mausoleum, Liu Qi Mausoleum and Yangling Mausoleum, is easily Xi'an's most underrated highlight. If you only have time for two sights, then it should be the Army of Terracotta Warriors and this impressive museum and tomb. Unlike the warriors, though, there are relatively few visitors here so you have the space to appreciate what you're seeing.

A Han-dynasty emperor influenced by Taoism, Jingdi (188–141 BC) based his rule upon the concept of wuwei (nonaction or noninterference) and did much to improve the life of his subjects: he lowered taxes greatly, used diplomacy to cut back on unnecessary military expeditions and even reduced the punishment meted out to criminals. The contents of his tomb are particularly interesting, as they reveal more about daily life than martial preoccupations – a total contrast with the Terracotta Army.

The site has been divided into two sections: the museum and the excavation area. The **museum** holds a large display of expressive terracotta figurines (more than 50,000 were buried here), including eunuchs, servants, domesticated animals and even female cavalry on horseback. The figurines originally had movable wooden arms (now gone) and were dressed in colourful silk robes.

Inside the **tomb** are 21 narrow pits, some of which have been covered by a glass floor, allowing you to walk over the top of ongoing excavations and get a great view of the relics. In all, there are believed to be 81 burial pits here.

To get here, take Xi'an metro Line 2 to the station Shitushuguan. Outside exit D take bus 4 (¥1) to the tomb, which leaves at 8.30am, 9.30am, 10.30am, noon, 1.30pm, 3pm, 4pm and 5pm, returning to the Xi'an metro station at 9am, noon, 4pm and 5pm.

Alternatively, you can take a tour (around ¥160), usually arranged by the guesthouses. The tomb is 20 minutes from the airport, so makes an easy stop off by taxi.

Tours

One-day tours allow you to see all the sights around Xi'an more quickly and conveniently than if you arranged one yourself. Itineraries differ somewhat, but there are two basic tours: an Eastern Tour and a Western Tour.

Most hostels run their own tours, but make sure you find out what is included (admission fees, lunch, English-speaking guide) and try to get an exact itinerary, or you could end up being herded through the Terracotta Warriors before you have a chance to get your camera out.

Eastern Tour

The Eastern Tour is the most popular as it includes the Army of Terracotta Warriors, as well as the Tomb of Qin Shi Huang, Banpo Neolithic Village, Huaqing Hot Springs and possibly the Big Goose Pagoda. Most travel agencies and hostels charge around ¥300 for an all-day, all-in excursion, including admission fees, lunch and guide, although sometimes the hostel tours skip Banpo. Tours to the Terracotta Warriors only are also available for around ¥160.

It's perfectly possible to do a shortened version of the Eastern Tour by using the tourist buses or bus 306, all of which pass by Huaqing Hot Springs, the Terracotta Warriors and the Tomb of Qin Shi Huang. If you decide to do this, start at the hot springs, then travel to Qin Shi Huang's tomb and end at the Terracotta Warriors.

Western Tour

The longer Western Tour includes the Xianyang City Museum, some of the imperial tombs, and possibly also Famen Temple and (if you insist) the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi. It's far less popular than the Eastern Tour and consequently you may have to wait a couple of days for your hostel or agency to organise enough people. It's also more expensive; expect to pay ¥600.

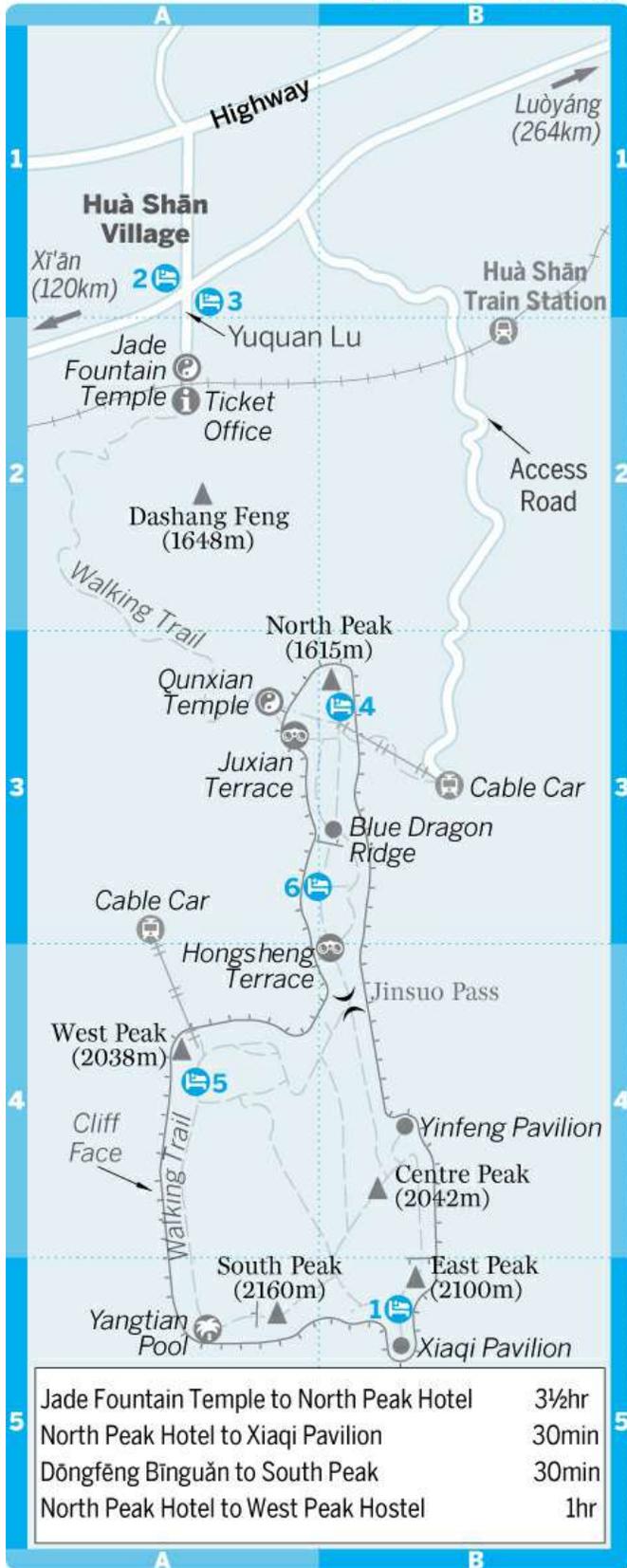
A tour of the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi, usually done by itself without any other sights, will cost around ¥160.

Hua Shan

One of Taoism's five sacred mountains, the granite domes of Hua Shan used

to be home to hermits and sages. These days, though, the trails that wind their way up to the five peaks are populated by droves of day-trippers drawn by the dreamy scenery. And it is spectacular. There are knife-blade ridges and twisted pine trees clinging to ledges as you ascend, while the summits offer transcendent panoramas of green mountains and countryside stretching away to the horizon. Taoists hoping to find a quiet spot to contemplate life and the universe will be disappointed, but everyone else seems to revel in the tough climb and they're suitably elated once they reach the top. So forget all that spiritual malarkey and get walking.

Huà Shān



Hua Shan

Sleeping

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Dongfeng Binguan | B5 |
| 2 Huayue Kuai Jie Jiudian | A1 |
| 3 Mingzhu Jiudian | A1 |
| 4 North Peak Hotel | B3 |
| 5 West Peak Hostel | A4 |
| 6 Wuyunfeng Fandian | A3 |

Sights & Activities

There are three ways up the mountain to the **North Peak** (Bei Feng), the first of five summit peaks. Two of these options start from the eastern base of the mountain, at the North Peak cable-car terminus. The first option is handy if you don't fancy the climb: an Austrian-built **cable car** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); one way/return ¥80/150; 🕒 7am-7pm) will lift you to the North Peak in eight scenic minutes, though you may have to queue for over an hour at busy times.

The second option is to work your way to the North Peak under the cable-car route. This takes a sweaty two hours, and two sections of 50m or so are quite literally vertical, with nothing but a steel chain to grab onto and tiny chinks cut into the rock for footing. Not for nothing is this route called the 'Soldiers Path.'

The third option is the most popular, but it's still hard work. A 6km path leads to the North Peak from the village of Hua Shan, at the base of the mountain (the other side of the mountain from the cable car). It usually takes between three and five hours to reach the North Peak via this route. The first 4km up are pretty easy going, but after that it's all steep stairs.

The village at the trailhead is a good place to stock up on water and snacks; these are also available at shops on the trail but prices double and triple the further you head up the mountain. Curiously, you'll also see old ladies selling

cotton gloves, the purpose of which becomes obvious at the steepest sections where you need to grab onto rusty chains for support.

If you want to carry on to the other peaks, then count on a minimum of eight hours in total from the base of Hua Shan. If you want to spare your knees, then another option is to take the cable car to the North Peak and then climb to the other peaks, before ending up back where you started. It takes about four hours to complete the circuit in this fashion and it's still fairly strenuous. In places, it can be a little nerve-racking, too. Hua Shan has a reputation for being dangerous, especially when the trails are crowded, or if it's wet or icy, so exercise caution.

But the scenery is sublime. Along **Blue Dragon Ridge** (Canglong Ling [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which connects the North Peak with the **East Peak** (Dong Feng), **South Peak** (Nan Feng) and **West Peak** (Xi Feng), the way has been cut along a narrow rock ridge with impressive sheer cliffs on either side.

A West Peak **cable car** (one way/return ¥140/280; 🕒 7am-7pm) started operation in mid-2013. Less crowded than the North Peak cable car, the West Peak's 20-minute ride offers clear views of all the other peaks at the top.

The South Peak is the highest at 2160m and the most crowded. The East Peak is less busy, but all three rear peaks afford great views when the weather cooperates. If possible, avoid weekends when foot traffic is heaviest.

At the South Peak thrill-seekers can try the **Plank Walk** (admission ¥30), which consists of a metal ladder that leads down to a path made from wooden boards that hover above a 2000m vertical drop. Thankfully, the admission fee includes a harness and carabiners that you lock onto cables, but even with these safety features it's scary as hell.

There is accommodation on the mountain, most of it basic and overpriced, but it does allow you to start climbing in the afternoon, watch the sunset and then spend the night, before catching the sunrise from either the East Peak or South Peak. Some locals make the climb at night, using torches (flashlights). The idea is to start around 11pm and be at the East Peak for sunrise; you get to see the scenery on the way down.

Admission is ¥180 (students ¥90). To get to either cable car (*suodao*), take a taxi from the village to the ticket office (¥10) and then a shuttle bus (one way/return to North cable car ¥20/40, to West cable car ¥40/80) the rest of the way.

Sleeping & Eating

You can either spend the night in Hua Shan village or on one of the peaks. Take your own food or eat well before ascending, unless you like to feast on instant noodles and processed meat – proper meals are very pricey on the mountain. Don't forget a torch and warm clothes. Bear in mind that prices for a bed triple during public holidays. The hotels on the mountain are basic; there are no showers and only shared bathrooms.

In the village, there are a number of dingy, shabby hotels along Yuquan Lu, the road leading up to the trailhead, that offer beds from ¥50 upwards. Pretty much every shop has rooms and the owners will find you. There are smarter places on Yuquan Donglu.

Huayue Kuai Jie Jiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞0913-436 8555; Yuquan Donglu,, Hua Shan village s & d ¥150; 📶)

Clean and simple rooms with OK bathrooms make this an obvious option for budget travellers. It's on Yuquan Lu at the bottom of the hill near the main intersection.

West Peak Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xifeng Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); dm ¥100)

Rustic and basic, but also the friendliest place on the mountain. It shares its premises with an old Taoist temple.

Mingzhu Jiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞0913-436 9899; Yuquan Donglu,, Hua Shan village s & d ¥238-281;



Located in Hua Shan village at the main intersection, this Chinese two-star hotel has clean, modern rooms with wi-fi. Discounts of 30% available outside peak holiday travel times.

Dongfeng Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); dm ¥150-220, tr/d ¥280/340)

The top location on the East Peak for watching the sun come up also has the best restaurant.

Wuyunfeng Fandian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); dm ¥100-180, tr/d ¥220/300)

This basic hotel is along the Black Dragon Ridge and on a hillside, not a peak. A good choice mostly if you're planning on doing a circuit of the rear peaks the next day, or want to catch the sunrise at the East or South Peak.

North Peak Hotel

HOTEL

(Beifeng Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 157 1913 6466; dm ¥100, d ¥260-280)

The busiest of the peak hotels.

i Getting There & Away

From Xi'an to Hua Shan, catch one of the private buses (¥36, two hours, 6am to 8pm) that depart when full from in front of Xi'an train station. You'll be dropped off on Yuquan Lu, which is also where buses back to Xi'an leave from 7.30am to 7pm. Coming from the east, try to talk your driver into dropping you at the Hua Shan highway exit if you can't find a direct bus. Don't pay more than ¥10 for a taxi into Hua Shan village. There are few buses (if any) going east from Hua Shan; pretty much everyone catches a taxi to the highway and then flags down buses headed for Yuncheng, Taiyuan or Luoyang. If you can't read Chinese, try to find someone to help you out.

Hancheng

 0913 / Pop 59,000

Hancheng is best known for being the hometown of Sima Qian (145–90 BC), China's legendary historian and author of the *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian). Sima Qian chronicled different aspects of life in the Han dynasty and set about arranging the country's already distant past in its proper (Confucian) order. He was eventually castrated and imprisoned by Emperor Wudi, after having defended an unsuccessful general.

Hancheng makes for a good side trip from Xi'an. Built upon a hill, the new town (*xincheng*) located at the top is dusty and unremarkable and is where you'll find hotels, banks and transport. But the more atmospheric old town (*gucheng*) at the bottom of the hill boasts a handful of historic sights. The unique Ming-dynasty village of Dangjiacun is 9km further east.

Sights

Confucius & Chenghuang Temples

CONFUCIAN

In the heart of the old town, the tranquil **Confucius Temple** (Wen Miao admission ¥15;  8am-5.30pm) is the pick of the sights in Hancheng itself. The weathered Yuan, Ming and Qing buildings give an understated sense of how long they have stood the test of time. They contrast with the dramatic towering cypress trees, half-moon pool and glazed dragon screens. The city museum holds peripheral exhibits in the wings.

At the back of the Confucius Temple is the **Chenghuang Temple** (Chenghuang Miao  8am-5.30pm; admission ¥15), in a lane lined with Ming-dynasty courtyard houses.

There has been a temple here since the Zhou dynasty, but the whole site has undergone extensive renovation in recent years. The main attraction is the **Sacrificing Hall**, with its intricate roof detail, where gifts were offered to the

gods to protect the city.

Buying a ticket to either temple gets you into the other as well. Bus 102 (¥1) runs here from the southwest corner of Huanghe Dajie, close to the bus station. A taxi is ¥10.

Yuanjue Pagoda

MONUMENT

(Yuanjue Sita 🕒 6am-6pm)

Looming over the old town and dating back to the Tang dynasty, but rebuilt in 1958, this pagoda also acts as a memorial to Red Army soldiers killed fighting the KMT. It's impossible to climb the pagoda itself, but the steep ascent to it offers panoramic views over the old town. To get here, turn sharp right when leaving the Chenghuang Temple and take the first major right you come to. The walk takes you through the most evocative part of the old town; exit the pagoda through the park on the other side and you're back in the new town.

Dangjiacun

HISTORIC SITE

(admission ¥40; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm)

This perfectly preserved, 14th-century village nestles in a sheltered location in a loess valley. Once the home of the Dang clan, successful merchants who ferried timber and other goods across the Yellow River (Huang He), it's since evolved into a quintessential farming community. The village is home to 125 grey-brick courtyard houses, which are notable for their carvings and mix of different architectural styles. The elegant six-storey tower is a **Confucian pagoda** (Wenxing ge).

Unfortunately, many of the families have moved out and their homes are now exhibition showrooms, so the village feels a little lifeless. Still, it's worth a wander to explore the old alleys and admire the architecture.

Dangjiacun is 9km northeast of Hancheng. To get here, take a minibus (¥3, 20 minutes) from the bus station to the entrance road, from where it's a pleasant 2km walk through fields to the village. Otherwise, you can take a taxi from Hancheng (¥35).

THE MAN BEHIND THE ARMY

Qin Shi Huang, China's first emperor, has gone down in history as the sort of tyrant who gives tyrants a bad name. It might be because he outlawed Confucianism, ordered almost all its written texts to be burnt and, according to legend, buried 460 of its top scholars alive.

Or perhaps it was his enslaving of hundreds of thousands of people to achieve his (admittedly monumental) accomplishments during his 36 years of rule (which began when he was just 13).

In recent years, there have been efforts by the China Communist Party (CCP) to rehabilitate him, by emphasising both his efforts to unify China and the far-sighted nature of his policies. A classic overachiever, he created an efficient, centralised government that became the model for later dynasties; he standardised measurements, currency and, most importantly, writing. He built over 6400km of new roads and canals and, of course, he conquered six major kingdoms before turning 40.

Nevertheless, he remains a hugely controversial figure in Chinese history, but also one whose presence permeates popular culture. The first emperor pops up in video games, in literature and on TV shows. He's also been the subject of films by both Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou (*The Emperor and the Assassin* and *Hero*), while Jet Li played a thinly disguised version of him in the 2008 Hollywood blockbuster *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*.

Sleeping

For something completely different, spend the night in Dangjiacun, where basic dorm beds in some of the courtyard houses are available for ¥30. If a local doesn't approach you, just ask and you'll be pointed in the right direction. They also offer simple and cheap home cooking.

Tianyuan Binguan

HOTEL

( 0913 529 9388; Longmen Dajie Beiduan, s & d ¥120-130;  )

A few doors down from the main bus station, this place has simple but perfectly functional rooms.

Yinhe Dajudian

HOTEL

(📞 0913 529 2555; Longmen Dajie Nanduan, r ¥398; ❄️ @)

This is an upmarket option. From the bus station turn left and walk on the main road for about 10 minutes. Discounts of 30% available.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang cnr Huanghe Dajie & Jinta Zhonglu; 🕒 8am-6pm)

There's a branch of the Bank of China close to the bus station that has a 24-hour ATM and will change cash.

Getting There & Away

Buses leave Xi'an's east bus station for Hancheng (¥68, three hours, seven daily) from 7am onwards. Buses back to Xi'an run until 6.30pm. There are two buses per day to Hua Shan (¥40.50, two hours) at 7am and 12.30pm. There are also two daily buses to Yan'an (¥79.50, eight hours) at 6.50am and 8am.

A middle-of-the-night train runs from Xi'an to Hancheng (¥33, 4½ hours) at 2.31am. From Hancheng, the daily K610 train rumbles towards Beijing (hard sleeper ¥238, 16 hours) via Pingyao (¥96, six hours) and Taiyuan (¥115, eight hours), departing at 2.10pm.

Yan'an

📞 0911 / Pop 107,000

When the diminished communist armies pitched up here at the end of the Long March, it signalled the beginning of Yan'an's brief period in the sun. For 12 years, from 1935 to 1947, this backwater town was the CCP headquarters, and it was in the surrounding caves that the party established much of the ideology that was put into practice during the Chinese

revolution.

These days, Yan'an's residents seem to be more interested in consumerism than communism; for a small place, there are a surprising number of shopping malls. But its livelihood is still tied to the CCP; endless tour groups of mostly middle-aged 'red tourists' pass through each year on the trail of Mao and his cohorts. Few foreigners make it here, so expect some attention.

Sights

Yan'an Revolution Museum

MUSEUM

(Yan'an Geming Jianshi Chenlieguan Shengdi Lu; 🕒 8.30am-5pm) **FREE**

By far the most flash building in town is the **Yan'an Revolutionary Memorial Hall** (Yan'an Geming Jinianguan), fronted by a statue of Mao and housing this museum. It offers an excellent, if obviously one-sided, account of the CCP's time in Yan'an and the Sino-Japanese War. More English captions would be nice, but there are plenty of photos of the good old days and other exhibits that are self-explanatory. Bus 1 (¥1) runs here.

You can walk here in a few minutes southeast from the Wangjiaping Revolution Headquarters Site.

Wangjiaping Revolution Headquarters Site

HISTORIC SITE

(Wangjiaping Geming Jiuzhi Wangjiaping Lu; 🕒 8am-5.30pm Mar-Nov, 8.30am-5pm Dec-Feb) **FREE**

During an extended stay, the communist leadership moved around Yan'an, resulting in numerous former headquarters sites. Adjacent to the Revolution Museum is the last site occupied by the communist leadership in Yan'an. The improved living conditions at the site, houses rather than dugouts, indicate the way the CCP's fortunes were rising by the time it moved here.

Yangjialing Revolution Headquarters Site

HISTORIC SITE

(Yangjialing Geming Jiuzhi Yangjialing Lu; 🕒 8am-6pm Mar-Nov, 8.30am-5pm Dec-Feb) **FREE**

Perhaps the most interesting site, this is located 3km northwest of the town

centre. Here you can see the assembly hall where the first central committee meetings were held, including the seventh national plenum, which formally confirmed Mao as the leader of the party and the revolution. It's fun watching the red tourists pose in old CCP uniforms in front of the podium.

Nearby are simple **dugouts** built into the loess earth where Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai and other senior communist leaders lived, worked and wrote.

Zaoyuan Revolution Headquarters Site

HISTORIC SITE

(Zaoyuan Geming Jiuzhi Zaoyuan Lu, 🕒 8am-6pm Mar-Nov, 8.30am-5pm Dec-Feb) **FREE**

The Communist leadership took refuge here between 1943 and 1947, on land allocated by a wealthy merchant. The leafy grounds are perhaps the most attractive of the revolutionary sites. It is located 4km past the Yangjialing site.

Fenghuangshan Revolution Headquarters Site

HISTORIC SITE

(Fenghuangshan Geming Jiuzhi Fenghuangshanlu, 🕒 8am-5pm Mar-Nov)

This was the first site occupied by the communists after their move to Yan'an, before being abandoned because it was too exposed to enemy aircraft fire. There's a photo exhibit about Norman Bethune, the Canadian doctor who became a hero in China for treating CCP casualties in the late 1930s. More accessible from town, this site is about 100m west of China Post.

Treasure Pagoda

PAGODA

(Bao Ta, Baota Shan admission ¥65; 🕒 6.30am-9pm Mar-Nov, to 8pm Dec-Feb)

Yan'an's most prominent landmark, Treasure Pagoda dates back to the Song dynasty. For an extra ¥10, you can climb the very narrow steps and ladders of the pagoda for an unrestricted view of the city.

Qingliang Mountain

PARK

(Qingliang Shan admission ¥31; 🕒 8am-7pm Mar-Nov, to 5.30pm Dec-Feb)

This was the birthplace of the CCP propaganda machine; *Xinhua* News Agency and the *Liberation Daily* started life here when the place was known as ‘Information Mountain.’ Now, it’s a pleasant hillside park with good city views, some nice trails and a few sights, including **Ten Thousand Buddha Cave** (Wanfo Dong) dug into the sandstone cliff beside the river. The cave has relatively intact Buddhist statues.

Sleeping & Eating

There are few budget options in Yan’an. Most hotels, though, offer discounts. It’s also not a gourmet’s paradise, though the night market, just off the small square in the centre of town, is a fine spot for eating alfresco and meeting the locals. Try the very tasty handmade noodles.

Yasheng Dajiudian

HOTEL

( 0911 266 6000; Erdaojie Zhongduan, tw ¥328-368; )

Located in the centre of town, the rooms here are clean and comfortable, if a bit gloomy. There’s a decent restaurant (dishes ¥14 to ¥40) on the top floor. Discounts of 40% are the norm.

Haisheng Jiudian

HOTEL

(Daqiaojie  0911 821 3333; Daqiaojie, s/d ¥438/698;  )

This hotel has excellent rooms with computers and the price includes breakfast. In a town of overpriced hotels this is not a bad option, with rooms usually going for around ¥268. Discounts of 50% available outside peak travel times.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang Daqiao Jie;  8am-5pm)

On the corner of Daqiao Jie and Erdao Jie, this branch has a 24-hour ATM. There are other ATMs around town, too.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng Yan'an Shi Dajie, 🕒 9am-5pm)

Post and telephone office.

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Wangba Erdaojie Zhongduan, per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr)

On the 2nd floor, down an alley just to the left of the Yasheng Dajiudian.

Getting There & Away

BUS

From Xi'an's east bus station (*qiche dongzhan*), there are buses to Yan'an (¥92.50, four hours) every 40 minutes from 8.30am to 5.35pm. The schedule back to Xi'an is essentially the same. Buses arrive and depart from the south bus station (*qiche nanzhan*).

At Yan'an's **east bus station** (*qiche dongzhan*), there are buses to Yulin (¥80, five hours) every 50 minutes from 7.25am to 5.30pm. Local buses to Mizhi (¥53.50, four hours) depart at 9.15am, 1.10pm and 2.20pm.

Heading west, there are departures to Yinchuan in Ningxia (¥127, eight hours); buses leave at 8am, 9.30am and 10.30am, while sleepers leave at 4pm and 5.30pm. You can also get into Shanxi and Henan from here.

TRAIN

Frequent high-speed trains to Xi'an (hard/soft sleeper ¥96/146, three hours) started in 2013, making tickets easier to come by. A taxi from the train station into town costs ¥10.

Getting Around

The Revolution Headquarters sites can be reached by taking bus 1, which

runs along the road east of the river and then heads up Shengdi Lu. This bus starts at the train station. Bus 8 also passes by these places and can be caught from Da Bridge. The taxi flag fall is ¥5.

Yulin

 0912 / Pop 92,000

Thanks to extensive coal mining and the discovery of natural gas fields nearby, this one-time garrison town on the fringes of Inner Mongolia's Mu Us Desert is booming. Despite all the construction, there's still enough of interest to make this a good place to break a trip if you're following the Great Wall or heading north on the trail of Genghis Khan.

Sights

Parts of the earthen **city walls** are still intact, while the main north–south pedestrian street in the elongated old town (divided into Beidajie and Nandajie) has several restored buildings, including a **Bell Tower** (Zhong Lou) first erected in 1472 and destroyed several times (the current tower dates to the early 20th century). With several restaurants and antique shops, it's a nice street to wander at night, when it's lit by lanterns.

Seven kilometres north of the Yulin bus station, on the outskirts of town, are some badly eroded sections of the Great Wall and a Ming-era four-storey **beacon tower** (zhenbeitai admission ¥20;  7.30am–7.30pm) that dates to 1607. Bus 11 (¥1) runs here from Changcheng Nanlu, about 200m west of the main bus station.

Sleeping

JIAYUAN SHANGWU BINGUAN

HOTEL

( 0912 326 8958; 2nd fl, 5 Yuyang Zhonglu, r ¥168)

Five minutes' walk west from the main bus station, this cheapie has a filthy staircase but the rooms are OK. A massive internet cafe is located on the 2nd floor.

Jinyu Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinyu Dajjudian 📞0912 233 3333; 6 Xinjian Nanlu, tw/d ¥238/268; 🌐📧)

This midrange place has large comfortable rooms and cable internet access. It's across the street from the main train station. Discounts of 30% available.

Getting There & Around

Taxis around town and to the train station will cost you ¥6.

AIR

There are several daily flights from Yulin to Xi'an (¥290).

BUS

Yulin has two bus stations. If you get off the bus inside the town walls (near the south gate), you are at the **main (south) bus station** (*qiche zhan*); the **regional (north) bus station** (*keyun zhan*) is located 3.5km northwest on Yingbin Dadao.

The main bus station has regular buses to Xi'an (¥170 to ¥181, seven to eight hours) from 7.25am to 7.30pm. You can also get frequent buses to Yan'an (¥80, five hours, half-hourly) from 7.25am to 5pm, to Yinchuan (¥142, five to six hours, eight daily), and two daily buses to Taiyuan (¥136, eight hours, 6.50am and 12.50pm).

The regional bus station has buses to Baotou in Inner Mongolia (¥94, four hours, hourly) and to Daliuta (¥49, two hours, every 30 minutes), from where you can travel on to Dongsheng. The buses to Dongsheng pass by Genghis Khan's Mausoleum.

Bus 1 (¥1) runs between the two bus stations.

TRAIN

The train station is 4km west of the main bus station. There are trains to

Xi'an (hard/soft sleeper ¥145/223, nine to 10 hours, five daily) via Yan'an, but sleeper tickets are pretty much impossible to grab on short notice.

FROM FARM BOY TO EMPEROR

Li Zicheng enjoyed a remarkable rise from shepherd to sitting on the imperial throne and led the most successful of the many peasant rebellions that took place in the dying days of the Ming dynasty. Born in 1606, Li drew tens of thousands of followers in famine-racked, 1630s Shaanxi by advocating equal shares of land for all and no taxes. Having taken over large parts of Shaanxi, Shanxi and Henan, Li and his army sacked Beijing and, after the suicide of the last Ming emperor, Li proclaimed himself Emperor of the Shun dynasty in April 1644.

His reign was short-lived. Less than two months later, the invading Manchu forces defeated his army and Li retreated back to Shaanxi and subsequently to Hubei, where he either committed suicide or was killed in 1645. Four centuries later, Li's impeccable socialist credentials made him an ideal role model for the CCP, who continue to laud his exploits as an early revolutionary.

Mizhi

📍0912

About 70km south of Yulin, Mizhi is famous as the hometown of Li Zicheng, protocommunist and would-be emperor, as well as for the alleged beauty of its female residents.

Despite those twin draws, it's a sleepy place with a small Hui presence and way off the tourist circuit; you will be the sole foreigner in town and likely the only visitor of any description. Some of the local population still live in caves and homes carved out of the surrounding hillsides, while the small old quarter, with its narrow alleys and dilapidated courtyard homes, is a fascinating place to wander.

The principal sight, though, is the **Li Zicheng Palace** (Li Zicheng Xingong Xingong Lu, admission ¥20; 🕒8am-5pm). This well-preserved and compact palace was built in 1643 at the height of Li's power. Set against a hillside, there's a

statue of the man himself, as well as pavilions, which house exhibits about Li and notable Mizhi women, and a pagoda. There's also a fine theatre, where music performances and plays were held, sometimes for three days at a time, to celebrate Li's victories. To reach the palace, walk east on Xinggong Lu. It's a 10- to 15-minute walk from the bus station.

Turn left immediately after leaving the palace and you are in the heart of the **old quarter** of Mizhi. Many of the original, late-Ming-dynasty courtyard homes survive, albeit in a rundown condition.

Getting There & Away

Mizhi makes an easy day trip from Yulin or you could stop here to/from Yan'an. Frequent buses (¥20, two hours) run from Yulin's main (south) bus station. Ask to get off at Jiulong Bridge (jiulong qiao), which is a little closer to the palace. Buses from Mizhi to Yan'an (¥53.50, 3½ hours, three daily) depart at 7.40am, 8.20am and 1.30pm.

Anhui

[Anhui Highlights](#)

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[Huizhou Villages](#)

[Huangshan](#)

[Jiuhua Shan](#)

[Hefei](#)

Anhui



Pop 64.1 million

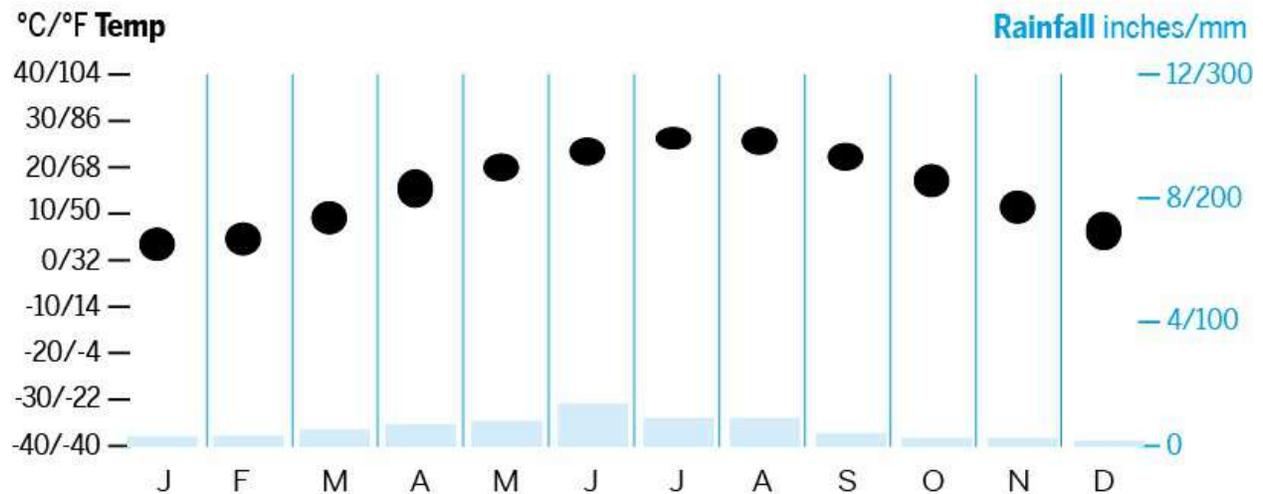
Why Go?

Well-preserved villages and fantastical mountain scapes are the principal draw for visitors to Anhui. The main attraction of this southern Huizhou region is unquestionably Huangshan, a jumble of sheer granite cliffs wrapped in cottony clouds that inspired an entire school of ink painting during the 17th and 18th centuries. But the often overlooked peaks of nearby Jiuhua Shan, where Buddhists bless the souls of the recently departed, are much quieter, with a hallowed aura that offers a strong contrast to Huangshan's stunning natural scenery.

At the foot of these ranges are strewn the ancient villages of Huizhou; their distinctive whitewashed walls and black-tiled roofs stand out against a verdant backdrop of green hills and terraced tea gardens. Anhui's lush mountains and slower pace of life are the perfect antidote to the brashness of China's larger cities.

When to Go

Túnxī



- ➔ **Mar** Pack a camera to catch the flowering yellow rapeseed around Shexian.
- ➔ **Oct** Autumn days are best for climbing Huangshan.
- ➔ **Dec** The snowcapped rooftops of Xidi's Hui houses look a picture.

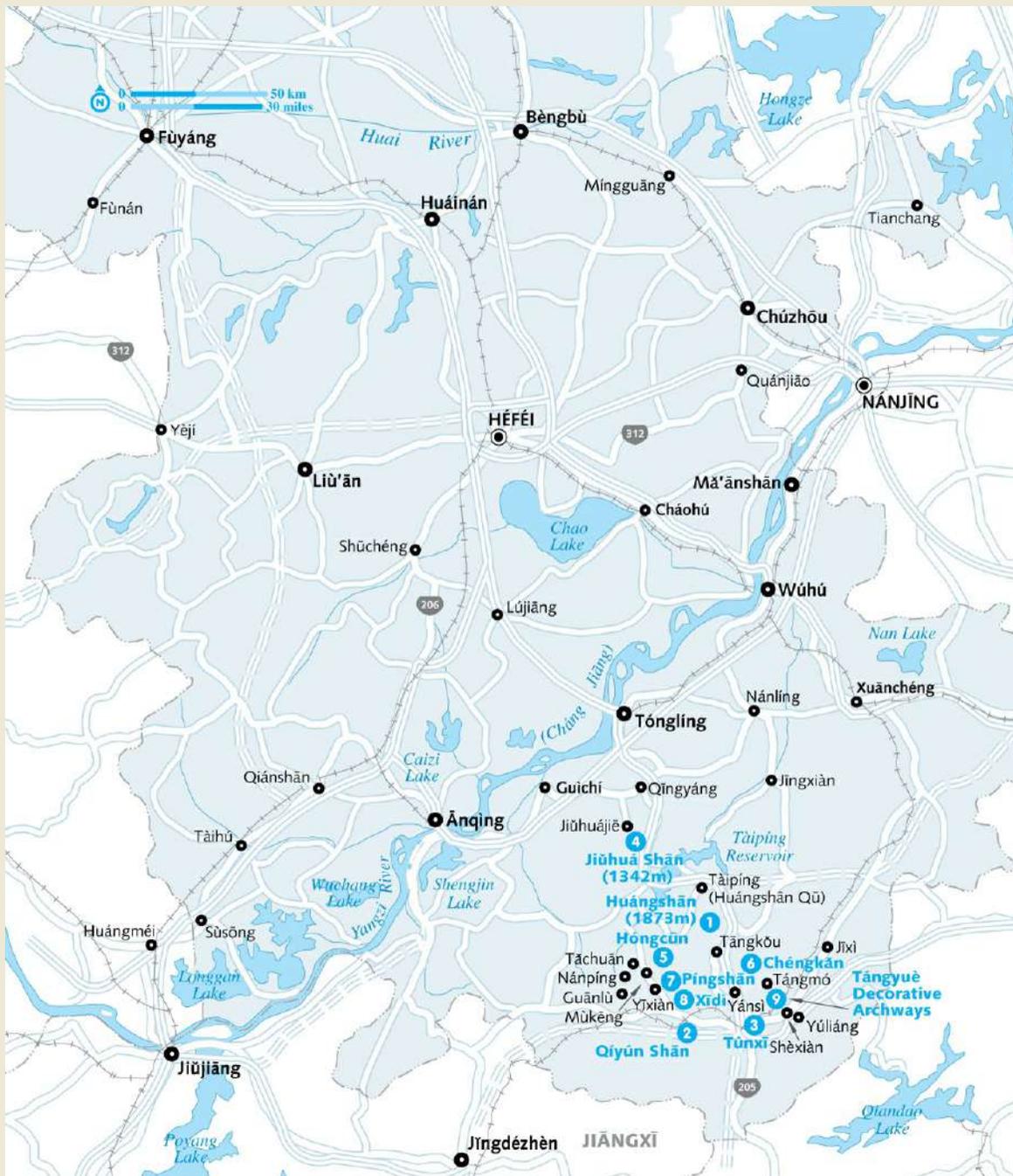
Best Mountains

- ➔ [Huangshan](#)
- ➔ [Jiuhua Shan](#)
- ➔ [Qiyun Shan](#)

Best Villages

- ➔ [Xidi](#)
- ➔ [Hongcun](#)
- ➔ [Chengkan](#)

Anhui Highlights



1 Catch the sunrise from the iconic Chinese mountain, [Huangshan](#).

2 Explore the grottoes and dilapidated temples at Taoist [Qiyun Mountain](#).

- 3 Soak up the Ming-dynasty vibe along Tunxi's [Old Street](#).
- 4 Join the Buddhist pilgrims at fog-shrouded [Jiuhua Mountain](#).
- 5 Don't miss the World Heritage village of [Hongcun](#).
- 6 Eschew crowds and enjoy authentic village life at [Chengkan](#).
- 7 Admire the palette of the colourful gateway to Shuguangyu Hall in [Pingshan](#).
- 8 Seek out the [Pig's Heaven Inn](#) in Xidi for a fantastic meal.
- 9 Get your camera out at Shexian's astonishing [Tangyue Decorative Archways](#).

History

The provincial borders of Anhui were defined by the Qing government, bringing together two disparate geographic regions and cultures: the arid, densely populated North China Plain and the mountainous terrain south of the Yangzi River (Chang Jiang), which wasn't settled until the late Tang dynasty.

Traditionally impoverished and today a primary source of China's hard-working army of *ayi* (nannies), rural Anhui's fortunes have begun to reverse. Some say the massive infrastructure improvements in the hitherto remote areas are partly due to former president Hu Jintao, whose ancestral clan hails from Jixi County. Hu comes from a long line of Huizhou merchants, who for centuries left home to do business or fill official posts elsewhere, but would never fail to complete their filial duty and send their profits back home (much of it by way of large homes and ceremonial structures).

These days locals often leave the region to seek work and fortune elsewhere (no different from their ancestors). However, they are never ashamed to declare their origins. And rightly so.

Getting There & Away

The historic and tourist sights of Anhui gather in the south around the town of Tunxi and are easily accessible by bus, train or plane from Hangzhou, Shanghai and Nanjing, or any other part of China.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥550

\$\$\$ more than ¥550

EATING

\$ less than ¥25

\$\$ ¥26 to ¥60

\$\$\$ more than ¥60

Tunxi

 0559 / Pop 77,000

Ringed by low-lying hills, the old trading town of Tunxi (also called Huangshan Shi;) is the main springboard for trips to Huangshan and the surrounding Huizhou villages. If you stay in the old town, it's an agreeable place with good transport connections to Shanghai, Nanjing, Suzhou and other destinations in the Yangzi River delta area. Compared with the region's pedestrian capital, Hefei, Tunxi makes for a far, far better base for exploring southern Anhui.

Tunxi



Tunxi

Sights

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 1 Old Street | C2 |
| 2 Wancuilou Museum | B2 |

Sleeping

- | | |
|---|----|
| 3 Ancient Town Youth Hostel | B2 |
| 4 Harbour Inn & Bar | B2 |
| 5 Hui Boutique Hotel | B2 |
| 6 Old Street Hostel | C2 |
| 7 Tunxi Lodge | A2 |

Eating

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| 8 Gaotang Hundun | A2 |
| 9 Meishi Renjia | C2 |
| 10 Tongjulou Huicai | B2 |

Sights

The oldest and most interesting part of town is in the southwest, along bustling Old Street (Lao Jie,). The brasher, newer part of town is in the northeast, near the train station.

Old Street

STREET

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Lao Jie)

Running a block in from the river, Old Street is lined with fun souvenirs, wooden shops and restored Ming-style Huizhou buildings. Things keep running till late. Duck into the side alleys for small eateries and glimpses of local life.

Wancuilou Museum

MUSEUM

(Wancuilou Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 143 Lao Jie; admission ¥50; 🕒 8.30am-9.30pm)

Wancuilou Museum, located on Old Street, displays a private antiques collection, offering an introduction to Huizhou architecture and furniture over four floors.

Tours

Youth hostels offer day-long village tours to Xidi and Hongcun (expect to pay around ¥210 including transport, admission fees and lunch) and bus trips to Huangshan (¥18, one hour, 6.15am). The [Huangshan Tourist Distribution Centre](#) has buses to popular tourist destinations.

Sleeping

Old Street Hostel

HOSTEL

(Laojie Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 254 0386; www.hiourhostel.com; 266 Lao Jie, dm ¥45-50, tw ¥159-169, d/tr/f ¥139/199/219; 🌐 @ 📶)

With a convenient location and decent rooms, this place clearly has an appeal that extends beyond the backpacking crowd. The four-person dorms come

with proper mattresses and private bathrooms, while the private rooms sport wood-lattice decor and flat-screen TVs. There's a cafe/bar on the 2nd floor, overlooking Lao Jie.

Reception and access is at the rear of a shop on Lao Jie. Staff speak English, and the manager is very helpful and efficient.

Ancient Town Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xiaozhen Guoji Qingnian Lushu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 252 2088; www.yhahs.com; 11 Sanma Lu, dm ¥40-50, d & tw ¥148-198; 📶 @ 📶)

Started by some former tour guides, this hostel ticks all the right boxes, with a well-stocked bar, movie room, good lounging areas, friendly and informative English-speaking staff, bike rental and organised tours. Dorms are spacious and comfy, while the cheapest of the (clean) twin rooms are lacking in natural light and quality varies, so check them first.

★ Hui Boutique Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Huangshan Huishepin Jiu- dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 235 2003; 3 Lihong Xiang, s/tw/d/f ¥450/450/570/690; 📶 @ 📶)

Tucked down an alley off Old St, this hotel blends boutique chic and traditional style with a restored Qing-dynasty building setting. Dark rooms are attractively decked out with antique furnishings and modern toilets, with 40% discounts online softening the tariff.

Harbour Inn & Bar

HOTEL

(Yebo Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 252 2179; 29 Zhongma Lu, d & tw ¥200; 📶 @ 📶)

We're not sure where to set sail from, but the rooms in this renovated traditional building in Tunxi's old town are a notch above the typical midrange options. Get a twin that overlooks the street or splash out for the deluxe room for a chance to sleep in a traditional wooden Chinese canopy bed. A bar is located downstairs, for when you get bored looking at the floral wallpaper and matching bed sheets in the rooms.

Tunxi Lodge

HOTEL

(Tunxi Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 258 0388; 15 Lao Jie, r ¥480-680; 📶 @)

At the western end of Lao Jie, this stylish hotel gets guests in the right mood with its Huizhou interior. The traditionally arrayed rooms have lovely wooden beds and clean, bright showers. There's a decent attached restaurant serving Chinese and Western cuisine. Discounts generally knock the cheapest doubles down to ¥290. Western breakfasts cost ¥25.

Eating & Drinking

There are cheap street eats and local restaurants in the area just east of the eastern end of Old St. There are restaurants galore on Old St and the streets abutting it, but they can all get crowded. Zhongma Lu off Old St has a string of cute coffee shops and bars, all with free wi-fi, ¥12 to ¥20 coffees and ¥10 to ¥25 beers.

★ Meishi Renjia

HUI

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 247 Lao Jie; dishes ¥7-60; 🕒 10.30am-late)

At the official entrance to Lao Jie, this bustling restaurant – spread over two floors and hung with traditional Chinese *madeng* lanterns – is a perennial favourite. Size up the range of dishes on display – *hundun* (wontons; dumpling soup), *jiaozi* (stuffed dumplings), *baozi* (steamed buns stuffed with meat or vegetables), noodles, claypot and more – then have them cooked up.

A more expensive version is located next door.

Gaotang Hundun

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Haidi Xiang; hundun ¥8-12; 🕒 10am-late)

Duck down a little alley opposite 120 Lao Jie for warming bowls of *hundun* (wonton) made by a 12th-generation seller. The secret is in the superthin *hundun* skins, meat minced from whole lean pork, and the tasty soup. No room on the skinny benches outside? Grab a seat in the owner's living room:

it's set in an atmospheric Qing-era Hui home. Also sells *da hundun* (larger, veggie-filled dumplings).

Tongjulou Huicai

HUIZHOU

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 257 2777; 216 Lao Jie; mains from ¥25)

With a corner positioning at the heart of Lao Jie, this fun and boisterous restaurant is a great place for grabbing an outside seat, feasting on local Huizhou cuisine and watching the bustling street action. Platters are arrayed uncooked inside, so take a look and see what you fancy, order up, grab some beers and take a seat (but avoid the beggar's chicken, which is both expensive and meagre).

Information

Hostels have wi-fi and computers for internet (usually ¥4 per hour).

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Xin'an Beilu & Huangshan Xilu; 🕒 8am-5.30pm)

Changes travellers cheques and major currencies; 24-hour ATM.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youqu 183 Lao Jie; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Conveniently located on Lao Jie.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju 📍 251 2929; 1st fl, 108 Changgan Donglu; 🕒 8am-noon & 2.30-5pm)

For visa extensions and police assistance.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Daily flights from Huangshan City Airport (Huangshanshi Feijichang),

located 5km west of town:

- **Beijing** ¥1090, 2½ hours, two daily
- **Guangzhou** ¥960, 1½ hours, two daily
- **Hong Kong** ¥2470, 1¾ hours, three times a week
- **Shanghai** ¥580, one hour, one daily

You can buy tickets at the **Huangshan Air Travel Agency** (Huangshan Hangkong Luyou Gongsi [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎251 7373; 1-1 Binjiang Xilu; 🕒8am-5.30pm).

BUS

The **long-distance bus station** (keyun zongzhan Qiyun Dadao) is roughly 2km west of the train station on the outskirts of town. Destinations include the following:

- **Hangzhou** ¥85, three hours, hourly (6.50am to 5.50pm)
- **Jingdezhen** ¥50, 3½ hours, three daily (9.15am, noon and 2.10pm)
- **Nanjing** ¥104, 5½ hours, three daily (7.25am, 12.10pm and 4.20pm)
- **Shanghai** ¥132, five hours, 11 daily (last bus 6pm)
- **Suzhou** ¥132, six hours, two daily (6am and 11am)
- **Wuyuan** ¥34, two hours, three daily (8.10am, 9am & 12.30pm)

Within Anhui, buses go to these destinations:

- **Hefei** ¥114, four hours, hourly (7.30am to 4pm)
- **Jiuhua Shan** ¥63, 3½ hours, one daily (1.30pm)
- **Shexian** ¥6, 45 minutes, frequent services
- **Yixian** ¥12.50, one hour, frequent services (6am to 5pm)

Buses to Huangshan go to the main base at Tangkou (¥18, one hour, frequent, 6am to 5pm) and on to the north entrance, Taiping (¥20, two hours). There are also minibuses to Tangkou (¥18) from in front of the train station.

Inside the bus station (to the right as you enter) is the separate **Huangshan Tourist Distribution Centre** (Luyou Jisan Zhongxin ☎252 4798;

Qiyun Lu, 🕒7.30am-6pm) with special tourist buses to popular destinations. Return buses operate hourly from 8am to 4pm, with a break from noon to 1pm.

Destinations include the following:

- ➔ **Hongcun** ¥14.50, 1½ hours
- ➔ **Qiyun Shan** ¥8.50, 40 minutes
- ➔ **Xidi** ¥12.50, one hour

TRAIN

Train connections are abysmal. Trains from Beijing (¥181 to ¥510, 20 hours, 9.21am), Shanghai (¥110 to ¥265, 13 hours, 8.45pm and 10.06pm) and Nanjing (¥70 to ¥159, six to 7½ hours, nine daily) stop at Tunxi (generally called Huangshan Shi;). There is also a service to Jingdezhen (¥25 to ¥115, three to five hours, 11 daily).

For better connections to southern destinations, first go to Yingtan (¥55 to ¥153, five to eight hours, nine daily) in Jiangxi and change trains there.

i Getting Around

Taxi flag fall is ¥5; the 5km taxi ride to the airport costs about ¥30.

Competition among pedicab drivers is fierce, so they are the cheapest way of getting around, costing approximately ¥4 for a trip to Old Street from the train station area. Short rides start at ¥2. Bus 9 (¥1) runs between the bus station and train station; otherwise, a taxi should cost ¥7 to ¥10.

Around Tunxi

Qiyun Mountain

Qiyun Mountain

MOUNTAIN

(Qiyun Shan admission Mar-Nov ¥75, Dec-Feb ¥55; 🕒8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-5.30pm Sat & Sun)

A 40-minute bus trip west of Tunxi brings you to the lush mountain

panoramas of Qiyun Shan. Long venerated by Taoists, the reddish sandstone rock provides a mountain home to the temples and the monks who tend to them, while mountain trails lead hikers through some stupendous scenery.

From the bus drop-off, cross the **Dengfeng Bridge** (Dengfeng Qiao) – dwelling on the luxuriant river views – and turn right through the village at the foot of the mountain for a 75-minute clamber up stone steps to the ticket office. Or ask the driver to drop you at the cable car (*suodao*; up ¥26, down ¥14) station ahead and do the circuit in reverse.

Beyond the ticket office, the **Zhenxian Cave** (Zhenxian Dongfu) houses a complex of Taoist shrines in grottoes and niches gouged from the sandstone cliffs. Further on, seated within the smoky interior of the vast and dilapidated **Xuan Tian Taisu Gong** is an effigy of Zhengwu Dadi, a Taoist deity. A further temple hall, the **Yuxu Gong**, is erected beneath the huge brow of a 200m-long sandstone cliff, enclosed around effigies of Zhengwu Dadi and Laotzu.

A charming village, **Qiyun Village** (Qiyun Cun), is seemingly plonked in the middle of the mountain range, its whitewashed buildings home to a variety of restaurants, souvenir stalls and friendly residents.

Getting There & Away

Tourist buses run directly to Qiyun Shan (¥8.50, 40 minutes) from Tunxi's [Huangshan Tourist Distribution Centre](#), leaving hourly from 8am to 4pm. This bus can drop you at the Dengfeng Bridge (*dengfeng qiao*) or the cable-car station (*suodao*). Otherwise, take any Yixian-bound bus from Tunxi and ask the driver to stop at Qiyun Shan. Returning to Tunxi, wait at the side of the road for buses coming from Yixian; however, note that the last bus from Yixian to Tunxi departs at 5pm. The last tourist bus departs at 4pm.

Huizhou Villages

 0559

The home of wealthy merchants who dealt in lumber, tea and salt – in addition to running a string of lucrative pawnshops throughout the empire – Huizhou was a double-edged sword: the inhabitants were often quite wealthy, but they were also mostly absent. At age 13, many young men were shunted out the door for the remainder of their lives to do business elsewhere, sometimes returning home only once per year. Rather than uproot their families and disrespect their ancestral clans, these merchants remained attached to the home towns they rarely saw, funnelling their profits into the construction of lavish residences and some of China's largest ancestral halls.

Consequently, the villages scattered throughout southern Anhui (also known as Wannan;) and northern Jiangxi are some of the country's loveliest, augmented by their lush surroundings of buckling earth, bamboo and pine forest, the silhouettes of stratified hills stacked away into the distance.

HUIZHOU STYLE

Huizhou architecture is the most distinctive ingredient of the regional personality, representative of the merchant class that held sway in this region during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The residences of Yixian and Shexian are the most typical examples of Huizhou architecture, their whitewashed walls topped on each flank by horse-head gables, originally designed to prevent fire from travelling along a line of houses, and later evolving into decorative motifs. Strikingly capped with dark tiles, walls are often punctured by high, narrow windows, designed to protect the residence from thieves (and lonely wives from illicit temptations).

Exterior doorways, often overhung with decorative eaves and carved brick or stone lintels, are sometimes flanked by drum stones (gushi) and lead onto interior courtyards delightfully illuminated by light wells (tianjing), rectangular openings in the roof. The doors are a talking point in themselves. It's said that an owner would spend 1000 taels of silver on the decorative archway and carvings but only four taels on the actual door!

Many Huizhou houses are furnished with intricately carved wood panels and extend to two floors, the upper floor supported on wooden columns. Even the furnishing holds much meaning. The main hall for taking visitors has several elements worth keeping an eye out for. You might notice semicircle half-tables against the walls: if the master of the house is in, the tables would be combined; if they are split, it's a subtle hint for male visitors to not intrude upon the wife. There might also be a mantelpiece where you will see a clock, vase and mirror. This symbolises peace and harmony in

the house. The Chinese words for these items translate as: zhong sheng (hourly chiming on clock), ping (harmony) and jing (peace).

Another characteristic element of regional architecture is the obsession with decorative archways (paifang; or, pailou), which were constructed by imperial decree to honour an individual's outstanding achievement. Examples include becoming a high official (for men; paifang) or leading a chaste life (for women; pailou). Archways are common throughout China and don't always carry symbolic meaning, but in Huizhou they were of great importance because they gave the merchants – who occupied the bottom rung of the Confucian social ladder (under artisans, peasants and scholars) – much-desired social prestige. Roads were built to pass under a paifang but around a pailou, so that a man would never feel that his status was beneath that of a woman's. The most elaborate examples are the Tangyue Decorative Archways outside Shexian.

Western Villages (Yixian)

Yixian is home to the two most picturesque communities in Anhui: Xidi and Hongcun. Even with soaring ticket prices and when spilling over with crowds (most of the time), these are, hands down, the most impressive sights in the Huizhou area.

Sights

Xidi

HISTORIC SITE

(admission ¥104)

Typical of the elegant Huizhou style, Xidi's 124 surviving buildings reflect the wealth and prestige of the prosperous merchants who settled here. Its Unesco World Heritage Site status means Xidi, located 54km northwest of Tunxi, enjoys a lucrative tourist economy, yet it remains a picturesque tableau of slender lanes, cream-coloured walls topped with horse-head gables, roofs capped with dark tiles, and doorways ornately decorated with carved lintels.

Dating to AD 1047, the village has for centuries been a stronghold of the Hu clan, descended from the eldest son of the last Tang emperor who fled

here in the twilight years of the Tang dynasty.

Wander around the maze of flagstone lanes, examining lintel carvings above doorways decorated with vases, urns, animals, flowers and ornamental motifs, and try to avoid tripping over hordes of high-school artists consigning scenes of stone bridges spanning small streams to canvas.

Xidi's magnificent three-tiered Ming-dynasty decorative arch, the **Huwenguang Paifang**, at the entrance to the village, is an ostentatious symbol of Xidi's former standing. Numerous other notable structures are open to inspection, including **Diji Hall** (Diji Tang) and **Zhuimu Hall** (Zhuimu Tang), both on Dalu Jie. **Jing'ai Hall** (Jing'ai Tang) is the town's largest building and was used for meetings, weddings and, of course, meting out punishment. Back in the day, women weren't allowed inside. **Xiyuan** is a small house known for its exquisite stone carvings on the windows. Unlike regular carvings, these are carved on both sides.

When you're done with the village, pop out on paths leading out to nearby hills where there are suitable spots for your picture-postcard panoramas of the village (though a mobile-phone tower blights the landscape). If you want to avoid the crowds, you'll have to start early or hang out late: tour groups start roaming around at 7am and only trickle out at 5pm or so.

Hongcun

VILLAGE

(admission ¥104)

Dating to the southern Song dynasty, the delightful village and Unesco World Heritage Site of Hongcun, 11km northeast of Yixian, has crescent-shaped Moon Pond (Yue Zhao) at its heart and is encapsulated by South Lake (Nan Hu), West Stream (Xi Xi) and Leigang Mountain (Leigang Shan). Founding village elders of the Wang clan consulted a feng shui master and the village was remodelled to suggest an ox, with its still-functioning waterway system representing its entrails.

The village remains a charming and unhurried portrait of bridges, lakeside views, narrow alleys and traditional halls. Alleyway channels flush water through the village from West Stream to Moon Pond (the stomach of the ox)

and from there on to South Lake, while signs guide visitors on a tour of the principal buildings. Lost? Just follow the water flow.

If the bridge at the entrance to the village looks familiar, it's because it featured in the opening scene from Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The picturesque Moon Lake also features in the film. Built by a salt merchant, the **Chengzhi Hall** (Chengzhi Tang Shangshuizhen Lu,) dates from 1855 and has 28 rooms, adorned with fabulous woodcarvings, 2nd-floor balconies and light wells. Peepholes on top-floor railings are for girls to peek at boy visitors and the little alcove in the mah-jong room was used to hide the concubine. The now-faded gold-brushed carvings are said to have required 100 taels of the expensive stuff and took over four years to be completed.

Other notable buildings include the **Hall of the Peach Garden** (Taoyuan Ju), with its elaborate carved wood panels, and the **South Lake Academy** (Nanhu Shuyuan), which enjoys an enviable setting beside tranquil South Lake. Overlooking Moon Pond is a gathering of further halls, chief among which is the dignified **Lexu Hall** (Lexu Tang), a hoary Ming antique from the first years of the 15th century. Turn up bamboo carvings, trinkets and a large selection of tea at the market west of Moon Pond. The busy square by **Hongji Bridge** (Hongji Qiao) on the West Stream is shaded by two ancient trees (the 'horns' of the ox), a red poplar and a ginkgo. Leigang Mountain serves as the head of the ox.

Admission to the village includes a guide with limited English-speaking skills – you'll have to engage one at the main entrance in case you enter by the side gate.

Tachuan

VILLAGE

(admission ¥20)

Only 3km northwest of Hongcun is the tiny little village of Tachuan, set at the base of a valley and famed for its stunning autumn scenery. Each year, the leaves on old-growth trees in and around the village change colours for anywhere between 10 to 30 days. The entire valley comes ablaze in shades of orange, green and brown, much to the delight of photographers.

On other days, the villagers eke out their living by planting rice and tea. From afar, the village looks like a pagoda (hence the name; the ‘*ta*’ in Tachuan means ‘pagoda’) as it’s built across the steps of foothills.

Pingshan

VILLAGE

(admission ¥50)

Take a motorised pedicab (around ¥20) through the mulberry groves from Hongcun towards Xidi to find this picturesque village, the streets of which are littered with young Chinese artists. Ancient, noteworthy halls include the **Xianyi Tang** with its terrifically decorated frontage and doorway. Sooner or later you’ll encounter the overgrown and untouched **Shuguangyu Hall** (Shuguangyu Tang), its front gateway a colourful blaze of painted immortals, *luohan* (arhats), lions and other characters. It’s the sole painted *menlou* (gate house) in Huizhou.

Creep in if the door is open to a deep, inviting (and very cool in hot weather) chamber. Elsewhere in the village is the fabulous, rouge-coloured 900-year old **Sangu Miao** (Three Girls Temple) with two rectangular ponds where turtles swim blinking in the sun. In the temple’s main hall are the Sansheng Longnu (Three Sacred Dragon Girls) with 18 *luohan* in attendance. Other famous halls in the village include the **Chengdao Hall** (Chengdao Tang) and the Ming dynasty **Shuqingyu Hall** (Shuqingyu Tang).

Nanping

VILLAGE

(admission ¥43)

With a history of more than 1100 years, this intriguing and labyrinthine village, 5km to the west of Yixian town, is famed as the setting of Zhang Yimou’s 1989 tragedy *Judou* and, of course, scenes from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Numerous ancient ancestral halls, clan shrines and merchant residences survive within Nanping’s mazelike alleys, including the **Chengshi Zongci** and the **Yeshi Zongci**.

The **Lao Yang Jia Ranfang** residence that served as the principal household of dyer Gongli and her rapacious husband in *Judou* remains

cluttered with props, and faded stills from the film hang from the walls. Admission includes a guide with limited English-speaking skills.

Guanlu

VILLAGE

(admission ¥35)

Around 8km west of Yixian and further along the road beyond Nanping, this small village's drawcard sights are the fabulous households (Badajia) of eight rich brothers. Each Qing-dynasty residence shares similar elegant Huizhou features, with light wells, interior courtyards, halls, carved wood panels and small gardens. Each an independent entity, the households are interconnected by doors and linked together into a systemic whole.

A distinctive aspect of the residences is their elegantly painted ceilings, the patterns and details of which survive. Admission includes a guide with limited English-speaking skills.

Mukeng Zhuhai

FOREST

(admission ¥30, zipline ¥40)

A hike through Mukeng's bamboo forest, 5km northeast of Hongcun, is an excellent diversion. Remember *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon's* breathtaking bamboo-top fight scenes? Yep, they were filmed here. The two-hour circuit along a ridgeline leads past the top-heavy plumes of feathery bamboo, trickling streams and hillside tea gardens, past a small village where you can get a filling meal and a clean room with bathroom for ¥60 to ¥120, and eventually to a small hamlet. A zipline can take you down in 40 seconds.

Sleeping & Eating

Regulations mean you can't just pitch up and land homestay-style accommodation (*zhu nongjia*) in Xidi and Hongcun. Each village has 'approved' accommodation for foreigners, most listed below. You can visit local homes to sample some excellent cooking – meals are generally around ¥20, unless you have a chicken slaughtered (*tuji*), which will cost ¥50 to

¥100. Restaurants abound; in spring, succulent bamboo shoots (*zhusun*) figure prominently in many dishes.

Xidi

Pig's Heaven Inn

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Zhulan Jiuba 📞 515 4555; <http://blog.sina.com.cn/zhulanjiuba>; Renrang Li, d incl breakfast ¥460-560, ste ¥780-880; 📶📶)

This restored 400-year-old house in Xidi has a study, two terraces and five distinctive rooms. Reservations are crucial (the entrance is unmarked) so book ahead; gourmet sleuths can seek it out for a fantastic lunch (dishes from ¥20) in the courtyard. This is a great place to just unwind for a day or three; grab one of their bicycles and get exploring.

The owners also have a larger, pricier property in Bishan with doubles and villas (double from ¥600, villa ¥1200), several kilometres away. Transfers to both properties are available. Limited English.

Xidi Travel Lodge

HOTEL

(Xidi Xingguan 📞 515 6999; d incl breakfast ¥368-738, ste ¥888-1290; 📶@)

This can't-miss-it property, just behind the main gate to Xidi village, is a sprawling multi-building affair complete with comfortable rooms, its own restaurant and alfresco cafe. All rooms have modern showers, flat-screen TVs and faux antique furnishing, while some have balconies. Get a room facing the small tea garden.

The restaurant serves local fare (dishes ¥18 to ¥108) and there's cheap ¥10 beer at the cafe. Discounts of 30% available.

Hongcun

Old House Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(📞 554 5888; Shangshui Zhen, dm ¥55, d ¥268; 📶)

This very quiet and secluded youth hostel has a mere handful of doubles –

finished in wood, with shower – so book up front. Dorms are upstairs and sleep four to six. It's tranquil and charming, and staff are welcoming and friendly and can book train and bus tickets.

Hongda Tingyuan

HOMESTAY

( 554 1262; 5 Shangshui Zhen, d/tr ¥160/200)

The draw of this Hongcun home is the verdant courtyard filled with potted daphne, heavenly bamboo and other flowering shrubs, all set around a small pool and pavilion. Its rooms are unadorned, but the peaceful location in the upper part of the village is ideal. You can stop by for lunch (dishes from ¥20), space permitting. No English spoken.

★ Long Lane Inn

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Hongcun Yipin Geng Lou  554 2001; www.hcno-1.com; 1 Shangshui Zhen, r incl breakfast ¥380-1280;  

In a quiet corner of Hongcun, this 10-room Taiwanese-run boutique hotel is lovely. Choose between traditionally styled rooms with rosewood Chinese four-posted beds (or splash out for the suite with a cute garden and sunken bath) or simple tatami rooms, each one immaculate. Iris Hong, the owner, speaks good English and can help with travel plans and private-vehicle hire.

In-house meals are great too.

Getting There & Around

BUS

Tourist buses run directly to Xidi (¥12.50, one hour) and on to Hongcun (¥14.50, 1½ hours) from Tunxi's [Huangshan Tourist Distribution Centre](#), leaving hourly from 8am to 4pm, with a break at noon. Otherwise, catch a local bus from the long-distance bus station to Yixian (¥13, one hour, frequent, 6am to 5pm), the transport hub for public transport to the surrounding villages.

From Yixian there are green minibuses (¥2 to ¥3, half-hourly, 7am to 5pm)

to Xidi (15 minutes), Nanping (15 minutes), Guanlu (20 minutes), Hongcun (20 minutes) and Pingshan (18 minutes). You will need to return to Yixian to get between the different villages, with the exception of Nanping and Guanlu, which are both in the same direction. From Yixian, it's possible to travel on to Tangkou (¥18, one hour, four daily) for Huangshan, Qingyang (¥60, 2½ hours, three daily) for Jiuhuashan, Hangzhou (¥91, one daily) and Shanghai (¥151, two daily).

BICYCLE

A great way to explore the surrounding countryside is on a bike (*chuzu zixingche*; per four hours ¥5 to ¥15), found on the modern street opposite Hongcun's Hongji Bridge (Hongji Qiao).

TAXI & PEDICAB

Taxis and pedicabs go to Xidi (¥10), Pingshan (¥10), Hongcun (¥15), Nanping (¥20) and Guanlu (¥25) from Yixian. Booking a pedicab to take you to all four villages from Yixian can cost as little as ¥150 for the day, depending on your bargaining skills. A minivan for the day will cost ¥300 to ¥400. Most accommodation places can help with transport bookings. From Hongcun, get a pedicab to Tachuan (¥10), Mukeng Zhuhai (¥15) and Pingshan (¥20). You'll need to negotiate for the driver to wait for you as returning pedicabs are rare.

Northern Villages

Rarely visited by individual travellers, the villages north of Tunxi can serve as a quieter antidote to the much-hyped and crowded towns to the west. A combined Chengkan, Tangmo, Shexian Old Town, Tangyue Decorative Archways and Qiankou Ancient Houses ticket is available for ¥220.

Sights

Chengkan

VILLAGE

(admission ¥107; 🕒 8am-5pm)

A real working community, Chengkan presents a very different picture from its more affluent cousins in Shexian – farmers walk through town with hoes slung over their shoulders, tea traders dump baskets of freshly picked leaves straight out onto the street, quacking ducks run amok in streams and the unmistakable odour of pig manure hangs in the air: a bona fide slice of life in rural China. Most visitors are here to see southern China’s largest ancestral temple.

The **Luo Dongshu Temple** (Luo Dongshu Ci) is a massive wooden complex several courtyards deep that took 71 years (1539–1610) to build. It has a mixed bag of architectural styles, from Greco-Roman columns to Persian patterns on overhead beams. Look out for the three-storey **Yanyi Tang**, nearly 600 years old; many residences are, however, in poor condition.

Tangmo

VILLAGE

(admission ¥80, incl electronic guide deposit ¥300; 🕒 8am-5pm)

A narrow village extending 1km along a central canal, Tangmo originally dates to the late Tang dynasty. A pathway follows the waterway from the entrance at the east gate (*dong men*) into the village, leading past the large **Tan’gan Garden** (Tan’gan Yuan), modelled after Hangzhou’s West Lake. Here you’ll enter the village proper, passing canalside Qing residences along **Shui Jie** before reaching the covered **Gaoyang Bridge** (Gaoyang Qiao), built in 1733 and home to a small teahouse.

At the end of town is the **Shangyi Ancestor Hall** (Shangyi Tang), with 199 peony blossoms carved into the entrance beam. There’s a string of traditional workshops and stalls near the east gate.

The public bus will probably drop you off at the west gate (meaning you’ll see the sights listed above in reverse), but there should be onward transport of some kind to the east gate, or just backtrack.

Getting There & Around

A tourist bus from the Tunxi long-distance bus station stops at Tangmo (¥14, 1½ hours, every two hours), running from 8am to 4pm.

Getting to Chengkan is slightly complicated. Start by taking a bus to Yansi (¥4.50, 30 minutes, frequent) from the Tunxi long-distance bus station. From the Yansi bus terminus, go to the town's north bus station (*bei zhan*) by public bus (¥1) or pedicab (¥4). From the north bus station, take another bus to Chengkan (¥3.50, 20 minutes, hourly). You can also reach Tangmo (¥2.50, 20 minutes, hourly) from the north bus station in Yansi.

Pedicabs also run from the Yansi bus terminus to Chengkan (¥30) or Tangmo (¥20). Decent bargainers can get one for a day for ¥80 to ¥100. To get between the villages on public transport, you'll need to return to Yansi. Note that the last buses are at 5pm, and transport stops for an hour around noon.

Eastern Villages

Shexian is a decent-sized provincial town with absorbing historic sights, while the neighbouring port of Yuliang harbours an architectural heritage entirely different from the other Huizhou villages. A combined Chengkan, Tangmo, Shexian Old Town, Tangyue Decorative Archways and Qiankou Ancient Houses ticket is available for ¥220.

Sights

Shexian

VILLAGE

(admission incl entry to Yuliang & Chinese-speaking guide ¥80, without entry to Yuliang ¥60)

Shexian is 25km east of Tunxi and can be visited as a day trip. The town was formerly the grand centre of the Huizhou culture, serving as its capital. Today, the **Old Town** (Huizhou Gucheng) is the town's main sight. From the Shexian bus station, cross the bridge over the river, hang right and go through a gate tower and along to **Yanghe Men**, a double-eaved gate tower

constructed of wood.

Get your admission ticket and climb the gate to examine a Ming-dynasty stone *xiezh* (a legendary beast) and elevated views of the magnificent **Xuguo Archway** (Xuguo Shifang) below. Fabulously decorated, this is China's sole surviving four-sided decorative archway, with 12 lions (18 in total if you count the cubs) seated on pedestals around it and a profusion of bas-relief carvings of other mythical creatures.

Continue in the same direction to reach the alleyway (on the left) to the old residential area of **Doushan Jie** (Doushanjie Guminju), a street of Huizhou houses, with several courtyard residences open to visitors and decorated with exquisitely carved lintels, beautiful interiors and occasional pairs of leaping-on blocks for mounting horses.

Local visitors don't receive the same rigorous ticket checks that foreign visitors do in and around the main gate. Wander around a bit and you'll find that there are also alleyways that lead into the old town.

Buses from Tunxi's long-distance bus station run regularly to Shexian (¥6.50, 45 minutes, frequent).

Yuliang

VILLAGE

(admission ¥30)

Little-visited Yuliang is a historic riverine port village on the Lian River (Lian Jiang). The cobbled and picturesque alley of **Yuliang Jie** houses former transfer stations for the wood, salt and tea that plied the river; the teashop at No 87 is an example. Note the firewalls separating the houses along the road. Examine the traditional Huizhou arrangement of the **Baweizu Museum** (Baweizu Jinianguan), also on Yuliang Jie.

The **Lion Bridge** (Shizi Qiao) dates to the Tang dynasty, a time when the 138m-long granite **Yuliang Dam** (Yuliang Ba) across the river was first constructed. Observe how amazingly well built it is, with finely finished interlocking stones. Oarsman can take you on boats from the dam for excellent 20-minute return river trips (¥10 to ¥20).

There are rooms with lovely views at a small **inn** (☎0559-653 9731; 147 Yuliang Jie, d with bathroom ¥50-60), and another similar **inn** (☎0559-653 8024; 145 Yuliang Jie, d with bathroom ¥80-100) two doors along. Both serve meals with dishes starting at ¥15. The innkeepers will take you into the village if you book ahead.

To reach Yuliang, take a pedicab (¥5) from Shexian's bus station (by the bridge), or hop on bus 1, which runs to Yuliang (¥1) from outside the bus station and also along the road opposite Shexian Ancient City. The last bus back to Tunxi departs at 6pm.

Tangyue Decorative Archways

MONUMENT

(Tangyue Paifang Qun www.paifangqun.com; admission ¥130, incl Bao Family Garden; 🕒7am-6pm summer, 7.30am-5.30pm winter)

This astonishing row of seven elaborate, decorative stone arches is quite a bizarre sight, marching off in a slight curve from the village of Tangyue towards the fields. The stone monuments form one of the most famous collections of memorial archways in the land. There's also the attached village to explore which contains several notable old halls and down the road, the beautifully laid out **Bao Family Garden** is decorated with all manner of exquisite flowering plants and trees. It's a perfect spot for a tranquil breather.

The best way to get here is direct by tourist bus 4 from Shexian, although it's possible to get here by bus (¥5) to the drop off at Zhengcun Lukou from Tunxi and then transfer to tourist bus 4 (¥2) – or you can walk the remaining 1.5km.

Huangshan

☎0559

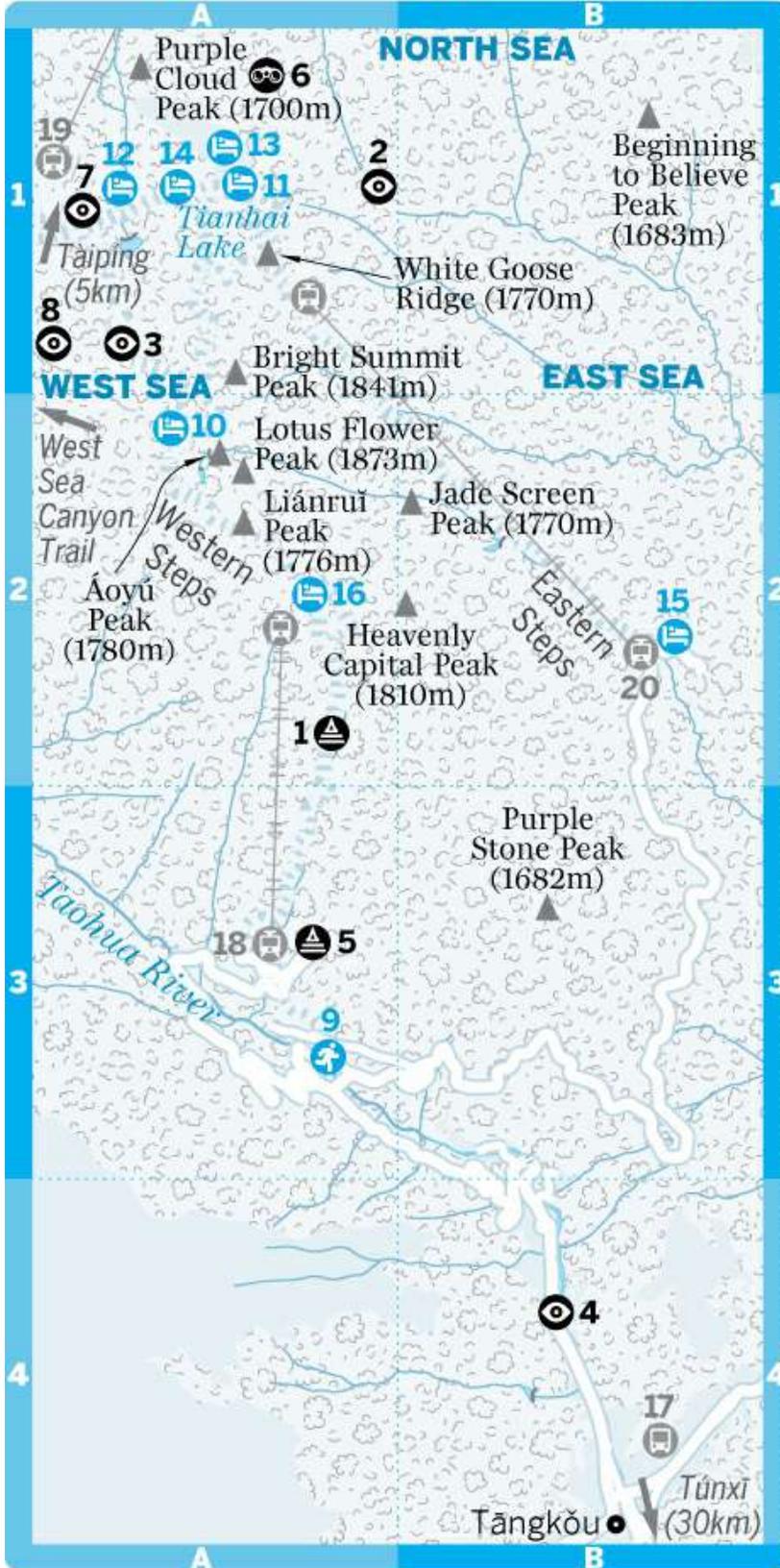
When its granite peaks and twisted pines are wreathed in spectral folds of mist, Huangshan's idyllic views easily nudge it into the select company of China's top 10, nay, top five, sights. Legions of poets and painters have drawn inspiration from Huangshan's iconic beauty. Yesterday's artists

seeking an escape from the hustle and bustle of the temporal world have been replaced by crowds of tourists, who bring the hustle and bustle with them: the mountain is inundated with tourist traffic at points, so the magic can rapidly evaporate, especially during holiday periods and weekends. But Huangshan still rewards visitors with moments of tranquility, and the unearthly views can be simply breathtaking.

Climate

Locals claim that it rains more than 200 days a year up on the mountain. Allow yourself several days and climb when the forecast is best. Spring (April to June) generally tends to be misty, which means you may be treated to some sublime scenery, but you're just as likely to encounter a dense fog that obscures everything except for a line of yellow ponchos extending up the trail. Summer (July to August) is the rainy season, though storms can blow through fairly quickly. Autumn (September to October) is generally considered to be the best travel period. Even at the height of summer, average temperatures rarely rise above 20°C at the summit, so come prepared.

Huángshān



Huangshan

Sights

| | |
|--|----|
| 1 Banshan Temple | A2 |
| 2 Flower Blooming on a Brush Tip | A1 |
| 3 Flying Rock | A1 |
| 4 Front Gate | B4 |
| 5 Mercy Light Temple | A3 |
| Mt Huangshan Visitor Centre | A3 |
| 6 Refreshing Terrace | A1 |
| 7 Ring Road 1 | A1 |
| 8 Ring Road 2 | A1 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | |
|---|----|
| 9 Huangshan Hot Springs | A3 |
|---|----|

Sleeping

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 10 Baiyun Hotel | A2 |
| 11 Beihai Hotel | A1 |
| 12 Paiyunlou Hotel | A1 |
| 13 Shilin Hotel | A1 |
| 14 Xihai Hotel | A1 |
| 15 Yungu Hotel | B2 |
| 16 Yupinglou Hotel | A2 |

Information

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Bank of China | A1 |
| Bank of China | A1 |
| Police Station | A1 |

Transport

| | |
|---|----|
| 17 East Long-Distance Bus Station | B4 |
| 18 Mercy Light Temple Station | A3 |
| 19 Taiping Cable Car Station | A1 |
| 20 Yungu Station | B2 |

Sights & Activities

Buses from Tunxi drop you off in Tangkou, the sprawling town at the foot of Huangshan. A base for climbers, this is the place to stock up on supplies (maps, raincoats, food, money), store your excess luggage and arrange onward transport. It's possible to spend time in Tangkou, but unless you're on a tight budget, you might as well stay on the mountain.

Tangkou consists of two main streets, the larger Feicui Lu – a strip of restaurants, supermarkets and hotels – and the more pleasant Yanxi Jie, which runs along the river perpendicular to Feicui Lu and is accessed by stairs leading down from the bridge.

Eastern Steps

HIKING

A medium-fast climb of the 7.5km eastern steps from Yungu Station (890m) to **White Goose Ridge** (Bai'e Feng; 1770m) can be done in 2½ hours. The route is pleasant, but lacks the awesome geological scenery of the western steps. In spring wild azalea and weigela add gorgeous splashes of colour to the wooded slopes. Much of the climb is comfortably shaded and although it can be tiring, it's a doddle compared with the western steps.

Slow-moving porters use the eastern steps for ferrying up their massive, swaying loads of food, drink and building materials, so considerable traffic plies the route. While clambering up, note the more ancient flight of steps that makes an occasional appearance alongside the newer set.

Purists can extend the eastern steps climb by several hours by starting at the **Front Gate** (Huangshan Damen [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) – also called the South Gate (Nan Damen) – where a stepped path crosses the road at several points before linking with the main eastern steps trail.

Western Steps

HIKING

The 15km western steps route has some stellar scenery, but it's twice as long and strenuous as the eastern steps, and much easier to enjoy if you're clambering down rather than gasping your way up. If you take the cable car

up the mountain, just do this in reverse. The western steps descent begins at the **Flying Rock** (Feilai Shi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a boulder perched on an outcrop 30 minutes from Beihai Hotel, and goes over **Bright Summit Peak** (Guangming Ding; 1841m), from where you can see **Aoyu Peak** (Aoyu Feng; 1780m), which resembles two turtles!

South of Aoyu Peak en route to Lotus Flower Peak, the descent funnels you down through a **Gleam of Sky** (Yixian Tian), a remarkably narrow chasm – a vertical split in the granite – pinching a huge rock suspended above the heads of climbers. Further on, **Lotus Flower Peak** (Lianhua Feng; 1873m) marks the highest point, but is occasionally sealed off, preventing ascents. **Lianrui Peak** (Lianrui Feng; 1776m) is decorated with rocks whimsically named after animals, but save some energy for the much-coveted and staggering climb – 1321 steps in all – up **Heavenly Capital Peak** (Tiandu Feng; 1810m) and the stunning views that unfold below. As elsewhere on the mountain, young lovers have padlocks engraved with their names up here and lash them for eternity to the chain railings. Access to Heavenly Capital Peak (and other peaks) is sometimes restricted for maintenance and repair, so keep those fingers crossed when you go!

Further below, the steps lead to **Banshan Temple** (Banshan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and below that, at the bottom of the steps, **Mercy Light Temple** (Ciguang Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). Huangshan is not one of China's sacred mountains, so little religious activity is evident. Mercy Light Temple is one of the few temples on the mountain whose temple halls survive, although they have been converted to more secular uses. The first hall now serves as the **Mt Huangshan Visitor Centre** (Huangshan Youren Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), where you can pore over a diorama of the mountain ranges.

From Mercy Light Temple, you can pick up a minibus back to Tangkou (¥13) to find yourself some beer as a reward or continue walking to the hot springs area.

Huangshan Hot Springs

HOT SPRINGS

(Huangshan Wenquan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); adult/child ¥238/119; 🕒 10am-11pm)

The hot springs area is the place to soak after the strenuous climb. It offers a mind-boggling variety of themed springs: soak in a coffee-infused pool or get heady in the wine- or alcohol-infused spring. There's also a pool with fish that nibble away dead skin on your feet. Follow it all up with a foot massage. Entry includes complimentary snacks and tea. Shuttle buses (¥11) run from Tangkou to the Hot Springs.

West Sea Canyon

HIKING

(Xihai Daxiagu)

A strenuous and awe-inspiring 8.5km hike, the West Sea Canyon route descends into a gorge (Xihai Daxiagu) and has some impressively exposed stretches (it's not for those with vertigo), taking a minimum four hours to complete. You can access the canyon at either the northern entrance (near the Paiyunlou Hotel) or the southern entrance (near the Baiyun Hotel aka White Clouds Hotel).

A good option to start would be at the northern entrance. From there, you'll pass through some rock tunnels and exit onto the best bits of the gorge. Here, stone steps have been attached to the sheer side of the mountain – peer over the side for some serious butt-clenching views down. Don't worry, there are handrails. If you're pressed for time or don't have the energy to stomach a long hike, do a figure-eight loop of [Ring Road 1](#) (Yihuan Shang Lukou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); West Sea Canyon) and [Ring Road 2](#) (Erhuan Shang Lukou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); West Sea Canyon), and head back to the northern entrance. Sure, you'll miss some stunning views across lonely, mist-encased peaks, but you'll also miss the knee-killing dip into the valley and the subsequent thigh-shuddering climb out to the southern entrance.

A new cable car (¥100) to this area opened in 2013, so the area has unfortunately become increasingly busier. Avoid this region in bad weather.

Huangshan Summit

HIKING

Huangshan's summit is essentially one huge network of connecting trails and walks that meander up, down and across several different peaks. More than a few visitors spend several nights on the peak, and the North Sea (Beihai) sunrise is a highlight for those staying overnight. **Refreshing Terrace** (Qingliang Tai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is five minutes' walk from [Beihai Hotel](#) and attracts sunrise crowds. Lucky visitors are rewarded with the luminous spectacle of *yunhai* (literally 'sea of clouds'): idyllic pools of mist that settle over the mountain, filling its chasms and valleys with fog.

The staggering and other-worldly views from the summit reach out over huge valleys of granite and enormous formations of rock, topped by gravity-defying slivers of stone and the gnarled forms of ubiquitous Huangshan pine trees (*Pinus taiwanensis*). Many rocks have been christened with fanciful names by the Chinese, alluding to figures from religion and myth. **Beginning to Believe Peak** (Shixin Feng; 1683m), with its jaw-dropping views, is a major bottleneck for photographers. En route to the North Sea, pause at the **Flower Blooming on a Brush Tip** (Mengbi Shenghua [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a 1640m-high granite formation topped by a pine tree. Clamber up to **Purple Cloud Peak** (Danxia Feng; 1700m) for a long survey over the landscape and try to catch the sun as it descends in the west. Aficionados of rock formations should keep an eye out for the poetically named **Mobile Phone Rock** (Shouji Shi), located near the top of the western steps. Continue on to sights en route to the Western Steps.

ASCENDING & DESCENDING THE MOUNTAIN

Regardless of how you ascend **Huangshan** (admission Mar-Nov ¥230, Dec-Feb ¥150, child 1.2-1.4m ¥115, under 1.2m free), you will be stung by a dizzying entrance fee. You can pay at the eastern steps near the **Yungu Station** (Yungu Zhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); Eastern Steps) or at the **Mercy Light Temple Station** (Ciguangge zhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Western Steps), where the western steps begin. Shuttle buses (¥19) run to both places from Tangkou.

Three basic routes will get you up to the summit: the short, hard way (eastern steps); the longer, harder way (western steps); and the very short, easy way (cable car). It's possible to do a 10-hour circuit going up the eastern steps and then down

the western steps in one day, but you'll have to be slightly insane, in good shape and you'll definitely miss out on some of the more spectacular, hard-to-get-to areas.

A basic itinerary would be to take an early-morning bus from Tunxi, climb the eastern steps, hike around the summit area, spend the night at the top, catch the sunrise and then hike back down the western steps the next day, giving you time to catch an afternoon bus back to Tunxi. Most travellers do opt to spend more than one night on the summit to explore all the various trails. Don't underestimate the hardship involved; the steep gradients and granite steps can wreak havoc on your knees, both going up and down.

Most sightseers are packed (and we mean packed) into the summit area above the upper cable car stations, consisting of a network of trails running between various peaks, so don't go expecting peace and quiet. The volume of visitors is mounting every year and paths are being widened at bottle neck points where scrums develop. The highlight of the climb for many independent travellers is the lesser-known West Sea Canyon hike, a more rugged, exposed section where most tour groups do not venture.

Make sure to bring enough water, food, warm clothing and rain gear before climbing. Bottled water and food prices increase the higher you go as porters ([Click here](#)) carry everything up. As mountain paths are easy to follow and English signs plentiful, guides are unnecessary.

Sleeping & Eating

Huangshan has clusters of hotels. Prices and availability vary according to season; book ahead for summit accommodation, especially so for dorms and at peak times. Prices for hotels tend to cost at least double what you'd pay in a non-mountain setting.

If you're on a tight budget, make sure to take plenty of food to the summit. You won't be able to get a hot meal there for under ¥50. Summit hotels usually offer warm jackets for sunrise watchers.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

PORTERS ON THE MOUNTAIN

When climbing Huangshan, spare a thought for the long-suffering, muscular and sun-tanned porters (tiaoshangong) who totter slowly uphill with all manner of goods from

rice to water and building materials for the hotels and hawkers that populate the higher levels. They then descend with rubbish. Going up, they earn ¥1.8 per kg hauled aloft, downhill it's ¥1.5 per kg. They ferry around 100kg each trip (and only ascend once per day), balanced on two ends of a stout pole across their shoulder. Remember to give way to them on your way up (and down).

Tangkou

Mediocre midrange hotels line Tangkou's main strip, Feicui Lu; remember to look at rooms first and ask for discounts before committing. There are also a host of budget choices along Tiandu Lu. Restaurants cluster along Yanxi Jie, which runs along the river perpendicular to Feicui Lu.

Pine Ridge Lodge

HOTEL

(Huangshan Tianke Shanzhuang  1377-761 8111; Scenic Area South Gate, r incl breakfast ¥120-150; )

Wayne, the friendly English-speaking owner, likens it to a lodge in Aspen... in reality, the place isn't so much a ski lodge but a very decent midrange hotel. Book a cosy room in the charming outhouse for privacy. The in-house restaurant serves great local food. Rooms include return transfers to/from the Tangkou bus station.

Zhongruihuayi Hotel

HOTEL

(Zhongruihuayi Dajiudian  556 6888, 556 8222; South Gate, r from ¥780; )

This white four-star hotel on the west side of the river on the Huangshan access road has the most expensive and most pleasant rooms in Tangkou. Staff can help with bus and flight bookings and there's a free shuttle bus to the bus station.

On the Mountain

Yungu Hotel

HOTEL

(Yungu Shanzhuang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 558 6444; s & d ¥580; ❄️)

With a lovely but inconveniently located setting looking out onto bamboo and forest, this traditionally styled hotel has fine, clean rooms, with 35% discounts frequently given. Walk down from the car park in front of the cable-car station.

Yupinglou Hotel

HOTEL

(Yupinglou Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 558 2288; www.hsypplhotel.com; d/tw ¥1480/1680; ❄️ @)

A 10-minute walk from the Yuping cable car (go to your right), this four-star hotel is perched on a spectacular 1660m-high lookout just above the **Welcoming Guest Pine Tree** (*Yingkesong*). Aim for the doubles with the good views at the back, as some rooms have small windows with no views. Discounts bring doubles down to ¥880.

Baiyun Hotel

HOTEL

(Baiyun Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 558 2708; dm ¥330, d/tr ¥1480/1680; ❄️ @)

Dorms come with TV and shower but are rather old and worn; doubles with private bathroom pass muster but the hotel is only an option if other places are booked out. No English sign, but well signposted in English as White Clouds Hotel. Discounts knock down dorms to around ¥200 and doubles to ¥980. Located on the Western Steps.

On the Summit

Huangshan visits should ideally include nights on the summit. Most hotel restaurants offer buffets (breakfast ¥60, lunch and dinner ¥100 to ¥140) plus a selection of standard dishes (fried rice ¥40), though getting service outside meal times can be tricky. Room prices rise on Saturday and Sunday, and are astronomical during major holiday periods.

Hotels in Tangkou can arrange tents (*zhangpeng*; ¥180) for camping at selected points on the summit.

Shilin Hotel

HOTEL

(Shilin Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 558 4040; www.shilin.com; dm with bathroom ¥300-360, d & tw from ¥1480; @)

Cheaper rooms are devoid of views, but the pricier doubles are bright and clean. Eight and 12-bed dorms are well-kept but cramped, with bunk beds and shared bathroom, but there are roomier quads; the block up the steps from the hotel has good views, as do some of the newer rooms in the main block and the villa behind. Doubles discount to around ¥1280.

Xihai Hotel

HOTEL

(Xihai Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 558 8888; www.hsxihaihotel.cn; dm ¥330 d ¥1380-1680; ❄ @)

Regular rooms are tired but clean with heating and hot water, but take a look at the doubles first, as some face inwards. Discounts knock dorms to ¥280 and doubles to ¥1280. A new ‘five-star’ block has been constructed, with plusher ¥1680 doubles. Located in the summit area near the Xihai Reservoir.

Beihai Hotel

HOTEL

(Beihai Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 558 2555; www.hsbeihaihotel.com; dm ¥360, d ¥1680; @ 📶)

Located north of White Goose Ridge, the four-star Beihai comes with professional service, money exchange, cafe and 30% discounts during the week. Larger doubles with private bathroom have older fittings than the smaller, better-fitted-out doubles (same price). There are ¥1280 doubles in the three-star compound on a hill across the main square. Although it's the best-located hotel, it's also the busiest and lacks charm.

Dorms can dip to ¥150 when it's quiet.

Paiyunlou Hotel

HOTEL

(Paiyunlou Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 558 1558; dm/d/tr ¥360/1280/1680; @)

With an excellent location near Tianhai Lake (Tianhai Hu) and the entrance

to the West Sea Canyon, plus three-star comfort, this place is recommended for those who prefer a slightly more tranquil setting. None of the regular rooms have views, but the newer dorms are unobstructed and come with attached showers and TVs. Discounted dorms are ¥150 and doubles ¥680.

Information

TANGKOU

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yanxi Jie, Tangkou; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Southern end of Yanxi Jie.

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(wangba Tangkou; per hr ¥3; 🕒 8am-midnight)

On the west side of the river, 2nd floor.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju 📞 556 2311)

Western end of the bridge.

ON THE MOUNTAIN

Most hotels on the mountain have internet access areas for guests and nonguests, with hourly rates of ¥15 to ¥20. Some have free wi-fi.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8-11am & 2.30-5pm)

Changes money and has ATM that accepts international cards. Opposite Beihai Hotel.

Police Station

POLICE

(paichusuo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 558 1388)

Beside the bank.

i Getting There & Away

Buses from Tunxi (aka Huangshan Shi) take around one hour to reach Tangkou from either the long-distance bus station (¥18, one hour, frequent, 6am to 5pm) or the train station (¥18, departures when full, 6.30am to 5pm, may leave as late as 8pm in summer). Buses back to Tunxi from Tangkou are plentiful, and can be flagged down on the road to Tunxi (¥18). The last bus back leaves at 5.30pm.

Tangkou has two bus stations. When getting into Tangkou, you will be dropped at the **South Long-distance Station** (Nandamen Huancheng Fenzhongxin). When coming down the mountain, you may be dropped at the **East Long-distance Bus Station** (Dongling Huancheng Fenzhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) east of the town centre and within walking distance from Feicui Lu, the main street. Your hotel should be able to help with bookings and pick-up or transfers. Major destinations include:

- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥100, 3½ hours, five daily
- ➔ **Hefei** ¥90, four hours, four daily
- ➔ **Jiuhua Shan** ¥55, 2½ hours, two daily (6.30am and 2.20pm)
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥86, five hours, three daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥140, 6½ hours, four daily
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥190 to ¥220, nine hours, two daily (8.40am and 5.30pm)
- ➔ **Yixian** ¥13, one hour, four daily (stops at Hongcun and Xidi)

i Getting Around

SHUTTLE BUS

Official tourist shuttles run between the two long-distance bus stations in Tangkou and the Hot Springs (¥11), Yungu Station (¥19) and Mercy Light Temple Station (¥19), departing every 20 minutes from 6am to 5.30pm,

though they usually wait until enough people are on board.

A taxi to the eastern or western steps will cost ¥50 and to the hot springs area ¥30.

CABLE CAR

Yungu Cable Car

CABLE CAR

(Yungu Suodao one way Mar-Nov ¥80, Dec-Feb ¥65; 🕒 7am-4.30pm)

Shuttle buses (¥19) ferry visitors from Tangkou to the cable car. Either arrive very early or late (if you're staying overnight) as long queues are the norm. The new cable-car station has shortened the three-hour queues to nothing more than 45 minutes.

Yuping Cable Car

CABLE CAR

(Yuping Suodao one way 1 Mar-20 Nov ¥80, 1 Dec-29 Feb ¥65; 🕒 7am-4.30pm)

Shuttle buses (¥19) run from Tangkou to Mercy Light Temple, which is linked by the Yuping Cable Car to the area just below the Yupinglou Hotel.

Jiuhua Shan

📞 0566

The Tang-dynasty Buddhists who determined Jiuhua Shan to be the earthly abode of the Bodhisattva Dizang (Ksitigarbha), Lord of the Underworld, chose well. Often shrouded in a fog that pours in through the windows of its cliff-side temples, Jiuhua Shan exudes an aura of otherworldliness, heightened by the devotion of those who come here to pray for the souls of the departed. At times, though, it can seem that the commerce that drives the religion – religious trinkets, good-luck charms and overpriced joss sticks – cheapens the effect. However, true believers brush it all off with their fervency. With its yellow-walled monasteries, flickering candles and the steady drone of Buddhist chanting emanating from pilgrims' MP3 players, the mountain is an entirely different experience from temporal Huangshan.

History

One of China's four Buddhist mountain ranges, Jiuhua Shan was made famous by the 8th-century Korean monk Kim Kiao Kak (Jin Qiaojue), who meditated here for 75 years and was posthumously proclaimed to be the reincarnation of Dizang. In temples, Dizang is generally depicted carrying a staff and a luminous jewel, used to guide souls through the darkness of hell.

Sights & Activities

Buses will let you off at **Jiuhuashan Xinquzhan**, the local bus terminus and main ticket office where you purchase your ticket for the [mountain](#). You'll also then need to buy a return shuttle bus ticket (¥50, 20 minutes, half-hourly) from the counters on the left of the admission-ticket windows. The shuttle bus goes to **Jiuhuaje village**, the main accommodation area that is about halfway up the mountain (or, as locals say, at roughly navel height in a giant Buddha's potbelly). The shuttle terminates at the bus station just before the gate (*damen*) leading to the village, from where the main street (Furong Lu) heads south past hotels and restaurants. The main square is on the right off Furong Lu as you proceed up the street.

Zhiyuan Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Zhiyuan Si 🕒 6.30am-8.30pm) **FREE**

Just past the village's main entrance on your left, worshippers hold sticks of incense to their foreheads and face the four directions at this enticingly esoteric yellow temple. Pilgrims can join chanting sessions in the evening.

Huacheng Si

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(🕒 6.30am-8.30pm) **FREE**

The largest, most elaborate temple in town has ornately carved dragons serving as handrails up the main steps. The eaves and beams of the buildings are painted in every colour imaginable and the icing on the cake is the three huge golden Bodhisattvas that greet visitors: each one sits at least 25m tall

and provides quite the setting come evening prayer time.

Jiuhua Mountain Summit

HIKING

The real highlight is walking up the mountain alongside the pilgrims, following a trail that passes waterfalls, streams and countless nunneries, temples and shrines. **Jiuhua Shan** (Jiuhua Shan admission Mar-Nov ¥190, Dec-Feb ¥140) summit is on a mountain range behind the village. The hike up takes a leisurely four hours; count on about two to three hours to get back down to the village.

You can begin just after the village's main entrance, where a 30-minute hike up the ridge behind Zhiyuan Temple leads you to **Baisui Gong** (🕒 6am-5.30pm), an active temple built into the cliff in 1630 to consecrate the Buddhist monk Wu Xia, whose shrunken, embalmed body is coated in gold and sits shrivelled within an ornate glass cabinet in front of a row of pink lotus candles. If you don't feel like hiking, take the **funicular** (express/ordinary return ¥150/100, one way ¥55; 🕒 7am-5.30pm) to the ridge.

From the top, walk south along the ridge past the **Dongya Temple** (Dongya Chansi) to the **Huixiang Pavilion** (Huixiang Ge), above which towers the seven-storey **10,000 Buddha Pagoda** (Wan Fo Ta admission ¥10; 🕒 6am-5.30pm), fashioned entirely from bronze and prettily lit at night. A western path leads to town, while the eastern one dips into a pleasant valley and continues past the **Phoenix Pine** (Fenghuang Song) and the **cable car station** (one-way/return ¥75/140) to **Tiantai Peak** (Tiantai Zheng Ding; 1304m). The two-hour walk to the summit is tough going, passing small temples and nunneries. The cable-car ride takes 15 minutes each way. Note that there's still a 1km walk up flights of stairs even if you take the cable car!

The summit is slightly damp, with mist shrouding the area. Within the faded **Tiantai Temple** (Tiantai Si) on Tiantai Peak, a statue of the Dizang Buddha is seated within the **Dizang Hall** (Dizang Dian), while from the magnificent **10,000 Buddha Hall** (Wanfo Lou) above, a huge enthroned statue of the Dizang Buddha gazes at the breathless masses mustering at his feet. The beams above your head glitter with rows of thousands of Buddhas.

There's another trail to your right before the main stairs to the Tiantai Temple. This one leads you to one of the highest and quietest points of the mountain, **Shiwang Peak** (Shiwang Feng; 1344m), where you can stop and let the rolling fog sweep past.

An easier route is to take a bus (return trip included with the ¥50 bus ticket) from Jiuhujie village up to the Phoenix Pine area to take the cable car. You can also walk to the summit in two hours from here. The bus option doesn't pass Baisui Gong.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a large number of hotels in Jiuhujie village along Furong Lu. Outside of major holiday periods, most dorm beds go for ¥30, while basic twins can be had from ¥80. Prices often double on weekends and public holidays. Cheap guesthouses can be found along Jiuhua Lao Jie.

There are numerous restaurants in the village around the main square and along Furong Lu and Huacheng Lu, which serve local dishes (from ¥10 to ¥100). The Zhiyuan Temple serves good ¥8 vegetarian meals (5.30am, 10.40am and 4.40pm).

Food is plentiful on the way up; stop at one of the reasonable restaurants near the Phoenix Pine (about halfway up). Food costs rise the higher you climb.

Baisuigong Xiayuan Hotel

HOTEL

(Baisuigong Xiayuan  282 0588; r ¥360-1380;  )

Pleasantly arranged around an old temple, this hotel has the right atmosphere and a good location. Standard rooms are just that – lino floors, small showers, but comfortable enough. It's right beside Julong Hotel, opposite Zhiyuan Temple.

Julong Hotel

HOTEL

(Julong Dajiudian  283 1368; Furong Lu, d & tw ¥1280-1480;   )

The long-standing Julong's recent facelift has resulted in quality rooms decked out with easy-on-the-eye hues of brown and gold. Flat-screen TVs, good bathrooms and friendly staff round out the experience. Discounts knock rooms down to ¥680 on weekdays, ¥880 on weekends. It's opposite Zhiyuan Temple, off Furong Lu after you enter the main gate.

Longquan Hotel

HOTEL

(Longquan Fandian  328 8888; Furong Lu; d & tw incl breakfast ¥780-880;  )

Located at the end of Furong Lu, this corner hotel has compact but smartly renovated rooms. Comfy beds, modern showers that don't choke, Chinese cable TV and terrible breakfast. Don't pay rack rate: weekend discounts are 50% and soar to 70% on weekdays. Walk to the end of Furong Lu and it's on the right as the road curves.

Shangketang Hotel

HOTEL

(Shangketang Binguan  283 3888; Furong Lu; d & tw ¥1280;  )

Keeping in tune with the mountain, this prime-located hotel has gone with a Buddhist theme. Rooms are splashed out in rosewood furniture, flat-screen TVs and plush carpets (some rooms have a wet carpet smell though). Weekday discounts knock rooms down to ¥580, ¥780 on weekends. The in-house vegetarian restaurant (dishes from ¥22) is very good.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang 65 Huacheng Lu;  9am-5pm)

Foreign exchange and 24-hour international ATM. West of the main square.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng 58 Huacheng Lu;  8am-5.30pm)

Off the main square.

Jiuhuashan Red Cross Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Jiuhuashan Hongshizi Yiyuan ☎283 1330)

After the pond on Baima Xincun.

i Getting There & Away

Buses from Jiuhuashan Xinquzhan (the bus terminus and main Jiuhua Shan ticket office) run to/from the following destinations:

- ➔ **Hefei** ¥73, 3½ hours, 10 daily
- ➔ **Huangshan** ¥60, three hours, one daily (7am)
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥75, three hours, four daily (6.20am, 7.20am, 8.40am and 1pm)
- ➔ **Qingyang** ¥7, 30 minutes, frequent services (6.30am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥150, six hours, two daily (7am and 2pm)
- ➔ **Tunxi** ¥60, 3½ hours, one daily (7am)
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥129, six hours, one daily (7am)

More frequent buses leave from nearby Qingyang:

- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥85, five hours, hourly
- ➔ **Hefei** ¥70, two to three hours, hourly
- ➔ **Huangshan** ¥55, three hours, three daily (7.30am, 9.30am and 2pm)
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥70, three hours, hourly
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥110, six hours, hourly
- ➔ **Tunxi** ¥60, two hours, two daily (7.30am and 2pm)
- ➔ **Yixian** ¥60, 2½ hours, two daily (8.30am and 1.30pm)

i Getting Around

The ¥50 shuttle ticket includes four bus rides: from the main ticket office to Jiuhuajie village (the base for the mountain ascent), from the village to Phoenix Pine (cable car station) and back to the village, and from the village back to the main ticket office (first bus 6am, last bus 5pm).

To get to Phoenix Pine, catch the bus (every 30 minutes or when full) from the bus station north of the main gate (cross the bridge on the right after the Julong Hotel). On busy days you may need to queue for more than two hours for the cable car to/from the peak.

Hefei

Transport Hub Transport Hub

Best used as a transport hub to the rest of Anhui, the provincial capital is a friendly city with lively markets, pleasant lakes and parks but few attractions.

Sleeping & Eating

The city is awash with a range of hotels (but no hostels!). The area around the train station has Chinese budget- and midrange-category places (from ¥70; look for, *binguan*) and the main commercial street of Changjiang Zhonglu is where you'll find the midrange hotel chains such as 7 Days, Home Inn and Hanting. For food, head to the pedestrianised Huaihe Lu Buxing Jie. The side streets have cheap eats and there's everything from fast-food chains to noodle shops. A night market sets up in the area too.

Green Tree Inn

HOTEL

(Geli'n Haotai [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6265 0988; www.998.com; 34 Hongxing Lu, d ¥209;  )

This reliable, modern midrange chain hotel offers compact, cheap and clean accommodation in a 24-room branch along a quiet residential street. There's food and shopping within walking distance.

Westin

HOTEL

(Hefei Wandaweisiting Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6298 9888; www.westin.com/hefeibaohu; 150 Ma'anshan Lu, d ¥2800;   )

Among the best in town, with a full range of modern facilities including a

fitness centre, swimming pool, spa, good restaurants and elegant and modern rooms, equipped with Westin's trademark Heavenly beds. There's a megamall across the street where you can shop at Gucci before watching an IMAX movie. Expect 35% discounts online.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The recently opened Hefei Xinqiao International Airport is 32km northwest of Hefei (the old airport has now shut). Bookings can be made at **China Eastern Airlines/Lanyu Travel** (/, Dongfang Hangkong Shoupiaochu

[GOOGLE MAP](#);  262 9955; 158 Changjiang Zhonglu), situated next to the Huadu Hotel, and at the train station's ticket booking office.

Daily flights include the following:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥1320, two hours
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥1030, two hours
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥590, one hour
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥860, 1½ hours

BUS

Hefei has numerous bus stations for its relatively small size, but the following are the most useful.

The **Hefei long-distance bus station** (Hefei changtu qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 168 Mingguang Lu) has buses to numerous destinations in the surrounding provinces:

- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥98 to ¥170, six hours, six daily
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥35 to ¥55, 2½ hours, half-hourly
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥145, six hours, 25 daily
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥140, six hours, eight daily

Buses to Huangshan (¥60, four hours, half-hourly), Jiuhua Shan (¥88, 3½ hours, every 40 minutes) and Tunxi (¥110, four hours, regular) leave from the

tourist bus station (luyou qichezhan Zhanqian Jie) 500m west of train station.

The so-called **main bus station** (keyun zongzhan Zhanqian Jie), just outside the train station, is for local buses only.

TRAIN

The train station is 4km northeast of the city centre. Express D and G trains:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥428, 4½ hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Nanjing** ¥61, one hour, 27 daily
- ➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao** ¥156 to ¥205, 3½ hours, regular
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥106, 2½ hours

Regular service destinations:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥140 to ¥398, 10 to 16 hours, six daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥116 to ¥183, 6½ to 8½ hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Tunxi** ¥66 to ¥162, six to seven hours, three daily

Getting Around

Metered taxis are cheap, starting at ¥6. Taking a taxi (¥100, 40 minutes) is the best way to the airport, 32km northwest of the city centre. Rides from the city to the train station should cost ¥10.

Henan

Henan Highlights

Zhengzhou

Nanjiecun

Song Shan & Dengfeng

Luoyang

Around Luoyang

Guoliangcun

Kaifeng

Zhuxian Zhen

Henan



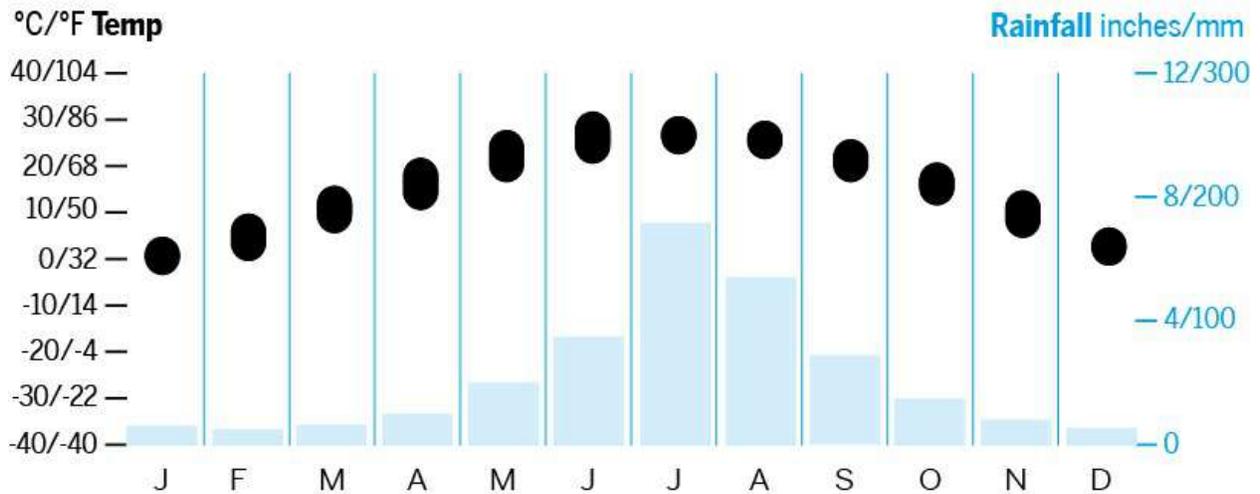
Pop 100 million

Why Go?

Affluent Chinese roll their eyes at the mention of impoverished and land-locked Henan, yet the province's heritage takes us back to the earliest days of Chinese antiquity. Ancient capitals rose and fell in Henan's north, where the capricious Yellow River (Huang He) nourished the flowering of a great civilisation. Henan is home to China's oldest surviving Buddhist temple and one of the country's most astonishing collections of Buddhist carvings, the Longmen Caves. There is also the Shaolin Temple, that legendary institution where the martial way and Buddhism found an unlikely but powerful alliance. Henan's inability to catch up with the rest of the land perhaps helps explain why the unusual village of Nanjiecun still sees a future in Maoist collectivism. Henan is also home to the excellent walled town of Kaifeng and the 1000-year-old craft of woodblock printing in Zhuxian.

When to Go

Zhèngzhōu



→ **Apr** Wangcheng Park in Luoyang is a blaze of floral colour during the peony festival.

→ **Jun** Trips to cool Guoliangcun up in the Ten Thousand Immortals Mountains.

→ **Sep & Oct** Catch the lovely and fleeting north China autumn.

Best Villages

→ [Guoliangcun](#)

→ [Zhuxian](#)

→ [Nanjiacun](#)

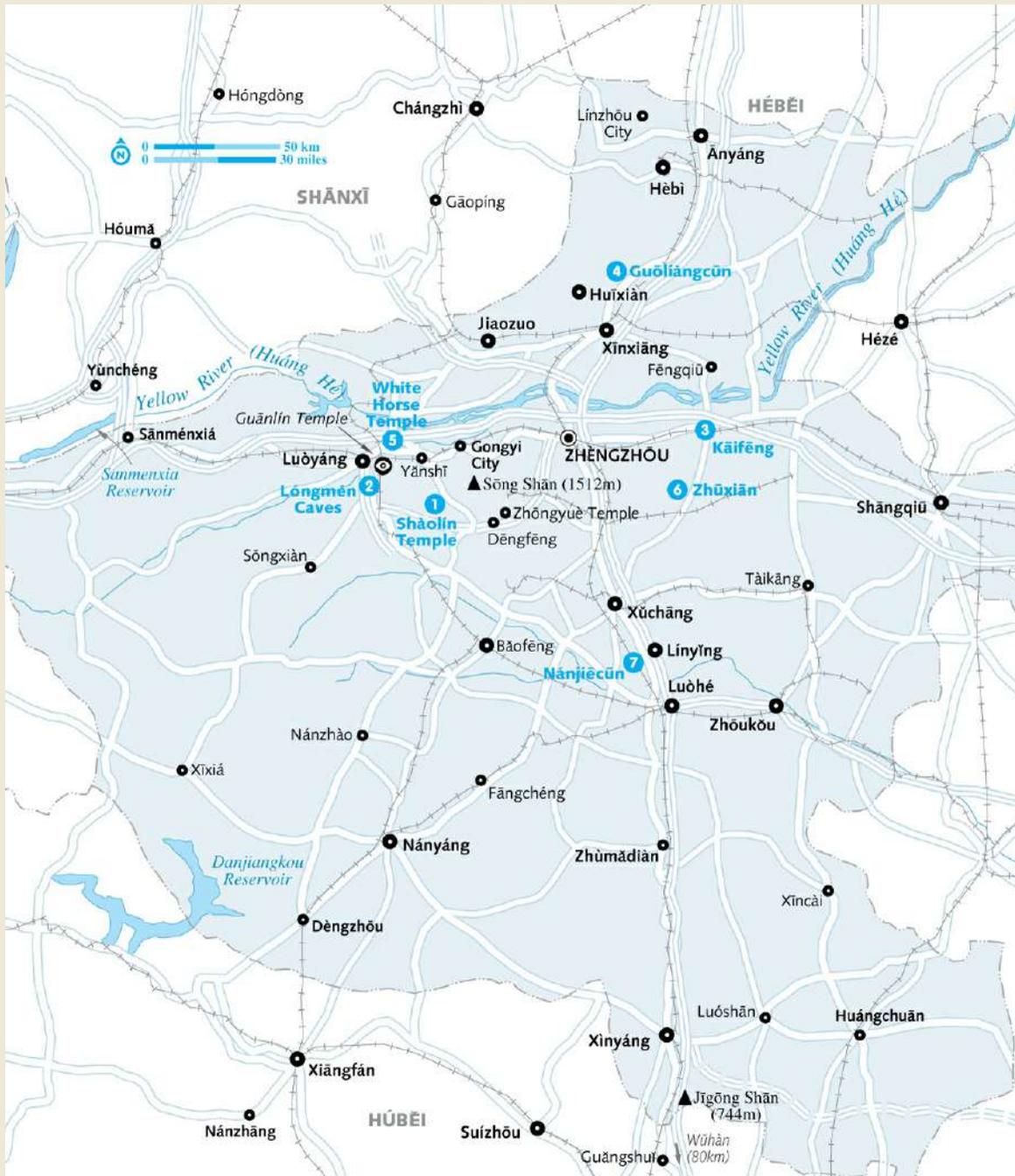
Best Historic Sites

→ [Shaolin Temple](#)

→ [Kaifeng](#)

→ [Luoyang](#)

Henan Highlights



① Fathom the martial mysteries of Shaolin boxing at the [Shaolin Temple](#).

② Seek enlightenment among the carved Bodhisattvas at the [Longmen Caves](#).

- 3 Take a trip back in time to [Kaifeng](#) and engage in some adventurous snacking at the night market.
- 4 Hide away in cliff-top [Guoliangcun](#) – don't forget your sketchpad.
- 5 Explore China's oldest Buddhist shrine: the [White Horse Temple](#) outside Luoyang.
- 6 Get acquainted with the ancient craft of Chinese woodblock printing in [Zhuxian](#).
- 7 Rediscover communism with Chinese characteristics at [Nanjiacun](#).

History

It is believed that the first Shang capital, perhaps dating back 3800 years, was at Yanshi, west of modern-day Zhengzhou. Around the mid-14th century BC, the capital is thought to have moved to Zhengzhou, where its ancient city walls remain visible.

Henan again occupied centre stage during the Song dynasty (AD 960–1279), but political power deserted it when the government fled south from its capital at Kaifeng following the 12th-century Jurchen invasion.

Modern Henan has been poor and strife-prone. In 1975 Henan's Banqiao Dam collapsed after massive rainfall, leading to a string of other dam failures that caused the deaths of 230,000 people. In the 1990s a scandal involving the sale of HIV-tainted blood led to a high incidence of AIDS in several Henan villages.

Getting There & Around

Henan is that rarity in China: a province in which travellers can get in, out and around with ease. Zhengzhou is the main regional rail hub; high speed G-class and D-class trains zip from Zhengzhou, Luoyang and, to a lesser extent, Kaifeng.

Luoyang has a small airport but Zhengzhou is the main hub for flying

to/from Henan.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥35

\$\$ ¥35 to ¥100

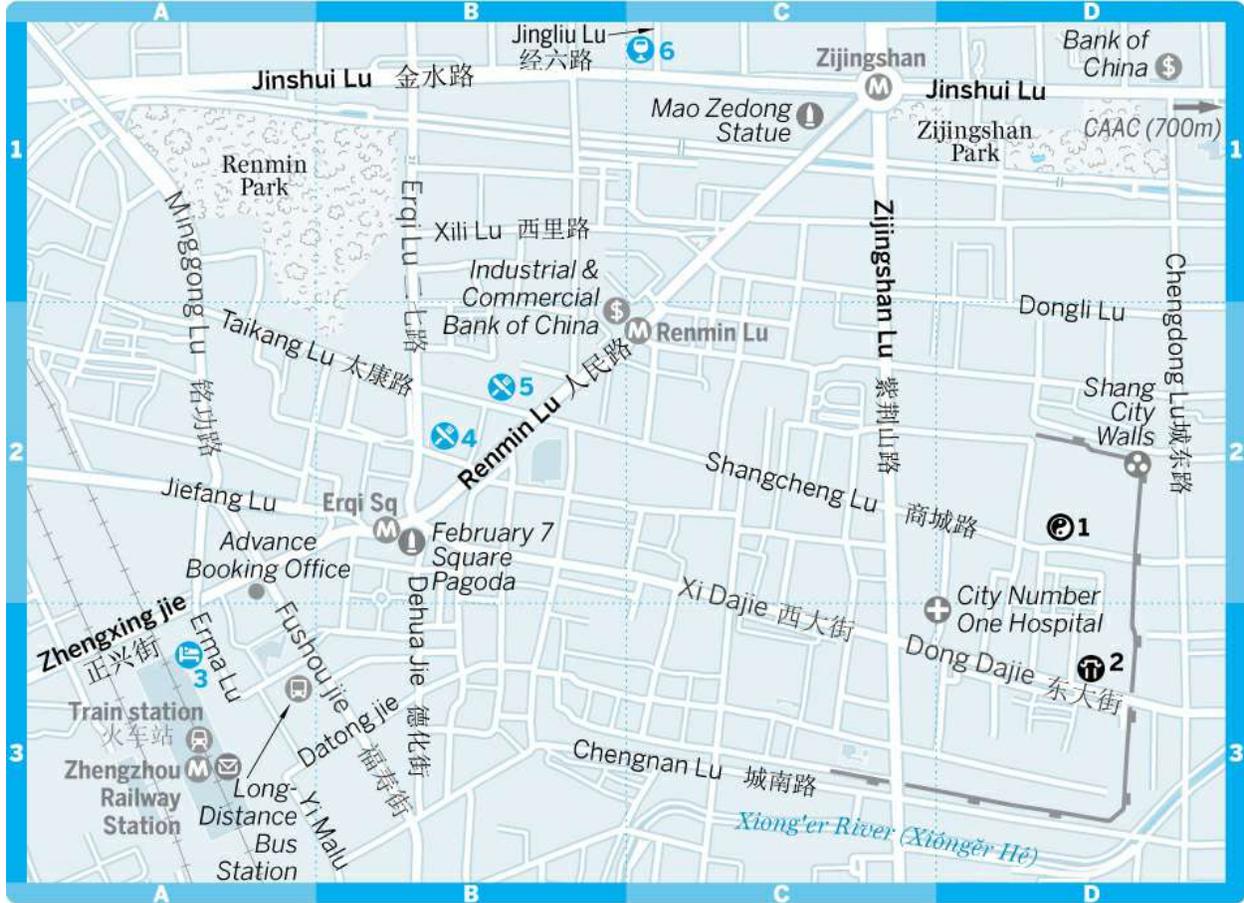
\$\$\$ more than ¥100

Zhengzhou

 0371 / Pop 4.25 million

The provincial Henan capital of Zhengzhou is a rapidly modernising smog-filled metropolis with few relics from its ancient past (due to Japanese bombing in WWII). Zhengzhou can be largely zipped through, serving as a major transport hub and access point for the Shaolin Temple and the left-field Maoist collective of Nanjiecun.

Zhèngzhōu



Zhengzhou

📍 Sights

- 1 [Chenghuang Temple](#) D2

- 2 [Confucius Temple](#) D3

🏠 Sleeping

- 3 [Jinjiang Inn](#) A3

🍴 Eating

- 4 [Guangcai Market](#) B2

- 5 [Henan Shifu Chinese](#) B2

🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

 **Sights**

Despite a history reaching back to the earliest chapters of Chinese history, the city now has few sights to deter travellers.

Henan Provincial Museum

MUSEUM

(Henan Sheng Bowuguan 8 Nongye Lu, English audio tour ¥20, deposit ¥200; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun, to 5.30pm in summer) **FREE**

The excellent collection here ranges from the artistry of Shang-dynasty bronzes, oracle bones, relics from the Yin ruins in Anyang, to gorgeous Ming and Qing porcelain and pottery specimens. The dioramas of Song-dynasty Kaifeng and the magnificent, and now obliterated, Tang-dynasty imperial palace at Luoyang serve to underscore that the bulk of Henan's glorious past is at one with Nineveh and Tyre. English captions. Take your passport as ID for admission.

The museum is around 2km north of Jinshui Lu. Buses 96, 61, 69 and 39 pass by; a taxi will cost ¥25.

Chenghuang Temple

TAOIST

(Chenghuang Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shangcheng Lu, 🕒 9am-6pm) **FREE**

The 600-year-old City God temple – any old Chinese city worth its salt should have one – bustles with worshippers who leave its trees festooned with red ribbons and its entrances swirling with incense smoke. Take bus 2 from the train station.

Confucius Temple

CONFUCIAN

(Wen Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 24 Dong Dajie, 🕒 8.30am-5pm) **FREE**

This restored temple is replete with colourfully painted eaves and ornate

carvings. Take bus 60 or 85 from the train station.

Sleeping

There are cheap beds (¥60 to ¥150) at the numerous guesthouses (*binguan*) around the train station, but they won't all take foreigners. More luxurious accommodation can be found on Jinshui Lu where chains such as Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn reside.

Jinjiang Inn

MOTEL

(Jinjiang Zhixing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6693 2000; 77 Erma Lu, d ¥229; 🏠; **M** Zhengzhou Railway Station)

This modern and swish looking branch has crisp, sharp and well looked-after rooms (work desks, flat-screen TVs) in a block set back from the road.

Hilton Zhengzhou

HOTEL

(Xierdun Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8996 0888; www3.hilton.com; 288 Jinshui Lu, d/ste ¥1849/3746; 🚫 @ 📶 🏠; **M** Yanzhuang)

The best hotel in town by a fair distance, the new Hilton combines stylish elegance with a highly exacting level of service and a tempting range of five-star amenities and dining choices in a tower on Jinshui Lu. Rooms are contemporary, invitingly spacious and fully equipped.

Eating & Drinking

Five hundred metres north of the train station is the busy February 7 Sq (Erqi Guang Chang), also called Erqi Sq, with nearby shops, restaurants and a night market. Look out for the large white pagoda.

Guangcai Market

MARKET

(Guangcai Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); btwn Erqi Lu & Renmin Lu; snacks ¥1-5; 🕒 8am-9pm; **M** Erqi Square)

Gritty, maybe, but this crowded warren of food and clothes stalls in the block northeast of February 7 Square is always packed. Try *mala tang* (spicy soup with skewered vegies and meat), *chun juan* (spring rolls), *roujiamo* (spicy meat in a bun), *caijiabing* (vegetables in a bun), *guotie* (fried dumplings) or *yangrou tang* (lamb soup).

There's also *baokao xian youyu* (fried squid kebabs), sweet *xingren cha* (almond tea) and much more. Enter via Renmin Lu or Erqi Lu.

Henan Shifu Chinese

HENAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6622 2108; 25 Renmin Lu, meals from ¥25; 🕒 10am-2pm & 5-9.30pm; 🚇 Renmin Rd)

Tucked away in a courtyard off Renmin Lu, this well-known restaurant's photo menu is full of exotic-looking dishes, but turn to the rear pages for cheap, tasty and wholesome fare. Try the *Shanghai xiaolongbao* (Shanghai steamed dumplings; meat/vegie ¥12/10) or the tasty *liyu beimian* (sweet and sour fish with noodles).

Target Pub

PUB

(Mubiao Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6590 5384; 10 Jingliu Lu, 🕒 5pm-3am)

A seasoned portrait of flags, old banknotes, rattan chairs and half a car pinned to the ceiling, Target hits the bull's-eye with excellent music, an outstanding selection of spirits, offbeat cocktails and a laid-back vibe.

Information

Internet cafes (*wangba*; per hour ¥3 to ¥5) are clustered near the train station.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 8 Jinshui Lu, 🕒 9am-5pm; 🚇 Yanzhuang)

North of the Sofitel, on Jinshui Lu.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-8pm; **M** Zhengzhou Railway Station)
South end of train station concourse.

City Number One Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Shi Yiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dong Dajie,)
West of the Confucius Temple.

Industrial & Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(ICBC,, Gongshang Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Renmin Lu, **M** Renmin Rd)
Has a 24-hour ATM.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju Churujing Guanlichu 📞 6962 0350; 90 Huanghe Donglu, 🕒 8.30am-noon & 3-6.30pm Jun-Aug, 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri Sep-May)
For visa extensions; take bus 135 or 114.

i Getting There & Away

AIR

Zhengzhou Airport is located 37km southeast of town. The **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC,, Zhongguo Minhang 📞 6599 1111; 3 Jinshui Lu, at Dongmin Lu), east of the city centre, sells flight tickets, as does the **ticket office** (Shoupiaochu 📞 6677 7111) at the Zhengzhou Hotel; look for the sign that reads Zhengzhou Airport ticket office.

Flights include the following:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥920, eight daily
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥1350, 11 daily
- ➔ **Guilin** ¥1250, one daily
- ➔ **Hong Kong** ¥1460, one daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥800, 12 daily

→ **Shenzhen** ¥1410, nine daily

BUS

The **long-distance bus station** (changtu qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is opposite the train station.

→ **Dengfeng** ¥22 to ¥26, one hour, half-hourly

→ **Kaifeng** ¥7 to ¥14, 1½ hours, hourly

→ **Linying** ¥40, two hours, hourly

→ **Luoyang** ¥28 to ¥40, two hours, every 15 minutes

→ **Shaolin Temple** ¥27, 1½ to 2½ hours, hourly (7.40am to 11.40pm)

→ **Xi'an** ¥127, six hours, hourly

TRAIN

Trains, including the Beijing–Kowloon express, run virtually everywhere from the main train station, on Line 1 of the metro. For a ¥5 commission, get tickets at the **advance booking office** (huoche yushou piaochu [GOOGLE MAP](#));

 6835 6666; cnr Zhengxing Jie & Fushou Jie;  8am-5pm).

→ **Beijing West D** train, hard/soft seat ¥202/243, 5½ hours, six daily

→ **Ji'nan D** train, hard/soft seat ¥193/272, 5½ hours, 12.28pm

→ **Kaifeng D** train, hard/soft seat ¥19/24, 30 minutes, three daily

→ **Luoyang** ¥18 to ¥71, 2½ hours, regular

→ **Luoyang Longmen G** train, hard/soft seat ¥66/90, 35 minutes, regular

→ **Nanjing South D** train, hard/soft seat ¥204/287, 5½ hours, three daily

→ **Shanghai D** train, hard/soft seat ¥238/381, 6½ hours, three daily

→ **Xi'an North G** train, hard/soft seat ¥239/380, 2½ hours, regular

Accessible on Line 1 of the metro, the vast new **Zhengzhou East Train Station** (Zhengzhou Dongzhan) has high-speed G-class trains:

→ **Beijing West G** train, hard/soft seat ¥309/504, 3½ hours, very regular

→ **Luoyang Longmen G** train, hard/soft seat ¥66/90, 35 minutes, regular

➔ **Xi'an North** G train, hard/soft seat ¥239/380, 2½ hours, regular

Getting Around

Buses for the airport (¥15, 70 minutes, hourly from 6.30am to 7pm) leave from the Zhengzhou Hotel (Zhengzhou Dajiudian). A taxi costs around ¥100 and takes 40 minutes.

Bus 26 travels from the train station past 7 February Sq, along Renmin Lu and Jinshui Lu to the CAAC office. Local buses cost ¥1 to ¥2.

The east–west running Line 1 of the new metro runs through the trains station, Erqi Sq, Renmin Lu and Zijingshan. The north–south Line 2 following Zijingshan Lu is under construction and is due to start service in 2015, while Line 5 will open in 2016 and Line 3 in 2018.

Taxi fares start at ¥8 (¥10 at night).

Nanjiecun

Nanjiecun

VILLAGE

(www.nanjie.cun.cn; admission ¥80)

South of Zhengzhou, Nanjiecun is China's very last Maoist collective (*gongshe*). There are no Buddhist temples or mist-wreathed mountain panoramas, but a trip to Nanjie is nonetheless one back in time: a journey to the puritanical and revolutionary China of the 1950s, when Chairman Mao was becoming a supreme being, money was yesterday's scene and the menace of karaoke had yet to be prophesied by even the most paranoid party faithful.

The first inkling you have arrived in an entirely different world comes from the roads: perfectly clean, willow tree-lined streets run in straight lines with a kind of austere socialist beauty, past noodle factories, schools and rows of identikit blocks of workers' flats emblazoned with vermilion communist slogans. There are hardly any cars and no advertising billboards,

but beatific portraits of Chairman Mao gaze down on all.

From the main entrance, head along the main drag, Yingsong Dadao, to **East is Red Square** (Dongfanghong Guangchang), where guards maintain a 24-hour vigil at the foot of a statue of Chairman Mao, and portraits of Marx, Engels, Stalin and Lenin (the original ‘Gang of Four’) rise up on all four sides. The square is deluged in shrill propaganda broadcast from speakers in true 1950s style, kicking off at 6.15am daily. A short stroll to the left brings you to **Chaoyang Gate Square** (Chaoyangmen Guangchang) and the rebuilt, traditional architecture of **Chaoyang Gate** (Chaoyang Men).

Once you look closer, however, you’ll realise that all is not well. Stroll to the edges of the town and you’ll see dilapidated buildings with broken windows, and walk into a public toilet and you may find the taps locked. But Nanjiecun is a welcome portrait of an ideologically guided collective, whose cleanliness, order and quietness contrast with the chaos and messiness of modern-day China.

Information

Tourist Service Centre

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Youke Jiedaichu Yingsong Dadao  7.30am-5.30pm)

Avoid the Tourist Service Centre at the west end of Yingsong Dadao as they’ll ask you to buy an admission ticket for ¥80. If you do take the offer up, it comes with a Chinese-speaking guide and a jaunt around town on an electric cart.

Getting There & Away

From Zhengzhou bus station, buses (¥40, two hours) run south every hour between 6.20am and 6.20pm to the bus station at Linying, from where it’s a ¥3 *sanlunche* (pedicab) journey south to Nanjiecun.

Song Shan & Dengfeng

📍 0371

In Taoism, Song Shan is considered the central mountain (*zhongyue*) of the five sacred peaks (*wuyue*), symbolising earth (*tu*) among the five elements and occupying the axis directly beneath heaven. Despite this Taoist persuasion, the mountains are also home to one of China's most famous and legendary Zen (Chan) Buddhist temples: the inimitable Shaolin Temple. Two main mountain ranges crumple the area, the 1494m-high **Taishi Shan** and the 1512m-high **Shaoshi Shan** whose peaks compose Song Shan about 80km west of Zhengzhou. Both peaks can be ascended.

At the foot of Taishi Shan, 12km southeast of the Shaolin Temple and 74km from Zhengzhou, sits the squat little town of **Dengfeng**. Tatty in parts, it is used by travellers as a base for trips to surrounding sights or exploratory treks into the hills.

The main bus station is in the far east of town. Most hotels and restaurants are strung out on or near Zhongyue Dajie, the main east–west street, and Shaolin Dadao, parallel to the south.

WUSHU OR GONGFU?

When planning to study Chinese martial arts, the first question you should ask is: shall I learn Wushu or Gongfu? There may be considerable overlap, but there are crucial differences. Wushu is a more recently created term strongly associated with athletic martial arts displays and competition-based martial arts patterns or forms. Gongfu (kungfu) is more connected to the development of internal and more esoteric skills, rather than physical prowess or mainstream athleticism. If you are lucky enough to see a martial arts master break a piece of ceramic from a bowl and grind it to dust with his bare fingers, this is gongfu, not wushu.



Sights

Shaolin Temple

BUDDHIST

(Shaolin Si  6370 2503; admission ¥100;  7.30am-5.30pm)

The largely rebuilt Shaolin Temple is a commercialised victim of its own incredible success. A frequent target of war, the ancestral home of *wushu* ([Click here](#)) was last torched in 1928, and the surviving halls – many of recent construction – are today assailed by relentless waves of selfie-shooting tour groups. The temple's claim to fame, its dazzling *gongfu* (kungfu) based on the movements of animals, insects and sometimes mythological figures, guarantees that martial arts clubs around the world make incessant pilgrimages.

A satisfying visit to the Shaolin Temple requires, rather than bestows, a Zen mentality (to handle the visiting hordes and the ticket prices). But if you explore away from the main areas, you could spend an entire day or two visiting smaller temples, climbing the surrounding peaks and eking out crumbs of solitude.

Coming through the main entrance, you'll pass several *wushu* schools. On the right, about 500m in, is a square showcasing impressive daily 30-minute outdoor martial arts performances. Next door is the **Wushu Training Centre** also with shows featuring monks tumbling around and breaking sticks and metal bars over their heads.

The main temple itself is another 600m along. Many buildings such as the main **Daxiong Hall** (Daxiong Baodian; reconstructed in 1985) were levelled by fire in 1928. Although the temple seems to have been founded in approximately AD 500 (accounts vary), some halls only date back as far as 2004. Among the oldest structures at the temple are the decorative arches and stone lions, both outside the main gate.

At the rear, the **West Facing Hall** (Xifang Shengren Dian) contains the famous depressions in the floor, apocryphally the result of generations of monks practising their stance work, and huge colour frescos. Always be on the lookout for the ubiquitous Damo (Bodhidharma), whose bearded Indian visage gazes sagaciously from stelae or peeks out from temple halls.

Across from the temple entrance, the **Arhat Hall** within the **Shifang**

Chanyuan contains legions of crudely fashioned *luohan* (monks who have achieved enlightenment and passed to nirvana at death). The **Pagoda Forest** (Shaolin Talin), a cemetery of 248 brick pagodas including the ashes of eminent monks, is well worth visiting if you get here ahead of the crowds. Sadly, where visitors were once allowed to wander amongst the pagodas, the area is now only viewable via a wooden fence circuit.

As you face the Shaolin Temple, paths on your left lead up **Wuru Peak** (Wuru Feng). Flee the tourist din by heading towards the peak to see the **cave** (Damo Dong) where Damo (Bodhidharma; [Click here](#)) meditated for nine years; it's 4km uphill. From the base, you may spot the peak and the cave, marked by a large bodhisattva figure. En route to the cave, detour to the **Chuzu Temple** (Chuzu An), a quiet and battered counterpoint to the main temple. Its main structure is the oldest wooden one in the province (c AD 1125).

At 1512m above sea level and reachable on the **Songyang Cableway** (Songyang Suodao; ¥60 return, 20 minutes), **Shaoshi Shan** is the area's tallest peak. The area beyond the cable car is home to the peak and **Erzu Nunnery** (Erzu An; ¥2) with four wells where you can sample its various tasting waters (sour, sweet, peppery and bitter).

There's also a scenic trek to neighbouring **Sanhuangzhai**, taking about six hours return, covering 15km and going past craggy rock formations along a path that often hugs the cliff to the 782-step **Rope Bridge** (Lian Tian Diao Qiao). To begin the hike, look for the small Chinese sign which leads to Sanhuangzhai. It's a long and hard-going hike, so for safety reasons, monks recommend trekking with a friend.

If you'd prefer an easier hike, use the **Shaolin Cableway** (Shaolin Suodao; ¥60 return, 40 minutes) which conveys you to Sanhuangzhai. From there, it's a shorter hike to the bridge. Both cableways are just beyond the Pagoda Forest. Note that the bridge may be closed at times for repair or during inclement weather. Start hikes early, as you don't want to be caught out in the dark.

To reach the Shaolin Temple, take a bus (¥3, 15 minutes) from Dengfeng's

west bus station (xizhan) on Zhongyue Dajie to the drop-off point, or bus 8 (¥2) from the old bus station. The temple compound office is across the road; buggies (¥10, from 8am to 6pm) run from here to the main temple entrance, or you can walk (20 minutes). Alternatively, take a minibus from either Luoyang or Zhengzhou (¥20 to ¥27, 1½ to 2½ hours) to the drop-off. From the temple, return buses leave from the drop-off point (last bus at around 8pm). A taxi to the temple from Dengfeng will cost ¥30 (unofficial fare, no meter).

Songyang Academy

ACADEMY

(Songyang Shuyuan admission ¥30; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm)

At the foot of Taishi Shan sits one of China's oldest academies, the lush and well-tended Songyang Academy, a building complex which dates to AD 484 and rises up the hill on a series of terraces. In the courtyard are two cypress trees believed to be around 4500 years old – and they're still alive!

Both bus 2 and bus 6 (¥1) from Dengfeng run to the Songyang Academy.

Mt Taishi

MOUNTAIN

(Taishi Shan admission ¥50; 🕒 8am-6pm)

A 2km walk from the Songyang Academy, the attractive **Songyue Pagoda** (Songyue Ta; admission ¥40), built in AD 509, is China's oldest brick pagoda. Nearby is the **Fawang Temple** (Fawang Si), ringed by mountains and first established in AD 71. Most visitors, however, come here to ascend Mt Taishi. To begin the climb, look for the large stone path just beyond the Songyang Academy. The challenging climb up stone steps takes three to four hours (one way).

The 1470m-high **Junji Peak** (Junji Feng) is little more than a viewing point.

Zhongyue Temple

TAOIST

(Zhongyue Miao admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-6pm)

A few kilometres east of Dengfeng, the ancient and hoary Zhongyue Miao is

a colossal active Taoist monastery complex that originally dates back to the 2nd century BC. The complex – embedded in a mountainous background, its monks garbed in traditional dress and sporting top knots – is less visited and exudes a more palpable air of reverence than its Buddhist sibling, the Shaolin Temple.

Besides attending the main hall dedicated to the Mountain God, walk through **Huasan Gate** (Huasan Men) and expunge *pengju*, *pengzhi* and *pengjiao* – three pestilential insects that respectively inhabit the brain, tummy and feet. Drop by the four **Iron Men of Song**, rubbed by visitors to cure ailments and stop by the **Sixty Gods Hall**, where visitors pay respects to the God corresponding to their birth year. From Dengfeng, take the green bus 2 along Zhongyue Dajie.

BODHIDHARMA & HIS SOLE SHOE

Called Damo by the Chinese, Bodhidharma was a 5th century Indian monk who travelled to the Shaolin Temple, bringing Chan (Zen) Buddhism to China in the process. The monk is also traditionally revered for establishing the breathing and meditational exercises that lay the foundations of Shaolin Boxing. Bodhidharma's bearded, heavy-browed and serious expression can be seen in temples across China, especially Chan temples. Accomplishments and legends swarm around his name: he is said to have sat in a cave silently staring at a wall for nine years. Damo is also often depicted carrying a shoe on a stick. Folklore attests that he was spotted wandering in the Pamir Mountains holding a single shoe. When the news reached the Shaolin Temple, it caused consternation as Bodhidharma had previously passed away and was buried nearby. His grave was exhumed and discovered to contain nothing but a solitary shoe.

Sleeping & Eating

The stretch of Chonggao Lu around the Shaolin Travelers Hostel has eating options galore. You'll also find plenty of restaurants in town along Zhongyue Dajie between Jiming Jie and Songshan Lu – a taxi will cost ¥5 to ¥7 from most hotels. At night, look for barbecue stalls set up outside restaurants.

Local specialties are thickly cut handmade noodles in broth (*hui mian*; ¥6 to ¥8) and barbecue lamb skewers (*yangrou chuan*; ¥2).

Shaolin Travelers Hostel

HOSTEL

(Luxingjia Qingnian Lushe  159 8188 3801, 6288 6799; www.shaolintravelershostel.hostel.com; 308 Chonggao Luxi, dm ¥30-60, d ¥160;   

Roomy 10-bed dorms are basic with no lockers, but private rooms here are large with foam mattresses and an odd stone-slab decor, while the English-speaking owner can help with recommendations. It's a ¥7 taxi ride from the main bus station or take bus 1 (¥1) and stop along Shaoshi Lu.

Shaolin Hotel

HOTEL

(Shaolin Binguan  6016 1616; 66 Zhongyue Dajie, d ¥300; 

Bright and cheery staff, good discounts and clean rooms make this neat and trim hotel a good choice. There's no English sign, so look for the four-storey white building east of Dicos (a fast-food restaurant) with the yellow and red sign. Take bus 1 from the main bus station or a ¥7 taxi ride. Discounts of 50%.

Shaolin International Hotel

HOTEL

(Shaolin Guoji Dajiudian  6285 6868; www.shaolinhotel.com; 20 Shaolin Dadao, d/ste ¥680/1328; 

Popular with visiting Chinese, this self-proclaimed four-star hotel is more like a smartish three-star, with scads of black Buicks parked outside. A taxi from the main bus station will cost ¥7. Discounts of 40%.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang  8am-5.30pm)

52 Zhongyue Dajie (52 Zhongyue Dajie;  9am-5pm Mon-Fri); **186 Shaolin**

Dadao (186 Shaolin Dadao; 🕒 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) 24-hour ATM and foreign exchange.

China International Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(CITS., Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe 📞 6287 2137; Beihuan Lu Xiduan,)

There are helpful, English-speaking staff at this branch of CITS.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng cnr Zhongyue & Wangji Rd)

Centrally located post office.

No 2 People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Di'er Renmin Yiyuan 📞 6289 9999; 189 Shaolin Dadao,)

On the main road.

i Getting There & Around

The **Dengfeng bus station** (zong zhan) is in the east of town; jump on bus 1 (¥1) to reach Zhongyue Dajie and the town centre. There's also a **west bus station** (xi zhan) which some buses head to after dropping people off at the main station. Buses to and from Zhengzhou (¥22, 1½ hours) and Luoyang (¥20, two hours) run every 30 minutes from the main station. To purchase tickets for trains departing from Zhengzhou, go to the **train ticket office** (huoche yushoupiaochu 72 Shaolin Dadao, 🕒 8am-6pm). Taxis are a cheap and easy way to get around. Fares start at ¥5 but use those with meters.

Luoyang

📞 0379 / Pop 1.4 million

Access point for the incredible Longmen Caves outside town, Luoyang was one of China's true dynastic citadels. The city was the prosperous capital of 13 dynasties, until the Northern Song dynasty shifted its capital east along the

Yellow River to Kaifeng in the 10th century. The mighty Sui- and Tang-dynasty walls formed an imposing rectangle north and south of the Luo River, while worshippers flocked to 1300 Buddhist temples through the city. Luoyang was once the very centre of the Chinese universe and the eastern capital of the resplendent Tang dynasty. Tragically, little remains of this glorious past: the heart of the magnificent Sui-dynasty palace complex was centred on the point where today's Zhongzhou Lu and Dingding Lu intersect in a frenzy of traffic.

Luòyáng



Luoyang

📍 Sights

1 [Eastern Zhou Royal Horse and Carriage Museum](#)

B2

2 [Wangcheng Park](#)

A2

3 [Wangcheng Square](#) B2

Sleeping

4 [Christian's Hotel](#) B2

5 [Luoyang Yijia International Youth Hostel](#) D1

Eating

6 [Old Town Market](#) D2

7 [Zhen Bu Tong Fandian Chinese](#) D2

Information

8 Bank of China A3

9 [Bank of China](#) A3

10 Bank of China A1

11 [Industrial & Commercial Bank of China](#) B2

Sights & Activities

★ [Luoyang Museum](#)

MUSEUM

(Luoyang Shi Bowuguan www.lymuseum.com; Nietai Lu, audio tour ¥40; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This huge new museum, situated out of the action south of the river, has exhilarating displays across two huge floors and is one of the few places to get ancient Luoyang in any kind of perspective. There's an absorbing collection of Tang-dynasty three-colour *sancai* porcelain and the city's rise is traced through dynastic pottery, bronzeware and other magnificent objects.

Take bus 77 (¥1) from the train station. A taxi from town will cost ¥20; getting a taxi from the museum can be hard without walking 10 minutes to the main road.

[Old Town](#)

HISTORIC SITE

(laochengqu [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Any Chinese city worth its salt has an old town. Luoyang's is east of the rebuilt **Lijing Gate** (Lijing Men), where a maze of narrow and winding streets yield up old courtyard houses and the occasional creaking monument, including the old **Drum Tower** (Gu Lou), rising up at the east end of Dong Dajie, and the lovely brick **Wenfeng Pagoda** (Wenfeng Ta), originally built in the Song dynasty. The rest of Dong Dajie is a hubbub of local life, with hairdressers, noodle stalls and tradesmiths clustering within crumbling old houses.

Wangcheng Square

SQUARE, MUSEUM

(Wangcheng Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhongzhou Zhonglu,)

This square is the meeting place for locals who come to play chess and cards under fluttering China flags, and is busy at night. Across Zhongzhou Zhonglu, a huge statue of six rearing horses marks the underground **Eastern Zhou Royal Horse & Carriage Museum** (Zhouwangcheng Tianzi Jialiu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wangcheng Sq; admission ¥30; 🕒 9am-5pm winter, 8.30am-7pm summer). The principal draw is the unearthed remains of a former emperor's royal horses, buried alive when the emperor passed on.

Wangcheng Park

PARK

(Wangcheng Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhongzhou Zhonglu; admission park ¥15, park & zoo ¥25, park, zoo & cable car ¥30, after 7pm ¥15, peony festival ¥55)

One of Luoyang's indispensable green lungs, this park is the site of the annual **peony festival**; held in April, the festival sees the park flooded with colour, floral aficionados, photographers, girls with garlands on their heads and hawkers selling huge bouquets of flowers. Unfortunately, the park is home to a decrepit zoo for which you're forced to pay an admission charge. There's also an amusement park (rides ¥15 to ¥20).

Artists ply their trade along the walls on the left as your turn into the park.

Sleeping

Luoyang has a large range of hotels in every budget bracket dotted all over the city.

Luoyang Yijia International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Luoyang Yijia Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6351 2311; 329 Zhongzhou Donglu, dm ¥45-55, d/tw ¥140/180; 📶 @ 📶)

Located in the busy old town, this hostel hits its stride with a lively communal area, bar and excellent food (pizzas ¥32 to ¥38). Six-bed dorms are a little tight but private rooms are the equivalent of a two-star Chinese room. Rooms facing the main road are noisy, so check first. Transport to town and all the major sights are within walking distance of the hostel. Buses 5 and 41 from the train and bus stations come past.

★ Christian's Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Kelisiting Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6326 6666; www.5xjd.com; 56 Jiefang Lu, d inc breakfast ¥1390; 📶 @ 📶)

This boutique hotel scores points for its variety of rooms, each one with a kitchen and dining area, large plush beds, flat-screen TVs, and mini-bar. Do you go for the room with the dark rich tones or the one with the white walls and circular bed? Regardless, you'll be thanking Christian each time you step into the room. Efficient staff rounds out the experience.

Eating

Luoyang's famous 'water banquet' (shuixi) resonates along China's culinary grapevine. The main dishes of this 24-course meal are soups served up with the speed of flowing water – hence the name.

A handy branch of the **Carrefour** (Jialefu) supermarket can be found near the corner of Tanggong Xilu and Jiefang Lu in the **Today mall** (Xindouhui) where you can also find a wide variety of things to eat. The old town is also rife with everything from noodles to dumplings, hotpot and more.

Old Town Market

MARKET

(Nandajie yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Xi Dajie & Dong Dajie & north to Zhongzhou Donglu;

 5-10pm)

This lively night market has a cornucopia of snacks from *yangrou chuan* (lamb kebabs; ¥2) to super-sweet *zhi* (juice; ¥3). Stalls on the left offer a wide range of cooked dishes (from ¥8 to ¥58) served at tables set up on the sidewalk behind. There are menus in Chinese with marked prices but you can just point and choose from a variety of seafood and vegetables, all served wok-fried. There's also draft beer (*shengpijiu*; ¥5).

Qianmen Kaoya Dajiudian

PEKING DUCK

( 6395 3333; cnr Zhongzhou Donglu & Minzu Jie; half/whole duck ¥70/138, other dishes from ¥28;

 10am-2pm & 5-9pm)

This efficient and smart choice serves up rich and tasty roast duck (*kaoya*), cooked by an army of white-clad chefs. There are other vegetable and meat dishes on the menu but why bother?

Zhen Bu Tong Fandian Chinese

HENAN

(One of a Kind Restaurant [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  6395 2609; 369 Zhongzhou Donglu, dishes

¥15-45, water banquet from ¥688;  10am-9pm)

Huge place behind a colourful green, red, blue and gold traditional facade. If you can rustle up a large group, this is the place to come for a water-banquet experience; if 24 courses and ¥688 seems a little excessive, you can opt to pick individual dishes from the menu.

Information

Internet cafes (per hour ¥3) are scattered around the train station and sprinkled along nearby Jingyuan Lu.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  8am-4.30pm)

Most branches have ATMs that take international cards. The Zhongzhou Xilu office exchanges travellers cheques. There's also a branch on the corner of Zhongzhou Lu and Shachang Nanlu. Another branch just west of the train station has foreign-exchange services.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhongzhou Zhonglu)

East of Wangcheng Sq.

Industrial & Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(CBC., Gongshang yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 228 Zhongzhou Zhonglu)

Huge branch; foreign exchange and 24-hour ATM.

Luoyang Central Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Luoyang Shi Zhongxin Yiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6389 2222; 288 Zhongzhou Zhonglu)

Works in cooperation with SOS International; also has a 24-hour pharmacy.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju ☎ 6393 8397; cnr Kaixuan Lu & Tiyuchang Lu; 🕒 8am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

The exit-entry department (Churujing Dating) is in the south building.

Getting There & Away

AIR

You would do better to fly into or out of Zhengzhou. Daily flights operate to Beijing (¥860, 1½ hours), Shanghai (¥890, 1½ hours), Guangzhou (¥1410) and other cities. Obtain tickets through hotels or Ctrip.

BUS

Regular departures from the **long-distance bus station** (yiyun qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 51 Jingyuan Lu), located diagonally across from the train station, include the following:

- ➔ **Dengfeng** ¥14, two hours, hourly (5.15am to 6.10pm)
- ➔ **Kaifeng** ¥41, three hours, hourly
- ➔ **Shaolin Temple** ¥19.50, 1½ hours, half-hourly (5.20am to 4pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥71 to ¥79, four hours, hourly (7am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Zhengzhou** ¥24 to ¥30, 1½ hours, hourly

Buses to similar destinations also depart from the friendly and less frantic **Jinyuan bus station** (Jinyuan qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)), just west of the train station.

TRAIN

Luoyang's **Luoyang Longmen Station** (Luoyang Longmen Zhan), over the river in the south of town, has D and G trains to Zhengzhou and Xi'an. The **regular train station** (Luoyang Huoche Zhan) has regional and long-distance trains.

You can get tickets for a ¥5 commission from a **train ticket agency** (Huochepiaodaishouchu 249 Zhongzhou Donglu).

Regional destinations include Kaifeng (hard seat ¥35, three hours, regular) and Zhengzhou (hard seat ¥25, 1½ hours, regular).

Hard-sleeper destinations departing the regular train station:

- ➔ **Beijing West** seat/sleeper ¥106/196, nine hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Nanjing** seat/sleeper ¥112/315, eight to 12 hours, six daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** seat/sleeper ¥153/263, 12 to 17 hours, five daily
- ➔ **Wuhan** seat/sleeper ¥90/170, nine hours, regular
- ➔ **Zhengzhou** 2nd/1st class ¥55/106, 40 minutes, 10 daily

From Luoyang Longmen Station:

- ➔ **Beijing West** G train 2nd/1st class ¥368/589, four hours
- ➔ **Nanjing** D train 2nd/1st class ¥231/615, six hours, one daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** D train 2nd/1st class ¥264/765, nine hours
- ➔ **Xi'an North** G train 2nd/1st class ¥175/280, two hours, regular

Getting Around

The airport is 12km north of the city. Bus 83 (¥1, 30 minutes) runs from the parking lot to the right as you exit the train station. A taxi from the train station costs about ¥35.

Buses 5 and 41 go to the Old Town from the train station, running via Wangcheng Sq. Buses 26, 28, 33, 65 and 66 run to Luoyang Longmen Station. A taxi from town costs about ¥20.

Taxis are ¥5 at flag fall, making them good value and a more attractive option than taking motor-rickshaws, which will cost you around ¥4 from the train station to Wangcheng Sq.

Around Luoyang

Longmen Caves

MONUMENT

(Longmen Shiku admission ¥120, English-speaking guide ¥150;  7.30am-4.30pm & 7-10.30pm summer, 8am-4pm & 7-10.30pm winter)

The ravaged grottoes at Longmen constitute one of China's handful of surviving masterpieces of Buddhist rock carving. A Sutra in stone, the epic achievement of the Longmen Caves was commenced by chisellers from the Northern Wei dynasty, after the capital relocated here from Datong in AD 494. During the next 200 years or so, more than 100,000 images and statues of Buddha and his disciples emerged from over a kilometre of limestone cliff wall along the Yi River (Yi He).

A disheartening amount of decapitation disfigures the statuary at this Unesco World Heritage Site. In the early 20th century, many effigies were beheaded by unscrupulous collectors or simply extracted whole, many ending up abroad in such institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Atkinson Museum in Kansas City and the Tokyo National Museum. A noticeboard at the site lists significant statues that are missing and their current whereabouts. Many statues have clearly just had their faces

crudely bludgeoned off, vandalism that probably dates to the Cultural Revolution and earlier episodes of anti-Buddhist fervour. The elements have also intervened, wearing smooth the faces of many other statues.

The caves are scattered in a line on the west and east sides of the river. Most of the significant Buddhist carvings are on the west side, but a notable crop can also be admired after traversing the bridge to the east side. Admission also includes entry to a temple and garden on the east side. English captions are rudimentary despite the caves being a major tourist drawcard. Nighttime illumination means aficionados can discover a different experience. Whether you visit in the day or night, allow your eyes to adjust to the light inside the caves for details to emerge.

The caves are 13km south of Luoyang and can be reached by taxi (¥30) or bus 81 (¥1.50, 40 minutes) from the east side of Luoyang's train station. The last bus 81 returns to Luoyang at 8.50pm. Buses 53 and 60 also run to the caves.

From the west side, you can take a boat (¥20 to ¥25) back to the main entrance to get a riverside view of the grottoes. Note that you can't re-enter the west side once you leave. From the east side, electric carts (¥5 to ¥10) can take you back to the main entrance.

West Side

Three Binyang Caves

CAVE

(Binyang San Dong)

Work began on the Three Binyang Caves during the Northern Wei dynasty. Despite the completion of two of the caves during the Sui and Tang dynasties, statues here all display the benevolent expressions that characterised Northern Wei style. Traces of pigment remain within the three large grottoes and other small niches honeycomb the cliff walls. Nearby is the **Moya Three Buddha Niche** (Moya Sanfo Kan), with seven figures that date to the Tang dynasty.

Ten Thousand Buddha Cave

CAVE

(Wanfo Dong)

South of [Three Binyang Caves](#), the Tang-dynasty Ten Thousand Buddha Cave dates from 680. In addition to its namesake galaxy of tiny bas-relief Buddhas, there is a fine effigy of the Amitabha Buddha. Note the red pigment on the ceiling.

Losana Buddha Statue Cave

CAVE

(Fengxian Si, Ancestor Worshipping Temple)

The most physically imposing and magnificent of all the Longmen caves, this vast cave was carved during the Tang dynasty between 672 and 675; it contains the best examples of sculpture, despite evident weathering and vandalism. Nine principal figures dominate: the 17m-high seated central Buddha is said to be Losana, whose face is allegedly modelled on Tang empress and Buddhist patron Wu Zetian, who funded its carving.

Tang figures tend to be more three-dimensional than the Northern Wei figures, while their expressions and poses also seem more natural. In contrast to the other-worldly effigies of the Northern Wei, many Tang figures possess a more fearsome ferocity and muscularity, most noticeable in the huge guardian figure in the north wall.

The final stretch of caves scattered along a maze-like set of stone steps have suffered the most damage and many grottoes are empty, so much so that staff sometimes discourage visitors from checking them out. There are gems to be found if you take the time to wander around. From the base, look up to see six pagodas carved at the top of the rock face.

East Side

When you have reached the last cave on the west side, cross the bridge and walk back north along the east side. The lovely **Thousand Arm & Thousand Eye Guanyin** (Qianshou Qianyan Guanyin Kan) in Cave 2132 is a splendid bas-relief dating to the Tang dynasty, revealing the Goddess of

Mercy framed in a huge fan of carved hands, each sporting an eye. Two Tang-dynasty guardian deities stand outside the sizeable **Lord Gaoping Cave** (Gaoping Junwang Dong). Further is the large **Reading Sutra Cave** (Kan Jing Sidong), with a carved lotus on its ceiling and 29 *luohan* around the base of the walls. There is also a large **viewing terrace** for sizing up the Ancestor Worshipping Temple on the far side of the river.

Xiangshan Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Xiangshan Si)

At the top of a steep flight of steps, this temple nestles against a hill. First built in AD 516 and repeatedly restored, it's filled with bronze Buddhist images. Look out for a stele with a poem written by Emperor Qianlong who visited and was moved to eulogise the temple's beauty. There's also a villa which once belonged to Chiang Kai-shek, built in 1936 to celebrate his 50th birthday.

Bai Juyi's Graveyard

GARDEN, TOMB

This lovely garden is built around Tang-dynasty poet Bai Juyi's tomb (Bai Juyi Mudi). It's a peaceful, leafy place to rest your tired feet. There's a cute alfresco teahouse inside where you can get tea (from ¥38), snacks and instant noodles.

White Horse Temple

White Horse Temple

BUDDHIST

(Baima Si admission ¥50; 🕒 7am-6pm)

Although its original structures have all been replaced and older Buddhist shrines may have vanished, this active monastery outside Luoyang is regarded as China's first surviving Buddhist temple, originally dating from the 1st century AD. When two Han-dynasty court emissaries went in search of Buddhist scriptures, they encountered two Indian monks in Afghanistan; the monks returned to Luoyang on two white horses carrying Buddhist Sutras

and statues. The impressed emperor built the temple to house the monks; it is also their resting place.

Ironically, the tombs are now overgrown and neglected and set off on the sides of the compound.

In the **Hall of the Heavenly Kings**, Milefo laughs from within an intricately carved cabinet featuring more than 50 dragons writhing across the structure. Other buildings of note include the **Mahavira Hall** with its two-level carved wooden structure and the **Pilu Hall** at the very rear. Also look out for peony gardens in bloom come April and May. The standout **Qiyun Pagoda** (Qiyun Ta), an ancient 12-tiered brick tower, is a pleasant five-minute walk through a garden and across a bridge.

The temple is 13km east of Luoyang, around 40 minutes away on bus 56 from the Xiguan stop. Bus 58 runs from Zhongzhou Donglu in the old town also runs here.

Guoliangcun

 0373 / Pop 500

On its clifftop perch high up in the Wanxian Shan (Ten Thousand Immortals) Mountains in north Henan, this delightful high-altitude stone hamlet was for centuries sheltered from the outside world by a combination of inaccessibility and anonymity. Guoliangcun shot to fame as the bucolic backdrop to a clutch of Chinese films, which firmly embedded the village in contemporary Chinese mythology.

Today, the village attracts legions of artists, who journey here to capture the unreal mountain scenery on paper and canvas. Joining them are weekend Chinese tourists who get disgorged by the busloads. For a true rustic mountaintop experience, come on a weekday when it's tranquil. New hotels have sprung up at the village's foot, but the original dwellings – climbing the mountain slope – retain their simple, rustic charms. Long treks through the lovely scenery more than compensate for the hard slog of journeying here.

At 1700m above sea level and approximately 6°C colder than Zhengzhou, Guoliangcun is cool enough to be devoid of mosquitoes year-round (some locals say), but pack warm clothes for winter visits, which can be bone-numbing. Visiting in low season may seem odd advice, but come evening the village can be utterly tranquil, and moonlit nights are intoxicating. Pack a small torch as lights beyond the hotels are scarce.

Several kilometres before the village, you will be made to get off the bus to purchase an admission ticket (¥80) to the **Wanxian Mountains Scenic Area**. There are no ATMs and nowhere to change money in Guoliangcun. A small **medical clinic** (☎671 0303) can be found in the village.

Sights & Activities

All of the **village dwellings**, many hung with butter yellow *bangzi* (sweetcorn cobs), are hewn from the same local stone that paves the slender alleyways, sculpts the bridges and fashions the picturesque gates of Guoliangcun. Walnut-faced old women peek from doorways and children scamper about, but locals are well used to outsiders.

You will have passed by the **Precipice Gallery** (Juebi Changlang), also referred to on some signs as ‘Long Corridor in the Cliffs’ en route to the village, but backtrack down for a closer perspective on these plunging cliffs, with dramatic views from the tunnel carved through the rock. Before this tunnel was built (between 1972 and 1978) by a local man called Shen Mingxin and others, the only way into the village was via the **Sky Ladder** (Tian Ti), Ming-dynasty steps hewn from the local pink stone, with no guard rails but amazing views.

To get to the Sky Ladder, take the left fork of the road heading towards the tunnel and walk for 2.5km. Another 500m along the road takes you to the charming village of **Huitao Zhai**, with its cliff-top cottages.

Over the bridge on the other side of the precipice from the village, walk past the small row of cottages almost on the edge of the cliff called **Yashang Renjia** () and you can step onto a platform atop a pillar of rock for

astonishing views into the canyon.

Head through the strip of street stalls, past the hotels to get to the start of a bracing 5km circuit through the mountain valley. From the end of the street, you can walk or take an electric cart (¥15 return) 1.3km to the starting point of the loop. Sadly, the mood of the area has been spoilt with the addition of several man-made oddities; a cable ride and a drain-like slide from the top of the mountain. If you start on the left-hand set of steps, you'll first go past the awe-inspiring curtain of rock above the **Shouting Spring** (Han Quan).

According to local lore, its flow responds to the loudness of your whoops (it doesn't). You'll also pass the peaceful **Old Pool** (Lao Tan). Further along, you'll pass the **Red Dragon Cave** (Honglong Dong), now closed, and after a few steep flights of stairs, the slide ride (¥30) and then the **White Dragon Cave** (Bailong Dong admission ¥20). The last sight is a set of steps which lead up **Pearl Spring** (Zhenzhu Quan), a fissure in the mountain from which pours out cool, clear spring water. You can of course, do the loop in the opposite direction (it's easier).

Once you've seen the big sights, get off the beaten trail and onto one of the small paths heading into the hills (such as the boulder-strewn brookside trail along the flank of Guoliangcun that leads further up into the mountain), but take water.

Sleeping & Eating

There are hotels galore in Guoliangcun though they offer identical two-star quality with hot showers and TVs (no toiletries or towels though). There's a strip of hotels at the foot of the village and another strip on the precipice facing the tunnel. The latter has better views though you'll have to contend with roosters crowing at odd hours. Rooms cost ¥40 to ¥100 depending on size and orientation. Prices are a bit higher during the summer but negotiable in the low season and on weekdays. There are no restaurants, but hoteliers have kitchens and Chinese menus offering a wide variety of veggie and meat-based dishes, rice and noodles.

i Getting There & Away

Reach Guoliangcun from Xinxiang, between Anyang and Zhengzhou. Fast trains run to Xinxiang from Zhengzhou (¥24, 45 minutes), as do regular buses (¥14 to 21, 1½ hours). Exit Xinxiang Train Station, head straight ahead and take the first left and cross the road onto Ziyou Lu to flag down buses to Huixian (¥6.50, 30 minutes, regular). The bus to Huixian also departs from the bus station.

Five buses (¥12, one hour 40 minutes, first/last bus 7am/4.30pm) from Huixian's bus station (Huixian zhan) pass by the mountain road to Guoliangcun. Buses may have the characters for Guoliang on the window, but may head straight to the final stop Nanping, a village beyond the base of the road to Guoliangcun, depending on passenger numbers. If the bus isn't going up the mountain, you can either ask to be dropped at the bottom of the Guoliangcun road and ask a local to bring you up the 4km steep winding road for a wallet-gouging ¥50 or head on to Nanping where there are green buses (¥15) that do a circuit to Guoliangcun. The green buses run regularly on the weekends but on weekdays will only go when there are enough passengers. The last bus leaves at 5.30pm.

In the other direction, Huixian-bound minibuses (¥12) run from the bottom of the mountain road from Guoliangcun at 6.30am, 9am, noon, 1pm and 3pm. Guesthouse owners should be able to run you down to the drop-off point for around ¥40 if you spend the night in their lodgings. Otherwise, take the green bus to Nanping to catch a bus to Huixian.

Kaifeng

 0371 / Pop 827,000

More than any other of Henan's ancient capitals, Kaifeng today recalls its former grandeur. The walled town has character: you may have to squint a bit and sift the repro from its genuine historical narrative, but the city still offers up a riveting display of age-old charm, magnificent market food, relics from

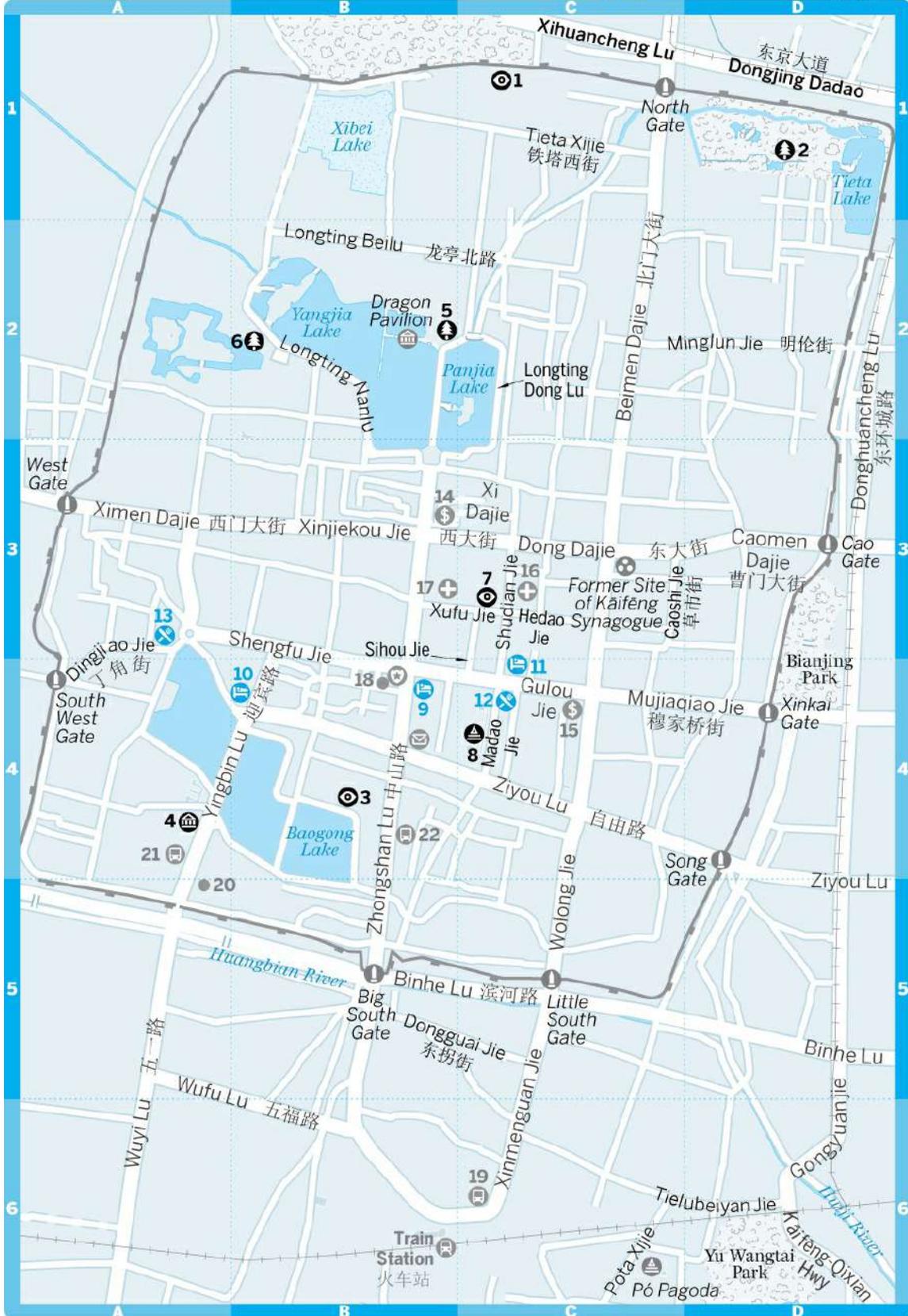
its long-vanished apogee and colourful chrysanthemums (the city flower; Kaifeng is also known as Jucheng, or ‘Chrysanthemum Town’). One reason you won’t see soaring skyscrapers is because buildings requiring deep foundations are prohibited, for fear of destroying the ancient northern Song-dynasty city below.

History

Once the prosperous capital of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126), Kaifeng was established south of the Yellow River, but not far enough to escape the river’s capricious wrath. After centuries of flooding, the city of the Northern Song largely lies buried 8m to 9m deep in hardened silt. Between 1194 and 1938 the city flooded 368 times, an average of once every two years.

Kaifeng was also the first city in China where Jewish merchants settled when they arrived, along the Silk Road, during the Song dynasty. A small Christian and Catholic community also lives in Kaifeng alongside a much larger local Muslim Hui community.

Kāifēng



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2
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4
5
6

A B C D

Xihuan Cheng Lu
Dongjing Dadao
North Gate
Tieta Xijie
Longting Beilu
Yangjia Lake
Dragon Pavilion
Panjia Lake
Longting Dong Lu
Minglun Jie
Beimen Dajie
Donghuan Cheng Lu
West Gate
Ximen Dajie
Xinjiekou Jie
Xi Dajie
Dong Dajie
Former Site of Kaifeng
Caoshi Jie
Caomen Dajie
Cao Gate
Dingjiao Jie
Shengfu Jie
Sihou Jie
Shudian Jie
Hedao Synagogue
Bianjing Park
South West Gate
Yingbin Lu
Baogong Lake
Zhongshan Lu
Madao Jie
Gulou Jie
Mujiqiao Jie
Xinkai Gate
Ziyou Lu
Song Gate
Binhe Lu
Big South Gate
Little South Gate
Wufu Lu
Xinmenguan Jie
Tielubeiyan Jie
Yu Wangtai Park
Pota Xijie
Pó Pagoda
Kaifeng-Oxian Hwy

Kaifeng

Sights

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | City Walls | C1 |
| 2 | Iron Pagoda Park | D1 |
| 3 | Kaifeng Fu | B4 |
| 4 | Kaifeng Museum | A4 |
| 5 | Longting Park | B2 |
| 6 | Riverside Scenic Park Qingming Garden | B2 |
| 7 | Shanshangan Guild Hall | C3 |
| 8 | Temple of the Chief Minister | C4 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 9 | Jinjiang Inn | B4 |
| 10 | Kaifeng International Youth Hostel | B4 |
| 11 | Soluxe Hotel Kaifeng | C4 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 12 | Gulou Night Market | C4 |
| 13 | Xisi Square Night Market | A3 |

Information

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 14 | Bank of China | B3 |
| 15 | China Construction Bank | C4 |
| 16 | Kaifeng No 1 People's Hospital | C3 |
| 17 | Zhangzhongjing Pharmacy | B3 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 18 | IATA Air Ticket Office | B4 |
| 19 | South Long-Distance Bus Station | C6 |
| 20 | Train Ticket Office | A5 |
| 21 | West Long-Distance Bus Station | A4 |
| 22 | Xiangguosi Bus Station | B4 |

Sights

Most travellers should base themselves within the walls of the old town. For ancient Kaifeng architecture, wander along small streets off the main drag within the city walls, for old, tumbledown, one-storey buildings with misshapen tiled roofs.

Temple of the Chief Minister

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Da Xiangguo Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Ziyou Lu; admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-6.30pm)

First founded in AD 555, this frequently rebuilt temple vanished along with Kaifeng in the early 1640s when rebels breached the Yellow River's dykes. During the Northern Song, the temple covered a massive 34 hectares and housed over 10,000 monks. The showstopper today is the mesmerising **Four-Faced Thousand Hand Thousand Eye Guanyin**, towering within the octagonal **Arhat Hall** (Luohan Dian), beyond the **Hall of Tathagata** (Daxiong Baodian).

Fifty-eight years in the carving, the 7m-tall gold-gilded, four-sided statue bristles with giant fans of 1048 arms, an eye upon each hand; the arhats themselves are presented with considerably less artistry. On the left of the **Hall of Tripitaka** (Cangjing Lou) is a small **hall** (Dashitang) where a master calligrapher works and plies his craft (works from ¥100). A huge pagoda and hall has been constructed at the rear. Elsewhere in the temple you can divine your future by drawing straws (*chouqian*) or dine at the pleasant onsite vegetarian restaurant (*suzhaibu*). Don't overlook the first **Hall of the Revarajas** (Tianwang Dian), where the mission of chubby Milefo (the Laughing Buddha) is proclaimed in the attendant Chinese: 'Big belly can endure all that is hard to endure in the world.'

Shanshangan Guild Hall

GUILDHALL

(Shanshan'gan Huiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 85 Xufu Jie, admission ¥30; 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm summer, 8.20am-5pm winter)

This tiny, elaborately styled guild hall was built as a lodging and meeting

place during the Qing dynasty by an association of merchants from Shanxi, Shanxi (Shaanxi) and Gansu provinces. Note the ornate carvings on the roofs, and delve into the exhibition on historic Kaifeng. Check out the fascinating diorama of the old Song city – with its palace in the centre of town – and compare it with a model of modern Kaifeng.

Also look out for the scale-model recreation of Zhang Zeduan's famed Qingming painting.

Iron Pagoda Park

PARK

(Tie Ta Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 210 Beimen Dajie, admission ¥50; 🕒 7am-7pm)

Rising up within Iron Pagoda Park is a magnificent 55m, 11th-century pagoda, a gorgeous, slender brick edifice wrapped in glazed rust-coloured tiles (hence the name); it's narrow stairs are climbable for ¥30. Take bus 1 from Zhongshan Lu or a taxi will cost ¥10.

Kaifeng Fu

HISTORIC SITE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); north side, Baogong East Lake, admission ¥50; 🕒 7am-7pm summer, 7.30am-5.30pm winter)

Popular with Chinese tour groups, this reconstructed site of the government offices of the Northern Song next to Baogong Lake has daily theatricals commencing daily outside the gates at 9am – the doors are thrown open costumed actors play period scenes complete with cracking whips and the sound of gongs. They then retreat inside to continue the play (in Chinese). Drama aside, the site, encased within tall walls, is a recreation of Song imperial life, with buildings from ye olde times.

Kaifeng Museum

MUSEUM

(Kaifeng Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 26 Yingbin Lu, 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This museum has a modest collection of archaeological finds, woodblock prints and historical objects. The draw for most is two notable Jewish stelae on the 4th floor, managed by the [Kaifeng Institute for Research on the](#)

History of Chinese Jews ( ext 8010 393 2178), which costs ¥50 to see them. Buses 1, 4, 9, 16, 20 and 23 all travel past here.

Riverside Scenic Park Qingming Garden

PARK

(Millennium City Park,, Qingming Shangheyuan  ; Longting Nanlu, admission day/night ¥80/199;  9am-6pm)

High on historical kitsch, this theme park is a recreation of Zeduan's famous Qingming painting, brought to life with roving staff in Song-era costumes, cultural performances, folk art and music demonstrations. Despite the surfeit of souvenir stalls, there's fun to be had (there's a wedding ceremony and even a mock naval battle out on the lake). The night ticket allows entry during the day and a seat for a colourful night performance (8.10pm to 9.30pm) out on the lake.

Longting Park

PARK

(Longting Gongyuan  ;  566 0316; Zhongshan Lu, admission summer/winter ¥40/35;  7am-7pm)

Site of the former imperial palace, this park is mostly lakes, into which hardy swimmers plunge in winter. Reached by bridge, you can climb the namesake **Dragon Pavilion** (Long Ting) for town views. The spectacular Chrysanthemum Festival is held here in October, when admission prices go up.

City Walls

HISTORIC SITE

( )

Kaifeng is ringed by a relatively intact, much-restored Qing-dynasty wall, which you can climb up at various points. Today's bastion was built on the foundations of the Song-dynasty Inner Wall (Neicheng). Encased with grey bricks, rear sections of the ramparts have been recently buttressed unattractively with concrete. Rising up outside was the mighty, now buried **Outer Wall** (Waicheng), a colossal construction containing 18 gates, which

looped south of Po Pagoda.

Former Site of Kaifeng Synagogue

RUIN

(Kaifeng Youtai Jiaotang Yizhi Jiefang Rd Tujie Section,)

Sadly, nothing remains of the synagogue – finally swept away in mid-19th century floodwaters – except a well with an iron lid in the boiler room of the Kaifeng Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital (Kaifeng Zhongyiyuan), which may allow you to examine it. The spirit of the synagogue lingers, however, in the name of the brick alley immediately south of the hospital – **Jiaoqing Hutong** (Teaching the Torah Alley).

A local English-speaking guide (yisrael-kaifeng@hotmail.com) familiar with local Jewish history lives in the house with the blue sign. Send an email prior to visiting if you intend to engage her guide services or want an extended chat.

ZHANG ZEDUAN'S MASTERPIECE

Now held in the Forbidden City and widely acknowledged as China's first shen (Godly) painting, *Along the River during the Qingming Festival* was completed by Zhang Zeduan in the early 12th century. These days, you'll see it everywhere in Kaifeng. Museums and parks have it in carved wood and stone bas-relief, there are scale dioramas, souvenir posters, advertising (it's on the Kaifeng Hostel's poster) and even a historical theme park modelled on it.

The long 24.8cm x 528.7cm painting depicts life in a city which experts have attributed as Kaifeng. It's packed to the gills with details of the period: boats unloading goods at a harbour, an inn crowded with customers and children playing on the streets. As you would imagine, it offers valuable insight into the life and times of a large Song dynasty town. When the original gets displayed in Beijing, queues to see it last hours.

You can see versions at several places in Kaifeng including the Riverside Scenic Park, the scale diorama in the Shanshangan Guild Hall, the replica version in the museum and the paper cutting in Zhuxian's Qingzhen Mosque.



Kaifeng International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Kaifeng Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 255 2888; 30 Yingbin Lu, dm ¥50, s ¥120, d & tw ¥140; 🌐 @ 📶)

With a good location on the edge of Baogong Lake, this hostel is an ok choice. Bunk-bed dorms have an ensuite shower and private rooms are comfy enough, but it's a largely average place. Bike rental cost ¥20 daily.

Jinjiang Inn

HOTEL

(Jinjiang Zhixing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2399 6666; 88 Zhongshan Lu, s & d ¥229/249; 🌐 @)

In a star location on the intersection of Zhongshan Lu, this chain hotel's branch ticks the right boxes: efficient staff, clean rooms, modern furnishing, flat-screen TVs and good plumbing.

Soluxe Hotel Kaifeng

HOTEL

(Kaifeng Yangguang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2595 8888; 41 Gulou Jie, s & d ¥518; 🌐 @)

The smart Soluxe Hotel offers compact but modern business-style rooms in shades of brown and white. Flat-screen TVs and PCs round out the features list. Discounts drop prices by 40%.

Eating & Drinking

Xisi Square Night Market

MARKET

(Xisi Guangchang Yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dingjiao Jie, snacks from ¥2, meal ¥20; 🕒 6.30pm-late)

Join the scrum weaving between stalls busy with red-faced popcorn sellers and hollering Hui Muslim chefs cooking up kebabs and *nang* bread. There are loads of vendors from whom you can buy cured meats, hearty *jianbing guozi* (pancake with chopped onions), sweet potatoes, roast rabbit,

xiaolongbao (Shanghai-style dumplings), peanut cake (*huasheng gao*), and cups of sugarcane juice.

Look for *yangrou kangmo* (lamb in a parcel of bread), a local Kaifeng Muslim speciality. Or opt for *yangrou chuan* (lamb kebabs). Look out for noodle vendors who pull and twist fresh *niurou lamian* (noodles in beef broth).

Among the flames and clouds of steam erupting from the ovens slave vocal vendors of *xingren cha* (almond tea), a sugary paste made from boiling water thickened with powdered almond, red berries, peanuts, sesame seeds and crystallised cherries. Take bus 24.

Gulou Night Market

MARKET

(Gulou Yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); off Sihou Jie, snacks from ¥2; 🕒 6.30pm-late)

Kaifeng's bustling night market has been touristified. While the food is the same, it's now all faux antique tables and benches, and stalls housed in wooden huts. This hasn't stopped the locals from having a good time. Visit the Tsingtao stall serving jugs (*hu*; ¥15 to ¥18) of draught lager (*huang zha*), ale (*hong zha*) and stout (*hei zha*).

East on Shudian Jie and around are more food stalls and others selling clothes, toys and books.

Information

The area around Zhongshan Lu has internet cafes, but at the time of research, you need local ID for surfing though some shops may let you get online for an hour or so.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Xi Dajie & Zhongshan Lu)

Has a 24-hour ATM.

China Construction Bank

BANK

(Zhongguo Jianshe Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gulou Jie,)

Has a 24-hour ATM.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Ziyou Lu, 🕒 8am-5.30pm)

West of the Temple of the Chief Minister.

Kaifeng No 1 People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Kaifeng Diyi Renmin Yiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2567 1288; 85 Hedao Jie,)

Located right in the heart of town.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2595 8899; 86 Zhongshan Lu, 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri)

Visa renewals.

Zhangzhongjing Pharmacy

PHARMACY

(Zhangzhongjing Dayaofang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xufu Jie, 🕒 7.30am-10pm summer, 8am-9pm winter)

Next to Shanshangan Guild Hall.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The nearest airport is at Zhengzhou. Tickets can be bought at the **IATA Air Ticket Office** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2595 5555; Zhongshan Lu) next to the PSB; two free daily buses (1½ hours, 8am and 2pm) run to Zhengzhou airport from here. There's also an **airport shuttle** from the corner of Gulou Jie and Jiefang Lu (¥40, 1½ hours, 10 daily, 5.30am to 6.4pm).

BUS

Buses run from the **west long-distance bus station** (changtu qiche xizhan

[MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)):

- **Dengfeng** ¥35, three hours, two daily (9.30am and 1.20pm)
- **Luoyang** ¥41, three hours, two daily (9am and 2pm)
- **Xinxiang** ¥30, two hours, six daily
- **Zhengzhou** ¥7, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes (6.20am to 7.30pm)

Buses also leave from the **south long-distance bus station** (changtu qiche nanzhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), opposite the train station:

- **Anyang** ¥54, four hours, regular services
- **Luoyang** ¥57, three hours, hourly
- **Xinxiang** ¥32, two hours, every 40 minutes
- **Zhengzhou** ¥8, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes

TRAIN

The train station is located in the south of town, around 1km beyond the city walls. Buy tickets at the **railway ticket office** (Huoche piao daishou Yingbin Lu; 🕒 8am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm) diagonally opposite the Kaifeng Hostel.

- **Beijing West** seat/sleeper ¥93/184, 12 hours
- **Luoyang** ¥30 to ¥84, 2½ hours, eight daily
- **Shanghai Hongqiao** D train 2nd/1st class ¥232/371, six to seven hours, three daily
- **Xi'an** seat/sleeper ¥81/154, eight hours, regular
- **Zhengzhou** ¥13 to ¥67, 45 minutes, frequently

Getting Around

Zhongshan Lu is a good place to catch buses to most sights (¥1). Taxis (flag fall ¥5) are the best way to get about; a journey from the train station to Zhongshan Lu should cost ¥7. Avoid pedicabs as they frequently rip off tourists.

Zhuxian Zhen

Twenty-three kilometres north of Kaifeng is Zhuxian (Vermillion Immortal). Some say it's one of China's four 'ancient' towns – the other three are Hankou (trade), Jingdezhen (porcelain) and Foshan (silk). Here, the 1000-year-old craft of woodblock printing (*muban nianhua*) continues to this day.

Families traditionally plaster their door fronts and houses with these prints (though many now use commercially printed ones) at the spring festival to usher in luck and prosperity for the year ahead. Five or so families have continued the craft. Sets of wooden blocks are painstakingly carved and each print requires anywhere from five to seven blocks, one for the base black outline and one for each other colour. Pigments (generally red, blue, yellow, black and green), made from natural materials such as seeds and plants, are then applied via handmade brushes onto rice paper. The outline in black is first printed, the paper left to dry and the process is repeated for each colour required. The prints feature Chinese characters from folklore, gods and others related to luck and blessings. These luridly coloured prints are embarrassingly cheap (¥5 to ¥30 for an A4/letter-size prints to ¥100 for a print made from 150-year-old blocks).

Visit **Tiancheng Nianhua Laodian** (天诚年画老店), 100m north of the Yuefei Temple. The artist and owner Mr Yin is a 5th-generation artisan, and his family has been in business for more than 200 years, 'excluding a period of 30 years or so because of the Cultural Revolution'. His work has been represented at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. You can pick up a beautifully bound book of prints with English explanations, housed in a wooden presentation box for ¥200 (if you're nice, he'll sell it for ¥180). There are several other workshops along the canal at the end of town.

Exploring the town further, you'll find two temples on the main drag: the **Yuefei Temple** (Yuefei Miao admission ¥20) and **Guanyu Temple** (Guanyu Miao admission ¥1). Heading 700m or so south off the main road along a wide stone path, you'll get to the **Qingzhen Temple** (Qing Zhen Si). This is a mosque

housed in a traditional Chinese temple compound with a pretty rose garden. On the wall is a paper-cut version of Zeduan's famed Qingming painting. Look for a stall featuring **elaborate paper-cutting art** by Mr Hu.

Head to the Xiangguo Si bus station on Zhongshan Lu where buses (¥6, 45 minutes, every 12 minutes) run all the way to Zhuxian. The last bus from Zhuxian leaves at 5.50pm. You'll pass through a busy thoroughfare where you should get off.

Hubei

Hubei

Hubei Highlights

Wuhan

Jingzhou

Around Jingzhou

Wudang Shan

Shennongjia

Yichang

Hubei

Pop 61.8 million

Why Go?

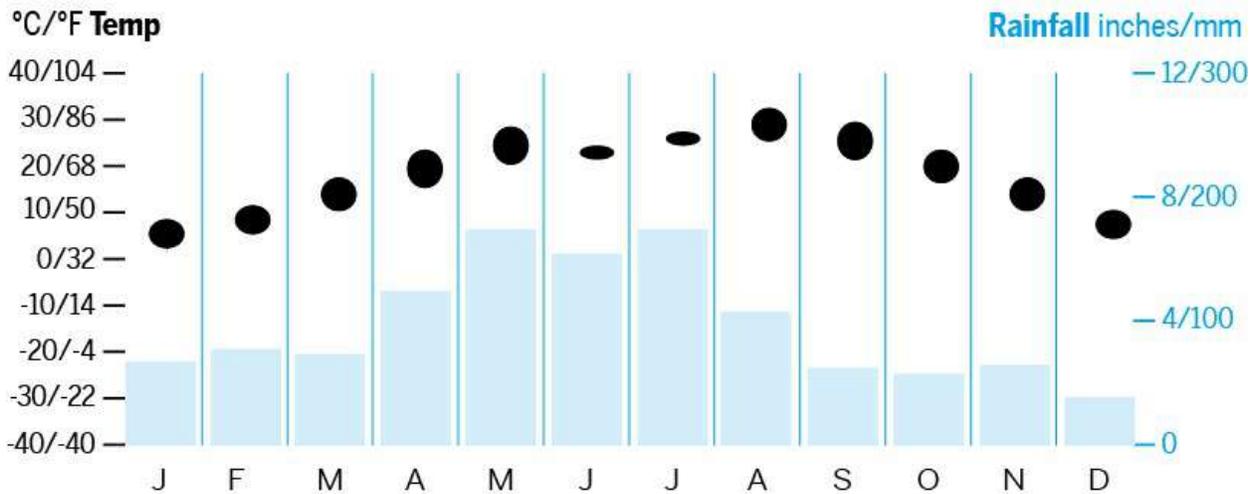
Vast hordes of travellers find themselves drifting into Hubei through the magnificent Three Gorges, the precipitous geological marvel that begins in neighbouring Chongqing and concludes here. It's a once-in-a-lifetime trip which perfectly introduces Hubei's dramatic natural beauty.

Sliced by rivers (including, of course, the mighty Yangzi) and dappled with lakes, Hubei is largely lush and fertile, but its western regions are dominated by stunning mountain scenery. National parks such as Shennongjia are jaw-droppingly spectacular, while the sacred peaks of Wudang Shan add pinches of Taoist mysticism to a sublime landscape.

Hubei's central location ensured it played a key role in Chinese history, with plenty of evidence around the ancient city of Jingzhou of the great Chu kingdom that ruled this part of China more than 2000 years ago. China's modern history, meanwhile, is woven into the fabric of Wuhan, Hubei's vast, battle-scarred capital city.

When to Go

Wǔhàn



- ➔ **Mar & Apr** Get in ahead of the draining Yangzi summer, but bring an umbrella.
- ➔ **Sep–Nov** The stupefying summer heat has finally lifted.
- ➔ **Nov–Mar** Wudang Shan at its prettiest, snowiest best. Pack your thermals.

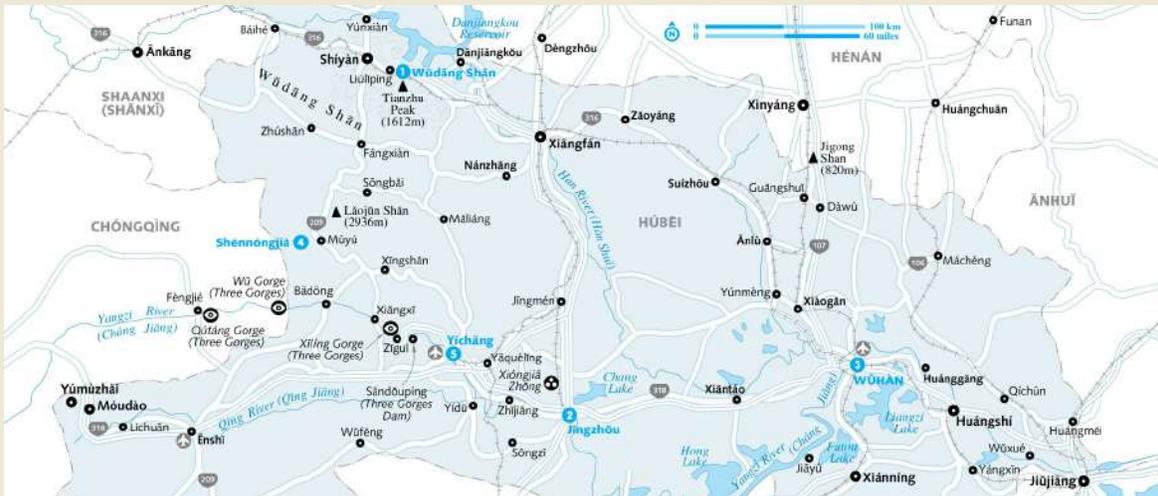
Best for Scenery

- ➔ [Shennongjia](#)
- ➔ [Wudang Shan](#)
- ➔ [Three Gorges Dam](#)

Best for History

- ➔ [Jingzhou](#)
- ➔ [Wudang Shan](#)
- ➔ [Wuhan](#)
- ➔ [Hubei Provincial Museum](#)

Hubei Highlights



- 1 Study taichi where it all began, on the awe-inspiring mountain slopes of [Wudang Shan](#).
- 2 Explore the historic gates, city walls and ruined temples of ancient [Jingzhou](#).
- 3 Find a bar and knock back a beer in the riverside concession district of mighty [Wuhan](#).
- 4 Flee China's urban sprawl and camp out in the wilds of stunning [Shennongjia](#).
- 5 Go against the tourist tide and start your Three Gorges cruise in [Yichang](#) rather than Chongqing.

History

The Hubei area first came to prominence during the Eastern Zhou (700–221 BC), when the powerful Chu kingdom, based in present-day Jingzhou, was at its height. Hubei again became pivotal during the Three Kingdoms (AD 220–280). The Chinese classic *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Yanyi*) makes much reference to Jingzhou. The mighty Yangzi River (Chang Jiang) ensured prosperous trade in the centuries that followed, especially for Wuhan, China's largest inland port and stage of the 1911 uprising, which led

to the fall of the Qing and the creation of the Republic of China.

Language

Hubei has two dialects of northern Mandarin – southwest Mandarin and lower-mid Yangzi Mandarin – while in the southeast many people speak Gan, a Mandarin dialect from Jiangxi.

Getting There & Around

Hubei is well connected to the rest of China by high-speed rail, air, bus and boats along the Yangzi River. Rail travel between most of the big destinations within the province is the best way to go, with bus journeys to more outlying parts.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥40

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥100

\$\$\$ more than ¥100

Wuhan

 027 / Pop 4.26 million

A gargantuan alloy of three formerly independent cities (Wuchang, Hankou

and Hanyang), Wuhan is huge. But the Yangzi River thrusts its way through the centre, carving the city in two and allowing for some breathing space between towering buildings and gnarling traffic, while numerous lakes and a smattering of decent sights provide more welcome retreats.

History

Although not actually named Wuhan until 1927, the city's three mighty chunks trace their influential status back to the Han dynasty, with Wuchang and Hankou vying for political and economic sway. The city was prised open to foreign trade in the 19th century by the Treaty of Nanking.

The 1911 uprising sparked the beginning of the end for the Qing dynasty. Much that wasn't destroyed then was flattened in 1944 when American forces fire-bombed the city after it had fallen under Japanese control.

Wǔhàn



Wuhan

Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Changchun Temple | D5 |
| 2 Guiyuan Temple | A4 |
| 3 Revolution of 1911 Museum | C5 |
| 4 Yellow Crane Tower | C4 |

Sleeping

| | |
|---|----|
| 5 Marco Polo | C2 |
| 6 Pathfinder Youth Hostel | D4 |
| 7 Tomolo | B2 |
| 8 Wanke Binquan | C1 |
| 9 Zhong Hui Hotel | C5 |

Eating

| | |
|--|----|
| Changchun Temple Vegetarian Restaurant | D5 |
| 10 Crown Bakery | D5 |
| 11 Xiao BeiKe | C2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 12 York Teahouse | C2 |
|----------------------------------|----|

Information

| | |
|---|----|
| 13 Public Security Bureau | C1 |
|---|----|

Transport

| | |
|--|----|
| 14 Fujiapo Long-Distance Bus Station | D5 |
| 15 Hongji Long-Distance Bus Station | D5 |
| 16 Wuhan Guan Dock | C3 |
| 17 Zhonghua Lu Dock | C4 |

Sights & Activities

In Hankou, the area west of Yanjiang Dadao remains a hodgepodge of concession-era architecture and historic consulate buildings.

Hankou Bund

PARK

(Hankou Jiangtan)

A stroll along Hankou Bund is a popular way to spend the early evening. It's essentially an elongated park, running along the western bank of the Yangzi, and is where locals come to exercise, chat and fly kites. It's not quite Shanghai but it's in a similar ballpark.

Hubei Provincial Museum

MUSEUM

(Hubei Sheng Bowuguan www.hbww.org; 156 Donghu Lu, 🕒 9am-5pm, no admission after 3.30pm, Tue-Sun; 📍 Dongting) **FREE**

The centrepiece of this fabulous museum is the exhibition of the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, which includes one of the world's largest musical instruments, a remarkable five-tonne set of 65 double-tone bronze bells. The museum is located beside the enormous East Lake (Dong Hu). To get here, take bus 402 or 411.

Hubei Museum of Art

MUSEUM

(Hubei Meishuguan <http://en.hbmoa.com>; Donghu Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Located by enormous East Lake, this impressive art museum stages regular worthwhile exhibitions. Take bus 402 or 411.

Guiyuan Temple

BUDDHIST

(Guiyuan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 20 Cuiweiheng Lu, admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-5pm; 📍 Lanjianglu)

Pass a large rectangular pond where turtles cling like shipwrecked sailors to two metal lotus flowers and examine the magnificently burnished cabinet housing Milefo in the first hall. Also seek out this 350-year-old Buddhist temple's collection of more than 500 statues of enlightened disciples in the **Hall of Arhats** (Luohan Tang). Completed in 1890, after nine years in the making, they remain in pristine condition.

In the **Mahasattva Pavilion** (Dashi Ge), the 2m-high Tang-dynasty tablet

carved with an image of Guanyin holding a willow branch is impressive, and a jade Buddha resides in the **Sutra Storing Pavilion** (Cangjing Ge). A vegetarian restaurant provides karmic sustenance. Buses 401 and 402 both go here.

Yellow Crane Tower

HISTORIC SITE

(Huanghe Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wuluo Lu, admission ¥80; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm, to 6.30pm in summer)

Wuhan's magical dancing crane, immortalised in the 8th-century poetry of Cui Hao, has long flown, but the city's pride and joy remains perched atop Snake Hill. The tower has had its history rebuilt out of it since the original was constructed in AD 223, and today's beautiful five-storey, yellow-tiled version is a 1980s remake of the Qing tower that combusted in 1884. Buses 401, 402 and 411, and trolley buses 1 and 10, all go here.

Changchun Temple

TAOIST

(Changchun Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8280 1399; 269 Wuluo Lu, admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-5pm)

This charming Taoist temple dates back to the Han dynasty, although very recent restoration is evident. The **Hall of Supreme Purity** (Taiqing Dian), containing a white-bearded statue of Laotzu, is the centrepiece. Other halls lead up the steep steps behind it. There's a well-regarded vegetarian restaurant next door. Buses 411, 401 and 402 all go here.

Revolution of 1911 Museum

MUSEUM

(Xinhai Geming Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shouyi Guangchang (Uprising Square), 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Housed in a dramatic, eye-catching red rock-like building, the Chinese Communist Party propaganda machine is in full tilt, but there are some interesting old photos.

East Lake

SWIMMING

(Donghu Donghu Youyongchi; entrance ¥10; 🕒 9am-10pm)

In summer, escape the sweltering city and head to this section of the vast East Lake, located in the east of Wuchang, which has been cordoned off for swimming. Take bus 402 to Donghu Donglu Youyongchi.

YELLOW CRANE TOWER BY CUI HAO

Penned in the 8th century by Tang dynasty luminary Cui Hao, this poem recalls the departure of someone on the back of a yellow crane, possibly to become an immortal. The spot he left from is now occupied by a tower named after the bird.

Yellow Crane Tower

A man of old left a long time ago on the Yellow Crane; this place is empty save for the Yellow Crane Tower.

Once the Yellow Crane left, it would never return; for a thousand years, the white clouds leisurely drifted.

The trees in Hanyang are all arrayed by the clear river and the fragrant grasses grow luxuriously on Parrot Isle.

Where are the gates of my home at dusk? The mist and ripples on the river waters make me sad.

Sleeping

★ Pathfinder Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Tanluzhe Guoji Qingnian Lushe  ; 📞 8884 4092; yhawuhan@hotmail.com;
368 Zhongshan Lu, dm ¥45-60, d/tr ¥160/210; 📶 @ 📶;  Pangxiejia)

Wuhan's best budget option cultivates an art-warehouse feel where guests add graffiti to the walls. Pinewood-decorated rooms are smart and clean; bathrooms are small with squat loos (communal bathrooms have sit-down versions), but the rest of the place oozes space. There's wi-fi, travel advice, real coffee, bike rental and helpful, English-speaking staff.

Walk south from exit A2 of Pangxiejia metro station along Zhongshan Lu,

and it's on your right.

Wanke Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8271 9922; 315 Shengli Jie, r ¥158-178; 🌐 @; 🚇 Sanyang Lu)

Wooden stairs and floorboards make this basic cheapie more stylish than most. Good location on the fringes of the pleasant former concession area, and close to the river. Cheapest rooms have no window. No English sign; no English spoken (hence the unfortunate name). Discounts may apply.

Zhong Hui Hotel

HOTEL

(Zhonghui Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8805 9288; 188 Shouyi Xincun, d without/with window ¥208/228; 🌐 @; 🚇 Shouyilu)

There are well-kept rooms with clean bathrooms at this Wuchang three-star choice. The cheapest rooms are smaller and have no windows, but are fine enough, and you'll have fun getting to them in the exterior brass lift. Rates include breakfast. Some rooms have a computer. Others have internet connection. Discounts may apply.

Tomolo

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Tianmeile Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8275 7288; 56 Jiangnan Sanlu, r ¥698; 🌐 @ 📶; 🚇 Xunlimen)

Tucked away in a lane off a modern pedestrianised shopping street, this excellent-value boutique hotel has a prime location and a natty finish throughout. Big rooms come with sofas, wide-screen TVs, internet access and lush carpets, while the bathrooms, complete with mosaic tiling and power showers, are in pristine condition; staff make a real effort. Excellent discounts.

Marco Polo

HOTEL

(Mage Boluo Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8277 8888; www.marcopolohotels.com; 159 Yanjiang Dadao, r from ¥897; 🌐 @ 📶 🚶; 🚇 Jiangnanlu)

The best-located five-star hotel in Wuhan, Marco Polo offers spacious and well-equipped rooms with sweeping views of the Yangzi River. It's backed by the tree-lined former concession area, which is dotted with bars, cafes and restaurants.

Eating

In Hankou, the alleyways north of Zhongshan Dadao, between Qianjin Yilu and Qianjin Silu, are particularly lively. **Jiqing Jie** has numerous *dapaidang* (open-air food stalls or restaurants) selling seafood and duck, especially at the Dazhi Lu end. **Cai'e Lu** is littered with smoky *shaokao* (barbecue).

In Wuchang, follow your nose to the hugely popular **Hubu Xiang Snack Street** (Hubu Xiang Xiaochi).

Breakfast – called *guozao* in Wuhan – is all about *regan mian* (literally ‘hot-dry noodles’; from ¥4).

Crown Bakery

BAKERY

(Huangguan Dangao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 345 Wuluo Lu, cakes ¥2-5, drinks ¥5-12; 🕒 7am-9pm)

Fabulously located in an old cruciform church built in 1907, with its original wood ceiling intact along with loads of portraits of Jesus, come here for the ambience, take a seat in the apse to break bread and order egg tarts (¥4), tea, cappuccino or cakes.

★ Xiao Beike

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 129 Dongting Jie, mains ¥20-50; 🕒 9.30am-10.30pm)

This stylish restaurant, with lovely tree-shaded terrace seating, offers an excellent range of pan-Chinese cuisine, with dishes from Hubei, Sichuan and Chongqing featuring highly. It also does a number of fish dishes, including braised catfish and delicious scallops. No English sign; it's in the yellow building on the corner of Dongting Jie and Cai'e Lu. English menu with photos.

Changchun Temple Vegetarian Restaurant

VEGETARIAN

(Changchunguan Sucai Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 269 Wuluo Lu, mains ¥20-50; 🕒 9am-8.30pm; 🍴)

Housed next door to the Changchun Temple, this place serves mock-meat creations but also cooks up fish dishes. Photo menu.



Drinking & Nightlife

Hankou is the place to go for a night out; Yanjiang Dadao and its surrounding lanes are the best place to start. There are neon-tastic nightclubs towards the ferry port, while Lihuangpi Lu is one of a number of lanes here with cutesy Western-style cafes.

York Teahouse

BAR

(Yueke Yingshi Chaguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8279 1110; 162 Yanjiang Dadao; 🕒 1pm-3am)

Run by 'Mr Sugar' (Tang Xiansheng), this old-timer has been doing its thing on the riverfront for over a decade. Inside is a warren of rooms, but there's plenty of outdoor seating and occasional live music. Waiting staff speak English. Beers and coffee from ¥20.



Information

Most ATMs accept foreign cards. Internet cafes (*wangba*) here may be reluctant to accept foreigners because they need to swipe a Chinese ID card to register users.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8539 5351; 7 Zhangzizhong Lu, 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm)

Can extend visas.



Getting There & Away

AIR

Tianhe International Airport (Tianhe Feijichang  8581 8888) is 30km northwest of town, with daily direct flights to:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥1440
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥910
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥1230
- ➔ **Hong Kong** ¥1480
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥1080
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥920

Use www.elong.net or ctrip.com to book flights.

BUS

There are several long-distance bus stations, all of which run very similar services. In Hankou, the main one is beside Hankou Train Station. In Wuchang, the main two are **Fujiapo long-distance bus station** (Fujiapo qiche keyunzhan  ) and **Hongji long-distance bus station** (Hongji changtu qichezhan  )

You can get buses to most major cities, even as far away as Shanghai and Beijing. The following are sample services from Hongji long-distance bus station:

- ➔ **Jingzhou** ¥75, three hours, every 45 minutes (7am to 8pm)
- ➔ **Muyu** (for Shennongjia) ¥150, eight hours, one daily (8.50am)
- ➔ **Shiyan** (for Wudang Shan) ¥145, six hours, three daily (8.40am, 11.40am and 1.30pm)
- ➔ **Yichang** ¥85 to ¥120, four hours, half-hourly (6.50am to 6pm)

TRAIN

Wuhan has three major train stations: Hankou Train Station (Hankou Huochezhan), Wuchang Train Station (Wuchang Huochezhan) and Wuhan Train Station (Wuhan Huochezhan), all of which should be linked up to the metro system by the time you read this. Services include:

➔ **Hankou Station**

➔ **Beijing** D train 2nd-/1st-class seat ¥267/333, 10 hours, two daily (8.06am and 9.05am)

➔ **Beijing** Z train hard/soft sleeper ¥263/411, 10 hours, two daily (8.24pm and 9.12pm)

➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao** D train 2nd-/1st-class seat ¥264/316, six hours, 11 daily (7.05am to 5.23pm)

➔ **Wudang Shan** hard seat ¥70, six to seven hours, two daily (10.35am and 4pm)

➔ **Xi'an** D train 2nd-/1st-class seat ¥307/432, 7½ hours, one daily (9.15am)

➔ **Wuchang Station**

➔ **Beijing** Z train hard/soft sleeper ¥263/411, 10 hours, two daily (9.03pm and 9.09pm)

➔ **Kunming** Hard/soft sleeper ¥380/600, 23 to 25 hours, five daily

➔ **Yichang** Hard seat ¥54, five hours, four daily (7.36am, 11.26am, 12.10pm and 5.35pm)

➔ **Wuhan Station**

➔ **Beijing** D train 2nd/1st class ¥267/333, 10 hours, one daily (11.57am)

➔ **Changsha** G train 2nd/1st class ¥165/265, 1½ hours, more than 40 daily (7am to 7.55pm)

➔ **Guangzhou** G train 2nd/1st class ¥464/739, four hours, more than 40 daily (7am to 7.55pm)

➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao** G train, 2nd/1st class ¥303/428, five hours, two daily (1.35pm and 3.10pm)

➔ **Xi'an North** G train 2nd/1st class ¥458/733, 4½ hours, seven daily

 **Getting Around**

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Regular airport shuttle buses reach Hankou Train Station (¥15, 45 minutes) and Fujiapo long-distance bus station (¥30, one hour). A taxi is about ¥100.

BUS

- ➔ **Bus 10** (¥1.50) Connects Hankou and Wuchang Train Stations.
- ➔ **Bus 401** (¥2) From Hanyang past Guiyuan Temple, Yellow Crane Tower and Changchun Temple to East Lake.
- ➔ **Bus 402** (¥2) From Wuchang Train Station to Changchun Temple and Yellow Crane Tower, then via Hanyang to Yanjiang Dadao in Hankou before returning over the river for the provincial museum and half a circuit of East Lake.
- ➔ **Bus 411** (¥1.50) Travels a more direct route from the museum to Yellow Crane Tower and Changchun Temple before carrying on to Hankou Train Station.

FERRY

Ferries (¥1.50, 6.30am to 8pm) make swift daily crossings of the Yangzi between **Zhonghua Lu Dock** (Zhonghua Lu Matou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and **Wuhan Guan Dock** (Wuhan Guan Matou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)).

METRO

Wuhan's fledgling metro system (*ditie*) includes Line 1, an overground light-rail line in Hankou, and Lines 2 and 4, which tunnel under the river, linking the main train stations. Four more lines are under construction.

Jingzhou

 0716 / Pop 1.5 million

Capital of the Chu kingdom during the Eastern Zhou, fantastic Jingzhou matches an ancient history with a homely small-town feel. One of China's few cities still ringed by an intact city wall, the town has clung onto some ancient temples, and boasts a noteworthy museum. The surrounding

farmlands are dotted with several ancient burial sites, including Xiongjia Zhong, the largest collection of Chu kingdom tombs ever discovered.

Sights

The walled section of Jingzhou is approximately 3.5km from east to west and 2.5km from north to south, with impressive city gates at each cardinal point, as well as several lesser gates. Passing through the wall at **New East Gate** (Xin Dongmen), as you will if you're on the bus from the main stations, you'll have Jingzhou Nanlu stretching out in front of you, and you'll see the older **East Gate** (Lao Dongmen) off to your right. Zhangjuzheng Jie leads away from East Gate and runs parallel to Jingzhou Nanlu.

Jingzhou Museum

MUSEUM

(Jingzhou Bowuguan Jingzhou Zhonglu, audio tour ¥20, English tour guide ¥200; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This excellent museum next to Kaiyuan Temple showcases some wonderful artefacts unearthed from Chu tombs around the area. The highlight is the incredibly well-preserved 2000-year-old body of a man found in his tomb with ancient tools, clothing and even food; the airtight mud seal around his crypt helped preserve him. You can find him in one of the buildings around the large pond behind the main building. Take bus 12, 19 or 101 to the West Gate (*Ximen*), then backtrack 200m.

City Wall

HISTORIC SITE

(Chengqiang)

Jingzhou's original city wall was a tamped mud wall dating from the Eastern Han dynasty, later clad in stone during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. The oldest surviving sections today, around **South Gate** (*Nanmen*), are Song, but most dates to the Ming and Qing. The South Gate, with its enceinte (*wengcheng*) still attached, concocts flavours of medieval Jingzhou, swarming with Taoist soothsayers, outdoor hairdressers offering

cutthroat shaves and vegetable sellers.

A similar carnival feel animates **East Gate** (Lao Dongmen), which also has an enceinte and a fairground feel. You can walk on parts of the wall, sometimes for a small fee (¥7 to ¥27), but the best way to see it is to rent a bike and cycle around the outside (1½ hours) between the wall and the city moat. This path also makes a lovely walk.

Kaiyuan Temple

TAOIST

(Kaiyuan Guan Jingzhou Zhonglu, admission free)

Explore the fascinating empty Taoist remains attached to the Jingzhou Museum.

Guandi Temple

TAOIST

(Guandi Miao)

Up the road from the South Gate, this historic Taoist temple originally dates to 1396.

Tienu Temple

BUDDHIST

(Tienu Si off Jingbei Lu)

Located in the north of town off Jingbei Lu, the name of this intriguing temple translates as the Iron Girl Temple.

Xuanmiao Temple

TAOIST

(Xuanmiao Guan north of Jingbei Lu)

This Taoist temple, just north of New North Gate (*xinbeimen*), literally translates as the ‘Temple of Mystery.’

Confucian Temple

CONFUCIAN

(Wen Miao Jingzhou Zhonglu,)

Now part of Shiyan Zhongxue (Experimental Middle School), it's a short walk east of the Jingzhou Museum. Smile sweetly to be let in.

Sleeping

Bayi Binguan

HOTEL

( 152 7248 2879; 14-4 Zhangju Zhengjie, 14-4 r from ¥70;  )

One of several cheap hotels on Zhangju Zhengjie, this renovated choice has newly decorated rooms, wi-fi and a good location 200m inside the older East Gate.

To get here, take bus 101 from either bus station and get off at the first stop after passing the East Gate. Walk back, take the first left, then left again down Zhangju Zhengjie and the hotel will be on your right.

Jiuge Holiday Hotel

HOTEL

(Jiuge Jiari Jiudian  885 7777; 13 Jingzhou Nanlu, r from ¥380;   )

This decent midrange hotel, with large, comfortable, wi-fi-enabled rooms, a restaurant and a cafe, is located about 200m inside the New East Gate.

Take bus 101 from either bus station and get off after passing the East Gate. Keep walking straight and the hotel will be on your left after 200m.

Eating

Come evening, locals head to the East Gate end of Zhangju Zhengjie for *shaokao*.

Bayu Renjia

HUBEI

(New East Gate, Donghuan Lu, mains ¥20-50;  11am-9pm)

Great location by the moat, outside New East Gate. Grab a table overlooking the city wall and moat and tuck into the restaurant speciality, *ganguo*, an iron pot of spicy delights, kept bubbling hot with a small candle burner. Varieties include chicken (*ganguo ziji*; ¥38), bullfrog (*ganguo niuwa*; ¥48) and tofu (*ganguo qianye doufu*; ¥32).

One pot is enough for two or three people with rice (*mifan*), which is free. Exit New East Gate, cross the moat and the restaurant is on your right.

Information

There are 24-hour internet cafes (*wangba*) dotted around town.

China Construction Bank

BANK

(Zhongguo Jianshe Yinhang)

Has a foreign-friendly ATM. Located between New East Gate and Jiuge Holiday Hotel.

Getting There & Around

BICYCLE

The **bicycle rental place** (per hr/day ¥7/50) by East Gate is one of many around the walled section of the city.

BUS

You'll probably arrive at either Shashi **long-distance bus station** (Shashi changtu qichezhan) or Shashi **central bus station** (Shashi zhongxin keyunzhan). Turn right out of either, walk to the first bus stop and take bus 101 (¥2) to East Gate (*dongmen*).

Buses from Shashi long-distance bus station:

- ➔ **Wudang Shan** ¥120, five hours, two daily (7.45am and 1pm)
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥80, four hours, frequent (6.30am to 8pm)
- ➔ **Yichang** ¥44, two hours, frequent (7am to 6pm)

TRAIN

Bus 49 (¥2) connects the train station (*huoche zhan*) with the East Gate. D- and G-class trains (and slower trains) link Jingzhou with:

- ➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao** 2nd/1st class ¥322/388, eight hours, five daily
- ➔ **Wuhan** 2nd/1st class ¥60/70, 1½ hours, regular

➔ **Yichang East** 2nd/1st class ¥25/30, 40 minutes, regular

Around Jingzhou

Xiongjia Zhong

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(admission ¥30; 🕒 9.30am-4.30pm)

Forty kilometres north of Jingzhou, the 2300-year-old tombs of Xiongjia Zhong are the source of a large collection of jade – on display at the [Jingzhou Museum](#) – while a fascinating and huge collection of skeletal horse and chariots in a section of the tomb in a hangerlike museum is open to visitors.

Buses (¥10, 70 minutes) leave hourly from the back of the bus station called Chudu Keyun Zhan in Jingzhou. Bus 24 links this station with Jinfeng Guangchang bus stop, just outside East Gate (over the moat and turn left). A taxi will be at least ¥100 return.

Wudang Shan

📞 0719

Wudang Shan may not be one of China's five sacred Taoist mountains but it's paradoxically known as the 'No 1 Taoist Mountain in the Middle Kingdom.' Sacrosanct in martial arts circles, it is acknowledged that 'in the north they esteem Shaolin, in the south they revere Wudang.' The Unesco World Heritage Site of Wudang Shan is the apocryphal birthplace of taichi, and possesses supernaturally good-looking vistas and an abundance of medicinal plants that naturally find their way into a panoply of Taoist medicinal potions. The mountain is also sadly overpriced and overcommercialised, with new developments afoot, so expect the magic of Taoist chanting to be occasionally perforated by the squeal of buzz saws.

 **Sights & Activities**

The town's main road, Taihe Lu – which at various sections is also labelled Taihe Donglu (Taihe East) and Taihe Zhonglu (Taihe Central) – runs east–west on its way up towards the main gate of the mountain. Everything of interest in town is either on or near this road and road numbers are clearly labelled. Buses often drop you at the junction by the main expressway, a 1km walk east of the town centre. From here, turn left to the mountain entrance (100m) or right into town.

You can buy Chinese (¥3) or English (¥8) maps at the main gate of the mountain.

Wudang Museum of China

MUSEUM

(Wudang Bowuguan Culture Sq, audio tour ¥20, deposit ¥200; 🕒 9-11.30am & 2.30-5pm) **FREE**

This is a great opportunity to get a grip on Wudang Shan history, lore and architecture. There's a whole pantheon of gods, including the eminent Zhenwu (patriarch of the mountain) and a section on Taoist medicine including the fundamentals of *neidan Xue* (internal alchemy). There are also some stunning bronze pieces.

The museum is down Bowuguan Lu, which leads to Culture Sq (Wenhua Guangchang).

Wudang Shan

MOUNTAIN

(admission ¥140, bus ¥100, audio guide ¥30)

Wudang Shan attracts a diverse array of climbers, from Taoist nuns with knapsacks, porters shouldering paving slabs and sacks of rice, businessmen with laptops and bright-eyed octogenarians hopping along. It's a grueling climb but the scenery is worth every step; plenty of Taoist temples line the route (where you can take contemplative breathers) and you'll see the occasional Taoist cairn or trees garlanded with scarlet ribbons weighed with small stones. On the way down, note how some pilgrims descend backwards!

To start your ascent, take bus 1 (¥1) or walk from Taihe Lu to the Main Gate (Shan Menkou) and ticket office. The bus ticket (compulsory with your

admission) gives you unlimited use of shuttle buses (from 6am to 6.30pm).

One bus – often only leaving when full – runs to the start of the **cable car** (suodao up/down ¥50/45). For those who don't mind steps, take the bus to **South Cliff** (Nanyan), where the trail to 1612m **Heavenly Pillar Peak** (Tianzhu Feng), the highest peak, begins. Consider disembarking early at the beautiful, turquoise-tiled **Purple Cloud Temple** (Zixiao Gong admission ¥20), from where a small stone path leads up to South Cliff (45 minutes). From South Cliff it's an energy-sapping, two-hour, 4km climb to the top.

The enchanting red-walled **Chaotian Temple** (Chaotian Gong) is about halfway up, housing a statue of the Jade Emperor and standing on an old, moss-hewn stone base with 4m-high tombstones guarding its entrance. From here you have a choice of two ascent routes, via the 1.4km **Ming-dynasty route** (the older, Back Way) or the 1.8km **Qing-dynasty path** (the 'Hundred Stairs'). The shorter but more gruelling Ming route ascends via the Three Heaven's Gates, including the stupefying climb to the **Second Gate of Heaven** (Ertian Men). You can climb by one route and descend by the other. Temple ruins, fallen trees, shocking inclines and steep steps misshapen by centuries of footslogging await you.

Near the top, beyond the cable-car exit, is the magnificent **Forbidden City** (Zijin Cheng admission ¥20) with its 2.5m-thick stone walls hugging the mountainside and balustrades festooned with lovers' locks. From here you can stagger to magnificent views from the **Golden Hall** (Jin Dian admission ¥20), constructed entirely from bronze, dating from 1416 and in dire need of some buffing up. A small statue of Zhenwu – Ming emperor and Wudang Shan's presiding Taoist deity – peeks out from within.

Courses

Wudang Taoist Kungfu Academy

SPORTS

(Wudang Daojiao Gongfu Xueyuan  568 9185; www.wudang.org; Purple Cloud Temple; fees per day classes ¥300, accommodation ¥200-300, meals ¥80)

Dozens of taichi schools pepper these parts, but this one has the edge for location, its qualities as a school and accessibility to foreigners. The setting is magical; in a large, secluded courtyard surrounded by pine trees halfway up the mountain. Classes, which follow a strict regime, are held either at the school or at various scenic spots on the mountain. For more information on taichi see ([Click here](#)) and ([Click here](#)).

At least one member of the admin staff speaks good English. You can sign up for anything from a few days to one year; the longer you study, the cheaper the rates. You'll have to find, and fund, your own way here the first time (it's down the steps to your left, just past Purple Cloud Temple; no English sign). After that, the school will arrange a pass for you so you can come and go without having to pay the hefty entrance fees to the mountain each time. There are no classes on Wednesday afternoon or Thursday. Expect some 5.30am starts!

Sleeping

In Town

Xuan Yue Hotel

HOTEL

( 566 5111; 27 Yuxu Lu, r from ¥380;   )

This smart, midrange hotel has comfortable rooms with clean bathrooms. It's on the corner of Yuxu Lu and Taihe Zhonglu and is accessed through an entranceway to the right of the one with the English sign for the hotel (the one with the English sign leads to the restaurant).

Shengjingyuan Binguan

HOTEL

( 566 2118; 7 Taihe Zhonglu, r ¥288, discounted to ¥128;   )

Simple, bright, pleasant rooms come with firm mattresses and spacious bathrooms. It's a couple of doors down from the Bank of China.

On the Mountain

There are about a dozen hotels and guesthouses by South Cliff. The cheapest rooms go for around ¥80, but bargain especially during the low season.

Nanyan Hotel

HOTEL

(Nanyan Dayue Binguan 📞 568 9182; r ¥608; 🌟 @)

This revamped, smart hotel right by the bus stop at South Cliff has large, clean, comfortable rooms and welcoming staff. Discounts may apply.

Taichi Hotel

HOTEL

(Taiji Huiguan 📞 568 9888; r ¥568, discounted to ¥348; 🌟 @)

The best-quality hotel on the mountain, although discounts aren't as good as elsewhere. Rooms with windows go for ¥348, and have fabulous mountain views. Rooms without windows are identical (apart from the views) but are generally not discounted. Internet connection for laptops is in all rooms. It's 200m downhill from the bus stop at South Cliff.

THE BIRTH OF TAICHI

Zhang San Feng, a semi-legendary Wudang Shan monk from the 10th or 13th century (depending on what source you read), is reputed to be the founder of the martial art taijiquan (literally 'Supreme Ultimate Boxing') or taichi ([Click here](#)). Zhang had grown dissatisfied with the 'hard' techniques of Shaolin boxing and searched for something 'softer' and more elusive. Sitting on his porch one day, he became inspired by a battle between a huge bird and a snake. The sinuous snake used flowing movements to evade the bird's attacks. The bird, exhausted, eventually gave up and flew away. Taichi is closely linked to Taoism, and many priests on Wudang Shan practise some form of the art.

Eating

In town a few *shaokao* stalls set up every evening in an alley off Taihe Lu. Look for the neon-lit archway with the characters, beside No 14.

On the mountain there are plenty of food options by South Cliff, although not many English menus.

Taihe Xuanwu Dajudian

CHINESE

(8 Taihe Zhonglu, mains ¥20-50; 🕒 6.30am-11.30pm)

Large bustling restaurant with half its menu helpfully translated into English. Various regional cuisines are represented, from Sichuanese to Cantonese; even Beijing roast duck! No English sign.



Entertainment

Wudang Grand Theatre

THEATRE

(Wudang Dajuyuan 📞 506 2366; Culture Sq., Wudang Taichi Show tickets ¥200-280; 🕒 Wudang Taichi Show 8-9pm)

Modern theatre opposite the Wudang Museum of China. It hosts the **Wudang Taichi Show** every Thursday, Friday and Saturday.



Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang 1 Taihe Zhonglu, 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

Foreign-friendly ATM and money-exchange facility.

Jisu Internet

INTERNET

(Jisu Wangba 2nd fl, 20 Taihe Lu, per hr ¥3 🕒 24hr)

Through a round archway. No English sign.



Getting There & Away

BUS

The new bus station (keyun qichezhan), 200m downhill from the expressway,

is on the right of the road leading into town.

- ➔ **Jingzhou** ¥120, five hours, one daily (9am)
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥150, five hours, two daily (8.30am and 11am)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥159, eight hours, one daily (8.30am)
- ➔ **Yichang** ¥110, five hours, one daily (9.30am)

A fleet of small green buses shuttles between the two nearest train stations – Wudangshan and Shiyang (¥15, one hour, 5.10am to 8pm) – via Liuliping (¥4, 20 minutes). They leave from outside Taihe Xuanwu Dajiudian restaurant.

TRAIN

Wudang Shan no longer has a train station, although the train station at Liuliping is often referred to as Wudang Shan. You can buy train tickets from the **train ticket agency** (tielu piaodaishou 🕒 8.30am-6pm), beside Wudang Shan's old train station on Chezhan Lu, a road opposite Xuanwu Dajiudian restaurant.

Liuliping (Wudang Shan) trains:

- ➔ **Beijing West** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥164/300, 19 to 22 hours, three daily
- ➔ **Changsha** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥112/208, 14½ hours, one daily (7.58am)
- ➔ **Chengdu** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥128/244, 11 to 18 hours, six daily
- ➔ **Shanghai South** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥192/351, 22 to 24 hours, three daily
- ➔ **Wuhan (Wuchang)** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥69/130, 6½ to 8½ hours, seven daily
- ➔ **Xi'an** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥69/130, five to six hours, three daily
- ➔ **Xi'an North** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥69/130, five to six hours, three daily
- ➔ **Xiangyang** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥24/78, two hours, regular (6am to 11.30pm)

➔ **Yichang East** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥55/109, three hours, one daily (4.23pm)

Shennongjia

📞 0719

Famed for its medicinal plants and legendary ape-man (*yeren*), Shennongjia forms a significant chunk of the most spectacular region of Hubei province. Thickly forested peaks with part-exposed rock faces rise up dramatically from a small network of Yangzi River tributaries; the bus journey here alone will leave you gobsmacked.

Foreigners are only allowed into one of the four sections of the national park, at **Yazikou** (admission ¥140), but the area is big enough for good walking and you can also camp here. Once inside the park, you can board shuttle buses (¥90) to various points of interest. Worth checking out are **Xiaolongtan**, about 10km from the entrance, and a good place to spot monkeys (Shennongjia is home to the rare golden snub-nosed monkey;, *chuan jinsihou*), and **Shennongding**, 20km from the entrance and the highest peak here (3105m). There's a camping area (¥30) at the base of Shennongding, called **Shennongying**. Winter is bitterly cold and snow often blocks roads.

Yazikou is accessed from **Muyu**, a small but well-developed tourist village about 14km down the mountain. All buses drop you in Muyu.

Sleeping & Eating

Shuanglin Hotel

HOTEL

(Shuanglin Jiudian 📞 345 2803; [25 Muyu Lu](#); r from ¥88, with computer ¥128; 🌐 @)

The modest Shuanglin Hotel, where buses drop you off, has tidy rooms and welcoming management, though there are flashier hotels, too. You can

normally rent tents (*zhangpeng*; ¥100 to ¥200) once inside the park, or buy them (¥700 to ¥800) from a couple of camping shops in Muyu.

Pian Qiao Wan

CHINESE

(53 Muyu Lu, mains ¥20-40; 🕒 10am-9pm)

The coolest place to eat in Muyu is Pian Qiao Wan, which is accessed via a wobbly bridge and backs onto a small tea plantation (you can buy tea here). The menu is in Chinese only. Try the *huiguo niurou* (spicy fried beef), the *chashugu chaolarou* (wild mushrooms and cured pork) or the *xianggu rousi* (shiitake mushrooms with pork shreds).

Don't forget to leave room for the *qiaomai bing* (flatbread made with buckwheat and wild herbs and served with a honey dip).

Information

The ICBC Bank at the top of Muyu village has an ATM that accepts foreign cards. Internet cafes (*wangba*) cost ¥4 per hour.

Getting There & Away

Buses leave from outside Shuanglin Hotel, where you can also buy tickets. Foreigners aren't allowed to continue north to Wudang Shan from Muyu.

➔ **Badong** ¥55, three hours, one daily (9.30am)

➔ **Yichang** ¥60, 2½ hours, five daily (7am to 3.30pm)

Shared minibuses to Yazikou (per person ¥10) leave from the top end of Muyu.

Yichang

 0717 / Pop 4 million

A young and vibrant city, Yichang lacks tourist sights but is on the map as a gateway to the magnificent Three Gorges.

Sights

Three Gorges Dam

ARCHITECTURE

(Sanxia Daba admission ¥105)

The huge Three Gorges Dam hulks away upstream. The world's largest dam due to its length (2.3km) rather than its height (101m), it isn't the most spectacular dam, but is worth a peek. You can't walk on it, but there's a tourist viewing area to the north. The view from the south is much the same, and free.

Take a bus from the long-distance station to Maoping (¥15, 8.30am to 3pm), but get off at Balu Chezhan. Alternatively, bus 8 (¥20, one hour, 8am to 4pm) leaves from Yichang's East Train Station.

Day trips can also be taken by boat (¥280 including entrance fee and lunch) from the old ferry port (*lao matou*). They leave at 7.30am and return around 5pm. Buy tickets from Yangtze River International Travel at the port.

Sleeping

Yichang Hotel

HOTEL

(Yichang Fandian  644 1616; 113 Dongshan Dadao, r from ¥288;   

This jolly place complements an elegant foyer with large and pleasant rooms. English is limited but it's all smiles. Diagonally opposite the long-distance bus station. Wi-fi in the lobby only. Discounts may apply.

Yiling Hotel

HOTEL

(Yiling Fandian  886 7199; 41 Yunji Lu, r from ¥528;  

Large bright rooms with laminated wood flooring. Well located close to the river and opposite a number of restaurants, bars and cafes. Discounts may apply. Take bus 4 from the old dock or bus 6 from the long-distance bus station; a taxi will cost ¥30.

Eating

Opposite Yiling Hotel there's a Korean restaurant called **Hanligong Liaoli** (11am to 9pm) with dishes, claypots and barbecues from ¥25; there's also a Western-style cafe. Both have English menus.

For something more local, hop on bus 2 or 6 (¥1) or into a taxi (¥7) to **Beimen**, where you can eat *xiao ye* (literally 'midnight snacks') at a number of stalls and restaurants which spill out onto the streets each evening (5pm to 2am). You'll see skewers (*chuan*), dumplings (*jiaozi*) and noodles (*mian*) as well as places doing barbecued fish (*kaoyu*). Look out for the **pancake stall** making *fei bing* ('flying pancakes'; ¥12 to ¥15); the banana ones (*xiangjiao*) are delicious.

Xiao Hu Niu

HUBEI

(73 Shangshu Xiang, Beimen; ingredients ¥8-26; 🕒 4pm-2am)

Our favourite restaurant in Beimen, this one specialises in a local beef hot plate called *xiao hu niu*; order that first, stipulating how spicy you want your beef (¥25 for 250g) or lamb (¥26 for 250g) – mild (*wei la*), medium (*zhong la*) or hot (*ma la*) – before ordering other raw ingredients to fry with it on your hot plate.

Choices include *qingjiao* (green peppers), *xianggu* (shiitake mushrooms), *tudou pian* (potato slices) and *ou pian* (lotus root slices).

Information

There are plentiful 24-hour internet cafes (*wangba*; per hour ¥3). Foreign-friendly ATMs are also everywhere.

Getting There & Around

AIR

Daily flights from **Three Gorges Airport** (Sanxia Jichang) include Beijing (¥1300), Chengdu (¥790), Guangzhou (¥960), Shanghai (¥1080) and Xi'an

(¥840).

Airport shuttle buses (¥20, 50 minutes) run to and from the Qingjiang building (Qingjiang dasha), leaving two hours before outward bound flights and meeting all incoming flights. Flight tickets can be bought from the Air China office inside the Qingjiang building. Turn right out of Yichang Hotel and it's on your right after about 1km.

BUS

There are three main long-distance bus stations: Yichang long-distance bus station (changtu qichezhan), plus ones at the East Train Station and the old ferry port. All are modern and well run, and offer very similar bus services. Services from the Yichang long-distance bus station include:

- ➔ **Jingzhou** ¥40 to ¥65, two hours and 10 minutes, half-hourly (6.40am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Laoying** (for Wudang Shan) ¥130, six hours, regular (8am to 1pm)
- ➔ **Muyu** (for Shennongjia) ¥70, five hours, seven daily (7.45am to 3.30pm)
- ➔ **Wudang Shan** ¥130, six hours, two daily (8am and 12.20pm)
- ➔ **Wuhan (Wuchang)** ¥78 to ¥110, 4½ hours, every hour (7am to 8pm)

TRAIN

Yichang's East Train Station (*huoche dongzhan*) is now the station that almost all trains use. Train tickets (¥5 service charge) can also be bought at window 1 of Yichang long-distance bus station. Trains include:

- ➔ **Beijing West** G train 2nd/1st class ¥617/948, eight hours, 9.20am
- ➔ **Chengdu** D train 2nd/1st class ¥259/311, seven hours, nine per day (some to Chengdu East)
- ➔ **Chongqing North** D train 2nd/1st class ¥162/195, five hours, regular
- ➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao** D train 2nd/1st class ¥349/420, eight hours, five daily
- ➔ **Wuhan** D train 2nd/1st class ¥85/103, 2½ hours, regular
- ➔ **Xi'an** Hard sleeper ¥208, 11 hours, two daily (one to Xi'an South)

➔ **Wudang Shan** Hard seat/hard sleeper ¥5 to ¥109, five hours, one daily (7.30pm)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Local buses cost ¥1. Useful routes for frequently running buses include:

➔ **Bus 4** Old ferry port (*san matou*)–Yiling Hotel (Yiling Fandian)–old train station (, *huoche zhan*; for Yichang Hotel or long-distance bus station).

➔ **Bus 6** Long-distance bus station (*changtu qichezhan*; for Yichang Hotel) to Beimen.

➔ **Bus 9** East Train Station (*huoche dongzhan*) to the long-distance bus station (*changtu qichezhan*).

Jiangxi

[Jiangxi Highlights](#)

[Nanchang](#)

[Around Nanchang](#)

[Jingdezhen](#)

[Wuyuan](#)

[Around Wuyuan](#)

[Sanqing Mountain](#)

[Longhu Mountain](#)

Jiangxi



Pop 45.2 million

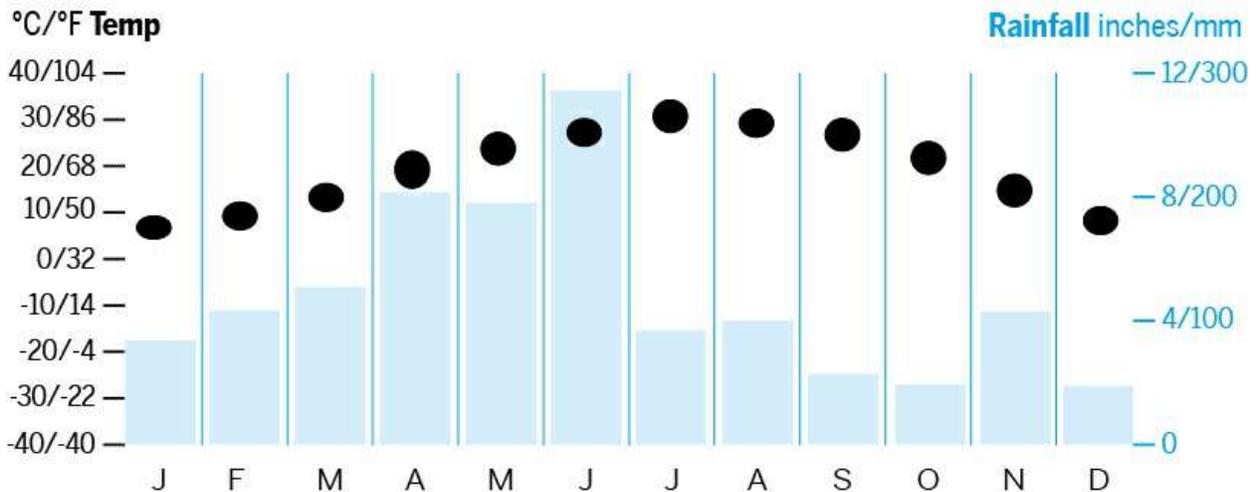
Why Go?

An interconnected web of rivers, lakes and shimmering rice paddies, Jiangxi is defined by its water. Farmers in ponchos and heavy boots till the fields in drizzling rain as snow-white herons whirl overhead, and off at the edges of the province, low-lying hills of tea plantations and pencil-thin pines give way to more substantial mountain ranges, seemingly shrouded in perpetual mist.

While not as remote as it used to be, Jiangxi is still rarely visited by foreign tourists and can be just the spot if you're after something off the beaten track. Jingdezhen will have porcelain enthusiasts going potty, while hikers will adore the hilltop trails around the northeastern mountains, but it's the irresistible countryside villages, their traditional architecture and their altogether slower pace of life which are the real highlight of a visit to this charming pocket of southeast China.

When to Go

Nánchāng



→ **Mid-Mar** Terraced rapeseed fields bloom in Wuyuan, drawing amateur photographers from across China.

→ **Late May–early Jun** Rhododendrons add splashes of pink to the Sanqing Mountain canopy.

→ **Sep–Nov** Less rainfall and moderate temperatures; best time to visit Jiangxi.

Best Hiking

→ [Sanqing Mountain](#)

→ [Wuyuan](#)

→ [Lushan](#)

→ [Wudang Mountain](#)

→ [Longhu Mountain](#)

Best Villages

→ [Likeng](#)

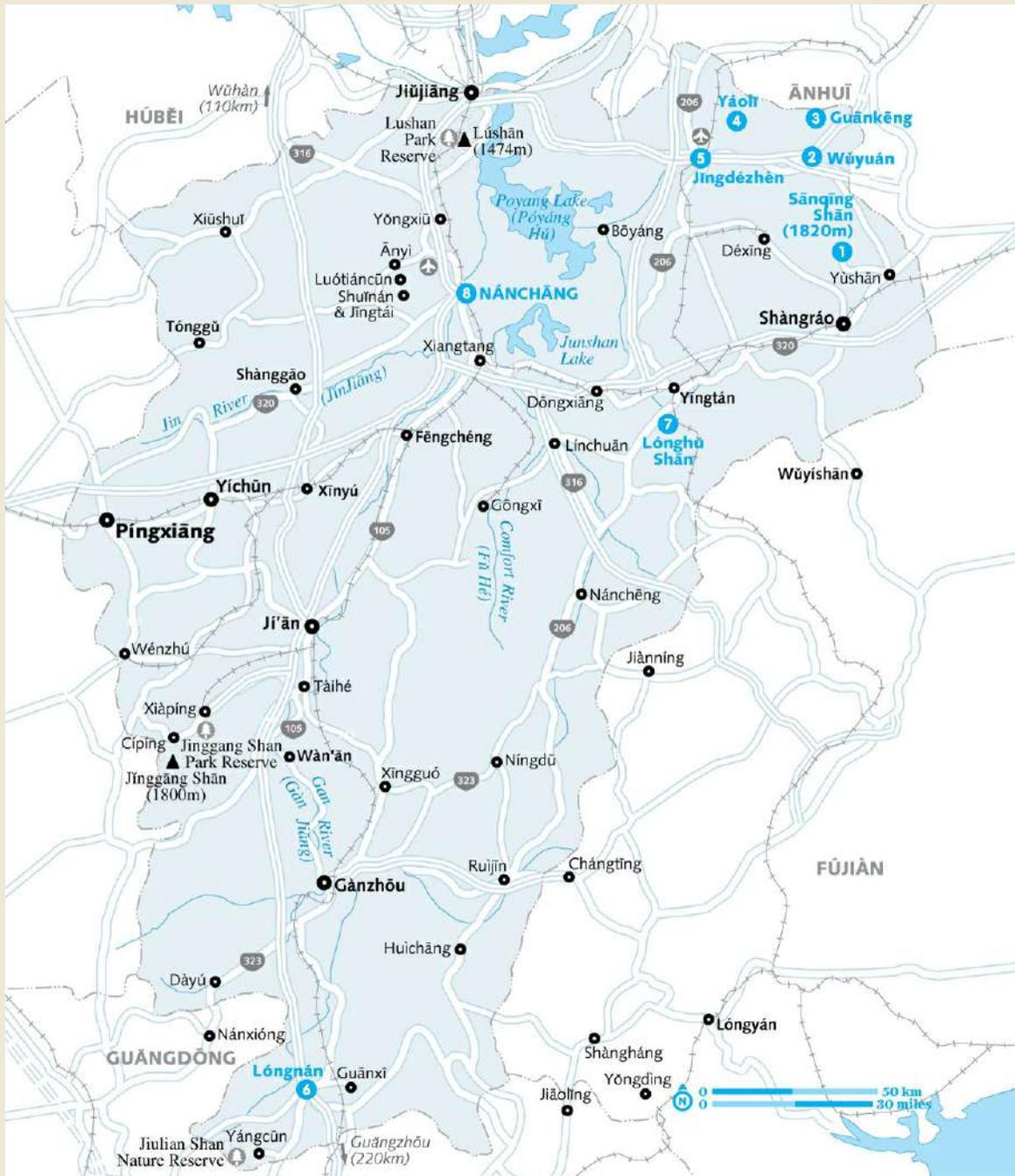
- [Yaoli](#)
- [Guankeng](#)
- [Xiaoqi](#)
- [Sixi & Yancun](#)
- [Luotiancun](#)

History

Jiangxi's Gan River Valley was the principal trade route that linked Guangdong with the rest of the country in imperial times. Its strategic location, natural resources and long growing season have ensured that the province has always been relatively well off. Jiangxi is most famous for its imperial porcelain (from Jingdezhen), although its contributions to philosophy and literature are perhaps more significant, particularly during the Tang and Song dynasties.

Peasant unrest arose in the 19th century when the Taiping rebels swept through the Yangzi River Valley. Rebellion continued into the 20th century, and Jiangxi became one of the earliest bases for the Chinese communists.

Jiangxi Highlights



- 1 Look out over a forest of granite spires in [Sanqing Mountain](#), one of eastern China's most underrated national parks.
- 2 Rent a mountain bike and village-hop your way around the countryside of [Wuyuan](#).

- 3 Hike the ancient postal trail from the remote village of [Guankeng](#).
- 4 Visit the ancient riverside village of [Yaoli](#), with its moss-hewn residences and traditional pottery kilns.
- 5 Browse for tea sets in [Jingdezhen](#), the porcelain capital of the world.
- 6 Explore Hakka country around [Longnan](#), where fortified villages and subtropical forest await.
- 7 Discover a forgotten Taoist cultural centre at family-friendly [Longhu Mountain](#).
- 8 Sample Jiangxi's best restaurants (and treat yourself to some proper coffee) in the busy provincial capital, [Nanchang](#).

Language

Most Jiangxi natives speak one of innumerable local variants of Gan, a dialect whose name is also used as a shorthand for the province. Gan is similar (some say related) to the Hakka language, spoken in southern Jiangxi.

Getting There & Around

Nanchang is connected by air to most major cities in China. There's also a small airport at Jingdezhen. Bullet trains link Nanchang with an ever-growing number of cities, including Wuhan and Shanghai. Wuyuan was also preparing, at the time of research, to be linked up to China's bullet-train network.

Travelling around the province, long-distance buses are usually quicker and more frequent than trains. Within towns and cities, local buses cost ¥1 (carry exact change). Around the villages, you may sometimes have to resort to motorbike taxis.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this region:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥100 (for a room)

\$\$ ¥100 to ¥300

\$\$\$ more than ¥300

EATING

\$ less than ¥30 (for a meal for one)

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥60

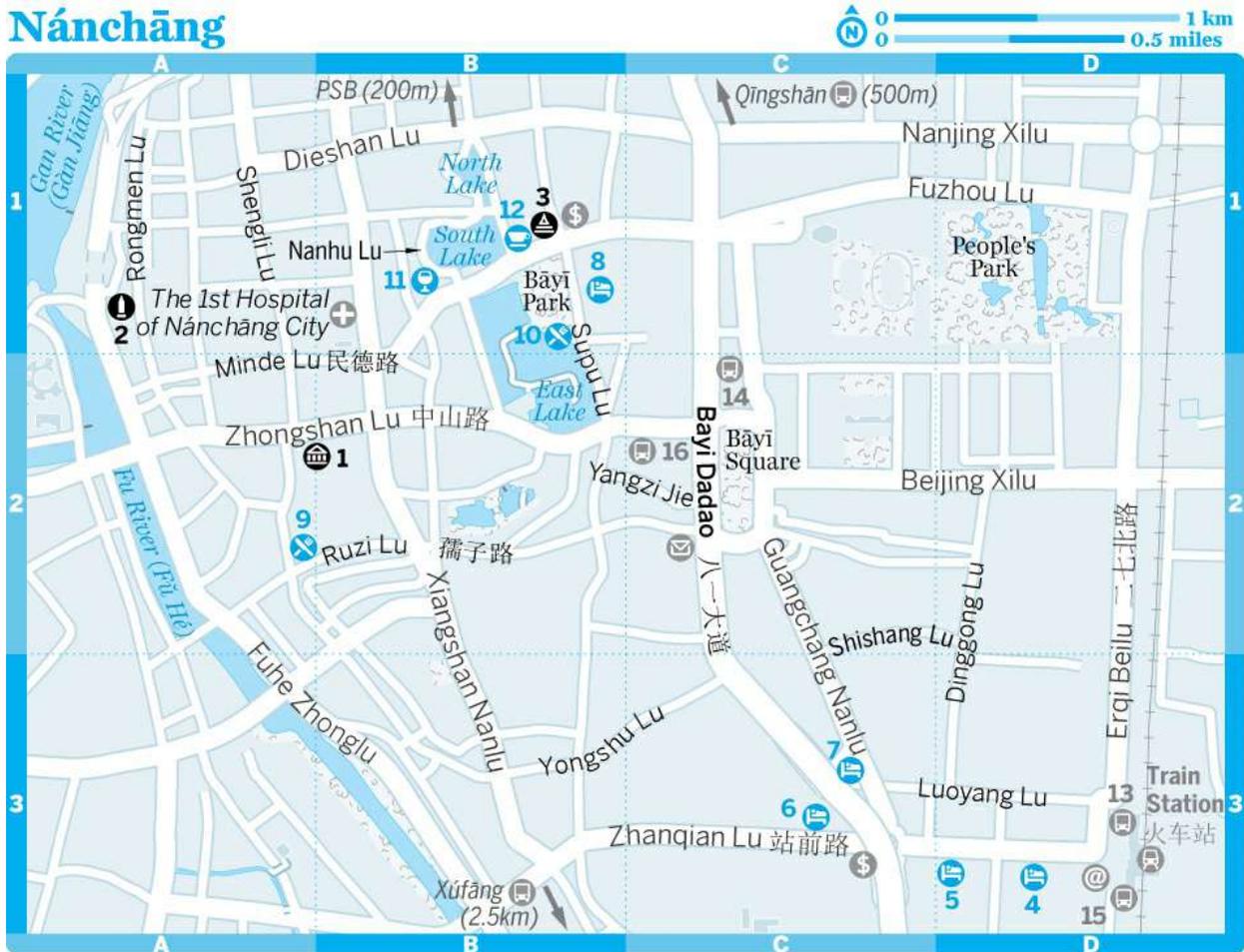
\$\$\$ more than ¥60

Nanchang

 0791 / Pop 2.5 million

A bustling, busy city, Nanchang is branded on Chinese consciousness as a revolutionary torchbearer and applauded in China's history books for its role in consolidating the power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Most foreign travellers pass through without stopping, en route to the bucolic charms of Jiangxi's marvellous countryside. If you do stay here, the most pleasant part of town is around Bayi Park.

Nánchāng



Nanchang

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Former Headquarters of the Nanchang Uprising | B2 |
| 2 | Tengwang Pavilion | A1 |
| 3 | Youmin Temple | B1 |

🏠 Sleeping

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 4 | 7 Days Inn | D3 |
| 5 | 7 Days Inn (older branch) | D3 |
| 6 | Galactic Classic International Hotel | C3 |
| 7 | Galactic Peace Hotel | C3 |
| 8 | Lihu City Hotel | B1 |

🍴 Eating

9 [Chaimi Youyan](#) A2

10 [Kalunbi Kafei](#) B1

Drinking & Nightlife

11 [Bossa Nova](#) B1

12 [Caffe Bene](#) B1

Transport

13 [Airport Bus](#) D3

14 Bayi Guangchangbei bus stop C2

15 Shuttle Bus for West Train Station D3

16 Zhongshanlu Dong bus stop C2

Sights

Tengwang Pavilion

MONUMENT

(Tengwang Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rongmen Lu, admission ¥50; 🕒 7.30am-6.15pm summer, 8am-4.50pm winter)

This nine-storey pagoda is the city's drawcard monument, first erected during Tang times, but destroyed and rebuilt no less than 29 times; most recently in 1989. Traditional music performances are played on the 6th floor. Take Bus 2 from the train station.

Youmin Temple

BUDDHIST

(Youmin Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 181 Minde Lu, ¥2; 🕒 9am-5pm)

This large, still-active temple was heavily damaged during the Cultural Revolution, but contains some notable statuary.

Former Headquarters of the Nanchang Uprising

MUSEUM

(Bayi Nanchang Qiyi Jinianguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 380 Zhongshan Lu, 🕒 9am-5pm, closed Mon) **FREE**

Wartime paraphernalia for rainy days and enthusiasts of the CCP. Admission free with passport.

Sleeping

Cheap guesthouses outside the train station have rooms for as little as ¥60.

Lihu City Hotel

HOTEL

(Lihu Chengshi Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8631 2288; 129 Supu Lu; r from ¥160; 📶 📶)

One of a few hotels near Bayi Park, Lihu has large, modern rooms with smart furnishings and strong wi-fi. It's worth paying a few extra *kuai* for one of the rooms at the front, which are brighter and have park views. Take Bus 22 from the train station to Bayi Guangchangbei bus stop, or Bus 212 from Xufang Bus Station to Zhongshanlu Dong bus stop.

7 Days Inn

HOTEL

(Qitian Liansuo Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8610 5088; www.7daysinn.cn; 19 Zhanqian Lu; r from ¥165; 📶 @ 📶)

Well-run chain hotel with clean rooms, reliable wi-fi and ¥7 Chinese breakfasts. There's an older, slightly cheaper [branch](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) further up the road.

Galactic Classic International Hotel

HOTEL

(Jialaite Jingdian Guoji Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8828 1888; www.glthp.com; 2 Bayi Dadao; r from ¥1288, discounted to ¥699)

Housed in an eye-catching modern tower, this is the most luxurious hotel in the train station area. Over the road, its older sister, [Galactic Peace Hotel](#)

(Jialaite Heping Guoji Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8611 1118; www.glthp.com; 10 Guangchang Nanlu, r from ¥1080, discounted to ¥498; 🚫 📶 @ 📶 📶), is a slightly cheaper option.



Eating & Drinking

Chaimi Youyan

JIANGXI

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 428 Ruzi Lu; mains ¥16-60; 🕒 10am-2pm & 5-11pm)

Dishes at this clean, comfortable restaurant include Jiangxi specialties such as: *jiang huang niu rou* (spicy stir-fried beef), *lao huo men ya* (duck stew), *chi tang gui yu* mandarin fish soup) and *tan wei zhou zi* (barbecued pork shoulder). Has a clear photo menu with handy pinyin.

★ Kalunbi Kafei

PAN ASIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Inside Bayi Park; mains ¥40-100; 🕒 9am-1.30am; 📶)

This modern cafe-restaurant, with a charming lakeside location inside Bayi Park, does fresh coffee (¥40), Chinese tea (¥90) and imported beer (¥30) as well as good quality food. The steaks (¥100 to ¥200) are expensive. Instead, go for noodles (¥45) or one of the tasty casserole pots (¥50 to ¥60).

Pay a few extra *kuai* to upgrade your dish to a *taocan*; a set meal with rice, soup and other small accompaniments. No English sign, but it does have an English menu.

Caffe Bene

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 1 Minde Lu;) coffee ¥25; 🕒 10.30am-11pm; 📶)

Spacious branch of the stylish Korean coffee chain. Does good coffee plus a small selection of Western food, including Belgian waffles and ice cream. Free wi-fi.

Bossa Nova

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 5 Nanhu Lu; beer from ¥15; 🕒 6pm-2am)

Brazilian-owned, this is one of Nanchang's friendliest bars. Hosts streetside Brazilian barbecues on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Information

There are 24-hour **internet cafes** by the train station. **ATMs** throughout Nanchang accept foreign cards.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang ; Zhanqian Xilu,)

Includes foreign exchange.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju  8728 8493; 131 Yangming Lu,  8am-noon & 2.30-6pm)

The 1st Hospital of Nanchang City

HOSPITAL

(Nanchang Shi Diyi Yiyuan ;  870 0989, 886 2288; 128 Xiangshan Beilu,)

Getting There & Away

AIR

Changbei airport, 28km north of Nanchang, has flights to all major Chinese cities as well as Bangkok and Singapore. Book tickets through www.ctrip.com.

BUS

Bus 89 links the train station with Xufang Bus Station. Bus 18 links the train station with Qingshan Bus Station, which will eventually be connected to the metro.

Services from **Qingshan Bus Station** (Qingshan keyunzhan):

- ➔ **Lushan** ¥55, 2½ hours, 8am, 9.30am & 10.40am
- ➔ **Wuyuan** ¥102, 3½ hours, 8am, 10.25am, 12.40pm, 2.15pm & 4.25pm

Services from **Xufang Bus Station** (Xujiafang keyunzhan):

- ➔ **Ganzhou** ¥120, 5½ hours, hourly, 7.20am-6.50pm
- ➔ **Jingdezhen** ¥83, three hours, hourly, 7am-7.30pm

- ➔ **Jiujiang** ¥37, two hours, every 40 minutes, 8am-7pm
- ➔ **Yingtian** ¥40, two hours, every 90 minutes, 7.45am-6.15pm
- ➔ **Yushan** ¥80, four hours, 2.40pm

TRAIN

An increasing number of bullet trains leave from Nanchang's new [West Train Station](#), which will eventually be connected to the metro. Until then, Shuttle Bus 1 (*gaotie bashi yihaoxian*; ¥5, 45 minutes, half-hourly 6am-11pm) links the two train stations.

Services from **Nanchang Train Station** (Nanchang Huochezhan):

- ➔ **Beijing West** Z-class hard sleeper ¥307, 11½ hours, two daily (7.55pm, 8.02pm)
- ➔ **Beijing West** K/T-class hard sleeper ¥307, 16 to 22 hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Ganzhou** K/T-class hard seat ¥63, four to six hours, 20 daily
- ➔ **Guangzhou** T/K-class hard sleeper ¥230 to ¥250, 11 to 13 hours, six daily
- ➔ **Hangzhou East** D-class bullet ¥190, five hours, four daily (8.10am, 8.58am, 1.18pm, 2.35pm)
- ➔ **Hangzhou** K-class hard sleeper ¥160 to ¥180, eight to 10 hours, 10 daily
- ➔ **Jingdezhen** K-class hard seat ¥41 to ¥47, 4½ hours, two daily (8.25am, 4.35pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai (Hongqiao)** D-class bullet ¥240, 6½ hours, three daily (8.10am, 8.58am, 2.35pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai South** K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥105/190, 10 to 14 hours, seven daily
- ➔ **Xi'an** T/K-class hard sleeper ¥270 to ¥320, 16 to 23 hours, five daily
- ➔ **Yushan** K-class hard seat ¥44, 4½ hours, seven daily

Services from **Nanchang West Train Station** (Nanchang Xizhan):

- ➔ **Beijing West** Z-class, hard sleeper ¥318, 12 hours, one daily (8.09pm)
- ➔ **Wuhan** D-class bullet ¥100, 2½ to three hours, 13 daily (8.02am to

7.39pm)

i Getting Around

Line 1 of Nanchang's new **metro** (*ditie*) should open in 2015, with Line 2 (connecting both train stations with Bayi Sq) following soon after.

Airport buses ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (¥15, 50 minutes, every 20 minutes from 5.30am to 9pm) leave from the north side of the train station square. A taxi to the airport (*jichang*) costs around ¥100.

Around Nanchang

The rarely visited, 1100-year-old village of **Luotiancun** (admission ¥40, incl admission to Shuinan and Jingtai villages), its uneven stone-flagged alleys etched with centuries of wear, provides a history-laden rural escape from urban Nanchang.

A lazy amble around the village will take you through a tight maze of lanes, past hand-worked pumps, ancient wells, stone steps, scattering chickens, lazy water buffaloes and conical haystacks. Rudimentary walking-tour signs – 'visit and go ahead' – have been put up around this village, and its two siblings, and will point you towards the most notable old buildings. (Admission costs include entry to Shuinan and Jingtai villages.)

A 1km-long flagstone path links Luotiancun with its sibling village, **Shuinan**. A further 500m down the stone path (and across the road) is the forlorn village of **Jingtai**. Both also contain some wonderful old buildings.

Simple **guesthouses** (around ¥30 per person) are available in Luotiancun – ask for *zhusu* (accommodation) – and there's a clutch of restaurants by the main square.

To get here, take Bus 22 (¥1) from Nanchang train station to a bus stop called Bayi Qiao (30 minutes), then walk 400m straight ahead to catch Bus 136, from a bus stop underneath the flyover, to the small town of Anyi (¥10, 90 minutes, frequent from 6am to 6pm). From Anyi bus station, where the

136 terminates, take a bus to nearby Shibi (¥5, 30 minutes, half-hourly, 7am to 5.30pm), but tell the ticket seller on the bus that you want to go to Luotiancun. They will then sell you a bus ticket which is also valid for the final 5km-minibus ride to the village entrance. The last bus back to Nanchang leaves Anyi at 6.30pm.

WORTH A TRIP

LUSHAN

A hilltop town with fresh air, cool temperatures and lovely mountain views, Lushan has a long history; first as a Buddhist centre, then as a retreat for foreign missionaries and finally as a political conference base for the Chinese Communist Party. Sadly, almost all traces of its Buddhist past were destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion in the mid-19th century. Some 20th-century European-style villas still dot the hillsides, though. These days, however, most people come simply to escape the scorching summer heat of Nanchang (it's particularly popular at weekends).

The walking up here is pleasant: there are plenty of viewpoints, some waterfalls and a few notable villas to head for. Buy a bilingual map (ditu; ¥6) in **Xinhua Bookshop** (Xinhua Shudian 11 Guling Zhengjie), opposite the main square – called Jiexin Park (Jiexin Gongyuan) – and head off in whatever direction takes your fancy.

There are dozens of hotels up here, and even more restaurants. **Daziran Youth Hostel** (Daziran Qingnian Lushe ☎0792 829 6327; www.yhalushan.com; 1 Hubei Lu, dm/d ¥50/180, weekends dm/d ¥70/260; 📶@📶) is the only youth hostel, though, and is worth pre-booking.



Getting There & Around

From Lushan bus station, walk through the tunnel, then turn left to get to the main square (Jiexin Park). Continue past Xinhua Bookshop (on your left), then take the next left to reach Daziran Youth Hostel (down to your right after 500m).

In summer, there are three direct buses to Lushan from Nanchang's Qingshan Bus Station. Otherwise, you'll have to first go to the small city of Jiujiang at the foot of the mountain, then catch a bus up to Lushan (¥15.5, one hour, hourly 6.50am to 4.30pm) from there. The last bus back down to Jiujiang from Lushan is at 5pm.

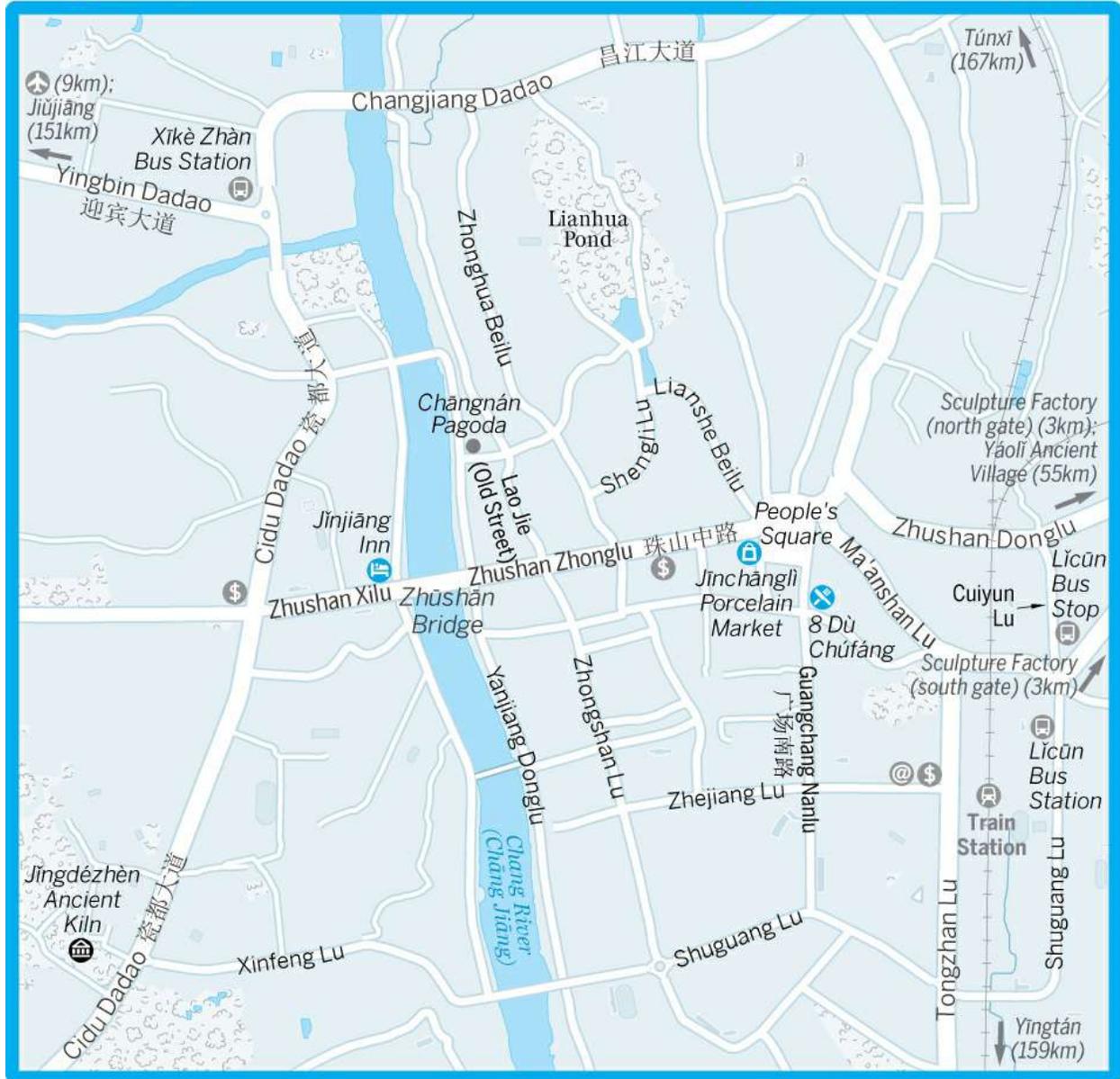
Buses from **Jiujiang Long-distance Bus Station** (Jiujiang changtu qiche zhan):

- ➔ **Nanchang** ¥37, two hours, hourly until 7pm
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥100, 3½ hours, hourly until 5.30pm
- ➔ **Wuyuan** ¥100, three hours, 8.30am, 11.50am and 2.30pm

Jingdezhen

The undisputed porcelain capital of China (and therefore the world), Jingdezhen has been producing the finest-quality ceramics for more than 1700 years. The Imperial kilns have long been extinguished (although you can visit some), but Jingdezhen still boasts a booming porcelain industry, including a thriving contemporary scene at the captivating arts district known as the Sculpture Factory.

Jǐngdézhèn



Sights

★ Sculpture Factory

ARTS CENTRE

(Diaosu Cichang 139 Xinchang Donglu;)

This tree-lined street, and the pathways that branch off it, form a kind of porcelain-production arts district, which is a centre for contemporary

ceramics in China. Some of the world's leading porcelain artists work and teach here and visitors can wander freely around the kilns, workshops and small factories as the latest masterpieces are being sculpted. This is also the most pleasant place in town to shop for ceramics, including tea sets.

While here, ceramics enthusiasts should pay a visit to the **Pottery Workshop** (Letian Taoshe 📞0798 844 0582; www.potteryworkshop.com.cn; inside the Sculpture Factory arts district; residencies incl accommodation & meals per week ¥2600). It runs highly regarded, month-long residency programmes for artists. Casual visitors can ask to look around. Staff speak English, and there's a pleasant cafe on site.

Bus 1, which runs along Zhushan Zhonglu in the centre of town, stops outside the south gate of the complex. Get off at Caojialing bus stop then walk through the archway opposite.

Jingdezhen Ancient Kiln

MUSEUM

(Guyao [GOOGLE MAP](#); Cidu Dadao; admission ¥95; 🕒8am-5pm)

A bit like a living museum, this large, nicely landscaped site contains traditional porcelain-making equipment, including revived ancient kilns, and has teams of staff demonstrating how they were once used. Some of the buildings here date from Qing and Ming times, although have been largely rebuilt. Bus 5 runs here from the train station, via Zhushan Xilu.

Sleeping & Eating

★ Jingdezhen International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Jingdezhen Guoji Qingnianlushe 📞0798 844 9998, 0798 844 8886; jdzhostel@hotmail.com; south end of the Sculpture Factory, 139 Xinchangdong Lu; dm ¥45-50, r ¥128-148)

Located inside the Sculpture Factory arts district, about 3km east of the town centre, this is the only hostel in Jingdezhen but is smart, clean and has English-speaking staff and a cafe. No website, but you can book through www.yhachina.com.

Jinjiang Inn

HOTEL

(Jinjiang Zhixing [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0798 857 1111; www.jinjianginns.com (Chinese only); 1 Zhushan Xilu; r from ¥169; 📶📶)

Comfortable, well-run chain hotel overlooking Zhushan Bridge (Zhushan Daqiao). Has attached restaurant. Bus 5 goes here from both the train station and the main bus station.

8 Du Chufang

JIANGXI

(Badu Chufang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 57 Guangchang Nanlu; mains ¥20-50; 🕒11am-9.30pm)

Popular modern restaurant serving Jiangxi specialities such as *niuqi chongtian* (spicy beef claypot), *xiangcun laodoufu* (village-style tofu) and *hongshao huangyatou* braised river fish). There are smaller, cheaper restaurants over the road, serving noodles and the like.



Shopping

Jinchangli Porcelain Market

MALL

(Jinchangli taoci dasha [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Zhushan Zhonglu; 🕒9am-6pm)

This multistorey shopping centre, specialising entirely in porcelain, isn't as pleasant a place to shop for ceramics as the Sculpture Factory, but it sure does stock a lot of tea sets!



Getting There and Away

AIR

There are daily flights to Beijing and Shanghai. Book tickets though www.ctrip.com, or at the CITS office behind Jinjiang Inn. The airport shuttle bus (*jichang bashi*; ¥10) meets arriving flights and goes to the train station, via the bus station and People's Sq (Renmin Guangchang). A taxi costs at least ¥60.

BUS

Jingdezhen's main bus station is called **Xike Zhan** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); Yingbin Dadao;). Services include the following:

Nanchang ¥85, three hours, hourly 6.50am to 7.30pm

Nanchang Airport ¥60, three hours, every two hours, 6.50am to 5.50pm

Jiujiang ¥56, 90 minutes, hourly 7.30am to 6.30pm

Wuyuan ¥30, one hour, 7.40am and 1.40pm

Yingtian ¥61, 2½ hours, 7.40am, 9.15am, 1.20pm and 5pm

Yushan ¥91, four hours, 8.20am

TRAIN

There's a train-ticket booking office beside Jinjiang Inn. Services include the following:

➔ **Beijing** K-class hard sleeper ¥350, 23 hours, 5.54am

➔ **Huangshan** K-class hard seat ¥25, three to four hours, three daytime trains (5.54am, 4.20pm and 5.44pm)

➔ **Nanchang** K-class hard seat ¥41 to ¥47, five hours, two daily (7.33am and 1.47pm)

➔ **Shanghai** K-class hard sleeper ¥200, 17 hours, 5.44pm

WORTH A TRIP

YAOLI

Situated on the banks of the Yaohe River, and surrounded by forested hills and tea plantations, **Yaoli Ancient Village** (Yaoli Guzhen), 90 minutes from Jingdezhen, is a gorgeous rural getaway.

Like Jingdezhen, Yaoli was one of China's original centres for porcelain production, and there's an ancient kiln site you can visit here. The village itself is made up of elegant, moss-hewn, stone-walled courtyard homes, many of which are still lived in, and wandering its tight, riverside pathways is a treat.

It's free to walk around the village but you need a ticket to enter any of the notable buildings. The ¥150 'through ticket' gives you access to all the sights, but better value is the ¥60 ticket, which gets you in to the village's four best sights, including the Ancient Kiln and the engaging **Cheng Ancestral Hall** (Chengmin Zongci), where you

can buy your ticket.

The **Ancient Kiln** (Guyao) is about 3km beyond the village (away from Jingdezhen); walk along the country road and you'll see the entrance on your right. It contains a collection of sights, all strung out along a riverside walk (give yourself at least an hour here). Don't miss the Song-dynasty 'dragon kiln' (longyao), which was built up a slope to increase the heat of the kiln's fire.

Simple restaurants, teahouses and family-run **guesthouses** (nongjiale) are dotted around the village, including cute **Pingchang Renjia** (📞150 7980 8902; Yaoli Guzhen; r ¥80; 📶📶), to the left of the river as you enter the village.

Direct buses to Yaoli (¥14, 90 minutes) leave from Jingdezhen's **Licun Bus Station** (Licun Chezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shuguang Lu;) at 7.30am and 2.30pm, and return at 9am and 3.40pm. Alternatively, catch a bus to Ehu (every 20 minutes until 5pm) from the same station, then change for Yaoli (frequent). To get to Licun Bus Station, take Bus 1 to **Licun Bus Stop** (Licun Chezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Cuiyun Lu;), walk back on yourself, cross the junction and it will be on your right.

Wuyuan

📞 0793 / Pop 81,200

The countryside around Wuyuan is home to some of southeastern China's most immaculate views. Parcelled away in this hilly pocket is a scattered cluster of picturesque Huizhou villages, where old China remains preserved in enticing panoramas of ancient bridges, trickling streams and stone-flagged alleyways. For more on Huizhou villages, see [Click here](#).

Despite lending its name to the entire area, Wuyuan itself is a fairly bog-standard town, but it has some comfortable hotels, and is where you can arrange bicycle hire for cycling trips into the countryside.

Wengong Beilu, and its southern extension Wengong Nanlu, is the main north-south drag.

Sleeping

[Yingdu Binguan](#)

HOTEL

(📞 734 8620; 13 Wengong Nanlu, r ¥100; 📶 @ 📶)

Centrally located hotel in reasonable condition. Bus 1 to People's Hospital (Renmin Yiyuan).

Tianma Hotel

HOTEL

(Tianma Dajiudian 📞 736 7123; www.wytm.cn; 119 Wengong Beilu, r from ¥628, discounted to ¥158; 📶 @ 📶)

This smart hotel, opposite Beizhan (North Bus Station), is comfortable. Breakfast included.

Information

ATMs are plentiful in Wuyuan, but not in the villages, so load up with cash here.

People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Renmin Yiyuan Wengong Nanlu)

Bus 1 goes here.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju 2 Huancheng Beilu; 🕒 8-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm)

Bus 1 goes here.

Qihang Wangba

INTERNET

(Wengong Nanlu; per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr)

Internet cafe; next to the People's Hospital.

Xinhua Bookstore

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Xinhua Shudian Tianyou Xilu; 🕒 8am-8pm)

The **Wuyuan Tourist Map** (*luyou jiaotong tu*; ¥6) sold here is in Chinese only, but includes a street map of Wuyuan town and a road map of the

surrounding countryside. Very useful if you intend to cycle out to the villages. Bus 1 goes here, or walk downhill along Wengong Nanlu, bear left and it's on your left.

CYCLING AROUND WUYUAN

Though you can reach most of Wuyuan's villages by bus, cycling gives you more freedom to village-hop around the surrounding countryside. Roads are in good nick and well signposted in pinyin as well as Chinese characters. You can pick up a Chinese map of the area from [Xinhua Bookstore](#).

One possible two- to three-day trip is the 130-km circuit from Wuyuan, passing Likeng, Xiaoqi and the Duanxin Reservoir, before looping back to Wuyuan via Qinghua and Sikou. Follow Wengong Beilu north out of Wuyuan to pick up signs to Likeng.

How long the circuit takes you depends on how much time you spend in each village, but the total cycling time (not including side trips to villages such as Guankeng and Lingjiao (both 30 minutes from the main road)) is about seven or eight hours. You could do it in two days, but taking three days makes more sense.

Some roads are hilly, but the only really tough climb is the one-hour slog from Jiangling up to the Duanxin Reservoir.

Individual cycling times from Wuyuan to various villages:

Likeng one hour

Wangkou 90 minutes

Xiaoqi 2½ hours

Guankeng 4½ hours

Sikou one hour

Qinghua 90 minutes

In Wuyuan, the following places rent bikes; don't forget to ask for a bike lock (chesuo).

XDS Bikes

BICYCLE HIRE

(Xidesheng Zixingche ☎187 2056 3868; 56 Wengong Beilu; 🕒6.30am-10pm)

This place rents brand new mountain bikes for ¥100 per day (deposit ¥1000). It is located down the hill from [Tianma Hotel](#).

Merida Bike Shop

BICYCLE HIRE

(Meilida Zixingche ☎0793 734 1818, 135 1703 3662; Liangli Shanlu;) 🕒8.30am-9pm)

Rents good-quality second-hand mountain bikes for ¥30 per day (deposit ¥500).

Helpful staff. It is located a short walk downhill from [Tianma Hotel](#). Turn left at the crossroads, then second left.

Getting There & Around

➔ **Local Bus 1** (¥1; 6am to 6pm), from Wuyuan Bus Station forecourt, goes to North Bus Station and People's Hospital before terminating at the new train station.

BUS

➔ **Wuyuan Bus Station** (Wuyuan qichezhan) is about 2km west of town.

Bus services include the following:

➔ **Hangzhou** ¥140, 3½ hours, 9.10am, 1.30pm and 4.30pm

➔ **Jiujiang** ¥100, 2½ hours, 8.20am, 11.50am and 2.30pm

➔ **Nanchang** ¥111, 3½ hours, 8am, 10am, 12.10pm, 2pm and 5pm

➔ **Shanghai South** ¥210, six hours, 9.50am and 10.30am

➔ **Sanqing Mountain** (east section) ¥32, 1½ hours, 11am

➔ **Tunxi** ¥46, 2½ hours, 8.20am and 1.20pm

➔ **Yushan** ¥46, 2½ hours, 8.10am, 11am and 1.20pm

Services from the smaller **North Bus Station** (Beizhan) include the following:

➔ **Guankeng** ¥23, 2½ hours, 7am, 8.30am, 11am and 2.30pm

➔ **Likeng** ¥6, 20 minutes, half-hourly (6.30am to 5.20pm)

➔ **Lingjiao** ¥20, 90 minutes, 8am, 9.20am, 10.30am, 1.30pm and 3.10pm

➔ **Qinghua** (via Sikou) ¥10, 30 minutes, half-hourly (7am to 5pm)

➔ **Xiaoqi** ¥15, one hour, hourly (6.30am to 3.30pm)

TRAIN

Wuyuan's new **train station** (*huochezhan*) was due to open sometime in 2015. It will form part of the high-speed rail line from Fuzhou to Hefei,

where it will connect with another high-speed line to Beijing.

Around Wuyuan

Wuyuan has become a massively popular destination with domestic tourists in the past few years. Avoid public holidays and, if possible, weekends.

There are two main ticketing options: either a **five-day pass** (¥210), which grants you admission to 12 villages/scenic areas, or **single tickets** (¥60) at each village.

Lesser-known villages, such as Guankeng, Lingjiao, Qingyuan and Changxi, are free to visit.

Pretty much every village will have accommodation (*zhusu*) of some sort. Expect to pay around ¥30 to ¥40 per person per night, plus about the same for a meal.

Around Wùyuan



i Getting Around

It's relatively easy to bus-hop your way from village to village if you stick to the more popular villages. Buses, for example, shuttle between Wuyuan and

Jiangwan – via Likeng and Wangkou – every 20 minutes until 5pm.
Likewise, there are frequent services along the Wuyuan-to-Qinghua road, via Sikou.

If you're trying to get to a more remote village, then consider taking a motorbike taxi. Expect to pay around ¥20 for a 10km-ride.

The Villages

Likeng

Likeng (admission ¥60) is the most picturesque village in the area (although the new elevated high-speed train line at one end does its best to spoil the scene). It enjoys a stupendous riverside setting, hung with lanterns, threaded by narrow alleys and tightly bound together by quaint bridges. Come nighttime, it's even more serene, with riverside lanes glowing softly under red lanterns and old-fashioned street lamps.

Likeng's highly photogenic focal point hinges on the confluence of its two streams, traversed by the bump of the 300-year-old **Tongji Bridge** (Tongji Qiao) and signposted by the **Shenming Pavilion** (Shenming Ting), one of the village's signature sights, its wooden benches polished smooth with age.

Among the *baicai* (Chinese cabbage) draped from bamboo poles and chunks of cured meat hanging out in the air from crumbling, mildewed buildings, notable structures include the **Patina House** (Tonglu Fang), erected during Qing times by a copper merchant, the rebuilt **old stage** (*guxitai*), where Chinese opera and performances are still held during festivals, and spirit walls erected on the riverbank to shield residents from the sound of cascading water.

Walk in any direction and you will hit the countryside.

Accommodation is easy to find; try the helpful **Brook Hotel** (Xiaoqiao Yizhan ☎ 138 7032 7901, 138 7934 9519; limin608058@126.com; d ¥100; 🌿 @ 📶) near Tongji Bridge, where young mum 'Linda' speaks some English, or the charming **Guangming Teahouse** (Guangming Chalou ☎ 0793 737 0999; d ¥80; 🌿 📶), just

beyond it, perched above the village stream. Guangming Teahouse is a lovely spot for lunch (English menu; mains ¥12 to ¥40) even if you don't stay the night.

Buses drop you off at the village turn-off, from where it's a five-minute walk to the ticket office.

Note, there are two Likeng villages in the region. This one is smaller, so is sometimes called Xiao Likeng (Little Likeng).

Wangkou

Less popular than some of the other ticketed villages, Wangkou (admission ¥60), 9km northeast of Likeng, enjoys a fine location beside a rushing weir at the confluence of two large rivers.

Xiaoqi

About 35km from Wuyuan, **Xiaoqi** (admission ¥60) dates back to AD 787. There are actually two villages here: the larger, more touristy lower Xiaoqi (Xia Xiaoqi) and the much quieter upper Xiaoqi (Shang Xiaoqi), where you'll find a fascinating old **tea factory** (*chuantong shengtai cha zuofang*). The two are linked by a timeworn, 500m-long stone pathway. Both parts of the village have accommodation.

Guankeng

If you've had enough of the jostling tour groups, the isolated village of Guankeng is a wonderful place to escape to. It doesn't have the architectural beauty of more famous villages here – although it is still highly attractive, nestled, as it is, in the pinch of two valleys – but unlike some other villages it is largely undeveloped and has never been repackaged for the tour bus crowd. This is also the start point of a wonderful three-hour hike to the equally quiet village of Lingjiao; see [Click here](#).

A few independent Chinese travellers come here, so there are a couple of

guesthouses; riverside **Guankeng Fandian** (☎0793 725 9588; beside the arched bridge; per person ¥40; 📶📶) does good meals and has someone who speaks a little English. **Luyou Zhijia** (☎158 7936 4277; per person ¥20-40) has great views of the village from its rooftop.

Buses from here to Wuyuan (¥22, two hours) leave at 6am, 6.40am, 7.30am and 11am.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

WALKING WUYUAN'S ANCIENT POSTAL TRAILS

Many of Wuyuan's villages are linked by timeworn **postal roads** (*yidao*) that today provide hikers with the perfect excuse to explore the area's gorgeous backcountry: imagine wild azalea, wisteria and iris blooms dotting steep hills cut by cascading streams and you're off to the right start.

Most trails are difficult to navigate without help from a local, but one fabulous 8km-long, three-hour trail linking the rarely visited villages of **Guankeng** and **Lingjiao** has bilingual signposts along its route, so can be done independently.

The path takes you up and over a pass, and has numerous steps, so is unfeasible if you've cycled out here.

Follow the hiking sign beside Guankeng Fandian, in Guankeng village, and head straight upstream. After the second pavilion (near the top of the pass) turn left, then right immediately afterwards, to continue on the path to Lingjiao, from where you can catch a bus back to Wuyuan (¥20, 90 minutes, 7am, 11.30am and 1pm).

Qinghua

Qinghua is the largest and least-captivating place in Wuyuan, but it has restaurants, hotels, grocery stores and ATMs so can be a handy stop.

Laojie (Old Street), which leads down to the 800-year-old **Rainbow Bridge** (*Caihong Qiao*), is the town's most interesting street, and has a few simple guesthouses (*kezhan*). For something more comfortable try **Qinghua Binguan** (☎0793 724 2789; r ¥238, discounted to ¥120; 📶📶), the town's best hotel.

Buses leave from the turn-off into the town, and include the following:

Jingdezhen ¥25, two hours, 7.20am, 8.30am and 2pm

Wuyuan (via Sikou) ¥10, 30 minutes, half-hourly 6am to 5pm
Buses between Wuyuan and Lingjiao also stop here.

Sixi & Yancun

The village of Sixi (admission including Yancun Village ¥60) is a delightful little place favoured by film crews, with the prow-shaped, covered wooden **Tongji Bridge** (Tongji Qiao) at its entrance, dating back to the 15th century. Follow the signs to the numerous Qing-dynasty residences, making sure not to miss the large **Jingxu Hall** (Jingxu Tang). A 15-minute walk back along the road, towards Sikou, brings you to Yancun, Sixi's more homely sibling, where you'll find yet more Qing architecture, plus the outstanding Go Home Hotel.

To get here, take any Wuyuan–Qinghua bus (¥3, 20 minutes) and get off at Sikou. Motorbikes will take you the rest of the way (¥5), or just walk (3km).

Go Home Hotel (Guiqu Laixi 📞0793 733 5118; Yancun Village; r ¥328-1180; 🌐📶), housed in a 270-year-old former residence in Yancun, is an immaculately renovated boutique hotel and is the most appealing place to stay in any of the villages around Wuyuan. Each room is different (ask to see them all), but decorated beautifully with period wooden furniture. Breakfast is free. Lunch and dinner cost ¥50 each. No website, but you can book a room through ctrip.com (search for Guiqu Laixi Hotel).

Sanqing Mountain

📞0793

Imagine a hiking trail built into a sheer rock face, looking out onto a forest of fantastical granite spires and a gorgeous canopy sprinkled with white rhododendron blooms. This is one of the many walks you can do at **Sanqing Mountain** (Sanqing Shan www.sanqingshan.com.cn; adult/student ¥150/80), one of the most underrated national parks in eastern China.

Unlike Huangshan, its more famous neighbour to the north, Sanqing Mountain has a spiritual legacy and has been a place of retreat for Taoist adepts for centuries. The name Sanqing means ‘The Three Pure Ones’, in reference to the three main peaks, believed to resemble Taoism’s three most important deities. Views are spectacular in any season, reaching a climax when the rhododendrons bloom in late May.

There are enough trails that you could easily spend two days up here, though a long day hike is doable. There are two main access points: the southern section (*nan bu*) and the eastern section (*dong bu*).

You can buy maps (¥5), or photograph ones on signboards.

Sights & Activities

Nanqing Garden

MOUNTAIN

(Nanqing Yuan)

Sanqing Mountain's main summit area is known as the Nanqing Garden, a looping trail that wends beneath strange pinnacles and connects the southern and eastern sections.

West Coast Trail

HIKING

(Xi Hai'an)

The spectacularly exposed West Coast Trail was built into the cliff face at an average altitude of 1600m. This trail eventually leads to the secluded **Taoist Sanqing Temple** (Sanqing Gong), established during the Ming dynasty. It's one of the few Taoist temples in Jiangxi to have survived the Cultural Revolution.

Sunshine Coast Trail

HIKING

(Yangguang An)

The Sunshine Coast Trail winds through a forest of ancient rhododendrons, sweet chestnut, bamboo, magnolia and pine, and even features a glass-floored

observation platform. There are lots of steps here; take it on the way back from the [Taoist Sanqing Temple](#).

Sleeping & Eating

You can sleep in three areas: on the summit, at the trailheads or in the town of Yushan. Prices rise on weekends, when it's a good idea to reserve if you want to sleep at the trailheads or on the summit.

Yushan

Fangfang Binguan

GUESTHOUSE

( 220 5890, 187 7931 6629; off Renmin Dadao, s/d ¥60/90;  )

The best of a few simple family-run guesthouses near the bus station. Left, then second left.

International Trade Hotel

HOTEL

(Guomao Dajiudian  0793 235 3922; Renmin Beilu,) r ¥218, discounted to ¥198)

Smart hotel with good-value, spacious rooms. Opposite the bus station.

Xintingji Tucaiguan

JIANGXI

(Renmin Dadao; mains ¥20-50;  9am-9pm)

Clean friendly restaurant with a clear photo menu and very tasty dishes. Specialties include *jinpai guomen tuji* (free-range chicken casserole), *xiaochao huangniurou* (spicy beef stir-fry) and *suijiao baiyu dou* (a simple but tasty broad bean dish). Turn left out of the bus station and it's on your left just before the crossroads.

At the Trailheads

There's at least a dozen hotels at both the eastern and southern trailheads.

Diwang Shanzhuang

HOTEL

( 213 7999; d from ¥280, discounted to ¥100)

Convenient rooms at Sanqing Mountain's eastern trailhead.

Nanqing Kezhan

GUESTHOUSE

( 138 7930 6267, 0793 218 0019; southern entrance;) tw ¥160)

Simple guesthouse near the cable car at Sanqing Mountain's southern trailhead.

Sanqingshan International Resort

HOTEL

(Sanqingshan Guoji Dujia Jiudian  223 3333; www.sqshotel.com; tw from ¥1988, discounted to ¥788; )

At the southern trailhead, this stylish hotel is Sanqing Mountain's best.

On the Summit

Rishang Binguan

HOTEL

( 218 9377; r from ¥480)

One of several summit hotels; a 10-minute walk past the top of Sanqing's southern chairlift.

Nushen Hotel

HOTEL

(Nushen Jiudian  218 9366; r from ¥480)

A 20-minute walk past the top of Sanqing's eastern chairlift.

Getting There & Away

Sanqing Mountain is accessed via the town of Yushan. The 11am bus from Wuyuan to Yushan stops at Sanqing Mountain (eastern section). The return to Wuyuan leaves at around 7pm.

BUS

- ➔ **Yushan Bus Station** (*Yushan qichezhan*) services:
- ➔ **Hangzhou** ¥105, four hours, 7.30am, 9am, 11.20am and 3.30pm
- ➔ **Nanchang** ¥80, four to five hours, 7.10am and 3pm
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥145, 5½ hours, 10am
- ➔ **Wuyuan** ¥45, 2½ hours, 7.55am and 1.20pm

TRAIN

Local Bus 8 (¥1) links the train and bus stations, but is only hourly. A motor-rickshaw costs around ¥5. Destinations from **Yushan train station** (Yushan huozhezhan) include the following:

- ➔ **Hangzhou** K-class hard seat ¥52, four to five hours, four morning trains (6.47am, 6.54am, 7.05m and 8.38am)
- ➔ **Nanchang** K-class hard seat ¥44, four hours, four daytime trains (8.39am, 11.57am, 1.51pm and 3.47pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai South** K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥75/138, seven hours, seven daily
- ➔ **Yingtian** K-class hard seat ¥24, two hours, six daytime trains (8.39am to 5.10pm)

Getting Around

Buses (¥17, 80 minutes, 6.30am to 5.20pm) run from Yushan bus station to the start of both the eastern section and southern section – make sure you specify your destination, as no buses link the two sections and they are at least 20km apart. The last buses back to Yushan leave just after 4.30pm.

A **cable car** (Sanqing Shan Suodao one way/return ¥70/125) leaves from both sections. The eastern section cable car ride is more spectacular, but leaves you further from the West Coast Trail; if you're walking, the southern section is a much shorter hike. Note, you can use your return ticket on either cable car.

Estimated hiking times from the southern section trailhead:

top of southern-section cable car: 1½ hours
top of eastern-section cable car: three hours
bottom of eastern-section cable car: five hours
Nanqing Garden loop and back: four hours

Longhu Mountain

 0701

Ideal for a family trip, Longhu Mountain (Longhu Shan) combines beautiful riverside scenery and a touch of Taoist history with raft rides, a miniature train and even a 4D cinema.

During the Song dynasty (AD960–1279) Longhu Mountain became the centre of the emergent Zhengyi sect, which claimed to represent the teachings of religious Taoism's founder, Zhang Daoling (AD34–156). Together with the Quanzhen sect, Zhengyi Taoism was one of the most prominent schools of Taoism in late imperial China, and there were once over 100 temples and monasteries here.

The Cultural Revolution may have wiped clean the physical traces of this past, but with a setting reminiscent of a landscape painting – a winding river, clusters of red sandstone peaks, grazing water buffaloes and solitary herons – this scenic area offers an easily packaged taste of the lush Jiangxi countryside.

Sights & Activities

The Longhu Mountain scenic area encompasses 200 sq km, most of which is located along the eastern bank of the Luxi River. Entrance costs ¥150, but most people buy the **combined ticket** (¥260), which includes admission to seven sites and a raft ride, as well as transport on miniature trains (main entrance to Zhengyi Temple) and shuttle buses (from Zhengyi Temple to the Residence of the Celestial Masters). To get the most out of your visit, narrow

your sightseeing options to two main areas: the Residence of the Celestial Masters and Elephant's Trunk Hill.

At the main entrance are two small museums, the **Taoist Museum** (Longhu Shan Daojiao Bowuguan 🕒 8am-5pm), with information in Chinese only, and the **Geology Museum** (Longhu Shan Dizhi Bowuguan 🕒 8am-5pm), with detailed explanations of Longhu Mountain's formation. The dinosaur-themed **4D-cinema** (Dianyingyuan ¥25) is above the ticket office.

Residence of the Celestial Masters

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Tianshi Fu)

This is the largest and best-preserved temple in the area. It was originally built in the Song dynasty, thoroughly renovated in the Qing dynasty and then again in the 1990s. The oldest building still standing is the **Sanctuary of Triple Introspection** (San Xing Tang), which dates to 1865. To get here, walk 15 minutes through old Shangqing village from the shuttle drop-off. Another 500m along Fuqian Jie is an abandoned **Catholic church** (Tianzhujiao Tang).

Located about 28km from Longhu Mountain's main entrance.

Shangqing Palace

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Da Shangqing Gong)

This temple complex was almost entirely destroyed by fire; only the entrance gate, first courtyard (with the drum and bell tower) and a few side halls remain. A mythic spot, Shangqing Palace is the alleged site of the residence of the first Celestial Master (Zhang Daoling).

Elephant's Trunk Hill

SCENIC AREA

(Xiangbi Shan)

Close to Longhu Mountain's main entrance, this is the first stop you'll reach on the area's miniature train. Here you can hike a loop past rock formations and rebuilt temples, then descend to the river from where you'll be able to

spy Longhu Mountain's 2500-year-old **hanging coffins** (*xuan guan*) on the opposite side of the bank.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotels and restaurants are conveniently based near the main entrance. There are also small restaurants inside the park, at Shangqing village.

Longhu Shan Kezhan

GUESTHOUSE

( 665 9506; 39 Xianrencheng Lu; r with/without air-con ¥80/60;  )

One block back from the main entrance to Longhu Mountain scenic area, this little guesthouse is clean and friendly.

Rongsheng Binguan

HOTEL

(Rongsheng Binguan  665 7666; tw from ¥168, discounted to ¥150;   )

Tasteful and surprisingly sophisticated, Rongsheng is opposite the Longhu Mountain park entrance, on the corner.

Information

There are **internet cafes** (*wangba*) and **ATMs** by the train station in Yingtian.

Getting There & Around

Longhu Mountain is near the small city of Yingtian. To get to Longhu Mountain from Yingtian, take bus K2, which runs from the train station, past the bus station and on to the main entrance (¥3, 25 minutes, 6.15am to 7pm, every 15 minutes).

Services from **Yingtian Train Station** (Yingtian huochezhan):

➔ **Hangzhou** D-class bullet, ¥148, four hours, five daily (9.17am to 3.42pm)

➔ **Hangzhou** T/K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥72/132, six to seven hours, 20 daily

- ➔ **Jingdezhen** K-class hard seat ¥24, three hours, four daytime trains (8.32am, 10.23am, 1.17pm and 2.52pm)
- ➔ **Nanchang** D-class bullet ¥43, one hour, four daily (1.02pm, 8.23pm, 9.27pm and 10.40pm)
- ➔ **Nanchang** K-class hard seat ¥24, two hours, 20 daily
- ➔ **Shanghai Hongqiao** D-class bullet ¥195, 5½ hours, four daily (9.17am, 10.05am, 2.37pm and 3.42pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai South** K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥94 to ¥168, eight to nine hours, 30 daily
- ➔ **Yushan** K-class hard seat ¥24, two hours, six daytime trains (6.27am to 5.56pm)

Services from **Yingtian bus station** (Yingtian keyunzhan):

- ➔ **Jingdezhen** ¥55, three hours, 7.40am, 8.40am, 12.40pm and 1.50pm
- ➔ **Nanchang** ¥42, two hours, hourly 7.30am to 6.15pm
- ➔ **Wuyuan** ¥76, 3½ hours, 8.30am, 11.50am and 1.20pm

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

LONGNAN

In the deep south of Jiangxi lies the rarely visited Hakka country, a region of lush hills peppered with fortified villages, unusually built in rectangular shapes, unlike the mostly circular tulou (roundhouse) of Fujian. Although there are estimates of some 370 such dwellings in Longnan County, we've narrowed down the choices here to two relatively easy to access areas, both of which can be visited from the riverside town of Longnan.

Sights

Built in 1827 by Xu Mingjun, a wealthy lumber merchant, **Guanxi New Fort** (Guanxi Xin Wei admission ¥10) is the largest and most ornate fortified village in the county. The smaller, more run-down fort just behind it is known as lao wei (old fort) and was built by Xu's father. Nearby is the **Hakka Wine Castle** (Kejia Jiubao admission ¥15, but rarely enforced), built in 1836 by a rich wine producer. A bus from outside Xinxing Binguan in Binjiang Sq in Longnan runs to Guanxi (¥5.50, 40 minutes, every 45 minutes from

6.15am to 5.40pm), passing by the Hakka Wine Castle (¥3).

A number of crumbling old fortified villages lie in the vicinity of Yangcun town, including the fascinating, 350-year-old **Yanyi Wei** (admission ¥10, but rarely applied), the tallest such residence in the county (four storeys). It's still lived in by villagers and you can climb all four storeys. Don't miss stopping off at the striking **Wudang Mountain** (Wudang Shan admission ¥15; ☀8am-5.30pm), a group of weathered sandstone peaks (not to be confused with Hubei's more famous Wudang Shan), which can be climbed (one hour) for fabulous views of the surrounding subtropical forest. To get to Yangcun, take a bus (¥12.5, 1¼ hours, frequent) from the small bus station at 99 Longding Dadao in Longnan. The bus passes Wudang Mountain (one hour).

In Longnan, you can stay at **Xinxing Binguan** (☎0797 353 6288; Binjiang Sq; d/tw ¥128/148, discounted to ¥70/90; 📶@📶), which overlooks Binjiang Sq.

If you're interested in exploring other traditional Hakka dwellings – or just fancy taking the back route into Guangdong province – you can catch a bus from Longnan's long-distance bus station to Meizhou (¥80, 4 hours, 7.20am), where you'll find China's largest cluster of weilongwu (coiled-dragon houses). From there you can catch a bus on to Yongding, to see Fujian's famed tulou.

Getting There & Around

Two direct trains to Longnan run from Nanchang (hard seat ¥75, 7½ hours, 3.33pm and 3.47pm) while one runs from Guangzhou East (hard seat ¥87, 5½ hours, 11.25am). Otherwise take a bus from Nanchang to Ganzhou (¥120, 5½ hours, hourly, 7.20am to 6.50pm), where you can transfer to a Longnan bus (¥58, two hours, hourly until 6pm). The bus from Ganzhou will stop at Longnan's long-distance bus station (changtu qichezhan) before terminating at the small bus station at 99 Longding Dadao, which is 200m from Binjiang Sq (turn left).

Local Bus 1 (¥1) goes from the train station in Longnan, past the long-distance bus station and onto Binjiang Sq (Binjiang Guangchang).

Hunan

Hunan Highlights

Changsha

Shaoshan

Heng Shan

Zhangjiajie

Fenghuang

Hongjiang Old Town

Hunan



Population 66 million

Why Go?

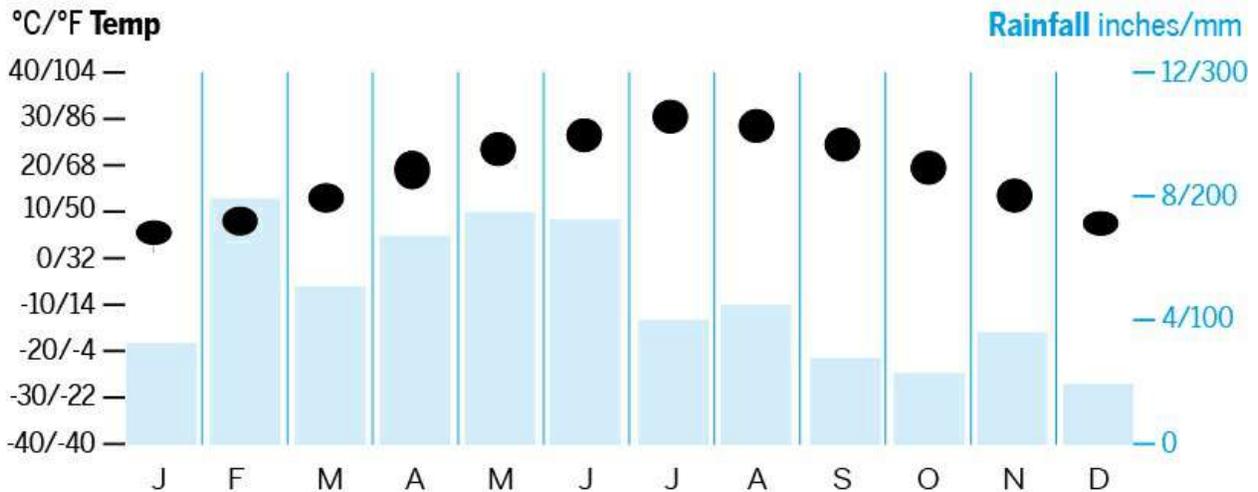
Communist Party cadres might wax lyrical about the sacred standing of Hunan in the annals of Chinese history, being as it is the birthplace of Mao Zedong, but it is Hunan's dramatic scenery that is the real draw.

A magnificent landscape of isolated mountain ranges and jagged, karst peaks covers more than 80% of the province. The most astonishing example is found at the phantasmagorical Zhangjiajie; one of China's most surreal national parks. Here, as in other parts of the province, geological marvels rise up majestically from green vales fed by tributaries in the fertile Yangzi River basin.

People have long made a home amid Hunan's natural wonders, taming the rocky slopes into terraces of lush fields, and their distinctive cultures live on in charming villages and towns, the most alluring being the historic riverside settlement of Fenghuang.

When to Go

Chángshā



- ➔ **Apr & May** After a chilly (though not freezing) winter, spring brings welcome warmth, and mountain flowers.
- ➔ **Sep & Oct** Temperatures cool after a scorching summer. Autumnal leaves emblazon Zhangjiajie.
- ➔ **Dec-Feb** Tour groups disappear from Fenghuang. Zhangjiajie is sometimes brushed with snow.

Best Scenery

- ➔ [Zhangjiajie](#)
- ➔ [Heng Shan](#)
- ➔ [Yuelu Mountain](#)
- ➔ [Dehang's Liusha Falls](#)

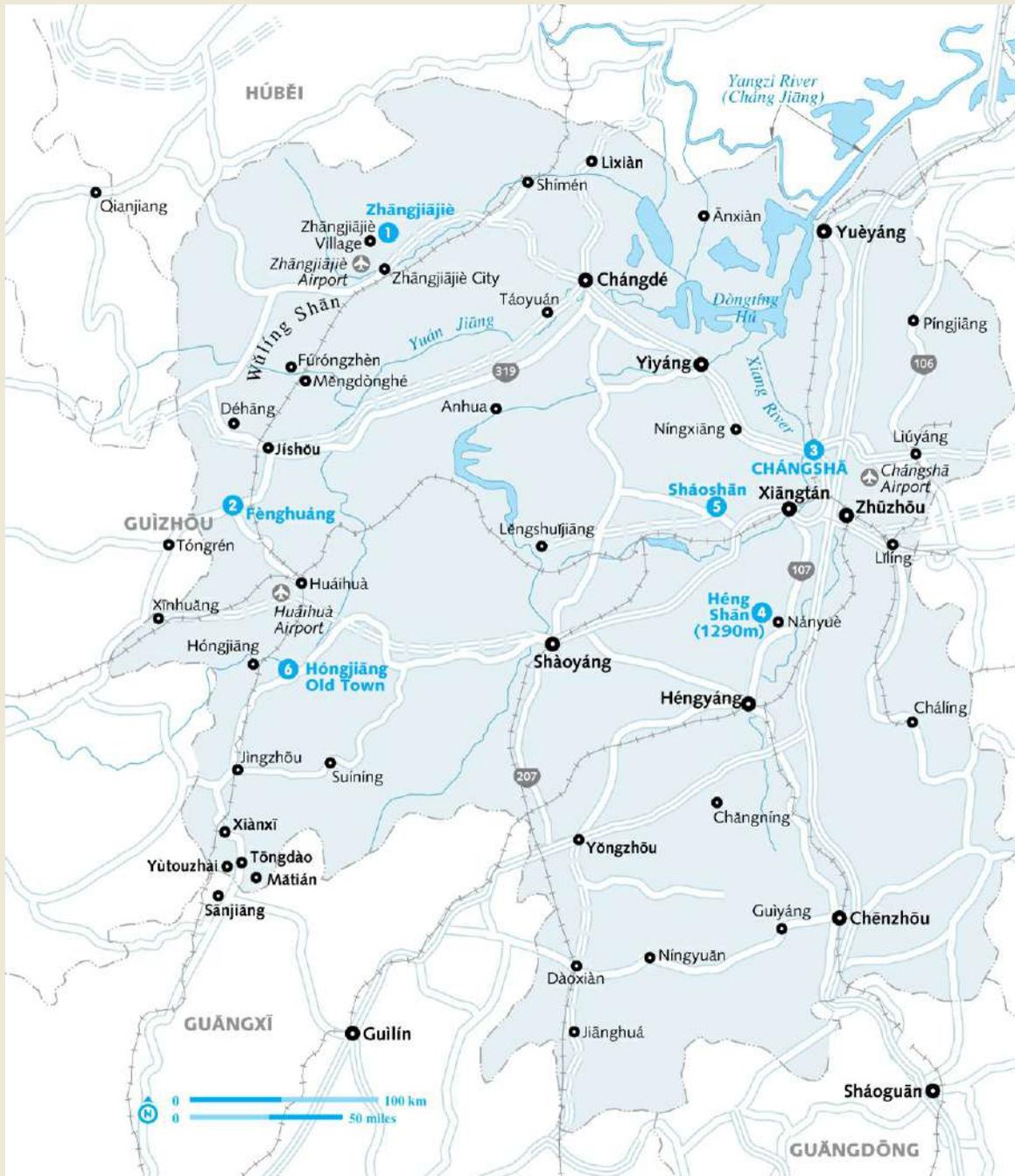
Best for Chinese History

- ➔ [Fenghuang](#)
- ➔ [Hongjiang old town](#)
- ➔ [Mao's childhood home](#)
- ➔ [Changsha's Old City Walls](#)

History

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Hunan was one of the empire's granaries, transporting vast quantities of rice to the embattled north. By the 19th century, land shortages and feudalism caused widespread unrest among farmers and hill-dwelling minorities. These economic disparities galvanised the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s, ensuring widespread support by the 1920s for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Hunan's Mao Zedong.

Hunan Highlights



- 1 Hike amongst the otherworldly peaks of [Zhangjiajie](#), one of China's most spectacular national parks.
- 2 Settle in at a riverside guesthouse in ancient [Fenghuang](#).
- 3 Sample authentic, chilli-laden *xiang cai* (Hunan cuisine) in

food-loving [Changsha](#).

4 Ascend the sacred slopes of [Heng Shan](#).

5 Join the masses paying homage to Chairman Mao in [Shaoshan](#).

6 Wander the Qing-dynasty merchant streets of the rarely visited [Hongjiang old town](#).

Climate

Subtropical Hunan averages 28°C in summer, and 6°C during its brief winter. Monsoon-like rains fall from April to June, followed by high temperatures and humidity in July and August; Changsha is positively scorching midsummer. The region's star attraction, Zhangjiajie, is beautiful during any season; lush and relatively cool during summer, stunningly colourful in spring and autumn, and sometimes brushed with snow in winter.

Language

Xiang (Hunanese) is a northern Mandarin dialect with six to eight sub-dialects of its own commonly spoken in central and southwest Hunan. Gan (Jiangxinese), another northern Mandarin dialect, but with much in common with the Hakka language, is used in the east and south.

Getting There & Around

Changsha is loaded with bullet trains, heading south to Guangzhou (2½ hours), north to Beijing (six hours), east to Shanghai (seven hours) and northwest to Xi'an (six hours). It also has flights to every major city.

Local trains can get you around the province, although long-distance buses are more frequent and often faster. Within towns and cities, local buses cost ¥1 or ¥2. Carry exact change.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this region:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥150 (for a room)

\$\$ ¥150 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥40 (for a meal for one)

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

Changsha

 0731 / Pop 2.5 million

For 3000 years this city on the Xiang River flourished steadily as a centre of agriculture and intellect. In the 1920s it was still so much as it always had been that British philosopher Bertrand Russell compared it to ‘a mediaeval town’, but not long after, the Sino–Japanese War and a massive fire in 1938 consumed virtually all of old Changsha, leaving little of its early history. These days, Changsha – a modern, energetic city – is known mainly for sights relating to a revolutionary by the name of Mao.

The first-rate Hunan Provincial Museum was being rebuilt at the time of research. Check its website (www.hnmuseums.com) for news.

Chángshā



Changsha

Sights

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Changsha Municipal Museum | B1 |
| 2 | Lieshi Park | C1 |
| 3 | Old City Walls & Tianxin Pavilion | B2 |
| 4 | Orange Isle | A1 |

Sleeping

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 5 | Hanting Express | B2 |
| 6 | Mini Hotel | C2 |
| 7 | Sheraton Changsha Hotel | B1 |

Eating

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 8 | Huogongdian | A2 |
| 9 | Huogongdian (Wuyi Dadao branch) | C2 |
| 10 | Lao Changsha Longxiaquan | A2 |
| 11 | Songhuajiang Jiaoziguan | D1 |

Drinking & Nightlife

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|----|
| 12 | Hualongchi Xiang | B2 |
| 13 | Jiefang Xilu | A2 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 14 Taiping Jie | A2 |
| 15 Yingshanlou Chaguan | B2 |

Information

| | |
|---|----|
| Bank of China | D2 |
| 16 China Post | D1 |
| 17 Internet Cafe | D1 |
| 18 Provincial People's Hospital | B2 |

Transport

| | |
|---|----|
| Airport Shuttle Bus | D2 |
| 19 Bus Ticket Office | D1 |
| 20 Civil Aviation Administration of China | D2 |

Sights

Old City Walls & Tianxin Pavilion

HISTORIC SITE

(Guchengqiang, Tianxin Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 3 Tianxin Lu; park admission free, pavilion ¥32;

 7.30am-6pm;  202)

The old city walls, which once stretched for 9km around ancient Changsha, were built of rammed earth in 202 BC, reinforced with stone in AD 1372, and finally demolished in 1928, save for this wonderfully imposing 250m-long section. You can enter Tianxin Park for free and wander around the old wall, but you have to pay to climb right up on top of it, and to visit the attractive Tianxin Pavilion which sits on top.

Orange Isle

PARK

(Juzi Zhou [GOOGLE MAP](#);  24hr;  Juzizhou) **FREE**

The most famous of the city's parks is a 5km-long sliver of an island smack bang in the middle of the Xiang River. A reflective 32-year-old Mao immortalised it in *Changsha*, probably his best regarded poem, after standing at its southern tip and looking west towards Yuelu Mountain one autumn day.

A towering granite bust of a youthful Chairman with flowing locks now stands at the spot – but faces in a new direction.

You can walk a circuit of the island on the pleasant riverside promenade, or catch a sightseeing electric trolley (¥20). You can also rent tandem bicycles (¥30 per hour) by the metro entrance.

Yuelu Mountain

PARK

(Yuelu Shan Yueshan Lu; 🕒 24hr; 🚏 1, 🚇 Yingwanzhen) **FREE**

This large park on the slopes of Yuelu Mountain makes a pleasant city break. You can climb to the top in less than an hour; or else go up on the **chair lift** (suodao up ¥30, return ¥50; 🕒 9am-5pm), before whizzing back down on the **toboggan ride** (hua dao ¥25; 🕒 9am-5pm).

To get here, turn left out of Exit 3 of Yingwanzhen metro station, then turn right down Yueshan Lu and the entrance will soon be on your right. Bus 1 from the train station stops at the gate.

Changsha Municipal Museum

MUSEUM

(Shi Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 538 Bayi Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚇 Yingbin Road) **FREE**

A colossal statue of Mao Zedong affably greets you at the entrance. It's the first clue that despite the paintings, ceramics and jade on display, this museum is really a shrine; note the huge portrait of a young Mao with shafts of light emanating from his head above the entrance.

The museum also houses the former site of the **Hunan CCP Committee** (Zhong Gong Xiangqu Weiyuanhui Jiuzhi), where Mao lived from 1921 to 1923 while secretly running the local CCP.

Lieshi Park

PARK

(Lieshi Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yingpan Donglu; 🕒 sunrise-sunset; 🚏 136 from train station) **FREE**

Tree-shaded and dotted with lakes, leafy Lieshi Park is very popular in the

mornings for singing, dancing and taichi.

Sleeping

You can find basic rooms clustered around the train station, but you get what you pay for.

Changsha International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Changsha Guoji Qingnian Lushe  8299 0202; www.hnhostel.com; 61 Gongshang Xiang, dm ¥40-45, s/d/tr ¥88/108/138;     136 from train station)

Changsha's first youth hostel, and still its best. Rooms here are simple, but bright and clean, and there's a nice cafe-bar area, as well as a back yard with table tennis and a pool table. Travel notices pinned up around the place are in Chinese only, but some staff speak a little English and are happy to help out.

The location is pleasant – tucked away down a quiet, tree-lined residential street – but out of the way. Take bus 136 from the train station and get off at Xiadalong bus stop. Cross the road and you'll find Gongshang Xiang behind the shops, running parallel to the main road. From Xiadalong bus stop, buses 112 and 901 go to Jiefang Xilu.

Its sister hostel – **Yuelu Mountain International Youth Hostel** (Yuelu Shan Guoji Qingnianlushe  8536 8418; 50 Xinmin Lu, dm/s/d ¥40/98/128;  1,  Yingwanzhen) – isn't as nice, but is OK if this place is full. It's on Xinmin Lu, which is opposite the entrance to Yuelu Mountain.

Hanting Express

HOTEL

(Hanting Kuaijie Jiudian  ;  567 1155; 147 Jiefang Xilu; r ¥219-259, with shared bathroom ¥99;   

If you want to be close to the action come evening, then consider this cheap hotel chain where small rooms without windows, and with shared (but clean) shower rooms, go for ¥99. Normal, well-appointed twins and doubles with private bathrooms cost upwards of ¥200.

Mini Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Mini Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8273 3999; www.mini2008.com (Chinese only); 79 Wuyi Dadao; r ¥286-486; 📶 @ 📶)

With an owner who's nuts about Mini Coopers, this funky car-themed establishment is the closest thing to a boutique hotel in Changsha. Run by young cheerful staff, the hotel is dotted with toy-sized Minis, and has a real one in the lobby. Rooms are modern yet understated, and each has its own computer. Rates include breakfast.

Sheraton Changsha Hotel

LUXURY HOTEL

(Xilaideng Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8488 8888; www.starwoodhotels.com; 478 Furong Zhonglu, r from ¥1000 plus 15% service charge; 📶 📶 @ 📶 📶)

The best luxury hotel in the city.

Eating

The lanes off the major shopping street, Huangxing Lu, and on and around the nightlife hub Taiping Jie, are good for street food. Follow your nose to the stalls selling *chou doufu* (stinky tofu), a popular local delicacy.

Breakfast here is all about *mifen* (rice noodles). Almost anywhere open early will serve them, usually in a number of varieties; beef (*niurou fen*) is popular.

★ Lao Changsha Longxiaguan

HUNAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 72 Xiangjiang Zhonglu; mains ¥10-30, crayfish ¥58-98; 🕒 5.30pm-3am)

A cavernous warehouse-like dining hall with a raucous atmosphere, this is the most enjoyable place to sample one of Changsha's signature dishes: spicy crayfish (*longxia*). You'll probably have to wait for a table, so grab a number, and a cold beer, and wait on a stool outside, before diving into the chilli-laced action.

The crayfish options – printed along the top of the tick-list menu – are as

follows: ordinary (*Changsha kouwei xia*), steamed (*Changsha zhengxia*) and deep fried (*Changsha youbao xia*). All are huge ¥98-portions; enough for three or four people to share. Alternatively, try the slightly smaller barbecued crayfish-tail skewers (*kao xiawei*; ¥58), about right for two to share.

The rest of the menu is split into four columns; a ¥10-column, a ¥20-column, a ¥30-column and a drinks column. ¥10 dishes include: *kongxincai* (water spinach), *lao Changsha choudoufu* (traditional Changsha stinky tofu), which isn't all that stinky here, and *kouwei dousun* (bamboo shoots). ¥20 dishes include *lao Changsha suoluo* (traditional Changsha spicy snails).

The only downside is that it charges you for using the tissues (¥2) and the tableware (¥1) – bit cheeky really.

Songhuajiang Jiaoziguan

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 102 Wuyi Dadao; dumplings from ¥10, mains ¥30-60; 🕒 9am-9.30pm)

If you need a break from chillies, this bustling eatery specialises in the mellow cuisine of northern China. Dumplings (*jiaozi*) are the specialty and come in many varieties, including: pork and cabbage (*baicai zhurou*), pork and chives (*jiucan zhurou*), egg and tomato (*xihongshi jidan*) and carrot and egg (*huluobo jidan*). Other dishes come with photos on the menu.

The dumplings are priced by the *liang* (50g), which gets you six dumplings. You must order at least two *liang* (*er liang*) of each type of dumpling.

★ Huogongdian

HUNAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8581 4228; 127 Pozi Jie; dishes ¥5-78; 🕒 6am-2am)

There's a great buzz at this landmark eatery, established in 1747 and set in and around a small temple-like courtyard. In 1958 Mao tried the housemade *chou doufu* (stinky tofu; ¥18), and praised it as both 'stinky and delicious'. The *xiao chi* (snacks) menu is for those eating in the courtyard and off to one side. The *Xiangcai* (Hunan cuisine) menu is for those seated in the back room.

Dishes to look out for include: *Maojia hongshaorou* (Mao-style braised pork; ¥98, taster portion ¥15), *lajiao chaorou* (pork fried with chillies; ¥28) and *qingtang mian* (non-spicy vegetable soup noodles; ¥18).

The **Wuyi Dadao branch** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 93 Wuyi Dadao; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5pm-2am), near the train station, is less atmospheric, but slightly cheaper and has a photo menu.



Drinking & Entertainment

Changsha comes alive after dark. A good place to start the night is **Taiping Jie** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a cobbled pedestrianised street between Wuyi Dadao and Jiefang Xilu. One of Changsha's oldest surviving streets, it has a mix of bars, cafes, boutiques and souvenir shops. From here, it's a short walk around the corner to **Jiefang Xilu** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), Changsha's club central with all manner of KTV (karaoke) joints and discos. There are no covers but drinks are expensive.

There's another busy enclave of bars down an ancient alley off the shopping strip Huangxing Zhonglu. Turn down the alley marked Dagudao Xiang and walk 100m to **Hualongchi Xiang** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)).

Yingshanlou Chaguan

TEAHOUSE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); in Tianxin Park; tea per cup ¥18-88, per pot ¥88-288; main dishes ¥30-60; 🕒 8am-11pm)

This lovely three-storey teahouse is hidden away inside Tianxin Park, right beside the entrance to the Old City Wall & Tianxin Pavilion. The building actually straddles part of the ancient wall, and you can sit beside it, on the tree-shaded terrace.

The tea menu is in Chinese, although each tea category – green, black, oolong etc – is written in English, so you at least know what type of tea you're ordering. Some teas are priced per cup (*bei*); others per pot (*hu*). As always, you can fill up your cup or pot with hot water as often as you like.

This is also a nice quiet spot for lunch. Again the menu is in Chinese only, but recommendations include: *pingguo jiyu* (pan-fried carp; ¥38), *jiang xiangrou* (very spicy pork stew; ¥48), *qingjiao chaorou* (pork fried with slightly spicy peppers; ¥32) and *jiangcong chao mu'er* (mushroom fried with onion and ginger; ¥28).

Information

➔ **ATMs** all over town take foreign cards. The train station area is densely populated with 24-hour **internet cafes**. Look for the large " signs.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 43 Wuyi Dadao)

By the Civil Aviation Hotel. Has an exchange.

China Post

POST

(Zhongguo Youzheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 460 Chezhan Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm)

By the train station.

HSBC ATM

BANK

(Huifeng Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 159 Shaoshan Lu)

Twenty-four-hour ATM in Dolton Hotel lobby.

Provincial People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Sheng Renmin Yiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8227 8120; 61 Jiefang Xilu;)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju 📞 8887 8741; 2 Fenglin Yilu;)

For visa extensions, go to this PSB about 2km west of the river. Yingwanzhen metro station is closest.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Changsha's **Huanghua International Airport** (Huanghua Guoji Jichang  8479 8777; www.hncaac.com) has flights to pretty much every city in China plus services to Bangkok, Seoul, Phnom Penh and Singapore. Also has daily local flights to Huaihua (¥800, one hour) and Zhangjiajie (¥950, one hour).

Book tickets through www.elong.net or www.ctrip.com, or at the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC, Zhongguo Minhang Shoupiao Chu   8411 2222; 49 Wuyi Dadao;  8.30am-5.30pm) near the train station. 

BUS

Changsha has multiple bus stations, but most travellers use **South Bus Station** (take Bus 107 or 7 from the train station, or Bus 16 from south train station) or **West Bus Station** (at Wangchengpo metro station). Long-distance buses also leave from both train stations.

Buy bus tickets at the bus stations, or at the **bus ticket office** (Changtu Qiche Shoupiao Chu  ; train station square (north side)) in the train station square.

Services from South Bus Station (qiche nanzhan):

- ➔ **Shaoshan** ¥34, 1½ hours, half-hourly 8am to 5.30pm
- ➔ **Heng Shan** ¥46, three hours, hourly 8am to 5.20pm
- ➔ **Hengyang** ¥60, two hours, hourly 7.50am to 6.20pm
- ➔ **Huaihua** ¥150, six hours, hourly 8.30am to 4pm

Services from West Bus Station (qiche xizhan):

- ➔ **Fenghuang** ¥140, five hours, two daily (9am and 3.40pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** sleeper ¥210, 12 hours, four daily (2.30pm, 5.30pm, 6.30pm and 6.40pm)
- ➔ **Guilin** ¥140, seven hours, 12.30pm
- ➔ **Nanchang** ¥126, five hours, two daily (8.30am and 3.30pm)

- ➔ **Shanghai** sleeper ¥360, 16 hours, 5pm
- ➔ **Zhangjiajie** ¥120, four hours, hourly 7.50am to 7pm

TRAIN

Both train stations are connected to the metro. Bullet trains leave from Changsha South.

Services from Changsha Train Station (Changsha huochezhan):

- ➔ **Beijing** T-class hard seat/sleeper ¥190/334, 14 hours, 10 daily
- ➔ **Guangzhou** T/K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥98/176, seven to eight hours, 30 daily
- ➔ **Huaihua** T/K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥72/132, seven hours, 15 daily
- ➔ **Jishou** T/K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥56/124, seven to nine hours, five daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** D-class bullet ¥258, seven hours, 10.35am
- ➔ **Shanghai** K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥149/264, 15 hours, three daily (6.36pm, 7.19pm and 12.37am)
- ➔ **Zhangjiajie** T/K-class hard seat/sleeper ¥55/116, 5½ hours, seven daily
- ➔ **Wuhan** K-class hard seat ¥54, four hours, 10 daily

Services from Changsha South Train Station (Changsha Nanzhan):

- ➔ **Beijing West** G-class bullet ¥650, six to seven hours, 10 daily (7.30am to 4pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou South** G-class bullet ¥314, 2½ hours, every 10 minutes (7am to 9.20pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** G-class bullet ¥470, seven hours, 1.28pm
- ➔ **Shenzhen** G-class bullet ¥390, 2½ hours, half-hourly 7am to 7.30pm
- ➔ **Xi'an** G-class bullet ¥590, six hours, nine daily (8.10am to 4.32pm)
- ➔ **Wuhan** G-class bullet ¥165, 1½ hours, half-hourly 7.30am to 9.50pm

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 26km from the city centre. **Airport shuttle buses** (jichang bashi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ¥16.5) depart from the CAAC office near the train station, every 15 minutes between 5.20am and 10.30pm, and take 40 minutes.

Local Bus 114 (¥3, 70 minutes, 6.30am to 6.30pm) also links the train station to the airport.

A taxi from the city centre is about ¥90.

The eagerly anticipated **Maglev** (*cifu*; magnetic levitation train) is due to start operating in 2016 and will whoosh passengers from the airport to South Train Station in just 10 minutes.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Handy Line 2 of Changsha's new **metro** (*ditie*; tickets ¥2 to ¥5) goes from South Train Station to Changsha Train Station then along Wuyi Dadao to Orange Isle and on to West Bus Station.

Local buses cost ¥1 or ¥2 per trip. Carry exact change.

Shaoshan

 0732

More than three million people make the pilgrimage each year to Mao Zedong's hometown, a pretty hamlet frozen in time 130km southwest of Changsha. The swarms of young and old drop something to the tune of ¥1.8 billion annually. Mao statues alone are such big business that each must pass inspection by no fewer than five experts checking for features, expression, hairstyle, costume and posture. The 6m-high bronze statue of Mao erected in 1993 in Mao Zedong Square is considered a model example.

Sights

Shaoshan has two parts: the modern town with the train and bus stations, and the original village about 5km away, where all the sights are clustered. Only a

handful of the popular sights have a genuine connection to Mao.

The minibus from town will drop you on the main road by the village, a few hundred metres from Mao's former residence; cross the small river to the left of the road. You'll then see **Mao Zedong Square** (with its Mao statue) to your right, but turn left to reach Mao's former residence.

Former Residence of Mao Zedong

HISTORIC SITE

(Mao Zedong Guju 🕒 8.30am-5pm) **FREE**

Surrounded by lotus ponds and rice paddies, this modest mud-brick house is like millions of other country homes except that Mao was born here in 1893. By most accounts, his childhood was relatively normal, though he tried to run away at age 10. He returned briefly in 1921 as a young revolutionary. On view are some original furnishings, photos of Mao's parents and a small barn. No photography inside.

Nan'an School

HISTORIC SITE

(Nan'an Sishu 🕒 8.30am-5pm) **FREE**

Mao began his education in this simple country school, next door to his childhood home.

Mao Zedong Memorial Museum

MUSEUM

(Mao Zedong Tongzhi Jinianguan 🕒 9am-4.30pm) **FREE**

Exiting Mao's home, turn left and walk straight on to Mao Zedong Sq where, on your left, you'll see the entrance to this museum. It portrays Mao's life through paintings and old photos and has decent English captions.

Exiting from the back of the museum, you'll see the **Relic Hall of Mao Zedong** (Mao Zedong Yiwuguan 🕒 9am-4.30pm) in front of you. This more modern museum includes everyday artefacts used by Mao, clothing he wore, plus more photos from his life, and also has good English captions. Turn left as you exit here to get back to Mao Zedong Square.

MAO: THE GREAT HELMSMAN

Mao Zedong was born in the village of Shaoshan in 1893, the son of 'wealthy' peasants. Mao worked beside his father on the 8-hectare family farm from age six and was married by 14.

At 16, he convinced his father to let him attend middle school in Changsha. In the city, Mao discovered Sun Yatsen's revolutionary secret society. When the Qing dynasty collapsed that year, Mao joined the republican army but soon quit, thinking the revolution was over.

At the Hunan County No 1 Teachers' Training School, Mao began following the Soviet socialism movement. He put an ad in a Changsha newspaper 'inviting young men interested in patriotic work to contact me', and among those who responded were Liu Shaoqi, who would become president of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Xiao Chen, who would be a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Mao graduated in 1918 and went to work as an assistant librarian at Peking University, where he befriended more future major CCP figures. By the time he returned to teach in Changsha, Mao was active in communist politics. Unlike orthodox Marxists, Mao saw peasants as the lifeblood of the revolution. The CCP was formed in 1921, and soon included unions of peasants, workers and students.

In April 1927, following Kuomintang leader Chiang Kaishek's attack on communists, Mao was tasked with organising what became the 'Autumn Harvest Uprising'. Mao's army scaled Jinggang Shan, on the border with Jiangxi province, to embark on a guerrilla war. The campaign continued until the Long March in October 1934, a 9600km retreat from which Mao emerged the CCP leader.

Mao forged a fragile alliance with the Kuomintang to expel the Japanese, and from 1936 to 1948 the two sides engaged in betrayals, conducting a civil war simultaneously with WWII. Mao's troops eventually won, and the PRC was established 1 October 1949.

As chairman of the PRC, Mao embarked on radical campaigns to repair his war-ravaged country. In the mid-1950s he began to implement peasant-based and decentralised socialist developments. The outcome was the ill-fated Great Leap Forward and later the chaos of the Cultural Revolution.

China saw significant gains in education, women's rights, and average life expectancy under Mao's rule; however, by most estimates between 40 and 70 million people died during that era of change. Five years after Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping famously announced Mao had been 70% right and 30% wrong in an effort, some say, to tear down Mao's cult of personality. Yet today, Mao remains revered as the man who united the country, and he is still commonly referred to as the 'Great Leader', 'Great Teacher' and 'supremely beloved Chairman'. His image hangs everywhere – in

schools, taxis and living rooms – but as a symbol of exactly what is the question with which China now grapples.

Sleeping & Eating

Mao Jia Fandian

HUNAN

(Shaoshan Village; mains ¥20-60; 🕒 6am-9pm)

The best-known restaurant in the village was opened in 1987 by business-savvy octogenarian Madam Tang, who used to live in the house opposite Mao, but who now owns a restaurant empire with more than 300 outlets worldwide. *Mao Zedong hongshaorou* (Mao's favourite braised pork belly; ¥58) takes pride of place as first dish on the menu.

Other dishes worth sampling include: *duo jiao yutou* (spicy steamed fish head; ¥58), *choudoufu* (smelly tofu; ¥28) and *qiezi doujiao* (fried aubergine with green beans; ¥22).

The adjacent **hotel** (📞 0731 5568 5132; r from ¥180) has huge rooms facing onto an overgrown courtyard, but most people visit Shaoshan on a day trip.

Getting There & Around

Buses from Changsha terminate at **Shaoshan Bus Station** (Shaoshan qichezhan), where minibuses (¥2.50 one way; ¥10 hop-on, hop-off) wait to take passengers to the village, 5km away. They then shuttle between the sights, but it's nicer just to walk around once you're there.

The last bus back to Changsha is at 5.30pm.

There's one daily train to Shaoshan (¥10; two hours 40 minutes) from Changsha Train Station at 6.35am. The return leaves at 4.48pm. Tickets are easy to get, and the train isn't crowded.

At weekends, an extra, faster train (¥10, one hour 40 minutes) is put into service. It leaves Changsha Train Station at 9.15am, returning at 2.38pm. Again, tickets are easy to buy.

Heng Shan

📍0734

About 130km south of Changsha rises the southernmost of China's five sacred Taoist mountains, to which emperors came to make sacrifices to heaven and earth. The ancients called it Nanyue (Southern Mountain), a name it now shares with the town at its base. The imperial visits left a legacy of Taoist temples and ancient inscriptions scattered amid gushing waterfalls, dense pine forests and terraced fields cut from lush canyons. Bring extra layers, as the weather can turn quickly and the summit is often cold and wet.

Sights & Activities

Heng Shan

MOUNTAIN

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Seventy-two peaks spanning 400km comprise Heng Shan, but most visitors focus on **Zhurong Peak** (Zhurong Feng admission ¥120), rising 1290m above sea level.

The lung-busting, 13km ascent up winding paths, steep staircases and, in places, a road busy with tourist shuttle buses, takes around four hours one way, although it can fill the best part of a day if you take in the many temples en route. Alternatively, tourist buses, or a combination of bus and cable car, can take you almost the whole way up.

If you want to take the bus, buy the bus ticket (*che piao*; ¥80 return, including cable car), along with your entrance ticket (*men piao*; ¥120) on the 2nd floor of the modern **tourist centre** (Luke Fuwu Zhongxin Yanshou Lu; 🕒7am-5.30pm), where you can also store luggage (¥10 per bag) and pick up a free leaflet with a map (*ditu*) on it. Buses depart directly from here to the mountain's **halfway point** (*Banshan Ting*; 15 minutes). From there, you can either take the cable car to **Nantianmen** (five minutes), or change to another bus. From Nantianmen, it's a 30-minute hike to Zhurong Peak.

Note, the mountain is open 24 hours, but the buses and cable car only run until around 6pm.

If you decide to hike up the mountain (a wise choice, as you miss most of the temples if you take the bus), it's nicer to start up the tree-lined road 300m east of the Tourist Centre marked by the stone **Shengli Archway** (Shengli Fang). This road leads to another entrance, where you can pay admission, and then to a tranquil path that winds 5km past lakes, waterfalls and streams in **Fanyin Valley** (Fanyin Gu) to almost the cable car departure point at Banshan Ting. Along the way, you can stop to see the colourful figures of Taoist and Buddhist scripture on display in **Shenzhou Temple** (Shenzhou Zumiao), the grand and dignified **Nanyue Martyrs Memorial Hall** (Nanyue Zhonglieci), dedicated to the anti-Japanese resistance, and a **stele** inscribed with a dedication from Kuomintang leader Chiang Kaishek celebrating the pine forest. Before you jump on the cable car, take a break and reconsider at **Xuandou Guan**, an active Taoist temple. The couplet carved at the entry reminds weary climbers that the path of righteousness is long, so don't give up halfway through!

The next 4.5km up to Nantianmen frequently takes the busy road and scattered staircases, but there are plenty more inspiring temples along the way. Once you reach Nantianmen, it's a chilly (outside of July and August) 30-minute ascent to the peak – you can rent coats (¥20) by the cable car station.

At the top is **Zhu Rong Palace** (Zhu Rong Dian), an iron-tiled, stone structure built for Zhu Rong, an ancient official who devised a method of striking stones to create sparks. After his death, he became revered as the god of fire.

Nanyue Temple

TAOIST, BUDDHIST

(Nanyue Damiao admission ¥60; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm)

This sprawling Taoist and Buddhist temple was moved from Heng Shan summit to its foot in the Sui dynasty and then rebuilt many times, most recently in the Qing dynasty. Each carved panel in the main pavilion's

balustrade tells a legend of one of Heng Shan's peaks. Its north gate is opposite the Tourist Centre.

Zhusheng Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Zhusheng Si 67 Dong Jie; 🕒 5am-6pm) **FREE**

A 10-minute walk east of Nanyue Temple, this Zen Buddhist temple, with an attractive stone-carved entranceway, dates back to the Tang dynasty. Outside, on Dong Jie, you can watch carpenters making wooden Buddha statues for the various temples in town.

Dashan Chan Temple

MONASTERY

(Dashan Chansi Zhurong Beilu; 🕒 7.30am-6pm) **FREE**

This active Taoist nunnery is on the west side of Nanyue.

Giant

BICYCLE HIRE

(Jie'ante 📞 138 7562 9725; 231 Heng Shan Lu; bike rental per hr/day ¥15/80, deposit ¥1000; 🕒 8.30am-9pm)

If you fancy cycling up a holy Taoist mountain, these guys can fix you up with a decent mountain bike. You can ride all the way to the summit at Zhurong Peak – there are three routes. If that sounds too much like hard work, simply take off into the surrounding countryside for a few hours before asking your way back to Nanyue (pronounced 'nan yoo-weh').

The Giant shop is near *paifang*, diagonally opposite Bank of China.

Sleeping & Eating

The cheapest hotels are found near Nanyue Bus Station. On the lower slopes of the mountain, basic hotels line the road at various places.

Nanyue has more than its share of restaurants. Try Zhurong Lu, the road Nanyue Telecom Hotel is on. Food on the mountain is costlier, although the vegetarian meals at Zushi Temple are decent value.

In Town

Auspicious Margin Hotel

HOTEL

(Jiyuan Binguan 📞187 1149 7187; 338 Hengshan Lu; r ¥70-100; 📶@📶)

Opposite the bus station, this simple hotel has a variety of rooms, all with air-con, TV and bathroom.

Nanyue Telecom Hotel

HOTEL

(📞0734 567 8888; 173 Zhurong Lu, r from ¥438, discounted to ¥238; 📶@📶)

This large hotel has comfortable, smart twins and doubles, going for ¥238 when we were here. Has a decent restaurant too. Turn right out of the bus station, left through the *paifang* (decorative stone archway) and it's on your left.

On the Mountain

Zushi Temple

GUESTHOUSE

(Zushi Dian 📞189 7476 3290; near Nantianmen; d ¥348; @)

The rooms in this Taoist temple are spartan, but the views are magic. Vegetarian rice meals (¥20 per plate) are served up throughout the day. It's a five-minute walk from the cable car station by Nantianmen – turn left as you exit the cable car.

Wangri Tai Jiedaizhan

HOTEL

(📞0734 566 3188; Wangri Tai; r from ¥300)

The mountain's highest accommodation, this place is just a 10-minute walk below Zhurong Peak (up to your right as you are climbing), and has small but modern rooms with air-con-heaters, TV and bathroom. Does food (mains ¥30 to ¥60). Doesn't do internet.

Turn right out of the main bus station to reach the *paifang*, a stone archway, and a focal point in town. Just past *paifang*, on your left, is a branch of **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang 270 Hengshan Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm) with currency exchange and a 24-hour ATM. Opposite the bank is a 24-hour **internet cafe** (wangba per hr ¥3).

Walk through the *paifang* to reach the tourist centre (1km; follow signs for Zhurong Peak) and the town's temples, all of which are also signposted.

Getting There & Around

Bullet trains from Changsha South Station (¥65, 30 minutes, 7.25am to 9.20pm) stop at **Heng Shan West Station** (Heng Shan Xizhan), 10km from Nanyue town centre. Local buses wait at the train station car park to take passengers to Nanyue (¥6). They will drop you at a small local bus station, called **Zhongxin Zhan**, which is diagonally opposite the main **Nanyue Bus Station** (Nanyue Qichezhan).

Returning to Changsha, bullet trains leave Heng Shan West Station roughly half-hourly from 9.14am to 9.54pm. You can buy tickets at a **train ticket office** (huoche piaodaishou 167 Zhurong Lu; commission ¥5 per ticket; 🕒 7.40am-9pm) near the *paifang* – walk through the *paifang*, and it's on your left.

Buses from Changsha arrive at Nanyue Bus Station, which has 12 buses a day back to Changsha (¥48, three hours, 7am to 4pm).

Zhangjiajie

 0744

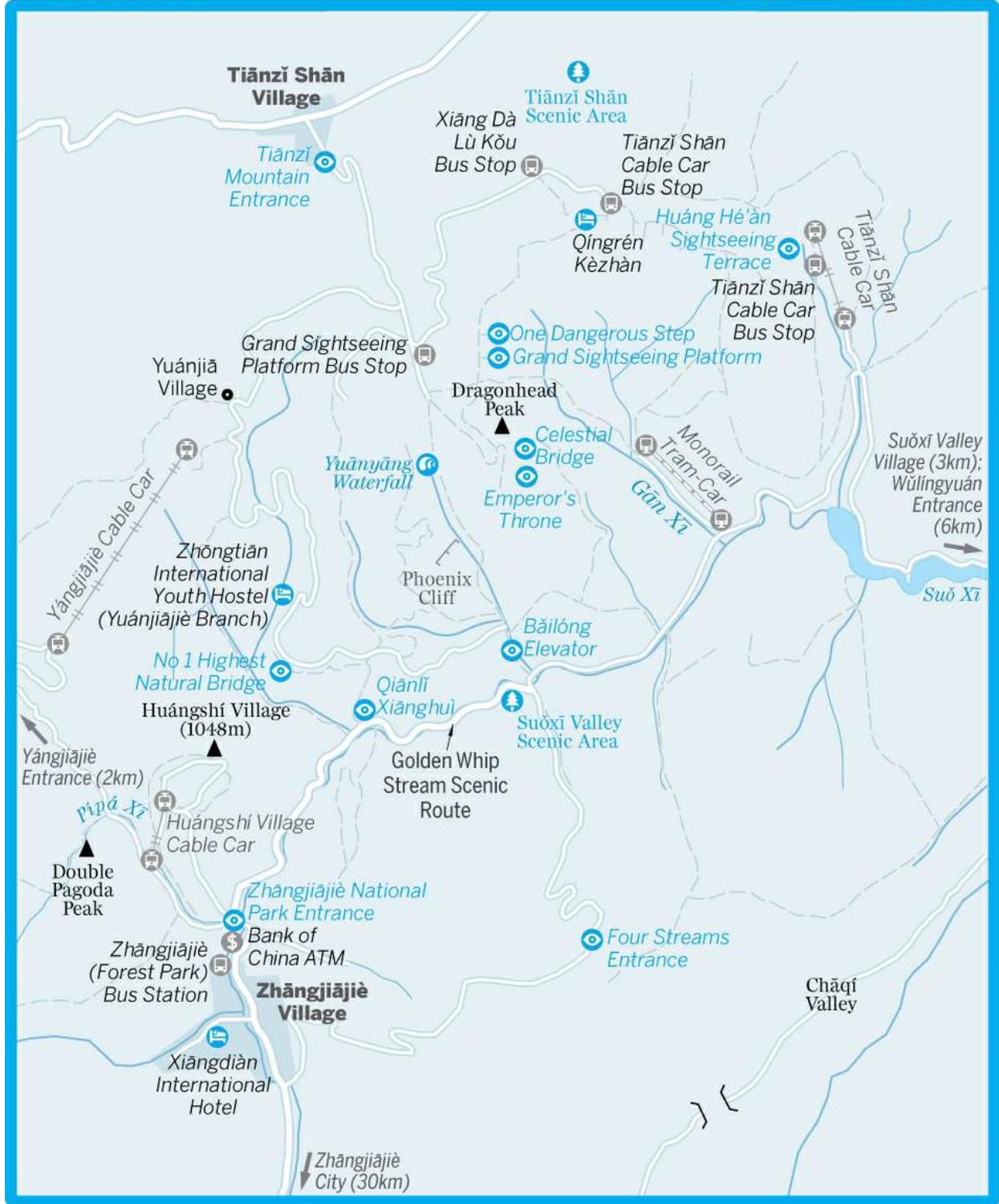
Avatar director James Cameron never mentioned Zhangjiajie as the inspiration to the floating mountains on Pandora (although that hasn't stopped China's tourism industry from promoting the supposed connection), but the incredible collection of karst pinnacles in this unique national park do indeed resemble a scene from another world, especially when the early-morning mountain mist rolls in around them. See Zhongtian International Youth

Hostel ([Click here](#)) for details on how to get here.

Rising from the subtropical and temperate forests of northwest Hunan, Zhangjiajie has a concentration of quartzite-sandstone formations found nowhere else in the world. Some 243 peaks and more than 3000 karst pinnacles and spires dominate the scenery in this Unesco-protected park. It is truly one of the most remarkable landscapes in China.

For thousands of years, this was a remote land known mainly to three minority peoples: Tujia, Miao and Bai. Today more than 20 million visitors annually come to the park. It is also home to more than 3000 distinct plant species as well as diverse fauna. You'll see lots of macaques on the main trails (remember, they are wild so don't feed them), while endangered species such as the Chinese giant salamander, Chinese water deer and the elusive clouded leopard (only their tracks have been seen) lurk deep in the park.

Zhāngjiājìe



Sights

The National Park

The national park's official name is the **Wulingyuan Scenic & Historic Interest Area** (Wulingyuan Fengjingqu; adult/student ¥245/160), but almost everyone refers to it simply as **Zhangjiajie**, the name of one section of the park.

Zhangjiajie is also the name of the city (Zhangjiajie shi) 30km south of the park, and the village (Zhangjiajie cun) by the 'Forest Park' entrance.

The park, covering a vast 264 sq km, is divided into three main areas: the Zhangjiajie, Tianzi Shan and Suoxi Valley scenic areas.

There are access points on all sides of the park, but most enter from the south, passing through Zhangjiajie village to the **Zhangjiajie National Park entrance** (Zhangjiajie Gongyuan menpiaozhan), more commonly called **Forest Park** (Senlin Gongyuan). Otherwise, many enter from the east through the less spectacular **Wulingyuan entrance** (Wulingyuan menpiaozhan).

Zhangjiajie Scenic Area

NATIONAL PARK

From the 'Forest Park' entrance, there is an early opportunity for a bird's-eye view of the karst towers from **Huangshi Village** (Huangshi Zhai), a 3km loop on a plateau 1048m up. It's a two-hour slog up 3878 stone steps, or a half-hour by electric bus (free), then cable car (one way ¥65).

Back on the canyon floor, the **Golden Whip Stream Scenic Route** (Jinbianxi jingpin youlanxian) is a flat path meandering 5.7km east along its namesake stream to the **Bailong Elevator** (Bailong Tianti; ¥72 one way), a cliff-side lift rising 335m in under two minutes to the Tianzi Shan section of the park. There are steps up the cliff as well (one hour).

Tianzi Shan Scenic Area

NATIONAL PARK

This area is on top of the plateau, and hence enjoys most of the park's more spectacular (and busiest) viewpoints. Touring here means manoeuvring around particularly large crowds (and waiting in long lines for buses), but the vistas are worth it; not least the **No 1 Highest Natural Bridge** (Tianxiadiyi

Qiao), a remarkable stone structure spanning two peaks, 357m above the canyon floor.

A further 30-minutes bus ride from here, at the other end of the plateau (before it descends into the Suoxi Valley), is the **Grand Sightseeing Platform** (Da Guan Tai), a popular spot for sunrise. Near here is a collection of other fine viewpoints, including **Celestial Bridge** (xianren qiao) and **Emperor's Throne** (Tianzi Zuo). A cable car (*suodao*; one way ¥67) can take you down into the Suoxi Valley, or you can hike down then take a cute **monorail tram-car** (*dianche*, one way ¥52) along a short stretch of the valley.

ZHANGJIAJIE IN TWO DAYS

If you're stuck for ideas, the following mini-itinerary takes in all three of the park's main zones, and can be done leisurely in two days, or in one day at a push.

Enter the park at the **Zhangjiajie National Park entrance**, more commonly known as **Forest Park**. Follow the **Golden Whip Stream Scenic Route**, an easy 5.7km path along the canyon floor, which leads to the **Bailong Elevator**. Before you reach the elevator, though, take the steps up to your left at a point called **Qianli Xianghui**, about one hour from where you started.

It's a tough one-hour climb to the top (you're now in the Tianzi Shan Nature Reserve), from where you can follow a short path to various viewpoints, including the famous **No 1 Highest Natural Bridge**. From here you can either hop on one of the free tourist buses, or walk along the main road (20 minutes) to **Zhongtian International Youth Hostel**, where you can either stop for the night, or just for lunch. Either way, don't forget to check out the path behind the hostel, which leads to two stunning viewpoints.

The hostel is right beside **Wang Qiao Tai** bus stop. From here, take a free bus about 30 minutes further up the mountain to the bus stop for the **Grand Sightseeing Platform**, and find a rarely taken trail which starts near a place called **One Dangerous Step** (yi bu nan xing). Follow this cliff-hugging trail through dripping-wet forest and past numerous small waterfalls, until, after about an hour, you reach a small rural hamlet where, if it's getting late, you can stay the night in the rustic family guesthouse **Qingren Kezhan**. Or turn left to follow the lane back up to the main road where you can pick up another free bus, at **Xiang Da Lu Kou** bus stop, to the terminus at the **Tianzi Shan cable car station** (Tianzi Shan Suodaozhan).

It's ¥67 to descend in the cable car. Alternatively, follow the stepped path down (about one hour – the views are fabulous in places). At the bottom (you're now in the

Suoxi Valley area) you can take the **monorail tram-car** (¥52 one way, 10 minutes) or walk another 20 minutes to a bus depot, from where you can either take a free bus 10km to the Wulingyuan park entrance (Wulingyuan menkou), from where there are buses back to Zhangjiajie City (¥12, 45 minutes), or turn right to get back to the path you began your hike on – after a few hundred metres you'll reach the bottom of the Bailong Elevator before continuing for about 90 minutes along the Golden Whip Stream Scenic Route again, back to the Zhangjiajie entrance.

Zhangjiajie City

Tianmen Mountain

SCENIC AREA

(Tianmen Shan admission ¥258; 🕒 8am-4.30pm)

Visible from anywhere in Zhangjiajie city, this distinctive mountain range features **Tianmen Dong**, a prominent keyhole cut through the mountainside. The 7km-long **Tianmen Mountain Cable Car** (Tianmen Shan Suodao) is Asia's longest, and takes half an hour to hoist you up. The cable car is included in your entrance ticket. Once at the top, a riveting 60m, glass plank road a short walk from the upper cable station will test your belief in human engineering.

It's a 10-minute walk to the cable car station from Zhangjiajie's Central Bus Station; Turn left at the bus station, take the second left, then left again at the roundabout.

Activities

With more than 40 limestone caves hidden along the banks of the Suoxi River and the southeast side of Tianzi Shan, the region offers ample opportunities to **raft** (piaoliu) and tour **caves**.

Zhongtian International Youth Hostel in Zhangjiajie City runs numerous one- and two-day tours, including a number of rafting trips (per person ¥200 to ¥500).

Sleeping & Eating

There are hotels just outside all the main entrances to the park, although, naturally, they cost more than hotels in Zhangjiajie City. Inside the park itself, family-run guesthouses (*kezhan*) are dotted along the main road in the Tianzi Shan area. Expect to pay ¥50 to ¥100 for a room. Every guesthouse will also do meals (around ¥30). Snack stalls and restaurant shacks line all the main hiking trails around the park.

Zhangjiajie City

Zhongtian International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Zhongtian Guoji Qingnian Lushe  0744 832 1678; www.zjzthostel.com; 4th fl, Zhongtian Bldg, cnr Ziwu Lu & Beizheng Lu; dm from ¥40, tw & d from ¥128; )

Despite the location in an anonymous office block, this pleasant hostel has a rooftop garden, a small bar and restaurant, and cosy rooms. Helpful staff speak some English, and the claypot rice meals (¥15 to ¥20) are delicious.

You can store luggage here for free, or have it delivered to its branch inside the park for ¥20. It also runs a range of day trips, including rafting. To get here, take Bus 6 (¥2) from outside Zhangjiajie Central Bus Station to Lieshi Gongyuan bus stop, then take Bus 3 (¥2) to Beizheng Lu and the Zhongtian Building will be up on your left.

BM Guesthouse

HOTEL

(Beimen Kezhan  0744 218 6777; in an alley off Beizheng Jie; r ¥100; )

This tidy, modern hotel has clean, comfortable rooms that come with a computer terminal as well as wi-fi access. A better deal than the private rooms at Zhongtian Youth Hostel, but no English spoken, and no restaurant. The hotel is in an alley, set back off Beizheng Jie (also called Beizheng Lu), between Nos 331 and 349. Take a bus to Beizheng Lu bus stop, then walk downhill slightly and it's on the right.

Zhangjiajie Village

Xiangdian International Hotel

HOTEL

(Xiangdian Guoji Jiudian 📞571 2999; r from ¥1080; 🚫🌿📧)

A five-minute walk from the park entrance, this elegant four-star hotel has smart rooms set around courtyard gardens, courteous staff, and great discounts. Standard rooms went for ¥468 when we were here; and for ¥498 with a mountain view.

Inside the Park

Zhongtian International Youth Hostel (Yuanjiajie branch)

HOSTEL

(Zhongtian Guoji Qingnianlushe, Yuanjiajiedian 📞0744 571 3568; Wang Qiao Tai bus stop, Yuanjiajie; dm ¥50, r from ¥150)

Not as good as the branch in Zhangjiajie City, this quiet hostel is still an excellent option within the park. Rooms are a bit musty (everywhere's musty up here!), but are clean and tidy. Not much English spoken, but the food menu (mains ¥15 to ¥30), and notices around the hostel, are all in English.

A path behind the hostel leads to two stunning viewpoints, while about 50m beyond the hostel are steps leading down into the canyon below.

The easiest and quickest way to get here is to enter the park through the Tianzi Shan entrance (Tianzishan menpiaozhan) then take the free bus to Wang Qiao Tai bus stop; about 40 minutes. You can also get here from the Zhangjiajie entrance (see [Click here](#)).

Qingren Kezhan

GUESTHOUSE

(📞189 0744 1378; Xiangda Lukou bus stop, Tianzi Shan area; r ¥80)

Remote, rustic, family-run guesthouse, with simple rooms, homecooked meals and farmyard animals running around the courtyard. No English spoken. Easiest way to get here is to take a free bus from the Tianzi Shan park entrance to Xiangda Lukou bus stop, not far before the Tianzi Shan

cable car station.

Information

In Zhangjiajie City, tree-lined Beizheng Lu (also known as Beizheng Jie,) has everything you need: accommodation, restaurants, snack stalls, pharmacies, ATMs, internet cafes, bars tucked away down alleys, and a side-street food market.

Bilingual maps (*ditu*) of the national park and Zhangjiajie City are available at ticket offices and hotels and hostels for ¥5.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The **airport** (*jichang*) is 6km southwest of Zhangjiajie City and about 40km from the Zhangjiajie National Park entrance; a taxi from the airport costs about ¥100 to the park. To get to the airport from the city, take local Bus 4 (¥2, 5.30am to 8.30pm) from outside the Tianmen Mountain Cable Car.

There are flights to Beijing, Changsha, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Xi'an. Use www.english.ctrip.com for bookings.

BUS

Buses leave from **Central Bus Station** (*zhongxin qichezhan*), right beside Zhangjiajie train station. As well as those listed here there are also daily sleeper buses to cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and Xi'an.

➔ **Changsha** ¥97, four hours, at least hourly 7am to 7pm

➔ **Fenghuang** ¥78, four hours, 8.30am, 9.30am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm, 3.30pm and 5.20pm

➔ **Jishou** ¥52, two hours, hourly 7am to 5pm

TRAIN

The **train station** (*huochezhan*) is beside Central Bus Station. Note, Huaihua trains also stop at Jishou (¥20, two hours).

- ➔ **Beijing** hard sleeper ¥350 to ¥390, 24 to 26 hours, two daily (12.45pm and 5.54pm)
- ➔ **Changsha** hard seat ¥48 to ¥84, six hours, seven daily between 1.16pm and 6.54pm
- ➔ **Huaihua** hard seat ¥38, three to four hours, nine daily between 8.03am and 7.12pm
- ➔ **Yichang** hard seat ¥39 to ¥44, five hours, three daily (4.09am, 9.15am and 4.40pm)

i Getting Around

Shuttle buses travel every 10 minutes from Zhangjiajie Central Bus Station to the three main park entrances: Zhangjiajie (better known as Forest Park; Senlin Gongyuan; ¥10, 45 minutes), Wulingyuan (¥12, one hour) and Tianzi Shan (¥13, one hour, less frequent). Once inside the park, all buses are free with your park ticket, but other transport (cable car, elevator, monorail tram-car) costs extra; typically around ¥70 per ride.

A taxi from the city to Forest Park entrance costs around ¥120.

DEHANG

Set against a backdrop of forested peaks, the once utterly charming Miao village of Dehang (admission ¥100) has been tarted up for tourism these days and lacks authenticity, but it still offers the chance to take some relatively short and easy-to-follow hikes into the stunning countryside. Bilingual signs and map-boards around the main square (where the bus terminates) show you the way to the various trailheads, including one which leads to the 216m-tall **Liusha Falls** (Liusha Pubu), one of China's tallest waterfalls.

There are plenty of guesthouses and restaurants around the main square and along the river. The most attractive is the simple **Jielongqiao Inn** (Jielongqiao Kedian ☎135 1743 0915; r ¥50-70), overlooking the arched **Jielong Bridge** (Jielong Qiao).

Dehang is accessed from the town of Jishou. Buses to Dehang (¥8, 45 minutes) leave frequently from outside Jishou train station.

You can catch frequent buses to Fenghuang (¥22, one hour, 7.30am to 7pm) and Zhangjiajie (¥45, three hours, 8am to 5pm) from Jishou bus station. Local bus 3 (¥2)

links Jishou's train and bus stations.

Fenghuang

📍 0743

Fenghuang was once a frontier town, marking the boundary between the Han civilisations of the central plains and the Miao, Tujia and Dong minorities of the southwest mountains. Protective walls went up in the Ming dynasty, but despite the implications Fenghuang prospered as a centre of trade and cultural exchange. Its diverse residents built a breathtaking riverside settlement of winding alleys, temples and rickety stilt houses, which these days attract tourists by the bucketload.



Fenghuang

Sights

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 1 | Chaoyang Temple | A2 |
| 2 | Chongde Hall | C2 |
| 3 | City Wall | B2 |
| 4 | Confucian Temple | B2 |
| 5 | East Gate Tower | C2 |
| 6 | Former Home of Shen Congwen | B3 |
| 7 | Gucheng Museum | B2 |
| 8 | Hong Bridge | C2 |
| 9 | Jiangxin Buddhist Temple | D3 |
| 10 | North Gate Tower | B2 |
| 11 | Three Kings Temple | C3 |
| 12 | Tianhou Temple | C3 |
| 13 | Wanshou Temple | D2 |
| 14 | Xiong Xi Ling Former Residence | B2 |
| 15 | Yang Family Ancestral Hall | C2 |
| 16 | Yingxi Gate | D2 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 17 | Mountain Bike Hire | B3 |
|----|------------------------------------|----|

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 18 | A Good Year | D3 |
| 19 | Beiyimen Lushe | B2 |
| 20 | Fenghuang Zhongtian International Youth Hostel | D2 |
| 21 | Love Hotel | B1 |
| 22 | Phoenix Jiangtian Holiday Village | C2 |
| 23 | Shi'er Hao Shiguang | B3 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 24 | Miss Yang Restaurant | B1 |
| 25 | Soul Cafe | C2 |

Information

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 26 | China Post | B3 |
| 27 | Kaiming Pharmacy | A3 |
| 28 | Tourism Administrative Bureau of Fenghuang | B3 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 29 Train Ticket Booking Office | C3 |
| 30 Xindongli Internet Cafe | C2 |

Transport

| | |
|--|----|
| 31 Bus 1 to Fenghuang Bus Terminal | A1 |
| 32 Bus 2 to Tuqiaolong Bus Station | A1 |
| 33 North Gate Boat Dock | B2 |

Sights

Wandering aimlessly is the best way to experience the charms of the **old town** (*gucheng*). The back alleys are a trove of shops, temples, ancestral halls and courtyard homes.

The through ticket (*tongpiao*; ¥148) gains you three-day access to the old town, plus entrance to all the major sights and a half-hour boat trip on the river. It is possible to avoid buying the ticket and still wander around the old town, although you have to pick your routes carefully, and you won't be able to enter the ticketed sights. Ticket offices are scattered around town. Sights are generally open 8am to 6pm. Come nightfall, much of old town is dazzlingly illuminated.

Inside the City Wall

City Wall

HISTORIC SITE

(Chengqiang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Restored fragments of the city wall lie along the south bank of the Tuo River. Carvings of fish and mythical beasts adorn the eaves of the **North Gate Tower** (Beimen Chenglou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), one of four original main gates. Another, the **East Gate Tower** (| Dongmen Chenglou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission with through ticket), is a twin-eaved tower of sandstone and fired brick.

Hong Bridge

BRIDGE

(Hong Qiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); through ticket for upstairs galleries)

In the style of the Dong minority's wind and rain bridges.

Yang Family Ancestral Hall

HISTORIC SITE

(Yangjia Citang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission with through ticket)

West of East Gate Tower. Built in 1836, its exterior is covered with slogans from the Cultural Revolution.

Xiong Xi Ling Former Residence

HISTORIC SITE

(Xiong Xi Ling Guju [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission with through ticket)

The home of a former premier and finance minister.

Jiangxin Buddhist Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Jiangxin Chansi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Secreted away on Huilong Ge, a narrow alley.

Three Kings Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Sanhuang Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Great views of town, colourfully carved dragons, and thousands of lucky charms, await up stone steps.

Tianhou Temple

TEMPLE

(Tianhou Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Off Dongzheng Jie, dedicated to the patron of seafarers.

Former Home of Shen Congwen

HISTORIC SITE

(Shen Congwen Guju [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission with through ticket)

The famous modern novelist was born here in 1902. (His tomb is east of town.)

Chongde Hall

HISTORIC SITE

(Chongde Tang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission with through ticket)

The town's wealthiest resident, Pei Shoulu's personal collection of antiques is on display in his former residence on Shijialong.

Confucian Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wen Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wenxing Jie)

This 18th-century walled temple is now a middle school.

Chaoyang Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Chaoyang Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 41 Wenxing Jie)

Features an ancient theatrical stage and hall, and is now home to a silver-forging training centre.

Gucheng Museum

MUSEUM

(Gucheng Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dengying Jie; admission with through ticket;

 6.30am-6pm)

A survey of the old town's history.

Outside the City Wall

The north bank of the river offers lovely views of Fenghuang's *diaojiolou* (stilt houses). Cross by stepping stones (*tiaoyan*) – best navigated when sober – or wooden footbridge (*mutou qiao*).

Wanshou Temple

HISTORIC SITE

(Wanshou Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission with through ticket)

Built in 1755 by Jiangxi arrivals, this assembly hall north of Wanming Pagoda houses a minority culture museum.

Yingxi Gate

GATE

(Yingxi Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Dates from 1807.

Southern Great Wall

ARCHITECTURE

(Nanfang Changcheng admission ¥45)

The Ming-dynasty defensive wall, 13km from town, once stretched to Guizhou province. Take Bus 2 from Nanhua Gate to its terminus at Tuqiaolong bus station (Tuqiaolong chezhan), from where you can catch a bus here.

Huangsi Bridge Old Town

VILLAGE

(Huangsi Qiao Gucheng admission ¥20)

A Tang-dynasty military outpost 25km from town. The Southern Great Wall bus continues to here.

Activities

You can rent **mountain bikes** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞137 8933 6467; 1 Tuanjieqiao; half-/full day ¥40/60, deposit ¥200 plus passport copy) with helmet and bike lock from Dongfang Weinisi Jiudian, a small hotel just outside Fucheng Gate. It takes about one hour to cycle to Southern Great Wall; head west along Hongqiao Xilu, turn left at the roundabout, onto Tuqiao Lu, and keep going. Huangsi Bridge Old Town is 10km further, on the same road.

Sleeping

Fenghuang is full of guesthouses (*kezhan*).

A Good Year

GUESTHOUSE

(Yi Nian Hao Shiguang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞322 2026; 91 Huilong Ge, r ¥100-130; ❄️📶)

There are just 10 rooms in this sweet, wood-framed inn on the river; all have

balconies, showers and TVs but six have fantastic river views (¥130). Air-con is ¥20 extra.

Love Hotel

BOUTIQUE GUESTHOUSE

(Niaochao Ludian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0743 326 6722, 135 7430 8830; 116 Laoying Shao; r ¥120; ❄️ @ 📶)

Despite rooms and bathrooms being small, it's hard not to love this cutesy boutique guesthouse. Each room is different, and although one takes the 'love' theme a bit too far (heart-shaped bed, anyone?), most are decked out like bedrooms in a countryside cottage and open out onto little communal terraces. Each has a computer and wi-fi. No river views.

Fenghuang Zhongtian International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Fenghuang Zhongtian Guoji Qingnian Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎326 0546; yhaphoenix@163.com; 11 Shawan, dm ¥35-50, r from ¥135; ❄️ @ 📶)

Accessed through a 100-year-old wooden doorway, Fenghuang's branch of the Zhongtian brood has character as well as location, and is run by a friendly old guy. He doesn't speak English, but other staff do. Rooms are small and simple, but some have river views.

Shi'er Hao Shiguang

HOSTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0743 350 0302, 137 6210 6759; 12 Zhongying Jie; dm ¥47, r ¥118, with private bathroom ¥148; ❄️ @ 📶)

Friendly, laid-back hostel with a quiet, back-alley location on historic Zhongying Jie.

Beiyimen Lushe

GUESTHOUSE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0743 366 6508, 153 0743 8250; 32 Laoying Shao; d ¥288 & ¥388; ❄️ @ 📶)

Recently renovated, this modern guesthouse has seven tastefully decorated rooms with balconies overlooking the river. Very comfortable, though

bathrooms are small.

Phoenix Jiangtian Holiday Village

HOTEL

(Fenghuang Jiangtian Luyou Dujiacun [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 326 1998; Jiangtian Sq, r from ¥588, discounted to ¥288; 📶 @ 📶)

The only proper hotel by the old town, Phoenix has decent, good-sized rooms, but bathrooms are small and there are no river views.

Eating & Drinking

Fenghuang has plenty of cheap, tasty street food – everything from kebabs to spicy *doufu* (tofu) and cooling bowls of *liangfen* (jellies made from grasses or starchy roots). Look out for evening *shaokao* (street barbecues) on the north side of Hong Bridge.

Bars wake up with a shout at nightfall along Laoying Shao and along both sides of the river.

Soul Cafe

ITALIAN

(Yisu Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 18 Laoying Shao; mains ¥35-65; 🕒 8am-midnight; 📶)

This upmarket cafe serves proper coffee (from ¥25), pizza (¥50 to ¥65) and pasta (¥35), as well as Italian ice cream, imported wines and Cuban cigars. Lovely riverside location with balcony seating to boot.

Miss Yang Restaurant

HUNAN

(Yangxiaojiede Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 45 Laoying Shao; mains ¥30-80; 🕒 11am-9pm)

Specialising in local cuisine, particularly that of the Miao and the Tujia people, this intimate restaurant serves some truly tasty delights, including Fenghuang's most famous dish, *Fenghuang xuebaya* (duck-blood cakes). Trust us: it's much nicer than it sounds.

It also does a delicious Taiwanese chicken stew called *san bei ji*, and its cured pork (*la rou*) dishes are superb – it has four types. Also worth trying is

the *tudou fen*, a rice-noodle dish from neighbouring Guizhou province. The only downside here are the expensive beers (¥15 to ¥35). Photo menu.

Information

The main bank branches are on Nanhua Lu.

China Post

POST

(Zhongguo Youzheng  ; cnr Sanwangge Lu & Hongqiao Zhonglu;  8am-5.30pm) **FREE**

Kaiming Pharmacy

PHARMACY

(Kaiming Dayaofang  ; Hongqiao Xilu;  7.30am-10.30pm)

Opposite the post office.

New People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Xin Renmin Yiyuan  322 1199; Hongqiao Xilu)

Southwest of town at the Jiensu Lu intersection.

Tourism Administrative Bureau of Fenghuang

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Fenghuang Luyou Zhongxin  ;  322 8365;  6.30am-6pm)

Off Wenhua Sq.

Xindongli Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Xindongli Wangba  ; 2nd fl, Jianshe Lu; per hr ¥3;  24hr) 

Beside Hong Bridge.

Getting There & Around

Buses from **Fenghuang Bus Terminal** (Fenghuang Qiche Keyun Zongzhan) include the following:

➔ **Changsha** ¥140, five hours, hourly 7am to 5pm

- ➔ **Huaihua** ¥40, three hours, hourly 8am to 6pm
- ➔ **Jishou** ¥22, one hour, frequent 6.30am to 7.30pm
- ➔ **Zhangjiajie** ¥80, 4½ hours, hourly 8.30am to 5pm

If you're heading to Guizhou province, there are frequent buses to Tongren (¥25, 1½ hours, 8am to 4.30pm), from where you can change for Zhenyuan.

- ➔ **Local Bus 1** goes from Fenghuang Bus Terminal to Nanhua Gate Tower.

There's no train station in Fenghuang, but you can book tickets at the **train ticket booking office** (Huoche Daipiaochu; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 322 2410; Hongqiao Zhonglu; 🕒 8am-10pm) south of Hong Bridge.

Hongjiang Old Town

☎ 0745 / Pop 60,783

This little-known town boasts an extraordinary history as a Qing-dynasty financial and trading centre, due to its fortuitous location at the confluence of the Yuan (Yuan Jiang) and Wu (Wu Shui) Rivers. At one time it was the main opium-distribution hub in southwest China. Dating as far back as the Northern Song dynasty, the surrounding city is mostly modern now, but the past lives on in the remarkable **old town** (*gushangcheng*), which is still home to a few thousand people.

Sights

The old town can be visited in half a day. It spreads in a maze of alleys running uphill from Yuanjiang Lu – a road running close to the riverbank – but can be accessed from all sides.

There's an official **ticket office** (admission ¥120; 🕒 8am-5pm) marked with red lanterns in an alley off Yuanjiang Lu. Admission includes guided two-hour tours in Chinese. You need not pay admission if you enter via any of the other alleys connecting to the main roads, but you won't be allowed into the

notable buildings without a ticket.

The old town undulates in a delightful, higgledy-piggledy, often steep, maze of narrow stone-flagged alleys and lanes. Many of the less important buildings remain in a charming state of dilapidation. English and Chinese signposts point the way to the more notable buildings, most of which have been fully restored. These include the tax office, an opium shop, a brothel, a newspaper office, ancestral halls, and courtyard homes of prominent merchants. Most are of the *yinziwu* style, characterised by a series of adjoining courtyards, high exterior walls and concave roofs.

Sleeping & Eating

Hongjiang Hotel

HOTEL

(Hongjiang Dajiudian  766 2999; 308 Xinmin Lu, r from ¥168, discounted to ¥118;   )

This ageing hotel with large rooms is well maintained and comfortable. The alley opposite, between 225 and 227 Xinmin Lu, leads into the old town. While you're in the alley, pull up a stool and grab a bowl of *mifen* (¥5), Hongjiang's specialty rice noodles.

The hotel is a few hundred metres uphill from the ticket office. The bus from Huaihua passes here before terminating by the ticket office.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang 318 Xinmin Lu)

Next to Hongjiang Hotel.

Getting There & Away

Don't confuse Hongjiang old town with Hongjiang city (Hongjiang Shi), the town on the railway 30km west. The old town is most easily reached via the

town of Huaihua.

Buses from Huaihua:

- ➔ **Changsha** ¥150, four hours, frequent 7.30am to 6.20pm
- ➔ **Fenghuang** ¥40, one hour, frequent 7am to 5.30pm
- ➔ **Hongjiang Old Town** ¥25, 90 minutes, half-hourly 6.30am to 6pm

Buses to and from Fenghuang use **Huaihua West Bus Station** (Qiche Xizhan), which is walking distance from Huaihua train station (turn left out of the bus station, then second left at the roundabout).

Buses to and from Changsha and Hongjiang old town use **Huaihua South Bus Station** (Qiche Nanzhan).

Local Bus 12 links Huaihua's train station and south bus station.

Buses back to Huaihua (6.30am to 6pm) from Hongjiang old town leave from opposite the ticket office.

Hong Kong

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Hong Kong



📍 852 / Pop 7 million

Why Go?

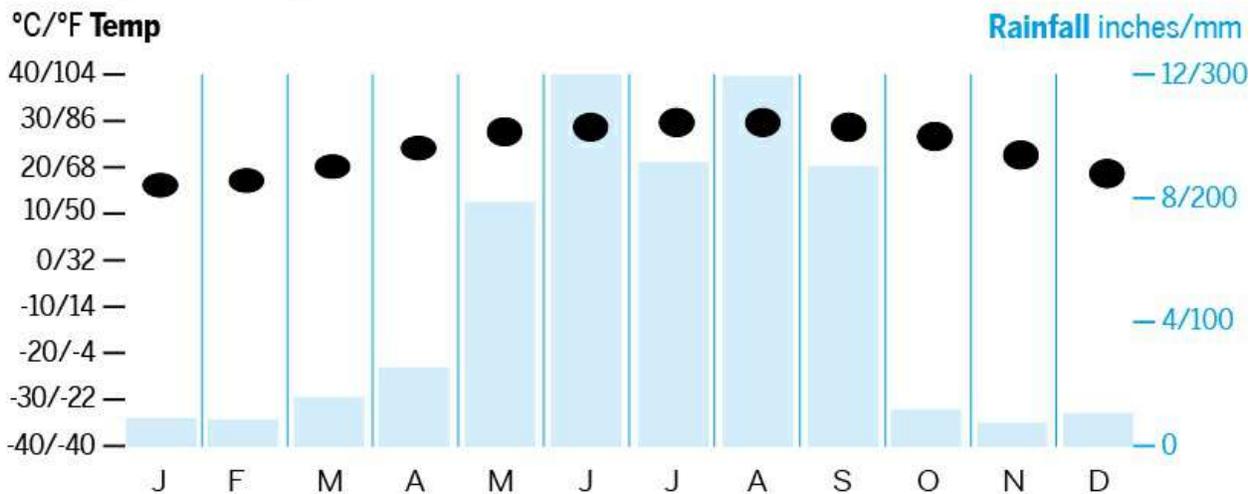
Like a shot of adrenalin, Hong Kong quickens the pulse. Skyscrapers march up jungle-clad slopes by day and blaze neon by night across a harbour crisscrossed by freighters and motor junks. Above streets teeming with traffic, five-star hotels stand next to ageing tenement blocks.

The very acme of luxury can be yours, though enjoying the city need not cost the earth. The HK\$2 ride across the harbour must be one of the world's best-value cruises. A meander through a market offers similarly cheap thrills. You can also escape the crowds – just head for one of the city's many country parks.

It's also a city that lives to eat, offering diners the very best of China and beyond. Hong Kong, above all, rewards those who grab experience by the scruff of the neck, who'll try that jellyfish, explore half-deserted villages or stroll beaches far from neon and steel.

When to Go

Hong Kong



- ➔ **Mar–May** Asia’s top film festival, rugby and deities’ birthdays beckon beyond a sea of umbrellas.
- ➔ **Jun–Sep** Get hot (beach, new wardrobe), get wet (dragon boat, beer): antidotes to sultry summers.
- ➔ **Nov–Feb** Hills by day, arts festival by night, celebrate Chinese New Year under Christmas lights.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ [22 Ships](#)
- ➔ [Kowloon Tang](#)
- ➔ [Luk Yu Tea House](#)
- ➔ [Ye Shanghai](#)
- ➔ [Little Bao](#)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ [Peninsula Hong Kong](#)
- ➔ [Tai O Heritage Hotel](#)
- ➔ [Mira Moon](#)
- ➔ [Helena May](#)
- ➔ [Upper House](#)

Hong Kong Highlights



- 1 Cross Victoria Harbour on the legendary [Star Ferry](#).
- 2 Take the steep ascent to Victoria Peak on the [Peak Tram](#).
- 3 Yum cha under whirling fans at [Luk Yu Tea House](#).
- 4 Soak up the incensed air at [Man Mo Temple](#).
- 5 Feel the chug of the world's last **double-decker trams**.
- 6 Indulge in the visual feast of [Tsim Sha Tsui East Promenade](#).
- 7 Lose yourself in a walled village on the [Ping Shan Heritage Trail](#).
- 8 Get some context for it all at the [Hong Kong Heritage Museum](#).
- 9 Take in the indigenous sights, sounds and smells of the [Temple Street Night Market](#).
- 10 Pay your respects to the magnificent Big Buddha at [Po Lin Monastery](#).

History

Until European traders started importing opium into the country, Hong Kong was an obscure backwater in the Chinese empire. The British developed the trade aggressively and by the start of the 19th century traded this ‘foreign mud’ for Chinese tea, silk and porcelain.

China’s attempts to stamp out the opium trade gave the British the pretext they needed for military action. Gunboats were sent in. In 1841, the Union flag was hoisted on Hong Kong Island and the Treaty of Nanking, which brought an end to the so-called First Opium War, ceded the island to the British crown ‘in perpetuity.’

At the end of the Second Opium War in 1860, Britain took possession of Kowloon Peninsula, and in 1898 a 99-year lease was granted for the New Territories.

Through the 20th century Hong Kong grew in fits and starts. Waves of refugees fled China for Hong Kong during times of turmoil. Trade flourished as did British expat social life, until the Japanese army crashed the party in 1941.

By the end of WWII Hong Kong’s population had fallen from 1.6 million to 610,000. But trouble in China soon swelled the numbers again as refugees (including industrialists) from the communist victory in 1949 increased the population beyond two million. This, together with a UN trade embargo on China during the Korean War and China’s isolation in the next three decades, enabled Hong Kong to reinvent itself as one of the world’s most dynamic ports and manufacturing and financial service centres.

In 1984 Britain agreed to return what would become the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong to China in 1997, on the condition it would retain its free-market economy and its social and legal systems for 50 years. China called it ‘One country, two systems.’ On 1 July 1997, in pouring rain, outside the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, the British era ended.

In the years that followed, Hong Kong weathered major storms – an economic downturn, the outbreak of the SARS virus and a nagging mistrust

of the government.

In March 2012, Leung Chun-ying, a former property surveyor, became Hong Kong's fourth chief executive. Though a seemingly more decisive man than his predecessors, Leung's unsubstantiated 'red' connections have many Hong Kongers worried, something not helped by spiralling living costs and China's treatment of its dissidents.

Pro-democracy protesters took over the streets of downtown Hong Kong in September 2014, demanding free elections. Demonstrations continued until mid-December, with Beijing refusing to budge.

HONG KONG PRIMER

Partly owing to its British colonial past, Hong Kong's political and economic systems are still significantly different from those of mainland China. Prices in this chapter are quoted in Hong Kong dollars (HK\$).

Language

Almost 95% of Hong Kongers are Cantonese-speaking Chinese, though Putonghua (Mandarin) is increasingly used. Visitors should have few problems, however, because English is widely spoken and the street signs are bilingual, as are most restaurant menus. Written Chinese in Hong Kong uses traditional Chinese characters, which tend to be more complicated than the simplified Chinese used on the mainland.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter. Note that prices for eating are per meal.

SLEEPING

\$ less than HK\$900

\$\$ HK\$900 to HK\$1900

\$\$\$ more than HK\$1900

EATING

\$ less than HK\$200

\$\$ HK\$200 to HK\$500

\$\$\$ more than HK\$500

Sights

Hong Kong comprises four main areas: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, the New Territories (NT) and the Outlying Islands. Most sights are distributed in the northwestern part of Hong Kong Island, southern Kowloon Peninsula and throughout the NT.

More than 70% of Hong Kong is mountains and forests, most of it in the NT. The area has seen plenty of urbanisation, but there remain traditional villages, mountain walks and beaches, all within an hour or so of the urban area by public transport. The suburbs in the NT are connected by the MTR, which links Kowloon to Lo Wu (East Rail) in the north and Kowloon to Tuen Mun (West Rail) in the west.

Of Hong Kong's 234 islands, only Lantau, Cheung Chau, Lamma and Peng Chau have easy access by ferry.

Admission charges for children and seniors at many sights are roughly half the regular price.

HONG KONG MUSEUMS

The **Hong Kong Museum Pass**

(www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/attractions/museum-major.html), which allows multiple entries to all museums mentioned in this chapter, is available from participating museums. Museums are free on Wednesday.

Hong Kong Island

Central is where high finance meets haute couture, and mega deals are closed in towering skyscrapers. To the west is historically rich – and increasingly hip – Sheung Wan, while Admiralty with its few but excellent offerings lies to the east. The 800m-long **Central–Mid-Levels Escalator** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ⌚ down 6-10am, up 10.30am-midnight), which begins on Queen’s Rd Central and finishes at Conduit Rd, is useful for negotiating the slopes of Sheung Wan.

East of Admiralty is Wan Chai which features skyscrapers in the north and old neighbourhoods in the south. Neon-clad Causeway Bay lies to the east.



Sheung Wan, Central & Admiralty

Top Sights

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 1 Hong Kong Park | F6 |
| 2 Man Mo Temple | C3 |

Sights

| | |
|--|----|
| 3 Asia Society Hong Kong Centre | H7 |
| 4 Cenotaph | F4 |
| 5 Central Police Station | D4 |
| 6 Central–Mid-Levels Escalator | D4 |
| 7 Dr Sun Yat-Sen Museum | C4 |
| Helena May | F6 |
| 8 Hong Kong Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception | D5 |
| 9 Hong Kong Zoological & Botanical Gardens | E6 |
| 10 HSBC Building | F5 |
| 11 Jamia Mosque | C5 |
| 12 Ohel Leah Synagogue | B4 |
| 13 Peak Tram | F6 |
| 14 St John's Cathedral | F5 |
| 15 Star Ferry | G2 |
| 16 Statue Square | F4 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | |
|--|----|
| 17 Wan Kei Ho International Martial Arts Association | C2 |
|--|----|

Sleeping

| | |
|---|----|
| 18 Bishop Lei International House | D5 |
| 19 Four Seasons | E2 |
| 20 Helena May | F6 |
| 21 Hotel LKF | D5 |
| 22 Ibis | B2 |
| 23 Landmark Oriental | E5 |
| 24 Mandarin Oriental | F4 |

Eating

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| AMMO | H7 |
| 25 Boss | E4 |

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 26 | Caprice | E2 |
| 27 | Island Tang | F5 |
| 28 | L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon | E4 |
| 29 | Life Cafe | D4 |
| 30 | Lin Heung Teahouse | D3 |
| 31 | Little Bao | C4 |
| 32 | Luk Yu Tea House | E4 |
| | Lung King Heen | E2 |
| 33 | Otto e Mezzo Bombana | F4 |
| 34 | Pure Veggie House | E6 |
| 35 | Sing Kee | D3 |
| 36 | Yardbird | C3 |
| 37 | Yung Kee Restaurant | E4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|----------------------------|----|
| 38 | Club 71 | D3 |
| 39 | Globe | D4 |
| 40 | MO Bar | E4 |
| 41 | Pier 7 | G2 |
| 42 | Propaganda | D4 |
| 43 | Sevva | F4 |
| | T:ME | D3 |

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 44 | Grappa's Cellar | F4 |
| 45 | Peel Fresco | D4 |
| 46 | TakeOut Comedy Club | C4 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 47 | Arch Angel Antiques | D4 |
| 48 | Chinese Arts & Crafts | H6 |
| 49 | Fook Ming Tong Tea Shop | F3 |
| 50 | IFC Mall | F3 |
| 51 | Pacific Place | H6 |
| 52 | Shanghai Tang | E5 |

Information

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 53 | British Consulate | H6 |
| 54 | Canadian Consulate | F3 |
| 55 | China Travel Service | D3 |

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 56 | French Consulate | H5 |
| 57 | German Consulate | H6 |
| 58 | Irish Consulate | H6 |
| | Japanese Consulate | F3 |
| 59 | Macau Government Tourist Office - Hong Kong branch | C2 |
| 60 | Nepalese Consulate | D4 |
| 61 | Netherlands Consulate | F5 |
| 62 | US Consulate | F6 |

Peak Tram

TRAM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2522 0922; www.thepeak.com.hk; Lower Terminus 33 Garden Rd, Central; one-way/return adult HK\$28/40, seniors over 65 & child 3-11yr HK\$11/18; 🕒 7am-midnight)

The Peak Tram is not really a tram but a cable-hauled funicular railway that has been scaling the 396m ascent to the highest point on Hong Kong Island since 1888. It is thus the oldest form of public transport in the territory.

The Peak Tram runs every 10 to 15 minutes from 7am to midnight. Octopus cards can be used.

HSBC Building

BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.hsbc.com.hk/1/2/about/home/unique-headquarters; 1 Queen's Rd Central, Central; admission free; 🕒 escalator 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat; 🚇 Central, exit K) **FREE**

Make sure you have a close-up look at the stunning headquarters of what is now HSBC (formerly the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank) headquarters, designed by British architect Sir Norman Foster in 1985. The building is a masterpiece of precision, sophistication and innovation. And so it should be. On completion in 1985 it was the world's most expensive building (it cost upward of US\$1 billion).

★ Man Mo Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2540 0350; 124-126 Hollywood Rd, Sheung Wan; admission free; 🕒 8am-6pm; 🚇 26) **FREE**

One of Hong Kong's oldest temples and a declared monument, atmospheric Man Mo Temple is dedicated to the gods of literature ('Man'), holding a writing brush, and of war ('Mo'), wielding a sword. Built in 1847 during the Qing dynasty by wealthy Chinese merchants, it was, besides a place of worship, a court of arbitration for local disputes when trust was thin between the Chinese and the colonialists. Oaths taken at this Taoist temple (often accompanied by the ritual beheading of a rooster) were accepted by the colonial government.

Outside the main entrance are four gilt plaques on poles that used to be carried around at processions. Two describe the gods being worshipped inside, one requests silence and a show of respect within the temple's grounds, and the last warns menstruating women to keep out of the main hall. Inside the temple are two 19th-century sedan chairs with elaborate carvings, that used to carry the two gods during festivals.

Lending the temple its beguiling and smoky air are rows of large earth-coloured spirals suspended from the roof, like strange fungi in an upside-down garden. These are incense coils burned as offerings by worshippers.

Off to the side is Lit Shing Kung, the 'saints' palace', a place of worship for other Buddhist and Taoist deities. Another hall, Kung Sor ('public meeting place'), used to serve as a court of justice to settle disputes among the Chinese community before the modern judicial system was introduced. A couplet at the entrance urges those entering to leave their selfish interests and prejudices outside. Fortune-tellers beckon from inside.

Asia Society Hong Kong Centre

HISTORIC BUILDING, GALLERY

(Hong Kong Jockey Club Former Explosives Magazine  ;  2103 9511;

www.asiasociety.org/hong-kong; 9 Justice Dr, Admiralty;  gallery 11am-5pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm last

Thu of month;  Admiralty, exit F)

An architectural feat, this magnificent site integrates 19th-century British military buildings, including a couple of explosives magazines, and transforms them into an exhibition gallery, a multipurpose theatre, an excellent restaurant and a bookstore, all open to the public. The architects

Tod Williams and Billie Tsien eschewed bold statements for a subdued design that deferred to history and the natural shape of the land. The result is a horizontally oriented site that offers an uplifting contrast to the skyscrapers nearby. Experience it with a meal at [AMMO](#).

Dr Sun Yat-Sen Museum

HISTORIC BUILDING, MUSEUM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2367 6373; <http://hk.dr.sunyatsen.museum>; 7 Castle Rd, Mid-Levels; adult/concession HK\$10/5, Wed free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 3B)

The museum, dedicated to the father of modern China, is housed in an Edwardian-style building, which is arguably more interesting than the solemn displays of archival materials. Built in 1914, the mansion belonged to Ho Kom-tong, a tycoon from a Eurasian family. It was converted into a Mormon Church in 1960, and became a museum in 2006. If you're taking the bus, alight at the Hong Kong Baptist Church on Caine Rd.

Central Police Station

HISTORIC BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 10 Hollywood Rd, Lan Kwai Fong; 🚏 26, **M** Central, exit D2)

Built between 1841 and 1919, Hong Kong's oldest symbol of law and order is this now-disused, police-magistracy-prison complex modeled after London's Old Bailey. The large compound is being redeveloped into an arts hub with cinema, museum and boutique shopping mall, due to open in 2016.

★ Hong Kong Park

PARK

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2521 5041; www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks/hkp/en/index.php; 19 Cotton Tree Dr, Admiralty; admission free; 🕒 park 6am-11pm; ♿; **M** Admiralty, exit C1) **FREE**

Designed to look anything but natural, Hong Kong Park is one of the most unusual parks in the world, emphasising artificial creations such as its fountain plaza, conservatory, waterfall, indoor games hall, playground, taichi garden, viewing tower, museum and arts centre. For all its artifice, the eight-hectare park is beautiful in its own weird way and, with a wall of skyscrapers on one side and mountains on the other, makes for some dramatic photographs.

Hong Kong Zoological & Botanical Gardens

PARK

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.lcsd.gov.hk/parks; Albany Rd, Central; 🕒 terrace gardens 5am-10pm, greenhouse 9am-4.30pm; ♿; 🚊 3B, 12) **FREE**

Built in the Victorian era, this garden has a welcoming collection of fountains, sculptures and greenhouses, plus a zoo and some fabulous aviaries. Along with exotic vegetation, some 160 species of bird reside here. The zoo is surprisingly comprehensive, and is also one of the world's leading centres for the captive breeding of endangered species. Albany Rd divides the gardens, with the plants and aviaries to the east, close to Garden Rd, and most of the animals to the west.

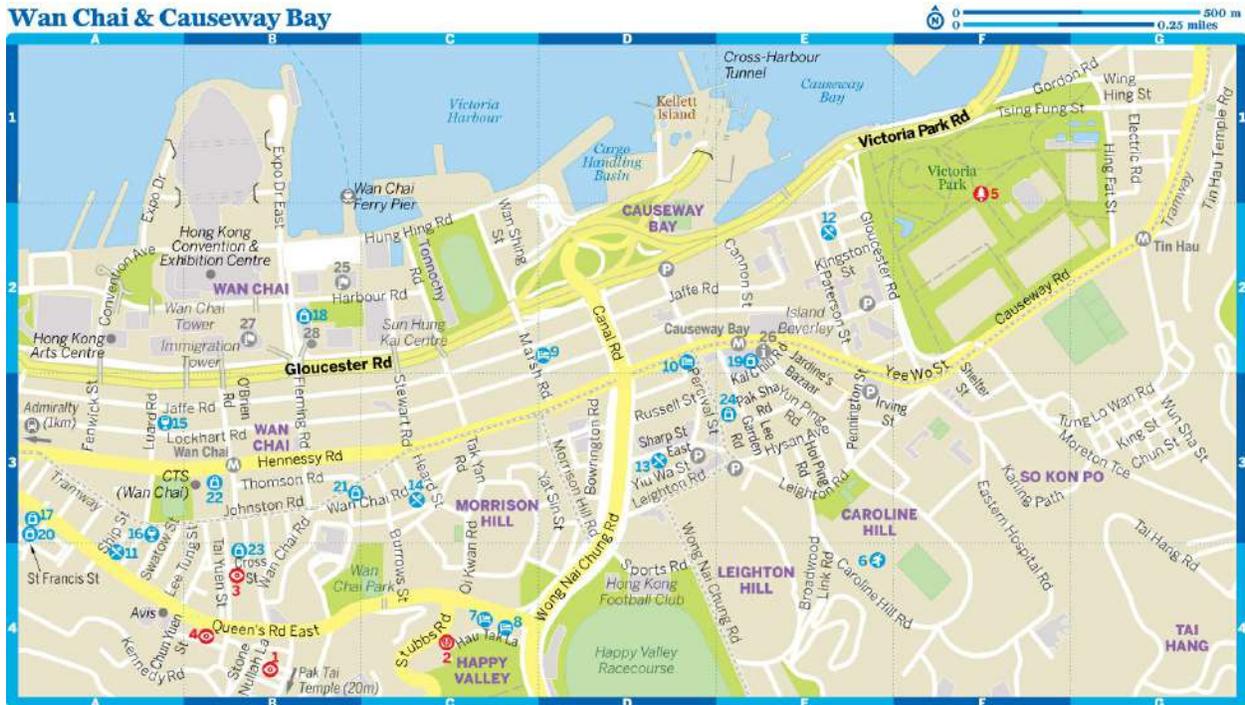
Statue Square

SQUARE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Edinburgh Pl, Central; **M** Central, exit K)

This leisurely square used to house effigies of British royalty. Now it pays tribute to a single sovereign – the founder of HSBC. In the northern area (reached via an underpass) is the **Cenotaph** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chater Rd), built in 1923 as a memorial to Hong Kong residents killed during the two world wars. On the south side of Chater Rd, Statue Sq has a pleasant collection of fountains and seating areas, with tiling that's strangely reminiscent of a 1980s municipal washroom.

Wan Chai & Causeway Bay



Wan Chai & Causeway Bay

Sights

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1 Blue House | B4 |
| 2 Khalsa Diwan Sikh Temple | C4 |
| 3 Old Wan Chai | B4 |
| 4 Old Wan Chai Post Office | B4 |
| 5 Victoria Park | F1 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

- | | |
|--|----|
| 6 South China Athletic Association | E4 |
|--|----|

Sleeping

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| 7 Cosmo | C4 |
| 8 Cosmopolitan Hotel | C4 |
| 9 Mira Moon | D2 |
| 10 YesInn | D2 |

Eating

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| 11 22 Ships | A4 |
|-----------------------------|----|

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 12 | Delicious Kitchen | E2 |
| 13 | Irori | D3 |
| 14 | Megan's Kitchen | C3 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 15 | Delaney's Executive Bar | A3 |
| 16 | Pawn | A3 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 17 | Chinese Arts & Crafts | A3 |
| 18 | Chinese Arts & Crafts | B2 |
| 19 | Eslite | E2 |
| 20 | Kapok | A3 |
| 21 | Kung Fu Supplies | B3 |
| 22 | Wan Chai Computer Centre | B3 |
| 23 | Wan Chai Market | B4 |
| 24 | Yiu Fung Store | E3 |

Information

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 25 | Australian Consulate | B2 |
| 26 | Hong Kong Island HKTB Centre | E2 |
| 27 | New Zealand Consulate | B2 |
| 28 | Visa Office of the People's Republic of China | B2 |

Old Wan Chai

VILLAGE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

The area around Queen's Rd E (Wan Chai metro station, exit A3) is filled with pockets of local culture that are best explored on foot.

The historic **Blue House** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 72-74a Stone Nullah Lane) is a prewar building with cast-iron Spanish balconies reminiscent of those found in New Orleans. Conservationists love it; tenants loathe it (old Bluesy's loos don't flush!). **Old Wan Chai Post Office** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 221 Queen's Rd E, Wan Chai; 🕒 10am-5pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 6, 6A) is Hong Kong's oldest post-office building. The area sandwiched by Queen's Rd E and Johnston Rd is a lively

outdoor bazaar. **Wan Chai Market** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 7.30am-7pm) vendors flaunt their wares on Cross St and Stone Nullah Lane. **Tai Yuen St** has goldfish, plastic flowers and granny underwear for sale but is best known for its toy shops selling collectibles such as clockwork tin.

Pak Tai Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Lung On St, Wan Chai; 🕒 8am-5pm; **M** Wan Chai, exit A3)

A short stroll up Stone Nullah Lane takes you to a majestic Taoist temple built in 1863 to honour a god of the sea, Pak Tai. The temple – the largest on Hong Kong Island – is impressive. The main hall contains a 3m-tall copper likeness of Pak Tai cast in the Ming dynasty.

Victoria Park

PARK

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/ls_park.php; Causeway Rd, Causeway Bay; 🕒 6am or 7am-11pm; **M** Tin Hau, exit B) **FREE**

Victoria Park is the biggest patch of public greenery on Hong Kong Island. The best time to go is on a weekday morning, when it becomes a forest of people practising the slow-motion choreography of taichi. The park becomes a flower market a few days before the Chinese New Year. It's also worth a visit during the **Mid-Autumn Festival**, when people turn out en masse carrying lanterns.

St John's Cathedral

CHURCH

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2523 4157; www.stjohnscathedral.org.hk; 4-8 Garden Rd, Central; 🕒 7am-6pm; 🚏 12A, 40, 40M, **M** Central, exit K) **FREE**

Services have been held at this Anglican cathedral since it opened in 1849, with the exception of 1944, when the Japanese army used it as a social club. It suffered heavy damage during WWII, and the front doors were subsequently remade using timber salvaged from HMS *Tamar*, a British warship that guarded Victoria Harbour. You walk on sacred ground in more ways than one here: it is the only piece of freehold land in Hong Kong. Enter

from Battery Path.

Khalsa Diwan Sikh Temple

SIKH TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2572 4459; www.khalsadiwan.com; 371 Queen's Rd E, Wan Chai; 🕒 4am-9pm; 🚌 10 from Central)

Sitting quietly between a busy road and a cemetery is Hong Kong's largest Sikh temple, a descendant of a small original built in 1901 by Sikh members of the British army. The temple welcomes people of any faith, caste or colour to join in their services. Sunday prayer (9am to 1.30pm) sees some 1000 believers and nonbelievers in collective worship (fewer at the daily prayers, 6am to 8.30am and 6.30pm to 8pm).

Hong Kong Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

CHURCH

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2522 8212; www.cathedral.catholic.org.hk; 16 Caine Rd, Mid-Levels; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat, mass 9.30am Sun; 🚌 23)

This Gothic revival cathedral was built in 1888 and financed largely by the Portuguese faithful from Macau. If taking the bus, alight at Caritas Centre on Caine Rd.

Jamia Mosque

MOSQUE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2523 7743; 30 Shelley St, Mid-Levels)

Also called Lascar Mosque, Hong Kong's oldest mosque was erected in 1849. Non-Muslims can only admire the facade from the terrace out front. Jamia Mosque is accessible by the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator.

Ohel Leah Synagogue

SYNAGOGUE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2589 2621; www.ohelleah.org; 70 Robinson Rd, Mid-Levels; 🕒 by appointment only 10.30am-7pm Mon-Thu, services 7am Mon-Fri, 6pm Mon-Thu; 🚌 3B, 23)

This Moorish Romantic temple, completed in 1902, is named after Leah Gubbay Sassoon, the matriarch of a philanthropic Sephardic Jewish family. It's Hong Kong's earliest synagogue. Be sure to bring ID if you plan on

visiting the sumptuous interior.

Stanley

VILLAGE

([GOOGLE MAP](#))

This crowd pleaser is best visited on weekdays. **Stanley Market** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); Stanley Village Rd; 🕒 9am-6pm; 🚏 6, 6A, 6X or 260) is a maze of alleyways that has bargain clothing (haggling a must!). **Stanley Main Beach** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) is for beach-bumming and windsurfing. With graves dating back to 1841, **Stanley Military Cemetery** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2557 3498; Wong Ma Kok Rd; 🕒 8am-5pm; 🚏 14, 6A), 500m south of the market, is worth a visit.

Aberdeen

VILLAGE

([GOOGLE MAP](#))

Aberdeen's main attraction is the typhoon shelter it shares with sleepy **Ap Lei Chau** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚤 Ap Lei Chau), where the sampans of Hong Kong's boat-dwelling fisherfolk used to moor. On weekday evenings, you may spot dragon boat teams practising here. The best way to see the area is by sampan. A half-hour tour of the typhoon shelter costs about HK\$55 per person. Embark from **Aberdeen Promenade**.

Repulse Bay

BEACH

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚏 6, 6A, 6X, 260)

The long beach with tawny sand at Repulse Bay is visited by Chinese tourist groups year-round and, needless to say, packed on weekends in summer. It's a good place if you like people-watching. The beach has showers and changing rooms and shade trees at the roadside, but the water is pretty murky.

Ocean Park

AMUSEMENT PARK

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 3923 2323; www.oceanpark.com.hk; Ocean Park Rd; adult/child 3-11yr HK\$320/160; 🕒 10am-7.30pm; 🚶; 🚏 629 from Admiralty, 🚏 973 from Tsim Sha Tsui, 🚏 6A,

6X, 70, 75 from Central,  72, 72A, 92 from Causeway Bay)

It may have to compete with the natural crowd-pulling powers of Disneyland on Lantau, but for many Ocean Park remains the top theme park in Hong Kong. The park's constant expansion and addition of new rides and thrills, as well as the presence of four giant pandas plus two very cute, rare red pandas – all gifts from the mainland – has kept this a must-visit for families.

Shek O Beach

BEACH

([GOOGLE MAP](#));  9 from Shau Kei Wan MTR station, exit A3)

Shek O beach has a large expanse of sand, shady trees to the rear, showers, changing facilities and lockers for rent.

HONG KONG IN...

ONE DAY

Catch a tram up to **Victoria Peak** for great views of the city, stopping in **Central** for lunch on the way down. Head to [Man Mo Temple](#) for a taste of history before boarding the [Star Ferry](#) to Kowloon. Enjoy the views along [Tsim Sha Tsui East Promenade](#) as you stroll over to the [Hong Kong Museum of History](#). Dine on ultra-luxe Cantonese cuisine (think seafood) at [Boss](#) in Central. After dinner, take the MTR to Soho for drinks at [Club 71](#).

TWO DAYS

In addition to the above, you could go to [Aberdeen](#) for a boat ride, then seafood and shopping. After dark, head to the [Temple Street Night Market](#) for sightseeing, shopping and street food. If you're still game, check out the Yau Ma Tei **Wholesale Fruit Market** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); cnr Shek Lung St & Reclamation St, Yau Ma Tei; 🕒 2-6am;  Yau Ma Tei, exit B2).

HSBC'S GEOMANCY

The 52-storey [HSBC Building](#) is supposedly full of examples of good feng shui (Chinese geomancy). Care is taken to ensure nothing blocks its view of Victoria Harbour, because water is associated with wealth and prosperity. The escalators are

believed to symbolise the whiskers of a dragon sucking wealth into its belly, and they are built at an angle to the entrance, which supposedly disorients evil spirits which can only travel in a straight line. Care was also taken not to locate the banking hall on the ground floor, because doing so would block off the flow of the 'dragon's vein' from Victoria Harbour to the mountains at the back, creating bad feng shui.

Kowloon

Tsim Sha Tsui, known for its variety of dining and shopping options, is Hong Kong's most eclectic district, with the glamorous only a stone's throw from the pedestrian, and a population comprising Chinese, South Asians, Africans, Filipinos and Europeans.

To the north, buzzing with local life, is down-at-heel **Yau Ma Tei**. Traffic- and pedestrian-choked **Mong Kok** is the world's most densely populated place.



Kowloon

Top Sights

1 [Tsim Sha Tsui East Promenade](#) E4

Sights

2 [Fook Tak Ancient Temple](#) C3

3 [Former Kowloon British School](#) C1

4 [Former Marine Police Headquarters](#) C4

5 [Hong Kong Museum of Art](#) C4

6 [Hong Kong Museum of History](#) E1

7 [Kowloon Mosque & Islamic Centre](#) C2

8 [Kowloon Park](#) C2

9 [Middle Road Children's Playground](#) D3

10 [Ocean Terminal Building](#) B4

11 [Signal Hill Garden & Blackhead Point Tower](#) D3

12 [St Andrew's Anglican Church](#) D1

Activities, Courses & Tours

13 [Hong Kong Dolphinwatch](#) C4

Sleeping

14 [BP International Hotel](#) C1

15 [Chungking Mansions](#) D3

16 [Hop Inn on Carnarvon](#) D2

17 [Hop Inn on Hankow](#) C3

18 [Hotel Icon](#) F2

19 [Hyatt Regency Tsim Sha Tsui](#) D3

20 [Mirador Mansion](#) D3

21 [Peninsula Hong Kong](#) C3

22 [Salisbury](#) C4

Eating

23 [Chicken HOF & Soju Korean](#) E1

24 [city'super](#) B2

25 [Din Tai Fung](#) B3

26 [Dong Lai Shun](#) E2

27 [Fook Lam Moon](#) D1

28 [Gaddi's](#) C3

29 [Great Beef Hot Pot](#) D2

30 [Spring Deer](#) D3

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 31 | Typhoon Shelter Hing Kee Restaurant | C1 |
| 32 | Woodlands | E3 |
| 33 | Ye Shanghai | B3 |
| 34 | Ziafat | C3 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 35 | Butler | D3 |
| 36 | Ned Kelly's Last Stand | C3 |
| 37 | Tapas Bar | E3 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 38 | Harbour City | B3 |
| 39 | Initial | D2 |
| 40 | Premier Jewellery | D3 |
| 41 | Rise Shopping Arcade | D2 |
| 42 | Swindon Books | C3 |

★ Tsim Sha Tsui East Promenade

HARBOUR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Salisbury Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit E)

One of the finest city skylines in the world has to be that of Hong Kong Island, and the promenade here is one of the best ways to get an uninterrupted view. It's a lovely place to stroll around during the day, but it really comes into its own in the evening, during the nightly **Symphony of Lights** ( 8-8.20pm), a spectacular sound-and-light show involving 44 buildings on the Hong Kong Island skyline. The new Deck 'n Beer bar located here is a great spot to have an alfresco, waterside drink (weather permitting).

Hong Kong Museum of History

MUSEUM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  2724 9042; <http://hk.history.museum>; 100 Chatham Rd South, Tsim Sha Tsui; adult/concession HK\$10/5, Wed free;  10am-6pm Mon & Wed-Sat, to 7pm Sun; ;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit B2)

For a whistle-stop overview of the territory's archaeology, ethnography, and natural and local history, this museum is well worth a visit, not only to learn

more about the subject but also to understand how Hong Kong presents its stories to the world. 'The Hong Kong Story' takes visitors on a fascinating walk through the territory's past via eight galleries, starting with the natural environment and prehistoric Hong Kong – about 6000 years ago, give or take a lunar year – and ending with the territory's return to China in 1997.

Former Marine Police Headquarters

HISTORIC BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2926 8000, tour reservation 2926 1881; www.1881heritage.com; 2A Canton Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 10am-10pm; 🚢 Star Ferry, 🚇 East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit L6) **FREE**

Built in 1884, this gorgeous Victorian complex, is one of Hong Kong's four oldest government buildings. It was used continuously by the Hong Kong Marine Police except during WWII when the Japanese navy took over. The complex is now a nakedly commercial property called 'Heritage 1881'. Some of the old structures are still here, including stables, pigeon houses and bomb shelter. Why 1881? Because '4' has a similar pronunciation to 'death' in Chinese, and the developer was superstitious.

St Andrew's Anglican Church

CHURCH

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2367 1478; www.standrews.org.hk; 138 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 7.30am-10.30pm, church 8.30am-5.30pm; 🚇 Tsim Sha Tsui, exit B1)

Sitting atop a knoll, next to the Former Kowloon British School, is a charming building in English Gothic style that houses Kowloon's oldest Protestant church. St Andrew's was built in 1905 in granite and red brick to serve Kowloon's Protestant population; it was turned into a Shinto shrine during the Japanese occupation. Nearby you'll see the handsome former vicarage with columned balconies (c 1909). Enter from the eastern side of Nathan Rd via steps or a slope.

Former Kowloon British School

HISTORIC BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; www.amo.gov.hk; 136 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🚇 Tsim Sha Tsui, exit B1)

The oldest surviving school building for expat children is a listed Victorian-

style structure that now houses the **Antiquities and Monuments Office**. Established in 1902, it was subsequently modified to incorporate breezy verandahs and high ceilings, prompted possibly by the fainting spells suffered by its young occupants.

Hong Kong Museum of Art

MUSEUM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2721 0116; <http://hk.art.museum>; 10 Salisbury Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; adult/concession HK\$10/5, Wed free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun; 🚢 Star Ferry, **M** East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit J)

This excellent museum has seven galleries spread over six floors, exhibiting Chinese antiquities, fine art, historical pictures and contemporary Hong Kong art. Highlights include the Xubaizhi collection of painting and calligraphy, contemporary works, and ceramics and other antiques from China. Audio guides are available for HK\$10. Refer to the tour schedule in the lobby for free English-language tours.

★ Temple Street Night Market

MARKET

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yau Ma Tei; 🕒 6-11pm; **M** Yau Ma Tei, exit C)

The liveliest night market in Hong Kong, Temple St extends from Man Ming Lane in the north to Nanking St in the south and is cut in two by the Tin Hau temple complex. While you may find better bargains further north in New Kowloon, and certainly over the border in Shenzhen, it is still a good place to go for the bustling atmosphere and the smells and tastes on offer from the *dai pai dong* (open-air street stall) food.

Jade Market

MARKET

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Battery St & Kansu St, Yau Ma Tei; 🕒 10am-6pm; **M** Yau Ma Tei, exit C)

The covered Jade Market, split into two parts by Battery St, has hundreds of stalls selling all varieties and grades of jade. But unless you really know your nephrite from your jadeite, it's not wise to buy expensive pieces here.

Tin Hau Temple

TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2385 0759; www.ctc.org.hk; cnr Temple St & Public Square St, Yau Ma Tei; 🕒 8am-5pm; **M** Yau Ma Tei, exit C)

This large, incense-filled sanctuary built in the 19th century is one of Hong Kong's most famous Tin Hau (Goddess of the Sea) temples. The public square out front is Yau Ma Tei's communal heart where fishermen once laid out their hemp ropes to sun next to Chinese banyans that today shade chess players and elderly men. Yau Ma Tei Police Station is a listed blue-and-white structure one block to the east along Public Square St.

★ Yuen Po Street Bird Garden & Flower Market

PARK, MARKET

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Yuen Po St & Boundary St, Mong Kok; 🕒 7am-8pm; **M** Prince Edward, exit B1)

In this enchanting corner of Mong Kok, you will find a handful of old men out 'walking' their caged songbirds. Stick around long enough and you should see birds being fed squirming caterpillars with chopsticks. There are also feathered creatures for sale, along with elaborate cages carved from teak. Adjacent to the garden is the [flower market](#) ([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Flower Market Rd), which theoretically keeps the same hours, but only gets busy after 10am.

Chi Lin Nunnery

BUDDHIST NUNNERY

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2354 1888; www.chilin.org; 5 Chi Lin Dr, Diamond Hill; admission free; 🕒 nunnery 9am-4.30pm, garden 6.30am-7pm; **M** Diamond Hill, exit C2) **FREE**

One of the most beautiful and arrestingly built environments in Hong Kong, this large Buddhist complex, originally dating from the 1930s, was rebuilt completely of wood (and not a single nail) in the style of the Tang dynasty in 1998. It is a serene place, with lotus ponds, immaculate bonsai tea plants and bougainvillea, and silent nuns delivering offerings of fruit and rice to Buddha and arhats (Buddhist disciples freed from the cycle of birth and death) or chanting behind intricately carved screens.

Sik Sik Yuen Wong Tai Sin Temple

TEMPLE

([GOOGLE MAP](#)  2327 8141, 2351 5640; www.siksikyuen.org.hk; 2, Chuk Yuen Village, Wong Tai Sin; donation HK\$2;  7am-5.30pm;  Wong Tai Sin, exit B2)

An explosion of colourful pillars, roofs, lattice work, flowers and incense, this busy temple is a destination for all walks of Hong Kong society, from pensioners and businesspeople to parents and young professionals.

Some come simply to pray, others to divine the future with *chim* – bamboo ‘fortune sticks’ that are shaken out of a box on to the ground and then read by a fortune-teller (they’re available free from the left of the main temple).

Middle Road Children’s Playground

PARK

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)  Middle Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui;  7am-11pm; ;  East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit K)

Accessible via a sweep of stairs from Chatham Rd South, this hidden gem atop the East Tsim Sha Tsui MTR station has play facilities, shaded seating and views of the waterfront. On weekdays it’s the quiet backyard playground of the residents nearby, but on weekends it’s filled with children and picnickers of as many ethnicities as there are ways to go down a slide (if you’re eight).

Signal Hill Garden & Blackhead Point Tower

PARK

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)  Minden Row, Tsim Sha Tsui;  tower 9-11am & 4-6pm;  East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit K)

The views from the top of this knoll are quite spectacular, and if it were the 1900s the ships in the harbour might be returning your gaze – a copper ball in the handsome Edwardian-style tower was dropped at 1pm daily so seafarers could adjust their chronometers. The garden is perched above the Middle Road Children’s Playground. Enter from Minden Row (Mody Rd).

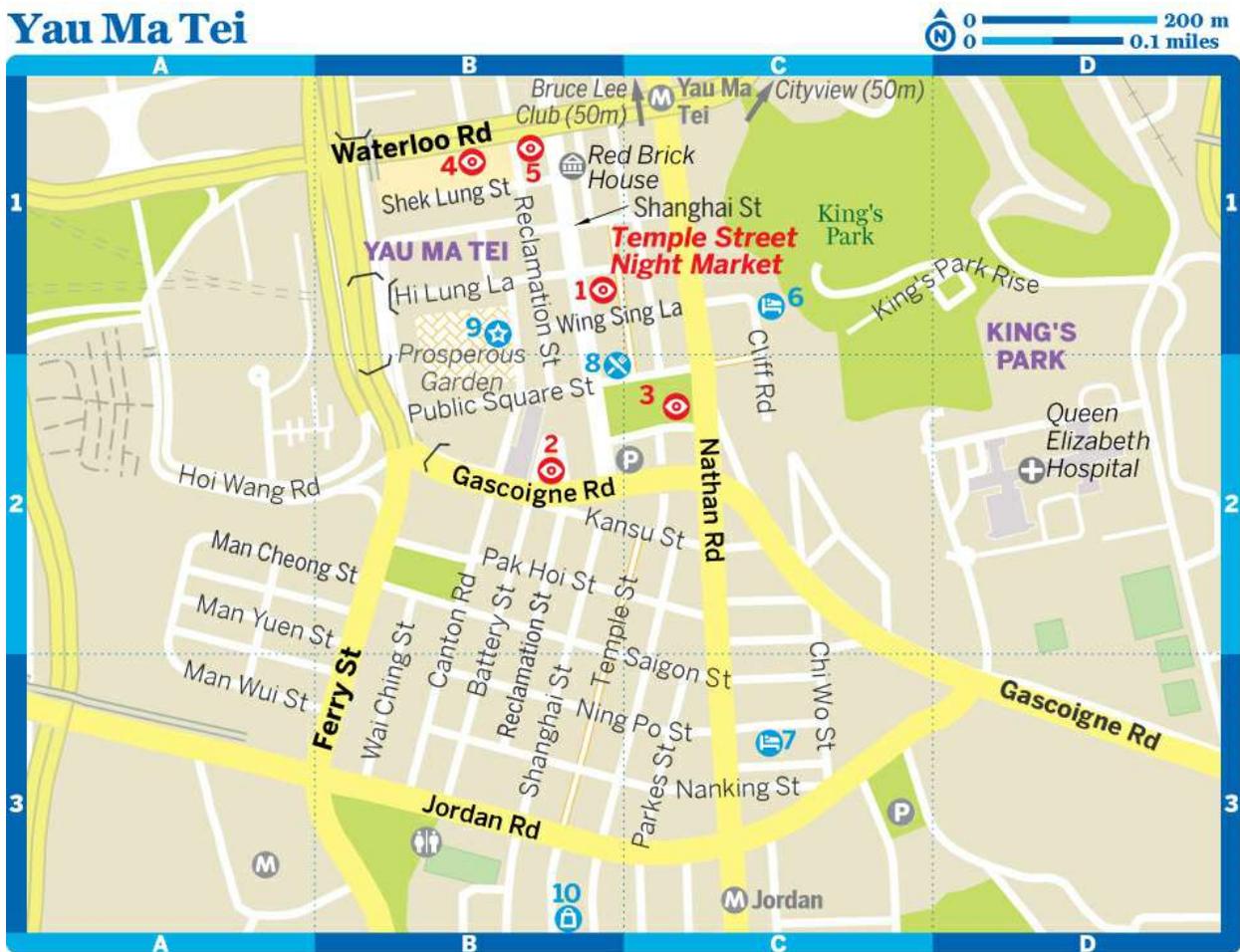
Kowloon Park

PARK

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)  www.lcsd.gov.hk; Nathan & Austin Rds, Tsim Sha Tsui;  6am-midnight; ;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit C2)

Built on the site of a barracks for Indian soldiers in the colonial army, Kowloon Park is an oasis of greenery and a refreshing escape from the hustle and bustle of Tsim Sha Tsui. Pathways and walls criss-cross the grass, birds hop around in cages, and ancient banyan trees dot the landscape. In the morning the older set practise taichi amid the serene surrounds, and on Sunday afternoon Kung Fu Corner stages martial arts displays.

Yau Ma Tei



Yau Ma Tei

📍 Top Sights

1 [Temple Street Night Market](#)

B1

📍 Sights

2 [Jade Market](#)

B2

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 3 | Tin Hau Temple | C2 |
| 4 | Wholesale Fruit Market | B1 |
| 5 | Yau Ma Tei Theatre | B1 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 6 | Caritas Bianchi Lodge | C1 |
| 7 | Madera Hong Kong | C3 |

Eating

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|----|
| 8 | Mido Cafe | B2 |
|---|---------------------------|----|

Entertainment

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 9 | Broadway Cinematheque | B1 |
|---|---------------------------------------|----|

Shopping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 10 | Chan Wah Kee Cutlery Store | B3 |
|----|--|----|

Yau Ma Tei Theatre

BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  2264 8108, tickets 2374 2598; www.lcsd.gov.hk/ymtt; 6 Waterloo Rd, cnr Waterloo Rd & Reclamation St, Yau Ma Tei;  Yau Ma Tei, exit B2)

Yau Ma Tei Theatre (1920) with art-deco interiors, and adjacent to the Wholesale Fruit Market, had for decades kept coolies and rickshaw drivers entertained, but losing business to modern cinemas in the '80s, it began showing erotic films and selling porn videos to stay afloat. At 8 Waterloo Rd next door, the neoclassical Red Brick House once belonged to a pumping station (1895). The buildings now house a Cantonese opera performance and training centre.

Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre

ARTS CENTRE

(JCCAC [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.jccac.org.hk; 30 Pak Tin St, Shek Kip Mei;  10am-10pm;  Shek Kip Mei, exit C)

Over 150 artists have moved into these factory premises that used to churn

out shoes and watches. Many studios are closed on weekdays, but you can visit the breezy communal areas, the cafes and the shops with regular opening hours.

Fook Tak Ancient Temple

TEMPLE

( ; 30 Haiphong Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 6am-8pm;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit C2)

Tsim Sha Tsui's only temple is a smoke-filled hole in the wall with a hot tin roof. Little is known about its ancestry except that it was built as a shrine in the Qing dynasty and renovated in 1900. Before WWII, worshippers of its Earth God were the coolies from Kowloon Wharf nearby, where the **Ocean Terminal** ( ; www.oceanterminal.com.hk; Salisbury Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 10am-9pm;  Star Ferry,  East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit J) now stands. Today most incense offerers are octogenarians – the temple specialises in longevity.

Kowloon Mosque & Islamic Centre

MOSQUE

( ; 📞 2724 0095; <http://kowloonmosque.com>; 105 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 5am-10pm;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit C2)

This structure, with its dome and carved marble, is Hong Kong's largest mosque. It serves the territory's 70,000-odd Muslims, more than half of whom are Chinese, and accommodates up to 3000 worshippers. The mosque was originally established to serve the Indian Muslim troops of the British army who were stationed at what is now Kowloon Park. Muslims are welcome to attend services, but non-Muslims should ask permission to enter. Remember to remove your footwear.

EXCHANGE RATES

| | | |
|--------------------|--------|-----------|
| Australia | A\$1 | HK\$6.39 |
| Canada | C\$1 | HK\$6.54 |
| China | ¥1 | HK\$1.25 |
| Euro zone | €1 | HK\$9.19 |
| Japan | ¥100 | HK\$6.55 |
| Macau | MOP\$1 | HK\$0.97 |
| New Zealand | NZ\$1 | HK\$6.09 |
| UK | UK£1 | HK\$11.76 |
| USA | US\$1 | HK\$7.75 |

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

THE STAR FERRY

You can't say you've 'done' Hong Kong until you've taken a ride on a **Star Ferry** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞2367 7065; www.starferry.com.hk; adult HK\$2.50-3.40, child HK\$1.50-2.10; 🕒every 6-12min, 6.30am-11.30pm; 🚇Hong Kong, exit A2), that legendary fleet of electric-diesel vessels with names like Morning Star and Twinkling Star. At any time of the day, the HK\$2.50 ride with its riveting views of skyscrapers and jungle-clad hills, must be one of the world's best-value cruises. The Star Ferry crosses the harbour between Central and Tsim Sha Tsui, and Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui. At the end of the 10-minute journey, a hemp rope is cast and caught with a billhook, the way it was in 1888 when the first boat docked.

The Star Ferry was founded by Dorabjee Nowrojee, a Parsee from Bombay. Parsees believe in Zoroastrianism, and the five-pointed star on the Star Ferry logo is an ancient Zoroastrian symbol – in fact the same as the one followed by the Three Magi (who may have been Zoroastrian pilgrims) to Bethlehem in the Christmas tale.

Zoroastrians consider fire a medium through which spiritual wisdom is gained, and water is considered the source of that wisdom. No wonder that on an overcast day, the only stars you'll see over Victoria Harbour are those of the Star Ferry.

New Territories

Occupying 747 sq km of Hong Kong's land mass, the New Territories is a combination of housing estates and unspoiled rural areas.

The New Towns of Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Fanling, Sheung Shui, Tai Po and Sha Tin are all worth visiting for their temples and museums. They are accessible via their eponymous MTR stations, and Tuen Mun is served by the Light Rail network.

Yuen Long boasts Hong Kong's most historical walled villages and a world-class nature reserve. It's on both the West Rail and the Light Rail Transit networks.

The Sai Kung Peninsula is great for hiking, sailing and seafood. The New Territories' best beaches are here.

★ Mai Po Nature Reserve

NATURE RESERVE

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2471 3480; www.wwf.org.hk; Mai Po, Sin Tin, Yuen Long; admission HK\$120; 🕒 9am-5pm; 🚗 76K from Sheung Shui East Rail or Yuen Long West Rail stations)

The 270-hectare nature reserve includes the **Mai Po Visitor Centre** (📍 2471 8272) at the northeastern end, where you must register; the **Mai Po Education Centre** (📍 2482 0369) to the south, with displays on the history and ecology of the wetland and Deep Bay; floating boardwalks and trails through the mangroves and mud flats; and a dozen hides (towers or huts from where you can watch birds up close without being observed). Disconcertingly, the cityscape of Shenzhen looms to the north.

Ping Shan Heritage Trail

OUTDOORS

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2617 1959; 🕒 ancestral halls 9am-1pm & 2-5pm, Tsui Sing Lau 9am-1pm & 2-5pm, closed Tue; 🚇 West Rail Tin Shui Wai, exit E)

Hong Kong's first ever heritage trail features historic buildings belonging to the Tangs, the first and the most powerful of the 'Five Clans'. Highlights of the 1km trail include Hong Kong's oldest **pagoda** (Tsui Sing Lau) a magnificent **ancestral hall**, a temple, a study hall, a well and a **gallery** inside an old police station that was built by the British as much to monitor the

coastline as to keep an eye on the clan.

Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail

HERITAGE WALK

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚶 54K)

This 4.5km-long trail northeast of Fanling meanders through five relatively well-preserved walled villages and, like the village of Ping Shan, they are home to the Tang clan. The most attractive of the lot is the oldest (800 years) but most intact **Lo Wai**, identifiable by its 1m-thick fortified wall.

Unfortunately, it's not open to the public. Admire the exterior, before carrying on to the more welcoming villages of **Tung Kok Wai** to the northeast and **Sun Wai** towards the northern end of the trail.

Kat Hing Wai

VILLAGE

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚶 64K)

This tiny village is 500 years old and was walled during the early years of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). It contains just one main street, off which a host of dark and narrow alleyways lead. There are quite a few new buildings and retiled older ones in the village. A small temple stands at the end of the street. Visitors are asked to make a donation when they enter the village; put the money in the coin slot by the entrance.

Tai Po Market

MARKET

([GOOGLE MAP](#); Fu Shin St; 🕒 6am-8pm; 🚇 Tai Wo)

Not to be confused with the East Rail station of the same name, this street-long outdoor wet market is one of the most winning in the New Territories. Feast your eyes on a rainbow of fruits and vegetables, tables lined with dried seafood, old ladies hawking glutinous Hakka rice cakes, and stalls selling fresh aloe and sugarcane juices.

★ Hong Kong Wetland Park

PARK

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 +852 3152 2666; www.wetlandpark.gov.hk; Wetland Park Rd, Tin Shui Wai;

standard/concession HK\$30/15; 🕒 10am-5pm Wed-Mon; ♿; 🚗 line 705 or 706)

This 60-hectare ecological park is a window on the wetland ecosystems of northwest New Territories. The natural trails, bird hides and viewing platforms make it a handy and excellent spot for bird-watching. The futuristic grass-covered headquarters houses interesting galleries (including one on tropical swamps), a film theatre, a cafe and a viewing gallery. If you have binoculars then bring them; otherwise be prepared to wait to use the fixed points in the viewing galleries and hides.

Fung Ying Sin Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 2669 9186; 66 Pak Wo Rd, Fanling; 🕒 8am-6pm, restaurant 10am-5pm; 🚇 Fanling)

This huge Taoist temple complex opposite the Fanling East Rail station has wonderful exterior murals of Taoist immortals and the Chinese zodiac, an orchard terrace, a herbal clinic and a **vegetarian restaurant** (ground and 1st floors, Bldg A7) . Most important are the dozen ancestral halls behind the main temple, where the ashes of the departed are deposited in niche urns.

★ Hong Kong Heritage Museum

MUSEUM

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 2180 8188; www.heritagemuseum.gov.hk; 1 Man Lam Rd; adult/concession HK\$10/5, Wed free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon & Wed-Sat, to 7pm Sun; ♿; 🚇 Che Kung Temple)

Southwest of Sha Tin town centre, this spacious, high-quality museum gives a peek into local history and culture. Highlights include a **children's area** with interactive play zones, the **New Territories Heritage Hall** with mock-ups of traditional minority villages, the **Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall**, where you can watch old operas with English subtitles, and an elegant **gallery** of Chinese art. Lately, the big draw is a semi-permanent **Bruce Lee exhibit**, with some 600 items of the Kung Fu star's memorabilia on display until 2018.

Tsing Shan Monastery

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

([GOOGLE MAP](#)  2461 8050; Tsing Shan Monastery Path;  24hr;  line 610, 615, 615P)

Also known as Castle Peak Monastery, this temple complex perched on the hill of Castle Peak is the oldest in Hong Kong. Founded by Reverend Pui To (literally, ‘travelling in a cup’) 1500 years ago, the complex you see today was rebuilt in 1926. Check out shrines and temples for different saints and Bodhisattvas, including one to Pui To in a grotto, as you ascend the hill. Some of these have slid into dilapidation; nonetheless they’re imbued with a spooky charm.

★ 10,000 Buddhas Monastery

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

([GOOGLE MAP](#)  2691 1067;  10am-5pm;  Sha Tin, exit B) **FREE**

This quirky temple about 500m northwest of Sha Tin station is worth the uphill hike to visit. Built in the 1950s, the complex actually contains more than 10,000 Buddhas. Some 12,800 miniature statues line the walls of the main temple and dozens of life-sized golden statues of Buddha’s followers flank the steep steps leading to the monastery complex. There are several temples and pavilions split over two levels, as well as a nine-storey pagoda.

Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park

OUTDOORS

([GOOGLE MAP](#)  hotline 1823; Hoi Ha;  green minibus 7)

A rewarding 6km walk in the area starts from the village of Hoi Ha (literally ‘Under the Sea’), now part of the Hoi Ha Wan Marine Park, a 260-hectare protected area blocked off by concrete booms from the Tolo Channel and closed to fishing vessels. It’s one of the few places in Hong Kong waters where coral still grows in abundance and is a favourite with snorkellers and kayakers.

Outlying Islands

Lantau is the largest island in Hong Kong and is ideal for a multiday excursion to explore its trails and villages and to enjoy the beaches. Mui Wo is the arrival point for ferries from Central, and Tung Chung is connected by

MTR.

Laid-back **Lamma** has decent beaches, excellent walks and a cluster of restaurants in **Yung Shue Wan** and **Sok Kwu Wan**. A fun day involves taking the ferry to Yung Shue Wan, walking the easy 90-minute trail to Sok Kwu Wan and settling in for lunch at one of the seafood restaurants beside the water.

Dumbbell-shaped **Cheung Chau**, with a harbour filled with fishing boats, a windsurfing centre, several temples and some waterfront restaurants, also makes a fun day out. Not far away is **Peng Chau**, the smallest and most traditional of the easily accessible islands.

★ **Po Lin Monastery & Big Buddha**

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2985 5248; Lantau; 🕒 9am-6pm)

Po Lin is a huge Buddhist monastery and temple complex that was built in 1924. Today it seems more of a tourist honeypot than a religious retreat, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors a year and still being expanded. Most of the buildings you'll see on arrival are new, with the older, simpler ones tucked away behind them.

★ **Tai O**

VILLAGE

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚌 1 from Mui Wo, 11 from Tung Chung, 21 from Ngong Ping)

On weekends, droves of visitors trek to the far-flung west coast of Lantau to see a fascinating way of life. Here in Tai O, historical home to the Tanka boat people, life is all about the sea. Houses are built on stilts above the ocean, sampans ply the dark-green waterways, and elderly residents still dry seafood on traditional straw mats and make the village's celebrated shrimp paste.

Hong Kong Disneyland

AMUSEMENT PARK

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 183 0830; <http://park.hongkongdisneyland.com>; adult/child HK\$499/355; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 9pm Sat & Sun; ♿; 🚇 Disney Resort Station)

Ever since it claimed Hong Kong in 2005, Disneyland has served as a rite of

passage for the flocks of Asian tourists who come daily to steal a glimpse of one of America's most famous cultural exports. It's divided into seven areas – Main Street USA, Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, Adventureland, Toy Story Land, Mystic Point, and Grizzly Gulch – but it's still quite tiny compared to the US version, and most of the attractions are geared to families with small children.

Most of the rides are appropriate for all but the smallest kids. Highlights include the goofy-scary tour through the Mystic Manor, and classics like 'It's a Small World' and the Mad Hatter teacups. Adrenalin junkies have only a few true thrills – the whipping-through-utter-darkness Space Mountain roller coaster in Tomorrowland, the Big Grizzly Mountain coaster in Grizzly Gulch, and the stomach-dropping RC Racer half-pipe coaster in Toy Story Land. The Iron Man Experience 3D motion simulator is slated to open in 2016.

While most of Hong Kong Disney is essentially a scaled-down version of the American Disneyland, there are a number of nods to Chinese culture. Disney consulted a feng shui master when building the park, and ended up moving the entrance 12 degrees to avoid *chi* slipping into the ocean. The lucky number eight is repeated throughout the park (the Western mining town of Grizzly Gulch was said to be founded on 8 August 1888), and Canto-pop singer Jacky Cheung is the park's official spokesperson.

The hungry will never be far from a snack or a sit-down meal, whether Eastern (dried squid, fish balls on a stick, dim sum) or Western (burgers, cotton candy, muffins). And you'll certainly never be far from a souvenir shop.

There's a parade daily through Main Street at 3.30pm, and a music, light and fireworks show centred on Sleeping Beauty's Castle nightly at 8pm. As in any Disney theme park, costumed characters wander around ready to be greeted by excited children.

Disneyland is linked by rail with the MTR at Sunny Bay station on the Tung Chung line; passengers just cross the platform to board the dedicated train for Disneyland Resort station and the theme park. Journey times from

Central/Kowloon/Tsing Yi stations are 24/21/10 minutes respectively.



Walking Tour Sheung Wan

START SUTHERLAND ST STOP OF KENNEDY TOWN TRAM

FINISH HOLLYWOOD RD

LENGTH 2.5KM; ONE HOUR

A walk through Sheung Wan will lead you down the memory lane of Hong Kong's past. Begin the tour at the Sutherland St stop of the Kennedy Town-bound tram. Have a look at Des Voeux Rd West's ① dried seafood shops, then turn up Ko Shing St, where there are ② herbal medicine wholesalers. 'Medicinal' items on display range from deer antlers to cordyceps, a kind of fungus that lives parasitically by eating insect's brains. At the end of the street, walk northwest along Des Voeux Rd

West and turn right onto New Market St, where you'll find **3** Western Market. Walk south along this street past Bonham Strand, which is lined with **4** ginseng root sellers, and turn right on Queen's Rd Central. To the right you'll pass **5** traditional shops selling bird's nests (for soup) and paper funeral offerings (for the dead).

Cross Queen's Rd Central and turn left onto **6** Possession Street, where the British flag was first planted in 1841.

Climbing Pound Lane to where it meets Tai Ping Shan St, look right to see **7** Pak Sing Ancestral Hall, then turn left to find **8** Kwun Yam Temple and **9** Tai Sui Temple. The center of a late 19th century outbreak of black plague, the whole Tai Ping Shan St area is thought by many Hong Kongers to be haunted by unhappy ghosts who died far from home. But that hasn't kept the hipsters away – the neighborhood is home to an increasing number of cool shops and cafes.

A bit further on, turn left into Square St, where you'll pass **10** Cloth Haven, a weaving workshop, and **11** funeral shops. Turn left into Ladder St and you'll see **12** Man Mo Temple. Descend Ladder St to Upper Lascar Row, home of the **13** Cat Street bazaar. Go down the length of Cat St, then turn left into Lok Ku Rd. Another left takes you to **14** Hollywood Rd, with its antique shops and art galleries.

Activities

The [Hong Kong Tourism Board](#) offers a range of fun and free activities, from feng shui classes through sunset cruises to taichi sessions. For a list of what's on, visit www.discoverhongkong.com. The **Map Publications Centre** sells excellent maps detailing hiking and cycling trails; buy online (www.landsd.gov.hk) or at major post offices. Sporting buffs should contact the **South China Athletic Association** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2577 6932; www.scaa.org.hk; 88 Caroline Hill Rd, 5th fl, South China Sports Complex, Causeway Bay; visitor membership per month HK\$60; 📠 31), which has facilities for any number of sports. Another handy website is www.hkoutdoors.com.

RENT-A-CURSE GRANNIES

Under the Canal Rd Flyover between Wan Chai and Causeway Bay, you can hire little old ladies to beat up your enemy. From their perch on plastic stools, these rent-a-curse grannies will pound paper cut-outs of your romantic rival, office bully or a whiny celeb with a shoe (their orthopaedic flat or your stilettos) while rapping curses. All for only HK\$50.

Villain hitting (da siu yan) is a practice related to folk sorcery. It's performed throughout the year but the most popular date for it is on the Day of the Awakening of Insects when the sun is at an exact celestial longitude of 345 degrees (usually between 5 and 20 March on the Gregorian calendar).

It's believed to bring reconciliation or resolution, though that too could be symbolic.

Martial Arts

Wan Kei Ho International Martial Arts Association

MARTIAL ARTS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2544 1368, 9506 0075; www.kungfuwan.com; 304 Des Voeux Rd Central, 3rd fl, Yue's House, Sheung Wan; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun; 🚇 Sheung Wan, exit A)

English-speaking Master Wan teaches northern Shaolin Kung Fu to a wide following of locals and foreigners. Classes are offered in the evenings from Monday to Thursday. Depending on how many classes you take, the monthly fees may range from HK\$300 to HK\$1400.

Hiking

Hong Kong is an excellent place to hike and the numerous trails on offer are all very attractive. The four main ones are **MacLehose Trail**, **Wilson Trail**, **Lantau Trail** and **Hong Kong Trail**. For more information check out www.hkwalkers.net.

HONG KONG'S BEST HIKES

Hong Kong has some of Asia's most impressive hiking trails, some of them just a few minutes from the high-rises of Central. Here are a few of the best spots:

Dragon's Back A popular see-the-sea ramble that undulates from central Hong Kong Island to the somnolent village of Shek O.

Lamma Island Family Trail Take a gentle 4km hike across the leafy island to the embrace of waterside seafood restaurants.

Hong Kong Cemetery Wander through this hilly, overgrown, deeply atmospheric resting place of Hong Kong's good and naughty.

Pok Fu Lam Reservoir to the Peak A picturesque ascent past dense forests,

waterfalls and military ruins.

Tai Mo Shan Several hiking trails thread up and around Hong Kong's tallest mountain.

Cycling

Cycle tracks in Hong Kong are located predominantly in the New Territories, running from Sha Tin through Tai Po to Tai Mei Tuk.

Bikes can be rented from **Wong Kei** (📞 2662 5200; Ting Kok Rd, Tai Mei Tuk) and **Friendly Bike Shop** (📞 2984 2278; Shop B, 13 Mui Wo Ferry Pier Rd, Lantau; per day HK\$30; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat & Sun).

Online resources include **Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation Department** (www.afcd.gov.hk) and **Crazy Guy on a Bike** (www.crazyguyonabike.com/doc/hongkong).

Golf

The **Hong Kong Golf Club** (📍 [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.hkgolfclub.org) welcomes nonmembers on weekdays at its **Fanling** (📞 2670 1211; Lot No 1, Fan Kam Rd, Sheung Shui; 🚇 Fanling) and **Deep Water Bay** (📍 [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2812 7070; 19 Island Rd, Deep Water Bay; 🚗 6, 6A) venues. The scenic 36-hole **Jockey Club Kau Sai Chau Public Golf Course** (📍 [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2791 3388; www.kscgolf.org.hk/index-e.asp; Kau Sai Chau, Sai Kung) is the territory's only public golf course. A ferry departs for Kau Sai Chau (every 20 minutes from 6.40am to 7pm weekdays, 6.40am to 9pm Friday to Sunday) from the pier near the Wai Man Rd car park.

Tours

Star Ferry runs a 60-minute **Harbour Tour** (HK\$80 to HK\$200) covering calling points at Tsim Sha Tsui, Central and Wan Chai. Get tickets at the piers.

Tours run by the Hong Kong Tourism Board:

HKTB Island Tour

BUS TOUR

(half-/full day HK\$350/490)

Includes Man Mo Temple, the Peak, Aberdeen, Repulse Bay and Stanley Market.

Hong Kong Dolphinwatch

CRUISE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍2984 1414; www.hkdolphinwatch.com; 15th fl, Middle Block, 1528A

Star House, 3 Salisbury Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; adult/child HK\$420/210; 🕒cruises Wed, Fri & Sun)

Hong Kong Dolphinwatch was founded in 1995 to raise awareness of Hong Kong's wonderful pink dolphins and promote responsible ecotourism. It offers 2½-hour cruises to see them in their natural habitat every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday year-round (adult/child HK\$420/210). About 97% of the cruises result in the sighting of at least one dolphin; if none are spotted, passengers are offered a free trip.

Water Sports

Hong Kong's government-run **water-sports centres**

(www.lcsd.gov.hk/watersport/en/index.php) have canoes, windsurfing boards and other equipment for hire by certificate-holders. For wakeboarding, try

Tai Tam Wakeboarding Centre (📍3120 4102; www.wakeboard.com.hk).



Festivals & Events

Western and Chinese culture combine to create an interesting mix of cultural events and about 20 public holidays. However, determining the exact times can be tricky: some follow the Chinese lunar calendar, so the dates change each year. For a full schedule with exact dates see

www.discoverhongkong.com.

Hong Kong Arts Festival

ARTS

(www.hk.artsfestival.org)

February to March.

Man Hong Kong International Literary Festival

LITERARY

(www.festival.org.hk)

March.

Hong Kong International Film Festival

FILM

(www.hkiff.org.hk)

March to April.

Le French May Arts Festival

ARTS

April to May.

Tin Hau Festival & Buddha's Birthday

CULTURAL

April or May.

Cheung Chau Bun Festival

FOOD

(www.cheungchau.org)

Apr or May

Art Basel Hong Kong

ART

(hongkong.artbasel.com)

May.

International Dragon Boat Races

SPORTS

(www.hkdba.com.hk)

May to June.

Summer International Film Festival

FILM

(www.hkiff.org.hk)

August to September.

Hong Kong International Jazz Festival

MUSIC

(<http://hkja.org/blog>)

November.

Clockenflap Outdoor Music Festival

MUSIC

(www.clockenflap.com)

Sleeping

Hong Kong offers the full gamut of accommodation, from cell-like spaces to palatial suites in some of the world's finest hotels. Compared with those in other cities in China, rooms are relatively expensive, though they can still be cheaper than their US or European counterparts. The rates listed here are the rack rates.

Most hotels are on Hong Kong Island between Central and Causeway Bay, and either side of Nathan Rd in Kowloon, where you'll also find the largest range of budget places. All hotels and some budget places add 13% in taxes to the listed rates.

Prices fall sharply outside the peak seasons, particularly in the midrange and top-end categories, when you can get discounts of up to 50% if you book online.

High seasons are March to early May, October to November, and Chinese New Year (late January or February). Check the exact dates on www.discoverhongkong.com.

Unless specified otherwise, all rooms listed here have private bathrooms and air-conditioning. Almost all places offer broadband and/or wi-fi access, as well as computers for guests' use. All hotels that are midrange and above and some budget places have nonsmoking floors, or are nonsmoking.

Hong Kong Island

Most of Hong Kong Island's top-end hotels are in Central and Admiralty,

while Wan Chai and Sheung Wan cater to the midrange market. Causeway Bay has quite a few budget guesthouses that are a step up (in both price and quality) from their Tsim Sha Tsui counterparts.

★ Helena May

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2522 6766; www.helenamay.com; 35 Garden Rd, Central; s/d HK\$510/670, studios per month HK\$15,520-20,230; 🚊 23)

If you like the peninsula's colonial setting but not its price tag, this grand dame could be your cup of tea. Founded in 1916 as a social club for single European women in the territory, the **Helena May** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2522 6766; www.helenamay.com; 35 Garden Rd, Central; 🚊 23) is now a private club for women of all nationalities and a hotel with 43 creaky but charming rooms.

Rooms in the main building are women's-only with shared bathrooms, while the rent-by-month studios in an adjacent building are also open to men. You must be 18 or above to stay at the Helena May. The building is a stone's throw from the Peak Tram Terminus and the Zoological & Botanical Gardens.

YesInn

HOSTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2213 4567; www.yesinn.com; 472 Hennessy Rd, 2nd fl, Nan Yip Bldg, Causeway Bay; dm HK\$159-469, r HK\$199-459; 🚇 Causeway Bay, exit F2)

This funky, vibrant hostel attracts backpackers from all over the world, as evidenced by their signatures on the building's chalkboard paint ceiling. There are both single-sex and mixed dorms, as well as private rooms, all brightly painted. The small reception area is made up for by the excellent roof deck, sometimes the site of hostel-sponsored barbecues.

The hostel entrance is at the side of the building on the corner. Private rooms are in a building across the street. The neon, shopping and late-night sushi of Causeway Bay are a two-minute walk. YesInn has sister hostels in Fortress Hill and Kowloon.

Bishop Lei International House

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 2868 0828; www.bishopleihtl.com.hk; 4 Robinson Rd, Mid-Levels; s/d/ste from \$650/700/1250; @ 📶; 🚏 23 or 40)

This hotel in residential Mid-Levels, though out of the way, provides a lot of bang for your buck. It boasts good service, a swimming pool, a gym and proximity to the Zoological & Botanical Gardens. The standard single and double rooms are small. It's worth paying a little more for the larger, harbour-facing rooms, which offer good views of the skyline and the cathedral from high up. Buses to Central and Wan Chai stop in front of the hotel.

Cosmo

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 3552 8388; www.cosmohotel.com.hk; 375-377 Queen's Rd E, Wan Chai; r/ste from HK\$650/1000; 🚏 📶; 🚏 Causeway Bay, exit A)

Aiming for boutique-y ambiance, this good-value hotel on the quiet side of Wan Chai has lovely rooms done up in cool whites and grays with modish pops of bright orange. The cheaper rooms have frosted-glass windows, so no view. Not to be confused with its pricier sister hotel, the **Cosmopolitan** (

[MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 3552 1111; www.cosmopolitanhotel.com.hk; 387-397 Queen's Rd E, Wan Chai; r/ste from HK\$900/1800; @ 📶; 🚏 Causeway Bay, exit A), just down the block.

★ Mira Moon

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 2643 8888; www.miramoonthotel.com; 388 Jaffe Rd, Wan Chai; r HK\$1400-3000; 📶; 🚏 Wan Chai, exit A1) 🍃

The new kid on the block is also the coolest. Decor at this 91-room boutique hotel riffs on the Chinese fairytale of the Moon Goddess and the Jade Rabbit – stylized rabbit wall art, oversized Chinese lanterns, graphic peony floor mosaics. For all its hipness, the hotel's staff is warm and helpful, and the architecture is eco-friendly to boot.

It's all about the details here. Freestanding bathtubs in the 'Half Moon' and 'Full Moon' rooms are to die for, while the more budget-friendly 'New Moon'

rooms offer walk-in showers. All rooms come with a phone, which guests can take with them for free 3G and local and international calls. There's free soy milk and soda in the minifridge, and the room's iPad connects to the TV. Amenities include a 24-hour gym, a Spanish-Chinese fusion tapas restaurant, and (naturally) a house DJ.

★ T Hotel

HOTEL

(T [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 3717 7388; www.vtc.edu.hk/thotel; 145 Pokfulam Rd, VTC Pokfulam Complex, Pok Fu Lam; r from HK\$900; @ 📶 🚰; 🚉 7, 91 from Central, 973 from Tsim Sha Tsui)

Ah, we almost don't want to tell you about this gem on the island! The 30-room T, perched high in the serene neighbourhood of Po Fu Lam, is entirely run by students of the local hospitality training institute. The young trainees are attentive, cheerful and very eager to hone their skills. Rooms are sparkling and spacious, and offer ocean or mountain views.

The food and beverage outlets, run by the famous culinary school in the complex, provide excellent Chinese and Western meals.

Ibis

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2252 2929; www.ibishotel.com; 18-30 Des Voeux Rd W, Sheung Wan; r from HK\$950; @; 🚉 5B from Central)

The 550-room Ibis offers a more affordable option in an expensive part of town. The rooms and facilities are decent, but do not expect luxury. The highlight here is the warm service by staff dressed perpetually in polo tees and a smile which lends the hotel a relaxing, resort-like flair. Prices are in the hundreds if you book online.

★ Upper House

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2918 1838; www.upperhouse.com; 88 Queensway, Pacific Pl, Admiralty; r/ste from HK\$4500/12,000; @ 📶; 🚉 Admiralty, exit F)

Every corner of this boutique hotel spells zen-like serenity – the understated lobby, the sleek eco-minded rooms, the elegant sculptures, the warm and

discreet service and the manicured lawn where guests can join free yoga classes. Other pluses include a free and ‘bottomless’ minibar, and easy access to the Admiralty MTR station.

Guests of the Upper House can pay to use the pool facilities of nearby hotels. This is a superb alternative to luxury options in Central and Admiralty, if you don’t mind fewer luxuries.

★ Four Seasons

LUXURY HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 3196 8888; www.fourseasons.com/hongkong; 8 Finance St, Central; r HK\$4800-8100, ste HK\$9800-65,000; @ 📶 🌐; 🚇 Hong Kong, exit F)

The Four Seasons arguably edges into top place on the island for its amazing views, pristine service, and its location close to the Star Ferry Pier, Hong Kong station, and Sheung Wan. Also on offer are palatial rooms, a glorious pool and spa complex, and award-winning restaurants **Caprice** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 3196 8888; www.fourseasons.com/hongkong; Four Seasons Hotel, 8 Finance St, Central; set lunch/dinner from HK\$540/1740; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm; 📶; 🚇 Hong Kong, exit E1) and [Lung King Heen](#).

Mandarin Oriental

LUXURY HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2522 0111; www.mandarinoriental.com/hongkong/; 5 Connaught Rd, Central; r HK\$5300-7400, ste HK\$8000-65,000; @ 📶 🌐; 🚇 Central, exit J3)

The venerable Mandarin has historically set the standard in Asia and continues to be a contender for the top spot, despite competition from the likes of the Four Seasons. The styling, service, food and atmosphere are stellar throughout and there’s a sense of gracious, old-world charm. The sleek **Landmark Oriental** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2132 0088; www.mandarinoriental.com/landmark; 15 Queen’s Rd, Central; r HK\$3500-6800, ste HK\$9300-45,000; @ 📶 🌐), just across the way, offers modern luxury, but with a business vibe.

Hotel LKF

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 3518 9688; www.hotel-lkf.com.hk; 33 Wyndham St, Central; r HK\$2600-6000, ste from HK\$10,000; @ 📶; 🚇 Central, exit D2)

Located on the upper, flatter section of Wyndham St, Hotel LKF is arguably the best gateway to the Lan Kwai Fong action, but is far enough above it not to be disturbed by it. It has high-tech rooms in muted tones and they brim with all the trimmings you'll need: fluffy bathrobes, espresso machines and free bedtime milk and cookies. There's a plush spa and yoga studio in the building.

Courtyard by Marriott Hong Kong

BUSINESS HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 3717 8888; www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/hkgcy-courtyard-hong-kong; 167 Connaught Rd W; r HK\$1300-3000, ste from HK\$2600; @ 📶; 🚇 5 or 5B from Central)

This hotel juggles luxury with limited space, and it works. Most rooms offer harbour views and are smartly decorated with modern furnishings. The plump beds and high-thread-count sheets guarantee you a good night's sleep. Service is impeccable. There's an Airbus stop across the street.

MECCA OF CHEAP SLEEPS

Chungking Mansions (CKM [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 36-44 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🚇 Tsim Sha Tsui, exit F) has been synonymous with budget accommodation in Hong Kong for decades. The crumbling block on Nathan Rd is stacked with the city's cheapest hostels and guesthouses. Rooms are usually minuscule and service rudimentary. But standards have risen in recent years and several guesthouses positively sparkle with new fittings. Even the lifts have been upgraded, though they're still painfully slow.

Mirador Mansion ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 54-64 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🚇 Tsim Sha Tsui, exit D2), its neighbour just up the street, also has a fair number of cheap sleeps.

Kowloon

Kowloon has an incredible array of accommodation: from the Peninsula, the

‘grand dame’ of hotels, to its infamous neighbour, [Chungking Mansions](#), plus plenty in between.

Hop Inn on Hankow

HOSTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2881 7331; www.hopinn.hk; 19-21 Hankow Rd, flat A, 2nd fl, Hanyee Bldg, Tsim Sha Tsui; s HK\$410-530, d & tw HK\$520-790, tr HK\$650-980, q HK\$1020-1200; @ 📶; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit C1)

This nonsmoking hostel has a youthful vibe and nine spotless and dainty rooms, each sporting illustrations by a different Hong Kong artist. The rooms without windows are quieter than the ones that have them. The other branch **Hop Inn on Carnarvon** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2881 7331; www.hopinn.hk; 33-35 Carnarvon Rd, 9th fl, James S Lee Mansion, Tsim Sha Tsui; s HK\$410-530, d & tw HK\$520-790, tr HK\$650-980, q HK\$1020-1200; 📶; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit A2) has newer rooms in an older building. Both branches offer free in-room wi-fi and will help to organise China visas.

Nic & Trig's

GUESTHOUSE

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 6333 5352; rooms@nostalgic.org; 703 Shanghai St, Mong Kok; r from HK\$400; 📶; **M** Prince Edward, exit C1)

Run by a friendly hipster couple, this place inside a 'walk-up' tenement building (c 1957) has atmospheric rooms inspired by retro Hong Kong. Toilet and shower areas are shared; provisions are basic. If you need anything, just ask. The owners are happy to give you restaurant and sightseeing tips. Email and they will tell you how to get there.

★ Madera Hong Kong

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2121 9888; www.hotelmadera.com.hk; 1-9 Cheong Lok St, Yau Ma Tei; r HK\$1200-4000, ste HK\$4200-\$9000; **M** Jordan, exit B1)

A spirited addition to Kowloon's midrange options, Madera is close to the [Temple Street Night Market](#) and the Jordan MTR station. The decent-sized rooms come in neutral tones accented with the bold, vibrant colours of

Spanish aesthetics. Madera (meaning 'wood') also has a ladies' floor, a hypo-allergenic floor, and a tiny but adequate gym room.

★ **Salisbury**

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2268 7888; www.ymcahk.org.hk; 41 Salisbury Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; dm HK\$300, s/d/ste from HK\$1000/1200/2200; @📶🚰; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit E)

If you can manage to book a room at this fabulously located place, you'll be rewarded with professional service and excellent exercise facilities. Rooms and suites are comfortable but simple, so keep your eyes on the harbour: that view would cost you five times as much at the Peninsula next door. The dormitory rooms are a bonus but restrictions apply.

The four-bed dorm rooms are meant for short-stay travellers, hence no one can stay there more than seven consecutive nights and walk-in guests aren't accepted if they've been in Hong Kong for more than seven days; check-in is at 2pm. The same restrictions do not apply to the other rooms of the Salisbury. Sports enthusiasts will love it here – the hotel has a 25m swimming pool, a fitness centre, and a climbing wall. The 7th floor is the smoking floor.

BP International Hotel

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2376 1111; www.bpih.com.hk; 8 Austin Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; r/ste from HK\$1900/6500; @📶; **M** Jordan, exit C)

This enormous hotel overlooks [Kowloon Park](#). The rooms are of a reasonable standard and some of the more expensive ones have good harbour views. The family rooms have bunk beds, which is good if you're travelling with kids. Haggle before you book: depending on the season and day of the week, prices are often reduced by 50%.

Caritas Bianchi Lodge

GUESTHOUSE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2388 1111; www.caritas-chs.org.hk/eng/bianchi_lodge.asp; 4 Cliff Rd, Yau Ma Tei; s HK\$1350, d & tw HK\$1600, f HK\$2100; 📶; **M** Yau Ma Tei, exit D)

This 90-room guesthouse run by a Catholic NGO is just off Nathan Rd (and a stone's throw from Yau Ma Tei MTR station), but the rear rooms are quiet and some have views of King's Park. All rooms are clean with private bathrooms. The wait for lifts can be long, especially at night. Breakfast is included in the rates.

★ Peninsula Hong Kong

LUXURY HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2920 2888; www.peninsula.com; Salisbury Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; r/ste from HK\$4080/7880; @ 📶 🚰; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit E)

Lording it over the southern tip of Kowloon, Hong Kong's finest hotel exudes colonial elegance. Your dilemma will be how to get here: landing on the rooftop helipad or arriving in one of the hotel's 14-strong fleet of Rolls Royce Phantoms. Some 300 classic European-style rooms sport wi-fi, CD and DVD players, as well as marble bathrooms.

Many rooms in the 20-storey annexe also offer spectacular harbour views; in the original building you'll have to make do with the glorious interiors. There's a top-notch spa and swimming pool, and **Gaddi's** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2696 6763; www.peninsula.com/Hong_Kong; 19-21 Salisbury Rd, 1st fl, the Peninsula, Tsim Sha Tsui; set lunch/dinner HK\$500/2000; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit E) is one of the best French restaurants in town.

★ Hyatt Regency Tsim Sha Tsui

LUXURY HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2311 1234; <http://hongkong.tsimshatsui.hyatt.com>; 18 Hanoi Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; s/d/ste from HK\$1200/4200/3600; @ 📶 🚰; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit D2)

Top marks to this classic that exudes understated elegance and composure. Rooms are plush and relatively spacious with those on the upper floors commanding views over the city. Black-and-white photos of Tsim Sha Tsui add a thoughtful touch to the decor. The lobby gets crowded at times, but the helpful and resourceful staff will put you back at ease.

Hotel Icon

LUXURY HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 3400 1000; www.hotel-icon.com; 17 Science Museum Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; r HK\$2200-4100, ste HK\$3000-6500; @ 📶 🚰; **M** East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit P1)

The rooms at this teaching hotel of a local university are modern and spacious, and the service is warm. Icon is a 10-minute walk from the MTR and there's a shuttle service to the more central parts of Tsim Sha Tsui. Not all rooms have harbour views and children are not allowed into the terrace lounge, but overall, it's great value for money.

Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong

LUXURY HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2263 2263; www.ritzcarlton.com; 1 Austin Rd W, Tsim Sha Tsui; r HK\$7200-9900, ste from HK\$13,000; 📶 🚰; **M** Kowloon, exit C1 or D1)

Sitting on Kowloon Station, this out-of-the-way luxury hotel is the tallest hotel on earth (lobby's on the 103rd floor). And to echo the theme of excess, the decor is over-the-top with imposing furniture and a superfluity of shiny surfaces; the service is stellar; [Tin Lung Heen](#) serves top-notch Chinese food, and the views on a clear day are mindblowing.

Cityview

HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2771 9111; www.thecityview.com.hk; 23 Waterloo Rd, Yau Ma Tei; r HK\$1880, tr HK\$2280, ste from HK\$3080; @ 📶 🚰; **M** Yau Ma Tei, exit A2)

All 413 rooms at this YMCA-affiliated hotel are clean and smart, featuring mellow colour tones and stylish fabrics. The service is also impeccable. The hotel occupies a quiet corner between Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok. It's a short stroll from [Yau Ma Tei Theatre](#) and the [Yau Ma Tei Wholesale Fruit Market](#).

New Territories

Good-value accommodation in the New Territories is sparse, but there are both official and independent hostels, usually in remote areas. The **Country & Marine Parks Authority** (www.afcd.gov.hk) maintains 40 no-frills campsites in the New Territories. Visit the website and click on 'Country &

Marine Parks.’

Pilgrim’s Hall

HOSTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2691 2739; www.tfssu.org/pilgrim.html; 33 Tao Fong Shan Rd; s/d with shared bathroom HK\$260/400; 🚶 Sha Tin, exit B)

This Lutheran Church–affiliated hostel provides a nice escape from the city as it’s set on a peaceful hillside above the town. To get here, take the MTR East Rail to Sha Tin station, leave via exit B and walk down the ramp, passing a series of old village houses on the left. To the left of these houses is a set of steps signposted ‘To Fung Shan’. Follow the path all the way to the top and you’ll see Pilgrim’s Hall. The walk should take around 20 minutes. A taxi from the nearest MTR station in Sha Tin will cost around HK\$20. The canteen serves simple and healthy meals (advance booking required).

Hyatt Regency Hong Kong

HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 3723 1234; www.hongkong.shatin.hyatt.com; 18 Chak Cheung St; r HK\$2500-3000, ste HK\$3500-12,500; 🚶 University)

This is the plushiest sleeping option as you head out towards the border with China. Views of Tolo Harbour or the rolling hills of Sha Tin can be seen in most rooms. It’s a five-minute walk from University East Rail station.

Bradbury Jockey Club Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2662 5123; www.yha.org.hk; 66 Tai Mei Tuk Rd; dm members under/over 18yr HK\$65/95, d/q members HK\$290/420; 🚶 75K)

This is the HKYHA’s flagship hostel in the New Territories and is open daily year-round. Bradbury is next to the northern tip of the Plover Cove Reservoir dam wall, a few hundred metres south of Tai Mei Tuk. To get here take bus 75K (or 275R on Sundays and public holidays) from Tai Po Market KCR East station to the Tai Mei Tuk bus terminus. The hostel is on the road leading to the reservoir.

Outlying Islands

Lantau, Lamma and Cheung Chau all have decent accommodation with a holiday vibe. For campers, the **Country & Marine Parks Authority** (1823; www.afcd.gov.hk) maintains 11 sites on Lantau. Camping is prohibited on Hong Kong beaches.

★ Tai O Heritage Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(; www.taioheritagehotel.com; Shek Tsai Po St, Tai O; r HK\$1900-2500;

  ; 1 from Mui Wo, 11 from Tung Chung, 21 from Ngong Ping)

Housed in a century-old former police station, this is Lantau's newest hotel. All nine rooms are handsomely furnished in a contemporary style, offering top-of-the-line comfort. Our favourite is the inspector-office-turned-Sea Tiger Room, the smallest digs (24 sq metres) but with picture windows ushering in the sea breeze.

Espace Elastique

B&B

(; 2985 7002; www.espaceelastique.com.hk; 57 Kat Hing St, Tai O; r Sun-Thu HK\$500-1400, Fri & Sat HK\$540-1700;   ; 1 from Mui Wo, 11 from Tung Chung, 21 from Ngong Ping)

This cosy four-room B&B is one of the best-kept gems on Lantau. All rooms are tastefully decorated; the 2nd-floor double room with a balcony overlooking the main Tai O waterway gets booked up quickly. The friendly owner Veronica provides multilingual travel advice, plus a hearty breakfast in the cafe. The jacuzzi on the rooftop is a delight.

Bali Holiday Resort

HOTEL

(; 2982 4580; fax 2982 1044; www.lammabali.com; 8 Main St, Yung Shue Wan; r Sun-Fri HK\$300-750, Sat & holidays HK\$700-1400;  Yung Shue Wan)

Near the ferry in Yung Shue Wan, Bali has basic, pleasant, tile-floored rooms with TVs and fridges, as well as family apartments. Upper-floor rooms with balconies are the nicest. Wi-fi on the patio.



Eating

One of the world's greatest food cities, Hong Kong offers culinary excitement whether you're spending HK\$20 on a bowl of noodles or megabucks on haute cuisine.

The best of China is well represented, be it Cantonese, Shanghainese, Northern or Sichuanese. What's more, the international fare on offer – French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Thai, Indian, fusion – is the finest and most diverse in all of China.

Hong Kong is an expensive place to dine by regional Chinese standards, but cheaper than Sydney, London or New York, and with more consistent quality of food and service than most eateries in mainland China.

At most of the eateries listed here, reservations are strongly advised, especially for dinner.

SELF-CATERING

Hong Kong's two main supermarket chains **Park'nShop** (www.parknshop.com) and **Wellcome** (www.wellcome.com.hk) have so many outlets you're bound to run into a few. The gourmet **city'super** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.citysuper.com.hk; Shop 3001, Gateway Arcade, 25-27 Canton Rd, Harbour City Level 3, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 10am-10pm) has attractive but expensive produce; there's a branch in the [IFC Mall](#).

Hong Kong Island

The island's best range of cuisines is in Central, Sheung Wan and Wan Chai.

★ Delicious Kitchen

SHANGHAISE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2577 7720; 9-11B Cleveland St, Causeway Bay; meals HK\$40-100; 🕒 11am-11pm; Causeway Bay, exit E)

The Shanghainese rice cooked with shredded Chinese cabbage is so good at

this *cha chaan teng* (tea cafe) that fashionistas are tripping over themselves to land a table here. It's best with the legendary honey-glazed pork chop. Fat, veggie-stuffed wontons and perfectly crispy fried tofu are also winners.

Lin Heung Teahouse

DIM SUM, CANTONESE

( ;  2544 4556; 160-164 Wellington St, Sheung Wan; lunch/dinner from HK\$60/120;  6am-11pm;  26,  Sheung Wan, exit E1)

This 80-year-old restaurant, packed with older men reading newspapers and extended families, has decent dim sum (until 5pm) and old-school Cantonese dishes. The grandfather-like waiters still wear traditional white tunics over black trousers, and pour tea from huge brass kettles. Tables are shared at this no-frills place, giving a feel of community even for first-timers.

Sing Kee

DAI PAI DONG

( ;  2541 5678; 9-10 Stanley St, Soho; meals HK\$200;  11am-3pm & 6-11pm daily; ;  Central, exit D2)

In the fine-dining enclave of Soho, finding a good and cheap meal can be tricky. Sing Kee, one of the few surviving *dai pai dong* (food stalls) in the area, has withstood the tide of gentrification, and still retains a working-class, laugh-out-loud character. There's no signage. Look for the crammed tables at the end of Stanley St.

Life Cafe

VEGETARIAN, INTERNATIONAL

( ;  2810 9777; www.lifecafe.com.hk; 10 Shelley St, Soho; meals HK\$100;  noon-10pm;   ;  Central, exit D1)

Right next to the Central–Mid-Levels Escalator, Life is a vegetarian's dream, serving organic vegan salads, guilt-free desserts, and tasty dishes free of gluten, wheat, onion, garlic – you name it – over three floors stylishly decked out in reclaimed teak and recycled copper-domed lamps. The ground-floor counter has goodies to take away.

★ Luk Yu Tea House

CANTONESE, DIM SUM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2523 5464; 24-26 Stanley St, Lan Kwai Fong; meals HK\$300; 🕒 7am-10pm, dim sum to 5.30pm; ♿; **M** Central, exit D2)

This gorgeous teahouse (c 1933), known for its masterful cooking and Eastern art-deco decor, was the haunt of opera artists, writers and painters (including the creator of one exorbitant ink-and-brush gracing a wall), who came to give recitals and discuss the national fate. Today some of the waiters who served the tousled glamourati will pour your tea in the same pleasantly irreverent manner.

★ 22 Ships

TAPAS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2555 0722; www.22ships.hk; 22 Ship St, Wan Chai; tapas HK\$68-178; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6-11pm; **M** Wan Chai, exit B2)

The star of the recent crop of new tapas restaurants to open in Hong Kong, this tiny, trendy spot is packed from open to close. But the long wait (the restaurant doesn't take reservations) is worth it for exquisite, playful small plates by much-buzzed-about young British chef Jason Atherton.

Molecular gastronomy techniques are on display in dishes like crispy fish skin with dollops of foamy cod mousse and the house sangria with powdered raspberry. Others, like a recent special of beef cheeks on toast with anchovy butter are pure luxe comfort food.

Little Bao

ASIAN FUSION

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2194 0202; www.little-bao.com; 66 Staunton St, Sheung Wan; meals HK\$200-500; 🕒 6-11pm Mon-Sat; **M** Central, exit D2)

A trendy diner that wows with its *bao* (Chinese buns) – snow-white orbs crammed with juicy meat and slathered with a palette of Asian condiments. The signature pork-belly *bao* comes with hoisin ketchup, sesame dressing, and a leek and shiso salad. If spot-on flavours and full-on sauces appeal, go early – they don't take reservations.

Megan's Kitchen

CANTONESE, HOTPOT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2866 8305; www.meganskitchen.com; 165-171 Wan Chai Rd, 5th fl, Lucky Centre, Wan Chai; hotpot per person HK\$200-300; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6-11.30pm; 🚇 Wan Chai, exit A3)

Broth choices like Thai-flavored tom yum and 'lobster borsch' make for a modern twist on the classic hot pot experience at Megan's, though standbys like spicy Sichuan soup are just as good. The vast menu of items to dip runs the gamut from the standard (mushrooms, fish slices, tofu) to the avant garde (don't miss the fabulous rainbow cuttlefish balls).

Like all hot pot restaurants, Megan's is best visited with a crowd of at least four. Subdivided hot pots mean you can sample up to three broths, so the more the merrier. Call ahead for reservations, especially on weekends.

AMMO

EUROPEAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2537 9888; www.ammo.com.hk; 9 Justice Dr, Asia Society Hong Kong Centre, Admiralty; meals HK\$200-400; 🕒 noon-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat; 🚇 Admiralty, exit F)

Awash in a coppery light the colour of bullets, this sleek glass-walled cafe at the [Asia Society Hong Kong Centre](#) features chandeliers and copper panels evoking the site's past as an explosives magazine. The excellent menu is well thought out and pricey, with a selection of mostly Italian mains, preceded by tapas available at cocktail hour. Bookings essential.

Yardbird

JAPANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2547 9273; www.yardbirdrestaurant.com; 33-35 Bridges St, Sheung Wan; meals HK\$300; 🕒 6pm-11.45pm Mon-Sat; 🚇 26)

Yardbird is a hipster's ode to the chicken. Every part of the cluck-cluck, from thigh to gizzard, is seasoned, impaled with a stick then grilled, *yakitori* style. The resulting skewers are flavourful with just the right consistency. The highly popular eatery doesn't take reservations, so sample the sakes at the convivial bar area while you wait for a table.

Pure Veggie House

VEGETARIAN, CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2525 0556; 51 Garden Rd, 3rd fl, Coda Plaza; meals HK\$200-400; 🕒 11am-10pm; 🍴; 🚇 Admiralty, then bus 12A)

This Buddhist restaurant goes way beyond the usual tofu-n-broccoli to serve innovative, exquisitely presented vegetarian dishes – sauteed lily bulb, fried rice with black truffle and pine nuts, seaweed-wrapped tofu rolls. Excellent all-veggie dim sum will please even dedicated carnivores. The tranquil setting resembles a rustic inn.

Yung Kee Restaurant

CANTONESE, DIM SUM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2522 1624; 32-40 Wellington St, Lan Kwai Fong; lunch HK\$150-400, dinner from HK\$450; 🕒 11am-10.30pm; ♿; 🚇 Central, exit D2)

The roast goose here, made from fowl raised in the restaurant's own farm and roasted in coal-fired ovens, has been the talk of the town since 1942. Celebrities and well-to-dos are regulars at this well-illuminated and welcoming place, and its lunch dim sum is popular with the Central workforce.

Irori

JAPANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2838 5939; Yiu Wa St, 2nd fl, Bartlock Centre, Causeway Bay; lunch/dinner from HK\$150/300; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6-11pm; 🚇 Causeway Bay, exit A)

Irori's versatile kitchen turns out raw and cooked delicacies of an equally impressive standard. Seasonal fish is flown in regularly from Japan, and carefully crafted into sushi and sashimi. To warm the stomach between cold dishes, there's a creative selection of tasty tidbits, such as fried beef roll and *yakitori* (grilled skewers).

★ Lung King Heen

CANTONESE, DIM SUM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 3196 8888; www.fourseasons.com/hongkong; 8 Finance St, Four Seasons Hotel, Central; set lunch/dinner HK\$500/1560; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm; 📶; 🚇 Hong Kong, exit E1)

The world's first Chinese restaurant to receive three stars from the Michelin people, still retains them. The Cantonese food, though by no means peerless in Hong Kong, is excellent in both taste and presentation, and when combined with the harbour views and the impeccable service, provides a truly stellar dining experience. The signature steamed lobster and scallop dumplings sell out early.

★ **Boss**

MODERN CANTONESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2155 0552; www.theboss1.com; Basement, 58-62 Queen's Rd Central, Central; meals from HK\$500; 🕒 11.30am-midnight Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun; 📶; **M** Central, exit D2)

Awarded one Michelin star, the Boss is a perfectionist. Flawless service, austere modern decor, and a meticulous kitchen point to high expectations being imposed. The old-school Cantonese dishes are impressive, notably the deep-fried chicken pieces with home-fermented shrimp paste, and the baked-crab casserole. Dim sum, made with first-rate ingredients, is available at lunch.

Otto e Mezzo Bombana

MODERN ITALIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2537 8859; www.ottoemezzobombana.com; Shop 202, Landmark Alexandra, 18 Chater Rd, Central; lunch/dinner from HK\$700/1380; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm Mon-Sat; 📶; **M** Central, exit H)

Asia's only Italian restaurant with three Michelin stars lives up to its name, and Chef Bombana is here, sleeves rolled, to see that it does. 'Eight and a Half' is the place for white truffles, being the host of the local bid for these pungent diamonds. To eat here though you'll need the tenacity of a truffle hound – book two months ahead.

L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon

MODERN FRENCH

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2166 9000; www.robuchon.com; 15 Queen's Rd Central, Shop 401, Landmark, Central; lunch HK\$450-1900, dinner HK\$800-2000; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm;

;  Central, exit G)

One-third of celebrity chef Joel de Robuchon's Michelin-crowned wonder in Hong Kong, this red-and-black workshop has a tantalising list of tapas (from HK\$350) and a 70-page wine list. If you prefer something more formal, visit Le Jardin in the next room. Le Salon de The, one floor down, has the best sandwiches and pastries in town for dine-in or takeaway.

SMOKING BAN

In Hong Kong, smoking is banned in all restaurants, bars, shopping malls and museums – even at beaches and public parks – but you can light up in 'alfresco' areas. Some bars, however, risk getting fined to attract more customers during nonpeak hours. You'll know which ones they are by the ashtray they nonchalantly place on your table.

Kowloon

There's plenty of choice in both cuisine and budget, especially in Tsim Sha Tsui. More local places can be found further north.

Woodlands

INDIAN, VEGETARIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  2369 3718; 62 Mody Rd, upper ground fl, 16 & 17 Wing On Plaza, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals HK\$70-180;  noon-3.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm;  ;  East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit P1)

Located above a department store, good old Woodlands offers excellent-value Indian vegetarian food to compatriots and the odd local. Dithering gluttons should order the *thali* meal, which is served on a round metal plate with 10 tiny dishes, a dessert and bread.

Chicken HOF & Soju Korean

KOREAN

(Chicken [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  2375 8080; Kimberley Rd, G/F, 84 Kam Kok Mansion, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals from \$150;  5pm-4am;  Jordan, exit D)

This place with darkened windows may look dodgy from the outside, but in fact it's a Korean gastropub with a friendly owner who'll holler a greeting when customers enter. The excellent fried chicken, made with a light and crispy batter, comes in five versions. Traditional fare like Korean barbecue is also available. Whatever you order, steer clear of the pupa soup. Ours tasted so musty, we thought we were eating a library.

Mido Cafe

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 2384 6402; 63 Temple St; meals HK\$40-90; 🕒 9am-10pm; **M** Yau Ma Tei, exit B2)

This retro *cha chaan tang* (1950) with mosaic tiles and metal latticework stands astride a street corner that comes to life at sundown. Ascend to the upper floor and take a seat next to a wall of iron-framed windows overlooking [Tin Hau Temple](#) – atmosphere is what makes it Kowloon's most famous tea cafe, despite passable food and service.

Ziafat

MIDDLE EASTERN, INDIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 2312 1015; 81 Nathan Rd, 6th fl, Harilela Mansion, Tsim Sha Tsui; meal HK\$80-200; 🕒 noon-midnight; 🍴; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit R)

This halal restaurant serves up decent Arabic and Indian fare like falafel, lentil soup, kebabs and curries. It's in a weary, post-WWII building alongside budget guesthouses, but the restaurant is clean, quiet and humbly furnished with Arabic art. You can also smoke shisha here.

★ Great Beef Hot Pot

HOTPOT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 3997 3369; 48 Cameron Rd, 1st & 2nd fl, China Insurance Bldg, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals HK\$350-600; 🕒 5.30pm-2am; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit B3)

Indecisive gluttons will scream at the mind-blowing hotpot choices here – 200 ingredients (the majority fresh or homemade; HK\$25–270), 20 kinds of broth (from clam soup to fancy herbal concoctions; HK\$68–468), and an embarrassment of condiments (all-you-can-dip)! There's no escaping the

menu either, the lights are too bright! Now onto the sashimi options...
Booking essential.

★ Ye Shanghai

SHANGHAI, DIM SUM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2376 3322; www.elite-concepts.com; Canton Rd, 6th fl, Marco Polo Hotel, Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals HK\$400-800; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm; 🚻; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit C2)

The name means ‘Shanghai Nights’. Dark woods and subtle lighting inspired by 1920s Shanghai fill the air with romance. The modern Shanghainese dishes are also exquisite. The only exception to this Jiangnan harmony is the Cantonese dim sum being served at lunch, though that too is wonderful. Sophisticated Ye Shanghai has one Michelin star.

Kowloon Tang

CHINESE, DIM SUM

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2811 9398; www.kowloontang.com; 1 Austin Rd W, Shop R002-003, Civic Square, 3rd fl, roof deck, Elements Mall; meals HK\$300-2000; 🕒 noon-10.30pm; 🚻; **M** Kowloon, exit U3)

Sophisticated Kowloon Tang serves impeccable Cantonese dishes, including a few Dong Guan classics, a laudable Peking duck, and an impressive selection of Western-style desserts in an art deco–inspired setting, reminiscent of its cousin across the harbour, **Island Tang** ([MAP](#)

[GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2526 8798; www.islandtang.com; 9 Queen’s Rd Central, Shop 222, Galleria, Central; set lunch from HK\$308, dinner from HK\$400; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm; 📶; **M** Central, exit D1).

Din Tai Fung

TAIWANESE, NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2730 6928; www.dintai fung.com.hk; 30 Canton Rd, Shop 130, 3rd fl, Silvercord, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals HK\$120-300; 🕒 11.30am-10.30pm; 🚻; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit C1)

Whether it’s comfort food or a carb fix you’re craving, the juicy Shanghai dumplings and hearty Northern-style noodles at this Taiwanese chain will do the trick. Queues are the norm and it doesn’t take reservations, but service is

excellent. DTF has one Michelin star.

Typhoon Shelter Hing Kee Restaurant

CANTONESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2722 0022; 180 Nathan Rd, 1st fl Bowa House, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals HK\$380-1200; 🕒 6pm-5am; 🚇 Jordan, exit D)

This celebrity haunt is run by a feisty fisherman's daughter who's known for her brilliant dishes prepared the way they were on sampans. The signature crabs smothered in a mountain of fried garlic are a wonder to taste and behold. The service can be a little edgy. Be sure you know the price of every dish before you order.

Spring Deer

NORTHERN CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2366 4012; 42 Mody Rd, 1st fl, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals HK\$80-500; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6-11pm; 🚇 East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit N2)

Hong Kong's most authentic Northern-style roasted lamb is served here. Yet better known is the Peking duck which is very good. That said, the service can be about as welcoming as a Beijing winter, c 1967. Booking is essential.

Dong Lai Shun

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2733 2020; www.rghk.com.hk; 69 Mody Rd, B2, the Royal Garden, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals HK\$250-1500; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 6pm-10.30pm; 📶 🚻; 🚇 East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit P2)

Besides superbly executed Northern Chinese dishes, the phonebook of a menu here also features Shanghainese, Sichuanese, and Cantonese favourites. But Dong Lai Shun is best known for its mutton hotpot which involves dunking paper-thin slices of mutton into boiling water and eating it with sesame sauce. The atmosphere is a little formal but the service is warm.

Tin Lung Heen

CANTONESE

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2263 2270; www.ritzcarlton.com/hongkong; 1 Austin Rd W, 102nd fl, Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong, International Commerce Centre; meals HK\$400-1700; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6-

10.30pm;  Kowloon, exit U3)

Though the decor is imposing – Xi Jinping could walk in any minute and feel at home – the service is personable and we were floored by the views. The signature *char siu* made with Spanish Iberico pork is the priciest plate of barbecue in town, but also the most succulent. Do not ask for a window seat if you suffer from vertigo.

Fook Lam Moon

CANTONESE, DIM SUM

( ;  2366 0286; www.fooklammoon-grp.com; 53-59 Kimberley Rd, Shop 8, 1st fl, Tsim Sha Tsui; meals HK\$400-2000;  11.30am-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit B1)

Locals call FLM ‘celebrities’ canteen’. But even if you’re not rich and famous, FLM will treat you as if you were. The huge menu contains costly items such as abalone which would shoot your bill up to at least HK\$1000 per head. But no one will snub you if you stick to the dim sum (from HK\$60 a basket), which is divine and available only at lunch.

New Territories

Cuisines are less diverse in the New Territories than Kowloon and Hong Kong but this area has an abundance of seafood and local eateries.

Ho To Tai Noodle Shop

CANTONESE

(;  2476 2495; 67 Fau Tsoi St; wonton noodles HK\$23;  8am-8pm;  Tai Tong Rd Light Rail station)

This 60-year-old Yuen Long institution is one of the world’s cheapest Michelin restaurants. It is best known for the fresh Cantonese egg noodles and shrimp roe noodles that it churns out daily. Foodies from all corners come to slurp the delightful wonton noodles. An English menu is available at the cashier. The haunt is a three-minute walk south of Tai Tong Rd Light Rail station.

Dai Wing Wah

HAKKA

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 2nd fl, Koon Wong Mansion, 2-6 On Ning Rd; dim sum HK\$16, dishes from HK\$70; 🕒 6am-midnight; 🚊 Tai Tong Rd Light Rail station)

The brainchild of celebrated chef Leung Man-to, Dai Wing Wah is most famous for its walled-village dishes. Leung sources local ingredients from small farms and food producers whenever possible, and complements them with his innovations in cooking. Must-eats include lemon-steamed grey mullet, smoked oysters and Malay sponge cake.

Honeymoon Dessert

DESSERTS

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2792 4991; 9, 10A, B&C Po Tung Rd; per person HK\$30; 🕒 1pm-2.45am; 🚗 1)

This shop specialising in Chinese desserts such as sweet walnut soup and durian pudding is so successful that it has branches all over China and in Indonesia, not to mention some 20 locations in Hong Kong.

★ Yue Kee Roasted Goose Restaurant

CANTONESE

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2491 0105; www.yuekee.com.hk/en; 9 Sham Hong Rd, Sham Tseng; meals HK\$100-200; 🕒 11am-11pm; 🚗 minibus 302 from Tai Wo Hau MTR)

In an alley lined with roast-goose restaurants, 54-year-old Yue Kee is king. Order gorgeous plates of coppery-skinned charcoal-roasted goose (half is plenty for four people) and sample house specialties like soy-braised goose web (feet), garlic-fried goose kidneys, and spicy goose intestines. If that's not your speed, there are plenty of standard Cantonese dishes on offer. English menu.

Sha Tin 18

CANTONESE, NORTHERN CHINESE

(18 [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 3723 1234; www.hongkong.shatin.hyatt.com; 18 Chak Cheung St, Hyatt Regency Hong Kong; meals HK\$300-500; 🕒 11.30am-3pm & 5.30-10.30pm; 🚇 University)

The Peking duck (whole HK\$538, half HK\$328) here has put this hotel restaurant, adjacent to the campus of the Chinese University, in the

gastronomic spotlight since its opening in 2009. Book your prized fowl 24 hours in advance. Tantalise your taste buds in two ways – pancakes with the crispy skin, and wok-fried mince duck with iceberg lettuce. The restaurant also boasts a tempting dessert counter.

Outlying Islands

Lamma boasts the biggest choices in Yung Shue Wan and Sok Kwu Wan. There are also some decent choices on Lantau and fewer on Cheung Chau.

★ **Mavericks**

BURGERS, INTERNATIONAL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 5402 4154; Pui O beach; meals from HK\$100; 🕒 5.30-11.30pm Fri, 11.30am-11.30pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 1 from Mui Wo) 🌿

Sunburned beach-goers gather for house-made sausages and burgers on artisan buns at this hip new surf-themed weekend spot, right on the water in Pui O. Many of the veggies are grown on the restaurant's own farm, the meat and dairy used are hormone-free, and menus are printed on recycled bamboo paper. Wash your meal down with a locally brewed Young Master Ale.

Bookworm Cafe

CAFE, VEGETARIAN

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2982 4838; 79 Main St, Yung Shue Wan; meals from HK\$80; 🕒 9am-9pm Fri-Wed; 🏠 Yung Shue Wan) 🌿

Veggie foodies are in heaven at Bookworm, the granddaddy of Hong Kong's healthy and eco-conscious dining scene. Tasty dishes include the dhal and salad combo, goat's cheese sandwich and shepherdess pie, which all pair well with the carefully selected organic wines. The cafe is also a secondhand bookshop.

Drinking

Lan Kwai Fong (LKF) in Central is synonymous with nightlife in Hong Kong, attracting everyone from expat and Chinese suits to travellers. In

general, watering holes in Wan Chai are cheaper and more relaxed (some say seedier), though sleek new spots have been fast emerging around Star St. Drinking places in Kowloon tend to attract more locals. Most places offer discounts on drinks during happy hour, usually from late afternoon to early evening – 4pm to 8pm, say – but times vary from place to place.

Hong Kong Island

★ Club 71

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 67 Hollywood Rd, Basement, Soho; 🕒 3pm-2am Mon-Sat, 6pm-1am Sun, happy hour 3-9pm; 🚏26, 🚇M Central, exit D1)

This friendly bar with a bohemian vibe is named after a protest march on 1 July 2003. It's a favourite haunt of local artists and activists who come for the beer and music jamming sessions. In the garden out front, revolutionaries plotted to overthrow the Qing dynasty a hundred years ago. Enter from the alley next to 69 Hollywood.

★ Pawn

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.thepawn.com.hk; 62 Johnston Rd, Wan Chai; 🕒 11am-2am, to midnight Sun; 🚇M Wan Chai, exit A3)

This handsome three-storey establishment used to be a row of tenement houses and the century-old Woo Cheong pawn shop. Now it's occupied by a restaurant and a bar. The slouchy sofas with space to sprawl, shabby-chic interiors designed by a filmmaker, plus great little terrace spaces overlooking the tram tracks, make this an ideal location to sample a great selection of lagers, bitters and wine.

Sevva

COCKTAIL BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞2537 1388; www.sevva.hk; 10 Chater Rd, 25th fl, Prince's Bldg, Central; 🕒 noon-midnight Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; 📶; 🚇M Central, exit H)

If there was a million-dollar view in Hong Kong, it'd be the one from the

balcony of ultra-stylish Sevva – skyscrapers so close you can see their arteries of steel, with the harbour and Kowloon in the distance. At night it takes your breath away. To get there though, you have to overcome expensive drinks and patchy service.

Globe

PUB

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2543 1941; www.theglobe.com.hk; 45-53 Graham St, Soho; 🕒 10am-2am, happy hour 9am-8pm; 🚇 Central, exit D1)

Besides an impressive list of 150 imported beers, including 13 on tap, the Globe serves T8, the first cask-conditioned ale brewed in Hong Kong. Occupying an enviable 370 sq metres, the bar has a huge dining area with long wooden tables and comfortable banquettes.

Pier 7

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2167 8377; www.cafedecogroup.com; Shop M, Roof Viewing Deck, Central Pier 7, Star Ferry Pier, Central; 🕒 9am-midnight, happy hour 6-9pm; 📶; 🚇 Hong Kong, exit A1)

Sitting atop the Star Ferry terminal, Pier 7 has a large outdoor terrace with views of neighbouring skyscrapers, the hills of Kowloon, and a sliver of the harbour. It's an unpretentious spot for a quiet pre-movie (or postdinner) drink and some light refreshments. On random weekends there are reggae DJs in the house and the vibe turns shaggy.

MO Bar

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2132 0077; 15 Queen's Rd Central, Landmark, Central; 🕒 7am-1.30am; 📶; 🚇 Central, exit D1)

If you want to imbibe in quiet or to catch up with a chat, the swish MO Bar, attached to the Mandarin's swanky outpost at the Landmark, offers peace, soft lighting, and a first-rate drinks list of wines and cocktails.

Executive Bar

LOUNGE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2893 2080; 3 Yiu Wa St, 7th fl, Bartlock Centre, Causeway Bay; 🕒 5pm-1am Mon-Sat; 🚇 Causeway Bay, exit A)

You won't be served if you just turn up at this clubby, masculine bar high above Causeway Bay – it's by appointment only. Odd perhaps, but worth the trip if you are serious about whisky and bourbon. Several dozen varieties are served here, in large brandy balloons with large orbs of ice hand-chipped by the Japanese proprietor to maximise the tasting experience.

Delaney's

BAR, PUB

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); www.delaneys.com.hk; 18 Luard Rd, ground & 1st fl, One Capital Place, Wan Chai; 🕒 noon-3am, happy hour noon-9pm; 🚇 Wan Chai, exit C)

At this immensely popular Irish watering hole you can choose between the black-and-white-tiled pub on the ground floor and a sports bar and restaurant on the 1st floor. The food is good and plentiful; the kitchen allegedly goes through 400kg of potatoes a week.

Kowloon

★ Butler

COCKTAIL BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2724 3828; 30 Mody Rd, 5th fl, Mody House, Tsim Sha Tsui; cover HK\$200, snacks HK\$30; 🕒 6.30pm-3am Mon-Fri, 6.30pm-2am Sat & Sun; 🚇 East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit N2)

A cocktail and whisky heaven hidden in the residential part of TST. You can flip through its whisky magazines as you watch bartender Uchida create magical concoctions with the flair and precision of a master mixologist in Ginza. We loved the cocktails made from fresh citrus. A discreet and welcome addition to the TST drinking scene.

Ozone

BAR

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2263 2263; www.ritzcarlton.com; 1 Austin Rd, 118th fl, ICC, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 5pm-1am Mon-Wed, to 2am Thu, to 3am Fri, 3pm-3am Sat, noon-midnight Sun; 📶; 🚇 Kowloon,

exit U3)

Ozone is the highest bar in Asia. The imaginative interiors, created to evoke a cyberesque Garden of Eden, have pillars resembling chocolate fountains in a hurricane and a myriad of refracted glass and colour-changing illumination. Equally dizzying is the wine list, with the most expensive bottle selling for over HK\$150,000. Offers potential for a once-in-a-lifetime experience, in more ways than one.

Ned Kelly's Last Stand

PUB

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2376 0562; 11A Ashley Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 11.30am-2am, happy hour 11.30am-9pm; 🚇 Tsim Sha Tsui, exit L5)

Named after a gun-toting Australian bushranger, Ned's is one of Hong Kong's oldest pubs. Most of the expat regulars here (and there are many) are drawn to the laid-back atmosphere and the Dixieland jazz band that plays and cracks jokes between songs. The bar is filled with old posters, rugby shirts and Oz-related paraphernalia.

Tapas Bar

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2733 8756; www.shangri-la.com; 64 Mody Rd, Lobby, Kowloon Shangri-La, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 3.30pm-1am Mon-Fri, from noon Sat & Sun; 📶; 🚇 East Tsim Sha Tsui, exit P1)

An intimate vibe and bistro-style decor make this a good place to unwind over champagne, tapas and the sports channel after a day of sightseeing. A table in the alfresco area will let you smoke and take in harbour views, visible beyond a river of cars.

Entertainment

Hong Kongers work hard and play harder. To find out what's on, pick up a copy of *HK Magazine* (<http://hk-magazine.com>), an entertainment listings magazine. It's free, appears on Friday and can be found in restaurants, bars and hotels. For more comprehensive listings buy the fortnightly *Time Out*

(www.timeout.com.hk) from newsstands. Also worth checking out is the freebie *bc magazine* (www.bcmagazine.net).

The main ticket providers, **Urbtix** (📞 2734 9009; www.urbtix.hk; 🕒 10am-8pm), **Cityline** (📞 2317 6666; www.cityline.com.hk) and **Hong Kong Ticketing** (📞 3128 8288; www.hkticketing.com; 🕒 10am-8pm), have among them tickets to every major event in Hong Kong. Book online or by phone.

Cinema

Tickets can be bought through Cityline (for mainstream films) and Urbtix (for alternative screenings). If you're into arthouse films, don't miss **Broadway Cinematheque** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2388 3188; 3 Public Square St, ground fl, Prosperous Gardens, Yau Ma Tei; **M** Yau Ma Tei, exit C).

Cantonese Opera

Hong Kong is one of the best places to watch Cantonese opera. **Sunbeam Theatre** ([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2856 0161, 2563 2959; www.sunbeamtheatre.com/hk; 423 King's Rd, Kiu Fai Mansion, North Point; **M** North Point, exit A4) and **Yau Ma Tei Theatre** are dedicated to the art form. You can book through Urbtix or Cityline.

Live Music

★ Street Music Concerts

LIVE MUSIC

(📞 2582 0280; www.kungmusic.hk; Wan Chai) **FREE**

Don't miss one of the free outdoor gigs thrown by eclectic musician Kung Chi-sing. One Saturday a month, the musician holds a concert outside the Hong Kong Arts Centre (6.30pm to 9pm). The exciting line-ups have included anything from indie rock, punk and jazz to Cantonese opera and Mozart. It's excellent, professional-quality music performed in an electrifying atmosphere. There's also performances at the **Blue House** on the second Thursday of the month (7.30pm to 9.30pm). Check the website for dates.

★ Peel Fresco

JAZZ

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎2540 2046; www.peelfresco.com; 49 Peel St, Soho; 🕒5pm-late Mon-Sat; 🚏13, 26, 40M)

Charming Peel Fresco has live jazz six nights a week, with local and overseas acts performing on a small but spectacular stage next to teetering faux-Renaissance paintings. The action starts around 9.30pm, but go at 9pm to secure a seat.

Grappa's Cellar

LIVE MUSIC

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎2521 2322; www.elgrande.com.hk/outlets/HongKong/GrappasCellar; 1 Connaught Pl, Central; 🕒9pm-late; 🚏Hong Kong, exit B2)

For at least two weekends a month, this subterranean Italian restaurant morphs into a jazz or rock music venue – chequered tablecloths and all. Call or visit the website for event and ticketing details.

WORTH A TRIP

HONG KONG'S HIDDEN AGENDA

Founded in a clandestine band room in the gritty industrial hub of Kwun Tong, **Hidden Agenda** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎9170 6073; www.hiddenagendahk.com; 15-17 Tai Yip St, 2A, Wing Fu Industrial Bldg, Kwun Tong; 🚏Ngau Tau Kok, exit B6) has become synonymous with underground music in Hong Kong. It now occupies a warehouse-turned-venue that accommodates 300 people. While the music started out with a raucous, head-banging focus, the mix of genres now include post-rock, reggae, jazz, folk, techno and punk.

Bands both local (Chochukmo, Hungry Ghosts) and foreign (Tahiti 80, The Chariot, Anti-Flag, Two Gallants, Alcest, Pitchtuner) have performed here. There are shows every week. Check the website for the latest.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

For the latest, try **Utopia Asia** (www.utopia-asia.com/hkbars.htm), **Gay HK** (www.gayhk.com) or the free, monthly magazine *Dim Sum* (www.dimsum-hk.com).

Hong Kong's premier lesbian organisation, **Les Peches** ( 9101 8001; lespechesinfo@yahoo.com) has monthly events for lesbians, bisexual women and their friends.

Propaganda

GAY CLUB

( ;  2868 1316; 1 Hollywood Rd, lower ground fl, Central;  9pm-4am Tue-Thu, to 6am Fri & Sat, happy hour 9pm-1.30am Tue-Thu;  Central, exit D2)

Hong Kong's default gay dance club and meat market; cover charge (HK\$120 to HK\$160) applies on Friday and Saturday. Enter from Ezra's Lane.

T:ME

GAY BAR

( ;  2332 6565; www.time-bar.com; 65 Hollywood Rd;  6pm-2am Mon-Sat;  Central, exit D1)

A small and chic gay bar located in a back alley off Hollywood Rd, close to Club 71; drinks are a bit on the pricey side but it has happy hour throughout the week.

Comedy Venues

TakeOut Comedy Club

COMEDY

( ;  6220 4436; www.takeoutcomedy.com; 34 Elgin St, Basement, Soho;  26)

In need of some LOL? Hong Kong's first full-time comedy club, founded by Chinese-American Jameson Gong, has stand-up and improv acts in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. It also hosts visiting comedians from overseas. See website for program.

Shopping

It's not the bargain destination it was, but Hong Kong is crammed with retail

space, making it a delight for shoppers. If you prefer everything under one roof, some of the sleeker options are: **IFC Mall** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2295 3308; www.ifc.com.hk; 8 Finance St;  Hong Kong, exit F), **Pacific Place** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2844 8988; www.pacificplace.com.hk; 88 Queensway, Admiralty;  Admiralty, exit F), **Elements** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); www.elementshk.com; 1 Austin Rd W, West Kowloon; 🕒 11am-9pm;  Kowloon, exit U3) and the enormous **Harbour City** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.harbourcity.com.hk; 3-9 Canton Rd;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit C1).

If you're looking for antiques and curios, Central's Hollywood Rd should be your first stop, while cheaper Cat St, also in Central, specialises in younger (ie retro) items such as Mao paraphernalia.

For cheap attire, browse at Jardine's Bazaar in Causeway Bay, Johnston Rd in Wan Chai or the **Tung Choi St Market** (., Ladies' Market [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tung Choi St; 🕒 noon-11.30pm;  Mong Kok, exit D3) in Mong Kok, Kowloon.

Hong Kong is one of the best places in Asia to buy English-language books and the city's computer malls have some of the lowest prices on earth. Similarly, there are some fantastic camera stores, though most are *not* on Nathan Rd in Tsim Sha Tsui.

Hong Kong Island

Central and Causeway Bay are the main shopping districts on Hong Kong Island. For cheap souvenirs, try the faux antiques vendors on Cat St or the street markets in Wan Chai.

Horizon Plaza

OUTLETS

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Lee Wing St, Ap Lei Chau, Aberdeen; 🕒 10am-7pm; 🚏 90 from Exchange Sq in Central)

Tucked away on the southern coast of Ap Lei Chau, this enormous outlet, in a converted factory building, boasts more than 150 shops over 28 storeys. Most locals come here to buy furniture, but you'll also find Alexander McQueens on offer and Jimmy Choos at knock-down prices.

Arch Angel Antiques

ANTIQUES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2851 6848; 53-55 Hollywood Rd, Lan Kwai Fong; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 6pm Sun; 🚏 26)

Though the specialities are ancient porcelain and tombware, Arch Angel packs a lot more into its three floors: it has everything from mah-jong sets and terracotta horses to palatial furniture.

★ Shanghai Tang

CLOTHING, HOMEWARE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2525 7333; www.shanghaitang.com; 1 Duddell St, Shanghai Tang Mansion, Central; 🕒 10.30am-8pm; 🚇 Central, exit D1)

This elegant four-level store is the place to go if you fancy a body-hugging *qipao* (cheongsam) with a modern twist, a Chinese-style clutch or a lime-green mandarin jacket. Custom tailoring is available; it takes two weeks to a month and requires a fitting. Shanghai Tang also stocks cushions, picture frames, teapots, even mah-jong tile sets, designed in a modern chinoiserie style.

Fook Ming Tong Tea Shop

FOOD, DRINK

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2295 0368; www.fookmingtong.com; 8 Finance St, Shop 3006, Podium Level 3, IFC Mall, Central; 🕒 10.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-8pm Sun; 🚇 Central, exit A)

Tea-making accoutrements and carefully chosen teas of various ages and grades are available here, from gunpowder to Nanyan Ti Guan Yin Crown Grade – costing anything from HK\$10 to HK\$9000 per 100g.

Chinese Arts & Crafts

DEPARTMENT STORE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 88 Queensway, Shop 220, Pacific Place, Admiralty; 🕒 10am-9pm; 🚇 Admiralty, exit F)

Mainland-owned CAC is probably the best place in Hong Kong to buy quality jade, porcelain chopsticks and other pricey Chinese crafts; it's positively an Aladdin's cave of souvenirs. On Hong Kong Island there are also branches in **Central** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2901 0338; 59 Queen's Rd,

ground fl, Asia Standard Tower;  Admiralty, exit F) and **Wan Chai** ( ; 28 Harbour Rd, 2nd Causeway Centre;  Wan Chai, exit A5).

★ **Wan Chai Computer Centre**

ELECTRONICS

( ; 130-138 Hennessy Rd, 1st fl, Southorn Centre, Wan Chai;  10am-8pm Mon-Sat;  Wan Chai, exit B2)

This gleaming, beeping warren of tiny shops is a safe bet for anything digital and electronic.

★ **Kapok**

CLOTHING, ACCESSORIES

( ;  2549 9254; www.ka-pok.com; 5 St Francis Yard, Wan Chai;  11am-8pm, to 6pm Sun;  Admiralty, exit F)

In the hip Star St area, this boutique has a fastidiously edited selection of luxe-cool local and international clothing and accessory labels. Look for their new line of Kapok-label made-in-HK men's shirts, and graphic Mischa handbags by local designer Michelle Lai. The sister boutique is around the corner at 3 Sun St.

Kung Fu Supplies

SPORTS

( ;  2891 1912; www.kungfu.com/hk; 188-192 Johnston Rd, Room 6a, 6th fl, Chuen Fung House, Wan Chai;  Mon-Sat;  6, 6A, 6X)

If you need to stock up on martial-arts accessories, including uniforms, nunchakus and safety weapons for practice, or just want to thumb through a decent collection of books and DVDs, this is the place to go. The staff here is very helpful.

★ **Eslite**

BOOKS

( ;  3419 6789; 500 Hennessy Rd, Causeway Bay, Hysan Place, 8/f-10/f;  10am-11pm Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat;  Causeway Bay, exit F2)

You could spend an entire evening inside this swank three-floor Taiwanese bookstore (really – it's open til 2am on weekends), which features a massive

collection of English and Chinese books and magazines, a shop selling gorgeous stationary and leather-bound journals, a cafe, a bubble-tea counter, and a huge kids toy and book section.

Yiu Fung Store

FOOD

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 3 Foo Ming St, Causeway Bay; 🕒 11am-10pm;  Causeway Bay, exit A)

Hong Kong's most famous store (c 1960s) for Chinese pickles and preserved fruit features sour plum, liquorice-flavoured lemon, tangerine peel, pickled papaya and dried longan. Just before the Lunar New Year, it's crammed with shoppers.

Kowloon

Shopping in Kowloon is a mix of the down-at-heel and the glamorous; you can find just about anything – especially in Tsim Sha Tsui.

Premier Jewellery

JEWELLERY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2368 0003; 50 Nathan Rd, Shop G14-15, ground fl, Holiday Inn Golden Mile Shopping Mall, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit G)

This third-generation family firm is directed by a qualified gemmologist and is one of our favourite places to shop. The range isn't huge but if you're looking for something particular, give Premier Jewellery a day's notice and a selection will be ready in time for your arrival. Staff can also help you design your own piece.

Initial

CLOTHING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; www.initialfashion.com; 48 Cameron Rd, Shop 2, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 11.30am-11.30pm;  Tsim Sha Tsui, exit B2)

This attractive shop and cafe carries stylish, multifunctional urbanwear with European and Japanese influences. The clothes created by local designers are complemented by imported shoes, bags and costume jewellery.

Ap Liu Street Flea Market

MARKET

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Ap Liu St, btwn Nam Cheong & Yen Chow Sts, Sham Shui Po; 🕒 noon-midnight; **M** Sham Shui Po, exit A1)

A geek's heaven, this flea market specialises in all things digital and electronic. The market spills over into Pei Ho St.

Swindon Books

BOOKS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 2366 8001; 13-15 Lock Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit A1)

This is one of the best 'real' (as opposed to 'supermarket') bookshops. An excellent range and knowledgeable staff. Strong on local books and history in particular.

Rise Shopping Arcade

CLOTHING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; www.rise-hk.com; 5-11 Granville Circuit, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 3-9pm; **M** Tsim Sha Tsui, exit B2)

Bursting the seams of this minimall is cheap streetwear from Hong Kong, Korea and Japan, with a few knock-offs chucked in for good measure. Patience and a good eye could land you purchases fit for a Vogue photo shoot. It's best visited between 4pm and 8.30pm when most of the shops are open.

Bruce Lee Club

SOUVENIRS

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 2771 7093; www.bruceleeclub.com; 530 Nathan Rd, Shop 160-161, In's Point, Mong Kok; 🕒 1-9pm; **M** Yau Ma Tei, exit A1) **FREE**

Founded by Bruce Lee's fans, this mini-museum and souvenir shop has action figures, toys, movie products and other memorabilia related to the kung-fu icon.

★ Chan Wah Kee Cutlery Store

HOMEWARES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 2730 4091; Temple St, 278D, Yau Ma Tei; 🕒 11am-6pm, closed Wed;

M Jordan, exit C2)

At this humble shop, 80-year-old Mr Chan, one of Asia's few remaining master knife-sharpeners, uses nine different stones to grind each blade, and alternates between water and oil. If you bring him your blade, he charges between HK\$100 and HK\$600 with a three-month wait. But if you buy from him, and he has a great selection, he'll do it there and then. Prices range from HK\$200 for a small paring knife to around HK\$2000 for a Shun knife.

Information

EMERGENCY

Fire, Police & Ambulance

EMERGENCY

( 999)

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafes are hard to come by, but wi-fi is widely available. It's free at Hong Kong International Airport, and at parks, public libraries, sports centres, museums, cooked-food markets, community halls and government premises listed at www.gov.hk/en/theme/wifi/location. Some chain restaurants offer free wi-fi with purchase.

A one-hour PCCW wi-fi pass is available at HKTB visitor centres. A 3G rechargeable SIM card (from HK\$48) will connect your phone to the internet and these are available at PCCW and SmarTone shops; PCCW provides some 10,000 wi-fi hot spots. Check service plans at www.pccwwifi.com.

MEDIA

Local and Asian editions of printed newspapers and journals locally include *South China Morning Post*, *The Standard*, *HK Magazine*, *BC Magazine*, *Time Out*, *USA Today*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Financial Times* and *Wall Street Journal Asia*.

English-language TV (terrestrial) and radio include TVB Pearl, ATV World; BBC World Service, RTHK 3 and 4.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical care is of a high standard in Hong Kong, though private hospital care is costly. Ambulance services can be reached by dialling 999.

Hospitals with 24-hour emergency services:

Matilda International Hospital

HOSPITAL

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2849 0111; 41 Mt Kellett Rd, The Peak)

Private hospital.

Prince of Wales Hospital

HOSPITAL

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2632 2211; 30-32 Ngan Shing St, Sha Tin)

Public hospital.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

HOSPITAL

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2958 8888; 30 Gascoigne Rd, Yau Ma Tei)

Public hospital in Kowloon.

MONEY

ATMs are available throughout Hong Kong, including at the airport. Most are available 24 hours. Banks have the best exchange rates, but some levy commissions of HK\$50 or more per transaction. Opening hours are 9am to 4.30pm or 5.30pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 12.30pm Saturday.

Licensed moneychangers are abundant in tourist districts, the ground floor of [Chungking Mansions](#) and at **Wing Hoi Money Exchange** (

[GOOGLE MAP](#); G/F, Shop No 9b, Mirador Mansion, 58 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, to 7pm Sun). Rates at the airport are poor.

BEWARE: FAKE MONKS

Real monks in Hong Kong never solicit money. However, you may be approached in temples and even bars and shops by con artists in monks' habits who try to make you part with your money. The more aggressive may offer fake Buddhist amulets for sale, or force 'blessings' on you and then pester you for a donation. When accosted, just

say 'no' and ignore them.

POST

Hong Kong Post ( 2921 2222; www.hongkongpost.com) offices:

General Post Office

POST OFFICE

(; 2 Connaught Pl, Central;  8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun)

On Hong Kong Island, the **General Post Office** is just west of the Star Ferry pier.

Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office

POST OFFICE

(; ground & 1st fl, Hermes House, 10 Middle Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui;  9am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun)

In Kowloon, the **Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office** is just east of the southern end of Nathan Rd.

TELEPHONE

All phone numbers have eight digits (except 800 toll-free numbers) and no area codes. Local calls are free on private phones and cost HK\$1 for five minutes on pay phones.

A phonecard, available at convenience stores, will let you make international direct-dial calls. A SIM card (from HK\$50) with prepaid call time will connect you to the local mobile phone network.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB  visitor hotline 2508 1234;

www.discoverhongkong.com;  hotline 9am-6pm) runs a website, visitor hotline and several visitor information and service centres:

Hong Kong Island HKTB Centre

TOURIST INFORMATION

( ; Peak Piazza;  9am-9pm)

Kowloon HKTB Centre

TOURIST INFORMATION

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Star Ferry Concourse, Tsim Sha Tsui; 🕒 8am-8pm)

Hong Kong International Airport HKTB Centres

TOURIST INFORMATION

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Chek Lap Kok; 🕒 7am-11pm)

There are centres in Halls A and B on the arrivals level in Terminal 1 and the E2 transfer area.

Lo Wu HKTB Centre

TOURIST INFORMATION

(2nd fl, Arrival Hall, Lo Wu Terminal Bldg; 🕒 8am-6pm)

At the border to mainland China.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

China Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(CTS [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2522 0450; www.ctshk.com; 77 Queen's Rd, ground fl, China Travel Bldg; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun)

WEBSITES

➔ **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/hong-kong) Destination information, bookings, traveller forum and more.

➔ **Discover Hong Kong** (www.discoverhongkong.com) A good general resource if you're seeking inspiration with lots of pictures.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Over 100 airlines operate between [Hong Kong International Airport](#) and some 160 destinations around the world. Fares are relatively low and you can find quite a number of discounted tickets.

That said, bargain airfares between Hong Kong and mainland China are few, as the government regulates the prices. The volume of business

travellers and Chinese tourists is enormous, so book well in advance. If you're prepared to travel to Guangzhou or Shenzhen, in Guangdong province, you can find much cheaper flights. Shenzhen airport has flights to just about everywhere in China (see www.elong.net).

Airline offices in Hong Kong:

Air China

AIRLINE

( 852-3970 9000; www.airchina.hk)

China Airlines

AIRLINE

(;  in Hong Kong 852-2868 2299; www.china-airlines.com)

China Southern

AIRLINE

(www.cs-air.com)

Dragonair

AIRLINE

(KA; ;  3193 3888; www.dragonair.com)

Owned by Cathay Pacific, Dragonair specialises in regional flights and flies to 20-plus cities in mainland China.

Hong Kong Airlines

AIRPORT

(HX;  3151 1888; www.hongkongairlines.com)

Cheaper airline that specialises in regional routes, including 17 cities in mainland China.

BOAT

Regular ferries link the **China Ferry Terminal** (; China Hong Kong City, 33 Canton Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui) in Kowloon and the **Hong Kong–Macau Ferry Terminal** (; Shun Tak Centre, 200 Connaught Rd, Sheung Wan) on Hong Kong Island with towns and cities on the Pearl River delta – but not central Guangzhou or Shenzhen. You'll find left-luggage lockers (HK\$20 to

HK\$30 per hour) in both terminals.

Chu Kong Passenger Transportation Co ( 2858 3876; www.cksp.com.hk) provides regularly scheduled ferries to Zhuhai (HK\$200, 70 minutes), Zhongshan (HK\$230, 1½ hours), Shunde (HK\$240, two hours), Zhaoqing (HK\$220, four hours) and Shekou (HK\$140, one hour).

BUS

You can reach virtually any major destination in Guangdong province by bus (HK\$100 to HK\$220):

CTS Express Coach

BUS

( [GOOGLE MAP](#));  2764 9803; <http://ctsbus.hkcts.com>)

Trans-Island Limousine Service

BUS

( 3193 9333; www.trans-island.com.hk)

Mainland destinations from Hong Kong include Dongguan, Foshan, Guangzhou, Huizhou, Kaiping, Shenzhen's Baoan airport and Zhongshan.

HKIA TO CHINA THE FAST WAY

AIRPORT EXPRESS

Hong Kong's convenient [Airport Express](#) check-in counters allow you to check in your luggage from downtown Hong Kong as early as 24 hours before your flight. There's one in the MTR's Hong Kong Station and one in Kowloon Station.

BUS

You can head straight from Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) to Macau and airports in Shenzhen and Guangzhou. The following companies (all with counters at HKIA Terminal 2) have buses going to points in southern China (Foshan HK\$230, Guangzhou HK\$250, and Shenzhen airport HK\$130):

[CTS Express Coach](#)

Eternal East Cross Border Coach ( [GOOGLE MAP](#));  3760 0888, 3412 6677; 4-6 Hankow Rd, 13th fl, Kai Seng Commercial Centre; ⌚ 7am-8pm)

[Trans-Island Limousine Service](#)

FERRY

You can also head straight from the airport to other Pearl River delta cities by ferry:

Skypier ( 2215 3232) A fast ferry service that links HKIA with Macau and six Pearl River delta destinations. Travellers can board ferries without clearing Hong Kong customs and immigration. Book a ticket prior to boarding from ticketing desks located in the transfer area at Arrivals (Level 5, near to immigration counters).

[Chu Kong Passenger Transportation Co](#) Has ferries from HKIA to Shenzhen airport (HK\$220, 40 minutes, eight daily, 10.15am to 6.30pm) and to Macau, Shekou, Dongguan, Zhuhai and Zhongshan.

TurboJet ( [GOOGLE MAP](#);  2859 3333; www.turbojet.com.hk) Has services to Macau (HK\$159, one hour, eight daily, 10am to 10pm).

TRAIN

For schedules and ticket prices, see www.mtr.com.hk.

Immigration formalities at Hung Hom train station must be completed before boarding, including checking your visa for China; arrive at the station 45 minutes before departure.

Tickets can be booked at CTS, East Rail stations in Hung Hom, Mong Kok, Kowloon Tong and Sha Tin, and MTR Travel at Admiralty Station; tickets booked with credit card by phone ([tel] 2947 7888) must be collected at least one hour before departure.

Destinations include:

➔ **Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing, Zhaoqing** Daily from Hung Hom station (HK\$190 to HK\$1191).

➔ **Shenzhen** The East Rail train takes you to Lo Wu or Lok Ma Chau; from Shenzhen you can take a local train or bus to Guangzhou and beyond.

Getting Around

Hong Kong's public transport system is fast, convenient, relatively inexpensive and easy to use with the Octopus card payment system.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The **Airport Express** ( 2881 8888; www.mtr.com.hk; HK\$100/90/60 per 24/21/13min

from Central/Kowloon/Tsing Yi) is the fastest and costliest public route to the airport; most airlines allow Airport Express passengers to check in at Central or Kowloon stations between 5.30am and 12.30am one day to 90 minutes before departure; at Hong Kong International Airport there is a **left-luggage office** (📞 2261 0110; level 3, Terminal 2; per hr/day HK\$12/140; 🕒 5.30am-1.30am) on Level 3 of Terminal 2.

Bus fares to the airport are HK\$21 to HK\$45. See ‘Transport’ on the www.hkairport.com website for details.

A taxi to Central is about HK\$300 plus luggage charge of HK\$5 per item.

BICYCLE

In quiet areas of the Outlying Islands or New Territories, a bike can be a lovely way of getting around. Some convenience stores in rural villages or beach areas rent bikes; don’t even think of taking one into the city.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving in Hong Kong isn’t for the faint-hearted. But if you are determined to see Hong Kong under your own steam try **Avis** (📍 [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2890 6988; www.avis.com.hk; 183 Queen's Rd E, Hopewell Centre, Wan Chai; 🚇 Wan Chai, exit B2) which has Honda Civics with unlimited kilometres. An international driving license is required.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

OCTOPUS CARD

Octopus Card

TRAVEL CARD

(📞 2266 2222; www.octopuscards.com)

The Octopus Card is a rechargeable ‘smart card’ valid on the MTR and most forms of public transport in Hong Kong. It also allows you to make purchases at retail outlets across the territory (such as convenience stores and supermarkets). The card costs HK\$150 (HK\$70 for children and seniors), which includes a HK\$50 refundable deposit and HK\$100 worth of travel. Octopus fares are about 5% cheaper than ordinary fares on the MTR. You can buy one and recharge at any MTR stations.

Bus

On Hong Kong Island the most important bus stations are the bus terminus in Central and the one at Admiralty. From these stations you can catch buses to Aberdeen, Repulse Bay, Stanley and other destinations on the southern side of Hong Kong Island. In Kowloon the Star Ferry bus terminal has buses heading up Nathan Rd and to the Hung Hom train station.

The bus system runs from 5.30/6am to midnight/12.30am and will get you almost anywhere. Fares start at \$2.50 and exact change or an Octopus card is required. The HKTB has leaflets on major bus routes. Bus companies:

Major bus stops and stations:

Public Light Bus

Better known as ‘minibuses,’ these 16-seaters come in two varieties:

➔ **With red roof/stripe** Fares cost HK\$2 to HK\$22; supplement bus services. Get on or off almost anywhere – just yell ‘*ni do, m goi*’ (here, please); Octopus card accepted on certain routes.

➔ **With green roof/stripe** Operate on more than 350 set routes and make designated stops; Octopus card accepted on all routes.

Ferry

The cross-harbour [Star Ferry](#) operates on two routes: Central–Tsim Sha Tsui and Wan Chai–Tsim Sha Tsui.

For ferries to the Outlying Islands, see schedules at ferry piers and ferry company websites, or ask for a pocket-sized timetable. Most ferries depart from the Outlying Islands Piers close to the IFC building in Central. The main companies are:

Train

The **Mass Transit Railway** (MTR; 📞2881 8888; www.mtr.com.hk; fares HK\$4-25) runs 10 lines; buy tickets or use the Octopus card (slightly cheaper). Once past the turnstile, you must complete the journey within 150 minutes.

The MTR also runs overland services on two main lines and two smaller lines, offering transport to the New Territories:

- ➔ **East Rail** From Hung Hom station in Kowloon to Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau (HK\$36 to HK\$48), gateway to Shenzhen; a spur runs from Tai Wai to Wu Kai Sha.
- ➔ **Light Rail** Fares cost HK\$4.10 to HK\$6.50; routes in western New Territories between Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, and feeds the West Rail.
- ➔ **West Rail** From Hung Hom station to Tuen Mun (HK\$20) via Yuen Long.

There are left-luggage lockers at major MTR train stations, including Hung Hom station.

Tram

Hong Kong's century-old **trams** ( 2548 7102; www.hktramways.com; fares HK\$2.30) represent the only all double-decker wooden-sided tram fleet in the world. They operate on six overlapping routes running east–west along the northern side of Hong Kong Island.

TAXI

Hong Kong is served by taxis of three colours:

- ➔ **Blue** Serving Lantau; HK\$17 flag fall, then HK\$1.40 for every 200m.
- ➔ **Green** Serving the New Territories; HK\$18.50 flag fall, then HK\$1.40 for every 200m.
- ➔ **Red** Serving Hong Kong Island and Kowloon; HK\$22 flag fall for the first 2km, then HK\$1.60 for every additional 200m.

Macau

[Macau Highlights](#)

[History](#)

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[Festivals & Events](#)

[Sleeping](#)

[Eating](#)

[Drinking](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[Shopping](#)

Macau



📍 853 / Pop 556,783

Why Go?

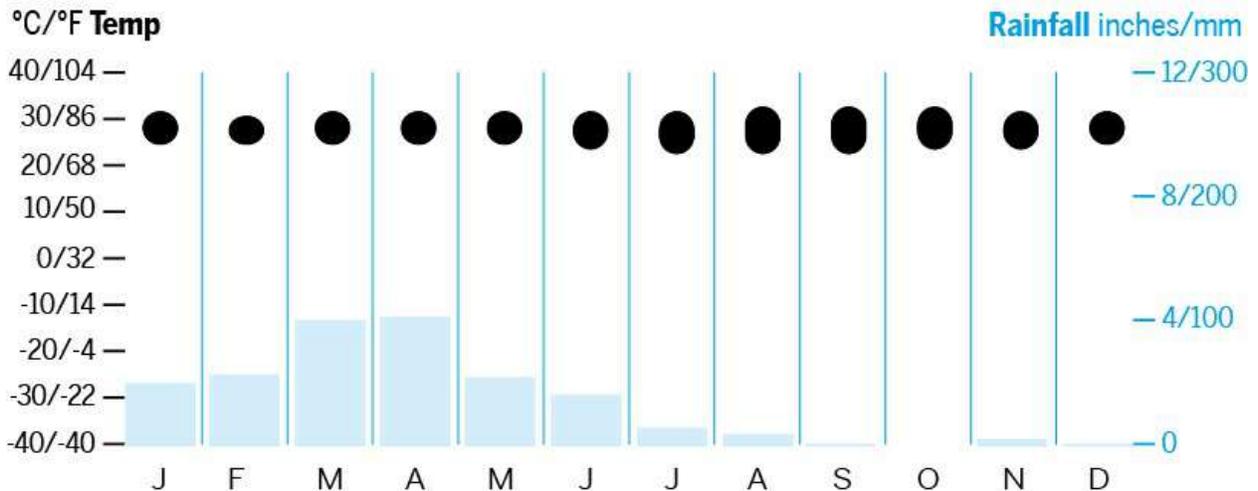
The Chinese people have stood up and they're off to Macau. Chairman Mao (who coined the first half of that sentence) must be spinning faster than a roulette wheel in his crystal coffin. Mainlanders can't get enough of this once Portuguese-administered backwater-turned-gambling-megaresort.

Such has been its explosive growth since 2002 that it is commonplace to refer to Macau as the Vegas of the East. It might be more appropriate to put that the other way round, since Macau has eclipsed its American rival in gambling income. And there are many other things that Macau does better. Beyond the gaming halls, it offers cobblestoned streets punctuated with Chinese temples and baroque churches, pockets of natural greenery, and a historic centre of Unesco World Heritage status.

Macau's unique history has also created a one-of-a-kind cuisine that celebrates the marriage of European, Latin American, African and Asian flavours.

When to Go

Macau



➔ **Mar–May** Celebrate the arts, a sea goddess and a dragon as mist hangs over the harbour.

➔ **Jun–Sep** Days in the shade of temples and dragon boats; nights aglow with fireworks.

➔ **Oct–Feb** Music and Grand Prix in a high-octane run-up to Christmas and New Year.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ [A Petisqueira](#)
- ➔ [Guincho a Galera](#)
- ➔ [Antonio](#)
- ➔ [Clube Militar de Macau](#)

Best Sights

- ➔ [Ruins of the Church of St Paul](#)

- ➔ [Guia Fort](#)
- ➔ [Mandarin's House](#)
- ➔ [St Lazarus Church District](#)

Macau Highlights



1 Get context for your impressions at the [Macau Museum](#).

- 2 Explore the ethereal ruins of the very symbol of Macau at the [Church of St Paul](#).
- 3 Sample Macau's unique cuisine at [Alfonso III](#).
- 4 Lose yourself in mazelike spaces at [Lou Lim Ioc Garden](#) and the [Mandarin's House](#).
- 5 Take the cable car to handsome [Guia Fort](#) and its gorgeous chapel.
- 6 Mingle with artists on the cobbled paths of the charming [St Lazarus district](#).

History

Portuguese galleons first visited southern China to trade in the early 16th century, and in 1557, as a reward for clearing out pirates, they obtained a leasehold for Macau. The first Portuguese governor of Macau was appointed in 1680, and as trade with China grew, so did Macau. However, after the Opium Wars between the Chinese and the British, and the subsequent establishment of Hong Kong, Macau went into a long decline.

In 1999, under the Sino–Portuguese Joint Declaration, Macau was returned to China and designated a Special Administrative Region (SAR). Like Hong Kong, the pact ensures Macau a ‘high degree of autonomy’ in all matters (except defence and foreign affairs) for 50 years. The handover, however, did not change Macau socially and economically as much as the termination of the gambling monopoly in 2001. Casinos mushroomed, redefining the city's skyline, and tourists from mainland China surged, fattening up the city's coffers.

Yet the revenue boost, coupled with government policies (or the lack thereof), also led to income inequality and a labour shortage. Macau residents are also increasingly critical of their chief executive's pro-Beijing stance. In May 2014, thousands in the formerly placid city took to the streets to protest Chief Executive Fernando Chui, who was reelected three months later.

MACAU PRIMER

Macau's political and economic systems, like Hong Kong's, are still significantly different from those of mainland China. The term 'Macanese' refers specifically to people of mainly Portuguese descent who were born in Macau, or their traditions.

Language

Cantonese and Portuguese are the official languages of Macau, though few people actually speak Portuguese. English and Mandarin are reasonably well understood, though the former is harder to find here than in Hong Kong.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are quoted in patacas (MOP\$). Note that prices for eating are per meal.

SLEEPING

\$ less than MOP\$700

\$\$ MOP\$700 to MOP\$2000

\$\$\$ more than MOP\$2000

EATING

\$ less than MOP\$200

\$\$ MOP\$200 to MOP\$400

\$\$\$ more than MOP\$400

Sights

For a small place (just 29 sq km), Macau is packed with important cultural and historical sights, including eight squares and 22 historic buildings, which have collectively been named the Historic Centre of Macau World Heritage Site by Unesco. Most of the sights are on the peninsula. At many of these

sites, seniors aged over 60 years and children 11 years or under are admitted free.

Central Macau Peninsula

Running from Avenida da Praia Grande to the Inner Harbour, Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro – or San Ma Lo (New Thoroughfare) in Cantonese – is the peninsula's main thoroughfare and home to the charming **Largo do Senado** (Map [Click here](#)), a black-and-white tiled square close to major sights.

Macau Peninsula



Macau Peninsula

 Top Sights

1 AFA (Art for All Society)

E2

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 2 | Guia Fort & Guia Chapel | E4 |
| 3 | Macau Museum of Art | F6 |
| 4 | Mandarin's House | B6 |
| 5 | Ruins of the Church of St Paul | C4 |

Sights

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 6 | A-Ma Temple | A7 |
| 7 | Avenida da Republica | B7 |
| | Bishop's Palace | B7 |
| | Casa Garden | C3 |
| 8 | Chapel of Our Lady of Penha | B7 |
| 9 | Church of St Lawrence | B6 |
| 10 | Flora Gardens | F3 |
| 11 | Guia Lighthouse | E4 |
| 12 | Kun Iam Temple | E2 |
| 13 | Lin Fung Temple | E1 |
| 14 | Lou Lim Ieoc Garden | E3 |
| 15 | Lou Lim Ieoc Garden Pavilion | E3 |
| 16 | Luis de Camoes Garden & Grotto | C3 |
| 17 | Macao Tea Culture House | E3 |
| 18 | Macau Tower | B8 |
| 19 | Maritime Museum | A7 |
| 20 | Moorish Barracks | B6 |
| 21 | Museu do Oriente | C3 |
| 22 | Na Tcha Temple | C4 |
| 23 | Old Ladies' House | D4 |
| 24 | Old Protestant Cemetery | C3 |
| 25 | Ox Warehouse | D2 |
| 26 | Penha Hill | B7 |
| 27 | Red Market | D2 |
| 28 | Residence of the Portuguese Consul-General | B7 |
| 29 | Rotunda de Caros da Maia | D3 |
| | Sr Wong Ieng Kuan Library | C3 |
| 30 | Sun Yat Sen Memorial House | E3 |
| 31 | Tap Seac Gallery | E4 |
| 32 | Tap Seac Square | E4 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| | AJ Hackett | B8 |
| | Gray Line | |
| 33 | Mong Ha Multi-Sport Pavilion | E2 |

Sleeping

| | |
|---|----|
| 34 Hotel Sintra | C5 |
| 35 Mandarin Oriental | E7 |
| 36 Pousada de Mong Ha | E2 |
| 37 Pousada de Sao Tiago | A8 |

Eating

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 38 Guincho a Galera | D6 |
| 39 Lung Wah Tea House | D2 |

Entertainment

| | |
|---|----|
| 40 Grand Lisboa Casino | D6 |
| 41 Live Music Association | E2 |

Shopping

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| 42 Worker Playground | D4 |
| Lines Lab | D4 |
| Mercearia Portuguesa | D4 |

Information

| | |
|---|----|
| 43 Centro Hospitalar Conde Sao Januario | E5 |
| 44 China Travel Service | E5 |
| MGTO-Macau Ferry Terminal | G4 |

Transport

| | |
|--|----|
| Avis Rent A Car | |
| 45 Burgeon Rent A Car | G1 |
| 46 Macau Maritime Ferry Terminal | G4 |
| TurboJet | G4 |

★ Ruins of the Church of St Paul

RUIN

(Ruinas de Igreja de Sao Paulo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Travessa de Sao Paulo; admission free;

 8A, 17, 26, disembark at Luis de Camoes Garden)

The most treasured icon in Macau, the facade and stairway are all that remain of this early-17th-century Jesuit church. With its statues, portals and

engravings that effectively make up a ‘sermon in stone’ and a *Biblia pauperum* (Bible of the poor), the church was one of the greatest monuments to Christianity in Asia, intended to help the illiterate understand the Passion of Christ and the lives of the saints.

The church was designed by an Italian Jesuit and completed by early Japanese Christian exiles and Chinese craftsmen in 1602. It was abandoned after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1762 and a military battalion was stationed here. In 1835 a fire erupted in the kitchen of the barracks, destroying everything, except what you see today. At the top is a dove, representing the Holy Spirit, surrounded by stone carvings of the sun, moon and stars. Beneath the Holy Spirit is a statue of the infant Jesus, and around it, stone carvings of the implements of the Crucifixion (the whip, crown of thorns, nails, ladder and spear). In the centre of the third tier stands the Virgin Mary being assumed bodily into heaven along with angels and two flowers: the peony, representing China, and the chrysanthemum, a symbol of Japan. To the right of the Virgin is a carving of the tree of life and the apocalyptic woman (Mary) slaying a seven-headed hydra; the Japanese kanji next to her read: ‘The holy mother tramples the heads of the dragon’. To the left of the central statue of Mary, a ‘star’ guides a ship (the Church) through a storm (sin); a carving of the devil is to the left. The fourth tier has statues of four Jesuit doctors of the church: (From left) Blessed Francisco de Borja; St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the order; St Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Far East; and Blessed Luis Gonzaga.

Monte Fort

FORT

(Fortaleza do Monte [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 7am-7pm; 🚏 7, 8, disembark at Social Welfare Bureau)

Just east of the ruins, Monte Fort was built by the Jesuits between 1617 and 1626 as part of the College of the Mother of God. Barracks and storehouses were designed to allow the fort to survive a two-year siege, but the cannons were fired only once, during the aborted attempt by the Dutch to invade Macau in 1622. Now the ones on the south side are trained at the gaudy

Grand Lisboa Casino like an accusing finger.

Macau Museum

MUSEUM

(| Museu de Macau [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2835 7911; www.macaumuseum.gov.mo; 112 Praceta do Museu de Macau; admission MOP\$15, 15th of month free; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 7, 8, disembark at Social Welfare Bureau)

This interesting museum inside Monte Fort will give you a taste of Macau's history. The 1st floor introduces the territory's early history and includes an elaborate section on Macau's religions. Highlights of the 2nd floor include a recreated firecracker factory and a recorded reading in the local dialect by Macanese poet Jose dos Santos Ferreira (1919–93). The top floor focuses on new architecture and urban-development plans.

★ Mandarin's House

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Caso do Mandarim [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2896 8820; www.wh.mo/mandarinhouse; 10 Travessa de Antonio da Silva; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Thu-Tue; 🚏 28B, 18) **FREE**

Built around 1869, the Mandarin's House, with over 60 rooms, was the ancestral home of Zheng Guanying, an influential author-merchant whose readers had included emperors, Dr Sun Yatsen and Chairman Mao. The compound features a moon gate, tranquil courtyards, exquisite rooms and a main hall with French windows, all arranged in that labyrinthine style typical of certain Chinese period buildings.

★ St Lazarus Church District

AREA

(Calçada da Igreja de Sao Lazaro [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.cipa.org.mo; 🚏 7, 8)

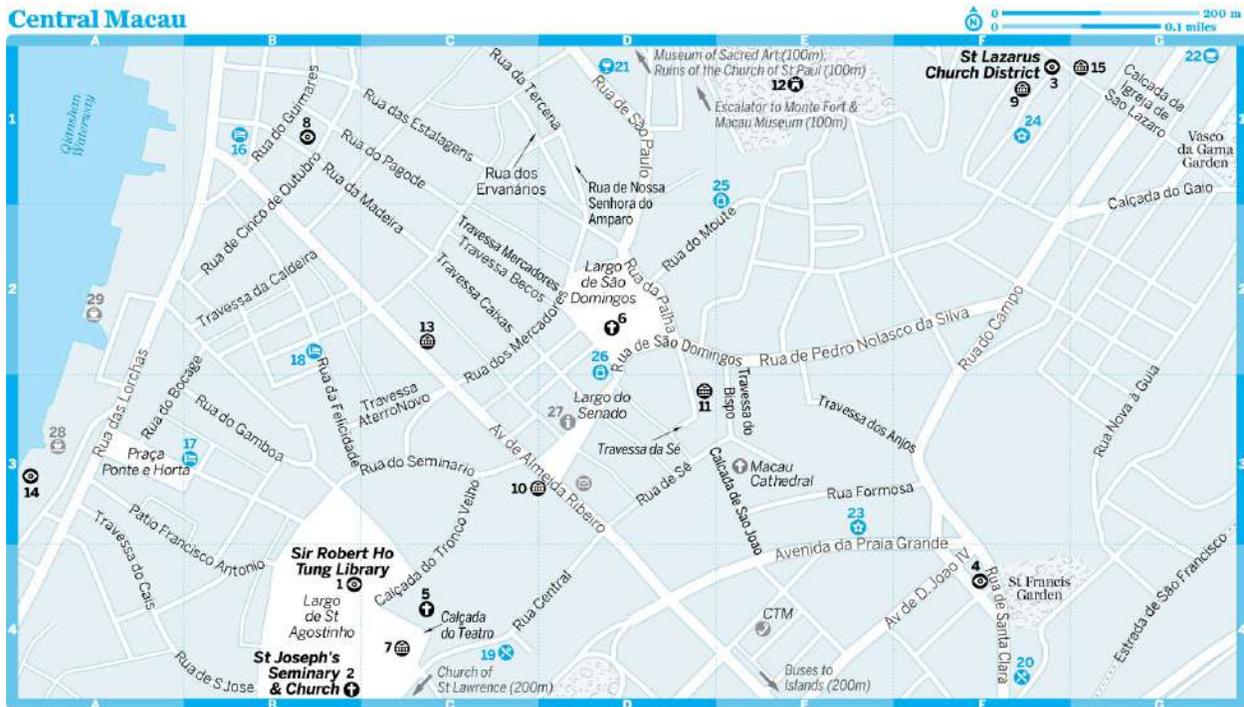
A lovely neighbourhood with colonial-style houses and cobbled streets.

Designers and independents like to gather here, setting up shop and organising artsy events, such as the weekly [Sun Never Left – Public Art Performance](#). **Tai Fung Tong Art House** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2835

3537; 7 Calçada de Sao Lazaro; 🕒 2-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 7, 8), **G32** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);

☎ 2834 6626; 32 Rua de Sao Miguel; 🕒 free guided tours 2.30-5pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 7, 8) and the

Old Ladies' House are also here.



Central Macau

📍 Top Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Sir Robert Ho Tung Library | B4 |
| 2 St Joseph's Seminary & Church | B4 |
| 3 St Lazarus Church District | F1 |

📍 Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 4 Chinese Reading Room | F4 |
| 5 Church of St Augustine | C4 |
| 6 Church of St Dominic | D2 |
| 7 Dom Pedro V Theatre | C4 |
| 8 East Asia Hotel | B1 |
| 9 G32 | F1 |
| IACM Temporary Exhibition Gallery | C3 |
| 10 Leal Senado | C3 |
| 11 Lou Kau Mansion | D3 |
| Macau Museum | E1 |
| 12 Monte Fort | E1 |

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 13 | Pawnshop Museum | C2 |
| 14 | Pier 8 | A3 |
| | Senate Library | C3 |
| 15 | Tai Fung Tong Art House | G1 |
| | Treasury of Sacred Art | D2 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 16 | 5Footway Inn | B1 |
| 17 | Ole London Hotel | B3 |
| 18 | San Va Hospedaria | B2 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 19 | Alfonso III | C4 |
| 20 | Clube Militar de Macau | F4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----|
| 21 | Macau Soul | D1 |
| 22 | Single Origin | G1 |

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 23 | Rui Cunha Foundation | E3 |
| 24 | Sun Never Left – Public Art Performance | F1 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 25 | Futura Classica | E1 |
| 26 | Pinto Livros | D2 |

Information

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----|
| 27 | Tourist Office | D3 |
|----|--------------------------------|----|

Transport

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 28 | South Sampan Pier | A3 |
| 29 | Yuet Tung Shipping Co | A2 |

(Albergue SCM or Albergue da Santa Casa da Misericordia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2852 2550; www.albcreativelab.com; 8 Calçada da Igreja de São Lazaro; 🕒 noon-7pm Wed-Mon; 🚏 7, 8)

The Old Ladies' House was a shelter for Portuguese refugees from Shanghai in WWII, and later a home for elderly women. It's now run by an art organisation, Albergue SCM, which organises cultural events here. The two yellow colonial-style buildings sit in a poetic courtyard with magnificent old camphor trees. Fashion boutique [Lines Lab](#) and Portuguese grocery shop [Mercearia Portuguesa](#) are here.

Church of St Dominic

CHURCH

(Igreja de São Domingos [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Largo de São Domingos; 🕒 10am-6pm; 🚏 3, 6, 26A)

Northeast of Largo do Senado, this baroque church with a beautiful altar and a timber roof was founded by three Spanish Dominican priests from Acapulco, Mexico, in the 16th century, though the current structure dates to the 17th century. It was here, in 1822, that the first Portuguese newspaper was published on Chinese soil. The former bell tower now houses the [Treasury of Sacred Art](#) (Tresouro de Arte Sacra [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 10am-6pm), an Aladdin's cave of ecclesiastical art and liturgical objects exhibited on three floors.

Lou Kau Mansion

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Casa de Lou Kau [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8399 6699; 7 Travessa da Se; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 3, 4, 6A, 8A, 19, 33) **FREE**

Built around 1889, this Cantonese-style mansion with southern European elements belonged to merchant Lou Wa Sio (aka Lou Kau), who also commissioned the [Lou Lim Ioc Garden](#). Behind the grey facade, an intriguing maze of open and semi-enclosed spaces blurs the line between inside and outside. The flower-and-bird motif on the roof can also be found in the Mandarin's House and A-Ma Temple. Free guided tours in Chinese on weekends (from 10am to 7pm).

★ St Joseph's Seminary & Church

CHURCH

(Capela do Seminario Sao Jose [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rua do Seminario; 🕒 church 10am-5pm; 🚏 9, 16, 18, 28B)

St Joseph's, which falls outside the tourist circuit, is one of Macau's most beautiful models of tropicalised baroque architecture. Consecrated in 1758 as part of the Jesuit seminary (not open to the public), it features a white and yellow facade, a scalloped entrance canopy (European) and the oldest dome, albeit a shallow one, ever built in China. The most interesting feature, however, is the roof that features Chinese materials and building styles.

Leal Senado

HISTORIC BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2857 2233; 163 Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro; 🕒 9am-9pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 3, 6, 26A, 18A, 33, disembark at Almeida Ribeiro)

Facing Largo do Senado is Macau's most important historical building, the 18th-century 'Loyal Senate', which houses the Instituto para os Assuntos Cívicos e Municipais (IACM; Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau). It is so-named because the body sitting here refused to recognise Spain's sovereignty during the 60 years that it occupied Portugal. In 1654, a dozen years after Portuguese sovereignty was re-established, King Joao IV ordered a heraldic inscription to be placed inside the entrance hall, which can still be seen today.

Inside the entrance hall is the [IACM Temporary Exhibition Gallery](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8988 4100; 163 Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro; 🕒 9am-9pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 3, 6, 26A, 18A, 33, disembark at Almeida Ribeiro). On the 1st floor is the [Senate Library](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2857 2233; 🕒 1-7pm Tue-Sat; 🚏 3, 6, 26A, 18A, 33, disembark at Almeida Ribeiro), which has a collection of some 18,500 books, and wonderful carved wooden furnishings and panelled walls.

Na Tcha Temple

TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 6 Calçada de Sao Paulo; 🕒 8am-5pm; 🚏 3, 4, 6A, 8A, 18A, 19)

There's no better symbol of Macau's cultural diversity than Na Tcha Temple sitting quietly beside a major Christian monument – the Ruins of the Church

of St Paul. Built around 1888, it's dedicated to the child god of war to halt the plague occurring at that time. The wall outside, often said to be a section of Macau's old city walls, in fact belonged to the former St Paul's College located at the ruins.

Ox Warehouse

ARTS CENTRE

(Armazem de Boi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2853 0026; <http://oxwarehouse.blogspot.com>; cnr Avenida do Coronel Mesquita & Avenida do Almirante Lacerda; 🕒 noon-7pm Wed-Mon; 🚏 4, 5, 25, 26A, 33)

This atmospheric former slaughterhouse is run by a nonprofit that hosts contemporary exhibitions, workshops and performances by local and visiting artists. Much of the work is engagingly experiential. Even if nothing's on, the architecture of the old buildings here makes it worthwhile to come for a peek.

★ AFA (Art for All Society)

GALLERY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2836 6064; www.afamacau.com; 3rd fl, Edifício da Fabrica de Baterias N E National, 52 Estrada da Areia Preta; 🕒 noon-7pm Mon-Sat; 🚏 8, 8A, 18A, 7)

Macau's best contemporary art can be seen at this nonprofit gallery, which has taken Macau's art worldwide and holds monthly solo exhibitions by Macau's top artists. AFA is near the [Mong Ha Multi-Sport Pavilion](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). Disembark from the bus at Rua da Barca or Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira. Alternatively, it's a 20-minute walk from Largo do Senado.

Pawnshop Museum

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Espaço Patrimonial – Uma Casa de Penhores Tradicional [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2892 1811; 396 Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro; admission MOP\$5; 🕒 10.30am-7pm, closed 1st Mon of month; 🚏 2, 3, 7, 26A)

This museum housed inside the former Tak Seng On ('virtue and success') pawnshop offers an atmospheric glimpse into Macau's pawnshop business, which dates back to the Qing dynasty. Built in 1917, it comprises an office, a

lobby and an eight-storey, fortress-like tower. On display is equipment from the original establishment, safes where goods were stored and financial records.

EXCHANGE RATES

| | | |
|--------------------|-------|------------|
| Australia | A\$1 | MOP\$6.47 |
| Canada | C\$1 | MOP\$6.75 |
| China | ¥1 | MOP\$1.28 |
| Euro zone | €1 | MOP\$9.44 |
| Hong Kong | HK\$1 | MOP\$1.03 |
| Japan | ¥1 | MOP\$0.07 |
| New Zealand | NZ\$1 | MOP\$6.22 |
| UK | UK£1 | MOP\$12.04 |
| USA | US\$1 | MOP\$7.99 |

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

MACAU IN ONE DAY

Start in the **Largo do Senado** and wander up to the [Ruins of the Church of St Paul](#). Spend an hour or so in the [Macau Museum](#) to give it all some context. Have lunch at [Clube Militar de Macau](#), before getting a feel for Macau's living history as you wander back through the tiny streets towards the Inner Harbour port and [A-Ma Temple](#). Jump on a bus to sleepy **Coloane Village**. Take an easy stroll around here and bus it back to Taipa for some sight-seeing and dinner at the lovely [Antonio](#). Then head for the gaudy magnificence of the [Grand Lisboa casino](#), before sauntering over to [Macau Soul](#) for wine and jazz.

Southern Macau Peninsula

The southern Macau Peninsula features a number of old colonial houses and baroque churches that are best visited on foot.

Church of St Augustine

CHURCH

(Igreja de Santo Agostinho [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); No 2, Largo de St Agostinho; 🕒 10am-6pm; 🚏 3, 4, 6, 26A)

The foundations of this church date from 1586 when it was established by Spanish Augustinians, but the present structure was built in 1814. The high altar has a statue of Christ bearing the cross, which is carried through the streets during the Procession of the Passion of Our Lord on the first Saturday of Lent, followed by thousands of devotees.

Dom Pedro V Theatre

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Teatro Dom Pedro V [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2893 9646; Calçada do Teatro, Largo de St Agostinho; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 🚏 3, 4, 6A, 8A, 19)

Opposite the Church of St Augustine, Dom Pedro V, a colonnaded, neoclassical theatre in green and white, is the oldest (1858) western-style theatre in China, and remains an important cultural venue for the Macanese community.

Church of St Lawrence

CHURCH

(Igreja de Sao Lourenco [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rua de Sao Lourenco; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, 1-2pm Mon; 🚏 9, 16, 18, 28B)

One of Macau's three oldest churches, St Lawrence was originally constructed of wood in the 1560s, then rebuilt in stone in the early 19th century. The neoclassical church has a magnificent painted ceiling and one of its towers once served as an ecclesiastical prison. Enter from Rua da Imprensa Nacional.

★ Macau Museum of Art

MUSEUM

(Museu de Arte de Macau [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8791 9814; www.mam.gov.mo; Macau Cultural Centre, Avenida Xian Xing Hai; adult/child MOP\$5/2, Sun free; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 1A, 8, 12, 23)

This excellent five-storey museum has well-curated displays of art created in

Macau and China, including paintings by Western artists like George Chinnery, who lived in the enclave. Other highlights are ceramics and stoneware excavated in Macau, Ming- and Qing-dynasty calligraphy from Guangdong, ceramic statues from Shiwan (Guangdong) and seal carvings. The museum also features 19th-century Western historical paintings from all over Asia, and contemporary Macanese art.

Avenida da Republica

AREA

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚏 6, 9, 16)

Avenida da Republica, along the northwest shore of Sai Van Lake, is Macau's oldest Portuguese quarter. There are several grand colonial villas not open to the public here. The former Bela Vista Hotel, one of the most-storied hotels in Asia, is now the **Residence of the Portuguese Consul-General** (Consulado-Geral de Portugal em Macau [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rua do Boa Vista). Nearby is the ornate **Santa Sancha Palace**, once the residence of Macau's Portuguese governors, and now used to accommodate state guests. Not too far away are beautiful, abandoned art-deco-inspired buildings.

A-Ma Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Templo de A-Ma [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rua de Sao Tiago da Barra; 🕒 7am-6pm; 🚏 1, 2, 5, 6B, 7)

A-Ma Temple was probably already standing when the Portuguese arrived, although the present structure may date from the 16th century. It was here that fisherfolk once came to replenish supplies and pray for fair weather. A-Ma, aka Tin Hau, is the goddess of the sea, from which the name Macau is derived. It's believed that when the Portuguese asked the name of the place, they were told 'A-Ma Gau' (A-Ma Bay). In modern Cantonese, 'Macau' (Ou Mun) means 'gateway of the bay'.

Penha Hill

AREA

(Colina da Penha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚏 6, 9, 16)

Towering above the colonial villas along Avenida da Republica is Penha Hill,

the most tranquil and least-visited area of the peninsula. From here you'll get excellent views of the central area of Macau. Atop the hill is **Bishop's Palace** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), built in 1837 and a residence for bishops (not open to the public), and the **Chapel of Our Lady of Penha** (Ermida de Nossa Senhora da Penha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Top of Penha Hill; 🕒 9am-5.30pm; 🚏 6B, 9, 16, 28B), once a place of pilgrimage for sailors.

Moorish Barracks

HISTORIC BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Calçada da Barra, Barra Hill; 🚏 18, 28)

These former barracks (c 1874) were designed by an Italian in a neoclassical style inspired by Moorish architecture, to accommodate Muslim Indian policemen from Goa. The confusion of Muslims with Moors was due to the fact that dated Cantonese refers to Indians as 'moh loh cha' and 'moh loh' is a transliteration of 'Moorish'. You can't enter the building, now occupied by the Macau Maritime Administration. Turn right as you leave A-Ma Temple; a 10-minute uphill walk will take you here.

Maritime Museum

MUSEUM

(Museu Marítimo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2859 5481; www.museumaritimo.gov.mo; 1 Largo do Pagode da Barra; adult MOP\$3-10, child free; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Wed-Mon; 🚏 1, 2, 5, 6B, 7, 10)

The highlights here are the interactive displays detailing the maritime histories of Portugal and China, the artefacts from Macau's seafaring past, and the mock-ups of boats – including the long, narrow dragon boats used during the Dragon Boat Festival – and a Hakka fishing village.

Northern Macau Peninsula

The northern peninsula is quite a good area to just wander around in. The historic **Three Lamps** (*saam jaan dang*) district is known for its Southeast Asian – particularly Burmese – influences. It begins at **Rotunda de Caros da Maia** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and sprawls over several square blocks.

★ Guia Fort & Guia Chapel

FORT, CHURCH

(Fortaleza da Guia e Capela de Guia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 chapel 9am-5.30pm; 🚏 2, 2A, 6A, 12, 17, 18 Flora Garden stop)

As the highest point on the peninsula, Guia Fort affords panoramic views of the city and, when the air is clear, across to the islands and China. At the top is the stunning Chapel of Our Lady of Guia, built in 1622 and retaining almost 100% of its original features, including some of Asia's most valuable frescoes. Next to it stands the oldest modern **lighthouse** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2856 9808; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2.15-5.30pm) on the China coast – an attractive 15m-tall structure that is closed to the public.

You could walk up, but it's easier to take the Guia cable car that runs from the entrance of **Flora Gardens** (Jardim da Flora; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Travessa do Tunel; 🕒 7.30am-8.30pm), Macau's largest public park.

Lou Lim leoc Garden

GARDENS

(Jardim Lou Lim leoc [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 10 Estrada de Adolfo de Loureiro; 🕒 6am-9pm; 🚏 2, 2A, 5, 9, 9A, 12, 16)

Locals come to this lovely Suzhou-style garden to practise taichi, play Chinese music, or simply to relax among its lotus ponds and bamboo groves. The Victorian-style **Lou Lim leoc Garden Pavilion** (Pavilhao do Jardim de Lou Lim leoc [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8988 4100; 10 Estrada de Adolfo Loureiro; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 2, 2A, 5, 9, 9A, 12, 16) was where the Lou family received guests, including Dr Sun Yatsen, and is now used for exhibitions. Adjacent to the garden is the **Macao Tea Culture House** (Cultura do Cha em Macau [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2882 7103; Lou Lim leoc Garden, Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida; admission free; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 2, 2A, 5, 9, 9A, 12, 16), displaying Chinese tea-drinking culture with exhibits of teapots and paintings related to the coveted drink.

Luis de Camoes Garden & Grotto

GARDENS

(Jardim e Gruta de Luis de Camoes [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Praca de Luis de Camoes; 🕒 6am-

10pm;  8A, 17, 26)

This relaxing garden with dappled meandering paths is dedicated to the one-eyed poet Luis de Camoes (1524–80), who is said to have written part of his epic *Os Lusíadas* in Macau, though there is little evidence that he ever reached the city. You'll see a bronze bust (c 1886) of the man here. The wooded garden attracts a fair number of chess players, bird owners and Chinese shuttlecock kickers. The [Sr Wong Ieng Kuan Library](#) is also here.

Kun Iam Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Templo de Kun Iam  ; 2 Avenida do Coronel Mesquita;  7am-5.30pm;  1A, 10, 18A, stop Travessa de Venceslau de Morais)

Macau's oldest temple was founded in the 13th century, but the present structures date back to 1627. Its roofs are embellished with porcelain figurines and its halls are lavishly decorated. Inside the main one stands the likeness of Kun Iam, the Goddess of Mercy; to the left of the altar is a statue of a bearded arhat rumoured to represent Marco Polo. The first Sino-American treaty was signed at a round stone table in the temple's terraced gardens in 1844.

Lin Fung Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(I Lin Fung Miu  ; Avenida do Almirante Lacerda;  7am-5pm;  1A, 8, 8A, 10, 28B)

Dedicated to Kun Iam, the Goddess of Mercy, this Temple of the Lotus was built in 1592, but underwent several reconstructions from the 17th century. It used to host mandarins from Guangdong province when they visited Macau. The most famous of these imperial visitors was Commissioner Lin Zexu, who was charged with stamping out the opium trade.

Tap Seac Gallery

GALLERY

(Galeria Tap Seac  ; www.macauart.net/ts; 95 Avenida Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida;  10am-7pm Tue-Sun; )

One of a handful of 1920s houses surrounding Tap Seac Sq, this building features a European-style facade and Moorish arched doors. The gallery inside hosts excellent contemporary art exhibitions. The original patio in the middle of the house has been kept, which creates a light-filled, relaxing setting.

Macau Tower

LANDMARK

(Torre de Macau [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2893 3339; www.macautower.com.mo; Largo da Torre de Macau; adult/child observation deck MOP\$135/70; 🕒 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 9A, 18, 23, 26, 32)

At 338m, Macau Tower looms above the narrow isthmus of land southeast of Avenida da Republica. You can stay put on the **observation decks** on the 58th and 61st floors, or challenge yourself to a bungee jump or some other form of extreme sport.

Tap Seac Square

SQUARE

(Praca do Tap Seac [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🚏 7, 8)

This beautiful square surrounded by important historic buildings from the 1920s (Cultural Affairs Bureau, Tap Seac Health Centre, Central Library, Library for Macau's Historical Archives, Tap Seac Gallery) was designed by Macanese architect Carlos Marreiros. Marreiros also created the Tap Seac Health Centre, a contemporary interpretation of Macau's neoclassical buildings.

Sun Yat Sen Memorial House

MUSEUM

(Casa Memorativa de Doutor Sun Yat Sen [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2857 4064; 1 Rua de Silva Mendes; 🕒 10am-5pm Wed-Mon; 🚏 2, 2A, 5, 9, 9A, 12) **FREE**

This mock-Moorish house (c 1910) commemorates Dr Sun Yatsen's (1866–1925) brief stay in Macau where he gathered support to overthrow the Qing dynasty. You'll see documents and personal belongings of the 'Father of the Chinese Republic'. Interestingly, Sun himself never lived in the house, though

it was built by his son, and his first wife Lu Muzhen lived here until she died in 1952.

Casa Garden

HISTORIC BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 13 Praca de Luis de Camoes; 🕒 garden 9.30am-6pm daily, gallery open only during exhibitions 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri; 🚏 8A, 17, 26)

Sitting quietly east of the Luis de Camoes Garden is this beautiful colonial villa built in 1770. It was the headquarters of the British East India Company when it was based in Macau in the early 19th century. Today it's the headquarters of the Oriental Foundation, and includes a gallery, [Museu do Oriente](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 13 Praca de Luis de Camoes; 🕒 during exhibitions 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri; 🚏 8A, 17, 26), that mounts interesting art exhibitions.

Old Protestant Cemetery

CEMETERY

(Antigo Cemiterio Protestante [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 15 Praca de Luis de Camoes; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm; 🚏 8A, 17, 26)

As church law forbade the burial of non-Catholics on hallowed ground, this cemetery was established in 1821 as the last resting place of (mostly Anglophone) Protestants. Among those interred here are Irish-born artist George Chinnery (1774–1852), and Robert Morrison (1782–1834), the first Protestant missionary to China and author of the first Chinese-English dictionary.

MACAU'S INNER BEAUTIES

LOVELY LIBRARIES

Macau's libraries show how tiny proportions can be beautiful.

Sir Robert Ho Tung Library ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 3 Largo de St Agostinho; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun; 🚏 9, 16, 18) is a stunner comprising a 19th-century villa and a glass-and-steel extension rising above a back garden, with Piranesi-like bridges shooting out between the two.

Chinese Reading Room ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Rua de Santa Clara; 🕒 9am-noon &

7pm-midnight; 🚏2A, 6A, 7A, 8) is a former drinks booth, known as 'Octagonal Pavilion' (c 1926) in Chinese.

Sr Wong Ieng Kuan Library (Praca de Luis de Camoes [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞2895 3075; 🕒8am-8pm Tue-Sun) is an oasis of calm between a boulder (which juts into its interior) and a banyan tree (which frames its entrance) in the Luis de Camoes Garden.

Coloane Library ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rua de Cinco de Outubro, Coloane; 🕒1-7pm Mon-Sat; 🚏21A, 25, 26A), a mini Grecian temple c 1917, which has a pediment and too-fat columns.

MODERNIST MARVELS

Pier 8 (8 [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rua do Dr Lourenco Pereira Marquez; 🚏5, 7) is a fine example of Chinese modernism in grey, 50 paces south from Macau Masters Hotel; best views are from the **South Sampan Pier** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) next door.

East Asia Hotel ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Rua do Guimares & Rua da Madeira; 🚏5, 7) has Chinese art deco in mint green; it's a little shabby and very chic.

Red Market (Mercado Almirante Lacerda [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Avenida do Almirante Lacerda & Avenida Horta e Costa; 🕒7.30am-7.30pm; 🚏23, 32) is another art deco edifice that houses a wet market.

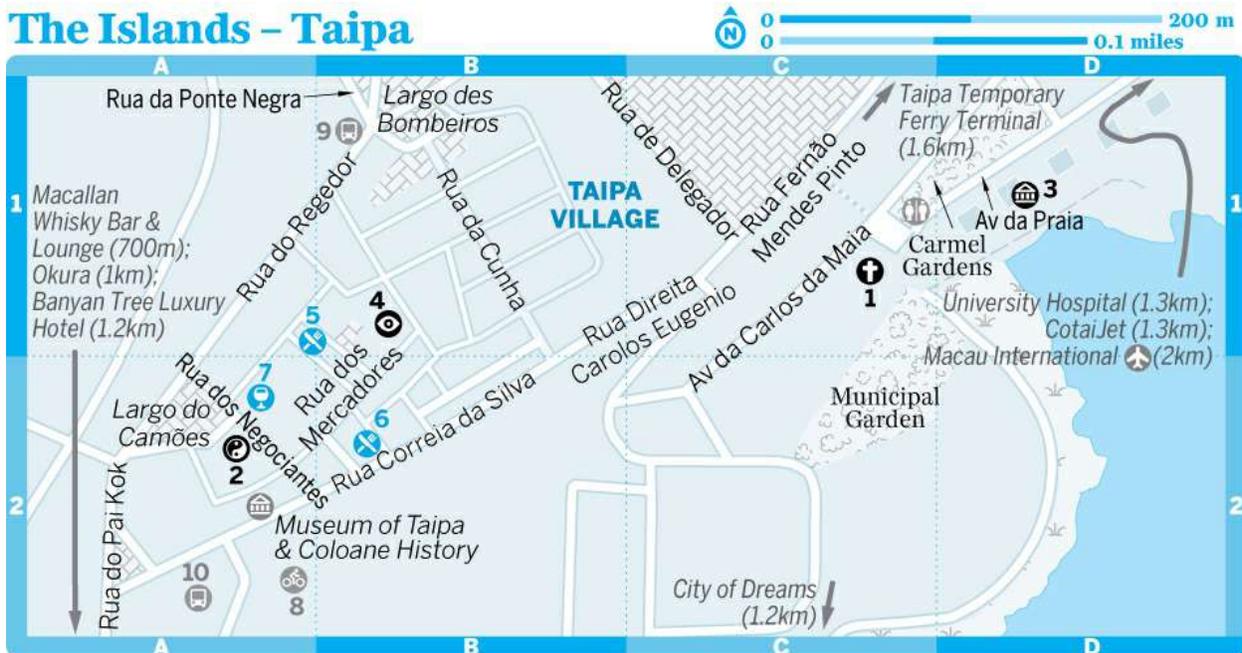
The Islands

Connected to the Macau mainland by three bridges and joined together by an ever-growing area of reclaimed land called Cotai, the islands of Coloane and, to a lesser extent, Taipa are oases of calm and greenery. By contrast, the Cotai Strip is development central, with megacasinos sprouting up.

Taipa

Traditionally an island of duck farms and boat yards, Taipa is rapidly becoming urbanised. But a parade of baroque churches, temples, overgrown esplanades and lethargic settlements means it's still possible to experience the traditional charms of the island.

The Islands – Taipa



The Islands – Taipa

Sights

| | |
|--|----|
| 1 Church of Our Lady of Carmel | C1 |
| 2 Pak Tai Temple | A2 |
| 3 Taipa Houses-Museum | D1 |
| 4 Taipa Village | B1 |

Eating

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 5 A Petisqueira | A1 |
| 6 Antonio | B2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 7 Old Taipa Tavern | A2 |
|------------------------------------|----|

Transport

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 8 Bicycle Rental | A2 |
| 9 Bus Stop | B1 |
| 10 Main Bus Stop | A2 |

Taipa Village

VILLAGE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  22, 26, 33)

The historical part of Taipa is best preserved in this village in the south of the island. With a tidy sprawl of traditional Chinese shops and some excellent restaurants, the village is punctuated by colonial villas, churches and temples. Avenida da Praia, a tree-lined esplanade with wrought-iron benches, is perfect for a leisurely stroll.

Taipa Houses-Museum

MUSEUM

(Casa Museum da Taipa [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  2882 7103; Avenida da Praia, Carmo Zone, Taipa; adult/student MOP\$5/2, child & senior free, Sun free;  10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun;  11, 15, 22, 28A, 30, 33, 34)

The pastel-coloured villas (c 1921) here were the summer residences of wealthy Macanese. House of the Regions of Portugal showcases Portuguese costumes. House of the Islands looks at the history of Taipa and Coloane, with displays on traditional industries, such as fishing and the manufacture of fireworks. Macanese House offers a snapshot of life in the early 20th century.

Church of Our Lady of Carmel

CHURCH

(Igreja de Nossa Senhora de Carmo; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rue da Restauracao;  22, 28A, 26)

Built in 1885, this pretty church stands on a hill overlooking the harbour, scenic Taipa village and the pastel-coloured Taipa Houses-Museum.

Pak Tai Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

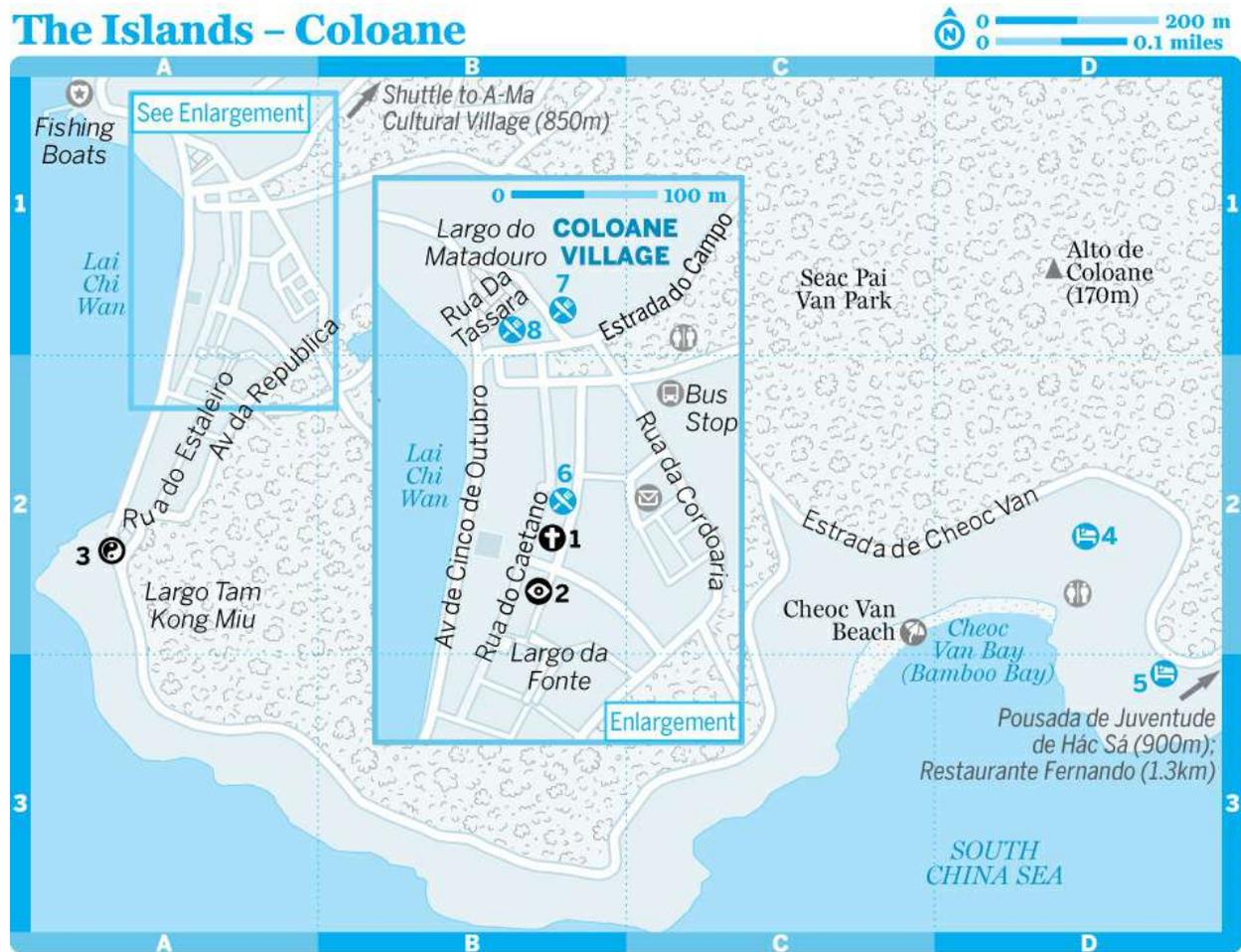
([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rua do Regedor;  22, 28A, 26)

Pak Tai Temple sits quietly in a breezy square framed by old trees. It is dedicated to a martial deity – the Taoist God (Tai) of the North (Pak) – who defeated the Demon King who was terrorising the universe. A pair of Chinese lions guards the entrance to the temple. On the third day of the third lunar month each year, Cantonese opera performances take place here.

Coloane

A haven for pirates until the start of the 20th century, Coloane, considerably larger than Taipa, is the only part of Macau that doesn't seem to be changing at a head-spinning rate. All buses stop at the roundabout in Coloane Village.

The Islands – Coloane



The Islands – Coloane

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Chapel of St Francis Xavier | B2 |
| 2 | Coloane Library | B2 |
| 3 | Tam Kong Temple | A2 |

🏠 Sleeping

| | |
|---|----|
| 4 Pousada de Coloane | D2 |
| 5 Pousada de Juventude de Cheoc Van | D3 |

Eating

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| 6 Cafe Nga Tim | B2 |
| 7 Espaco Lisboa | B1 |
| 8 Lord Stow's Bakery | B1 |

Chapel of St Francis Xavier

CHURCH

(Capela de Sao Francisco Xavier [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rua do Caetano, Largo Eduardo Marques, Coloane; 🕒 10am-8pm; 🚌 15, 21A, 25, 26A)

This chapel built in 1928 contains paintings of the infant Christ with a Chinese Madonna, and other reminders of Christianity and colonialism in Asia. It's a quirky place painted in yellow and embellished with red lanterns. In front of the chapel are a monument and fountain surrounded by four cannonballs that commemorate the successful – and final – routing of pirates in 1910.

Tam Kong Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Avenida de Cinco de Outubro, Largo Tam Kong Miu; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm; 🚌 15, 21A, 25, 26A)

This temple is dedicated to Tam Kung, a Taoist god of seafarers. Inside the main altar is a long whale bone carved into a model of a dragon boat. To the left of the main altar is a path leading to the roof, which has views of the village and waterfront.

A-Ma Statue & Temple

MEMORIAL

(Estatua da Deusa A-Ma [GOOGLE MAP](#); Estrada do Alto de Coloane; 🕒 temple 8am-7.30pm)

Atop Alto de Coloane (176m), this 20m-high white jade statue of the goddess who gave Macau its name was erected in 1998. It's the best part of a touristy 'cultural village' that also features **Tian Hou Temple**. A free bus runs from

the A-Ma ornamental entrance gate on Estrada de Seac Pai Van (bus 21A, 25, 50) half-hourly from 8am to 6pm. You can also reach both by following the Coloane Trail (Trilho de Coloane) from Seac Pai Van Park.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

COLOANE'S STILT HOUSES

Macau was a fishing village before gambling was legalised in the mid-19th century. Now the only vestiges of that idyllic past are found in Coloane.

Along the coastline, on Rua dos Navegantes in Coloane's old fishing village, there are a few stilt houses and shipyards. These huts of colourful corrugated metal, extending like chunky chopsticks out into the harbour, were once landing spots for houseboats. A couple have been turned into dried seafood shops, such as Loja de Peixe Tong Kei at Largo do Cais, the square just off the charming old pier of Coloane.

From the square, take the slope to the right of the Servicos de Alfangegea building. After two minutes, you'll see the cavernous cadaver of a shipyard, also on stilts.

Activities

While Macau is no adventure paradise, it offers a taste of everything from spectator sport to extreme sport. For more ways to get those endorphins flowing, visit www.iacm.gov.mo (click 'facilities').

AJ Hackett

ADVENTURE SPORTS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#));  988 8656; <http://macau.ajhackett.com>)

New Zealand-based AJ Hackett organises all kinds of adventure climbs up and around the Macau Tower.

BRIGHT LIGHTS, SIN CITY

Gargantuan monuments in all forms of postmodern kitsch have taken over Macau's seafront. There are close to 40 casinos in Macau, their total gaming revenue surpassing all of the world's major gambling jurisdictions combined.

Table games are the staple at casinos here – mostly baccarat, then roulette and a

dice game called dai sai (big small). You'll hardly hear any whooping and clunking – slot machines make up only 5% of total casino winnings (versus Vegas' 60%). Drunks are also hard to come by, as Chinese players believe that booze dulls their skill. Over 80% of gamblers and 95% of high rollers come from mainland China. The latter play inside members-only rooms where the total amount wagered on any given day can exceed a country's GDP.

For recreational players, the only thing to watch out for is harassment by tip hustlers – scam artists who hang around tables acting like your new best friend. They may steal your chips, nag you for a cut or try to take you to a casino that'll tip them for bringing clients.

Casinos are open 24 hours. To enter, you must be 18 years or older and properly dressed.

Cycling

Cycling is a great way to see Taipa and Coloane. Taipa has two cycling trails. Taipa Grande Trail (bus 21A, 26, 28A) can be accessed via a paved road off Estrada Colonel Nicolau de Mesquita, near the United Chinese Cemetery. Taipa Pequena Trail (bus 21A, 33, 35) is reachable by way of Estrada Lou Lim Ieok, behind the Regency Hotel.

A store on 11 Rua dos Negociantes, near Pak Tai Temple and two shops up from Old Taipa Tavern, has bikes for rent at MOP\$20 per hour; it's open from 9am to 7pm. Dang Rang, on Rua do Meio in Coloane, does the same. Cycling across the Macau–Taipa bridges is prohibited.



Tours

Quality Tours, coach trips organised by the Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO) and tendered to such agents as [Gray Line](#) ([MAP](#))

[GOOGLE MAP](#);  2833 6611; Room 1015, ground fl, Macau Ferry Terminal; adult/child 3-11 MOP\$118/108), take about 10 hours.



Festivals & Events

The blend of Cantonese and Portuguese culture and religious occasions

creates an unusual and intriguing succession of holidays and festivals in Macau; Chinese festivals usually fall on dates in the lunar calendar.

The Script Road & Macau Literary Festival

LITERATURE

(☎6207 2294; www.thescriptroad.org)

Ten brilliant days of literary events in March.

Macau Arts Festival

ART

(www.icm.gov.mo/fam)

Music, dance and theatre troupes; takes place in May.

Procession of Our Lady of Fatima

RELIGIOUS

Takes place in May.

Feast of the Drunken Dragon

CULTURAL

Features a dragon dance performed by drunken men; held in May or June.

Macau Formula 3 Grand Prix

SPORTS

(☎2855 5555; www.macau.grandprix.gov.mo)

Macau's biggest sporting event of the year is held in the third week of November.

Sleeping

Most of Macau's hotels are aimed at moneyed visitors rather than budget travellers.

For those with the cash, there are world-class options. Rates shoot up on Friday or Saturday, while during the week you can find some incredible deals at travel agencies, hotel websites and specialist sites such as www.macau.com, and booths at Hong Kong's **Shun Tak Centre** (200 Connaught Rd, Sheung Wan), from where the Macau ferries depart, and the

arrivals hall of the Macau Ferry Terminal.

All rooms listed here have air-conditioning and bathroom unless otherwise stated. Most midrange and top-end hotels have shuttle buses from the ferry terminal.

Macau Peninsula

Cheap guesthouses occupy central Macau, on and around Rua das Lorchas and Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, with options aplenty on Rua da Felicidade (Street of Happiness), whose shuttered terraces were once Macau's main red-light district (scenes from Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom were shot here). The top-end casino-hotels generally occupy the southeast and centre of town.

Ole London Hotel

INN

( ;  2893 7761; 4-6 Praca de Ponte e Horta; d MOP\$420-500;   ;  2, 7, 10A)

A stone's throw from the Inner Harbour, this place has smart, clean rooms. They are small, but given its location and rates you can't really complain. Bigger discounts apply if you book via www.macau.com.

San Va Hospedaria

GUESTHOUSE

( ;  8210 0193 reservations, 2857 3701; www.sanvahotel.com; 65-67 Rua da Felicidade; d \$190-220, tw \$320-360, tr \$380;  3, 6, 26A)

Built in 1873, San Va, with its green partitions and retro tiles, is about the cheapest and most atmospheric lodging in town – Wong Kar-wai filmed parts of *2046* here. However it's also very basic, with shared bathrooms and no air-conditioning (just fans).

★ Pousada de Mong Ha

INN

( ;  2851 5222; www.ift.edu.mo; Colina de Mong Ha; r MOP\$700-1300, ste MOP\$1300-1800;   ;  5, 22, 25)

Sitting atop Mong Ha Hill near the ruins of a fort built in 1849 is this Portuguese-style inn run by students at the Institute for Tourism Studies. Rooms are well appointed, with some having computers, and the service is attentive. Rates include breakfast. Discounts of 25% to 40% midweek and off season.

★ 5Footway Inn

INN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.5footwayinn.com; 8 Rua de Constantino Brito; d & tw MOP\$700, tr MOP\$900;   ;  1, 2, 10, 5, 7)

This Singapore-owned accommodation converted from a love motel has 23 small clean rooms, vibrant paintings in communal areas and excellent English-speaking staff. Rates include a self-service breakfast. It's opposite the Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16, which means you can take the latter's free shuttle buses to and from the ferry terminal.

Hotel Sintra

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  2871 0111; www.hotelsintra.com; Avenida de Do Joao IV; r MOP\$1500-2000, ste from MOP\$2500;  ;  3, 11, 22)

Spotless rooms and professional staff make this centrally located three-star hotel a great-value option. Our only complaints are the slow-moving lift and the massive LED screen of the Grand Emperor Hotel nearby, which is visible from some rooms. Discounts of up to 50% midweek.

Mandarin Oriental

LUXURY HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  8805 8888; www.mandarinoriental.com/macau; Avenida Dr Sun Yat Sen, Novos Aterros do Porto Exterior; r MOP\$2088-4000, ste MOP\$4788-6588;     

A great high-end option, the Mandarin has everything associated with the brand – elegance, superlative service, comfortable rooms and excellent facilities. Though relatively small, it's a refreshing contrast to the glitzy casino hotels.

Pousada de Sao Tiago

HISTORIC HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2837 8111; www.saotiago.com.mo; Fortaleza de Sao Tiago da Barra, Avenida da Republica; ste MOP\$3000-5400; 🚫 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚏 6, 9, 28B)

Built into the ruins of the 17th-century Barra Fort, the landmark Sao Tiago is the most romantic place to stay in Macau. No other hotel has such a rich history. All 12 rooms are elegantly furnished suites. Discounts of up to 35% off season. The restaurant La Paloma is here.

The Islands

Taipa is changing fast, with several high-end international hotel chains opening up along the Cotai Strip. Coloane offers some great budget options, including two HI-affiliated hostels.

Pousada de Juventude de Hac Sa

HOSTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2888 2702, 2888 2701; www.dsej.gov.mo; Rua de Hac Sa Long Chao Kok, Coloane; dm Sun-Fri MOP\$50-80, Sat additional MOP\$20-40; 📶 📶; 🚏 21A, 25, 26A)

Similar deal as the Cheoc Van youth hostel, but with more beds and recreation space. It's 400m uphill from the beach on Rua de Hac Sa Long Chao Kok. Showers and toilets are shared, though its website says otherwise.

Pousada de Juventude de Cheoc Van

HOSTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2888 2024; www.dsej.gov.mo; Rua de Antonio Francisco, Coloane; dm/tw/q from MOP\$100/160/120; 📶 📶; 🚏 21A, 25, 26A)

This government-run, beachside hostel is excellent value, but conditions apply. You'll need to book three months in advance and own an International Youth Card, International Youth Hostel Card or similar. It's closed to tourists in July and August. More details on the website.

Pousada de Coloane

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2882 2143; www.hotelpcoloane.com.mo; Estrada de Cheoc Van,

Coloane; r from MOP\$750; @ 📶; 🚗 21A, 25)

This 30-room hotel with its Portuguese-style rooms (all with balconies and sea views) is great value, though some rooms are better maintained than others. And the location above Cheoc Van beach is about as chilled as you'll find. Rates drop considerably during midweek. Discounts of 20% to 40% off season.

Grand Hyatt Macau

CASINO HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 8868 1234; <http://macau.grand.hyatt.com>; City of Dreams, Estrada do Istmo, Cotai; r MOP\$1300-3200, ste from MOP\$2300; 🚫 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚗 35, 50)

The most tasteful of the casino hotels on the Cotai Strip, the Grand Hyatt is part of the City of Dreams complex. The massive rooms come with glass-and-marble showers, bath-tubs and a full battery of technology.

Banyan Tree Luxury Hotel

LUXURY HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 8883 8833; www.banyantree.com/en/macau; Galaxy, Avenida Marginal Flor de Lotus, Cotai; ste MOP\$2880-63,800, villas MOP\$23,600-35,100; 🚗 25, 25X)

One of two hotels at the new Galaxy Macau, this extravagant resort recreates tropical-style luxury in Macau. All 10 villas come with private gardens and swimming pools, while the suites have huge baths set by the window. If you need more pampering, there's a spa with state-of-the-art facilities. Slightly more affordable than Banyan Tree is the other hotel at the Galaxy, **Okura** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)); www.hotelokuramacau.com; Avenida Marginal Flor de Lotus, Cotai; r MOP\$2200-5600, ste MOP\$3000-20,000), which offers luxury with a Japanese twist.

Eating

Browse a typically Macanese menu and you'll find an enticing stew of influences from Chinese and Asian cuisines, as well as from those of former Portuguese colonies in Africa, India and Latin America. Coconut, tamarind, chilli, jaggery (palm sugar) and shrimp paste can all feature. A famous

Macanese speciality is *galinha africana* (African chicken), made with coconut, garlic and chillies. Other Macanese favourites include *casquinha* (stuffed crab), *minchi* (minced meat cooked with potatoes, onions and spices) and *serradura*, a milk pudding.

You'll find Portuguese dishes here too; popular ones include *salada de bacalhau* (dried salted cod salad), *arroz de pato* (rice with duck confit) and *leitao assado no forno* (roast suckling pig). While Macau's Chinese cuisine is excellent, most people come here to sample Macanese or Portuguese food.

A Petisqueira

PORTUGUESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2882 5354; 15 Rua de Sao Joao, Taipa; meals MOP\$150-500; 🕒 12.30-2.15pm & 6.45-10pm Tue-Sun; ♿; 🚏 22, 28A)

'The Snackery' is an amicable place with myriad Portuguese choices set in an obscure alley. It serves its own *queijo fresca da casa* (homemade cheese). Try the bacalao five ways, and baked seafood with rice.

★ Lung Wah Tea House

CANTONESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2857 4456; <http://lungwahteahouse.com>; 3 Rua Norte do Mercado Aim-Lacerda; dim sum from MOP\$14, tea MOP\$10, meals MOP\$50-180; 🕒 7am-2pm; ♿; 🚏 23, 32)

There's grace in the retro furniture and the casual way it's thrown together in this airy Cantonese teahouse (c 1963). Take a booth by the windows overlooking the Red Market where the teahouse buys its produce every day. There's no English menu; just point and take. Lung Wah sells a fine array of Chinese teas.

Cafe Nga Tim

MACANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); Rua do Caetano, Coloane; mains MOP\$70-200; 🕒 noon-1am; ♿; 🚏 21A, 25, 26A)

We love the Chinese-Portuguese food, the small-town atmosphere, the view of the Chapel of St Francis Xavier, the prices and the owner – a guitar- and *erhu*-strumming ex-policeman named Feeling Wong.

Lord Stow's Bakery

BAKERY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 1 Rua da Tassara; 🕒 7am-10pm Thu-Tue, to 7pm Wed)

Though the celebrated English baker Andrew Stow passed away, his café (9 Largo do Matadouro) and Lord Stow's Bakery keep his memory well alive by serving his renowned *pasteis de nata*, a warm egg-custard tart (MOP\$6) and cheesecake (MOP\$14) in unusual flavours, including black sesame and green tea.

★ Clube Militar de Macau

PORTUGUESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2871 4000; www.clubemilitardemacau.net; 975 Avenida da Praia Grande; meals MOP\$150-400; 🕒 1.45-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Sat & Sun; 🚗 6, 28C)

Housed in a distinguished colonial building, with fans spinning lazily above, the Military Club takes you back in time to a slower and quieter Macau. The simple and delicious Portuguese fare is complemented by an excellent selection of wine and cheese from Portugal. The MOP\$153 buffet is excellent value. Reservations are required for dinner and weekend lunches.

★ Alfonso III

PORTUGUESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2858 6272; 11a Rua Central; meals MOP\$300; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-9.30pm; ♿; 🚗 3, 6, 26A)

A short stroll southwest of Leal Senado is this tiny, family-run restaurant that has won a well-deserved reputation among Macau's Portuguese community. Service is patchy, but no one seems to mind. Tables are often in short supply, so phone ahead.

Restaurante Fernando

PORTUGUESE

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 2888 2264; 9 Hac Sa beach; meals MOP\$150-270; 🕒 noon-9.30pm; ♿; 🚗 21A, 25, 26A)

Possibly Coloane's most famous restaurant, Fernando's easy-breezy atmosphere makes it perfect for a protracted seafood lunch by the sea, as its

devoted customers would agree. The bar stays open till midnight.

★ Antonio

PORTUGUESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2899 9998; www.antonimacau.com; 7 Rua dos Clerigos, Taipa; meals MOP\$350-1200; 🕒 noon-10.30pm; 🚗 22, 26)

The cosy mahogany-framed dining room, the meticulously thought-out menu and the entertaining chef, Antonio Coelho, all make this the go-to place for traditional Portuguese food. If you can only try one Portuguese restaurant in Macau, make it this one.

★ Guincho a Galera

PORTUGUESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8803 7676; 3rd fl, Hotel Lisboa, 2-4 Avenida de Lisboa; meals MOP\$550-1800; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm; 🚗 3, 10)

The international branch of Portugal's famous Fortaleza do Guincho, this luxuriously decorated restaurant brings Portuguese haute cuisine to Macau. The menu features well-executed classical dishes, with a couple of Macanese additions. Set meals are available at lunch (from MOP\$300) and dinner (from MOP\$600).

Espaco Lisboa

PORTUGUESE, MACANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2888 2226; 8 Rua das Gaivotas, Coloane; meals MOP\$250-800; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6.30-10pm Thu & Sun-Tue, noon-10.30pm Fri & Sat; ♿; 🚗 21A, 25, 26A)

The home-style dishes here are solidly good, but what makes this two-storey restaurant in Coloane village unique is the combination of Portugal-inspired decor and a Chinese village house – in other words, the space (*espaco*).

Drinking

Macau's unique and atmospheric drinking places are far removed from the glitz of the Outer Harbour.

★ Macallan Whisky Bar & Lounge

BAR

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 8883 2221; www.galaxymacau.com; 203, 2nd fl, Galaxy Hotel, Cotai;

🕒 5pm-1am Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; 🚗 25, 25X)

Macau's best whisky bar is a traditional affair featuring oak panels, Jacobean rugs and a real fireplace. The 400-plus whisky labels include representatives from Ireland, France, Sweden and India, and a 1963 Glenmorangie.

★ Macau Soul

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 2836 5182; www.macausoul.com; 31a Rua de Sao Paulo; 🕒 3-10pm

Sun, Mon & Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat; 🚗 8A, 17, 26)

An elegant haven in wood and stained glass, where twice a month a jazz band plays to a packed audience. On most nights though, Thelonious Monk fills the air as customers chat with the owners and dither over their 430 Portuguese wines. Opening hours vary; phone ahead.

Club Cubic

CLUB

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 6638 4999; www.cubic-cod.com; 2105-02, Level 2, City of Dreams, Estrada

do Istmo, Cotai; 🕒 11.30pm-6am Mon-Sat; 🚗 50, 35)

The massive and flashy Club Cubic at the Hard Rock Hotel has themed rooms and a large disco ball. There are DJs mixing a variety of tunes, including hip hop, techno and Korean pop, pumped out of the club's top-notch sound system.

★ Single Origin

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📞 6698 7475; www.singleorigincoffee.com; 19 Rua de Abreu Nunes;

☕ MOP\$35; 🕒 11.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 2-7pm Sun; 📶; 🚗 2, 4, 7, 7A, 8)

This airy corner cafe, opened by coffee professional Keith Fong, makes a mean shot of espresso. You can choose your poison from a daily selection of 10 beans from various regions. If you can't decide, the well-trained barristas are more than happy to help.

Old Taipa Tavern

PUB

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 21 Rua dos Negociantes, Taipa; ;  22, 28A, 26)

A location near the Pak Tai Temple makes laid-back OTT a sublime spot to watch the comings and goings in the centre of Taipa village.

Entertainment

Macau's nightlife may be dominated by the ever-expanding casino scene, but a number of interesting live-music venues have also sprung up about town. For entertainment/cultural events listings, check out the bimonthly *CCM+* and monthly *Destination Macau* available for free at MGTO outlets and larger hotels.

★ Live Music Association

LIVE MUSIC

(LMA; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; www.lmamacau.com; 11b San Mei Industrial Bldg, 50 Avenida do Coronel Mesquita;  3, 9, 32, 12, 25)

The go-to place for indie music in Macau, this excellent dive inside an industrial building has hosted local and overseas acts, including Cold Cave, Buddhistson, Mio Myo and Pet Conspiracy. See the website for what's on. Macau indie bands to watch out for include WhyOceans (www.whyoceans.com) and Turtle Giant (www.turtlegiant.com).

Sun Never Left – Public Art Performance

LIVE MUSIC

(- [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; www.cipa.org.mo; Rua de Sao Roque;  3-6pm Sat & Sun; ;  7, 8)

Every weekend, artists at St Lazarus Church District set up shop on the picturesque Rua de Sao Roque, selling art and handicrafts. Buy coffee from a nearby cafe and sip it as you browse and enjoy the live music.

Grand Lisboa Casino

CASINO

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ;  2838 2828; Avenida de Lisboa, Macau Peninsula;  3, 10)

The only Macau-born casino, the plush Grand Lisboa, with its glowing bulb exterior and flaming-torch-shaped tower, has become the landmark by which people navigate the peninsula's streets.

House of Dancing Water

THEATRE

(;  8868 6688; <http://thehouseofdancingwater.com>; City of Dreams, Estrada do Istmo, Cotai; tickets MOP\$580-980;  50, 35)

'The House of Dancing Water', Macau's most expensively made show, is a breathtaking melange of stunts, acrobatics and theatre designed by Franco Dragone, the former director of Cirque du Soleil. The magic revolves around a cobalt pool the size of several Olympic-sized swimming pools, over, around, into and under which a cast of 80 perform hair-raising stunts dressed in glorious costumes.

Rui Cunha Foundation

CULTURAL CENTRE

(Fundacao Rui Cunha  ;  2892 3288; <http://ruicunha.org>; 749 Avenida da Praia Grande;  gallery 10am-7pm;  2A, 6A, 7A, 8)

From its airy venue in the heart of the peninsula, this foundation promotes the Macau identity through a thoughtfully curated series of art exhibitions, literary readings and recitals. These are held alongside thought-provoking seminars on Macau's legal and social systems.

Shopping

Browsing through the shops in the old city, specifically on crumbly Rua dos Ervanarios and Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo near the Ruins of St Paul, can be a great experience. You can also look for antiques or replicas at shops on or near Rua de Sao Paulo, Rua das Estalagens and Rua de Sao Antonio. Rua de Madeira and Rua dos Mercadores, which lead up to Rua da Tercena and its flea market, have stores selling mah jong tiles and bird cages.

Mercearia Portuguesa

FOOD

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2856 2708; www.merceariaportuguesa.com; 8 Calçada da Igreja de Sao Lazaro; 🕒 1-9pm Mon-Fri, noon-9pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 (7, 8)

The charming Portuguese corner shop opened by a film director and actress has a small but well-curated selection of provisions, which includes honey, chinaware, wooden toys and jewellery from Portugal, gorgeously packaged and reasonably priced.

Futura Classica

BEAUTY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2835 8378; www.futuraclassica.com; 1A, Calçada da Rocha; 🕒 noon-8pm; 🚏 (3, 6, 26 A, 18A, 33)

This dizzyingly sweet-smelling shop is the Asian distributor of Claus Porto, a Portuguese brand of luxury soap and beauty products. It's a great place to shop for souvenirs. Prices range from MOP\$50 to MOP\$1000.

Pinto Livros

BOOKS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); <http://blog.roodo.com/pintolivros>; 1a Veng Heng Bldg, 31 Largo do Senado; 🕒 11.30am-11pm; 🚏 (3, 6, 26A)

This upstairs reading room overlooking Largo do Senado has a decent selection of titles in art and culture, a few esoteric CDs and two resident cats.

Lines Lab

CLOTHING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); www.lineslab.com; Shop A3, 8 Calçada da Igreja de Sao Lazaro; 🕒 1-8pm Tue-Sun; 🚏 (7, 8)

Two Lisbon-trained designers opened this boutique in the Old Ladies' House art space and created edgy Macau-inspired clothes and bags for it.

Worker Playground

CLOTHING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎ 2875 7511; Ground fl, Edificio Cheung Seng, 83A Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida; 🕒 3-10pm; 🚏)

Worker Playground makes solid-quality baseball jackets, biker pants and fashionably androgynous garments for men and women. The brand pays

tribute to the old Workers' Stadium, a nostalgic landmark that was razed to make way for the Grand Lisboa Casino.

MACAU'S SWORD MASTER

One of Macau's most accomplished artists and former director of the Macau Museum, Antonio Conceicao Junior (aka Antonio Cejunior) custom designs blades (www.arscives.com/bladesign) inspired by Macau, mythology and the modern world.

The charismatic Antonio has designed Eastern and Western swords, as well as hybrids such as one featuring a Western-style blade with a guard inspired by the Harley Davidson wheel. Antonio does not manufacture the swords himself, but he will recommend North American bladesmiths. Interested parties should email Antonio at antonio.cejunior@gmail.com. Expect about two weeks for the design and a designer's fee of US\$3000.

Information

The Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO) distributes the excellent (and free) *Macau Tourist Map*, with tourist sights and streets labelled in Portuguese and Chinese.

EMERGENCY

Visitors can utilise a dedicated **24-hour emergency hotline** (112) for tourists. **Police, fire and ambulance** can be reached by dialling 999.

INTERNET ACCESS

You can access free public wi-fi in select government premises, tourist hot spots and public areas daily from 8am to 1am the following day. See www.wifi.gov.mo for details.

Most cafes and hotels in Macau have free wi-fi.

You can also buy prepaid phonecards from CTM, ranging from MOP\$50 to MOP\$130, to enjoy mobile broadband; or buy a mobile broadband pass for unlimited internet access for one day (MOP\$120) or five days (MOP\$220).

MEDICAL SERVICES

Centro Hospitalar Conde Sao Januario

HOSPITAL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2831 3731; Estrada do Visconde de Sao Januario)

Southwest of Guia Fort.

University Hospital

HOSPITAL

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2882 1838; www.uh.org.mo; Block H, Macau University of Science &

Technology, Avenida Wai Long, Taipa; 🕒 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun)

Western and Chinese medical services available.

MONEY

ATMs are everywhere. Most allow you to choose between patacas and Hong Kong dollars.

You can change cash and travellers cheques at the banks (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, to 1pm Saturday) lining Avenida da Praia Grande and Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro.

Hong Kong dollars are accepted everywhere in Macau, but your change will be returned in patacas, especially at smaller establishments.

POST

Correios de Macau, Macau's postal system, is efficient and inexpensive.

The **main post office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2832 3666; 126 Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) faces Largo do Senado. There are other

post offices in Macau Peninsula, including a **Macau ferry terminal branch** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 2872 8079; Macau Ferry Terminal; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Sat).

EMS Speedpost is available at the main post office. Other companies can also arrange express forwarding.

TELEPHONE

Local calls are free from private phones and most hotel telephones; calls from public payphones cost MOP\$1 for five minutes. Dial 101 for International Directory Assistance or 181 for Local Directory Assistance.

Phonecards

Prepaid International Direct Dialling (IDD) and local phonecards can be used in most mobile phones. You can purchase them from CTM stores or the ferry terminal for MOP\$50.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Macau Government Tourist Office has themed leaflets on Macau's sights and bilingual maps at its outlets.

MGTO - Hong Kong Branch

TOURIST INFORMATION

(--  2857 2287; 200 Connaught Rd Central, 336-337 Shun Tak Centre;  9am-1pm & 2-6pm)

The Hong Kong branch of the Macau Government Tourist Office.

Tourist Office

TOURIST INFORMATION

(  ;  2831 5566, tourism hotline 2833 3000; www.macautourism.gov.mo;

Edificio 'Hot Line', 12o andar, 335-341 Alameda Dr Carlos d'Assumpcao;  9am-1pm & 2.30- 5.35pm
Mon-Fri)

MGTO-Macau Ferry Terminal

TOURIST OFFICE

(  ;  8790 7039;  9am-10pm)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

China Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(Zhongguo Luxingshe; CTS   ;  2870 0888; www.cts.com.mo; Nam Kwong Bldg, 207 Avenida do Dr Rodrigo Rodrigues;  9am-6pm)

China visas (MOP\$285 plus photos) are available to most passport holders in one day.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Macau Cultural Affairs Bureau

WEBSITE

(www.icm.gov.mo)

Macau's cultural offerings month-by-month.

Getting There & Away

Macau is connected to limited destinations in Asia by air. If you are coming from outside Asia, your best option is to fly to [Hong Kong International Airport](#) and take a ferry to Macau without going through Hong Kong customs.

AIR

Macau International Airport

AIRPORT

([GOOGLE MAP](#));  2886 1111; www.macau-airport.com)

Macau's airport is located on Taipa Island, 20 minutes from the city centre. There are frequent services to destinations including Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Kaohsiung, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Osaka, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei and Tokyo. There are also regular flights to Beijing, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Ningbo, Shanghai and Xiamen and less frequent flights to Chengdu, Chongqing, Fuzhou and Wuhan.

Sky Shuttle ( in Hong Kong 2108 9898; www.skyshuttlehk.com) runs a 15-minute helicopter shuttle between Macau and Hong Kong up to 27 times daily.

BOAT

Macau's **main ferry terminal** ( Terminal Maritimo de Passageiros do Porto Exterior [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Outer Harbour, Macau) is located on the eastern side of the peninsula, with services to mainland China and Hong Kong. **TurboJet** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  bookings 852-2921 6688, in Hong Kong 790 7039, information 852-2859 3333; www.turbojet.com.hk; economy/superclass Mon-Fri HK\$142/244, Sat & Sun HK\$154/260, night crossing HK\$176/275) has departures daily to Shekou, in Shenzhen (MOP\$210, one hour, 10 between 9.45am and 8.45pm). It also has departures to Shenzhen airport (MOP\$210, one hour, five from 11.30am to 7.30pm), and to Nansha, near Guangzhou (MOP\$180, two between 10.45am and 4.15pm).

Macau is linked directly to Hong Kong International Airport by TurboJet, which has eight ferries operating between 10am and 10pm. It costs MOP\$233/178/126 per adult/child/infant and takes 45 minutes. However,

note that this ferry service is for transit passengers only. It is not available for passengers originating in Hong Kong.

CotaiJet

FERRY

([GOOGLE MAP](#));  2885 0595; www.cotaijet.com.mo)

Every half-hour from 7am to 1am; runs between Taipa Ferry Terminal and Hong Kong's Hong Kong–Macau Ferry Terminal. A feeder shuttle bus service drops off at destinations on the Cotai Strip. Check the website for services to Hong Kong International Airport.

Yuet Tung Shipping Co

FERRY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#));  2893 9944, 2877 4478; www.ytmacau.com; Point 11A Inner Harbour, Inner Harbour Ferry Terminal (Macau to Zhuhai/Wanzai))

Has ferries connecting Macau's Taipa temporary ferry terminal (MOP\$155, 1½ hours, 11am, 2pm, 7pm) with Shekou. Ferries also leave from Macau maritime ferry terminal (MOP\$12, every half-hour, 8am to 4.15pm) for Wanzai of Zhuhai.

BUS

There are two gateways to Guangdong from Macau. One is the Border Gate at the border with [Zhuhai](#); the other is the Cotai Frontier Post at the end of the Lotus Bridge in Cotai. Travelers are required to have the same documents as when entering China from elsewhere.

Border Gate Bus

BUS

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); Portas de Cerco;  7am–midnight)

Take bus 3, 5 or 9 and walk across.

Cotai Frontier Post

BUS

( 9am–8pm)

On the causeway linking Taipa and Coloane; allows visitors to cross Lotus Bridge by shuttle bus (HK\$3) to Zhuhai; buses 15, 21, 25 and 26 drop you off

at the crossing.

Kee Kwan Motor Rd Co

BUS

([GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 2893 3888; Underground bus terminal near Border Gate; 🕒 7.15am-9pm)

Has buses going to Guangzhou (MOP\$80, four hours, every 15 minutes from 8am to 9.40pm) and to Zhongshan (MOP\$23, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes from 8am to 8pm).

Macau International Airport Bus Terminal

AIRPORT

(📍 2888 1228)

Buses to Guangzhou and Dongguan (both MOP\$155, four hours).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Take buses 21 and 26 from the airport to Coloane. Bus 21 goes from the airport to A-Ma Temple.

Airport Bus AP1

BUS

Airport to [Macau Ferry Terminal](#) and Border Gate; stops at major hotels en route. Runs every 15 minutes from 7am to midnight. Extra charge of MOP\$3 for each large piece of luggage.

Airport Buses MT1 and MT2

BUS

Airport to Praca de Ferreira do Amaral near [Casino Lisboa](#). Runs from 7am to 10am, then 4pm to 8pm.

Taxi

TAXI

Airport to town centre (MOP\$60, 20 minutes).

BICYCLE

Bikes can be **rented** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) in Taipa Village. You are not

allowed to cross the Macau–Taipa bridges on a bicycle.

CAR

Avis Rent A Car ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎2872 6571; www.avis.com.mo; Room 1022, Ground fl, Macau Maritime Ferry Terminal; 🕒10am-1pm & 2-4pm) Hires out cars. MOP\$700 to MOP\$1400 per day; with chauffeur from MOP\$300 per hour, 20% more on weekends.

Burgeon Rent A Car ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎2828 3399; www.burgeonrentacar.com; Shops O, P & Q, Block 2, La Baie Du Noble, Avenida Do Nordeste) Hires out Kia cars. From MOP\$190/270/390 for 6/11/24 hours; with chauffeur from MOP\$160 per hour, minimum two hours.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

➔ **Routes** Macau has about 50 public bus and minibus routes running from 6am to midnight. Fares range from MOP\$3.20 to MOP\$6.40.

➔ **Destinations** Displayed in Portuguese and Chinese.

➔ **Information** For info on routes and fares, see **Macau Transmac Bus Co** (☎2827 1122; www.transmac.com.mo), **Macau TCM Bus** (www.tcm.com.mo) and **Reolian** (☎2877 7888; www.reolian.com.mo). The *Macau Tourist Map*, available at MGTO outlets, has a list of bus routes.

➔ **Useful services** Buses 3 and 3A (between ferry terminal and city centre); buses 3 and 5 (to the Border Gate); and bus 12 (from ferry terminal, past Hotel Lisboa to Lou Lim Ioc Garden and Kun Iam Temple). Buses 21, 21A, 25 and 26A go to Taipa and Coloane.

TAXI

➔ **Language** Not many taxi drivers speak English, so it can help to have your destination written in Chinese.

➔ **Cost** Flag fall is MOP\$15 (first 1.6km); then it's MOP\$1.50 for each additional 230m.

➔ **Surcharge** MOP\$5/2 surcharge to Coloane from Macau Peninsula/Taipa; MOP\$5 surcharge for journeys from the airport; large bags cost an extra

MOP\$3.

➔ **Handy numbers** Call 2851 9519 or 2893 9939 for yellow radio taxis.

Guangdong

[Guangdong Highlights](#)

[Guangzhou](#)

[Around Guangzhou](#)

[Foshan](#)

[Kaiping](#)

[Yangjiang](#)

[Zhaoqing](#)

[Around Zhaoqing](#)

[Qingyuan](#)

[Nanling National Forest Park](#)

[Shenzhen](#)

[Around Shenzhen](#)

[Zhuhai](#)

[Chaozhou](#)

[Around Chaozhou](#)

[Meizhou](#)

[Dabu](#)

Guangdong



Pop 93 million

Why Go?

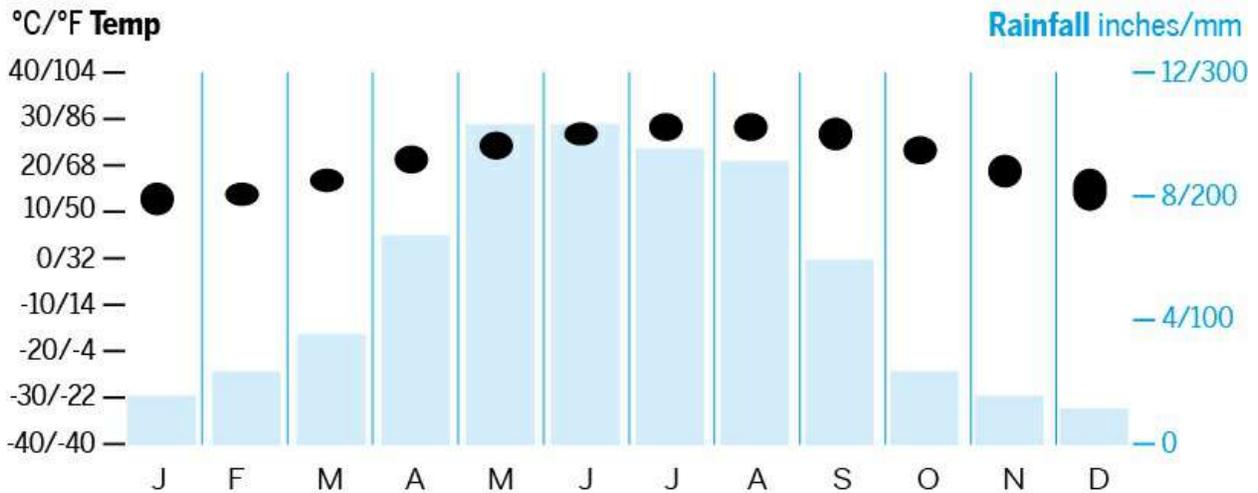
Guangdong's unique culture and natural beauty fly under the radar and have yet to be discovered by many travellers, so you may have a plethora of sublime sights (not to mention great dim sum) all to yourself.

Northern Guangdong is home to some wild and wondrous landscapes. In the blue pine forests of Nanling, the music of waterfalls and windswept trees boomerangs in your direction. If it's Unesco-crowned heritage you're after, Kaiping's flamboyant watchtowers and the stylised poses of Cantonese opera will leave you riveted. What's all the fuss about Hakka and Chiuchow cultures? Well, find out in Meizhou and Chaozhou.

Historically Guangdong was the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road and the birthplace of revolution. On the scenic byways of the Pearl River delta, you'll uncover the glory of China's revolutionary past. While on the surf-beaten beaches of Hailing Island, an ancient shipwreck and its treasures await.

When to Go

Guǎngzhōu



- **Apr–Jun** Verdant paddy fields against the built wonders of Kaiping and Meizhou.
- **Jul–Sep** Blue pines and stained-glass windows offer respite from summer.
- **Oct–Dec** The typhoons and heat are gone; this is the best time to visit.

Best for History

- [New Guangdong Museum](#)
- [Mausoleum of the Nanyue King](#)
- [Zumiao](#)
- [Whampoa Military Academy](#)

Best Views

- [Zili](#)
- [Yuyin Mountain Villa](#)

➔ [Nanling National Forest Park](#)

➔ [Dinghu Shan Reserve](#)

➔ [Lover's Road](#)

Guangdong Highlights



- 1 Climb dramatic Unesco-crowned watchtowers at [Kaiping](#).
- 2 Be awed by the crouching dragons and flying saucers of the Hakka architecture at [Meizhou](#).
- 3 Visit [Foshan](#), the hometown of two martial arts legends.
- 4 Cross the majestic [Guangji Bridge](#) in Chaozhou with its 18 boats and 24 piers.
- 5 Be mesmerised by the labyrinthine streets and storied mansions of old towns such as [Chayang](#).
- 6 After a day's hike, fall asleep to the whispered symphony of an ancient forest in [Nanling National Forest Park](#).
- 7 Lunch in a garden-restaurant in [Guangzhou](#) while listening to an operatic aria.
- 8 Visit silken beaches and an 800-year-old shipwreck in [Yangjiang](#).

History

Guangdong has had contact with the outside world for nearly two millennia. Among the first outsiders to arrive were the Romans, who appeared in the 2nd century AD. By the Tang dynasty (AD 618–907), a sizeable trade with

the Middle East and Southeast Asia had developed.

The first Europeans to settle here were the Portuguese in 1557, followed by the Jesuits who established themselves in Zhaoqing. The British came along in the 17th century and by 1685 merchant ships from the East India Company were calling at Guangzhou. In 1757 an imperial edict gave the *cohong*, a local merchants' guild, a monopoly on China's trade with foreigners, who were restricted to Shamian Island. Trade remained in China's favour until 1773, when the British shifted the balance by unloading 1000 chests of Bengal opium in Guangzhou. Addiction spread in China like wildfire, eventually leading to the Opium Wars.

In the 19th century, Guangdong was a hotbed of reform and revolt. Among the political elites who sowed revolutionary ideas here was Sun Yatsen, who later became the first president of the Republic of China.

The 20th century saw Guangdong serve as the headquarters of both the Nationalist and Communist Parties, and endure great suffering during the Cultural Revolution. After the implementation of the 'open door' policy in 1978, it became the first province to embrace capitalism. The province's continued economic success has made it a leading export centre for consumer goods.

Language

The vast majority of the people of Guangdong speak Cantonese, a dialect distinct from Mandarin. Though it enjoys a less exalted status than the national dialect, Cantonese is older and better suited than Mandarin for the reading of classical poetry, according to many scholars.

Getting There & Around

Airports at Guangzhou and Shenzhen run domestic and international flights, while those at Zhuhai, Meizhou and Chaozhou bring every major city within a three-hour flight of the sights. High-speed rail connects Guangdong to its provincial neighbours Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangxi and Fujian.

The fastest trains on the northeast–southwest axis head for Nanchang (four hours), Wuhan (four hours), Xi’an (nine hours) and Beijing (10 hours). A well-developed network of convenient, older rail lines and expressways spans the entire province. Metro and light rail in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Foshan are connected to major and high-speed train stations.

Long-distance buses are most the frequent transportation between major areas in Guangdong.

Hong Kong and Macau can be easily reached via Shenzhen (by train, metro, bus and ferry) and Zhuhai (by bus and ferry).

PRICE INDICATORS

We use the following price indicators in reviews:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥250

\$\$ ¥250 to ¥600

\$\$\$ more than ¥600

EATING

\$ less than ¥70

\$\$ ¥70 to ¥150

\$\$\$ more than ¥150

Guangzhou

☎ 020 / Pop 12 million

History

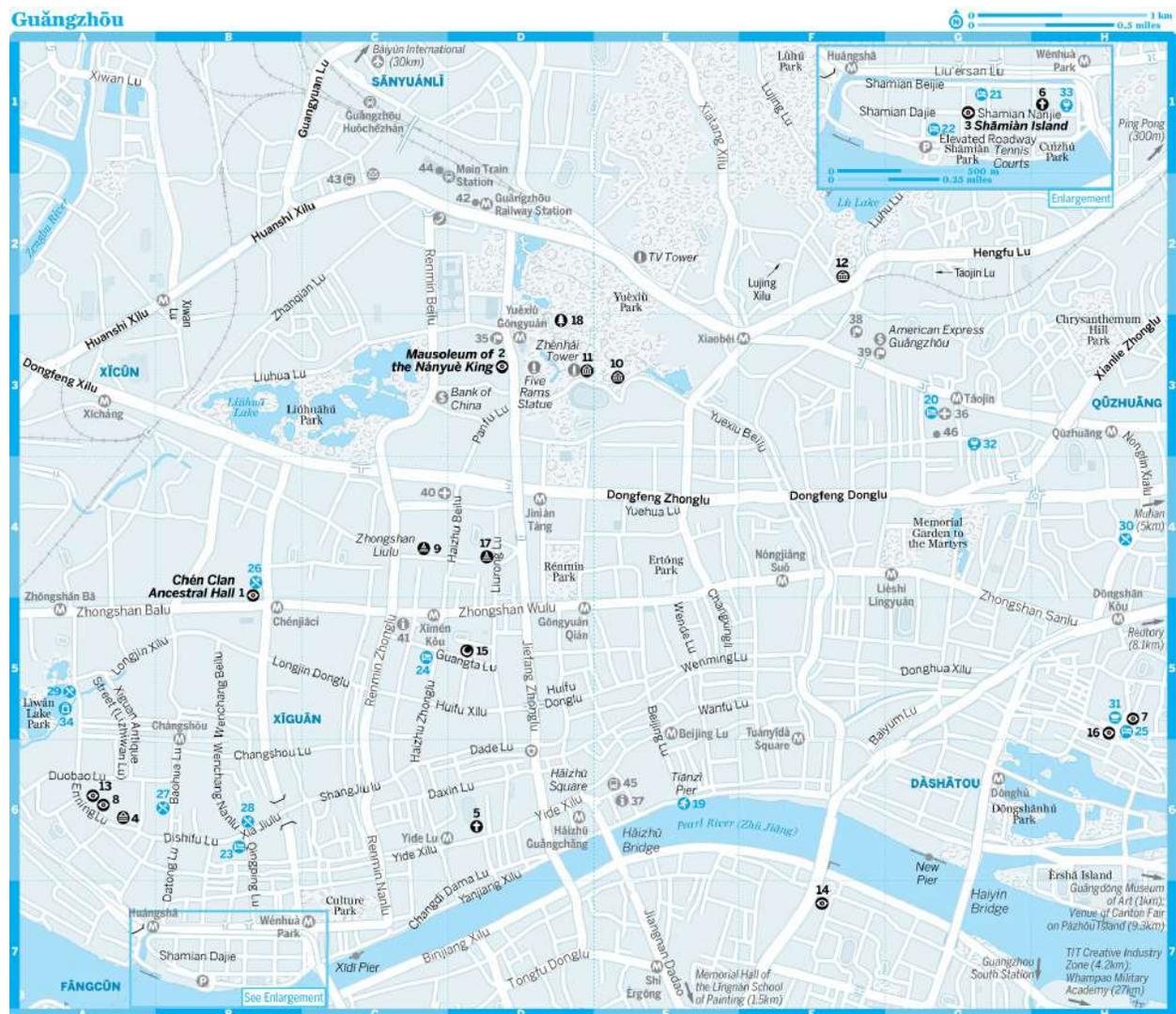
Guangzhou’s history is one dominated by trade and revolution. Since the Tang dynasty (AD 618–907), it had been China’s most important southern port and the starting point for the Maritime Silk Road, a trade route to the

West. It became a trading post for the Portuguese in the 16th century, and later for the British.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the city was a stronghold of the republican forces led by Sun Yatsen and, subsequently, a centre of activity of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led by Mao Zedong.

During the post-1949 years of China's self-imposed isolation, the Canton Trade Fair was the only platform on which China did business with the West.

In 2010 Guangzhou held the Asian Games, resulting in major expansion of the city's transport network.



Guangzhou

Top Sights

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Chen Clan Ancestral Hall | B4 |
| 2 | Mausoleum of the Nanyue King | D3 |
| 3 | Shamian Island | G1 |

Sights

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| | Ancestral Home of Bruce Lee | A6 |
| 4 | Bahe Academy | A6 |
| 5 | Cathedral of the Sacred Heart | D6 |
| 6 | Church of Our Lady of Lourdes | H1 |
| 7 | Dongshan | H5 |
| 8 | Enning Lu | A6 |
| 9 | Guangxiao Temple | C4 |
| 10 | Guangzhou Art Gallery | E3 |
| 11 | Guangzhou City Museum | D3 |
| 12 | Guangzhou Museum of Art | F2 |
| 13 | Luanyu Tang | A6 |
| 14 | Memorial Museum of Generalissimo Sun Yatsen's Mansion | F7 |
| 15 | Mosque Dedicated to the Prophet | D5 |
| 16 | Spring Garden | H5 |
| 17 | Temple of the Six Banyan Trees | D4 |
| 18 | Yuexiu Park | D3 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 19 | Guangzhou Star Cruises Company | E6 |
|----|--|----|

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 20 | Garden Hotel | G3 |
| 21 | Guangdong Victory Hotel | G1 |
| 22 | Guangzhou Youth Hostel | G1 |
| 23 | Holiday Inn | B6 |
| 24 | Lazy Gaga | C5 |
| 25 | Old Canton Youth Hostel | H5 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 26 | Chen Clan Ancestral Hall Food Stalls | B4 |
|----|--|----|

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 27 | Chen Tianji | B6 |
| 28 | Guangzhou Restaurant | B6 |
| 29 | Panxi Restaurant | A5 |
| 30 | Wilber's | H4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 31 | Kui Garden | H5 |
| 32 | Paddy Field | G3 |
| 33 | Shamian Clubhouse | H1 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 34 | Xiguan Antique Street | A5 |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|

Information

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 35 | Canadian Consulate | D3 |
| 36 | Can-Am International Medical Centre | G3 |
| 37 | China Travel Service | E6 |
| 38 | French Consulate | F3 |
| 39 | German Consulate | F3 |
| 40 | Guangzhou First Municipal People's Hospital | C4 |
| 41 | Tourism Administration of Guangzhou | C5 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 42 | China Southern Airlines | D2 |
| 43 | Guangdong Long-Distance Bus Station | C2 |
| 44 | Guangzhou Main Train Station | C1 |
| 45 | Hotel Landmark Canton—buses to Hong Kong & Macau | E6 |
| 46 | Malaysia, Thai International, United and Vietnam Airlines | G3 |



Sights & Activities

Zhujiang Xincheng (Zhujiang New Town)

New Guangdong Museum

MUSEUM

(Guangdongsheng Bowuguan Xinguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  3804 6886;

www.gdmuseum.com; 2 Zhujiang Donglu, Zhujiang New Town; 🕒 9am-4pm Tue-Sun; 🚇 Line 3, Zhujiang Xincheng, exit B1) **FREE**

This ultramodern museum has an extensive collection illuminating the human and natural history of Guangdong, as well as Cantonese art, literature and architecture. Inspired by the Chinese lacquer box, the museum's appearance is a striking contrast against the curvilinear design of the Guangzhou Opera House further to the west.

Guangzhou Opera House

BUILDING

(Guangzhou da ju yuan **MAP** **GOOGLE MAP**; 📞 tour bookings 3839 9847, 3839 2666; www.chgoh.org; 1 Zhujiang Xilu; admission ¥30, tours in English per person ¥200; 🕒 9am-4.30pm, closed Mon, tours 10am, 11am, 2pm, 3pm & 4pm; 🚇 Line 3, Zhujiang Xincheng, exit B1)

Authored by architect Zaha Hadid, southern China's biggest performance venue has transformed the area with its other-worldly appearance. With futuristic glass panels knitted together to form subtle curves, it's been described as pebbles on the bed of the Pearl River. To enter, you have to join one of five 45-minute daily tours. Tours in English require booking a day in advance.

The visit will allow you to see the ethereal opera hall with its 4200 LED lights and floor planks from Russia, as well as the state-of-the-art rehearsal studios.

Haizhu District

Memorial Museum of Generalissimo Sun Yatsen's Mansion

(Sun Zhongshan Dayuanshuai Fu **MAP** **GOOGLE MAP**; 📞 8901 2366; HISTORIC SITE www.dyshf.com; 18 Dongsha Jie, Fangzhi Lu; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚇 Line 2, Shi Ergong) **FREE**

Sun Yatsen lived in this restored mansion when he established governments in Guangzhou in 1917 and 1923. The beautiful complex comprises two Victorian-style buildings housing displays on the history of Guangzhou in the revolutionary era, as well as Sun's living quarters. A cab from Shamian

Island costs about ¥40, and from Shi Ergong station, about ¥20.

Memorial Hall of the Lingnan School of Painting

MUSEUM

(Lingnan Huapai Jinianguan  8401 7167; www.lingnans.org; 257 Changgang Donglu;  9am-5pm Tue-Sun;  Xiao Gang, exit A) **FREE**

This small but excellent museum on the leafy campus of the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts (Guangzhou Meishu Xueyuan) pays tribute to the founders of the Lingnan school of painting, such as Gao Jianfu, and shows the colourful ink and brush works of contemporary artists versed in the Lingnan style.

Liwan District

★ Chen Clan Ancestral Hall

HISTORIC SITE

(Chenjia Ci  ;  8181 4559; 34 Enlong Li, Zhongshan Qilu; admission ¥10;  8.30am-5.00pm;  Line 1, Chenjiaci, exit D)

An all-in-one ancestral shrine, Confucian school and ‘chamber of commerce’ for the Chen clan, this compound was built in 1894 by the residents of 72 villages in Guangdong, where the Chen lineage is predominant. There are 19 buildings in the traditional Lingnan style, all featuring exquisite carvings, statues and paintings, and decorated with ornate scrollwork throughout.

Islands

★ Shamian Island

HISTORIC SITE

(Shamian Dao  ;  Line 1, Huangsha)

To the southwest of Guangzhou is the dappled oasis of Shamian Island. It was acquired as a foreign concession in 1859 after the two Opium Wars. Shamian Dajie, the main boulevard, is a gentle stretch of gardens dotted by old houses, cafes and galleries. The **Church of Our Lady of Lourdes**

(Tianzhujiao Lude Shengmu Tang  ; 14 Shamian Dajie;  8am-6pm;

M Line 1, Huangsha) built by the French in 1892, is on the eastern end.

Whampoa Military Academy

MUSEUM

(Huangpu Junxiao  8820 1082;  9am-5pm Tue-Sun; **M** Line 2, Chigang, exit C1) **FREE**

This academy on Changzhou Island (Changzhou Dao) was founded in 1924 by the Kuomintang to train military elites for both the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. Many of the graduates went on to fight in important conflicts and civil wars. The present structure has a museum dedicated to the revolutionary history of modern China. After leaving the metro, board bus 262 on Xingang Zhonglu to Xinzhou Pier (Xinzhou Matou). Ferries (¥2) to the academy depart every hour from 7.40am to 7.40pm.

Ferries leave from the pier every 20 minutes between the rush hours of 7.50am to 9.30am. Private boats will also make the 10-minute trip to the island for ¥40.

Guangdong Museum of Art

MUSEUM

(Guangdong Meishuguan ;  8735 1468; www.gdmoa.org; 38 Yanyu Lu; admission ¥15;  9am-5pm Tue-Sun;  89, 194, 131A)

At the southern end of Ersha Island (Ersha Dao), this worthy museum showcases the works of important Cantonese artists and has been the site of the Guangzhou Triennale.

Yuexiu District

★ Mausoleum of the Nanyue King

MAUSOLEUM

(Nanyuewang Mu  ;  3618 2920;

www.gznywmuseum.org/nanyuewang/index.html; 867 Jiefang Beilu; admission ¥12;  9am-4.45pm;

M Line 2, Yuexiu Gongyuan, exit E)

This superb mausoleum from the 2000-year-old Nanyue kingdom is one of China's best museums. It houses the tomb of Zhao Mo, second king of Nanyue, who was sent south by the emperor in 214 BC to quell unrest and

established a sovereign state with Guangzhou as its capital. Don't miss Zhao Mo's jade burial suit – the precious stone was thought to preserve the body.

Dongshan

HISTORIC SITE

(Dongshan Qu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  Dongshan Kou)

Tree-lined Xinhepu Lu, Xuguyuan Lu and Peizheng Lu in the historic Dongshan area offer a welcome respite from the city. There are schools and churches raised by American missionaries in the 1900s, and exquisite villas commissioned by overseas Chinese and military bigwigs of the Kuomintang. Take the metro to Dongshan Kou station. From exit A, walk south along Shuqian Lu and follow the signs.

The most beautifully restored building is the three-storey [Kui Garden](#), built in 1922 by an overseas Chinese in America. [Spring Garden](#) (Chunyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 24 Xinhepu Lu;  9.30am-5pm) was the former headquarters of the central committee of the Chinese Communist Party in 1923.

Yuexiu Park

PARK

(Yuexiu Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  8666 1950; 988 Jiefang Beilu;  6am-9pm;  Line 2, Yuexiu Gongyuan)

A statue of the symbol of Guangzhou – the five rams that supposedly carried the five immortals who founded the city – stands guard at this park. On a hilltop is red-walled Zhenhai Tower (Zhenhai Lou), built in 1380 as a watchtower to keep out pirates. The tower is home to the excellent

[Guangzhou City Museum](#) (Guangzhoushi Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);

 8355 0627; www.guangzhomuseum.cn/en/main.asp; admission ¥10;  9am-5pm;  Line 2,

Yuexiu Gongyuan), which traces the city's history from the Neolithic period. To the east is [Guangzhou Art Gallery](#) (Guangzhou Meishuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yuexiu Park), which has embroidery, ivory carvings and other displays on the city's trading history with the West.

Guangzhou Museum of Art

MUSEUM

(Guangzhou Yishu Bowuyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8365 9337; www.gzam.com.cn; 13 Luhu Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 10, 84, 109, 297, 808, 🚇 Line 5, Xiaobei) **FREE**

This massive museum has an extensive collection of Chinese art that ranges from the ancient to the contemporary. The emphasis is on calligraphic works and paintings, especially those created in the Lingnan area. Rare Tibetan tapestries are displayed on the top floor.

Temple of the Six Banyan Trees

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Liurong Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8339 2843; 87 Liurong Lu; admission ¥5, pagoda ¥10; 🕒 8am-5pm; 🚏 56)

This Buddhist temple was built in AD 537 to enshrine Buddhist relics brought over from India; they were placed in the octagonal **Decorated Pagoda** (Hua Ta). The temple was given its current name by the exiled poet Su Dongbo in 1099, who waxed lyrical over the (now gone) banyans in the courtyard. You can see the characters 'six banyans' (*liurong*) that he wrote above the gates.

Many prominent monks taught here, including Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism. The temple opens at 6.30am on the first and 15th day of the lunar month.

Guangxiao Temple

BUDDHIST

(Guangxiao Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8108 7421; 109 Guangxiao Lu; admission ¥5; 🕒 6am-5.30pm; 🚇 Line 1, Ximen Kou)

‘Bright Filial Piety Temple’ is the oldest temple in Guangzhou, dating back to the 4th century. By the time of the Tang dynasty it was well established as a centre of Buddhist learning in southern China. Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism, taught here. Most of the current buildings date from the 19th century, including a main hall with double eaves and a 10m-tall Buddha statue.

Mosque Dedicated to the Prophet

MOSQUE

(Huaisheng Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8333 3593; 56 Guangta Lu; 🕒 daybreak to sundown; **M** Line 1, Ximen Kou)

The original building is believed to be founded here in 627 by Abu Waqas, an uncle of the prophet Mohammed. The present mosque dates from the Qing dynasty.

Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

CHURCH

(Shishi Jiaotang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 368 Yide Lu; **M** Line 2, Haizhu Guangchang)

The French were granted permission to build this impressive twin-spired Roman Catholic cathedral after the second Opium War, between 1863 and 1888. It features a neo-Gothic style and is constructed entirely of granite, with massive towers reaching a height of 48m.

Guangzhou Star Cruises Company

RIVER CRUISES

(Guangzhou Zhixing Youlun Youxian Gongsi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8333 2222; cruises ¥48-88; 🕒 6pm-11pm)

The Guangzhou Star Cruises Company has eight two-hour evening cruises on the Pearl River. Boats leave from the **Tianzi Pier** (Tianzi Matou; Beijing Lu), just east of Haizhu Bridge (Haizhu Qiao; catch metro line 2 from Haizhu Guangchang station), and head down the river as far as Ersha Island (Ersha Dao) before turning back.

East Guǎngzhōu



East Guangzhou

Sights

| | |
|--|----|
| Guangzhou Opera House | B6 |
| 1 New Guangdong Museum | B6 |

Entertainment

| | |
|---|----|
| 2 191 Space | A5 |
| 3 Guangzhou Opera House | B6 |
| 4 T Union | A4 |

Tianhe District

Redtory

VILLAGE

(Hongzhuang Chang  8557 8470; www.redtory.com.cn/english/redtory.php; 128 Yuancun Sihenglu;  6am-midnight;  Line 3, Yuncun, exit B)

The Bauhaus structures of Guangdong Canned Food Factory (c 1958) are now stuffed with the galleries, bookstores and cafes of Redtory art village. The art is underwhelming, but the dated architecture and the old factory equipment on display make a visit worthwhile. Turn right from the metro exit and make your way to the alley immediately behind the one you're on. About 200m down the alley, turn left into a dirt road.

ENNING LU

If you like history, a stroll down century-old **Enning Lu** (Enning Road 

;  Luanyu Tang 10am-3pm;  Changshou Lu) can be rewarding.

Located in the area known traditionally as Xiguan, the western gate and commercial hub of old Canton, it retains a few cultural relics, despite earnest urban renewal efforts.

Bahe Academy

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Bahe Huiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 117 Enning Lu)

Bahe Academy was a guild hall for Cantonese opera practitioners. The original institution opened in 1889 to provide lodging and other services to opera troupes. It's now a meeting place for retired artists. Bahe is not open to the public, but you can see the original 3m-tall wooden door from 1889, the only item that survived a bombing by the Japanese in 1937. It was used during the Great Leap Forward as a parking plank for 4-tonne vehicles, and clearly survived that as well.

Luanyu Tang

BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒10am-3pm)

Luanyu Tang is a 200-year-old union for actors playing martial and acrobatic roles in Cantonese opera. The union still gives theatrical martial arts training to children, and members come for opera 'jamming' sessions. It's the second-last unit along a small lane off Yongqing Erxiang, off Enning Lu.

Birthday of the Fire God

CULTURAL

(🕒28th day of the 9th lunar month)

Every year on the birthday of the Fire God, usually around November, Bahe Academy guild hall throws a banquet for the opera industry. From early morning, you'll hear gongs and drums, and ceremonies are performed at Luanyu Tang. Hundreds show up for the day-long feasting that takes place both indoors and on the pavement.

According to legend, the Fire God (Huaguang Shifu) was sent by the heavenly emperor to burn down an opera house that was making too much noise. But the god was so moved by the performance that he asked the audience to burn incense instead to fool the emperor. People involved in opera believe that the Fire God protects them from fire, poverty, tricky negotiations and other mishaps to which those from the grassroots, like themselves, are prone.

Ancestral Home of Bruce Lee

BUILDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

The last unit along a small lane off Yongqing Erxiang, which runs off Enning Lu, was the ancestral home of Bruce Lee, the kungfu icon, whose father Li Haiquan was a Cantonese opera actor. There's now a wall in its place, but if you retrace your steps out of the two alleys, turn right and head up Enning Lu, you'll pass the gates of a school. In the right corner, just past the entrance, you can see the shuttered house.



Festivals & Events

Canton Trade Fair

TRADE FAIR

(Zhongguo Chukou Shangpin Jiaoyi Hui; 📞 2608 8888; www.cantonfair.org.cn)

The 15-day Canton Trade Fair is held twice yearly, usually in April and October, on Pazhou Island south of the Pearl River in Guangzhou.



Sleeping

Guangzhou has few good choices in the budget and lower midrange, but plenty of excellent top-end and upper-midrange hotels. During the Canton Trade Fair (usually in April and October), prices go up. All hotels offer wi-fi and air-conditioning.

Hai Zhu, Yuexiu & Tianhe Districts

Lazy Gaga

HOSTEL

(Chuntian Jiajia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8192 3232, 8192 3199; www.gagahostel.com; 215 Haizhu Zhonglu; dm ¥55-65, d & tw ¥168-198, tr ¥225; Ximenkou, exit B)

Only five minutes' walk from the metro, Lazy Gaga has 45 cheerful rooms and homey communal areas enlivened by colourful walls and furniture. Guests can have free use of the spotless kitchen; and the pleasant staff members are up for a chat when they're not busy. In-room lockers come thoughtfully embedded with chargers for mobile devices.

Old Canton Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Guang Zhou Guyue Dongshan Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8730 4485; 22 Xuguyuan Lu; dm ¥50, s with bathroom ¥120-150, d without bathroom ¥150; 📶 @ 📶; Dongshankou, exit F)

Located close to Kui Garden in the leafy Dongshan area of Yuexiu District,

this hostel is a good budget option. Rooms are clean and come with free wi-fi.

★ Garden Hotel

HOTEL

(Huayuan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8333 8989; www.thegardenhotel.com.cn; 368 Huanshi Donglu; r/ste from ¥3200/5200; 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚇 Line 5, Taojin)

One of the most popular luxury hotels in Guangzhou with waterfalls and lovely gardens in the lobby and on the 4th floor. The rooms are just as classy. Bookings essential.

Holiday Inn

HOTEL

(Jiari Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8138 0088; www.holidayinn.com.cn; 188 Dishifu Lu; r ¥1680-2790, ste ¥2980-6888; 🚫 📶 @ 📶 📶; 🚇 Changshou Lu)

Don't be distracted by the chaotic street outside. Holiday Inn has everything you'd associate with the name, reliable service, and clean, comfortable rooms with a few luxuries. Huge discounts are available too.

Mulian

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Guangzhou Mulianzhuang Jiudian ☎ 8353 8888; www.themulian.com; 715 Jinsui Lu; r ¥868-1068, ste ¥1168; 📶 📶; 🚇 Tancun, exit D)

If you don't mind windowless rooms (which is 90% of the rooms here), the Mulian is perfect for a getaway – the soundproofing is seamless; the decor is exotically Thai; there are a host of gadgets to keep you entertained indoors; and there's free afternoon tea when you get hungry.

The metro exit sits at the junction between Huacheng Dadao and Machanglu. Turn right into the latter. Walk for 10 minutes, turn left into Jinsui Lu. You'll see the entrance to a residential community. The hotel is on the left about 100m from the entrance.

Shamian Island

Shamian Island is by far the quietest and most attractive area to stay in

Guangzhou.

Guangzhou Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Guangdong Etan Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8121 8298; www1.gzyhostel.com; 2 Shamian Sijie; dm/s/tr ¥60/240/390, d ¥260-320; @)

For the cheapest beds on Shamian Island, head to this nondescript hostel. Backpacker ambience is nonexistent, but rooms are moderately clean.

Guangdong Victory Hotel

HOTEL

(Shengli Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8121 6688; www.vhotel.com; 53 & 54 Shamian Beijie; 53 r from ¥800, tr ¥1180, ste ¥1380-3880; 📶 @ 📶)

There are two branches of the Victory Hotel on Shamian Island: an older one at 54 Shamian Beijie (enter from 10 Shamian Sijie) and a newer wing at 52 Shamian Nanjie. Both offer decent value for money.

Eating

Guangzhou is home to some excellent Cantonese restaurants. Dim sum (*dianxin*), or yum cha (*yincha*; tea drinking), may be the best-known form of Cantonese cuisine to foreigners, but in fact noodles, congee and desserts are equally popular locally.

Chen Tianji

CANTONESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8182 8774; 59 Baohua Lu; dishes ¥7-32; 🕒 9.30am-10.30pm; **M** Changshou Lu)

This old hole-in-the-wall serves three things – crunchy blanched fish skin (*yupi*) tossed with peanuts and parsley; sampan congee (*tingzai zhou*); and rice-flour rolls (*changfen*). At 59 Baohua Lu, turn into an alley; it's the second eatery.

★ Guangzhou Restaurant

DIM SUM

(Guangzhou Jiujiu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Wenchang Nanlu; dim dum per portion ¥7.5-23;
🕒 7am-11pm; [M](#) Changshou Lu)

A large, traditional yum cha restaurant that offers an exquisite selection of teas (¥8 to ¥50 per person) to go with its well-made dim sum. Tables and dining spaces are dispersed around a beautiful interior garden in the atrium. Go early: by 8.30am all the tables with views are taken.

Chen Clan Ancestral Hall Food Stalls

CANTONESE

(Chenjiaci Daipaidang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Enlong Li, Zhongshan Qilu; per person ¥40-60;
🕒 from 7pm; [M](#) Line 1, Chenjiaci, exit D)

Locals munch on grilled oysters (*kaoshenghao*), pepper salt shrimp (*jiaoyanxia*) and stir-fried crab (*chaoxie*) at the outdoor food stalls that come into being every evening in an alley next to [Chen Clan Ancestral Hall](#). It's clean by food-stall standards.

★ Panxi Restaurant

DIM SUM

(Panxi Jiujiu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8172 1328; 151 Longjin Xilu; dishes from ¥40;
🕒 7.30am-midnight; [M](#) Changshou Lu)

Set in a majestic garden and embracing another one within its walls, Panxi is the most representative of Guangzhou's garden-restaurants. Corridors and courtyards are brought together to give the effect of 'every step, a vista'. Elderly diners are known to get up and sing an operatic aria or two when the mood is right. You'll need to queue for a table after 8.30am.

Wilber's

EUROPEAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 3761 1101; www.wilber.com.cn; 62 Zhusigang Ermalu; mains ¥30-180; 🕒 11am-4pm & 5-9pm; 📶; [M](#) Dongshan Kou)

Hidden on the edge of Yuexiu District, gay-friendly Wilber's gets top marks for drinks and atmosphere, and the food is not far behind. You can munch on cold cuts and mini burgers at the bar, or opt for seafood risotto and pan-fried scallops in the restaurant. Look for the restored colonial villa with

whitewashed walls and a patio.

Drinking

Guangzhou's party hub is Zhujiang Pati, a strip of land by the river that is the site of the massive Zhujiang Brewery (though by the time you read this, the brewery should have relocated). Abandoned facilities now throb with trendy bars and clubs. With the brewery still visibly in operation, it's the city's most surreal (and boozy) party place. Upmarket Yanjiang Lu Bar St is also worth a visit.

★ Kui Garden

CAFE

(Kui Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8765 9746; 9 Xuguyuan Lu; 🕒10am-midnight; **M**Line 1, Dongshankou, exit F)

From its location inside the gorgeous Kui Garden in the historic Dongshan area, this cafe serves decent coffee and canapes during the day and morphs into a bar at night. Stylish, warm-toned seating areas occupy the rooms of the original residence. Built in 1922, the house is famous for its Western architectural features that include colonnaded verandahs and a portico.

There's a small exhibition space on the ground floor and a light-flooded shop on the top floor that is breathtaking to look at but doesn't sell much. Both the gallery and the shop close at 10pm.

Sun's

LOUNGE

(☎8977 9056; www.sunsgz.com; B25-26 Yuejiang Xilu; 🕒7am-2am Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat; 🚊779, 765 (final stop))

The best of the lot in Zhujiang Pati, Sun's lets you sip cocktails on couches by the river or dance to electronic music.

Paddy Field

PUB

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8360 1379; 38 Hua Le Lu, 2nd fl, Central Plaza; 🕒11.30am-2.30pm & 4.30pm-2am Mon-Fri, 11.30am-2am Sat & Sun; **M**Taojin, exit A)

An old name in the city's drinking scene, this Irish pub is frequented for its top-notch beer and jovial atmosphere.

Shamian Clubhouse

BAR

(Shamian Huiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shamian Dajie; 🕒 11am-11pm; 📶; 🚇 Huangsha)

The 'Red Mansion' (c 1907), once known as 'Shamian's grandest mansion', fuses features of British colonial architecture such as colonnades and louvre windows with the Lingnan fondness for skylights. It has a small, clubby bar with long teak flooring.

LINGNAN CULTURE

Lingnan, literally 'South of the Ranges', refers to that region to the south of the five mountain ranges that separate the Yangzi River (central China) from the Pearl River (southern China). Traditionally Lingnan encompassed several provinces, but today it's become almost synonymous with Guangdong.

The term Lingnan was traditionally used by men of letters on the Yangzi side as a polite reference to the boonies, where 'mountains were tall and emperors out of sight'. These northerners regarded their southern cousins as less robust (physically and morally), more romantic and less civilised. But being far-flung had its benefits. Lingnan offered refuge to people not tolerated by the Middle Kingdom; and played host in various diasporas in Chinese history to migrants from the north, such as the Hakka in Meizhou. This also explains why some Cantonese words are closer in pronunciation to the ancient speech of the Chinese.

Culturally Lingnan was a hybrid and a late bloomer that often went on to reverse-influence the rest of the country. Its development was also fuelled by the ideas of the revolution to end feudalism. Boundaries between refined and pedestrian are relaxed and there's an open-mindedness towards modernity. For a long time in the Qing dynasty, Guangzhou was the only legal port for trade between China and the world. Interactions with the outside world infused the local culture with the foreign and the modern. Some of the most important political thinkers in modern China came from Lingnan, such as Kang Youwei and Sun Yatsen.

Lingnan culture is an important part of Cantonese culture and it manifests itself most notably in food, art and architecture, and Cantonese opera.

LINGNAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING (1900–50)

The Lingnan painters were an influential lot who ushered in a national movement in

art in the first half of the 20th century.

Traditionally, Chinese painters were literati well-versed in calligraphy, poetry and Confucian classics. These scholar-artists would later become imperial bureaucrats, and as they were often stationed somewhere far away from home, they expressed their nostalgia by recreating the landscapes of their childhood villages from memory.

The founding masters of the Lingnan School of Painting, however, studied abroad, where they were exposed to Japanese and European art. China, during the Qing dynasty, was being carved up by Western powers. Sharing the ideals of the revolutionaries, these artists devoted themselves to a revolution in art by combining traditional techniques with elements of Western and Japanese realist painting.

The New National Painting, as it came to be called, featured a bolder use of colours, more realism and a stronger sense of perspective – a style that was more accessible to the citizenry of China's new republic than the literati painting of the past.

You can see Lingnan paintings at the [Guangdong Museum of Art](#) and [Memorial Hall of the Lingnan School of Painting](#).

LINGNAN ARCHITECTURE

The Lingnan school of architecture is one of three major schools of modern Chinese architecture, alongside the Beijing and Shanghai schools. It was founded in the 1950s, though earlier structures exhibiting a distinctive local style had existed since the late Ming dynasty (1600s). The features of the Lingnan school are lucidity, openness and an organic incorporation of nature into built environments.

ANCIENT

Examples of this style of architecture include schools, ancestral halls and temples of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Chen Clan Academy in Guangzhou and Zumiao in Foshan are prime illustrations of this style.

Vernacular Lingnan-style houses are more decorative than their austere northern cousins. The 'wok-handle' houses (guo'er wu) in Licha Village near Zhaoqing have distinctive wok-handle-shaped roofs that also serve to prevent the spread of fire. You'll also see in Licha Village bas-relief sculpting and paintings (fudiao caihua), intricate and colourful, above windows or doors, portraying classical tales, birds, flowers and landscapes.

MODERN

An excellent example of this style of architecture, appearing in the late Qing dynasty, are the Xiguan houses on [Enning Lu](#) in Guangzhou, with their grey bricks and stained-glass windows. These windows were products of the marriage between Manchurian windows (manzhou chuang), simple contraptions consisting of paper overlaid with wood and coloured glass introduced to Guangzhou by Westerners. It's said that when a foreign merchant presented the empress dowager with a bead of coloured glass,

she was so dazzled by its beauty that she reciprocated with a pearl. Panxi Restaurant in Guangzhou and Yuyin Mountain Villa have Manchurian windows embedded with coloured glass.

Another example of modern Lingnan architecture are shophouses with arcades or qilou on the ground floor, a style that evolved from the arcades of southern Europe. You see them in Chayang Old Town in Meizhou and Chikan in Kaiping.

CONTEMPORARY

The garden-restaurants and garden-hotels that proliferated between the 1950s and 1990s are examples of contemporary architecture. Guangzhou's Garden Hotel, Guangzhou Restaurant and Panxi Restaurant all contain elaborate indoor gardens complete with trees and waterfalls, and make use of glass to blur the boundary between built and natural environments.

These indoor Edens were fashioned after the private Lingnan-style gardens of wealthy families, such as Liang Garden in Foshan, which together with the imperial gardens of Peking and the scholars' gardens of Jiangnan, constituted the three main types of Chinese gardens. Thanks to these architects, the privilege of having gardens in the interior was now available to all.

CANTONESE OPERA

Cantonese opera is a regional form of Chinese opera that evolved from theatrical forms of the north and neighbouring regions. Like Peking opera, it involves music, singing, martial arts, acrobatics and acting. There's elaborate face painting, glamorous period costumes and, for some of the roles, high-pitched falsetto singing. But compared to its northern cousin, it tends to feature more scholars than warriors in its tales of courtship and romance.

You don't have to understand or even like Cantonese opera to appreciate it as an important aspect of Cantonese culture – there's no shortage of related attractions, such as Bahe Academy and Luanyu Tang in Guangzhou, a festival, and a props speciality shop in Chaozhou.

If you do decide to catch a show at Culture Park in Guangzhou, those exotic strains could years later become the key that unlocks your memory of your travels in China.

CANTONESE CUISINE

There's a saying 'Good food is in Guangzhou' (shi zai Guangzhou). Regional bias aside, Cantonese food is very good. The most influential of the eight major regional cuisines of China, it's known for complex cooking methods, an obsession with freshness and the use of a wide range of ingredients.

Many Cantonese dishes depend on quick cooking over high heat – these require skills (versus patience over a stew) that are less common in other regional cuisines. Cantonese chefs are also masters at making new techniques sizzle in their language.

Dishes such as sweet and sour pork, crab shell au gratin and tempura-style prawns show an open-mindedness to foreign ideas.

When it comes to haute cuisine, even northern cooks would acknowledge the superiority of their Cantonese colleagues in making the best of expensive items such as abalone. Also, much of the costliest marine life to grace the Cantonese table, such as deep-sea fish and large prawns, simply don't grow in inland rivers.

Entertainment

Your best resource for entertainment in Guangzhou is www.gzstuff.com.

★ 191 Space

LIVE MUSIC

(191Space 191 Space Yinle Zhuti Jiuba  ;  8737 9375; www.191space.com;
191 Guangzhou Dadao Zhonglu;  8pm-2am;  Line 5, Wuyangcun, exit A)

Two steps from the metro exit, this is a throbbing dive that features live indie gigs from China and overseas every weekend.

Ping Pong

LIVE MUSIC

(Pingpang Kongjian ;  2829 6306; 60 Xianlie Donghenglu, Starhouse 60;
 6pm-2am)

This bohemian place is where you'll find live music, theatrical performances and art exhibitions. It's hard to find, though. Tell the taxi driver to drop you at the rear entrance of Xinghai Conservatory (Xinghai Yinyue Xueyuan Houmen) and make sure they haven't taken you to Xinghai Concert Hall on Ersha Island!

T Union

LIVE MUSIC

(Tu Kong Jian  ;  3659 7623; <http://weibo.com/uniontutu>; G/F, 361-365
Guangzhou Dadaozhong; 361-365  Yangji, exit B)

A rustic-looking cafe that hosts performances by local and overseas acts. The genre tends towards modern folk and singer-songwriter, but postrock and heavy metal have been featured too. It's next to a 7 Days Inn.

Fei Live House

LIVE MUSIC

(Fei Unit B4, 128 Yuancun Sihenglu, Redtory;  Line 3, Yuncun, exit B)

A new live-music space with an awesome sound system that just opened inside Redtory art village.

C Union

LIVE MUSIC

(Xiwo ;  3584 0144; 115 Shuiyin Lu;  7pm-2am)

Unpretentious C Union hosts a good mix of bands playing jazz, R&B and reggae. It's behind the Chengshihui building, in the Yuexiu District. Only accessible by taxi.

Guangzhou Opera House

THEATRE

(Guangzhou Dajuyuan  ;  3839 2666, 3839 2888; <http://gzdjy.org>; 1 Zhujiang Xilu;  9am-4.30pm, closed Mon;  Line 3, Zhujiang Xincheng, exit B1)

Guangdong's premier performance venue.



Shopping

TIT Creative Industry Zone

CLOTHING

(TIT TIT Chuangyi Yuan ; 397 Xingang Zhonglu;  10am-7pm;  Kecun, exit A)

This fashion village on the leafy site of a communist-era textile factory has boutiques selling a variety of locally designed clothing – office wear, modern Chinese garments, European brand lookalikes, and gauzy, lacy ultragirly dresses. There are also a couple of trendy cafes. Turn left from the metro exit and walk for five minutes.

Xiguan Antique Street

ANTIQUES

(Xiguan Guwancheng  ; Lizhiwan Lu;  Line 5, Zhongshan Balu)

This street sells everything from ceramic teapots to Tibetan rugs. Even if you're not in the mood to load up your pack with ceramic vases, it's a

wonderful place in which to browse. Note that most artefacts here are known to be fakes.

Fang Suo Commune

BOOKS

(Fangsuo [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 3868 2327; MU35, Tai Koo Hui, 383 Tianhe Lu; 🕒 10am-10pm;

🚇 Line 1, Shipaiqiao)

Occupying some 2000 sq metres in a classy mall, this elegant bookstore also sells (pricey) clothes, homewares and coffee. There are more than 90,000 titles, mostly Chinese, including books from Taiwan.

Information

Good maps of Guangzhou in both English and Chinese can be found at newsstands and bookshops.

EMERGENCY

Ambulance

MEDICAL

(☎ 120)

Fire

FIRE

(☎ 119)

Police

POLICE

(☎ 110)

INTERNET ACCESS

Most hotels provide free broadband internet access. Free wi-fi is available at all Guangdong branches of Starbucks, Fairwood (Dakuaihuo) and Cafe de Coral (Dajiale).

MEDICAL SERVICES

Can-Am International Medical Centre

HOSPITAL

(Jiamei Guoji Yiliao Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8386 6988; www.canamhealthcare.com;
5th fl, Garden Tower, Garden Hotel, 368 Huanshi Donglu)

Has English-speaking doctors, but you'll need to call ahead.

Guangzhou First Municipal People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Guangzhou Diyi Renmin Yiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8104 8888; 1 Panfu Lu)

Medical clinic for foreigners on the 1st floor.

MONEY

ATMs are available – most 24 hours – throughout Guangzhou.

American Express Guangzhou

EXCHANGE

(Meiguo Yuntong Guangzhou [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8331 1611; fax 8331 1616; Room 1004, Main
Tower, Guangdong International Hotel, 339 Huanshi Donglu; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Cashes and sells Amex travellers cheques.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8334 0998; 686 Renmin Beilu; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri,
to 4pm Sat & Sun)

Most branches change travellers cheques.

POST

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 151 Huanshi Xilu; 🕒 8am-8pm)

Located next to the train station.

TELEPHONE

China Telecom

TELEPHONE

(Zhongguo Dianxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 10000; 196 Huanshi Xilu; 🕒 9am-6pm)

Main branch is opposite the train station (eastern side of Renmin Beilu).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourism Administration of Guangzhou

TOURIST INFORMATION

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.visitgz.com; 325 Zhongshan Liulu)

Has 19 tourist information centres, including at the airport, at the train station and at 325 Zhongshan Liulu (open from 9am to 6pm).

Tourist Complaint Hotline

TOURIST INFORMATION

( 8666 6666)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Most hotels offer travel services that, for a small charge, can help you book tickets and tours.

China Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(CTS; Zhongguo Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  8333 6888; 8 Qiaoguang Lu;  8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun)

Located next to Hotel Landmark Canton (Huaxia Dajjudian).

WEBSITES

➔ **Delta Bridges Guangzhou** (www.deltabridges.com/users/guangzhou)

Listings of events around town.

➔ **Guangzhou Stuff** (www.gzstuff.com) Entertainment listings, forums and classifieds.

➔ **Life of Guangzhou** (www.lifeofguangzhou.com) Yellow pages for visitors and expats.

Getting There & Away

AIR

China Southern Airlines

AIRLINE

(Zhongguo Nanfang Hangkong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  95539; www.cs-air.com; 181 Huanshi

Xilu; 🕒 24hr)

Frequent flights to major cities in China include Guilin (¥660), Shanghai (¥1280) and Beijing (¥1700); also numerous international destinations.

BUS

Guangzhou has many long-distance bus stations with services to destinations in Guangdong, southern Fujian, eastern Guangxi and further afield. There are frequent buses to Foshan (¥20, 45 minutes), Kaiping (¥56, two hours), Shenzhen (¥60, two hours) and Zhuhai (¥60, two hours) from Tianhe bus station, Fangcun bus station, Guangzhou East coach terminal and Guangdong long-distance bus station.

Other destinations:

- ➔ **Chaozhou** ¥170 to ¥180, six hours, hourly from Tianhe station
- ➔ **Guilin** ¥160, 10 hours, eight daily from Guangdong long-distance bus station (8.30am to 11.30pm)
- ➔ **Haikou** ¥250 to ¥280, 12 hours, seven daily from Guangdong long-distance bus station
- ➔ **Nanning** ¥180, 10 hours, five daily from Guangdong long-distance bus station
- ➔ **Qingyuan** ¥30 to ¥40, 1½ hours, every half-hour from Tianhe station
- ➔ **Shantou** ¥180 to ¥200, five hours, every 30 minutes from Tianhe station
- ➔ **Shaoguan** ¥70 to ¥80, four hours, every 45 minutes from Guangdong long-distance bus station
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥220, nine hours, every 45 minutes from Tianhe station
- ➔ **Zhaoqing** ¥35 to ¥50, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes from Tianhe station

Deluxe buses ply the Guangzhou–Shenzhen freeway to Hong Kong, which is the easiest route to travel. Buses (from ¥100 to ¥110, 3½hours) to Hong Kong and its airport leave from Hotel Landmark Canton near Haizhu Sq station or China Hotel a Marriott hotel near Yuexiu Park station every 30 minutes.

Buses through Zhuhai to Macau (¥75, every hour, 2½ hours) leave frequently from Tianhe station (7.40am to 8pm).

Tianhe Bus Station

BUS

(Tianhe Keyunzhan 📞 3708-5070; www.tianhebus.com; Yanling Lu; **M** Tianhe Keyunzhan)

Most frequent departures to destinations in Guangdong; accessible by metro.

Fangcun Bus Station

BUS

(Fangcun Keyunzhan 📞 3708 5070; www.fangcunbus.com; Huadi Dadao; **M** Kengkou)

Accessible by metro (Kengkou station).

Guangzhou East Coach Terminal

BUS

(Guangzhou Dongzhan Keyunzhan **GOOGLE MAP**; Linhe Xilu)

Behind Guangzhou East Station. Good for destinations within Guangdong; departures aren't as frequent as from other stations.

Guangdong Long-Distance Bus Station

BUS

(Guangdong Sheng Qiche Keyunzhan **MAP** **GOOGLE MAP**; Huanshi Xilu)

To the left of the Guangzhou Railway Station (metro). There's a smaller long-distance bus station (Guangzhou Shiqichezhan) over the footbridge.

TRAIN

Guangzhou's three major train stations serve destinations all over China.

[China Travel Service](#), next to Hotel Landmark Canton, books train tickets up to five days in advance for ¥10 to ¥20.

From **Guangzhou Main Train Station:** (Guangzhou Zhan **MAP**)

GOOGLE MAP; Huanshi Xilu; **M** Line 2, Guangzhou Huochezhan)

➔ **Lhasa** ¥818, 54 hours, one every two days (11.46pm)

➔ **Shaoguan** ¥38, 2½ hours, frequent services

➔ **Zhaoqing** ¥19 to ¥42, two hours, 14 daily

High-speed trains leave from **Guangzhou South Station** (Guangzhou Nanzhan Shibi, Panyu) in Panyu:

- ➔ **Changsha** ¥314, 2½ hours, frequent
- ➔ **Qingyuan** ¥40, 25 minutes, frequent
- ➔ **Shaoguan** ¥104, 50 minutes, frequent
- ➔ **Shenzhen North Station** ¥75, 45 minutes
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥464, four hours, frequent

Light rail goes to Zhuhai (¥34, one hour).

To get to Guangzhou South Station, take metro line 2 from the main train station (¥6, 34 minutes) or one of the South Station Express buses (Nanzhan Kuaixian) that leave from Tianhe Sports Centre metro station, Garden Hotel and Hotel Landmark Canton (¥14, 45 minutes).

From **Guangzhou East station** (Guangzhou Dongzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#);  Line 1, Guangzhou Dongzhan):

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥250 to ¥450, 22 hours, one daily (4.11pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥220 to ¥380, 16 hours, one daily (6.06pm)

The station is used more for bullet trains to Shenzhen (¥80, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes, 6.15am to 10.32pm) and a dozen direct trains to Hong Kong (¥190, HK\$190, two hours, 8.19am to 9.32pm).

Getting Around

Greater Guangzhou extends some 20km east to west and north to south. The metro is the speediest way to get around.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

[Baiyun International Airport](#) is 28km north of the city. Airport shuttle buses (¥17 to ¥32, 35 to 70 minutes, every 20 to 30 minutes, 5am to 11pm) leave from half-a-dozen locations, including Garden Hotel and Tianhe bus station. A taxi to/from the airport will cost about ¥150.

Metro line 2 links the airport's south terminal (Airport South station;

Jichang Nan) and Guangzhou East station. The ride takes 40 minutes (¥7, from 6.10am to 11pm).

BUS

Guangzhou has a large network of motor buses and bus rapid transport (BRT; ¥2).

METRO

Guangzhou has 10 metro lines in full service, all with free maps available. Operating hours are approximately from 6.20am to 11.30pm and fares cost from ¥2 to ¥14.

Transit passes (*yang cheng tong*) are available at metro stations from ¥70 (deposit ¥20 included). The deposit is refundable at designated stations, including Tiyu Xilu and Gongyuan Qian. This pass can be used on all public transport, including yellow taxis. There are also one-day (¥20) and three-day (¥50) metro passes. Both allow unlimited use within the specified period and do not require a deposit.

TAXI

Taxis are abundant but demand is high. Peak hours are from 8am to 9am, and around lunch and dinner. Yellow or red cabs are driven by local drivers; others by migrant drivers who may not know the city well. Flag fall is ¥10 for the first 2.5km; ¥2.6 for every additional kilometre, with a ¥1 fuel surcharge.

Around Guangzhou

★ Yuyin Mountain Villa

GARDENS

(Yuyin Shanfang 📞 3482 2187; Nancun, Panyu; adult/child ¥18/9; 🕒 8am-6pm; 🚇 Line 1, Dashi, exit A)

One of Guangdong's four famous classical gardens, this graceful property was built in 1871 by an official of the Qing court. It incorporates the landscaping styles of Suzhou and Hangzhou, and the features of Lingnan architecture. The result is a photogenic collection of pavilions, terraces, halls,

bridges and lakes. It also has a dessert shop selling ginger milk curd (*jiangzhi zhuangnai*).

The Waterside Pavilion commands a different vista on each of its eight sides; the Deep Willow Room features ancient art and coloured 'Manchu' windows (*manzhou chuang*) aka 'four-season windows' (*siji chuang*), which create an illusion of changing seasons by altering the hue of the outside scenery.

Turn left when you leave the metro. There's a stop for the Route 8 feeder bus to Qixinggong Gongyuan (¥2). Disembark at Nanshan Gongyuan, the 20th stop, after half an hour. Cross to the opposite and leafy side of the road. Bus 30 (¥2) from the stop there takes you to the entrance of Yuyin Mountain Villa just one stop away.

Foshan

☎0757 / Pop Six million

An hour-long bus ride will take day-trippers from Guangzhou to this city. Foshan (literally 'Buddha Hill') was famous for its ceramics in the Ming dynasty. Today, it's better known as the birthplace of two kung fu icons, Wong Fei Hung and Ip Man.

THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL LEGEND

Foshan-born Wong Fei Hung (1847–1924) is one of China's best-known folk heroes. Although a consummate gongfu (kung fu) master in his lifetime, he didn't become widely known until his story was merged with fiction in countless movies made since 1949, most by Hong Kong directors, such as Hark Tsui's *Once Upon a Time in China*, starring Jet Li. Sadly, Wong spent his later years in desolation, after his son was murdered and his martial-arts school was destroyed by fire. Regardless, an astonishing 106 movies (and counting!) have celebrated this son of Foshan, resulting in the world's longest movie series and the creation of a national legend.

Another Foshan hero, Ip Man (1893–1972) rose to fame as a Wing Chun master at the outset of WWII. He fled to Hong Kong in 1949 where he founded the first Wing Chun school. His most famous student was Bruce Lee. Ip Man was immortalised by

Wong Kar-wai's award-winning *The Grandmaster* and a series of semibiographical movies starring Donnie Yen.

Sights

Zumiao

TAOIST TEMPLE

( 8229 3723; www.fszumiao.com; 21 Zumiao Lu; admission ¥20, combo with Ancient Nanfeng Kiln ¥35;  8.30am-5.30pm;  Zumiao, exit A)

The 11th-century Zumiao temple is believed to be the site where Cantonese opera flourished. The art is still performed today during festivals to entertain the gods, and the tourists. Sharing the complex are a Confucius temple (c1911) and memorial halls dedicated to two martial artists born in Foshan – Wong Fei Hung (aka Huang Fei Hong) and Ip Man.

There are daily performances of kung fu (10am, 2pm and 3pm) and lion dance (10.30am, 2.30pm and 3.30pm). The temple runs martial arts classes for children every summer. Call 8222 1680 for details.

Liang Garden

GARDENS

(Liang Yuan  8224 1279; Songfeng Lu; admission ¥10;  8.30am-5.30pm;  205, 212)

This tranquil residence of a family that produced painters and calligraphers was built during the Qing dynasty. Designed in a Lingnan style, it delights with ponds, willow-lined pathways and, in summer, trees heavy with wax apple and jackfruit. Like Yuyin Mountain Villa near Guangzhou, it's one of the four great classical gardens. Liang Garden is north of Renshou Temple and 300m north of the Bank of China (Zhongguo Yinhang).

Nanfeng Ancient Kiln

KILN

(Nanfeng Guzao  8271 1798; 6 Gaomiao Lu, Shiwan; admission ¥25;  9am-5.30pm;  137)

Shiwan, 2km from downtown Foshan, was once China's most important ceramics production centre. Much of the Ming-dynasty pottery you see at

museums comes from here (those in shops nearby, however, are mass-produced copies). Two ancient ‘dragon kilns’ of more than 30m length are set in this lovely complex with meandering stone-paved paths.

Renshou Temple

BUDDHIST

(Renshou Si  8225 3053; 9 Zumiao Lu;  8am-5pm;  1, 2B, 5, 11)

This former Ming monastery remains an active place of worship today. Inside, you’ll find a pagoda built in 1656, and the **Foshan Folk Arts Studio**, featuring pretty paper-cut art.

Foshan Lingnan Tiandi

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Tiandi Lu, Chancheng Qu;  11am-9pm;  101, 105)

A photogenic collection of restored medicinal shops, Chinese liquor stores and old villas that are occupied by swanky boutiques, upmarket eateries and trendy bars.

Eating

Healthy Buddha Vegetarian

CANTONESE, VEGETARIAN

(Jiankang Puti Sushi  8230 2836; mains ¥18-35;  lunch & dinner; ;  1, 2b, 5, 10, 11)

This vegetarian restaurant on the property of Renshou Temple offers great value for money.

Yingji Noodle Shop

NOODLES

(Yingji Mianjia  3171 2533; 116 Lianhua Lu; noodles ¥5-10;  7am-11pm)

This excellent noodle shop opposite Lianhua Supermarket (Lianhua Chaoshi) is the go-to place in Foshan for noodles with shrimp wonton (*xianxia yuntunmian*).

Shunde Double Layer Milk Pudding

DESSERT

(Shunde Shuangpinai 31 Zumiao Lu; ¥10-25;  9.30am-10pm summer, to 9.30pm winter;  Zumiao,

exit A)

This dessert shop sells the popular southern Chinese dessert 'double layer' milk pudding, so-called because of the layer of milk skin on the surface. It can be eaten hot or cold.

Entertainment

AD Livehouse

LIVE MUSIC

(Livehouse; Xiyuan Livehouse  139 2991 1129; Bldg 5, Xijie, Poly Canal Plaza, Denghu Xilu, Nanhai District;, 1  8.30am-2am; )

This large and out-of-the-way bar with a hardcore sound system has live music from 10pm every night. Performances are usually by a local band, but every month or so overseas acts feature in various genres. A cab from downtown Foshan costs less than ¥35.

Getting There & Around

Buses leave from **Foshan bus station** (Foshan Sheng Qichezhan Fenjiang Zhonglu), 400m south of the train station:

- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥75 to ¥90, 2½ hours, every 30 minutes
- ➔ **Zhuhai** ¥70, three hours, every 30 to 60 minutes

Trains go to Guangzhou (¥9 to ¥24, 30 minutes, 21 daily).

The metro runs between Guangzhou and Foshan on the Guangfo line (¥6, 30 minutes). There's a direct express train to Hong Kong (¥210, 2½ hours, 4.13pm) and at 10.42pm from Kowloon.

Buses 101 and 134 (¥2) link the train station to Zumiao and Shiwan. Taxis start at ¥8 for the first 2km; ¥2.6 for every addition 1km.

Kaiping

☞ 0750 / Pop 680,000

Kaiping, 140km southwest of Guangzhou, is home to one of the most arresting human-constructed attractions in Guangdong – the Unesco-crowned *diaolou*, eccentric watchtowers featuring a fusion of Eastern and Western architectural styles. Out of the approximately 3000 original *diaolou*, only 1833 remain.

Downtown Kaiping is pleasant, especially the section near the Tanjiang River, where you'll see people fishing next to mango and wampee trees.

Kaiping is also the home of many overseas Chinese. Currently, 720,000 people from the county are living overseas – 40,000 more than its local population.

PIGLETS FOR SALE

The mid-19th century saw Guangdong in a state of despair, stalked by famine and revolt. Meanwhile, slavery was outlawed in most Western countries, creating a need to recruit cheap labour for the exploitation of the New World. Conditions were ripe for many unskilled workers from Taishan (where Kaiping was located) to seek opportunities for a better life overseas.

Disingenuous recruiters promised good pay and working conditions, but in reality the workers were made to work as coolies under deplorable conditions on the sugarcane fields of South America, on farms in Southeast Asia, and in gold mining and rail construction in North America. The coolie trade was known in Cantonese as *maai ju jai* – 'selling piglets'.

Of the nine million Chinese workers who left home in the mid-19th to early 20th centuries, many died, but a handful made a fortune, becoming wealthy 'overseas Chinese', a powerful community that often brought home exotic ideas that were assimilated into the local culture.

Sights

A combo ticket for seven sights, including Li Garden and the villages of Zili, Jinjiangli and Majianglong, costs ¥180. It's only available at Li Garden and Zili village. The price for just Li Garden and one village is ¥150. A village

alone costs from ¥50 to ¥80. Some towers charge an extra ¥5 to ¥10 to let you in.

★ Zili

VILLAGE

(Zili Cun 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

Zili, 11km west of Kaiping, has the largest collection of *diaolou* historic watchtowers, though only a few of the 15 are open to the public. The most stunning is **Mingshi Lou**, which has a verandah with Ionic columns and a hexagonal pavilion on its roof. It appeared in the film *Let the Bullets Fly*. **Yunhuan Lou** has four towers known as ‘swallow nests’, each with embrasures, cobblestones and a water cannon.

Next to the village is Fang Clan’s Deng Lou, aka Light Tower, because of its powerful searchlight. Admission is free.

Jinjiangli Historic Village

VILLAGE

(Jinjiangli Cun 🕒 9am-5pm)

The highlights in this village, 20km south of Kaiping, are the privately run **Ruishi Lou** (admission ¥20) and **Shengfeng Lou**. The former (c 1923) is Kaiping’s tallest *diaolou* (historic watchtower) and comprises nine storeys, topped off with a Byzantine-style roof and a Roman dome. The latter is one of very few *diaolou* that had a European architect.

In nearby Nanxing village, Nanxing Xie Lou watchtower tilts severely to one side, with its central axis over 2m off-centre.

Li Garden

HISTORIC SITE

(Li Yuan 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

About 15 minutes by taxi from Kaiping, Li Garden has a fortified mansion built in 1936 by a wealthy Chinese American. The interiors, featuring Italianate motifs, and the gardens with their artificial canals, footbridges and dappled pathways, are delightful.

Diaolou watchtowers here include the oldest of the historic towers,

Yinglong Lou, found in Sanmenli village, and the fortified villas of **Majianglong** (Majianglong) village.

Chikan

VILLAGE

()

The charming old town of Chikan, 10km southwest of Kaiping, has streets of shophouses with arcades on the ground floor flanking the Tanjiang River. These distinctive *qilou* buildings were built by overseas Cantonese merchants in the 1920s. Bus 6 from Yici bus station takes you to Chikan.

Fengcai Hall

HISTORIC SITE

(Fengcai Tang admission ¥5; 🕒 9am-4.30pm)

Not a typical ancestral hall, this compound built in 1906 retains an exquisite southern Chinese architectural style, but with Western elements eccentrically blended. The complex is hidden inside a school 1.5km south of Changsha bus station. Bus 2 from either Changsha or Yici bus stations takes you to Fengcai Zhongxue.

KAIPING'S BIZARRE TOWERS

Scattered across Kaiping's 20km periphery are diaolou – multistorey watchtowers and fortified residences displaying a flamboyant mix of European, Chinese and Moorish architectural styles. The majority were built in the early 20th century by villagers who made a fortune working as coolies overseas. They brought home fanciful architectural ideas they'd seen in real life and on postcards, and built the towers as fortresses to protect their families from bandits, flooding and Japanese troops.

The oldest diaolou were communal watchtowers built by several families in a village. Each family was allocated a room within the citadel, where all its male members would go to spend the night to avoid being kidnapped by bandits. These narrow towers had sturdy walls, iron gates and ports for defence and observation. The youngest diaolou were also watchtowers, but ones equipped with searchlight and alarm. They are located at the entrances to villages.

More than 60% of diaolou, however, combined residential functions with defence. Constructed by a single family, they were spacious and featured a mix of decorative

motifs. As the builders had no exposure to European architectural traditions, they took liberties with proportions, resulting in outlandish buildings that seem to have leapt out of an American folk-art painting or a Miyazaki cartoon.

These structures sustain a towerlike form for the first few floors, then, like stoic folk who have not forgotten to dream, let loose a riot of arches and balustrades, Egyptian columns, domes, cupolas, corner turrets, Chinese gables and Grecian urns.

Sleeping & Eating

Staying overnight in Kaiping allows you to give its sights the attention they deserve.

Many villagers in Zili village serve rustic dishes cooked with home-grown ingredients inside their homes. Popular items include free-range chicken (*zoudiji*) for ¥28 a catty (jin), and rice cooked with baby eel (*huangshan fan*; ¥70).

Pan Tower Hotel

HOTEL

(Tanjung Bandao Jiudian  233 3333; www.pantower.com; 2 Zhongyin Lu; r ¥800-1800, ste ¥1800-2400;  )

The place to stay in Kaiping. It's on an islet on the Tanjiang River and only accessible by taxi (¥12 from Changsha bus station, five minutes away). Offers discounts of 50% to 60%.

Tribe of Diaomin

HOTEL

(Diaomin Buluo  0750 261 6222; 126 Henan Lu, Chikan; dm per person ¥50, r ¥110-300; )

An old building right by Tanjiang River in Chikan has been turned into a pleasant backpacker hostel by a bicycle club. You can rent one of the 100-plus bikes for a full day of sightseeing for ¥50 to ¥80.

Wilson Hotel

HOTEL

(Wei'ershun Jiudian  220 8888; www.wilsonhotel.com.cn; 70 Musha Rd; r ¥ 620-880;   )

A centrally located hotel inside a shopping mall, Wilson has 146 neat,

spacious and slightly outmoded guestrooms. It offers good value if you don't mind the human traffic from the mall. It's a 15-minute walk from Yici and Changsha bus stations, or a 7 motorcycle taxi ride.

Chaojiangchun Restaurant

CHINESE

(Chaojiangchun Jiulou 📞0750 221 9963; 114 Guangming Lu; mains ¥25-90; 🕒11am-10.30pm)

This excellent restaurant serves the local speciality – braised wild-grown goose (*gouzai e*). The steamed tofu with shredded taro and ground pork (*rousui yusi zheng doufu*) and salt-baked chicken (*shousiji*) are also delicious.

i Getting There & Around

Kaiping has two bus stations (www.bus.ko.com.cn) that are linked by local buses 7 and 13: **Yici bus station** (Yici zongzhan 📞221 3126; Mucun Lu) and **Changsha bus station** (Changsha qichezhan 📞233 3442; Xijiao Lu). Both run frequent services:

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥60, 2½ hours, every 40 minutes (6.30am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Hong Kong** HK\$150, four hours, three to four times daily
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥90, three to 3½ hours, every 45 minutes (7.30am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Zhuhai** ¥50 to ¥70, 2½ to three hours, every 40 minutes (7am to 7.43pm)

From both Yici and Changsha bus stations, local buses (from ¥2 to ¥5) go to Chikan and some of the historic *diaolou* watchtowers. But as the *diaolou* are scattered over several counties, your best bet is to hire a taxi for the day. A full day costs around ¥600, but you can negotiate.

Yangjiang

📞0662 / Pop 2.4 million

Yangjiang is a city on the southwestern coast of Guangdong. While downtown Yangjiang is unexciting, picturesque Hailing Island (Hailing Dao), located 50km or an hour's drive away, is home to the Maritime Silk Road

Museum and some of the finest beaches in the province.

If money is not an issue, stay on Hailing Island – in the up-and-coming resort area near the museum or in lively Zhapo resort town. Downtown Yangjiang, though, has the cheapest sleeping options.

Sights

Maritime Silk Road Museum of Guangdong

MUSEUM

(Guangdong Haishang Sichou Zhilu Bowuguan  368 1111; www.msrmuseum.com; admission ¥80, free English audioguide;  9am-5pm, closed 1st & 2nd Mar & Nov)

Sitting right on Shili Yintan beach, this museum is purpose-built to house an 800-year-old Song-dynasty shipwreck that was wholly salvaged near the island. The remains of the 30m-long merchant vessel (*Nanhai No 1*;), and much of the 70,000 pieces of merchandise on board, now rest in a sealed glass tank. The displays are supplemented by temporary exhibitions of treasures from dynastic China.

The ship is believed to have been headed for the Middle East or Africa when it sank. The wreckage has significant archaeological value, though only a few hundred pieces of the porcelain, gold and copper treasures have been put on display. Excavation is being carried out in phases.

Shili Yintan

BEACH

(southern shore of Hailing Island, Jiangcheng District;  8am-7pm, 6.30am-6pm summer)

Literally '10 miles of silver beach', this is the most beautiful and the longest stretch of coastline in the area. It's where you'll find the Maritime Silk Road Museum of Guangdong.

Dajiaowan

BEACH

( 8am-7pm, 6.30am-6pm summer)

A ¥50 ticket gives you two days' unlimited entry to the centrally located Dajiaowan beach in the lively Zhapo area. Tickets to the beach are also sold

at a water world at Dajiaowan, but they're good for only a day. Lockers and showering facilities are available for ¥10 and ¥5 respectively. It's 10 minutes away from beautiful Shili Yintan beach on Hailing Island by pedicab.

Sleeping & Eating

Zhapo on Hailing Island has plenty of seafood restaurants that are all quite similar. Pick out what you want from the tanks, agree on the price, and it'll be cooked for you. Generally, seafood items cost from ¥28 to ¥230 per 500g/1 *catty* (*jin*); nonseafood dishes go for between ¥20 and ¥90. Most eateries pay drivers commission for bringing customers – it's better to choose a restaurant yourself.

7 Days Inn

HOTEL

(7 Qitian Liansuo Jiudian  321 7888; www.7daysinn.cn; 37 Dongfeng Erlu, Yangjiang.; r ¥140-195; )

Located in Yangjiang, this place has cheerful rooms, and wi-fi in the lobby.

Jinhaili Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinhaili Dajjudian  389 6688; fax 389 5599; 23 Haibin Lu, Zhapo Town; r ¥260-320)

This affordable option in the upmarket Zhapo area has a gloomy lobby and big decent rooms (it's a designated host for government officials). In July and August prices go up by 30% on Fridays and double on Saturdays.

Hailing Crowne Plaza

LUXURY HOTEL

(Hailingdao Huangguan Jiari Jiudian  386 8888; www.ihg.com/crowneplaza; Shili Silver Beach; ¥ 2628-3800;     )

The most luxurious place to stay in Yangjiang offers 313 top-notch rooms, its own stretch of beach, a spa, swimming pools, BBQs and child-minding services. In July and August expect to share all of the above with hordes of moneyed local tourists who follow rules of etiquette that may be different from yours. Packages and off-season discounts are often available.

i Getting There & Away

Yangjiang's **main bus station** (Yangjiang qiche keyun zongzhan ☎316 9999; Xiping Belu) has direct services to the following:

- ➔ **Foshan** ¥95, three hours, six daily (8.30am to 4.50pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥65 to ¥93, 3½ hours, frequent (6.05am to 7.20pm)
- ➔ **Hong Kong** ¥170 to ¥260, six hours, four daily (8am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥120, four to five hours, 14 daily (8am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Zhuhai** ¥90, 3½ to four hours, frequent (8am to 7.30pm)

No 2 bus station (Yangjiang er yun qi che zhan ☎342 9168; 666 Shiwan Beilu) has daily direct services to the following:

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥85, three hours, frequent (6.10am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Kaiping** ¥50, two hours, five daily (8.20am to 4.40pm)
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥135, four hours, 11 daily (7.40am to 8.30pm)

Kaiping's Yici bus station has two buses daily (from 12.55pm and 5.15pm) to Yangjiang's main bus station and six (from 8.45am to 4.10pm) to its No 2 station (¥36).

i Getting Around

Local buses run every 20 minutes to Zhapo from No 2 station (¥13, one hour, 6.30am to 9pm) and the main station (6am to 9.30pm, one hour, ¥13 to ¥20).

Zhapo and the museum area on Hailing Island are connected by pedicabs (¥10 to ¥15, 10 minutes). A taxi from downtown Yangjiang to the Maritime Silk Road Museum of Guangdong costs ¥100 (one hour).

Zhaoqing

☎0758 / Pop 3.9 million

Bordered by lakes and limestone formations, the leisurely town of Zhaoqing

in western Guangdong province was where Jesuit Mateo Ricci first set foot in China in 1583.



Zhaoqing

📍 Sights

1 City Walls

B4

2 Plum Monastery Buddhist

A4

3 [Seven Star Crag Park](#) C1

Sleeping

4 [Shanshui Trends Hotel](#) A3

Eating

5 [Bohailou](#) B1

6 [Kuaihuolin Restaurant](#) A2

Sights

Seven Star Crag Park

PARK

(Qixing Yan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 230 2838; admission ¥78; 🕒 8am-5.30pm)

The landscape of limestone hills, grottoes and willow-graced lakes in this massive park is beautiful, so it's a pity the authorities try so hard – the caves are illuminated like nightclubs and boat rides cost extra (¥15 to ¥60). The easiest way to navigate between sights is to use the battery-operated carts (¥15 to ¥30 per person).

Plum Monastery Buddhist

BUDDHIST

(Meian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 283 3284; Mei'an Lu, Duanzhou Qu; 🕒 8.30am-4pm)

This dignified temple is dedicated to the Father of Chinese Zen Buddhism – Master Huineng, who was said to be fond of plum blossoms. Born in Zhaoqing during the Tang dynasty, Master Huineng planted plum trees all over the hillside during a sojourn here, and dug a well (look for the one with petals carved into its parapet) to irrigate them.

The temple's plum trees bloom between winter and spring. A pedicab from downtown Zhaoqing costs ¥20.

City Walls

HISTORIC SITE

(Gu Cheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Zhaoqing's city walls were built during several periods – the lowest part with large mud bricks are Song dynasty; above that is Ming; then a Qing extension featuring smaller bricks. Anything above that was built yesterday.

Interestingly, there are alleyways and dwellings at the top. The **River View Tower** and **Cloud-Draped Tower** here are only open for dignitaries.

Sleeping & Eating

Shanshui Trends Hotel

BUSINESS HOTEL

(Shanshui Shishang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 285 9999; 36 Xijiang Beilu; d/tw ¥168-308, tr from ¥ 338, ste, from ¥ 438; 🚫 📶 @ 📶)

A decent option for the price and location, if you don't mind slightly thin walls (pray for a quiet neighbour) and small TV screens. There are more than 200 rooms in this hotel adjacent to a shopping centre.

Bohailou

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 230 2708; Xinghu Xilu; dim sum ¥6-32; 🕒 11.30am-1.30pm, 5.30-7.30pm)

This restaurant with lake views serves Zhaoqing delicacies such as sticky rice dumplings (*guozhengzong*), containing beans, pork, chestnuts and egg yolk, and fox nuts buns (*cishi bao*). It's a 10-minute walk from the western entrance of Seven Star Crag Park. Bus 19 (¥2) from the entrance passes here (Bohailou).

Kuaihuolin Restaurant

CANTONESE

(Kuaihuolin Shijia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 285 1332; Xijiang Beilu, next to fruit market; 🕒 11am-2.30pm, 5pm-2am)

if you're hankering for seafood, this restaurant near a fruit market will overwhelm with its options. It's wildly popular and, at peak times, can get

slightly chaotic. But the food is great. We recommend the broiled shrimp (*baizhuo shaxia*; 24) and the fish soup with tofu and parsley (*yanqian doufu huangguyu tang*; 37). Chinese picture menu.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Duanzhou Wulu; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jianshe Sanlu; 🕒 9am-8pm)

China Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(CTS; Zhaoqing Zhongguo Luxingshe [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 226 8090; Duanzhou Wulu; 🕒 8am-9pm)

Getting There & Away

BUS

The **main bus station** (Zhaoqing Qiche Keyun Zongzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 223 5173; Duanzhou Silu) runs frequent services to the following:

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥55, 1½ hours, frequent (6.30am to 9.30pm)
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥100, three hours, frequent (7.30am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Zhuhai** ¥100, four hours, 13 daily (7.40am to 6.30pm)

The **east bus station** (Zhaoqing Chengdong Keyunzhan ☎ 271 8474; Duanzhou Sanlu), 1.5km east of the main bus station, has services to Kaiping (¥55, 2½ hours).

TRAIN

The fastest train to Guangzhou (¥17 to ¥26, every 30 minutes) takes two hours. The direct express train to Hong Kong (HK\$235, four hours) departs at 3.10pm.

Getting Around

Bus 12 links the train station (¥2, every 10 minutes) and main bus station with the ferry pier. A taxi to the train station from the centre costs about ¥15.

Around Zhaoqing

Dinghu Shan

The reserve of Dinghu Shan, northeast of Zhaoqing, offers great walks among lush vegetation, rare trees and roaring waterfalls, and makes for a relaxing day trip.

Bus 21 (¥2) goes to Dinghu Shan from the local bus station in Zhaoqing.

Dinghu Shan Reserve

NATURE RESERVE

(Dinghushan Ziran Baohu Qu  262 2510; 21 Paifang Lu; admission ¥78;  8am-6pm)

The 11.3 sq km Dinghu Shan Reserve lies 18km northeast of Zhaoqing. A boat (¥35) will ferry you to a butterfly reserve on a tiny wooded island on Ding Lake (Dinghu). From there, a guide will take you on an hour-long hike through a scenic forest with ponds and waterfalls, to emerge near Baoding Garden (Baoding Yuan), which has the world's largest *ding*, a three-legged ceremonial cauldron. Battery-operated carts (¥20) are useful for navigating the reserve.

Qingyun Temple (Qingyun Si) may look a little gaudy, but the site was built in 1636, making it one of Guangdong's four oldest temples (*guangdong si da mingsha*). What's more, it's surrounded by towering ancient banyans, and it's where you'll find a great vegetarian restaurant.

★ Qingyun Vegetarian Restaurant

VEGETARIAN

(Qingyuns Zhai Tang  262 1585; mains ¥38-135;  8am-2pm, 5-7pm; )

An excellent but pricey eatery in Dinghu Shan Reserve that serves the

famous Dinghu Vegetarian Dish (Dinghu Shangsù; ¥68), supposedly an invention by monks around here. It also does an exceptional sweet-and-sour pork (*tangcu gularou*; ¥50) with fried winter melon, no less.

Things to note: when servers give you tea, make sure it's regular tea (putongcha; ¥3 per person) and not exotic varieties that will inflate your bill by ¥30 to ¥100; snacks left at your table also cost money.

Bagua Villages

Two villages, exceptional for their shape and feng shui, make great excursions from Zhaoqing. These '*bagua* villages' (Bagua Cun) are designed according to *bagua*, an octagon-shaped Taoist symbol with eight trigrams representing different phases in life.

Licha Village

VILLAGE

(Licha Cun admission ¥25; 🕒 8.15am-5.30pm)

At 700-year-old Licha village, 21km east of Zhaoqing, houses, many with wok-handle roofs and bas-relief sculptures, radiate from a taichi (a symbol of yin and yang) on a central terrace, turning the village into a maze. Most residents have emigrated to Australia; only the elders remain. Bus 315 (¥10, 40 minutes) leaves for Licha from behind Qiaoxi bus station in Zhaoqing every 15 minutes.

Xiangang Village

VILLAGE

(Xiangang Cun)

Fifteen kilometres southeast of downtown Zhaoqing, Xiangang village, founded in the Ming dynasty, is a large and lively '*bagua*' village, and has a market at its entrance. Its 16 ancestral halls, some opulent, only open on the first and 15th day of the lunar month. Board bus 308 (¥10, one hour) at Qiaoxi bus station in Zhaoqing to get here.

Qingyuan

 0763 / Pop 3.7 million

The industrial town of Qingyuan is where to set off for a scenic jaunt down the Beijiang River. The secluded temple in Feilai and the monastery in Feixia are the main attractions. Four-hour cruises (¥380 to ¥600 for the whole boat, depending on size) leave from Qingyuan's Wuyi dock (Wuyi Matou).

You can buy seafood from the floating market at Feixia and your boatman will cook it for you at no extra charge. Make sure you do so after sightseeing. Boat operators are known to return produce to vendors in exchange for cheaper versions, when you're not looking.

Sights

Feilai

BUDDHIST

(admission ¥15)

Cruise along the Beijiang River from Qingyuan's Wuyi dock (Wuyi Matou), heading past ancient pagodas to the Buddhist temple complex of Feilai. Though it has been around for more than 1400 years, the complex was destroyed by a landslide in 1997 and subsequently rebuilt. The mountain-top pavilion offers terrific views of the river gorge below.

Feixia

MONASTERY

(admission ¥50;  7.30am-5.30pm)

The admission fee to the monastery at Feixia, 4km upstream from Feilai, includes an eight-minute ride (every 15 minutes) to the Taoist relics uphill. Cangxia Ancient Cave (c 1863) is a maze of whispering shadows, abandoned courtyards and crumbling alleys connected by arboured paths. Further up, there is a pagoda; further down, a nunnery.

Getting There & Around

To visit Feilai and Feixia on a day trip from Guangzhou, catch one of the 10 high-speed trains from Guangzhou South Station that stop in Qingyuan (¥25 to ¥40, 30 minutes). On arrival, it's a 15-minute walk to Qingyuan's Wuyi dock (Wuyi Matou). Turn right as you leave the station.

Buses run every 25 minutes from Guangzhou's long-distance bus stations (¥37 to ¥42, 70 to 80 minutes, 6.30am to 9pm).

Nanling National Forest Park

 0751 / Pop 2000

Lying 285km north of Guangzhou, the Nanling (Southern Mountains) ranges stretch from Guangxi to Jiangxi provinces, separating the Pearl River from the Yangzi River.

The range in Guangdong, home to the only ancient forests in the province, is a reserve for old-growth blue pines, a species unique to this part of Guangdong.

Activities

Come here with your walking boots. There are four trails, most of which can be completed under three hours.

The Nanling National Forest Park entrance is at the southern end of the village of **Wuzhishan**, which is small enough to cover on foot. Farmers nearby do their weekly shopping and stock clearance at Wuzhishan's lively Sunday market. Staying in Orange House here will give you access to the park the next day. Just get your ticket and receipt stamped at the hotel.

From Wuzhishan it's 6km to the start of the trails to Pubu Changlang waterfalls and Water Valley, and another 6km to Little Yellow Mountain. The best way is to hire a car from Wuzhishan. For between ¥350 and ¥500 you can hire one for the whole day. The driver can drop you at one end of the

trail and wait for you at the other. A one-way trip to the lower entrance of the trail to Little Yellow Mountain costs ¥120.

Water Valley

HIKING

(Qinshuigu)

The easiest of the 4 walks through Nanling National Forest Park, this 6km trail follows a stream and leads you through the steep-sided gorges and crystalline pools of Water Valley.

Pubu Changlang

HIKING

(Pubu Changlang)

This short but more interesting 3.5km trail through Nanling National Forest Park takes you past roaring waterfalls.

Little Yellow Mountain

HIKING

(Xiao Huangshan)

The 12km-long trail through Nanling National Forest Park to Little Yellow Mountain is a challenging hike through a forest of blue pines. The view of rolling mountain ranges from the crest (1608m) is spectacular.

Shikengkong

HIKING

()

The longest (28km) and most difficult of the four trails through Nanling National Park is the No 4 Trail (Sihao Lindao) to Shikengkong. At 1902m, Shikengkong is the highest peak in Guangdong and straddles the boundary between Guangdong and Hunan.

Sleeping & Eating

As camping inside Nanling National Forest Park is prohibited, the only option is to stay in Wuzhishan. There are a couple of *zhaodaisuo* (basic

lodgings), where you can get a room from ¥90.

Orange House

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Chengwu  523 2929; www.ctrip.com; d ¥398-489, Ranger House tr ¥198;  )

A cheery boutique hotel with 32 comfortable but slightly musty rooms. The hotel also manages an air-con-free Ranger House (Linshe) behind Orange House. Discounts of 30% to 40% via www.ctrip.com. It can arrange transportation to and from the park.

Feng's Kitchen

CANTONESE

(Fengjiacai  138 2799 2107; mains ¥10-40;  7am-8.30pm)

A farmer restaurant that cures its own meat and grows its own vegetables (¥10 per plate). Reservations necessary. Mr Feng can arrange for car hire of any duration.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Shaoguan is your gateway to Nanling. Buses (¥70 to ¥90, 3½ hours) leave Guangzhou's long-distance bus stations for Shaoguan's Xihe bus station every hour (6.50am to 8.30pm).

If you miss the bus to Wuzhishan, catch a bus to Ruyuan (¥10, one hour, every 15 minutes). From Ruyuan, three buses to Wuzhishan (¥10) leave at 9am, 12.45pm and 4.30pm, or you can hire a taxi (¥80).

In Wuzhishan, buses to Shaoguan leave at 7.30am, 12.30pm and 3.30pm.

TRAIN

High-speed trains (¥105, one hour) leave from Guangzhou South station for Shaoguan train station (*Shaoguan Gaotiezhan*). From there, board bus 22 and get off at **Xihe bus station** (Xihe qichezhan  875 4176; Gongye Donglu). Buses to Wuzhishan (¥20, two hours) depart at 8am, 11.45am and 3.30pm.

Guangzhou's main train station has trains that stop over at **Shaoguan**

East station (Shaoguan Dongzhan ¥38, 2½ hours). Buses to Wuzhishan leave at 7.45am, 11.15am and 3.15pm.

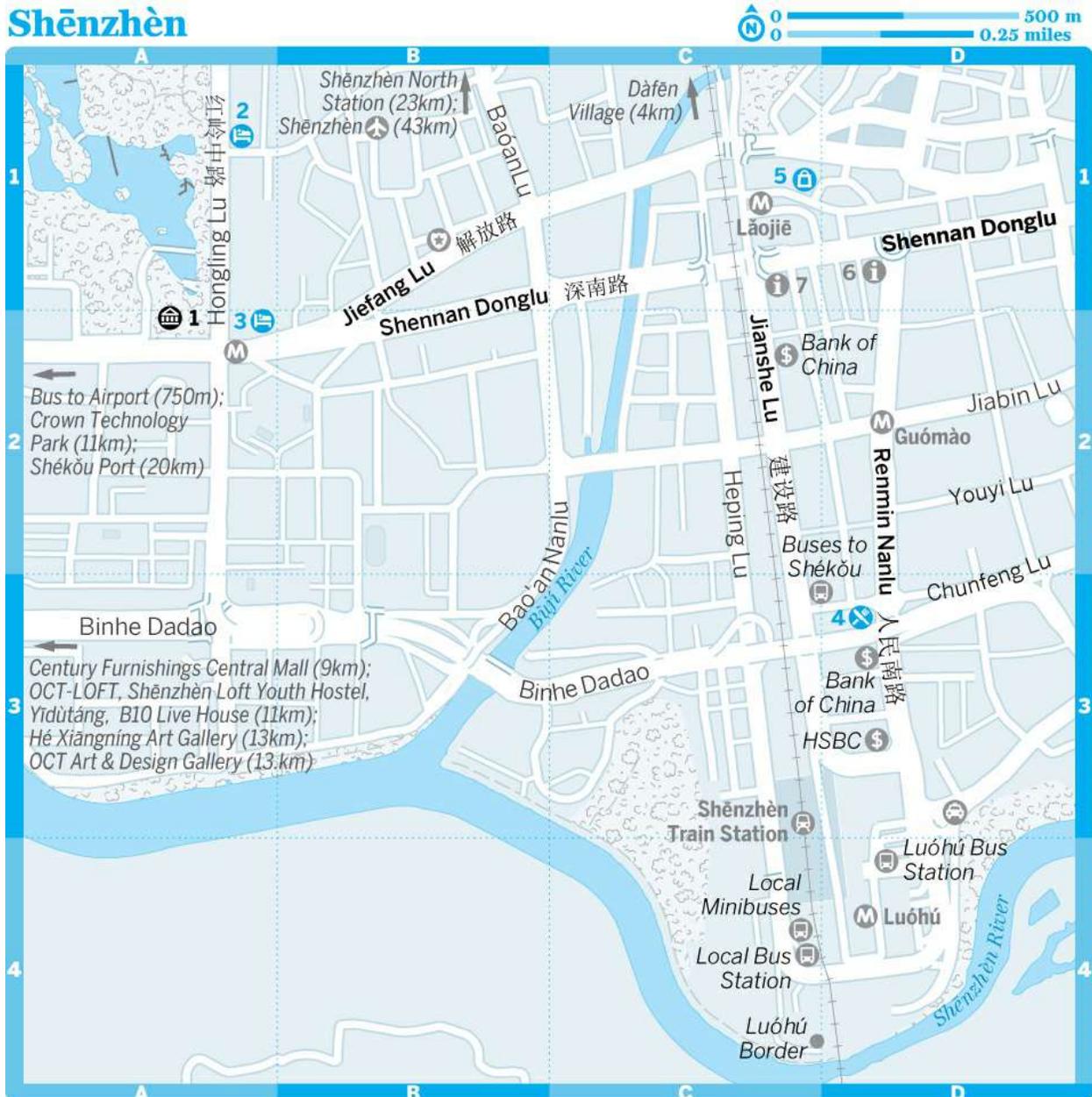
Shenzhen

 0755 / Pop 10.5 million

One of China's wealthiest cities and a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Shenzhen draws a mix of business people, investors and migrant workers to its golden gates. It's also a useful transport hub to other parts of China.

You can buy a five-day Shenzhen-only visa (¥160 for most nationalities, ¥469 for Brits; cash only) at the **Luohu border** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); Lo Wu;  9am-10.30pm), **Huangang** ( 9am-1pm & 2.30-5pm) and **Shekou** ( 8.45am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm). US citizens must buy a visa in advance in Macau or Hong Kong.

Shēnzhèn



Shenzhen

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Sights

Shenzhen Museum

MUSEUM

(Shenzhen Bowuguan Xinguan  [GOOGLE MAP](#);  8201 3036;

www.shenzhenmuseum.com.cn; East Gate, Block A, Citizens' Centre, Fuzhong Sanlu, Futian District;

 10am-6pm Tue-Sun;  Line 4, Shimin Zhongxin, exit B) **FREE**

The hulking Shenzhen Museum provides a solid introduction to Shenzhen's short yet dynamic history of social transformation, both before and after the implementation of Deng Xiaoping's policies of reform. Highlights include propaganda art popular in the 1940s and the colourful scale models in the folk culture hall.

★ OCT-LOFT

ARTS CENTRE

(Huaqiaocheng Chuangyi Wenhuyuan  2691 1976; Enping Jie, Huaqiaocheng, Nanshan District;

 10am-5.30pm;  Qiaochengdong, exit A)

The sprawling OCT-LOFT complex, converted from fashionably austere communist-era factories, is one of the best places to see contemporary art in Shenzhen, and makes for a wonderful browse-as-you-stroll experience. Large exhibition spaces and private galleries – many closed on Mondays – are complemented by chilled-out cafes (not to mention the ubiquitous Starbucks),

restaurants with exposed ventilation ducts, quirky fashion boutiques, a gem of a bookstore, and the obligatory 'lifestyle' outlets.

Turn right as you exit the metro station and follow the signs.

OCT Art & Design Gallery

GALLERY

(Hua Meishuguan  3399 3111; www.oct-and.com; 9009 Shennan Lu; adult/child ¥15/8;  10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun;  Huaqiaocheng, exit C)

The bare interiors of this former warehouse are filled with the works of excellent mainland and international graphic designers. Exhibits change frequently. It's a glass-encased steel structure adjacent to He Xiangning Art Gallery.

He Xiangning Art Gallery

GALLERY

(Hexiangning Meishuguan  2660 4540; www.hxnart.com; 9013 Shennan Lu;  9.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun;  Huaqiaocheng, exit C) **FREE**

The esoteric permanent collection here features Japanese-influenced Chinese water paintings by He Xiangning (1878–1972), the late master of modern Chinese art and well-known revolutionary. These are complemented by temporary exhibits that range from avant-garde Chinese art to Western works of an experimental nature. The gallery is one metro stop from OCT-Loft.

Sleeping

Hotels in Shenzhen regularly slash up to 50% off the regular rack rates on weekdays, though you should ask for a discount at any time.

★ Shenzhen Loft Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Shenzhen Qiaocheng Luyou Guoji Qingnian Lushe  8609 5773; www.yhachina.com; 7 Xiangshan Dongjie, OCT-LOFT, Huaqiaocheng, Nanshan district; dm from ¥65, d from ¥200, ste from ¥370;     Qiaochengdong, exit A)

Located in a tranquil part of OCT-LOFT, near the junction of Enping Jie and

Xiangshan Dongjie, this immaculate YHA hostel has over 50 private rooms, all with showers, and dormitory-type accommodation with shared bathrooms. The staff are well trained and helpful. There's wi-fi in the lobby only.

New Melbourne Hostel

HOSTEL

(Mo'erben Yijia [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 158 2076 6520; 1435113378@qq.com; Unit 1801, Lijing Dasha, 1008 Hongling Zhonglu; 1008 dm from ¥70; 🚫 📶 @ 📶; 🚇 Dajuyuan, exit B)

Three spotless dormitory rooms (two women's, one men's) with a total of 18 bed spaces, run by John, the well-mannered English-speaking owner. Some rooms overlook a river and a park. The building is a 10-minute stroll on Hongling Zhonglu from the metro station.

Shenzhen Vision Fashion Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Shenzhen Shijie Fengshang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 2558 2888; www.visionfashionhotel.com; 5018 Shennan Donglu; d ¥486-1880; 📶 @ 📶; 🚇 Dajuyuan, exit B)

Inside a theatre complex is this boutique hotel featuring eclectic designs in its rooms. Some are chic, some bizarre. Its prime location and quiet environment make it a very good choice. Discounts of 50% to 70% available.

Eating

Laurel

DIM SUM, CANTONESE

(Danguixuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8232 3668; Renmin Nanlu; dim sum ¥8-28, dishes ¥40-180; 🕒 7am-11pm)

An excellent modern dim sum restaurant on the 5th floor of Luohu Commercial City. Tables are a little close together, but the environment is pleasant and service is warm.

Drinking & Entertainment

The free *That's PRD* (<http://online.thatsmags.com/city/shenzhen>) has

monthly events listings.

Yidutang

BAR

(☎ 8610 6046; Enping Lu, Block F3, OCT-LOFT, Huaqiaocheng, Nanshan District; 🕒 11.30am-2am; **M** Qiaochengdong, exit A)

International and local indie bands play almost every night after 10pm at this warehouse-turned-bohemian-haunt in OCT-LOFT. It's a pleasant place with large glass panes, a soaring ceiling (from which chandeliers hang) and velvet armchairs placed next to brick walls. During the day, it's an upmarket cafe.

B10 Live House

LIVE MUSIC

(☎ 8633 7602; Shantou Jie, northern section, OCT-LOFT, Huaqiaocheng, Nanshan District; **M** Qiaochengdong, exit A)

A huge warehouse-turned-cultural space that morphs into a live house when there are no exhibitions going on. It's located on the north side of the Block B10 in the northern section of OCT-LOFT.

Brown Sugar

LIVE MUSIC

(Hongtang Guanzi www.hongtangguan.com; Tairan Jiulu, Futian District, Ground fl, Block 2, Huangguan Keji Yuan; tickets ¥40-120; 🕒 2pm-midnight Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; **M** Chegongmiao, exit C)

Sandwiched between a garage and a hair salon near the entrance of Crown Technology Park (Huangguan Kejiyuan), this loft-like bar is where local and foreign indie bands play every weekend from 9pm. Run by young musicians, it sports eclectic furniture and paintings displayed on bare concrete walls.

At the metro exit, turn right and walk to the end of the road, then make a left. You should see the park entrance on your right after two minutes.

INDIE MUSIC FESTIVALS

Shenzhen's indie music scene is rocking, and there's irrefutable proof – China's largest indie music events, **Strawberry Music Festival** (Caomei Yinyue Jie www.modernsky.com; 🕒 May) and **Midi Music Festival** (Midi Yinyue Jie

www.midifestival.com) have had Shenzhen editions since 2013–14. Both events feature the strongest bands from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong performing for three days. Midi takes place at the end of the year and Strawberry is usually in May. Check their websites for details.

Shopping

Die-hard shoppers won't leave Shenzhen empty-handed, though the quality may vary. Remember to bargain!

Dafen Village

ARTS & CRAFTS

(Dafencun  8473 2633; www.dafenvillageonline.com; Dafen, Buji, Longgang District)

A real eye-opener: 600 studios-cum-stores, churning out thousands of copies of Rembrandt, Renoir and Picasso paintings every week, and some original work. Prices start from ¥300. It's also a good place to stock up on art supplies, with prices about 50% cheaper than in downtown Shenzhen. Bus 306 from Shenzhen's Luohu station takes you to the village in about an hour. A taxi ride costs around ¥80.

★ Old Heaven Books

BOOKS

(Jiutiantang Shudian  8614 8090; oldheavenbooks@gmail.com; Room 120, Block A5, northern section, OCT-LOFT, Huaqiaocheng, Nanshan District;  11am-10pm;  Qiaochengdong, exit A)

A delicious bookstore specialising in cultural and academic titles, which also doubles up as music store (vinyl anyone?). Gigs sometimes take place in the adjoining cafe. Located in the northern section of OCT-LOFT, it's up the street perpendicular to B10 Live House, on the left-hand side.

Century Furnishings Central Mall

HOMEWARES

(Shijizhongxin jiajuguang Chang  8371 0111; www.sz-sjzx.com; Shennan Dadao, west of Xiangmi Hu Water Park, Futian District;  9.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 8.30pm Sat & Sun;  Chegongmiao, exit A)

This mall has a whopping 30,000 sq metres of retail space for homewares. There are three main zones. A and B sell mainly tiles, and bathroom and

shower gadgets; C – the most popular among leisure shoppers – is all about lamps. A cab from Shenzhen's Luohu station costs about ¥40.

Dongmen Market

MARKET

(Dongmen Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 10am-10pm;  Laojie, exit A)

A chaotic market popular for tailored suits, skirts, curtains and bedding. Be careful of pickpockets.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2022 Jianshe Lu; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun)

You can use either Chinese renminbi (or yuan, abbreviated '¥') or Hong Kong dollars in Shenzhen, but the rise of the renminbi makes Hong Kong dollars less desired.

China Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(CTS, Zhongguo Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8228 7644; 3023 Renmin Nanlu; 🕒 9am-6pm)

Great Land International Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Jubang Guoji Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 2515 5555; 3rd fl, Junting Hotel, 3085 Shennan Donglu; 🕒 10am-6pm)

Good for air tickets.

HSBC

BANK

(Huifeng Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Ground fl, Shangri-La Hotel, 1002 Jianshe Lu; Xianggelila Dajudian 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍2446 3999; 4018 Jiefang Lu)

SZ Party

TOURIST INFORMATION

(www.shenzhenparty.com)

For current events in Shenzhen.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Shenzhen Airport

AIRPORT

(Shenzhen Baoan Guoji Jichang 📍2345 6789; eng.szairport.com)

Shenzhen airport has flights to most major destinations around China.

BOAT

Shekou Port (📍2669 1213) has services to Hong Kong:

➔ **Hong Kong International Airport** ¥260, 30 minutes, 14 daily (7.45am to 9pm)

➔ **Hong Kong–Macau Ferry Terminal, Central** ¥120, one hour, six daily (7.45am, 10.15am, 11.45am, 2.15pm, 4.45pm and 7.15pm)

To Macau:

➔ **Macau Maritime Ferry Terminal** ¥190, one hour, 11 daily (8.15am to 7.30pm)

➔ **Taipa Temporary Ferry Terminal** ¥190, one hour, seven daily (9.30am-7pm)

To Zhuhai:

➔ **Jiuzhou Port** ¥150, one hour, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 8.30pm)

Fuyong ferry terminal (Fuyong Keyunzhan; 📍2345 5388) in Shenzhen airport runs ferries to Hong Kong and Macau:

➔ **Macau Maritime Ferry Terminal** ¥222, 80 minutes, seven daily (8.15am to 6pm)

➔ **Sky Pier, Hong Kong International Airport** ¥295, 40 minutes, four daily (8.35am, 11.30am, 3.30pm and 6.30pm)

BUS

Regular intercity buses leave from **Luohu bus station:** (Luohu Qichezhan

[GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍8232 1670)

➔ **Chaozhou** ¥150, 5½ hours, three daily (8.30am, 1.40pm and 8pm)

➔ **Guangzhou** ¥50 to ¥70, two hours, every 20 minutes (7am to 10pm)

➔ **Shantou** ¥130 to ¥170, four to five hours, every 30 minutes (7.20am to 9.40pm)

➔ **Xiamen** ¥220 to ¥240, eight hours, six daily (9.30am, 11am, 7.30pm, 8.30pm, 9.30pm and 9.50pm)

TRAIN

Services to Guangzhou and Hong Kong leave from Luohu train station to Guangzhou East station (¥80, 1½ hours); and from Shenzhen North station (Shenzhen Beizhan) in Longhua to Guangzhou South station (¥80, 40 minutes).

The Mass Transit Railway (MTR) links Shenzhen with Hong Kong.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Shenzhen's airport, 36km west of the city, is connected to Luohu by metro line 1 (¥9, 70 minutes). A taxi costs ¥180 to ¥200. Airport bus departures are from **Hualian Mansion** (Hualian Dasha [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shennan Zhonglu; 📍101,  Kexue Guan, exit B2) and cost ¥20 (40 minutes, every 15 minutes, 5am to 9pm), and Luohu train station in Luohu (¥20, one hour, every 15 minutes, 7am to 10pm). Buses leave from the **local bus station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) west of the train station.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Shenzhen has a good public transport network, with five metro lines (¥2 to

¥11). Transit passes (*Shenzhen Tong*) can be bought in metro stations and are good for all except taxis. Bus and minibus fares cost ¥2 to ¥10.

TAXI

Flag fall costs ¥12.50 (from 11pm to 6am ¥16), ¥4 fuel surcharge and ¥2.40 every additional kilometre.

Around Shenzhen

Dapeng Fortress

VILLAGE

(Dapeng Suocheng 📞0755-8431 5618; Dapeng Town, Longgang District; adult/student & senior ¥20/10; 🕒10am-6pm)

This walled town and lively village built 600 years ago lies on Shenzhen's eastern edge. Stately mansions, fortress gates and ornate temples from the Ming and Qing dynasties are the main attractions. Board bus 360 at Yinhu bus station or near China Regency Hotel on Sungang Lu. The journey takes about 90 minutes. At Dapeng bus station (Dapeng zongzhan;), change to bus 966. A taxi from Luohu costs ¥190.

★ Guanlan Original Printmaking Base

VILLAGE

(Guanlan Banhua Yuanchuang Chanye Jide 📞2978 2510; www.guanlanprints.com/en/; Dashuitian, Niuahu, Bao'an District; 🚏312, M258, M285, M288, M338, M339 to Guanlan Printmaking Base stop, 🚏B650, B768, B769, E4 to Guanlan jiedaoban zhan)

At this 300-year-old village, rows of quaint black-and-white houses exuding a modest, functional elegance unique to Hakka architecture are occupied by the workshops and galleries of printmaking artists from China and overseas. The village, with its tree-lined paths and lotus ponds, is open all day, but the galleries keep different hours. The journey from downtown Shenzhen takes about 1½ hours.

Zhuhai

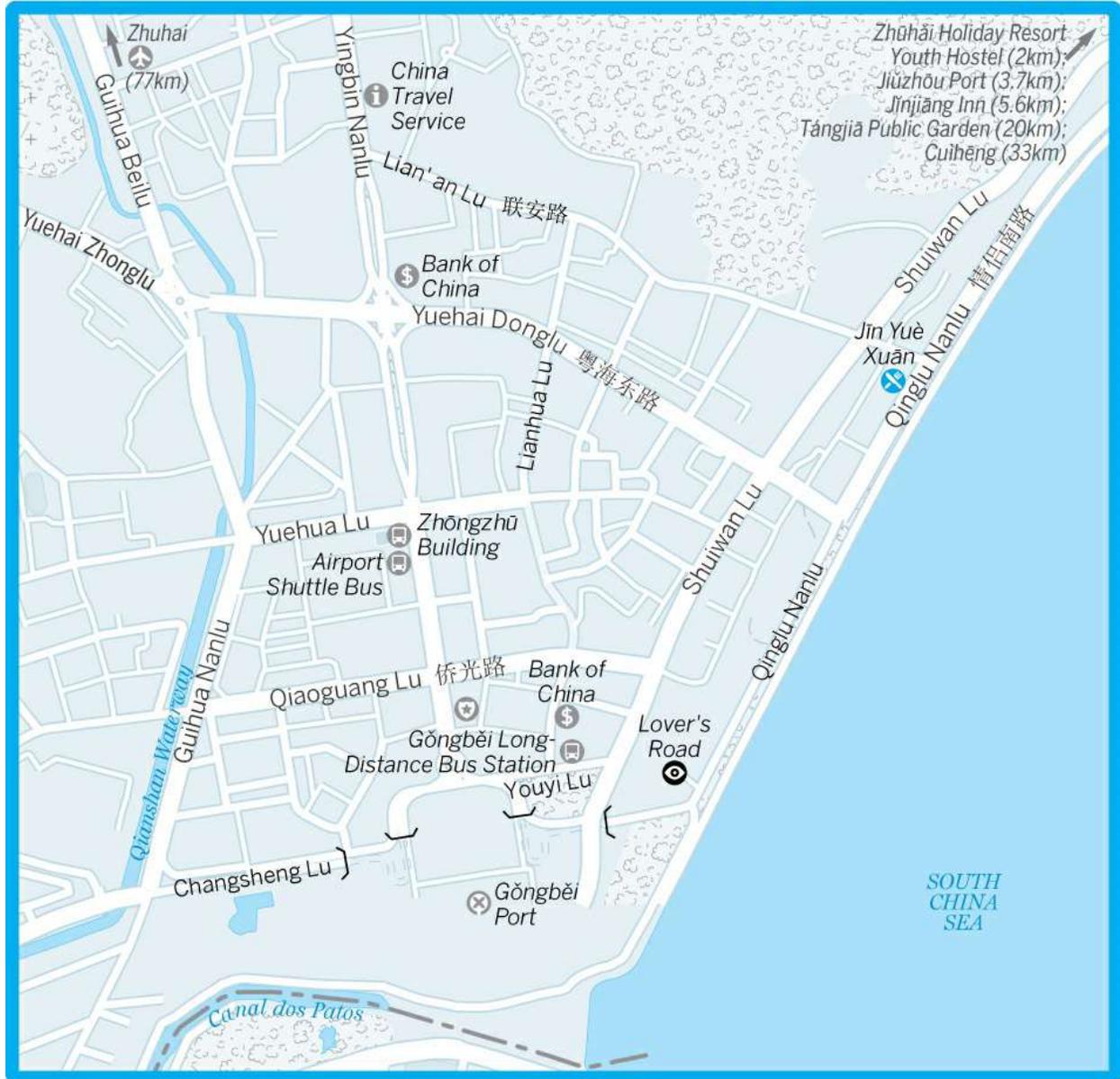
☎0756 / Pop pop 1.6 million

Zhuhai is close enough to Macau for a day trip. It's laid-back, and the driving isn't too maniacal.

Gongbei in the south is the main tourist district. Ferries connecting to Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangdong stop at Jidain in the northeast.

Visas (¥168 for most nationalities, ¥469 for Brits) valid for three days are available at the border (8.30am to 12.15pm, 1pm to 6.15pm, and 7pm to 10.30pm). US citizens must buy a visa in advance in Macau or Hong Kong.

Zhūhǎi



Sights

Lover's Road

STREET

(Qinglu Lu [GOOGLE MAP](#))

This balmy promenade starts at Gongbei, at the border with Macau, and sweeps north for 28km along the coast, passing some of Zhuhai's most

coveted real estate. The section near Tangjia Public Garden is the most beautiful. There are kite and bicycle rentals along the way, and snack booths at night.

Tangjia Public Garden

GARDENS

(Tangjia Gongleyuan  338 8896; Eling, Tangjiawan; adult/student ¥10/5;  8.30am-5.30pm)

Thirteen kilometres north of Zhuhai is the labyrinthine town of Tangjiawan, where you'll find the former estate of the first premier of the Republic of China, Tong Shaoyi. It's now a garden with old-growth and rare trees. From Zhuhai take the K3, 3A, 69 or 3 bus (40 minutes) at the bus stop near the junction of Fenghuang Nanlu and Dongfeng Lu, and exit at Tangjia Shichangzhan (Tangjia Market station).

Sleeping

There's little demand for budget accommodation as very few travellers stay in Zhuhai.

Jinjiang Inn

INN

(Jinjiang Zhixing  :  221 9899; 1058 Fenghuang Nanlu; r ¥220-450;  

The best of several branches in Zhuhai, this one is 50m from Lover's Rd, and 300m from Wanzaisha Sq (Wanzisha Guangchang). Rooms are bright and clean though those facing the street can be a tad noisy. Not all staff members speak English, but they're helpful and courteous. A reliable and affordable option.

Zhuhai Holiday Resort Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Guoji Qingnian Xuesheng Luguan  :  333 3838; www.zhuhai-holitel.com; 9 Shihua Donglu; dm ¥60;  99)

Hidden away inside the Zhuhai Holiday Resort (Zhuhai Dujiacun) in Jida, this hostel has two eight-bed dorms.



Eating & Drinking

Gongbei, near the Macau border, has restaurants, bars and street hawkers.

Jin Yue Xuan

DIM SUM

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 813 3133; 1st-3rd fl, Block B, 265 Rihua Commercial Sq, Qinglu Nanlu; meals ¥100-130; 🕒 9am-10pm)

For some of the best dim sum and Cantonese cuisine in Zhuhai, head to this elegant restaurant before 11am to secure a table.



Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang)

Gongbei ([GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Yingbin Nanlu & Yuehai Donglu; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun); **Lianhua Lu** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); Lianhua Lu; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun).

China Travel Service

TOURIST INFORMATION

(CTS; Zhongguo Luxingshe [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 889 9228; 2nd fl, Overseas Chinese Hotel, 2016 Yingbin Nanlu; 🕒 8am-8pm)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 888 5277; 1038 Yingbin Nanlu)



Getting There & Away

AIR

Zhuhai Airport (📞 777 8888; www.zhairport.com) serves various destinations in China, including Beijing (¥1950), Shanghai (¥1400) and Chengdu (¥1460).

BOAT

Hong Kong-bound jetcats leave from **Jiuzhou Port** (Jiuzhou Gang

[GOOGLE MAP](#);  333 3359):

- ➔ **China Ferry Terminal, Kowloon** ¥175, 70 minutes, six daily (8am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Hong Kong International Airport** ¥290, one hour, four daily (9.30am, 12.40pm, 3.30pm and 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Hong Kong–Macau Ferry Terminal, Central** ¥175, 70 minutes, nine daily (9am to 9.30pm)

Ferries leave Jiuzhou Port for Shenzhen's port of Shekou (¥150, one hour, every half-hour, 8am to 9.30pm); ferries leave Shekou for Jiuzhou Harbour every half-hour (7.30am to 9.30pm).

Local buses 3, 4, 12, 23, 25 and 26 go to Jiuzhou Port.

BUS

Gongbei long-distance bus station (Gongbei changtu qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#);  888 5218; Lianhua Lu) at Gongbei Port runs regular buses between 6am and 9.30pm:

- ➔ **Foshan** ¥55 to ¥70, three hours, 10 daily
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥55 to ¥70, 2½ hours, frequent
- ➔ **Kaiping** ¥40 to ¥75, three hours, four daily
- ➔ **Shantou** ¥180, 6½ hours, two daily
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥75, three hours, every 30 minutes
- ➔ **Zhaoqing** ¥65, 4½ hours, 10 daily

LIGHT RAIL

Guangzhou–Zhuhai Light Rail ( 9510 5105) serves Zhuhai North station and Guangzhou South station (¥36, 70 minutes). Zhuhai North station can be reached by buses K1, 3A and 65.

Getting Around

Zhuhai's airport, 43km southwest of the centre, runs a shuttle service (¥25, 50 to 70 minutes) to the city centre (every 30 minutes, 6am to 9.30pm) from Jiuzhou Port and the **Zhongzhu Building** (Zhongzhu Dasha; [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Yuehua Lu & Yingbin Nanlu). A taxi to the centre costs about ¥150.

Flag fall for taxis is ¥10 for the first 3km, then ¥0.60 for each additional 250m.

Chaozhou

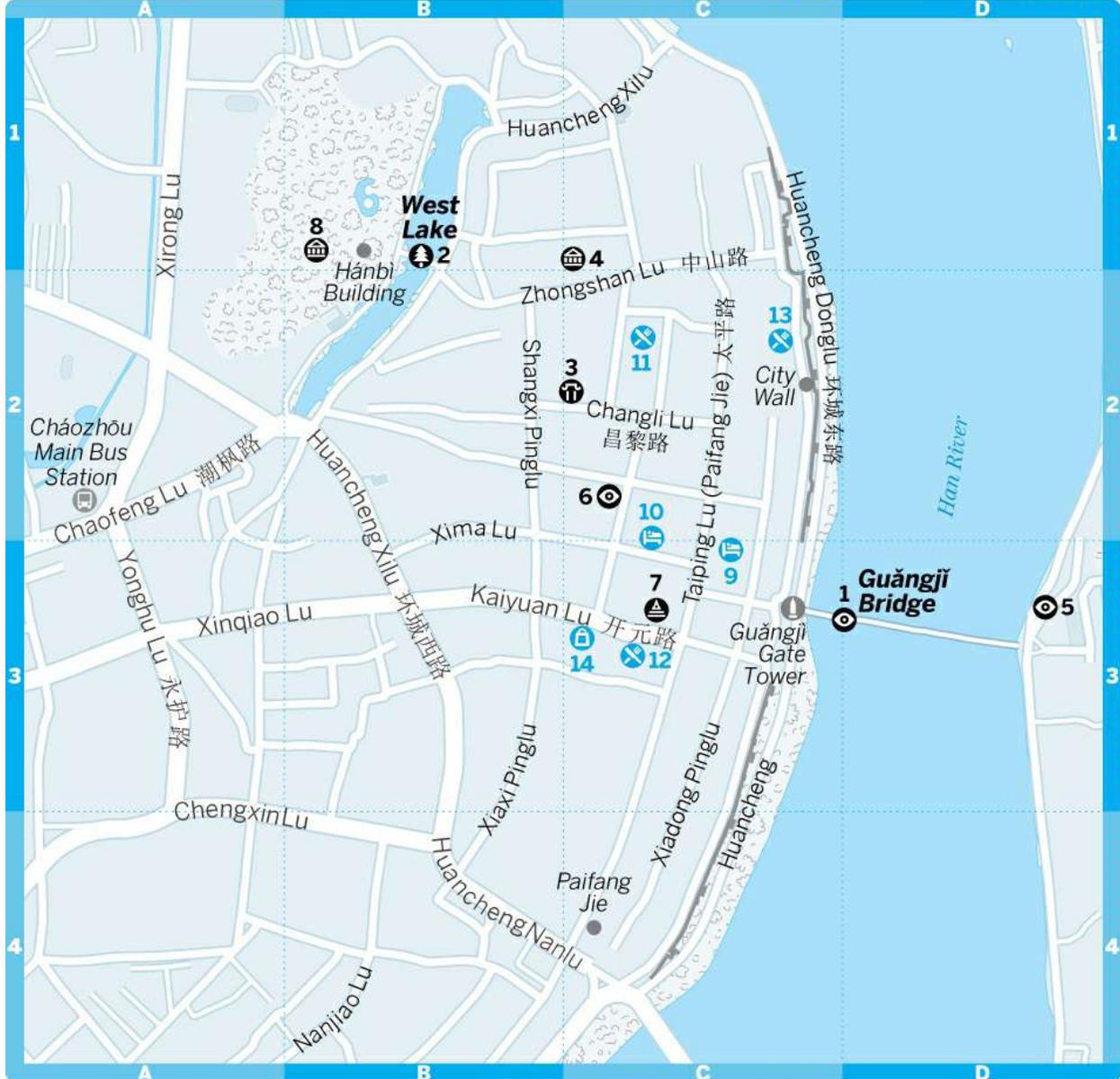
 0768 / Pop 2.7 million

Charming Chaozhou was once a thriving trading and cultural hub in southern China, rivalling Guangzhou. Today, it still preserves its distinct dialect, cuisine and opera. Chaozhou is best appreciated at a leisurely pace, so do consider spending a night here.

Paifang Jie (Street of Memorial Arches), running 1948m from north to south in the old quarter, has signage to the main sights and is a good place to orient yourself. It's made up of Taiping Lu (1742m) and Dongmen Jie (206m).

Cháozhōu

0 500 m
0 0.25 miles



Chaozhou

📍 Top Sights

- 1 [Guangji Bridge](#) D3
- 2 [West Lake](#) B1

📍 Sights

- 3 [Confucian Academy](#) C2

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 4 | Emperor Xu's Son-in-Law's Mansion | C1 |
| 5 | Hanwen Temple | D3 |
| 6 | Jilue Huang Temple | C2 |
| 7 | Kaiyuan Temple | C3 |
| 8 | Phoenix Building | B1 |
| | Siwang Lou | B1 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|
| 9 | Chengfu Inn | C3 |
| 10 | Zaiyang Inn | C2 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 11 | Hu Rong Quan | C2 |
| 12 | Lianhua Vegetarian | C3 |
| 13 | Zheng's Private Kitchen | C2 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 14 | Chaozhou Opera Costumes & Props | C3 |
|----|---|----|

Sights

Sights abound in Chaozhou but admission charges can add up. Before you go sightseeing, buy a combo ticket (¥80) from **Jinlong Travel Service** (Jinlong Luxingshe  222 1437; 39 Huangcheng Nanlu;  9am-5.30pm) located across Huangcheng Nanlu from the southern entrance of Street of Memorial Arches. Tickets are good for two days and cover six or seven sights.

★ **Guangji Bridge**

BRIDGE

(Guangji Qiao  [GOOGLE MAP](#);  222 2683; admission ¥50;  10am-5.30pm)

Originally a 12th-century pontoon bridge with 86 boats straddling the Han River, Guangji Bridge suffered repeated destruction over the centuries. The current version is a brilliant, faux-ancient passageway with 18 wooden boats hooked up afresh every morning and 24 stone piers topped with pagodas.

A ticket allows you one crossing. If you want to come back, remember to tell the staff ‘I want to come back’ (*woyao huilai*) before leaving the bridge.

Jilue Huang Temple

TEMPLE

(Jilue Huanggongci [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 225 1318; 2 Tie Xiang, Yian Lu; admission ¥10; 🕒 8.30am-5pm)

The highlights here are the ancient Chaozhou woodcarvings decorating the walls and thresholds. The art form is famous for its rich and subtle details, intricate designs and exquisite craftsmanship. Born 1000 years ago, it flourished during the Qing dynasty, which was also when this temple (1887) was built. It's about ¥10 by pedicab from Paifang Jie.

★ West Lake

PARK

(Xihu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 222 0731; Huancheng Xilu; admission ¥8; 🕒 8am-11pm)

The moat of ancient Chaozhou is a lake inside a park well-loved by locals. Around the lake are a few notable buildings. **Hanbi Building** (Hanbi Lou) served as a military office during antiwarlord expeditions in 1925. Sitting on a knoll is **Phoenix Building** (Fenglou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥5; 🕒 6am-6pm), with its bird-like shape, iron moongate, gourd-shaped ceiling openings, and quirky interior spaces formed by the fowl's anatomy.

Phoenix Building is attached to a shuttered building (**Siwang Lou** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))), in a period style reminiscent of 1970s kung fu movies. West Lake is about ¥10 by pedicab from Paifang Jie.

Kaiyuan Temple

BUDDHIST

(Kaiyuan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥5; 🕒 6am-5.30pm)

Built in AD 738, Chaozhou's most famous temple has old bodhi trees and an embarrassment of statues, including one of a 1000-arm Guanyin.

Hanwen Temple

TEMPLE

(Hanwengong Ci [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥20; 🕒 8am-5.30pm)

On the east bank of the Han, this is the oldest and best-preserved temple dedicated to the Tang-dynasty philosopher Han Yu, who was banished to ‘far-flung’ Guangdong for his anti-Buddhist views.

Emperor Xu’s Son-in-Law’s Mansion

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Xufuma Fu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 225 0021; 4 Dongfucheng, Putao Xiang, Zhongshan Lu, Xiangqiao District; admission ¥20; 🕒 8am-5pm)

This breezy mansion originally built in 1064 retains some of the ancient stonework and wall coverings. The high door saddles, unique to southern China, were used to protect doors from humidity. The antechamber was used to keep coffins.

Confucian Academy

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE, GARDENS

(Haiyangxian Ruxue Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Changli Lu & Wenxing Lu, Xiangqiao District; admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-5pm)

This 4000-sq-metre compound has lily ponds teeming with koi and a main temple dedicated to Confucius that is supported by 48 pillars.

Sleeping

Zaiyang Inn

HOTEL

(Zaiyang Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 223 1272; www.czdafudi.com; 15 Zaiyang Xiang, Taiping Lu; r ¥128-368; 📶)

This classy Qing-style inn with graceful courtyards and antique wood carvings (that were smothered in lime during the Cultural Revolution to prevent looting) is *the* place to stay in Chaozhou. Rooms are small, but clean and very quiet. Prices more than double during holidays. Located in an alley off Paifang Jie; ¥10 by pedicab from the main bus station.

Chengfu Inn

HOTEL

(Chengfu Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 222 8585; 9 Fensi Houxiang, Taiping Lu;, r ¥158-220)

Located in an old building inside an alley off Paifang Jie, Chengu Inn offers decent accommodation and opportunities to meet fellow travellers. Rooms on the ground floor can be noisy. It's ¥10 by pedicab from the main bus station.

Eating & Drinking

Food is generally good in Chaozhou. On Paifang Jie, you'll find China's best beef balls with noodles (*niuwan fen*) and oyster omelette (*haolao*). **Hu Rong Quan** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-late), which has three branches close to each other, sells pastries and sweet soups. There are also a number of trendy cafes, all offering free wi-fi.

★ Lianhua Vegetarian

CHINESE, VEGETARIAN

(Lianhua Sushifu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 223 8033; 9 Kaiyuan Sq; mains ¥15-30; 🕒 11am-2.30pm, 5.30-9.30pm; 🍴)

An excellent vegetarian restaurant opposite Kaiyuan Temple. The menu also features Chaozhou specialities, including the delightful desserts on the last page.

★ Zheng's Private Kitchen

CHINESE

(Zhengchu Sifangcai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 399 1310; 1 Shangdong Pinglu; per person ¥50-100; 🕒 lunch & dinner)

A new private kitchen that whips up impressive Chaozhou-style seafood dishes. Ask a Mandarin- or Cantonese-speaking friend to call and book at least a day in advance. Also tell them your budget per person; and if you don't want shark's fin, a speciality here, say so too. It's in the first lane opposite Shangshuimen Gate Tower (Shangshuimen Chenglou). Walk down the lane until you see the stairs.

Shopping

Chaozhou Opera Costumes & Props

SOUVENIRS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍222 6041; 12 Kaiyuan Lu; 🕒9am-10.30pm)

Diagonally across the road from Kaiyuan Temple is this tiny shop that makes gowns, headdresses, swords, sedans and shoes for the Chaozhou opera stage.

i Getting There & Away

BUS

Services from Chaozhou's **main bus station** (Chaozhou qiche zongzhan

[GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍220 2552; 2 Chaofeng Lu):

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥110 to ¥170, 5½ hours, eight daily (8am to 11.55pm)
- ➔ **Meizhou** ¥55, two hours, two daily (8.30am and 3pm)
- ➔ **Raoping** ¥17, one hour, 13 daily (6.30am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥380, 20 hours, one daily, (2.45pm)
- ➔ **Shantou** ¥13, one hour, 13 daily (7am to 6.40pm)
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥120 to ¥140, five hours, five daily (8am to 11pm)
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥100, 3½ hours, four daily (7am to 2.20pm)
- ➔ **Zhuhai** ¥140, 9½ hours, two daily (8.30am and 9.10pm)

TRAIN

Services from Chaozhou's train station, 8km west of the centre:

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥91 to ¥167, seven hours, two daily (8.41am and 12.45pm)
- ➔ **Shantou** ¥9, 35 minutes, three daily (7.45am, 3.30pm, 6.53pm)

Around Chaozhou

Located in Raoping, 53km from downtown Chaozhou, is China's largest octagonal Hakka earthen house, **Daoyunlou** (admission ¥20; 🕒8.30am-5.30pm).

Six hundred villagers once resided in this stunning complex built in 1587;

now only 100 remain. Ascend to the upper floors from unit 18 to admire the views and frescoes.

Buses to Raoping (¥20, one hour) leave from the Chaozhou main bus station. Change to a bus to the village of Sanrao (¥11), another 50km away. From there, motor-rickshaws will take you to Daoyunlou (¥5, 10 minutes).

WORTH A TRIP

SHANTOU

If you like history, the industrial town of Shantou has a couple of interesting sights on its outskirts that can be covered on a day trip from Chaozhou.

Buses run from Chaozhou (¥13, one hour, 13 daily, 7am to 6.40pm. Shantou's main bus station and CTS bus station run buses every 30 minutes to an hour to Chaozhou (¥17, one hour, 8.20am to 4.10pm); Guangzhou (¥90 to ¥150, 5½ hours, 7am to 11pm); Meizhou (¥60, 2½ hours, 6am and 5pm); and Shenzhen (¥100, five hours, 6.20am to 10pm).

Cultural Revolution Museum

MUSEUM

(Wenge Bowuguan admission ¥10; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm)

The only museum in China that honours the victims of the Cultural Revolution sits atop Tashan Park (Tashanfengjingqu), 25km north of Shantou's city centre. Names and inscriptions are engraved on the walls.

Take eastbound bus 102 from the long-distance bus station to Tashan Lukou. After the 45-minute ride, cross the road and walk 800m to the entrance, then another 3.5km uphill (take the path on the left).

Chen Cihong Memorial Home

BUILDING

(Chen Cihong Guju admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-5.30pm)

This attractive complex was built by a businessman who made his fortune in Thailand in the 19th century. He had the region's best raw materials shipped here and assembled in imaginative ways that incorporated Asian, Western and Moorish motifs. Board the northbound bus 103 from People's Sq (eastern edge) in Shantou. The hourlong ride will cost you ¥6.

Meizhou

 0753 / Pop 5 million

Meizhou, populated by the Hakka (Kejia in Mandarin;) people, is home to China's largest cluster of 'coiled dragon houses' or *weilongwu*. Specific to the Hakka, these are dwellings arranged in a horseshoe shape evocative of a dragon napping at the foot of a mountain. You'll also see *tulou* (roundhouses) dotting the fields like mysterious flying saucers, and a jumble of other architectural treasures.

Sights

Hakka Park

PARK, MUSEUM

(Kejia Gongyuan Dongshan Dadao; 🕒 Xianqin Bldg 8.30am-5.10pm, Dafu Bldg 8.30-11.30am & 2-5.30pm; 🚏 1, 6)

Pebbled paths and a willow-fringed pond make this small park on the north bank of the Meijiang River a delight to stroll around in. The **Hakka Museum** (Kejia Bowuguan Dongshan Dadao; 🕒 9am-5.10pm, closed Mon; 🚏 1, 6) here offers a quick warm-up to the culture of Hakkaland, and there are a couple of interesting 1930s buildings: Xianqin Building (Xianqinlou), a courtyard-style Hakka house; and the East–West hybrid Dafu Building (Dafulou), which evokes a pseudo-Western train terminal drawn by Japanese cartoonist Miyazaki.

Nankou Village

VILLAGE

(Nankou)

This quiet village about 16km west of Meizhou is where you'll see fine examples of *weilongwu* dwellings nestled between paddy fields and the hills like dragons in repose. If you make your way to the back of Donghua Lu and Dexin Tang, you'll see rooms arranged in a semi-circle on an undulating slope, like the coiled body of a dragon. Another of the old houses, Nanhua Youlu charges an admission of ¥10.

Bus 9 from the Meizhou's local bus terminal and buses to Xingning (¥10,

every 20 minutes) from Meizhou's main bus station go to Nankou. Once you get off, walk 1km to the village entrance. The last bus back leaves at 4.30pm. A taxi ride costs around ¥35.

Meizhou Old Street

STREET

(Meizhou Laojie Lingfeng Lu)

Meizhou's sleepy Old Street covers four blocks on Lingfeng Lu. There's not much to see by way of building design, but there are traditional industries that cannot be found elsewhere producing fishing implements, funereal and wedding accessories, and more. Walk through the vehicular passage in the brown building opposite Huaqiao Daxia at 12 Jiangbian Lu and you'll see it.

Hua'e Lou

HISTORIC SITE

(admission ¥10)

The 400-year-old 'house of calyx', 20km south of Meizhou, is the largest circular earthen castle in Guangdong. It comes complete with three rings and stone walls more than 1m thick. There's no public transport to Hua'e Lou. A taxi from Dabu costs ¥100 and takes about an hour.

Sleeping & Eating

Royal Classic Hotel

HOTEL

(Huangjia Mingdian Jiudian  867 7777; www.hjmd-hotel.com; 35 Dongmen Lu; r ¥118-1288, ste ¥1888-2888)

This glitzy Hong Kong-owned hotel has clean, quiet rooms, with wide, comfortable beds. Lifts can only be activated with guestroom card-keys, which makes it feel safe. The extravagant breakfast buffet (at ¥50 per person) in the revolving restaurant offers a good selection of local delicacies. Rates are often 30% to 50% of those posted.

★ Dabu Handmade Noodles

NOODLES

(Dabu Shougong Mianguan 15 Bingfang Dadao; noodles ¥4-15, soup ¥5; 🕒 6.30am-2pm, 5pm-2am;)

This neighbourhood shop whips up al dente Hakka tossed noodles (*yanmian*) and pig innards soup (*sanjidi tang*). The strands also come stir-fried (*chaomian*). Bus 4, which runs from Meizhou train station, a 15-minute walk away, stops here. Disembark at Meiyuan Xincun. It's on your left.

Chengde Lou Coiled Dragon House Restaurant

CHINESE, HAKKA

(Chengdelou Weilongwu Jiuja 📍 233 1315; Fuqi Lu; mains ¥33-120)

From inside a maze-like 19th-century Hakka house, this atmospheric eatery serves local dishes such as salt-baked chicken (*yanju ji*; ¥88/58) and pork braised with preserved vegetables (*meicai kourou*; ¥48). The manager speaks English. A taxi here from Meizhou centre costs ¥15.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Meizhou's airport, 4km south of town, has flights to Guangzhou (¥700, daily) and Hong Kong (¥1000, Mondays and Fridays).

BUS

Meizhou has two bus stations: the **main bus station** (Yueyun Qiche Zongzhan 📍 222 2427; Meizhou Dadao), north of the river, and **Jiangnan bus station** (Jiangnan qichezhan 📍 226 9568; Binfang Dadao) to the south. Most buses to Meizhou drop you off at the former.

- ➔ **Chaozhou** ¥54, 2½ hours, two daily (10.40am and 3.30pm)
- ➔ **Chayang** ¥25, three daily (5.45am, 7am and 11.10am)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥100, five hours, 15 daily (7am to 10.30pm)
- ➔ **Hong Kong** ¥200, eight hours, two daily (7.40am and 2.40pm)
- ➔ **Shantou** ¥60, 2½ hours, 13 daily (8am to 5.20pm)
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥100, six hours, five daily (8.30am, 10am, 11.20am, 1.40pm and 4.30pm)

➔ **Yongding** ¥49, three hours, two daily (6am and 12.45pm)

TRAIN

The train station, south of town, has four daily trains to Guangzhou (¥78 to ¥117, 12.12am, 8.40am, 3.25pm and 10.59pm) and three daily trains to Yongding (¥19 to ¥32, 12.01am, 2.41am and 1.52pm).

Getting Around

A taxi ride into Meizhou town centre from the airport, 4km south, costs about ¥15.

Bus 6 links the airport and train station to both bus stations. Anywhere within the city by taxi should cost no more than ¥15.

Most sights are scattered in different villages, and almost inaccessible by public transport. It makes more sense to hire a taxi for a day. Expect to pay about ¥450.

Dabu

Dabu sits on the border with Fujian, in the easternmost part of Guangdong, about 89km from downtown Meizhou. It's encircled by mountains and rivers, which means beautiful natural scenery and nicely preserved old towns.

You can stay in downtown Dabu and make day trips to surrounding areas.

Sleeping & Eating

There are rooms for ¥80 upwards with air-con on Wanxiang Dadao, about 240m from the bus station.

Ruijin Hotel

HOTEL

(Ruijin Jiudian  518 5688; www.ruijin-hotel.com; 2nd St, Long Shan, Neihuan Xilu; r ¥888-988, ste ¥1688-1988;    )

Large, plush rooms and an attractive swimming pool make this a great place to stay. Discounts are often available. The hotel is a 20-minute walk from Dabu bus station (Dabu Qiche Keyun Zhan). Turn left at the hotel entrance and walk several blocks up until you reach a T-junction, then left and you'll see the station.

Dabu Gourmet Street

HAKKA

(Dabu Meishi Jie Huliao Tongyen Lu; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Littered with tiny eateries, Huliao Tongyen Lu, built in the Qing dynasty, is known as Dabu Gourmet Street. Comb it (it's only 330m) for Dabu and Hakka snacks such as pancakes (*baobing*) and bamboo-shoot dumplings (*sunban*).

Getting There & Around

Meizhou has buses to Dabu from [Jiangnan bus station](#) at 2.30pm and 4.30pm (¥22).

Buses head daily from Dabu to the following:

- ➔ **Chaozhou** ¥67, three hours, 157km, one daily (8.10am)
- ➔ **Chayang** ¥5, 30 minutes, two daily (5pm, 5.30pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥233, 6½ hours, 535km, eight daily (7.30am, 8am, 8.40am, 9am, 1.10pm, 6.30pm, 7pm, 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Meizhou** ¥13, one hour, frequent
- ➔ **Shantou** ¥78, three hours, 163km, one daily (7.40am)
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥221, 8am, six hours, 505km, five daily (8.20am, 9am, 1.30pm, 2.50pm, 3.30pm)
- ➔ **Xiamen** ¥103, 4½ hours, 243km, one daily (6.40am)

Chayang Old Town

People still take long siestas in lazy Chayang (Chayang Guzhen), 27km from

downtown Dabu County. Its old streets (*laojie*) with pillared arcades are nice to lose yourself in for a couple of hours.

Buses run from Chayang to Meizhou every half hour from 7.10am to 6pm.

Memorial Arch of the Father and Son Graduates

MONUMENT

(FuziJinshi Paifang Dapu High School, Xueqian Jie;)

This handsome granite edifice from 1610 stands before a school. The arch was set up by the Ming government to commemorate a father and son who both became successful candidates in the imperial exams.

Soviet Department Store Building

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Baihuo Dalou Shengli Lu)

This weather-beaten, three-storey building on Shengli Lu just opposite Chayang Guesthouse (Chayang Binguan) was a department store built in the 1950s with Soviet funds. Patches of yellow paint still cling onto its facade, and you can make out Mao-era slogans on its red pillars.

If you walk along the river and cross the bridge, then go straight, turn left and walk to the end of the road, you'll see the stunning Xuan Lu villa.

★ Xuan Villa

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Xuanlu 115 Dahua Lu;)

Foreboding and beautiful Xuan Villa was built in 1936 by a wealthy Malaysian Chinese who was a member of a secret society tied to Sun Yatsen. Parts of the building doubled up as an air-raid shelter. If the owners let you in, you'll see crumbling but elegant staircases and sweeping balconies with views of tea fields.

Baihou Old Town

Scenic Baihou, Dabu's closest town to Meizhou, is known for its Qing dynasty buildings. These were the stately residences and public spaces of the Yang family, a family known for the number of scholars and government

officials it nurtured. Baihou literally means 'a hundred noblemen'.

Buildings with a flamboyant hybrid style tend to cluster around the southern end, while ancestral halls and village houses are in the north. Between them are winding paths, peanut vines, longan and wampi trees, and a huge lily pond.

All south-bound buses from Dabu pass through Baihou (¥5). Tell the driver you want to get off at Baihou Tourist Area (Baihou Luyou Qu). From Dabu, it's 20 minutes (11km).

Haiyuan Building

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Haiyuan Lou)

An eye-catching early 20th century mansion, the Haiyuan Building combines Southeast Asian features, Western details and the attributes of a hakka (*zouma lou*), a two-storey residence with a wide wooden corridor that keeps the rooms safe and dry. It becomes Haiyuan Inn (Haiyuan Kezhan) from October 2014.

Zhaoqing Hall

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Zhaoqing Tang ¥15; 🕒 8.30am-noon, 2-5pm)

Inhabited by the third and fourth generations of the founder, a pharmaceutical merchant, this balmy courtyard residence (c 1914) features stone, wood and ceramic carvings, and stained-glass windows from Italy. The stately two-storey structure in front of it was the study quarters of the younger members of the family.

Qinan Villa

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Qinan Xuan)

Lack of upkeep and old age (early 18th century) means Qinan Villa looks a bit like a princeling-turned-pauper. The stone carvings around its elegant arches and the terraces fringed with urn-shaped balusters are now overgrown with black moss and weed. The villa was built as a study with 27 rooms in the early decades of the Qing dynasty.

Hainan

[Hainan Highlights](#)

[Haikou](#)

[Around Haikou](#)

[Central Highlands](#)

[Wuzhishan City \(Tongshi\)](#)

[Around Wuzhishan City](#)

[The East Coast](#)

[Bo'ao](#)

[Shimei Bay & Sun & Moon Bay](#)

[Sanya](#)

Hainan



Pop 8.9 million

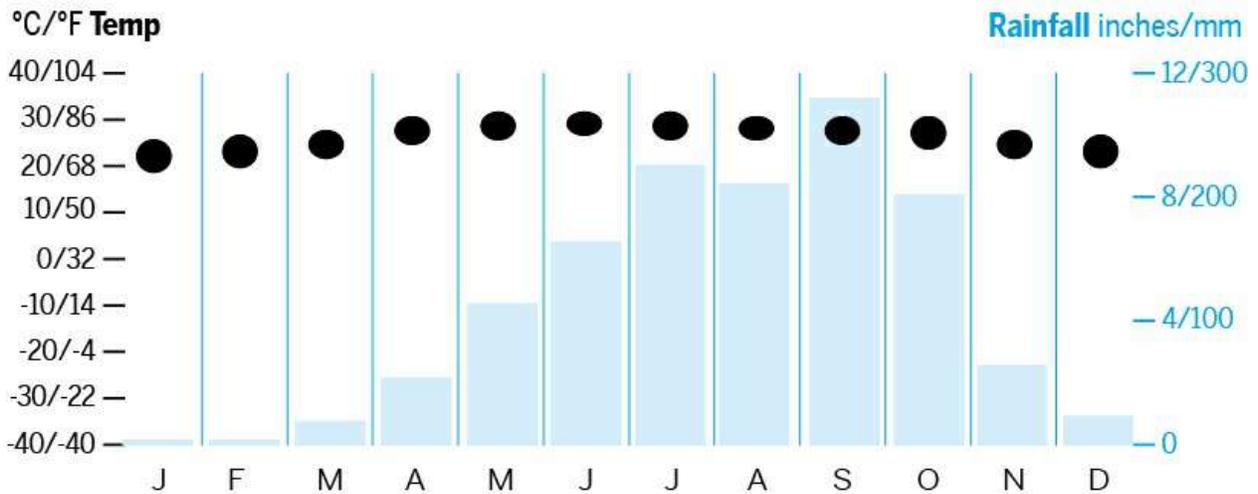
Why Go?

China's largest tropical island boasts all the balmy weather, coconut palms and gold-sand beaches you could ask for. Down at Sanya it's see-and-be-seen on the boardwalks or escape altogether at some of Asia's top luxury resorts. Thatched huts and banana pancakes haven't popped up anywhere yet, but there's a whiff of hipness coming from the east coast beachside towns, and the budding surf scene is helping to spread the gospel of chill out.

Money is pouring into Hainan these days to ramp up the luxury quotient. You can cruise on the high-speed rail, but cycling is still the better way to get around. When you've had enough of a lathering on the coast, the cool central highlands are an ideal place to be on two wheels. The good roads, knockout mountain views, and concentration of Li and Miao, the island's first settlers, give the region an appealing distinction from the lowlands.

When to Go

Sānyà



- **Apr–Oct** Low season is hot, hot, hot but ideal for hotel bargains.
- **Nov–Mar** Cool dry months are perfect for cycling under the blue South China sky.
- **Nov–Jan** Winter winds blow in the island's best surfing season.

Best Beaches

- [Sanya Bay](#)
- [Yalong Bay](#)
- [Bo'ao](#)
- [Houhai](#)

Best Activities

- Climb [Wuzhishan](#) & [Seven Fairy Mountain](#)
- [Cycle the Central Highlands](#)
- [Xincun fishing harbour](#)
- [Hainan Museum](#)

→ [Haikou Volcanic Cluster Geopark](#)

Hainan Highlights



- 1 Soak up the sun, sand and cocktails at [Sanya](#), China's top beach resort.
- 2 Cycle the [Central Highlands](#), home of the Li and Miao.
- 3 Explore the traditional villages and empty beaches around [Bo'ao](#).
- 4 Surf China's best waves at [Sanya Bay and Shimeimei Bay](#).
- 5 Wander a classic south seas fishing port at [Xincun](#).

- 6 Climb [Wuzhishan](#) and [Seven Fairy Mountain](#), the most famous peaks on Hainan.
- 7 Enjoy seafood at markets all over the island including [Banqiao Road Seafood Market](#) in Haikou.

History

Until the economic boom of the last 30 years, Hainan had been a backwater of the Chinese empire since the first Han settlements appeared on the coast almost 2000 years ago. Largely ignored by a series of dynasties, Hainan was known as the ‘tail of the dragon,’ ‘the gate of hell,’ and a place best used as a repository for occasional high-profile exiles such as the poet Su Dongpo and the official Hai Rui.

More recently, China’s first communist cell was formed here in the 1920s, and the island was heavily bombarded and then occupied by the Japanese during WWII. Li and Han Chinese guerrillas waged an effective campaign to harass the Japanese forces but the retaliation was brutal – the Japanese executed a third of the island’s male population. Even today resentment over Japanese atrocities lingers among the younger generation.

In 1988 Hainan was taken away from Guangdong and established as its own province and Special Economic Zone (SEZ). After years of fits and starts, development is now focused on turning tropical Hainan into an ‘international tourism island’ by 2020. What this really means, besides developing every beach, and building more golf courses and mega-transport projects (such as a high-speed rail service round the island, a cruise ship terminal and even a spaceport), is not entirely clear.

THE LI & MIAO

There are some 39 ethnic groups on Hainan, of which four are the main minorities. These include the first settlers of the island, the Li and Miao (H’mong), who today are found mostly in the forested areas covering the Limuling Shan (Mother of the Li Mountain) range that stretches down the centre of the island. The Li probably

migrated to Hainan from Fujian 3000 years ago and today they number more than one million.

Despite a long history of rebellion against the Chinese, the Li aided communist guerrillas on the island during the war with the Japanese. Perhaps for this reason the island's centre was made an 'autonomous' region in 1952 after the communist takeover. The region hereafter would be self-governing, giving the marginalised Li and Miao communities a degree of control. That situation, however, proved short-lived after newly empowered local politicians were done in for corruption and money-wasting.

Like the Li, the Miao spread from southern China and now can be found across northern Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. There are some 60,000 Miao living on Hainan today, occupying some of the most rugged terrain on the island.

Climate

The weather on Hainan is largely warm in autumn and winter, and hot and humid in spring and summer. The mountains are always cooler than the coast, and the north is cooler than the south. Hainan is hit by at least one typhoon a year, usually between May and October.

Language

Hainanese is a broad term for the baker's dozen local dialects of Hainan Min (it's known by many other names), most of which are also spoken in Guangdong. While the Li and Miao can usually speak Mandarin, they prefer to use their own languages.

Getting Around

Getting around most of Hainan is both cheap and easy. Haikou and Sanya are linked by three main highways: the eastern expressway along the coast (only 3½ hours by bus); the central and much slower highway via Wuzhishan; and the less popular western expressway. The main roads are great, bus services comfortable and departures regular.

A high-speed rail system runs from Haikou to Sanya along the east coast.

Tickets cost only slightly more than buses, but most stations are not centrally located.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

HAIKOU

☎0898 / Pop 2 million

Haikou means ‘Mouth of the Sea,’ and while sea trade remains relatively important, the buzzing provincial capital at the northern tip of Hainan is most notable for its booming construction. New and restarted projects are everywhere.

While poor in actual sights, Haikou makes a good base for exploring the north of the island. There are some decent beaches a short bike or bus ride away, the air is fresh and clean (though worsening yearly because of traffic), and some visitors find themselves quite satisfied just hanging out here for a few days.

Travellers tend to stay around Haikou Park or north of the river on Haidian Island (Haidian Dao). These are both older, less flashy neighbourhoods (especially compared with the western sections of the city), but all your life-support systems, including banks, food and travel agents, can be found here.

Haikou

Sights

1 [Haikou Old Town](#) B2

Sleeping

2 [Haikou Banana Youth Hostel](#) A1

3 [Hainan Minhang Binguan](#) A3

Eating

4 [Haikou Qilou Snack Street](#) A2

Drinking & Nightlife

5 [Heping Road Bar Street](#) B1

Shopping

6 [Xinhua Bookstore](#) A2

Transport

7 [China Southern Airlines](#) A3

Sights & Activities

A few kilometres west of the city centre is a long stretch of sandy beaches. Take bus 37 (¥2) from Ertong Park and get off anywhere; alternatively, rent a bike in town. Cycling Haidian Island is also rewarding; look for news of the completion of a network of routes out to reservoirs and the Haikou Volcanic Cluster Geopark.

Haikou Old Town

AREA

(Haikou Lao Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Bo'ai Beilu)

The streets around Bo'ai Beilu are a looking glass into Haikou's French colonial past, with cobblestone blocks of porticoed row houses – some restored, some charmingly decayed. Though still a work in progress, 'Old Town' aims to be a dining and shopping destination, and some cute cafes, bookshops, and markets hawking handicrafts and spices have popped up recently. Amateur photographers will delight in the atmosphere here, especially down the funky un-rehabbed alleys.

Hainan Museum

MUSEUM

(Hainan Sheng Bowuguan 68 Guoxing Dadao; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This modern colossus of a building should be your first stop when you arrive in Hainan. The displays on ethnic minorities, as well as Hainan's 20th-century history, which included fierce resistance against the Japanese and later Nationalists, are particularly informative (and in English, too!).

The museum is about 2km southeast of Haikou Park, along the river. Buses 43 and 48 from downtown stop outside the museum. A taxi will cost around ¥30.

Five Officials Memorial Temple

TEMPLE

(Wugong Ci 169 Haifu Dadao; admission adult/child ¥20/17; 🕒 8am-6pm)

This atmospherically decaying Ming temple and surrounding gardens are dedicated to five officials who were banished to Hainan in earlier times. Famous Song dynasty poet, Su Dongpo, also banished to Hainan, is commemorated here as well.

The temple is about 2km southeast of Haikou Park. Grab a taxi for about ¥30.

Sleeping

Unlike in the more seasonal Sanya, prices in Haikou tend to be greatly discounted from the published rates pretty much year-round. Only during major holidays might you get a rude shock.

★ Haikou Banana Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Haikou Banana Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6628 6780; www.haikouhostel.com; 3 Dong, 6 Bieshu Liyuan Xiaoqu, 21 Renmin Dadao, 6 dm/s/tw/tr ¥50/90/130/160; 📶 @ 📶)

The digs of choice for international budget travellers, the simple, friendly Banana Hostel is tucked away down a quiet residential alley. Staff speak English, and amenities include laundry, internet and common areas, as well as a super-informative bulletin board and website.

Bicycle rentals range from day-trip beaters (per day ¥20) to solid Giant mountain bikes for multiday trips (per day ¥50; book in advance).

Hainan Minhang Binguan

HOTEL

(Hainan Civil Aviation Hotel [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6650 6888; www.mhbghotel.com; 9 Haixiu Donglu; r from ¥190; 📶 @)

The hotel isn't setting any trends, but the inoffensive modern decor offers a cosy environment to unwind. There's an attached restaurant and the surrounding zone is loaded with cheap eateries. As a bonus, the airport shuttle bus (¥15) starts and ends here. Also known as the 'Green Hotel.'

Golden Sea View Hotel

HOTEL

(Huangjin Haijing Da Jiudian ☎ 6851 9988; www.goldenhotel.com.cn; 67 Binhai Dajie; r from ¥350)

With discounts of 40% to 50%, rooms in this well-run three-star hotel are priced similarly to those stuck deep in the city. The Sea View, however, sits across from a large park at the start of the beaches to the west of town. The hotel's revolving restaurant has excellent views over Haikou and the ocean, and is well regarded for its breakfast buffet.

HAINAN FARE

There is a huge variety of Chinese cuisine available in Hainan. Fresh fruit and vegies are available everywhere, and, unlike much of China, they are grown under blue skies and in red soil mostly free from industrial contamination. There are myriad seafood dishes available, but most of them use imported or locally farmed fish and

crustaceans.

Don't forget to try Hainan's own famous four dishes.

Dongshan mutton (dongshan yang) A black-wool mountain goat fed camellias and orchids, and stewed, roasted or cooked in coconut milk, or used in soups.

Hele crab (hele xie) Juicy crab, usually steamed but also roasted, from Hele near Wanning; it's best eaten in autumn.

Jiaji duck (jiaji ya) To-die-for roast duck from Jiaji (the alternative name for Qionghai).

Wenchang chicken (wenchang ji) Most famous of all and originally cooked up in coastal Wenchang, this is succulent chicken raised on a diet of rice and peanuts.

Eating & Drinking

A lot of evening eating is done in the refreshingly cool outdoors on practically every major street. Haixiu Donglu on the south side of Haikou Park is chock-a-block full of cheap food stalls and fast-food joints. On the corner of Haidian 3 Donglu and Renmin Dadao you'll find a stack of cafes, fruit stalls, supermarkets and restaurants with picture menus. Haidian 2 Donglu is one long row of barbecue stalls at night with tables set up from Renmin Dadao to Heping Beilu.

★ Haikou Qilou Snack Street

MARKET

(Haikou Qilou Xiao Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Datong Lu & Jiefang Lu; snacks from ¥6)

This marvellous colonial arcade contains dozens of snack shops surrounding a massive open interior. Buy a prepaid plastic card at the window on the right of the entrance, then use that to pay for your snacks – you can refund the unused amount later. Local treats on offer include coconut rice served in the shell, plates of cockles, and dumplings of all sorts.

On weekends and busy nights, expect opera and other traditional performances on the stage in the open atrium. There's plenty of seating.

Directly to the left of the Qilou building, a traditional covered alley sells snacks (cash-only) like cumin-roasted corn and Muslim-style meat-stuffed pastries in a slightly less touristy setting.

Banqiao Road Seafood Market

SEAFOOD, MARKET

(Banqiao Lu Haixian Shichang Banqiao Lu, meals per person from ¥50)

For a fresh seafood dinner with lots of noise, smoke and toasting, head to the hectare of tables at the Banqiao Road Seafood Market, known island-wide. It's best to go with a group; prices average ¥50 per person (not including beer). A taxi to the market from downtown costs ¥15.

Banqiao Lu is about 3km south of the city centre.

Heping Road Bar Street

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Heping Beilu; 🕒 noon-late)

Various (often short-lived) bars and open air pubs line Heping Road in Haidian Island, all of which tend to be more casual than the KTV bars found elsewhere on Hainan. Look for the highest concentration a few blocks north of the river.

START YOUR DAY THE HAINAN WAY

Getting started in the morning with a decent and cheap breakfast is often a challenge in China. On Hainan, in nearly every city, town and hovel, look for a local institution called laoba cha where you can get fresh coffee (¥4 a pot), meat-filled buns (baozi) and a host of sweet snacks. OK, healthwise it's not exactly muesli and yoghurt, but you can always supplement it with some fresh fruit picked up from the stall down the street.

Laoba cha are easily recognised by their large bare interiors, or in smaller towns by their outdoor seating (usually under shady trees). If you can't find one, just ask a local.

i Information

The annually published *Hainan Island Guide Map* (¥6) has a good city map of Haikou, which includes a map of all of Hainan Island on the back in addition to smaller maps of Sanya and Bo'ao. **Xinhua Bookstore** (l, Xinhua Shudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 10 Jiefang Xilu; 🕒 9am-10pm) has good maps if you are

biking.

Many cafes around Guomao and Jinlong Lu have wi-fi.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Datong Lu)

Changes money and travellers cheques. ATM outlets are plentiful around town.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Haikou's **Meilan Airport** (www.mlairport.com) is well connected to most of China's major cities, including Hong Kong and Macau, with international flights to Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Taipei. Low-season one-way domestic fares are cheap. Destinations include Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai.

BUS

➔ **Xiuying Harbour Station** (Haikou Xiuyinggang Keyun Zhan) is far to the west of town. To get here, catch bus 37 from Ertong Park. A taxi costs about ¥25 from downtown. Destinations include:

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥290, 10 hours, hourly
- ➔ **Guilin** ¥280, 15 hours, hourly

Buses from the **south bus station** (32 Nanhai Dadao), 3km south of downtown, go to:

- ➔ **Qiongzong** ¥38, three hours via the central highway, hourly
- ➔ **Sanya** ¥80, 3½ hours, every 20 minutes
- ➔ **Wuzhishan** ¥80, four hours via the east highway, hourly

Buses from the **east bus station** (148 Haifu Lu), 1.5km south of downtown, go to:

- ➔ **Qionghai** ¥30, 1½ hours, frequent

- **Sanya** ¥80, 3½ hours
- **Wenchang** ¥20, 1½ hours, frequent

TRAIN

→ **Haikou Railway Station**, the main train station, is far west of the city. Bus 37 (¥2) connects the train station and Ertong Park. Bus 40 (¥2) connects the southern part of the city with the train station.

Trains to/from Guangzhou (hard/soft sleeper ¥192/296, 12 hours, five daily between 11.36am and 23.55pm) are shunted onto a ferry to cross the Qiongzhou Strait. Buy tickets (¥5 service fee) at the train station or from the dedicated counter at **China Southern Airlines** (Zhongguo Nanfang Hangkong

[MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Haixiu Donglu).

HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

Running from Haikou to Sanya via the east coast, the new high-speed rail stops in Haikou at the main train station (Haikou Railway Station) to the west of the city, the east train station (Haikou East Railway Station) and Meilan Airport. Note that many trains don't go all the way to Haikou Railway Station. Services:

- **Qionghai** ¥45, one hour, irregular schedule
- **Sanya** ¥99, two hours, frequent

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Meilan Airport is 25km southeast of the city centre. A shuttle bus (¥15, every 30 minutes) runs to/from Hainan Minhang Binguan in downtown. A taxi costs around ¥80 (negotiated price) to downtown. The high-speed rail also has a stop at the airport.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Haikou's centre is easy to walk around. The bus system (¥1 to ¥2) is decent, though it often takes transfers to get around.

TAXI

Taxis charge ¥10 for the first 3km. They're easy to spot, but difficult to catch on large roads because of roadside barriers.

CYCLING HAINAN

Hainan is a great destination for recreational touring. You're rarely more than an hour from a village with food and water, and never more than a few hours from a town with a decent hotel. At the same time, you'll find most of your riding is out in nature or through pretty farming valleys, not urban sprawl. Preparation time for a tour can be minimal.

Some popular routes include the following:

Haidian Island Plenty of fishing villages and rural landscapes and so close to Haikou.

North Coast Ride alongside kilometre after kilometre of sand beaches and down side routes into the interior.

Wenchang County Ride 100km out to Dongjiao Coconut Plantation and spend the night at a quiet beachside cabin. The next day head to Tonggu Ling, one of Hainan's best undeveloped beaches.

The most popular multiday ride is the 250km journey from Haikou to Wuzhishan and on to Sanya. The highway has a good shoulder most of the way, and allows for endless side trips up small country roads and stops in tiny villages. After a day riding through the lush Tunchang County valley, the route climbs into some fine hill country around **Shiyun**. The village, 32km southwest of Qiongzong, sits on a grassy shelf above a river and is worth a look around. Local cyclists recommend the 42km side trip from here up a wooded canyon to **Baisha**. The major towns in this area are **Tunchang** and **Qiongzong**, the latter a major settlement for the Miao.

After Shiyun you can look forward to a long climb (at least 10km), followed by a long fast descent into Wuzhishan. If you are continuing on to Sanya, the road is one long, steep downhill after the turn-off to Baoting.

If you're not bringing your own wheels, you can rent decent-quality mountain bikes at [Haikou Banana Youth Hostel](#) for ¥50 a day. Check out the hostel's website for detailed information on cycling Hainan. There's also a **Giant Bicycles** (☎6865 5598; www.hncycling.com; 26 Jinmao Xilu, bike rentals per day ¥50-100) shop in Haikou that does rentals. It's worth noting that people in Hainan call bikes danche.

AROUND HAIKOU

Sights

Haikou Volcanic Cluster Geopark

VOLCANO

(Leiqiong Shijie Dizhi Gongyuan Shishan Town; admission ¥60; 🕒 10am-5pm)

While this geopark encompasses about 108 sq km of rural countryside, the main attraction here is a corny tourist park surrounding a (genuinely cool) extinct volcano cone. Make haste past the snack stands and gift kiosks to descend the stairs winding down into the lushly vegetated crater, which feels more like a cave. Then climb back up for luscious views of the countryside all the way to the sea.

The geopark entrance is about 18km west of Haikou. To get here, first take a taxi to the T-intersection of Xiuying Xiaojie and Xiuying Dadao and then catch one of the frequent minibuses (¥4, 30 minutes) to Shishan County (Shishan Zhen) from the bus stop on the far side of Xiuying Dadao. A taxi to the park costs ¥60.

Mei She Village

HISTORIC SITE

(Mei She Cun)

Photogenic Mei She was built out of the rough grey volcanic stone so prevalent in this part of Hainan. Wander the quiet back alleys and gawp at the castle-like five-storey gun tower in the centre of town. It was built in the 1920s to protect the village from bandits.

A taxi (about ¥60 from Haikou) is the best way to get here, unless you've got a bike and a very good map. It's a 15-minute drive from the Haikou Volcanic Cluster Geopark entrance.

Dongjiao Coconut Plantation

BEACH, VILLAGE

(Dongjiao Yelin)

This coconut farming community takes up a big chunk of Wenchang County on the northeast coast. Cool, palm-lined lanes wind through traditional villages where locals harvest coconuts and snooze in hammocks. At the

shore, kilometres of long (though somewhat scrubby and gnat-ridden) beaches hardly see a tourist all year long.

For a very intrepid solo traveller, a few days of biking through the plantation would be a fine adventure. For the rest of us, hiring a car to explore the area as a day trip from Hainan is the best bet. Plan on packing your own food (though villagers would be happy to feed you a simple lunch if communication allows), or subsisting on coconuts.

From Haikou's east train station catch a high-speed train to Wenchang (¥30, 30 minutes, hourly). Then catch bus 6 (¥2) to the Xinhua Chu Dian stop (about five minutes' ride), cross the street and catch a bus on to Jianhuashan (¥8.50), the last stop. The beach is just ahead through the gate of the Hainan Prima Resort, the area's only accommodation.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

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Hainan's reputation rests on its tropical beaches, but for many travellers it's in this region of dark green mountains and terraced rice-growing valleys that they make genuine contact with the island's culture.

Until recently, Han Chinese had left almost no footprint here, and even today visible signs of Chinese culture, such as temples or shrines, are very rarely seen. Instead, the region is predominantly Li and Miao – minority ethnic groups who have lived a relatively primitive subsistence existence for most of their time on the island. Indeed, groups of Li living as hunter-gatherers were found in the mountainous interior of Hainan as recently as the 1930s. Today, they are by far the poorest people on Hainan.

Travelling in the region is easy, as a decent bus system links major and minor towns. Most buses from Haikou reach Wuzhishan in a few hours via the east coast highway. If you want to ply the central highway, head first to Qiongzong and from there catch a bus onward to Wuzhishan. Cycling is also a great way to get around this region.

Wuzhishan City (Tongshi)

Once called Tongzha or Tongshi, Wuzhishan Shi was renamed after the famous nearby mountain, the highest point on the island and a symbol of Hainan. Though the size of a large town, Wuzhishan is actually China's smallest city, having been given such status when it became the capital of the short-lived Li and Miao Autonomous Prefecture back in the 1980s.

Most travellers here are heading out to climb the mountain, or using the town as a base for exploring the region. There are several ATMs in Wuzhishan, so get cash before heading out of town.

Sleeping & Eating

There are cheap restaurants all around the bus station area (50 Haiyu Beilu), as well as countless fruit stalls, bakeries and cafes. Barbecue stalls are set up in the evenings all around town. Off Buxing Jie, the wide riverside promenade with more than 1km of old spreading banyan trees, sit rows of *laoba cha* (places selling coffee and snacks), teahouses and barbecue joints.

Hongye Hotel

HOTEL

(Hongye Dajiudian  3862 1111; 1 Nonglin Lu, r from ¥135)

Convenient to the bus station (just turn left out of the station and walk to the traffic circle, then turn right), this newish modern business hotel has clean, comfortable rooms at excellent price points. No English.

Zhengzong Lanzhou Lamian

NOODLES

(Authentic Lanzhou Noodles Haiyu Lu, dishes ¥7-15;  6.30am-10pm)

Across from the bus station, this Hui Muslim restaurant sells a wide range of cheap but excellent noodle and lamb dishes. Try the *ganbanmian* (¥8), a kind of stir-fried spaghetti bolognaise with hand-pulled noodles.

Getting There & Away

The bus station is on the town's main thoroughfare, on the northeast side of the river. Buses from Wuzhishan include the following:

- ➔ **Baoting** ¥9, 40 minutes, hourly
- ➔ **Haikou** ¥90, four hours, seven daily
- ➔ **Qiongzong** ¥30, two hours, hourly
- ➔ **Sanya** ¥23, 1½ hours, frequent
- ➔ **Shuiman** ¥8, one hour, hourly

Around Wuzhishan City

Wuzhishan (Five Finger Mountain)

Wuzhishan

MOUNTAIN

(Five Finger Mountain admission ¥50; 🕒 24hr)

The mountain after which Wuzhishan is named rises 1867m out of the centre of Hainan in a reserve 30km northeast of the city. As the highest peak in the land, it's naturally steeped in local lore: the five peaks, for example, are said to represent the Li people's five most powerful gods. Despite the name, however, from most angles the summit looks like a single volcanic peak or a cleft hoof. It's a great area for hiking. A good time to visit is on the third day of the third month of the lunar calendar, when lots of Miao people gather for an annual festival.

The reserve is the source of the Wanquan and Changhua Rivers and protects a mixed forest containing 6.5% of all vascular plant species in China. It's a rich (though threatened) ecosystem and receives the highest rainfall in Hainan. Average humidity is more than 90% and the mountaintop is often shrouded in fog and mist.

It's pretty much an all-day event to get out here and climb the mountain, so leave as early as possible if you hope to enjoy clear views from the peak.

Most people can reach the top of the first finger (the second is highest) in three hours. The path is clear but very steep and includes a number of ladder climbs further up. Coming down is not much faster than going up, so give yourself six to eight hours.

Wuzhishan sits about 4km from the village of Shuiman. There is no fixed schedule to Shuiman but buses (¥8, one hour, 35km) run about every hour. In Wuzhishan, buy your ticket on the bus, which leaves across the street from the station front. Make sure to get a bus going to Shuiman via Nansheng.

In Shuiman, motorcycle taxis will take you the remaining 4km for ¥15. The last bus back to Wuzhishan leaves Shuiman around 6pm.

Qi Xian Ling (Seven Fairy Mountain)

Seven Fairy Mountain

MOUNTAIN

(Qi Xian Ling Wenquan Guojia Senlin Gongyuan admission ¥48)

About 39km southeast of Wuzhishan lies the small and conspicuously orderly Li town of **Baoting**. While that orderliness may strike you as noteworthy after a few weeks spent travelling in China, the main reason to come here is to climb the 1126m peak, comprising an eye-catching ridge of jagged spearlike crags. The area is perhaps more famous among Chinese, however, for the hot-spring resorts popping up in the tropical forest.

The mountain entrance and hot springs area are 9km off the main road from Baoting in what is ostensibly now a national hot springs and forest park. Tickets (¥42) to climb the Seven Fairy Mountain can be purchased at the park office at the start of the 2.4km long trail, though at the time of writing the park administration was in flux and admission was free. It's three hours to the top and back along a stepped path through a dense, healthy rainforest buzzing with bird and insect life. The final 100m climb to the peak runs up a pitted slope with chains and railings in place to aid your near-vertical climb. The views from the top are worth the effort.

There are frequent buses to Baoting from Wuzhishan (¥9, 40 minutes) and also Sanya (¥22, 1½ hours). From Baoting's bus station, catch a motorcycle

(¥30) to the national park entrance. Make sure not to catch a motorcycle with a side car as they lack the power to make it the last 4km from the hot springs area up to the trailhead.

Sleeping

Narada Resort

RESORT

(Junlan Dujia Jiudian  8388 8888; www.hainanparadise.com; Qixianling Hot Springs National Forest Park; r from ¥617)

At the foot of Seven Fairy Mountain, the Narada is an elegant surprise in the middle of the peaceful (though increasingly developed) rainforest. The 222 bright, airy rooms are done up in wood with ethnic minority art; the manicured grounds drip with fruit trees. Most guests come to soak in the many hot tubs, some spiked with different healing herbs and teas.

THE EAST COAST

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Hainan's east coast is a series of spectacular palm-lined beaches, long bays and headlands most of which are, unfortunately, not usually visible from the main roads, not even at bicycle level. With the best beaches developed or being developed, there is little reason to make a special trip out here (to Bo'ao being the exception) unless you are surfing or wish to stay at a resort. Biking or motorcycling is another story, however, as there are endless small villages and rural roads to explore and even a few near-deserted bays.

In the past, the east coast was the centre of Han settlement. If you are coming from the highlands you will start to notice temples, gravesites, shrines and other signs of Chinese culture dotting the landscape.

Bo'ao

This attractive little coastal town at the confluence of three rivers is famous as the site of the Bo'ao Forum for Asia (BFA), an annual April meet-up of top-level officials, academics and economists exclusively from the Asia region. For cyclists, Bo'ao is a natural stop along the coast, offering good accommodation and food. For all travellers, it's an unpretentious little beach town (with a usually deserted beach), surrounded by some of the prettiest countryside on Hainan.

Like much of Hainan, or China for that matter, during the past few years Bo'ao has been under the spell of the construction fairy, and in the north of town luxury villas and resorts continue to pop up. Officially Bo'ao is starting to cover a large area, but the 'downtown' blocks, where most travellers both stay and eat are tiny, in essence being two streets that intersect at a T-junction: Haibin Lu runs north–south and Zhaobo Lu runs east–west. The beach is a five-minute walk from here.

Avoid planning a trip to Bo'ao either during the forum or the week before as the town is pretty much closed off under the scrutiny of high-level security (there are even warships in the harbour).

Sights & Activities

Despite hosting the BFA every year, and despite over-construction giving parts of town the look of a small Dubai, Bo'ao is still a rather rural place. Even a few blocks from the main junction are small villages of stone and brick buildings where locals dry rice in the middle of the lanes, and burn incense in small shrines to their local folk deities. Some good examples are **Da Lu Po Village** (Da Lu Po Cun) and **Nanqiang Village** (Nanqiang Cun) off the main road about 2km west of the downtown junction. About 20km northeast of Bo'ao look for the little fishing village of **Tanmen**, where the local multicoloured wooden junks are made and repaired.

Bo'ao Beach

BEACH

Bo'ao's beach is a few hundred metres east of the main road. Head south

down Haibin Lu, turn left at the Jinjiang Hot Spring Hotel and follow the road as it swings right to drop you off at a Chinese temple. The river hits the sea here and a long thin sandbar at the mouth is, for very dubious reasons (go ahead and ask the locals), a popular place to boat out to.

If you plan to swim, head at least 500m north to avoid dangerous currents.

Cai Family Former Residence

HISTORIC SITE

(Caijia Zhai)

For a rewarding half-day trip, grab a bike, or rent a motorcycle taxi (¥50), and head to this sprawling old mansion built in 1934 by several brothers who made their fortune in the Indonesian rubber industry. The building was abandoned in 1937 after the Japanese invaded Hainan, and later became a guerrilla outpost for resistance fighters. In 2006 it was declared a heritage site and these days you can wander around inside for a look if the caretaker is about.

To reach the house, head west out of town and when the road ends at a junction turn left (south) and cross two long bridges. Head right after crossing the second bridge at the English sign. In a couple of blocks stay left and enjoy a sumptuous ride through green fields and collections of handsome old and new houses alongside the road. It's about 5km from town.

Bo'ao Temple

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Dongfang Wenhuyuan)

This modern Buddhist temple complex is not being maintained well, but it's still worth a visit to see the enormous statue of the many-armed and many-headed Guanyin, the stunning pagoda, and the views over the delta which show just how pretty and rural Bo'ao can still be.

A motorcycle taxi costs ¥10 from the centre of Bo'ao. You can easily walk the 3km back to town and take in some of the traditional villages along the way.

Sleeping

Meiwenmeiya International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Meiwen Meiya Qingnian Lushe  3222 7222; Meiya Village, Bo'ao Town, Qionghai dm ¥30)

This bamboo-shrouded hamlet a stone's throw from downtown Bo'ao is trying to make a go of being an 'ecovillage.' The very rustic set-up at this hostel includes spartan dorms with bunk beds and mosquito nets, and a spot for camping. Don't expect to see any other travellers unless there's a group cycling trip passing through.

Bo'ao Golden Coast Hot Spring Hotel

RESORT

(Qionghai Bo'ao Jinhai'an Wenquan Dajiudian  6277 8888; 8 Jinhai'an Dadao, Bo'ao r from \$450)

One of the more classically resort-y options in town, this sprawling complex has more than 300 rooms, an enormous pool, manicured lawns, and several restaurants and bars. In the off-season (most of the year), it's great value.

Eating

Because of its international status as the site of the BFA, the town has a good range of Chinese restaurants dedicated to regional cuisine (Hui Muslim, Hunan and Sichuan are just the start) as well as plenty of barbecue stalls that set up in the evenings. You'll see English signs out the front and even some English or picture menus within. On the main streets there are grocery stores, and abundant fruit stands.

Around 4pm each day head north about 150m from the main intersection on Haibin Lu and look for stalls on either side of the road near the Hainan Bank selling succulent Jiaji duck (*Jiaji ya*; ¥10 for a leg), a Hainan speciality. Don't be tardy as it sells out quickly.

Colourful Noodles

VEGETARIAN, NOODLES

(Qicai Mianguan Zhaobo Lu; dishes ¥13-15;  8am-late; )

Though a few meat dishes are on offer at this warm family-run place, it's otherwise a true vegetarian set-up serving veggie-flavoured noodle dishes, as well as dumplings, fresh fruit and juices. To get here, head west along Zhaobo Lu almost to the end of the two-storey row of whitewashed buildings.

★ **Sea Story**

SEAFOOD, CAFE

(Haide Gushi dishes ¥18-38; 🕒 9.30am-1am; 📶)

The ocean-facing Sea Story has an open driftwood frame with a funky beachcomber design: an old wood fishing junk even sits as the centrepiece inside the lobby. Outside, the breezy deck is an ideal spot for cocktails or an extended lunch or dinner. Loud music, karaoke and other intrusive noises or activities are banned. Sea Story is about 1km north from the temple along the seaside lane.

Aozhuang Haixian Cheng

SEAFOOD

(dishes ¥60; 🕒 6pm-late)

For seafood, head north out of town to this collection of seaside cafes, which are famous across the island. Just choose and then point to what you want cooked up but make sure to ask the price before sitting down. Restaurants open around 9.30am and close when the last customers leave. You can walk here on the main road, or better yet along the seaside lane starting at the Matsu Temple, in about 30 minutes.

Drinking & Nightlife

The beach road leading north from downtown has been redeveloped into a 'Seaside Bar Street' lined with spanking-new wine bars and cafes. Unless it's BFA season, you'll probably have the views to yourself.

★ **Lao Wood Coffee Rest Area**

CAFE

(Lao Fangzi 61 Haibin Lu; drinks from ¥18; 🕒 9am-2am; 📶)

The owner of this cafe, a local dancer and art administrator, literally had an

old traditional stone house taken apart and reassembled on Bo'ao's coastal street to make his dream of opening a stylish cafe come true. The inside is chock-full of antiques and *objets d'art*, while in front is a sculpture-filled garden dotted with cafe tables.

Information

You can buy high-speed train tickets from **Yuantong International Travel Agency** (64 Haibin Lu; 🕒 8am-10pm) about 200m north of the main intersection across from an ABC Bank. In the same area is a **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang) with an ATM. A decent map of the Bo'ao area can be found at the bottom of the general *Hainan Island Guide Map*.

Getting There & Away

HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

The nearest station to Bo'ao is actually Qionghai and from there you'll need to catch a taxi (¥40) the rest of the way. Alternatively, catch bus 6 or 7 outside the train station to Qionghai East Bus Station and then take a minibus the rest of the way (see [Click here](#)).

➔ **Haikou** ¥45, one hour, hourly

➔ **Sanya** ¥53, one hour, hourly

BUS

From Haikou's east bus station catch a bus to the main station in Qionghai (¥26, 1½ hours, 102km) then cross the street to the Kentucky Fried Chicken side, and look for the bus stop just down the road to the left. Catch minibus 2 to Bo'ao (¥4, 30 minutes, frequent). Passengers get dropped off at the main junction in Bo'ao.

HITTING THE WAVES ON HAINAN

Surfing is slowly gaining a following in China, and Hainan is without question the centre of that budding scene. While the majority of people out on the waters are still

Westerners, the number of Chinese trying the sport grows each year. Conditions are never going to make this the next Indonesia, but every level, from beginner to advanced, can find suitable waves. In recognition of the growing interest, two annual competitions are now held each year in the Shimei Bay and Sun and Moon Bay area: the **Hainan Surf Open**, in November, organised by Brendon Sheradon's **Surfing Hainan** (Chonglang Hainan www.surfinghainan.com); and the **Hainan Classic**, in January, sponsored by ASP (the Association of Surfing Professionals).

If you want to try your hand at the sport, Dadonghai and Houhai get decent waves from May to September and are suitable for absolute novices (especially quiet Houhai). Shimei Bay and Sun and Moon Bay are prime from November to January but it's possible to surf all year. With up to five breaks, the area is suitable for all levels; advanced surfers can try their luck on the Ghost Hotel waves. Unlike further south, Shimei Bay and Sun and Moon Bay get a bit chilly and overcast in the winter months, so light wetsuits are recommended.

You can find rentals and basic lessons in Sanya at [Sanya Backpackers](#), but if you want professional instruction contact Surfing Hainan, which offers two-hour lessons for ¥400 and rentals for ¥100 per day. It also has wetsuits for rent at ¥50 per day.

Shimei Bay & Sun & Moon Bay

Shimei Bay (Shimei Wan) and Sun and Moon Bay (Ri Yue Wan) are among the most stunning stretches of coastline on Hainan. Development of major resorts is proceeding apace but the beaches are still open to the public and offer some of China's best surfing waves, especially from November to January. Some hostels and hotels in Sanya offer day trips to the bays and you can ride out to them if you are biking the east coast.

WORTH A TRIP

COLOURFUL FISHING PORT OF XINCUN

This classic south seas fishing port (Xincun) is one of the most authentic, and authentically picturesque, destinations on Hainan. Among the hubbub, clutter, filth and flotsam of a typical fishing port float hundreds of painted wooden ships in a deep blue tropical bay ringed with emerald green hills. Fish dry on the docks, women weave nets, men weld old scraps of metal together, and a whole community thrives, including the hundreds of families who live on permanent floating houseboats across

the bay.

Most people come to this area simply to see the rather dull **Nanwan Monkey Islet** (Nanwan Houdao) across the bay and reached by China's longest **gondola** (return incl admission ¥163; 🕒8am-4.50pm, last gondola 4.20pm). Some 1000 macaque monkeys (*Macaca mulatta*) live on the hilly islet, and while most of the area is now off limits to tourists, monkeys are still made to perform for visitors in a depressing spectacle of chains, whips and too-small cages.

If you just want to see the monkeys and ride the gondola the best way is to go on a tour from Sanya. Otherwise, to visit the fishing port, catch a bus 79km from Sanya to Lingshui (¥20, 1½ hours, hourly). In Lingshui, after leaving the station's main exit, cross the road and head right. Walk a few blocks and catch a minibus in front of the Bank of China to Xincun (¥3, 40 minutes). In Xincun, catch a motorcycle taxi or walk the 1km to the harbour.

SANYA

📍0898 / Pop 685,400

China's premier beach community claims to be the 'Hawaii of China,' but 'Moscow on the South China Sea' is more like it. The modern, hyper-developed resort city has such a steady influx of Russian vacationers these days that almost all signs are in Cyrillic as well as Chinese. Middle-class Chinese families are increasingly drawn to Sanya's golden shores as well, which means the beaches are just as full at night as they are during the day (due to the Chinese aversion to sunburn).

While the full 40km or so of coastline dedicated to tourism is usually referred to as Sanya, the region is actually made up of three distinct zones. Sanya Bay is home to the bustling city centre and a long stretch of beach and hotels aimed at locals and mainland holidaymakers. Busy, cheerfully tacky Dadonghai Bay, about 3km southeast, beyond the Luhuitou Peninsula, is where most Western travellers stay. A further 15km east, at exclusive Yalong Bay, the beach is first-rate, as is the line of plush international resorts.

You'll find the bus station in the Sanya Bay area on Jiefang Lu, the main drag. This road morphs into Yuya Lu as it heads into Dadonghai Bay and Yalong Bay.

Dàdōnghǎi (Sānyà)



Dadonghai (Sanya)

Sights

1 [Dadonghai Bay](#) C2

Sleeping

2 [Golden Beach Villa](#) C2

3 [Resort Intime](#) B2

4 [Sanya Backpackers](#) B1

Eating

5 [Casa Mia Italian Restaurant](#) B1

Sights & Activities

Unsurprisingly for a beach resort, the vast majority of things to see and do revolve around sand, sea, shopping and after-hours entertainment. Strolling along the river fronts is pleasant in the cool evenings. Banyan trees shade the

boulevards, healthy looking mangroves line the shore, and a modern glitzy skyline dominates the background.

If you want to scuba or snorkel, May to August, before typhoon season, is the best time though locals will tell you honestly that there is not that much to see in the water. Surfing is possible year-round if you alternate between Dadonghai, Houhai and nearby Sun and Moon Bay.

Be aware that although beaches often have lifeguards they may not be properly trained.

Sanya Bay

BEACH

(Sanya Wan)

The long sandy strip off the city centre at Sanya Bay is the most relaxed of the three main beaches, where you'll find crowds of mostly mainland Chinese tourists kicking back, laughing, playing and having a beachy old time. In little covered areas locals play music, sing, engage in conspiracy, write characters in the sand, and so on. There's a long pathway for strolling in the cool evenings, and if the tide is out a little you can walk on the sand for many kilometres. In the evenings it's fun to watch the lights on Phoenix Island (the awesome cruise ship terminal) turn on.

Dadonghai Bay

BEACH

(Dadonghai Wan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Dadonghai Bay sports a wider beach than Sanya and has a shaded boardwalk running along most of its length. The setting, in a deep blue bay with rocky headlands, is simply gorgeous but it does get busy here. At night, half the crowd is knocking back beers and eating crabs at the boardwalk restaurants, while the other half is still bobbing in the sea under the light of the moon.

Yalong Bay

BEACH

(Yalong Wan, Asian Dragon Bay 🕒 6.30am-6.30pm)

Yalong Bay is more attractive and less crowded than Sanya's other beaches,

though with fewer shops and vendors budgeters might want to bring their own food and water. It offers a wide range of activities, including jet-skiing, banana boats, snorkelling and diving.

China's beaches are theoretically open to everyone but at Yalong Bay there can be a quasi-official fee if you're not staying at one of the beachfront resorts. To avoid any sporadically enforced, quasi-official beach entry fees, walk through one of the hotels rather than entering the beach from the main square. No one will bother you.

Houhai Beach

BEACH

()

Houhai, a crescent-shaped sandy beach about 45 minutes northeast out of Dadonghai, is popular with those looking to get away from the crowds (though ironically it lies in the southern reach of Haitang Bay where the scale of development must be seen to be believed). Sanya-based hostels take people here to surf and scuba while Chinese tourists are shuttled to the pier for a boat ride out to Wuzhizhou Island.

Bus 28 from the main road in Dadonghai (¥11) takes you to the beach. There's a small village here with plenty of small restaurants and fruit stands.

Sanya Market #1

MARKET

(Jiefang Lu, Sanya; 🕒 11am-2am)

Sanya's most popular market practically writhes with life – vendors hawking cheap jewellery, frozen fruit treats and women's underwear, teenage tourists jostling to play rickety arcade games, old women pushing through the crowds with pails of crabs. Things really heat up after dark.

Sleeping

A glut of hotel rooms makes even luxury resorts affordable in Sanya. Dadonghai Bay is the place to head for midrange and budget lodgings catering to the international set. The top-end resorts are off the beach at

Yalong Bay, in a private area of palm-lined roads and landscaped grounds. Outside peak periods 30% to 60% discounts are common everywhere.

Dadonghai Bay

★ Sanya Backpackers

HOSTEL

(Sanya Beibao Dujia Wu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8821 3963; www.sanyabackpackers.com; No 1 Type 1 Villa, Lu Ming Community, Haihua Lu, Dadonghai Bay; dm ¥75, s/d ¥200/240; 📶 @ 📶)

Run by a Singaporean diving instructor and his charming wife, this spick-and-span hostel is a more intimate and friendly place than others in town. Set in a whitewashed building in a quiet residential compound it's also an oasis. Simple backpacker dishes are available, and there's a new bar for hanging out in the evenings.

The hostel offers open-water certification and refresher courses (per day ¥500 including lunch and transport), in addition to surfing lessons and rentals (per day ¥380) and some customised trips out to waterfalls and jungle hiking trails.

Golden Beach Villa

HOTEL

(Jin Shatan Haijing Dujia Bieshu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8821 2220; www.jinshatan888.com; 21 Haihua Lu; r from ¥360; 📶)

Despite the address, the front office and the suites are actually on Donghai Lu facing the beach. Rooms, which are enclosed in a walled-off garden, face the sea, and the upper floors have excellent views. Despite being so close to the seaside action this is a fairly quiet part of Dadonghai.

Resort Intime

RESORT

(Xiangtou Yintai Dujia Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8821 0888; www.resortintime.com; Dadonghai Bay; r from ¥768; 🚫 📶 @ 📶)

It feels a bit like you are entering a busy bus terminal when you walk in the lobby and head up the elevator to reception, but that's about the only thing

pedestrian about this great little resort right by the beach. The hotel grounds are surprisingly large and leafy, and feature a barbecue area near the pool. The rooms aren't the most spacious but those with sea views are set at a perfect angle to take in the bay. Nonsmoking floors are available.

Yalong Bay

Hotel Pullman

HOTEL

(Sanya Wanhai Jubo'er Mandujia Jiudian  8855 5588; www.pullmanhotels.com; Yalong Bay; r from ¥900)

Directly across the street from the ocean, what you give up in oceanfront views, you make up in savings at the Pullman. Ground floor rooms have 'swim up' entrances to the pool, which surrounds an emerald interior courtyard. Kids will dig the waterslide area. Don't expect five-star luxury, just solid midrange value and comfort.

Ritz-Carlton

RESORT

( 8898 8888; www.ritzcarlton.com; Yalong Bay; r from ¥1800)

While some of Yalong Bay's palatial resorts can feel a bit ghost town-y due to Sanya's overbuilding, the Ritz is always abuzz. Well-heeled matrons sip tea on the grand patio, princelings splash down water slides in the kids' pool, and young couples lie on the wide, sugar-white beach. Rooms are large and airy, all white linen and elegant mahogany.

Eating

The entire beachfront at Dadonghai is one long strip of restaurants, bars and cafes, most of which are overpriced and not terribly good, even if the overall atmosphere is cool, shady and scenic. At night, Haihua Lu is lined with restaurants featuring outdoor seating for barbecue and seafood.

When ordering seafood, be sure to settle on price beforehand – Sanya has had some fairly infamous restaurant scams.

Yingjie Eatery

CHINESE

(147 Xinmin Lu; dishes from ¥40; 🕒 noon-10pm)

Buy live seafood at the nearby market and have it cooked up fresh with garlic, soy sauce or whatever you desire at this friendly little local eatery in Sanya town. There's very little English spoken, so plan on either bringing a friend to translate or doing a lot of pointing.

★ Casa Mia Italian Restaurant

ITALIAN

(Kasa Miya Yidali Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Resort Intime, Dadonghai; mains ¥48-100; 📶)

A jaded traveller might pooh-poo the thought of finding top-notch Italian in a Chinese resort town. They'd be wrong. Casa Mia has truly divine pizzas, pastas (try the special seafood linguine) and classics like veal scallopini. The inside dining area is a bit cramped and bright, so choose to sit outside by the fountain. The wine list is nothing to sneeze at either.

Baan Rim Nam Antara

THAI

(☎ 8888 5088; <http://sanya.anantara.com>; Anantara Sanya Resort, Sanya Bay; dishes from ¥98-268)

Dine on Thai classics like curried crab, green papaya salad and basil pork at this hushed and elegant restaurant in the Antara, a spa-like resort all done up in mirrors and dark wood. Service is extremely friendly. If it's not too hot, opt to sit on the patio.



Drinking & Nightlife

Most of the after-hours fun is in Sanya and Dadonghai Bay. There's a bar and karaoke TV (KTV) street on Yuya Lu near the river.

★ Dolphin Sports Bar & Grill

PUB

(☎ 8821 5700; www.sanyadolphin.com; 99 Yuya Lu, Dadonghai; 🕒 11am-2am)

International tourists and expats mingle with locals at this always-packed Western-style pub. Wash down a (very good) cheeseburger with a pint while

watching football on the multiple TVs, or wait until after 10pm, when the live music starts up and the crowd really gets rolling. Friendly servers speak impeccable English.

Club M2

NIGHTCLUB

(☎ 7685-8711; www.clubmj.cn; Times Coast Bar Street; Jiu Ba Jie; 🕒 8pm-3am)

You've got to dress the part to get into M2, one of the swankier clubs on Sanya's bar row – think lots of hair gel/high heels/skinny suits/minidresses. Chinese big shots wheel and deal by the bar, while the younger crowd dances to ear-splitting EDM.

Information

There is the full gamut of internet cafes (Chinese ID required), banks, travel agencies etc in Sanya city as well as Dadonghai Bay. Wi-fi is widely available in restaurants and cafes.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yuya Lu, Dadonghai; 🕒 9am-5pm)

Changes travellers cheques and has an ATM.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Sanya's **Phoenix Airport** (www.sanyaairport.com) has international flights to Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan and Japan, as well as to Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai.

BUS

Frequent buses and minibuses to most parts of Hainan depart from the **long-distance bus station** (Sanya Qichezhan Jiefang Lu,), in busy central Sanya.

➔ **Baoting** ¥25, 1½ hours, hourly

➔ **Haikou** ¥80, 3½ hours, regular services

- ➔ **Lingshui** ¥20, 1½ hours, hourly
- ➔ **Wanning** ¥30, two hours, hourly
- ➔ **Wuzhishan** ¥25, two hours, regular services

HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

Tickets can be purchased in Dadonghai from the **air ticket office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); Yuya Lu) two bus stops east of Summer Mall (the stop is called Bayi Zhongxue). You can also order tickets online (at least a week in advance) from **Apple Travel** (www.appletravel.cn/china-trains).

- ➔ **Haikou** ¥99, two hours, frequent
- ➔ **Qionghai** ¥49, one hour, hourly

Getting Around

Phoenix Airport is 25km from Dadonghai Bay. Shuttle bus 8 (¥5, one hour) leaves for the airport from Yuya Lu. A taxi costs ¥60 to ¥70. The high-speed train station is far out of town. Bus 4 (¥1) runs there from Dadonghai but takes over an hour. A taxi will cost ¥40 for a 20-minute ride.

Buses 2 and 8 (¥1, frequent) travel from Sanya bus station to Dadonghai Bay.

From Dadonghai Bay to Yalong Bay, catch bus 15 (¥5).

Taxis charge ¥8 for the first 2km. A taxi from Sanya to Dadonghai Bay costs ¥10 to ¥15, and from Dadonghai Bay to Yalong Bay it's ¥60.

Guangxi

[Guangxi Highlights](#)

[Guilin](#)

[Around Guilin](#)

[Longji Rice Terraces](#)

[Sanjiang](#)

[Yangshuo](#)

[Around Yangshuo](#)

[Huangyao](#)

[Nanning](#)

[Yangmei](#)

[Beihai](#)

[Weizhou Island](#)

[Huashan Cliff Murals](#)

[Pingxiang](#)

[Detian Waterfall](#)

[Tongling Grand Canyon](#)

[Leye](#)

Guangxi



Pop 51 million

Why Go?

Tell someone you're heading to Guangxi and they'll seethe with envy, imagining you cycling and bamboo-rafting under the famous karst peaks of Yangshuo, or hiking between ethnic villages in the lofty Longji Rice Terraces. Tell them that that's not all though: you'll also be taking selfies in front of the dramatic Danxia landscape (a type of landform) at Tianmen Mountain and Bajiaozhai National Geopark, and getting sprayed by the mighty waterfall of Detian or splashed by live seafood in Beihai's Vietnamese quarter.

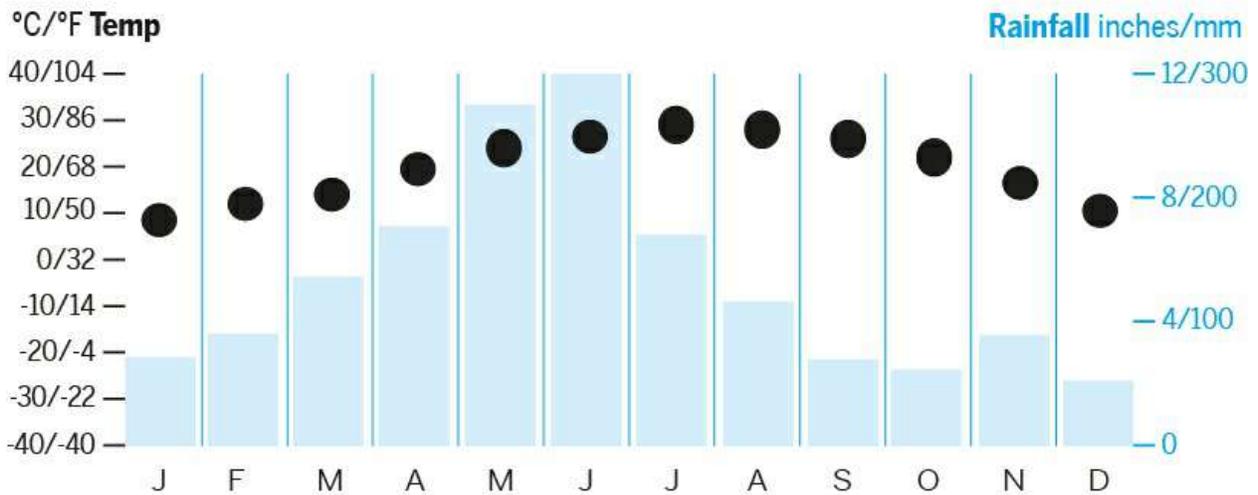
What's more, you'll be contemplating the 2000-year-old Huashan Cliff Murals from a boat, getting your feet massaged by the cobblestones of Daxu Ancient Town, and comparing the poetry of the Dong villages at Chengyang to the beauty of Kyoto in Japan.

After you've had your fill of wonders above ground, you'll be plunging into the subterranean forests of Leye and soaking your feet in the underground streams of Tongling Grand Canyon. Tell them all that and they're bound to

hop on the next flight to Guilin or Nanning.

When to Go

Guilín



- **Apr & May** Karst peaks in Guilin and Yangshuo don emerald robes.
- **Jun–Sep** Rains turn rice terraces into mirrors and fatten waterfalls.
- **Sep & Oct** The gulf breeze caresses your face as you stroll on Weizhou Island.

Best Non-Karst Sights

- [Longji Rice Terraces](#)
- [Chengyangqiao Scenic Area](#)
- [Tongling Grand Canyon](#)

Best Mountain Scenery

- [Bajiaozhai National Geopark](#)

➔ [Tianmen Mountain National Park](#)

➔ [Leye Geopark](#)

➔ [Yangshuo](#)

History

In 214 BC a Qin-dynasty army attempted to assimilate the Zhuang people, living in what is now called Guangxi, into their newly formed Chinese empire. But while the eastern and southern parts submitted, the western extremes remained largely controlled by hill-tribe chieftains.

Major tribal uprisings occurred in the 19th century, the most significant being the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64), which became one of the bloodiest civil wars in human history.

Communist bases were set up in Guangxi following the 1929 Baise Uprising led by Deng Xiaoping, although they were eventually destroyed by Kuomintang forces. Much of Guangxi fell briefly under Japanese rule following highly destructive WWII invasions.

Today the Zhuang, China's largest minority group, makes up 32% of Guangxi's population, which led to the province being reconstituted in 1955 as the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. As well as Zhuang, Miao and Yao, Guangxi is home to significant numbers of Dong people.

Language

Travellers with a grasp of Mandarin (Putonghua) will have few problems navigating Guangxi's vast sea of languages. Cantonese (Guangdonghua), known as Baihua in these parts, is the language of choice in Nanning, Pingxiang and Daxin, but most people also understand Mandarin. Visitors will also hear a number of minority languages being spoken, such as Zhuang, Dong and Yao.

Getting There & Around

Airports at Guilin and Nanning run domestic flights of three hours or less to every major city, as well as international flights mainly to destinations in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore.

A well-developed network of convenient rail lines and expressways spans the province, taking you to every corner in four hours.

High-speed rail, centred in Nanning, connects Guangxi to provincial neighbours including Guangdong, Guizhou, Hunan and Yunnan. The fastest trains reach Guangzhou (three hours), Guiyang (five hours) and Beijing (13 hours).

Long-distance buses are the most frequent form of transportation between major cities in Guangxi and neighbouring provinces.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥150

\$\$ ¥150 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

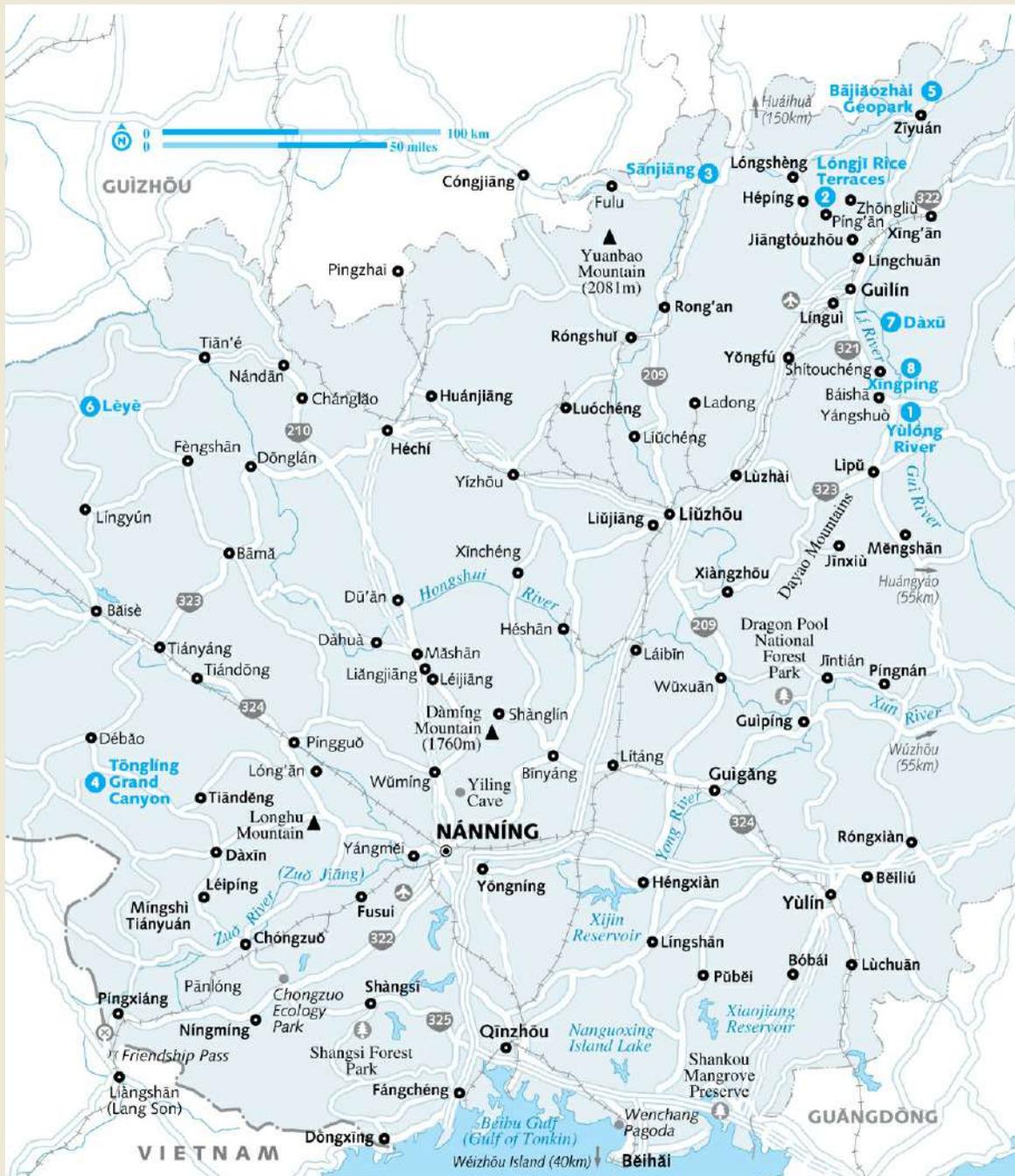
EATING

\$ less than ¥40

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥100

\$\$\$ more than ¥100

Guangxi Highlights



- 1 Cycle past scenery straight out of a painting alongside the [Yulong River](#) near Yangshuo.
- 2 Trek among stilt houses and fields that cascade like the stairs of a giant at [Longji Rice Terraces](#).

- 3 Visit the Chengyang Wind & Rain Bridge, drum towers and cedarwood homes of the artistic Dong people in [Sanjiang](#).
- 4 Let underground rivers, ancient caves and primeval forests whisper you their secrets at [Tongling Grand Canyon](#).
- 5 Watch the drama of Danxia geology unfold as you explore [Bajiaozhai National Geopark](#).
- 6 Be awestruck by the surreal nature of the massive sinkholes and their caverns at [Leye Geopark](#).
- 7 Enjoy the rustic pleasures of 1000-year-old [Daxu Ancient Town](#).
- 8 Revisit the charms of Yangshuo as it would have been 15 years ago in [Xingping](#).

Guilin

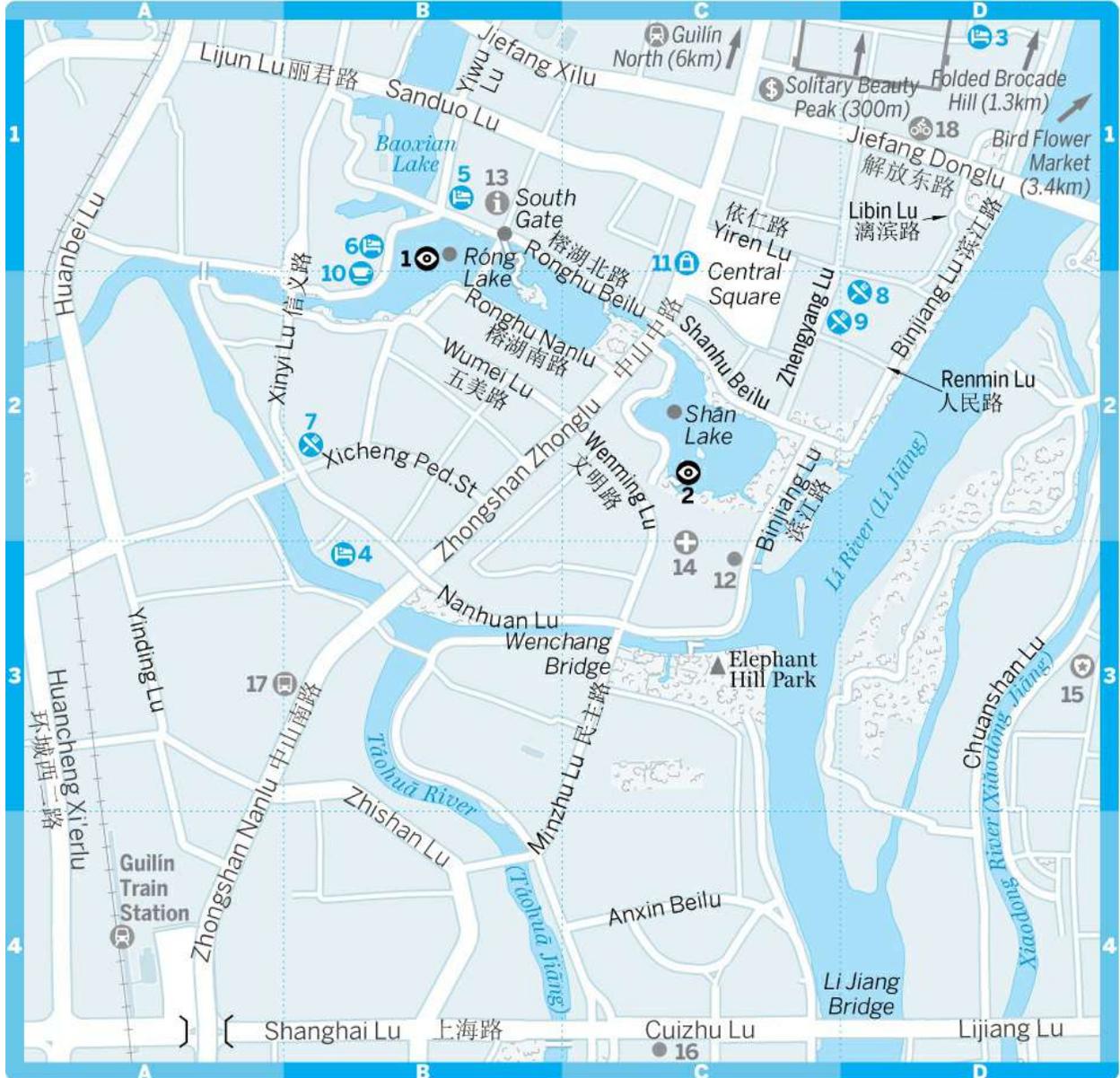
 0773 / Pop 5,189,562

Guilin was China's first city to develop tourism after 1949. For decades, children's textbooks proclaimed 'Guilin's landscape is the best under heaven'. It was the darling of Chinese politicians, the star city proudly presented to visiting dignitaries. Today Guilin's natural endowments still amaze, yet, thanks to imperfect urban planning, there is a pervasive feeling that the city is past its prime.

No matter where you're going in Guangxi, you're likely to spend a night or two here – Guilin is a convenient base to plan trips to the rest of the province. It's clean and modern, with a high percentage of English-speaking locals, but you'll have to put up with touts and high admission fees to sights.

Guilin

0 500 m
0 0.25 miles



Guilin

📍 Sights

- 1 [City Wall](#) B1
- 2 [Sun & Moon Twin Pagodas](#) C2

🏠 Sleeping

- 3 [Ming Palace International Youth Hostel](#) D1

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 4 | Riverside Hostel | B3 |
| 5 | This Old Place Hostel | B1 |
| 6 | White House | B1 |

Eating

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 7 | Cengsan Jiaweiguan | B2 |
| 8 | Chongshan Rice Noodle Shop | D2 |
| 9 | Lao Chen Ji | C2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|
| 10 | Rong Coffee | B2 |
|----|-----------------------------|----|

Shopping

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 11 | Guilin Night Market | C1 |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|

Information

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 12 | China International Travel Service | C3 |
| 13 | Guilin Tourist Information Service Centre | B1 |
| 14 | People's Hospital | C3 |
| 15 | Public Security Bureau | D3 |

Transport

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 16 | Civil Aviation Administration of China | C4 |
| 17 | Main Bus Station | B3 |
| 18 | Ride Giant | D1 |

Sights

Guilin's sights are built around scraggly karst peaks that dot the bustling city. Some, owing to exorbitant admission prices, can be skipped. A ride down the magical Li River (Li Jiang) and a stroll around tranquil Rong and Shan Lakes offer pleasing, wallet-friendly alternatives.

City Wall

GATE, LAKE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Rong Hu)

On the northern shore of **Rong Lake**, and strikingly illuminated at night, the **South Gate** (Nan Men) is the only surviving section of the original Song-dynasty city wall (*cheng qiang*). The area is abuzz with activity and is a good place to watch locals practising taichi, calligraphy and dancing.

About 1km north of Folded Brocade Hill (Diecai Shan) is the partly reconstructed **East Gate** (Dongzhen Men), flanked by crumbling sections of the original wall. To reach the East Gate, take bus 1 or 2 and get off at the Dongzhen Lu stop, then turn right down the road of the same name. Alternatively, it's a short walk or cycle north along the river bank, just east of the entrance to Folded Brocade Hill.

Sun & Moon Twin Pagodas

PAGODA

(Riyue Shuang Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥45; 🕒 8am-10.30pm)

Elegantly embellishing the scenery of **Shan Lake** (Shan Hu), the Sun and Moon Twin Pagodas, beautifully illuminated at night, are the highlight of a stroll around Guilin's two central lakes. The octagonal, seven-storey Moon Pagoda (Yue Ta) is connected by an underwater tunnel to the 41m-high Sun Pagoda (Ri Ta), one of the few pagodas with a lift.

Solitary Beauty Peak

PARK

(Duxiu Feng [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Wangcheng; admission ¥130; 🕒 7.30am-6pm; 🚗 1, 2)

This park is a peaceful, leafy retreat from the city centre. The entrance fee for the famous lone pinnacle includes admission to an underwhelming 14th-century Ming prince's mansion (oversold as a 'palace'). The 152m peak affords fine views of Guilin.

Activities

Swimming in the Li River is popular in summer.

Tours

The popular **Li River trip** from Guilin to Yangshuo lasts about 4½ hours and includes a wonderfully scenic boat trip to Yangshuo, lunch and a bus ride back to Guilin. Expect to pay ¥350 to ¥450 for a boat with an English-speaking guide. There's also the **Two Rivers Four Lakes** (Er Jiang Si Hu) boat ride around Guilin that does a loop of the Li River and the city's lakes. Prices vary from ¥150 to ¥340 for 90 minutes, depending on the time of day (it costs more at night). Pretty much every Guilin hotel and tourist information service centre can arrange these two tours.

Sleeping

This Old Place Hostel

HOSTEL

(Laodifang Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 281 3598; www.topxingping.com; 2 Yiwu Lu; dm from ¥40, d ¥140-160, tr ¥220-320; 🚶 📶 📧 📺)

This hostel with an enviable position facing Rong Lake is a 10-minute walk to the main eating and shopping areas. Three-bed dorms are single beds with an en suite; regular rooms have a similar, though more spacious, arrangement. A taxi here from the train/bus station costs about ¥10.

Ming Palace International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Guilin Wangcheng Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 283 6888; mingpalace123@hotmail.com; 10 Donghua Lu, next to Zhonghua Primary School (Zhonghua Xiaoxue), dm ¥40, d ¥120-160, tr ¥180; 🚶 📶 📧 📺; 🚌 99, 100 from South Guilin Bus Station)

An affordable and well-located option with large, dimly illuminated rooms. Some were being renovated at the time of writing, and, according to the helpful staff, rates may go up. Disembark from the bus at Lequn Lukou, turn right at the first crossing, walk on, passing two arches, and then you'll see the hostel. A taxi from the airport costs ¥130.

Riverside Hostel

INN

(Jiulong Shangwu Luyou Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 258 0215; www.guilin-hostel.com; 6

Zhumu Xiang, Nanmen Qiao; s & d ¥150-300; 📶@📶)

This cosy inn by the Taohua River comes highly recommended by travellers (especially couples) for its attentive staff and pleasant rooms. Advance booking is essential.

★ White House

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Bai Gongguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞899 9888; www.glbhg.com; Bldg 4, 16 Ronghu Beilu; 4 d ¥1380-1780, ste ¥2380; 🚶📶@📶)

The White House is decked out in all manner of art-deco-inspired trappings to honour the building it's in – part of the former residence of General Bai Chongxi, a powerful regional Guangxi warlord and father of the Taiwanese writer Kenneth Pai Hsien-yung. The spacious guestrooms are lavishly appointed, featuring, among other luxuries, a mini-spa and high-thread-count bedding.

Photos of General Bai (literally 'white') and his era grace the corridors, and vintage artefacts are displayed in the lobby. The hotel is ¥12 by cab from the main bus station, and ¥120 from the airport.

Eating

Local specialities include Guilin rice noodles (*Guilin mifen*), beer duck (*pjiu ya*) and snails (*tianluo*). The pedestrianised Zhengyang Lu and its surrounding lanes are the busiest dining areas.

Chongshan Rice Noodle Shop

NOODLES

(Chongshan Mifen Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞282 6036; 5 Yiren Lu, near junction with Zhengyang Lu, Qixing District; noodles ¥3-5; 🕒6.30am-midnight)

Wildly popular Guilin noodle shop with branches all over town. Order at the front, take your docket to the cook and retrieve your food from a window. The slippery rice noodles come with a variety of ingredients, but the Guilin speciality (also the tastiest) is with stewed vegetables (*lucai fen*).

Lao Chen Ji

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhengyang Lu; dishes ¥6-15; 🕒 10am-midnight)

Here's a twist on the local noodles...they are served with horse meat (*maroumifen*). If you like them boring, there's beef (*niurou*) and pork (*zhurou*) too.

★ Cengsan Jiaweiguan

GUANGXI

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 286 3781; 10 Xinyi Lu, near junction with Xicheng Lu; dishes ¥20-158; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5-9pm)

A modern restaurant jam-packed with middle-class locals who come for the generously plated wild boar, rabbit and cured meat dishes. If you prefer tamer flavours, there are other great options in the phone book of a menu. For weekend dinner, go before 6.15pm to snag a table. Smoking is allowed inside the restaurant. Chinese picture menu.

GREAT GUANGXI BIKE RIDES

ANCIENT VILLAGE PURSUIT

Guilin to Jiangtouzhou (25km, three hours) This countryside spin takes you to the village of Jiangtouzhou. From the west gate of Guilin's Solitary Beauty Peak, head north along Zhongshan Beilu for 1km, then turn left onto Huancheng Beiyilu before taking the first right. Keep cycling north until you leave the town of Dingjiang Zhen, then continue along the country lane for about 15km. When the road forks, bear right towards Tanxia Zhen. At the Tanxia Zhen junction, turn left then follow signs to Jiuwu. Jiangtouzhou is down a track on the right, just past Jiuwu.

YULONG RIVER LOOP

Yangshuo to Dragon Bridge & back (20km round trip, four hours) Follow the Yulong River past rice paddies and fish farms to the 600-year-old Dragon Bridge (Yulong Qiao). From Yangshuo, cycle along Pantao Lu and take the first main road on the left after the Farmers Trading Market. Continue straight, past the hospital and through the village of Jima, before following the road round to the right to reach the start of a bumpy track. Follow this all the way to Dragon Bridge. After the crossing, follow another track south for around 8km until it becomes a small, paved road, which eventually stops at the river's edge. Take a bamboo raft across the river (¥5),

then turn left off a small paved road down a tiny pathway, which leads you back to Jima village road.

LI VALLEY BOAT 'N' BIKE COMBO

Yangshuo to Xingping & back (15km boat ride, 20km cycle, half-day) Combine a river cruise from Yangshuo to Xingping with a bike ride back along the glorious Li Valley. Put your bike on a bamboo raft (¥170 to ¥250, 1½ hours), then sit back and enjoy the views to the village of Xingping. From here, cycle south, following the trail past the villages of Gupi Zhai, Qiaotou Pu and Dongxin before reaching Fuli, 4km east of Yangshuo. Just past Fuli take your bike on a ferry (¥5) across the Li River, then continue past Dutou and back to Yangshuo, crossing the river once more, this time over a bridge.



Drinking & Nightlife

Guilin's streets are dotted with trendy cafes: Zhengyang Lu has a short stretch of bars with outdoor seating, while Binjiang Lu has a slew of cute drinking spots, most with free wi-fi.

Rong Coffee

CAFE

(Rong Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Bldg 5, Ronghu Hotel, 16 Ronghu Beilu; coffee & tea ¥18-188, cake ¥24-28; 🕒 1-11pm; 📶)

Looking like a greenhouse with colourful armchairs, this peaceful cafe by the picturesque Rong Lake offers a lovely getaway. It's even got a tiny garden with a couple of tables and a garden swing.



Shopping

Guilin Night Market

MARKET

(Yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhongshan Zhonglu; 🕒 from 7pm)

For souvenirs, check out Guilin's night market, which runs along Zhongshan Zhonglu from Ronghu Beilu to Sanduo Lu.

Bird Flower Market

MARKET

(Huaniao Shichang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-5pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 51)

This local flea market has everything from electronics to vintage magazines, calligraphy brushes, dogs and, of course, birds and flowers.

Information

Buy a map of Guilin (*Guilin ditu*) from bookshops or kiosks (¥7).

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Branches on Zhongshan Nanlu (near the main bus station) and Jiefang Donglu change money, give credit-card advances and have 24-hour ATMs.

China International Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(CITS; Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.guilintrav.com; Binjiang Lu)

Helpful staff.

Guilin Tourist Information Service Centre

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Guilin Luyou Zixun Fuwu Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 280 0318; South Gate, Ronghu Beilu; 🕒 8am-10pm)

These helpful centres dot the city. There's a good one by the South Gate on Rong Lake.

People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Renmin Yiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 70 Wenming Lu)

This large, well-equipped hospital is a designated International SOS service provider, and the teaching hospital of several universities in Guangxi.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 582 3492; 16 Shijiayan Lu; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 3-6pm)

Mon-Fri)

Visa extensions. Located by Xiaodong River and 500m south of the Seven Stars Park. A taxi from downtown will cost around ¥18.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air tickets can be bought from the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; Zhongguo Minhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍384 7252; cnr Shanghai Lu & Anxin Beilu; 🕒7.30am-8.30pm). Direct flights include Beijing (¥1800), Chengdu (¥920), Chongqing (¥676), Haikou (¥10,140), Guangzhou (¥860), Hong Kong (Xianggang; ¥1819), Kunming (¥600), Shanghai (¥1600) and Xi'an (¥1090).

International destinations include Seoul, Korea (Hancheng; ¥2000), and Osaka, Japan (Daban; ¥3200).

BUS

Guilin's **main bus station** (Guilin Qiche Keyun Zongzhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍386 2358; 65 Zhongshan Nanlu; 🚏3, 9, 10, 11, 16, 25, 51, 88, 91, 99) has regular buses to the following destinations:

- ➔ **Beihai** ¥190, seven hours, three daily (8.30am, 9.20am and 9pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥180, 9½ hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Huangyao** ¥60, five hours, three daily (9.10am, 1.10pm and 2.20pm)
- ➔ **Longsheng** (for Longji Rice Terraces) ¥40, two hours, five daily (8am, 8.30am, 9.30am, 1pm and 3pm)
- ➔ **Nanning** ¥120 to ¥140, five hours, every 15 minutes
- ➔ **Sanjiang** ¥43, four hours, hourly
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥270, 12 hours, two daily (6pm and 9.20pm)
- ➔ **Yangshuo** ¥24, 1½ hours, every 15-20 minutes

Both the main bus station and **North bus station** (Guilin Qiche Beizhan 76

Beichen Lu;  18, 32, 99, 100) have buses to Ziyuan (¥13 to ¥26, every 20 minutes 6.40am to 6pm).

Buses to Longji Rice Terraces also depart from **Qintan Bus Station** (Qintan Qiche Zhan 31 Cuizhu Lu, Xiangshan;  2, 12, 26, 32, 85, 91) (¥24 to ¥29, two hours, every 40 minutes 6.10am to 7pm).

TRAIN

Few trains start in Guilin, which means it's often tough to find tickets, so get them a few days in advance. Most trains leave from Guilin Station (Guilin Zhan), but some may leave from Guilin north train station (Guilin Beizhan), 9km north of the city centre.

Direct services include the following:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥446, 23 hours, four daily (1.57am, 1.05pm, 3.40pm and 6.55pm)
- ➔ **Beijing West G train** ¥806, 10 hours, one daily (7.47am)
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥280, 19 hours, two daily (12.38pm and 12.58pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥230, 12 hours, two daily (6.28pm and 9.18pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥310, 18½ to 24 hours, three daily (9.50am, 10.09am and 3.23pm)
- ➔ **Nanning** ¥130, six hours, regular
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥360, 22 hours, four daily (11.58am, 3pm, 5.13pm and 7.11pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥390, 27 hours, one daily (5.49pm)

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Guilin's Liangjiang International Airport (Liangjiang Guoji Jichang) is 30km west of the city. Half-hourly shuttle buses (¥20) run from the CAAC office between 6.30am and 9pm. From the airport, shuttle buses meet every arrival. A taxi costs about ¥120 (40 minutes).

BICYCLE

Guilin's sights are all within cycling distance. Many hostels rent out bicycles (about ¥20 per day). For decent bikes, head to **Ride Giant** (Jie'ante Zixingche [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 286 1286; 16 Jiefang Donglu; per day ¥30, deposit ¥500; 🕒 9am-8.30pm).

BUS

Buses numbered 51 to 58 are all free but run very infrequently. Regular buses cost ¥1 to ¥2. The following are the most useful:

- ➔ **Bus 2** Runs past Elephant Trunk Hill and Folded Brocade Hill.
- ➔ **Bus 51** Starts at the train station and heads north along the length of Zhongshan Lu to the Bird Flower Market and beyond.
- ➔ **Bus 58** Goes to Elephant Trunk Hill, Seven Stars Park, Wave-Subduing Hill, Folded Brocade Hill and Reed Flute Cave.

Around Guilin

There are many ancient towns and old villages around Guilin that make for a refreshing day trip.

Daxu Ancient Town

One of the four greatest ancient market towns in Guangxi, Daxu (literally, 'big market') was founded in AD 200. The town's dusty streets run alongside the Li River for 2km, flanked by one- and two-storey houses. Some of these are 'home offices' from which herbalists, barbers, cobblers and traditional craftspeople ply their trade. It's a leisurely place where doors are left open, children and chickens run freely, and corn is dried on the crooked banisters of an old stone bridge.



Guangchang Museum

MUSEUM, HISTORIC BUILDING

(Guangchang Bowuguan 66 Minzhu Lu)

The opulent residence of Daxu's wealthiest family, the Gaos, will soon be turned into a museum, according to the new owner. The house and its courtyards are lavishly embellished with ornate carvings and expensive classical furniture. Renovations were underway at the time of writing.

Eating

★ Ancient Town Fish Restaurant

SEAFOOD

(Guzhen Yu Canting  635 2299; 69 Minzhu Lu; dishes ¥28-58;  11.30am-3pm & 6-8.30pm)

The kitchen of this excellent rustic place has cured pork hanging on white-tiled walls, fish swimming in tubs, and baskets of vegetables plucked from their plot. Sometimes the staff will let you go into the kitchen and choose your meal. Look for the door with a red sign that says (Guzhen Lushe). Go through the lobby into a courtyard and you'll see the restaurant.

Getting There & Away

The town is 15km from Guilin. Buses headed for Guanyan stop at Daxu Zhen. They depart from Guilin's main bus station every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 4.30pm. The 40-minute ride costs ¥4.50.

Jiangtouzhou

The 1000-year-old village of Jiangtouzhou is tucked away among farmland 32km north of Guilin. There's an unmistakable rustic charm, with cobblestone alleyways and weathered homes from the Ming and Qing dynasties, where blocks of tofu are laid out to set in the courtyards. Tourists have to pay a ¥20 admission fee to the village.

The residents are descendants of the philosopher Zhou Dunyi who is famed for his essay on virtue, 'Love of the Water-Lily'. The flower is a decorative

motif throughout the village and inside the **ancestral hall**.

Jiangtouzhou is a two- to three-hour bike ride from Guilin. Alternatively, take an orange minibus on the stretch of Zhongshan Beilu near Guilin North Train Station to Lingchuan (¥3, 40 minutes). Get off at Tanxia Lukou, zip across the road and change to a bus to Jiuwu (¥4, 45 minutes), from where it's a 15-minute walk to the village. Buses stop running around 5.30pm.

Ziyuan & Around

About 107km north of Guilin, Ziyuan County, built around the pristine Zi River, is a gateway to some geological gems of Danxia topography, such as Bajiaozhai National Geopark and Tianmen Mountain National Park.

The town of Ziyuan is a good place to base yourself to explore these two sites. **Chengyuan Hotel** (Chengyuan Dajiudian Chengbei Kaifaqu, near County Government Headquarters; r from ¥320; 🚻 🌞 📶) offers plush lodgings.

On the way up to the Bajiaozhai car park, you'll pass a few farm restaurants. The chicken hotpot (*tuji huoguo*), made with freshly slaughtered free-range fowl and just-picked vegetables, is divine.

Sights

★ **Bajiaozhai National Geopark**

NATIONAL PARK

(Bajiaozhai Meixi Xiang Fuzhu Village; admission ¥80)

This park is named after eight Danxia stone peaks that lie near the border with Hunan. Round, isolated, featuring ring-like troughs and leaning 45 degrees in the same direction, they resemble snails sunning themselves after the rain. The trail winds past steep cliffs, collapsed boulders, plunging gorges and bamboo forests.

From the car park, hike up to Jianglong Monastery (Jianglong Si). After descending for 15 minutes, you'll see a junction near a snack shop. Bear left for an hour to Longtou Xiang, from where, on a fine day, you can see the

eight peaks that gave the area its name. Another 10 minutes takes you back to the car park.

Tianmen Mountain National Park

MOUNTAIN

(Tianmen Shan Jingqu adult/child ¥60/30, cable car one-way/return ¥60/120; 🕒 9am-5pm, cable car 9.30am-4pm)

Tianmen Mountain is home to proud cliffs, sharp ravines and dramatic waterfalls of Danxia topography, but also lush subtropical foliage, clusters of ash-brown dwellings and crumbling roadside shrines. There are multiple viewing spots along hiking trails in the park, including a U-shaped deck with a transparent floor. If you have time, there are boats to take you for a ride down the lovely Zi River for ¥130 to ¥258 (per boat).

Getting There & Around

Buses leave Guilin's main bus station and Guilin North Bus Station for Ziyuan every 20 minutes from 6.40am to 6pm. Tickets are ¥13 to ¥26 for the three-hour ride.

From downtown Ziyuan, you can hire a car to Tianmen Mountain, 30 minutes away, for ¥120, or to Bajiaozhai National Geopark, 45 minutes away, for ¥150. The driver will wait for you to hike. If you do both places on the same day, it's ¥200, but you'll need to start off early (say, at 7am) and spend no more than four hours at each destination. A car directly from Guilin will set you back ¥600 to ¥700.

Longji Rice Terraces

 0773

This part of Guangxi is famous for its breathtaking vistas of terraced paddy fields cascading in swirls down into a valley. For hundreds of years, the paddy fields remained unknown to travellers, then everything changed in the 1990s when a photographer named Li Yashi moved here. His images of the

scenery amazed the world and put Longji (literally 'Dragon's Back') firmly on the tourist trail.

You'll find the most spectacular views around the villages of Ping'an, a sprawling Zhuang settlement; the more remote Dazhai, a mesmerising Yao village; and Tiantouzhai, which sits atop a mountain.

Being the earliest to open to tourism, Ping'an has the best facilities but is less visually sublime than Dazhai and Tiantouzhai, which would move even hardened cynics. That said, tourism is picking up at these two villages and a cable-car service now connects their main viewing points (for ¥70 or ¥120 round-trip).

As hiking is a way of life here, bring a day pack and leave your luggage in Guilin or in the main ticket office. Otherwise villagers will carry your bags up for ¥50 apiece. There's nowhere here to change money.

The best time to visit Longji is after the summer rains in May, which leave the fields glistening with reflections. The fields turn golden just before harvesting (October) and become snow-white in winter (December). Avoid early spring (March), when the mountains are shrouded in mist.

ETHNIC CUSTOMS & FOLKLORE

The Zhuang are China's most numerous ethnic minority and they're indigenous to Guangxi. By contrast, the Yao were refugees from Shandong province who fled here in dynastic China. The cultures of both are filled with legends and traditions often as vibrant as their garments.

TRADITIONAL DRESS

Yao women are distinguished by their colourful costumes and long, shiny hair. Mothers wear it in a thick bun over the forehead. Women with hair coiled on top of their heads like a turban are married but childless. Heavy silver earrings and pink tunics are sported by the unmarried, and patterned tunics by older women. Zhuang women, on the other hand, have simple hairdos, and wear plain tunics over wide, often dark-coloured pants.

CUSTOMS

The eating of dog meat, sometimes practised in Guangxi, stops short of the Yao

hearth. This is because Panhu, the Yao totem, is a mythological dog who was given the hand of the princess by the emperor to reward his bravery. The Yao believe that Panhu, aka King Pan, was their first ancestor.

Up until the 1970s, young people of the mountainous Yao and Zhuang found romantic partners by yodelling. If they were in the fields and someone's singing pleased their ears, they sang back. Intermarriage between the two ethnic groups was forbidden by tradition up until the late 1980s. Occasionally a Zhuang man may have been permitted to take a Yao wife, but exceptions were never made for the women.

LEGEND

Viewing point number 2 in Dazhai – Seven Stars Chase the Moon (Qixing Zhui Yue) comprising seven terraced knolls developed in the early days – is also known as 'dead man's mound' (siren bao). According to one legend, a Yao girl married her Zhuang lover, and secretly set up house here. But her clansmen tracked them down and killed her husband. He was buried on the spot. The widow left the village for many years, then stole back one night to pay respects at her husband's grave. She was discovered and killed by a band of Yao men. As she breathed her last, lightning struck, electrocuting her murderers. No one dared to touch the corpses and they eventually turned into knolls.

FESTIVALS

Clothes Drying Festival

CULTURAL

(Shaiyi Jie)

One of the biggest Yao festivals is the Clothes Drying Festival, which falls on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month. On that day, the women lay out all their traditional costumes under the sun. This serves the dual purpose of disinfection and allowing the ladies to show off. If it rains, they take their fashion spread indoors, leaving the door open.

In the evening, from 7.30pm to 9.30pm, the villagers light a thousand torches by the fields and set off fireworks.

Ghost Festival

CULTURAL

(Gui Jie)

During the Ghost Festival, celebrated on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, the Yao and Zhuang eat 'rice of seven colours' (qicai fan), which consists of white glutinous rice, and rice dyed naturally with maple (black), amaranth (red), sweet vernal-grass (yellow), and a kind of berry (blue), and, artificially, with purple and green dyes.

Some say the practice is a tribute to their forefathers – the colours represent the

generations before them. Others say the colours stand for different crops, and the practice is a prayer for an abundant harvest. Some Zhuang clans eat it whenever there's a festival, not just during the Ghost Festival. There are also variations with five colours and eight colours.

Memorial Day of Fighting the Japanese

CULTURAL

(Da Rijun Jinian Ri)

The 14th day of the fifth month is Memorial Day of Fighting the Japanese for some Yao villages. Two men (volunteers) carrying a red flag are chased from field to field and beaten up by children under the age of 11, followed by cheering adults. (The age limit was set after the violence got out of hand.)

The gang of people sets off early in the morning after paying their respects and slaughtering a pig in a temple. Every time they pass a field, the owners feed everyone wine and rice dumplings. For their blood and sweat, the two men receive a rooster, some pork and ¥36. A village banquet wraps up the day.

Sights & Activities

You can take a number of short **walks** from each village to the fabulous viewing points. These are numbered and clearly marked by signs. The three-to four-hour trek between the villages of Dazhai and Ping'an is also highly recommended. However, get a local to guide you for ¥100 or ask directions frequently along the way, as there are almost no signposts for this hike.

Longji Rice Terraces

RICE TERRACE

(Longji Titian adult ¥80)

These are the clear standouts in the area. Rising to 1000m, they are an amazing feat of farm engineering on hills dotted with minority villages. The oldest field is over 700 years old; you pass it just before making your ascent to Dazhai.

Sleeping & Eating

You can stay in traditional wooden homes for ¥30 to ¥40 a night (per bed).

Nearly all guesthouses offer food, and most restaurants have English menus; dishes cost between ¥16 and ¥100.

Oil tea – fried tea leaves brewed and drunk with rice puffs and peanuts – is consumed for breakfast, as is egg in sweet wine (*tian jiu jidan*), heated rice wine into which an egg is dropped. Another common dish is *zhutong fan*, glutinous rice baked inside bamboo sticks.

Ping'an

Liqing Hotel

HOTEL

(Liqing Fandian  138 7835 2092; www.liqinghotel.com; d ¥100, tw ¥120-200, tr ¥280, ste ¥398;   )

This excellent-value hotel offers simple but comfortable rooms with different feature combos to suit different wallets. The friendly, English-speaking staff will explain the details to you. Liqing is a 20-minute climb from the village parking lot, but villagers will carry your bags for ¥40 apiece.

Longji Holiday Hotel

INN

(Longji Jiari Jiudian  758 3545, 134 5731 8219; www.ljjrd.com; d ¥299, ste ¥520;   )

This cosy place, run by a pleasant Zhuang woman and her brother, has spacious rooms with sharp colour coordination and a display of Zhuang artefacts. All rooms come with balconies, great views (especially on the upper floors) and wi-fi.

Dazhai

Minority Cafe & Inn

GUESTHOUSE

(Longji Kafeidian  758 5605; r ¥100)

Perched above Dazhai village on the trail leading up to Tiantouzhai, this small guesthouse has a terrace. It's about a 20-minute walk (1km) uphill from the village's main gate.

Dragon's Den Hostel

HOSTEL

(Dazhai Qingnian Lushe  182 7838 7610, 758 5780; www.dragonsdenhostel.com; Tiantou Zhai, Dazhai Village; dm ¥30-35, r ¥90-120;  )

This youth hostel has a cosy lounge with a children's library. All rooms with views have sit-down toilets and air-conditioning; the rest have squatting latrines and the cool night breeze. 'Dorms' are actually spacious triples. It's a 40-minute climb from Dazhai. When you see Mr Liao Cafe & Bar, turn right and go another 150m.

★ Panorama House Hotel

HOTEL

(Quanjinglou Dajjudian  758 5688, 136 1786 9898, 130 7764 6291; www.quanjinglou.com; scenic spot no 1, Longji Terrace, s ¥180, d ¥308-398, tr ¥498, ste ¥488-688, extra bed ¥120;  )

There's much to be said for this 100-room brick-and-concrete hotel near the summit of Dazhai: it has a bird's-eye view of the fields, the rooms are sparkling, the restaurant is good (though pricey), and there are swings on the balconies. Ask for a room facing east.

Tiantouzhai

Meijinglou

INN

( 758 5678; r ¥120-150;  )

This welcoming guesthouse is located above Tiantouzhai. Rooms at the front have unobstructed views to the fields. After you leave Tiantouzhai village, take the path up to the right. From there it's another 800m. There are steps leading up to the entrance.

Shopping

You'll find women peddling clothes and handicrafts with ethnic prints in the villages. Though attractive, most of these are little different from goods sold in other touristy areas in Guangxi.

Red Bean Handicrafts Workshop

HANDICRAFTS

(Hongdou Shougongyi Zuofang Ping'an Village)

This attractive shop about a 30-minute uphill walk from the Ping'an car park sells traditional handicrafts (straw shoes, silver jewellery, slippers, bracelets, earrings and scarves) that are a cut above the souvenirs you see elsewhere.

Getting There & Away

Hotels in Dazhai and Tiantouzhai arrange direct shuttle services from Dazhai to Guilin (10am, 1pm and 4pm), and from Guilin to Dazhai (8am, 10.30am and 2pm) for their guests. The price is ¥50 per person. They also take other passengers if seats are available. Reservations are a must. All hotels in Ping'an provide a similar service.

For public transport, head to Guilin's [Qintan Bus Station](#) via public bus 1. From there, take a bus to Longsheng (¥24 to ¥35, 1½ hours, every 40 minutes 7am to 7pm) and ask to get off at Heping. From the road junction (or the ticket office three minutes' walk away), minibuses trundle between Longsheng and the rice terraces, stopping to pick up passengers to Dazhai (¥9, one hour, every 30 minutes 7am to 5pm) and Ping'an (¥7, 30 minutes, every 20 minutes to one hour 7am to 5pm).

Guilin's [main bus station](#) also has buses to Dazhai and Longji (Ping'an; ¥50, three hours, 8.30am, 9am and 2pm). Renting a car from Guilin to here is about ¥400.

Six buses run daily between Longsheng and Ping'an (¥7, one hour, 7.30am, 9am, 11am, 1pm, 3pm and 5pm).

To continue to Sanjiang you have to catch a bus from Longsheng bus station.

Sanjiang

 0772 / Pop 367,707

Sanjiang is a convenient springboard to the ethereal Dong villages and their

architectural wonders in **Chengyangqiao Scenic Area** (Chengyangqiao Jingqu; admission ¥60).

The best way to take in the area's natural and manmade beauty is by walking among the fields. Each hamlet has a distinctive-looking drum tower and a stage on which tables are set up for mah-jong games. The homes are simple one- or two-storey cabins made of chocolate-toned cedar bark that exude an ancient grace evocative of Kyoto. The Dong are known for their exquisite carpentry and you can certainly see why.

The late afternoon sun and the yellow light bulbs that come on at dusk lend the villages a mesmerising mood – these are the best times to visit. At night electricity outages are not uncommon, so bring a torch with you.

There are plenty of simple eateries here, serving breakfast for ¥5 and dishes for ¥15 to ¥80.

Sights

★ Chengyang Wind & Rain Bridge

BRIDGE

(Chengyangqiao admission ¥60)

The grandest of over 100 nail-less wind-and-rain bridges in the area, this photogenic black-and-white structure (78m) was built from cedar and stone over 12 years in the 1910s. It features towers with upturned eaves, pavilions where people gather to socialise or take shelter from the elements, and a sweeping corridor with handrails and benches – a picture of pure poetry.

★ Drum Towers

TOWER

(Gulou)

A drum tower resembles a flamboyant, multi-eaved pagoda plonked on a rectangular pavilion. The taller ones are built entirely of cedar. Donate a few coins as you enter, and look up at the receding beams and the scale-like tiles. Some towers have a fire pit. Once the social and religious heart of the village, they're now colonised by old men watching TV and playing ping pong.

Sleeping

Longfeng Hotel

INN

(Longfeng Kezhan  189 7727 8037, 858 2619; www.lfhotel.net; d ¥90, tr ¥110-120;  )

This conveniently located place with a nice cafe has 15 basic rooms with wi-fi and (forgettable) views. Look for the waterwheel at the entrance.

Dong Village Hotel

INN

(Chengyangqiao Dongjia Binguan  858 2421; www.donghotel.com; d ¥200, tr ¥250;   )

An inn run by the English-speaking Michael Yang who can give sightseeing suggestions. The rooms, connected by a creaking staircase, come with balconies, air-con and bathrooms. Pray for quiet neighbours – the walls are thin. It's immediately on your left after the bridge crossing.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

BRIDE'S HOMECOMING

On the third day of the Lunar New Year, the Dong villages are ablaze with Bride's Homecoming (Song Xinniang) festivities. Dong weddings usually take place at the New Year, and on the third day, the women return home for a visit. The grooms and their kin will carry a slaughtered pig, rice cakes and other edible gifts in processions accompanying the brides to their maternal homes. Each procession is led by men who set off firecrackers to 'clear' the path, with the bride bringing up the rear. The night before, you'll see villagers cooking up a storm.

Getting There & Around

Most buses go to/from Sanjiang's east bus station (*hedong chezhan*), but buses to Chengyang bridge go from the west bus station (*hexi chezhan*), a 10-minute walk (about 500m, or a ¥4 pedicab ride) across the river. To reach the west bus station, turn right from the east bus station, right again over the river and right once more after you cross the river.

For Chengyang bridge, take the half-hourly bus bound for Linxi from Sanjiang west bus station (¥7, 30 minutes, 7.30am to 5.30pm). If you miss the last bus, private minivans to Linxi wait on the main road outside the west bus station. The fare is the same but they won't leave until they're full. It's ¥50 to have the minivan all to yourself.

Guilin has trains to Sanjiang (¥63, 6¼ hours, 1.25pm and 7.40pm) and buses (¥27, 155km, five hours, 6am, 6.30am, 7.10am, 7.40am, 8.40am, 1.30pm, 2.45pm and 4.30pm) daily. There are 21 buses daily from Longsheng to Sanjiang (¥15, 65km, three hours, 6.30am to 6pm).

Yangshuo

☎0773 / Pop 308,296

Seasoned travellers to Guangxi used to make Yangshuo their base, but many of these veterans now gripe about Yangshuo's lack of authenticity – 'too many tourists', they complain. And they're right: the town, once peaceful, is now a collage of Chinese tour groups, bewildered Westerners, pole-dancing bars, bad traffic and the glue that binds any tourist hot spot together – touts.

Outside of town, however, the karst landscape is surreal. Take a bamboo-raft ride or cycle through the dreamy valleys and you'll see.

Yangshuo is one of the more family-friendly Chinese destinations, with English-speaking locals, well set-up hostels and food for the finicky.

Yángshuò



Yangshuo

Sights

1 [Bilian Peak](#) D2

Activities, Courses & Tours

2 [Bike Asia](#) C1

Sleeping

3 [C Source West Street Residence](#) C2

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Drinking & Nightlife

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Information

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Transport

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Sights

Bilian Peak

MOUNTAIN

(Bilian Feng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥30)

Located in the southeastern corner of town, this is Yangshuo's main peak; it's also the most accessible (it can be climbed in half an hour). Because it has a flat northern face that is supposed to resemble an ancient bronze mirror, it is also called Bronze Mirror Peak (Tongjing Feng). The peak rises up next to the Li River, in the Mountain Water Garden (Shanshui Yuan); look for the sign that says .

Activities

Yangshuo is one of the hottest climbing destinations in Asia. There are eight major peaks in regular use, already providing more than 250 bolted climbs.

Insight Adventures Yangshuo ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 881 1033; www.insight-adventures.com; 12 Fu Rong Lu; 🕒 9am-9pm) offers guided climbs, while **Bike Asia** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 882 6521; www.bikeasia.com; 42 Guihua Lu; 🕒 9am-6pm) hires out bicycles, and offer maps and English-speaking guides.

Courses

Yangshuo is an excellent place to expand your skills: **Omeida Chinese Academy** (Oumeida Shuyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 881 2233; www.omeida.com.cn; 49 Longyue Lu) offers Chinese-language courses or cook up some Guangxi cuisine at **Yangshuo Cooking School** (Yangshuo Pengren Xuexiao 📞 137 8843 7286; www.yangshuocookingschool.com; Chaolong Village).

Sleeping

Yangshuo teems with hotels run by English-speaking staff, and all provide internet access. While the Xijie neighbourhood has abundant options, some of the best lodgings are on the outskirts.

★ **Green Forest Hostel**

HOSTEL

(Washes [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 888 2686; greenforest_yangshuo@yahoo.com; 3rd fl, Zone A, Business St, Chengzhongcheng, Diecui Lu, A dm ¥40, r ¥200; 🚫📶📶)

This hostel's attractiveness is highlighted by the rundown building it's in. Rooms are painted white with colourful accents and earth-toned furnishings; communal areas are flooded in natural light. From the bus station, turn right and walk along Diecui Lu, past Guihua Lu. At the junction with Chengzhong Lu, turn right and look for 99 Shopping Centre (99).

Phoenix Pagoda Fonglou Retreat

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Fenglou Suiyue [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 180 7730 5230, 877 8458; www.fonglou.com; 98 Fenglou Village, Gaotian Town, d & tw ¥320-380, ste ¥560; 🚫🚫📶📶)

The 12 rooms here have wide balconies overlooking the hills, furniture made from local materials, wi-fi and no TV. Meals are served on the scenic rooftop patio. The Taiwanese owner Jerry has tips on hiking and biking. It's a ¥40 taxi ride from downtown Yangshuo.

C Source West Street Residence

HOTEL

(Xishuoyuan Xijiegongguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 882 9489; 79 Xijie; r ¥298-398, ste ¥558-658; 📶 @ 📶)

This 268-year-old building on heaving Xijie was once a Taoist temple and then a French-owned private club. The rooms of the hotel occupying it are quiet, with ancient China-inspired decor in a modern setting. Service can be a tad impersonal.

River View Hotel

HOTEL

(Wangjianglou Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 882 2688; www.riverview.com.cn; 11 Binjiang Lu; r ¥360-680; 📶 @ 📶)

If you prefer staying downtown but want to avoid the crowds, this good-value hotel is a decent bet. The balcony rooms overlook the Li River and are somewhat old-fashioned but decent. The street below can be noisy so tell the friendly staff you'd like a room on the 3rd or 4th floor.

★ Secret Garden

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Mimi Huayuan Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 877 1932, 138 0773 5773; www.yangshuosecretgarden.com; Jiuxian Village; r ¥420-460, ste ¥560-580; 📶 @ 📶)

A South African designer nicknamed 'Crazy One' by the locals has turned a cluster of Ming-dynasty houses in the village of Jiuxian into a gorgeous Western-style boutique hotel with 18 rooms. A taxi to town from here costs ¥50.

★ Tea Cozy Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Shuiyun Ge [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 135 0783 9490, 881 6158; www.yangshuoteacozy.com; 212 Baisha Zhen, Xiatang Village, r ¥480, ste ¥528-880; 📶 @ 📶)

What makes Tea Cozy a true winner is not the 12 ethnic-style balcony rooms (though these are wonderful in themselves), but the exceptional service by the English-speaking staff. Also laudable are the culinary skills of the restaurant staff (mains ¥18 to ¥108). The hotel has shuttle buses daily to

Yangshuo and back, or you can take a taxi for ¥30.

Eating & Drinking

Local specialities include *tianluoniang* (stuffed snails) and *pijiuyu* (beer fish). The fish with the least bones are *jianguyu* and the bigger and cheaper *maoguyu*. Almost all restaurants have English menus.

You can find anything from wood-fired pizza to that most famous of fast foods around Xijie. Just off Xijie is where you might find German beer gardens sitting alongside generic Western-style cafes.

Laojiaxiang Shaguofan

GUANGXI

(  ; 3 Guifa Lu, near junction with Diecui Lu; dishes ¥10-28;  9am-11pm)

A small shop with tables spilling onto a busy street, serving hearty, reasonably priced meals. There's a huge selection of claypot rice dishes (*shaguofan*), including vegetarian options, and the ubiquitous (and delicious) beer fish (*pijiuyu*; ¥28 to ¥68 per kilo). It's the third shop on the left as you turn from Diecui Lu into Guifa Lu. Look for the black-and-white awning.

Dacunmen Night Market

MARKET

(Dacunmen Yeshi  ; Pantao Lu;  5pm-late)

This night market is a culture-filled slice of nontourist Yangshuo life. Watch locals sniffing out the best spices, haggling over snails or tucking into a dog hotpot. It's a 30-minute walk from Xijie. After you pass the petrol station on Pantao Lu, look for the fire station on the left, behind which is the night market.

★ Pure Lotus Vegetarian Restaurant

CHINESE, VEGETARIAN

(Anxiang Shuying Sucaiguan   ;  881 8995;

www.yangshuomagnolia.com/purelotus.htm; 7 Diecui Lu; dishes ¥18-48;  10am-10.30pm;



A Zen-like atmosphere created by Buddhist music, antique furniture and a cast of quiet, industrious staff prepares you for an innovative vegetarian meal. Prominently displayed wine bottles are an unexpected surprise in a place you wouldn't expect to be served alcohol.

River View Hotel Restaurant

GUANGXI, WESTERN

(Wangjianglou Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 11 Binjiang Lu; dishes ¥15-80; 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm; ❄️🍷)

Just a street removed from traffic-choked Diecui Lu, this place offers good food, quiet surrounds and attractive prices, with river views to boot. There's an English menu with pizzas and sandwiches, and a Chinese one with all the usual suspects, well executed.

Kaya

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 186 7735 0084; 31 Xianqian Jie, beside Shuangyue Bridge; drinks ¥20-50, cover charge ¥30-40; 🕒 8pm-3am)

Bars that do not play pop or hire pole dancers have a hard time surviving in Yangshuo, which makes this place a slight anomaly. Kaya has monthly reggae performances, and a DJ on weekends playing bass and dubstep. The rest of the time, the artist owner has Bob Marley on loop.

Entertainment

Impressions Liu Sanjie

PERFORMING ARTS

(Yinxiang Liu Sanjie [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 881 7783; tickets ¥200-680; 🕒 7.30-8.30pm & 9.30-10.30pm)

The busiest show in town is directed by filmmaker Zhang Yimou, who also directed the opening ceremony at the Beijing Olympics and acclaimed films such as *Raise the Red Lantern*. Six hundred performers take to the Li River each night with 12 illuminated karst peaks serving as a backdrop. Book at your hotel for discounts and transport to/from the venue (1.5km from town).

Shopping

Souvenir shops run the length of Xijie, while stalls set up daily along Binjiang Lu. You'll find silk scarves, trinkets, knitted shoes and all manner of other goods here. Bargain your socks off.

Qiuhuang

CLOTHING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 111 Guihua Lu; clothing ¥50-3000; 🕒 noon-11pm)

Fine-looking modern Chinese clothing with an ethnic twist for men and women. The owner is a designer from Yunnan's Tibetan region.

Information

Travel agencies are all over town. Backpacker-oriented cafes and most hotels can also often dispense good advice. Shop around for the best deals.

Touts are an almost constant nuisance in Yangshuo, but with a greater percentage of English speakers here than in most places in China, there's little need for their services. Fend them off firmly but politely.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xijie; 🕒 9am-5pm)

Foreign exchange and 24-hour ATM for international cards.

People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Renmin Yiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 26 Chengzhong Lu)

English-speaking doctors available.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chengbei Lu; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-6pm summer, 2.30-5.30pm winter)

Has several fluent English speakers. Doesn't issue visa extensions. It's 100m east of People's Hospital.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The closest airport is in Guilin. Your hotel should be able to organise taxi rides directly to the airport (about ¥240, one hour).

BUS

Yangshuo has two bus stations: **Shima South Station** (Shima Nanzhan Courtyard of the Agriculture Mechanisation Management Bureau, 321 Guodao,,) and **Dacunmen North Station** (Dacunmen Beizhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); fishery market next to Dacunmen Provincial Government Service Centre, Qingquan Lu,).

Direct bus links:

- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥120, seven hours, five daily (10.20am, noon, 8pm, 9.30pm and 10.30pm)
- ➔ **Guilin** ¥20, one hour, every 15 to 20 minutes (6.45am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Nanning** ¥166, 6½ hours, three daily (8.40am, 11.30am and 3.30pm)
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥180, eight hours, seven daily (1.30am, 12.30pm, 1.30pm, 3pm, 8.30pm, 9.30pm and 10.30pm)
- ➔ **Xingping** ¥8, one hour, every 15 minutes (6.30am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Yangdi** ¥9.50, one hour, every 20 minutes (7am to 6pm)

The bus from Guilin to Huangyao only stops in Yangshuo (¥50, two hours, one daily) erratically, so check before purchasing tickets.

TRAIN

Yangshuo has no train station, but train tickets for services from Guilin and Nanning can be bought from hotels and travel agencies around town. Expect to pay ¥50 commission.

Getting Around

Most places in town can be reached by pedicab for under ¥20. Bicycles can be rented at almost all hostels and from streetside outlets for ¥10 to ¥25 per

day. A deposit of ¥200 to ¥500 is standard, but don't hand over your passport. For better-quality bikes, head to [Bike Asia](#).

Around Yangshuo

The countryside of Yangshuo offers weeks of exploration by bike, boat, foot or any combination thereof. Scenes that inspired generations of Chinese painters are the standard here: wallowing water buffalo and farmers tending their crops against a backdrop of limestone peaks. Some of the villages come alive on **market days**, which operate on a three-, six- and nine-day monthly cycle.

Around Yángshuò



Xingping & Around

Some say Xingping is the Yangshuo of 15 years ago before the latter became a honeypot, for better or worse. This 1750-year-old town is certainly

attractive; in fact, the landscape you see when you disembark from the raft is printed on the back of the ¥20 banknote.

A bus from Yangshuo to Xingping takes 40 minutes (¥7, every 15 minutes, 6am to 7pm).

Sights

Xingping Ancient Stage

HISTORIC SITE

(Xingping Gu Xitai  9am-5pm) **FREE**

The highlight of Xingping's old street is this well-preserved opera stage from the Qing dynasty. You can see intricate carvings depicting operatic scenes, and slash marks made by prop weaponry on the pillars. If you want to take pictures, an old man will collect a ¥1 donation from you. The trendy-looking Master Cafe has recently opened in the same compound.

Fish Village

VILLAGE

(Yucun admission ¥10, 'Clinton' house ¥1)

You can hike the mountain behind Xingping, past pomelo and orange groves, to sleepy Fish Village. Miraculously untouched during the Sino-Japanese War and the Cultural Revolution, the 400-year-old village has friendly residents and vernacular houses similar to those at Xingping. It was visited by Bill Clinton in the 1990s, something it still takes pride in today.

A bamboo raft back to Xingping or Yangshuo costs ¥200 to ¥300.

Sleeping & Eating

★ This Old Place

HOSTEL

(Lao Difang  870 2887; www.topxingping.com; 5 Rongtan Lu; dm ¥50-80, s ¥100-120, d ¥140-380 ;

 cafe noon-9.30pm;   )

This hostel has a nice backpacker vibe, 42 solid rooms, and a supremely

lounge-worthy living room with a wood-fire oven that makes delicious pizzas (¥32 to ¥46). The south-facing rooms in the new wing are the best. The hostel operators can suggest plenty of itineraries for guests.

Old Neighbourhood

CHINESE

(Laojiefang Canba 📍 870 1808, 137 3739 6512; 12 Xingjie; dishes ¥15-120; 🕒 8am-10.30pm)

Old Neighbourhood's owner is a self-made cook from northeastern China who's lived in Guangdong, so dishes from these and other regions all figure on the menu. Of particular note are the dumplings (*jiaozi*) and the stuffed duck (*lianzi ya*), which requires three hours' pre-ordering.

This Old Place Cafe

CHINESE, WESTERN

(Lao Difang 📍 870 2901; 46 Laojie; mains ¥18-88; 🕒 8am-8pm; ❄️ 📶)

Affiliated with This Old Place hostel, this pretty cafe serves sandwiches and pizzas alongside Guangxi dishes. It's a popular place as evidenced by the number of customers' notes plastered on its brick walls.

Yulong River

The scenery along this smaller, quieter river (Yulong He) about 6km southwest of Yangshuo is breathtaking.

Tell the boatperson you want to visit the fairy-tale-like **Dragon Bridge** (Yulong Qiao), about 10km upstream. This 600-year-old stone arched structure overhung with old gnarly trees is among Guangxi's largest, and comes with crooked steps and leaning parapets.

You can also get here by taking the bus to Jinbao; get off at Dragon Bridge (¥6, 35 minutes), just after Baisha.

Liugong Cun

The quiet 400-year-old village of Liugong (Liugong Cun), 13km from Yangshuo, was a trading hub on the Li River during the Ming and Qing

dynasties. Traces of its former affluence are visible in the handsome buildings (the walls of some still blush with slogans painted during the Cultural Revolution). You can stroll from the village to the hills behind it, where the only things punctuating the silence are cockerels and murmurs of the past.

Sights

Deyue Building

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Deyue Lou)

Once among Li River's most beautiful buildings, Deyue, with its ornate embellishments, stands weather-beaten by the river like a frail diva. Residents say it used to be an opera house, and on performance nights music would reverberate over the moonlit water. An exquisite four-cornered pavilion sits on the rooftop.

Eating

Liugong Gupu Farmer Restaurant

GUANGXI

(Liugong Gupu Nongjiafan  892 3581, 136 6946 2263; mains ¥16-98;  7am-late)

All visitors to Liugong come here for fresh river fish, local fowl and homemade tofu. On national holidays, it's colonised by local tourists; book ahead. The restaurant also rents out kayaks (¥60 per day).

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

THE LEGEND OF THE CARP

In Liugong Cun, the House of Two Lions (Shuangshi Menhu), the former home of Yangshuo's richest man, has a bulge over a 1-sq-metre area of its living-room floor. According to legend, the bulge is the gill of a carp (a symbol of abundance), and it would protrude every morning then flatten in the afternoon. However, on the advice

of an ill-intentioned feng-shui master, the owner removed the soil from under the spot where the bulge was. This killed the carp – whose gill protruded one last time, creating a permanent bulge – and ruined the family.

Mr Li, a descendant, still lives here and he may let you in. It's a 30-second walk down the first alley that leads west away from the river, past Liugong Gupu Farmer Restaurant. It's the one with wooden doors and steps, just before the concrete building with red lanterns.

Getting There & Away

To cycle there, take Kangzhan Lu in Yangshuo until the roundabout. Bear left, passing traffic lights and entering the new Shima Lu. After crossing the bridge, you'll see Aishan Village. At the junction, look for signage for Puyi. Take the concrete road that heads in that direction. After a curve, continue for another 4km, passing other villages. At a road junction with small shops including a motorcycle repair shop, you'll see signage for Liugong Village. Another 5km on a concrete road brings you to a hill close to the roadside and then a rusty sign pointing to the village.

From the village pier, a 90-minute raft ride to Yangshuo costs ¥200 per person (¥260 for two).

Huangyao

📍0774

Huangyao is one of China's most high-profile villages, with many movies filmed here; *The Painted Veil*, starring Edward Norton, is possibly the most well known.

Bucolic charm permeates the lovingly preserved 900-year-old village, though roving tour groups take some of the shine off. Still, there's plenty on its eight streets to ensure the ¥100 entry fee is well spent, including two massive 500-year-old Chinese banyans that have wound their way up from the river's edge.

Huangyao is famous for its condiments and chilli salsa, which you'll see

and smell everywhere.

Sleeping & Eating

Yuanfangde Jia

INN

( 672 2792, 133 7703 6002; Yfdj13377036002@163.com; 94 Liyu Jie; r ¥138-168, ste ¥228; )

Two floors of small but adequate rooms connected by a creaky wooden staircase. It's on a busy street just before you reach Dailong Bridge (Dailong Qiao).

★ Heterotopias Clan

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Yitubang Huiguan  181 7679 6519; heterotopias@126.com; 49 Anle Jie; r ¥250-350;

   )

With its cultured air and eight elegant rooms, Heterotopias sits inside an old courtyard complex. The owners are intellectual types and the hotel's white walls and minimalist aesthetic showcase their literary collection and paintings by their artist friends to great effect.

★ Dailong Farmer Restaurant

GUANGXI

(Dailongqiao Longjia Fanzhuang  131 0054 9638; Zhongxing Jie, at the start of Dailong Bridge; mains ¥15-80;  11am-8pm)

Rarely does a famous eatery (it's been featured countless times by the media) uphold its culinary excellence, and its boss, his modesty, so well. But that's precisely why patrons keep returning to feast on steamed spare ribs (*douchi zheng paigu*), stuffed tofu (*doufu niang*) and other deliciousness on the river bank. Mr Liang speaks English too.

Getting There & Away

There are two direct buses daily from Guilin (¥60, three hours, 8.30am and 1.30pm). The return buses from Huangyao leave at 2pm and 8pm, though the

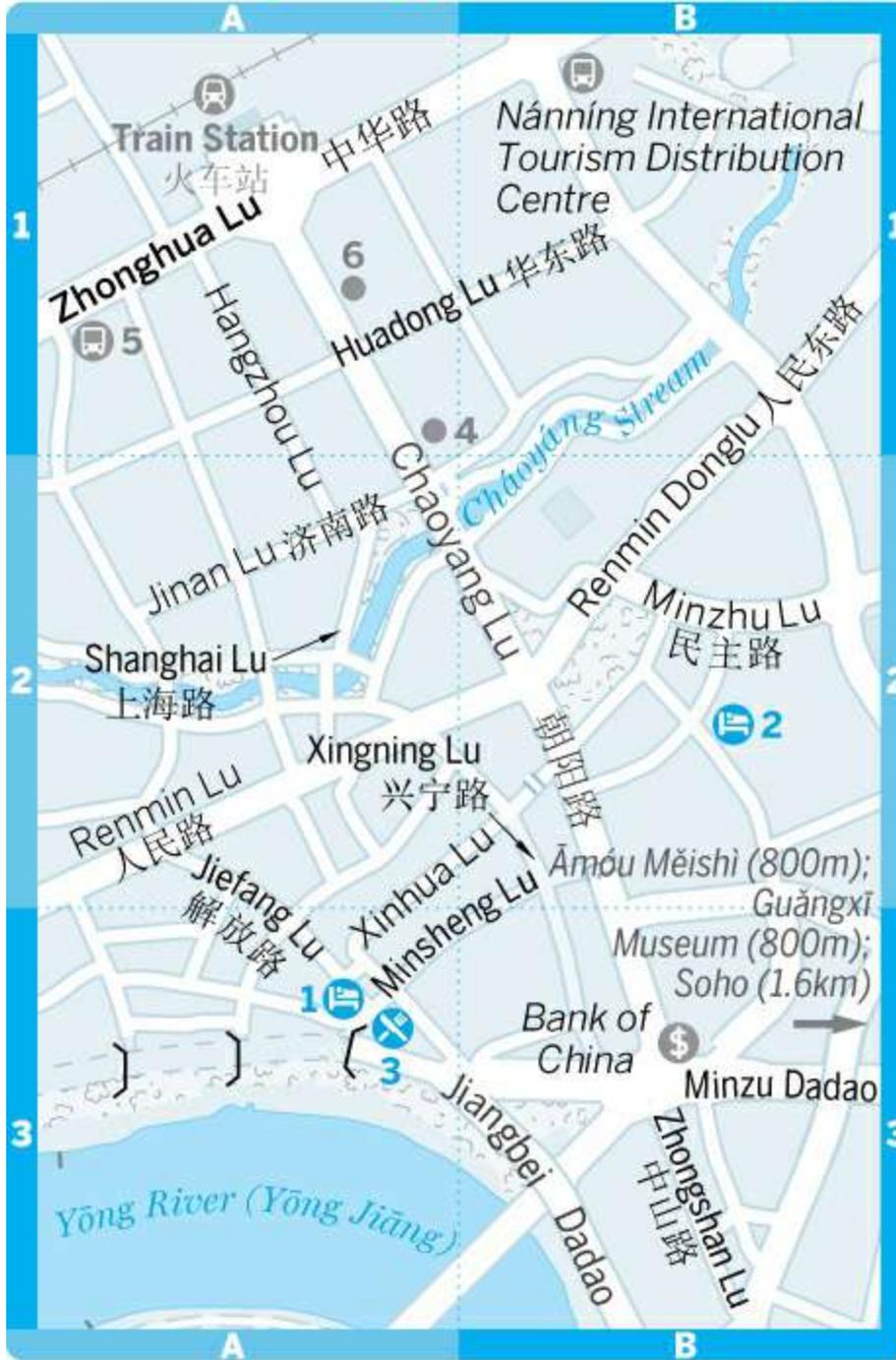
service is erratic, meaning you may have to take a bus to Hezhou (¥18, two hours) and change to a Guilin service (¥60 to ¥80, 2½ to four hours). Joining a local tour from Yangshuo (arriving at 11am and departing at 4.30pm) costs ¥198.

Nanning

☞ 0771 / Pop 7.1 million

Like many provincial capitals in China, Nanning is a bog-standard city with few sights of note. But it's a fairly relaxing place to recharge your batteries before leaving for, or returning from, Vietnam. Nanning's metro system will be completed in phases in 2016, and is expected to improve the city's traffic.

Nánning



Nanning

 Sleeping

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1 Green Forest Hostel | A3 |
| 2 Wanxing Hotel | B2 |

Eating

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| 3 Liyu Cun | A3 |
|----------------------------|----|

Information

| | |
|--|----|
| 4 China International Travel Service | A1 |
|--|----|

Transport

| | |
|--|----|
| 5 Buses to Yangmei | A1 |
| CITS/Nanfang Hotel (Bus to Vietnam) | A1 |
| 6 Civil Aviation Administration of China | A1 |

Sights & Activities

Guangxi Museum

MUSEUM

(Guangxi Bowuguan ; www.gxmuseum.com; cnr Minzu Dadao & Gucheng Lu;

 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun;  6) **FREE**

A fairly interesting museum showcasing Qing ceramics, art and calligraphy with Guangxi characteristics, and the customs of ethnic minorities. The collection of ancient copper drums is one of China's best. The traditional handicrafts shop on the ground floor has great souvenirs.

South Lake Park

PARK

(Nanhu Mingshu Bolanyuan  12, 25, 33, 46, 220) **FREE**

This 193-hectare park has dozens of species of trees including some rare ones, but you don't have to be a botanist to enjoy it. The setting is lovely and some of the foliage is simply interesting to look at, or read a book under. There are also lawns to nap on and a lake to stroll around and watch the locals fish.

Get off the bus at South Lake South Sq (Nanhu Nanguangchang).

Sleeping

There's a cluster of budget hotels around the train station, displaying the price of their cheapest discounted rooms on signs in the windows. Prices are ¥60 upwards.

Green Forest Hostel

HOSTEL

(Washes [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 281 3977; greenforest_nanning@yahoo.com; 3rd fl, 3 Jiefang Lu, near Minsheng Buxingjie, 3, dm ¥50-60, d ¥138; 🚫 🌿 @ 📶; 🚏 6, 8, 32, 41)

Like its newer Yangshuo branch, this hostel is located in an old building. The rooms are highly liveable despite the slightly musty-smelling corridors. Get off the bus at Chaoyang Sq (Chaoyang Guangchang), walk on for 10m, and you'll see the pedestrianised Minsheng Buxingjie.

Lotusland Hostel

HOSTEL

(Heyi Ju Langdong Keyun-zhan ☎ 677 3664; newlotuslandhostel@163.com; 155 Minzu Dadao; d/tw ¥70/120; 🌿 @ 📶)

A spiffy fit out and clean rooms make this hostel close to the Langdong long-distance bus station a good choice.

Wanxing Hotel

HOTEL

(Wanxing Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 238 1000; www.nnwxhotel.com; unit 1, 42 Beining Jie; 42-1 d ¥438-788, tr ¥888, ste ¥1688; 🌿 @ 📶)

One of those seemingly characterless urban hotels that actually turn out to be very good. The guest rooms are very comfortable though not large, and the service is exceptional.

Eating

Zhongshan Lu is jam-packed with eateries selling squid kebabs, grilled oysters, roasted pigeon, crocodile skewers, *chou doufu* (stinky tofu) and noodles of all persuasions. Street food costs ¥5 to ¥10 and a seafood dish at a restaurant starts at ¥25.

★ Ganjiajie Lemon Duck

GUANGXI

(Ganjiajie Pai Ningmengya  585 5585; www.ganjiajie.com; 12 Yuanhu Lu; mains ¥30-68;  10am-9.30pm)

The star here is the flavourful lemon duck (*ningmengya*), a Nanning dish that cooks the fowl with pickled lemon peel, ginger, garlic and chilli. You can choose from two types of quack-quack; we recommend the more tender cherry duck (*yingtao guya*).

Liyu Cun

GUANGXI

( ;  283 6800; 131 Minsheng Lu, near junction with Jiefang Lu; mains ¥35-58)

Hearty Guilin specialities are the highlights of this bustling place with a faux-rustic interior, including good beer fish (*ganzheng jianguyu*) and fried pork knuckle (*hongyun zhaocaishou*). Service can be careless. It's a three-minute walk to Green Forest Hostel.

Amou Delicious Eats

GUANGXI

(Amou Meishi ; Gucheng Lu; mains ¥28-98;  9am-9pm; )

Unique and flavourful ethnic dishes served on a photogenic wind-and-rain bridge or in a dining room, both in the compound of the Guangxi Museum. We liked the spare ribs and green-pea mush (*zhuangxiang lurong gu*) and fried pork belly dipped in rice wine (*melaozu ruxiang roubing tianjiu*).

Drinking & Nightlife

You can find plenty of bars on Jiangbei Dadao.

Interesting Tavern

BAR

(Yi Jiuguan  186 7708 9179; 8 Jiangbei Dadao; beer from ¥260;  7pm-4am;  27, 35, 71)

This watering hole is decorated like a bar in Lijiang, Yunnan, with old ship wood and artefacts from Lijiang. Local and Lijiang bands croon mellow tunes from 10pm to 1am, and there's a good variety of imported beer.

Soho

CLUB

(Suhe ;  530 8111; www.sohobar.com.cn; 18 Xinghu Lu Beiyi Li; beer from ¥280;  8pm-6am)

White-collar Nanningers love this place with pounding pop music, dizzying lights and over-the-top modern baroque decor.

Entertainment

★ King of Live

LIVE MUSIC

(Houpengyou Xianchang car park of Minghu Bldg, 171 Mingxiu Donglu)

Nanning's only 'live house' (live-music venue) sees indie bands from China and overseas doing three to 10 gigs a month. It's inside a building's car park in the pleasant but out-of-the-way university neighbourhood of Xixiangtang. The building is next to a teacher-training school. Enter below the fast-food shop Sanpinwang. Check the Douban or Weibo websites for the venue's line-up.

Information

The useful *Street Map of Nanning* (Nanning Jiedao Tu; ¥5), in English and Chinese, can be found at bookshops and kiosks around town.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang ; Chaoyang Lu;  9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Changes travellers cheques and gives credit-card advances. Other Bank of

China branches around town have 24-hour ATMs that accept international cards.

China International Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(CITS; Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 232 3330; 76 Chaoyang Lu;

🕒 7am-11pm)

Has some English-speaking staff, issues one-month Vietnam visas (¥420) and sells bus tickets to Hanoi (Henei; ¥150).

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju 📞 289 1260; 10 Xiuling Lu Xierli; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Located 2km north of the train station, off Xiuling Lu.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Direct daily flights from Nanning include Beijing (¥1800), Shanghai (¥1550), Xi'an (¥1800), Kunming (¥780), Guangzhou (¥660) and Hong Kong (¥1880). You can also fly to a number of other countries in Asia, including Vietnam (Yuenan; ¥1950).

The **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; Zhongguo Minhang

[MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 243 1459; 82 Chaoyang Lu; 🕒 24hr) sells tickets.

BUS

The main **Langdong long-distance bus station** (Langdong Keyunzhan 📞 550 8333; east end of Minzu Dadao; 🚌 6, 25, 42, 76, 90, 98, 206, 603, 701, 704), 5km east of the city centre, has high-speed, direct buses to pretty much everywhere, although you may be dropped at one of the other bus stations, also on the outskirts, when arriving. There's a downtown ticketing office on Chaoyang Lu near CAAC.

➔ **Beihai** ¥65, three hours, every 10 to 20 minutes (7am to 10pm)

➔ **Guangzhou** ¥160 to ¥220, nine hours, 15 daily (8am to 11pm)

- ➔ **Guilin** ¥80 to ¥140, 4½ hours, every 15 to 30 minutes (7.30am to 10pm)
- ➔ **Pingxiang** ¥70, 2½ hours, 16 daily (7.30am to 8.30pm)

There is one direct bus daily to Detian Waterfall (Detian Pubu; ¥50, 3½ hours, 7.40am). Other daily routes include Chongqing, Chengdu, Hainan Dao, Shanghai and Hong Kong (Xianggang).

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO VIETNAM FROM NANNING

There are seven daily buses to Hanoi (Hanoi, Vietnam; ¥150, 7½ hours) via Friendship Pass (Youyi Guan). Two departures (8am and 8.20am) leave from Nanning International Tourism Distribution Centre (Nanning Guoji Luyou Jisan Zhongxin), and four (8.40am, 9am, 10am and 1.40pm) leave from Langdong bus station. One bus run by CITS (¥158, 7.30am) leaves from Nanfang Hotel (Nanfang Jiudian).

Note that you'll have to get off and walk across the border at Friendship Pass before boarding another bus to Hanoi. There's also a daily train from Nanning train station to Hanoi (1st/2nd class ¥248/160, 11 hours, 6.20pm).

Local hostels will help organise visas (for free – you pay for the visa only) and transport (¥30 to ¥50 fee).

TRAIN

Following are some daily services:

- ➔ **Beihai** ¥38 to ¥50, three hours, two daily (12.55pm and 1.40pm)
- ➔ **Beijing West** ¥280, 27 hours, two daily (8am and 10.30am)
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥199, 36½ hours, one daily (7.38pm)
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥162, 27 hours, one daily (12.50pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥96 to ¥115, 11½ to 14 hours, three daily (12.27am, 5.12am and 6.50pm)
- ➔ **Guilin** ¥60 to ¥1180, 4½ to 6½ hours, over 20 daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥199 to ¥231, 28 to 31 hours, two daily (6am and 9am)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥227, 33 hours, one daily (11.20am)

Two daily trains go to Pingxiang (¥15 to ¥17, 3½ to 5½ hours, 7.40am and 11.45am) near the Vietnam border. Both stop at Chongzuo (¥9 to ¥10, two to three hours) and Ningming (¥11 to ¥13, 2½ to four hours), but only the slow one stops at Pingxiang's north train station.

Booth 16 in the train station sells international tickets to Hanoi.

Getting Around

Buses 6 and 213 run the length of Chaoyang Lu and Minzu Dadao until around 11pm (¥2 per ride). A taxi ride from Langdong bus station to downtown is around ¥40. Taxis start at ¥7 and short pedicab rides cost ¥5.

The twice-hourly airport shuttle bus (¥20, 40 minutes, 5.30am to 10.30pm) leaves from outside the CAAC office. A taxi to the airport is about ¥120.

Yangmei

A rambling bus ride 25km west of Nanning takes you to this former market town (admission ¥10) on the Yong River (Yong Jiang). Yangmei was founded a millennium ago and flourished in the 17th century, earning the nickname 'Little Nanning'.

Most of Yangmei's inhabitants were migrants from Shandong, with a small percentage from Guangdong. Hybridity is reflected in its buildings, which feature both the sturdy solemnity of Shandong vernacular architecture, and the penchant for embellishment of the softer southern style.

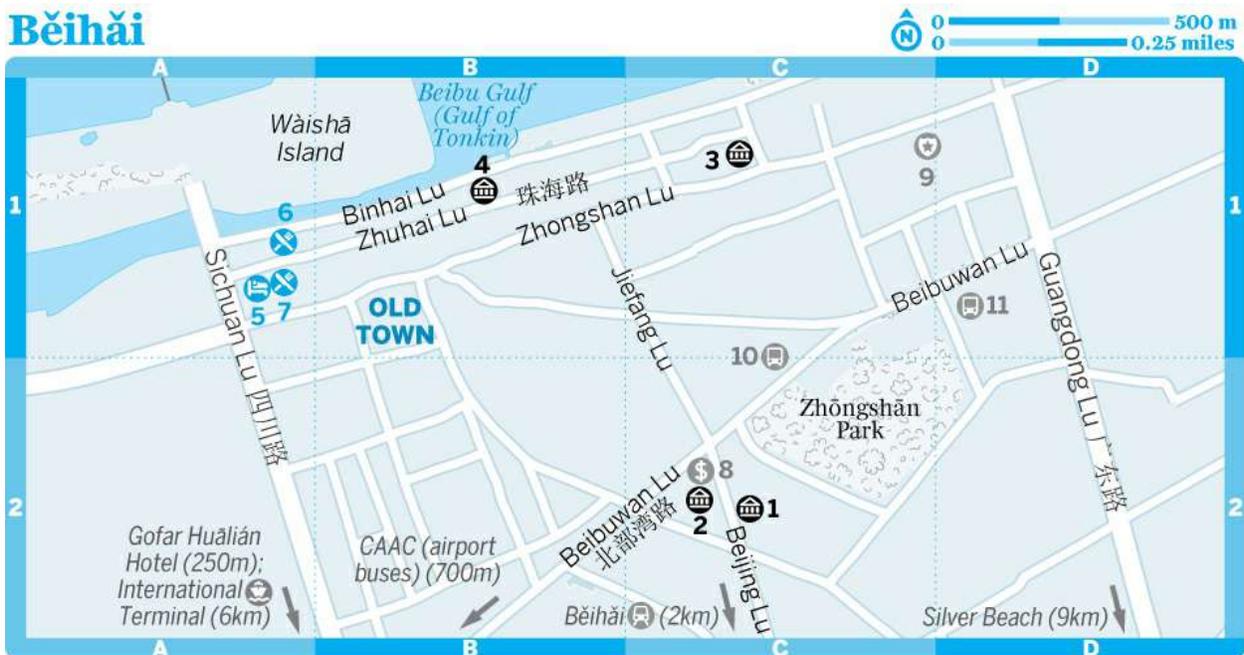
Spend a couple of hours wandering the cobbled streets, munching on fried fish (from ¥2), steamed rice rolls (¥4) and local starfruit (¥5 a catty) as you walk. The pace is slow and you're free to peep into the musty Ming- and Qing-dynasty homes.

Buses leave from behind Huatian Guoji, an office-block building at 202 Huaqiang Lu, just west of Nanning's train station. Departures and returns are from 8.30am to 4.30pm (¥15, two hours, hourly). The last bus gets packed so arrive early for a seat.

Beihai

☎0779 / Pop 1.5 million

Beihai (literally ‘North Sea’) is famed among Chinese tourists for its Silver Beach, dubbed ‘number one beach on earth’ in tourism brochures (it’s not). More charming though is the old quarter, where you’ll find colonnaded streets and colonial-era architecture that’s escaped the demolition ball.



Beihai

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Former British Consulate Building | C2 |
| 2 | Former German Consulate Building | C2 |
| 3 | Former Post Office | C1 |
| 4 | Maruichi Drugstore | B1 |

🏠 Sleeping

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|----|
| 5 | Backpacker Inn | A1 |
|---|--------------------------------|----|

🍴 Eating

[6 Aunty Li's Shrimp Pancakes](#) A1

[7 Old Town Coffee, Bar & Restaurant](#) A1

Information

[8 ICBC](#) C2

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Transport

[10 Buses to Silver Beach](#) C1

[11 Central Long-Distance Bus Station](#) D1

Sights & Activities

Silver Beach

BEACH

(Yintan [GOOGLE MAP](#))

A long stretch of silvery-yellow sand with apparently clean water, about 8km south of the city centre. Take bus 3 (¥1.50) from the central bus station.

Former British Consulate Building

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Yingguo Lingshiguan Jiuzhi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beihai No 1 Middle School, 1 Beihai Lu)

Beihai's first consulate of a Western country is a whitewashed edifice built in 1885 that now sits inside an elite school. The guard will let you in for a peek if you're nice.

Former German Consulate Building

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Deguo Lingshiguan Jiuzhi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2 Beijing Lu)

Across the street from the Former British Consulate Building, next to Yinrui Hotel, is this charming two-storey yellow structure built in 1905.

THE CHARMING STREETS OF OLD BEIHAI

Beihai's old streets (laojie) usually refer to Zhongshan Lu and Zhuhai Lu, which were part of old Beihai's trading hub, but are now home to sleepy residences of the city's older population. Built a century ago, the streets spread from west to east and are flanked by recently restored 19th-century qilou buildings (arcade houses) housing an alarming number of pearl shops.

Start your stroll at the western end of Zhuhai Lu. Look for the small white arch inscribed with the Chinese characters (Shengping Jie), the road's former name. This street has been paved over and offers visitors an atmospheric, albeit slightly contrived, walk.

Former Post Office

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Daqing Youzheng Beihai Fenju Jiuzhi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Zhongshan Donglu & Haiguan Lu; 🕒 9am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Wed-Sun) **FREE**

Dating from 1896, this attractive edifice now serves as a tiny museum devoted to relics of the Qing-dynasty postal system. No English captions, nor photos allowed indoors.

Maruichi Drugstore

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Wanyi Yaofang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 203 9169; 104 Zhuhai Zhonglu; 🕒 8.30-11.30am & 3-5.30pm) **FREE**

This site was disguised as a pharmacy that allowed the Japanese to carry out espionage activities in the 1930s. It's now a tiny national security museum. No English captions.

Sleeping

From the central bus station, cross Sichuan Lu to reach Beihai's cheapest accommodation on Huoshaochuang Wuxiang. This small alley off Beibuwan Xilu is jam-packed with *zhaodaisuo*, simple guesthouses offering doubles and twins from ¥35.

Backpacker Inn

INN

(Laodao Jingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 203 0605; www.backpacker-china.com; 165 Haizhu Xilu; s ¥158, d ¥188-208, tw ¥388-588; 📶 📶)

This place on the western end of one of Beihai's lesser-known old streets,

Haizhu Xilu, has 13 spiffy rooms with upholstered bay windows that make for relaxed reading.

Gofar Hualian Hotel

HOTEL

(Guofa Hualian Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 308 7888; Beibuwan Xilu; d/tw ¥258/358; 🌐 @)

A midrange hotel close to the central bus station and shopping action. Its brown-carpeted rooms are spacious with dark-wood furniture. Doubles/twins drop to ¥120/150 during the low season, offering good value if you can put up with blaring karaoke music. Turn left from the bus station and walk 700m.

Bavaria City Hotel

HOTEL

(Bafaliya Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 223 7000; reservation@bavariahotel.net; 338 Xinan Dadao, Haicheng District., r ¥438, ste ¥647-736; 🚗 🌐 @ 📶)

A plush option in a new quarter close to the high-speed train station (¥15 by cab or a 25-minute walk), Bavaria offers clean, bright and quiet rooms. You can flag down pedicabs outside the hotel, or the thoughtful staff will find you a taxi – just give them 10 minutes.

Eating

The old town is full of stalls selling steamed rice rolls (*fenjuan*) and shrimp pancakes (*xiabing*). Overseas Town is your best bet for a reasonably priced seafood feast.

★ Kieu Viet Vietnam Banh Cuon

VIETNAMESE

(Qiaoyue Yuenan Juanfen Tangfen 1 & 2 Fengsheng Jie, Overseas Town., 2 rice rolls ¥1.50-2.50;

🕒 7am-1am)

Piping hot, Vietnamese-style steamed rice rolls (*fenjuan*) made fresh.

Old Town Coffee, Bar & Restaurant

CAFE

(Laodao Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 203 1828; www.backpacker-china.com; 155 Zhuhai Lu;

snacks ¥16-35, mains ¥25-30, drinks ¥28-45; 🕒 9am-1.30am; 📶)

At the western end of the old street Haizhu Lu is this moody cafe (flickering candles, bricks exposed in the right places) inside a 19th-century building. The ground floor is open all day, and the upper floors morph into a bar at night. The decor has got a slight '70s vibe with cast-iron railings and plastic creepers.

Aunty Li's Shrimp Pancakes

GUANGXI

(Liyi Xiabing Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 110 Haizhu Lu; pancakes ¥3; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Dried shrimp pancakes (*xiabing*) are a delicacy here and nobody does them better than this hawker stall opposite Beihai Christ Church.

★ Overseas Town Restaurant

SEAFOOD, VIETNAMESE

(Qiaogangzhen Shoulao Dapaidang 📞 388 2086; 7-8 Hongmian Lu, Overseas Town; 7-8 fish per catty ¥60-120, shrimp per catty ¥50-150, clams from ¥38; 🕒 10.30am-10.30pm)

Take your pick from the tanks of aquatic life near the entrance and tell the staff how you'd like it cooked, making sure you know the prices before committing. The pan-fried squid (*xiangjian xiaoyouyu*) is exceptional. If you're coming from Gangkou Lu, go south, turn left into Qiaoxing Lu, then right into Hongmian Lu.

From Binhai Lu, go west and turn left into Qiaobei Lu. Walk to the end, turn right into Qiaoxing Lu, then left into Hongmian Lu.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

CHOW DOWN IN OVERSEAS TOWN

Beihai is the place to feast on fresh seafood – it's excellent and abundant. Yet at the most visible seafood eateries, especially those near Silver Beach, customers pay through the nose for a plate of squid.

This is because cab and pedicab drivers get a cut for bringing customers to these places – up to 50% of the bill! With that kind of incentive, some drivers will work hard to lure you to eateries that pay them. Insist on going elsewhere and they may feign ignorance of the location, or take you to their pet eatery and pretend it's the one

you're after.

But there are exceptions to the rule. Seafood restaurants that don't overcharge can be found in Overseas Town (Qiaogang Zhen), 4km away from Silver Beach. OT was established in 1979 to settle Vietnamese Chinese refugees who had arrived near the shores of Beihai. Most of the arrivals were fishermen who brought their unique mix of Chinese and Vietnamese culture to the area.

So ask a driver to take you to Overseas Town (without mentioning a restaurant), then walk to your destination. The whole town is only 1.1 sq km.

Information

ICBC

BANK

(Zhongguo Gongshang Yinhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Has a 24-hour ATM for international cards.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 213 Zhongshan Donglu; 🕒 8am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm, 3-6pm summer)

At the eastern end of the old town; can extend visas.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are daily flights to Beijing (¥2010) and Shanghai (¥1700). The airport is 21km northeast of the town centre.

BOAT

The international ferry terminal (*guoji keyun matou*) is on the road to Silver Beach (bus 3; ¥1.50). Three ferries leave daily for the volcanic island of Weizhou (¥120 to ¥240, 1½ hours, 8.30am, 11.15am and 4pm). Ferries return to Beihai at 9.45am, 2.30pm and 5.15pm. Services double on the weekend.

BUS

Direct bus routes include Nanning (¥65, three hours, every 30 minutes 7am to

9.30pm) and Guilin (¥180, seven hours, seven daily).

TRAIN

Two trains leave daily to Nanning from Beihai Train Station (¥40 to ¥60, three hours, 9.24am and 11.50am). Tickets to onward destinations can be bought from the **train station ticket office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8.10am-noon & 2-5pm) for a ¥5 fee.

Express trains from Nanning (about ¥70, 1½ hours, 10.35am and 2.55pm) arrive at the new Beihai Express Train Station on Zhanbei Lu.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Airport shuttle buses (¥10, 30 minutes) leave from outside the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; Zhongguo Minhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 303 3757; Beibuwan Xilu; 🕒 8am-10pm), a few hundred metres beyond Huoshaochuang Wuxiang, and connect with every flight. Flight tickets can also be bought here.

BUS

There are two main bus stations: a central long-distance one (*keyun zongzhan*) on Beibuwan Lu and a newer, inconveniently located one (*Beihai nanzhu qiche zhan*). Most buses drop you at the latter station. You'll need to take public bus 15 (¥1.50) to Beibuwan Lu or a taxi (¥25).

From the central bus station, bus 2 (¥1.50) goes to the train station.

PEDICAB & MOTORCYCLE TAXI

There are three-wheeled pedicabs and motorcycle taxis. You can get to most places in town, including to Silver Beach, for ¥5 to ¥20.

Weizhou Island

China's largest volcanic island Weizhou (6.5km long) makes for a relaxing

day trip from Beihai, 124km away, if you like dormant volcanic scenery, water sports and religious architecture. You can pay for the entry ticket (¥90 per person) and buy a map (¥3) at the Beihai pier. Note, however, that the island's growing popularity with Chinese tourists has meant new surcharges and sometimes less-than-honest operators.

The main settlement of **Nanwan Port** (Nanwan Gang) is 5km south of the pier. The waters around Weizhou contain some of the most diverse coral communities in the area; ask in Nanwan Port about motorboat rides and diving opportunities, though instructions will be in Chinese. If you're not into water sports, the beaches are skippable.

The entry ticket includes admission to the **Mouth of the Volcano** (Huoshan Kou), a site marked by a pile of black rocks and one of the highlights along a seafront boardwalk that snakes past wave-sculpted caverns and animal shapes that were molten lava several millennia ago.

The star of the island by far, however, is the Catholic church in the northeastern part.

Sights

★ Weizhou Catholic Church

CHURCH

(Weizhou Tianzhu Tang Shengtang;)

This baby was built in 1835 in a neo-Gothic style with coral and volcanic rocks from the seabed, and looks quite formidable despite its modest size – who would have known that pinnacles and pointed windows go so well with rough-textured and discoloured rocks? As it looms into view behind hawkers and tour vans, your mouth drops a little.

The church was constructed by French missionaries for followers who had fled here to escape ethnic conflict in Guangdong. It was damaged during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt with donations from the wife of former premier Zhou Enlai, and a Catholic priest in Hong Kong. The lovely garden sports old jackfruit trees and a 125-year-old mango tree. Outside the church

are hawkers selling noodles and delicious coconut buns (*yezi bao*; ¥2).

i Getting There & Around

To get from the ferry pier to Nanwan Port, it's ¥15 by pedicab. Consider hiring a pedicab (roughly ¥120 for four to five hours), a van (¥150) or a sightseeing cart (¥220) to save time. Drivers from the same operator may take turns chauffeuring you around, so make sure no one owes you change before you let them out of your sight.

Tickets for boats to Weizhou Island can be purchased from the international ferry terminal in Beihai.

Huashan Cliff Murals

Huashan Cliff Murals

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(Huashan Shihua)

The enigmatic Hua Mountain Cliff Murals, 2000-year-old rock paintings of people and animals on sheer cliff faces, are the reason many people come to Guangxi. For several years now, conservation works have been carried out on the murals and portions of the cliff are covered by scaffolding, as China applies for the site's inclusion on the UN World Heritage list in 2016.

The red-painted murals are believed to be the work of ancestors of the Zhuang, who refer to Hua Mountain as *pay laiz* (mountain with colourful paintings) but why they were painted remains a mystery. For an idea of scale, the largest of 1900 distinguishable images is 3m tall.

The crudely drawn figures are barefoot and shown in silhouette. Many have hands raised and knees bent, accompanied by pictures of drums and animals – features that suggest celebration of harvest or victory.

The admission fee (¥80) includes a two-hour boat ride on a spectacular section of the **Zuo River** (Zuo Jiang) past ducks and fallen cliff faces. The boat leaves at 10am and 2pm; outside these times, you can hire a private boat;

it's ¥300 to ¥500 for 90 minutes to three hours, depending on the type of vehicle used.

The only way to see this ancient wonder is by boat from the village of Panlong, commonly known as **Huashan Shanzhai**. The cliffs are in Ningming, a county between Nanning and Pingxiang.

Getting There & Away

Trains and buses that run between Nanning and Pingxiang stop at Ningming. From the train or bus station, take a pedicab (¥30 to ¥50, 40 minutes) to Huashan Shanzhai.

Regular buses leave Ningming for Pingxiang (¥12, one hour), Chongzuo (¥20, 1½ hours) and Nanning (¥65, three hours); the last buses leave at 6.30pm, 6pm and 7.50pm, respectively.

Trains to Pingxiang leave at 10.57am (¥62, 55 minutes) and 4.44pm (¥38, one hour 13 minutes). Trains to Chongzuo (slow/fast ¥38/46, 1½ hours/one hour) and Nanning (¥46/72, four hours 40 minutes/three hours) leave at 9.50am (slow train) and 1.07pm (fast train).

Pingxiang

 0771 / Pop 110,000

Guangxi's gateway to Vietnam (Yuenan) is a market town with a dusty, end-of-the-world feel.

Turn right from the bus station's front entrance onto Yingxing Lu to find the Bank of China (Zhongguo Yinhang) and a couple of internet cafes (*wangba*). Turning left from the station will take you to rice and noodle stalls.

Sights

Friendship Pass Scenic Area

PARK

(Youyiguan Jingqu admission ¥42; 🕒 8am-8pm)

The Chinese side of the Sino-Vietnamese border is an attractive park sprinkled with old buildings. These include a yellow French colonial number erected by the Qing government, and the virile-looking **Friendship Pass Tower**, rebuilt in 1957 on the original 2000-year-old site with battlements and ramparts.

Sleeping

On Beida Lu behind the bus station are hotels with air-con and internet ranging from ¥50 to ¥150. Look for the Chinese characters (binguan).

Xiang City Hotel

HOTEL

(Xiangcheng Guoji Dajiudian 📞 802 2666; www.xc-hotel.com; 2 Beida Lu; r ¥260, ste ¥538; 🏠 📶)

One of the more comfortable places to stay in Pingxiang.

Getting There & Away

Trains leave for Ningming (¥62) and Nanning (¥78, 3½ hours) from Pingxiang Station (Pingxiang Zhan) from 10.25am. The train station is 3km south of the bus station and pedicabs (about ¥5) link the two.

Regular buses depart from Pingxiang bus station for Ningming (¥12, one hour) until 7pm, for Chongzuo (¥33, one hour 20 minutes) until 6.40pm, and for Nanning (¥80, three hours) until 8pm.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO/FROM VIETNAM FROM PINGXIANG

The Friendship Pass (Youyi Guan) border is located about 18km south of Pingxiang on the Chinese side, and several kilometres from the obscure town of Dong Dang on the Vietnamese side; the nearest Vietnamese city (Liangshan; Lang Son in Vietnamese) is 18km away. The border is open from 8am to 8pm Chinese time (China is one hour ahead of Vietnam), but some travellers have reported that passports aren't always stamped after around 4.30pm.

To get to the border crossing, take a pedicab or taxi (about ¥40) from Pingxiang. From there it's a 600m walk to the Vietnamese border post. Onward transport to Hanoi, located 164km southwest of the border, is by bus or train via Lang Son.

If you're heading into China from Friendship Pass, catch a minibus to Pingxiang bus station, from where there are regular onward buses to Nanning and beyond. A word of caution: though train tickets to China are more expensive in Hanoi, it isn't advisable to walk across the border from Dong Dang and buy the ticket on the Chinese side. Dong Dang is several kilometres from Friendship Pass, and you'll need someone to take you by motorbike. If going by train, buy a ticket from Hanoi to Pingxiang, and then in Pingxiang, buy a ticket to Nanning or beyond.

There are still reports of Lonely Planet's China being confiscated by border officials at Friendship Pass. We advise copying vital information and putting a cover over your guidebook just in case. Note that all bags are searched as you walk into the train station. Once you leave Pingxiang, you won't have a problem.

Detian Waterfall

📍0771

The picturesque Detian Waterfall (Detian Pubu) belongs to Chungui River (Chunguihe), which flows between China and Vietnam. The river is only 30m across in this upstream section, which means that folks on both sides can see each other going about their business. Some border residents make a living by smuggling. It's not uncommon around here to hear someone comment how poor the Vietnamese look, then, in the same breath, gush over their trucks ('So much sturdier than ours!') and their goods of herbs, coffee and perfume.

After visiting the waterfall, follow the signs to the **53rd mere stone**. After running the gauntlet of Chinese souvenir stalls, you'll hit a market of Vietnamese traders hawking snacks and smokes, and the weathered stone marking the border.

Outside the entrance gates, there are guesthouses offering doubles with air-con for about ¥80, and eateries from ¥10-a-bowl noodle shops to proper restaurants (¥35 per person).

Detian Waterfall

WATERFALL

(Detian Pubu; Ban Gioc Waterfall 📍 261 2482; www.detian.com; admission ¥80)

It's not grand like Niagara Falls, but the largest falls spanning two countries in Asia are quite a beauty. There's the added buzz of being surrounded by karst peaks and being able to legally cross the Vietnamese border at the 53rd mere stone – tourists like to take photos of themselves stepping into what's officially Vietnamese territory. The falls drop in three stages to create cascades and small pools. Swimming is not allowed, but bamboo rafts (¥30) will take you up to the spray.

i Getting There & Away

Unless you catch the one direct bus, which departs from Nanning's International Tourism Distribution Centre (one way/return ¥50/90, 3½ hours, 7.40am) and stops en route at Langdong bus station (8.30am), you will have to come via Daxin from Nanning. At Daxin, switch to a bus headed to Detian (¥20, two hours, hourly); a cab costs ¥110.

The last bus leaves for Daxin at around 5.30pm. There are regular buses from Daxin to Nanning (¥55, 2½ hours) until 8.30pm. The direct bus from the falls to Nanning leaves at 3.30pm.

Tongling Grand Canyon

Some 30km from Detian Waterfall in Baise city, Jingxi County, Tongling canyon is like a beautiful wound on the land's surface, offering virgin forests and geological drama over a 1000m by 200m area. As you make your way down from the entrance in the north, you'll understand why it's named Tongling – 'connected to the spiritual world'.

From the canyon's exit, you can walk 30 minutes uphill to the entrance car park, where your hired car will be waiting for you. Alternatively, vans can take you for ¥5. There are buses from Jingxi south bus station that make the hour-long trip (¥10) to the canyon every 20 to 30 minutes until 7pm. Look for

those headed for Hurun town (Hurunzhen).

★ Tongling Grand Canyon

CANYON

(Tongling Daxia Gu  618 0076; www.tonglinggu.com; admission ¥90;  8am-5pm)

Follow flights of narrow stairs that zigzag precariously down to a large cavern, with flickering bulbs and the roar of an underground river your only guides. From there, you venture (or your eyes do) through a thick tropical forest into gorges wild and wonderful, and past vaulted cliffs with hanging stalactites, more subterranean rivers and dramatic waterfalls that end in crystal pools framed by boulders.

You can walk around some of the waterfalls into the cool, otherworldly caves beyond. But you can't go near the tallest one, which has a drop of 170m and a splash of up to hundreds of metres in the summer.

Getting There & Away

Buses depart from Nanning north station for Jingxi every 20 minutes. Nanning's Langdong bus station runs tour buses to Daxin that stop at the canyon.

Leye

 0776

Guangxi's highest county is perched on the western edge of the province, and makes a good springboard to underground caves, primeval forests and natural sinkholes.

Sights & Activities

Peaceful and compact Leye belongs to Baise city, which also administers Jingxi County where Tongling Grand Canyon is located. Allow a day or two to visit the area's impressive sights.

You can buy a combo ticket for the two sinkholes of **Leye Geopark** (Leye Shijie Dizhi Gongyuan 🕒 8.30am-5pm) and the Lotus Cave (¥158); just for the sinkholes (¥118); or for Dashiwei Sinkhole and the Lotus Cave (¥128).

Every 20 to 30 minutes, between 8am and 4.30pm, a bus leaves Leye for Dashiwei Sinkhole. Catch it at a large temporary car park diagonally opposite the People's Hospital (Renmin Yiyuan). The car park is accessible via a small alley. The 30-minute ride costs ¥4.30. There's no bus to Chuantong Sinkhole, but if you go to Dashiwei Sinkhole, the staff can arrange a driver to take you there and back to the city centre for ¥80 to ¥100 a car (seats four).

★ Chuantong Sinkhole

CAVE

(Chuantong Tiankeng Leye Geopark; 🕒 to 5.30pm)

A two-hour hike takes you past limestone caves, primeval vegetation and an underground river. You can trek to the sinkhole's bottom via an ethereal-looking cavern with a hole in its roof. On sunny days at noon, a shaft of light passes through the hole onto the cavern floor.

Dashiwei Sinkhole

CAVE

(Dashiwei Tiankeng Leye Geopark; admission ¥98; 🕒 8am-5.30pm)

From the ticket office here, you're transferred to an electric cart for a 20-minute ride to what resembles a deep meteor crater. Follow the path to one of three viewing platforms at the top for cloud-level views of karst ranges.

Luomei Lotus Cave

CAVE

(Luomei Lianhua Dong Tongle Lu; admission ¥80; 🕒 8am-5pm)

This 970m-long cave, once an underground river, shelters the world's largest collection of lotus-shaped limestone formations, illuminated (too ambitiously) by colourful lights. The cave is 200m north of the bus station.

SKY PITS

Sinkholes, known as (tiankeng), literally 'sky pits' in Chinese, are depressions in the land caused by the collapse of the surface layer. This happens when bedrock made of a soluble substance such as limestone is eroded by underground water, forming caves that may eventually collapse from the surface. Some sinkholes have openings into the caves below or to underground rivers. Some are carpeted by primeval forests.

Sleeping & Eating

There are noodle shops and hotels along Xingle Lu, a ¥7 pedicab ride from the train station. Rooms start at ¥75 and come with air-con and en-suite bathrooms. From Xingle Lu, it's a ¥5 ride or a 10-minute walk west towards Tongle Zhonglu, where you'll find vendors selling snacks and fruit.

City Comfort Inn

HOTEL

(Chengshi Bianjie Jiudian  255 9888; www.cc9d.com; unit 1, Bldg 4, Letian Gardens District, 1 r ¥166-199)

Small, bright and comfortable rooms in a small hotel next to Minzu Middle School.

Getting There & Around

There are four daily buses from Nanning (¥135, six hours). The main station is on the southern end of Tongle Lu and the town is 1km north.

Detian's Hurun Town Bus Station (Hurunzhen Keyun Qichezhan) runs buses to Jingxi every 20 minutes (¥10); Jingxi has frequent buses to Baise (¥55, 3½ hours).

Regular daily buses depart from Leye for:

- ➔ **Baise** (the regional hub where you can connect to southern destinations such as Daxin and Guangdong) ¥55, three to four hours, 12.30pm to 8pm
- ➔ **Nanning** ¥140, seven hours (9am, 12.40pm, 7pm and 9.50pm)

The easiest way to see the sights in Leye is to hire a pedicab for the day (¥180 to ¥250). Ask the driver: Baoche yitian yao duo shao? ? (How much is

it to hire your car with chauffeur service for a day?) Short rides cost about ¥7.

Guizhou

[Guizhou Highlights](#)

[Central Guizhou](#)

[Guiyang](#)

[Qingyan](#)

[Eastern Guizhou](#)

[Kaili](#)

[Around Kaili](#)

[Zhenyuan](#)

[Around Zhenyuan](#)

[Western Guizhou](#)

[Anshun](#)

[Around Anshun](#)

[Weining](#)

[Northern Guizhou](#)

[Chishui](#)

[Around Chishui](#)

Guizhou



Pop 34.7 million

Why Go?

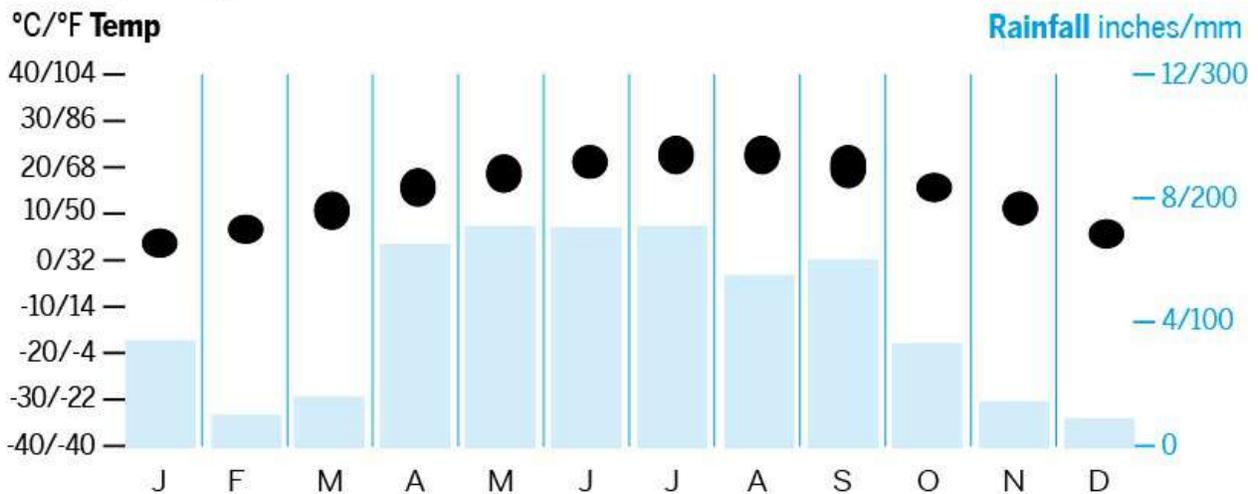
Little-visited Guizhou has always been the least fashionable southwest China province. A much-quoted proverb describes it as a place ‘without three *li* of flat land, three days of fine weather, or three cents to rub together’. Ouch!

Certainly, pockets of Guizhou are desperately poor and not for nothing do expats refer to it as 'Greyzhou'. The upside is that there's plenty of elbow room out in the simply stunning countryside, a sublime mix of undulating hills and carpets of forest, riven with rivers tumbling into magnificent waterfalls and down into spooky-thrilling karst cave networks.

As big a draw as the landscapes is Guizhou's extraordinary human mosaic. Around 37% of the province's population consists of more than 18 ethnic minorities. They all contribute to Guizhou's social-butterfly calendar, which enjoys more folk festivals than any other province in China, and those parties more than make up for the weather.

When to Go

Guìyáng



- ➔ **Jan** Brave the chill for the wondrous sight of thousands of rare birds wintering at Caohai Lake.
- ➔ **Jun** Hope for some summer sunshine as you village-hop around the southeast.
- ➔ **Oct & Nov** See in the Miao New Year in Xijiang with gallons of rice wine.

Best Views

- ➔ [Yunjiu Temple](#)
- ➔ [Huangguoshu Falls](#)
- ➔ [Shizhangdong Waterfall](#)
- ➔ [Tiantaishan](#)

Best Historic Towns & Villages

- [Zhenyuan](#)
- [Yunshan](#)
- [Zhaoxing](#)
- [Tianlong](#)

History

Chinese rulers set up an administration in this area as far back as the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220), but it was merely an attempt to maintain some measure of control over Guizhou's non-Han tribes.

It wasn't until the Sino-Japanese war, when the Kuomintang made Chongqing their wartime capital, that the development of Guizhou began. Most of this activity ceased at the end of WWII and industrialisation of the area wasn't revived until the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began construction of the railways.

Despite an expanding mining industry, Guizhou's GDP per capita remains the lowest in all China.

Language

Mandarin Chinese is spoken by the Han majority, although with a distinctive local accent. Thai and Lao are spoken by some, and Miao-Yao (Hmong-mien) dialects by the Miao and Yao.

Getting There & Away

You can fly to more than 40 destinations within China from Guiyang Longdongbao International Airport, including all major Chinese cities plus direct flights to Taipei in Taiwan.

Guiyang and Chongqing are linked by an expressway. Another expressway links Guiyang with Kunming, via Huangguoshu Falls. Yunnan is also accessible – less comfortably – by bus via Weining in the west. Reach Guangxi through Congjiang in the southeastern part of the province from

Guangxi.

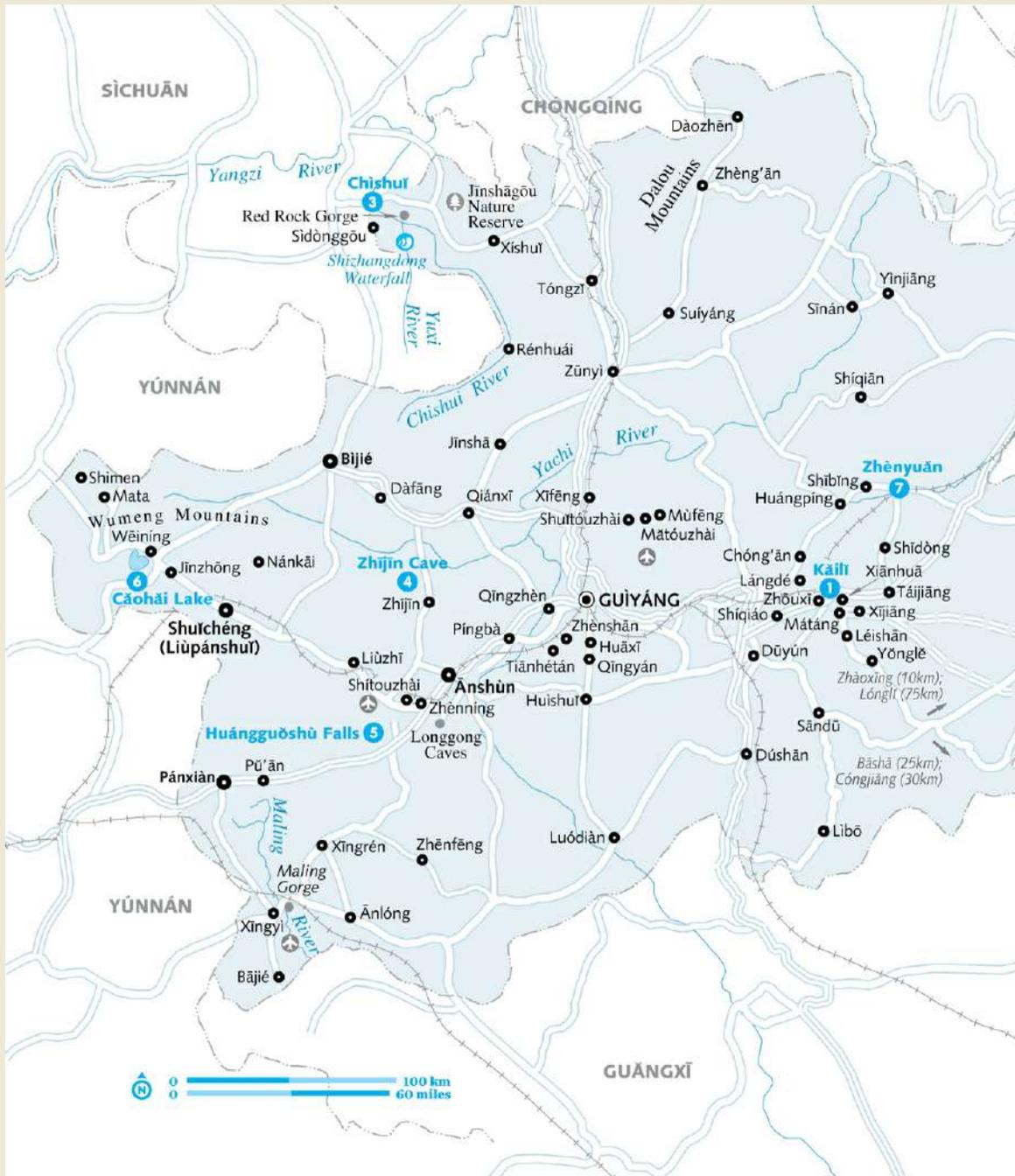
Major roads within the province have been upgraded, cutting journey times dramatically. However, secondary roads in the northeast, west and southeast are often poor.

Sleepers to Chengdu, Kunming and Guilin are popular. Guiyang is due to be linked by high-speed rail with Chengdu, Guilin, Leshan and Guangzhou by 2015. You can enter Guizhou by train from Hunan through the back door from Huaihua to Zhenyuan.

Getting Around

Buses are useful for much of Guizhou, but the train is very handy for Kaili, Zhenyuan, the east of the province and major cities. New expressways access the more remote western areas of the province, while the train now runs to Weining in the far west too. Roads between smaller cities and villages remain a work in progress – and there are many mountains and hills out there to wind around – so bring bags of patience.

Guizhou Highlights



- 1 Spend a week village-hopping around [Kaili](#).
- 2 Party with the locals at one of the thousand-odd [festivals](#) held in Guizhou each year.
- 3 Get way off the beaten track in the prehistoric fern forests

around [Chishui](#).

- 4 Head underground at [Zhijin Cave](#), the largest cavern in China.
- 5 Soak yourself in the mists at the thundering [Huangguoshu Falls](#), China's largest waterfall.
- 6 Escape the madding crowds and get up close with rare black cranes at remote [Caohai Lake](#).
- 7 Amble in low gear around the charming old town of [Zhenyuan](#), on either bank of the Wuyang River.

CENTRAL GUIZHOU

The capital city, Guiyang, dominates the central portion of the province.

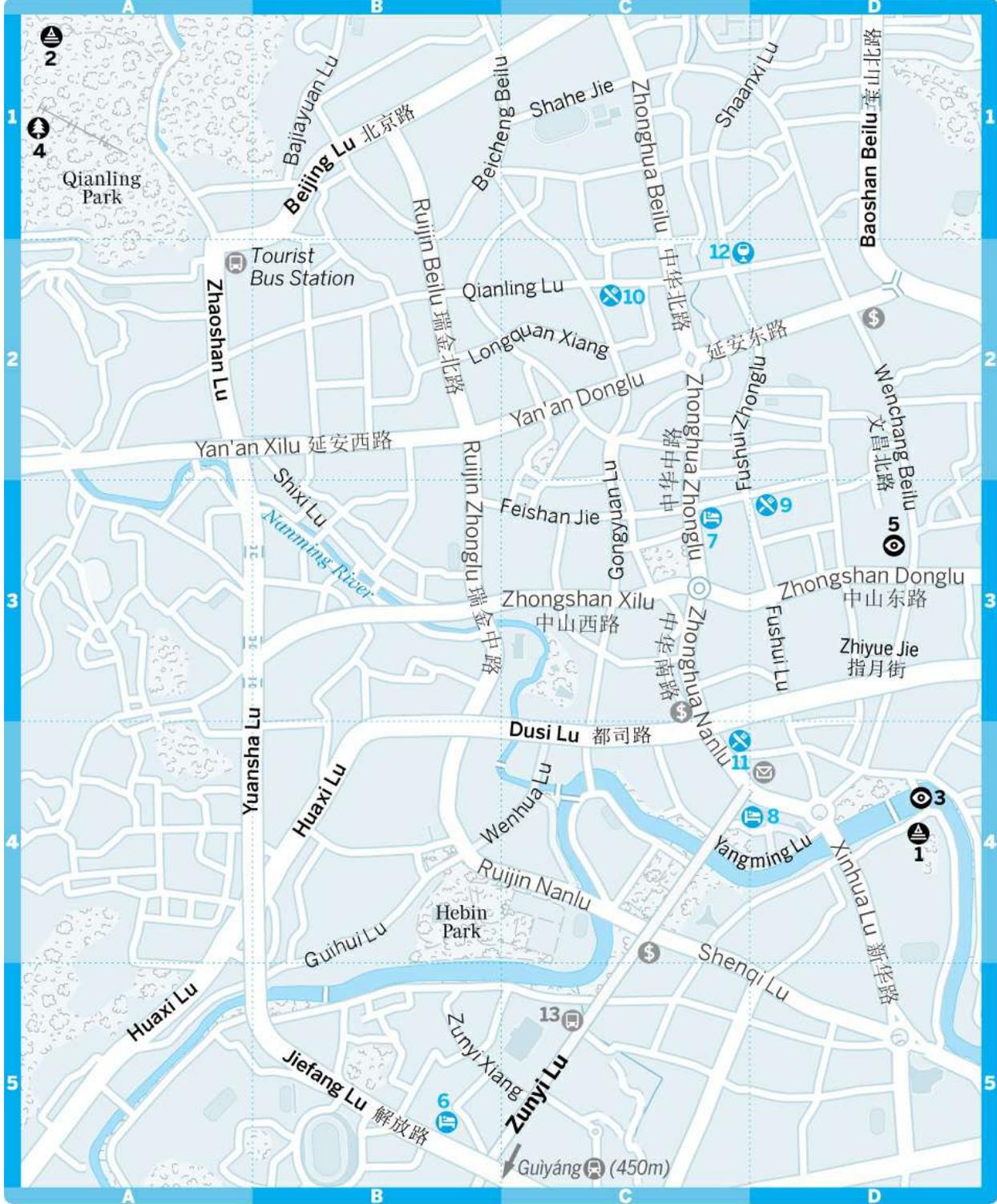
Guiyang

☞ 0851 / Pop 3 million

Guizhou's capital serves as a jumping-off point to Anshun and its surrounding sights, Huangguoshu Falls, Kaili, Zhenyuan and other destinations in the province.

Guiyang

0 500 m
0 0.25 miles



Guiyang

Sights

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Cuiwei Gongyuan | D4 |
| 2 | Hongfu Temple | A1 |
| 3 | Jiaxiu Pavilion | D4 |
| 4 | Qianling Park | A1 |
| 5 | Wenchang Pavilion | D3 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|----|
| 6 | Hanting Express | B5 |
| 7 | Motel 168 | C3 |
| 8 | Sheraton Hotel | D4 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 9 | Kaili Sour Fish Restaurant | D3 |
| 10 | Siheyuan | C2 |
| 11 | Tree Kitchen | C4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|------------------------|----|
| 12 | Hobo's | C2 |
|----|------------------------|----|

Transport

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 13 | Civil Aviation Administration of China | C5 |
|----|--|----|

Sights

Hongfu Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Hongfu Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥2, cable car up/down ¥15/20; 🕒 7am-6pm, cable car 9am-5pm)

Located in [Qianling Park](#) (Qianling Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥5; 🕒 24hr) in the north of the city, Hongfu Temple is perched near the top of 1300m Qianling Shan and dates back to the 17th century. It's an easy 40-minute walk to the temple, or there's a **cable car**. The monastery has a vegetarian restaurant in the rear courtyard. From the train station area, take

bus 2.

Other Sights

Walk north across the river, turn right onto Yangming Lu, cross a roundabout, descend to the river and follow it to the triple-roofed **Jiaxiu Pavilion** (Jiaxiu Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm), Guiyang's most famous landmark.

Across the river stands **Cuiwei Gongyuan** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-11pm), an erstwhile Ming-dynasty temple which has picturesque pavilions and some pricey Miao souvenirs.

Backtrack across the bridge and walk north along Wenchang Beilu to another Ming-dynasty speciality: **Wenchang Pavilion** (Wenchang Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), restored along with the city walls.

There are always plenty of locals lounging around, chatting and snacking here.

Tours

Organised tours (in Chinese) to Huangguoshu Falls and Longgong Caves leave daily from a special tourist bus station (*luyou keyunzhan*) opposite Qianling Park. Many hotels also organise day tours, with fewer tours (if at all) in the low season.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators have been used for this region:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥50

\$\$ ¥50 to ¥100

\$\$\$ more than ¥100

Sleeping

Motel 168

HOTEL

(Motai Jiudian 168 [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 1010 2020; www.motel168.com; 2 Shengfu Lu; tw & d ¥199; 📶 📶)

Bland, but clean and modern rooms slap in the middle of town, close to restaurants and shops. The 2nd-floor **One Cafe** is a surprisingly cool teahouse—coffee shop—bar.

Hanting Express

HOTEL

(Hanting Liansuo Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 855 1888; www.htinns.com; 372 Jiefang Lu, tw & d ¥219-239; 📶 @ 📶)

Efficient and clean hotel with decent rooms. Free coffee awaits guests in the lounge, there are three internet terminals and a lift. Walk north up Zunyi Lu and turn left along Jiefang Lu; it's on the far side of the road.

Sheraton Hotel

HOTEL

(Xilaideng Guihang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 588 8280; www.sheraton.com/guiyang; 49 Zhonghua Nanlu, d/ste ¥2488/4888; 📶 📶 @ 📶 📶)

Sitting astride a central intersection like a colossus, the rooms here are Guiyang's top digs. Huge, comfy beds, as well as a spa, gym, pool, and Western and Chinese restaurants. English-speaking staff too; a rarity in this town. Discounts of 50% are routinely available.

Eating & Drinking

North of the train station and Jiefang Lu, Zunyi Xiang is a lively and busy food street of hotpot, Sichuan and Jiachangcai restaurants. It shuts around 10pm.

Siheyuan

GUIZHOU

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 682 5419; Qianling Xilu; mains from ¥15; 🕒 noon-9.30pm)

Every Guiyang local knows this place – a rowdy, riotous and labyrinthine spot with very tasty local dishes. Perfunctory service, no English menu. It's tough to find – walk west along Qianling Xilu off Zhonghua Beilu and look for a church with a red cross atop it on the right; the restaurant is down a small alley opposite.

★ Kaili Sour Fish Restaurant

MIAO

(Lao Kaili Suantangyu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 584 3665; 55 Shengfu Lu; mains from ¥38; 🕒 11.30am-10pm)

Locals come here for the best *suantangyu* (sour fish soup) in town. A Miao delicacy that's Guizhou's most famous dish; fish are chopped up or dumped whole in a bubbling hotpot. Fling in vegies of your choice and you're all set. Look for the Miao waitresses standing guard outside in traditional costume.

Tree Kitchen

GUIZHOU

(Shu Chu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 582 6853; next door to Novotel Hotel; dishes from ¥28; 🕒 10.30am-9.30pm)

Hip for Guiyang, this cool place in an old courtyard home has only 36 dishes on offer. All are good and offer a fusion-like take on local dishes. Try the barbecued beef and leeks (*huoshao cong xiang niurou*) or the pork and sliced potato (*ruanshao tudoupian*). Book ahead here.

Hobo's

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 150 0851 2834; 11 Shangyu Jia Xiang; cocktails from ¥45; 🕒 7pm-2am)

The only cocktail bar in Guiyang – no beer here. The bartenders were trained in Japan and really know their stuff. Reasonably priced drinks, a fine collection of single malts as well and an amenable crowd. It's tucked down an alley off Qianlong Donglu's buzzing bar strip.

Information

At the time of writing, internet cafes in Guiyang were not accepting foreigners. Some places may let you log on using one of the staff's ID cards, but don't count on it.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang ; near cnr Dusi Lu & Zhonghua Nanlu;  9am-5pm)

Has an ATM and offers all services you need. Other branches can be found on the corner of Wenchang Beilu and Yan'an Donglu, and on Zunyi Lu near Renmin Sq.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,  590 4509; Daying Lu;  8.30am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Fri)

The staff don't see many foreigners here, but they seem pleasant enough.

Getting There & Around

AIR

Guiyang Longdongbao International Airport is around 10km east of the city. Destinations include:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥1363, two hours 50 minutes, 10 daily
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥964, two hours 15 minutes, 10 daily
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥853, 1½ hours, nine daily
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥719, one hour 10 minutes, nine daily
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥799, one hour 45 minutes, eight daily

- ➔ **Kunming** ¥355, one hour 10 minutes, eight daily
- ➔ **Hong Kong** ¥1797, one hour 35 minutes, one daily

The **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC, Zhongguo Minhang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 264 Zunyi Lu; 🕒 8am-7pm) is around 1km north of the train station, on the corner with Qingyun Lu; airport buses depart every 30 minutes from the CAAC office (¥10, 20 minutes, 8am to 7pm). A taxi from the airport will cost around ¥60.

BUS

The Jinyang long-distance bus station (*Jinyang keyunzhan*) is in the western suburbs on Jinyang Nanlu, a long haul from central Guiyang. Take bus 219 (¥2, 6.30am to 10pm) from the train station; a taxi will cost ¥45. Destinations include the following:

- ➔ **Anshun** ¥35, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes (7am to 9pm)
- ➔ **Huangguoshu** ¥55, 2½ hours, every 40 minutes (7.40am to 12.45pm)
- ➔ **Weining** ¥128, six hours, two daily (9am and 12.30pm)

For Kaili (¥60, 2½ hours, every 20 to 30 minutes, 7am to 9pm) and Congjiang (¥150, seven hours, 9am, 11am and 3pm), head to the East Bus Station (*dong keyunzhan*) on the eastern outskirts of town. Bus 229 (¥2) runs here from the train station. A taxi is ¥25 to ¥30.

TAXI

Taxi flagfall is ¥9; late at night it increases to ¥10.

TRAIN

Guiyang's train station is useful for reaching Kaili, Anshun, Weining and Zhenyuan. Destinations include the following (prices are for hard sleeper berths):

- ➔ **Anshun** (seat) ¥16, 1½ hours, 27 daily (4.20am to 11.59pm)
- ➔ **Caohai** (for Weining) (seat) ¥50, four to eight hours, eight daily (11.30am to 6.01pm)
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥223, 11 to 20 hours, seven daily (12.16am to 8.11pm)

- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥126, nine to 12 hours, eight daily (12.16am to 10.05pm)
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥306, 19 to 22 hours, five daily (8.09am to 4.16pm)
- ➔ **Kaili** (seat) ¥29, two to three hours, 27 daily (2.23am to 11pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥156, 7 to 10 hours, 16 daily (4.20am to 11.59pm)
- ➔ **Zhenyuan** (seat) ¥41, three to four hours, 16 daily (2.39am to 9pm)

CELEBRATING WITH THE LOCALS, GUIZHOU-STYLE

Minority celebrations are lively events that can last for days at a time, and often include singing, dancing, horse racing and buffalo fighting.

One of the biggest is the **lusheng festival**, held in either spring or autumn, depending on the village. The lusheng is a reed instrument used by the Miao people. Other important festivals include the [dragon boat festival](#), **hill-leaping festival** and **'sharing the sister's meal festival'** (equivalent to Valentine's Day in the West). The **Miao new year** is celebrated on the first four days of the 10th lunar month in Kaili, Guading, Zhouxi and other Miao areas. The **fertility festival** is celebrated only every 13 years (the next one's due in 2016).

All minority festivals follow the lunar calendar and so dates vary from year to year. They will also vary from village to village and shaman to shaman. CITS in Kaili can provide you with a list of local festivals.

Qingyan

With its winding, stone-flagged streets and restored city walls, **Qingyan** (admission ¥10, through ticket ¥80) makes a pleasant diversion from modern Guiyang. A former Ming-era military outpost dating back to 1378, Qingyan was once a traffic hub between the southwest provinces, leaving the village with Taoist temples and Buddhist monasteries rubbing up against Christian churches and menacing watchtowers.

Some of the places of worship are still active; make sure to visit the tranquil **Yingxiang Temple** (Yingxiang Si), on a side street populated by fortune tellers, and to compare the current, minimalist **Catholic Church**

(Tianzhu Jiaotang) with the now disused but much more impressive 19th-century original. Note that you don't need the through ticket to see the major sights, but you do need it to access some places in town.

Qingyan is about 30km south of Guiyang and makes an easy day trip. Bus 210 runs here from the left-hand side of Hebin Park (¥2, one hour 15 minutes, every 30 minutes from 6.30am). At the time of writing, surrounding construction meant buses were stopping 5km short of Qingyan, where you transfer onto a smaller bus (¥3) that drops you a five minute walk from the ticket office.

TRADITIONAL GARMENTS

The assortment of clothing among Guizhou's minorities provides travellers with a daily visual feast. Clothes are as much a social and ethnic denominator as pure decoration. They also indicate whether or not a woman is married, and provide clues to a woman's wealth and skills at weaving and embroidery.

Many women in remote areas still weave their own hemp and cotton cloth. Some families, especially in Dong areas, still ferment their own indigo paste as well, and you will see this for sale in traditional markets. Women will often not attend festivals in the rain for fear that the dyes in their fabrics will run. Methods of producing indigo are greatly treasured and kept secret, but are increasingly threatened by the introduction of artificial chemical dyes.

Embroidery is central to minority costume and is a tradition passed down from mother to daughter. Designs include many important symbols and references to myths and history. Birds, fish and a variety of dragon motifs are popular. The highest quality work is often reserved for baby carriers, and many young girls work on these as they approach marrying age. Older women will often spend hundreds of hours embroidering their own funeral clothes.

Costumes move with the times. In larger towns, Miao women often substitute their embroidered smocks with a good woolly jumper (sweater) and their headdresses look suspiciously like mass-produced pink and yellow Chinese towels.

EASTERN GUIZHOU

More than a dozen minority groups live in the gorgeous misty hills and river valleys east of Kaili; this area is truly a rare window on a typical life in

China. Sure, some villages have been discovered big time, but there are still places to lose yourself here. Booming country markets and festivals are held almost weekly.

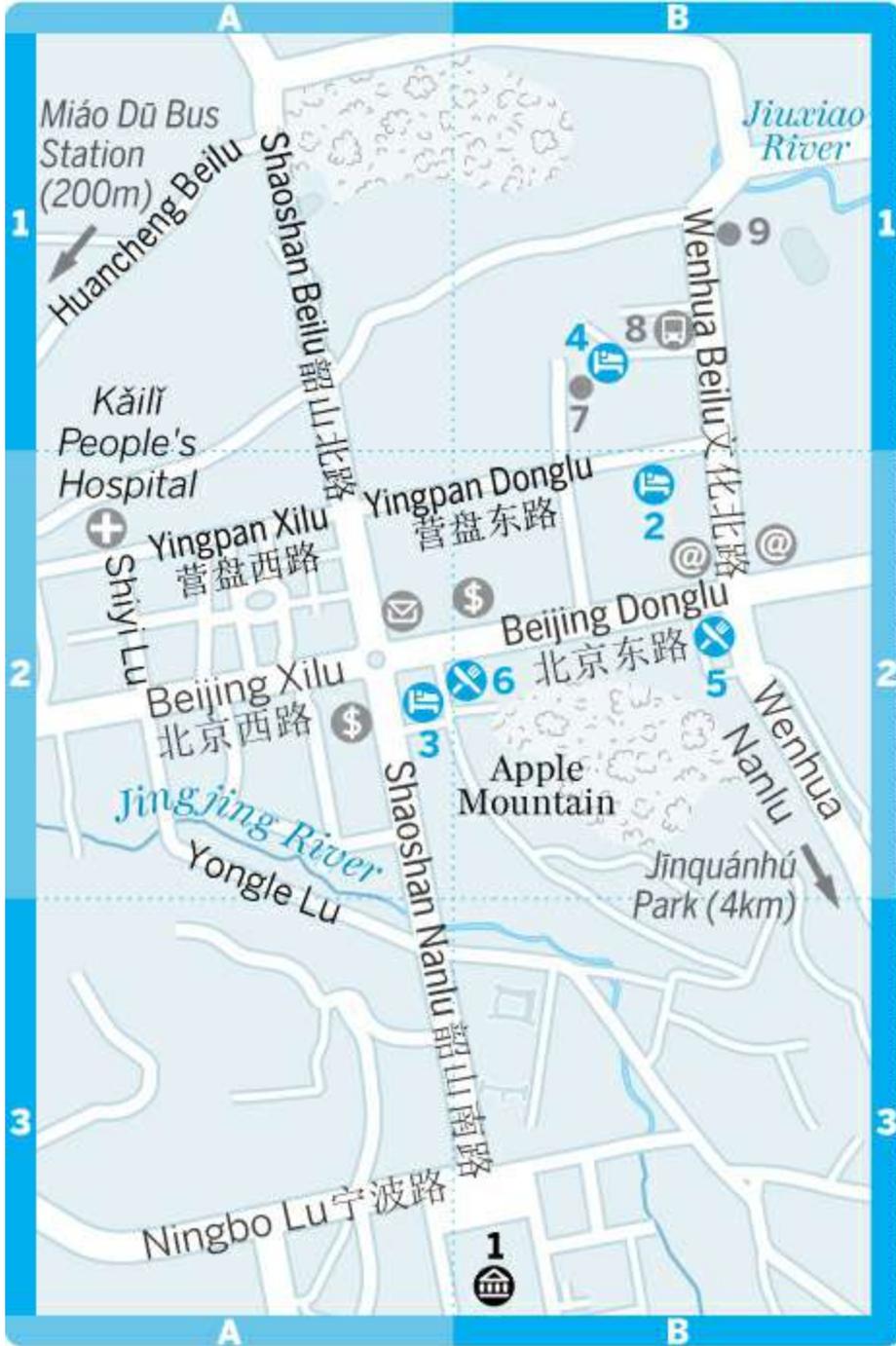
China's largest Miao village, Xijiang, and the Dong village of Zhaoxing, in the southeast, are particularly popular. If you have time, consider visiting them as part of the back-door route into Guangxi. Outside Kaili there are no places to change money, so bring plenty of renminbi with you.

Kaili

☎0855 / Pop 153,000

About 195km east of Guiyang, Kaili is an expanding town that makes a good base for visiting minority villages or planning a back-door trip into Guangxi or Hunan.

Kǎilǐ



Kaili

📍 Sights

1 [Minorities Museum](#) B3

Sleeping

2 [C'est La Vie Hotel](#) B2

3 [New Century Hotel](#) A2

4 [Yingpanpo Minzu Binyuan](#) B1

Eating

5 [Lixiang Mianshidian](#) B2

6 [Night Market](#) B2

Information

7 [China International Travel Service](#) B1

Transport

8 [Long-Distance Bus Station](#) B1

9 [Train Ticket Office](#) B1

Sights & Activities

Check out the [Minorities Museum](#) (Guizhou Minzu Bowuguan [MAP](#))

[GOOGLE MAP](#); Ningbo Lu;  9am-4.30pm) in the south of town, which has some displays of minority clothing and artefacts.

Wu Min, also known as Louisa, a local Miao woman, runs **treks** to remote Miao and Dong villages that come highly recommended. She can also organise homestays, as well as arrange for visitors to study the Miao and Dong languages and learn local dances. She speaks good English. Contact her via email at wuminlouisa@gmail.com or on 158 8583 5852.

Festivals & Events

Markets and festivals are one of Guizhou's major attractions, and their profusion around Kaili makes this sleepy town the best place to base yourself

for exploring them.

Sleeping

C'est La Vie Hotel

HOTEL

(Si La Wei Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 823 9111; www.klslw.com; 44 Yingpan Donglu; tw/d ¥228/248; ❄️ 📶)

New hotel with efficient staff, comfortable and sizeable rooms and a handy location close to the bus station. By far the best-value choice in town, while the attached restaurant (picture menu) is a solid and reasonably priced spot to eat.

New Century Hotel

HOTEL

(Xinshiji Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 826 0333; 1 Shaoshan Nanlu; tw/d ¥210/200; ❄️ @ 📶)

Decent-sized rooms, if a little scuffed, comfy beds and a good central location. Avoid the noisy ones at the front. Wi-fi and ADSL internet in the rooms.

Yingpanpo Minzu Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 382 7779; 53 Yingpan Donglu, tw ¥288; ❄️)

This old school, government-run place has reasonable rooms in a pleasant, secluded location with a lovely garden decorated with *Magnolia grandiflora*. Discounts of around 30% are common. No internet or wi-fi.

Eating

Kaili's streets are lined with some fantastic snack stalls. Savoury crepes, potato patties, barbecues, tofu grills, noodles, hotpot, *shuijiao* (boiled dumplings) and wonton soup overflow at reasonable prices. Look out for *guotiedian* (dumpling snack restaurants), which sell scrummy *guotie* (fried

dumplings) and Shanghai-style *xiaolongbao*; there are several on Wenhua Beilu, including a tasty outfit just north of the long-distance bus station. Also make tracks for the **night market** (Yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); off Beijing Donglu; 🕒 5pm-2am), which is packed with locals and open till the wee hours.

Lixiang Mianshidian

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wenhua Nanlu; dishes from ¥7; 🕒 7am-7.30pm)

This friendly eatery, with blue plastic furniture, serves simple dishes such as spare ribs soup (¥7) as well as tasty noodles, and is handy for a morning meal or coffee prior to village-hopping.

Information

Every other shop in Kaili is a chemist.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shaoshan Nanlu; 🕒 9am-5pm)

This main branch has all services and an ATM. A second branch on Beijing Donglu will also change cash. Many other ATMs around town accept foreign cards.

Boyu Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wenhua Beilu; per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr)

One of a number of internet cafes on Wenhua Beilu, the staff here will normally log you in on one of their ID cards.

China International Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(CITS, Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 822 2506; 53 Yingpan Donglu; 🕒 9am-5.30pm)

Tucked just behind Yingpan Donglu, CITS has the most up-to-date information on minority villages, festivals, markets and organised tours. Staff are helpful, with some English spoken.

Kaili People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Kailishi Diyi Renmin Yiyuan; [GOOGLE MAP](#); 28 Yingpan Xilu)

The best place in town for medical care.

Post Office

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Shaoshan Beilu & Beijing Donglu; 🕒 9am-6pm)

You can send mail overseas from here.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju 📍 853 6113; Beijing Donglu; 🕒 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Deals with all passport and visa enquiries.

Getting There & Away

AIR

For departures from Guiyang Longdongbao International Airport, airport buses (¥60, 2½ hours, 7am to 6pm) leave regularly from the **airport office** (📍 836 3868; 73 Jinjing Lu; 🕒 8am-7pm), where you can also check-in before your flight. You can also buy air tickets here.

BUS

Kaili's **long-distance bus station** (Changtu Keyunzhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 825 1025; Wenhua Beilu) has departures to most destinations.

- ➔ **Congjiang** ¥110, five hours, five daily (9am to 4pm)
- ➔ **Guiyang** ¥60, three hours, every 20 minutes (7am to 8pm)
- ➔ **Jinping** (for Longli) ¥91, four hours, 10 daily (8am to 4pm)
- ➔ **Leishan** ¥14, 50 minutes, every 25 minutes (7.25am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Liping** ¥137, five hours, eight daily (7.40am to 4.30pm)
- ➔ **Majiang** ¥17, one hour, hourly (8.20am to 5.50pm)
- ➔ **Rongjiang** ¥77 to ¥90, 4½ hours, every 40 minutes (7.20am to 6.20pm)

➔ **Xijiang** ¥15.50, 80 minutes, hourly (8.40am to 5.40pm)

➔ **Zhenyuan** ¥35, two hours, six daily (8.30am to 4pm)

For Chong'an (¥13, one hour, every 20 minutes, 6.40am to 6pm) and Huangping (¥20, one hour, every 20 minutes, 6.40am to 6pm) head to the **Miao Du Bus Station** (Miao Du Keyunzhan) on Huangcheng Beilu.

TRAIN

Kaili's train station is a couple of kilometres north of town but departures are infrequent and the service slow (but cheap), apart from regular trains to Guiyang (¥28, two to three hours), Zhenyuan (¥14, 1½ hours) and Huaihua (¥21 to ¥42, four hours). A handy **train ticket office** (Huochebiao daishouchu

 ;  381 7920; 38 Wenhua Beilu;  8.30am-6.30pm) is on Wenhua Beilu.

For longer distances, it's worth stopping in Guiyang to secure a reservation.

Getting Around

Bus fares cost ¥1 in Kaili and almost all of the buses departing from the train station follow the same route: up Qingjiang Lu, past the long-distance bus station, along Beijing Donglu and down Shaoshan Nanlu to the Minorities Museum. For the train station, take bus 2.

Taxi flagfall is ¥6. A taxi to the train station from the centre of town will cost around ¥10.

Around Kaili

If you are village-hopping into Guangxi, plan on spending about a week. Note that some of these villages charge entrance fees. An extraordinary number of markets are held in the villages surrounding Kaili. Check with the CITS in Kaili for the latest information.

Xijiang

Xijiang

VILLAGE

(admission ¥100)

Snugly ensconced in the pretty Leigong Hills, Xijiang is thought to be the largest Miao village (its full name in Chinese is Xijiang Qianhu Miaozhai – Xijiang 1000-Household Miao Village) and is famous for its embroidery and silver ornaments (the Miao believe that silver can dispel evil spirits). Now firmly embedded on the tourist trail, commercialisation has cheapened its allure but it still flings together a pastoral picture of paddies, wooden *diaojiolou* (traditional handcrafted houses), water buffalo and mists.

From the ticket office, buses (¥5) run to the village itself. The tourist infrastructure runs to a performance square, English signposts, souvenir shops, an ATM taking foreign cards (sometimes) and even a few cafes with wi-fi. Head to the western side of the village for a more authentic experience. Come evening, when the day trippers have disappeared, the village reverts to a more traditional pace of life.

When the sun obliges, Xijiang is lovely. Head away from the village on paths that weave through rice paddies, sidestepping farmers and water buffalo, and recharge your soul in the surrounding hills. A lovely **trek** is the 50-minute hike past terraced fields and rice paddies over the hills to Kaijue Miao Village (Kaijue Miaozhai) and Kaijue Waterfall (Kaijue Pubu) a bit further beyond.

There's also a three-day **trek** from Xijiang to Paiyang, a Miao village north of Xijiang. This trail winds its way through some remote minority villages and lush scenery. You will probably find accommodation with locals en route, but you shouldn't expect it so come prepared to sleep under the stars. Also ask about the largely uphill 27km trek from Xijiang to gorgeous Leigongping through a lushly green and forested landscape; you can continue on to Leishan from Leigongping.

Many families in Xijiang offer rooms from ¥50 and there are an increasing

number of guesthouses. The **Miao Family Guesthouse** (Miao Zhai Renjia ☎334 8688; tw ¥188) has clean, comfortable rooms with hot water. It's across the river on the eastern side of the village. Quite a hefty walk to the top of the village is rewarded with excellent views from the undisturbed **Guzangtoujia** (☎136 3809 5568; r ¥50-100), where clean and fresh wooden rooms occupy a traditional building opposite the historic Guzangtang, an ancestral home which houses drums used in festivals. It's run by an old man who speaks nary a word of English.

From Kaili, buses run hourly between 8.40am and 5.40pm. There are hourly buses back to Kaili from 8.30am to 5.30am. Alternatively, heading south and east towards Guangxi, there are regular buses to Leishan (¥11, 1½ hours, 6.30am to 5.40pm), from where you can head south towards Rongjiang. There are also two buses a day to Guiyang's East Bus Station (¥80, four hours, 9am and 3pm).

Langde

Superb extant Miao architecture and cobbled pathways naturally draw loads of tour buses for elaborate singing, dancing and reed flute performances in this village. But the commercialisation can't overcome the wondrousness of the locals. There's a terrific 15km **trail** along the Bala River that will take you through several Miao villages.

About 20km outside Kaili, buses pass by Langde (¥11) on the way to Leishan. The village is 2km from the main road. Getting away, head out on the street and flag down a bus back to Kaili.

Leishan

This village is usually used as a transit point, but you can also head to **Leigong Shan** (Leigong Mountain admission ¥100), at 2178m, which offers some interesting hiking opportunities and some charming settlements, including the attractive Miao village of Wudongzhai. Other nearby Miao villages include Paika (Paika Miaozhai), around 3km south of Leishan, where *lusheng*

bamboo and reed musical instruments have been handmade for centuries. Either walk or hop on a Datang-bound bus (¥3) from Leishan bus station. The road from Leishan continues towards Rongjiang. From Kaili, there are numerous buses to Leishan (¥14, one hour).

Shiqiao

Shiqiao means 'stone bridge' and you'll know why when you spy the lovely ones in this beautiful Miao town southwest of Kaili. This town was also famed for its handmade paper, which can still be seen.

To reach Shiqiao, take any bus to Leishan and change there.

Matang

This village around 20km from Kaili is home to the Gejia. Officially classified as a subgroup of the Miao minority, the Gejia have different customs, dress and language, and are renowned batik artisans; their traditional dress often features batik and embroidery. Matang has been dolled up for tourism – the inevitable performance square has materialised – and the women hawkers can be persistent. A worthwhile 30-minute walk from Matang brings you to the village of Shilongzhai, populated by another sub-branch of the Miao called the Xijia.

Matang is 2km from the main road and buses regularly run past the drop-off point in the direction of Chong'an (¥7) and Kaili (¥9). Just stand on the side of the road and flag down anything that comes your way.

Longli

Longli

VILLAGE

FREE

Stranded in splendid isolation amid fields and rice paddies near the Hunan border, Longli is a former garrison town populated by the descendants of Han

soldiers sent to protect the empire from the pesky Miao. One of the province's 'eco-museums' (read, real-live village), it's fascinating for its extant architecture.

Enter via the East Gate (Dongmen) and savour its warren of narrow cobblestone streets – you'll only need about an hour – and mostly wooden houses, lovely courtyards, pavilions, temples and town walls. The surrounding area looks prime for bike exploration, too.

Just outside the old town, **Longli Gucheng Jiudian** (☎0855-718 0018, 136 3855 4888; tw ¥80) offers basic rooms with squat toilets.

Coming from Kaili is rather arduous as there's no direct bus. First take a bus to Jinping (¥91), then switch to another bus (¥16, 1½ hours, half-hourly or so from 7.30am to around 5pm) to Longli.

Basha

Basha

VILLAGE

(admission ¥60)

Visiting historic Basha is like stepping back in time to the Tang or Song eras. The local men wear period clothes with daggers secured to their belts and, when not farming, hunt with antique rifles. Meanwhile, the women parade in full Miao rig with their hair twisted in a curl on top of their heads.

Quite why Basha is stuck in a timewarp is a mystery, as it's only 7.5km from very modern Congjiang. Not even the locals can explain why they've retained their ancient customs so well. Nor is Basha undiscovered. A collection of six hamlets that sprawls across a beautiful valley, Chinese–English signs point the way to the various places of interest. It's best seen during a festival, even if that means more visitors, because most of the year the men are out in the fields during the day. But at any time, the surrounding countryside is superb. You might also be able to arrange a hunting trip with the men.

You can find very rudimentary rooms for ¥30. By far the nicest place to

stay is the family-run **Gufengzhai Qingnian Luguan** (📞138 8554 9720; dm ¥50, tw/d ¥128/168; @ 📶). Walk down the path to the left of the village square to find it. Alternatively, you can spend the night in Congjiang. The **Zheng Peng Binguan** (📞0855 641 2757; tw ¥120; ❄️ 📶) has spacious, clean rooms (but squat toilets) and wi-fi and is across the road from the bus station.

A few orange and grey minibuses run between Congjiang and Basha early in the morning and late in the afternoon (¥5). Otherwise, you'll have to take a taxi (it's a very steep walk up to the village). The return trip should cost ¥60; you'll need the driver to wait for you.

Zhaoxing

Zhaoxing

VILLAGE

(admission ¥100)

Perhaps the quintessential Dong village and packed with traditional wooden structures, several wind and rain bridges and five remarkable drum towers, Zhaoxing is no longer the little-known paradise it once was. Its sheer uniqueness makes for a powerful draw, and the locals are certainly not complaining about the increase in visitors.

Yet, the essential, amazing nature of Zhaoxing hasn't changed. Yes, the restaurants on the main street have English menus, which is just as well as they eat rat (*laoshu rou*) in these parts, and there are now any number of quasi-inns and guesthouses offering rooms from ¥50. But away from the main street, Zhaoxing remains a working farming village, where most people still speak only their native Dong language and are extremely welcoming. The tour groups might swoop in, but Zhaoxing remains a very easy place to while away a few days.

Nearby, too, are mostly tourist-free Dong villages. Hike west out of Zhaoxing from the bus station for an hour, up a steep hill and past some splendid rice terraces, and you're in equally friendly **Jitang**, which has its own drum tower. Head the other way out of Zhaoxing through the fields and two hours later you reach **Tang'an**, a village so essentially Dong it's been

named a living museum.

The **Wangjiang Lou Hostel** (Wangjianglou Kezhan 📞0855 613 0269; tw & d ¥100; 🌐@📶) isn't a hostel but a family-run place by the river with fresh and clean wooden rooms featuring hot showers and sit-down toilets. The most upmarket digs in the village can be found at the **Zhaoxing Binguan** (📞0855 613 0899; tw & d ¥228-398; 🌐@📶), where rooms are spotless, with tiny gleaming bathrooms. It's a tour-group haunt, so it's often booked out.

Getting here from Kaili is a slog. First you have to travel to Congjiang (¥110, 4½ hours, five daily from 9am to 4pm) and then change for a bus to Zhaoxing (¥19, two hours, 7.50am and 1pm). From Liping, there are five buses daily (¥25, 3½ hours, 8.20am to 2.50pm).

Heading out of Zhaoxing, there are two morning buses (¥19, 7.30am and noon) to Congjiang. If you're heading to Sanjiang in Guangxi, you'll need to change buses in Liping (¥25, four daily, 7.20am, 9am, 10am and 1pm) or Congjiang, where there are frequent buses to Guilin (¥82) too.

Zhenyuan

📞0855 / Pop 60,000

Plunging into the far east of Guizhou from Kaili to Zhenyuan, the train traverses an astonishing panorama of surging peaks and hills densely cloaked with trees. The delightful riverine town of Zhenyuan sits picturesquely astride the Wuyang River (Wuyang He), pinched between towering cliffs and peaks. A former outpost on the trade route from Yunnan to Hunan, Zhenyuan is largely off the Western traveller radar and the old town is a delightful place for a few days temple hunting before framing the enchanting night-time river scenes through your hotel window.

Zhènyuǎn



Zhenyuan

📍 Sights

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Catholic Church | C2 |
| 2 | City Walls | B2 |
| 3 | Confucius Temple | C2 |
| 4 | Fire God Temple | C2 |
| 5 | Four Officials Temple | C1 |
| 6 | Heping Cun | A2 |
| 7 | Miaojiang Great Wall | C1 |
| 8 | Pavilion | C2 |
| 9 | Qinglong Dong | D2 |
| 10 | Shiping Shan | C1 |
| 11 | Sifangjing Xiang | C2 |
| 12 | Tianhou Temple | B1 |
| 13 | Zhenyuan Museum | C2 |
| | Zhusheng Bridge | C2 |

🏠 Sleeping

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 14 | Daheguan Hotel | C2 |
| 15 | Deyin Hotel | B2 |
| 16 | Hejia Dayuan Kezhan | B2 |
| 17 | Liuhulan Jiudian | C2 |

Eating

18 [Gucheng Zhengjiao](#)

C2

Drinking & Nightlife

19 [Man Man's Little Space Cafe](#)

C2

Information

20 [Zhenyuan Tourist & Information Centre](#)

B2

Transport

21 [Zhenyuan Ferry](#)

C2

Sights

Qinglong Dong

TEMPLE

(Green Dragon Cave [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥60;  7.30am-6pm)

Across the river from the old town, the epic vertical warren of temples, grottoes, corridors and caves of Qinglong Dong rises up against **Zhonghe Mountain** (Zhongheshan). Flooded with lights at night, it forms a sublime backdrop to the town. Put aside a good hour for exploration: it's a labyrinth and there's a lot to see, including some choice panoramas.

The intriguing complex was commenced in the Ming dynasty, its temples dedicated to the three faiths of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. At the far entrance to Zhongyuan Cave (Zhongyuan Dong) is a stone table allegedly used by the eccentric founder of taichi, Zhang Sanfeng. The exterior of the splendid **Wanshou Gong** – once the Jiangxi Guildhall – is still bedecked with slogans, its interior a prime example of *jiangnan*-style architecture with delightful woodcarvings. The unruffled Jade Emperor presides over everything – and some fine views – from the **Yuhuang Ge** (Jade Emperor Pavilion), his namesake pavilion at the top. Watch out when walking, as

some of the stone steps are super slippery.

Zhusheng Bridge

BRIDGE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Zhenyuan's old **bridge** (Zhusheng Qiao), a gorgeous and robust span of arches topped with a three-storey **pavilion** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), is an impressive sight, leading visitors across the water to Qinglong Dong. River views along the river from the bridge at night are serene, with Qinglong Dong splendidly lit up.

Sifangjing Xiang

ALLEY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Four old and well-preserved alleys lead north away from the river: Sifangjing Xiang, Fuxing Xiang, Renshou Xiang and Chongzikou Xiang. Wander along Sifangjing Xiang and peek at its namesake **Sifangjing** (Four Directions Well), with its three deities overlooking the water, capped with red cloths. Note the magnificently made stone steps of this alley and the gorgeous old residences, a picture at night when they're dressed with red lanterns.

Miaojiang Great Wall

WALL

(Miaojiang Changcheng, Miao Border Great Wall [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; admission ¥30)

There's an energetic half-hour climb past the **Four Officials Temple** (Siguan Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) to the top of **Shiping Shan** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) above town to the remains of this **wall**. Get up really early or leave it late in the day and you could get a jump on ticket collectors. Undulating across peaks, the wall is quite substantial and glorious views range over town.

Tan Gongguan

HISTORIC BUILDING

([GOOGLE MAP](#))

Just north of Wuyanghe Bridge (Wuyanghe Daqiao), the splendid Tan Gongguan is sadly shut, inaccessible and unrestored. Festooned with Mao-era

slogans, the building is a remarkably solid piece of historic architecture and remains unconverted. Note the carvings on the door pillars.

Other Sights

The small **Fire God Temple** (Yandi Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) backs onto the green cliffs, housing the fearsome deities Yandi and the fiery-faced Huoshen (Fire God). Now pretty much a block of flats from the 1960s, little remains of the **Confucius Temple** (Wenmiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shuncheng Jie) save its main facade and the Li Men (Gate of Rites). The **Zhenyuan Museum** (Zhenyuan Zhanlanguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm) displays items relating to the history of the town. The old **city walls** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) on the south side of the Wuyang River have been restored and you can walk a considerable way along them towards the train station. The **Tianhou Temple** (Tianhou Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) – a temple dedicated to the goddess Tianhou – can be found along Minzhu Jie to the west of the old town. It's worth hunting out the welcoming **Catholic Church** (Tianzhu Jiaotang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) south of the river. Further along the road from the church, the compound and watchtowers of **Heping Cun** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm) was Kuomintang HQ during the war against Japan.

Tours

Buy tickets for the riverborne cruises (¥80 for 35 minutes, 8.30am to 9.30pm) at the office next to **Yumun Wharf** (Yumen Matou [GOOGLE MAP](#)), identified by the decorative arch. Travel agents line Xinglong Jie; you should also be able to book tours through your hotel.

Festivals & Events

On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month **dragon boat festival** races churn the

waters of the Wuyang River. In the high season, **dragon boat races** take place most Saturdays at around 1pm from Xinda Bridge (Xin Daqiao).

Sleeping

There are rooms everywhere in the old town. Don't expect any spoken English. Rooms south of the river get the amplified sound of trains rumbling by. Ask for discounts.

Liuhulan Jiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 572 0586; Xinglong Jie, r ¥180-260; 🌐 @ 📶)

This handy hotel has clean, decent-sized rooms overlooking the river, some with big sliding windows and terraces, although there are no sit down toilets. Note that locals pronounce this place 'Liufulan'. Regular discounts bring room prices down to ¥130.

Deyin Hotel

HOTEL

(Deyin Yizhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 217 0888; 70 Xingzhong Jie; tw & d ¥168-188; 🌐 📶)

Brand new, modern digs with great beds and nice bathrooms. The top floor rooms have river views.

Daheguan Hotel

HOTEL

(Daheguan Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 571 0188; Shuncheng Jie, tw & d ¥268-469; 🌐 📶)

Rather swish for Zhenyuan, this place on the corner comes with attractive rooms with proper bathrooms and comfy beds, all set around a wooden courtyard. Discounts of 25% are normally available.

Hejia Dayuan Kezhan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 572 3770; Chongzikou Xiang, tw/d ¥388/428; 🌐 📶)

Just re-furbished, this traditional courtyard hotel has pleasant rooms in a

lovely old property tucked away up an alley away from the river. Discounts should be available.

Eating & Drinking

The main drag is full of restaurants, many of them aimed at tourists. Look out for local men wielding hefty wooden mallets to pound *muchui xiangsu*, a kind of sweet, crispy and brittle biscuit made from walnut, sesame seeds, sugar and honey (it's delicious). A handful of places along Xinglong Jie sell cheap plates of fried *jiaozi* (stuffed dumplings). A few bars dotted along Xinglong Jie see local bands step up on stage to an audience of largely empty tables.

Gucheng Zhengjiao

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinglong Jie, mains ¥9; 🕒 noon-2am)

Right next to Yumun Wharf, this very simple restaurant does lovely *jianjiao* (fried dumplings) and is a cheap place for a beer.

Man Man's Little Space Cafe

CAFE

(Manman de Xiaoyuzhou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 41 Zhou Dajie; dishes from ¥18)

Amiable, easy-going place for a coffee or evening beer right by the river. Also does a few small Chinese dishes. Look for the yellow lantern

Information

Agricultural Bank of China

BANK

(Nongye Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinglong Jie; 🕒 9am-5pm)

ATM taking foreign cards; opposite Zhenyuan Museum.

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(ICBC, Gongshang Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinglong Jie; 🕒 9am-5pm)

ATM taking foreign cards.

Post Office

POST OFFICE

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Xinglong Jie; 🕒 9am-6pm)

You can send mail overseas from here.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Xinglong Jie; 🕒 8.30am-11.30am & 2.30pm-5.30pm)

Across from Yumun Pier.

Shenzhou Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Shenzhou wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr)

On south side of the Xinda Bridge by the wall.

Xinshikong Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Xinshikong wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Panlong Jie; per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr)

Internet cafe.

Zhenyuan Tourist & Information Centre

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Zhenyuan Luyou Zixun Fuwu Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Xinzhong Jie; 🕒 8am-8pm)

Good for maps of Zhenyuan.

Getting There & Around

A **ferry** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ¥1; 🕒 6am-7.30pm) can punt you across the river.

The best way to reach Zhenyuan from Guiyang is by train (the tracks thunder south of the old town). The train station (*huochezhan*) is on the south of the river in the southwest of town, not far from Wuyanghe Bridge (Wuyanghe Daqiao). A taxi to the old town from the train station is ¥5. It's a good 20 minute walk to the old town from the train station, so either book your ticket out of Zhenyuan when you arrive or ask your hotel owner to book

one for you (they will need to take your passport, however). You can book tickets more than three days in advance at the post office for a commission (¥15). Trains from Zhenyuan include the following:

- ➔ **Anshun** ¥54, 5½ hours, five daily (6.30am to 3.45pm)
- ➔ **Guiyang** ¥41, 3¾ hours, regular
- ➔ **Huaihua** ¥29, 2½ hours, regular
- ➔ **Kaili** ¥15, 1¼ hours, regular
- ➔ **Yuping** ¥13, one hour, regular

The bus station (*changtu qichezhan*) is opposite the train station.

- ➔ **Baojing** ¥13, three daily (10.20am, 12.30pm and 3.20pm)
- ➔ **Kaili** ¥21, six daily (8.30am to 4.30pm)
- ➔ **Tongren** ¥55, two daily (11am and 3pm)

Around Zhenyuan

Tiexi Gorge

Tiexi Gorge

GORGE

(admission ¥50)

A trip to the pleasant Tiexi Gorge offers the chance to plunge along rocky trails shaded by overhanging trees. Make sure not to miss **Dragon Pool** (Longtan) and **Jiguan Mountain** (Jiguan Ling). Food vendors are scattered along the two and half hour route to the mountain, ensuring you won't go hungry. Reach the gorge by buggy (¥6, 20 minutes) from the western end of Zhusheng Bridge in Zhenyuan; vehicles depart when full.

Baojing

Although a January 2014 fire destroyed around 100 homes in this Dong

minority village, most will have been re-built by the time you visit. A few examples of fine *diaojiailou* architecture remain. Located 40km from Zhenyuan, the village is also known for the **seed sowing festival** (*bozhongjie*). Held on the third day of the third lunar month, it's a lively celebration of dancing and courtship rituals. Three buses (¥13, 10.20am, 12.30pm and 3.20pm) run to Baojing daily from the bus station in Zhenyuan.

WORTH A TRIP

FANJINGSHAN

Accessed via the gateway town of Tongren in the northeast of Guizhou, the 2572m-high Buddhist-named mountain of **Fanjingshan** (¥110) is a must for fans of Buddhist culture, nature lovers or those en route to Hunan or Chongqing from Zhenyuan or Kaili. The reserve provides a home to more than half the province's protected plants and two-thirds of its animals, including the very rare (and even more rarely glimpsed) golden monkey (*jinsihou*).

To reach the mountain, hop on a bus (¥21, hourly, 7.30am to 5.30pm, 40 minutes) to Jiangkou from Tongren's main bus station. From Jiangkou, buses (¥9, 50 minutes, hourly, 6am to 6pm) run close to the ticket office. You could climb the mountain, but it is a marathon on the legs so most people take the **cable car** (one way/return ¥90/160), which takes 20 minutes to ascend the mountain from where you can climb to the summit (*jinding*).

Spring and autumn are the best seasons to visit Fanjingshan, but check on the weather before you go as it is often fogged out; clear days are rewarded with spectacular views. Bear in mind, too, that the animals here are very retiring. There are a number of restaurants and serviceable hotels on the approach to the ticket office. Ignore listed prices. You should be able to snag a room for ¥80 to ¥100. Try the **Bu Cha Qian Shanzhuang** (📞138 8567 4067; 100 metres From Entrance Gate; tw ¥388; 📶).

From Zhenyuan, there are two daily buses to Tongren (¥55, 11am and 3pm). Otherwise, take a train (¥12.50) to Yuping, cross the road from the train station to the bus station and jump on a bus to Tongren (¥26, two hours). Other buses from Tongren's bus station run to Huaihua (¥55, three daily), Kaili (¥80, six daily) and Guiyang (¥140, eight daily). Trains run southeast from Tongren to Huaihua and north to Chongqing and Chengdu.

WESTERN GUIZHOU

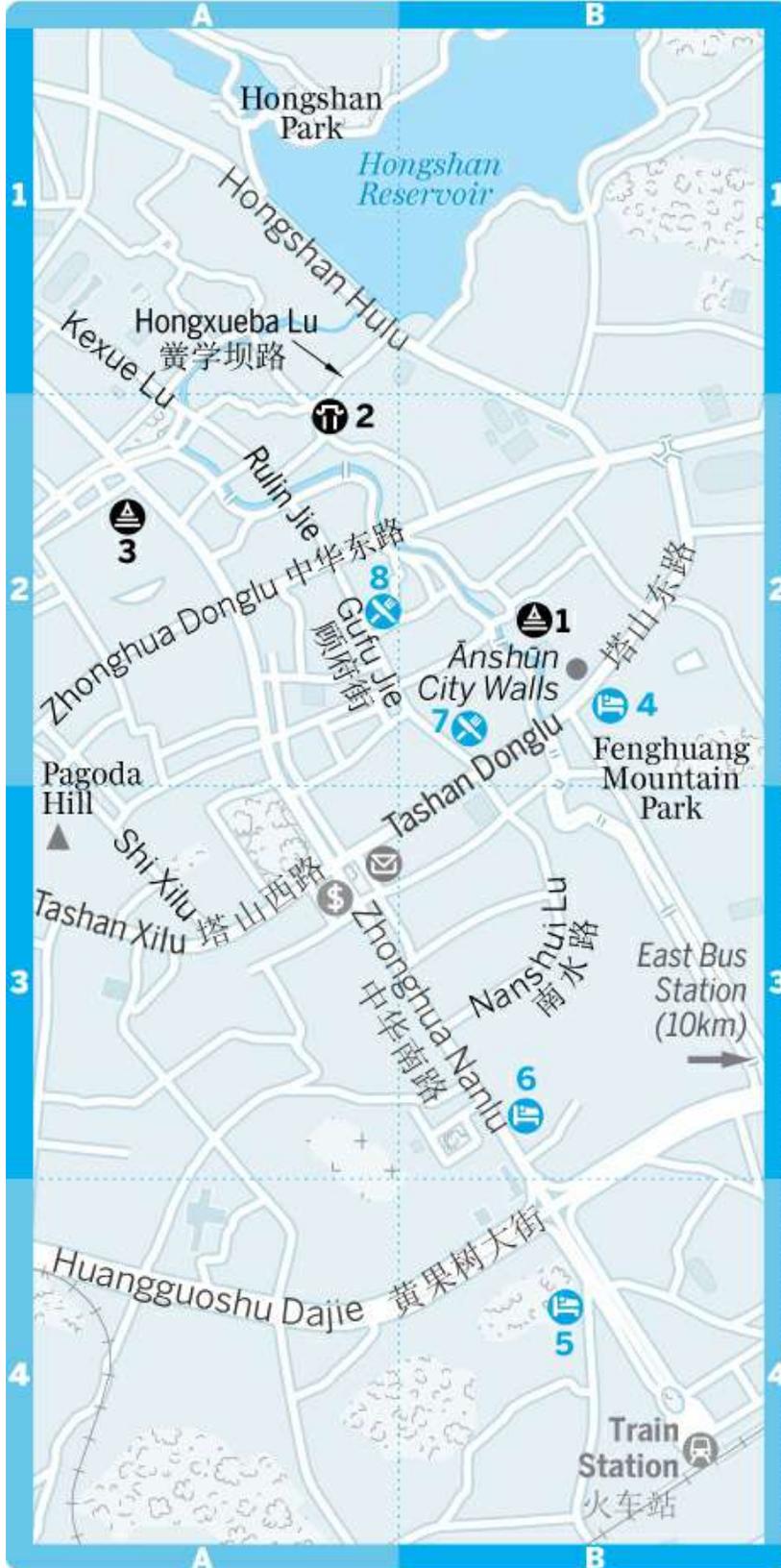
Birds, caves and waterfalls are the main attractions of this region. Outside Anshun, the thundering Huangguoshu Falls is Guizhou's premier tourist attraction, while Zhijin Cave is one of the largest in the world. Way out west, the town of Weining has one of China's top birdwatching locations in Caohai Lake, and also offers a backdoor route into Yunnan.

Anshun

☞ 0853 / Pop 763,313

Once a centre for tea and opium trading, Anshun remains the commercial hub of western Guizhou and is now most famous as a producer of batik, kitchen knives and the lethal Anjiu brand of alcohol. Once a marvellous historical city ringed by a town wall, the city's heritage has largely vanished and it's the surrounding sights that are the real draws.

Anshùn



Anshun

Sights

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 1 Donglin Temple | B2 |
| 2 Fuwen Miao | A2 |
| 3 Longwang Miao | A2 |

Sleeping

- | | |
|---|----|
| 4 Fenghuangshan Dajiudian | B2 |
| 5 Pengcheng Binguan | B4 |
| 6 Xixiushan Binguan | B3 |

Eating

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 7 Anshun Night Market | B2 |
| 8 Liuyishou Kaoyu | A2 |

Sights

A modest chunk of the former **Anshun city walls** (Anshun chengqiang yizhi) stands opposite the Fenghuangshan Dajiudian on Tashan Donglu, where a revealing photo on the wall depicts Anshun during Republican days, before the advent of concrete, road widening and socialist aesthetics.

Fuwen Miao

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥10;  7.30am-midnight)

Check out this charming Confucian temple in the north of town with some stunningly intricate cloud-scrolling carvings on the twin stone pillars before the main hall.

Donglin Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Donglin Si;  8am-5pm) **FREE**

The resident Buddhist monks welcome visitors warmly to this temple, built in AD 1405 (during the Ming dynasty) and restored in 1668.

Longwang Miao

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 🕒 7.30am-5.30pm) **FREE**

A working Buddhist temple, just off Zhonghua Beilu.

Sleeping

If your Chinese is up to it, try one of the guesthouses (*luguang*) in the train station area for a cheap room.

Pengcheng Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 372 2555; 10 Ma'anshan Lu; d ¥80-120; 📶📶)

A cut above its competitors close to the train station – less noisy with modern, compact rooms and wi-fi. It's near the top of Maan Shan Lu. No English sign: look for four white characters on a yellow background.

Xixiushan Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 333 7888; 63 Zhonghua Nanlu, s/d/tw ¥288-388; 📶@📶)

Pleasingly different, rooms here are set back from the road with a garden in the main courtyard at the rear. Rooms are clean, large and comfortable. Singles are discounted by 50%, but are smaller and older and don't come with wi-fi or ADSL internet.

Fenghuangshan Dajiudian

HOTEL

(Golden Phoenix Mountain Hotel [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 322 5724; 58 Tashan Donglu, tw & d ¥228; 📶@📶)

There's loads of brass and faded marble here, bathrooms are cramped and rooms have seen better days, but the staff are pleasant enough and there's wi-fi. Look for the building with two lions standing guard outside. Discounts of

around 30% are normally available.

Eating

Local speciality *qiaoliangfen* is a spicy dish made from buckwheat noodles and preserved bean curd. A good on-the-run snack is *chongchong gao*, a cake made from steamed sticky rice with sesame and walnut seeds and sliced wax gourd. Also look out for plates of fried potatoes, hawked at the roadside, which taste like chips; locals call them *yangyi*. There are hot pot places on Nan Shui Lu close to the night market.

By far the best place to eat is the **night market** (Anshun Yeshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gufu Jie; 🕒 5pm-late). It's the most happening spot in Anshun, with the locals crowding out the many food tents and stalls that set up here. The speciality is barbecued fish (*kaoyu*), while Uighur chefs, snails sizzling up in woks and proudly displayed pigs' trotters fill out the picture.

Liuyishou Kaoyu

SEAFOOD

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Hongqi Lu, fish per jin from ¥30; 🕒 6pm till late)

Packed during night-market hours, when the restaurant fills its premises on Hongqi Lu and spills onto tables flung out on Gufu Jie, this heaving eatery specialises in tasty grilled fish. It's best to dine as a group, as fish weights start at around three *jin*.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Tashan Xilu & Zhonghua Nanlu; 🕒 9am-5pm)

Offers all services and has an ATM. There are many other ATMs around town.

Post Office

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Zhonghua Nanlu & Tashan Donglu)

Look for it tucked next to the China Telecom building.

i Getting There & Around

The north bus station (*keche beizhan*) has buses (¥34, three hours, every 20 minutes, 7am to 6pm) to Zhijin town (for Zhijin Cave). Almost every other bus now leaves from the new east bus station (*dong keyunzhan*), 10km east of the centre. Bus 16 (¥1) runs here from Zhonghua Nanlu opposite the Xixiushan Binguan. A taxi is ¥25 to ¥30.

- ➔ **Guiyang** ¥35, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes (7.10am to 7.10pm)
- ➔ **Huangguoshu** ¥20, one hour, every 20 minutes (7.20am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** sleeper ¥150, 10 hours, four daily (9am, 10.40am, 1pm and 4pm)
- ➔ **Longgong Caves** ¥10, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Pingba** ¥15, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Shuicheng** ¥60, 3½ hours, every 50 minutes (8.20am to 4.40pm)
- ➔ **Weining** ¥90, five to six hours, one daily (10am)
- ➔ **Yunfeng** ¥5, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 6pm)

Most trains from the train station (*huochezhan*) heading east stop in Guiyang (¥15, 1½ hours, regular). It is still hard to get sleeper reservations for trains from here; pick them up in Guiyang instead. There's a train ticket office a few hundred metres north of the train station on Zhonghua Nanlu. Destinations include the following:

- ➔ **Caohai** (for Weining) ¥37, three to five hours, eight daily
- ➔ **Guiyang** ¥15, 1½ hours, regular
- ➔ **Kaili** ¥43, four hours, nine daily
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥75 (seat), ¥133 (hard sleeper), eight to 10 hours
- ➔ **Liupanshui** ¥24, 2½ hours, regular

Bus 1 zips around town from the train station and up Tashan Donglu. Bus 2 travels between the train station and the north bus station. Bus 16 runs from Zhonghua Nanlu to the east bus station. Buses cost ¥1. Taxi flagfall is ¥6.

Around Anshun

Longgong Caves

Longgong Cave

CAVE

(Longgong Dong, Dragon Palace; admission ¥120; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

The vast cave network snakes through 20 hills. While some travellers enjoy drifting through the caves on rowboats with their subdued guides, others find the whole experience – coloured lights, cheesy music, tour groups – kitschy.

Longgong is 23km south of Anshun and an easy day trip from there. Local buses (¥10, 40 minutes) depart every 30 minutes from Anshun's east bus station from 7.30am. Returning, buses leave until about 5pm.

Zhijin Cave

Zhijin Cave

CAVE

(Zhijin Dong; admission ¥135; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

As the largest cave in China, and one of the biggest in the entire world at 10km long and up to 150m high, **Zhijin Cave** gets tourist accolades. *Lord of the Rings* has been used to describe the abstract landscape of spectacular shapes and spirals, often cathedral-like, reaching from the floor to the ceiling.

Tickets to the cave, which is 15km outside Zhijin and 125km north of Anshun, include a compulsory 2½-hour Chinese-only tour (minimum 10 people). The tour covers some 6km of the cave, up steep, slippery steps at times, and there are English captions at the main points along the way. Solo travellers visiting outside peak summer months or Chinese holidays should

be prepared for what can be a tedious wait for enough people to roll up to form a group.

A long day trip from Anshun is possible, but you need to be on an early bus to Zhijin (¥34, three hours, from 7am), from Anshun's north bus station. Once there, hop in a taxi (¥4) to the local bus station on Yuping Jie and catch one of the minibuses that leave regularly for the cave entrance (¥8, 50 minutes). Returning from the caves, buses leave regularly. The last bus back to Anshun heads out of Zhijin at 5.30pm.

From Guiyang, regular buses (return ¥110, four hours) depart every 30 minutes to Zhijin from the long-distance bus station from 6.30am in the morning until 5.20pm.

Huangguoshu Falls

Huangguoshu Falls

WATERFALL

(Huangguoshu Dapubu, Yellow Fruit Tree Falls; admission Mar-Oct ¥180, Nov-Feb ¥160; 🕒 7.30am-6pm)

Disgoring from endless buses, a friendly invasion of frenetic tourists from all over China come to see the 77.8m-tall, 81m-wide Huangguoshu Falls, making this Guizhou's number-one natural attraction. From May to October in particular, these falls really rock the local landscape with their cacophony, while rainbows from the mist dance about **Rhinoceros Pool** below and colourful peacocks show off their dazzling plumage.

The cascades are actually part of a 450-sq-km cave and karst complex discovered when engineers explored the area in the 1980s to gauge the region's hydroelectric potential. Although there are paths around the falls, the entire area is vast and sights so spread out you'll really need to board one of the **sightseeing cars** (*guanguangche*; ¥50). They link the main areas, which include **Doupotang Waterfall**, **Luositan Waterfall**, **Tianxing Qiao Scenic Zone** and the **Main Waterfall Scenic Zone**. Hiring a cab from the entrance for a tour will cost around ¥100 or expect to pay around ¥20 for a single journey.

In the main waterfall area, don't miss groping your way through the dripping natural corridor in the rock face of the 134m-long **Water Curtain Cave** (Shuilian Dong), behind the waterfall.

Going underground into the colossal caves within the geological **Tianxing Qiao Scenic Zone** (Tianxing Qiao Jingqu) is a quite awe-inspiring sideshow, especially if you do not have time for the Longgong or Zhijin Caves.

You can do Huangguoshu Falls in a day trip from Guiyang at a push, while it's an easy one from Anshun. There are accommodation options everywhere in Huangguoshu village, but there is little need to overnight.

From Anshun, buses (¥20, one hour, 7.20am to 7pm) run every 30 minutes from the east bus station. There are seven buses a day from Guiyang to Huangguoshu (¥55, 2½ hours, every 40 minutes from 7.40am to 12.45pm) from the long-distance bus station on Jinyang Nanlu. The last bus returns to Guiyang at 4pm.

Tianlong & Tiantaishan

You only need around a couple of hours to explore this delightful village cut with a sparkling stream not far outside Anshun. **Tianlong** (admission ¥35, through ticket ¥50) is a well-preserved **Tunpu village**, its settlements erected by Ming-dynasty garrison troops posted here during the reign of Hongwu to help quell local uprisings and consolidate control. Coming from the middle and lower reaches of the Yangzi River, the soldiers brought their customs and language with them. Han descendants of these 14th-century soldiers live in Tianlong today, and the women are notable for their turquoise tops with embroidered hems. Gorgeous-looking embroideries are on sale everywhere (bargain hard), while local women sit sewing small and exceptionally colourful embroidered shoes, in all sizes.

Complementing its dry stonewalls and narrow alleyways, the architectural highlight of the village is the **Tianlong Xuetang**, an impressive and distinctive building. The **Sanjiao Temple** (Sanjiao Si) is a creakingly dilapidated shrine dedicated to Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. Short

performances of *dixi* – an ancient form of local drama – are regularly held in the **Yanwutang** throughout the day.

Other local idiosyncrasies include distinct colloquialisms: the local expression for a thief is a *yemaozi* (night cat). A couple of *kezhan* (inns) in the village can put you up for the night for around ¥70, a delightful option for a bucolic evening. To reach Tianlong, hop on a bus for Pingba (¥15, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes, 7.30am to 6.30pm) from Anshun's east bus station and at the drop off, change to the bus for Tianlong (¥4, 20 minutes).

Around a 20-minute walk from Tianlong, the astonishing temple of **Wulong Si** emerges surreally from the summit of **Tiantaishan** (admission ¥20), a bit like Colditz Castle. A refreshing hike through the trees takes you to the summit, where you can explore the various rooms of the temple. In a hall at the rear, a figure of Guanyin lithely sits, illuminated by a guttering candle; a further hall displays exhibits relating to local *dixi* theatre. Afterwards, climb to the Dayuetai terrace to gaze out over the glorious countryside.

When descending from the temple keep an eye out for a small shrine along a narrow trail where a statue of one of the 18 *luohan* sits grumpily all alone. His skinny frame is the result of generosity in giving food to others; he also bestows good fortune on all. Further below rises a 21m-high and 500-year-old ginkgo tree, festooned with ribbons, while other trails disappear into the trees.

Yunfeng Bazhai

Yunfeng Bazhai is a scattering of traditional villages about 20km northeast of Anshun. Introduced by the mildly interesting **Tunpu Culture Museum** (Tunpu Wenhua Bowuguan through ticket ¥50; 🕒 8am-6pm), which serves as the point of entry, the village of **Yunshan**, at the top of a steep set of steps from the road a 15 minute walk from the museum, is a gem. Hung with bright yellow dried corncobs and red lanterns, protected by a wall and a main gate and overlooked by the Yunjiu Shan (Cloud Vulture Mountain), the settlement is a charming and unruffled portrait of rural Guizhou. At the heart of the almost

deserted village stands the rickety **Money God Temple** (Caishen Miao), opposite an ancient pavilion.

If you want to spend the night, a couple of *kezhan* can put you up in basic rooms for around ¥50. Whatever you do, don't miss the chance to walk up to **Yunjiu Temple** (Yunjiu Si) at the top of Yunjiu Shan for some of the most extraordinary views in Guizhou. You can walk virtually all around the top of the temple for a sublime and unparalleled panorama of fields and peaks ranging off into the distance. In spring, flowering bright yellow rapeseed plants (*youcaihua*) add vibrant splashes of colour.

From Yunshan it's a 15-minute walk along the road to the village of **Benzhai**, also at the foot of Yunjiu Shan. With its old pinched alleyways, high walls, carved wood lintels, stone lions and ancient courtyard residences, Benzhai is brim-full of history.

To reach Yunfeng Bazhai, take a bus (¥5, 40 minutes, every 25 minutes, 7am to 6pm) from Anshun's east bus station. The last bus from Yunfeng Bazhai to Anshun leaves at 6.20pm, passing through Benzhai. Coming from Tianlong, hop on a bus from the main road to Qiyanqiao (¥5, 20 minutes) and then take a motorbike (¥10) for the 10-minute journey to the museum and the villages.

Weining

☞ 0857 / Pop 57,000

A dusty, scrappy but surprisingly busy town, Weining is one of the top spots in the world for that most sedate of hobbies, birdwatching. The jewel-like Caohai Lake sits close to the city centre and draws twitchers to observe wintering migratory birds, especially the rare black-necked crane. Called 'Sun City' by Chinese for its abundant rays, and historically an important route linking north Yunnan and Sichuan, Weining is home to a large population of Hui (Muslim), Miao and Yi; a big market held every three or four days sees the town thronged with people from the surrounding minority villages.

Sights & Activities

Caohai Lake

LAKE

(Caohai Hu, Grass Sea Lake)

Guizhou's largest highland lake and southwest China's most significant wetland, Caohai Lake draws some 180 or so protected bird species, including black-necked cranes, black and white storks, golden and imperial eagles, white-tailed sea eagles, Eurasian cranes and white spoonbills. The prime time to see them is from November to March.

The lake has a fragile history, having been drained during both the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution in hopes of producing farmland. It didn't work and the lake was refilled in 1980. Government tinkering with water levels in ensuing years impacted on the local environment and villagers' livelihoods; officials have since enlisted locals to help with the lake's protection in an effort to remedy both problems. The 20-sq-km freshwater wetland has been a national nature reserve since 1992, but many environmental problems remain.

Lovely trails explore much of the lake, but the best way for a close-up of the birds is to cruise around the lake on a punt. Buy tickets at the **ticket office** (per boat 1/2/3hr ¥120/240/360; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm) at the end of the path leading to the lake, rather than from the touts lurking nearby.

To get to the lake it's a 45-minute walk southwest of central Weining or a 10-minute taxi ride (¥6).

Sleeping & Eating

For budget rooms, try the bus station area and nearby Jianshe Donglu, where you should be able to net a room for around ¥100.

With a large population of Hui, Muslim *yangrou fen* (lamb rice noodles) and *niurou fen* (beef rice noodles) places are all over town, especially around

the bus station area. A local delicacy is dragonfly lava, consumed fried.

Caohai Jiari Jiudian

HOTEL

( 623 1881; Caohai Lu, tw ¥358-388;  

Right by the lake, rooms here are big and comfortably furnished, if old-fashioned, and service has improved markedly. It's still not worth the price, but discounts (of 50% to 60%) when the twitchers aren't in town make things more tolerable. Some rooms have lake views and all have wi-fi.

Information

There's no place to change money in Weining. A couple of branches of the ICBC, including one on Jianshe Donglu close to the bus station, take foreign cards, but bring extra cash just in case. Opposite the bus station, above the China Mobile shop, there's an **internet cafe** (per hr ¥3;  24hr).

Getting There & Away

Weining has a near-new train station 6km west of the town centre, connecting it to points east in Guizhou and Kunming in Yunnan. Sleeper tickets, though, are virtually impossible to buy here. Note that the station's official name is Caohai.

Weining is a seven-hour bus ride from Guiyang (¥130, 9am and 11am). You can also get here from Anshun's east bus station. First take a bus to Shuicheng (¥60, 3½ hours, every 50 minutes from 8.20am to 4.40pm), then transfer to a Weining-bound bus (¥35, two hours, hourly from 7.45am). Note that Shuicheng is also referred to as Liupanshui.

Leaving Weining, you can backtrack to Guiyang, or take a bus south to Xuanwei in Yunnan (¥65, five to six hours, eight daily, 7.30am to 4pm), where you can transfer to a bus for Kunming. From Weining, there is also a daily direct bus to Kunming (¥130, 10 hours, 12.30pm).

Alternatively, take a bus to Zhaotong (¥45, three hours, three daily, 8.30am, 1.40pm and 3.30pm), from where you can hop over to Xichang in

southern Sichuan and connect with the Kunming–Chengdu train line.

Taxi flagfall is ¥6. Taxis charge a flat ¥15 to go to the train station.

NORTHERN GUIZHOU

This is where things get a bit wild. Few foreigners venture north of Guiyang; those that do will find that already incomprehensible accents get broader, roads more rugged and a stray *laowai* (foreigner) can stop the traffic. Way up on the Sichuan border, Chishui and its surrounding valleys, waterfalls and national parks are still virgin territory for western travellers, and utterly gorgeous. It's a good-looking and little-travelled route into southern Sichuan.

Chishui

 0852 / Pop 50,000

Plonked on the border with Sichuan, Chishui was once a riverine node for the transport of salt. Some 230 million years before that this was all ocean and today it's the gateway to some of the least-seen natural delights in the southwest. Just outside town are deep gorges and valleys flanked by towering cliffs hewn out of red sandstone – a World Heritage-listed feature known as *danxia* – a profusion of waterfalls, as well as luxuriant bamboo and fern forests that date to the Jurassic era.

While the locals are extremely friendly, there's nothing of intrinsic interest in Chishui itself, but it's the logical base for exploring the surrounding sights. The town sits on the east bank of the Chishui River (Chishui He). Cross the town's main bridge (Chishui Daqiao) to the other side and you're in Jiuzhi in Sichuan.

Note that you cannot change money in either Chishui or Jiuzhi, so bring extra cash with you.

Sleeping

Chishui Hotel

HOTEL

(Chishui Dajiudian  282 1334; 106 Xinei Huanlu; tw & d ¥220;   )

On the corner of Renmin Xilu, this new hotel comes with modern and spacious rooms (some with computers) and wi-fi, although the beds are hard. Expect discounts of 30% to 40% (ask if one isn't offered).

Chishui Yuan Binguan

HOTEL

( 288 7798; 18 Renmin Beilu, tw & d ¥388-588;   )

A short walk from the bus station, this hotel is the town stalwart and remains popular with tour groups. Rooms are large and perfectly fine, if rather old-fashioned, with plain bathrooms. Significant discounts (50% and up) are available if it's not booked out. ADSL internet in the rooms, wi-fi in the lobby.

Zhongyue Dajiudian

HOTEL

( 282 3888; 22 Nanzheng Jie, tw & d ¥628-768;   )

The posh option in town. A slick operation with comfy rooms, proper showers and helpful staff, although they seem a little alarmed by foreigners. Discounts (30%), even in summer. Wi-fi in the lobby and ADSL internet in the rooms.

Eating

Popular restaurants are scattered in the area around Hebin Zhonglu, near the Chishui River, where there are also simple outdoor bars for an evening beer. The main drag of Renmin Xilu has hole-in-the-wall eateries serving noodle and rice dishes, dumplings and the ever-present pigs' trotters. There are also streetfood stalls, supermarkets and a few hot-pot places scattered along Renmin Beilu.

Information

There's a brand-new branch of the **Industrial and Commercial Bank** (ICBC; Gongshang Yinhang Hongjun Dadao ; 🕒 9am-5pm) with an ATM on Hongjun Dadao, off Renmin Xilu. Another ATM on the corner of Renmin Xilu and Renmin Beilu should also take foreign cards. A couple of internet cafes are in this vicinity too. The post office is on Nanzheng Jie.

i Getting There & Around

Chishui's **bus station** (Luyou Chezhan is on Nan Jiao Lu on the riverfront opposite Sichuan, a ¥5 cab ride from Renmin Xilu. Buses for very local destinations leave from next door to it. Destinations include the following:

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥120, five hours, three daily (7.50am, 9.30am and 3pm)
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥90, five hours, seven daily (6am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Guiyang** ¥163, 5½ hours, three daily (7.30am, 9.30am and 3pm)
- ➔ **Jinshagou** ¥12, 1½ hours, hourly (6am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Shizhangdong** ¥12, 1½ hours, nine daily (6.50am to 4.30pm)
- ➔ **Sidonggou** ¥8, 30 minutes, hourly (7am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Zunyi** ¥115, four hours, four daily (6.50am to 11.15am)

Taxi flagfall is ¥4.

Around Chishui

It's hard to imagine a more dramatic landscape. The locals claim the region has 4000 waterfalls, and some are spectacular, but everywhere you look they're gushing into the rivers that run red from the colour of the earth (Chishui means 'red water') and which cut through valleys and gorges covered in lush foliage. As if that wasn't enough, there are huge forests of bamboo and alsophila plants, giant ferns that date back 200 million years and were once the food of dinosaurs.

As sights are scattered, consider hiring a taxi or minibus to scoop them all

up. Expect to pay ¥300 to ¥400 per day, depending on your bargaining skills. To see the waterfalls at their fullest and loudest, come during the rainy season (May to October).

Shizhangdong Waterfall

Shizhangdong Waterfall

WATERFALL

(Shizhangdong Pubu admission ¥40; 🕒 8am-4pm)

A mere metre or so shorter than the much better-known, and visited, Huangguoshu Falls, the 76m-high Shizhangdong Waterfall explodes in a sea of spray as it plunges. You can stand 100m away and still get drenched if the wind is right.

About 40km from Chishui, nine buses a day (¥12, 1½ hours) run here starting at 6.50am. The bus will drop you in Shizhangdong village, from where it's a short walk to the ticket office.

From there, it's a 30- to 40-minute walk up a hard road to the turn-off to the waterfall, or you can ride there on a buggy (one-way/return ¥10/20). Another, more pleasant walk, stretches to the falls on the other side of the river. Doing the complete circuit takes three to four hours. Try to visit before noon during the low season as a hydroelectric dam upriver slows the water after that time. The waterfall is also known as Chishui Waterfall (Chishui Dapubu).

Yanziyan National Forest Park

NATIONAL PARK

(Yanziyan Guojia Senlin Gongyuan; admission ¥25; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Yanziyan National Forest Park is famed for its *danxia* (red rock) formations. An attractive hike cuts through the trees to an imposing red *danxia* cliff face featuring an impressive cascade. It's around 9km from the Shizhangdong Waterfall; the bus to the waterfall from Chishui passes by the park.

Sidonggou

This 4.5km long **valley** (Sidonggou Gu admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-5pm) around 15km from Chishui is forested with ancient ferns, as well as being dotted with gushing cataracts. Paths follow both sides of a river, as minifalls gush down over them, and take you past four ‘proper’ waterfalls. The biggest and most impressive is the last one, the 60m-high **White Dragon Pond Waterfall** (Bailongtan Pubu). The cool thing here is that you can get really close to the falls, including being able to walk behind one. It takes about three hours to do the circuit, although there are plenty of trails leading off the main paths that will provide fun and games for intrepid hikers.

Sidonggou is the most touristy of Chishui’s sights, but still not overly crowded, even in summer. Buses run here from Chishui’s bus station (¥8, 30 minutes) hourly from 7am and return on the same schedule.

Buses to Sidonggou from Chishui also pass by the town of **Datong**, which has an attractive and historic old town (*guzhen*) quarter.

Jinshagou Nature Reserve

By far the least-visited of the sights in the area, this reserve (Jinshagou Ziran Baohuqu) was established to protect the alsophila ferns that grow in abundance here. It’s also the site of a bamboo forest, known as the **Bamboo Sea** (Zhuhai admission ¥25; 🕒 8am-5pm), where you can trek through the trees in almost total isolation. The paths get very slippery when wet and mosquitoes are everywhere, so come armed with repellent.

To get here, catch the buses heading to Jinshagou village (¥12, 1½ hours). From there, you’ll have to negotiate with the locals for a motorbike or minibus ride to the park entrance, which is another 20 minutes away. Expect to pay ¥30 to ¥40 each way. Make sure to arrange a pick-up for your return; very little transport hangs around the park.

Red Rock Gorge

Red Rock Gorge

GORGE

(Hongshi Yegu admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-5pm)

Also known as Yangjiayan, it is dotted with small waterfalls that make for a vivid contrast with the red sandstone *danxia* cliffs. There are impressive photo opportunities here, particularly if the sun is shining, when the red earth really stands out.

Minibuses make the 16km journey here from the local bus station next door to the main bus station (¥6, 40 minutes, five daily from 8am to 4.30pm).

Yunnan

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[Dehong Prefecture](#)

[Ruili](#)

[Around Ruili](#)

[Yichuanhanna Region](#)

Baisha

Shuhe Old Town

Yulong Xueshan

LISHUANGUANNA REGION

Jinghong

Around Jinghong

Yunnan



Pop 46.3 Million

Why Go?

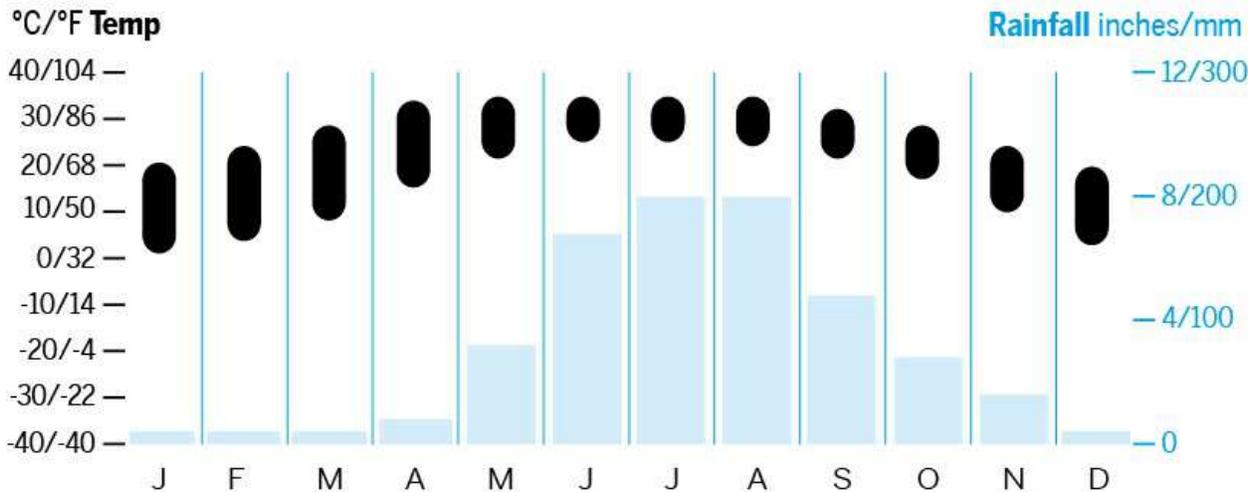
Yunnan is perhaps the most diverse province in all China, both in its extraordinary mix of peoples and in the splendour of its landscapes. That combination of superlative sights and many different ethnic groups has made Yunnan *the* trendiest destination for China's exploding domestic tourist industry.

More than half of the country's minority groups reside here, providing a glimpse into China's hugely varied mix of humanity. Then there's the eye-catching contrasts of the land itself – dense jungle sliced by the Mekong River in the south, soul-recharging glimpses of the sun over rice terraces in the southeastern regions, and snow-capped mountains as you edge towards Tibet.

With everything from laid-back villages and spa resorts to mountain treks and excellent cycling routes, Yunnan appeals to all tastes. Transportation links are good so getting around is a breeze but you'll need time to see it all – whatever time you've set aside for Yunnan, double it.

When to Go

Kūnmíng



- ➔ **Apr** Prepare to get soaked in Xishuangbanna during the Dai water-splashing festival.
- ➔ **Jul & Aug** Head for the mountains and glaciers around Deqin.
- ➔ **Dec & Jan** Escape China's winter chill and head for Kunming, the city of eternal spring.

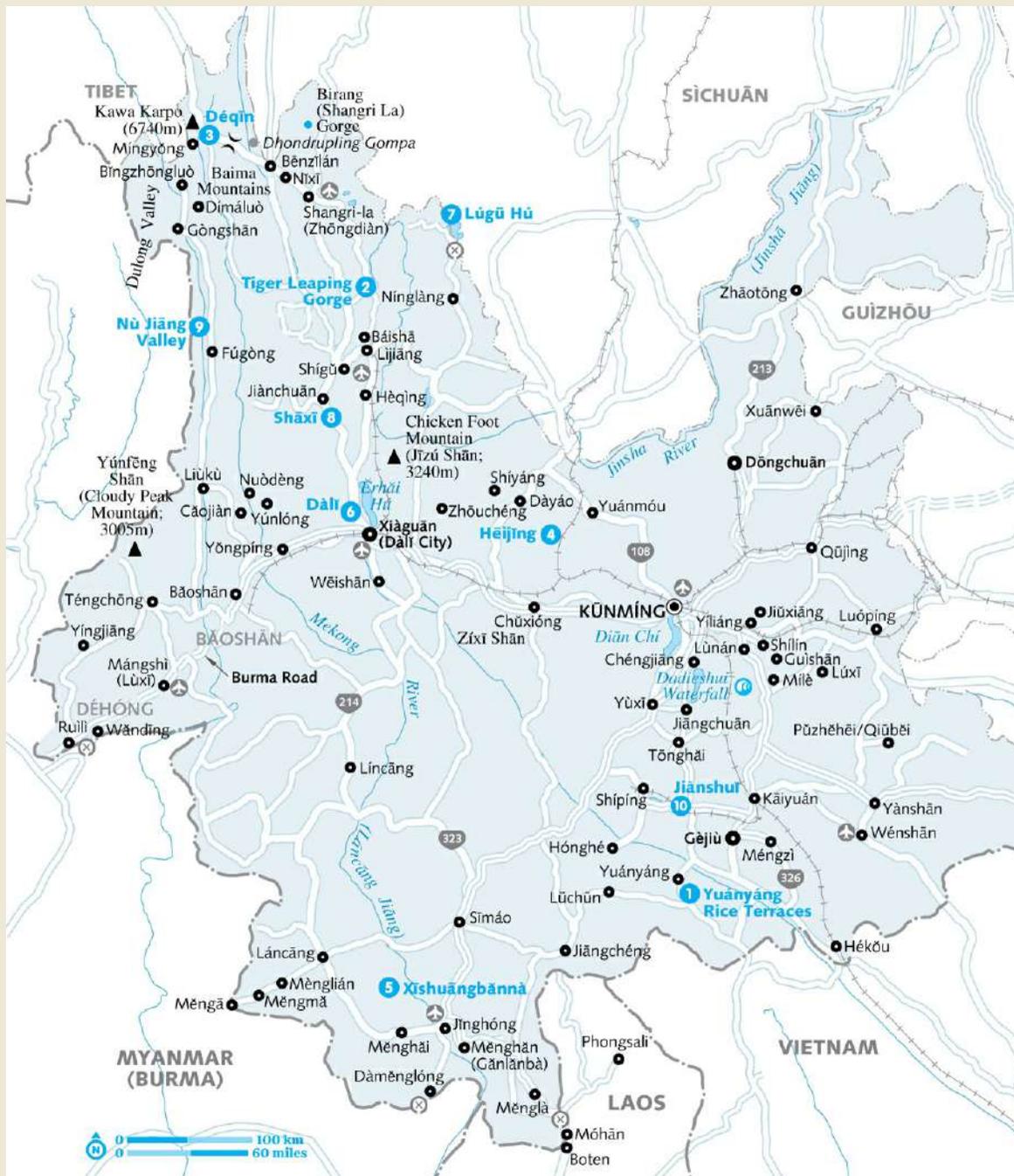
Best Hikes

- ➔ [Tiger Leaping Gorge](#)
- ➔ [Nu Jiang Valley](#)
- ➔ [Xishuangbanna Minority Villages](#)
- ➔ [Yubeng Village](#)
- ➔ [Cang Shan](#)

Best Natural Sights

- ➔ [Lugu Hu](#)
- ➔ [Baishuitai](#)
- ➔ [Yulong Xueshan](#)
- ➔ [Swallow's Cavern](#)
- ➔ [Kawa Karpo](#)

Yunnan Highlights



- 1 Gaze out over the magical [Yuanyang Rice Terraces](#).
- 2 Test your legs and lungs trekking [Tiger Leaping Gorge](#).
- 3 Marvel at the peaks (and glacier) around [Deqin](#).
- 4 Step off the tourist trail in the ancient village of [Heijing](#).

- 5 Hike to minority villages in the jungle of [Xishuangbanna](#).
- 6 Kick back in the cafes and bars of [Dali](#).
- 7 Laze around the shores of stunning [Lugu Hu](#).
- 8 See how time has stood still in the former Tea-Horse Trail oasis of [Shaxi](#).
- 9 Get way off the map in the remote [Nu Jiang Valley](#).
- 10 Check out the classic architecture in [Jianshui](#).

History

With its remote location, harsh terrain and diverse ethnic make-up, Yunnan was once considered a backward place populated by barbarians.

The early Han emperors held tentative imperial power over the southwest and forged southern Silk Road trade routes to Myanmar (Burma). From the 7th to mid-13th centuries, though, two independent kingdoms, the Nanzhao and Dali, ruled and dominated the trade routes from China to India and Myanmar. It wasn't until the Mongols swept through that the southwest was integrated into the Chinese empire as Yunnan. Even so, it remained an isolated frontier region, more closely aligned with Southeast Asia than China.

Today, Yunnan is still a strategic jumping-off point to China's neighbours. Despite its geographical isolation, much of the province has modernised rapidly in recent years.

Language

Many different dialects are spoken in Yunnan. Most belong either to the Tibeto-Burman family (eg the Naxi language) or the Sino-Tibetan family (eg the Lisu language).

Getting There & Around

Kunming's new-ish airport is the fourth-largest and seventh-busiest in China and has daily flights to most cities, as well as to an increasing amount of

international destinations. Lijiang is also well-connected to a number of Chinese cities, while Dali and Jinghong have many more flights than before. In the past it was possible to travel by cargo boat from Jinghong to Thailand. However, recent security threats have mostly stopped passenger travel on boats.

Expressways link Kunming with Dali, east to Guizhou and Guangxi, southwest past Baoshan to Ruili and past Jinghong to the Laos border. An expressway is also being built from Kunming to Hekou on the Vietnam border and beyond to Hanoi.

Railways link Yunnan to Guizhou, Guangxi, Sichuan and beyond. In Yunnan itself, development of the railways has been slower than elsewhere, due mostly to topographical interference. Trains link Dali and Lijiang and, by the time you read this, the line onward to Shangri-la should be open.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥160

\$\$ ¥160 to ¥300

\$\$\$ more than ¥300

EATING

\$ less than ¥40

\$\$ ¥40 to ¥60

\$\$\$ more than ¥60

CENTRAL YUNNAN

Kunming

☞ 0871 / Pop 3.58 million

Kunming has long been regarded as one of China's most liveable cities. Known as the 'Spring City' for its equable climate, it remains a very pleasant place to kick back for a few days. For visitors who haven't succumbed to the laid-back attitude displayed by the locals, there are plenty of temples and national parks nearby (including the legendary Stone Forest) to keep you busy.

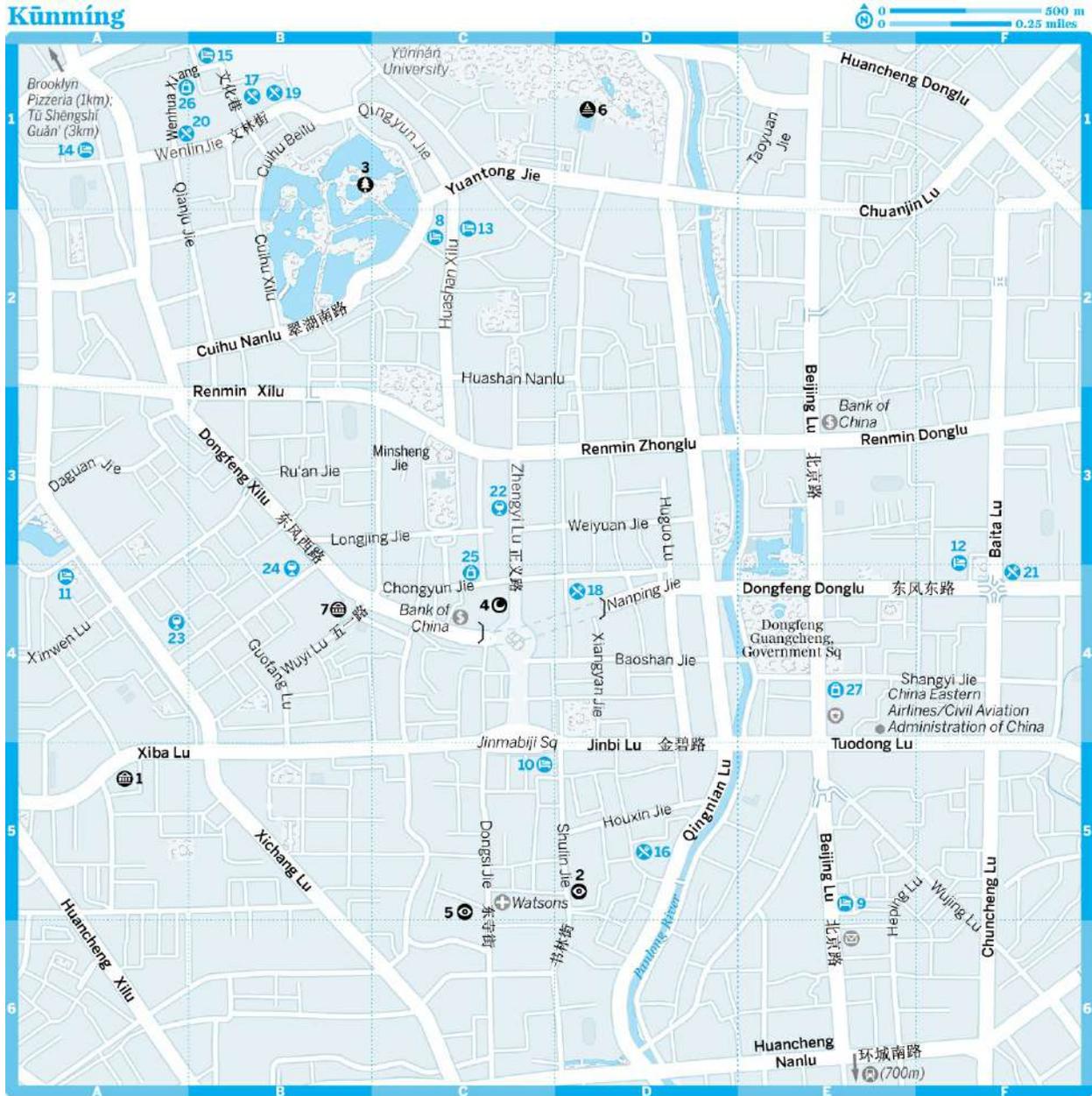
Of course, like other Chinese cities, the face of Kunming is constantly changing and many old neighbourhoods have been torn down to make way for shopping malls. And the traffic jams that were unknown a few years ago, are now a regular occurrence. Yet, the essentially easy-going nature of Kunming is, thankfully, still the same.

History

The region of Kunming has been inhabited for 2000 years, but it wasn't until WWII that the city really began to expand, when factories were established and refugees, fleeing from the Japanese, started to pour in from eastern China. As the end point of the famous Burma Road, a 1000km-long haul from Lashio in Myanmar (Burma), the city played a key role in the Sino-Japanese war. Renmin Xilu marks the tail end of the road.

Following the war the city returned to being overlooked and isolated. When China opened to the West, however, tourists noticed the province, and Kunming used its gateway status to the rest of Yunnan to become one of the loveliest cities in southwest China.

Kūnmíng



Kunming

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Chuang Ku | A5 |
| 2 | East Pagoda | D5 |
| 3 | Green Lake Park | B1 |
| 4 | Nancheng Mosque | C4 |
| | TCG Nordica | A5 |
| 5 | West Pagoda | C5 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Yuansheng Art Space | A5 |
| 6 Yuantong Temple | D1 |
| 7 Yunnan Provincial Museum | B4 |

Sleeping

| | |
|---|----|
| 8 Green Lake Hotel | C2 |
| 9 Hanting Express | E5 |
| 10 Hump Hostel | C5 |
| 11 Kunming Cloudland Youth Hostel | A4 |
| 12 Kunming Hotel | F3 |
| 13 Kunming Upland Youth Hostel | C2 |
| Lost Garden Guesthouse | C2 |
| 14 Te Yun Hotel | A1 |
| 15 Yunda Binguan | B1 |

Eating

| | |
|--|----|
| 16 1910 La Gare du Sud | D5 |
| 17 As You Like | B1 |
| 18 Carrefour Supermarket | D4 |
| 19 Hong Dou Yuan | B1 |
| 20 Salvador's | A1 |
| 21 Zhenxing Fandian | F4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| 22 Alej | C3 |
| 23 Mask | A4 |
| 24 Moondog | B4 |

Shopping

| | |
|---|----|
| 25 Flower & Bird Market | C4 |
| 26 Mandarin Books & CDs | A1 |
| 27 Tianfu Famous Teas | E4 |

Sights

Yuantong Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Yuantong Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yuantong Jie; admission ¥6, surrounding park ¥10; 🕒 5.30am-5pm)

This temple is the largest Buddhist complex in Kunming and a draw for both pilgrims and locals. It's more than 1000 years old, but has been refurbished many times. To the rear, a hall has been added, with a statue of Sakyamuni, a gift from Thailand's king.

Green Lake Park

PARK

(Cuihu Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Cuihu Nanlu; 🕒 6am-10pm)

Come here to people-watch, practise taichi or just hang with the locals and stroll. The roads along the park are lined with wannabe trendy cafes, teahouses and shops. In November everyone in the city awaits the return of the local favourites, red-beaked seagulls; it's a treat watching people, er, 'flock' to the park when the first one shows up.

Yunnan Provincial Museum

MUSEUM

(Yunnan Sheng Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 118 Wuyi Lu; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Set inside a 1950s-era building, Yunnan's provincial museum has been upgraded and its interior is sparkling throughout. There are reasonable exhibitions on Dian Chi (Lake Dian) prehistoric and early cultures but the highlight is the section on Yunnan's minorities, with excellent displays of ethnic costumes and musical instruments.

Chuang Ku

GALLERY

(Loft [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 101 Xiba Lu)

West of downtown in a disused factory area known as Chuang Ku, you'll find a small number of galleries and cafes featuring modern Chinese artists and photographers. **Yuansheng Art Space** (Yuanshengfang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6419 5697; 101 Xiba Lu; 🕒 2.30-8.30pm) is a gallery-bar-restaurant-theatre focusing on the province's ethnic groups. The cornerstone of sorts is **TCG Nordica**

(Nuodika [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 411 4691; www.tcgnordica.com; 101 Xiba Lu; 🕒 5-11.30pm Mon, 11.30am-11pm Tue-Sat, noon-4pm Sun), best described as a gallery-exhibition hall-cultural centre – with, oddly, a restaurant serving Scandinavian and Chinese food.

Not many taxi drivers know this place as The Loft; ask to go to 101 Xiba Lu.

West Pagoda

PAGODA

(Xisi Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Dongsi Jie; 🕒 9am-5pm) **FREE**

This Tang pagoda can't be climbed, nor is the temple complex open, but it is a good spot for people-watching with all manner of tea-drinking and mah-jong games going on.

East Pagoda

PAGODA

(Dongsi Ta [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 63 Shulin Jie; 🕒 9am-5pm) **FREE**

The East Pagoda is a Tang structure that was, according to Chinese sources, destroyed by an earthquake (Western sources say it was destroyed by the Muslim revolt in the mid-19th century). It's now a hangout for senior citizens.

Nancheng Mosque

MOSQUE

(Nancheng Qingzhen Gusi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 51 Zhengyi Lu)

Originally built more than 400 years ago, this mosque was ripped down in 1997 in order to build a larger version, which looks vaguely like a bad Las Vegas casino. And sadly, that's now about it for the area's once-thriving Muslim neighbourhood (torn down in toto in 2007).

Sleeping

Kunming Upland Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Kunming Qingcheng Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6337 8910;

uplandhostel@gmail.com; 92 Huashan Xilu, 6/8-bed dm ¥45, s/d/tw ¥138-218; (@ 📶)

This place aims to impress with its sharp red and black decor, sizeable bar and inside and outdoor communal areas. Rooms have wood furnishings and dorms come with big lockers and power outlets. It has helpful English-speaking staff and a handy location near Green Lake.

It's just off Huashan Xilu on a little alley called Dameiyuan Xiang, near the back entrance of the landmark Green Lake Hotel.

Hump Hostel

HOSTEL

(Tuofeng Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6364 0359; www.thehumphostel.com; Jinmabiji Sq, Jinbi Lu, 4/6/10 bed dm ¥40-55, tw or d without/with bathroom ¥110/165; (@ 📶))

You'll hear about Kunming's most notorious hostel long before you arrive. Students, socialites and party animals love the place due to its close proximity to dozens of bars, karaoke joints and restaurants. Bring some earplugs as all this activity could keep you up at night. The hostel itself has clean and big dorms; some of the private rooms lack windows.

Bike hire is ¥30 a day and the hostel's own bar and terrace are popular spots for late night carousing.

Kunming Cloudland Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Kunming Dajiaoshi Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6440 3777; www.cloudlandhostel.com; 23 Zhuantang Lu, 6/8 bed dm ¥35-40, tw/d ¥138-198; (@ 📶))

Long-established hostel which attracts a steady flow of Western and Chinese travellers. Rooms and dorms are clean and well-furnished and there's a cute roof terrace, although the communal areas are smallish. It's located on a hard to spot alley off Xichang Lu.

To get here from the train or long-distance bus station, take city bus 64 and get off at Yunnan Ribaoshe Zhan.

★ Lost Garden Guesthouse

BOUTIQUE GUESTHOUSE

(Yiqiu Tianyuan Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6511 1127; www.lostgardenguesthouse.com; 7

Yiqiu Tian, 4/6-bed dm ¥45/50, d/tw ¥148-260; (@ 📶)

A relaxing oasis amid white-brick apartment blocks, this boutique guesthouse has nouveau Dali decor with wood furniture, antiques, pleasant lounge and roof terrace. The cafe serves surprisingly good Western meals. It's tricky to locate: start by walking up the little alley to the right of Green Lake Hotel, take the first left and look for the sign pointing left.

Ask for a room towards the back; there is a noisy school across the road .

Hanting Express

HOTEL

(Hanting Kuajie Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 400 8121 121; www.htinns.com; 277 Beijing Lu, tw/d ¥209/219; 🚫 @ 📶 ; 🚶 Tangzixiang)

Handily located budget chain hotel with compact but modern and clean rooms. You won't hear any English spoken, but it's close to the subway, the train station and the centre of town. To get here, walk south of the Tangzixiang subway stop (line 2) for 200m.

Green Lake Hotel

HOTEL

(Cuihu Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 6515 8888; www.greenlakehotel.com; 6 Cuihu Nanlu, 6 r from ¥2277; 🚫 🚫 @ 📶 🚶)

Proud but subdued, this gentle giant of Kunming *hotellerie* history has a fabulous location, opposite Green Park, and has kept up with modernity, doing so tastefully and with top-notch service. The panorama from the top floors is worth the price alone. Discounts of 30%-50% are often available, and there are Chinese and Western restaurants on site.

Te Yun Hotel

HOTEL

(Te Yun Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 6809 0999; 40 Longxiang Jie, 40 d/tw ¥688; 🚫 @ 📶)

A Chinese-style mid-range hotel; big rooms with decent beds and bathrooms, a useful location close to restaurants and bars, and routine 50% discounts make it an attractive choice. Wi-fi in the lobby only, but there's ADSL

internet in the rooms, and the staff are helpful despite limited English. It's set back from the road.

Kunming Hotel

HOTEL

(Kunming Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6316 2063; www.kunminghotel.com; 52 Dongfeng Donglu, d/tw ¥780; 🚶 📶 @ 📶)

In business since the 1950s, this city landmark has gone through extensive renovations and posits itself as a five-star hotel. It's not the Ritz but it does have professional staff and comfortable rooms, which are a good deal with the 30% discounts sometimes given. It offers a free airport shuttle and wi-fi is available in the lobby.

Yunda Binguan

HOTEL

(Yunnan University Hotel [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6503 4179; Wenhua Xiang, d/tw ¥398-598; 📶 @ 📶)

Conveniently close to the restaurant and bar hub of Wenhua Xiang and Wenlin Jie, the Yunda's rooms are not exciting but do the job. The hotel is divided into two, with the cheaper rooms in the wing across the road from the main entrance. Regular 50% discounts bring it into the mid-range price category.

ACROSS-THE-BRIDGE NOODLES

Yunnan's best-known dish is 'across-the-bridge noodles' (guoqiao mixian). You are provided with a bowl of very hot soup (stewed with chicken, duck and spare ribs) on which a thin layer of oil is floating, along with a side dish of raw pork slivers (in classier places this might be chicken or fish), vegetables and egg, and a bowl of rice noodles. Diners place all of the ingredients quickly into the soup bowl, where they are cooked by the steamy broth. Prices generally vary from ¥15 to ¥25, depending on the side dishes. It's usually worth getting these, because with only one or two condiments the soup lacks zest.

It is said the dish was created by a woman married to an imperial scholar. He decamped to an isolated island to study and she got creative with the hot meals she brought to him every day after crossing the bridge. This noodle dish was by far the

most popular and christened 'across-the-bridge noodles' in honour of her daily commute.

Eating

Kunming is home to all of Yunnan's fabulous foods. Regional specialities are *qiguoji* (herb-infused chicken cooked in an earthenware steam pot and imbued with medicinal properties depending on the spices used – *chongcao*; caterpillar fungus, or pseudo-ginseng is one), *xuanwei huotui* (Yunnan ham), *guoqiao mixian* (across-the-bridge noodles), *rubing* (goat's cheese), and various Muslim beef and mutton dishes.

For all manner of foreign restaurants, including Indian, Korean and Japanese, head to Wenhua Xiang. For self-catering, try **Carrefour Supermarket** (Jialefu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nanping Jie), a branch of the popular French chain.

Hong Dou Yuan

YUNNAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6539 2020; 142 Wenlin Jie; dishes from ¥18; 🕒 11am-9pm)

An old-school Chinese eatery, with a duck-your-head stairway and plastic-film-covered tables, this is a real locals' hangout on cosmopolitan Wenlin Jie. The food is excellent and will draw you back. Try regional specialities like the *taoza rubing* (fried goat's cheese and Yunnan ham) and *liang bai rou* (peppery, tangy beef). [Picture menu](#).

Zhenxing Fandian

YUNNAN

(Yunnan Typical Local Food Restaurant [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 316 6221; cnr Baita Lu & Dongfeng Donglu; dishes from ¥10; 🕒 24hr)

There's always a queue of hungry locals waiting to eat here. It offers a reliable introduction to Kunming fare, especially for *guoqiao mixian* (¥18), and is handy for late-night eats. Pay upfront at the desk where the grumpy middle-aged ladies sit.

★ 1910 La Gare du Sud

YUNNAN

(Huoche Nanzhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6316 9486; 8 Houxin Jie, dishes from ¥12; 🕒 11am-9pm)

Offering Yunnan specialities in a pleasant neo-colonial-style atmosphere, this place is now a fave with both expats – it's the kind of place foreign students take their parents when they come to visit – and cashed-up locals. It's hidden down an alley off Chongshan Lu, south of Jinbi Lu. Call ahead for instructions on how to get here.

Tu Shengshi Guan

YUNNAN

(☎ 6542 0010; District B, Jinding 1919, 15 Jindingshan Beilu, 1919 B dishes ¥20-48; 🕒 10am-9pm)

Located on the ground-floor of a converted warehouse a couple of kilometres northwest of the city centre, this family-run place uses strictly organic ingredients for its selection of favourite local dishes. The vegies and homemade tofu are outstanding, and the atmosphere relaxed; there's a pleasant outside area. No English spoken, but there is an English menu.

Salvador's

WESTERN

(Sa'erwadu kafeiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6536 3525; 76 Wenhua Xiang, sandwiches from ¥24, mains from ¥30; 🕒 9am-11.30pm; 📶)

Always busy with travellers and foreign students, Salvador's is now a Kunming staple. With a Mexican/Mediterranean food theme, as well as solid breakfasts, good coffee and a decent range of teas, it caters for all hours of the day. In the evening you can hang around the bar and watch as Kunming's beautiful people parade along Wenhua Xiang.

Brooklyn Pizzeria

WESTERN

(Bulukelin Pisadian ☎ 6533 3243; 6-8, Bldg 12 Banzhucuiyuan, 11 Hongshan Donglu, 126-8 pizzas from ¥45; 🕒 noon-11pm Thu-Tue; 📶)

A big selection of stone-oven pizzas, as well as excellent New York-style grinder and Philly cheese steak sandwiches, are on offer here, as well as lots

of foreign beers. It's just northwest of the centre of town, in a rapidly-expanding area of new restaurants and bars.

Tell your taxi to head for Banzhucuiyuan and then walk east from the McDonald's for 100m or so.

As You Like

WESTERN

(Youjia mianbao dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6541 1715; 5 Tianjundian Xiang, off Wenlin Jie; pizzas from ¥32, salads from ¥15; 🕒 11am-10.30pm Tue-Sun; 📶 🍴)

Cute cubbyhole cafe/restaurant that's all-vegetarian. Staff make excellent pizza, salads and sandwiches, all from local organic produce. It's an adventure to find: as you walk east on Wenlin Jie (coming from Wenhua Xiang) take the first left up the narrow alley after the Dune Cafe.



Drinking & Nightlife

Foreigners congregate in the bars on and around Wenhua Xiang, while Jinmabiji Sq is home to many Chinese-style bars and karaoke joints. The Kundu Night Market area is also a club and bar zone.

Mask

BAR

(Lianpu jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 14 Kundu Night Market; beers from ¥15; 🕒 8pm-late)

In the heart of the Kundu Night Market area, and jammed on weekends when there are DJs, the Mask is popular with expat and local students. It offers a fair range of domestic and foreign beers. During the week, it's more relaxed and a decent spot for a quiet drink.

Alei

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 836 9099; Bldg A1, Zhengyifang, 3 Qianwang Jie: A1 cocktails from ¥50; 🕒 5pm-midnight; 📶)

The only genuine cocktail bar in Kunming, Alei is a large, low-lit, modern space that has proved a hit with upwardly mobile locals. The bartenders know

their trade and there's nightly live music of one form or another.

Moondog

BAR

(Yueliang Gou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 138-5 Wacang Nanlu; beers from ¥15; 🕒 6pm-late)

An expat-Chinese run dive bar that attracts a mixed crowd of expats and locals. Fine collection of whiskies (from ¥50) and live music or occasional DJs.



Shopping

Yunnan specialities are marble and batik from Dali, jade from Ruili, minority embroidery, musical instruments and spotted-brass utensils.

Some functional items that make good souvenirs include large bamboo water pipes for smoking angel-haired Yunnan tobacco; and local herbal medicines, such as Yunnan Baiyao (Yunnan White Medicine), which is a blend of more than 100 herbs and is highly prized by Chinese throughout the world.

Yunnanese tea is an excellent buy and comes in several varieties, from bowl-shaped bricks of smoked green tea called *tuocha*, which have been around since at least Marco Polo's time, to leafy black tea that rivals some of India's best.

Tianfu Famous Teas

TEA

(Tianfu Mingcha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Shangyi Jie & Beijing Lu; 🕒 8.30am-10.30pm)

This place offers most types of teas grown in Yunnan, including the famed *pu'er* tea.

Mandarin Books & CDs

BOOKS

(Wuhua Shuyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 52 Wenhua Xiang; 🕒 9am-10pm)

Good spot for guidebooks, novels and a selection of travel writing in English and other languages, as well as books on Yunnan itself.

FLOWER & BIRD MARKET

The **Flower & Bird Market** (Huaniao Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tongdao Jie), also known as lao jie (old street), has shrunk dramatically in recent years and is now ominously hemmed in by encroaching modernity. Nor are flowers and birds the main draw here any more. Instead, strollers peruse stalls chock-full of jewellery, endless curios, knick-knacks and doodahs (the contents of someone's back hall often enough), some occasionally fine rugs and handmade clothing, and a hell of a lot of weird stuff.

One block west of the intersection of Guanghua Jie and the pedestrian-only Zhengyi Lu sits **Fu Lin Tang**, the city's oldest pharmacy, which has been dishing out the sanqi (the legendary Yunnanese cure-all root mixed into tea; around ¥160 per gram) since 1857.

Information

For any and all information on the city, check out www.gokunming.com (it also covers parts of the rest of Yunnan).

Maps (¥8) are available from the train/bus station areas and in hotels, but they're not much use to non-Chinese speakers.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Although Kunming's reputation as one of China's safest cities was dented by a March 2014 attack on passengers at the train station by restive Uighurs that left 29 people dead, foreigners have little to fear here. As always, take special precautions against pickpockets at and around the train and long-distance bus stations. There have been a number of victims who've been drugged and robbed on overnight sleeper buses.

INTERNET ACCESS

Every hotel and cafe frequented by travellers offers internet and/or wi-fi, usually for free. The city has many internet cafes, charging ¥3 to ¥4 per hour.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Richland International Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Ruiqide Guoji Yiyuan  6574 1988; Beijing Lu)

Most of the doctors are Chinese but English is spoken here. Standards are generally good and prices are reasonable (consultations start from ¥30). It's on the bottom three floors of the Shangdu International building; Yanchang Xian extension near Jinxing Flyover. A taxi ride from the city centre costs around ¥20.

Watsons

PHARMACY

(Qu Chen Shi ; Dongsi Jie;  9am-10pm)

Western cosmetics and basic medicines. Other branches around town.

Yan'an Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Yan'an Yiyuan  ;  317 7499, ext 311; 1st fl, block 6, Renmin Donglu)

Has a foreigners' clinic.

MONEY

Many ATMs around town should accept international cards.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang ; 448 Renmin Donglu;  9am-noon & 2-5pm)

All necessary services and has an ATM.

POST

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng ; 223 Beijing Lu)

The main international office has poste restante and parcel service (per letter ¥3, ID required). It is also the city's Express Mail Service (EMS) and Western Union agent. Another branch on Dongfeng Donglu.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Many of the backpacker hotels and some of the cafes can assist with travel queries.

You can complain about, or report, dodgy tourist operations via the **Tourist Complaint & Consultative Telephone** (☎ 316 4961).

VISA EXTENSIONS

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6301 7878; 399 Beijing Lu; 🕒 9-11.30am & 1-5pm Mon-Fri)

To visit the givers of visa extensions, head southeast off Government Sq (Dongfeng Guangchang;) to the corner of Shangyi Jie and Beijing Lu.

Another **office** (☎ 571 7001; Jinxing Lu) is off Erhuan Beilu in northern Kunming; take bus 3, 25 or 57.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO LAOS & VIETNAM

GETTING TO LAOS

A daily bus from Kunming to Vientiane (¥587) leaves from the south bus station, at 6pm, reaching its destination 30 hours later. Alternatively, take a bus to Mohan on the border with Laos; these depart at 12.20pm and 8pm, cost ¥243 to ¥378 and take about 14 hours.

GETTING TO VIETNAM

Apart from getting on a plane, the only way to get to Vietnam from Kunming for now is by bus. Six buses (9.40am to 7.30pm) run daily from Kunming's east bus station to the border town of Hekou (¥147).

Official proceedings at this border crossing can be frustrating (and officials have been known to confiscate Lonely Planet guides because they show Taiwan as a different country to China). Just keep your cool.

On the Chinese side, the border checkpoint is technically open from 8am to 11pm but don't bank on anything after 6pm. Set your watch when you cross the border: the time in China is one hour later than in Vietnam. Visas are unobtainable at the border crossing.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kunming's airport has direct services to/from North America, Europe and Australia. International flights to Asian cities include Bangkok (¥1555), Hong Kong (¥1447), Vientiane (¥1575), Yangon (¥1865) and Kuala Lumpur (¥1598).

China Eastern Airlines/Civil Aviation Administration of China

(CAAC, Zhongguo Minhang; [GOOGLE MAP](#); 28 Tuodong Lu; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm) issues tickets for any Chinese airline but the office only offers discounts on certain flights.

Daily flights from Kunming go to most major cities across China, including Beijing (¥1455), Guangzhou (¥1007) and Shanghai (¥1208). There are regional services to Lhasa in Tibet (¥1960) and within Yunnan, including Baoshan (¥726), Lijiang (¥570), Xiaguan/Dali (¥1130).

BUS

Kunming's five bus stations are located on the outskirts of the city.

The following buses depart from the south bus station (*caiyun beilu nan keyunzhan*):

- ➔ **Jianshui** ¥83, 3½ hours, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Jinghong** ¥165, eight hours, every 30 minutes (8am to 8.10pm)
- ➔ **Yuanyang** ¥136, seven hours, three daily (10.20am, 12.30pm and 7pm)

The following buses depart from the west bus station (*majie xi keyunzhan*):

- ➔ **Baoshan** ¥181 to ¥207, nine hours, every hour (8.30am to 8.20pm)
- ➔ **Chuxiong** ¥48, two to three hours, every 20 minutes (7am to 7.20pm)
- ➔ **Dali** ¥138, four to five hours, every 20 minutes (7.20am to 8pm)
- ➔ **Lijiang** ¥102, nine hours, seven daily (8.50am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Ruili** ¥261, 12 to 14 hours, 10 daily (8.30am to 9pm)
- ➔ **Shangri-la** ¥243, 12 hours, seven daily (8.30am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Tengchong** ¥235, 11 hours, seven daily (9am to 9pm)

The following buses depart from the east bus station (*baishahe dong keyunzhan*):

- ➔ **Hekou** ¥147, eight hours, six daily (9.40am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Shilin** ¥37, two hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 7.30pm).

Allow plenty of time to get to the bus stations (60 to 90 minutes). Line 2 of the subway runs to the south bus station, as does bus 154 from the train station. Bus 80 runs to the west bus station from the train station, while bus 60 goes to the east bus station, which is also on the subway network. A taxi will cost ¥40 to ¥50.

TRAIN

You can buy train tickets up to 10 days in advance. The following prices are for hard-sleeper, middle berths on the fastest train:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥555
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥263
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥349
- ➔ **Guiyang** ¥156
- ➔ **Liupanshui** ¥114
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥515
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥383

Within Yunnan, eight daily trains run to Dali (seat ¥64, hard sleeper ¥102, six to seven hours, 4.41am to 5.56pm). Book ahead, as it is a popular route.

Six trains run daily to Lijiang (seat ¥89, hard sleeper ¥147, nine hours, 9.47am to 11pm).

Getting Around

The first of Kunming's subway lines has opened, with others under construction. Fares range from ¥2 to ¥4 and trains run 6.30am to 11pm. For now, the most useful stops include the train station and south bus station, as well as Government Sq (Dongfeng Guangchang) in the centre of town.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Kunming's airport is located 25km northeast of the city. Airport buses (¥25)

run to and from it every 30 minutes from six different locations, the most convenient being the train station, north and west bus stations and the Kunming Hotel. The subway should have been extended to reach the airport by the time you read this. Watch out for the unofficial taxi touts who will approach you after you exit customs. Always take an official cab. Taxis charge a flat ¥120 to the airport and around ¥100 into town.

BICYCLE

Some hostels rent out bikes for around ¥30 per day.

BUS

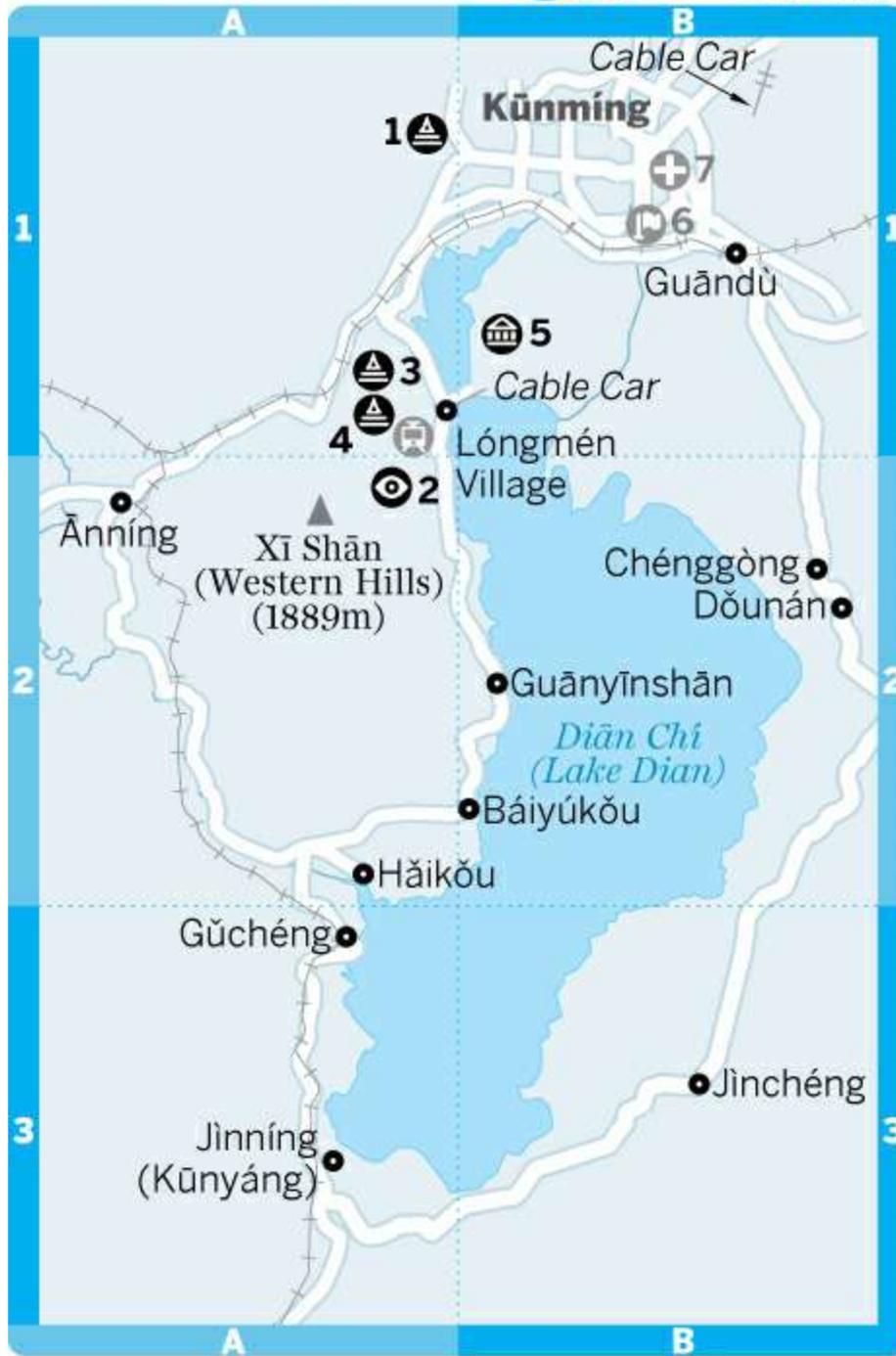
Bus 63 runs from the east bus station to the main train station. Bus 2 runs from the train station to Government Sq (Dongfeng Guangchang) and then past the west bus station. Fares range from ¥1 to ¥4. The main city buses have no conductors and require exact change.

Around Kunming

There are some grand sights within a 15km radius of Kunming, but getting to most of them is time-consuming and you'll find the majority of them extremely crowded (weekdays are best to avoid the crowds).

If you don't have much time, the Bamboo Temple (Qiongzhu Si) and Xi Shan (Western Hills) are the most interesting. Both have decent transport connections. Dian Chi (Lake Dian) has terrific circular-tour possibilities of its own.

Around Kūnmíng



Around Kunming

📍 Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Bamboo Temple | A1 |
| 2 Dragon Gate | A2 |
| 3 Huating Temple | A1 |
| 4 Taihua Temple | A1 |
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Information

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| 6 Vietnamese Consulate | B1 |
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Bamboo Temple

Bamboo Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Qiongzhu Si; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥40; 🕒 8am-7pm)

This serene temple (no photos allowed inside) is definitely one to be visited by sculptors as much as by those interested in temple collecting. Raised during the Tang dynasty, it was rebuilt in the 19th century by master Sichuanese sculptor Li Guangxiu and his apprentices, who fashioned 500 *luohan* (arhats or noble ones) in a fascinating mishmash of superb realism and head-scratching exaggerated surrealism.

Li and his mates pretty much went gonzo in their excruciating, eight-year attempt to perfectly represent human existence in statuary. How about the 70-odd surfing Buddhas, riding the waves on a variety of mounts – blue dogs, giant crabs, shrimp, turtles and unicorns? And this is cool: count the arhats one by one to the right until you reach your age – that is the one that best details your inner self.

So lifelike are the sculptures that they were considered in bad taste by Li Guangxiu's contemporaries (some of whom no doubt appeared in caricature), and upon the project's completion he disappeared into thin air.

The temple is about 12km northwest of Kunming. Take bus 2 to Huang tu po, from where shared minivans (¥10 per person) run to the temple.

Dian Chi

The shoreline of Dian Chi (Lake Dian), located to the south of Kunming, is dotted with settlements, farms and fishing enterprises. The western side is hilly, while the eastern side is flat country. The southern end of the lake, particularly towards the southeast, is industrial.

The lake is elongated – about 40km from north to south – and covers an area of 300 sq km. Plying the waters are *fanchuan* (pirate-sized junks with bamboo-battened canvas sails). The area around the lake is mainly for scenic touring and hiking, and there are some fabulous aerial views from the ridges at Dragon Gate in Xi Shan.

Xi Shan

This cool, forested mountain range on the western side of Dian Chi makes for a great day trip from Kunming. The range is full of walking trails (some very steep sections), quiet temples, gates and lovely forests. But avoid the weekends when Kunmingers come here in droves.

It's a steepish approach from the north side. The hike to Dragon Gate takes 2½ hours, though most people take a connecting bus to the top section.

Alternatively, it is possible to cycle to the hills from the city centre in about an hour; to vary the trip, consider doing the return route across the dikes of upper Dian Chi.

A through ticket (*tongpiao*) for all the sights on the mountain and the bus costs ¥100.

Sights

Huating Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(,Huating Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥25 ; ⌚ 8am-6pm)

At the foot of the climb, about 15km from Kunming, is Huating Temple, a

country temple of the Nanzhao kingdom believed to have been constructed in the 11th century. It's one of the largest in the province and its numerous halls are decorated with arhats. A combined ¥25 ticket allows admission here and to Taihua Temple.

Taihua Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Taihua Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥25; 🕒 8am-6pm)

The road from Huating Temple winds 2km up to the Ming-dynasty Taihua Temple. The temple courtyard houses a fine collection of flowering trees, including magnolias and camellias. A combined ¥25 ticket gets you into both temples.

Sanqing Ge

TAOIST TEMPLE

()

Sanqing Ge, near the top of the mountain, was a country villa of a Yuan-dynasty prince, and was later turned into a temple dedicated to the three main Taoist deities (*sanqing* refers to the highest level of Taoist 'enlightenment').

From near here you can catch a **chairlift** (one way/return ¥25/40) if you want to skip the final ascent to the summit.

Dragon Gate

HISTORIC SITE

(Long Men [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥40)

Close to the top of the mountain is Dragon Gate, a group of grottoes, sculptures, corridors and pavilions that were hacked from the cliff between 1781 and 1835 by a Taoist monk and coworkers, who must have been hanging up here by their fingertips.

Getting There & Away

Take bus 54 (¥1) from the corner of Renmin Zhonglu and Zhengyi Lu in Kunming to its terminus at Mian Shan Che Chang, and then change to bus 6 (¥1), which will take you to the foot of the hills. Buses run up Xi Shan itself

to Sanqing Ge (one way/return ¥12.50/25, every 15 minutes, 8.10am to 6.10pm).

Returning, you could take the cable car across to Haigeng Park for ¥40. From here, take the 94 bus or a taxi for the 3km or so to the Yunnan Nationalities Village, opposite the Yunnan Minorities Museum, where you can catch bus 44 (¥2, 40 minutes) to Kunming's main train station.

Yunnan Nationalities Museum

On the northeast corner of Dian Chi (Lake Dian), the **Yunnan Nationalities Museum** (Yunnan Minzu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); www.ynnmuseum.com; 🕒 9am-4.20pm Tue-Sun) is reputedly the largest minorities museum in China, even if it doesn't have a whole lot on display. But the ground floor exhibition of costumes is comprehensive and comes with proper English captions.

Across the road is the **Yunnan Nationalities Village** (Yunnan Minzu Cun admission ¥90; 🕒 8.30am-9.30pm). Here you can walk through a tacky re-creation of an old Kunming street to reach the 'village', where all-smiling, all-dancing minorities perform for mostly domestic tour groups. Skip it and head to Xishuangbanna for the real thing instead.

Buses 44 (¥2) runs to both the museum and village from the main train station.

Shilin

📍 0871

A conglomeration of utterly bizarre but stunning karst geology and a hell of a lot of tourists, **Shilin** (Stone Forest admission ¥175), about 120km southeast of Kunming, is equal parts tourist trap and natural wonderland. A massive collection of grey limestone pillars split and eroded by wind and rainwater (the tallest reaches 30m high), the place was, according to legend, created by

immortals who smashed a mountain into a labyrinth for lovers seeking privacy.

Yes, it's packed to the gills, every single rock is affixed with a cheesy poetic moniker, Sani women can be persistent in sales, and it's all pricey as hell. Yet, idyllic, secluded walks are within 2km of the centre and by sunset or moonlight Shilin becomes otherworldly. To avoid the crowds, arrive early and avoid weekends.

Sani song and dance evenings are organised when there are enough tourists. Shows normally start at around 8pm at a stage next to the minor stone forest but there are sometimes extra performances. There are also Sani performances at the same location during the day between 2pm and 3pm.

Shilin can easily be visited as a day trip from Kunming, and it doesn't have much in the way of budget accommodation. But if you want to stay the night, the rooms at the **Shilin Heisongyan Jiudian** (☎6771 1088; tw/d ¥280/380; 📶) are quiet and have good views over Shilin, double rooms regularly get knocked down to ¥180.

Near the main entrance is a cluster of restaurants and snack bars that are open from dawn to dusk. Check all prices before you order, as overcharging is not uncommon.

During the July/August **torch festival**, wrestling, bullfighting, singing and dancing are held at a natural outdoor amphitheatre by Hidden Lake, south of Shilin.

Buses to Shilin (¥37, two hours, every 30 minutes, 7am to 7.30pm) leave from Kunming's east bus station.

Heijing

☎0878

Time-warped **Heijing** (admission ¥30) has been known for salt production for centuries and is still an important producer of the 'white gold', as well as home to a sizeable Hui Muslim community. Heijing has retained much of its

period architecture and is a great place to wander for a day or two, marvelling at the old gates, temples and shady narrow alleys. The village makes a fine stopping-off point if you want to take the route less-travelled between Dali and Kunming.

A small tourist information office near the first bridge can point the way to the various sights.

Sights & Activities

The admission fee at the main gate (a few kilometres before the village) includes admission to **Dalong Ci** (the clan meeting hall) and **Guyan Fang** (an old salt production facility). The latter offers brief descriptions of the history of salt production, although none in English. You can find it by walking east from the village for about 15 minutes. A few old salt wells can also be inspected, look out for the **Black Cow Well** (Heiniu Jing), just south of Dalong Ci.

Should you tire of salty attractions just take a stroll around some of the back alleys and admire the temples, gates and old homes. Heijing is especially magical at night, when the day trippers disappear and the village reverts to its natural sleepy state.

There's pleasant **walking** to be done in the hills behind the town too. An obvious path leads up to **Feilai Temple** (Feilai Si), then along the ridge line past some tombs before descending to the village. Plan on two to three hours for this walk.

Sleeping & Eating

Locals will approach you offering basic beds from ¥30. Meals are extra, but there are a few restaurants and *shaokao* (barbecue) places in the village.

Wang Family Courtyard

INN

(Wangjia Dayuan  489 0506; r ¥60-80; )

One of the best-value guesthouses in all Yunnan, the rooms at this family-run place are big and bright enough and the more expensive have working ADSL internet connections. Bathrooms are simpler (squat toilets), but the courtyard is perfect for star-gazing come nightfall.

Wu Family Courtyard

INN

(Wujia Dayuan 📞489 0358; s/tw ¥180/280; 📶)

The best-known and most comfortable place in town was once owned by local salt magnate Wu Weiyang, who was summarily executed by communist forces in 1949. Single rooms are cramped but the twins are large and all are set around a very attractive courtyard. It's worth a visit even if you don't stay here.

i Getting There & Away

Getting to Heijing is tricky. The best option is local train 6162 (¥11.50, four hours), departing Kunming at 9.10am and arriving at 1pm. The train stops a couple of kilometres from the village but horse-drawn buggies (¥3 per person) meet the train to make the journey here. Going the other way train 6161 departs at 1.34pm and reaches Kunming at 5.30pm.

The alternative is to take the bus from Kunming or Dali to the county capital Chuxiong. From Chuxiong's main bus station, take a taxi (¥7) to the east bus station, where there are buses to Heijing (¥14) every hour between 9am and 3.50pm. From Heijing, buses to Chuxiong leave from outside the market at the end of the village from 7am to 2.30pm.

Jianshui

📞0873 / Pop 17,400

Jianshui is a charming town of old buildings, an enormous Confucian temple, a cave laden with swallows, and some of the best steampot cooking and barbecue you'll find in Yunnan. The architecture is constantly being

‘facelifted’, but still retains much of its distinct character, and the locals, who are a mix of Han, Hui and Yi, are extremely friendly.

Known in ancient times as Butou or Badian, Jianshui’s history dates back to the Western Jin period, when it was under the auspices of the Ningzhou kingdom. It was handed around to other authorities until its most important days as part of the Tonghai Military Command of the Nanzhao kingdom. The Yuan dynasty established what would eventually become the contemporary town.

Sights

Classic architecture surrounds you in Jianshui, and not just in the old-style back alleys. Virtually every main street has a historically significant traditional structure. The architecture here is especially intriguing because of the obvious mixture of central plains and local styles. Many old buildings, despite official decrees positing them as state treasures, have been co-opted for other purposes and the trick – and the great fun – is trying to find them.

Note that you can buy a ¥133 **through ticket** (*tongpiao*) that gets you into the Confucian Temple, the Zhu Family Garden and Swallow’s Cavern. It’s on sale at any of those places.

Confucian Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wenmiao [GOOGLE MAP](#); Lin'an Lu; admission ¥60; 🕒 6.30am-8pm)

Jianshui’s most famous temple was modelled after the temple in Confucius’ hometown of Qufu (Shandong province) and finished in 1285; it covers 7.5 hectares and is the third-largest Confucian temple in China. (Some locals employ a flurry of Byzantine mathematics to prove it’s the largest; either way, Xue Lake, around which it sits, uses the Chinese word for ‘sea’ in its name!)

The temple operated as a school for nearly 750 years and its academic credentials were such that more than half of all Yunnan’s successful candidates in imperial examinations during this period came from Jianshui.

Many of the names of buildings in Jianshui use the ideogram wen, or 'literacy'.

Zhu Family Garden

HISTORIC SITE

(Zhuji Huayuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Hanlin Jie; admission ¥50; 🕒 8am-8pm)

This spacious 20,000-sq-metre complex, a fascinating example of Qing-era one-upping-the-Joneses, comprises ancestral buildings, family homes, ponds and lovely gardens, and took 30 years to build. The Zhu family made its name through its mill and tavern, and dabbled in everything from tin in Gejiu to opium in Hong Kong, eventually falling victim to the political chaos following the 1911 revolution.

Chaoyang Gate

HISTORIC SITE

(Chaoyang Lou [GOOGLE MAP](#)) **FREE**

Being refurbished at the time of writing, Chaoyang Gate is an imposing Ming edifice that guards the entrance to the old town. Modelled on the [Yellow Crane Tower](#) in Wuhan and the Yueyang Tower located at Dongting Lake (Dongting Hu) in Hunan, it bears more than a passing resemblance to the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing.

Zhilin Si

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 6am-midnight) **FREE**

The largest preserved wooden structure in Yunnan, this monastery was built during the latter stages of the Yuan dynasty; its distinctive design feature is the brackets between columns and crossbeams.

Sleeping

Jianshui International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Jianshui Guoji Qingnian Lushe 📞 765 2451; yhajianshui@yahoo.com; 253 Lin'an Lu, dm ¥25, d/tw ¥60/90; @📶)

Recently re-located, this place has basic but bearable dorms and rooms with reasonable bathrooms. No English spoken and it's more of a cheap hotel than a true hostel, but the staff are affable. To find it, walk 30m past the Confucian Temple and turn down an alley on the left-hand side of the road by 253 Lin'an Lu.

Huaqing Jiudian

HOTEL

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 766 6166; 46 Hanlin Jie, d/tw ¥298; 📶 @ 📶)

Decorated in a neo-Qing–dynasty style, the rooms here are a fair size and some come with small terraces. Discounts of 40% are standard and the staff are friendly. There's a downstairs teahouse too. It's close to the Chaoyang Gate at the entrance to the old town.

Lin'an Inn

INN

(Lin'an Kezhan 📍 765 5866; 32 Hanlin Jie, d/tw ¥328; 📶 @ 📶)

In a prime location in the heart of the old town and with well-kept rooms, the biggest draw here is the great communal courtyard which is very pleasant for a beer in the evening. Regular discounts bring prices under ¥200 and they rent bikes for ¥30 per day.

Eating

Jianshui is legendary for its *qiguo*, a stew made in the county's famed earthenware pots and often infused with medicinal herbs. The cook may make use of the local speciality, *caoya* (grass sprouts), also known as elephant's tooth grass root, which tastes like bamboo. Only found in Jianshui County, it's often used in broth or fried with liver or pork. Vegetarians might find a place that will substitute tofu. Expect to pay ¥40 per pot. You'll also find places serving delicious *liang mian* (cold rice noodles served with sesame paste and tofu balls cooked on a grill).

Then there's glorious Jianshui barbecue (Jianshui *shaokao*). Tons of cubbyhole restaurants are filled with braziers roasting meats, vegies, tofu and

perhaps goat's cheese. A perfect night out is a roasted meal under the Jianshui stars with friends. Head to Hanlin Jie and Lin'an Lu and the alleys off it for both restaurants and barbecue places.

Information

There are plenty of ATMs around town that take foreign cards.

There's an **internet cafe** (Wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr) on Hanlin Jie next to Huaqing Jiudian.

Getting There & Away

Jianshui has a couple of bus stations. The main one is 3km north of Chaoyang Gate. For very local destinations, you need to head to the second small (regional) bus station a few minutes' walk west at the corner of Chaoyang Beilu and Beizheng Jie.

From the main station, there are buses continually leaving for Nansha (new town) in Yuanyang (¥30, 2½ hours). For Xinjie and the rice terraces, there is one daily bus (¥43, four hours, 11.34am).

Frequent buses head to Kunming (¥73, every 25 minutes, three to four hours, 7am to 7.35pm). Hekou-bound travellers have four buses to choose from (¥72 to ¥77, five hours, 6.40am, 7.26am, 8.10am and 10.53am). Sleepers to Jinghong (¥175, 12 hours) depart at 1.30pm and 4.30pm.

Around Jianshui

Swallow's Cavern

Swallow's Cavern

CAVE

(Yanzi Dong, admission ¥80; 🕒 9am-5pm)

This freak of nature and ornithology is halfway between Jianshui and Gejiu. The karst formations (the largest in Asia) are a lure, but what you'll want to

see are the hundreds of thousands of swallows flying around in spring and summer. The cave is split into two – one high and dry, the other low and wet. The higher cave is so large that a three-storey pavilion and a tree fit inside.

Plank walkways link up; the Lu River runs through the lower cave for about 8km and you can tour the caverns in 'dragon-boats'.

There's no direct bus, but the ones bound for Mengzi, Kaiyuan or Gejiu which don't take the expressway pass the cavern (¥10, one hour).

Twin Dragon Bridge

Twin Dragon Bridge

BRIDGE

(Shuanglong Qiao,)

This bridge across the confluence of the Lu and Tachong Rivers is 5km from the western edge of town. One of the 10 oldest in China, the bridge features 17 arches, so many that it took two periods of the Qing dynasty to complete the project. To get here, take minibus 4 from Jianshui's second bus station (¥2). Note that you have to ask the driver to tell you where to get off and then point you in the right direction.

Bus 4 continues to Huanglong Si, a small temple.

Yuanyang Rice Terraces

 0873 / Pop 22,700

Picture hilltop villages, the only things visible above rolling fog and cloud banks, an artist's palette of colours at sunrise and sunset, spirit-recharging treks through centuries-old rice-covered hills, with a few water buffalo eyeing you contentedly nearby. Yes, it's hard not to become indulgent when describing these *titian* (rice terraces), hewn from the rolling topography by the Hani throughout the centuries. They cover roughly 12,500 hectares and are one of Yunnan's most stunning sights.

Yuanyang is actually split into two: Nansha, the new town, and Xinjie, the

old town an hour's bus ride up a nearby hill. Either can be labelled Yuanyang, depending what map you use. Xinjie is the one you want, so make sure you get off there.



Xinjie

Xinjie is a bit grubby, but makes a useful base. The bus station is a minute's walk from Titian Sq, the town's hub.

Sights & Activities

The terraces around dozens of outlying villages have their own special characteristics, often changing with the daylight. Bilingual maps are available

at all hotels in town. Bear in mind that the *titian* are at their most extraordinary in winter when they are flooded with water which the light bounces off in spectacular fashion. Avoid visiting at Chinese public holidays, when prices for minibuses go sky-high (¥600 and more per day).

Duoyishu, about 25km from Xinjie, has the most awesome sunrises and is the one you should not miss. **Quanfuzhuang** is a less-crowded alternative and has easy access down to the terraces. For sunsets, **Bada** and **Mengpin**, also known as **Laohuzui**, can be mesmerising.

A combined ¥100 ticket gets you access to Duoyishu, Bada, Quanfuzhuang and Mengpin/Laohuzui.

Buses run to all the villages from the bus station, but you are much better off arranging your own transport, or hooking up with other travellers to split the cost of a sunrise/sunset drive. Minibuses and motor-rickshaws congregate around Yunti Shunjie Dajiudian and on the street west of the bus station. Expect to pay ¥400 to ¥500 in peak season for a minibus. Less comfortable motor-rickshaws can be got for ¥250.

Several **markets** are worth visiting; check with your accommodation for the latest information.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a number of places around the bus station where rooms can be found for ¥40 and up. Restaurants surround Titian Sq. Try **Liu Jun Fandian** (dishes from ¥12; 🕒 8am-10pm), on the corner of the square closest to the bus station.

Increasing numbers of travellers are now basing themselves in much more picturesque **Pugaolao** in Duoyishu, an hour by bus from Xinjie, where the rice terraces are all around you. The village has spawned many guesthouses but there's still only one restaurant (eat where you stay).

Timeless Hostel Yuanyang

HOSTEL

(Jiu Ju Yuanyang Qingnian Lushe  153 6837 6718; yuanyang.timeless@gmail.com; 6-bed dm ¥35,

d/tw ¥120; @📶)

New hostel in the heart of Duoyishu's Pugaolao village, with fresh dorms and rooms, a roof terrace with decent views, an amenable communal area and English-speaking staff. Bikes can be hired for ¥30 per day and staff can offer advice on potential hiking routes, as well as organise transport to other villages.

Sunny Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(,Duoyishu Yangguang Kezhan 📍159 8737 1311; sunny_guesthouse@163.com; 10-bed dm ¥40, d ¥120-160)

Great views of the rice terraces from the roof at this guesthouse, which has a collection of basic rooms (cold in the winter), with both shared and private bathrooms, some overlooking the terraces. It's a 10-minute walk through Pugaolao village to find it.

Yingyoulian Jiudian

HOTEL

(📍159 8737 4367; caihumei2006@163.com; r ¥40-80; 📶)

In Xinjie and basic (the price is a clue), but some rooms have Western toilets and the wi-fi connection is strong. Owner Belinda speaks good English and is honest and helpful when it comes to arranging transport to the outlying villages. To get here, walk up the road from the bus station for five minutes and it's on your left.

Yunti Shunjie Dajudian

HOTEL

(📍562 1588; Xinjie; d/tw ¥298; 📶)

Just off Titian Sq in Xinjie and a few minutes from the bus station, this place has clean, compact and comfortable rooms, discounted by 50% or more outside high season. Wi-fi is only available in the lobby.

Information

There are a couple of internet cafes (*wangba*; ¥3/hr) off Titian Sq near Yunti

Shunjie Dajiudian.

Agricultural Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Nongye Yinhang)

Has an ATM that sometimes takes foreign cards: don't rely on it. To find it, head down the stairs by the entrance to Yunti Shunjie Dajiudian and walk on for a couple of minutes; it's on the left-hand side.

Getting There & Around

There are three buses daily from Kunming to Yuanyang (¥136, seven hours, 10.20am, 12.30pm and 7pm); these return at 9.05am, 12.30pm and 6.30pm. Other destinations include Hekou (¥58, four hours) at 7.30am and 10am.

To forge on to Xishuangbanna, catch any of the frequent buses to Nansha (¥10, one hour), where there's a daily bus to Jinghong at 4pm (¥150, eight hours). Alternatively, you can backtrack to Jianshui (¥43, four hours, six daily from 10.20am to 4.30pm) and catch one of the twice-daily Jinghong sleepers (¥175, 1.30pm and 4.30pm).

From Xinjie, local buses leave when full to Duoyishu's Pugaolao village for ¥15.

Xiaguan

 0872 / Pop 158,000

Xiaguan, on the southwest shore of Erhai Hu (Erhai Lake), serves as a transport hub for travellers headed to Dali, a few kilometres further up the highway. Confusingly, Xiaguan is sometimes referred to as Dali on tickets, maps and buses.

There is no reason to stay in Xiaguan and you only need to come here in order to catch a bus or train.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang; Jianshe Donglu)

Changes money and travellers cheques, and has an ATM that accepts all major credit cards.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju 📞 214 2149; Tai'an Lu; 🕒 8-11am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri)

Handles all visa extensions for Xiaguan and Dali. Take bus 8 from Dali and ask to get off at the Shi Ji Middle School (Shiji Zhongxue).

Getting There & Away

Xiaguan's **airport** is 15km from the town centre. Buy air tickets online or at an agency in Old Dali. No public buses run to the airport; taxis will cost ¥50 from Xiaguan or ¥100 from Dali. Five flights daily leave for Kunming (¥782) and two to Xishuangbanna (¥991).

Xiaguan has no less than five bus stations. The Dali express bus station (*kuaisu keyunzhan*) is on Nan Jian Lu. The second main station used by travellers is Xingsheng bus station (also called *gao kuai keyunzhan*), located down the road from the express bus station. To find it, walk out of the express bus station, turn right and walk downhill, cross the big intersection to Xingsheng Lu and walk for 100m. The third station of interest is the north bus station (*bei keyunzhan*) on Dali Lu, which is reached by bus 8 (¥2) or a ¥10 taxi ride.

Remember that when departing, the easiest way to Kunming or Lijiang is to get a bus from Old Dali. The following departures are from the Dali express bus station (*kuaisu keyunzhan*):

- ➔ **Chuxiong** ¥74, 2½ hours, every 40 minutes (7.10am to 6.40pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥115, four to five hours, every 30 minutes (7.50am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Liuku** ¥83, five hours, five buses (7.40am to 12.30pm)

The following departures are from the Xingsheng bus station (*gao kuai keyunzhan*):

- ➔ **Baoshan** ¥65, 2½ hours, every 40 minutes (7.50am to 7.20pm)
- ➔ **Jinghong** ¥200, 16 hours, two daily (9am and 11am)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥145, four to five hours, every 30 minutes (7.20am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Lijiang** ¥87, three to four hours, five daily (8.30am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Mangshi (Luxi)** ¥118, six to eight hours, three daily (10am, 11.30am and 1pm)
- ➔ **Ruili** ¥147, eight hours, three daily (8.30am, 3pm and 8pm)
- ➔ **Tengchong** ¥132, six hours, three daily (10am, 1pm and 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Yunlong (Nuodeng)** ¥42, three hours, 14 daily (7.30am to 4.30pm)

Departures from the north bus station (*bei keyunzhan*) include the following:

- ➔ **Jianchuan (for Shaxi)** ¥33, three hours, every 15 minutes (6.25am to 6.50pm)
- ➔ **Shangri-la (Zhongdian)** ¥100, seven hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to noon)

If you want to head to Jinghong (¥218, 15 hours, 8.20am and 9.40am), you need the east bus station (*dong keyunzhan*) by the train station, which also serves destinations on the east side of Erhai Hu such as Shuanglang and Wase.

For Weishan, you must go to the southwest bus station (*xi nan keyunzhan*).

Buses to Old Dali (¥3, 35 minutes) leave from outside the Xingsheng bus station. Bus 8 (¥3, 35 minutes) runs from the train station to the centre of Xiaguan to Dali's West Gate. If you want to be sure, ask for Dali *gucheng* (Dali old city).

Tickets for nearly all destinations can be booked in Dali and this is often the easiest way to do it as it will save you a trip to Xiaguan (although you will pay a small service fee).

There are eight **trains** daily from Kunming's main train station (hard seat/sleeper ¥68/111, six to seven hours, 4.41am to 5.56pm). Returning to Kunming, there are seven daily trains (1.18am to 5.45pm). There are trains daily to Lijiang (¥37, two hours) at 5.52am, 7.18am and 5.01pm.

Weishan

☞0872 / Pop 20,700

Some 55km or so south of Xiaguan, Weishan is the heart of a region populated by Hui and Yi. It was once the nucleus of the powerful Nanzhao kingdom, and from here the Hui rebel Du Wenxiu led an army in revolt against the Qing in the 19th century. Today, it's an attractive small town of narrow streets lined with wooden houses, with drum towers at strategic points and a lovely backdrop of the surrounding hills.

The town's central point is the unmistakable **Gongchang Tower** (Gongchang Lou). South from Gongchang Lou you'll come first to **Xinggong Tower** (: Xinggong Lou) and then on the right-hand side of the street to **Menghua Old Home** (Menghua Laojia admission ¥8; 🕒8.30am-9pm), the town's best-preserved slice of architecture.

Linye Binguan (☞612 0761; 24 Xi Xin Jie, s ¥60, tw ¥80-100; 📶📶) is a hop, skip and a jump from Gongchang Lou and has big and comfortable rooms. It's a ¥5 ride from the bus station in a motor-rickshaw.

The only restaurants in the town are cubbyhole eateries. Head north or south of Gongchang Lou to find most of them. You may see people indulging in a local Yi speciality, baked tea.

Xiaguan's south bus station has buses to Weishan (¥16, 1½ hours, every 20 to 30 minutes, 6.20am to 6pm). They return to Xiaguan from 6.30am.

Weibao Shan

Eminently worthy **Weibao Shan** (Weibao Mountain; admission ¥60), about 10km

south of Weishan, has a relatively easy hike to its peak at around 2500m. During the Ming and Qing dynasties it was the zenith of China's Taoism, and you'll find some superb Taoist murals; the most significant are at **Wenchang Gong** (Wenchang Palace No 3 on the entrance ticket) and **Changchun Cave** (Changchun Dong No 1 on the entrance ticket). Birders in particular love the mountain; the entire county is a node on an international birding flyway.

There are no buses here. Head to the street running east of Gongchang Lou in Weishan to pick up a microvan to the mountain. Expect to pay ¥80 to ¥100 for the round trip; you'll need the driver to wait for you.

Dali

☞ 0872 / Pop 40,000

Dali, the original backpacker hang-out in Yunnan, was once *the* place to chill, with its stunning location sandwiched between mountains and Erhai Hu (Erhai Lake). Loafing here for a couple of weeks was an essential part of the Yunnan experience.

In recent years, domestic tourists have discovered Dali in a big way and the scene has changed accordingly. Instead of dread-locked Westerners, it's young Chinese who walk around with flowers in their hair. Still, Dali has not been overwhelmed by visitors like nearby Lijiang and remains a reasonably relaxed destination, with the local Bai population very much part of daily life.

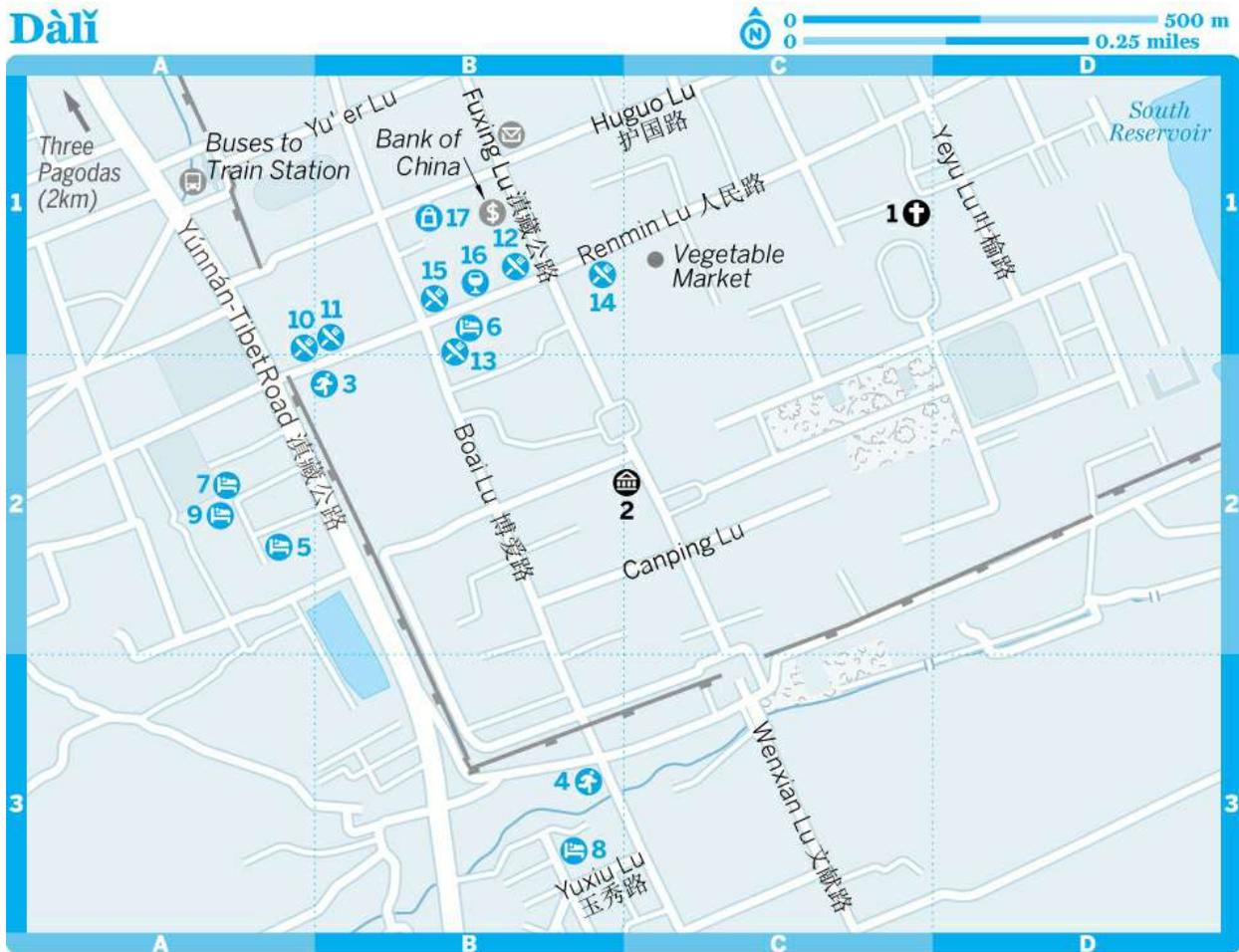
Surrounding Dali there are fascinating possibilities for exploring, especially by bicycle and in the mountains above the lake, or you can do what travellers have done for years – eat, drink and make merry.

History

Dali lies on the western edge of Erhai Hu at an altitude of 1900m, with a backdrop of the imposing 4000m-tall Cang Shan (Green Mountains). For much of the five centuries in which Yunnan governed its own affairs, Dali was the centre of operations, and the old city retains a historical atmosphere

that is hard to come by in other parts of China.

The main inhabitants of the region are the Bai, who number about 1.5 million and are thought to have settled the area some 3000 years ago. In the early 8th century they succeeded in defeating the Tang imperial army before establishing the Nanzhao kingdom, which lasted until the Mongol hordes arrived in the mid-13th century.



Dali

📍 Sights

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Sights & Activities

Three Pagodas

PAGODA

(San Ta Si adult incl Chongsheng Temple ¥121;  7am-7pm)

Absolutely *the* symbol of the town/region, these pagodas, a 2km walk north of the north gate, are among the oldest standing structures in southwestern China. The tallest of the three, **Qianxun Pagoda**, has 16 tiers that reach a height of 70m. It was originally erected in the mid-9th century by engineers

from Xi'an. It is flanked by two smaller 10-tiered pagodas, each of which are 42m high.

While the price is cheeky considering you can't go inside the pagodas, **Chongsheng Temple** (Chongsheng Si) behind them has been restored and converted into a relatively worthy museum.

Dali Museum

MUSEUM

(Dali Shi Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Fuxing Lu; 🕒 8am-5.30pm) **FREE**

The museum houses a small collection of archaeological pieces relating to Bai history, including some fine figurines. English descriptions are lacking.

Catholic Church

CHURCH

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); off Renmin Lu)

It's worth checking out Dali's Catholic Church. Dating back to 1927, it's a unique mix of Bai-style architecture and classic European church design. Mass is held here every Sunday at 9.30am.

Climb Dali

ROCK CLIMBING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 131 5064 4701; info@climbdali.com; 20 Renmin Lu)

This outfit runs active adventures around Dali, including rock climbing, mountaineering, kayaking and rafting trips. Contact Adam Kritzer.

Rice & Friends

COOKING COURSE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 151 2526 4065; www.riceandfriends.com)

Recommended cooking school that includes trips to markets to purchase ingredients and tips on preparation, as well as cooking classes.

Tours

China Minority Travel

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎) 138 8723 5264; chinaminoritytravel@gmail.com)

Henriette, a Dutch expat, can offer a long list of trips, including tours to Muslim and Yi minority markets as well as through remote areas of Yunnan and Guizhou.

Zouba Tours

BICYCLE TOUR, HIKING

(☎) 136 9877 9374; www.zoubatours.com)

Bike tours and treks to the less-visited parts of Yunnan.

Tibet Motorcycle Adventures

MOTORCYCLE TOUR

(☎) 151 8499 9452; <http://tibetmoto.com>)

Motorbikes can be rented for ¥200 per day. Contact Hendrik Heyne.



Festivals & Events

Third Moon Fair

CULTURAL

Merrymaking – along with endless buying, selling and general horse-trading (but mostly partying) – takes place during the third moon fair (*sanyue jie*), which begins on the 15th day of the third lunar month (usually April) and ends on the 21st day.

Three Temples Festival

CULTURAL

The three temples festival (*raosan ling*) is held between the 23rd and 25th days of the fourth lunar month (usually May). The first day starts at Dali's south gate and ends at Sacred Fountainhead Temple (Shengyuan Si) in Xizhou, where there is all-night dancing and singing. From there, revellers move on to Jingui Temple (Jingui Si), before returning by way of Majiuyi Temple (Majiuyi Si).

Torch Festival

CULTURAL

The torch festival (*huoba jie*) is held on the 24th day of the sixth lunar month (normally July) and is likely to be the best photo op in the province. Flaming torches are paraded at night through homes and fields. Locals throw pine resin at the torches causing minor explosions everywhere. According to one local guesthouse owner, 'it's total madness'.

Sleeping

There's heaps of accommodation in Dali, but the popular places fill up quickly during peak summer months.

★ Jade Emu

HOSTEL

(Jinyuyuan Zhong'ao Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 267 7311; www.jade-emu.com; West Gate Village, 4-bed dm with bathroom ¥40, 6-bed dm without/with bathroom ¥25/35, d/tw ¥150-180; @ 📶)

Smack in the shadow of Cang Shan (a five-minute walk from the old town), the Jade Emu sets the standard for hostels in Dali and elsewhere with its attention to detail. There's an in-house VPN for access to social media sites banned in China, while the dorm beds are more comfortable than most and the staff efficient and friendly.

Private rooms are spacious, clean and well-maintained. Staff also arrange tours and bus tickets. Around the corner, sister establishment Jade Roo copes with the overflow of travellers with similar rooms, while next door is its own cafe-cum-bookshop and new restaurant La Dolce Vita.

Lily Pad Inn & International Guest House

HOSTEL

(Baihe Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 267 7807; www.lilyinn.com; Xicheng Men; 4/6-bed dm ¥45/30, d/tw ¥100-180; @ 📶)

One of a growing number of hostels located just outside the old town and near the west gate, this cool, relaxed guesthouse is set around two attractive, plant-filled courtyards. Dorms are a little cramped, but they come with bathrooms and some have mountain views. Rooms are big and nicely

furnished. There's a pool table and the English-speaking staff are helpful.

Sleepyfish Lodge

HOSTEL

(Dali Leyou Kezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞153 3167 0214; www.sleepyfishlodge.com; Yu'er Lu, near Dongmen; 4-bed dm ¥50, d/tw ¥180-240; @ 📶)

Well away from Dali's main tourist strip (it's close to the east gate, down an alley off the right-hand side of Yu Er Lu just before the ornamental gate), Sleepyfish is all about peace and quiet. Rooms lack TVs, but come with balconies overlooking a garden and are a big step up from the more functional dorms.

Bike hire is available from ¥25 a day; you may need one as it's a good 20 minute walk to the centre of town.

Five Elements

HOSTEL

(Wu Xing Guoji Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞130 9985 0360; www.5elementschina.com; West Gate Village, 4/6-bed dm ¥40/30, d/tw ¥120; @ 📶)

This place has a popular following with backpackers, thanks to the low prices and friendly vibe. Dorms lack lockers but are reasonably sized, while the private rooms are a decent deal for the price. There's a nice courtyard and garden where the manager grows organic vegies. Tours and tickets can be booked and bike hire is ¥30 per day.

Four Seasons International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Chun Xia Qiudong Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞267 1668; dicxqd@hotmail.com; 26 Renmin Lu; 4/6-bed dm ¥40, d/tw ¥150/180; @ 📶)

Located in the heart of Dali, this hostel sees far more Chinese travellers than foreigners. Rooms are big, clean and well-maintained, with beds raised off the floor, and the communal area spreads into an attractive garden. Dorms are less spacious but you're just steps away from cafes and restaurants. Wi-fi in the lobby, ADSL internet in the rooms.

Jim's Tibetan Hotel

HOTEL

(Jimu Heping Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 267 7824; www.china-travel.nl; 13 Yuxiu Lu, s/d ¥300; 📶 @ 📶)

The rooms here are some of the most distinctive in Dali, coming with Tibetan motifs and packed with antique Chinese-style furniture. The bathrooms too are a cut above the competition, while there's a garden, rooftop terrace, restaurant and bar. Travel services and tours can be booked.

Eating

Bai food makes use of local flora and fauna – many of which are unrecognisable! Province wide, *er kuai* are flattened and toasted rice 'cakes' with an assortment of toppings (or plain). *Rushan* ('milk fan') may not sound appetising, but this 'aired' yoghurt/milk mixture (it ends up as a long, thin sheet) is a local speciality and is often fried or melted atop other foods. This is distinct from *rubing* (goat's cheese). Given Erhai Hu's proximity, try *shaguo yu*, a claypot fish casserole/stew made from salted Erhai Hu carp – and, as a Bai touch, magnolia petals. Local tastes also ensure that when ordering beef the fat-to-meat ratio is typically 50:50.

Good Panda

YUNNAN

(Miaoxiang Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 81 Renmin Lu, dishes from ¥18; 🕒 9am-10pm)

Surrounded by Western-style restaurants, this is a more local joint and a good introduction to classic Dali dishes like sizzling beef (*tieban niurou*) and crispy carp (*jianchuan ganshao yu*), plus Yunnan and Sichuan food. There's a limited English menu, but you can point at the vegetables that look best. The patio is an excellent spot for people-watching.

Lovely Lotus Delicious Vegetarian

CHINESE, VEGETARIAN

(Ai Lian Shuo Sushan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 533 7737; B2, Jiulongju, west side of Fuxing Lu; B2 buffet ¥20; 🕒 11.30am-1.30pm & 6-8pm; 🍴)

No menu here; instead you choose from a tempting buffet of all-vegetarian dishes. It's very popular at lunchtimes and there's a small outside area to eat at. It's just off Boai Lu on the right-hand side of a forecourt.

Sweet Tooth

CAFE

(Tiandian Wu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 266 3830; 52 Boai Lu; cakes from ¥25, sandwiches from ¥28; 🕒 8.30am-10.30pm; 📶)

Owned and run by a culinary arts graduate, Sweet Tooth's homemade ice cream and desserts are simply inspiring. There's also fine coffee, proper English tea and healthy fruit and yoghurt shakes. As an added bonus, profits from the cafe benefit the hearing impaired.

Duan's Kitchen

YUNNAN

(Xiaoduan Chufang [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 153 0872 7919; 12 Renmin Lu; dishes from ¥20; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5.30-9pm)

Cosy and cute courtyard restaurant at the far eastern end of Renmin Lu which sees a lot of Chinese travellers. The dishes are an interpretation of Bai cuisine rather than 100% the real deal, but the ingredients are absolutely local.

Bakery No. 88

WESTERN

(88, Bashiba Hao Xidiandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 267 9129; 17 Renmin Lu, sandwiches from ¥25; 🕒 8.30am-10pm; 📶)

Spread across two floors and with a small garden, this smoke-free haven of tranquillity has excellent sandwiches, pastas and soups, all prepared with local produce, as well as fine breads and cakes.

Meizi Jing

YUNNAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 267 1578; 130 Renmin Lu, dishes from ¥15; 🕒 11am-9pm)

This charmingly authentic Bai restaurant is composed of three grey-brick courtyards each containing small seating nooks where you can feast on traditional local cuisine. The nonsensical English menu includes a few

mystery dishes ('Sewing kit fried lily', anyone?), but the 'braised chicken' or 'wild mushroom' dishes are both fine starting points. It's tucked off Renmin Lu opposite the vegetable market.

Birdbar Cafe

JAPANESE

(Niaoba Kafei Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 250 1902; 20 Renmin Lu; breakfast ¥38, sushi from ¥38; 🕒 10am-8.30pm Tue-Sun; 📶)

There's a great, sun-filled upstairs area to lounge in over a coffee, tea or beer, while the menu is an intriguing take on Japanese cuisine. The breakfasts are an especially good deal, as are the set dinners (¥68).



Drinking & Nightlife

The Western-style restaurants double as bars.

Bad Monkey

BAR

(Huai Houzi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Renmin Lu; beers from ¥15; 🕒 9am-late)

The eternally happening, Brit-run Bad Monkey brews its own strong ales (from ¥25), has regular live music and endless drink specials. There's also average pub grub (pizzas, burgers and shepherd's pie) and Sunday roast for ¥45 (including a glass of wine).

Sun Island

BAR

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 324 Renmin Lu, beers from ¥12; 🕒 3pm-late)

Courtyard bar with a sound selection of foreign beers, a pool table and laid-back vibe. It's on the right-hand side of Renmin Lu going towards the east gate.



Shopping

Dali is famous for its marbled blue and white batik printed on cotton and silk.

The centre of town has a profusion of clothes shops. Most shopkeepers can also make clothes to your specifications – which will come as a relief when you see how small some of the items of ready-made clothing are.

A few more-or-less useful maps (¥8) can be picked up at hostels and restaurants around town. You can also find them at **Mandarin Books & CDs** (Wuhua Shuyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Huguo Lu; 🕒 9.30am-9.30pm), along with guidebooks and novels in Chinese, English, French and German.

Information

On hikes around Cang Shan there have been several reports of robbery of solo walkers. On the overnight sleeper bus from Kunming, a bag is often pinched or razored. Bags in the luggage hold are also not safe.

All hostels and many hotels offer travel advice, arrange tours and book tickets for onward travel. There are also numerous travel agencies and cafes that will book bus tickets and offer all manner of tours. They can be expensive unless you can get a group together.

A couple of internet cafes can be found on Renmin Lu (¥3 per hour).

Note that there is a **Public Security Bureau** (PSB., Gong'anju  214 2149; Dali Rd, Xiaguan; 🕒 8-11am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) in Dali, though visas cannot be renewed here; you have to go to Xiaguan.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Fuxing Lu)

Changes cash and travellers cheques, and has an ATM that accepts all major credit cards.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Fuxing Lu & Huguo Lu; 🕒 8am-8pm)

You can make international calls here.

i Getting There & Away

The golden rule: most buses advertised to Dali actually go to Xiaguan. Coming from Lijiang, Xiaguan-bound buses stop at the eastern end of Dali to let passengers off before continuing on to the Xingsheng bus station.

From Kunming's west bus station there are numerous buses to Dali (¥138, four to five hours, every 20 minutes from 7.20am to 8pm). Heading north, it's easiest to pick up a bus on the roads outside the west or east gates; buy your ticket in advance from your guesthouse or a travel agent and they'll make sure you get on the right one. (You could hail one yourself to save a surcharge but you're not guaranteed a seat.)

From the old town (near West Gate Village) you can catch a 30-seat bus to Kunming for ¥110, departing 9am, 10.30am, 11.30am, 1.30pm and 4.30pm.

Buses run regularly to Shaping (¥10), Xizhou (¥6) and other local destinations from outside the west gate.

i Getting Around

From Dali, a taxi to Xiaguan airport takes 45 minutes and costs around ¥100; to Xiaguan's train station it costs ¥50.

Bikes are the best way to get around and can be hired at numerous places from ¥20 to ¥30 per day.

Buses (¥3, 30 minutes, marked) run between the old town and Xiaguan from as early as 6.30am; wait along the highway and flag one down. **Bus 8** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) runs between Dali and central Xiaguan (¥2, 30 minutes) on the way to the train station every 15 minutes from 6.30am.

Around Dali

Travellers have a **market** to go to nearly every day of the week. Every Monday at **Shaping**, about 30km north of Dali, there is a colourful Bai market (Shaping Ganji). From 10am to 2.30pm you can buy everything from

food products and clothing to jewellery and local batik.

Regular buses to Shaping (¥10, one hour) leave from just outside the west gate. By bike, it will take about two hours at a good clip.

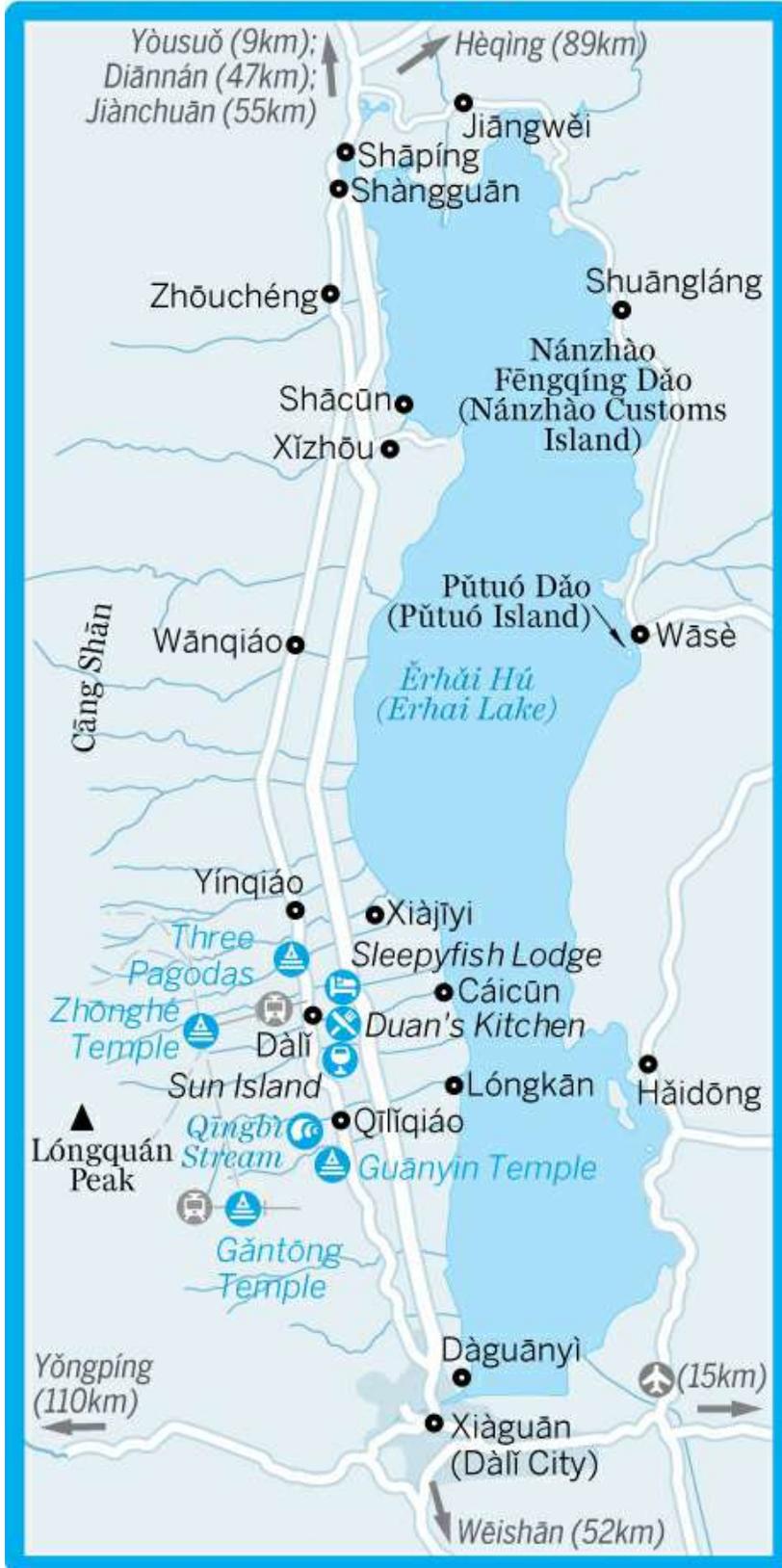
Markets also take place in **Shuanglang** (Tuesday), **Shaba** (Wednesday), **Yousuo** (Friday morning, the largest in Yunnan) and **Jiangwei** (Saturday). **Xizhou** and **Zhoucheng** have daily morning and afternoon markets, respectively. **Wase** also has a popular market every five days with trading from 9am to 4.30pm. Thanks to the lack of boats, travellers now have to slog to Xiaguan's east bus station for buses to Wase (¥20).

Many cafes and hotels in Dali offer tours or can arrange transportation to these markets for around ¥150 for a half day.

Erhai Hu

Erhai Hu (or 'Ear-Shaped' Lake) dominates the local psyche. The seventh-biggest freshwater lake in China, it sits at 1973m above sea level and covers 250 sq km; it's also dotted with trails perfect for bike rides and villages to visit. It's a 50-minute walk, a 15-minute bus ride or a 10-minute downhill zip on a bike from Dali.

Dàlǐ & Ěrhǎi Hú 5 km / 2.5 miles



Sights & Activities

Caicun, a pleasant little village east of Dali (¥1.50 on bus 2), is the nexus of lake transport. Sadly, putt-putt local ferries are a distant memory. All boat travel is now on ‘official’ vessels. Expect to pay ¥180 for a three-hour trip.

On the east side of the lake the beautiful lakeside town of **Shuanglang** is now extremely popular with domestic tourists. The town is a labyrinth of winding old alleys and traditional homes sitting on a little peninsula that juts into the lake. Just offshore is **Nanzhao Customs Island** (Nanzhao Fengqing Dao), which has gardens, parks a 17.5m-tall marble statue of Avalokiteshvara (Chenresig) aka Guanyin, and a hotel. Boats to the island cost ¥50, the price includes admission.

The other east-side highlight, close to Wase, is **Putuo Dao** (Putuo Island) and **Lesser Putuo Temple** (Xiaoputuo Si), set on an extremely photogenic rocky outcrop.

Roads encircle the lake so it is possible to do a loop (or partial loop) of the lake by **mountain bike**. A bike path goes from Caicun to Tao Yuan Port, which makes a great day trip (but most travellers turn around at Xizhou,). Some hard-core cyclists continue right around the lake (the full loop is around 98km). The lack of boats means you’re looking at an overnight stay or an extremely long ride in one day.

Sleeping

There are several guesthouses in Shuanglang, including the **Sky & Sea Lodge** (Haidi Shenghuo ☎0872-246 1762; www.skysealodge.org; 8-bed dm ¥40, d/tw ¥120-300; 📶), with excellent lake views. You can’t take a taxi here so you’ll have to walk about 10 to 15 minutes through the village, ask locals to point the way.

Cang Shan

This range of gorgeous peaks rises imposingly above Dali and offers the best legwork in the area. Most travellers head first for **Zhonghe Temple** (Zhonghe Si), on the side of **Zhonghe Shan** (Zhonghe Mountain admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-6pm). At the temple, be careful of imposter monks passing out incense and then demanding ¥200 for a blessing.

You can hike up the mountain, a sweaty two to three hours for those in moderately good shape (but note the warning that there have been several reports of robbery of solo walkers). Walk about 200m north of the **chairlift** (¥60 return) base to the riverbed. Follow the left bank for about 50m and walk through the cemetery, then follow the path zigzagging under the chairlift. When you reach some stone steps, you know you are near the top. This is but one of several paths to the temple.

Branching out from either side of Zhonghe Temple is a trail that winds along the face of the mountains, taking you in and out of steep, lush valleys and past streams and waterfalls. From the temple, it's a nice 11km walk south to **Gantong Temple** (Gantong Si), **Qingbi Stream** (Qingbi Xi) and/or **Guanyin Temple** (Guanyin Tang), from where you can continue to the road and pick up a Dali-bound bus. The path, called **Jade Belt Road** (Yudai Lu), is paved and easily walkable.

There's also a **cable car** (one way/return ¥50/80) between Qingbi Stream and Gantong Temple.

Alternatively, take the new **cable car** (return ¥230) up to the **Horse Washing Pond** (Xi Ma Tan), high in the mountain range, where Kublai Khan set up his base in the late 13th century.

Xizhou

A trip to the old town of Xizhou for a look at its well-preserved Bai architecture is lovely, and some travellers now make it their base. You can catch a local bus (¥6) from the west gate in Dali, but a bicycle trip is also a good idea.

Walk through the market to find the old town and the American-run **Linden Centre** (Xi Lin Yuan 📞245 2988; www.linden-centre.com; 5 Chengbei; d/ste incl breakfast ¥980/1480; @ 📶), a traditional home turned boutique hotel with 15 rooms that come with antique furniture and modern bathrooms. But there are other places in the village where you can find a room for ¥80.

From here, the interesting town of **Zhoucheng** is 7km further north; it too has basic accommodation.

Nuodeng

📞0872

This anachronistic hamlet, oft-lauded as the ‘thousand-year-old’ village, has one of the highest concentrations of Bai in Yunnan and some of the best preserved buildings in the entire province. Nuodeng has managed to maintain traditional village life, with ponies and donkeys clomping up the steep flagstone streets past traditional mud-brick buildings with ornate gates, many of which date back to the Ming and Qing dynasties, making it a delightful place to kickback for a while.

Sights

After crossing the bridge at the bottom of the village you’ll see one of the original **salt wells**, located inside a wooden shed. The town is built upon a steep hill and winding up through the alleys you’ll reach an impressive **Confucian Temple** (Kongmiao), which today serves as the village primary school (check out the detailed frescoes still visible on the ceiling). Further uphill is the picturesque 16th-century **Yuhuang Pavillion** (Yuhuang Ge).

Village life is centred on the small **market square**; a good place to catch some sun and gab with the local elders.

On the way to Nuodeng village from Yunlong, the **Bi River** is forced by the surrounding hills into a serpentine roll that from above looks remarkably

like a yin-yang symbol, or **Taijitu**. You won't notice this natural phenomenon from ground level; you need to go up to a viewing platform on the nearby hill. The road to the pavilion is 7km of endless switchbacks, a tedious and tiring hike, or you could hire a rickshaw to take you there for ¥20.

Sleeping & Eating

Good Life Hostel

HOSTEL

(Gudaofang Kezhan  572 3526; 292970620@qq.com; 4-bed dm ¥40, d without/with bathroom ¥120/160; )

Converted courtyard home with compact but clean rooms and friendly staff. To find it, head for the stone steps leading uphill from the bridge where rickshaws arrive and depart, and follow the signs. Staff can cook simple Chinese dishes too.

Fujia Liufangyuan

INN

( 572 3466; dm ¥30, d/tw ¥80)

Big rooms at this family-run guesthouse set around a lush garden of bougainvillea. It's right at the top of the village; call ahead and they'll come and meet you.

Yan Quan Nongjia

YUNNAN

( 552 5111; dishes from ¥36;  11am-7.30pm)

The one genuine restaurant in the village is also one of the most famous in all Yunnan, having been featured on the hit Chinese TV cooking show *A Bite of China*. People come from far and wide to sample *huotui*, a slightly salty cured ham that is the local speciality. Prices are accordingly expensive, but the food tastes great.

Getting There & Away

Buses (¥42, three hours, 14 daily from 7.30am to 4.30pm) leave from Xiaguan's Xingsheng bus station to the county seat Yunlong, from where you can take a three-wheel rickshaw (¥20 to ¥25) the final 7km to Nuodeng. Buses back to Xiaguan leave on a similar schedule, the final departure is at 4pm. Heading to and from Liuku, catch the hourly buses that run to and from Lanping between 8am and 1pm (¥46).

Shaxi

☞ 0872

The tiny hamlet of Shaxi, 120km northwest of Dali, is a hugely evocative throwback to the days of the Tea-Horse Roads. You can almost hear the clippety-clop of horses' hooves and shouts of traders.

Shaxi is one of only three surviving caravan oases from the old Tea-Horse Roads that stretched from Yunnan to India. It's by far the best preserved and the only one with a surviving market (held on Fridays).

The village's wooden houses, courtyards and narrow, winding streets make it a popular location for period Chinese movies and TV shows (and day trippers), but this is still a wonderfully sleepy place where nightlife means sitting out under the canopy of stars and listening to the frogs croaking in the rice paddies.

Sights

Sideng Jie is the ancient town street leading off the main road. It's about 300m downhill to the multifrescoed **Xingjiao Si** (Xingjiao Temple; admission ¥20; 8.30am-5.30pm), the only Ming-dynasty Bai Buddhist temple. On the opposite side of the courtyard is the **Three Terraced Pavilion** (Kuixingge), which has a prominent theatrical **stage** (*guxitai*), something of a rarity in rural Yunnan. There is a small museum here, ask the guard at the temple for the key. The absolute highlight, however, is the **Ouyang Courtyard** (Ouyang Dayuan), a superb example of three-in-one Bai folk

architecture in which one wall protected three yards/residences. Sadly, most of it is currently closed to the public, although you can poke your head inside for a quick look.

Exit the east gate and head south along the Hui River (Hui Jiang) for five minutes, cross the ancient **Yujin Qiao** (Yujin Bridge), and you're walking the same trail as the horse caravans. If you look hard enough, you'll still be able to see hoofprints etched into the rock, or so the locals claim.

Otherwise, the main activity around town is walking. The guesthouses in town have maps that can get you started and keep you busy for days.

THE TEA-HORSE ROAD

Less well known than the Silk Road, but equally important in terms of trade and the movement of ideas, people and religions, the Tea-Horse Road (Chamagudao) linked southwest China with India via Tibet. A series of caravan routes, rather than a single road, which also went through parts of Sichuan, Myanmar (Burma), Laos and Nepal, the trails started deep in the jungle of Xishuangbanna. They then headed north through Dali and Lijiang and into the thin air of the Himalayan mountains on the way to the Tibetan capital Lhasa, before turning south to India and Myanmar.

Although archaeological finds indicate that stretches of the different routes were in use thousands of years ago, the road really began life in the Tang dynasty (AD 618–907). An increased appetite for tea in Tibet led to an arrangement with the Chinese imperial court to barter Yunnan tea for the prized horses ridden by Tibetan warriors. By the Song dynasty (AD 960–1279), 20,000 horses a year were coming down the road to China, while in 1661 alone some 1.5 million kilos of tea headed to Tibet.

Sugar and salt were also carried by the caravans of horses, mules and yaks. Buddhist monks, Christian missionaries and foreign armies utilised the trails as well to move between Myanmar, India and China. In the 18th century the Chinese stopped trading for Tibetan horses and the road went into a slow decline. Its final glory days came during WWII, when it was a vital conduit for supplies from India for the allied troops fighting the Japanese in China. The advent of peace and the communist takeover of 1949 put an end to the road.

Sleeping & Eating

Basic beds are available along Sideng Jie from ¥50.

Horsepen 46

INN

(Majuan Sishiliu Kezhan  472 2299; www.horsepen46.com; 46 Sideng Jie; 6/8-bed dm ¥30, r ¥60-120;  )

In-demand guesthouse with cute, compact rooms surrounding a sunny little courtyard. There's a laid-back traveller vibe here with daily communal dinners (¥20). There's also bike hire (¥20 per day) and the helpful English-speaking staff can organise hikes in the area. It's tucked away to the right of the stage in the village square.

Tea and Horse Caravan Trail Inn

INN

(Gudao Kezhan  472 1051; 83 Sideng Jie, d/tw ¥120-200; )

There are a couple of cheap rooms without bathrooms (¥60) at this friendly place, but the more expensive ones are a significant step up and come with comfy beds and decent bathrooms, as well as being set around a pleasant garden.

★ Old Theatre Inn

BOUTIQUE GUESTHOUSE

(Xitai Huiguan  472 2296; reservations@shaxichina.com; Duanjiadeng Village, r incl breakfast ¥460;  )

This boutique guesthouse has been lovingly restored out of a 200-year-old Chinese theatre and inn. There are only five very comfortable rooms here, all with photogenic views towards the nearby mountains; book ahead. It's located 3km north of Shaxi, you can rent a bike here (¥20) to get around.

Ban Xian Ju

YUNNAN

(Sideng Jie; dishes from ¥20;  9am-10pm)

On the corner of the village square, this courtyard restaurant attracts both locals and travellers with its small but authentic range of Bai dishes, as well as Yunnan-wide fare.

Hungry Buddha

ITALIAN

(Dazui Fo dishes from ¥40; 🕒 9.30am-9pm Wed-Sun)

Quite the most sophisticated eatery in town, with a mouth-watering menu utilising locally produced ingredients. Great homemade cheese, pasta and pizza, as well as a fine breakfast. Proper wine list too.

i Getting There & Away

From Jianchuan, minivans (¥10, one hour) run to and from Shaxi. Moving on you'll have to backtrack to Jianchuan. There are frequent buses to Dali (¥42) between 6.30am and 6pm. To Lijiang (¥20) there are buses at 8am, 9.30am, 11.30am, 1.30pm and 3.30pm. Buses to Kunming (¥160) leave at 9.30am and 2pm, and to Shangri-la (¥53) at 9am and 10am.

NORTHWEST YUNNAN

Lijiang

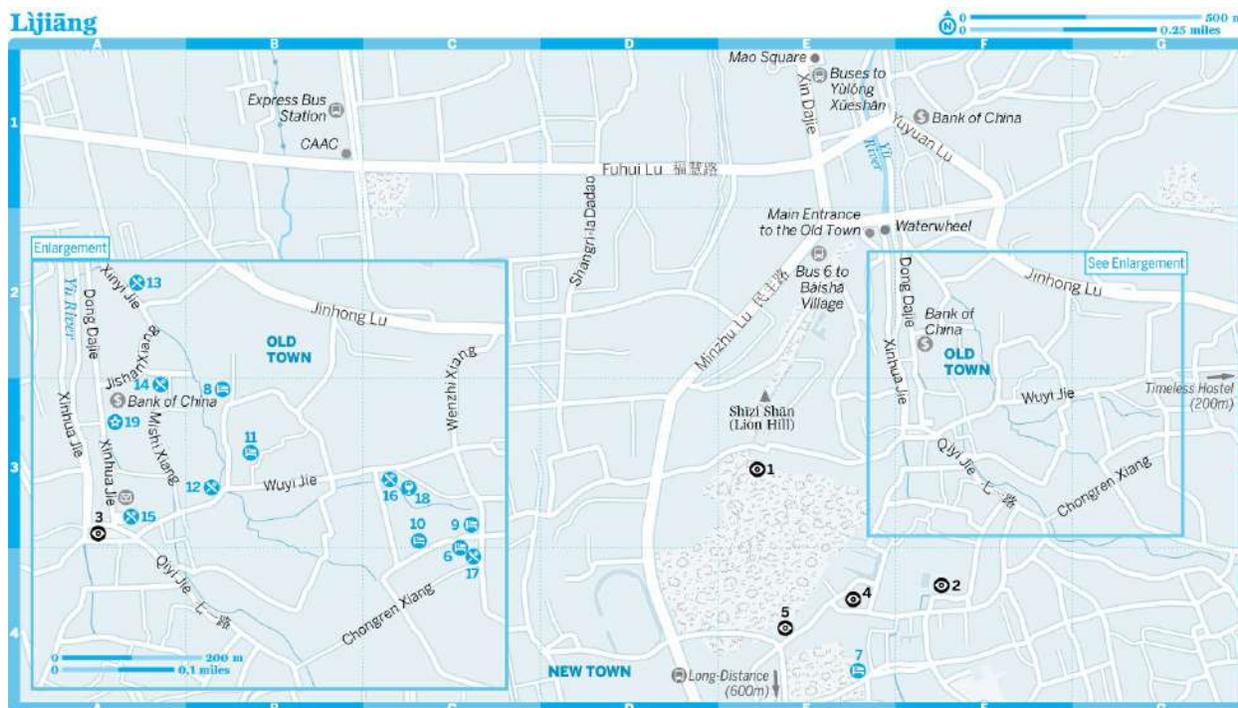
📞 0888 / Pop (old town) 40,000

How popular is this timelocked place? Lijiang's maze of cobbled streets, rickety (or rickety-looking, given gentrification) wooden buildings and gushing canals suck in over *eight million* people a year. So thick are the crowds in the narrow alleys that it can feel like that they've all arrived at the same time.

But remember the 80/20 rule: 80% of the tourists will be in 20% of the places. Get up early enough and you can often beat the crowds. And when they do appear, that's the cue to hop on a bike and cycle out to one of the nearby villages.

A Unesco World Heritage Site since 1997, Lijiang is a city of two halves: the old town and the very modern new town. The old town is where you'll be spending your time and it's a jumble of lanes that twist and turn. If you get lost (and most do), head upstream and you'll make your way back to the main square.

Lijiang



Lijiang

Sights

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Looking at the Past Pavillion | E3 |
| 2 Mu Family Mansion | F4 |
| 3 Old Market Square | A3 |
| 4 White Horse Dragon Pool | E4 |
| 5 Zhongyi Market | E4 |

Sleeping

| | |
|--|----|
| 6 Blossom Hill Joyland | C3 |
| 7 Crowne Plaza Lijiang | E4 |
| 8 Lijiang International Youth Hostel | B3 |
| 9 Mama Naxi's Guesthouse | C3 |
| 10 Mama Naxi's Guesthouse 3 | C3 |
| 11 Zen Garden Hotel | B3 |

Eating

| | |
|--|----|
| 12 Amayi Naxi Snacks | B3 |
| 13 Lamu's House of Tibet | A2 |
| 14 N's Kitchen | A3 |

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 15 | Sakura Good Food Square | A3 |
| 16 | Tian He Canting | C3 |
| 17 | Tiantian Xian | C4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 18 | Stone the Crows | C3 |
|----|---------------------------------|----|

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----|
| 19 | Naxi Orchestra | A3 |
|----|--------------------------------|----|

THE NAXI

Lijiang has been the homeland of the 286,000-strong Naxi (also spelt Nakhi and Nahi) minority for about the last 1400 years. The Naxi descend from ethnically Tibetan Qiang tribes and lived until recently in matrilineal families. Since local rulers were always male it wasn't truly matriarchal, but women still seemed to run the show.

The Naxi matriarchs maintained their hold over the men with flexible arrangements for love affairs. The azhu (friend) system allowed a couple to become lovers without setting up joint residence. Both partners would continue to live in their respective homes; the boyfriend would spend the nights at his girlfriend's house but return to live and work at his mother's house during the day. Any children born to the couple belonged to the woman, who was responsible for bringing them up. The man provided support, but once the relationship was over, so was the support. Children lived with their mothers and no special effort was made to recognise paternity. Women inherited all property and disputes were adjudicated by female elders.

There are strong matriarchal influences in the Naxi language. Nouns enlarge their meaning when the word for 'female' is added; conversely, the addition of the word for 'male' will decrease the meaning. For example, 'stone' plus 'female' conveys the idea of a boulder; 'stone' plus 'male' conveys the idea of a pebble.

Sights

Note that a ¥80 'protection fee', allegedly for old town preservation projects, is sold at most guesthouses and provides free entry to Black Dragon Pool. Proof of payment of this fee is required at some other sites, such as Jade

Dragon Snow Mountain.

Old Town

HISTORIC SITE

()

The old town is centred around the busy and touristy **Old Market Square** (Sifang Jie). The surrounding lanes are dissected by a web of artery-like canals that once brought the city's drinking water from Yuquan Spring, on the far outskirts of what is now Black Dragon Pool Park. Several wells and pools are still in use around town (but hard to find). Where there are three pools, these were designated into pools for drinking, washing clothes and washing vegetables.

A famous example of these is the **White Horse Dragon Pool** (Baimalong Tan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 7am-10pm) in the deep south of the old town, where you can still see the odd local washing their vegies after buying them in the market.

Now acting as sentinel of sorts for the town, the **Looking at the Past Pavillion** (Wanggu Lou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥50 (free with ¥80 town entrance ticket); 🕒 7.30am-7pm) has a unique design using dozens of four-storey pillars – culled from northern Yunnan old-growth forests.

A must-see is **Zhongyi Market** (Zhongyi Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 6am-5pm) where locals sell produce, copper items and livestock. If you are craving a slice of old Lijiang, this is where you'll find it.

Black Dragon Pool Park

PARK

(Heilongtan Gongyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xin Dajie; admission free with ¥80 town entrance ticket; 🕒 7am-7pm)

On the northern edge of town is the Black Dragon Pool Park; its view of **Yulong Xueshan** (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain) is the most obligatory photo shoot in southwestern China. The **Dongba Research Institute** (Dongba Wenhua Yanjiushi [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) is part of a renovated complex on the hillside here. You can see Naxi cultural artefacts and scrolls featuring

a unique pictograph script.

Trails lead up **Xiang Shan** (Elephant Hill) to a dilapidated gazebo and then across a spiny ridge past a communications centre and back down the other side, making a nice morning hike, but note that there have been reports of solo women travellers being robbed in this area..

The **Museum of Naxi Dongba Culture** (Naxi Dongba Wenhua Bowuguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm) is at the park's northern entrance and is a decent introduction to traditional Naxi lifestyle and religion, complete with good English captions.

Note that the pool has dried up in recent years and without water some visitors are disappointed with this site; ask at your accommodation first if the pool has water before deciding whether or not to visit.

Mu Family Mansion

HISTORIC SITE

(Mushi Tusifu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥60; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

The former home of a Naxi chieftain, the Mu Family Mansion was heavily renovated (more like built from scratch) after the devastating earthquake that struck Lijiang in 1996. Mediocre captions do a poor job of introducing the Mu family but many travellers find the beautiful grounds reason enough to visit.

KEEPING THE GOOD FORTUNE

An interesting local historical tidbit has it that the original Naxi chieftain, whose former home is the Mu Family Mansion, would not allow the old town to be girdled by a city wall because drawing a box around the Chinese character of his family name would change the character from mu (wood) to kun (surrounded, or hard pressed).

Tours

There are dozens of tour operators in the old town, but these cater to tour groups. Your best bet is to book trips through your accommodation.

Keith Lyons

TOURS

( 137 6900 1439; keithalyons@gmail.com)

Lijiang-based guide Keith Lyons runs tours and treks, specialising in the area outside Lijiang.

Insiders

DRIVING TOUR

( 138 1761 6975; www.insidersexperience.com)

If you fancy seeing Lijiang's environs from the sidecar of a vintage Chinese motorbike, Insiders runs tours from its base in nearby Baisha.

NAXI SCRIPT

The Naxi created a written language more than 1000 years ago using an extraordinary system of pictographs – the only hieroglyphic language still in use. The most famous Naxi text is the Dongba classic Creation, and ancient copies of it and other texts can still be found in Lijiang, as well as in the archives of some US universities. The Dongba were Naxi shamans who were caretakers of the written language and mediators between the Naxi and the spirit world. The Dongba religion, itself an offshoot of Tibet's pre-Buddhist Bon religion, eventually developed into an amalgam of Tibetan Buddhism, Islam and Taoism.

Useful phrases in the Naxi language are nuar lala (hello) and jiu bai sai (thank you).



Festivals & Events

Fertility Festival

CULTURAL

The 13th day of the third moon (late March or early April) is the traditional day to hold this festival.

Torch Festival

CULTURAL

July brings the torch festival (Huoba Jie), also celebrated by the Bai in the Dali region and the Yi all over the southwest. The origin of this festival can be traced back to the Nanzhao kingdom, when the wife of a man burned to

death by the king eluded the romantic entreaties of the monarch by leaping into a fire.

These days, flaming torches are paraded through the streets to much merriment.

Sleeping

There are well over a thousand places to stay in the old town, with more appearing all the time. Many have less than 10 rooms. In peak seasons (especially holidays), prices double (or more).

★ **Timeless Hostel**

HOSTEL

(Jiu Ju Yuanyang Qingnian Lushe  517 4626; lijiang.timeless@gmail.com; 63 Wenming Xiang, Wuyi Jie, Yishang, 4/8-bed dm ¥45/40, d/tw ¥140-160;  )

Formerly known as the Panba, this amiable hostel at the quieter eastern end of Wuyi Jie has the best dorms in town: large with en-suite bathrooms and big lockers, as well as clean private rooms with shared balconies. The solicitous staff are pleasant and the attached restaurant and bar are good for both meals and hanging out.

Bikes can be hired for ¥40 a day and all the usual tickets and tours can be arranged.

Garden Inn

GUESTHOUSE

(Lijiang Wenmiao Guoji Kezhan  [GOOGLE MAP](#);  151 0887 3494; www.mayhostel.wix.com/gardeninn; 7 Wenmiao Xiang, Beimen Jie; 7, 6-bed dm ¥35, d/tw ¥140-300;   )

Just re-located higher up in the old town (so the views are better), this popular backpacker hostel is set around an attractive courtyard garden. All dorms come with their own bathrooms, and there's a range of private rooms. There's a decent communal area too, and the helpful staff can arrange tours or rent you a bike (¥40 per day).

Mama Naxi's Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Gucheng Xianggeyun Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 510 7713; mamanaxi@hotmail.com; 70 Wangjia Zhuang Lane, Wuyi Jie, 4/6-bed dm ¥40/36, d/tw ¥100-180; @ 📶)

The energetic Mama operates two guesthouses near each other, named '1' and '3'. Head to '3' ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 510 7713; 70 Wangjia Zhuang Lane; 4/6-bed dm ¥40/36, d ¥100-180) at 70 Wangjia Zhuang Lane for cramped dorms, clean standard rooms, information-gathering, socialising and cheap eats. It's a bit loud when a Naxi wedding is taking place at the next-door wedding hall. '1', at 78 Wangjia Zhuang Lane is dorm-free and more peaceful.

Lijiang International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Lijiang Laoxie Chemadian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 518 0124; Maying130@126.com; 44 Mishi Xiang, Xinyi Jie, 12/8/4-bed dm ¥35/55/40, d/tw ¥138-168; @ 📶)

This hostel sees mostly domestic travellers – not much English is spoken – but dorms and rooms are reasonably-sized and priced, if uninspired. No bike hire but there's a good bar/communal area.

★ Blossom Hill Joyland

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Huajian Tang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 4000 767 123; www.blossomhillinn.com; 55 Wenhua Xiang, Wuyi Jie; d/tw ¥880-1586; ❄️ 📶)

There are only 18 rooms, all individually decorated in very tasteful and comfortable fashion, at this boutique inn in the heart of the old town. Bathrooms are modern and large, while each room comes with its own collection of antiques and wood furnishings. Staff are helpful and there's a small common area with a library. It's essential to book ahead.

Crowne Plaza Lijiang

HOTEL

(Lijiang Hefu Jiari Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 558 8888; www.crowneplaza.cn; 276 Xianghe Lu, d/ste ¥1553/3370; @ 📶 🚿)

The best hotel in the old town, a magical space with lofty ceilings, little gardens and epic views of the Jade Dragon Mountain. The bathrooms are the

finest in town, the beds huge and comfy. Other amenities include two restaurants, a swimming pool, day spa and children's play room. Discounts of 25% are sometimes available.

Zen Garden Hotel

HOTEL

(Ruihe Yuan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 518 9799; www.zengardenhotel.com; 36 Xingren Lane, Wuyi Jie, d/ste ¥500/1200; @ 📶)

As befits its name, this is a serene, hushed establishment. Run by a Naxi teacher and decorated with help from her artist brother, the furniture and design in the communal areas is tremendous, while the rooms have been recently upgraded and come with top bathrooms.

Eating

There are many, many eateries around the old town, and almost every menu will have both Chinese and Western dishes.

Baba is the Lijiang local speciality – thick flatbreads of wheat, served plain or stuffed with meat, vegetables or sweets. There are always several 'Naxi' items on menus, including the famous 'Naxi omelette' and 'Naxi sandwich' (goat's cheese, tomato and fried egg between two pieces of local *baba*). Try locally produced *qing mei jiu*, a plum-based wine with a 500-year history – it tastes like a semi-sweet sherry.

★ Tiantian Xian

YUNNAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 518 4933; 47 Wangjiazhuang Xiang, Wuyi Jie; dishes from ¥14; 🕒 noon-9pm)

Locals flock here for the superb, signature grilled fish and chicken and soybean-paste dishes (get here before 7pm or it will have run out). But all the great-value Naxi specialities on offer are fantastic. No English spoken, but there is an English menu. To find it, look for the three characters with 'Daily Fresh' written in English underneath them.

Tian He Canting

YUNNAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍139 8887 6492; 139 Wuyi Jie; dishes from ¥18; 🕒7am-11pm)

It's hard to find a neighbourhood-style restaurant in the old town, or one that doesn't also serve Western food, but this very solid, family-run place hits the spot with a mix of Naxi dishes and Chinese staples like dumplings, hotpots and *gong bao ji ding* (a chicken, peanut and chilli-flavoured dish).

Sakura Good Food Square

YUNNAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yinghua Meishi Guangchang; Qiyi Jie snacks from ¥10; 🕒10am-late)

Snackers should not miss the open-air food market where vendors sell appetising bite-size treats, some of which are native to Lijiang. Try the *Naxi kao qiezi* (Naxi grilled eggplant) served in a boat-shaped crust, *tu dou bing* (Naxi potato pancake), and *Naxi kaola chang* (Naxi grilled, salty sausage) made with pork, fat and pepper.

For dessert, try the delightful *Naxi nuomi tuan* a sticky rice ball stuffed with either *hongdousha* (red bean), *shuca*i (vegetable) or *rou* (meat).

Amayi Naxi Snacks

YUNNAN

(Amayi Naxi Yinshi Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍530 9588; Wuyi Jie; dishes from ¥28; 🕒11am-9.30pm)

The name doesn't do justice to the small but select and very authentic selection of Naxi cuisine on offer at this calm courtyard restaurant. There are fantastic mushroom dishes, as well as *zhutong fan*, rice that comes packed in bamboo. It's down an alley off Wuyi Jie, close to the Stone Bridge.

N's Kitchen

WESTERN

(Erlou Xiaochu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍512 0060; 17 Jishan Xiang, Xinyi Jie; breakfast from ¥20, mains from ¥25; 🕒9am-10pm; 📶)

Clamber up the steep stairs for one of the best breakfasts in town, a monster burger and fine Yunnan coffee. It's a good source of travel info too and can arrange bus tickets.

Lamu's House of Tibet

TIBETAN

(Xizangwu Xicanting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 511 5776; 56 Xinyi Jie; dishes from ¥20; 🕒 7am-midnight; 📶)

Friendly Lamu has been serving up smiles and hearty Tibetan and international fare for more than a decade. Ascend the little wooden staircase to the 2nd-floor dining area, a great spot for people-watching, and try the excellent Naxiburger, a pasta or steak. There's also a good selection of paperback books to thumb through.

Drinking

Xinhua Jie, just off Old Market Sq, is packed out with Chinese-style drinking dens.

Stone the Crows

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 134-2 Wenzhi Xiang; beers from ¥15; 🕒 2pm-late)

Worth checking out is this Irish-owned, endearingly ramshackle bar with a good range of local and foreign beers and a mixed crowd of locals and Westerners. It gets going later rather than earlier.

Entertainment

Naxi Orchestra

LIVE MUSIC

(Naxi Guyue Hui, Naxi Music Academy [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinhua Jie, tickets ¥120-160; 🕒 performances 8pm)

Attending a performance of this orchestra inside a beautiful building in the old town is a good way to spend an evening in Lijiang. Not only are all two dozen or so members Naxi, but they play a type of Taoist temple music (known as *dongjing*) that has been lost elsewhere in China.

The pieces they perform are said to be faithful renditions of music from the

Han, Song and Tang dynasties, and are played on original instruments.

Information

Crowded, narrow streets are a pickpocket's heaven. Solo women travellers have been mugged when walking alone at night in isolated areas. Xiang Shan (Elephant Hill) in Black Dragon Pool Park (Heilongtan Gongyuan) has been the site of quite a few robberies.

Lijiang's cafes and backpacker inns are your best source of information on the area. There are no internet cafes in the old town, but all hostels and hotels have internet access and/or wi-fi, as do virtually all the cafes in town.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yuyuan Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm)

This branch has an ATM and is convenient for the old town. There are many ATMs in the old town too.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Minzhu Lu; 🕒 8am-8pm)

In the old town just north of Old Market Sq.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju 📞 518 8437; 110 Taihe Jie, Xianghelicheng District; 🕒 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Reputedly speedy with visa extensions. Located on the west side of the Government Building. A taxi here will cost ¥15 from the city centre.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Lijiang's airport is 28km east of town. Tickets can be booked at **CAAC** (Zhongguo Minhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Fuhui Lu & Shangrila Dadao; 🕒 8.30am-9pm). Most

hotels in the old town also offer an air-ticket booking service.

From Lijiang there are oodles of daily flights to Kunming (¥580), as well as daily flights to the following:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥1985
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥823
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥710
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥1600
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥1825
- ➔ **Shenzhen** ¥1555
- ➔ **Xishuangbanna** ¥879

BUS

The main long-distance bus station (*keyunzhan*) is south of the old town; to get here, take bus 8 or 11 (¥1; the latter is faster) from along Minzhu Lu.

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥326, 24 hours, one daily (1pm)
- ➔ **Jianchuan** ¥23, two to three hours, five daily (8.20am to 4pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥232, eight to nine hours, eight buses daily (9am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Lugu Hu** ¥100, nine hours, two daily (8.30am and 9am)
- ➔ **Ninglang** ¥56, five hours, 11 daily (9.10am to 4.10pm)
- ➔ **Panzhihua** ¥99, eight hours, nine daily (7.10am to 4pm)
- ➔ **Qiaotou** ¥29, two hours, two daily (8.30am and 9am); Lijiang to Shangri-la buses also stop here.
- ➔ **Shangri-la** ¥63 to ¥72, five hours, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 3.30pm)
- ➔ **Xiaguan** ¥63 to ¥80, three hours, every 30 minutes (7.10am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Xishuangbanna** ¥276, 18 hours, one daily (7.30am)

In the north of town, the **express bus station** (Gao kuai keyunzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shangri-la Dadao) is where many of the above buses originate, but it's usually more convenient to catch your bus from the long-distance bus

station.

TRAIN

There are six trains daily to Dali (¥34, two hours, 7.39am to 10.55pm) and eight trains to Kunming (hard sleeper ¥147, nine hours, 7.39am to 11.20pm). Trains to Shangri-la should be running by the time you read this.

Getting Around

Buses to the airport (¥20) leave from outside the CAAC office from 6.30am to 10pm.

Taxi flagfall is ¥8, although you will struggle to get drivers to use their meters. Taxis are not allowed into the old town. Bike hire is available at most hostels (¥40 per day).

Around Lijiang

It is possible to see most of Lijiang's environs on your own, but a few agencies in Lijiang, such as Keith Lyons, offer half- or full-day tours, starting from ¥200, plus fees.

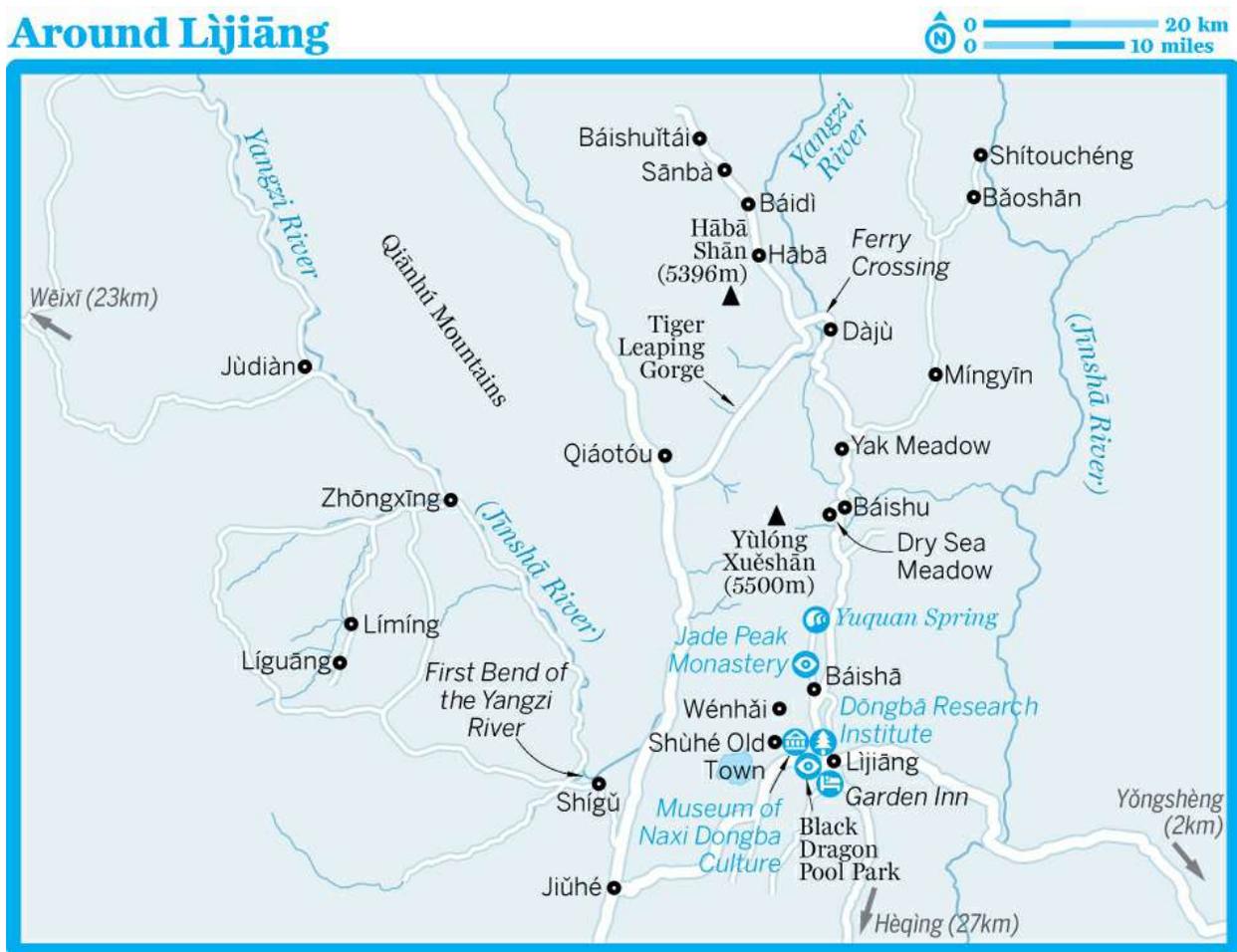
There are a number of monasteries around Lijiang, all Tibetan in origin and belonging to the Karmapa (Red Hat) sect. Most were extensively damaged during the Cultural Revolution and there's not much monastic activity nowadays.

Jade Peak Monastery (Yufeng Si [GOOGLE MAP](#)): admission ¥30) is on a hillside about 5km past Baisha. The last 3km of the track requires a steep climb. The monastery sits at the foot of Yulong Xueshan (5500m) and was established in 1756. The monastery's main attraction nowadays is the **Camellia Tree of 10,000 Blossoms** (Wanduo Shancha). Ten thousand might be something of an exaggeration, but locals claim that the tree produces at least 4000 blossoms between February and April. A monk on the grounds risked his life to keep the tree secretly watered during the Cultural Revolution.

Lijiang is also famed for its **temple frescoes**, most of which were painted during the 15th and 16th centuries by Tibetan, Naxi, Bai and Han artists; many were restored during the later Qing dynasty. They depict various Taoist, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist themes and can be found on the interior walls of temples in the area. Keep in mind the Cultural Revolution did lots of ravaging here.

Frescoes can be found in Baisha and on the interior walls of **Dajue Palace** (Dajue Gong) in the village of Longquan.

Around Lìjiāng



Baisha

By far, the most serene spot around Lijiang, Baisha is a small village near several old temples and makes a great day trip by bike. Alternatively, it's an

ideal spot for lazing and cycling the surrounding area for a day or two.

Located on the plain north of Lijiang, Baisha was the capital of the Naxi kingdom until Kublai Khan made it part of his Yuan empire (1271–1368).

Sights

The ‘star’ attraction of Baisha is **Dr Ho Shi Xiu**, a legendary herbalist who was propelled to fame by the travel writer Bruce Chatwin when he mythologised him in a 1986 *New Yorker* story as the ‘Taoist physician in the Jade Dragon Mountains of Lijiang’.

A sprightly 92 at the time of writing and still treating the ill every day with herbs collected from the nearby mountains, Dr Ho is very chatty (he speaks English, German and Japanese) and is happy to regale visitors with the secrets of good health and longevity.

There are a couple of **frescoes** worth seeing in town and the surrounding area. The best can be found in Baisha’s **Dabaoji Palace**, and at the neighbouring **Liuli Temple** (Liuli Dian) and **Dading Ge**. Note that you'll have to show the ¥80 Lijiang town entrance ticket to gain access to the palace.

JOSEPH ROCK

Yunnan has always been a hunting ground for famous, foreign plant-hunters such as Kingdon Ward and Joseph Rock (1884–1962). Rock lived in Lijiang between 1922 and 1949, becoming the world’s leading expert on Naxi culture and local botany.

Born in Austria, the withdrawn autodidact learned eight languages, including Sanskrit. After becoming the world’s foremost authority on Hawaiian flora, the US Department of Agriculture, Harvard University and later National Geographic (he was their famed ‘man in China’) sponsored Rock’s trips to collect flora for medicinal research. He devoted much of his life to studying Naxi culture, which he feared was being extinguished by the dominant Han culture.

Rock sent more than 80,000 plant specimens from China – two were named after him – along with 1600 birds and 60 mammals. His caravans stretched for half a mile, and included dozens of servants, including a cook trained in Austrian cuisine, a portable darkroom, trains of pack horses, and hundreds of mercenaries for

protection against bandits, not to mention the gold dinner service and collapsible bath tub.

Rock lived in Yuhu village (called Nguluko when he was there), outside Lijiang. Many of his possessions are now local family heirlooms.

The Ancient Naxi Kingdom of Southwest China (1947) is Joseph Rock's definitive work. Immediately prior to his death, his Naxi dictionary was finally prepared for publishing.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a few places to stay in the village. The laidback **Baisha There International Youth Hostel** (Baisha Nali Qingnian Lushe 📞 534 0550; www.yhachina.com; 8/10-bed dm ¥40, d/tw ¥168-198; @ 📶) is down a lane left off the main street, past Dr Ho's.

On the same street as Dr Ho you'll find a number of small cafes and restaurants including **Country Road Cafe** (📞 133 6888 0272; Xiang Cun Lu; dishes from ¥12; 🕒 7.30am-7pm; 📶), a rustic cafe with Western, Chinese and Naxi dishes. The owner Rosey and her sister Lucy speak good English and are a reliable source of travel information.

Getting There & Away

Baisha is a one-hour bike ride from Lijiang. Otherwise, take the bus 8 (¥1) from Minzhu Lu, near the pedestrian bridge, to Xiangshan Lu opposite the market and change to bus 6 (¥1). It returns to Lijiang regularly.

Shuhe Old Town

Marginally more tranquil than Lijiang, Shuhe Old Town (Shuhe Gucheng) is attracting both increasing numbers of travellers and day trippers. A former staging post on the Tea-Horse Road that's just 4km from Lijiang, Shuhe can be visited in a day, or makes a less frenetic alternative base for exploring the region.

Sights

Although there's little in the way of sights, the cobblestoned alleys and streets south of its **main square** are very picturesque and more peaceful at night than Lijiang. Head for the **original section of town**, which is sandwiched between the Jiuding and Qinglong Rivers and nestles beneath the foothills of Yulong Xueshan. The first part of town, identified by a large Chinese-style gate, is actually completely new (though it looks old), built for the purposes of tourism in the early 2000s (this section of town is actually owned by a private company).

Sleeping & Eating

There are many guesthouses, cafes and restaurants scattered around Shuhe. The big and busy **K2 Hostel** (K2, K2 Guoji Qingnian Lushe  513 0110; www.k2yha.com; 1 Guailiu Xiang, Kangpu Lu, dm ¥35-50, d/tw ¥158;  ) is very popular with Chinese travellers. The dorms are a bit cramped but there is a large communal area. To get here, don't enter the town's main gate, but take the road to the right, which leads on to Kangpu Lu after five minutes. More upmarket is the **Sleepy Inn** (Lishe Kezhan  6401 0235; 8 Qinglong Lu; d/tw ¥268; ) , which has comfortable rooms with balconies set around a courtyard. Reach it by crossing the bridge over the Qinglong River and walking 100m west on Qinglong Lu.

Getting There & Away

Getting to Shuhe is easy from Lijiang, with regular minivans (¥3) running from Shangrila Dadao, close to the junction with Fuhui Lu.

Yulong Xueshan

Yulong Xueshan

MOUNTAIN

(Jade Dragon Snow Mountain adult ¥105, protection fee ¥80)

Also known as Mt Satseto, Yulong Xueshan soars to some 5500m. Its peak was first climbed in 1963 by a research team from Beijing and now, at some 35km from Lijiang, it is regularly mobbed by hordes of Chinese tour groups and travellers, especially in the summer.

Buses from Lijiang arrive at a parking area where you can purchase tickets for the various cable cars and chairlifts that ascend the mountain. This is also where the **Impression Lijiang** (admission ¥190-260; 🕒 daily 1pm) show is held, a mega song-and-dance performance. Note that if you are going to the performance you will also have to pay the park admission fees. Close to the parking area is **Dry Sea Meadow** (Ganhaizi), a good spot for photographing the mountain.

A **cable car** (¥185) ascends the mountain to an elevation of 4506m, from here you can walk up another 200m to a viewing point to see the glacier near the peak. It can often get chilly near the top so bring warm clothes. You will also have to pay ¥20 for the bus ticket to the base of the cable car.

Back down at the parking lot you can switch to a bus that goes to **Blue Moon Lake** (Lanyue Hu) and **White Water River** (Bai Shui He), where a walking trail leads along the river up to the lake (the round-trip walk takes about 90 minutes). The cable car bus ticket is also good for the bus to the lake.

A 10-minute drive past Blue Moon Lake is **Yak Meadow** (Maoniuping), where a **chairlift** (¥60, plus bus ticket ¥20) pulls visitors up to an altitude of 3500m.

In summer, when crowds for the cable car are long (up to two hours wait), most travellers just do the trip to the lake and Yak Meadow.

Minibuses (¥30) leave from opposite Mao Sq. Returning to Lijiang, buses leave fairly regularly but check with your driver to find out what time the last bus will depart.

Tiger Leaping Gorge

📍0887

Gingerly stepping along a trail swept with scree to allow an old fellow with a donkey to pass; resting atop a rock, exhausted, looking up to see the fading sunlight dance between snow-shrouded peaks, then down to see the lingering rays dancing on the rippling waters a thousand metres away; feeling utterly exhilarated. That pretty much sums up **Tiger Leaping Gorge** (Hutiao Xia admission ¥65), the unmissable trek of southwest China.

One of the deepest gorges in the world, it measures 16km long and is a giddy 3900m from the waters of the Jinsha River (Jinsha Jiang) to the snowcapped mountains of Haba Shan (Haba Mountain) to the west and Yulong Xueshan to the east, and, despite the odd danger, it's gorgeous almost every single step of the way.

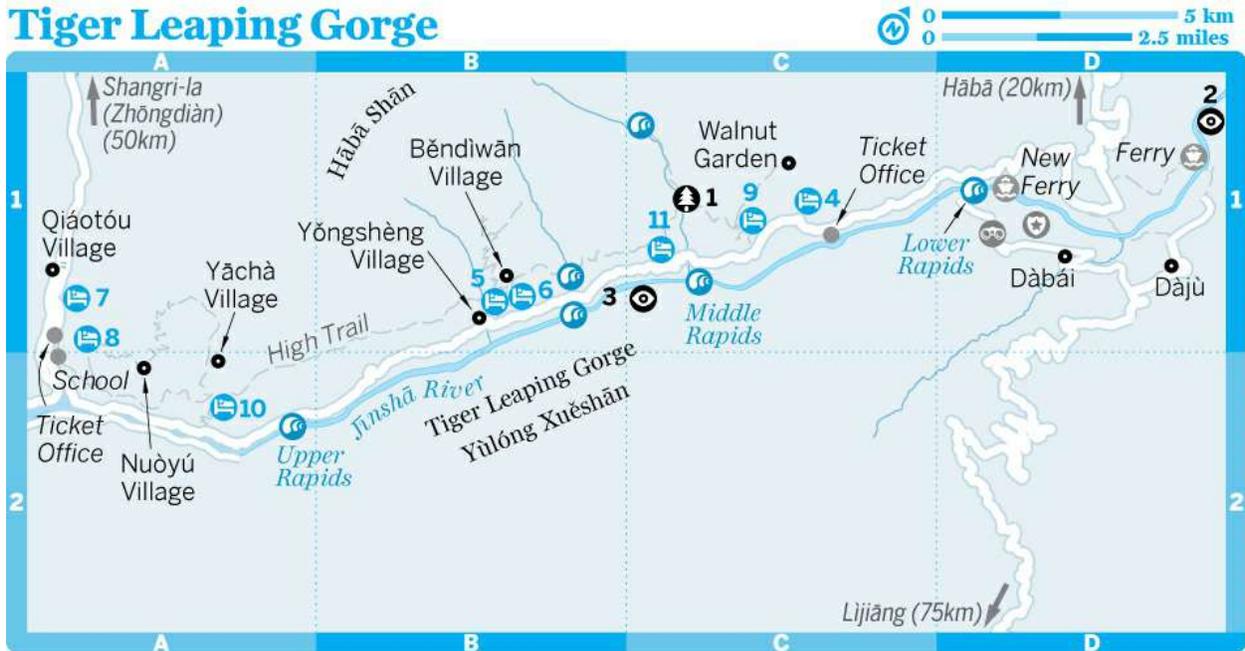
The gorge hike is not to be taken lightly. Even for those in good physical shape, it's a workout and can certainly wreck the knees. The path constricts and crumbles and is alarmingly narrow in places, making it sometimes dangerous. When it's raining (especially in July and August), landslides and swollen waterfalls can block the paths, in particular on the low road. (The best time to come is May and the start of June, when the hills are afire with plant and flower life.)

A few people – including a handful of foreign travellers – have died in the gorge. During the past decade, there have also been cases of travellers being assaulted on the trail. As always, it's safer in all ways not to do the hike alone.

Check with cafes and lodgings in Lijiang or Qiaotou for trail and weather updates. Most have fairly detailed gorge maps; just remember they're not to scale and are occasionally out of date.

Make sure you bring plenty of water on this hike – 2L to 3L is ideal – as well as plenty of sunscreen and lip balm.

Tiger Leaping Gorge



Tiger Leaping Gorge

Sights

| | | |
|---|---------------------|----|
| 1 | Bamboo Forest | C1 |
| 2 | Pagoda | D1 |
| 3 | Tiger Leaping Stone | C1 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 4 | Chateau de Woody | C1 |
| 5 | Come Inn | B1 |
| 6 | Halfway Guesthouse | B1 |
| 7 | Jane's Guesthouse | A1 |
| 8 | Naxi Family Guesthouse | A1 |
| 9 | Sean's Spring Guesthouse | C1 |
| 10 | Tea Horse Guesthouse | A2 |
| 11 | Tina's Guesthouse | C1 |

Activities

There are two trails: the higher (the older route) and the lower, which follows

the new road and is best avoided, unless you enjoy being enveloped in clouds of dust from passing tour buses and 4WDs. While the scenery is stunning wherever you are in the gorge, it's absolutely sublime from the high trail. Make sure you don't get too distracted by all that beauty, though, and so miss the arrows that help you avoid getting lost on the trail.

From the ticket office, it's six hours to Bendiwan, eight hours to Middle Gorge (Tina's Guesthouse), or nine hours to Walnut Garden. It's much more fun, and a lot less exhausting, to do the trek over two days. By stopping overnight at one of the many guesthouses along the way, you'll have the time to appreciate the magnificent vistas on offer at almost every turn of the trail.

Ponies can be hired (their owners will find you) to take you to the gorge's highest point for ¥200; it's not uncommon to see three generations of a family together, with the oldies on horseback and the young ones panting on foot behind them.

The following route starts at **Jane's Guesthouse**. Walk away from **Qiaotou**, past the school, for five minutes or so, then head up the paved road branching to the left; there's an arrow to guide you. After about 2.5km on the road the gorge trail proper starts and the serious climbing begins. Note that locals may try and hit you up for an additional 'fee' at this point, which they will claim is reward for them keeping the trail litter-free.

The toughest section of the trek comes after **Nuoyu** village, when the trail winds through the 28 agonising bends, or turns, that lead to the highest point of the gorge. Count on five hours at normal pace to get through here and to reach **Yacha** village. It's a relatively straightforward walk on to **Bendiwan**. About 1½ hours on from here, you begin the descent to the road on slippery, poor paths. Watch your step here; if you twist an ankle, it's a long hop down.

After the path meets the road at Tina's Guesthouse, there's a good detour that leads down 40 minutes to the middle rapids and **Tiger Leaping Stone**, where a tiger is once said to have leapt across the Yangzi, thus giving the gorge its name. Locals charge ¥10 to go down the path. At the bottom of this insanely steep trail locals charge another ¥10 for one viewpoint but another spot is free. From one of the lower rest points another trail (¥10) heads

downstream for a one-hour walk to **Walnut Garden**.

Most hikers stop at Tina's, have lunch, and head back to Qiaotou. Those continuing to Walnut Garden can take the trail along the river or use an alternative trail that keeps high where the path descends to Tina's, crosses a stream and a 'bamboo forest' before descending into Walnut Garden. If you are deciding where to spend the night, Walnut Garden is more attractive than Tina's.

Sleeping & Eating

Qiaotou

Jane's Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Xiagu Xing Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 880 6570; 4-bed dm ¥30, d or tw without/with bathroom ¥60/120; @ 📶)

This friendly place with tidy, clean rooms is where many people start their trek. The breakfasts here make for good walking fuel and it has left-luggage facilities (¥5 a bag).

In the Gorge

The following list of accommodation options along the way (listed in the order that you'll come to them) is not exhaustive. In the unlikely event that everywhere is full, basic rooms will be available with a local. We've never heard of anyone who had to sleep rough in the gorge.

All the guesthouses double as restaurants and shops, where you can pick up bottled water and snacks along the way.

Naxi Family Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Naxi Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 880 6928; dm ¥30, d/tw ¥120; @ 📶)

Taking your time to spend a night here instead of double-timing it to Walnut Garden isn't a bad idea. It's an incredibly friendly, well-run place (organic

vegies and wines), set around a pleasant courtyard.

Tea Horse Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Chama Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎139 8870 7922; 6-bed dm ¥35, d/tw ¥150)

Just after Yacha village, this ever-expanding place has a new restaurant – it makes a good lunch stop – as well as a small spa and massage parlour where aching limbs can be eased.

Come Inn

GUESTHOUSE

(Xiayi Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎181 8385 3151; 4-bed dm ¥50, d/tw ¥200)

Huge dorms with bathrooms and sliding doors that open out onto a vast wooden terrace with super views are on offer at this brand-new guesthouse near the entrance to Bendiwan village. Private rooms are in tip-top condition.

Halfway Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Zhongtu Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎139 8870 0522; Bendiwan; 10-bed dm ¥40, d/tw ¥120-200)

Once a simple home to a guy collecting medicinal herbs and his family, this is now a busy-busy operation. The vistas here are awe-inspiring and perhaps the best of any lodging in the gorge; the view from the communal toilets is worth the price of a bed alone.

Tina's Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Zhongxia Ludian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎820 2258; 2625441148@qq.com; dm ¥30, d/tw ¥120-280; @WiFi)

Almost a package-holiday operation, with travellers funneled to and from the gorge, Tina's lacks the charm of its competitors. But it's efficiently run, has plenty of beds and the location is perfect for those too knackered to make it to Walnut Garden. Pricier rooms have excellent views. There are daily buses from here to Lijiang and Shangri-la (¥55, 3.30pm).

Chateau de Woody

GUESTHOUSE

(Shanbailian Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 139 8871 2705; sgrlwoody@163.com; 10-bed dm ¥30, d/tw ¥60-180)

This old-school gorge guesthouse has rooms with good views and modern bathrooms that are a decent deal. Across the road, the less-attractive modern extension has the cheapest rooms.

Sean's Spring Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Shanquan Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 820 2223, 158 9436 7846; www.tigerleapinggorge.com; r ¥60-80, with bathroom ¥160-380; @📶)

One of the original guesthouses on the trail, and still the spot for lively evenings, the eponymous Sean is a true character and one of the few locals seriously concerned with the gorge's environmental well-being. There are 28 rooms here, including a couple of cheapies, and the best have great views of Yulong Xueshan.

i Getting There & Away

From Lijiang's long-distance bus station there are two direct buses a day to Qiaotou (¥29, 2¼ hours, 8.30am and 9am). Otherwise, catch any bus to Shangri-la (¥40, 2¼ hours, every 40 minutes, 7.30am to 3.30pm) and get off at Qiaotou.

Most travellers get a minivan (¥35) to the start of the walking track, organised through their guesthouse in Lijiang. The minivan can deliver extra luggage to the guesthouse of your choice (usually Tina's or Jane's).

Returning to Lijiang from Qiaotou, buses start passing through from Shangri-la at around 10am. The last one rolls through at around 8pm. The last bus to Shangri-la passes through at around 5.30pm. Tina's Guesthouse also organises one bus a day to both Lijiang and Shangri-la.

At the time of writing, there were no buses to Baishuitai from Lijiang. There are three buses a day from Shangri-la to Baishuitai (¥24, three hours, 9.10am, 9.20am & 2pm).

Tiger Leaping Gorge to Baishuitai

An adventurous add-on to the gorge trek is to continue north all the way to Haba village and the limestone terraces of **Baishuitai** (admission ¥35). This turns it into a four-day trek from Qiaotou and from here you can travel on to Shangri-la. From Walnut Garden to **Haba**, via Jiangbian, is a seven-to-eight-hour walk. From here to the Yi village of **Sanba**, close to Baishuitai, is about the same, following trails. You could just follow the road and hitch with the occasional truck or tractor, but it's longer and less scenic. The best way would be to hire a guide in Walnut Garden (for ¥400 to ¥500 per day for an English-speaker). A horse will cost ¥250 per day extra. The turn-off to Haba starts 6km down the road from Walnut Garden, up the hill where you see 'Welcome to Tibet Guesthouse' painted on the retaining wall.

In Haba most people stay at the **Haba Snow Mountain Inn** (Haba Xueshan Kezhan ☎088 7886 6596; dm ¥30, d/tw ¥80-150; @), which has older dorms and new double rooms. The enthusiastic host can organise guides to lead you up **Haba Mountain** (Haba Shan), a two-day trek, or to **Black Lake** (Hei Hai), a nine-hour round trip hike. Note that locals now charge a ¥200 'protection fee' per person for access to the mountain, supposedly going towards conservation efforts.

From Tina's to Sanba there is a daily bus at 1.30pm (¥47, three hours), but it sometimes doesn't run due to the road being blocked. From Sanba to Shangri-la there is also a daily bus (¥50, three hours) at noon. Minivans frequently ply these routes so flagging down a ride isn't too tough.

If you plan to hike the route alone, assume you'll need all provisions and equipment for extremes of weather. Ask for local advice before setting out.

Lugu Hu

☎0888

Straddling the remote Yunnan–Sichuan border, this **lake** (admission ¥100) is an

absolutely idyllic place, even with the rise in domestic tourism. The ascent to the lake, which sits at 2690m, is via a spectacular switchback road and the first sight of the 50-sq-km body of water, surrounded by lushly forested slopes, will take your breath away.

Villages are scattered around the outskirts of the lake, with **Luoshui** the biggest and most developed, and the one where the bus will drop you. As well as guesthouses and restaurants, and a few cafes with English menus and Western food, there are the inevitable souvenir shops. Nevertheless, it's hardly a boomtown, with the dominant night-time sound being the lapping of the lake.

Most travellers move quickly to **Lige**, 9km further up the road, tucked into a bay on the northwestern shore of the lake. Although guesthouses make up most of the place, along with restaurants serving succulent, but pricey, barbecue, the sights and nights here are lovely. If you want a less touristy experience, then you need to keep village-hopping around the lake to the Sichuan side. At the moment, top votes for alternative locations are **Luowa** and **Wuzhiluo**.

The area is home to several Tibetan, Yi and Mosu (a Naxi subgroup) villages. The Mosu are the last practising matriarchal society in the world and many other Naxi customs lost in Lijiang are still in evidence here.

The best times to visit the lake are April to May, and September to October, when the weather is dry and mild. It's usually snowbound during the winter months.

Sights & Activities

From Luoshui and Lige you can punt about with local Mosu by dugout canoe – known by the Mosu as ‘pig troughs’ (*zhucuo*). Expect to head for **Liwubi Dao**, the largest island (and throw a stone into Sichuan). The second-largest island is **Heiwae Dao**. Boat-trip prices vary wildly. If you're in a group, it's around ¥30 per person. But if it's a quiet time, you should be able to get a ride on your own for ¥50.

Bikes (per day ¥30) and scooters (per day ¥100 to ¥150) can be hired along the lakeshore at Luoshui and Lige.

Mosu Folk Custom Museum

MUSEUM

(Mosu Minzu Bowuguan Luoshui; admission ¥60; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

This museum in Luoshui is set within the traditional home of a wealthy Mosu family, and the obligatory guide will explain how the matriarchal society functions. There is also an interesting collection of photos taken by Joseph Rock in the 1920s. The entrance fee is normally discounted by 50%.

Zhamei Temple

MONASTERY

(Zhamei Si donation)

On the outskirts of Yongning, this is a Tibetan monastery with at least 20 lamas in residence. Admission is free, but a donation is expected. A private minivan costs ¥20 per person for the half-hour ride.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotels and guesthouses line the lakeside in Luoshui and Lige, with basic rooms available for around ¥80. Many have attached restaurants that serve traditional Mosu foods, including preserved pig's fat and salted sour fish – the latter being somewhat tastier than the former. Of the two places, Lige is really the place to go for fantastic barbecue.

Lao Shay Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Laoxie Chemadian 📞 588 1555; www.laoshay.com; Lige; 4-bed dm ¥45, s/d/tw ¥78-218; @ 📶)

Still the best spot for cheap digs in Lige, with a prime location smack in the middle of the village. The best rooms have balconies and lake views, the cheapest share bathrooms. Dorms have lockers and are in reasonable condition. Enthusiastic staff. Bike hire is ¥40 per day.

Husi Teahouse

HOSTEL

(Husi Chawu 📞 588 6960; husihostel@gmail.com; Luoshui; 6-bed dm ¥35, d/tw ¥98-288; @ 📶)

The granddaddy of all Lugu Hu backpacker joints, this place in Luoshui is a multistorey complex of dorms and private rooms, the more expensive with excellent lake views. There is a big lounge with computers and a restaurant serving Chinese food and average Western meals. The English-speaking staff are helpful.

Yase Daba Luxingzhe Zhijia

HOTEL

(📞 588 1196; ligemosuo@126.com; Lige; d ¥420-460; @ 📶)

Stuck out on a little promontory at the edge of Lige, all the rooms here come with decent views, but the ones on the 2nd floor are tremendous. They're a little over-priced but the bathrooms are a cut above the rest in the village. In the attached restaurant, try Lugu Hu fish (*lugu hu yu*) or sausage (*xiangchang*).

Zhaxi Canting

BARBECUE

(📞 588 1055; Lige; dishes from ¥30; 🕒 5pm-midnight)

Lively restaurant and barbecue joint that's good for the local speciality, Mosuo pork (¥50). You'll see the pigs being roasted whole outside, where you can sit near the lake.

i Getting There & Away

Lijiang's express bus station has two direct buses a day to the lake (¥100, seven hours, 8.30am and 9am), but buy your ticket at least one day in advance as it's frequently sold out. Note too that it often takes nine or 10 hours to get to the lake for various road-related reasons.

For Lige you'll have to change for a minibus in Luoshui (¥20 per person), or hire a bike.

Leaving Luoshui, there are two daily buses to Lijiang at 10am and 10.30am. Again, tickets should be bought at least a day in advance. You can also catch one of the regular minivans to Ninglang (¥30, four hours), from

where there are plenty of buses to Lijiang.

For Sichuan, there's a daily bus at 2pm to Xichang (¥110, nine hours).

Shangri-la (Zhongdian)

☞ 0887 / Pop 120,000

Shangri-la, previously known as Zhongdian (and also known in Tibetan as 'Gyalthang'), is where you begin to breathe in the Tibetan world. That's if you can breathe at all, given its altitude (3200m).

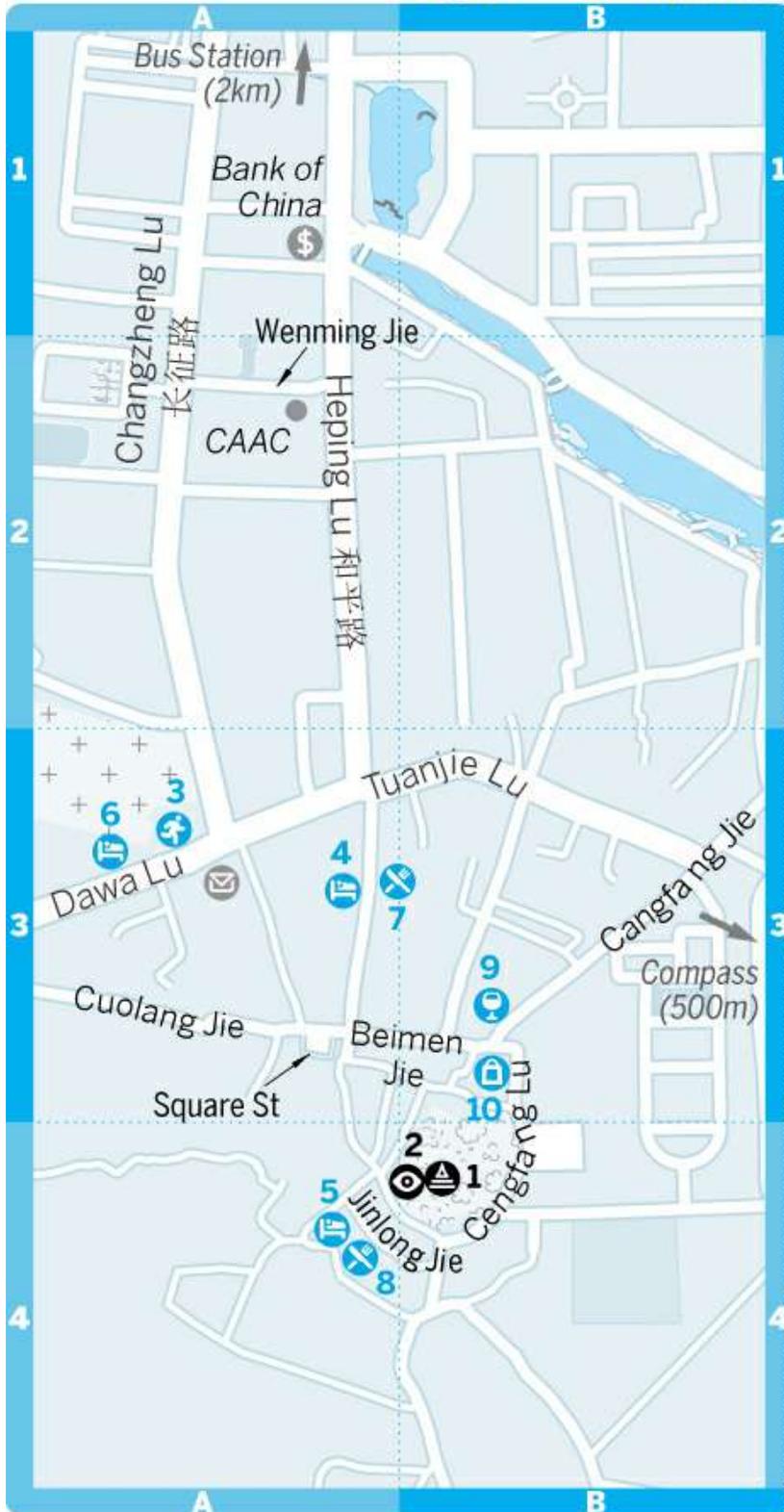
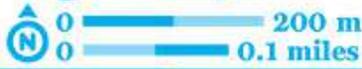
Home to one of Yunnan's most rewarding monasteries, Shangri-la is also the last stop in Yunnan before a rough five- or six-day journey to Chengdu via the Tibetan townships and rugged terrain of western Sichuan.

Shangri-la is divided into two distinct sections. The much larger modern side of town and the old quarter. A devastating fire in January 2014 sent much of the old town up in smoke and the area now resembles a bomb site as it is being rebuilt. It's a work in progress, so expect changes when you arrive. But even with most of the old town gone, Shangri-la remains an intriguing destination thanks to its blend of Tibetan and Han Chinese culture. The surrounding area too, is simply delightful with its mix of mountains, meadows and lakes.

Plan your visit for between March or April and October. During winter the city practically shuts down and transportation is often halted completely by snowstorms.

In mid- to late June, the town hosts a **horse-racing festival** that sees several days of dancing, singing, eating and, of course, horse racing. Accommodation is tight at this time.

Shangri-la (Zhōngdiàn)



Shangri-la (Zhongdian)

Sights

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 1 Guishan Si | B4 |
| 2 Zhuangjin Tong | B4 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 3 Khampa Caravan | A3 |
|----------------------------------|----|

Sleeping

- | | |
|---|----|
| 4 Dragoncloud Guesthouse | A3 |
| 5 Kersang's Relay Station | A4 |
| 6 Kevin's Trekker Inn | A3 |

Eating

- | | |
|---|----|
| 7 Kailash | A3 |
| 8 Tara Gallery Cafe & Bar | A4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

- | | |
|-------------------------|----|
| 9 Raven | B3 |
|-------------------------|----|

Shopping

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| 10 Dropenling | B3 |
|-------------------------------|----|

Sights

Shangri-la is a wonderful place for getting off the beaten track, with plenty of trekking and horse-riding opportunities, as well as little-visited monasteries and villages. However, the remote sights are difficult to reach independently given the lack of public transport.

Ganden Sumtseling Gompa

MONASTERY

(Songzanlin Si admission ¥115; 🕒 7am-7pm)

About an hour's walk north of town is this 300-year-old Tibetan monastery complex with around 600 monks. Extensive rebuilding has robbed the monastery of some of its charm, but it remains the most important in southwest China and is definitely worth the visit. Bus 3 runs here from anywhere along Changzheng Lu (¥1). From the main gate where the tickets are sold you can catch a tourist bus to the monastery.

If you don't mind hiking it's possible to visit for free by walking to the left side of the ticket office, up the hill parallel to the paved road and down to a lake with the monastery on the other side (a 30-minute walk).

Old Town

HISTORIC SITE

A few streets survived the 2014 fire and retain the mix of cobbled lanes and renovated wooden buildings that characterised the old town. Worth a visit is **Guishan Si** (Guishan Temple [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which is home to a handful of monks who conduct morning prayers. Next to it is **Zhuangjin Tong** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) the world's biggest prayer wheel standing at 21m high and containing 100,000 small prayer wheels. At least six people are needed to make it spin.

On the far side of Guishan Si is the **Shangri-la Thangka Academy** (Tangka Xuehui [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 888 1612; www.thangkaacademy.com; 31 Jinlong Jie), where *thangka* (Tibetan sacred art) master Lobsang Khudup trains young monks in painting and Buddhist philosophy. The academy also offers classes for tourists, costing ¥200 per day; a real bargain considering the price includes room and board.

Baiji Si

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(100 Chickens Temple) **FREE**

For the best views over Shangri-la, head to this delightfully named and little-visited temple. The temple has three monks inside and dozens of chickens wandering around outside. To get here, walk along the narrow paths behind

Kersang's Relay Station, past the deserted temple, continue uphill and you'll see it on the left.

SHANGRI-LA: UP IN SMOKE

On 11 January 2014, much of Shangri-la's old town went up in flames, reducing the city's prime tourist attraction to a pile of smoking ashes.

The fire was caused by an electrical fault in a guesthouse. Once it took hold, the old town – a tightly packed warren of narrow, twisting lanes and wooden houses – had no chance. Some 260 buildings, including 40 guesthouses, were destroyed.

Thankfully, no one died in the inferno, a result of the fire services ordering an immediate evacuation of the area. Less impressive was the fact that their fire engines turned up without any water, resulting in them having to turn around and head to the nearest river to fill up.

For many locals, the fire was an accident waiting to happen. Ever since Chinese 'experts' announced in 1997 that the city of Zhongdian and the surrounding area was the fabled Shangri-la of James Hilton's best-selling 1933 novel Lost Horizon, and so re-named it, the city had expanded at a pace that far outstripped its infrastructure.

Water shortages were common, while a lack of planning ensured the old town was nothing more than a fire trap, with locals opening shops, guesthouses and restaurants on top of each other to cash in on the tourism boom prompted by the re-naming of Zhongdian.

Re-building is under way, but it will take three or four years for a new 'old town' to emerge.

Hilton's novel – likely inspired by articles written by the famed northwest Yunnan explorer Joseph Rock – tells the story of four travellers who are hijacked and taken to a mountain utopia whose residents can live for over 150 years. In contrast, the 'real' Shangri-la lasted a mere 17.

Tours

Khampa Caravan

TOURS

(Kangba Shangdao Tanxian Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 828 8648;

www.khampacaravan.com; 2nd flr, cnr Dawa Lu & Changzheng Lu; 🕒 9am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

Tibetan-run, this well-established outfit organises some excellent treks and overland journeys, inside Tibet too, that get good feedback. The company also runs a lot of sustainable development programs within Tibetan communities. See www.shangrilaassociation.org for more details.

Haiwei Trails

TOURS

( 139 8875 6540; www.haiweitrails.com)

Has a good philosophy towards local sustainable tourism, and over a decade of experience running treks and trips.

Sleeping

With so many guesthouses destroyed in the fire, good places to stay are at a premium, although that will change in the future. Cheap digs (¥60 a room) can be found around the bus station and the square off Dawa Lu at the edge of the old town.

Despite Shangri-la's often glacial night temperatures, many guesthouses are neither heated nor have 24-hour hot water. Most dorms in town are fairly basic too.

★ Kevin's Trekker Inn

GUESTHOUSE

(Longmen Kezhan  ;  822 8178; www.kevintrekkerinn.com; 138 Dawa Lu, d/tw ¥120-300;  )

Kevin, a Yunnanese Bai, and his wife Becky are charming, and a great source of local knowledge. Their guesthouse has a cosy lounge and rooms that range from the cheap and boxy, to the very comfortable, with good bathrooms and views over the old town (or what's left of it). It's located just off Dawa Lu behind the Long Xiang Inn.

Kersang's Relay Station

INN

(Gesang Zang Yi  ;  822 3118; kersangs@yahoo.com; 1 Yamenlang,

Jinlong Jie, 5-bed dm ¥50; d/tw ¥180-240; (@ 📶)

This friendly, Tibetan-run place, popular with Western travellers, survived the fire by the skin of its teeth and now overlooks the devastated old town. Rooms are cosy with modern bathrooms and come with much-needed electric blankets. There's a cool terrace, communal lounge and pleasant staff.

Dragoncloud Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Longxing Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 828 9250; www.dragoncloud.cn; 94 Beimen Jie, Jiantang Zhen, 5-bed dm ¥50, d/tw ¥120-165; (@ 📶)

Set around a courtyard, the dorms are spacious if rudimentary, while the standard rooms come with modern bathrooms. There are a few more basic doubles that are cheaper. During bouts of chill, you'll love the fireplace in the common area, which also has a pool table.

Arro Khampa Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(- Aruokangba Nansuoda Zhuangyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8881 007; www.zinchospitality.com; 15 Jinlong Jie; d ¥1080; (🚫 📶))

Hushed boutique hotel with very swish rooms set around a stone-flagged courtyard. Excellent beds and bathrooms, and the underfloor heating keeps everything toasty-warm. There's a restaurant offering Chinese and Tibetan dishes on site. Efficient staff. Non-smoking too.



Eating & Drinking

Shangri-la's eating options include Tibetan, Chinese, Indian and Western food.

★ Rebgong

TIBETAN

(Regong Yiren Ge [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 182 8882 0252; 9-2 Juelang Lu; 9-2 dishes from ¥25; 🕒 11am-9pm)

Excellent joint for Tibetan eats. The house speciality is yak-meat hotpot, but

if you're not in a group then the *momo* (Tibetan dumplings), which come in meat or veggie versions, or the spicy yak-meat pizza are good alternatives. To find it, look for the small sign and walk through the forecourt to where two pine-fresh rooms await you.

Kailash

TIBETAN, CHINESE

(Gelaxia Canba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 822 5505; 20 Beimen Ji; dishes from ¥15; 🕒 10am-9pm)

Reliable, family-run courtyard restaurant with a strategically located stove to keep the place warm. The dishes are a mix of Tibetan and Chinese, with the odd Indian-themed one. This is a good place to sample yak meat, stir-fried or in a hotpot, as well as some of the local vegies that are unique to the area.

The Compass

WESTERN

(Shudeng kule ☎ 822 3638; 50 Shangye Jie; dishes from ¥35; 🕒 8.30am-9.30pm; 📶)

Bustling spot for a fine breakfast, and the tastiest Western food in town. Steaks, pasta, pizzas and kebabs are all available, as well as a few generic Asian dishes. Great cakes and coffee, and it's non-smoking too. It's an ideal place to take a break from sightseeing.

Tara Gallery Cafe & Bar

TIBETAN, INDIAN, YUNNAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 822 6128; House 29 Old Town; dishes from ¥25; 🕒 10am-10pm)

This upmarket restaurant, bar and cafe (and art gallery) is a tasteful, thoughtfully designed space, and includes a plant-filled 2nd-floor terrace. The menu is a tantalising mix of Tibetan, Indian and Yunnan dishes; the seven-course Indian set meal (¥95) is a feast. It's also a relaxing spot for a coffee or an evening drink. The owner, Utara, is very friendly.

Raven

BAR

(Wuya Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9A Cangfang Jie; 9A beers from ¥15; 🕒 Noon-late; 📶)

Re-located since the fire, but still in the old town, this comfy and compact

2nd-floor bar is owned by a Londoner and has a decent range of local and foreign beers (including Yunnan-brewed craft ales).

Shopping

Dropenling

HANDICRAFTS

(Zhuo fang lin  ;  823 2292; www.tibetcraft.com; 18 Cengfang Lu,
 10am-8.30pm)

Wide array of Tibetan handicrafts made for Western tastes, including bags, cushions, toys and ornaments.

Yunnan Mountain Handicraft Center

HANDICRAFTS

(Yunnan Shandi Shougong Yipin Zhongxin ;  822 7742; www.ymhfshangrila.com;
1 Jinlong Jie,)

Fairtrade handicraft shop that sells locally produced products including pottery, clothing, jewellery, carpets, Nixi black pottery and more.

Information

Altitude sickness can be a problem here and most travellers need a couple of days to acclimatise.

There are no internet cafes in the old town, but all hostels and hotels and most cafes have wi-fi or internet.

Bikes can be hired on Beimen Jie from ¥20 a day.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang ; Heping Lu)

Has a 24-hour ATM and changes US dollars.

Getting There & Away

Note that some bus tickets refer to Shangri-la as Zhongdian.

GETTING TO TIBET

At the time of writing, it was not possible to enter Tibet overland from Shangri-la, or anywhere in Yunnan. If you're tempted to try and sneak in, then think again. There were at least 11 checkpoints operating on the road between Shangri-la and Lhasa in 2014; you will be caught, fined, detained and escorted to Chengdu by the police.

It is possible to fly to Lhasa from Shangri-la, but flights are cheaper from elsewhere (Kunming and Chengdu), and you'll need to be part of an organised group with all the necessary permits. By far the best people to talk to about Tibet travel in Shangri-la are [Khampa Caravan](#).

AIR

There are six flights daily to Kunming (¥1188), two flights to Chengdu (¥1028), and a daily flight to Lhasa (¥2480) in peak season. Flights for other domestic destinations also leave from the airport but are completely irregular and destinations change from week to week. You can enquire about your destination or buy tickets at **CAAC** (Zhongguo Minhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wenming Jie). If booking online, you need to type in 'Diqing' for the airport name.

BUS

Following are destinations from Shangri-la:

- ➔ **Baishuitai** ¥24, three hours, three daily (9.10am, 9.20am and 2pm)
- ➔ **Daocheng** ¥109, 11 hours, one daily (7.30am)
- ➔ **Deqin** ¥67, four to five hours, four daily (8.20am, 9.20am, noon and 2.30pm)
- ➔ **Dongwang** ¥50, seven to eight hours, one daily (7.30am)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥237 to ¥256, 12 hours, four daily (8.30am, 9.30am, 5pm and 7pm)
- ➔ **Lijiang** ¥66, five hours, every 30 minutes (7.30am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Xiaguan** ¥75 to ¥100, seven hours, every 30 minutes (7am to noon, then 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Xiangcheng** ¥85, eight hours, one daily (8am)

If you're up for the bus-hopping trek to Chengdu, in Sichuan, you're looking at a minimum of three to four days' travel (often five to six) at some very high altitudes – you'll need warm clothes. Note that for political reasons this road may be closed at any time of the year (if the ticket seller at the bus station says 'come back tomorrow', it's closed indefinitely for sure).

If you can get a ticket, the first stage of the trip is to Xiangcheng in Sichuan. From Xiangcheng, your next destination is Litang, though if roads are bad you may be forced to stay overnight in Daocheng. From Litang, it's on to Kangding, from where you can make your way west towards Chengdu.

Note that roads out of Shangri-la can be temporarily blocked by snow at any time from November to March. Bring a flexible itinerary.

Train

A railway is being built from Lijiang to Shangri-la and is expected to be finished sometime in 2015.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 5km from town and is sometimes referred to as Diqing or Deqen – there is currently no airport at Deqin. A taxi or minivan between the airport and Shangri-la will cost between ¥30 and ¥50. Otherwise, try to call your hotel to arrange a pick-up.

TO/FROM THE BUS STATION

From outside the bus station take local bus 1 (¥1) to the old town (*gucheng*). The bus station is 2km north of the old town, straight up Changzheng Lu.

Around Shangri-la

Around Shangri-la are any number of sights: mountains, meadows, ponds, *chorten* (Tibetan stupas), waiting to be explored. Just note that virtually everywhere has or will have a pricey admission fee.

Napa Hai

LAKE

(Napa Lake admission ¥60)

Some 7km northwest of Shangri-la you'll find the seasonal Napa Hai, surrounded by a large grassy meadow. Between September and March it attracts a myriad of rare species, including the black-necked crane. Outside of these months, the lake dries up and you can see large numbers of yaks and cattle grazing on the meadow.

Tiansheng Bridge

BRIDGE

(Tiansheng Qiao admission ¥20, hot springs ¥100; 🕒 9am-11pm)

Approximately 15km southeast of Shangri-la is the Tiansheng Bridge. Local Tibetans believe that the sulphur-rich water can cure any number of skin ailments and other health issues. There is a co-ed swimming pool and a natural sauna (inside a cave) that is divided into male and female sections. It's possible to cycle here in about two hours or you could take a taxi (¥100 round trip).

Great Treasure Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Dabao Si admission ¥5)

Another 10km past the hot spring at Tiansheng Bridge is the Great Treasure Temple, one of the oldest Buddhist temples in Yunnan.

Emerald Pagoda Lake

Emerald Pagoda Lake

LAKE

(Bita Hai admission ¥258)

Also known as Pudacuo, a Mandarinised-version of its Tibetan name, Emerald Pagoda Lake is 25km east of Shangri-la. The bus to Sanba can drop you along the highway. From there, it's 8km down a trail (a half-hour by pony), and while the ticket price is laughably steep, there are other (free) trails to the lake. A bike is useful for finding them; taxis will drop you at the

ticket office.

Pony trips can be arranged at the lake. An intriguing sight in summer are the comatose fish that float unconscious for several minutes in the lake after feasting on azalea petals.

The whopping entrance fee is also due to the inclusion of **Shudu Hu**, another lake approximately 10km to the north. The name means ‘Place Where Milk is Found’ in Tibetan because its pastures are reputedly the most fertile in northwestern Yunnan.

Getting to the lake(s) is tricky. You usually have to catch the bus to Sanba, get off at the turn-off and hitch. Getting back you can wait (sometimes interminably) for a bus or hike to one of the entrances or main road and look out for taxis – but there may be none. A taxi will cost around ¥300 to ¥400 for the return trip, including Shudu Hu.

Baishuitai

TERRACE

(admission ¥35)

Baishuitai is a limestone deposit plateau 108km southeast of Shangri-la, with some breathtaking scenery and Tibetan villages en route. For good reason it has become probably the most popular backdoor route between Lijiang and Shangri-la. The terraces – think of those in Pamukkale in Turkey or Huanglong in Sichuan – are lovely, but can be tough to access if rainfall has made trails slippery.

From Shangri-la there are three daily buses to Baishuitai (¥24, three hours). One adventurous option is to hike or hitch all the way from Baishuitai to Tiger Leaping Gorge. A taxi from Shangri-la is ¥600.

A couple of guesthouses at the nearby towns of Baidi and Sanba have rooms with beds from ¥50.

Deqin

☞ 0887 / Pop 60,100

Mellifluously named Deqin (that last syllable seems to ring, doesn't it?) lies in some of the most ruggedly gorgeous scenery in China. Snuggly cloud-high at an average altitude of 3550m, it rests in the near embrace of one of China's most magical mountains, **Kawa Karpo** (often referred to as Meili Xueshan). At 6740m, it is Yunnan's highest peak and straddles the Yunnan–Tibet border.

A true border town, Deqin is one of Yunnan's last outposts before Tibet, but from here you could also practically hike east to Sichuan or southwest to Myanmar (Burma). Diqing Prefecture was so isolated that it was never really controlled by anyone until the PLA (People's Liberation Army) arrived in force in 1957.

More than 80% of locals are Tibetan, though a dozen other minorities also live here, including one of the few settlements of non-Hui Muslims in China. The town, though, is seriously unattractive and a little rough – the local police impose a midnight curfew. Confusingly, Deqin is the name of the city and county; both are incorporated by the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Most people make immediate tracks for Feilai Si. Either catch one of the minivans (¥10 per person) that hang around the main street, or take a taxi (¥40). The daily 3pm bus to Xidang also stops at Feilai Si (¥10, one hour).

For Shangri-la, four daily buses leave from Deqin's small bus station on the main street (¥67, four to five hours, 8.30am, 9.30am, noon and 2.40pm). There is also a daily bus to Lijiang (¥189, 10 hours, 7.30am) and to Kunming (¥268, 18 hours, 1pm).

Around Deqin

The main reason to come to Deqin is to spend time in the valleys below Kawa Karpo. Most access is on foot, so you'll need at least three or four days to make the most of your journey.

Note that entry to the sights requires buying a [Meili Snow Mountain](#)

National Park (Meili Xueshan Guo Jia Gong Yuan admission ¥150-230) entrance ticket.

There are three ticket options: one includes three observation points and the glacier (¥228), another ticket is the same three observation points and Yubeng village (¥230), and the third is just three observation points (¥150).

If you want to go to the glacier and Yubeng village you should buy the full ticket plus a ¥85 supplement for the village. A student card nets a 50% discount.

YUBENG & KAWA KARPO HIKES

The principal reason to visit Deqin is the chance to hike to the foot of Kawa Karpo. The main destination is **Yubeng** village from where you can make day hikes to mountain meadows, lakes and the fabulous **Yubeng Waterfall** (Yubeng Shenpu).

The five-hour trek to Yubeng starts at the **Xidang** hot spring, about 3km past Xidang village. The drive from Feilai Si takes one hour and 40 minutes and a taxi will cost ¥180. You could also hike all the way here from Feilai Si using local roads and paths. Another possibility is the 3pm bus from Deqin to Xidang (¥20), which stops in Feilai Si. There is a ¥5 entrance fee for Yubeng but when you show your receipt at your guesthouse you'll get ¥5 discount off your bill.

Yubeng consists of two sections. You first arrive in 'Upper Yubeng', which contains most guesthouses, then the trail continues another 1km to 'Lower Yubeng'. **Lobsang Trekker Lodge** (Zangbale Zhijia 📞139 8879 7053; <http://lobsangtrekkerlodge.webs.com>; dm ¥30, d/tw ¥200-300), in Upper Yubeng, is a popular place that offers meals, comfortable rooms, modern bathrooms and good traveller info (English is spoken here). Also in Upper Yubeng is the much more basic **Yak Butter Inn** (Suyoucha Kezhan 📞182 8884 0453; dm ¥35-40), which has knowledgeable staff.

From Yubeng village, loads of treks lie out here. It's a three- to four-hour trip on foot or horseback to the waterfall. Or, you could head south to a picturesque lake (it's around 4350m high and not easy to find, so take a guide). Guides cost around ¥200 per day. Supplies (food and water) are pricey in Yubeng so stock up in Feilai Si.

Leaving the village, trekkers will often hike to **Ninong** village by the Mekong River, a four- to five-hour hike that definitely requires a guide (and a good sense of balance as it's very steep in some sections). If you are prone to vertigo, head back to Xidang instead. Arrange a pick-up in Ninong or ask around for a taxi, if you are stuck walk 6km to Xidang where there is more transport.

Then there's the legendary Kawa Karpo kora, a 12-day pilgrim circumambulation of Meili Xueshan. However, half of it is in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, so you'll need a permit to do it; and you'll definitely need a guide.

Feilai Si

Approximately 10km southwest of Deqin is the small but interesting Tibetan **Feilai Si** (Feilai Temple donation), or Naka Zhashi (or Trashi) Gompa in Tibetan, devoted to the spirit of Kawa Karpo. There's no charge but leave a donation. No photos are allowed inside the tiny hall.

Everyone comes here for the sublime **views** – particularly the sunrises – of the Meili Xueshan range, including 6740m-high Kawa Karpo (also known as Meili Xueshan or Taizi Shan) and the even more beautiful peak to the south, 6054m-high Miacimu (Shennu in Chinese), whose spirit is the female counterpart of Kawa Karpo.

Joseph Rock described Miacimu as ‘the most glorious peak my eyes were ever privileged to see...like a castle of a dream, an ice palace of a fairy tale’. Locals come here to burn juniper incense to the wrathful spirit of the mountain.

Sadly, weather often as not does not cooperate, shrouding the peaks in mist. October/November is your best shot at a sunrise photo op. A ticket office near the platform sells tickets for Feilai Si and other sites.

The ‘town’ is actually just an ugly, expanding strip of concrete shops, hotels and restaurants along the main road. Across the road, the government has unsportingly set up a wall, blocking the view of the mountains (just walk downhill 200m for the same view).

Most backpackers stay at **Feeling Village Youth Hostel** (Juese Dianxiang Guoji Qingnian Lushe 📞0887-841 6133; juesedianxiang@163.com; dm ¥30-40, d/tw ¥120-170; @📶), which has cheerful English-speaking staff, simple but clean rooms with electric blankets and hot water in the evenings. It's set back from the main road; look for the sign turning right up the little alley at the bottom of the village.

On the main road, the **Zang Ji Wang Shangwu Jiudian** (📞088 7841 6998; d/tw ¥256; 📶) has comfortable rooms with huge windows and spectacular

mountain views. Prices are regularly discounted by 20%.

Restaurants on the main road serve pricy Chinese and Western meals.

To get here from Deqin a taxi will cost you ¥40, or take a minivan (¥10 per person).

Mingyong Glacier

Tumbling off the side of Kawa Karpo peak is the 12km-long **Mingyong Glacier** (Mingyong Bingchuan; admission ¥228). At over 13 sq km, it is not only the lowest glacier in China (around 2200m high) but also an oddity – a monsoon marine glacier, which basically translates as having an ecosystem that couldn't possibly be more diverse: tundra, taiga, broadleaf forest and meadow.

The mountain has been a pilgrimage site for centuries and you'll still meet a few Tibetan pilgrims, some of whom circumambulate the mountain over seven days in autumn. Surrounding villages are known as 'heaven villages' because of the dense fog that hangs about in spring and summer.

The trail to the glacier leads up from Mingyong's central square. After 70 minutes of steady uphill walking you will reach the Tibetan **Taizi Miao**, a small temple where there are snack and drink stalls. A further 30 minutes along the trail is **Lotus Temple** (Lianhua Miao), which offers fantastic views of the glacier framed by prayer flags and *chorten*. Horses can also be hired to go up to the glacier (¥200).

If you're coming from Yubeng, you could also hike to Mingyong from Xidang in around three hours if you hoof it.

Mingyong village consists of only a couple hotels, restaurants and shops. You can overnight in the simple **Renqin Hotel** (Renqin Jiudian 📞139 8871 4330; dm/d ¥25/100; @📶) which also serves meals.

From Deqin, private minibuses to Mingyong leave regularly from the bridge near the market at the top end of town (¥20 per person), or you can hire your own for ¥120.

The road from Deqin descends into the dramatic Mekong Gorge. Six kilometres before Mingyong the road crosses the Mekong River and branches off to Xidang. Nearby is a small temple, the **Baishulin Miao**, and a *chorten*. There is a checkpoint here where you will need to show your national park ticket.

NU JIANG VALLEY

The 320km-long Nu Jiang Valley is one of Yunnan's best-kept secrets. The Nu Jiang (known as the Salween in Myanmar; its name in Chinese means 'Raging River') is the second-longest river in Southeast Asia and one of only two undammed rivers in China, as well as being a Unesco World Heritage Site.

Sandwiched between the Gaoligong Shan and Myanmar to the west, Tibet to the north and the imposing Biluo Shan to the east, the gorge holds nearly a quarter of China's flora and fauna species, and half of China's endangered species. The valley also has an exotic mix of Han, Nu, Lisu, Drung and Tibetan nationalities, and even the odd Burmese trader. And it's simply stunning – all of it.

Getting here is a pain. On a map, it seems a stone's throw from Deqin in the province's northwest. Nope. All traffic enters via the Baoshan region. Once here, you trundle eight hours up the valley, marvelling at the scenery, and then head back the way you came. Plans have been announced to blast a road from Gongshan in the northern part of the valley to Deqin, and another from the village of Bingzhongluo even further north into Tibet. Given the immense topographical challenges, these plans are a long way off. Sadly, though, it seems likely that the river will be dammed in the next few years. Get here before that happens.

Liuku

☞ 0886 / Pop 17,800

Liuku is the lively, pleasant capital of the prefecture. Divided by the Nu Jiang River, it's the main transport hub of the region, although it's of little intrinsic interest. You will likely have to register with a police checkpoint about 5km before entering the town.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a few scruffy cheapies on Chuancheng Lu in the centre of town where rooms can be got from ¥80.

To eat, head to the riverbank, south of Renmin Lu, where loads of outdoor restaurants cook great barbecued fish.

Nujiang Gerui Shangwu Jiudian

HOTEL

( 388 8885; 123 Chuancheng Lu, d/tw ¥488;  )

Routine discounts of 70% bring this solid midrange place into the budget category. It has modern showers and comfortable rooms, although it can get a bit busy at night when a gaggle of scantily clad 'hostesses' stand by the door to welcome punters to karaoke upstairs. After crossing the bridge it's one block uphill from Renmin Lu.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang)

Located uphill from the bus station.

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Wangba per hr ¥4)

There is an internet cafe near the main pedestrian bridge, in a little shopping mall, opposite the Sheng Bao Lu Hotel.

Getting There & Away

The bus station is located south of downtown and across the river (a ¥15 taxi ride).

- ➔ **Baoshan** ¥52, three to four hours, eight daily (8am to 4.30pm)
- ➔ **Bingzhongluo** ¥81, nine hours, one daily (8.20am)
- ➔ **Fugong** ¥40, four hours, nine daily (7.20am to 4.20pm)
- ➔ **Gongshan** ¥71, eight hours, eight daily (7am to 1pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥201, 11 to 12 hours, seven daily (8.30am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Tengchong** ¥66, six hours, three daily (8am, 10am and 11am)
- ➔ **Xiaguan** ¥83, four to five hours, 10 daily (8am to 7pm)

Fugong

Hemmed in by steep cliffs on all sides, Fugong offers some of the best scenery in the valley and has a large Lisu population, even if the town itself is unremarkable. Fugong is roughly halfway up the valley and the best place to break your journey if it's late.

The **Fugong Binguan** ( 301 7013; d/tw ¥188;  ) is across the road from the bus station. Its big rooms are routinely discounted to ¥100.

There are twice-hourly buses to Liuku (¥40, four hours) between 7.20am and 4.20pm. For Bingzhongluo you'll have to wait for the bus from Liuku to pass by, which happens around noon. Otherwise, buses to Gongshan (¥33, seven daily) start running at 10.30am. Your best bet for a quick getaway to Gongshan is take a shared minivan for ¥40. They start running from 7.30am outside the bus station.

Bingzhongluo

 0886

The main reason to come to the Nu Jiang Valley is to visit this isolated, friendly **village** (adult/student ¥100/50), set in a beautiful, wide and fertile bowl. Just 35km south of Tibet and close to Myanmar, it's a great base for hikes into the surrounding mountains and valleys. The area is at its best in spring and early autumn. Don't even think about coming in the winter.

Activities

Potential **short hops** include heading south along the main road for 2km to the impressive 'first bend' of the Nu Jiang River, or north along a track more than 15km long that passes a 19th-century church and several villages (the road starts by heading downhill from Road to Tibet Guesthouse).

Longer three- or four-day treks include heading to the Tibetan village of **Dimaluo** and then onto the village of **Yonzhi**. From Yonzhi it's another two hours walk to the main road from where you can hitch a ride to Deqin. It is a demanding trek that can really only be done from late May until September as the 3800m pass is too difficult to cross in heavy snow.

A guide is pretty much essential. Tibetan trek leader Aluo comes highly recommended. He's based at Road to Tibet Guesthouse, although he's often away on treks so email him first (aluo_luosang@hotmail.com). Treks usually cost around ¥250 per day. Note that there are no villages en route to Yonzhi so you'll need to carry all your own food and sleep in basic huts along the way (porters can be hired for around ¥100 per day).

Another pricier option is Peter, a Lemaoguide, who offers treks for ¥350 a day. He speaks good English, although some travellers report he doesn't always deliver what he promises. You can find him at **Nu Jiang Baina Travel** ( 139 8853 9641; yangindali@yahoo.co.uk) on the main street, where he also rents out mountain bikes for ¥80 a day.

Sleeping & Eating

Road to Tibet Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

( 358 1168, 189 0886 1299; waniwwang@hotmail.com; 6/8-bed dm ¥70, s ¥120, d/tw ¥160-260;



Most backpackers end up at this place, located on the street heading downhill from the main road. Beds are hard but it's a clean place with some English spoken and 50% discounts a lot of the time. The owner, Aluo, also has a simple guesthouse in his home village of Dimaluo, a good destination for a day hike.

Yu Dong Binguan

HOTEL

( 358 1285; d/tw ¥180; )

With standard 30% discounts, well-maintained rooms and reasonable beds, this is actually a good budget option. The rooms at the back have fine views of the valley.

Information

All hotels in town have wi-fi and Peter has internet access at Nu Jiang Baini Travel for ¥3 per hour.

There is a brand-new ATM that allegedly takes foreign cards. Don't rely on it.

Getting There & Away

There is one direct bus a day from Liuku to Bingzhongluo (¥81, nine hours, 7am). It returns from opposite Yu Dong Binguan at 8am. Otherwise, take a bus to Gongshan (¥12, one hour), where there are eight buses daily to Liuku (¥76, eight hours, 7.30am to 12.10pm).

Dulong Valley

Separated from the Nu Jiang Valley by the high Gaoligong Shan range and

only reached by road in 1999, the Dulong Valley is one of the remotest valleys in China and is home to the 5000-strong Dulong ethnic group. The Dulong River actually flows out of China into Myanmar, where it eventually joins the Irrawaddy.

Although the road into the valley has been upgraded, no buses run here. Minivans make the four-hour, 96km trip infrequently (¥100 per person, or hire one for ¥600). There are a couple of hotels in the county capital **Kongdang** where you can find rooms for ¥80 to ¥100.

The main road in the valley itself is now paved south towards the border with Myanmar and north towards Tibet, but there are no hotels or restaurants and hardly any cars outside Kongdang. Strong cyclists will have a field day here, but bring your own tent and food. It might be possible to find a bed in a village (most are close to the main road), but bear in mind that the Dulong people are very shy and you won't hear much Mandarin, let alone English, here.

BAOSHAN REGION

Scrunched up against Myanmar (Burma) and bisected by the wild Nu Jiang, the Baoshan region is a varied landscape that includes thick forests, dormant volcanoes and hot springs.

The eponymous capital is unremarkable; lovely Tengchong (and its environs) is where it's at. The Tengchong area is peppered with minority groups whose villages lie in and around the ancient fire mountains.

As early as the 4th and 5th centuries BC (two centuries before the northern routes through central Asia were established), the Baoshan area was an important stop on the southern Silk Road – the Sichuan–India route. The area did not come under Chinese control until the Han dynasty. In 1277 a huge battle was waged in the region between the 12,000 troops of Kublai Khan and 60,000 Burmese soldiers and their 2000 elephants. The Mongols won and went on to take Bagan.

Tengchong

📍 0875

With 20 volcanoes in the vicinity, lots of hot springs and great trekking potential, there's plenty to explore in this neck of the woods. And the city itself is a bit of an oddity – one of the few places in China that, though much of the old architecture has been demolished, remains a pleasant place to hang out, with oodles of green space (you can actually smell the flowers!) and a friendly, low-key populace.



Tengchong

📍 Sights

| | |
|--|----|
| 1 Dieshui Waterfall | A1 |
| 2 Jade Market | C1 |
| 3 Large Produce Market | C2 |
| 4 Small Produce Market | B1 |
| 5 Xianle Temple | A1 |

🏠 Sleeping

Sights & Activities

Much of the old-time architecture is now gone, but some OK places for a random wander are still to be found. Tengchong's proximity to Myanmar means there are many jade and teak shops around town.

Walking along Fengshan Lu from Feicui Lu, the first side street on the left has a **small produce market** (Chanpin Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). Further down on the right is a large, covered **jade market** (Zhubao Yuqi Jiaoyi Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), where you can sometimes see the carving process. Walk east along Yingjiang Xilu and you will come across a larger **produce market** (Da Chanpin Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) on your right.

Dieshui Waterfall

WATERFALL

(Dieshui Pubu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥20)

In the western suburbs of town, beside the **Xianle Temple** (Xianle Si), this is a good place for a picnic. The area makes a nice destination for a bike ride and you could easily combine it with a trip to **Heshun**, a picturesque village 4km outside Tengchong.

Laifeng Shan National Forest Park

PARK

(| Laifeng Shan Guojia Senlin Gongyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ⌚ 8am-7pm) **FREE**

On the western edge of town, walk through lush pine forests of this park to **Laifeng Temple** (Laifeng Si [GOOGLE MAP](#)) or make the sweaty hike up to the summit, where a pagoda offers fine views.

Sleeping & Eating

There's no shortage of places to stay; bargain hard at any hotel.

There are many hole-in-the-wall eateries and barbecue places along Feicui Lu and elsewhere around town. At night, food stalls set up in the centre of town off Fengshan Lu.

Xinghua Dajiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 513 2688; 7 Tuanpo Xiaoqu, d/tw ¥120; 📶 @ 📶)

It's been around a while, and there are alarming, tiger-pattern carpets here, but the rooms themselves are clean, if a little old-fashioned. The location is handy in what is a spread-out town. Wi-fi in the lobby, ADSL internet in the rooms.

Yudu Hotel

HOTEL

(Yudu Dajiudian 📍 513 8666; 15 Tengyue Lu; d/tw ¥978; 📶 📶)

Rooms at this very comfortable, professionally run place are routinely discounted by a whopping 70%, making them a great deal. Don't expect to hear any English, though. It's around 500m north of [Xinghua Dajiudian](#).

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Fengshan Lu & Yingjiang Xilu)

Has a 24-hour ATM and will change cash and travellers cheques. There are other ATMs around town that take foreign cards too.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Fengshan Lu)

Serves as post and telephone office.

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); 100m north of Xinghua Dajiudian; per hr ¥3)

At the time of writing, internet cafes in Tengchong were not admitting

foreigners.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#)); Yingjiang Xilu; 🕒 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Can help with visa extensions.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Tengchong's airport, 12km south of town, has five flights daily to Kunming (¥1187).

BUS

The city's long-distance bus station is in the south of town. A taxi to the centre of town is ¥15.

- ➔ **Baoshan** ¥63, three hours, every 40 minutes (8am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** (express) ¥231–248, 11 hours, six daily (9am–8.10pm)
- ➔ **Lijiang** (sleeper) ¥203, 10 hours, one daily (7pm)
- ➔ **Liuku** ¥62, six hours, four daily (8am, 9am, 10am, 11am)
- ➔ **Xiaguan** ¥125, six hours, three daily (10.30am, noon and 7pm)

Tengchong's **local bus station** (keyun zhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (keyun zhan) is on Dongfang Lu.

- ➔ **Mangshi** ¥42, two to three hours, ten daily (8am to 4.30pm)
- ➔ **Ruili** ¥80, four hours, nine daily (7.50am to 3.50pm)

Buses to local destinations north of Tengchong, such as Mazhan, Gudong, Ruidian, Diantan or Zizhi, leave from a forecourt on the corner of Huoshan Lu and Guaijinlou Xiang in the northeast of town.

Getting Around

MInivans run to the airport from the junction of Feicui Lu and Rehai Lu (¥20

per person). Bus 2 runs from the town centre to the long-distance bus station (¥1). Taxis charge ¥6 to hop around town.

Around Tengchong

Getting out to the sights around Tengchong is a bit tricky. Catching buses part of the way and hiking is one possibility, hiring a taxi for the day (¥300) is another.

Some highlights of the region are the traditional villages that are scattered between Tengchong and Yunfeng Shan (Cloudy Peak Mountain). The relatively plentiful public transport along this route means that you can jump on and off minibuses to go exploring as the whim takes you.

Heshun

Southwest of Tengchong, **Heshun** (admission ¥80; 🕒 8am-7.30pm) has been set aside as a retirement village for overseas Chinese, but it's of much more interest as a traditional Chinese village with cobbled streets. It sees an increasing number of day trippers, but there are some great old buildings in the village, providing lots of photo opportunities. The village also has a small **museum** (*bowuguan*) and a famous old **library** (*tushuguan*).

The **Heshun International Youth Hostel** (Tengchong Guoji Qingnian Lushe 📞 515 8398; hsyha123@163.com; Cunjiawan, 4-bed dm ¥35-40, d/tw ¥128) in the village (close to the big banyan tree) is pleasant and set around a small courtyard. In the centre of the village, the **Lanna Cafe** (Lanna Kafei 📞 136 2586 2709; coffee from ¥23, dishes ¥38; 🕒 9am-10pm; 📶) is a chilled place for a coffee and has a small selection of Western dishes.

From Tengchong bus 6 (¥1) goes to Heshun from Feicui Lu, or you can take a minibus (¥3) from the corner of Feicui Lu and Laifeng Xiang.

Yunfeng Shan

A Taoist mountain dotted with 17th-century temples and monastic retreats, **Yunfeng Shan** (admission ¥80) is 47km north of Tengchong. It's possible to take a **cable car** (one way/return ¥90/160), close to the top from where it's a 20-minute walk to **Daxiong Baodian**, a temple at the summit. **Luzu Dian**, the temple second from the top, serves up solid vegetarian food at lunchtime. It's a quick walk down but it can be hard on the knees. You can walk up the mountain in about 2½ hours.

To get to the mountain, go to Huoshan Lu in Tengchong and catch a bus to Gudong (¥15), and then a microbus from there to the turn-off (¥10). From the turn-off you have to hitch, or you could take the lovely walk past the village of **Heping** to the pretty villages just before the mountain. From the parking lot a golf cart (¥5) takes you to the entrance. Hiring a vehicle from Tengchong for the return trip will cost about ¥300 to ¥350.

Volcanoes

Tengchong County is renowned for its volcanoes, and although they have been behaving themselves for many centuries, the seismic and geothermal activity in the area indicates that they won't always continue to do so. The closest volcano to Tengchong is **Ma'an Shan** (Saddle Mountain), around 5km to the northwest. It's just south of the main road to Yingjiang.

Around 22km to the north of town, near the village of **Mazhan**, is the most accessible cluster of **volcanoes** (admission ¥60). The main central volcano is known as **Dakong Shan** (Big Empty Hill), which pretty much sums it up, and to the left of it is the black crater of **Heikong Shan** (Black Empty Hill). You can haul yourself up the steps for views of the surrounding lava fields (long dormant).

To get here from Tengchong, take a Gudong-bound bus (¥15) from Huoshan Lu. From Mazhan town, it's a 10-minute walk or you can take a motor-tricycle (¥5) to the volcano area. Once you are in the area there is a fair bit of walking to get between the sights, or you can hitch rides.

Sea of Heat

The intriguingly named **Sea of Heat** (Rehai admission ¥60, pool access ¥268; 🕒 8am-9pm) is a steamy cluster of hot springs, geysers and streams (but no actual sea, per se). Located about 12km southwest of Tengchong, it's essentially an upmarket resort, with a few outdoor springs, a nice warm-water swimming pool along with indoor baths. Even if you don't pay the steep price to enter the pools it's possible to just wander along the stone paths admiring the geothermal activity. Some of the springs here reach temperatures of 102°C (don't swim in these ones!).

The rooms at the **Yang Sheng Ge** (📍 586 9700; www.chinaspa.cn; d/tw ¥1960, ste ¥3600; 📶) all come with their very own mini-spa complete with water piped from the hot springs. It's close to the ticket office.

Note that it's possible to buy a combined ticket (¥100) for both the Sea of Heat and the Mazhan volcanoes here.

Bus 2 (¥3) leaves Tengchong from Rehai Lu, 200m south of the junction with Feicui Lu, for the Sea of Heat.

DEHONG PREFECTURE

Dehong Prefecture (Dehong Zhou and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture) juts into Myanmar in the far west of Yunnan. Once a backwater of backwaters, from the late 1980s the region saw tourists flock in to experience its raucous border atmosphere.

That's dimmed quite a bit and most Chinese tourists in Dehong are here for the trade from Myanmar that comes through Ruili and Wanding; Burmese jade is the most desired commodity and countless other items are spirited over the border.

The most obvious minority groups in Dehong are the Burmese (who are normally dressed in their traditional sarong-like *longyi*), Dai and Jingpo (known in Myanmar as the Kachin), a minority group long engaged in armed struggle against the Myanmar government.

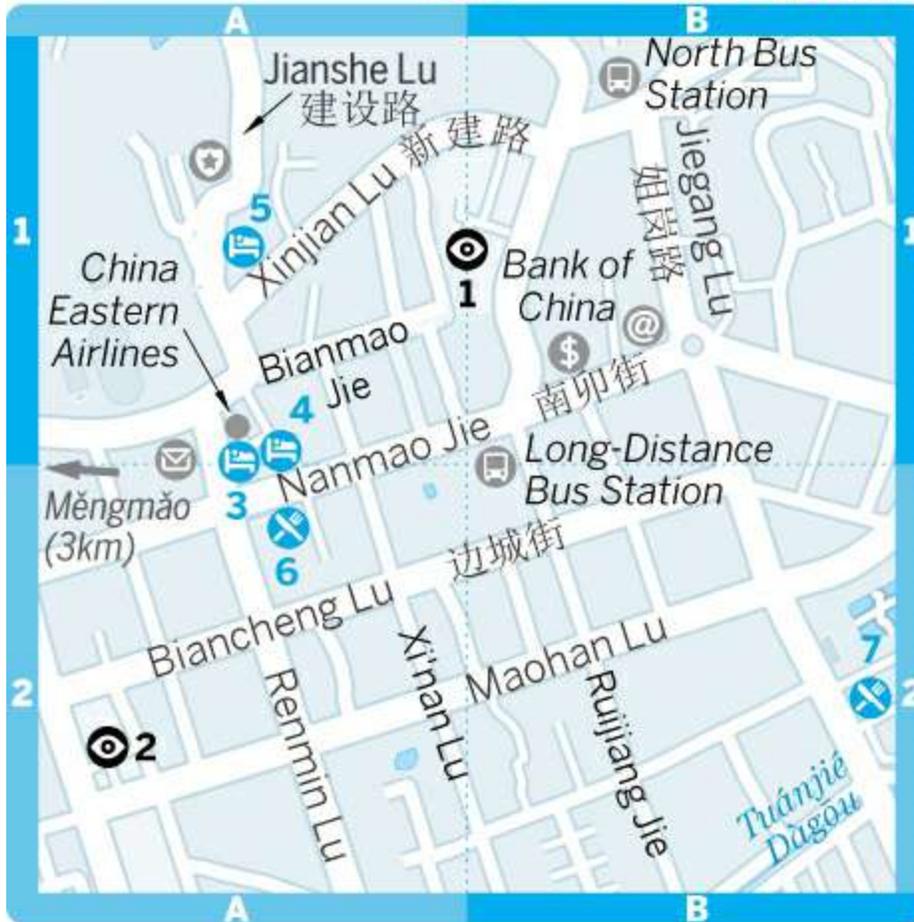
Ruili

📍 0692

Back in the 1980s this border town was a notorious haven for drug and gem smugglers, prostitution and various other iniquities. The government cleaned it up in the 1990s (on the surface anyway) and today you're more likely to stumble into a shopping mall than a den of thieves. Still, Ruili has an edge to it, thanks to a thriving gem market operated largely by Burmese traders. And with its palm tree-lined streets, bicycle rickshaws and steamy climate, it has a distinctly laid-back, Southeast Asian feel.

The minority villages nearby are also good reason to come and it's worth getting a bicycle and heading out to explore. Another draw for travellers is Myanmar, which lies only a few kilometres away. Though individual tourists are not allowed to cross freely, organising permits to take you through the sensitive border area is becoming easier.

Ruili



Ruili

Sights

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| 1 Jade Market | B1 |
| 2 Market | A2 |

Sleeping

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 3 Bashi Jiudian | A1 |
| 4 Mingrui Hotel | A1 |
| 5 Ruili Binguan | A1 |

Eating

- | | |
|--|----|
| 6 Bo Bo's Cold Drinks Shop | A2 |
|--|----|

Sights

Think atmosphere rather than aesthetics. The huge **market** (shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) in the west of town is one of the most colourful and fun in Yunnan; a real swirl of ethnicities, including Dai, Jingpo, Han and Burmese, as well as the odd Bangladeshi and Pakistani trader. Get here in the morning, when the stalls are lined with Burmese smokes, tofu wrapped in banana leaves, dodgy pharmaceuticals from Thailand, clothes, you name it. It's also a good place to grab lunch at one of the many snack stalls.

Also great for people-watching is Ruili's ever-expanding **jade market** (zhubao jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), the centre of town in all senses. Burmese jade sellers run most of the shops here and for a while you may even forget you are still in China.

Sleeping

There are many hotels in Ruili, with cheap rooms (¥80) available along Nanmao Jie near the bus station.

Bashi Jiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 412 9088; cnr Renmin Lu & Nanmao Jie, d/tw ¥100-120; ❄️ 📶)

The once-sleepy staff are now on their toes, while the rooms have been given a much-needed upgrade and are now clean. Beds remain a little lumpy.

Mingrui Hotel

HOTEL

(Mingrui Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 410 8666; 98 Nanmao Jie; d/tw ¥268; ❄️ 📶)

Big, bright and clean rooms – normally discounted by 60% – and a handy location close to the bus station make this a good-value choice. Staff are

friendly. Strong wi-fi connection. From the bus station, it's just down an alley off the right-hand side of Nanmao Jie.

Ruili Bilingual

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 410 0888; 25 Jianshe Lu, d/tw ¥520; 📶 @ 📶)

This place, garishly painted orange and gold, is perhaps the best value in town for comfort and facilities, with regular 50% discounts. Wood-panelled rooms have ADSL internet and there is wi-fi in the lobby. The staff are amenable and can sell maps (¥10) of town and the surrounding area.

Eating & Drinking

Street stalls set up all over town come nightfall; just follow your nose.

★ Bo Bo's Cold Drinks Shop

CAFE

(Bubu Lengyindian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xi'nan Lu; dishes from ¥12; 🕒 9am-midnight; 📶)

Busy from early to late, the *longyi*-clad Burmese waiters at this Ruili institution hustle as they serve up fantastic fruit juices, Burmese-style milky tea, ice cream and cakes, as well as simple but tasty rice and noodle dishes. Head to the 2nd floor terrace for an evening beer and wi-fi.

Huafeng Market

MARKET

(Huafeng Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); off Jiegang Lu; 🕒 6pm-late)

An outdoor food court that thrives once darkness descends, come here for Burmese and Chinese food, including superb barbecue dishes. The food is all on display, so just pick and point.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Nanmao Jie)

Provides all the usual services and will cash travellers cheques for US dollars if you're headed to Myanmar. There are other ATMs around town that take foreign cards. You can also change/find US dollars at the jade market.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Mengmao Lu & Renmin Lu)

Despite (or perhaps because of?) its border location, sending any kind of package abroad from this post and telephone office is difficult, if not impossible.

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Nanmao Jie & Jiegang Lu; per hr ¥4; 🕒 24hr)

At the time of writing, foreigners weren't allowed to use Ruili's internet cafes.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jianshe Lu; 🕒 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm)

Come here for visa extensions.

Getting There & Away

An expressway from Baoshan to Ruili was being built at the time of writing, which will link Ruili to Xiaguan and on to Kunming. The first five hours or so out of Ruili are still on older roads that pass through villages (and checkpoints), then you get on the highway for a speedy finish to Xiaguan.

AIR

Daily flights come from Kunming via Mangshi, a two-hour drive away. You can buy tickets at **China Eastern Airlines** (Dongfang Hangkong Gongsi

[GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 411 1111; Renmin Lu; 🕒 8am-10pm). Shuttle taxis leave daily from the office, three hours before scheduled flights (¥70).

BUS

Ruili has a **long-distance bus station** (changtu keyun zhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)) in the centre of town and a **north bus station** (qiche beizhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)), really more of a forecourt, at the top of Jiegang Lu. Head to the north bus station if you're trying to get to Mangshi (¥35, last bus 6pm – they leave when full) or Zhangfeng (¥15, one hour); for everything else, you're better off going to the long-distance station.

- ➔ **Baoshan** ¥90, six to seven hours, every 40 minutes (6.30am to 4pm)
- ➔ **Jinghong** ¥417, 22 hours, one daily (10am)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥294 to ¥310, 14 hours, six daily (8.30am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Tengchong** ¥82, four to five hours, every 40 minutes (7.10am to 12.20pm)
- ➔ **Xiaguan** ¥150 to ¥170, nine to 10 hours, two daily (9am and 7pm)

For local destinations, minibuses and buses leave from the left of the main bus station, or you can just flag one down in the street. Destinations include Wanding (¥15) and the village of Nongdao (¥8).

Getting Around

The most interesting day trips require a bicycle. Ask at your accommodation about the best place to rent one.

A flat rate for a taxi ride inside the city should be ¥6 and up for negotiation from there. There are also cheaper motor and cycle rickshaws.

Around Ruili

Most of the sights around Ruili can be explored by bicycle. It's worth making detours down the narrow paths leading off the main roads to visit minority villages. The people are friendly, and there are lots of photo opportunities. The *Tourism and Traffic Map of Ruili*, available from the Xinhua bookshop on Renmin Lu, shows major roads and villages.

The shortest ride is to turn left at the corner north of China Post and continue out of Ruili into the little village of **Mengmao**. There are half a

dozen Shan temples scattered about; the fun is in finding them.

Golden Duck Pagoda

Golden Duck Pagoda

PAGODA

(Nong'an Jinya Ta)

In the outskirts of town to the southwest, on the main road, this pagoda is an attractive stupa set in a temple courtyard. It was established to mark the arrival of a pair of golden ducks that brought good fortune to what was previously an uninhabited marshy area.

Temples

Just past Golden Duck Pagoda is a crossroads and a small wooden temple. The road to the right (west) leads to the villages of **Jiexiang** and **Nongdao**, and on the way are a number of small temples, villages and stupas. None are spectacular but the village life is interesting and there are often small markets near the temples.

The first major Dai temple is **Hansha Zhuang Temple** (Hansha Zhuang Si), a fine wooden structure with a few resident monks. It's set a little off the road and a green tourism sign marks the turn-off. The surrounding Dai village is interesting.

A few kilometres further on is **One Village Two Countries** (Yizhai Liangguo admission ¥20; 🕒 9am-6pm), a low-key tourist attraction where you can stand on the border between China and Myanmar. It's rather tacky – Kayan women show off their brass neck rings – but borderholics will be satisfied.

Another 20 minutes or so further down the road, look out for a blue and gold roofed traditional building on the right side of the road. Turn right here and follow the narrow paved road through the fields to **Leizhuangxiang** (), Ruili's oldest stupa, dating back to the middle of the Tang dynasty.

Jiegao Border Checkpoint

On land jutting into Myanmar, Jiegao is the main checkpoint for a steady stream of cross-border traffic. It's a bustling place, with plenty of traders doing last-minute shopping in the many shops and goods outlets. Tourists saunter right up to the border and snap photos in front of the large entry gate. It remains busy well into the night.

To get here, continue straight ahead from Golden Duck Pagoda, cross the Myanmar bridge over Ruili Jiang and you will come to Jiegao, about 7km from Ruili.

Shared red taxis (¥5) with signs for Jiegao drive around the centre of Ruili from dawn until late at night.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO MYANMAR (BURMA)

At the time of writing it was not possible for third-country nationals to travel across the border at Jiegao. The only way to go is by air from Kunming. Visas are available at the embassy in Beijing or in Kunming at the **Myanmar consulate** (☎0871 6816 2810; www.mcgkunming.org; 99 Yingbin Lu, Guandu District Consular Zone; 🕒9am-noon Mon-Fri). In Kunming visas cost ¥235, take three days to process and are good for a maximum 28-day visit

At the time of writing there were two daily flights to Yangon from Kunming on Air China and China Eastern Airlines for ¥1835 and one daily to Mandalay for ¥2335.

Golden Pagoda

Golden Pagoda

PAGODA

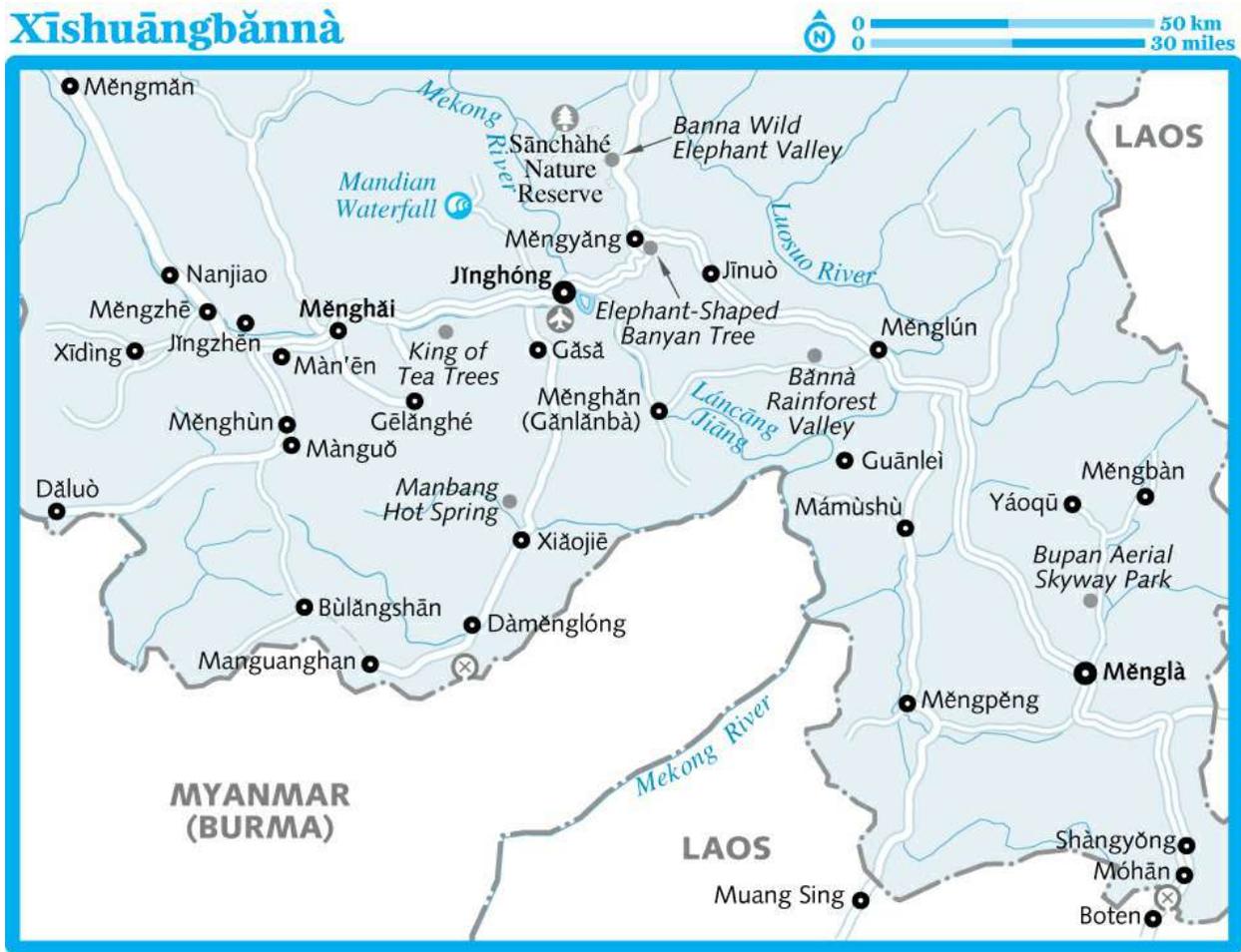
(Jiele Jinta)

A few kilometres to the east of Ruili on the road to Wanding is the Golden Pagoda, a fine structure that dates back 200 years.

XISHUANGBANNA REGION

North of Myanmar and Laos, Xishuangbanna is the Chinese approximation of the original Thai name of Sip Sawng Panna (12 Rice-Growing Districts). The Xishuangbanna region, better known as Banna, has become China's mini-Thailand, attracting tourists looking for sunshine, water-splashing festivals and epic jungle treks.

But Xishuangbanna is big enough that it rarely feels overwhelmed by visitors and even the expanding capital, Jinghong, is still basically an overgrown town.



Environment

Xishuangbanna has myriad plant and animal species, although recent scientific studies have shown the tropical rainforest areas of Banna are now acutely endangered. The jungle areas that remain contain a handful of tigers,

leopards and golden-haired monkeys. The number of elephants has doubled to 250, up 100% from the early 1980s; the government now offers compensation to villagers whose crops have been destroyed by elephants, or who assist in wildlife conservation. In 1998 the government banned the hunting or processing of animals, but poaching is notoriously hard to control.

BANNA BORDER CHECKPOINTS

At the time of writing, normally sleepy Banna was a hive of police activity, especially along the borders with Laos and Myanmar. The reason for this is the increase in the number of Uighurs – the restive Muslim ethnic minority group native to far-off Xinjiang Province – attempting to flee China across what are normally the country's most porous frontiers.

Any bus or car travelling close to the borders will be stopped at any number of checkpoints and the IDs of all passengers scrutinised. It is absolutely essential for all travellers to carry their passports with them when journeying around the border areas. The police will be unimpressed if you have no proof of who you are and where you are from.

People

About one-third of the million-strong population of this region are Dai; another third or so are Han Chinese and the rest are a conglomerate of minorities that include the Hani, Lisu and Yao, as well as lesser-known hill tribes such as the Aini (a subgroup of the Hani), Jinuo, Bulang, Lahu and Wa.

Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, as it is known officially, is subdivided into the three counties of Jinghong, Menghai and Mengla.

MINORITY GROUPS OF XISHUANGBANNA

The Dai are Hinayana Buddhists (as opposed to China's majority Mahayana Buddhists) who first appeared 2000 years ago in the Yangzi Valley and were subsequently driven south to here by the Mongol invasion of the 13th century. The common dress for Dai women is a straw hat or towel-wrap headdress, a tight, short blouse in a bright colour, and a printed sarong with a belt of silver links. Some Dai

men tattoo their bodies with animal designs, and betel-nut chewing is popular. The Dai language is quite similar to Lao and northern Thai dialects. Some Dai phrases include douzao li (hello), yindi (thank you) and goihan (goodbye).

The Jinuo people, sometimes known as the Youle, were officially 'discovered' as a minority in 1979 and are among the smallest groups – numbering between 12,000 and 18,000. They call themselves 'those who respect the uncle' and are thought to possibly have descended from the Qiang. The women wear a white cowl, a cotton tunic with bright horizontal stripes and a tubular black skirt. Earlobe decoration is an elaborate custom – the larger the hole and the more flowers it can contain, the more beautiful the woman is considered. Teeth are sometimes painted black with the sap of the lacquer tree, for both beauty and to protect from teeth decay.

The Bulang people live mainly in the Bulang, Xiding and Bada mountains of Xishuangbanna. They keep to the hills farming cotton, sugar cane and pu'er tea, one of Yunnan's most famous exports. Men traditionally tattoo their arms, legs, chests and stomachs while women wear vibrant headdresses decorated with flowers.

The Hani (also known in adjacent countries as the Akha) are closely related to the Yi as a part of the Tibeto-Burman group; the language is Sino-Tibetan but uses Han characters for the written form. They are mostly famed for their river-valley rice terraces, especially in the Red River valley, between the Ailao and Wuliang Shan, where they cultivate rice, corn and the occasional poppy. Hani women (especially the Aini, a subgroup of the Hani) wear headdresses of beads, feathers, coins and silver rings, some of which are decorated with French (Vietnamese), Burmese and Indian coins from the turn of the century.

Climate

The region has two seasons: wet and dry. The wet season is between June and August, when it rains ferociously, although not every day and only in short bursts. From September to February there is less rainfall, but thick fog descends during the late evening and doesn't lift until 10am or even later.

November to March sees temperatures average about 19°C. The hottest months of the year are from April to September, when you can expect an average of 25°C.

ETIQUETTE IN DAI TEMPLES

Around Dai temples the same rules apply as elsewhere: dress appropriately (no

sleeveless tops or shorts); take off shoes before entering; don't take photos of monks or the inside of temples without permission; leave a donation if you do take any shots and consider leaving a token donation even if you don't – unlike in Thailand, these Buddhists receive no government assistance. It is polite to wai (clasp your hands together in a prayer-like greeting) the monks and remember to never rub anyone's head, raise yourself higher than a Buddha figure or point your feet at anyone. (This last point applies to secular buildings too. If you stay the night in a Dai household, it is good form to sleep with your feet pointing towards the door.)

Festivals & Events

During festivals, booking same-day airline tickets to Jinghong can be extremely difficult. Hotels in Jinghong town are booked solid and prices usually triple. Most people end up commuting from a nearby Dai village. Festivities take place all over Xishuangbanna, so you might be lucky further away from Jinghong.

Tanpa Festival

CULTURAL

In February, young boys are sent to the local temple for initiation as novice monks.

Tan Jing Festival

CULTURAL

Held between February and March, this festival's participants honour Buddhist texts housed in local temples.

Water-Splashing Festival

CULTURAL

Held in mid-April, the same time as it is celebrated in Thailand and Laos, the three-day water-splashing festival washes away the dirt, sorrow and demons of the old year and brings in the happiness of the new. Jinghong celebrates it from 13 to 15 April but dates in the surrounding villages vary. The actual splashing only occurs on the last day. Foreigners earn special attention, so prepare to be drenched all day.

Closed-Door Festival

CULTURAL

The farming season, July to October, is the time for the closed-door festival, when marriages or festivals are banned. Traditionally, this is also the time of year that men aged 20 or older are ordained as monks for a period of time. The season ends with the **Open-Door Festival**, when everyone lets their hair down again to celebrate the harvest.

Tan Ta Festival

CULTURAL

This festival is held during a 10-day period in October or November, with temple ceremonies, rocket launches from special towers and hot-air balloons. The rockets, which often contain lucky amulets, blast into the sky; those who find the amulets are assured of good luck.

HIKING IN XISHUANGBANNA

Hikes around Xishuangbanna used to be among the best in China – you'd be invited into a local's home to eat, sleep and drink mijiū (rice wine). Growing numbers of visitors have changed this in many places, while encroaching rubber and banana plantations – some wags now refer to the region as Xishuangbanana – are having an increasingly deleterious effect on the environment.

It's still possible to find villages that see very few foreigners and remain pristine, but they are remote. But you can't expect to roll up in Jinghong and the next day be in a village that hasn't seen a Westerner before. Or automatically expect a welcome mat and a free lunch because you're a foreigner.

If you do get invited into someone's home, try to establish whether payment is expected. If it's not, leave an offering or modest gift (ask at the backpacker cafes to find out what's considered appropriate), even though the family may insist on nothing.

Also take care before heading off. It's a jungle out there, so go prepared, and make sure somebody knows where you are and when you should return. In the rainy season you'll need to be equipped with proper hiking shoes and waterproof gear. At any time you'll need water purification tablets, bottled water or a water bottle able to hold boiled water, as well as snacks and sunscreen.

Seriously consider taking a guide. You won't hear much Mandarin on the trail, let alone any English. Expect to pay around ¥300 per day.

Both the **Mekong Cafe** (Meigong Kafe ☎069 1212 7324; Menglong Lu) and the [Banna](#)

[Cafe](#) in Jinghong can arrange treks and guides. The nearby [Meimei Cafe](#) doesn't organise treks but does have lots of details in binders so you can find your own way.

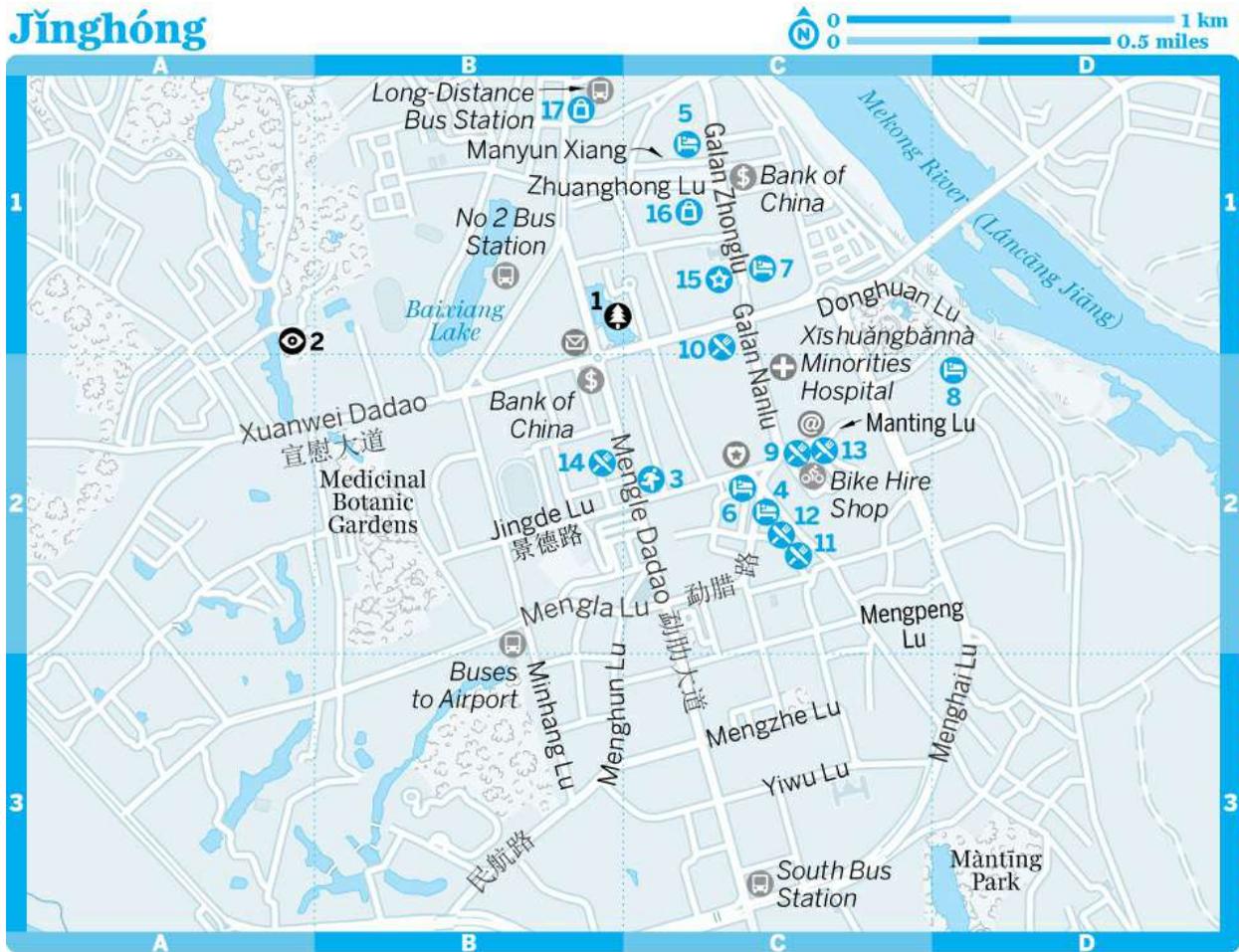
Jinghong

 0691 / Pop 520,000

Jinghong – the ‘City of Dawn’ in local Dai language – is the capital of Xishuangbanna Prefecture, but don’t take that too seriously. While many Chinese from more frigid regions are buying holiday homes here – and the new apartment blocks are sprawling down both sides of the Mekong River (known as the Lancang in China) which bisects the city – it’s still a perfect representation of laid-back Banna. And everything from the food, to the weather has more in common with Southeast Asia than China.

In the summer, the low season, prepare yourself for searing heat and a sapping humidity that puts the entire city into extended slow motion. If you’ve acclimatised to higher and nippier elevations in Yunnan, you’ll probably find yourself needing lots of midday siestas. During the winter months, though, the temperature is just perfect.

Jǐnghóng



Jinghong

Sights

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1 Peacock Lake Park | B1 |
| 2 Tropical Flower & Plants Garden | A1 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 3 Taiji Blind Massage | C2 |
|---------------------------------------|----|

Sleeping

- | | |
|---|----|
| 4 King Land Hotel | C2 |
| 5 Many Trees International Youth Hostel | C1 |
| 6 Mekong River International Youth Hostel | C2 |
| 7 Popular Holiday Hotel | C1 |
| 8 Riverside International Hostel | D2 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 9 | Banna Cafe | C2 |
| 10 | Luo Luo Bing Wu | C1 |
| 11 | Meimei Cafe | C2 |
| 12 | Mekong Cafe | C2 |
| 13 | Thai Restaurant | C2 |
| 14 | YDN | B2 |

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 15 | Mengbala Naxi Arts Theatre | C1 |
|----|--|----|

Shopping

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|
| 16 | Jade Market | C1 |
| 17 | Market | B1 |

Sights & Activities

Tropical Flower & Plants Garden

GARDENS

(Redai Huahuiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 99 Jinghong Xilu; admission ¥40;  7.30am-6pm)

This terrific botanic garden, west of the town centre, is one of Jinghong's better attractions. Admission gets you into a series of gardens where you can view over 1000 different types of plant life. Take the path on the left-hand side as you enter the gardens to head towards the lovely tropical rainforest area.

Peacock Lake Park

PARK

(Kongque Hu Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

The artificial lake in the centre of town isn't much, but the small park next to it is pleasant. The English Language Corner takes place here every Sunday evening, so this is a great opportunity to exchange views or to engage with the locals practising their English.

Taiji Blind Massage

MASSAGE

(Taiji Mangren Anmo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Mengle Dadao & Jingde Lu; 🕒 9am-midnight)

Jinghong's oft-recommended blind massage school offers hour-long massages for ¥60. Staff are extremely kind and travellers give it terrific reports. Head down the lane off Mengle Dadao and climb the stairs on your left up to the 2nd floor.

Sleeping

Manting Lu is lined with cheapies, where you can find bearable rooms from ¥50. Outside of festival season, big discounts are normally on offer all over town.

Riverside International Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xishuangbanna Xiju Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 219 5611;

lim711@foxmail.com; 15F, Bldg 1, Xishuang Shi'er Cheng (next to Green Eastern Hotel); 15 4/8-bed dm ¥45/40, d/tw ¥158-188; 🏠 @ 📶)

Despite its location in a new tower block, this is the best hostel in town. Private rooms are bright, fresh and large and many come with great Mekong River views. The dorms are spacious too and have little balconies and lockers. There's a big communal area, helpful staff and bikes can be hired for ¥30 a day.

To find it, look for the two tower blocks beyond the performance square off Menghai Lu and head for the right-hand one.

Many Trees International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Manlicui Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 212 6210; manytreesyha@gmail.com;

5 Manyun Xiang, 4-bed dm ¥40-45, d/tw ¥98-108; 🏠 @ 📶)

Dorms here have super-thin mattresses – a theme of Jinghong's hostels – but come with lockers and ensuite bathrooms. The twins and doubles are a bit tatty but the price is right. There's wi-fi throughout and a cosy communal

area. It's down an alley off Galan Zhonglu.

Mekong River International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Meigong He Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 229 8000; mekongyha@gmail.com; 6 Menglong Lu, G 6-bed dm ¥40, d/tw ¥138-168; 📶 @ 📶)

This centrally located hostel has a utilitarian feel, but it makes a very convenient base. Dorms are cramped and lack lockers, but the private rooms are reasonable. It sees more Chinese travellers than Westerners, but some English is spoken.

King Land Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinglan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 216 9999; 6 Jingde Lu, d/tw ¥980-1580; 📶 @ 📶 📶)

Sporting two enormous elephants at its entrance, this is one of Jinghong's unmistakable landmarks. It has a supercentral location, four-star standard rooms and a swimming pool. Rooms are routinely discounted by 60% out of season and it accepts Western credit cards.

Popular Holiday Hotel

HOTEL

(Jiari Shishang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 213 9001; 104 Galan Zhonglu, d/tw ¥558; 📶 @ 📶)

Standing out from the three-star pack by virtue of its light, clean and modern rooms, many of which come with computers, the optimistic name of this place is justified. Ask for a room at the back for peace and quiet at night. Ignore the listed prices; you should be able to get a room for ¥120 outside of festival time.

Eating

The Dai restaurants along Menghai Lu, Mengpeng Lu and Menghun Lu are where you'll find the locals and the most authentic and tastiest food in town (as well as at the food stalls that pop up all over town at night).

Dai dishes include barbecued fish, eel or beef cooked with lemongrass or served with peanut and tomato sauce. Vegetarians can order roast bamboo shoots prepared in the same fashion. Other specialities include fried river moss (better than it sounds and excellent with beer), spicy bamboo-shoot soup and *shaokao* (skewers of meat wrapped in banana leaves and grilled over wood fires).

Luo Luo Bing Wu

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 96 Xuanwei Dadao; dishes from ¥12; 🕒 6.30am-10pm)

A buzzing local spot, Jinghongers flock here for the cheap and tasty rice noodle and fried rice dishes, as well as fruit juices, shakes and Taiwanese-style shaved ice desserts that are perfect for cooling off. There's also an open-air area out back.

Thai Restaurant

THAI

(Taiguo Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 216 1758; 193 Manting Lu; dishes ¥12-40; 🕒 10am-9.30pm)

If you're not making the trek overland to Southeast Asia, get your Thai fix at this ever-reliable open-air restaurant. It's not the most upmarket Thai place in town, but it's certainly the busiest and there's a huge range of dishes to choose from.

YDN

YUNNAN, BURMESE

(Yedena [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 214 1640; 3/F, Shawan International Plaza, 39 Mengle Dadao; 3 dishes from ¥12; 🕒 8am-midnight)

There's a big picture menu here of tasty, decently priced local dishes, but the cuisine-curious will be more interested in the reasonably authentic Burmese curries and salads also on offer here. It's on the 3rd floor of a shopping mall.

Banna Cafe

WESTERN

(Banna Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 216 0970; 1 Manting Lu; breakfast from ¥22, dishes from

¥25; 🕒 9am-11pm; 📶)

A good place for breakfast, this friendly, Akha-owned cafe also has a small terrace that is ideal for a sundowner or late-evening libation while watching the world go by. Staff can also arrange treks and guides.

Meimei Cafe

WESTERN

(Meimei Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 216 1221; www.meimei-cafe.com; 107-108 Menglong Lu; 107-108 dishes from ¥25; 🕒 8am-1am; 📶)

You'll find it and you'll eat here. This is the original of all the Western-style cafes in town and still the best, thanks to its menu of steaks, burgers, sandwiches, pizza and pasta, and foreigner-friendly Chinese and Thai dishes. Good range of local and foreign beers and proper coffee and juices too. Owner Orchid is a great source of local info.

Mekong Cafe

WESTERN

(Meigong Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 216 2395; 104 Menglong Lu; dishes from ¥26; 🕒 8am-2am; 📶)

French-owned, the Mekong is a long-time presence and serves up a wide-ranging mix of Western, Japanese and Chinese food. The steaks (¥74) and pizzas (from ¥38) are decent. It has the best wine list in town, as well as many foreign ales. There's an outdoor area out back and it's a reliable source of trekking info too.

Entertainment

Mengbala Naxi Arts Theatre

THEATRE

(Mengbala Naxi Yishugong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Galan Zhonglu; tickets ¥200; 🕒 8pm & 9.40pm)

Wildly popular with tour groups, this theatre has nightly song and dance shows.

Shopping

Market groupies can head to the fabulous fish and produce **market** (Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Minhang Lu) next to the long-distance bus station. The nearby **Jade Market** (Yu Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhuanghong Lu) features lots of Burmese hawking their goods alongside locals, and is fun for people-watching as well as shopping.

Information

Every once in a while we get reports from travellers who have been drugged and then robbed on the Kunming–Jinghong bus trip. Be friendly but aware, accept nothing, and never leave your stuff unattended when you hop off for a break.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xuanwei Dadao)

Changes travellers cheques and foreign currency, and has an ATM machine. There are other branches on Galan Zhonglu and Minhang Lu.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Mengle Dadao & Xuanwei Dadao; 🕒 9am-6pm)

You can send mail overseas from here.

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); Manting Lu; per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr)

One of a number of internet cafes along this street.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 13 Jingde Lu; 🕒 8-11.30am & 3-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Has a fairly speedy visa-extension service.

Xishuangbanna Minorities Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Xishuangbanna Minzu Yiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 213 0123; Galan Nanlu)

The best bet for having an English-speaker available.

i Getting There & Away

AIR

There are several daily flights to Kunming (¥730) but in April (when the water-splashing festival is held) you'll need to book tickets several days in advance to get in or out.

There are also daily flights to Dali (¥978) and Lijiang (¥570), as well as increasing numbers of flights that connect with cities across China via Kunming. Lao Airlines has one flight a week to Luang Prabang in Laos on Sunday (¥870). Travel agents all over town sell air tickets, or book online. Note that Jinghong's airport is known as Xishuangbanna.

BUS

The **long-distance bus station** (Changtu keyunzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Minhang Lu) serves the following destinations and also has a daily bus to Luang Nam Tha in Laos (¥70, seven hours, 10.40am).

- ➔ **Jianshui** ¥178, 12 hours, two daily (9.30am and 10.30am)
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥219 to ¥252, eight hours, seven daily (8.30am to 10pm)
- ➔ **Lijiang** ¥276, 18 hours, one daily (9.30am)
- ➔ **Ruili** ¥417, 22 to 24 hours, one daily (9am)
- ➔ **Xiaguan** ¥220, 12 hours, two daily (8.30am and 10am)

If you want to explore Xishuangbanna, go to the **No 2 bus station** (Di'er keyunzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)), also known as the Banna bus station.

- ➔ **Ganlanba** ¥18, 40 minutes, every 20 minutes (7.40am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Menghai** ¥17, 50 minutes, every 20 minutes (7am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Mengla** ¥50, 2½ hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 6pm)

- ➔ **Menglun** ¥20, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes (7am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Mengyang** ¥10, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes (7am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Sanchahe** ¥15, one hour, 10 daily (8am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Simao** ¥55, two hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 7pm)

For Menghun, take any bus to Menghai and change there.

For buses to Damenglong, head to the **south bus station** (keyun nanzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which also has departures to Kunming.

If you want to get to the Yuanyang Rice Terraces, there is normally a daily bus from the long-distance bus station to Nansha (¥150, eight hours), where you can catch a bus onto Xinjie. You could also take a bus from here to Jianshui and then catch a bus to Yuanyang.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO THAILAND

Until late 2011, it was possible to travel by cargo boat to Chiang Saen in northern Thailand; the journey took around 24 hours. However, piracy and drug-related violence has largely put an end to that adventurous route south. At the time of writing, the only way to reach Thailand directly was to fly from Kunming. However, you could ask about hitching a ride on a cargo boat. They leave from Guanlei, about 75km southeast of Jinhong. The [Mekong Cafe](#) can sometimes arrange a ride. If you get one, expect to pay ¥1200 per person for the trip. Alternatively, head into Laos and then skip over the Thai border.

i Getting Around

Bus 1 ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (¥2) runs to the airport, 5km south of the city, from a stop on Mengla Lu near the corner with Minhang Lu. A taxi will cost around ¥25 but expect to be hit up for much more during festivals.

Jinhong is small enough that you can walk to most destinations, but a bike makes life easier and can be rented through most accommodation for ¥25 to ¥30 a day or from the **bike hire shop** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 8.30am-10pm) on Manting Lu.

A taxi anywhere in town costs ¥7.

Around Jinghong

Trekking (or busing) to the endless minority villages is the draw here. You could spend weeks doing so, but even with limited time most destinations in Xishuangbanna are only two or three hours away by bus. Note that to get to the most isolated villages, you'll often first have to take the bus to a primary (and uninteresting) village and stay overnight there, since only one bus per day – if that – travels to the tinier villages.

Market addicts can rejoice – it's an artist's palette of colours in outlying villages. The most popular markets are the Thursday market in Xiding, then Menghun, followed by Menghai.

Take note: it can feel like every second village begins with the prefix 'Meng' and it isn't unheard of for travellers to end up at the wrong village entirely because of communication problems. Have your destination written down in script before you head off.

Sanchahe Nature Reserve

This nature reserve (Sanchahe Ziran Baohuqu), 48km north of Jinghong, is one of five enormous forest reserves in southern Yunnan. It has an area of nearly 1.5 million hectares; seriously, treat it with respect – you get off-trail here, you won't be found. The madding crowds head for **Banna Wild Elephant Valley** (Banna Yexianggu admission ¥65), named after the 50 or so wild elephants that live in the valley. The elephants are very retiring and rare are the travellers who have actually seen any of them. You will see monkeys, though, and it's worth a visit if you want to see something of the local forest. A 2km-long **cable car** (one way/return ¥50/70) runs over the tree tops from the main entrance into the heart of the park, as does an elevated walkway.

There is no accommodation in the park; it's best to stay in Jinghong. There are 10 buses daily to Sanchahe (¥15, one hour, 8am to 5pm).

Mengyang

The much photographed **Elephant-Shaped Banyan Tree** (Xiangxing Rongshu) is the reason most people visit Mengyang, 34km northeast of Jinghong on the road to Simao. It's also a centre for the Hani, Floral-Belt Dai and Lahu, one of the poorest minorities in the region.

From Mengyang it's another 19km southeast to **Jinuo**, which is home base for the Jinuo minority.

Menghan (Ganlanba)

A few years ago, Menghan (or Ganlanba as it's sometimes referred to) was a grand destination – you'd bike here and chill. Sadly, much of the main attraction – the lovely, friendly, somnolent village itself – has basically been roped off as a quasi-minority theme park with tour buses, cacophonous dancing – the usual. That said, the environs of the village are still wondrous.

Sights

Dai Minority Park

VILLAGE

(Daizuyuan  250 4099; Manting Lu; admission ¥65)

This was once the part of town that everyone in this region came to experience – especially for its classic temples and Dai families hosting visitors in their traditional homes. (It's now the aforementioned 'theme park'.) Tourists can spend the night in villagers' homes and partake in water-splashing 'festivals' twice a day. Despite the artificial nature of it all, some people love the experience.

For wonderful scenery along rivers and rice paddies, travellers recommend heading to the south of town, crossing the Mekong by ferry (¥2) and then heading left (east). The last ferry returns at 7pm.

Sleeping & Eating

Beds in a Dai home within the park will cost between ¥50 and ¥60 per person. Food is extra. Beds are traditional Dai mats and are usually very comfortable. Most homes will also have showers for you. Restaurants inside the park are pricey and firmly aimed at tour groups.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Menghan leave from Jinghong's No 2 bus station (¥18, every 20 minutes, 7.40am to 6pm). Note that at the time of writing, roadworks meant buses were taking a more circuitous route and the journey time was two hours. From Menghan's bus station, there are buses back to Jinghong (¥18) every 20 minutes. The last bus leaves at 7.30pm. There's also one bus a day to Kunming (¥250, nine hours, 6.30pm).

If there are no roadworks, it is possible to cycle from Jinghong to Menghan in a brisk two hours or a leisurely three hours, but the traffic is heavy.

Menglun

East of Menghan, Menglun sports the **Tropical Plant Gardens** (Redai Zhiwuyuan admission ¥104; 🕒 7.30am-midnight). The gardens are gorgeous and get some high marks from visitors. To get here, turn left out of the bus station and then take the first left. Follow the road downhill and bear right and you'll reach the ticket office, which is just before a footbridge across the Mekong.

Your best bet for a clean bed in town is the **Chunlin Binguan** (📞 069 1871 5681; tw ¥60; 🏠), which is close to the gardens' entrance.

From Jinghong's No 2 bus station there are buses to Menglun (¥20, 75 minutes, every 20 minutes, 7am to 6pm). From Menglun, there are buses to Mengla (¥26, 2½ hours, every 20 minutes, 8am to 6pm) and Jinghong (¥20, 75 minutes, every 20 minutes, 6.30am to 6pm).

Mengla

Mengla is the last (or first) main city for travellers headed to/from Laos. It has a few palm-tree-lined streets and some garish orange-coloured buildings designed with local architecture in mind, but little in the way of sights.

Depending on bus condition/road traffic/arrival time, you may be stuck here for the night (the border is another 45km away). If you need a hotel, try

Jinqiao Dajudian ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞069 1812 4946; d/tw ¥40-80; 📶📶),

convenient for the north bus station just up the hill.

Mengla has two bus stations. The northern long-distance bus station has buses to Kunming (¥290, two or three buses daily, 8.30am to 11.30am). The No 2 bus station is in the southern part of town.

Buses from Mengla's No 2 station go to the following locations:

Jinghong ¥50, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 6pm)

Menglun ¥26, every 20 minutes (7am to 7pm)

Mohan ¥15, every 20 minutes (8am to 6pm)

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO LAOS

On-the-spot visas for Laos can be obtained at the border. The price will depend on your nationality (generally US\$35 to US\$40). You can also pick one up at the **Lao Consulate** (Laowo Lingshiguan 📞221 9355; 2/F, Bldg 2, Gaozhuang Xishuangjing, Xuanwei Dadao; 🕒8.30-11.30am & 2.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri) in Jinghong, which is on the other side of the river on the edge of town. A taxi here will cost ¥15.

The **Chinese checkpoint** (📞069 1812 2684; 🕒8am-5.30pm) is generally not much of an ordeal. Don't forget that Laos is an hour behind China.

A daily bus runs to Luang Nam Tha in Laos from Jinghong (¥70, seven hours, 10.40am). Along with the daily bus to Vientiane from Kunming (¥587, 30 hours, 6pm), it stops at Mengla, but you're not guaranteed a seat.

No matter what anyone says, there should be no 'charge' to cross. Once your passport is stamped (double-check all stamps), you can jump on a motor-rickshaw to take you 3km into Laos for around ¥5. Whatever you do, go early, in case things wrap up early on either side. There are guesthouses on both the Chinese and Lao sides; people generally change money on the Lao side.

Damenglong

Damenglong (just the latter two characters, ‘Menglong’, are written on buses) is a scrappy place with drowsy folks lolling about the dusty streets. Sights include some decent pagodas, but mostly you’re here to traipse or bike through endless villages (ask about bike hire at Hua Jie Binguan). Bear in mind that new rubber plantations here have made the countryside less pristine than it once was.

About 55km south of Jinghong and a few kilometres from the Myanmar border, the border crossing point (not open for foreigners) with Myanmar has been designated as the entry point for a planned highway linking Thailand, Myanmar and China, which should really liven things up around here if it ever gets built.

Sights

White Bamboo Shoot Pagoda

PAGODA

(Manfeilong Ta admission ¥10)

Surrounded by jungle (watch out for stray snakes!), this pagoda dates back to 1204 and is Damenglong’s premier attraction. According to legend, the pagoda’s temple was built on the location of a hallowed footprint left behind by the Sakyamuni Buddha, who is said to have visited Xishuangbanna. If you have an interest in ancient footprints you can look for it in a niche below one of the nine stupas. The temple has been extensively renovated in recent years.

If you’re in the area in late October or early November, check the precise dates of the Tan Ta Festival. At this time, White Bamboo Shoot Pagoda is host to hundreds of locals whose celebrations include dancing, rockets and fireworks, paper balloons and so on.

The pagoda is easy to get to: just walk back along the main road towards Jinghong for 2km until you reach a small village with a temple on your left. From here there’s a path up the hill, it’s about a 20-minute walk. There’s

often no one around to collect the entry fee. A motor-rickshaw from Damenglong is ¥10.

Black Pagoda

PAGODA

(Hei Ta) **FREE**

Just above the centre of town is a Dai monastery with a steep path beside it leading up to the Black Pagoda – you’ll notice it when entering Damenglong. The pagoda itself is actually gold, not black. Take a stroll up and have a chat with the few monks in residence. The views of Damenglong and surrounding countryside are more interesting than the temple itself.

Sleeping & Eating

There are simple Dai barbecue places scattered around the village. Try the ones close to the Black Pagoda.

Hua Jie Binguan

HOTEL

( 069 1274 2588; d/tw ¥60; )

Not very prepossessing, but the best option in town. To get here, turn right out of the bus station, then left up the hill and it’s on the left-hand side, set back from the road.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Damenglong (¥16, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes, 6.30am to 6.30pm) leave from Jinghong’s south bus station. Remember, the ‘Da’ character is sometimes not displayed. Buses for the return trip run on the same schedule.

Menghai

This modern town is another potential base for exploring the countryside, although it’s not as pleasant a place as Jinghong. Grab a bike and head north

for the most interesting pagodas and villages.

If you're passing through Menghai, it's worth visiting the huge daily **produce market** that attracts members of the hill tribes. The best way to find it is to follow the early-morning crowds.

Buses run from Jinghong's No 2 bus station to Menghai (¥17, 45 minutes, every 20 minutes, 7am to 7pm). They return every 20 minutes or so too.

Menghun

This quiet little village, about 26km southwest of Menghai, has a colourful **Saturday market**. The town begins buzzing around 7am and the action lingers on through to midday. The swirl of hill tribes-people alone, with the women sporting fancy leggings, headdresses, earrings and bracelets, makes the trip worthwhile. Some travellers love it, while others decry the 'foreignisation' of locals.

There are several guesthouses, though none are remarkable. For ¥50 you get a double with bathroom and TV, but no air-con.

To get here, take any bus to Menghai from the No 2 bus station in Jinghong and then change for a minivan (¥7) or any bus heading through Menghun (¥4).

Xiding

This sleepy hillside hamlet comes alive every Thursday for its weekly **market** (7am to 11am), one of the best in the region. At other times you'll find Xiding almost deserted. If you want to see the market at its most interesting, you'll really have to get here the night before. Beds in the village are available for ¥50; their owners will find you.

To get here by public transport you can catch one of the two direct buses from Menghai (¥12, 10.30am and 3pm); going the other way you can catch the bus back to Menghai at 8am and 12.30pm. There are also twice daily buses from Xiding to Menghun (¥11, 7.20am and 1pm). If you miss the bus

you can always get a ride on a motorbike (¥30), a spectacular if hair-raising experience.

Jingzhen

In the village of Jingzhen, about 14km west of Menghai, is the **Octagonal Pavilion** (Bajiao Ting admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-6pm), first built in 1701. The original structure was severely damaged during the Cultural Revolution but renovated in 1978 and the ornate decoration is still impressive. The temple also operates as a monastic school. The paintings on the wall of the temple depict scenes from the Jataka, the life history of Buddha.

Frequent buses from Menghai's bus station go via Jingzhen (¥10, 30 minutes).

Sichuan

[Sichuan Highlights](#)

[Central Sichuan](#)

[Chengdu](#)

[Around Chengdu](#)

[Emei Shan](#)

[Le Shan](#)

[Southern Sichuan](#)

[Zigong](#)

[Yibin](#)

[Bamboo Sea](#)

[Western Sichuan](#)

[Kangding](#)

[Danba](#)

[Sichuan–Tibet Highway
\(Northern Route\)](#)

[Sichuan–Tibet Highway
\(Southern Route\)](#)

[Northern Sichuan](#)

[Songpan](#)

[Jiuzhaigou National Park](#)

[Langzhong](#)

Sichuan



Pop 80.8 million

Why Go?

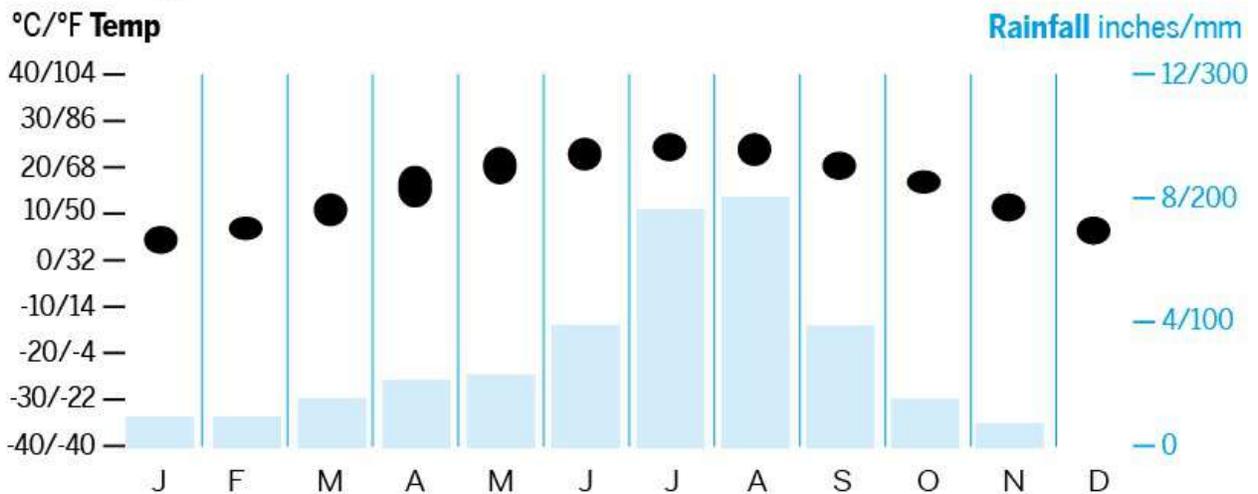
It's fitting that an ancient form of opera and magic called *bianlian* (face-changing) originated here, for Sichuan is a land of many guises.

Capital Chengdu shows a modern face, but just beyond its bustling ring roads you'll find a more traditional landscape of mist-shrouded, sacred mountains, and a countryside scattered with ancient villages and cliffs of carved Buddhas. Central Sichuan is also home to the giant panda, the most famous face in China.

To the north, the visage changes again into a fairyland of alpine valleys and blue-green lakes. Sichuan's Tibetan face appears as you venture west. This is Kham, one of the former Tibetan prefectures: a vast landscape of plateau grasslands and glacial mountains where Tibetan culture still thrives and you're certain to have your most challenging, yet most magical, experiences.

When to Go

Chéngdū



- ➔ **Mar–May** Prime time for Chengdu. Not too humid, little rain and peach blossoms.
- ➔ **Jul–Aug** In the west, the warm grasslands bloom in technicolor.
- ➔ **Aug–Oct** The turquoise lakes to the north offer secluded camping amid stunning autumn leaves.

Best Hiking

- ➔ [Yading Nature Reserve](#)
- ➔ [Jiuzhaigou National Park](#)
- ➔ [Songpan](#)
- ➔ [Tagong](#)
- ➔ [Xinlu Hai](#)
- ➔ [Emei Shan](#)

Best History & Culture

→ [Chengdu](#)

→ [Dege](#)

→ [Seda](#)

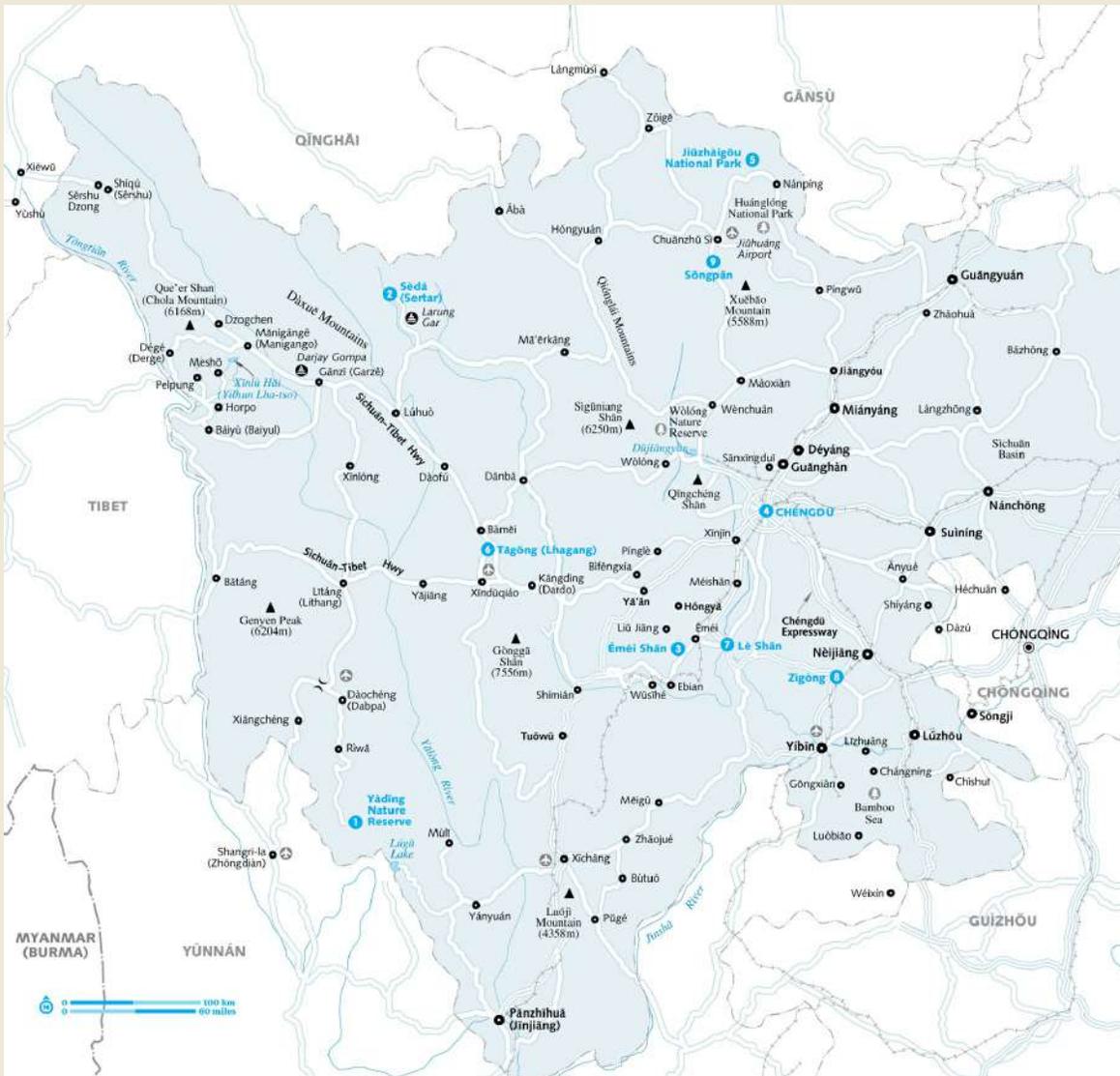
→ [Danba](#)

→ [Luobiao](#)

→ [Zigong](#)

→ [Litang](#)

Sichuan Highlights



- 1 Make the pilgrimage trek around the stunning holy mountains of [Yading Nature Reserve](#).
- 2 Chat with monks and nuns in training at Seda's massive [Buddhist institution](#).
- 3 Rise with the sun on the forested slopes of [Emei Shan](#).
- 4 Meet China's cuddly national icon at Chengdu's [Giant Panda Breeding Research Base](#).
- 5 Camp in Jiuzhaigou's alpine valley through the park's

[ecotourism program.](#)

- ⑥ Break bread with Tibetan nomads on [Tagong](#)'s grasslands.
- ⑦ Peer over the toenails of the world's largest [Buddha statue](#) in Le Shan.
- ⑧ Discover salt and dinosaurs in [Zigong](#).
- ⑨ Horse trek to the mountain lakes around [Songpan](#).

History

Sichuan's early history was turbulent. The region was the site of various breakaway kingdoms, ever skirmishing with central authority, but it was finally wrested under control and established as the capital of the Qin empire in the 3rd century BC. It was here that the kingdom of Shu (a name by which the province is still known) ruled as an independent state during the Three Kingdoms period (AD 220–80).

During the Warring States period (475–221 BC), local governor and famed engineer Li Bing managed to harness the flood-prone Min River (Min Jiang) on the Chuanxi plain with his revolutionary weir system; the Dujiangyan Irrigation Project still still controls flooding, and supplies Chengdu and 49 other provincial cities with water, 2200 years after it was constructed! It's one of the reasons the Sichuan basin is synonymous with fertile soil.

Another more recent factor was the efforts of Zhao Ziyang, the Party Secretary of Sichuan in 1975. After the Great Leap Forward, when an estimated one-tenth of Sichuan's population died of starvation, Ziyang became the driving force behind agricultural and economic reforms that restored farming output. He reinstated the 'Responsibility System', whereby plots of land were granted to farming families on the proviso that they sold a quota of crops to the state. Any additional profits or losses would be borne by the families. This household-focused approach was so successful that it became the national model. Sichuan continues to be a major producer of the nation's grain, soybeans, and pork.

Catastrophe struck the region on 12 May 2008, when the Wenchuan

earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale hit the province's central region. Some sources reported it killed more than 88,000 people, as many as 10,000 of them school children, and left millions more injured or homeless.

The trillion-yuan aid and rebuilding effort continues in the remote, mountainous areas. The main road linking Chengdu with Jiuzhaigou took four years to re-open. Now travellers on that route will see brand new villages rising from the rubble.

Language

Sichuanese is a Mandarin dialect, but with its fast clip, distinctive syntax, and five tones instead of four, it can challenge standard Mandarin speakers. Two phrases easily understood are *yaode* (pronounced 'yow-day', meaning 'yes' or 'OK') and *meide* (pronounced 'may-day', meaning 'no').

Sichuan's other major languages belong to the Tibeto-Burman family and are spoken by Tibetans and Yi minorities. Don't expect much help from phrasebooks. In western Sichuan, Tibetan dialects vary from town to town.

Getting There & Around

Chengdu serves as the province's transit hub. Smooth expressways to eastern and southern Sichuan make short trips of many destinations, but heading north or west is a different story. Many roads are in poor shape or are under construction. Weather conditions are unpredictable at high elevations, and hazards ranging from landslides to overturned semis are common.

Trains head from Chengdu to major cities, including Lhasa. High-speed trains now connect Chengdu to Qingcheng Shan and Dujiangyan, and will soon reach Le Shan and Emei Shan.

Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport is the largest airport in southwest China. Several small airports in Sichuan's furthest corners are connected to it by a one-hour flight — Jiuzhaigou in the north, Kangding in the west, and Daocheng-Yading in the southwest.

PRICE INDICATORS

We have used the following price indicators to represent price ranges:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥600

\$\$\$ more than ¥600

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥50

\$\$\$ more than ¥50

CENTRAL SICHUAN

The province's friendly and modern capital city, Chengdu, is where most travellers start their Sichuan explorations. It makes a great base for trips to the region's top sights. The area surrounding this emerging metropolis remains dotted with quaint old villages and farmsteads. Nearby, rise the lush, forested peaks of Emei Shan, the cliffs of Le Shan with an ancient Buddha (the world's largest), and, hidden in the bamboo thickets, pandas; practically impossible to see in the wild, they are easy to spot in area reserves.

Chengdu

☞ 028 / Pop 14.2 million

On the face of it, Chengdu should be a drag. It's flat, with no distinguishing natural features. The weather is grey and drizzly much of the year. The traffic is alarming. Yet somehow everyone comes away satisfied. Perhaps it's the truly fabulous food, and the laid-back local folk. Or it could be the relaxing teahouse culture. Maybe it's the lively nightlife? Then there are the pandas, of course. Who knows?

As the transport hub for the whole region, most travellers in China's southwest will be fortunate enough to pass through and find out for themselves.

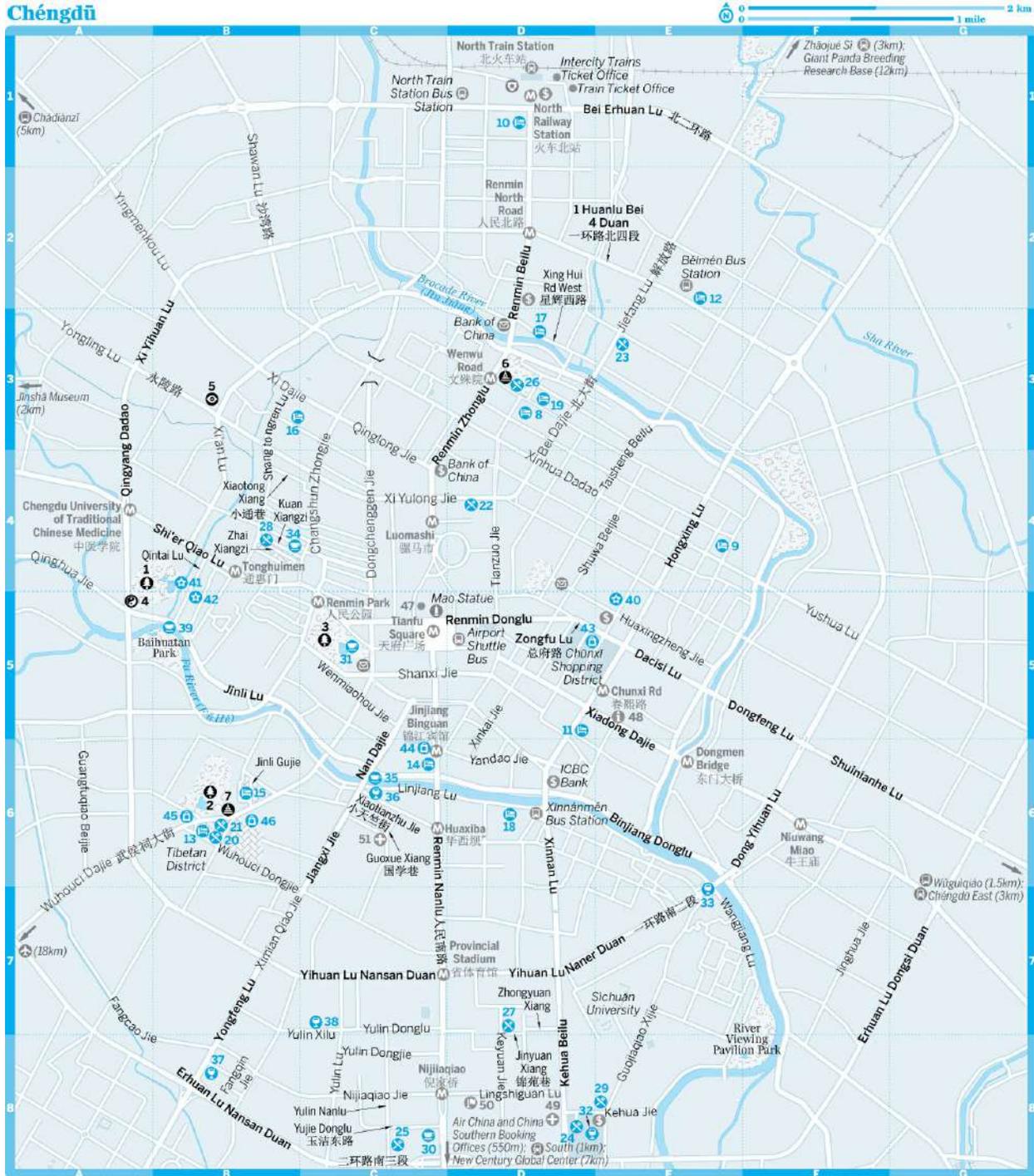
History

Chengdu has seen the rise and fall of nearly a dozen independent kingdoms and dynasties since its founding in 316 BC; agricultural potential and geography were key to its political power. Yet throughout history it has been equally well known as a cornerstone of culture and commerce – celebrated Tang-dynasty poet Du Fu created 240 seminal works during his four-year retreat here. Three hundred years later, during the Song dynasty, Chengdu issued the world's first paper money.

Two walls were constructed during the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC) to create two city sections along the north bank of the rushing Jin Jiang. They were levelled in 1644 by the rebel Zhang Xianzhong on his way to founding his own kingdom. There was also a vast imperial palace, built in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), on the site where Tianfu Sq and the Mao statue now stand. Covering 380,000 sq metres (more than half the size of Beijing's Forbidden City, and one-fifth of Chengdu's area at the time), it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, the last of its magnificent gates disappearing in 1979. In the modern city crowded temples and quiet alleyways still stand – relics of the past.

The city now stretches across both sides of the Jin Jiang, whose name means 'Brocade River', a reminder of the city's silk industry, which thrived beginning in the Eastern Han dynasty (AD 25–220) when, from Chengdu, the southern Silk Road opened China to the West.

Chéngdū



Chengdu

📍 Sights

1 [Culture Park](#)

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| 2 | Nanjiao Park | B6 |
| 3 | People's Park | C5 |
| 4 | Qingyang Temple | A5 |
| 5 | Tomb of Wang Jian | B3 |
| 6 | Wenshu Temple | D3 |
| 7 | Wuhou Temple | B6 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 8 | BuddhaZen Hotel | D3 |
| 9 | Chengdu Free Guys | E4 |
| 10 | Chengdu Grand Hotel | D1 |
| 11 | Flipflop Lounge Hostel | D5 |
| 12 | Hello Chengdu International Youth Hostel | E2 |
| 13 | Holly's Hostel | B6 |
| 14 | Jinjiang Hotel | C6 |
| 15 | Jinli Hotel | B6 |
| 16 | Loft Design Hostel | B3 |
| 17 | Mix Hostel | D3 |
| 18 | Mrs Panda Hostel | D6 |
| 19 | Old Chengdu Club | D3 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 20 | Are Tibetan Restaurant | B6 |
| 21 | Are Tibetan Restaurant | B6 |
| 22 | Chen Mapo Doufu | D4 |
| 23 | Chongqing Baye | E3 |
| 24 | Hui Zhi Feng | D8 |
| 25 | Sultan | C8 |
| 26 | Wenshu Temple Vegetarian Restaurant | D3 |
| 27 | Yangyang Canguan | D7 |
| 28 | Yu Family Kitchen | B4 |
| 29 | Yulin Chuanchuan Xiang | E8 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 30 | Bookworm | C8 |
| 31 | He Ming Teahouse | C5 |
| 32 | Jellyfish | D8 |
| 33 | Jiuyan Bar Street | E7 |
| 34 | Kai Lu Lao Zhaiyuan | B4 |
| 35 | Lao Nanmen Teahouse | C6 |
| 36 | Nanmen Bridge Bars | C6 |

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 37 | New Little Bar | B8 |
| 38 | Old Little Bar | C7 |
| 39 | Sanhua Lou/Ye Pijiu | B5 |
| | Yuelai Teahouse | E5 |

★ Entertainment

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 40 | Jinjiang Theatre | E5 |
| 41 | Shufeng Yayun Teahouse | B4 |
| 42 | Shufeng Yayun Teahouse | B5 |

🏠 Shopping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 43 | Chunxi Lu Shopping District | D5 |
| 44 | Sanfo | C6 |
| 45 | Sanfo | B6 |
| 46 | Tibetan Shops | B6 |

Information

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 47 | Chengdu Entry & Exit Service Centre | C5 |
| 48 | China Youth Travel Service | E5 |
| 49 | Global Doctor Chengdu Clinic | D8 |
| 50 | US Consulate | D8 |
| 51 | West China Hospital SCU | C6 |

Sights

★ Giant Panda Breeding Research Base

WILDLIFE RESERVE

(Daxiongmao Fanyu Jidi  8351 0033; www.panda.org.cn; 1375 Xiongmao Dadao; adult/student ¥58/29;  8am-5.30pm)

One of Chengdu's most popular attractions, this reserve, 18km north of the city centre, is the easiest way to glimpse Sichuan's famous residents outside of a zoo. The enclosures here are large and well maintained. Home to nearly 120 giant and 76 red pandas, the base focuses on getting these shy creatures to breed.

March to May is the 'falling in love period' (wink wink). If you visit in

autumn or winter, you may see tiny newborns in the nursery.

Try to visit in the morning, when the pandas are most active. Feeding takes place around 9.30am, although you'll see them eating in the late afternoon, too. They spend most of their afternoons sleeping, particularly during the height of midsummer, when they sometimes disappear into their (air-conditioned) living quarters.

Catch bus 49 (¥2, 40 minutes) and transfer at Zhaojue Henglu stop to bus 87 or 198 (¥2, 20 minutes) to the Panda Base stop (Xiongmao Jidi). Alternatively, from north train station take bus 9 (¥2, 60 minutes) to the Zoo stop (Dongwuyuan) and switch to 198 (¥2, 20 minutes). Hostels run trips here, too. Metro line 3 will run directly here when it is completed.

Wenshu Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Wenshu Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Renmin Zhonglu; 🕒 8am-10.50pm; [M](#)1) **FREE**

This Tang-dynasty monastery is dedicated to Wenshu (Manjushri), the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, and is Chengdu's largest and best-preserved Buddhist temple. The air is heavy with incense and the low murmur of chanting; despite frequent crowds of worshippers, there's still a sense of serenity and solitude.

The temple's popular **vegetarian restaurant** (Wenshuyuan Suyan Ting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wenshu Temple, Renmin Zhonglu; dishes ¥12-48; 🕒 10.30am-8.30pm) and teahouse were closed for renovations when we visited. The 'old' neighbourhood streets surrounding the temple are crowded with teahouses, snack stalls and shops; touristy, yes, but fun to wander.

Jinsha Site Museum

MUSEUM

(Jinsha Yizhi Bowuguan www.jinshasitemuseum.com; 227 Qingyang Dadao; admission ¥80; 🕒 8am-5.30pm)

In 2001 archaeologists made a historic discovery in Chengdu's western suburbs: they unearthed a major site containing ruins of the 3000-year-old Shu kingdom. This excellent, expansive museum includes the excavation site

and beautiful displays of many of the uncovered objects, which were created between 1200 and 600 BC.

Like the discoveries further outside the city at [Sanxingdui](#), the 6000 or so relics include both functional and decorative items, from pottery and tools to jade artefacts, stone carvings and ornate gold masks. A large number of elephant tusks were also unearthed here.

Take bus 901 from Xinnanmen bus station, or metro line 2 to Yinpintianxia.

Tomb of Wang Jian

TOMB

(Wangjian Mu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 10 Yongling Lu, admission ¥20; 🕒 8am-6pm; 🚏 54, 30)

Built for Wang Jian (847–918), a general who rose to power following the collapse of the Tang dynasty to rule as emperor of the Shu kingdom, this above-ground tomb, the only one excavated in China so far, was pillaged just once, sometime after the subsequent collapse of the Shu.

The tomb is decorated with carvings of 24 musicians and dancers all playing different instruments and is considered to be the best surviving record of Tang-dynasty court entertainment; the statue at the back is thought to be the only existing lifelike sculpture of an ancient Chinese king. Strolling the surrounding grounds is free and altogether the site makes for a pleasant hour or two.

People's Park

PARK

(Renmin Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 6.30am-10.30pm, to 10pm winter; 🚏 2) **FREE**

On weekends, locals fill this park with dancing, song and taichi. There's a small, willow-tree-lined boating lake and a number of teahouses: [He Ming Teahouse](#) is the most popular.

Qingyang Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(Qingyang Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Huanlu Xi Er Duan, admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-5pm;

🚏 11, 27, 45)

Located alongside **Culture Park** (Wenhua Gongyuan; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 9 Huanlu Xi Er Duan, 🕒 6am-10pm), this is Chengdu's oldest and most extensive Taoist temple. Qingyang, or Green Ram, Temple dates from the Zhou dynasty, although most of what you see is Qing. A highlight is the unusually squat, eight-sided pagoda, built without bolts or pegs.

Wuhou Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Wuhou Ci [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 231 Wuhouci Dajie; admission ¥60; 🕒 8am-6pm; 🚏 1, 21, 26)

Located adjacent to **Nanjiao Park** (Nanjiao Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 235 Wuhouci Dajie; 🕒 6am-7:30pm) and surrounded by mossy cypresses, this temple (rebuilt in 1672) honours several figures from the Three Kingdoms period, namely legendary military strategist Zhuge Liang and Emperor Liu Bei (his tomb is here). Both were immortalised in the Chinese literature classic, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms (San Guo Yanyi)*.

Just east of the temple is **Jinli Gujie**, one of Chengdu's restored ancient alleyways, crammed with souvenir stalls and eateries.

Sleeping

★ Hello Chengdu International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Laosong Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8196 7573, 8335 5322; www.gogosc.com;

211 Huanlu Bei 4 Duan, dm from ¥40, s without/with bathroom ¥90/120, d from ¥140, ste ¥210;

🚫 🌿 @ 📶; 🚏 28, 34)

Once one of the best hostels in China, nevermind Chengdu, this place has lost some of its finesse in recent years. It's still a nice space, though, sprawled around two garden courtyards, good for kids and adults to laze about. Rooms are clean and simple, and facilities are what you'd expect from a top-class hostel.

There's a solid bar and cafe, bike rental (from ¥10), a DVD library, and ready travel advice.

Loft Design Hostel

HOSTEL

(Sihao Gongchang Qingnian Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8626 5770; www.lofthostel.com; 4 Xiaotong Xiang off Zhongtongren Lu., dm ¥50-60, s/d from ¥180/300; 📶 @ 📶; 🚏48, 54, 341)

Chic boutique meets trendy hostel in this converted printing factory, with its pretty cafe and bar, exposed brick, and arty vibe. The front desk at this hostel for grown-ups offers solid travel advice plus a decent cocktail selection.

Dorms are small but the deluxe private rooms are spacious. The main downfall: wi-fi is only in the common spaces.

Mix Hostel

HOSTEL

(Luyouji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8322 2271; www.mixhostel.com; 23 Ren Jia Wan, Xinghui Lu West, dm ¥35-50, s ¥88, d/tr from ¥98/130; 📶 @ 📶; 🚏16, 55)

Mix exudes a laid-back, backpacker vibe. It's not particularly central but is only a short walk from the Renmin Beilu metro stop, so it's easy to plug yourself into the action. There's a good cafe, wi-fi (lobby area mostly), bike rental (¥20), and trustworthy travel advice. Shared bathroom only.

Flipflop Lounge Hostel

HOSTEL

(Tuo Banxie Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎6250 0185; www.chengduhostel.com; 98 Dongsheng Jie, dm ¥35-45, s/d/tr ¥140/170/200; 📶 @ 📶; 🚏1, 2, 55)

This very lively hostel offers travellers all the usual services plus a few rare gifts – a pool table, decent water pressure in the communal showers, and experienced help when filing for permits and booking tours to Tibet. Rooms are slightly more expensive than other hostels, but you're paying for the 10-minute walk to the [Chunxi Lu shopping district](#) and metro station.

Mrs Panda Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xiongmao Furen Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8705 5315; mrspandahostel@hotmail.com; 6 Linjiang Zhonglu, dm ¥40-50, r without bath ¥90, with bath ¥170-210; 📶 @ 📶; 🚏55, 76, 16)

The new owners recently spruced up beloved Traffic Inn hostel with a panda

theme. Rooms with shared bathroom remain the best value thanks to the spotless shared showers and toilets. Close to Xinnanmen bus station, this is extremely convenient for day trips.

Chengdu Free Guys

HOSTEL

(Xianren Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8666 6478, 180 8486 6478;

www.freeguyshostel.com; 55 Dongjiaochang Jie, dm ¥25-35, r without/with bathroom ¥80-135/120-160;

🚰📶; 🚏(28, 101)

A solid choice for those needing a cheap, clean bed and decent shower. There's not much by way of frills in this windowless maze of rooms, but the chill guys (and gals) managing the comfortable bar and library on the 2nd floor pour cold beers.

BuddhaZen Hotel

HOTEL

(Yuan He Yuan Fu Chan Kezhan, 00 [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8692 9898;

www.buddhazenhotel.com; B6-6 Wenshufang, B6-6, near Wenshu Temple incl breakfast s & d from

¥495, ste from ¥788; 🚰@📶; 🚏(M1)

Set in a tranquil courtyard building, this boutique hotel blends traditional decor with modern comforts and a taste of Buddhist philosophy. You can ponder life sipping tea on your private balcony, circling the sand garden, or soaking in a wooden tub at the spa.

It's lovely here. So nice in fact that you're bound to forget your suffering long enough to enjoy a vegetarian meal (mains from ¥30) in the silk-adorned downstairs restaurant. Limited English.

Jinli Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinli Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6631 1335; www.cdjinli.com; 231 Wuhouci Dajie, 11

Zhangwu Jie, s/d/ste ¥398/518/618; 🚰📶; 🚏(1, 21, 26)

If you don't mind the tourists swarming Jinli Gujje by Wuhou Temple, this upmarket inn set in two courtyard-style buildings, is a nice place to stay. Rooms mix traditional Chinese wooden furnishings with modern touches

such as puffy white duvets and wide-screen TVs. The two standard rooms do not have wi-fi.

Holly's Hostel

HOSTEL

(Jiulongding Qingnian Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8555 7349, 8554 8131;

hollyhostelcn@yahoo.com; 246 Wuhouci Dajie, dm ¥40-55, d ¥260-280; 📶@📶; 🚗27, 45)

Prepare for trips out west by plugging yourself in to Chengdu's small Tibetan district, which surrounds this cute and friendly hostel. Holly's has clean, basic rooms plus wi-fi, bike rentals (¥20) and a nice rooftop cafe (Western and Chinese mains ¥10 to ¥50). They can also help with permits to Lhasa. Discounted doubles go for as low as ¥120.

Chengdu Grand Hotel

HOTEL

(Chengdu Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8317 3888; www.cdgrandhotel.com; 29 North

Renmin, d & tw ¥400-580, discounted to ¥240-280; 📶@📶; 🚗1, 27, 🚇1)

This 23-storey old-school hotel with decent, internet-enabled rooms makes a comfortable choice near the north train station.

Jinjiang Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinjiang Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8550 6550; www.jjhotel.com; 80 Renmin Nanlu, 2nd

Section, r from ¥1099; 📶@📶📶; 🚗1, 57, 🚇1)

At nine storeys, Jinjiang was Sichuan's first five-star hotel and the tallest building in Chengdu until the late 1970s. There are more luxurious options now, but this one retains a charm that the chains lack, from the courteous and polished bell hops to the Michelin-level chef helming Jinyue French Restaurant.

Old Chengdu Club

HOTEL

(Chengdu Huiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8695 6688; www.oldchengduclub.com.cn; 28

Wuyuegong Jie, s/d/tr from ¥380/580/780; 📶@📶)

On Wenshu Temple's doorstep, the Ming dynasty-style courtyard buildings

and luxurious rooms of this hotel are decorated with lovely Chinese furnishings and artwork. It's worth upgrading to the bright and sumptuous rooms in the main building. Limited English.

TOP FIVE SICHUANESE DISHES

Gongbao jiding Spicy chicken with peanuts.

Ganbian sijidou Dry-fried green beans.

Mapo doufu Spicy beancurd invented, it's said, by a pock-marked woman.

Shuizhu yu Boiled fish in a fiery sauce.

Huiguo rou Pork, simmered with spices and then stir-fried.

Eating

With the highest density of restaurants and teahouses of any city in the world, and the first city in Asia to be named a Unesco City of Gastronomy, your most memorable Chengdu moments are likely to involve food.

One popular speciality is *chuanchuan xiang*, the skewer version of the famous Chongqing hotpot (*huoguo*), that is just as spicy. First, choose the broth – usually either *hong guo* (spicy) or *yuanyang guo* (half-spicy, half-not) – then your meats, vegetables, and whatnot. Skewers generally cost ¥1; platters ¥2. There are restaurants specialising in this quintessential local eating experience all over the city.

Several monasteries, including Wenshu Temple, have popular vegetarian restaurants (dishes from ¥12) that are generally open only for lunch.

Yangyang Canguan

SICHUANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8523 1394; 32 Jinyuan Xiang, mains ¥15-50; 🕒 11.30am-2pm & 5-9pm; 📱)

The go-to for good-quality, tasty, and inexpensive Sichuanese cooking. The Chinese menu (*zhongwen caidan*) has photos and prices, but the English menu (; *yingwen caidan*) has neither, so ask for both. The spicy Guizhou

chicken (*Guizhou ji*; ¥38) is a good start.

Are Tibetan Restaurant

TIBETAN

(Are Zangcan Lao Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8551 0112; 3 Wuhouci Dongjie; mains from ¥13; 🕒 8.30am-10pm; 📍)

Choose from a delicious array of Tibetan staples from *tsampa* (roasted barley flour, ¥20) to *thugpa* (noodles in soup; ¥13 to ¥16), *momo* (dumplings; ¥20), and yak butter tea (¥18 to ¥25). Their **newer, less quaint location** (Are Zangcan Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8557 0877; 234 Wuhouci Dajie; 🕒 8.30am-10pm), just across from [Wuhou Temple](#), has fast counter service and a dining room upstairs. English, picture menus.

★ Yulin Chuanchuan Xiang

HOTPOT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 2-3 Kehua Jie, 3 broth ¥20-25, skewers short/long ¥0.20/¥1.50, sauce from ¥2; 🕒 10.30am-2am)

Sichuan University's hungry students crowd this lively branch of the popular chain, which specialises in *chuanchuan xiang*, Chengdu's version of the Chongqing hotpot. Pick your broth, then load up on skewers from the refrigerated back room to cook up at your table. Staff will tally the damage at the end of your meal.

There's another smaller branch in the city's southside.

Chen Mapo Doufu

SICHUANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8674 3889; 197 Xi Yulong Jie, mains ¥22-58; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-9pm; 📍)

The plush flagship of this famous chain is a great place to experience *mapo doufu* (small/large ¥12/20) – soft, house bean curd with a fiery sauce of garlic, minced beef, fermented soybean, chilli oil and Sichuan pepper. It's one of Sichuan's most famous dishes and is this restaurant's speciality. Non-spicy choices, too.

Hui Zhi Feng

BARBECUE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 181 1302 5306; Blue Caribbean Plaza, cnr Kehua Beilu & Kehua Jie, mains ¥39-58; 🕒 11am-2am; 📧)

A satisfying place to fill up before (or between) drinks on Kehua Jie. There are tables outside or seats around the *tie ban* to watch the chef sear your order to perfection. A highlight is the seared bacon-wrapped mushrooms (*peigen juan*; ¥25). Two dishes per person is usually enough.

Yu Family Kitchen

MODERN CHINESE

(Yu Jia Chufang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8669 1975; 43 Zhai Xiangzi near Xia Tongren Lu., set menu per person ¥660, with four or more guests ¥330; 🕒 noon-2pm, 5-9pm)

Pioneering the next phase of Chinese cuisine, Chef Yu Bo dazzles and delights with a set menu that begins with 16 intricate cold dishes followed by many more courses of ever-changing, meticulously prepared seasonal dishes – some traditional and many you've never seen before. By reservation only. With all the acclaim and just six private rooms, call early.

Sultan

MIDDLE EASTERN

(Sutan Tu'erqi Canba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 8555 4780; 5 Fanghua Jie, 12 mains from ¥50; 🕒 11am-11pm; 📶 📧)

Crowd-pleasing fare from the western reaches of the Silk Road, including lamb kebabs, hummus, house-made yoghurt, Turkish coffee, and warm naan. Hook into the free wi-fi outside on the patio, or into a sheesha pipe (¥50) in a private room piled with cushions.

Chongqing Baye

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6820 8243; www.cqbaye.com; 2nd fl, cnr Jiefang Lu & Zhangjia Xiang, mains ¥12-28, pots s/m/l ¥88/118/148; 🕒 9.30am-11pm)

This *ganguo* ('dry pot') specialist serves sizzling concoctions in very hot iron pots. Our favourites include *chaoji huanla xia* (shrimp), *zhusun jibao* (chicken and bamboo shoots), *xiangla paigu* (pork ribs) and *xiangla yachun*

(duck beak).

With rice (*mifan*), a small pot is enough for two or three; a ¥38 pot (*danrende*) is plenty for one. The menu also includes regular Sichuanese dishes, or head upstairs for standard (with broth) hotpot (from ¥50 per person). Finish with the *mijiu tangyuan* (sweet glutinous rice balls; ¥10).

Drinking

Sichuan does teahouses better than anywhere else in China. The art of tea – the brewing, serving, and savouring – dates back 3000 years, and teahouses have long been the centres of neighbourhood social life. In Chengdu, they are as they always have been – people gossip, play cards, watch opera, get haircuts and even have their ears cleaned! Try a Sichuan-grown green tea like *maofeng*, which uses tender, downy tea leaves, and *zhuyeqing*, which looks like tiny bamboo leaves.

Today you'll find crowded teahouses all over the city, particularly in parks and temple grounds. There are also pleasant ones along the river banks. Tea is generally served by the cup (¥20 to ¥40) and is topped up for free as often as you like.

There are plenty of options for the harder stuff too, including raucous **Jiuyan Bar Street**, (Jiuyan Jiuba Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) a neon strip of bars and clubs on the Jin Jiang, and the cluster of comparatively subdued watering holes by **Nanmen Bridge** (Nanmen Qiao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). For the latest on Chengdu's nightlife, pick up copies of *Hello Chengdu* or *More Chengdu* (www.morechengdu.com), or check out www.gochengdoo.com/en.

He Ming Teahouse

TEAHOUSE

(Heming Chaguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); People's Park; tea ¥12-30; 🕒 6am-9pm)

Always lively, this century-old spot is most pleasant for whiling away an afternoon with a bottomless cup of tea. Neat tea-pouring performances happen on Saturdays from 2pm to 3pm. Ear cleanings (¥20) available daily.

Kai Lu Lao Zhaiyuan

TEAHOUSE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 180 3041 6632; 11 Kuan Xiangzi, from ¥35 a cup; 🕒 10am-11pm)

For 200 years one of the city's most venerable teahouses has been tucked away in a peaceful courtyard behind a stone archway off the otherwise frenetic Kuan Alley.

New Little Bar

LIVE MUSIC

(Xiao Jiuguan (Fangqin Dian) [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 8515 8790; site.douban.com/littlebar; 47 Yongfeng Lu & Fangqin Jie, 1, beer from ¥15, cocktails from ¥25; 🕒 6pm-2am)

This small pub-like venue is *the* place in Chengdu to catch live local bands. Bands play most Fridays and Saturdays, and occasional weekdays, usually from 8pm. Live music carries a cover charge of around ¥15, depending on who's playing. Check online for the schedule.

Old Little Bar

BAR

(Xiao Jiuguan (Yulin Dian) [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 8556 8552; 55 Yulin Xilu, beer from ¥15, cocktails from ¥25; 🕒 6pm-2.30am)

The former epicentre of Chengdu's rock scene no longer puts on live performances, but it's still a chill place to hang out with beer- and music-loving locals.

Bookworm

CAFE

(Lao Shuchong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📞 8552 0177; www.chengdubookworm.com; 2-7 Yujie Dongjie, 28 Renmin Nanlu, 2-7 mains ¥35-95; 🕒 9am-1am)

This hopping bookstore-cafe, like its branches in Beijing and Suzhou, is a gathering place for expats and a pleasant spot for a beer or coffee (from ¥25). It also serves decent Western food. You can buy or borrow from the English-language section, or stop by for author talks, live music and other events. Check the website for the schedule.

Lao Nanmen Teahouse

TEAHOUSE

(Lao Nanmen Chayuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Binjiang Xi Lu, tea per cup ¥10-38; 🕒 noon-11pm summer, to 7pm rest of yr)

This pocket-sized riverside tea garden stays open late for the summer crowds. Just under the bridge beside a rushing weir, it's a pleasant local favourite that serves all the usual teas and snacks. No English menu.

Sanhua Lou/Ye Pijiu

TEAHOUSE, BEER GARDEN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 1 Qingyang Zhengjie, tea per cup ¥15-50, beer ¥10-40; 🕒 8am-2am)

Housed in a four-storey red pagoda, this teahouse overlooking the river and the other teahouses in Baihuatan Park, turns into a beer garden come 7pm, complete with football on the projection screen and small bites (¥10 to ¥30) to wash down with a bottle or five.

Jellyfish

BAR

(Hai Mu Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 152 0833 3220; 2nd fl, Blue Caribbean Plaza, cnr Kehua Beilu & Kehua Jie, 2 cocktails from ¥25; 🕒 7.30pm-2.30am, to 4am weekends)

This cocktail bar turns into a hotbed of awkward dance-floor international relations when the DJs spin late nights. Gawk while enjoying a six cocktail flight with bar snacks (¥488) from your banquette or, better yet, join in. Happy hour goes from midnight to 1am, and ladies drink free on Thursday nights.

Entertainment

Chengdu is the birthplace of Sichuan opera, which dates back more than 250 years. Besides glass-shattering songs, performances feature slapstick, martial arts, men singing as women, acrobatics, and even fire breathing. An undoubted highlight is *bianlian* (face changing) where performers change character in a blink by swapping masks, manipulating face paint, and other prestidigitation.

Shufeng Yayun Teahouse

SICHUAN OPERA

(Shufeng Yayun [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8776 4530; www.shufengyayun.net; inside Culture Park; tickets ¥140-320; 🕒ticket office 3pm-9.30pm, nightly shows at 8pm)

This famous century-old theatre and teahouse puts on excellent 1½ hour shows that include music, puppetry and Sichuan opera's famed fire breathing and face changing. Come at around 7.30pm to watch performers putting on their elaborate make-up and costumes. For ¥50 to ¥100, kids (and adults) can try on garb and have a costume artist paint their face.

Ignore the **newer venue** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) just outside the park's east gate, which offers showings for very large tour groups. Buy tickets from the red ticket booth outside the park's east gate or either theatre.

Jinjiang Theatre

SICHUAN OPERA

(Jinjiang Juchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎8666 6891; 54 Huaxingzheng Jie, tickets ¥150-280; 🕒8pm-9.10pm)

Mixed-performance shows are held daily at this renowned opera theatre. The adjoining **Yuelai Teahouse** (Yuelai Chalou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 54 Huaxingzheng Jie, tea from ¥12, tickets for shows ¥20-40; 🕒8.30am-5pm), a local favourite, holds wonderfully informal performances on its small stage on Saturdays from 2pm to 4.30pm.

Shopping

Fancy-pants shopping centres dot the city with the highest concentration around **Chunxi Lu** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), the pedestrian street area east of Tianfu Sq.

On the south end of town sprawls the monstrous **New Century Global Center** (Xin Shiji Huanqiu Zhongxin ☎6273 2888; 1700 Tianfu Bei Dadao; 1 to Jincheng Square), the world's largest mall with 511,000-sq-metres of consumption possibilities, as well as a faux-seaside town complete with beach, waves and 24-hour sunshine.

For a more traditional option, try the small shops in the **Tibetan**

neighbourhood (Zangzu Yongpin Yitiao Jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) southeast of Wuhou Temple, which sell prayer flags, colourful scarves, beads and brass goods.

Sanfo

OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

(Sanfu Huwai [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.sanfo.com; 243 Wuhouci Dajie, 🕒 10am-8.30pm)

Outdoor clothing and camping equipment are a brisk business in Chengdu, as many people head to Tibet or the western mountains. Quality varies and fakes abound, but this place has good-quality gear. Another large branch is at **32 Renmin Nanlu** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 32 Renmin Nanlu,) by Nijiaqiao metro station.

Information

MEDICAL SERVICES

Global Doctor Chengdu Clinic

HOSPITAL

(Huanqiu Yisheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8528 3660, 24hr helpline 139 8225 6966; www.globaldoctor.com.au; 2nd fl, 9-11 Lippo Tower, 62 Kehua Beilu, 29-11 consultation ¥840, after-hours visit ¥1050, house call ¥1700; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri)

English- and Chinese-speaking doctors and a 24-hour emergency line.

West China Hospital SCU

HOSPITAL

(Sichuan Daxue Huaxi Yiyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 24hr emergency assistance in Chinese & English 8542 2761, for appointment 8542 2408; <http://eng.cd120.com>; 37 Guoxue Xiang,)

This hospital complex is China's largest and is among the most well-regarded. Foreigners should head for the International Hospital – where doctors and some staff members speak English. Note, some treatments without qualifying insurance may require a deposit.

MONEY

Most ATMs accept foreign cards.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 35 Renmin Zhonglu, 2nd Section, 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun)

Changes money and travellers cheques, and offers cash advances on credit cards.

VISAS

Chengdu Entry & Exit Service Centre

VISA

(Chengdushi Churujing Jiedai Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 8640 7067; www.chengdu.gov.cn; 2 Renmin Xilu, 🕒 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat)

Visa extensions (five working days), residence permits, and paperwork for lost passports on the 3rd floor. In the building behind the Mao statue's right hand.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Skip the gazillion Chinese travel agencies around town and head to the travel desk at one of Chengdu's many excellent hostels. You can book anything from Giant Panda Base visits to full-blown multiweek camping excursions across western Sichuan into Tibet.

Getting There & Away

AIR

You can fly directly to Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport from nearly any other major Chinese city in less than three hours. There are also direct international flights from Amsterdam, Bangkok, Doha, Frankfurt, Kathmandu, Kuala Lumpur, London, Melbourne, Mumbai, San Francisco, Seoul, Singapore and Tokyo.

Many travellers fly from here to Lhasa (¥892 to ¥1286, prepare for palpable oxygen deprivation). Flights to destinations within Sichuan include Kangding (¥470 to ¥923), Jiuzhaigou (¥830 to ¥1239) and Daocheng-Yading (¥701 to ¥1468).

Many hostels can book tickets.

Air China Chengdu Booking Office

AIRLINE TICKETS

(Guohang Shijie Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 nationwide bookings 95583; 1 Hangkong Lu, 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

By Tongzilin metro station, on the north side of Hangkong Lu.

China Southern Airlines

AIR TICKET

(Zhongguo Nanfang Hangkong [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8666 3618; www.csair.com; 45 Renmin Nanlu 4th Section, New Hope Tower 15th fl, 15 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

Near Tongzilin metro station, just south of Hangkong Lu.

BUS

The main bus station for tourists is **Xinnanmen** (| Xinnanmen Qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 24hr) (officially the central tourist station,). Two other useful stations are Chadianzi and **Beimen** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)). Be prepared to be dropped at any one of these (and other) bus stations when arriving in Chengdu. If you end up at Shiyangchang bus station, local bus 28 (¥2) connects it to Xinnanmen and Beimen bus stations, as well as the **north train station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)). Buses also depart directly from the airport for Le Shan, Ya'an, Yibin and Zigong.

Destinations from Xinnanmen Station

- ➔ **Bamboo Sea** ¥90 to ¥101, five hours, two daily (9.10am, 3.30pm)
- ➔ **Emei Shan** ¥41, 2½ hours, every 20 minutes from 6.40am to 7.20pm
- ➔ **Guanghan (for Sanxingdui)** ¥14, two hours, two daily (8.30am, 3pm)
- ➔ **Hongya (for Liu Jiang)** ¥38, two hours, every 45 minutes from 7.40am to 5.40pm
- ➔ **Jiuzhaigou** ¥128 to ¥138, 10 hours, six daily (from 7.10am to 8.40pm).

Extra morning buses run in July and August. Note, these buses pass Songpan (eight hours), but you may have to pay the full fare even if you get off at

Songpan.

- ➔ **Kangding** ¥117 to ¥127, seven hours, hourly from 7am to 2pm
- ➔ **Le Shan** ¥49, two hours, every 20 minutes from 7.20am to 7.35pm
- ➔ **Pingle** ¥20 to ¥24, two hours, approximately hourly from 8.10am to 6.20pm
- ➔ **Ya'an (for Bifengxia)** ¥44, two hours, every 40 minutes from 7.30am to 7.30pm

Western Destinations from Chadianzi Station

- ➔ **Danba** ¥79, eight hours, one daily (6.30am). Weather permitting; often cancelled from January to April.
- ➔ **Seda** ¥158, 15 hours, two daily (6.35am, 8am)
- ➔ **Songpan** ¥86, seven hours, three daily (6.30am, 7.30am, 9.30am)

Destinations from Beimen Station

- ➔ **Langzhong** ¥90 to ¥100, five hours, eight daily (8.30am to 3.30pm)
- ➔ **Yibin** ¥80, four hours, two daily (9am, 3pm)
- ➔ **Zigong** ¥60, three hours, departs when full from 7am to 7.20pm

TRAIN

Chengdu's two main train stations are Chengdu North Train Station (huoche beizhan) and the newer Chengdu East Train Station (huoche dongzhan), both of which connect directly to the metro.

Hotels, hostels and **CYTS** (CYTS, [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6599 9955; www.cytstours.com; 63 Xiadong Dajie, 🕒 8.30am-9pm) can book tickets, usually for a ¥5 fee.

Destinations from North Train Station

The **north station ticket office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) is in the separate building on your right as you approach the station. Buy high-speed train tickets at the adjacent **intercity trains ticket office** (chengji lieche shoupiaochu [GOOGLE MAP](#)).

- ➔ **Chongqing** (D class) 2nd/1st class ¥97/116, two hours, seven daily (7.41am to 7.11pm)
- ➔ **Emei Town** seat ¥24, 2½ hours, eight daily (6.40am to 7.39pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** seat/hard sleeper ¥139/247, 18 to 22 hours, six daily (8.42am to 7.04pm)
- ➔ **Le Shan** seat/hard sleeper ¥22/73, 2½ hours, two daily (6.40am, 5.55pm)
- ➔ **Lhasa** hard/soft sleeper ¥689/1101, 43 hours, one daily (8.45pm)
- ➔ **Qingcheng Shan** (D class) seat ¥15, 45 minutes, six daily (9.01am to 8.44pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an** seat/hard sleeper ¥112/200, 13 to 17 hours, 11 daily (7.39am to 10.30pm)
- ➔ **Yibin** seat/hard sleeper ¥51/102, six to 7½ hours, seven daily (8.30am to 11.37pm)
- ➔ **Zigong** seat/hard sleeper ¥41/92, five hours, seven daily (8.31am to 11.48pm)

Destinations from East Train Station

Daily D-class trains depart from the east train station for the following:

- ➔ **Chongqing** 2nd/1st class ¥97/116, two hours, frequently (7am to 8.53pm)
- ➔ **Wuhan** 2nd/1st class ¥344/413, 10 hours, seven daily (7am to 10.07am)

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Shuangliu Airport is 18km west of the city. **Airport shuttle buses** (Jichang Daba ; www.cdairport.com; ¥10;  6am-10pm, varies by route) cover four routes, reaching all corners of the city. Route 1 is the most direct to the city centre, stopping in front of the Jinjiang Hotel on Renmin Nanlu, from where you can catch the metro. Route 2 reaches the south train station (which also has a metro connection), and then stops frequently along Renmin Lu to the

north train station.

A taxi will cost ¥70 to ¥90. Most guesthouses offer airport pick-up services for slightly more.

BICYCLE

Chengdu is nice and flat with designated biking lanes, although the traffic can be a strain on cyclists. Youth hostels rent out bikes for around ¥20 per day. Always lock it up.

BUS

You can get almost anywhere in Chengdu by bus, as long as you can decipher the labyrinthine routes. Stops are marked in Chinese and English and some post route maps. Fares within the city are usually ¥2.

Useful routes:

- ➔ **Bus 1** City centre–Beimen bus station–Wuhou Temple
- ➔ **Bus 28** Shiyangchang bus station–Xinnanmen bus station–Beimen bus station–north train station
- ➔ **Bus 16** north train station–Renmin Lu–South Train Station
- ➔ **Bus 82** Chadianzi bus station–Jinsha Site Museum (stop is)–Wuhou Temple–Xinnanmen bus station
- ➔ **Bus 81** Mao statue–Qingyang Temple
- ➔ **Bus 69** north train station bus station–Zhaojue Si bus station
- ➔ **Tourist Bus 87** Zhaojue Si bus station–Giant Panda Breeding Research Base
- ➔ **Tourist Bus 60** Traffic Inn–Giant Panda Breeding Research Base

METRO

Line 1 links the north and south train stations, running the length of Renmin Lu and beyond. East–west running Line 2 links Chengdu East Train Station with the city centre, meeting Line 1 at Tianfu Sq before continuing west to Chadianzi bus station.

Line 3, which will run to the Giant Panda Breeding Research Base and

Xinnanmen bus station, and Line 4, for the new Chengdu West Train Station, will be completed in 2015.

Rides cost ¥2 to ¥6 depending on the distance covered. Stations have bilingual signs, maps and ticket machines.

TAXI

Taxis are ¥8 (¥9 from 11pm to 6am) for the first 2km, then ¥1.90 (¥2.20 at night) per kilometre thereafter.

TRAVELLING INTO KHAM

For trips west into Kham, groups might consider booking an SUV (yueye che) with a driver. Given the high cost of petrol and the challenging road conditions, rates are generally high, starting at ¥850 per day including tolls and petrol, but excluding food and sleeping costs for the driver. Add at least an additional ¥150 per day if the driver speaks English or Tibetan.

Most of Chengdu's hotels and hostels can assist with finding a reliable, properly insured driver. Before embarking, settle on the itinerary, fee and what it covers, and what happens should the car break down or some other unpredictable, trip-altering problem arise.

Around Chengdu

Sanxingdui

The **Sanxingdui Museum** (Sanxingdui Bowuguan  565 1526; www.sxd.cn; 133 Xi'an Lu, Guanghan; admission ¥80, audio guide ¥10;  8.30am-6pm, last entry 5pm), 40km north of Chengdu in Guanghan, exhibits relics of the Shu kingdom, a cradle of Chinese civilisation dating from 1200 BC to 1100 BC. Some archaeologists regard these artefacts, which include stunningly crafted, angular and stylised bronze masks, as even more important than Xi'an's Terracotta Warriors. Art and archaeology buffs will need at least a half day here.

Throughout the 20th century, farmers around Guanghan continually

unearthed intriguing pottery shards and dirt-encrusted jade carvings when digging wells and tilling their fields. However, war and lack of funds prevented anyone from investigating these finds. Finally, in 1986, archaeologists launched a full-scale excavation and made a startling discovery when they unearthed the site of a major city dating back to the neolithic age in the upper reaches of the Yangzi River (Chang Jiang). It was previously believed that the oldest civilisations were concentrated around the Yellow River (Huang He).

Buses to the site depart Chengdu's Xinnanmen bus station (¥15, 1½ hours, six daily, from 8.30am to 3pm). Alternatively, buses from Chengdu's Zhaojue Si station (¥12, 1½ hours, 7am to 8pm) head to Guanghan's tourist bus station; from there, transfer to local bus 6 (¥2, from 7am to 6pm) for the remaining 10km to the site.

A bus from the site back to Zhaojue Si station (7km northeast of Chengdu centre) leaves at 4.10pm; otherwise buses depart the tourist bus station for Xinnanmen every 10 minutes (¥16, from 6.40am to 6.50pm).

Dujiangyan

Two Unesco World Heritage Sites in Dujiangyan, 60km northwest of Chengdu, make for separate, very full day trips.

Sights

Dujiangyan Irrigation Project

HISTORIC SITE

(Dujiangyan Shuili Gongcheng admission ¥90, shuttle to Yulei Pavilion ¥10; 🕒 8am-6pm)

This system of channels, floodgates and weirs, constructed in the 3rd century BC, is the oldest and only surviving non-dam irrigation system in the world. Still in use, this feat of engineering is in a beautifully scenic area with forested hills, ancient temples, hilltop pagodas and coursing waters.

To tame the devastating floods caused by the fast-flowing Min Jiang, the

region's magistrate Li Bing set a crew of tens of thousands to work. Using sausage-shaped bamboo baskets filled with stones they reshaped the river bends and also cut a 20m-wide channel through Yulei Shan. Since gunpowder had yet to be invented, they used fire and water to crack the mountain's hard rock.

Numerous teahouses and restaurants on either side of the decorative South Bridge (Nan Qiao), near the park entrance, are good for a bite.

Every 5 April, catch elaborately costumed reenactments of the building process, ceremonial sacrifices, and elegies sung to Li Bing at the Water Releasing Festival.

Qingcheng Shan

MOUNTAIN

(Azure City Mountain Dujiangyan; admission ¥90)

Covered in lush, dripping forests, the sacred mountain of Qingcheng Shan has been a Taoist spiritual centre for more than 2000 years. Its beautiful trails are lined with ginkgo, plum and palm, and there are caves, pavilions and centuries-old wooden temples to explore.

Visitors can experience two sides of the mountain. The main entrance is on the mountain's front side (Qian Shan), and leads to paths that wind past 11 important Taoist sites. Those interested in hiking will prefer the back entrance (Hou Shan), accessed 15km northwest. In either case, to actually enjoy the views, avoid major holidays when hordes of tourists arrive to pay tribute to their ancestors.

Qian Shan

The trails here lead to a summit of only 1600m, a relatively easy climb — four hours up and down, even easier via the **cable car** (one way/return ¥35/60). Snack stands are scattered along the mountain trails.

If you want to stay the night, a few temples on Qian Shan welcome guests, including the fabulous **Shangqing Temple** (Shangqing Gong r from ¥50), a Qing-dynasty rebuild of the original Jin-dynasty temple set in the forest near the top of the mountain; it has a restaurant (dishes ¥18 to ¥45) and teahouse (tea

from ¥5). The cheapest rooms are reserved for pilgrims, but you may be able to land one if business is slow.

Hou Shan

The back of the mountain has 20km of rugged pathways – expect a six-hour hike to the summit, where you'll find **Baiyun Temple** (Baiyun Si); the **cable car** (¥30) will shave a couple of hours off the hike. You can find basic guesthouses (*kezhan*) at both **Youyi Village** (Youyi Cun), less than half way up the mountain, and near the top at **Baiyun Ancient Village** (Baiyun Guzhai).

i Getting There & Away

There are two separate high-speed rail routes from Chengdu's north train station to the Dujiangyan sites.

For the Dujiangyan Irrigation Project, take an early train to Lidui (Lidui Gongyuan; ¥15, 40 minutes, 6.30am, 8.32am and 11.12am); from there, take bus 4 (¥2, 15 minutes) to the last stop (Lidui Gongyuan).

For Qingcheng Shan, take the train to Qingcheng Shan (¥15, 45 minutes, 6.53am, 7.29am, 9.01am, 10.45am, 11.45am and 12.51am). Don't get off at the stop before this, which is confusingly called Dujiangyan. Pick up bus 101 (¥2, 10 minutes) to the main gate (Qian Shan), or take a tourist bus (¥10, 35 minutes) to Hou Shan. Tourist buses leave when full and pass the main gate en route, but only stop for passengers if there are spare seats.

Bus 101 (¥2, 40 minutes) also connects the Lidui stop with Qingcheng Shan's main gate.

The last trains back to Chengdu depart at 10.56pm from Lidui and 9.45pm from Qingcheng Shan.

Pingle

A popular subject of paintings by Chinese art students, this **ancient river village** (Pingle Guzhen) began as a way station on the southern Silk Road more

than 2000 years ago. Many of the wooden buildings have been rebuilt, but some date to the Ming and Qing dynasties and locals still live amongst the ever-multiplying trinket shops.

The town's most venerable inhabitants are its banyan trees, a dozen of which are more than 1000 years old. The most charming of Pingle's old stone passageways, **Fuhui Street Water Gate** (Fuhui Jie Shuimen Pingle), leads down to the river, where you can lounge on a bamboo chair and sip tea (¥20 to ¥50). Cross the river and you can wander into the decidedly untouristy surrounding farmland and small tea plantations.

Commercialism threatens to overwhelm the charm but enough real life remains to make this a pleasant day trip from Chengdu, especially in warm months, when there's fun to be had in the water. If you want to linger, there are comfortable lodgings (*kezhan*, and, *zhusu*) along both riverbanks. **Gubu Kezhan** (📞153 9764 0708; 32 Changqing Jie, r ¥189-280; 📶📶) has bright, little rooms with river views; turn left when you reach the river.

Buses to Pingle usually stop first at the small town of Qionglai, about 15 minutes before Pingle. Don't get off here by mistake. Once in Pingle, walk out of the bus station and turn right for the river. Buses leave for Chengdu's Xinnanmen bus station (¥24, two hours), about every half hour to an hour between 8.10am and 6.20pm.

Ya'an

Established in prime forest in Ya'an in 2003 for research purposes rather than tourism, the mission of the **Ya'an Bifengxia Panda Base** (Bifengxia Daxiongmao Jidi 📞083 5231 8145; www.chinapanda.org.cn; admission ¥118, shuttle ¥15; 🕒8.30-11.30am & 1.30-4.30pm, kindergarten feeding 3.20pm) expanded in 2008, following the earthquake that severely damaged its sister reserve, **Wolong** (| Wolong Ziran Baohuqu). Though Wolong continues to do ground-breaking work, it is closed indefinitely to the public. Bifengxia is now home to 80 pandas, some of which may someday be returned to the wild.

It's a treat to glimpse any one of the 1600 surviving pandas in the world,

but with bustling Chengdu 150km east, you can get a real sense of their natural habitat here. Cubs in the 'panda kindergarten' climb high into the trees in their reasonably pleasant enclosures. Humans can hike along a forested river gorge with waterfalls and stunning scenery surrounding the main attraction.

The panda centre is 3km from the ticket office in the main car park where the minibus drops its passengers. Turn left out of the ticket office then take the free lift (*qingyunti*) 50 storeys down to the foot of the gorge. From here you can walk on to catch the free bus or cross the bridge to hike. On foot, it takes about two hours to reach the centre, slightly longer if you picnic or stop at snack stalls along the way. (Skip the regular zoo nearby.)

You can enjoy Bifengxia as an easy day trip from Chengdu or stay longer for the **volunteer program** (www.pandaclub.cn). Those aged 12 and up can sign on for a minimum one day of work (with time to explore the park) sweeping pens, prepping food, and even feeding the pandas. The cost is ¥200 per day, plus a one-time ¥150 uniform fee, and volunteers must cover their own costs such as food, lodging, and park entry.

Those staying overnight can sleep in the park at **Xiaoxitian Minlucun** (📞135 5155 6417; r without/with sit-down toilet ¥80/100; ❄️📶), a basic guesthouse at the end of the gorge hike just before you reach the panda centre. A handful of guesthouses and restaurants are also by the entrance.

Getting There & Around

Buses from Chengdu (¥114) terminate at Ya'an's Ximen bus station (*ximen chezhan*), but for Bifengxia, get off before this at the tourist bus station (*luyou chezhan*), where minibuses (¥5) wait to take you the final 18km to the Panda Base. The last bus back to Chengdu from the tourist bus station leaves at 6.30pm.

From Ya'an's Ximen bus station, you can head on to various other destinations:

➔ **Emei Town** ¥50, 2½ hours, four daily (8.30am, 10am, 12.10pm, 2pm)

➔ **Kangding** ¥100, 4½ hours, three daily (8am, 10am, 1pm)

➔ **Le Shan** ¥55, 2½ hours, seven daily (8.30am to 6pm)

A pedicab between Ya'an's two bus stations costs ¥8.

Liu Jiang

The charming pastoral setting is the main attraction of this riverside village nestled in central Sichuan's countryside. The **old town** (guzhen), with its narrow alleyways, wooden courtyard buildings and ancient banyan trees, straddles both sides of the Yangcun River (Yangcun He) in a picture-perfect scene. For now at least, the reconstruction and sales tactics remain more palatable here than in other 'fixed-up' old towns.

This is a great spot for a lazy lunch or a dip in the river. If you want to stay the night, near the plank bridge, the century-old **Wangjiang Kezhan** (📞159 8432 8196; 38 Liujiang Jie, r ¥60-80) has creaky wooden floorboards and simple rooms with shared bathrooms and river views. You can have tea (from ¥20) or locally grown dishes (¥10 to ¥50) on the pleasant terrace. Downriver by the jumping stones, **Shui Mu Shi Kong** (📞3752 7789; s/d ¥140/160; 🌐📶) offers slightly more upscale rooms with river views.

There's some excellent walking to be done in the surrounding countryside. Look for wooden signboards in the old town with maps in Chinese of walking trails. One option is the 3.5km uphill hike to **Houjia Shanzhai**, marked by a wooden archway off the main driving road on the opposite side of the river from where the buses drop off. Once you've found that, follow the road up. Near the top is **Tiaowang Wawu** (📞130 8838 1221; r ¥100, meals ¥20-80), a renovated courtyard guesthouse, run by the friendly Liu family, with simple rooms and fabulous views. They'll feed you tea and noodle (*mian*) or rice (*fan*) dishes all made from ingredients grown in their hillside gardens. A minibus from the old town is about ¥30.

To reach Liu Jiang, take a bus from Chengdu's Xinnanmen bus station to Hongya (¥60, 2½ hours, every half hour from 5.30am to 6pm), then change

for Liu Jiang (¥9, 45 minutes, every 15 minutes until 5.30pm). The last bus from Hongya to Chengdu is at 5pm. There are also regular buses from Hongya to Emei Shan, Le Shan and Ya'an.

Emei Shan

📍0833

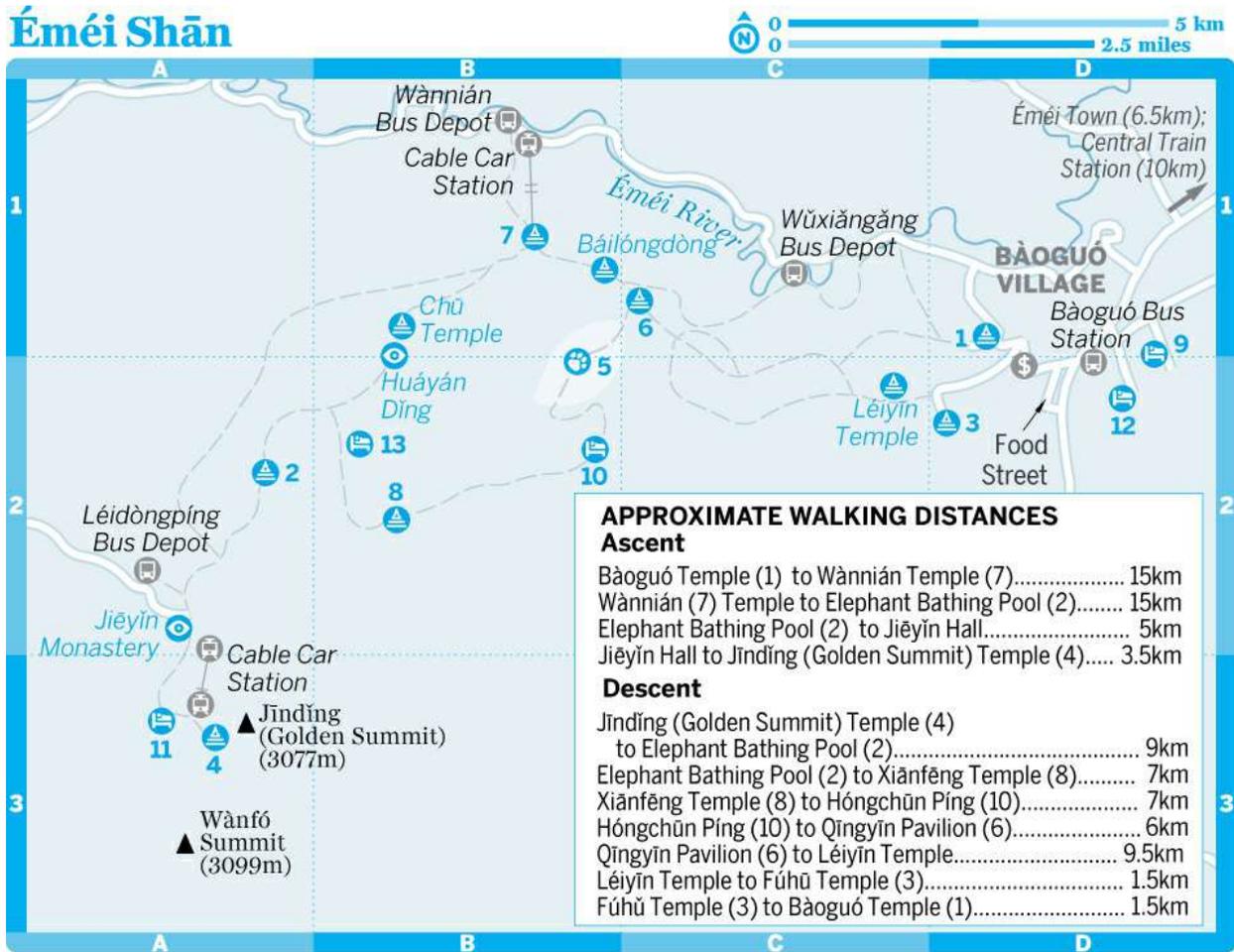
A cool, misty retreat from Sichuan basin's usual heat, stunning 3099m **Emei Shan** (📍552 3646; adult/student & seniors ¥185/90, winter ¥110/55 winter; 🕒6am-6pm) is one of China's four sacred Buddhist Mountains (the others being Putuo Shan, Wutai Shan and Jiuhua Shan). A farmer built the first Buddhist temple near its summit in the 1st century CE, marking Buddhism's arrival in the Eastern world.

Later adorned with brass tiling engraved with Tibetan script and, in 1614, named Huazang Temple, that first temple stood at Jin Ding until it was gutted by fire in 1972. It was restored in 1989. Many of the more than 150 temples on the mountain suffered similar fates, or were looted, over the centuries. Some 30 have been maintained and restored in various degrees over the years. Wannian Temple, the oldest surviving temple, clocks in at a respectable 1100 years.

In addition to its rich cultural heritage, the mountain stands on the edge of the eastern Himalayan highlands and is home to a diverse range of plants and animals. Together with nearby Le Shan, Emei Shan is on Unesco's list of World Heritage Sites.

The entry ticket gives you access to most sites on the mountain but does not include rides on the three buses to the main routes up. Most rewarding is walking the whole way, starting from Baoguo Temple, but most opt to ride to Wannian depot, because of its easy access to the cable car, or to Wuxiangang depot, which is an easy walk to poetic Qingyin Pavilion and other important sights. The Leidongping bus drops off closest to the summit. Regardless of your starting point, getting a feel for the place takes at least a full day, ideally

two. Wander the wooden temples, meet the macaques demanding tribute for safe passage, then find shelter in a monastery guesthouse and wake up in time to welcome the sun. The early morning light refracting in the cool mist has been heralded since ancient times as Buddha's Halo.



Emei Shan

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Baoguo Temple | D1 |
| 2 | Elephant Bathing Pool | A2 |
| 3 | Fuhu Temple | D2 |
| 4 | Jinding (Golden Summit) Temple | A3 |
| 5 | Monkey Zone | B2 |
| 6 | Qingyin Pavilion | C1 |
| 7 | Wannian Temple | B1 |

8 [Xianfeng Temple](#) B2

Sleeping

[Baoguo Temple Guesthouse](#) D1

9 [Happy Hotel](#) D1

10 [Hongchun Ping](#) B2

11 [Jinding Dajiudian](#) A3

12 [Teddy Bear Hotel](#) D2

[Xianfeng Temple](#) B2

13 [Yuxian Temple](#) B2

When to Go

The best time to visit is June to October, when the mist burns off by early afternoon. Epic crowds arrive in July and August. Avoid national holidays, of course.

Snowfall generally begins around November on the upper slopes. In winter you can rent crampons to deal with ice and snow. Expect rain and mist throughout the year.

Average temperatures:

| | JAN | APR | JUL | OCT |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|
| Éméi town | 7°C | 21°C | 26°C | 17°C |
| Summit | -6°C | 4°C | 12°C | 4°C |

Sights

Baoguo Temple

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Baoguo Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Declare Nation Temple; admission ¥8;  7am-7.30pm)

Constructed in the 16th century, this temple (550m) features beautiful

gardens of rare plants, as well as a 3.5m-high porcelain Buddha dating back to 1415, which is housed near the Sutra Library. This is not included in the Emei Shan entrance ticket. You can stay in a basic [guesthouse](#) or the five-star hotel on the premises.

Fuhu Temple

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Fuhu Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Crouching Tiger Monastery; admission ¥6)

Located about 1km from Baoguo Temple, Fuhu Temple (630m) is hidden deep within the forest. It houses a 7m-high copper pagoda inscribed with Buddhist images and texts. Not included in the Emei Shan entrance ticket.

Xianfeng Temple

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Xianfeng Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Immortal Peak Monastery)

Somewhat off the beaten track, this carefully tended monastery (1752m) is backed by rugged cliffs and surrounded by fantastic scenery.

Qingyin Pavilion

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Qingyin Ge [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Named ‘Pure Sound Pavilion’ after the soothing sounds of the waters coursing around rock formations, this temple (710m) is built on an outcrop in the middle of a fast-flowing stream. Rest in one of the small pavilions here while you appreciate the natural ‘music’.

Monkey Zone

WILDLIFE RESERVE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Between Qingyin Pavilion and Hongchun Ping (Venerable Trees Terrace), you will encounter the mountain’s infamous monkeys. Unfortunately, those before you have teased this merry band into grabby monsters. Rangers are usually onhand to help if things get out of hand, but avoid extended eye contact (a sign of aggression), put away any food and drinks when approaching, and keep bags closed.

Wannian Temple

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Wannian Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); Long Life Monastery; admission ¥10)

Reconstructed in the 9th century, Wannian Temple (1020m) is the oldest surviving Emei temple. It's dedicated to the man on the white elephant, the Bodhisattva Puxian (also known as Samantabhadra), the Buddhist Lord of Truth and patron of the mountain. This 8.5m-high statue cast in copper and bronze dates from AD 980 and weighs an estimated 62,000kg. If you can manage to rub the elephant's hind leg, good luck will be cast upon you.

The statue is housed in Brick Hall, a domed building with small stupas on it – the only building left unharmed in a 1945 fire.

Elephant Bathing Pool

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Xixiang Chi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

According to legend, Elephant Bathing Pool (2070m) is where Puxian flew his elephant in for a nice scrub, but today there's not much of a pool to speak of. Being almost at the crossroads of both major trails, the temple here is sometimes crowded with pilgrims.

Jinding (Golden Summit) Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Jinding Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

This magnificent temple is at the **Golden Summit** (Jin Ding; 3077m), commonly referred to as the mountain's highest peak. The temple is a striking modern renovation, covered with glazed tiles and surrounded by white marble balustrades. In front, the prominent 48m-tall golden statue of multi-dimensional Samantabhadra (Shifang Puxian) honours mountain protector Puxian, and was added in 2006.

The mountain's highest point (3099m) is actually nearby **Wanfo Ding** (Ten Thousand Buddha Summit), but it has been closed to visitors for some years now.

EMEI SHAN HIKING ROUTES

There are many combinations of paths, buses, cable cars, and monastery rest stops on Emei Shan. Below are some possibilities. Estimated times exclude breaks, which you will certainly need.

One day Take the bus from Baoguo station to Wannian bus depot (45 minutes, ¥20), then hike to the Golden Summit (five hours) with the help of both **cable cars** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (¥65 up, ¥45 to ¥55 down, 6am to 6pm). Catch a ride from Leidongping bus depot (1½ hours, ¥50) back to Baoguo Village.

Two days Take the bus from Baoguo station to Wannian bus depot, then hike to the summit (6½ hours). Descend to sleep in a monastery. On the way down, turn right a short distance past Elephant Bathing Pool and take the more scenic path, via Xianfeng Temple, to Wannian depot (eight hours) for a ride back to the village (30 minutes, round trip ¥40).

Or take the bus to Leidongping depot (1½ hours, ¥50) and hike to the top (two hours). Descend to sleep in a monastery before making the long descent, via Xianfeng Temple to Chunyang Temple, to Baoguo Village (10 hours).

Three days Hoof it up and down the mountain (about 20 hours in total). To see more sights, ascend via Wannian Temple and descend via Xianfeng Temple on the way down. (Perhaps make offerings to sore muscles everywhere at each.)

Sleeping

On the Mountain

Almost all of the temples on the mountain (with the notable exception of Jinding Temple at the summit) offer cheap dormitory-style accommodations with shared bathrooms but usually no showers. Some also have guesthouse-quality private rooms with private bathrooms for a premium.

There are also standard hotels on the mountain, mostly by the **cable car stations** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)). **Jinding Dajudian** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 509 8088, 509 8077; r from ¥980, discounted to ¥780; ❄️ 📶) is to the right of the Jinding cable car exit and is a convenient launch pad for catching the sunrise. You can reach it on foot in about 9½ hours from the base of the mountain or 30 minutes from the summit.

Xianfeng Temple

MONASTERY

(Xianfeng Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎189 8131 0142; dm & tw without bathroom ¥50-240, tw with bathroom ¥600; 📶)

This remote temple hidden in a forest backed by rugged cliffs has a good range of rooms, from dorms to pricey twins with showers. There's even wi-fi in the common space. Approximate walking time from base/summit is about six/four hours.

Hongchun Ping

MONASTERY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎083 3509 9043; dm ¥50, tw ¥60-130; 📶)

The smartest temple accommodations on the mountain is at a comfortable 1120m. Rooms are simple, with wi-fi and shared bathroom. Approximate walking time from base/summit is three/six hours.

Yuxian Temple

MONASTERY

(Yuxian Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); dm/tw from ¥50/240)

At 1680m the views from this small temple are stunning. Choose from basic dorms to private twins. It is very remote here, which can either feel glorious or eerie, depending on your travel style. Approximate walking time from base/summit is seven/three hours.

In Baoguo Village

Happy Hotel

HOTEL

(Xingfu Shu Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 31 Baoguo Village, 4th group, 31 r incl breakfast from ¥188; 📶)

This straightforward, very tidy hotel has a surprisingly good, reasonably priced Chinese restaurant (a rarity in Baoguo Village). Some English spoken and there's bike rental, too.

Baoguo Temple Guesthouse

MONASTERY

(Baoguo Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞559 2822; Declare Nation Temple; dm ¥15-30, r ¥200; 🌿)

Baoguo Temple is an atmospheric and accessible option if you want a monastery stay without the climb up. The simple rooms are tucked away from the crowded public areas. There's a common shower area and dining hall (vegetarian meals ¥10). Check in (Chinese spoken only) at the guest counter to the right as you enter the temple.

There's also a very un-Buddhist five-star hotel (rooms from ¥1300) on the premises.

Teddy Bear Hotel

HOSTEL

(Wanjuxiong Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞559 0135, manager 138 9068 1961; www.teddybear.com.cn; 43 Baoguo Lu, next to bus station; dm ¥40, r ¥80-260; 🌿 @ 📶)

If you can get past the theme (bears, bears, everywhere), this very clean backpacker hotel offers nice rooms and English-speaking staff that provides solid, hostel-style travel services plus decent coffee and Western food. The left-luggage service is free, as are walking sticks, crampons, maps, and pick up from Emei town (call Andy, the manager).

You can even indulge in an in-room massage (50 minutes for ¥60) when you make it back down the mountain. For a good night's sleep, avoid rooms overlooking the Baoguo bus station next door and perhaps shell out for the downright sumptuous, Chinese-themed rooms on the 4th floor.

Eating

On the mountain, most temples have small dining halls, and you're never very far from a trailside food stall selling simple dishes, instant noodles (*fangbian mian*), tea and snacks.

In Baoguo Village, restaurants and supermarkets abound. **Haochi Jie** (Food St) is crammed with places to eat, many with outdoor seating. The menus contain various Sichuanese dishes (¥15 to ¥40) and have English

translations.

Information

Agricultural Bank of China

BANK

(Nongye Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 9am-5pm)

Has a foreign-exchange desk and a foreign-card-friendly ATM. The ATM by Baoguo bus station also accepts foreign cards.

Getting There & Away

The town of Emei (Emei Shan Shi) is the transport hub and lies 6.5km east of the park entrance. Most buses terminate at Emei Shan central station (Emei Shan keyun zhongxin), directly opposite Emei Railway Station (Emei Huochezhan). If you ask, some drivers will go all the way to the more convenient Baoguo Village bus station – which confusingly is also known as the Emei Shan tourist bus station (Emei Shan luyou keyun zhongxin) – for ¥10 more.

A taxi from Emei Town to Baoguo Village is about ¥25. Many guesthouses will pick you up if you arrange it with them in advance. Local bus 8 (¥1) connects the Emei Town station with the park entrance.

BUS

While it's not possible to travel directly to Baoguo from most long-distance destinations, some long-distance buses do leave from Baoguo:

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥50, 2½ hours, frequent services from 8am to 6pm
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥140, six hours, 8.30am
- ➔ **Le Shan** ¥11, 45 minutes, every 20 minutes from 8am to 5pm

Buses from Emei Shan central station:

- ➔ **Kangding** ¥120, seven hours, 9.50am
- ➔ **Ya'an** ¥51, three hours, four daily (7.45am, 9.30am, 12.30pm and 2.20pm)

➔ **Zigong** ¥51, three hours, frequently from 7.40am to 5.10pm

TRAIN

➔ **Chengdu K** ¥24, 2½ hours, seven daily (3.16am to 10.25am, then 6.36pm and 9.15pm)

➔ **Kunming K** seat/hard sleeper ¥124/223, 17 hours, four daily (3.23pm, 4.37pm, 5.19pm and 9.42pm)

➔ **Le Shan K** ¥8, 16 minutes, three daily (7.27am, 10.25am and 6.36pm)

➔ **Xi'an K** hard/soft sleeper ¥231/364, 20 hours, 10.25am

Getting Around

Buses from **Baoguo bus station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) travel to three depots on the mountain: **Wuxiangang** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (30 minutes, round trip ¥40), about a 20-minute walk below Qingyin Pavilion; **Wannian** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (45 minutes; round trip ¥40), below Wannian Temple; and **Leidongping** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (1½ hours, round trip ¥90), a few minutes' walk from **Jin Ding cable car** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)). If you return via a different depot, you may have to pay a small surcharge.

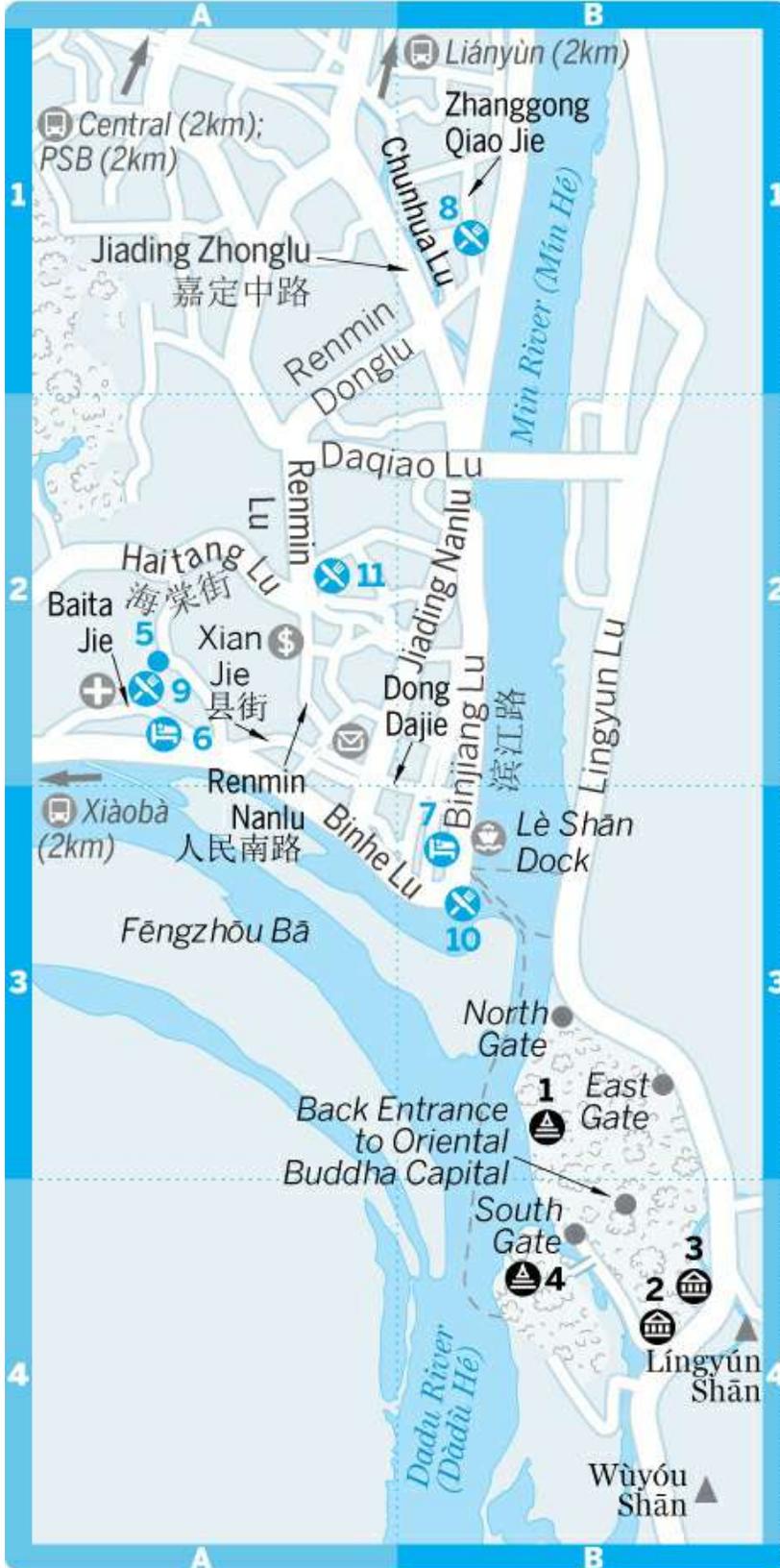
Buses run frequently from around 6am to 5pm (7am to 4pm in winter). The last buses head down the mountain at 6pm (5pm in winter).

Le Shan

 0833 / Pop 678,752

With fingernails bigger than the average human, the world's largest ancient Buddha draws plenty of tourists to this relaxed riverside town. This Unesco World Heritage Site is an easy day trip from Chengdu or stopover en route to or from Emei Shan.

Lè Shān



Le Shan

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Sights

Grand Buddha

BUDDHIST STATUE

(Dafo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); adult ¥90, students & seniors ¥50; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm Apr-early Oct, 8am-5.30pm early Oct-Mar)

Le Shan's serene, 1200-year-old Grand Buddha sits in repose, carved from a cliff face overlooking the confluence of three busy rivers: the Dadu, Min, and Qingyi. The Buddhist monk Haitong conceived the project in AD 713, hoping that Buddha would protect the boats and calm the lethal currents.

It was 90 years after Haitong's death that the project was completed, but

afterwards the river waters obeyed. Believers credited Buddha's grace; cynics pointed to the construction process, in which piles of surplus rocks reshaped the rivers and changed the currents.

At 71m tall, he is indeed grand. His shoulders span 28m, and each of his big toes is 8.5m long. His ears are 7m. Their length symbolises wisdom and the conscious abandonment of materialism. It is said that heavy gold baubles left Siddhartha's earlobes elongated even after he was no longer weighed down by material things.

Inside the body, hidden from view, is a water-drainage system to prevent weathering, although the statue is showing its age and soil erosion is an ongoing problem.

To fully appreciate this Buddha's magnitude, get an up-close look at his head, then descend the steep, winding stairway for the Lilliputian view. Avoid visiting on weekends and holidays, when traffic on the staircase can come to a complete standstill.

Admission also includes access to a number of caves and temples on the grounds, though they are a decent hike from the main attraction. **Mahaoya Tombs Museum** (Mahaoyamu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), has a modest collection of tombs and burial artefacts dating from the Eastern Han dynasty (AD 25–220). **Wuyou Temple** (Wuyou Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), like the Buddha, dates from the Tang dynasty, and has Ming and Qing renovations. This monastery contains calligraphy and artefacts, with the highlights in the Luohan Hall — 1000 terracotta *arhat* (Buddhist celestial beings, similar to angels) displaying an incredible variety of postures and facial expressions — no two are alike. Also inside is a fantastic statue of Avalokiteshvara (Guanyin), the Goddess of Mercy.

A separate park (not included in the Grand Buddha admission), the **Oriental Buddha Capital** (Dongfang Fodu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥80;  3, 13), houses a collection of 3000 Buddha statues and figurines from across Asia, including a 170m-long reclining Buddha, one of the world's longest. There is an entrance near the Grand Buddha's South Gate; otherwise exit and take bus 3 or 13 (¥1) to the Oriental Buddha Capital (Dongfang Fodu) stop.

The entrance is further than it looks on the park maps.

Tours

Tour boats (youchuan 20-minute round trip ¥70, kids under 12 free; 🕒 7.30am to 6.30pm Apr-Oct, from 8am winter) leave regularly from **Le Shan dock** (Le Shan gang [GOOGLE MAP](#)), passing by the cliffs for views of Dafo, revealing two guardians in the cliff side that are not visible from land. The ride is short and otherwise unexciting.

Mr Yang

TOUR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 211 2046, 159 8438 2528; richardyangmin@163.com; 186 Baita Jie, 2nd fl, Apt 1; per person ¥200)

Affable Mr Yang has been guiding foreign tourists around Le Shan since the 1970s. His hearing is going but his expertise is not. Email him to make arrangements. His signature half-day tour includes a calligraphy demonstration, an old-town stroll, and a visit to a villager's home. Transport, lunch, and his services as an English-speaking guide are included. He can also book tickets.

Sleeping

The choices in town, unfortunately, are mostly large hotels devoid of personality and priced for tourists. Stay in Emei Shan, if you can.

Jiazhou Hotel

HOTEL

(Jiazhou Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 213 9888; 85 Baita Jie, r incl breakfast from ¥360; 📶 @ 📶)

Rooms aren't as grand as the lobby suggests, but this place is more upmarket than most and makes for a comfortable stay. Even some of the cheaper rooms have river views.

Jintaoyuan Dajiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 210 7666; 136 Binjiang Lu, d from ¥158-218; 📶 @ 📶)

Smart, clean and across the street from the river. The river-view rooms are a good deal at ¥188. No English sign.

Eating

The best food by day and night is found on the streets. Stalls also line the riverbank, but to eat like a local, head to **Baita Jie** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) where you can try all manner of simmering stews (*shaguo*, from ¥18), or gorge on cool yet spicy *bang bang chicken* (*bang bang ji*, from ¥20).

Zhanggong Qiao Jie ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) has a small night market and many restaurants to choose from.

Zhao Family Crispy Duck

BARBECUE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 211 4196; 169 Xincun Jie & Renmin Nanlu, meal ¥20; 🕒 10am-6pm)

Foodies flock to this tiny barbecue stand for its speciality – sweet, crispy roast duck (*jin* ¥22). The draw is the skin, which is best described as duck candy, a miraculously ungreasy bite of heaven. Eat it while it's hot – in the middle of the sidewalk with your bare hands, if necessary. Look for the sign 'Zhaoyazi, '.

Xiaogongzui Baba

SICHUANESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Binhe Lu, mains from ¥15; 🕒 9am-midnight; 📶)

One of a cluster of cafe-restaurants with terrace seating on the riverbank, this place is perfect for tea (from ¥15) or fresh coffee (from ¥25) during the day, or a riverside beer (from ¥10) come evening. Choose from barbecue skewers (from ¥1.5) and Sichuanese main courses. To get to the riverbank, walk down the steps from the road.

Information

People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Renmin Yiyuan ;  211 9310, after-hr emergencies 211 9328; www.leshan-hospital.com.cn; 222 Baita Jie)

Has some English-speaking doctors. Pharmacies cluster around the entrance.

Public Security Bureau

PSB

(PSB,, Gong'anju  518 2555; <http://lsscrj.gotoip1.com>; 548 Fenghuang Lu Zhongduan, 3rd fl;  9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri)

Visa extensions in five days. Take Bus 6 (¥1) from the centre.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Le Shan has three main bus stations, all within 5km of each other. Buses from Chengdu's Xinnanmen station usually arrive at Xiaoba bus station (Xiaoba chezhan), the main tourist station. The central bus station (Le Shan keyun zhongxin chezhan) and Lianyun bus station (Lianyun chezhan) are also useful.

Note, if you're heading to Emei Shan, it's better to use Xiaoba bus station, as buses from there go all the way to Baoguo station (¥11, 45 minutes, every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 5pm).

Other services from Xiaoba bus station include:

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥47, two hours, every 30 minutes from 7am to 7pm
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥138, six hours, 10.40am
- ➔ **Emei town** ¥8, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 6pm
- ➔ **Ya'an** ¥54, 2½ hours (9.50am, 2pm and 4.10pm)
- ➔ **Zigong** ¥42, three hours, hourly from 8.30am to 5.10pm

TRAIN

The new 37-minute high-speed rail link from Chengdu to Le Shan may be ready by the time you read this.

Getting Around

BUS

Local buses cost ¥1. Some handy routes:

- ➔ **Bus 13** Xiaoba bus station–town centre–Oriental Buddha Capital–Grand Buddha–Wuyou Temple
- ➔ **Bus 1** Xiaoba bus station–Jiazhou Hotel–town centre–Lianyun bus station
- ➔ **Bus 6** Xiaoba bus station–town centre–Public Security Bureau
- ➔ **Bus 9** Central bus station–town centre–Le Shan dock

SOUTHERN SICHUAN

Not often on the radar of foreign tourists, steamy southern Sichuan is for those who enjoy digging into history. There are dinosaur fossils, ancient cliff-face hanging coffins, and lush bamboo forests to explore. It's also home to some stellar teahouses.

Zigong

 0813 / Pop 666,204

This intriguing riverside city has been an important centre of Chinese salt production for almost 2000 years. Remnants of that industry make up part of an unconventional list of sights that includes the world's deepest traditional salt well and Asia's first dinosaur museum. Zigong is also the undisputed king of Sichuan teahouses, so there's plenty of opportunity to just put your feet up for a day.

Sights

Zigong has exploded into a sprawling city, but travellers will spend most of their time in the ancient district on the north side of the Fuxi River (*Fuxi He*),

which cuts through the centre of town.

Salt Industry History Museum

MUSEUM

(Yanye Lishi Bowuguan 89 Dongxing Si, admission ¥22; 🕒 8.30am-5pm; 🚏 1, 3, 11, 33, 35)

Housed in an ornate 270-year-old guild hall, this unique museum documents the course of the region's salt industry, which dates to the 1st century CE. Salt, a vital ingredient of life, was at one time valued more than gold, and by the late 19th century, industrious salt merchants had turned Zigong into a leading industrial centre.

The museum tells the story through old photographs (some with English captions) and a modest collection of exhibits demonstrating how the extraction process developed; though the building itself, built by Shaanxi salt merchants in 1736, with its tranquil stone courtyards, beautiful woodcarvings and swooping eaves, sometimes steals the show.

To get here from Rongguang Business Hotel, walk down the hill and turn left onto Jiefang Lu. The museum will be on your right after about 500m.

Shenhai Salt Well

HISTORIC SITE

(Shenhai Jing 📞 510 6214; 289 Da'an Jie, admission ¥22; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm)

This fascinating museum is also a working salt mine. Its 1001m-deep artesian salt well was the world's deepest well when it was built in 1835 and it remains the deepest salt well ever made using percussion drilling, a technique invented here and later applied throughout the world.

Many pieces of original equipment, including a 20m-high wooden derrick that towers above the tiny, 20cm-wide mouth of the well, are still intact. On the 2nd floor of the salt house, rows of cauldrons bubble away day and night over fires powered by natural gas, the mine's other product, until only fluffy white piles of glistening salt remain.

There are excellent English captions explaining the process, from how bamboo was once used to siphon brine from beneath the earth to how soymilk is added to clarify it. Bags of the salt (from ¥3) are sold from the window to the right when you exit.

Take bus 5 or 35 (¥1, 10 minutes) from opposite the Rongguang Business Hotel. Bus 35 continues to the [Dinosaur Museum](#).

Dinosaur Museum

MUSEUM

(Konglong Guan  580 1235; www.zdm.cn/en; 238 Dashan Pu, Da'an District, admission ¥42, movie ¥25;  8.30am-5pm;  35)

Built on top of the Dashanpu excavation site, which has one of the world's largest concentrations of dinosaur fossils, this museum has a fine collection of reassembled skeletons, as well as partially excavated fossil pits.

The first publicised finds here were made in 1972. The huge numbers of fossils, mostly dating from the rarely seen early and middle Jurassic periods, baffled archaeologists at first. It is now believed that floods swept them here en masse. Budding paleontologists will appreciate the *Huayangosaurus taibaii*, the most primitive and complete stegosaur ever discovered, as well as the incredibly rare skin fossil specimens on display. A kid-friendly movie screens at 10am, 11am, 2.30pm and 3.30pm daily.

Take bus 35 (¥1, 25 minutes) from opposite Rongguang Business Hotel.

Sleeping

Rongguang Business Hotel

HOTEL

(Rongguang Shangwu Jiudian  211 9999; 25 Ziyou Lu, r incl breakfast from ¥100-258;  )

Large, clean rooms with friendly staff, free-to-use computers on the 4th floor, and a free buffet breakfast distinguish this hotel from others in this prime location. Take bus 1 or 35 from the bus station, or bus 34 from the train station.

Xiongfei Holiday Hotel

HOTEL

(Xiongfei Jiari Jiudian  211 8888; 193 Jiefang Lu, r incl breakfast from ¥960, discounted to ¥389;   )

This large, upmarket hotel is within close reach of Zigong's riverside sights.

Eating & Drinking

Evenings here are all about *shaokao* (barbecue skewers; skewers ¥1 to ¥4), with stalls spilling onto the pavement. Most of them set up from around 7pm. Zigong locals love their rabbit meat (*tuzi rou*) and some stalls cook up various rabbit parts. Our favourite sets up in front of the Bank of China on Ziyou Lu. There are also cheap noodle and steamed dumpling stands along the **walking street** (7am-9pm).

Beifang Wei

DUMPLINGS

(70 Jiefang Lu; mains from ¥18; 🕒 8am-8pm)

For a break from fiery Sichuan cuisine, try this generally packed Northern-style *shuijiao* restaurant. Lamb (*yang*), vegetable (*cai*), chicken (*ji*), and seafood (*haixian*) *shuijiao* are ¥18 to ¥48 per half *jin* (good for one).

★ Huanhou Palace

TEAHOUSE

(Huanhou Gong Zhonghua Lu, tea ¥5-8; 🕒 7am-9pm)

This teahouse is located inside an 1868 butchers' guild hall. Its dramatic stone facade opens up into a tree-shaded courtyard with an old stone stage framed on all sides by beautiful wooden carvings. The antique dealers who share the space generally don't cut into the tranquillity — unless you make eye contact.

It's on your left as you walk towards the salt museum from the hotels.

★ Wangye Temple

TEAHOUSE

(Wangye Miao 3 Binjiang Lu, tea ¥5-20; 🕒 8.30am-11pm; 🚏 3, 11, 33)

Housed within the ochre walls of a 100-year-old guild hall of boatmen and merchants, this lively teahouse (officially, Linjiang Chalou) is one of the neatest in Sichuan.

Perched above the Fuxi, it sits opposite the still-active Fazang Temple (Fazang Si). The pair were built to ensure safe passage for boats transporting salt downstream. Everyone in the industry came here to make sacrifices to Wangye, the protector of boatmen and sailors. Now locals gather here to banter, play cards and admire the river view. From the hotels, walk down to the river, turn left and follow the river for about 750m.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang Ziyou Lu)

Foreign-card-friendly ATMs.

Getting There & Around

To get to the hotels, walk out of the bus station, turn right and walk 200m to the first bus stop. Then take bus 1 or 35 (¥1) four stops to the Shizi Kou stop. The hotels are down the hill and across the road. From the train station, which is on the east end of town, take bus 34 (¥1) to Binjiang Lu bus stop. From there, walk back 200m and turn left up Ziyou Lu.

BUS

Destinations from the main **bus station** (817 Dangui Dajie,) include:

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥65, 3½ hours, about hourly from 6.30am to 7.50pm
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥95, four hours, hourly from 6.20am to 6pm
- ➔ **Emei Shan** ¥52, 3½ hours, four daily (9.20am, 11.50am, 2.50pm and 4pm)
- ➔ **Le Shan** ¥45, three hours, hourly from 8am to 5.30pm
- ➔ **Yibin** ¥28, one hour, every 40 minutes from 7.10am to 6.20pm

TRAIN

- ➔ **Chengdu** K ¥41, five hours, seven daily (1.38am to 10.07am)
- ➔ **Kunming** K seat/hard sleeper ¥115/206, 17 hours, two daily (2.12pm and

7.48pm)

➔ **Yibin** K ¥13, two hours, eight daily from 4.30am to 9.44pm

WORTH A TRIP

LIZHUANG

On a quiet bend of the Yangzi, 19km east of Yibin, sits the remote village of Lizhuang, just as it has for two millennia. Its ramshackle rooftops, crooked alleyways and peeling woodwork date back to the Ming and Qing dynasties and offer visitors a rare glimpse of a disappearing age.

The old town covers just a few sq km, with all the main sights between the bus stop and the river. Entry to the main temples and courtyard residences requires a ticket, but visitors are free to amble the streets and tranquil riverside.

Among the important sights is **Xizi Xiang**, a narrow lane named for the craftsman who wove grass sleeping mats here. The two-storey, wooden houses on either side are characteristic of architecture from 400 years ago, with wide eaves that nearly touch their neighbours. To the east, a towering gate welcomes you at the **Jade Buddha Temple**, built by Fujian arrivals in 1845. By the river on Bingjiang Lu, the windows of the 200-year-old **Zhang Family Ancestral Hall** are adorned with 50 pairs of intricately carved red-crowned cranes. Between 1937 and 1942, the hall and the **Huiguang Temple**, the architectural masterpiece downriver, secreted many of China's most precious cultural relics. Villagers gave refuge to scholars and thousands of works of art, literature, history and science during the Japanese invasion.

Lizhuang deserves a day of exploration. Refuel on local specialities such as ranmian (from ¥7, spicy noodles) and bairou (¥25 to ¥40, paper-thin slices of seasoned pork with garlic sauce) on **Zheng Jie**. **Wang Jiang Lou** (📞244 2729, 153 7827 1187; 94 Shunhe Lu, aka Binjiang Lu s/d/tr ¥60/80/100; 📶📶) has tidy rooms (the rooftop ones are nicest) by the river.

Buses travel between here and Yibin's Nanke bus station frequently (¥4, 35 minutes). From the bus stop, head towards the river for the old town.

Yibin

📞0831 / Pop 549,650

Where the Min and Jinsha converge to become the mighty Yangzi River, Yibin has stood as a town of great strategic military importance throughout

history. Today it's a relatively modern, mid-sized city, making it a convenient travel hub for trips to old town Lizhuang, the Bamboo Sea, and Luobiao's hanging coffins.

The city is easily explored on foot. Turn right out of Jingmao Hotel, and right again to reach the **river confluence**, accessed through the reconstructed **Shui Dong Men** (East Water Gate), which has a teahouse on top of it. Further down and off to the right is a genuinely old city-wall **gateway**, plus remnants of the original **ancient city wall**, leading towards a modern public square where locals dance in the evening. Up from the square are more city-wall remains with **Guanying Jie**, a street of courtyard homes, dating from the Qing dynasty.

In the middle of the action, the no-frills, clean **Jingmao Hotel** (Jingmao Binguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍513 7222; 108 Minzhu Lu, tw ¥160-180; 🌐@📶) is a bargain when it offers discounts of up to 20%. There are foreign-card-friendly ATMs by Xufu Shangcheng bus stop.

There's a lively **night market** (Dong Jie) with stalls serving *diandian xiang maocai* (skewers boiled in a spicy sauce). Turn left out of **Jingmao Hotel** (Jingmao Binguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍513 7222; 108 Minzhu Lu, tw ¥160-180; 🌐@📶) and Dong Jie is on your left. In the daytime, look for *ranmian*, a spicy, fried noodle dish that is a local favourite.

Getting There & Around

BUS

Most travellers arrive at Gaoke bus station (Gaoke zhan). To get to the town centre from here, take bus 22 (¥1 to ¥2, 15 minutes) into town and get off at the Xufu Shangcheng stop on Renmin Lu. Turn right at the light; Jingmao Hotel will be on your left.

Continue on bus 4 to get to Nanke bus station (Nanke zhan) for buses to Lizhuang (¥4, 35 minutes, every 15 minutes), the Bamboo Sea (Zhuhai; ¥22, 1½ hours, 8am, 9.30am, 10am, 11.30am and 4.30pm) and Luobiao (¥33, three hours, 2pm).

Travellers may find the nearby cities of Changning and Gongxian have more direct buses to the Bamboo Sea and Luobiao.

Buses from Gaoke bus station include:

- ➔ **Changning** ¥15, one hour, frequent services
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥100, four hours, frequent services from 7.20am to 7pm
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥110, four hours, frequent services from 7.10am to 7pm
- ➔ **Gongxian** ¥17, 1½ hours, frequent services
- ➔ **Le Shan** ¥62, four hours, hourly from 8.20am to 5.30pm
- ➔ **Zigong** ¥28, one hour, frequent services from 7.30am to 7pm

TRAIN

Bus 11 (¥1) links the train station with Gaoke bus station (or it's a 10-minute walk between the two) and passes by the end of Renmin Lu. Trains leaving from Yibin Train Station (*huoche zhan*) include:

- ➔ **Chengdu** K ¥51, 6½ to eight hours, seven daily from 3.06am to 11.59pm
- ➔ **Kunming** K seat/hard sleeper ¥105/190, 15 hours, three daily (4.20pm, 7.54pm and 9.15pm)
- ➔ **Zigong** K ¥13, 1½ hours, nine daily from 3.06am to 11.59pm

SICHUAN'S MYSTERIOUS HANGING COFFINS

Travellers looking to get off the beaten track should make time for [Luobiao](#), a small town in the southeast corner of Sichuan, that is home to one of the province's most mysterious sights: the hanging coffins (*xuanguan*) of the ancient Bo.

The origins of the Bo kingdom more than 3000 years ago and its disappearance by the 16th century continue to baffle archaeologists. One theory is that they are distant relatives of the Tujia minority, who still inhabit the Three Gorges area. We do know that the Bo were keen horsemen with a sharp social hierarchy. Recovered adult skeletons indicate the Bo knocked out their back teeth while still alive, although exactly why they practised this custom is unknown.

Almost everything we know about the Bo has been gleaned from their burial sites, the remaining coffins that rest balanced on wooden stakes hammered into the side of cliffs, and the fading, primitive paintings alongside them.

SIGHTS

Luobiao Hanging Coffins

HISTORIC SITE

(Bo Ren Xuanguan Jingqu Luobiao; entry & museum admission ¥20; 🕒 8am-dark)

There are hanging coffins found in other parts of China, but there are more in Luobiao than anywhere else and they are reasonably accessible. At one time there were more than 300 hanging coffins, although a third have fallen to the ground as their support stakes have rotted away over the past 600 years.

There's a small, free museum just inside the site entrance with old photos, burial artefacts, and a coffin. About 100m further is a large cluster of coffins on the cliff. Steps lead up to a better vantage point and a huge cave. About 2km further is another impressive grouping right by the road, though there are many others to be spotted in the surrounding cliffs.

The area is at its most photogenic first thing in the morning as the sun rises opposite the cliffs, so consider arriving the evening before and staying the night.

To get to the coffin site, turn left out of the small Luobiao bus station and walk (45 minutes); take the right fork at the black stele dedicated to Bo. Or you can catch a motorcycle taxi (¥30) to the entrance.

SLEEPING

Boxianju Binguan

HOTEL

(📞 083 1441 0169; Luobiao Chezhan Jie; r without/with computer ¥60/70; 📶 @ 📶)

Two doors down from the bus station is a friendly hotel with basic rooms. Some overlook the surrounding farms and mountains. Soap and air-con remote upon request.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

One of the reasons this place is so rarely visited is that it's a pain to reach. Roads wind through small towns (only some picturesque), and are either in rough shape or under construction.

Buses run directly from Yibin to Luobiao (¥35, five hours, 10.30am, 2pm and 3.30pm), heading back to Yibin twice in the morning (¥35, 6.50am and 10am). From Changning (¥20, one hour, frequent services from 6.20am to 6.20pm), you must transfer at the grim coal-mining town of Gongxian (¥30, 2½ hours, every half hour from 6am to 5.30pm).

To continue into Guizhou province, take a bus from Luobiao to Xunchang (¥22, 2½ hours, every half hour from 6am to 5pm) where there are regular buses across the border to Longtou (¥10, two hours, every 40 minutes from 6am to 5pm); from there it's an easy transfer to Guiyang. For Yunnan province, buses depart Luobiao's Sancha

Lu bus lot for Weixin (¥35, three hours, hourly from 6am to 5.30pm); in Weixin you can change for Kunming.

Ticket Office

BUS TICKETS

(☎135 0819 5096; Chezhan Jie, behind the black stele with the flame, tickets ¥2-5, from shuttle service ¥10; 🕒6am-7.30pm)

Books bus tickets around Sichuan and into Guizhou and Yunnan. They'll also shuttle you to connecting stations, if necessary, for reasonable fees. Chinese only spoken.

Bamboo Sea

Swaths of swaying bamboo, well-marked walking trails and a handful of charming lakes and waterfalls make south Sichuan's **Shunan Zhuhai National Park** (Shunan Zhuhai Guojia Gongyuan Apr-Oct 31 ¥112, Nov-Mar 31 ¥60, shuttle van ¥10) a worthwhile detour. There are more than 30 types of bamboo across this 120-sq-km national park and the scenery is gorgeous enough to have attracted many a TV and film director.

Bamboo is an especially fast-growing grass that can shoot up nearly a metre in 24 hours. In May, in between the downpours, you can actually hear the pops and wiggles as new shoots spring up.

Sights & Activities

The villages of Wanling, at the west gate, and Wanli, near the east gate, are the main settlements inside the park. It's about an 11km hike from one to the other if you follow the road the whole way.

Two cable cars (*suodao*) ease the journey considerably, and are a great way to see the forest from another angle. The **Guanguang cable car** (Guanguang Suodao one way/return ¥30/40; 🕒8am-5pm) near Wanling takes you on a 25-minute ride over a stunning forest. There's a pleasant, one-hour streamside walk that loops around the forest just past the cable car entrance.

The second cable car, **Daxiagu** (Daxiagu Suodao one way/return ¥20/30; 🕒8.30am-

5.30pm), is to the right as you exit the first. The 10-minute ride traverses a dramatic gorge and ends in another scenic area with two lakes. From here, Sanhe Jie is a nearby junction where you can find accommodation, or pass it and continue on to Wanli village another few kilometres away.

Two waterfalls near Wanli are worth a look. To get to **Rainbow Falls** (Qicai Feipu), either follow the lake by the village or turn right before it and walk about 1km along the road to the signposted main gate. Onward is **Clear Dragon Falls** (Qinglong Pubu), usually serene as it's off the maps, although you may have to pay ¥10 to an enterprising old man to see it.

Eating & Sleeping

Most settle in a hotel in Wanling or Wanli. For a more tranquil escape, walk 1km beyond Wanli to **Zhuyun Shanzhuang** (📞497 9001, 138 9092 5673; r from ¥100), opposite Rainbow Falls main gate (look for the sign 'Waterfall Rural Inn'). These spotless rooms in a rustic bamboo-framed house overlook a lovely bank of Qinglong Lake. In Wanling, the friendly Yang family keeps a tidy, basic guesthouse called **Jingxin Yuan Yijiale** (Joan's Guesthouse 📞139 9091 1705, English 135 4771 7196; www.snzhjourney.com; West gate, 200m past the small bridge, r ¥120-160; 📶📶).

All guesthouses and hotels serve food, which is generally pretty good. Try dishes with *zhusun*, tender bamboo shoots, and the various local fungi that propagate at their roots.

Getting There & Around

Ask for a free map when you buy your ticket. There are also detailed maps with English posted throughout the park. All the main sights are signposted, too.

Motorbike taxis can take you between the two main villages (around ¥50, 45 minutes) if you decide not to walk.

BUS

Buses into the park stop at the west gate to allow you to get off and buy your entrance ticket, before passing through Wanling and then terminating at Wanli.

There are two direct buses from Wanli to Yibin (¥25, two hours, 7am and 1pm). Both pass Wanling (30 minutes) and, if you ask, will drop you at the junction for Changning (one hour), where you can change for Gongxian to get to Luobiao. Smaller local buses shuttle every 15 minutes between Wanling and Changning (¥6, 7am to 6pm).

WESTERN SICHUAN

West of Chengdu, green tea becomes butter tea, gentle rolling hills morph into jagged snowy peaks and *ni hao!* gives way to *tashi-delek!*

This is the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, a territory that corresponds roughly with the Kham (in Chinese Kangba), one of old Tibet's three traditional provinces. It is home to more than a dozen distinct Tibetan tribes, the largest being the Khampas, historically fierce warriors and horsemen.

Each season brings its own rugged beauty. In May many remote towns and monasteries can feel abandoned as villagers head out to harvest *byar rtswa dgun bu* (*chongcao*) a medicinal caterpillar fungus that grows on the alpine slopes.

Western Sichuan endures up to 200 freezing days per year, but summer days can be blistering. This, combined with the high altitude, can leave new arrivals vulnerable to bad sunburn and altitude sickness. Pack layers and take a couple of days to acclimate when you arrive.

TIBET'S NO-GO REGIONS

Foreigners are forbidden from travelling individually overland from Sichuan into Tibet proper (Xizang) as Tibet's far eastern prefecture of Chamdo (Changdu Diqu), which borders Sichuan, is usually off limits. During March (a time of holy celebrations and politically sensitive anniversaries), Tibet is often completely closed to foreigners. This

closure has extended to Sichuan's Aba and Ganzi prefectures though not in recent years. Hostels keep up with the latest information, or check the China and Tibet branches of Lonely Planet's online forum, **Thorn Tree** (www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree).

Kangding

 0836 / Pop 110,000

Coming from the Chengdu area, there are two main gateways into Tibetan Sichuan. One is Danba, but far more popular is Kangding (known in Tibet as Dartsendo or Dardo), the capital of the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Set in a steep river valley at the confluence of the raging Zheduo and Yala Rivers (the Dar and Tse in Tibetan), Kangding offers an easy introduction to Tibetan culture and elevations above 2500m.

This town has long stood as a trading centre between the Tibetan and Han, with sizeable Hui and Qiang minority populations also part of the mix. You'll find elements of all of these cultures represented here. Snow white Gongga Shan stands sentinel to the south, one of nearly two dozen peaks over 6000m within a few hours' drive of town.

Kāngdìng (Dartsendo)



Kangding (Dartsendo)

Sights

- | | |
|------------------------------|----|
| 1 Paoma Shan | C3 |
| 2 Paoma Si | C3 |

Sleeping

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 3 Dengba Hostel | B1 |
| 4 Yongzhu Hotel | A3 |
| 5 Zhilam Hostel | A3 |

Eating

- | | |
|---|----|
| 6 A'Re Tibetan Restaurant | D1 |
| 7 Mage Mian | A3 |
| 8 Malaya Tibetan Restaurant | B2 |

9 [Taste of Tibet](#)

B2

Drinking & Nightlife

10 [Himalayan Coffee](#)

B3

11 [Tibetan Culture Dew](#)

A2

Shopping

12 [Market](#)

B3

Sights & Activities

Small mountains loom over Kangding and make for pleasant day hikes. Several monasteries are scattered around town.

Guoda Shan

MOUNTAIN

(Zhedra Rawo)

Guoda Shan looms large at the eastern end of town and takes a full day to climb up and down. From the peak (1500m) you can take in the breathtaking glaciers to the south.

Paoma Shan

MOUNTAIN

(Dentok Rawo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥50)

Paoma Shan is the famed mountain of the 'Kangding Qing Ge' (Kangding Love Song), one of China's most enduring folk songs. It's an easy ascent on foot or take the **cable car** (suodao one way/return ¥30/45; 🕒 8.30am-6pm) halfway up for excellent views of the town and surrounding peaks and valleys. You have to pay to go all the way up the stepped path, past ribbons of prayer flags and **Paoma Si** (Dentok Lhakang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥50), or just loop north and descend another way.

Ganzi Prefecture Tibetan Cultural Heritage Museum

MUSEUM

([GOOGLE MAP](#) ; 📍 2811 1312; 36 Xiangyang Jie; 🕒 8.30am-5:30pm)

By the Paoma Shan cable car entrance, behind the building with the big red 'om', this *beng ke*-style structure (three-storey structures with split log and packed earth walls), houses exhibits surveying the Kham's rich heritage from the garb of regional tribes to *thangka* (sacred paintings), and a sky burial horn fashioned from a teenage girl's femur.

Make time for a Tibetan lunch and dinner, served in the traditional kitchen (¥50 per person).

Nanwu Si

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Lhamo Tse [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Lucheng Nanlu, 🕒 dawn-5pm)

Nanwu Temple belongs to the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) sect of Tibetan Buddhism and is the most active monastery in the area. Walk south along the main road, cross the river and keep going for about 200m until you see a small sign (") for the monastery on your right. Follow the road uphill to the gold-capped roofs.

Jingang Si

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Dordrak Lhakang [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; Lucheng Nanlu,)

About 100m past Nanwu Temple along the main road is this 400-year-old Nyingma (Red Hat sect) monastery. Turn right at the sign for Sally's Cafe Chiruman Youth Hostel.

Gongga Shan

MOUNTAIN

(Minyak Konka)

The trailhead for the nine-day pilgrims' circuit of holy Gongga Shan (7556m) is a half-hour drive from Kangding. Many hostel staff can advise you on how to approach the trek, and rent out camping equipment. We recommend finding a guide with horses through [Zhilam Hostel](#).

LOAD UP WITH CASH

At the time of research it was impossible to change money or travellers cheques, get advances on credit cards or use ATMs with foreign bank cards anywhere in western Sichuan apart from Kangding. Larger towns such as Xinduqiao and Ganzi have a branch of the Agricultural Bank of China that usually accept foreign cards, but in others, despite the Visa signs, expect rejection.

Festivals & Events

Circling the Mountain Festival

RELIGIOUS

(Zhuanshanjie)

Kangding's biggest annual festival takes place on [Paoma Shan](#) on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month (normally in May) to commemorate the birthday of the Historical Buddha, Sakyamuni. White and blue Tibetan tents cover the hillside and there's wrestling, horse racing and visitors from all over western Sichuan.

Sleeping

★ [Zhilam Hostel](#)

HOSTEL

(Huidao Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  283 1100; www.zhilamhostel.com; 72 Bai Tukan Cun Lu, dm/r from ¥40/260;  )

Run by an American family, this fabulous, kid-friendly, hillside hostel is a comfortable base in Kangding. They provide all manner of top-end hostel services, from camping-gear rental to good Western food and travel advice. It's a winding 10-minute walk uphill by the road that passes Yongzhu Hotel.

Zhilam is also a reliable resource for wilderness adventures. Resident Tibetan guide Patru doesn't speak English, but is experienced with guiding foreigners around the Gongga Shan circuit (from ¥300 per day, not including horse fees).

[Konka International Youth Hostel](#)

HOSTEL

(Gongga Guoji Qingnian Lushe  2817 788; G318, Dongguan Xingcheng 3 fl; dm ¥35-40, s/d ¥150/170; @ )

The most convenient option for bus travellers, this pleasant hostel offers all the usual services, plus they can help with self-guided excursions into the mountains. They even loan out outdoor gear. From June through November, beds in rooftop tents go for ¥25. Lively communal dinners include vegetarian options (¥18 to ¥24 per person). Just 50m to the left of the bus station.

Dengba Hostel

HOSTEL

( ;  2877 377; 88 Xida Jie, dm ¥70, r with private bath ¥120-150; @ )

Worn but welcoming hostel with small rooms in an alley off Xi Dajie.

Yongzhu Hotel

GUESTHOUSE

(Yongzhu Yizhan  ;  283 2381, 159 8373 8188; dm ¥35-45, r ¥160-200; )

Hidden in a lane near Anjue Si, this simple guesthouse has rooms built around an inner atrium decorated with colourful Tibetan flourishes.

ROUGH ROADS

The roads in western Sichuan are notoriously bad, and many sections have been reduced to mud and gravel as part of an ongoing resurfacing project. Travel times are sometimes double what they could be and, after heavy rain, some stretches are impassable. Ask hostels in the area for the latest travel time information.

Eating & Drinking

Stock up on trail snacks at the **market** (Dehui Chaoshi  ; Neijie Shang Ye, off Dongda Jie;  8am-10pm) in the Liu Liu Cheng shopping complex. On mild evenings, **barbecue stalls** set up around the northeast corner of People's

Sq. For a sit-down meal, the [Tibetan Cultural Heritage Museum](#) offers a unique experience with dishes cooked over a traditional iron stove.

Mage Mian

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yanhe Xilu; noodles ¥7-12; 🕒 24hr)

A solid late-night option, the speciality here is *ma'ge mian*, house noodles topped with a spicy mince-meat sauce in small (*yiliang*; ¥9), medium (*er liang*; ¥10) or large (*sanliang*; ¥12).

A'Re Tibetan Restaurant

TIBETAN

(A're Zangcan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 669 6777; Xinshi Qianjie, mains from ¥18; 🕒 9am-10pm; 📍)

This reliable standby serves tasty soups, *tsampa*, and lamb- and yak-meat dishes, including a whole yak hoof, if that sort of thing takes your fancy.

Taste of Tibet

TIBETAN

(Pama Linka [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 699 9999; off Yanhe Donglu, mains from ¥38; 🕒 9.30am-late)

This upscale arrival offers a refined take on Tibetan fare in a rustic dining room decorated with a fine collection of traditional nomad tools. The chef sources ingredients from the Kham — from Xinduqiao's fragrant barley to tender yak from Shiqu. Live music (and enthusiastic smoking) starts at 7pm.

Malaya Tibetan Restaurant

TIBETAN

(Malaya Zangcan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 287 7111; Yanhe Donglu, dishes from ¥18; 🕒 11am-11pm; 📍)

Friendly restaurant-cum-teahouse serving authentic Tibetan dishes. If you need inspiration, try the yak meat burger (meat stew topped with flatbread; ¥68) or the very filling curry (beef and potato on rice; ¥18). Located on the 6th floor above the fast-food joint **Dico**.

Tibetan Culture Dew

TEAHOUSE

(Xizang Yu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yanhe Xilu, snacks ¥2-18, tea/beer ¥15; 🕒 10am-11pm)

Hang out with the sipping, snacking locals at this lovely teahouse with a rustic stone and wood interior decorated with colourful Tibetan prayer flags.

Himalayan Coffee

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 281 8887; 13 Neijie Shang Ye, off Dongda Jie; coffee ¥25, mains from ¥18; 🕒 10am-11pm; 📶)

The only spot for actual pour-over coffee in all of the Kham, this cafe near the big yak sculpture, is a veritable oasis for the caffeine-deprived. Wraps, pizza, house-baked pastries and wi-fi satisfy other common traveller cravings – though at homeland prices.

EATING TIBETAN

| ENGLISH | TIBETAN PRONUNCIATION | TIBETAN SCRIPT | CHINESE PRONUNCIATION | CHINESE SCRIPT |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Butter tea | <i>bo-cha</i> | བོད་ཇི | <i>sūyóu chá</i> | 酥油茶 |
| Noodles | <i>thuk-pa</i> | ཐུག་པ། | <i>zàngmiàn</i> | 藏面 |
| Rice, potato and yak-meat stew | <i>shemdre</i> | ཤ་འབྲུག་སྤོག་པ། | <i>gālí niúròu fàn</i> | 咖喱牛肉饭 |
| Roasted barley flour | <i>tsampa</i> | ཅོ་མ། | <i>zānbā</i> | 糌粑 |
| Tibetan yoghurt | <i>sho</i> | ཤོ། | <i>suānnǎi</i> | 酸奶 |
| Yak-meat dumplings | <i>sha-momo</i> | ཤ་མོ་མོ། | <i>niúròu bāozi</i> | 牛肉包子 |
| Vegetable dumplings | <i>tse-momo</i> | ཅོ་མོ་མོ། | <i>sùcài bāozi</i> | 素菜包子 |

Entertainment

At 7pm, there's one place you must go: every evening dozens, if not hundreds, of locals descend on People's Sq for a daily get-together of dancing and calisthenics.

Information

Agricultural Bank of China ATM

BANK

(Zidong Guiyuan Ji [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yanhe Xilu)

One of several around town that takes foreign cards.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 281 1415; 232 Dongda Xiaojie, 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm)

Visa-extension service in three working days. First-time extensions only.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kangding Airport is 43km west of town and has daily flights to Chengdu (¥700, 11.30am) and four weekly fights to Chongqing (¥751, 8.35am Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday).

Buy tickets online or from the **flight ticket centre** (Jichang Shoupiao Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 287 1111; in the Airport Hotel, 28 Jianlu Jie,, 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm), which sometimes has tickets discounted by ¥100 or so. Pick up the airport shuttle (¥35, 1½ hours) in front of the Airport Hotel at 8.30am. Shuttles from the airport (¥50) arrive here at around 1pm.

BUS

The bus station is a 10-minute walk from the centre of town (taxi ¥7). Shared minibuses to all destinations listed here leave from outside the bus station.

Rides to **Tagong** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (¥50 to ¥80) and Ganzi (around ¥200) also leave from the walking street, Xinshi Qianjie. Remember: private hire – *baоче*; shared vehicle – *pinche*.

➔ **Baiyu** ¥192, 20 hours, 6am. Stops overnight in Ganzi; book the day before

➔ **Chengdu** ¥120 to ¥140, eight hours, hourly from 6am to 11pm

- ➔ **Danba** ¥45, three hours, two daily (6am, 6.30am)
- ➔ **Daocheng** ¥162.50, 12 hours, two daily (both at 6am)
- ➔ **Dege** ¥202, 16 hours, one daily (6.45am, layover in Ganzi)
- ➔ **Ganzi** ¥129, 11 hours, two daily (6.30am, 9am)
- ➔ **Litang** ¥97, eight hours, three daily (6am, 7am, 9am)
- ➔ **Ya'an** ¥68, 4½ hours, about every hour from 6am to 4pm

PERMITS FOR SUMMITTING SICHUAN'S PEAKS

In 2009, after a dozen foreign climbers died on Sichuan's mountains, the Chinese government began to enforce permit regulations. Officially, climbing any Sichuan peak above 3500m requires registration through the **Sichuan Mountaineering Association** (☎028 8543 8819; <http://www.sma.gov.cn>; 93 Xin Nanlu, 5th fl, Chengdu, 5). When your plans involve more than a standard hike (for example, rock climbing, ice climbing, extended backpacking), you should at least register with the mountain's administrative office by the park's entrance gate. You may have to pay an environmental protection fee (from ¥150), and at popular but treacherous mountains such as **Siguniang**, hire a guide (from ¥300 per day).

Danba

☎0836 / Pop 58,200

Dusty Danba (known as Rongtrak in Tibet; 1893m) straddles a dramatic gorge near the confluence of three rivers, and makes an interesting alternative to Kangding as a gateway into or out of western Sichuan.

The town itself is not very exciting, but in the surrounding hills are clusters of picturesque Jiarong Tibetan and Qiang villages with ancient watchtowers and welcoming homestays.



Qiang Watchtowers

RUINS

(Qiangzu diaolou)

The 30m- to 60m-high ancient stone towers scattered throughout the villages overlooking the Dadu River were built by the Qiang between 700 and 1200 years ago. Some enterprising families have opened theirs up to those travellers (¥10 to ¥20) who are willing to climb log ladders 6m up to the entrance.

Household towers were signs of status, and were used to store precious goods (and family members during wartime). Village towers were taller, built for conducting religious rituals, demarcating borders, and passing smoke signals. In wartime, they were used to launch assaults against Tibetan marauders and the Qing army.

Jiaju Zangzhai

VILLAGE

(adult/student ¥30/¥15)

Of all the pretty villages in the hills around here, Danba's pride and joy is Jiaju, 12km northwest of town and perched at the top of a multi-switchback track that winds its way up a steep river gorge. With its fruit trees, charming Tibetan stone houses and homestays, Jiaju's quaint architecture will suck in travellers for a day or two.

To get here, take a shared minivan (¥10) from the Bamei end of Danba. A private taxi costs about ¥50 one way.

Suopo

VILLAGE

()

Danba's nearest village with watchtowers is a 30-minute walk along the river. An enterprising family has rebuilt the wooden base levels of a tower next to their home. Visitors can climb up the inside from their rooftop (¥15). Don't worry about finding them. They, or a 'friend' of theirs, will find you.

To get to Suopo, turn left out of Zhaxi Zhuokang Backpackers Hostel and follow the river. Turn down the track beside the small police station, then

cross the suspension bridge and keep walking up to the village. Look for stone steps under some large trees up to your left, just after you reach the village's first couple of buildings. These steps lead to the nearest towers.

Zhonglu

VILLAGE

(admission ¥20)

Comparatively remote Zhonglu is a popular village for homestays, and a good base for wandering through the countryside. It's 13km from town. Take a taxi (¥80).

Sleeping

Zhaxi Zhuokang Backpackers Hostel

HOTEL

(Zhaxi Zhuokang Qingnian Lushe  139 9046 4961, 352 1806; 35 Sanchahe Nanlu, dm ¥25-30, tw without/with bathroom ¥80/100;  )

Traveller central in Danba proper, the friendly management can arrange minibus rides (with advance notice) and extended treks to natural springs and remote villages off the tourist map. Rooms are decidedly average but tidy, and there are free internet terminals and wi-fi. Some English is spoken.

It's a 25-minute walk from the bus station (keep the river on your left, and follow it as it curves right), or a ¥6 taxi ride.

Liangke Shu

HOMESTAY

( 135 6868 5278; Jiaju Zangzhai; dm incl meals ¥60)

One of a number of stone houses that have been converted into a homestay, excellent Liangke Shu has simple dorms decorated with Tibetan furniture, a pleasant central courtyard, and stunning views. The owner can arrange trips into the fabulous surrounding countryside.

Village Hotel

GUESTHOUSE

(Dongpo Zangjia  135 5850 9707; Zhonglu; r incl meals without/with bath ¥80/90; )

Spend a night or two in this converted white-stone and crimson-timber house, so that you have time to partake in the multi-course meals and wander the surrounding countryside. If you're lucky, Mr Dongpo, the family patriarch, will show you his collection of clothing, weapons and ancient relics.

Don't miss climbing up to the ancient altar in the crumbling watchtower, which dates back 700 years. If you want to climb higher, neighbours have restored theirs to safely accommodate visitors.

Eating & Drinking

In town, small restaurants by the bus station open early for breakfast noodles (*mian*) or dumplings (*xiaolong baozi*), but the best eating is to be done in the homestays and guesthouses. Ask at [Zhaxi Zhuokang Backpackers Hostel](#) for recommendations.

Getting There & Away

For Tagong, take a minibus (¥60, three hours) from the west end of town, via Bamei (¥40, two hours). Bus destinations include:

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥115, eight hours, two daily (6.30am and 10am)
- ➔ **Ganzi** ¥101, nine hours, 6.50am
- ➔ **Kangding** ¥48, five hours, two daily (6.30am and 3pm)

CYCLING THE SICHUAN–TIBET HIGHWAY

Cyclists clad in sunglasses, bandannas, and dust are a common sight these days, pedalling – or pushing – their bikes along the northern and southern routes of China's longest highway. G318, as it's officially known, starts in Shanghai, but it is the southern route of the Sichuan–Tibet Hwy – a 2144-km section between Chengdu and Lhasa – that draws more than 10,000 riders annually.

The road cuts through the region's most rugged landscape. During its construction, so many died from landslides, cave-ins, and freezing temperatures, it is said that every 800m cost one life. Navigating it today means encountering countless construction zones, endless tunnels, 10 mountain passes over 4000m, and

increasingly frequent traffic jams, which is why only a fifth of riders make it through the entire three-week journey.

If you want to join the peloton, hostels in Chengdu can recommend guides and outfitters. Be aware that the ride for foreigners, who are restricted from entering eastern Tibet, ends at Batang, on Sichuan's bank of the Jinsha Jiang.

Sichuan–Tibet Highway (Northern Route)

The famous Sichuan–Tibet Hwy splits in two just west of Kangding. The northern route is 300km longer than the southern route, and is generally less travelled. Following it, you'll traverse high-plateau grasslands and numerous Tibetan settlements, often attached to a local monastery.

Making it to the other side of Chola Mountain (Que'er Shan) requires negotiating a 5050m narrow pass – the highest this side of Lhasa – that takes you to Dege and the border with the Tibet Autonomous Region (Xizang). You can continue on this route north into Qinghai province via Shiqu. From Ganzi, you can hook back up with the southern route via Xinlong.

Come here prepared. Bring warm clothing; it can be frigid at these elevations even in midsummer. Remember that bus services can be unreliable – this is no place to be in a hurry.

Tagong

 0836 / Pop 8984

The Tibetan village of Tagong (Lhagang; 3700m) and its surrounding grasslands offer plenty of excuses to linger.

On the road from Kangding is a sea of mani stones carved (and spray-painted) with (*om mani padme hum*), the mantra of Buddha's path. Explore this terrain on horseback or foot, sip real yak butter tea, then fall asleep in tents under the stars.

Sights

Lhagang Monastery

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Tagong Si admission ¥20)

The story goes that when Princess Wencheng, the Chinese bride-to-be of Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo, was on her way to Lhasa in AD 640, a precious statue of Jowo Sakyamuni Buddha toppled off one of the carts in her entourage. A replica of the statue was carved on the spot where it landed and a temple built around it.

That replica is now in the hall on the right. The original, which is the most revered Buddha image in all of Tibet, is housed in Lhasa's Jokhang Temple. Also make note of the beautiful 1000-armed Chenresig (Avalokiteshvara) in the hall to the left, and the impressive collection of over 100 *chortens* (Tibetan stupas) behind the monastery.

You can also visit the Sakya Monastic School across the river; exit the monastery and walk straight down the main road, turn right at the police station, cross the bridge and walk another 800m. Monks in training sit face-to-face on cushions, debating Buddhist texts. In seven years, they will be able to join the others in Lhagang.

Activities

Horse riding (per person per day 1/2/3 people ¥420/310/290) and guided **grassland hikes** (per person per day ¥200) can be arranged through [Khampa Cafe & Arts Centre](#). It's an extra ¥60 per person with meals and accommodation. They rent out camping equipment (tent per day ¥30) and mountain bikes (per day ¥40).

You can also hike out into the grasslands on your own. One popular option is the two-hour hike south to [Ser Gyergo](#) (Heping Fahui), the largest nunnery in the area - ask at [Khampa Cafe](#) ( 136 8449 3301; <http://definitelynomadic.com>; dishes ¥9-28;  8am-11pm) for directions.

Festivals & Events

Tagong holds an annual **horse-racing festival** (*saimahui*) during the fifth lunar month (usually early July).

Sleeping & Eating

The three most popular places to stay are in a row to the left of Lhagang Monastery, along one side of the main square. All transport drops passengers here.

★ **Khampa Cafe & Arts Centre**

GUESTHOUSE

( 136 8449 3301; <http://definitelynomadic.com>; r ¥100-200; )

Angela, an American, and her Tibetan husband, Djarga, run the most comfortable place to stay in Tagong. There is just one shared bathroom, but the bedrooms are spacious, tasteful, and exceptionally clean. The top-floor cafe (open 8.30am to 11pm, dishes ¥15 to ¥70) is also the best hang-out in town, with great food and advice on hiking, camping etc.

Angela can also arrange very cool Tibetan homestays out in the grasslands, as well as multi-day horse treks.

Wi-fi is available in one corner downstairs.

Jya Drolma and Gayla's Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

( 286 6056; dm ¥25, tw without bathroom ¥60)

Bedrooms here – even the dorms – are a riot of golds, reds and blues, with elaborately painted ceilings and walls. There are common toilets on each floor and one shower with 24-hour hot water. Some English is spoken.

Snowland Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Xuecheng Lushe  286 6098; tagongsally@yahoo.com; dm from ¥20, s/d ¥50/80) 

This long-standing backpacker hang-out is the cheapest option for budget

travellers. Rooms are basic, but you'll get a decent night's sleep. The attached **Sally's Kham Restaurant** (yak burger ¥22; 🕒 8am-10pm) serves a selection of Tibetan, Chinese and Western standards. No English.

Getting There & Around

For destinations north, take a shared minivan to Bamei (¥20, one hour), where you'll have your pick of minivans to places such as Danba (¥30, two hours) and Ganzi (¥50 to ¥70, seven hours). For Ganzi, you can also try to snag a seat on the bus from Kangding, which passes the square at around 9am, or arrange a shared minivan (¥100 to ¥150).

To get to Litang, take a shared minivan to Xinduqiao (¥13, one hour), where you can flag down the Kangding–Litang bus (¥64, seven hours), which passes there at around 9am, or take a shared minivan the whole way (¥150).

To head back east, the Ganzi–Kangding bus (¥40, two hours) passes the square at around 9am but is often full. Take a shared minivan (¥50 to ¥70), but note, you might struggle to find fellow passengers after 10am.

For close destinations, rent motorbikes in town (per day from ¥100).

Seda

Seda (Sertar), home to the largest Buddhist academy in the world, offers an incredible glimpse into the life of monks and nuns.

Sights & Activities

Larung Gar Five Sciences Buddhist Academy

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Larong Wuming Fo Xueyuan)

Of all the Buddhist sights in western Sichuan, there is none as striking as Larung Gar. The future of Tibetan Buddhism is contained here in this school, the largest of its kind in the world, cradled in a valley some 170km northeast of Ganzi. Some 10,000 students study here, dedicated for the next six to 13

years to serious monastic study.

Larung Gar was founded in 1980 by 30 disciples gathering at their charismatic leader Khenpo Jikphun's modest home. Many more soon arrived. Today the two main halls that anchor the valley floor – the **nunnery** (*nujin shi*) distinguished with three *darchen* (flag poles) in front, and the massive main **monastery** (*dajin shi*) – are thoroughly surrounded by a hive of subsidiary chapels and low-slung living quarters that blanket the valley in crimson. Devoted pilgrims climb to the ridge to prostrate before a huge *chorten* and walk the *kora* (holy path) spinning prayer wheels.

Most of the classes in Buddhist philosophy, history, and discourse are taught in Tibetan, even though the students are a mix of Tibetan, Han, and other minorities from across China and as far away as Singapore. You can observe students engaging in lively debates at 5pm in the monastery.

Monks- and nuns-in-training live separate lives, only gathering in the monastery hall for scripture readings. Living quarters are divided by a high wall, and they even cook their meals in designated areas. At around 11am, you can watch monks cooking for 3000 in giant woks outside, next to the monastery.

Sky Burial (Jhator)

CEREMONY

(Tian zang 🕒 1pm-2.30pm) **FREE**

There is no more stark a contrast between Tibetan and Western religion than in the ceremonies surrounding death. Early Tibetan kings were buried, and the holy are still cremated and their ashes enshrined in *chorten*. But where soft earth and kindling are rare resources, ordinary Tibetans are honored through *jhator*. On a hill 1km north of Larung Gar, visitors can view this extraordinary funerary rite firsthand.

Bodies of the deceased arrive having already undergone rituals over the preceding three days. A lama has recited prayers from the *Book of the Dead* to help the soul on its journey to rebirth. The body arrives wrapped in cloth, which *rogyapas* (designated caretakers) remove to cut the hair and break up the body with a large knife. It is believed the soul has already departed when

the vultures descend. To confront death openly and without fear is to watch these massive birds tear at the flesh. Through all of this, there is no open mourning by loved ones. This final act of compassion to return the deceased back to earth evokes a sober joy.

If you're wondering, yes, watching these rites is controversial. Under pressure from the tourist industry, this once private ritual now takes place next to some hideous, amusement-park Buddhist iconography. It's hard to strike a balance between sanctity and gawking, so if you do attend, never take photos, never point, and stay in the roped off viewing area, 100m away from the deceased.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a handful of simple restaurants and small shops around the main halls of Larung Gar. Up on the ridge, **Lirong Bingguan** (189 4283 6579; dm from ¥35, s/d ¥160/180) serves buffet meals and is a decent (but chilly) sleeping option on the school grounds.

There is a crowded strip of businesses just outside the monastery, but better options with wi-fi and 24-hour hot water overlook the walking street (Buxingjie) in Seda Xian, 20km northwest. **Zangyuan Bingguan** (083 6852 2188; Buxing Jie, Seda County, r without/with bathroom ¥120/160; ) has a fantastic Tibetan teahouse downstairs. A gaggle of friendly ladies keep **Shushi Bingguan** (083 6852 1850; Buxing Jie, Seda County; r without/with bathroom ¥158/248) particularly tidy. Your hotel may ask you to register in person at the PSB (*paichusuo*) on one end of the walking street.

Getting There & Around

Minibuses arrive and drop-off at the big parking lot halfway up the hill on the Larung Gar grounds. A ride to the Seda Xian walking street or the Sky Burial site is about ¥10 with other passengers, ¥70 private. Minibuses to and from Ganzi (¥70 to ¥100, 4½ hours) arrive and depart from here as well. From Seda Xian, regular buses to Chengdu (¥239) and Kangding (¥53) depart at

around 6am from the east end of town, less than 1km from the walking street.

Ganzi

 0836 / Pop 68,523

It's easy to spend a couple of days in the lively market town of Ganzi (Garze) exploring the beautiful countryside, which is scattered with Tibetan villages and large monasteries surrounded by snowcapped mountains. Photo opportunities abound, especially from late July to October, when the grassland is an impossible green accented with wildflowers in bloom.

Sights & Activities

Garze Gompa

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Ganzi Si admission ¥20)

North of the town's Tibetan quarter is the region's largest monastery, dating back more than 500 years and glimmering with gold. Encased on the walls of the main hall are hundreds of small golden Sakyamunis. In a smaller hall just west is an awe-inspiring statue of Jampa (Maitreya or Future Buddha), dressed in a giant silk robe. Catch fantastic views from the rooftop.

The monastery is a 25- to 30-minute walk from the bus station. Turn left out of the station and just keep going.

Rongbo Hot Springs

HOT SPRING

(Rongbo Wenquan per room ¥50;  6am-midnight)

Perfect after a day of hiking in the hills, Ganzi's hot springs are a short walk past the turnoff for Hotel Himalaya. When you see the road Xinqu Lu on your left, turn right down the alley opposite and follow it downhill towards the sulphur smell. Each room is private with a large soaking tub. Towels (*yujin*) are available for ¥10.

Sleeping & Eating

Eateries offering the promise of a full stomach on ¥20 or less abound along Dongda Jie and Chuanzang Lu. The colourful teahouses offer an excellent range of Tibetan dishes beyond just tea.

Hotel Himalaya

HOTEL

(Ximalaya Binguan  752 1878; 13 Dongda Jie, r ¥150)

Run by a Ganzi local who happens to speak German, this is the most comfortable place in town. Rooms are large, bright and come with attached bathrooms featuring sit-down toilets and hot-water showers. Turn left out of the bus station, then take the first right up Chuanzang Lu. Dongda Jie is on your left after a couple of hundred metres.

Hong Fu Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Hongfu Luguan  752 5330; 49 Chuanzang Lu, per bed ¥40)

In a traditional Tibetan wooden building on the main drag, Hong Fu has straightforward twin rooms, shared toilets and one cramped shower, but, as the owners say, the hot springs are just up the road.

Turn left out of the bus station, take the first left and you'll soon see a sign on your right for Long Da Guesthouse (same prices; not as good). Walk towards that and you'll see Hong Fu just before it, on your left.

Jintaiyang Binguan

HOTEL

( 752 2444; Chuanzang Lu at Shizimen; r ¥150-180, discounted to ¥100; )

If you need wi-fi, this standard midrange hotel does the trick. Turn left out of the bus station, take the first right and it's on your left through the police station archway. No English sign.

Getting There & Away

Minivans congregate outside the bus station and head to:

- ➔ **Dege** ¥160, six to seven hours
- ➔ **Litang** ¥120, six to seven hours
- ➔ **Manigange** ¥50, two to three hours

Scheduled bus services run to the following destinations:

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥226, 18 hours, 6.30am
- ➔ **Danba** ¥101, nine hours, 6.30am
- ➔ **Kangding** ¥117 and ¥129, 11 hours, two daily, (both at 6.30am)
- ➔ **Shiqu** ¥96, six hours, every other day (6.30am)

DON'T MISS

DARJAY GOMPA

Travellers sick of dusty market towns and only seeing gorgeous scenery through bus windows will enjoy two days exploring the grasslands around one of Ganzi prefecture's most venerated monasteries, **Darjay Gompa** (Da Jin Si), 30km west of Ganzi on the road to Dege.

Talam Khang (Dajin Si Luguan 📞187 8366 2272; Ganzi; camping & dm ¥50/, d/tw ¥100/200) is a small temple, a short walk from Darjay Gompa, with snowcapped mountains to one side, and rolling grasslands and a river to the other. Three friendly monks welcome guests to share their mudbrick and wood-framed living quarters. Beds are carpeted benches, and rooms are similarly rustic and full of character. The monks cook up vegetarian noodle dishes (¥10 to ¥15) upon request.

To get to the temple from Darjay Gompa, exit from the monastery's back gate and walk about 15 minutes along the dirt road. Walk towards the white stupa farthest on the left, keeping the grassland villages on your right. You'll see the temple as you come over the hill.

It costs around ¥40 to get here from Ganzi in a shared minivan, at least ¥60 in a private taxi. Hitching is another option.

Manigange

📞0836

There's not much going on in Manigange (Manigango), a rough two-street

transit town halfway between Ganzi and Dege. The surrounding hills do offer wonderful hiking opportunities, though. The vast monastery and school, **Dzogchen Gompa** (Zhu Qing Si) an important seat of the Nyingma (Red Hat sect), is also within striking distance, on the road north to Yushu.

Sleeping & Eating

Fenglingdu Kezhan

GUESTHOUSE

( 150 0248 8791; beds ¥30; )

Lorna, the friendly owner from Liaoning speaks some English, and keeps her few rooms spic-and-span. Both dorm and private rooms are priced by the bed and have a nice travellers' vibe thanks to all the young Chinese backpackers. No showers, but you can request a bucket of hot water.

It's 200m down from the Manigange Pani Hotel (where the buses drop you). Look for the 'Guesthouse' sign on the left.

Manigange Pani Hotel

HOTEL

(Manigange Pani Jiudian  822 2788; 317 dm from ¥30, tw without bathroom ¥130, with bathroom ¥150-200)

This OK hotel is the town's centre of gravity, with its parking lot serving as the unofficial bus station and its restaurant (mains ¥25 to ¥40, open 7am to 10pm) a popular lunch stop for passing cyclists.

Getting There & Away

A daily bus to Dege (¥50, three to four hours) passes through Manigange between 7am and 8.40am, but is often full. Going the other way, there are usually empty seats on the Ganzi-bound bus (¥50, three to four hours), which passes by at 7am to 8am. Catch both from Manigange Pani Hotel.

Minibuses congregate at the east end of town at the crossroads of the main drag (G317) and the road north to Yushu (S217). They head to Ganzi (¥40), Dege (¥60) or Shiqu (¥80) when full. A bus from Ganzi to Shiqu (¥70, seven

hours) also passes by here at around 8.30am.

Xinlu Hai

Xinlu Hai

LAKE

(Yilhun Lha-tso admission ¥20)

It is said King Gesar's beloved concubine Zhumu was so taken by these stunning turquoise-blue waters that her heart fell in. This now holy glacial lake, 13km southwest of Manigange is still awe inspiring.

The water is frigid and the surface freezes solid from September through March. Take it in by hiking among the *chorten* and *mani* stones, beneath snowcapped Chola Mountain, which feeds this lake, to the west. You can walk a couple of hours up the foothills on the left side of the lake for more breathtaking views and possible glimpses of white-lipped deer (baichunlu).

You can also ride horses led by guides (from ¥100). Camping is frowned upon – though some self-sufficient travellers have slept in the caves without trouble. In summer, you may run into local monks setting up colourful tents.

To get here, take a Dege-bound minibus (¥20 to ¥40), hitch a ride or hike (turn right out of Manigange Pani Hotel and keep going for two hours). The lake is a five-minute walk from the main road, along a signposted track. Minivans (¥20) wait to take you back to Manigange.

Dege

☞ 0836 / Pop 58,600

Your bumpy bus ride just got bumpier. Dege (Derge) is cut off from the rest of western Sichuan by the towering Chola Mountain (Que'er Shan, 6168m); to get here from the east, you have to endure a highly uncomfortable, harrowing, five-hour ride by dirt track over the 5050m-high Chola Pass. At the highest point, Buddhists on board throw coloured prayer papers out the window and chant mantras that you can only hope will help carry you all to safety.

Unless you've secured the rare permit to enter the Chamdo prefecture of Tibet proper (Xizang), the main reason to make the arduous trek out here is to see Dege's famous printing monastery, one of this region's premier sights.

Sights

The printing press is in the centre of town, but further along the road up the hill beyond it, you'll reach the huge, reconstructed **Gonchen (Dege) Monastery**, which has stood here in various forms for a millennium. High in the mountains to the south and east are several other monasteries, including Pelpung Gompa, Dzongsar Gompa and Pewar Gompa.

★ Bakong Scripture Printing Press & Monastery

(Dege Yinjingyuan www.degeparkhang.org; admission ¥50; BUDDHIST MONASTERY, HISTORIC SITE

 8.30am-noon & 2-6.30pm)

This fascinating 1792 monastery houses one of western Sichuan's star attractions: an ongoing printing operation that still uses traditional woodblock printing methods and maintains more than 320,000 scripture plates, an astonishing 70% of Tibet's literary heritage.

The wood blocks are engraved with scriptures from all of the Tibetan Buddhist orders, as well as Bon, a religion that predates the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet. These ancient writings cover astronomy, geography, music, medicine and Buddhist classics, including two of the most important Tibetan sutras. A set of 555 woodblock plates written in Hindi, Sanskrit and Tibetan, describes the history of Indian Buddhism and is the only surviving copy in the world.

Within the monastery, dozens of workers produce more than 2500 prints each day, as ink, paper and blocks fly through the workers' hands at lightning speed. In a side room, you'll find the senior printers making larger and more complex prints of Tibetan gods on paper and coloured cloth.

You can also examine storage chambers, paper-cutting rooms and the main hall of the monastery itself, protected from fire and earthquakes by the

guardian goddess Drolma (Tara). There are some nice murals in the two ground-floor chapels, so bring a torch.

You aren't allowed to take photos of the library shelves or the main hall, but ask the printers if it is OK to snap away as they meditatively fill customers' orders.

To get here, turn right out of the bus station, then left over the bridge and keep walking up the hill.

Sleeping & Eating

There are guesthouse and food options, including cheap noodle shops, clustered near the bus station.

Hexie Hotel

HOTEL

(Hexie Luguan  822 6111; 67 Chamashang Jie, dm/tw ¥50/80; )

This friendly Tibetan-run hotel has a homely feel. Spacious carpeted rooms come with comfy beds, clean sheets and even warm duvets. There's also occasional wi-fi and shared bathrooms with 24-hour hot-water showers. Turn left out of the bus station; it's a few hundred metres on your left.

Dege Hotel

HOTEL

(Dege Binguan  822 6666; 11 Gesa'er Dajie; r from ¥380, discounted to ¥180;  )

This standard, reliable hotel is in a big building by the river, near the bus station. All rooms have private bathrooms and some even have nice mountain views. Turn left out of the bus station, cross the bridge, and follow the signs to turn right down the lane into the hotel courtyard.

Kangba Zangcan

TIBETAN

( 139 9049 9866; Chamashang Jie, dishes ¥20-30;  9am-10pm)

This Tibetan teahouse serves authentic Tibetan food, plus tea and beer. There's no menu, but here's a sample of what's on offer: yak pancakes

(*niurou bing*; ¥30), yak-meat *momos* (¥2 per dumpling), *thukpa* (¥15), *tsampa* (¥10) and butter tea (from ¥15). No English is spoken. Turn left out of the bus station; it's on your right, on the 2nd floor.

Jiang Hong Relay Station

CAFE

(Jiang Hong Yizhan 3 Bagong Jie; 🕒 10am-midnight; 📶)

This little cafe serves small snacks such as chicken wings and fries (from ¥15), OK coffee (¥30), and has cushy sofas. The owner lets out the *very* basic upstairs rooms (expect cloth-covered windows, very low-ceilings, and a sink in the hall) for ¥50 a night. It's on your left on the road up the hill to the Bakong monastery.

i Getting There & Away

Just one daily east-bound bus leaves from here at 7am, heading for Kangding (¥182 to ¥201, next-day arrival) via Manigange (¥36 to ¥39, 4½ hours), Ganzi (¥64 to ¥70, six hours) and Luhuo (¥115 to ¥127, 7½ hours), where it stops for the night. Otherwise, there are minivans to Ganzi (¥100), Baiyu (¥80), and Manigange (¥60).

Foreigners are not allowed to take public transport west from here into Tibet proper.

WORTH A TRIP

BAIYU

Pelyul Gompa

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Baiyu Zusi) **FREE**

If you can't make the long trek to Seda's Larung Gar Buddhist academy, you can get a semblance of the spectacle through a visit to Baiyu Si (Baiyul; 3150m), a small monastery village of striking beauty. Wander the temples and observe the 200 monks living here, then explore the maze of lanes that wind among the red and white houses clinging to the hillside.

The original monastery, built in 1665, grew to be one of the six most influential monasteries of the Nyingma (Red Hat) sect. It has been restored and rebuilt several

times, and at its height had more than a thousand monks, before it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The monastery was rebuilt in 1982 with both private and government funds.

The monastery has a small printing operation in a building just past the main halls. On the second floor, you can watch carvers create delicate script in reverse.

The monastery village infrastructure remains rudimentary; raw sewage flows onto the paths after rains. There are no restaurants or guesthouses, but you might find a friendly monk or villager willing to take you in. In town, **Jixiang Hotel** (Jixiang Luguan ☎135 6828 8728; 87 Hedong Shangjie, r without/with bath ¥80/100), just to the right of the bus station as you exit, is good.

From the Baiyu bus station, the temple is a 2km slog uphill, or find a ride — the mail carriers have been known to give free lifts. Buses depart from the Baiyu station at 7am for Ganzi (¥90, 7½ hours). Minibuses are the only options for Dege (¥80, four hours) and Litang (¥170, nine hours).

Shiqu

☎0836 / Pop 68,200

Shiqu commonly refers to both the traditional monastery town of Sershu Dzong and the modern(ish) county seat of Sershu (Shiqu Xian,), 40km to the east. Both are nosebleed high at over 4200m elevation.

Shiqu Xian has more lodging and transport connections, and is the usual stop between Manigange and Yushu (in Qinghai), but the huge **monastery** (Shiqu Si), home to hundreds of monks, and its largely unmodernized surroundings are interesting in their own right.

Sleeping & Eating

For the complete experience, stay in Sershu Dzong's basic **monastery guesthouse** (Sexu Si Gangjing Fandian Sershu Dzong; dm from ¥20, tw per bed ¥40-50), where simple meals are provided. Otherwise, in Shiqu Xian there are plenty of small restaurants – noodle joints, as well as Tibetan teahouses – on and off the main road.

Gesa'er Jiudian

GUESTHOUSE

(Shiqu Xian; per bed from ¥50)

In Shiqu Xian, this place has decent rooms in various configurations. The shared bathroom is nothing more than a row of pit toilets. Coming from Manigange, take the first left after the post office and look for the big green building. Reception is on the 2nd floor, along with a popular **Tibetan restaurant** (dishes ¥15-35; 🕒 10am-11pm).

Shangdeenyma Hotel

HOTEL

(Xiangdenima Dajjudian 📞 862 2888; tw/d/tr ¥248/252/298)

The only place we could find in Shiqu Xian with decent showers is housed in an imposing Tibetan-style building set back from the main street. The cheaper doubles and triples have communal bathrooms. Check that the hot water is working before settling on a room.

i Getting There & Away

The small bus station at the far east end of Shiqu Xian has a 7am bus to Ganzi (¥150, eight hours), via Manigange (¥80, four hours).

The bus to Yushu (¥80, five hours, 8am) leaves from the even smaller bus station at the far west end of town. The Yushu-bound buses will let you off at Sershu Dzong, or find a shared minivan (¥50).

Sichuan–Tibet Highway (Southern Route)

Travel along the southern route of the Sichuan–Tibet Hwy takes you through vast grasslands dotted with alpine lakes, Tibetan block homes and abundant, contentedly grazing yaks. Majestic peaks seem to touch the sky.

Journeying along this 2140km route is slightly easier than taking the northern route, but it's still not for the faint-hearted; settlements are remote and high altitude is a factor as much as ever. Warm clothing and sunscreen are a must. However, as the Kangding–Litang–Xiangcheng–Shangri-la

journey has become a popular route into Yunnan province, road conditions have vastly improved.

The new, very high, Daocheng-Yading Airport puts everything in closer reach, but those who opt for the one-hour flight from Chengdu should make sure to set aside a couple of days to acclimate.

Litang

 0836 / Pop 51,300

At a dizzying altitude of 4014m, Litang (Lithang) is one of the highest settlements on earth. Its scenery will certainly leave you breathless, and getting out to see it – whether on horse, motorbike or foot – calls for spending at least a couple of days here.

For Tibetans, Litang occupies another exalted space as the birthplace of holy men, including the seventh and 10th Dalai Lamas and many revered lamas. Their birthplace and the town's large monastery, Chode Gompa, draw devoted pilgrims from afar.

Sights & Activities

Former Residence of the 7th Dalai Lama

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Renkang guwu Renkang Gujie, off of Genie Lu.,  visitors 8am-7pm)

Kelzang Gyatso (1708–57), the 7th Dalai Lama, was born in the basement of this house during a period of intense political struggle. Eventually growing into a visionary leader, under his rule Tibet established a national archive, instituted civil-service training programs, and formalised the Tibetan government structure. The house, built in the 16th century, is Litang's best preserved temple.

Not all Tibetans shared the belief he was the reincarnate; to escape the ongoing civil war, the Dalai Lama was raised and educated largely in exile. Qing Emperor Kangxi issued a proclamation affirming his identity, and in

1720 sent his son and troops to install the Dalai Lama to power in Lhasa. Mongol uprisings, rebellions, and several coups later, the Dalai Lama gained the support of the clergy and the people.

The main house is a series of rooms crowded with devotees lost in prayer and displays of sacred relics of the Dalai Lama and the 13 other lamas born here. You may have to ask to see his actual birthplace, which is behind a door to the left of the entrance.

To get here, walk along Xinfu Xilu towards Baita Gongyuan. Turn down the lane marked Renkang Gujie, which is on your right, before Chengxihe Lu.

Chode Gompa

BUDDHIST MONASTERY

(Changqingchun Ke'er Si)

At the north end of town, the large Chode Gompa is a Tibetan monastery that was built for the third Dalai Lama. Inside is a statue of Sakyamuni, believed to have been carried from Lhasa by foot. Don't miss climbing onto the roof of the main hall on the far right for great views of the Tibetan homes leading up to the monastery, as well as the grasslands and mountains beyond. Monks climb up here to sound the *dungchen* (long horns).

To get here from the post office, turn left at the end of Tuanjie Lu, then take the first right and keep walking north.

Baita Gongyuan

CHORTEN

()

Circle Baita Gongyuan with the worshippers as they recite mantras and spin the massive prayer wheels, or join the locals just hanging out in the surrounding park. Turn left out of the bus station and just keep walking.

Activities

Hiking opportunities abound north of town and further afield.

You can trace the steps of the two-day *kora* around Zhaga Shenshan, a holy mountain a three-hour hike south of town. You'll need a tent. For help, talk to Mr Zheng at [Tian Tian Restaurant](#). Medok at [Potala Inn](#) can also organise horse trekking (from ¥180).

There are **hot springs** (wenquan admission per person from ¥20) to soak in post-adventure. From Baita Gongyuan, keep hiking west for about 5km until you see a steaming creek. Skip the bathhouses right by the road; the nicer options are just over the hill.

Litang has a secluded **sky burial** (Tian zang) site in the hills behind Chode Gompa. You must have the permission of the monastery to attend, so ask Mr Zheng or your guesthouse to help make the arrangements. If you do attend a sky burial, always remember exactly what you are watching and treat the rites, and all those involved, with the utmost respect.

Festivals & Events

Unfortunately, one of the biggest and most colourful Tibetan festivals, the Litang Horse Festival, which is usually held over several days from 1 August, hasn't happened in recent years. A series of smaller horse races from the end of July through August have been held instead. Check with your guesthouse for details.

Sleeping

Potala Inn

HOSTEL

(Budala Dajjudian  532 2533, English 135 6867 7588; dm/tw ¥25/120, tr without bathroom ¥60;



Medok, a warm, English-speaking Tibetan runs this large backpackers hostel, which has a mixed bag of rooms ranging from basic dorms to Tibetan-style twins with private bathrooms. Some are much nicer than others, so look first. For organising hiking trips, horse trekking, sky burial viewings or anything

else in the area, Medok is the best in town.

There's free internet and wi-fi on the 1st and 2nd floors, and a pleasant cafe and bar. Turn left from the bus station and it's on the right, set back from the main street.

Litang Summer International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Litang de Xiatian Guoji Qingnian Lushe  180 1579 1574; 47 Ping'an Lu; dm ¥35-40, r ¥160, ste ¥260)

This lively youth hostel has the most cheerful rooms in town with colourful, warm bedding and a service demeanour to match. Hike this mountain? Find this unmapped route? Make me breakfast (¥10)? They'll make it happen. Except, there's no English spoken. Turn left out of the bus station, and then left again down Ping'an Lu.

Night of Grassland

GUESTHOUSE

(Caoyuan Zhiye  532 2655, 189 9047 3777; dm from ¥35, r ¥130-200; )

Smart twin rooms with wi-fi and private bathrooms are set around a garden courtyard. The upgrades have nifty oxygen machines for the O2 deprived. It's popular with groups road-tripping in the summer, so call ahead (although little English spoken). Turn left out of the bus station, then left after the Potala Inn turn-off.

Peace Guest House

HOTEL

(Heping Binguan  136 8449 3036; Chenghe Xilu, dm ¥25-30, d without/with bath ¥100/120, tr ¥150;  )

The private rooms, with a choice of wood veneer or colourful Tibetan decor, are clean and a real bargain. The dorms and shared bathrooms are another story. A revamped restaurant was in the works when we visited. Turn right out of the bus station and walk 50m up the hill.

Litang International Youth Guesthouse

HOTEL

(Litang Guoji Qingnian Dajiudian  532 4666, English 135 6867 7588; Chengdong He Lu, dm ¥20-35,

s/d ¥120-130)

Under the same management as Potala Inn, this place has basic twins and doubles with attached bathrooms and offers travel advice and tours. The ¥10 upgrade gets you a sit-down toilet. Take the next right after the Potala Inn turn-off.

Eating

★ Tian Tian Restaurant

CHINESE, WESTERN

(Tiantian Yinshi  135 4146 7941; 108 Xingfu Donglu, mains ¥15-35;  9am-11pm; 

Long-standing travellers' haven run by the ever-friendly, English-speaking ace chef, Mr Zheng. Food is a good mix of Chinese, Tibetan and Western; there's also coffee, delicious *tudou bing* (potato pancakes, ¥20), and expert travel advice. Turn left out of the bus station and it's about 600m along, on the left.

Tibetan Special Dishes

TIBETAN

(Zangrenjia Tecan  182 8367 0582; 18 Xingfu Donglu, mains from ¥20;  8am-10pm; 

For authentic Tibetan food, try this simple place run by a friendly family from Tagong. He doesn't speak English but has an English menu. Turn left out of the bus station. It's about 500m on the left.

Information

China Post

(Zhongguo Youzheng ; Tuanjie Lu;  9-11.30am & 2-5.30pm)

Turn left out of the bus station, then right at the main roundabout crossroads.

Getting There & Away

It's normally easy to bag Kangding or Xinduqiao bus tickets but otherwise,

buses are often full by the time they reach Litang. Minivans (around ¥40 more expensive than buses) loiter outside the bus station to save the day. The quickest way north to Ganzi (¥110; around five hours) is by minivan via Xinlong. No scheduled buses run this route.

Buses go to:

- ➔ **Batang** ¥63, 3½ hours, around 3pm
- ➔ **Daocheng** ¥48, four hours, around 1.30pm
- ➔ **Kangding** ¥87, eight hours, 6.30am
- ➔ **Xiangcheng** ¥66, five hours, two daily (around 1.30pm and 3pm)
- ➔ **Xinduqiao** ¥63, six hours, 6.30am

YADING NATURE RESERVE

Yading Nature Reserve

NATURE RESERVE

(Yading Fengjingqu 📍572 2666; admission incl shuttle bus ¥270; 🕒7.30am-6.30pm)

The magnificent Yading Nature Reserve, 140km south of Daocheng, centres around three sacred snow-capped mountains, a holy trinity encircled by forested valleys, crystal clear rivers and glacier-fed lakes. These are, quite simply, some of the most stunning landscapes you'll ever see. There are opportunities to hike, ride and camp here.

Locals have worshipped these mountains for more than 800 years. The three peaks – Chenresig (compassion), Chana Dorje (power) and Jampelyang (wisdom) – represent bodhisattvas in Tibetan Buddhism. Even for non-believers, walking the 35km kora (holy hike,) around the highest peak, Chenresig (Xiannairi), which tops out at 6032m, can be a hugely meaningful experience.

The clockwise circuit around Chenresig begins at **Longtong Ba** and takes at least 12 hours of serious hiking. To avoid one very long day, many use the campsites located about two-thirds round, near **Tianping Cheng**. You have to bring all your own gear and supplies. (Though you'll pass locals living in simple stone huts, under park rules they are not supposed to take you in.) Remember to keep the mountain on your right, and to always take the right-hand turn when there's a choice of paths. There is a longer, four-day, 110km hike that adds a circuit around 5958m **Chana Dorje** (Xialang Duoji), which begins and ends at the same place as the kora.

These hiking trails are all around 4000m above sea level, so acclimatise properly and pack for a serious expedition before you set off. Guides are available for hire at

Longtong Ba.

If you don't have the time (or energy) for a full circuit, there are buses and electric carts to shorter hikes. Take the shuttle bus from the ticket office into the park, to the small settlement of **Longtong Ba**. From here hike 3km to the 800-year-old **Chonggu Monastery** (t, Chonggu Si), where you can pick up **electric carts** (one-way/return ¥50/80; 6km, 20 minutes) into the **Luorong Grassland** (Luorong Niuchang), which offers incredible views of the trinity and is as far as most tourists go.

It's worth continuing another 5km (three hours) to **Milk Lake** (Niunai Hai) and stunning **Five-Colour Lake** (Wuse Hai). You can also ride guided mules (one-way/return ¥200/¥300) for this segment, but keep in mind, even on four legs, the roundtrip journey takes 5½ hours on a steep, rocky trail. Riders must dismount multiple times to scramble alongside their ride for about a kilometre.

There are guesthouses and places to eat in **Yading village** and Longtong Ba. To get an early start on the kora, try **Drolma's Youth Hostel** (Zhuomu Minju Qingnian Lushe ☎133 3079 0284, 572 1069; Yading village; tent ¥30, dm ¥40-50, r ¥120; 📶) in Yading village, which has a friendly backpacker vibe and the most pleasant rooms around. From the shuttle bus stop, take a few steps back up the hill and then follow the small road to the last Tibetan house on the right.

The best times to visit the reserve are May to June and September to early October.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Take a shared minibus (per person ¥50, 2½ hours) from Daocheng to the small town of Riwa, where you buy tickets for the reserve. The ticket includes a mandatory ¥120 shuttle-bus fee, so take the park shuttle bus the last 32km into the park; it stops first in Yading village and then 3km later at Longtong Ba.

To get back to Daocheng, catch the shuttle back to Riwa, and then a minibus (¥50, 10am, 2pm and 5pm) back to Daocheng.

Daocheng

☎0836 / Pop 32,300

Although the small town centre is modernised these days, Daocheng (Dabpa; 3750m) still packs bags of rural charm and makes a lovely base for exploring magnificent [Yading Nature Reserve](#). After Yading, you can fill another couple of days here, walking or cycling around boulder-strewn wetlands, hills, and barley fields, which are scattered with Tibetan monasteries. Fall is

particularly beautiful, when a blaze of red leaves and grass electrifies the landscape.

Sleeping

Given the size of this town, there is a surprising number of decent options. Dexi Jie, a quiet lane just to the left of the bus station, has a number of good choices.

Drolma's Guesthouse

HOSTEL

( 136 8449 1026; zhuomarenjia@163.com; 50 Dexi Jie; dm ¥30-40, r without/with bath ¥80/120; )

The best place to stay in town is this Tibetan-style house tucked behind a big gate on Dexi Jie. The English-speaking manager runs a neat, comfortable ship and can advise on hiking routes in Yading and beyond. There's coffee, laundry (¥10), bike rental (¥20), and organised trips to nearby Rubuzhaka hot springs (¥40).

Yading Backpackers Hostel

HOSTEL

(Yading Ren Shequ Guoji Qingnian Lushe  136 1813 7066; www.yading.net; 58 Dexi Jie; dm ¥40-50, tw ¥180; @ )

Small rooms are set around the courtyard of a pretty Tibetan blockhouse (first right off Dexi Jie).

De Ji Zang Jia Kezhan

GUESTHOUSE

( 135 4715 2157, 773 5781; 6 Dexi Jie; dm ¥20-40, tw ¥180; @ )

The dorm beds in this Tibetan blockhouse are the cheapest in town at ¥20. Wi-fi is only in the common areas.

Peng Song Cuo

HOTEL

( 572 8581; Xingfu Lu, dm ¥30-40, r ¥120-160; )

The rooms in this new Tibetan-style house by the river are either standard hotel rooms with private, modern bathrooms, or rustic wood cabins. All have wi-fi. Turn left out of the bus station, walk past Dexi Jie and the police station, then turn left onto Xingfu Lu.

Eating

The town is small enough to wander into something tasty. **E Chu Jie** (make two right turns out of the bus station), is a walking street with dependable noodle (¥10 to ¥12) and barbecue (¥1.50 to ¥4 per stick) establishments. Street vendors set up along the main drags of Gongga Jie and Gongba Lu.

Getting There & Away

Two buses leave daily at 6am. One goes to Chengdu (¥239, 20 hours), via Litang (¥60, three hours) and Kangding (¥135, 10 hours); the other goes southwest to Shangri-la (Zhongdian; ¥114, 10 hours) in Yunnan province, via Xiangcheng (three hours). You can buy tickets from 2pm the day before, although you cannot buy tickets to Litang or Xiangcheng until the morning the bus leaves. Minibuses (per person ¥80) are more common for these two destinations.

Minibuses are the only option for Yading Nature Reserve (¥50, three hours).

The new Daocheng-Yading Airport, 43km north, has daily flights to Chengdu (¥1180, one hour, 8.55am) and thrice-weekly flights to Chongqing (¥1550, 8.50am Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday). Airport shuttle buses (¥30, 50 minutes, 6am and 6.15am) leave from Gongga Lu. Turn left out of the bus station and keep walking for about 1km. Shuttles wait by the tall, new building on the right.

Xiangcheng

 0836

The little valley town of Xiangcheng (Chaktreng; 3180m) is a good spot to break your journey into or out of Yunnan province. It benefits from a microclimate that keeps temperatures here slightly warmer than everywhere else around it, making it a particularly comfortable stop.

The ornate **Sampeling monastery** (Sangpiling Si admission ¥15) at the top end of town commands fine views of the surroundings. There are also quiet lanes of beautiful, high-walled Tibetan houses off the main road. Turn left out of the bus station, then take a right at the Delei Hotel down Nainai Zhong Jie.

Lamu Binguan (📞158 8405 2619; r without/with bath ¥60/100) has a few very basic rooms, some with great views, in a white Tibetan-style house down the hill, across from the bus station. **Seven Lake Hotel** (Qihu Binguan 📞582 5059; 114 Xiangbala Nanlu, r without/with bathroom ¥50/80, tr ¥120; 📶), past the bus station on the left, has four storeys of simple rooms with wi-fi.

Further up the main street, on the left before the town square, a northern couple cooks up their hometown style of dumplings (*shuijiao*; ¥15 per half *jin*) at **Heilongjiang Dongbei Jiaozi** (📞182 8362 6582; 9 Sangpi Jie, dishes from ¥10; 🕒8.30am-9pm). A half *jin* (*ban jin*) is plenty for one. So is a killer bowl of *banmian* (mince-meat dry noodles; ¥10 to ¥12).

i Getting There & Away

Two buses leave daily at 6am. One goes south to Shangri-la (Zhongdian; ¥87, eight hours); the other goes to Kangding (¥154, 12 hours). Note tickets to Litang are not sold on the Kangding-bound bus, even though it's en route; take a shared minivan instead (¥80, 4½ hours).

There are also buses to Daocheng (¥50, three hours, 6am and 3.30pm). A shared minivan to Daocheng is around ¥80.

NORTHERN SICHUAN

Hiking, or even camping, in the stunning Jiuzhaigou National Park or heading out on horseback around Songpan are how most travellers

experience the carpets of alpine forest, swaths of grasslands, icy lakes and snow-topped mountains of northern Sichuan. You can also travel north from here into Gansu, Shaanxi or even Qinghai, or loop around towards western Sichuan via Danba.

Note that banks in this region cannot change foreign currency.

Songpan

☞ 0837 / Pop 71,650

Horse trekking into the woods and mountains is the main attraction of this laid-back, historic town, a holdover from its role as a major trading centre on the Tea Horse Road. The hiking is also good, so there's a healthy backpacker population to swap travel tales with.

In midwinter (December to March) Songpan slows down, and some businesses close; however, even in the cold, horse trekking is still possible.

Sōngpān

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles



Songpan

Sights

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 1 Covered Bridge | B5 |
| 2 Covered Bridge | A5 |
| 3 East Gate | C4 |
| 4 Guanyin Ge | A5 |
| 5 North Gate | B2 |
| 6 South Gate | B6 |
| 7 West Gate | A2 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | |
|---|----|
| 8 Qiqile Madui | A6 |
| 9 Shunjiang Horse Treks | C1 |

Sleeping

| | |
|--|----|
| 10 Amdo Coffee House Inn | B3 |
| 11 Emma's Guesthouse | C1 |
| 12 Old House Hotel | C1 |
| 13 Shunjiang Guesthouse | C1 |

Eating

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 14 Emma's Kitchen | C1 |
| 15 Lao Wu Caiyuan | A6 |
| 16 Ru Zai Niu Dian | B4 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| 17 Teahouses | A5 |
|------------------------------|----|

Sights

Old Town

(Guzhe)

HISTORIC SITE

Songpan's old town is full of cranes and jackhammers, part of a major initiative to add more top-end guesthouses and eateries. Parts of the city and rebuilt city wall may be less than a decade old, but its borders are still marked by ancient gates.

The gates are original Ming-dynasty structures going back some 600 years. Note the horse carvings at the foot of the two **south gates** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), half swallowed by the ever-rising road. The only original part of the old wall is by the rebuilt **West Gate** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), which overlooks the town from its hillside perch.

Two wooden covered bridges – **Gusong Qiao** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) and **Yingyue Qiao** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) – the bases of which are very old, span the Min River. On the western side of the river is **Guanyin Ge** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), a small temple near the start of a hillside trail that offers good views over Songpan.

Activities

One of the most popular ways to experience the alpine forests and lakes surrounding Songpan is by signing on for a horse trek. Many people rate this experience as a highlight of their travels in this region. Guides lead you through otherwise unseen territory to remote campsites aboard not-so-big, very tame horses. Food and gear are all provided.

One of the most popular routes is a three- or four-day trek through unspoilt scenery to **Ice Mountain** (Xuebaoding), a spectacular peak. A three-day trek to **Qicang Valley** (Qicang Gou), recently opened to camping, passes several technicolor lakes.

The nearby hills are wonderfully good for **hiking**. One option is to hike around one hour up to the only remaining part of the original town wall, by the West Gate. There are three paths up: one starts beside the stream north of **North Gate** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); another leads up the hill from the west end of Gulou Jie; while a third is accessed via Guanyin Ge. Another option is

to hike for about two hours to **Shangniba Monastery** (Shangniba Simiao) in the eastern hills.

Shunjiang Horse Treks

HORSE RIDING

(Shunjiang Luyou Madui [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎153 0904 6777, 723 1064; Shunjiang Beilu, per person per day ¥220-320)

The most established union of guides in town has been leading tourists, foreign and domestic, on horse treks for years. You can tailor trips from one- to five-days. Expect limited English-language skills.

Rates are all-inclusive of gear, horses and two meals. Your guides take care of setting up tents and cooking, unless you want to. The only additional charges are park entry fees for some of the trips (you are told of these before you set out), and tips, should you be inclined.

The majority of travellers seem happy with their services, but we do sometimes receive reports of guides careless about environmental impact. Also, some travellers have had trouble getting refunds, particularly when the weather turned bad, which it often does. If you don't speak Chinese or Tibetan, we recommend booking through local and Chengdu hostels, which will help you negotiate details, such as the terms for a refund.

Qiqile Madui

HORSE RIDING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎723 4138, 135 6879 2936; per day per person ¥220)

If you speak Chinese, you may want to inquire at this well-run outfitter, although as of this writing, they were technically not licensed to accept foreign tourists. (Officially, this means trips run the risk of being cancelled.) They cover the usual ground as well as run further afield to northerly Ruo'ergai (eight days), and southward Hong Yuan (10 days).

Sleeping

Old House Hotel

GUESTHOUSE

(Guyun Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 723 1368; dongshan.6666@sina.com; Shunjiang Beilu, dm/s/tw/tr ¥35/120/150/180; @📶)

Right by the bus station, a can-do mum-and-son duo run this hotel like a hostel. Son Daniel speaks English and can advise on horse-trekking and camping. There's 24-hour hot water, wi-fi and solid travel advice. Rooms are small but clean, positioned off an interior courtyard in an old-style, three-storey wooden building. Rates go up ¥50 to ¥80 during certain summer holidays.

Emma's Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Xiaoqu Ouzhou Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 131 0837 2888; emmachina@hotmail.com; Shun Village, dm ¥40-60, r ¥120-180, ste ¥200-300; ❄️📶)

Knowledgeable Emma runs this warm guesthouse, which is next to her family's wood-framed house down a quiet side street. The rooms are bright and clean with private bathrooms, and heaters and electric blankets for the cold months. Check in at [Emma's Kitchen](#).

Amdo Coffee House Inn

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 139 9041 7006, English 135 1596 0964; Beijie, North Gate; s/d with shared bath from ¥248; 🚫📶)

In this stylish wooden structure inside the old town's north gate, management is still working out the kinks. Hot water is elusive and staff speak little English, but at least there's airport pickup (¥120). Some rooms are small, so head downstairs to the wired cafe for real coffee (¥18) and a big window, perfect for people watching. Rates drop to ¥198 off season.

Shunjiang Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Shunjiang Zizhu Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 723 1064, 139 0904 3501; Shunjiang Beilu, dm ¥30-40, r ¥120; 📶)

The owners of Shunjiang Horse Treks run this simple guesthouse with decent rooms around an open courtyard. It can be freezing here in cold weather, but

bathrooms have heaters and 24-hour hot water, and beds come with electric blankets. Rates double in July and August.

Eating

For affordable, delicious eats, follow Songpan's sizeable Hui population's lead as they get their fix in Old Town around **Xiashuiguan Muslim Street**. You'll find restaurants (dishes ¥12 to ¥15; 8am to 9.30pm) with the occasional English menu. Typical offerings include *Lanzhou lamian* (Lanzhou pulled noodles), *gan banmian* (minced-meat dry noodles), *daoxiao mian* (knife-sliced noodles) and *yangza tang* (sheep innards soup).

Song in the Mountain

CHINESE, WESTERN

(Shanlizi Zhige Chuan Caiguan  189 0904 3640; mains from ¥10;  7.30am-11.30pm;  )

Run by the helpful Sarah Yang, this place serves a variety of simple Western and Chinese dishes at reasonable prices.

★ Emma's Kitchen

CAFE, PIZZA

(Xiao Ouzhou Xi Kafei Canting  ;  131 0837 2888, 723 1088; emmachina@hotmail.com; Shunjiang Beilu; mains ¥18-58;  8am-midnight;  )

Songpan's main travellers' hang-out is this laid-back cafe with wi-fi and fresh coffee (from ¥16), pizza and other Western fare, along with a number of Chinese dishes. Emma is exceedingly knowledgeable and can sort out almost anything from laundry to tickets to picnic lunches for your horse trek. She also has leads on mountain-biking tours (from ¥220).

This is where you check-in for [Emma's Guesthouse](#).

Ru Zai Niu Dian

HOTPOT

( ;  725 3555; Daxibei Ming Snack St, pot from ¥88, fixings from ¥6-30)

A soothing meal after a long trek into the grasslands. Start with a pot of the house speciality, a unique, non-spicy tomato-based soup, and then add your

choice of fixings: thinly sliced beef (*xian niurou*), chicken wings (*jichi*), cabbage (*da baicai*), winter melon (*donggua*) and bamboo shoots (*zhu sun*) are all possibilities. It's in Old Town near the **east gate** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)).

Drinking

Along the Min River (Min Jiang), on the southern edge of town, are several small **teahouses** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) (tea from ¥5; open 8am to 6pm) where you can while away the afternoon with the locals.

Lao Wu Caiyuan

TEAHOUSE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); tea from ¥5, dishes from ¥8; 🕒 8am-11pm)

Through an unassuming archway near the east end of Ying Yue Qiao is this buzzing courtyard teahouse, a local favourite. The house special, spicy *liangfen* (¥8), made of mung bean and potato starch, won the prize for being the best in the region.

Information

It is not possible to change foreign currency in Songpan.

Agricultural Bank of China

BANK

(Nongye Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shunjiang Beilu)

Foreign-card-friendly ATM.

Public Security Bureau

VISAS

(PSB,, Gong'anju 📞 723 3778; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 3-6pm)

Take a ¥10 taxi from Old Town to get here in the new district. Can usually renew visas in one day.

Getting There & Around

AIR

There's no public transport between Songpan and the Jiuhuang Airport. A taxi should be around ¥100 (¥150 at night).

BUS

Buses leaving **Songpan bus station** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (*keyunzhan*) include:

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥124, 7½ hours, three daily (6am, 6.30am and 7am)
- ➔ **Dujiangyan** ¥107, 6½ hours, 7.20am
- ➔ **Huanglong National Park** ¥32, two hours, three daily (6am, 7am and 1.50pm)
- ➔ **Jiuzhaigou** ¥46, 2½ hours, two daily (9am and 1pm)
- ➔ **Zoige** ¥51, three hours, two daily (10am and 2.30pm)

PEDICAB

Pedallers wait on the west end of Gulou Jie to give rides generally starting at ¥5.

THE ROAD TO GANSU

Those heading north into Gansu province will need to bus-hop their way from Songpan. First stop is **Zoige** (Ruo'ergai), a small, remote Tibetan town, with a distinct frontier feel. The grasslands here burst into life with wildflowers in late summer, and it's possible to arrange horse treks, although facilities are more rustic than those in Songpan, and English-language skills are rare.

Shuguang Binguan (☎083 7229 2988; Shuguang Jie; r without/with bathroom ¥120/160) is known for its decent rooms, some with private bathrooms. Turn left out of the bus station and walk 100m. There are plenty of eating options on Shuguang Jie.

Zoige buses go to Songpan (¥51, three hours, 10am and 2.30pm) and Langmusi (¥20, two hours, 2.30pm), an enchanting monastery town straddling the Sichuan–Gansu border. From Langmusi you can catch onward transport towards Lanzhou. Buses can be sporadic, especially when snow renders roads impassable. Zoige is at 3500m and temperatures can plummet suddenly.

WORTH A TRIP

HUANGLONG NATIONAL PARK

Huanglong National Park

PARK

(Huanglong Jingqu 📞083 7724 9166; www.huanglong.com; adult/students & seniors ¥200/110, cable car ¥80; 🕒admission 8am-5pm)

A trip to Huanglong National Park is essentially a five-hour, moderate hike up and down one small valley. The valley, however, is stunning, with exquisite terraces of coloured limestone ponds in blues, greens, oranges, yellows and white. The best time to come is May to October, ideally during mild July and August. At this elevation (3600m), always bring a jacket.

With smaller crowds than Jiuzhaigou, Huanglong is certainly worth the trip. To see the whole park, walk 800m to the cable car (8am to 5.30pm), which drops you in a deep forest. The path leads you up a few kilometres to the start of the main sights, and then down again to the entrance, some 8km of long ascents and descents in all.

By the park entrance is a visitor centre with restaurant, teahouse and luggage check. Pack a picnic as bottled water costs ¥10 in the park. There are also a few expensive tour-group hotels nearby, but most people day trip it from Songpan or Jiuzhaigou.

To get here, two daily buses depart Jiuzhaigou (¥48, three hours, 7am and 7.30am); travellers arriving on morning flights can take an airport shuttle (¥100, 1½ hours) directly to Huanglong, where you'll wait for four hours before departing for Jiuzhaigou. There's also one return bus to Jiuzhaigou (¥45, 3pm) and a minibus (¥120, departs when full) by the visitors centre. To get to Songpan, take the Jiuzhaigou bus and ask the driver to drop you at Chuanzhu Si (one hour), where you can catch a shared taxi to Songpan (¥60).

Jiuzhaigou National Park

📞0837 / Pop 62,000

Jiuzhaigou National Park (Jiuzhaigou Fengjing Mingshengqu; 📞773 9753;

www.jiuzhai.com; admission incl bus adult/concession May 1–Nov 15 ¥310/200, Nov 16–Apr 31

¥170/130; 🕒7am-7pm May–mid-Nov, 8am-6pm mid-Nov–Apr, last tickets 3hr before closing), an

enchanting Unesco World Heritage Site, is one of Sichuan's star attractions.

More than two million people visit annually to gawk at its famous bluer-than-

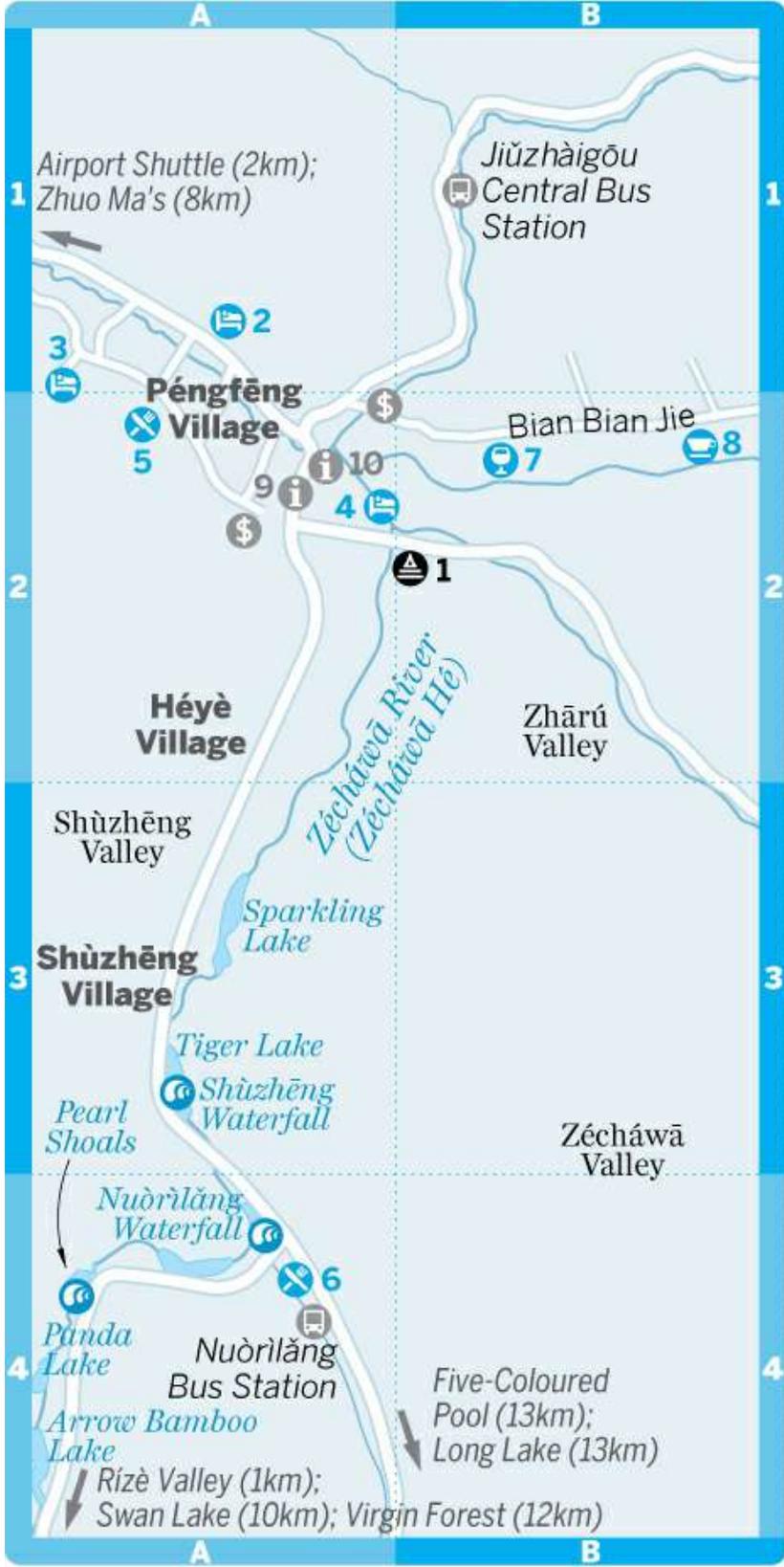
blue lakes, rushing waterfalls and deep woodlands backlit by snowy mountain ranges. The park's major sites are easily accessed on foot, via kilometres of well-maintained boardwalk trails, or by bus. There are even opportunities to [camp](#).

The best time to visit is September through to November, when you're most likely to have clear skies and (particularly in October) blazing autumn colours to contrast with the turquoise lakes. Summer is the busiest, and also rainiest, time. Spring can be cold but still pleasant, and winter, if you're prepared for frigid temperatures, brings dramatically frosted trees and frozen-in-place waterfalls.

Jiuzhaigou means 'Nine Village Valley' and refers to the nine Tibetan villages scattered in the parklands. According to Tibetan legend, Jiuzhaigou was created when a jealous devil caused the goddess Wunosemo to drop her magic mirror, a present from her lover the warlord god, Dage. The mirror dropped to the ground and shattered into 114 shimmering turquoise lakes.

Seniors (70 and over) and kids get in free, but are required to purchase ¥10 visitor insurance. A ¥90 hop-on, hop-off bus fee is automatically included in admission for all visitors.

Jiǔzhàigōu



Jiuzhaigou

Sights

1 [Zharu Temple \(Zaru Gompa\)](#) B2

Sleeping

2 [Angelie Hotel](#) A1

3 [Jiuzhai Renjia Youth Hostel](#) A1

4 [Jiuzhaigou Grand Hotel](#) A2

Eating

5 [Abu Luzi](#) A2

6 [Nuorilang Junction Eateries](#) A4

Drinking & Nightlife

7 [A Mi Luo Luo](#) B2

8 [Star Cafe](#) B2

Information

9 [Park Entrance](#) A2

10 [Visitors Centre & Tickets](#) A2

Sights

There are a number of lakes and waterfalls in the area worth visiting. The main road follows Zechawa River (Zechawa He) up Shuzheng Valley, as it runs past Heye Village (Heye Cun) to Sparkling Lake (Huohua Hai), the first in a series of lakes filled by the Shuzheng Waterfall (Shuzheng Pubu).

A walking trail begins north of Sparkling Lake and runs along the eastern edge of the river up to Nuorilang Waterfall (Nuorilang Pubu). Here, the road branches in two, with the eastern road leading to Long Lake (Chang Hai) and Five-Coloured Pool (Wucui Chi); and the western road leading to Swan Lake

(Tian'e Hai).

The western route has a greater concentration of attractions, most of which are accessible from the quiet forest trail leading from Mirror Lake (*Jinghai*) to Panda Lake (Xiongmao Hai). Views from this trail are particularly fantastic, especially those of the waterfall known as Pearl Shoals (Zhenzhutan Pubu).

The eastern route is almost better done by bus as the narrow road sees a great deal of traffic and there are fewer 'sights'. Nevertheless, the two lakes at the far end, Long Lake and Five-Coloured Pool, are well worth a visit.

It's about 14km from the park entrance to Nuorilang Waterfall; a further 17.5km along the western road to Swan Lake; then another couple of kilometres on to the Virgin Forest, which is as far as the road goes. On the eastern route, it's about 18km from Nuorilang Waterfall to Long Lake.

Zharu Temple (Zaru Gompa)

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Zharu Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

The first official sight inside the park proper is the Tibetan Zharu Temple in the Zharu Valley. The park bus doesn't stop here, but it's only a short walk from the ticket office; turn left at the first fork off the main road.

Activities

As part of the park's **ecotourism program** (Jiuzhai Zharu Gou Zhengtai Luyou

 773 7070; zharu.jiuzhai.com; Heye Guesthouse, 2nd fl, 1-/2-/3-day from ¥560/1320/1960)

visitors can now hike and even camp inside the Zharu Valley, just east of the main tourist valley. Prices include English-speaking guides, all camping equipment and main meals (although you may want to bring along some fruit and snacks), but exclude the park entrance fee. The multiday hikes include time to visit the main park without a guide after your hike. To have access to such unspoiled and hallowed land is an extremely rare opportunity in China and numbers are strictly limited, so it's highly advisable to email or phone ahead, especially if you want to camp. The program office is on the 2nd floor

of the Jiuzhaigou Administration Heye Guesthouse, the white hotel to the right of the park entrance.

There are other great **hiking** opportunities all over this area, although not in the national park itself. One option is to hike around the hills near [Zhuo Ma's homestay](#); Zhuo Ma can advise you on good routes. She also arranges short **horse treks** (two hours, ¥180) from the village, and helps run two- to three-hour **Tibetan cookery classes** (per person including a meal ¥150) at [Abu Luzi restaurant](#).

HOW TO 'DO' JIUZHAIGOU

- **Start early** Get to the park entrance just a few minutes after opening. The early jam will have cleared up, and you'll still avoid the crush of late-rising tour groups.
- **Go up first** Since the most spectacular scenery is in the park's upper reaches, you'll see the highlights first if you take the bus to the top, then walk or ride down. Head first to either Long Lake or Grass Lake, work your way down to the Nuorilang junction, then go up the other fork. Later in the day you can see the lakes between Nuorilang and the entrance.
- **Get off the bus** Trails run throughout the park; by walking, you'll steer clear of the biggest crowds. The walking trails are generally on the opposite side of the lakes from the road, so you'll have more peace and quiet, too. If you have just a day, though, buses are required to see both routes.
- **Pack a lunch** Dining options inside the park are limited and expensive. If you bring your own food, you can picnic away from the hordes.
- **Take it easy** Site elevations veer from 2140m to 3060m, which is tough if you're not acclimated.

Sleeping

There's an almost endless supply of hotels around Pengfeng Village (Pengfeng Cun), the area near the park entrance, so don't worry if the place you had your heart set on is full.

(Zhuoma  135 6878 3012; www.zhuomajiuzaigou.hostel.com; per person ¥200)

A genuine Tibetan homestay, this pretty wood cabin in a tiny village about 10km up the valley from the main park has six simple rooms and a wonderfully accommodating family. There's a common bathroom with shower, and prices include three meals and pick-up from the bus station (otherwise it's around ¥60 in a taxi).

The lovely Zhuo Ma speaks some English and is usually on hand to welcome foreign guests. Her mother (*amma*) is the host and cooks the meals. If you're coming from Songpan you could ask the driver to drop you on the main road at Shang Si Village (Shang Si Zhai). Zhuo Ma's is about a 15-minute walk uphill from there. Any problems, just call Zhuo Ma.

Angelie Hotel

HOSTEL

(Sanxi Binguan  ; dm from ¥35, r from ¥200, discounted to ¥100)

More hostel than hotel, the friendly, English-speaking staff here organise Huanglong tours (¥120), cook up Eastern and Western food, and book tickets — all the usual hostel stuff in a hotel-ish setting. Dorms are stand-alone rooms on top of the roof, which offers incredible views of the mountains. From the park entrance, cross the street, turn left and walk about 400m.

Jiuzhai Renjia Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Jiuzhai Renjia Qingnian Lushe  ;  777 4455, some English 189 0904 4443; www.jzrjhostel.com; Pengfeng Village; dm ¥40, s from ¥190, discounted to ¥80; )

There are five or so run-of-the-mill youth hostels within 100m of each other in Pengfeng Village. This one is furthest from the park entrance (a 15-minute walk), but has a good vibe with friendly staff. Call ahead for a ride from the bus station.

Jiuzhaigou Grand Hotel

HOTEL

(Jiuzhaigou Guibinlou Fandian  ;  773 9066, 773 5555; r incl breakfast from ¥696, discounted to ¥460)

You can't beat the location, just beside the park entrance gate. The rooms themselves are fairly midrange, but they're large and many have views of either the mountains or the stream that runs alongside the hotel.

Eating & Drinking

Pengfeng Village is crammed with Sichuanese restaurants. If you're willing to catch a cab, there's a strip of small places with a bit more atmosphere (and drink options) along the pleasant riverside, Bianbian Jie.

Inside the park you can buy pricey snacks and drinks. There is also a restaurant (also pricey) at the **Nuorilang junction** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)). Some hostels can pack a lunch for you.

★ Abu Luzi

TIBETAN

(Abu Luzi Fengqing Zanganba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 135 6878 3012; www.abuluzi.com; Pengfeng Village; dishes from ¥39; 🕒 11am-11pm; 🍴)

The nicest Tibetan restaurant in Jiuzhaigou, this excellent establishment is run by the same family behind Zhuo Ma's homestay (Zhuo Ma's brother, Ke Zhu, is a trained chef). There's an extensive menu of delicious Tibetan dishes, and some Western ones as well.

They also run Tibetan cookery classes (per person ¥150).

Star Cafe

CAFE

(Taibai Lou Xican Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 773 9839; 23 Bianbian Jie, mains ¥20-48; 🕒 11.30am-midnight; 📶)

A chill hang-out, Star Cafe has a decent selection of fresh coffee (from ¥25), beer (from ¥15) and wine, plus a range of international dishes from the most common tourist nationalities. There's free wi-fi and patio seating by the river.

A Mi Luo Luo

BAR

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 187 8375 7666; 11 Bian Bian Jie; beer from ¥30, dishes from ¥40;

 9.30pm-midnight)

This dimly-lit bar by the river has an international selection of brews to wash down Tibetan bites and Western bar snacks.

Information

An **ATM** (Zidong Guiyuan Ji) at the park entrance accepts foreign cards, as does the **China Construction Bank** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (near the bus station) and **Agricultural Bank of China** ([GOOGLE MAP](#)) (in Pengfeng Village), where you can also change cash.

The park has an informative multi-language website at www.jiuzhai.com. The **visitors centre** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) by the **park entrance** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is less helpful.

Getting There & Around

AIR

More than a dozen daily flights link Chengdu with Jiuzhaigou Airport (officially, Jiuhuang Airport), which is located in Chuanzhu Si, a small town closer to Songpan than Jiuzhaigou. Direct flights include Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Chongqing, Kunming and Xi'an.

Shuttle buses to Jiuzhaigou (¥50, 1½ hours) meet arriving flights and drop off at Menghuan Jiuzhai parking lot (Menghuan Jiuzhai tingche chang), 4km west of the park entrance. A taxi from there costs about ¥10.

A taxi all the way from the airport is pricey during peak season – about ¥300 (over ¥500 after 11pm). Many hotels and hostels offer pick-up services for about the same price.

BUS

Jiuzhaigou central bus station (gou kou zhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is just 2km east of the park entrance. Some buses arrive at Jiuzhaigou Xian's station, 40km away. A taxi from Jiuzhaigou Xian to Pengfeng Village costs ¥40 to ¥100, depending on season and time of day.

Selected buses departing Jiuzhaigou central bus station:

- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥149, 10 hours, four daily (6am, 7am, 8am and 10am)
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥230, 12 hours, 7.30am
- ➔ **Guangyuan** ¥93, eight hours, 6.30am
- ➔ **Huanglong National Park** ¥48, three hours, two daily (7am and 7.30am)
- ➔ **Songpan** ¥38, two hours, 7.30am

Note, you can travel to western Sichuan, via Danba, without having to go via Chengdu.

TAXI

Taxis ply the streets and don't use meters. Generally, rides within Pengfeng Village and to the central bus station cost ¥10.

Langzhong

 0817 / Pop 242,535

An endless sea of black-tile roofs with waves of swooping eaves, flagstone streets lined with tiny shops, and temples atop hills of mist overlooking the river. It's all here in the town of Langzhong, Sichuan's capital city during the Qing dynasty and now home to the province's largest grouping of extant traditional architecture.

Sights

Old Town

HISTORIC SITE

(Guzhen)

Base yourself in old town Langzhong, the main attraction. Most will be happy enough not buying a ticket, instead wandering the alleys and studying the architecture, which is a blend of northern *tailiang* (pillars and beams) and southern *chuandou* (through joint) styles that allow for a variety of dramatic

roof shapes.

Don't miss **Zhang Fei Temple** (Zhangfei Miao Xi Jie, admission ¥50), the tomb of local boy Zhang Fei, a legendary general during the kingdom of Shu, who administered the kingdom from here. The **Feng Shui Museum** (Fengshui Guan Dadong Jie, admission ¥30) includes a model of the town, illustrating its feng shui-guided design. A helpful English-speaking guide is sometimes available here. **Gong Yuan** (Xuedao Jie, admission ¥45) is among the best-preserved imperial examination halls in China.

For bird's-eye views of the town's rooftops and lanes, climb to the top of one of the three towers: **Huanguang Lou** (21 Dadong Jie; admission ¥15), just past the Feng Shui Museum and rebuilt in 1867; **Zhongtian Lou** (Wumiao Jie; admission ¥15), a 2006 rebuild on the way to Zhang Fei Temple; or **South Gate** (Nanmen Lou), a 2010 rebuild on Nan Jie, a street running parallel to Dadong Jie.

At any of the sights, you can buy a **combination ticket** (¥130, including shuttle to Jinping Hill), which admits you to all of the above attractions as well as to a pagoda on Jinping Hill. Sights are open from 8am to 6pm.

Grand Buddha Temple

HISTORIC SITE

(Dafo Si ¥10)

There's also some good exploring to be done across the river, south of the old town. At the foot of one hill, and among other Buddhist statuary and caves, sits the sedate-looking Grand Buddha. From the old town, walk down to the river, turn left and keep going past the second road bridge. Then cross the river on a small passenger boat (¥3).

Sleeping

There are dozens of renovated courtyard guesthouses in Old Town. Look for signs saying (*kezhan*; guesthouse) or (*zhusu*; lodgings).

★ Tianyi Youth Hotel

GUESTHOUSE

(Tianyi Qingnian Lushe 📍622 5501; 100 Dadong Jie, r without bathroom ¥98-138, with bathroom ¥168-238; 🌿 @ 📶)

If you want to improve your geomancy, settle into this beautiful courtyard inn beside the Feng Shui Museum. The nice twin rooms are each inspired by a particular feng-shui element: earth, wood, fire, metal or water. The shared-bathroom twins and doubles are more simple, but are crisp and clean with lots of natural wood. Some have simple bedrolls (*ruzi*).

Ancient Hotel

HOTEL

(Dujia Kezhan 📍622 4436; 63 Xiaxin Jie, r from ¥480, discounted to ¥198; 🌿 @)

The nicest rooms in this large wooden building with multiple courtyards are set around a back courtyard with an open-air stage (performances Friday and Saturday, 8pm to 10pm), and go for ¥295. Turn right off Dadong Jie just before the Huaguang Lou tower.

Lee's Courtyard

HOTEL

(Lijia Dayuan 📍623 6500; 47 Wumiao Jie, r from ¥688, discounted to ¥410; 🌿 📶)

This is the most upscale option in Old Town, with lux bedding, fully equipped bathrooms and private balconies. After recent renovations, this ancient courtyard hotel, built in 1506, sparkles like a five-star hotel and is priced to match.

Eating

Popular local fare includes *zhangfei niurou* (preserved water-buffalo beef; from ¥25 per packet), which makes a great roadtrip snack. Eateries abound throughout Old Town.

Zheng Ziwei

NOODLES

(6 Shanghua Jie, noodles ¥8-12; 🕒 8am-10pm, to 8pm winter)

This small, friendly noodle joint is run by Grace, an English teacher and zither (*zheng*) player, and her cook husband. No English menu, but Grace can help. If she's teaching or performing when you visit, just go for *niurou mian* (beef noodles), with either *hong tang* (spicy soup) or *zhangfei* (, more of a stew).

Shanghai Jie is a continuation of Dadong Jie; this place is just up from the Huaguang Lou tower.

Entertainment

North Sichuan Shadow Puppetry

THEATRE

(Chuanbei Piyong  623 8668; 67 Wumiao Jie, tickets ¥20;  10am-9.30pm)

A fifth-generation family of puppeteers put on fun, informal 20-minute performances of north Sichuan shadow puppetry in a tiny, open-air courtyard. Shows are performed for audiences of two or more. It's a couple of doors from Lee's Courtyard.

Information

You can pick up **street maps** (ditu; ¥5) at some shops in the Old Town or at some tourist sights. Multilingual signs and maps are posted throughout the Old Town streets.

Bank of China ATM

BANK

(cnr Dadong Jie & Neidong Jie)

At the top end of Dadong Jie; accepts foreign cards.

Getting There & Away

Buses from Chengdu's Beimen bus station arrive at Langzhong's main bus station (keyun zhongxin qichezhan), which also serves Chongqing (¥107, five hours, hourly from 7am to 3pm). Buses returning to Chengdu (¥98, four

hours) leave frequently between 6.40am and 5.30pm.

Langzhong also has a smaller bus station, Bashijiu Dui (89), which serves Guangyuan (¥60, three hours, 8am, 9am, 10am, 1pm and 2pm), from where you can catch trains north to Xi'an or buses west to Jiuzhaigou. Local bus 89 (Bashijiu Dui; ¥2, 20 minutes) connects the two stations via the Old Town (ask to get off at Huaguang Lou, then walk up towards the tower for Dadong Jie).

From the Bashijiu Dui bus station, it's easiest just to walk to the Old Town. Turn left out of the station; after a couple of blocks turn right onto Tianshangong Jie and keep walking straight. Dadong Jie will be on your left. Wumiao Jie will be straight on.

THE WAY TO XI'AN

Those on their way to Xi'an from Jiuzhaigou can take the most direct overland route via the mid-sized town of **Guangyuan** on the main Chengdu–Xi'an train line.

China's only female emperor, Wu Zetian, was born in Guangyuan during the Tang dynasty. **Huangze Temple** (Huangze Si adult/student ¥50/25; 🕒 8am-6pm), with its pavilions and a thousand carvings, is dedicated to her. Further north on the east bank of the Jialing River, **Qianfu Cliff** (Qianfu Ya Moya Aoxiang adult/student ¥50/25; 🕒 8am-6pm) is a honeycomb of more than 7000 grotto carvings dating back 1500 years.

Guangyuan's train and long-distance bus station are adjacent. If you need to stay the night, to the right of the train station exit, **Tianzhao Hotel** (Tianzhao Maruika Jiudian ☎ 083 9366 8888; 212 Jinlun Nanlu, r from ¥168; 📶📶📶) has smart rooms. Huangze Temple is about 750m beyond the hotel. Qianfu Cliff is a walkable 4km northeast of the town, near the river's east bank.

SELECTED BUSES FROM GUANGYUAN

Chengdu ¥118, four hours, frequently from 6.30am to 9pm

Jiuzhaigou ¥80, 8½ hours, 6am and 4.10pm

Langzhong ¥60, three hours, five daily (7.40am, 8.30am, 10am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm)

Xi'an ¥160, six hours, every 30 minutes from 6am to 5.30pm

SELECTED TRAINS FROM GUANGYUAN

Chengdu K ¥47, five hours, very frequently from 12.16am to 10.55pm

Xi'an K ¥75, 10 hours, 10 daily from 12.05am to 11.12pm

Chongqing

Chongqing Highlights

Chongqing City

Dazu Buddhist Caves

Zhongshan

Songji

Chongqing



Pop 28.8 million

Why Go?

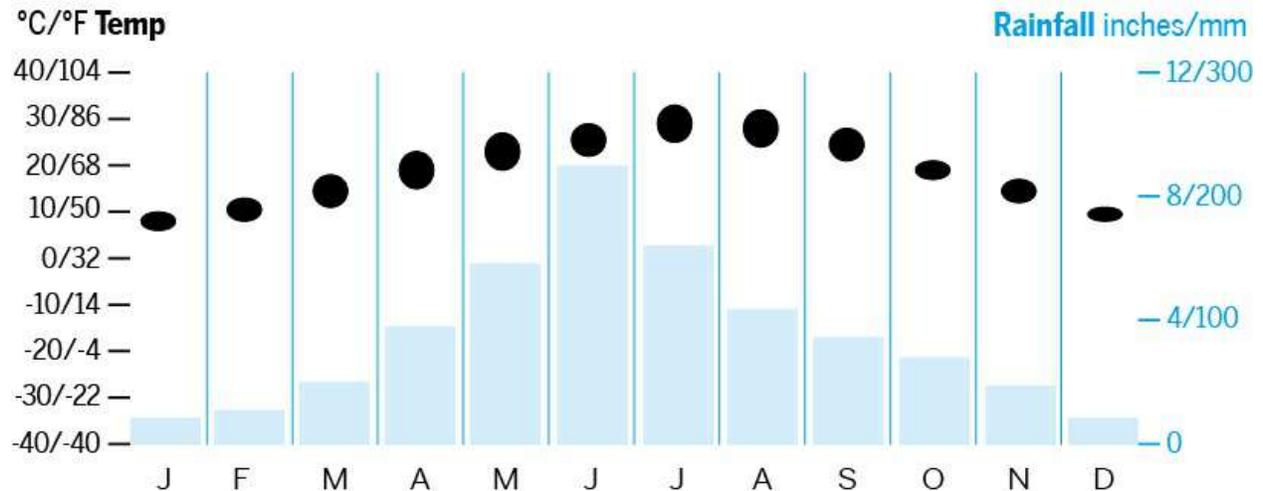
Chongqing municipality may be a relatively recent creation, having been carved out of Sichuan province in 1997, but with its eponymous city driving the economy of western China, it's now one of the most important regions in the whole country. And, despite its new name, the area it covers has played a significant role throughout Chinese history and remains a place of great natural beauty.

Thanks to the mighty Yangzi River (Chang Jiang), which powers its way through here, this region has long been one of strategic military importance. The river was responsible for creating one of China's greatest natural wonders, the magnificent Three Gorges.

Humans have left their indelible mark as well, with a panoply of ancient Buddhist sculptures, dozens of seemingly lost-in-time villages and, of course, the megalopolis that is Chongqing: one of the fastest-growing, buzzing cities in all China.

When to Go

Chóngqìng



- ➔ **Apr & May** Winter chill has lifted; full force of summer sweat box yet to arrive, but still rainy.
- ➔ **Jul & Aug** It's hot; temperatures top 40°C and Chongqing City resembles a steam bath.
- ➔ **Sep & Oct** Manageable temperatures; a good time to explore the countryside.

Best for History

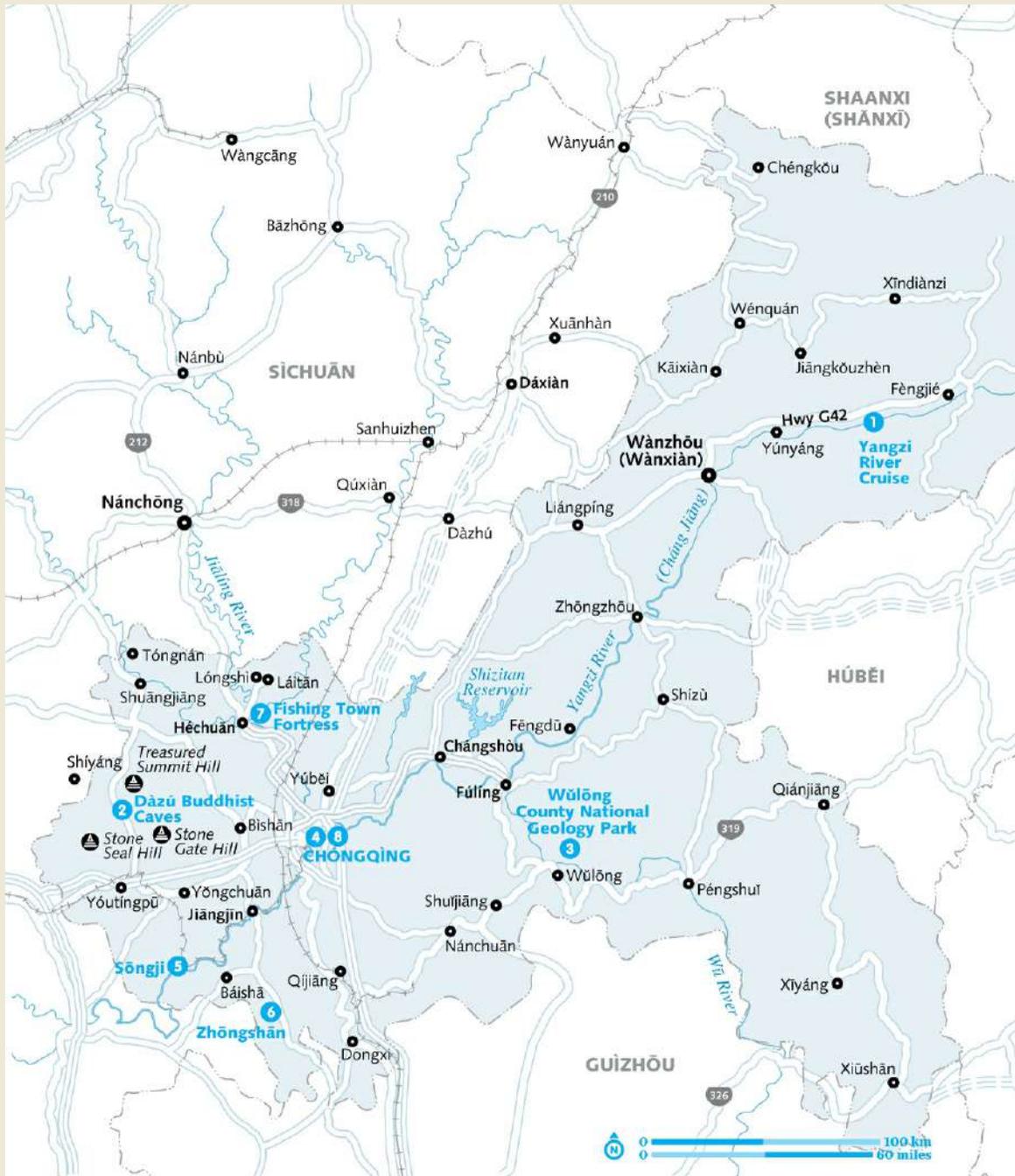
- ➔ [Dazu Buddhist Caves](#)
- ➔ [Fishing Town Fortress](#)
- ➔ [Chongqing's city gates](#)

Best for Scenery

- ➔ Three Gorges
- ➔ [Wulong County National Geology Park](#)

→ [Zhongshan](#)

Chongqing Highlights



- 1 Shift down a gear or two as you float past the awe-inspiring Three Gorges on a [Yangzi River Cruise](#)
- 2 Gasp in wonder at the exquisite ancient artwork of the [Dazu Buddhist Caves](#)

- 3 Explore the wild waterfalls and Karst formations of [Wulong County National Geology Park](#)
- 4 Tuck into the world's most mouth-numbing hotpot at [Mangzi](#)
- 5 Wander the cobblestones, or just chill in a teahouse in the Ming dynasty village of [Songji](#)
- 6 See traditional wooden stilt housing in the ancient riverside village of [Zhongshan](#)
- 7 Hike the ruins of [Fishing Town Fortress](#), one of China's greatest battlefields
- 8 Pull up a stool and sample the delights of [shaokao](#), Chongqing's no-nonsense streetside barbeques

History

Stone tools unearthed along the Yangzi River valleys show that humans lived in this region two million years ago. The ancient Ba kingdom ruled from here more than 2000 years before subsequent Qin, Sui and Southern Song dynasty rulers took over. From 1938 to 1945, Chongqing City (previously known as Chungking) became the Kuomintang's wartime capital. It was here that representatives of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), including Zhou Enlai, acted as 'liaisons' between the Kuomintang and the communists headquartered at Yan'an, in Shaanxi province.

Refugees from all over China flooded into the city during WWII. More followed when the construction of the Three Gorges Dam displaced more than one million people.

In 1997 Chongqing separated from Sichuan province and became a municipality under the direct control of the central government.

The city was the backdrop for one of modern China's biggest political scandals in 2012 when Gu Kailai, the wife of Chongqing's Communist Party boss Bo Xilai, was convicted of murdering British businessman Neil Heywood. Allegations of corruption, extortion and espionage surrounded the case, as well as rumours that Beijing was unhappy with Bo's populist policies

and wanted him out of the way. Both Bo and his wife were sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

Language

In addition to standard Mandarin Chinese, Chongqing residents also speak Sichuanese. It's a Mandarin dialect, but pronunciation is different enough that it's often difficult for those who speak standard Chinese to understand. Two words visitors will often hear are *yaode* (pronounced 'yow-day', meaning 'yes' or 'ok') and *meide* (pronounced 'may-day', meaning 'no').

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used for Chongqing:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥50

\$\$ ¥50 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

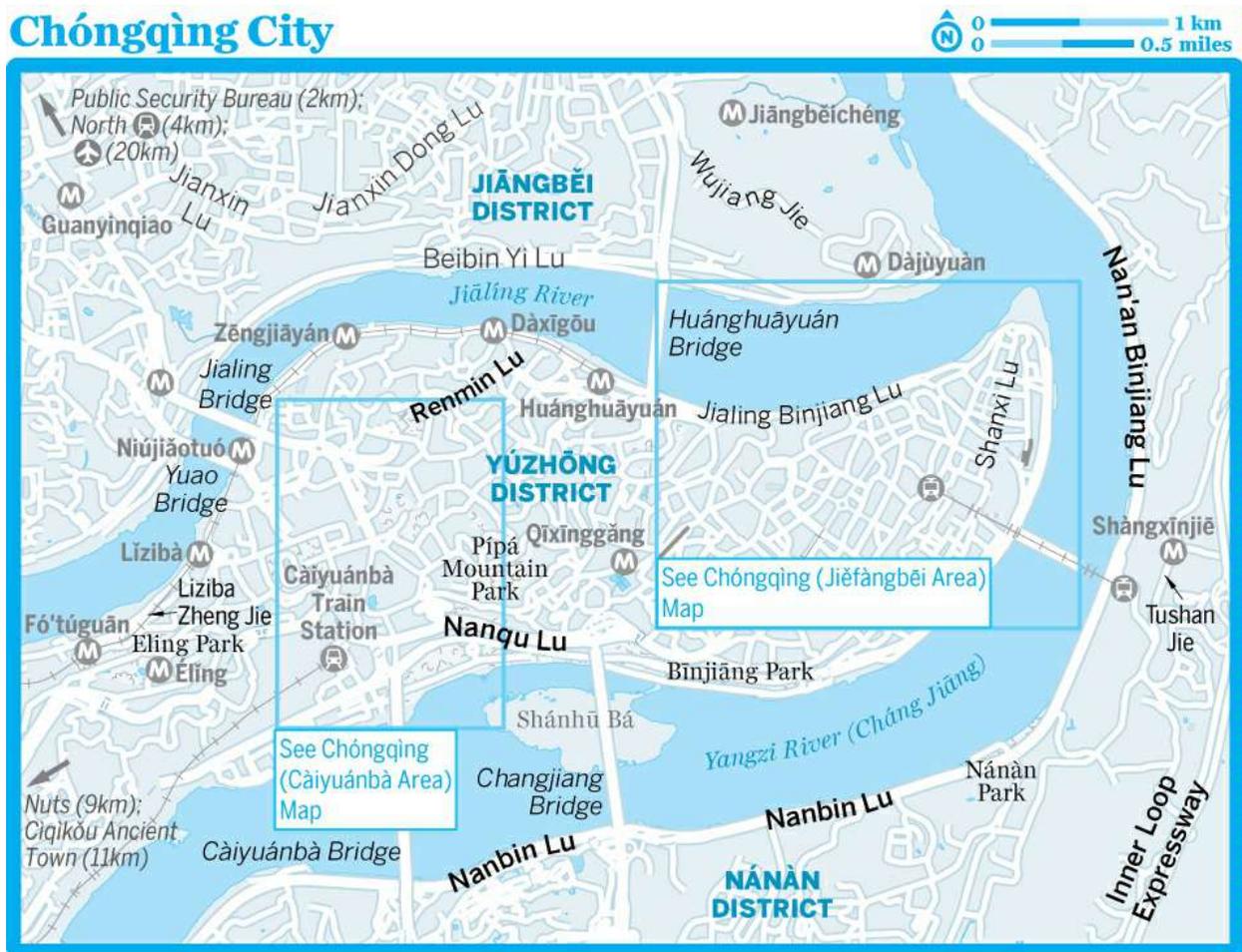
Chongqing City

 023 / Pop 6.7 million

There's a frontier town vibe to Chongqing City, one of the most booming metropolises on earth. Despite a history that dates back to the ancient Ba kingdom – as well as being China's de facto capital during WWII – this former walled fortress has a distinctly brash feel.

Sprawling down both banks of the Yangzi River for miles – with further development ongoing – very little remains of old Chongqing. Yet the city has a unique energy that makes it a fascinating place and the locals are some of the most welcoming in all China. The gritty docks, too, are a permanent reminder of how Chongqing's fortunes have long been tied to the river that flows through it.

Chongqing is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the most populous city in the world. It isn't. Figures for the whole municipality's population are close to 30 million but, for now anyway, the city of Chongqing itself has just under seven million inhabitants.



Sights & Activities

Arhat Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Luohan Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Luohan Si Jie; admission ¥10; 🕒 7am-5pm; [M](#) Xiaoshizi)

Built around 1000 years ago, this still-active temple is now sandwiched between skyscrapers. A notable feature is the corridor flanked by intricate rock carvings found just after you enter the complex, but the main attraction here is **Arhat Hall** (Luohan Tang), off to your right just after the corridor, which contains 500 terracotta *arhats* (a Buddhist term for those who have achieved enlightenment and who pass to nirvana at death).

Huguang Guild Hall

MUSEUM

(Huguang Huiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6393 0287; Dongshuimen Zhengjie; admission ¥30; 🕒 9am-5pm; [M](#) Xiaoshizi)

You could spend several hours poking around the beautifully restored buildings in this gorgeous museum complex, which once served as a community headquarters for immigrants from the Hu (Hunan and Hubei) and Guang (Guangdong and Guangxi) provinces, who arrived in Chongqing several hundred years ago. There are rooms filled with artwork and furniture, a **temple**, a **teahouse** and several stages for Chinese **opera performances**.

Free-to-watch rehearsals of Yueju (an operatic style originating from Zhejiang province) and Jingju (Beijing Opera) are held every Sunday, usually between 3pm and 6pm.

At the time of research, nearby construction meant that access to the Hall was via a dizzying series of steps to the right of the Dongshuimen Bridge. Keep asking the way.

Ancient City Gates

RUIN

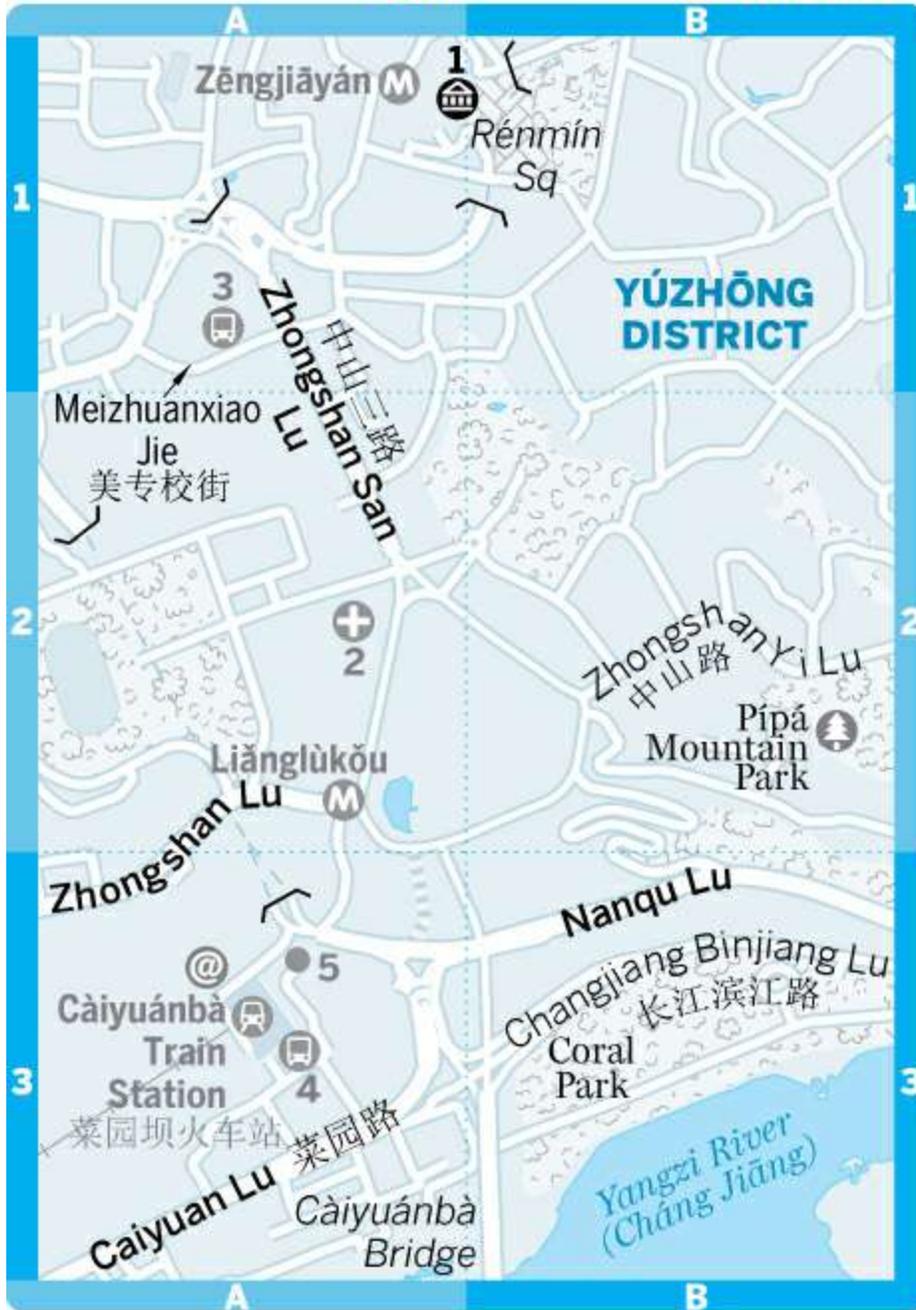
(Guchengmen)

Sadly, only fragments remain of Chongqing's once magnificent Ming dynasty city wall, which stretched 8km around the Jiefangbei peninsula and was more than 30m tall in places. Of the 17 gates that punctuated the wall before demolition began in 1927, two are still standing. The charming, moss-

hewn **Dongshui Men** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is on a pathway beside the Yangtze River Hostel. Larger, and partly restored is **Tongyuan Men** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); **M**Qixinggang, exit 1), a short walk from Qixinggang metro station.

You can walk along the wall for a short stretch at both locations. If you're interested in seeing how the wall once encircled the old city, look for the carved map of ancient Chongqing on the **public square at Chaotianmen** (Chaotianmen Guangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)), itself once a city gate.

Chóngqìng (Càiyuánbà Area)



Chongqing (Caiyuanba Area)

📍 Sights

1 [Three Gorges Museum](#) A1

Eating

[Made in Kitchen](#) A1

Information

2 [Global Doctor Chongqing Clinic](#) A2

Transport

3 [Airport Shuttle Bus](#) A1

4 [Caiyuanba Bus Station](#) A3

5 [Escalator](#) A3

Ciqikou Ancient Town

OLD TOWN

(Ciqikou Guzhen  Ciqikou, exit 1)

The opportunity to snatch a glimpse of old Chongqing makes it worth riding out to this part of town, on the Jialing River west of the centre. Through the archway that is the entrance to the town, most of the buildings – many dating to the late Ming dynasty – have been restored, and the main drag can feel like a carnival, especially on weekends, but away from the central street, a living, working village remains.

You can easily lose yourself in its narrow lanes, peeking into homes and tiny storefronts. And there's plenty to eat here, both in the alleys and overlooking the river. It's also worth poking your head inside **Baolun Si** (admission ¥5;  7am-6pm), one of Ciqikou's only remaining temples. Its main building is more than 1000 years old. The alley the temple is on, Heng Jie, is one of the most pleasant places to explore, and contains a string of cute cafes with wi-fi.

Three Gorges Museum

MUSEUM

(Sanxia Bowuguan  [GOOGLE MAP](#); 236 Renmin Lu;  9am-4pm Tue-Sun;

 Zengjiayan, exit A) **FREE**

This sleek museum showcases the history of settlement in the Chongqing region. There's the inevitable exhibition on the Three Gorges, including a model of the dam, as well as clothing and artwork relating to southwest China's minority groups. Some exhibits have better English captions than others.



Chongqing (Jiefangbei Area)

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Arhat Temple | E3 |
| 2 | Chaotianmen Square | G1 |
| 3 | Dongshui Men | G4 |

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----|
| 4 | Huguang Guild Hall | F4 |
| 5 | Liberation Monument | D4 |
| 6 | Tongyuan Men | A5 |

Activities, Courses & Tours

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 7 | Chaotiangong Cruise Boat | G1 |
| 8 | Chaotianmen Cruise Boat | G1 |
| 9 | Jinbi Huanggong Cruise Boat | G1 |
| 10 | Yangzi River Cable Car | E4 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 11 | Deck 88 Hostel | D3 |
| 12 | Green Forest Hostel | B6 |
| 13 | Harbour Plaza | D5 |
| 14 | Hongyadong Dajudian | D3 |
| 15 | Sunrise Mingqing Hostel | F4 |
| 16 | Xinhua Hotel | C4 |
| 17 | Yangtze River Hostel | G3 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 18 | Liuyishou Huoguo | E3 |
| 19 | Mangzi | C5 |
| 20 | Uncle | C6 |
| 21 | Xiao Bin Lou | B6 |
| 22 | Zeng Lao Yao Yu Zhuang | E6 |
| 23 | Zhao'er Huoguo | E5 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|
| 24 | Cici Park | D3 |
|----|---------------------------|----|

Entertainment

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 25 | Chongqing Sichuan Opera House | A5 |
|----|---|----|

Shopping

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|----|
| | Hongyadong | D3 |
|--|----------------------------|----|

Information

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------|----|
| 26 | 24-Hour Pharmacy | C5 |
|----|----------------------------------|----|

Transport

[27](#) Chongqing Ferry Port Ticket Hall

F1

[28](#) Three Gorges Ferry Port

F1

Activities

Yangzi River Cable Car

CABLE CAR

(Changjiang Suodao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); one-way ¥10; 🕒 7am-10pm; [M](#) Xiaoshizi, exit 5)

A ride on the creaky old Yangzi River cable car is slightly disconcerting, but gives you a wonderful bird's-eye view of the murky waters and the cityscape beyond. It drops you off near the riverside bar and restaurant strip on Nan'an Binjiang Lu.

City River Cruises

Chongqing looks best from the water, especially at night when the city flashes with neon. The so-called two-river cruises last for 60 to 90 minutes, leaving every afternoon (2pm to 3pm) and evening (7pm to 8pm) from Chaotianmen Dock, and can be a fun way of getting an alternative view of this unique metropolis.

There are a number of boats offering the same service. The difference in prices reflects the quality and age of the boats. [Chaotiangong](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); evening cruise ¥136), [Chaotianmen](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); evening cruise ¥148) and [Jinbi Huanggong](#) ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); evening cruise ¥148) were the three most popular at time of research. Although there are cruises every day, not all boats run daily. The boats have no English signs and very little English is spoken. You can eat on board, although menus are in Chinese only and the food is pretty expensive (dishes ¥30 to ¥80). Prices listed are for evening cruises, which are much more popular (and more worthwhile).

Expect to get tickets for as little as ¥40 to ¥50 for an afternoon cruise. Buy your tickets from the end of the jetty leading to the boat in question, or at any number of ticket sellers around town.

Tours

While it is possible to [cruise the Yangzi River](#) in either direction, Chongqing is the most popular spot to start your trip along the river, mainly because of its proximity to the mighty Three Gorges. Both luxury and ordinary cruises depart daily and tickets for them are sold at travel agencies all over town. It's best to book a day or two ahead and, if possible, avoid Chinese public holidays when the boats get very crowded.

THE TOUGHEST PORTERS IN CHINA

Ever since the first Chongqingers couldn't bear the thought of carrying their buckets of water from the river up to their cliff-side homes, there's been a need for a special kind of porter. A porter who can lift more than his body weight and lug that load up and down hills all day long. A porter who can't use a trolley like in other cities, or a bike or a rickshaw, but instead works on foot using only the cheapest of tools: a bamboo pole – or 'bangbang' – and a length of rope.

Known as the Bangbang Army, these porters have been bearing the city's weights on their shoulders for hundreds of years, but their numbers really exploded in the 1990s when the government began resettling millions who lived along the Yangzi River. Many came from the countryside with little education and no relevant skills, and soon became part of the 100,000-strong workforce.

'Bangbang' porters earn around ¥50 per day to work in one of China's hottest, hilliest cities, lugging heavy loads up and down steep hills, although you'll also see them carrying people's shopping home on the subway.

Despite the wealth that's been pumped into the city in recent years (just look across the river at the Grand Theatre), the Bangbang Army continues to be an integral feature of Chongqing and porters are especially plentiful in the area close to the docks.

Sleeping

★ Green Forest Hostel

HOSTEL

(Washe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6310 4270; chongqinggreenforest@gmail.com; 4/F, Yuya Bldg, 7 Zhongxing Lu; 4 dm/s/d/tw/tr ¥55/148/180/220/270; ❄️ @ 📶; 🚇 Jiaochangkou, exit 4)

The office block location may lack the character of its sibling the Yangzi River Hostel, but this new place has bigger, better and brighter dorms and rooms, all with bathrooms. There's also an excellent, spacious cafe-communal area, efficient, pleasant staff and a very handy location, close to restaurants, shops and bars.

Yangtze River Hostel

HOSTEL

(Xiyuan Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6310 4208; yangtzeriverhostelreception@gmail.com; 80 Changbin Lu; dm ¥35-50, tw & d ¥200; ❄️ @ 📶; 🚇 Xiaoshizi)

Overlooking the river and backing onto one of the remaining stretches of Chongqing's ancient city wall, this friendly, well-run hostel is a smart choice if you don't mind climbing steps to walk into town (there are few eating options in the immediate area). Dorms are spacious and some come with bathrooms, while private rooms are bright and clean, if compact.

There's a pool table and a restaurant-cafe in the lobby area. Staff provide reliable travel advice without giving it the hard sell, making this a good place to book your Yangzi River cruises.

Sunrise Mingqing Hostel

COURTYARD HOTEL

(Shangyue Mingqing Kezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 6393 1579; www.srising.com; 23 Xiahong Xuexiang (down steps from 26 Jiefang Donglu); dm ¥69, tw & d ¥369.; ❄️ @ 📶; 🚇 Xiaoshizi)

Facing the western wall of Huguang Guild Hall, this renovated Qing dynasty courtyard hotel isn't a true hostel – there's no restaurant or cafe – but remains an atmospheric place to stay. Rooms are beautifully decorated but, like all courtyard places, they are dark and small. It can also be accessed by climbing the steep alley just to the west of Huguang Guild Hall.

Deck 88 Hostel

HOSTEL

(Taoting Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6281 7796; 88 Jiabin Lu; dm/s/tw/d ¥50/150/210/200; 🌐 @ 📶; **M** Xiaoshizi)

New hostel right on the riverfront that sees more Chinese travellers than foreigners. Dorms are poky, but the private rooms are a decent deal for this part of town. Staff are friendly, although there's not much English spoken, and there's an amenable communal area with a bar.

To get here, take the lift at the Hongyadong complex on Cangbai Lu down to the ground floor, turn left and walk for 75 metres.

Hongyadong Dajiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6399 2888; 56 Cangbai Lu; tw & d from ¥650; 🌐 @ 📶; **M** Xiaoshizi)

This huge complex – built in faux Chongqing stilt-house style – hugs the cliff side overlooking the Jialing River and comes with restaurants, bars, shopping streets and this comfortable hotel with welcoming staff. Rooms are big and well maintained, some with balconies and river views. Reception is on the 11th floor of the complex. Discounts (up to 30%) are generally available.

Xinhua Hotel

HOTEL

(Xinhua Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6355 7777; 9 Qingnian Lu; tw from ¥828; 🌐 @ 📶; **M** Jiaochangkou)

Elegant, low-lit interior with spacious, well-equipped rooms (TV, fridge, safe) but smallish bathrooms. Some English spoken. A stone's throw from Liberation Monument so about as central as it gets. Routine 40% discounts make it a fair choice.

Harbour Plaza

HOTEL

(Chongqing Haiyi Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 6370 0888; www.harbour-plaza.com; Wuyi Lu; tw & d from ¥1500; 🌐 @ 📶 🚰; **M** Jiaochangkou)

Smart and large rooms at this centrally located and popular hotel. All come

with wide-screen TV, fridge and safe. Wi-fi throughout and proper bathrooms. English spoken and the travel desk on the 3rd floor can help with Yangzi River cruises. Up to 50% discounts are often available.

CHONGQING NOODLES

Chongqing's are particularly fond of noodles and you'll find noodle joints all over the region. They rarely have English menus or signs – just look for the character (mian; noodles) and you're good to go.

Specialities here include xiaomian or mala xiaomian – often eaten for breakfast despite being very spicy – and liangmian, which are delicious despite being served cold. Noodles in Chongqing are served by the liang (50g). Two-liang (er liang) or three-liang (san liang) portions are most common. Expect to pay between ¥6 and ¥10 for a bowl. Remember: wo neng chi lade (I can handle spicy food); bu yao tai la (not too spicy, please).

MENU DECODER

mala xiaomian (spicy noodles)
liangmian (cold noodles)
niurou mian (beef noodles)
jidan mian (egg noodles)
suanla fen (tangy glass noodles)
feichang mian (pig intestine noodles)

Eating

Chongqing is all about [hotpot](#) (*huoguo*): a fiery cauldron of head-burning *lajiao* (chillies) and mouth-numbing *huajiao* (Sichuan peppers) into which is dipped deliciously fresh ingredients, from vegetables and tofu to all types of fish and meat. It's a dish best sampled with a group. Indeed, hotpot restaurants tend to be among the liveliest you'll find.

As well as the local noodle dishes, another great thing to sample in Chongqing is *shaokao* (barbeque skewers), the perfect point-and-eat street food. Just choose your skewers, hand them over and wait for them to come back spiced and grilled. Select from *doufu pi* (tofu skin), *xiao mantou* (mini

steamed rolls), *niangao* (sticky rice cake), *qiezi* (eggplant/aubergine), and *jiucaai* (leek) among other ingredients.

Shaokao barbeque spots are found all over the city. Most *shaokao* places in Chongqing also do bowls of pigs brain (*naohua*) as a side dish. We dare you.

Zhao'er Huoguo

HOTPOT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 6671 1569; 128 Jiefang Donglu, 3rd fl; dipping ingredients ¥4-25; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5.30pm-midnight)

Highly popular, Zhao'er's hotpot is rightly lauded. There are various options: the nine-sectioned pot (*jiugong guo*) allows you to separate the flavours of your raw ingredients (ideal if one of you is vegetarian), although the broth is shared; while the two-sectioned *yuanyang guo* has a clear broth that is separated completely from the spicy one.

You may be asked if you want your broth spicy (*hongde*) or clear (*qingde*) and therefore spiceless. Assuming you opt for spicy, we highly advise you plump for mild! As well as all the usual hotpot raw ingredients, the speciality here is fresh lamb tripe (*xian maodu*). The water spinach (*kongxin cai*) is also particularly good.

No English sign or menu. Look for the archway with yellow characters against a red backdrop and then walk up the stairs to the left.

Mangzi

HOTPOT

(Mangzi Lao Huoguo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 📍 6371 8492; Zhongxing Lu, 10 Wangyeshibao; dipping ingredients ¥6-26; 🕒 11am-2am)

A real locals' fave with some of the tastiest (and spiciest) hotpot in town. You sit on wooden benches around your table and bubbling broth. Expect to see male diners with their shirts off, beer bottles close to hand. It's just up the alley at the end of Qingnian Lu in the midst of the flower market on the left-hand side.

Look for two red characters on a yellow sign. No English menu, but the friendly staff will do their best to assist.

Uncle

CANTONESE

(Biao Shu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6326 5050; Riyueguang Zhongxin Sq, 89 Minquan Lu; dishes ¥26-49; 🕒 11am-11pm; 🚇 Jiaochangkou)

If your body needs a break from Chongqing's fiery chillies, head to this Guangzhou restaurant chain, modelled on a type of Hong Kong teahouse-cum-canteen. It's young, friendly, brightly lit and serves a good variety of tasty Cantonese dishes – lots of soups as well as noodle and rice meals.

Portions are hearty, meaning most dishes are meals in themselves. It's at the back of a public square, under the giant TV screen. Nonsmoking, too.

Liuyishou Huoguo

HOTPOT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6161 8555; 46 Cangbai Lu, 3rd fl; 3 dipping ingredients ¥5-28; 🕒 10am-midnight; 🚇 Xiaoshizi)

The hotpot here is decent enough, and the atmosphere is congenial, but the real attraction is the view; you dine as you gaze out across the Jialing River. You'll be pushed to find a river-view table at peak eating times, so perhaps come earlier or later than you'd usually eat. Take the lift to the right of Motel 168.

★ Zeng Lao Yao Yu Zhuang

HOTPOT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 6392 4315; Changbin Lu; 🕒 24hr)

Outside, it's a seething mass of people crowded around tables. Inside, it's even more packed as you descend into a former bomb shelter – white-tiled walls and a rock roof. This Chongqing institution is a unique, utilitarian dining experience, with all stratum of society in search of the signature fish dish (*jiyu*; carp) and the simply sublime spare ribs (*paigu*).

As always, it's best to eat in a group and be prepared to wait for a table. But it never closes, so you can roll up anytime. No English menu, so point at what other diners are eating. Every taxi driver in town knows this place.

Xiao Bin Lou

CHONGQING

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎ 6383 8858; Riyueguang Zhongxin Sq, 4/F, 89 Minquan Lu; 4 set menu ¥50-78; 🕒 11.30am-2pm, 5.30-8.30pm)

A gentle introduction to Chongqing cuisine, especially good for the spice-averse. Choose from a selection of small-sized dishes on display, or better still go for one of the set menus, either six or eight dishes. It's on the fourth floor of a shopping mall, but the interior is a spacious approximation of an old Chongqing eatery.

Made in Kitchen

ASIAN, WESTERN

(Chufang Zhizao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎ 6363 6228; Three Gorges Museum, 236 Renmin Lu, dishes from ¥48; 🕒 11am-10pm; 🚇 Zengjiayan)

It's an unprepossessing approach through a dimly lit underpass, but this is a swish, stylish restaurant with tip-top service. The menu spans Asia – sushi and Thai dishes as well as Chinese – and it's also a fine place for a Western steak (¥198). Decent wine list too.

Located underneath the Three Gorges Museum, the entrance is down to the left as you face the museum entrance.

HOTPOT MENU

The best hotpot restaurants are entirely local affairs so you have about as much chance of finding an English menu as you have of being able to eat the thing without your nose running. (Do not underestimate a hotpot's bite. This part of China is renowned for fiery food, and it doesn't come spicier than hotpot.)

As with many dishes in Chongqing, the first thing to establish when ordering hotpot is how hot you want it – bu la (not spicy, but in Chongqing this will still be spicy), wei la (mildly spicy), zhong la (medium spicy), zui la (very spicy) and jia ma jia la (extra, extra spicy).

Then you'll be given a menu checklist of raw ingredients that you will later cook in your pot. Here are some of our favourites for you to look out for on the menu:

yangrou juan (wafer-thin lamb slices)
fei niurou (beef slices)
xian maodu (fresh tripe, usually lamb)
xian yachang (strips of duck intestine)

lao doufu (tofu slabs)
ou pian (slices of lotus root)
xian huanghua (chrysanthemum stalks)
tu dou (potato slices)
bai cai (cabbage leaves)
mu'er (mushroom)
kongxin cai; (water spinach)



Drinking & Nightlife

As well as the places listed below, there are a string of riverside bars (*jiuba*), cafes and restaurants on **Nan'an Binjiang Lu**; take the cable car over the Yangzi, then walk down to the river and turn left. From there, walk 15 minutes along the river or hop on any bus for one stop. Note: the cable car stops running at 10pm.

De Yi Shi Jie is a public square surrounded by tacky bars, karaoke joints and the city's biggest nightclubs.

For traditional **teahouses**, head to Ciqikou Ancient Town and look for signs for (*chayuan*; tea garden).

★ Cici Park

BAR

(Xixi Gongyuan  : 1/F Hongyadong, Jiabin Lu;, beer from ¥15;  5pm-late;  Xiaoshizi)

The most amenable bar in Chongqing, Cici's has a very chilled vibe and bohemian furnishings. Beers are affordable, mixers start at ¥30 and sometimes there are DJs and live music. It attracts a mixed crowd of both locals and expats, some of whom like to roll their own cigarettes.

Nuts

LIVE MUSIC

(Jianguo Julebu  8810 1647; www.douban.com/host/nutsclub; Shazhong Lu, Shapingba district; beers from ¥15;  7pm-2am;  Shapingba, exit 2)

Fabulous, pint-sized club that's *the* place to catch live music. Local bands

take to the stage every weekend, but it also hosts any act of note passing through town. It's right by Chongqing University so gets a decent crowd in. Live music carries a ¥30 cover charge.

You can walk here from Shapingba metro station in 20 minutes. Take exit 2, walk through the Three Gorges Square, then straight along Hanyu Lu, then left down Shazhong Lu and it's on the right-hand side.

The Harp Irish Pub

BAR

(Shuqin Ai'erlan Jiuba  6880 0136; Chongqing Tiandi; draught beers from ¥35;  3pm-1am; )

Not much to do with the Emerald Isle, but by far the best spot in town to catch live sport, especially the English Premier League, NBA and NFL. Strong selection of foreign brews and decent pub grub: fish and chips, pizzas, burgers and salads, as well as reasonable Mexican dishes. Also has a pool table and is nonsmoking.

It's located in a new complex of bars and restaurants a ¥25 taxi ride from the centre. There's another, smaller branch on the ninth floor of the [Hongyadong complex](#).

Chongqing Sichuan Opera House

THEATRE

(Chongqingshi Chuanjuyuan  ;  6371 0153; 76 Jintang Jie; tickets ¥20;  2pm)

Holds a 2½-hour performance of Sichuan opera every Saturday afternoon.

Shopping

For top-name brands, head to the glitzy shopping malls around the [Liberation Monument](#) (Jiefangbei  ). For souvenirs, try the unashamedly touristy 3rd floor of [Hongyadong](#) ( ; 56 Cangbai Lu,  9am-10pm;  Xiaoshizi), below the hotel of the same name, or head to Ciqikou Ancient Town.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

There are internet cafes (*wangba*; ¥3 per hour) all over the city, including three or four by Caiyuanba Bus Station.

MEDICAL SERVICES

24-Hour Pharmacy

PHARMACY

(Yaodian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 63 Minquan Lu; 🕒 24hr;  Jiaochangkou)

Western medicine, ground floor; Chinese medicine, 1st floor.

Global Doctor Chongqing Clinic

MEDICAL

(Huanqiu Yisheng Chongqing Zhensuo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 8903 8837; Suite 701, 7th fl, Office Tower, Hilton Hotel, 139 Zhongshan Sanlu; 7 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

A 24-hour emergency service is available by dialling the general clinic number.

MONEY

ATMs are everywhere, and most accept foreign cards.

HSBC

BANK

(Huifeng Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Minquan Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri;  Jiaochangkou)

Has a money-exchange facility.

ICBC

BANK

(Industrial & Commercial Bank of China; Gongshang Yinhang; [GOOGLE MAP](#); Minzu Lu; 🕒 9am-6pm;  Jiaochangkou)

On Minzu Lu beside the Liberation Monument. Has a dedicated money-exchange facility.

POST & TELEPHONE

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng ; Minquan Lu; 🕒 9am-6pm;  Jiaochangkou)

You can top up your Chinese phone and buy SIM cards at the China Mobile store (open 9am to 9pm) on the 1st floor.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

[Yangtze River](#) and [Green Forest](#) hostels can arrange tours of all types (including Three Gorges cruises) and have better English-language speakers than the travel agencies and ticket offices around town. They charge minimal commission.

Harbour Plaza Travel Centre

TRAVEL AGENCY

(Haiyi Luyou Zhongxin  ; 📞 6373 5664; 3rd fl, Harbour Plaza, Wuyi Lu; 🕒 8am-10pm;  Jiaochangkou)

Staff here are helpful, speak English and can book air tickets and arrange Three Gorges cruises.

VISAS

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju  6396 1994; 555 Huanglong Lu; 🕒 9am-noon & 2-5pm;  Tangjia Yuanzi, exit 2)

Extends visas. Accessed from Ziwei Zhilu. Take metro Line 3 to Tangjia Yuanzi. Leave from exit 2, go up the escalator, turn left then first right, then keep going until you see the large building with flags on your right (10 minutes).

Getting There & Away

AIR

➔ **Chongqing's Jiangbei Airport** is 25km north of the city centre, and connected to the metro system. As always, it's easiest to book online. Try www.ctrip.com or www.elong.net. Alternatively, buy tickets at the **China International Travel Service** (CITS; Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe  6383 9777; 8th fl, 151

Zourong Lu; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri). Some English is spoken. Because of the high-speed rail link, there are no longer flights between Chongqing and Chengdu. Direct flights include:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥988, 2½ hours
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥531, 70 minutes
- ➔ **Shanghai** ¥790, 2½ hours
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥453, 90 minutes
- ➔ **Wuhan** ¥603, 90 minutes

BOAT

Chongqing is the starting point for hugely popular cruises down the Yangzi River through the magnificent Three Gorges ([Click here](#)).

BUS

Chongqing has several long-distance bus stations, but most buses use **Caiyuanba Bus Station** (Caiyuanba Qichezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#));

M Lianglukou) beside the main (old) train station. Destinations include:

- ➔ **Chengdu**, Sichuan (¥88 to ¥98, four hours, every hour, 7.40am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Chishui**, Guizhou (¥65 to ¥70, 4½ hours, six daily, 7.40am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Dazu** (¥36 to ¥43, 2½ hours, every 30 minutes, 7am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Hechuan** (¥29, 90 minutes, every 30 minutes, 6.30am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Songji** (¥41, two hours, one daily, 1.20pm)
- ➔ **Wanzhou** (¥111, 3½ hours, five daily from 8am to 5.30pm)
- ➔ **Yibin**, Sichuan (¥97 to ¥115, three to four hours, every 30 minutes, 6.45am to 8.30pm)
- ➔ **Yongchuan** (¥32, 90 minutes, every 20 minutes, 8.30am to 9.20pm)

Buses for **Jiangjin** (¥24, 70 minutes, every 30 minutes, 7am to 9pm) and **Fengjie** (¥160, four to five hours, hourly, 7.30am to 8.30pm), where you can catch the Three Gorges hydrofoil or ferry, leave from Longtousi Bus Station (Longtousi Qichezhan), which is on metro Line 3 (station name: Longtousi).

For **Wulong** (¥60, three hours, every 40 minutes, 7.30am to 7.40pm), you need the Sigongli Bus Station (Sigongli Qichezhan), which is on metro Line 3 (station name: : Sigongli).

TRAIN

New, faster trains, including the D class ‘bullet’ train to and from Chengdu, use Chongqing’s new **North Station** (Chongqing Beizhan Kunlun Dadao;), but some others, such as the train to **Kunming** use the older train station at Caiyuanba.

Destinations include:

- ➔ **Beijing West** (hard sleeper ¥393, 23 to 31 hours, five daily, 11.34am to 11.40pm)
- ➔ **Chengdu East** (hard seat from ¥46, two to 2½ hours, 20 daily, 6.49am to 7.51pm)
- ➔ **Guilin** (hard sleeper ¥270, 20 hours, one daily, 8.35pm)
- ➔ **Kunming** (hard sleeper ¥252, 18 to 19 hours, three daily, 9.24am, 2.12pm and 6.32pm)
- ➔ **Shanghai** (hard sleeper from ¥421, 28 to 40 hours, three daily, 8.02am, 1.10pm and 4.29pm)
- ➔ **Wuhan** (hard sleeper from ¥206, 15 hours, three daily, 2.15pm, 6.18pm and 7.28pm)
- ➔ **Xi’an** (hard sleeper from ¥184, 10 to 11 hours, three daily, 10.05am, 12.45pm and 5.26pm)

Getting Around

AIRPORT

Metro Line 3 goes from the airport (*jichang*) into town (¥7, 45 minutes, 6.22am to 10.30pm). Note, the metro is signposted as ‘Light Rail’ (*qinggui*) at the airport.

The **airport shuttle bus** (Jichang Daba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ¥15, 45 minutes) meets all arriving planes and takes you to Meizhuanxiao Jie, a small road off

Zhongshan Sanlu, via a couple of stops in the north of the city. Bus 461 goes from Zhongshan Sanlu to Chaotianmen. To get to the metro, turn left onto Zhongshan Sanlu and go straight over the large roundabout. Niujiatuo station will be on your left.

Shuttle buses going to the airport run from 6am to 8pm.

A taxi is ¥60 to ¥70.

BUS

Local bus fares are ¥1 or ¥2. Useful routes:

- ➔ **Bus 105** North Train Station–Linjiangmen (near Liberation Monument)
- ➔ **Bus 120** Chaotianmen–Caiyuanba Train Station
- ➔ **Bus 141** North Train Station–Chaotianmen
- ➔ **Bus 419** North Train Station–Caiyuanba Train Station
- ➔ **Bus 461** Chaotianmen–Zhongshan Sanlu (for airport bus)
- ➔ **Bus 462** Zhongshan Sanlu (airport bus)–Liberation Monument

METRO

Chongqing's part-underground, part-overground **metro system** (Guidao per trip ¥2-10; 🕒 6.30am-11.30pm) has four lines and links the Jiefangbei peninsula with many parts of the city, including the airport and the two train stations. Fares are ¥2 to ¥10 and trains run 6.30am to 11.30pm. Signs are bilingual but, unhelpfully, the metro map is in Chinese characters only (although stops are marked in pinyin on the maps on the trains).

The metro station for Caiyuanba Train Station is called Lianglukou and is accessed via one of the world's longest **escalators** (da futi 

; ¥2).

TAXI

Taxi flagfall is ¥10. A taxi from Jiefangbei to [Nuts](#) should cost around ¥45.

WORTH A TRIP

WULONG COUNTY NATIONAL GEOLOGY PARK

Wulong County National Geology Park

PARK

(Wulong Guojia Dizhi Gongyuan)

Head a couple of hours southeast of Chongqing City and you enter a dramatic landscape where deep ravines cut through the thickly-forested hills, while waterfalls plunge into mighty rivers, and jagged limestone Karst formations rise up towards the sky. Mostly off the map for foreign travellers, the Wulong County National Geology Park is a fantastic place to experience the area's wild scenery.

A vast area of natural beauty, the park contain any number of attractions – endless caves, giant canyons and many waterfalls – the unmissable one is the **Three Natural Bridges** (Tiansheng San Qiao admission ¥135). Towering above huge, hollowed-out karst formations, these natural bridges (you don't walk across them) are the highest in the world and utterly unique; you won't see anything like them anywhere else on the planet.

Unfortunately, visiting the park as an independent traveller is difficult. While there are regular buses to the unremarkable town of Wulong from Chongqing's Sigongli Bus Station, the park is 22km northeast of there and you'll need a taxi to reach it. You'll also require private transport to get around the park, which is massive. Each site too, has a separate (and pricey) admission ticket, while the restaurants and hotels scattered around the park are also expensive.

The best way to visit is on a day tour. Expect to pay ¥350 to ¥400 (bring your passport), which will include transport, lunch and admission to the Three Natural Bridges. The tours include at least one other sight in the park, normally **Longshui Canyon** (Longshui Xia), a very deep gorge off which waterfalls tumble (take an umbrella!). Yangtze River and Green Forest hostels can arrange tours.

WORTH A TRIP

FISHING TOWN FORTRESS

Fishing Town Fortress

FORTRESS

(Diaoyu Cheng admission ¥80; 🕒8.30am-6pm)

Famed throughout China for being one of the great ancient battlefields, this 700-year-old fortress is surrounded by rushing rivers on three sides and perched on top of a 300m-tall rocky mountain. This was the last stand of the Southern Song dynasty and famously, in the 13th century, the fortress withstood the mighty Mongol armies for an incredible 36 years, during which time an estimated 200 battles were fought here.

The fortress was protected by an 8km-long, 30m-tall double wall, punctuated with eight gate towers. Much of the outer wall and all the main gates remain today; some partly restored, others crumbling away. There is little here in terms of facilities (bring a picnic) but it's a fascinating and peaceful place to walk around; narrow stone pathways lead you through the forest, past Buddhist rock carvings, gravestones, bamboo groves, ponds, caves, the wall and its gateways and some fabulous lookout points. Sights not to miss include the serene, 11m-long, 1000-year-old **Sleeping Buddha** (Wofo), cut into the overhang of a cliff, **Huguo Temple** (Huguo Si), dating from the Tang dynasty, although largely rebuilt, and the **Imperial Cave** (Huangdong), an ancient drainage passage with steps leading down to it, clinging to the outside of the fort wall.

To reach the fortress, take a bus from Chongqing to Hechuan. Alternatively, numerous trains run from Chongqing North train station (¥12.50, 40 minutes) to Hechuan. There are no direct buses to the fortress. A taxi from the train station should be ¥25; from the bus station ¥10. The last bus back to Chongqing from Hechuan is at 6pm.

Dazu Buddhist Caves

The superb rock carvings of Dazu (Dazu Shiku) are a Unesco World Heritage site and one of China's four great Buddhist cave sculpture sites, along with those at Dunhuang, Luoyang and Datong. The Dazu sculptures are the most recent of the four, but the artwork here is arguably the best and in better condition.

Scattered over roughly 40 sites are thousands of cliff carvings and statues (with Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian influences), dating from the Tang dynasty (9th century) to the Song dynasty (13th century). The main groupings are at Treasured Summit Hill and North Hill.

Sights

Treasured Summit Hill

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(Baoding Shan admission ¥135, combination ticket with North Hill ¥170;  8.30am-6pm)

Of all the stunning sculptures here, which are believed to have been carved

between 1174 and 1252, the centrepiece is a 31m-long, 5m-high reclining Buddha depicted entering nirvana, with the torso sunk into the cliff face. Next to the Buddha, protected by a temple, is a mesmerising gold Avalokiteshvara (or Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy). Her 1007 individual arms fan out around her, entwined and reaching for the skies. Each hand has an eye, the symbol of wisdom.

Treasured Summit Hill differs from other cave sites in that it incorporates some of the area's natural features – a sculpture next to the reclining Buddha, for example, makes use of an underground spring. At the time of writing, some of the sculptures were undergoing renovation.

The site is about 15km northeast of Dazu town and is accessed by bus (¥3, 20 minutes, every 30 minutes, until 7pm) that leave from Dongguanzhan bus stop. Dazu has two bus stations; old and new. Buses from Chongqing drop you at Dazu's old bus station (*laozhan*). Buses from Chengdu drop you at Dazu's new bus station (*xinzhan*). From either, take bus 101 (¥1) or a ¥7 taxi to get to Dongguanzhan bus stop.

Once at the site, it's a 10- to 15-minute walk from where the bus drops you off to the entrance to the sculptures. Buses returning from Treasured Summit Hill run until 6pm.

North Hill

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(Bei Shan admission ¥90, combination ticket with Treasured Hill Summit ¥170; 🕒 8.30am-6pm; ♿)

This site, originally a military camp, contains some of the region's earliest carvings. The dark niches hold several hundred statues. Some are in poor condition, but it is still well worth a visit.

The pleasant, forested North Hill is about a 30-minute hike – including many steps – from Dazu town; turn left out of the old bus station and keep asking the way. It's ¥20 in a taxi.

South Hill

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(Nan Shan admission ¥20; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

This modest site really only has one set of carvings, but makes a nice

appetiser before you delve into the main courses at North Hill and Treasured Summit Hill. It's behind the old bus station and takes around 15 minutes to walk to. It's ¥10 in a taxi.

Stone Gate Hill & Stone Seal Hill

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

If you're really into Buddhist rock carvings, try to get out to the rarely visited sculptures at **Stone Gate Hill** (Shimen Shan), 19km southeast of Dazu, or those at **Stone Seal Hill** (Shizhuan Shan), 20km southwest of town. You'll have to take a taxi.

Buddha Vaironcana Cave

CAVE

(Pilu Dong)

The truly adventurous might like to catch a bus to the tiny town of Shiyang, which has a little-seen collection of Song dynasty Buddhist rock carvings.

Buses to Shiyang, just over the border in Sichuan province, leave from Dazu's old bus station. When you get there, keep asking for Pilu Dong; it's walking distance. From Shiyang, you can continue by bus to Chengdu.

Sleeping

Most cheapies in Dazu won't accept foreigners. Try the **Fragrant Begonia Hotel** (Haitang Xiangguo Jiudian ☎ 023 4372 1189; 35-37 Yihuan Zhonglu; 35-37 tw & d ¥298; 📍). To find it, turn right out of Dazu's old bus station, walk 100 metres, then turn right onto Yihuan Zhonglu and it's on the right-hand side.

Getting There & Away

Buses from Dazu old station:

- ➔ **Chongqing** (¥35-43, 2½ hours, every 30 minutes, 6.30am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Shiyang** (¥12, one hour, every 40 minutes, 7.20am to 5.40pm)
- ➔ **Yongchuan**, for Songji (¥22, 90 minutes, every 30 minutes, 7.10am to 5.40pm)

Buses from Dazu new station:

- ➔ **Chengdu** (¥102, four hours, five daily, 7.15am to 9.50pm)
- ➔ **Leshan** (¥102, 4½ hours, one daily, 7.20am)
- ➔ **Zigong** (¥52, 3½ hours, two daily, 8am and 1.30pm)

STILT HOUSES

Once a striking feature of the Chongqing skyline, stilt houses (diaojiao lou) were, in many ways, the predecessor to the modern skyscraper; sprawling vertically rather than horizontally to save space. Their design also served to keep family units in close quarters despite the uneven terrain of hilly Chongqing. They were built on a bamboo or fir frame that was fitted into bore holes drilled into the mountainside, and their thin walls were stuffed with straw and coated with mud to allow for cooling ventilation in a city that swelters in summer.

Modernisation has turned stilt housing into a symbol of poverty and as a result it has all but disappeared in the city itself, with the last remaining stilt houses in the centre slated for demolition at the time of research. But many survive in the villages around Chongqing municipality, with some fine examples in the alleyways of Songji and especially by the river in Zhongshan.

Zhongshan

Chongqing's once-ubiquitous stilt houses have all but disappeared from the city itself, but visit this gorgeous riverside village and you'll find plenty of them to gawp at. The **old town** (guzhen) is essentially one long street lined with wooden homes on stilts above the riverbank. Walk down to the river and look up at the houses to see their support structures. You can also hike along the other side of the river.

Sleeping & Eating

Restaurants (dishes ¥18 to ¥60) and teahouses are plentiful and there are at least half a dozen guesthouses (rooms ¥30 to ¥100); look for signs saying

(zhusu; lodgings). Most are small but clean and the more expensive rooms have their own bathrooms and cracking river views.

If you're stuck for choice, try the guesthouse run by Mrs Zhao – **Zhao Shike** (☎138 8320 9407; r ¥30-80). She doesn't speak English but is welcoming. A couple of doors down **Yi Xian Lou** (dishes ¥8-60) does decent food (no English menu). Look for guzhen laolarou (cured pork fried with green chillies; ¥35), heshui doufu (river water tofu; ¥7) and ye cai (a type of spinach grown in the hills here; literally 'wild veg'; ¥10).

Shopping

Most residents have turned their front rooms into storefronts. While some hawk souvenir trinkets, others sell locally made products such as chilli sauce or jugs of rice wine. Popular snacks include squares of smoked tofu (yanxun doufu; ¥2) and sweet doughy rice cakes filled with ground nuts.

Getting There & Away

To get here from Chongqing, change buses at Jiangjin, from where buses leave for Zhongshan (¥15, one hour 45 minutes, roughly every 30 minutes from 6.30am to 4.45pm). The last bus back to Jiangjin is at 4.20pm. The last bus from Jiangjin back to Chongqing is at 7pm. You can also head south into Guizhou province from Jiangjin, via Zunyi (¥107, 3½ hours, 8.40am and 2pm), or north to the caves at Dazu (¥51, two hours, 7.30am and 2.10pm).

Songji

Winding cobblestone alleyways housing temples, teahouses, old gateways and some wonderful courtyard homes dominate this still-lived-in Ming dynasty village on the banks of the Yangzi River. Deep in southwest Chongqing, Songji is a genuine community, rather than just a tourist destination, and sees very few foreigners, making it a great place to wander.

To guide yourself around the lanes, take a photo of the large wooden bilingual map at the entrance to the old town, just down towards the river from where the bus drops you.

Sights

Chen Family Compound

HOUSE

(Chen Jia Dayuan admission ¥1)

If you're looking for a focus, seek out the historic home of the village's most prominent family. This sprawling structure once contained more than 100 rooms. What remains of the compound is much smaller, but its walls are extensively decorated with family photos and memorabilia. Actress/director Joan Chen (known in China as Chen Chong), who starred in Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* and Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*, is the most famous family member.

Dongyu Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(Dongyu Miao)

On a bluff above the river, about a 20-minute walk from the old town, is this temple, home to a 9.5m-tall Buddha and some gruesome dioramas depicting various hells (impaling, scalding, having your tongue ripped out).

Sleeping & Eating

Songshan Binguan

HOTEL

( 023-4954 6078; tw/d ¥100/120; )

Clean rooms, some with river views, in a quiet location. No internet access.

Guzhen Jiudawan

CHINESE

(dishes ¥20-50;  9am-8pm)

This nicely renovated old courtyard has been turned into a restaurant-cum-teahouse and offers reasonably priced dishes.

i Getting There & Away

There's one direct bus from Chongqing (¥41, two hours, 1.20pm). Otherwise, catch a bus to Yongchuan (¥32), from where buses to Songji (¥10, 70 minutes) leave every 20 to 30 minutes. The last bus back to Yongchuan leaves Songji at about 5.30pm. The last bus from Yongchuan to Chongqing leaves at 6.50pm.

Cruising the Yangzi

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Cruising the Yangzi

Why Go?

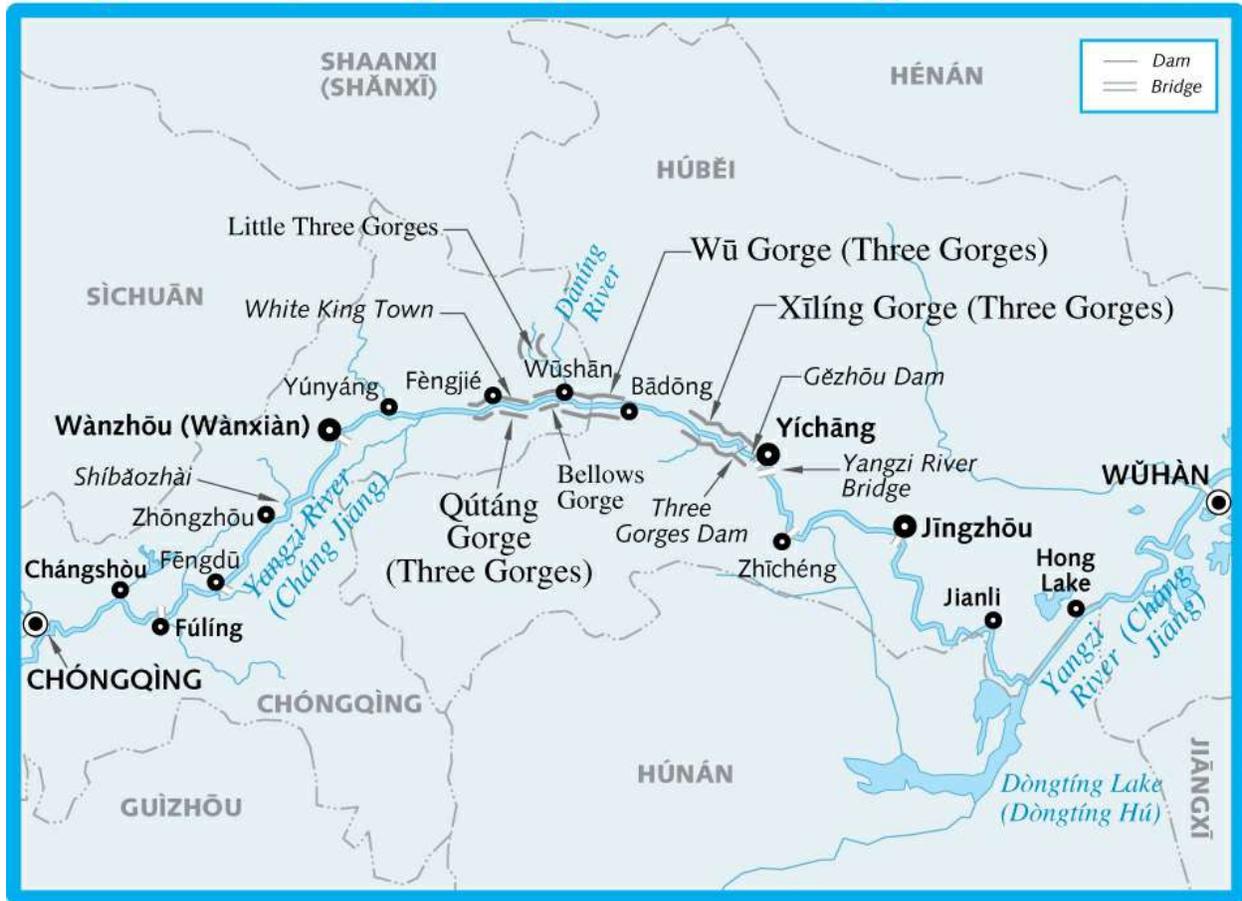
Taking a boat down the Yangzi River – China's longest and most scenic waterway – is all about the journey rather than the destination. It isn't just an escape from marathon train journeys and agonising bus rides, but a chance to kickback as an astonishing panorama slides by at a sedate pace which allows time for contemplation and relaxation. Cruising the Yangzi is a truly unique experience, one that gets you up close with mostly domestic travellers allowing time for real interaction. Jump aboard.

When to Go

- ➔ **Dec–Mar** The low season; rates are cheaper and the journey is more serene.
- ➔ **Apr & May** The best weather, but the highest prices and rowdiest crowds.
- ➔ **Oct & Nov** Cooler climes but the crowds are back.

Yangzi River (Cháng Jiāng)

0 200 km
0 120 miles



The Three Gorges

The Three Gorges

CANYON, RIVER

(Sanxia)

Few river panoramas inspire as much awe as the Three Gorges. Well-travelled Tang dynasty poets and men of letters have gone weak-kneed before them. Voluble emperors and hard-boiled communist party VIPs have been rendered speechless. Flotillas of sightseers have mega-pixelled their way from Chongqing to Yichang. For as long as many Yangzi boat hands can remember, the Three Gorges have been a member of the prestigious China Tour triumvirate, rubbing shoulders with the Terracotta Warriors and the Great Wall.

Yet the gorges these days get mixed press. Some travellers have their socks well and truly blown off; others arrive in Yichang scratching their heads and wondering what all the fuss was about. The route's natural scenery is certainly far more dramatic than its historical sights, often crammed with historical allusions obscure to all but Chinese minds. Temples along the way can be crowded, while uniform riverine towns and settlements are modern-looking rather than twee and charming. To some, the gorges' dramatic appearance can become rather repetitive, especially overlong Xiling Gorge (Xiling Xia). The reservoir built up behind the Three Gorges Dam – a body of water almost the length of England – has certainly taken its toll as much more is now inundated.

But if you don't expect to swoon at every bend in the river, journeying downriver is a stimulating and relaxing adventure, not least because of the change of pace and perspective.

FAST FACTS

The Three Gorges Dam is the world's largest artificial generator of electric power from a renewable source.

The Three Gorges Dam is designed to withstand an earthquake of 7 on the Richter scale.

Plans for the Three Gorges Dam date from 1919, when Sun Yatsen (Sun Zhongshan) saw its huge potential for power generation.

The Yangzi River will deposit more than 500 million tonnes of silt every year into the reservoir behind the dam.

An estimated one-third of China's population live in the Yangzi River basin. The river delta generates not just electricity, but around 20% of China's GDP.

Hundreds of catastrophic floods have been caused by the Yangzi River, including the disastrous inundation of 1931, in which an estimated 145,000 people died.

The River

The journey puts you adrift on China's mightiest – and the world's third-

longest – river, the gushing 6300km Yangzi River (*Chang Jiang*). Starting life as trickles of snow melt in the Tanggula Shan of southwestern Qinghai, the river then spills from Tibet, swells through seven Chinese provinces, sucks in water from hundreds of tributaries and rolls powerfully into the Pacific Ocean north of Shanghai.

The Effects of the Three Gorges Dam

The dwarfing chasms of rock, sculpted over aeons by the irresistible volume of water, are the Yangzi River's most fabled stretch. Yet the construction of the controversial and record-breaking Three Gorges Dam (*Sanxia Daba*) cloaked the gorges in as much uncertainty as their famous mists: have the gorges been humbled or can they somehow shrug off the rising waters?

In brief, the gorges have been undoubtedly affected by the rising waters. The peaks are not as towering as they once were, nor are the flooded chasms through which boats travel as narrow and pinched. The effect is more evident to seasoned boat hands or repeat visitors. For first-timers the gorges still put on a dramatic show.

THE ROUTE

Apocryphally the handiwork of the Great Yu, a legendary architect of the river, the gorges – Qutang, Wu and Xiling – commence just east of Fengjie in Chongqing province and level out west of Yichang in Hubei province, a distance of around 200km. The principal route for those cruising the Yangzi River is therefore between the cities of Chongqing and Yichang.

The route can be travelled in either direction, but most passengers journey downstream from Chongqing. Travelling upstream does ensure a less crowded boat, but somehow feels less dramatic.

If you buy your ticket from an agency, ensure you're not charged upfront for the sights along the way, as you may not want to visit them all. Some of the sights are underwhelming and entrance fees are as steep as the

surrounding inclines. The only ticket truly worth buying in advance is for the popular and worthwhile Little Three Gorges tour, which is often full.

Chongqing to Wanzhou -

The initial stretch is slow-going and unremarkable, although the dismal view of factories gradually gives way to attractive terraced countryside and the occasional small town.

Passing the drowned town of Fuling, the first port of call is at **Fengdu**, 170km from Chongqing city. Long nicknamed the City of Ghosts (*Guicheng*), the town is just that: inundated in 2009, its residents were moved across the river. This is the stepping-off point for crowds to clamber up **Ming Mountain** (Ming Shan admission ¥120, cable car ¥20), with its theme-park crop of ghost-focused temples.

Drifting through the county of Zhongzhou, the boat takes around three hours to arrive at **Shibaozhai** (Stone Treasure Stockade admission ¥50; 🕒 8am-4pm) on the northern bank of the river. A 12-storey, 56m-high wooden pagoda built on a huge, river-water-encircled rock bluff, the structure dates to the reign of Qing dynasty emperor Kangxi (1662–1722). Your boat may stop for rapid expeditions up to the tower and for climbs into its interior.

Most morning boats moor for the night at partially inundated **Wanzhou** (also called Wanxian). Travellers aiming to get from A to B as fast as possible while taking in the gorges can skip the Chongqing to Wanzhou section by hopping on a 3½ hour bus and then taking either the hydrofoil or a passenger ship from the Wanzhou jetty.

Wanzhou to Yichang -

Boats departing from Wanzhou soon pass the relocated **Zhang Fei Temple** (Zhangfei Miao admission ¥40). Quick disembarkations can be made here, allowing a visit to the ancient but much-restored temple which was moved 20 miles

upstream in 2002 and now sits opposite **Yunyang**. A modern, utilitarian and unremarkable town strung out along the northern bank of the river, Yunyang is typical of many of the new settlements created in the wake of the building of the Three Gorges Dam. Past here, boats drift on past ragged islets, some carpeted with small patchworks of fields, and alongside riverbanks striated with terraced slopes, rising like green ribbons up the inclines.

The ancient town of **Fengjie**, capital of the state of Kui during the periods known as the ‘Spring and Autumn’ (722–481 BC) and ‘Warring States’ (475–221 BC), overlooks Qutang Gorge, the first of the three gorges. The town – where most ships and hydrofoils berth – is also the entrance point to half-submerged **White King Town** (Baidicheng admission ¥120), where the King of Shu, Liu Bei, entrusted his son and kingdom to Zhu Geliang, as chronicled in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Qutang Gorge (*Qutang Xia*), also known as Kui Gorge (*Kui Xia*), rises dramatically into view, towering into huge vertiginous slabs of rock, its cliffs jutting out in jagged and triangular chunks. The shortest and narrowest of the three gorges, 8km-long Qutang Gorge is over almost as abruptly as it starts, but is considered by many to be the most awe-inspiring. The gorge offers a dizzying perspective onto huge strata despite having some of its power robbed by the rising waters. On the northern bank is **Bellows Gorge** (*Fengxiang Xia*), where nine coffins were discovered, possibly placed here by an ancient tribe.

After Qutang Gorge the terrain folds into a 20km stretch of low-lying land before boats pull in at the riverside town of **Wushan**, situated high above the river. Most boats stop at Wushan for five to six hours so passengers can transfer to smaller boats for trips along the **Little Three Gorges** (Xiao Sanxia tickets ¥200) on the Daning River (*Daning He*). The landscape is gorgeous and you're right up close to it, and many travellers insist that the narrow gorges are more impressive than their larger namesakes. Some tours include a 40 minute ride on local fishing boats here too.

Back on the Yangzi River, boats pull away from Wushan to enter the penultimate Wu Gorge, under a bright-red bridge. Some of the cultivated

fields on the slopes overhanging the river reach almost illogical angles.

Wu Gorge (*Wu Xia*) – the Gorge of Witches – is stunning, cloaked in green and carpeted in shrubs, its sides frequently disappearing into ethereal layers of mist. About 40km in length, its towering cliffs are topped by sharp, jagged peaks on the northern bank. A total of 12 peaks cluster on either side, including **Goddess Peak** (*Shennu Feng*) and **Peak of the Immortals** (*Jixian Feng*). If you're fortunate, you'll catch the sunrise over Goddess Peak.

Boats continue floating eastward out of Wu Gorge and into Hubei province, along a 45km section before reaching the last of the three gorges. At this time, many boats offer the option of a two hour trip on motorised dragon boats along **Jiuwan Stream** (*Jiuwan Xi*) and nearby tributaries of the Yangzi. Some travellers enjoy the experience, although the scenery isn't as inspiring as that of the Little Three Gorges.

At 80km, **Xiling Gorge** (*Xiling Xia*) is the longest and perhaps least spectacular gorge; sections of the gorge in the west have been submerged. Note the slow-moving cargo vessels, including long freight ships loaded with mounds of coal, ploughing downriver to Shanghai. The gorge was traditionally the most hazardous, where hidden shoals and reefs routinely holed vessels, but it has long been tamed, even though river traffic slows when the fog reduces visibility.

Apart from a few of the top-end luxury cruises, tour boats no longer pass through the monumental **Three Gorges Dam**, although many tours offer the option of a visit to the dam by bus. The passenger ferries and hydrofoils tend to finish (or begin) their journey at **Taiping Creek Port** (*Taipingxi Gang*), upstream from the dam. From here, two types of shuttle bus wait to take you into Yichang (one hour). One is free and takes you to the old ferry port (*lao matou*) in the centre of town. The other costs ¥10 and drops you at Yichang East Train Station (*Huochedongzhan*). Ordinary tourist boats tend to use **Maoping Port** (*Maoping Gang*), from where you can at least see the dam, and which is also connected to Yichang via shuttle buses.

BOATS

There are four categories of boats: luxury cruises, tourist boats, passenger ships and hydrofoil.

Luxury Cruises

The most luxurious passage is on international-standard cruise ships (*haohua youlun*), where maximum comfort and visibility accompany a leisurely agenda. Trips normally depart Chongqing mid-evening and include shore visits to all the major sights (Three Gorges Dam, Little Three Gorges etc), allowing time to tour the attractions (often secondary to the scenery). Cabins have air-con, TV (perhaps satellite), fridge/minibar and sometimes more. These vessels are aimed specifically at Western tourists and are ideal for travellers with time, money and negligible Chinese skills. The average duration for such a cruise is three nights and three to four days.

Tourist Boats

Typically departing from Chongqing at around 9pm, ordinary tourist cruise ships (*putong youlun*) usually take just under 40 hours to reach Yichang (including three nights on board). Some boats stop at all the sights; others stop at just a few. They are less professional than the luxury tour cruises and are squarely aimed at domestic travellers (Chinese food, little spoken English).

Expect early starts: the public-address system starts going off after 6am. Cabins in all classes are fairly basic – hard beds in 2nd and 3rd class – but come with AC and a TV and usually have a small attached bathroom with a shower (although that doesn't mean hot water). Many travellers now book packages that take you first by bus from Chongqing to Wanzhou, where you board a vessel for the rest of the trip. This reduces the journey by one night.

In theory, you can buy tickets on the day of travel, but booking one or two days in advance is recommended. Fares vary, although not by much,

depending whether you buy your ticket from a hostel, agency or direct from the ticket hall, so it's worth shopping around to check. If buying a ticket through an agent, ensure you know exactly what the price includes. Note that the following prices include admission to the most popular stops along the way (including the Little Three Gorges).

Special class (*tedeng*) ¥1780, two-bed cabin

1st class (*yideng*) ¥1440, two-bed cabin

2nd class (*erdeng*) ¥1150, four-bed cabin

3rd class (*sandeng*) ¥1000, six-bed cabin

BEST TOP-END CRUISES

Viking River Cruises (www.vikingrivercruises.com; From \$6337) Very luxurious cruise, offering five-day cruises from Chongqing to Wuhan, as part of a larger 13-day tour of China. Complete tour from US\$6337.

Century Cruises (www.centuryrivercruises.com) Claims to be the most luxurious cruise service on the Yangzi. Ships are new, service is first class and facilities are top notch. Chongqing to Yichang tickets booked through Harbour Plaza Travel Centre start at US\$650.

Victoria Cruises (www.victoriacruises.com; From US\$980) Comfortable four-day trips between Chongqing and Yichang. Older boats than some other operators, but has excellent English-speaking guides. From US\$980, through Harbour Plaza Travel Centre.

Passenger Ships

Straightforward passenger ships (*ke chuan*) are cheap, but can be disappointing because you sail through two of the gorges in the dead of night. Stops are frequent, but hasty, and they pass by the tourist sights. Journeys between Chongqing and Yichang take around 36 hours; between Fengjie and Yichang, around 12 hours. Toilets are shared, and soon get pretty grotty. There are no showers, but there are sinks and power sockets in the twin cabins (as well as TVs, which usually don't work). Meals on board are decent and cheap but there is no choice of dishes, so take along your own food and

drinks in case you don't like what's on offer.

Eastbound boats leave Chongqing at 10pm and Fengjie at 9pm. For westbound journeys, shuttle buses, which connect with the boats, leave Yichang's old ferry port at 7.30pm; the boat leaves at 9pm.

Tickets can usually be bought on the day of travel.

Chongqing to Yichang fares:

1st class (*yideng*) ¥884, twin cabin

2nd class (*erdeng*) ¥534, twin cabin

3rd class (*sandeng*) ¥367, four- to six-bed dorm

4th class (*sideng*) ¥224, eight-bed dorm

Fengjie to Yichang fares:

1st class ¥343

2nd class ¥212

3rd class ¥147

4th class ¥119

Hydrofoil

Yangzi River hydrofoils (*kuai ting*) are a dying breed. There are now just three per day and they only run between Fengjie and Yichang. Buses, though, connect Fengjie with Chongqing (¥160, five hours, hourly, 7.30am to 8.30pm) so this is still a quick and reasonably convenient way of seeing the Three Gorges.

Hydrofoils are passenger vessels and are not geared towards tourists, so there's no outside seating. Visibility is OK (albeit through perspex windows), but if you stand by the door you can get a good view. Food and refreshments are served on board, but are nothing special. Hydrofoils make regular but very brief stops at towns along the river for embarkation and disembarkation.

At the time of research, times of departure and prices for tickets bought at the relevant port's official ticket office were as follows (note, the Yichang times of departure are for the free shuttle buses which leave from Yichang's

old port before connecting with the hydrofoils which leave from a newer port 45km upstream):

Yichang to Fengjie ¥245, four to five hours (7.20am, 9.50am and 1.20pm)

Fengjie to Yichang ¥235, four to five hours (8.30am, 11am and 2pm)

If you get stuck for the night in Fengjie, **Fenggang Binguan** (☎023 5683 4333; tw & d from ¥80), attached to the ferry port, has large clean rooms, some with river views. It's run by a friendly family, but no English is spoken; no English sign.

TICKETS

In Chongqing or Yichang, most hotels, hostels and travel agents can sell you a trip on either the luxury cruise ships or the ordinary tourist boats. In either city, passenger ferry tickets have to be bought at the ferry port ticket halls, which also sell ordinary tourist boat tickets. For the hydrofoil, you can buy westbound tickets in Yichang from the Three Gorges Tourist Centre at the old ferry port. Eastbound tickets must be bought at the ticket hall in Fengjie, where the hydrofoil starts its journey. You can no longer buy hydrofoil tickets in Chongqing.

The price of your ticket will include the one-hour shuttle bus ride to/from the old ferry port in the centre of Yichang from/to one of the two newer ferry ports, about 45km upstream, where almost all boats now leave from or terminate at.

Chongqing

The [Yangtze River Hostel](#) mostly sells tickets for the ordinary tourist boats, but can arrange luxury cruises too. Helpful and excellent English skills. The [Harbour Plaza Travel Centre](#) specialises in luxury cruises, but also sells ordinary tourist boat tickets. Staff are friendly and speak OK English. The Chongqing Ferry Port Ticket Hall is the cheapest place to buy ordinary

tourist boat tickets, and the only place that sells passenger ferry tickets; no English is spoken.

Yichang

China International Travel Service

TOURS

(CITS., Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe 📞 0717 625 3088; Yunji Lu; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Sells luxury cruises to Chongqing (from ¥2800) and tourist boat tickets to Chongqing (¥880 to ¥900), but not hydrofoil tickets. Some English spoken.

Three Gorges Tourist Centre

FERRY TICKETS

(Sanxia Youke Zhongxin 📞 0717 696 6116; Yanjiang Dadao, 🕒 7am-8pm)

Commission-free, so cheaper than CITS. Sells hydrofoil tickets to Fengjie (¥245) plus passenger ferry tickets to various destinations between Yichang and Chongqing. Minimal English spoken, but staff members are helpful. Enter the modern tourist centre (no English sign) and head to the ticket counters at the far right of the building.

Yangtze River International Travel

FERRY TICKETS

(Yichang Changjiang Guoji Luxingshe 📞 0717 692 1808; 🕒 7am-8pm)

Marginally cheaper than CITS for ordinary tourist-boat tickets to Chongqing (from ¥890). Also sells luxury cruises. Housed inside the Three Gorges Tourist Centre, but has a separate desk beside the passenger-boat ticket counters.

Fengjie

Fengjie Ferry Port Ticket Hall

FERRY PORT

(Fengjie Gang Shoupiaoting)

Sells passenger ferry tickets in either direction, plus hydrofoil tickets to Yichang (¥235). Don't expect to be able to board tourist boats from here because tickets are usually sold out in Chongqing or Yichang.

Wuhan

The [Pathfinder Youth Hostel](#) sells tickets for westbound trips from Yichang, which include the bus from Wuhan to Yichang.

Xinjiang

[Xinjiang Highlights](#)

[Central Xinjiang](#)

[Urumqi](#)

[Tian Chi](#)

[Turpan](#)

[Around Turpan](#)

[Hami \(Kumul\)](#)

[Kuqa](#)

[Around Kuqa](#)

[Southwest Xinjiang –](#)

[Kashgaria](#)

[Kashgar](#)

[Karakoram Highway](#)

[Southern Silk Road](#)

[Yengisar](#)

[Yarkand](#)

[Karghilik](#)

[Hotan](#)

[Cherchen](#)

[Charklik](#)

[Northern Xinjiang](#)

[Bu'erjin](#)

[Kanas Lake Nature Reserve](#)

[Yining](#)

[Sayram Lake](#)

Xinjiang



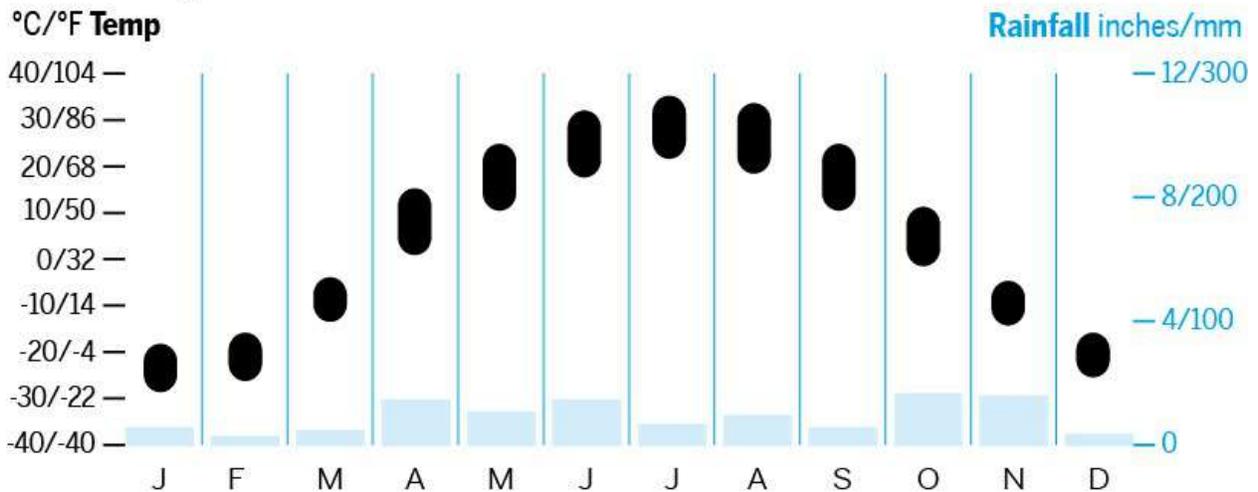
Pop 21.8 million

Why Go?

In this far-flung and restive frontier province, Central Asian culture is very much alive: from the irresistible smell of teahouse kebabs, to the bustle of bazaars and markets, to the sound of the call to prayer from the neighbourhood mosque. Xinjiang is China's Uighur homeland, but for a thousand years it was also a portal and stronghold for Buddhism in the Middle Kingdom. Outside Silk Road oasis towns the legacy of this remains in stunning cave art, and the ruins of ancient cities and monasteries. The awesomeness of Xinjiang's environment is an equal draw for travellers, from the scorching sands of the Taklamakan Desert to the cool forests and lakes of the Tian Shan (Heavenly Mountains). In short, a journey to Chinese Turkestan rewards as an exploration of China's past, its unsettled multicultural present, or simply as an adventure into one of the most sublime landscapes on earth.

When to Go

Ürümqi



- ➔ **Mar** Nauryz (New Year) festivals held in Kazakh and Kyrgyz villages.
- ➔ **Aug** Celebrate the grape-harvest festival in Turpan.
- ➔ **Sep** Autumnal colours at Kanas Lake and Hemu.

Best Bazaars

- ➔ [Sunday market](#), Hotan
- ➔ [Livestock market](#), Kashgar
- ➔ [Sunday bazaar](#), Kuqa
- ➔ [Sunday market](#), Yarkand

Best Off the Beaten Track

- ➔ [Shipton's Arch](#)
- ➔ Horse trek to Hemu in [Kanas Lake Nature Reserve](#)
- ➔ Hiking around Muztagh Ata

→ [Bezeklik Caves](#)

History

By the end of the 2nd century BC the expanding Han dynasty had pushed its borders west into what is now Xinjiang. Military garrisons protected the fledgling trade routes, as silk flowed out of the empire in return for the strong Ferghana horses needed to fight nomadic incursions from the north. Chinese imperial rule waxed and waned over the centuries, shrinking after the collapse of the Han and reasserting itself during the 7th-century Tang, though central control was tenuous at best. A Uighur kingdom based at Khocho thrived from the 8th century and oversaw the Central Asian people's transformation from nomads to farmers and from Manichaeans to Buddhists.

It was during Kharakhanid rule in the 10th to 12th centuries that Islam took hold in Xinjiang. In 1219, Yili (Ili), Hotan and Kashgar fell to the Mongols and their various successors controlled the whole of Central Asia until the mid-18th century, when the Manchu army marched into Kashgar.

In 1865 a Kokandi officer named Yaqub Beg seized Kashgaria, proclaimed a short-lived independent Turkestan, and made diplomatic contacts with Britain and Russia. The Manchu army eventually returned and two decades later Kashgaria was formally incorporated into China's newly created Xinjiang (New Frontier) province. With the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, Xinjiang came under the chaotic and violent rule of a succession of Muslim and Chinese warlords, over whom the Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party) had very little control. In the 1930s and 1940s there was an attempt in both Kashgar and Ili to establish an independent state of Eastern Turkestan, but both were short-lived.

Since 1949, the Chinese government's main social goal in Xinjiang has been to keep a lid on ethnic separatism, dilute local culture, and flood the region with Han Chinese. Economically, the 'Develop the West' campaign has used the region's oil resources to ramp up the local economy. But this has led to an increase in Han settlers, which has exacerbated ethnic tensions. In a telling statistic, Uighurs once composed 90% of Xinjiang's population; today

they make up less than 50%.

In 2008, street protests and bomb attacks rocked the province, and in 2009, communal violence between Han and Uighur civilians in downtown Urumqi led to around 200 deaths and 1700 injuries, according to Chinese police reports.

2014 was another year wracked by violence. First, a March attack by knife-wielding assailants (blamed on Uighur separatists) at a train station in Kunming, Yunnan province saw 29 killed and 143 injured. The next month, two attackers stabbed people at the Urumqi train station before setting off vest explosives. A few weeks later, a suicide car and bomb attack on a market in Urumqi ended with 31 killed and 90 injured. The Chinese authorities cracked down hard with a campaign against terrorism, which was expected to last until at least summer 2015.

Heightened security in airports, railways and subways was felt across the country. Pictures of passengers waiting in epically long lines to enter the Beijing subway made international news, as did several mass public 'trials' that summer, including one before a 7000-person audience in a stadium in Yining. Hundreds of Uighurs were sentenced to long jail terms, and dozens executed.

More violence came in July in Yarkand but, by then, Xinjiang was under heavy media control and details of what happened are murky. The Chinese government took a week to announce that 96 people had been killed following a knife attack on a police station. Exiled Uighur groups claimed the violence began after government forces suppressed protesters angry over Ramadan restrictions, and that the deaths numbered in the thousands.

Whatever the truth, as long as Uighur resentment is fuelled by what they view as economic marginalisation, cultural restrictions, ethnic discrimination and outright oppression, violence looks likely to continue in the restive province.

Xinjiang Highlights



- 1 Follow the footprints of Marco Polo along the [southern Silk Road](#) oasis towns.
- 2 Overnight in a yurt and marvel at the dramatic mountain scenery of the [Karakoram Highway](#).
- 3 Explore the ancient ruins, such as [Jiaohe](#), near the laid-back oasis town of Turpan.
- 4 Hagggle for a fat-tailed sheep at the Sunday livestock market at

[Kashgar](#).

- 5 Explore the story of Buddhism and Central Asian silk in [Hotan](#).
- 6 Pause on the northern Silk Road at [Kuqa](#), for its authentic bazaar and nearby Buddhist ruins.

Climate

Xinjiang's climate is one of extremes. Turpan is the hottest spot in the country – up to 47°C in summer (June to August), when the Tarim and Jungar Basins aren't much cooler. As daunting as the heat may seem, spring (April and May) is not a particularly good time to visit, with frequent sandstorms making travel difficult and dust clouds obscuring the landscape. Winters (November to March) see the mercury plummet below 0°C throughout the province, although March is a good time to catch some festivals. Late May through June and September through October (especially) are the best times to visit.

Language

Uighur, the lingua franca of Xinjiang, is part of the Turkic language family and thus fairly similar to other regional languages, such as Uzbek, Kazakh and Kyrgyz. The one exception is Tajik, which is related to Persian.

The Han Chinese in Xinjiang don't speak Uighur. Vice versa, many Uighurs can't, or won't, speak Mandarin. However, learning Mandarin is now mandatory in Uighur-language schools (but not the other way round), and Mandarin is exclusively used in universities. Nominally this is to provide more economic opportunities to the Uighurs, but resistance to Sinicisation, and its effects on Uighur culture and traditions, is steadfast.

WHICH TIME IS IT?

Making an appointment in Xinjiang is not just a matter of asking what time, but also

'which time?' All of China officially runs on Beijing time (Beijing shijian). Xinjiang, several time zones removed from Beijing, however, runs duelling clocks: while the Chinese tend to stick to the official Beijing time, the locals set their clocks to unofficial Xinjiang time (Xinjiang shijian), two hours behind Beijing time. Thus 9am Beijing time is 7am Xinjiang time. Most government-run services, such as banks, post offices, bus stations and airlines, run on Beijing time, generally operating from 10am to 1.30pm and from 4pm to 8pm to cater to the time difference.

i Getting There & Away

You can fly between Xinjiang and most Chinese domestic cities, Central Asia and a couple of cities further afield, including Moscow and Tehran.

There are overland border crossings with Pakistan (Khunjerab Pass), Kyrgyzstan (Irkeshtam and Torugart Passes) and Kazakhstan (Korgas, Alashankou, Tacheng and Jimunai). The Qolma Pass to Tajikistan may conceivably open to foreign travel in the coming years. All of these border crossings are by bus, except Alashankou, China's only rail link to Central Asia.

Heading back into mainland China, the obvious route is the train following the Silk Road through Gansu. More rugged approaches are the mountain roads from Charklik to Qinghai, and Karghilik to Ali (Tibet).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The increased unrest and terrorism that hit in Xinjiang in 2014 had not, at the time of writing, resulted in the type of massive clampdown seen in Tibet after the 2008 riots. But it was by no means business as usual. In addition to paying close attention to your safety in transport stations, crowded public areas and government offices (in particular, police stations), there are a few things to be aware of. As of the summer of 2014, you will need a passport to buy long-distance bus tickets. Some city buses also ban the carrying of cigarette lighters, water and yogurt. There was also a push to ban beards, typically worn by Uigher men, from public transport. Note too that fewer hotels are now authorised to take foreigners, and many hotels no longer have available internet connections. We hadn't heard of any new regional closures, but many popular markets in large cities (such as Urumqi) were closed and were expected to remain closed for at least the entire duration the government's new anti-terrorism campaign, slated to last into summer 2015. In short, expect the adage

'things change' to apply to this region much more than usual.

i Getting Around

The railway from Gansu splits near Turpan, with one branch heading west through Urumqi to Yining and Kazakhstan, and the other going southwest to Kashgar and Hotan. In 2015 high-speed rail was slated to link Urumqi (and towns in between) to Lanzhou in Gansu.

Distances are large in Xinjiang and buses are often sleepers. On-board entertainment usually includes kung fu film marathons cranked to the hilt. Shared taxis run along many of the bus routes, taking up to half as long again, and costing twice as much as buses. Shared taxis only depart when full.

Flying around the province can save a lot of time and tickets are often discounted by up to 60%. Flights are sometimes cancelled for lack of passengers or due to bad weather.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this region:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥170 (for a room)

\$\$ ¥170 to ¥280

\$\$\$ more than ¥280

EATING

\$ less than ¥20 (for a meal for one)

\$\$ ¥20 to ¥35

\$\$\$ more than ¥35

CENTRAL XINJIANG

Bounded by deserts and mountain ranges, much of present-day Central

Xinjiang would have been completely familiar to Silk Road traders on the Northern Route to Kashgar. Today the largest and most important city in the region is Urumqi, though for travellers the ancient cities around Turpan, the Tianshan mountains, and the Buddha caves of Kuqa are the bigger draws.

Urumqi

📍 0991 / Pop 3.1 million

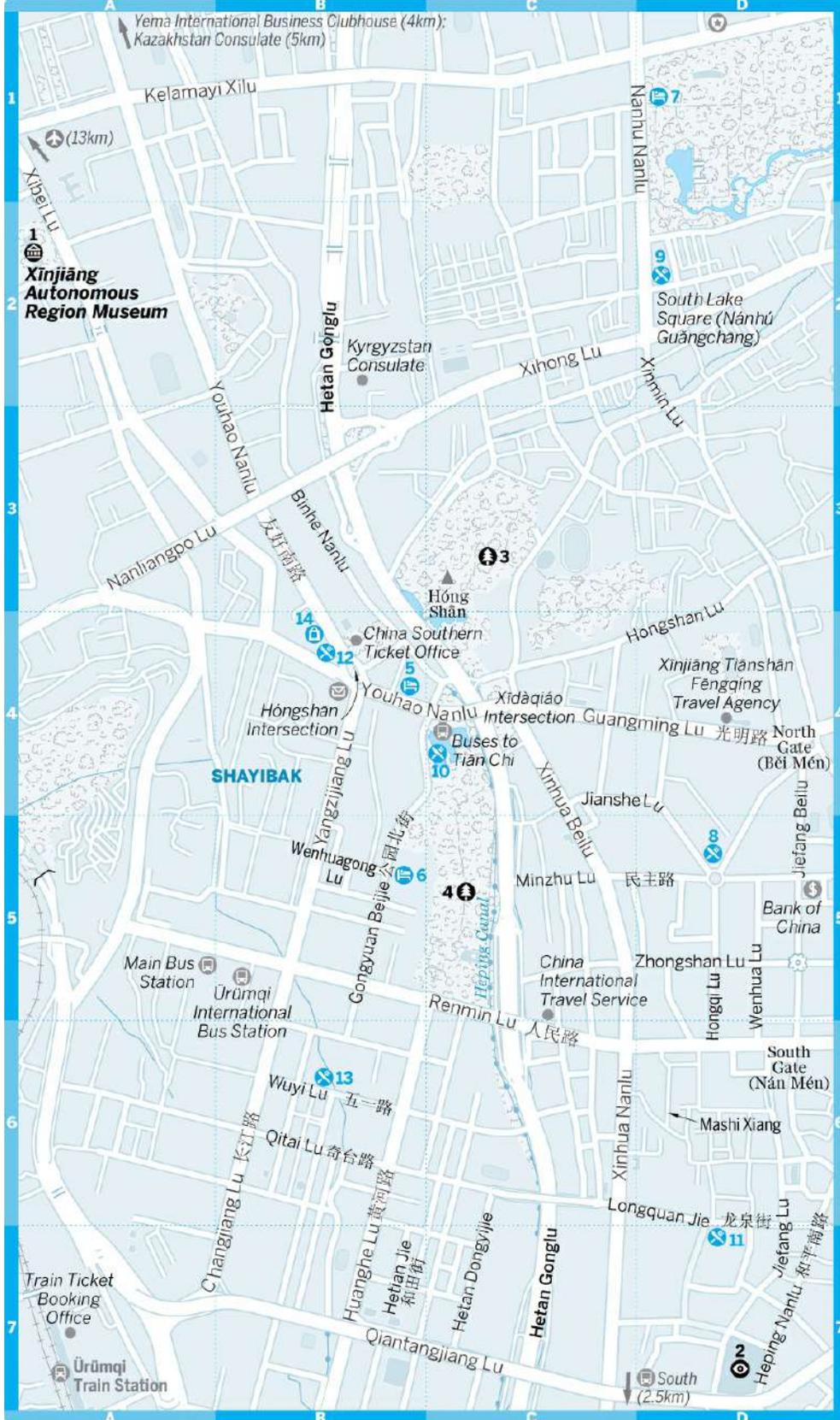
Urumqi's more than three million urban residents live in a city that sprawls 20km across a fertile plain in the shadow of the Tian Shan mountains. High-rise apartments and tower blocks form a modern skyline that will soon dash any thoughts of spotting wandering camels and ancient caravanserais.

As a fast-growing Central Asian hub (high-speed rail is expected to reach the city by 2015) the city does business with traders from Beijing to Baku and plays host to an exotic mix of people. Cyrillic signs and fragrant corner kebab stands add a Central Asian feel, though in reality over 75% of Urumqi's inhabitants are Han Chinese.

Urumqi is not a historic city, but the provincial museum is excellent and there are some interesting Uighur districts. If you find yourself hanging around for a Kazakh or Kyrgyz visa, consider a side trip to Turpan or Hami.

Ürümqi

0 500 m
0 0.25 miles



Urumqi

📍 Top Sights

1 [Xinjiang Autonomous Region Museum](#) A2

📍 Sights

2 [Erdaoqiao Market](#) D7

3 [Hongshan Park](#) C3

4 [People's Park](#) C5

🏠 Sleeping

5 [Maitian International Youth Hostel](#) B4

6 [Super 8](#) B5

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🍴 Eating

8 [Aroma](#) D5

9 [Carrefour](#) D2

10 [Fubar](#) C4

11 [May Flower](#) D7

12 [Tianfu Zhengcai](#) B4

13 [Wuyi Night Market](#) B6

🛒 Shopping

14 [Navigate the Outdoors](#) B4

👁️ Sights & Activities

★ [Xinjiang Autonomous Region Museum](#)

MUSEUM

(Xinjiang Zizhiqu Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 132 Xibei Lu; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Xinjiang's massive provincial museum is a must for Silk Road aficionados. The highlight is the locally famous 'Loulan Beauty', one of the 3800-year-

old desert-mummified bodies of Indo-European ancestry that became symbols of Uighur independence in the 1990s. Other exhibits include some amazing silk and sculpture from Astana and an introduction to all of the province's minorities. From the Hongshan Intersection, take bus 7 for four stops and ask to get off at the museum (*bowuguan*).

Erdaoqiao Market

BAZAAR

(Erdaoqiao Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jiefang Nanlu)

The Erdaoqiao Market and nearby International Bazaar (Guoji Dabazha) have undergone extensive 'redevelopment' in recent years and are now aimed more at Chinese tour groups than Uighur traders. Planted in the bazaar is a replica of the Kalon Minaret from Bukhara in Uzbekistan (though the 12th-century original doesn't have an elevator inside it). The surrounding streets are worth a stroll for their Uighur markets and snack stalls.

Hongshan Park

PARK

(Hongshan Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥10; 🕒 dawn-dusk)

More of an amusement park, but with good city views, particularly from the 18th-century hilltop pagoda. The main southern entrance is to the north of the Xidaqiao Intersection.

People's Park

PARK

(Renmin Gongyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥5; 🕒 7.30am-dusk)

A green oasis, with north and south entrances.

Sleeping

Maitian International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Maitian Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 459 1488; www.xjmaitian.net; 726

Youhao Nanlu; dm ¥45-55, r ¥160; @ 📶)

On the east side of the Parkson Shopping Mall, centrally located Maitian has simple doubles and dorms, some with private bathrooms, and a pleasant common area—bar. The shared bathrooms are pretty grotty, but the rooms do get a regular cleaning. Book ahead in summer. Private rooms are discounted from November to mid-April.

White Birch International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Baihualin Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 488 1428; www.yhaxinjiang.com; 186 Nanhu Nanlu; dm ¥40-50, d ¥120; @ 📶)

The English-speaking staff at this hostel are usually friendly and can help organise trips and onward transport. It's a bit out of the centre but rooms are modern, and there's laundry and a nearby park. Email for bus directions or arrange an airport pickup. From the train station a taxi is around ¥15.

Super 8

HOTEL

(Suba Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 559 0666; www.super8.com.cn; 140 Gongyuan Beijie; tw ¥218-228; 📶 📶)

Quietly located behind People's Park, this is the best of the budget chain hotels, representing good value with its ultra-neat rooms, modern bathrooms and free Chinese-style breakfast.

Yema International Business Clubhouse

HOTEL

(Yema Guoji Shangwu Huiguan ☎ 768 8888; 158 Kunming Lu; tw incl breakfast ¥598-698; 📶 @)

This elegant and surprisingly stylish modern hotel has an art gallery, wine bar and restaurant, mixing traditional Chinese design with urban chic. It even has its own zoo out the back with rare animals including Przewalski horses (wild horses indigenous to Central Asia). There is a range of rooms, from less expensive Japanese-style doubles to larger rooms in the main tower. The hotel is located north of the city, next to the Kazakhstan Consulate.



Eating & Drinking

Wuyi Night Market

MARKET

(Wuyi Yeshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wuyi Lu)

This animated night market was closed at the time of writing as part of the government's campaign against terrorism. It was well known for its shish kebabs and handmade noodles, so check its status when in town.

Carrefour

SUPERMARKET

(Jialefu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

The branches of this French supermarket chain, notably in [Erdaoqiao Market](#) and near White Birch International Youth Hostel, are good for produce and both have excellent-value cafeterias.

Tianfu Zhengcai

SHANGHAINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 773 0076; 17 Lanxiuyuan Xijie; mains ¥15-40; 🕒 11am-11pm)

A cosy and friendly neighbourhood place just northwest of the Hongshan Intersection, featuring tasty eastern Chinese dishes. Try the Shanghai-style braised meatballs (*hongshao shizi tou*;) or tiger-skin peppers with braised eggplant (*hupi lazi shaoqiezi*;). It's down a side alley.

May Flower

UIGHUR

(Wuyuehua [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 153 Longquan Jie; meals ¥25-55; 🕒 11am-midnight)

Though part of a chain this place is still recommended for delicious Uighur cuisine. Try the specialty, *polo* (rice pilaf; *zhuafan*), along with a few sticks of shish kebab and a glass of pomegranate juice, then sit back and enjoy the traditional live music (8pm).

Aroma

EUROPEAN

(A'nuoma Xicanting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 196 Jianshe Lu; meals ¥40-100; 🕒 noon-midnight)

A Maltese chef who somehow washed up in Urumqi runs this cosy and warm bistro. Pizzas, pastas and risottos are local favourites, or sink your teeth into a tasty steak. Most of the ingredients are either home-grown or homemade. It's

opposite the Laiyuan Hotel.

Fubar

PUB FOOD

(Fuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 40 Gongyuan Beijie; beer ¥25-35, mains ¥35-65; 🕒 11am-4am; 📶)

This well-known, long-running expat watering hole recently changed hands. In addition to a good selection of imported beers, and classic pub grub like pizzas and burgers, you'll find some Spanish fare. Young expat teachers and volunteers congregate here, making this a good place to get the skinny on activities around Urumqi.

Fubar is on a street of bars and clubs if you want to make a big night of it.



Shopping

Navigate the Outdoors

OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

(Changxing Huwai Yongpin Dian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 453-0938; 437 Youhao Nanlu)

Almost directly opposite the China Southern Airlines Hotel, this small shop rents camping gear such as tents (per day ¥15), sleeping bags (per day ¥10) and sleeping pads (per day ¥5).



Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Jiefang Beilu & Dongfeng Lu; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3.30pm Sat & Sun)

Can handle most transactions and has an ATM (and at other branches).

China International Travel Service

TICKET OFFICE

(CITS; Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 282 1428; www.xinjiangtour.com; 33 Renmin Lu; 🕒 10am-7.30pm Mon-Fri)

This office runs standard tours around the province and can supply a driver and English-speaking guide.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Hongshan Intersection; 🕒 10am-10pm)

The main branch handles all international parcels.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 281 0452, ext 3456; Kelayayi Donglu; 🕒 10am-1.30pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri)

You should be able to renew a visa here but it might take two weeks.

Xinjiang Tianshan Fengqing Travel Agency

TRAVEL AGENCY

(Xinjiang Tianshan Fengqing Luxingshe [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 883-9406; Bogeda Binguan, 253 Guangming Lu)

For trips to Kanas Lake.

Getting There & Away

AIR

International flights include Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bishkek and Osh (Kyrgyzstan), Baku (Azerbaijan), Tbilisi (Georgia), Istanbul (Turkey), Islamabad (Pakistan), Moscow (Russia), Dushanbe (Tajikistan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Tehran (Iran). Some of these are seasonal and many are suspended without warning.

You can get to Urumqi from almost anywhere in China. Destinations within Xinjiang include Altay (Aletai), Hotan (Hetian), Kashgar (Kashi), Kuqa (Kuche), Tacheng and Yining. **China Southern** (Nanfang Hangkong Shoupiachu [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 95539; <http://skypearl.csair.com/cn/>; 576 Youhao Nanlu) has the most flights to and around Xinjiang, with a central booking office in the Southern Airlines Pearl International Hotel.

BUS

Two long-distance bus stations in Urumqi serve northern and southern destinations. The **main bus station** (Nianzigou Changtu Qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Heilongjiang Lu) has sleeper buses to the following:

- ➔ **Bu'erjin** ¥178 to ¥188, 12 hours, three daily (11.15am, 8.10pm and 8.40pm)
- ➔ **Hami** ¥150 to ¥160, seven hours, three daily (11am, 1pm and 8pm)
- ➔ **Yining** ¥178 to ¥188, 11 to 12 hours, almost hourly (8.30am to 9pm)

BRT bus 1 runs from the train station to Hongshan, passing Heilongjiang Lu on the way. Bus 44 or 906 pass directly in front of the bus station.

The **south bus station** (nanjiao keyunzhan) has frequent departures to the following:

- ➔ **Hotan** ¥370 to ¥390, 24 hours, every 30 minutes in the afternoon only (crossing the Taklamakan Desert)
- ➔ **Kashgar** ¥260 to ¥280, 24 hours, every 40 minutes in the afternoon only
- ➔ **Kuqa** ¥145 to ¥220, 12 to 13 hours, every 30 minutes in the afternoon only
- ➔ **Turpan** ¥45, 2½ hours, every 20 minutes

There is also a once-daily bus that travels to Cherchen (¥320 to ¥340, 22 to 24 hours) on the southern Silk Road, departing at 7pm. A seat in a private car to Turpan costs ¥85 and takes around two hours.

Bus 51 or 7 will get you to the south bus station from Hongshan Intersection. BRT bus 3 will get you here from the South Lake Square (via People's Sq) .

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO KAZAKHSTAN

If you have a Kazakhstan visa, you can go to Almaty in Kazakhstan by the daily 7pm bus (upper/lower bunk ¥440/460, 24 hours) departing from **Urumqi International Bus Station** (Wulumuqi Guoji Yunshu Qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎587 8637), behind the main bus station. Expect delays of several hours at the Korgas customs posts. A

longer but more pleasant trip is to break the journey in Yining.

Trains currently depart Urumqi twice weekly for Almaty, Kazakhstan (K9795, via Alashankou) on Monday and Saturday at midnight. The journey takes a slow 32 hours, six of which are spent at Chinese and Kazakh customs. Tickets cost ¥804 to ¥829.

There is also a Monday service (9797) to the Kazakh capital of Astana leaving at midnight. Tickets cost ¥1094.

Tickets can only be purchased in the lobby of the Ya'ou Jiudian (next to the train station), at the **booking office** (wang alamutu huochepiao shoupiaochu [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎10am-1pm & 3.30-6pm Sat, Mon, Wed & Thu). The booking office regulations are worth noting. Monday you buy same-day train tickets. Wednesday and Thursday you buy tickets for the next Saturday and Monday. Saturday you buy same-day tickets and tickets for next Monday.

At the time of research you could get a 30-day tourist visa at the **Kazakhstan Consulate** (Hasake Sitan Gongheguo Zhu ☎369-1444; 216 Kunming Lu; ☎9am-1pm Mon-Fri) in Urumqi. Visas take five days to be issued, cost US\$25 and you need one passport photo and copy of your passport and China visa. Visas generally specify your entry date into Kazakhstan. Show up early to apply and don't expect the consulate to pick up the phone if you call. If possible apply for a visa in Beijing or your home country.

TRAIN

Urumqi is expected to be connected to China's high-speed rail network by 2015. The following are regular train routes and schedules with hard/soft sleeper ticket prices:

- ➔ **Beijing** ¥575/887, 33 to 41 hours, two daily (10.35am and 5.33pm)
- ➔ **Dunhuang** (via Liuyuan) ¥214/325, 8½ to 10 hours, frequent
- ➔ **Hami** ¥148/223, 5½ to 7½ hours, frequent
- ➔ **Kashgar** ¥343/527 24 to 30 hours, three daily (8.43am, 9.17am and 11.51am)
- ➔ **Kuqa** ¥123-214/210-325, 14 to 19 hours, four daily (8.43am, 9.17am, 11.51am and 9.21pm)
- ➔ **Yining** ¥150/233, 10 hours, four daily (two at 8.50pm, 10.20pm and 11.17pm)

i Getting Around

The airport is 16km northwest of the centre; a taxi costs about ¥40 to ¥50. An airport bus (¥10) runs straight south through town via Hongshan Intersection to the train station every 30 minutes. In the city centre, an airport shuttle (¥15, free for China Southern passengers) leaves from the Southern Airlines Pearl International Hotel every 30 minutes starting at 7.30am. You'll need to arrive 10 minutes early to get a seat.

A subway system was under construction at the time of writing and as this is expected to disrupt bus lines for years to come, regard the following as mere guidelines.

The fastest and most useful buses are the BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) expresses, which dodge traffic by having their very own bus lanes. BRT 1 runs from the railway station to Hongshan Intersection and then north up Beijing Nanlu. BRT 3 runs from the south bus station to People's Sq and the South Lake Sq. Fares are a flat ¥1. See www.chinabrt.org for a route map.

Other useful buses (¥1) include bus 7, which runs up Xinhua Lu from the southern bus station through the Xidaqiao and Hongshan Intersections, and bus 52 from the train station to Hongshan Intersection.

Tian Chi

The rugged Tianshan range was well known to travellers along the northern Silk Road, who had to traverse its southern edge if they had any hope of making progress. Modern travellers have it easy and plan trips into the mountains themselves, especially to the stunning Tian Chi. This high-altitude lake is extremely popular these days (and getting more and more developed for mass Chinese tourism), but you can still ditch most of the crowds, who either stick to the paved paths on the northern end or ride overpriced boats across the lake. Stay overnight to get a few hours of quiet in the morning before the tour buses arrive.

Sights

Tian Chi Lake

LAKE

(Heaven Lake; admission ¥100)

Two thousand metres up in the Tian Shan range is Tian Chi, a small, long, steely-blue lake nestled below the view-grabbing 5445m **Peak of God** (Bogeda Feng). Scattered across the alpine pine and spruce-covered slopes are Kazakh yurts and lots of sheep. It was a paradise described in Vikram Seth's wonderful travelogue *From Heaven Lake*; and still is for some.

There are dirt roads, boardwalks and trails at Tian Chi to various peaks, or it's seven hours hiking around the lake (if the whole system is open, which it may not be anymore). For an easy walk try the path up to **Little Heavenly East Lake** (Dong Xiao Tianchi). There are also temples to explore on both the east and west shores, though many travellers are turned off by the commercial nature of these.

Sleeping

In late May, Kazakhs set up yurts around the lake for tourists at ¥50 to ¥80 per person in a shared yurt for up to 10 people; English-speaking **Rashit** ( 138 9964 1550; www.rashityurt.com; twin ¥150, with meals ¥200) is a popular host for backpackers and can arrange for a car to pick you up at the ticket booth. The yurt owners sometimes require ID, so make sure to bring your passport. Alternatively, you can camp at the lake but do so away from the main areas. Regardless of the temperature in Urumqi, take warm clothes and rain gear, as the weather can be unpredictable. Also don't forget to bring your own water and food if you plan to go hiking for any length of time.

Getting There & Around

Tourist buses to Tian Chi main gate leave Urumqi around 9am from the north gate of People's Park, and return around 6pm. Most stop at major hotels to

pick up passengers before leaving town. In the low season they may not run at all. The return fare is ¥50 and the trip takes about 2½ hours one way. Expect to stop at the usual tourist shopping traps along the way.

From the main gate (where you purchase a ticket), all travellers must take the park's own bus (¥90, every 10 to 15 minutes) for the 30-minute ride to another parking lot, which itself is still 1km before the lake. You can walk from the final lot or take a shuttle (¥10).

Turpan

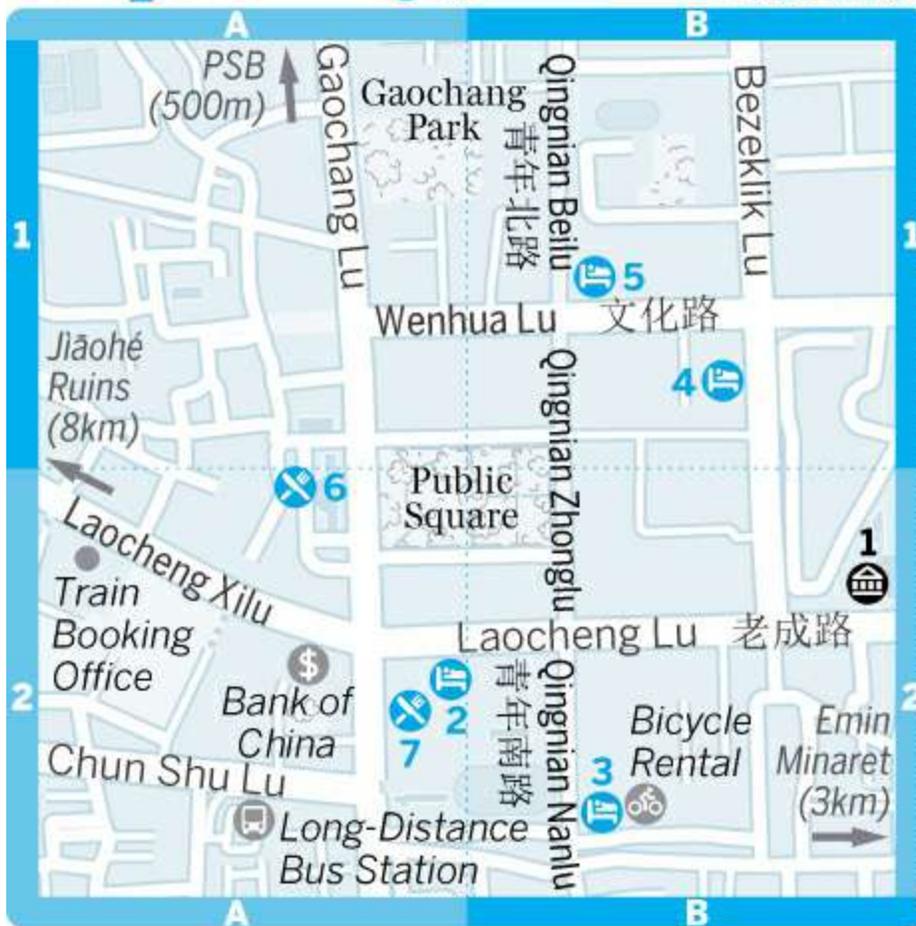
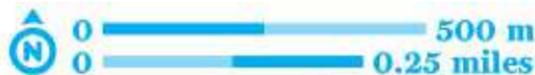
☞ 0995 / Pop 273,400

Turpan (Tulufan) is China's Death Valley. At 154m below sea level, it's the second-lowest depression in the world and the hottest spot in China. In July and August temperatures soar above 40°C, forcing the local population and visiting tourists into a state of semi-torpor.

Despite the heat, the ground water and fertile soil of the Turpan depression has made this a veritable oasis in the desert, evidenced by the nearby centuries-old remains of ancient cities, imperial garrisons and Buddhist caves.

Though the Turpan area has been inhabited for thousands of years, and was once an important oasis on the northern Silk Road, ruled and coveted by the Xiongnu, Han, Tiele, Tibetans and Uighurs, the new town is a fairly recent creation; the historic sites are scattered in the surrounding basin. Still, there is mellow vibe to the place, and recovering from a day's sightseeing over a cold Xinjiang beer under the grape vines on a warm summer evening is one of the joys of travelling through the province.

Turpan



Turpan

Sights

1 [Turpan Museum](#) B2

Sleeping

2 [Tianhe Binguan](#) A2

3 [Tulufan Binguan](#) B2

4 [Turpan White Camel Youth Hostel](#) B1

5 [Xizhou Dajiudian](#) B1

Eating

6 [Gaochang Lu Night Market](#) A2

[7 Hanzada Restaurant](#)
[John's Information Cafe](#)

A2
B2

Sights

Emin Minaret

ISLAMIC SITE

(Emin Ta admission ¥50;  9am-8pm)

Built to honor Turpan general Emin Hoja, this splendid 44m-high mud-brick structure, built 1777–78, is the tallest minaret in China. Also known as Sugong Ta after Emin's son Suleiman, who oversaw its construction, its bowling pin shape is decorated with an interesting mix of geometrical and floral patterns: the former reflect traditional Islamic design, the latter Chinese. You can no longer climb the interior steps of the minaret itself but the rest of the grounds, including the adjacent mosque, are open.

Biking or strolling the 3km to get there is half the fun. The dusty, tree-lined Uighur streets give a fascinating glimpse into old Turpan.

Turpan Museum

MUSEUM

(Tulufan Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  10am-7pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Xinjiang's second-largest museum houses a rich collection of relics recovered from archaeological sites across the Turpan Basin, including dinosaur fossils and a couple of local mummies. Pop in here before signing up for a tour; the photos of nearby sites might help you decide which ones to visit.

Sleeping

Turpan White Camel Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Tulufan Bai Tuo Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  156 0995 5676, 866 0556;

www.turpanwhitecamel.hostel.com; 55 Bezeklik Lu; dm/d ¥50/100; 🌐 @ 📶)

In an alley behind the Bezeklik Hotel is Turpan's one and only hostel. Rooms are bare but clean and there's wi-fi and bike rental (per day ¥30).

Tianhe Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 862 6999; 969 Laocheng Lu; tw ¥168; 🌐 @)

The spacious, modern and clean rooms are good value, though you might have to gently persuade them to take foreigners.

Tulufan Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 856 8888; tifbg@126.com; 2 Qingnian Nanlu; tw incl breakfast ¥280; 🌐 @)

The white-tile exterior of the old-school Turpan Hotel is uninspiring, but things improve when you enter the Arabian Nights–style lobby. Bike hire (per hour ¥5) and internet access are bonuses.

★ Turpan Silk Road Lodge

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Tulufan Shi Sichou Zhilu Gongyu 📞 856 8333; <https://silkroadlodges.com>; Munar Lu; r with breakfast ¥680; 🌐 @ 📶)

One of the very few boutique hotels in Xinjiang, Silk Road is set in a grape orchard across from [Emin Minaret](#). Though the rooms feature a flat international-chain-hotel design, the rooftop views over the fields and low rising desert hills make this a unique and peaceful retreat.

Xizhou Dajjudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 855 3666; 8 Qingnian Beilu; tw incl breakfast ¥320; 🌐 @ 📶)

A clean and friendly option, with an ugly pink-and-white exterior.

Eating

The string of restaurants that set up tables under the vine trellises on

Qingnian Lu are a fine place to savour a cold drink and bowl of *laghman* (pulled noodles; ¥15).

Gaochang Lu Night Market

MARKET

(Gaochang Lu Yeshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gaochang Lu; dishes from ¥10; 🕒 7pm-midnight)

Come dusk dozens of stalls set up shop by the fountains to the west of the main central square. Grab a cold beer and choose from fried fish, *shaguo* (casseroles), goat's feet soup and cumin-scented kebabs. Due to construction on Gaochang Lu the market can be a bit difficult to find, and noisy when there. Check out the area around the southern end of the Bazaar, near the new long-distance bus station.

John's Information Cafe

INTERNATIONAL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 150 2626 8966; Qingnian Nanlu; dishes from ¥12; 🕒 7.30am-11pm, May-Oct)

This backpacker refuge has a quiet location in the backyard of the [Tulufan Binguan](#). Western and Chinese dishes are offered and the ice-cream sundae is a treat in Turpan's blistering heat. There is little in the way of traveller information but it does have bike rental (per hour ¥5).

Hanzada Restaurant

UIGHUR

(Hanzada Haohua Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gaochang Lu; mains ¥15-40)

Popular with locals for its ornate Central Asian decor (think painted alabaster and chintzy chandeliers) and diner-style booths. The picture menu helps sort out the noodles from the *polo* and *dapanji* (Hui-style spicy chicken, potatoes and peppers), all of which are excellent.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Laocheng Lu; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm)

Changes cash and travellers cheques.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gaochang Lu)

North of the city centre; will likely refer you to the capital for visa extensions.

Getting There & Away

The nearest train station is at Daheyan, 54km north of Turpan. Even the new high-speed rail station (which should open late 2014) is out there. You can buy tickets in Turpan at the **train booking office** (Huoche Shoupiao chu [GOOGLE MAP](#); Laocheng Xilu; commission ¥5; 🕒 9am-1pm, 3.30-8pm), located inside a China Mobile office with the sign 'China TieTong' above. There are three trains a day to Kashgar (hard/soft sleeper ¥317/484, 23 hours) departing at 10.42am, 11.14am and 1.50pm.

From the **long-distance bus station** (Changtu Qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chun Shu Lu;), which is in Turpan, minibuses to Daheyan (¥11, 1½ hours) run approximately every 40 minutes.

Buses to Urumqi (¥45, 3½ hours) run every 20 minutes. There is one daily sleeper bus at 4pm to Kashgar (¥292 to ¥320, 23 hours). A bus to Hami (¥89, six hours) departs in the morning (check at the station for the exact schedule). For Dunhuang (¥161, 11 hours) in Gansu take afternoon sleeper bus (again, check in person for the schedule).

Getting Around

Public transport around Turpan is by taxi (flag fall at ¥5), minibus or bicycle. Bicycles (about ¥5 per hour), available from [John's Information Cafe](#) and [White Camel Youth Hostel](#), are convenient for the town and the [Emin Minaret](#).

Around Turpan

Most of Turpan's surrounding sights are fascinating, but some can be skipped if time is tight. Turpan's long-distance bus station has buses going to a couple of the spots, but it won't save you much. The easiest way to see the sights is on a customised day tour. Several travellers have recommended English-speaking **Tahir** (☎150 2626 1388; tahirtour8@yahoo.com) who offers both an English speaking driver service and a non-English service. A full day tour costs ¥380 to ¥480 per car. Contact Tahir by email first to ensure he is available and to discuss what you want to see. You'll be gone for the day, so don't underestimate the desert heat. Essential survival gear includes a water bottle, sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat.

You can bypass the **Astana Graves** (Asitana Gumuqu admission ¥20), since the most interesting finds of this imperial cemetery are in museums in Urumqi and Turpan. Some travellers enjoy the **Karez System** (| Kan'erjing admission ¥30), a museum dedicated to the uniquely Central Asian-style irrigation system that includes hundreds of kilometres of above and underground canals, wells and reservoirs (much of it still working). **Aydingkul Lake** (Aiding Hu admission ¥10), the second-lowest lake in the world and the hottest place in China, has dried in recent decades and now is mostly a muddy, salt-encrusted flat. But many people still enjoy the views.

Near Bezeklik Caves and Tuyuq are the **Flaming Mountains** (Huoyan Shan admission ¥40), which appear midday like multicoloured tongues of fire. The Flaming Mountains were immortalised in the Chinese classic *Journey to the West*, when Sun Wukong (the Monkey King) used his magic fan to extinguish the blaze. There's no need to pay the entry fee, as you can see the mountains anywhere on the roadside from Hami or Gaochang.

Jiaohe Ruins

★ Jiaohe Ruins

RUIN

(Jiaohe Gu Cheng admission ¥40)

Also called Yarkhoto, Jiaohe was established by the Chinese as a garrison town during the Han dynasty. It's one of the world's largest (6500 residents once lived here), oldest (1600 years old) and best-preserved ancient cities, inspiring with its scale, setting, and palpable historical atmosphere. Get an overview of the site at the central governor's complex then continue along the main road past a large monastery to a 'stupa grove' with a 10m-tall pagoda surrounded by 100 smaller pagoda bases.

The ruins are 8km west of Turpan. Take bus 101 (¥1) to its terminal station Yaer Xiang and then a minibus (¥2) or taxi (¥15). It's also possible to cycle here from Turpan.

Tuyoq

Tuyoq

VILLAGE

(Tuyugou admission ¥30)

Set in a green valley fringed by the Flaming Mountains, the mud-constructed village Tuyoq offers a glimpse of traditional Uighur life and architecture. Tuyoq has been a pilgrimage site for Muslims for centuries: the devout claim that seven trips here equal one trip to Mecca. On the hillside above the village (near the road) is the **Hojamu Tomb** (admission ¥20), a *mazar* (a tomb of a saint or holy notable that often functions as a pilgrims' destination), said to hold the first Uighur to convert to Islam.

Any Uighur planning a pilgrimage to Mecca is expected to stop here beforehand.

Up the gorge look for a series of Buddhist caves dating back to the 3rd century AD (thus the earliest discovered Buddhist caves in Xinjiang). The caves may still be closed, however, so check before heading out.

Don't leave town without trying some of the locally produced mulberry juice or dried berries, available near the tomb entrance.

Tuyoq is often looped into a tour with the Flaming Mountains and

Bezeklik Caves.

Gaochang (Khocho) Ruins

Gaochang

RUIN

(Gaochang Gu Cheng admission ¥40)

Originally settled in the 1st century BC, Gaochang rose to power in the 7th century during the Tang dynasty. Also known as Khocho, or sometimes Karakhoja, Gaochang became the Uighur capital in AD 850 and was a major staging post on the Silk Road until it burnt in the 14th century.

Texts in classical Uighur, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan have all been unearthed here, as well as evidence of a Nestorian church and a significant Manichaean community. Manichaeism was a major dualistic Persian religion widespread in the east and west between the 3rd and 7th centuries (St Augustine was once a Manichaean).

Though the earthen city walls, once 12m thick, are clearly visible, not much else is left standing other than a large Buddhist monastery in the southwest. To the north, adjacent to an adobe pagoda, is a two-storey structure (half underground), purportedly the ancient palace.

Bezeklik Caves

★ Bezeklik Cave Complex

CAVE

(Bozikelike Qianfo Dong admission ¥20)

This cave complex, which dates from the 6th to 14th century, has a fine location in a mesmerising desert landscape. Bezeklik means 'Place of Paintings' in Uighur and the murals painted in the 11th century represented a high point in Uighur Buddhist art. Sadly the site is now famous for having most of its distinctive cave art cut out of the rock face by German, Japanese and British teams in the early 20th century.

Even more sad is that many of these did not survive WWII bombings.

Today, only photographic remains exist for many masterpieces but there is still enough at the original site to make the trip out worthwhile. Most travellers also simply enjoy the chance to walk around a major historical complex without the usual crowds.

Hami (Kumul)

 0902 / Pop 365,000

Hami, with its famously sweet melons, was a much-anticipated stop on the Silk Road for ancient travellers. It's still worth a break today. There are enough sights to keep you busy for a day and the town is a convenient halfway point between Turpan and Dunhuang.

A **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang Guangchang Beilu) is located just north of the main square (Shidai Guangchang).

Sights

The main sights are located together, near the main bus station and 5km south of the train station; a taxi between the two is about ¥10.

Hami Kings Mausoleum

TOMB

(Hami Wangling Huancheng Lu; admission ¥40;  9.30am-8pm)

The main site in Hami is this peaceful complex of tombs containing the nine generations of Hami kings who ruled the region from 1697 to 1930. The green-tiled main tomb is of the seventh king Muhammed Bixir, with family members and government ministers housed in Mongolian-style buildings to the side.

Hami Museum

MUSEUM

(Hami Bowuguan Huancheng Lu;  9.30am-7pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Across from the Hami Kings Mausoleum, this mildly interesting museum

spotlights mummies and dinosaurs found in the region, including a cool fossilised nest of dinosaur eggs.

Kumul Muqam Heritage Centre

MUSEUM

(Hami Mukamu Chuan-cheng Zhongxin admission ¥15; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-7pm)

This eye-catching building focuses specifically on *muqam*, the classical form of Uighur music.

Sleeping

Jiuchongtian Binguan

HOTEL

(📞 231 5656; 4 Tianshan Beilu; d ¥158-168; 🌐 @)

Clean and fresh rooms, some with computers. With your back to the train station, it's 50m straight ahead, on the right.

Getting There & Away

A high-speed rail station should open in late 2014 (tests of the line began in the summer) in Hami connecting it with Urumqi and Turpan in the west and Dunhuang in the east. This will be by far the fastest way to travel between these regions. Use Hami's other name, Kumul, when doing rail searches.

There are also frequent regular trains in the morning (less frequent in the afternoon) to Urumqi (hard seat/sleeper ¥78/148, six hours).

Long-distance buses depart from the **south bus station** (nanjiao keyunzhan), located 200m east of the [Hami Kings Mausoleum](#).

➔ **Dunhuang** ¥65, 8.30am and 4pm

➔ **Turpan** ¥60, six hours, 9.30am

➔ **Urumqi** ¥80 to ¥90, nine hours, 11am, 1pm and 8pm

Local bus No 3 runs from the train station to the south bus station and museum via the central bus station.

Kuqa

 0997 / Pop 68,100

Part of an excellent triangular itinerary with Kashgar and Hotan, Kuqa (Kuche) is well worth a couple of days for its interesting bazaars and excursions to the surrounding desert ruins.

The once thriving city-state, known as Qiuci, was a major centre of Buddhism and was famed in Tang-era China for its music and dancers. Kumarajiva (AD 344–413), the first great translator of Buddhist sutras from Sanskrit into Chinese, was born here to an Indian father and Qiuci princess, before later being abducted to central China to manage translations of the Buddhist canon. When the 7th-century monk Xuan Zang passed through nearby Subashi, he recorded that two enormous 30m-high Buddha statues flanked Kuqa's western gate, and that the nearby monasteries held over 5000 monks.

The bus station is east of the town centre on Tianshan Lu, and the train station is a further 5km southeast.

Sights

Qiuci Palace

MUSEUM

(Kuche Wangfu Linjilu Jie; admission ¥60;  9am-8.30pm; )

Located in the old town, 3.5km west of the centre, is the newly restored (ie rebuilt) Qiuci Palace, the residence of the kings of Qiuci until the early 20th century. The museum has a good collection of Buddhist frescoes, some from the nearby Kumtura and Simsim caves, and there are human remains from the surrounding desert ruins. Behind the museum, the ancestral hall displays the history of the Qiuci kings and photos of the life of the last king, Dawud Mahsut, now an elderly local party official.

Nearby is an impressive section of Qing-dynasty city wall.

Sunday Bazaar

MARKET

(Laocheng Baza)

Every Sunday a large bazaar is held about 2.5km west of the modern town, next to a bridge over the Kuqa River on Renmin Lu. It doesn't quite rival Kashgar's, but you won't find any tour buses here. A small livestock market also takes place here on Fridays.

Rasta Mosque

MOSQUE

(Resitan Qingzhen Si)

The charming Rasta Mosque, near Kuqa's Sunday Bazaar, draws a throng of worshippers at Friday lunchtime. North of here, through the old town, is the large but less animated **Great Mosque** (Qingzhen Dasi admission ¥15), built in 1931 on the site of a 16th-century original.

Maulana Ashiddin Mazar

TOMB

(Molana Eshiding Maza)

This timeless green-tiled mosque and tomb of a 13th-century Arabian missionary is surrounded by a sea of graves and overflows with worshippers at Friday lunchtime prayers. It's a 10-minute walk from the Kuche Binguan, along mulberry-tree-lined Wenhua Lu.

Sleeping & Eating

Jiaotong Binguan

HOTEL

(Traffic Hotel  712 2682; 194 Tianshan Lu; tw ¥160;  )

Located next to the bus station, this place has a range of acceptable rooms. There's wi-fi in the lobby.

Kuche Binguan

HOTEL

( 712 2901; 17 Jiefang Beilu; tw with breakfast ¥258;  )

Kuqa's main hotel has fresh rooms with plush carpets in the new block and scruffier but acceptable rooms in the quiet old block. It's located near the city centre. Catch a taxi here.

★ Uchar Darvaza Bazaar

MARKET

(Wuqia Nonghuo Shichang)

The best place for Uighur food is this street at the junction of Tianshan Zhonglu and Youyi Lu. Kebabs, noodles and *samsas* (baked mutton pies) are all served hot and fresh, though our favourites are the chicken kebabs served with sombrero-sized local nan. Some stalls start to close at 9pm, others only set up from 10pm.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang 25 Wenhua Lu; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri)

Wenhua Lu has several Bank of Chinas. Travellers cheques are not accepted.

Getting There & Away

The new airport, 35km west of the city, has daily flights to Urumqi (¥550). A taxi there costs ¥30.

The bus station has a variety of sleepers heading east.

- ➔ **Aksu** ¥65, four hours, hourly. At Aksu you can connect to Kashgar.
- ➔ **Hotan** ¥192, eight hours, one daily at noon
- ➔ **Kashgar** ¥150, 16 hours. You may have to wait for a sleeper from Urumqi to pass and hope that it has berths.
- ➔ **Urumqi** ¥207 to ¥262, 12 hours, seven per day (one at noon, the others in the evening)

The train station is southeast of the centre. A taxi costs ¥10.

- ➔ **Kashgar** hard/soft sleeper ¥182/275, 10 hours, three daily (12.40am,

6.59am and 11.23pm)

➔ **Urumqi** hard/soft sleeper ¥214/325, 15 to 19 hours, four daily (7.14am, 7.13pm, 8.43pm and 10.18pm)

Getting Around

Taxi rides are a standard ¥5 per trip, with pedicabs, tractors and donkey carts around half this.

Around Kuqa

Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves

Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves

CAVE

(Kezi'er Qianfo Dong admission ¥55;  daylight)

Seventy-five kilometres northwest of Kuqa are the Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves, the largest Buddhist cave art site in Xinjiang. The interior murals date from the 3rd to the 8th centuries and as ancient Kuqa was an ethnically diverse place, artisans were inspired by Afghanisti, Persian and Indian motifs and styles. The heavy use of blue pigment in middle-period murals is a Persian influence, for example. Only the last phase shows any Chinese influence.

The caves are generally built the same way, with two chambers and a central niche. The front vaulted chamber roof contains murals of the Buddha's past lives (so-called *jataka* tales) and, unique to Kizil, the pictures are framed in diamond-shaped patterns. There are 236 caves at Kizil, but only a handful are open to the public. Several were stripped by German archaeologist Albert Von le Coq, while the others have been defaced by both Muslims and Red Guards.

The caves are 75km from Kuqa. A return taxi will cost around ¥200 to ¥300 and takes 90 minutes each way. Add on stops in Subashi and the 13.5m-

tall Han-dynasty **watchtower** (fenghuotai; admission ¥15) at Kizilgah if you can't bargain down a lower price.

Subashi Ruins

Subashi

RUIN

(admission ¥25; 🕒 daylight)

Subashi was a Buddhist complex that thrived from the 3rd to the 13th centuries. It's less visited than other ancient cities in Xinjiang, but with its starkly beautiful desert setting, is a highlight for many travellers in the region. Most people visit the west complex, with its large central *vihara* (monastery) and two large pagodas, but the dramatic eastern complex across the Kuqa River is worth the hike.

A return taxi to Subashi, 23km northeast of Kuqa, costs about ¥80 to ¥100; you'll need to pay extra waiting time if you want to visit the eastern ruins.

SOUTHWEST XINJIANG – KASHGARIA

The Uighurs' heartland is Kashgaria, the rough-but-mellifluous-sounding historical name for the western Tarim Basin. Consisting of a ring of oases lined with poplar trees, it was a major Silk Road hub and has bristled with activity for more than 2000 years, with the weekly bazaars remaining the centre of life here to this day.

Kashgar

📞 0998 / Pop 350,000

Locked away in the westernmost corner of China, physically closer to Tehran and Damascus than to Beijing, Kashgar (Kashi) has been the epicentre of regional trade and cultural exchange for more than two millennia.

In recent years modernity has swept through Kashgar like a sandstorm.

The roads, rail and planes that now connect the city to the rest of China have brought waves of Han migrant workers and huge swaths of the old city have been bulldozed in the name of economic ‘progress’.

Yet, in the face of these changes, the spirit of Kashgar lives on. Uighur craftsmen and artisans still hammer and chisel away in side alleys, traders haggle over deals in the boisterous bazaars and donkey carts still trundle their way through the suburbs. And the Sunday livestock market is the real deal, no matter how many tour buses roll up.

So soak it in for a few days, eat a few kebabs, chat with the local carpet sellers, visit the holiest sites in Xinjiang and prepare your trip along the southern Silk Road to Hotan, over the Torugart or Irkeshtam Passes to Kyrgyzstan or south along the stunning Karakoram Hwy to Pakistan.



Kashgar

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Sights

★ Grand (Sunday) Bazaar

MARKET

(Dabazha; Yengi Bazaar [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Aizirete Lu, 🕒 daily)

Kashgar's main bazaar is open every day but really kicks it up a gear on Sunday. Step carefully through the jam-packed entrance and allow your five senses to guide you through the market; the pungent smell of cumin, the sight of scorpions in a jar, the sound of *muqam* music from tinny radios, the taste of hot *samsas* and the feel of soft sheepskin caps are seductive, and overwhelming.

A section on the northern side of the market contains everything of interest to foreign visitors, including the spice market, musical instruments, fur caps, kitschy souvenirs and carpets. A taxi to the market is ¥5 to ¥10.

Sunday Livestock Market

MARKET

(Dongwu Shichang, Mal Bazaar 🕒 8am-6pm Sun)

No visit to Kashgar is complete without a trip to the Livestock Market, which takes place once a week on Sunday. The day begins with Uighur farmers and herders trekking into the city from nearby villages. By lunchtime just about every sellable sheep, camel, horse, cow and donkey within 50km has been squeezed through the bazaar gates. It's dusty, smelly and crowded, and most people find it wonderful, though the treatment of the animals often leaves something to be desired.

Trading at the market is swift and boisterous between the old traders; animals are carefully inspected and haggling is done with finger motions. Keep an ear out for the phrase '*Bosh-bosh!*' ('Coming through!') or you risk being ploughed over by a cartload of fat-tailed sheep.

In 2012 the market relocated to the northeastern suburbs. A taxi here costs ¥20 to ¥25; it's a good idea to pay it to wait for your return. Alternatively take bus No 23 from the Sunday Bazaar. Tour buses usually arrive in the morning, so consider an early afternoon visit. A few simple stalls offer hot

samsas if you get peckish.

If you miss the Sunday Market, don't despair: there are plenty of other markets in Xinjiang to visit. Try the Sunday market in Hotan or Kuqa, the Monday market in Upal or the Tuesday market in Charbagh.

Abakh Hoja (Afaq Khoja) Mausoleum

TOMB

(Xiangfeimu, Abakh Hoja Maziri admission ¥30; 🕒 daylight)

On the northeastern outskirts of town is the Abakh Hoja Mausoleum, a 3-hectare complex built by the Khoja family who ruled the region in the 17th and 18th centuries. Widely considered the holiest Muslim site in Xinjiang, it's a major pilgrimage destination and a beautiful piece of Islamic architecture well worth a long lingering visit.

Founded as a religious school by Yusuf Khoja, the mausoleum was built in 1640 with further halls and mosques being added over the next three centuries. In addition to housing the remains of Yusuf, dozens of Khoja family members are interned here. These include Yusuf's son Abakh Hoja, a famed 17th-century Sufi and political leader (and after who the mausoleum is named), and according to legend, Iparhan, Abakh Hoja's granddaughter.

Known to the Chinese as Xiang Fei, the 'Fragrant Concubine' of the Emperor Qianlong, Iparhan remains a potent symbol of the Chinese-Uighur divide. To the Han, she was the beloved but homesick concubine of the Emperor and thus a symbol of national unity. To the Uighur she was a resistance leader (or the wife of one) who was captured and taken to Beijing where she died (and was likely buried) broken-hearted, or was killed by the Emperor's mother.

The mausoleum complex has an irregular design so all the mosques face Mecca at a slightly different angle. South are the main stone gate, with its striking blue tiles, and the High and Low Mosques. These mosques form a typical pairing in Uighur religious architecture and are known as summer and winter mosques: their open-sided and closed structures, respectively, allow for prayer during the different seasons. Note the wooden and painted columns here, carved in 1926, with their *muqarnas* capitals (a traditional Persian

design likened to hanging stalactites).

The Great Mosque is in the west of the complex, while the small Green Mosque (which also has summer and winter halls) is in the north. The domed mausoleum, the tallest structure in the complex, is east, and is surrounded by a graveyard wall with four colourful towers in the corners. The most striking feature, however, are the mismatched exterior tiles, the result of piecemeal repairs over the years.

A taxi here is ¥10 to ¥15.

Old Town

OLD TOWN

The Chinese government spent the past two decades knocking the Old Town down, block by block, and building a replacement. Many travellers still enjoy exploring the new areas but to see some of the last remaining alleys check out the neighborhood near Donghai Lake in the east part of the city. Sprawling on both sides of Jiefang Lu there are also alleys lined with Uighur workshops and adobe houses right out of an early-20th-century picture book.

Where they exist, houses range in age from 50 to 500 years old and the lanes twist haphazardly through neighbourhoods where Kashgaris have lived and worked for centuries. It's a great place for strolling, peeking through gates, chatting up the locals and admiring the craftsmen as they bang on tin and chase copper.

Traditional houses in Kashgar, rarely more than two-stories high, are built with poplar timber and mud bricks. Walls are very thick but usually unadorned on the outside. The inner courtyards and balconies, however, are decorated with woodcarvings and hangings.

At the eastern end of Seman Lu stands a 10m-high section of the Old Town walls, which are at least 500 years old.

Id Kah Mosque

MOSQUE

(Ai Tiga'er Qingzhen Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Id Kah Sq; admission ¥30)

The yellow-tiled Id Kah Mosque, which dates from 1442, is the spiritual and

physical heart of the city. Enormous (it's the largest mosque in China), its courtyard and gardens can hold 20,000 people during the annual Qurban Baiyram. Also known as Eid, or Id, celebrations they fall in September for the next few years.

Non-Muslims may enter, but not during prayer time. Dress modestly, including a headscarf for women. Take off your shoes if entering carpeted areas and be discreet when taking photos.

The stalls outside the mosque are a good place to pick up a striped *khalat* (cloak) or traditional Uighur *doppi* (skullcap).

Shipton's Arch (Tushuk Tagh)

NATURAL LANDMARK

This natural rock arch (the Uighur name means 'mountain with a hole in it') is reputedly the tallest on earth. The first Westerner to describe it was the British mountaineer and last British consul-general in Kashgar, Eric Shipton, during his visit to the region in 1947. Successive expeditions attempted to find it without success until a team from *National Geographic* rediscovered the arch in 2000. The arch, located 80km northwest of Kashgar, is a half-day excursion from Kashgar.

The first part of the trip involves an hour's drive towards the Irkeshtam Pass, followed by another 20km ride and then a 30-minute hike. At times you'll be scrambling through the narrowest part of the gorge over small ladders. Kashgar-based tour operators can arrange a day trip with guide for ¥600 to ¥800 per car plus ¥400 for the guide. Bring sturdy shoes, a fleece, snacks and water.

Mor Pagoda

RUIN

(Mu'er Fota admission ¥15; 🕒 daylight)

At the end of a 45km drive northeast of town are the ruins of Ha Noi, a Tang-dynasty town built in the 7th century and abandoned in the 12th century. Little remains apart from an enigmatic pyramid-like structure and the impressive four-tiered Mor Pagoda. A round-trip taxi, including waiting time, costs ¥100 to ¥150.

Tours

Popular tours include four-day treks around Muztagh Ata, overnighting in tents, yurts or villages, as well as overnight camel tours into the dunes fringing the Taklamakan Desert around Davakul Lake or Yarkand. For a real challenge, consider biking the Karakoram Hwy.

Ablimit 'Elvis' Ghopar

TOUR

( 138 9913 6195; elvisablimit@yahoo.com)

Local English-speaking Uighur carpet dealer Elvis organises city-wide cultural trips, with a special emphasis on Uighur classical music and the Kashgar carpet market. Find him at the Saqiya Teahouse near Id Gah Mosque.

Old Road Tours

TOUR

( [MAP](#)  [GOOGLE MAP](#); ( 220 4012, 138 9913 2103; www.oldroadtours.com; 337 Seman Lu)

One of the best, run by Abdul Wahab and operating out of the Seman Binguan. Can arrange trekking at Muz Tagh Ata, homestays in Turpan villages and Yining, overnighting in the desert, and overnight camel tours in the Taklimakan desert.

Uighur Tours

TOUR

( [MAP](#)  [GOOGLE MAP](#); ( 298 1073; www.kashgartours.com; 144 Seman Lu)

Ali Tash runs this recommended agency based in the Chini Bagh Hotel. It offers tours and treks of Karakul lake and Muztagh Ata, camel treks in the Taklimakan desert, and even Uighur cooking lessons.

Sleeping

Accommodation can be tighter on the days preceding the Sunday Market.

★ Pamir Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Kashi Pami'er Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 282-3376, 180-9985-1967; www.pamirhostel.com/en; 3f Id Kah Bazaar District 7, Section A; dm ¥40-50, d without bathroom ¥150; ❄️ 📶)

With an outdoor terrace that overlooks the beautiful Id Kah Mosque, this hostel has quickly become a popular base for exploring the city and its historical surroundings. Dorm rooms are basic but include individual lockers and free wifi. To find Pamir look for the green dome just north of the mosque.

Kashgar Old Town Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Kashi Laocheng Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 282 3262; www.pamirinn.com; 233 Ostangboyi Lu (Wusitangboyi Lu), tw without bathroom ¥100-120, tw with breakfast ¥160; @ 📶)

Nestled in the old city, this atmospheric place is set around a courtyard where overlanders hang out on *shyrdaks* (Kyrgyz-style felt carpets), swapping stories and travel info. The rooms are bare, the toilets simple and the beds are rock hard, but staff speak English and there's cheap laundry and free internet access.

Sahar Hotel

BUDGET HOTEL

(Seha'er Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 258 1122; 348 Seman Lu; tw ¥70; 📶)

A friendly but dowdy hotel whose customers are mostly Pakistani, Tajik and Uighur traders. The hotel offers some of the cheapest ensuite rooms available to foreigners, with wi-fi, though they are pretty simple. Rooms on the 3rd floor are best.

Chini Bagh Hotel

HOTEL

(Qiniwake Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 298 2103; 144 Seman Lu; tw with breakfast ¥288-328; ❄️ @ 📶)

The Chini Bagh, immortalised in William Dalrymple's travelogue *In Xanadu*, is located on the grounds of the former British consulate (1901–1951). The central location is convenient for the Old Town. Visit the Chinese restaurant

behind the north block to see the old consulate building.

Eden Hotel

HOTEL

(Haierbage Dafandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 266 4444; 148 Seman Lu; tr with breakfast ¥188; 📶)

The quiet rooms and excellent location of this midrange hotel make it good value. The staff speak some English and there's an excellent attached Turkish restaurant.

Yambu Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinzu Dafandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 258 8888; 198 Renmin Xilu; d ¥238; 📶 @)

A good bet for affordable, modern and spacious midrange comfort but check a couple of rooms as standards vary. As ever, the back rooms are quietest.

Eating

Kashgar is one of the best places in Xinjiang to try the full gamut of Uighur food.

★ Ou'er Daxike Night Market

MARKET

(Ou'er Daxike Yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Ou'er Daxike Lu; meals from ¥10; 🕒 8pm-midnight Xinjiang time)

The night market across Jiefang Beilu from the Id Kah Mosque is a great place to sample local fare. Among the goodies are fried fish, chickpeas, kebabs, fried dumplings known as *hoshan* and bubbling vats of goat's head soup. Top off a meal with a glass of tart pomegranate juice or freshly churned vanilla-scented ice cream.

Karakorum Cafe

CAFE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 87 Seman Lu; mains ¥20-48; 🕒 10.30am-10.30pm; 📶)

Smart-looking but slightly sterile cafe serving Western-style breakfasts,

sandwiches, desserts and coffee (¥10 to ¥28) in an oasis of delicious quiet.

Altun Orda

UIGHUR

(Jin'ao'erda Yinshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xibei Lu; dishes from ¥25; 🕒 8am-10pm)

Perfect for a celebration or last Kashgar meal, Altun Orda is a sumptuously decorated Uighur restaurant famous for its roasted mutton (¥78), *gosh nan* (meat pie) and *mirizlig samsa* (pastry with raisins and almonds). There are branches across Xinjiang.

John's Cafe

INTERNATIONAL

(Yuehan Zhongxi Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.johncafe.net; 337 Seman Lu; mains from ¥20; 🕒 May-Oct; 📶)

This is a popular backpacker hang-out, offering both Western (pricey) and Chinese (cheaper) dishes. Management also arranges local tours.

UIGHUR FOOD

Uighur cuisine includes all the trusty Central Asian standbys, such as kebabs, polo (pilau rice) and chuchura (dumplings), but has benefited from Chinese influence to make it the most enjoyable region of Central Asia in which to eat.

Uighurs boast endless varieties of laghman (pulled noodles; lamian in Chinese), though the usual topping is a combination of mutton, peppers, tomatoes, eggplant and garlic shoots. Suoman are torn noodle squares fried with tomatoes, peppers, garlic and meat, with suoman goshsiz the vegetarian variety. Suoman can be quite spicy, so ask for lazasiz (without peppers) if you prefer a milder version.

Kebabs are another staple and are of a much better standard than the ropey shashlyk of the Central Asian republics. Jiger (liver) kebabs are the low-fat variety. Tonor kebabs are larger and baked in an oven tonor (tandoori) style. True kebab connoisseurs insist on kovurgah kebab or bel kebab, made from rib and waist meat respectively. Most are flavoured with zir (cumin).

Nan (breads) are a favourite staple and irresistible when straight out of the oven and sprinkled with poppy seeds, sesame seeds or fennel. They make a great plate for a round of kebabs, especially the Hotanese variety, which are more than 2ft wide. Most Uighur restaurants serve small cartons of delicious ketik (yoghurt) to accompany your meal.

Other snacks include serik ash (yellow, meatless noodles), nokot (chickpeas),

pintang (meat and vegetable soup) and gang pan (rice with vegetables and meat). Opke is a broth of bobbing goat's heads and coiled, stuffed intestines.

Samsas (baked mutton dumplings) are available everywhere, but the meat-to-fat ratio varies wildly. Hotan and Kashgar offer huge meat pies called daman or gosh girde.

For dessert try morozhenoe (vanilla ice cream churned in iced wooden barrels), kharsen meghriz (fried dough balls filled with sugar, raisins and walnuts, also known as chiker koimak) or dogh (sometimes known as doghap), a delicious mix of shaved ice, syrup, yoghurt and iced water. As with all ice-based food, try the latter at your own risk. Tangzaza are triangles of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves covered in syrup.

Anyone with a sweet tooth should look for carts selling matang (walnut fruit loaf), and sokmak, a delicious paste of walnuts, raisins, almonds and sugar, sold by the 500g jar (¥20 to ¥30) at honey and nut stalls. It's fine to ask for a free sample.

Xinjiang is justly famous for its fruit, whether it be uruk (apricots), uzum (grapes), tawuz (watermelon), khoghun (sweet melon) or yimish (raisins). The best grapes come from Turpan; the sweetest melons from Hami. Markets groan with the stuff from July to September.

Meals are washed down with kok chai (green tea), often laced with nutmeg or rose petals. The one local beer worth going out of your way for is bottled Xinjiang Black Beer, a dark lager-style brew.



Shopping

For serious shopping go to the Old Town, ready to bargain. Kum Darwaza Lu is a good starting point. The Grand Bazaar has a decent selection but prices tend to be higher. Hats, teapot sets, copper- and brassware, kebab skewers and Uighur knives are among the best souvenirs.

Grand (Sunday) Bazaar

MARKET

(Dabazha Aizirete Lu; 🕒 daily)

Most carpet dealers display their wares at the Market pavilion. The rugs here are made of everything from silk to synthetics and finding traditional designs can be difficult. The brightly coloured felt Kyrgyz-style *shyrdaks* are a good buy.

Ahmed Carpet Shop

HOMEWARES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 283 1557; 49 Kum Darwaza Lu)

Ahmed and his son run this Old Town carpet shop, offering a good selection of antique and new carpets, *gilims* and *shyrdaks* from across Central Asia.

Uighur Musical Instrument Factory

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 272 Kum Darwaza Lu)

You'll find long-necked stringed instruments here running the gamut from souvenirs to collectors' items. If any traditional performances are on, owner Mohammed will know where to find them. There are several places with the same name on the same street.

Ilhas Supermarket

SUPERMARKET

(Yihelasi Chaoshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jiefang Beilu; 🕒 10am-midnight)

An excellent choice of Turkish and Central Asian goods underneath the Id Kah plaza.

Information

Travellers have lost money or passports to pickpockets at the Sunday Market, so keep yours tucked away.

Kashgar is the most conservative corner of Xinjiang and the one place where you will see women's faces obscured by headscarves or veils. Some foreign women walking the streets alone have been sexually harassed. It is wise for women travellers to dress as would be appropriate in any Muslim country, covering arms and legs.

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); People's Sq; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm & 4-7pm)

Changes travellers cheques and cash and has a 24-hour ATM. You can also sell yuan back into US dollars at the foreign-exchange desk if you have exchange receipts; this is a good idea if you are headed to Tashkurgan, where

the bank hours are erratic.

People's Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Renmin Yiyuan Jiefang Beilu)

North of the river.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju 111 Youmulakexia Lu; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm & 4-8pm)

Visa extensions take three to four days, dependent on the political climate.

Getting There & Away

It's imperative when you buy tickets in Kashgar to verify 'which time' the ticket is for. It should be Beijing time, but this isn't always the case.

Note that in 2014, heightened security meant there were a number of new checkpoints on the roads and bus journeys could be 50% longer than scheduled. It's best to take the train whenever possible.

Over a dozen daily flights depart for Urumqi (¥1100).

Domestic buses use the **long-distance bus station** (Diqu Keyunzhan 

; Tiannan Lu):

- ➔ **Hotan** ¥132 to ¥145, seven to 10 hours, every 1½ hours
- ➔ **Karghilik** ¥52 to ¥65, four hours, frequent
- ➔ **Tashkurgan** (on the Karakorum Hwy) ¥55, six hours, two per day (9.30am and 10am)
- ➔ **Yarkand** ¥39 to ¥47, three hours, frequent
- ➔ **Yengisar** ¥17, 1½ hours, frequent

Faster shared taxis also run to all these places for twice the bus fare; a ticket office just inside the entrance sells tickets.

Sleeper buses depart from the **international bus station** (Guoji Qichezhan

; Jiefang Beilu):

- ➔ **Kuqa** ¥260 12 hours, three per day (11am, 4pm and 7pm)
- ➔ **Urumqi** ¥265 to ¥280, 24 hours, eight buses per day between 9am and 10pm
- ➔ **Hotan** hard seat/sleeper ¥33/77, seven hours, one per day (9.21am)
- ➔ **Urumqi** hard sleeper ¥182-342, soft sleeper ¥338-527, 25 to 31 hours, three daily (8.01am, 12.52pm and 9.41pm)

There are also trains to **Yengisar** (two hours), **Yarkand** (four hours), and **Karghilik** (5½ hours).

You can buy tickets from the **train booking office** (Huoche Shoupiao) [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tiannan Lu; commission ¥5; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 3-8pm) at the long-distance bus station.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO KYRGYZSTAN, PAKISTAN & TAJIKISTAN

TO KYRGYZSTAN

There are two passes into Kyrgyzstan: the Torugart Pass, which leads to Naryn and then Bishkek in the north; and the Irkeshtam Pass, which goes to Osh in the south. Getting to Osh (¥570, two days) is straightforward, with a sleeper bus leaving Kashgar's [international bus station](#) at 9am on Monday and Friday. You can also hire a car through a Kashgar agency, though no special permits or guide are needed for this route.

Crossing the Torugart requires more red tape, for which you will need a travel agency's help. You will also need to have pre-arranged transport on the Kyrgyz side, which travel agents can arrange with their contacts in Naryn or Bishkek. [Old Road Tours](#) in Kashgar runs trip to Naryn and back nearly every day. It usually only needs a day or two to arrange permits.

Kyrgyzstan visas are available from the consulate in Urumqi. Bring one passport photo and a copy of your passport and visa and arrive early because the consulate is only open for two hours a day.

TO PAKISTAN

Buses to/from Sost (¥270, two days) in Pakistan leave Kashgar's [international bus station](#) daily at noon. However, if there are fewer than 10 passengers the bus may not depart until the following day. The 500km trip stops overnight at Tashkurgan, where

customs procedures are conducted. You can also hire a car from one of the tour outfits in Kashgar though this will be considerably more expensive.

Officially, the border opens daily between 1 May and 31 October. However, the border can open late or close early depending on conditions at the Khunjerab Pass, and may close on weekends. The Chinese customs and immigration formalities are done at Tashkurgan (technically 3km down the road towards Pakistan). Then it's 126km to the last checkpoint at Khunjerab Pass, the actual border, where your documents are checked again before you head into Pakistan. Pakistan immigration formalities are performed at Sost. Pakistani visas are no longer available to tourists on arrival (and visas are difficult to get in Beijing), so the safest option is to arrive in China with a visa obtained in your home country. Check the current situation as this could change.

TO TAJIKISTAN

The 4362m Qolma (Kulma) Pass linking Kashgar with Murghab (via Tashkurgan) opened in 2004 to local traders. As of 2014 it was still closed to foreign travellers.

Getting Around

The airport is 13km northeast of the town centre. A taxi costs ¥15 to ¥20 but drivers often ask for double this. Bus 2 (¥1) goes directly to the airport from People's Sq and Id Kah Mosque.

Giant Bike Shop (Jie'ante Zixingche  640 1616; 37 Jiankang Lu) rents bikes for ¥50 per day. It's located 1.5km south of town opposite the Three Fortune Hotel (Sanyun Binguan). [Kashgar Old Town Youth Hostel](#) also rents bikes (per day ¥40).

Useful bus routes are Buses 2 (Jiefang Lu north to the international bus station and the airport), 9 (international bus station to the Chini Bagh Hotel and Seman Binguan), 20 (China Post to Abakh Hoja Tomb) and 28 (Id Kah Mosque to the train station). The fare is ¥1.

Taxis are metered and the flag fall is ¥5. Nowhere in town should cost more than ¥15.

Karakoram Highway

The Karakoram Hwy (KKH; Zhongba Gonglu) over the Khunjerab Pass (4800m) is one of the world's most spectacular roads and China's gateway to Pakistan. For centuries this route was used by caravans plodding down the Silk Road. Khunjerab means 'valley of blood' – local bandits used to take advantage of the terrain to slaughter merchants and plunder caravans. Note this section only deals with exploring the highway within China. For getting into Pakistan, (see [Click here](#)).

Facilities en route are being gradually improved, but take warm clothing, food and drink on board with you – once stowed on the bus roof it will be unavailable on the journey. Check the state of the highway well ahead of time.

Within China, many travellers head up the highway at least to Tashkurgan. It's possible to do a day trip to Karakul Lake and back but it's much better to spend a night or two up in these gorgeous mountains camping and trekking. Some travellers also hire bikes in Kashgar: get a lift up to Tashkurgan and cycle back for an exciting three-day journey.

During times of political tension foreigners need a permit from a travel agent to get past the checkpoint at Ghez. Check in advance with a Kashgar travel agency.

Kashgar to Tashkurgan

Travelling up the KKH to Tashkurgan is a highlight of Kashgaria. The journey begins with a one-hour drive through the Kashgar oasis to **Upal** (Wupa'er in Chinese), where most vehicles stop for breakfast, especially during the interesting Monday market. The renovated **Tomb of Mahmud Kashgari** (admission ¥30), a beloved local 11th-century scholar, traveller and writer, is a potential excursion but it's far from unmissable. The tomb is about 2.5km from the market on the edge of Upal hill.

Two hours from Kashgar you enter the canyon of the Ghez River (Ghez Darya in Uighur), with its dramatic claret-red sandstone walls. Ghez itself is a major checkpoint; photographing soldiers or buildings is strictly prohibited.

At the top of the canyon, 3½ hours above the plain, you pop out into a huge wet plateau ringed with mountains of sand, part of the Sarikol Pamir, and aptly called Kumtagh (Sand Mountain) by locals.

Soon Kongur Mountain (Gongge'er Shan; 7719m) rises up on the left side of the road, followed by heavily glaciated Muztagh Ata (Mushitage Shan; 7546m). The main stopping point for views is **Karakul Lake**, a glittering mirror of glacial peaks 194km from Kashgar. From here you can hike into the hills or circumnavigate the lake. [Old Road Tours](#) can organise four- to 11-day trekking tours around the lake to Subash village or the Muztagh Ata base camp (4500m), overnighing in tents, villages and Kyrgyz yurts along the way. The trek includes food, permits, guide and even a camel to haul your gear.

The journey climbs to a pass offering fine views, then meanders through high mountain pastures dotted with grazing camels and yaks, before passing the turn-off to the Qolma Pass (currently closed to foreigners). The final major town on the Chinese side is **Tashkurgan** at 3600m. You could easily kill a couple of hours wandering the streets and visiting the small museum at the **Folk Culture Centre** (admission ¥30; 🕒 10am-5pm) at the central crossroads (marked by the eagle statue).

On the outskirts of town, close to the river, is **Tashkurgan Fort** (Shitoucheng admission ¥30), whose 1400-year-old stone (*tash*) fortifications (*kurgan*) give the town its name. The ruins were one of the filming locations for the movie *Kite Runner*. The boggy valley below is dotted with Tajik yurts in summer and offers some spectacular views back towards the fort.

Some travellers head up to the Khunjerab Pass for a photo opportunity on the actual Pakistan–China border. Note that you need a border permit (available in Kashgar) and a guide, which most tour agencies can arrange.

Sleeping

[Jiaotong Binguan](#)

HOTEL

(📞 0998-342 1192; tw ¥120-140; 📶)

The bus station hotel has fresh and modern twins. Bus passengers en route to Sost generally overnight here.

Crown Inn

HOTEL

(Huangguan Dajiudian 📞 0998-342 2888; www.crowninntashkorgan.com; 1 Pami'er Lu; d/tw with breakfast ¥630; @ 📶)

This plush Singaporean-run hotel offers comfortable, bright rooms and a good though pricey restaurant. Internet was cut off by the government in 2014.

i Getting There & Away

From Kashgar two daily buses run to Tashkurgan from the long-distance bus station, leaving at 9.30am and 10am (¥55, six hours). Shared taxis also depart from the city's **Tashkurgan Administration Office** (Tashiku'ergan Banshichu 166 Xiyu Dadao Lu;), in the west of town.

From Kashgar it's 118km to the Ghez checkpoint, 194km to Karakul Lake, 283km to Tashkurgan and 380km to the Pakistani border.

SOUTHERN SILK ROAD

The Silk Road east of Kashgar splits into two threads in the face of the Taklamakan Desert, the second-largest sandy desert in the world. The northern thread follows the modern road and railway to Kuqa and Turpan. The southern road charts a more remote course between desert sands and the towering Pamir and Kunlun mountain ranges.

This off-the-grid journey takes you far into the modern Uighur heartland, as well as deep into the ancient multi-ethnic heritage of the region. You're as likely to come across a centuries-old tiled mosque as the ruins of a Buddhist pagoda from the 4th century.

It's possible to visit the southern towns as a multiday trip from Kashgar

before crossing the Taklamakan Desert to Urumqi, or as part of a rugged backdoor route into Tibet or Qinghai.

THE SILK ROAD

Nomadic trading routes across Asia and Europe had existed for thousands of years but what we now call the Silk Road, an intercontinental network connecting the East and West, began to take shape in the 2nd century BC. At the time, the Mediterranean had already been linked to Central Asia by Alexander the Great (and his Roman successors), and China, in its need to defend itself from marauding Xiongnu, was about to do its part.

In 138 BC the Emperor Wudi sent envoy Zhang Qian to negotiate an alliance with the Yuezhi, a Central Asian people being driven west by the Xiongnu. On his return (after much hardship which included being kidnapped twice) Zhang piqued the emperor's interest with tales of wealthy neighbouring kingdoms, powerful horses, and trade of Chinese goods, including silk, that had already reached these regions. Over the next two centuries the Han experienced endless setbacks as they sought to defeat the Xiongnu and secure safe passage from Gansu through Xinjiang, but eventually formal trade with Central Asia was established.

Owing as much to continuous political instability as geographical challenges, there was never any one route that goods travelled along, much less a road; the name Silk Road in fact was coined in 1877 by German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen. The loose, fragile and often dangerous network of ancient times had its Chinese start in Chang'an (modern Xi'an) and from there proceeded up the Hexi Corridor to Dunhuang. At this great oasis town it split north and south to circumvent the unforgiving Taklamakan desert. The routes then met again at Kashgar, where they once more split to cross the high, snowy Pamirs, Karakorum and Tian Shan Mountains to connect with Samarkand (and eventually Iran and Constantinople), India and the Russian Volga.

Despite the distances that goods could reach, almost all trade was small scale and local: large caravan teams were rare unless travelling as official envoys, and goods were seldom carried more than a few hundred kilometres by any one group. An average day's journey was 15km to 20km and traders often made lengthy stops at oasis towns to plan their next stage.

In addition to silk, which was often used as currency, goods included spices, nuts, fruit, metals, leather products, chemicals, glass, paper, precious gems, gold, ivory, porcelain and exotic animals including the powerful Ferghana horse much prized by the Chinese. It was the exchange of ideas, technology and culture, however, that is the true legacy of the Silk Road.

Buddhism entered China via the Silk Road, and later allowed Chinese monks to

travel to Gandhara and India for direct study and the gathering of primary texts. In copying Buddhist cave art, which originated in India, the Chinese created some of the finest examples in locations such as Mogao and Kizil. Going the other direction, fine Chinese tri-colored pottery had influence across Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The heyday of Silk Road trade began in the 6th century under the stable but militarily strong Tang Dynasty. Chang'an became one of the most cosmopolitan capitals in the world, with an estimated 5000 foreigners, including Indians, Turks, Iranians, Japanese and Koreans permanently settled there. Trade declined and then stabilised under Mongolian rule of China, but by the 14th century sea routes were supplanting the slow and still dangerous overland routes. By the 16th century the Silk Road network had reverted to obscure local trading and never recovered its former importance.

In June 2014, at the behest of China, Kirghistan and Kyrgyzstan, UNESCO listed the 5000km Tian Shan Corridor of the Silk Road as World Heritage. The designation highlights not just the obvious pagodas, palaces, cave art and remains of the Great Wall (including beacon towers and forts), but also the caravanserais and way stations that provided relief and lodging for traders. Hopefully in the coming years the listing will encourage more conservation and research into one of the world's 'preeminent long-distance communication networks' and not be seen as a license for unfettered tourist development.

Yengisar

The tiny town of Yengisar (Yingjisha) is synonymous with knife production. A lesser-known but more sensitive fact is it's the birthplace of the Uighur's icon of nationalism, Isa Yusuf Alptekin (1901–95), the leader of the First East Turkestan Republic in Kashgar, who died in exile in Istanbul.

There are dozens of knife shops here, most of them strung along the highway; ask for the 'knife factories' (*xiaodaochang* in Chinese; *pichak chilik karakhana* in Uighur). Each worker makes the blade, handle and inlays himself, using only the most basic of tools. To get there from the main bus station, hop in a taxi (¥5) for the 3km trip to the knife shops. They are right on the main road, so you'd even pass them on the way to Yarkand. Note that knives are prohibited in check-in luggage, so you'll have to ship them home.

Buses pass through the town regularly en route between Yarkand (¥28, 1½

hours) and Kashgar (¥13, 1½ hours).

Yarkand

At the end of a major trade route from British India, over the Karakoram Pass from Leh, Yarkand (Shache) was for centuries an important caravan town and regional centre for the trade in cashmere wool. This traditional and conservative town is worth a stop, though be aware that Yarkand was the site of a still opaque violent protest on 28 July 2014, which led to 96 official deaths; the WUC (World Uyghur Congress) claim it was more than 2000. At the time of writing many hotels were not accepting foreigners and most had had their internet cut off. It's best to check conditions in Kashgar before heading out here.

Modern Yarkand is split into a Chinese New Town and a Uighur Old Town to its east. Take a right upon exiting the bus station to get to the main avenue. Once there, take another right and flag down any public bus, which will take you past the **Shache Binguan**, 1km east of the bus station; the Old Town and the Altun Mosque complex are 1km further.

Yarkand has a **Sunday Market** a block north of the Altun Mosque, though it's considerably smaller than those of Kashgar or Hotan.

Sights

Altun Mosque Complex

MOSQUE, CEMETERY

(Aletun Qingzhen Si)

Yarkand's main sights are clustered around its charming central 18th-century mosque. Next to the mosque in the modern square is the **Mausoleum of Ammanisahan** (admission ¥15), commemorating a 16th-century local Uighur queen and musician famed for her work collecting Uighur *muqam* music. Behind the tomb is the central **mazar** (tomb) of her husband Sultan Sayid Khan, the founder of the Yarkand dynasty of rulers (1514–1682).

The surrounding sprawling cemetery is home to several other impressive shrines, with white flags marking the graves of *pir* (holy men). There are normally groups of elderly Uighurs praying here.

Yarkand Old Town

NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the Old Town to the east of the Altun Mosque craftsmen still work their wares with ball-peen hammers and grindstones and several workshops churn out traditional Uighur instruments. To get here take the dirt lane headed east, just south of the Altun Sq, and keep going. Eventually you'll link up with Laocheng Lu and can return west back to the New Town. We've heard of police stopping travellers from photographing in this area so exercise caution.

Sleeping & Eating

There are several good restaurants by Altun Sq with traditional Uighur food and decor.

Xinsheng Binguan

HOTEL

( 852 7555; 4 Xincheng Lu, tw ¥218)

This place has clean and modern rooms. It's on the main road, just beside the gates of the **Shache Binguan**.

Getting There & Away

Buses leave half-hourly to Kashgar (¥40, three hours), Yengisar (¥34, 1½ hours) and Karghilik (¥12, 1½ hours). Four buses daily take the expressway to Hotan (¥58, five hours), and six leave for Urumqi (¥310 to ¥340, 25 hours). Faster shared taxis also depart when full to Kashgar, Yengisar and Karghilik.

Karghilik

Karghilik (Yecheng) is of importance to travellers as the springboard to the fantastically remote Hwy 219, the Xinjiang–Tibet highway that leads to Ngari (Ali) in far west Tibet.

The main attraction in town is the 15th-century **Friday Mosque** (Jama Masjid) and the surrounding adobe-walled backstreets of the Old Town.

The town of **Charbagh**, located 10 minutes' drive towards Yarkand, has a large market on Tuesday.

Sleeping & Eating

The PSB limits foreigners to staying at either Jiaotong Binguan or Qiaogelifeng Dengshan Binguan.

There are busy Uighur eateries outside the Friday Mosque and 24-hour food stalls across from the bus station.

Jiaotong Binguan

HOTEL

( 728-5540; 1 Jiatong Lu; tw ¥125;  )

Try to get rooms in the quieter and cleaner back block.

Qiaogelifeng Dengshan Binguan

HOTEL

( 748 5000; 9180 Linggongli, r ¥30-190;  )

The 'K2 Hotel' is an OK place to stay but the location isn't great if you're only passing through. It's 6km from the bus station; a taxi here will cost ¥10 to ¥15.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Yarkand (¥15) and Kashgar (¥53, four hours) leave every 30 minutes or one hour from 10am until 8.30pm. During the same period, every two hours there is a bus to Hotan (¥53, five hours), or take a faster shared taxi.

The newly paved 1100km road to Ali, in western Tibet, branches off from

the main Kashgar–Hotan road 6km east of Karghilik. The only way to (legally) take the highway is by organising a Land Cruiser tour with an agent in Lhasa. See Lonely Planet’s *Tibet* guide for details.

Hotan

☞ 0903 / Pop 166,000

This oasis town (and its surrounding basin) has a long and illustrious history intimately tied to the Silk Road. Hotan (Hetian, also Khotan, especially when referring to the ancient kingdom: 224 BC to 1006 AD) sat at the junction of the southern Silk Road and trade routes into India. With its relatively abundant water supplied from the nearby Kunlun Mountains, it became the largest settlement in western Xinjiang and boasted steady trade, and more importantly, facilitated cultural and technological exchanges.

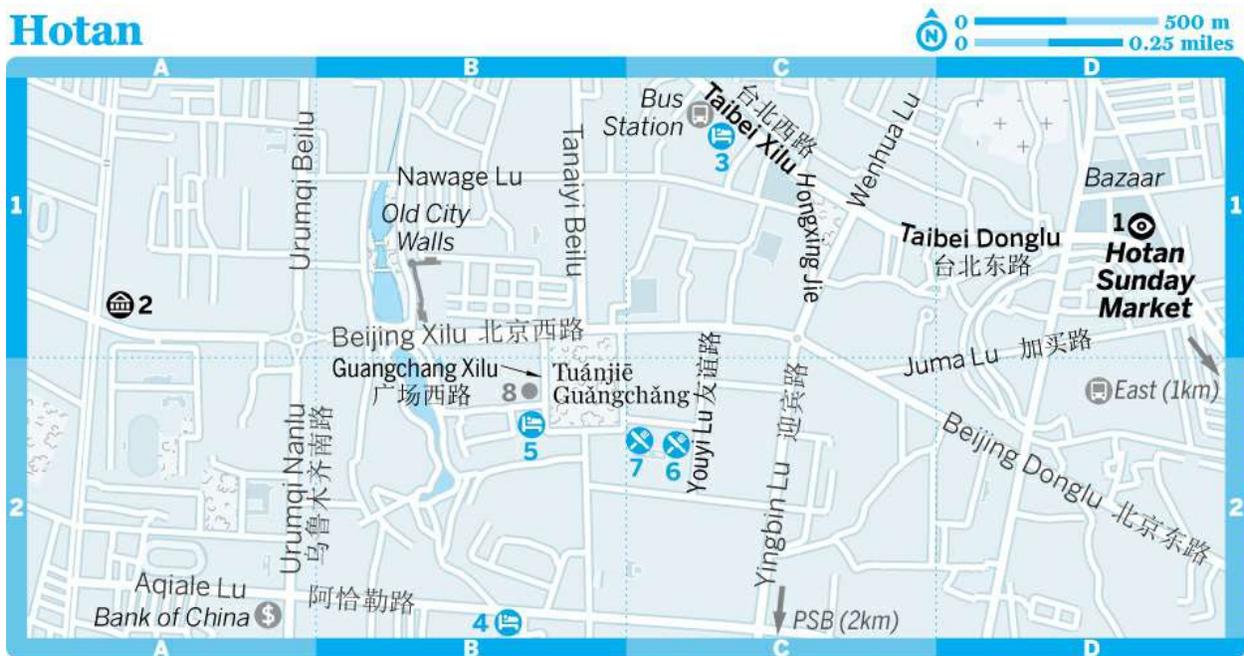
New religions entered Xinjiang (and China) first through Hotan, and as with Buddhism (which arrived around 84 BC), they became well established. In fact, the Khotan Kingdom was a center for Buddhist translation and study, and famous Chinese monks such as Faxian and Xuan Zang who passed through in the 5th and 7th centuries, respectively, commented favorably on the wealth and size of Khotan's Buddhist community. In 1006 Khotan was conquered by the Muslim Karakhanids and slowly Islam became the dominant cultural force. In the 13th century Marco Polo reported that the entire population followed the new religion.

Hotan has also long been known as the epicentre of the central Asian and Chinese jade trade. Locally unearthed jade artefacts have been dated to around 5000 BC and it is believed that Hotan attracted Chinese traders along the Jade Road even before they headed westward to open up the Silk Road. In 5th century AD the Hotanese were also the first non-Han to learn the secret of Chinese silkmaking, and later established themselves as the region’s foremost carpet weavers.

Today Hotan is a modern city, with a largely Uighur population, but it still has some fascinating old neighbourhoods and markets and retains a cultural

authenticity that is increasingly hard to find in Kashgar.

Beijing Xilu is the main east–west axis running past the enormous main square (Tuanjie Guangchang), with its paternalistic statue of Mao looking down on an undersized Uighur craftsman.



Hotan

📍 Top Sights

1 [Hotan Sunday Market](#) D1

📍 Sights

2 [Hotan Cultural Museum](#) A1

🏠 Sleeping

3 [Jiaotong Binyuan](#) C1

4 [Tarim Hotel](#) B2

5 [Yudu Dajjudian](#) B2

🍴 Eating

6 [Marco's Dream Cafe](#) C2

Information

Sights

★ [Hotan Sunday Market](#)

MARKET

(Xingqitian Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Hotan's most popular attraction is its weekly Sunday market. The covered market bustles every day of the week but on Sundays it swamps the northeast part of town, reaching fever pitch between noon and 2pm Xinjiang time. The most interesting parts are the *doppi* (skullcap) bazaar, the colourful *atlas* (tie-dyed, handwoven silk) cloth to the right of the main entrance and the *gilim* (carpet) bazaar, across the road. Nearby Juma Lu is filled with traditional medicine and spice shops.

The small but authentic Sunday livestock bazaar is about 2km further east, near the Jade Dragon Kashgar River on Donghuan Beilu.

[Carpet Factory](#)

HANDICRAFTS

(Ditan Chang  10am-7pm) **FREE**

On the eastern bank of the Jade Dragon Kashgar River is this large factory (*gilim karakhana* in Uighur). It's primarily set up for group visits but you can look around the various halls when open. Even with up to 10 weavers, 1 sq m of wool carpet takes 20 days to complete.

[Jiya Silk Workshop](#)

HANDICRAFTS

(Sichou Shougong Gongyi  10am-7.30pm)

Northeast of Hotan is the small town of Jiya, a traditional centre for silk production. Visitors can wander the recently renovated workshop (*atlas*

karakhana in Uighur) to see how the silk is spun from silk cocoons, then dyed and woven, all using traditional methods. A return trip by taxi to the workshop, taking in the carpet factory, costs ¥100. Buses run frequently to Jiya from Hotan's east bus station.

Melikawat Ruins

RUIN

(Malikewate Gucheng admission ¥10)

The deserts around Hotan are peppered with the faint remains of abandoned cities. The most interesting are those of Melikawat, 25km south of town, a Tang-dynasty settlement with wind-eroded walls, Buddhist stupas and the remains of pottery kilns. Some scholars believe Melikawat was a capital city of the Yutian state (206 BC–AD 907), an Indo-European civilisation that thrived during the height of the Silk Road. A taxi should cost about ¥100 to Melikawat.

Rawaq (Rawak) Stupa

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

This 9m-tall ruin is the largest of the southern Silk Road stupas yet discovered. Built between the 3rd and 5th centuries for a wealthy Khotanese monastery, it might have been visited by the Chinese monk Faxian in 401AD on his way to India. It was certainly explored by archeologist Aurel Stein, who excavated the site in 1901, and declared it a magnificent ruin. Stein's original work also uncovered 91 large Buddhist statues (now all sadly gone).

Rawaq is about 50km north of Hotan. You'll need to buy a ticket in advance to visit (expect to pay several hundred renminbi for this). Contact the **Cultural Department** (Wenhuaaju; 📞0903-618 2018) at Hotan Museum for information on this and other specialised archaeological sites.

Hotan Cultural Museum

MUSEUM

(Hetian Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beijing Xilu; 🕒9.45am-1pm & 4-7.30pm, closed Wed) **FREE**

West of the centre is the regional museum. The main attractions are a fine painted wooden coffin and two 1500-year-old Indo-European mummies

unearthed from the nearby Imam Musa Kazim Cemetery. There are also some fascinating finds from ancient Niya, including a large wooden pillar, a 2000-year-old bow and arrow and wooden tablets engraved with Indian-influenced Kharoshthi script.

Mazar of Imam Asim

TOMB

A few kilometres beyond Jiya lies the tomb complex of Imam Asim (Tomb of Four Imams). It's a popular pilgrimage site, particularly during May, and you'll likely see groups of Uighurs praying and chanting at the desert shrine, which is slowly being engulfed by the Taklamakan Desert.

The best day to visit is Thursday, when a pilgrim market springs up by the roadside, about 2km before the tomb, and buses run direct to the site from Hotan's east bus station. At other times buses to Jiya drop you 3km from the site, from where you should be able to hire a motorised cart.

SILK

Prices for atlas silk vary wildly depending on whether the cloth is pure silk or a satin mix, whether it's handmade (coarser) or machine made (softer and glossier but not as nice) and whether it uses natural or chemical dyes. A 6m-long piece of pure silk costs up to ¥500, with real silk scarves around ¥100 to ¥180.

Sleeping

Jiaotong Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 203 2700; Taibei Xilu; d with/without bathroom ¥140/120; ❄️ 📶)

The bus station hotel is worn out and overpriced but it's the only real budget option. The shared bathrooms are awful.

Tarim Hotel

HOTEL

(Talimu Dafandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 206 7777; 135 Aqiale Xilu; r incl breakfast ¥218;



New four-star hotel with fresh, modern rooms, some with computers (add ¥20), that make it the best-value midrange choice. It's a block southwest of the main square.

Yudu Dajiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 202 3456; 11 Guangchang Xilu; tw/d ¥198/238; 🌟)

The three-star 'Jade Capital' has spacious and modern rooms, with a useful location on the west side of the main square. You can buy air tickets in the lobby.



Eating

Uighur Night Market

MARKET

(Weizuren Yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Guangchang Donglu; 🕒 7pm-midnight)

On the southeast corner of the square; a good place to grab such goodies as *tonur kebab* (whole roast sheep) and *chuchvara* (meat dumplings in broth), topped off with sweet *tangzaza* (sticky rice with syrup and yoghurt).

Marco's Dream Cafe

CAFE

(Make Yizhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.marcodreamcafe.blogspot.com; 57 Youyi Lu; mains ¥18-30; 🕒 1.30-9.30pm Tue-Sun)

This Malaysian-run restaurant serves a nice range of Southeast Asian dishes, including curried chicken, plus cakes and coffee. The friendly English-speaking owners can provide excellent travel advice.



Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Urumqi Nanlu & Aqiale Lu; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm & 4-8pm)

Mon-Fri)

Cashes travellers cheques, and has a 24-hour ATM in the southwest of town.

Southern Silk Road Travel Information Center

TRAVEL AGENCY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎137 7929 1939; www.southernsilkroadtour.com; 11 Guangchang Xi Lu)

Local guide Kurbanjan runs private day and multiday tours along the southern Silk Road.

Getting There & Away

There are about a dozen flights daily between Hotan and Urumqi (¥1500). The airport is 10km southwest of town.

There are two bus stations in Hotan. From the **main bus station** (keyunzhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Taibei Xilu):

- ➔ **Kashgar** ¥128, seven to 10 hours, every 1½ hours from 9.30am to 10.30pm. Buses to Kashgar also stop at **Karghilik** (¥52, five hours) and **Yarkand** (¥71, six hours).
 - ➔ **Urumqi** ¥257 to ¥387, 25 hours, hourly from 9.30am to 10.30pm. Buses head straight across the desert on one of two cross-desert highways.
 - ➔ **Kuqa** ¥168 to ¥185, eight hours, two daily departs at 2pm and 8pm
- Shared taxis also run to Karghilik (¥90), Yarkand (¥120) and Kashgar (¥200).
- ➔ **East bus station** (dongjiao keyunzhan), 2km east of downtown:
 - ➔ **Cherchen** ¥124 to ¥160, 10 hours
 - ➔ **Niya** ¥63, four hours

The railway line from Kashgar reached Hotan in 2011.

- ➔ **Urumqi** hard/soft sleeper ¥239/411, 32 hours
 - ➔ **Kashgar** hard seat/sleeper ¥33/77, eight hours, one daily at 1.36pm
-

Cherchen

 0996 / Pop 53,000

The next major stop along the southern Silk Road after Hotan is Cherchen (Qiemo), 580km away via the townships of Keriya (Yutian) and Niya (Minfeng). The road initially passes the towering Kunlun Mountains that mark the border with Tibet to the south, before crossing impressive sand dunes and then stony desert for the last 300km.

A taxi/cart from Cherchen bus station to the centre of town costs ¥10/3.

To visit the main sights outside Cherchen go first to the Cherchen Museum, as you need to take a guide with you to unlock the gates. Guides can also help arrange a taxi.

Sights

Cherchen Museum

MUSEUM

(Qiemo Xian Bowuguan  9.30am-1.30pm & 4-7.30pm) **FREE**

Relics from Cherchen's main sights are on display at this new regional museum, alongside displays ranging from yetis in the Altun Tagh mountains to the travels of explorer Sven Hedin. It's in the northwest of town, by the huge new government square.

Toghraklek Manor

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Tuohulake Zhuangyuan admission ¥20)

Cherchen's main sight is this fine example of early-20th-century Kashgarian architecture, built in 1911 for a local warlord. It's 2.5km west of town.

Zaghunluq Ancient Mummy Tomb

TOMB

(Zagunluke Gumuqun Jingdian admission ¥30)

This 2600-year-old tomb contains a dozen or so naturally mummified bodies, still sporting shreds of colourful clothing. The site is a further 4km west of

the Toghraklek Manor, on the edge of the desert. Figure on ¥50 for a taxi to both sites.

Sleeping

Hongzao Shangwu Binguan

HOTEL

( 761 1888; Aita Lu; r ¥110-120;   )

Clean, fresh and spacious rooms next to the bazaar, though some bathrooms are cleaner than others. The pricier rooms come with computers.

Kunyu Binguan

HOTEL

( 762 6555; Tuanjie Beilu; tw ¥100)

Decent option next to the central town square.

Getting There & Away

There are sleeper buses to Urumqi (¥280 to ¥300, 16 hours) and a 10am and 7pm bus to Korla (¥170, six hours); both of these go via the Cross-Desert Hwy.

The bus to Hotan (¥127 to ¥177, 10 hours) leaves at 10am and is normally a sleeper bus.

A daily 10am bus (¥61, four hours) continues 350km east to Charklik.

Charklik

Charklik (Ruoqiang; not to be confused with Karghilik further west) is a soulless, modern Chinese city, but there are several ancient ruined cities nearby. The most famous is remote **Loulan**, located some 260km northeast of Charklik, but you'll probably have to join a very pricey group tour to visit as permits can run into the thousands of dollars. The ruined fortress and stupa of **Miran** is closer, located just 7km southeast of the modern town of Miran

(which is 85km northwest of Charklik). Permits are more reasonable, being a few hundred renminbi for a group. Contact CITS (www.xinjiangtour.com) in Urumqi for help with the paperwork.

If you get stuck in town, there are hotels near the bus station.

From Charklik you can complete the Taklamakan loop by taking a bus to Korla. Alternatively, you can continue east over the mountains to Golmud in Qinghai on a daily sleeper bus.

NORTHERN XINJIANG

This region of thick evergreen forests, rushing rivers and isolated mountain ranges is historically home to pastoral nomads. It was closed to foreigners until the 1990s, due to the proximity of the sensitive Russian, Mongolian and Kazakhstan borders.

Bu'erjin

 0906 / Pop 60,000

Bu'erjin, 620km north of Urumqi, marks the end of the desert-like Jungar Basin and the beginning of the lush sub-Siberian birch forests and mountains to the north. The town's population is mainly Kazakh, but there are also Russians, Han, Uighurs and Tuvans.

If you have some time to kill, stroll to the southern limits of town to the Erqis (Irtysh) River, where dozens of stone *balbals* (Turkic grave markers) line the river embankment. From here the river flows eventually into the Arctic Ocean; the only major river in China to do so. In summer you'll be confronted with swarms of biting insects around dusk, so stock up on insect repellent.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel rates peak between July and September and are heavily discounted at

other times.

Burqin Tourist Hotel

HOTEL

(Bu'erjin Luyyou Binguan  651 0099; 4 Wolongwan Xilu; d ¥260-460;  May-Nov; )

Large, dependable hotel with two-, three- and four-star blocks.

Bu'erjin Night Market

MARKET

(Heti Yeshe Hebin Lu; mains from ¥10;  7pm-midnight)

Specialising in grilled fish, fresh yoghurt and *kvas* (a yeasty brew popular in Russia), this riverside night market makes for very atmospheric dining. To find it, walk south on Youyifeng Lu and keep going until the street dead ends: it's on the right.

Getting There & Away

Nearby Altay has an airport with year-round daily flights to/from Urumqi (¥1290).

There are both day (¥180, 10 hours) and night buses (¥183, 12 hours) to Urumqi. Hourly buses run to Altay (Aletai; ¥24, 1½ hours) between 10am and 7pm.

Two buses a day run to Jimunai (¥20, two hours) on the border with Kazakhstan at 11am and noon.

Faster shared taxis run from outside the bus station to Urumqi and Altay.

There are no direct trains to Bu'erjin. The closest station is Beitun, from where you have to catch a shared taxi or bus the final 90km. Make sure to buy your return train tickets in advance.

Kanas Lake Nature Reserve

Stunning Kanas Lake is a long finger of water nestled in the southernmost reaches of the Siberian taiga ecosystem, pinched in between Mongolia, Russia and Kazakhstan. Most of the local inhabitants are Kazakh or Tuvan.

Chinese tourists (and the occasional foreigner) descend on the place like locusts in summer, but with a little effort it's just about possible to escape the crowds. Many come hoping for a cameo by the Kanas Lake Monster, China's Nessie, who has long figured in stories around yurt campfires to scare the kids. She appears every year or two, bringing loads of journalists and conspiracy hounds.

The whole area is only accessible from mid-May to mid-October, with ice and snow making transport difficult at other times. The gorgeous autumn colours peak around mid-September.

Sights & Activities

About 160km from Bu'erjin the road comes to an end at Jiadengyu, basically a collection of hotels near the entrance to the [Kanas Lake Nature Reserve](#) (Kanasi Hu Ziran Baohuqu; admission ¥150). Buy a ticket and board a tourist bus (per person ¥90, unlimited rides), which carries you 16km up the canyon to a tourist base.

At the tourist base you can change buses to take you the final 2km to Kanas Lake. From the final stop it's a five-minute walk to the lake. At the lakeshore you can take a speedboat ride, walk along a long boardwalk along the shore, walk downstream from the dock along the river, or hike to the lookout point **Guanyu Pavilion** (Guanyu Ting; 2030m). You can also explore the Tuvan village in the park, go on white-water-rafting trips (¥200) and horse rides (per hour ¥30 to ¥60). It's even possible to take an overnight horse trek to the **valley of Hemu**, 70km southeast of Kanas Lake, via Karakol (Black Lake, or Hei Hu). Check with the youth hostel in Hemu.

Tours

[Xinjiang Tianshan Fengqing Travel Agency](#) in Urumqi offers a four-day tour of the lake for ¥900. This includes return transport from Urumqi, a park entrance ticket, and lodging. This company operates some of the facilities and

activities in the park, including the rafting and boating trips.

Sleeping & Eating

There are homestays and hotels at Jiadengyu, and in the park at the tourist base and Tuvan. In Hemu, stay at the **AHA International Youth Hostel** (Aha Guoji Qingnian Lushe  1380-995 5505; www.yhakanas.com; dm/d ¥100/380; ), a rustic wood-cabin hostel and comfortable base for exploring the village and nearby mountains.

Getting There & Away

Kanas airport, 50km south of the reserve, has flights to and from Urumqi (¥1403, one hour) in July and August only. From here taxis will take you the rest of the way to the reserve.

There is no public bus to the main gate at Jiadengyu from Bu'erjin. Buses to Hemu leave from Jiadengyu but are sporadic (email the hostel in Hemu for the latest).

Share taxis do run to/from Bu'erjin and Jiadengyu, though outside summer it may be hard to find a ride. Taxi drivers will look for you at Bu'erjin's bus station.

Yining

 0999 / Pop 430,000

Located on the historic border between the Chinese and Russian empires, Yining (Yili, or Gulja) has long been subject to a tug-of-war between the two sides. The city was occupied by Russian troops between 1872 and 1881, and in 1962 there were major Sino-Soviet clashes along the Ili River (Yili He). There are no unmissable sights here but it's a pleasant, untouristed stop on route to Sayram Lake or Kazakhstan.

In 2014 the stadium in Yining was the site of a mass trial in which 55

Uighurs were charged with terrorist activities. At least one death sentence was handed down. A similar mass trial was held in 1997 and is the subject of Nick Holdstead's *The Tree That Bleeds*.

The bus station is 3km from the centre at the northwest end of Jiefang Lu, the main thoroughfare through town.

Sights

People's Square

SQUARE

(Renmin Guangchang)

The heart of the city is People's Sq, a popular place to fly kites. The south side is lined with ice cream, fruit and kebab stands.

Shanxi Mosque

MOSQUE

(Shanxi Dasi Shengli Nan Lu)

South of the People's Sq is the Uighur Old Town and the 260-year-old Shanxi Mosque, as well as workshops making traditional-style leather Uighur boots.

Baytullah Mosque

MOSQUE

(Baitula Qingzhensi)

From the Old Town, head through backstreets west to Jiefang Nanlu and the modern Baytullah Mosque.

Sleeping & Eating

Just to the south of town is a line of open-air restaurants where you can sit and watch the mighty Ili River (Ili Daria in Uighur, Yili He in Chinese) slide by over a bottle of honey-flavoured *kvass* (a fermented drink made from rye bread).

V8 Shangwu Jiudian

HOTEL

(V8 📞 819 8555; Jiefang Lu, d ¥148; 🌐 @ 📶)

The new bus station hotel offers immaculate and excellent-value rooms with flat-screen TVs, internet-enabled computers and gold carpets.

Yili Binguan

HOTEL

(📞 802 3799; www.yilibinguan.com; 8 Yingbin Lu, tw ¥228-268; 🌐 @)

Yili's former Soviet consulate is full of character and super-quiet if not booked out by a group of Maotai-slurping visiting party officials. A bust of Lenin greets you at the entrance, beyond which is a forest of chirping birds and 1950s Russian dachas. The restaurant offers fancy Western-style meals and quiet internet access.

Getting There & Away

From the **main bus station** (changtu keyunzhan) on Jiefang Xi Lu there are hourly buses to Urumqi (¥165 to ¥180, nine to 12 hours) from 8.30am to 2pm, and three evening sleepers. There are also hourly buses to Bole for Sayram Lake (¥60, four hours from 10.50am to 3.50pm). Buses also run frequently for the Kazakh border at Korgas and once a day to Almaty in Kazakhstan itself. You must have a Kazakhstan visa if you wish to enter the country.

There are five daily trains to Urumqi (hard/soft sleeper ¥150/233, 10 to 12 hours). The station is 8km northwest of the city centre.

There are a dozen daily flights to Urumqi (¥1300). The airport is 5km north of town.

Sayram Lake

Sayram Lake

LAKE

(Sailimu Hu)

Vast Sayram Lake, 120km north of Yining and 90km west of Bole, is an

excellent spot to get a taste of the Tian Shan range (Tengri Tagh in Kazakh). The lake is especially colourful during June and July, when the alpine flowers are in full bloom. In the height of summer there are Kazakh yurts scattered around the lake willing to take boarders.

By bus, Sayram Lake is two hours from Bole or three hours from Yining; any bus passing between the two cities can drop you by the lake. Coming from Yining, the last section of road is a spectacular series of mountain bridges and tunnels.

Gansu

[Gansu Highlights](#)

[Lanzhou & Southern Gansu](#)

[Lanzhou](#)

[Linxia](#)

[Xiahe](#)

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[Hezuo](#)

[Langmusi](#)

[Hexi Corridor](#)

[Wuwei](#)

[Zhangye](#)

[Mati Si](#)

[Jiayuguan & Around](#)

[Dunhuang](#)

[Around Dunhuang](#)

[Eastern Gansu](#)

[Tianshui](#)

[Around Tianshui](#)

[Pingliang](#)

Gansu



Pop 26.4 million

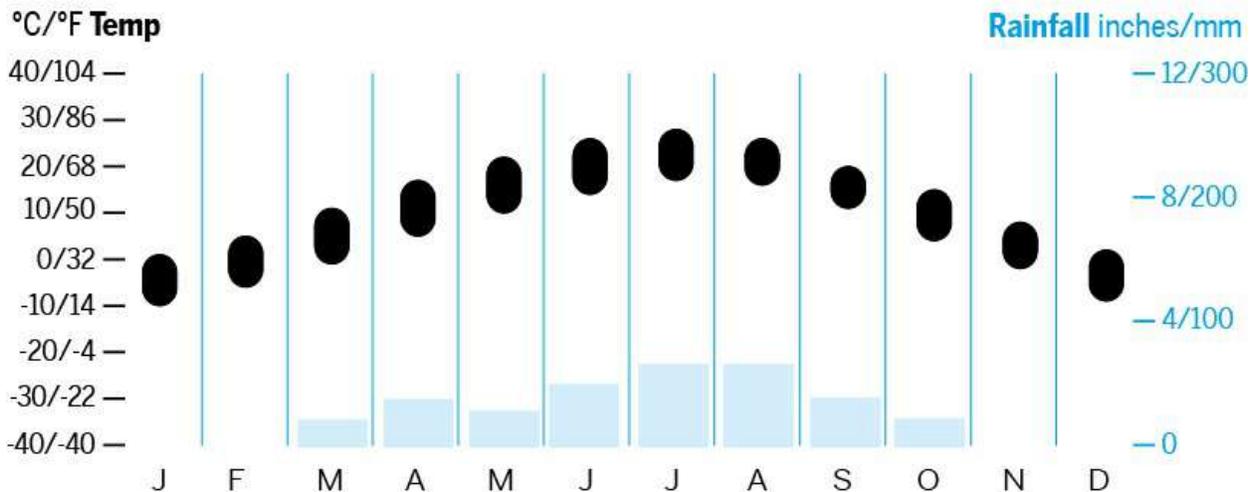
Why Go?

Synonymous with the Silk Road, the slender province of Gansu flows east to west along the Hexi Corridor, the gap through which all manner of goods once streamed from China to Central Asia. The constant flow of commerce left Buddhist statues, beacon towers, forts, chunks of the Great Wall and ancient trading towns in its wake.

Gansu offers an entrancingly rich cultural and geographic diversity. Historians immerse themselves in Silk Road lore, art aficionados swoon before the wealth of Buddhist paintings and sculptures, while adventurers hike to glaciers, ride camels through the desert and tread along paths well worn by Tibetan nomads. The ethnic diversity is equally astonishing: in Linxia, the local Hui Muslims act as though the Silk Road lives on; in Xiahe and Langmusi a pronounced Tibetan disposition holds sway, while other minority groups such as the Bao'an and Dongxiang join in the colourful minority patchwork.

When to Go

Lánzhōu



- ➔ **Feb & Mar** Join the Tibetan pilgrims for the magnificent Monlam Festival in Xiahe.
- ➔ **Apr & May** Before the full heat of summer switches on.
- ➔ **Sep & Oct** For crisp northern Gansu autumnal colours, blue skies and cooler climes.

Best Landscapes

- ➔ [Yadan National Park](#)
- ➔ [Singing Sands Mountain](#)
- ➔ Road to [Bingling Si](#)
- ➔ Ganjia Grasslands
- ➔ Langmusi

Best Buddhist Sites

- ➔ [Mogao Caves](#)
- ➔ [Zhangye Great Buddha Temple](#)
- ➔ [Bingling Si](#)
- ➔ [Labrang Monastery](#)
- ➔ [Maiji Shan](#)

Gansu Highlights



- 1 Peruse the astonishing [Mogao Caves](#)
- 2 Relax and explore the venerable Buddha Caves at the Horse Hoof Monastery, [Mati Si](#)
- 3 Camp beneath the stars amid the vast dunes of the [Singing Sands Mountain](#) near Dunhuang
- 4 Go with the Tibetan flow around the [Labrang Monastery](#) kora in Xiahe

- 5 Hike to your heart's content through the fantastic scenery around Langmusi
- 6 Stand head-to-head with the vast [Sleeping Buddha](#) of Zhangye
- 7 Feel the Gobi wind in your hair as you stand on the ramparts of [Jiayuguan Fort](#) in Jiayuguan
- 8 Ride through a mesmerising terraced landscape on the road to [Bingling Si](#)
- 9 Walk in a dried-out desert lake and witness the setting sun melt over the dunes at [Yadan National Park](#)

History

Although the Qin dynasty had a toehold on eastern Gansu, the first significant push west along the Hexi Corridor came with the Han dynasty. An imperial envoy, Chang Ch'ien, was dispatched to seek trading partners and returned with detailed reports of Central Asia and the route that would become known as the Silk Road. The Han extended the Great Wall through the Hexi Corridor, expanding their empire in the process. As trade along the Silk Road grew, so did the small way stations set up along its route; these grew into towns and cities that form the major population centres of modern Gansu. The stream of traders from lands east and west also left their mark in the incredible diversity of modern Gansu. The Buddhist grottoes at Mogao, Maiji Shan and elsewhere are testament to the great flourishing of religious and artistic schools along the Silk Road.

The mixing of cultures in Gansu eventually led to serious tensions, which culminated in the Muslim rebellions of 1862 to 1877. The conflict left millions dead and virtually wiped out Gansu's Muslim population. Ethnic tensions have never really left the province as the pro-Tibetan demonstrations in Xiahe in 2008 and 2012 illustrate.

Though remote from the investment banks and manufacturing hubs along the east coast of China, Gansu is not a poor province. Gross Domestic

Product has been growing at a higher rate than the already blistering national average and massive investments in wind energy are fuelling the transformation of both the natural and urban landscapes.

Climate

Gansu rarely sees any rain outside of the southern regions, and dust storms can whip up, particularly in the spring, so it's good to come prepared with face masks and even antibiotic eye drops. Winters are nippy from November to March. Summer temperatures in the desert regions can top 40°C.

Language

Gansu has its own group of regional Chinese dialects, loosely known as Gansuhua (part of the northwestern Lanyin Mandarin family). On the borders of Qinghai and Sichuan there is a significant Tibetan population speaking the Tibetan Amdo dialect.

Getting There & Around

Lanzhou has flights around the country; other airports such as Dunhuang, Jiayuguan and outside Xiahe only have a handful of flights to major cities, with fewer flights in the winter.

Both trains and buses are handy for connecting the province's Silk Road sights. For southern Gansu you are largely at the mercy of (sometimes painfully slow) buses.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used for this region.

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥150

\$\$ ¥150 to ¥500

\$\$\$ more than ¥500

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

LANZHOU & SOUTHERN GANSU

Lanzhou is a major transportation hub employed by most travellers as a springboard for elsewhere. The Tibetan-inhabited areas around Xiahe and Langmusi are the principal enticements – perfect stopovers for overlanders heading to or from Sichuan.

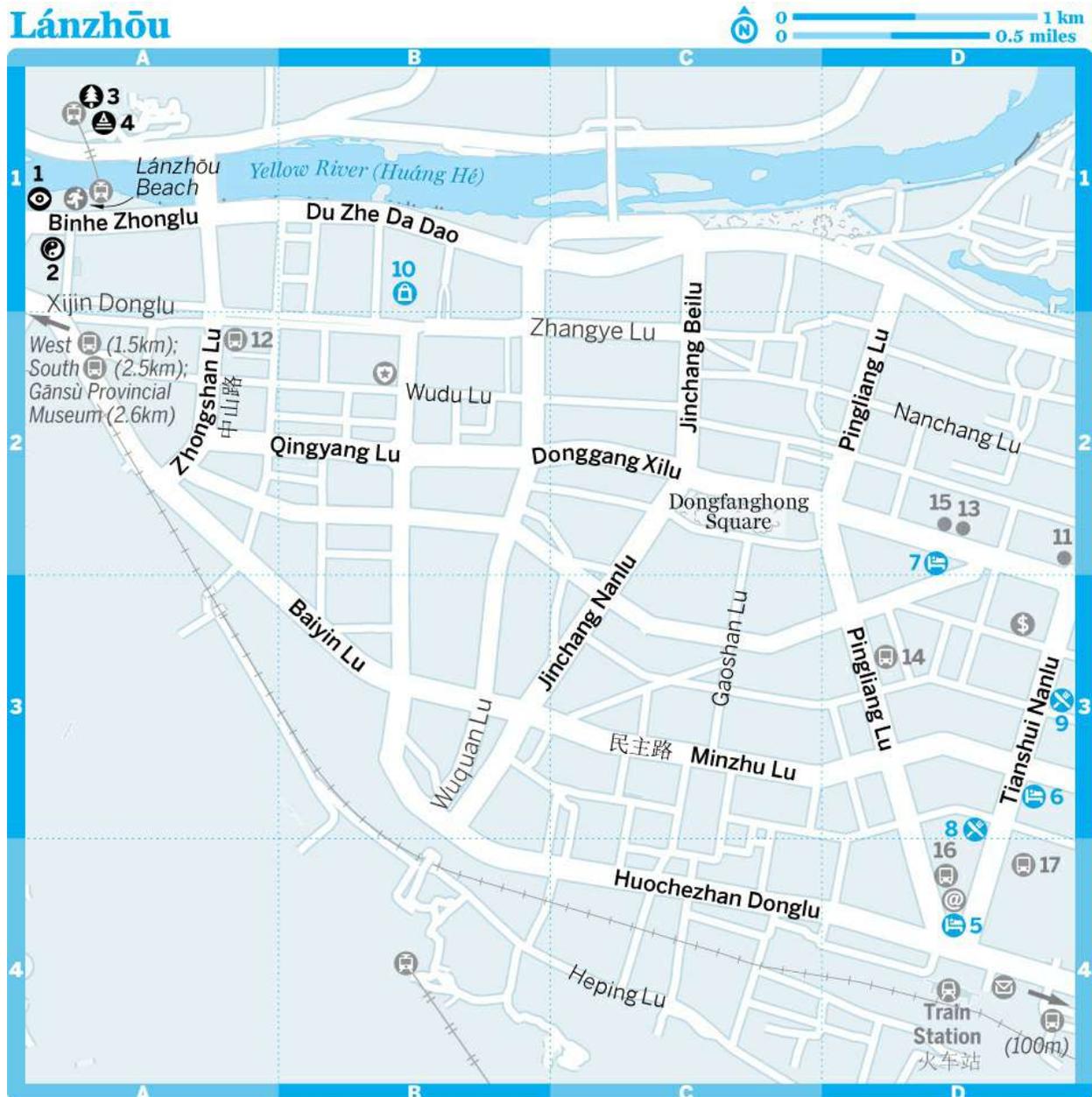
Lanzhou

📍 0931 / Population 2.17 million

Roughly at China's cartographic bullseye, Gansu's elongated capital marks the halfway point for overlanders trekking across the country. Growing up on a strategic stretch of the Yellow River (*Huang He*), and sitting between competing Chinese and Central Asian empires, Lanzhou frequently changed hands. Trapped between mountains, modern Lanzhou has frequent bad-air days when a grey sun sets anaemically over a hazy city.

The city sprawls in an inelegant east–west concrete melange for over 20km along the southern banks of the Yellow River. There are some attractive neighbourhoods along the northwest, and a pleasant riverside promenade, but most travellers will spend their time around the train station, home to an assortment of hotels and eateries.

Lánzhōu



Lanzhou

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Water Wheels | A1 |
| 2 | White Cloud Temple | A1 |
| 3 | White Pagoda Park | A1 |
| 4 | White Pagoda Temple | A1 |

Sleeping

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 5 Hualian Binguan | D4 |
| 6 Jinjiang Inn | D3 |
| 7 JJ Sun Hotel | D2 |

Eating

| | |
|---|----|
| 8 Hezheng Lu Night Market | D3 |
| 9 Nengrenju | D3 |

Shopping

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 10 Chenghuang Miao | B1 |
|------------------------------------|----|

Information

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| 11 Western Travel Agency | D2 |
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Transport

| | |
|---|----|
| 12 Bus 111 to South Bus Station | A2 |
| 13 China Eastern Airlines | D2 |
| 14 East Bus Station | D3 |
| 15 Gansu Airport Booking Office | D2 |
| 16 Main Long-Distance Bus Station | D4 |
| 17 Tianshui Bus Station | D4 |

Sights

Gansu Provincial Museum

MUSEUM

(Gansu Sheng Bowuguan Xijin Xilu; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This museum has an intriguing collection of Silk Road artefacts with English descriptions, including inscribed Han-dynasty wooden tablets used to relay messages along the Silk Road, and dinosaur skeletons.

The graceful Eastern Han (25 BC–AD 220) bronze horse galloping upon the back of a swallow is known as the 'Flying Horse of Wuwei'. Unearthed at

Leitai, it has been proudly reproduced across northwestern China. Bring your passport for admission.

Take bus 1 (¥1, 40 mins) here from Lanzhou train station.

White Pagoda Temple

BUDDHIST

(Baita Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); White Pagoda Park; Binhe Zhonglu, cable car up/down/return ¥35/25/45) **FREE**

This temple, built during the Yuan dynasty (1206–1368) for a fallen Tibetan monk, stands in **White Pagoda Park** (Baita Shan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Binhe Zhonglu, 🕒 6.30am-8.30pm) on the northern bank of the Yellow River and provides city and river views.

Enter from a gate on the north side of Zhongshan Bridge and walk or catch a cable car (closed in winter) on the south side a few blocks to the east. Bus 34 from the train station drops you off near the cable car.

White Cloud Temple

TAOIST

(Baiyun Guan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Binhe Zhonglu, 🕒 7am-6.30pm) **FREE**

This largely rebuilt Qing-dynasty Taoist temple is an oasis of reverential calm at the heart of the city.

Water Wheels

HISTORIC SITE

(Shuiche Yuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Binhe Donglu, admission ¥6; 🕒 8am-6pm, to 8pm summer)

Lanzhou is the only city centre that the Yellow River flows through and these massive wooden copies of irrigation devices give a taste of what once lined the banks. A few kilometres east, look for a larger collection of about a dozen **wheels** (Lanzhou Shuiche Bolan Yuan 4 Binhe Zhonglu, admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-10pm).

Sleeping

Most budget hostels around the train station won't accept foreigners (or are

too dreary to recommend) and throughout the city even many midrange places are off limits to foreigners, including some nationwide chains.

Hualian Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0931 499 2109; www.lzhfbg.com; 7-9 Tianshui Nanlu, 7-9 d/tw ¥319/399; ❄️ 📶)

This 360-room mammoth has comfortable rooms with wi-fi, a restaurant, mini-gym and travel agency. The staff are friendly, but you'll have to put up with some traffic noise if you get a lower floor. The hotel is conveniently located opposite the train station, from where you can read the English sign 'Lanzhou Mansions'. Expect discounts of 50%.

Jinjiang Inn

HOTEL

(Jinjiang Zhixing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0931 861 7333; 182 Tianshui Nanlu, tw ¥229-289; ❄️ 📶)

Neat and tidy express business-style hotel around 1km north of the train station with unfussy, compact and well-maintained rooms and snappy service.

JJ Sun Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinjiang Yangguang Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0931 880 5511; 589 Donggang Xilu, tw/d ¥800/900; ❄️ @)

This good four-star choice has well-groomed, spacious and affordable rooms. There's a pleasant wood-panelled restaurant on the 2nd floor. Discounts of 40% are usual.

Eating

Lanzhou enjoys nationwide fame (take that as you will) for its *niuroumian* (beef noodle soup) that's spicy enough to make you snort. A handy phrase is 'buyao lajiao' (without chillies). There are plenty of places to try the dish on

Huochezhan Donglu (left as you exit the train station) and Tianshui Nanlu north of the station. These streets are also lined with restaurants serving dumplings and noodle dishes. Most have picture menus.

Hezheng Lu Night Market

MARKET

(Hezheng Lu Yeshichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Hezheng Lu,)

This bustling ramshackle market, extending from Tianshui Nanlu to Pingliang Lu, is terrific for savouring the flavours of the northwest. The mix of Hui, Han and Uighur stalls offer everything from goat's head soup to steamed snails, *roujiabing* (mutton served inside a 'pocket' of flat bread), lamb dishes seasoned with cumin, *dapan ji* (large plate of spicy chicken, noodles and potatoes), dumplings, spare-rib noodles and more.

Nengrenju

HOTPOT

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 216 Tianshui Nanlu; hotpot starting at ¥35; 🕒 11am-10pm)

At this tasty Beijing-style *shuan yangrou* (traditional lamb hotpot) the pot of broth costs ¥25, after which you can add sliced mutton (¥30), greens (¥10) and various other dishes. The restaurant is about 100m past the intersection with Minzhu Lu.



Shopping

Chenghuang Miao

ANTIQUES

(City God Temple [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 202 Zhangye Lu; 🕒 9am-6pm daily)

The gods would probably not approve, but this former house of Taoist worship has been turned into one of Lanzhou's best shopping venues. Vendors sell everything from Mao kitsch to tea sets, beautiful pottery, woodwork and antiques. The temple is set back on the north side of Zhangye Lu (pedestrian-only) 500m east of Zhongshan Lu.



Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tianshui Lu; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Has an ATM and changes travellers cheques on the 2nd floor.

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(Wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); 11-13 Tianshui Nanlu, 11-13 per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr)

On the 2nd floor, to the right of [Hualian Binguan](#).

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎️ 0931 871 8610; 482 Wudu Lu; 🕒 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

The foreign-affairs branch is on the 2nd floor. Visa extensions take several days; one photo required.

Western Travel Agency

TRAVEL AGENCY

(Xibu Luxingshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎️ 0931 882 0529; 486 Donggang Xilu; 🕒 8am-6pm daily)

On the 2nd floor of the west wing of Lanzhou Fandian at the corner of Donggang Xilu and Tianshui Nanlu. Offers tours around Lanzhou (as far south as Xiahe) and ticket bookings.

WORTH A TRIP

THE BUDDHA CAVES & POTATO TERRACES OF BINGLING SI

Bingling Si

CAVE, BUDDHIST

(☎️ 0930 887 9057; admission ¥50; 🕒 8am-6pm; closed Dec-Mar)

With its relative inaccessibility, Bingling Si is one of the few Buddhist grottoes in China to have survived the tumultuous 20th century unscathed. Which is a good thing, as during a period spanning 1600 years, sculptors dangling from ropes carved 183 niches and sculptures into the porous rock of steep canyon walls. Today the cliffs are isolated by the waters of the Liujiaxia Reservoir (; Liujiaxia Shuiku) on the Yellow

River and hemmed in by a ring of dramatic rock citadels. The cave art can't compare to Dunhuang, but the setting, few tourists and the remarkable terraced landscapes you pass getting here make Bingling Si an unmissable day trip from Lanzhou.

The star is the 27m-high seated **statue of Maitreya**, the future Buddha, but some of the smaller, sway-hipped Bodhisattvas and guardians, bearing an obvious Indian influence, are equally exquisite.

As you loop around past the Maitreya cave, consider hiking 2.5km further up the impressive canyon to a small **Tibetan monastery**. There might also be jeeps running the route.

You can visit Bingling Si as a day trip from Lanzhou or en route to Linxia. Take a boat or taxi from the town of Liujiaxia. Frequent buses from Lanzhou's west bus station (¥20, 2½ hours) run to Liujiaxia and will drop you off a short walk from the boat ticket office (1km before Liujiaxia itself) or at the town's main bus station, where you can hire a taxi. Try to catch the earliest buses possible from Lanzhou (starting at 7am) to avoid getting stuck on the way back. The last return bus to Lanzhou leaves at 6.30pm.

A covered speedboat (seating up to eight people) costs ¥700 for the one-hour journey. The boat ticket office is good at hooking up independent travellers with small groups; expect to pay around ¥150 per person in this case.

Surprisingly, the much more scenic route to the caves is by taxi (¥250 return). Out of Liujiaxia, the road runs high into the rugged hills above the reservoir, and for 90 minutes you will twist and turn, dip and rise through a wonderland of potato-growing terraces laddering and layering every slope, mound, outcrop and ravine. The final descent to the green-blue reservoir, with its craggy backdrop, is sublime.

If heading to Linxia after the caves, there are frequent buses from the station at Liujiaxia.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Lanzhou has flights to Beijing (¥1460), Dunhuang (¥1466), Jiayuguan (¥1576), Kunming (¥1902), Shanghai (¥1750) and Xi'an (¥480).

Gansu Airport Booking Office

TICKET OFFICE

(Gansu Jichang Shoupiao Zhongxin [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0931 888 9666; 616 Donggang Xilu; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

Can book all air tickets at discounted prices.

BUS

Lanzhou has several bus stations, all with departures for Xining. The **main long-distance bus station** (Changtu Chezhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Pingliang Lu) is just a ticket office, outside which you catch a shuttle bus 30 minutes before departure for the **east bus station** (Qiche Dongzhan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0931 841 8411; Pingliang Lu). Most bus journeys back into Lanzhou end up at the east bus station; if you want to rough it on a sleeper to Zhangye or Jiayuguan, buy a ticket directly at that station.

A bus station 150m east of the train station on Huochezhan Donglu offers most of the same routes as the main long-distance and east bus stations.

For journeys to the south of Gansu you must head to the **south bus station** (Qiche Nanzhan Langongping Lu). A taxi from the train station costs ¥35 and takes 45 minutes. Touts from the bus station charge ¥7 for a seat in shared minivans to Lanzhou train station, departing when full.

From the main long-distance bus station:

- ➔ **Pingliang** ¥125, five hours, hourly (7am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Tianshui** ¥84, four hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Xining** ¥59, three hours, every 30 minutes (7.10am to 8.10pm)
- ➔ **Yinchuan** ¥124, six hours, seven per day (7am to 8pm)

The following services depart from the south bus station. Frustratingly tickets can only be purchased there, though can be bought just before departure:

- ➔ **Hezuo** ¥74, four hours, every 20 minutes (8am to 5pm)
- ➔ **Langmusi** ¥121, eight hours, two daily (8.40am and 9.40am)
- ➔ **Linxia** ¥35, three hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Xiahe** ¥76.50, 3½ hours, five daily (7am to 3pm)

The **west bus station** (Qiche Xizhan Xijin Xilu) has frequent departures to Liujiaxia (¥19.50, 2½ hours, 7am to 6pm), if you are heading to Bingling Si.

Hidden off the main street, the **Tianshui bus station** (Tianshui Qichezhan

[MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Tianshui Lu) has buses for eastern Gansu, including Luomen (¥55, four hours, hourly). To find the station, look for a large WC sign and turn right into the narrow alley.

TRAIN

Lanzhou is the major rail link for trains heading to and from western China. In summer buy your onward tickets a couple of days in advance to guarantee a sleeper berth. For Xining, you may be better off taking a bus, as the service is more frequent and Xining's train station has temporarily moved to the outskirts of town (the main railway station is expected to reopen in late 2014). For Dunhuang make sure to get a train to the town itself and not Liuyuan, a time-wasting 180km away.

There are frequent trains to the following:

- ➔ **Dunhuang** hard/soft sleeper ¥244/398, 13 hours (two per day direct to Dunhuang at 5.50pm and 7.10pm; the rest go to Liuyuan)
- ➔ **Jiayuguan** hard/soft seat ¥103/160, seven to eight hours; hard/soft sleeper ¥179/275, 11 hours
- ➔ **Urumqi** hard/soft sleeper ¥396/598, 24 hours
- ➔ **Wuwei** hard/soft seat ¥44/72, 3½ hours
- ➔ **Xi'an** hard/soft sleeper ¥164/252, eight to nine hours
- ➔ **Zhangye** hard/soft seat ¥76/119, five to six hours
- ➔ **Zhongwei** seat/hard sleeper ¥48/127, five to six hours

Getting Around

Lanzhou's streets are filled with vehicles these days and traffic jams are common. Give yourself plenty of time to get around, especially if you have a morning bus or train to catch. The airport is 70km north of the city. Airport buses leave hourly from 5.30am to 7pm in front of **China Eastern Airlines** (Dongfang Hangkong Gongsi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0931 882 1964; 586 Donggang Xilu). The trip costs ¥30 and takes 60 minutes. A taxi costs around ¥150 though you might be able to find a shared taxi across the street from where the airport

buses leave.

Useful bus routes:

➔ **Buses 1 and 6** From the train station to the west bus station via Xiguan Shizi.

➔ **Bus 111** From Zhongshan Lu (at the Xiguan Shizi stop;) to the south bus station.

➔ **Buses 7 and 10** From the train station up the length of Tianshui Nanlu before heading west and east, respectively.

Public buses cost ¥1; taxis are ¥7 for the first 3km. There is no bus from the train station to the south bus station, so you are better off taking a taxi for ¥35 for 45 minutes.

Linxia

 0930 / Pop 198,600 / Transport Hub

Known as the 'Little Mecca of China', this stronghold of Chinese Islam is filled with over 100 mosques and the descendants of ancient Silk Road Muslims. Linxia is mostly used by travellers (and monks) to break up the trip to or from Xiahe, or points in Qinghai.

Sleeping & Eating

As you walk out of the bus station onto Jiefang Lu, you'll find both sides of the street lined with small noodle restaurants and decent budget hotels all asking around ¥68 to ¥88 for a room without a bathroom and ¥158 to ¥188 for one with.

About 1km north of the train station (head right as you exit), on the west of Zhongxin Guangchang look for a night market with rows of vendors selling lamb kebabs (¥1 each) and *sha guo* (mini hotpots; ¥10).

Jinhe Binguan

HOTEL

(📞0930 631 1301; Qianheyuan Xilu; tw with bathroom ¥138-168; ❄️📶)

In this alcohol-free hotel, rooms sport a relaxed modern design with just a few carpet stains to spoil the effect. From the south bus station exit, turn right and walk 300m to the first big intersection. Cross and turn left down Qianheyuan Xilu for 50m.

i Information

Bank of China (Zhongguo Yinhang Jiefang Lu; 🕒8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) is 400m up Jiefang Lu to the right as you exit the south bus station. There's a 24-hour ATM here and you can change travellers cheques.

i Getting There & Away

Linxia has three long-distance bus stations: south (*nanzhan*), west (; *xizhan*) and east (; *dongzhan*). You may be dropped off at the west bus station but it is of little use otherwise. Bus 6 links the south and the west bus stations; a taxi between the two costs ¥5.

From the **east bus station** there are frequent buses to Dongxiang (¥7, one hour) and Liujiaxia (¥16, three hours).

From the **south bus station** there are frequent buses to Hezuo (¥31, two hours), Lanzhou (¥35, three hours) and Xiahe (¥32, 2½ hours; 6.30am to 5pm), and one daily to Xining (¥64, eight hours; 6am).

One interesting side route is to the Mengda Nature Reserve in Qinghai. The fastest way here is a bus to Dahejia (¥7, one hour) from Linxia's **east bus station**, followed by a taxi for the last 15km.

If you're on the slow road to Qinghai, buses to Xunhua (¥50, 3½ hours, 8am to 3.30pm) leave every hour or two from a courtyard behind the Tianhe Fandian hotel. To get here, walk about 300m from the south bus station (turning right as you exit) to the first intersection and then turn right and walk 350m to the hotel. From Xunhua you'll find onward transport to Xining or Tongren.

MINORITY COMMUNITIES AROUND LINXIA

Spilling over a ridge high above Linxia and home to both Hui and Dongxiang minorities, the little market town of **Suonanba** (population 12,000) has a single street that's a hive of activity, with locals trading livestock and occasional shepherds shoeing flocks about.

The town is sometimes also called Dongxiang after the surrounding county. The Dongxiang people speak an Altaic language and are believed to be descendants of 13th-century immigrants from Central Asia, moved forcibly to China after Kublai Khan's Middle East conquest.

Dahejia (population 4500), with sweeping views over the Yellow River, towering red cliffs and (in summer) verdant green terraces, is equally a kaleidoscope of colour. The surrounding area is home to a significant population of Bao'an, Muslims who speak a Mongolic language. The Bao'an are famed for producing knives and share cultural traits with the Hui and Dongxiang. Their Mongol roots come out during summer festivals, when it is possible to see displays of wrestling and horse riding.

To Suonanba, frequent minibuses (¥7, one hour) head up on the pleasant journey past terraced fields from Linxia's east bus station.

You can visit Dahejia when travelling on the road between Linxia and Xining. Most buses between the two will stop here. From Linxia you can also catch a frequent minibus (¥25, three hours) from the station called chengjiao qiche zhan on the outskirts of town.

Xiahe

☞ 0941 / Pop 70,000

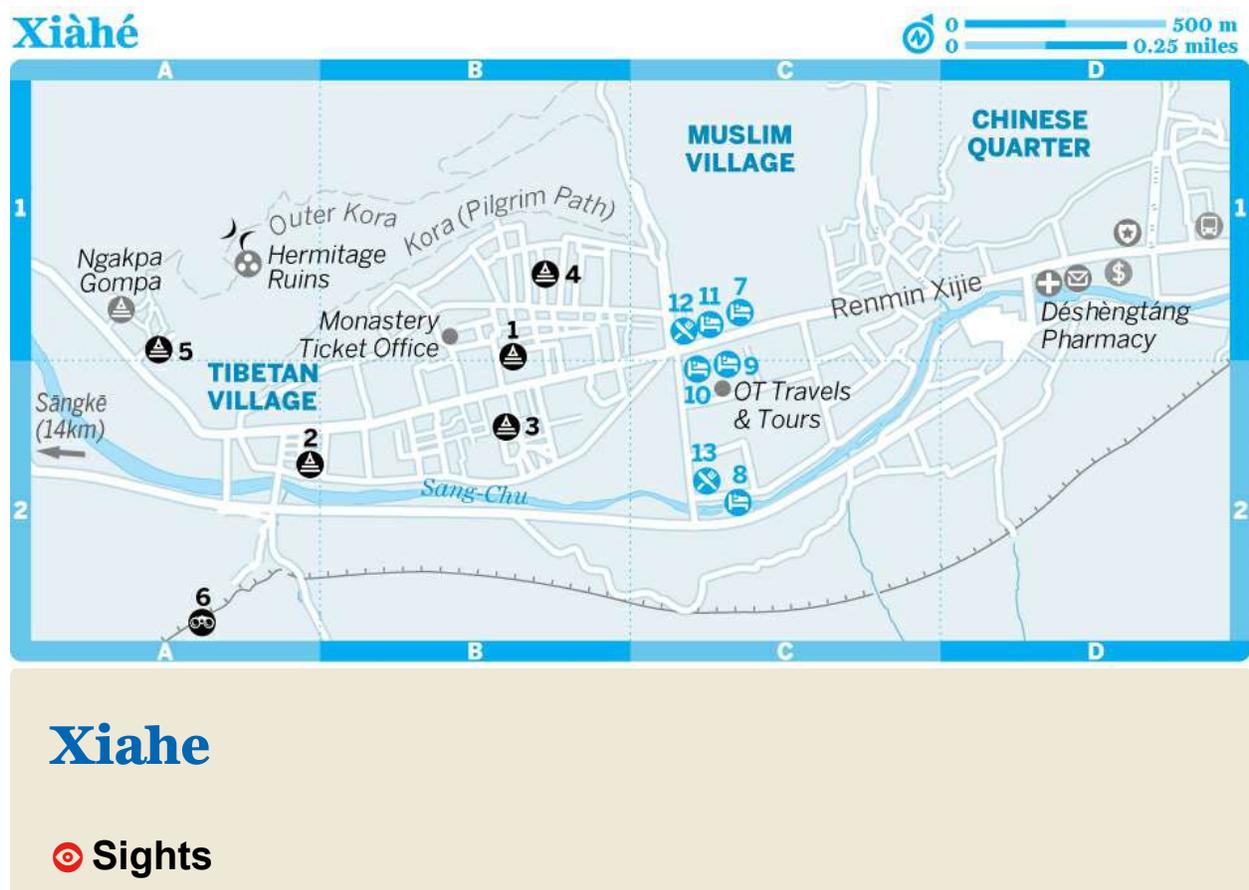
The alluring monastic town of Xiahe attracts an astonishing band of visitors: backpack-laden students, insatiable wanderers, shaven-headed Buddhist nuns, Tibetan nomads in their most colourful finery, camera-toting tour groups and dusty, itinerant beggars. Most visitors are rural Tibetans, whose purpose is to pray, prostrate themselves and seek spiritual fulfilment at holy Labrang Monastery (*Labuleng Si*).

In a beautiful mountain valley at 2920m above sea level, Xiahe has a certain rhythm about it and visitors quickly tap into its fluid motions. The rising sun sends pilgrims out to circle the 3km *kora* (pilgrim path) that rings

the monastery. Crimson-clad monks shuffle into the temples to chant morning prayers. It's easy to get swept up in the action, but some of the best moments come as you set your own pace, wandering about town or in the splendid encircling mountains.

The Xiahe area was long part of the Tibetan region of Amdo. As a microcosm of southwestern Gansu, the three principal ethnic groups are represented here. In rough terms, Xiahe's population is 65% Tibetan, 25% Han and 10% Hui. Labrang Monastery marks the division between Xiahe's mainly Han and Hui Chinese eastern quarter and the scruffy Tibetan village to the west.

Despite Xiahe's ostensible tranquillity, these ethnic groups don't necessarily mix peacefully. The Tibetan community maintains a strong solidarity with their brethren on the plateau, and demonstrations and rioting here in the wake of riots in Lhasa led to the region being closed for nearly two years in 2008, and for a few months at the end of 2012.



| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Barkhang | B1 |
| 2 | Gongtang Chorten | A2 |
| 3 | Hall of Hayagriva | B2 |
| 4 | Labrang Monastery | B1 |
| 5 | Nunnery | A1 |
| 6 | Thangka Display Terrace | A2 |

Sleeping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 7 | Labrang Baoma Hotel | C1 |
| 8 | Labrang Red Rock International Hostel | C2 |
| 9 | Overseas Tibetan Hotel | C2 |
| 10 | Tara Guesthouse | C2 |
| 11 | White Stupa Hotel | C1 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 12 | Gesar Restaurant | C1 |
| 13 | Nirvana Restaurant & Bar | C2 |

Sights

Labrang Monastery

BUDDHIST

(Labuleng Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Renmin Xijie; tour ¥40)

With its endless squeaking prayer wheels (3km in total length), hawks circling overhead and the throb of Tibetan longhorns resonating from the surrounding hills, Labrang is a monastery town unto itself. Many of the chapel halls are illuminated in a yellow glow by yak-butter lamps, their strong-smelling fuel scooped out from voluminous tubs.

Even if Tibet is not on your itinerary, the monastery sufficiently conveys the esoteric mystique of its devout persuasions, leaving indelible impressions of a deeply sacred domain.

In addition to the chapels, residences, golden-roofed temple halls and living quarters for the monks, Labrang is also home to six *tratsang* (monastic colleges or institutes), exploring esoteric Buddhism, theology, medicine,

astrology and law.

Labrang Monastery was founded in 1709 by Ngagong Tsunde (E'angzongzhe in Chinese), the first-generation Jamyang (a line of reincarnated Rinpoches or living Buddhas ranking third in importance after the Dalai and Panchen lamas), from nearby Ganjia. The monastery is one of the six major Tibetan monasteries of the Gelugpa order (Yellow Hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism). The others are Ganden, Sera and Drepung monasteries near Lhasa; Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse; and Kumbum (Ta'er Si) near Xining, Qinghai.

At its peak, Labrang housed nearly 4000 monks, but their ranks greatly declined during the Cultural Revolution. Modern Labrang is again such a popular destination for young disciples that numbers are currently capped at 1800 monks, drawn from Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Inner Mongolia.

Main Buildings

The only way to visit the interior of the most important buildings is with a tour (no photos allowed inside), which generally includes the Institute of Medicine, the Manjushri Temple, the Serkung (Golden Temple) and the main Prayer Hall (Grand Sutra Hall), plus a museum of relics and yak-butter sculptures. English **tours** (per person ¥40) of the monastery leave the ticket office (shoupiao chu) around 10.15am and 3.15pm, and although they give lots to see, they can feel a bit rushed with only basic explanations for those with no knowledge of the workings of monasteries. Outside those times you can latch on to a Chinese tour, with little lost even if you don't understand the language. Even better is to show up at around 6am or 7am to be with the monks. At dusk the hillside resonates with the throaty sound of sutras being chanted behind the wooden doors.

Other Buildings

The rest of the monastery can be explored by walking the *kora*. Although many of the temple halls are padlocked shut, there are a couple of separate smaller chapels you can visit, though they can often be closed for unexplained reasons. Some charge admission.

The three-storey **Barkhang** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Labrang Monastery, Renmin Xijie; admission ¥10) is the monastery's traditional printing press. With rows upon rows of more than 20,000 wood blocks for printing, it's well worth a visit, and photos are allowed. The Barkhang is off the main road down a small side lane. Ask your guide for the latest opening hours.

The **Hall of Hayagriva** (Matou Mingwang Dian, Hall of Horsehead Buddha [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Labrang Monastery, Renmin Xijie; admission ¥10), destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, was reopened in 2007. A repository of vivid and bright murals, the hall also encapsulates a startlingly fierce 12m-high effigy of Hayagriva – a wrathful manifestation of the usually calm Avalokiteshvara (Guanyin) – with six arms and three faces. The hall is down a side lane almost directly across from the lane to the Barkhang.

With an interior splashed with murals and illuminated by a combination of yak-butter lamps and electric light bulbs by the thousand, the 31m-tall **Gongtang Chorten** (Gongtang Baota, Gongtang Stupa [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Labrang Monastery, Renmin Xijie; admission ¥20) is a perennial favourite with visitors. Head up to the roof for landscape views. At the rear of the golden *chorten* (Tibetan stupa) look for a **Sleeping Buddha** (*Wofu*), which depicts Sakyamuni on the cusp of entering nirvana. The stupa is accessed by gates that face the river. If you follow the *kora* path, you will pass by it.

Access to the rest of the monastery area is free, and you can easily spend several hours just walking around and soaking up the atmosphere in the endless maze of mud-packed walls. The Tibetan greeting in the local Amdo dialect is *Cho day mo?* ('How do you do?') – a great icebreaker.

The best morning views of the monastery come from the **Thangka Display Terrace** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr of Jiujialu & Renmin Xijie), a popular picnic spot, or the forested hills south of the main town.

Nunnery

BUDDHIST

(Nigu'an, Ani Gompa [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥10)

This nunnery is on the hill above the Tibetan part of town. The higher *kora*

path begins just to the left of here.

WALK LIKE A TIBETAN

Following the 3km kora (pilgrim path) encircling Labrang Monastery is perhaps the best approach to grasping its layout, scale and significance. The kora is lined with long rows of squeaking prayer wheels, whitewashed chortens (Tibetan stupas) and chapels. Tibetan pilgrims with beads in their hands and sunhats on their heads, old folk, mothers with babies and children, shabby nomads and more walk in meditative fashion clockwise along the path (called zhuanjingdao, 'scripture-turning way' in Chinese), rotating prayer wheels as they go. Look also for the tiny meditation cells on the northern hillside.

For a short hike, the more strenuous outer kora path takes about an hour and climbs high above the monastery. To reach the start, head past the monastery's western edges and about one block into the Tibetan village look for a large signpost (in Tibetan but it's the only one around) on the right. Follow the alley up, and make your way to the ridge, where you wind steeply uphill to a collection of prayer flags and the ruins of a hermitage. The views of the monastery open up as you go along. At the end of the ridge there's a steep descent into town.

Tours

Losang at OT Travels & Tours and the staff at Tara Guesthouse are both excellent resources for information and tours of the surrounding area.

Festivals & Events

Festivals are central to the calendar for both the devotional monks and the nomads who stream into town from the grasslands in multicoloured splendour. Tibetans use a lunar calendar, so dates for individual festivals vary from year to year.

Monlam Festival

RELIGIOUS

(Great Prayer Festival)

This festival starts three days after the Tibetan New Year, which is usually in

February or early March, with significant days accompanied by spectacular processions and prayer assemblies. Monlam Festival finishes with a creative display of monk-sculpted butter lanterns lighting up the 15th evening (and full moon) of the New Year.

On the morning of the 13th day of the New Year, more than 100 monks carry a huge *thangka* (sacred painting on cloth) of the Buddha, measuring more than 30m by 20m, and unfurl it on the hill facing the monastery. On the 14th day there is an all-day session of Cham dances performed by 35 masked dancers, with Yama, the lord of death, playing the leading role. On the 16th day the Maitreya statue is paraded around the monastery.

Sleeping

Overseas Tibetan Hotel

HOTEL

(Huaqiao Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0941 712 2642; www.overseastibetanhotel.com; 77 Renmin Xijie; dm ¥50, d ¥200-300; 📶)

A well-run and bustling place, mid 2014 saw the final renovations of the guesthouse including wi-fi that reaches every corner, and solar power to ensure 24/7 hot water. The modern doubles are the best value in town with clean enclosed showers (proper glass doors!), flat-screen TVs and the cushiest thick mattresses in Xiahe. Discounts of 20% in quiet periods.

Owned by Losang, an energetic, likeable Tibetan with faultless English and in touch with the wants of travellers. Services include bike rental (¥20 per day), laundry, a travel agency and the Everest Cafe with Western set breakfasts with yak yoghurt (¥30).

Labrang Red Rock International Hostel

HOSTEL

(Labuleng Hongshi Guoji Qingnian Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0941 712 3698; 253 Yagetang; dm ¥45, d ¥140; 📶)

This Tibetan-themed, quiet hostel has pine-wood rooms, solar-powered hot showers, a restaurant-bar, and a beautiful display of *thangka*. Doubles are

clean with futon style beds, and YHA card holders get a discount. To get here, walk past the Tara Guesthouse on Yagetang, turn left and left again at the last street before the river. Look for the prayer flags outside.

Tara Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Zhuoma Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0941 712 1274; 268 Yagetang; dm ¥15, s/tw without bathroom ¥30-40/¥60-100, d with bathroom ¥180; 📶)

This long-established budget place is run by monks from Sichuan and has extremely frugal dorms, small, comfortable *kang* rooms (shared shower room, no phone), and larger doubles with private bathrooms. English is spoken at the front desk. The attached restaurant serves some of the best *momo* (Tibetan dumplings; ¥15) around and is popular with monks for the many vegetarian options.

Labrang Baoma Hotel

HOTEL

(Labuleng Baoma Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0941 712 1078; www.labranghotel.com; 77 Renmin Xijie; 5-bed dm ¥35, r from ¥480; @)

Pleasant and vibrantly colourful hotel with friendly staff, nice interior, Tibetan-style courtyard and comfortable en suite doubles. Discounts of 50% are common.

White Stupa Hotel

HOTEL

(Qudeng Gabu Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0941 712 2866; Renmin Xijie; d/tw ¥168/300; @)

This friendly place has clean, if scruffy, bright rooms with en suite bathrooms. Expect discounts of 20%.

Eating & Drinking

For those of you who can't make it to Tibet, Xiahe provides an opportunity to develop an appetite for the flavours of the Land of Snows, whether it's

momo, *tsampa* (a porridge of roasted barley flour), yak-milk yoghurt or throat-warming glasses of the local firewater. Most hotels and guesthouses have their own attached restaurants, and it seems the entire 2nd floor of the main street is all eateries; finding an English menu in this crowd is not hard.

★ Gesar Restaurant

TIBETAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Renmin Xijie & Tengzhilu; dishes ¥12-35; 🕒 7am-8pm daily)

This simple, family-run restaurant takes care to bring out tasty dishes with very fresh ingredients (the yoghurt is the best around). There's a long selection of vegetarian dishes, as well as stews, traditional Tibetan staples such as vegetarian *momo* (¥3), *tsampa* and fried bread, and a decent a la carte Western breakfast menu.

Nirvana Restaurant & Bar

TIBETAN, CAFE

(Deguyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0941 718 1702; 247 Yagetang; dishes ¥15-35; 🕒 9am-10pm; ❄️ 📶)

Travellers wanting authentic Tibetan and Western dishes congregate here for a large helping of yak stew with potatoes (¥35), simple pizza, fresh espresso and travel advice with the English-speaking Tibetan-Dutch couple who own the restaurant. The welcoming, casual vibe makes leaving Nirvana difficult, as does the long wine and spirits menu.

Shopping

Xiahe is an excellent place to look for Tibetan handicrafts, so why not don a cowboy hat or a Tibetan trilby, enshroud yourself in a *chuba* (Tibetan cloak), light up some juniper incense, wrap your head in a furry yellow monk's hat, jump into a pair of monk's boots, flap a prayer flag or shell out for brocaded silks, *thangka*, Tibetan-style tents or a silver teapot? Stacks of handicraft shops line the upper part of the main road, before the monastery walls, and some painting shops are found off the lower *kora* route alongside the river.

Information

Internet cafes around town require Chinese ID, though some will allow you to use their ID. Ask at hostels for nearby internet access.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng ; 8 Renimn Xijie; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Deshengtang Pharmacy

PHARMACY

(Deshengtang Yaodian ; 14 Renmin Xijie; 🕒 9.30am-9pm daily)

Western, Chinese and Tibetan medicine; just west of China Post.

Industrial & Commercial Bank of China

BANK

(ICBC; Gongshang Yinhang ; 98 Nanxiahe Jie, 🕒 8.30am-4pm daily)

Has an ATM and changes US dollars but not travellers cheques.

OT Travels & Tours

TRAVEL AGENCY

(; 📞 1390 9419 888; amdolosang@hotmail.com; 77 Renmin Xijie, 🕒 8am-9pm daily)

This reliable travel agency at the Overseas Tibetan Hotel can arrange cars and guides to nearby sights, and also specialises in overland tours from Lanzhou, Xining and Chengdu to Xiahe.

Getting There & Away

Trains don't run to Xiahe, but it's regularly serviced by bus. Most travellers head on to either Lanzhou or Sichuan; the road less travelled takes you over the mountains to Tongren in Qinghai.

AIR

The **Gannan Xiahe Airport** (code GXH; Gannan Xiahe Jichang;) opened in early 2014 with flights to Xi'an (¥1130), dodging the uninspiring Lanzhou-Xiahe bus journey, and Lhasa (¥1760), with Beijing and Chengdu to come. Book

flights online in English at ctrip.com. There is no airport bus, but [OT Travels & Tours](#) can arrange a private 1hr taxi to the airport for ¥400.

BUS

The following bus services depart from Xiahe:

- ➔ **Hezuo** ¥21.50, one hour, every 30 minutes (6.10am to 5.20pm)
- ➔ **Langmusi** ¥72.50, 3½ hours, one daily (7.40am)
- ➔ **Lanzhou** ¥77, 3½ hours, four daily (6.30am, 7.30am, 8.30am and 2.30pm)
- ➔ **Linxia** ¥32, two hours, every 30 minutes (6am to 5.25pm)
- ➔ **Tongren** ¥32, 2½ hours, one daily (7.30am)
- ➔ **Xining** ¥79, seven hours, one daily (6.10am)

If you can't get a direct ticket to/from Lanzhou, take a bus to Linxia or Hezuo and change there. If you are heading to Xining, note that buses run there every 40 minutes from Tongren.

Getting Around

Hotels and restaurants rent out bikes for ¥30 per day. Taxis cost ¥1 to ¥2 per seat for a short trip around town, including to the bus station and monastery. Leaving the bus station, turn right for a 1km walk to town.

Around Xiahe

Sangke Grasslands

Expanses of open grassland dotted with Tibetans and their grazing yak herds highlight a trip to the village of **Sangke**, 14km from Xiahe. Development has turned the area into a small circus, complete with touristy horse rides and fake tourist yurts, but there is good hiking in the nearby hills and you can keep going to more distant and pristine grasslands in the direction of Amchog. You can cycle up to Sangke in about one hour. A taxi costs ¥50

return. The grasslands are lushest in summer.

Ganjia Grasslands

The Ganjia Grasslands (*Ganjia Caoyuan*), 34km from Xiahe, aren't as pretty as at nearby Sangke, but there is more to explore. From Xiahe the bumpy road crosses the Naren-Ka pass (impassable after long rains) before quickly descending into wide grasslands dotted with herds of sheep and backed by ever-more dramatic mountain scenery. Past Ganjia Xian village, a side road climbs 12km to **Nekhang** (Baishi Ya Rong dong admission ¥30), a cave complex where pilgrims lower themselves down ropes and ladders into two sacred underground chambers. A Dutch traveller fell to his death here in 2006, and to prevent the same fate we advise avoiding this place.

Just up the road from the caves is **Trakkar Gompa** (Baishiya Si admission ¥30), a monastery of 90 monks set against a stunning backdrop of vertical rock formations. From Trakkar it's a short drive to the 2000-year-old Han-dynasty village of **Bajiao** (Karnang in Tibetan admission ¥25). The remarkable 12-sided walls here still shelter a small living community. From the village it's a short 5km diversion to the renovated **Tseway Gompa** (Zuohai Si admission ¥30), one of the few Bon monasteries in Gansu. Make sure you circumnavigate any holy site counterclockwise in the Bon fashion. There are great views of Bajiao from the ridge behind the monastery.

A four- to five-hour return trip to the Ganjia Grasslands costs around ¥180 for a taxi from Xiahe. If you want an English-speaking driver and guide (which will cost more), contact [OT Travels & Tours](#).

Hiking

It's possible to hike over several days from the Ganjia Grasslands to 4636m-high **Dalijia Shan** (Dalijia Mountain), but you will need to be well equipped. Summer is the best season for such treks as you have more daylight hours, wildflowers and warmer weather. There are also treks between Tibetan villages and around **Daowei Tibetan Village** (*Daowei Zangzu Xiang*; also

called *Guru*).

[OT Travels & Tours](#) in Xiahe can advise on these and other trips and arrange a car for four people for ¥400 per day and an English-speaking guide (for another ¥400); they can also arrange fun camping trips for overnighing on the grasslands.

Hezuo

 0941 / Pop 76,000

The booming regional capital of Gannan prefecture, Hezuo is a transit point for travellers plying the excellent overland route between Gansu and Sichuan provinces. The city is also the sight of the incredible Milarepa Palace, a bewitching Tibetan temple ranging spectacularly over nine floors.

Hezuo is a fairly compact town, with a large public square (Wenhua Guangchang) roughly halfway between the two bus stations. You'll find banks with ATMs around the square. Most taxi rides around town cost ¥2.

Sights

Milarepa Palace Buddhist Temple

BUDDHIST

(Sekhar Gutok, Jiuceng Foge admission ¥20;  7am-6pm)

About 2km from the bus station along the main road towards Xiahe is this towering temple, ringed by prayer wheels. Resembling a boutique hotel, Milarepa is odd in the Tibetan world in that different spiritual leaders from varying sects are worshipped on each floor. The town's main monastery, [Tso Gompa](#) (Hezuo Si, Hezuo Monastery Nawulu,  8am-6pm), is next door. A taxi here costs ¥2 to ¥3 from the central main bus station.

The Milarepa's ground-floor is a powerful spectacle: a galaxy of Bodhisattvas, Buddhist statues and yak-butter lamps illuminating celestial figures. Climb upstairs to a further rich display of lamas and living Buddhas.

More deities muster on the 4th floor and an unsettling array of fearsome, turquoise tantric effigies awaits on the 6th floor. The 8th floor houses effigies of Sakyamuni and Guanyin, with views over the hills and town.

Sleeping & Eating

With Xiahe just an hour to the north there is little reason to stay here, and cheap hotels are loath to take foreigners. If you get stuck, the **Gannan Fandian** (📞 0941 821 4733; Maqu Xilu, tw ¥180-260, discounts of 20%; 🏠 @) has decent, clean and bright doubles with shower and internet; it's on the southwest corner of the public square.

There are restaurants around the public square, and also around the bus stations. Across the road from the entrance to the central bus station, look for a **Muslim restaurant** (Opposite the central bus station; dishes ¥4-10; 🕒 8am-8pm daily) with a picture menu outside. Try the *ganbanmian* (¥10), a type of spaghetti bolognese with hand-pulled noodles.

Getting There & Away

Hezuo is where buses from Zoige (*Ruo'ergai*), in Sichuan, and Langmusi and Xiahe meet. There is a train booking office just outside the central bus station (though no trains pass through here).

Services from the **central bus station** (Changtu Qichezhan Nawulu,):

- ➔ **Lanzhou** ¥74, four hours, every 30 minutes
- ➔ **Linxia** ¥30, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes
- ➔ **Xiahe** ¥14.50, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes

From the **south bus station** (Qiche Nanzhan cnr Zhuoni Donglu & Tongqin Jie,):

- ➔ **Langmusi** ¥33 to ¥50, three hours, three daily (7am, 10.20am and 12.20pm)
- ➔ **Zoige** ¥78, 3½ hours, one daily (7.30am)

A taxi between the two bus stations costs ¥2 per person, or take bus 1 (¥1).

Langmusi

 0941 / Pop 3000

Straddling the border between Sichuan and Gansu is Langmusi (Taktsang Lhamo in Tibetan), an expanding and modernising alpine Amdo Tibetan village nestled among steep grassy meadows, evergreen forests of slender pine trees brushing the sky, crumbling stupas, piles of *mani* stones and snow-clad peaks. Lovely and moist compared to the lowlands, Langmusi is a delightful place, surrounded by countless red and white monastery buildings, flapping prayer flags and the mesmerising sound of monks chanting at twilight.

The White Dragon River (*Bailong Jiang*) divides the town in two and the Sichuan side has quickly become the far nicer part to stay in. From where the bus drops you off on the scruffy main street, walk up the road about three blocks and then turn left. The well-paved street runs a few blocks up to the Kerti monastery and is lined with a range of hostels, hotels, eateries and souvenir shops.

Sights

Kerti Gompa

BUDDHIST

(Geerdi Si admission valid 2 days ¥30;  6.30-8am, 11am-1pm & 6-8pm)

Rising up on the Sichuan side of White Dragon River is this monastery – otherwise dubbed the Sichuan Monastery – built in 1413, home to around 700 monks, and composed of five temples and colleges. Try your luck catching a glimpse of student monks in class, or sky burials (both from a respectful distance) by visiting the monastery in the morning (6.30am to 8am and 11am to 1pm) or late afternoon (6pm to 8pm).

A short walk from the monastery stand small pavilions built over a brook whose waters power a round-the-clock revolving of prayer wheels housed inside – the ultimate in holiness! Just across from the entrance is a small **Hui**

Muslim village with yellow houses and central mosque.

Serti Gompa

BUDDHIST

(Saichi Si admission ¥30; 🕒 6.30-8am, 11am-1pm & 6-8pm)

This small monastery with golden- and silver-roofed halls dates from 1748 stands on the Gansu side of White Dragon River and is simply referred to as the Gansu Monastery. The best chance of seeing sky burials is in the morning (6.30am to 8am and 11am to 1pm) and late afternoon (6pm to 8pm). At all times of day the views are lovely from up here.

Activities

Hiking

Bountiful hiking opportunities radiate in almost every direction. For reasonably priced guides for all-day or overnight treks, including to **Huagaishen Shan** (4200m), all the horse-trekking companies and hostels in town can offer a local guide.

Southwest of Kerti Gompa is **Namo Gorge** (*Namo Daxiagu*), which makes for a superlative two- to three-hour (return) hike. The gorge contains several sacred grottoes, one dedicated to the Tibetan goddess Palden Lhamo, the other is the stone-tablet labelled **Fairy Cave** (*Xiannu Dong*), where monks sometimes chant inside, which gives the town its Tibetan name (*langmu* meaning fairy). Cross rickety bridges flung over the gushing stream, trek past piles of *mani* stones and prayer flags, and hike on into a splendid ravine. After about 30 minutes of clambering over rocks you reach a grassy plain surrounded by towering peaks.

Another popular trek is the hike along the White Dragon River to the **river's source** (*Bailong Jiang Yuantou*), where Chinese hikers go in search of *chongcao*, a coveted herb used in Chinese medicine.

A lovely walk heads out over the hills along a narrow paved road from the stupa at Serti Gompa (you must pay admission to pass through) to the small

village of **Jikehe Cun**. This hike can be combined with the hike to the White Dragon River source. When you reach the village, simply follow the loop and then head down a dirt path towards the valley below. Watch out for local dogs.

For some glorious open views over Xiahe, trek up the coxcomb-like **Red Stone Mountain** (*Hongshi Ya*). To start, turn right one street down (heading out of Langmusi) past the intersection where the bus drops you off.

Horse Trekking

The mountain trails around Langmusi offer spectacular riding opportunities. There are two outfits in town offering similar one- to four-day treks overnighiting at nomads' tents and with the option of climbing nearby peaks along the way. Both companies have English-speaking staff and are good sources of travel information.

Langmusi Tibetan Horse Trekking

HORSE RIDING

(📞 0941 667 1504; www.langmusi.net; 🕒 8am-10pm)

This established, officially licensed outfit offers horse hire per day for ¥300 for a single traveller; ¥220 for two or more. In addition to guide, food and sleeping bags, trips include a package on nomad culture.

Wind Horse Trekking

HORSE RIDING

(Langmusi Baiwu Madui 📞 151 0944 1588; 🕒 8am-8pm)

Offers horse-riding packages starting at ¥180 per day (bring your own sleeping bag). Opposite the China Telecom office on the main road of Langmusi.

Biking

Langmusi is worth exploring on two wheels for serious cyclists. The many dirt tracks snaking into the hills, Red Stone Mountain and the source of the White Dragon River all make for hard steep work. Two distant lakes, both around 40km from town on quiet, flat highways, are popular destinations.

[Langmusi Tibetan Horse Trekking](#) can help with bike tours and also **rents bikes** (¥60 to ¥80 per day).

Festivals & Events

If you are in the area in late July, head out to Maqu to see the **annual horse races**. The dates change each year, so try contacting the [Langmusi Binguan hotel](#) to find out when it is being held. Maqu is 67km west of Langmusi. Travellers cafes and hotels in Langmusi can arrange transport to the town.

Sleeping

Tibetan Barley Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Zangde Qingke Guoji Qingnian Lushe  mobile 134 3879 8688; dm ¥40-45, d/tw with shower ¥220; )

This hostel has clean, colourful rooms, some with sunny rooftop views, and a homely bar-lounge with Chinese meals and cushion seating. Co-manager Yezi speaks good French and English, is full of travel information, can arrange tours and has even drawn a useful Langmusi map. To get here, go straight ahead from the bus dropoff, cross the river and turn left.

Langmusi Binguan

HOTEL

( 0941 667 1086; tibetanyakboy@yahoo.co.uk; dm ¥30, d/tw with shower ¥160-180)

Just up the side road from where the bus drops you off is this friendly English-speaking place with basic three-bed dorms and clean en suite rooms that show a bit wear and tear. The courtyard rooms are quietest. Discounts of 30%.

Yong Zhong Hotel

HOTEL

(Yongzhong Binguan  0941 667 1032; tw ¥180-220;  )

On the Sichuan side of town, just down from [Kerti Gompa](#), is this pleasant

family-run hotel with small, bright, modern rooms, all with air-con and 24-hour hot water. There's also a free computer with internet downstairs in the shoe shop where you access the hotel. Expect discounts of 30%.

Langmusi Hotel

HOTEL

(Langmusi Da Jiudian  0941 667 1555; langmusihotel@yahoo.com.cn; d ¥666-699, tr ¥700)

This friendly four-storey hotel is the most upscale in Langmusi and offers very pleasant, clean and spacious rooms in either standard or Tibetan styling. It's on the road towards [Kerti Gompa](#), literally across from the ticket booth. Discounts of up to 70%.

Eating

Practically every backpacker-oriented guesthouse and hostel has its own attached restaurant-bar serving a combination of Western, Tibetan and Chinese dishes. On the Sichuan side of town you'll find a dozen pleasant small restaurants serving Sichuanese, Yunnanese and Tibetan dishes. For cheap noodles, head to the Muslim restaurants across from the entrance to Kerti Gompa.

Happy Homemade Yunnan Taste

YUNNANESE

(Yuanzi Yuanwei dishes ¥10-18;  10am-10pm; )

The Yunnanese folk at this family run restaurant are infectiously happy. Sample the strong home-made *baijiu* (Chinese spirit) and you might be too. Popular with Chinese travellers for the *guoqiao mixian* (Yunnanese hot pot) and huge servings of classics such as *yuxiang qiezi* (red-pepper stewed eggplant). Located just north of the east side of main street.

★ Black Tent Cafe

TIBETAN, CAFE

(Hei Zhanpeng Kafei dishes ¥25-50;  8am-10pm; )

Great service, a Tibetan-style interior, rooftop seating and a good little menu offering Western and Tibetan dishes are just some of the highlights of this

2nd-floor cafe run by the folks at [Langmusi Tibetan Horse Trekking](#). Our only complaint is the price of beer: ¥12 for a small can! The cafe is just up the side street from the intersection where the bus drops you off (off the west side of main street).

Information

There is nowhere to change money and no ATMs that accept foreign cards. Wi-fi is widely available at hostels and cafes. The **Public Security Bureau** (PSB; Gonganju) is just down from the Langmusi Hotel.

Getting There & Away

There's one daily bus to Zoige (*Ruo'ergai*; ¥25, 2½ hours) at 6.30am which arrives with time to connect with the bus to Songpan. There are two to three daily buses to Hezuo (¥50, three hours), departing at 6.30am (summer only), 7.20am and noon. Take the one direct bus to Xiahe (¥72, 3½ hours) at 2pm, or change in Hezuo for frequent buses. Note that while there is a daily bus from Lanzhou to Langmusi, there is no return bus. For the latest schedule see www.langmusi.net.

HEXI CORRIDOR

Bound by the Qilian Shan range to the south and the Mazong (Horse's Mane) and Longshou (Dragon's Head) ranges to the north, the narrow strip of land that is Hexi Corridor (*Hexi Zoulang*), around which the province is formed, was once the sole western passage in and out of the Middle Kingdom.

Wuwei

 0935 / Pop 509,000

Wuwei stands at the strategic eastern end of the Hexi Corridor. It was from here, two millennia ago, that the emperors of China launched their

expeditionary forces into the unknown west, eventually leading them to Jiayuguan and beyond. Temples, tombs and traditional gates hint at Wuwei's Silk Road past, while the rapidly modernising city has some pleasant squares and pedestrian streets.

Wuwei is compact enough that with the exception of Haizang Temple you can walk to all the sights in an afternoon. Most travellers base themselves in the southern part of town near the rebuilt South Gate. The city's main square, Wenhua Guangchang, is about 1km directly north of the gate on Bei Dajie.

Sights

The following sights are written in the order you would approach them starting from the South Gate.

Confucius Temple

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Wenmiao cnr Xin Qingnianxiang & Wenmiaolu, admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-6pm)

This Ming-era temple is divided into Confucian Temple and Wenchang Hall sections. Both display some fine examples of traditional architecture. Head east from the South Gate along pleasant Mingqing Fanggu Wenhua Jie to the square at the end (about 600m).

There is also an important stele featuring the extinct Xixia language carved into one side and a Chinese translation on the other: a sort of Rosetta stone allowing researchers to understand the once unintelligible Xixia texts. The stele is now housed in a small museum (free with temple ticket) on the left side of the square as you exit the temple.

Kumarajiva Pagoda

BUDDHIST PAGODA

(Luoshisi Ta cnr Gonghejie & Bei Dajie; 🕒 8am-6pm daily) **FREE**

Located 400m north of Wuwei's main square (*Wenhua Guangchang*), on Bei Dajie, this pagoda dates from AD 488 and is surrounded by a tranquil complex of both unpainted and colourful wooden temples with old folk gossiping under trees. Dedicated to the great translator of Buddhist sutras

(whose tongue was buried beneath the pagoda), the pagoda was toppled during the great earthquake in 1927 and rebuilt.

Leitai Si

HISTORIC SITE

(Lei Tai Dong Lu; admission ¥50; 🕒 8am-6pm)

The pride and joy of the city, the bronze **Flying Horse of Wuwei** was discovered here in 1969 and is the unofficial symbol of Gansu. It was found in a secret tomb beneath this temple, built on top of steep earthen ramparts. The Flying Horse is now displayed in the [Gansu Provincial Museum](#).

The site is 1.2km north of Wuwei; turn right at Lei Tai Dong Lu. Note that you'll need your passport to enter.

While it's a thrill to explore a 2000-year-old tomb, there is precious little inside.

Haizang Temple

BUDDHIST

(Haizang Si Haizang Park; admission ¥10; 🕒 6am-6pm)

A fascinating active monastery with a minute pavilion to the right of the entrance containing a **well** whose 'magic waters' (*shenshui*) are said to connect by subterranean streams to a Holy Lake (*Shenghu*) in the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Drinking the water is said to cure myriad ailments. A short trip on bus 3 (¥2) or taxi (¥15 to ¥20) outside town takes you to the entrance of shabby **Haizang park** (admission ¥2), with the temple out back.

The **Three Sages Hall** (*Sansheng Dian*) contains a 'hermaphroditic Guanyin'. Dating to the Ming dynasty, the raised **Wuliang Palace** (*Wuliang Dian*) was once used to store sutras but now houses a reclining Buddha in a glass cabinet.

WORTH A TRIP

THE BIG BUDDHA OF TIAN TISHAN

It's hard to appreciate how massive the 15m-high Shakyamuni Buddha statue at **Tian tishan Grottoes** (Tiantishan Shiku Dengshan village; admission ¥10; 🕒 8am-6pm daily) is until

you are at its truck-sized feet and peering up at its outstretched hand emerging from the cliff face. These 1600-year-old carvings stand majestically in the open air, not hidden in dark caves, so snap away.

The similarly ancient murals (tigers, black dragons) are worth a look amongst the 17 caves, along with some scroll paintings, but most relics have been whisked off to Dunhuang, so the Buddha is the real star.

The grottoes are 50km south of Wuwei. From Wuwei bus station, ask for the Tian tishan minibus (¥12, 3.5 hours, every 30 minutes). You'll be dropped off at Zhonglu, from where it's a short taxi ride (¥10) to the grottoes.

Sleeping & Eating

The best place to situate yourself is around the South Gate. Mingqing Fanggu Wenhua Jie (or simply Mingqing Jie) extends east from the gate and is an attractive street lined with restaurants, coffee shops and a KTV or two.

Wuwei Nanchengmen Binguan

HOTEL

( 0935 231 9999; 62 Nan Dajie; tr without bathroom ¥108, d/tw with bathroom ¥138/158; )

Almost touching the northwest side of the South Gate is this friendly hotel with small rooms with wear and tear but sporting disproportionately spacious bathrooms. Mention whether you prefer street views or a quiet inner room. The hotel entrance is down a short alley. Discounts of 15% to 20%.

Ziyunge Hotel

HOTEL

(Ziyunge Jiudian  0935 225 3888; Mingqing Fanggu Wenhua Jie; s/d/tr ¥198/280/218;  )

Just east of the South Gate, this great hotel has bright, comfortable and spacious rooms with showers and new furnishings. Wi-fi only in lobby. You can often net a standard double for around ¥140.

Korean Special Seafood and Hotpot

KOREAN, HOTPOT

(Hanguo Tebie Tehaixian Huoguomian  mobile 186 9350 7234; Xinqingnian Alley, dishes ¥10-22;

 9am-9pm)

This modern restaurant breaks the monotony of dumplings with seafood

okonomiyaki (Japanese crepe), cooked-at-your-table hotpots (¥56) with kimchi, and sushi on its large picture menu. Pass north through the South Gate and take the first right two blocks till the corner with Huiguan Alley. Look for the long black sign with yellow script.

Information

There's a **Bank of China** (| Zhongguo Yinhang Buxing Shangye Jie;) on the west end of the pedestrian shopping street where you can change money. There's also a branch with a 24-hour ATM behind the [Ziyunge Hotel](#). Internet cafes in Wuwei require Chinese ID.

Getting There & Around

BUS

Express buses run from the long-distance bus station (*changtu qiche zhan*), 1.5km southwest of Wenhua Guangchang to Jiayuguan, Lanzhou and Zhangye, though trains are faster and cheaper still.

TRAIN

The station is 3.5km southwest of Wenhua Guangchang; the two are connected by buses 1 and 2 (¥1) or taxi (¥10). Taxis rides around town are around ¥4 to ¥7. There are frequent trains to the following:

- ➔ **Dunhuang** hard/soft sleeper ¥195/302, 10 hours (two per day directly to Dunhuang at 9.21pm and 10.46pm; other trains drop you off at Liuyuan)
- ➔ **Jiayuguan** hard/soft seat ¥70/108, five to six hours, six daily
- ➔ **Lanzhou** hard/soft seat ¥47/72, 3½ hours, every 20-30 minutes
- ➔ **Zhangye** hard/soft seat ¥41/61, three hours, every 20-30 minutes
- ➔ **Zhongwei** seat/hard sleeper ¥40.5/86.5, three to four hours, seven daily

To pre-purchase tickets, cross the square opposite the Confucius Temple (cnr of Xin Qingnianxiang & Wenmiaolu;) to the **train booking office**.

Zhangye

 0936 / Pop 260,000

Most people use this mid-size Silk Road town as a jumping-off base for the unique cliff temples at nearby Mati Si. But budget at least the afternoon here. There's a colossal Buddha ensconced inside one of China's best preserved wooden temples that deserves an extended visit.

The main road through town (as far as the traveller is concerned) is divided into Xi (West) Dajie and Dong (East) Dajie, depending which direction it radiates from the drum tower. Jianfu Jie intersects with Xi Dajie a few blocks from the drum tower and heading north takes you to a pleasant eating street while south leads to the Great Buddha Temple and Wooden Pagoda.

Sights

★ Great Buddha Temple

BUDDHIST

(Dafo Si  0936 821 9671; off Jianfu Jie; admission ¥41;  8am-6pm)

Originally dating to 1098 (Western Xia dynasty), this behemoth contains an astonishing 35m-long sleeping Buddha – China's largest of this variety – surrounded by mouldering clay arhats (Buddhists who have achieved enlightenment) and Qing-dynasty murals. Until the 1960s, small children would clamber into the huge Buddha and play around inside his tummy.

From Xi Dajie head south about 1km.

This is one of the few wooden structures from this era still standing in China and there is a wealth of traditional symbols to examine. Even the unrestored exterior is fascinating and there's an impressive white **clay stupa** (*tu ta*) dating from the Ming dynasty.

Wooden Pagoda

PAGODA

(Muta cnr Xianfu Jie & Minzhu Xijie; admission ¥5;  8am-noon & 2.30-6pm)

In the town's main square stands this brick and wooden pagoda. Though first built in AD 528, the present structure is a thorough reconstruction from 1926.

Sleeping & Eating

For meals, head 300m west of the drum tower and look for Mingqing Jie, an alley of faux-Qing architecture lined with dozens of clean, friendly restaurants with picture menus. There is also a **food court** on the northeast side of the drum tower beside the China Construction Bank.

Huayi Binguan

HOTEL

( 0936 824 2118; Dong Dajie; d without/with bathroom ¥40/90;  )

Surprisingly clean and tidy budget hotel with rooms showing minimum wear and tear. In-room broadband is a definite bonus, as is the location just east of the drum tower. Look for the stone lions guarding the entrance.

Ganzhou Hotel

HOTEL

(Ganzhou Binguan  0936 888 8822; 373 Nan Dajie; d & tw ¥399;  )

A solid if entirely generic midrange hotel with bright modern rooms, courteous staff and a good location just 150m south of the drum tower. Discounts of up to 50% make this a great choice.

Information

There's an **internet cafe** (wangba 3rd fl, 403 Nan Dajie; per hr ¥3;  8am-late) on the southwest corner of the drum tower intersection. The **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang Dong Dajie;  8.30am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Fri) can change travellers cheques and has a 24-hour ATM.

Getting There & Around

BUS

The town has three bus stations, in the south, east and west. The **west bus**

station (Xi Zhan  0936 821 0597; 347 Xihuanlu,) has the most frequent departures. Destinations include Xining, Golmud, Jiayuguan, Lanzhou, Dunhuang and Wuwei, though it's faster and cheaper to take a train.

From any of the bus stations to the hotels costs ¥4 to ¥5. Bus 4 runs past the west bus station from Dong or Xi Dajie.

TRAIN

The **train booking office** (12 Oushi Jie,  8am-6pm) is near a Marco Polo statue (the great explorer spent a year in town). To get here walk west of the drum tower and turn right (north) at Oushi Jie.

- ➔ **Dunhuang** hard/soft sleeper ¥145/223, 7½ hours (two daily at 12.19am and 2.04am; day trains all go to Liuyuan)
- ➔ **Jiayuguan** hard/soft seat ¥38/57, two to three hours, every 10-30 minutes
- ➔ **Lanzhou** hard/soft seat ¥76/119, six to seven hours, every 20 minutes
- ➔ **Wuwei** seat/hard sleeper ¥41/92, three to four hours, every 20-30 minutes

The station is 7km northeast of the city centre. A taxi will cost ¥10, or take bus 1 (¥1).

Mati Si

Carved into the cliff sides in foothills of the grand Qilian Mountains (Qilian Shan), the venerable Buddhist grottoes of Mati Si make for a fine short getaway from the hectic small towns along the Hexi Corridor. There's excellent hiking in the nearby hills, and a decent range of simple accommodation and food in the nearby village from May to September. Come in July to see the mountain valleys carpeted in blue wildflowers.

Sights & Activities

Mati Si

CAVE, BUDDHIST

()

Mati Si translates as Horse Hoof Monastery, a reference to when a heavenly horse left a hoof imprint in a grotto. Between the 5th and 14th centuries a series of caves were almost as miraculously built in sheer sandstone cliffs and filled with carvings, temples and meditation rooms. The caves are reached via twisting staircases, balconies, narrow passages and platforms that will leave your head spinning.

Mati Si is 65km north of Zhangye, and one or both of the main caves may be closed outside of May to September.

The grottoes are not in one area but spread over many sections. The most accessible are the **Thousand Buddhas Caves** (Qian Fo Dong Shiku admission ¥35) just past the entrance gate to the scenic area. Within this complex is the **Puguang Temple** where you'll find the relic of the horse foot imprint. The **Mati Si North Caves** (Matisi Bei Dong admission ¥35) are just above the village (2km up the road from the Thousand Buddhas Caves). Other collections of grottoes are scattered about the cliff faces, as are utilitarian caves that were formerly used as dwellings by local people.

Hiking

There are several good day hikes around Mati Si, including the five-hour loop through pine forest and talus fields to the **Linsong Waterfall** (*Linsong Pubu*) and back down past **Sword Split Stone** (*Jianpishi*). For unrivalled panoramas, take the steep ascent of the ridge starting across from the white *chorten* just above the village at Sanshisantian Shiku.

Horse Riding

Horse riding is a popular activity. Prices are fixed at ¥200 for a four-hour ride. Note it costs ¥20 just to enter into the general village/grotto scenic area.

WORTH A TRIP

THE RAINBOW ROCKS OF ZHANGYE

Multicoloured rock formations, known in China as **Danxia rocks** (Zhangye Danxia), gained a bit of attention after six well-known formations in the south were inscribed as Unesco World Heritage sites. If you are hiring a taxi to go to Mati Si, consider taking a side trip to Zhangye's spectacularly colourful examples. The swirling rainbow palette and the scale of the formations is astonishing.

From Zhangye a taxi to both Mati Si and the rocks will cost around ¥200.

Sleeping & Eating

If you're adequately prepared for camping, some overnight trips are possible. The tiny village also has several basic guesthouses. Call **Mr Hua** ( mobile 130 859 2081; tw ¥60) to book at a friendly family-run place and arrange a pick-up at Mati He. Decent meals can be had at a couple of village restaurants or head up into the fields towards the mountains to one of several large comfortable tents serving Tibetan-style fare (including butter-milk tea and *tsampa*).

Getting There & Away

Buses leave every 30 minutes from Zhangye's south bus station for the crossroads village of Mati He (¥9.50, 1½ hours, 6.40am to 5.40pm), from where you can catch a minibus or taxi (¥30) for the final 7km or so.

Direct buses to Mati Si depart from Zhangye's south bus station at 7.35am, 8.25am and 9.15am from May to September. The last bus back to Mati He or Zhangye leaves before 5pm. Check with locals on the exact time.

A one-way taxi from Zhangye will cost around ¥80.

Jiayuguan & Around

 0937 / Pop 170,000

You approach Jiayuguan through the forbidding lunar landscape of north Gansu. It's a fitting setting, as Jiayuguan marks the symbolic end of the Great Wall, the western gateway of China proper and, for imperial Chinese, the

beginning of the back of beyond. One of the defining points of the Silk Road, a Ming-dynasty fort was erected here in 1372 and Jiayuguan came to be colloquially known as the ‘mouth’ of China, while the narrow Hexi Corridor, leading back towards the *neidi* (inner lands), was dubbed the ‘throat’.

You’ll need plenty of imagination to conjure up visions of the Silk Road, as modern Jiayuguan is a city of straight roads and identikit blocks, almost as if airlifted into position from North Korea. But the Jiayuguan Fort is an essential part of Silk Road lore and most certainly worth a visit.



Jiayuguan

 Sleeping

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Jiayuguan Hotel | A1 |
| 2 | Jinye Binguan | A2 |
| 3 | Kanghui Hotel | A1 |

Eating

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 4 | Jingtie Xiaochicheng | B2 |
| 5 | Yuan Zhong Yuan Restaurant | A2 |

Information

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 6 | People's No 1 Hospital | B2 |
|---|--|----|

Transport

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|
| 7 | Train Booking Office | B2 |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|

Sights

With the exception of the Wei Jin Tombs, all the sites are covered by the entrance ticket to the Jiayuguan Fort; admission fees quoted for individual sites are for entry without admission to the fort. A taxi to all the sights (including the tombs), which are all outside town, is likely to cost ¥200 for the half-day. A taxi to cover just to the sites covered by the fort ticket will cost ¥100 to ¥150 depending on how long you stay to look at things.

Jiayuguan Fort

FORT

(Jiayuguan Chenglou Xinhua Nanlu; admission ¥120;  8am-6pm)

One of the classic images of western China, the fort guards the pass between the snowcapped Qilian Shan peaks and the Hei Shan (Black Mountains) of the Mazong Shan range.

Built in 1372, it was christened the ‘Impregnable Defile Under Heaven’. Although the Chinese often controlled territory far beyond the Jiayuguan area, this was the last major stronghold of imperial China – the end of the ‘civilised world’, beyond which lay only desert demons and the barbarian armies of Central Asia.

Towards the eastern end of the fort is the **Gate of Enlightenment** (*Guanghua Lou*) and in the west is the **Gate of Conciliation** (*Rouyuan Lou*), from where exiled poets, ministers, criminals and soldiers would have ridden off into oblivion. Each gate dates from 1506 and has 17m-high towers with upturned flying eaves and double gates that would have been used to trap invading armies. On the inside are horse lanes leading up to the top of the inner wall. On the west-facing side of the Gate of Enlightenment are the shadowy remains of **slogans** praising Chairman Mao, blasted by the desert winds. A further prolix quote from Mao stands out in yellow paint on the south wall of **Wenchang Pavilion** (*Wenchang Ge*).

Near the fort entrance gate is the excellent **Jiayuguan Museum of the Great Wall** (Xinhua Nanlu; 🕒 8.30am-6pm), with photos, artefacts, maps, Silk Road exhibits and models to show just how the fort and wall crossed the land.

Overhanging Great Wall

HISTORIC SITE

(Xuanbi Changcheng 3904-4646 Xinhua Beilu; admission ¥21; 🕒 8.30am-8pm, to 6pm winter)

Running north from Jiayuguan Fort, this section of wall is believed to have been first constructed in 1539, though this reconstruction dates from 1987. It's quite an energetic hike up to excellent views of the desert and the glittering snowcapped peaks in the distance. The wall is about 9km north of the fort.

First Beacon Platform of the Great Wall

HISTORIC SITE

(Changcheng Diyi Dun Lianhuo Gaosu; admission ¥20; 🕒 8.30am-8pm, to 6pm winter)

Atop a 56m-high cliff overlooking the Taolai River south of Jiayuguan, the remains of this beacon platform are a disappointing pile of dirt, but the views over the river and bare gorge are impressive and you can walk alongside attached vestiges of Ming-era Great Wall. Your driver will likely drop you off 150m away at a **subterranean viewing platform**, labelled the 'Underground Valley'.

Wei Jin Tombs

TOMB

(Xincheng Weijinmu admission ¥31; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm)

These tombs date from approximately AD 220–420 (the Wei and Western Jin periods) and contain extraordinarily fresh brick wall paintings (some ineptly retouched) depicting scenes from everyday life, from making tea to picking mulberries for silk production. There are thousands of tombs in the desert 20km east of Jiayuguan, but only one is currently open to visitors, that of a husband and wife.

The small museum is also worth a look and the only area where photos are permitted. A taxi here from central Jiayuguan will cost around ¥70 so it's worth paying a little more (¥100) to also visit Yemawan Bao Yizhi, a former walled town with dramatically crumbling remains. Nearby are some unrestored sections of the Great Wall dotting farm fields and free to access.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

JULY 1ST GLACIER

July 1st Glacier

GLACIER

(Qiyi Bingchuan admission ¥101)

About 90km southwest of Jiayuguan, this glacier sits high in the Qilian Shan range at 4300m. Hikers can walk a 5km trail alongside the glacier. Icy winter weather grinds transport to a halt from November to March. In summer it's a great place to come to escape the heat of the desert below, but if you come in the spring or autumn it can be a cold and forbidding place – the glacier fills the rocky valley and there is little life up here. Global warming is having an effect on the glacier, which has retreated 50m in recent years.

It is reached via the train to the iron-ore town of Jingtieshan (Y10), departing from Jiayuguan's Luhua train station at 8am. It's a scenic three-hour train trip to Jingtieshan, where you can hire a taxi to the glacier (return ¥120, 20km).

You could theoretically do this in one day, but it's better to stay the night in **Jingtieshan**, where there is a cheap and basic hostel (zhaodaisuo). This will leave you with enough time the next morning to hire a taxi up to Tian'e Hu (return ¥50) and the Tibetan village of **Qiqing**. Return trains depart around 1.46pm from Jingtieshan. A return taxi to the glacier from Jiayuguan costs around ¥400 (nine hours).

Sleeping

Jinye Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞0937 620 1333; 12 Lanxin Xilu, d/tw without/with shower ¥138/200; ❄️)

The en suite rooms are a bit of a tight squeeze but overall good value at this hotel with a useful location by the bus station. The cheapest rooms are a bit tatty and the shared bathrooms could be cleaner. Expect discounts of 40%.

Kanghui Hotel

HOTEL

(Kanghui Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞0937 620 3456; 1599 Xinhua Zhonglu; tw/tr ¥208/288; ❄️@📶)

Wide windows, high ceilings and very spacious rooms (and bathrooms) are highlights at this tidy business hotel in the centre of town. Renovations finished in 2013 yet prices remained the same, making its excellent location on the tree-lined street hard to beat. Discounts of 30% are typical.

Jiayuguan Hotel

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞0937 620 1588; 1 Xinhua Beilu, d/tw from ¥669/768; ❄️@📶)

Rooms here are modern with heavy accents on the brown woods and faux marble. Most include a Chinese breakfast and computers with broadband. Other services include a restaurant serving Western-style food, a spa, travel agent and attentive staff. Conveniently located on the pleasant tree-lined shopping boulevard of Xinhua Zhonglu. Discounts of 30% to 60% are common.

Eating

For breakfast ask or look around for small shops selling *baozi* (steamed meat- or veg-filled buns) and *doujiang* (soya milk).

Fuqiang Market

MARKET

(Fuqiang Shichang 14 Xinhua Beilu; 🕒 10am-9pm)

For a fast, hot meal in the evenings, especially barbecued lamb washed down with beer, try the food stalls at this market, north of the traffic circle.

Jingtie Xiaochicheng

MARKET

(Jingtie Market [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinhua Zhonglu; 🕒 10am-10pm)

At this busy market load up on lamb kebabs, *roujiamo*, wonton soup, dumplings, roast duck and more.

Yuan Zhong Yuan Restaurant

SICHUANESE

(Yuanzhongyuan Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jingtie Shangchang; dishes ¥12-48; 🕒 9am-9pm)

Directly across from the bus station on the far side of a small park is this pleasant Sichuan restaurant nice enough for a first date. Try its *gongbao jiding* (spicy chicken and peanuts), *tieban doufu* (fried tofu) or a *yuxiang rousi* (stir-fried pork and vegetable strips).

Information

The **Bank of China** (| Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 33-41 Xinhua Zhonglu; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) south of the Lanxin Xilu intersection has an ATM and can change money. There's a large **post office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinhua Zhonglu; 🕒 8am-6pm) which can send packages internationally. Look for an **internet cafe** (wangba Lanxin Xilu; per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr) beside the bus station.

Getting There & Away

Jiayuguan has an airport with flights to Beijing, Shanghai and Lanzhou but most people arrive by bus or train.

BUS

Doubling as a billiards hall, Jiayuguan's **bus station** (Qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); Lanxin Xilu) is by a busy four-way junction on Lanxin Xilu, next to the main budget hotels. It is cheaper and quicker to take a train, but bus destinations include Dunhuang, Lanzhou, Wuwei and Zhangye.

TRAIN

Direct trains to Dunhuang are labelled as such. Beware of the more frequently scheduled trains to Liuyuan – a lengthy 180km away from Dunhuang.

- **Dunhuang** seat/hard sleeper ¥55/118, five hours
- **Lanzhou** hard/soft seat ¥103/160, seven to eight hours; hard/soft sleeper ¥179/275, nine hours
- **Urumqi** hard/soft sleeper ¥246/384, 15 hours
- **Wuwei** seat/hard sleeper ¥69/126, four to six hours
- **Zhangye** hard/soft seat ¥38/57, two to three hours

Purchase tickets at the **train booking office** (Huochezhan Shoupiaochu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 28 Xinhua Zhonglu; 🕒 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri, to 3.30pm Sat & Sun) near the People's No 1 Hospital, next to the China Construction Bank. Note that you can't buy tickets here for Jingtieshan (for the July 1st Glacier) but must purchase these directly at the station.

Jiayuguan's **train station** is southwest of the town centre. Bus 1 runs here from Xinhua Zhonglu (¥1). A taxi costs ¥10.

Getting Around

Bus 1 (¥1) runs from the train station to the bus station. A taxi to the airport (25 minutes) costs ¥50.

Dunhuang

 0937 / Pop 187,000

The fertile Dunhuang oasis has long been a refuge for weary Silk Road travellers. Most visitors stayed long enough only to swap a camel and have a feed; but some settled down and built the forts, towers and magnificent cave temples that are now scattered over the surrounding area. These sites, along with some dwarfing sand dunes and desertscares, make Dunhuang a magnificent place to visit.

Despite its remoteness, per capita income in Dunhuang is among the highest in China, thanks to a push into wind and solar energy production. The town is now thoroughly modern, but there's no doubt it has maintained its distinctive ambience of a desert sanctuary. With clean tree-lined streets, slow-moving traffic, bustling markets, budget hotels, cafes and souvenir shops, it has remained as much an oasis for the weary traveller as ever.

Dūnhuáng



Dunhuang

Sleeping

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1 Feitian Biquan | B4 |
| 2 Mogao Hotel | B3 |
| 3 Shazhouyi International Youth Hostel | A1 |

Eating

| | |
|---|----|
| 4 Bu Ji Lu Rou Huang Mianguan | C3 |
| 5 Charley Johnq's Cafe | B3 |
| 6 Shazhou Night Market | D2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 7 Brown Sugar Cafe | D3 |
|------------------------------------|----|

Entertainment

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 8 Dunhuang Theatre | C2 |
|------------------------------------|----|

Sights

Though relatively small, Dunhuang is a great walking town with wide sidewalks and endless narrow alleys opening up into squares, markets and the lives of ordinary citizens. The riverside is worth a visit if only to see if you are brave enough to cross to the platforms in the middle of the stream.

Dunhuang Museum

MUSEUM

(Dunhuang Bowuguan  0937 882 2981; Mingshan Lu;  8am-6.30pm) **FREE**

Outside of town on the road to [Singing Sands Mountain](#) is this sparkling museum that takes you on an artefact-rich journey through the Dunhuang area (from prehistoric to Qing-dynasty times) via hallways designed to make you feel as if you were in a cave. You can easily walk here in 15 minutes from the centre of town. Bring your passport for admission.

Sleeping

Competition among Dunhuang's hotels is fierce, and you should get significant discounts (50% or more) outside of summer.

There are a dozen or so smaller business-type hotels along Mingshan and Yangguan Zhonglu. They tend to be around ¥200 in the off-season and ¥300 to ¥400 in the height of summer.

★ Dune Guesthouse

HOSTEL

(Yuequan Shanzhuang Qingnian Lushe  mobile 138 9376 3029; dhzhzh@163.com; Sha Sheng Botanical Garden, dm ¥30, r & cabins with shared bathroom ¥100)

Near the base of the [Singing Sands Mountain](#) and surrounded by flowering gardens and grapevines, this chilled-out backpackers' retreat is superbly located with fruit trees and a courtyard. A taxi here is ¥15, or catch minibus 3 from Shazhou Nanlu to the terminus, then walk back towards town, taking the first left past the vines, following the signs.

The guesthouse is run by the folks at [Charley Johng's Cafe](#), so make enquiries there first.

Shazhouyi International Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Dunhuang Shazhouyi Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  0937 880 8800; shazhouyiyha@gmail.com; 8 Qilian Lu,) dm ¥45-55, d ¥180;    

This hostel is plant- and light-filled, inviting you to lounge and plan one of the offered tours. Dorm beds are comfy with modern shared bathrooms. Doubles are bright and spacious. The street is traffic heavy but has cheap eats, with the [Shazhou Night Market](#) a 10-minute walk away through a leafy park. English spoken.

Free shuttle bus from train station.

Mogao Hotel

HOTEL

(Mogao Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  0937 885 1777; 12 Mingshan Lu; d/tw from ¥308/428;   

With its excellent location near restaurants and shops, this is one of the better options for the single traveller who wants a private room. There's in-room broadband and wi-fi in the lobby. Off-season the smaller doubles go for around ¥188.

Feitian Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  0937 882 2337; www.fttravel.cn; 22 Mingshan Lu, d/tw ¥428/458;



This long-standing two-star hotel has a good location on one of Dunhuang's major streets. Rooms are small but tidy and well lit. Discounts of 50%.

Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel

HOTEL

(Dunhuang Shanzhuang 0937 888 2088; www.dunhuangresort.com; Dunyue Lu, dm ¥80, d ¥350-1200;

This four-star resort is tastefully designed with Central Asian rugs, a cool stone floor and Chinese antiques. The hotel's rooftop restaurant has without doubt the best outdoor perch in Dunhuang. A taxi from town costs ¥10, or take minibus 3 (¥1). Discounts of 20% to 40%.

Eating

There are restaurants large and small all over Dunhuang, many with English or picture menus. For *niurou mian* (beef noodles) head to any of a number of restaurants along Xiyu Lu.

Charley Johng's Cafe

BREAKFAST, CHINESE

(Fengwei Canguan ; 0937 388 2411; Mingshan Lu; dishes ¥6-36; 8am-10pm)

Tasty Western-style breakfast items including scrambled eggs, muesli with yoghurt, and pancakes are available all day either a la carte or as a set. There are also sandwiches, and a host of Chinese dishes such as stir-fries and dumplings. They also offer tours and good traveller information.

★ Zhaixing Ge

CHINESE, INTERNATIONAL

(Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel Dunyue Lu; dishes ¥18-38; 7am-1pm & 4.30pm-midnight)

Part of the Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel, this superb rooftop restaurant is ideal for a meal (the Western buffet breakfast is well regarded by travellers) or a sundowner gazing out over the golden sand dunes with someone you love.

Dishes do not cost much more than places in town. Try the Uighur bread or the surprisingly good thick-crust pizza.

Shazhou Night Market

MARKET

(Shazhou Yeshe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); btwn Yangguan Donglu & Xiyu Lu; 🕒 morning-late)

Extending from Yangguan Lu south to Xiyu, this market is both a place to eat and to socialise, night and day. Off Yanguang DongLu are dozens of well-organised stalls with English signs: expect Sichuan, Korean noodles, dumplings, claypot, barbecue including *roujiamo* and Lanzhou noodles. Also look out for cooling cups of *xingpishui* (apricot juice; ¥5).

There is also an open-air seating area nearby with singing, music bands and roast lamb by the platter or skewer. Along with the seated areas along Fanggu Shangye Yitao Jie, this is the most expensive place to eat barbecued meat. For a better deal try the alleys radiating east.

Bu Ji Lu Rou Huang Mianguan

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shazhou Nanlu; dishes ¥12-38, set meals from ¥60; 🕒 10am-10pm)

Donkey meat with yellow noodles is a local speciality and this is one popular place to try it. Donkey tastes like roast beef and set meals are served with noodle dishes topped with tofu. There's a picture menu.



Drinking

The alley behind the mosque has a row of stylish cafes that also serve as bars in the evening. In summer the Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel hosts a **beer garden** at the entrance to the grounds, while their stylish rooftop **Zhaixing Ge** (Dunyue Lu, 🕒 4.30pm-midnight) offers peerless views over the desert to go with a beer or a glass of local red wine.

Brown Sugar Cafe

CAFE

(Heitang Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0937 881 7111; 28 Tianma Jie; tea ¥25-38, bottle of wine ¥78-198; 🕒 1pm-midnight; 📶)

This three-level cafe mixes modern with crafty decor and cafe classics with a Dunhuang twist. Try one of the 11 varieties of fresh-leaf Chinese teas to balance out a sweet black-rice muffin. Things turn smoky at night when fashionable locals come to sip beer and Mogao wine.

Entertainment

There are often night-time opera and other music performances in the square behind the mosque. This is also a good place to go if you have children, as there are several large free play areas.

Dunhuang Theatre (Dunhuang Dajuyuan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yangguan Zhonglu) hosts **Dunhuang Goddess** (Dunhuang Shennu tickets ¥220; 🕒 8.30pm), an 80-minute acrobatic dramatisation of stories on the walls of the Mogao Caves. English subtitles are provided.

Information

Ask at any hostel or [Charley Johng's Cafe](#) for tourist info; they can also help with tours from camel rides to overnight camping excursions. The north end of Mingshan Lu has stores for camping, hiking, camera and luggage needs. Wi-fi is widely available in cafes and hotel rooms, and there's an **internet cafe** (Wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Mingshan Lu & Xiyu Lu; per hr ¥3; 🕒 24hr).

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yangguan Zhonglu; 🕒 8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri)

Has a 24-hour ATM and changes travellers cheques.

Feitian Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(Feitian Luxingshe, Feitian Binguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 138 3070 6288, 0937 885 2318; Mingshan Lu)

Can arrange buses to Mogao, local tours and car rental.

China Post

POST OFFICE

([GOOGLE MAP](#); Yangguan Donglu; 🕒 8.30am-6pm daily)

Sells stamps and delivers packages internationally.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB; Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0937 886 2071; Yangguan Zhonglu; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri)

Two days needed for visa extension.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Apart from November to March, when there are only flights to/from Lanzhou and Xi'an, there are regular flights to/from Beijing (¥1880), Lanzhou (¥1466), Shanghai (¥2460), Urumqi (¥710) and Xi'an (¥1160).

Seats can be booked at the air ticket office in the lobby of the Youzheng Binguan hotel, on Yangguan Donglu west of China Post.

BUS

Dunhuang's **bus station** (Zhangtu Qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0937 885 3746; Xiyu Lu; 🕒 7am-8pm daily) is a ten-minute walk from the mosque. Buses go to Jiayuguan and Lanzhou (though trains are cheaper and faster), as well as:

- ➔ **Golmud** ¥99, nine hours, two daily (9am and 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Liuyuan** ¥20, eight per day (7.30am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Urumqi** ¥198, 14 hours, one daily (7pm), sleeper. May stop in Turpan.

TRAIN

Dunhuang's station is 10km east of town, but for some destinations, such as Beijing West and Urumqi, you'll have to leave from Liuyuan station, a crazy 180km away.

- ➔ **Jiayuguan** seat/hard sleeper ¥58/163, 5 hours (two per day at 9.30am and 6.58pm)

➔ **Lanzhou** hard/soft sleeper ¥246/383, 14 hours (two per day at 9.32am and 6.58pm; more trains leave from Liuyuan Station)

➔ **Turpan** (from Liuyuan Station) hard/soft sleeper ¥164/252, eight to nine hours

➔ **Urumqi** (from Liuyuan Station) hard/soft sleeper ¥195/302, 11 hours

For tickets to Urumqi head to the **train booking office** (Tielu Shoupiaochu **GOOGLE MAP**; 📞0937 595 9592; Yangguan Lu; 🕒8.30am-8pm). For Lanzhou or Jiayuguan, head to the **train booking office** (Huoche Piao Fashou Dian **GOOGLE MAP**; Tianma Jie; 🕒8am-noon & 1-4pm, to 8pm summer) behind the mosque. Both charge a ¥5 commission.

i Getting Around

Dunhuang's airport is 13km east of town; a taxi into town costs ¥30 and takes 20 minutes. The train station is on the same road as the airport and costs a similar amount. Bus 1 runs to the train station from the stand at Mingshan Lu from 7.30am to 9pm.

If you are heading to Liuyuan train station (for trains to Urumqi), catch a bus or shared taxi (per person ¥45) from the front of the bus station on Sanwei Lu. Give yourself at least three hours to get to Liuyuan station (including waiting for the taxi to fill up with other passengers).

Taxis around town start at ¥5.

You can rent bikes from travellers' cafes for ¥5 per hour. Getting to some of the outlying sights by bike is possible, but hard work at the height of summer.

THE WINDY ROAD TO A CLEANER CHINA

The road from Jiayuguan to Dunhuang will likely impress you as much for the stark desert landscape as the endless spinning turbines. Once the cradle of China's oil industry, this windswept northern region has become the site of nearly two dozen energy farms and 5000 (and growing) individual turbines. At the industry centre in Jiuquan (southeast of Jiayuguan) dozens of companies are cranking out several

thousand more each year.

The pace of change has been breathtaking. From 2006 to 2010, the wind industry experienced triple-digit growth and construction began on 10GW wind farms in Gansu (1GW is the capacity of a large coal or nuclear power plant), Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Jilin and Hebei.

Rapid progress has brought hiccups. Installed capacity has far outpaced the rate at which it can be absorbed by the national electric grid. And while China became the world's largest wind farm market by 2013, it also overtook the US as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. By 2020, coal production will add another 1000GW of capacity (which incredibly is the current total capacity of the US).

Yet the blades won't stop churning. The green light was given in 2014 to construct wind farms in Jiangsu with a whopping 300GW total capacity! Long-term projections have wind potentially accounting for up to one-third of all capacity by 2050. With an equally strong push into solar, hydro and nuclear, China's electrical production could one day become among the cleanest in the world.

Around Dunhuang

Most people visit the Mogao Caves in the morning, followed by the Mingsha Shan sand dunes in the late afternoon to catch the sunset. Note that it can be above 40°C in the desert during the summer so go prepared with water, a sunhat and snacks.

Sights

Mogao Caves

Mogao Caves

CAVE, BUDDHIST

(Mogao Ku low/high season ¥100/180; 🕒 8.15am-6pm May-Oct, 9.15am-5.30pm Nov-Apr, tickets sold till 1hr before closing)

The Mogao Caves (Mogao Ku) are, simply put, one of the greatest repositories of Buddhist art in the world. At its peak, the site housed 18 monasteries, more than 1400 monks and nuns, and countless artists,

translators and calligraphers.

Excellent English-speaking **guides** are available (and included in the admission price) at 9am, noon and 2pm, and you should be able to arrange tours in other languages as well.

Wealthy traders and important officials were the primary donors responsible for creating new caves, as caravans made the long detour past Mogao to pray or give thanks for a safe journey through the treacherous wastelands to the west.

The traditional date ascribed to the founding of the first cave is AD 366. The caves fell into disuse after the collapse of the Yuan dynasty and were largely forgotten until the early 20th century, when they were ‘rediscovered’ by a string of foreign explorers.

Entrance to the **caves** is strictly controlled – it’s impossible to visit them on your own. The general admission ticket grants you a two-hour tour (display great interest at the start as your guide has the discretion to make this longer) of around 10 caves, including the infamous Library Cave (cave 17) and a related exhibit containing rare fragments of manuscripts in classical Uighur and Manichean.

Of the 492 caves, 20 ‘open’ caves are rotated fairly regularly, so recommendations are useless, but tours always include the two **big Buddhas**, 34.5m and 26m tall. It’s also possible to visit some of the more unusual caves for ¥100 to ¥500 per cave.

Photography is strictly prohibited everywhere within the fenced-off caves area. And if it’s raining or snowing or there's a sand storm, the caves will be closed.

After the tour it’s well worth visiting the **Dunhuang Research Centre**, where eight more caves, each representative of a different period, have been flawlessly reproduced, along with selected murals. The 15-minute video on the paintings in cave 254 is also worth watching.

If you have a special interest in the site, check out the **International Dunhuang Project** (<http://idp.bl.uk>), an online database of digitised manuscripts from the Library Cave at Mogao.

The Mogao Caves are 25km (30 minutes) southeast from Dunhuang. A green **minibus** (one way ¥8) leaves every 30 minutes from 8am to 5pm from outside [Charley Johng's Cafe](#); buses return every 30 minutes 9am to 6pm to [Shazhou Night Market's](#) north end. A return taxi costs ¥100 to ¥150 for a day, or try finding a taxi willing to take you back to Dunhuang from the caves for ¥40.

Some people ride out to the caves on a bicycle, but be warned that half the ride is through total desert – hot work in summer.

Northern Wei, Western Wei & Northern Zhou Caves CAVE, BUDDHIST

These, the earliest of the Mogao Caves, are distinctly Indian in style and iconography. All contain a central pillar, representing a stupa (symbolically containing the ashes of the Buddha), which the devout would circle in prayer. Paint was derived from malachite (green), cinnabar (red) and lapis lazuli (blue), expensive minerals imported from Central Asia.

The art of this period is characterised by its attempt to depict the spirituality of those who had transcended the material world through their asceticism. The Wei statues are slim, ethereal figures with finely chiselled features and comparatively large heads. The Northern Zhou figures have ghostly white eyes.

Sui Caves CAVE, BUDDHIST

The Sui dynasty (AD 581–618) was short-lived and very much a transition between the Wei and Tang periods. This can be seen in the Sui caves at Mogao: the graceful Indian curves in the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures start to give way to the more rigid style of Chinese sculpture.

The Sui dynasty began when a general of Chinese or mixed Chinese–Tuoba origin usurped the throne of the northern Zhou dynasty and reunited northern and southern China for the first time in 360 years.

Tang Caves CAVE, BUDDHIST

The Tang dynasty (AD 618–907) was Mogao's high point. Painting and sculpture techniques became much more refined, and some important aesthetic developments, notably the sex change (from male to female) of Guanyin and the flying *apsaras*, took place. The beautiful murals depicting the Buddhist Western Paradise offer rare insights into the court life, music, dress and architecture of Tang China.

Some 230 caves were carved during the religiously diverse Tang dynasty, including two impressive grottoes containing enormous, seated Buddha figures. Originally open to the elements, the statue of Maitreya in cave 96 (believed to represent Empress Wu Zetian, who used Buddhism to consolidate her power) is a towering 34.5m tall, making it the world's third-largest Buddha. The Buddhas were carved from the top down using scaffolding, the anchor holes of which are still visible.

Post-Tang Caves

CAVE, BUDDHIST

Following the Tang dynasty, the economy around Dunhuang went into decline, and the luxury and vigour typical of Tang painting began to be replaced by simpler drawing techniques and flatter figures. The mysterious Western Xia kingdom, which controlled most of Gansu from 983 to 1227, made a number of additions to the caves at Mogao and began to introduce Tibetan influences.

SILK ROAD RAIDERS

In 1900 the self-appointed guardian of the [Mogao Caves](#), Wang Yuanlu, discovered a hidden library filled with tens of thousands of immaculately preserved manuscripts and paintings, dating as far back as AD 406.

It's hard to describe the exact magnitude of the discovery, but stuffed into the tiny room were texts in rare Central Asian languages, military reports, music scores, medical prescriptions, Confucian and Taoist classics, and Buddhist sutras copied by some of the greatest names in Chinese calligraphy – not to mention the oldest printed book in existence, the Diamond Sutra (AD 868). In short, it was an incalculable amount of original source material regarding Chinese, Central Asian and Buddhist history.

Word of the discovery quickly spread and Wang Yuanlu, suddenly the most popular bloke in town, was courted by rival archaeologists Auriel Stein and Paul Pelliot, among others. Following much pressure to sell the cache, Wang Yuanlu finally relented and parted with an enormous hoard of treasure. During his watch close to 20,000 of the cave's priceless manuscripts were whisked off to Europe for the paltry sum of £220.

Today, Chinese intellectuals bitter at the sacking of the caves deride Stein, Pelliot and other 'foreign devils' for making off with a national treasure. Defenders of the explorers point out that had the items been left alone they may have been lost during the ensuing civil war or the Cultural Revolution.

Singing Sands Mountain & Crescent Moon Lake

Singing Sands Mountain

DESERT

(Mingsha Shan admission ¥120; 🕒 6am-9pm)

Six kilometres south of Dunhuang at Singing Sands Mountain, the desert meets the oasis in most spectacular fashion. From the dunes it's easy to see how Dunhuang gained its moniker 'Shazhou' (Town of Sand). The view across the undulating desert sands and green poplar trees below is awesome.

You can bike to the dunes in 20 minutes. Minibus 3 (¥1) shuttles between Dunhuang and the dunes from 7.30am to 9pm, departing from Mingshan Lu. A taxi costs ¥20 one way.

The climb to the top of the dunes – the highest peak swells to 1715m – is sweaty work, but worth it. Rent a pair of bright orange shoe protectors (*fangshaxue*; ¥10) or just shake your shoes out later.

At the base of the colossal dunes is a famous yet underwhelming pond, **Crescent Moon Lake** (*Yueyaquan*). The dunes are a no-holds-barred tourist playpen, with camel rides (per person ¥80) as well as dune buggies, 'dune surfing' (sand sliding), paragliding (jumping off the dunes with a chute on your back) and even microlighting. But it's not hard to hike away to enjoy the dunes in peace.

Hostels in Dunhuang offer overnight camel trips to the dunes from ¥400 per person. There are also five- to eight-day expeditions out to the Jade Gate

Pass, Liuyuan and even as far as Lop Nor in the deserts of Xinjiang.

Yadan National Park & Jade Gate Pass

Yadan National Park

DESERT

(Yadan Guojia Dizhi Gongyuan incl tour ¥80)

The weird, eroded desert landscape of Yadan National Park is 180km northwest of Dunhuang, in the middle of the Gobi Desert's awesome nothingness. A former lake bed that eroded in spectacular fashion some 12,000 years ago, the strange rock formations provided the backdrop to the last scenes of Zhang Yimou's film *Hero*. The desert landscape is dramatic, but you can only tour the site on a group minibus, so there's little scope to explore on your own.

To get to Yadan you have to pass through (and buy a ticket to) the Jade Gate Pass. The best way to get here is to take one of two daily **minibus tours** (per person for 7am departure ¥76, for 2pm departure ¥86), which you can book through [Charley Johng's Cafe](#) or [Dune Guesthouse](#). [Shazhouyi International Youth Hostel](#) has similar (per person departing 12:30pm ¥85). Tour prices don't include entrance fees. The 10- to 12-hour tours include a stop at the Jade Gate Pass and the **Western Thousand Buddha Caves** (Xi Qianfo Dong admission ¥40; 🕒 7am-5.30pm), 35km west of Dunhuang, where there are 16 caves hidden in the cliff face of the Dang He gorge, ranging from the Northern Wei to the Tang dynasties. Take an afternoon departure to witness a glorious desert sunset.

Jade Gate Pass

HISTORIC SITE

(Yumen Guan admission ¥50)

The Jade Gate Pass and the **South Pass** (*Yang Guan*), 78km west of Dunhuang, were originally military stations, part of the Han dynasty series of beacon towers that extended to the garrison town of Loula'n in Xinjiang.

Admission includes entry to a small museum (with scraps of Silk Road **silk**); a nearby section of Han-dynasty **Great Wall** (101 BC), impressive for

its antiquity and lack of restoration; and the ruined city walls of **Hecang Cheng**, 15km down a side road.

For caravans travelling westward, the Jade Gate marked the beginning of the northern route to Turpan, while the South Pass was the start of the southern route through Miran. The Jade Gate derived its name from the important traffic in Khotanese jade.

Yulin Grottoes

Yulin Grottoes

CAVE, BUDDHIST

(Yulin Ku 🕒 9am-5pm, to 6pm summer, last ticket 1hr before closing)

About 180km south of Dunhuang, the 40-plus caves of the Yulin Grottoes face each other across a narrow canyon. It's intriguing to observe the original carved interior tunnels that formerly connected the caves. The interior art spans a 1500-year period, from the Northern Wei to the Qing dynasty. Many show a distinctive Tibetan influence.

The only way to get out here is to rent a minivan (¥400) for the half-day. Excellent English guides are available on-site for ¥15.

While the art at the [Mogao Caves](#) is considered higher quality, the frescoes here are better preserved; there is little of the oxidation and thickening of painted lines so prevalent at Mogao.

EASTERN GANSU

Most travellers speed through eastern Gansu, catching mere glimpses from the train window as they shuttle between Lanzhou and Xi'an. This is a shame because the area contains some spectacular Silk Road remnants and dramatic grottoes at Maiji Shan to rival the Mogao Caves.

Tianshui

📍 0938 / Pop 450,000

Tianshui's splendid Buddhist caves at nearby Maiji Shan entice a consistent flow of visitors to this otherwise bland provincial town. Or is that two towns? Modern Tianshui is actually two very separate districts 15km apart: there is the railhead sprawl, known as Maiji Qu (formerly *Beidao*), and the central commercial area to the west, known as Qinzhou Qu, where you'll arrive if coming in by bus. The two sections are lashed together by a long freeway that runs through a hilly corridor.

Sights

Tianshui's main draw are the grottoes at Maiji Shan, 35km south of the train station. Within walking distance of the Tianshui Dajiudian hotel are two temples worth checking out if you have time to kill.

Fuxi Temple

BUDDHIST

(Fuxi Miao off Jiefang Lu, Qincheng; admission ¥30; 🕒 8am-6pm)

This Ming-dynasty temple was founded in 1483 in honour of Fuxi, the father and emperor of all Chinese people. The Tianshui resident's semi-naked statue is in the main hall, along with traditional symbols such as bats, dragons and peonies. The hall ceiling's original paintings of the 64 hexagrams (varying combinations of the eight trigrams used in the *I Ching*) have uncanny similarities to computer binary language. It's worth visiting just for the 1000-year-old cypress tree in the tranquil gardens.

Yuquan Temple

TAOIST

(Yuquan Guan Renmin Xilu, Qincheng; adult/student ¥20/10; 🕒 8am-6pm, to 8pm summer)

Ascending in layers up the hillside above Qincheng, this Taoist temple has been a place of worship since the Tang dynasty. Most of the buildings have been restored in recent decades, but this is still a pleasant, green and rambling shrine with a number of ancient cypress trees.

Sleeping

Tianshui has plenty of accommodation options in both parts of town – Maiji Qu, the district around the railway, and Qinzhou Qu, the central commercial area 15km to the west.

Tianshui Dajiudian

HOTEL

( 0938 828 9999; 1 Qinzhou Dazhong Nanlu; r ¥130)

This popular hotel is a solid choice in Qinzhou Qu district. The bus to Maiji Shan is just 200m south and restaurants abound. Standard en suite rooms are usually discounted up to 40%.

New Leaf Inn

HOTEL

(Xin Ye Jiudian  0938 261 8808; Longchang Lu; d & tw ¥138;   

This small business hotel has clean bright rooms with Ikea-style furnishings. The hotel is about 200m east (left as you exit) of the train station on the far side of Longchang Lu in Maiji Qu district.

Eating

Tianshui is famed for its *mianpi* noodles, which can be found everywhere. In Qinzhou, good claypot, Sichuan and noodle snack stalls, as well as fruit and nut sellers can be found around the Tianshui Dajiudian hotel.

Tasty *roujiamo* and other fine snack food in Maiji Qu fill Erma Lu, a pedestrian mall two blocks directly south of the train station.

One place to try is **Beidao Qingzhen Laozihao Nirou Mianguan** (Erma Lu; dishes ¥4-12;  24hr). Get a ticket from the kiosk out front and collect your beef noodles (*niroumian*) and flatbread (*shaobing*) from the kitchen window. Point to side dishes of spicy cabbage and other cold vegetables. There's no English sign, but it's nearly opposite an ICBC bank.

Information

There's a **Bank of China** (Zhongguo Yinhang Longchang Lu; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm) with a 24-hour ATM three blocks directly south from the train station almost at the river. An **internet cafe** (Wangba Longchanglu; per hr ¥2.50; 🕒 24hr) can be found on the 2nd floor of the Wanhui Zhaodaisuo guesthouse in Maiji Qu.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses leave from the long-distance bus station in Qinzhou for:

- ➔ **Gangu** ¥15, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes
- ➔ **Huixian** ¥35, three hours, hourly (7.20am to 6pm)
- ➔ **Lanzhou** ¥74, four hours, every 20 minutes (7.20am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Linxia** ¥99, seven hours, one daily (6.30am)
- ➔ **Luomen** ¥25, two hours, three daily (7am, 11am and 2.30pm)
- ➔ **Pingliang** ¥65, five hours, hourly (7am to 3pm)

TRAIN

Tianshui is on the Xi'an–Lanzhou rail line; there are dozens of daily trains in each direction.

- ➔ **Lanzhou** seat/hard sleeper ¥54/130, four hours
- ➔ **Xi'an** hard/soft seat ¥51/78, five hours

Getting Around

Taxis shuttle passengers between Qinzhou (from both the city bus station 200m south of [Tianshui Dajjudian](#) hotel and also from the long-distance bus station) and the train station in Maiji Qu. It costs ¥10 per person (¥45 for the whole taxi). Alternatively, take the much slower bus 1 or 6 (¥3, 40 minutes).

Around Tianshui

Maiji Shan

Set among wild and lush green hills southeast of Tianshui, the riveting grottoes of Maiji Shan (Haystack Mountain) hold some of China's most famous Buddhist rock carvings and externally are far more captivating than the Mogao Caves.

Sights

Maiji Shan

CAVE, BUDDHIST

(admission ¥70;  8am-6pm)

The cliff sides of Maiji Shan are riddled with niches and statues carved principally during the Northern Wei and Zhou dynasties (AD 386–581). Within the hard-to-miss Sui-dynasty trinity of Buddha and bodhisattvas is the largest statue on the mountain: the cave's central effigy of Buddha tops out at 15.7m. When the statue was restored three decades ago, a handwritten copy of the *Sutra of Golden Light* was discovered within the Buddha's fan.

Vertigo-inducing catwalks and steep spiral stairways cling to the cliff face, affording close-ups of the art. It's not certain just how the artists managed to clamber so high; one theory is that they created piles from blocks of wood reaching to the top of the mountain before moving down, gradually removing them as they descended.

A considerable amount of pigment still clings to many of the statues – a lot of which are actually made of clay rather than hewn from rock – although you frequently have to climb up steps to peer at them through tight mesh grills with little natural illumination. Much, though, is clearly visible and most of the more impressive sculptures decorate the upper walkways, especially at cave 4.

The entire undertaking is rounded off with a crescent of food stalls selling

delicious spicy cold noodle dishes as well as teas and soft drinks.

An English-speaking guide charges ¥70 for the day. It's possible to view normally closed caves (such as cave 133) for an extra fee of ¥500 per group.

The admission ticket includes entry to **Ruiying Monastery** (*Ruiying Si*), at the base of the mountain, which acts as a small museum of selected statues. Across from the monastery is the start of a trail to a **botanic garden** (*zhiwuyuan*; admission free with ticket), which allows for a shortcut back to the entrance gate through the forest.

You can also climb **Xiangji Shan**. For the trailhead, head back towards the food stall area you passed on the way in and look for a sign down a side road to the left.

Sleeping

There are several places where you can spend the night, including cabins within the botanic gardens at the **Hotel Arboretum** (Zhiwuyuan Shanzhuang  0938 223 1025; zwyszhotel@126.com; Maiji Arboretum; cabins ¥386). There are also simple **guesthouses** (¥40 to ¥50) in the village about 1km before the entrance gate. Just wander in and your intentions will be clear.

Getting There & Away

Green bus 34 (¥5, 40 minutes) leaves every 15 minutes from in front of the train station in Tianshui. The first bus leaves at 6.30am and the last returns around 6pm. The bus may drop you at the crossroads, 5km before the site, from where a taxi van will cost ¥5 per seat to the ticket office.

Bus 5 leaves from the bus terminal just south of **Tianshui Dajiudian** in Tianshui at 8.30am and returns at 2.30pm. Taxis wait for passengers (per person ¥30) at the same location most of the morning.

From the ticket office at Maiji Shan you can either walk the last 2km to 3km to the caves or take the **tour buggy** (*guanguan che*).

Pingliang

 0933 / Pop 106,800

A booming Chinese mid-sized town, Pingliang is a logical base for visits to the nearby holy mountain of Kongtong Shan. The train station is in the northeastern part of town and the main bus station in the far western part. Xi Dajie is the main street in town and where you'll find hotels, restaurants and banks.

Sights

Kongtong Shan

TAOIST TEMPLE

(admission ¥120;  7am-5pm)

Kongtong Shan, 11km west of Pingliang, is one of the 12 principal peaks in the Taoist universe. It was first mentioned by the philosopher Zhuangzi (399–295 BC), and illustrious visitors have included none other than the Yellow Emperor. Numerous paths lead over the hilltop past dozens of picturesque (though entirely restored) temples to the summit at over 2100m. While the mountain is an enchanting place to hike, those looking for genuine historical artefacts or ambience will be disappointed.

From the north gate visitor centre (pick up a free map here to orientate yourself) catch a bus to Zhongtai (¥32) or Xiangshan (¥48), both essentially small visitor areas on the mountain with paths radiating out to lookouts and temples.

A taxi from Pingliang will cost ¥30, or you can catch bus 16 (¥1) on Xi Dajie and then transfer to bus 13 (¥2) when you reach Kongtong Dadao. Bus 13 drops you off right in front of the main visitor centre before continuing on to the East Gate. At the end of your visit you can walk down from Zhongtai to the East Gate and catch bus 13 back to town.

Sleeping & Eating

Just around the corner from the Hongyun Binguan hotel, look for the Sizhong Alley market (*Sizhong Xiang shichang*). There are numerous restaurants here, and more food stalls serving noodles, spicy hotpot and barbecued meats, as well as fresh fruit.

Hongyun Binguan

HOTEL

( 0933 822 6399; 128 Xi Dajie; d/tw without bathroom ¥128/158, tw ¥188;  )

The hotel has a friendly guesthouse atmosphere and surprisingly pleasant rooms reached by a very narrow staircase. All rooms have computers and broadband internet, and there are discounts of up to 30%.

Pingliang Binguan

HOTEL

( 0933 821 9485; 86 Xi Dajie; tw ¥588;  )

The top hotel in town is just off the main road in a large complex. Expect discounts up to 40%.

Getting There & Away

BUS

The following services depart from Pingliang's main bus station, in the western part of town on Lai Yuan Lu:

- ➔ **Guyuan** ¥24, 1½ hours, frequent
- ➔ **Lanzhou** ¥105, five hours, hourly (6.30am to 5.30pm)
- ➔ **Tianshui** ¥65, seven hours, one daily (9am)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥88, six hours, every 40 minutes (6.20am to 6pm)

For Tianshui there are more frequent departures from the east bus station (*qiche dongzhan*).

TRAIN

It's better to take a bus to Xi'an as trains either leave or arrive at very

inconvenient hours. There's one sleeper train daily to Lanzhou (hard/soft sleeper ¥99/155, 11 hours) leaving at 9.37pm.

Bus 1 (¥2) runs from the train station to Xi Dajie. A taxi costs ¥10. From Xi Dajie to the bus station costs ¥4 or take bus 16 (¥1).

Ningxia

[Ningxia Highlights](#)

[Yinchuan](#)

[Around Yinchuan](#)

[Zhongwei](#)

[Around Zhongwei](#)

[Guyuan & Around](#)

Ningxia



Pop 6.4 million

Why Go?

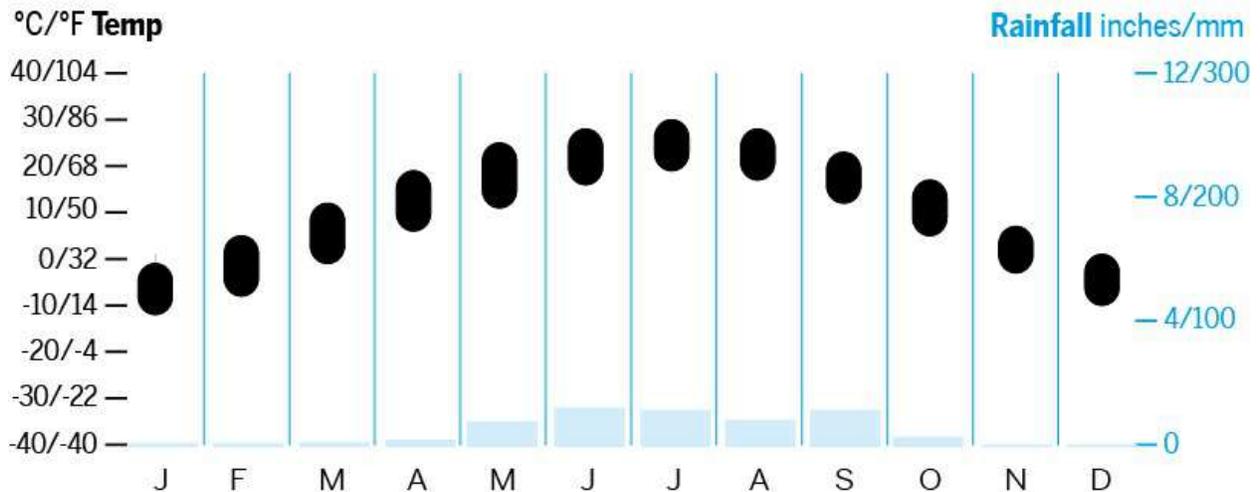
With its raw landscape of dusty plains and stark mountains, sliced in two by the Yellow River (Huang He), there is a distinct *Grapes of Wrath* feel to Ningxia. Outside the cities, it's a timeless landscape where farmers till the yellow earth just like their ancestors did.

Yet Ningxia was once the frontline between the empires of the Mongols and the Han Chinese and there is a host of historic sites here, ranging from little-seen Buddhist statues to the royal tombs of long-past dynasties, as well as ancient rock carvings that predate any emperor. And as the homeland of the Muslim Hui ethnic minority, Ningxia is culturally unique, too.

Then there's the chance to camp out under the desert sky, or float down the Yellow River on a traditional raft. But best of all, Ningxia sees few foreign visitors so it seems like you have the place all to yourself.

When to Go

Yínchuān



- ➔ **Jun** Warm, dry nights will give you a thirst for some local nightlife and Ningxia wine.
- ➔ **Oct** It's cooling down and time to play Lawrence of Arabia in the little-visited Tengger Desert.
- ➔ **Nov** The Yellow River festival in Yinchuan features concerts and folk dancing.

Best Historic Sites

- ➔ [Western Xia Tombs](#)
- ➔ [Helan Mountain rock carvings](#)
- ➔ [Xumi Shan](#)
- ➔ [Shui Dong Gou](#)

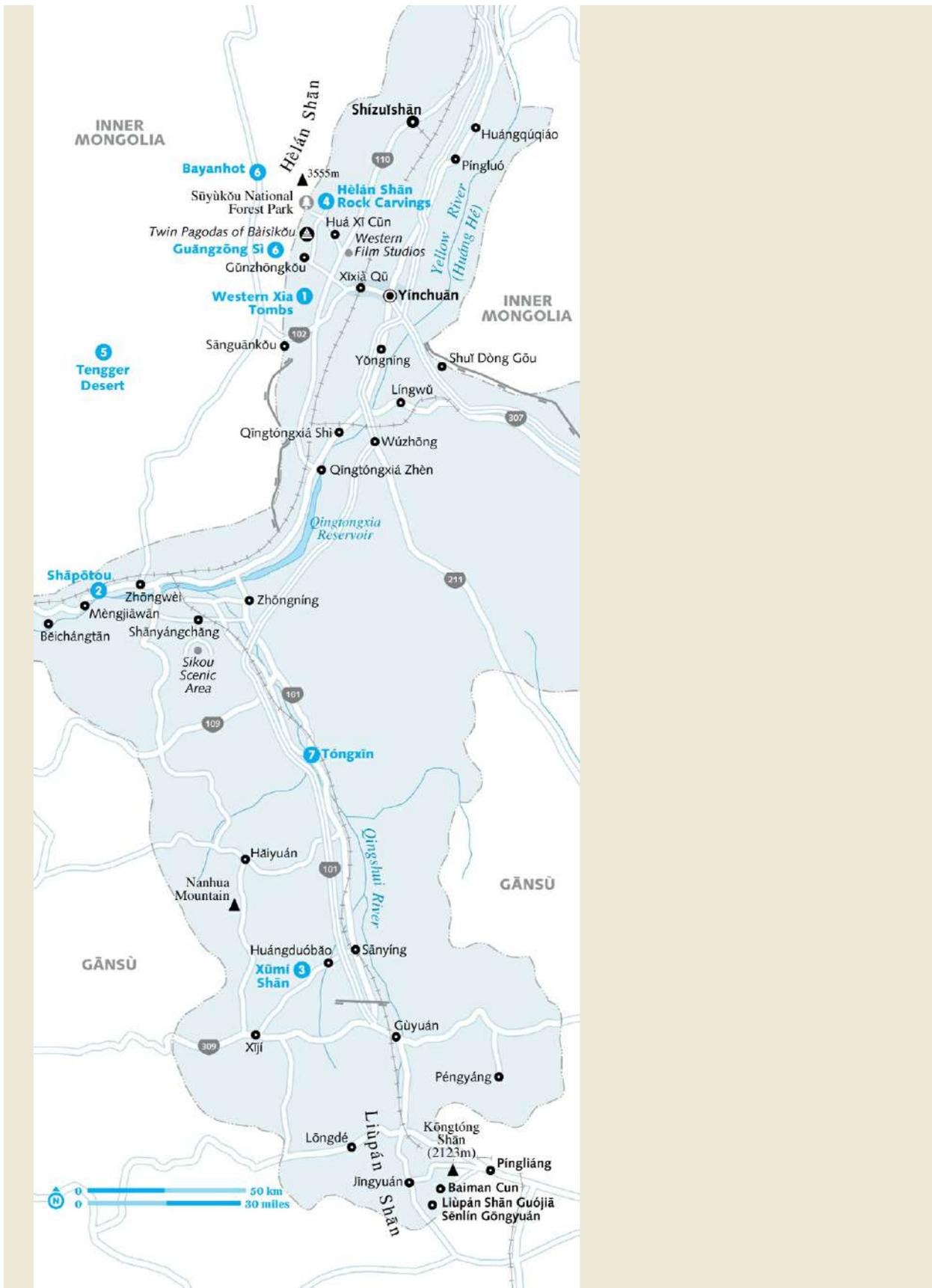
Best Temples

- ➔ [Qingzhen Da Si](#)
- ➔ [Gao Temple](#)

➔ [Guangzong Si](#)

➔ [Yanfu Si](#)

Ningxia Highlights



- 1 Visit the imperial [Western Xia Tombs](#) outside Yinchuan, a rare reminder of this long-extinct culture.
- 2 Raft down the Yellow River or slide down the sand dunes at desert playground [Shapotou](#).
- 3 Explore the little-seen Buddhist grottoes with hundreds of statues at [Xumi Shan](#).
- 4 Check out the utterly unique rock carvings at [Helan Shan](#), which date back thousands of years.
- 5 Hop on a camel and trek into the [Tengger Desert](#) for an overnight stay.
- 6 Investigate Mongol culture at lonely sites around [Bayanhot](#), [Guangzong Si](#) and [Yanfu Si](#).
- 7 Get way off the beaten track at Tongxin's marvellous Ming-era [Great Mosque](#).

History

Ningxia had been on the periphery of Chinese empires ever since the Qin dynasty, but it took centre stage in the 10th century AD when the Tangut people declared the establishment of the Xixia (Western Xia) empire in the face of Song opposition. The empire was composed of modern-day Gansu, Ningxia, Shaanxi and western Inner Mongolia, but it soon collapsed in the face of Mongol might.

The Mongol retreat in the 14th century left a void that was filled by both Muslim traders from the west and Chinese farmers from the east. Tensions between the two resulted in Ningxia being caught up in the great Muslim Rebellion that convulsed northwest China in the mid-19th century.

Once part of Gansu, Ningxia is China's smallest province, although technically it is an autonomous region for the Muslim Hui ethnic minority, who make up one-third of the population, rather than an official province. It remains one of the poorest areas of China, with a sharp economic divide between the more fertile, Han Chinese-dominated north and the parched,

sparsely populated south.

Climate

Part of the Loess Plateau, Ningxia is composed primarily of arid mountain ranges and highlands. Summer temperatures soar during the day, and precipitation is generally no more than a fond memory. Winters are long and often freezing; spring is lovely, though blustery.

Language

Ningxia's dialect is grouped together with the northwestern dialects of Gansu and Qinghai, an umbrella group known to linguists as Lanyin Mandarin.

Getting There & Around

Ningxia's capital Yinchuan is the only viable flight hub, but Ningxia is so small you can drive across it in a few hours. Buses go everywhere, sometimes slowly, while trains connect the major cities.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥250

\$\$ ¥250 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥50

\$\$\$ more than ¥50

Yinchuan

☎ 0951 / Pop 750,000

In the sun-parched land that is Ningxia, Yinchuan has managed to thrive. The Tangut founders chose this spot wisely as their capital, planting the city between a source of water (the Yellow River) and a natural barrier from the Gobi Desert (the Helan Shan mountains).

Modern-day Yinchuan is predominantly Han, although its many mosques reveal its status as the capital of the Hui peoples' homeland. But the most interesting sights, the Western Xia Tombs and Helan Shan to the west of the city, predate both the Han and the Hui. Yinchuan is also a handy jumping-off point for longer trips to western Inner Mongolia.



Yinchuan

📍 Sights

1 [Chengtiansi Ta](#)

B2

2 [Yinchuan Drum Tower](#)

C1

Sleeping

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|----|
| 3 | 7 Days Inn Gulou | C1 |
| 4 | Hanting Express | D2 |
| 5 | Ningfeng Binguan | C1 |

Eating

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| 6 | Bai Gong | D2 |
| 7 | Da Ma Jiaozi Guan | C1 |
| 8 | Xianhe Lou | D2 |
| 9 | Xianhe Lou | D2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|
| 10 | Liangyuan Jiuba | D1 |
|----|---------------------------------|----|

Sights

Yinchuan is divided into three parts. Xixia Qu (New City), the new industrialised section, is on the western outskirts. Jinfeng Qu is the central district (the train station is on Jinfeng's western edge). Xingqing Qu (Old City) is 12km east of the train station and has most of the town's sights and hotels.

Ningxia Museum

MUSEUM

(Ningxia Bowuguan Renmin Guangchang;  9am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

Located halfway between the new and old cities, this cavernous, well-mounted museum contains an extensive collection of rock art, Silk Road-era pottery and ancient Korans as well as the requisite hall of communist propaganda and Mao fun facts. It's a good starting point if you want to learn something of Hui culture. Bus 102 from the southern bus terminal (nanmen qichezhan) passes nearby.

Chengtiansi Ta

PAGODA

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jinning Nanjie; admission ¥18; 🕒 9am-5pm, to 5.30pm summer)

The most impressive site in Xingqing Qu – climb the 13 storeys of steep, narrow stairs for 360-degree views of Yinchuan. The pagoda is also known as Xi Ta (West Pagoda) and dates back almost 1000 years to the Western Xia dynasty, though it has been rebuilt several times since.

Sleeping

There's no shortage of places to stay in Xingqing Qu, but the accommodation is a mostly uninspired mix of chain hotels and overpriced, old-school two- and three-star joints. The only hostel in Yinchuan is in the industrial Xixia Qu. But if you're willing to splash out, then the quality of hotels improves dramatically.

7 Days Inn Gulou

BUSINESS HOTEL

(7, 7 Tian Liansuo Jiudian Gulou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 0951 561 2999; 74 Gulou Nanjie, d ¥188; 🚶 🛎️ 📧 📶)

Its name may sound like a convenience store, and while there is a franchise feel to the shrink-wrapped towels, flat-screens and Ikea-esque beds in this hotel's compact, bright rooms, the cleanliness, friendly staff and convenient position near the **Drum Tower** (Yinchuan Gulou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Jiefang Dongjie;) make this a comfortable modern choice. Follow the blue '7' logos down a passageway off the plaza of Gulou Nanjie.

Hanting Express

HOTEL

(Hanting Jiudian Yuhuangge Nanjiedian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 0951 765 3888; 192 Liquan Dongjie, d/tw incl breakfast ¥210/259; 🛎️ 📶)

Modern means leatherette bathroom walls, it seems, but this clean chain hotel also made the compact rooms feel spacious and bright. Light(less) sleepers can nab windowless chambers at a 15% discount.

Ningfeng Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 609 0222; www.ningfenghotel.com; 6 Jiefang Dongjie, d & tw ¥688, discounts of 20%; 📶 @ 📶)

A solid choice which is as comfortable as many more expensive hotels in Yinchuan and better located. Rooms are big and well organised, and the bathrooms are nice and up to date. There's a Chinese restaurant on-site and a few of the helpful staff can speak some English. Call ahead as reception are sometimes reluctant to take foreigners.

THE EAST IS RED (WINE)

Wine is hot in China. A bottle of red has become a status symbol for a mushrooming Chinese middle class. In fact, in 2013 China became the world's largest red wine consumer, overtaking France and Italy by glugging (or at least purchasing) 155 million cases of the stuff. Population helps and consumption per capita is still lower than in Europe, but red wine sales managed to triple from 1997 to 2013.

Most wine that is drunk in China is red wine produced in China itself, in Ningxia. In 2012 the wine produced here was worth over 2 billion renminbi. International names such as LVMH (of Moët fame) and Pernod Ricard (which owns Australia's Jacob's Creek wines) have taken leases on the Ningxia government-owned land to produce vineyards for local wines.

Since the late '90s the local government has been pumping water into the slopes of the Helan Shan mountains, which stand against the Gobi Desert. By the end of 2013 the transformed, fertile soil was feeding 58,000 acres of vines and China became the world's fifth largest wine producer. It's still early days, however – the vines are young, difficult to keep protected from Helan Shan's fluctuating temperatures and propagation standards are low.

Ningxia wine may not yet have the same full flavours of their European cousins, but domestically, the region is esteemed for its Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and 'Chinese Cabernet' Gernischt grape varieties. The Ningxia government has its sight on expanding to over 1000 wineries by 2024. Enough time to get the notes right and to make Ningxia a name that rolls off the tongue as smoothly as Bordeaux, Beaujolais and Burgundy when singing the praises of red wine.

Try Ningxia's distinctively light, herbaceous wine putaojiu with live jazz or Tibetan music in Yinchuan at **Liangyuan Jiuba** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 mobile 138 9517 1102; 127 Wenhua Dongjie, bottle of wine ¥98-220; 🕒 6pm-late), a five-minute walk north of the [Drum Tower](#). In Zhongwei, uncork a bottle of red in a cosy booth at the two-level

Rhent Bar (Ruide Jiuba [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎0955 701 9208; Xinlong Beijie; bottle of wine ¥80-200; 🕒9am-late).

Eating & Drinking

Like the rest of northwest China, noodles are a staple here. Every restaurant serves them and in many places in Ningxia they will be all you can find to eat.

★ **Xianhe Lou**

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 204 Xinhua Dongjie; dishes from ¥12; 🕒24hr)

You can't go wrong at this landmark restaurant which never closes and caters for both big spenders and those on a budget. You could splash out on the pricey fish dishes or the great *kaoyangpai* (barbecued ribs) from the picture menu, but you can also get a huge plate of beef noodles for ¥12.

The production line of *shuijiao* (boiled ravioli-style dumplings), a house speciality, is on display. A half *jin* (Chinese weight, about 600g; ¥30) is normally enough for two people. There are another two branches around the corner on **Zhongshan Nanjie** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 118 Zhongshan Nanjie; dishes ¥12-22), the smallest shutting at 9.30pm.

Da Ma Jiaozi Guan

DUMPLINGS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 32 Jiefang Dongjie; dumplings from ¥15; 🕒11am-10.30pm)

Popular joint dedicated to Chinese dumplings. They come by the *jin*, but you can order a half or quarter *jin*, and there are all sorts of beef, prawn and veggie options. There are plenty of cold dishes, soups and meat and fish dishes available, too, as well as the inevitable noodle choices. Picture menu.

Bai Gong

DIM SUM

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 82 Yuhuang Nanjie, dim sum from ¥15; 🕒24hr)

Waiters here push around carts piled with all forms of delicious steamed

dumplings and buns to point to, as well as more esoteric nibbles like spicy chicken feet. The carts offer good variety for solo travellers, but as usual with dim sum, you'll find yourself ordering a few to satisfy your appetite. Look for two massive crayfish on the wall outside.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 170 Jiefang Xijie; 🕒 8am-noon & 2.30-6pm)

You can change travellers cheques and use the 24-hour ATM at this main branch. Other branches change cash only.

China Comfort International Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(CCT., Kang Hui Luyou [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 504 5678; www.chinasilkroadtour.com; 317 Jiefang Xijie; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri)

Organises desert trips, rafting and permits for Ejina Qi (Inner Mongolia). It's located 2km west along a road running from the [Drum Tower](#) to just before the Fenghuangjie intersection.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Jiefang Xijie & Minzu Beijie; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chaoyang Xiang; per hr ¥2-3; 🕒 24hr)

On the left-hand side of the road as you walk south from Jiefang Dongjie and on the 2nd floor. A big sign outside says 'Internet Cafe Animation.'

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju 472 Beijing Donglu; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri)

For visa extensions. It's on a busy intersection near a hospital, large park and schools. Take bus 3 from the [Drum Tower](#).

Getting There & Away

AIR

➔ **Yinchuan Hedong International Airport** (Yinchuan Hedong Guoji Jichang) is located by the Yellow River, 24km southeast of the Drum Tower and Xingqing Qu. Flights connect Yinchuan with Beijing (¥1090), Chengdu (¥1110), Guangzhou (¥1320), Shanghai (¥900), Urumqi (¥1080) and Xi'an (¥360). Buy tickets at www.ctrip.com or www.elong.net.

BUS

The main, **southern bus terminal** (nanmen qichezhan) is 5km south of Nanmen Sq on the road to Zhongwei.

Departures from the southern bus terminal run frequently to Bayanhot, Guyuan and Zhongwei as well as:

- ➔ **Lanzhou** ¥140, six hours, two daily (7.20am and 3.40pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥181, eight to 10 hours, five daily (8.30am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Yan'an** ¥136, eight to nine hours, five daily (8am to 5.30pm)

If you're heading north to Inner Mongolia, you need the **northern (tourism) bus station** (beimen chezhan), in an area full of hostels and cheap restaurants. Bus 316 (¥1) trundles between it and the main bus station.

From the southern terminal the express buses (*kuaike*) to Zhongwei and Guyuan are far quicker than the local buses that stop at every village along the way.

TRAIN

Yinchuan is on the Lanzhou–Beijing railway line, which runs via Hohhot (11 hours) and Datong (13½ hours) before reaching Beijing (21 hours). If you're heading for Lanzhou (hard/soft sleeper ¥131/195, eight hours), the handy overnight K915 train leaves at 10.40pm. For Xi'an, try train 2653 (hard/soft sleeper ¥195/302, 15½ hours) leaving at 5.06pm.

The train station is in Xixia Qu, about 12km west of the Xingqing Qu centre. Book sleeper tickets well in advance. There's a **train ticket**

booking office (daishou huochepiao [GOOGLE MAP](#); 15 Gongnong Xiang, 🕒 9am-noon & 2-5pm) near the Bell Tower.

i Getting Around

The airport is 25km from the Xingqing Qu (Old City) centre; buses (¥20, 30 minutes, hourly, 6am to 6pm) leave to/from in front of the Civil Aviation Administration of China office on Changcheng Donglu, just south of Nanmen Sq. A taxi to/from the airport costs around ¥60.

Between 6am and 11.30pm bus 1 (¥1) runs from the southern bus terminal (from the bus shelter in the middle of the road) to Nanmen Sq (10 minutes) in Xingqing Qu, along Jiefang Jie and then on to the train station in Xixia Qu (40 to 50 minutes). Taxis cost ¥7 for the first 3km. A taxi between the train station and Xingqing Qu costs ¥20 to ¥30.

THE HUI

The Hui are perhaps China's most unusual ethnic minority; they are the only people to be designated as one solely because of their religious beliefs. The Hui don't have their own language, speaking only Mandarin, and are scattered throughout every province of the country with nearly 80% of the 10 million-odd Hui living outside their official homeland.

Their origins date back more than 1000 years to the time of the Silk Road, when trade thrived between China and the Middle East and Central Asia. Arab traders intermarried with the local women and now most Hui are ethnically indistinguishable from the Han Chinese. What marks them out is their adherence to Islam.

Most Hui men wear white skullcaps, while many women don headscarves. The more educated can read and speak Arabic, a result of studying the Koran in its original language. For many young Hui, learning Arabic is the path to a coveted job as a translator for the Chinese companies on the east coast doing business in the Middle East.

Although the Hui can be found all over China, they are most numerous in the northwest provinces of Gansu, Ningxia and Shaanxi. True to their origins as traders and caravanserai operators, many Hui are still engaged in small businesses, especially the running of restaurants.

Around Yinchuan

Western Xia Tombs

Western Xia Tombs

HISTORIC SITE

(Xixia Wangling admission ¥60; 🕒 8am-5.30pm, to 6pm summer)

The Western Xia Tombs, which look like giant beehives, are Ningxia's most famous sight. The first tombs were built a millennium ago by Li Yuanhao, the founder of the Western Xia dynasty. There are nine imperial tombs, plus 200 lesser tombs, in an area of 50 sq km – there are electric carts if you're not up for walking. The one you'll see is Li Yuanhao's, a 23m-tall tomb originally constructed as an octagonal seven-storey wooden pagoda. All that remains is the large earthen core. Permits, usually organised through local tour operators, are required to visit other tombs in the area.

The examples of Buddhist art in the good site museum (8am-5.30pm) offer a rare glimpse into the ephemeral Western Xia culture, and point to clear artistic influences from neighbouring Tibet and Central Asia. There are also many fascinating artefacts excavated from Li Yuanhao's tomb.

The tombs are 33km west of Yinchuan. A return taxi costs around ¥150 (including waiting time). From the South Gate, you could take bus 2 to its terminus in Xixia Qu and then take a cheaper taxi (¥25 each way) from there. Yinchuan's southern bus terminal has a bus (¥8, 20 minutes, every two hours) to the tombs. The site is also on the road towards Bayanhot, if you are headed that way.

Helan Shan

The rugged Helan mountains have long proved an effective barrier against both nomadic invaders and the harsh Gobi winds. They were the preferred burial site for Xixia monarchs, and the foothills are today peppered with graves and honorific temples.

Sights

Rock Carvings

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(Helanshan Yanhua admission ¥70; 🕒 8am-6.30pm)

By far the most significant sight in Helan Shan are the ancient rock carvings, thought to date back 10,000 years. There are more than 2000 pictographs depicting animals, hunting scenes and faces, including one (so local guides like to claim) of an alien, and they are the last remnants of the early nomadic tribes who lived in the steppes north of China.

The ticket price includes entry to the world's only **museum** dedicated to ancient rock art and a ride in a golf cart to the valley containing the rock carvings. Don't miss the image of the Rastafarian-like sun god (climb the steps up the hill on the far side of the valley).

Twin Pagodas of Baisikou

PAGODA

(Baisikou Shuangta admission ¥40; 🕒 8am-6pm)

About 10km west of the Helan Shan [rock carvings](#) are these pagodas. You can't climb them, but they're an impressive sight against the backdrop of the barren mountains: 13 and 14 storeys high and decorated with intricate animal faces and Buddha statuettes.

Suyukou National Forest Park

PARK

(Suyukou Guojia Senlin Gongyuan admission ¥60; 🕒 7am-5pm)

This park is a good place to start exploring the Helan mountains. You can hike up the trails from the car park or take the cable car (up/down ¥50/30) straight up to cool pine-covered hills.

Western Film Studios

FILM LOCATION

(Zhenbeibao Xibu Yingcheng admission ¥80; 🕒 8am-6pm)

This film studio is where the famed Chinese movie *Red Sorghum* was shot, as well as countless other films and TV shows. Hugely popular with Chinese

tour groups, who swarm all over it in the summer, it's fun to explore the fake fortress and recreations of old Ming and Qing streets. To get here, take bus 17 (¥5) from the Yinchuan train station.

i Getting There & Away

The only way to get around the Helan Shan sites is by taxi. The cheapest way to do it is to take bus 17 from the Yinchuan train station to the Western Film Studios (¥5) and then hire a taxi (¥100) from there. Alternatively, you can hire a minibus from the train station for ¥200 return to do the loop of the sights. You could combine that with a visit to the Western Xia Tombs for around ¥300.

Shui Dong Gou

Shui Dong Gou

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

()

The archaeological site of Shui Dong Gou, 25km east of Yinchuan, right on the border with Inner Mongolia, has been turned into something of an adventure theme park. The site is divided into two parts; the first is a **museum** that resembles Jabba the Hut's bunker and which contains the Palaeolithic-era relics first uncovered here in 1923.

From there, it's a golf cart ride to an unrestored section of the Great Wall dating back to the Ming dynasty. Then it's a walk, boat trip, donkey- and camel-cart ride to a **fortress** with an elaborate network of underground tunnels once used by Chinese soldiers defending the Wall. The renovated tunnels include trap doors, false passages and booby traps.

The catch is that the admission price to Shui Dong Gou only lets you into the site itself. Everything else – the museum, fort and all transport – costs extra, making this an expensive day out. Unless you fancy an 8km walk around the complex, the cheapest way to do it is to buy the through ticket (*tongpiao*) for ¥130. Standard admission costs ¥60.

Buses from Yinchuan's southern bus terminal, starting at 8.20am, run past Shui Dong Gou (¥10, 40 minutes, five daily). To return, wait by the highway and flag down any passing Yinchuan-bound bus.

Bayanhot

Bayanhot (known to the Chinese as Alashan Zuoqi) is not actually in Ningxia; it's across the border in Inner Mongolia. But the most convenient way to access Bayanhot is from Yinchuan, and a visit here is a good introduction to both Mongol culture and the vast deserts and high blue skies of far western Inner Mongolia.

The original Mongol town was centred on the small 18th-century temple **Yanfu Si** (admission ¥5; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-6pm). Completed in 1742, it once housed 200 lamas; around 30 are resident here now.

Next door is the local museum **Alashan Bowuguan** (admission ¥40; 🕒 9am-5.30pm), the former home of the local prince, the Alashan Qin Wang. A well-restored, Qing-era complex of buildings and courtyards, there are photos of the last prince (1903–68) and his family, plus some of their personal effects.

Bayanhot means 'Rich City' in Mongolian and there's a thriving jade trade here. Numerous shops deal in it and there's a small market in front of the museum. Bargain hard if you're in a buying mood.

Frequent buses depart from Yinchuan's southern bus terminal for Bayanhot (¥30, two to three hours) between 8am and 6pm (stopping off at the Western Xia Tombs). If you want to travel further west into Inner Mongolia from Bayanhot there are two buses a day to Ejina Qi (¥104, eight hours) at 8am and 8.20am. One daily bus goes to Alashan Youqi (¥121, six hours) at 7.10am. Note: you need a permit to travel to Ejina Qi, which can be arranged by travel agents in Yinchuan.

Around Bayanhot

Guangzong Si

MONASTERY

(admission ¥80; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Once one of the most magnificent monasteries in Inner Mongolia, Guangzong Si has a stunning setting in the mountains 38km south of Bayanhot. At its height, some 2000 monks lived here. So important was the monastery that the main prayer hall, Gandan Danjaling Sum, contains the remains of the sixth Dalai Lama inside the golden stupa that dominates it.

Tragically, the monastery was demolished during the Cultural Revolution; a 1957 photo in the main prayer hall gives you an idea of how big it once was. The temples have since been rebuilt, but in the last couple of years a hotel, yurt restaurants and a supremely tacky shopping street have been added to the complex to entice domestic tour groups here.

There are good walking trails in the mountains behind the complex; take the path to the right of the main temple and follow it for one hour to a grassy plateau with fantastic views.

From Bayanhot, a taxi to the monastery and then back to the highway (where you can flag down any Yinchuan-bound bus) is ¥120. On your way back to Yinchuan, look out for the crumbling, yet still mighty, remains of the Great Wall at **Sanguankou**. Some sections are up to 10m high and 3m wide.

Zhongwei

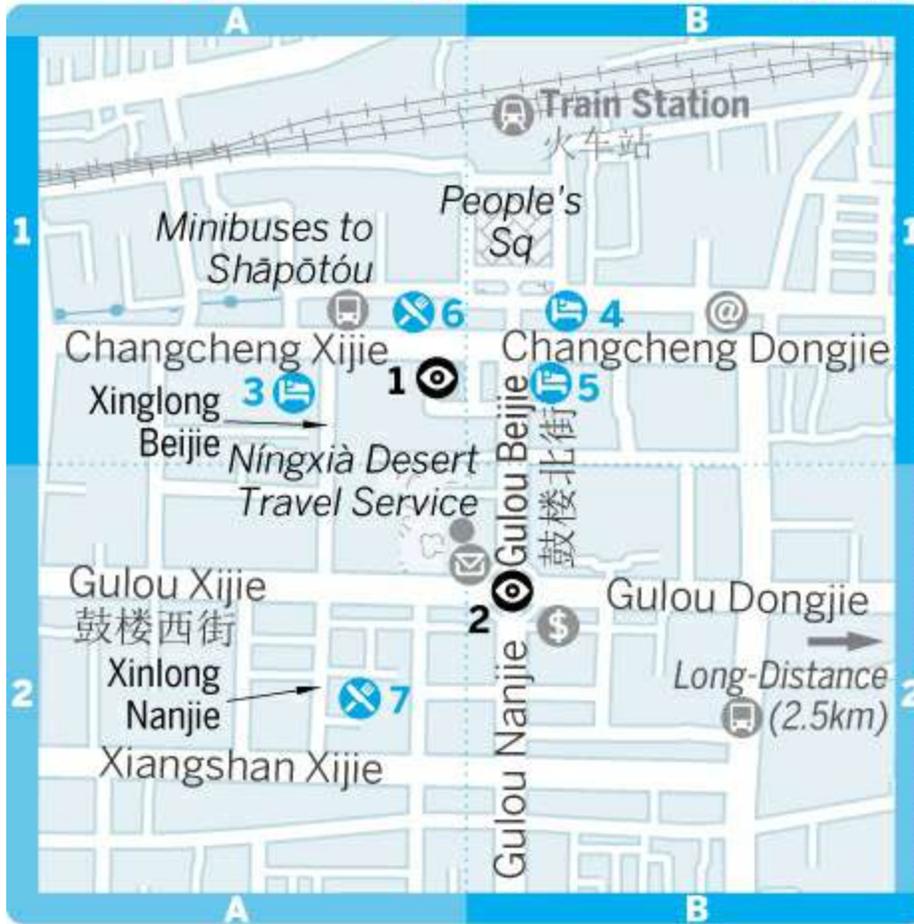
📞 0955 / Pop 1 million

With its wide streets and relaxed feel, Zhongwei easily wins the prize for Ningxia's best-looking and friendliest city. It's an ideal base for a trip up the Yellow River or further afield into the Tengger Desert.

Zhōngwèi



0 500 m
0 0.25 miles



Zhongwei

Sights

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1 Gao Temple | A1 |
| 2 Zhongwei Drum Tower | B2 |

Sleeping

- | | |
|---|----|
| 3 North by Northwest Hostel | A1 |
| 4 Zhonghui Shangwu Binguan | B1 |
| 5 Zhongwei Dajiudian | B1 |

Eating

- | | |
|--|----|
| 6 Hong Yun Lai Han Canting | A1 |
|--|----|

[7 Zhongwei Night Market](#)

A2

Drinking & Nightlife

[Rhent Bar](#)

A1

Sights

Gao Temple

TEMPLE

(Gao Miao [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gulou Beijie; admission ¥30;  7.30am-7pm)

One of the more extraordinary temples you'll find in China, this eclectic shrine has at various times catered to the needs of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. It's still a funky mishmash of architectural styles, but the revitalised Buddhist deities have muscled out the original Taoists and Confucians.

The real oddity here is the former **bomb shelter**, built beneath the temple during the Cultural Revolution, which has been converted into a Buddhist hell-haunted house. The eerie, dimly lit tunnels contain numerous scenes of the damned having their tongues cut out, being sawed in half or stoked in the fires of hell, while their screams echo all around. Great stuff.

Sleeping

A number of hotels in Zhongwei won't accept foreigners.

★ [North by Northwest Hostel](#)

HOSTEL

(Xibei Pianbei Qingnianlushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  0955 763 5060; 453190353@qq.com; 87 Xinglong Beijie, dm ¥40-50, d/tr ¥150/180;  )

It may be Zhongwei's only hostel but budget travellers are spoiled with some of the softest beds in Ningxia in spacious clean rooms. The murals, mosaic-like washbasins and homemade Zhongwei postcards amp up the art-school

vibe. The jovial young staff are extremely helpful, have a go with English and offer Shapotou and desert tours.

Zhonghui Shangwu Binguan

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍701 0808; 61 Changcheng Dongjie, d & tw ¥98-148; 📶@)

The rooms have seen some wear and tear and could be cleaner, but the price is great, the staff amenable and the location very convenient. The more expensive rooms come with computers.

Zhongwei Dajiudian

HOTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍702 5555; 66 Gulou Beijie, d & tw ¥368; 📶@)

Big, surprisingly comfortable rooms with decent-sized beds and modern showers are on offer here. Discounts available outside peak season.



Eating & Drinking

On summer nights, with the lit-up **Drum Tower** (Zhongwei Gulou [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) acting as a beacon, locals eat and drink alfresco at numerous locations around the centre of town.

Zhongwei Night Market

MARKET

(Zhongwei Yeshi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); off Xinglong Nanjie; dishes ¥7-20)

A Dante's Inferno of flaming woks and grills, the night market is made up of countless stalls in the alleys running left off Xinglong Nanjie (which is lined with Chinese-style bars). There are tonnes of cheap eats. Two favourites to check out are *roujiamo* (fried pork or beef stuffed in bread, sometimes with green peppers and cumin) and *shaguo* (mini hotpot).

Hong Yun Lai Han Canting

CHINESE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 52 Changcheng Xijie; dishes from ¥13; 🕒9am-9.30pm)

Solid restaurant serving up northern Chinese classics as well as solo-diner

friendly claypots of *baozaifan* (meat/veg with spicy peppers on rice). Large picture menu.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Gulou Beijie & Gulou Dongjie; 🕒 9am-5pm)

One of many around town.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Gulou Xijie)

Internet Cafe

INTERNET

(wangba [GOOGLE MAP](#); 121 Changcheng Dongjie; per hr ¥2.50; 🕒 9am-1am)

Dark and smoky and filled with gamers.

Ningxia Desert Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(Ningxia Shamo Luxingshe [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 702 7776, 186 0955 9777; www.nxdesert.com)

Professional outfit for camel and rafting trips. A five-night desert camping trip starts at ¥1480. Contact the English-speaking manager Billy.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju 📞 706 0597; Silou Dong Nanjie; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5pm)

For visa extensions you have to go to Yinchuan. About 4km south of the [Drum Tower](#).

Getting There & Away

BUS

The **long-distance bus station** (changtu qichezhan) is 2.5km east of the Drum Tower, along Gulou Dongjie. Take bus 1 or a taxi (¥7, 10 minutes).

Destinations include the following:

- ➔ **Guyuan** ¥70, four hours, two daily (10am and 2.30pm); express bus (*kuai che*)
- ➔ **Tongxin** ¥26, 2½ hours, five daily (from 9am)
- ➔ **Yinchuan** ¥53, 2½ hours, half-hourly (6.30am to 6pm); express bus

Buses to Xi'an (¥180, eight hours, 6pm) run every other day from in front of the train station. There's also a night bus to Lanzhou (¥80, four hours, one daily), which departs from the Drum Tower at 10pm.

TRAIN

You can reach Yinchuan in 2½ hours (¥25), though you'll be dropped off closer to the city centre in Yinchuan if you take the bus. It's 5½ hours to Lanzhou (hard seat/hard sleeper ¥45/89) and 12½ hours to Xi'an (hard/soft sleeper ¥156/245). For Guyuan (¥33, 3½ hours) take the Xi'an train.

Around Zhongwei

WORTH A TRIP

TONGXIN

South of Zhongwei, the Han Chinese-dominated cities of northern Ningxia give way to the Hui heartland. Journeying here takes you deep into rural Ningxia, through villages of mud-brick houses where the minarets of the numerous mosques tower over the endless cornfields.

Of all the mosques in Ningxia, the most hallowed is **Qingzhen Da Si** (Great Mosque admission ¥15) in Tongxin. Dating back to the 14th century, although the present mosque was built in 1573 and then renovated in 1791, it was the only one of Ningxia's 1000-odd mosques to avoid the ravages of the Cultural Revolution. As such, it's a near-perfect example of Ming- and Qing-era temple architecture. Not until you get up close and notice the crescents that top the pagoda roofs does it become apparent that it's a mosque.

Unsurprisingly, Tongxin has a very strong Muslim feel. There are always students in residence at the mosque training to be imams and they will greet you with a salaam alaikum and show you around. Tongxin is also one of the few places in China outside

of southern Xinjiang where you'll see women in veils and covered from head to toe in black.

Qingzhen Da Si is on the south side of town, a ¥5 taxi ride from the bus station on Jingping Jie. There are frequent express buses between Tongxin and Yinchuan (¥52, three hours), making a long day trip possible. The last bus back to Yinchuan leaves at 4pm. You could also visit from Zhongwei (¥26, 2½ hours), or stop for a couple of hours if you are heading further south to Guyuan (¥26, two hours). If you get stuck here, try the **Hui Chun Binguan** (☎0953-803 1888; d ¥138; 🌃) opposite the bus station.

Shapotou

The desert playground of **Shapotou** (admission ¥100; 🕒7.30am-6.30pm), 17km west of Zhongwei, lies on the fringes of the Tengger Desert at the dramatic convergence of sand dunes, the Yellow River and lush farmlands. It's based around the Shapotou Desert Research Centre, which was founded in 1956 to battle the ever-worsening problem of desertification in China's northwest.

These days, though, Shapotou is almost an amusement park. You can zipline (¥80) or hang-glide (¥100) on a wire across the Yellow River or go sand-sledding (¥30) or bungee jumping (¥160).

It's also a good place to raft the churning Yellow River. The traditional mode of transport on the river for centuries was the *yangpi fazi* (leather raft), made from sheep or cattle skins soaked in oil and brine and then inflated. From Shapotou you can roar upstream on a speedboat and return on a traditional raft. Prices range from ¥80 to ¥240, depending on how far you go. You can also combine the boat/raft ride with a camel ride (¥110).

Shapo Shanzhuang (☎0955-768 9073; r ¥288; 🕒Apr-Oct) is a basic but comfortable hotel near the dunes. Meals are available.

Buses (¥5, 45 minutes) run between Zhongwei and Shapotou from 7.30am to 6.30pm. You can pick them up on Changcheng Xijie about 200m past the Gao Temple on the opposite side of the road. Taxis cost ¥30 each way.

Tengger Desert

If you fancy playing Lawrence of Arabia, make a trip out to the Tengger Desert (Tenggeli Shamo), a mystical landscape of shifting sand dunes and the occasional herd of two-humped camels. Shapotou lies on the southern fringe, but it's definitely worth heading deeper into the desert to avoid the crowds. The sun is fierce out here, so you'll need a hat, sunglasses and plenty of water. Nights are cool, so bring a warm layer.

[Ningxia Desert Travel Service](#) in Zhongwei offers overnight camel treks through the desert, with a visit to the Great Wall by car, for ¥500 per person per day for a group of four. The price includes transport, food and guide. Ask your guide to bring along a sand sled for a sunset surfing session. Drinking beers around the campfire under a starry sky tops off the experience. The desert trek can be combined with a rafting trip down the Yellow River.

Guyuan & Around

 0954

An expanding but still small and very new city, Guyuan makes a convenient base for exploring little-visited southern Ningxia. Few foreigners make it down here, so expect some attention from the overwhelmingly Hui locals. Make sure to bring cash, too; precious few ATMs in this part of the world accept foreign cards.

Sights & Activities

Xumi Shan

CAVES

(admission ¥50;  8am-5pm)

These Buddhist grottoes (Xumi is the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit *sumeru*, or Buddhist paradise) some 50km northwest of Guyuan are southern Ningxia's must-see sight. Cut into the five adjacent sandstone hills are 132 caves housing more than 300 Buddhist statues dating back 1400 years, from the Northern Wei to the Sui and Tang dynasties.

Cave 5 contains the largest statue, a colossal Maitreya (future Buddha), standing 20.6m high. Further uphill, the finest statues are protected by the Yuanguang Temples (caves 45 and 46; 6th century) and Xiangguo (cave 51; 7th century), where you can walk around the interior and examine the artwork up close – amazingly, the paint on several of the statues is still visible in places.

To reach the caves, take a bus from Guyuan to Sanying (¥7, one hour). They depart from Wenhua Xilu, by the two big hospitals opposite the night market. From Sanying you'll have to hire a taxi for the 40km return trip (¥100 including waiting time) to Xumi Shan.

Liupan Shan Guojia Senlin Gongyuan

PARK

(Liupan Mountain National Forest Park admission ¥65; 🕒 7am-6pm)

Those on the trail of Genghis Khan will want to visit southern Ningxia's Liupan Shan, where some believe the great man died in 1227. Legend has it that he fell ill and came here to ingest medicinal plants native to the area, but perished on its slopes (though it's much more likely he died elsewhere). The mountain is now a protected area.

A walking trail leads 3km up a side valley to a waterfall. About 5km further up the main valley is a clearing with some stone troughs and tables that locals say was used by the Mongols during their stay.

To get here, take a bus from Guyuan's main bus station to Jingyuan (¥16, one hour) and then hire a taxi for the final 18km to the reserve (¥80 return). A return taxi from Guyuan will cost ¥200.

Guyuan Museum

MUSEUM

(Guyuan Bowuguan 133 Xicheng Jie, admission ¥20; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun, to 6.30pm summer)

For such an out-of-the-way place, Guyuan's museum is rather good, with Neolithic-era artefacts, Tangut ceramics and some fine figurines from the Northern Wei dynasty. Decent English captions, too.

Sleeping & Eating

Liupanshan Binguan

HOTEL

( 0954 202 1666; 35 Zhongshan Nanjie, d & tw ¥200 ;  )

The rooms at this long-standing hotel look their age these days, but they are quiet and it still makes a decent base. Foreigners will be directed to the rear annexe, where there's also a restaurant. Discounts of 30%.

Delong Business Hotel

HOTEL

(Delong Shangwu Jiudian  0954 286 3918; Wenhua Xilu, tw incl breakfast ¥268 ;  )

Friendly, helpful staff and good-sized rooms with modern bathrooms make this the pick of the hotels along Wenhua Xilu. Discounts of 40% are common.

Night Market

MARKET

(Xiaochi Cheng dishes from ¥11)

This alley of food stalls runs till very late and specialises in delicious *shaguo* (mini hotpot), as well as *shaokao* (barbecue) and noodles. Dishes are on display, so you can pick and choose. It's down a covered arcade off Wenhua Xilu, directly opposite two big hospitals.

Getting There & Away

BUS

The long-distance bus station is about 4km west of central Guyuan's hotels and museum. A taxi cost ¥5. There are frequent buses to Tongxin, Xi'an and Yinchuan, as well as the following:

- ➔ **Lanzhou** ¥95, nine hours, one daily (8am)
- ➔ **Tianshui** ¥65, seven hours, one daily (6.30am)
- ➔ **Zhongwei** ¥70, 2½ hours, two daily (10.10am and 3pm)

TRAIN

Guyuan is on the Zhongwei–Baoji railway line. Sleeper tickets are near impossible to get and the majority of trains depart in the middle of the night. To get to the train station, take bus 1 or a taxi (¥5).

- ➔ **Lanzhou** hard sleeper ¥89, 9½ hours, one daily (10.53pm)
- ➔ **Xi'an** hard/soft sleeper ¥151/213, seven to eight hours, four daily
- ➔ **Yinchuan** seat/hard sleeper ¥65/152, six hours, four daily (1.14am to 1.27pm)

Inner Mongolia

[Inner Mongolia Highlights](#)

[Hohhot](#)

[Around Hohhot](#)

[Shangdu \(Xanadu\)](#)

[Baotou](#)

[Wudang Lamasery](#)

[Genghis Khan Mausoleum](#)

[Haila'er](#)

[Around Haila'er](#)

[Jinzhanghan Grasslands](#)

[Enhe](#)

[Shi Wei](#)

[Manzhouli](#)

Inner Mongolia



Pop 24.7 million

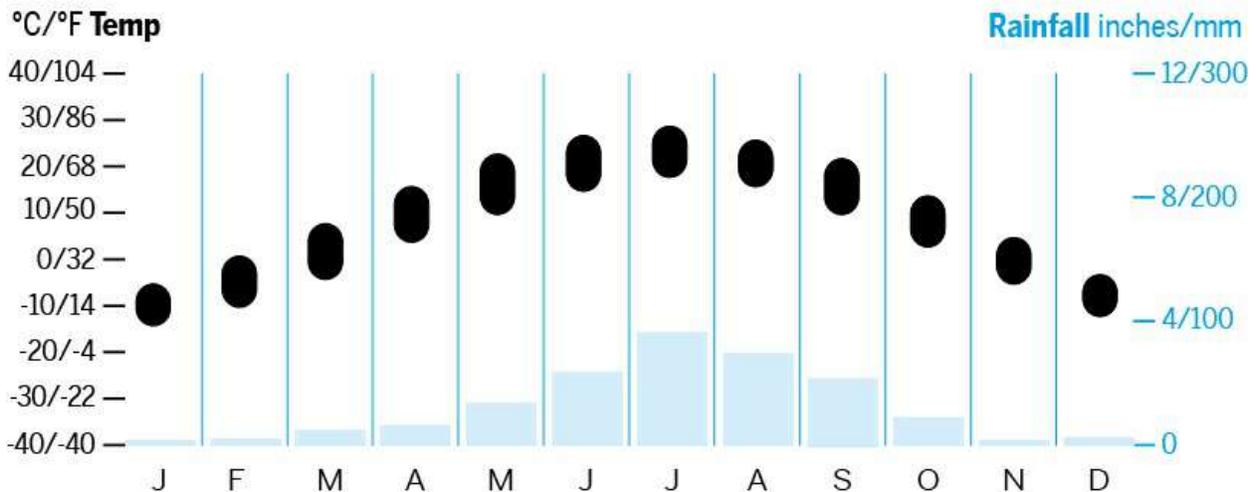
Why Go?

Mongolia. The word alone stirs up visions of nomadic herders, thundering horses and, of course, the warrior-emperor Genghis Khan. The Mongols conquered half the known world in the 13th century and while their empire is long gone, visitors are still drawn to this land wrapped up in both myth and legend.

Travellers heading north of the Great Wall might half expect to see the Mongol hordes galloping through the vast grasslands. The reality is quite different: 21st-century Inner Mongolia (*Nei Menggu*) is a wholly different place from Mongolia itself. The more-visited south of the province is industrialised, prosperous and very much within the realm of China's modern economic miracle. The Mongolia of your dreams exists off the tourist route, amid the shimmering sand dunes of the Badain Jaran Desert or the vast grasslands in the north. Some effort is required to reach these areas, but the spectacular scenery makes it worthwhile.

When to Go

Hohhot



- **May** Good weather and shoulder season equals good value.
- **Jul** Hohhot and other regions host the annual Naadam festival.
- **Aug & Sep** The best time to see the grasslands and ride Mongolia's famed horses.

Best Natural Wonders

- [Hulunbei'er Grasslands](#)
- [Badain Jaran Desert](#)
- [Hulun Lake](#)

Best Temples

- [Wudang Lamasery](#)
- [Wuta Pagoda](#)
- [Da Zhao](#)

Inner Mongolia Highlights



- 1 Saddle up and go for a horse ride around the glorious Hulunbei'er grasslands near [Haila'er](#)
- 2 Wander amid the ancient walls of [Shangdu](#) and contemplate the lost greatness of Kublai Khan's pleasure dome
- 3 Find some peace and sample the local milk and produce at the laid-back farming town of [Enhe](#).
- 4 Mount a camel and set off across the dunes of the [Badain Jaran Desert](#)
- 5 Mingle with the Chinese-speaking ethnic Russians at the unique village of [Shi Wei](#) near the Russian border
- 6 Listen to the groaning chants of Mongolian monks at the colourful monasteries of [Da Zhao](#) and [Xilitu Zhao](#) in Hohhot

History

The nomadic tribes of the northern steppes have always been at odds with the agrarian Han Chinese, so much so that the Great Wall was built to keep them out. But it acted more like a speed bump than an actual barrier to the Mongol hordes.

Genghis Khan and grandson Kublai rumbled through in the 13th century,

and after conquering southern China in 1279 Kublai Khan became the first emperor of the Yuan dynasty. But by the end of the 14th century the Mongol empire had collapsed, and the Mongols again became a collection of disorganised roaming tribes. It was not until the 18th century that the Qing emperors finally gained full control of the region.

A divide-and-conquer policy by the Qing led to the creation of an 'Inner' and 'Outer' Mongolia. The Qing opened up Inner Mongolia to Han farmers, and waves of migrants came to cultivate the land. Outer Mongolia was spared this policy and, with backing from the USSR, it gained full independence in 1921.

Now Mongolians make up only 15% of Inner Mongolia's population. Most of the other 85% are Han Chinese, with a smattering of Hui, Manchu, Daur and Ewenki.

Inner Mongolia's economy has boomed in recent years thanks to extensive mining of both coal and rare earth minerals. That growth has come at great environmental cost. The mines have swallowed up pastureland at alarming rates and desertification is the root cause of the dust storms that envelop Beijing each spring. Only the far north of the region, where the economy is largely based on cattle ranching and tourism, has escaped heavy industrialisation.

Climate

Siberian blizzards and cold air currents rake the Mongolian plains from November to March. June to August brings pleasant temperatures, but the west is scorching hot during the day.

The best time to visit is between July and September, particularly to see the grasslands, which are green only in summer. Make sure you bring warm, windproof clothing, as even in midsummer it's often windy, and evening temperatures can dip to 10°C or below.

Language

The Mongolian language is part of the Altaic linguistic family, which includes the Central Asian Turkic languages and the now defunct Manchurian. Although the vertical Mongolian script (written left to right) adorns street signs, almost everyone speaks standard Mandarin.

Getting There & Away

Inner Mongolia borders Mongolia and Russia. There are border crossings at Erenhot (Mongolia) and Manzhouli (Russia), which are stopovers on the Trans-Mongolian and Trans-Manchurian Railways, respectively. To Mongolia, you can also catch a local train to Erenhot, cross the border and take another local train to Ulaanbaatar (with the appropriate visa). Possible air connections include Hohhot to Ulaanbaatar or Haila'er to Choibalsan (eastern Mongolia) and Hohhot to Moscow.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥50

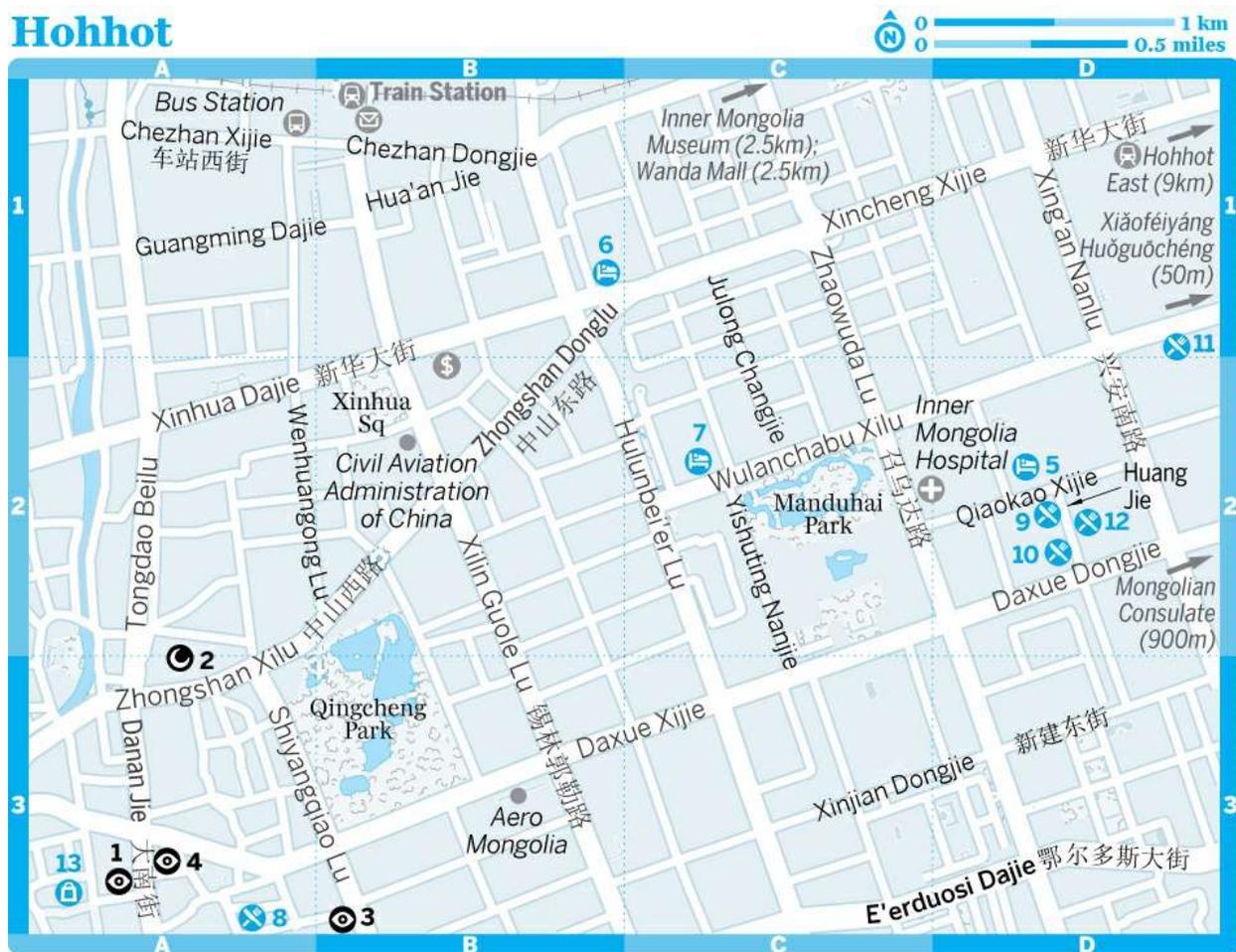
\$\$\$ more than ¥50

HOHHOT

 0471 / Pop 2.86 million

Founded by Altan Khan in the 16th century, the capital of Inner Mongolia is an increasingly prosperous city with an inordinate amount of KTV (karaoke)

bars. Hohhot (known in Mandarin as *Huhehaote*) means ‘Blue City’ in Mongolian, a reference to the arching blue skies over the grasslands. Streets are attractively tree-lined (although the roads are traffic-snarled) and there are a handful of interesting temples and pagodas in the town – enough to keep you busy for a day or two before heading to the hinterlands.



Hohhot

📍 Sights

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Da Zhao | A3 |
| 2 | Great Mosque | A3 |
| 3 | Wuta Pagoda | B3 |
| 4 | Xilitu Zhao | A3 |

Sleeping

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| 5 Anda Guesthouse | D2 |
| 6 Jinjiang Inn | B1 |
| 7 Nei Menggu Fandian | C2 |

Eating

| | |
|---|----|
| 8 Gutang Qingcheng Hele Mianguan | A3 |
| 9 Nana's Cafe | D2 |
| 10 Wuzhumuqin Naichaguan Si Fendian | D2 |
| 11 Xiaofei yang Huoguo cheng | D1 |
| 12 Xinjiang Hongliu Zhuangyuan | D2 |

Shopping

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 13 Souvenir Shops | A3 |
|-----------------------------------|----|

Sights

Inner Mongolia Museum

MUSEUM

(Nei Menggu Bowuyuan Xinhua Dongdajie;  9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This massive museum in the northeastern section of town has a distinctive sloping roof supposed to resemble the vast steppes of Mongolia. It's one of the better provincial museums, with everything from dinosaurs and Genghis Khan to space-age rockets. Take bus 3 from Xinhua Dajie or pay ¥14 for a cab.

Wuta Pagoda

PAGODA

(Wuta Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wutasi Houjie; admission ¥35;  8am-6pm)

This striking, Indian-influenced, five-tiered pagoda was completed in 1732. Its main claim to fame is the Mongolian star chart around the back, though the engraving of the Diamond Sutra (in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Mongolian), extending around the entire base of the structure, is in much better condition.

Bus 1 runs by the pagoda.

Da Zhao

MONASTERY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Danan Jie; admission ¥35; 🕒 8am-7pm)

Da Zhao is a large, well-maintained lamasery (monastery for lamas) that is still used as a temple. In the sacred main prayer hall you may come upon groups of Mongol monks chanting and praying (usually at 9am).

Xilitu Zhao

MONASTERY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Danan Jie; admission ¥30; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm)

Across from the [Da Zhao](#) temple is this simple, peaceful monastery, the purported stomping ground of Hohhot's 11th Living Buddha (he actually works elsewhere). Monks chant at 9am and 3pm.

Great Mosque

MOSQUE

(Qingzhen Dasi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 28 Tongdao Beilu)

North of the old town is the Great Mosque. Built in the Chinese style, it dates from the Qing dynasty but has been modernised. You can look around as long as you don't enter the prayer hall. The main street, with plenty of food stalls, is worth wandering around.

A YURT BY ANY OTHER NAME...

'Yurt', the common name for traditional Mongolian tents, is a Turkish word. The Mongolian word is ger, and the Chinese call them 'Menggu bao' – literally 'Mongolian buns' – perhaps because the white structures with their conical tops resemble puffy steamed breads.



Festivals & Events

Naadam

CULTURAL, SPORTS

The week-long summer festival known as Naadam features traditional Mongolian sports such as archery, wrestling and horse racing. It takes place at Gegental and at various grassland areas in early July. Book local tours at your accommodation.

Sleeping

There are plenty of options in Hohhot from no-name guesthouses near the train station to the Shangri-la. Check www.ctrip.com for last-minute deals.

Anda Guesthouse

HOSTEL

(Anda Luguan  ;  159 475 19807, 691 8039;

andaguesthouse@hotmail.com; Qiaokao Xijie, dm/d with shared bath ¥60/180;  )

Backpackers love its friendly, English-speaking Mongolian staff and cosy atmosphere. The Anda has compact dorms and decent-sized basic doubles. The bathrooms especially could be cleaner, but there's a small lounge, kitchen facilities and a cute courtyard. The staff are eager to show off Mongolian culture and organise trips to the grasslands, as well as to the Kubuqi Desert and [Naadam](#).

Finding the place can be difficult; call ahead and get a pick-up from the train station. Otherwise take bus 2, 37 or 61 to the Inner Mongolia Hospital (A *Nei Menggu Yiyuan Dalou A Zuo*), then walk west for six minutes on Qiaokao Xijie. It's down an unmarked alley almost opposite the northern end of Huang Jie. Look for the blue sign. A taxi costs ¥11.

Jinjiang Inn

HOTEL

(Jinjiang Zhixing Luguan  ;  666 8111; www.jinjianginns.com; 61 Xinhua

Dajie, d ¥249;   )

Big branch of the ultra-efficient chain hotel that has spotless, if somewhat bland, rooms that come with free broadband access.

Nei Menggu Fandian

HOTEL

(Inner Mongolia Hotel [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎693 8888; www.nmg hotel.com; Wulanchabu Xilu, r from ¥1480; 📶 @ 📶 📶)

Despite competition from upmarket Western chains, this 14-storey high-rise is one of Hohhot's best, featuring fine renovated rooms with big comfy beds, a pool and health centre. You can dine Mongolian-style in concrete yurts out back. Some staff speak English. 60% discounts outside the peak summer season.

Eating & Drinking

Mongolia's notable culinary contribution is *huoguo* (hotpot), a refined version, so the story goes, of the stew originally cooked in soldiers' helmets. *Yangrou* (mutton), *mian* (noodles), *doufu* (tofu), *mogu* (mushrooms) and other vegies are added to the bubbling cauldron.

For an excellent selection of Mongolian and Chinese restaurants, head down to Huang Jie (Yellow Street), which is lined with about 40 small eateries. There are a few Mongolian music bars nearby; ask at Anda Guesthouse for the latest hotspot. There are also food options galore at the new **Wanda Mall** (Wanda Guangchang Xinhua Dongdajie; dishes from ¥15) and along the main shopping strips of Zhongshan Xilu near the junction of Xilin Guole Lu.

★ **Gutang Qingcheng Hele Mianguan**

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wutasi Nanjie; noodles ¥10-11; 🕒24hr)

The massive bowls of buckwheat noodles (*qiaomian*) and unlimited servings of cold Chinese vegie dishes by the counter can sate any hunger pangs you might have. There's also cheap beer and hunks of pork on bone (*zhu banggu*, ¥13) to gorge on if the noodles fail to do the trick.

Wuzhumuqin Naichaguan Si Fendian

MONGOLIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Huang Jie; meals from ¥20; 🕒7am-midnight)

This small restaurant serves Mongol 'soul food', including juicy *jiaozi*

(dumplings), *makhtai shul* (meat soup) and *suutai tsai* (salty milk tea), along with hunks of lamb on the bone and beef (served by the *jin*).

Nana's Cafe

INTERNATIONAL, MONGOLIAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Huang Jie; dishes from ¥30; 🕒 10.30am-10pm)

Head through a blue wooden door up to the second level for this cute cafe serving pasta, dumplings and a range of Western dishes. Pair your meal with coffee, beer or salty Mongolian milk tea.

Xinjiang Hongliu Zhuangyuan

XINJIANG

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Huang Jie; meals from ¥35; 🕒 11.30am-2am)

With an outdoor area that's busy until the wee hours and smoke billowing off the giant grill, this place specialises in Uighur cuisine from the far western province of Xinjiang. The chunky and succulent lamb kebabs (¥8) – nothing like the scrawny, fatty ones sold by street vendors – are especially good.

Picture menu.

Xiaofei yang Huoguo cheng

MONGOLIAN, HOTPOT

(Little Fat Sheep Hotpot City [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 490 1998; www.littlesheep.com; 80

Wulanchabu Donglu; hotpot dishes from ¥15; 🕒 11am-1.30am)

Giant branch of the popular and reliable Inner Mongolian chain serving Mongolia's most famous culinary export. Decent cuts of lamb and beef, a wide choice of fresh vegies and mushrooms and a fun atmosphere. There's a picture menu to help you make your choices.



Shopping

Souvenir Shops

SOUVENIRS

(Biaoji Dianpu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#))

Opposite [Da Zhao](#) monastery, this Qing-era street is packed with souvenir

stalls selling fake Mongolian tat, jade, Buddhist and Mao memorabilia. South of Da Zhao is a kitschy open-air shopping plaza done up as a *hutong* (narrow alley), with stores selling antiques, old books and the usual Mao memorabilia.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xinhua Dajie)

Has a 24-hour ATM available.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Chezhan Dongjie)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju Chileichuan Dajie,  8.30am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Fri)

For visa extensions and other enquiries. The foreign-affairs bureau is to the left of the main building, outside the gated compound.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Daily flight destinations (routes are reduced in winter) include Beijing (¥500), Xi'an (¥800), Haila'er (¥1300), Manzhouli (¥1000), and Shanghai (¥1350). Book flights on www.elong.net or www.ctrip.com.

BUS

Hohhot's **main bus station** (changtu qichezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#)) is next door to the train station.

➔ **Baotou** ¥40, two hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 7pm)

➔ **Beijing** ¥150, six to eight hours, 8.30am, 10.10am, 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.50pm

- ➔ **Datong** ¥65, four hours, hourly (6.30am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Dongsheng** ¥65, three hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 7pm)
- ➔ **Erenhot (Erlian)** ¥95, five hours, 7.50am, 8.20am, 9.20am, 12.50pm and 1.30pm

TRAIN

Sleeper tickets are hard to come by in July and August; hotel travel desks can book them for a ¥30 commission. From Hohhot, trains go to the following:

- ➔ **Baotou** ¥25, two hours, 16 daily
- ➔ **Beijing** seat/hard sleeper ¥90/167, 10 hours, 13 daily
- ➔ **Datong** seat ¥44, four hours, nine daily
- ➔ **Xilinhot** seat/hard sleeper ¥92/174, 10 hours, 8.50pm
- ➔ **Yinchuan** seat/hard sleeper ¥82/163, 10 hours, three daily

Getting Around

Useful bus routes include bus 1, which runs from the train station to the old part of the city past Zhongshan Xilu, and bus 33, which runs east on Xinhua Dajie from the train station. Tickets are ¥1.

Hohhot's airport is 15km east of the city. The airport bus (¥10) leaves from **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC, Zhongguo Minhang Gongsi [GOOGLE MAP](#);  696 4103; Xilin Guole Lu). A taxi will cost ¥50 (flag fall ¥6).

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO MONGOLIA

Two direct trains run between Beijing and Ulaanbaatar (hard/soft sleeper ¥216/336, 30 hours), the Mongolian capital, on Monday and Friday at 8.05am. The same train stops in Erenhot (Erlianhaote; hard seat/hard sleeper ¥55/114, 13 hours), at the Mongolian border. Erenhot is listed on Chinese train timetables as Erlian.

There are also six daily buses from Hohhot to Erenhot (¥95, six hours), leaving between 8am and 1.30pm; buses are more practical than the train. From Erenhot you can catch a jeep across the border (about ¥50) and continue to Ulaanbaatar on the daily 5.50pm local train. A train also runs from Hohhot to Ulaanbaatar on Monday and

Friday, leaving at 10.50pm and taking 30 hours.

Air China has several daily flights from Hohhot to Ulaanbaatar (via Beijing) from ¥2000. Book online at www.ctrip.com. **Aero Mongolia** (Kong Menggu [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍138 4818 7711; www.aeromongolia.mn; 36 Daxue Xijie) flies from Hohhot to Ulaanbaatar on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from ¥1800. Flight schedules change in winter.

If you need a visa, head for the **Mongolian consulate** (Menggu Lingshiguan 5 Dongying Nanjie, 🕒9am-noon Mon, Tue & Thu) in Hohhot. The 30-day visa costs ¥260 and takes four days to process. A rush visa (¥495) can be obtained the following day. US citizens do not need a visa to visit Mongolia. To find the consulate, travel east on Daxue Dongjie, turn left on Dongying Nanjie and look for the consulate 200m on the left. Go early.

There is also a consulate in **Erenhot** (Menggu Lingshiguan Youyi Lu; 🕒9am-noon & 3-5pm Mon-Fri). To find the consulate from the bus station, walk half a block east to the T-junction and head left. Walk north along this road (Youyi Lu) for 10 minutes until you see the red, blue and yellow Mongolian flags on your left. A 30-day rush tourist visa (¥495) can be obtained the next day.

AROUND HOHHOT

In the middle of the fields, 7km east of the airport (about 22km from Hohhot), is **Bai Ta** (White Pagoda admission ¥35), a striking seven-storey octagonal tower built during the Liao dynasty. A steep, double-barrelled staircase leads to a small shrine room at the top. Few travellers come here, so you will feel like you have the place to yourself. A taxi from Hohhot will cost around ¥70 return.

About 110km north of Hohhot is the grassland area of **Xilamuren** (Xilamuren), with dozens of faux concrete yurt camps that cater mainly to the Chinese market. Nearby mining operations have accelerated infrastructure development, so don't come this way if you are looking for a true wilderness experience.

For a more authentic Mongolian grassland experience, [Anda Guesthouse](#) in Hohhot will set you up at the home of a local family where you get to pick your own dried cow dung to light a campfire. Day trips start from ¥290 (including one meal) or ¥390 for an overnight trip (including three meals). Horse riding is an extra ¥100 per hour. The guesthouse also offers multiday

tours which cover Bai Ta, Wudang Lamasery and the Kubuqi desert. They were planning to open up a new Mongolian homestay in the very un-touristy Sonid Youqi, so ask.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

ZHAMSU: A GRASSLANDS LIFE

Mongolian Zhamsu, now 52, has spent his entire life living in the grasslands of [Xilamuren](#).

What was your life like growing up? My parents were nomad herders. We lived in a ger (yurt). We had more than 300 sheep, 10 cows and 10 horses. I started to help herding when I was seven. Life was hard, but it was less complicated.

How different are the grasslands now? There are more people and fewer animals. The government has banned herding in our area until 2016 to protect the grasslands. So now I live in a house and our ger is for tourists to stay in. I still have 20 sheep, but only for the guests to eat, and a few horses for people to ride.

Is Mongolian culture still strong in Inner Mongolia? Not really. Fewer children speak Mongolian now and many young people move to the cities. They speak Mandarin and accept Chinese culture because they think that will lead to a better life. It's only in the grasslands that you can experience traditional Mongolian culture.

Will you ever move to the city? No, I can't imagine how I'd survive. I feel comfortable on the grasslands. I've lived with animals every day for the last 50 years. How could I live without them?

SHANGDU (XANADU)

Explorer Marco Polo made it his final stop and poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge immortalised it in Western minds as the ultimate pleasure palace. Today Xanadu, or **Shangdu** (Yuan Shangdu yizhi admission ¥30; 🕒 7am-6pm), is little more than a vast prairie with vague remnants of once mighty walls, but it is still a legendary destination thanks to its glory days as one of the most storied cities on earth.

Conceived by Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis and the first Yuan emperor, Shangdu's lifespan as the summer capital was relatively brief. Construction of the city started in 1252 and lasted four years, but it was

overrun and destroyed by Ming forces in 1369.

Listed as a World Heritage Site by Unesco in June 2012, Shangdu actually consisted of three distinct cities: the outer city, the imperial city and the palace city. All that is visible now are the outer and inner walls. From the ticket yurt, it's about 1.5km to the outer walls (a golf buggy will take you for ¥10 or rent a bicycle for ¥10). From there, you can walk another 500m to the inner ramparts. Paths through the wildflower-covered grassland that has swallowed up the city offer the chance for pleasant strolls and reflective musings on the vagaries of history.

The gateway to Shangdu is Lanqi. The town's **Xanadu Museum** (Shangdu Bowuguan admission ¥20; 🕒 8am-5pm Tue-Sun) is worth visiting for the scale models that give a good impression of the sheer ambition of Shangdu, as well as for relics from the site, including ceramics and statues.

Sleeping & Eating

Shangdu's status as a World Heritage site means Lanqi's hotels are overpriced (but expect big discounts outside the peak summer season). Next to the bus station, **188 Liansuo Binguan** (188 📞 0479-423 9188; Jinlianchuan Dajie; r ¥188-588; 📍 📧) is a good option. On Shangdu Dajie, you'll also find restaurants and a branch of the ICBC bank with an ATM that takes foreign cards.

Getting There & Away

Although Shangdu signifies distant wonders in the Western imagination, in truth it's not that isolated (275km northwest of Beijing). But it does feel remote, partly because of the huge empty prairie it sits in, and also because getting here requires some effort. Hohhot's bus station has buses to Lanqi (¥132, six to seven hours, 7am and 2pm). From Lanqi it's about a 20km taxi ride (¥150 return) to Shangdu. Buses return to Hohhot at 7am and 12.30pm.

BAOTOU

Transport Hub

Unlovely but booming Baotou sprawls across more than 20km of dusty landscape, much of it industrialised and polluted. However, if you're heading to the Wudang Lamasery and Genghis Khan's Mausoleum, you'll likely have to pass through and maybe stop a night.

The older eastern district (Donghe) is a convenient place to stay; if you're arriving by train make sure to get off at the Baotou East Railway Station (*Baotou Dongzhan*) and not the west station. The modern western district (Kunqu) is 25km away and where most residents now work and stay.

Sleeping & Eating

Head to Nanmenwai Dajie for a selection of hotels, restaurants and banks within walking distance of the East Baotou train station and a short hop in a cab (¥7) from the east bus station.

Xihu Fandian

HOTEL

(West Lake Hotel  414 4444; 10 Nanmenwai Dajie, d ¥288;  )

A five-minute walk from the train station, this friendly place has plenty of clean, comfortable rooms with modern bathrooms. Expect discounts of 30% to 40%. The hotel was under renovation at the time of research but should be open by the time you read this. Otherwise, several other hotels are located along the same street.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Flights connect Baotou with Beijing (¥700). Buy tickets at www.ctrip.net.

The airport is 2km south of Baotou East Railway Station. A taxi there is ¥15, but ¥30 in the other direction.

BUS

When arriving in Baotou, ask if the bus stops at Donghe or Kunqu. If it's the latter, you will need to get off in between and take a bus (K10, ¥2.50) or a taxi (¥35) to get to the eastern Donghe district.

- ➔ **Dongsheng** ¥34, two hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 6.30pm)
- ➔ **Hohhot** ¥40, three hours, every 30 minutes (6.30am to 7.30pm)
- ➔ **Yan'an** (Shaanxi) ¥156, eight hours, 3pm
- ➔ **Yulin** (Shaanxi) ¥92, five hours, eight daily (6.30am to 4.30pm)

TRAIN

Frequent trains between Hohhot and Baotou (¥25, two hours) stop at both the east and west stations. The following trains depart from the east station.

- ➔ **Beijing** hard/soft sleeper ¥175/264, 8½ to 13 hours, 10 daily
- ➔ **Lanzhou** hard/soft sleeper ¥223/345, 17 hours, three daily
- ➔ **Taiyuan** hard/soft sleeper ¥184/284, nine to 12½ hours, three daily
- ➔ **Yinchuan** hard/soft sleeper ¥142/213, seven hours, four daily

WUDANG LAMASERY

Lying on the pilgrim route from Tibet to Outer Mongolia, this handsome, Tibetan-style **monastery** (Wudang Zhao admission ¥45; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm) saw considerable foot traffic from the time of its establishment in 1749. At its height it was the largest monastery in Inner Mongolia, housing 1200 monks belonging to the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Around 60 monks are resident here these days, but the monastery's numerous outlying buildings, now occupied by local villagers, are a reminder of how important Wudang once was. Climb the steps leading up the hill opposite the car park for views of the complex and across the prayer-flag-draped landscape. There's a little compound beside the public toilet offering basic beds (¥50, no showers) and home-cooked meals if you wish to stay the night.

The monastery is 67km northeast of Baotou. A direct bus (¥20, 1½ hours)

departs from the bus parking lot in front of Baotou East Railway Station at 9am and 3.20pm. Buses return at 7am and 1pm. Alternatively, bus 7 (¥10, one hour), from the same parking lot, goes to Shiguai, 40km from Baotou. From Shiguai you can hire a taxi to the monastery (one-way/return ¥50/100).

GENGHIS KHAN MAUSOLEUM

Genghis Khan Mausoleum

TOMB, MUSEUM

(Chengji Sihan Lingyuan admission ¥120, with museum entry ¥150; 🕒 8am-6pm)

Located 130km south of Baotou in the middle of absolutely nowhere is the Genghis Khan Mausoleum, China's tribute to the great Mongol warlord. Unfortunately, old Genghis was not buried here. Instead, the mausoleum's existence is justified by an old Mongol tradition of worshipping Genghis Khan's personal effects, including his saddle, bow and other items. Kublai Khan established the cult and handed over care for the objects to the Darhats, a Mongol clan. Darhat elders kept the relics inside eight white tents, which could be moved in times of warfare.

In the early 1950s, the government decided to build a permanent site for the relics and constructed this impressive triple-domed building. By then, most of the relics had been lost or stolen (everything you'll see here is a replica). But even today, some of the guards at the site still claim descent from the Darhat clan. The ¥150 ticket includes entry to a museum with information on Genghis and Mongolian culture.

Getting There & Away

From Baotou there are hourly buses (¥41, two hours, 6.10am to 2.40pm) to Chengling. You'll then have to catch a taxi (¥15) the final 7km to the mausoleum.

To move on, take a cab back to a small tourist village (with shops, hotels and restaurants) to flag down any Dongsheng-bound bus at the roundabout. Buses should pass by regularly till about 4pm. From Dongsheng you can

connect to Hohhot (¥65, four hours, hourly) and other regional destinations.

At the roundabout, there are also share taxis to Ejin Horo Qi (¥15 per person, *Yijin Huoluo Qi*), known as ‘Yi Qi’, where you can get a bus to Hohhot (¥70, 4½ hours, last bus 3pm).

GENGHIS' GRAVE

The great Genghis left stern instructions that his burial place be kept secret. Legend has it that the slaves who built his tomb were massacred afterwards by soldiers, who were then subsequently killed themselves to prevent anyone knowing the location of his grave. Archaeologists hunting for Genghis' final resting place have been further hampered by a reputed curse that has supposedly struck some down. Most historians assume that after his death (and no one knows where that occurred) in 1227, Genghis' body was taken back to Mongolia and buried near his birthplace in Khentii Aimag close to the Onon River.

HAILA'ER

☞ 0470 / Pop 350,000

Haila'er is the largest city in northern Inner Mongolia and a busy, ordinary place. Surrounding it are the Hulunbei'er Grasslands, a vast expanse of prairie that begins just outside the city and rolls northwards towards the Russian and Mongolian borders, seemingly forever. Superbly lush in July and August, the grasslands are a fantastic sight and *the* place in Inner Mongolia to saddle up a horse.

In the immediate area around Haila'er are several touristy yurt camps where you can eat, listen to traditional music and sometimes stay the night. Although they're not places where Mongolians actually live, you can still learn a bit about Mongolian culture, and the wide-open grasslands are a splendid setting. For a more authentic (and far more rustic) experience, you need to travel further away, although staying with local families in the grasslands is not easy to organise unless you speak a bit of Mandarin (or Mongolian).

Haila'er's main square is on Zhongyang Dajie, near Xingan Lu. Hotels and services are conveniently located near the main square. Buxing Jie, a pedestrian street just off Zhongyang Dajie, contains a few souvenir shops run by Mongolians. Just past Buxing Jie is a re-creation of a Qing-dynasty *hutong*, completed in 2010.

Sights

Ewenki Museum

MUSEUM

(Ewenke Bowuguan 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm) **FREE**

Roughly 20,000 Ewenki people live in northern Inner Mongolia, most in the Hulunbei'er Grasslands surrounding Haila'er. You can glimpse some of their history and culture at this modern museum. The Ewenki have traditionally been herders, hunters and farmers; they are one of the few peoples in China to raise reindeer.

The museum is on the southeastern edge of town. Regular minibuses (¥4, 15 mins) run here from Buxing Jie beside the Busen shopping centre.

Underground Fortress

FORTRESS

(Haila'er Yaosai Yizhi admission ¥60; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

In the mid-1930s, during the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, this network of tunnels was constructed by the Japanese army in the grasslands north of Haila'er. The site now contains a museum, a monument and old tanks and artillery guns to climb on. Inside the freezing, spooky tunnels you can peek into 'rooms' where soldiers bunked and a hospital was located.

The site is 4km northwest of the train station; you'll need an hour to see everything. A taxi between the tunnels and the town centre costs about ¥40. If you want the taxi to wait, then a round trip will be around ¥100.

Alternatively, the tunnels are on the road to Jinzhanghan, so you might negotiate a stop here en route.

Festivals & Events

Naadam

CULTURAL, SPORTS

The Haila'er Naadam (sports festival) is held annually in July on the grasslands just north of town. You'll see plenty of wrestling, horse racing and archery. The city is flooded with tour groups at this time, making it difficult to find a room. Hotel prices double during this time.

Sleeping & Eating

Haila'er has a mostly undistinguished, overpriced selection of hotels. Touts at the train station can lead you to rooms (with computers, shared baths) for ¥40 to ¥80.

On summer nights, Buxing Jie and the surrounding alleys become a hub of outdoor *shaokao* (barbecue) places that are good for a beer and meeting the locals.

Bei'er Dajjudian

HOTEL

(Bei'er Hotel  835 8455; 36 Zhongyang Dajie, d incl breakfast ¥880 & 980;  )

With a large bright lobby, welcoming staff and well-maintained rooms, this is the number-one midrange choice in town. It's advisable to book ahead here, especially in July and August. Discounts knock rooms down to ¥240 and ¥380.

Jinchuan Douhuazhuang

HOTPOT

( 834 6555; Xi Dajie; 2 people from ¥75;  10am-11pm)

Big and bustling hotpot favourite with the locals; you can choose from a wide selection of meat, seafood and veggie options, as well as opting to make your broth less or more spicy. No English or picture menu, but the waitresses will help you out. It's on the corner of Xi Dajie and Bei Xiejie, close to Zhongyang Dajie.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang cnr Xingan Donglu & Zhongyang Dajie)

Next door to Bei'er Dajiudian in the centre of town.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE STATION

(PSB, Gong'anju; Alihe Lu)

Opposite CITS in the Hedong district on the east side of the river.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Haila'er's small airport has direct daily flights to Beijing (¥1150, two hours), Hohhot (¥1150, 2¼ hours) and Shanghai (¥1550, 3½ hours). Go to www.elong.net or www.ctrip.com to book flights.

Hunnu Air

AIRLINE

( +976 7000 1111; www.hunnuair.com)

This Mongolian airline flies to Ulaanbaatar (from ¥900) in Mongolia every Wednesday and Saturday. Book tickets online.

BUS

The new **long-distance bus station** (changtu chezhan) in the Hedong district has buses to the following:

➔ **Labudalin** ¥38, two hours, half hourly, 6.40am to 5.30pm

➔ **Manzhouli** ¥47, three hours, hourly, 8am to 5pm

TRAIN

Ten daily trains go to Manzhouli (¥29, two to three hours). There are also daily trains between Haila'er and Ha'erbin (hard/soft sleeper ¥188/284, 11 hours), Qiqiha'er (seat/hard sleeper ¥63/128, eight hours) and Beijing

(hard/soft sleeper ¥423/645, 29 hours).

The train station is in the northwestern part of town. A taxi to the city-centre is ¥7.

i Getting Around

Airport buses (¥5) connect to all flights and depart from the train station roughly 1½ hours before departure. A taxi to the airport from town costs ¥30.

Buses 1, 3, 7 and 9 run from the train station to Bei'er Dajiudian. Bus 18 runs from Hedong new bus station to the train station while taxis charge ¥12. Taxi fares start at ¥6.

WORTH A TRIP

INNER MONGOLIA'S FAR WEST

The golden deserts, shimmering lakes and ruined cities of western Inner Mongolia are fantastic places for adventures far from the beaten track. Visiting them, though, requires some logistical help.

One destination is **Khara Khoto** (Black City,; Heicheng admission ¥10; ☀8am-7pm), a ruined Tangut city built in 1032 and captured by Genghis Khan in 1226 (his last great battle). Khara Khoto continued to thrive under Mongol occupation, but in 1372 an upstart Ming battalion starved the city of its water source, killing everyone inside. Six hundred years of dust storms nearly buried the city, until the Russian explorer PK Kozlov excavated and mapped the site, and recovered hundreds of Tangut-era texts (kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St Petersburg). Located about 25km southeast of Ejina Qi, the allure here is the remoteness of the site and surrounding natural beauty. A great time to visit is late September to early October when the poplar trees are changing colours; but be warned that every hotel room in Ejina Qi will be booked out at this time.

The second tourist drawcard in these parts is the remote but stunning **Badain Jaran Desert** (Badanjilin Shamo), a mysterious landscape of desert lakes, Buddhist temples and towering dunes. The dunes here are the tallest in the world, some topping 380m (the same height, incredibly, as the Empire State Building). The closest town in the region, Alashan Youqi, is a 30-minute drive from the dunes. **Badanjilin Travel Service** (Badanjilin Luxingshe ☎0483-602 4888; www.badanjilin.net), in town, organises camel treks (from ¥120 per hour) and tours with English-speaking guides from ¥1000. It can also organise a car to Khara Khoto for ¥1600 return. Chengdu-based **Navo Tours** (☎028-8611 7722; www.navo-tour.com) runs 4WD tours

here (three days of which is in the desert) starting from Lanzhou with English-speaking guides.

This part of Inner Mongolia is highly militarised (China's space city is nearby) and travel permits are required for the road between Jiuquan and Ejina Qi, as well as Khara Khoto itself and the Badain Jaran Desert. Travel agents need at least three days to organise the necessary permits.

The closest rail links are Jiuquan and Zhangye in Gansu province. However, public transport between Gansu and Inner Mongolia is limited. A daily bus travels between Alashan Youqi and Shandan Xian, but the best connections start with other Inner Mongolian towns such as Bayanhot. There are daily buses from Bayanhot to both Ejina Qi and Alashan Youqi.

AROUND HAILA'ER

North of Haila'er are few permanent settlements, just the yurts of herders with their flocks of sheep and cows and strings of Mongolian ponies set in some of the greenest grasslands you will ever see. Closer to the Russian border, the rolling prairie becomes more wooded, as spindly white pine trees appear. Bring along binoculars if you want to have a closer look at the Russian villages across the border.

If you speak Chinese, you can hire a private car for ¥500 per day to take in the sights around Haila'er. Contact Mr Liu (Liu Shifu, 159 4775 3673). During busier seasons, he can find Chinese travellers to carpool (*pinche*) with. He has set itineraries that covers Enhe, Shi Wei and Manzhouli.

Jinzhangan Grasslands

Set along a winding river about 40km north of Haila'er, this **grassland camp** (Jinzhangan Caoyuan 📞133 2700 0919; 🕒 Jun–early Oct) has a spectacular setting, even if it is designed for tourists. You can pass an hour or so looking around and sipping milk tea, spend the day horse riding (per hour ¥200) or hiking, or come for an evening of dinner, singing and dancing.

If you want to stay the night, you can sleep in one of the **yurts** (per person ¥100). There's no indoor plumbing, but there is a toilet hut. To get here,

you'll have to hire a taxi from Haila'er (about ¥300 return) or join one of the Chinese group tours (sign up at your hotel or at the booth at the Haila'er train station).

About 2km before the main camp there are a couple of unsigned family-run camps. Prices for food, accommodation and horse rental are about half what you pay at Jinzhanghan, but they are rather less organised. To skip the tourist-run camps, push further north through the grasslands towards Enhe and Shi Wei.

Enhe

The township of Enhe, located 70km north of Labudalin en route to Shi Wei, is one of the area's unsung villages brimming with atmosphere. Surrounded by hills and acres of lush grass, the village has only just opened to tourism and there's still a very low-key vibe here. Many residents are of Chinese-Russian origin; some could easily pass for Russians. Here, herders milk their cows outside their properties when they aren't taking them out to pasture. Sample boiled milk at your accommodation.

You can ride a horse for ¥60 (a bargain in Inner Mongolia!), hire a bicycle (¥10 per hour) or go for hikes. The mosquitoes are killer in summer so bring plenty of repellent.

Sleeping

★ Enhe Grasslands International Hostel

HOSTEL

(Hulunbei'er Enhe Muchang Guoji Qingnian Lushe  0470-694 2277; hulunbuiryha@126.com; dm ¥45, d & tw ¥120; )

Rooms at this hostel on the edge of town are housed in comfortable wooden cabins but the best aspect of this hostel is the cozy hall with killer views out to the hill-ringed grasslands. It's a great place to have a beer or meal (dishes from ¥16) and to meet Chinese travellers.

Getting There & Away

To get here from Haila'er, travel to Labudalin (¥38, two hours, half hourly, 6.40am to 5.30pm). From Labudalin (sometimes called E'erguna) there are two daily direct buses (¥27, two hours) at 12.10am and 2.30pm. Buses return to Labudalin at 8.30am and 9.30am. The Shi Wei bound buses also stop on the main road leading to Enhe where it's a 1.5km walk into town. You can flag onward buses to Shi Wei from the main road at around 11.15am and 5.15pm.

Shi Wei

A small Russian-style village of log cabins located right on the E'erguna River, which marks the border with Russia, Shi Wei is deep within the glorious grasslands. Shi Wei itself has been discovered by the domestic tourist hordes and is no longer the backwater it once was, although very few foreigners make it up here. But it's still fun to ride a horse along the riverbank (¥40 per half hour), while gazing at the Russian village on the opposite bank. Look for wooden stages on both sides of the river: each country used to host performances for their neighbours!

For a closer look at Russia, you can also walk to the **Friendship Bridge** (Youyi Qiao ¥20; 🕒 8am-5pm). Chinese tourists pose for photos at the foot of the bridge connecting the two countries before wandering down to a hut to buy Russian chocolate and souvenirs. Taxis can take you to **Linjiang** – a less touristy border village with a lovely natural setting – for ¥100 return. You can also find accommodation in Linjiang but will need to head back to Shi Wei if you want to get the bus back to Labudalin.

Sleeping & Eating

In Shi Wei, families have turned their homes into guesthouses and/or restaurants. You can find rooms from ¥100 to ¥300. Come evening, BBQ

stalls set up along the main drag and in most of the adjacent lanes.

Zhuoyazhijia

GUESTHOUSE

( 150 4701 7557; d & tw ¥100)

Neat doubles and courtyard river views can be had for ¥100 at Zhuoyazhijia. From the bus drop-off, walk ahead towards the town square and turn left on the last lane. The house is 100m to the right.

Getting There & Away

From Haila'er, travel to Labudalin (¥38, two hours, half hourly, 6.40am to 5.30pm). From Labudalin there are two daily direct buses (¥44, four hours) at 9.30am and 3.30pm. Buses return to Labudalin at 8am and 1pm but do buy your ticket in advance.

MANZHOU LI

( 0470 / Pop 300,000)

This laissez-faire border city, where the Trans-Siberian Railway crosses from China to Russia, is a pastel-painted boomtown of shops, hotels and restaurants catering to the Russian market. Unless you look Asian, expect shopkeepers to greet you in Russian. Manzhouli is modernising at lightning speed, but a few Russian-style log houses still line Yidao Jie.

Manzhouli is small enough to get around on foot. From the train station to the town centre, it's a 10-minute walk. Turn right immediately as you exit the station, then right again to cross the footbridge. You'll come off the bridge near the corner of Yidao Jie and Zhongsu Lu.

Sights

Hulun Lake

LAKE

(Hulun Hu admission ¥30)

One of the largest lakes in China, Hulun Lake is called Dalai Nuur (Ocean Lake) in Mongolian. It unexpectedly pops out of the grasslands like an enormous inland sea. You can hire a horse (¥100 per 30 minutes) or a quad bike (¥100 per 20 minutes), take a boat ride (¥10 per 20 minutes) or simply stroll along the rocky lakeshore.

The only way to get to Hulun Hu, 39km southeast of Manzhouli, is to hire a taxi. Expect to pay about ¥200 return, including a visit to the nearby Russian Doll Park.

Russian Doll Park

PARK

(Taowa Guangchang  8am-6pm) **FREE**

This bizarre park is filled with giant Russian *matryoshka* dolls, many with portraits of famous historical figures, from Albert Einstein to Michael Jordan. The largest doll is a Russian-style restaurant. Next to the park is a **museum** of Russian art (admission ¥20). Bus 6 (¥1.50) runs along Liudao Jie past the bus station and the doll park before terminating at the Russian border area, **Guomen**.

Sleeping

There are a huge number of hotels and guesthouses in Manzhouli. There are Chinese and Russian signs – гостиница (pronounced ‘gastinitsa’) is the Russian word for ‘hotel’.

Fengzeyuan Ludian

GUESTHOUSE

( 225 4099, 139 4709 3443; Yidao Jie, tw ¥200;  )

Located inside a restored Russian log cabin (painted yellow and green), this friendly (and cheap, for Manzhouli) guesthouse has large, clean rooms. Coming off the pedestrian bridge from the train station, it's the first building in front of you, next to the statue of Zhou Enlai. Prices fall to ¥50 in low season.

Shangri-La

HOTEL

(Xianggelila Dajiudian  396 8888; www.shangri-la.com; 99 Liudao Jie, d ¥1388, ste ¥4588;



Nothing indicates Manzhouli's soaring status more than this outpost of the Shangri-La chain; it's surely the most remote of its hotels in China if not Asia! The very comfortable rooms offer views over the surrounding grasslands, and there are Chinese and Russian restaurants, a swimming pool and a spa. The efficient staff will drum up someone who can speak English.

Eating

There are plenty of restaurants (*pectopah* in Russian) in town.

Beijia'er Hu Xi Canting

RUSSIAN

(23 Zhongsu Lu, near Wudao Jie; dishes from ¥28;  24hr)

The name of the restaurant translates as 'Lake Baikal Western Restaurant', giving some indication of its target audience. Rub shoulders with Russians who come for robust Chinese-style Russian dishes such as borscht and steaks set to a Russian soundtrack. The set meals (from ¥60) let you sample the best dishes and are great paired with cold draft beer. Picture menu available.

Huayang Jiaozi

DUMPLINGS

(Yidao Jie; dumplings from ¥13;  10am-10pm)

This popular eatery opposite [Fengzeyuan Ludian](#) serves up all manner of dumplings and cold beer. There's a picture menu on the wall detailing a huge variety of Chinese dishes if you are tired of dumplings.

Information

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC)

BANK

(Gongshang Yinhang cnr Yidao Jie & Zhongsu Jie)

China International Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(CITS., Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe  622 8319; 35 Erdao Jie;  8-11.30am & 2-4pm Mon-Fri)

Sells train tickets for Chinese cities and one-day tours (¥270) to the local sights. Located on the 1st floor of Guoji Fandian (International Hotel).

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng cnr Haiguan Jie & Sidao Jie)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB., Gong'anju cnr Sandao Jie & Shulin Lu)

Getting There & Around

Manzhouli has a small airport on the edge of town; a taxi to the airport will take about 15 minutes (¥40). There are daily flights to Beijing (¥1250, 2¼ hours) and, in summer, to Hohhot (¥1250, 2½ hours).

You can reach Manzhouli by train from Haila'er (¥26, 2½ hours), Ha'erbin (hard/soft sleeper ¥230/348, 12 to 16 hours) or Qiqiha'er (hard/soft sleeper ¥180/265, 11 hours).

There are 10 buses a day to Haila'er (¥47, three hours, 6.30am to 5.30pm) from the main bus station on Wudao Jie. Taxis charge ¥10 for most trips around town.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO RUSSIA

Buses to Zabaikalsk (Houbeijia'er, ¥92, five hours), over the Russian border, depart eight times daily between 7.40am and 1.30pm from Manzhouli's bus station, but they tend to be much slower than a private car (the Chinese traders on your bus will take ages to get through customs). In Manzhouli you could ask around for a ride from a Russian trader (Russians get through faster). Otherwise, take a taxi to the border (¥40), 9km from town, and get a ride across from there with a Russian driver.

Qinghai

[Qinghai Highlights](#)

[Xining](#)

[Around Xining](#)

[Tongren \(Repkong\)](#)

[Guide](#)

[Yushu \(Jyekundo\)](#)

[Around Yushu](#)

Qinghai



Pop 5.7 million

Why Go?

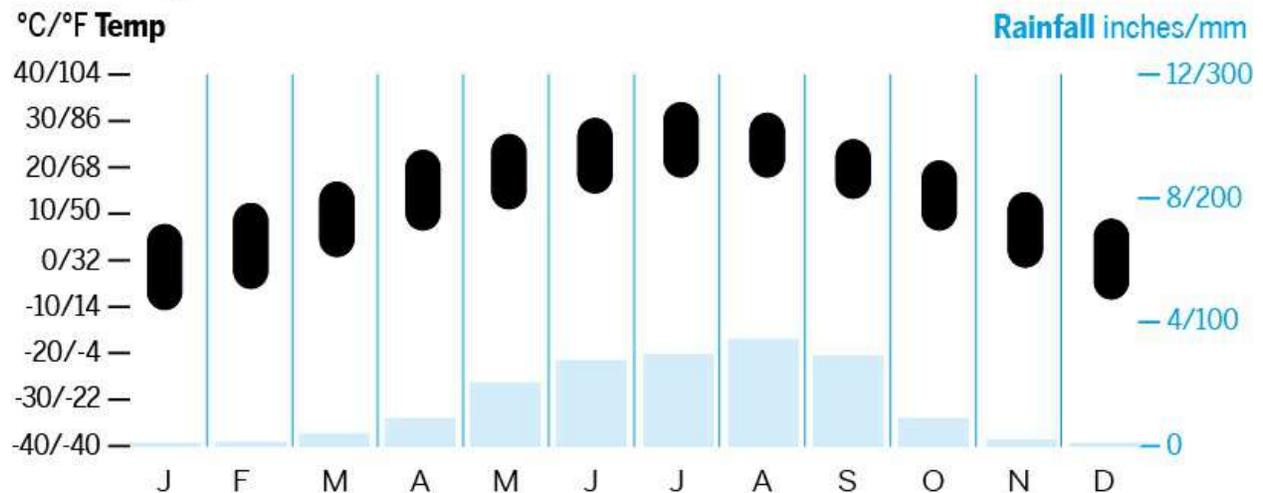
Big, bold and beautifully barren, Qinghai, larger than any country in the EU, occupies a vast swathe of the northeastern chunk of the Tibetan Plateau. In fact, as far as Tibetans are concerned, this is Amdo, one of old Tibet's three traditional provinces. Much of what you'll experience here will feel more Tibetan than Chinese; there are monasteries galore, yaks by the hundred and nomads camped out across high-altitude grasslands.

Rough-and-ready Qinghai, which means Blue Sea in Chinese, is classic off-the-beaten-track territory, often with a last frontier feel to it. Travelling here can be both inconvenient and uncomfortable, though China's rapid development plans have begun to touch the province, with huge highways and new rail lines under construction.

Despite that, Qinghai still delivers a heavy dose of solitude among middle-of-nowhere high-plateau vistas, Martian-like red mountains and encounters with remote communities of China's ethnic minorities.

When to Go

Xīníng



- **Jan & Feb** Tibetan New Year (Losar), with lots of pilgrims and celebrations at monasteries.
- **Jul & Aug** Grasslands at their greenest; landscape dotted with nomad tents.
- **Sep** Safest and most comfortable time for hiking around Mt Amnye Machen.

Best Monasteries & Temples

- [Kumbum Monastery](#)
- [Youning Monastery](#)
- [Longwu Si](#)
- [Princess Wencheng Temple](#)

Best Natural Sights

- [Kanbula National Park](#)

- ➔ [Mt Amnye Machen](#)
- ➔ [Mengda Nature Reserve](#)
- ➔ [Zhaling and Eling Lakes](#)
- ➔ Nangchen County

counter Tibetan raids on trading caravans.

During the Yarlung dynasty, a time of great expansion of Tibetan power and influence, Qinghai was brought directly under Lhasa's control. After the collapse of the dynasty in AD 842, local rulers filled the ensuing power vacuum, some nominally acting as vassals of Song dynasty emperors.

In the 13th century, all of Qinghai was incorporated into the Yuan empire under Genghis Khan. During this time, the Tu began to move into the area around Huzhu, followed a century or so later by the Salar Muslims into Xunhua.

After the fall of the Yuan dynasty, local Mongol rulers and the Dalai Lamas in Lhasa wrestled for power. The Qing emperors restored the region to full Chinese control, setting it up as a prefecture with more or less the same boundaries as today. As in the past, however, they left administrative control in the hands of local elites.

Qinghai became a province of China in 1928 during the republican era, though at the time it was under the de facto control of the Muslim Ma clan. When the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, Qinghai retained its provincial borders and capital city, Xining.

In the late 1950s an area near Qinghai Lake (Qinghai Hu) became the centre of China's nuclear weapons research program. During the next 40 years, at least 30 tests were held at a secret base, the Qinghai Mine.

In April 2010, Yushu, a Tibetan town in remote southwest Qinghai, was devastated by a 7.1-magnitude earthquake. Thousands died – some say tens of thousands – but the rebuilding effort was swift and Yushu's main centre reopened as a tourist destination in early 2014.

Language

Most of the population in Qinghai speaks a northwestern Chinese dialect similar to that spoken in Gansu. Most Tibetans here speak the Amdo dialect. You'll have no trouble travelling around the province using Mandarin, though English is less common outside of Xining.

i Getting There & Around

Most people arrive by train, usually into Xining, but after that train lines are limited, so long-distance buses are the best way to get around. In more remote areas you'll often have no option but to hire a private car and driver. Off-the-beaten-track overland routes include south into Sichuan, at Aba or Shiqu, and north into Gansu or Xinjiang from Golmud (be aware that foreigners travelling this way often need a special permit). Routes southwest into Tibet are even more remote and are often closed to foreigners altogether, and some areas north of Qinghai Lake have been closed to foreigners for years.

As with everything in China, things change rapidly and areas that may be open to travellers one week could be closed or require permits the next. It's always best to check around once you arrive before heading to a new destination, just to be sure.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥150

\$\$ ¥150 to ¥300

\$\$\$ more than ¥300

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

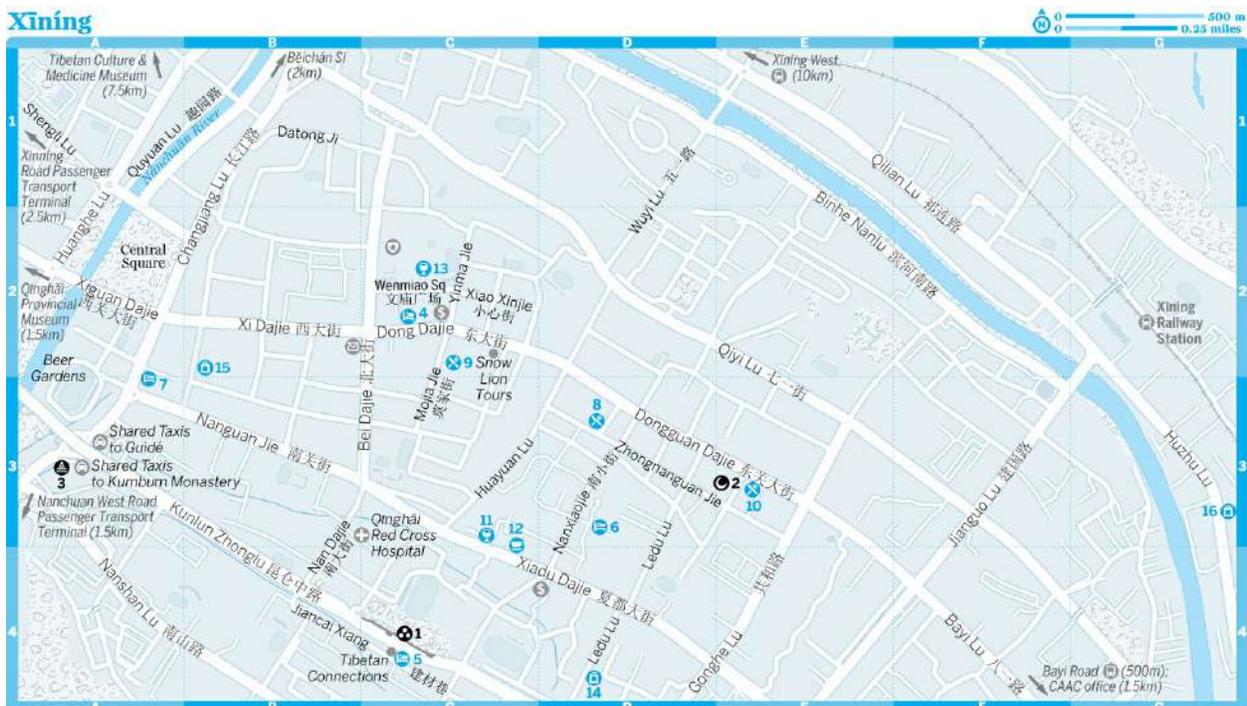
\$\$ ¥30 to ¥50

\$\$\$ more than ¥50

Xining

 0971 / Pop 2.2 million

Situated on the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau, this lively provincial capital makes a good base from which to dive into the surrounding sights and on to the more remote regions of Qinghai and beyond. Though many travellers use Xining as a jumping off or landing point from the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, it's also a wonderful place to explore the province's varied cultures – Muslim (Hui, Salar and Uighur), Tibetan and Han Chinese – especially the dynamite culinary mix that these groups bring together.



Xining

Sights

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | City Wall | C4 |
| 2 | Dongguan Grand Mosque | E3 |
| 3 | Nanchan Si | A3 |

Sleeping

- | | | |
|---|--|----|
| 4 | Jinjiang Inn | C2 |
| 5 | Lete Youth Hostel | C4 |
| 6 | Mandala International Youth Hostel | D3 |
| 7 | Sanwant Hotel Xining | A3 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 8 | Amdo Nomad Homestyle Restaurant | D3 |
| 9 | Mazhong Snack Centre | C2 |
| 10 | Zhenya Niurou Mian | E3 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 11 | Bill's Place | C3 |
| 12 | Greenhouse | C3 |
| 13 | Xining Bar Street | C2 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 14 | Amdo Cafe | D4 |
| 15 | Shuijing Xiang Market | B2 |
| 16 | Xining Tibetan Market | G3 |

Sights

★ [Tibetan Culture & Medicine Museum](#)

MUSEUM

(Zang Wenhua Bowuguan  531 7881; www.tibetanculturemuseum.org; 36 Jing'er Rd, admission ¥60;

 9am-6pm;  1)

Exhibitions at this excellent museum focus on traditional Tibetan medicine, astronomy and science, as well as traditional Tibetan life, homes and costumes. The highlight is a 618m-long *thangka* (Tibetan sacred art) scroll – the world's longest – which charts most of Tibetan history. Completed in 1997, it's not an ancient relic, but it is unbelievably long. It took 400 artists four years to complete and is displayed in a maze-like exhibition hall.

The museum is located on the far northwest side of Xining, not too far from Qinghai University. Bus 1 (¥1) goes here from Dong Dajie (about a 30-minute ride). A taxi costs about ¥15 from the centre.

[Dongguan Grand Mosque](#)

MOSQUE

(Qingzhen Dasi [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 25 Dongguan Dajie, admission ¥25; 🕒 7am-8pm)

About one-third of Xining's population is Muslim and there are more than 80 mosques across the city. But this is the big one. In fact, it's one of the largest mosques in China. Friday lunchtime prayers regularly attract 50,000 worshippers who spill out onto the streets before and afterwards. And during Ramadan as many as 300,000 come here to pray. The mosque was first built during the late 14th century and has since been restored.

It's also worth visiting in early evening when the whole building is lit up with flashing neon lights. Non-Muslims can't enter the main prayer hall but can stroll around the grounds.

Qinghai Provincial Museum

MUSEUM

(Qinghai Sheng Bowuguan 📞 611 1164; Xinning Sq, 58 Xiguan Dajie, 🕒 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sat; 🚏 22, 41) **FREE**

At the east end of Xining Square, the provincial museum looks like an ominous government building from afar, but once inside, three galleries offer a sophisticated presentation of local history and artifacts, ranging from 5000-year-old pottery recovered from excavations in Qinghai to paintings and Tibetan carpets. You'll be asked to show a passport and sign in before entering.

Inside the museum, bypass the displays of overpriced goods and head upstairs to the two main galleries. On the right, you'll find one exhibit chock full of ancient artifacts – the abundant collection of ancient pottery pieces are particularly interesting. The left-hand gallery contains a collection of local cultural artefacts, including some examples of traditional Qinghai costumes and utensils. The third exhibition showcasing Tibetan carpets is on the ground floor.

Buses go from Xining's main drag, Dong Dajie. Alight at Xinning Guangchang Nan.

City Wall

RUIN

(Chengqiang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Kunlun Zhonglu,) **FREE**

One or two isolated sections of Xining's old city wall still remain, the most accessible being this short stretch within a park on Kunlun Zhonglu. The wall was originally built in 1385, but different portions were erected, repaired or left to crumble over subsequent centuries. The wall's remains, an overgrown dirt embankment, aren't all that impressive; however, the tiered pathways that wind through the park make for a nice stroll in good weather.

Beichan Si

BUDDHIST

( 8am-4pm) **FREE**

The temple at the foot of a barren hillside on Xining's north side is nothing special but halfway up the steep climb to the top you pass cave temples and shrines that are thought to be 1700 years old. A pagoda, and great views of the city, await you at the top.

The easiest way to get there is to take a ¥6 taxi.

Nanchan Si

BUDDHIST

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 93 Nanshan Lu,)

Stood atop Phoenix Mountain, this Buddhist temple is the southern counterpart to [Beichan Si](#), overlooking Xining from the south. The temple was built during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) and is the oldest Chan (Chinese Zen) Buddhist temple in Qinghai province. Worth a walk up for incredible views of the city.

Sleeping

★ [Mandala International Youth Hostel](#)

HOSTEL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#);  971 522 9053; www.mandalaxining.com; 41 Nanxiaojie, Ningzhiyuan, Qingyafu 2E, dm ¥35-60, d ¥50-75;  )

Far and away the best place to stay in Xining, this guesthouse sits quietly

behind the city's Grand Mosque. Bright, spotless dorms and privates are available, each with colourful Tibetan motifs hand-painted on the walls. Shared bathrooms are clean and modern (ours had a bathtub), there's fast wi-fi and the downstairs bar/TV room has a great atmosphere.

The Tibetan manager, Westin, speaks excellent English and can offer lots of advice about travelling in the surrounding areas, as well as helping book private cars for day excursions and pointing you in the right direction for exploring Tibetan culture in Xining. Prices go up by about ¥20 in summer. Cash only.

Qinghai Sangzhu Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Qinghai Sangzhu Guoji Qingnian Lushe  359 4118; 94 Huzhu Zhonglu, dm ¥40-55, d ¥90;  ;  32, 33)

This spacious hostel has a big lounge decorated with Tibetan artwork and the rooms have comfortable beds. English is spoken and there's traveller information posted on the walls. It's a few kilometres west of town, however, so you'll need to take a bus or taxi to get anywhere.

Lete Youth Hostel

HOSTEL

(Liti Qingnian Lushe  ;  820 2080; 16th fl, Bldg 5, International Village Apartments, 2-32 Jiancai Xiang, 16 dm ¥45-55, d without/with bathroom ¥70/140;  

Located in a somewhat unsightly high-rise building, this backpacker joint has a cafe/bar, wide-screen TVs, laundry, kitchen and a small terrace with nice views of the city. Rooms are spacious, though travellers have reported the shared bathrooms could use some sprucing. Staff members speak English and the travel agency [Tibetan Connections](#) is two floors up.

Sanwant Hotel Xining

HOTEL

(Xining Shenwang Da Jiudian  ;  971 820 1111; <http://sanwant-xining.hotel.com.tw>; 79 Changjiang Lu, s ¥650, d ¥770;    

If you're looking to splash out a little, this international hotel does the trick,

with sparkling clean rooms, English-speaking staff and a tour desk that can arrange excursions in the area.

Rooms are of an international standard, with ensuite bathrooms (and tubs), though like many international hotels in this part of China, the decor is a bit dated. There's free wi-fi and a big breakfast with a few Western dishes. It's a good option for those stopping over in Xining on either side of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway.

Jinjiang Inn

HOTEL

(Jinjiang Zhixing [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 492 5666; www.jinjianginns.com; 30 Dong Dajie, d incl breakfast ¥239; 🍷 @)

This reliable chain hotel is in the heart of Xining and has clean rooms and a helpful staff. There are a couple of other locations around town, including one on Nanxiaojie. Book well in advance in summer.

FULL HOUSE

Scoring a hotel room in Xining during the summer months can be surprisingly difficult, especially for foreigners as there are only a few places that will accept them. Book your room or dorm bed as early as possible, preferably one week in advance.

Eating

Xining has a great range of food, especially Tibetan and Hui Muslim cuisines. For Muslim food head to Dongguan Dajie, near the [Grand Mosque](#), or the northern stretch of Nanxiaojie.

For snacks, try one of the cheap barbecue places (*shaokao*) on Xiao Xinjie that stay open until the early hours.

Mazhong Snack Centre

HAWKER

(--, Zhonghua Ming Xiaochi–Mazhong Mei Shicheng [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 11-16 Mojia Jie, 11-16 noodles ¥12, dishes ¥ 25)

Small stalls selling local and regional specialties line this indoor food court, from Tibetan *momo* (dumplings) to *mianpian* (flat noodle pieces) and *chaodao xiaomian* (stir-fried spicy noodles). This is an easy option for a cheap, fresh fill-up, especially for those with limited Mandarin skills, as pointing or grab-and-go are the order of the day.

Zhenya Niurou Mian

NOODLES

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 24 Dongguan Dajie, noodles ¥8-12; 🕒 9am-10pm)

Join the local Muslim population for their noodle fix at this busy place by the Grand Mosque. There's no menu, but the order of the day is *gan banmian* (mince beef noodles; ¥12), which is served swiftly with a side of *suan tang* (black pepper soup) and eaten with a liberal dose of the house chilli oil.

They also do a mean *niurou mian* (beef noodles; ¥10). Wash it all down with bottomless cups of dark, flavoursome wheat tea – serve yourself from the hot water basins near the door.

★ Amdo Nomad Homestyle Restaurant

TIBETAN

(Anduo Zangzu Mumin Renjia Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 22nd fl, Yidan Yuan, Nanxiaojie, dishes ¥50-70)

You might wonder if you're in hipster country as you ascend to the 22nd floor of this residential tower block just off Nanxiaojie. But a door opens and you walk in to a secret Tibetan wonderland: yak hides adorn warm brown walls, and family-style Tibetan meals are served at low tables where you're seated cross-legged.

Food here is authentically Amdo Tibetan. Be sure to sample the spicy potatoes (*tudou*), *momo* (dumplings) and *mianpian* (flat noodle pieces), and finish it off with some Tibetan yak milk yogurt (*maoniu suannai*). Private rooms and balcony tables have unbeatable views of the city and nearby Nan'guan Mosque lit up in the evening.

It's a bit tough to find. From Nanxiaojie, turn west onto Zhongnanguan Jie and right (north) onto an unmarked road leading out to Dongguan Dajie. Take

a swift left into a gated car park for the large high-rise building and enter an unmarked door to the left. Proceed up the grotty elevator to the 22nd floor.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

QINGHAI EATS

Qinghai's cuisine is unlike that of any other place in China. Influenced by its mix of ethnic populations – Muslim (Hui, Salar and Uighur), Tibetan and Han Chinese – the food you'll eat here is hearty fare with an emphasis on breads, dumplings and lots of lamb. The following are Qinghai staples. To sample, head to the [Mazhong Snack Centre](#) in Xining, where all the options are laid out for the taking.

Mianpian Literally translated as 'noodle slices,' this dish consists of small, flat squares of noodles cooked in a light broth or oil with greens, fresh tomato and sometimes egg. This is a favourite local snack and you'll see small restaurants all over the province with blinking signs boasting the Chinese characters for mianpian.

Kaobing These thick pancakes are baked and then further roasted over coal fire and lightly dusted with spicy chilli powder, garlic salt and spices. Order in Muslim restaurants or procure from street vendors, who roast them over coal after dark.

Momo Tibetan-style dumplings similar to Chinese baozi (steamed meat buns) typically filled with a savoury lamb meatball and served with spiced chilli oil. An alternate version is served in hot broth.

Yak milk yogurt (maoni suannai) Whether love or hate, visitors usually have a strong reaction to this Tibetan-style yogurt made from yak's milk. Shops and vendors all over Qinghai sell small portions in plastic cups, usually served with a sprinkling of rock sugar to balance the tartness. If you enjoy the taste, it's a wonderfully fresh dessert or snack. Locals also claim it helps combat altitude sickness.



Drinking & Nightlife

Open-air beer gardens line both sides of the Nanchuan River between Kunlun Zhonglu and Xiguan Jie, most of which are open from the afternoon onwards serving big bottles of local beer and snacks.

For a more mellow evening, there is a growing set of cafes, music bars and pubs along Xiadu Dajie between Nanxiao Jie and Huayuan Nanjie.

(jiu ba jie [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Wenhua St, beer from ¥6)

Traditionally Xining's nightlife has centred around its so-called bar street; three floors of bars, cafes and restaurants (typically with loud music and neon lights) set around Wenmiao Sq (Wenmiao Guangchang) off Wenhua Jie.

Greenhouse

CAFE

(Gulinfang Kafei [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 971 820 2710; www.greenhousecoffee.cn; 222-22 Xiadu Dajie, 222-22 coffee from ¥28; 🕒 7:30am-11.30pm; 📶)

Rustic split-level wood interior with smoothies and the best coffee in town. Also has a basic menu of pastries and sandwiches. Mellow music selection, too.

Bill's Place

BAR

(Huochai Ren [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 971 824 2626; 222-42 Xiadu Dajie, 222-42 📶)

This friendly bar/restaurant pulls in Xining's expat crowd for good reason. The staff speak decent English and they offer a menu of Western dishes (mains ¥45 to ¥75) like pasta, pizza, salads and a few Mexican items. The real draw is the bar, however, which is one of the few places in the city that mixes cocktails – the margaritas (¥45) are a house specialty. They also have a selection of foreign and Chinese beer and wine.

Shopping

Amdo Cafe

HANDICRAFTS

(Anduo Kafeiwu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 821 3127; 19 Ledu Lu, 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Sat; 📶)

Profits from the lovely handmade Tibetan gifts (from ¥30) sold here go back to the local craftswomen. There's also decent coffee (from ¥20).

Xining Tibetan Market

MARKET

(Xizang Shichang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Xiaoshangpin Shichang, Huzhu Lu, 🕒 9am-5pm)

The four floors of this market are chock full of Tibetan goods and you'll see groups of monks stopping in to stock up on various Buddhist knickknacks and attire. A few shops specialise in Tibetan Buddhist music (and instruments), and there are numerous places to score a statue of a Buddha or bodhisattva or a string of prayer flags to bring home.

Shuijing Xiang Market

MARKET

(Shuijing Xiang Shangchang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 9am-6pm)

This arcade-style market has a double row of shops selling everything from fruit and spices to Tibetan bags and scarves. It's a good place to score a cheap souvenir or some breakfast items. Runs north-south between Xi Dajie and Nanguan Jie.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 22 Dong Dajie, 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun)

Has a number of large branches around town that exchange cash and travellers cheques and have foreign-friendly ATMs.

ICBC ATM

ATM

(Gongshang Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); 55 Nanxiaojie,)

Has ATMs that accept foreign cards.

Post Office

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Xi Dajie & Nan Dajie, 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB,, Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); 35 Bei Dajie, 🕒 8.30-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Can extend visas.

Qinghai Red Cross Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Qinghai Hongshizi Yiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 824 7545; Nan Dajie)

English-speaking doctors available. Outpatients (*menzhen bu*) has a 24-hour pharmacy (*yaodian*).

Snow Lion Tours

TRAVEL AGENCY

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 816 3350; www.snowliontours.com; Cheng Lin Mansion, Office 1212, 7 Dong Dajie,,)

Run by a knowledgeable English-speaking Tibetan guy; arranges treks, camping with nomads and Tibet permits. The office is located in the same building as the Cheng Lin Hotel.

Tibetan Connections

TRAVEL AGENCY

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍 135 1973 7734; www.tibetanconnections.com; 16th fl, Bldg 5, International Village Apartments, 2-32 Jiancai Xiang)

This friendly tour company focuses on remoter parts of Amdo and Kham but can arrange trips into Tibet. Prices may be a little higher than local travel agencies but staff speak English and are good to deal with.

The agency is located in [Lete Youth Hostel](#).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Flights include Beijing (¥1450), Chengdu (¥990), Shanghai (¥940), Yushu (¥1280), Golmud (¥1330 and Xi'an (¥650). There are no direct flights to Lhasa; you must fly via Chengdu.

The **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC,, Zhongguo Minhang 📍 813 3333; 32 Bayi Xilu; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm) has a booking office on Bayi Lu near the long-distance bus station.

BUS

Xining's main Jianguo Rd bus station (*chezhan*) closed in 2013 as part of the

rebuilding work on the city's main railway station. Buses for most towns in Qinghai and neighbouring provinces currently leave from one of three stations: [Bayi Road Station](#), **Xinning Road Passenger Transport Terminal** (Xinning Lu Keyun Zhan Xinning Lu,) and **Nanchuan West Road Passenger Transport Terminal** (Nanchuan Xilu Keyun Zhan 4 Nanchuan Xilu,).

Buses to Golmud take around 12 hours, and sleepers to Yushu can take up to 17 hours.

MINIVAN & SHARED TAXI

Minivans and shared cars depart to some of the same destinations reached by bus. They leave when full so you won't know how long you have to wait around, but once they go the trip will be shorter than the bus ride. These vehicles typically leave between 8am and 2pm.

You can score a ride to Tongren (¥70) from the corner of Bayi Lu and Delingha Lu. For Guide (¥70), head to the northern side of the intersection on Kunlun Zhonglu (near the bridge).

TRAIN

After being closed for reconstruction for several years, **Xining Railway Station** (*Huoche Zhan*) reopened in September 2015, with new high-speed rail services passing through here between Lanzhou in Gansu province and Urumqi in Xinjiang. Regional trains also start/stop at **Xining West Railway Station** (*Xi Huoche Zhan*), about 10km west of the city centre.

Lhasa-bound trains pass through Xining (hard/soft sleeper ¥500/800, 22 hours) on their way towards the now world-famous Qinghai–Tibet Railway stretch of China's rail network, but the K9801 actually starts here so is usually easier to get tickets for. Make sure to have all your Tibet papers in order.

Other destinations from Xining:

- ➔ **Beijing** Sleeper ¥500, 22 to 24 hours
- ➔ **Chengdu** Sleeper ¥400, 25 hours
- ➔ **Golmud** Seat/sleeper ¥105/250, eight to 11 hours

- ➔ **Lanzhou** Seat ¥40, 2½ hours
- ➔ **Xi'an** Seat/sleeper ¥120/300, 10 to 14 hours

Getting Around

The airport is 27km east of the city. Shuttle buses (¥21, 30 minutes) leave from the CAAC office on Bayi Lu.

City buses cost ¥1 per ride. A handy route is bus 1, which runs from **Bayi Road Bus Station** (Bayi Lu Qiche Zhan cnr Bayi Lu & Huangzhong Lu,) along Dongguan Dajie before heading north the nearby Tibetan Culture Museum, a 45-minute ride. Taxis are ¥6 for the first 3km and ¥1.20 per kilometre thereafter.

Around Xining

Qinghai Lake

China's largest lake, Qinghai Lake (Qinghai Hu, Lake Kokonor; elevation 3600m) has become a huge draw for large tour groups but views of the lake backdropped by mountains still make the trek out worthwhile.

Sights

Bird Island

ISLAND

(Niao Dao admission ¥115)

This island on China's largest lake (now in fact a peninsula) is the breeding ground for thousands of wild geese, gulls, cormorants, sandpipers, extremely rare black-necked cranes and other bird species. Perhaps the most interesting are the bar-headed geese that migrate over the Himalaya to spend winter on the Indian plains, and have been spotted flying at altitudes of 10,000m.

The island is located on the western side of the lake, about 300km from Xining. The best time to visit is from March to early June, when migratory

birds have stopped over to nest.

Erlangjian Scenic Area

LAKE

(Qinghai Hu Erlangjian Jingu admission ¥100)

The closest Qinghai Lake tourist spot to Xining, this site 150km west of town consists of a Chinese-style sightseeing village backing on to the shores of the lake. A long pier allows you to walk out over the calm waters, and on a clear day there are glorious views of the surrounding mountains, as well as the ruin of the **Torpedo Launch Experiment Base**, China's first torpedo testing site set up in the 1960s. Though far from the most scenic spot in the area, if you're pressed for time, this is the best way to catch a glimpse of Qinghai Lake without shelling out too much money or doing an overnight.

There are a number of ways to move around the site, including a trolley bus (¥10) that leaves from the main entrance and carries you down to the lakeshore. It's an easy 10-minute walk, though, and there are also bicycles for hire (¥15 per hour), which makes for the most pleasant way to explore the area.

Dedicated buses depart regularly from Xining's [Bayi Road Bus Station](#) and cost ¥37 each way. Don't forget to purchase a ticket for your return journey at the Erlangjian ticket window.

Sleeping

Niao Dao Binguan

HOTEL

( 0970-865 5098; r with breakfast from ¥380)

This in offers no-fills accommodation with basic amenities, but is the closest to Bird Island. The hotel is located on the western side of Qinghai Lake in Xianggong Village (Xianggong Cun). You are still 16km from the island here, but you should be able to hire a taxi (¥70 return).

Getting There & Away

The best way to see the sights here is by hiring a private car and driver (¥500 per day). Alternately, all-inclusive overnights and multiday trips can be organised through travel agencies in Xining, including [Tibetan Connections](#). Touts abound at every bus station in Xining; bargain hard and you could score a great deal on a shared taxi.

Kumbum Monastery (Ta'er Si)

Kumbum Monastery

MONASTERY

(Ta'er Si admission ¥80; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

One of the great monasteries of the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) sect of Tibetan Buddhism, Kumbum Monastery was built in 1577 on hallowed ground – the birthplace of Tsongkhapa, founder of the sect.

It's of enormous historical significance, and hundreds of monks still live here but, perhaps because it's such a big tourist draw for this part of Qinghai, the atmosphere can at times feel a bit overrun. The artwork and architecture, however, remain impressive.

Nine temples are open, each with its own characteristics. The most important is the **Grand Hall of Golden Tiles** (Dajinwa Dian), where an 11m-high chorten marks the spot of Tsongkhapa's birth. You'll see pilgrims walking circuits of the building and prostrating outside the entrance. Also worth seeking out is the **Yak Butter Scripture Temple** (Suyouhua Guan) which houses sculptures of human figures, animals and landscapes carved out of yak butter.

Kumbum is located 27km from Xining in the town of Huangzhong. Buses (¥11, 45 minutes) leave every six minutes from [Xinning Road Passenger Transport Terminal](#), starting at 7am. Get off at the last stop and walk up the hill to the monastery. The last bus back is at 7pm.

Youning Monastery

Younging Monastery

MONASTERY

(Younging Si)

Well known throughout the Tibetan world, this 17th-century hillside monastery in the Huzhu Tuzu Autonomous County is considered one of the greats of the Gelugpa order. The monastery lies at the edge of a forested valley, and many chapels perch wondrously on the sides of a cliff face. Give yourself a couple of hours to explore the entire picturesque area.

Famous for its academies of medicine and astrology, its scholars and its living Buddhas (tulku), Younging Monastery (*Rgolung* in Tibetan) was instrumental in solidifying Gelugpa dominance over the Amdo region. The monastery was founded by the Mongolian 4th Dalai Lama, and over time became a religious centre for the local Tu (themselves a distant Mongolian people). At its height, over 7000 monks resided here; these days there are probably less than 200, all of whom are Tu.

There are a couple of ways to reach the monastery. Buses to Ping'ian (¥8, 40 minutes) go from Xining's [Bayi Road Bus Station](#). From there, you'll need to hire a taxi (one way/return ¥70/100, 30 minutes). Alternately, if you have a group, you could hire a private car or taxi (return ¥400) from Xining. The monastery is about 25km north of Ping'an.

WORTH A TRIP

KANBULA NATIONAL PARK

Kanbula National Park

NATIONAL PARK

(Kanbula Guojia Senlin Gongyuan admission ¥100)

The desert scenery outside of Tongren comes to a pinnacle in this national park where flaming red mountains meet the turquoise waters of a reservoir created by the damming of the Yellow River. A nervous-sweat inducing road snakes up through the park's peaks, past sleepy Tibetan villages and colourful prayer flags waving high on the wind.

It's best to hire a private driver to bring you here from either Tongren (¥300 per day) or Xining (¥700 per day) to fully experience the park, including plenty of photo stops and a chance to explore the villages. The drive from Xining also passes over dusky 3980m peaks.

Tongren (Repkong)

📍 0973

For several centuries now, the villages outside the monastery town of Tongren (Repkong in Tibetan) have been famous for producing some of the Tibetan world's best *thangkas* (scroll paintings) and painted statues, so much so that an entire school of Tibetan art is named after the town. Visiting Wutun Si monastery not only gives you a chance to meet the artists, but also to purchase a painting or two, fresh off the easel.

Tongren is set on the slopes of the wide and fertile Gu-chu river valley. The local populace is a mix of Tibetans and Tu. The valley and surrounding hills are easily explored on foot.

Sights

Longwu Si

MONASTERY

(Rongwo Gonchen Gompa Dehelong Nanlu, admission ¥60)

Tongren's main monastery is a huge and rambling maze of renovated chapels and monks' residences, dating from 1301. It's well worth a wander, and you'll need one or two hours to see everything. Your ticket includes entry into six main halls, although you may be able to take a peek inside others, too.

There are more than 500 resident monks and every day dozens of them go into the courtyard outside the **Hall of Bodhisattva Manjusri** (Wenshu Dian) to take part in animated, hand-clapping debates. There's a map in English on a wooden board just inside the main gate.

Wutun Si

MONASTERY

(admission ¥30)

This complex of two monasteries is the place to head if you're interested in Tibetan art. The **Upper (Yango) Monastery** (Wutun Shangsi) is closest to Tongren, while the **Lower (Mango) Monastery** (Wutun Xiasi) is larger and may offer the chance to see monks painting. The monks will show you around and you can usually ask to see a showroom or workshop. The resident artists are no amateurs – commissions for their *thangka* paintings come in all the way from Lhasa, and prices aren't cheap.

Artwork is usually of an exceptionally high quality, but expect to pay hundreds of renminbi for the smallest painting, thousands for a poster-sized one and tens or even hundreds of thousands for the largest pieces. There are a handful of showrooms outside the Lower Monastery where you can browse and buy.

The Lower Monastery is easily recognisable by eight large chorten out front. While there, check out the 100-year-old **Jampa Lhakang** (Jampa Temple) and the new chapels dedicated to Chenresig and Tsongkhapa.

The Upper Monastery includes a massive modern chorten as well as the old *dukhang* (assembly hall) and the new chapel dedicated to Maitreya (Shampa in Amdo dialect). The interior murals here (painted by local artists) are superb.

To get here, take a minibus (¥2 per seat) from the intersection just uphill from Tongren bus station ticket office. The 6.5km walk back takes around an hour, or hail a minibus on its way back to town.

Sleeping & Eating

★ **Rebgong Norbang Travel Inn**

HOTEL

(Regong Nuo'erbang Luyou Kezhan  0973 8726999, 0973 8726555; Xuelian Donglu, d ¥140; ste ¥400;   )

This clean spot is one of the most modern hotels in Tongren and offers fantastic value. Most floors have spacious, clean Western-style rooms, but pay a little extra to stay on the floor with rooms in traditional Tibetan style,

which have huge wooden beds, books on Tibetan Buddhism and sparkling ensuite bathrooms.

Regong Siheji Binguan

HOTEL

( 879 7988; 14 Dehelong Nanlu, d from ¥160)

This hotel has a colourful lobby that leads up through gold hallways to bright and clean rooms with flat-screen TVs and well-maintained bathrooms. It's well-placed on Tongren's main road about 200m before Longwu Si.

Homely Teahouse

TIBETAN

(Wenxin Chayi Dehelong Nanlu, dishes ¥8-14;  8am-midnight)

This authentic Tibetan restaurant – with a yak skull hanging on the wall and plastic flowers throughout – serves *momo* (dumplings), yoghurt and noodle soup and a range of beers and teas. It's located in a cosy two-storey wood-panelled building with excellent views of the valley.

Information

China Construction Bank ATM

BANK

(Jianshe Yinhang 47 Zhongshan Lu,)

Foreign-card friendly.

Getting There & Around

The scenery on the road from Xining is awesome as it follows a tributary of the Yellow River through steep-sided gorges, but the way out to Xiahe is even better, passing dramatic red rock scenery and the impressive Gartse Gompa, where local Tibetan herders board the bus to sell fresh yoghurt. For Xiahe and Linxia, try to buy your ticket one day in advance.

WORTH A TRIP

XUNHUA

A nice side trip from Tongren is to Xunhua, a tidy town in the Xunhua Salar Autonomous County, about 75km northeast of Tongren. The Salar Muslims have their origins in Samarkand and speak an isolated Turkic language, giving the region a Central Asian feel (and cuisine).

Mengda Nature Reserve

NATURE RESERVE

(Mengda Guojia Ziran Baohuqu admission ¥70; 🕒8am-6pm)

This nature reserve is home to a tiny lake that is sacred for both Salar Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists, and is much hyped locally. The road to the reserve – which follows the coppery-green Yellow River as it cuts its way through a fantastically scenic gorge of rust-red cliffs – is worth the trip alone. You'll find stunning photo opportunities around every turn.

From the main gate of the reserve you can ride horses (¥50, 30 minutes) to the lake or take a gas-powered buggy (free) to a small parking area, then walk the rest of the way.

To get to the reserve you'll need to hire a taxi from outside Xunhua bus station. Expect to pay at least ¥200 return, including waiting time.

Jiaotong Binguan

HOTEL

(📞0972-881 2615; d/tw ¥160/240)

This inn beside Xunhua's bus station has comfortable rooms often discounted to less than ¥100.

HIKING ON SACRED MT AMNYE MACHEN

Mt Amnye Machen

MOUNTAIN

(Animaqing)

The 6282m peak of Machen Kangri, or Mt Amnye Machen, is Amdo's most sacred mountain – it's eastern Tibet's equivalent to Mt Kailash in western Tibet. Tibetan pilgrims travel for weeks to circumambulate the peak, believing it to be home to the protector deity Machen Pomra. The circuit's sacred geography and wild mountain scenery make it a fantastic, though adventurous, trekking destination.

The full circuit takes around 11 days (including transport to/from Xining), though tourists often limit themselves to a half circuit. Several monasteries lie alongside the route.

With almost all of the route above 4000m, and the highest pass hitting 4600m, it's essential to acclimatise before setting off, preferably by spending a night or two at

nearby **Maqin** (Tawo; 3760m). You can make a good excursion 70km north of town to **Rabgya Gompa** (Lajia Si), an important branch of Tibet's Sera Monastery. The best months to trek are May to October, though be prepared for snow early and late in the season.

Since local public transport is almost non-existent, most trekkers go on an organised tour. Expect to pay around US\$140 per person per day, all-inclusive.

If you do want to try venturing out on your own, take the bus to Huashixia and then hitch or hire a shared minivan (¥300 to ¥400 per person) to Xiadawu. In Xiadawu the starting point for the kora (holy hike) path is at Guru Gompa (Geri Si), and from here follow the road east. After three days the road peters out near Xueshan from where you can hitch a ride to Maqin. If you intend to continue past Xueshan you'll need to ask a local to show you the kora path. In Xiadawu, a guide costs ¥120 to ¥150 per day, and it's about the same price for a packhorse or yak.

Guide

 0974

As the Yellow River (Huang He) flows down from the Tibetan Plateau it makes a series of sharp bends, powering its way past ancient Guide. Sitting on the riverbank here at sunset, with a beer in hand, is a great way to end the day. The old town (*gucheng*), still largely enclosed within its crumbling 10m-high mud walls, also makes for a pleasant stroll and is a good base for your stay. But changes are afoot. The government has begun to knock down many buildings in the old town with a plan to redevelop the place into a major tourist attraction, complete with five-star hotels and a golf course. Get here soon before it's discovered by the masses.

Sights & Activities

★ Guide National Geological Park

PARK

(Guide Guojia Dizhi Gongyuan 101 Provincial Rd, 101 admission ¥80;  11)

In the stunning multi-coloured clay scenery of Danxia Canyon (Danxia Xiagu), this geopark offers walking trails in among red and orange hills that

have eroded into other-worldly shapes. Set against the contrasting blue Qinghai skies and teal waters of the Yellow River, this is a lovely spot to spend an afternoon wandering and taking photos, or exploring the peculiar geology of this part of the Tibetan Plateau.

Signs and maps in English and well-kept paths allow for easy access to the geological formations and make this an easy walk rather than a backcountry hike. The park is located about 20km north of Guide. A taxi will cost around ¥50.

Yuhuang Pavilion

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

(Yuhuang Ge 5 Beida Jie, admission ¥60; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

The focal point of Guide's old town is this small temple complex, built in 1592. It includes a three-storey pagoda, which can be climbed for good views, and a **Confucius Temple** (Wen Miao).

China Fortune Wheel

RELIGIOUS

(Zhonghua Fuyunlun Nanbinhe Lu, admission ¥80)

This enormous, gold-plated Tibetan prayer wheel is turned with the aid of rushing water from the Yellow River. The prayer wheel is 27m tall, 10m in diameter and weighs 200 tonnes, earning it a spot in the *Guinness World Records* as the world's largest prayer wheel.

Inside the wheel are 200 copies of the Kangyur text, and the base contains a large prayer hall. Near the wheel is a museum of Tibetan artefacts.

The wheel is located in a dedicated park along the Yellow River, which can be reached by following Huanghe Nanlu behind Yuhuang Pavilion and turning left at the large suspension bridge. Alternately, a mototaxi from Nan Dajie costs ¥10.

Zhacang Hot Springs

HOT SPRINGS

(Zhacang Wenquan)

Guide's hot springs, known locally as *reshui gou*, are a 13km-drive from

town past some mightily impressive barren scenery. Here you can join the local Tibetans for a free outdoor bath. There are several guesthouses nearby where you can enter the pools for a fee of ¥20. Naked bathing is common. Don't expect any infrastructure.

Sleeping & Eating

Guide is a busy town and the government's plans to turn it into a tourism centre mean there is already plenty of accommodation and eating options, with more being built all the time. There are lots of bright, clean restaurants along Bei Dajie near Yuhuang Pavilion, many with atmospheric sidewalk tables, perfect for munching some *liangmian* (cold noodles with chilli, vinegar and chives) and sipping a cold beer.

Qinghai Guide Hot Spring Hotel

HOTEL

(Wenquan Binguan  0974 855 3534; 355 Yingbin Lu, d ¥200, ste ¥550;   )

This upmarket option is starting to show its age, but it is still a decent choice for foreigners, with a heated pool, spa and pleasant garden grounds, as well as 24-hour hot water. It should be noted that there are no hot springs on-site.

Jinheyuan International Hotel

HOTEL

(Jinheyuan Guoji Jiudian 33 Yingbin Xilu, d ¥420, ste ¥700;    )

This sparkling Western-style hotel offers all the standard amenities in bright, spacious rooms decorated to as high a standard as you'll find in this region, with prices to match. There's a breakfast buffet on the 2nd floor and staff speak limited English.

Information

There are internet cafes (*wangba*) on Yingbingo Xilu and Bei Dajie.

China Construction Bank ATM

BANK

(Jianshe Yinhang 14 Yingbin Xilu,)

Accepts foreign cards.

Getting There & Around

The old town is 1.5km from the bus station. Turn left out of the station on Yingbin Xilu, then left again along Nan Dajie and past the old town gate to arrive at Bei Dajie. Three-wheel motorised rickshaws ply the streets of Guide. Most short trips cost ¥5 to ¥10.

There are regular buses to Xining (¥26, two hours) and several other destinations around Qinghai.

Yushu (Jyekundo)

 0976 / Pop 380,000

Until the spring of 2010, Yushu (Jyekundo is the name of the town itself while Yushu is the prefecture) and its surrounding areas gained notoriety as one of Qinghai's best adventure travel destinations. All that changed on 14 April 2010, when a 7.1-magnitude earthquake devastated the town, killing 2698 people (although some believe the true figure across the whole region to be more like 20,000).

After the earthquake most of Jyekundo's buildings were pulled down and an army of construction workers arrived to rebuild the city. Locals were housed in government-issued blue tents, giving the place the look and feel of a refugee camp (and a very dusty, noisy one at that).

In early 2014, the government officially declared Yushu reopen for tourism. A shiny new town centre built in Tibetan-style architecture (with a modern Chinese twist) replaced the tent village, while a monument shaped like a crumbling building stands as a reminder of the town's painful recent history.

Sights & Activities

Jyekundo Dondrubling Monastery

MONASTERY

(Gajie Gusi) **FREE**

First built in 1398, the Jyekundo Dondrubling Monastery suffered heavy damage from the 2010 earthquake (the main prayer hall was completely destroyed and a number of resident monks were killed). At the time of research, it was still being rebuilt, albeit with concrete and other modern materials, and probably won't be completed for a few more years. It's dramatically located in a ridge perched above town.

It takes about 20 minutes to walk the 1.5km from town via the atmospheric **mani lhakhang** (chapel containing a large prayer wheel), or a taxi costs around ¥30.

Seng-ze Gyanak Mani Wall

BUDDHIST

(Xinzhai Jiana Mani Shidui Xinzhai Village) **FREE**

Completely rebuilt after suffering extensive damage in the 2010 earthquake, this site is thought to be the world's largest mani wall (piles of stones with Buddhist mantras carved or painted on them). Founded in 1715, the mani consists of an estimated 2.5 billion mantras, piled one on top of the other over hundreds of square metres. It's an astonishing sight that grows more and more marvellous as you circumambulate the wall with the pilgrims. Be sure to turn the dozens of prayer wheels, and head into the pile itself for a moment of quiet reflection.

In addition to the patchwork of mani stone piles outside, the rebuild includes a series of stone paths outside the main pile, as well as stone benches. Work is also ongoing to construct a few Tibetan-style buildings on the site.



Festivals & Events

Horse Festival

CULTURAL

(Yushu Saima Jie,)

Yushu's spectacular three-day horse festival (late July) features traditional horse and yak races, Tibetan wrestling, archery, shooting and dance. The festival hasn't been regularly held since the earthquake, but did make a comeback in 2014. Double-check the latest before you make this part of your itinerary.

Sleeping & Eating

After the 2010 earthquake, many hotels in Yushu were badly damaged or destroyed. Many have since been rebuilt, but prices can be shockingly high for this remote part of China and facilities are still sometimes lacking in amenities, including 24-hour hot water or wi-fi.

Pearl Business Hotel

HOTEL

(Mingzhu Shangwu Binguan  0976 881 1177; 33 Qionglong Lu, d ¥280)

This spiffy hotel has an intimate feel with all the regular amenities and bright, clean bathrooms. There's 24-hour hot water and rooms come with hairdryers and high-speed broadband connection. Prices are negotiable so ask to see a room first.

Kham Inn

HOTEL

(Kangba Yizhan  0976 881 6111; Middle of Qionglong Lu, d ¥428)

Regarded as one of the best hotels in Yushu, this gleaming place has spotless rooms with TVs, internet, 24-hour hot water, and hairdryers. Bathrooms are big and bright and even the carpets are super clean.

Gangga Riwu Zangcan

TIBETAN

(Minzhu Lu, west of People's Bank, meals ¥40-50;  10am-9.30pm)

This local restaurant is regarded as the best Tibetan place in Jyekundo. The traditional decor complements the local dishes, which are flavourful and beautifully presented. It's a great option for those wanting to try traditional Tibetan food. Located just west of the Bank of China branch on Minzhu Lu.

i Getting There & Away

AIR

Yushu Batang Airport is 25km south of town. There are daily flights to Xining (¥1920), with continuing service to Xi'an.

BUS

Yushu's rebuilt **long-distance bus terminal** (Yushu Changtu Keyun Zhan Xihang Lu,) opened in September 2014 in combination with a new stretch of highway connecting it to Xining (¥191) and reducing travel time to just 10 to 13 hours. The terminal also serves Chengdu with one departure daily, and Chongqing. Buses for other parts of Qinghai go from the **Provincial Bus Station** (Sheng Qiche Zhan Linshi Dian) in Dongfeng village.

Long-distance minibuses depart from outside the long-distance bus terminal bound for Nangchen (¥60, four to five hours), leaving only when full. Vehicles also depart when full for Ganzi (¥180, 13 hours) in Sichuan from another minivan stand located on Qionglong Lu.

i Getting Around

Local bus routes 2, 3 and 4 (¥1) connect the main areas of town via three stations: Zha Xike, Fo Xueyuan and Xi Hang. You need to hail the bus for it to stop, and be aware they run very infrequently. Taxis are prevalent and fares start at ¥10, rising steeply if you head anywhere out of town. A taxi to the airport is ¥50.

THE SOURCE OF THE YELLOW RIVER

Zhaling & Eling Lakes

LAKE

(Zhaling Hu He Eling Hu)

Set in stunning, barren, high-plateau scenery, these two lakes purportedly host the source of the Yellow River (Huanghe yuantou), China's most revered waterway. The scenery around the two lakes here, and en route, is awesome. While here you might spot animals including fox, marmot, eagle, antelope and, of course, plenty of yaks.

Note, the widely accepted source of the Yellow River, which is marked by an engraved stone tablet, is actually just the most accessible of a number of sources. Locals refer to it as niutoubei. If you want to get to the very-hard-to-find true source of the Yellow River you'll need a two-day round trip from Maduo (sleeping in the 4WD) and it will cost around ¥3000 per vehicle, assuming you can find a driver willing to take you.

There's nowhere to stay or eat, so most people visit the lake as a day trip from the two-street town of Maduo. From Maduo, SUVs take you to the lake and back (¥1000 per vehicle; three hours one way). It is possible to camp here in the summer but you'll need to be completely self-sufficient.

Remember this area, including Maduo (4260m), is over 4000m high so altitude sickness is a real risk. Consider coming from Yushu (3680m) rather than Xining (2275m) so you don't have to ascend too much in one go.

Around Yushu

Princess Wencheng Temple

Princess Wencheng Temple

BUDDHIST

(Wencheng Gongzhu Miao)

This temple is dedicated to the Tang-dynasty Chinese Princess Wencheng, who was instrumental in converting her husband and Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo, to Buddhism in the 7th century. The temple marks the spot where the princess (and possibly the king) paused for a month en route from Xi'an to Lhasa.

Said to be the oldest Buddhist temple in Qinghai, the inner chapel has a rock carving (supposedly self-arising) of Vairocana (Nampa Namse in Tibetan), the Buddha of primordial wisdom, which allegedly dates from the 8th century. To the left is a statue of King Songtsen Gampo.

The temple, which suffered minor damage from the Yushu earthquake, is small, and few linger in it for long, but do allow time to explore the nearby hills. Here a sprawling spider's web of blue, red, yellow, white and pink prayer flags runs up the slopes, down the slopes and over the ravine, covering

every inch of land, and is one of the most extraordinary sights imaginable.

A steep trail (a popular kora route for pilgrims) ascends from the end of the row of eight chortens to the left of the temple. At the end of the trail head up the grassy side valley for some great hiking and stunning open views.

It's located 20km south of Yushu. Minibuses (¥20 one-way) depart from outside the long-distance bus terminal in Yushu, or a taxi costs about ¥80 return.

MONASTERIES AROUND YUSHU

The road from Yushu to Xiewu is dotted with monasteries set among beautiful landscapes, perfect for hiking. Minivans ply the route between Yushu and Xiewu from where you should be able to get onward transport to Shiqu.

Sebda Gompa

BUDDHIST

(Saiba Si)

The main assembly hall at this monastery is impressive, but most surprising is the chapel featuring a huge 18m statue of Guru Rinpoche, with smaller statues of his various manifestations on either side.

Ethnographic Museum

MUSEUM

(Renzhongxue Bowuguan admission ¥10)

This small museum has some offbeat gems like traditional Tibetan clothing, swords and stuffed animals. If you have more time you can explore the ruins of the old monastery on the ridge behind the adjacent gompa or do some great hiking in the valley opposite.

Drogon Gompa

BUDDHIST

(Xiewu Si)

This Sakyapa-school temple includes the scary gonkhang (protector chapel). Set atop a hill, it is adorned with snarling stuffed wolves and Tantric masks. Only men may enter this chapel.

Nangchen

 09763680m / Elev 3680m

The scenic county of Nangchen (Nangqian), a former Tibetan kingdom, is the end of the line for most travellers. Further south of here is the Qinghai–Tibet border, with roads to Riwoche and Chamdo, but any attempt to go here without the proper permits (and guide and driver) will land you in hot water.

Most visit just for the drive from Yushu to the little county capital of Sharda (Xiangda Zhen, 3550m). Several monasteries are scattered about town.

Sights

Sajiya Gompa

BUDDHIST

(Sajia Si)

The most recognisable of the Buddhist monasteries scattered around Sharda, this *gompa* is perched on a hill above town like an old manor. You can hike even further up the hill behind the *gompa* for excellent views of the valley.

Jiaba Gompa

BUDDHIST

(Jiaba Si)

This *gompa* in the centre of Sharda is where Tibetans, young and old, appear each morning to turn prayer wheels and circumambulate the temple.

Gar Gompa

BUDDHIST

(Ga'er Si)

Nestled on the ridge of a forested mountain about 70km south of Sharda is this *gompa*. Wildlife is prevalent in the area, including blue sheep and monkeys. It's a popular spot for birdwatchers. A taxi from Sharda costs about ¥500 return.

Sleeping & Eating

Nangchen Oriental Hotel

HOTEL

(Dongfang Binguan  152 9702 5483; d ¥150)

With clean bathrooms and hot showers, this hotel has bright rooms with fresh linens and heating in the winter. At the time of research, they were planning to install internet in the rooms.

Zhengqi Nirou Mian Guan

NOODLES

(dishes ¥10;  9am-9pm)

A popular and cheap place for Muslim-style noodles. Try the *zha jiang mian*, a dish consisting of hearty meat noodles topped with mince beef. There are two locations, one near the [Oriental Hotel](#) and another near the town's main bus station.

Information

There are several internet cafes (*wangba*) on Xingfu Lu, reached by walking through the alley next to a bank. You can also use wi-fi at some of the hotels in town.

Agricultural Bank of China

BANK

(Nongye Yinhang Xingfu Lu,)

Not all foreign cards work here, so don't count on getting cash if you're relying on ATMs.

Getting There & Away

From Sharda bus station on the main road, one daily bus goes to Xining (¥264, 20 to 24 hours) departing at 10am. Book at least one day in advance.

For Yushu (¥60, three to five hours) most locals travel by shared taxis, which assemble on the main road near the hotels. Major road construction was ongoing at the time of research.

Golmud

 0979

For three decades Golmud faithfully served overlanders as the last jumping-off point before Lhasa. Bedraggled backpackers hung around the city's truck depot trying to negotiate a lift to the 'Roof of the World.' But since the completion of the Qinghai–Tibet Railway, this lonesome backwater has become even less important, as most Tibet travellers board the train elsewhere and blow right through town. Today it's mostly of use to travellers trying to get between Lhasa and Dunhuang (in Gansu) or Huatugou (en route to Xinjiang).

Sleeping & Eating

There are a few decent hotel options if you get stuck here for the night, though most travellers are just transiting through.

Both Bayi Lu and Kunlun Lu are lined with restaurants.

Dongfang Hotel

HOTEL

(Dongfang Binguan [GOOGLE MAP](#);  0979 841 0011; 7 Bayi Lu, d ¥100-128, ste ¥260)

This centrally located hotel has clean and tidy standard rooms that come equipped with an ADSL cable for laptops. Deluxe rooms come with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Hedong Market (Hedong Shichang).

Alan Canting

MUSLIM

([GOOGLE MAP](#); 48-1 Bayi Lu, 48-1 dishes ¥5-48, noodles ¥9;  8.30am-9pm)

Serves several types of Muslim-style noodles, including *ganban mian* (spaghetti-style noodles with meat sauce) or *niurou mian* (beef noodles). Other dishes are available from a separate photo menu.

Getting There & Away

Note that if you are heading for Dunhuang you'll need a special permit (*luxing zheng*; ¥50) when boarding the bus. Permits are available from the **Public Security Bureau** (PSB,, Gong'anju 6 Chaidamu Lu; 🕒 8am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Fri). The PSB can also extend visas. We've also heard reports that the PSB only allows tourists to stay one night in Golmud.

There are buses to a number of destinations in Qinghai and neighbouring provinces from Golmud's **main bus station** (Ge'ermu Changtu Chezhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 0979 845 3688; 23 Jianyuan Lu,), including Dunhuang (¥102, seven to eight hours), Huatugou (¥104, six hours) and Xining (¥160, 12 to 14 hours). There is also a sleeper bus to Charklik (Ruoqiang; ¥224, 10 hours).

Trains to Lhasa (¥368, 15 hours) tend to depart from **Golmud Railway Station** (Ge'ermu Huoche Zhan [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 0979 722 2222; Yingbin Lu,) late in the evening or at night; you'll need your Tibet permit to be in order to board. Other destinations include Xining (¥191, 10 hours) and Dunhuang (¥116, 10 hours).

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Kunlun Lu & Chaidamu Lu; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat & Sun)

Changes travellers cheques and cash. Foreign-friendly ATM.

CAAC

TRAVEL AGENCY

(Jichang Shoupiaochu [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 24hr booking line 842 3333; 🕒 8.30am-6pm)

Can help book onward flights.

China International Travel Service

TRAVEL AGENCY

(CITS,, Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 849 6275; 4th fl, 60 Bayi Zhonglu, 4 🕒 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri)

The only place in town that can arrange Tibet permits, though they can only

be procured as part of a group tour. Look for the characters (Zhongguo Luyou, China Travel).

Tibet

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[Samye Monastery](#)

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[Yamdruk-Tso](#)

[Gyantse](#)

[Shigatse](#)

[Sakya](#)

[Rongphu Monastery & Everest Base Camp](#)

[Tingri to Zhangmu](#)

[Zhangmu](#)

[Western Tibet](#)

[Lhatse to Kailash](#)

[Mt Kailash](#)

[Lake Manasarovar](#)

Tibet



Pop 3 million

Why Go?

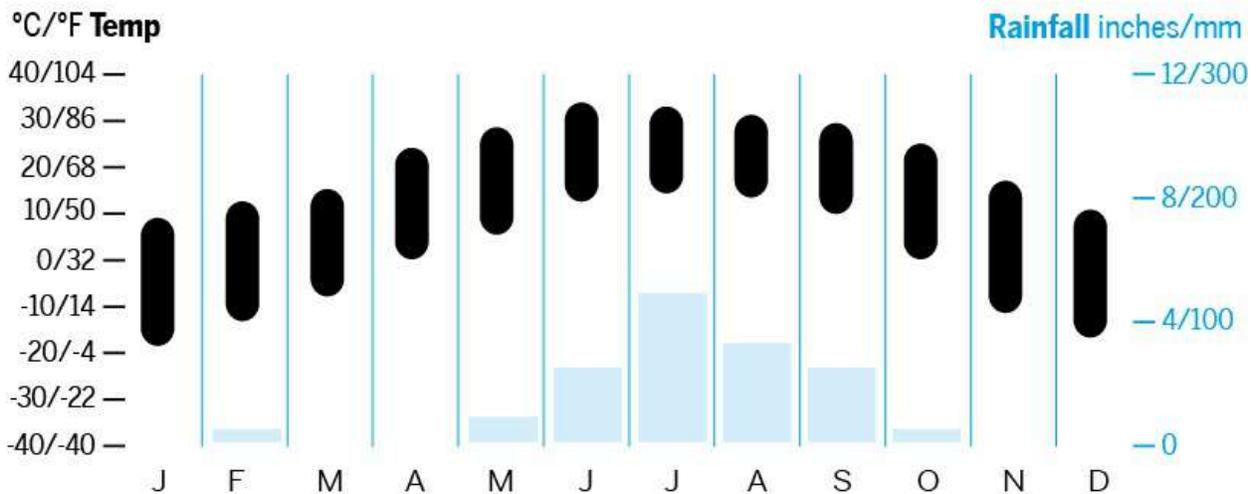
For centuries exotic Tibet has captured the imagination of spiritual seekers, mountain adventurers and intrepid travellers. For modern travellers the ‘roof of the world’ continues to promise breathtaking high-altitude scenery, awe-inspiring monasteries, epic trans-Himalayan road trips and a unique Buddhist culture that remains vibrant even after a half-century of assault and repression.

Perhaps the true highlight of Tibet, though, is the Tibetan people, from crimson-robed monks to wild-haired pilgrims, whose colour, good humour and religious devotion are what makes travelling across the plateau such a profound joy.

Tibet is changing at a pace unmatched even in China. The political tensions of recent years have resulted in strict travel restrictions on foreigners throughout the autonomous region, limiting travel to pre-arranged group tours. Despite all this, the magic of old Tibet is still there – you just have to work a bit harder to find it these days.

When to Go

Lhasa



- ➔ **Mar** This politically sensitive month brings closures and permit problems; avoid.
- ➔ **May–Sep** High season: warm weather, some rain in July/August, and good hiking.
- ➔ **Apr & mid-Oct–Nov** A good time to visit, with fewer crowds and warm days.

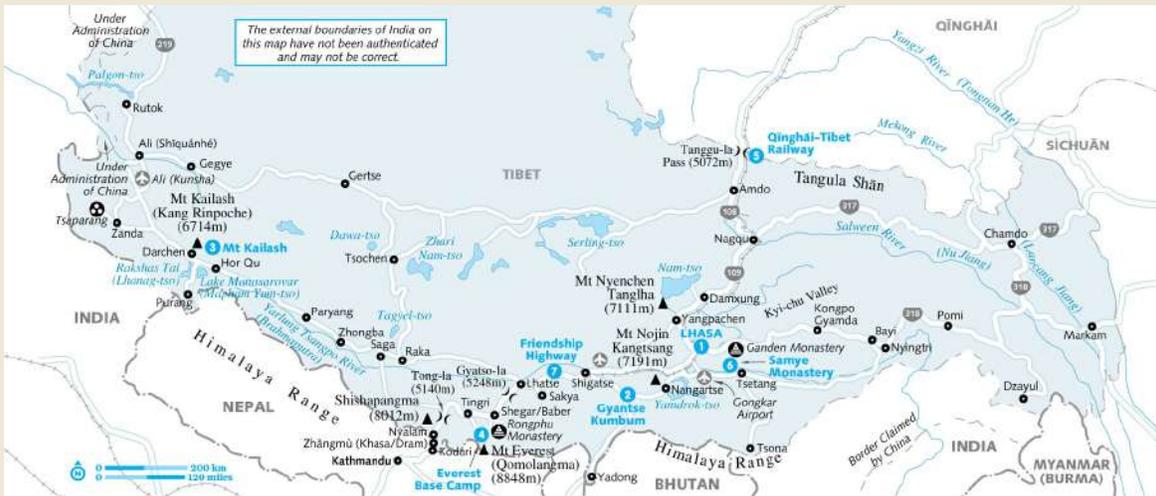
Best Monasteries

- ➔ [Drepung](#)
- ➔ [Ganden](#)
- ➔ [Samye](#)
- ➔ [Sakya](#)

Best Views

- ➔ Everest's north face from [Rongphu Monastery](#)
- ➔ Nam-tso from [Tashi Dor](#)
- ➔ Yamdrok-tso from the [Kamba-la](#)
- ➔ Samye Monastery from [Hepo Ri](#)

Tibet Highlights



- 1 Rub shoulders with Tibetan pilgrims in the holy city of [Lhasa](#)
- 2 Wonder at the murals of angels and demons in the 108 chapels of the [Gyantse Kumbum](#), an architectural wonder
- 3 Erase the sins of a lifetime on the three-day pilgrim circuit around sacred [Mt Kailash](#)
- 4 Rouse yourself from a yak-wool tent or monastery guesthouse to catch first light at [Everest Base Camp](#)
- 5 Ride the planet's highest rails across the roof of the world on the [Qinghai–Tibet Railway](#) to Lhasa
- 6 Explore the mandala-shaped chapels and stupas at [Samye Monastery](#), Tibet's first monastery
- 7 Hire a vehicle for the week-long trip along the [Friendship Highway](#) from Lhasa to Kathmandu, one of Asia's great road trips

History

Recorded Tibetan history began in the 7th century AD, when the Tibetan armies began to assemble a great empire. Under King Songtsen Gampo, the Tibetans occupied Nepal and collected tribute from parts of Yunnan. Shortly afterwards the Tibetan armies moved north and took control of the Silk Road

and the great trade centre of Kashgar, even sacking the imperial Chinese city of Chang'an (present-day Xi'an).

Tibetan expansion came to an abrupt halt in 842 with the assassination of anti-Buddhist King Langdarma; the region subsequently broke into independent feuding principalities. The increasing influence of Buddhism ensured that the Tibetan armies would never again leave their high plateau.

By the 7th century, Buddhism had spread through Tibet, though it had taken on a unique form, as it adopted many of the rituals of Bon (the indigenous pre-Buddhist belief system of Tibet). The prayer flags, pilgrimage circuits and sacred landscapes you'll see across modern Tibet all have their roots in the animist religion of Bon.

From the 13th century, power politics began to play an increasing role in religion. In 1641 the Gelugpa ('Yellow Hat' order) used the support of Mongol troops to crush the Sakyapa, their rivals. It was also during this time of partisan struggle that the Gelugpa leader adopted the title of Dalai Lama (Ocean of Wisdom), given to him by the Mongols. From here on out, religion and politics in Tibet became inextricably entwined and both were presided over by the Dalai Lama.

With the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, Tibet entered a period of de facto independence that was to last until 1950. In this year a resurgent communist China invaded Tibet, claiming it was 'liberating' over one million Tibetans from feudal serfdom and bringing it back into the fold of the motherland.

Increasing popular unrest in response to Chinese land reform resulted in a full-blown revolt in 1959, which was crushed by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Amid popular rumours of a Chinese plot to kidnap him, the Dalai Lama fled to India. He was followed by an exodus of 80,000 of Tibet's best and brightest, who now represent the Tibetan government-in-exile from Dharamsala, India.

The Dalai Lama, who has referred to China's policies on migration as 'cultural genocide', is resigned to pushing for autonomy rather than independence, though even that concession has borne little fruit. The Chinese

for their part seem to be waiting for him to die, positioning themselves to control the future politics of reincarnation. The Dalai Lama's tireless insistence on a non-violent solution to the Tibet problem led to him winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, but despite global sympathy for the Tibetan cause, few nations are willing to raise the issue and place new business deals with China's rising economic superpower at risk.

The Chinese are truly baffled by what they perceive as the continuing ingratitude of the Tibetans. They claim that Tibet pre-1950 was a place of abject poverty and feudal exploitation. China, they say, has brought roads, schools, hospitals, airports, factories and rising incomes.

Many Tibetans, however, cannot forgive the destruction in the 1950s and 1960s of hundreds of monasteries and shrines, the restrictions on religious expression, the continued heavy military presence, economic exploitation and their obvious second-class status within their own land. Riots and protests in the spring of 2008 brought this simmering dissatisfaction out into the open, as Lhasa erupted into full-scale riots and protests spread to other Tibetan areas in Gansu, Sichuan and Qinghai provinces. The Chinese response was predictable: arrest, imprisonment and an increased police presence in many monasteries. The increasing desperation felt by many Tibetans has led to a spate of self-immolations by Tibetans across the region, including two in Lhasa's Barkhor Circuit in 2012. At the time of writing, riot police armed with fire extinguishers patrolled much of Lhasa's old town.

As immigration and breakneck modernisation continue, the government is gambling that economic advances will diffuse the Tibetans' religious and political aspirations. It's a policy that has so far been successful in the rest of China. Whether it will work in Tibet remains to be seen.

Climate

Most of Tibet is a high-altitude desert plateau at more than 4000m. Days in summer (June to September) are warm, sunny and generally dry but temperatures drop quickly after dark. It's always cool above 4000m and often

freezing at night, though thanks to the Himalayan rain shadow there is surprisingly little snow in the 'Land of Snows'. Sunlight is very strong at these altitudes, so bring plenty of high-factor sunscreen and lip balm.

Language

Most urban Tibetans speak Mandarin in addition to Tibetan. Even in the countryside you can get by with basic Mandarin in most restaurants and hotels, since they are normally run by Mandarin-speaking Han or Hui Chinese. That said, Tibetans are extremely pleased when foreign visitors at least greet them in Tibetan, so it's well worth learning a few phrases.

Getting There & Away

NEPAL ROUTE

The 865km road connecting Lhasa with Kathmandu is known as the Friendship Hwy. Currently the only means of transport for foreigners is a rented vehicle.

When travelling from Nepal to Lhasa, foreigners generally arrange transport and permits through agencies in Kathmandu. Be careful with whom you organise your trip – the vast majority of complaints about Tibet that we receive have been about trips from Kathmandu. If you don't want to organise your own trip, the most common option is a seven-day overland tour to Lhasa, returning by flight to Kathmandu (US\$420-620, three weekly).

If you join a fixed-departure tour you will likely end up with travellers from other companies. Accommodation en route is pretty simple. Most agencies advertising in Thamel are agents only; they don't actually run the trips and so will probably just shrug if there's a complaint.

Whatever you do, when coming from Nepal do not underestimate the sudden rise in elevation; altitude sickness is very common. It is especially not recommended to visit Everest Base Camp within a few days of leaving Kathmandu. Heading to Nepal, you will arrange 4WD hire as part of your Tibet tour.

Better agencies in Kathmandu include the following:

Adventure Greenhill

TOUR AGENCY

([GOOGLE MAP](#));  4700803; www.advgreenhill.com; Thamel)

Travel and trekking agency that can book overland trips to Tibet.

Eco Trek

TOUR AGENCY

([GOOGLE MAP](#));  4423207; www.ecotrek.com.np; Thamel)

Seven-day overland trips, plus tours to Kailash, the latter in conjunction with Indian pilgrim groups.

Royal Mount Trekking

TRAVEL AGENCY

([GOOGLE MAP](#));  01-4241452; www.royaltibet.com; Durbar Marg)

Tashi Delek Nepal Treks & Expeditions

TRAVEL AGENCY

([GOOGLE MAP](#));  01-4410746; www.tibettour.travel; Thamel)

QINGHAI ROUTE

Now that the railway connects Lhasa with Qinghai, there is no reason to suffer the long ride on the sleeper bus from Golmud. Bear in mind that it is much harder to get train tickets to Lhasa than from Lhasa, so flying in and taking a train out makes sense.

OTHER ROUTES

Between Lhasa and Sichuan, Yunnan and Xinjiang provinces are some of the wildest, highest and most remote routes in the world. The bad news is that for the last few years permits have been impossible to obtain for overland routes from Sichuan and Yunnan through eastern Tibet. Even if the region reopens you will have to sign on to an organised trip to secure permits.

Getting Around

These days foreigners travel around Tibet in a rented 4WD. Public buses

outside Lhasa are off limits to foreigners and bus stations won't sell you a ticket.

Overland cycling routes are possible, but currently expensive, as you still need a guide and transport, even if you're not travelling in it! For experienced cyclists, the Lhasa–Kathmandu trip is one of the world's great rides.

TIBET TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Troubled Tibet is essentially part of China, yet in many ways separate from it. Travel regulations here are much more restrictive than the rest of the nation; tourists currently need to arrange a guided tour in order to visit any place in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR).

Authorities would say this is for tourists' protection, though it has more to do with economic interests and foreigners' tendency to sympathise with the Tibetan cause and bear witness to political tensions. If you want to explore Tibetan areas independently by foot or public transport, you are currently better off heading to the Tibetan areas of Sichuan and Qinghai.

Travel regulations are in constant flux in Tibet and travel infrastructure is changing at head-spinning speed. Be sure to check current regulations with travel companies and check the designated Tibet branch of the **Lonely Planet Thorn Tree** (www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree). Tibet can completely close to foreigners without warning, as it did for several months in 2012. Western Tibet was closed for most of 2014.

At the time of research:

Foreign travellers need a Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) permit to get into Tibet and an Alien Travel Permit (and other permits) to travel outside Lhasa.

To get these permits you need to prebook an itinerary, a guide for your entire stay and transport for outside Lhasa with an agency, before travelling to Tibet.

To get on a plane or train to Lhasa you generally need to show your TTB permit. For the plane you need the original, so your agency will courier that to you at an address in China (normally a hostel). A printout/copy is currently acceptable for the train.

You don't need to book transport for your time in Lhasa, but you do need to visit the main monasteries with a guide.

For travel outside Lhasa you will need to prearrange transport hire. You cannot travel outside Lhasa independently and cannot take public transport.

Most agencies charge around ¥200 per person for permits, ¥250 per day for a guide and anywhere from US\$100 to US\$150 per day for 4WD hire (not per person). Many agencies let you book your own accommodation.

Agencies can only apply for permits 15 days before departure, so there is invariably a last-minute rush to get permits posted to you in time. This obviously complicates booking flight and train tickets; we recommend buying travel insurance and booking a fully refundable ticket if possible.

Travel from Nepal to Tibet brings its own complications, since foreigners can only travel on a group visa (a separate piece of paper), which is only valid for up to three weeks and is almost impossible to extend. If you already have a Chinese visa in your passport it will be cancelled. Group visas in Kathmandu cost US\$58 and take 10 days, or you can pay US\$118 for express service. US citizens pay a hefty surcharge.

The companies listed here can arrange tours and permits for Tibet and are used to dealing with individual travellers. See www.tibetgreenmap.com for other responsible Tibetan tour operators.

LHASA

Explore Tibet

TRAVEL AGENCY

( 0891-632 9441, mobile 158 8909 0408; www.tibetexploretour.com; 4-5 House, Namsel No 3, Doudi Rd)

Contact Jamphel.

Namchen Tours

TRAVEL AGENCY

( 634 5009; www.tibetnamchen.com)

At Barkhor Namchen Guest House. Contact Dhoko.

Road to Tibet

TRAVEL AGENCY

( 133 0898 1522; www.roadtotibet.com)

Contact Woesser Phel.

Shigatse Travels

TRAVEL AGENCY

( [GOOGLE MAP](#);  633 0489; www.shigatsetravels.com; Yak Hotel, 100 Beijing Donglu)

Top-end tours from a large agency that uses European trip managers.

Spinn Cafe

TRAVEL AGENCY

( [GOOGLE MAP](#);  136 5952 3997; www.cafespinn.com; 135 Beijing Donglu)

Contact Kong or Pazu.

Tibet Highland Tours

TRAVEL AGENCY

( [GOOGLE MAP](#);  139 0898 5060, 634 8144; www.tibethighlandtours.com; Zangyiyuan Lu)

Contact Tenzin or Dechen.

Tibetan Guide

TRAVEL AGENCY

(☎635 1657, mobile 136 2898 0074; www.tibetanguide.com)

Contact Mima Dhondup.

OTHER CITIES IN CHINA

Leo Hostel

TRAVEL AGENCY

(☎10-8660 8923; www.leohostel.com; 52 Dazhalan Xijie, Qianmen, Beijing)

Popular backpacker hostel that books tours through an agency in Tibet. Leo Hostel in Beijing in Review section if it's included this edition.

Mix Hostel

TRAVEL AGENCY

(☎028-8322 2271; www.mixhostel.com; 23 Renjiawan, Xinghui Xilu, Chengdu)

Popular backpacker hostel. Mix Hostel in Chengdu in Review section if it's included this edition.

Snow Lion Tours

TRAVEL AGENCY

(☎971-816 3350, 134 3932 9243; www.snowliontours.com; Office 1212, Chenglin Mansion, 7 Dongdajie Lu, Xining)

Contact Wangden Tsering.

[Tibetan Connections](#)

Travel Wild Tibet

TRAVEL AGENCY

(☎0971-6313 188, mobile 139 9712 4471; www.travelwildtibet.com; Qinghai International Business Centre, 12th fl, 37 Kunlun Zhonglu, Xining)

Contact Tashi Phuntsok.

LHASA

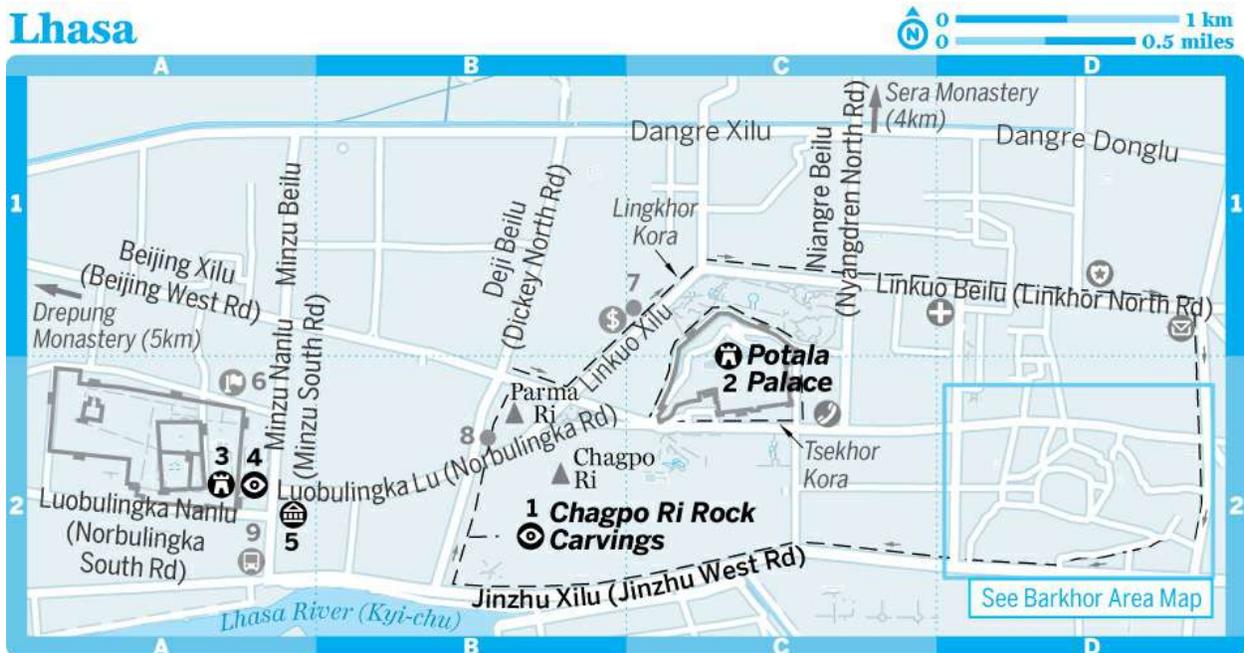
☎089 / Pop 400,000 / Elev 3650m

Lhasa is the traditional, political and spiritual centre of the Tibetan world. Despite uncompromising Chinese-led modernisation, Tibet's premodern and sacred heritage survives in the form of the grand Potala Palace (former seat of the Dalai Lama); the ancient Jokhang Temple (Tibet's first and most holy);

the great monastic towns of Sera, Drepung and Ganden; and the city's countless other smaller temples, hermitages, caves, sacred rocks, pilgrim paths and prayer-flag-bedecked hilltops.

Lhasa is a comfortable travellers' destination these days. There are dozens of good budget and midrange hotels and no shortage of excellent inexpensive restaurants. Lhasa is also currently the only place in Tibet where you have a certain freedom to explore without your guide, plus it's cheaper here than the rest of Tibet because you don't need to hire transport.

Lhasa divides clearly into a sprawling Chinese section to the west and a much smaller but infinitely more interesting Tibetan old town in the east, centred on the wonderful Barkhor area. For the last couple of years the oppressive military patrols, riot squads and undercover police in the Barkhor region have lent the old town an atmosphere of occupation.



Lhasa

📍 Top Sights

1 [Chagpo Ri Rock Carvings](#)

B2

2 [Potala Palace](#)

C2

Sights

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|----|
| 3 | Norbulingka | A2 |
| 4 | Norbulingka Ticket Office | A2 |
| 5 | Tibet Museum | A2 |

Information

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 6 | Nepalese Consulate-General | A2 |
| 7 | Wind Horse Adventure | C1 |

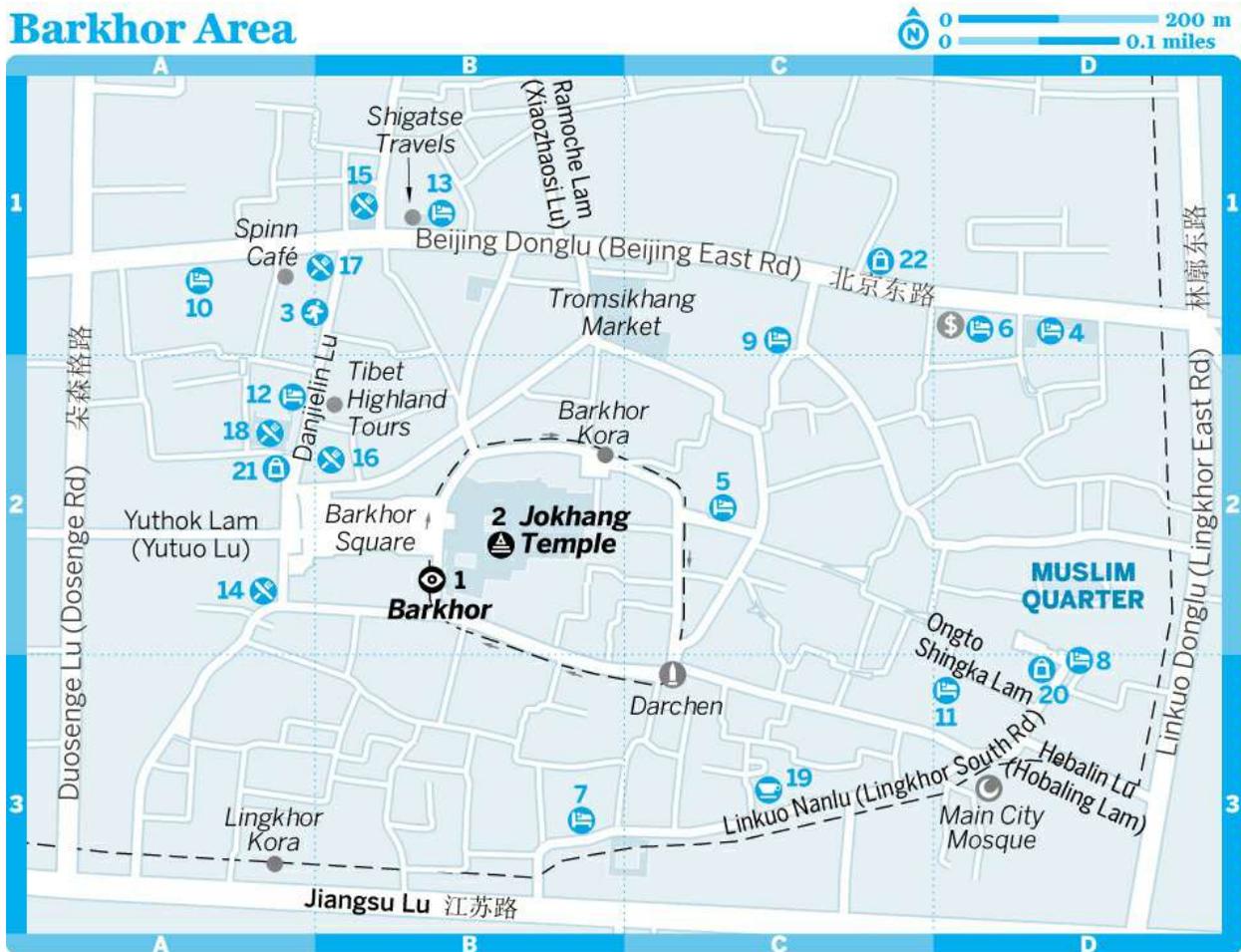
Transport

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 8 | City Train Ticket Office | B2 |
| 9 | Western Bus Station | A2 |

Sights & Activities

In addition to the main sights and activities listed here, Lhasa's old town is well worth exploring for its backstreet temples, booming craft shops and interesting Muslim neighbourhood.

Barkhor Area



Barkhor Area

📍 Top Sights

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 1 Barkhor | B2 |
| 2 Jokhang Temple | B2 |

🚶 Activities, Courses & Tours

- | | |
|---|----|
| 3 Tenzin Blind Massage Centre | A1 |
|---|----|

🏠 Sleeping

- | | |
|--|----|
| 4 Banak Shol | D1 |
| 5 Barkhor Namchen House | C2 |
| 6 Dongcuo International Youth Hostel | D1 |
| 7 Gorkha Hotel | B3 |
| 8 Heritage Hotel | D3 |

| | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 9 | House of Shambhala | C1 |
| 10 | Kyichu Hotel | A1 |
| 11 | Rama Kharpo Hotel | D3 |
| 12 | Shangbala Hotel | A2 |
| 13 | Yak Hotel | B1 |

Eating

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 14 | New Mandala Restaurant | A2 |
| 15 | Pentoc Tibetan Restaurant | B1 |
| 16 | Snowland Restaurant | B2 |
| 17 | Tashi I | B1 |
| 18 | Woesser Zedroe Tibetan Restaurant | A2 |

Drinking & Nightlife

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 19 | Ani Sangkhung Nunnery Teahouse | C3 |
| | Summit Cafe | A2 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 20 | Dropenling | D3 |
| 21 | Dropenling (Branch) | A2 |
| 22 | Outlook Outdoor Equipment | C1 |

★ Barkhor

PILGRIM CIRCUIT

(Bakuo [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)) **FREE**

It's impossible not to be swept up in the wondrous tide of humanity that is the Barkhor, a *kora* (pilgrim circuit) that winds clockwise around the periphery of the Jokhang Temple. You'll swear it possesses some spiritual centrifugal force, as every time you approach within 50m, you somehow get sucked right in and gladly wind up making the whole circuit again! It's the perfect place to start your explorations of Lhasa, and the last spot you'll want to see before you bid the city farewell.

★ Jokhang Temple

BUDDHIST, TEMPLE

(Dazhao Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥85;  8.30-6pm, most chapels closed after noon)

The 1300-year-old Jokhang Temple is the spiritual heart of Tibet: the continuous waves of awestruck pilgrims prostrating themselves outside are testament to its timeless allure. The central golden Buddha here is the most revered in all of Tibet.

The Jokhang was originally built to house an image of Buddha brought to Tibet by King Songtsen Gampo's Nepalese wife. However, another image, the Jowa Sakyamuni, was later moved here by the king's other wife (the Chinese Princess Wencheng), and it is this image that gives the Jokhang both its name and spiritual potency: Jokhang means 'chapel of the Jowo'.

The two-storeyed Jokhang is best visited in the morning, though the crowds of yak-butter-spooning pilgrims can be thick. Access is possible in the afternoon through a side entrance but only the ground floor chapels can be viewed (and then only through a grill) and there are no pilgrims.

★ Potala Palace

PALACE

(Budala Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission May-Oct ¥200, Nov-Apr ¥100; 🕒 9.30am-3pm before 1 May, 9am-3.30pm after 1 May, interior chapels close 4.30pm)

The magnificent Potala Palace, once the seat of the Tibetan government and the winter residence of the Dalai Lamas, is Lhasa's cardinal landmark. Your first sight of its towering, fortress-like walls is a moment you'll remember for years. An architectural wonder even by modern standards, the palace rises 13 storeys from 130m-high Marpo Ri (Red Hill) and contains more than a thousand rooms. Pilgrims and tourists alike shuffle open-mouthed through the three storeys, trying to take in the dozens of magnificent chapels, golden stupas and prayer halls.

The first recorded use of the site dates from the 7th century AD, when King Songtsen Gampo built a palace here. Construction of the present structure began during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama in 1645 and took divisions of labourers and artisans more than 50 years to complete. It is impressive enough to have caused Zhou Enlai to send his own troops to protect it from the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution.

The layout of the Potala Palace includes the rooftop **White Palace** (the

eastern part of the building), used for the living quarters of the Dalai Lama, and the central **Red Palace**, used for religious functions. The most stunning chapels of the Red Palace house the jewel-bedecked golden *chorten* (Tibetan stupa) tombs of several previous Dalai Lamas. The apartments of the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas, in the White Palace, offer a more personal insight into life in the palace. Grand aesthetics and history aside, however, one can't help noticing that today it is essentially an empty shell, notably missing its main occupant, the Dalai Lama, and a cavernous memorial to what once was.

Tickets for the Potala are limited. The day before you wish to visit, you or your guide should take your passport to the ticket booth just inside the far southwest exit (yes, exit), where you will receive a free ticket voucher with a time stamped on it.

The next day, be at the south entrance 30 minutes before the time on the voucher (tour groups use the southeast entrance). After a security check, follow the other visitors to the stairs up into the palace. Halfway up you'll pass the actual ticket booth, where you'll buy your ticket. Note that if you arrive later than the time on your voucher (or if you forget your voucher) you can be refused a ticket. Photography isn't allowed inside the chapels.

Sera Monastery

BUDDHIST, MONASTERY

(Sela Si admission ¥50; 🕒 9am-5pm)

About 5km north of Lhasa, Sera was founded in 1419 by a disciple of Tsongkhapa as one of Lhasa's two great Gelugpa monasteries. About 600 monks are now in residence, down from an original population of around 5000. The half-dozen main colleges feature spectacular prayer halls and chapels. Equally interesting is the monk debating that takes place from 3pm to 5pm in a garden near the assembly hall. Don't miss the fine hour-long *kora* path around the exterior of the monastery.

From Sera Monastery it's possible to take a taxi northwest for a couple of kilometres to little-visited **Pabonka Monastery**. Built in the 7th century by King Songtsen Gampo, this is one of the most ancient Buddhist sites in the Lhasa region.

A taxi to Sera costs around ¥15 from the old town.

Drepung Monastery

BUDDHIST, MONASTERY

(Zhebang Si admission ¥50; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm, smaller chapels close at 2pm)

Along with Sera and Ganden Monasteries, Drepung functioned as one of the three 'pillars of the Tibetan state' and this one was purportedly the largest monastery in the world, with around 7000 resident monks at its peak.

Drepung means 'rice heap', a reference to the white buildings dotting the hillside. The 1½-hour-long kora around the 15th-century monastery, 8km west of Lhasa, is among the highlights of a trip to Tibet.

The kings of Tsang and the Mongols savaged the place regularly, though, oddly, the Red Guards pretty much left it alone during the Cultural Revolution. With concerted rebuilding, Drepung once again resembles a monastic village and around 600 monks reside here. At lunchtime you can see the novices bringing in buckets of tsampa and yak-butter tea. In the afternoons you can often see Tibetan-style religious debating (lots of hand slapping and gesticulating). The best way to visit the monastery is to follow the pilgrim groups or the yellow signs.

Nearby Nechung Monastery, a 10-minute walk downhill, was once the home of the Tibetan state oracle and is worth a visit for its bloodcurdling murals.

Bus 25 (¥2) runs from Beijing Donglu to the foot of the Drepung hill, from where minivans (¥3) run up to the monastery. A taxi from the Barkhor area is around ¥30. There is a ¥10 to ¥20 charge per chapel for photography.

★ Chagpo Ri Rock Carvings

HISTORIC SITE

(Yaowang Shan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Deji Zhonglu; admission ¥10; 🕒 dawn-dusk)

This hidden corner of Lhasa features over 5000 painted rock carvings that were created on the back side of Chagpo Ri over the course of a millennium. Throughout the day pilgrims perform full body prostrations in front of the images, while stonecarvers at the far end of the courtyard contribute to a large chorten built entirely of the carvers' mani stones. The best way to visit the

area is as part of the Lingkhor pilgrim route.

Norbulingka

PALACE

(Luobulinka [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Minzu Lu; admission ¥60; 🕒 9am-6pm)

About 3km west of the Potala Palace is the Norbulingka, the former summer residence of the Dalai Lama. The pleasant park contains several palaces and chapels, the highlight of which is the **New Summer Palace** (Takten Migyu Podrang), built by the current (14th) Dalai Lama. It's debatable whether it's worth the entry fee.

Tibet Museum

MUSEUM

(Xizang Bowuguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Minzu Nanlu; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This museum has some interesting displays, if you can filter out the Chinese propaganda. Starting with the prehistory of Tibet, the multiple halls cover everything from weapons and musical instruments, to folk handicrafts and fine ancient *thangkas* (Tibetan sacred art). Look for the 18th-century golden urn (exhibit No 310) used by the Chinese to recognise their version of the Panchen Lama. A useful handheld audio self-touring device (¥5) is available with a deposit.

Tenzin Blind Massage Centre

MASSAGE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 135 4901 5532; Danjielin Lu; 🕒 9.30am-11pm)

There's no better way to recover from an overland trip than with a massage from this graduate of the Braille Without Borders organisation (www.braillewithoutborders.org). Choose between hour-long Chinese ((¥100 per hour) or Tibetan oil massage (¥150), the former clothed, the latter naked (don't be self-conscious, they're blind).

ALTITUDE SICKNESS

Altitude sickness (or acute mountain sickness, AMS; [Click here](#)) is a life-threatening condition that you should take seriously in Tibet. While medicines such as Diamox

can help deal with mild symptoms, the number one rule to follow is to rise in altitude gradually.

Most people experience only minor symptoms (headaches, breathlessness) when flying in to Lhasa (3600m), as long as they take things easy for their first couple of days. The key is to ascend gradually, preferably less than 400m per day. Spend up to a week in and around Lhasa before heading to higher elevations like Nam-tso or Western Tibet, and don't even think about heading straight to Everest Base Camp (5150m) from Kathmandu (1300m): you need at least two or three nights along the way, in places such as Nyalam (3750m) and Tingri (4250m).



Festivals & Events

Tibetan festivals are held according to the Tibetan lunar calendar, which usually lags at least a month behind the West's Gregorian calendar. The following is a brief selection of Lhasa's major festivals. Most are also celebrated elsewhere in Tibet.

Losar Festival

RELIGIOUS

New year celebration take place in the first week of the first lunar month (February), with performances of Tibetan opera, prayer ceremonies at the Jokhang and Nechung Monastery, and the streets are thronged with Tibetans dressed in their finest.

Saga Dawa

RELIGIOUS

The 15th day (full moon) of the fourth lunar month (May/June) sees huge numbers of pilgrims walking the Lingkor pilgrim circuit.

Worship of the Buddha

RELIGIOUS

During the second week of the fifth lunar month (June), the parks of Lhasa, in particular the Norbulingka, are crowded with picnickers.

Drepung Festival

RELIGIOUS

The 30th day of the sixth lunar month (July) is celebrated with the displaying

at dawn of a huge *thangka* at Drepung Monastery. Lamas and monks perform opera in the main courtyard.

Shotun Festival

RELIGIOUS

The first week of the seventh lunar month (August) sees the unveiling of a giant *thangka* at Drepung Monastery, then moves down to Sera and down to the Norbulingka for performances of *lhamo* (Tibetan opera) and some epic picnics.

Palden Lhamo

RELIGIOUS

The 15th day of the 10th lunar month (normally November) has a procession around the Barkhor circuit bearing Palden Lhamo, protective deity of the Jokhang Temple.

Tsongkhapa Festival

RELIGIOUS

Much respect is shown to Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa order, on the anniversary of his death on the 25th of the 10th lunar month (December). Check for processions and monk dances at the monasteries at Ganden, Sera and Drepung.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

SLEEPING

\$ less than ¥200

\$\$ ¥200 to ¥400

\$\$\$ more than ¥400

EATING

\$ less than ¥30

\$\$ ¥30 to ¥80

\$\$\$ more than ¥80

Sleeping

Lhasa has a good range of accommodation for all budgets. Rates depend on visitor numbers but generally peak in July and August (reservations recommended), with discounts of at least 20% at other times.

Banak Shol

HOTEL

(Balangxue Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 632 3829; 8 Beijing Donglu; dm ¥50, d/tr without bathroom ¥100/150, d with bathroom ¥230; 📶)

It's a mixed picture at this old backpacker stalwart. The newest triple rooms without bathroom are spacious, fresh and carpeted and the shared shower blocks are sparkling. Unfortunately the older roadside doubles and singles are still small, noisy and overpriced. The recently renovated standard rooms with bathroom are normally the cheapest such options in town.

Rama Kharpo Hotel

HOTEL

(Rema Gabu Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 634 6963; www.lhasabarkhor.com; 15 Ongto Shingka Lam; dm ¥40, d/tr incl breakfast ¥180/260; ❄️ 📶)

Named the 'White Goat' after the legendary founder of the city, this easily-missed lodge is hidden deep in the old town near the Muslim quarter. Both dorm and en-suite rooms are comfortable (though check for barking dogs) and the dark but pleasant cafe is a great meeting place. Bathrooms are en suite but simple. Vehicles can't reach this part of the old town.

Barkhor Namchen House

GUESTHOUSE

(Bakuo Longqian Jiating Luguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 679 0125; www.tibetnamchen.com; 2 Barkhor North St; dm/d with shared bathroom ¥40/100; @ 📶)

This small backstreet Tibetan-style guesthouse is a good budget choice. The old-town location just off the Barkhor is near perfect, the staff are friendly, and the (squat) bathrooms and hot showers are super-clean. Rooms are fairly

small with hard beds and some have limited natural light (ask for an upper-floor room) but you can head to the rooftop for fine views.

★ Kyichu Hotel

HOTEL

(Jiqu Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 633 1541; www.kyichuhotel.com; 18 Beijing Donglu; r standard/deluxe from ¥400/500; 📶 @ 📶)

The renovated Kyichu is a friendly and well-run choice that's very popular with repeat travellers to Tibet. Rooms are comfortable and pleasant, with wooden floors, Tibetan carpets and private bathrooms, but the real selling points are the location, the excellent service and – that rarest of Lhasa commodities – a peaceful garden courtyard (with espresso coffee). Reservations recommended.

Yak Hotel

HOTEL

(Ya Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 630 0195; 100 Beijing Donglu; dm ¥50, d ¥450-650, r VIP ¥880; 📶 @ 📶)

The ever-popular Yak has matured in recent years from backpacker hang-out to tour-group favourite, eschewing the cramped dorm rooms (there are three left) for a range of comfortable en-suite rooms. Reservations are recommended. The 5th-floor breakfast bar offers great views of the Potala. Discounts of 30% are standard.

Heritage Hotel

HOTEL

(Guyi Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 691 1333; heritagehotel@hotmail.com; 11 Chaktsal gang Lu; r ¥300-420; 📶 @ 📶)

Located inside the artsy courtyard holding the [Dropeiling](#) craft centre, the friendly Heritage offers 21 stylish rooms featuring stone-walled showers, wooden floors and Tibetan wall hangings. The old-town location is atmospheric if you don't mind a 10-minute walk to most restaurants.

Gorkha Hotel

HOTEL

(Guo'erka Fandian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 634 7000; gorkhahotel@yahoo.com; 47 Linkuo Nanlu, r/ste ¥380/450; @)

This atmospheric Nepali-Tibetan venture is a nice blend of cultures, from the Tibetan-style entry murals and traditional architecture to the photographs of Nepali royalty and Nepali-style restaurant on the roof. The creaking back block housed the Nepali consulate in the 1950s. Other rooms vary considerably, with some dark and small and others modern, so take a look at a few.

House of Shambhala

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

(Zhuomala Gong [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 632 6533; www.shambhalaserai.com; 7 Jiri Erxiang, d incl breakfast ¥675-1015; 🕒 closed mid-Jan to end Apr; @)

Hidden in the old town in a historic Tibetan building, the romantic, boutique-style Shambhala mixes the earthy charm of the old town with a great rooftop lounge and spa treatments, making it perfect for couples who prefer atmosphere over mod-cons. The nine rooms, decorated in natural wood and slate with antique Tibetan furniture, vary only in size.

VISITING MONASTERIES & TEMPLES

Most monasteries and temples extend a warm welcome to foreign guests. Please maintain this good faith by observing the following courtesies:

- ➔ Always circumambulate monasteries, chapels and other religious objects clockwise, thus keeping shrines and chortens (Tibetan stupas) to your right.
- ➔ Don't touch or remove anything on an altar and don't take prayer flags or mani (prayer) stones.
- ➔ Don't take photos during a prayer meeting. At other times always ask permission to take a photo, especially when using a flash. The larger monasteries charge photography fees. If a monk stops you from taking a photograph there's no point getting angry – you don't know what pressures they may be under.
- ➔ Don't wear shorts or short skirts in a monastery, and take your hat off when you go into a chapel.
- ➔ Don't smoke in a monastery.
- ➔ If you have a guide, try to ensure that he or she is Tibetan, as Chinese guides

invariably know little about Tibetan Buddhism or monastery history.

→ Be aware that women are generally not allowed in protector chapels (gonkhang).

Eating

The staple diet in Tibet is *tsampa* (porridge of roasted barley flour) and *bo cha* (yak-butter tea). Tibetans mix the two in their hands to create doughlike balls. *Momos* (dumplings filled with vegetables or yak meat) and *thugpa* (noodles with meat) are also local comfort food. Variations include *thenthuk* (fried noodle squares) as well as *shemdre* (rice, potato and yak-meat curry). See Eating Tibetan for Chinese and Tibetan script for Tibetan dishes.

Lhasa is filled with restaurants serving a range of excellent Nepalese, Chinese, Tibetan and Western dishes. Unless noted otherwise, the places listed here are open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Tashi I

INTERNATIONAL

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Danjielin Lu & Beijing Donglu; dishes ¥12-35; 🕒 8am-10pm; 🍴)

Old Lhasa hands like this unpretentious slice of old Lhasa for its mellow vibe, cheerful service, cheap prices and great location. The food can be hit and miss but there are plenty of breakfast and vegetarian options. Try the *bobis* (chapati-like unleavened bread), which come with seasoned cream cheese and fried vegetables or meat, or some fried apple *momos*.

Woesser Zedroe Tibetan Restaurant

TIBETAN

(Guangming Zezhui Zang Canguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Danjielin Lu; mains ¥10-30)

This is where visiting and local Tibetans come to fill up after a visit to the Jokhang. Add some pleasant traditional seating and a perfect location to the Tibetan vibe and it's a logical lunch stop. The *momos* are recommended, especially the fried yak meat or cheese varieties. Skip the boiled yak hooves and the phenomenally expensive dishes made with cordyceps.

Pentoc Tibetan Restaurant

TIBETAN

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 135 1890 0942; dishes ¥10-20; 🕒 8.30am-9pm)

Charming English-speaking Pentoc runs this local teahouse restaurant after working in Tashi I for many years. Authentically Tibetan, the simple menu includes breakfasts, and Pentoc's is a good place to try home-made Tibetan standards such as *momos* and *shemdre* (rice, potato and yak meat), plus butter tea, *chang* and even *dal bhat*. It's 20m down an alleyway off Beijing Donglu, on the left.

★ Snowland Restaurant

INTERNATIONAL

(Xueyu Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 633 7323; 8 Danjielin Lu; dishes ¥25-45; 🕒 10am-10pm)

This old-timer has a new location but is still an extremely popular place that serves a mix of excellent Continental and Nepali food in very civilised surroundings. The Indian dishes are particularly good, especially the tasty chicken butter masala and giant naan breads. The cakes are the best in town; give the lemon pie our fond regards.

★ New Mandala Restaurant

NEPALI

(Xinmanzhai Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 634 2235; west of Barkhor Sq; dishes ¥20-45; 🕒 8am-10pm)

This Nepali-run restaurant is definitely a winner for its fine views over the Barkhor, either from the mural-filled 2nd floor or the sunny rooftop. The excellent Nepali *thali* (set meal) is a great choice, or try a chicken sizzler. The owner runs the Tashi restaurants in Shigatse and Tsetang.

Drinking

Tibetans consume large quantities of *chang* (a tangy alcoholic drink derived from fermented barley) and *bo cha* (butter tea). The other major beverage is *cha ngamo* (sweet milky tea). Hole-in-the-wall Tibetan teahouses can be

found all over the old town.

★ Ani Sangkhung Nunnery Teahouse

TEAHOUSE

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 29 Linkuo Nanlu; tea ¥3-8; 🕒 8am-5pm)

If you're exploring the old town and need a break, make a beeline for this bustling teahouse in the courtyard of Lhasa's most important (and most politically active) nunnery. The nuns do a great job and the location is superb. Most of the customers these days are Chinese backpackers.

Summit Cafe

CAFE

(Dingfeng Kafeidian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.thetibetsummitcafe.com; 1 Danjielin Lu; coffee ¥20-30, snacks ¥15-50; 🕒 8am-9.30pm; 📶)

With authentic espresso coffee and smoothies, free wi-fi and melt-in-your-mouth cheesecakes, this coffeehouse is mocha-flavoured nirvana (even if they threw us out for asking too many questions!). It's in the courtyard of the **Shangbala Hotel** (Xiangbala Jiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 632 3888; www.tibetshangbalahotel.com; 1 Danjielin Lu; 📶), a stone's throw from the Jokhang, with less-useful branches around town.



Shopping

Whether it's prayer wheels, *thangkas*, sunhats or imported muesli, you shouldn't have a problem finding it in Lhasa. The old town is especially good for buying spiritual souvenirs and pilgrim accessories, with stalls selling prayer flags, amulets, turquoise jewellery, Tibetan boots, cowboy hats, yak butter and juniper incense. Most of this stuff is mass-produced in Nepal. Haggle, haggle, haggle.

★ Dropenling

HANDICRAFTS

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 633 0898; www.tibetcraft.com; 11 Chaktsalgang Lam; 🕒 10am-8pm) 🍃

This impressive nonprofit enterprise aims to bolster traditional Tibetan handicrafts in the face of rising Chinese and Nepali imports. There are two shops; a main showroom in the old town and a smaller but more convenient **branch** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 632 2443; Danjielin Lu; 🕒 10am-7pm) next to Lhasa Kitchen restaurant. Ask about the 90-minute artisan walking tour of Lhasa's old town (¥150 minimum for up to five people).

Outlook Outdoor Equipment

OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

(Kan Fengyun Bianhuan Yuanjing; [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 633 8990; 11 Beijing Donglu)

This reliable trekking shop has Western-quality sleeping bags (¥350 to ¥600), Gore-Tex jackets and tents, plus hard-to-find imported knick-knacks like altimeters, trekking socks and Primus cook sets. Gear is also available for rent.

DON'T MISS

LHASA'S PILGRIM CIRCUITS

Lhasa's four main koras (pilgrim circuits) are well worth walking, especially during the Saga Dawa festival, when the distinction between tourist and pilgrim can become very fine. Remember always to proceed clockwise.

- ➔ **Nangkhor** Encircles the inner precincts of the Jokhang.
- ➔ **Barkhor** Traces the outskirts of the Jokhang.
- ➔ **Lingkhor** You can join the 8km-long circuit anywhere, but the most interesting section is from the southeastern old town to the Potala Palace.
- ➔ **Potala Kora (Tsekhor)** An almost continuous circuit of prayer wheels, chortens (Tibetan stupas), rock paintings and chapels encircles the Potala Palace. Stop for sweet tea en route at the charming teahouse by the three white chortens on the northwest corner.

Information

EMBASSIES

Nepalese Consulate-General

CONSULATE

(Nibo'er Lingshiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 0891 681 3965; www.nepalembassy.org.cn; 13 Luobulingka Beilu; 🕒 10am-noon Mon-Fri)

Issues visas in 24 hours. The current fee for a 15-/30-/90-day visa is ¥175/280/700. Bring a visa photo. Chinese tourists have to get their visas here; foreigners will find it easier to obtain visas on the spot at Kodari, the Nepalese border town.

INTERNET ACCESS

The [Summit Cafe](#), [Rama Kharpo](#) and [Kyichu Hotel](#) offer the most convenient free wi-fi for patrons. Public internet cafes currently require you to present a Chinese ID card.

MEDICAL SERVICES

120 Emergency Centre

HOSPITAL

(Jijiu Zhongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 633 2462; 16 Linkuo Beilu)

Part of People's Hospital. Consultations cost around ¥150.

Tibet Military Hospital

HOSPITAL

(Xizang Junqu Zongyiyuan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 625 3120; Niangre Beilu)

Travellers who have received medical attention confirm that this place is the best option (if you have an option).

MONEY

Bank of China (Main Office)

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Linkuo Xilu; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-4pm Sat & Sun)

West of the Potala, this is the only place to arrange a credit-card advance (3% commission) or a bank transfer. Take a number as you walk in the door. The ATMs outside the building are open 24 hours.

Bank of China (Branch)

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beijing Donglu; 10am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3.30pm Sat & Sun)

The most conveniently-located bank changes cash and travellers cheques without fuss. The currency exchange machine and ATMs dispense cash 24 hours a day. It's just west of the Banak Shol Hotel.

POST

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beijing Donglu; 🕒 9am-8pm)

Buy stamps from the counter in the far-left corner. It's east of the Potala Palace.

PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU

Lhasa City PSB

POLICE

(PSB., Lasa Shi Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎️ 624 8154; 17 Linkuo Beilu; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm Mon-Fri)

Visa extensions of up to a week are rarely given; if they are it's only a day or two before your visa expires and only through your tour agency.

TELEPHONE

China Mobile

TELEPHONE

(Zhongguo Yidong Tongxin [GOOGLE MAP](#); Beijing Donglu; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat)

This is the best place to get a local SIM card for your mobile phone. Choose from data, calls or a mixture of both. It's a fairly complicated procedure and you'll likely need a local ID card so go with your guide. Expect to pay around ¥100 for a month of data.

Getting There & Away

AIR

It's possible to buy flights to Lhasa on some online sites, though others (like www.ctrip.com and www.elong.net) won't sell tickets to foreigners. Most airline offices won't sell you a ticket to Lhasa without a permit.

Leaving Lhasa is a lot simpler, as tickets can be purchased (and changed) without hassle from the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC,, Zhongguo Minhang ☎682 5430; 1 Niangre Lu; 🕒9am-7pm). Credit cards are not accepted. Flight connections continue to all major destinations in China. Note that most tickets are often discounted by up to 30%, especially to Chengdu and Chongqing.

Flights to/from Lhasa include the following destinations:

- ➔ **Ali** ¥2570, three weekly
- ➔ **Beijing** ¥2600, daily
- ➔ **Chengdu** ¥1670, many daily
- ➔ **Chongqing** ¥1800, daily
- ➔ **Guangzhou** ¥2670, daily
- ➔ **Kathmandu** ¥4685, three weekly
- ➔ **Kunming** ¥2130, daily
- ➔ **Lanzhou** ¥1730, three weekly
- ➔ **Shanghai Pudong** (via Xi'an or Chongqing) ¥2930, daily
- ➔ **Xi'an** ¥1820, daily
- ➔ **Xining** ¥1780, daily
- ➔ **Zhongdian** (Shangri-la) ¥1550, daily (summer only)

BUS

Foreigners are currently not allowed to travel around Tibet by public transport and so the bus station will not sell you a ticket. Should this change, there are buses from the long-distance station to Shigatse, Gyantse and beyond.

TRAIN

You can buy train tickets up to 18 days in advance at the Lhasa **train station ticket office** ([GOOGLE MAP](#); 🕒 7am-10pm) on the southwest edge of town or at the central **city ticket office** (Huochebiao Daishouchu [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 19 Deji Zhonglu; commission ¥5; 🕒 8am-5.30pm). Trains to Lhasa arrive in the evening. Departures from Lhasa include the following (all are daily unless noted).

- ➔ **Beijing West** (T28), 1.45pm
- ➔ **Chengdu** (T24), every other day, 7.57am
- ➔ **Chongqing** (T224), every other day, 12.45pm
- ➔ **Guangzhou** (T266), 12.05pm
- ➔ **Lanzhou** (K918), 8.20am
- ➔ **Shanghai** (T166), 11.25am
- ➔ **Xining** (K918, K9802), 8.20am

THE WORLD'S HIGHEST TRAIN RIDE

Since starting in 2006 the Qinghai–Tibet Railway has been the world's highest train ride. With track topping the 5072m Tanggu-la pass and with 80% of the Golmud to Lhasa stretch above 4000m, the railway is an impressive piece of engineering. Its 160km of bridges and elevated track were built over permafrost, so sections of cooling pipes were inserted to help keep the boggy ground frozen in summer. The cost? A cool US\$4.1 billion, not including the 2014 extension to Shigatse. While the Chinese are rightfully proud of this engineering marvel; many Tibetans aren't quite so sure. The railway brings cheaper (Chinese-made) goods and greater economic growth to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), but it also fuels Han migration, delivering one million passengers to Lhasa every year. What the line does best is staple Tibet ever more firmly to the rest of China.

At the time of writing, foreigners needed a copy of their Tibet Tourism Bureau (TTB) permit to buy a ticket. On board passengers have access to piped-in oxygen, although the cabins are not actually pressurised. Soft-sleeper berths come with TVs, and speakers in each cabin make periodic travel announcements about sights along the way. Schedules are designed to let passengers take in the best scenery during daylight hours.

Train departure times and fares to Lhasa (hard sleeper/soft sleeper, lower berth)

from the following cities are listed below, but are subject to change. Note that tickets can be very hard to get in July and August, when many agencies impose a surcharge of around ¥200 to get tickets to Lhasa. Check www.chinatibettrain.com for the latest schedules. Services run daily unless noted:

Beijing West (T27), ¥763/1186, 44 hours, departure 8.09pm

Chengdu (T22/23), ¥709/1101, 44 hours, every other day, 9pm

Chongqing (T222/3), ¥751/1166, 44 hours, every other day, 7.55pm

Guangzhou (T264/5), ¥919/1528, 56 hours, 12.19pm

Lanzhou (K917), ¥550/852, 27 hours, 12.05pm

Shanghai (T164/5), ¥842/1311, 48 hours, 7.52pm

Xining (K917, K9801), ¥511/794, 27 hours, 3.05pm

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Gongkar airport is 65km south of Lhasa. Almost all tourists are picked up by their guide as part of their tour.

Airport buses (¥25, 60 minutes) leave up to 10 times a day between 7.30am and 1.30pm from in front of the CAAC building. The bus is free if you purchased your air ticket at the CAAC office.

A taxi to the airport costs between ¥150 and ¥200.

BICYCLE

A good option for getting around Lhasa once you have acclimatised is to hire a bike. The **Dongcuo International Youth Hostel** (Dongcuo Guoji Qingnian Lushe [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 627 3388; www.yhalasa.com; 10 Beijing Donglu; dm ¥40-60, r without bathroom ¥80-120, s/d/tr ¥160/180/210 ; @📶) rents mountain bikes for ¥30 per day with a ¥200 deposit.

BUS

Buses (¥2) travel frequently between Beijing Donglu and western Lhasa.

TAXI

Taxis charge ¥10 to almost anywhere within the city. Few Chinese drivers know the Tibetan names for even the major sites. Bicycle rickshaws should

charge around ¥5 for short trips but require some extended haggling *before* you set off.

AROUND LHASA

Ganden Monastery

Ganden Monastery

BUDDHIST, MONASTERY

(Gandan Si; admission ¥50; 🕒 dawn-dusk)

About 40km east of Lhasa, this **monastery**, founded in 1417 by Tsongkhapa, was the first Gelugpa monastery. Still the order's heart and soul, it's the one out-of-Lhasa sight to choose if your time is limited. Two *koras* offer astounding views over the braided Kyi-chu Valley and you'll probably meet more pilgrims here than anywhere else. Some 400 monks now study in Ganden and extensive reconstruction has been under way for some time now, alongside a strong police presence.

Nam-tso

The waters of sacred **Nam-tso** (Namucuo; admission May-Oct ¥120, Nov-Apr ¥60) shimmer with an almost transcendent turquoise, framed by strings of prayer flags and snowcapped mountain peaks. Geographically part of the Changtang Plateau, the huge lake is bordered to the north by the Tangula Shan range and to the southeast by 7111m Nyenchen Tanglha peak.

Most travellers head for **Tashi Dor Monastery** in the southeastern corner of the lake. There are some fine walks up to the summits of the twin hills, as well as a short but pilgrim-packed *kora*. The scenery is breathtaking but so is the altitude: at 4730m it's 1100m higher than Lhasa. Do not rush here but instead count on a week in Lhasa at the minimum to avoid acute mountain sickness (AMS).

Sleeping & Eating

Half a dozen charmless metal guesthouses offer food and accommodation between April and October; the best options are the **Holy Lake Namtso Guesthouse** (Shenhu Namucuo Kezhan  0891-611 0388; dm/d ¥60/150-280;  ) or **Namtso Sheep Hotel** (Yang Binguan  139 0890 0990; dm ¥40-80, r ¥160-260; ). Bedding is provided but nights here can be very cold. The paucity of toilets and lack of running water are an E. coli outbreak waiting to happen.

Getting There & Away

Nam-tso is 195km north of Lhasa, a four-hour paved drive over the 5190m Largen-la (la means ‘pass’). It’s much better to visit as an overnight, rather than a day trip. Even if independent travel returns, there is no public transport to the lake.

Samye Monastery

About 170km southeast of Lhasa, set amongst dramatic sand dunes on the north bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) River is **Samye Monastery** (Sangye Si), the first monastery in Tibet. Founded in AD 775 by King Trisong Detsen, Samye is famed not just for its pivotal role in the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, but its unique mandala design: the main hall, or **Utse** (; admission ¥40;  8am-5.30pm), represents Mt Meru, the centre of the universe, while the outer temples represent the oceans, continents, subcontinents and other features of the Buddhist cosmology.

Sleeping & Eating

The **Samye Monastery Guesthouse** (Sangyesi Binguan ;  783 6666; d without bathroom ¥140, d/tr ¥220/280), outside the northeast corner of the monastery walls has the best ensuite doubles in town and clean and fresh

triples without a shower. The **Friendship Snowland Restaurant** (Xueyu Tongbao Luguan, Gangjong Ponda Sarkhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); meals ¥14-40; 🕒 8am-midnight), outside the east gate, serves good Chinese and Tibetan dishes, banana pancakes and milky tea in a cosy Tibetan atmosphere. Dorm rooms (¥50) with real mattresses (not foam) are available upstairs. There are several other decent accommodation options next door.

i Getting There & Away

If you are heading to Everest Base Camp or the Nepal border, a visit here will only add one day to your itinerary. You may have to detour briefly to the nearby town of Tsetang (Zedang) for your guide to pick up a required travel permit. One good option is to take the paved road to Samye via Tsetang and then return via the less-visited north bank road and interesting Dorje Drak Monastery.

GANDEN TO SAMYE HIKE

One of the most popular treks in Tibet is the four- to five-day hike from Ganden Monastery to Samye Monastery, an 80km wilderness walk connecting two of Tibet's most important monasteries. It begins less than 50km from Lhasa and takes you over the high passes of the Shuga-la (5250m) and Chitu-la (5100m). Along the way are subalpine lakes, dwarf forests and meadows, all at high altitude, so it shouldn't be underestimated.

The situation for getting permits for hiking is the same as for normal travel in Tibet. Some agencies will let you arrange your own ad hoc trek (ie horse or yak hire and food), as long as you take a guide and arrange transport to and from the trailheads; others require a fully supported trek. **Wind Horse Adventure** ([MAP](#)

[GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 683 3009; www.windhorsetibet.com; B32 Shenzheng Huayuan, Sera Beilu) in Lhasa is one of the most professional trekking agencies in Lhasa, though it's not the cheapest. For further details of this trek and others in the Everest, Tsurphu, Shalu and Kailash regions, see the trekking chapter of Lonely Planet's Tibet guide.

THE FRIENDSHIP HIGHWAY

The 865km route between Kathmandu and Lhasa, known as the Friendship Hwy, offers without a doubt one of the world's great overland routes. At times sublime, at times unnerving, at times headache-inducing (the highest point is the Gyatso-la pass at 5100m), it's the yellow-brick road of Tibet, leading to some of the most magical destinations on the plateau.

For the sake of simplicity, we've included the side route from Lhasa to Shigatse via Yamdrok-tso and Gyantse in this section. This is the route most travellers take between the two towns and it's by far the more scenic and attraction-packed.

Yamdrok-Tso

On the direct road between Gyantse and Lhasa, you'll probably catch your first sight of coiling **Yamdrok-tso** (Yangzhuo Yongcuo; admission ¥40) from the summit of the Kamba-la pass (4794m). The lake lies several hundred metres below the road, and in clear weather is a fabulous shade of deep turquoise. Far in the northwest distance is the huge massif of Mt Nojin Kangsang (7191m).

The small town of **Nangartse** along the way is essentially a lunch stop, with popular buffets (¥35 to ¥40) at the Lhasa and Yak restaurants, and most people overnight in Gyantse. A 15-minute drive from Nangartse brings you to **Samding Monastery** (Sangding Si admission ¥20), a charming place with scenic views of the surrounding plain and lakes from the simple but pleasant **monastery guesthouse** (Sangding Si Zhaodaisuo ☎139 8993 3664; dm ¥40).

From Nangartse to Gyantse you cross the 5050m Karo-la, site of the highest battle in British imperial history during the Younghusband invasion of 1903–04, where glaciers spill off the side peaks beside a popular **viewpoint** (admission ¥50). Avoid the ridiculous 'admission fee' by stopping further below the pass.

Gyantse

 0892 / Elev 3980m

The traditional town of Gyantse (Jiangzi) is famed for its monumental nine-tiered *chorten*, long considered one of Tibet's architectural wonders. Historically, the town was at the centre of a thriving trans-Himalayan wood and wool trade, and Gyantse carpets were considered the best in Tibet. These days, Gyantse remains one of the less Chinese-influenced settlements, and wandering the backstreets around the monastery affords a rare picture of traditional urban Tibetan life.

Sights & Activities

Gyantse hosts the colourful **Dhama Festival** from 20 to 23 June, featuring traditional Tibetan games like horse-racing, archery, yak-racing and tug-of-war.

Pelkor Chode Monastery

BUDDHIST, MONASTERY

(Baiju Si [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥60;  9am-6.30pm, some chapels closed 1-3pm)

The high red-walled compound in the far north of town houses Pelkor Chode Monastery, founded in 1418. The main assembly hall is the main attraction but there are several other chapels to see. There's a small but visible population of 80 monks and a steady stream of prostrating, praying, donation-offering pilgrims doing the rounds almost any time of the day.

Gyantse Dzong

FORT

([GOOGLE MAP](#);  817 2116; admission ¥30;  9.30am-6.30pm)

The main reason to make the 20-minute climb to the top of the Gyantse Dzong is for the fabulous views of the Pelkor Chode Monastery and Gyantse's whitewashed old town below. Entry to the *dzong* is via a gate just north of the main roundabout. Vehicles can drive about halfway to the top.

DON'T MISS

GYANTSE KUMBUM

★ Gyantse Kumbum

BUDDHIST, CHORTEN

(Jiangzi Qianfota [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission incl in entry to Pelkor Chode)

Commissioned by a Gyantse prince in 1427 and sitting inside the Pelkor Chode complex, the Gyantse Kumbum is the town's foremost attraction. The 32m-high chorten, with its white layers trimmed with decorative stripes and its crown-like golden dome, is awe-inspiring. But the inside is no less impressive, and in what seems an endless series of tiny chapels you'll find painting after exquisite painting (kumbum means '100,000 images').

Sleeping

Gyantse is a popular stop for 4WD tours and has a decent range of accommodation and food along north–south Yingxiong Nanlu.

★ Yeti Hotel

HOTEL

(Yadi Huayuan Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 817 5555; www.yetihotel Tibet.com; 11 Weiguo Lu; d incl breakfast ¥320; ❄️ @ 📶)

The revamped three-star Yeti is easily the best midrange option in Gyantse, offering 24-hour hot water, clean carpeted rooms, quality mattresses and reliable wi-fi, so make sure you reserve in advance. The cafe and excellent lobby restaurant serve everything from yak steak to pizza, alongside one of Tibet's best buffet breakfasts. The manager has plans to open a four-star boutique hotel in 2016.

Jianzang Hotel

HOTEL

(Jianzang Fandian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 817 3720; jianzanghotel@yahoo.com.cn; 14 Yingxiong Nanlu, q per bed ¥50-70, d ¥260; 📶)

The Jianzang, with English-speaking staff, offers rooms in a quiet new courtyard block with en suite rooms and 24-hour hot water. If pressed, staff

will also show you the quad rooms with showers down the hall. The hotel is popular with 4WD groups and the 2nd-floor Tibetan-style restaurant is a cosy option for breakfast or a cup of tea.

Eating

Tashi Restaurant

NEPALI, INTERNATIONAL

(Zhaxi Canting [GOOGLE MAP](#); Yingxiong Nanlu; mains ¥30-40; 🕒 7.30am-11pm)

This Nepali-run place (a branch of Tashi in Shigatse) whips up tasty and filling Indian fare. It also has the usual range of Western breakfasts, Italian and Chinese food. The decor is Tibetan but the Indian movies and Nepali music give it a sub-continental vibe.

Gyantse Kitchen

TIBETAN

(Jiangzi Chufang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Shanghai Zhonglu; dishes ¥30-40; 🕒 7am-midnight)

This local favourite serves Western, Tibetan and Indian favourites, from chicken sizzlers to breakfast pancakes, plus unique fusion dishes like yak pizza. The friendly owner, who may join you for a drink, donates a portion of his income to support poor families in Gyantse.

Getting There & Away

Most people overnight in Gyantse as part of a trip to the Nepal border, Mt Everest, or out west to Mt Kailash. It's only 90km (1½ hours' drive) on to Shigatse.

Shigatse

 0892 / Pop 80,000 / Elev 3850m

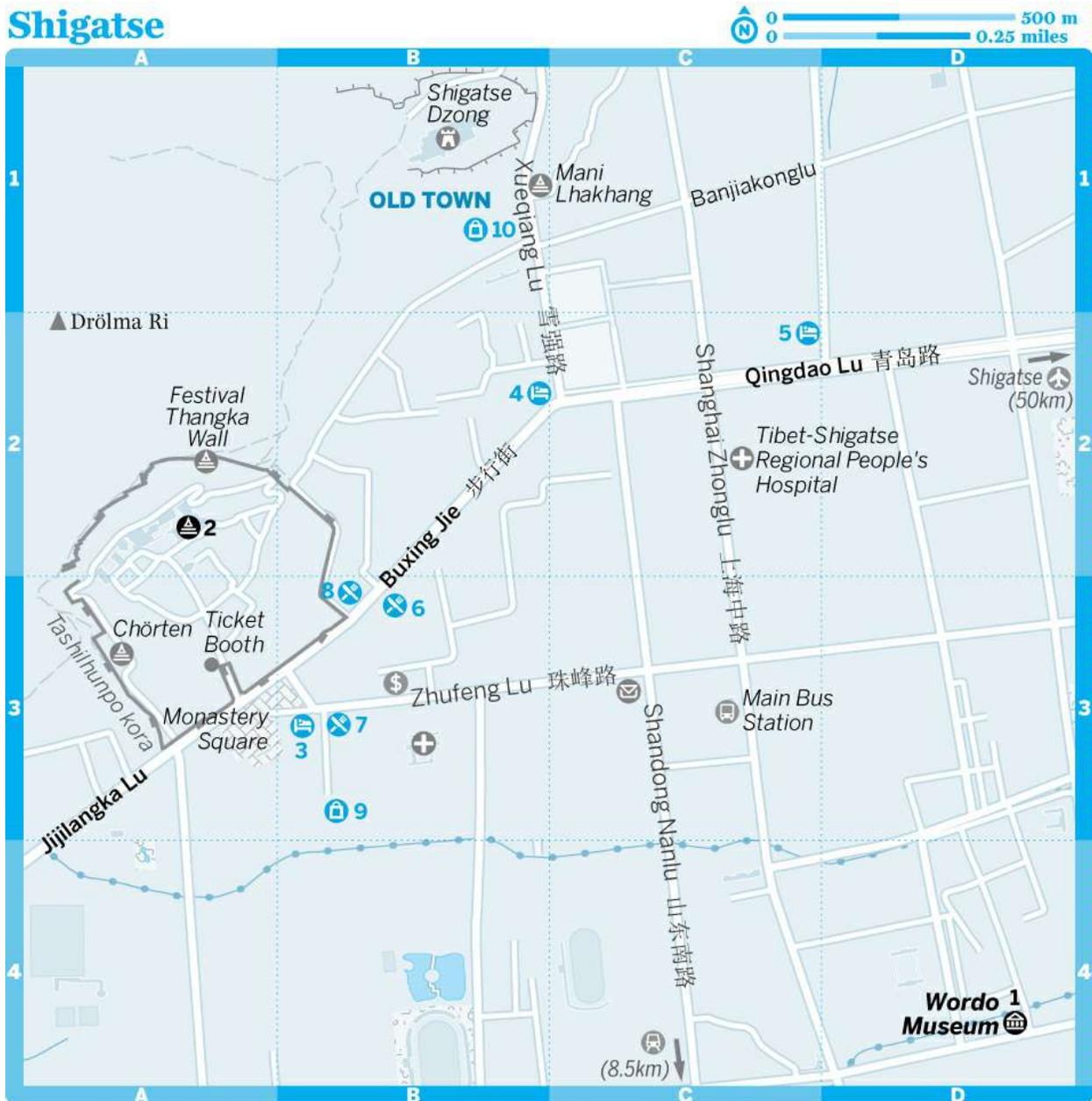
Shigatse (Rikaze) is the second-largest city in Tibet, and like Lhasa has two distinct faces: a Tibetan one and a Chinese one. The Tibetan section, running

northeast of the high-walled Tashilhunpo Monastery, is filled with whitewashed compounds, dusty alleys and prayer-wheel-spinning pilgrims. The modern Chinese section has all the charm of a shopping mall but is where you'll find most restaurants and hotels and other life-support systems. The new airport and train connection to Lhasa looks set to boost Shigatse's economy further.

History

As the traditional capital of the central Tsang region, Shigatse was long a rival with Lhasa for political control of the country. The Tsang kings and later governors exercised their power from the imposing heights of the (recently rebuilt) Shigatse Dzong. Since the time of the Mongol sponsorship of the Gelugpa order, Shigatse has been the seat of the Panchen Lamas, the second-highest-ranking lamas in Tibet. Their centre was and remains the Tashilhunpo Monastery.

Shigatse



Shigatse

📍 Top Sights

1 [Wordo Museum](#)

D4

📍 Sights

2 [Tashilhunpo Monastery](#)

A2

Sleeping

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 3 | Gang Gyan Orchard Hotel | B3 |
| 4 | Tashi Chotar Hotel | B2 |
| 5 | Tsampa Hotel | C2 |

Eating

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 6 | Songtsen Tibetan Restaurant | B3 |
| 7 | Third Eye Restaurant | B3 |
| 8 | Tibet Family Restaurant | B3 |
| | Wordo Kitchen | D4 |

Shopping

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 9 | Tibet Gang Gyen Carpet Factory | B3 |
| 10 | Tibetan Market | B1 |

Sights

Tashilhunpo Monastery

BUDDHIST, MONASTERY

(Zhashilunbu Si [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); admission ¥80;  9am-7pm)

One of the few monasteries in Tibet to weather the stormy seas of the Cultural Revolution, Tashilhunpo remains relatively unscathed. It is a real pleasure to explore the busy cobbled lanes twisting around the aged buildings. Covering 70,000 sq metres, the monastery is now the largest functioning religious institution in Tibet and one of its great monastic sights. The huge golden statue of the Future Buddha is the largest gilded statue in the world.

Sleeping

★ [Gang Gyan Orchard Hotel](#)

HOTEL

(Rikaze Gangjian Binguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 882 0777; 77 Zhufeng Lu; dm ¥50, d with bathroom ¥180; ❄️📶)

Right next to the carpet factory is this well-run hotel offering modern, recently renovated Western-style rooms with comfortable beds and clean bathrooms with hot water. Each room has its own wi-fi router. Dorm rooms give access to shared hot showers. Best of all is the location, less than 100m from the entrance of the Tashilhunpo Monastery and next to Shigatse's best restaurants.

Tsampa Hotel

HOTEL

(Zangba Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 866 7888; 9 Renbu Lu; d/tr ¥280/350; ❄️📶)

This three-star Tibetan place opened in 2012 and is a good choice. The rooms are fresh, modern and carpeted with modern bathrooms and lots of Tibetan touches, including a good Tibetan restaurant.

Gesar Hotel

HOTEL

(Gesa'er Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 880 0088; Longjiang Lu; r standard/deluxe ¥380/500; ❄️@📶)

This new four-star giant has clean and modern rooms, each decorated with its own thanka of Gesar Ling, and a pleasant rooftop teahouse, though the location in the southwestern suburbs is a bit of a drag. The deluxe rooms are huge but the glass-walled bathrooms won't work unless you and your room mate are very close friends.

Tashi Chotar Hotel

HOTEL

(Zhaxi Quta Dajiudian [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 883 0111; www.zxqthotel.com; 2 Xueqiang Lu; d/tr ¥780/980; ❄️@📶)

A new and comfortable four-star place with Tibetan decor, internet cables, nice modern bathrooms and a good central location. Single rooms come with a computer. Rates include breakfast and can dip as low as ¥350 for a double.

Eating

★ Tibet Family Restaurant

TIBETAN

(Fengsheng Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Phuntsho Serzikhang; dishes ¥15-30; 🕒 8am-10pm)

This teahouse-style Tibetan place is our favourite for its excellent food, nice outdoor seating and friendly clientele of locals. It also boasts the perfect people-watching location, right at the end of the monastery kora. The food runs from simple and fresh vegetable options to more adventurous yak-meat dishes, all great value.

★ Third Eye Restaurant

NEPALI

(Xuelian Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 883 8898; Zhufeng Lu; dishes ¥35-50; 🕒 9am-10pm)

A Nepali-run place that is popular with both locals and tourists. Watch as locals sip *thugpa* (noodles) while travellers treat their taste buds to the city's best Indian curries. It's upstairs, next to the Gang Gyan Shigatse Orchard Hotel.

★ Wordo Kitchen

TIBETAN

(Wu'erduo Chufang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 882 3994; Zhade Donglu; mains ¥15-70)

For something a bit special, head out to this stylish restaurant and museum in the southeast of town. The pleasant Tibetan seating is decorated with old prayer wheels and yak butter pots. Ask for Kelsang to explain the Tibetan menu and make sure you head upstairs to the **museum** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📞 139 8992 0067; Wordo Kitchen, Zhade Donglu; admission ¥20, for restaurant customers ¥15; 🕒 9.30am-11pm) before or after dinner. Dishes range from curried potatoes to more ambitious braised yak ribs.

Songtsen Tibetan Restaurant

INTERNATIONAL

(Songzan Xizang Canting [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Buxing Jie; dishes ¥30-45; 🕒 9am-10pm)

Popular Nepali-style place that serves hearty breakfasts, yak burgers and curries to Land Cruiser groups. It has a great location on the 'pedestrian-only' street, offering good views of the pilgrims ambling past.

Shopping

The **Tibetan market** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); Bangjiakong Lu) in front of the Tenzin Hotel is a good place to pick up souvenirs such as prayer wheels, rosaries and *thangkas*. There are also dozens of souvenir and craft shops along the pedestrian-only street (Buxing Jie). Bargain hard.

Tibet Gang Gyen Carpet Factory

CARPETS

(Xizang Gangjian Ditan Chang [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); www.tibetgang-gyencarpet.com; 9 Zhufeng Lu; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat)

Beside the Gang Gyan Orchard Hotel, 100m down a side alley, this workshop hires and trains impoverished women to weave high quality wool carpets. Upon arrival you'll be directed to the workshop, where you can watch the 80 or so women work on the carpets, singing as they weave, dye, trim and spin; you're free to take photos.

Information

Bank of China (branch)

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#); Zhufeng Lu; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

A short walk from the Gang Gyan Orchard Hotel, this useful branch changes travellers cheques and cash and has a 24-hour ATM outside.

China Post

POST OFFICE

(Zhongguo Youzheng [GOOGLE MAP](#); cnr Shandong Lu & Zhufeng Lu)

It's possible to send international letters and postcards from here, but not international parcels.

Public Security Bureau

POLICE

(PSB, Gong'anju [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 882 2240; Jilin Nanlu; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat & Sun)

Your guide will likely have to stop here for half an hour to register and/or pick up an alien's travel permit for the Friendship Hwy or western Tibet. It's in the southeastern suburbs, near the Gesar Hotel.

Getting There & Around

Foreigners are currently not allowed to take any of the plentiful transport to Lhasa (five hours), Gyantse (1½ hours), Saga, Sakya, Lhatse and various other points along the Friendship Hwy.

Shigatse's new airport, 50km east of the city has a twice-weekly service to Chengdu (¥1880). The train line extension from Lhasa was inaugurated in late 2014.

A taxi anywhere in Shigatse costs ¥10.

Sakya

☎ 0892 / Elev 4280m

In the 13th century, the monastic town of Sakya (Sajia) emerged as an important centre of scholarship. Less than a century later the Sakya lamas, with Mongol military support, became the short-lived rulers of all Tibet. Still today the local colouring of buildings – ash grey with red and white vertical stripes – symbolises both the Rigsum Gonpo (the trinity of Bodhisattvas) and Sakya authority. For travellers the magnificent, brooding monastery, the visiting bands of pilgrims and the surrounding traditional village make Sakya a real highlight. It's one of our favourites and well worth an overnight stop.

Sights

★ Sakya Monastery

BUDDHIST, MONASTERY

(admission ¥45; 🕒 9am-6pm)

The immense, grey, thick-walled southern monastery is one of Tibet's most impressive constructed sights, and one of the largest monasteries. Established in 1268, it was designed defensively, with watchtowers on each corner of its high walls. Inside, the dimly lit hall exudes a sanctity and is on a scale that few others can rival. As usual, morning is the best time to visit as more chapels are open.

Sleeping & Eating

Manasarovar Sakya Hotel

HOTEL

(Shenhu Sajia Binguan 📞 824 2555; 1 Gesang Xilu; d/tr ¥200/280)

The renovated rooms at this modern hotel are spacious and comfortable, with hot-water bathrooms and electric blankets, making it the best value in town.

Sakya Monastery Restaurant

TIBETAN

(Sajia Si Canting dishes ¥7-15; 🕒 8am-9pm)

This Tibetan joint is owned by the monastery and serves fried rice, *thugpa* (noodles), dumplings and lashings of milk tea. It's cosy and always full of characters.

Sakya Farmer's Taste Restaurant

TIBETAN

(Sajia Nongmin Meishiting 📞 824 2221; dishes ¥10-35)

Looking over the main street, this Tibetan place has a cosy atmosphere amid Tibetan decor. The green-jacketed waiters are friendly and will help explain the various Tibetan dishes available.

Getting There & Away

Sakya is 25km off the Friendship Hwy. Most people stay overnight at Sakya

en route to the Everest region.

Rongphu Monastery & Everest Base Camp

Before heading to the Nepal border, many travellers make the diversion to iconic **Everest Base Camp** (EBC; 5150m). The clear vistas (if you are lucky) of Everest's sheer North Face are far superior to anything you'll see in Nepal. Everest is known locally as Qomolangma (also spelt Chomolungma), or as Zhufeng in Chinese. Because EBC is a prime target for political protests, the Chinese army maintains a strong presence up here.

Vehicles can drive on a gravel road to **Rongphu Monastery** (admission ¥25), at 5000m reputedly the highest in the world, and then proceed just a few kilometres more to a ramshackle collection of nomad tents set near a China Post kiosk (the highest post office in the world). From here it's a one-hour walk (recommended if you aren't suffering from the altitude) or shuttle-bus ride (¥25) up a winding dirt road to EBC. Tourists are not allowed to visit the expedition tents of actual base camp.

EBC is about 90km off the Friendship Hwy over the 5050m Pang-la. Before you set off you'll have to stop in Baber (new Tingri), or old Tingri if coming from Nepal, to pay the Qomolangma National Park entrance fee of ¥400 vehicle and ¥180 per person. Clarify in advance with your agency who pays what here.

If you are headed from Everest to the Nepal border, note that the dirt road to Tingri via Zombuk village and the Lamna-la offers a handy shortcut.

Sleeping

Rongphu Monastery Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE

(Rongbu Si Zhaodaisuo  136 2892 1359; dm ¥60, tw without bathroom ¥200)

The monastery-run guesthouse at Rongphu is probably the most comfortable place to stay at Everest. The private rooms with proper beds tend to be

warmer than the tent camp and there's certainly more privacy. The best value is a bed in a four-bed room. All rooms share the pit toilets. Come the evenings everyone huddles around the yak dung stove in the cosy restaurant (dishes ¥25 to ¥40).

Tent Camp

TENTS

(dm ¥60; 🕒 end Mar–mid-Oct)

The main alternative to staying at Rongphu is this motley collection of yak-hair tents. Don't expect much privacy: tents sleep six people (your host and perhaps one or two of their relatives will be sharing the space with you) in an open area around the central stove. Even with the fire going it's still bloody cold. Simple meals (¥25) and drinks are available.

Kangjong Hotel

HOTEL

(Xueyu Binguan 📞 139 8992 3995; Baber; d with bathroom ¥220-280, d without bathroom ¥80; 📶)

The new blocks have good quality carpeted rooms, clean bathrooms and hot water. Rooms in the older block above the road, with toilets down the hall (no showers), are dim and scruffy. The attached restaurant (dishes ¥20 to ¥50) is a good place to kick back with your guide over a thermos of sweet tea. The hotel is in the middle of town at the crossroads to Shegar.

Tingri to Zhangmu

The huddle of mudbrick buildings that comprises the old village of **Tingri** (Dingri; 4250m) now spreads about a kilometre down the Friendship Hwy. The views of the towering Himalayan peaks of Mt Everest (8848m) and Cho Oyu (8153m) across the sweeping plain make up for the truckstop feel.

Ruins on the hill overlooking Tingri are all that remain of the **Tingri Dzong**. This fort was destroyed in a late-18th-century Nepalese invasion. Many more ruins on the plains between Shegar and Nyalam shared the same history.

There are several Tibetan guesthouses and restaurants on the main highway, including the **Hehu Binguan** (☎136 4892 2335; dm ¥50-80, d with bathroom ¥260), a good place in the centre with good mattresses in the pricier dorms and rooms with hot water bathrooms, plus the best restaurant in town.

From Tingri down to Zhangmu on the Nepal border is an easy half-day's drive of just under 200km. If you are coming the other way you should break the trip into two days to aid acclimatisation. The highest point along the paved road is the Tong-la pass (5140m), 95km from Tingri, from where you can see a horizon of 8000m Himalayan peaks.

The one-street town of **Nyalam** (Nielamu) is about 30km from the Nepal border and a usual overnight spot for 4WD trips from Nepal. The **Nyalam Nga-Dhon Guesthouse** (Nielamu Adun Luguan ☎827 2113; 2 Chongdui Lu; d without bathroom ¥100, d with bathroom ¥200-300) in the centre offers the best range of rooms, while the new **Shishapangma Hotel International** (☎136 5892 8053; r with shared bathroom ¥250-400, d ¥350, ste ¥600-700) is the most luxurious hotel this side of Shigatse. Nyalam's accommodation can get booked out with Indian groups returning from Kailash.

After Nyalam, the road drops like a stone into a lush, deep forested gorge (trees!) lined with spectacular waterfalls, many of which are hundreds of metres high. You can feel the syrupy air getting thicker as you descend towards the subcontinent.

Zhangmu

☎0892 / Elev 2250m

The frenetic border town of Zhangmu (Khasa in Nepalese, Dram in Tibetan) hangs from the forested slopes above the tortuous final kilometres of the Friendship Hwy. The smells of curry and incense float in the air, and the babbling sound of fast-flowing streams cuts through the piercing squeals of Tata truck brakes. After time on the barren high plateau, it's an assault on the senses and a sign that the fabulous chaos of the subcontinent is just a stone's

throw away.

Sleeping & Eating

Sherpa Hotel

HOTEL

(Xia'erba Jiudian [GOOGLE MAP](#);  874 2098; d without/with bathroom ¥120/230; )

The pink-painted rooms are clean (if a little small) at this friendly hotel, and hot water is available most of the time in the simple bathrooms. Back rooms are bright and sunny with valley views.

Property Hotel

HOTEL

(Caiyuan Binguan [GOOGLE MAP](#);  874 5888; d ¥360;   )

Midrange Land Cruiser groups like this modern, new place for its clean, good quality (but smallish) rooms, en-suite bathrooms and decent breakfasts.

Information

Bank of China

BANK

(Zhongguo Yinhang [GOOGLE MAP](#);  9.30am-1pm & 3.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat & Sun)

This branch at the top end of town will change cash and travellers cheques into yuan and also yuan into dollars, euros or pounds, but doesn't deal in Nepali rupees. The ATM accepts Mastercard, Maestro, Cirrus, Visa and Plus cards.

BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO NEPAL

Your transport will take you 8km down switchbacks to **Chinese immigration** ( 10am-5.30pm, sometimes closed 1.30-3.30pm) next to the Friendship Bridge and Nepal border post at Kodari. If for some reason you don't have transport, orange and blue taxis run this stretch for ¥10 per person.

At **Nepali immigration** ( 8.30am-4pm) in Kodari, you can get a visa for the same price as in Lhasa (US\$25/40/100 for a 15-/30-/90-day visa, or the equivalent in

rupees). If you don't have a passport photo you'll be charged an extra US\$5. Nepal is 2¼ hours behind Chinese time.

There are four daily buses to Kathmandu – the last bus at 1.30pm is express – or take a bus to Barabise (three hours, last bus 5pm) and change. The easier option is to share a private vehicle with other travellers (Rs 4500 per car, or Rs 1500 per seat; four hours). You'll struggle to find a driver after 5pm.

WESTERN TIBET

Tibet's far wild west, known in Tibetan as Ngari, has few permanent settlers, but is nevertheless a lodestone to a billion pilgrims from three major religions (Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism). They are drawn to the twin spiritual power places of Mt Kailash and Lake Manasarovar, two of the most legendary and far-flung destinations in the world.

Ngari is a huge, expansive realm of salt lakes, Martian-style deserts, grassy steppes and snowcapped mountains. It's a mesmerising landscape, but also intensely remote: a few tents and herds of yaks may be all the signs of human existence one comes across in half a day's drive. As ever, the transport infrastructure is changing fast. The recent paving of the southern road to Kailash has made the week-long drive from Lhasa a lot more comfortable and it's now even possible to fly back from Ali.

Warm clothes are essential on any trip to the region, even in summer, and a sleeping bag is recommended. The three-day *kora* around Mt Kailash can be done without a tent but bringing one will give you added flexibility and comfort.

Accommodation along the way ranges from basic guesthouses to chilly hotel rooms. Few have attached bathrooms but most towns have at least one public bathhouse. Most towns now have well-stocked supermarkets, internet cafes and Chinese restaurants, though it's still worth bringing along a few treats, such as peanuts, chocolate bars and dehydrated food from home.

The only places to change money in Ngari are banks in Ali, and it's much easier to change US dollars as cash rather than travellers cheques. It's best just to bring what you expect to spend in renminbi.

When to Go

May, June and from mid-September to early October are probably the best times for travel in the region. The summer months of July and August see the bulk of the rain, though it's still very limited. The Drolma-la pass on the Mt Kailash *kora* is usually blocked with snow from late October or early November until early April. The festival of Saga Dawa during May or June brings hundreds of pilgrims and tourists to the mountain.

Permits

You'll need a fistful of permits to visit Ngari: a TTB permit, Alien Travel Permit, military permit, foreign affairs permit etc. The travel agency that organises your 4WD trip will need at least two weeks to arrange these.

Getting There & Away

Four-wheel-drive trips to Mt Kailash require a minimum 14 days. Add on three days to explore the Guge Kingdom at Tsaparang. One good option is to exit at Zhangmu, detouring from Saga to the Friendship Hwy via the beautiful lake of Peiku-tso. For details of the remoter and longer return route via the northern highway, see Lonely Planet's *Tibet* guide.

Lhatse to Kailash

From Lhasa most travellers take the faster, direct southern route to Ngari. It's a two- or three-day trip along the paved Friendship Hwy to the town of **Lhatse** (Lazi), where there are several hotels, including the friendly budget **Lhatse Tibetan Farmers Hotel** (Lazi Nongmin Luguan 📞832 2333; dm ¥25-45, d without/with bathroom ¥260/90), and the excellent new mid-range **Dewang Manor** (Dewang Zhuangyuan 📞139 8902 7775; d ¥250; 📶📶).

Turning off the Friendship Hwy just after Lhatse, Hwy 219 continues on a mostly paved road to the hamlet of **Raka**, near where the lesser-travelled

northern route branches north. There are simple guesthouses in Raka but most groups continue 60km west to the larger military town of **Saga** (Saga), which has internet cafes and hot public showers. The **Saga Hotel** (Saga Binguan ☎ 0892-820 2888; d with bathroom ¥380-420; 📶 @) is at the town crossroads and has hot showers and Western bathrooms, or try the budget-option **Ali Zhaodaisuo** (Ali Zhaodaisuo tr per bed ¥70) across the road.

It's possible to reach Darchen in one long day (490km) from Saga, though many groups split the scenic ride into two days. This also helps with the acclimatisation process. After Lhatse the altitude never drops below 4000m. There are simple guesthouses in both old Zhongba and grubby **Paryang** (Payang). From Paryang to Hor Qu is 200km.

In **Hor Qu** (Huo'er), 44km before Mt Kailash, you now have to park your vehicle and take a mandatory 'eco bus' (¥150) on to Darchen (for Mt Kailash) or Lake Manasarovar.

Mt Kailash

Known in Tibetan as Kang Rinpoche, or 'Precious Jewel of Snow', the hulking pyramidal-shaped Mt Kailash (Gang Renbozhai Feng; 6714m) seldom needs to be pointed out to travellers: it just dominates the landscape. For Buddhists, Kailash is the abode of Demchok, a wrathful manifestation of Sakyamuni. For Hindus it is the domain of Shiva, the Destroyer and Transformer.

It's not hard to see why Kailash became associated long ago with the myth of a great mountain. More surprising is that this mountain was said to be the source of the four major rivers of South Asia: and most astonishing that the legends are more or less true. The drainage system around Kailash and Lake Manasarovar is in fact the source of the Karnali (a major tributary of the Ganges), the Brahmaputra, Indus and Sutlej Rivers. A visit to Kailash puts you squarely in one of the geographical and spiritual centres of the world.

Activities

Many pilgrims are often happy enough just to gaze at the southern face of Kailash (scarred in such a way that it resembles a swastika – a Buddhist and Hindu symbol of spiritual strength). But for Tibetans and most foreign travellers the purpose of coming here is to complete a *kora* around the mountain.

The *kora* begins in grubby **Darchen** (Ta'erqin; 4560m), and takes (on average) three days to complete (though most Tibetans do it in one 15-hour day). The *kora* is not a climb to the top, but a walk around the central peak. The highest point is the 5630m Drolma-la pass, though no point is below 4600m.

The first day is a 20km walk (six to seven hours) from Darchen to Dirapuk Monastery. The ascent is minimal, which allows you to take your time and enjoy the otherworldly landscape of the Lha-chu river valley. The second day is the hardest, as it involves the ascent to the Drolma-la pass, the steep descent down the pass to the Lham-chu Khir river valley, and hike to the Zutul-puk Monastery. Expect to take eight hours to complete this 18km stretch. The final day is a simple 14km (three hours) walk back to Darchen. Fit walkers can cover the *kora* in two days if they wish, especially as jeep tracks are nibbling away at the beginning and end of the walk.

Any reasonably fit and acclimatised person should be able to complete the three-day walk, but come prepared with warm, waterproof clothing and equipment. Local guides and porters are available in Darchen for ¥150 a day. Larger groups often hire yaks to carry their supplies.

Your guide will register your group with the **PSB** (PSB,, Gong'anju) in Darchen. There is a ¥150 Kailash entry fee.

Sleeping & Eating

At the end of each day's walk there is dormitory accommodation (¥60-70) at the local monasteries or in a nearby guesthouse, though it's advisable to carry

a tent if walking during July and August or the popular Saga Dawa festival. Instant noodles, tea and beer are available at nomad tents along the way, but bring hot drinks and snacks with you.

Most travellers spend a night in Darchen before the *kora*. Many guesthouses offer basic accommodation (no running water, outdoor pit toilets) and there is now at least one three-star hotel (with wi-fi!). There are a couple of supermarkets, a public shower and patchy internet access.

Pilgrim Hotel (Chaosheng Binguan 📞298 0833; dm ¥60) donates part of its profits to local monasteries; otherwise choose the **Lhasa Holyland Guesthouse** (Lasa Shengdi Kangsang Luguan 📞139 8907 0818; d ¥70-80) or the cosy **Sun & Moon Guesthouse** (Ninda Dronkhang,, Riyue Binguan 📞260 7102; q per bed ¥60-70) in the far top (northwest) end of town, next to the Tibet Medical and Astrological Institute (Menkhang).

WORTH A TRIP

THE LOST KINGDOM OF GUGE

One worthwhile detour from Darchen is to the surreal ruins of the Guge Kingdom at **Tsaparang** (Guge Gucheng; joint admission ticket with Tholing ¥200, optional guide per person ¥10). The ruins, which seem to grow like a honeycomb out of the barren hills, were once the centre of one of Tibet's most prosperous kingdoms. The tunnels and caves are great fun to explore and the chapels offer superb examples of Kashmiri-influenced mural art. A trip here will add three days to your itinerary, but is worth it to see some outstanding scenery and one of Asia's little-known wonders.

From Darchen it's a day's drive to **Zanda** (Zhada), the nearest town to Tsaparang (18km away), and home to spectacular Tholing Monastery.

Lake Manasarovar

After their *kora*, most travellers head to Lake Manasarovar (Mapang Xiongcuo) or Mapham Yum-tso (Victorious Lake) to rest and gaze at the sapphire-blue waters and perfect snowcapped mountain backdrop. The lake is the most venerated in Tibet and has its own five-day *kora*, accessible by jeep

track. The admission fee is ¥150.

Picturesque **Chiu village**, site of Chiu Monastery, overlooks the northwestern shore of the lake, and here you'll find a half-dozen identical friendly **guesthouses** (dm ¥50-60), some right down at the water's edge. Basic meals are available. To get to the lake you may have to park at Hor Qu and take the mandatory 'eco' bus (¥150).

Understand China

CHINA TODAY

A mix of optimism and deep-rooted social and economic problems, China continues to position itself at the centre of world trade – but will it last?

HISTORY

China has, for much of its history, been in conflict either internally or with outsiders.

PEOPLE OF CHINA

China is a huge bundle of different ethnicities, a consequence of sharing borders with over a dozen nations.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Although each faith is distinct, some fascinating cross-pollination goes on between Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and even Christianity in China.

CHINESE CUISINE

Some people visit China for the food alone. We can't blame them.

ARTS & ARCHITECTURE

China is custodian of one of the world's richest cultural and artistic legacies.

CHINA'S LANDSCAPES

China is home to the world's highest mountain range, one of the planet's hottest deserts and a colossal web of waterways.

MARTIAL ARTS OF CHINA

Chinese martial arts are deeply impregnated with religious and philosophical values – and perhaps a morsel of magic.

China Today

A highly idiosyncratic mix of can-do entrepreneurs, inward-looking Buddhists, textbook Marxists, overnight millionaires, the out-of-pocket, leather-faced farmers, unflagging migrant workers and round-the-clock McJobbers, China today is as multifaceted as its challenges are diverse. From the outside, China's autocratic decision-making may suggest national uniformity, but things are actually more in a state of controlled, and not so controlled, chaos.

Best in Print

Country Driving: A Chinese Road Trip (Peter Hessler) Hessler's amusing and insightful journey at the wheel around the highways and byways of China.

Tiger Head, Snake Tails (Jonathan Fenby) Compelling account of contemporary China's myriad challenges and contradictions.

Diary of a Madman & Other Stories (Lu Xun) Astonishing tales from the father of modern Chinese fiction.

Best on Film

Still Life (Jia Zhangke; 2005) Bleak and hauntingly beautiful portrayal of a family devastated by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam.

Raise the Red Lantern (Zhang Yimou; 1991) Exquisitely fashioned tragedy from the sumptuous palette of the Fifth Generation.

In the Mood for Love (Wong Kar-Wai; 2000) Seductive, stylishly costumed and slow-burning Hong Kong romance.

New Superpower or the Next Japan?

Tipped to overtake the US economy sometime before 2020, China can

readily seem to be assuming the mantle of superpower. The rash of books trumpeting China's ascendancy echoes the glut of titles in the late 1980s that celebrated the rise of its island neighbour. While the Chinese economy effortlessly streaked past Japan's in 2010 and today gradually fills the United States' rear-view mirror, the unstoppable juggernaut of the Chinese economy could be hitting some hefty potholes, if not nearing the end of the road. Some financial analysts foresee China slewing into a long era of stagnation similar to that which depressed Japan after its asset bubble burst in the early 1990s. A combination of bad debt accumulation, imbalanced growth, downward property prices, a burdensome overcapacity and overdependence on exports could commence a persistent squeeze to the brakes on economic growth. Resolving bad debt and sorting out the shaky banking sector and the deeply undercapitalised financial system may be central to any longterm resolution but a real estate slump could limit options, while inequality in China remains among the most severe in the world.

To Boldly Go

In December 2013, the Chang'e 3 probe landed on the surface of the moon, marking the first lunar landing since 1976. Carrying the Yutu (Jade Rabbit) lunar rover, the mission also marked China's coming of age as a space power. Since the 1960s, moon landings have been a superpower hallmark: China's foray into the ether is as much about national standing as it is about scientific research. Rivalries notwithstanding – India's unmanned Mars probe achieved Martian orbit in 2014 – China wants to show the world it has both the ambition and the sophistication to pull a (jade) rabbit from its hat. The space program also casts China as an exploratory power that is willing to take risks, in an arena littered with noble failures. China also has a working space station – the Tiangong-1, a precursor to a much larger station in the pipeline – and plans to put a man on the moon and a rover on Mars (despite a Chinese probe to the Red Planet ending in failure in 2011).

Troubled Waters & Restive Borderlands

China's dazzling economic trajectory over the last two decades has been watched with awe by the West and increasing unease by the Middle Kingdom's neighbours. By virtue of its sheer size and population, a dominant China has been ruffling some East Asian feathers. A growing – and seemingly intractable – spat over the contested and uninhabited Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands to the Japanese) has soured relations between China and Japan. Close to shipping lanes, surrounded by well-stocked fishing grounds and near to the Chunxiao gas field, the islands have aggravated Chinese and Japanese nationalism and overseen a growing mutual antipathy. Occasionally violent anti-Japanese protests in China have been the result. A festering dispute has also seen growing tensions between China and Vietnam, the Philippines and other nations over the control of waters, islands, reefs, atolls and rocky outcrops in the South China Sea. While keeping an eye on maritime issues, at home President Xi Jinping has to deal with growing unrest in Xinjiang province, which has led to terror attacks in both Yunnan and in front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing, as well as a spate of brazen bombings and attacks in Xinjiang itself. The increasing Uighur disquiet has prompted an increasingly harsh security clampdown from Beijing, which may threaten to inflame sentiments further.

Population

1.35 BILLION

GDP (PPP)

\$13.39 TRILLION

GDP per capita

\$9800

Labour Force

797.6 MILLION

Unemployment

4.1%

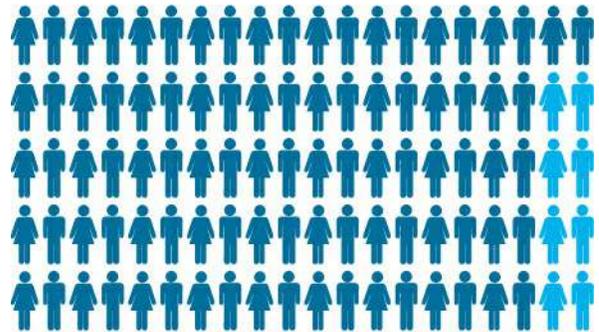
Highest Point

MT EVEREST (8848M)

Annual Alcohol Consumption

5.2L PER PERSON

if China were 100 people

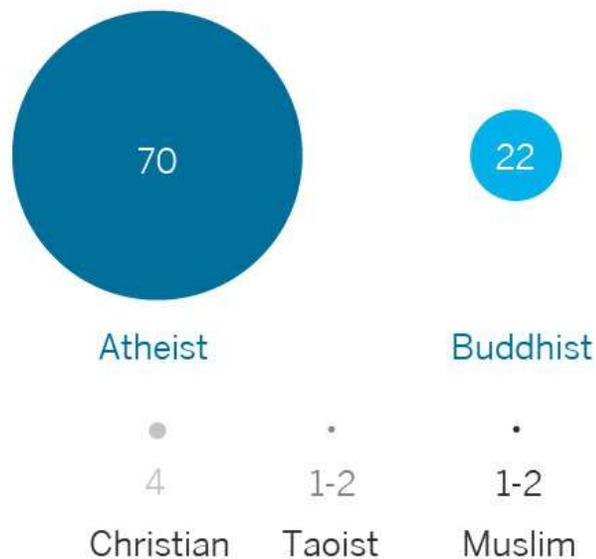


92 would be Han Chinese

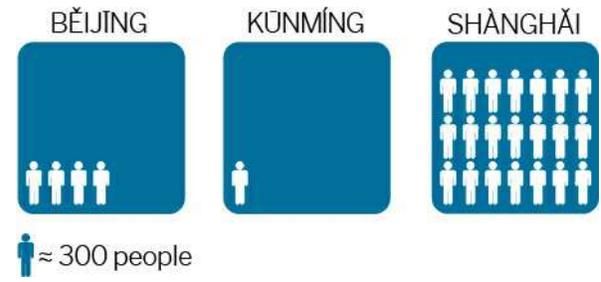
8 would be ethnic minorities, eg Zhuang, Manchu, Uighur etc

belief systems

(% of population)



population per sq km



History

The epic sweep of China's history paints a perhaps deceptive impression of prolonged epochs of peace occasionally convulsed by break-up, internecine division or external attack. Yet for much of its history China has been in conflict either internally or with outsiders. Although China's size and shape has also continuously changed – from tiny beginnings by the Yellow River (Huang He) to the subcontinent of today – an uninterrupted thread of history runs from its earliest roots to the full flowering of Chinese civilisation. Powerful bonds tie the Chinese of today with their ancestors of 5000 or 6000 years ago, creating the longest-lasting complex civilisation on earth.

Evidence from Han tombs suggests that a popular item of cuisine was a thick vegetable and meat stew, and that flavour enhancers such as soy sauce and honey were also used.

From Oracle Bones to Confucius

The earliest 'Chinese' dynasty, the Shang, was long considered apocryphal. However, archaeological evidence – cattle bones and turtle shells in Henan covered in mysterious scratches, recognised by a scholar as an early form of Chinese writing – proved that a society known as the Shang developed in central China from around 1766 BC. The area it controlled was tiny – perhaps 200km across – but Chinese historians have argued that the Shang was the first Chinese dynasty. By using Chinese writing on 'oracle bones', the dynasty marked its connection with the Chinese civilisation of the present day.

Sometime between 1050 and 1045 BC, a neighbouring group known as the Zhou conquered Shang territory. The Zhou was one of many states competing for power in the next few hundred years but developments during

this period created some of the key sources of Chinese culture that would last till the present day. A constant theme of the first millennium BC was conflict, particularly the periods known as the ‘Spring and Autumn’ (722–481 BC) and ‘Warring States’ (475–221 BC).

The Chinese world in the 5th century BC was both warlike and intellectually fertile, in a way similar to ancient Greece during the same period. From this disorder emerged the thinking of Confucius (551–479 BC), whose system of thought and ethics underpinned Chinese culture for 2500 years. A wandering teacher, Confucius dispensed lessons in personal behaviour and statecraft, advocating an ordered and ethical society obedient towards hierarchies and inclined towards ritual. Confucius' desire for an ordered and ethical world was a far cry from the warfare of his times.

ANCIENT ICONS

Tick off the most iconic sights dating from the very birth of the Chinese nation through the nation's imperial heydays.

[The Terracotta Warriors](#) Silent and awe-inspiring emissaries from the dawn of China's imperial past.

[The Great Wall](#) Snaking across north China, mounting peaks, plunging into valleys and collapsing splendidly into ruin.

[The Forbidden City](#) Ornate and privileged bastion of the Ming and Qing dynasty emperors at the heart of Beijing.

[Mogao Caves](#) China's most splendid collection of Buddhist art.

So far, some 7000 soldiers in the famous Terracotta Army have been found near Xi'an. The great tomb of the first emperor still remains unexcavated, although it is thought to have been looted soon after it was built.

Early Empires

The Warring States period ended decisively in 221 BC. The Qin kingdom conquered other states in the central Chinese region and Qin Shi Huang proclaimed himself emperor. The first in a line of dynastic rulers that would

last until 1912, later histories portrayed Qin Shi Huang as particularly cruel and tyrannical, but the distinction is dubious: the ensuing Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) adopted many of the short-lived Qin's practices of government.

Qin Shi Huang oversaw vast public works projects, including walls built by some 300,000 men, connecting defences into what would become the Great Wall. He unified the currency, measurements and written language, providing the basis for a cohesive state.

Establishing a trend that would echo through Chinese history, a peasant, Liu Bang (256–195 BC), rose up and conquered China, founding the Han dynasty. The dynasty is so important that the name Han still refers to ethnic Chinese and their language (Hanyu; 'language of the Han'). Critical to the centralisation of power, Emperor Wu (140–87 BC) institutionalised Confucian norms in government. Promoting merit as well as order, he was the first leader to experiment with examinations for entry into the bureaucracy, but his dynasty was plagued by economic troubles, as estate owners controlled more and more land. Indeed, the issue of land ownership would be a constant problem throughout Chinese history to today. Endemic economic problems and the inability to exercise control over a growing empire, coupled with social unrest that included an uprising by Taoists (known as the Yellow Turbans) led to the collapse and downfall of the Han. Upheaval would become a constant refrain in later Chinese dynasties.

Han trade along the Silk Road demonstrated clearly that China was fundamentally a Eurasian power in its relations with neighbouring peoples. To the north, the Xiongnu (a name given to various nomadic tribes of Central Asia) posed the greatest threat to China. Diplomatic links were also formed with Central Asian tribes, and the great Chinese explorer Zhang Qian provided the authorities with information on the possibilities of trade and alliances in northern India. During the same period, Chinese influence percolated into areas that would later become known as Vietnam and Korea.

The features of the largest Buddhist statue in the Ancestor Worshipping Cave at the Longmen Caves outside Luoyang are supposedly based on Tang female emperor Wu Zetian, a famous champion of Buddhism.

RUINS

Many of China's historical artefacts may be in a state of perpetual ruin, but some vestiges get top-billing:

[Ruins of the Church of St Paul in Macau](#) China's most sublime architectural wreck.

[Jiankou Great Wall](#) No other section of the Great Wall does the tumble-down look in such dramatic fashion.

[Great Fountain Ruins](#) Sublime tangle of Jesuit-designed stonework in the Summer Palace.

[Xanadu](#) A vivid imagination is required to conjure up impressions of Kublai Khan's pleasure palace.

[Ming City Wall Ruins Park](#) Beijing's last section of Ming city wall.

Disunity Restored

Between the early 3rd and late 6th centuries AD, north China witnessed a succession of rival kingdoms vying for power while a potent division formed between north and south. Riven by warfare, the north succumbed to non-Chinese rule, most successfully by the northern Wei dynasty (386–534), founded by the Tuoba, a northern people who embraced Buddhism and left behind some of China's finest Buddhist art, including the famous caves outside Dunhuang. A succession of rival regimes followed until nobleman Yang Jian (d 604) reunified China under the fleeting Sui dynasty (581–618). His son Sui Yangdi contributed greatly to the unification of south and north through construction of the Grand Canal, which was later extended and remained China's most important communication route between south and north until the late 19th century. After instigating three unsuccessful incursions onto Korean soil, resulting in disastrous military setbacks, Sui Yangdi faced revolt and was assassinated in 618 by one of his high officials.

A Chinese woodblock-printed copy of the *Diamond Sutra*, kept in the British Library, is the earliest dated printed book, created in 868. Visit the library website to turn the pages of the sutra online (www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/diamondsutra.html).

OLD TOWNS & VILLAGES

For strong shades of historic China, make a beeline for the following old towns (guzhen):

Pingyao The best preserved of China's ancient walled towns.

[Fenghuang](#) Exquisite riverside setting, pagodas, temples, covered bridges and ancient city wall.

[Hongcun](#) Gorgeous Huizhou village embedded in the lovely south Anhui countryside.

[Tianluokeng Tulou Cluster](#) Overnight in a photogenic Hakka roundhouse.

[Shaxi](#) Flee modern China along Yunnan's ancient Tea-Horse Rd.

[Zhenyuan](#) Slot into low gear and admire the peaks, temples and age-old alleys of this riverside Guizhou town.

The Tang: China Looks West

Tang rule (618–907) was an outward-looking time, when China embraced the culture of its neighbours – marriage to Central Asian people or wearing Indian-influenced clothes was part of the era's cosmopolitan elan – and distant nations that reached China via the Silk Road. The Chinese nostalgically regard the Tang as their cultural zenith and Chinatowns around the world are called Tangrenjie (Tang People Streets) to this day. The output of the Tang poets is still regarded as China's finest, as is Tang sculpture, while its legal code became a standard for the whole East Asian region.

The Tang was founded by the Sui general Li Yuan, his achievements consolidated by his son Taizong (r 626–49). Chang'an (modern Xi'an) became the world's most dazzling capital, with its own cosmopolitan foreign quarter, a population of a million, a market where merchants from as far away as Persia mingled with locals, and an astonishing city wall that eventually enveloped 83 sq km. The city exemplified the Tang devotion to Buddhism, with some 91 temples recorded in the city in 722, but a tolerance of and even absorption with foreign cultures allowed alien faiths a foothold, including Nestorian Christianity, Manichaeism, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism.

Taizong was succeeded by a unique figure: Chinese history's sole reigning woman emperor, Wu Zetian (r 690–705). Under her leadership the empire reached its greatest extent, spreading well north of the Great Wall and far west into inner Asia. Her strong promotion of Buddhism, however, alienated her from the Confucian officials and in 705 she was forced to abdicate in favour of Xuanzong, who would preside over the greatest disaster in the Tang's history: the rebellion of An Lushan.

Xuanzong appointed minorities from the frontiers as generals, in the belief that they were so far removed from the political system and society that they would not harbour ideas of rebellion. Nevertheless, it was An Lushan, a general of Sogdian-Turkic parentage, who took advantage of his command in north China to make a bid for imperial power. The fighting lasted from 755 to 763, and although An Lushan was defeated, the Tang's control over China was destroyed forever. It had ceded huge amounts of military and tax-collecting power to provincial leaders to enable them to defeat the rebels, and in doing so dissipated its own power. A permanent change in the relationship between the government and the provinces formed; prior to 755, the government had an idea of who owned what land throughout the empire, but after that date the central government's control was permanently weakened. Even today, the dilemma has not been fully resolved.

In its last century, the Tang withdrew from its former openness, turning more strongly to Confucianism, while Buddhism was outlawed by Emperor Wuzong from 842 to 845. The ban was later modified, but Buddhism never regained its previous power and prestige. The Tang decline was a descent into imperial frailty, growing insurgencies, upheaval and chaos.

Qing emperor Kangxi sponsored a vast encyclopaedia of Chinese culture, which is still read by scholars today.

The Song: Conflict & Prosperity

Further disunity – the fragmentary-sounding Five Dynasties or Ten Kingdoms period – followed the fall of the Tang until the northern Song

dynasty (960–1127) was established. The Song dynasty existed in a state of constant conflict with its northern neighbours. The northern Song was a rather small empire coexisting with the non-Chinese Liao dynasty (which controlled a belt of Chinese territory south of the Great Wall that then marked China's northern border) and less happily with the western Xia, another non-Chinese power that pressed hard on the northwestern provinces. In 1126 the Song lost its capital, Kaifeng, to a third non-Chinese people, the Jurchen (previously an ally against the Liao). The Song was driven to its southern capital of Hangzhou for the period of the southern Song (1127–1279), yet the period was culturally rich and economically prosperous.

The full institution of a system of examinations for entry into the Chinese bureaucracy was brought to fruition during the Song. At a time when brute force decided who was in control in much of medieval Europe, young Chinese men sat tests on the Confucian classics, obtaining office if successful (most were not). The system was heavily biased towards the rich, but was remarkable in its rationalisation of authority, and lasted for centuries. The classical texts set for the examinations became central to the transmission of a sense of elite Chinese culture, even though in later centuries the system's rigidity failed to adapt to social and intellectual change.

China's economy prospered during the Song rule, as cash crops and handicraft products became far more central to the economy, and a genuinely China-wide market emerged, which would become even stronger during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The sciences and arts also flourished under the Song, with intellectual and technical advances across many disciplines. Kaifeng emerged as an eminent centre of politics, commerce and culture.

The cultural quirk of foot binding appears to have emerged during the Song dynasty. It is still unknown how the custom of binding up a girl's feet in cloths so that they would never grow larger than the size of a fist began, yet for much of the next few centuries, it became a Chinese social norm.

Two Nestorian monks smuggled silkworms out of China in 550 AD, disclosing the method of silk production to the outside world.

HISTORY BOOKS

The City of Heavenly Tranquillity: Beijing in the History of China (Jasper Becker; 2009) Becker's authoritative and heartbreaking rendering of Beijing's transformation from magnificent Ming capital to communist-capitalist hybrid.

The Penguin History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power 1850–2008 (Jonathan Fenby; 2008) Highly readable account of the paroxysms of modern Chinese history.

China, A History (John Key; 2008) An accessible and well-written journey through Middle Kingdom history.

Ping pong (*pingpangqiu*) may be China's national sport (*guoqiu*), but it was invented as an after-dinner game by British Victorians who named it *wiff-waff* and first used a ball made from champagne corks.

Mongols to Ming

The fall of the Song reinforced notions of China's Eurasian location and growing external threats. Genghis Khan (1167–1227) was beginning his rise to power, turning his gaze on China; he took Beijing in 1215, destroying and rebuilding it; his successors seized Hangzhou, the southern Song capital, in 1276. The court fled and, in 1279, southern Song resistance finally crumbled. Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis, now reigned over all of China as emperor of the Yuan dynasty. Under Kublai, the entire population was divided into categories of Han, Mongol and foreigner, with the top administrative posts reserved for Mongols, even though the examination system was revived in 1315. The latter decision unexpectedly strengthened the role of local landed elites: since elite Chinese could not advance in the bureaucracy, they decided to spend more time tending their large estates instead. Another innovation was the introduction of paper money, although overprinting created a problem with inflation.

The Mongols ultimately proved less adept at governance than warfare, their empire succumbing to rebellion and eventual vanquishment within a century. Ruling as Ming emperor Hongwu, Zhu Yuanzhang established his

capital in Nanjing, but by the early 15th century the court had begun to move back to Beijing, where a hugely ambitious reconstruction project was inaugurated by Emperor Yongle (r 1403–24), building the Forbidden City and devising the layout of the city we see today.

Although the Ming tried to impose a traditional social structure in which people stuck to hereditary occupations, the era was in fact one of great commercial growth and social change. Women became subject to stricter social norms (for instance, widow remarriage was frowned upon) but female literacy also grew. Publishing, via woodblock technology, burgeoned and the novel appeared.

Emperor Yongle, having usurped power from his nephew, was keen to establish his own legitimacy. In 1405 he launched the first of seven great maritime expeditions. Led by the eunuch general Zheng He (1371–1433), the fleet consisted of more than 60 large vessels and 255 smaller ones, carrying nearly 28,000 men. The fourth and fifth expeditions departed in 1413 and 1417, and travelled as far as the present Middle East. The great achievement of these voyages was to bring tribute missions to the capital, including two embassies from Egypt. Yet ultimately, they were a dead end, motivated by Yongle's vanity to outdo his father, not for the purpose of conquest nor the establishment of a settled trade network. The emperors who succeeded Yongle had little interest in continuing the voyages, and China dropped anchor on its global maritime explorations.

The Great Wall was re-engineered and clad in brick while ships also arrived from Europe, presaging an overseas threat that would develop from entirely different directions. Traders were quickly followed by missionaries, and the Jesuits, led by the formidable Matteo Ricci, made their way inland and established a presence at court. Ricci learned fluent Chinese and spent years agonising over how Christian tenets could be made attractive in a Confucian society with distinctive norms. The Portuguese presence linked China directly to trade with the New World, which had opened up in the 16th century. New crops, such as potatoes, maize, cotton and tobacco, were introduced, further stimulating the commercial economy. Merchants often

lived opulent lives, building fine private gardens (as in Suzhou) and buying delicate flowers and fruits.

The Ming was eventually undermined by internal power struggles. Natural disasters, including drought and famine, combined with a menace from the north: the Manchu, a nomadic warlike people, who saw the turmoil within China and invaded.

The first railroad in China was the Woosung Railway, which opened in 1876, running between Shanghai and Wusong; it operated for less than a year before being dismantled and shipped to Taiwan.

HISTORIC CITIES

At the centre of things, China's cities have seen dynasties rise, topple and fall, leaving them littered with dynastic vestiges and age-old artefacts.

[Beijing](#) Heritage, history and imperial grandeur, with the Great Wall to boot.

[Xi'an](#) The granddaddy of China's old towns, enclosed by an intact Ming-dynasty wall with the Terracotta Warriors in the suburbs.

[Hangzhou](#) Possibly China's best-looking city, with oodles of charm and an abundance of lakeside history.

[Nanjing](#) Supreme city walls and imposing imperial Ming vestiges.

The Qing: the Path to Dynastic Dissolution

After conquering just a small part of China and assuming control in the disarray, the Manchu named their new dynasty the Qing (1644–1911). Once ensconced in the (now torched) Forbidden City, the Manchu realised they needed to adapt their nomadic way of life to suit the agricultural civilisation of China. Threats from inner Asia were neutralised by incorporating the Qing homeland of Manchuria into the empire, as well as that of the Mongols, whom they had subordinated. Like the Mongols before them, the conquering Manchu found themselves in charge of a civilisation whose government they had defeated, but whose cultural power far exceeded their own. The result was quite contradictory: on the one hand, Qing rulers took great pains to win

the allegiance of high officials and cultural figures by displaying a familiarity and respect for traditional Chinese culture; on the other hand, the Manchu rulers made strong efforts to remain distinct. They enforced strict rules of social separation between the Han and Manchu, and tried to maintain – not always very successfully – a culture that reminded the Manchu of their nomadic warrior past. The Qing flourished most greatly under three emperors who ruled for a total of 135 years: Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong.

Much of the map of China that we know today derives from the Qing period. Territorial expansion and expeditions to regions of Central Asia spread Chinese power and culture further than ever. The expansion of the 18th century was fuelled by economic and social changes. The discovery of the New World by Europeans in the 15th century led to a new global market in American food crops, such as chillies and sweet potatoes, allowing food crops to be grown in more barren regions, where wheat and rice had not flourished. In the 18th century, the Chinese population doubled from around 150 million to 300 million people.

Historians now take very seriously the idea that in the 18th century China was among the most advanced economies in the world. The impact of imperialism would help commence China's slide down the table, but the seeds of decay had been sown long before the Opium Wars of the 1840s. Put simply, as China's size expanded, its state remained too small. China's dynasty failed to expand the size of government to cope with the new realities of a larger China.

In the 18th century, the Chinese used an early form of vaccination against smallpox that required not an injection, but instead the blowing of serum up the patient's nose.

DIRTY FOREIGN MUD

Although trade in opium had been banned in China by imperial decree at the end of the 18th century, the cohong (local merchants' guild) in Guangzhou helped ensure that the trade continued, and fortunes were amassed on both sides. When the British East India Company lost its monopoly on China trade in 1834, imports of the drug

increased to 40,000 chests a year.

In 1839, the Qing government sent Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu to stamp out the opium trade once and for all. Lin successfully blockaded the British in Guangzhou and publicly burned the 'foreign mud' in Humen. Furious, the British sent an expeditionary force of 4000 men from the Royal Navy to exact reparations and secure favourable trade arrangements.

What would become known as the First Opium War began in June 1840 when British forces besieged Guangzhou and forced the Chinese to cede five ports to the British. With the strategic city of Nanking (Nanjing) under immediate threat, the Chinese were forced to accept Britain's terms in the Treaty of Nanking.

The treaty abolished the monopoly system of trade, opened the 'treaty ports' to British residents and foreign trade, exempted British nationals from all Chinese laws and ceded the island of Hong Kong to the British 'in perpetuity'. The treaty, signed in August 1842, set the scope and character of the unequal relationship between China and the West for the next half-century.

War & Reform

For the Manchu, the single most devastating incident was not either of the Opium Wars, but the far more destructive anti-Qing Taiping Rebellion of 1850–64, an insurgency motivated partly by a foreign credo (Christianity). Established by Hakka leader Hong Xiuquan, the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (Taiping Tianguo) banned opium and intermingling between the sexes, made moves to redistribute property and was fiercely anti-Manchu. The Qing eventually reconquered the Taiping capital at Nanjing, but upwards of 20 million Chinese died in the uprising.

The events that finally toppled the dynasty, however, came in rapid succession. Foreign imperialist incursions continued and Western powers nibbled away at China's coastline; Shanghai, Qingdao, Tianjin, Gulang Yu, Shantou, Yantai, Weihai, Ningbo and Beihai would all either fall under semicolonial rule or enclose foreign concessions. Hong Kong was a British colony and Macau was administered by the Portuguese. Attempts at self-strengthening – involving attempts to produce armaments and Western-style military technology – were dealt a brutal blow by the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. Fought over control of Korea, it ended with the humiliating

destruction of the new Qing navy. Not only was Chinese influence in Korea lost, but Taiwan was ceded to Japan.

Japan itself was a powerful Asian example of reform. In 1868 Japan's rulers, unnerved by ever-greater foreign encroachment, had overthrown the centuries-old system of the Shogun, who acted as regent for the emperor. An all-out program of modernisation, including a new army, constitution, educational system and railway network was launched, all of which gave Chinese reformers a lot to ponder.

One of the boldest proposals for change, which drew heavily on the Japanese model, was the program put forward in 1898 by reformers including the political thinker Kang Youwei (1858–1927). However, in September 1898 the reforms were abruptly halted, as the Dowager Empress Cixi, fearful of a coup, placed the emperor under house arrest and executed several of the leading advocates of change. Two years later, Cixi made a decision that helped to seal the Qing's fate. In 1900 north China was convulsed by attacks from a group of peasant rebels whose martial arts techniques led them to be labelled the Boxers, and who sought to expel foreigners and kill Chinese Christian converts. In a major misjudgement, the dynasty declared its support for the Boxers in June. Eventually, a multinational foreign army forced its way into China and defeated the uprising which had besieged the foreign Legation Quarter in Beijing. The imperial powers then demanded huge financial reparations from the Qing. In 1902 the dynasty reacted by implementing the Xinzheng (New Governance) reforms. This set of reforms, now half-forgotten in contemporary China, looks remarkably progressive, even set against the standards of the present day.

The Cantonese revolutionary Sun Yatsen (1866–1925) remains one of the few modern historical figures respected in both China and Taiwan. Sun and his Revolutionary League made multiple attempts to undermine Qing rule in the late 19th century, raising sponsorship and support from a wide-ranging combination of the Chinese diaspora, the newly emergent middle class, and traditional secret societies. In practice, his own attempts to end Qing rule were unsuccessful, but his reputation as a patriotic figure dedicated to a

modern republic gained him high prestige among many of the emerging middle-class elites in China, though much less among the key military leaders.

The end of the Qing dynasty arrived swiftly. Throughout China's southwest, popular resentment against the dynasty had been fuelled by reports that railway rights in the region were being sold to foreigners. A local uprising in the city of Wuhan in October 1911 was discovered early, leading the rebels to take over command in the city and hastily declare independence from the Qing dynasty. Within a space of days, then weeks, most of China's provinces did likewise. Provincial assemblies across China declared themselves in favour of a republic, with Sun Yatsen (who was not even in China at the time) as their candidate for president.

The oldest surviving brick pagoda in China is the Songyue Pagoda, on Song Shan in Henan province, dating to the early sixth century.

FOREIGN CONCESSIONS & COLONIES

China's coastline is dotted with a string of foreign concession towns that ooze charm and a sensation of 19th- and early-20th-century grandeur.

[Shanghai, French Concession](#) Shanghai's most stylish concession goes to the French.

Gulang Yu, Xiamen Thoroughly charming colonial remains on a beautiful island setting.

[Qingdao](#) Wander the German district for cobbled streets and Teutonic architecture.

[Hong Kong](#) Outstanding ex-colonial cachet on the Guangdong coast.

[Macau](#) An unforgettable cocktail of Cantonese and Portuguese flavour.

[Shamian Island](#) Gentrified and leafy lozenge of Guangzhou sand, decorated with a handsome crop of buildings and streets.

Chiang Kaishek's New Life Movement and the Chinese Communist Party ideology were attempts to mobilise society through renewal of the individual. But only the communists advocated class war.

The Republic: Instability & Ideas

The Republic of China lasted less than 40 years on the mainland (1912–1949) and continues to be regarded as a dark chapter in modern Chinese history, when the country was under threat from what many described as ‘imperialism from without and warlordism from within’. Yet there was also breathing room for new ideas and culture. In terms of freedom of speech and cultural production, the republic was a far richer time than any subsequent era in Chinese history. Yet the period was certainly marked by repeated disasters, similar to the almost contemporaneous Weimar Republic in Germany.

Sun Yatsen returned to China and only briefly served as president, before having to make way for militarist leader Yuan Shikai. In 1912 China held its first general election, and it was Sun’s newly established Kuomintang (Nationalist; Guomindang, literally ‘Party of the National People’) party that emerged as the largest grouping. Parliamentary democracy did not last long, as the Kuomintang itself was outlawed by Yuan, and Sun had to flee into exile in Japan. However, after Yuan’s death in 1916, the country split into rival regions ruled by militarist warlord-leaders. Supposedly ‘national’ governments in Beijing often controlled only parts of northern or eastern China and had no real claim to control over the rest of the country. Also, in reality, the foreign powers still had control over much of China’s domestic and international situation. Britain, France, the US and the other Western powers showed little desire to lose those rights, such as extraterritoriality and tariff control.

Shanghai became the focal point for the contradictions of Chinese modernity. By the early 20th century, Shanghai was a wonder not just of China, but of the world, with skyscrapers, art deco apartment blocks, neon lights, women (and men) in outrageous new fashions, and a vibrant, commercially minded, take-no-prisoners atmosphere. The racism that accompanied imperialism was visible every day, as Europeans kept themselves separate from the Chinese. Yet the glamour of modernity was undeniable too, as workers flocked from rural areas to make a living in the

city, and Chinese intellectuals sought out French fashion, British architecture and American movies. In the prewar period, Shanghai had more millionaires than anywhere else in China, yet its inequalities and squalor also inspired the first congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The militarist government that held power in Beijing in 1917 provided 96,000 Chinese who served on the Western Front in Europe, not as soldiers but digging trenches and doing hard manual labour. This involvement in WWI led to one of the most important events in China's modern history: the student demonstrations of 4 May 1919.

Double-dealing by the Western Allies and Chinese politicians who had made secret deals with Japan led to an unwelcome discovery for the Chinese diplomats at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Germany had been defeated, but its Chinese territories – such as Qingdao – were not to be returned to China but would instead go to Japan. Five days later, on 4 May 1919, some 3000 students gathered in central Beijing, in front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, and then marched to the house of a Chinese government minister closely associated with Japan. Once there, they broke in and destroyed the house. Over in a few hours, the event immediately found a place in modern Chinese folklore.

The student demonstration came to symbolise a much wider shift in Chinese society and politics. The May Fourth Movement, as it became known, was associated closely with the New Culture, underpinned by the electrifying ideas of 'Mr Science' and 'Mr Democracy'. In literature, a May Fourth generation of authors wrote works attacking the Confucianism that they felt had brought China to its current crisis, and explored new issues of sexuality and self-development. The CCP, later mastermind of the world's largest peasant revolution, was created in the intellectual turmoil of the movement, many of its founding figures associated with Peking University, such as Chen Duxiu (dean of humanities), Li Dazhao (head librarian) and the young Mao Zedong, a mere library assistant.

The Tang saw the first major rise to power of eunuchs. Often from ethnic minority groups, they were brought to the capital and given positions within the imperial palace. In many

dynasties they had real influence.

HISTORY MUSEUMS

[Hong Kong Museum of History](#) One of the former British territory's best museums: a colourful narrative supported by imaginative displays.

[Shanghai History Museum](#) Excellent chronicle of Shanghai's colourful journey from 'Little Suzhou' to 'Whore of the Orient' and beyond.

[Macau Museum](#) The ex-Portuguese territory's fascinating history brought vividly to life.

[Shaanxi History Museum](#) Eye-opening and informative chronicle of ancient Chang'an.

Paul French's *Midnight in Peking* (2012) is a gripping true-crime murder mystery examining the death of Pamela Werner in 1937 Peking.

The Northern Expedition

After years of vainly seeking international support for his cause, Sun Yatsen found allies in the newly formed Soviet Russia. The Soviets ordered the fledgling CCP to ally itself with the much larger 'bourgeois' party, the Kuomintang. Their alliance was attractive to Sun: the Soviets would provide political training, military assistance and finance. From their base in Guangzhou, the Kuomintang and CCP trained together from 1923, in preparation for their mission to reunite China.

Sun died of cancer in 1925. The succession battle in the party coincided with a surge in antiforeign feeling that accompanied the May Thirtieth Incident when 13 labour demonstrators were killed by British police in Shanghai on 30 May 1925. Under Soviet advice, the Kuomintang and CCP prepared for their 'Northern Expedition', the big 1926 push north that was supposed to finally unite China. In 1926–27, the Soviet-trained National Revolutionary Army made its way slowly north, fighting, bribing or persuading its opponents into accepting Kuomintang control. The most

powerful military figure turned out to be an officer from Zhejiang named Chiang Kaishek (1887–1975). Trained in Moscow, Chiang moved steadily forward and finally captured the great prize, Shanghai, in March 1927. However, a horrific surprise was in store for his communist allies. The Soviet advisers had not impressed Chiang and he was increasingly convinced that the communists aimed to use their cooperation with the Kuomintang to seize control themselves. Instead, Chiang struck first. Using local thugs and soldiers, Chiang organised a lightning strike by rounding up CCP activists and union leaders in Shanghai and killing thousands of them.

Toilet paper was first used in China as early as the 6th century AD, when it was employed by the wealthy and privileged for sanitary purposes.

Kuomintang Rule

Chiang Kaishek's Kuomintang government officially came to power in 1928 through a combination of military force and popular support. Marked by corruption, it suppressed political dissent with great ruthlessness. Yet Chiang's government also kick-started a major industrialisation effort, greatly augmented China's transport infrastructure and successfully renegotiated what many Chinese called 'unequal treaties' with Western powers. In its first two years, the Kuomintang doubled the length of highways in China and increased the number of students studying engineering. The government never really controlled more than a few (very important) provinces in the east, however, and China remained significantly disunited. Regional militarists continued to control much of western China; the Japanese invaded and occupied Manchuria in 1931; and the communists re-established themselves in the northwest.

In 1934 Chiang Kaishek launched his own ideological counterargument to communism: the New Life Movement. This was supposed to be a complete spiritual renewal of the nation, through a modernised version of traditional Confucian values, such as propriety, righteousness and loyalty. The New Life Movement demanded that the renewed citizens of the nation must wear frugal

but clean clothes, consume products made in China rather than seek luxurious foreign goods, and behave in a hygienic manner. Yet Chiang's ideology never had much success. Against a background of massive agricultural and fiscal crisis, prescriptions about what to wear and how to behave lacked popular appeal.

The new policies did relatively little to change the everyday life for the population in the countryside, where more than 80% of China's people lived. Some rural reforms were undertaken, including the establishment of rural cooperatives, but their effects were small. The Nationalist Party also found itself unable to collect taxes in an honest and transparent fashion.

Traditionally the dragon (*long*) was associated with the emperor and the male principle while the phoenix (*fenghuang*) was a symbol of the empress and the female principle.

The Long March

The communists had not stood still and after Chiang's treachery, most of what remained of the CCP fled to the countryside. A major centre of activity was the communist stronghold in impoverished Jiangxi province, where the party began to try out systems of government that would eventually bring them to power. However, by 1934, Chiang's previously ineffective 'extermination campaigns' were making the CCP's position in Jiangxi untenable, as the Red Army found itself increasingly encircled by Nationalist troops. The CCP commenced its Long March, travelling over 6400km. Four thousand of the original 80,000 communists who set out eventually arrived, exhausted, in Shaanxi (Shanxi) province in the northwest, far out of the reach of the Kuomintang. It seemed possible that within a matter of months, however, Chiang would attack again and wipe them out.

The approach of war saved the CCP. There was growing public discontent at Chiang Kaishek's seeming unwillingness to fight the Japanese. In fact, this perception was unfair. The Kuomintang had undertaken retraining of key regiments in the army under German advice, and also started to plan for a wartime economy from 1931, spurred on by the Japanese invasion of

Manchuria. However, events came to a head in December 1936, when the Chinese militarist leader of Manchuria (General Zhang Xueliang) and the CCP kidnapped Chiang. As a condition of his release, Chiang agreed to an openly declared United Front: the Kuomintang and communists would put aside their differences and join forces against Japan.

Mao Zedong is one of the most intriguing figures of 20th-century history. Philip Short's *Mao: A Life* (1999), in English, is the most detailed and thoughtful recent account of his life.

War & the Kuomintang

China's status as a major participant in WWII is often overlooked or forgotten in the West. The Japanese invasion of China, which began in 1937, was merciless, with the notorious Nanjing Massacre (also known as the Rape of Nanjing) just one of a series of war crimes committed by the Japanese Army during its conquest of eastern China. The government had to operate in exile from the far southwestern hinterland of China, as its area of greatest strength and prosperity, China's eastern seaboard, was lost to Japanese occupation.

In China itself, it is now acknowledged that both the Kuomintang and the communists had important roles to play in defeating Japan. Chiang, not Mao, was the internationally acknowledged leader of China during this period, and despite his government's multitude flaws, he maintained resistance to the end. However, his government was also increasingly trapped, having retreated to Sichuan province and a temporary capital at Chongqing. Safe from land attack by Japan, the city still found itself under siege, subjected to some of the heaviest bombing in the war. From 1940, supply routes were cut off as the road to Burma was closed by Britain, under pressure from Japan, and Vichy France closed connections to Vietnam. Although the US and Britain brought China on board as an ally against Japan after Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the Allied 'Europe First' strategy meant that China was always treated as a secondary theatre of war. Chiang Kaishek's corruption and leadership qualities were heavily criticised, and while these accusations

were not groundless, without Chinese Kuomintang armies (which kept one million Japanese troops bogged down in China for eight years), the Allies' war in the Pacific would have been far harder. The communists had an important role as guerrilla fighters, but did far less fighting in battle than the Kuomintang.

The real winners from WWII, however, were the communists. They undertook important guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese across northern and eastern China, but the really key changes were taking place in the bleak, dusty hill country centred on the small town of Yan'an, capital of the CCP's largest stronghold. The 'Yan'an way' that developed in those years solidified many CCP policies: land reform involving redistribution of land to the peasants, lower taxes, a self-sufficient economy, ideological education and, underpinning it all, the CCP's military force, the Red Army. By the end of the war with Japan, the communist areas had expanded massively, with some 900,000 troops in the Red Army, and party membership at a new high of 1.2 million.

Above all, the war with Japan had helped the communists come back from the brink of the disaster they had faced at the end of the Long March. The Kuomintang and communists then plunged into civil war in 1946 and after three long years the CCP won. On 1 October 1949 in Beijing, Mao declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

Chiang Kaishek fled to the island of Formosa (Taiwan), which China had regained from Japan after WWII. He took with him China's gold reserves and the remains of his air force and navy, and set up the Republic of China (ROC), naming his new capital Taipei (Taibei).

Ding Ling's novel *The Sun Shines on the Sanggan River* (1948) gives a graphic account of the violence, as well as the joy, that greeted land reform (ie redistribution) in China in the early 1950s.

Mao's China

Mao's China desired, above all, to exercise ideological control over its

population. It called itself 'New China', with the idea that the whole citizenry, down to the remotest peasants, should find a role in the new politics and society. The success of Mao's military and political tactics also meant that the country was, for the first time since the 19th century, united under a strong central government.

Most Westerners – and Western influences – were swiftly removed from the country. The US refused to recognise the new state at all. However, China had decided, in Mao's phrase, to 'lean to one side' and ally itself with the Soviet Union in the still-emerging Cold War. The 1950s marked the high point of Soviet influence on Chinese politics and culture. However, the decade also saw rising tension between the Chinese and the Soviets, fuelled in part by Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin (which Mao took, in part, as a criticism of his own cult of personality). Sino-Soviet differences were aggravated with the withdrawal of Soviet technical assistance from China, and reached a peak with intense border clashes during 1969. Relations remained frosty until the 1980s.

Mao's experiences had convinced him that only violent change could shake up the relationship between landlords and their tenants, or capitalists and their employees, in a China that was still highly traditional. The first year of the regime saw some 40% of the land redistributed to poor peasants. At the same time, some one million or so people condemned as 'landlords' were persecuted and killed. The joy of liberation was real for many Chinese, but campaigns of terror were also real and the early 1950s was no golden age.

As relations with the Soviets broke down in the mid-1950s, the CCP leaders' thoughts turned to economic self-sufficiency. Mao, supported by Politburo colleagues, proposed the policy known as the Great Leap Forward (Dayuejin), a highly ambitious plan to harness the power of socialist economics to boost production of steel, coal and electricity. Agriculture was to reach an ever-higher level of collectivisation. Family structures were broken up as communal dining halls were established: people were urged to eat their fill, as the new agricultural methods would ensure plenty for all, year after year.

However, the Great Leap Forward was a horrific failure. Its lack of economic realism caused a massive famine and at least 20 million deaths; historian Frank Dikotter posits a much larger minimum figure of 45 million deaths in his *Mao's Great Famine* (2010). Yet the return to a semimarket economy in 1962, after the Leap had comprehensively ended, did not dampen Mao's enthusiasm for revolutionary renewal. This led to the last and most fanatical of the campaigns that marked Mao's China: the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76.

During the Cultural Revolution, some 2.2 billion Chairman Mao badges were cast. Read *Mao's Last Revolution* (2006) by Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals for the history; see Zhang Yimou's film *To Live* (1994) to understand the emotions.

Cultural Revolution

Mao had become increasingly concerned that post-Leap China was slipping into 'economism' – a complacent satisfaction with rising standards of living that would blunt people's revolutionary fervour. Mao was particularly concerned that the young generation might grow up with a dimmed spirit of revolution. For these reasons, Mao decided upon a massive campaign of ideological renewal, in which he would attack his own party.

Still the dominant figure in the CCP, Mao used his prestige to undermine his own colleagues. In summer 1966, prominent posters in large, handwritten characters appeared at prominent sites, including Peking University, demanding that figures such as Liu Shaoqi (president of the PRC) and Deng Xiaoping (senior Politburo member) must be condemned as 'takers of the capitalist road'. Top leaders suddenly disappeared from sight, only to be replaced by unknowns, such as Mao's wife Jiang Qing and her associates, later dubbed the 'Gang of Four'. Meanwhile, an all-pervasive cult of Mao's personality took over. One million youths at a time, known as Red Guards, would flock to hear Mao in Tian'anmen Sq. Posters and pictures of Mao were everywhere. The Red Guards were not ashamed to admit that their tactics were violent. Immense violence permeated throughout society: teachers,

intellectuals and landlords were killed in their thousands.

While Mao initiated and supported the Cultural Revolution, it was also genuinely popular among many young people (who had less to lose). However, police authority effectively disappeared, creative activity came to a virtual standstill and academic research was grounded.

The Cultural Revolution could not last. Worried by the increasing violence, the army forced the Red Guards off the streets in 1969. The early 1970s saw a remarkable rapprochement between the US and China: the former was desperate to extricate itself from the quagmire of the Vietnam war; the latter terrified of an attack from the now-hostile USSR. Secretive diplomatic manoeuvres led, eventually, to the official visit of US President Richard Nixon to China in 1972, which began the reopening of China to the West. Slowly, the Cultural Revolution began to cool down, but its brutal legacy survives today. Many of those guilty of murder and violence re-entered society with little or no judgment while today's CCP discourages open analysis and debate of the 'decade of chaos'.

One product of the new freedom of the 1980s was a revived Chinese film industry. *Red Sorghum*, the first film directed by Zhang Yimou, was a searingly erotic film of a type that had not been seen since 1949.

Reform

Mao died in 1976, to be succeeded by the little-known Hua Guofeng (1921–2008). Within two years, Hua had been outmanoeuvred by the greatest survivor of 20th-century Chinese politics, Deng Xiaoping. Deng had been purged twice during the Cultural Revolution, but after Mao's death he was able to reach supreme leadership in the CCP with a radical program. In particular, Deng recognised that the Cultural Revolution had been highly damaging economically to China. Deng enlisted a policy slogan originally invented by Mao's pragmatic prime minister, Zhou Enlai – the 'Four Modernisations'. The party's task would be to set China on the right path in four areas: agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and

technology.

To make this policy work, many of the assumptions of the Mao era were abandoned. The first highly symbolic move of the 'reform era' (as the post-1978 period is known) was the breaking down of the collective farms. Farmers were able to sell a proportion of their crops on the free market, and urban and rural areas were also encouraged to establish small local enterprises. 'To get rich is glorious,' Deng declared, adding, 'it doesn't matter if some areas get rich first'. As part of this encouragement of entrepreneurship, Deng designated four areas on China's coast as Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which would be particularly attractive to foreign investors.

Politics was kept on a much shorter rein than the economy, however. Deng was relaxed about a certain amount of ideological impurity, but some other members of the leadership were concerned by the materialism in reform-era China. They supported campaigns of 'antispiritual pollution', in which influences from the capitalist world were condemned. Yet inevitably the overall movement seemed to be towards a freer, market-oriented society.

The new freedoms that the urban middle classes enjoyed created the appetite for more. After student protests demanding further opening up of the party in 1985–86, the prime minister (and relative liberal) Hu Yaobang was forced to resign in 1987 and take responsibility for allowing social forces to get out of control. He was replaced as general secretary by Zhao Ziyang, who was more conservative politically, although an economic reformer. In April 1989 Hu Yaobang died, and students around China used the occasion of his death to organise protests against the continuing role of the CCP in public life. At Peking University, the breeding ground of the May Fourth demonstrations of 1919, students declared the need for 'science and democracy', the modernising watchwords of 80 years earlier, to be revived.

In spring 1989 Tian'anmen Sq was the scene of an unprecedented demonstration. At its height, nearly a million Chinese workers and students, in a rare cross-class alliance, filled the space in front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, with the CCP profoundly embarrassed to have the world's media

record such events. By June 1989 the numbers in the square had dwindled to only thousands, but those who remained showed no signs of moving. Martial law was imposed and on the night of 3 June and early hours of 4 June, tanks and armoured personnel carriers were sent in. The death toll in Beijing has never been officially confirmed, but it seems likely to have been in the high hundreds or even more. Hundreds of people associated with the movement were arrested, imprisoned or forced to flee to the West.

For some three years, China's politics were almost frozen, but in 1992 Deng, the man who had sent in the tanks, made his last grand public gesture. That year, he undertook what Chinese political insiders called his 'southern tour', or *nanxun*. By visiting Shenzhen, Deng indicated that the economic policies of reform were not going to be abandoned. The massive growth rates that the Chinese economy has posted ever since have justified his decision. Deng also made another significant choice: grooming Jiang Zemin – the mayor of Shanghai, who had peacefully dissolved demonstrations in Shanghai in a way that the authorities in Beijing had not – as his successor by appointing him as general secretary of the party in 1989.

Deng died in 1997, the same year that Hong Kong returned to China under a 'one country, two systems' agreement with the UK, which would maintain the ex-British colony's independence in all aspects except defense and foreign affairs for the next fifty years. Macau followed suit two years later. Faced with a multitude of social problems brought on by inequalities spawned by the Deng years, President Jiang Zemin, with Zhu Rongji as premier, sought to bring economic stability to China while strengthening the centralised power of the state and putting off much-needed political reforms. Faced with a protest of up to 10,000 Falun Gong adherents outside Beijing's Zhongnanhai in April 1999, Jiang branded the movement a cult and sought its eradication in China through imprisonment and detention, backed up by a draconian propaganda campaign.

Ban Zhao was the most famous female scholar in early China. Dating from the late 1st century AD, her work *Lessons for Women* advocated chastity and modesty as favoured female qualities.

The Soviets withdrew all assistance from the PRC in 1960, leaving the great bridge across the Yangzi River at Nanjing half-built. It became a point of pride for Chinese engineers to finish the job without foreign help.

21st-Century China

Jiang Zemin was succeeded in 2002 by President Hu Jintao, who made further efforts to tame growing regional inequality and the poverty scarring rural areas. China's lopsided development continued, however, despite an ambitious program to develop the western regions. By 2009, an in-flow of US\$325 billion had dramatically boosted GDP per capita in the western regions but a colossal prosperity gap survived and significant environmental challenges – from desertification to water shortages to soil erosion – persisted.

The question of political reform found itself shelved, partly because economic growth was bringing prosperity to so many, albeit unevenly. Property prices – especially in the richer eastern coastal provinces – were rocketing and the export and investment-driven economy was thriving. For many, the first decade of the 21st century was marked by spectacular riches for some – the number of dollar billionaires doubled in just two years – and property prices began moving dramatically beyond the reach of the less fortunate. This period coincided with the greatest migration of workers to the cities the world has ever seen.

China responded to the credit crunch of 2007 and the downturn in Western economies with a stimulus package of US\$586 billion between 2008 and 2009. Property and infrastructure construction enjoyed spectacular growth, buffering China from the worst effects of the downturn, but the export sector contracted as demand dried up overseas. A barrage of restrictions on buying second properties attempted to flush speculators from the market and tame price rises. These policies partially worked but millions of flats across China lay empty – bought by investors happy to see prices rise – and entire ghost towns (such as Ordos in Inner Mongolia, built on the back of the coal rush) had already risen from the ground.

Vice-president from 2008, Xi Jinping replaced Hu Jintao as president in 2013. Pledging to root out corruption, Xi has also sought to instigate reforms, including a relaxation of the one-child policy and the abolition of the *laojiao* (re-education through labour) system. These reforms, however, were matched by a growing zeal for internet and social media controls and a domestic security budget that sucked in more capital than national defense.

Xi Jinping inherited a China that was a tremendous success story, but one that remained beset with problems. Despite resilient and ambitious planning (massive expansion of the high-speed rail network, a space program setting itself bold targets, some of the world's tallest buildings), the Chinese economy was still fundamentally imbalanced. Skewed towards the export industry and high-investment projects, growth needed to derive more from domestic demand to create sustainability, a challenge that his predecessor had left on the back burner but which requires Xi's increasing attention today.

TIMELINE

c 4000 BC

The first known settlements appear along the Yellow River (Huang He). The river remains a central cultural reference point for the Chinese throughout history.

c 1700 BC

Craftsmen of the Shang dynasty master the production of bronzeware (in the form of ritual vessels) in one of the first examples of multiple production in history.

c 600 BC

Laotzu (Laozi), founder of Taoism, is supposedly born. The folk religion of Taoism goes on to coexist with later introductions such as Buddhism, a reflection of Chinese religion's syncretic, rather than exclusive, nature.

551 BC

The birth of Confucius. Collected in The Analects, his ideas of an ethical, ordered society that operated through hierarchy and self-development would dominate Chinese culture until the early

20th century.

214 BC

Emperor Qin indentures thousands of labourers to link existing city walls into one Great Wall, made of tamped earth. The stone-clad bastion dates from the Ming dynasty.

c 100 BC

The Silk Road between China and the Middle East takes Chinese goods to places as far flung as Rome.

c 100 BC

Buddhism first arrives in China from India. This religious system ends up thoroughly assimilated into Chinese culture and is now more powerful in China than in its country of origin.

AD 755–763

An Lushan rebels against the Tang court. Although his rebellion is subdued, the court cedes immense military and fiscal power to provincial leaders, a recurring problem through Chinese history.

874

The Huang Chao rebellion breaks out, which will help reduce the Tang empire to chaos and lead to the fall of the capital in 907.

c 1000

The major premodern inventions – paper, printing, gunpowder, the compass – are commonly used in China. The economy begins to commercialise and create a countrywide market system.

1215

Genghis Khan conquers Beijing as part of his creation of a massive Eurasian empire under Mongol rule. The Mongols overstretch themselves, however, and neglect good governance.

1286

The Grand Canal is extended to Beijing. Over time, the canal becomes a major artery for the transport of grain, salt and other important commodities between north and south China.

1298–99

Marco Polo pens his famous account of his travels to China. Inconsistencies in his story have led some scholars to doubt whether he ever went to China at all.

1368

Zhu Yuanzhang founds the Ming dynasty and tries to impose a rigid Confucian social order on the entire population. However, China is now too commercialised for the policy to work.

1406

Ming Emperor Yongle begins construction of the 800 buildings of the Forbidden City. This complex, along with much of the Great Wall, shows the style and size of late-imperial architecture.

1557

The Portuguese establish a permanent trade base in Macau, the first of the European outposts that will eventually lead to imperialist dominance of China until the mid-19th century.

c 1600

The period of China's dominance as the world's greatest economy begins to end. By 1800 European economies are industrialising and clearly dominant.

1644

Beijing falls to peasant rebel Li Zicheng and the last Ming emperor Chongzhen hangs himself in Jingshan Park; the Qing dynasty is established.

1689

The Treaty of Nerchinsk is signed, delineating the border between China and Russia: this is the first modern border agreement in Chinese history, as well as the longest lasting.

1793

British diplomat Lord Macartney visits Beijing with British industrial products, but is told by the Qianlong emperor that China has no need of his products.

1823

The British are swapping roughly 7000 chests of opium annually – with about 140 pounds of

opium per chest, enough to supply one million addicts – compared with 1000 chests in 1773.

1839

The Qing official Lin Zexu demands that British traders at Guangzhou hand over 20,000 chests of opium, leading the British to provoke the First Opium War in retaliation.

1842

The Treaty of Nanjing concludes the First Opium War. China is forced to hand over Hong Kong Island to the British and open up five Chinese ports to foreign trade.

1856

Hong Xiuquan claims to be Jesus' younger brother and starts the Taiping uprising. With the Nian and Muslim uprisings, the Taiping greatly undermines the authority of the Qing dynasty.

1882

Shanghai is electrified by the British-founded Shanghai Electric Company. Shanghai's first electricity-producing plant generates 654kw and the Bund is illuminated by electric light the following year.

1898

Emperor Guangxu permits major reforms, including new rights for women, but is thwarted by the Dowager Empress Cixi, who has many reformers arrested and executed.

1898

The New Territories adjoining Kowloon in Hong Kong are leased to the British for 99 years, eventually returning, along with the rest of Hong Kong, in 1997.

1900

The Hanlin Academy in Beijing – centre of Chinese learning and literature – is accidentally torched by Chinese troops during the Boxer Rebellion, destroying its priceless collection of books.

1904–05

The Russo–Japanese War is fought entirely on Chinese territory. The victory of Japan is the first triumph by an Asian power over a European one.

1905

Major reforms in the late Qing dynasty include the abolition of the 1000-year-long tradition of examinations in the Confucian classics to enter the Chinese bureaucracy.

1908

Two-year-old Puyi ascends the throne as China's last emperor. Local elites and new classes such as businessmen no longer support the dynasty, leading to its ultimate downfall.

1911

Revolution spreads across China as local governments withdraw support for the dynasty, and instead support a republic under the presidency of Sun Yatsen (fundraising in the US at the time).

1912

Yuan Shikai, leader of China's most powerful regional army, goes to the Qing court to announce that the game is up: on 12 February the last emperor, six-year-old Puyi, abdicates.

1915

Japan makes the '21 demands', which would give it massive political, economic and trading rights in parts of China. Europe's attention is distracted by WWI.

1916

Yuan Shikai tries to declare himself emperor. He is forced to withdraw and remain president, but dies of uremia later that year. China splits into areas ruled by rival militarists.

1925

The shooting of striking factory workers on 30 May in Shanghai by foreign-controlled police inflames nationalist passions, giving hope to the Kuomintang party, now regrouping in Guangzhou.

1926

The Northern Expedition: Kuomintang and communists unite under Soviet advice to bring together China by force, then establish a Kuomintang government.

1927

The Kuomintang leader Chiang Kaishek turns on the communists in Shanghai and Guangzhou,

having thousands killed and forcing the communists to turn to a rural-based strategy.

1930s

Cosmopolitan Shanghai is the world's fifth-largest city (the largest in the Far East), supporting a polyglot population of four million people.

1930

Chiang's Kuomintang government achieves 'tariff autonomy': for the first time in nearly 90 years, China regains the power to tax imports freely, an essential part of fiscal stability.

1931

Japan invades Manchuria (northeast China), provoking an international crisis and forcing Chiang to consider anti-Japanese, as well as anti-communist, strategies.

1932

War breaks out in the streets of Shanghai in February–March, a sign that conflict between the two great powers of East Asia, China and Japan, may soon be coming.

1935

Mao Zedong begins his rise to paramount power at the conference at Zunyi, held in the middle of the Long March to the northwest, on the run from the Kuomintang.

1937

The Japanese and Chinese clash at Wanping, near Beijing, on 7 July, sparking the conflict that the Chinese call the 'War of Resistance', which only ends in 1945.

1938

Former prime minister Wang Jingwei announces he has gone over to Japan. He later inaugurates a 'restored' Kuomintang government with Japan holding the whip hand over government.

1939

On 3–4 May Japanese carpet bombing devastates the temporary Chinese capital of Chongqing. From 1938 to 1943, Chongqing is one of the world's most heavily bombed cities.

1941

In the base area at Yan'an (Shaanxi), the 'Rectification' program begins, remoulding the Communist Party into an ideology shaped principally by Mao Zedong.

1941

The Japanese attack the US at Pearl Harbor. China becomes a formal ally of the US, USSR and Britain in WWII, but is treated as a secondary partner at best.

1943

Chiang Kaishek negotiates an agreement with the Allies that, when Japan is defeated, Western imperial privileges in China will end forever, marking the twilight of Western imperialist power in China.

1946

Communists and the Kuomintang fail to form a coalition government, plunging China back into civil war. Communist organisation, morale and ideology all prove key to the communist victory.

1949

Mao Zedong stands on top of the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing on 1 October, and announces the formation of the PRC, saying 'The Chinese people have stood up'.

1950

China joins the Korean War, helping Mao to consolidate his regime with mass campaigns that inspire (or terrify) the population.

1957

A brief period of liberalisation under the 'Hundred Flowers Movement'. However, criticisms of the regime lead Mao to crack down and imprison or exile thousands of dissidents.

1958

The Taiwan Straits Crisis. Mao's government fires missiles near islands under the control of Taiwan in an attempt to prevent rapprochement between the US and USSR in the Cold War.

1962

The Great Leap Forward causes mass starvation. Politburo members Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping reintroduce limited market reforms, which lead to their condemnation during the Cultural Revolution.

1966

The Cultural Revolution breaks out, and Red Guards demonstrate in cities across China. The movement is marked by violence as a catalyst for transforming society.

1972

US President Richard Nixon visits China, marking a major rapprochement during the Cold War, and the start of full diplomatic relations between the two countries.

1973

Deng Xiaoping returns to power as deputy premier. The modernising faction in the party fights with the Gang of Four, who support the continuing Cultural Revolution.

1976

Mao Zedong dies, aged 83. The Gang of Four are arrested by his successor and put on trial, where they are blamed for all the disasters of the Cultural Revolution.

1980

The one-child policy is enforced. The state adopts it as a means of reducing the population, but at the same time imposes unprecedented control over the personal liberty of women.

1987

The Last Emperor, filmed in the Forbidden City, collects an Oscar for Best Picture, and marks a new openness in China towards the outside world.

1988

The daring series River Elegy (Heshang) is broadcast on national TV. It is a devastating indictment of dictatorship and Mao's rule in particular, and is banned in China after 1989.

1989

Hundreds of civilians are killed by Chinese troops in the streets around Tian'anmen Sq. No official reassessment has been made, but rumours persist of deep internal conflict within the party.

1997

Hong Kong is returned to the People's Republic of China. Widespread fears that China will interfere directly in its government prove wrong, but its politics become more sensitive to Beijing.

2001

China joins the World Trade Organization, giving it a seat at the top table that decides global norms on economics and finance.

2004

The world's first commercially operating Maglev train begins scorching a trail across Shanghai's Pudong District, reaching a top speed of 431km/hour.

2006

The Three Gorges Dam is completed. Significant parts of the landscape of western China are lost beneath the waters, but energy is also provided for the expanding Chinese economy.

2008

Beijing hosts the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and Paralympics. The Games go smoothly and are widely considered to be a great success in burnishing China's image overseas.

2008

Violent riots in Lhasa, Tibet, again put the uneasy region centre stage. Protests spread to other Tibetan areas in Gansu, Sichuan and Qinghai provinces.

2008

A huge 8.0 magnitude earthquake convulses Sichuan province, leaving 87,000 dead or missing and rendering millions homeless.

2009

July riots in Urumqi leave hundreds dead as inter-ethnic violence flares between Uighurs and Han Chinese. Beijing floods the region with soldiers and implements a 10-month internet blackout.

2010

A huge 7.1-magnitude earthquake in the Qinghai region of the far west flattens the remote town of

Yushu in April, killing thousands.

2011

Two high-speed trains collide in July near Wenzhou in Zhejiang province, killing 40 people, the first fatal high-speed rail crash in China.

2012

After the heaviest rainfall in 60 years, Beijing is inundated with epic summer floods; 77 people are killed by the floodwaters and 65,000 evacuated.

2013

In December, the total length of China's national high-speed rail network reaches a staggering 10,000km, the world's longest.

2013

China's lunar lander Chang'e 3 touches down on the moon in December, the first spacecraft to soft-land on the moon since 1976.

People of China

Despite being the world's most populous nation – the stamping ground of roughly one-fifth of humanity – China is often regarded as being largely homogenous, at least from a remote Western perspective. This is probably because Han Chinese – the majority ethnic type in this energetic and bustling nation – constitute over nine-tenths of the population. But like Chinese cuisine, and of course the nation's mystifying linguistic Babel, you only have to cover a bit more mileage and turn a few extra corners to come face-to-face with a surprising hodgepodge of ethnicities.

Ethnicity

Han Chinese

Han Chinese (Hanzu) – the predominant clan among China's 56th recognised ethnic group – make up the lion's share of China's people, 92% of the total figure. When we think of China – from its writing system to its visual arts, calligraphy, history, literature, language and politics – we tend to associate it with Han culture.

The Han Chinese are distributed throughout China but are predominantly concentrated along the Yellow River, Yangzi River and Pearl River basins. Taking their name from the Han dynasty, the Han Chinese themselves are not markedly homogenous. China was ruled by non-Han Altaic (Turk, Tungusic or Mongolian) invaders for long periods, most demonstrably during the Yuan dynasty (Mongols) and the long Qing dynasty (Manchu), but also under the Jin, the Liao and other eras. This Altaic influence is more evident in northern Chinese with their larger and broader frames and rounder faces, compared to their slighter and thinner southern Han Chinese counterparts, who are physically more similar to the southeast Asian type. Shanghai Chinese for

example are notably more southern in appearance; with their rounder faces, Beijing Chinese are quite typically northern Chinese. With mass migration to the cities from rural areas and the increased frequency of marriage between Chinese from different parts of the land, these physical differences are likely to diminish slightly over time.

The Han Chinese display further stark differences in their rich panoply of dialects, which fragments China into a frequently baffling linguistic mosaic, although the promotion of Mandarin (Hanyu – or ‘language of the Han’) has blurred this considerably. The common written form of Chinese using characters (Hanzi – or ‘characters of the Han’), however, binds all dialects together.

Overseas Chinese frequently refer to people of Chinese blood from China or abroad as Huaren, or ‘people of China’. Conversely, foreigners may be quaintly called *yangren* (‘people of the ocean’) or not as quaintly – down south – as *guilao* (‘foreign devils’).

CHINA DEMOGRAPHICS

Population: 1.35 billion

Birth rate: 12.25 births per thousand people

People over 65: 9.4%

Urbanisation rate: 2.85%

Male to female ratio: 1.17 : 1 (under 15s)

Life expectancy: 75 years

The Non-Han Chinese

A glance at the map of China reveals that the core heartland regions of Han China are central fragments of modern-day China’s huge expanse. The colossal regions of Tibet, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and the three provinces of the northeast (Manchuria – Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning) are all historically non-Han regions, some areas of which remain essentially non-Han today.

Many of these regions are peopled by some of the remaining 8% of the population: China's 55 other ethnic minorities, known collectively as *shaoshu minzu* (minority nationals). The largest minority groups in China include the Zhuang, Manchu (Manzu), Miao, Uighur (Weiwu'er zu), Yi, Tujia, Tibetan (Zangzu), Hui, Mongolian (Menggu zu), Buyi, Dong, Yao, Korean (Chaoxian zu), Bai, Hani, Li, Kazak (Hasake zu) and Dai. Population sizes differ dramatically, from the sizeable Zhuang in Guangxi to small numbers of Menba in Tibet. Ethnic labelling can be quite fluid: the roundhouse-building Hakka (Kejia) were once regarded as a separate minority, but are today considered Han Chinese. Ethnic groups also tell us a lot about the historic movement of peoples around China: the Bonan minority, found in small numbers in a few counties of Qinghai and Gansu, are largely Muslim but show marked Tibetan influence and are said to be descended from Mongol troops once stationed in Qinghai during the Yuan dynasty.

China's minorities tend to cluster along border regions, in the northwest, the west, the southwest, the north and northeast of China, but are also distributed throughout the country. Some groups are found in just one area (such as the Hani in Yunnan); others, such as the Muslim Hui, live all over China.

Wedged into the southwest corner of China between Tibet, Myanmar (Burma), Vietnam and Laos, fecund Yunnan province alone is home to more than 20 ethnic groups, making it one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in the country.

Despite Manchu culture once ruling over China during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), possibly fewer than 50 native speakers of the Manchu language survive today, although the closely related Xibo language is spoken by around 20,000 descendants of Xibo tribes resettled in Xinjiang in China's northwest in the 18th century.

The Naxi created a written language more than 1000 years ago using an extraordinary system of pictographs – the only hieroglyphic language still in use today.

The Chinese Character

Shaped by Confucian principles, the Chinese are thoughtful and discreet, subtle but also pragmatic. Conservative and rather introverted, they favour dark clothing over bright or loud colours while their body language is usually reserved and undemonstrative, yet attentive.

The Chinese can be both delightful and mystifyingly contradictory. One moment they will give their seat to an elderly person on the bus or help someone who is lost, and the next moment they will entirely ignore an old lady who has been knocked over by a motorbike.

Particularly diligent, the Chinese are inured to the kind of hours that may prompt a workers' insurrection elsewhere. This is partly due to a traditional culture of hard work but is also a response to the absence of social-security safety nets and an anxiety regarding economic and political uncertainties. The Chinese impressively save much of what they earn, emphasising the virtue of prudence. Despite this restraint, however, wastefulness can be breathtaking when 'face' is involved: mountains of food are often left on restaurant dining tables, particularly if important guests are present.

Chinese people are deeply generous. Don't be surprised if a person you have just met on a train invites you for a meal in the dining carriage; they will almost certainly insist on paying, grabbing the bill from the waitress at blinding speed and tenaciously resisting your attempts to pay.

The Chinese are also an exceptionally dignified people. They are proud of their civilisation and history, their written language and their inventions and achievements. This pride rarely comes across as arrogance, however, and can be streaked with a lack of self-assurance. The Chinese may, for example, be very gratified by China's newfound world status, but may squirm at the mention of food safety.

The modern Chinese character has been shaped by recent political realities, and while Chinese people have always been reserved and circumspect, in today's China they can appear even more prudent. Impressive mental gymnastics are performed to detour contentious domestic political issues, which can make the mainland Chinese appear complicated, despite their

reputation for being straightforward.

For an idea of local urban salaries, a chef or waitress in a Shanghai restaurant can stand to earn between ¥2300 and ¥3000 (about US\$360 to US\$475) per month.

CHINA'S 'ONE-CHILD POLICY'

The 'one-child policy' (in effect a misnomer) was railroaded into effect in 1979 in a bid to keep China's population to one billion by the year 2000 (a target it failed to meet); the latest government estimate claims the population will peak at 1.5 billion in 2033. The policy was harshly implemented at first but rural revolt led to a softer stance; nonetheless, it generated much bad feeling between local officials and the rural population.

All non-Han minorities are exempt from the one-child policy; Han Chinese parents who were both single children could have a second child and in a new policy initiative from 2013, this has been expanded to include couples, if at least one of them is a single child. Rural families are allowed to have two children if the first child is a girl, but some have upwards of three or four kids. Additional children often result in fines and families having to shoulder the cost of education themselves, without government assistance. Official stated policy opposes forced abortion or sterilisation, but allegations of coercion continue as local officials strive to meet population targets. In 2014, the film director Zhang Yimou was fined US\$1.2m for breaking the one-child policy.

Families who abided by the one-child policy often went to extreme lengths to ensure their child was male, with female infanticide, sex-selective abortion and abandonment becoming commonplace. In parts of China, this resulted in a serious imbalance of the sexes – in 2010, 118 boys were born for every 100 girls. In some provinces the imbalance has been even higher. By 2020, potentially around 35 million Chinese men may be unable to find spouses.

Another consequence of the one-child policy was a rapidly ageing population, with over a quarter of the populace predicted to be over the age of sixty-five by 2050.

As women can have a second child abroad, this also led to large numbers of mainland women giving birth in Hong Kong (where the child also qualified for Hong Kong citizenship). The Hong Kong government has used new legislation to curb this phenomenon, dubbed 'birth tourism', as government figures revealed that almost half of babies born in the territory in 2010 were born to mainland parents. In 2013, the Hong Kong government prohibited mainland women from visiting Hong Kong to give birth, unless their husband is from the territory.

Women in China

Equality & Emancipation

Growing up in a Confucian culture, women in China traditionally encountered great prejudice and acquired a far lower social status than men. The most notorious expression of female subservience was footbinding, which became a widespread practice in the Song dynasty. Female resistance to male dominated society could sometimes seek inventive solutions, however: discouraged from reading and writing, women in Jiangyong county (Hunan) once used their own invented syllabic script (partly based on Chinese) called *nushu* to write letters to each other (which men found incomprehensible).

Women in today's China officially share complete equality with men; however, as with other nations that profess sexual equality, the reality is often far different. Chinese women do not enjoy strong political representation and the Chinese Communist Party remains a largely patriarchal organisation. Iconic political leaders from the early days of the Chinese Communist Party were men and the influential echelons of the party persist as a largely male domain. Only a handful of the great scientists celebrated in a long photographic mural at Shanghai's Science and Technology Museum are women.

The Communist Party after 1949 tried to outlaw old customs and put women on equal footing with men. It abolished arranged marriages and encouraged women to get an education and join the workforce. Women were allowed to keep their maiden name upon marriage and leave their property to their children. In its quest for equality during this period however, the Communist Party seemed to 'desexualise' women, fashioning instead a kind of idealised worker/mother/peasant paradigm.

David Eimer's *The Emperor Far Away: Travels at the Edge of China* (Bloomsbury, 2014) is a riveting journey through China's periphery, from the deserts of Xinjiang and the mountains of Tibet, to the tropical jungles of Xishuangbanna and the frozen wastes of far northern Heilongjiang.

Chinese Women Today

High-profile, successful Chinese women are very much in the public eye, but the relative lack of career opportunities for females in other fields also suggests a continuing bias against women in employment.

Women's improved social status today has meant that more women are putting off marriage until their late 20s or early 30s, choosing instead to focus on education and career opportunities. This has been enhanced by the rapid rise in house prices, further encouraging women to leave marriage (and having children) till a later age. Premarital sex and cohabitation before marriage are increasingly common in larger cities and lack the stigma they had several years ago.

Some Chinese women are making strong efforts to protect the rights of women in China, receiving international attention in the process. In 2010 the Simone de Beauvoir prize for women's freedom was awarded to Guo Jianmei, a Chinese lawyer and human rights activist, and filmmaker and professor Ai Xiaoming. Guo Jianmei also received the International Women of Courage Award in 2011.

In a sign of growing confidence among the female workforce, a young Beijing woman won the first ever gender discrimination lawsuit in China in 2014.

China is the world's fastest growing market for luxury goods and Chinese shoppers spend an average of £3500 per visit to Harrods, the famous London department store. Furthermore, 25% of worldwide Bentley sales in 2013 went to China.

Rural Women in China

A strong rural–urban divide exists. Urban women are far more optimistic and freer, while women from rural areas, where traditional beliefs are at their strongest, fight an uphill battle against discrimination. Rural Chinese mores are heavily biased against females, where a marked preference for baby boys

exists. China's women are more likely to commit suicide than men (in the West it is the other way around), while the suicide rate for rural Chinese women is around five times the urban rate.

China has almost 90 cities with populations of five to 10 million people and more than 170 cities with between one and five million people.

Religion & Philosophy

Despite the seemingly pragmatic nature of its people, ideas have always possessed an extraordinary potency in China. The Taiping Rebellion fused Christianity with revolutionary principles of social organisation, almost sweeping away the Qing dynasty in the process and leaving 20 million dead in its horrifying 20-year spasm. The momentary incandescence of the Boxer Rebellion drew upon a volatile cocktail of martial-arts practices and superstition, blended with xenophobia, while the chaos of the Cultural Revolution is a further suggestion of what may happen in China when ideas assume the full supremacy they seek.

Religion Today

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) today remains fearful of ideas and beliefs that challenge its authority. Proselytising is not permitted, religious organisation is regulated and monitored, while organisations such as Falun Gong can be banned outright. Despite these constraints, worship and religious practice is generally permitted and China's spiritual world provides a vivid and colourful backdrop to contemporary Chinese life.

China has always had a pluralistic religious culture, and although statistics in China are a slippery fish, an estimated 400 million Chinese today adhere to a particular faith. The CCP made strident efforts after 1949 to supplant religious worship with the secular philosophy of communism but since the abandonment of principles of Marxist–Leninist collectivism, this policy has significantly waned.

Religion is enjoying an upswing as people return to faith for spiritual solace at a time of great change, dislocation and uncertainty. The hopeless, poor and destitute may turn to worship as they feel abandoned by communism and the safety nets it once assured. Yet the educated and

prosperous are similarly turning to religious belief for a sense of guidance and direction in a land many Chinese suspect has become morally bereft.

Religious belief in China has traditionally been marked by tolerance. Although the faiths are quite distinct, some convergence exists between Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, and you may discover shrines where all three faiths are worshipped. Guanyin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, finds her equivalent in Tianhou (Mazu), the Taoist goddess and protector of fisher folk, and the two goddesses can seem almost interchangeable. Other symbioses exist: elements of Taoism and Buddhism can be discerned in the thinking of some Chinese Christians, while the Virgin Mary finds a familiar toehold in the Chinese psyche owing to her physical similarity with Guanyin.

FALUN GONG

Falun Gong – a practice that merges elements of qigong-style regulated breathing and standing exercises with Buddhist teachings, fashioning a quasi-religious creed in the process – literally means ‘Practice of the Dharma Wheel’. Riding a wave of interest in qigong systems in the 1990s, Falun Gong claimed as many as 100 million adherents in China by 1999. The technique was banned in the same year after over 10,000 practitioners stood in silent protest outside Zhongnanhai in Beijing, following protests in Tianjin when a local magazine published an article critical of Falun Gong. The authorities had been unnerved by the movement’s audacity and organisational depth, construing Falun Gong as a threat to the primacy of the CCP. The movement was branded a cult (xiejiao) and a robust, media-wide propaganda campaign was launched against practitioners, forcing many to undergo ‘re-education’ in prison and labour camps. After the ban, the authorities treated Falun Gong believers harshly and reports surfaced of adherents dying in custody. Falun Gong remains an outlawed movement in China to this day.

Buddhism

Although not an indigenous faith, Buddhism (Fojiao) is the religion most deeply associated with China and Tibet. Although Buddhism’s authority has long ebbed, the faith still exercises a powerful sway over China’s spiritual inclinations. Many Chinese may not be regular temple-goers but they harbour an interest in Buddhism; they may merely be ‘cultural Buddhists’, with a

strong affection for Buddhist civilisation.

Chinese towns with any history usually have several Buddhist temples, but the number is well down on pre-1949 figures. The small Hebei town of Zhengding, for example, has four Buddhist temples, but at one time had eight. Beijing once had hundreds, compared to the 20 or so you can find today.

Some of China's greatest surviving artistic achievements are Buddhist in inspiration. The largest and most ancient repository of Chinese, Central Asian and Tibetan Buddhist artwork can be found at the Mogao Caves in Gansu, while the carved Buddhist caves at both Longmen and Yungang are spectacular pieces of religious and creative heritage. To witness Buddhism at its most devout, consider a trip to Tibet.

The death of a young toddler, who was run over twice and ignored by nearly 20 passers-by in Foshan in 2011, prompted a passionate debate about morals in modern Chinese society.

Origins

Founded in ancient India around the 5th century BC, Buddhism teaches that all of life is suffering, and that the cause of this anguish is desire, itself rooted in sensation and attachment. Suffering can only be overcome by following the eightfold path, a set of guidelines for moral behaviour, meditation and wisdom. Those who have freed themselves from suffering and the wheel of rebirth are said to have attained nirvana or enlightenment. The term Buddha generally refers to the historical founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, but is also sometimes used to denote those who have achieved enlightenment.

Siddhartha Gautama left no writings; the sutras that make up the Buddhist canon were compiled many years after his death.

Beyond Tibet, China has four sacred Buddhist mountains, each one the home of a specific Bodhisattva. The two most famous mountains are Wutai Shan and Emei Shan, respectively ruled over by Wenshu and Puxiang.

Buddhism in China

Like other faiths such as Christianity, Nestorianism, Islam and Judaism, Buddhism originally reached China via the Silk Road. The earliest recorded Buddhist temple in China proper dates back to the 1st century AD, but it was not until the 4th century, when a period of warlordism coupled with nomadic invasions plunged the country into disarray, that Buddhism gained mass appeal. Buddhism's sudden growth during this period is often attributed to its sophisticated ideas concerning the afterlife (such as karma and reincarnation), a dimension unaddressed by either Confucianism or Taoism. At a time when existence was especially precarious, spiritual transcendence was understandably popular.

As Buddhism converged with Taoist philosophy (through terminology used in translation) and popular religion (through practice), it went on to develop into something distinct from the original Indian tradition. The most famous example is the esoteric Chan school (Zen in Japanese), which originated sometime in the 5th or 6th century, and focused on attaining enlightenment through meditation. Chan was novel not only in its unorthodox teaching methods, but also because it made enlightenment possible for laypeople outside the monastic system. It rose to prominence during the Tang and Song dynasties, after which the centre of practice moved to Japan. Other major Buddhist sects in China include Tiantai (based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra) and Pure Land, a faith-based teaching that requires simple devotion, such as reciting the Amitabha Buddha's name, in order to gain rebirth in paradise. Today, Pure Land Buddhism is the most common.

GUANYIN

The boundlessly compassionate countenance of Guanyin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, can be encountered in temples across China. The goddess (more strictly a Bodhisattva or a Buddha-to-be) goes under a variety of aliases: Guanshiyin (literally 'Observing the Cries of the World') is her formal name, but she is also called Guanzizai, Guanyin Dashi and Guanyin Pusa, or, in Sanskrit, Avalokiteshvara. Known as Kannon in Japan, Guanyam in Cantonese and Quan Am in Vietnam, Guanyin

shoulders the grief of the world and dispenses mercy and compassion. Christians will note a semblance to the Virgin Mary in the aura surrounding the goddess, which at least partially explains why Christianity has found a slot in the Chinese consciousness.

In Tibetan Buddhism, her earthly presence manifests itself in the Dalai Lama, and her home is the Potala Palace in Lhasa. In China, her abode is the island of Putuoshan in Zhejiang province, the first two syllables of which derive from the name of her palace in Lhasa.

In temples throughout China, Guanyin is often found at the very rear of the main hall, facing north (most of the other divinities, apart from Weituo, face south). She typically has her own little shrine and stands on the head of a big fish, holding a lotus in her hand. On other occasions, she has her own hall, often towards the rear of the temple.

The goddess (who in earlier dynasties appeared to be male rather than female) is often surrounded by little effigies of the luohan (or arhat; those freed from the cycle of rebirth), who scamper about; the Guanyin Pavilion outside Dali is a good example of this. Guanyin also appears in a variety of forms, often with just two arms, but sometimes in multi-armed form (as at the Puning Temple in Chengde). The 11-faced Guanyin, the fierce horse-head Guanyin, the Songzi Guanyin (literally 'Offering Son Guanyin') and the Dripping Water Guanyin are just some of her myriad manifestations. She has traditionally been a favourite subject for dehua (white-glazed porcelain) figures, which are typically very elegant.

Buddhist Schools

Regardless of its various forms, most Buddhism in China belongs to the Mahayana school, which holds that since all existence is one, the fate of the individual is linked to the fate of others. Thus, Bodhisattvas – those who have already achieved enlightenment but have chosen to remain on earth – continue to work for the liberation of all other sentient beings. The most popular Bodhisattva in China is Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy.

Ethnic Tibetans and Mongols within China practise a unique form of Mahayana Buddhism known as Tibetan or Tantric Buddhism (Lama Jiao). Tibetan Buddhism, sometimes called Vajrayana or 'thunderbolt vehicle', has been practised since the early 7th century AD and is influenced by Tibet's pre-Buddhist Bon religion, which relied on priests or shamans to placate spirits, gods and demons. Generally speaking, it is much more mystical than

other forms of Buddhism, relying heavily on mudras (ritual postures), mantras (sacred speech), yantras (sacred art) and secret initiation rites. Priests called lamas are believed to be reincarnations of highly evolved beings; the Dalai Lama is the supreme patriarch of Tibetan Buddhism.

China's oldest surviving Buddhist temple is the White Horse Temple in Luoyang; other more ancient Buddhist temples may well have existed but have since vanished.

Taoism

A home-grown philosophy-cum-religion, Taoism (Daojiao) is also perhaps the hardest of all China's faiths to grasp. Controversial, paradoxical, and – like the Tao itself – impossible to pin down, it is a natural counterpoint to rigid Confucianist order and responsibility.

Taoism predates Buddhism in China and much of its religious culture connects to a distant animism and shamanism, despite the purity of its philosophical school. In its earliest and simplest form, Taoism draws from *The Classic of the Way and Its Power* (Taote Jing; Daode Jing), penned by the sagacious Laotzu (Laozi; c 580–500 BC) who left his writings with the gatekeeper of a pass as he headed west on the back of an ox. Some Chinese believe his wanderings took him to a distant land in the west where he became Buddha.

The Classic of the Way and Its Power is a work of astonishing insight and sublime beauty. Devoid of a god-like being or deity, Laotzu's writings instead endeavour to address the unknowable and indescribable principle of the universe, which he calls Dao (*dao*; 道), or 'the Way'. Dao is the way or method by which the universe operates, so it can be understood to be a universal or cosmic principle.

The opening lines of *The Classic of the Way and Its Power* confess, however, that the treatise may fail in its task: 'The way that can be spoken of is not the real way, the name that can be named is not the true name'. Despite this disclaimer, the 5000-character book, completed in terse classical Chinese, somehow communicates the nebulous power and authority of 'the

Way'. The book remains the seminal text of Taoism, and Taoist purists see little need to look beyond its revelations.

One of Taoism's most beguiling precepts, *wuwei* (inaction) champions the allowing of things to naturally occur without interference. The principle is enthusiastically pursued by students of Taiji Quan, Wuji Quan and other soft martial arts who seek to equal nothingness in their bid to lead an opponent to defeat himself.

The Chinese verb for 'to know' is *zhidao*, literally 'know the *dao*' or 'to know the way', indicating a possible Taoist etymology.

Confucianism

The very core of Chinese society for the past two millennia, Confucianism (Rujia Sixiang) is a humanist philosophy that strives for social harmony and the common good. In China, its influence can be seen in everything from the emphasis on education and respect for elders to the patriarchal role of the government.

Confucianism is based upon the teachings of Confucius (Kongzi), a 6th-century-BC philosopher who lived during a period of constant warfare and social upheaval. While Confucianism changed considerably throughout the centuries, some of the principal ideas remained the same – namely an emphasis on five basic hierarchical relationships: father–son, ruler–subject, husband–wife, elder–younger, and friend–friend. Confucius believed that if each individual carried out his or her proper role in society (ie, a son served his father respectfully while a father provided for his son, a subject served his ruler respectfully while a ruler provided for his subject, and so on) social order would be achieved. Confucius' disciples later gathered his ideas in the form of short aphorisms and conversations, forming the work known as *The Analects* (Lunyu).

Early Confucian philosophy was further developed by Mencius (Mengzi) and Xunzi, both of whom provided a theoretical and practical foundation for many of Confucius' moral concepts. In the 2nd century BC, Confucianism

became the official ideology of the Han dynasty, thereby gaining mainstream acceptance for the first time. This was of major importance and resulted in the formation of an educated elite that served both the government as bureaucrats and the common people as exemplars of moral action. During the rule of the Tang dynasty an official examination system was created, which, in theory, made the imperial government a true meritocracy. However, this also contributed to an ossification of Confucianism, as the ideology grew increasingly mired in the weight of its own tradition, focusing exclusively on a core set of texts.

Nonetheless, influential figures sporadically reinterpreted the philosophy – in particular Zhu Xi (1130–1200), who brought in elements of Buddhism and Taoism to create Neo Confucianism (Lixue or Daoxue) – and it remained a dominant social force up until the 1911 Revolution toppled the imperial bureaucracy. In the 20th century, intellectuals decried Confucian thought as an obstacle to modernisation and Mao further levelled the sage in his denunciation of ‘the Four Olds’. But feudal faults notwithstanding, Confucius’ social ethics recently resurfaced in government propaganda where they lent authority to the leadership’s emphasis on ‘harmony’ (*hexie*).

Confucius Institutes around the world aim to promote Chinese language and culture internationally, while simultaneously developing its economic and cultural influences abroad.

Christianity

The explosion of interest in Christianity (Jidujiao) in China over recent years is unprecedented except for the wholesale conversions that accompanied the tumultuous rebellion of the pseudo-Christian Taiping in the 19th century.

Christianity first arrived in China with the Nestorians, a sect from ancient Persia that split with the Byzantine Church in 431 AD, who arrived in China via the Silk Road in the 7th century. A celebrated tablet – the Nestorian Tablet – in Xi’an records their arrival. Much later, in the 16th century, the Jesuits arrived and were popular figures at the imperial court, although they made few converts.

Large numbers of Catholic and Protestant missionaries established themselves in the 19th century, but left after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. One such missionary, James Hudson Taylor from Barnsley in England, immersed himself in Chinese culture and is credited with helping to convert 18,000 Chinese Christians and building 600 churches during his 50 years in 19th-century China.

In today's China, Christianity is a burgeoning faith perhaps uniquely placed to expand due to its industrious work ethic, associations with first-world nations and its emphasis on human rights and charitable work.

Some estimates point to as many as 100 million Christians in China. However, the exact population is hard to calculate as many groups – outside the four official Christian organisations – lead a strict underground existence (in what are called 'house churches') out of fear of a political clampdown.

In signs of greater official unease at the spread of Christianity, authorities in Wenzhou – a city in Zhejiang province known as 'China's Jerusalem' – demolished churches, threatened others with demolition and removed large crosses from some church spires in 2014. Officials argued they were enforcing building laws but Christian locals saw the moves as a deliberate attempt to undermine their faith. Beijing has also recently ratcheted up efforts to suppress fringe Christian groups such as the Church of Almighty God, an apocalyptic church which was designated a cult. Over a thousand members of the Church of Almighty God were arrested over a three month period in 2014.

Believing he was the son of God and brother of Jesus Christ, Hakka rebel Hong Xiuquan led the bloody and tumultuous pseudo-Christian Taiping Rebellion against the Qing dynasty from 1856 to 1864.

Islam

Islam (Yisilan Jiao) in China dates to the 7th century, when it was first brought to China by Arab and Persian traders along the Silk Road. Later, during the Mongol Yuan dynasty, maritime trade increased, bringing new

waves of merchants to China's coastal regions, particularly the port cities of Guangzhou and Quanzhou. The descendants of these groups – now scattered across the country – gradually integrated into Han culture, and are today distinguished primarily by their religion. In Chinese, they are referred to as the Hui.

Other Muslim groups include the Uighurs, Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Tajiks and Uzbeks, who live principally in the border areas of the northwest. It is estimated that 1.5% to 3% of Chinese today are Muslim.

An inspiring read, [God is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China](#) (2011) by Liao Yiwu, himself not a Christian, relates his encounters with Christians in contemporary China, set against a background of persecution and surging growth for the faith.

Communism & Maoism

Ironically (or perhaps intentionally), Mao Zedong, while struggling to uproot feudal superstition and religious belief, sprung to godlike status in China via a personality cult. In the China of today, Mao retains a semi-deified aura.

Communism sits awkwardly with the economic trajectory of China over the past 30 years. Once a philosophy forged in the white-hot crucible of civil war, revolution and the patriotic fervour to create a nation free from foreign interference, communism had largely run its credible course by the 1960s. By the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the political philosophy had repeatedly brought the nation to catastrophe, with the Hundred Flowers Movement, the Great Leap Forward and the disastrous violence of the Cultural Revolution.

Communism remains the official guiding principle of the CCP. However, young communist aspirants are far less likely to be ideologues than pragmatists seeking to advance within the party structure. In real terms, many argue that communism has become an adjunct to the survival of the CCP.

Chinese Communism owes something to Confucianism. Confucius' philosophy embraces the affairs of man and human society and the relationship between rulers and the ruled, rather than the supernatural world.

Establishing a rigid framework for human conduct, the culture of Confucianism was easily requisitioned by communists seeking to establish authority over society.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, Beijing became aware of the dangers of popular power and sought to maintain the coherence and strength of the state. This has meant that the CCP still seeks to impose itself firmly on the consciousness of Chinese people through patriotic education, propaganda, censorship, nationalism and the building of a strong nation.

Communism also has considerable nostalgic value for elderly Chinese who bemoan the loss of values in modern-day China and pine for the days when they felt more secure and society was more egalitarian. Chairman Mao's portrait still hangs in abundance across China, from drum towers in Guangxi province to restaurants in Beijing, testament to a generation of Chinese who still revere the communist leader. Until his spectacular fall from power in 2012, Chinese politician and Chongqing party chief Bo Xilai launched popular Maoist-style 'red culture' campaigns in Chongqing, which included the singing of revolutionary songs and the mass-texting of quotes from Mao's *Little Red Book*.

Kaifeng in Henan province is home to the largest community of Jews in China. The religious beliefs and customs of Judaism (Youtai Jiao) have died out, yet the descendants of the original Jews still consider themselves Jewish.

NATIONALISM

In today's China, '-isms' (zhuyi or 'doctrines') are often frowned upon. Any zhuyi may suggest a personal focus that the CCP would prefer people channel into hard work instead. 'Intellectualism' is suspect as it may clash with political taboos. 'Idealism' is nonpragmatic and potentially destructive, as Maoism showed.

Many argue that China's one-party state has reduced thinking across the spectrum via propaganda and censorship, dumbing down and an educational system that emphasises patriotic education. This has, however, helped spawn another '-ism': nationalism.

Nationalism is not restricted to Chinese youth but it is this generation – with no

experience of the Cultural Revolution's terrifying excesses – which most closely identifies with its message. The fenqing (angry youth) have been swept along with China's rise; while they are no lovers of the CCP, they yearn for a stronger China that can stand up to 'foreign interference' and dictate its own terms.

The CCP actively encourages strong patriotism, but is nervous about its transformation into aggressive nationalism and the potential for disturbance. Much nationalism in the PRC has little to do with the CCP but everything to do with China; while the CCP has struggled at length to identify itself with China's civilisation and core values, it has been only partially successful. With China's tendency to get quickly swept along by passions, nationalism is an often unseen but quite potent force, most visibly flaring up into the periodic anti-Japanese demonstrations that can convulse large towns and cities.

Animism

A small percentage of China's population is animist, a primordial religious belief akin to shamanism. Animists see the world as a living being, with rocks, trees, mountains and people all containing spirits that need to live in harmony. If this harmony is disrupted, restoration of this balance is attempted by a shaman who is empowered to mediate between the human and spirit world. Animism is most widely believed by minority groups and exists in a multitude of forms, some of which have been influenced by Buddhism and other religions.

During the Cultural Revolution, many Christian churches around China served as warehouses or factories, and were gradually rehabilitated in the 1980s.

Chinese Cuisine

Cooking plays a central role in both Chinese society and the national psyche. When Chinese people meet, a common greeting is ‘*Ni chifan le ma?*’ (‘Have you eaten yet?’). Work, play, romance, business and family all revolve around food. Catalysts for all manner of enjoyment, meals are occasions for pleasure and entertainment, to clinch deals, strike up new friendships and rekindle old ones. To fully explore this tasty domain on home soil, all you need is a visa, a pair of chopsticks, an explorative palate and a passion for the unusual and unexpected.

Zongzi (dumplings made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo or reed leaves) are eaten during the Dragon Boat Festival.

Real Chinese Food

Because the nation so skilfully exported its cuisine abroad, your very first impressions of China were probably via your taste buds. Chinatowns the world over teem with the aromas of Chinese cuisine, ferried overseas by China’s versatile and hard-working cooks. Sunday sees flocks of diners filling Chinatowns to ‘yum cha’ and feast on dim sum. Chinese food is indeed a wholesome and succulent point of contact between an immigrant Chinese population and everyone else.

But what you see – and taste – abroad is usually just a wafer-thin slice of a very hefty and wholesome pie. Chinese cuisine in the West is lifted from the cookbook of an emigrant community that mainly originated from China’s southern seaboard. In a similar vein, the sing-song melodies of Cantonese were the most familiar of China’s languages in Chinatowns, even though the dialect finds little traction in China beyond Hong Kong, Macau, Guangdong, parts of Guangxi and KTV parlours nationwide. So although you may be hard

pressed to avoid dim sum and *cha siu* in your local Chinatown, finding more ‘obscure’ specialities from elsewhere in China may still be a challenge, or an expensive proposition. The ‘Peking duck’ at your local restaurant, for example, may be at best a distant relative of the fowl fired up over fruit-tree wood in the ovens of Beijing *kaoyadian* (Peking duck restaurants).

To get an idea of the size of its diverse menu, remember that China is not that much smaller than Europe. Just as Europe is a patchwork of different nation states, languages, cultural traditions and climates, China is also a smorgasbord of dialects, languages, ethnic minorities and extreme geographic and climatic differences, despite the common Han Chinese cultural glue.

The sheer size of the land, the strength of local culture and differences in geography and altitude means there can be little in common between the cuisines of Xinjiang and Tibet, even though they are adjacent to each other. Following your nose (and palate) around China is one of the exciting ways to journey the land, so pack a sense of culinary adventure along with your travelling boots!

Regional Cooking

The evolution of China’s wide-ranging regional cuisines has been influenced by the climate, the distribution of crop and animal varieties, the type of terrain, proximity to the sea and the influence of neighbouring nations and the import of ingredients and aromas. Naturally seafood is prevalent in coastal regions of China, while in Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang there is a dependence on meat such as beef and lamb.

Another crucial ingredient is history. The flight of the Song court south of the Chang Jiang (Yangzi River) from northern Jurchen invaders in the 12th century helped develop China’s major regional cuisines. This process was further influenced by urbanisation, itself made possible by the commercialisation of agriculture and food distribution, which saw the restaurant industry emerge and the further consolidation of regional schools. Further impetus came from the merchants and bureaucrats who travelled the land, and from improved communications, such as the Grand Canal.

Many Chinese regions lay claim to their own culinary conventions, which may overlap and cross-pollinate each other. The cooking traditions of China's ethnic minorities aside, Han cooking has traditionally been divided into eight schools (*zhonghua badacaixi*):

Chuan (Sichuan cuisine)

Hui (Anhui cuisine)

Lu (Shandong cuisine)

Min (Fujian cuisine)

Su (Jiangsu cuisine)

Xiang (Hunan cuisine)

Yue (Cantonese/Guangdong cuisine)

Zhe (Zhejiang cuisine).

Although each school is independent and well defined, it is possible to group these eight culinary traditions into northern, southern, western and eastern cooking.

A common philosophy lies at the heart of Chinese cooking, whatever the school. Most vegetables and fruits are *yin* foods, generally moist and soft, possessing a cooling effect while nurturing the feminine aspect. *Yang* foods – fried, spicy or with red meat – are warming and nourish the masculine side. Any meal should harmonise flavours and achieve a balance between cooling and warming foods.

TRAVEL YOUR TASTE BUDS

China is such a gourmand's paradise you won't know when to stop. In the north, fill up on a tasty dish of wontons (*hundun*) stuffed with juicy leeks and minced pork, or Mongolian hotpot (*Menggu huoguo*), a hearty brew of mutton, onions and cabbage.

Chefs from China's arid northwest can slide a bowl of noodles topped with sliced donkey meat (*lurou huang mian*) under your nose or pop sizzling lamb kebabs (*kao yangrou*) between your fingers. Stop by Xi'an for warming servings of mutton broth and shredded flat bread (*yangrou paomo*). A dish of Lanzhou hand-pulled noodles (*la mian*) is a meal in itself.

In case you're pining for something sweet, head to Shanghai for delicious honey-smoked carp (*mizhi xunyu*) where you can also dine on more savoury helpings of

steaming xiaolongbao dumplings, which require considerable dexterity to consume without meat juices jetting to all compass points.

Cleanse your palate with a glass of heady Shaoxing yellow wine (Shaoxing huangjiu) or the more delicate flavours of Dragonwell tea (longjing cha). It may not exactly give you wings, but a dose of Huangshan braised pigeon (Huangshan dunge) will definitely give you the stamina to clamber up the misty inclines of Huangshan.

Some like it hot, and little comes hotter than the fiery flavours of Sichuan. Begin with mouth-numbing mapo tofu (mapo doufu), followed by the celebrated spicy chicken with peanuts (gongbao jiding). If the smoke isn't now coming out of your ears, fish smothered in chilli (shuizhu yu) should have you breathing fire. Alternatively, test your mettle with a volcanic Chongqing hotpot.

In the south, relax with morning dim sum in Guangzhou or a bowl of Cantonese snake soup (she geng) in one of the city's boisterous night markets. While in Macau, taste the Macanese dish porco a alentejana, a mouthwatering casserole of pork and clams.

Northern Cooking

With **Shandong** (lucai) – the oldest of the eight regional schools of cooking – at its heart, northern cooking also embraces Beijing, northeastern (Manchurian) and Shanxi cuisine, creating the most time-honoured and most central form of Chinese cooking.

In the dry north Chinese wheat belt an accent falls on millet, sorghum, maize, barley and wheat rather than rice (which requires lush irrigation by water to cultivate). Particularly well suited to the harsh and hardy winter climate, northern cooking is rich and wholesome (northerners partially attribute their taller size, compared to southern Chinese, to its effects). Filling breads – such as mantou or bing (flat breads) – are steamed, baked or fried while noodles may form the basis of any northern meal (although the ubiquitous availability of rice means it can always be found). Northern cuisine is frequently quite salty, and appetising dumplings (jiaozi) are widely eaten, usually boiled and sometimes fried.

As Beijing was the principal capital through the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, Imperial cooking is a chief characteristic of the northern school. Peking duck is Beijing's signature dish, served with typical northern

ingredients – pancakes, spring onions and fermented bean paste. You can find it all over China, but it's only true to form in the capital, roasted in ovens fired up with fruit-tree wood.

With China ruled from 1644 to 1911 by non-Han Manchurians, the influence of northeast cuisine (dongbei cai) has naturally permeated northern cooking, dispensing a legacy of rich and hearty stews, dense breads, preserved foods and dumplings.

Meat roasting is also more common in the north than in other parts of China. Meats in northern China are braised until falling off the bone, or slathered with spices and barbecued until smoky. Pungent garlic, chives and spring onions are used with abandon and also employed raw. Also from the northwest is the [Muslim Uighur](#) cuisine.

The nomadic and carnivorous diet of the Mongolians also infiltrates northern cooking, most noticeably in the Mongolian hotpot and the Mongolian barbecue. Milk from nomadic herds of cattle, goats and horses has also crept into northern cuisine, as yoghurts (suannai) for example.

Hallmark northern dishes:

| PINYIN | SCRIPT | ENGLISH |
|---------------------------|--------|---|
| <i>Běijīng kǎoyā</i> | 北京烤鸭 | Peking duck |
| <i>jiāo zhá yángròu</i> | 焦炸羊肉 | deep-fried mutton |
| <i>jiǎozi</i> | 饺子 | dumplings |
| <i>mántou</i> | 馒头 | steamed buns |
| <i>qīng xiāng shāo jī</i> | 清香烧鸡 | chicken wrapped in lotus leaf |
| <i>ròu bāozi</i> | 肉包子 | steamed meat buns |
| <i>sān měi dòufu</i> | 三美豆腐 | sliced bean curd with Chinese cabbage |
| <i>shuàn yángròu</i> | 涮羊肉 | lamb hotpot |
| <i>sì xǐ wánzi</i> | 四喜丸子 | steamed and fried pork, shrimp and bamboo shoot balls |
| <i>yuán bào lǐ jī</i> | 芫爆里脊 | stir-fried pork tenderloin with coriander |
| <i>zào liū sān bái</i> | 糟溜三白 | stir-fried chicken, fish and bamboo shoots |

Spanish traders in the early Qing dynasty first introduced red chilli pepper to China. Not only a spice, chillies are also a rich source of vitamins A and C.

Western Cooking

The cuisine of landlocked western China, a region heavily dappled with ethnic shades and contrasting cultures, welcomes the diner to the more scarlet end of the culinary spectrum. The trademark ingredient of the western school is the fiercely hot red chilli, a potent firecracker of a herb that floods dishes with an all-pervading spiciness. Aniseed, coriander, garlic and peppercorns are thrown in for good measure to add extra pungency and bite.

The standout cuisine of the western school is fiery **Sichuan** (chuancai)

food, one of China's eight regional cooking styles, renowned for its eye-watering peppery aromas. One of the herbs that differentiates Sichuan cooking from other spicy cuisines is the use of 'flower pepper' (huajiao), a numbing peppercorn-like herb that floods the mouth with an anaesthetising fragrance in a culinary effect termed mala (numb and hot). A Sichuan dish you can find cooked up by chefs across China is the delicious sour cabbage fish soup (suancaiyou; wholesome fish chunks in a spicy broth). The Chongqing hotpot is a force to be reckoned with but must be approached with a stiff upper lip (and copious amounts of liquid refreshment). If you want a hotpot pitched between spicy and mild, select a yuanyang hotpot (yuanyang huoguo), a vessel divided yin-yang style into two different compartments for two different soup bases.

Sichuan restaurants are everywhere in China, swarming around train stations, squeezed away down food streets or squished into street markets with wobbly stools and rickety tables parked out front.

Another of China's eight regional schools of cooking, dishes from **Hunan** (xiangcai) are similarly pungent, with a heavy reliance on chilli. Unlike Sichuan food, flower pepper is not employed and instead spicy flavours are often sharper, fiercer and more to the fore. Meat, particularly in Hunan, is marinated, pickled or otherwise processed before cooking, which is generally by stir- or flash-frying.

Cuisine in Tibet includes tsampa (porridge of roasted barley flour), bo cha (yak-butter tea), momos (dumplings filled with vegetables or yak meat), thugpa (noodles with meat), thenthuk (fried noodle squares) as well as shemdre (rice, potato and yak-meat curry).

Western-school dishes:

| PINYIN | SCRIPT | ENGLISH |
|---------------------------|--------|---|
| <i>bàngàng jī</i> | 棒棒鸡 | shredded chicken in a hot pepper and sesame sauce |
| <i>Chóngqing huǒguō</i> | 重庆火锅 | Chóngqing hotpot |
| <i>dāndan miàn</i> | 担担面 | spicy noodles |
| <i>gānshāo yán lǐ</i> | 干烧岩鲤 | stewed carp with ham and hot and sweet sauce |
| <i>huíguō ròu</i> | 回锅肉 | boiled and stir-fried pork with salty and hot sauce |
| <i>málà dòufu</i> | 麻辣豆腐 | spicy tofu |
| <i>Máoshì Hóngshaōròu</i> | 毛氏红烧肉 | Mao family braised pork |
| <i>shuǐ zhǔ niúròu</i> | 水煮牛肉 | spicy fried and boiled beef |
| <i>shuǐzhǔyú</i> | 水煮鱼 | fried and boiled fish, garlic sprouts and celery |
| <i>suāncàiyú</i> | 酸菜鱼 | sour cabbage fish soup |
| <i>yú xiāng ròusī</i> | 鱼香肉丝 | fish-flavour pork strips |
| <i>zhàcài ròusī</i> | 榨菜肉丝 | stir-fried pork or beef tenderloin with tuber mustard |

Southern Cooking

The southern Chinese – particularly the Cantonese – historically spearheaded successive waves of immigration overseas, leaving aromatic constellations of Chinatowns around the world. Consequently, Westerners most often associate this school of cooking with China.

Typified by Cantonese (yuecai) cooking, southern cooking lacks the richness and saltiness of northern cooking and instead coaxes more subtle aromas to the surface. The Cantonese astutely believe that good cooking does not require much flavouring, for it is the *xian* (natural freshness) of the ingredients that marks a truly high-grade dish. Hence the near obsessive

attention paid to the freshness of ingredients in southern cuisine.

The hallmark **Cantonese** dish is dim sum (Mandarin: dianxin). Yum cha (literally ‘drink tea’) – another name for dim sum dining – in Guangzhou and Hong Kong can be enjoyed on any day of the week. Dishes – often in steamers – are wheeled around on trolleys so you can see what you want to order. Well-known dim sum dishes include guotie (a kind of fried dumpling), shaomai (a kind of open pork dumpling), chashaobao (pork-filled bun) and chunjuan (spring rolls). The extravagantly named fengzhua (phoenix claw) is the name for the ever-popular steamed chicken’s feet. Xiaolongbao (steamed dumplings) are often sold in dim sum restaurants but are traditionally from Shanghai.

Local esteem for Cantonese food is evident in a popular Chinese saying: ‘Be born in Suzhou, live in Hangzhou, eat in Guangzhou and die in Liuzhou’. (Suzhou was famed for its good-looking people, Hangzhou was a lovely place to live in, Guangzhou was the best place to eat while Liuzhou was famed for the wood of its coffins!)

Fujian (mincai) cuisine is another important southern cooking style, with its emphasis on light flavours and, due to the province’s proximity to the East China Sea, seafood.

Hakka cuisine from the disparate and migratory Hakka people (Kejiazu) is another feature of southern Chinese cooking, as is the food of Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong.

Rice is the primary staple of southern cuisine. Sparkling paddy fields glitter across the south; the humid climate, plentiful rainfall and well-irrigated land means that rice has been farmed here since the Chinese first populated the region during the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220).

Southern-school dishes:

| PINYIN | SCRIPT | ENGLISH |
|------------------------------|----------|---|
| <i>bái zhuó xiā</i> | 白灼虾 | blanched prawns with shredded scallions |
| <i>dōngjiāng yānjú jī</i> | 东江盐焗鸡 | salt-baked chicken |
| <i>gāilí jī</i> | 咖喱鸡 | curried chicken |
| <i>háoyóu niúròu</i> | 蚝油牛肉 | beef with oyster sauce |
| <i>kǎo rǔzhū</i> | 烤乳猪 | crispy suckling pig |
| <i>mì zhī chāshāo</i> | 蜜汁叉烧 | roast pork with honey |
| <i>shé ròu</i> | 蛇肉 | snake |
| <i>tángcù lǐjī/gǔlǎo ròu</i> | 糖醋里脊/咕老肉 | sweet and sour pork fillets |
| <i>tángcù páigǔ</i> | 糖醋排骨 | sweet and sour spare ribs |

Streets around China reek with the powerful and popular aromas of stinky tofu (*chou doufu*), a form of fermented tofu with an aroma pitched somewhere between unwashed socks and rotting vegetation.

Eastern Cooking

The eastern school of Chinese cuisine derives from a fertile region of China, slashed by waterways and canals, glistening with lakes, fringed by a long coastline and nourished by a subtropical climate. Jiangsu province itself is the home of **Jiangsu** (sucai) cuisine – one of the core regions of the eastern school – and is famed as the ‘Land of Fish and Rice’, a tribute to its abundance of food and produce. The region was also historically prosperous and in today’s export-oriented economy, the eastern provinces are among China’s wealthiest. This combination of riches and bountiful food created a culture of epicurism and gastronomic enjoyment.

South of Jiangsu, **Zhejiang** (zhecai) cuisine is another cornerstone of Eastern cooking. The Song dynasty saw the blossoming of the restaurant industry here; in Hangzhou, the southern Song-dynasty capital, restaurants and teahouses accounted for two-thirds of the city’s business during a

splendidly rich cultural era. At this time, one of Hangzhou's most famous dishes, dongpo rou (named after the celebrated poet and governor of Hangzhou, Su Dongpo), achieved fame.

Generally more oily and sweeter than other Chinese schools, the eastern school revels in fish and seafood, reflecting its geographical proximity to major rivers and the sea. Fish is usually qingzheng (steamed) but can be stir-fried, pan-fried or grilled. Hairy crabs (dazhaxie) are a Shanghai speciality between October and December. Eaten with soy, ginger and vinegar and downed with warm Shaoxing wine, the best crabs come from Yangcheng Lake. The crab is believed to increase the body's yin (coldness), so yang (warmth) is added by imbibing lukewarm rice wine with it. It is also usual to eat male and female crabs together.

As with Cantonese food, freshness is a key ingredient in the cuisine, and sauces and seasonings are only employed to augment essential flavours. Stir-frying and steaming are also used, the latter with Shanghai's famous xiaolongbao, steamer buns filled with nuggets of pork or crab swimming in a scalding meat broth. Learning how to devour these carefully without the meat juice squirting everywhere and scalding the roof of your mouth (or blinding your neighbour) requires some – quite enjoyable – practice.

With a lightness of flavour, **Anhui** (huicai) cuisine – one of China's eight principle culinary traditions and firmly in the eastern cooking sphere – puts less emphasis on seafood. Braising and stewing of vegetables and wildlife from its mountainous habitats is a pronounced feature of this regional cuisine.

China's best soy sauce is also produced in the eastern provinces, and the technique of braising meat using soy sauce, sugar and spices was perfected here. Meat cooked in this manner takes on a dark mauve hue auspiciously described as 'red', a colour associated with good fortune.

Famous dishes from the eastern school:

| PINYIN | SCRIPT | ENGLISH |
|-----------------------------|--------|--|
| <i>gōngbào jīdīng</i> | 宫爆鸡丁 | spicy chicken with peanuts; kung pao chicken |
| <i>háoyóu niúròu</i> | 蚝油牛肉 | beef with oyster sauce |
| <i>hóngshāo páigǔ</i> | 红烧排骨 | red-braised spare ribs |
| <i>hóngshāo qiézi</i> | 红烧茄子 | red-cooked aubergine |
| <i>hóngshāo yú</i> | 红烧鱼 | red-braised fish |
| <i>huǒguō</i> | 火锅 | hotpot |
| <i>húntùn tāng</i> | 馄饨汤 | wonton soup |
| <i>jiācháng dòufu</i> | 家常豆腐 | 'homestyle' tofu |
| <i>jiǎozi</i> | 饺子 | dumplings |
| <i>jīdànmiàn</i> | 鸡蛋面 | noodles and egg |
| <i>qīngjiāo ròupiàn</i> | 青椒肉片 | pork and green peppers |
| <i>shāguō dòufu</i> | 沙锅豆腐 | bean curd casserole |
| <i>suānlàtāng</i> | 酸辣汤 | hot and sour soup |
| <i>tiěbǎn niúròu</i> | 铁板牛肉 | sizzling beef platter |
| <i>xīhóngshì chǎojiǎn</i> | 西红柿炒鸡蛋 | fried egg and tomato |
| <i>xīhóngshì jīdàn tāng</i> | 西红柿鸡蛋汤 | egg and tomato soup |
| <i>xīhóngshì niúròu</i> | 西红柿牛肉 | beef and tomato |
| <i>yúxiāng qiézi</i> | 鱼香茄子 | fish-flavoured aubergine |

Organic (*youji*) food is experiencing considerable growth and popularity in China, partly as a result of concerns about food safety but also as a reflection of growing incomes.

Home-Style Dishes

Besides China's regional cuisines, there is a tasty variety of *jiachangcai* (home-style) dishes you will see all over the land, cooked up in restaurants and along food streets.

Notable *jiachangcai* dishes:

| PINYIN | SCRIPT | ENGLISH |
|----------------------------|--------|---|
| <i>jiāng cōng chǎo xiè</i> | 姜葱炒蟹 | stir-fried crab with ginger and scallions |
| <i>mìzhī xūnyú</i> | 蜜汁熏鱼 | honey-smoked carp |
| <i>níng shì shànyú</i> | 宁式鳝鱼 | stir-fried eel with onion |
| <i>qiézhī yúkuài</i> | 茄汁鱼块 | fish fillet in tomato sauce |
| <i>qīng zhēng guìyú</i> | 清蒸鳊鱼 | steamed Mandarin fish |
| <i>sōngzǐ guìyú</i> | 松子鳊鱼 | Mandarin fish with pine nuts |
| <i>suānlà yóuyú</i> | 酸辣鱿鱼 | hot and sour squid |
| <i>xiǎolóngbāo</i> | 小笼包 | steamer buns |
| <i>yóubào xiārén</i> | 油爆虾仁 | fried shrimp |
| <i>zhá hēi lǐyú</i> | 炸黑鲤鱼 | fried black carp |
| <i>zhá yúwán</i> | 炸鱼丸 | fish balls |

It is quite common for banquets and dinners in China to finish abruptly, as everyone stands up and walks away in unison with little delay.

Dining Ins & Outs

Chinese Restaurants

Chinese eateries come in every conceivable shape, size and type: from shabby, hole-in-the-wall noodle outfits with flimsy PVC furniture, blaring TV sets and well-worn plastic menus to gilded banquet-style restaurants where elegant cheongsam-clad waitresses show you to your seat, straighten your chopsticks and bring you a warm hand towel and a gold-embossed wine list.

In between are legions of very serviceable midrange restaurants serving cuisine from across China.

As dining in China is such a big, sociable and often ostentatious affair,

many Chinese banqueting-style restaurants have huge round tables, thousand-candle-power electric lights and precious little sense of intimacy or romance. Over-attentive and ever-present staff can add to the discomfort for foreigners.

TIPPING

Tipping is never done at cheap restaurants in mainland China. Smart, international restaurants will encourage tipping but it is not obligatory and it's uncertain whether waiting staff receive their tips at the end of the night. Hotel restaurants automatically add a 15% service charge and some high-end restaurants may do the same.

Dining Times

The Chinese eat early. Lunch usually commences from around 11.30am, either self-cooked or a takeaway at home, or in a street-side restaurant. Dinner kicks off from around 6pm. Reflecting these dining times, some restaurants open at around 11am to close for an afternoon break at about 2.30pm before opening again around 5pm and closing in the late evening.

Traditionally one of the seven necessities of daily life in China, tea was once employed as a form of currency in the Middle Kingdom.

Menus

In Beijing, Shanghai and other large cities, you may be proudly presented with an English menu (*Yingwen caipu*). In smaller towns and out in the sticks, don't expect anything other than a Chinese-language menu and a hovering waitress with no English-language skills. The best is undoubtedly the ever-handly photo menu. If you like the look of what other diners are eating, just point (*wo yao nei ge*; 'I want that' – a very handy phrase). Alternatively, pop into the kitchen and point out the meats and vegetables you would like to eat.

The world's fifth-largest producer of wine in 2010, China became the world's largest market for red wine in 2013.

Desserts & Sweets

The Chinese do not generally eat dessert, but fruit – typically watermelon (*xigua*) or oranges (*cheng*) – often concludes a meal. Ice cream can be ordered in some places, but in general sweet desserts (*tianpin*) are consumed as snacks and are seldom available in restaurants.

The Chinese word for tea (*cha*) has colloquially entered numerous different languages, including English (UK), Portuguese, Greek and Russian. The word 'tea' itself comes from the Fujian dialect for tea.

Table Manners

Chinese meal times are generally relaxed affairs with no strict rules of etiquette. Meals can commence in a Confucian vein before spiralling into total Taoist mayhem, fuelled by incessant toasts with *baijiu* (a white spirit) or beer and furious smoking by the men.

Meals typically unfold with one person ordering on behalf of a group. When a group dines, a selection of dishes is ordered for everyone to share rather than individual diners ordering a dish just for themselves. As they arrive, dishes are placed communally in the centre of the table or on a lazy Susan, which may be revolved by the host so that the principal guest gets first choice of whatever dish arrives. Soup may appear midway through the meal or at the end. Rice often arrives at the end of the meal; if you would like it earlier, just ask.

It is good form to fill your neighbours' tea cups or beer glasses when they are empty. To serve yourself tea or any other drink without serving others first is bad form, and appreciation to the pourer is indicated by gently tapping the middle finger on the table.

When your teapot needs a refill, signal this to the waiter by simply taking

the lid off the pot.

It's best to wait until someone announces a toast before drinking your beer; if you want to get a quick shot in, propose a toast to the host. The Chinese do in fact toast each other much more than in the West, often each time they drink. A formal toast is conducted by raising your glass in both hands in the direction of the toastee and crying out *ganbei*, literally 'dry the glass', which is the cue to drain your glass in one hit. This can be quite a challenge if your drink is 65% *baijiu*, and your glass is rapidly refilled to the meniscus after you drain it, in preparation for the next toast which may rapidly follow.

Smokers can light up during the meal, unless they are in the no-smoking area of a restaurant. Depending on the restaurant, smokers may smoke through the entire meal. If you are a smoker, ensure you hand around your cigarettes to others as that is standard procedure.

Don't use your chopsticks to point at people or gesticulate with them and never stick your chopsticks upright in bowls of rice (it's a portent of death).

Last but not least, never insist on paying for the bill if someone else is tenaciously determined to pay – usually the person who invited you to dinner. By all means offer, but then raise your hands in mock surrender when resistance is met; to pay for a meal when another person is determined to pay is to make them lose face.

Chinese toothpick etiquette is similar to that found in other Asian nations: one hand excavates with the toothpick, while the other hand shields the mouth.

Chinese diners will often slurp their noodles quite noisily, which is not considered to be impolite.

Street Food

Snacking your way around China is a fine way to sample the different flavours of the land while on the move. Most towns have a street market or a night market (*yeshi*) for good-value snacks and meals so you can either take away or park yourself on a wobbly stool and grab a beer. Street markets such

as Kaifeng's boisterous night market abound with choices you may not find in restaurants. Vocal vendors will be forcing their tasty creations on you but you can also see what people are buying and what's being cooked up, so all you have to do is join the queue and point.

You will be charged for a wrapped-up hand-cleaning wipe if you open it at your restaurant table; if you don't use it, it should not appear on your bill.

Eating with Kids

Similar to travelling with children in China, dining out with kids can be a challenge. Budget eateries won't have kids' menus; nor will they have booster seats. Smarter restaurants may supply these but it can be touch and go. In large cities you will be able to find more restaurants switched on to the needs of families, especially Western restaurants that may have a play area, kids' menu, activities, booster seats and other paraphernalia.

Vegetarianism

If you'd rather chew on a legume than a leg of lamb, it can be hard going trying to find truly vegetarian dishes. China's history of famine and poverty means the consumption of meat has always been a sign of status, and is symbolic of health and wealth. Eating meat is also considered to enhance male virility, so vegetarian men raise eyebrows. Partly because of this, there is virtually no vegetarian movement in China, although Chinese people may forgo meat for Buddhist reasons. For the same reasons, they may avoid meat on certain days of the month but remain carnivorous at other times.

You will find that vegetables are often fried in animal-based oils, while vegetable soups are often made with chicken or beef stock, so simply choosing vegetable items on the menu is ineffective. In Beijing and Shanghai you will, however, find a generous crop of vegetarian restaurants to choose from alongside outfits such as Element Fresh, which has a decent range of healthy vegetarian options.

Out of the large cities, your best bet may be to head to a sizeable active Buddhist temple or monastery, where Buddhist vegetarian restaurants are often open to the public. Buddhist vegetarian food typically consists of ‘mock meat’ dishes created from tofu, wheat gluten, potato and other vegetables. Some of the dishes are almost works of art, with vegetarian ingredients sculpted to look like spare ribs or fried chicken. Sometimes the chefs go to great lengths to create ‘bones’ from carrots and lotus roots.

If you want to say ‘I am a vegetarian’ in Chinese, the phrase to use is *wo chi su*.

To turn your hand to Chinese cooking while travelling, popular classes can be joined in Beijing, Shanghai and other towns in China. Check under Courses in the destination chapters for listings.

Breakfast

Breakfast in China is generally light, simple and over and done with quickly. The meal may merely consist of a bowl of rice porridge (*zhou*) or its watery cousin, rice gruel (*xifan*). Pickles, boiled eggs, steamed buns, fried peanuts and deep-fried dough sticks (*youtiao*) are also popular, washed down with warm soybean milk. Breakfast at your Chinese hotel may consist of some or all of these. Coffee is rarely drunk at breakfast time, unless the family is modern, urban and middle class, but it’s easy to find in cafes, especially in large towns. Sliced bread (*mianbao*) was once rare but is increasingly common, as is butter (*huangyou*).

Tea

An old Chinese saying identifies tea as one of the seven basic necessities of life, along with firewood, oil, rice, salt, soy sauce and vinegar. The Chinese were the first to cultivate tea, and the art of brewing and drinking it has been popular since Tang times (AD 618–907).

China has three main types of tea: green tea (*lu cha*), black tea (*hong cha*)

and *wulong* (a semifermented tea, halfway between black and green tea). In addition, there are other variations, including jasmine (*chashui*) and chrysanthemum (*juhua cha*). Some famous regional teas of China are Fujian's *tie guanyin*, *pu'erh* from Yunnan and Zhejiang's *longjing* tea. Eight-treasure tea (*babao cha*) consists of rock sugar, dates, nuts and tea combined in a cup; it makes a delicious treat. Tea is to the Chinese what fine wine is to the French: a beloved beverage savoured for its fine aroma, distinctive flavour and pleasing aftertaste.

Search on www.bbcgoodfood.com for a mouth-watering selection of Chinese recipes and full instructions on throwing together some classic and lesser-known dishes from around China.

Alcoholic Drinks

Beer

If tea is the most popular drink in China, then beer (*pjiu*) is surely second. Many towns and cities have their own brewery and label, although a remarkable feat of socialist standardisation ensures a striking similarity in flavour and strength. You can drink bathtubs of the stuff and still navigate a straight line. If you want your beer cold, ask for *liang de*, and if you want it truly arctic, call for *bingzhen de*.

The best-known beer is Tsingtao, made with Lao Shan mineral water, which lends it a sparkling quality. It's originally a German beer since the town of Qingdao (formerly spelled 'Tsingtao') was once a German concession and the Chinese inherited the brewery, which dates to 1903, along with Bavarian beer-making ways.

Several foreign beers are also brewed in China and there's a growing market for craft brews in the wealthier cities. If you crave variety, many of the bars we list should have a selection of foreign imported beers; prices will be high, however.

Wine

Surging demand for imported wines saw China and Hong Kong emerge as the world's largest consumer of Bordeaux wines in 2011. Expensive French reds (*hongjiu*) are treasured in a fashionable market that was only finding its feet a mere 15 years ago. Wine has become the drink of choice among an increasingly sophisticated business class eager to appear discerning and flamboyant. Unfortunately this also means you can pay way over the odds at restaurants in Shanghai or Beijing for imported wines. White wine consumption is increasingly associated with female drinkers in China.

China has also cultivated vines and produced wine for an estimated 4000 years, and Chinese wines are generally cheaper than imports from abroad. The provinces of Xinjiang and Ningxia in the distant northwest of China are famous for their vineyards ([Click here](#)).

Spirits

The word 'wine' gets rather loosely translated – many Chinese 'wines' are in fact spirits. Maotai, a favourite of Chinese drinkers, is a very expensive spirit called *baijiu* made from sorghum (a type of millet) and used for toasts at banquets. The cheap alternative is Erguotou, distilled in Beijing but available all over China; look out for the Red Star (Hongxing) brand. *Baijiu* ranges across the alcohol spectrum from milder forms to around 65% proof. Milder rice wine is intended mainly for cooking rather than drinking but can be drunk warm like sake.

Arts & Architecture

China is custodian of one of the world's richest cultural and artistic legacies. Until the 20th century, China's arts were deeply conservative and resistant to change but revolutions in technique and content over the last century fashioned a dramatic transformation. Despite this evolution, China's arts – whatever the period – remain bound by a common aesthetic that taps into the very soul and lifeblood of the nation.

Xinjiang-born Wang Shu, architect of the distinctive Ningbo Museum, won the coveted Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2012.

Aesthetics

In reflection of the Chinese character, Chinese aesthetics have traditionally been marked by restraint and understatement, a preference for oblique references over direct explanation, vagueness in place of specificity and an avoidance of the obvious in place of a fondness for the veiled and subtle. Traditional Chinese aesthetics sought to cultivate a more reserved artistic impulse, principles that compellingly find their way into virtually every Chinese art form, from painting to sculpture, ceramics, calligraphy, film, poetry, literature and beyond.

As one of the central strands of the world's oldest civilisation, China's aesthetic traditions are tightly woven into Chinese cultural identity. For millennia, Chinese aesthetics were highly traditionalist and, despite coming under the influence of occupiers from the Mongols to the Europeans, defiantly conservative. It was not until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 and the appearance of the New Culture Movement that China's great artistic traditions began to rapidly transform. In literature the stranglehold of classical Chinese loosened to allow breathing space for *baihua* (colloquial Chinese) and a progressive new aesthetic began to flower, ultimately leading

to revolutions in all of the arts, from poetry to painting, theatre and music.

It is hard to square China's great aesthetic traditions with the devastation inflicted upon them since 1949. Confucius advocated the edifying role of music and poetry in shaping human lives, but 5th-century philosopher Mozi was less enamoured with them, seeing music and other arts as extravagant and wasteful. The communists took this a stage further, enlisting the arts as props in their propaganda campaigns, and permitting the vandalism and destruction of much traditional architecture and heritage. Many of China's traditional skills (such as martial arts lineages) and crafts either died out or went into decline during the Cultural Revolution. Many of the arts have yet to recover fully from this deterioration, even though opening up and reform prompted a vast influx of foreign artistic concepts.

The most abstract calligraphic form is grass or cursive script (*caoshu*), a highly fluid style of penmanship which even Chinese people have difficulty reading.

Calligraphy

Although calligraphy (*shufa*) has a place among most languages that employ alphabets, the art of calligraphy in China is taken to unusual heights of intricacy and beauty. Although Chinese calligraphy is beautiful in its own right, the complex infatuation Chinese people have for their written language helps elucidate their great respect for the art of calligraphy.

To understand how perfectly suited written Chinese is for calligraphy, it is vital to grasp how written Chinese works. A word in English represents a sound alone; a written character in Chinese combines both sound and a picture. Indeed, the sound element of a Chinese character – when present – is often auxiliary to the presentation of a visual image, even if abstract.

Furthermore, although some Chinese characters were simplified in the 1950s as part of a literacy drive, most characters have remained unchanged for thousands of years. As characters are essentially images, they inadequately reflect changes in spoken Chinese over time. A phonetic written language such as English can alter over the centuries to reflect changes in the

sound of the language. Being pictographic, Chinese cannot easily do this, so while the spoken language has transformed over the centuries, the written language has remained more static.

This helps explain why Chinese calligraphy is the trickiest of China's arts to comprehend for Western visitors, unless they have a sound understanding of written Chinese. The beauty of a Chinese character may be partially appreciated by a Western audience, but for a full understanding it is also essential to understand the meaning of the character in context.

There are five main calligraphic scripts – seal script, clerical script, semicursive script, cursive script and standard script – each of which reflects the style of writing of a specific era. Seal script, the oldest and most complex, was the official writing system during the Qin dynasty and has been employed ever since in the carving of the seals and name chops (stamps carved from stone) that are used to stamp documents. Expert calligraphers have a preference for using full-form characters (*fantizi*) rather than their simplified variants (*jiantizi*).

BEST ART MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

[Shanghai Museum](#) An outstanding collection of traditional Chinese art and antiquities.

[Poly Art Museum](#) Inspiring displays of traditional bronzes and Buddhist statues.

[Rockbund Art Museum](#) Forward-thinking museum of contemporary art, just off the Bund.

[Hong Kong Museum of Art](#) First-rate display of antiquities, paintings, calligraphy and contemporary Hong Kong art.

[M50](#) Contemporary art in a converted Shanghai industrial zone.

[798 Art District](#) Beijing's premier art zone, housed in a former electronics factory.

[Propaganda Poster Art Centre](#) Shanghai treasure trove of propaganda art from the communist golden age.

[AFA \(Art for All Society\)](#) Nonprofit gallery promoting the best in contemporary Macau art.

[ShanghART](#) Impressive warehouse-sized Shanghai gallery dedicated to contemporary Chinese artists.

Painting

Traditional Painting

Unlike Chinese calligraphy, no ‘insider’ knowledge is required for a full appreciation of traditional Chinese painting. Despite its symbolism, obscure references and occasionally abstruse philosophical allusions, Chinese painting is highly accessible. For this reason, traditional Chinese paintings – especially landscapes – have long been treasured in the West for their beauty.

As described in Xie He’s 6th century AD treatise, the *Six Principles of Painting*, the chief aim of Chinese painting is to capture the innate essence or spirit (*qi*) of a subject and endow it with vitality. The brush line, varying in thickness and tone, was the second principle (referred to as the ‘bone method’) and is the defining technique of Chinese painting. Traditionally, it was imagined that brushwork quality could reveal the artist’s moral character. As a general rule, painters were less concerned with achieving outward resemblance (that was the third principle) than with conveying intrinsic qualities.

Early painters dwelled on the human figure and moral teachings, while also conjuring up scenes from everyday life. By the time of the Tang dynasty, a new genre, known as landscape painting, had begun to flower. Reaching full bloom during the Song and Yuan dynasties, landscape painting meditated on the surrounding environment. Towering mountains, ethereal mists, open spaces, trees and rivers, and light and dark were all exquisitely presented in ink washes on silk. Landscape paintings attempted to capture the metaphysical and the absolute, drawing the viewer into a particular realm where the philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism found expression. Humanity is typically a small and almost insignificant subtext to the performance. The dream-like painting sought to draw the viewer in rather than impose itself on them.

On a technical level, the success of landscapes depended on the artists’ skill in capturing light and atmosphere. Blank, open spaces devoid of colour

create light-filled voids, contrasting with the darkness of mountain folds, filling the painting with *qi* and vaporous vitality. Specific emotions are not aroused but instead nebulous sensations permeate. Painting and classical poetry often went hand in hand, best exemplified by the work of Tang-dynasty poet/artist Wang Wei (699–759).

The five fundamental brushstrokes necessary to master calligraphy can be found in the character, which means eternal or forever.

Modern Art

Socialist-Realism

After 1949, classical Chinese techniques were abandoned and foreign artistic techniques imported wholesale. Washes on silk were replaced with oil on canvas and China's traditional obsession with the mysterious and ineffable made way for concrete attention to detail and realism.

By 1970 Chinese artists had aspired to master the skills of socialist-realism, a vibrant communist-endorsed style that drew from European neoclassical art, the lifelike canvases of Jacques-Louis David and the output of Soviet Union painters. Saturated with political symbolism and propaganda, the blunt artistic style was produced on an industrial scale.

The entire trajectory of Chinese painting – which had evolved in glacial increments over the centuries – had been redirected virtually overnight. Vaporous landscapes were substituted with hard-edged panoramas. Traditional Taoist and Buddhist philosophy was overturned and humans became the master of nature. Dreamy vistas were out; smoke stacks, red tractors and muscled peasants were in.

Propaganda Art

Another art form that found a fertile environment during the Mao era was the propaganda poster. Mass-produced from the 1950s onwards and replicated in their thousands through tourist markets across China today, the colourful

Chinese propaganda poster was a further instrument of social control in a nation where aesthetics had become subservient to communist orthodoxy.

With a prolific range of themes from chubby, well-fed Chinese babies to the Korean War, the virtues of physical education, the suppression of counter-revolutionary activity and paeans to the achievements of the Great Leap Forward or China as an earthly paradise, propaganda posters were ubiquitous. The golden age of poster production ran through to the 1980s, only declining during Deng Xiaoping's tenure and the opening up of China to the West.

The success of visual propaganda lay in its appeal to a large body of illiterate or semi-literate peasants. The idealism, revolutionary romanticism and vivid colouring of Chinese propaganda art brought hope and vibrancy to a time that was actually often colourless and drab, while adding certainty to an era of great hardship and struggle.

Discovered by amateur astronomer William Kwong Yu Yeung in 2001, the main belt asteroid – 83598 Aiweiwei – was named after Chinese artist Ai Weiwei in 2001.

Post-Mao

It was only with the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976 that the shadow of the Cultural Revolution – when Chinese aesthetics were conditioned by the threat of violence – began its retreat and the individual artistic temperament was allowed to thrive afresh.

Painters such as Luo Zhongli employed the realist techniques gleaned from China's art academies to depict the harsh realities etched in the faces of contemporary peasants. Others escaped the suffocating confines of socialist realism to navigate new horizons. A voracious appetite for Western art brought with it fresh concepts and ideas, while the ambiguity of exact meaning in the fine arts offered a degree of protection from state censors.

One group of artists, the Stars, found retrospective inspiration in Picasso and German Expressionism. The ephemeral group had a lasting impact on the development of Chinese art in the 1980s and 1990s, paving the way for the

New Wave movement that emerged in 1985. New Wave artists were greatly influenced by Western art, especially the iconoclastic Marcel Duchamp. In true nihilist style, the New Wave artist Huang Yongping destroyed his works at exhibitions, in an effort to escape from the notion of ‘art’. Political realities became instant subject matter as performance artists wrapped themselves in plastic or tape to symbolise the repressive realities of modern-day China.

Beyond Tian’anmen

The Tian’anmen Square protests in 1989 fostered a deep-seated cynicism that permeated artworks with loss, loneliness and social isolation. An exodus of artists to the West commenced. This period also coincided with an upsurge in the art market as investors increasingly turned to artworks and money began to slosh about.

Much post-1989 Chinese art dwelled obsessively on contemporary socioeconomic realities, with consumer culture, materialism, urbanisation and social change a repetitive focus. More universal themes became apparent, however, as the art scene matured. Meanwhile, many artists who left China in the 1990s have returned, setting up private studios and galleries. Government censorship remains, but artists are branching out into other areas and moving away from overtly political content and China-specific concerns.

Cynical realists Fang Lijun and Yue Minjun fashioned grotesque portraits that conveyed hollowness and mock joviality, tinged with despair. Born in the late 1950s, Wang Guangyi took pop art as a template for his ironic pieces, fused with propaganda art techniques from the Cultural Revolution.

Born just before the Cultural Revolution in 1964 and heavily influenced by German expressionism, Zeng Fanzhi explored the notions of alienation and isolation – themes commonly explored by Chinese artists during this period – in his *Mask* series from the 1990s. Introspection is a hallmark of Zeng’s oeuvre. In 2008 Christie’s in Hong Kong sold Zeng Fanzhi’s painting *Mask Series 1996 No. 6* (featuring masked members of China’s communist youth organisation, the Young Pioneers) for US\$9.7 million, which is the highest price yet paid for a contemporary Chinese artwork.

Also born in the early 1960s, Zhang Dali is another artist who gave expression to social change and the gulf between rich and poor, especially the circumstances of the immigrant worker underclass in Beijing.

Contemporary Directions

Most artists of note and aspiration gravitate to Beijing (or Shanghai perhaps) to work. Today's China provides a huge well-spring of subject matter for artists, tempered by the reality of political censorship and the constraints of taboo. Themes that may appear tame in the West can assume a special power and volatility in China, so works may rely upon their context for potency and effect.

Ai Weiwei, who enjoys great international fame partly due to his disobedient stand, best exemplifies the dangerous overlap between artistic self-expression, dissent and conflict with the authorities. Arrested in 2011 and charged with tax evasion, Ai Weiwei gained further publicity for his temporary *Sunflower Seeds* exhibition at the Tate Modern in London.

Working collaboratively as Birdhead, Shanghai analog photographers Ji Weiyu and Song Tao record the social dynamics and architectural habitat of their home city in thoughtful compositions. Beijing-born Ma Qiusha works in video, photography, painting and installations on themes of a deeply personal nature. In her video work *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, the artist removes a bloody razor blade from her mouth after narrating her experiences as a young artist in China. Born in 1982, Ran Huang works largely in film but across a spectrum of media, conveying themes of absurdity, the irrational and conceptual. Shanghai artist Shi Zhiying explores ideas of a more traditional hue in her sublime oil paint depictions on large canvases of landscapes and religious and cultural objects. Also from Shanghai, Xu Zhen works with provocative images to unsettle and challenge the viewer. Xu's *Fearless* (2012), a large mixed-media work on canvas, is a powerful maelstrom of symbolism and the fragments of cultural identity. Xinjiang-born Zhao Zhao – once an assistant to Ai Weiwei – communicates provocative sentiments in his work. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, Zhao

Zhao observed: 'There are lines that you can't cross in this state. I try to resist being tamed as an artist.'

Ceramics

China's very first vessels – dating back more than 8000 years – were simple handcrafted earthenware pottery, primarily used for religious purposes. The invention of the pottery wheel during the late Neolithic period, however, led to a dramatic technological and artistic leap.

Over the centuries, Chinese potters perfected their craft, introducing many new exciting styles and techniques. The spellbinding artwork of the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an reveals a highly developed level of technical skill achieved by Qin-dynasty craftsmen. Periods of artistic evolution, during the cosmopolitan Tang dynasty, for example, prompted further stylistic advances. The Tang dynasty 'three-colour ware' is a much admired type of ceramic from this period, noted for its vivid yellow, green and white glaze. Demand for lovely blue-green celadons grew in countries as distant as Egypt and Persia.

The Yuan dynasty saw the first development of China's standout 'blue and white' (*qinghua*) porcelain. Cobalt blue paint from Persia was applied as an underglaze directly to white porcelain with a brush, the vessel then covered with another transparent glaze and fired. This technique was perfected during the Ming and such ceramics became hugely popular all over the world, eventually acquiring the name 'China-ware', whether produced in China or not.

Although many kilns were established over China, the most famous was at Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province, where royal porcelain was fired.

During the Qing dynasty, porcelain techniques were further refined and developed, showing superb craftsmanship and ingenuity. British and European consumers dominated the export market, displaying an insatiable appetite for Chinese vases and bowls decorated with flowers and landscapes. Stunning monochromatic ware is another hallmark of the Qing, especially the ox-blood vases, imperial yellow bowls and enamel-decorated porcelain. The

Qing is also notable for its elaborate and highly decorative wares.

Jingdezhen remains an excellent place to visit ceramic workshops and purchase various types of ceramic wares, from Mao statues to traditional glazed urns. The Shanghai Museum has a premier collection of porcelain, while several independent retailers in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong also sell more modish and creative pieces. [Spin](#), in particular, sells a highly creative selection of contemporary ceramic designs.



Poet Li Bai depicted on a Qing-dynasty plate
DEA / G. DAGLI ORTI / GETTY IMAGES ©

Sculpture

The earliest sculpture in China dates to the Zhou and Shang dynasties, when small clay and wooden figures were commonly placed in tombs to protect the

dead and guide them on their way to heaven.

With the arrival of Buddhism, sculpture turned towards spiritual figures and themes, with sculptors frequently enrolled in huge carving projects for the worship of Sakyamuni. Influences also arrived along the Silk Road from abroad, bringing styles from as far afield as Greece and Persia, via India. The magnificent Buddhist caves at Yungang in Shanxi province date back to the 5th century and betray a noticeable Indian influence.

Chisellers also began work on the Longmen Caves in Henan province at the end of the 5th century. The earliest effigies are similar in style to those at Yungang, revealing further Indian influences and more other-worldliness in their facial expressions. Later cave sculptures at Longmen were completed during the Tang dynasty and reveal a more Chinese style.

The most superlative examples are at the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang in Gansu province, where well-preserved Indian and Central Asian-style sculptures, particularly of the Tang dynasty, carry overtly Chinese characteristics – many statues feature long, fluid bodies and have warmer, more refined facial features.

The Shanghai Museum has a splendid collection of Buddhist sculpture, as does Capital Museum and the Poly Art Museum, both in Beijing.

Beyond China's grottoes, other mesmerising Chinese sculpture hides away in temples across China. The colossal statue of Guanyin in Puning Temple in Chengde is a staggering sight, carved from five different types of wood and towering over 22m in height. Shuanglin Temple outside Pingyao in Shanxi province is famed for its painted statues from the Song and Yuan dynasties.

In 2010 a Qing-dynasty Chinese vase sold for £53.1 million after being discovered in the attic of a house in northwest London and put up for auction.

Literature

Classical Novels

Until the early 20th century, classical literature (*guwen*) had been the principal form of writing in China for thousands of years. A breed of purely literary writing, classical Chinese employed a stripped-down form of written Chinese that did not reflect the way people actually spoke or thought. Its grammar differed from the syntax of spoken Chinese and it employed numerous obscure Chinese characters.

Classical Chinese maintained divisions between educated and uneducated Chinese, putting literature beyond the reach of the common person and fashioning a cliquey lingua franca for Confucian officials and scholars.

Classical novels evolved from the popular folk tales and dramas that entertained the lower classes. During the Ming dynasty they were penned in a semivernacular (or ‘vulgar’) language, and are often irreverently funny and full of action-packed fights.

Probably the best-known novel outside China is *Journey to the West* (Xiyou Ji) – more commonly known as *Monkey*. Written in the 16th century, it follows the misadventures of a cowardly Buddhist monk (Tripitaka; a stand-in for the real-life pilgrim Xuan Zang) and his companions – a rebellious monkey, lecherous pig-man and exiled monster-immortal – on a pilgrimage to India. In 2007 a Chinese director collaborated with Damon Albarn of the virtual band Gorillaz to transform the story into a circus opera that has played to considerable international acclaim.

The 14th-century novel *The Water Margin/Outlaws of the Marsh/All Men are Brothers* (Shuihu Zhuan) is, on the surface, an excellent tale of honourable bandits and corrupt officials along the lines of Robin Hood. On a deeper level, though, it is a reminder to Confucian officials of their right to rebel when faced with a morally suspect government (at least one emperor officially banned it).

The *I Ching* (Yijing; Book of Changes) is the oldest Chinese text and is used for divination. It is comprised of 64 hexagrams, composed of broken and continuous lines, that represent a balance of opposites (yin and yang), the inevitability of change and the evolution of events.

Modern Literature

Early 20th Century

Classical Chinese maintained its authority over literary minds until the early 20th century, when it came under the influence of the West.

Torch-bearing author Lu Xun wrote his short story *Diary of a Madman* in 1918. It was revolutionary stuff. Apart from the opening paragraph, Lu's seminal and shocking fable is written in colloquial Chinese.

For Lu Xun to write his short story in colloquial Chinese was explosive, as readers were finally able to read language as it was spoken. *Diary of a Madman* is a haunting and unsettling work and from this moment on, mainstream Chinese literature would be written as it was thought and spoken: Chinese writing had been instantly revolutionised.

Other notable contemporaries of Lu Xun include Ba Jin (*Family*; 1931), Mao Dun (*Midnight*; 1933), Lao She (*Rickshaw Boy/Camel Xiangzi*; 1936) and the modernist playwright Cao Yu (*Thunderstorm*). Lu Xun and Ba Jin translated a great deal of foreign literature into Chinese.

Published by the Chinese University of Hong Kong Research Centre for Translation, *Renditions* is an excellent journal of Chinese literature in English translation, covering works from classical Chinese to modern writing.

The Book and the Sword by Jin Yong/Louis Cha (2004) is China's most celebrated martial-arts novelist's first book. The martial-arts genre (*wuxia xiaoshuo*) is a direct descendant of the classical novel.

Contemporary Writing

A growing number of contemporary voices have been translated into English, but far more exist in Chinese only. The provocative Nobel Prize-winning Mo Yan (*Life and Death are Wearing Me Out*; 2008), Yu Hua (*To Live*; 1992) and Su Tong (*Rice*; 1995) have written momentous historical novels set in the 20th century; all are excellent, though their raw, harrowing subject matter is not for the faint of heart.

Zhu Wen mocks the get-rich movement in his brilliantly funny short stories, published in English as *I Love Dollars and Other Stories of China* (2007). It's a vivid and comic portrayal of the absurdities of everyday China.

'Hooligan author' Wang Shuo (*Please Don't Call Me Human*; 2000) is one of China's best-selling authors with his political satires and convincing depictions of urban slackers. Alai (*Red Poppies*; 2002), an ethnic Tibetan, made waves by writing in Chinese about early-20th-century Tibetan Sichuan – whatever your politics, it's both insightful and a page-turner. Refused entry into China, exiled author Ma Jian writes more politically critical work; his 2001 novel *Red Dust* was a Kerouacian tale of wandering China as a spiritual pollutant in the 1980s. Banned in China, his 2008 novel *Beijing Coma* is set against the Tian'anmen demonstrations of 1989, and their aftermath. China's most renowned dissident writer, Gao Xingjian, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000 for his novel *Soul Mountain*, an account of his travels along the Yangzi after being misdiagnosed with lung cancer. All of his work has been banned in the PRC since 1989.

Controversial blogger Han Han (<http://blog.sina.com.cn/twocold>) catapulted himself into the literary spotlight with his novel *Triple Door*, a searing critique of China's educational system. His successful 2010 road trip novel *1988: I Want to Talk with the World* only served to grow his already massive fan base and establish himself as spokesman of a generation.

Candy (2003) by Mian Mian is a hip take on modern Shanghai life, penned by a former heroin addict musing on complicated sexual affairs, suicide and drug addiction in Shenzhen and Shanghai. It's applauded for its urban underground tone, but sensational more for its framing of post-adolescent themes in contemporary China. *Years of Red Dust: Stories of Shanghai* (2010) by Qiu Xiaolong contains 23 short stories in the context of momentous historic events affecting the city and the inhabitants of Red Dust Lane.

In his novel *Banished*, poet, essayist, short-story writer and blogger Han Dong reaches to his own experiences during the Cultural Revolution for inspiration. Winner of the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2010, Bi Feiyu's

Three Sisters is a poignant tale of rural China during the political chaos of the early 1970s. In *Northern Girls*, Sheng Keyi illuminates the prejudices and bigotries of modern Chinese society in her story of a Chinese girl arriving as an immigrant worker in Shenzhen. *The Fat Years* (2009) by Chan Koonchung is a science fiction novel set in a near-future totalitarian China where the month of February 2011 has gone missing from official records.

For a taste of contemporary Chinese short-story writing with both English and Chinese, buy a copy of *Short Stories in Chinese: New Penguin Parallel Text* (2012). *The Picador Book of Contemporary Chinese Fiction* (2006) brings together a range of different contemporary voices and themes into one accessible book.

Wolf Totem (2009) by Jiang Rong is an astonishing look at life on the grasslands of Inner Mongolia during the Cultural Revolution and the impact of modern culture on an ancient way of life.

Film

Early Cinema

The moving image in the Middle Kingdom dates to 1896, when Spaniard Galen Bocca unveiled a film projector and blew the socks off wide-eyed crowds in a Shanghai teahouse. Shanghai's cosmopolitan verve and exotic looks would make it the capital of China's film industry, but China's very first movie – *Conquering Jun Mountain* (an excerpt from a piece of Beijing opera) – was actually filmed in Beijing in 1905.

Shanghai opened its first cinema in 1908. In those days, cinema owners would cannily run the film for a few minutes, stop it and collect money from the audience before allowing the film to continue. The golden age of Shanghai film-making came in the 1930s when the city had over 140 film companies. Its apogee arrived in 1937 with the release of *Street Angel*, a powerful drama about two sisters who flee the Japanese in northeast China and end up as prostitutes in Shanghai; and *Crossroads*, a clever comedy

about four unemployed graduates. Japanese control of China eventually brought the industry to a standstill and sent many film-makers packing.

Communist Decline

China's film industry was stymied after the Communist Revolution, which sent film-makers scurrying to Hong Kong and Taiwan, where they played key roles in building up the local film industries that flourished there.

Cinematic production in China was co-opted to glorify communism and generate patriotic propaganda. The days of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) were particularly dark. Between 1966 and 1972, just eight movies were made on the mainland, as the film industry was effectively shut down.

Resurgence

It wasn't until two years after the death of Mao Zedong, in September 1978, that China's premier film school – the Beijing Film Academy – reopened. Its first intake of students included Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang, who are considered masterminds of the celebrated 'Fifth Generation'.

The cinematic output of the Fifth Generation signalled an escape from the dour, colourless and proletarian Mao era, and a second glittering golden age of Chinese film-making arrived in the 1980s and 1990s with their lush and lavish tragedies. A bleak but beautifully shot tale of a Chinese Communist Party cadre who travels to a remote village in Shaanxi province to collect folk songs, Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* aroused little interest in China but proved a sensation when released in the West in 1985.

It was followed by Zhang's *Red Sorghum*, which introduced Gong Li and Jiang Wen to the world. Gong became the poster girl of Chinese cinema in the 1990s and the first international movie star to emerge from the mainland. Jiang, the Marlon Brando of Chinese film, has proved both a durable leading man and an innovative, controversial director of award-winning films such as *In the Heat of the Sun* and *Devils on the Doorstep*.

Rich, seminal works such as *Farewell My Concubine* (1993; Chen Kaige) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991; Zhang Yimou) were garlanded with praise, receiving standing ovations and winning major film awards. Their directors were the darlings of Cannes; Western cinema-goers were entranced. Many Chinese cinema-goers also admired their artistry, but some saw Fifth Generation output as pandering to the Western market.

In 1993 Tian Zhuangzhuang made the brilliant *The Blue Kite*. A heartbreaking account of the life of one Beijing family during the Cultural Revolution, it so enraged the censors that Tian was banned from making films for a decade.

Each generation charts its own course and the ensuing Sixth Generation – graduating from the Beijing Film Academy post-Tian’anmen Square protests – was no different.

Sixth Generation film directors eschewed the luxurious beauty of their forebears, and sought to capture the angst and grit of modern urban Chinese life. Their independent, low-budget works put an entirely different and more cynical spin on mainland Chinese film-making, but their darker subject matter and harsh film style (frequently in black and white) left many Western viewers cold.

Independent film-making found an influential precedent with Zhang Yuan’s 1990 debut *Mama*. Zhang is also acclaimed for his candid and gritty documentary-style *Beijing Bastards* (1993).

Meanwhile, *The Days*, directed by Wang Xiaoshui, follows a couple drifting apart in the wake of the Tian’anmen Square protests. Wang also directed the excellent *Beijing Bicycle* (2001), inspired by De Sica’s *Bicycle Thieves*.

Contemporary Film

Jia Zhangke has emerged as the most acclaimed of China’s new film-makers. His meditative and compassionate look at the social impact of the construction of the Three Gorges Dam on local people, *Still Life* (2006),

scooped the Golden Lion at the 2006 Venice Film Festival. His other films include the celebrated *24 City* (2008) and *A Touch of Sin* (2013).

Controversial Sixth Generation director Lou Ye has a prolific and notable portfolio of sensual and atmospheric films. The tragic, noirish experience of *Suzhou River* (2000) is perhaps his best-known work, but *Summer Palace* (2006), *Spring Fever* (2009) and the violent *Mystery* (2014) have maintained his reputation as an *enfant terrible* of China's censorship-laden film industry.

The Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai is particularly notable for seductively filmed classics such as *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and *2046* (2004).

Historical *wuxia* (martial arts) cinema is enduringly popular in China and typified much film-making in the noughties, with larger-than-life films like *Hero* (2002; Zhang Yimou), *House of Flying Daggers* (2004; Zhang Yimou) and *The Banquet* (2006; Feng Xiaogang) leading the way. Epic historical war dramas such as *Red Cliff* (2008 and 2009; John Woo) and *The Warlords* (2007; Peter Chan) belong to a similar genre.

For a taste of Kazakh folk music from northwest Xinjiang province, listen to *Eagle* by Mamer, an intriguing collection of songs described as 'Chinagrass' by their composer.

Chinese Opera

Contemporary Chinese opera, of which the most famous is Beijing opera (*Jingju*), has a continuous history of some 900 years. Evolving from a convergence of comic and ballad traditions in the Northern Song period, Chinese opera brought together a disparate range of forms: acrobatics, martial arts, poetic arias and stylised dance.

Operas were usually performed by travelling troupes who had a low social status in traditional Chinese society. Chinese law forbade mixed-sex performances, forcing actors to act out roles of the opposite sex. Opera troupes were frequently associated with homosexuality in the public imagination, contributing further to their lowly social status.

Formerly, opera was performed mostly on open-air stages in markets, streets, teahouses or temple courtyards. The shrill singing and loud percussion were designed to be heard over the public throng, prompting American writer PJ O'Rourke to say it was 'as if a truck full of wind chimes collided with a stack of empty drums during a birdcall contest'.

Opera performances usually take place on a bare stage, with the actors taking on stylised stock characters who are instantly recognisable to the audience. Most stories are derived from classical literature and Chinese mythology, and tell of disasters, natural calamities, intrigues or rebellions.

As well as Beijing opera, other famous Chinese operatic traditions include Cantonese opera, Kunqu (from the Jiangnan region), Min opera (from Fujian) and Shanghai opera.

The 2010 remake of *The Karate Kid*, starring Jackie Chan, is set in Beijing and authentically conveys the city despite having nothing to do with karate.

Architecture

Traditional Architecture

Four principal styles governed traditional Chinese architecture: imperial, religious, residential and recreational. The imperial style was naturally the most grandiose, overseeing the design of buildings employed by successive dynastic rulers; the religious style was employed for the construction of temples, monasteries and pagodas; while the residential and recreational style took care of the design of houses and private gardens.

Whatever the style, Chinese buildings traditionally followed a similar basic ground plan, consisting of a symmetrical layout oriented around a central axis – ideally running north–south to conform with basic feng shui (*fengshui*) dictates and to maximise sunshine – with an enclosed courtyard (*yuan*) flanked by buildings on all sides.

In many aspects, imperial palaces are glorified courtyard homes (south-

facing, a sequence of courtyards, side halls and perhaps a garden at the rear) completed on a different scale. Apart from the size, the main dissimilarity would be guard towers on the walls and possibly a moat, imperial yellow roof tiles, ornate dragon carvings (signifying the emperor), the repetitive use of the number nine and the presence of temples.

Major art festivals include Beijing's 798 International Art Festival, China International Gallery Exposition and Beijing Biennale, the Shanghai Biennale, Guangzhou Triennial and Hong Kong's one-day Clockenflap festival.

Religious Architecture

Chinese Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian temples tend to follow a strict, schematic pattern. All temples are laid out on a north–south axis in a series of halls, with the main door of each hall facing south.

With their sequence of halls and buildings interspersed with breezy open-air courtyards, Chinese temples are very different from Christian churches. The roofless courtyards allow the weather to permeate within the temple and permits *qi* (spirit) to circulate, dispersing stale air and allowing incense to be burned.

Buddhist Temples

Once you have cracked the logic of Buddhist temples, you can discover how most temples conform to a pattern. The first hall and portal to the temple is generally the Hall of Heavenly Kings, where a sedentary, central statue of the tubby Bodhisattva Maitreya is flanked by the ferocious Four Heavenly Kings. Behind is the first courtyard, where the Drum Tower and Bell Tower may rise to the east and west, and smoking braziers may be positioned.

The main hall is often the Great Treasure Hall sheltering glittering statues of the past, present and future Buddhas, seated in a row. This is the main focal point for worshippers at the temple. On the east and west interior wall of the hall are often 18 *luohan* (arhat – a Buddhist who has achieved enlightenment) in two lines, either as statues or paintings. In some temples,

they gather in a throng of 500, housed in a separate hall. A statue of Guanyin (the Goddess of Mercy) frequently stands at the rear of the main hall, facing north, atop a fish's head or a rocky outcrop. The goddess may also have her own hall and occasionally presents herself with a huge fan of arms, in her 'Thousand Arm' incarnation – the awesome effigy of Guanyin in the Mahayana Hall at Puning Temple in Chengde is the supreme example.

The rear hall may be where the sutras (Buddhist scriptures) were once stored, in which case it will be called the Sutra Storing Building. A pagoda may rise above the main halls or may be the only surviving fragment of an otherwise destroyed temple. Conceived to house the remains of Buddha and later other Buddhist relics, pagodas also contained sutras, religious artefacts and documents.

In 2011 an ink and brush painting by artist Qi Baishi (1864–1957) sold for ¥425 million (US\$65 million) at auction.

BATTLE OF THE BUDDHAS

China's largest ancient Buddha gazes out over the confluence of the waters of the Dadu River and the Min River at Leshan in Sichuan. When the even bigger Buddha at Bamiyan in Afghanistan was demolished by the Taliban, the Leshan Buddha enjoyed instantaneous promotion to the top spot as the world's largest. The Buddha in the Great Buddha Temple at Zhangye in Gansu province may not take it lying down, though: he is China's largest 'housed reclining Buddha'. Chinese children once climbed inside him to scamper about within his cavernous tummy.

Lounging around in second place is the reclining Buddha in the Mogao Caves, China's second largest. The vast reclining Buddha at Leshan is a whopping 170m long and the world's largest 'alfresco' reclining Buddha. Bristling with limbs, the Thousand Arm Guanyin statue in the Puning Temple's Mahayana Hall in Chengde also stands up to be counted: she's the largest wooden statue in China (and possibly the world). Not to be outdone, Hong Kong fights for its niche with the Tian Tan Buddha Statue, the world's 'largest outdoor seated bronze Buddha statue'.

Taoist Temples

Taoist shrines are more nether-worldly than Buddhist shrines, although the

basic layout echoes Buddhist temples. They are decorated with a distinct set of motifs, including the *bagua* (eight trigrams) formations, reflected in eight-sided pavilions and halls, and the Taiji yin/yang (*yin/yang*) diagram. Effigies of Laotzu, the Jade Emperor and other characters popularly associated with Taoist myth, such as the Eight Immortals and the God of Wealth, are customary.

Taoist door gods, similar to those in Buddhist temples, often guard temple entrances; the main hall is usually called the Hall of the Three Clear Ones, devoted to a triumvirate of Taoist deities.

Taoist monks (and nuns) are easily distinguished from their shaven-headed Buddhist confreres by their long hair, twisted into topknots, straight trousers and squarish jackets.

A dark and Gothic image in the West, the bat is commonly used in Chinese porcelain, wood designs, textiles and artwork as it is considered a good luck omen.

Confucian Temples

Confucian temples bristle with steles celebrating local scholars, some supported on the backs of *bixi* (mythical tortoise-looking dragons). A statue of Kongzi (Confucius) usually resides in the main hall, overseeing rows of musical instruments and flanked by disciples. A mythical animal, the *qilin* (a statue exists at the Summer Palace in Beijing), is commonly seen. The *qilin* was a chimera that only appeared on earth in times of harmony. The largest Confucian temple in China is at Qufu in Shandong, Confucius' birthplace.

ART DECO IN SHANGHAI

Fans of art deco must visit Shanghai. The reign of art deco is one of the city's architectural high-water marks and the city boasts more art deco buildings than any other city, from the drawing boards of the French firm Leonard, Veysseyre and Kruze, and others. Largely emptied of foreigners in 1949, Shanghai mostly kept its historic villas and buildings intact, including its fabulous art deco monuments. The Peace Hotel, Bank of China building, Cathay Theatre, Green House, Paramount Ballroom, Broadway Mansions, Liza Building, Savoy Apartments, Picardie Apartments and

Majestic Theatre are all art deco gems. For a comprehensive low-down on the style, hunt down a copy of Shanghai Art Deco by Deke Erh and Tess Johnston.

Modern Architecture

Architecturally speaking, anything goes in today's China. You only have to look at the Pudong skyline to discover a melange of competing designs, some dramatic, inspiring and novel, others rash. The display represents a nation brimming over with confidence, zeal and money.

If modern architecture in China is regarded as anything post-1949, then China has ridden a rollercoaster ride of styles and fashions. In Beijing, stand between the Great Hall of the People (1959) and the National Centre for the Performing Arts (2008) and weigh up how far China travelled in 50 years. Interestingly, neither building has clear Chinese motifs. The same applies to the form of Beijing's CCTV Building, where a continuous loop through horizontal and vertical planes required some audacious engineering.

The coastal areas are an architect's dreamland – no design is too outrageous, zoning laws have been scrapped, and the labour force is large and inexpensive. Planning permission can be simple to arrange – often all it requires is sufficient *guanxi* (connections). Even the once cash-strapped interior provinces are getting in on the act. The planned Sky City in the Hunan capital of Changsha will be the world's tallest building, if built. The company aiming to erect it – Broad Sustainable Building – says the job can be completed in just 90 days, although the go-ahead was still awaiting government approval at the time of writing. Opening in Chengdu in 2013, the staggeringly large New Century Global Center is the world's largest freestanding building: big enough to swallow up 20 Sydney Opera Houses!

Many of the top names in international architecture – IM Pei, Rem Koolhaas, Norman Foster, Kengo Kuma, Jean-Marie Charpentier, Herzog & de Meuron – have all designed at least one building in China in the past decade. Other impressive examples of modern architecture include the National Stadium (aka the 'Bird's Nest'), the National Aquatics Center (aka

the ‘Water Cube’) and Beijing South train station, all in Beijing; and the art deco–esque Jinmao Tower, the towering Shanghai World Financial Center, Tomorrow Square and the Shanghai Tower in Shanghai. In Hong Kong, the glittering 2 International Finance Center on Hong Kong Island and the International Commerce Center in Kowloon are each prodigious examples of modern skyscraper architecture.

CHINESE GARDENS

Classical Chinese gardens can be an acquired taste: there are no lawns, few flowering plants, and misshapen, huge rocks are strewn about. Yet a stroll in Shanghai's Yuyuan Gardens (and the gardens of Suzhou) is a walk through many different facets of Chinese civilisation, and this is what makes them so unique. Architecture, philosophy, art and literature all converge, and a background in some basics of Chinese culture helps to fully appreciate garden design.

The Chinese for ‘landscape’ is shanshui, literally ‘mountain-water’. Mountains and rivers constitute a large part of China’s geography, and are fundamental to Chinese life, philosophy, religion and art. So the central part of any garden landscape is a pond surrounded by rock formations. This also reflects the influence of Taoist thought. Contrary to geometrically designed formal European gardens, where humans saw themselves as masters, Chinese gardens seek to create a microcosm of the natural world through an asymmetrical layout of streams, hills, plants and pavilions (they symbolise humanity’s place in the universe – never in the centre, just a part of the whole).

Plants are chosen as much for their symbolic meaning as their beauty (the pine for longevity, the peony for nobility) while the use of undulating ‘dragon walls’ brings good fortune. The names of gardens and halls are often literary allusions to ideals expressed in classical poetry. Painting, too, goes hand in hand with gardening, its aesthetics reproduced in gardens through the use of carefully placed windows and doors that frame a particular view. The central precept of fengshui (literally ‘wind water’) is also paramount, so rockeries and ponds are deliberately arranged to maximise positive qi (energy).

Finally, it’s worth remembering that gardens in China have always been lived in. Generally part of a residence, they weren’t so much contemplative (as in Japan) as they were a backdrop for everyday life: family gatherings, late-night drinking parties, discussions of philosophy, art and politics – it’s the people who spent their leisure hours there that ultimately gave the gardens their unique spirit.

China's Landscapes

The Land

The world's third-largest country – on a par size-wise with the USA – China swallows up an immense 9.5 million sq km, only surpassed in area by Russia and Canada. Straddling natural environments as diverse as subarctic tundra in the north and tropical rainforests in the south, this massive land embraces the world's highest mountain range and one of its hottest deserts in the west, to the steamy, typhoon-lashed coastline of the South China Sea. Fragmenting this epic landscape is a colossal web of waterways, including one of the world's mightiest rivers – the Yangzi (Chang Jiang).

Over 1.2 million tons of transparent plastic sheeting is used annually by China's farmers to reduce water loss from evaporation, but much of the plastic is later ploughed into the earth, polluting the soil and decreasing crop yields.

Mountains

China has a largely mountainous and hilly topography, commencing in precipitous fashion in the vast and sparsely populated Qinghai–Tibetan plateau in the west and levelling out gradually towards the fertile, well-watered, populous and wealthy provinces of eastern China.

This mountainous disposition sculpts so many of China's scenic highlights, from the glittering Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces of Guangxi to the incomparable stature of Mt Everest, the stunning beauty of Jiuzhaigou National Park in Sichuan, the ethereal peaks of misty Huangshan in Anhui, the vertiginous inclines of Hua Shan in Shaanxi (Shanxi), the sublime karst geology of Yangshuo in Guangxi and the volcanic drama of Heaven Lake in Jilin.

Averaging 4500m above sea level, the Qinghai–Tibetan region's highest peaks thrust up into the Himalayan mountain range along its southern rim. The Himalayas, on average about 6000m above sea level, include 40 peaks

rising dizzyingly to 7000m or more. Also known as the planet's 'third pole', this is where the world's highest peak, Mt Everest – called Zhumulangmafeng by the Chinese – thrusts up jaggedly from the Tibet–Nepal border.

This vast high-altitude region (Tibet alone constitutes one-eighth of China's landmass) is home to an astonishing 37,000 glaciers, the third-largest mass of ice on the planet after the Arctic and Antarctic. This enormous body of frozen water ensures that the Qinghai–Tibetan region is the source of many of China's largest rivers, including the Yellow (Huang He), Mekong (Lancang Jiang), and Salween (Nu Jiang) Rivers and, of course, the mighty Yangzi, all of whose headwaters are fed by snowmelt from here. Global warming, however, is inevitably eating into this glacial volume, although experts argue over how quickly they are melting.

This mountain geology further corrugates the rest of China, continuously rippling the land into spectacular mountain ranges. There's the breathtaking 2500km-long Kunlun range, the mighty Karakoram mountains on the border with Pakistan, the Tian Shan range in Xinjiang, the Tanggula range on the Qinghai–Tibetan plateau, the Qinling mountains and the Greater Khingan range (Daxingan Ling) in the northeast.

China Dialogue (www.chinadialogue.net) is a resourceful dual-language website that seeks to promote debate on China's immense environmental challenges.

Deserts

China contains head-spinningly huge – and growing – desert regions that occupy almost one-fifth of the country's landmass, largely in its mighty northwest. These are inhospitably sandy and rocky expanses where summers are staggeringly hot and winters bone-numbingly cold, but as destinations, the visuals can be sublime. North towards Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan from the plateaus of Tibet and Qinghai is Xinjiang's Tarim Basin, the largest inland basin in the world. This is the location of the mercilessly thirsty Taklamakan Desert – China's largest desert and the world's second largest

mass of sand after the Sahara Desert. Many visitors to Xinjiang will experience this huge expanse during their travels or can arrange camel-trekking tours and expeditions through its vast sand dunes. China's biggest shifting salt lake, Lop Nur (the site of China's nuclear bomb tests) is also here.

The Silk Road into China steered its epic course through this entire region, ferrying caravans of camels laden with merchandise, languages, philosophies, customs and peoples from the far-flung lands of the Middle East. The harsh environment shares many topographical features in common with the neighbouring nations of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and is almost the exact opposite of China's lush and well-watered southern provinces. But despite the scorching aridity of China's northwestern desert regions, their mountains (the mighty Tian Shan, Altai, Pamir and Kunlun ranges) contain vast supplies of water, largely in the form of snow and ice.

Northeast of the Tarim Basin is Urumqi, the world's furthest city from the sea. The Tarim Basin is bordered to the north by the lofty Tian Shan range – home to the glittering mountain lake of Tian Chi – and to the west by the mighty Pamirs, which border Pakistan. Also in Xinjiang is China's hot spot, the Turpan Basin. Known as the 'Oasis of Fire' and 'China's Death Valley', it gets into the record books as China's lowest-lying region and the world's second-deepest depression after the Dead Sea in Israel.

China's most famous desert is, of course, the Gobi, although most of it lies outside the country's borders. In little-visited Western Inner Mongolia, the awesome Badain Jaran Desert offers travellers spectacular journeys among remote desert lakes and colossal sand dunes up to 380m in height; further west lie the famous grasslands and steppes of Inner Mongolia.

The World Health Organisation estimates that air pollution causes more than 650,000 fatal illnesses per year in China, while more than 95,000 die annually from consuming polluted drinking water.

Rivers

At about 5460km long and the second-longest river in China, the Yellow River (Huanghe) is touted as the birthplace of Chinese civilisation and has been fundamental in the development of Chinese society. The mythical architect of China's rivers, the Great Yu, apocryphally noted 'Whoever controls the Yellow River controls China'. From its source in Qinghai, the river runs through North China, meandering past or near many famous towns, including Lanzhou, Yinchuan, Baotou, Hancheng, Jincheng, Luoyang, Zhengzhou, Kaifeng and Ji'nan in Shandong, before exiting China north of Dongying (although the watercourse often runs dry nowadays before it reaches the sea).

The Yangzi (the 'Long River'), is one of the longest rivers in the world (and China's longest). Its watershed of almost 2 million sq km – 20% of China's land mass – supports 400 million people. Dropping from its source high on the Tibetan plateau, it runs for 6300km to the sea, of which the last few hundred kilometres is across virtually flat alluvial plains. In the course of its sweeping journey, the river (and its tributaries) fashions many of China's scenic spectacles, including Tiger Leaping Gorge and the Three Gorges, and cuts through a string of huge and historic cities, including Chongqing, Wuhan and Nanjing, before surging into the East China Sea north of Shanghai. As a transport route, the river is limited, but the Three Gorges cruise is China's most celebrated river journey. The waterborne journey along the Li River between Guilin and Yangshuo in Guangxi is China's other major riverine experience.

SOUTH-NORTH WATER DIVERSION PROJECT

Water is the lifeblood of economic and agricultural growth, but as China only has around 7% of the world's water resources (with almost 20% of its population), the liquid is an increasingly precious resource.

A region of low rainfall, North China faces a worsening water crisis. Farmers are draining aquifers that have taken thousands of years to accumulate, while industry in China uses three to 10 times more water per unit of production than developed nations. Meanwhile, water usage in large cities such as Beijing and Tianjin continues to climb as migrants flood in from rural areas.

To combat the water crisis, the CCP embarked on the construction of the US\$62 billion South–North Water Diversion Project, a vast network of pumping stations, canals and aqueducts (as well as a tunnel under the Yellow River) lashing north and south via three routes. The ambition is to divert 3.8 million Olympic swimming pools' worth of water yearly from the Yangzi River to the parched regions of China's north. The first stage began operating in 2013 and water was due to begin flowing along the second stage the following year.

There are concerns however that pollution in the Yangzi River waters will become progressively concentrated as water is extracted, while Yangzi cities such as Nanjing and Wuhan are increasingly uneasy that they will be left with a water shortfall. Alarm has also arisen at the pollution in channels – including the Grand Canal, which links Hangzhou with north China – earmarked to take the diverted waters. There are worries that these polluted reaches are almost untreatable, making elements of the project unviable.

Critics also argue that the project, which will involve the mass relocation of hundreds of thousands of people, will not address the fundamental issue of China's water woes – the absence of policies for the sustainable use of water as a precious resource.

The Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia*), a towering (growing up to 200ft) and elegant fine-needled deciduous Chinese tree, dates to the Jurassic era. Once considered long extinct, a single example was discovered in 1941 in a Sichuan village, followed three years later by the discovery of further trees.

Fields & Agriculture

China's hills and mountains may surround travellers with a dramatic backdrop, but they are a massive agricultural headache for farmers. Small plots of land are eked out in patchworks of land squashed between hillsides or rescued from mountain cliffs and ravines, in the demanding effort to feed 20% of the world's population with just 10% of its arable land.

Astonishingly, only 15% of China's land can be cultivated so hillside gradients and inclines are valiantly levelled off, wherever possible, into bands of productive terraced fields. Stunning examples of rice terraces – beautiful in the right light – can be admired at the Yuanyang Rice Terraces in Yunnan and the Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces in Guangxi.

Wildlife

China's vast size, diverse topography and climatic disparities support an astonishing range of habitats for animal life. The Tibetan plateau alone is the habitat of over 500 species of birds, while half of the animal species in the northern hemisphere exist in China.

It is unlikely you will see many of these creatures in their natural habitat unless you are a specialist, or have a lot of time, patience, persistence, determination and luck. If you go looking for large animals in the wild on the off chance, your chances of glimpsing one are virtually nil. But there are plenty of pristine reserves within relatively easy reach of travellers' destinations such as Chengdu and Xi'an and even if you don't get the chance to see animals, the scenery is terrific. Try Yading Nature Reserve in Sichuan, Mengda Nature Reserve in Qinghai, Sanchahe Nature Reserve in Yunnan, Fanjingshan in Guizhou, Shennongjia in Hubei, Wuzhishan in Hainan, Kanas Lake Nature Reserve in Xinjiang and Changbai Shan, China's largest nature reserve, in Jilin.

Mammals

China's towering mountain ranges form natural refuges for wildlife, many of which are now protected in parks and reserves that have escaped the depredations of loggers and dam-builders. The barren high plains of the Tibetan plateau are home to several large animals, such as the *chiru* (Tibetan antelope), Tibetan wild ass, wild sheep and goats, and wolves. In theory, many of these animals are protected but in practice poaching and hunting still threaten their survival.

The beautiful and retiring snow leopard, which normally inhabits the highest parts of the most remote mountain ranges, sports a luxuriant coat of fur against the cold. It preys on mammals as large as mountain goats, but is unfortunately persecuted for allegedly killing livestock.

The Himalayan foothills of western Sichuan support the greatest diversity of mammals in China. Aside from giant pandas, other mammals found in this

region include the panda's small cousin – the raccoon-like red panda – as well as Asiatic black bears and leopards. Among the grazers are golden takin, a large goatlike antelope with a yellowish coat and a reputation for being cantankerous, argali sheep and various deer species, including the diminutive mouse deer.

The sparsely populated northeastern provinces abutting Siberia are inhabited by reindeer, moose, bears, sables and Manchurian tigers.

Overall, China is unusually well endowed with big and small cats. The world's largest tiger, the Manchurian Tiger (Dongbeihu) – also known as the Siberian Tiger – only numbers a few hundred in the wild, its remote habitat being one of its principal saviours. Three species of leopard can be found, including the beautiful clouded leopard of tropical rainforests, plus several species of small cat, such as the Asiatic golden cat and a rare endemic species, the Chinese mountain cat.

Rainforests are famous for their diversity of wildlife, and the tropical south of Yunnan province, particularly the area around Xishuangbanna, is one of the richest in China. These forests support Indo-Chinese tigers and herds of Asiatic elephants.

The wild mammals you are most likely to see are several species of monkey. The large and precocious Pere David's macaque is common at Emei Shan in Sichuan, where bands often intimidate people into handing over their picnics; macaques can also be seen on Hainan's Monkey Island. Several other monkey species are rare and endangered, including the beautiful golden monkey of Fanjingshan and the snub-nosed monkey of the Yunnan rainforests. But by far the most endangered is the Hainan gibbon, numbering just a few dozen individuals on Hainan island thanks to massive forest clearance.

The giant panda (*xiongmao* – literally 'bear cat') is western Sichuan's most famous denizen, but the animal's solitary nature makes it elusive for observation in the wild, and even today, after decades of intensive research and total protection in dedicated reserves, sightings are rare. A notoriously fickle breeder (the female is only on heat for a handful of days each spring),

there are approximately 1600 pandas in the Chinese wilds according to World Wildlife Fund. Interestingly, the panda has the digestive tract of a carnivore (like other bears), but has become accustomed to exclusively eating bamboo shoots and leaves. However, the panda's digestive tract is unable to efficiently break down plant matter so the mammal needs to consume huge amounts to compensate and spends much of its time eating, clearing one area of bamboo before moving on to another region. The easiest way to see pandas outside of zoos is at the Giant Panda Breeding Research Base, just outside Chengdu or at the Ya'an Bifengxia Panda Base, also in Sichuan.

Changqing Nature Reserve in Shaanxi province is well worth a visit for its relatively unspoilt montane forest and the chance to see giant pandas in the wild. Find out more at www.cqpanda.com.

Birds

Most of the wildlife you'll see in China will be birds, and with more than 1300 species recorded, including about 100 endemic or near-endemic species, China offers some fantastic birdwatching opportunities. Spring is usually the best time, when deciduous foliage buds, migrants return from their wintering grounds and nesting gets into full swing. **BirdLife International** (www.birdlife.org/regional/asia), the worldwide bird conservation organisation, recognises 12 Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs) in China, nine of which are wholly within the country and three of which are shared with neighbouring countries.

Although the range of birds is huge, China is a centre of endemism for several species and these are usually the ones that visiting birders will seek out. Most famous are the pheasant family, of which China boasts 62 species, including many endemic or near-endemic species.

Other families well represented in China include the laughing thrushes, with 36 species; parrotbills, which are almost confined to China and its near neighbours; and many members of the jay family. The crested ibis is a pinkish bird that feeds on invertebrates in the rice paddies, and was once

found from central China to Japan.

Among China's more famous large birds are cranes, and nine of the world's 14 species have been recorded here. In Jiangxi province, on the lower Yangzi, a vast series of shallow lakes and lagoons was formed by stranded overflow from Yangzi flooding. The largest of these is Poyang Lake, although it is only a few metres deep and drains during winter. Vast numbers of waterfowl and other birds inhabit these swamps year-round, including ducks, geese, herons and egrets. Although it is difficult to reach and infrastructure for birdwatchers is practically nonexistent, birders are increasingly drawn to the area in winter, when many of the lakes dry up and attract flocks of up to five crane species, including the endangered, pure white Siberian crane.

Recommended destinations include Zhalong Nature Reserve, one of several vast wetlands in Heilongjiang province. Visit in summer to see breeding storks, cranes and flocks of wildfowl before they fly south for the winter. Beidaihe, on the coast of the Bohai Sea, is well known for migratory birds. Other breeding grounds and wetlands include Qinghai Hu in Qinghai, Caohai Lake in Guizhou, Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan and Mai Po Marsh in Hong Kong. For the latter, the **Hong Kong Bird Watching Society** (www.hkbws.org.hk) organises regular outings and publishes a newsletter in English.

Most birdwatchers and bird tours head straight for Sichuan, which offers superb birding at sites such as Wolong. Here, several spectacular pheasants, including golden, blood and kalij pheasants, live on the steep forested hillsides surrounding the main road. As the road climbs up, higher-altitude species such as eared pheasants and the spectacular Chinese monal may be seen. Alpine meadows host smaller birds, and the rocky scree slopes at the pass hold partridges, the beautiful grandala and the mighty lammergeier (bearded vulture), with a 2m wingspan.

Parts of China are now well-established on the itineraries of global ecotour companies. Bird Tour Asia (www.birdtourasia.com) has popular tours to Sichuan, Tibet, Qinghai and southeast China, as well as providing custom

tours. The **China Bird Watching Network** (www.chinabirdnet.org) has useful links to birdwatching societies across China.

China has earmarked a staggering US\$140 billion for an ambitious program of wind farms; ranging from Xinjiang province to Jiangsu province in the east, the huge wind farms are due for completion in 2020.

Plants

China is home to more than 32,000 species of seed plant and 2500 species of forest tree, plus an extraordinary plant diversity that includes some famous ‘living fossils’ – a diversity so great that Jilin province in the semifrigid north and Hainan province in the tropical south share few plant species.

Apart from rice, the plant probably most often associated with China and Chinese culture is bamboo, of which China boasts some 300 species. Bamboos grow in many parts of China, but bamboo forests were once so extensive that they enabled the evolution of the giant panda, which eats virtually nothing else, and a suite of small mammals, birds and insects that live in bamboo thickets. Most of these useful species are found in the subtropical areas south of the Yangzi, and the best surviving thickets are in southwestern provinces such as Sichuan.

Many plants commonly cultivated in Western gardens today originated in China, among them the ginkgo tree, a famous ‘living fossil’ whose unmistakable imprint has been found in 270 million-year-old rocks.

Deciduous forests cover mid-altitudes in the mountains, and are characterised by oaks, hemlocks and aspens, with a leafy understorey that springs to life after the winter snows have melted. Among the more famous blooms of the understorey are rhododendrons and azaleas, and many species of each grow naturally in China’s mountain ranges. Best viewed in spring, some species flower right through summer; one of the best places to see them is at Sichuan’s Wolong Nature Reserve. All of the nature reserves mentioned under Wildlife above are also excellent places for botanical exploration.

A growing number of international wildlife travel outfits arrange botanical

expeditions to China, including UK-based **Naturetrek** (www.naturetrek.co.uk), which arranges tours to Yunnan and Sichuan.

One of the aims of the Three Gorges Dam is to help prevent flooding on the Yangzi River. The river has caused hundreds of catastrophic floods, including the disastrous inundation of 1931, in which an estimated 145,000 died.

Endangered Species

Almost every large mammal you can think of in China has crept onto the endangered species list, as well as many of the so-called 'lower' animals and plants. The snow leopard, Indo-Chinese tiger, chiru antelope, crested ibis, Asiatic elephant, red-crowned crane and black-crowned crane are all endangered.

Deforestation, pollution, hunting and trapping for fur, body parts and sport are all culprits. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) records legal trade in live reptiles and parrots, and high numbers of reptile and wildcat skins. The number of such products collected or sold unofficially is anyone's guess.

Despite the threats, a number of rare animal species cling to survival in the wild. Notable among them are the Chinese alligator in Anhui, the giant salamander in the fast-running waters of the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers, the Yangzi River dolphin in the lower and middle reaches of the river (although there have been no sightings since 2002), and the pink dolphin of the Hong Kong islands of Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau. The giant panda is confined to the fauna-rich valleys and ranges of Sichuan.

Intensive monoculture farmland cultivation, the reclaiming of wetlands, river damming, industrial and rural waste, and desertification are reducing unprotected forest areas and making the survival of many of these species increasingly precarious. Although there are laws against killing or capturing rare wildlife, their struggle for survival is further complicated as many remain on the most-wanted lists for traditional Chinese medicine and dinner delicacies.

In 2010, six of China's *danxia* (eroded reddish sandstone rock), karst-like geological formations, were included in Unesco's World Heritage List. The list includes Chishui in Guizhou province. The rocks can also be seen outside Zhangye in Gansu.

The Environment

China may be vast, but with two-thirds of the land either mountain, desert or uncultivable, the remaining third is overwhelmed by the people of the world's most populous nation. For the first time in its history, China's city dwellers outnumbered rural residents in 2011, with an urbanisation rate set to increase to 65% by 2050. The speed of development – and the sheer volume of poured concrete – is staggering. During the next 15 years, China is expected to build urban areas equal in size to 10 New York Cities.

Beyond urban areas, deforestation and overgrazing have accelerated the desertification of vast areas of China, particularly in the western provinces. Deserts now cover almost one-fifth of the country and China's dustbowl is the world's largest, swallowing up 200 sq km of arable land every month.

TOP BOOKS ON CHINA'S ENVIRONMENT

When a Billion Chinese Jump (2010) Jonathan Watts' sober and engaging study of China's environmental issues.

China's Environmental Challenges (2012) Judith Shapiro's excellent primer for understanding China's manifold environmental problems.

The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future (2010; 2nd edition) Elizabeth Economy's frightening look at the unhappy marriage between breakneck economic production and environmental degradation.

The China Price: The True Cost of Chinese Competitive Advantage (2008) Alexandra Harney's telling glimpse behind the figures of China's economic rise.

China's Water Crisis (2004) Ma Jun rolls up his sleeves to examine the sources of China's water woes.

In 2010 China overtook the USA as the world's largest energy consumer; in the same year the nation replaced Japan as the world's second-largest economy and is tipped to overtake the USA by 2020 (some say by 2016).

A Greener China?

China is painfully aware of its accelerated desertification, growing water shortages, shrinking glaciers, acidic rain, contaminated rivers, caustic urban air and polluted soil. The government is keenly committed, on a policy level, to the development of greener and cleaner energy sources. China's leaders are also seeking to devise a more sustainable and less wasteful economic model for the nation's future development.

There is evidence of ambitious and bold thinking: in 2010 China announced it would pour billions into developing electric and hybrid vehicles; Beijing committed itself to overtaking Europe in renewable energy investment by 2020; wind farm construction (in Gansu, for example) continues apace; and China leads the world in production of solar cells. It aims to reduce energy use per unit of GDP by more than 15% before 2015.

Public protests – sometimes violent – against polluting industries have proliferated in recent years across China and have scored a number of notable victories, including the 2012 demonstrations in Shifang (Sichuan), which led to the cancellation of a planned US\$1.6 billion copper smelting facility. A 2013 survey in China revealed that 78% of people would demonstrate if polluting industries were constructed near their homes. Much of the agitation is the result of health concerns as cancer is now the leading cause of death in China and up to 650,000 people die prematurely every year because of atmospheric pollution.

One of China's main energy quandaries is coal. Coal is cheap, easy to extract and remains China's primary energy source, accounting for almost 70% of power requirements.

China's Bayan Obo Mining District in Inner Mongolia produces roughly half of the world's rare earth metals, elements essential for the production of mobile phones, high-definition TVs, computers, wind turbines and other products.

Martial Arts of China

Unlike Western fighting arts – Savate, kickboxing, boxing, wrestling etc – Chinese martial arts are deeply impregnated with religious and philosophical values. And, some might add, a morsel or two of magic. Many eminent exponents of *gongfu* – better known in the West as kungfu – were devout monks or religious recluses who drew inspiration from Buddhism and Taoism and sought a mystical communion with the natural world. Their arts were not leisurely pursuits but were closely entangled with the meaning and purpose of their lives.

Styles & Schools

China lays claim to a bewildering range of martial arts styles, from the flamboyant and showy, inspired by the movements of animals or insects (such as Praying Mantis Boxing) to schools more empirically built upon the science of human movement (eg Wing Chun). On the outer fringes are the esoteric arts, abounding with metaphysical feats, arcane practices and closely guarded techniques.

Many fighting styles were once secretively handed down for generations within families and it is only relatively recently that outsiders have been accepted as students. Some schools, especially the more obscure of styles, have been driven to extinction partly due to their exclusivity.

Some styles also found themselves divided into competing factions, each laying claim to the original teachings and techniques. Such styles may exist in a state of schism; other styles have become part of the mainstream; Wing Chun in particular has become globally recognised, largely due to its associations with Bruce Lee.

Unlike Korean and Japanese arts such as Taekwondo or Karate-do, there is frequently no international regulatory body that oversees the syllabus,

tournaments or grading requirements for China's individual martial arts. Consequently students of China's myriad martial arts may be rather unsure of what level they have attained. It is often down to the individual teacher to decide what to teach students, and how quickly.

COURSES, BOOKS & FILMS

Often misinterpreted, gongfu teaches an approach to life that stresses patience, endurance, magnanimity and humility. Courses can be found in abundance across China, from Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Wudang Shan in Hubei to the Shaolin Temple in Henan.

John F Gilbey's *The Way of a Warrior* is a tongue-in-cheek, expertly written and riveting account of the Oriental fighting arts. *Meditations on Violence: A Comparison of Martial Arts Training & Real World Violence* by Sgt Rory Miller is a graphic, illuminating and down-to-earth book on violence and its consequences.

For metaphysical pointers, soft-school adherents can dip into Laotzu's terse but inspiring *The Classic of the Way and Its Power*. For spectacular (if implausible) Wing Chun moves and mayhem, watch *Ip Man* (2008), starring the indefatigable Donnie Yen.

Hard School

Although there is considerable blurring between the two camps, Chinese martial arts are often distinguished between hard and soft schools. Typically aligned with Buddhism, the hard or 'external' (*waijia*) school tends to be more vigorous, athletic and concerned with the development of power. Many of these styles are related to Shaolin Boxing and the Shaolin Temple in Henan province.

Shaolin Boxing is forever associated with [Bodhidharma](#), an ascetic Indian Buddhist monk who visited the Shaolin Temple and added a series of breathing and physical exercises to the Shaolin monk's sedentary meditations. The Shaolin monk's legendary endeavours and fearsome physical skills became known throughout China and beyond. Famous external schools include Baimei Quan (White Eyebrow Boxing) and Chang

Quan (Long Boxing).

Several Chinese styles of *gongfu* include drunken sets, where the student mimics the supple movements of an inebriate.

Soft School

Usually inspired by Taoism, the soft or ‘internal’ Chinese school (*neijia*) develops pliancy and softness as a weapon against hard force. Taichi (Taiji Quan) is the best known soft school, famed for its slow and lithe movements and an emphasis on cultivating *qi* (energy). Attacks are met with yielding movements that smother the attacking force and lead the aggressor off balance. The road to Taichi mastery is a long and difficult one, involving a re-education of physical movement and suppression of one’s instinct to tense up when threatened. Other soft schools include the circular moves of Bagua Zhang and the linear boxing patterns of Xingyi Quan, based on five basic punches – each linked to one of the five elements of Chinese philosophy – and the movements of 12 animals.

The linear movements and five punches of the internal Chinese martial art Body-Mind Boxing (Xingyi Quan) possibly evolved from spear-fighting techniques.

Forms

Most students of Chinese martial arts – hard or soft – learn forms (*taolu*), a series of movements linked together into a pattern, which embody the principal punches and kicks of the style. In essence, forms are unwritten compendiums of the style, to ensure passage from one generation to the next. The number and complexity of forms varies from style to style: taichi may only have one form, although it may be very lengthy (the long form of the Yang style takes around 20 minutes to perform). Five Ancestors Boxing has dozens of forms, while Wing Chun only has three empty-hand forms.

Iron Shirt (*tieshan*) is an external *gongfu qigong* training exercise that circulates and concentrates the *qi* in certain areas to protect the body from impacts during a fight.

Qigong

Closely linked to both the hard and especially the soft martial-arts schools is the practice of *qigong*, a technique for cultivating and circulating *qi* around the body. *Qi* can be developed for use in fighting to protect the body, as a source of power or for curative and health-giving purposes.

Qi can be developed in a number of ways – by standing still in fixed postures or with gentle exercises, meditation and measured breathing techniques. Taichi itself is a moving form of *qigong* cultivation while at the harder end of the spectrum a host of *qigong* exercises aim to make specific parts of the body impervious to attack.

Bagua Zhang

One of the more esoteric and obscure of the soft Taoist martial arts, Bagua Zhang (Eight Trigram Boxing, also known as Pa-kua) is also one of the most intriguing. The Bagua Zhang student wheels around in a circle, rapidly changing direction and speed, occasionally thrusting out a palm strike.

Bagua Zhang draws its inspiration from the trigrams (an arrangement of three broken and unbroken lines) of the classic *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* or *I Ching*), the ancient oracle used for divination. The trigrams are typically arranged in circular form and it is this pattern that is traced out by the Bagua Zhang exponent. Training commences by just walking the circle so the student gradually becomes infused with its patterns and rhythms.

A hallmark of the style is the exclusive use of the palm, not the fist, as the principal weapon. This may seem curious and perhaps even ineffectual, but in fact the palm can transmit a lot of power – consider a thrusting palm strike to the chin, for example. The palm is also better protected than the fist as it is cushioned by muscle. The fist also has to transfer its power through a multitude of bones that need to be correctly aligned to avoid damage while

the palm sits at the end of the wrist. Consider hitting a brick wall as hard as you can with your palm (and then imagine doing it with your fist!).

The student must become proficient in the subterfuge, evasion, speed and unpredictability that are hallmarks of Bagua Zhang. Force is generally not met with force, but deflected by the circular movements cultivated in students through their meditations upon the circle. Circular forms – arcing, twisting, twining and spinning – are the mainstay of all movements, radiating from the waist.

Despite being dated by historians to the 19th century, Bagua Zhang is quite probably a very ancient art. Beneath the Taoist overlay, the movements and patterns of the art suggest a possibly animistic or shamanistic origin, which gives the art its timeless rhythms.

Praying Mantis master Fan Yook Tung once killed two stampeding bulls with an iron-palm technique.

Wing Chun

Conceived by a Buddhist nun from the Shaolin Temple called Ng Mui, who taught her skills to a young girl called Wing Chun, this is a fast and dynamic system of fighting that promises quick results for novices. Wing Chun (Yong Chun) was the style that taught Bruce Lee how to move and, although he ultimately moved away from it to develop his own style, Wing Chun had an enormous influence on the Hong Kong fighter and actor.

Wing Chun emphasises speed over strength and evasion, rapid strikes and low kicks are its hallmark techniques. Forms are simple and direct, dispensing with the pretty flourishes that clutter other styles.

The art can perhaps best be described as scientific. There are none of the animal forms that make other styles so exciting and mysterious. Instead, Wing Chun is built around its centre line theory, which draws an imaginary line down the human body and centres all attacks and blocks along that line. The line runs through the sensitive regions: eyes, nose, mouth, throat, heart, solar plexus and groin and any blow on these points is debilitating and

dangerous.

The three empty hand forms – which look bizarre to non-initiates – train arm and leg movements that both attack and defend this line. None of the blocks stray beyond the width of the shoulders, as this is the limit of possible attacks, and punches follow the same theory. Punches are delivered with great speed in a straight line, along the shortest distance between puncher and punched. All of this gives Wing Chun its distinctive simplicity.

A two-person training routine called *chi sau* (sticky hands) teaches the student how to be soft and relaxed in response to attacks, as pliancy generates more speed. Weapons in the Wing Chun arsenal include the lethal twin Wing Chun butterfly knives and an extremely long pole, which requires considerable strength to handle with skill.

Zhang Sanfeng, the founder of taichi, was supposedly able to walk more than 1000 *li* (around 350 miles) a day; others say he lived for more than 200 years!

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Accommodation

From rustic homesteads, homestays, enterprising youth hostels, student dormitories, guesthouses, courtyard lodgings, snappy boutique hotels and elegant historic residences to metallic five-star towers and converted art deco apartment blocks, China's accommodation choice is impressive (on a national level). The choice varies enormously, however, between regions and cities. Top-tier draws such as Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Hong Kong sport a rich variety of accommodation options but other towns can have a poor supply, despite being inundated with visitors. Rural destinations are largely a patchwork of homesteads and hostels, with the occasional boutique-style choice in big ticket villages.

Rooms & Prices

Accommodation is divided by price category, identified by the symbols \$ (budget), \$\$ (midrange) or \$\$\$ (top end); accommodation prices vary across China, so one region's budget breakdown may differ from another. We list the rack rate, which generally reflects the most you are ever expected to pay. However, at most times of the year [discounts](#) are in effect which can range from 10% to 60%.

Rooms come with private bathroom or shower room, unless otherwise stated. Rooms are generally easy to procure, but phone ahead to reserve a room in popular tourist towns (such as Hangzhou), especially for weekend visits.

Most rooms in China fall into the following categories:

Double rooms (*shuang ren fang* or *biaozhun jian*) In most cases, these are twins, ie with two beds.

One-bed rooms/single (*danjian*) This is usually a room with one double-sized bed.

Large-bed rooms (*dachuang fang*) Larger than a one-bed room, with a big double bed.

Suites (*taofang*) Available at most midrange and top-end hotels.

Dorms (*duorenfang*) Usually, but not always, available at youth hostels (and at a few hotels).

Business rooms (*shangwu fang*) Usually equipped with computers.

HOTEL DISCOUNTS

Always ignore the rack rate and ask for the discounted price or bargain for a room, as discounts usually apply everywhere but youth hostels (except for hostel members) and the cheapest accommodation; you can do this in person at reception, or book online. Apart from during the busy holiday periods (the end of April and first few days of May, the first week of October and Chinese New Year), rooms should be priced well below the rack rate and are rarely booked out. In some towns (such as Hangzhou), there may be a pricier weekend rate (Friday and Saturday). Discounts of 10% to 60% off the tariff rate (30% is typical) are the norm, available by simply asking at reception, by phoning in advance to reserve a room or by booking online at Ctrip (<http://english.ctrip.com>).

Restrictions

The majority of hotels in China still do not have the authorisation to accept foreigners. This can be a source of frustration when you find yourself steered towards pricier midrange and top-end lodgings. All hotels we list accept foreign guests. To see if a hotel accepts foreign guests, ask: *zhege binguan shou waiguoren ma?*

PRACTICALITIES

There are three types of plugs – three-pronged angled pins, two flat pins or two narrow round pins. Electricity is 220 volts, 50 cycles AC.

The standard English-language newspaper is the (censored) China Daily (www.chinadaily.com.cn). China's largest circulation Chinese-language daily is the People's Daily (Renmin Ribao). It has an English-language edition on <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn>. Imported English-language newspapers can be bought from five-star hotel bookshops.

Listen to the BBC World Service or Voice of America; however, the websites can be jammed. Chinese Central TV (CCTV) has an English-language channel – CCTV9. Your hotel may have ESPN, Star Sports, CNN or BBC News 24.

China officially subscribes to the international metric system, but you will encounter the ancient Chinese weights and measures system that features the liang (tael; 50g) and the jin (catty; 0.5kg). There are 10 liang to the jin.

Booking

Booking online can help you secure a room and obtain a good price, but remember you

should be able to bargain down the price of your room at hotel reception (except at youth hostels and the cheapest hotels) or over the phone. To secure accommodation, always plan ahead and book your room in advance during the high season. Airports at major cities often have hotel-booking counters that offer discounted rates.

Ctrip

WEBSITE

(☎ 400 619 9999; www.english.ctrip.com)

Excellent hotel booking, air and train ticketing website, with English helpline. Useful app available.

Elong

WEBSITE

(☎ 400 617 1717, 24hr customer support 010-8457 7827; www.elong.net)

Hotel and air ticket booking, with English helpline.

Travel Zen

WEBSITE

(☎ 400 720 3355; www.travelzen.com)

Air tickets and hotel bookings. English helpline.

Checking In & Out

At check-in you will need your passport; a registration form will ask what type of visa you have. For most travellers, the visa will be L (travel visa). A deposit (*yajin*) is required at most hotels; this will be paid either with cash or by providing your credit-card details. International credit cards are generally only accepted at midrange hotels or chain express hotels and top-end accommodation; always have cash in case. If your deposit is paid in cash, you will be given a receipt and the deposit will be returned to you when you check out.

You usually have to check out by noon. If you check out between noon and 6pm you will be charged 50% of the room price; after 6pm you have to pay for another full night.

Camping

There are few places where you can legally camp and as most of China's flat land is put to agricultural use, you will largely be limited to remote, hilly regions. Camping is more feasible in wilder and less populated parts of west China. In certain destinations with camping possibilities, travel agencies and hotels will arrange overnight camping trips or multiday treks, in which case camping equipment will be supplied. Camping on the Great Wall is technically illegal, however the watchtowers are often used for pitching tents or rolling out a sleeping bag as long as you clean up after yourself and take care of the Wall ([Click here](#)).

Courtyard Hotels

Largely confined to Beijing, courtyard hotels have rapidly mushroomed. Arranged around traditional *siheyuan* (courtyards), rooms are on ground level. Courtyard hotels are charming and romantic, but are often expensive and rooms are small, in keeping with the dimensions of

courtyard residences. Facilities will be limited so don't expect a swimming pool, gym or subterranean garage.

Budget Business Chain Hotels

Dotted around much of China, budget business chain hotels can sometimes be a decent alternative to old-school two- and three-star hotels, with rooms around the ¥180 to ¥300 mark. In recent years, however, their once-pristine facilities have sometimes come to resemble the threadbare clunkers they aimed to replace. Still, their sheer ubiquitousness means you can usually find accommodation (but look at the rooms first). They often have membership/loyalty schemes which make rooms cheaper. Chains include:

Home Inn (☎400 820 3333; www.homeinns.com) Includes the Motel 168 chain.

Jinjiang Inn (☎400 820 9999; www.jinjianginns.com)

Guesthouses

The cheapest of the cheap are China's ubiquitous guesthouses (*zhaodaisuo*). Often found clustering near train or bus stations but also dotted around cities and towns, not all guesthouses accept foreigners and Chinese skills may be crucial in securing a room. Rooms (doubles, twins, triples, quads) are primitive and grey, with tiled floors and possibly a shower room or shabby bathroom; showers may be communal.

Other terms for guesthouses:

(*ludian*)

(*luguan*)

means 'rooms available'

means 'rooms available today'

(*zhusu*) means 'accommodation'.

Homesteads

In more rural destinations, small towns and villages, you should be able to find a homestead (*nongjia*) with a small number of rooms in the region of ¥50 (bargaining is possible); you will not need to register. The owner will be more than happy to cook up meals for you as well. Showers and toilets are generally communal.

Hostels

If you're looking for efficiently run budget accommodation, turn to China's youth hostel sector.

Hostelling International (☎020-8751 3731; www.yhachina.com) hostels are generally well run; other private youth hostels scattered around China are unaffiliated and standards at these may be variable. Book ahead in popular towns as rooms can go fast.

Superb for meeting like-minded travellers, youth hostels are typically staffed by youthful English-speakers who are also well informed on local sightseeing and transport. The foreigner-friendly vibe in youth hostels stands in marked contrast to many Chinese hotels.

Double rooms in youth hostels are frequently better than midrange equivalents, often just as comfortable and better located, and they may be cheaper (but not always). Many offer wi-fi, while most have at least one internet terminal (free, free for 30 minutes or roughly ¥5 to ¥10 per hour). Laundry, book-lending, kitchen facilities, bike rental, lockers, noticeboard, bar and cafe should all be available, as well as possibly a pool, ping pong, DVDs, PlayStation and other forms of entertainment. Soap, shower gel and toothpaste are generally not provided, although you can purchase them at reception.

Dorms usually cost between ¥40 and ¥55 (discounts of around ¥5 for members). They typically come with bunk beds but may have standard beds. Most dorms won't have en-suite showers, though some do; they should have air-con. Many hostels also have doubles, singles, twins and maybe even family rooms; prices vary but are often around ¥150 to ¥250 for a double, again with discounts for members. Hostels can arrange ticketing or help you book a room in another affiliated youth hostel. Book ahead (online if possible) as rooms are frequently booked out, especially at weekends or the busy holiday periods. In popular destinations, hostels may charge elevated rates on Friday and Saturday.

HOTEL TIPS

The standard of English is often better at youth hostels than at midrange or some high-end hotels.

Your hotel can help with ticketing, for a commission.

Almost every hotel has a left-luggage room, which should be free if you are a guest in the hotel.

Always bargain for a room.

Ask your hotel concierge for a local map.

Hotels

Hotels vary wildly in quality within the same budget bracket. The star rating system employed in China can also be misleading: hotels may be awarded four or five stars when they are patently a star lower in ranking. The best rule of thumb is to choose the newest hotel in each category as renovations can be rare. Deficiencies may not be immediately apparent, so explore and inspect the overall quality of the hotel; viewing the room up front pays dividends.

China has few independent hotels of real distinction, so it's generally advisable to select chain hotels that offer a proven standard of international excellence. Shangri-La, Marriott, Hilton, St Regis, Ritz-Carlton, Marco Polo and Hyatt all have a presence in China and can generally be relied upon for high standards of service and comfort.

Note the following:

English skills are often poor, even in some five-star hotels.

Most rooms are twins rather than doubles, so be clear if you specifically want a double.

Virtually all hotel rooms, whatever the price bracket, will have air-conditioning and a TV.

Very cheap rooms may have neither telephone nor internet access.

Wi-fi is increasingly common in hostels and midrange and top-end hotels (but might be only in the lobby).

Late-night telephone calls or calling cards from 'masseurs' and prostitutes are still common in budget and lower midrange hotels.

All hotel rooms are subject to a 10% or 15% service charge.

Practically all hotels will change money for guests, and most midrange and top-end hotels accept credit cards.

A Western breakfast may be available, certainly at four-star establishments.

The Chinese method of designating floors is the same as that used in the USA, but different from, say, that used in Australia. What would be the ground floor in Australia is the 1st floor in China, the 1st is the 2nd, and so on.

In China, hotels are called:

binguan

dafandian

dajjudian

fandian

judian.

Temples & Monasteries

Some temples and monasteries (especially on China's sacred mountains) provide accommodation. They are cheap but ascetic, and may not have running water or electricity.

Activities

Grab copies of expat magazines in Beijing, Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shanghai for information on activities such as golf, running, horse riding, cycling, football, cricket, hiking and trekking, swimming, ice skating, skiing, skateboarding, waterskiing and rock climbing.

Children

More comfortable in the large cities of Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai, children are likely to feel out of place in smaller towns and in the wilds. With the exception of Hainan, China is not famous for its beaches. Ask a doctor specialising in travel medicine for information on recommended immunisations for your child.

Practicalities

Baby food, nappies and milk powder: widely available in supermarkets.

Restaurants: few have baby chairs.

Train travel: children shorter than 1.4m can get a hard sleeper for 75% of the full price or a half-price hard seat. Children shorter than 1.1m ride free, but you have to hold them the entire journey.

Air travel: infants under the age of two fly for 10% of the full airfare, while children between the ages of two and 11 pay half the full price for domestic flights and 75% of the adult price for international flights.

Sights and museums: many have children's admission prices, for children under 1.1m or 1.3m in height.

Always ensure your child carries ID in case they get lost.

Customs Regulations

Chinese customs generally pay tourists little attention. 'Green channels' and 'red channels' at the airport are clearly marked. You are not allowed to import or export illegal drugs, or animals and plants (including seeds). Pirated DVDs and CDs are illegal exports from China – if found they will be confiscated. You can take Chinese medicine up to a value of ¥300 when you depart China.

Duty free, you're allowed to import:

400 cigarettes or the equivalent in tobacco products

1.5L of alcohol

50g of gold or silver.

As well:

Importation of fresh fruit and cold cuts is prohibited.

There are no restrictions on foreign currency (but declare any cash exceeding US\$5000 or its equivalent in another currency).

Objects considered antiques require a certificate and a red seal to clear customs when leaving China. Anything made before 1949 is considered an antique, and if it was made before 1795 it cannot legally be taken out of the country. To get the proper certificate and red seal, your antiques must be inspected by the **State Administration of Cultural Heritage** (Guojia Wenwu Ju; [MAP](#), [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎010-5679 2211; www.sach.gov.cn; 83 Beiheyuan Dajie) in Beijing.

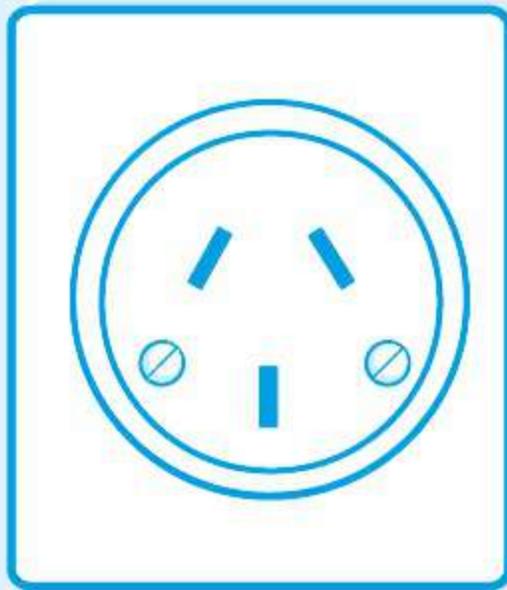
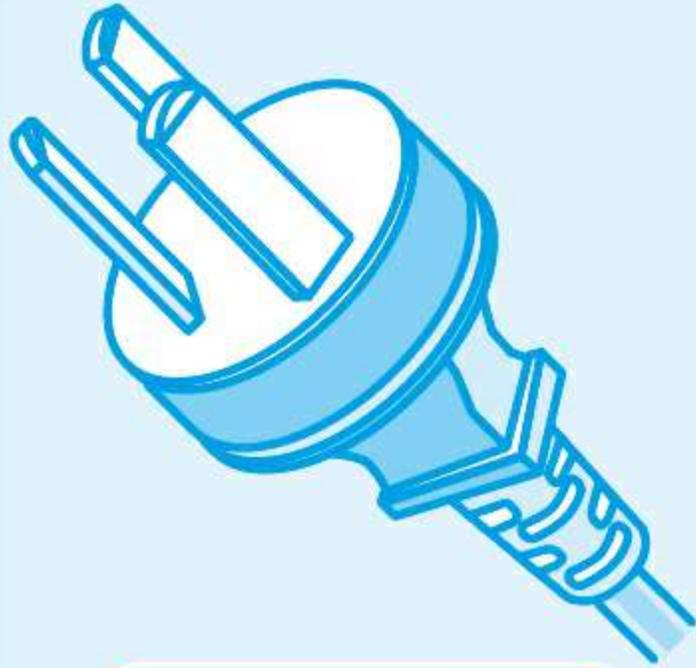
Discount Cards

Seniors over the age of 65 are frequently eligible for discounts and 70-and-overs get free

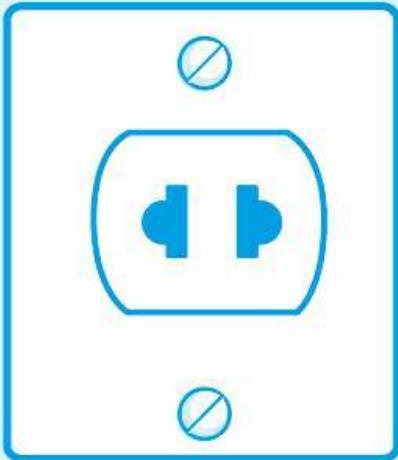
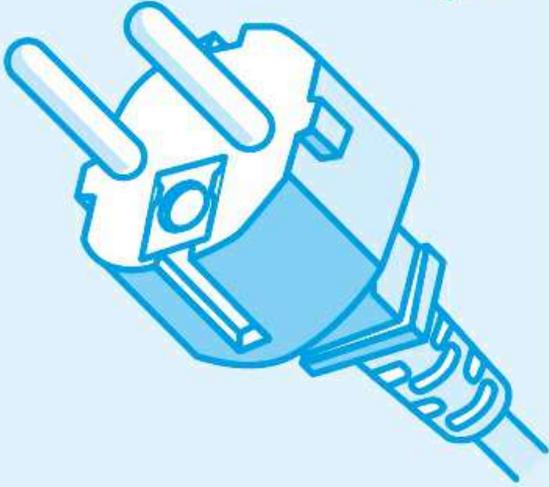
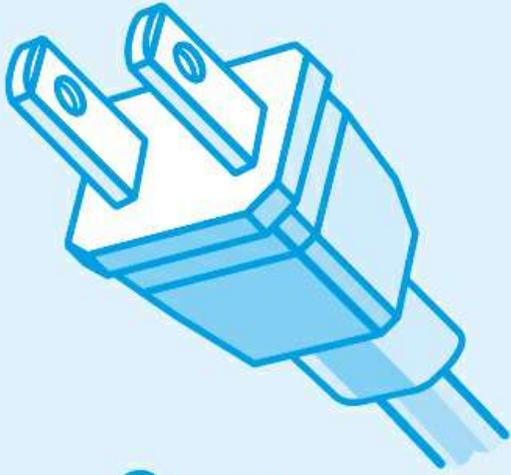
admission, so make sure you take your passport when visiting sights as proof of age.

An International **Student Identity Card** (ISIC; www.isic.org; €12) can net students half-price discounts at many sights (but you may have to insist).

Electricity



220V/50Hz



220V/50Hz

Embassies & Consulates

Embassies

Embassies are located in Beijing, with consulates scattered around the country. There are three main embassy areas in Beijing: Jianguomenwai, Sanlitun and Liangmaqiao. Embassies are open from 9am to noon and 1.30pm to 4pm Monday to Friday, but visa departments are often only open in the morning. For visas, you need to phone to make an appointment.

Australian Embassy

EMBASSY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎010-5140 4111; www.china.embassy.gov.au; 21 Dongzhimenwai Dajie)

Hong Kong ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎852-2827 8881; 23rd fl, Harbour Centre, 25 Harbour Rd, Wan Chai), **Shanghai** (Aodaliya Lingshiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎021-2215 5200; www.shanghai.china.embassy.gov.au; 22nd fl, CITIC Sq, 1168 West Nanjing Rd; 22 🕒8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri), **Guangzhou** (☎020-3814 0111; 12th fl, Development Centre, 3 Linjiang Dadao)

Canadian Embassy

EMBASSY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎010-5139 4000; www.canadainternational.gc.ca; 19 Dongzhimenwai Dajie)

Hong Kong ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎852-3719 4700; 5th fl, Tower 3, Exchange Square, 8 Connaught Place, Central), **Shanghai** (Jianada Lingshiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎021-3279 2800; www.shanghai.gc.ca; 8th fl, 1788 West Nanjing Rd; 8 🕒8.30am-noon & 1-5pm), **Chongqing** (☎023-6373 8007; Suite 1705, 17th fl, Metropolitan Tower, 68 Zourong Lu), **Guangzhou** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎020-8611 6100; Room 801, China Hotel Office Tower, Liuhua Lu)

French Embassy

EMBASSY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎010-8531 2000; www.ambafrance-cn.org; 60 Tianze Lu)

Hong Kong ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎852-3752 9900; 26th fl, Tower II, Admiralty Centre, 18 Harcourt Rd, Admiralty), **Shanghai** (Faguo Lingshiguan [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎021-6010 6300; www.consulfrance-shanghai.org; 8th fl, Bldg A, Soho Zhongshan Plaza, 1055 West Zhongshan Rd; A 🕒8.15am-12.15pm Mon, 8.45am-12.15pm Tue-Fri), **Chengdu** (☎028-6666 6060; 30th fl, Times Plaza, 2 Zongfu Lu), **Shenyang** (☎024-2319 0000; 34 Nanshisan Weilu), **Guangzhou** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#)); ☎020-2829 2000; Room 810, 8th fl, Main Tower, Guangdong International Hotel, 339 Huanshi Donglu), **Wuhan** (☎027-6579 7900; Rooms 1701-1708, New World International Trade

Center, 568 Jianshe dadao)

German Embassy

EMBASSY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎010-8532 9000; www.china.diplo.de; 17

Dongzhimenwai Dajie,)

Other offices are located in **Hong Kong** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎852-2105 8777; 21st fl, United Centre, 95 Queensway, Admiralty), **Shanghai** (Deguo Lingshiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎021-3401 0106; www.shanghai.diplo.de; 181 Yongfu Rd;), **Chengdu** (☎028-8528 0800; 25th fl, Western Tower, 19 Renmin Nanlu 4th Section), **Guangzhou** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎020-8313 0000; 14th fl, Main Tower, Yuehai Tianhe Bldg, 208 Tianhe Lu)

Indian Embassy

EMBASSY

(Yindu Dashiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎010-8531 2500;

www.indianembassy.org.cn; 5 Liangmaqiao Beijie,)

Other offices are located in **Hong Kong** (☎852-3970 9900; www.cgihk.gov.in; Unit A, 16th fl, United Centre, 95 Queensway, Admiralty) and **Shanghai** (☎021-6275 8881; 1008 Shanghai International Trade Centre, 2201 West Yan'an Rd)

Irish Embassy

EMBASSY

([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎010-8531 6200; www.embassyofireland.cn; 3

Ritan Donglu)

Hong Kong ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎852-2527 4897; 1408 Two Pacific Pl, 88 Queensway, Admiralty), **Shanghai** (Ai'erlan Lingshiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎021-6010 1360; www.embassyofireland.cn; 700a Shanghai Centre, 1376 West Nanjing Rd; 700a ☎9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm)

Japanese Embassy

EMBASSY

(Riben Dashiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎8531 9800; [www.cn.emb-](http://www.cn.emb-japan.go.jp)

japan.go.jp; 1 Liangmaqiaodong Jie,)

Other offices are located in **Hong Kong** ([MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎852-2522 1184; www.hk.emb-japan.go.jp; 46-47th fl, One Exchange Sq, 8 Connaught Pl, Central), **Shanghai** (Riben Lingshiguan [GOOGLE MAP](#) ; ☎021-5257 4766; www.shanghai.cn.emb-japan.go.jp; 8 Wanshan Rd; ☎9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri), **Qingdao** (☎0532-8090 0001; 59 Xianggang Donglu)

Kazakhstan Embassy

EMBASSY

(☎010-6532 6182; 9 Sanlitun Dongliujie)

Urumqi (☎0991-369 1444; Hasakesitan Lingshiguan; 216 Kunming Lu; ☎9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

Kyrgyzstan Embassy

EMBASSY

(☎ 010-6468-1297; www.kyrgyzstanembassy.net; 18 Xiaoyun Lu, 10/11 H District, King's Garden Villas; 🕒 applications 9am-11am Mon, Wed, Fri)

Urumqi (📍 [GOOGLE MAP](#)); 38 Hetan Beilu; 🕒 noon-2pm Mon-Fri)

Laotian Embassy

EMBASSY

(Laowo Dashiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 010-6532 1224; 11 Sanlitun Dongsijie,)

Other offices are located in **Hong Kong** (☎ 852-2544 1186; 14th fl, Arion Commercial Centre, 2-12 Queen's Rd West, Sheung Wan), **Kunming** (☎ 0871-316 8916; Ground fl, Kunming Diplomat Compound, 6800 Caiyun Beilu), [Jinghong](#)

Mongolian Embassy

EMBASSY

(Menggu Dashiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 010-6532 1203; 2 Xiushui Beijie)

There is a separate **visa section** (📍 [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 010-6532 6512; 🕒 9-11am Mon-Fri). Other offices are located in [Hohhot](#) and **Erenhot**. (☎ 151-6497-1992; Youyi Lu; 🕒 9am-noon & 3-5pm Mon-Fri)

Myanmar Embassy

EMBASSY

(☎ 010-6532-0359; www.myanmarembassy.com/chinese; 6 Dongzhimenwai Dajie)

[Kunming](#)

Nepalese Embassy

EMBASSY

(Nibo'er Dashiguan [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 010-6532 1795; www.nepalembassy.org.cn; 1 Sanlitun Xiliujie,)

Other offices are located in **Hong Kong** (📍 [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 852-2369 7813; www.nepalconsulatehk.org; 715 China Aerospace Tower, Concordia Plaza, 1 Science Museum Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui), **Shanghai** (☎ 021-6272 0259; 16a, 669 West Beijing Rd) and **Lhasa**. (☎ 0891-681 3965; 13 Norbulingka Beilu; 🕒 10am-noon Mon-Fri)

Netherlands Embassy

EMBASSY

(📍 [MAP](#) [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 010-8532 0200; www.hollandinchina.org; 4 Liangmahe Nanlu)

Hong Kong, **Shanghai** (Helan Lingshiguan [GOOGLE MAP](#); ☎ 021-2208 7288; www.hollandinchina.org; 10th fl, Tower B, Dawning Center, 500 Hongbaoshi Rd; 10 🕒 9am-noon & 1-5.30pm Mon-Fri), **Guangzhou** (☎ 020-3813 2200; <http://china.nlembassy.org/>; Teem Tower, 208 Tianhe Lu)

New Zealand Embassy

EMBASSY

( 010-8531 2700; www.nzembassy.com/china; 3 Sanlitun Dongsan Jie)

Hong Kong ( ;  2525 5044; Room 6501, 65th fl, Central Plaza, 18 Harbour Rd, Wan Chai), **Shanghai** (Xinxilan Lingshiguan  ;  021-5407 5858; www.nzembassy.com; Room 1605-1607A, 16th fl, The Centre, 989 Changle Rd; 1605-1607A ☎8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri), **Guangzhou** ( 020-8667 0253; Room 1055, China Hotel Office Tower, Lihua Lu)

North Korean Embassy

EMBASSY

( ;  010-6532 1186; 11 Ritan Beilu)

Shenyang ( 024-8685 2742; 37 Beiling Dajie)

Pakistan Embassy

EMBASSY

( ;  010-6523 3504; www.pakbj.org.pk; 1

Dongzhimenwai Dajie)

Chengdu ( 028-8526 8316; Ste 2306, One Aerospace Center, No. 7, Xinguanghua Jie)

Russian Embassy

EMBASSY

(Eluosi Dashiguan ;  010-6532 1381; www.russia.org.cn;

4 Dongzhimen Beizhongjie,, off Dongzhimennei Dajie)

South Korean Embassy

EMBASSY

(Nanhan Dashiguan  ;  010-8531 0700; 20

Dongfang Donglu,)

Shengyang ( 024-2385 3388; 37 Nanshan Weilu), **Qingdao** ( 0532-8897 6001; 101 Xianggang Donglu)

Thai Embassy

EMBASSY

(Taigu Dashiguan  ;  6532 1749;

www.thaiembassy.org; 40 Guanghua Lu,)

Other offices are located in **Shanghai** (Taiwangguo Lingshiguan ;  021-6288 3030; www.thaishanghai.com; 15th fl, 567 Weihai Rd; 15 ☎ visa office 9.30-11.30am Mon-Fri) and [Kunming](#).

UK Embassy

EMBASSY

( ;  010-5192 4000;

www.gov.uk/government/world/china; 11 Guanghua Lu)

Hong Kong (852-2901 3000; 1 Supreme Court Rd, Admiralty), **Shanghai** (Yingguo Lingshiguan  ; 021-3279 2000; <http://ukinchina.fco.gov.uk>; Room 319, 3rd fl, Shanghai Centre, 1376 West Nanjing Rd; 301 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri), **Chongqing** (023-6369 1500; Suite 2801, 28th fl, Metropolitan Tower, 68 Zourong Lu), **Guangzhou** (020-8314 3000; 2nd fl, Main Tower, Guangdong International Hotel, 339 Huanshi Donglu)

US Embassy

EMBASSY

(010-8531 3000; <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn>; 55 Anjialou Lu)

Hong Kong ( ; 852-2523 9011; 26 Garden Rd, Central), **Shanghai** (Meiguo Lingshiguan  ; after-hour emergency for US citizens 021-3217 4650; <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn>; 8th fl, Westgate Tower, 1038 West Nanjing Rd; 8 8.15-11.30am & 1.30-3.30pm Mon-Fri), **Chengdu** ( ; 028-8558 3992; 4 Lingshiguan Lu), **Guangzhou** (; 020-3814 5000; Huaxia Lu, Zhujiang New Town, Tianhe District), **Shenyang** (024-2322 1198; 52 Shisi Weilu)

Vietnamese Embassy

EMBASSY

(Yuenan Dashiguan  ; 010-6532 1155; <http://vnemba.org.cn>; 32 Guanghua Lu,)

Other offices are located in **Hong Kong** (852-2591 4510; vnconsul@netvigator.com; 15th fl, Great Smart Tower, 230 Wan Chai Rd, Wan Chai), **Kunming** ( ; 0871-352 2669; 507, Hongta Mansion, 155 Beijing Lu)

Gay & Lesbian Travellers

Greater tolerance exists in the big cities than in the more conservative countryside, but even in urban areas, gay and lesbian visitors should be quite discreet. You will often see Chinese same-sex friends holding hands or putting their arms around each other, but this usually has no sexual connotation.

Spartacus International Gay Guide

GAY & LESBIAN

(Bruno Gmunder Verlag; www.spartacusworld.com/en)

Best-selling guide for gay travellers; also available as an iPhone App.

Utopia

GAY & LESBIAN

(www.utopia-asia.com/tipschin.htm)

Tips on travelling in China and a complete listing of gay bars nationwide.

Insurance

Carefully consider a travel-insurance policy to cover theft, loss, trip cancellation and medical eventualities. Travel agents can sort this out for you, although it is often cheaper to find good deals with an insurer online or with a broker. Worldwide travel insurance is available at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel-insurance. You can buy, extend and claim online anytime – even if you're already on the road.

Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities' such as scuba diving, skiing and even trekking. Check that the policy covers ambulances or an emergency flight home.

Paying for your airline ticket with a credit card often provides limited travel accident insurance – ask your credit-card company what it's prepared to cover.

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than reimbursing you for expenditures after the fact. If you have to claim later, ensure you keep all documentation.

Internet Access

Wi-fi accessibility in hotels, cafes, restaurants and bars is generally good. The best option is to bring a wi-fi equipped smartphone, tablet or laptop or use your hotel computer or broadband internet connection.

The Chinese authorities remain mistrustful of the internet, and censorship is heavy-handed. Around 10% of websites are blocked; sites like Google may be slow, while social-networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are blocked (as is YouTube). Gmail is often inaccessible, as is Google Drive, so plan ahead. Newspapers such as the *New York Times* are also blocked, as is Bloomberg. Users can get around blocked websites by using a VPN (Virtual Private Network) service such as Astrill (www.astrill.com).

Many internet cafes only accept customers with Chinese ID, barring foreigners. In large cities and towns, the area around the train station generally has internet cafes.

The internet icon in hotel reviews indicates the presence of an internet cafe or a terminal where you can get online; wi-fi areas are indicated with a wi-fi icon.

Language Courses

Learning Chinese in China is big business. Weigh up fees and syllabus carefully and check online reviews – some schools are pricey and may use teaching methods unsuited to Westerners. Consider where you would like to study: the Beijing accent and setting has obvious cachet, but a course in a setting such as Yangshuo can be delightful.

Legal Matters

China does not officially recognise dual nationality or the foreign citizenship of children born in China if one of the parents is a PRC national. If you have Chinese and another nationality you may, in theory, not be allowed to visit China on your foreign passport. In practice, Chinese authorities are not switched on enough to know if you own two passports, and should accept you on a foreign passport. Dual-nationality citizens who enter China on a Chinese passport are subject to Chinese laws and are legally not allowed consular help. If over 16 years of age, carry your passport with you at all times as a form of ID.

Gambling is officially illegal in mainland China. Distributing religious material is also illegal in mainland China.

China takes a particularly dim view of opium and all its derivatives; trafficking in more than 50g of heroin can lead to the death penalty. Foreign-passport holders have been executed in China for drug offences. The Chinese criminal justice system does not ensure a fair trial and defendants are not presumed innocent until proven guilty. If arrested, most foreign citizens have the right to contact their embassy.

Anyone under the age of 18 is considered a minor; the minimum age for driving a car is 18. The age of consent in China is 14; in Hong Kong and Macau it is 16. The age of consent for marriage is 22 for men and 20 for women. There is no minimum age restricting the consumption of alcohol or use of cigarettes.

Money

The Chinese currency is the renminbi (RMB), or 'people's money'. The basic unit of RMB is the yuan (¥), which is divided into 10 jiao, which is again divided into 10 fen. Colloquially, the yuan is referred to as kuai and jiao as mao. The fen has so little value these days that it is rarely used.

The Bank of China issues RMB bills in denominations of ¥1, ¥2, ¥5, ¥10, ¥20, ¥50 and ¥100. Coins come in denominations of ¥1, 5 jiao, 1 jiao and 5 fen. Paper versions of the coins remain in circulation.

Hong Kong's currency is the Hong Kong dollar (HK\$). The Hong Kong dollar is divided into 100 cents. Bills are issued in denominations of HK\$10, HK\$20, HK\$50, HK\$100, HK\$500 and HK\$1000. Copper coins are worth 50c, 20c and 10c, while the \$5, \$2 and \$1 coins are silver and the \$10 coin is nickel and bronze. The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the US dollar at a rate of US\$1 to HK\$7.80, though it is allowed to fluctuate a little.

Macau's currency is the pataca (MOP\$), which is divided into 100 avos. Bills are issued in denominations of MOP\$10, MOP\$20, MOP\$50, MOP\$100, MOP\$500 and MOP\$1000. There are copper coins worth 10, 20 and 50 avos and silver-coloured MOP\$1, MOP\$2, MOP\$5 and MOP\$10 coins. The pataca is pegged to the Hong Kong dollar at a rate of MOP\$103.20 to HK\$100. In effect, the two currencies are interchangeable and Hong Kong dollars, including coins, are accepted in Macau. Chinese renminbi is also accepted in many places in Macau at

one-to-one. You can't spend patacas anywhere else, however, so use them before you leave Macau. Prices quoted are in yuan unless otherwise stated.

ATMs

Bank of China and the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) 24-hour ATMs are plentiful, and you can use Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus, Maestro Plus and American Express to withdraw cash. All ATMs accepting international cards have dual-language ability. The network is largely found in sizeable towns and cities. If you plan on staying in China for a few weeks or more, it is advisable to open an account at a bank with a nationwide network of ATMs, such as the Bank of China or ICBC (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China). HSBC and Citibank ATMs are available in larger cities. Keep your ATM receipts so you can exchange your yuan when you leave China.

The exchange rate on ATM withdrawals is similar to that for credit cards, but there is a maximum daily withdrawal amount. Note that banks can charge a withdrawal fee for using the ATM network of another bank, so check with your bank before travelling.

To have money wired from abroad, visit Western Union or Moneygram (www.moneygram.com).

Credit Cards

In large tourist towns, credit cards are relatively straightforward to use, but don't expect to be able to use them everywhere, and always carry enough cash; the exception is in Hong Kong, where international credit cards are accepted almost everywhere (although some shops may try to add a surcharge to offset the commission charged by credit companies, which can range from 2.5% to 7%). Check to see if your credit card company charges a foreign transaction fee (usually between 1% and 3%) for purchases in China.

Where they are accepted, credit cards often deliver a slightly better exchange rate than banks. Money can also be withdrawn at certain ATMs in large cities on credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard and Amex.

Moneychangers

It's best to wait till you reach China to exchange money as the exchange rate will be better. Foreign currency and travellers cheques can be changed at border crossings, international airports, branches of the Bank of China, tourist hotels and some large department stores; hours of operation for foreign-exchange counters are 8am to 7pm (later at hotels). Top-end hotels will generally change money for hotel guests only. The official rate is given almost everywhere and the exchange charge is standardised, so there is little need to shop around for the best deal.

Australian, Canadian, US, UK, Hong Kong and Japanese currencies and the euro can be changed in China. In some backwaters, it may be hard to change lesser-known currencies; US dollars are still the easiest to change. Lhasa has ATM-style currency exchange machines that can change cash in several currencies into renminbi 24 hours a day, with your passport.

Keep at least a few of your exchange receipts. You will need them if you want to exchange any remaining RMB you have at the end of your trip.

Tipping

Almost no one in China (including Hong Kong and Macau) asks for tips. Tipping used to be refused in restaurants, but nowadays many midrange and top-end eateries include their own (often huge) service charge; cheap restaurants do not expect a tip. Taxi drivers throughout China do not ask for or expect tips.

Travellers Cheques

With the prevalence of ATMs across China, travellers cheques are not as useful as they once were and cannot be used everywhere, so always ensure you carry enough ready cash. You should have no problem cashing travellers cheques at tourist hotels, but they are of little use in budget hotels and restaurants. Most hotels will only cash the cheques of guests. If cashing them at banks, aim for larger banks such as the Bank of China or ICBC.

Stick to the major companies such as Thomas Cook, Amex and Visa. In big cities travellers cheques are accepted in almost any currency, but in smaller destinations, it's best to stick to big currencies such as US dollars or UK pounds. Keep your exchange receipts so you can change your money back to its original currency when you leave.

Opening Hours

China officially has a five-day working week. Saturday and Sunday are public holidays.

Banks, offices and government departments open Monday to Friday (roughly 9am until 5pm or 6pm), possibly closing for two hours in the middle of the day; many banks are also open Saturday and maybe Sunday.

Post offices are generally open seven days a week.

Museums generally stay open on weekends and may shut for one day during the week.

Travel agencies and foreign-exchange counters in tourist hotels are usually open seven days a week.

Department stores, shopping malls and shops are open daily from 10am to 10pm.

Internet cafes are typically open 24 hours, but some open at 8am and close at midnight.

Restaurants open from around 10.30am to 11pm; some shut at around 2pm and reopen at 5pm or 6pm.

Bars open in the late afternoon, shutting around midnight or later.

Passports

You must have a passport (*huzhao*) on you at all times; it is the most basic travel document and all hotels will insist on seeing it for check-in. It is now mandatory to present your passport

when buying train tickets; you will also need it for using internet cafes that accept foreigners.

The Chinese government requires that your passport be valid for at least six months after the expiry date of your visa. You'll need at least one entire blank page in your passport for the visa.

Take an ID card with your photo in case you lose your passport and make photocopies of your passport: your embassy may need these before issuing a new one. You must report the loss to the local Public Security Bureau (PSB), who will issue you with a 'Statement of Loss of Passport'.

Long-stay visitors should register their passport with their embassy.

Post

The international postal service is generally efficient, and airmail letters and postcards will probably take between five and 10 days to reach their destinations. Domestic post is swift – perhaps one or two days from Guangzhou to Beijing. Intracity post may be delivered the same day it's sent.

China Post operates an express mail service (EMS) that is fast, reliable and ensures that the package is sent by registered post. Not all branches of China Post have EMS.

Major tourist hotels have branch post offices where you can send letters, packets and parcels. Even at cheap hotels you can usually post letters from the front desk. Larger parcels may need to be sent from the town's main post office.

In major cities, private carriers such as **United Parcel Service** (☎800 820 8388; www.ups.com), **DHL** (Dunhao; ☎800 810 8000; www.cn.dhl.com), **Federal Express** (Lianbang Kuaidi; ☎800 988 1888; <http://fedex.com/cn>) and **TNT Skypak** (☎800 820 9868; www.tnt.com/express/zh_cn) have a pick-up service as well as drop-off centres; call their offices for details.

If you are sending items abroad, take them unpacked with you to the post office to be inspected; an appropriate box or envelope will be found for you. Most post offices offer materials for packaging (including padded envelopes, boxes and heavy brown paper), for which you'll be charged. Don't take your own packaging as it will probably be refused.

Public Holidays

The People's Republic of China has a number of national holidays. Some of the following are nominal holidays that do not result in leave. It's not a great idea to arrive in China or go travelling during the big holiday periods as hotels prices reach their maximum and transport can become very tricky.

New Year's Day 1 January

Chinese New Year 19 February 2015, 8 February 2016, 28 January 2017; a week-long

holiday for most.

International Women's Day 8 March

Tomb Sweeping Festival First weekend in April; a popular three-day holiday period.

International Labour Day 1 May; for many it's a three-day holiday.

Youth Day 4 May

International Children's Day 1 June

Dragon Boat Festival 20 June 2015, 9 June 2016, 30 May 2017.

Birthday of the Chinese Communist Party 1 July

Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Liberation Army 1 August

Mid-Autumn Festival 27 September 2015, 15 September 2016, 4 October 2017.

National Day 1 October; the big one, a week-long holiday.

Safe Travel

GOVERNMENT TRAVEL ADVICE

The following government websites offer travel advisories and information on current hot spots.

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (☎1300 139 281; www.smarttraveller.gov.au)

British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (☎0845-850-2829; www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade (☎800-267 6788; <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>)

US State Department (☎888-407 4747; <http://travel.state.gov>)

Crime

Travellers are more often the victims of petty economic crime, such as theft, than serious crime. Foreigners are natural targets for pickpockets and thieves – keep your wits about you and make it difficult for thieves to get at your belongings.

High-risk areas in China are train and bus stations, city and long-distance buses (especially sleeper buses), hard-seat train carriages and public toilets.

Women should avoid travelling solo. Even in Beijing, single women taking taxis have been taken to remote areas and robbed by taxi drivers.

LOSS REPORTS

If something of yours is stolen, report it immediately to the nearest Foreign Affairs Branch of the Public Security Bureau (PSB; Gong'anju). Staff will ask you to fill in a loss report before investigating the case.

A loss report is crucial so you can claim compensation if you have travel insurance. Be prepared to spend many hours, perhaps even several days, organising it. Make a copy of your passport in case of loss or theft.

Scams

Con artists are widespread. Well-dressed girls flock along Shanghai's East Nanjing Rd, the Bund and Beijing's Wangfujing Dajie, asking single men to photograph them on their mobile phones before dragging them to expensive cafes or Chinese teahouses, leaving them to foot monstrous bills. 'Poor' art students haunt similar neighbourhoods, press-ganging foreigners into art exhibitions where they are coerced into buying trashy art.

Taxi scams at Beijing's Capital Airport are legendary; always join the queue at the taxi rank and insist that the taxi driver uses his or her meter. Try to avoid pedicabs and motorised three wheelers wherever possible; we receive a litany of complaints against pedicab drivers who originally agree on a price and then insist on an alternative figure (sometimes 10 times the sum) once you arrive at the destination.

Be alert at all times if you decide to change money or buy tickets (such as train tickets) on the black market, which we can't recommend.

Always be alert when buying unpriced goods (which is a lot of the time): foreigners are frequently ripped off. Always examine your restaurant bill carefully for hidden extras and if paying by credit card ensure there are no extra charges.

Transport

Traffic accidents are the major cause of death in China for people aged between 15 and 45, and the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates there are 600 traffic deaths per day. On long-distance buses, you may find there are no seatbelts or the seatbelts are virtually unusable through neglect, or inextricably stuffed beneath the seat. Outside of the big cities, taxis are unlikely to have rear seatbelts fitted.

Your greatest danger in China will almost certainly be crossing the road, so develop 360-degree vision and a sixth sense. Crossing only when it is safe to do so could perch you at the side of the road in perpetuity, but don't imitate the local tendency to cross without looking. Note that cars frequently turn on red lights in China, so the green 'walk now' man does not mean it is safe to cross.

Telephone

Mobile Phones

A mobile phone should be the first choice for calls, but ensure your mobile is unlocked for use in China if taking your own. If you have the right phone (eg Blackberry, iPhone, Android), **Skype** (www.skype.com) and **Viber** (www.viber.com) can make calls either very cheap or free with wi-fi access. Also consider buying a data SIM card in China for constant network access away from wi-fi hotspots; plans start at under ¥70 for 300mb of data, 50 minutes of China calls, and around 240 free local SMS per month. If buying 3G SIM cards, China Unicom offers almost twice as much data as China Mobile. China Mobile or China Unicom outlets can sell you a standard SIM card (note that numbers with eights in them are more expensive, numbers with fours are cheaper) which cost from ¥60 to ¥100 and include ¥50 of credit. When this runs out, top up by buying a credit-charging card (*chongzhi ka*) from outlets. Cards are also available from newspaper kiosks and shops displaying the China Mobile sign.

Buying a mobile phone in China is also an option as they are generally inexpensive. Make sure the phone uses W-CDMA, which works on China Unicom and most carriers around the world, and not TD-SCDMA, which works only on China Mobile and not international carriers. Cafes, restaurants and bars in larger towns and cities are frequently wi-fi enabled. Consider investing in a USB portable power bank for charging your phone and other devices while on the road.

Landlines

If making a domestic call, look out for very cheap public phones at newspaper stands (*baokanting*) and hole-in-the-wall shops (*xiaomaibu*); you make your call and then pay the owner. Domestic and international long-distance phone calls can also be made from main telecommunications offices and 'phone bars' (*huaba*). Cardless international calls are expensive and it's far cheaper to use an internet phone (IP) card. Public telephone booths are rarely used now in China but may serve as wi-fi hot spots (as in Shanghai).

PHONECARDS

Beyond Skype or Viber, using an IP card on your mobile or a landline phone is much cheaper than calling direct, but they can be hard to find outside the big cities. You dial a local number, punch in your account number, followed by a pin number and finally the number you wish to call. English-language service is usually available. Some IP cards can only be used locally, while others can be used nationwide, while still others are no good for international calls, so it is important to buy the right card (and check the expiry date).

Visas

Applying for Visas

FOR CHINA

Apart from visa-free visits to Hong Kong and Macau and useful 72-hour visa-free transit stays (for visitors from 51 nations) to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xi'an, Guilin, Chengdu,

Chongqing, Dalian and Shenyang (although you won't be permitted to leave transit cities during your three-day stay), you will need a visa to visit China. Citizens from Japan, Singapore, Brunei, San Marino, Mauritius, the Seychelles and the Bahamas do not require a visa to visit China. There remain a few restricted areas in China that require an additional permit from the PSB. Permits are also required for travel to Tibet, a region that the authorities can suddenly bar foreigners from entering.

Your passport must be valid for at least six months after the expiry date of your visa (nine months for a double-entry visa) and you'll need at least one entire blank pages in your passport for the visa. For children under the age of 18, a parent must sign the application form on their behalf.

At the time of writing, the visa application process had become more rigorous and applicants were required to provide the following:

a copy of flight confirmation showing onward/return travel

for double-entry visas, flight confirmation showing all dates of entry and exit

if staying at a hotel in China, confirmation from the hotel (this can be cancelled later if you stay elsewhere)

if staying with friends or relatives, a copy of the information page of their passport, a copy of their China visa and a letter of invitation from them.

At the time of writing, prices for a standard single-entry 30-day visa were as follows:

UK£30 for UK citizens

US\$140 for US citizens

US\$30 for citizens of other nations.

Double-entry visas:

UK£45 for UK citizens

US\$140 for US citizens

US\$45 for all other nationals.

Six-month multiple-entry visas:

UK£90 for UK citizens

US\$140 for US citizens

US\$60 for all other nationals.

A standard 30-day single-entry visa can be issued in four to five working days. In many countries, the visa service has been outsourced from the Chinese embassy to a **Chinese Visa Application Service Centre** (www.visaforchina.org), which levies an extra administration fee. In the case of the UK, a single-entry visa costs UK£30, but the standard administration charge levied by the centre is an additional UK£36 (three-day express UK£48, postal service UK£54). In some countries, such as the UK, France, the US and Canada, there is more than one service centre nationwide. Visa Application Service Centres are open Monday to Friday.

A standard 30-day visa is activated on the date you enter China, and must be used within three months of the date of issue. Sixty-day and 90-day travel visas are harder to get. To stay longer, you can extend your visa in China.

Visa applications require a completed application form (available from the embassy, visa

application service centre or downloaded from its website) and at least one photo (normally 51mm x 51mm). You generally pay for your visa when you collect it. A visa mailed to you will take up to three weeks. In the US and Canada, mailed visa applications have to go via a visa agent, at extra cost. In the US, many people use the **China Visa Service Center** ( in the US 800 799 6560; www.mychinavisa.com), which offers prompt service. The procedure takes around 10 to 14 days. **CIBT** (www.uk.cibt.com) offers a global network and a fast and efficient turnaround.

Hong Kong is a good place to pick up a China visa. **China Travel Service** (CTS; Zhongguo Luxingshe) will be able to obtain one for you, or you can apply directly to the **Visa Office of the People's Republic of China** ( ;  852-3413 2300; www.fmccprc.gov.hk/eng; 3rd & 4th fl, China Resources Building, 26 Harbour Rd, Wan Chai; 🕒 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri).

Be aware that American and UK passport holders must pay considerably more for their visas. You must supply two photos. Prices for China visas in Hong Kong are as follows:

Standard visa One-/two-/three-day processing time HK\$500/400/200

Double-entry visa One-/two-/three-day processing time HK\$600/500/300

Multiple-entry six-month visa One-/two-/three-day processing time HK\$800/700/500

Multiple-entry one-, two- or three-year visa One-/two-/three-day processing time HK\$1100/1000/800.

You can buy a five-day, Shenzhen-only visa (¥160 for most nationalities, ¥469 for Brits; cash only) at the Luohu border (Lo Wu; 9am to 10.30pm), [Huangang](#) and [Shekou](#). US citizens must buy a visa in advance in Macau or Hong Kong.

Three-day visas are also available at the **Macau–Zhuhai border** (¥168 for most nationalities, ¥469 for British, US citizens excluded; 8.30am to 12.15pm, 1pm to 6.15pm & 7pm to 10.30pm). US citizens have to buy a visa in advance in Macau or Hong Kong.

Be aware that political events can suddenly make visas more difficult to procure or renew.

When asked about your itinerary on the application form, list standard tourist destinations; if you are considering going to Tibet or western Xinjiang, just leave it off the form. The list you give is not binding. Those working in media or journalism may want to profess a different occupation; otherwise, a visa may be refused or a shorter length of stay than that requested may be given.

VISA-FREE TRANSITS

Citizens from 51 nations (including the US, Australia, Canada, France, Brazil and the UK) can now stay in Beijing and Shanghai for 72 hours without a visa as long as they are in transit to other destinations outside China, have a third-country visa and an air ticket out of Beijing or Shanghai. Similarly, citizens from the same nations can also transit through Guangzhou, Xi'an, Guilin, Chengdu, Chongqing, Dalian and Shenyang for 72 hours visa-free, with the same conditions. Visitors on such three-day stays are not allowed to leave the transit city.

FOR HONG KONG

At the time of writing, most visitors to Hong Kong, including citizens of the EU, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada, could enter and stay for 90 days without a visa. British passport holders get 180 days, while South Africans are allowed to stay 30 days visa-free. If you require a visa, apply at a Chinese embassy or consulate before arriving. If you visit Hong Kong from China, you will need a double-entry, multiple-entry or new visa to re-enter China.

FOR MACAU

Most travellers, including citizens of the EU, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada and South Africa, can enter Macau without a visa for between 30 and 90 days. British passport holders get 180 days. Most other nationalities can get a 30-day visa on arrival, which will cost MOP\$100/50/200 per adult/child under 12/family. If you're visiting Macau from China and plan to re-enter China, you will need to be on a multiple- or double-entry visa.

VISA TYPES

There are 12 categories of visas (for most travellers, an L visa will be issued).

| TYPE | ENGLISH NAME | CHINESE NAME |
|-------|--|--------------------------|
| C | flight attendant | chéngwù 乘务 |
| D | resident | dìngjū 定居 |
| F | business or student | fāngwèn 访问 |
| G | transit | guòjìng 过境 |
| L | travel | lǚxíng 旅行 |
| Z | working | gōngzuò 工作 |
| M | commercial and trade | màoyì 贸易 |
| Q1/Q2 | family visits more/less than six months | qīnshǔ1 亲属1/ qīnshǔ2 亲属2 |
| R | talents/needed skills | réncai 人才 |
| S1/S2 | Visits to foreign relatives/privates (more/less than six months) | sīrén1 私人1/ sīrén2 私人2 |
| J1/J2 | journalist (more/less than six months) | jìzhě1 记者1/ jìzhě2 记者2 |
| X1/X2 | student (more/less than six months) | xuéxí1 学习1/ xuéxí2 学习2 |

Visa Extensions

FOR CHINA

The Foreign Affairs Branch of the local PSB deals with visa extensions.

First-time extensions of 30 days are usually easy to obtain on single-entry tourist visas; a

further extension of a month may be possible, but you may only get another week. Travellers report generous extensions in provincial towns, but don't bank on this. Popping across to Hong Kong to apply for a new tourist visa is another option.

Extensions to single-entry visas vary in price, depending on your nationality. At the time of writing, US travellers paid ¥185, Canadians ¥165, UK citizens ¥160 and Australians ¥100. Expect to wait up to five days for your visa extension to be processed.

The penalty for overstaying your visa in China is up to ¥500 per day. Some travellers have reported having trouble with officials who read the 'valid until' date on their visa incorrectly. For a one-month travel (L) visa, the 'valid until' date is the date by which you must enter the country (within three months of the date the visa was issued), not the date upon which your visa expires.

FOR HONG KONG

For tourist-visa extensions, inquire at the **Hong Kong Immigration Department** (☎852-2852 3047; www.immd.gov.hk; 2nd fl, Immigration Tower, 7 Gloucester Rd, Wan Chai; 🕒8.45am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9-11.30am Sat). Extensions (HK\$160) are not readily granted unless there are extenuating circumstances such as illness.

FOR MACAU

If your visa expires, you can obtain a single one-month extension from the **Macau Immigration Department** (☎853-2872 5488; Ground fl, Travessa da Amizade; 🕒9am-5pm Mon-Fri).

Residence Permits

The 'green card' is a residence permit, issued to long-term foreign residents in China. Besides needing all the right paperwork, you must also pass a health exam, for which there is a charge. Green cards are valid for five or 10 years. If you lose your card, there's a hefty fee to have it replaced.

Volunteering

Large numbers of Westerners work in China with international development charities such as [VSO](#).

Joy in Action

(JIA; www.joyinaction.org)

Establishing work camps in places in need in south China.

VOLUNTEERING

World Teach

(www.worldteach.org)

Volunteer teachers.

VOLUNTEERING

VSO

(www.vso.org.uk)

Provides you with useful experience and the chance to learn Chinese.

VOLUNTEERING

Transport

Getting There & Away

Getting Around

Transport

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Flights, cars and tours can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/bookings.

Entering China

No particular difficulties exist for travellers entering China. Chinese immigration officers are scrupulous and highly bureaucratic, but not overly officious. The main requirements are a passport that's valid for travel for six months after the expiry date of your visa, and a [visa](#). Travellers arriving in China will receive a health declaration form and an arrivals form to complete.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND TRAVEL

Every form of transport that relies on carbon-based fuel generates CO₂, the main cause of human-induced climate change. Modern travel is dependent on aeroplanes, which might use less fuel per person than most cars but travel much greater distances. The altitude at which aircraft emit gases (including CO₂) and particles also contributes to their climate change impact. Many websites offer 'carbon calculators' that allow people to estimate the carbon emissions generated by their journey and, for those who wish to do so, to offset the impact of the greenhouse gases emitted with contributions to portfolios of climate-friendly initiatives throughout the world. Lonely Planet offsets the carbon footprint of all staff and author travel.

Air

Airports

Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai are China's principal international air gateways; Baiyun International Airport in Guangzhou is of lesser, but growing, importance.

Baiyun International Airport

AIRPORT

(CAN; Baiyun Guoji Jichang ☎ 020-3606 6999; www.baiyunairport.com)

In Guangzhou; receiving an increasing number of international flights.

Capital Airport

AIRPORT

(PEK, Shoudu Jichang; 📍96158; <http://en.bcia.com.cn>)

Beijing's international airport; three terminals.

Hong Kong International Airport

AIRPORT

(HKG; [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍2181 8888; www.hkairport.com)

The futuristic passenger terminal consists of eight levels, with check-in on level seven, departures on level six and arrivals on level five.

Outlets (including bank branches, moneychangers and five ATMs) total 150, and there are more than 30 cafes, restaurants and bars, and more than 280 check-in counters.

Designed by British architect Sir Norman Foster, the airport was the world's largest civil engineering project when it opened in mid-1998, and is on Chek Lap Kok, a largely man-made island off the northern coast of Lantau. It is connected to the mainland by several spans. Among them is the 2.2km-long Tsing Ma Bridge, which is one of the world's largest suspension bridges and is capable of supporting both road and rail transport, including the 34km-long Airport Express high-speed train from Hong Kong Island to Chek Lap Kok via Kowloon.

Hongqiao Airport

AIRPORT

(SHA; Hongqiao Jichang; [GOOGLE MAP](#); 📍021-6268 8899, 3659)

In Shanghai's west; domestic flights, some international connections.

Pudong International Airport

AIRPORT

(PVG; Pudong Guoji Jichang; 📍021-96990)

In Shanghai's east; international flights.

Airlines Flying to/from China

The following list comprises the main airlines flying into Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Macau.

Aeroflot Russian Airlines

AIRLINE

(www.aeroflot.ru)

Air Canada

AIRLINE

(www.aircanada.ca)

Air China

AIRLINE

(www.airchina.com)

Air France

AIRLINE

(www.airfrance.com)

Air Macau

AIRLINE

(www.airmacau.com.mo)

Air New Zealand

AIRLINE

(www.airnewzealand.com)

AirAsia

AIRLINE

(www.airasia.com)

Alitalia

AIRLINE

(www.alitalia.com)

All Nippon Airways

AIRLINE

(www.ana.co.jp)

Flies to numerous other cities in China.

American Airlines

AIRLINE

(www.aa.com)

Asiana Airlines

AIRLINE

(www.flyasiana.com)

Also flies to numerous other cities in China.

British Airways

AIRLINE

(www.britishairways.com)

Cathay Pacific

AIRLINE

(www.cathaypacific.com)

China Airlines

AIRLINE

(www.china-airlines.com)

Direct flights from Taiwan to numerous other cities in China.

China Eastern Airlines

AIRLINE

(www.ce-air.com)

China Southern Airlines

AIRLINE

(www.cs-air.com)

| | |
|--|---------|
| Dragonair (www.dragonair.com) | AIRLINE |
| Emirates Airline (www.emirates.com) | AIRLINE |
| Garuda Indonesia (www.garuda-indonesia.com) | AIRLINE |
| Hong Kong Airlines (www.hkairlines.com) | AIRLINE |
| Japan Airlines (www.jal.com) Also flies to numerous other cities in China. | AIRLINE |
| KLM (www.klm.nl) | AIRLINE |
| Korean Air (www.koreanair.com) Also flies to Qingdao and Shenyang. | AIRLINE |
| Lao Airlines (☎ in Guangzhou 020-83884085, in Kunming 0871-6312 5748; www.laoairlines.com) Flights to Jinghong, Kunming and Guangzhou. | AIRLINE |
| Lufthansa Airlines (www.lufthansa.com) | AIRLINE |
| Malaysia Airlines (www.malaysiaairlines.com) | AIRLINE |
| MIAT Mongolian Airlines (www.miat.com) | AIRLINE |
| Nepal Airlines (www.nepalairlines.com.np) | AIRLINE |

| | |
|--|---------|
| Pakistan International Airlines (www.piac.com.pk) | AIRLINE |
| Philippine Airlines (www.philippineairlines.com) | AIRLINE |
| Qantas Airways (www.qantas.com.au) | AIRLINE |
| Scandinavian Airlines (www.sas.dk) | AIRLINE |
| Silk Air (www.silkair.com) | AIRLINE |
| Singapore Airlines (www.singaporeair.com) | AIRLINE |
| Swiss International Airlines (www.swiss.com) | AIRLINE |
| Thai Airways International (www.thaiairways.com) | AIRLINE |
| Tiger Airways (www.tigerairways.com) | AIRLINE |
| United Airlines (www.ual.com) | AIRLINE |
| Uzbekistan Airways | AIRLINE |
| Vietnam Airlines (www.vietnamair.com.vn) | AIRLINE |
| Virgin Atlantic (www.virgin-atlantic.com) | AIRLINE |

Tickets

The cheapest tickets to Hong Kong and China exist on price comparison websites or in discount agencies in Chinatowns around the world. Budget and student-travel agents offer cheap tickets, but the real bargains are with agents that deal with the Chinese, who regularly return home. Airfares to China peak between June and September.

The cheapest flights to China are with airlines requiring a stopover at the home airport, such as Air France to Beijing via Paris, or Malaysia Airlines to Beijing via Kuala Lumpur.

The best direct ticket deals are available from China's international carriers, such as China Eastern Airlines, Air China or China Southern Airlines.

Firms such as STA Travel (www.statravel.co.uk) have offices worldwide and offer competitive prices to most destinations. Beyond internet travel websites – Expedia (www.expedia.com) and Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) for example – flight comparison websites weigh up the best prices from airline websites, travel agents, search engines and other online sources and are highly versatile, but tend to quote similar fares. They include the following:

Fly.com (www.fly.com)

Kayak (www.kayak.com)

Momondo (www.momondo.com)

Travelsupermarket (www.travelsupermarket.com)

Skyscanner (www.skyscanner.net)

Land

China shares borders with Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Vietnam; the borders with Afghanistan, Bhutan and India are closed. There are also official border crossings between China and its special administrative regions, Hong Kong and Macau.

Lonely Planet *China* guides may be confiscated by officials, primarily at the Vietnam–China border.

INTERNATIONAL TRAIN ROUTES

In addition to the Trans-Siberian and Trans-Mongolian rail services, the following routes can be travelled by train:

Hung Hom station in Kowloon (Jiulong; Hong Kong; www.mtr.com.hk) to Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing

Pyongyang (North Korea) to Beijing

Almaty (Kazakhstan) to Urumqi

Astana (Kazakhstan) to Urumqi

Beijing to Ulaanbaatar
Beijing to Hanoi

Kazakhstan

Border crossings from Urumqi to Kazakhstan are via border posts at Korgas, Alashankou, Tacheng and Jimunai. Ensure you have a valid Kazakhstan visa (obtainable, at the time of writing, in Urumqi, or from Beijing) or China visa.

Apart from Alashankou, which links China and Kazakhstan via train, all other border crossings are by bus; you can generally get a bike over, however. Two trains weekly (32 hours) run between Urumqi and Almaty, and one train per week runs to Astana.

Remember that borders open and close frequently due to changes in government policy; additionally, many are only open when the weather permits. It's always best to check with the **Public Security Bureau** (PSB; Gong'anju) in Urumqi for the official line.

Kyrgyzstan

There are two routes between China and Kyrgyzstan: one between Kashgar and Osh, via the Irkeshtam Pass; and one between Kashgar and Bishkek, via the dramatic 3752m Torugart Pass.

Laos

From the Mengla district in China's southern Yunnan province, you can enter Laos via Boten in Luang Nam Tha province (from Mohan on the China side), while a daily bus runs between Vientiane and Kunming and also from Jinghong to Luang Nam Tha in Laos.

On-the-spot visas for Laos are available at the border, the price of which depends on your nationality (although you cannot get a China visa here).

Mongolia

From Beijing, the Trans-Mongolian Railway trains and the K23 train run to Ulaanbaatar. There are also trains and regular buses between Hohhot and the border town of Erenhot (Erlan). Mongolian visas on the Chinese side can be acquired in Beijing, Hohhot or Erenhot.

Myanmar (Burma)

The famous Burma Road runs from Kunming in Yunnan province to the Burmese city of Lashio. The road is open to travellers carrying permits for the region north of Lashio, although you can legally cross the border in only one direction – from the Chinese side (Jiegao) into Myanmar; however, at the time of writing the border was not open to foreign travellers and flying in from Kunming was the only option. Myanmar visas can only be arranged in Kunming or Beijing.

[Nepal](#)

The 865km road connecting Lhasa with Kathmandu is known as the Friendship Highway, currently only traversable by rented vehicle (for foreign travellers). It's a spectacular trip across the Tibetan plateau, the highest point being Gyatso-la Pass (5248m).

Visas for Nepal can be obtained in Lhasa, or at the border at Kodari.

When travelling from Nepal to Tibet, foreigners still have to arrange transport through tour agencies in Kathmandu. Access to Tibet can, however, be restricted for months at a time without warning.

[North Korea](#)

Visas for North Korea are not especially hard to arrange although it is not possible to travel independently so you will need to be on a pre-planned tour. Those interested in travelling to North Korea on tours from Beijing should contact Nicholas Bonner or Simon Cockerell at **Koryo Tours** (☎010-6416 7544; www.koryogroup.com; 27 Beisanlitun Nan, Beijing).

Four international express trains (K27 and K28) run between Beijing train station and Pyongyang.

[Pakistan](#)

The exciting trip on the Karakoram Hwy, said to be the world's highest public international highway, is an excellent way to get to or from Chinese Central Asia. There are buses from Kashgar for the two-day trip to the Pakistani town of Sost via Tashkurgan when the pass is open. Pakistani visas are no longer available to tourists on arrival (and visas are difficult to get in Beijing), so the safest option is to arrive in China with a visa obtained in your home country. Check the current situation as this could change.

[Russia](#)

The train from Ha'erbin East to Vladivostok is no longer running but you could take the train to Suifenhe and take an onward connection there.

The Trans-Mongolian (via Erenhot) and Trans-Manchurian (via Ha'erbin) branches of the Trans-Siberian Railway run from Beijing to Moscow.

There are also border crossings 9km from Manzhouli and at Heihe.

[Tajikistan](#)

At the time of writing, the Qolma (Kulma) Pass, linking Kashgar with Murghab, was not yet open to foreign travellers.

[Vietnam](#)

Visas are unobtainable at border crossings; Vietnam visas can be acquired in Beijing, Kunming, Hong Kong and Nanning. Chinese visas can be obtained in Hanoi.

[FRIENDSHIP PASS](#)

China's busiest border with Vietnam is at the obscure Vietnamese town of Dong Dang, 164km northeast of Hanoi. The closest Chinese town to the border is Pingxiang in Guangxi province, about 10km north of the actual border gate.

Seven Hanoi-bound buses run from Nanning via the Friendship Pass; twice-weekly trains (T5 and T6) connect Beijing and Hanoi (via Nanning) while a daily train (T8701 and T8702) links Hanoi with Nanning.

HEKOU

The Hekou–Lao Cai border crossing is 468km from Kunming and 294km from Hanoi. At the time of writing, the only way to reach Vietnam via Hekou was by bus from Kunming.

MONG CAI

A third, but little-known border crossing is at Mong Cai in the northeast corner of Vietnam, just opposite the Chinese city of Dongxing and around 200km south of Nanning.

River

At the time of writing, fast ferries from Jinghong in Yunnan to Chiang Saen in Thailand had been suspended.

Sea

[Japan](#)

There are weekly ferries between Osaka and Kobe and Shanghai. There are also twice-weekly boats from Qingdao to Shimonoseki. The weekly ferry from the Tianjin International Cruise Home Port to Kobe (Shenhu) had been suspended indefinitely at the time of writing.

Check in two hours before departure for international sailings.

[South Korea](#)

International ferries connect the South Korean port of Incheon with Weihai, Qingdao, Yantai, Dalian and Dandong. The ferry to Incheon from the Tianjin International Cruise Home Port was suspended at the time of research, but should be up and running again.

Tickets can be bought cheaply at the pier, or from **China International Travel Service** (CITS; Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe) for a very steep premium.

[Taiwan](#)

Daily ferries ply the route between Xiamen and Kinmen Island in Taiwan, from where you can

fly to other major cities in Taiwan. You can also catch a ferry from Fuzhou's Mawei ferry terminal to Taiwan's archipelago of Matsu, from where there are boats to Keelung and flights to other cities in Taiwan.

Sea Routes



GETTING AROUND

Air

Despite being a land of vast distances, it's quite straightforward to navigate your way terrestrially around China by rail and bus if you have time.

China's air network is extensive and growing. The civil aviation fleet is expected to triple in size over the next two decades, up to 70 new airports were planned for construction by 2015 alone and 100 more were to be expanded or upgraded. Air safety and quality have improved considerably, but the speed of change generates its own problems: a serious shortage of qualified personnel to fly planes means China needed a reported 18,000 new pilots by 2015. When deciding between flying and using high-speed rail, note that flight delays in China are the worst in the world, according to travel industry monitor FlightStats (while trains almost always leave on time).

Shuttle buses usually run from **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; Zhongguo Minhang) offices in towns and cities throughout China to the airport, often running via other stops. For domestic flights, arrive at the airport one hour before departure.

Remember to keep your baggage receipt label on your ticket as you will need to show it when you collect your luggage. Planes vary in style and comfort. You may get a hot meal, or just a small piece of cake and an airline souvenir. On-board announcements are delivered in Chinese and English.

Airlines in China

The CAAC is the civil aviation authority for numerous airlines. Some of the listed airlines also have subsidiary airlines. Not all Chinese airline websites have English-language capability.

Air China

AIRLINE

(☞ in China 95583; www.airchina.com.cn)

Chengdu Airlines

AIRLINE

(☞ in Chengdu 028-6666 8888; www.chengduair.cc)

China Eastern Airlines

AIRLINE

(☞ in Shanghai 95530; www.ceair.com)

China Southern Airlines

AIRLINE

(☞ in Guangzhou 4006 695 539; www.csair.com/en)

Serves a web of air routes, including Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an and Tianjin.

Hainan Airlines

AIRLINE

(☞ in Hainan 950718; www.hnair.com)

Shandong Airlines

AIRLINE

(☎400-60-96777; www.shandongair.com.cn)

Shanghai Airlines

AIRLINE

(☎in Shanghai 95530; www.ceair.com)

Owned by China Eastern Airlines.

Shenzhen Airlines

AIRLINE

(☎in Shenzhen 95080; www.shenzhenair.com)

Sichuan Airlines

AIRLINE

(☎in Chengdu 4008 300 999; www.scal.com.cn)

Spring Airlines

AIRLINE

(☎in Shanghai 95524; www.china-sss.com)

Has connections between Shanghai and tourist destinations such as Qingdao, Guilin, Xiamen and Sanya.

Tianjin Airlines

AIRLINE

(☎in Tianjin 950710; www.tianjin-air.com)

Tibet Airlines

AIRLINE

(☎4008 0891 88; www.tibetairlines.com.cn; 🕒7am-9pm)

Domestic connections all over China from Lhasa.

Tickets

Except during major festivals and holidays, tickets are easy to purchase, with an oversupply of airline seats. Purchase tickets from branches of the CAAC nationwide, airline offices, travel agents or the travel desk of your hotel; travel agents will usually offer a better discount than airline offices. Discounts are common, except when flying into large cities such as Shanghai and Beijing on the weekend, when the full fare can be the norm. Fares are calculated according to one-way travel, with return tickets simply costing twice the single fare. If flying from Hong Kong or Macau to mainland China, note that these are classified as international flights; it is much cheaper to travel overland into Shenzhen, Zhuhai or Guangzhou and fly from there.

You can use credit cards at most CAAC offices and travel agents. Departure tax is included in the ticket price.

[Ctrip](#) [Elong](#) [Travel Zen](#)

Bicycle

Bikes (*zixingche*) are an excellent method for getting around China's cities and tourist sights. They can also be invaluable for exploring the countryside and surrounding towns such as Yangshuo.

Hire

Hangzhou has the world's largest bicycle sharing network with docking stations dotted around the town, however its success (and foreigner-friendly ease of use) has only been fitfully replicated elsewhere in China. Generally, the best places to try are youth hostels which rent out bicycles, as do many hotels, although the latter are more expensive.

Bikes can be hired by the day or by the hour and it is also possible to hire for more than one day. Rental rates vary depending on where you find yourself, but rates start at around ¥10 to ¥15 per day in cities such as Beijing.

Touring

Cycling through China allows you to go when you want, to see what you want and at your own pace. It can also be an extremely cheap, as well as a highly authentic, way to see the land.

You will have virtually unlimited freedom of movement but, considering the size of China, you will need to combine your cycling days with trips by train, bus, boat, taxi or even planes, especially if you want to avoid particularly steep regions, or areas where the roads are poor or the climate is cold.

A basic packing list for cyclists includes a good bicycle-repair kit, sunscreen and other sun protection, waterproofs, fluorescent strips and camping equipment. Ensure you have adequate clothing, as many routes will be taking you to considerable altitude. Road maps in Chinese are essential for asking locals for directions.

BikeChina (www.bikechina.com) arranges tours and is a good source of information for cyclists coming to China.

Boat

Boat services within China are limited, especially with the growth of high-speed rail and expressways. They're most common in coastal areas, where you are likely to use a boat to reach offshore islands such as Putuoshan or Hainan, or the islands off Hong Kong. The Yantai–Dalian ferry will probably survive because it saves hundreds of kilometres of overland travel, although a super-long undersea tunnel is on the drawing board ([Click here](#)). There's also a ferry every other evening to Dalian from the **Tianjin International Cruise Home Port** (Tianjin Guoji Youlun Mugang ☎022 2560 4137).

The best-known river trip is the three-day boat ride along the Yangzi (Chang Jiang) from

Chongqing to Yichang. The Li River (Li Jiang) boat trip from Guilin to Yangshuo is a popular tourist ride.

Hong Kong employs an out-and-out navy of vessels that connects with the territory's myriad islands, and a number of boats run between the territory and other parts of China, including Macau, Zhuhai, Shekou (for Shenzhen) and Zhongshan.

Boat tickets can be purchased from passenger ferry terminals or through travel agents.

Bus

Long-distance bus (*changtu gonggong qiche*) services are extensive and reach places you cannot reach by train; with the increasing number of intercity highways, journeys are getting quicker.

Buses & Stations

Routes between large cities sport larger, cleaner and more comfortable fleets of private buses, some equipped with toilets and hostesses handing out snacks and mineral water; shorter and more far-flung routes still rely on rattling minibuses into which as many fares as possible are crammed. Buses often wait until they fill up before leaving, or (exasperatingly) trawl the streets looking for fares.

Sleeper buses (*wopu keche*) ply popular long-haul routes, costing around double the price of a normal bus service. Bunks can be short, however, and there have been several fatal fires in recent years.

Bus journey times should be used as a rough guide only. You can estimate times for bus journeys on nonhighway routes by calculating the distance against a speed of 25km per hour.

All cities and most towns have one or more long-distance bus station (*changtu qichezhan*), generally located in relation to the direction the bus heads in. Most bus stations have a left-luggage counter. In many cities, the train station forecourt doubles as a bus station.

Tickets

Tickets are getting more expensive as fuel prices increase but are cheaper and easier to get than train tickets; turn up at the bus station and buy your ticket there and then. The earlier you buy, the closer to the front of the bus you will sit, although you may not be able to buy tickets prior to your day of travel. At the time of writing, ID was required for the purchase of bus tickets in restive Xinjiang.

Tickets can be hard to procure during national holiday periods.

Dangers & Annoyances

Breakdowns can be a hassle, and some rural roads and provincial routes (especially in the southwest, Tibet and the northwest) remain in bad condition. Precipitous drops, pot holes, dangerous road surfaces and reckless drivers mean accidents remain common. Long-

distance journeys can also be cramped and noisy, with Hong Kong films and cacophonous karaoke looped on overhead TVs. Drivers continuously lean on the horn (taking an MP3 player is crucial for one's sanity). Note the following when travelling by bus:

Seat belts are a rarity in many provinces.

Take plenty of warm clothes on buses to high-altitude destinations in winter. A breakdown in frozen conditions can prove lethal for those unprepared.

Take a lot of extra water on routes across areas such as the Taklamakan Desert.

Car & Motorcycle

Hiring a car in China has always been complicated or impossible for foreign visitors and in mainland China is currently limited to Beijing and Shanghai, cities that both have frequently gridlocked roads. Throw in the dangers, complexity of Chinese roads for first-time users and the costs of driving in China and it makes more sense to use the subway/metro system and taxis, both of which are cheap and efficient in Beijing and Shanghai. Hiring a car with a driver from your hotel is possible, but it's generally far cheaper and more convenient to hire a taxi for the day instead.

Driving Licence

To drive in Hong Kong and Macau, you will need an International Driving Permit. Foreigners can drive motorcycles if they are residents in China and have an official Chinese motorcycle licence. International driving permits are generally not accepted in China.

Hire

Beijing Capital Airport has a [Vehicle Administration Office](#) where you can have a temporary three-month driving licence issued (an international driver's licence is insufficient). This will involve checking your driving licence and a simple medical exam (including an eyesight test). You will need this licence before you can hire a car from **Hertz** (☎400-888-1336; www.hertzchina.com), which has branches at Capital Airport. Check out the **Hertz office** (☎021-6085 1900; Terminal 2; 🕒8am-8pm Mon-Fri & 9am-6pm Sat-Sun) at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport for how to obtain a temporary licence in Shanghai. There are also branches in both central Beijing and Shanghai. Hire cars from Hertz start from ¥230 per day (up to 150km per day; ¥20,000 deposit). **Avis** (☎400 882 1119) also has a growing network around China, with car rental starting from ¥200 per day (¥5000 deposit).

Road Rules

Cars in China drive on the right-hand side of the road. Even skilled drivers will be unprepared for China's roads: in the cities, cars lunge from all angles and chaos abounds.

Train

For information on travelling by train, see the [China by Train](#) chapter.

Local Transport

Long-distance transport in China is good, but local transport is less efficient, except for cities with metro systems. The choice of local transport is diverse but vehicles can be slow and overburdened, and the network confusing for visitors. Hiring a car is often impractical, while hiring a bike can be inadequate. Unless the town is small, walking is often too tiring. On the plus side, local transport is cheap, taxis are usually ubiquitous and affordable, and metro systems continue to rapidly expand in large tourist towns.

Bus

With extensive networks, buses are an excellent way to get around town, but foreign travellers rarely use them. Ascending a bus, point to your destination on a map and the conductor (seated near the door) will sell you the right ticket. The conductor will usually tell you where to disembark, provided they remember. In conductor-less buses, you put money in a slot near the driver as you embark.

Fares are very cheap (usually ¥1 to ¥2) but buses may be packed.

In cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, a locally purchased transport card can be used on the buses.

Navigation is tricky for non-Chinese speakers as bus routes at bus stops are generally listed in Chinese, without Pinyin.

In Beijing and Shanghai and other large tourist towns, stops will be announced in English.

Always have change ready if there is no conductor on the bus.

Buses with snowflake motifs are air-conditioned.

Traffic can make things slow.

Subway, Metro & Light Rail

Going underground or using light rail is fast, efficient and cheap; most networks are either very new or relatively recent and can be found in a rapidly growing number of cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou, Xi'an, Hangzhou, Tianjin, Chengdu, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Kunming, Chongqing and Hong Kong.

Taxi

Taxis (*chuzu qiche*) are cheap and easy to find. Taxi rates per kilometre are clearly marked on a sticker on the rear side window of the taxi; flag fall varies from city to city, and depends upon the size and quality of the vehicle.

Most taxis have meters but they may only be switched on in larger towns and cities. If the meter is not used (on an excursion out of town, for example, or when hiring a taxi for the day or half-day), negotiate a price before you set off and write the fare down. If you want the meter used, ask for *dabiao*. Also ask for a receipt (*fapiao*); if you leave something in the taxi, the taxi number is printed on the receipt so it can be located.

Note that:

Congregation points include train and long-distance bus stations, but usually you can just flag taxis down.

Taxi drivers rarely speak any English so have your destination written down in characters.

If you have communication problems, consider using your mobile to phone your hotel for staff to interpret.

You can hire taxis on a daily or half-day basis, often at reasonable rates (always bargain).

To use the same driver again, ask for his or her card (*mingpian*).

In many provinces, taxis often cover long-distance bus routes. They generally charge around 30% to 50% more but are much faster. You need to wait for four passengers.

Other Local Transport

A variety of ramshackle transport options exist across China; always agree on a price in advance (preferably have it written down).

Motor pedicabs are enclosed three-wheeled vehicles (often the same price as taxis).

Pedicabs are pedal-powered versions of motor pedicabs.

Motorbike riders also offer lifts in some towns for what should be half the price of a regular taxi. You must wear a helmet – the driver will provide one.

China by Train

China by Train

Trains are the best way to travel long distance around China in reasonable speed and comfort. They are also adventurous, exciting, fun, practical and efficient, and ticket prices are reasonable to boot. Colossal investment over recent years has put high-speed rail at the heart of China's rapid modernisation drive. You really don't have to be a trainspotter to find China's railways a riveting subculture and you get to meet the Chinese people at their most relaxed and sociable.

THE CHINESE TRAIN NETWORK

One of the world's most extensive rail networks, passenger railways penetrate every province in China and high-speed connections are suddenly everywhere. In line with China's frantic economic development and the pressures of transporting 1.4 billion people across the world's third-largest nation, expansion of China's rail network over the past decade has been mind-boggling.

The network currently totals over 103,000km in length. You can climb aboard a train in Beijing or Shanghai and alight in Tibet's capital (although ticket scarcity for trains into Lhasa means it's easier to fly in and take the train out). Lines are poking further into Tibet, with a line to Shigatse opening in 2014. In China, thousands of miles of track are laid every year and new express trains have been zipping across the land since 2007, shrinking once daunting distances. State-of-the-art train stations are ceaselessly appearing, many to serve high-speed links.

With the advent of high-speed D, G and C class express trains, getting between major cities is increasingly a breeze (albeit far more expensive than regular fast trains). High-speed rail has put the squeeze on numerous domestic air routes and the punctuality of trains sees far fewer delays than airports. A high-speed link connected Beijing and Xi'an in 2014. The Lanzhou-Urumqi high-speed link should be up and running by the time you read this; there is even talk of extending this through Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Turkey to Bulgaria. Down south, China is also planning a high-speed link from Kunming in Yunnan to Singapore, via Laos, Thailand and Malaysia.

TRAIN TYPES

Chinese train numbers are usually (but not always) prefixed by a letter, designating the category of train.

The fastest, most luxurious and expensive intercity trains are the streamlined, high-speed C, D and G trains, which rapidly shuttle between major cities.

D class trains were the first high-speed trains to appear and breathlessly glide around China at high speed, offering substantial comfort and regular services. D-class temperature-regulated 1st-class carriages have mobile and laptop chargers, seats are two abreast with ample legroom and TV sets. Second-class carriages have five seats in two rows. G class

trains are faster than D class trains, but have limited luggage space.

Less fast express classes include the overnight Z class trains, while further down the pecking order are older and more basic T and K class trains.

REGULAR TRAINS

| TYPE | PINYIN | CHINESE | TOP SPEED (KM/H) |
|-------------------|--------|---------|------------------|
| Z class (express) | zhídá | 直达 | 160 |
| T class | tèkuài | 特快 | 140 |
| K class | kuàisù | 快速 | 120 |

TICKETS

It is possible to upgrade (*bupiao*) your ticket once aboard your train. If you have a standing ticket, for example, find the conductor and upgrade to a hard seat, soft seat or hard sleeper (if there are any available).

HIGH-SPEED TRAINS

| TYPE | PINYIN | CHINESE | TOP SPEED (KM/H) |
|---------|---------|---------|------------------|
| C class | Chéngjì | 城际 | 350 |
| D class | Dòngchē | 动车 | 250 |
| G class | Gāotiě | 高铁 | 350 |

Soft Sleeper

Soft sleepers are a very comfortable way to travel and work perfectly as mobile hotels; tickets cost much more than hard-sleeper tickets and often sell out, however, so book early. Soft sleepers vary between trains and the best are on the more recent D and Z class trains. All Z class trains are soft-sleeper trains, with very comfortable, up-to-date berths. A few T class trains also offer two-berth compartments, with their own toilet. Tickets on upper berths are slightly cheaper than lower berths. Expect to share with total strangers. If you are asleep, an attendant will wake you to prepare you to disembark so you will have plenty of time to ready your things. Available on some lines, two-bed deluxe soft sleepers usually have a toilet and sink. VIP sleepers, essentially three-bed compartments which one person can book in its entirety, are available on the Kunming–Lijiang route.

Soft sleeper carriages contain:

four air-conditioned bunks (upper and lower) in a closed compartment
bedding on each berth and a lockable door to the carriage corridor
meals, flat-screen TVs and power sockets on some routes
a small table and stowing space for your bags
a hot-water flask, filled by an attendant (one per compartment).

Hard Sleeper

Hard sleepers are available on slower and less modern T, K and N class trains, as well as trains without a letter prefix. As with soft sleeper, they serve very nicely as an overnight hotel.

There is a small price difference between the numbered berths, with the lowest bunk (*xiapu*) the most expensive and the highest bunk (*shangpu*) the cheapest. The middle bunk (*zhongpu*) is good, as all and sundry invade the lower berth to use it as a seat during the day, while the top one has little headroom and puts you near the speakers. As with soft sleepers, an attendant will wake you well in advance of your station.

Hard-sleeper tickets are the most difficult of all to buy; you almost always need to buy these a few days in advance. Expect:

doorless compartments with half a dozen bunks in three tiers
sheets, pillows and blankets on each berth
a no-smoking policy
lights and speakers out at around 10pm
a hot-water flask, filled by an attendant (one per compartment)
trolleys passing by selling food and drink
a rack above the windows for stowing your baggage.

Seats

Soft-seat class is more comfortable but not nearly as common as hard-seat class. First-class (*yideng*) and 2nd-class (*erdeng*) soft seats are available in D, C and G class high-speed trains. G class trains also offer business class and/or VIP seats, which include a hot meal and added comfort.

First-class comes with TVs, mobile phone and laptop charging points, and seats arranged two abreast.

Second-class soft seats are also very comfortable; staff are very courteous throughout. Overcrowding is not permitted and power points are available. On older trains, soft-seat carriages are often double-decker, and are not as plush as the faster and more modern high-speed express trains.

Hard-seat class is not available on the faster and plusher C, D and G class trains, and is

only found on T and K class trains and trains without a number prefix; a handful of Z class trains have hard seat. Hard-seat class generally has padded seats, but it's hard on your sanity; often unclean and noisy, and painful on the long haul.

Since hard seat is the only class most locals can afford, it's packed to the gills.

You should get a ticket with an assigned seat number; if seats have sold out, ask for a standing ticket, which gets you on the train, where you may find a seat or can upgrade; otherwise you will have to stand in the carriage or between carriages (with the smokers).

Hard-seat sections on China's newer trains are air-conditioned and less crowded.

Buying Tickets

The Achilles heel of China's overburdened rail system, buying tickets can be a pain.

Most tickets are one way only, with prices calculated per kilometre and adjustments made depending on class of train, availability of air-con, type of sleeper and bunk positioning.

Some tips on buying train tickets:

Never aim to get a sleeper ticket on the day of travel – plan and purchase ahead.

Most tickets can be booked 18 days in advance of your departure date when booking in person at ticket offices and 20 days when booking online.

Buying tickets for hard-seat carriages at short notice is usually no hassle, but it may be a standing ticket rather than a numbered seat.

Tickets are only purchasable with cash or bank cards that are part of the Chinese UnionPay network.

You will need your passport when buying a ticket (the number is printed on your ticket) at all train ticket offices. Your name will also appear on tickets bought online.

All automated ticket machines (eg at Shanghai Train Station) require Chinese ID (ie your passport will not work); you will need to queue at the ticket window.

As with air travel, buying tickets around the Chinese New Year and the 1 May and 1 October holiday periods can be very hard.

Tickets on many routes (such as to Lhasa) can be very hard to get in July and August; consider flying to distant destinations.

Expect to queue for up to half an hour or more for a train ticket at the station; ticket offices outside of the station are often less busy.

Avoid black market tickets: your passport number must be on the ticket.

Refunds for lost train tickets are arduous and involve purchasing a new ticket and getting a refund at the other end once it has been proved no one occupied your seat.

If you miss your D or G class train, you will be allowed to take the next available train on the same day only at no charge. For all other trains, your ticket is forfeited (unless your connecting train was late).

Your ticket will display:

- the train number
- the name of your departure and destination stations in Chinese and Pinyin
- the time and date of travel
- your carriage and seat (or berth) number
- the ticket price
- your passport number (second from bottom).

TRAIN TICKETS

| TICKET TYPE | PINYIN | CHINESE |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------|
| soft sleeper | ruǎnwò | 软卧 |
| hard sleeper | yìngwò | 硬卧 |
| soft seat | ruǎnzǔo | 软座 |
| hard seat | yìngzǔo | 硬座 |
| standing ticket | wúzuò or zhànpiào | 无座\站票 |

TRAVELLING THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

Rolling out of Europe and into Asia, through eight time zones and over 9289km of taiga, steppe and desert, the Trans-Siberian Railway and its connecting routes constitute one of the most famous and most romantic of the world's great train journeys.

There are, in fact, three railways. The 'true' **Trans-Siberian** line runs from Moscow to Vladivostok. But the routes traditionally referred to as the Trans-Siberian Railway are the two branches that veer off the main line in eastern Siberia for Beijing.

Since the first option excludes China, most readers of this guide will be choosing between the **Trans-Mongolian** and the **Trans-Manchurian** railway lines. The Trans-Mongolian route (Beijing to Moscow, 7865km) is faster, but requires an additional visa and another border crossing – on the plus side, you also get to see some of the Mongolian countryside. The Trans-Manchurian route is longer (Beijing to Moscow, 9025km).

TRANS-MONGOLIAN RAILWAY

Trains offer deluxe two-berth compartments (with shared shower), 1st-class four-berth compartments and 2nd-class four-berth compartments. Tickets for 2nd class/1st class/deluxe cost from around ¥3496/5114/5064 to Moscow, ¥1222/1723/1883 to Ulaanbaatar and ¥2559/3734/4052 to Novosibirsk. Ticket prices are cheaper if you travel in a group. The K23 service departs on Sunday

(2nd/1st class ¥1259/1849, 11.22am, 30 hours) and terminates at Ulaanbaatar on Monday.

From Beijing: train K3 leaves Beijing Train Station on its five-day journey to Moscow at 11.22am every Tuesday, passing through Datong, Ulaanbaatar and Novosibirsk, arriving in Moscow the following Monday at 1.58pm.

From Moscow: train K4 leaves at 9.35pm on Tuesday, arriving in Beijing Train Station the following Monday at 2.04pm. Departure and arrival times may fluctuate slightly.

TRANS-MANCHURIAN RAILWAY

Trains have 1st-class two-berth compartments and 2nd-class four-berth compartments; prices are similar to those on the Trans-Mongolian Railway.

From Beijing: train K19 departs Beijing Train Station at 11pm on Saturday arriving in Moscow (via Manzhouli) the following Friday at 5.58pm.

From Moscow: train K20 leaves Moscow at 11.58pm on Saturday, arriving at Beijing Train Station the following Friday at 5.32am. Departure and arrival times may fluctuate slightly.

VISAS

Travellers will need Russian and Mongolian visas for the Trans-Mongolian Railway, as well as a Chinese visa. These can often be arranged along with your ticket by travel agents such as China International Travel Service (CITS).

BUYING TICKETS

Book well in advance (especially in summer); in Beijing tickets can be conveniently purchased and booked in advance in central Beijing from **CITS** (China International Travel Service, ☎6512 0507; Zhongguo Guoji Luxingshe, Beijing International Hotel, 9 Jianguomennei Dajie, Dongcheng; 🕒9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun), for a ¥50 mark-up. Tickets can also be booked with a mark-up through [China DIY Travel](#).

Ticket Offices & Buying Online

Ticket offices (*shoupiaoting*) at train stations are usually to one side of the main train station entrance. Automated ticket machines operate on some routes but never accept foreign passports as ID. At large stations there should be a window manned by someone with basic English skills.

Alternatively, independent train ticket offices usually exist elsewhere in town where tickets can be purchased for a ¥5 commission without the same kind of queues; we've listed these where possible. Larger post offices may also sell train tickets. Your hotel will also be able to

rustle up a ticket for you for a commission, and so can a travel agent.

You can buy tickets online at www.12306.cn but the website is Chinese-language only and you will need a Chinese bankcard. It's cheaper to buy your ticket at the station, but tickets can be bought online at the following (China DIY Travel is the cheapest):

China DIY Travel (www.china-diy-travel.com; Commission \$10 per ticket)

[CTrip](#)

China Trip Advisor (www.chinatripadvisor.com)

For trains from Hong Kong to Shanghai, Guangzhou or Beijing, tickets can be ordered online at no mark-up from **KCRC** (www.mtr.com.hk), however for Beijing or Shanghai a faster alternative is the high-speed trains from Shenzhen to Shanghai (D train) and Beijing (G train), which take around 10 hours compared to 20 to 24 hours for departures from Hong Kong.

You can also find English-language train timetables on these websites.

To get a refund (*tui piao*) on an unused ticket, windows exist at large train stations where you can get from 80 to 95% of your ticket value back, depending on how many days prior to the departure date you cancel.

CHINA TRAIN ROUTES

| ROUTE | DURATION | FARE (SEAT/SLEEPER) |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Běijīng West–Xī'ān North | 5½-6hr | 2nd/1st ¥515/824 |
| Běijīng West–Guilín | 10½hr | 2nd/1st class ¥806/1249 |
| Běijīng–Dàtóng | 6½hr | hard seat/sleeper ¥54/104 |
| Běijīng South–Hángzhōu | 5hr | 2nd/1st class ¥540/909 |
| Běijīng West–Kūnmíng | 33hr | hard seat/sleeper ¥317/555 |
| Běijīng West–Lhasa | 43hr | hard/soft sleeper ¥742/1186 |
| Běijīng South–Qīngdǎo | 4½hr | 2nd/1st class ¥314/474 |
| Běijīng South–Shànghǎi Hóngqiáo | 5½hr | 2nd/1st class ¥553/933 |
| Běijīng South–Tiānjīn | 33min | 2nd/1st class ¥54/65 |
| Shànghǎi Hóngqiáo–Hángzhōu | 1hr | 2nd/1st class ¥77/123 |
| Shànghǎi Hóngqiáo–Shēnzhèn North | 8½hr | hard seat/sleeper ¥478/593 |
| Shànghǎi–Lhasa | 48hr | hard seat/sleeper ¥402/817 |
| Shànghǎi Hóngqiáo–Nánjīng South | 1½hr | 2nd/1st class ¥134/229 |
| Shànghǎi Hóngqiáo–Wūhàn | 6hr | 2nd/1st class ¥302/428 |
| Shànghǎi Hóngqiáo–Xiàmén North | 8hr | 2nd/1st class ¥328/413 |
| Shànghǎi–Xī'ān North | 10½hr | 2nd class seat/soft sleeper ¥338/834 |
| Píngyáo–Xī'ān North | 2hr | 2nd/1st class ¥150/187 |
| Shēnzhèn–Guilín | 13½hr | hard seat/sleeper ¥128/230 |
| Kūnmíng–Lìjiāng | 7-10hr | hard/soft sleeper ¥147/226 |
| Kūnmíng–Chéngdū | 17hr | hard seat/sleeper ¥138/246 |
| Kūnmíng–Guilín | 18-22hr | hard seat/sleeper ¥152/270 |
| Ūrūmqi–Kashgar | 24hr | hard/soft sleeper ¥190/339 |
| Wūhàn–Guǎngzhōu South | 4hr | 2nd/1st class ¥463/738 |
| Xī'ān North–Luòyáng Lóngmén | 2hr | 2nd/1st class ¥174/279 |
| Běijīng West–Píngyáo | 4hr | 2nd/1st class ¥225/322 |

INTERNET RESOURCES

The Man in Seat 61 (www.seat61.com/China.htm)

Travel China Guide

China Tibet Train (www.chinatibettrain.com)

Health

[Insurance](#)

[Vaccinations](#)

[Medical Checklist](#)

[Websites](#)

[Further Reading](#)

Health

China is a reasonably healthy country to travel in, but some health issues should be noted. Pre-existing medical conditions and accidental injury (especially traffic accidents) account for most life-threatening problems, but becoming ill in some way is not unusual. Outside of the major cities, medical care is often inadequate, and food and waterborne diseases are common. Malaria is still present in some parts of the country, and altitude sickness can be a problem, particularly in Tibet.

In case of accident or illness, it's best just to get a taxi and go to hospital directly.

The following advice is a general guide only and does not replace the advice of a doctor trained in travel medicine.

BEFORE YOU GO

Pack medications in their original, clearly labelled containers.

If you take any regular medication, bring double your needs in case of loss or theft.

Take a signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications (using generic names).

If carrying syringes or needles, ensure you have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

If you have a heart condition, bring a copy of your ECG taken just prior to travelling.

Get your teeth checked before you travel.

If you wear glasses, take a spare pair and your prescription.

In China you can buy some medications over the counter without a doctor's prescription, but not all, and in general it is not advisable to buy medications locally without a doctor's advice. Fake medications and poorly stored or out-of-date drugs are also common, so try to take your own.

Insurance

Even if you are fit and healthy, don't travel without health insurance – accidents happen.

Declare any existing medical conditions you have (the insurance company *will* check if your problem is pre-existing and will not cover you if it is undeclared).

You may require extra cover for adventure activities such as rock climbing or skiing.

If you're uninsured, emergency evacuation is expensive; bills of more than US\$100,000 are not uncommon.

Ensure you keep all documentation related to any medical expenses you incur.

Vaccinations

Specialised travel-medicine clinics stock all available vaccines and can give specific recommendations for your trip. The doctors will consider your vaccination history, the length of your trip, activities you may undertake and underlying medical conditions, such as pregnancy. Visit a doctor six to eight weeks before departure, as most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given.

Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination (otherwise known as the 'yellow booklet'), listing all vaccinations received.

The only vaccine required by international regulations is yellow fever.

Proof of vaccination against yellow fever is only required if you have visited a country in the yellow-fever zone within the six days prior to entering China. If you are travelling to China directly from South America or Africa, check with a travel clinic as to whether you need a yellow-fever vaccination.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the following vaccinations for travellers to China:

Adult diphtheria and tetanus (ADT) Single booster recommended if you've not received one in the previous 10 years. Side effects include a sore arm and fever. An ADT vaccine that immunises against pertussis (whooping cough) is also available and may be recommended by your doctor.

Hepatitis A Provides almost 100% protection for up to a year; a booster after 12 months provides at least another 20 years' protection. Mild side effects such as a headache and sore arm occur in 5% to 10% of people.

Hepatitis B Now considered routine for most travellers. Given as three shots over six months; a rapid schedule is also available. There is also a combined vaccination with hepatitis A. Side effects are mild and uncommon, usually a headache and sore arm. Lifetime protection results in 95% of people.

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) Two doses of MMR is recommended unless you have had the diseases. Occasionally a rash and a flulike illness can develop a week after receiving the vaccine. Many adults under 40 require a booster.

Typhoid Recommended unless your trip is less than a week. The vaccine offers around 70% protection, lasts for two to three years and comes as a single shot. Tablets are also available; however, the injection is usually recommended as it has fewer side effects. A sore arm and fever may occur. A vaccine combining hepatitis A and typhoid in a single shot is now available.

Varicella If you haven't had chickenpox, discuss this vaccination with your doctor.

The following immunisations are recommended for travellers spending more than one month in the country or those at special risk:

Influenza A single shot lasts one year and is recommended for those over 65 years of age or with underlying medical conditions such as heart or lung disease.

Japanese B encephalitis A series of three injections with a booster after two years. Recommended if spending more than one month in rural areas in the summer months, or more than three months in the country.

Pneumonia A single injection with a booster after five years is recommended for all travellers over 65 years of age or with underlying medical conditions that compromise immunity, such as heart or lung disease, cancer or HIV.

Rabies Three injections in all. A booster after one year will then provide 10 years' protection. Side effects are rare – occasionally a headache and sore arm.

Tuberculosis A complex issue. High-risk adult long-term travellers are usually recommended to have a TB skin test before and after travel, rather than vaccination. Only one vaccine is given in a lifetime. Children under five spending more than three months in China should be vaccinated.

Pregnant women and children should receive advice from a doctor who specialises in travel medicine.

Medical Checklist

Recommended items for a personal medical kit:

Antibacterial cream, eg mucipirocin

Antibiotics for diarrhoea, including norfloxacin, ciprofloxacin or azithromycin for bacterial diarrhoea; or tinidazole for giardia or amoebic dysentery

Antibiotics for skin infections, eg amoxicillin/clavulanate or cephalexin

Antifungal cream, eg clotrimazole

Antihistamine, eg cetirizine for daytime and promethazine for night-time

Anti-inflammatory, eg ibuprofen

Antiseptic, eg Betadine

Antispasmodic for stomach cramps, eg Buscopan

Decongestant, eg pseudoephedrine

Diamox if going to high altitudes

Elastoplasts, bandages, gauze, thermometer (but not mercury), sterile needles and syringes, safety pins and tweezers

Indigestion tablets, such as Quick-Eze or Mylanta

Insect repellent containing DEET

Iodine tablets to purify water (unless you're pregnant or have a thyroid problem)
Laxative, eg coloxyl
Oral-rehydration solution (eg Gastrolyte) for diarrhoea, diarrhoea 'stopper' (eg loperamide) and antinausea medication (eg prochlorperazine)
Paracetamol
Permethrin to impregnate clothing and mosquito nets
Steroid cream for rashes, eg 1% to 2% hydrocortisone
Sunscreen
Thrush (vaginal yeast infection) treatment, eg clotrimazole pessaries or Diflucan tablet
Urinary infection treatment, eg Ural

Websites

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention WEBSITE
(www.cdc.gov)

Lonely Planet WEBSITE
(www.lonelyplanet.com)

MD Travel Health WEBSITE
(www.mdtravelhealth.com)

Provides complete travel-health recommendations for every country; updated daily.

World Health Organization WEBSITE
(www.who.int/ith)

Publishes the excellent *International Travel & Health*, revised annually and available online.

HEALTH ADVISORIES

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel-health website before departure, if one is available.

Australia (www.dfat.gov.au/travel)

Canada (www.travelhealth.gc.ca)

New Zealand (www.mfat.govt.nz/travel)

UK (www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) Search for travel in the site index.

USA (www.cdc.gov/travel)

Further Reading

Healthy Travel – Asia & India (Lonely Planet) Handy pocket size, packed with useful information.

Traveller's Health by Dr Richard Dawood.

Travelling Well (www.travellingwell.com.au) by Dr Deborah Mills.

IN CHINA

Availability of Health Care

Good clinics catering to travellers can be found in major cities. They are more expensive than local facilities but you may feel more comfortable dealing with a Western-trained doctor who speaks your language. These clinics usually have a good understanding of the best local hospital facilities and close contacts with insurance companies should you need evacuation.

If you think you may have a serious disease, especially malaria, do not waste time – get to the nearest quality facility. To find the nearest reliable medical facility, contact your insurance company or your embassy. Hospitals are listed in the Information sections in cities and towns throughout the guide.

Infectious Diseases

DRINKING WATER

Follow these tips to avoid becoming ill.

Never drink tap water.

Bottled water is generally safe – check the seal is intact at purchase.

Avoid ice.

Avoid fresh juices – they may have been watered down.

Boiling water is the most efficient method of purifying it.

The best chemical purifier is iodine. It should not be used by pregnant women or those with thyroid problems.

Water filters should also filter out viruses. Ensure your filter has a chemical barrier such as iodine and a pore size of less than 4 microns.

Dengue

This mosquito-borne disease occurs in some parts of southern China. There is no vaccine so avoid mosquito bites. The dengue-carrying mosquito bites day and night, so use insect-avoidance measures at all times. Symptoms include high fever, severe headache and body ache. Some people develop a rash and diarrhoea. There is no specific treatment – just rest and paracetamol. Do not take aspirin.

Hepatitis A

A problem throughout China, this food-and-waterborne virus infects the liver, causing jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), nausea and lethargy. There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A; you just need to allow time for the liver to heal. All travellers to China should be vaccinated.

Hepatitis B

The only sexually transmitted disease that can be prevented by vaccination, hepatitis B is spread by contact with infected body fluids. The long-term consequences can include liver cancer and cirrhosis. All travellers to China should be vaccinated.

Japanese B Encephalitis

A rare disease in travellers; however, vaccination is recommended if you're in rural areas for more than a month during summer months, or if spending more than three months in the country. No treatment available; one-third of infected people die, another third suffer permanent brain damage.

Malaria

Malaria has been nearly eradicated in China; it is not generally a risk for visitors to the cities and most tourist areas. It is found mainly in rural areas in the southwestern region bordering Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam, principally Hainan, Yunnan and Guangxi. More limited risk exists in the remote rural areas of Fujian, Guangdong, Guizhou and Sichuan. Generally, medication is only advised if you are visiting rural Hainan, Yunnan or Guangxi.

To prevent malaria:

Avoid mosquitoes and take antimalarial medications (most people who catch malaria are taking inadequate or no antimalarial medication).

Use an insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin (natural repellents such as citronella can be effective, but require more frequent application than products containing DEET).

Sleep under a mosquito net impregnated with permethrin.

Choose accommodation with screens and fans (if it's not air-conditioned).

Impregnate clothing with permethrin in high-risk areas.

Wear long sleeves and trousers in light colours.

Use mosquito coils.

Spray your room with insect repellent before going out for your evening meal.

Rabies

An increasingly common problem in China, this fatal disease is spread by the bite or lick of an infected animal, most commonly a dog. Seek medical advice immediately after any animal bite and commence postexposure treatment. The pretravel vaccination means the post-bite treatment is greatly simplified.

If an animal bites you:

Gently wash the wound with soap and water, and apply an iodine-based antiseptic.

If you are not prevaccinated, you will need to receive rabies immunoglobulin as soon as possible, followed by a series of five vaccines over the next month. Those who have been prevaccinated require only two shots of vaccine after a bite.

Contact your insurance company to locate the nearest clinic stocking rabies immunoglobulin and vaccine. Immunoglobulin is often unavailable outside of major centres, but it's crucial that you get to a clinic that has immunoglobulin as soon as possible if you have had a bite that has broken the skin.

Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia)

This disease occurs in the central Yangzi River (Chang Jiang) basin, carried in water by minute worms that infect certain varieties of freshwater snail found in rivers, streams, lakes and, particularly, behind dams. The infection often causes no symptoms until the disease is well established (several months to years after exposure); any resulting damage to internal organs is irreversible. Effective treatment is available.

Avoid swimming or bathing in fresh water where bilharzia is present.

A blood test is the most reliable way to diagnose the disease, but the test will not show positive until weeks after exposure.

Typhoid

Typhoid is a serious bacterial infection spread via food and water. Symptoms include headaches, a high and slowly progressive fever, perhaps accompanied by a dry cough and stomach pain. Vaccination is not 100% effective, so still be careful what you eat and drink. All travellers spending more than a week in China should be vaccinated.

Traveller's Diarrhoea

Between 30% and 50% of visitors will suffer from traveller's diarrhoea within two weeks of starting their trip. In most cases, the ailment is caused by bacteria and responds promptly to

treatment with antibiotics.

Treatment consists of staying hydrated; rehydration solutions such as Gastrolyte are best. Antibiotics such as norfloxacin, ciprofloxacin or azithromycin will kill the bacteria quickly. Loperamide is just a 'stopper' and doesn't cure the problem; it can be helpful, however, for long bus rides. Don't take loperamide if you have a fever, or blood in your stools. Seek medical attention if you do not respond to an appropriate antibiotic.

Eat only at busy restaurants with a high turnover of customers.

Eat only freshly cooked food.

Avoid food that has been sitting around in buffets.

Peel all fruit, cook vegetables and soak salads in iodine water for at least 20 minutes.

Drink only bottled mineral water.

Amoebic Dysentery

Amoebic dysentery is actually rare in travellers and is over-diagnosed. Symptoms are similar to bacterial diarrhoea – fever, bloody diarrhoea and generally feeling unwell. Always seek reliable medical care if you have blood in your diarrhoea. Treatment involves two drugs: tinidazole or metronidazole to kill the parasite in your gut, and then a second drug to kill the cysts. If amoebic dysentery is left untreated, complications such as liver or gut abscesses can occur.

Giardiasis

Giardiasis is a parasite relatively common in travellers. Symptoms include nausea, bloating, excess gas, fatigue and intermittent diarrhoea. 'Eggy' burps are often attributed solely to giardia, but are not specific to the parasite. Giardiasis will eventually go away if left untreated, but this can take months. The treatment of choice is tinidazole, with metronidazole a second option.

Intestinal Worms

These parasites are most common in rural, tropical areas. Some may be ingested in food such as undercooked meat (eg tapeworms) and some enter through your skin (eg hookworms). Consider having a stool test when you return home.

Environmental Hazards

Air Pollution

Air pollution is a significant and worsening problem in many Chinese cities. People with underlying respiratory conditions should seek advice from their doctor prior to travel to ensure they have adequate medications in case their condition worsens. Take treatments such as

throat lozenges, and cough and cold tablets.

Altitude Sickness

There are bus journeys in Tibet, Qinghai and Xinjiang where the road goes above 5000m. Acclimatising to such extreme elevations takes several weeks at least, but most travellers come up from sea level very fast – a bad move! Acute mountain sickness (AMS) results from a rapid ascent to altitudes above 2700m. It usually commences within 24 to 48 hours of arriving at altitude, and symptoms include headache, nausea, fatigue and loss of appetite (feeling much like a hangover).

If you have altitude sickness, the cardinal rule is that you must not go higher as you are sure to get sicker and could develop one of the more severe and potentially deadly forms of the disease: high-altitude pulmonary oedema (HAPE) and high-altitude cerebral oedema (HACE). Both are medical emergencies and, as there are no rescue facilities similar to those in the Nepal Himalaya, prevention is the best policy.

AMS can be prevented by 'graded ascent'; it is recommended that once you are above 3000m you ascend a maximum of 300m daily with an extra rest day every 1000m. You can also use a medication called Diamox as a prevention or treatment for AMS, but you should discuss this first with a doctor experienced in altitude medicine. Diamox should not be taken by people with a sulphur drug allergy.

If you have altitude sickness, rest where you are for a day or two until your symptoms resolve. You can then carry on, but ensure you follow the graded-ascent guidelines. If symptoms get worse, descend immediately before you are faced with a life-threatening situation. There is no way of predicting who will suffer from AMS, but certain factors predispose you to it: rapid ascent, carrying a heavy load, and having a seemingly minor illness such as a chest infection or diarrhoea. Make sure you drink at least 3L of noncaffeinated drinks daily to stay well hydrated.

Heat Exhaustion

Dehydration or salt deficiency can cause heat exhaustion. Take time to acclimatise to high temperatures, drink sufficient liquids and avoid physically demanding activity.

Salt deficiency is characterised by fatigue, lethargy, headaches, giddiness and muscle cramps; salt tablets may help, adding extra salt to your food is better.

Hypothermia

Be particularly aware of the dangers of trekking at high altitudes or simply taking a long bus trip over mountains. In Tibet it can go from being mildly warm to blisteringly cold in minutes – blizzards can appear from nowhere.

Progress from very cold to dangerously cold can be rapid due to a combination of wind, wet clothing, fatigue and hunger, even if the air temperature is above freezing. Dress in layers; silk, wool and some artificial fibres are all good insulating materials. A hat is important, as a lot of heat is lost through the head. A strong, waterproof outer layer (and a space blanket for

emergencies) is essential. Carry basic supplies, including food containing simple sugars, and fluid to drink.

Symptoms of hypothermia are exhaustion, numb skin (particularly the toes and fingers), shivering, slurred speech, irrational or violent behaviour, lethargy, stumbling, dizzy spells, muscle cramps and violent bursts of energy.

To treat mild hypothermia, first get the person out of the wind and/or rain, remove their clothing if it's wet, and replace it with dry, warm clothing. Give them hot liquids – not alcohol – and high-calorie, easily digestible food. Early recognition and treatment of mild hypothermia is the only way to prevent severe hypothermia, a critical condition that requires medical attention.

Insect Bites & Stings

Bedbugs don't carry disease but their bites are very itchy. Treat the itch with an antihistamine.

Lice inhabit various parts of the human body, most commonly the head and pubic areas. Transmission is via close contact with an affected person. Lice can be difficult to treat, but electric lice combs/detectors can be effective (pick one up before travelling); otherwise you may need numerous applications of an antilice shampoo such as permethrin. Pubic lice (crab lice) are usually contracted from sexual contact.

Ticks are contracted by walking in rural areas, and are commonly found behind the ears, on the belly and in armpits. If you have had a tick bite and experience symptoms such as a rash, fever or muscle aches, see a doctor. Doxycycline prevents some tick-borne diseases.

Women's Health

Pregnant women should receive specialised advice before travelling. The ideal time to travel is in the second trimester (between 14 and 28 weeks), when the risk of pregnancy-related problems is at its lowest and pregnant women generally feel at their best. During the first trimester, miscarriage is a risk; in the third trimester, complications such as premature labour and high blood pressure are possible. Travel with a companion and carry a list of quality medical facilities for your destination, ensuring you continue your standard antenatal care at these facilities. Avoid rural areas with poor transport and medical facilities. Above all, ensure travel insurance covers all pregnancy-related possibilities, including premature labour.

Malaria is a high-risk disease in pregnancy. The World Health Organization recommends that pregnant women do not travel to areas with chloroquine-resistant malaria.

Traveller's diarrhoea can quickly lead to dehydration and result in inadequate blood flow to the placenta. Many drugs used to treat various diarrhoea bugs are not recommended in pregnancy. Azithromycin is considered safe.

Heat, humidity and antibiotics can all contribute to thrush. Treatment is with antifungal creams and pessaries such as clotrimazole. A practical alternative is a single tablet of fluconazole (Diflucan). Urinary tract infections can be precipitated by dehydration or long bus journeys without toilet stops; bring suitable antibiotics.

Supplies of sanitary products may not be readily available in rural areas. Birth-control options may be limited, so bring adequate supplies of your own form of contraception.

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) views the human body as an energy system in which the basic substances of *qi* (vital energy), *jing* (essence), *xue* (blood) and *tiye* (body fluids, blood and other organic fluids) function. The concept of yin and yang is fundamental to the system. Disharmony between yin and yang or within the basic substances may be a result of internal causes (emotions), external causes (climatic conditions) or miscellaneous causes (work, exercise, stress etc). Treatment includes acupuncture, massage, herbs, diet and qi gong, which seeks to bring these elements back into balance. Treatments can be particularly useful for treating chronic diseases and ailments such as fatigue, arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome and some chronic skin conditions.

Be aware that 'natural' does not always mean 'safe'; there can be drug interactions between herbal medicines and Western medicines. If using both systems, ensure you inform both practitioners what the other has prescribed.

Language

Discounting its many ethnic minority languages, China has eight major dialect groups: Pǔtōnghuà (Mandarin), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan and Hakka. These dialects also divide into subdialects.

It's the language spoken in Běijīng which is considered the official language of China. It's usually referred to as Mandarin, but the Chinese themselves call it Pǔtōnghuà (meaning 'common speech'). Pǔtōnghuà is variously referred to as Hànyǔ (the Han language), Guóyǔ (the national language) or Zhōngwén or Zhōngguóhuà (Chinese). With the exception of the western and southernmost provinces, most of the population speaks Mandarin (although it may be spoken there with a regional accent). In this chapter, we have included Mandarin, Cantonese, Tibetan, Uighur and Mongolian.

MANDARIN

Writing

Chinese is often referred to as a language of pictographs. Many of the basic Chinese characters are in fact highly stylised pictures of what they represent, but around 90% are compounds of a 'meaning' element and a 'sound' element.

A well-educated, contemporary Chinese person might use between 6000 and 8000 characters. To read a Chinese newspaper you need to know 2000 to 3000 characters, but 1200 to 1500 would be enough to get the gist.

Theoretically, all Chinese dialects share the same written system. In practice, Cantonese adds about 3000 specialised characters of its own and many of the dialects don't have a written form at all.

WANT MORE?

For in-depth language information and handy phrases, check out Lonely Planet's *China Phrasebook*. You'll find it at shop.lonelyplanet.com

Pinyin & Pronunciation

In 1958 the Chinese adopted Pinyin, a system of writing their language using the Roman alphabet. The original idea was to eventually do away with Chinese characters. However, tradition dies hard, and the idea was abandoned.

Pinyin is often used on shop fronts, street signs and advertising billboards. Don't expect all Chinese people to be able to use Pinyin, however. In the countryside and the smaller towns you may not see a single Pinyin sign anywhere, so unless you speak and read Chinese you'll need a phrasebook with Chinese characters.

Below we've provided Pinyin alongside the Mandarin script.

Vowels

| | |
|------|--|
| a | as in 'father' |
| ai | as in 'aisle' |
| ao | as the 'ow' in 'cow' |
| e | as in 'her' (without 'r' sound) |
| ei | as in 'weigh' |
| i | as the 'ee' in 'meet' (or like a light 'r' as in 'Grrr!' after c, ch, r, s, sh, z or zh) |
| ian | as the word 'yen' |
| ie | as the English word 'yeah' |
| o | as in 'or' (without 'r' sound) |
| ou | as the 'oa' in 'boat' |
| u | as in 'flute' |
| ui | as the word 'way' |
| uo | like a 'w' followed by 'o' |
| yu/ü | like 'ee' with lips pursed |

Consonants

| | |
|----|--|
| c | as the 'ts' in 'bits' |
| ch | as in 'chop', but with the tongue curled up and back |
| h | as in 'hay', but articulated from further back in the throat |
| q | as the 'ch' in 'cheese' |
| sh | as in 'ship', but with the tongue curled up and back |
| x | as the 'sh' in 'ship' |
| z | as the 'ds' in 'suds' |
| zh | as the 'j' in 'judge' but with the tongue curled up and back |

Double tap to enlarge

The only consonants that occur at the end of a syllable are **n**, **ng** and **r**.

In Pinyin, apostrophes are occasionally used to separate syllables in order to prevent ambiguity, eg the word **píng'ān** can be written with an apostrophe after the 'g' to prevent it being pronounced as **pín'gān**.

Tones

Mandarin is a language with a large number of words with the same pronunciation but a different meaning. What distinguishes these homophones (as these words are called) is their 'tonal' quality – the raising and the lowering of pitch on certain syllables. Mandarin has four tones – high, rising, falling-rising and falling, plus a fifth 'neutral' tone that you can all but ignore. Tones are important for distinguishing meaning of words – eg the word **ma** has four different meanings according to tone, as shown below. Tones are indicated in Pinyin by the following accent marks on vowels:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| high tone | mā (mother) |
| rising tone | má (hemp, numb) |
| falling-rising tone | mǎ (horse) |
| falling tone | mà (scold, swear) |

Basics

When asking a question it is polite to start with **qǐng wèn** – literally, 'May I ask?'.

| | | |
|---|------------------------|-------------|
| Hello. | 你好。 | Nǐhǎo. |
| Goodbye. | 再见。 | Zàijiàn. |
| How are you? | 你好吗? | Nǐhǎo ma? |
| Fine. And you? | 好。你呢? | Hǎo. Nǐ ne? |
| Excuse me. (to get attention) | 劳驾。 | Láojià. |
| (to get past) | 借光。 | Jièguāng. |
| Sorry. | 对不起。 | Duìbùqǐ. |
| Yes./No. | 是。/不是。 | Shì./Bùshì. |
| Please ... | 请…… | Qǐng ... |
| Thank you. | 谢谢你。 | Xièxie nǐ. |
| You're welcome. | 不客气。 | Bù kèqi. |
| What's your name? 你叫什么名字? | Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi? | |
| My name is ... 我叫…… | Wǒ jiào ... | |
| Do you speak English? 你会说英文吗? | Nǐ huìshuō Yīngwén ma? | |
| I don't understand. 我不明白。 | Wǒ bù míngbái. | |

KEY PATTERNS – MANDARIN

To get by in Mandarin, mix and match these simple patterns with words of your choice:

How much is (the deposit)?

(押金)多少? (Yājīn) duōshǎo?

Do you have (a room)?

有没有(房)? Yǒuméiyǒu (fáng)?

Is there (heating)?

有(暖气)吗? Yǒu (nuǎnqì) ma?

I'd like (that one).

我要(那个)。 Wǒ yào (nàge).

Please give me (the menu).

请给我(菜单)。 Qǐng gěiwǒ (càidān).

Can I (sit here)?

我能(坐这儿)吗? Wǒ néng (zuòzhèr) ma?

I need (a can opener).

我想要(一个开罐器)。 Wǒ xiǎngyào (yíge kāiguān qì).

Do we need (a guide)?

需要(向导)吗? Xūyào (xiàngdǎo) ma?

I have (a reservation).

我有(预订)。 Wǒ yǒu (yùdìng).

I'm (a doctor).

我(是医生)。 Wǒ (shì yīshēng).

Accommodation

Do you have a single/double room?

有没有(单人/套)房? Yǒuméiyǒu (dānrén/tào) fáng?

How much is it per night/person?

每天/人多少钱? Měitiān/rén duōshǎo qián?

| | | |
|-------------------|------|----------------------|
| campsite | 露营地 | lùyíngdì |
| guesthouse | 宾馆 | bīnguǎn |
| hostel | 招待所 | zhāodàisuǒ |
| hotel | 酒店 | jiǔdiàn |
| reception | 总台 | zǒng tái |
| air-con | 空调 | kōngtiáo |
| bathroom | 浴室 | yùshì |
| blanket | 被子 | bèizi |
| bed | 床 | chuáng |
| cot | 张婴儿床 | zhāng yīng'ér chuáng |
| hair dryer | 吹风机 | chuīfēngjī |
| safe | 保险箱 | bǎoxiǎnxiāng |
| sheet | 床单 | chuángdān |
| towel | 毛巾 | máojīn |
| window | 窗 | chuāng |

SIGNS – MANDARIN

| | | |
|-----|----------|-------------|
| 入口 | Rùkǒu | Entrance |
| 出口 | Chūkǒu | Exit |
| 问讯处 | Wènxùncù | Information |
| 开 | Kāi | Open |
| 关 | Guān | Closed |
| 禁止 | Jìnzhǐ | Prohibited |
| 厕所 | Cèsuǒ | Toilets |
| 男 | Nán | Men |
| 女 | Nǚ | Women |

Directions

Where's (a bank)?

(银行) 在哪儿? (Yínháng) zài nǎr?

What's the address?

地址在哪儿? Dìzhǐ zài nǎr?

Could you write the address, please?

能不能请你把地址写下来? Néngbunéng qǐng nǐ bǎ dìzhǐ xiě xiàlái?

Can you show me where it is on the map?

请帮我找它在地图上的位置。Qǐng bāngwǒ zhǎo tā zài dìtú shàng de wèizhi.

Go straight ahead.

一直走。Yīzhí zǒu.

Turn left.

左转。Zuǒ zhuǎn.

Turn right.

右转。Yòu zhuǎn.

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-----------------|
| at the traffic lights | 在红绿灯 | zài hónglǜdēng |
| behind | 背面 | bèimiàn |
| far | 远 | yuǎn |
| in front of ... | ……的前面 | ... de qiánmian |
| near | 近 | jìn |
| next to | 旁边 | pángbiān |
| on the corner | 拐角 | guǎijiǎo |
| opposite | 对面 | duimiàn |

Eating & Drinking

What would you recommend?

有什么菜可以推荐的? Yǒu shénme cài kěyǐ tuījiàn de?

What's in that dish?

这道菜用什么东西做的? Zhèdào cài yòng shénme dōngxi zuòde?

That was delicious.

真好吃。Zhēn hǎochī.

The bill, please!

买单! Mǎidān!

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Cheers! | 干杯! | Gānbēi! |
| I'd like to reserve a table for ... | 我想预订一张……的桌子。 | Wǒ xiǎng yùdìng yīzhāng ... de zhuōzi. |
| (eight) o'clock | (八) 点钟 | (bā) diǎn zhōng |
| (two) people | (两个) 人 | (liǎngge) rén |
| I don't eat ... | 我不吃…… | Wǒ bùchī ... |
| fish | 鱼 | yú |
| nuts | 果仁 | guǒrén |
| poultry | 家禽 | jiāqín |
| red meat | 牛羊肉 | niúyángròu |

Key Words

| | | |
|-------------------|---------|------------------|
| appetisers | 凉菜 | liángcài |
| bar | 酒吧 | jiǔbā |
| bottle | 瓶子 | píngzi |
| bowl | 碗 | wǎn |
| breakfast | 早饭 | zǎofàn |
| cafe | 咖啡屋 | kāfēiwū |
| children's menu | 儿童菜单 | értóng càidàn |
| (too) cold | (太) 凉 | (tài) liáng |
| dinner | 晚饭 | wǎnfàn |
| dish (food) | 盘 | pán |
| food | 食品 | shípǐn |
| fork | 叉子 | chāzi |
| glass | 杯子 | bēizi |
| halal | 清真 | qīngzhēn |
| highchair | 高凳 | gāodèng |
| hot (warm) | 热 | rè |
| knife | 刀 | dāo |
| kosher | 犹太 | yóutài |
| local specialties | 地方小吃 | dìfāng xiǎochī |
| lunch | 午饭 | wǔfàn |
| main courses | 主菜 | zhǔ cài |
| market | 菜市 | càishì |
| menu (in English) | (英文) 菜单 | (Yīngwén) càidàn |
| plate | 碟子 | diézi |
| restaurant | 餐馆 | cānguǎn |
| (too) spicy | (太) 辣 | (tài) là |
| spoon | 勺 | sháo |
| vegetarian food | 素食食品 | sùshí shípǐn |
| beef | 牛肉 | niúròu |
| chicken | 鸡肉 | jīròu |
| duck | 鸭 | yā |

Double tap to enlarge

| | | |
|---------|----|----------|
| fish | 鱼 | yú |
| lamb | 羊肉 | yáng ròu |
| pork | 猪肉 | zhū ròu |
| seafood | 海鲜 | hǎi xiān |

Fruit & Vegetables

| | | |
|---------------|-----|-------------|
| apple | 苹果 | píngguǒ |
| banana | 香蕉 | xiāngjiāo |
| bok choy | 小白菜 | xiǎo báicài |
| carrot | 胡萝卜 | húluóbo |
| celery | 芹菜 | qíncài |
| cucumber | 黄瓜 | huángguā |
| 'dragon eyes' | 龙眼 | lóngyǎn |
| fruit | 水果 | shuǐguǒ |
| grape | 葡萄 | pútáo |
| green beans | 扁豆 | biǎndòu |
| guava | 石榴 | shíliú |
| lychee | 荔枝 | lìzhī |
| mango | 芒果 | mángguǒ |
| mushroom | 蘑菇 | mógū |
| onion | 洋葱 | yáng cōng |
| orange | 橙子 | chéngzi |
| pear | 梨 | lí |
| pineapple | 凤梨 | fènglí |
| plum | 梅子 | méizi |
| potato | 土豆 | tǔdòu |
| radish | 萝卜 | luóbo |
| spring onion | 小葱 | xiǎo cōng |
| sweet potato | 地瓜 | dìguā |
| vegetable | 蔬菜 | shūcài |
| watermelon | 西瓜 | xīguā |

Other

| | | |
|--------------|-----|------------|
| bread | 面包 | miànbāo |
| butter | 黄油 | huángyóu |
| egg | 蛋 | dàn |
| herbs/spices | 香料 | xiāngliào |
| pepper | 胡椒粉 | hújiāo fěn |

Question Words – Mandarin

| | | |
|--------|------|----------------|
| How? | 怎么? | Zěnmé? |
| What? | 什么? | Shénme? |
| When? | 什么时候 | Shénme shíhòu? |
| Where? | 哪儿 | Nǎr? |
| Which? | 哪个 | Nǎge? |
| Who? | 谁? | Shuí? |
| Why? | 为什么? | Wèishénme? |

| | | |
|---------------|----|----------|
| salt | 盐 | yán |
| soy sauce | 酱油 | jiàngyóu |
| sugar | 砂糖 | shātáng |
| tofu | 豆腐 | dòufu |
| vinegar | 醋 | cù |
| vegetable oil | 菜油 | càiyóu |

Drinks

| | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|
| beer | 啤酒 | pǐjiǔ |
| Chinese spirits | 白酒 | báijiǔ |
| coffee | 咖啡 | kāfēi |
| (orange) juice | (橙) 汁 | (chéng) zhī |
| milk | 牛奶 | niú nǎi |
| mineral water | 矿泉水 | kuàngquán shuǐ |
| red wine | 红葡萄酒 | hóng pútáo jiǔ |
| rice wine | 米酒 | mǐjiǔ |
| soft drink | 汽水 | qìshuǐ |
| tea | 茶 | chá |
| (boiled) water | (开) 水 | (kāi) shuǐ |
| white wine | 白葡萄酒 | bái pútáo jiǔ |
| yoghurt | 酸奶 | suānnǎi |

Emergencies

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------|------------------------|
| Help! | 救命! | Jiùmìng! |
| I'm lost. | 我迷路了。 | Wǒ mílù le. |
| Go away! | 走开! | Zǒukāi! |
| There's been an accident. | 出事了。 | Chūshì le. |
| Call a doctor! | 请叫医生来! | Qǐng jiào yīshēng lái! |
| Call the police! | 请叫警察! | Qǐng jiào jǐngchá! |
| I'm ill. | 我生病了。 | Wǒ shēngbìng le. |
| It hurts here. | 这里痛。 | Zhèlǐ tòng. |
| Where are the toilets? | 厕所在哪儿? | Cèsuǒ zài nǎr? |

Shopping & Services

| | | |
|---------------------|--------|--------------------|
| I'd like to buy ... | 我想买…… | Wǒ xiǎng mǎi ... |
| I'm just looking. | 我先看看。 | Wǒ xiān kànkan. |
| Can I look at it? | 我能看看吗? | Wǒ néng kànkan ma? |
| I don't like it. | 我不喜欢。 | Wǒ bù xǐhuan. |

Double tap to enlarge

Numbers – Mandarin

| | | |
|------|-----|----------|
| 1 | 一 | yī |
| 2 | 二/两 | èr/liǎng |
| 3 | 三 | sān |
| 4 | 四 | sì |
| 5 | 五 | wǔ |
| 6 | 六 | liù |
| 7 | 七 | qī |
| 8 | 八 | bā |
| 9 | 九 | jiǔ |
| 10 | 十 | shí |
| 20 | 二十 | èrshí |
| 30 | 三十 | sānshí |
| 40 | 四十 | sìshí |
| 50 | 五十 | wǔshí |
| 60 | 六十 | liùshí |
| 70 | 七十 | qīshí |
| 80 | 八十 | bāshí |
| 90 | 九十 | jiǔshí |
| 100 | 一百 | yībǎi |
| 1000 | 一千 | yīqiān |

How much is it?

多少钱? Duōshǎo qián?

That's too expensive.

太贵了。 Tàiguì le.

Can you lower the price?

能便宜一点吗? Néng piányi yídiǎn ma?

There's a mistake in the bill.

帐单上
有问题。 Zhàngdān shàng
yǒu wèntí.

| | | |
|----------------|-------|------------------|
| ATM | 自动取款机 | zìdòng qǔkuǎn jī |
| credit card | 信用卡 | xìnyòng kǎ |
| internet cafe | 网吧 | wǎngbā |
| post office | 邮局 | yóujú |
| tourist office | 旅行店 | lúxíng diàn |

Time & Dates

What time is it?

现在几点钟? Xiànzài jǐdiǎn zhōng?

It's (10) o'clock.

(十)点钟。 (Shí) diǎn zhōng.

Half past (10).

(十)点三十分。 (Shí) diǎn sānshífēn.

| | | |
|-----------|----|----------|
| morning | 早上 | zǎoshang |
| afternoon | 下午 | xiàwú |
| evening | 晚上 | wǎnshàng |

| | | |
|-----------|-----|-------------|
| yesterday | 昨天 | zuótiān |
| today | 今天 | jīntiān |
| tomorrow | 明天 | míngtiān |
| Monday | 星期一 | xīngqī yī |
| Tuesday | 星期二 | xīngqī èr |
| Wednesday | 星期三 | xīngqī sān |
| Thursday | 星期四 | xīngqī sì |
| Friday | 星期五 | xīngqī wǔ |
| Saturday | 星期六 | xīngqī liù |
| Sunday | 星期天 | xīngqī tiān |
| January | 一月 | yīyuè |
| February | 二月 | èryuè |
| March | 三月 | sānyuè |
| April | 四月 | sìyuè |
| May | 五月 | wúyuè |
| June | 六月 | liùyuè |
| July | 七月 | qīyuè |
| August | 八月 | bāyuè |
| September | 九月 | jiǔyuè |
| October | 十月 | shíyuè |
| November | 十一月 | shíyīyuè |
| December | 十二月 | shí'èryuè |

Transport

Public Transport

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|-------------|
| boat | 船 | chuán |
| bus (city) | 大巴 | dàbā |
| bus (intercity) | 长途车 | chángtú chē |
| plane | 飞机 | fēijī |
| taxi | 出租车 | chūzū chē |
| train | 火车 | huǒchē |
| tram | 电车 | diànchē |

I want to go to ...

我要去…… Wǒ yào qù ...

Does it stop at (Hāerbīn)?

在(哈尔滨)能下车吗? Zài (Hā'ěrbin) néng xià chē ma?

At what time does it leave?

几点钟出发? Jǐdiǎnzhōng chūfā?

At what time does it get to (Hángzhōu)?

几点钟到(杭州)? Jǐdiǎnzhōng dào (Hángzhōu)?

Can you tell me when we get to (Hángzhōu)?

到了(杭州)请叫我, 好吗? Dào le (Hángzhōu) qǐng jiào wǒ, hǎo ma?

I want to get off here.

我想这儿下车。 Wǒ xiǎng zhèr xiàchē.

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| When's the ... (bus)? | ……(车) 几点走? | … (chē) jǐdiǎn zǒu? |
| first | 首趟 | Shǒutàng |
| last | 末趟 | Mòtàng |
| next | 下一趟 | Xià yītàng |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| A... ticket to (Dàlián). | 一张到 (大连)的 ……票。 | Yīzhāng dào (Dàlián) de … piào. |
| 1st-class | 头等 | tóuděng |
| 2nd-class | 二等 | èrděng |
| one-way | 单程 | dānchéng |
| return | 双程 | shuāngchéng |

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| aisle seat | 走廊的 座位 | zǒuláng de zuòwèi |
| cancelled | 取消 | qǔxiāo |
| delayed | 晚点 | wǎndiǎn |
| platform | 站台 | zhàntái |
| ticket office | 售票处 | shòupiàochù |
| timetable | 时刻表 | shíkè biǎo |
| train station | 火车站 | huǒchēzhàn |
| window seat | 窗户的 座位 | chuānghu de zuòwèi |

Driving & Cycling

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|-------------|
| bicycle pump | 打气筒 | dǎqìtǒng |
| child seat | 婴儿座 | yīng'érzuò |
| diesel | 柴油 | cháiyóu |
| helmet | 头盔 | tóukuī |
| mechanic | 机修工 | jīxiūgōng |
| petrol | 汽油 | qìyóu |
| service station | 加油站 | jiāyóu zhàn |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| I'd like to hire a ... 4WD | 我要租 一辆…… 四轮驱动 | Wǒ yào zū yīliàng ... sìlún qūdòng |
| bicycle | 自行车 | zìxíngchē |
| car | 汽车 | qìchē |
| motorcycle | 摩托车 | mótuōchē |

Does this road lead to ...?
这条路到……吗? Zhè tiáo lù dào ... ma?

How long can I park here?
这儿可以停多久? Zhèr kěyǐ tíng duōjiǔ?

The car has broken down (at ...).
汽车是(在……)坏的。Qìchē shì (zài ...) huài de.

I have a flat tyre.
轮胎瘪了。 Lúntāi biē le.

I've run out of petrol.
没有汽油了。 Méiyóu qìyóu le.

CANTONESE

Cantonese is the most widely used Chinese language in Hong Kong, Macau, Guangdong, parts of Guangxi and the surrounding region. Cantonese speakers use Chinese characters, but pronounce many of them differently from a Mandarin speaker. Also, Cantonese adds about 3000 characters of its own to the character set. Several systems of Romanisation for Cantonese script exist, and no single one has emerged as an official standard. In this chapter we use Lonely Planet's pronunciation guide, designed for maximum accuracy with minimum complexity.

Pronunciation

In Cantonese, the **ng** sound can appear at the start of a word. Words ending with the consonant sounds **p**, **t**, and **k** are clipped. Many speakers, particularly young people, replace the **n** with an **l** at the start of a word – eg **náy** (you) often sounds like **láy**. Where relevant, our pronunciation guide reflects this change.

The vowels are pronounced as follows: **a** as the 'u' in 'but', **ai** as in 'aisle' (short), **au** as the 'ou' in 'out', **ay** as in 'pay', **eu** as the 'er' in 'fern', **eui** as **eu** followed by **i**, **ew** as in 'blew' (short, with lips tightened), **i** as the 'ee' in 'deep', **iu** as the 'yu' in 'yuletide', **o** as in 'go', **oy** as in 'boy', **u** as in 'put', **ui** as in French *oui*.

Tones in Cantonese fall on vowels (**a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**) and on **n**. The same word pronounced with different tones can have a different meaning, eg **gwàt** (dig up) vs **gwát** (bones). There are six tones, divided into high- and low-pitch groups. High-pitch tones involve tightening the vocal muscles to get a higher note, while lower-pitch tones are made by relaxing the vocal chords to get a lower note. Tones are indicated with the following accent marks: **à** (high), **á** (high rising), **à** (low falling), **á** (low rising), **a** (low), **a** (level – no accent mark).

Basics

| | | |
|--------------|------------|---------------------|
| Hello. | 哈佬。 | hà-ló |
| Goodbye. | 再見。 | joy-gin |
| How are you? | 你幾好 啊嗎? | láy gáy hó à maa |
| Fine. | 幾好。 | gáy hó |
| Excuse me. | 對唔住。 | deui-ng-jew |
| Sorry. | 對唔住。 | deui-ng-jew |
| Yes./No. | 係/不係。 | hai/ng-hai |
| Please ... | 唔該…… | ng-gòy ... |
| Thank you. | 多謝。 | dàw-je |

What's your name?
你叫乜嘢名? láy giu màt-yé méng aa

Double tap to enlarge

My name is ...
我叫…… ngáw giu ...

Do you speak English?
你識唔識講
英文啊? láy sik-ng-sik gáwng
ying-mán aa

I don't understand.
我唔明。 ngáw ng-ming

Accommodation

campsite 營地 ying-day
guesthouse 賓館 bàn-gún
hostel 招待所 jiù-doy-sáw
hotel 酒店 jáu-dim

Do you have
a ... room? 有冇……
房? yáu-mó ...
fáwng

double 雙人 sèung-yàn
single 單人 dān-yàn

How much is it
per ...? 一……幾多
錢? yát ... gáy-dàw
chín
night 晚 mán
person 個人 gaw yàn

Directions

Where's ...? ……喺邊度? ... hái bin-dò

What's the
address? 地址係? day-jí hai

left 左邊 jáu-bin
on the corner 十字路口 sap-ji-lo-háu
right 右邊 yau-bin
straight ahead 前面 chin-min
traffic lights 紅綠燈 hùng-luk-dàng

Eating & Drinking

What would you recommend?
有乜嘢好介紹? yáu màt-yé hó gaai-siu

That was delicious.
真好味。 jàn hó-may

I'd like the bill, please.
唔該我要埋單。 ng-gòy ngáw yiu mài-dàan

Cheers!
乾杯! gawn-bui

I'd like to
book a
table for ... 我想
訂張檯，
……嘅。 ngáw séung
deng jèung tóy
... ge

(eight)
o'clock (八)
點鐘 (bàat)
dim-jùng

(two) people (兩)位 (léung) ai

Numbers – Cantonese

| | | |
|------|----|----------|
| 1 | 一 | yát |
| 2 | 二 | yi |
| 3 | 三 | sàam |
| 4 | 四 | say |
| 5 | 五 | ng |
| 6 | 六 | luk |
| 7 | 七 | chát |
| 8 | 八 | baat |
| 9 | 九 | gáu |
| 10 | 十 | sap |
| 20 | 二十 | yi-sap |
| 30 | 三十 | sàam-sap |
| 40 | 四十 | say-sap |
| 50 | 五十 | ng-sap |
| 60 | 六十 | luk-sap |
| 70 | 七十 | chát-sap |
| 80 | 八十 | baat-sap |
| 90 | 九十 | gáu-sap |
| 100 | 一百 | yát-baak |
| 1000 | 一千 | yát-chín |

bar 酒吧 jáu-bàa
bottle 樽 jèun
breakfast 早餐 jó-chàan
cafe 咖啡屋 gaa-fè-ngùk
dinner 晚飯 mán-faan
fork 叉 chàa
glass 杯 bui
knife 刀 dò
lunch 午餐 ng-chàan
market 街市 (HK) gài-sí
市場 (China) sí-chèung
plate 碟 dip
restaurant 酒樓 jáu-làu
spoon 羹 gàng

Emergencies

Help! 救命! gau-meng
I'm lost. 我蕩失路。 ngáw dawng-sák-lo
Go away! 走開! jáu-hòy

Call a doctor!
快啲叫醫生! faai-di giu yi-sàng

Call the police!
快啲叫警察! faai-di giu ging-chaat

I'm sick.
我病咗。 ngáw beng-jáv

Shopping & Services

I'd like to buy ...
我想買…… ngáw séung máai ...

How much is it?
幾多錢? gáy-dàw chin

That's too expensive.
太貴啦。 tai gwai laa

There's a mistake in the bill.
帳單錯咗。 jeung-dàan chaw jáv

internet cafe 網吧 mánwng-bàa

post office 郵局 yàu-gúk

tourist office 旅行社 léui-hàng-sé

Time & Dates

What time is it? 而家幾點鐘? yí-gàa gáy-dím-jùng

It's (10) o'clock. (十)點鐘。 (sap)-dím-jùng

Half past (10). (十)點半。 (sap)-dím bun

morning 朝早 jiù-jó

afternoon 下晝 haa-jau

evening 夜晚 ye-máan

yesterday 寢日 kàm-yat

today 今日 gàm-yat

tomorrow 听日 ting-yat

Transport

boat 船 sèwn

bus 巴士 (HK) bàa-sí
公共 gùng-gung

汽車 (China) hay-chè

train 火車 fáv-chè

A ... ticket to (Panyu). 一張去 (番禺) 嘅……飛。 yàt jèung heui (pùn-yèw) ge ... fày

1st-class 頭等 tàu-dáng

2nd-class 二等 yí-dáng

one-way 單程 dàan-chìng

return 雙程 sèung-chìng

At what time does it leave?
幾點鐘出發? gáy-dím jùng chèut-faa

Does it stop at ...?
會唔會喺……停呀? wuj-ùg-wuj hái ... tìng aa

At what time does it get to ...?
幾點鐘到……? gáy-dím jùng do ...

TIBETAN

Tibetan is spoken by around six million people, mainly in Tibet. In urban areas almost all Tibetans also speak Mandarin.

Most sounds in Tibetan are similar to those found in English, so if you read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English, you'll be understood. Note that *à* is pronounced as the 'a' in 'ago', *ò* as the 'er' in 'her', and *ù* as the 'u' in 'flute' but with a raised tongue. A vowel followed by *n*, *m* or *ng* indicates a nasalised sound (pronounced 'through the nose'). A consonant followed by *h* is aspirated (accompanied by a puff of air).

There are no direct equivalents of English 'yes' and 'no' in Tibetan. Although it may not be completely correct, you'll be understood if you use *la ong* for 'yes' and *la men* for 'no'.

Hello. བཀྲ་ཤིས་བདེ་ལེགས། ta-shi de-lek

Goodbye. ག་ལེར་མེབས། ka-lee pay
(if staying)

(if leaving) ག་ལེར་བཞུགས། ka-lee shu

Excuse me. དགོངས་དག gong-da

Sorry. དགོངས་དག gong-da

Please. ལུགས་རྗེ་གཟིགས། tu-jay-sig

Thank you. ལུགས་རྗེ་ཚེ། tu-jay-chay

How are you? ལྱིད་རང་སྐྱ་གཞུགས། kay-ràng ku-su
བདེ་ལོ་ཡིན་པས། de-po yin-bay

Fine. And you? བདེ་ལོ་ཡིན། ལྱིད་རང་ཡང་ de-bo-yin kay-ràng-yàng
སྐྱ་གཞུགས་བདེ་ལོ་ཡིན་པས། ku-su de-po yin-bay

What's your name? ལྱིད་རང་གི་མཚན་ལ། kay-ràng-gi tsen-lâ
ག་རེ་རེ། kâ-ray-ray

My name is ... འཕེ་མིང་ལ། ... རེ། ngay-ming-la ... ray

Do you speak English? ལྱིད་རང་དབྱིན་ཇི་སྐད་ kay-ràng in-ji-kay
ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་པས། shing-gi yò-bay

I don't understand. ཏུ་གོ་མ་སོང། ha ko ma-song

How much is it? གོང་ག་ཚད་རེ། gong kâ-tsay ray

Where is ...? ... ག་ཁབ་ཡོད་རེ། ... ka-bah yò-ray

UIGHUR

Uighur is spoken all over Xinjiang. In China, Uighur is written in Arabic script. The phrases in this chapter reflect the Kashgar dialect.

In our pronunciation guides, stressed syllables are indicated with italics. Most consonant sounds in Uighur are the same as in English, though note that **h** is pronounced with a puff of air. The vowels are pronounced as follows: **a** as in 'hat', **aa** as the 'a' in 'father', **ee** as in 'sleep' (produced back in the throat), **o** as in 'go', **ö** as the 'e' in 'her' (pronounced with rounded lips), **u** as in 'put', and **ü** as the 'i' in 'bit' (with the lips rounded and pushed forward). Stressed syllables are in italics.

Basics

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Hello. | ئەسسالامۇ ئەلەيىكۆم. | <i>as-saa-laa-mu</i> <i>a-lay-kom</i> |
| Goodbye. | خەير-خوش. | <i>hayr-hosh</i> |
| Excuse me. | گۈرۈچەك گە قانداق بارىدۇ؟ | <i>ka-chü-rüng ga</i> <i>kaan-daak</i> <i>baar-i-du</i> |
| Sorry. | گۈرۈچەك. | <i>ka-chü-rüng</i> |
| Yes. | ھەئە. | <i>ee-a-a</i> |
| No. | ياق. | <i>yaak</i> |
| Please. | مەرھەممەت. | <i>ma-ree-am-mat</i> |
| Thank you. | رەخمەت سىزگە. | <i>rah-mat siz-ga</i> |
| How are you? | قانداق ئەھۋالىڭىز؟ | <i>kaan-daak</i> <i>a-ee-vaa-li-ngiz</i> |
| Fine. And you? | ياخشى، سىزچۇ؟ | <i>yaah-shi siz-chu</i> |
| What's your name? | سىزنىڭ ئىسمىڭىز نىمە؟ | <i>siz-ning</i> <i>is-mi-ngiz ni-ma</i> |
| My name is ... | مىنىڭ ئىسمىم ... | <i>mi-ning is-mim ...</i> |
| Do you speak English? | سىز ئىنگلىزچە بىلەمسىز؟ | <i>siz ing-gi-lis-ka</i> <i>bi-lam-siz</i> |
| I don't understand. | چۈشەنمىدىم. | <i>man chu-shan-mi-dim</i> |
| How much is it? | قانچە پۇل؟ | <i>kaan-cha pool</i> |
| Where is ...? | ... نەدە؟ | <i>... na-da</i> |

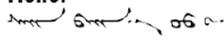
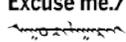
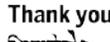
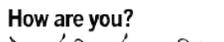
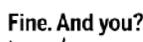
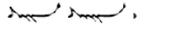
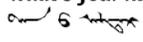
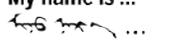
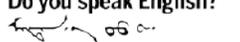
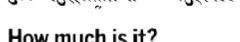
MONGOLIAN

Mongolian has an estimated 10 million speakers. The standard Mongolian in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China is based on the Chahar dialect and written using a cursive script in vertical lines (ie from top to bottom), read from left to right. So if you want to ask a local to read the script in this section, just turn the book 90 degrees clockwise. Our coloured pronunciation guides, however, should simply be read the same way you read English.

Most consonant sounds in Mongolian are the same as in English, though note that **r** in Mongolian is a hard, trilled sound, **kh** is a throaty sound like the 'ch' in the Scottish *loch*, and **z** is pronounced as the 'ds' in 'lads'. As for the vowels, **ê** is pronounced as in 'there', **ô** as in 'alone', **ö** as 'e' with rounded lips, **öö** as a slightly longer **o**, **u** as in 'cut' and **ü** as in 'good'.

In the pronunciation guides, stressed syllables are in italics.

Basics

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Hello. |  | <i>sên bën nô</i> |
| Goodbye. |  | <i>ba-yur-tê</i> |
| Excuse me./Sorry. |  | <i>ôch-lê-rê</i> |
| Yes. |  | <i>teem</i> |
| No. |  | <i>oo-gway</i> |
| Thank you. |  | <i>ba-yur-laa</i> |
| How are you? |  | <i>sên bën nô</i> |
| Fine. And you? |  | <i>sên sên</i> <i>sên nô</i> |
| What's your name? |  | <i>tan-nê al-dur</i> |
| My name is ... |  | <i>min-nee nur ...</i> |
| Do you speak English? |  | <i>ta ang-gul hul</i> <i>mu-tun nô</i> |
| I don't understand. |  | <i>bee oil-og-sun-gway</i> |
| How much is it? |  | <i>hut-tee jôs vê</i> |
| Where's ...? |  | <i>... haa bêkh vê</i> |

GLOSSARY

apsara – Buddhist celestial being

arhat – Buddhist, especially a monk, who has achieved enlightenment and passes to nirvana at death

běi – north; the other points of the compass are *dōng* (east), *nán* (south) and *xī* (west)

biānjiè – border

biéshù – villa

bīnguǎn – hotel

bìxì – mythical tortoiselike dragon

Bodhisattva – one who is worthy of nirvana and remains on earth to help others attain enlightenment

Bon – pre-Buddhist indigenous faith of Tibet

bówùguǎn – museum

CAAC – Civil Aviation Administration of China

cadre – Chinese government bureaucrat

cāntīng – restaurant

cǎoyuán – grasslands

CCP – Chinese Communist Party

chau – land mass

chéngshì – city

chí – lake, pool

chop – carved name seal that acts as a signature

chōrten – Tibetan *stupa*

CITS – China International Travel Service

cūn – village

dàdào – boulevard

dàfàndiàn – large hotel

dàjiē – avenue

dàjiǔdiàn – large hotel

dǎo – island

dàpùbù – large waterfall

dàqiáo – large bridge

dàshà – hotel, building

dàxué – university

déhuà – white-glazed porcelain

ditiě – subway

dōng – east; the other points of the compass are *běi* (north), *nán* (south) and *xī* (west)

dòng – cave

dòngwùyuán – zoo

fàndiàn – hotel, restaurant

fēng – peak

fēngjǐngqū – scenic area

gé – pavilion, temple

gōmpa – monastery

gōng – palace

gōngyuán – park

gōu – gorge, valley

guān – pass

gùjū – house, home, residence

hǎi – sea

hǎitān – beach

Hakka – Chinese ethnic group

Han – China's main ethnic group

hé – river

hú – lake

huáqiáo – overseas Chinese

Hui – ethnic Chinese Muslims

huǒchēzhàn – train station

huǒshān – volcano

hútòng – a narrow alleyway

jiāng – river

jiǎo – unit of *renminbi*; 10 jiǎo equals 1 *yuán*

jiàotáng – church

jīchǎng – airport

jiē – street

jié – festival

jīn – unit of weight; 1 *jīn* equals 600g

jīngjù – Beijing opera

jìniànbēi – memorial

jìniànguǎn – memorial hall

jiǔdiàn – hotel

jū – residence, home

junk – originally referred to Chinese fishing and war vessels with square sails; now applies to various types of boating craft

kang – raised sleeping platform

KCR – Kowloon–Canton Railway

kora – pilgrim circuit

Kuomintang – Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist Party; now one of Taiwan's major political parties

lama – a Buddhist priest of the Tantric or Lamaist school; a title bestowed on monks of particularly high spiritual attainment

lǐlòng – Shànghǎi alleyway

lín – forest

líng – tomb

lìshǐ – history

lóu – tower

LRT – Light Rail Transit

lù – road

lǚguǎn – guesthouse

luóhàn – Buddhist, especially a monk, who has achieved enlightenment and passes to nirvana at death; see also *arhat*

mahjong – popular Chinese game for four people; played with engraved tiles

mǎtòu – dock

mén – gate

ménpiào – entrance ticket

Miao – ethnic group living in Guizhōu

miào – temple

MTR – Mass Transit Railway

mù – tomb

nán – south; the other points of the compass are *běi* (north), *dōng* (east) and *xī* (west)

páilou – decorative archway

pinyin – the official system for transliterating Chinese script into roman characters

PLA – People's Liberation Army

Double tap to enlarge

Politburo – the 25-member supreme policy-making authority of the Chinese Communist Party

PRC – People's Republic of China

PSB – Public Security Bureau; the arm of the police force set up to deal with foreigners

pùbù – waterfall

qì – life force

qiáo – bridge

qìchēzhàn – bus station

rénmín – people, people's

renminbi – literally 'people's money'; the formal name for the currency of China, the basic unit of which is the *yuán*; shortened to RMB

sampan – small motorised launch

sānlún mótuōchē – motor tricycle

sānlúncē – pedal-powered tricycle

SAR – Special Administrative Region

sēnlín – forest

shān – mountain

shāngdiàn – shop, store

shěng – province, provincial

shì – city

shí – rock

shìchǎng – market

shíkū – grotto

shíkùmén – literally 'stone-gate house'; type of 19th-century Shànghǎi residence

shòupiàochù – ticket office

shuǐkù – reservoir

sì – temple, monastery

sihéyuàn – traditional courtyard house

stupa – usually used as reliquaries for the cremated remains of important *lamas*

tǎ – pagoda

thangka – Tibetan sacred art

tíng – pavilion

wān – bay

wǎngbā – internet café

wēnquán – hot springs

xī – west; the other points of the compass are *dōng* (east), *běi* (north) and *nán* (south)

xī – small stream, brook

xiá – gorge

xiàn – county

xuěshān – snow mountain

yá – cliff

yán – rock or crag

yóujú – post office

yuán – basic unit of *renminbi*

yuán – garden

zhào – lamasery

zhāodàisuǒ – guesthouse

zhíwùyuán – botanic gardens

zhōng – middle

Zhōngguó – China

zìrán bǎohùqū – nature reserve

Behind the Scenes

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OUR READERS

Many thanks to the travellers who used the last edition and wrote to us with helpful hints, useful advice and interesting anecdotes:

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Piera Chen

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Emily Matchar

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Daniel McCrohan

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Phillip Tang

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Illustrations: by Michael Weldon.

THIS BOOK

This 14th edition of Lonely Planet's China guidebook was researched and written by Damian Harper, Piera Chen, Chung Wah Chow, Megan Eaves, David Eimer, Tienlon Ho, Robert Kelly, Shawn Low, Emily Matchar, Bradley Mayhew, Daniel McCrohan, Dai Min and Phillip Tang.

This guidebook was produced by the following:

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OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling

together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS

Damian Harper



Coordinating Author, Anhui, Henan, Hubei, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang

After graduating with a degree in Chinese in the days when it was still an unfashionably exotic choice, Damian relocated to Hong Kong to see out the last year of British rule. Since undertaking a leg-busting, nine-province journey for the 6th edition of this book in 1997, Damian has tumble-weeded his way around China, working on multiple editions of China, Shanghai and Beijing, contributing to Hong Kong and Southwest China, and road-testing incalculable hotel beds, hole-in-the-wall menus and wayside watering holes. Damian also wrote the Plan, Understand and Survive sections, as well as the Bund illustrated highlight.

Piera Chen



Guangdong, Guangxi, Macau Hong Kong native Piera first travelled to China to visit relatives as a child. It's where she learned how to smoke, ride a bike and coax a water leech away – skills that came in handy during dozens of subsequent sojourns in different parts of the country, including research trips for this book. Piera also pays frequent visits to Macau for food, friends and her favourite secret places. Piera has worked on several editions of Hong Kong and China.

Chung Wah Chow



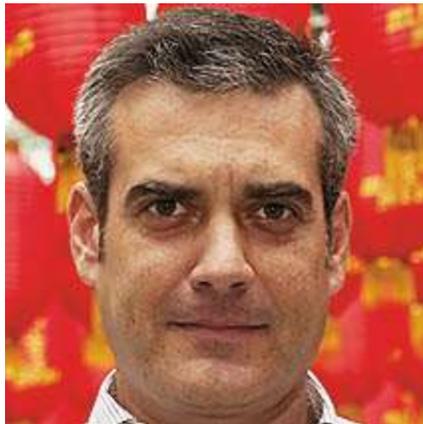
Fujian Born and raised in Hong Kong, Chung Wah first visited the home of her ancestors in China when she was four. Since then, she has been returning to China to visit relatives in Guangdong, study graves in Fujian and trek in the wilderness in Xinjiang. Chung Wah contributed to the previous three editions of this book and has co-authored other Lonely Planet titles, including Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Megan Eaves



Qinghai Lonely Planet's North Asia Destination Editor, Megan first went to China after getting hooked on a Mandarin language class at university in her native New Mexico. Extended stints living in small-town China taught her how to play guitar in front of a bonfire in 40-degree-celsius heat on regional television and how to weather a typhoon on the 2nd floor of a flooded guesthouse. In this edition, she explored the dusky high plateaus of Qinghai province. You can follow her on Twitter @megoizzy.

David Eimer



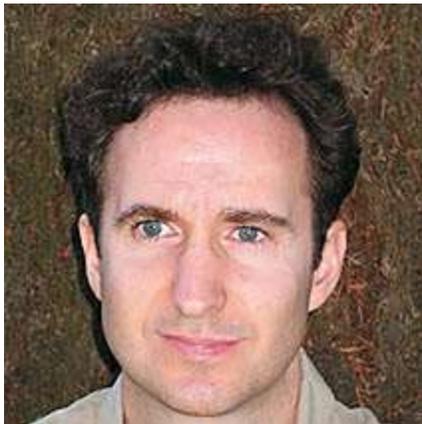
Chongqing, Cruising the Yangzi, Guizhou, **Yunnan** David first came to China in 1988, when cars and foreigners were both in short supply. After spells as a journalist in LA and in his native London, David spent seven years living in Beijing. His travels have taken him to almost every province in the Middle Kingdom. David has co-authored the last four editions of both the China and Beijing guides. Now based in Bangkok, he contributes to a variety of newspapers and magazines in the UK.

Tienlon Ho



Shandong, Sichuan Tienlon was born and raised in Worthington, Ohio, where the best Chinese food was always at her house. She moves around a lot but mostly keeps to San Francisco and other places where people eat thoughtfully and passionately, and mangosteens are readily available. This is her second round with the China guide, and she has also worked on Lonely Planet's Southwest China and California guides. Read more at <http://tienlon.com>.

Robert Kelly



Qinghai, Xinjiang As a long-term resident of Taiwan, Robert appreciated being asked to cover another of China's 'rebel provinces'. For this edition, he had his hands full navigating a frontier with such a confounding history and culture. But the chance to delve into the subtleties of Islamic pilgrimage, the variations of Persian influence on Buddhist cave art and the origins of Uighur resistance to Han rule was a welcome challenge. A freelance writer since the early 2000s, Robert is contributing to Lonely Planet's China for the fourth time.

Shawn Low



Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia, Jilin, Liaoning, Shanxi Shawn grew up in hot, humid, food-crazy Singapore but later made his way further south to less hot, less humid, food-crazy Melbourne (Australia, not Florida). He's spent the last eight years working for Lonely Planet: as an editor, commissioning editor, author, TV host and travel editor. Shawn's fourth foray into China for LP saw him explore the lush Inner Mongolian grasslands and some of the more remote northerly provinces bordering North Korea and Russia. Hey, it's a hard job, but someone's gotta do it, right? He's on Twitter @shawnlw.

Emily Matchar



Hainan, Hong Kong Emily has contributed to some two dozen Lonely Planet guides, and she writes for newspapers and magazines all over the world. A native of North Carolina in the southern USA, she currently lives near the top of the world's longest outdoor escalator in Hong Kong.

Bradley Mayhew



Tibet Bradley has been visiting the Tibetan plateau for 20 years, since studying Chinese at Oxford University. Over the years he's been horse trekking in Kham, done the Kailash kora twice and clocked around 40,000km bumping across Tibet. Bradley has coordinated the last five editions of Tibet and wrote the first editions of Lonely Planet's Shanghai and Southwest China. See what he's up to at www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com.

Daniel McCrohan



Beijing, The Great Wall, Hunan, Jiangxi, Tianjin & Hebei Daniel has been living in China for more than a decade, and he has been working in China, India and beyond for much of that time. This is his 22nd Lonely Planet guidebook and his fourth successive stint on the China guide. Away from guidebooks, Daniel is the creator of the iPhone app Beijing on a Budget and co-host of the TV series Best in China. He also builds personalised itineraries for travellers to China, India, Mongolia and Bangladesh. Find out more at <http://danielmccrohan.com>, where you can also watch the videos he makes while on the road for Lonely Planet.

Dai Min (Daisy Harper)



Anhui, Henan, Hubei, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang Dai Min grew up in beer-making Qingdao (Tsingtao) on the Shandong coast before hopping on the train north to university in Beijing to read English. She moved to the UK in the 1990s, then to Shanghai for two years in the mid-noughties, living on the gritty cusp of the French Concession and, for a while, in West Shanghai. Regularly returning to visit her family in China, Dai Min has contributed to several editions of Lonely Planet's China and also works as a freelance English–Chinese translator (and multitasking mum).

Phillip Tang



Gansu, Ningxia, Shaanxi (Shanxi) Phillip first visited China in 1998 to put to use his Chinese degree and love of potent cigarettes. He is fascinated with China for the way it transforms itself. His return trips over the years can be signposted through witnessing VCD stores morph into DVD parlours and then mobile-phone emporiums. Phillip lives between Mexico City, London and Sydney. He no longer smokes. Find Phillip's China photos on Instagram @mrtangtangtang, tweets @philliptang and more tips on the Middle Kingdom and elsewhere at <http://philliptang.co.uk>.

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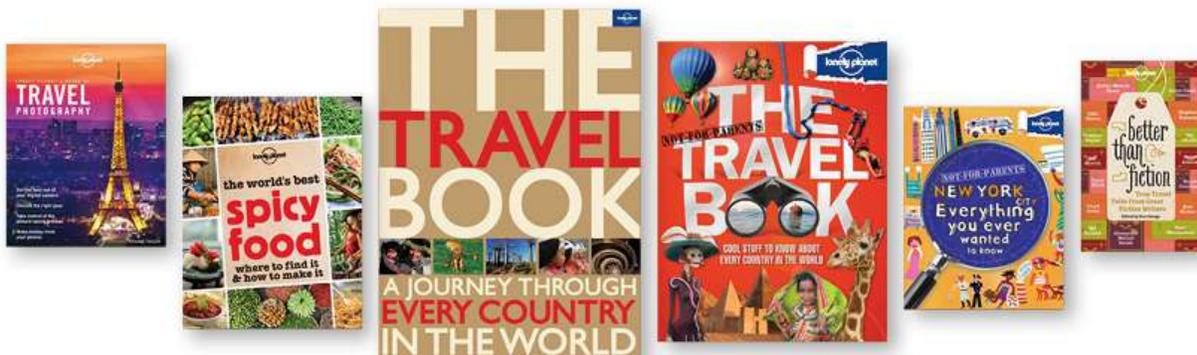
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Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- BART station
- Border crossing
- Boston T/Tunnelbana/T-bane station
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/MRT station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway/S-Bahn/Subte/Skytrain/S-train station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway/LRT
- Tram
- Tube Station
- Underground/U-Bahn station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this eBook