



## Charm of the Ancient City

### Stele Forest

As a key historical monument under state protection, and a national AAAA scenic area, the Stele Forest, is the earliest site of stone steles in China and has the largest number of steles. It was first constructed in 1087 (the second year of the Yuanyou reign period of Emperor Zhezong of the Song Dynasty) to preserve *Kaiyuan Stone Scriptures* of the Tang Dynasty, and was renovated in the Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, the number of steles of the past ages increasing constantly. In the early Qing Dynasty, it took the name of the Stele Forest. Now over 2,300 steles are on display.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Stele Forest Museum was set up on the old site, with an area of 31,900 square meters, including 4,900 square meters of exhibition rooms. This museum mainly consists of three parts—the history exhibition halls, stele forest and stone carving art rooms—and houses more than 11,000 cultural relics, including over 3,000 pieces on display in 11 exhibition halls, and 134 national cultural relics which fall into 19 types (groups). Hence the Stele Forest Museum has been known as the largest indoor museum of steles and the richest treasure house of calligraphic art in China. The museum now holds more than 2,300 tablets with inscriptions ranging from the Han to the



The front gate of the Stele Forest

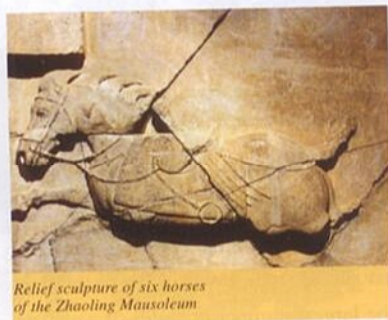
Qing Dynasty. Now the museum has seven exhibition halls for steles, eight pavilions for sheltering stone tablets, one stone-engraving art room, six corridors for showing tombstones and three temporary exhibition halls. The inscriptions on the tablets are rich in contents, integrating politics, history, culture and calligraphic art, so they are of important historical and artistic value. For instance, *Kaiyuan Stone Scriptures* are inscribed on both sides of 114 tablets, totaling over 650,000 words and being the large stone library to preserve important documents of ancient China. It is known as the "heaviest book" in the world. As a treasure house of calligraphic art, the Stele Forest gathers outstanding calligraphic works by famous calligraphers of the past ages. Various style of Chinese calligraphy can be



Stele Forest

seen here, such as seal, official, cursive, running and regular scripts.

The history exhibition halls introduce the politics, economy, culture and society of the Zhou, Qin, Han, Sui, Tang and other dynasties through cultural relics, pictures, drawings and models. Here visitors can find various kinds of exquisite ancient bronze wares of the slave society of the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 1100-771 B.C.), such as drinking vessels; the southward-pointing instrument (prototype of the compass) of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) and Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.); bricks of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.); tiles of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.); remaining murals, bronze materials and rammed earth pieces of the Epang Palace of the Qin Dynasty that were burnt down; iron production tools, bronze gear wheels and paper of the Han Dynasty; and gold and silver wares, bronze mirror and tri-color household utensils



Relief sculpture of six horses of the Zhaoqing Mausoleum



A memorial archway at the Stele Forest

of the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

The stone-carving art rooms contain more than 70 pieces of stone carvings from the second to 10th century, such as stone animals and frescoes of the Eastern Han Dynasty, a squatting lion and a rhinoceros of the Tang Dynasty, Buddhist statues and warriors, and world-renowned relief sculpture of six horses of the Zhaoqing Mausoleum. They are important materials for the study of China's ancient stone-carving art, customs, lifestyle and social systems.

Add: Old site of Confucius Temple, Sanxue Jie

Opening hours: 08:00-18:00

Admission: 30 yuan

Transport: It can be reached by bus Nos. 704, 2, 3, 6, 603 and 618. Please get off at South Gate and go through the Shuyuanmen Ancient-style Street. If tourists take bus No. 14, 213, 239 or 402, they should get off at Wenchang Gate.



### Great Ci'en Temple and Greater Wild Goose Pagoda

Located in the southern suburbs of Xi'an, both the Great Ci'en Temple and Greater Wild Goose Pagoda are key historical monuments under state protection and important symbols of Xi'an.

The Great Ci'en Temple, originally known as Tianlou Temple, was first constructed in the Sui Dynasty (581-618). When Li Zhi, Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty, was the crown prince, he had the temple renovated to commemorate his mother Empress Wende. In the Tang Dynasty, the temple was grand and gorgeous, including many buildings, pavilions, meditation rooms and over 10 courtyards. Eminent Monk Xuan Zang of the Tang Dynasty translated scriptures in Dadong Yard, and founded Ci'en Sect, an important sect of Chinese Buddhism. Hence the temple enjoyed a high reputation in the country then. After the Tang



Statue of Xuan Zang

Dynasty, the temple was destroyed by war time and again, and all the buildings burnt down except for the pagoda. Now the Grand Hall and other buildings in the temple were constructed

Great Ci'en Temple



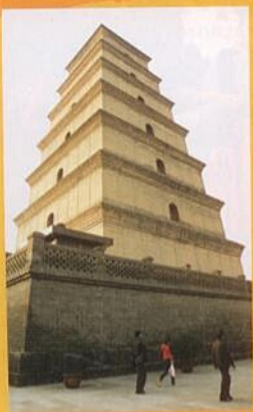
Burning joss sticks



in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

The seven-story Greater Wild Goose Pagoda was built in 652 (the third year of the Yonghui reign period of the Tang Dynasty) by the imperial house at the request of the renowned monk Xuan Zang, who had traveled to India and brought back many Buddhist scriptures. Xuan Zang housed all the scriptures in this pagoda. This square pavilion-like structure is built with earth, covered by bricks. Including the base, it is 64 meters high, solid and magnificent. The walls of each story are covered by thin, long and flat pillars and lintels made of bricks, and each story has a door in the middle. The door lintels and doorframes are deco-

Greater Wild Goose Pagoda



Inside the Great Ci'en Temple



Trees grow luxuriantly at the Great Ci'en Temple

rated with beautifully carved patterns, featuring well-arranged pictures and strong lines, which are important data for the study of China's ancient architecture. The pagoda is square inside too. Visitors may climb up a spiral staircase inside the pagoda to its top and enjoy a panoramic view of the southern suburbs of Xi'an. On both side of the south entrance of pagoda, there are two tablets engraved with the calligraphy of Chu Sui liang, a famous Tang Dynasty calligrapher, from the inscriptions by the Tang emperors—"Preface to the Sacred Tripitaka of the Tang Dynasty" by Li Shiming (Emperor Taizhong) and "Notes for the Preface to the Sacred Tripitaka of the Tang Dynasty" by Li Zhi (Emperor Gaozong).

Add: South to Yanta Lu

Opening hours: 08:00-17:00

Transport: It can be reached by bus Nos. 5, 19, 21, 22 and 601.

### Jianfu Temple and Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda

Located in Youyi Xilu, Nanmenwai, both the Jianfu Temple and Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda are national key historical monuments under state protection.

The Jianfu Temple, which originally stood in Kaihuafang, Chang'an during the Tang Dynasty, was the old residence of Princess Xiangcheng of Emperor Taizong. In 684, the relatives of the imperial family had it built for Emperor Gaozong to offer good wish, and named it Xianfu Temple. In 690, it was renamed Jianfu Temple. It was a famous temple in Chang'an in the Tang Dynasty. Now the temple consists of the gate, Bell and Drum towers, Cishi Pavilion, Grand Hall, Tower of Buddhist Scriptures, an ancient pagoda, etc. Yi Jing, an eminent monk of the Tang

Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda



Dynasty, went to India to study Buddhism. After returning home, he came to the Jianfu Temple, devoting himself to translating Buddhist scriptures. He translated 56 Buddhist scriptures altogether, and wrote a book *The Biography of a Tang Monk Who Went to the Western Regions for Scriptures*, which is of great value to the study of the cultural exchanges between China and India. The most cultural relics in the temple are tablets with inscriptions, including 43 since the Tang Dynasty, of which "Bodhisattva attendant" is a rare cultural relic of the Tang. The temple also houses more than 100,000 copies of ancient books, including over 200 types of rare ones. 10 ancient trees, such as a 1,000-year-old Chinese scholar tree also can be found in the temple. After being renovated in an all-round way, the temple looks more magnificent now, with spacious halls and beautiful courtyards.

Located in the Jianfu Temple, the Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda was built between 707 and 710 (the