



Theme Tour: Silk Road Culture

Destination Information

Dunhuang

Dunhuang, a desert treasure trove famed for its historical cave-paintings, is one of the most important oasis towns on the Silk Road.

Dunhuang used to be called Shazhou and was one of the "four counties in Hexi Corridor" in Gansu Province. Dunhuang adjoins Anxi to the east, and borders Aksay all the way to the neighboring Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the northwest. There are many tourist attractions in Dunhuang, including the world famous Mogao Caves which were put into the "World Heritages" by UNESCO in 1987. Dunhuang is listed as a state historic and cultural city.

Gansu Province

Gansu Province is located in the northwestern China. Gansu covers an area of 175,289 square mile with a population of 24 million. The capital city is Lanzhou. The province lies between Qinghai-Tibet and Inner Mongolia and rises 4,921 feet above sea level.

To the west of Lanzhou and west of the Yellow River is the famous "Hexi Corridor," an important strategic passage on the ancient Silk Road stretching to the west. This area abounds in rich historical and cultural heritage, including grottoes, ancient buildings and other cultural relics.

Many ethnic minorities congregate in Gansu, which makes it a unique tourist destination with a variety of folk customs. The scenes of grassland, the Gobi desert, and snow-capped mountains add beauty to this mysterious land.

Jiayuguan

Jiayuguan City is located at the central part of the Hexi Corridor. Jiayuguan Pass was an important strategic spot in ancient times. It has been a magnificent pass for over 160 years. Although it is a booming industrial city now, there are many rich tourist resources, for example the Jiayuguan Pass, the Suspended Great Wall, and the Great Wall Museum. Other attractions include the Mural Tomb of the Kingdom of Wei and Jin Dynasties, Qiyi Glacier and Jiayuguan Glide Range.

Jiuquan

Jiuquan was one of the “four counties in Hexi Corridor”. It has a variety of historic and cultural sites including the Jiuquan scenic spots dating back to the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC- 25 AD) and the many murals from the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420) tomb. It is also a well-known wine glass production city.

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.

Qinghai Province

Qinghai is in the northeastern part of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and its name comes from Qinghai Lake, the largest inland lake in China. The Yangtze, the Yellow and Lancang Rivers all have their origins there, so Qinghai is also known as the birthplace of rivers. Qinghai is over 9,842 feet above sea level. It is rich in tourist resources and possesses an ideal ecological environment. The people of the region have a unique religious culture and traditional folk customs, which also makes Qinghai a fascinating destination.

In the remote past, there was a branch line of the ancient Silk Road which stretched west from Lanzhou in Gansu to Qinghai, through Xining, Golmud, and then north to Dunhuang, finally converging with the main road. Along the Silk Road in Qinghai main scenic spots include Qinghai Lake and Birds Island, the Salt Lake and the famous Ta'er Lamasery.

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.

Xining

Located on the northeastern part of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Xining is the provincial capital of Qinghai. It is the hub of politics, culture, economy and transportation, Qinghai-Tibet Railways in particular. Xining sits astride the main route to the hinterland of Qinghai and Tibet. Xining is 7,463 feet above sea level and is a typical example of a plateau city.

Xining has unique and beautiful scenery and many places of interests. The Ta'er Lamasery which holds plenty of precious relics and good editions of Tibetan scriptures. Major attractions include the world-famous Qinghai Lake, Bird Island, Sun & Moon Hill, Jin Yin Tan plain and mysterious Atom City.

Zhangye

Located in the central part of the Hexi Corridor, Zhangye was one of the four counties in Hexi Corridor. It was known as Ganzhou in the past and is regarded as a granary in this area. Visitors can visit the sleeping Buddha in the Giant Buddha Temple. Visitors can get the feel of the prairie in south Gansu, riding horses and tame deer on the grasslands with the hospitable Yugur people. There are also opportunities to sing and dance with the Yugur people. Mati Temple is near Zhangye in the Sunan area.