

Xiangfan - Twin City Metropolis

Xiangfan is composed of two originally separate cities - Xiangfan and Fancheng - and is located at the confluence of the Hanshui, Tanghe, and Beihe rivers in northwest Hubei Province. It is an important entrepot on the upper reaches of the Hanshui River, a major tributary that flows into the Yangtze.

Ancient Longzhong

On the eastern slope of Longzhong Mountain fifteen kilometers west of Xiangyang, Longzhong was the hometown of Zhuge Liang (A.D. 181-234), one of the most well-known politicians and strategists in Chinese history who helped Liu Bei establish and consolidate his rule during the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280). Zhuge Liang was granted the honored title of Duke Wuxiang after his death. Longzhong is surrounded by hills covered with pine and cypress trees and embellished with winding streams. Scenic spots here include Little Rainbow Bridge (Xiaobongqiao), Half Moon Creek (Banyuexi), Old Dragon Cave (Laolongdong), and Holding the Knee Stone (Baiqishi).

Wudang Mountain

Once the mecca of Taoism, this famous mountain is in southwest Junxian County, Hubei Province. Densely wooded and towering into the clouds, it has a circumference of 400 kilometers, with 72 peaks, 36 precipices, and 24 ravines. Its highest peak - Heavenly Pillar Peak (Tianzhufeng) - is 1,600 meters above sea level.

The building of palaces and temples on its slopes began during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Emperor Zhi Di dispatched 300,000 laborers and embarked on large-scale construction on the mountain. Today, more than a dozen groups of architecturally interesting buildings left by the Yuan (1271-1368), Ming, and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties are scattered on the slopes. At the top of Heavenly Polar Peak stands Golden Palace (Jindian), which was built completely of bronze, then gilded and decorated with beautiful ornaments. Weighing 80 tons altogether, the compactly built structure is 5.5 meters high, 5.8 meters wide, and 4.2 meters deep and represents the highly developed smelting and casting skills of Ming Dynasty craftsmen. Inside the palace, there is a ten-ton bronze statue of Zhen Wu, the founder of Taoism. Purple Cloud Palace (Zixiaogong) is another well-preserved ancient building on the mountain, covered with brightly glazed green tiles and surrounded by red walls decorated with colorful paintings.

Wudang Mountain is famous not only for its beautiful scenery, but also for its unique Wudang style martial art.