

Oct. 2014

Vol. 9



Hello! China

Shanxi Travel Guidebook

-- Where Datong and Pingyao are located

Group Tours with Solo Adventure!

Shanxi Quick Facts

- **Name of the Province:** Shanxi (山西, Shānxī)
- **Population:** 35,712,111 (2010)
- **Location:** North China
- **Area :** 156,000 km²
- **Capital:** Taiyuan (太原)

Overview

Geographical Location

Shangxi Province is located in the middle reaches of the Yellow River. Loess Plateau starts from the Taihang Mountain in the east to the Wuqiao Range in the west. Its east part belongs to Shanxi Province. Most of the areas in the province are covered by loess. The depth of loess layer ranges from 30 meters to 100 meters. Shanxi Province is in the center of Loess Plateau.

History

Shanxi is one of the birthplaces of the Chinese civilizations. It was the land of the Jin State during the Spring and Autumn Period. Therefore, it is called Jin for short.

Tourist Resources

The whole province has more than 220 tourist areas and spots. It has basically established the seven largest tourist areas of Taiyuan, Datong, Wutai Mountain, Linfen, Yuncheng, Shangdang and Yangquan.

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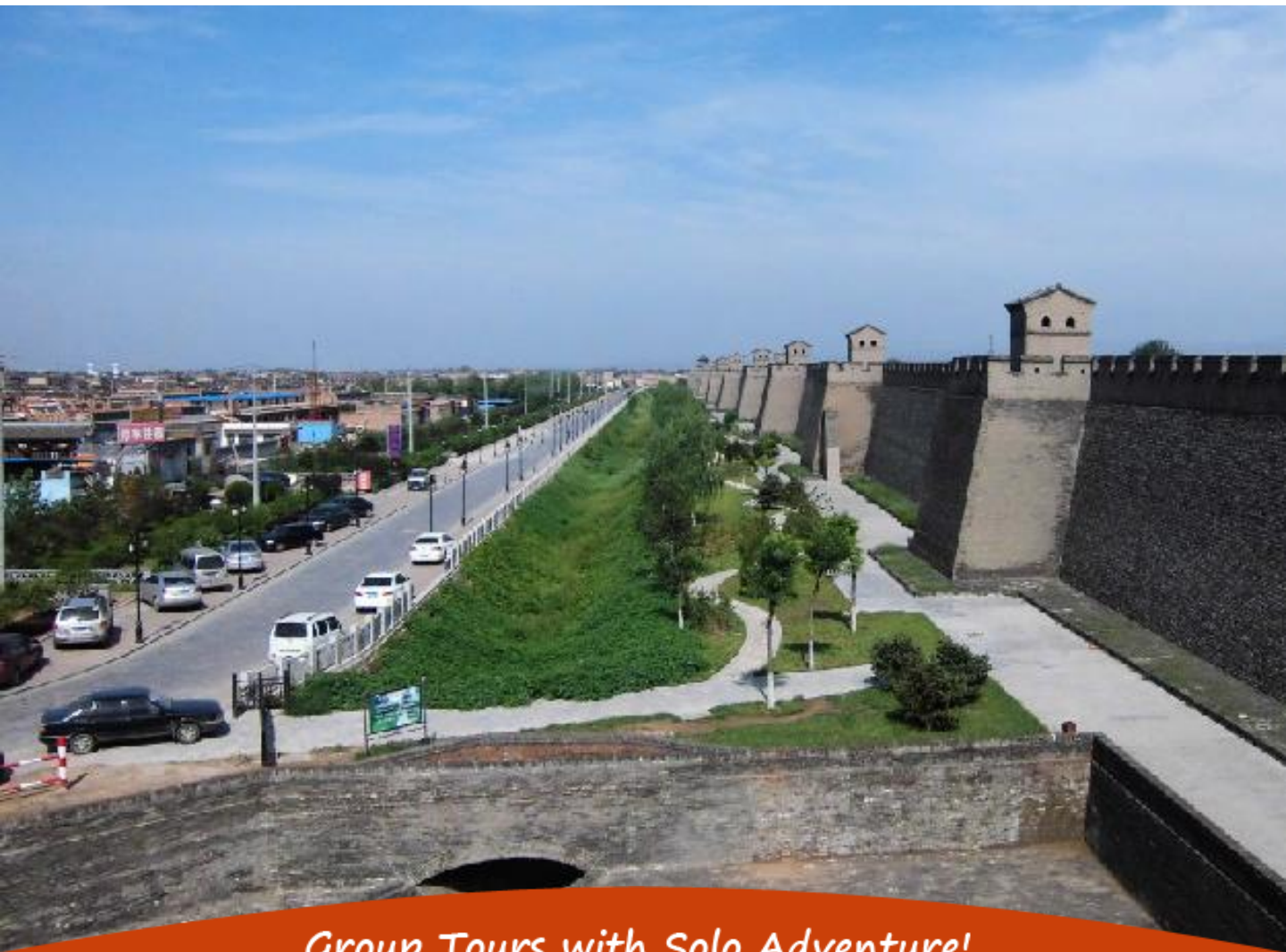
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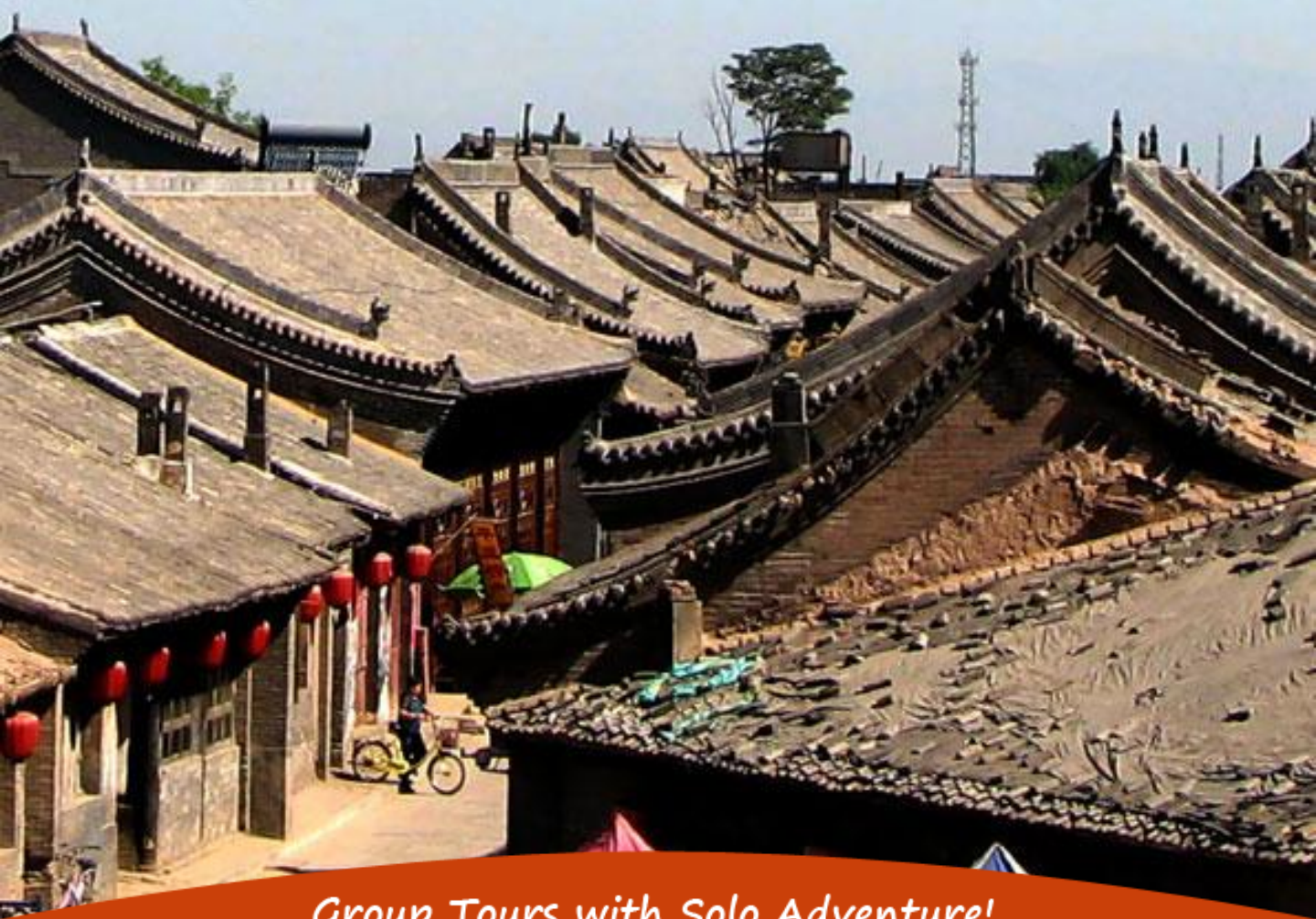


Climatic Features

- Shanxi Province has a relatively high topography with mountain ranges in the southeast blocking off ocean air currents. Therefore, the neighboring Huabei Plain has a low temperature, less rainfall, great difference in temperature between the day and the night and especially the strong wind and sand storms in spring. Hence, tourists who take a tour of Shanxi should prepare articles such as sun glasses and hat to keep off wind and sands.
- Shanxi has a temperate continental climate. It has a long, cold and dry winter and a short, hot and rainy summer. It has significant daily temperature variation in spring and a transient and mild climate in autumn.
- The best tourist season in Shanxi is from May to October.



What to See in Shanxi



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Mt. Hengshan

Mount Hengshan, also known as Ziyue, Hengzong, or Changshan Mountain, lies some 60 kilometers south of the city of Datong, Shanxi Province. The mountain, whose highest peak reaches an altitude of 2,017 meters, is the most northernmost of the "Five Sacred Mountains of China," or "Wu Yue," as they are called by the Chinese in recognition of the mountains' link to Taoism.

This grand mountain has historically been a venue for Taoist activities, though it was not always possible to pursue these activities on Mt. Hengshan, given that the entire region was under the domination of invaders for long periods of time. This put pilgrimages at a premium; it is perhaps for this reason that the mountain later came to be shared by Taoists, Confucianists, and Buddhists alike.

Mt. Hengshan's Temples

Beiyue Miao, or Beiyuan Temple (also known as Shrine of the Northern Peak), is Mt. Hengshan's only Taoist (alternatively, Daoist) temple. It is situated on West Hill, concealing itself in true, humble Taoist fashion among dense pines.

The Hanging Monastery, Mt. Hengshan's most famous religious site, is in fact a Buddhist temple. It is regarded as "the first view of Mt. Hengshan." The old proverb "Hanging Monastery is just like 3 horsetails in mid-air" best describes the overall image of the temple.



- **Adress:** Hengshan, Datong, China
- **Admission:** 60 yuan
- **Opening Hours:** 8:00-18:00
- **Getting there:** You can take the regular bus from the city of Datong to Hunyuan County; the fare is 15 yuan.
- **More Tips:**
 - 1) Minimum recommended time to allot to a sightseeing trip to the area: 1 day.
 - 2) Suggested 1-day itinerary: Big Character Sinus → Tiger Wind Gap → Sacrificing Cliff → Flying Stone Cave → Beiyuan Temple → Tianfeng Hill.

Hanging Temple

The Hanging Monastery at the foot of Heng Shan (Heng Mountain, aka Henshan Mountain), Shanxi Province, is located some 5 kilometers south of the village of Hunyuan, and about 65 kilometers southeast of the largest regional city, Datong. Although Henshan Mountain is one of the Five Sacred Mountains of Taoism/ Daoism, the Hanging Monastery is in fact a Buddhist temple.

Suspended some 50 meters over the ground and consisting of 40 pavilions and halls, the Hanging Monastery is constructed with the help of wooden pillars that are anchored into the cliff face behind the edifices, though no one today can say for certain whether the holes into which the pillars are anchored were manmade or natural. The monastery is reached via a bridge that leads up a stone staircase that has been chiseled into the cliff face. It is worth noting that there is a stone well in the hill named **Luyu Well** (陆羽井) since it was dug by Lu Yu in the Tang Dynasty (618 A.D-907 A.D).



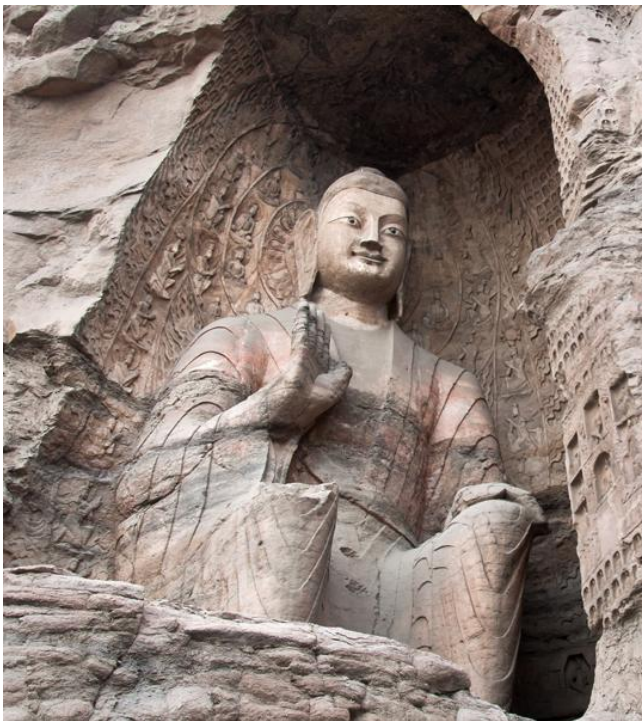
- **Get There:** From downtown Datong, take the bus to Hunyuan County (a village). The fare is 15 yuan.
- **Opening Hours:** 8:00-18:00
- **More Tips:** Minimum recommended time to allot to a visit to the Hanging Monastery: ½ day.

Yungang Grottoes

The **Yungang Grottoes** are carved out of sandstone cliffs on Wuzhou Mountain, located near the city of Datong, Shanxi Province. The Yungang Grottoes were dug over a span of forty years (CE 453-493).

It should also be pointed out that at the time of the digging of the Yungang Grottoes proper (the sculptures and other statues stem from the period CE 520-525, i.e., towards the end of the Northern Wei Dynasty), the city of Datong was the capital of the Northern Wei Dynasty; the capital was moved to the city of Luoyang (home of the Longmen Grottoes) in CE 494.

The emergence of the art of the Yungang Grottoes (and the same applies even more emphatically to the Magao Grottoes) is intimately linked to the Silk Road that connected China to the outside world from the 1st century BCE to the 16th century CE.

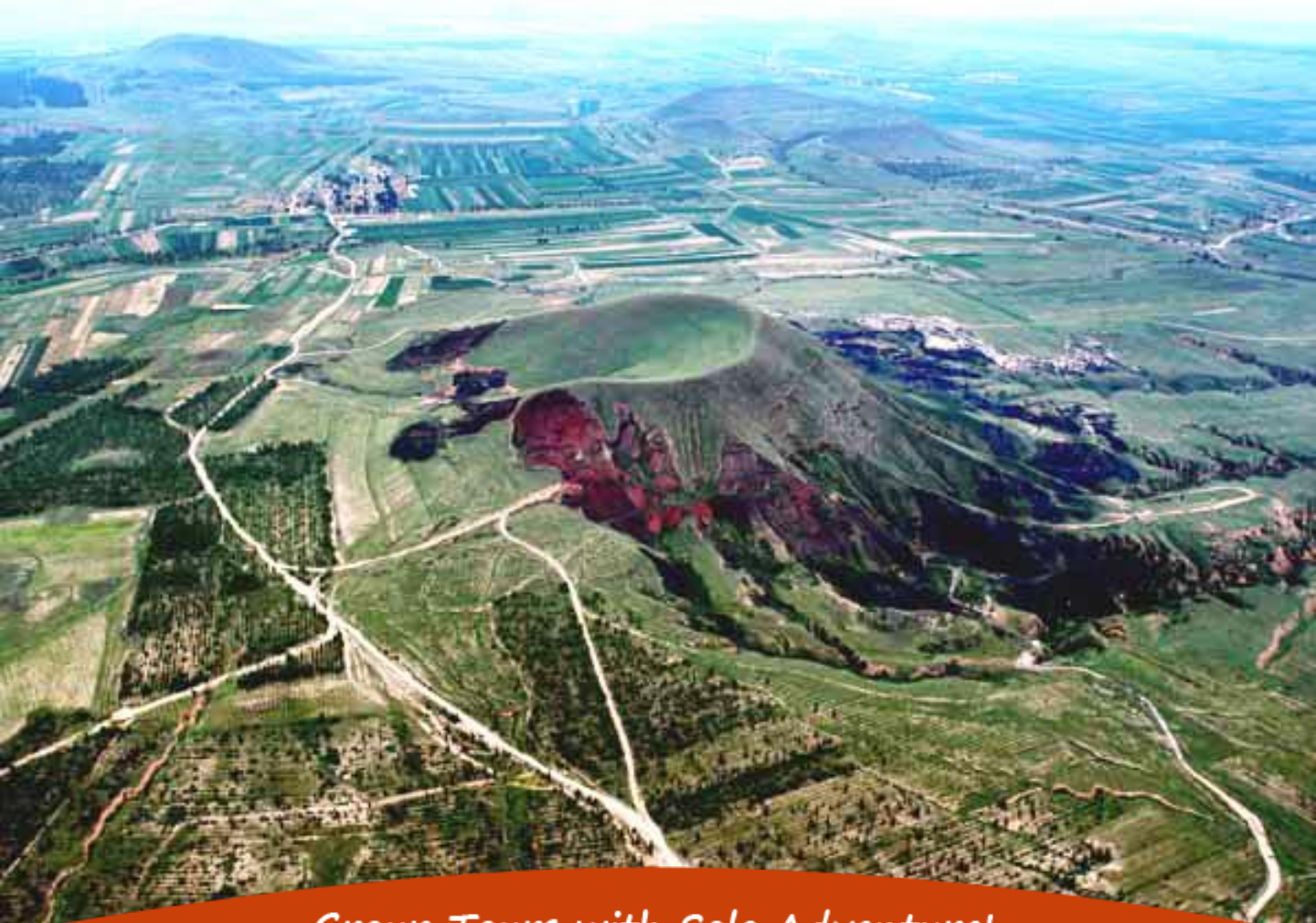


- **Ticket Price:** 150 Yuan per person
- **Opening Hours:**
8:00-18:00
- **More Tips:**
Minimum recommended time to allot to viewing the grottoes (view them once briefly, then again with more careful scrutiny, and finally, find a spot where you can take them all in, in one sweeping, panoramic view): ½ day.

Datong Volcanic Cluster

Datong Volcanic Cluster, located in the east of Datong Basin, formed in the Quaternary Period and stopped erupting about 60,000 years ago. The cluster consists of over 30 semicircular –mound-like volcanoes, at the craters of which there are obvious traces of water and soil erosion and deposits of lava, grit and pozzolana.

- **Recommended Visiting Time:** 3 hours
- **Opening Hours:** 8: 00-18: 00



Yingxian Wooden Pagoda

Yingxian Muta, or Yingxian Wooden Pagoda, built in 1056 during the Liao (CE 916-1125) Dynasty, is located in the village of Yinxian in Shanxi Province, about 70 kilometers south of the old Liao Dynasty capital city of Datong. Yingxian Muta is the oldest all-wood pagoda in China, and the highest all-wood pagoda in the world, standing at 67.31 meters and with a base diameter of 30.27 meters. By comparison, Yingxian Muta is some 30 meters higher than the famous White Pagoda in Beijing's Beihai Park, and almost 3½ meters higher than the Big Goose Pagoda in Xi'an (formerly Chang'an, the imperial city where China's first emperor, Emperor Shi Huang of the Qin (BCE 221-207) Dynasty, had a Terracotta Army constructed to guard his mausoleum). water diversion, the old Grand Canal will surely coruscate the youth and vitality again.

There are windows on all eight sides of the pagoda, offering excellent views of the surrounding countryside, especially in good weather, including views of Mt. Hengshan and the nearby Songgan River.

- **Opening Hours:** 8:00-18:00
- **Getting there:** From Datong Railway Station, you can take a one-day touring minibus to the pagoda. The minibus departs at 7:30 AM. The fare depends on the demand on any given day, so the potential for price haggling exists, while the normal fare is 40 yuan per person, round trip.
 - **More Tips:** Both Yingxian Muta and the Hanging Monastery of Hunyuan County can be visited in a single day if you take a rented car, or if you can arrange for group travel in a minibus. Here is the recommended route: Leaving Datong behind you, visit first the Hanging Monastery in Hunyuan County, then proceed on to Yingxian Muta before returning to Datong. By regular tour bus, each of these sites would normally require an entire day to view.



Recommended Shanxi Tours



[4 Day Pingyao Ancient Town Tour from Beijing](#)

Day 1: Beijing to Taiyuan, Taiyuan to Pingyao

Day 2: Pingyao-[Pingyao Ancient Town](#)- [Rishengchang Draft Bank](#)-[Ancient Mingqing Street](#) and [Ancient City Wall](#).

Day 3: Pingyao- [Shuanglin Temple](#)-[Wang Family's Grand Courtyard](#).

Day 4: Pingyao to Taiyuan, Taiyuan to Beijing

[4 Day Pingyao Tour from Shanghai](#)

Day 1: Shanghai to Taiyuan, Taiyuan to Pingyao

Day 2: Pingyao-[Pingyao Ancient Town](#)- [Rishengchang Draft Bank](#)-[Ancient Mingqing Street](#) and [Ancient City Wall](#).

Day 3: Pingyao- [Shuanglin Temple](#)-[Wang Family's Grand Courtyard](#).

Day 4: Pingyao to Taiyuan, Taiyuan to Shanghai



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What to Do in Shanxi

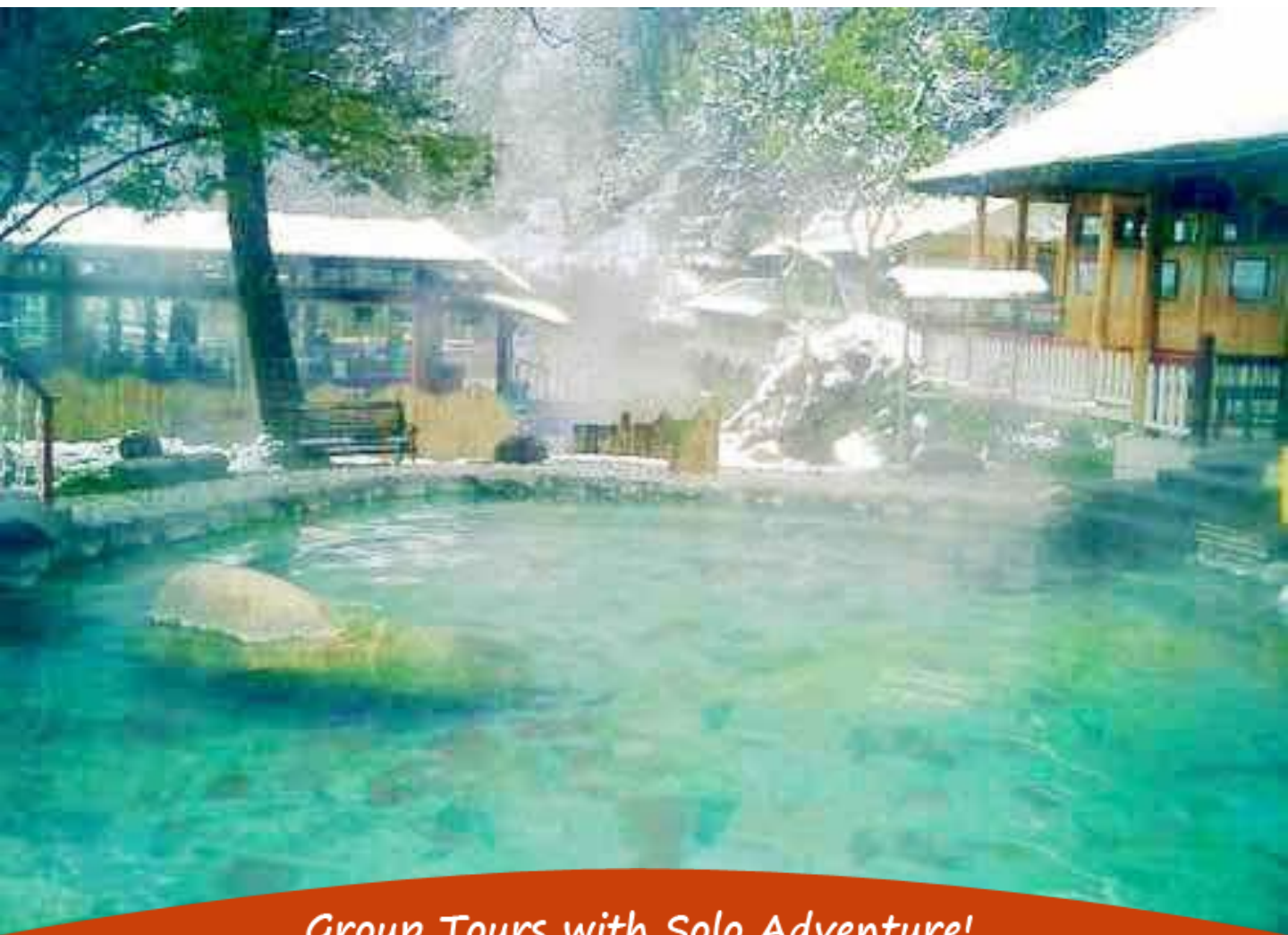


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Tangtou Hot Spring

The temperature of Tangtou hot spring is constantly about 63 °C. According to experts' reconnaissance survey and assay, the hot spring, forming out of terrestrial heat from extinct volcanoes, contains radioactive elements including radium and radon as well as mineral substances including potassium, sodium, calcium, magnesium and sulfured hydrogen. Therefore, it is curative to some diseases such as skin disease, diabetes, arthritis, rheumatism and neurasthenic.

According to historical records, 1,400 years ago, Tangtou hot spring was already used to cure illnesses. Even some emperors, princes, and generals would also like to bath here for their health. For example, the emperor of the Northern Wei Dynasty once had his temporary residence built here just for an easy hot spring bath. Now, a sanitarium equipped with all kinds of bathing facilities has been set up for all the tourists.



Wang Family Courtyard

The Wang Family Residential Compound is a rare example of vintage Chinese civilization handed down through the ages. Built by the Wang family of Jingsheng in Lingshi County, descendants of the Wang family of the city of Taiyuan some 150 kilometers to the north and one of the four prominent merchant families of Shanxi Province during the Qing (CE 1644-1911) Dynasty, the compound is an unsurpassed masterpiece of Chinese residential architecture from the Qing Dynasty period.



Confucian Temple

The Confucian temple in the Ancient City of Pingyao, Shanxi Province, was first built in the early years of the Zhenguan era (CE 627-649) of the Tang (CE 618-907) Dynasty, i.e., during the reign of Emperor Taizong, considered as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, Chinese emperor. The original, modest temple was not built as a memorial temple, but rather, was the family temple of Confucius himself.





What to Eat in Shanxi

Yellow Cake

Yellow cake is a kind of local food which is popular in the south of Hebei province and Datong city of Shanxi province. Some local people even take yellow cake as their lunch in daily life. The main ingredient of yellow cake is broomcorn millet flour. Well, actually, there are two kinds of yellow cake in Datong city. One is fried yellow cake, the other is steamed yellow cake. And Fried yellow cake is cooked on the based of steamed yellow cake. When the steamed yellow cakes are steamed, put them out, and fry them with cooking oil after it becomes completely cold. Steamed yellow cake is light yellow, soft and tasty. Fried yellow cake is dark yellow, crisp and of course, delicious.



Datong Instant Boiled Lamb

Datong Instant boiled Lamb is famous all over China for its four big characters- attractively shaped, fresh, tender, and delicious.

The raw materials of this dish can be found almost everywhere in Datong. Among them, the lamb from Guangling and Shuozhou is regarded as the best. The chef often cuts the lamb into pieces evenly and then freezes them in the fridge. While eating, people first grab a piece of lamb with chopsticks and put it into the boiled water for just one or two seconds. And then put the cooked lamb piece into a bowl of sauce which is made of sesame paste, chili oil, balsam, soy sauce, gourmet powder, coriander and so on. Thus this sweet-smelling lamb meat will taste delicious and the savory aroma will lead one's appetite, it is one of the most popular items.



What to Buy in Shanxi



Eggshell Carving

Eggshell Carving is one of an increasingly flourish folk handicraft in resent years. All designs are carved on real eggshells. All shells should be cleaned and sterilized. After carving is complete, a protective coating is applied. There are many different kinds of handicraft of eggshell carving. One of eggshell carvings is to sculpt figures, landscape, flowers and birds with special carver on the little darker egg surface.



Datong Coal Carving

Datong is the second largest city in Shanxi, and is known as the coal capital because of the developed mining industry in the region. In the long history of dealing with coal, people in Datong not only burn coal for warm but have created an art out of it. Coal carving originates in Datong city, Shanxi province. The raw material of coal carving is coal gangue. Coal carving as a new art first appeared in 1998.





Guangling Paper Cut

Guangling Paper-Cut is famous for its rich content, exquisite craftsmanship, bright color, distinctive flavor of life and local style.



Artistic Porcelain

As early as 1400 years earlier, Datong has been famous for producing potteries. It was recorded in Tang and Song dynasties, Datong had developed "Ci Lei" (a kind of weapon) which was used in wars. Nowadays, there are still many pottery factories in Datong. They mainly produce some pottery kitchen utensil like cups, dish wares, bowls, tea pots. Their products are renowned for being fashion, original, beautiful and with high quality.



Festival in Shanxi

Jin Merchant Shehuo Festival

Characteristics of the activity: Shehuo as a traditional performance art existent widely among the folks of the Central Jin has become a folk entertainment activity full of good wishes such as happy events, luck and blessing. Its main activity items include appreciating festive lanterns of ancient [Pingyao city](#), hanging auspicious bells on marvelous Mianshan Mountain and holding Shehuo in the Wangs' grand courtyard house.



Location of the activity: Jiexiu Mianshan Mountain, ancient Pingyao City and the Qiaos' grand courtyard house

Date of the festival: December 28th to January 18th of the Chinese lunar calendar of every year (February 9th to March 1st of the Gregorian calendar)

Ancient Pingyao City Cultural and International Tourist Festival

Characteristics of the activity: During the festival, there are several traditional folk culture and arts performances such as Welcoming Guest Ceremony in the Ancient Style, Casting an Embroidered Ball downstairs from a Storied Building to seek a Spouse and Interrogation of the Magistrate in the Feudal Society.

Location of the activity: The main meeting place is not fixed every year.

Date of the festival: It starts from June 9th of every year.



Shanxi Hotels





Garden Hotel Datong

Garden Hotel Datong is situated in the commercial district of Datong, and is a multifunctional complex that combines hostelling, dining, entertaining, relaxing, and shopping altogether under one roof. This four-star tourism hotel is in very close proximity to some of the most famous historical sites in Datong, such as Puhua Temple, Nine Dragon Wall, and the Drum Tower.

- **Address:**

No.59 Danan Road, Datong, Shanxi
花园大饭店

- **Hotel Tel:**0352-5865888

- **Quick Enquiry:**

+86-773-2838787



Yungang International Hotel

Located in the central district of the historical city Datong, Yungang International Hotel was first opened in 2003. Yungang International Hotel is conveniently situated near many historical attractions such as the world-famous Yungang Stone Grottoes, the Nine Dragon Wall, and the Huayan Temple. In 2007, the hotel was ranked as the first five-star tourism hotel by the National Tourism Administration.

- **Address:**

No.38, Daxi Street, Datong
大同云冈 国际酒店

- **Hotel Tel:**0352-5869999

- **Quick Enquiry:**

+86-773-2838787

Shanxi Transportation

Shanxi has made great strides in transport and communications. Now it has basically established a solid traffic network of crisscrossing and radiating railways, highways and airlines. The Shanxi railway takes the north and south Tong-Pu railway lines and the Shi-Tai railway line as the trunk and develops into a railway transport network covering nine major railway lines of Shi-Tai, Jing-Yuan, Jing-Bao, Tai-Jiao, Han-Chang, Hou-Yue, Da-Qin, and north and south Tong-Pu as well as three main branch lines and more than four hundred special lines, which are connected respectively with the national railway main arteries of Jing-Bao Line, Jing-Guang Line and Long-Hai Line and lead to all the large cities of China and seashore wharfs such as Qinhuangdao, Tianjin and Shijiusuo. The highways of Shanxi Province center on the provincial capital Taiyuan and take the national highways and provincial main stems as framework, linking all the parts of the province and connecting Shanxi to the places outside the province. The Da (Datong)-Yun (Yuncheng) highway running from north to south is a main stem for the material circulation of the whole province. The newly opened Taiyuan-Jiuguan Highway is connected with the Beijing-Shijiazhuang Highway and incorporated into the network system of Jing-Jin-Tang and Jin-Shen highways.

Changzhi ●

Jincheng ●

Sanmen ●

source: <http://www.china-map-guide.com>

Airports in Shanxi

Shanxi also has rapid development in civil aviation and air transportation. The provincial capital Taiyuan has got forty one airlines to and fro more than thirty large cities in the country. In 1993, Taiyuan Airport was opened to traffic and became a national first class airport with the approval of the State Department. In August, 17th of the same year, it opened direct charter flights to Hong Kong.



Railway in Shanxi

Datong-Qinghuangdao Railway Line, the first special coal transportation railway on which heavy haul unit trains run, as well as the newly built Houma-Yueshan Railway Line has become a new main artery for transporting coal out of Shanxi Province. Shanxi has 194 kilometers of railway lines with the Tong-Pu railway line running from north to south and connecting the two ends of Shanxi and Houxi and Houyue railway lines running from east to west as the second European-Asian continental bridge in our country.



Highway in Shanxi

Shanxi Province now has more than thirty thousand kilometers of highways, half of which are mostly high and second high grade highways. It has basically developed a highway network, which centers on cities such as Taiyuan, Datong, Changzhi, Linfen and Houma, and links all the cities and counties as well as above 95% of towns in the province.



Waterway in Shanxi

The status of Shanxi waterways is related with its geographical environment. Shanxi, which is located on Loess Plateau, has less rainfall and few rivers distributed over its area. The Yellow River and the tributary of Fen River flowing through Shanxi are narrow with shallow water level and unsteady current, which is conducive to the development of river transportation.

