



Theme Tour: Desert Culture Destination Information

Hotan (Khotan)

Hotan, a city in southwest Tarim Basin in Xinjiang, bordered by Karakorum Mountains and Tibet to the south, was the part of Keriya Kingdom in ancient times, and the centre of Buddhism for Xinjiang in the earliest days. It is a charming oasis that abounds in jade, silk and carpets.

Kashgar (Kashi)

The meaning of Kashgar is "Jade". It is situated at the southwestern part of Xinjiang and is located in the western extremity of China, near the border with Tajikistan. It is the constellating point of Chinese and Western cultures.

Kuqa

It is a city in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and is under the administration of the Aksu Prefecture. It was once the home of an ancient Buddhist Kingdom of Kucha and played a vital role on the ancient Silk Road.

Taklamakan Desert

Taklamakan Desert is located in the Tarim Basin in the south of Xinjiang. It is the second largest desert in the world and the largest in China. Its moving sands continue to shape the desert during the wind season. Due to its mysterious landscape, Taklamakan Desert is also called "Sea of Death" – people got in would hardly find the way out in the old days.

Turpan

Turpan, located in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, has the lowest elevation of any place in China. It is a basin in the mountains of east Xinjiang. Aydingkol Lake is 505 feet below sea level and is the second lowest area of the world, behind the Dead Sea in Jordan. The temperature in the summer can get as high as 50°C, which is why it is also known as "The Fire Prefecture".

Famous historical sites include the ancient cities of Jiaohe and Gaochang, and the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves. It is 113 miles from Urumqi with expressways linking the two cities.

Urumqi

Urumqi means "a beautiful pasture land" in ancient Mongolian used by the Junggar tribe. It is the capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in China. Urumqi was an important town on the new northern route of the Silk Road, which made vital contributions in promoting Sino-foreign economic and cultural exchanges 2,000 years ago.

Urumqi is a city where ethnic minorities live in compact of mixed communities. They are the Uygur, Han, Hui, Kazak, Mongolian, Kirgiz, Xibe, altogether over 40 ethnic groups of people. It is interesting that Han people are the major ethnic group in China, but in Xinjiang, they are minority group. The city's uniqueness, the strong colorful ethnic life styles and local customs are quite attractive to visitors.

Xian (also Xi'an)

Xian, the capital of Shaanxi Province, is located in the heart of the Guanzhong Basin, with the Weihe River running along the northern border of the city. It is the largest metropolis in northwestern China. Known as Chang'an in ancient China, Xian is a world-renowned ancient capital.

For 1,062 years beginning in the 11th century B.C., Xian was the capital of 13 dynasties including the Western Zhou, Qin, Western Han, Eastern Han, Sui, and Tang. The continuous dynastic occupation kept the city beautiful and magnificent. More than two hundred and seventy palaces and temples were built during its heyday, such as the "Three Han Palaces" in the Han dynasty, namely Changle, Weiyang, Jianzhang Palaces, and numerous other palaces and watch towers. The most well-known among these is the Tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang, with the Terracotta Warriors and chariot. Xian is also the starting point of the ancient Silk Road.

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

Xinjiang is located in northwest China and covers 617 thousand square miles. Its population is 16.62 million. It contains one sixth of the total area of China, and is inhabited with different minorities and nationalities including Uygur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Mongolian, Kirgiz, Xihe, Tajik, Uzbek, Manchu, Daur, Tatar, and Russian.

Xinjiang is far from the sea and is surrounded by snow-capped mountains, boundless deserts and vast grasslands. There are many basins and oases scattered over the region. The dry climate has created the peculiar natural scenery such as the Gobi Desert and salt deserts. The clear water from melted snow and ample sunshine make it an invigorating place. After entering the border of Xinjiang, the Silk Road splits into three routes: the north, middle and south. Many ruins of ancient cities, watchtowers and numerous historical sites of the Han and Tang dynasties that have been swallowed by the sand remain along the routes. There are also important cities and towns such as Urumqi, Turpan, Kashai, Kuqa, Hotan, and Taxkorgan along the ancient Silk Road.