

Details of Xi'An Sightseeing of APNG Camp

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1. Museum of Qin Terra-cotta Warriors and Horses

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

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

The State Council authorized to build a museum on site in 1975. When completed, people from far

and near came to visit. Xian and the Museum of Qin Terra Cotta Warriors and Horses have become landmarks on all travelers' itinerary.

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

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

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

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

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

2. Mausoleum of the first Qin Emperor

Speaking of Qin's Terracotta Warriors and Horses, I dare say that most people definitely have heard about it or even have paid a visit. Its grandeur and mystery really overwhelm you. However, people could have neglected the yet unexcavated mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shi Huang due to all this. Actually, the Museum of Terracotta Warriors forms only part of the tomb. Greater things are yet to come.

Qin Shi Huangdi (259 BC - 210 BC), the first emperor of China, ascended the throne at the age of 13, when construction of his tomb began. On completion of his many conquests, he ordered 720,000 conscript laborers to hurry up on building his royal tomb. It was finished just-in-time in 210 BC for his use. His son, the second Qin Emperor, saw to his entombment.

The tomb of Qin Shi Huang is located in the eastern suburbs of Lintong County, 35 kilometers (22 miles) east of Xian: on the Lishan Mountain in the south and overlooking the Wei River towards north. The lay of the land from Lishan to Mount Hua is shaped dragon-like according to traditional Chinese geomancy. The imperial tomb is at the eye of the dragon. The emperor had chosen well.

In size, the mausoleum is larger than the Great pyramid in Egypt. Seen from afar, it is a hill overgrown with vegetation. It is believed that the tomb consists of an interior city and an exterior city. The exterior of the mausoleum is a low earth pyramid with a wide base. In 2000 years, the original 100-meter-high (328 feet) hillock has been weathered down to about 47 meters (154 feet) high, 515 meters (1,690 feet) long from south to north and 485 meters (1,591 feet) wide east to west. In an area of 2,180,000 square meters (less than one square miles), many large-scale alhambresque buildings housing precious treasures are said to be buried inside the tomb. According to historical records, the mausoleum was a notorious crime scene. Many laborers died

of hardship during its construction, and all the workmen were entombed along with the emperor in order to keep their mouths shut.

Also all the barren royal concubines accompanied the emperor on his last journey.

The Historical Records Sima Qian, a great historian who wrote in early Han dynasty, offered archeologists great insight on the mausoleum's construction. We learned from him that the tomb is huge. The coffin of Emperor Qin Shihuang was cast in bronze. Underground Palace was gem-studded replica of imperial housing above ground. Moreover, booby traps with automatic-shooting arrows were installed to deter would-be tomb robbers. Heaven and earth were represented in the central chamber of the tomb. Ceiling shaped into sun, moon and stars by inlaying pearls and gems symbolizes the sky and the ground was an accumulation point of rivers, lakes and seas, like Yellow River and Yangtze River, which stands for the earth. It is said that the underground palace was brightly lit by whale oil lamps for eternity. Nowadays, the records in this book have been definitely proved right by archaeological findings and the underground palace of the tomb is presumably well preserved.

As a part of the mausoleum, the terracotta warriors have dazzled the world. But the materials unexcavated are also worth studying. Qin bricks and tiles, engraved with decorative patterns, are strewn everywhere around the tomb. There are many satellite tombs built for accompanying Qin Shihuang. Ministers, princesses and princes, the famous and the not so famous were inhumed there. The burial pits for horses, rare birds and pottery figures were ever regarded as the sacrificial objects to the Emperor. Hence the remains from these tombs and pits are beneficial for archeologists to make further research.

Hopefully one day, the entire mausoleum will be unearthed and displayed to the public.

3. Huaqing Hot Springs

Situated at the northern foot of Mt. Lishan in Lintong County, 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) from Xian City, Huaqing Hot Spring is famed for both its dainty spring scenery and the romantic love story of Emperor Xuanzong (685-762) and his concubine Yang Guifei in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Its long history and location among the wonderful landscapes of Xian should entice any visitor to visit and bathe in this hot spring.

It is said that King You built a palace here during the Western Zhou Dynasty (11th century BC-711 BC). Additions were subsequently made by the First Emperor Qing (259 BC-210BC) and Emperor Wu during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-24). During his reign, the Emperor Xuanzong spent dizzying amounts of his funds to build a luxurious palace, changing its name to Huaqing Hot Spring or Huaqing Palace. Over the course of 41 years in his days, he visited the palace as many as 36 times. The palace thus has a history of 3,000 years and the hot spring a history of 6,000 years! Ranked among the Hundred Famous Gardens in China, it is also has the status as a National Cultural Relic Protection Unit and a National Key Scenic Area.

4. Big Wild Goose Pagoda (Dayan Ta)

As the symbol of the old-line Xian, Big Wild Goose Pagoda is a well-preserved ancient building and a holy place for Buddhists. It is located in the southern suburb of Xian City, about 4 kilometers (2.49 miles) from the downtown of the city. Standing in the Da Ci'en Temple complex, it attracts numerous visitors for its fame in the Buddhist religion, its simple but appealing style of construction, and its new square in front of the temple. It is rated as a National Key Cultural Relic Preserve as well as an AAAA Tourist Attraction.

This attraction can be divided into three parts: the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, the Da Ci'en Temple, and the North Square of Big Wild Goose Pagoda.

5. Xi'An City Wall

When Zhu Yuanzhang, the first Emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), captured Huizhou, a hermit named Zhu Sheng admonished him that he should 'built high walls, store abundant food supplies and take time to be an Emperor,' so that he could fortify the city and unify the other states. After the establishment of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang followed his advice and began to enlarge the wall built initially during the old Tang dynasty (618 -907), creating the modern Xian City Wall. It's the most complete city wall that has survived in China, as well being one of the largest ancient military defensive systems in the world.

A nice suggestion for tourists: Try biking on the City Wall, you will have an enjoyable and interesting experience.

6. Forest of Stone Steles Museum

Once the site of the Temple of Confucius during the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127), the Forest of Stone Steles Museum is situated on Sanxue Street, near the south gate of Xian City Wall. It was initially established in AD 1087 when some precious stone steles were moved here for safe keeping, including the 'Classic on Filial Piety' written by Emperor Xuanzong in AD 745 and 'the Kaicheng Stone Steles' carved in AD 837. With an area of 31,000 square meters, the Forest of Stone Steles used to be the principal museum for Shaanxi Province since 1944. Then because of the large number of stone steles, it was officially named as the Forest of Stone Steles Museum in 1992.

With 900 years of history, this treasure house holds a large collection of the earliest stone steles of different periods, from the Han Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. All together, there are 3,000 steles and the museum is divided into seven exhibitions halls, which mainly display the works of calligraphy, painting and historical records. All of these record some achievements in the development of the Chinese culture and reflect the historical facts of the cultural exchanges between China and other countries.

7. Shaanxi History Museum

Shaanxi Province is the birthplace of the ancient Chinese civilization. Xian City was the capital city in thirteen dynasties which in total lasted over 1100 years. Consequently, the ancient history of Shaanxi is to some degree the ancient history of China. The Shaanxi History Museum considers it an obligation to be a showcase of ancient civilizations. It is situated in the southern suburb of Xian City, northwest of the Big Wild Goose Pagoda. Since it was opened to the public in 1991, its architectural buildings, internal apparatus, and exhibits have made it famous as a first-class museum in China.

8. Tang Paradise

Near the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Tang Paradise is located in the Qujiang Resort, southeast of the Xian City, Shaanxi Province. It is a newly opened tourist attraction in April, 2005. Tang Paradise covers a total area of 1000 mu (about 165 acres) and of which 300 mu (about 49 acres) is water. This tourist attraction not only claims to be the biggest cultural theme park in the northwest region of China but also the first royal-garden-like park to give a full display of the Tang Dynasty's (618-907) culture. Altogether, twelve scenic regions are distributed throughout Tang Paradise to provide visitors with the enjoyment of twelve cultural themes and a perfect exhibition of the grandness, prosperity and brilliance of the culture of the Tang Dynasty.