

# CHINA'S TOP 10 UNESCO HERITAGE SITES



## The Great Wall

China's first 'taikonaut' might not have been able to spot it from orbit last year, but it's the undisputed big daddy of them all. Summing up everything that is both admirable and appalling about Chinese history, this stupendous feat of engineering entombs thousands of the unfortunates that constructed it.

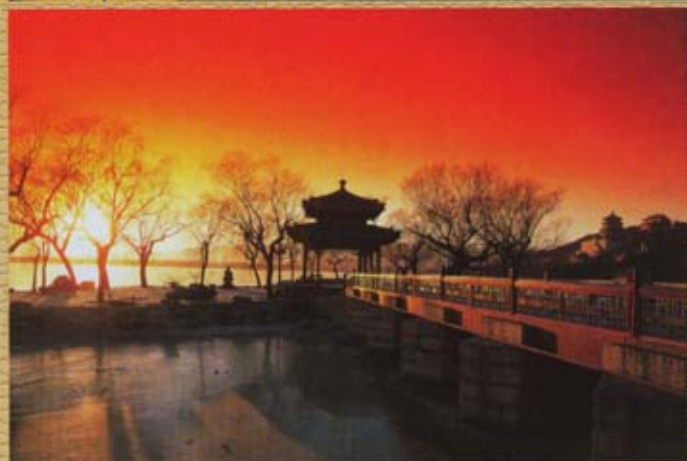
## Confucian Relics of Qufu, Shandong

Ancestral pile of the philosopher, politician, educator and all round good egg who defined a critical strand of Chinese culture. The graveyard not only contains Confucius's tomb but the remains of more than 100,000 of his descendants, while alongside the world's biggest Confucian temple stands their aristocratic residence, the Kong family mansions.



## The Forbidden City, Beijing

Grand testament to the death throes of China's dynastic past, it was both a sanctuary and a prison to the ruling elite. Nowadays even Starbucks has set up shop, but gaze past the crowds and there are still reminders of the egotistical-but-doomed era of the emperors.



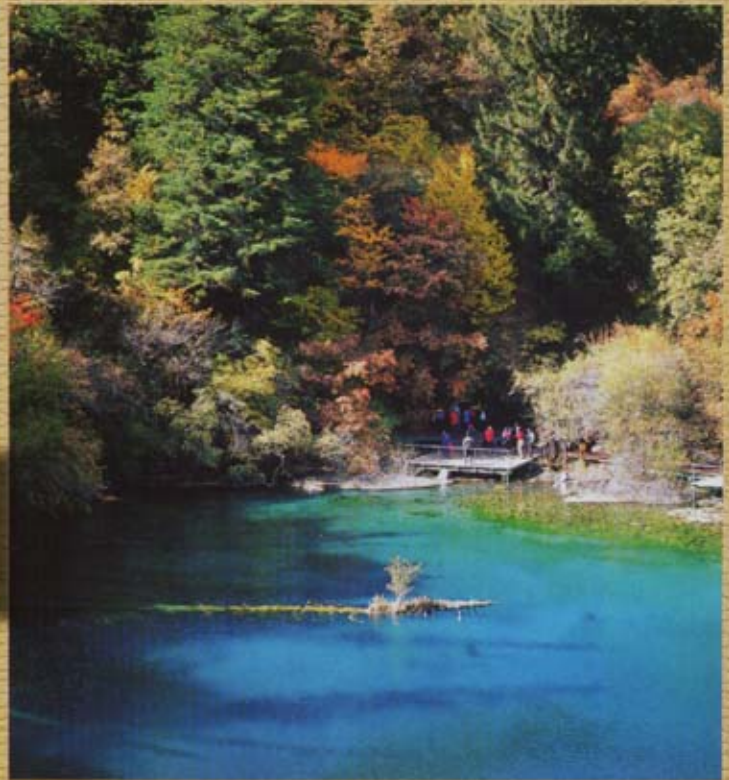
## The Summer Palace, Beijing

Despite being torched by unfriendly gangs of Victorian Brits on tour, as landscape gardens go its rebuilt lakes, bridges and temples outshine even the most extravagant European estates. "A potent symbol of one of the major world civilisations," says UNESCO.



#### Huangshan, Anhui

Inspiration for half of the fading ink brush paintings you'll come across in provincial museums, art galleries and knock-off markets, the unearthly peaks and spires of the mountains lend themselves perfectly as subject matter for poets and photographers alike.



#### Jiuzhaigou, Sichuan

Home to another of China's internationally recognised emblems, the giant panda, Jiuzhaigou's mountainous landscape shields diverse forest ecosystems and a whole bunch of other elusive and endangered creatures. Spectacular limestone formations harbour waterfalls and lakes coloured strange shades by local minerals.



#### The Giant Buddha of Leshan, Sichuan

It's not just China's walls that come larger than life. Carved out of a hillside in the 8th century, at 71m high this is the biggest Buddha in the world. Its backdrop is the holy summit of Mount Emei, home to an ancient forest containing the occasional tree over one thousand.



#### Lijiang County, Yunnan

An earthquake in 1996 may have been the best thing that happened to Lijiang: while many of the new buildings crumbled the historic old town remained relatively intact. Mostly populated by the Naxi minority, it's swiftly becoming the backpacker's answer to Shangri-la. Wherever that might be.



#### Capital Cities and Tombs of Koguryo, Liaoning/Jilin

Inscribed only this year, the sites include remains of three cities and 40 tombs of the Koguryo Dynasty that ruled over parts of northern China and the Korean Peninsula from 37 BC to AD 668. Evidence of yet another ancient, obscure and ultimately vanished civilisation.

#### Lushan, Jiangxi

Three-for-one value, combining contrasting aspects of the holy trinity of China's major spiritual influences in a single package. Buddhist and Taoist temples sit alongside Confucian landmarks with a strikingly beautiful landscape thrown in for free.

