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**REDISCOVERING THE GREAT WALL  
SIGHTS AND HISTORY**

ENJOYING PICTURESQUE VIEWS AND  
COLOURFUL HERITAGE

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February 2023

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# Rediscovering the Great Wall Sights and History

Translated by Wang Wei Edited by Brad Green, Anne Ruisi Photos by Wu Jianye, Wei Zheng, Bu Xiangdong, Wang Jian, Li Xiaoyin, Li Hongtao, Ma Yansheng, Wang Shugong, Zhang Liucheng

## The Great Wall is the light of glory.

In the old days, soldiers accompanied by the sounds of bugles and the neighing of horses fought against the enemy along the Great Wall. The wall was a continuous barrier, which was hard to surmount by the enemy. For 2,000 years, its glory has never faded, and the wall remains a spiritual symbol of the Chinese nation.

## The Great Wall is a miracle on earth.

From the coast of the Bohai Sea in the east to the deserts in the west, the Great Wall snakes through 403 counties in 15 provinces and municipalities, with a total length of 21,196 kilometres (km). Over the past 2,000 years, from the Spring and Autumn Period (770–446 BC) to the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, and the present-day new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Great Wall has evolved as an icon of Chinese civilisation. Old bricks and stones are like the hieroglyphs in ancient writings, depicting the vicissitudes and glories of the Chinese nation.

## The Great Wall is a magnificent architectural achievement.

The wall was first recorded by Sima Qian from the Western Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 8) in his *Records of the Historian*. As an ancient military defence project, with a time span of 2,000 years, the Great Wall has become a magnificent architectural miracle, an unparalleled historical and cultural symbol of human history, and a spiritual symbol of the Chinese nation. As an outstanding representative of the peak era of its construction, the section of the Great Wall in Beijing is considered among the city's most important landmarks. The Great Wall Cultural Belt has become the top priority of developing Beijing into China's national cultural centre, combining traditional Chinese culture with modern civilisation. The ancient Great Wall, one of the UNESCO World Heritage sites, still draws the attention of the world.

## Developing the Great Wall Cultural Belt

The Great Wall, which stretches tens of thousands of km and dates back more than 2,000 years, is the largest and most widely distributed piece of cultural heritage in China. With a total length of 520 km, the section of the Great Wall in Beijing is not much longer than sections in other regions. The section of the wall in Beijing accounts for less than one 20th of its total length. However, this section is the essence of the Great Wall because it has been the best-preserved, and is still the most valuable, complex and culturally rich among all sections of the wall in China.

The existing section of the Great Wall in Beijing mainly includes the remnants of the wall from the Northern Qi (AD 550–577) and Ming dynasties—more

than 20 from the Northern Qi Dynasty and more than 2,300 from the Ming Dynasty. The Great Wall built during the Ming Dynasty is the main body of the Beijing section, running through Pinggu, Miyun, Huairou, Changping, Yanqing and Mentougou districts from the east to the west. The majesty of the Great Wall lies in its continuous scale. Its value lies in its profound cultural background as a heritage site. In recent years, the capital city has attached great importance to the protection and management of the Great Wall, and continues to promote related works in this area. The sections of the Great Wall in Beijing are being integrated according to related protection plans.

### Plans for Protecting Beijing's Section

Over the years, the protection of the Great Wall in Beijing has continued and accelerated, forming a “Beijing experience” that can be replicated and spread throughout the regions with the wall based on a range of published governmental documents, such as the *Measures for the Administration of the Protection of the Great Wall in Beijing* and the *Beijing Great Wall Cultural Belt Protection and Development Plan (2018–2035)*. The construction of the Beijing section of the Great Wall National Cultural Park has begun; the Great Wall Cultural Festival has been held for years; the renovation of the Great Wall Museum has been launched. The Great Wall Cultural Belt, beautifully blending ancient and modern features, enables sightseers to learn about the culture and history of the world heritage site.

It has been 20 years since the promulgation of the *Measures for the Administration of the Protection of the Great Wall in Beijing*. The process of protecting, renovating and rediscovering the city's section of the Great Wall, and passing down its culture, has increased in recent years. With the issuance of the *Beijing Urban Master Plan (2016–2035)*, the Great Wall Cultural Belt, the Yongding River Cultural Belt and the Grand Canal Cultural Belt have become a key part of developing Beijing into the nation's cultural centre and protecting Beijing as a historical and cultural city.

In 2019, the protection and renovation of the Great Wall in Beijing were further strengthened. *The Protection and Development*

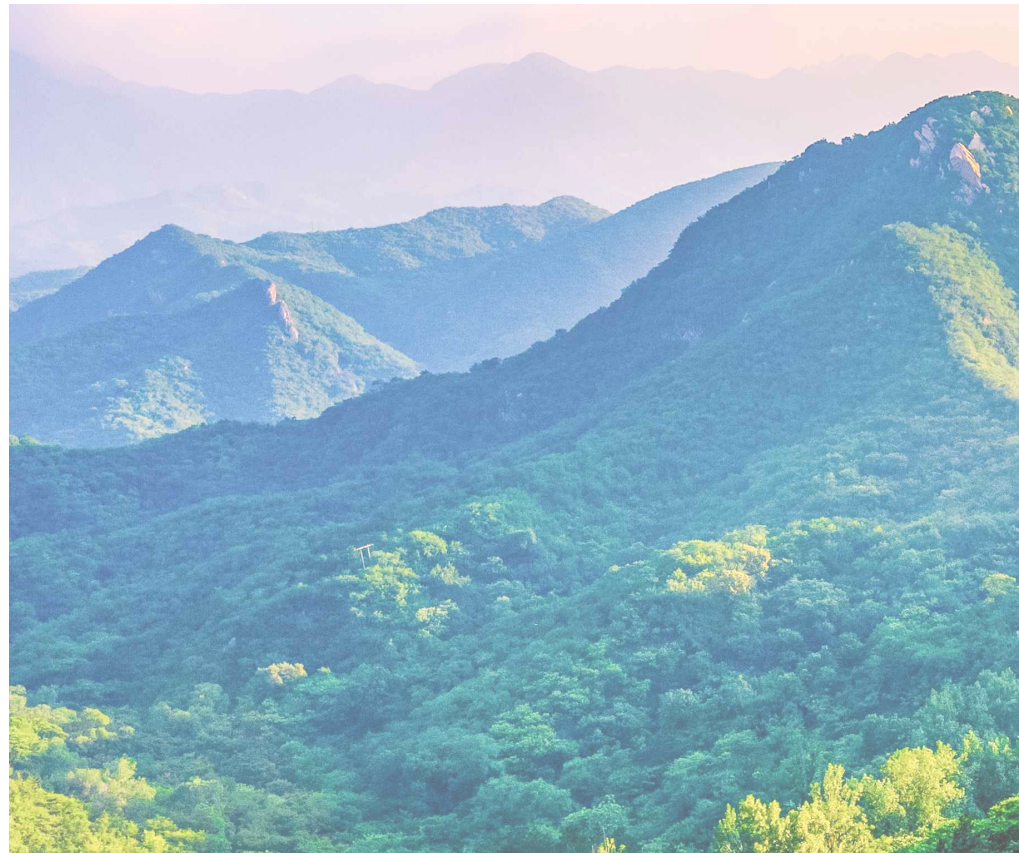
Efforts regarding the Great Wall Cultural Belt as described in the Beijing Urban Master Plan are depicted as follows: promoting the maintenance and repair of key sections of the Great Wall, and strengthening the management of the unopened Great Wall; implementing strict supervision over the urban development within the protection scope and the construction control zones along the Great Wall; developing relevant cultural industries based on improving the environment to display the history and culture of the world heritage site as a major military defence system in ancient times.

*Plan for the Beijing Great Wall Cultural Belt (2018–2035)* defines the spatial scope of the Beijing Great Wall Cultural Belt for the first time. With a total area of 4,929.29 square kilometres (sq.km), it is divided into core areas and radiation areas. Its spatial layout is described as “one line, five areas and multiple locations.” There are 2,873 locations distributed in 664 protective resource areas along the Great Wall in Beijing, which can be divided into three categories according to their value: the Great Wall heritage, related culture and ecological resources. From 2019 on, the Great Wall in Beijing was no longer measured only for its length, but also for its space. A total of 10 protection and reinforcement projects for the Great Wall are carried out every year.

*The Development and Protection Plan of the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Beijing Section)* was published in December 2021. A national cultural park is an open space with special significance. It emphasises the importance of presenting a symbol of Chinese civilisation and highlighting the lasting influence and spread of traditional Chinese culture. The Plan states that Beijing Great Wall National Cultural Park is

positioned as a demonstration area for the development of the Great Wall National Cultural Park of China, and serves the opening-up of the capital city and the country. By 2035, the construction of the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Beijing section) will be completed based on the development of the Demonstration Area of the Great Wall Historical and Cultural Landscape and the Demonstration Area for the Integrated Culture, Ecology and Human Life along the Great Wall.





According to *The Development and Protection Plan of the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Beijing Section)*, the overall layout of the sections of the Great Wall National Cultural Park in Beijing features “one line, five areas and multiple locations.”



## Major Area of the Great Wall

The 520-km section Great Wall in Beijing runs from east to west via Malan Road, Gubeikou Road, Huanghua Road, Juyong Road and Yanhecheng. There are many demonstration parks and centres, ancient villages and tourist attractions in Pinggu, Miyun, Huairou, Yanqing, Changping and Mentougou districts. These have been included in *The Development and Protection Plan of the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Beijing Section)*.

The capital city’s 13th Five-Year Plan (2016–2020) proposed that the city would develop the Great Wall Cultural Belt, integrate the historical and cultural resources along the Badaling, Juyong Pass and Mutianyu sections, and promote the joint protection of the Great Wall. It would also pilot the development of a cultural park with the theme of the Great Wall that combines tourism, leisure and popular science education, as well as cultural relic protection and research.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021–2025), developing the Great Wall National Cultural Park is conducive to the protection and utilisation of the world heritage site and the high-quality integration of culture and tourism.

“One line” refers to the main line with dotted resources of the Great Wall, which played a role in serving as a military defence system in ancient dynasties, showing its historical values and cultural heritage.

“Five areas” refers to the Malan Road, Gubeikou Road, Huanghua Road, Juyong Road and Yanhecheng areas, which are located around the major tourist attractions along the section of the Great Wall in Beijing. The length of these areas accounts for about 10 percent of the total length of the Great Wall in Beijing. Each area has its own characteristics.

The Malan Road area is located in Pinggu District, focusing on “the Great Wall plus outdoor leisure” to serve as a pilot area for the collaborative management of the protection of the Great Wall

in Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei Region. Jiangjungan, built during the Ming Dynasty within the area, is a key section.

The Gubeikou Road area covers Gubeikou Town in Miyun and Bakeshiying Town in Hebei Province, focusing on “the Great Wall plus historic towns.” It will be developed into a pilot area for the coordinated development of the Beijing and Hebei Great Wall Scenic Area.

The Huanghua Road area is located in Huairou’s Bohai and Yanqi towns and Yanqing’s Sihai Town, focusing on “the Great Wall plus passing down of its culture” to be developed into a pilot area for cross-regional cooperation in the protection and revitalisation of the Great Wall. The Mutianyu and Jiankou sections built during the Ming Dynasty lie within the area.

The Juyong Road area is located in Yanqing and Changping districts, combining the Great Wall with international features. It will serve as a pilot area for the coordinated development of the Great Wall scenic areas across the region.



It includes the Juyong Pass and Badaling sections built during the Ming Dynasty.

The Yanhecheng area is located in Mentougou District, focusing on “the Great Wall plus revolutionary culture.” The Huangcaoliang section, with its watchtowers built during the Ming Dynasty, is a major tourist attraction within this area.

“Multiple locations” refers to demonstration parks, belts and other spots highlighting the Great Wall, enabling sightseers to explore the Great Wall’s history and culture, enjoy the surrounding natural beauty, and experience high-quality cultural and tourism resources along the wall.

By the end of 2023, the coordinated promotion of the protection and utilisation of cultural relics and resources along the Great Wall in Beijing will achieve an early result, such as the development of the Malan Road, Gubeikou Road, Huanghua Road and Juyong Road areas, creating good conditions for advancing the National Great Wall Cultural Park.

## Multiple Charms

Touching legends, heroic stories and historical events that are related to the Great Wall add a variety of features to this giant. *The Development and Protection Plan of the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Beijing Section)* specifies 10 landmark projects.

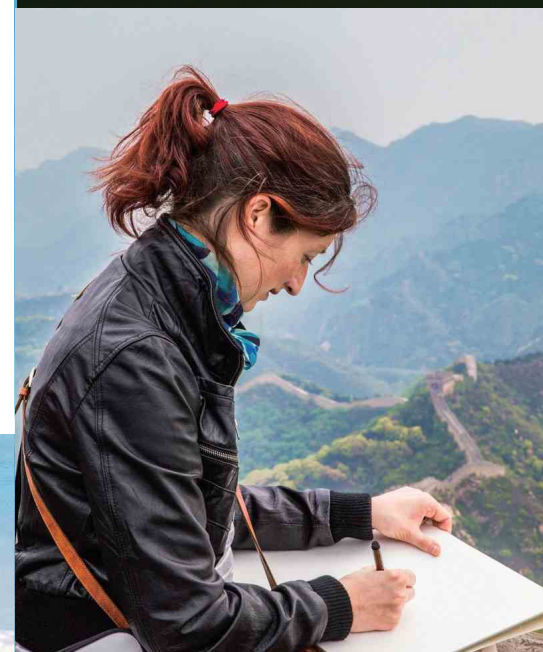
One of the main features of Yanqing District is the variety of resources along the Great Wall, including the Badaling section. Located in the Badaling Great Wall Scenic Area, the Great Wall Museum of China opened to the public in 1994, displaying the history and culture of the Great Wall. With the development of Beijing as China’s cultural centre and the Great Wall National Cultural Park, the museum was closed in 2022, and its renovation began accordingly.

As the top project of the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Beijing section), the reconstruction and upgrading of the Great Wall Museum of China follows national standards based on innovative technologies.

A number of watchtowers and beacon towers, sections of the wall and passes, and dangerous peaks and cliffs offer an incomparable glimpse into history.

international standards based on innovative technologies. Following the renovation, the museum will become a world-class venue focusing on the Great Wall. The renovated museum will be composed of an exhibition centre, a tourist centre, and a Great Wall international research and exchange centre.

In 2021, the protection of the Jiankou section entered a new stage. Five watchtowers and side walls between Watchtowers Nos. 141 and 145 were selected for scientific research before their renovation. A kind of renovation based on the research results began to be rolled out step by step. The protection of the Great Wall has changed from focusing on traditional protection to protection plus research. Its research and preventive protection centres on cultural ecology and heritage site environment.



At the end of the summer of 2022, on a ridge in the northern suburbs of Beijing, the Jiankou section of the Great Wall was under construction. Its west walls with eight watchtowers are in the fourth phase of the renovation project. Unlike other projects, this research and renovation project not only needs to eliminate risks and provide further reinforcement, but also to study the wall's changes, damages and surrounding environment through archaeological, architectural, material and construction technologies, as well as phytology and other disciplines.

A research, protection and renova-

tion project for the Jiankou section of the Great Wall has become a demonstration project. The aim of carrying out the project was to explore a new model for the protection and archaeological research of the Great Wall. The Jiankou section has become China's first base for the protection and restoration of the wall. Its technical methods will lead national actions and provide a replicable experience and model for the protection and renovation of wall sections throughout the country.

The development of the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Beijing section) is a major national-level project. Due to the park's development, the Beijing Great Wall Cultural Festival came into being. The festival is an event held to promote the Great Wall's culture and explore the history of its major sections, such as Badaling, Mutianyu and Gubeikou. Since 2020, the city has held three editions of the festival at the foot of the Mutianyu, Badaling and Gubeikou sections, respectively.

The 400-km-long Great Wall National Scenic Road in Beijing radiates and links 8 key sections of the Great Wall at the national level in the city's six districts, creating a scenic corridor with

the characteristics of the Great Wall and providing perfect service and rich experience in the Great Wall National Cultural Park. When exploring the scenic corridor, one can visit the colourful cultural resources along the Great Wall, including watchtowers, fortresses and the sites of the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression from the 1930s to the 1940s. There are more rural homestays, hiking trails and intangible cultural heritage experiences to enjoy along the way.

Beijing has made its section of the Great Wall National Cultural Park a model promoted by the central reform and deployment, which has effectively witnessed the implementation of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era in the capital city and the latest development in the city's cultural relics and museums.

# The Spirit of the Great Wall Soul of Beijing

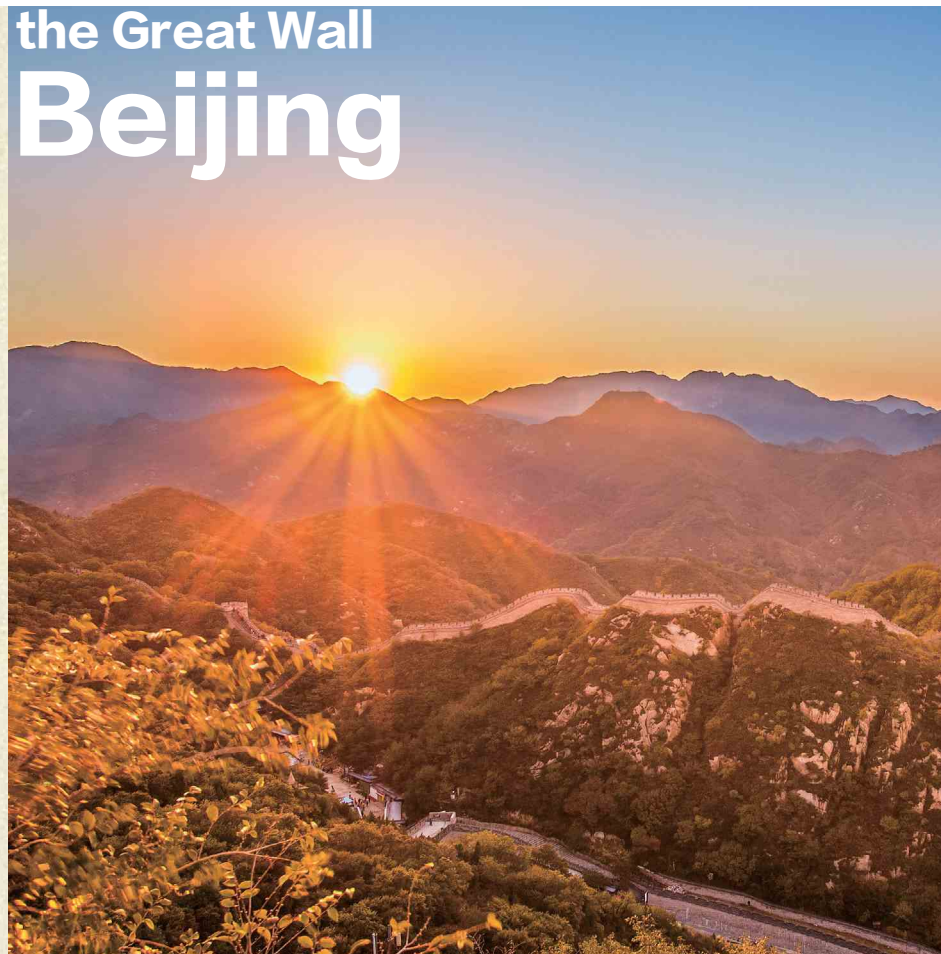
When the first pile of rammed earth was in place, the prologue of the Great Wall miracle began. From the pre-Qin era thousands of years ago to the present, the Great Wall has not only been a wall built with rammed earth and bricks, but is also regarded as a spiritual symbol of the Chinese nation. If it is given personification, the Great Wall also faces the same questions that follow: "Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?"

## A Brief History

Luo Zhewen (1924–2012), a Great Wall researcher, described the wall in a poem: "Over the more than 2,000 years, how many generals, soldiers and artisans have worked hard to build this great project." The Great Wall, as the crystallisation of hardworking and talented ancient Chinese, not only embodies their great creativity, but also reflects their indomitable spirit and the cohesion of their unity. Old walls, bricks and stones have endured all the hardships of exposure. The Great Wall is like a landscape scroll, unrolling over the terrain waiting for people to appreciate it. The Great Wall is more like a monument recording the struggle of numerous workers.

## Mission for Peace

More than 3,000 years ago, the monarch of the Zhou Dynasty (770–221 BC) gave enfeoffments throughout the country to his imperial family members and meritorious ministers. During the Spring and Autumn Period, the State of Chu was strengthened. After conquering the states of Shen and Deng, the State of Chu began to expand northward in order to dominate



The history of ancient Chinese building the Great Wall seems to be a history of using a defensive method to pursue peace.

the Central Plains. At the same time, to prevent attacks from other powerful states in the north, the State of Chu began to build the Great Wall, which played a key role in the wars that were to come. The Great Wall originally built by the State of Chu was located in today's Nanyang in Henan Province. Later, with growing needs caused by war, the Great Wall began to expand in all directions, forming a defence system in the west, north and east, known as the "Square City of Chu."

The Great Wall grew from war, and

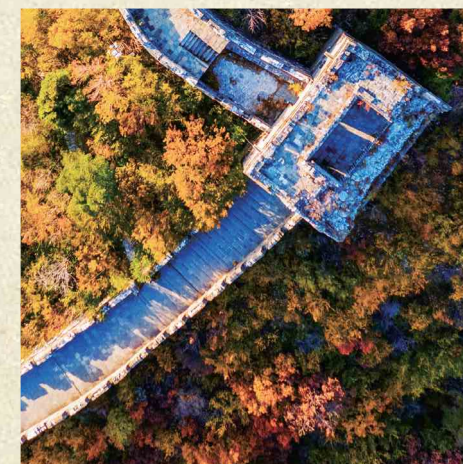
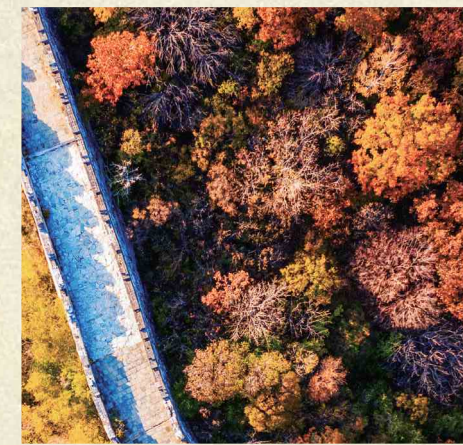
from its birth has shouldered the mission of defence. Construction of the Great Wall lasted a span of over 2,000 years. From the Square City built by the State of Chu in the 7th century BC to the Ming Dynasty, more than 20 vassal states and feudal dynasties contributed to the building of the wall. The total length of the Great Wall built during the Qin (221–206 BC), Han (206 BC–AD 220) and Ming dynasties exceeded 5,000 km. In actuality, the total length of the various sections of the Great Wall during numer-

ous periods of history exceeds 50,000 km, which is longer than the earth's equator. The Great Wall was the world's longest and largest military defence project in ancient times.

War and peace are inseparable contradictions. Peace always sprouts from war and the flames of war are always extinguished by the expectation of peace. Since the Square City of Chu, vassal states had been fighting for hegemony. According to their own needs, these states built the Great Wall on their borders. The sections of the Great Wall built by the states of Qin, Yan and Zhao were referred to as the North Great Wall to prevent the invasion from Xiongnu. The Great Wall sections built by the vassal states of Qi, Han, Wei and Chu, known as the South Great Wall, served to prevent the invasion of other vassal states. However, the scale of the various sections of the wall was not great at that time. The world-famous Great Wall that we know today did not begin its construction until Emperor Shihuang (reign: 221–210 BC) of the Qin Dynasty defeated six other states and unified the Chinese nation.

In 221 BC, Emperor Shihuang established the Qin Dynasty, the first unified multi-ethnic centralised country in Chinese history. Back then, the Xiongnu people living in the north often harassed people living in the Central Plains to the south. In order to ensure the stability of the country and its people's lives, the emperor sent Meng Tian (died in 210 BC) to connect, strengthen and extend the Great Wall built by the states of Qin, Zhao and Yan. The Great Wall of the Emperor Shihuang snakes from Liaodong in the east to Lintao in the west.

In the early Han Dynasty, Xiongnu people often harassed the border people. After Emperor Wu (reign: 141–87 BC) of the Han Dynasty ascended the throne, he created wars against the Xiongnu, and finally drove them into deserts in the north. After that, a new section of the Great Wall was built, stretching from Ershicheng in the west (today's Osh City in Kyrgyzstan) to the north bank of the Yalu River in the east. From then on, the Xiongnu people did not dare to invade the Han Dynasty, and the Silk Road began to operate smoothly. The Great Wall was



built and repaired during China's ancient dynasties. The Ming was the last dynasty to carry out extensive renovations of the Great Wall. Most sections of today's surviving Great Wall were built during the Ming Dynasty. The Beijing section of the Great Wall was mostly built during the reigns (1567–1620) of emperors' Longqing and Wanli of the Ming Dynasty.

In a sense, the Great Wall served as a fortress to promote unity and safeguard peace. Under the protection of the Great Wall, fighting became less frequent, and more abundant farming and animal husbandry appeared along both sides. The Great Wall not only consolidated the central regime of the Qin Dynasty, but also protected the culture of the Central Plains. After the Qin Dynasty built the Great Wall, people were encouraged to live in the border regions along the Great Wall and built roads to accommodate transport. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), a pioneer of the revolution, said, "Emperor Shihuang was tyrannical, but his Great Wall made a greater contribution to later generations than Yu the Great did for flood control 4,000 years ago."







The Great Wall is more like a monument recording the struggle of numerous workers.

### Pride of the Chinese Nation

The Great Wall, winding along mountains and ridges, resembles a mighty dragon. The towering walls stand on mountains, with hundreds of passes, thousands of watchtowers and beacon towers, adding unique characteristics and highlighting the magnificent and steep terrain to show a great artistic charm. One will enjoy a striking view of the Great Wall after climbing the wall and seeing its wide and long ramps, wide enough to allow five horses to run side by side, stretching to the distance. Looking down from its ramparts, one will see cliffs, adding a breath-taking splendour to the wall.

Back then, General Meng Tian from the Qin Dynasty mobilised 300,000 workers to build the Great Wall. Over the course of five years, the Great Wall, which was thousands of km long from east to west, was connected. This represents a miracle in the history of global architecture. At that time, construction methods were archaic, and equipment and tools were primitive. Completing the unprecedentedly large project is unthinkable arduous

given the circumstance of the day.

The Ming Great Wall was the last built in Chinese history. It was also the longest, largest and most completed in terms of its defensive role in the history of the Great Wall. The Ming Great Wall was built with bricks at key sections. Around them, kilns were opened to make bricks and tiles, and stones were quarried to be used for burning lime. Such building technology was also primitive, and it was not easy to carry out such a magnificent project.

Numerous sightseers from around the world have climbed the Great Wall and realised their dreams. Each of the dressed stones they trampled on weighs nearly 1,000 kilograms (kg). Even a small piece of city brick that consists of sand and gravel can be more than 15 kg in weight. In an era without trains, automobiles and cranes, these heavy bricks and stones were carried up the steep mountains step by step on the shoulders and in the hands of workers. Such a magnificent project is a great miracle in the history of the world and the pride of the Chinese nation.

One line of the lyrics from the song "The Long Great Wall" goes like this: "You know how long the Great Wall is, you know how many storms, snow and frosts have combined with the blood and flesh of numerous heroes on the Great Wall."

### Song of Praise for Heroes

The Great Wall in Beijing runs on the mountains and valleys, and inadvertently reveals its mottled body. A section of the Great Wall is a memory of blood; the cold body of the Great Wall mixed with the blood of martyrs is the unyielding backbone of the Chinese nation. The spirit of heroes sacrificing their lives for the country has been sung along the Great Wall in Beijing.

Today, a village is quietly nestled at the foot of the Gubeikou section of the Great Wall. When people touch the broken bricks, it seems that they could vaguely hear the roar of war horses and see the smoke along the wall. Gubeikou served as a fortress of the Great Wall. After the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) was overthrown by the Ming Dynasty, Mongols retreated to the north of the deserts, but they still harassed the border of the Ming Dynasty along the Great Wall again and again. In 1554, a Mongolian noble led 120,000 cavalries to attack Gubeikou. At a critical moment, Yang

Bo (1509–1574), Governor of Jiliao from the Ming Dynasty, went straight to the front and camped at Gubeikou without taking off his helmet and armour. He led his men to battle against the enemy day and night, and finally claimed victory.

Beijing was a city along the border, becoming a battleground for strategists in ancient dynasties. From the late Qing Dynasty in 1840 to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China experienced more than 100 years of arduous and indomitable revolutionary development. The Great Wall breathed with China and experienced the ups and downs of the Chinese nation.

In 1933, the Japanese Army invaded Jehol Province, causing North China to come under threat. Then, the defence of the Great Wall broke out. Gubeikou was a main battlefield of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, where both sides mobilised many troops and saw an intense period of fighting, producing the greatest impact on the war. On the Gubeikou section, the Chinese Army fired its first shot against the Japanese invaders in Beijing. This gave the public hope, and inspired thousands of Chinese to go to the battlefield to save the country. In the Battle of Gubeikou emerged many heroes, such as the "Seven Warriors from Mount Maoer." Chinese troops shared a common hatred and fought fiercely to build a Great Wall

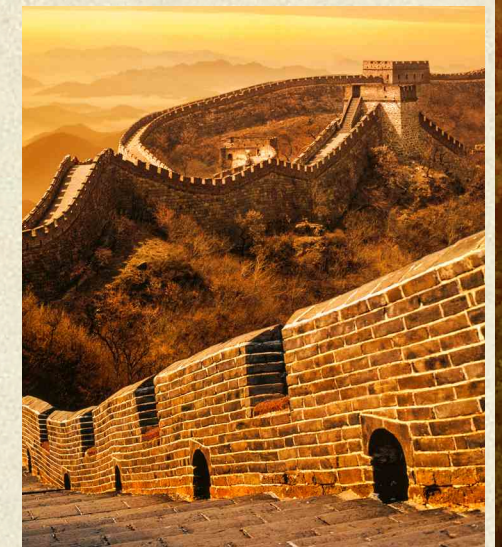
of flesh and blood with their lives.

Many people do not know that China's national anthem originated from the War of Resistance along the Gubeikou section of the Great Wall. "Stand up! Those who are unwilling to become slaves! Take our flesh, and build it to become a new Great Wall!" The majestic "March of the Volunteers" was an elegy for the martyrs in the war of national independence and a song for heroes who fought against the enemy.

The War of Resistance along the Great Wall still inspired the tenacious and unyielding spirit of the people in Beijing. They did not give up in later battles. General Tong Lingde (1892–1937) and Zhao Dengyu (1898–1937) served the country to their death. According to the instructions of the CPC Central Committee, most secret CPC members in Peiping (Beijing) went south or carried out a guerrilla war of resistance against the enemy in the suburbs of Peiping. After the fall of Peiping, in order to delay the Japanese Army's westward and southward movements, the Kuomintang Government mobilised its major forces to gather at the Nankou section of the Great Wall, with a total of more than 60,000 troops. In the Battle of Nankou, they fought bravely one after another, and 16,679 soldiers were killed or injured. From 1938 to 1945, the Eighth Route Army led by the CPC established

resistance against Japanese Army bases in the north and west of Peiping and the west of Hebei, where they clashed with the enemy on over 4,200 occasions, killing, injuring and capturing more than 46,000 members of the Japanese Army and its puppet forces.

The Great Wall was a fortress of resistance against foreign aggression. Over the years, it has evolved into a spiritual fortress for people: industrious, intelligent, united and courageous. The spirit of the Great Wall is a source of the spirit of Beijing and has made up a key part of the city's culture that will be passed down from generation to generation. The Great Wall will always be together with the people of Beijing.





### Blending Cultures Along the Great Wall

The Great Wall has witnessed China's long history. In some periods of ancient China, its military defence functions gradually weakened. The wall running from the east and the west became a link to maintain the great unity of the Chinese nation. The farming culture originating from the Central Plains and the nomadic culture from grasslands collided and blended along the wall.

#### With One Heart

The Great Wall was the product of war. Many ethnic groups inhabited regions where the Great Wall was located. They sometimes fought against each other and sometimes learnt from each other, and sometimes their cultures mixed. At the section of the Great Wall in the suburbs of Beijing, ethnic groups took the wall as a link, moving from fighting to respecting each other and uniting.

The building of the Great Wall could not be separated from the joint participation of many ethnic groups. During the Tang Dynasty (AD 618–907), Mohe people began to settle down in today's Beijing. At the end of the Tang Dynasty, after the war, Mohe people moved along the bank of the Huaisha River and finally inhabited the plains area in the central section of today's Huairou, an area they named Bohaisuo. During the reign of Emperor Hongzhi (1488–1505) of the Ming Dynasty, with the construction

of the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall, Bohaisuo became increasingly important. The government built a fortress for Bohaisuo. The descendants of the Mohe people together with government troops shouldered the heavy responsibility of safeguarding the imperial tombs and the capital city. Today, in a warehouse of the Resident Committee of Bohaisuo Village, many unearthed stone tablets, grinders and lions have become witnesses of the different nationalities who garrisoned here to defend the country in ancient times.

In AD 907, the Khitan people established the Liao Dynasty (AD 907–1125), and relied on the Great Wall to resist against other regimes. After that, the Jurchen people defeated the Liao and established the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234). They inherited the Khitan people's cognition of the Great Wall while following the Liao Dynasty's boundary. The Great Wall, which was originally used by Han people to fight against nomadic peoples from the north, became a natural barrier for the security of the Liao and Jin dynasties. The participation, construction and development of the Great Wall by multiple ethnic groups made the wall a symbol of the integration and exchange of these groups, becoming their common spiritual home.

With the existence of the Great Wall, the dynasties on both sides gradually stopped fighting and began to communicate. In 1004, the Alliance of Chanyuan took place between the Liao and Song (AD 960–1279) dynasties. After that, both sides sent delegations to visit each

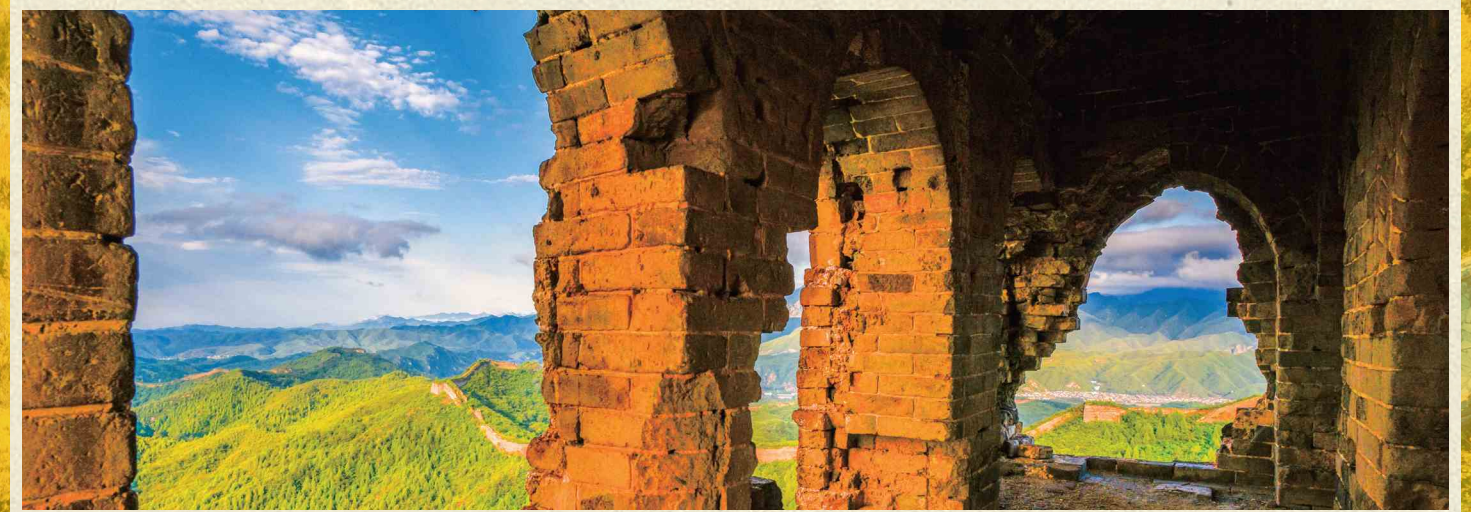
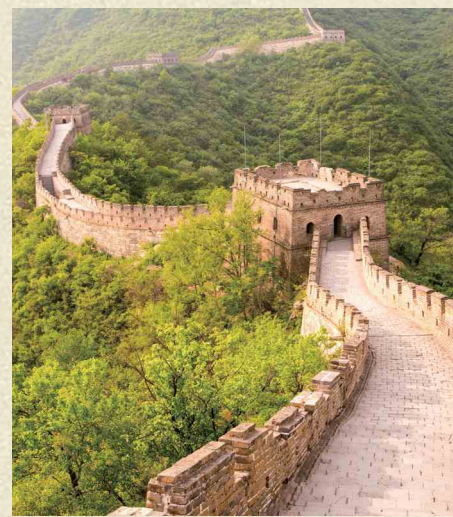
other. Some famous literary ministers of the Song Dynasty, such as Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072), visited with the Liao. Khitan people admired the advanced culture of the Central Plains. When visiting Liao, Ouyang was warmly welcomed in every aspect. He wrote an article praising the Khitan people, who he said were polite and pursued good-neighbourly friendship, which differed from their previous reputation as barbaric and rude in the eyes of people in the Central Plains. He pointed out that although the Song and Liao were politically opposed, the public from both sides always hoped for the integration of the economy, culture and popular sentiment.

Many generations of various ethnic people settled down along the Great Wall. In the common cultivation of this land, their hearts were closely connected.

#### Common Folk Customs

The section of the Great Wall in Beijing, which stands between mountains and rivers, has been a symbol of peace and tranquillity for the majority of its existence. The areas along the wall also became a trade zone for people from different regions. In economic and trade exchanges, the customs of many ethnic groups gradually merged and unified.

To the north of the Great Wall were vast grasslands rich in cattle and sheep. To the south of the Great Wall were rich farming lands, producing wheat and rice, as well as silk, tea and porcelain. A variety of products were transported to Beijing along the Grand Canal connect-



ing the north and south. The Great Wall in the transitional zone began to serve as something of a distribution centre of goods from the north and south. Fortresses and passes along the wall were not only important nodes, but also trade centres for people between the north and the south to conduct exchanges. Gubeikou, Chadao Village, Yongning City, Huanghua City, Hefangkou and Yanhe City along the Great Wall turned into important trade venues. Old shops on both sides of narrow stone roads running in villages at the foot of the wall witnessed the past prosperity.

A scholar commented on the passes along the wall during the Qing Dynasty: "Passes along the Great Wall were often hustling and bustling as trade markets, and a national trade market of a large feudal country was taking shape after the wall no longer served as a military barrier between different ethnic groups on both sides."

The economic development promoted the growth of the population and brought about the prosperity of folk culture. Back then, Gubeikou Village was inhabited by different ethnic groups but was later dominated by Manchu people. Influenced by Han culture, some wealthy people also built houses in the Han style, but still retained unique Manchu elements. Due to the special geography, snacks with different flavours also began to emerge in Gubeikou. These snacks integrated the culinary habits of Gubeikou people for many years. Through innovation, they have formed a series of distinctive snacks with local flavour. There are more than 30 kinds of snacks in the village, and can be found in every

household. In addition, traditional ethnic activities and celebrations can often be seen in the village, such as temple fairs and the Jiuqu Yellow River Lantern Festival. In every traditional festival, the village holds activities with Manchu characteristics. At its temple fairs, Manchu dance and stilt-walking troupes present wonderful performances. At the Lantern Festival of the Jiuqu Yellow River Array, people can assemble river lanterns and pray for their families and friends.

#### Common Cultural Connotations

Rich and colourful multi-ethnic cultures meet and converge along the Great Wall, creating a powerful force of beauty and unity. This is the centripetal force of cultural identity. Areas along the Great Wall witnessed many historical events. Legends and stories originated from the fertile soil, becoming examples of the city's literature and arts. These cultural products do not belong to a certain village or a certain ethnic group, but are the spiritual wealth shared by the Chinese nation.

During the Song-Liao War, General Yang Ye (died in AD 986) from the Song Dynasty was respected by his enemy, the Khitan people, who set up a memorial temple for him at Gubeikou. Today, walking along the Great Wall in Beijing, from Hongshimen and Jiangjun Pass in the east to Xinchengzi and Gubeikou in the north, and then on to Huanghuacheng, Juyong Pass and Yanhecheng in the south, one can hear the legend of General Yang and his family as told by locals. Yang's sons ventured into Youzhou and fought in Jinshatan; his daughter-in-law Mu Guiying took command; his wife

and other female members also joined the army to expel the enemy. These vivid stories have been widely spread among people along the Great Wall in Beijing. Memorial temples for General Yang are widely distributed along the wall, echoing his legendary folk tales. Today, the Yangs' spirit of sacrificing for the country is still highly respected by the Chinese nation. There are countless kinds of literary works derived from the story of General Yang. The power of folk culture is infused into the national spirit.

Changyucheng Village in Changping District is adjacent to Mentougou District and Huailai County in Hebei Province in the west and Yanqing District in the north, serving as a frontier fortress and military stronghold in ancient times. To the north of the village is the more than 1,400-m-high Huangtuxiling. On the ridge is the site of the Great Wall built 2,300 years ago. It is the highest elevation and oldest section of the Great Wall in Beijing. Although it has eroded to some degree, the ruins of its ramparts and a fortress are still visible.

Every Lunar New Year, the sound of gongs and drums rings out in Yongxing Temple on the hillside of the village. The performance of local village opera begins. This opera retains its unique singing and culture, showing the changes with the integration of ethnic groups inside and outside the Great Wall. The opera traces back to the Ming Dynasty. Many of the contents in the opera, such as the story of "General Yang," originate from the land. According to legend, during the Northern Song Dynasty, Yang Yanzhao (AD 958–1014), one of General Yang Ye's sons, fought against a bandit here. Ruins



### Tourist Attractions along the Great Wall

The outline of the section of the Great Wall in Beijing is a semi-circular arc. The winding arc gathers the essence of the Great Wall, which is the best preserved, most complicated and culturally rich section in China. Many major fortresses and passes along the wall have already become world-famous tourist attractions: Badaling, Hongshimen, Gubeikou and Jiankou, all of which are being further driven by the development of the Great Wall Cultural Belt. The ancient wall will continue to stand in the capital city, with a new posture and appearance. More modes of sightseeing will draw admirers to the wall, with its interesting stories, rich history and colourful culture.

#### Areas around Guangou

The Western Hills in Beijing is part

of the northern section of the Taihang Mountains, dubbed "Beijing's Right Arm." Jundu Mountain in the north of Beijing belongs to Yanshan Mountain, which heads the foot of the Western Hills and stretches to the coast along the Bohai Sea. The two ranges together form a natural defence barrier that guards the capital city. At their intersection, a fault zone was formed due to crustal movement. This narrow and long zone is Guangou, less than 50 km from central Beijing. Because of its surrounding towering peaks, Guangou is called a natural barrier. Juyong Pass and Badaling are located within the area, and were the key defence zone in the north of Beijing.

At the north entrance of ancient Guangou Road on Jundu Mountain is a huge pass, the Badaling section of the Great Wall, which served as the first barrier in the north of Beijing in ancient China. In 1505, the construction

of the Badaling section began. Because of its strategic position, the section was mostly built in high mountains and deep valleys. The tall and solid walls were built with giant granite strips and blue bricks along the slopes of the mountain. Badaling enjoyed a strategic location because it stood at Beikou in front of Juyong Pass along a main road leading to central Beijing. Most of the tops of the wall section at Badaling are wide and flat, which can allow for an impressive five horses or 10 people to walk side by side.

In 1961, Badaling was identified as one of the first cultural relic protection units at the national level. In 1982, it was listed as a national key scenic area. In 1987, it was inscribed on UNESCO's *World Heritage List*. In 2007, the Badaling Great Wall was approved by the National Tourism Administration as a national 5A tourist attraction. For more than half a century, Badaling, with its

unique charm, has served as platform for cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world.

Since the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, Juyong Pass had been a key pass for guarding the border. Because of its dangerous terrain, Juyong Pass was a place for military strategists in ancient dynasties. During the Ming Dynasty, it once became a main battlefield that was connected to the survival of the country. After Juyong Pass was renovated by General Xu Da, the government paid much attention to the importance of the pass. Emperor Chengzu (reign: 1402–1424) once said, "Juyong Pass is like the throat of the capital city because of its terrain. I will not worry about the north when I own the pass." During the reign of Emperor Jingtai (1449–1457), Juyong Pass saw its largest reconstruction after the establishment of the Ming Dynasty. The

renovation was very large, as the pass had played a significant role in a vital resistance war for the dynasty years before.

In 1449, Emperor Yingzong (reign: 1435–1449, 1457–1464) and more than 200,000 troops were defeated by a Mongolian cavalry. Emperor Yingzong became a prisoner of war. Esen Taishi (died in 1454), head of the Mongolian cavalry, led his cavalry to attack Juyong Pass. General Luo Tong (1390–1470) defended Juyong Pass and resisted the fierce Mongolian attack. Thus, Esen Taishi decided to divide the troops into two sections. One group of his men would continue to attack Juyong Pass, and the rest would follow him to try to occupy Zijing Pass. In the end, Esen Taishi was still defeated by the Ming army because most of his troops were contained at Juyong Pass. Despite the victory, Emperor Jingtai (a younger brother of Emperor Yingzong) still ac-

cepted the advice of ministers to expand and strengthen Juyong Pass, including setting up water and land gates for the pass. There were barbicans outside the pass's north and south gates. After that, the facilities of Juyong Pass reached a higher level.

Located among towering peaks, Juyong Pass is majestic, with its unique, steep and dangerous terrain. The fortress echoes the pleasant scenery of Guangou. The beauty of mountains and streams around the pass is fascinating. During the Jin Dynasty, the area became the first of the "Eight Sights of Yanjing (Beijing)." Emperor Qianlong (1735–1795) of the Qing Dynasty wrote an inscription, "*Juyong die-cui*," meaning that the pass was covered by emerald green, as well as a poem to honour its role in defending the capital city. Today, every April, the S2 Railway Line runs along next to the spring flowers that are blooming in profusion on both sides, drawing sightseers and shutterbugs.



### AN AMAZING TRIP

The Mutianyu section of the Great Wall is famous for its precipitousness.

The section of the Great Wall in Huairou District accounts for half of the more dangerous sections of the wall in all of China. Those who have climbed the Mutianyu and Jiankou sections must have such first-hand experience. The Northern Qi Dynasty built the Great Wall in Mutianyu and later General Xu Da rebuilt the wall on the previous site. General Qi Jiguang (1528–1588) strengthened the wall on the basis of the section built by Xu. Today, the Mutianyu section, which connects the Juyong Pass section in the west and Gubeikou in the east, is one of the best-preserved sections of the Great Wall built during the Ming Dynasty. People often say, “The unique beauty of the Great Wall belongs to the Mutianyu section.” This is one of the new 16 sights in Beijing, and it is the best place for sightseers to take in the steep and unique natural beauty.

As a key fortress, the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall was built on the edge of steep cliffs, taking advantage of the dangerous terrain to create a defence system. The eastern section of Mutianyu is relatively gentle, while the western is precipitous. There are three watchtowers standing together in the southeast, which is the location of Mutianyu Pass. This architectural style is extremely rare among sections of the wall throughout the country. In the northwest, the wall stretches straight from the mountainside to the mountain top, with a standing watchtower. The wall immediately runs down along the terrain to return to the mountainside,

and then rises suddenly again to a place that sits more than 940 m above sea level. The outline of the section creates a large bend, resembling a bullhorn. Thus, the section is dubbed “Bull’s Horn Ridge.” From there, the wall continues to reach the Jiankou Section with steep cliffs on both sides. On the east of the Mutianyu section, the wall, which extends to the northeast along the mountain, was separated by a watchtower to run to the southeast and extends more than one km in the distance, with a watchtower built at the end of the wall. This section is known as “Bald Tail Side.” Standing at the separation point, one will see the winding wall on three

sides. This is the sight titled “Viewing Dragon from Three Sides.”

The natural scenery around the Mutianyu section is extremely beautiful. Surrounded by mountains, Mutianyu offers colourful and gorgeous views throughout the year: spring, featuring a variety of flowers; summer, with clear water and blue skies; autumn, with red leaves throughout the mountains; and winter, featuring a snow-covered landscape. In 1992, Mutianyu was rated as one of the best tourist attractions in Beijing.

The Jiankou section is named for its shape, which is similar to the shape of an “arrow nock.”

The Jiankou section is the high-



light of the Great Wall in Huairou. It is second to none with its dangerous cliffs, solid structures, ingenious construction techniques and magnificent colours. It connects the Mutianyu section in the east and the Yunling section in the west. The Jiankou section stretches for more than 20 km along the 1,141-m-high mountain. The wall is built on cliffs with exposed rocks, and its slope is about 50 degrees. One part of the wall along the slope is nearly 90 degrees and each of its steps is quite narrow. The Great Wall runs to the steep peak along the rolling terrain.

In a quiet place, the Jiankou section is more vigorous and magnificent in the woods. The section is dotted with many steep and beautiful architectural elements, including Sky Ladder and Nine-Eye Tower. Nowadays, the precipitous and magnificent section is

the first choice for sightseers to challenge themselves and photographers to create wonderful works.

Nine-Eye Tower is the largest watchtower in terms of volume of all those along the Great Wall.

At the top of Huoyan Mountain at the junction of Huairou and Yanqing districts is a watchtower, where one can take in a panoramic view of the Jiankou and Mutianyu sections. This watchtower has nine windows on each side of the tower, hence the name “Nine-Eye.” In ancient times, the location of the tower served as the intersection of three military strongholds, playing a great role in national defence. In addition to serving as a military facility, the tower also has cultural background. On a platform on the north side of the tower are 24 stelae, most of which feature contents

praising the majesty of the tower and expressing the authors’ inner feelings. Most of the writers were generals of the Ming Dynasty. It is unusual for a watchtower to be depicted in so many poems, which is a demonstration of its unique position.

### Natural Beauty

The Great Wall has inspired countless visitors with its magnificent landscape since ancient times.

Built in the early years of Emperor Hongwu (reign: 1368–1398) of the Ming Dynasty, the Simatai section is famous for its various architectural styles.

Located in the northeast of Miyun District, the Simatai section still retains the original appearance of the Great Wall built during the Ming Dynasty. Because of the steep terrain, the wall

runs along the knife-edge ridge, with different widths. Its platforms, watch-towers and ramparts vary greatly over its short distance, which is extremely rare among sections of the Great Wall throughout the country. This section was designated as the "Primitive Great Wall" by UNESCO.

Built in the early years of Emperor Hongwu (reign: 1368–1398) of the Ming Dynasty, the Simatai section is famous for its various architectural styles. The 5.4-km wall section features brick structures, brick and wood structures, and brick and stone structures. The layout of some structures resembles the shape of the Chinese character "田," while others resemble the character "井." There are 135 well-preserved watchtowers. The shortest distance between two watchtowers is 43.8 m.

The clear water at the foot of Simatai adds it a touch of tenderness. This is Lake Yuanyang, formed by hot and cold springs. On the west section of the lake is a hot spring, with ripples all year round, with rising steam and swimming fish. However, on the east is a cold spring, with bone-chilling water. The lake is never frozen in winter.

Throughout the year, the breeze and beautiful scenery on the lake make one feel relaxed and happy.

**The Hongshimen section is a stone Great Wall.**

The Great Wall in Pinggu District is the starting point of the Ming Great Wall entering Beijing from the east. The Hongshimen section, located in Jinhaihu Town, covers Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei. In recent years, the section has drawn many mountaineers and sightseers from Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei for its unique terrain, rolling mountains and beautiful scenery.

At Hongshimen, one will see the "Three-Boundary Monument," indicating the special feature of the section. As the easternmost end of the Great Wall in Beijing, the building materials of this section are also different from other sections. The base is built with strip stones, and the wall itself is built with other stones. The design of the section's height and width follows the idea of winding along the mountain. The base of each watchtower is usually built with strip stones, while the other parts of each watchtower are built with local materials, such as rocks without any decoration, showing bold and unconstrained natural beauty.

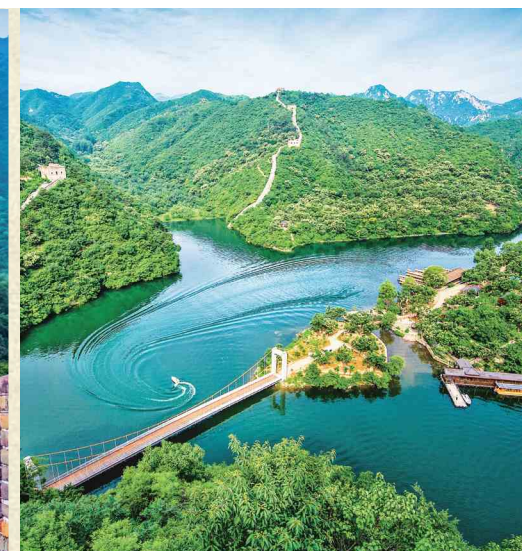
**Huanghuacheng is one of the few waterside sections.**

Built during the reign of Emperor Jingtai, the Huanghuacheng section is not far from the Ming Tombs in the south. Thus, it is an extremely important pass of the wall. In the past, the defence line of Huanghuacheng was deep, featuring a complete military fortress composed of three checkpoints and four sections of the walls.

Later, the section began to be called the Lakeside Great Wall. When Xi-shuiyu Reservoir was built in 1974, the dam closed, and the water level rose to submerge the lower wall. It seems that the wall runs from a peak into the water and climbs up another peak from the other side of the lake, forming an amazing view. Huanghuacheng has become a getaway for people to escape from the hustling and bustling city and get closer to nature. Around the winding road along the mountainside, one will not only enjoy the beautiful views of the lake and peaks, but also the magnificence of the Great Wall. In mid-summer, with trees and flowers, this is an ideal route for hiking and leisure.

### Impregnable Passes

Defence was the basic function of the Great Wall. Usually located along vital communication lines and strategic points, its passes ensured people's safety and were like homes guarded by soldiers.



**Stepping on the Gubeikou section, one may imagine the brave fighting of ancient soldiers while looking over the magnificent views in the distance.**

Among the rolling peaks, the Ming Great Wall is a unique sight. The Pass of the Gubeikou section and its wall offer breath-taking views with precipitousness and beauty. As an important pass of the Great Wall, Gubeikou is nestled at the foot of the Wohu and Panlong mountains, and the Chaohe and Tanghe rivers run in front of it. Known as "the lock and key to the capital city," the pass is where every inch of land was fought for in ancient times.

In order to fight against nomadic invasions, Emperor Wenxuan (reign: AD 550–559) of the Northern Qi Dynasty ordered the construction of the Great Wall from Yulin in the west to Shanhai Pass in the east via Gubeikou. During the Jin Dynasty, an iron gate was built here to guard it, so it is called Iron Gate Pass. During the Ming Dynasty, Gubeikou became a dependable and powerful pass.

In 1550, during the reign of Emperor Jiajing (1522–1566), Mongols occupied Gubeikou and rushed to the foot of the city of Beijing. Qi Jiguang, who was 23 years old at that time, was saddened when he witnessed the tragic situation of the war in the capital. Later, he was shown appreciation by Prime Minister Zhang Juzheng (1525–1582) because of his suggestions on reconstructing the Great Wall. However, Emperor Jiajing worried that Beijing would be attacked again and had to agree to open more areas for Mongols to trade with the Ming Dynasty. Therefore, the border was stable for several years. During this period, Qi led his troops to quell the plunder from foreign pirates in China's southeast coast. The court was impressed by his skills in training and fighting, and later agreed with his plan to rebuild the Gubeikou section of the Great Wall. Today, the section is as strong as ever.

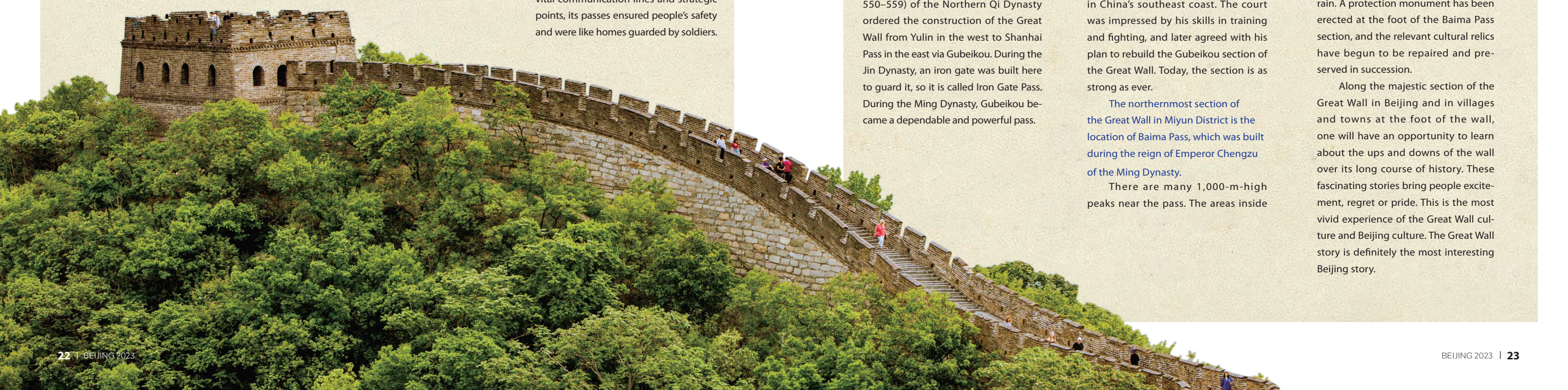
**The northernmost section of the Great Wall in Miyun District is the location of Baima Pass, which was built during the reign of Emperor Chengzu of the Ming Dynasty.**

There are many 1,000-m-high peaks near the pass. The areas inside

and outside the pass are narrow, making it a military stronghold. It was only a small fortress at the beginning. With the increase in military demand, the section was rebuilt during the reign of Emperor Jiajing, including the construction of watchtowers and ramparts, which further expanded and improved the facilities and functions of the wall.

There are few surviving *loulu*, a type of watchtower, along the section of the Great Wall in Beijing. Along the Baima Pass section, one can see a watchtower with a unique architectural style, which served as a location for soldiers to observe the enemy and shelter themselves from the wind and rain. A protection monument has been erected at the foot of the Baima Pass section, and the relevant cultural relics have begun to be repaired and preserved in succession.

Along the majestic section of the Great Wall in Beijing and in villages and towns at the foot of the wall, one will have an opportunity to learn about the ups and downs of the wall over its long course of history. These fascinating stories bring people excitement, regret or pride. This is the most vivid experience of the Great Wall culture and Beijing culture. The Great Wall story is definitely the most interesting Beijing story.



# Achieving Spectacular Worldwide Fame



In October 1954, the Badaling section of the Great Wall welcomed Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), Prime Minister of India. Nehru and Premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) together put forward the five principles of peaceful coexistence in handling international relations, laying the foundation for China-India ties. During his visit, Nehru, accompanied by Premier Zhou, visited Badaling with great enthusiasm. This was the first time for the heritage site to receive a foreign leader. From then on, Badaling, the most representative ancient pass of the wall in Beijing, had begun its new historical mission. Over the past half-century, hundreds of heads of state and government representatives, and more than 8,000 distinguished guests at or above the ministerial level from around the world have visited Badaling. These include Norodom Sihanouk (1922–2012), Kakuei Tanaka (1918–1993), Richard Nixon (1913–1994), Ronald Reagan (1911–2004), Queen Elizabeth II (1926–2022), Boris Yeltsin (1931–2007), Nelson Mandela (1918–2013), George Walker Bush, Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama.

In the face of the magnificent Great Wall, outstanding figures from around the world cannot help but marvel at the great architecture. In 1972, Richard Nixon visited China with the intention of restoring China-US relations. At the Badaling section, he

was amazed by the miraculous creativity of the Chinese nation. He said that the Great Wall is one of the greatest wonders in the world. He added that as one struggles to climb on it, one can imagine what kind of wisdom and strength were needed to build it. In October 1993, Yitzhak Rabin (1922–1995) visited the Badaling section, stating that the designer was great. The Great Wall is worthy of its worldwide recognition. Only a great nation can build such great architecture. Ronald Reagan said that the Great Wall is the greatest project in the world, and he never saw such a masterpiece in any other place. In the eyes of Boris Yeltsin, the Great Wall is the greatest wall, but also the only one of its kind in the world. He said that he was amazed at the beauty of China's scenery and the diligence and great history of the Chinese nation. After enjoying the Badaling section of the Great Wall, Vladimir Putin, who has always been famous for his image as a tough man, showed a rare moment of emotional excitement.

The Great Wall is like a shield to bring and ensure human peace. For thousands of years, Chinese people's idea of harmony and peacefulness being the most precious has always occupied the core position of their values. With stopping war to survive as a basic goal, ancient Chinese formed the idea of building the Great Wall, which was to make a shield rather than a spear. Since the laying of its first brick, the Great Wall

has nurtured the peace-loving thought of the Chinese nation. This idea has been strengthened with the passing of time, and has continued with the establishment and promotion of building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind in the new era. The Great Wall is a glorious monument, radiating the light of Chinese civilisation of "peace and harmony" to forge a friendship with people around the world.

According to Ancient Chinese, beauty is not intrinsic, and it depends on objective traits and must be discovered by people. Different people have different feelings about what constitutes beauty. With its unique position and profound connotation, the Great Wall has become a platform for the world to learn about China. Before taking "climbing the Great Wall" as part of China's diplomacy, the Great Wall had long been an important bridge and link for people-to-people exchanges between the country and the rest of the world. Even when China hit its low point in the late Qing Dynasty, the Great Wall was still a ray of light that would never extinguish for the Chinese nation, giving them the confidence to save the country and enabling foreigners to have a clear and profound understanding of China.

At the end of the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty, British envoy George Macartney (1727–1806) visited China to celebrate the emperor's

birthday. He was impressed by the ingenuity and solidity of the Great Wall at Gubeikou. After returning to Britain, he once stressed in his mission record that this section of the Great Wall seemed not to have been built by humans. He said if all famous projects in the world were added together, they could not compete with the Great Wall of China.

In 1908, William Edgar Geil (1865–1925), an American traveller, completed a survey along the entire Great Wall of China and published his *Great Wall of China*, the world's first monograph on it the following year. He recounts, "Continuing the ascent, we came upon large sections of the Great Wall in almost perfect repair and in truly classic ensemble, which would rival that of ancient Greece."

In 2009, the UK's William Lindesay held a photo exhibition titled *The Great Wall Revisited: From the Jade Gate to Old Dragon's Head at Guozijian*

*in Beijing*. He recalled when he was young, seeing a map of China, and the Great Wall stretching across the north of the land. It was so beautiful. On the map, he saw the start and end of the wall, and he dreamed of riding a bicycle one day from one end to the other. With his childhood dream, Lindesay came to China and hiked along the Great Wall from Jiayu Pass in Gansu Province to Shanhai Pass in Hebei Province. During the period of more than 160 days, he met and fell in love with the Great Wall and a beautiful Chinese woman, who later became his wife. He captured the changes of the Great Wall with the passing of time and continued Geil's legend on the Great Wall.

The Great Wall is not only a miracle created by the Chinese civilisation and belonging to China, but also an item of world heritage belonging to all human beings. In the more than 100 years since the invention of pho-

tography, many photographers from around the world have special love for the Great Wall. Founded more than 20 years ago, the World Photographers Focusing on Beijing event has always taken the Great Wall as a permanent subject, showing not only the photographers' aspirations, but also the open spirit of Beijing.

With the rapid development of the Great Wall Cultural Belt in recent years, the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Beijing section) has achieved initial results, the international influence of the Great Wall Cultural Festival has increased and the section of the Great Wall in Beijing Scenic Road has become more popular with sightseers. The resources along the Great Wall are being integrated to demonstrate the pursuit of inclusive development, peace and harmony. In so doing, more stories of Beijing will contribute to every aspect of exchanges between China and rest of the world.



# DEVOTED TO RESTORING THE GREAT WALL

Translated by Wang Wei Edited by Brad Green, Anne Ruisi Photos by Wan Yuanzheng, Wu Jiang, Zheng Xinqia

Cheng Yongmao's office is full of objects related to his work repairing the Great Wall over the course of nearly 20 years. For example, a dozen self-made mountaineering sticks and masonry tools, as well as a general plan of the repaired section of the Ming-era Great Wall in Huairou District marked with watchtowers, passes and tourist attractions, which Cheng created using PC software.

On the wall opposite his desk is a group photo of Cheng and his three colleagues who have worked side by side for many years. Four people stand on the Great Wall, wearing work clothes and holding mountaineering sticks in their hands, each with a broad smile. This photo was taken when they repaired the Jiankou section of the Great Wall in 2017.

Since 2004, Cheng and his team have repaired a total of more than 20 kilometres (km) from the Huanghuacheng and Mutianyu sections of the wall to Qinglong Gorge, Yaoziyu and Jiankou.

The section of the Great Wall in Beijing is dominated by portions built during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), running through the city's six districts. With a number of programmes issued by the city, the protection of the wall has continued to be strengthened, and the idea of repairing it has improved. The heritage site remains close to the heart of the Chinese nation.

## Climbing the Great Wall at Least Once a Week

Cheng Yongmao, 66, still goes to climb the Great Wall at least once a week. On August 8, 2022, Chen arrived at the office at about 7 a.m. He read the weather forecast, and chose this fine day. He wore a blue vest, a helmet and a pair of cloth shoes. While holding a mountaineering stick, he told his team members, "Let's go to Jiankou."

Cheng is responsible for the fourth phase of the Jiankou section's repair project. As the Executive Deputy General Manager of Huairou Construction Group's Ancient Building Company, he has to deal with many trivial matters, but he still insists on climbing up the Great Wall. "Is being told about the work, and going to examine the work myself the same?"

On the way to Jiankou, Cheng would ask his driver to pull over from time to time so he could take pictures of Jiankou from different angles along the road. Cheng enthusiastically introduced the beautiful scenery along the section in the distance to a journalist in his car.

The wall of the Jiankou section is far steeper than mountain roads. Some of its slopes can reach 80 degrees, and the steps are full of broken bricks, leading people to easily slip. However, Cheng climbed up the section in only a few minutes. "I often went up the mountain to cut firewood when I

was young. This is no different from flat land for me," said Cheng. Because he climbed the Great Wall faster than young people, a friend of his said that he seemed to have kung fu movements.

After arriving at the construction site, Cheng carefully examined the work results of the previous last week. He took a digital camera to shoot what he thought was good or bad. Workers were busy carrying bricks. Seeing Cheng, they came to say hello: "Look, is it okay what we did last week?" Cheng began to discuss the project with the workers.

Cheng asked them to try to piece some broken bricks into one. "If we can't do it, we can use our new bricks." Every time Cheng finds a place where ancient artisans did exceptionally exquisite work, he stops to appreciate it.

Zhao Xiaojie, manager of the project, has been working with Cheng since 2004. In his eyes, Cheng is easy-going and never puts on airs. Zhao said, "He is our leader at work, and we are brothers after work." However, Cheng cannot tolerate carelessness. He asks his workers to redo any job they did not do well. "He is really attached to the Great Wall. He always works day and night, and even personally instructs the workers on how to lay bricks. Even festivals cannot stop him from going to the Great Wall," said Zhao.

The Jiankou section connects with the Mutianyu section from the No. 122 watchtower (Zhengbeilou) in the east and runs to No. 169 watchtower (Jiuyanlou) in the northwest. Because of Jiankou's steep terrain, it is considered one of the most dangerous sections of the Great Wall in all of China.

In 2016, the first phase of the Jiankou section repair project rolled out. Zhang Tong, director of the Huairou District Cultural Heritage Institute, explained, "At that time, how to repair the Great Wall caused widespread public concern. The Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau attached great importance to it. Through experts' field investigations and improvement of its design scheme, the orig-

inal style of the section has been preserved with the goal of guaranteeing the safety of the wall structure, winning public recognition."

"If the first phase is given a grade of 80 out of 100 by the public, the second phase can reach 90," said Zhang. Jiankou's phase II paid high attention to its details. "For example, whether vegetation should be removed or kept, and to what extent bricks should be laid over bridle paths and ramparts. These efforts were completed well in the first phase, which used fewer new bricks and did less renovation. The second phase paid more attention to maintaining the original appearance than the first phase."

The second phase of the project introduced social capital for the first time and added related archaeological excavation work. Archaeological excavation efforts that are included in the Great Wall protection and maintenance project are important for the transformation of cultural heritage protection ideas in the new era.

According to historical records, there was a pass called Jiaerling on the west of the Mutianyu section. However, its exact location had not been found until the execution of Jiankou's third phase in 2020. A stele was found on the west side of the No. 127 watchtower, providing important material evidence that part of Jiankou belonged to the Jiaerling defence area in ancient times.

Shang Heng, an associate researcher at the Beijing Institute of Archaeology, said that the information from the inscription of the stele showed that during the Ming Dynasty, the section was under the jurisdiction of the Jiaerling defence area. Zhang said, "In the process of archaeological excavation, projectiles, hand cannons and some building components were found, providing solid academic support for the subsequent display and utilisation."

In 2021, with the establishment of the Great Wall Protection and Repair Practice Base, Beijing began to focus on general pro-







tection projects and research projects, and the Dazhuangke section in Yanqing District and Jiankou in Huairou District were selected as pilot projects to roll out new exploration. Zhang explained, "This new mode consists of carrying out archaeological excavations, design and survey, as well as working out construction plans. It will focus on strengthening scientific research before construction."

### From a Bricklayer to an Expert in Repairing the Great wall

"I never dreamed I would be engaged in repairing the Great Wall for the rest of my life," said Cheng, who was born in the village of Huairou in 1956. In 1972, Cheng, who did not complete his primary education, began to learn bricklaying with his uncle. "At that time, people would be very proud of being an artisan." After more than 20 years of hard work, Cheng mastered bricklaying technology. In 1991, he joined the Huairou Construction Group and participated in reconstructing the Great Buddha's Hall at Hongluo Temple.

This was a strange field for Cheng. In the past, he had been mostly engaged in building modern civilian houses, while ancient Chinese buildings, such as the Great Buddha's Hall, are decorated with sacred animals and other decorations on the roof. In addition, the roof of ancient buildings of this type was covered with glazed tiles.

During this period, Cheng met his mentor, Piao Xuelin, who had a profound influence on him. Piao was a senior engineer of the Palace Museum and the 15th-generation successor of a major studio, which participated in the construction and renovation of the Forbidden City and other imperial buildings during the Ming and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. Huairou Construction Group specially invited Piao to take charge of technical guidance and quality.

When faced with such a valuable opportunity, Cheng humbly requested advice from Piao. "Piao is a wonderful craftsman. He taught me step by step, and told me to practice basic skills well," said Cheng.

In October 1991, a relative government organ in Beijing opened a training course on ancient Chinese architecture, which was

taught by Piao. Cheng also participated in the three-month course, which covered the history of ancient Chinese architecture, especially the imperial architectural style of the Ming and Qing dynasties. "I did not finish primary school, but I have practical experience and can combine it with theoretical knowledge. My technical level improved a lot through the course," said Cheng. He later learned how to use PPT and computer graphic software.

In 2004, Cheng took over his first large-scale restoration of the Great Wall—the Huanghuacheng section project. The wall was familiar yet strange to Cheng, who lived in a village at the foot of the wall when he was young. He grew up listening to the legends and stories of the wall, however, he had never climbed the wall prior to the project.

Cheng was surprised and curious when he climbed the Great Wall for the first time. He could hardly imagine how ancient workers completed such a massive project along the mountains, and with such exquisite workmanship. His experience in repairing the wall started from the very beginning. Cheng recruited a construction team of dozens of members, most of which came from the mountainous areas in Hebei, and are good climbers. "Some places are so dangerous that ordinary people can hardly stand, let alone work. Some people came to work for several days, and their feet hurt badly. They started to limp, and they could not go on," said Cheng. Later, under his leadership, workers were proud of repairing the Great Wall. Cheng said, "They often tell their family that it is their honour to repair the wall in Beijing."

It is quite difficult to transport building materials and supply water to construction sites on the Great Wall. Mules are not allowed to tread on the wall. Building materials can be lifted to the construction site by winches, but then they must be carried by human hands. A single brick can weigh from 10 to 15 kilograms (kg), and workers can only carry two or three bricks at a time. Water can only be supplied by several high-pressure pumps to the construction site, which is about 1,000 metres (m) above sea level. "Repairing the Great Wall requires minimal intervention with the methods of ancients," said Cheng.

### Noting is Impossible

Over the past two decades, the workmanship of Cheng's team has gradually matured. His team has followed a set of methods. Cheng pointed out that the core principle is to maintain the original appearance of the Great Wall and restore its ancient charm. Chen said, "Broken places should maintain their original appearance. It must follow the slope and the wall must be repaired according to the mountain terrain."

Like other sections in China, the preservation of the Great Wall in Beijing is quite a challenge after it has been impacted by weather erosion, geological changes and wars over the ages. *The Beijing Great Wall Cultural Belt Protection and Development Plan (2018–2035)* proposes that by 2035, Beijing will achieve the preservation of the entire Great Wall, leaving no dangerous cases through emergency response and routine maintenance. To achieve this goal, Beijing has carried out 10 Great Wall reinforcement projects every year since 2019. As of June 2022, Beijing had implemented 50 reinforcement projects.

When looking back on the years of participating in the repair and protection of the Great Wall, Yu Haikuan, Deputy Director of the Yanqing District Cultural Heritage Management Office, felt that the biggest change is that the degree of intervention has been getting smaller and smaller. "From the time it opened to the present, the Badaling section has received more than 500 heads of state and has always been a symbol or model section of the Great Wall. However, some people think that the appearance of today's Badaling is too new, because after it collapsed years ago, we reconstructed it."

"Over more than 10 years, we have improved our repair ideas and methods, been more careful to respect the original appearance of the Great Wall and preserved its ancient features. Fewer and fewer materials are used now, but more and more funds are invested in how to protect it," said Yu.

Zhang Tong explained, "The traditional repair method is that if a house collapses, it should be rebuilt." Preventive protection and repair based on research should rediscover the historical connotations of the Great Wall and carry out more targeted protection. He

said, "What the wall has experienced over the past 400 years, how to place each brick and other details need to be carefully considered."

In 2017, Cheng took over the repair project of the Jiankou section. Jiankou has always been regarded as the most precipitous section of the Great Wall built during the Ming Dynasty and also the epitome of the city's Great Wall scenery.

After discussion with experts, Cheng decided that if plants do not affect the safety of the Great Wall itself, they should be retained accordingly. If plants must be removed, they cannot be uprooted, but need to be cut directly to avoid cracking the wall.

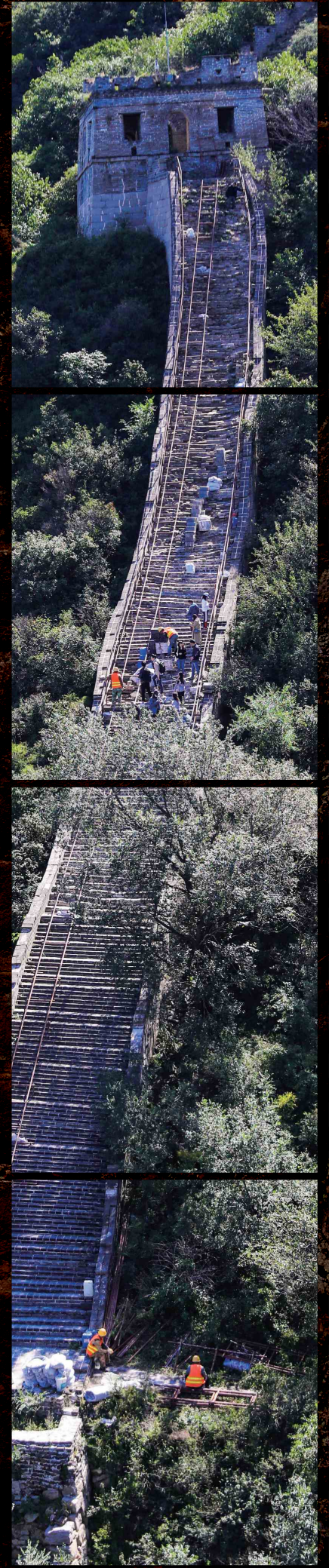
The Yingfeidaoyang section of Jiankou is the most dangerous, running along a slope of nearly 80 degrees. Before repairing the section, each step was only a few inches in width, with broken bricks that could easily fall off. Its repair was a big challenge for Cheng.

The collapse of the section was about 40 m long, leading to some strip stones weighing hundreds of kilograms each rolling down to the bottom of a ditch, dozens of metres deep. Cheng had to ask his team to pull them up with winches to their original positions. Later, Cheng said proudly, "No matter how dangerous or difficult it is, there is nothing that my team cannot do."

Prior to the repair, Yingfeidaoyang saw several accidents where hikers fell to their deaths when climbing the section. "Since I finished the repair, there have never been such instances like this," said Cheng.

Cheng recalled that after the repair of Yingfeidaoyang, he met a visitor who specially went to see the results of the repair. He was pleasantly surprised, and told Cheng that he could not see any sign of repair with the naked eye. The original appearance of the ancient wall has been preserved, but it is now safe to climb, and hikers no longer need to worry about its bricks falling off.

Recently, Cheng led his team to start the fourth phase of Jiankou's repair. As he grew older, he felt that the speed of his mountain climbing was not as fast as before. However, as long as he has strength, he will go to the Great Wall, visit construction sites and see the heritage site he loves as often as possible. "I will climb until I can climb no more," said Cheng.



# OUR BEAUTIFUL HOME THE GREAT WALL

Translated by Li Shasha, Edited by Brad Green, Anne Ruisi  
Photos by Wang Zicheng, Tao Ran



At the Opening Ceremony of the 2021 Beijing Great Wall Cultural Festival, Yu Haikuan, deputy director of the Yanqing District Culture Heritage Administration Bureau, was honoured with the title of “Most Beautiful Heritage (Great Wall) Keeper in Beijing.” It had been nearly 15 years since he joined the field survey of the Great Wall in 2007.

Yu started the job only as an unofficial contract worker. For 15 years, he has travelled the length and breadth of the Great Wall sections in Yanqing District.

On top of this, Yu has also organised and taken part in training the Great Wall keepers, to spread his experience to more young people. As of the first half of 2020, there were 488 Great Wall keepers in Beijing, and most of them came from nearby villages.

Chen Qingchun and Liu Hongyan are among these keepers, and they conduct field surveys of the Great Wall five days a week. Chen said, “I have the responsibility to protect the Great Wall, since I was born and grew up at the foot of the Great Wall.” Cao Yonghe and two others from Gubeikou are responsible for looking after the “wild” (unrepaired) sections of the Great Wall. They regularly walk over 20,000 steps a day through hilly paths with thorny shrubs.

## Footprints on the Great Wall

Although Yu Haikuan is somewhat disabled, he still makes field surveys at different sections of the Great Wall every week. The year-round outdoor activity has caused severe wear of the menisci in his knees. He often takes medicine to relieve the pain.

The sections of the Great Wall from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) bequeathed in Yanqing run for 179.2 kilometres (km), including the famous Badaling section. It is about one-third of the wall's total length in Beijing.

Before becoming a keeper of the Great Wall, Yu was a train driver, travelling around the country all year long. In 2007, he retired to return to his hometown of Yanqing, because he wanted to accompany and take care of his old parents. Around that time, the Yanqing District Culture Heritage Administration Bureau was recruiting. He thus applied for a position as an unofficial contractor.

From 2006 to 2012, the National Cultural Heritage Administration organised comprehensive and systematic investigations of the Great Wall resources in all regions where the wall can be found, to have a thorough understanding of the wall's actual condition. The Yanqing District Cultural Heritage Administration Bureau thus started the work.

After joining the bureau, Yu led a team to carry out



a field survey for two years. In addition to taking care of the daily routine of his team members, he also coordinated with locals to search for the right guides. At that time, the Great Wall was not completely protected. Some sections were scattered around villages, some were hidden in forests and some in the uninhabited areas deep in the mountains.

With GPS (global positioning system) devices, tape measures a satellite map in hand and cameras on their backs, they often trekked along the hills for days at a time. Yu remembered that they always prepared baked buns the night before and got up at 4 or 5 a.m. the next morning to begin their work.

Sometimes, they had to stay at a local house when they could not make the round-trip in a day. In November 2017, the field survey team worked at a section in Shiyao Village in Sihai Town, which was about 50 km from urban Yanqing, a distance of over two hours in each direction. To save time, Yu Haikuan and his teammates worked and lived in the village for a week.

In freezing winter, especially on rainy or snowy days, working outside was a tough challenge, where ragged stones piled up, mountain roads turned slippery, and wild animals such as birds and snakes could appear at any time. Injuries were often par for the course. One of his colleagues was punctured by a nail through the sole of his shoe.

After the two years of fieldwork was wrapped up, Yu and his colleagues had trekked the entire 179.2-km Ming sections of the Great Wall in Yanqing. They walked through the complicated

terrain of the Nanshanlu wall section, Donglu wall section, many passes and watchtowers. Their efforts concluded with over 20 hours of video footage. Yu and his team made great contributions to the successful investigation of the Great Wall and earned an honorary title for the district—“National Advanced County in Cultural Heritage Conservation” (Yanqing used to be administrated as a county).

Previously, Yu had thought that only the marvellous Badaling section of the Great Wall winding on the mountain would be recognised as the Great Wall. Later, he gradually came to realise that the Great Wall’s cultural heritage is comprised of much more than the famous sites, and includes the small mounds and piles of stones along the way.

Today, the distribution of the Great Wall sections in Yanqing is perfectly clear to district authorities. Yu Haikuan said, “Our work has laid a foundation for the subsequent preservation of the Great Wall.” Likewise, related historical books and records have been collated during the fieldwork process.

### Conservation of the Great Wall

The documentary *Walking along the Great Wall* was produced by Yu Haikuan and his colleagues to wrap up their investigation process. In the following years, he again led the surveying and mapping with students to complete the “Field Mapping of the Fortresses on the Great Wall in Yanqing County.”

Numerous field visits had helped acquaint Yu Haikuan with the road conditions along the Great Wall. Which road

is bumpy or in good condition? Yu can figure it out very easily.

Of the roughly 179 km of the Great Wall in Yanqing District, only 26.6 km are made of masonry, and the remaining parts are built with earth or stone. Hundreds of years of exposure to the weather resulted in the collapse of some parts, leaving them scattered around the countryside. On rainy days, Yu Haikuan and his colleagues must immediately head out to begin their inspection and conduct structural reinforcement of any possible dangerous areas.

With white gloves on, Yu inspected bricks and minor cracks very seriously while climbing on the Great Wall. Only with the naked eye can he identify if masonry displacement has taken place. Some displacement can only be spotted up close. Yu put what he found on record.

After the flood season and heavy snow of 2021, Yu Haikuan and his colleagues detected the collapse, bulging and cracks in some passes and affiliated walls.

About two km northwest of the Badaling section of the Great Wall, a city wall sits along a forked road against the mountain. This place serves as the outpost of the Badaling section. However, some walls collapsed inward, bulged and cracked to varying degrees. Between the second and third towers of the Shuiguan section of the wall (the eastern part of the Badaling Great Wall), the side walls collapsed outward, affecting the normal opening of the scenic area.

A series of exploration and re-

search projects began at once. In July 2022, emergency reinforcement was carried out. The collapsed rocks were first cleared, and the vacant walls were rebuilt and reinforced. On those days, Yu Haikuan could always be seen onsite checking the progress of the project.

During the wall’s reinforcement, trees and weeds nearby should be thoroughly cleared, and floor tiles should be added to ensure the good condition of the drainage system. In this way, the roots from surrounding plants could not push the wall apart, and pressure on the wall gap resulting from the infiltration of rainwater or ice could be avoided.

In 2018, Yu Haikuan began to occupy the position of deputy director of the Yanqing District Cultural Heritage Administration Bureau. At the Opening Ceremony of the 2021 Beijing Great Wall Cultural Festival, he earned the title of “Most Beautiful Heritage (Great Wall) Keeper in Beijing.”

Today, Yu maintains his usual pace of work and stays busy, either at the Great Wall or at the office. He often says, “We aim to better protect the Great Wall, and preserve the masterpiece longer.”

### Inheritance

The Great Wall, which has been exposed to weather for hundreds of years, remains under threat from both nature and man. According to the *Regulations on the Protection of the Great Wall*, the “keeper” system of the Great Wall requires keepers to make day-long inspections of key sites and regular inspections of common sites, to achieve full protection coverage of the Great Wall.

According to Yu Haikuan, some Great Wall sections pass through or by a village. Many villagers have grown up at the foot of the Great Wall, but they don’t have an idea of what the Great Wall truly is until they become keepers. Today, many of them can introduce details of the Great Wall to tourists and other villagers, and communicate their sense of pride and related knowledge to more people.

The duties of keepers include patrolling, emergency monitoring, cleaning and discouraging visitors from climbing. Each day, they patrol a section of the Great Wall, then take photos and upload them to an application with text descriptions. After the pictures are collected into the background system, photos are compared to record changes to the wall over time in order to determine the wall’s condition.

In 2019, 128 Great Wall keepers from Yanqing District were trained. They are responsible for the Great Wall sections in Yanqing District. Yu Haikuan passed on his experience field surveying the Great Wall, including the basic conditions of the Great Wall as well as emergency measures to deal with injuries in the field or encountering wild animals such as snakes. Yu also set up a WeChat (a social media app) group to provide online training for new keepers. He often browses the photos uploaded to the system to check on the quality of the photos provided by the keepers, and follows up with helpful feedback.

What impressed Yu the most was Liu Hongyan, a Great Wall keeper from Shixia Village. Liu grew up at the foot of the Great Wall, but did not know those small

plain mounds of earth and stones on nearby mountains could be considered part of the Great Wall. After training, she not only made sense of different forms of the Great Wall, but also learned about the related threats to the Great Wall.

Liu Hongyan started her job in May 2019 and spends five days a week patrolling the Great Wall. In the beginning, she was afraid to climb on the Great Wall alone, so she brought a dog with her. Later, as more and more villagers became keepers, Liu Hongyan had more companions.

Yu keeps in close contact with those guarding the Great Wall. He hopes they are well-informed about the current status of the Great Wall and can pass on their knowledge to more people.

Chen Qingchun, a full-time keeper of the Great Wall in the Changping District town of Liucun, won the title “Most Beautiful Keeper of the Great Wall in Beijing” in 2020. Chen explained that his daily job is to patrol the Great Wall five days a week; he walks for about six to seven hours a day.

Chen said, “To protect the Great Wall, we try to reasonably persuade tourists not to climb on the unopened section of the Great Wall, spread its history and culture, and let tourists join us to preserve the Great Wall.” There are many tourists who are respectful of the Great Wall, working with keepers to maintain the environment. Organising bricks, cleaning or taking part in other duties, the responsibilities of being a Great Wall keeper can belong to anyone.



# Every Shutter Click Brings Excitement

Translated by Wang Wei Edited by Brad Green, Anne Ruisi  
Photos by Yan Yueluan, Yang Dong

On the afternoon of August 23, 2022, as a professional photographer who was born in the 1990s, the enthusiastic Yang Dong faced a video camera to introduce the Great Wall. At that time, he cooperated with a television station to shoot a programme. Since Yang gained fame for his photographs of the Great Wall, such work invitations have come regularly for him.

Like Yang, there are many photographers in China who take the Great Wall as a subject, and some have become professional photographers as a result. One of them became famous for his work, and was selected to photograph the opening ceremony of the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games (Beijing 2022).

They are of different ages, personalities and backgrounds, but they have found their own way to “get along” with the Great Wall through years of shooting: to show the beauty of the wall, record its ups and downs, understand its spirit and show their own stories through their lenses.

## Love at First Sight

“When looking around, I have a wide field of vision. Lofty mountains and the ancient Great Wall come into view, making me want to shout with excitement! The thrill is unprecedented and shocking!” This was how Yang described first seeing the wall in the summer of 2015.

At that time, 23-year-old Yang had not landed a steady job after graduating from college a year earlier. He earned a modest living by submitting pictures to photo websites. Although his major was accounting, his heart was in photography. A senior photographer told him he should have a long-term shooting subject, which is particularly important for improving the professionalism of his photography. Yang heard that a disabled photographer won a golden award at the national level because he had taken pictures of the Great Wall for nearly 40 years. This inspired Yang to take a trip to the Great Wall.

Compared to the sections of the Great Wall he saw in his hometown of Dandong as a child, Yang felt that

the sections of the Great Wall in Hebei were more authentic, surrounded by mountains with clouds and fog. He was touched by the towering wall, and stayed for three days to take photographs. “I slept in a watchtower at night, and took pictures of the wall under the starry sky.”

It did not take long for Yang to realise that he had found his long-term photography focus: the Great Wall. His first award-winning work was a series of photographs taken over the course of three consecutive days. “The prize was not big, but it was a really great encouragement for my ability and also reinforced my determination to become a professional photographer.”

Coincidentally, when Wang Qihong climbed the Great Wall in Hebei Province, he also found his focus. On a weekend in July 2009, Wang accompanied his family to climb the wall in Chengde. “The night before we went, it rained heavily on the mountain, so we saw the sea of clouds when climbing. That view was really beautiful. Locals said that such a scene rarely appears throughout the year, so I was impressed.”

Forty-one-year-old Wang works

for a state-owned enterprise in Beijing. Before that visit, photography was only a hobby, and his focus was portraits. However, after visiting the Great Wall in Hebei, he became interested in taking photos of landscapes. After shooting for a period of time, he did not find any satisfactory work. Under the guidance of friends in a photography circle, he began to focus on the wall beginning in 2018. “Only by focusing on a single target for a long time is it more likely to improve one’s work. Photographers will understand the subject better because they do it again and again.”

Wang also became famous for focusing on the Great Wall. At the beginning of 2022, eight sets of photographs of the wall taken by Wang were displayed to the world as the background of the 24 solar terms at the opening ceremony of Beijing 2022.

Among his works, the first one selected by Zhang Yimou, chief director of the opening/closing ceremony of Beijing 2022, was an aerial shot of the Badaling Section of the Great Wall. Taken in March 2021, it is a symbol of Major Snow, one of the 24 solar terms. “Zhang said

that this is like a traditional Chinese painting of the wall. The section of the wall resembles a circling dragon, and watchtowers and beacon towers along it are complete, making it suitable for showing in front of the worldwide audience at the ceremony.”

Yu Wenjiang, 51, has been taking pictures of the Great Wall for nearly 20 years. For him, meeting the ancient wall when climbing the mountains is like a special gift. In addition to physical exercise, mountain climbing can offer one a variety of natural scenery. However, if the views include the wall, it feels suddenly different. One can feel the history in the old bricks and broken walls.

Yu was born in Qingdao, Shandong Province. He grew up in a mountainous area and had deep feelings for the peaks. After college, he worked in Qinhuangdao, Hebei Province. Qinhuangdao features not only the Liujiang Basin, a rare geo-heritage site formed by ancient geological movements, but also Shanhai Pass, which is known as the “First Pass under Heaven,” part of the Great Wall built from the

mid to late Ming Dynasty.

Yu began to love shooting the Great Wall. “The wall is too special. It is different from the natural scenery. The latter is beautiful, but has no story. The ancient wall is like a large puzzle. Photographers cannot help exploring it again and again.”

Yang Yueluan, vice chairman of the China Photographers Association and Chairman of the Hebei Photographers Association, has taken more than 100,000 pictures of the Great Wall over the last 30 years. Yang has been to 13 of China’s 15 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities where the wall can be found.

In April 2009, Yang and the People’s Government of Huailai County of Hebei Province jointly organised a photography exhibition for Jimingyi. In addition to shooting Jimingyi, Yang also paid attention to the nearby Chenjiapu section of the Great Wall. As a wild section of wall, Chenjiapu, which has not seen recent repairs, remained in a weather-worn state: collapsed watchtowers and walls with

weeds and trees, showing a magnificent and dangerous scene. This deeply touched Yang.

Yang began to focus on sections of the Great Wall that can produce a masterpiece. Looking at sections of the wall across the country, Yang changed his focus from the scenery of the wall to its culture, and paid much more attention to exploring and presenting the wall's details, and the connection between its history and reality. In the past, he thought that majestic, towering and precipitous features were the main symbols of the wall. After focusing on its wild sections, Yang felt that the broken, desolate and humble sections represented the reality and culture of the wall.

Yang said that if the Great Wall was a novel, it would consist of many connected stories. When people see the Jinshanling, Jiankou, Badaling and Simatai sections, they are at the climax of the novel. However, like a large book, the wall still has many interesting paragraphs leading up to the climax. People should not ignore these and only focus on the colourful parts. The culture of the wall should cover its entirety, and each section should be treated equally.

### Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained

The wait behind a lens is often long, and the pursuit of perfection requires perseverance. People who love shooting the Great Wall know this. For Wang Qihong, the cost of shooting the wall is much higher than the portrait itself. Wang can only take such time on weekends or legal holidays. The Beijing section of the wall is located in its suburbs. Thus, Wang needs to travel hundreds of km each time, taking an entire weekend. In terms of safety, the wall snakes along mountains, and its natural environment is complex.

These challenges failed to stop Wang. His years of experience gave him the ability to judge weather changes and prevent risks in the wild. In order to wait for a sunrise, a sea of clouds, or rain and snow, sleeping on the Great Wall at night has become part of his everyday life. No matter how hard it is, capturing a satisfactory picture makes it all worth it for Wang.

Wang recalled one Friday in the summer of 2020. In order to shoot the Great Wall amidst the sea of clouds, he went home to prepare his sleeping bag, food and equipment as soon as he got off work. He climbed up a section of the wall in the suburbs of Beijing in the heavy rain around 11 p.m. However, the next two days were overcast, and the scene he hoped for did not appear. Should he leave or stay?

Wang did not give up. He kept waiting for the perfect shot from the watchtower. When he was tired, he would

sleep in his sleeping bag, and when he was hungry, he would eat some food. On the evening of that Sunday, a sudden thunderstorm broke out on the mountain. He set up his camera and waited patiently in the watchtower. By chance, he captured a shocking image he called "The Great Wall under Lightning," making him feel that the trip was worthwhile.

As a professional photographer, Yang Dong believes that there are many kinds of methods for the art of photography. One is to shoot an amazing scene that ordinary people do not often see. Buildings with a long history, such as the Great Wall, can produce wonderful and unique shots in special weather.

In December 2018, Yang wanted to take a picture of the Great Wall under heavy snow. He had been waiting for it at the foot of the Great Wall for more than 10 days. Finally, the day came when the temperature dropped to more than minus 20 degrees Celsius. However, it was so cold that the tablet PC he used to operate his UAV powered off automatically, and the UAV only had enough power for one take-off. If the tablet PC did not work, Yang's days of waiting would be in vain.

"I put the tablet PC directly under my clothes and pressed it against my body. It was like a piece of ice. Twenty minutes later, I felt that I was going to be frozen, but the tablet finally responded." That day, the UAV only flew over the wall for a few minutes, but Yang felt lucky with the images he captured.

There are not only amazing views, but also other interesting factors when it comes to taking pictures of the Great Wall. In order to better understand the wall, Yu Wenjiang began to read many books related to the wall. He learned that most of the wall in Qinhuangdao was built from the mid to late Ming Dynasty and was done at the hand of the famous General Qi Jiguang (1528-1588).

After a rain in August 2020, Yu saw

two rainbows while climbing up the Great Wall. At that moment, he blurted out a line from a poem by General Qi: "Two rainbows span over the top of towering mountains that were created by Mother Nature," describing the scenery the general overlooked the distance from the wall.

"More than 400 years later, I saw a similar scene to the one General Qi viewed from the wall. I felt wonderful, as if I could dialogue with the ancient general; or it was a resonance, as if he was beside me or me beside him."

### Touching Stories Add Beauty to the Wall

"No matter how beautiful the scenery along the Great Wall is, it may be the same or not have too many changes years later. What really makes one feels the vicissitudes over time is the change of people related to the wall," said Yang Dong.

In 2018, Yang participated in the production the documentary film I Love the Great Wall to take photos for 106-year-old Wang Dingguo (1913-2020). Wang, a former female soldier of the Red Army, was one of the founders of The Great Wall Society of China and greatly contributed to protecting its heritage.

More than a year later, Yang sent a photo to Wang who was ill and bedridden. This black and white picture features a beacon tower of the Great Wall under the approaching dark clouds. "It is like smoke signals from a beacon tower during the war in ancient times," said Wang, with a pleased expression when looking at the picture.

Yang said, "Wang Dingguo and Luo Zhewen volunteered to protect the Great Wall without any funds and encountered many difficulties." After the production of the documentary, Yang planned to take pictures of people related to the wall, such as people who participated in the protection of the heritage site. According to Yang, the wall is more beautiful with its stories.

As early as 10 years ago, Yu Wenjiang, who had been shooting the Great Wall throughout the four seasons for many years, felt that it would be tire-

some for him or his viewers if his works only showed the natural scenery along the wall. "With the in-depth understanding of the wall, I would like to know more about the stories of the wall, the spirit symbolised by it and the people who are associated with it."

In 2014, Yu saw a stone tablet on the Great Wall. Its inscription is hard to ascertain due to centuries of erosion from the weather. "At that moment, a theme immediately came into my mind. In a sense, the entire wall has also been eroded by wind and rain," he said. According to Yu, after hundreds of years of weather, as well as the damage caused by vegetation growth, the present-day wall is not the same wall built during the Ming Dynasty. Only the location and appearance of the outline remain the same.

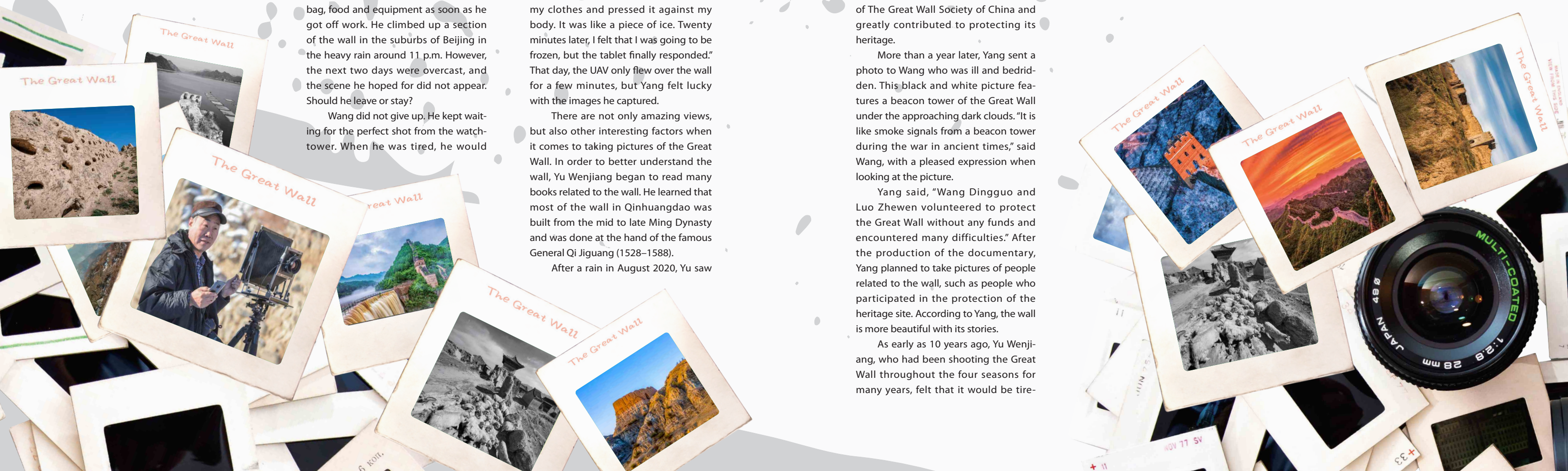
From 2015 onward, Yu began to take photos around this theme. With hundreds of millions of pixels of pictures, Yu shows the details of the Great Wall and the realistic appearance of the ancient wall through some incomplete and weathered watchtowers and bricks.

Such inspiration bursts out from time to time. On an evening in the spring of 2017, Yu sat on the Great Wall until

sunset, and saw villages at the foot of the mountain, which lit up the distance from one place to another. However, the wall where he sat was dark. A new theme sprouted in his mind. The fires burning on beacon towers along the wall were extinguished long ago, but the lights at the foot of the wall still glow.

"I think it was a different scene in ancient times. It was dark at the foot of the mountain, but bright on the Great Wall. The wall was a product of war, but it was actually the starting point of peace. Only because the smoke and fires no longer appear on beacon towers can the lights dotting the foot of the mountain be seen.

Using a continuous shooting mode, he captured a glowing scene at the foot of the mountain that appeared for a period of time along the Great Wall at night. Over the past two years, Yu also planned to take pictures of people related to the wall, such as scholars who study the wall, photographers who shoot it and residents who live at the foot of it. "What I want to express is that the wall is a living building with rich cultural connotations, and it is still vibrant," Yu said.



# Presenting the Spirit of the Great Wall with Oil Paintings

Translated by Wang Wei Edited by Brad Green  
Anne Ruisi Photos courtesy of Tian Fengyin

The Great Wall resembles a silver dragon dancing along the mountains. Over the past 30 years, Tian Fengyin has travelled tens of thousands of kilometres (km) along the wall and created more than 600 oil paintings of the world heritage site. When she was tired, she took a nap in a beacon tower; when she was hungry, she nibbled on a pancake. She once broke two ribs while climbing the wall to paint, but the result was an amazing artistic work of snowflakes falling over the wall.

She has held her own exhibitions in 23 countries, bringing the spirit of the wall and the spirit of the Chinese nation to the world.



At the early hour of 6 a.m. on February 12, 2023, 54-year-old Tian Fengyin slipped out of her home without telling her family, and took the bus to Xizhazi Village at the foot of the Jiankou section of the Great Wall. With an altitude of 1,141 metres (m), Jiankou is the most magnificent section of the wall in Beijing and resembles an arrow nock. Jiankou's most precipitous section is called "Heavenly Ladder," with a steep slope of nearly 80 degrees.

Tian dragged aside the vegetation from the broken wall and slowly stepped on rocks to continue her climb. The snow from the day before left a layer on the mountain, and one could easily slip on the icy ground if not careful. There were still small snowflakes dancing in the sky, and the chilly wind brought a slight sting to the face. After climbing for nearly four hours, Tian took in the beautiful site of Jiankou.

## Falling in Love with the Great Wall at First Sight

Tian Fengyin was born at the foot of the Great Wall in Huairou, Beijing. She encountered the wall for the first time during her junior middle school years. During a summer vacation, she went to visit her aunt's home dozens of km away. Her aunt's daughter and other children in the village often invited her to climb the Dazhenyu section of the Great Wall. They often wore knitted grass hats and played games. Sometimes Tian would draw sketches of the wall in a small book.

Because her family was not well-off, Tian was not willing to let her parents spend extra money on her. During her winter and summer vacations, she earned living expenses and money to purchase supplies by painting murals and advertisements. She could not afford to buy books on painting, but she spent her free time reading about art at the local library.

At the library, she saw a picture of the Great Wall. Without hesitation, she picked up her oil painting box, took the bus and then walked four km to reach Xizhazi Village at the foot of Jiankou. The village did not have any inns or hotels at that time, so she stayed at the house of a local female farmer. When she left the next day, the woman, knowing Tian was just a student, sent her along to paint the Great Wall with four pancakes. "At that time, we still needed vouchers to buy flour. Even though I was a stranger, she gave me flour pancakes."

It was autumn. After climbing the wall, Tian saw golden autumnal leaves covering the ancient city wall inside and outside, and colourful wildflowers dotting the mountains. The winding wall separated and merged the mountains. She fell in love with the wall at first sight.

After setting up her board, Tian began to paint. Being lost in her work, she did not realise the day had turned to night until she could no longer clearly see the canvas. She did not dare to go down the mountain at night, so she walked to a nearby beacon tower to find shelter from the chilly wind. The night wind was cold, leaves were noisily blown around her and unknown birds shrieked. She picked up small stones, which she would throw at wild animals such as wolves, if they came nearby.

This was all Tian remembered. When she woke up, she was lying in the farm-woman's house, where she had stayed the night before. The woman realised that Tian did not return at night, and contacted the village head. The leader took several young men to the mountain to look for her with flashlights. When they found Tian, she had fainted.

Tian said that her second life was given to her by the people of Xizhazi Village at the foot of the Great Wall. "The best way to thank them is to paint and publicise the

section of the wall."

On February 12 of this year, it was dark when Tian returned home. Her brother and mother were angry, and argued that she was no longer young and should not run this risk. Her mother said, "You have a grandchild, but you are still so impulsive. If you fall, you will break your bones!" She often heard words like this, but she will continue to paint the Great Wall. "When you stand there, you share resonance with the Great Wall. It is difficult to describe it in pictures and words. So, when I see the wall now, I still have the impulse to paint it."

## Being Proud of the Great Wall

Tian Fengyin majored in fine art education when she was in college. After graduation, she came to Huairou to teach in a junior middle school and became its only fine art teacher.

Here, Tian saw that some of the children were skilled at painting. However, learning fine art was expensive at that time. Since the school could not provide funds to support her, Tian established her own art group to give free painting classes to school children at nights and on weekends.

In the early 1990s, there was no shop selling sketch paper throughout all of Huairou. Tian took the bus to an art store opposite the National Art Museum of China in central Beijing to buy such paper. It took an entire day to commute back and forth to buy the supplies. The sketch paper, as well as pencils, gouaches and pigments, often weighed up to 35 kilograms. She carried a bundle on her shoulder and a bundle in her hand.

The students did not let her down. In her art group, more than 200 students were admitted to secondary art schools. Her students' works frequently stood out



in the Huairou Primary and Secondary School Students' Calligraphy, Fine Art and Photography Contest.

She also regularly gave free lectures to children living in the mountainous areas and led them to participate in competitions. Some parents did not understand why their children should study fine art when they were not doing well in their main courses. For this, Tian visited them personally to explain their children's artistic talents and potential.

Schools in the depths of the mountains provided Tian with lists of children who loved studying fine art. Some children came to her because they admired her fame. Among students in her after-school fine art class, one-third of the children attended free of charge. Even the supplies they needed for painting were also free and provided by Tian. Many of these children were later admitted to art colleges, some of which have become designers or fine art teachers themselves, continuing to follow Tian's path.

For 2023, Tian has even more plans. She hopes that she will lead more painters to the Great Wall and hold more lectures. "I plan to organise 20 activities for teenagers at Tian Fengyin Great Wall Art Museum this year so that they can draw the wall and feel proud of it."

### Showing the Spirit of China by Depicting the Great Wall

When Tian was in school, some suspected that the thin girl would have the ability to hike and paint the Great Wall. Climbing and painting the wall is hard work, but Tian has persisted for 30 years.

From an artistic viewpoint, it is rather difficult to depict the Great Wall. "Few people dare to depict the wall as a lifetime theme because it means one is likely to fail in one's art field. However, my love for the wall made me choose it."

From 2014 to 2017, she travelled and sketched all the way from Shanhai Pass in the easternmost section of the Great Wall in Hebei Province to Jiayu Pass in western China's Gansu Province. During the process, Tian drew more than 100 sketches, took numerous photos and finally gathered them into a massive oil painting of the wall. Her painting, "Soul of China," has a height of 2.3 m and a length of 18 m. On April 1, 2017, when the painting was hung in the exhibition hall of Tian Fengyin Great Wall Art Museum, she cried with excitement.

The Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games was held simultaneously in Beijing and Hebei Province's Zhangjiakou. In order to welcome the Winter Olympics, Tian spent two years completing "The Great Wall: Spirit

of China," with a height of 2.62 m and a length of 24 m. The painting covers the Simatai and Jiankou sections of the wall in Beijing, as well as Shanhai Pass and the Dajingmen, Jinshanling and Chongli sections in Hebei.

"I think the Great Wall is a symbol of the spirit of the Chinese nation and a bond of friendship between China and the rest of the world. The Olympic spirit and the Great Wall spirit are integrated together, presenting a friendship song of 'walking to the future together' and also a friendship song of world peace," said Tian.

In 2022, Tian visited the Jinshanling, Badaling and Mutianyu sections of the Great Wall many times. She feels that her understanding of the wall has changed. In the past, she focused on realism, depicting the history and ups and downs of the wall. Nowadays, her works are more colourful, youthful and energetic.

"For a long time, I only considered the Great Wall as ruins, but later I understood that it is a spiritual symbol that connects ancient and modern times." Tian felt that the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress encouraged her and made her understand the spirit of the Chinese nation more thoroughly. "The Great Wall presents not only the strength of national unity, but also a strong and unyielding national spirit"



### Going Global to Present the Great Wall

In 2005, Tian Fengyin received a call from *China Pictorial*. The press outlet told her that Alfred Gilder, president of an artist association in France, saw her paintings in the magazine and sent an invitation through the Chinese Embassy in Paris, hoping that she could hold an exhibition in France.

Since her first exhibition held in France, Tian has travelled the globe exhibiting her paintings of the Great Wall. In order to help people from around the world learn more about the wall and the Chinese people, she often tells them its origin and stories.

"The construction of the Great Wall took thousands of years to complete, showing that the Chinese nation is a united and upward family. Our ancestors built it for defence rather than aggression. Chinese people have long loved world peace in our hearts. There were many post stations built at the passes and fortresses along the wall for trade activities in ancient times, reflecting that we have been a hospitable and

courteous people," explained Tian.

Through the exhibitions, many international friends have come to a new understanding of the Great Wall and of China. Christine Lagarde, French minister of Economy, Finance and Industry, praised Tian as a friendly envoy between Chinese and French people. Alfred Gilder praised Tian as the "second Monet."

In 2010, Alfred Gilder told Tian that he would write a biography for her, hoping that all young French artists could learn from her. In May 2010, he visited Beijing and met Tian during springtime in Yushuidong Village in Huairou, Tian's birthplace. Emerald green mountains were blurred in the drizzle, and Gilder was moved. "Tian, I know why you want to paint—because you live in a fairyland."

Tian has been invited to hold 47 exhibitions of her Great Wall paintings in 23 countries and at the United Nations. Her paintings of the wall have been recognised by many domestic and foreign audiences. In addition, her works were presented to heads of state and distinguished guests as a national gift during APEC China 2014.

During Lunar New Year 2023, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism presented 10 routes of attractions for tourists to enjoy along the sections of the Great Wall in Beijing. The sections of the Great Wall in Beijing total 400 kilometres in length, and pass through the city's Mentougou, Changping, Yanqing, Huairou, Miyun and Pinggu districts. Come to Beijing and enjoy the magnificent scenery of the Great Wall along the 10 routes to learn about the history of the world heritage site and feel its unique charm.



Sections of the Great Wall in Beijing

There are 15 sections of the Great Wall in Mentougou District, with a total length of over 10 kilometres (km), accounting for about 2 percent of the wall's total length within Beijing's city limits. Mentougou's sections have 19 single buildings, 2 fortresses and 6 related facilities.

The earliest Great Wall section in Mentougou was built during the Northern Qi Dynasty (AD 550–577), and was later reinforced and added with facilities many times during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). The sections that remain today are dominated by the remains of the Ming-era Great Wall, as well as a small number of Northern Qi sections.

Among them, the east-west Dongling Mountain section, located in Jiangshuihe Village, is the highest in Beijing, with an elevation of 2,303 metres (m). The wall is built with stones. Mentougou's sections do not have winding walls like the sections in five other districts. They mainly dot the towns of Qingshui, Zhaitang, and Yanchi.

Mentougou District

This village was built during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), featuring a layout of harmony between man and nature.  
Location: Zhaitang Town, Mentougou District

爨底下村  
Cuandixia Village

These roads served commercial, military and pilgrimage purposes in ancient times.  
Location: Throughout Mentougou District

京西古道  
Jingxi Ancient Roads

First built in AD 307, Tanzhe Temple is the earliest one of this type after Buddhism was introduced into Beijing.  
Location: Tanzhe Mountain, Mentougou District

潭柘寺  
Tanzhe Temple



The Great Wall in Changping District has two sections built during the Northern Qi Dynasty, one Ming section and five other fortresses.

Changping features the longest Northern Qi-era section of the Great Wall in Beijing. The two Northern Qi sections are Mapaoquan and Dalinggou. In addition, there are two remains of the Northern Qi beacon towers in the north of Xinzhuang Village, Yanshou Town. The Ming-era Great Wall, known as the Gaolong section, has a total length of 2,400 m, including 14 sections of walls, 14 watchtowers and 3 beacon towers. The five fortresses are Shangguancheng, Juyong Pass, Nankoucheng, Baiyangcheng and Changyucheng.

In addition, the length of the Northern Qi section in Mapaoquan is 23.5 km, which is the longest, most continuous and most complete preserved site built during the Ming Dynasty in Beijing

Changping District

In ancient times, according to their status, pagodas were built for dead monks in Fahua Buddhist Temple and at the foot of Yinshan Mountain. There are 17 such surviving pagodas today.  
Location: Xingshou Town, Changping District

银山塔林

Yinshan Pagoda Forest

The scenic area features clear and quality springs flowing throughout the year.  
Location: Northwest of Liucun Town, Changping District

白羊沟

Baiyanggou

Thirteen emperors and their empresses from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) were buried in this imperial tomb cluster.  
Location: Tianshou Mountain, Changping District

十三陵

Ming Tombs

Yanqing District is home to sections of the Great Wall built during the Northern Qi and Ming dynasties. There are 109 sections of walls (one Northern Qi section and 108 Ming sections, with a total length of more than 170 km.

When it comes to the Great Wall of China, people may first think of the Badaling section. The section was opened to the public in 1958. It is the first scenic area of the Ming-era Great Wall in China to receive sightseers from home and abroad. In 1987, Badaling was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List as a representative section of the Great Wall of China.

In addition, the Huajiyao section, facing west of the Badaling section of the Great Wall, has a diamond-shaped watchtower with four openings. It is 11.6 m long from east to west and 8.9 m wide from south to north. The central load-bearing structure has collapsed, but a wall remains on the top.

Yanqing District

Ancient people dug stone grottos as their dwellings on precipitous cliffs in today's Yanqing. Location: Zhangshanying Town, Yanqing District

古崖居  
Guyajiu Caves

The geopark features not only a unique geological structure landscape, but also rare dinosaur footprints. Location: the intersection of Liugan Road and Luanchi Road, Yanqing District

延庆世界地质公园  
Yanqing World Geopark

The scenic area is 112 li (one li equals 500 metres) long, with a variety of landscapes, which can rival other famous attractions throughout the country. Location: Qianjiadian Town, Yanqing District

百里山水画廊  
100 Li Landscape Gallery



The Great Wall in Huairou is located in the district's southern area. The majority of the sections of Huairou were built during the Ming Dynasty. In addition, it has two sections of the wall built during the Northern Qi Dynasty.

The Great Wall in Huairou is famous for its precipitousness and grandeur. The most beautiful essence of the sections in Huairou run from "Beijing Knot," "Yingfeidaoyang," "Heavenly Ladder" and "Bull Horn's Edge" to Mutianyu, Qiliankou, Shentangyu and Hefangkou passes.

The Mutianyu section is the highlight of the Great Wall in Huairou. It has received many heads of state since Bob Hawke (1929–2019), prime minister of Australia, climbed the wall in 1985. In recent years, 40 percent of its sightseers have come from overseas.

Huairou District

First built in AD 338, the temple has been commonly recognised by the name Hongluo because of a beautiful legend of the Hongluo (Red Conch) Fairy. Location: Hongluo Mountain, Huairou District

Hongluo Temple

红螺寺

The ruins have a high terrain. Many fragments of bricks from the Qin Dynasty and tiles from the Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 220) have been found among the ruins. Location: Beifang Town, Huairou District

Ancient Yuyang City Ruins

古渔阳城遗址

The scenic area boasts its Buddhist resources, as well as a good environment with a forest and a two-kilometre-long river. Location: Huaibei Town, Huairou District

石门山

Shimen Mountain



The scenic area, located in a valley, with a total length of 4 kilometres and a vertical drop of 220 metres, has 18 pools with various shapes and sights. Location: Shicheng Town, Miyun District

Heilong Pool Scenic Area

黑龙潭

There are more than 20 inscriptions carved on the stone walls in a hill to the north of Miyun District. In 1987, experts identified that some of them are the scripts of ethnic minorities. Location: 65 kilometres north of Miyun District

Stone Carvings Featuring Scripts of Ethnic Minorities

番字牌石刻

As an important pass along the Great Wall, the fortress was built along the mountain, with a more than 6,000-metre-long wall around the fortress and one gate on each of its east, south and west walls. Location: Caojiayu Village, Miyun District

Caojiayu Yingcheng Ruins


曹家路营城遗址

The outline of the sections in Miyun resembles the Chinese character “几,” spanning 11 of its 17 towns. There are 147 sections of the wall in Miyun, including 3 Northern Qi sections. The total length of the sections of the wall in Miyun is about 182 km.

As one of the highlights of the Ming-era sections of the Great Wall, the sections in Miyun are characterised by dense watchtowers with different styles. Taking the lower section of Gubeikou as an example, there are 84 watchtowers on the 55 sections of the wall.

The highlight of the wall in Miyun is the Simatai section, which was built along extremely steep mountains. Between Fairy Tower and Wangjing Tower is a steep cliff on one side of the ridge. The stone walls on one side are arranged in the shape of the Chinese character “弓,” featuring dense loopholes.

Miyun District



The scenic area is surrounded by water on three sides and green mountains. Its attractions include Huguang Pagoda and Pavilion for Observing the Lake.  
Location: Jinhaihu Town, Pinggu District

Jinhai Lake

金海湖

The scenic area boasts mountains, valleys, lakes and forest. One of its highlights is an aerial cableway connecting the Grand Valley and Jingtai Mountain, with a vertical drop of up to 1,000 metres.  
Location: Shandongzhuang Town, Pinggu District

Western Beijing Grand Valley

京东大峡谷

Developed from the geological strata 1.5 billion years ago, stalactites with various shapes can be observed in the cave. They resemble towers, flowers and figures, leading visitors to experience a unique underground fairyland.  
Location: East of Heidouyu Village, Pinggu County

Western Beijing Karst Cave

京东大溶洞

The total length of the Great Wall in Pinggu District is 53.67 km. Pinggu has one Northern Qi and 123 Ming sections of the Great Wall, with a total length of more than 50 km.

Most of the Ming sections in Pinggu run along high and steep mountains and ridges, protecting the plains in the south and belonging to the eastern defence zone of the capital city during the Ming Dynasty. The Northern Qi section built with stones in Pinggu is located inside the Ming Great Wall.

The highlights of the wall in Pinggu include the Jiangjungan section demonstration park, Hongshimen and Huangsongyu sections demonstration belts, Zhangzuoli, Huangsongyu passes and other characteristic demonstration points, as well as Huangsongyu National Mine Park, two other cultural and tourism integration areas and Heishuiwan Village.

Pinggu District

# Mutianyu

## An International Neighbourhood

Translated by Zhang Hongpeng Edited by Brad Green, Anne Ruisi  
Photos by Wang Zicheng, Wang Yuanzheng, Yin Yafei

# Village



Mutianyu Village, at the foot of the Great Wall in Huairou District, is nestled in a luxuriant pine forest. In late January, the village was adorned with festive red decorations in celebration of the Chinese New Year. Many visitors took photos and bought goods at shops along the roads in the village. Sometimes, groups of foreigners could be spotted walking out of a traditional Beijing-style grey-brick residence.

When the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall opened to the public in 1988, this small village began to accommodate tourists and sell souvenirs. Afterwards, many foreigners came to build businesses and rent residences there. Some of them have renovated local residences and settled down. They added large glass windows to dwellings which were built with grey bricks and tile roofs. Though the buildings have

been given certain Western architectural elements, their original architectural style remains.

Currently, Mutianyu Village has over 170 households and more than 50 guesthouses. A commercial street in the village is lined with over 200 stalls. Owners of these stalls speak fluent English. While touting exquisite handiwork to foreign tourists, they introduce their hometown and the Great Wall.

### An Attraction to Foreign Residents

After Chinese New Year, the road leading to Mutianyu Village was flanked by piles of snow. This village is surrounded by mountains in all four directions. Only its western side is a gateway to the outside world. A narrow passage starts from the entrance and leads to the Great Wall. Locals said that the village takes the shape of a gourd. Legend has it that the village used to be a military camp. Currently, it is dotted with residences and guesthouses.

The Mutianyu section of the Great Wall is connected with Juyong Pass in Changping District in the west and Gubeikou in Miyun District in the east, and it is part of the Huanghuazhen section, which is considered the northern gateway of Beijing. In ancient times, the Mutianyu section was regarded as a defence system for the city of Beijing and the nearby imperial tombs.

When telling stories of Mutianyu Village and the Great Wall, Li Fengyun and Li Fengshu, two village leaders, mentioned an American named Jim Spear. When Spear came to Mutianyu Village for the first time in March 1986, he was captivated by the local natural scenery and cultural monuments, and decided to live permanently in the village.

Spear hoped to find a dwelling at the foot of the Great Wall. When he met Li Fengquan, who was selling T-shirts, they had a chat. Li tried to help Spear find a residence to rent. In 2005, Spear quit his job in the urban area and moved to the village. He renovated a shabby courtyard residence into a villa with a lawn and garden. From the main room, the Great Wall can be viewed.

According to Li Fengshu, over 20 foreign families from 10 countries have rented residences and settled in the village, bringing funds and design ideas along with them. Since the Great Wall opened to the public in 1988, the hospitality industry and tourism product sales have contributed to the increased income of residents of Mutianyu Village.

Currently, Mutianyu Village has over 170 households and more than 550 residents. The small village is distinguished by the harmonious coexistence of tradi-

tional courtyard residences and yellow Western-style multi-storeyed houses. Strolling along the smooth cement roads in the village, people can frequently see foreign visitors chatting with local villagers. Young people in trendy apparel can be spotted relaxing in small parks.

After Spear settled in the village, many other expatriates came there to rent unoccupied houses. Since then, the village has become an international neighbourhood.

### Welcome to Mutianyu Village

When 60-year-old Wen Qingxia saw two international guests approaching her stall, she greeted them in fluent English, "Welcome to Mutianyu Village. Our shirts are on sale." In the commercial street of the village are over 200 stalls, which sell cultural and creative products, such as panda t-shirts, postcards and models of the Great Wall.

In winter, the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall receives fewer visitors. In the evening, most tourists prepare to return home. At 4:30 p.m. on January 18, most stalls had closed, but Wen Qingxia was still busy placing goods around her shop. She said that it was her first business day after Spring Festival, so she

wanted to work longer than usual.

These stalls are actually storefronts, and most are designed in the same form. Every store covers about 10 square metres. Almost all households of the village have their own stores there. As foreign visitors frequently come to the village, operators of the stores use fluent English to communicate with them. These stores are owned by Mutianyu Village, and villagers do not need to pay rent for them.

The weather was still cold in Mutianyu Village after Spring Festival. Snow along the commercial street had not yet thawed. However, many t-shirts with panda and Great Wall designs were on sale in Wen's store. She said that selling summer clothing could still meet some consumers' needs. Some tourists would like to buy t-shirts in winter, as their price was lower than that in summer.

In addition to t-shirts, goods on sale in the stores include animal hoodies, Chinese zodiac figurines, postcards with various motifs, comics, thread-bound books, wooden swords, pottery bowls and porcelain vases, as well as bronze models of the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and the famous Terra-cotta Warriors.

Wen said, "As many foreigners visit Mutianyu Village, we not only sell Great Wall-themed cultural products, but also display traditional handicrafts



from across the country. Goods at these stalls are from Beijing's tourism product wholesale markets. International friends like them."

After having a granddaughter, Yang Lihong, who was born in 1970, stopped selling goods on the commercial street. Beginning to sell goods in the village in 1993, Yang was an outstanding salesperson. After several years of doing business with foreigners, she could speak English fluently. Thanks to her warmth and outgoing personality, many foreign customers became her regular customers, and she even regarded them as friends. They often introduced their friends to her.

Yang said, "A foreigner, who let me call him Old Ye, is very funny. When he visited our village in the 1990s, he told me that he loved the landscapes here. However, in those days, my English was not good enough to fully understand his meaning. Several years later, he came to our village once again and bought goods at my stall. This time, my English had made some progress, so we had a longer chat. I told him about the history and customs of our village. He listened carefully to me."

Yang recalled that most villagers of her age had only received a junior middle school education. They studied English in school as children, but had forgotten it as they grew up. However, when they sold goods, they studied English once again and could communi-

cate simply with foreigners. The villagers' committee has organised activities to encourage locals to learn English.

In the village, people can purchase local specialty foods. The 74-year-old He Jinli often advertised local pears, "Our Mutianyu pears are juicy and taste as sweet as honey."

### Villagers' Residences Turned into Themed Guesthouses

Yang Lihong's home is a three-storeyed building with large windows. Sitting in a woven rocking chair atop the building, one can see the meandering Great Wall rolling along the mountains. In winter, pine forests in the mountains remain green and lush. The Great Wall looks spectacular and older in contrast to the green pines.

Yang's husband, Liu Fengdong, was born in 1968. In earlier years, Liu sold cold drinks and sweet potatoes in the Great Wall scenic area. He said that villagers have done business for decades, so they are friendly and welcoming to guests. Liu Fengdong's father, Liu Dewang, opened the first guesthouse in the village in the 1990s.

At that time, Liu Dewang's establishment of the guesthouse was a significant event. He renovated all of his five wing rooms into a guesthouse to accommodate visitors. However, as the Mutianyu

section of the Great Wall had not been developed for long, his guesthouse did not quickly gain popularity. Only a few tourists visited the village, so the guesthouse did not receive many customers. According to Liu Fengdong, the daily cost of a room was only 10 yuan in those days. In one entire tourism season, his guesthouse may only earn around 100 yuan.

Villagers of Mutianyu Village earned their livings by selling handicrafts, and for a long time, were not interested in turning their homes into guesthouses. In 2018, Liu Fengdong and his wife invested over two million yuan in building a multi-storeyed building on their property. Liu said that when they constructed the building, they intended at first to only meet their family's residential needs. When their son got married and had a son and a daughter, their family needed more rooms.

Standing on the balcony of Liu Fengdong's home, one can take in a panoramic view of guesthouses along the main street in the village. Many guesthouses are identified by noticeable signs. After the Liu family's new building was completed in 2018, Liu Fengdong wanted to open a guesthouse there. On the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar in 2019, the guesthouse opened its doors.

Liu Fengdong and his wife jointly decorated the rooms. After carefully ob-

serving tourists in the village, they found that most tourists came there together with their families, so they built rooms at the second and third floors as family rooms. Some rooms were equipped with tatami-style beds to better serve elderly people. Some rooms' wallpapers had cartoons to delight children. They also named guest rooms after the 24 solar terms. Yang Lihong said, "As there are many boutique guesthouses and foreign tourists in our village, we think that our guesthouse should have an elegant aura and reflect high aesthetic value."

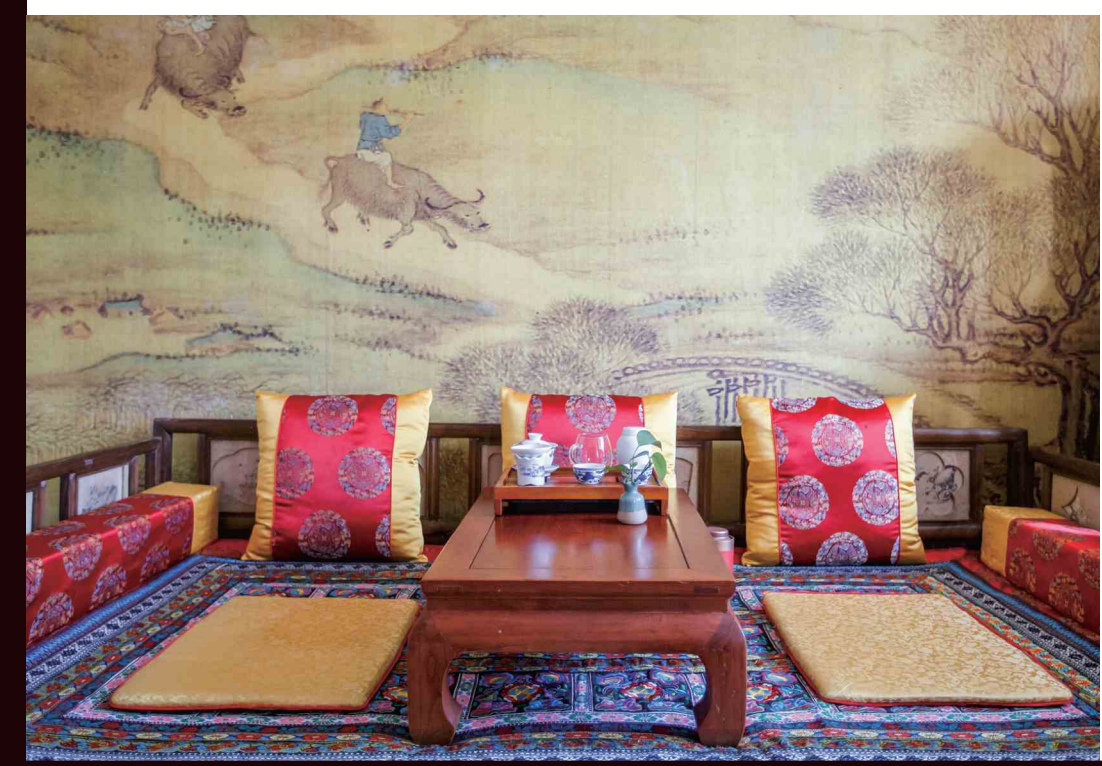
More guesthouses are under construction in the village. On the afternoon of January 28, some houses were undergoing exterior renovations. One guest house owner stated that she wanted to make her house trendy to attract patrons. According to statistics, public holidays in the first half of a year are often the peak tourist season for the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall. During the holidays, both sides of roads in Mutianyu Village are often packed with private cars, and guesthouses cannot meet tourists' demands. The large market demand enables more villagers to increase their income.

There are many distinct guesthouses in the village. Zhang Fengjuan runs two traditional Chinese courtyard guesthouses there. Wind chimes hang from chestnut trees in the courtyards. In winter, when snow falls, these chimes send out beautiful sounds with the breeze. The village is distinguished by various wooden rooms, exquisite wooden furniture, tie-dyed fabrics, century-old trees, green stones and surrounding pine forests.

### Stories about the Great Wall

When Li Fengshu described Mutianyu Village to tourists, he often emphasised the village's main difference from others of its kind: the village remains green in winter. Although this village has little arable land, it features lush vegetation and luxuriant pine forests. In the village, people can admire the Great Wall running amidst mountains.

Li Fengshu recalled that prior to the 1980s, he and his childhood



friends often went to the Great Wall to play the game hide-and-seek and run races. The Great Wall has many watchtowers, where Li and his friends played together. "No one dared to damage the Great Wall. We did not vandalise the wall, as our parents taught us to protect it," said Li.

Li Fengyun once referred to historical documents to find the relations between Mutianyu Village's name and Mutiangu Pass. Mutianyu Fort was a peripheral structure of Mutiangu Pass, and was built around the year 1404. The fort was built according to local folklore. It was over 100 metres (m) from north to south and more than 80 m from east to west. Its main gate faced south. The fort was home to over 100 soldiers. It was the base camp of garrisons at the local section of the Great Wall.

A plaque with an inscription in Chinese characters reading "mu tian gu guan," meaning "Mutiangu Pass," is on display in the Mutianyu Great Wall Relics Exhibit Hall. In ancient times, the character "gu" on the plaque also was pronounced "yu," so Mutianyu Village's

name was derived from Mutiangu Pass.

Li Fengyun said with a smile, "Our ancestors might be soldiers defending the Great Wall." He recalled a story that he often heard as a child. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), an officer made a mistake while constructing the Great Wall, so he was severely punished by the imperial court. This story is popular in the village. Villagers often say that every story of the Great Wall carries importance.

There is a section on the eastern side of the Great Wall that stretches about 1,000 m south-eastwards, but suddenly ends at a magnificent watchtower. According to Li, this is the section that the officer constructed wrongly and was later punished for.

Currently, this section is characterised by surrounding lush pine forests. Li Fengyun said that villagers planted ecological forests of pines in the 1980s. The forests cover an area of about 100 hectares, and are maintained annually by villagers. Li said that villagers planted trees there to protect the Great Wall from the winds and sandstorms.



# Changyucheng Village

## A Small Village Known for its Theatrical Performances

Translated by Zhang Hongpeng Edited by Brad Green,  
Anne Ruisi Photos by Chen Jie, Li Xiaoyin



In the border area between Changping District in Beijing and Huailai County in Hebei Province is an ordinary old village, Changyucheng, which presents two different facets in winter and summer. In winter, the weather is cold, and strong winds often hit the village. In summer, the village features lush vegetation and is full of

blooming flowers. Tourists call it the "Little Tibet in the Suburbs of Beijing."

Likewise, the residents of Changyucheng Village, mostly elderly and friendly, can show two sides. In the daytime, they occasionally sit together in public spaces in the village to chat or play Chinese chess. They recount various stories and the history

of the village to visitors. But in the evening, they step on the stage to perform ancient plays. When playing roles in plays, their eyes sparkle with excitement. In the plays they perform, many lines are related to the history of the Great Wall. The village of Changyucheng emerged due to its proximity to the Great Wall.



### Defensive Facilities in a Valley

Changyucheng Village stands by a meandering road amidst mountains to the west of the Beijing–Chongli Expressway. In late January, only a few vehicles could be spotted on the road. This region is often greeted with gale winds in winter.

According to senior residents, Changyucheng Village does not see its most bustling period in winter or early spring. Plants in the village do not turn green at that time. The centuries-old elm tree in the village is still leafless.

The grey brick walls and stone pavements in the village gleam in the cold light. In the east of the village are ruins of a section of the Great Wall. In ancient times, Changyucheng Village was a border fortress.

Changyucheng Village was first built in 1520 as a fortress for the Great Wall during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). The village is nestled between two valleys in the northern extension of the Taihang Mountains. In the past, its walls were connected with the Great Wall, making it an important gateway

from Yanhuai Basin to Beijing. It served as a strategic pass to support Beijing's defence system. During the Ming and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, it functioned as the northwest gateway to Beijing. Changyucheng, Nankoucheng, Juyong Pass, Chadaocheng, Shanguancheng, Huanghuacheng and Gubeikou formed an over 100-kilometre defence system of Beijing.

During the late and mid-Ming Dynasty, Changyucheng was controlled by local garrisons, witnessing many ethnic conflicts in those days. After the Qing army entered Shanhai Pass and captured Beijing, the Qing Dynasty was established and the ethnic groups in northern and southern China achieved reconciliation. Therefore, the Great Wall-based military defence system lost its original role and Changyucheng turned into a living quarter for the army. Afterwards, the fortress gradually became a village.

### Two Sections of the Village

Currently, a stone wall in the eastern village has been dilapidated and abandoned, but its original magnificence can

still be observed.

According to *Annals of Xiguan*, the fortress at Changyucheng was built over a mountain from east to west in 1520. In another history book, *Annals of Changping Prefecture during the Guangxu Period (1875–1908)*, the Changyucheng fortress featured 1 terrace, 32 watchtowers and 2 gates. There was a citadel in the fortress. The citadel was built in 1573 and called Changyuxincheng, which has become today's new section of the village. The other parts apart from the citadel constitute the old section of the village. The existing Changyucheng is a collective name for the new and old sections.

Elderly people in the village said that Changyucheng was indeed a real fortress. It was built in the opening of a valley and could defend two mountains. The designer of the fortress used the local geographical advantages and built stone walls on the southern and northern sides to connect the south and north gates. Climbing over a ridge, people could reach Yanhuai Basin, through which Beijing could easily be accessed. To defend Beijing, the Ming Dynasty established a fortress there.





At the foot of the east mountain is a seasonal river running through Changyucheng, and there is a sluice gate in the village. To prevent floods from striking the village, a north-south stone wall was built along the waterway outside the north gate. The design of Changyucheng makes the village a sophisticated defensive facility.

Currently, over 100 households live in Changyucheng Village. The population in the new section is remarkably larger than that of the old section. Century-old houses in the village are made of grey bricks and tile roofs. All buildings face south. The structures are typical of Beijing's traditional siheyuan (courtyard residences).

### Distinctive Local Theatrical Performances

Changyucheng Village is home to government offices, temples and schools. There are four temples, among which Yongxing Temple is the largest.

This restored temple is located on a terrace in the western village. Currently, no statues of deities are enshrined in the temple. The old elm tree in front of the temple is a witness to the long history of the village.

In the backyard of the temple is an old stage on the western side. This stage is still used for theatrical performances today. Changyucheng Village has the only folk troupe in Changping District. During Chinese New Year or other important festivals, the troupe performs plays on the stage in the temple. The theatrical performances in the village are known as Changyucheng Shanbangzi Opera. According to historical documents, Shanbangzi Opera dates back more than 300 years. At that time, performers from Shanxi, Shaanxi and Hebei provinces introduced their regional tunes to the village. These tunes were integrated to become today's Shanbangzi Opera, which features high notes.

Changyucheng Shanbangzi Opera enjoyed widespread popularity in the

past. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the local troupe was frequently invited to perform in Beijing and Hebei. In those days, the troupe experienced its heyday and supported the lives of many villagers. The old stage in the village was a centre of performing arts among nearby villages. When the theatrical performances were thriving in the village, many families sent their children to learn performance techniques from the troupe. According to elderly people in the village, there were over 70 plays of Shanbangzi Opera at its peak.

The opera is often performed in the evening. When the stage is lit up, it resembles a shining piece of jade nestled in the mountain. When simple villagers apply facial makeup, they become professional performers. Whether there are many or only a few in the audience, performers carefully play their roles on the stage.

In August 2020, Changyucheng Shanbangzi Opera was added to the list

of the fifth group of Changping District's intangible cultural heritage items, a nomination effort that took the village 16 years to accomplish. During the nomination process, many performers retired. Several years ago, some young people were recruited into the troupe as new performers.

Senior performers believe that the transmission of the opera variety should depend on its recognition as an intangible cultural heritage item as well as young people's engagement.

### A Living Model of the Great Wall Culture

In addition to Shanbangzi Opera, there are many legends and stories in Changyucheng Village. According to a popular story told among local elderly people, many bandits occupied a mountain near the village during the Song (AD 960–1279) and Liao (AD 916–1125) dynasties. To wipe out these bandits, the central government of the Song Dynasty

dispatched the well-known general Yang Yanzhao (AD 958–1014), also known as Yang Liulang. Yang established a military camp, known as Liulang City, at the location of the village. Currently, the site of Liulang City can be seen in the village. At the site is a terrace, where the general gave military orders.

Perhaps every old village in China has its own impressive legends, but the stories of Changyucheng Village as a fortress in ancient times are related to its important military operations.

In actuality, the village has only seen peace for around 80 years. In 1937, the Nankou Battle broke out, and Changyucheng was a battlefield. Over the following eight years, most buildings in the village were destroyed. Senior residents said that adult men carried stretchers to transport wounded soldiers and women provided logistical support during times of battle.

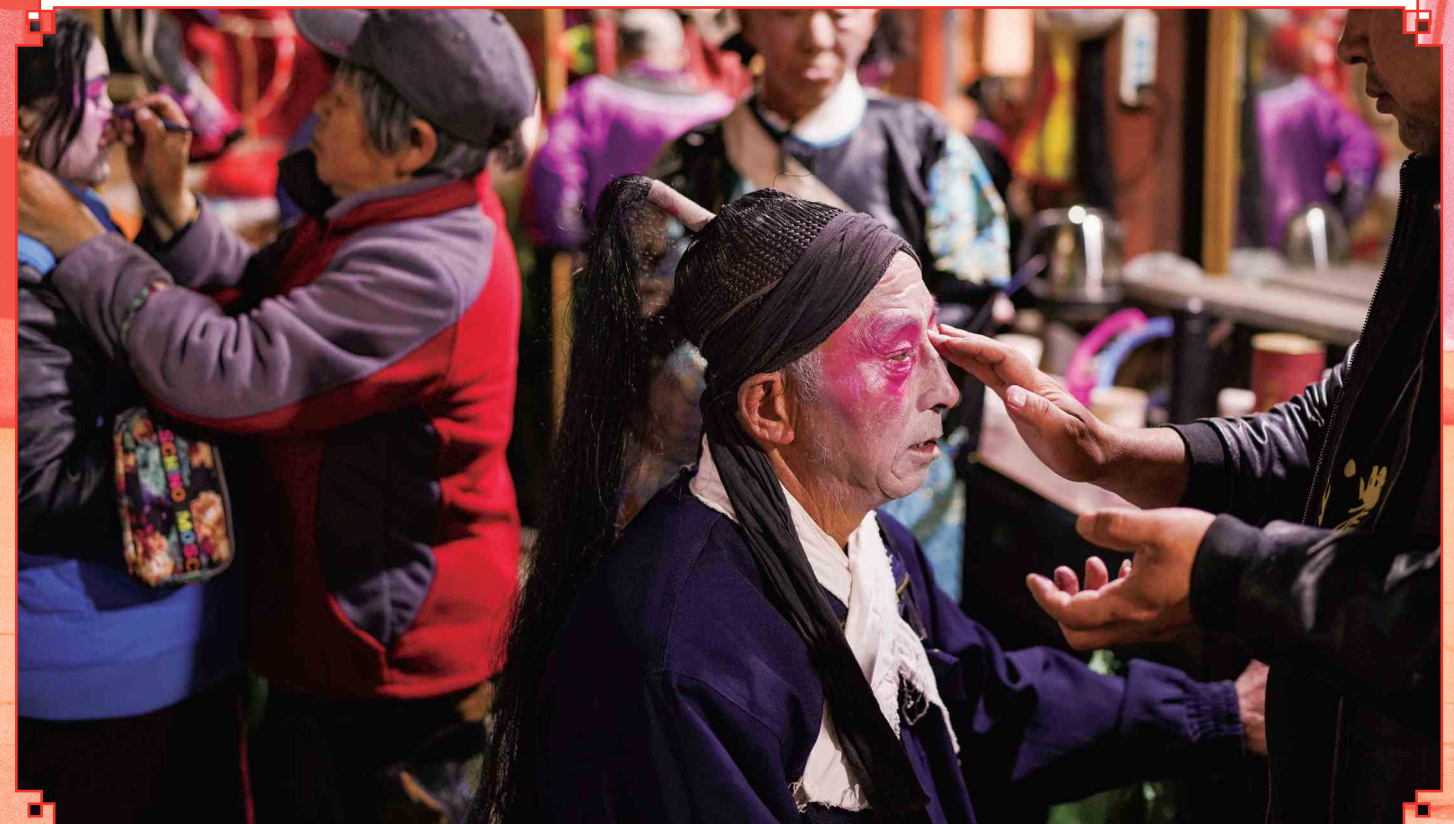
Currently, Changyucheng Village is one of the first 44 municipal-level traditional villages in Beijing, and it is

recognised as one of the most beautiful villages in the city. The original appearance of the village and traditional customs have been retained, and villagers make every effort to protect the village as a living model of the Great Wall culture.

On fine days, some villagers stand by the entrance of the village to show the way to the Great Wall to tourists. Tourists can view the Great Wall, local windmills and the Changyucheng Reservoir.

Elderly people in the village say that the village is most vibrant during the transition from spring to summer. At that time, the village and surrounding mountains are blanketed with green vegetation, and the centuries-old elm tree provides a large area of shade with its canopy.

Changyucheng Village was hidden among the mountains in ancient times. Today, it has become a popular destination for a pleasurable getaway in the suburbs of Beijing.



# Portraying the Great Wall

In the eyes of many foreign illustrators, the Great Wall represents the East, China and Beijing.



