

Héběi 河北



Héběi is Běijīng's forgotten cousin from the countryside: she's got less money, wears last year's fashions and can catch a chicken faster than a taxi, but hey, she's still family. But while cuisine, language and favourite opera songs may overlap, the similarities end there. The capital is slick, modern and cosmopolitan; the province has more of a rough-edged charm comprised of grazing sheep, brown earth and fields of corn and wheat.

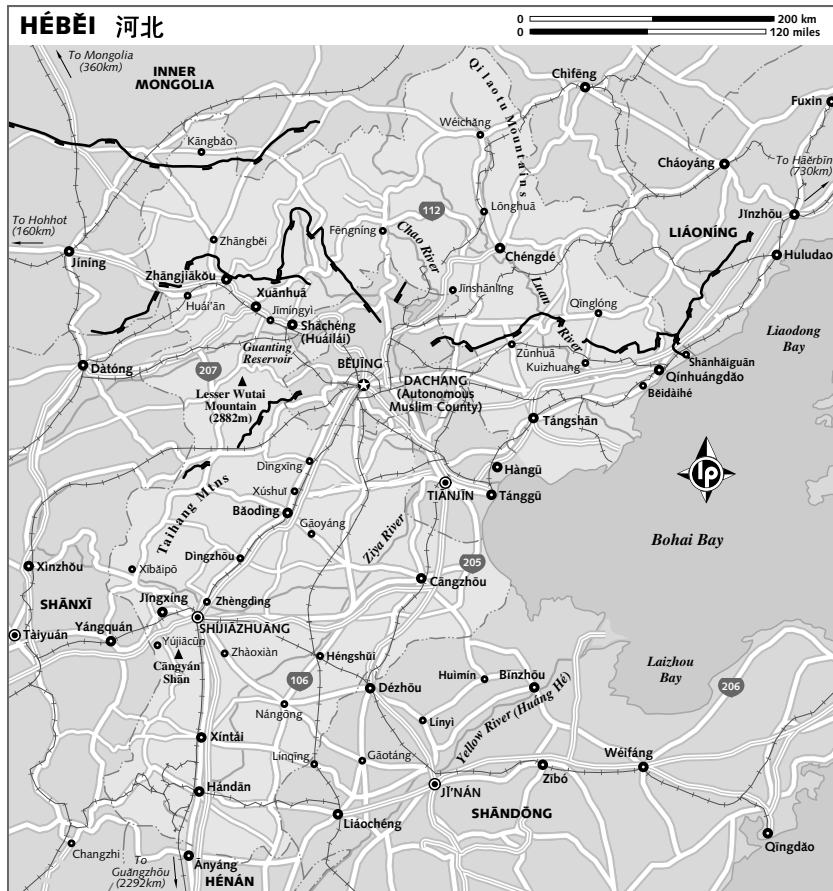
Don't let those tattered edges put you off though; Héběi is more than just one big stretch of farmland. It first put itself on the world map in the 1920s, when dragon bones uncovered in Zhōukǒudiàn (southwest of Běijīng) turned out not to belong to some mythical creature, but instead to *Homo erectus*, the precursor to modern humans. At the time, the remains – which may date back as far as 500,000 years – gave rise to a short-lived theory that human-kind originated in Asia. (This has since been refuted.)

And even if it's not the cradle of civilisation, Héběi is hardly disappointing – especially as there are a number of sights that can be done as a weekend getaway from the capital. Chief among them is Chéngdé, the majestic 18th-century summer retreat of the Qing emperors. Twentieth-century rulers preferred seaside Běidàihé, but much more impressive is the Great Wall, whose serpentine roller-coaster ride begins nearby at the sea's edge and continues across the province's rugged northern Yanshan Mountains. What you may remember most though are trips to low-key towns like Yújiācūn and Jímíngyì, where you'll be rewarded with overwhelming hospitality and a glimpse into the hard-working lives of China's many farmers.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Escape the capital for some downtime at the rustic imperial retreat at **Chéngdé** (p192)
- Scramble up **Jiǎo Shān** (p200) at Shānhǎiguān for sparkling ocean vistas and a little Great Wall adventure
- Check out one of China's more unusual rock collections – the village of **Yújiācūn** (p190)
- Strike off for **Jímíngyì** (p198), a 13th-century stop on the pony express
- Count temples and compare pagoda styles at the ancient walled town of **Zhèngdìng** (p189)





Climate

Considerable temperature differences exist between the mountainous north and the south of the province, as well as between coastal and inland regions, but generally speaking Héběi gets very hot in summer (with an average temperature of 20°C to 27°C in July) and freezing cold in winter (average temperature in January -3°C) with dust fallout in spring and heavy rains in July and August. Autumn (September to November) is the best season to visit.

Getting There & Away

Běijīng and Tiānjīn are the most convenient bases for exploring the province. Héběi is also linked to numerous other domestic destinations by both bus and rail.

Getting Around

The provincial rail hub is at Shìjiāzhuāng, with rail links to all major towns and cities in Héběi. Travel to Chéngdé, Jímíngyì and Shānhǎiguān is best done from Běijīng or Tiānjīn. Bus connections cover the entire province.

SHÌJIÁZHUĀNG 石家庄

☎ 0311 / pop 2.1 million

Thoroughly eclipsed by the larger cities of Běijīng and Tiānjīn, Shìjiāzhuāng is a definitive provincial capital: it's a bustling, modern sprawl with little on offer culturally apart from a museum. It is a good departure point for exploring southern Héběi though, and the sights nearby – including historic Zhèngdìng

(p189) and rural Yújiācūn (p190) – are interesting enough to warrant the short trip down from Běijīng.

Orientation

Most of the city's hotels and sights can be found along the east–west running Zhongshan Lu, which divides into Zhongshan Xilu and Zhongshan Donglu, and the area around the train station.

Information

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; Jinqiao Beidajie) Through the west door of Dongfang City Plaza Shopping Center.

Bank of China ATM (Qúkuānjī; 97 Zhongshan Xilu) Outside on the southwest corner of Dongfang City Plaza Shopping Center.

Hualian Jingyi Internet Bar (Huálián Jīngyì Wǎngbǎ; 2nd fl, Zhongshan Jie; per hr Y2; ☎ 8am-midnight) Through the south entrance of the big department store opposite the train station – look for 'Sushi Beef Noodle' (but don't eat there).

Post office (Yóujú; cnr Gongli Jie & Zhongshan Xilu; ☎ 24hr)

Public Security Bureau (PSB; Gōngānjū; 83 Minzu Lu)
Visa office (☎ 8702 4274; 8 Liming Jie; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm) Around the corner from the PSB.

Sights

HEBEI PROVINCIAL MUSEUM

河北省博物馆

Héběi's ageing **museum** (Héběi Shěng Bówùguǎn; ☎ 8604 5642; Zhongshan Donglu; admission Y10; ☎ 9am-5pm May-Oct, 8.30-11.30am & 2-5.30pm Nov-Apr, closed Mon) is in desperate need of a face-lift (or even a whole new face), but looks aside, the old gal still has some worthwhile stories to tell. Skip 'Hebei Today' downstairs and head for the 2nd floor where you'll find exhibitions ranging from prehistoric pottery to later artefacts, including imaginative bronzes, Buddhist statuary and a constellation of pottery figures from the Northern Qi. The central hall is devoted to a photo exhibit of the Great Wall, while a separate hall at the rear displays excavations from the Mancheng Western Han tombs, including two jade Han burial suits, one of which is sewn with 1.1kg of gold thread.

REVOLUTIONARY MARTYRS' MAUSOLEUM

烈士陵园

This **mausoleum** (Lièshì Língyuán; ☎ 8702 2904; 343 Zhongshan Xilu; admission Y3; ☎ 7.30am-6pm) is located in a pleasant tree-shaded park. Among the

shrines to communist martyrs is the tomb of the Canadian guerrilla doctor Norman Bethune (1890–1939). Bethune served as a surgeon with the Eighth Route Army in the war against Japan, and is eulogised in Mao Zedong Thought – 'We must all learn the spirit of absolute selflessness from Dr Norman Bethune'.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Jinghuá Fāndiàn (☎ 8702 5068; 14 Zhanqian Jie; 站前街14号; tw Y70-160, tr Y86-280; ☎) The Jinghuá has 12 storeys of wall-to-wall carpeting and marvellous views of Shìjiāzhuāng's smokestacks. Directly across from the bus station.

Yínquán Jūjiǎ (☎ 8598 5999; 12 Zhanqian Jie; 站前街12号; tw Y118-198; ☎) The linoleum flooring in the economy rooms here offsets the spartan touches (no soap or towels), making it more enticing than the Jinghuá. The more expensive rooms are inexplicably less attractive.

MIDRANGE

Bailin Hotel (Báilín Dàshà; ☎ 8598 5688; fax 8598 5588; 24 Zhanqian Jie; 站前街24号; s Y220, tw Y280-320, tr Y560; ☎) The singles have huge beds and the pricier twins at this three-star hotel should guarantee a good night's sleep. The TV video channel shows films of varying quality, but the staff is generally courteous and the location opposite the train station is excellent. Try the Huìwén Dàijiùdiàn next door if it's full.

TOP END

World Trade Plaza Hotel (Shimào Guǎngchǎng Jiǔdiàn; ☎ 8667 8888; www.wtp-hotels.com; 303 Zhongshan Donglu; 中山东路303号; d/studios/ste Y818/988/1318; ☎) This is the city's finest and most elegant hotel, a splendid five-star affair with huge and luxurious rooms that come with broadband internet access, drinking water on tap and satellite TV. There's a deli, Chinese restaurant, Brazilian barbecue, café and bar.

Eating

Tudari (Túdàlì; Jinqiao Beidajie; meals from Y15) You may need to wait for a seat at this Korean barbecue chain, but that'll give you time to decipher the menu (hint: 'kraut' is *kimchi*). In addition to a tantalising selection of kebabs, there are also noodles (Y8 to Y15) and personal hotpots (Y18 to Y28). It's opposite the Dongfang City Plaza Shopping Center.

Qiānqīnggé Zhōupù (18 Zhanqian Jie; meals from Y20) As well as dozens of different types of *zhōu*



INFORMATION		Revolutionary Martyrs' Mausoleum 烈士陵园 5 A1	Tudari 土大力 10 B1
Bank of China ATM 中国银行取款机 (see 11)			
Bank of China 中国银行 (see 11)	SLEEPING 🛏	Bailin Hotel 柏林大厦 6 B1	SHOPPING 🛍
Hualian Jingyi Internet Bar 华联竞艺网吧 1 B1		Jinghua Fandian 京华饭店 7 B1	Dongfang City Plaza Shopping Center 东方大厦 11 B1
Post Office 邮局 2 B1		World Trade Plaza Hotel 世贸广场酒店 8 D1	TRANSPORT
PSB 公安局 3 A1		Yinquan Jiujiu 银泉酒家 (see 7)	Long-Distance Bus Station 长途汽车站 12 B1
Visa Office (see 3)	EATING 🍽		Minibus 201 to Zhèngdìng 去正定的201路 13 B1
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Hebei Provincial Museum 河北省博物馆 4 D1	EATING 🍽	
	Qiánqīnggé Zhōupū 乾清阁粥铺 9 B2		

(porridge) in steaming buckets, this highly popular and busy restaurant serves up exceedingly tasty Chinese staples such as the crispy *hóngshāo páigǔ* (红烧排骨; braised spareribs; Y18). Filling porridge comes in all flavours, including *bābǎo* (八宝; a sweet concoction including berries and nuts; Y2) and *dìguā* (地瓜; sweet potato; Y2).

Shopping

Dongfang City Plaza Shopping Center (Dōngfāng Dàshì; 97 Zhongshan Xilu; ☎ 9am-9pm) This shopping centre is located west of the train station.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Shìjiāzhuāng is connected by air to most major cities in China.

BUS

From the long-distance bus station (*chángtú qìchēzhàn*) there are frequent buses to Běijīng

(Y50 to Y74, 3½ hours), Jǐ'nán (Y82, four hours), Tiānjīn (Y45 to Y90, four hours) and Zhèngzhōu (Y107, six hours). All of these buses run roughly from 7am to 6pm.

Other destinations include Qínhuángdǎo (Y130, 6½ hours, departure 11am) and Qīngdǎo (Y150, seven hours, departure 11am). For luxury buses go to the left-hand ticket windows (almost all buses); for old-school clunkers go to the right-hand side windows.

TRAIN

Shìjiāzhuāng is a major rail hub with comprehensive connections, including regular trains to/from Beijing West (express Y50, 2½ hours). Other destinations include Chéngdé (Y88, 10½ hours), Qínhuángdǎo (Y160, 8½ hours), Dàtóng (Y148, 11½ hours), Chángchūn (Y240, 16 hours), Jǐ'nán (hard seat Y24, five hours), Guǎngzhōu (Y409, 20½ hours), Nánjīng (Y246, 13½ hours) and Shànghǎi (Y320, 18½ hours).

Getting Around

Shìjiāzhuāng's airport is 40km northeast of town. **Civil Aviation Administration of China buses** (CAAC; 中国民航; Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎ 8505 4084; Y15) to the airport depart from the CAAC office at 471 Zhongshan Donglu; the office can be reached on bus 5. There are two or three buses per day, with the first leaving at around 5.40am and the last leaving at around 5pm. A taxi to the airport will take about an hour and costs Y130. Taxis are Y5 at flag fall.

AROUND SHÌJÍAZHUĀNG

Zhèngdìng 正定

☎ 0311 / pop 130,280

From atop Zhèngdìng's South Gate, you can see the silhouettes of four distinct pagodas jutting prominently above the sleepy town. Remnants of a traditional skyline in China are an excellent example of the country's former architectural ingenuity. Nicknamed the town of 'nine towers, four pagodas, eight great temples and 24 golden archways', Zhèngdìng seems to have misplaced (or miscounted) a number of the original 45 monuments, but it nevertheless retained the magnificent Dafo Temple, which is enough to make up for having lost all nine towers.

The through ticket (*tōngpiào*; Y60) gets you access to all sights except Linji Temple. Opening hours are from 8am to 6pm.

ORIENTATION

All of the attractions are either off the east-west Zhongshan Lu or the north-south Yanzhao Nandajie. Beginning with Dafo Temple, you can see almost everything by walking west until reaching Yanzhao Nandajie, and then continuing south until the city gate. There's a small map (in Chinese) on the back of the through ticket.

SIGHTS

Of Zhèngdìng's many monasteries, the most famous is Longxing Temple (隆兴寺), more popularly known as **Dafo Temple** (大佛寺; Dàfó Sì; ☎ 878 6560; Zhongshan Donglu; admission Y40), or Big Buddha Temple, located in the east of town.

Dating from AD 586, much of the temple has since been restored. You are met in the first hall by the corpulent Milefo, apparently chubby enough that the caretakers decided to pluralize him – he's now dubbed the 'Monks

with a Bag'. The four Heavenly Kings flanking him in pairs are typically vast and disconcerting.

Beyond is the Manichaean Hall, with a huge gilded statue of Sakyamuni and some magnificent faded wall frescoes. At the rear of the hall is a distinctly male statue of the goddess **Guanyin** (see the boxed text, p196), seated in a lithe pose with one foot resting on her/his thigh (a posture known as *lalitāsana*) and surrounded by *luòhàn* (those freed from the cycle of rebirth).

The **Buddhist Altar** behind houses an unusual bronze two-faced Buddha that was cast during the Ming dynasty, gazing north and south. There are two halls behind the Buddhist Altar. On the left is the Zhuanlunzang Pavilion, which contains a remarkable revolving octagonal wooden bookcase. The hall to the right holds a magnificent painted and gilded Buddha.

Beyond these halls lie two stele pavilions that you pass on the way to the vast **Pavilion of Great Mercy** (大悲阁; Dàbēi Gé), which houses a bronze colossus of Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy. At 21.3m high, cast in AD 971 and sporting a third eye, the effigy may lack the beauty and artistry of her sibling in Chéngdé's Puning Temple (p193), but she is still impressive. You can climb all the way up into the galleries surrounding Guanyin for free. The wooden hall in which the goddess is housed was rebuilt in 1999 after consulting Song-dynasty architecture manuals.

Within the hall at the rear is a four-faced Buddha (the Buddha of four directions), crowned with another four-faced Buddha, upon which is supported a further set.

About five minutes west (right as you exit) of Dafo Temple is **Tianning Temple** (天宁寺; Tiānníng Sì; admission Y5). Enter off an alleyway leading north, and cross the remains of a now vanished temple hall. The 41m-high Tang-dynasty **Lofty Pagoda** (凌霄塔; Língxiāo Tǎ) – also called Mùtǎ or Wooden Pagoda – originally dates from AD 779; it was later restored in AD 1045. The octagonal, nine-eaved and spire-topped pagoda is in fine condition and typical of Tang brickwork pagodas. If you wish to clamber up inside, torches are provided, but mind your head and the steep stairs. The views from the top are not great as the windows are small.

Further west on Zhongshan Xilu, past the intersection with Yanzhao Nandajie, is the

Confucius Temple (文庙; Wén Miào; admission Y5); however, there is little to see here.

Heading south on Yanzhao Nandajie brings you to **Kaiyuan Temple** (开元寺; Kāiyuán Sì; admission Y10), which originally dates from AD 540. Destroyed in 1966, little remains of the temple itself aside from some leftover good vibes (it's a popular spot for qi gong and taichi practitioners). The **Bell Tower** has survived, but the drawcard is the dirt-brown **Xumi Pagoda**, a well-preserved and unfussy early-Tang-dynasty brickwork, nine-eaved structure, topped with a spire. Its round, arched doors are particularly attractive, as are the carved figures on the base.

Also displayed is a colossal stone *bixi* (mythical, tortoise-like dragon) near the entrance with a vast chunk of its left flank missing and its head propped up on a plinth. Dating from the late Tang era, the creature was excavated in 2000 from a street in Zhèngdìng.

About 200m south of Kaiyuan Temple on the other side of the road is the **Liang Family Ancestral Temple** (梁氏宗祠; Liángshì Zōngcí; admission Y5; often dosed), a Ming-dynasty, five-bay wide single hall topped with dark tiles.

The active monastery of **Linji Temple** (临济寺; Línjì Sì; Linji Lu; admission Y8), around 700m southeast of Kaiyuan Temple, is notable for its tall, elegant, carved brick **Chengling Pagoda** (topped with an elaborate lotus plinth plus ball and spire) and the main hall behind, with a large gilt effigy of Sakyamuni and 18 golden *luòhàn*. At the rear of the hall is Puxian astride an elephant, Wenshu on a lion and a figure of Guanyin. In the Tang dynasty, the temple was home to one of Chan (Zen) Buddhism's most eccentric and important teachers, Linji Yixuan, who penned the now famous words, 'If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!'

Nothing remains of **Guanghui Temple** (广惠寺; Guǎnghuì Sì; admission Y10) further south, except its unusual Indian-style pagoda decorated with lions, elephants, sea creatures, *púsa* (Bodhisattvas) and other figures (some missing). With a brick base and four doors, the pagoda has stone-carved upper storeys and a brickwork cap. You can climb to the top.

Part of Zhèngdìng's main street (Yanzhao Dajie) has been restored and is now a pleasant stretch of traditional Chinese roofing and brickwork called the **Zhengding Historical Culture Street** (正定历史文化街; Zhèngdìng Lìshǐ Wénhuà Jiē). At the southern end of the street

is **Changle Gate** (长乐门; Chánglè Mén; admission Y10; ☎ 8am-6pm), also known as Nanchengmen or South Gate. The original wall (which dates back to the Northern Zhou) was made up of an outer wall (*yuèchéng*) and an inner wall (*nèichéng*), with encintes (*wèngchéng*), and had a total length of 24km. You can climb onto Changle Gate where there is a small exhibition. Extending away from the gate to the east and west are the dilapidated remains of the wall, sprouting grass and trees.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Shijiazhuang, minibus 201 (Y3, 45 minutes) runs regularly to Zhèngdìng from Daocha Jie, slightly south of the main bus stop in the train station square. The minibus goes to Zhèngdìng bus station, from where you can take minibus 1 to Dafo Temple (Y1). Regular train services also run through Zhèngdìng from Shijiazhuang.

GETTING AROUND

Zhèngdìng is not huge and the road is relatively easy as the sights are largely clustered together. Taxis within Zhèngdìng are around Y10; three-wheel motorcycles cost Y4 for anywhere in town. Bus 1 runs from the local bus station to Dafo Temple and bus 3 runs to the train station.

Yújiācūn 于家村 pop approximately 1600

Hidden away in the hills near the Héběi-Shānxī border is the unusual little village of **Yújiācūn** (admission Y20), where nearly everything, from the houses to the furniture inside them, was originally made of stone. As such, Yújiācūn today is remarkably well preserved: the cobbled streets lead past traditional Ming- and Qing-dynasty courtyard homes, old opera stages and tiny temples. Actually, 'traditional' doesn't quite describe it: this is a model Chinese clan-village, where 95% of the inhabitants all share the same surname, Yu. One of the more unusual sights is inside the **Yu Ancestral Hall** (于氏宗祠; Yúshì Zōngcí), where you'll find the 24-generation family tree. There are five tapestries, one for the descendants of each of the original Yu sons who founded the village.

Another peculiarity is the three-storey **Qingliang Pavilion** (清凉阁; Qīngliáng Gé), completed in 1581. Supposedly the work of one thoroughly crazed individual (Yu Xi-

chun, who wanted to be able to see Běijīng from the top), it was, according to legend, built entirely at night, over a 25-year period, without the help of any other villagers. It was certainly built by an amateur architect: there's no foundation, and the building stones (in addition to not being sealed by mortar) are of wildly different sizes, giving it an asymmetrical look that's quite uncommon in Chinese architecture.

It's definitely worth spending the night here. As the sun sets, the sounds of village life – farmers chatting after a day in the fields, clucking hens, kids at play – are miles away from the raging pace of modern Chinese cities. Villagers rent out rooms for Y10 per person; home-cooked meals are another Y10 each.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

All roads to Yújiācūn pass through Jìngxíng (井陘), about 35km west of Shijiazhuang. The two fastest trains to Jìngxíng (Y8, 50 minutes) depart at 6.30am and 1.35pm; trains back to Shijiazhuang depart at 5pm, 6.06pm (two hours) and 8pm. Otherwise, there are regular buses (Y6, one hour) running throughout the day between Shijiazhuang's Xiwang Station (洗王站; Xìwáng Zhàn) and Jìngxíng. Take bus 9 to get to Xiwang from the Shijiazhuang train station.

From Jìngxíng you can catch buses to Yújiācūn (Y4, one hour, departures 7am to 6.30pm) and Cāngyán Shān (Y5, one hour, departures 9am to 1pm, returns noon to 5pm). Buses arrive at and depart from various intersections in town; you can walk or take a taxi for Y5. Alternatively, hire a taxi for one destination (Y80 return) or for the day (Y200).

Cāngyán Shān 苍岩山

Cāngyán Shān (admission Y50) is the site of the transcendent cliff-spanning Hanging Palace, a Sui-dynasty construction perched halfway up a precipitous gorge. Given the dramatic location, it must have been at one time an impressive temple complex, though these days the best views after the main hall are of the surrounding canyons (thankfully the chairlift doesn't mar too many photos). It's a quick, steep jaunt up to the palace, and then another 45 minutes past scattered pagodas and shrines to the new temple at the summit. The standard lunar festivals see a lot of worshippers and are a good time to visit if you don't mind crowds.

In theory, morning buses (Y25, two hours) for Cāngyán Shān leave from Shijiazhuang in summer, returning in the late afternoon. In reality, it's best to combine it with a trip to Yújiācūn and catch more reliable transport to Jìngxíng (see left).

Zhaozhou Bridge 赵州桥

This **bridge** (Zhàozhōu Qiáo; admission Y30) in Zhàoxiàn County, about 40km southeast of Shijiazhuang and 2km south of Zhàoxiàn town, has spanned Jiao River (Jiǎo Hé) for 1400 years and is China's oldest-standing bridge. The world's first segmental bridge (ie its arch is a segment of a circle, as opposed to a complete semicircle), it predates other bridges of this kind throughout the world by 800 years. In fine condition, it is 50m long and 9.6m wide, with a span of 37m. Twenty-two stone posts are topped with carvings of dragons and mythical creatures, with the centre slab featuring a magnificent *tāotiè* (an offspring of a dragon).

To get to the bridge from Shijiazhuang's long-distance bus station, take bus 30 to the south bus station (南焦客运站; *nánjiāo kèyùnzhàn*). Then take a minibus to Zhàoxiàn town (Y6, one hour). There are no public buses from Zhàoxiàn to the bridge, but you can hop on a *sānlúnchē* (three-wheeled motor scooter) for Y3.

CHÉNGDÉ 承德

☎ 0314 / pop 700,000

Originally known as Rèhé (and as 'Jehol' in Europe), Chéngdé evolved during the first half of the Qing dynasty from hunting grounds to full-scale summer resort and China's centre of foreign affairs. The Manchu emperors, beginning with Kangxi, came here to escape the stifling summer heat of Běijīng and get back to their northern roots, primarily by hunting, fishing and watching archery competitions. The court also took advantage of Chéngdé's strategic location between the northern steppes and the Chinese heartland to hold talks with the border groups – undoubtedly more at ease here than in Běijīng – who posed the greatest threats to the Qing frontiers: the Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs and, eventually, the Europeans.

What remains today is the elegantly simple Bìshū Shānzhūāng (Fleeing-the-Heat Mountain Villa), not nearly as ornate as the Forbidden City, but no less grand. The walled

enclosure behind the palace is the site of China's largest regal gardens, and surrounding the grounds is a remarkable collection of politically inspired temples, built to host dignitaries such as the sixth Panchen Lama. Grab a bike, pedal through the enchanting countryside and make sure you take in the jaw-dropping statue of Guanyin at Puning Temple – one of Buddhist China's most incredible accomplishments.

History

Although the Qing emperors were already firmly entrenched in the Chinese bureaucracy by the beginning of the 18th century, they nevertheless strove to maintain a separate Manchu identity. In addition to preserving their own language and dress, the court would embark on long hunting expeditions, heading north towards the Manchu homeland. In 1703 one expedition passed through the Chéngdé valley, where Emperor Kangxi became so enamoured with the surroundings that he decided to build a hunting lodge, which gradually grew into the summer resort.

Réhé (Warm River; named after a hot spring here), as Chéngdé was then known, grew in importance and the court began to spend increasingly more time here – sometimes up to several months a year. To get a sense of the former imperial grandeur, imagine the procession as it set out from Běijīng: some 10,000 people accompanied the emperor on the seven-day journey.

The resort reached its peak under Emperor Qianlong (r 1735–96), who commissioned many of the 12 outlying temples (only eight remain) in an attempt to simultaneously welcome and awe ethnic groups from Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiāng.

In 1793 British emissary Lord Macartney arrived and sought to open trade with China. The well-known story of Macartney refusing to kowtow before Qianlong probably wasn't the definitive factor in his inevitable dismissal (though it certainly made quite an impression on the court) – in any case, China, it was explained, possessed all things and had no need for trade.

The palace was eventually abandoned after Emperor Jiaqing died there in 1820. He was purportedly struck by lightning – fact or fiction, it was nonetheless interpreted to be an especially ominous sign.

Orientation

Set in a pleasant river valley bordered by hills, the modern town spreads out south of the Bishū Shānzhūang and the Eight Outer Temples. The train station is in the southeast of town on the east side of the Wulie River (Wūliè Hé), with most hotels and restaurants of note on the west side of the river.

Information

There is a handful of internet cafés (Y2 per hour) off Shaanxiyīng Jie.

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; 4 Dong Dajie) Central branch with ATM access; there's a smaller branch at 19 Lizhengmen Dajie, also with an ATM.

China International Travel Service (CITS; Zhōngguó Guójī Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 202 4816; 2nd fl, 3 Wulie Lu) In the government compound on the right-hand side. The staff speaks some English, but otherwise the office is of little help.

Post office (Yóujú; cnr Lizhengmen Dajie & Dong Dajie; ☎ 8am–6pm)

PSB (Gōngānjú; ☎ 202 2352; ☎ 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri) At the rear of a compound off Wulie Lu.

Xiandai Internet Café (Xiàndài Wǎngbà; Chezhan Lu; per hr Y2; ☎ 24hr) West of the train station.

Sights

Winter admission and hours are applicable from 16 October to 14 April.

BISHŪ SHĀNZHUĀNG 避暑山庄

The Qing emperors lived, worked and played in this **summer resort** (admission Y90, winter Y50, audio guide Y10 plus Y1000 deposit; ☎ palace 7am–5pm, park 5.30am–6.30pm), composed of a main palace complex and enormous park-like gardens, all of which is enclosed by a 10km-long wall.

Entering through Lizheng Gate (Lizhèng Mén), you arrive at the **Main Palace** (Zhèng Gōng), a series of nine courtyards containing five elegant, unpainted halls whose rusticity is complemented by the towering pine trees growing throughout the complex. Note that the wings in each courtyard have various exhibitions (porcelain, clothing, weaponry) on display, and most of the halls have period furnishings.

The first hall is the refreshingly cool Hall of Simplicity and Sincerity, built of an aromatic cedar called *nánmù*, and displaying a carved throne draped in yellow silk. Other prominent halls include the emperor's study (Study of Four Knowledges) and living quarters (Hall of Refreshing Mists and Waves). On the left-hand

side of the latter is the imperial bedroom. The lucky bed partner for the night was ushered in through the door with no exterior handle (to ensure privacy and security for the emperor) after being stripped and searched by eunuchs. Two residential areas branch out from here: the empress dowager's **Pine Crane Palace** (松鹤斋; Sōnghè Zhài), to the east, and the smaller Western Apartments, where the concubines (including a young Cixi) resided.

Exiting the Main Palace brings you to the gardens and forested hunting grounds, whose landscapes were borrowed from famous southern scenic areas in Hángzhōu, Sūzhōu and Jiāxīng, as well as the Mongolian grasslands. The 20th century took its toll on the park, but you can still get a feel for the original scheme of things.

The double-storey **Misty Rain Tower** (Yānyǔ Lóu), on the northwestern side of the main lake, was an imperial study. Further north is the **Wenjin Pavilion** (Wénjīn Gé), built in 1773 to house a copy of the *Siku Quanshu*, a major anthology of classics, history, philosophy and literature commissioned by Qianlong. The anthology took 10 years to put together, and totalled an astounding 36,500 chapters. Four copies were made, only one of which has survived (now in Běijīng). In the east, tall **Yongyousi Pagoda** (Yǒngyòusi Tǎ) soars above the fragments of its vanished temple.

About 90% of the compound is taken up by lakes, hills, forests and plains (where visitors now play football), with the odd vantage-point pavilion. At the northern part of the park the emperors reviewed displays of archery, equestrian skills and fireworks. Horses were also chosen and tested here before hunting sorties.

Just beyond the Main Palace are electric carts that whiz around the grounds (Y40); further on is a boat-rental area (Y10 to Y50 per hour). Almost all of the forested section is closed from November through May because of fire hazard, but fear not, you can still turn your legs to jelly wandering around the rest of the park.

GUANDI TEMPLE 关帝庙

Requisitioned years ago by the local government to house generations of Chéngdé residents, the restored **Guandi Temple** (Guāndi Miào; admission Y20), west of the main gate, is a welcome addition to Chéngdé's temple population. Also called the Wumiao, the Guandi Temple is a Taoist temple dedicated to Guān

Yǔ, first built during the reign of Yongzheng, in 1732. Enter the temple past the protective guardians of the Green Dragon (also called the Blue Dragon) on your right and the White Tiger (also called the White Lion) on your left in the **Shanmen Hall**. The **Chongwen Hall** on the right contains modern frescoes of Confucius while in the **Shengmu Hall** on the left is a statue of the Princess of Azure Clouds, the patron deity of Tàì Shān (a mountain in Shāndōng), holding a baby. The hall ahead contains a statue of Guandi himself (see the boxed text on p410), the Taoist God of War and patron guardian of business. In the courtyard at the rear are two **stelae**, supported on the backs of a pair of disintegrating *bixi*. The right-hand hall here is dedicated to the God of Wealth (Cǎishén), the left-hand hall to the God of Medicine and his co-practitioners. The **Hall of the Three Clear Ones** (三清殿) stands at the rear to the left, while the central rear hall contains a further statue of Guandi. The former inhabitants of the temple grounds (the citizens of Chéngdé) have been moved on and the temple is now home to a band of Taoist monks, garbed in distinctive jackets and trousers, their long hair twisted into topknots.

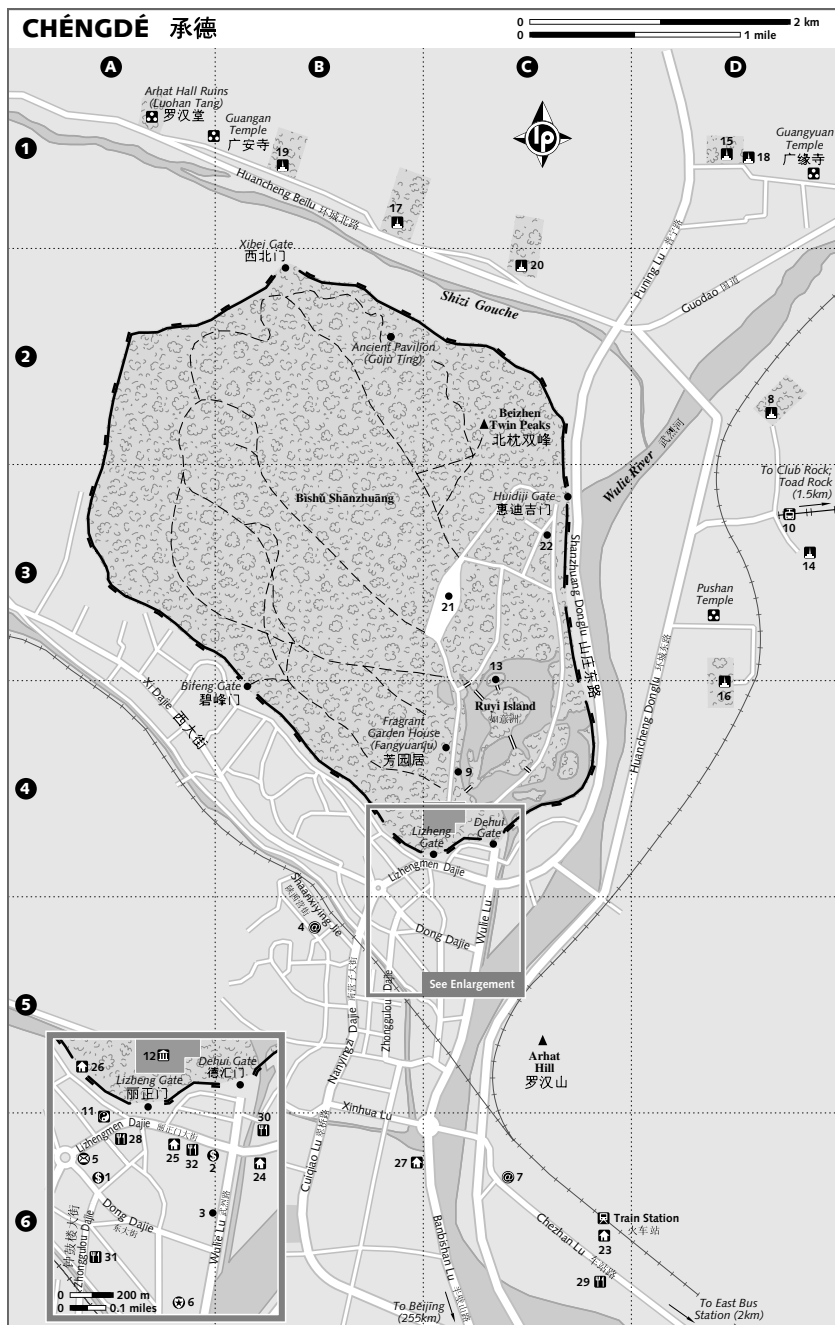
EIGHT OUTER TEMPLES 外八庙

Skirting the northern and eastern walls of the Bishū Shānzhūang are eight impressive temples (*wài bā miào*), unusual in that they were built primarily for diplomatic rather than spiritual reasons. Some were based on actual Tibetan Buddhist monasteries (and one on the Potala Palace), though in keeping with the political inspiration, the emphasis was, of course, primarily on appearance. Smaller temple buildings are sometimes solid, and the Tibetan façades (with painted windows) are often fronts for traditional Chinese temple interiors. The surviving temples and monasteries were all built between 1713 and 1780; the prominence of Tibetan Buddhism was as much because of the Mongols (fervent Lamaists) as it was for visiting Tibetan leaders.

Bus 6 taken to the northeastern corner will drop you in the vicinity, though pedalling the 12km (round trip) by bike is an excellent idea. You can also rent a cab for four hours (Y70).

Puning Temple 普宁寺

Chéngdé's only active temple, **Puning Temple** (Pǔníng Sì; Puningsi Lu; admission Y50, winter Y40; ☎ 7.30am–6pm, winter 8am–5pm) was built in 1755



INFORMATION		Main Palace 正宫		SLEEPING	
Bank of China 中国银行	1 A6	Misty Rain Tower	12 A5	Jingcheng Hotel 京承饭店	23 C6
Bank of China 中国银行	2 A6	Pule Temple 普乐寺	14 D3	Mingzhu Dajudian 明珠大酒店	24 B6
CITS 中国国际旅行社	3 A6	Puning Temple 普宁寺	15 D1	Mountain Villa Hotel 山庄宾馆	25 A6
Internet Cafés 网吧	4 B5	Puren Temple 普仁寺	16 D4	Qiwànglóu Bīnguǎn	26 A5
Post Office 邮局	5 A6	Putuo Zongcheng Temple	17 B1	Yunshan Hotel 云山大酒店	27 B6
PSB 公安局	6 A6	Puyou Temple 普佑寺	18 D1		
Xiandai Internet Café	7 C6	Shuxiang Temple 殊像寺	19 B1	EATING	
现代网吧	7 C6	Temple of Sumeru, Happiness and Longevity	19 B1	Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant	
		Shizunwuliang-shoufo	19 B1	北京烤鸭店	28 A6
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Dongpo Restaurant 东坡饭庄	29 C6	Dongpo Restaurant 东坡饭庄	30 B6
Anyuan Temple 安远庙	8 D2	Dongpo Restaurant 东坡饭庄	30 B6	Xiláishūn Fānzhuāng	
Boat Rental 出租小船	9 C4	Wenjin Pavilion 文津阁	21 C3	西来顺饭庄	31 A6
Chairlift to Club & Toad Rocks	10 D3	Yongyou Si Pagoda	22 C3	Zhōudingjī 粥鼎记	32 A6
棒槌峰索道	10 D3				
Guandi Temple 关帝庙	11 A5				

in anticipation of Qianlong's victory over the western Mongol tribes in Xinjiang. It was supposed to be modelled on the earliest Tibetan Buddhist monastery (Samye), although the first half of the temple is distinctly Chinese; the Tibetan buildings are at the rear.

Enter the temple grounds to a stele pavilion with inscriptions by the Qianlong emperor in Chinese, Manchu, Mongol and Tibetan. Behind are arranged halls in a typical Buddhist temple layout, with the **Hall of Heavenly Kings** (天王殿; *Tiānwáng Diàn*) and beyond, the **Mahavira Hall** (大雄宝殿; *Dàxióngbǎo Diàn*). The hall contains three images of the Buddhas of the three generations. Behind lie some very steep steps (the temple is arranged on a mountainside) leading to a gate tower, which you can climb.

On the terrace at the top of the steps is the huge **Mahayana Hall**. To the right and left are stupas and square, block-like Tibetan-style buildings, decorated with attractive water spouts. Some buildings on the terrace have been converted to shops, while others are solid, serving a purely decorative purpose.

The highlight of any trip here is the heart-arresting golden statue of **Guanyin** (the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy) in the Mahayana Hall; see the boxed text, p196. The effigy is astounding: over 22m high, it's the highest of its kind in the world and radiates a powerful sense of divinity. Mesmerising in its scale, this labour of love is hewn from five different kinds of wood (pine, cypress, fir, elm and linden). Guanyin has 42 arms, with each palm bearing an eye, and each hand holding instruments, skulls, lotuses and other Buddhist devices. Tibetan features include the pair of hands in front of the goddess, below the two clasped in prayer, the right one of which holds a sceptre-like *dorje* (*vajra* in Sanskrit), a

masculine symbol, and the left a *dril bu* (bell), a female symbol. On Guanyin's head sits the Teacher Longevity Buddha (Shizunwuliang-shoufo). To her right stands a colossal male guardian and disciple called Shancai, opposite his female equivalent, Longnü (Dragon Girl). Unlike Guanyin, they are both painted, although their paintwork is in poor condition. On the wall on either side are hundreds of small effigies of Buddha.

You can clamber up to the first gallery (Y10) for a closer inspection of Guanyin; torches are provided to cut through the gloom so you can pick out the uneven stairs (take care). Sadly, the higher galleries are often out of bounds, so an eye-to-eye with the goddess may be impossible. If you want to climb the gallery, try to come in the morning, as it is often impossible to get a ticket in the afternoon.

Puning Temple has a number of friendly Lamas who manage their domain, so be quiet and respectful at all times. You can catch bus 6 from in front of the Mountain Villa Hotel to Puning Temple.

Putuo Zongcheng Temple 普陀宗乘之庙
The largest of the Chengde temples, **Putuo Zongcheng Temple** (Pūtuo zōngchéng Zhīmào; Shizigou Lu; admission ¥40, winter ¥30; ☎ 8am-6pm, winter 8.30am-5pm) is a minifacsimile of Lhasa's Potala Palace and houses the nebulous presence of Avalokiteshvara (Guanyin); see the boxed text, p196. The temple is a marvellous sight on a clear day, its red walls standing out against its mountain backdrop. Enter to a huge stele pavilion, followed by a large triple archway topped with five small stupas in red, green, yellow, white and black. In between the two gates are two large stone elephants whose knees bend impossibly. The scale of the place comes into

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relief when you reach the Red Palace and look up – it's an astonishing sight, especially when framed against a blue sky.

Fronted by a collection of prayer wheels and flags, the **Red Palace** (also called the Great Red Platform) contains most of the main shrines and halls. Continue up past an exhibition of *thangka* (sacred Tibetan paintings) in a restored courtyard and look out for the marvellous sandalwood pagodas in the front hall. Both are 19m tall and contain 2160 effigies of the Amitabha Buddha. Among the many exhibits on view are displays of Tibetan Buddhist objects and instruments, including a *kapala* bowl, made from the skull of a young girl. The main hall is located at the very top, surrounded by several small pavilions; the climb to the top is worth it for the views. In the uppermost hexagonal pavilion in the northwest part of the roof is a small statue of Guanyin. The temple's sacred aura is sadly spoiled by the numerous souvenir stalls, but the faithful can buy a bust of Chairman Mao from the Buddhist Statue Shop.

Other Temples & Sights

The **Temple of Sumeru, Happiness and Longevity** (Xūmífúshòu Zhìmiào; Shizigou Lu; admission Y30, winter Y20; ☞ 8am-5.30pm, winter 8.30am-5pm) is another

huge temple, around 1km to the east of the Putuocongcheng Temple. It was built in honour of the sixth Panchen Lama, who stayed here in 1781, and it incorporates elements of Tibetan and Chinese architecture, being an imitation of a temple in Shigatse, Tibet. Note the eight huge, glinting dragons (each said to weigh over 1000kg) that adorn the roof of the main hall.

The peaceful **Pule Temple** (Pūlē Sì; admission Y30, winter Y20; ☞ 8am-6pm, 8.30am-5pm winter) was built in 1776 for the visits of minority envoys (Kazakhs among them). At the rear of the temple is the unusual Round Pavilion, reminiscent of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests at Beijing's Temple of Heaven (p131). Inside is an enormous wooden mandala (a geometric representation of the universe).

It's a 30-minute walk to **Club Rock** (棒槌峰; Bàngchuí Fēng) from Pule Temple – the rock is said to resemble a club used for beating laundry dry. Nearby is **Toad Rock** (蛤蟆峰; Hámá Shí). There is pleasant hiking, good scenery and commanding views of the area. You can save yourself a steep climb to the base of Club Rock (admission Y20) and Toad Rock by taking the chairlift (Y45 return), but it's more fun to walk if you're reasonably fit. Bus 10 will take you to Pule Temple. East of

Puning Temple is **Puyou Temple** (Pūyòu Sì; admission Y20; ☞ 8am-6pm). While dilapidated, there is a plentiful contingent of merry gilded *luohàn* in the side wings.

Anyuan Temple (Ānyuǎn Miào; admission Y10; ☞ 8am-5.30pm summer only) is a copy of the Gurza Temple in Xinjiang. Only the main hall remains, which contains deteriorating Buddhist frescoes. **Puren Temple** (Pūrén Sì), built in 1713, is the earliest temple in Chéngdé, but is not open to the public. Surrounded by a low red wall, **Shuxiang Temple** (Shūxiàng Sì) also appears to be closed. You can try your luck, or at least look at the pair of huge stone lions sitting outside. Just to the west of Shuxiang Temple is a military-sensitive zone where foreigners are not allowed access, so don't go wandering around.

Tours

The only practical way to see all sights in one day is to take a tour by minibus, most of which start out at 8am. Most hotels run group tours from around Y50 per day (excluding admission prices).

Sleeping

For such an important tourist destination, Chéngdé has a particularly unremarkable range of accommodation. No budget hotels were accepting foreigners at the time of writing.

MIDRANGE

Mountain Villa Hotel (Shānzhuāng Bīngguǎn; ☞ 209 1188; www.hemvhotel.com; 11 Lizhengmen Lu; 丽正门路11号; tw Y280-480, tr Y210; ☞) The Mountain Villa has a plethora of rooms and offers pole positioning for a trip inside the Bishū Shānzhuāng, making it one of the best choices in town. One wing or another is always being renovated, so try to find the newest rooms if you're not big on the smell of stale smoke. Take bus 7 from the train station and from there it's a short walk. All major credit cards are accepted.

Jingcheng Hotel (Jīngchéng Fāndiàn; ☞ 208 2027; train station square; 火车站广场; tw Y260, tr Y240; ☞) Although the train station location isn't great, you can often get discounts of over 50% through April. Overall, it's kept in good condition; the 2nd floor has the best rooms.

Míngzhū Dàjiùdiàn (☞ 202 1188; Xiaonanmen Dongce; 小南门东侧; tw Y380; ☞) Definitely a last-minute backup (unless you get the 75% discount); the only thing that's been refurb-

bished here since the turn of the century is the staff, who are full of youthful enthusiasm. Most rooms feature ragged carpeting and dim fluorescent lights.

TOP END

Qiwànglóu Bīngguǎn (☞ 202 2196; 1 Bifengmen Donglu; 碧峰门东路北1号; tw Y500-600, ste Y1500; ☞) Qiwànglóu boasts a serene setting alongside the Summer Villa's walls, accentuated by the hotel's courtyard gardens. Don't come with expectations of Qianlong-style opulence, however – the rooms aren't quite as nice as at the Yunshan Hotel. Stay in the new back building.

Yunshan Hotel (Yúnshān Dàjiùdiàn; ☞ 205 5888; 2 Banbisha Lu; 半壁山路2号; d/ste Y680/1600; ☞ ☑) Despite the ghastly exterior (white tiles, office block-style), the rooms at this four-star hotel are clean, elegant and spacious, and benefit from regular redecoration. They have minibars, bathrooms and internet access, and on-request DVDs. The hotel has a business centre, a western restaurant, a sauna and lobby bar.

Eating

Chéngdé is famous for wild game (notably venison, *lǜròu*, and pheasant, *shānjī*), but don't expect to see too much on the menus these days. One delicious local speciality that's easy enough to find is almond milk (杏仁露; *xíngrén lù*). There's also no shortage of street food; head for Shaanxiying Jie (northern end of Nanyingzi Dajie) for a good choice of barbecue (*shāokǎo*) and Muslim noodle restaurants.

Zhōudingji (11-18 Lizhengmen Dajie; meals Y5-15) There are all sorts of cheap snacks here, from steamed buns and porridge for breakfast to noodles and dumplings for lunch and dinner. Look for the red and gold façade.

Dongpo Restaurant (Dōngpō Fānzhuāng; ☞ 210 6315; Shanzhuang Donglu; dishes Y6-48) With red lanterns outside and steaming *shāguō* (砂锅; claypot) at the door, this lively restaurant has a fantastic array of Sichuan dishes. Classics like the warming *huíguōròu* (回锅肉; crispy pork steeped in hot sauce; Y17) are excellent, but the best choices are invariably on the seasonal and house specials menus. Both have photos, some English and a chilli index. There's another branch across from the train station.

Xiláishūn Fānzhuāng (6 Zhonggulou Dajie; dishes Y10-40) The gathering place for local Muslims, this

GUANYIN

The boundlessly compassionate countenance of Guanyin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, can be encountered in temples all over China. The goddess (more strictly a Bodhisattva or a Buddha-to-be) goes under a variety of aliases: Guanshiyin (literally meaning 'Observing the Cries of the World') is her formal name, but she is also called Guanzizai, Guanyin Dashi and Guanyin Pusa or, in Sanskrit, Avalokiteshvara. In Japan she is known as Kannon and in Cantonese as Guanyam. Guanyin shoulders the grief of the world and dispenses mercy and compassion. Christians will note a semblance to the Virgin Mary in the aura surrounding the goddess.

In Tibetan Buddhism, her earthly presence manifests itself in the Dalai Lama, and her home is the Potala Palace (p920) in Lhasa. In China, her abode is the island of Pūtuóshān (p332) in Zhèjiāng province, whose first two syllables derive from the name of her palace in Lhasa.

In temples throughout China, Guanyin is often found at the very rear of the main hall, facing north (most of the other divinities, apart from Weitou, face south). She typically has her own little shrine and stands on the head of a big fish, holding a lotus in her hand. On other occasions, she has her own hall, which is generally towards the rear of the temple.

The goddess (who in earlier dynasties appears to be male rather than female) is often surrounded by little effigies of the *luohàn* (or *arhat*, those freed from the cycle of rebirth), who scamper about; the Guanyin Pavilion outside Dālì (p709) is a good example of this. Guanyin also appears in a variety of forms, often with just two arms, but sometimes also in a multi-armed form (as at the Puning Temple here in Chéngdé). The 11-faced Guanyin, the horse head Guanyin, the Songzi Guanyin (literally 'Offering Son Guanyin') and the Dripping Water Guanyin are just some of her myriad manifestations. She was also a favourite subject for *déhuà* (white-glazed porcelain) figures, which are typically very elegant.

unassuming restaurant is a great choice for those undaunted by Chinese-only picture menus. Excellent choices include beef fried with coriander (烤牛肉; *kǎo niúròu*; Y24) and sesame duck kebabs (芝麻鸭串; *zhīma yāchuàn*; Y25). You can also find local specialities such as venison (铁板鹿肉; *tiěbǎn lùròu*; Y40) and spicy pheasant with peanuts (宫爆山鸡; *gōngbào shānjī*; Y40). Look for the mosque-style entrance.

Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant (Běijīng Kǎoyādiàn; ☎ 202 2979; 22 Wumiao Lu; duck Y50) If you just can't get enough *kǎoyā*, this central restaurant across the way from the Guandi Temple offers tasty duck roasted over fruit-tree wood.

Getting There & Away

Buses for Chéngdé leave Běijīng hourly (Y46, four hours) from both the Liuliqiao and Sihui long-distance bus stations. Upon arrival, it's preferable to get off at the train station if given the choice. Minibuses from Chéngdé leave every 20 minutes for Běijīng from the train station parking lot, also stopping in front of the Yunshan Hotel. The Jingcheng Expressway (Běijīng–Chéngdé) should be completed by 2007, which will shorten the voyage to 2½ hours. The downside is that it may no longer be possible to hop off at the Great Wall at Jinshānlǐng (p173), but ask anyway.

The east bus station (*dōng zhàn*) is 2km south of the train station, with morning buses to Qínhuángdǎo (Y66, five hours, close to Shānhǎiguān) and Tiānjīn (Y67, six hours).

Regular trains run between Běijīng and Chéngdé, with the first and most convenient departing Běijīng at 7.16am and returning at 2.40pm. The fastest trains take four hours (Y41 hard seat, Y61 soft seat); slower trains take around seven hours. There are also connections to Shěnyáng (Y97, 13 hours, 6.55am), Dāndōng (Y126, 17 hours, 6.39pm) and Tiānjīn (Y65, nine hours, 9.53pm).

Getting Around

Taxis are Y5 at flag fall, which should get you to most destinations in town. There are several minibus lines (Y1), including minibus 5 from the train station to Lizhengmen Dajie, 1 from the train station to the east bus station and 6 to the Eight Outer Temples, grouped at the northeastern end of town. Biking around town is an excellent way to go; however, at last check the only place renting bikes was the Mountain Villa Hotel (Y50 per day).

JÍMÍNGYÌ 鸡鸣驿

pop approximately 1000

As ragged and forlorn as a cast-off shoe, tiny Jímíngyì is a characteristic snapshot of the Héběi countryside: disintegrating town walls rise above fields of millet and corn, while the occasional flock of sheep *baas* its way through one of the main gates in the early morning. The oldest remaining post station in China, Jímíngyì is a long way off from the gleaming capital – much further than the 140km distance would indicate. The rural pace of life and unrestored charm are what make the place attractive, though at its height during the Ming and Qing dynasties it was a town of considerably more bustle, as evidenced in the numerous surviving temples.

History

Imperial China had a vast network of postal routes used for transporting official correspondence throughout the country for well over 2000 years. The post stations, where couriers would change horses or stay the night, were often fortified garrison towns that also housed travelling soldiers, merchants and officials. Marco Polo estimated some 10,000 post stations and 300,000 postal-service horses in 13th-century China – while Marco clearly understood that a little embellishment is what makes a good story, there is little doubt the system was well developed by the Yuan dynasty (AD 1206–1368). Jímíngyì was established at this time under Kublai Khan as a stop on the Běijīng–Mongolia route. In the Ming dynasty, the town expanded in size as fortifying the frontiers with Chinese soldiers became increasingly important.

Sights

Wandering along the peeling adobe walls of Jímíngyì's courtyard houses takes you past scattered temples, including the simple **Confucius Temple** (孔庙; Kǒng Mào; admission Y5), which, like many Confucius temples, also doubled as a school. Not far from here is the larger **Taishan Temple** (泰山庙; Tàishān Miào; admission Y5), whose Qing murals depicting popular myths (with the usual mix of Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian figures) were whitewashed – some say for protection – during the Cultural Revolution. A professor from Qinghua University helped to uncover them; you can still see streaks

of white in places. Other small temples that can be visited include the **Temple of the God of Wealth** (财神庙; Cǎishén Miào; admission Y5) and the **Temple of the Dragon King** (龙神庙; Lóngshén Miào; admission Y5).

Jímíngyì's walls are still standing; ascend the **East Gate** (东门; Dōng Mén) for fine views of the town, surrounding fields and Jiming Mountain to the north. Across town is the West Gate; the **Temple of the Town Gods** (城隍庙; Chénghuáng Miào), overgrown with weeds and in ruins, stands beneath it. There are a few intriguing Qing caricatures of Yuan-dynasty crime fighters remaining on the chipped walls. The largest and oldest temple in the area is the **Temple of Eternal Tranquility** (永宁寺; Yǒngníng Sì), located 12km away on Jiming Mountain.

The infamous Empress Dowager Cixi passed through here on her flight from Běijīng; for Y5 you can see the room she slept in, but it's decidedly unimpressive.

Sleeping & Eating

Most people visit Jímíngyì as a day trip, but spending the night is a great way to experience village life once others have returned to Běijīng's luxuries. You can arrange to stay with one of the villagers for Y10 to Y15; a home-cooked meal will cost the same. There are a few noodle shops outside the north wall.

Getting There & Away

Jímíngyì is only accessible from the larger town of Shāchéng (沙城), from where buses leave (Y3, 30 minutes, 8.30am to 5pm) as they fill up. You'll be dropped off along the north wall.

Getting to Shāchéng from the capital is straightforward. There are frequent buses from Běijīng's Liuliqiao Station (Y26 to Y30, two hours) between 6.40am and 7.20pm. There are also trains from Beijing West (hard seat Y9 to Y16, 2½ to three hours) leaving at 9.12am, 1.05pm, 1.40pm and 7.30pm; one train from Běijīng's main station departs at 11.40pm. Buses back to Běijīng run from 8.30am to 4pm. There are trains at all hours, but the terminus varies between the main, west, south and north train stations. You can also catch a train on to Dàtóng (Y35, 3½ hours) at 6.40am, 11.40am, 2pm and 4pm.

You'll need to take a taxi (Y5) or motor tricycle between Shāchéng's train and bus stations. You can store luggage at the bus station (Y1).

SHĀNHǎIGUĀN 山海关

☎ 0335 / pop 19,500

The walled town of Shānhǎiguān guards the narrow plain that leads to northeastern China, and is the renowned site where the Great Wall snakes out of the hills to meet the sea. In the rush to keep up with Běijīng and Shànghǎi, Shānhǎiguān began demolition of much of the historic part of town in 2006. While renovation of the poor, run-down buildings was necessary, the current plan is simply to rebuild the entire town from the ground up (in the 'original style') – all in the course of a single year. It may sound like a tall order, but hey, that's China for you.

Given that our crystal ball was thoroughly obscured by construction dust, it's hard to say what exactly the future has in store. The town walls and monuments should be left untouched, meaning that there's still reason to visit, particularly for Great Wall aficionados. Unfortunately, though, much of the historic charm may be gone for good.

History

It makes some sense that the Ming dynasty (AD 1368–1644), following hard on the heels of the traumatic Yuan dynasty (when China was ruled by the Mongols), was characterised by a period of conservative, xenophobic rule. Shānhǎiguān is a perfect example of the Ming mentality. The garrison town and wall here were developed in order to seal off the country from the Manchus, whose ancestors previously ruled northern China during the Jin dynasty (AD 1115–1234). This strategy worked, for a while anyway, but as the Ming grew weaker, the wall's fatal flaw was exposed.

In 1644, after Chinese rebels seized Běijīng, General Wu Sangui decided to invite the Manchu army through the impregnable pass to help suppress the uprising. The plan worked so well that the Manchus went on to take over the entire country and establish their own Qing dynasty.

An ironic footnote: in 1681 Qing rulers finished building their own Great Wall, known as the Willow Palisade (a large ditch fronted by willow trees), which stretched several hundred miles from Shānhǎiguān to Jílín, with another branch forking south to Dāndōng from Kǎiyuán. The purpose, of course, was to keep the Han Chinese and Mongols out of Manchuria.



INFORMATION

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Post Office 邮局	2	A2
PSB 公安局	3	A1
Yimei Internet Café 伊妹网吧	4	B2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

First Pass Under Heaven 天下第一关	5	A1
Great Wall Museum 长城博物馆	6	B1
Wang Family Courtyard House 王家大院	7	A2

SLEEPING

Friendly Cooperate Hotel 谊合酒店	8	B2
Jiguan Guesthouse 机关招待所	9	A2
Shānhǎiguān Dàjiūdiàn 山海关大酒店	10	B2

EATING

Lida Restaurant 丽达海鲜酒楼	11	A1
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Information

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm) South of the Great Wall Museum on Diyi Guan Lu; there's no international ATM.

Post office (Yóujú; ☎ 8am-5.30pm) On the east side of Nan Dajie.

PSB (Gōngānjú; ☎ 505 1163) Opposite the entrance to First Pass Under Heaven on the corner of a small alleyway.

Yimei Internet Café (Yimèi Wǎngbā; Xinglong Jie; per hr Y2; ☎ 7am-midnight) South of the South Gate.

Sights

FIRST PASS UNDER HEAVEN 天下第一关

The **First Pass Under Heaven** (Tiānxià Diyi Guān; cnr Dong Dajie & Diyi Guan Lu; admission Y40; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm, to 5.30pm Oct-Apr) is also known as East Gate (Dōng Mén). Shredded by the wind, tattered flags flap

along a restored section of wall, itself studded with watchtowers, dummy soldiers and tourist paraphernalia. Long views of factories stretch off to the east as decayed sections of battlements trail off into the hills. The wall here is 12m high and the principal watchtower – two storeys with double eaves and 68 arrow-slit windows – is a towering 13.7m high.

The calligraphy at the top (attributed to the scholar Xiao Xian) reads 'First Pass Under Heaven'. Several other watchtowers can also be seen and there's a *wèngchéng* (enceinte) extending out east from the wall. Along the west edge of the wall south of the entrance is a pleasant grassy park where you can stretch your legs.

If you purchase the Y50 admission ticket you can visit the vaguely interesting 18th-century **Wang Family Courtyard House** (Wángjiā Dàyuán; 3 Dongsantiao Hutong; ☎ 7.30am-6pm), which is a large residence with an amateur display of period furnishings.

GREAT WALL MUSEUM 长城博物馆

Down the street, this **museum** (Chángchéng Bówùguǎn; Diyi Guan Lu; admission Y10; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm, 8am-5.30pm Oct-Apr) is housed in a pleasant, one-storey traditional Chinese building with up-turned eaves. This is an interesting way to explore the history of the wall, thanks to its collection of photographs and memorabilia. There are no captions in English. Admission is included in First Pass Under Heaven tickets.

JIAO SHAN 角山

Shānhǎiguān's most exciting activity is a hike up the Great Wall's first high peak, **Jiǎo Shān** (admission Y15; ☎ 7am-sunset). From here you'll have a telling vantage point over the narrow tongue of land below and one-time invasion route for northern armies. (The horizon's sparkling expanse of water should also inspire those unmoved by military strategy.) For something more adventurous, you can follow the wall's unrestored section indefinitely past the watchtowers or hike over to the secluded **Qixian Monastery** (Qǐxián Sì; admission Y5).

It's a steep 20-minute clamber from the base, or a cable car can yank you up for Y20. Jiǎo Shān is a 4km bike ride north of town; otherwise take a taxi (Y10).

OLD DRAGON HEAD 老龙头

Old Dragon Head (Lǎolóngtóu; admission Y50; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm) is the mythic origin/conclusion of the

Great Wall at the sea's edge, 4km south of Shānhǎiguān. What you see now was reconstructed in the late 1980s – the original wall crumbled away long ago. The name derives from the legendary carved dragon head that once faced the waves.

As attractions go, it's essentially a lot more hype than history. Avoid buying the extortionate ticket and take the left-hand road to the sea (just past the bus stop) where you can walk along the beach to the base of the Great Wall. The salt breeze and glittering ocean make for a great picnic site, and you can join the periwinkle-pickers and cockle-hunters on the rocks. Bus 25 (Y1) goes to Old Dragon Head from Shānhǎiguān's South Gate. Watch out for the touts who will do anything to pull you into a peripheral attraction of no interest.

MENGJIANGNU TEMPLE 孟姜女庙

Mengjiangnu Temple (Mèngjiāngnǚ Miào; admission Y30; ☎ 7am-5.30pm) is a Song-Ming reconstruction 6km east of Shānhǎiguān. It has coloured sculptures of Lady Meng and her maids and calligraphy of a famous Chinese story, 'Looking for Husband Rock'. In the tale, Meng Jiang's husband was press-ganged into wall-building because his views conflicted with those of Emperor Qin Shi Huang. When winter came Meng set off to take her husband Wan warm clothing, only to discover that he had died from the hard labour. Meng wandered the Great Wall, thinking only of finding Wan's bones to give him a decent burial. The wall, a sensitive soul, was so upset that it collapsed, revealing the skeleton entombed within. Overcome with grief, Meng hurled herself into the sea from a boulder. A taxi here should cost around Y12.

Sleeping

Shānhǎiguān does not have many hotels, though they are cheaper than in Běidàihé.

BUDGET

Lida Restaurant (Lídà Hǎixiān Jiǔlòu; ☎ 505 1476; Dong Dajie; 东大街; tw/q Y30/40; ☎ May-Sep) Very simple lodgings are on offer at the rear of the Lida Restaurant (right). Unfortunately, the owners were unsure as to the fate of their building. Call ahead.

Jiguan Guesthouse (Jīguān Zhāodàisù; ☎ 505 1938; 17 Dongsitiao Hutong; 东四条胡同17号; tw/tr Y180/260; ☎) One of the few original *sihéy-uán* (traditional courtyard houses) slated to

survive demolition, this is a pleasant place with rooms off two courtyards. The twins have clean, tiled floors and TV; one room has no bathroom (Y80). It's about 50m down Dongsitiao Hutong on the north side; there's no English sign.

MIDRANGE

Friendly Cooperate Hotel (Yǐhé Jiūdiàn; ☎ 593 9069; 4 Nanhai Xilu; 南海西路4号; tw/tr/q Y288/388/400; ☎) This well-maintained two-star hotel just south of the Xinghua Market has large, clean and smart double rooms with water cooler, TV, phone and bathroom. Staff are pleasant and there's a restaurant next door.

Shānhǎiguān Dàjiūdiàn (☎ 506 4488; 107 Guancheng Nanlu; 关城南路107号; tw/tr Y288/430; ☎) Overlooking a park, this is a good choice if the Friendly Cooperate is full or you're arriving late at night by train.

Eating

Due to impending construction, restaurants in the old town were virtually nonexistent at the time of writing. Small eateries and kebab sellers used to line Nan Dajie, though only time will tell if they're gone for good. Currently, the best food options are the larger restaurants south of the walls along Nanguan Dajie.

Lida Restaurant (Lídà Hǎixiān Jiǔlòu; ☎ 505 1476; Dong Dajie; meals Y35) This cheerful place serves/served local, northeastern and Sichuanese fare. Because of its choice location inside the walls, it may be gone by the time you read this. If not, celebrate with a plate of *huíguōròu* (Y25), a bowl of tasty *hèimi* (black rice; Y2) or some steaming *jiǎozi* (dumplings; Y5). The owner speaks a little English and has cheap beds out the back (see left).

Getting There & Around

See p203 for information on getting to Shānhǎiguān.

Cheap taxis are Y5 flag fall and Y1.4 per kilometre after that. Motor tricycles cost Y2 to go anywhere in Shānhǎiguān. Bike rental costs Y30 per day, though you'll have to scout out for new stalls.

BĚIDÀIHÉ 北戴河

☎ 0335 / pop 61,000

The summer seaside resort of breezy Běidàihé was first cobbled together when English railway engineers stumbled across the beach in the 1890s. Diplomats, missionaries and business



INFORMATION	SLEEPING	Yoyui Restaurant
Bank of China 中国银行..... 1 B2	Beidaihe Friendship Hotel 北戴河友谊宾馆..... 5 D2	友谊酒店..... 9 A2
Post Office 邮局..... 2 A1	Guesthouse for Diplomatic Missions 外交人员宾馆..... 6 A2	TRANSPORT
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Yuehua Hotel 悦华宾馆..... 7 A2	Bus Station 海滨汽车站..... 10 B1
Biluo Tǎ 碧螺塔..... 3 D2	EATING	Buses to Běijīng 到北京的班车..... 11 A1
Statue of Gorky 高尔基像..... 4 A2	Kiessling's Restaurant 起士林餐厅..... 8 A2	Train Ticket Office 火车票售票处..... 12 A2

Guesthouse for Diplomatic Missions (Wǎijiāo Rényuán Bīnguǎn; ☎ 404 1287; fax 404 1807; 1 Bao Sanlu; 保三路1号; tw Y650-780, tr 480; ☎ Apr-Oct; 🚻) This guesthouse remains an appealing place to stay and has outdoor porches, so relax in the breeze and enjoy the hotel's beach. There's also tennis and weekend barbecues.

Eating

A whole string of seafood restaurants (*hǎixiāndiàn*) is strung out along Bao Erlu, near the beach; you can't miss them or their vocal owners. Choose your meal from the slippery knots of mysterious sea creatures kept alive in buckets on the pavement. Also look out for one of the ubiquitous fruit sellers wheeling their harvest around on bicycles, selling grapes, peaches, bananas, peanuts etc. Several small supermarkets can be found near the junction of Dongjing Lu and Haining Lu.

Yoyui Restaurant (Yòuyi Jiǔdiàn; ☎ 404 1613; Bao Erlu; meals Y30, seafood Y60) This popular seafood restaurant stays open off-season – choose from the bowls, buckets and pots of fresh aquatic life. Dishes include tomato and shrimps (Y38), drunken prawns (price depends on season), *suāncàiyú* (酸菜鱼; fish slices with pickled cabbage; Y35) and staple Sichuan standards.

Kiessling's Restaurant (Qīshìlín Cāntīng; ☎ 404 1043; Dongjing Lu; ☎ Jun-Aug) A relative of the Tiānjīn branch, this place serves both Chinese and international food, and has pleasant outdoor seating.

Getting There & Away

Getting to Běidàihé or Shānhǎiguān is best done via Qínhuángdǎo, the largest city in the area. There are four express trains from Běijīng to Qínhuángdǎo (soft seat Y75, three hours), leaving at 7.30am, 8.30am, 2pm and 7.47pm. The earliest stops at Běidàihé (2½ hours); the 2pm stops at Shānhǎiguān (3½

hours). From Qínhuángdǎo, you can catch bus 33 to Shānhǎiguān (Y2, 30 minutes) or bus 34 to Běidàihé (Y2, 30 minutes) from in front of the train station on Yingbin Lu. There are plenty of other trains that pass through one of the three stations, though these can take up to six hours and may arrive at an inconvenient time.

There are express trains from Qínhuángdǎo back to Běijīng at 7.14am, 8.47am, 1.37pm and 4.19pm. It can be difficult to get tickets to Běijīng from the other two stations. Other destinations from Qínhuángdǎo include Tiānjīn (Y44, 3½ hours), Shíjiāzhuāng (Y160, 8½ hours), Shěnyáng (Y63 hard seat, five hours) and Hǎerbīn (Y230, 12 hours).

Comfortable buses leave from Běijīng's Bawangfen Station from Qínhuángdǎo (Y62 to Y66, 3½ hours) between 7am and 7pm. There are also direct buses from Qínhuángdǎo to Chéngdé (Y61, 5½ hours), departing hourly from 7am to 11am, and at 5pm. A convenient place to pick up a bus to Běijīng in Běidàihé is from the east side of Haining Lu, just north of the post office (Y66, three hours, departures at 6am, 12.30pm and 4pm).

Near Shānhǎiguān, Qínhuángdǎo's little airport has flights from Dàlián, Shànghǎi, Tàiyuán, Hǎerbīn and Chángchūn.

Getting Around

Buses 5 and 22 (via Nándàihé) connect Běidàihé train station to the bus station (Y4) or you can take a taxi (Y15). Buses connect all three towns, generally departing every 30 minutes from 6am to 6.30pm.

Cheap taxis in Běidàihé and Qínhuángdǎo are Y5 flag fall and Y1.4 per kilometre after that.

Bikes and tandems are available along Zhonghaitan Lu, east of Bao Erlu (Y10 per hour).

people from the Tiānjīn concessions and the Běijīng legations hastily built villas and cottages in order to indulge in the new bathing fad.

Some time after Liberation, the cream of China's leaders began congregating here each July for a summer retreat. But President Hu, apparently not much of a swimmer, has since ended the tradition, abandoning the resort to the middle class and nostalgic cadres. In addition to inspiring Mao to poetry, Běidàihé has starred tragic personalities such as Jiang Qing and Lin Biao. Lin reputedly plotted his frantic escape from Běidàihé in 1971 after a failed coup; the official line is that he died when his jet crashed hours later in Mongolia. (A much better urban legend claims that Zhou Enlai strangled him in his Běidàihé villa.)

During the summer high season (May to October) Běidàihé comes alive with vacationers who crowd the beaches and eat at the numerous outdoor seafood restaurants. During the low season, the town is dead.

Information

Bank of China (Zhōngguó Yínháng; near cnr of Dongjing Lu & Binhai Dadao; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm) Has foreign currency exchange but no ATM.

Post office (Yóujú; Haining Lu)

Public Security Bureau (PSB; Gōngānjū; ☎ 404 1032; Lianfeng Beilu) Located in a new government compound 2km from town; a taxi here will run to around Y15.

Sights & Activities

Wandering the streets and seafront of Běidàihé in summer is enjoyable, as is hir-

ing a bike or tandem (*shuāngzuò zìxíngchē*) and whizzing around the beachfront roads. Otherwise, fork out for a rubber ring, inner tube and swimming trunks from one of the street vendors and plunge into the sea (after elbowing through the crowds).

Always be on the lookout for Běidàihé's peculiar revolutionary emblems and seaside kitsch, including a statue of **Gorky** (Gǎoěrfǐ) surrounded by outsized seashells. For those in pursuit of bad taste, Běidàihé comes up trumps with its **Biluo Tǎ** (Emerald Shell Tower) – it's quite ghastly.

Sleeping

Many foreign travellers stay in Shānhǎiguān (p201), as accommodation is expensive and limited in town. The resort is only fully open during the summer season (May to October); many hotels shut up shop in the low season.

Yuehua Hotel (Yuèhuá Bīnguǎn; ☎ 404 1575; 90 Dongjing Lu; 东经路90号; s/tw/tr Y400/400/400; ☎ Apr-Oct; 🚻) Smack in the centre of town, this three-star hotel has a spacious lobby and ponderous cladding on the exterior. Good discounts apply during slack periods.

Beidaihe Friendship Hotel (Běidàihé Yóuyi Bīnguǎn; ☎ 404 8558; fax 404 1965; 1 Yingjiao Lu; 鹰角路1号; d Y480-680; ☎ Apr-Oct; 🚻) Set in huge, grassy green grounds in the east of town, this hotel is a good deal with tidy doubles and singles. The cheaper doubles (also clean) are at the rear in stone terraced houses. You can exit the rear entrance, mosey down the road and get straight onto the beach.

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