

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Chinese Architecture Ancient Capitals and Heritages 古都与文化遗产

Ancient Capitals and Historical Sites

The Four Great Ancient Capitals of China traditionally refers to Beijing, Luoyang, Nanjing, and Xi'an. After the 1920s as more discoveries were made, other historical capitals were added to the list, including Kaifeng, Hangzhou, and Anyang.

There are several historical constructions in Beijing such as the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, and numerous other construction projects. Beijing is also the best place to visit the Great Wall. Luoyang is regarded as cradle of the Chinese civilization. Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties and well-known for the Terracotta Army ("Soldier and Horse Figures"), inside the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor. The present-day city wall of Nanjing was built more than 600 years ago during the Ming dynasty, and it is the longest surviving city wall in the world. Kaifeng was the capital of Northern Song dynasty. Hangzhou is known for its beautiful scenery. Anyang was a capital of Shang dynasty 3,300 years ago where the oracle bones inscriptions were excavated.

Questions

1. The Great wall is regarded as a wonder of the world. It witnesses the separation and integration in Chinese history. Who built it and for what purposes?
2. The Forbidden City is a glorious and awe-inspiring royal palace. Compare it with royal palaces of western countries, what are the differences?
3. How was the Terracotta Army discovered? How were the soldier and horse figures sculptured? What are their features in terms of art and technology?

Tourist Resources in China

There are some tourist resources in China on the list of world cultural and natural sites. Mount Taishan is admired by Chinese as paramount among the Five Sacred Mountains. Grottoes filled with precious murals and sculptures are concentrated along the ancient Silk Road in Gansu Province. The best known are the Mogao Caves which are called "treasure house of oriental art". The Shaolin Temple, the birthplace of Chinese Zen Buddhism, is famous for its Shaolin kungfu martial arts. Suzhou and Hangzhou, long known as "paradise on earth," are crisscrossed with rivers, lakes, bridges and villages, as beautiful as paintings.

Questions

1. What are the most famous five mountains in China? Why did Chinese emperors worship Mt. Taishan so much?
2. What are the unique features of the gardens south of Yangtse River? What are the differences between the gardens and the gardens in western countries in terms of architecture and the concepts?

Reading

Dingmin Wu, *A Panoramic View of Chinese Culture*, Nanjing: Yilin Publishing House, 2010

Lang Ye & Zhu Liangzhi, *Insights into Chinese Culture*, Foreign Language Teaching and Research press, Beijing, 2008

Ebrey Patricia Buckley, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd Ed, 1993