



Shaanxi (Shǎnxī)

POPULATION: 37 MILLION

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Why Go?

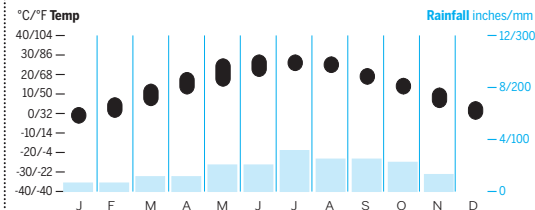
Shaanxi (陕西) is where it all started for China. As the heartland of the Qin dynasty, whose warrior emperor set out to unite much of China for the first time, Shaanxi was the cradle of Chinese civilisation. Later on, Xī'ān was the beginning and end of the Silk Road and a buzzing, cosmopolitan capital long before anyone had heard of Běijīng.

It's Shaanxi's treasure trove of archaeological sites that make it such an essential destination. Nor is it all ancient history; the caves around Yán'ān were the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) base in the 1930s and '40s.

But there's much more to Shaanxi than just its storied past. There are farm villages barely touched by modern life, and mountains that were once home to hermits and sages waiting to be explored. So wherever you go, the sights and views will knock you out.

When to Go

Xī'ān



April & May
Spring breezes and the ideal time to climb Huà Shān.

September & October
The rain's stopped and it's still warm, so hit Xī'ān's sights.

December
Avoid the crowds and maybe get the Terracotta Warriors all to yourself.

Shaanxi Highlights

- 1 See what an emperor takes with him to the grave at the extraordinary **Army of Terracotta Warriors** (p367)
- 2 Contemplate Xi'an's fabled past from its formidable old **city walls** (p362)
- 3 Watch the sun rise over the Qínlíng Mountains from atop Taoism's sacred western peak, **Huà Shān** (p371)
- 4 Step back in time in the perfectly preserved Ming-dynasty village of **Dāngjiācūn** (p373)
- 5 Take a different look at China's past by gazing down on the enthralling excavations at the **Tomb of Emperor Jingdi** (p369)
- 6 Get lost wandering the backstreets of Xi'an's ancient **Muslim Quarter** (p359)
- 7 Check out the **cave** where Mao Zedong lived in Yán'ān and the red tourists who flock to see it (p374)



History

Around 3000 years ago, the Zhou people of the Bronze Age moved out of their Shaanxi homeland, conquered the Shang and became dominant in much of northern China. Later the state of Qin, ruling from its capital Xiányáng (near modern-day Xī'ān), became the first dynasty to unify much of China. Subsequent dynasties, including the Han, Sui and Tang, were based in Xī'ān, then known as Cháng'ān, which was abandoned for the eastern capital of Luòyáng (in Hénán) whenever invaders threatened.

Shaanxi remained the political heart of China until the 10th century. However, when the imperial court shifted eastward, the province's fortunes began to decline. Rebellions and famine were followed in 1556 by the deadliest earthquake in history, when an estimated 830,000 people died. The extreme poverty of the region ensured that it was an early stronghold of the CCP.

Language

Locals like to joke that Xī'ān's dialect is the 'real' standard Mandarin – after all, the city was one of the ancient capitals of China. Those pedantic linguists, however, prefer to classify the Shaanxi dialect as part of the central Zhōngyuān Mandarin group. Jin is also spoken in some parts of the province.

Getting There & Around

Xī'ān has one of China's best-connected airports. Roads are good north, east and west of Xī'ān; travelling south is more problematic. Rail links within the province are slow.

PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

Sleeping

\$	less than Y160
\$\$	Y160 to Y400
\$\$\$	more than Y400

Eating

\$	less than Y50
\$\$	Y50 to Y100
\$\$\$	more than Y100

Xī'ān

 029 / POP 4.5 MILLION

Xī'ān's fabled past is a double-edged sword. Primed with the knowledge that this legendary city was once the terminus of the Silk Road and a melting pot of cultures and religions, as well as home to emperors, courtesans, poets, monks, merchants and warriors, visitors can feel let down by the roaring, modern-day version. But even though Xī'ān's glory days ended in the early 10th century, many elements of ancient Cháng'ān, the former Xī'ān, are still present.

The city walls remain intact, vendors of all descriptions still crowd the narrow lanes of the warrenlike Muslim Quarter, and there are enough places of interest to keep even the most diligent amateur historian busy. There's still a vital feel to Xī'ān, too, as if the ghosts of the ancient traders, sages, soldiers and officials were sitting up on the ramparts of the city walls demanding not to be forgotten.

While Xī'ān is no longer China's political capital, it's woken up to the potential value of its hallowed history. In the last few years, the city has been campaigning for the Silk Road to be added to the UN's World Heritage List, and at the time of writing there were ambitious plans to revitalise the Muslim Quarter. Whether that means a Silk Road-meets-Disney tourist trap or something less tacky remains to be seen, but expect some changes.

Most people only spend two or three days in Xī'ān; history buffs could easily stay busy for a week. Of course, nearby are some of the most spectacular and essential sights in all China; topping the list in and around the city are the Terracotta Warriors, the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi, the Muslim Quarter and the city walls. With a little more time, check out the pagodas, museums and any number of other sights outside the city. Better still, arrange an overnight trip to nearby Huà Shān or Hánchéng.

Sights

INSIDE THE CITY WALLS

Muslim Quarter

HISTORIC SITE

(回族区) The backstreets leading north from the Drum Tower have been home to the city's Hui community (Chinese Muslims) for centuries. Although Muslims have been here since at least the 7th century,

some believe that today's community didn't take root until the Ming dynasty.

The narrow lanes are full of butcher shops, sesame-oil factories, smaller mosques hidden behind enormous wooden doors, men in white skullcaps and women with their heads covered in coloured scarves. It's a great place to wander and especially atmospheric at night. Good streets to stroll down are Xiyang Shi, Dapi Yuan and Damaishi Jie, which runs north off Xi Dajie through an interesting Islamic food market.

Great Mosque

MOSQUE

(清真大寺; Qīngzhēn Dàsi; Huajue Xiang; admission Mar-Nov Y25, Dec-Feb Y15, Muslims free; ☉8am-7.30pm Mar-Nov, to 5.30pm Dec-Feb) One of the largest mosques in China, the Great Mosque is a fascinating blend of Chinese and Islamic architecture. Facing west (towards Mecca) instead of the usual south, the mosque begins with a classic Chinese temple feature, the spirit wall, designed to keep demons at bay. The gardens, too, with their rocks, pagodas and archways are obviously Chinese, with the exception of the four palm trees at the entrance. Arab influence, meanwhile, extends from the central minaret (cleverly disguised as a pagoda) to the enormous turquoise-roofed Prayer Hall (not open to visitors) at the back of the complex, as well as the elegant calligraphy gracing most entryways. The present buildings are mostly Ming and Qing, though the mosque

is said to have been founded in the 8th century.

To get here, follow Xiyang Shi several minutes west and look for a small alley leading south past a gauntlet of souvenir stands.

Forest of Stelae Museum

MUSEUM

(碑林博物馆; Bēilín Bówùguǎn; 15 Sanxue Jie; admission Mar-Nov Y45, Dec-Feb Y30; ☉8am-6.15pm Mar-Nov, to 5.15pm Dec-Feb) Housed in Xī'ān's Confucius Temple, this museum holds over 1000 stone stelae (inscribed tablets), including the nine Confucian classics and some exemplary calligraphy. The second gallery holds a Nestorian tablet (AD 781), the earliest recorded account of Christianity in China. (The Nestorians professed that Christ was both human and divine, for which they were booted out of the Church in 431.) The fourth gallery holds a collection of ancient maps and portraits, and is where rubbings (copies) are made, an interesting process to watch.

The highlight, though, is the fantastic sculpture gallery (across from the gift shop), which contains animal guardians from the Tang dynasty, pictorial tomb stones and Buddhist statuary.

To get to the museum, follow Shuyuan Xiang east from the South Gate.

Bell Tower & Drum Tower

HISTORIC SITES

Now marooned on a traffic island, the **Bell Tower** (钟楼; Zhōng Lóu; admission Y27,

Xī'ān

📍 Top Sights

City Walls.....	A2
Great Mosque.....	C3
Muslim Quarter.....	C2

📍 Sights

1 Bell Tower.....	D3
2 Drum Tower.....	C3
3 Folk House.....	C3
4 Forest of Stelae Museum.....	D4
5 Temple of the Eight Immortals.....	G3

🛏 Sleeping

6 Bell Tower Hotel.....	D3
7 City Hotel Xī'ān.....	D3
8 Hàn Táng Inn.....	D3
9 Héjiā Shāngwù Hotel.....	D4
10 Hyatt Regency Xī'ān.....	F3
11 Jīnjiāng Inn.....	F3

12 Qixián Youth Hostel.....	E1
13 Shūyuàn Youth Hostel.....	D4
14 Sofitel.....	E2
15 Xiāngzǐmén Youth Hostel.....	D4

🍴 Eating

16 First Noodle Under the Sun.....	E4
17 Lǎo Sūn Jiā.....	E3
18 Wūyí Fàndiàn.....	D3

🍷 Drinking

19 Moonkey Music Bar.....	D4
20 Old Henry's Bar.....	C4

🎮 Entertainment

21 1+1.....	E3
22 Song & Song.....	D4

🛍 Shopping

23 Northwest Antique Market.....	F3
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combined Drum Tower ticket Y40; ☉8.30am-9.30pm Mar-Nov, to 6pm Dec-Feb) sits at the heart of Xi'an and originally held a large bell that was rung at dawn, while its alter ego, the **Drum Tower** (鼓楼; Gǔ Lóu; Beiyuanmen; admission Y27, combined Bell Tower ticket Y40; ☉8.30am-9.30pm Mar-Nov, to 6pm Dec-Feb), marked nightfall. Both date from the 14th century and were later rebuilt in the 1700s (the Bell Tower initially stood two blocks to the west). Musical performances, included in the ticket price, are held inside each at 9am, 10.30am, 11.30am, 2.30pm, 4pm and 5pm. Enter the Bell Tower through the underpass on the north side.

Folk House

HISTORIC SITE

(高家大院; Gāojiā Dàyuàn; 144 Beiyuanmen; admission Y15, with tea Y20; ☉8.30am-11pm) This well-rounded historic residence also serves as an art gallery, entertainment centre and teahouse. Originally the home of the Qing bureaucrat Gao Yuesong, it's a fine example of a courtyard home and has been tastefully restored. There are reception rooms, bedrooms, servants' quarters, an ancestral temple and a study (now the teahouse).

Tours start with an optional marionette or shadow-puppet demonstration (Y10). As the complex currently belongs to the Shaanxi Artists Association, there's an art gallery here where you can pick up reasonably priced traditional Chinese art. Confusingly, despite the address, this place isn't at No 144, but is about 20m down the street.

OUTSIDE THE CITY WALLS

City Walls

HISTORIC SITE

(城墙; Chéngqiáng; admission Y40; ☉8am-8.30pm Apr-Oct, to 7pm Nov-Mar) Xi'an is one of the few cities in China where the old city walls are still standing. Built in 1370 during the Ming dynasty, the 12m-high walls are surrounded by a dry moat and form a rectangle with a perimeter of 14km.

Most sections have been restored or rebuilt, and it is now possible to walk the entirety of the walls in a leisurely four hours. You can also cycle from the South Gate (bike hire Y20 for 100 minutes, Y200 deposit). The truly lazy can be whisked around in a golf cart for Y200. Access ramps are located inside the major gates, with the exception of the South Gate, where the entrance is outside the walls; there's another entrance inside the walls beside the Forest of Stelae Museum.

To get an idea of Xi'an's former grandeur, consider this: the Tang city walls originally enclosed 83 sq km, an area seven times larger than today's city centre.

FREE **Shaanxi History Museum** MUSEUM
(陕西历史博物馆; Shǎnxī Lìshǐ Bówùguǎn; 91 Xiaozhai Donglu; ☉8.30am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, last admission 4.30pm, 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar, last admission 4pm) Shaanxi's museum is often touted as one of China's best, but if you come after visiting some of Xi'an's surrounding sights you may feel you're not seeing much that is new. Nevertheless, the museum makes for a comprehensive and illuminating stroll through ancient Cháng'an, and most exhibits include labels and explanations in English.

The ground floor covers prehistory and the early dynastic period. Particularly impressive are several enormous Shang- and Western Zhou-dynasty bronze tripods (*dǐng*), Qin burial objects, bronze arrows and crossbows, and four original terracotta warrior statues.

Upstairs, the second section is devoted primarily to Han-dynasty relics. The highlights include a collection of about 40 terracotta figurines from the tomb of the first Han emperor Liu Bang. There's also an imaginative collection of bronze lamps, Wei figurines and mythological animals.

The third section focuses primarily on Sui and Tang artefacts: expressive tomb guardians; murals depicting a polo match; and a series of painted pottery figurines with elaborate hairstyles and dress, including several bearded foreigners, musicians and braying camels.

The number of visitors is limited to 4000 a day, so get here early and expect to queue for at least 30 minutes. Make sure you bring your passport to claim your free ticket. Take bus 610 from the Bell Tower or bus 701 from the South Gate.

Big Goose Pagoda

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(大雁塔; Dàyàn Tǎ; Yanta Nanlu; admission Y50, incl pagoda climb Y80; ☉8am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar) Xi'an's most famous landmark, this pagoda dominates the surrounding modern buildings. One of China's best examples of a Tang-style pagoda (squarish rather than round), it was completed in AD 652 to house the Buddhist sutras brought back from India by the monk Xuan Zang. Xuan spent the last 19 years of his life translating scriptures with a crack team of linguist monks; many of these translations

MONKEY BUSINESS

Xuan Zang's epic 17-year trip to India, via Central Asia and Afghanistan, in search of Buddhist enlightenment was fictionalised in *Journey to the West*, one of Chinese literature's most enduring texts. The Ming-dynasty novel gives the monk Xuan three disciples to protect him along the way, the best-loved of which is the Monkey King.

The novel, which is attributed to the poet Wu Cheng'en, has inspired many films, plays and TV shows, including the cult '70s series *Monkey*. More recently, the Gorillaz team of Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett collaborated with opera director Chen Shi-Zheng on a popular 2007 stage version.

are still used today. His travels also inspired one of the best-known works of Chinese literature, *Journey to the West*.

Surrounding the pagoda is **Dà Cǐ'ēn Temple** (大慈恩寺; Dàcǐ'ēn Sì), one of the largest temples in Tang Cháng'ān. The buildings today date from the Qing dynasty.

Bus 610 from the Bell Tower and bus 609 from the South Gate drop you off at the pagoda square; the entrance is on the south side. An evening fountain show is held on the square.

FREE Xi'an Museum MUSEUM
(西安博物馆; Xī'ān Bówùguǎn; 76 Youyi Xilu; ☎8.30am-7pm, closed Tue) Housed in

the pleasant grounds of the Jiànfú Temple is this new-ish museum featuring relics unearthed in Xī'ān over the years. There are some exquisite ceramics from the Han dynasty, as well as figurines, an exhibition of Ming-dynasty seals and jade artefacts. Don't miss the basement, where a large-scale model of ancient Xī'ān gives a good sense of the place in its former pomp.

Also in the grounds is the **Little Goose Pagoda** (小雁塔; Xiǎoyàn Tǎ; ☎8.30am-7pm, closed Tue). The pagoda was shaken off by an earthquake in the middle of the 16th century, but the rest of the 43m-high structure is intact. Jiànfú Temple was originally built in AD 684 to bless the afterlife of the late Emperor Gaozong. The pagoda, a rather delicate building of 15 progressively smaller tiers, was built from AD 707 to 709 and housed Buddhist scriptures brought back from India by the pilgrim Yi

Jing. At the time of writing, it was no longer possible to climb the pagoda.

Bus 610 runs here from the Bell Tower; from the South Gate take bus 203.

Temple of the Eight Immortals

TAOIST TEMPLE

(八仙庵; Bāxiān Ān; Yongle Lu; admission Y3; ☎7.30am-5.30pm Mar-Nov, 8am-5pm Dec-Feb) Xī'ān's largest Taoist temple dates back to the Song dynasty and is still an active place of worship. Supposedly built on the site of an ancient wine shop, it was constructed to protect against subterranean divine thunder. Scenes from Taoist mythology are painted around the courtyard. Empress Cixi, the mother of the Last Emperor, stayed here in 1901 after fleeing Beijing during the Boxer Rebellion. There's a small **antique market** opposite, which is busiest on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Bus 502 runs close by the temple (east-bound from Xi Xinjie).

Sleeping

If you're arriving by air and have not yet booked accommodation, keep in mind that representatives at the shuttle bus drop-off (outside the Melody Hotel) can often get you discounted rooms at a wide selection of hotels.

All hostels in the city offer a similar range of services, including bike hire, internet, laundry, restaurant and travel services. Ask about free pick-up from the train station and book ahead at the most popular places.

TOP CHOICE **Hàn Táng Inn** HOSTEL \$
(汉唐驿; Hàntáng Yì; ☎8728 7772, 8723 1126; www.hostelxian@yahoo.com.cn; 7 Nanchang Xiang; 南长巷7号; dm/s/d Y50/70/160; ☎☎☎)

Newly ensconced in a more convenient central location, the dorms here are compact but spotless and come with en suite bathrooms. Smaller and more homely than the other hostels in town – the roof terrace provides space to spread out – the staff know what travellers want and do their best to satisfy them. It's tucked down an alley off Bei Dajie; look for the two terracotta warriors standing guard outside.

Xiāngzīmén Youth Hostel HOSTEL \$

(湘子门国际青年旅舍; Xiāngzīmén Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎6286 7999/7888; www.yhaxian.com; 16 Xiangzimiao Jie; 南门里湘子庙街16号; dm Y50, s, d & tr Y120-220; ☎☎) Lively and loud, this is the hostel of the moment. Set

around an impressive series of interconnected courtyards, it's a big, sprawling place with friendly staff and attracts a good mix of local and foreign travellers. Avoid the windowless basement rooms. Take bus 603 from opposite the train station to the South Gate and walk 100m west.

Sofitel

(索菲特人民大厦; Suǒfèitè Rénmín Dàshà; ☎8792 8888; sofitel@renminsquare.com; 319 Dong Xinjie; 东新街319号; d/ste Y1242/1814; ☹☹☹☹) Xī'ān's self-proclaimed 'six-star' hotel is undoubtedly the most luxurious choice in the city and has a soothing, hushed atmosphere. The bathrooms are top-notch. Cantonese, Japanese and Moroccan restaurants are on-site, as well as a South American-themed bar. Reception is in the east wing and room rates change daily, so you can score a deal when business is slow.

Shūyuàn Youth Hostel

(书院青年旅舍; Shūyuàn Qīngnián Lúshè; ☎8728 7721; shuyuanhostel@yahoo.com.cn; 2a Shuncheng Xixiang; 南门里顺城西巷甲2号; dm Y30-50, s & d Y160; ☹☹) The longest-running hostel in Xī'ān and still one of the most amenable, the Shūyuàn is located in a converted courtyard residence near the South Gate. The pleasant cafe, with wi-fi access, is a good place to hang out with fellow travellers. The hostel is 20m west of the South Gate along the city walls and bus 603 runs close to it.

Jīnjiāng Inn

(锦江之星; Jīnjiāng Zhīxīng; ☎8745 2288; www.jj-inn.com; 110 Jiefang Lu; 解放路110号; d/tw/ste Y179/199/219; ☹☹) By Xī'ān's standards, the prices are close to budget, but the clean and bright modern rooms, all with ADSL, make this a better option than most three-star places. There's a cheap restaurant here, too.

Hyatt Regency Xī'ān

(西安凯悦(阿房宫)酒店; Xī'ān Kǎiyuè Jiǔdiàn; ☎8769 1234; 158 Dong Dajie; 东大街158号; d Y1600, discounts of up to 40%; ☹☹☹) Slap in the centre of downtown, the Hyatt has big, rather characterless rooms with all the trimmings, as well as efficient staff, a spa and Western and Chinese restaurants. Add a 15% service charge to the bill.

Bell Tower Hotel

(西安钟楼饭店; Xī'ān Zhōnglóu Fàndiàn; ☎8760 0000; www.belltowerhtl.com; 110 Nan Dajie; 南大街110号; d Y850-1080, discounts of 33%; ☹☹)

Big discounts are on offer during slack periods, making this state-owned, four-star more affordable. Some rooms have a bird's-eye view of the Bell Tower and all are spacious and comfortable with cable TV and broadband internet connections.

Qīxián Youth Hostel

(七贤庄; Qīxián Zhuāng; ☎6229 6977; www.7sages.com.cn; 1 Beixin Jie; 北新街1号; dm Y40-60, s & d Y120-150; ☹☹) This is the most secluded hostel, set in a traditional courtyard house, and popular with Chinese travellers. The rooms are a little faded, but there's a decent communal cafe and restaurant, and the staff are helpful. Take bus 610 from opposite the train station.

Héjiā Shāngwù Hotel

(和嘉商务宾馆; ☎8728 2200/8919; www.hj600.cn; 16 Nan Dajie; 南大街16号; s/d/tr Y280/298/368, discounts of 30%; ☹☹) The great location means this new place can be noisy, but the rooms are decent-sized with clean bathrooms and they all come with ADSL connections.

City Hotel Xī'ān

(西安城市酒店; Xī'ān Chéngshì Jiǔdiàn; ☎8721 9988; www.cityhotelxian.com; 70 Nan Dajie; 南大街70号; s/tw/d Y266/488/588, discounts of 25%; ☹☹) Despite the dreary decor, this is a reliable midrange choice popular with tour groups. The entrance is down an alley 20m west off Nan Dajie.



Eating

Hit the **Muslim Quarter** for fine eating in Xī'ān. Common dishes here are *májiàng liángpí* (麻酱凉皮; cold noodles in sesame sauce), *fēnzhēngròu* (粉蒸肉; chopped mutton fried in a wok with ground wheat), *ròujiāmó* (肉夹馍; fried pork or beef in pitta bread, sometimes with green peppers and cumin), *càijiāmó* (菜夹馍; the vegetarian version of *ròujiāmó*) and the ubiquitous *ròuchuàn* (肉串; kebabs).

Best of all is the delicious *yáng ròu pào mó* (羊肉泡馍), a soup dish that involves crumbling a flat loaf of bread into a bowl and adding noodles, mutton and broth. You can also pick up mouth-watering desserts such as *huāshēnggāo* (花生糕; peanut cakes) and *shìbǐng* (柿饼; dried persimmons), which can be found at the market or in Muslim Quarter shops.

A good street to wander for a selection of more typically Chinese restaurants is Dongmutou Shi, east of Nan Dajie.

All the hostels serve up Western breakfasts and meals with varying degrees of success. For something more refined, try the buffet at the **Sofitel** (lunch/dinner incl service charge Y128/208).

First Noodle Under the Sun NOODLES \$
(天下第一面酒楼; Tiānxià Dìyī Miàn Jiǔlóu; ☎8728 6088; 19 Dongmutou Shi; dishes Y6-58; ☉9am-10.30pm; ④) The speciality at this busy place is *biáng biáng miàn*, a giant, 3.8m strip of noodle that comes folded up in a big bowl with two soup side dishes (Y10). But all sorts of excellent noodle, meat and veggie dishes are available here.

Máogōng Xiāngcài guǎn HUNAN \$\$
(毛公湘菜馆; ☎8782 0555; 99 Youyi Xilu; mains from Y26; ☉11am-10pm; ④) A statue of the Chairman overlooks diners at this slick place across the road from the Little Goose Pagoda. The menu features Húnán classics, such as spicy chicken and boiled frog (Y38), most of which have a fiery kick that Mao, who liked his food hot, would have approved of.

Lǎo Sūn Jiā SHANXI \$
(老孙家; ☎8240 3205; 2nd fl, Dong Dajie; dishes Y12-40; ☉8am-9pm; ☉) Xī'ān's most famous restaurant (over a century old) is as well known for its perfunctory service as it is for the steaming bowls of *yánggròu pàomó* it specialises in. They still go down a treat. There's no English sign; look for the big red characters on the 2nd-floor window.

Green Molly Restaurant & Bar WESTERN \$\$
(绿茉莉; Lù Mòlì; ☎8188 3339; Keji Lu; 世纪金花商厦后门右200米; mains from Y52; ☉7pm-3am; ④) It's a bit of a trek southwest of the city walls (Y20 in a taxi), but if you're craving authentic Western food and beers on tap, then this wood-panelled pub behind the Ginwa Shopping Centre is the place to come. The menu covers all the bases, from steaks and pizzas to Mexican. The beers are expensive, but it's buy one, get one free all the time. It's hard to find, so get your taxi driver to call for directions.

Wūyī Fàndiàn CHINESE \$
(五一饭店; 351 Dong Dajie; dishes Y8-22; ☉7.30am-9.30pm) This frenetic and noisy cafeteria-style restaurant is good for northern staples, such as dumplings and noodles, and the pick-and-choose format is perfect for the Chinese-challenged. It's normally packed out with locals craving postshopping sustenance.



Drinking

Xī'ān's nightlife options range from bars and clubs to cheesy but popular tourist shows.

The main bar strip is Defu Xiang, close to the South Gate. The top end of the street has coffee shops and teahouses. The bars get more raucous the closer to the South Gate you get, but it's still fairly tame.

Old Henry's Bar BAR
(老亨利酒吧; Lǎohēnglì Jiǔbā; 48 Defu Xiang; ☉8pm-3am) Always busy and has outside seating.

Moonkey Music Bar BAR
(月亮钥匙音乐酒吧; Yuèliàng Yàoshi Yīnyuè Jiǔbā; ☉5pm-2am) Opposite the South Gate, this is an appropriately grungy spot to hear local bands while downing a beer.



Entertainment

Clubs get going early in Xī'ān, in part because they're as much places to drink as to dance. They are free to get into, but expect to pay at least Y30 for a beer. Most are located along or off Nan Dajie.

Some travellers enjoy spending the evening at the **fountain & music show** (☉9pm Mar-Nov, 8pm Dec-Feb) on Big Goose Pagoda Sq; it's the largest in Asia. Xī'ān also has a number of dinner-dance shows, which are normally packed out with tour groups. They can be fun if you're in the mood for a bit of kitsch.

Song & Song CLUB
(上上酒吧乐巢会; Shàngshàng Jiǔbā Lècháohuì; 109 Ximutou Shi; ☉7pm-late) More of a big bar with DJs than a genuine club.

1+1 CLUB
(壹加壹俱乐部; Yījiāyī Jùlèbù; 285 Dong Dajie; ☉7pm-late) The ever-popular 1+1 is a neon-lit maze of a place that pumps out party hip-hop tunes well into the early hours.

Tang Dynasty DINNER SHOW
(唐乐宫; Tángyuè Gōng; ☎8782 2222; www.xiantangdynasty.com; 75 Chang'an Beilu; performance with/without dinner Y500/220) The most famous dinner theatre in the city stages an over-the-top spectacle with Vegas-style costumes, traditional dance, music and singing. It's dubbed into English.

Shaanxi Grand Opera House DINNER SHOW
(陕歌大剧院; Shǎngē Dàjùyuàn; ☎8785 3295; www.xiantangdynasty.com; 165 Wenyi Lu; performance with/without dinner Y198/128) Also known as the Tang Palace Dance Show, this is a cheaper, less flashy alternative to the Tang Dynasty show.

Shopping

Stay in Xi'an for a couple of days and you'll be offered enough sets of miniature terracotta warriors to form your own army. The souvenir industry is big business here, with everyone from the major museums to street vendors doing their best to separate you from your cash. A good place to search out gifts is the Muslim Quarter, where prices are generally cheaper than elsewhere.

Xiyang Shi is a narrow, crowded alley running north of the Great Mosque where terracotta warriors, Huxian farmer paintings, shadow puppets, lanterns, tea ware, 'antiques', Mao memorabilia and T-shirts are on offer. Bear in mind that most of it is fake, so check the quality of what you're buying and bargain hard. Remember, though, the purpose of haggling is to achieve a mutually acceptable price and not to screw the vendor into the ground. It always helps to smile.

Near the South Gate is the Qing-style Shuyuan Xiang, the main street for art supplies, paintings, calligraphy, paper cuts, brushes and fake rubbings from the Forest of Stelae Museum. Serious shoppers should also visit the **Northwest Antique Market** (西北古玩城; Xīběi Gǔwán Chéng; Dong Xinjie; ☉10am-5.30pm), by the Zhongshan Gate. This three-storey warren of shops selling jade, seals, antiques and Mao memorabilia sees far fewer foreign faces than the Muslim Quarter.

There's a much smaller antique market by the Temple of the Eight Immortals on Sunday and Wednesday mornings.

Information

Pick up a copy of the widely available *Xi'an Traffic & Tourist Map* (¥8). This bilingual publication has exhaustive listings and is regularly updated – even the bus routes are correct. Chinese-language maps with the bus routes are sold on the street for ¥5.

All hostels and most hotels offer internet access. You can burn digital photos onto CDs at the youth hostels (per disc ¥20).

In the event of an emergency, call ☎120.

ATM (自动柜员机; Zìdòng Guìyuánjī; ☉24hr) You should have no trouble finding usable ATMs. When in doubt, try the southeast corner of the Bell Tower intersection.

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng) Juhuayuan Lu (38 Juhuayuan Lu; ☉8am-8pm); Nan Dajie (29 Nan Dajie; ☉8am-6pm) You can exchange cash and travellers cheques and use the ATMs at both of these branches.

China International Travel Service (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójī Lúxíngshè) Branch office (2nd fl, Bell Tower Hotel, 110 Nan Dajie); Main office (48 Chang'an Beilu) The Bell Tower Hotel office is best for organising tours.

China Post (中国邮政; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; Bei Dajie; ☉8am-8pm)

Internet cafe (网吧; wǎngbā; 21 Xi Qilu; per hr ¥3; ☉24hr) Around the corner from the long-distance bus station. There are also other internet cafes in this area.

Kodak (柯达数码中心; Kēdá Shùmǎ Zhōngxīn; cnr Jiefang Lu & Dong Dajie; per disc ¥10; ☉8am-9pm) Offers CD burning.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; ☎1682 1225; 63 Xi Dajie; ☉8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri)

Getting There & Away

Air

Xi'an's Xiányáng Airport is one of China's best connected – you can fly to almost any major Chinese destination from here, as well as several international ones.

China Eastern Airlines (中国东方航空公司; Zhōngguó Dōngfāng Hángkōng; ☎8208 8707; 64 Xi Wulu; ☉8am-9pm) operates most flights to and from Xi'an. Daily flights include Běijīng (Y840), Chéngdū (Y630), Guǎngzhōu (Y890), Shànghǎi (Y1160), Shēnzhèn (Y980) and Ūrūmqī (Y1640). On the international front, China Eastern has flights from Xi'an to Hong Kong (Y1410), Seoul, Bangkok, Tokyo and Nagoya.

Most hostels and hotels and all travel agencies sell airline tickets.

Bus

The most central **long-distance bus station** (长途汽车站; chángtú qìchēzhàn) is opposite Xi'an's train station. It's a chaotic place. Note that buses to Huà Shān (6am to 8pm) depart from in front of the train station.

Other bus stations around town where you may be dropped off include the **east bus station** (城东客运站; chéngdōng kèyùnzhàn; Changle Lu) and the **west bus station** (城西客运站; chéngxī kèyùnzhàn; Zaoyuan Donglu). Both are located outside the Second Ring Rd. Bus 605 travels between the Bell Tower and the east bus station, and bus 103 travels between the train station and the west bus station. A taxi into the city from either bus station costs between ¥15 and ¥20.

Buses from Xi'an's long-distance bus station go to:

Hánchéng ¥62.50, four hours, every 30 minutes (7am to 4pm)

Huà Shān one way/return ¥33/55, two hours, three daily (11am, noon and 2.30pm)

Luòyáng Y60.50, four hours, every 40 minutes (7am to 7.30pm)

Píngyáo Y180, seven hours, hourly (8am to 4pm)

Yán'ān Y82.50, 5½ hours, every 40 minutes (6.40am to 4.20pm)

Zhèngzhōu Y120, 6½ hours, hourly (7am to 4.30pm)

Train

Xī'ān's main train station (*huǒchē zhàn*) is just outside the northern city walls. It's always busy. Buy your onward tickets as soon as you arrive. Most hotels and hostels can get you tickets (Y40 commission); there's also an **Advance Train-Ticket Booking Office** (代售火车票; Dàishòu Huǒchēpiào; Nan Dajie; ☎8.30am-noon & 2-5pm) in the ICBC Bank's south entrance. Otherwise, brave the crowds in the main ticket hall.

Xī'ān is well connected to the rest of the country. Deluxe Z-trains run to/from Běijīng West (soft sleeper only Y417, 11½ hours), leaving Xī'ān at 7.23pm and Běijīng at 9.24pm. Several express trains also make the journey (Y265, 12½ hours); departures begin late afternoon.

All prices listed below are for hard sleeper (*yìng wò*) tickets.

Chéngdū Y201, 16 ½ hours

Chóngqìng Y191, 14 hours

Guǎngzhōu Y416, 26 hours

Guilín Y385, 27 hours

Jī'nán Y265, 16 to 18 hours

Kūnmíng Y385, 36 hours

Lánzhōu Y169, 7 ½ to nine hours

Luòyáng Y106, five hours

Píngyáo Y95, nine hours

Shànghǎi Y323, 15 to 22 hours

Tàiyuán Y106, 10 to 12 hours

Ūrūmqi Y483, 27 to 39 hours

Zhèngzhōu Y133, six to eight hours

Within Shaanxi, there is an overnight train to Yúlín (Y165, 12 to 14 hours) via Yán'ān (Y103, five to nine hours). Buy tickets in advance. There is also an early-morning train to Hánchéng (Y19, 4½ hours).

i Getting Around

Xī'ān's Xiányáng Airport is about 40km north-west of Xī'ān. Shuttle buses run every 20 to 30 minutes from 5.40am to 8pm between the airport and the Melody Hotel (Y25, one hour). Taxis into the city charge over Y100 on the meter.

If you're itching to try out the public buses, they go to all the major sights in and around the city. Bus 610 is a useful one: it starts at the train station and passes the Bell Tower, Little Goose Pagoda, Shaanxi History Museum and Big Goose

Pagoda. Remember that packed buses are a pickpocket's paradise, so watch your wallet.

The official word on the city's much-needed and much-delayed first subway line is that it should open in 2011.

Taxi flagfall is Y6. It can be very difficult to get a taxi in the late afternoon, when the drivers change shifts. If you can cope with the congested roads, bikes are a good alternative and can be hired at the youth hostels.

Around Xī'ān

The plains surrounding Xī'ān are strewn with early imperial tombs, many of which have not yet been excavated. But unless you have a particular fascination for burial sites, you can probably come away satisfied after visiting a couple of them.

The Army of Terracotta Warriors is obviously the most famous site, but it's really worth the effort to get to the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi as well.

Tourist buses run to almost all of the sites from in front of Xī'ān train station, with the notable exception of the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi.



Sights

EAST OF XĪ'ĀN

Army of Terracotta Warriors

MUSEUM

(兵马俑; Bīngmǎyǒng; www.bmy.com.cn; admission Mar-Nov Y90, students Y45, Dec-Feb Y65; ☎8.30am-5.30pm Mar-Nov, to 5pm Dec-Feb) The Terracotta Army isn't just Xī'ān's premier site, but one of the most famous archaeological finds in the world. This subterranean life-size army of thousands has silently stood guard over the soul of China's first unifier for over two millennia. Either Qin Shi Huang was terrified of the vanquished spirits awaiting him in the after-life, or, as most archaeologists believe, he expected his rule to continue in death as it had in life – whatever the case, the guardians of his tomb today offer some of the greatest insights we have into the world of ancient China.

The discovery of the army of warriors was entirely fortuitous. In 1974, peasants drilling a well uncovered an underground vault that eventually yielded thousands of terracotta soldiers and horses in battle formation. Over the years the site became so famous that many of its unusual attributes are now well known, in particular the fact that no two soldier's faces are alike.



To really appreciate a trip here, it helps to understand the historical context of the warriors. If you don't want to employ a guide (Y100) or use the audioguide (Y40), the on-site theatre gives a useful primer on how the figures were sculpted. Then visit the site in reverse, which enables you to build up to the most impressive pit for a fitting finale.

Start with the smallest pit, **Pit 3**, containing 72 warriors and horses, which is believed to be the army headquarters due to the number of high-ranking officers unearthed here. It's interesting to note that the northern room would have been used to make sacrificial offerings before battle. In the next pit, **Pit 2**, containing around 1300 warriors and horses, which is still being excavated, you get to examine five of the soldiers up close: a kneeling archer, a standing archer, a cavalryman and his horse, a mid-ranking officer and a general. The level of detail is extraordinary: the expressions, hairstyles, armour and even the tread on the footwear are all unique.

The largest pit, **Pit 1**, is the most imposing. Housed in a building the size of an aircraft hangar, it is believed to contain 6000 warriors (only 2000 are on display) and horses, all facing east and ready for battle. The vanguard of three rows of archers (both crossbow and longbow) is followed by the main force of soldiers, who originally held spears, swords, dagger-axes and other long-shaft weapons. The infantry were accompanied by 35 chariots, though these, made of wood, have long since disintegrated.

Almost as extraordinary as the soldiers is a pair of bronze chariots and horses unearthed just 20m west of the Tomb of Qin Shi Huang. These are now on display, together with some of the original weaponry, in a small **museum** to the right of the main entrance.

The Army of Terracotta Warriors is easily reached by public bus. From the car park at Xi'an train station, take one of the green Terracotta Warriors minibuses (Y7, one hour) or bus 306 (Y7, one hour), both of which travel via Huaqing Hot Springs and the Tomb of Qin Shi Huang. The car park for all vehicles is a good 15-minute walk from the Terracotta Warriors site. Electric carts do the run for Y5. If you want to eat here, go for the restaurants across from the car park.

Huaqing Hot Springs

HISTORIC SITE

(华清池; Huaqing Chi; admission Mar-Nov Y70, Dec-Feb Y40; ☀7am-7pm Mar-Nov, 7.30am-6.30pm Dec-Feb) The natural hot springs in this park were once the favoured retreat of emperors and concubines during the Tang dynasty.

An obligatory stop for Chinese tour groups, who pose for photos in front of the elaborately restored pavilions and by the ornamental ponds, it's a pretty place but not really worth the high admission price. You can, though, hike up to the **Taoist temple** on Black Horse Mountain (Lí Shān). The temple is dedicated to Nuwa, who created the human race from clay and also patched up cracks in the sky. There's also a **cab** (one way/return Y45/70) to the temple, but note that the stop is outside the park, so you

won't be able to get back in unless you buy another ticket.

Tomb of Qin Shi Huang

HISTORIC SITE

(秦始皇陵; Qín Shǐhuáng Líng; admission Mar-Nov Y40, Dec-Feb Y20; ☀8am-6pm Mar-Nov, to 5pm Dec-Feb) In its time, this tomb must have been one of the grandest mausoleums the world had ever seen.

Historical accounts describe it as containing palaces filled with precious stones, underground rivers of flowing mercury and ingenious defences against intruders. The tomb reputedly took 38 years to complete, and required a workforce of 700,000 people. It is said that the artisans who built it were buried alive within, taking its secrets with them.

Considered too dangerous to excavate, the tomb has little to see but you can climb the steps to the top of the mound for a fine view of the surrounding countryside. The tomb is about 2km west of the Army of Terracotta Warriors. Take bus 306 from XĪ'ān train station.

Bànpō Neolithic Village

ANCIENT VILLAGE

(半坡博物馆; Bànpō Bówūguǎn; admission Mar-Nov Y35, Dec-Feb Y25; ☀8am-6pm) This village is of enormous importance for Chinese archaeological studies, but unless you're desperately interested in the subject it can be an underwhelming visitor experience.

Bànpō is the earliest example of the Neolithic Yangshao culture, which is believed to have been matriarchal. It appears to have been occupied from 4500 BC until around 3750 BC. The excavated area is divided into three parts: a pottery-manufacturing area, a residential area complete with moat, and a cemetery. There are also two exhibition halls that feature some of the pottery, including strange-shaped amphorae, discovered at the site.

The village is in the eastern suburbs of XĪ'ān. Bus 105 (Y1) from the train station runs past (ask where to get off); it's also often included on tours.

NORTH & WEST OF XĪ'ĀN

Tomb of Emperor Jingdi

HISTORIC SITE

(汉阳陵; Hàn Yánglíng; admission Mar-Nov Y90, Dec-Feb Y65; ☀8.30am-7pm Mar-Nov, to 6pm Dec-Feb) This tomb (also referred to as the Han Jing Mausoleum, Liu Qi Mausoleum and Yangling Mausoleum) is easily XĪ'ān's most underrated highlight. If you only have time for two sights, then it should be the Army of Terracotta Warriors and this im-

pressive museum and tomb. And unlike the warriors, there are relatively few visitors here so you have the space to appreciate what you're seeing.

A Han-dynasty emperor influenced by Taoism, Jingdi (188–141 BC) based his rule upon the concept of *wúwéi* (nonaction or noninterference) and did much to improve the life of his subjects: he lowered taxes greatly, used diplomacy to cut back on unnecessary military expeditions and even reduced the punishment meted out to criminals. The contents of his tomb are particularly interesting, as they reveal more about daily life than martial preoccupations – a total contrast with the Terracotta Army.

The site has been divided into two sections: the museum and the excavation area. The **museum** holds a large display of expressive terracotta figurines (over 50,000 were buried here), including eunuchs, servants, domesticated animals and even female cavalry on horseback. The figurines originally had movable wooden arms (now gone) and were dressed in colourful silk robes.

But it's the **tomb** itself, which is still being excavated, that's the real reason to make the trip out here. Inside are 21 narrow pits, some of which have been covered by a glass floor, allowing you to walk over the top of ongoing excavations and get a great view of the relics. In all, there are believed to be 81 burial pits here.

Unfortunately, getting here by public transport is a pain. First, take bus 4 (Y1) from XĪ'ān's North Gate. After 30 minutes, it reaches the end of its line at the Zhang Jiabu roundabout. Get off and walk 100m right of the roundabout, where another bus, also numbered 4 (Y2), leaves for the tomb. The catch is that while there are many buses to the roundabout, only three a day do the second leg to the tomb. At the time of writing, they were leaving at 8.30am, 10.50am and 2.30pm, returning to XĪ'ān at 12.30pm, 3.30pm and 5.30pm.

Alternatively, you can try to find a Western Tour that visits the site, or hire a taxi (figure on Y200 for a half-day). The tomb is also close to the airport, so you could stop here on your way to or from there.

Fāmén Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(法门寺; Fāmén Sì; admission Mar-Nov Y120, Dec-Feb Y90; ☀8am-6pm) This temple dating back to the 2nd century AD was built to

THE MAN BEHIND THE ARMY

History is written by the winners. But in China, it was penned by Confucian bureaucrats and for Qin Shi Huang that was a problem, because his disdain for Confucianism was such that he outlawed it, ordered almost all its written texts to be burnt and, according to legend, buried 460 of its top scholars alive. As a result, the First Emperor went down in history as the sort of tyrant who gives tyrants a bad name.

At the same time, though, it's hard to overstate the magnitude of his accomplishments during his 36 years of rule (which began when he was just 13). A classic over-achiever, he created an efficient, centralised government that became the model for later dynasties; he standardised measurements, currency and, most importantly, writing; he built over 6400km of new roads and canals; and, of course, he conquered six major kingdoms before turning 40.

The fact that Qin Shi Huang did all this by enslaving hundreds of thousands of people helped ensure that his subsequent reputation would be as dark as the black he made the official colour of his court. But in recent years, there have been efforts by the China Communist Party (CCP), no strangers to autocratic rule themselves, to rehabilitate him, by emphasising both his efforts to unify China and the far-sighted nature of his policies.

Nevertheless, he remains a hugely controversial figure in Chinese history, but also one whose presence permeates popular culture. The First Emperor pops up in video games, in literature and on TV shows. He's also been the subject of films by both Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou (*The Emperor and the Assassin* and *Hero*), while Jet Li played a thinly disguised version of him in the 2008 Hollywood blockbuster *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*.

house parts of a sacred finger bone of the Buddha, presented to China by India's King Asoka. In 1981, after torrential rains had weakened the temple's ancient brick structure, the entire western side of its 12-storey pagoda collapsed. The subsequent restoration of the temple produced a sensational discovery. Below the pagoda in a sealed crypt were over 1000 sacrificial objects and royal offerings – all forgotten for over a millennium.

Scenting a cash cow, the local authorities have recently started enlarging the temple complex, an ongoing process. You can join the queue of pilgrims who shuffle past the finger bone, but the real reason to make the trip out here is the superb **museum** and its collection of Tang-dynasty treasures. Arguably, what's on display here is more impressive than the collection at the Shaanxi History Museum. There are elaborate gold and silver boxes (stacked on top of one another to form pagodas) and tiny crystal and jade coffins that originally held the four sections of the holy finger.

Other notable exhibits are ornate incense burners, glass cups and vases from the Roman Empire, statues, gold and silver offerings, and an excellent reproduced cross-section of the four-chamber crypt,

which symbolised a tantric mandala (a geometric representation of the universe).

Fāmén Temple is 115km northwest of Xī'ān. Tour bus 2 (Y25, 8am) from Xī'ān train station runs to the temple and returns to Xī'ān at 5pm. The temple is also generally included on Western Tours.

FREE **Xiányáng City Museum** MUSEUM
(咸阳市博物馆; Xiányáng Shì Bówùguǎn; Zhongshan Jie; ☎9am-5.30pm) Over 2000 years ago, Xiányáng was the capital of the Qin dynasty. These days, it's just a dusty satellite of Xī'ān. Its chief attraction is this museum, which houses a remarkable collection of 3000 50cm-tall terracotta soldiers and horses, excavated from the tomb of Liu Bang, the first Han emperor, in 1965. Set in an attractive courtyard, the museum also has bronze and jade exhibits and good English captions.

Buses run every 15 minutes to Xiányáng (Y8.50, one hour) from Xī'ān's long-distance bus station. Ask to be dropped off at the museum. To get back to Xī'ān, just flag down buses going in the opposite direction.

Imperial Tombs HISTORIC SITES
A large number of imperial tombs (皇陵; *huáng líng*) dot the Guānzhōng plain around Xī'ān. They are sometimes in-

cluded on tours from Xī'ān, but most aren't so remarkable as to be destinations in themselves. By far the most impressive is the **Qián Tomb** (乾陵; Qián Líng; admission Mar-Nov Y45, Dec-Feb Y25; ☉8am-6pm), where China's only female emperor, Wu Zetian (AD 625–705), is buried together with her husband Emperor Gaozong, whom she succeeded. The long **Spirit Way** (Yù Dào) here is lined with enormous, lichen-encrusted sculptures of animals and officers of the imperial guard, culminating with 61 (now headless) statues of Chinese ethnic group leaders who attended the emperor's funeral. The mausoleum is 85km northwest of Xī'ān. Tour bus 2 (Y25, 8am) runs close to here from Xī'ān train station and returns in the late afternoon.

Nearby, are the **tomb of Princess Yong Tai** (永泰墓; Yǒng Tàì Mù) and **tomb of Princess Zhang Huai** (章怀墓; Zhāng Huái Mù), both of whom fell foul of Empress Wu, before being posthumously rehabilitated. Other notable tombs are the **Zhao Tomb** (昭陵; Zhāo Líng), where the second Tang emperor Taizhong is buried, and the **Mao Tomb** (茂陵; Mào Líng), the resting place of Wudi (156–87 BC), the most powerful of the Han emperors.

Tours

One-day tours allow you to see all the sights around Xī'ān more quickly and conveniently than if you arranged one yourself. Itineraries differ somewhat, but there are two basic tours: an Eastern Tour and a Western Tour.

Most hostels run their own tours, but make sure you find out what is included (admission fees, lunch, English-speaking guide) and try to get an exact itinerary, or you could end up being herded through the Terracotta Warriors before you have a chance to get your camera out.

Eastern Tour

The Eastern Tour (Dōngxiàn Yóulǎn) is the most popular as it includes the Army of Terracotta Warriors, as well as the Tomb of Qin Shi Huang, Bānpō Neolithic Village, Huáqīng Hot Springs and possibly the Big Goose Pagoda. Most travel agencies and hostels charge around Y300 for an all-day, all-in excursion, including admission fees, lunch and guide, although sometimes the hostel tours skip Bānpō. Tours to the Terracotta Warriors only are also available for around Y160.

It's perfectly possible to do a shortened version of the Eastern Tour by using the tourist buses or bus 306, all of which pass by Huáqīng Hot Springs, the Terracotta Warriors and the Tomb of Qin Shi Huang. If you decide to do this, start at the hot springs, then travel to Qin Shi Huang's tomb and end at the Terracotta Warriors.

Western Tour

The longer Western Tour (Xīxiàn Yóulǎn) includes the Xiányáng City Museum, some of the imperial tombs, and possibly also Fāmén Temple and (if you insist) the Tomb of Emperor Jingdi. It's far less popular than the Eastern Tour and consequently you may have to wait a couple of days for your hostel or agency to organise enough people. It's also more expensive; expect to pay Y600.

Huà Shān

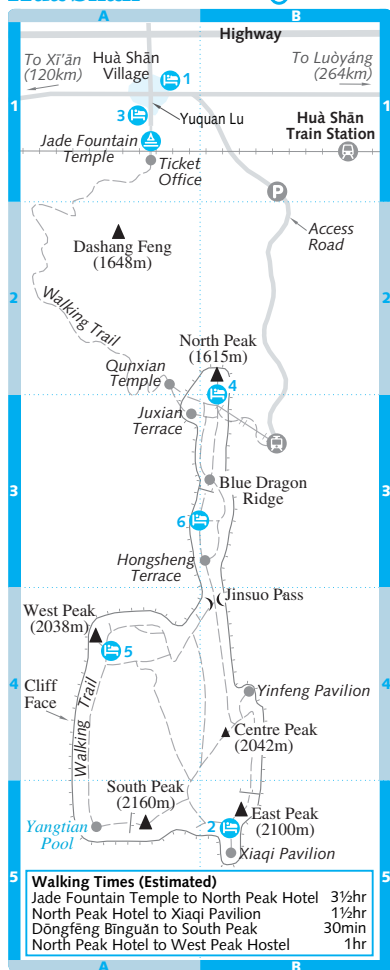
华山

One of Taoism's five sacred mountains, the granite domes of Huà Shān used to be home to hermits and sages. These days, though, the trails that wind their way up to the five peaks are populated by droves of day trippers drawn by the dreamy scenery. And it is spectacular. There are knife-blade ridges and twisted pine trees clinging to ledges as you ascend, while the summits offer transcendent panoramas of green mountains and countryside stretching away to the horizon. Taoists hoping to find a quiet spot to contemplate life and the universe will be disappointed, but everyone else seems to revel in the tough climb and they're suitably elated once they reach the top. So forget all that spiritual malarkey and get walking.

Sights & Activities

There are three ways up the mountain to the **North Peak** (北峰; Běi Fēng), the first of five summit peaks. Two of these options start from the eastern base of the mountain, at the cable-car terminus. The first option is handy if you don't fancy the climb: an Austrian-built **cable car** (one-way/return Y80/150; ☉7am-7pm) will lift you to the North Peak in 10 scenic minutes.

The second option is to work your way to the North Peak under the cable-car route. This takes a sweaty two hours, and two sections of 50m or so are quite literally vertical, with nothing but a steel chain to grab onto and tiny chinks cut into the rock



Huà Shān

Sleeping

- | | |
|--------------------------|----|
| 1 Bǔjiāyí Inn..... | A1 |
| 2 Dōngfēng Bīnguǎn..... | B5 |
| 3 Huáyáng Hotel..... | A1 |
| 4 North Peak Hotel..... | B2 |
| 5 West Peak Hostel..... | A4 |
| 6 Wǔyúnfēng Fàndiàn..... | A3 |

for footing. Not for nothing is this route called the 'Soldiers Path'.

The third option is the most popular, but it's still hard work. A 6km path leads to the

North Peak from the village of Huà Shān, at the base of the mountain. It usually takes between three and five hours to reach the North Peak via this route. The first 4km up are pretty easy going, but after that it's all steep stairs.

If you want to carry on to the other peaks, then count on a minimum of eight hours in total from the base of Huà Shān. If you want to spare your knees, then another option is to take the cable car to the North Peak and then climb to the other peaks, before ending up back where you started. It takes about four hours to complete the circuit in this fashion and it's still fairly strenuous. In places, it can be a little nerve-racking, too. Huà Shān has a reputation for being dangerous, especially when the trails are crowded, or if it's wet or icy, so exercise caution.

But the scenery is sublime. Along **Blue Dragon Ridge** (苍龙岭; Cānglóng Lǐng), which connects the North Peak with the **East Peak** (东峰; Dōng Fēng), **South Peak** (南峰; Nán Fēng) and **West Peak** (西峰; Xī Fēng), the way has been cut along a narrow rock ridge with impressive sheer cliffs on either side.

The South Peak is the highest at 2160m and the most crowded. The East Peak is less busy, but all three rear peaks afford great views when the weather cooperates.

There is accommodation on the mountain, most of it basic and overpriced, but it does allow you to start climbing in the afternoon, watch the sunset and then spend the night, before catching the sunrise from either the East Peak or South Peak. Some locals make the climb at night, using torches (flashlights). The idea is to start around 11pm and be at the East Peak for sunrise; you get to see the scenery on the way down.

Admission is Y100. To get to the cable car (*suǒdào*), take a taxi from the village to the ticket office (Y10) and then a shuttle bus (one way/return Y10/20) the rest of the way.

Sleeping & Eating

You can either spend the night in Huà Shān village or on one of the peaks. Take your own food or eat well before ascending, unless you like to feast on instant noodles and processed meat – proper meals are very pricey on the mountain. Don't forget a torch and warm clothes. Bear in mind that prices for a bed triple during public holidays. Some of the mountain hotels are

also reluctant to give out dorm beds to solo travellers. If that happens, head to the West Peak Hostel.

In the village, there are a number of dining, none-too-clean hotels along Yuquan Lu, the road leading up to the trailhead, that offer beds from Y50 upwards. There are smarter places on Yuquan Donglu. On the mountain, expect nothing remotely luxurious, especially not a private bathroom.

Bijiāyī Inn

HOTEL \$\$

(比家宜快捷酒店; Bǐjiāyī Kuàijié Jiùdiàn; ☎0913-465 8000; Yuquan Donglu; 玉泉东路; s & d Y238-281; Ⓜ) A new and welcome choice in a town crying out for a decent midrange hotel. Big, modern rooms and the best option if you want a modicum of comfort without breaking the bank.

Wūyúnfēng Fàndiàn

HOTEL \$

(五云峰饭店; dm Y100-180, tr/d Y210/280) If you're planning on doing a circuit of the rear peaks the next day, or want to catch the sunrise at the East or South Peak, this is a good choice.

Huáyáng Hotel

HOTEL \$

(华洋大酒店; Huáyáng Dàjiùdiàn); ☎0913-436 5288; Yuquan Lu; 玉泉路; s & d Y120) Clean and simple rooms with OK bathrooms make this the pick of the admittedly poor hotels on offer on Yuquan Lu.

Dōngfēng Bīnguǎn

HOTEL \$

(东峰宾馆; dm Y100-220, tr/d Y260/320) The top location for watching the sun come up and the best restaurant.

West Peak Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(西峰旅社; Xīfēng Lǚshè; dm Y80) Rustic and basic, but also the friendliest place on the mountain. It shares its premises with an old Taoist temple.

North Peak Hotel

HOTEL \$

(北峰饭店; Běifēng Fàndiàn; dm Y60-180, d Y240-260) The busiest of the peak hotels.

Getting There & Away

From Xi'an to Huà Shān, catch one of the private buses (one way/return Y33/55, two hours, 6am to 8pm) that depart from in front of Xi'an train station. You'll be dropped off on Yuquan Lu, which is also where buses back to Xi'an leave from 7.30am to 7pm. Coming from the east, try to talk your driver into dropping you at the Huà Shān highway exit if you can't find a direct bus. Don't pay more than Y10 for a taxi into Huà Shān village. There are few buses (if any) going east from Huà Shān; pretty much everyone catches a taxi to the highway and then flags down buses

headed for Yunchéng, Tàiyuán or Luòyáng. If you can't read Chinese, try to find someone to help you out.

Háncéng

韩城

☎0913 / POP 59,000

Háncéng is best known for being the hometown of Sima Qian (145–90 BC), China's legendary historian and author of the *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian). Sima Qian chronicled different aspects of life in the Han dynasty and set about arranging the country's already distant past in its proper (Confucian) order. He was eventually castrated and imprisoned by Emperor Wudi, after having defended an unsuccessful general.

Háncéng makes for a good overnight trip from Xi'an. Built upon a hill, the new town (新城; *xīnchéng*) located at the top is dusty and unremarkable and is where you'll find hotels, banks and transport. But the more atmospheric old town (古城; *gǔchéng*) at the bottom of the hill boasts a handful of historic sights that are well off the main tourist circuit. The principal reason to visit, though, is to head to the nearby Ming-dynasty village of Dǎngjiācūn.

Sights

Dǎngjiācūn

ANCIENT VILLAGE

(党家村; admission Y40; ☉7.30am-6.30pm) This remarkable, perfectly preserved, 14th-century village nestles in a sheltered location in a loess valley. Once the home of the Dang clan, successful merchants who ferried timber and other goods across the Yellow River, it's since evolved into a quintessential farming community. Three hundred and twenty families live here in 125 grey-brick courtyard houses, which are notable for their carvings and mix of different architectural styles. The elegant six-storey tower is a **Confucian pagoda** (Wénxīng gé). With its sleepy, timeless atmosphere, it's a fine place to escape the hustle of modern China.

Dǎngjiācūn is 9km northeast of Hāncéng. To get here, take a minibus (Y3, 20 minutes) from the bus station to the entrance road, from where it's a pleasant 2km walk through fields to the village. Otherwise, you can take a taxi from Hāncéng (Y20).

Confucius & Chénghuáng Temples

CONFUCIAN TEMPLES

In the heart of the old town, the tranquil **Confucius Temple** (文庙; Wén Miào; admission Y15; ☉8am-5.30pm) is the pick of the sights in Hánchéng itself. The dilapidated Yuan, Ming and Qing buildings could do with a fresh coat of paint, but there's a half-moon pool, towering cypress trees and glazed dragon screens. The city museum holds peripheral exhibits in the wings.

At the back of the Confucius Temple is the **Chénghuáng Temple** (城隍庙; Chéng-huáng Miào; admission Y15; ☐8am-5.30pm), in a lane lined with Ming-dynasty courtyard houses. There has been a temple here since the Zhou dynasty, but the whole site has undergone extensive renovation in recent years. The main attraction is the **Sacrificing Hall**, with its intricate roof detail, where gifts were offered to the gods to protect the city.

Buying a ticket to either temple gets you into the other as well. Bus 102 (Y1) runs here from the southwest corner of Huanghe Dajie, close to the bus station. A taxi is Y10.

Yuánjué Pagoda

MONUMENT

(园觉寺塔; Yuánjué Sītā; ☉6am-6pm) Looming over the old town and dating back to Tang dynasty, but rebuilt in 1958, this pagoda also acts as a memorial to Red Army soldiers killed fighting the KMT. It's not possible to climb the pagoda itself, but the steep ascent to it offers panoramic views over the old town. To get here, turn sharp right when leaving the Chénghuáng Temple and then take the first major right you come to. The walk takes you through the most evocative part of the old town; exit the pagoda through the park on the other side and you're back in the new town.

Tomb of Sima Qian

HISTORIC SITE

(司马迁祠; Sīmǎqiān Cí; admission Y35; ☉8am-6pm) With its dramatic location atop a hill overlooking fields and the nearby Yellow River, the Tomb of Sima Qian is an imposing sight, even if there's an elevated freeway close by. Despite that, it's still a popular spot with picnickers. The actual tomb, though, isn't much to look at.

The tomb is 10km south of town. To get here, take bus 1 (Y1, 10 minutes) from the train station to its terminus at Nánguān, and then switch to the green Sīmǎ Miào bus (Y3, 20 minutes). You'll have to catch a taxi back (Y30).

Sleeping

For something completely different, spend the night in Dǎngjiācūn, where basic dorm beds in some of the courtyard houses are available for Y15. If a local doesn't approach you, just ask and you'll be pointed in the right direction. They also offer simple and cheap home cooking.

If you'd prefer to spend the night in town try one of the following:

Tiānyuán Bīnguǎn

HOTEL \$

(天园宾馆; ☎529 9388; Longmen Dajie Beiduan; 龙门大街北段; s & d Y120-130; ☉☎) Across from the train station.

Yínhé Dàjiǔdiàn

HOTEL \$\$

(银河大酒店; ☎529 2555; Longmen Dajie Nanduan; 龙门大街南段; r Y398, discounts of up to 33%; ☉☎) More upmarket.

Information

There's a branch of the **Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; cnr Huanghe Dajie & Jinta Zhonglu; ☉8am-6pm) close to the bus station that has a 24-hour ATM and will change cash. There are other ATMs that take foreign cards, too.

Getting There & Away

Buses leave Xi'an's long-distance bus station for Hánchéng (Y62.50, three hours, seven daily) from 7am onwards. Buses back to Xi'an run until 6pm – though these may drop you off at the east bus station. You can catch them from opposite the train station on Longmen Dajie Beiduan, as well as from the bus station. If you're in an exploratory mood, you can also cross over the Yellow River into Shànxi from here.

An early-morning train runs from Xi'an to Hánchéng (Y19, 4½ hours) at 2.50am. From Hánchéng, a daily local train rumbles towards Běijīng via Píngyáo and Tàiyuán at 4.10pm (Y217, 18 hours).

Yán'ān

延安

☎0911 / POP 107,000

When the diminished communist armies pitched up here at the end of the Long March, it signalled the beginning of Yán'ān's brief period in the sun. For 12 years, from 1935 to 1947, this backwater town was the CCP headquarters, and it was in the surrounding caves that the party thrashed out much of the ideology that was put into practice during the Chinese revolution.

These days, Yán'ān's residents seem to be more interested in consumerism than

communism; for a small place, there are a surprising number of shopping malls. But its livelihood is still tied to the CCP; endless tour groups of mostly middle-aged 'red tourists' pass through each year on the trail of Mao and his cohorts. Few foreigners make it here, so expect some attention.

Sights

FREE **Yán'ān Revolution Museum** MUSEUM
(延安革命简史陈列馆; Yán'ān Géming Jiǎnshǐ Chénnièguǎn; Shengdi Lu; ☎8am-5pm)
By far the most flash building in town is the new **Yán'ān Revolutionary Memorial Hall** (延安革命纪念馆; Yán'ān Géming Jìniànguǎn), fronted by a statue of Mao and housing this museum. It offers an excellent, if obviously one-sided, account of the CCP's time in Yán'ān and the Sino-Japanese War. More English captions would be nice, but there are plenty of photos of the good old days and other exhibits that are self-explanatory. Bus 1 (Y1) runs here.

FREE **Yángjiǎng Revolution Headquarters Site** HISTORIC SITE
(杨家岭革命旧址; Yángjiǎng Géming Jiùzhǐ; Yángjiǎng Lu; ☎8am-6pm Mar-Nov, 8.30am-5pm Dec-Feb) During their extended stay, the communist leadership shifted around Yán'ān. As a result there are numerous former headquarters sites. The most interesting, this site is located 3km northwest of the town centre. Here you can see the assembly hall where the first central committee meetings were held, including the seventh national plenum, which formally confirmed Mao as the leader of the party and the revolution. It's fun watching the red tourists pose in old CCP uniforms in front of the podium.

Nearby are simple **dugouts** built into the loess earth where Mao, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai and other senior communist leaders lived, worked and wrote.

FREE **Wángjiāpíng Revolution Headquarters Site** HISTORIC SITE
(王家坪革命旧址; Wángjiāpíng Géming Jiùzhǐ; Wángjiāpíng Lu; ☎8am-6pm Mar-Nov, 8.30am-5pm Dec-Feb) Further south, this was the last site occupied by the communist leadership in Yán'ān. The improved living conditions at this site – houses rather than dugouts – indicate the way the CCP's fortunes were rising by the time it moved here.

Both Revolution Headquarters Sites can be reached by taking bus 1, which runs along the road east of the river and then

heads up Shengdi Lu. Bus 3 runs along the other side of the river along Zhongxin Jie; get off when it crosses north over the river. Both of these buses start at the train station. Bus 8 also passes by these places and can be caught from Da Bridge (大桥). The taxi flag fall is Y5.

FREE **Fènghuángshān Revolution Headquarters Site** HISTORIC SITE
(凤凰山革命旧址; Fènghuángshān Géming Jiùzhǐ; ☎8am-5pm Mar-Nov) More accessible from town, this Revolution Headquarters Site is about 100m west of the post office. This was the first site occupied by the communists after their move to Yán'ān, before being abandoned because it was too easy for enemy planes to attack it. There's a photo exhibit about Norman Bethune, the Canadian doctor who became a hero in China for treating CCP casualties in the late 1930s.

Treasure Pagoda MONUMENT
(宝塔; Bǎo Tǎ; admission Y65; ☎6.30am-9pm Mar-Nov, to 8pm Dec-Feb) Yán'ān's most prominent landmark, Treasure Pagoda dates back to the Song dynasty. For an extra Y10, you can climb the very narrow steps and ladders of the pagoda for a restricted view of the city.

Qīngliáng Mountain PARK
(清凉山; Qīngliáng Shān; admission Y31; ☎8am-7pm Mar-Nov, to 5.30pm Dec-Feb) This was the birthplace of the CCP propaganda machine; *Xinhua* News Agency and the *Liberation Daily* both started life here when the place was known as 'Information Mountain'. Now, it's a pleasant hillside park with some nice trails and a few sights, including **Ten Thousand Buddha Cave** (万佛洞; Wǎnfó Dòng) dug into the sandstone cliff beside the river. The cave has relatively intact Buddhist statues.

Sleeping & Eating

There are few budget options in Yán'ān. Most hotels, though, offer discounts. It's also not a gourmet's paradise, though the night market, just off the small square in the centre of town, is a fine spot for eating al fresco and meeting the locals. Try the very tasty handmade noodles.

Yán'ān Shénzhōu Guójí Hotel HOTEL \$\$
(延安神州国际大酒店; Yán'ān Shénzhōu Guójí Dàjiùdiàn; ☎298 0888; Dong Dajie; 东大街; s/d Y538/698, discounts of 60%; 🍷🍷) With its dim lighting and red-themed decor, this

new place close to the east bus station looks distinctly dodgy at first glance. But it's not a love hotel and the rooms are modern and spacious. Ignore the ludicrously optimistic prices.

Yàshèng Dàjiùdiàn

HOTEL \$\$

(亚圣大酒店; ☎266 6000; Erdaojie Zhongduan; 二道街中段; tw Y328-368, discounts of 40%;

⊛) Located in the centre of town, the rooms here are clean and comfortable, if slightly gloomy. There's an OK restaurant (dishes Y14 to Y40) on the top floor.



Information

Bank of China (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; Daqiao Jie; ☎8am-5pm) On the corner of Daqiao Jie and Erdao Jie, this branch has a 24-hour ATM. There are other ATMs around town, too.

China Post (中国邮政; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng; Yan'anshi Dajie) Post and telephone office.

Internet cafe (wǎngbā; per hr Y3; ☎24hr) On the 2nd floor, down an alley just to the left of the Yàshèng Dàjiùdiàn.

Public Security Bureau (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; 56 Yan'anshi Dajie) There is an office at the Yán'an Bīnguǎn.



Getting There & Away

Air

There are daily flights to Xi'an (Y380) and Beijing (Y850) from the airport (飞机场), 7km northeast of the town.

The airline booking office, the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; 中国民航; Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎211 1111; ☎8am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm), is located on Baimi Dadao.

Bus

From Xi'an's east bus station, there are buses to Yan'an (Y82.50, four to five hours) every 40 minutes from 6.30am to 4.20pm. The schedule back to Xi'an is essentially the same. Buses arrive and depart from the south bus station (汽车南站; *qìchē nánzhàn*).

At Yan'an's east bus station (*qìchē dōngzhàn*), there are buses to Yulin (Y69.50, five hours) every 50 minutes from 7.25am to 6pm. Heading west, there are departures to Yinchuan in Ningxia (Y107, eight hours); buses leave at 8am, 9.30am and 10.30am, while sleepers leave at 4pm and 5.30pm. You can also get into Shanxi and Hénán from here.

Train

The quickest overnight train back to Xi'an leaves at 10.28pm (Y106, eight hours). Advance tickets in Yan'an can be hard to come by – consider taking the bus instead. A taxi from the train station into town costs Y10.

Yulin

榆林

☎0912 / POP 92,000

Thanks to extensive coal mining and the discovery of natural gas fields nearby, this one-time garrison town on the fringes of Inner Mongolia's Mu Us Desert is booming. Despite all the construction, there's still enough of interest to make this a good place to break a trip if you're following the Great Wall or heading north on the trail of Genghis Khan.

Parts of the earthen **city walls** are still intact, while the main north-south pedestrian street in the elongated old town (divided into Beidajie and Nandajie) has several restored buildings, including what appears to be an early-20th-century **Bell Tower** (钟楼; Zhōng Lóu). With several restaurants and antique shops, it's a nice street to wander at night, when it's lit by lanterns.

West of Beidajie and Nandajie and running parallel to it is Xinjian Nanlu, where you can find ATMs, internet cafes and a post office. The streets running off it are good for cheap restaurants.

Four kilometres north of Yulin are some badly eroded 15th-century sections of the Great Wall and a prominent four-storey **beacon tower** (镇北台; zhènběitái; admission Y20; ☎8am-6pm). Bus 11 (Y1) runs here from Changcheng Nanlu, about 200m west of the main bus station.



Sleeping

Xiyà Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(西亚大酒店; Xiyà Dàjiùdiàn; ☎368 4000; 59 Xinjian Nanlu; 新建南路59号; s/d Y238/268, discounts of 30%; ⊛⊙) The Xiyà's huge rooms have comfy beds and all come with computers, while some of the bathrooms feature cool whirlpool baths. With the discounts on offer, it's a good deal. The easy-to-miss entrance is two doors down from a China Mobile store.

Shùn fā Zhāodàisù

HOTEL \$

(顺发招待所; ☎326 8958; 2nd fl, 5 Yuyang Zhonglu; 榆扬中路5号二楼; r with shared bathroom Y60) Five minutes' walk from the main bus station and just east of Xinjian Nanlu, this place offers OK basic accommodation and is one of the few cheapies that will take foreigners. Look for the red doors and head up the stairs.

FROM FARM BOY TO EMPEROR

Li Zicheng enjoyed a remarkable rise from shepherd to sitting on the imperial throne and led the most successful of the many peasant rebellions that took place in the dying days of the Ming dynasty. Born in 1606, Li drew tens of thousands of followers in famine-racked, 1630s Shaanxi by advocating equal shares of land for all and no taxes. Having taken over large parts of Shaanxi, Shǎnxī and Hénán, Li and his army sacked Běijīng and, after the suicide of the last Ming emperor, Li proclaimed himself Emperor of the Shun dynasty in April 1644.

His reign was short-lived. Less than two months later, the invading Manchu forces defeated his army and Li retreated back to Shaanxi and subsequently to Húběi, where he either committed suicide or was killed in 1645. Four centuries later, Li's impeccable socialist credentials, as well as his megalomania, made him an ideal role model for the CCP, who continue to laud his exploits as an early revolutionary.

i Getting There & Around

There is a daily flight from Yúlín to Xī'ān (Y400).

Yúlín has two bus stations. If you get off the bus inside the town walls (near the south gate), you are at the **main (south) bus station** (汽车站; qìchē zhàn); the **regional (north) bus station** (客运站; kèyùn zhàn) is located 2km northwest on Yingbin Dadao.

The main bus station has regular buses to Xī'ān (Y155, 10 hours) from 7am to 7.30pm. You can also get frequent buses to Yán'ān (Y69, five hours), and morning buses to Tàiyuán (Y122, eight hours) and Yínchuān (Y127, five to six hours).

The **regional bus station** has hourly buses to Bāotóu in Inner Mongolia (Y84, five hours) and half-hourly buses to Dàliútǎ (Y10, 1½ hours), from where you can travel on to Dōngshèng. Note that the buses to Dōngshèng pass by Genghis Khan's Mausoleum.

The **train station** is 1km west of town. There are two trains a day to Xī'ān (Y101 to Y165, 12 to 14 hours) via Yán'ān, but sleeper tickets are hard to come by.

Bus 1 (Y1) runs between the two bus stations. Taxis around town and to the train station will cost you Y5.

Mǐzhǐ

0912

About 70km south of Yúlín, Mǐzhǐ is best known as the hometown of Li Zicheng, protocommunist and would-be emperor, as well as for the alleged beauty of its female residents.

Despite those twin draws, it's a sleepy place with a small Hui presence and way off the tourist circuit; you will be the sole foreigner in town and likely the only visitor of any description. Some of the local popula-

tion still live in caves and homes carved out of the surrounding hillsides, while the small old quarter, with its narrow alleys and dilapidated courtyard homes, is a fascinating place to wander.

The principal sight, though, is the **Li Zicheng Palace** (李自成行宮; Lǐ Zìchéng Xínggōng; Xínggōng Lu; admission Y20; ☎8.30am-5.30pm). This well-preserved and compact palace was built in 1643 at the height of Li's power. Set against a hillside, there's a statue of the man himself, as well as pavilions, which house exhibits about Li and notable Mǐzhǐ women, and a pagoda. There's also a fine theatre, where music performances and plays were held, sometimes for three days at a time, to celebrate Li's victories. To reach the palace, walk east on Xínggōng Lu.

Turn left immediately after leaving the palace and you are in the heart of the **old quarter** of Mǐzhǐ. Many of the original, late-Ming-dynasty courtyard homes survive, albeit in a rundown condition.

There's no reason to stay the night, but if you want to break the trip to Yán'ān then try the **Bǎoshān Bīnguǎn** (宝山宾馆; ☎621 3987; Zhihuang Xilu; 治黄西路; s & d Y50-100; ☎), or the posher **Jīntài Hotel** (金泰大酒店; Jīntài Dàjiǔdiàn; ☎621 1999; Jiulong Qiao; 九龙桥北侧; s/d/tr Y168/218/228; ☎) on the north side of Jiulong Qiao.

Mǐzhǐ makes an easy day trip from Yúlín. Buses (Y19, 1½ hours) run from Yúlín's main, or south, bus station. Ask to get off at Jiulong Qiao. Local buses to Yán'ān will also drop you here. At the time of writing, road repairs meant the journey was taking three to four hours.

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