

Jingbei prairie at Fengning, Hebei province



Hebei set for Olympics visitors

By WEN ZONGDUO

A province with seashores, islands, lakes, wetlands, plains, mountains and plateaus, Hebei is ready to offer its scenery and historic sites to Olympics participants and visitors.

"All people in the province will be welcoming tourists from all over the world with warmth and honesty," said Hebei Provincial Tourism Bureau Director Wang Xinyong.

The province's attractions include ancient relics, beautiful settings and vast folklore.

To meet the demand its tourism bureau has organized a "quality month" in August to ensure friendliness, honesty and safe, comfortable and timely service.

The province also has made it a policy that Olympic champions can tour Hebei for free, while all Olympic athletes can attend its attractions

at no cost and enjoy half-price discounts on hotels.

The province has designed seven tours for Olympics visitors within two hours of drive from Beijing and has arranged 27 different itineraries for Beijing and Tianjin residents.

The province has organized multiple bus lines from Beijing to its tourist attractions and set up about 2,000 signs along expressways and highways to guide visitors driving cars.

Rich resources

Hebei is adjacent to Beijing and Tianjin municipalities and stretches to the Bohai Sea in the east.

Five of its cities are listed on the national historic and cultural list, 168 locales are on the national cultural protection list and three have been designated world cultural heritage sites - Chengde Mountain Resort and Outlying Temples, the Great Wall, and the Eastern and Western Mausoleums of the Qing Dynasty

(1644-1911).

The province has seven national scenic sites, eight national-level nature reserves, 20 national forest parks, two world geological parks and more than 500 tourist scenic spots.

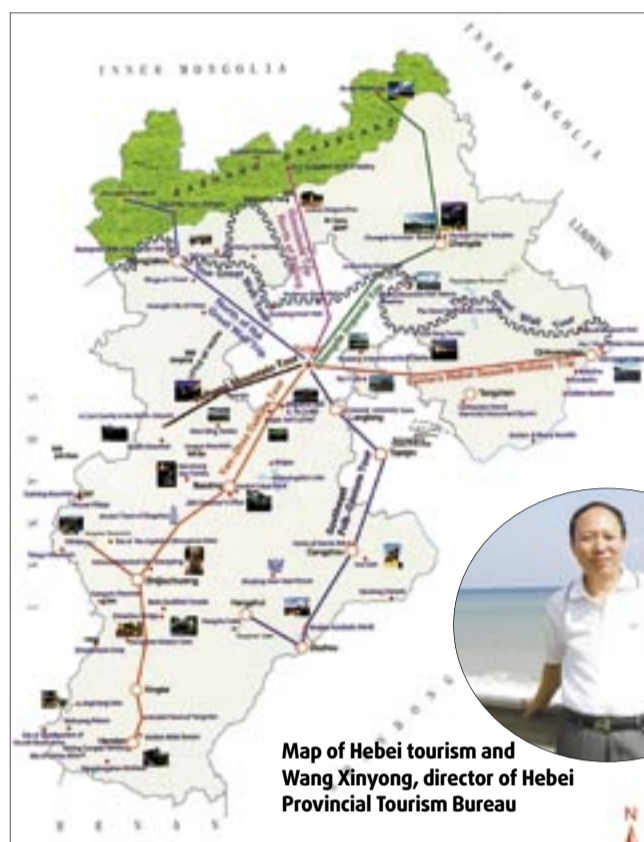
Coastal city Qinhuangdao will be hosting 12 football matches for the Beijing Olympics between August 6 and 16.

As the closest province to Beijing, Hebei is becoming the choice for many tourists from around the world during the Games.

The cities of Langfang, Baoding, Tangshan and Qinhuangdao are within one and a half hour's drive from Beijing.

Star-rated hotels with nearly 40,000 beds are set to serve visitors during the period as well as 200 hotels that offer economic lodging.

As well, some 20,000 tour guides and hotel staff have been trained in foreign languages, Olympics knowledge, foreign etiquette and cuisine.



Map of Hebei tourism and Wang Xinyong, director of Hebei Provincial Tourism Bureau



Puning Temple in Chengde



Putuo Temple in Chengde



Pule Temple in Chengde



Autumn at Mulan royal hunting ground in Hebei province



Chengde Mountain Resort in Hebei province

Chengde offers imperial tours

By LIU XIANG

Hundreds of years ago emperors of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) often stayed in the city of Chengde not far from Beijing in summer or when they traveled to northeast China. Chengde has since been famous for its charming scenery, historic sites and pleasant weather.

Tourists to Chengde can climb the Great Wall at Jinshanling and recall the glory and hardship of ancient warriors, enjoy horse rides at the Mulan royal hunting ground - the world's largest imperial hunting ground - or wander through the imperial gardens at Chengde Mountain Resort and absorb ancient wisdom at its outlying temples.

Chengde's appeal also lies in its diverse ethnic culture. Here you may join the singing and dancing of

Manchu and Mongolian people, listen to the Buddhist understanding of the world, taste a range of Manchu-Han dishes, try snacks unique to the region, enjoy the folk arts of cloth painting and paper cutting, or savor local produce such as hazelnuts and mushrooms.

Among more than 50 tourist sites in Chengde, 23 have been rated Grade A at the national level. It has four four-star, 12 three-star and 14 two-star hotels along with more than 2,000 restaurants, dozens of karaoke and dance halls and a bowling alley. The city has 2,300 tour guides, a number of whom speak English, Japanese, German, French, Italian and Korean.

Major attractions

Chengde's Mountain Resort was an important part of imperial life during the Qing Dynasty. Built over 89 years during the most prosperous decades

of the dynasty, the resort combines 72 scenic sites and is the world's largest classic imperial garden. It is composed of a palace area, greens, lakes and hills. It has amassed both the delicate plants of southern gardens and the grandeur of north China's parks, thus "collecting all beautiful scenes under the sky in one garden".

Outlying Temples

The Eight Outlying Temples surrounding the Mountain Resort of Chengde are the largest group of imperial monasteries in the world.

The temple of the Potaraka Doctrine - Putuozongsheng Miao - was modeled on the Potala palace in Lhasa, Temple of Far-spreading Peace - Anyuan Miao - after Gurza Temple in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Puning Temple after a monastery in Tibet, Pule Temple after the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, and Shuxiang

Temple an exact copy of the original Shuxiang Temple on Mount Wutai in Shanxi province. The temples not only represent the magnificence of Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur, Han and Manchurian groups, but also the unity of people of different cultures and origins.

Jinshanling Great Wall

The Jinshanling part of the Great Wall is among the most representative. Inside Chengde, the section of wall was first built in 1368, the year the Ming Dynasty was established, under the supervision of top general Xu Da. It is a national key historic site, a State-level scenic spot and a listed site for World Heritage.

The 10.5 km section starts from Longling Pass in the west and ends at Wangjinglou Tower in the east. Along the stretch are 67 battlements and five passes. It is the most well preserved

section of the Ming Dynasty Great Wall and considered the highest form of the Ming wall due to its intricate defense systems.

Jingbei No 1 Prairie

Jingbei No 1 Prairie, also named Datan Prairie, received its name because it is the closest natural grassland to Beijing. It spans 285 km from south to north and covers 350 sq km. Its clear lakes, shoulder-high grass and grazing sheep make its sound ecosystem famous from ancient times.

The region is 1,487 m in altitude with waves of grass filled with colorful flowers, singing birds and running horses. In addition to horseback riding, visitors can ride camels, join in archery and hunting or fly a kite.

The grasslands are home to mostly Manchurian and Mongolian people who may invite you to join them.

Jinshanling section of the Great Wall in Hebei province



Chengde vital statistics

Location: Northern China, bordering Beijing, Tianjing, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia

Honors: Among first group of 24 cities of historical and cultural interest named by the State Council. One of the Chinese mainland's top 10 scenic spots and one of top 40 tourist attractions

Chengde Mountain Resort and Outlying Temples joined UNESCO World Heritage list in 1994.

The resort was designated one of the nation's top 10 model spots for "civilized tourism" in June 1998. Chengde was cited an outstanding tourism city of the mainland in 1998.

Development strategy: The city has given priority to tourism development, promoted several premier sites both at home and overseas, and upgraded tourism standards.

Tourist attractions: More than 50 sites, eight graded at 4-A, three at 3-A and 12 2-A;

One attraction is on the world cultural heritage list;

Eight relic and cultural sites are protected at the national level;

Thirty-five relics and cultural sites protected at provincial level;

One scenic attraction is protected at the national level;

Six national forest parks;

Two nature reserves at the national level.

Famed sites: Chengde Mountain Resort and Outlying Temples; Jinshanling section of the Great Wall;

The world's largest royal hunting ground at Mulan;

The highest peak to the east of Beijing Wuling Peak;

Xinchui Peak, a remarkable feature of the Danxia landform;

Panlong Lake, likened to the city of Guilin, though smaller.

Tourism facilities:

Star hotels: Four four-star, 12 three-star, 14 two-star.

Other hotels: More than 300 hostels and other hotels with 35,000 beds in total.

Tour agencies: 89, eight of them able for international tours.

Tour guides: 2,300, some capable of speaking English, Japanese, German, French, Italian, or Korean.

Restaurants: Over 2,000.

Recreation: Dozens of karaoke halls, bars and bowling alleys.

Tourism fact and figures:

Number of tourists: 6.222 million in 2005, up 12.7 percent over the previous year;

Number of overseas tourists, 186,000, up 10.3 percent;

Total tourism revenue: 3.02 billion yuan, up 29.6 percent.

Income from overseas tourists: \$19.98 million, up 18.9 percent.

Source: Chengde Tourism Bureau