

China  Educational Tours

Xi'an Travel Guide



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Welcome to Xi'an

Xi'an (西安) is the capital of Shaanxi Province, located in northwest China.

Interesting historical facts about Xi'an :

- It was the first of China's four capitals from roughly 200BC to 900AD.
- It was the capital through 13 different dynasties.
- A Neolithic village, Banpo, discovered outside of Xi'an contains man-made items which carbon date back to 6,500BC, showing the approximate first human inhabitation.
- Xi'an served as the eastern terminus of the ancient Silk Road.

Today, Xi'an is world-renowned for housing one of the most famous archeological finds ever discovered – the famous Terracotta Warriors of the Qin Dynasty. The city itself is well preserved, especially the famous protective walls that still encircle the city-center. Just an hour or so outside the city stands the spectacular Taoist mountain – HuaShan (Mount Hua). This historical and vibrant city is easily considered by many travelers to be one of the top 5 best destinations of China. Xi'an is truly one of the most special cities in the country.

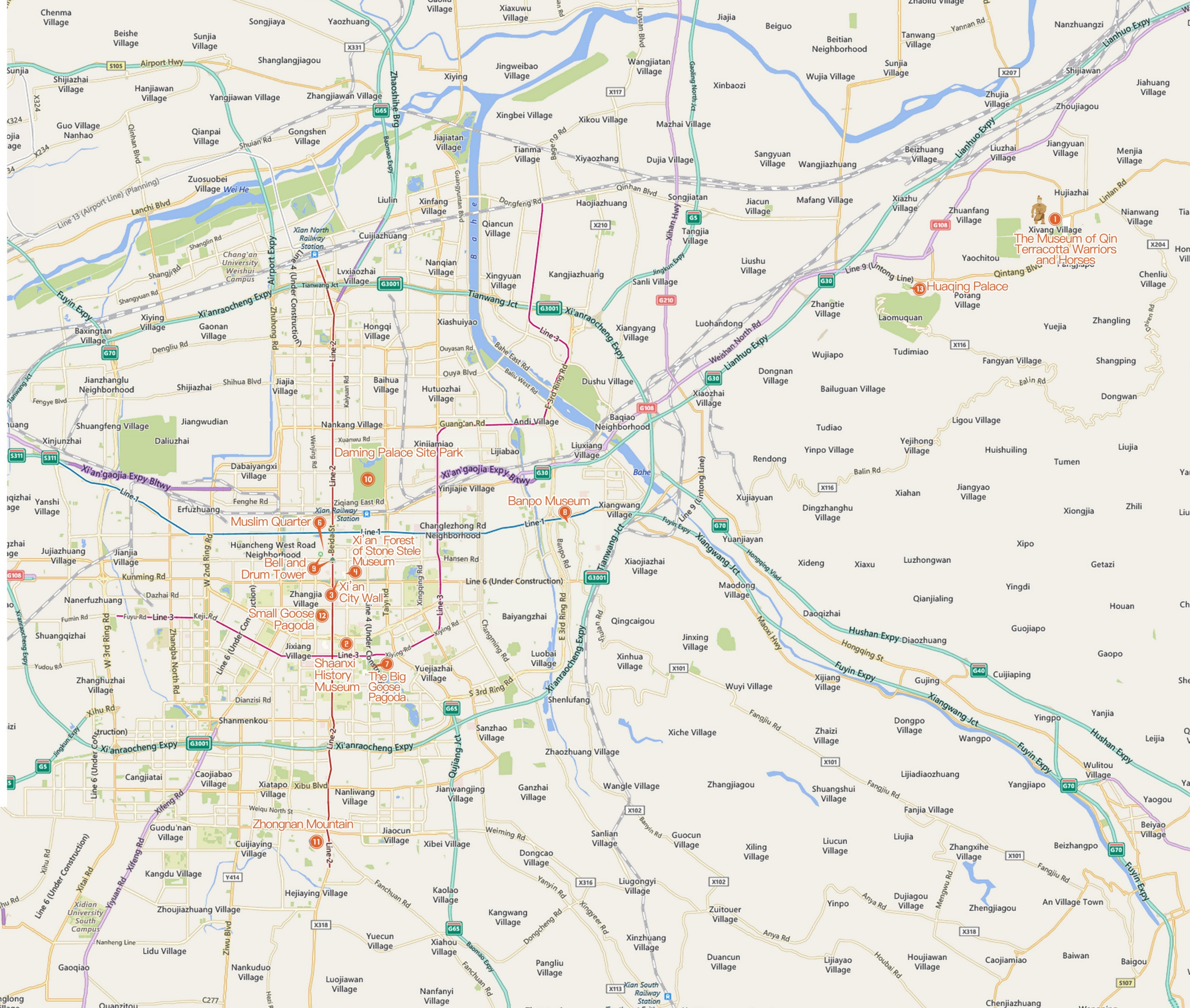


Xi'an City

Map



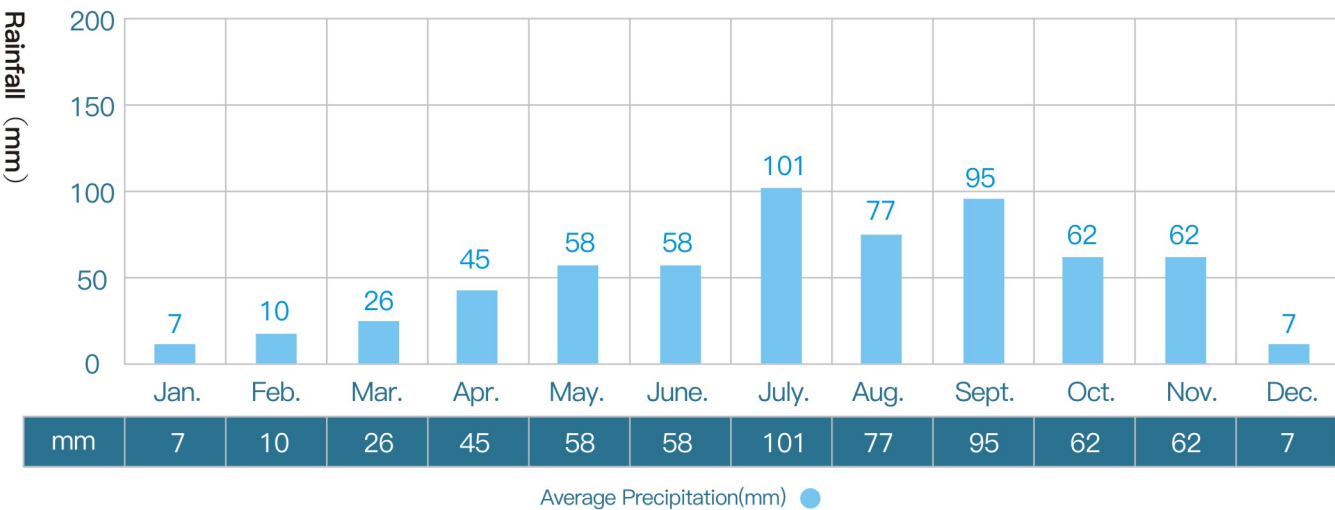
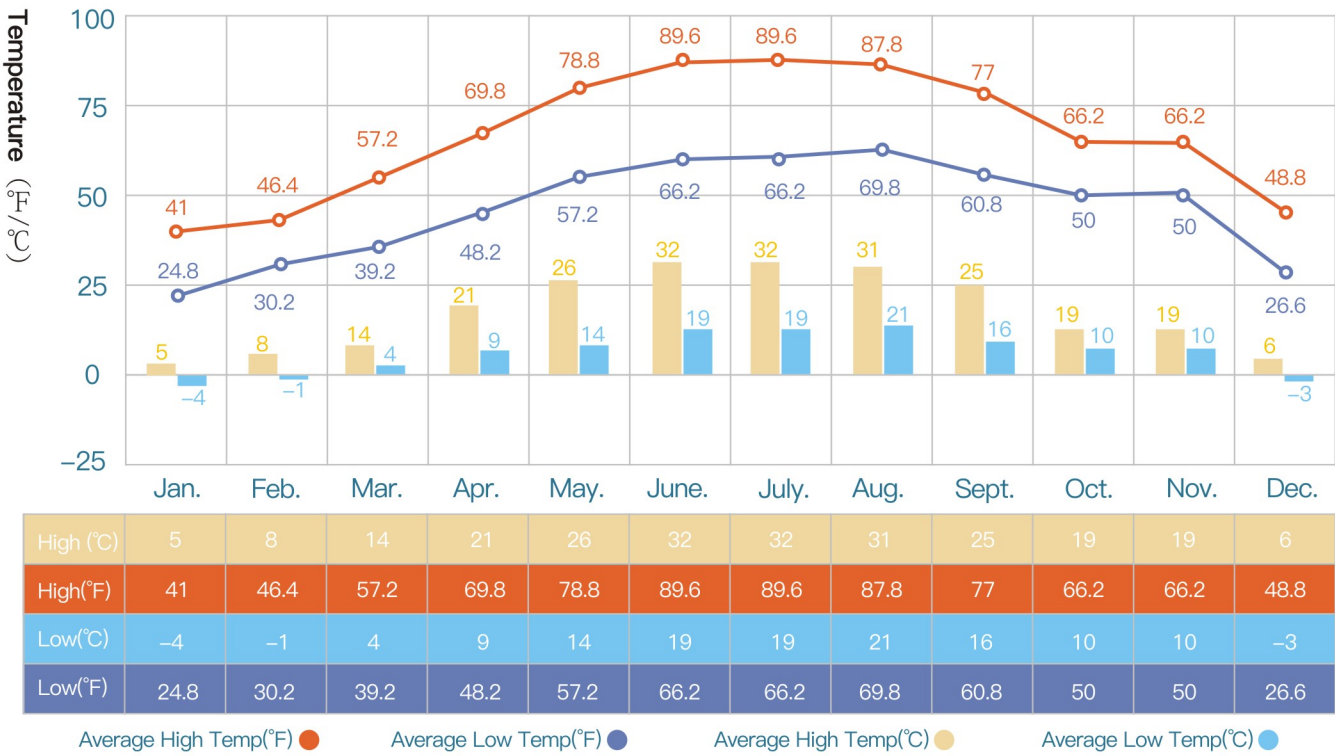
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Best Time to Visit

With its mild climate and moderate rainfall, Xi'an has four distinct seasons. The spring is warm, mostly dry, and windy; the summer is hot and rainy, with occasional thunderstorms and gusty winds; autumn is cool, with the temperature falling rapidly when it rains; and the winter is cold and dry. Xi'an can be susceptible to occasional fog, but in general, due to its location in a more arid section of the country, it doesn't rain or snow here as much as in many other cities.

Spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) are the best seasons to visit Xi'an. The temperature is mild and comfortable, and good for outdoor activities such as riding a bike on top of the ancient city wall or going to the top of HuaShan mountain (Mount Hua). Summer can be quite hot and winter is close to freezing. All of Xi'an's museums, such as the Terracotta Warriors museum, are good places to visit year round since they are indoors.



(Note: expect the top of HuaShan to be at least 15oF (8oC) cooler than the base and windy — making the temperature feel even colder. In fact, many report the temperature difference to feel more like 25oF/13oC cooler.)

Clothing



Spring. Summer. Autumn. Winter

Spring — Xi'an occasionally has rainy weather in spring, with days quickly alternating between hot and cold seemingly without any reason. Visitors should pack for the changing weather: Thin sweaters, light-weight coat or medium jacket, windbreaker, long-sleeved T-shirts, long pants, shorts, good walking/hiking shoes or hiking sandals, ski cap for chilly mornings/evenings, even a scarf and gloves for trips to HuaShan.

Summer — Temperatures can get fairly warm and occasionally top 100oF (38oC). It rains more during the summer than the rest of the year, but the rain usually falls in the form of thunderstorms and quick showers rather than all-day, steady rains. Prepare for strong sun and mostly hot days, so visitors should bring — sunglasses, sunscreen, light-weight clothing, short sleeves, shorts, hiking sandals, sun/rain hat, windbreaker/lightweight rain

coat (doubles for protection at the top of a cool, windy HuaShan Mtn.)

Autumn — Expect a bit more rain in autumn, and much more pleasant temperatures. From mid to late October, northern air cools off the city making it quite comfortable. Visitors should pack similar to spring, with a little more consideration of the slightly wetter conditions: thin sweaters, light-weight coat or medium jacket, windbreaker, long-sleeved T-shirts, long pants, shorts, good walking/hiking shoes or hiking sandals, ski cap for chilly mornings/evenings, even a scarf and gloves for trips to HuaShan.

Winter — Gusty winds and fog often show their face during winter. The harshest months are December and January when the northeast winds blow heavily. The temperature in February is not that harsh, but it is still cold. Visitors should dress warm and with sufficient protection for the wind: heavy sweaters; fleece jackets (200 or 300 weight); a heavy, insulated coat; leggings or insulated long underwear; jeans or heavy pants; insulated shoes or snow boots; long-sleeved shirts; gloves, scarfs, and a winter hat; and skin care products to combat the cold, dry air like moisturizing lotion and lip balm.



Top 6 things to do

(besides the Terracotta Warriors and HuaShan mountain)

Just taking pictures of the ancient city walls, taking the cable car to the top of HuaShan, and standing mouth–agaped at the Terracotta Warriors are certainly the most famous things to do in Xi'an , but Xi'an offers much, much more.



1 Ancient Tombs

The Terracotta Warriors aren't the only ancient tombs excavated around Xi'an . There are at least a ½ dozen more museums that show the on-site, open tombs of famous ancient Chinese emperors, leaders, and warriors. These aren't just rooms showing artifacts. These are the actual excavation sites with a roof over top — and often with real archeologists working right in front of you.



Riding a Bike atop the Ancient City Walls

Unlike so many places in the world which take a “hands-off”, “do-not-touch” approach to ancient relics (a wise policy in nearly every case), the thick, ancient stone walls encircling the center of Xi'an are actually open to the public! Anyone can either walk, jog, or even take their bikes around the top the 8 mile (14km) city wall. At 40ft (12m) high, the view of the surrounding area is breathtaking. Bikes can be rented for a nominal fee.



3 Taste Xi'an Cuisine

Being so old and located at the terminus of the ancient silk road means that Xi'an has been at the crossroads of different cultures for literally 1,000s of years. This makes their cuisine unique from the rest of China. For those not familiar with Chinese cuisine, Xi'an's flavor more resembles that of middle-eastern food than what people would expect from a visit to Hong Kong — more bread-type dishes with more “exotic” spices such as cumin, mint, and cardamom. Yet, it's not middle eastern at all, but a mouth-watering fusion of Western Asia meets Eastern Asia. For this writer, it's some of the best cuisine China has to offer.



4 Shadow Puppet Theater

Nearly guaranteed to put a smile on the face of the young and old alike, Shadow Puppet theater is one of the most unique, ancient Chinese art forms and you'll be hard-pressed to find shadow puppet theater outside of China. Colorful, translucent stick-like puppets are held between a thin white screen and a strong light source, casting their colored shadows onto the screen. Voices and ancient Chinese musical instruments like slide-whistles and symbols combine to carry the story forward. Xi'an is the birthplace of Shadow Puppets in China and there are ample local theaters which have nightly performances.



5 The Muslim Quarter and the Great Mosque

Outside of the mostly Muslim far-west province of Xinjiang, there are limited opportunities to see Chinese Muslim culture and Xi'an is one of the best. The Muslim quarter is a wonderfully preserved labyrinth of streets dating back several hundred years. The architecture itself is impressive, but many visitors will be even more enthralled with the area's cultural uniqueness. Nearby is one of the largest, oldest, and most impressive mosques in the country — the Great Mosque.



6 The Bell Tower and Drum Tower

For a jaw-dropping experience that will last decades after your China trip, remember these 3 words — go .. at .. night. While the daytime versions of these sites are certainly worthwhile, they are simply spectacular at night! These are ancient styled, 10-story high, stone and wood towers built inside separate traffic round-a-bouts, separating them from any other building by at least 100 yards/meters. At night, they are illuminated in bright red, yellow, and white making them an absolute must-see for photographers and lovers of ancient Chinese architecture alike. Visitors are allowed to the upstairs mini-museums for a small fee and a combined ticket is sold to enter both towers. The rooms showcase ancient furniture, musical instruments, and other relics of Xi'an's storied past. And the view from the top? Oh yeah, that's an added bonus.



Top Recommended Tour

Discover Xi'an , China's first capital city, like no book can show you. We have selected the highlights of the city for you and our professional, knowledgeable, friendly, English-speaking guides will make this city one to remember. Get ready to learn 4,000 years of history in just 2 days.



Day 01

Terracotta Warriors & the Ancient City Wall (B, L)

Today is the highlight of your Xi'an tour — and possibly one of the most amazing days on any tour to China. After having breakfast at your hotel, our guide will meet you in the hotel lobby and transport you in a private car to the Museum of the Terracotta Warriors located about 1 ½ hours away. Made even more famous in the west after the movie "the Mummy 3" which magically brought this enormous army back to life, the Terracotta Warriors are considered one of the most important archeological finds in history — along with sites like Pompeii, King Tut's tomb, and Machu Pichu. This incomparable find changed the way the world understood Chinese history and is understandably the main reason people come to Xi'an. No other archeological find has come anywhere close to unearthing the more than 8,000 perfectly intact, completely unique statues that were all cast to represent 8,000 different people — along with weapons, horses, chariots, and other relics from the time. For those unfamiliar with the Warriors, this is considered one of the top destinations in China, as well as the world.

The museum now is actually an ongoing excavation site with an enormous roof over top and archeologists are still working round-the-clock at unearthing more. There are several different pits to visit and a small, more typical museum to see some of the best examples closeup. You'll have several hours here before we have lunch and then head

back to Xi'an.

In the afternoon, (weather permitting) we'll ride bikes atop Xi'an's ancient walls. For those who would prefer to not go bike riding, walking is also an option. The wall stretches for 8 miles (14km), but it's up to each visitor whether or not to see the entire thing. We'll make stops along our ride, especially when arriving at the Muslim Quarter. This labyrinth of ancient architecture and small, winding streets has an amazing selection of food and Chinese Muslim culture. Evenings are the best time to enjoy the quarter as everything is lit up and there are booths selling all kinds of food, trinkets, and local specialties. Art abounds too — catch a traditional Shadow Puppet show, get your profile or front silhouette cut out of paper, or listen to traditional Chinese music played in small theaters or on the street. It's a feast for your ears, eyes, and nose. Best of all, while you will see some tourists here, the quarter is actually popular with locals. So visitors will truly get the feeling they are seeing a real, thriving part of an ancient city — not a tourist stop. Oh, did we mention how amazing the views of Xi'an are from atop the wall?

Good to know:

If you are a fan of Chinese Kungfu, you can add a Taiji Class to this trip which takes place on top of the City Wall.

For those who prefer not to cycle, you can take the open-air mini bus as an alternative.

Day 02

City tour & Departure (B, L)

Today we visit one of China's most comprehensive history museums, the Shaanxi History Museum. Touted as one of the best in China, this museum highlights something from every part of Chinese history — dating back to the early Dynastic period, all the way to modern day. True lovers of the Middle Kingdom's past can easily spend all day here, but we'll plan for just the morning.

Next, we'll pay a visit to the Big Goose Pagoda and learn about the Chinese Buddhist culture. This nearly 200 ft tall (65m) pagoda has often been used as a symbol of Xi'an and is located in a temple complex surrounded by a square with fountains. Afterwards, we'll pay a visit to a local Xi'an family in their home and get a dumpling cooking class. We'll learn local cooking techniques, seasoning tips, and see first-hand how people use a typical Xi'an kitchen. This is a unique opportunity offered by our company.

If you would like for us to arrange a tour to HuaShan mountain, either independent of the above city tour, or as an add-on, please let us know.

Main Attractions

Below you'll find a comprehensive list of the best Xi'an has to offer

The Museum of Qin Terracotta Warriors and Horses

★★★★★ | Monument / Historical site & relics / Tomb

Found by complete accident in the most fortuitous manner in 1974 by local villagers digging a well. Excavation started almost immediately as it was obvious this was one of humanity's biggest, most historically significant archeological finds. Everything here belonged to China's very first unifying emperor Qin Shi Huang who ruled around 220BC. In fact, his dynasty is now referred to as the Qin dynasty and is considered the beginning of "China". Previous to Emperor ShiHuang, today's China was ruled by many different groups, each controlling their own geographic location. This is the same situation as found in Medieval Europe when different "Houses", or families, ruled England, Spain, Italy, and France — long before any of those unified under one ruler and took their geographic shape they have today. So, this army represents the very beginning of the China we know today.

Obviously, the importance of the Qin dynasty is well known in China, but outside, some people may still not be aware of the Terracotta Army or the Qin dynasty. Thanks to Hollywood however, this archeological jewel was made more famous in the West after the 2008 movie "The Mummy 3" which magically brought this enormous army back to life. Today, the Terracotta Warriors are considered one of the most important archeological finds in history — along with sites like Pompei, King Tut's tomb, and Machu Pichu. This incomparable find changed the way the world understood Chinese history and is understandably the main reason people come to Xi'an . No other archeological find has come anywhere close to unearthing the more than 8,000 perfectly intact, completely unique statues that were all cast to represent 8,000 different people — along with weapons, horses, chariots, and other relics from the time. This is considered one of the top destinations in China, as well as the world.

The museum now is actually an ongoing excavation site with an enormous roof over top and archeologists are still working round-the-clock at unearthing more. There are several different pits to visit and a small, more typical museum to see some of the best examples closeup. The main pit is the size of a large aircraft hangar and it alone will take most people an at least an hour to walk around.

Tip: To get the best shots of the warriors, a good telephoto, or zoom, lens with low-light shooting capability will be necessary. Binoculars are also helpful to get the best views.



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 秦始皇兵马俑博物馆 Qín Shǐ Huáng Bīng Mǎ Yǒng Bó Wù Guǎn
- Duration: 2 hours minimum, 4–6 hours for enthusiasts.
- Entrance fee: 150 RMB
- Opening hours: 16th Mar — 15th Nov: 8:30 — 18:35
16th Nov — 15th Mar: 8:30 — 18:05
- Address: Intersection of Qin Huang Guan Road and Qin Ling North Road, Linyi District, Xi'an
- Best time to visit: All year round
- How to get to there: Take bus 5 or 306 from Xi'an Railway Station East Square to the terminal "Terracotta Warriors"



Shaanxi History Museum

★★★★★ | Museum / Historical site & relics

Located in the west of the Dayan Pagoda in Xi'an, this is the largest modern national museum in China. The museum covers a total area of 700,000 ft² (65,000 m²) and houses over 37,000 cultural relics, including simple stone tools used by ancient humans to items used in daily life from around 1840 — this spans over 1 million years. Shaanxi's importance can be compared similarly to that of the Smithsonian in Washington DC or the British Museum in London and is easily one of the top 3 most important museums in China.

There are different types of cultural relics with exquisite bronze ware of the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, terracotta figures in a variety of shapes, some of the country's best gold and silver items from the Han and Tang Dynasties, and distinctive murals from the tombs of the Tang Dynasty. The Museum is truly a treasure trove boasting a wide variety of fine artwork.



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 陕西历史博物馆
Shǎn Xī Lì Shǐ Bó Wù Guǎn
- Duration: 3 hours for most people, all day for lovers of Chinese history
- Entrance fee: Main museum — Free.
Brochure of the Tang Dynasty — 30 RMB (This brochure has good information about the Tang Dynasty)
Collection of Murals in the Tang Dynasty — 300 RMB
- Opening hours: 8:30–18:00 (stop selling tickets at 16:30) from Mar. 15th to Nov. 14th; 9:00–17:30 (stop selling tickets at 16:00) from Nov. 15th to Mar. 14th of the following year. It is closed on Monday all year round.
- Best time to visit: All year round
- Address: 91 Xiao Zhai East Road, Xi'an
- How to get there:
 - By Bus: Take 5, 19, 24, 26, 27, 30, 34, 401, 521, 527, 610, 701, or 710 and get off at Cuihua Road Station.
 - By Subway: Take Subway Line 2 or Line 3 to Xiaozhai Station and leave the station from Exit D. Then, walk east along East Xiaozhai Road for about a ½ mile (800 m). Take Subway Line 3 to Dayanta Station and then walk west along East Xiaozhai Road for about a ½ mile (800 m).

Xi'an City Wall



Architecture / Historical sites

Xi'an City Wall is a landmark of ancient Xi'an and one of its most defining features. Pictures of the wall and its guard towers grace guidebook and magazine covers worldwide. Many travelers say it's the best all-around ancient wall in China (even beating the Great Wall for various reasons). The existing city wall was built in the early Ming Dynasty and runs about 8 miles (14 km). It only takes about 1 ½ hours to cycle the whole wall and bikes are permitted atop. Some people like walking atop the wall and others go for their daily jog here. The design of the wall was based on an imperial city in the Tang Dynasty, which included such defensive features as moats and watchtowers. The view of Xi'an from atop the wall is fantastic.

QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 西安城墙 Xi Ān Chéng Qiáng
- Duration: 30 minutes – 4 hours
- Entrance fee: 54 RMB
- Opening hours:

South and North gates: 8:00–22:00 all year round

Hanguang Gate: 8:00–17:30 all year round

Other gates: April 1st–30th 8:00–18:00; May 1st–October 31st 8:00–19:00; November 1st–March 31st 8:00–18:00

- Best time to visit: Sunny days from spring to autumn.

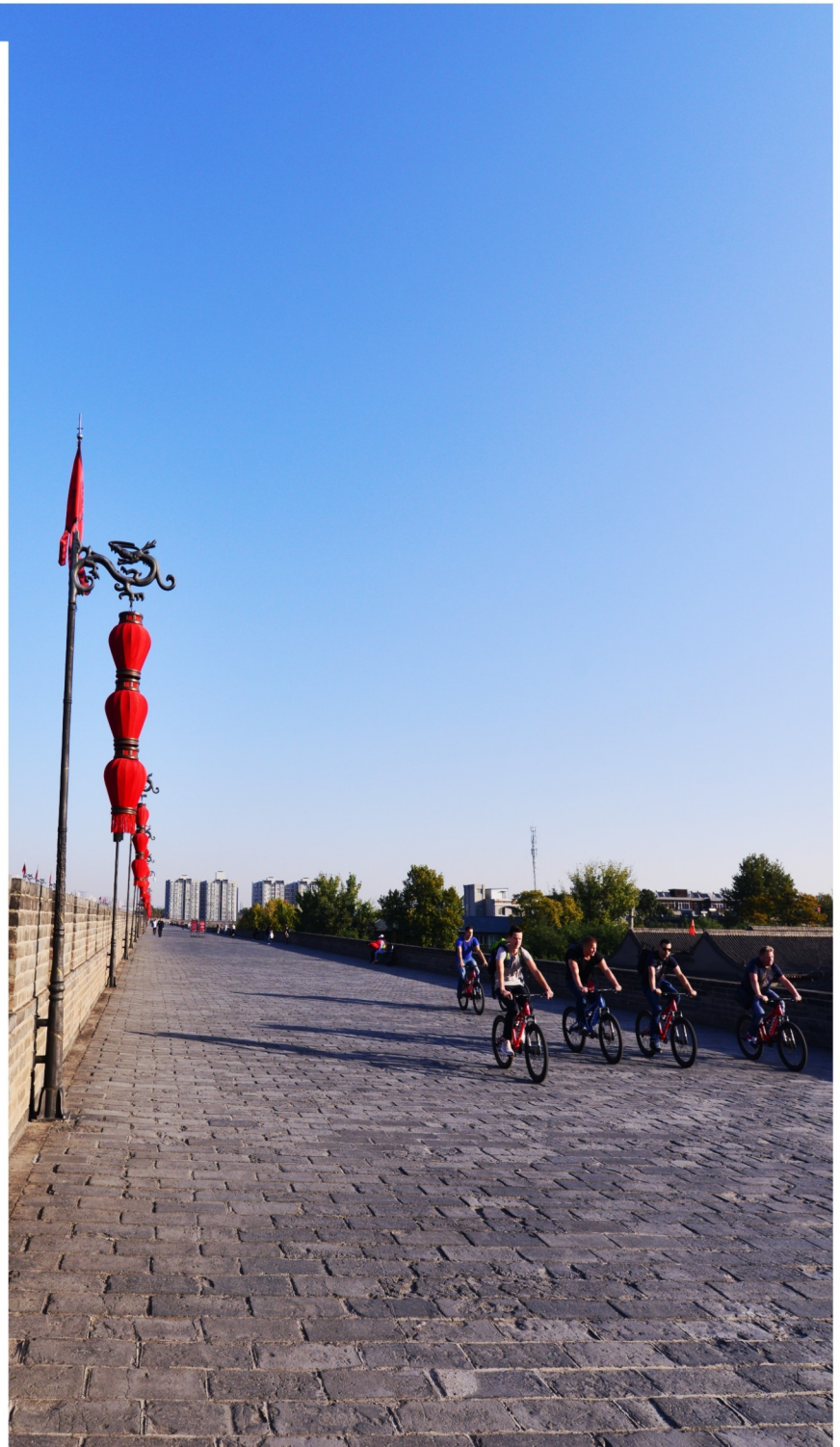
How to get there:

1. To the South Gate: Take Subway line 2 to Yongningmen Station; bus no.6, 11, 12, 23, 46, 215, 239, 258, 600, 603, 608, 910, K600...and arrive at South Gate Station.

2. To the East Gate: Take bus no.8, 22, 27, 29, 33, 37, 43, 45, 102, 203, 218, 235, 252, 300, 527, 602, 604, or 903...and arrive at East Gate Station.

3. To the North Gate: Take Subway line 2 to Anyuanmen Station; bus no.6, 26, 28, 33, 37, 39, 117, 205, 208, 214, 229, 236, or 511...and arrive at North Gate Station.

4. To the West Gate: Take bus no.4, 10, 15, 23, 31, 201, 205, 206, 215, 221, 222, 223, 300, 407, 504, 611 or 701...and arrive at West Gate Station.



Xi'an Forest of Stone Stele Museum

★★★★★ | Museum / Monument (aka Steles and Stelae Museum).

Situated near the Wenchang Gate and housed inside Xi'an's Confucius Temple, the Xi'an Forest of Stone Stele Museum was built 900 years ago and hosts an impressive collection of ancient carved stonework — tablets, statues, wall carvings, etc. It is currently listed on China's "National Key Cultural Relics Protection" list as it holds over 1,000 stone tablet carvings as well as the first ever recorded evidence of Christianity in China.



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 西安碑林博物馆 Xī Ān Bēi Lín Bó Wù Guǎn
- Duration: 1–2 hours
- Entrance fee: March 1st – November 30th: 75 RMB

December 1st – February 29th : 50 RMB

- Opening hours: 8:00–18:00
- Best time to visit: All year round



HuaShan Mountain (aka, Mt. Hua)

★★★★★ | Mountain / Adventure

Mt. Hua is located 75 miles (120 km) outside of Xi'an . Some say the mountains seen in the animated movie "Kung Fu Panda" were based on HuaShan, while others say they were based on Huang Shan mountain outside of Shanghai. Either way, on an overcast day, the mountain magically turns into a misty, fantasy-like Confucian experience. On clear, sunny days, the views can stretch for 100 miles (160km).

A visit to the mountain is an incredible day-trip from Xi'an and will take the entire day. Overnighting at the top is possible as there are refuges that accept travelers, but it's recommended to contact them ahead of time and expect fairly basic accommodation. Nonetheless, waking up to a sunrise, or seeing the sunset, from the top can be one of the top experiences of any trip to China.

Getting to the top has been made easier as the government built 2 cable cars (one going to the West peak, and another going to the North peak) that whisk visitors to the top in minutes. If you don't want to fork over the 120/140 RMB (one-way, low/high season), then there are several trails you can take. Each contain around 10,000 steps and take 4–6 hours to complete going up (probably more for those out-of-shape) and about 1 hour less coming down. Entrance tickets are good for 2 days (in case you get stuck on top). It's allowed, and even recommended, to take the West cable car to the top, walk across the mountain (several hours), and then take the North cable car to the bottom. (Note: getting to the North cable car entrance on top may require visitors to walk down around 1,000 steps, depending on the route you take while atop).

The "top" of the mountain is actually a sprawling chain of peaks and HuaShan is divided into 4 sections — North, East, South, and West. Visitors

are advised to check a map of HuaShan prior to leaving and identify the destinations they want to see before going up. It can take several hours of (fairly easy) walking once on top to get from one side of the chain to the other and there are many things to see along the way. Smooth, concrete walkways line the entire mountain complex and all the steps are concrete as well (some are narrow however, so be careful).

Best things on see/do on top:

- Small Taoist temples — all over HuaShan sit tiny Taoist temples often with incense bellowing out of the windows.
- Narrow (10"/25cm), rickety, wooden planks — precariously bolted into the side of sheer rock faces with +1,000 ft (+300m), these weathered old boards can be traversed for those truly brave-hearted souls. Note: there is no place on HuaShan where it's mandatory to cross these wooden planks. All planks are located in optional-only areas and signs clearly indicate them well before you're there. Steels cables are also bolted in for hand holds and of recent, safety harnesses are available for about 30 RMB to those who want them — although part of the fun is to see the number of people who traverse these tiny planks without one. A picture of you on one of these seemingly 1,000-year-old planks, with one leg hanging off and nothing but air and birds between you and the ground make this one of the most unique pictures you may ever get anywhere on the planet.

- Tree-lined paths — hiking, or walking, on the top is quite pleasant. The paths are in good shape and trees are all around. If you take the cable car up and down, there isn't much hard walking to do.

- The views — Even if you do a day trip and don't get to see the sunrise or sunset, the views are still

spectacular from nearly anywhere atop.

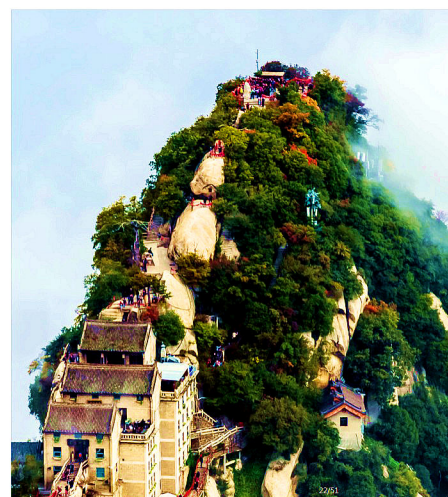
- The padlocks — while somewhat cheesy for many visitors, if you want to lock your experiences forever on top, there is a section that allows people to put a padlock on a fence beside the other 100,000 hopeless romantics.

Notes of caution:

Expect the weather to be much colder and windier on top. It's usually at least 15oF (8oC) cooler than the base and always windy — making the temperature to feel even colder yet. In fact, many report the temperature difference to feel more like 25oF/13oC cooler. Nevertheless, there are many areas of the mountain that aren't actually near the edge and on a sunny day, those areas can get quite warm — so packing in layers and bringing a windbreaker is a good idea. Shorts during the summer, late spring, and early autumn will be fine for most people.

Limited food is available atop, so it's recommended to bring your own.

The biggest drawback by far is the number of people who ascend HuaShan every day. It's mega-popular among local tourists and 10s of thousands visit every day. To reduce the number of fellow visitors, go during the week and never during a Chinese holiday.





QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 华山 Huà Shān

- Duration: 6 – 8 hours on top, 10–14 hours including transportation. Overnights are possible.

- Entrance fee (validity: 48 hours):

March 1 – November 30: 160 RMB /person,

December 1 – February 28/29: 100 RMB /person

- Cable Car fee

Hours

March – November: 07:00 – 19:00, December – February:

08:00 – 18:00

Destination

Donggoukou – White Sparrow Temple – West Peak

March – November: 280 RMB round trip; 140 RMB one-way

December – February: 240 RMB round trip; 120 RMB one-way

Note:

1) The Wengyu Tourism Bus runs between the Tourist Center and Donggoukou

(the lower station of West Peak cable car). The bus costs 40 RMB one-way and 80 RMB round trip.

2) Visitors can get off at the White Sparrow Temple on the way to the cable car and then get back on a different bus and continue to the West Peak cable car entrance.

Wamiaogou – North Peak

March – November: 150 RMB round trip; 80 RMB one-way

December – February: 80 RMB round trip; 45 RMB one-way

Note: The Huangfuyu Tourism

Bus runs between Tourist Center and Wamiaogou, the lower station of North Peak

cable car. The bus costs 20 RMB one-way and 40 RMB

round trip.

- Opening hours:

West Gate: Open 24 hours a day

Dong Gate Cableway: peak season 7:00–19:00, off-season 8:30–17:00;

North Peak Cableway: peak season: 7:00–19:00, off season 9:00–17:00

- Address: South Section of Yuquan Road, Huayin City, Weinan City, Shaanxi Province

Best season: April to October (although for the hearty traveler, a snow-capped HuaShan experience in winter is spectacular)

- How to get there:

Regular Coach/Long-distance Bus: Xi'an East Coach Station – Huashan Station. The first bus leaves at 7:00 and the last at 19:15. There are buses every 15 minutes. Just inform the driver that you want to get off at "Hua Shan" and they will drop you near the entrance.

Ticket price: 41 RMB /person (insurance fee included)

By high-speed train: Take subway line 2 to Xi'an North Train Station. Then, take a high-speed train to Huashan North Train Station – departures every 10 minutes. The entire journey takes 50 minutes and costs 54.5RMB/second class seat. There are free buses (Huayin Bus 1 and 2) from Huashan North station to Huashan Scenic Area (this is the ticketing office), and takes about 30 minutes.

Muslim Quarter / Muslim Street

★★★★★ | Food / Local Life

Easily one of the most vibrant, electric streets in all of China. This labyrinth of ancient architecture and small, winding streets has an amazing selection of food and Chinese Muslim culture. Evenings are the best time to enjoy the quarter as everything is lit up and there are booths selling all kinds of food, trinkets, and local specialties. Art abounds too — catch a traditional Shadow Puppet show, get your profile or front silhouette cut out of paper, or listen to traditional Chinese music played in small theaters or on the street. It's a feast for your ears, eyes, and nose. Best of all, while you will see some tourists here, the quarter is actually popular with locals so visitors will truly get the feeling they are seeing a real, thriving part of an ancient city — not a tourist stop.

Two of the area's highlights are the Bell and Drum Towers (mentioned separately below). Also stunning at night, they are must-see stops while in Xi'an, especially for those planning a visit to the Muslim Quarter.



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 回民街 Huí Mín Jiē
- Duration: 1.5 hours
- Entrance fee: Free
- Opening hours: Open 24 hours a day
- Address: An area consisting of many streets located inside the Wall, on the west side of Zhong Gu Lou Square.
- Best time to visit: All year around
- How to get there:

Bus: Take bus 618, 15, or 205 and get off at “Zhong Lou West Railway” Station.

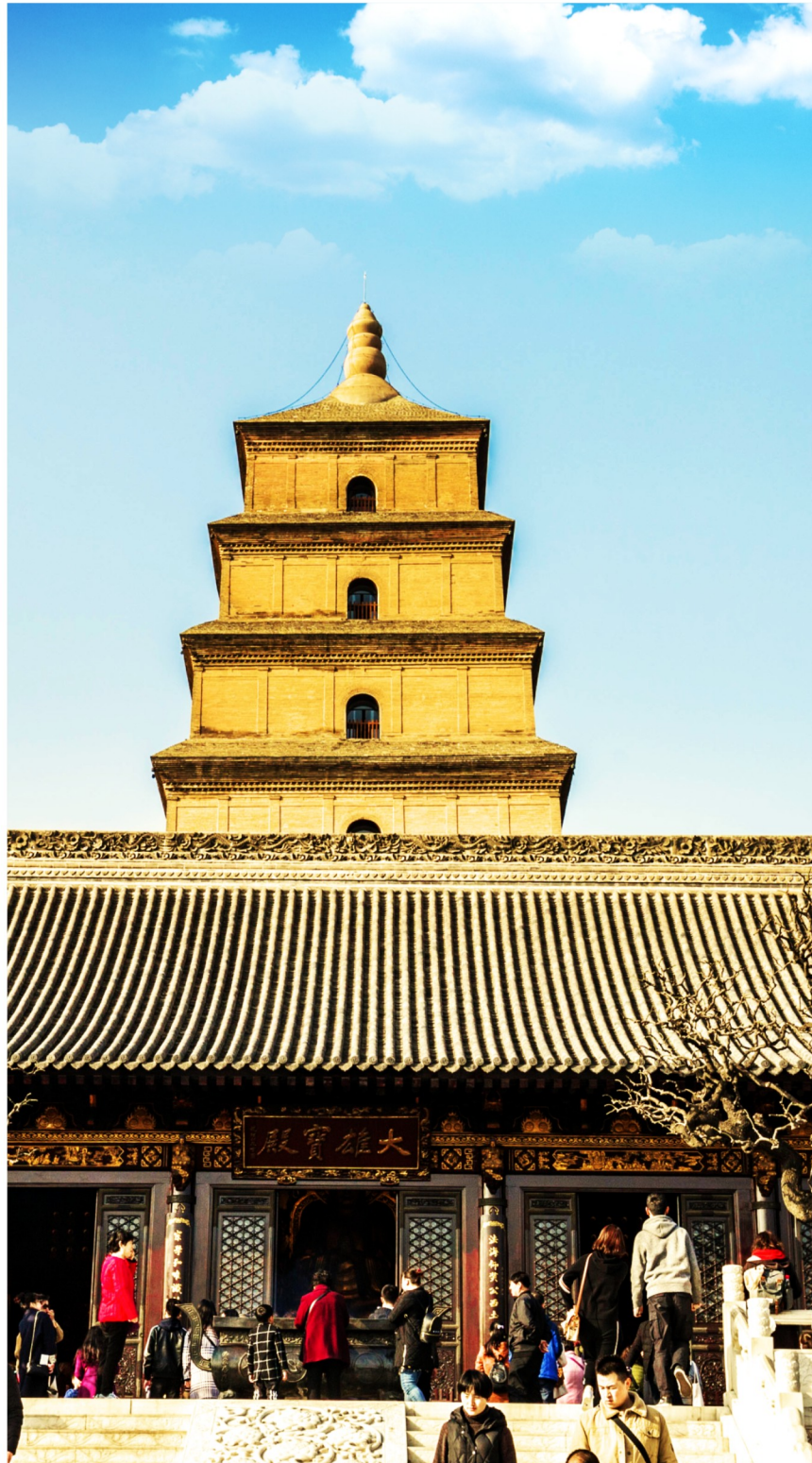
Subway: Take Subway Line 2 to the “Zhong Lou” station, then it's a 5 minute walk from the station.



The Big Goose Pagoda

★★★★★ | Religious Building / Culture

The Big Goose Pagoda is an elegantly constructed, 210 ft (65 m) high sacred Buddhist temple and one of the most famous Xi'an landmarks. It was built in 652 AD during the Tang dynasty by Prince Li Zhi in honor of his mother Queen Wende and its original purpose was to house tens of thousands of Buddhist relics — some brought back from India over 1,000 years ago. Inside are many Buddhist statues and artwork, including the obligatory golden Buddha statue. Located inside the Da Ci'en Temple complex, two separate tickets need to be purchased to go inside the pagoda.



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 大雁塔 Dà Yàn Tǎ
- Duration: 1 hour, 2–3 for enthusiasts of Buddhist culture
- Entrance fee: 80 RMB total — 50 RMB to enter the Da Ci'en temple complex + 30 RMB to enter the Big Goose Pagoda
- Opening hours: 09:00 – 17:00
- Best time to visit: spring to autumn
- How to get there: Take bus Y6, 21, 22, 24, 601 or 610, or Minibus 501 or 503.

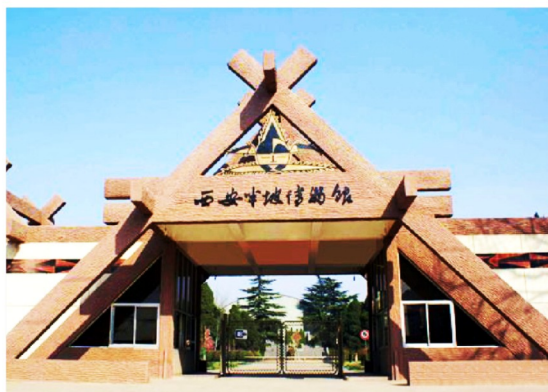


Banpo Museum

★★★★★ | Historical Site / Museum

Banpo is one of the oldest archeological sites in the world to showcase human civilization. This site contains evidence of a town-like society estimated to have flourished here around 4,000BC, although carbon dating has placed objects found at the site to around 6,500 BC — making this site 6,000 — 8,500 years old. There are exceedingly few places on the planet where you can see anything that is 8,500 years old and to simply behold something that old with one's own eyes is an indescribable experience. For comparison, the pyramids at Giza are 5,000 years old and ancient Rome is a spring chicken at only 2,700 years old (with the Coliseum turning 2,000 in 2080). There's just not much that has survived, or been discovered, that is older than the Egyptian pyramids. So, if you're in Xi'an , you have the chance to see something that very few people will ever observe.

There are basically two sites to see. One is a museum which contains the best examples of the artifacts found (usually considered the main reason for coming to Banpo) and gives a good look into the Neolithic Yangshao, Yellow River Valley culture (amazing stuff for teachers, academics, and all those interested in human history and civilization). The other is a recreation of the what archeologists think the village looked like (which may not be worth the time). Banpo is located within the city limits of Xi'an , doesn't take long to reach from the center, and is served by public transportation.



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 半坡博物馆
Bàn Pō Bó Wù Guǎn
- Duration: 1–2 hours, 4 hours for enthusiasts
- Entrance Fee: March 1 – November 30: 65 RMB; December 1 to February 29: 45 RMB
- Opening hours: 8:00 – 17:00
- Best season to visit: All year round
- How to get there: Take Bus 11, 15, 42, 105 or 301, or Minibus 913, 401, 406 or 507, get off at the Ban Po Station and head south for about 500 ft (150 m)



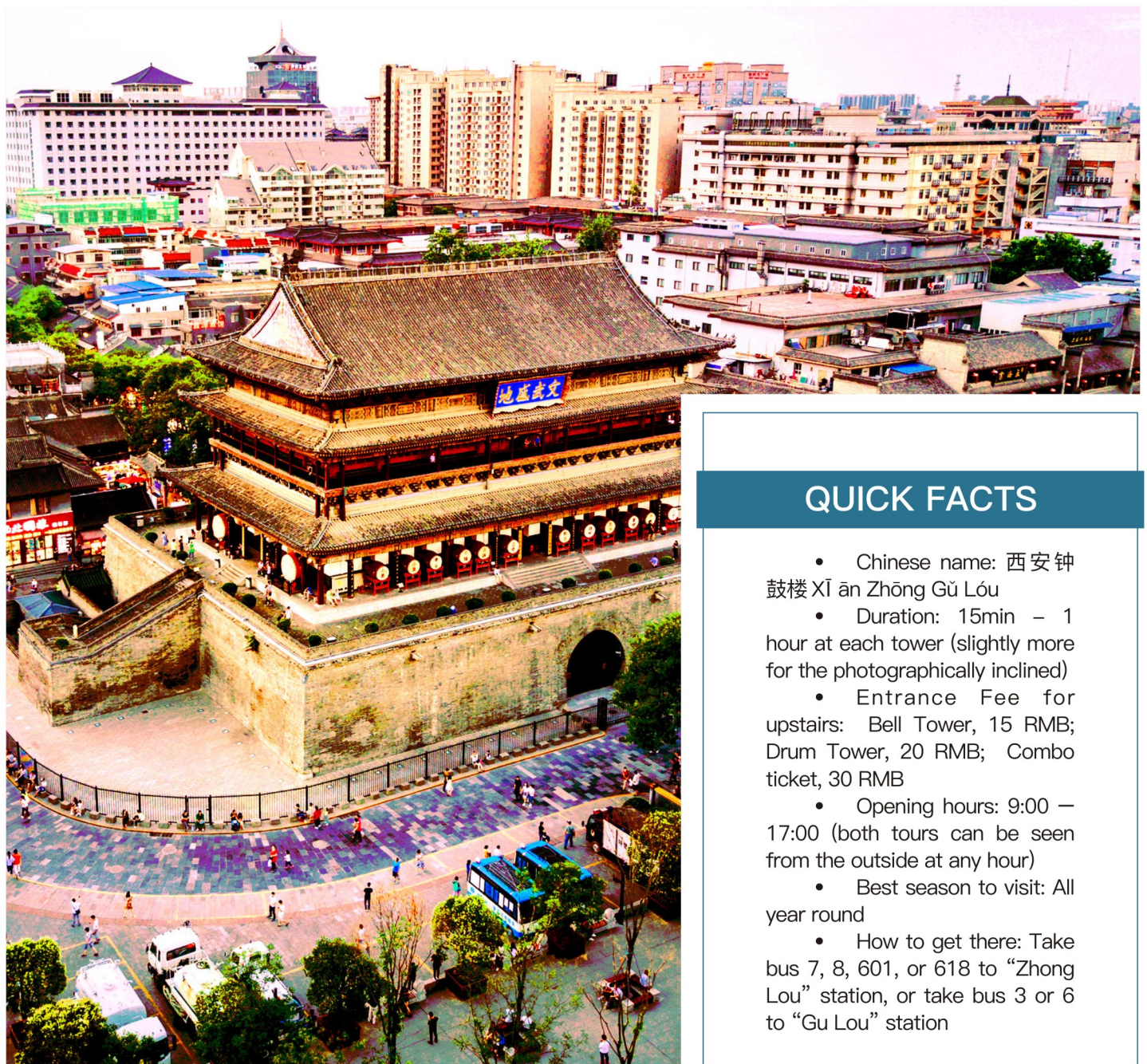
Bell and Drum Tower

★★★★☆ | Architecture / Historical Site

For a jaw-dropping experience that will last decades after your China trip, remember these 3 words — go .. at .. night. While the daytime versions of these sites are certainly worthwhile, they are simply spectacular at night! These are ancient styled, 10-story high, stone and wood towers built inside separate traffic round-a-bouts, separating them from any other building by at least 100 yards/meters. At night, they are illuminated in bright red, yellow, and white making them an absolute must-see for photographers and lovers of ancient Chinese architecture alike. Visitors are allowed to the upstairs mini-museums for a small fee and a combined ticket is sold to enter both towers. The rooms showcase ancient furniture, musical instruments, and other relics of Xi'an's storied past. And the view from the top? Oh yeah, that's an added bonus. To hear drum performances in the Drum Tower (included in the ticket price), below is the current schedule (Note: there are occasional bell performances at the Bell Tower, please check updated online info for times).

Performance venue: Showroom on the second floor of the Drum Tower

Time: Morning: 9:30 10:15 11:00 11:45 Afternoon: 14:00 14:45 15:30 16:20



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 西安钟鼓楼 Xī ān Zhōng Gǔ Lóu
- Duration: 15min – 1 hour at each tower (slightly more for the photographically inclined)
- Entrance Fee for upstairs: Bell Tower, 15 RMB; Drum Tower, 20 RMB; Combo ticket, 30 RMB
- Opening hours: 9:00 – 17:00 (both tours can be seen from the outside at any hour)
- Best season to visit: All year round
- How to get there: Take bus 7, 8, 601, or 618 to “Zhong Lou” station, or take bus 3 or 6 to “Gu Lou” station

Daming Palace Site Park

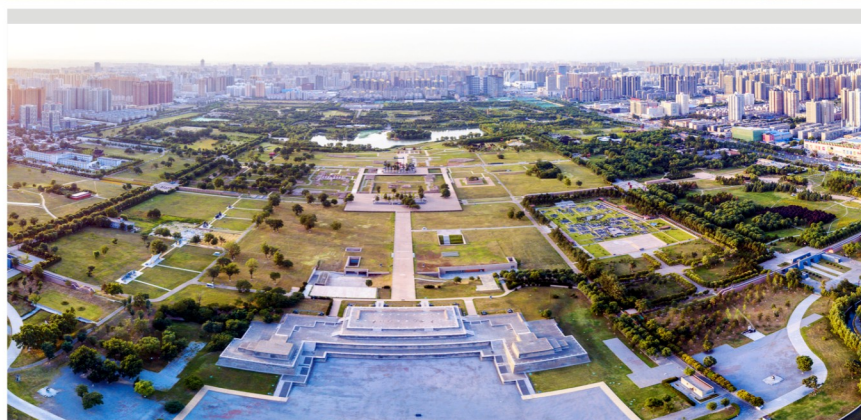
★★★★☆ | Park / Archaeological Site

Built in 626 AD and destroyed in the late Tang dynasty about 250 years later, Daming Palace Site Park was the most magnificent palace complex of the Tang Empire. Even today, one of the biggest draws for many visitors is its unbelievable expansiveness — concrete covers an open area that stretches for at least 50 football fields!

The Park is built on the ruins of The Tang Dynasty's magnificent palace and today visitors can see the original foundation and bridges, with an interesting palace miniature built to a 1:15 ratio.

QUICK FACTS

- Chinese Name: 大明宫遗址公园
Dà Míng Gōng Yí Zhǐ Gōng Yuán
- Duration: 1–2 hours
- Entrance fee: 60 RMB
- Opening Hours: 09:30 – 18:00
- Best Time to Visit: February to November
- How to get there: Take bus 2, 17, or 22, and get off at Dahua1935 Station; Take Bus 2, 262, 288, 528, 717, 723 and get off at Danfengmen Station; Take Bus 18, 36, 37, and other 16 buses to Gongjiaoliugongsi Station
- Take subway line 2 and get off at Daminggong West, take exit C or D and then walk 10 minutes to enter the park.



Zhongnan Mountain

★★★★☆ | Natural Landscape / Taoism

Zhongnan Mountain is a lush green Taoist mountain with nice views, and opportunities to experience Tao culture and also practice Kung Fu (the quintessential Chinese martial art is often practiced here as). The mountain draws many followers of the Quanzhen Sect of Taoism and readers of Jin Yong's Kung Fu novels.

There are many scenic spots here including Mount South Wutai, Mount Cuihua, and Louguan Tai.



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese Name: 终南山
Zhōng Nán Shān
- Duration: A day trip
- Entrance Fee: 20 RMB
- Best time to visit: From March to November
- Address: South of Chang'an County, Xi'an



Small Goose Pagoda



Religious Building / Culture

QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 小雁塔 Xiǎo Yàn Tǎ
- Duration: 30 minutes – 2 hours
- Entrance fee: Free
- Opening hours: 9:00 – 16:00 (Closed on Tuesdays)
- Best time to visit: March to November
- How to get there: Take bus 21 or 402



Don't let the word "small" make you think it's somehow "less" than the Big Goose Pagoda. In fact, the Small Goose Pagoda is quainter, with better landscaping, and many would say makes for a nicer, more intimate experience than its larger cousin. Even the pagoda itself is described as being more symmetrical and pleasing to the eye. For those interested in Buddhist culture, this stop should be considered, and you may want to visit it first before going to the Big Goose. The Small Goose Pagoda was built during the Tang Dynasty and has witnessed over 70 earthquakes in its 1,200 year history, making it all the more astonishing that thirteen of its fifteen stories are still original and have survived this long.



Huaqing Palace



Leisure / Hot Spring



A picturesque ancient wooden palace beautifully constructed in the local ancient style, the small palace is set in a peaceful, postcard-like setting backdropped by a lush green hill with a shallow lake gracing the front. The lake is part of a natural hot spring complex that stays a constant 110°F (43°C) all year round. The water is rich with silicon dioxide and fluorine, and is claimed to be beneficial in curing rheumatism and arthritis. The Huaqing Hot Spring, sometimes called the “Magic Spring in the East”, is as renowned as the Baths of Caracalla in ancient Rome and British Bath Spa. The Huaqing Palace itself is located within the Lishan National Forest Park, and when combined with the Summer Palace, Old Summer Palace, and Chengde Imperial Summer Palace the four collectively are known as the Four Imperial Gardens of China.



QUICK FACTS

- Chinese name: 华清宫 Huá Qīng Gōng
- Duration: 1 – 4 hours
- Entrance fee: March – November: 150 RMB
December – February: 120 RMB
- Opening hours: 07:00 – 19:00 from March to November; 07:30 – 18:00 from December to February
- Best time to visit: spring and autumn
- Address: 38 Huaqing Road, Lintong District, Xi'an
- How to get there: Take bus 914, 915, Y5(306) or 307 and get off at the Huaqing Station



Eating in Xi'an

Top Recommended Dishes

Shaanxi cuisine, also known as Xi'an or Qin cuisine (named after the Qin dynasty which ruled the area 2,400 years ago and had its capital in Xi'an), is the name of the local cuisine in the Xi'an area. Being so old and located at the terminus of the ancient silk road means that Xi'an has been at the crossroads of different cultures for literally 1,000s of years. This makes their cuisine unique from the rest of China. For those not familiar with Chinese cuisine, Xi'an's flavor more resembles that of middle-eastern food than what people would expect from a visit to Hong Kong — more bread-type dishes with more “exotic” spices such as cumin, mint, and cardamom. Yet, it's not middle eastern at all, but a mouth-watering fusion of Western Asia meets Eastern Asia. For this writer, it's some of the best cuisine China has to offer.



1. Spicy Cumin Lamb with handmade noodles



Chewy handmade wheat noodles mixed with a rich, smoky cumin lamb sauce. Flavors burst out of this plate.

Recommendation:

LIU LAOSI NIUROU GAN MIAN ZHUANG 刘老四牛肉擀面庄

Address: Miaohoujie street, 20m from the police station



2. Gourd Chicken (Hulu Ji)



Hulu Ji is a traditional dish of Xi'an City dating back to the Tang Dynasty. Chicken is boiled, steamed, and fried coming out golden and red with crisp skin and tender, juicy meat.

Recommendation:

Xi'an Restaurant

Address: No. 298, Dongdajie Avenue

3. Braised Three Delicacies (Shao SanXi'an)

A typical winter dish containing: fish balls (ground/minced fish meat rolled into a ball), fish maw, roast pork, fresh green vegetables, and shiitake mushrooms. The flavor is smooth, light, and yet somewhat hearty.

Recommendation:

A Journey to Chang'an (Zhujiu chang'an)

Address: 3F, Yintai Department Store, Yintai Central Ring Plaza, West Avenue



4. Pork Hock with Bone (Daiba Zhouzi)



Somewhat similar to German Pork Knuckle, this a juicy, meaty hunk of pork that is boiled or steamed leaving the skin moist (not crispy). It's a unique looking dish with nice color, aroma, and taste.

Recommendation:

Xi'an Restaurant

Address: No. 298, Dongdajie Avenue

5. Sea Cucumber with Pig's Feet (Haishen hu tizi)

This is a premium Shaanxi dish. Soft sea cucumber and tender pig's feet are soaked in a thick salty juice.

Recommendation:

Tang Dynasty Maison Restaurant (Datang BoXi'an gfu)

Address: No. 6-1, Furongdong Road, Yanta District



6. Warm Sliced Pig Kidney with Sauce

Served crispy and tender with a spicy aroma and rich flavor. Some people enjoy this with hard liquor. Recommendation: Xi'an Restaurant Address: No. 298, Dongdajie Avenue



7. Coin Shaped Black Seaweed (Jinqian Facai)



Seaweed and fresh spinach dressed with white wine, salt, and eggs. It has a uniquely slippery texture when eaten and is a specialty in Northwest China. Recommendation: Tang Dynasty Maison Restaurant (Datang BoXi'an gfu) Address: No. 6-1, Furongdong Road, Yanta District

8. Shredded Stewed Squid (Wei youyu si)



A wet squid dish served over top cut leaks or spring onions and mixed with a tangy red sauce. Recommendation: Huang House from Sanyuan County Address: No. 2-4, Yongxingfang, Inner Zhongshan Gate, Guanzhong Lane, Dongxin Street, Xincheng District

9. Fish Soup (Naitang guozi yu)



This is a milky soup cooked for many hours that contains tender pieces of fish and a tangy vinegar sauce.

Recommendation:

Xi'an Restaurant

Address: No. 298, Dongdajie Avenue



10. Golden Lined Cabbage (Jinbian baicai)

A bowl of cabbage leaves stir fried until they turn a nice golden brown.

Recommendation:

Chang'an Greasy Spoon Restaurant

Address: 1 & 2F, west side of Yitian Holiday World, outside Chaoyang Gate, North Section of Huanchengdong Road, Xincheng District



Top Restaurants

1.

Chang'an Greasy Spoon Restaurant Small dishes

A good place to sample many authentic, local dishes since all meals are served in small dishes so you won't get over stuffed.

Average price per person: 70 RMB

Business hours: 11:00–21:30

Address: 4F, Incity, No. 33, Weiyang Road, Weiyang District

2.

Lao Sun Jia

Over a century old, this is one of Xi'an's most famous restaurants and now has multiple branches across the city. This location is the original and is famous for its steaming bowls of "Yangrou Paomo" (a bowl of small bits of bread, lamb, and lamb broth).

Average price per person: 20–50 RMB

Business hours: 7:00–22:00

Address: 5th fl, 364 Dong Dajie

3.

Xi'an Restaurant

Built in 1929, Xi'an Restaurant is famous for its "original Shaanxi flavor" and has entertained heads of state and governments. Xi'an Restaurant's signature gourd chicken (hulu ji) is the most renowned. Guests also favor their delicious and spicy (Youpo) noodles. In addition to

Shaanxi's traditional dishes, diners will find new dishes too.

Average price per person: 96 RMB

Business hours: Monday to Friday, 10:30 – 14:00, 16:30 – 21:00

Saturday/Sunday, 10:30 – 21:00

Address: No. 110, Nandajie Avenue, Bell Tower Hotel Xi'an

4.

De Fa Chang

Dumplings

If you ask a local which is the best jiaozi (Chinese dumplings) restaurant in Xi'an, they will almost definitely reply, "De Fa Chang". De Fa Chang, founded in 1936, is renowned for its dumpling feasts. The shape and the flavor of each dumpling is unique in the feast and currently they offer over 200 kinds of dumpling in more than ten feast combinations.

Average price per person: 61 RMB

Business hours: 11:00 – 14:00 17:00 – 21:00

Address: Bell Tower Branch: 1F, Bell Drum Tower Plaza

Small Wild Goose Pagoda Branch: No. 74, Youyixi Road, Beilin District

5.

Chun Fa Sheng

This is another famous place to get Pita Bread soaked in Lamb Soup ("Yangrou Paomo"). Chun Fa Sheng is a local time-honored restaurant, listed on the Shaanxi Cultural

Heritage List and also having played host to foreign dignitaries over the years.

Average price per person: 46 RMB

Business hours: 8:30 – 21:30

Address: No. 20, Nanyuanmen Street, Beilin District

6.

Huang House from Sanyuan

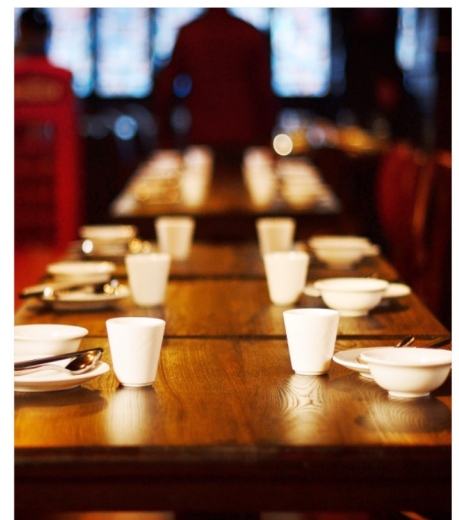
Traditional snacks

A local chain restaurant that first opened over 100 years ago under the Qing dynasty (China's last ruling family) and has been operated by the same family ever since. Many of its dishes date back a century ago are now on the local heritage list. It has a branch in the center of Xi'an.

Average price per person: 63 RMB

Business hours: 10:00–21:00

Address: 2B, Yongningmen Lane Gourmet Food City, Beilin District





Street Food

Brick-and-mortar restaurants are not the only places to get great food in Xi'an . Food stalls often serve up some of the most memorable tastes for visitors and will be found scattered throughout the city.

Visitors should know that the health standards employed by food stalls are often not very different from those observed at established restaurants. And, one major benefit of eating at food stalls is the fact that you can clearly see the food being prepared, the ingredients that are used, the storage practices of those ingredients, and the hygienic standards of the chef. All of these issues are well-hidden at most restaurants (with one exception being “Lanzhou” style restaurants in China — the ones that make hand-pulled noodles — which usually have large windows between the kitchen and the dining area).



Best Streets for Great Eats

People of different ethnic groups still set up their food stalls along the street today just as they did 100's of years ago during the Tang Dynasty. Being one of China's four ancient capitols and located on the ancient silk road means that Xi'an has been at the crossroads of different cultures for literally 1,000s of years. This makes the local Shaanxi cuisine unique from the rest of China, while also creating a wonderful mixing pot of many other Chinese cultures and flavors. The end result is some of the best street food in the country. In addition to the renowned Muslim Quarter, there are many streets known for serving up hot, fresh, and delicious eats.

1. Dapiyuan Street

One of many great streets in the Muslim Quarter, Dapiyuan Street is nearly 1,200 ft (400 m) and was constructed 600 years ago — giving it an authentically ancient feel. Frequented by locals, the street serves many dishes from spicy soup (Hula tang) in the morning to fried noodles and barbecue of the evening. Just pick any place in the street that looks interesting (and/or busy) and give it a try.

Recommendations:

Yizheng House, Tongsheng & Sun Qinghai Cured Beef and Mutton, Grandma Hua's Plum Juice, Jia's Mix Congee, Ma's Jiafen Steamed Meat with Rice and Wonton, HongshunXi'an g Marinade Bean Jelly, Xi'an Sheng Zhiwang Steamed Flour with Sesame Paste, Ding's Fried Meat (halal), Liu's Yiwei Meat Ball and Hula Soup (halal), Wang's Dumpling House, and Laohuifang Spicy Hot Pot

Address: Lianhu District

Transportation: Take subway Line 2 to the Gulou Station

Nearby Attractions: Bell Tower, Drum Tower, Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Fortifications of Xi'an , and Daming Palace National Heritage Park





2. Shajin Bridge Street

Shajin Bridge street is a 2,400 ft (800 m) long quarter, noisy as a bazaar beginning from 6 am. Numerous stalls on both sides of the street are filled with all types of daily items and a tour of the street will give any visitor a real sense of real life Xi'an. The busy, energetic atmosphere continues late into the night, sometimes going until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.

Recommendation:

Ma's Beef Pancake, Li's Meat Balls and Spicy Soup, Yang Tianyu Sandwich with Cured Beef, Jingde Shredded Bread Soaked in Mutton Soup, Bai's Meatballs, Braised Cabbages, and Aromatic Pancakes.

Address: Lianhu District

Transportation: Take subway Line 1 to the Shajin Bridge Station or take bus 10, 12, or 28 and get off at the Shajin Bridge bus stop.

Nearby Attractions: Daming Palace National Heritage Park, Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Bell Tower and Drum Tower



3. Xiyangshi Street

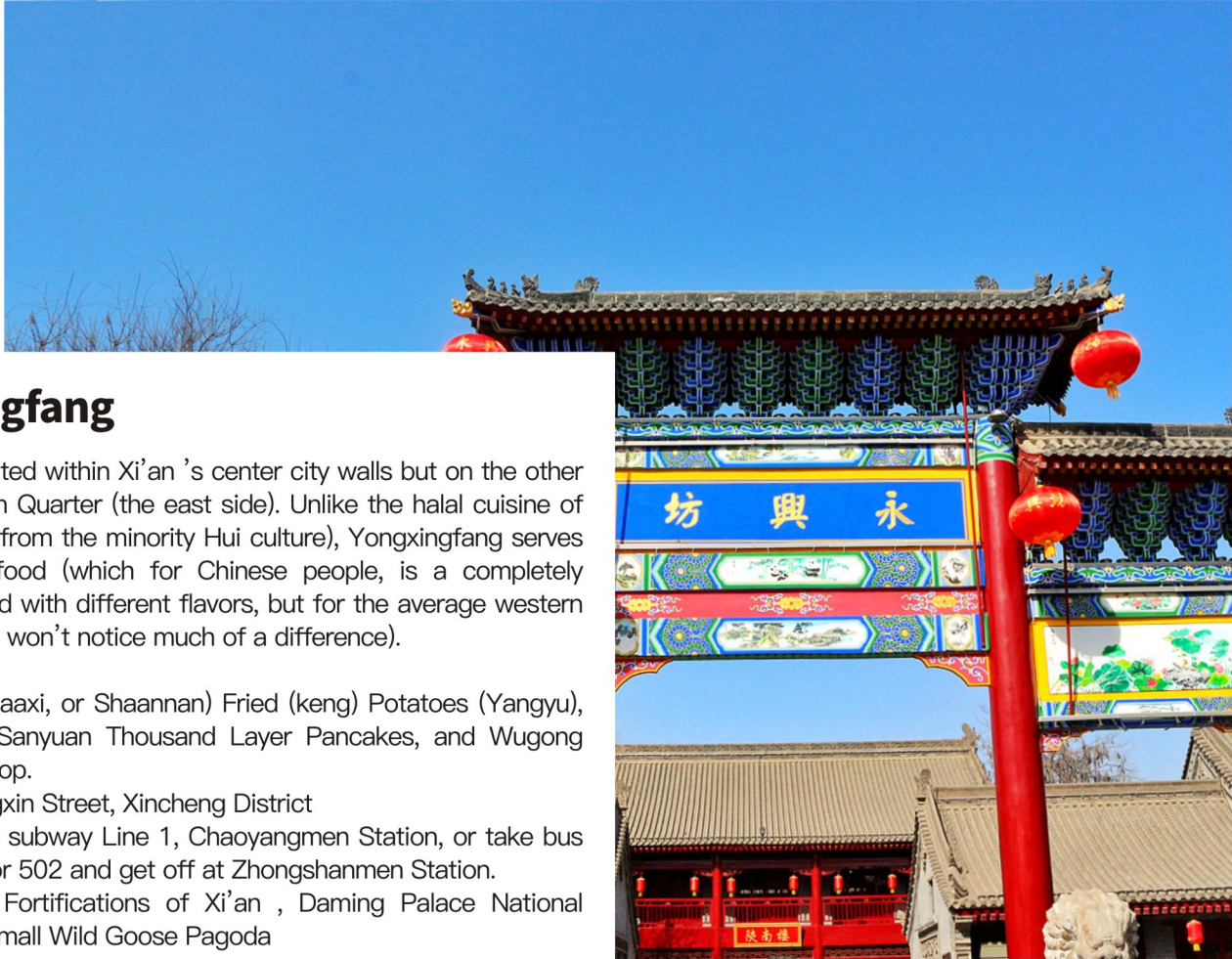
Another street located in the Muslim Quarter just 1 street over from Dapiyuan, this street similarly measures 1,200 ft (400 m) long and was also constructed over 600 years — interestingly as a de facto sheep and lamb market. Now it boasts many shops and stalls from China's Hui minority. Stalls here mostly serve "snack-type" food, although many travelers sampling multiple "snacks" can easily make a full meal out of a trip here. (Note: in China, take-away bowls of soup, noodles, and kabobs which are usually consumed as a light meal in the West, are often referred to as "snacks").

Address: Near North Guangji Street, Lianhu District

Transportation: Take bus 4, 7, 8, 15, or 32

Nearby attractions: Bell Tower, Drum Tower, Fortifications of Xi'an and Small Wild Goose Pagoda





4. Yongxingfang

Yongxingfang is located within Xi'an's center city walls but on the other side from the Muslim Quarter (the east side). Unlike the halal cuisine of the Muslim Quarter (from the minority Hui culture), Yongxingfang serves mostly Han street food (which for Chinese people, is a completely different style of food with different flavors, but for the average western traveler, most people won't notice much of a difference).

Recommendations:

Hanzhong (South Shaaxi, or Shaannan) Fried (keng) Potatoes (Yangyu), Zichang Pancakes, Sanyuan Thousand Layer Pancakes, and Wugong Dough Twist Workshop.

Address: No. 1, Dongxin Street, Xincheng District

Transportation: Take subway Line 1, Chaoyangmen Station, or take bus 22, 32, 33, 47, 263 or 502 and get off at Zhongshanmen Station.

Nearby Attractions: Fortifications of Xi'an, Daming Palace National Heritage Park, and Small Wild Goose Pagoda



5. Shun Cheng Lane

Shun Cheng Lane (or "Alley") is the 8 mile (14km) street that runs adjacent to the ancient walls. Many sections are quiet and beautiful, often paved with green stones. All along the street there are numerous youth hostels, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and other places that may be of interest to tourists. It also has food stalls in parts that serve local cuisine.

Recommendations: Wei Zhuo Yin, Urban Minor Scale Movie Restaurant, Shrimp, and Zhu Xiuying

Address: South Gate of Stele Forest, Beilin District

Transportation: Take bus 26 or 322 and get off at Nanmen Station

Nearby Attractions: Xi'an Wall

Shopping

Top Items to take back Home



Farmers Paintings



Models of Terracotta Warriors



Pi Ying



You Po La Zi



Shi Zi Mo

After enjoying the professionals of Xi'an preparing your meals, you may want to try and recreate some of the dishes, or beverages, back home, and you may also want to take an interesting and authentic piece of Xi'an (or China) with you. Here are a few items to consider.

Farmers Paintings

The most renowned Farmers Paintings in Xi'an are from Hu County. The farmers there express their wish for a bumper harvest by painting scenes of a farmer working in his field, happy children playing, or satisfied diners sitting around a table. Anything that can make someone happy may appear as a theme in their paintings.

Props for Shadow Puppets (Pi Ying)

After seeing one of the (highly recommended) Shadow Puppet Theater shows, visitors often want to take part of the show back home with them. Especially for children, setting up their own home puppet show is not only a novel way for them to

spend time, but teaches them about another cultural art form and you're practically guaranteed to be the only house in the neighborhood (or even county) that has authentic Chinese Shadow Puppets. They're lightweight, thin, and excellent for packing. Even if you're not interesting in making a home shadow puppet theater, the puppets themselves make excellent gifts for kids (aged 5–12).

Models of Terracotta Warriors

Sure, this may seem tacky and touristy to some, but a good clay recreation of the famous Terracotta Warriors that was actually made and purchased in Xi'an can make interesting and attractive talking pieces back home. For those who love these warriors, it's much more authentic to pick one up in Xi'an than ordering one online.

Red Chili Oil (You Po La Zi)

This is the most popular noodle sauce in Xi'an. Qin pepper ground chili powder, peanuts, and other spices are mixed and then added to an oil base

to get a rich, savory, slightly spicy cooking oil that can be added to meat as it's frying or made into a sauce. It adds another layer of savory goodness to any dish and can easily be used even with non-Asian dishes. Versions of this oil can generally be found in Asian markets all over the west but buying a bottle in Xi'an will be easier and faster for most than searching all over the city for one of a few places that might sell it. Plus, you get a nice memory from Xi'an every time you use it. Makes a great gift for the culinary gifted.

The steamed bun baked by heated rocks (Shi Zi Mo)

These are steamed and baked buns that follow an ancient recipe and cooking method. The buns are baked on top of heated stones that impart a unique flavor and they can be stored for a long time. In fact, people used to make Shi Zi Mo to take on long trips. After you get home, heat them in the oven before eating.

Top Places for Shopping

Shuyuanmen Pedestrian St. Chinese Visual Art

A mass of shops that sell calligraphy, painting, and traditional Chinese stationery in Ming and Qing style. Visitors can find original and reproductions here. If you're interested in Chinese calligraphy, painting, and other visual-forms of Chinese art, this is a good place to find a large selection. Located right outside the North Gate.

Address: Shulin Gate, Beilin District



BaXi'an Antique Market

If you are interested in Chinese antiques and odd, old things, this is a good place to go. It will give many visitors the impression of being a flea market and can be as interesting of an experiencing coming just to look around as it is to shop. The market is known for selling both real and fake items to head caution before making any large purchases. As a general rule of thumb, if you're very familiar with the type of item you're buying and you feel comfortable spotting a fake, then spending a lot of a real antique here could be a fantastic buying opportunity. However, for those not as familiar with what they're buying, it's probably best to avoid believing tall tales regarding the authenticity of many items. Bargain hard here. Located near the East Gate, outside of the wall.

Address: No. 12, North Fire Lane, Changlefang, Beilin District



Luo Ma Walking Street

If you're looking for a typical, Xi'an pedestrian street where locals shop daily, this is a good one. It has a market atmosphere and allows you to shop right along side regular locals going about their day. There are even bustling underground malls and numerous food stalls. Located near the Bell Tower inside the wall.

Address: East Street (near Minsheng Department Store)



Transportation

Taxi

Taxis are plentiful, efficient, affordable, and safe in Xi'an (as well as in most of the China) The base rate is 8–9 RMB, depending on the type of car, and then 1.9 RMB for every kilometer. A night subsidy is charged from 23:00 to 6:00. All taxis have easily displayed meters and usually the drivers are very good about using them. If you do get in a taxi and the meter (with bright red LED numbers) is not turned on within the first few seconds of the trip (again, very rare), just point to it and the driver will turn it on.

Tip: If you're traveling in summer and the driver has the windows down and the AC off (which is more common than you may think), if you'd really like for it to be on, you can usually communicate this wish by pointing in the area of the AC control and then waving your hand back and forth in front of your face indicating that you're hot. However, since most distances are fairly short and the ride will be over in 5–15min, it may not be enough time for the car to cool down. So, before you get in a taxi on a hot day, just make sure the windows are UP and check to make sure the car is cool as soon as you open the door — or be prepared to sweat. During the day, don't be afraid to pass on a taxi, even if you stopped it, as the driver will easily find another passenger.

A great way to hail taxi's now is through a taxi-hailing app. The most popular, and arguably best one, is the Apple backed app "Didi Chuxing", simply called "Didi".

Bus:

- Buses are as cheap as the subway (usually only 1–2 RMB)
- China is famous for having very comprehensive bus systems covering nearly every corner of every city meaning you won't have to walk very far once getting off.
- Buses come frequently with popular lines arriving possibly every minute during rush hour, but rarely longer

than every 10 minutes.

- Buses are modern and usually based on Japanese or German designs.
- Some buses even use hybrid engines making them better for the environment.
- During summer, they always have the AC on.

Subway:

The subway is the fastest, nicest, coolest, and the most convenient way to move around Xi'an. Modern, climate-controlled trains whisk you around the city quickly efficiently, and best of all, very affordably. While taxis are affordable by western standards, you'd need to take several subway trips before equaling the cost of just one taxi ride. True, you'll need to walk a little to get to your final destination, but Xi'an's subway system has stops at most major (and even minor) popular destinations — and traffic is never an issue.

Notes and Tips:

Taking the subway, even at night, is

extremely safe. All stations are well lit and have security guards. Westerners who are used to doggy, dingy, or poorly lit subways with no security are in for a treat. China's subways are the complete opposite.

Subway maps, found inside the trains and all over the stations, use both Chinese characters and their Pinyin counterparts (Pinyin is Chinese written using the Roman alphabet). For those not familiar with riding subways, the following is important: before boarding a train, find your destination on a map and then look at the FINAL

DESINATION going in that direction. The name of the final destination is

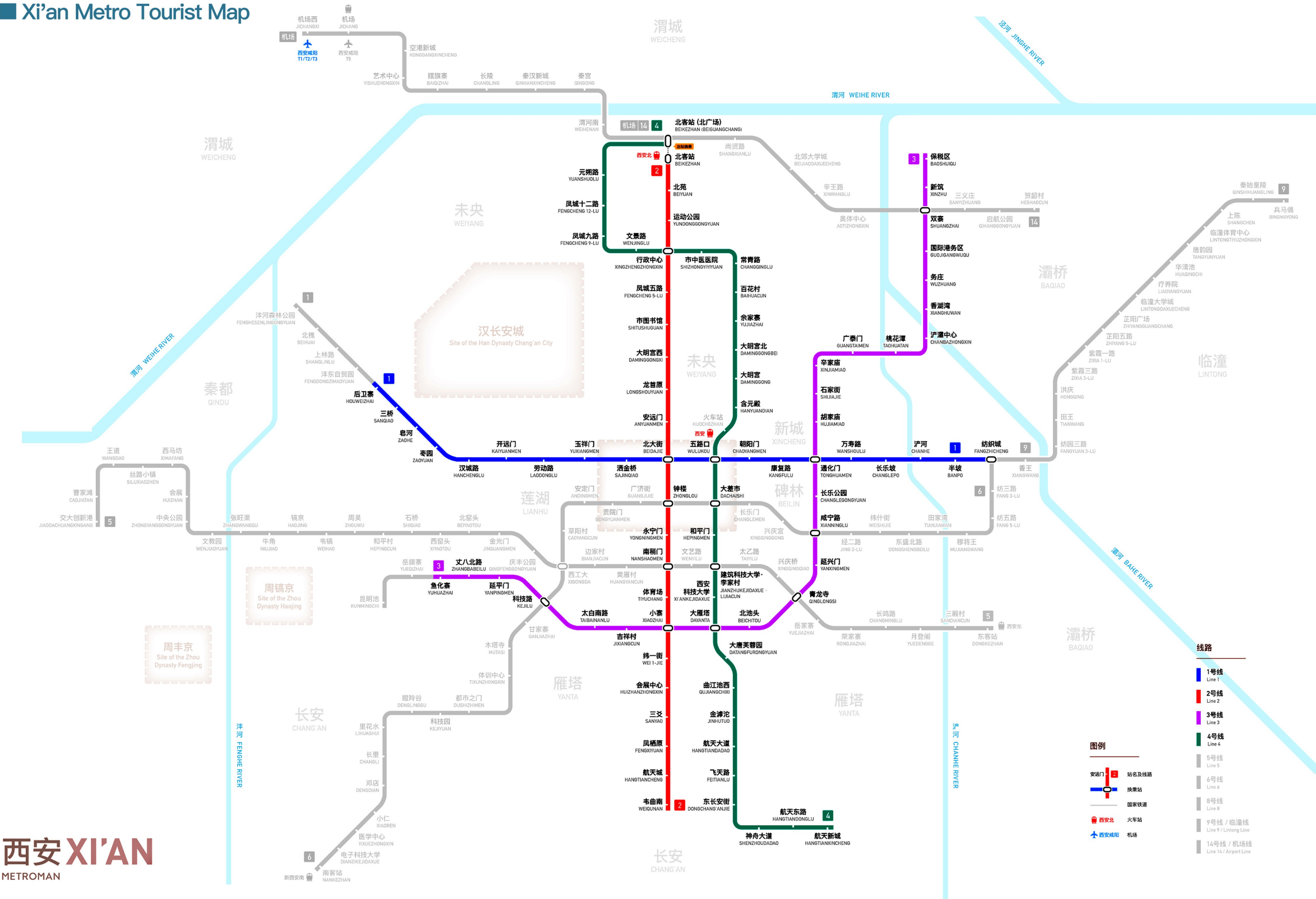
important in order to find which train you need.

(will insert a map of subways here)

Here are some of the more popular attractions and their corresponding subway lines :

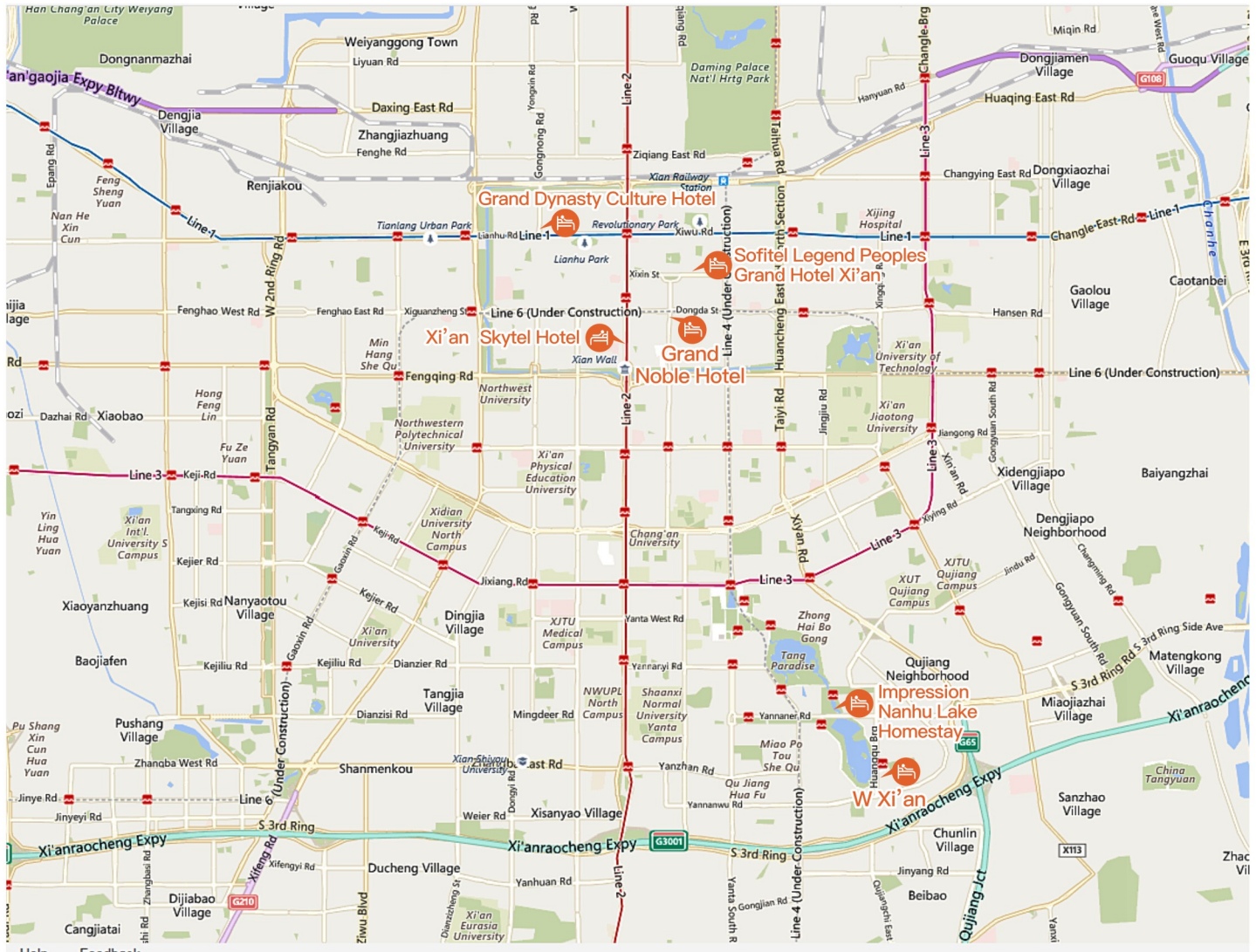
- Line 1: Yongxingfang, Xi'an City Wall
- Line 2: Daming Palace Site Park, Bell and Drum Tower, Huimin Street, Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Shaanxi History Museum
- Line 4: Daming Palace Site Park, Xi'an Railway Station, Yongxingfang, Xi'an City Wall, Big Wild Goose Pagoda

Xi'an Metro Tourist Map



西安 XI'AN
METROMAN

Top Hotels



W Xi'an

Fashionable Deluxe
Resembling a blue pyramid at night, and a scene out of the movie "Blade Runner", this is a sleek, cosmopolitan, uber-modern architectural marvel. The interior is full of art and their facilities are luxurious and avant-garde. In China, the "W Hotel" is a national chain and this location is their largest. Address: No. 333, Qujiang Chi East Road, Qujiang New District

Sofitel Legend Peoples Grand Hotel Xi'an

Elegant Deluxe

A stately looking building resembling the architecture found in the British empire, it's actually a blend of French and Sino-Russian inspiration. The building isn't as old as it looks, dating back only to 1953 when it opened as a state guesthouse. Countless important figures have stayed here over those years and today the inside has been beautifully renovated making spacious rooms with lofty ceilings, elegant molding, and art deco features. Located inside the city walls and

within walking distance of the historic Bell and Drum towers, this is one of the best located options in the city for its level of comfort. Address: No.319 Dongxin Street, Xincheng District

Grand Noble Hotel

Business Comfortable
While this hotel doesn't boast the architectural pleasure of other hotels in its category, it's still a fantastic option and online discounts (which can be around \$50 USD/night) can often be found making it an excellent value and

exceedingly affordable. It's luxurious inside with rooms full of amenities. Even for those travelers who don't often stay in such luxury accommodations, this might be a nice time for an affordable splurge. Also located inside the city wall, it makes it wonderfully convenient (only slightly further away from the Muslim Quarter than the Sofitel Legend). The Bell Tower and Forest of Stone Steles Museum is only a 10-minute walk.

Address: No. 334, East Main Street, Beilin District

Impression Nanhu Lake Homestay

Ancient-style Comfortable

Don't let the word "homestay" in the name fool you — this is not a homestay at all. This is a unique, boutique style hotel that's a refreshing change from the more boxy, large hotels. Everything is on one single floor here and all rooms are located around a pleasant courtyard. This hotel retains the quaint architectural style of a Guanzhong residence, with a Ming architectural style and an oriental charm. Impression Nanhu features

comfortable, welcoming rooms all designed slightly differently in a classic Chinese style, and come fully equipped with all amenities. Worth a look for those seeking a more unique Xi'an experience.

Located only about 3 miles (5 km) from the South Gate, in a quiet, pleasant area of the city, next to Furong Lake and Qujiang Pool (not a swimming pool).

Address: No.7 Courtyard, Fenghuangchi Commercial Area, Qujiang Chibei Road, Yanta District

Grand Dynasty Culture Hotel

Perfect location Comfortable

A straightforward, simple design houses nice, comfortable rooms at affordable prices. Online deals can also make this hotel a good value. It has all the amenities of a 4-star hotel with indoor pool and well-equipped rooms. It's not as luxurious as other options on this list but should be more than adequately comfortable and pleasant for most travelers.

Super conveniently located inside the wall, just 1 minute from the upper West Gate, making it a 5-

minute walk (or less) from the Muslim Quarter.

Address: No.172, Lianhu Road, Lianhu District, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province 710002

Xi'an Skytel Hotel

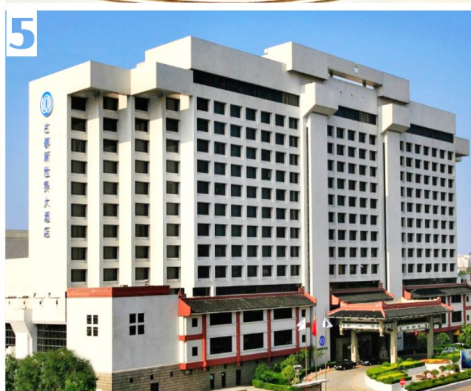
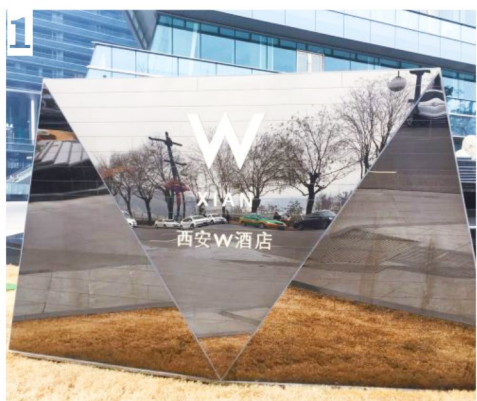
Meeting Comfortable

A slightly newer option, the Skytel is simple, modern, and comfortable. It offers basic amenities and makes for a very affordable, conveniently located option. The simple and bright rooms are equipped with central air conditioning, large LCD TV, Bailan mattress (softer, with more cushion than many mattresses found in Chinese hotels), and high speed wifi.

Located inside the wall just a minute or so from the South Gate and several minutes from the Bell tower.

Address: No. 32, South Street, Beilin District

(Note: this hotel has scheduled renovation work starting in September, 2019)



Xi'an Facts

Chinese name: 西安 Xī ān
Location: Northwest China
Population (city): 9M
Language: Mandarin
Zip code: 710000
Tel code: +86 (029)
Time zone: China standard (UTC+8)

Before you Go

Bank

There are ATMs all over Xi'an that accept foreign debit and credit cards. Keypads and screens all have English options and almost all ATMs are located in well-lit, very safe areas often with their own security guard. Almost all hotels (except for some very basic hostels) accept western debit and credit cards.

Internet

All hotels, most youth hostels, coffee shops, shopping malls, train stations, the airport provide free WIFI.

Hospitals / Medical Facilities

The best hospitals in Xi'an are: The Xijing Hospital affiliated to the Fourth Medical University, Tangdu Hospital,

and the Second Affiliated Hospital of Xi'an Jiaotong University.

Small health clinics can be found all over the city and are good options for minor issues — such as developing a cough, showing signs of a cold, running a low-grade fever, having stomach problems, cuts, scrapes, bruises, etc. It is often faster to use these clinics instead of going to a hospital. However, these clinics will not be able to provide treatment for major health issues.

Some medical staff will speak basic English in the hospitals, although don't expect all doctors to speak English or be prepared for their English to be very basic. Staff at small clinics may not speak any English beyond simple greetings. Communication may be an issue if

you have a serious medical issue, but the hospitals mentioned above can usually arrange for interpretation if necessary — just don't expect a translator for a non-life-threatening visit.

Expert Tips:

1) Take pictures of any medicine you're currently taking. Remember that outside of your home country, the brand name will often not be recognized. While it can be helpful to have the brand name, it's likely more helpful to have the translation of the active ingredient (for example, the medicine in the drug Tambocor is "Flecainide", and in the drug Ambien it's called "Zolpidem"). The pictures can come in handy because you likely won't be carrying your medicine with you outside of the hotel.

2) Translate any major conditions you currently have (ie, diabetes, cancer, heart arrhythmia) and take a picture (or otherwise save the Mandarin translation).

3) If you suffer from occasional medical issues (dizziness, fainting, high blood pressure, etc.), download a copy of a simple medical translation “cheat-sheet” and keep on your phone.

4) Do not assume that you can easily get refills of medicine that you’re currently taking. Even fairly common medicine, such as inhalers and birth control, may not be available or easy to find in China. So, assume you’re going to drop or lose some medicine that you bring and A) take extra, B) store in different locations, not all in the same bag.

Feminine Hygiene products/ Unisex Hygiene products

While habits and attitudes are changing in China, feminine products such as tampons are not readily available. Large Chinese stores and even some convenient stores, will stock some options, but many women report of not finding the brand, quality, or size they need. Therefore, it’s advisable to take extra.

For other hygiene products, such as deodorant or toothpaste, many travelers may also find difficulties in finding the brand, flavor, scent, or quality that they like. Even the same brand may sell a different version of inferior quality inside of China (case in point: the exact same can of deodorant bought in and outside of China may be of vastly different qualities). Therefore, if there are products you feel particularly loyal to, and you think you may run out during your trip, it’s advisable to pack extra.

Safety

Both violent and non-violent crime is rare in China. Streets are mostly safe to walk down at all hours of the night.

Taxis are mostly safe too. China has extra strict, forcefully applied, laws protecting foreigners which discourages most crime against them.

Nevertheless, travelers should always observe good common sense. While even dark alleyways may be perfectly safe in China, if you’re carrying anything valuable, you may not want to risk it. Don’t leave luggage or any possessions unattended. Be careful with pick pocketers in large crowds. Women traveling alone should also take normal precautions, but there’s no need to be fearful. Overall, China and particularly Xi’an, are exceptionally safe places to travel.

Eating Safe (especially on the street)

Use the following tips to help ensure your meal has been properly prepared:

1) Where there’s people, the food is probably great — the age-old common-sense tactic of eating where others eat still holds true today. If the place is busy (with locals), it probably means the food is safe and delicious.

2) Stand back and watch for a few minutes before ordering — a little observation can save the day (and the night). If you find a stall that you like, before ordering, just step back and observe how the cook prepares the food. Pay attention to hygienic practices like the use of gloves and hair nets or hats, fresh meat kept in a refrigerated environment (like a cooler with ice), vegetables looking fresh and stored in an enclosed container with lid not an open container near the ground, and of course most of all, the stall is kept clean. Other issues to notice: those who touch food should not also be touching money — it doesn’t matter if the cook is wearing gloves because even a gloved hand should not touch your food right after they have grabbed the previous customer’s money; the cook or any worker at the stall should not cough

or sneeze anywhere near food and should also wash (or at least wipe) their hands right after doing so; and while this last one may seem like it would never happen, it does so be on the look-out — anything dropped on the ground (food, utensils, unwrapped plastic forks or straws, cups) should be discarded, but unfortunately this is not always the case.

3) The nose knows — this tactic can be a little difficult for travelers new to Chinese cuisine, but in general, if it smells wonderful (not “good” or “nice”, but “OMG! I gotta try it!”), then it’s probably a good place.

4) The eyes know something too — does the food look dry, old, mushy, or like it’s been sitting out for most of the day? If so, you’ll want to pass. Hot food should look like it has been freshly and recently prepared with a nice shine to the outside. Cold food, especially fruits and vegetables, should look fresh and crisp and not brown.

5) In general, fruits and vegetables that are peeled are generally safer to eat than those that aren’t. So, oranges, bananas, coconuts, (usually) carrots, peas etc. are great choices. Some exceptions are melons (cantaloupe, watermelon, honeydews) which are often grown in very low-lying areas that may be exposed to unsanitary water and water run-off. Produce that is not peeled (and served fresh, not cooked) could be perfectly fine to eat, but they do carry extra risk — all berries, apples, all types of lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.

Readers may take some comfort in knowing that the writer of this guide has in fact eaten at many street stalls all over China and using these tips, has not only never had a problem but has also had some of the tastiest, most memorable meals at them — for a much more affordable price.

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