



Lake Baiyangdian

Baoding boasts culture, natural beauty

By Liu Xiang

Situated between the three major metropolises of Beijing, Tianjin and Shijiazhuang, Baoding in North China's Hebei Province enjoys a good geographic location and transportation network.

Known as "the south gate of the capital," the city is only 140 km south of Beijing. It takes just one-and-a-half hours to reach Baoding by bus from Beijing on the Beijing-Zhuhai Expressway.

Baoding covers an area of 22,000 sq km, with a total population of 11 million.

Serving as Hebei Province's political center for a long period in history, Baoding is rich in cultural relics.

One third of the city's territory lies on the Taihang Mountains in the west, one third on the eastern plain area and the other third on the hilly land in between.

As a result, the city has beautiful sceneries of green mountains, abundant forests and clean lakes.

It has one national AAAAA scenic spot, six AAAA scenic spots, two world geoparks, three national geoparks, four national forest parks and one national key scenic spot.

Major attractions include:

Western Qing Tombs

It is a necropolis that incorporates four royal mausoleums where 78 royal members are buried, including four emperors of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and their empresses, imperial concubines, princes and princesses, as well as other royal servants.

It lies at the foot of

Yongning Mountain in the north, about 15 km west of Yi County.

Covering an area of about 800 sq km, it is surrounded by over 20,000 ancient pines.

With enthralling scenery, high cultural value, delicate craftwork and designs, it has proved to be a popular location for tourists from home and abroad.

It became a UNESCO world cultural heritage site in 2000.

Lake Baiyangdian

As a national AAAAA scenic spot, Lake Baiyangdian is a popular tourist attraction with peaceful water scenes and vast lotus gardens.

Covering a total area of 366 sq km, it is the largest natural freshwater lake in the North China Plain, consisting of 147 shallow lakes and water-filled depressions.

The lake is home to multiple

varieties of fish, wild geese, duck, birds as well as a vast number of lotus, ti plants, and other plants.

the highest-ranking local official whose jurisdiction covered today's Hebei province, Beijing and Tianjin municipalities and parts of Shandong, Shanxi, Henan, Inner Mongolia and Liaoning.

As a south-facing compound, the office's gate, middle gate, main halls, side halls, official residence and main rooms are built on a central axis.

Ye San Po Valley

Located in Laishui County, the Ye San Po Valley is a national key scenic spot and part of the Fangshan-Shidu World Geopark.

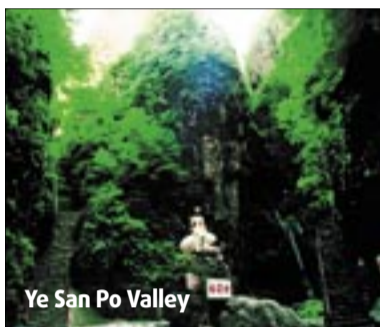
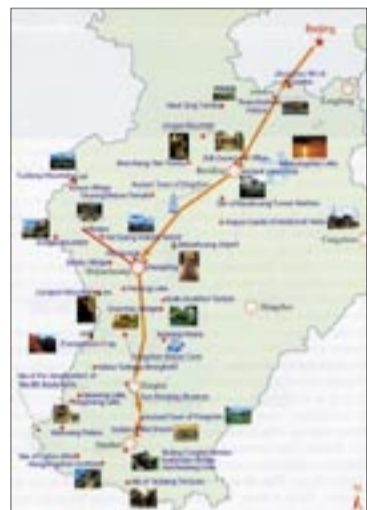
The valley lies in a natural reserve tucked among layers of mountain ranges 118 km southwest of Beijing.

The valley and surrounding regions have dramatic cliffs and Karst caves.

The reserve also contains numerous sandalwood trees believed to be more than 1,000 years old.

In addition to beautiful scenery, the valley is also home to a wide range of wildlife.

Tourists can also visit Buddhist temples housing some of the key figures in Buddhism.



Ye San Po Valley

Zhili Provincial Governor's Office

Governor's Office

Located in the center of downtown Baoding, the office is a key cultural relic site under state protection.

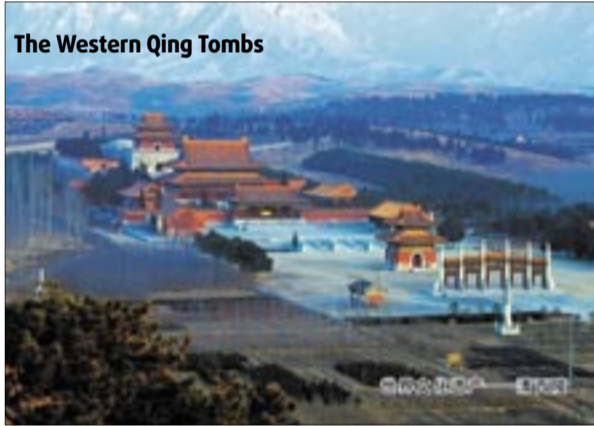
As the nation's only well-preserved provincial government office building of the Qing Dynasty, it has 105 rooms with the distinct features of a northern government office.

Built in the Yuan Dynasty (1368-1644), Zhili Provincial Governor's Office served as a government office throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties and the early years of the Republic of China.

In the eighth year of the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1730), it became the office of the governor of Zhili (Hebei Province),



Zhili Provincial Governor's Office



The Western Qing Tombs

Shijiazhuang bridges past, present in tourism

By Cong Rong

Located at the foot of the Taihang Mountains and in the west of the north China plain, Shijiazhuang is the capital of Hebei province and the province's political, economic and cultural center.

With urban and rural population of 9.4 million, Shijiazhuang is a city with great development potential and an ideal place for investment.

Adjacent to Beijing and Tianjin, the city is a transportation hub located at the intersection of the Beijing-Guangzhou, Taiyuan-Dezhou, and Shuozhou-Huanghua railroads and many expressways.

It takes just two hours by

train to reach the city from Beijing.

Though a young industrial city, Shijiazhuang has beautiful scenery and numerous sites of historical and cultural importance in the surrounding area.

Xibaipo, a small village located in Pingshan County, served as the seat of the headquarters of the Communist Party of China and its troops from May 1948 to March 1949.

The city boasts of 18 key cultural relics sites under the state protection, with Zhaozhou Bridge being the most famous one.

The Zhaozhou Bridge, built in the year 595 in the Sui Dynasty (581-618), is the world's oldest existing stone arch bridge.

Zhengding, a city noted for history and culture, and boasting many Buddhist relics, is only eight km from Shijiazhuang.

In recent years, the tourism infrastructure in the city has been greatly improved, providing more comfort and convenience to the tourists.

The city has now two five-star hotels, 19 four-star hotels and 26 three-star hotels.

The city received the honor of "China's Excellent Tourism City" in 2001.

Major attractions include:

Xibaipo Memorial

The memorial is located in Pingshan County, about 80 km northwest of Shijiazhuang. It is a national base for patriotic

education.

It was the site of the Communist Party of China's last headquarters in a rural area before it moved to Beijing and liberated the entire country.

During 10 months of their stay here, Mao Zedong and the Communist Party launched three major military campaigns and won decisive victories against Kuomintang forces led by Chiang Kai-shek.

The Xibaipo Memorial was built in 1977 to commemorate this revered site.

Longxing Temple

The Longxing temple, also called "the Giant Buddha Temple" by local people, was first built in 586 during the Sui Dynasty (581-618).

It is one of the earliest, well-preserved and largest Buddhist temples in China.

It became a national key cultural relics site under state protection in 1961.

Since then, the government has spent a great deal on renovating and expanding the old temple.

Emperors of different dynasties paid visit to the temple to burn joss sticks to the Buddha statues and left behind many poems or notes on the steles in the temple.

Baoduzhai scenic spot

The Baoduzhai scenic spot, only 16 km from Shijiazhuang, is a hill with both historical and natural attractions.

With an altitude of 580 m and sheer cliffs on four sides, the hill was a strategic site in ancient battles and wars.

It was the ancient battlefield where General Han Xin and his troops combated fought the troops of Xiang Yu in the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD).

Tiangui Mountain

The Tiangui Mountain is a famous mountain of Daoism, about 80 km from Shijiazhuang.

Covering an area of 60 sq km, the mountain is famous for the ancient temples, strange rocks, springs, mysterious caves and deep valleys.

It became a national key scenic spot in 2002.

Cangyan Mountain

The mountain is 70 km northwest of Shijiazhuang.

With an altitude of more than 1,000 m, it has impressive waterfalls and springs.



Xibaipo Memorial



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1. Zhaozhou Bridge
2. Baoduzhai scenic spot
3. Cangyan Mountain
4. The Longxing Temple