



BEYOND BEIJING:

Exploring China's Cities

Guidebook



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Hong Kong



It would be hard to find a more exciting city than Hong Kong. Set among beautiful natural surroundings it has all the benefits of a thriving and vibrant commercial center. Here you can find the delights of modern living alongside an abundance of reminders of its historic past. Whether you visit the better known highlights like the stunning Ocean Park, the fantastic viewpoint of Victoria Peak, or the beautiful Repulse Bay, Hong Kong is certain to exceed your expectations.

Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region of PRC, has grown from what was a simple fishing village into the world's fourth largest banking and financial center and eighth largest trading economy. Situated in the southeast corner of China, Hong Kong occupies an area of 1,104 square kilometers (about 426 square miles) and is home to more than 6,970,000 people. Most people (about 97% of the population) are Chinese and speak Cantonese and English, although Mandarin is becoming more popular in Hong Kong now. Most tourism personnel and taxi drivers can communicate with tourists in English. The most common religions are Buddhism and Christianity.

Hong Kong is made up of four parts: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula, the New Territories and the Outlying Islands. Hong Kong Island is the center of economy, politics, entertainment and shopping. Northern Hong Kong Island is the main commercial, shopping and entertainment area; the residential area is located in Eastern Hong Kong Island; and Southern Hong Kong Island known for its sea shores and bays. Kowloon is another flourishing part of Hong Kong. Above all, Causeway Bay, Wan Chai, Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok are the most popular areas. These areas are busy day and night, and tourists can feel secure enjoying the lively nightlife, because Hong Kong is one of the most secure cities in the world. The New Territories and Outlying Islands are ideal places to experience a peaceful and natural Hong Kong.

An open city with a wonderful natural harbor, Hong Kong is the meeting place of various cultures that blend harmoniously with Chinese traditions and exotic influences. On one hand traces of British culture can be found everywhere as a result of former colonial rule. On the other hand, Hong Kong preserves traditional customs and the core values of Confucianism that have faded in Mainland China. This is reflected in its colorful festivals ranging from Spring Festival to Christmas. Nowhere else on earth do luxury restaurants, street side food-stalls known locally as *dai pai dong*, grand mansions and penthouses, tenements, office blocks, wooden boats and huge liners coupled with English in a variety of accents and multifarious Chinese dialects coexist peacefully.

It is the dynamic Hong Kong that provides the environment in which the richest Chinese listed in Forbes directory do business. The city also is the backdrop for modern movies and pop music that together enjoy worldwide recognition. Home of *Kongfu* heroes like the late Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, Hong Kong continues to attract more and more ambitious would-be stars and entrepreneurs.

From *Yum Cha* (tea and *dim sum*) in the morning to a moon lit view from the top of Victoria Peak or stunning night time harbor cruise, mingling with shoppers in the numerous malls and markets around Tsim Sha Tsui , tasting delicacies at dai pai dong, taking a trip in a sampan or high speed ferry, Hong Kong will guarantee its visitors an unforgettable experience. There will always be something to enchant you and quite probably make you fall in love with this unique place, be it sightseeing, shopping, dining or simply exploring its many delights by day and night.

Qingdao



Qingdao, a beautiful seaside city, is located in the southeast part of Shandong Province. To the east, a short distance across the Yellow Sea, lie Korea and Japan, making Qingdao an important city for international trade.

For thirty three years, up to 1949, Qingdao was a colony of Germany and Japan. Thus, Qingdao has a great deal of European architecture. This foreign architecture -a remnant of the colonial past- now beautifies this seaside city.

The red roofs, green trees, blue sea, and azure sky form a bright and colorful picture of Qingdao. The city is sometimes known as the Switzerland of the Orient.

Surrounded by the sea on three sides, Qingdao attracts many tourists with its charming seascape. Sights like the Eight Passes Villas, the Zhan Bridge, Wusi Square, Mt. Laoshan, will help you remember Qingdao. Just walking on the sand and listening to the surf breaking on the beach becomes enjoyable.

Qingdao offers food with distinctive flavors--especially seafood. So take this chance to enjoy the delicious seafood of Qingdao. Also, Qingdao is the home of the famous Qingdao (Tsingtao) Beer. Have a bottle of pure Qingdao Beer right here in Qingdao!

The Qingdao Municipal Government recognizes the importance of the tourism industry and has further plans to develop tourism in Qingdao. To enhance the tourism industry, Qingdao now sponsors the Qingdao International Beer Festival, the Qingdao International Sea Festival, Beach Culture Festival, the Sea Affection Festival, and the Summer of Qingdao Festival.

In cooperation with the Beijing Olympic Games 2008, Qingdao will hold the Sailing Competition in the Olympic Games in 2008. This great event brings a great opportunity for this charming city to build its bright future.

Qinhuangdao



If comparing the Great Wall to a dragon then Qinhuangdao is located at the head facing the sea. This wonderful summer resort is lauded as the back garden of Beijing and Tianjin, boasting a beautiful coastline and perfect ecological environment.

Qinhuangdao is a time-honored city named after the first emperor in Chinese History Qin Shi Huang who once made his east inspection tour to Qinhuangdao and sent people to the sea to looking for the immortals. It is also an important harbor city in North China with the Port of Qinhuangdao having more than a hundred years of history. Located in the center of the economic region circling the Bohai Sea, it is also a new rising industrial city having the largest glass industrial base and bridge manufacturing group, most important aluminum processing base and gas turbine producing base, largest hub factory for vehicle wheel as well as a distinguished dry and red wine producing base in China.

However, most people talk about it as a fascinating summer resort. Famous for the beautiful coast and attractions relevant to the Great Wall, Qinhuangdao is a hot tourist city laden with history and endowed with refreshing air. Tourist resources are paralleled in two concentrated lines. In the coastal region, there are Laolongtou, Shanhaiguan Pass and several theme parks. While most spots related to the Great wall scatters around the hilly area in central and northern Qinhuangdao, such as the Longevity Hill, Jiaoshan Hill (Hornberg Hill) and Yansai Lake. The first-class summer resort Beidaihe is also one of the four finest bird watching resorts in the world.

Shanghai



In China there is a saying that 'Xian has witnessed 2,000 of history, Beijing has witnessed 1,000 years of history while Shanghai bears witness to the last 100 years.' For anyone who is interested in the history of modern China, Shanghai serves as an ideal starting point. Regarded as the 'Oriental Pearl', the city has a unique and important place in modern China and its rich heritage is worthy of exploration.

Yesterday's Shanghai

Shanghai, Hu for short, is situated on the estuary of Yangtze River, a position that led to frequently unwelcome intervention from foreigners seeking to impose their exports on the Empire during the nineteenth century. However, in the 1920s and the 1930s, Shanghai became an important international trade center. With its advantaged natural conditions, rapid development and splendid oriental culture, Shanghai was famed as the 'Oriental Paris' and attracted many entrepreneurs and established businesses. In addition, many foreign scientists, literary figures and artists chose to live, give lectures or just experience the Chinese charm in Shanghai. They included Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw and the poet Rabindranath Tagore, to name but a few. However, by the middle of the 20th century, the glory of the city was in decline.

Today's Shanghai

Having suffered the ravages of war, turmoil and economic crisis, the fortunes of Shanghai have been revived thanks to the great Reform and Opening Up since 1978. A favorable national policy, efficient administration, regular market mechanism and a large number of talents have come together to enhance by leaps and bounds the city's economic development in recent years.

Now over 300 of the world's top 500 enterprises have opened branches in Shanghai, while many have their research and development centers or headquarters there. Pudong New Area has developed in just five years, and Lujiazui in Pudong has become one of the foremost world class financial and trade zones in Asia. Skyscrapers such as Jinmao Tower and Shanghai Global Financial Center dominate the skyline, while landmark constructions like Oriental Pearl TV Tower, Pudong International Airport and Shanghai International Convention Center offer the finest and best of modern facilities.

These economic achievements are due to Shanghai's progress in the fields of politics, finance, trade, culture, science and technology. Various important international events have held in Shanghai, including political conventions, commercial conferences, academic forums, sports events, cultural exhibitions, film festivals and fashion shows.

Shanghai's rapid development has come as a great surprise to many in China and has international recognition. Shanghai has grown from a provincial city into an international metropolis on par with New York and Paris in just ten years. No other city in the world has done this - it is unique!

Hundreds of thousands of tourists from all over the world throng to Shanghai to see for themselves its great economic impulse, distinctive attractions and to savor its blend of Eastern and Western cultures. In the eyes of westerners, Shanghai has special oriental charm; while in the eyes of Chinese, Shanghai has a fresh western style. The old say that Shanghai is modern and fashionable, while the young say that Shanghai is old and reminiscent. Wherever you come from and whoever you are, you will find Shanghai an ideal tour destination.

Shanghai has many attractions in the downtown area, including Huangpu River, the Bund, Oriental Pearl TV Tower, Jinmao Tower, Shanghai Museum, Yuyuan Garden, Xin Tian Di and the special old streets and lanes. Besides, there are places well worth a visit in the suburbs such as Qibao Ancient Town, Zhujiajiao Water Town and Chongming Island for in addition to its modern facets, the city has a wealth of more ancient Chinese traditions. Dining will be one of the most enjoyable aspects of your Shanghai trip. In addition to Shanghai dishes, restaurants in the city offer a wide variety of foods from other parts of China as well as a number of foreign countries.

Shanghai is a shopper's paradise. There are various bustling commercial streets and shopping centers waiting for you. These include Nanjing Road, Huaihai Road, North Sichuan Road, Xujiahui Shopping Center, Yuyuan Shopping City and Jiali Sleepless City.

The convenient transportation, comfortable accommodation and colorful places of entertainment will enhance your stay in this fascinating city.

Tomorrow's Shanghai

Shanghai continues to develop at an amazing speed. It will host the football preliminary of the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the World Expo in 2010, both of which offer the means to introduce Shanghai to yet more people worldwide. There is every reason to expect Shanghai to continue to surprise the world.

Shenyang



Shenyang, the largest city in Northeast China, is the political, economic, and cultural center of Liaoning Province. It is also an important industrial base and a famous historical city. As the host city of the 2006 International Horticultural Exposition and venue for the football (soccer) matches of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Shenyang will soon be the focus of world-wide attention.

Shenyang is located in the central part of Liaoning Province. Its climate is relatively dry most of the year with spikes in precipitation during the summer months due to the influence of monsoons. Temperatures vary as much as 10 degrees Celsius from daytime to night, and in winter they can drop below 0 degrees Celsius, so the smart traveler will plan to dress in layers.

Shenyang is a celebrated old city with more than 2,000 years of history which can be traced back to Warring States Period (476 BC - 221 BC). It is the birthplace of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and has many cultural relics which symbolize the prosperity and subsequent decline of China's last feudal dynasty... The most famous of these is the Shenyang Imperial Palace, which is of great historic and artistic significance and second only to the Forbidden City in Beijing in the extent of its preservation. Fuling Tomb and Zhaoling Tomb are two other famous imperial structures of the Qing Dynasty.

Among the natural wonders of Shenyang the most impressive and unusual is Strange Slope (Guaipo), an 'anti-gravity' slope more than eighty meters (about 87.5 yards) long. Cars and bikes must accelerate to go down the hill but easily roll upward toward the top. Walkers experience a similar reversal in energy required to walk up and down.

As a significant city in Northeast China with abundant resources, Shenyang has made great efforts to provide good lodging, dining, transportation and recreation for tourists from all over the world. Altogether there are five five-star hotels in Shenyang, and the service and facilities of the other star-rated hotels in the city are all good enough to make you feel at home. In addition, you can find less expensive accommodations at local universities and hostels.

Famous traditional dishes and snacks in Shenyang will definitely make your mouth water. And there are plenty of pubs, KTVs (karaoke bars), cafes, and tea houses available to meet your food and entertainment needs. A visit to Shenyang can be both entertaining and relaxing.

Tianjin



Tianjin is one of the four municipalities in China. Its name means 'the place where the emperor crossed the river'. In recent years Tianjin has received more and more attention from both tourists at home and abroad due to its numerous travel resources and rich history.

It is no exaggeration to say that Tianjin bears a splendid historical background. However, it was desecrated by foreign invaders long before the foundation of People's Republic of China. Tianjin was shared by nine countries: Italy, Germany, France, Russia, Great Britain, Austria, Japan and Belgium. This marked an extremely hard period for Tianjin and her people because those imperialist countries left permanent marks in her body, most notable of which were thousands of villas. Today those villas provide an exotic flavor to Tianjin, enhancing the beauty of the entire city.

Blessed with variety of tourist attractions, Tianjin is a good place to explore. The top ten attractions in Tianjin, known as Jinmen Shijing, are Gu Wenhua Jie, Dagu Emplacement, Huangyaguan Great Wall, Dule Temple, Haihe River, Water Park, Panshan Mountain, Hotel Street and Food Street, Tianjin TV & Radio Tower and Zhonghuan Cailian. There are also many natural scenes of beauty as well as great historical events.

Getting in and out of the city is convenient because of the well-planned transportation system. If you want to come by water, there are a series of international and domestic sea routes in the port of Tianjin, which is the biggest man-made port in China. If you plan to arrive by air, Tianjin Binhai International Airport offers excellent service. Planes have routes that reach most of the major cities in China and also cities in Europe and America. Of course, arriving in Tianjin by land is another option, while trains or long-distance buses are yet another alternative.

Various hotels, guesthouses and hostels can also meet your different needs. In addition, there are all types of entertainment available to relax both your body and mind.

(Source – Travel China Guide.com)

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