

# HANGZHOU



Hangzhou, otherwise known as 'Heaven on Earth', is the vibrant capital city of Zhejiang Province which boasts delicious food, a buzzing city centre and a rich cultural heritage. Hangzhou's enchanting natural scenery draws travellers from far and wide, wishing to see for themselves the beauty of West Lake, which has been the source of inspiration for numerous Chinese poets and painters throughout history. It's abundance of attractions and cultural activities make it easy to see why Hangzhou was Marco Polo's favourite city in the world and why has become a tourist hotspot.



## Attractions

**West Lake:** West Lake, famous for its beauty and historical relevance, is Hangzhou's most popular attraction and it's not hard to see why. Covering an area of 2.5 square miles, it is possible to walk or cycle around the lake, stopping at the many scenic spots and historical sights on the way around. Though tourists flock to it, West Lake remains a very peaceful area, where locals go to sing, dance, play chess and partake in other cultural activities, making it a great place in which to experience local culture.



The lake is free to visit, but tickets must be bought to access some scenic areas around the lake.

**Leifeng Pagoda:** Located south of West Lake, on the top of Sunset Hill, Leifeng Pagoda is China's oldest colourful bronze pagoda. From the top of the pagoda, visitors can enjoy great views of West Lake and the nearby Jingci Temple. For a good view, dusk is a good time to visit, the reflection of the surrounding mountains in the lake create a beautiful sight, which has been recognised as one of the best scenes around West Lake.



**Grand Canal:** Stretching 1,200 miles from Hangzhou to Beijing, the Grand Canal is the longest man-made canal in ancient China and is over 2,000 years old. Historically, the Grand Canal was a major transportation hub, which connected the Yangtze, Yellow, Huaihe, Haihe, and Qiantang Rivers and flowed through Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, Provinces, before reaching Hangzhou. Consequently, the canal played a large role in strengthening the economic and cultural relations between the north and the south. It's possible to



boat along the canal and this is a great way to get good views of the river towns and witness some of the local customs.

**China National Silk Museum:** Hangzhou is famous throughout China for its silk production. The National Silk Museum is an interesting spot for anyone looking to find out about this part of Hangzhou's long history and culture. The museum is free to enter and is located on the southern bank of West Lake. It boasts eight exhibition halls, which house various preserved relics and costumes, as well as the oldest piece of silk ever to be discovered.



**Longjing Tea Village:** Known as the 'Green Queen', Longjing tea is over 1,200 years old and is the most expensive green tea in China. Longjing Tea Village, where the tea originated, is located on the west side of West Lake and is well worth a 2-3-hour visit. Visitors can take in the beauty of the emerald green tea plantation by taking a hike around the fields, sample the tea in the hundred-year old tea house and watch tea growers roast the tea leaves and prepare the No. 1 tea of China.

Longjing Tea Village can be reached by bus in around 1 hour, or by taxi in 30 minutes.

## Food

Just like most other cities in China, Hangzhou has its own unique cuisine that visitors won't want to miss. For visitors looking to sample some of the delicious local dishes, Hangzhou's most famous restaurant, Lou Wai Lou, is a must!

**West Lake Fish in Vinegar Gravy (Xi Hu Cu Yu):** This is one of Hangzhou's traditional dishes and is made by poaching grass carp from West Lake, before putting a sweet vinegar glaze on the fish to produce a delicious dish with flavours typical of the region.



**Where to try it:** Lou Wai Lou, Zhi Wei Guan, Huang Fan Er and Wai Po Jia.

**Beggar's Chicken (Jiao Hua Ji):** This dish gets its name from the rumour that it was first made by a beggar who, not knowing how to cook a chicken when presented with one, wrapped it in a ball of clay and baked it. The outcome was supposedly delicious and it has since become one of the region's most famous dishes. Restaurants now use a combination of ingredients and spices to cook this dish.

**Where to try it:** Lou Wai Lou, Zhi Wei Guan and Tian Wai Tian.

**Fried Shrimps with Long Jing Tea Leaves (Long Jing Xia Ren):** This dish is made by stir-frying river prawns and combining them with a sauce made of Longjing tea, tea leaves and Shaoxing wine. This dish is light in both colour and flavour and is very fragrant and refreshing.



**Where to try it:** Lou Wai Lou, Tian Wai Tian, Shan Wai Shan and Huang Fan Er.

## Accommodation

**Wushanyi International Youth Hostel:** Located only a 15-minute walk from West Lake and 10 minutes from Wushan square, this hostel is very popular with backpackers and those looking for cheap, comfortable accommodation. Rooms are well looked after, there is a large lobby with computers and staff are very friendly.

**Hangzhou International Youth Hostel:** This hostel is very close to many of the city's main attractions. It's less than 1 minute away from Wushan Mountain, only a 15-minute walk from West Lake and it's very close to a good bike rental shop. The hostel offers guests a discount in two nearby restaurants and it has a selection of clean and comfortable dorm and private rooms.

## Entertainment

After a day of sightseeing, there are plenty of places in the city to have a drink and unwind or enjoy some of the local culture.

**Impression West Lake:** Impression West Lake is a live evening performance that tells the stories of Hangzhou legends and is performed entirely on the lake. This impressive spectacle of light, music and dance is a must-see for any visitor to Hangzhou.



**The Romance of the Song Dynasty:** this is a dramatic performance which uses music and acrobatics to tell the old stories and legends of Hangzhou City. Thanks to the impressive costumes, music and lighting, the show has received great praise and has attracted over 10 million visitors since opening.



**The Musical Fountain of West Lake:** Situated in a lake in Hu Bin San Lakeside Park, this fountain show is a popular attraction in Hangzhou. Performed to dramatic music and stunning lights for 10 minutes a time, the show is particularly impressive at night and begins at 7:30pm, 8:00pm 8:30pm and 9:00pm every day. It also runs twice during the day, at 10:00am and 3:30pm.



## Bars

**Aurora Lounge:** A stylish and popular cocktail bar located just behind the main train station

**Amigo Bar:** A well-decorated bar with a nice outdoor seating area. It serves great Western food and is a good spot to start the night

**1944 Bar:** A loud bar with comfy seats and good drinks that's been decorated with souvenirs the owners have picked up from their travels around China. A popular spot with both the locals and the expat community.

## Getting around Hangzhou

The city buses are the most convenient and cheapest way to get around the city. Hangzhou operates many different bus lines, including downtown, suburban and night lines as well as the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and tourist bus routes. Tickets usually cost between 1-4 RMB, but if paying with a [Transportation Smart Card](#), passengers enjoy 50% off. The tourist bus lines Y2, Y6, Y8, Y9 and Y10 take passengers to all the main attractions.



Having opened in 2012, Hangzhou's metro system is still relatively new, therefore there are only three lines in operation; line 1, line 2 and line 4. These lines run through various points in the city, including the main train station. Fares cost between 2-8 RMB. Click on the map to open the latest metro map.

Taxis aren't hard to find in Hangzhou, with over 10,000 serving the city. It's not always easy to find a taxi which charges by the meter near popular attractions and transport hubs, therefore visitors will likely need to negotiate a flat rate.

It's worth keeping in mind that the rate in a metered taxi is 11 RMB for the first 3km, 2.5 RMB for kilometres 4-10 and 3.75 RMB for each kilometre after that.

Push bikes are another popular mode of transport in Hangzhou, particularly around West Lake. There are many bike rental places in the city and around the main attractions and usually cost around 10 RMB for 1-2 hours.

## Travel

Hangzhou has three railway stations; Hangzhou Railway Station, East Railway Station and South Railway Station. Hangzhou Railway Station is the main hub for slow trains to many other cities and the East Station is one of the largest hubs in China, operating various speed trains to cities all over the country.



Around 17 miles outside of the city, Xiaoshan International Airport serves Hangzhou and many surrounding cities. It has two terminals and operates flights to both domestic and international cities

such as Beijing, Chengdu, Jiuzhaigou, Guangzhou, Guilin, Xian, Singapore, Seoul, Amsterdam, Pattaya, Phuket Island and Tokyo.

The airport is also one of the few that have a 144-Hour Visa-Free Transit policy, great for anyone passing through without a visa!