

CHINA

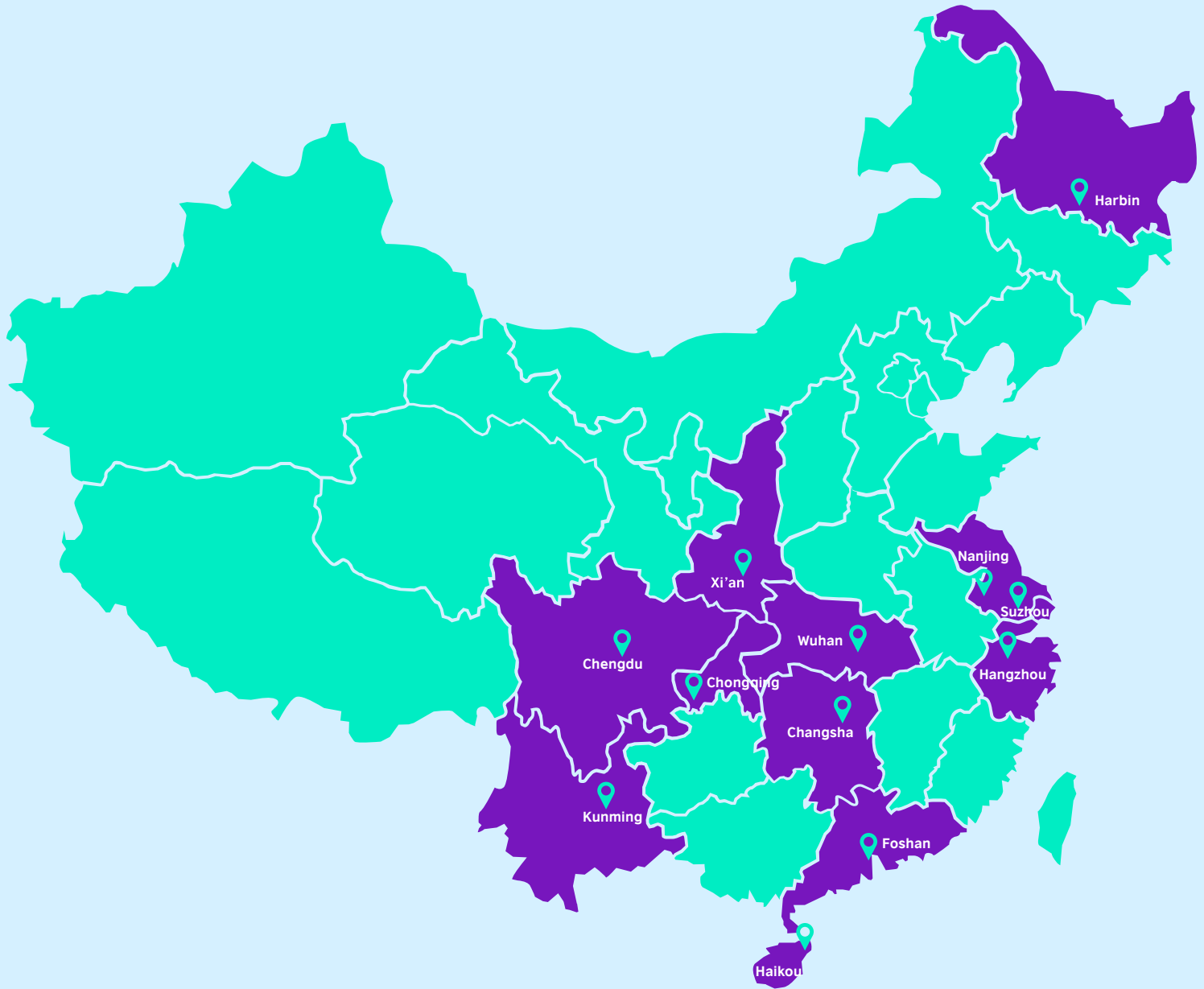
CULTURAL CITY PROFILE



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COUNTRY OVERVIEW



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CHINA IN NUMBERS

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

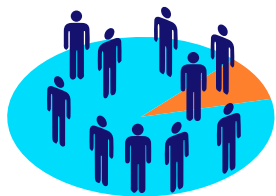
Cultural City Profile
China

GBP1 ≈ CNY9



MOBILITY & MIGRATION
70% INCREASE

Mobility and migration have increased by around 70% over the past decade (2010-2020), seeing a growing itinerant population who live and work outside their household registration (hukou) areas.

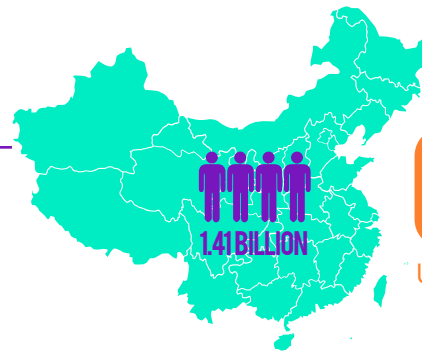


91%
Han ethnicity

The Han ethnic group accounts for 91% (1.28 billion people) of China's population. The overall population of ethnic minorities has grown by approximately 10% since 2010, and now stands at about 120 million people.

244 **PER CAPITA**
EDUCATION, CULTURE & RECREATION

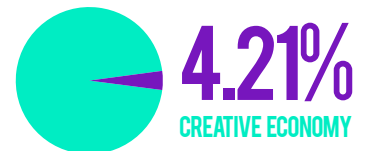
In 2018, nationwide disposable income per capita was approximately GBP 3,111 (CNY 28,000), while national spending per capita on the education, culture and recreation sectors totalled around GBP 244 (CNY 2,200).



64%
Urban population

China has a population of 1.41 billion (2020), according to the Seventh National Population Census. China's urban population accounts for 64% of its total population in 2020.

GDP PER CAPITA
7183



GDP per capita was GBP 7,183 (CNY 64,644) in 2018. Tertiary services contributed over 52% of the national GDP. The culture and creative sectors accounted for 4.2% of the national GDP in 2018.



56 WORLD
HERITAGE SITES

On the UNESCO World Heritage List, China has 38 listed cultural sites, 14 natural sites and 4 mixed sites.

2017 **TO TRIPLE x3** **2030**

Consumption in China's smaller cities is expected to triple between 2017 and 2030.

THE RISE OF NEW FIRST-TIER CITIES

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile
China

Diversity

The Han ethnic group accounts for 91% (1.28 billion people) of the country's population. Chinese minority populations have grown by 10% since 2010, and minority peoples now total around 120 million.

(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

Economy

Nationwide disposable income per capita was around RMB 28,000 in 2018. GDP per capita was RMB 64,644 in 2018. Tertiary services contributed over 52% of the national GDP.

(Source: Yicai)

China is a massive and diverse country of over 1.41 billion people. Over 170 Chinese cities have a population of over 1 million residents,¹ with an urban population of over 64% of China's total population.²

The 613 cities across China are commonly divided into four tiers, where the first-tier cities, including its capital Beijing, alongside Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, are the main hubs for domestic growth.³ Increasingly, second- and third-tier cities are focused on building their appeal and competitiveness as top destinations for local workers and foreign investors, thanks to their affordability and quality of life. These high-growth, high-prospect smaller cities are dubbed 'the new first-tier club' with growing economic and socio-cultural influence.⁴

Consumption in China's smaller cities is expected to triple between 2017 to 2030 due to population growth, continued rise in household income, and growing consumer spending.⁵ This includes a burgeoning appetite for cultural and creative goods, services and experiences.⁶

In 2018, a study on young audiences commissioned by the British Council found cultural consumption to be booming.⁷ As young families are willing to relocate to smaller cities, around half of potential cultural consumers are found in China's second-tier cities, with the rest split between first-tier megacities and emerging third-tier cities.⁸

As per recent central government directives to resolve a decline in population, emerging cities have relaxed their household registration system to not only appeal to highly-educated residents of first-tier cities, but also attract rural residents who may wish to relocate for education and work. Cities in the Yangtze Delta region, including Hangzhou, Suzhou and Nanjing, are early movers to secure creative workers for their expanding knowledge, cultural and creative economy.⁹

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (CCIs)

“ Products, goods and services, involving the creation, production, dissemination and exhibition of cultural content...This includes news and information services, content creation and production, creative design services, cultural communications channels, cultural investment and management, cultural entertainment and recreational services, auxiliary cultural production and mediation services, cultural equipment production, and cultural end product production (manufacturing to sales) National Bureau of Statistics of China¹⁵ ”

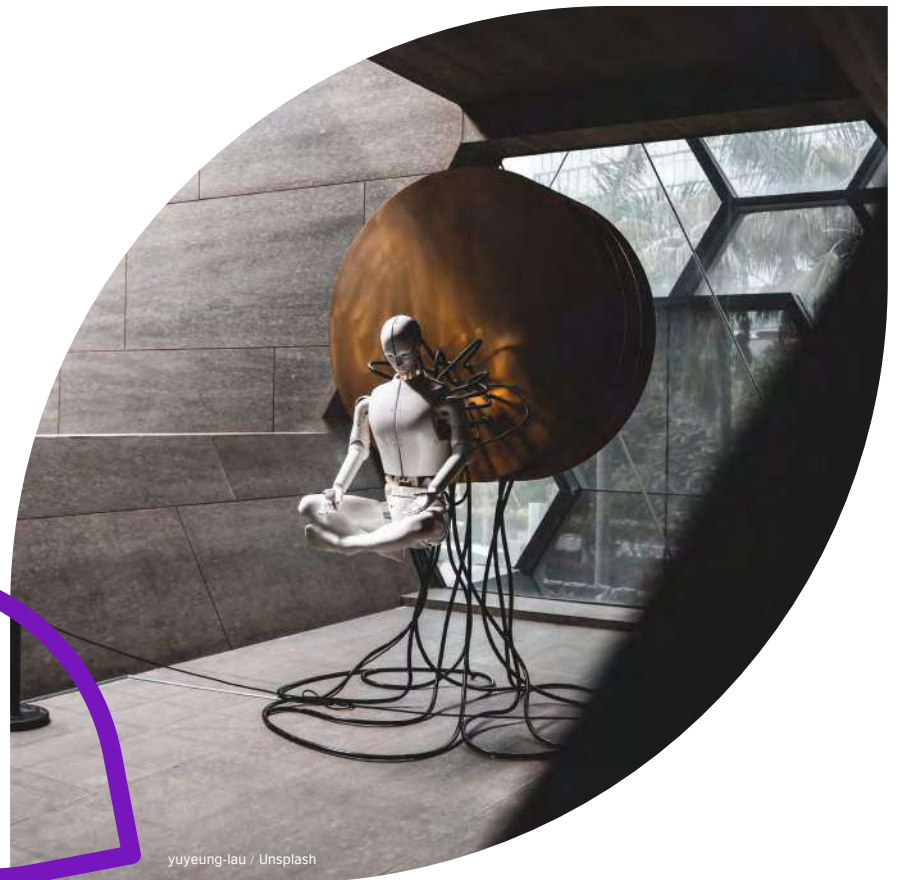
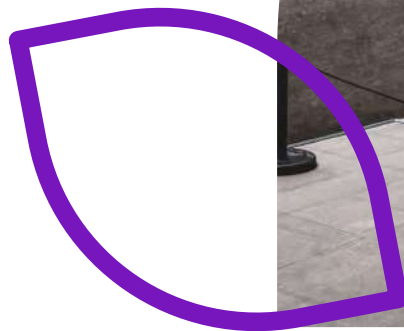
As a fast growth sector in China, the cultural and creative economy accounted for 4.21% of the national GDP in 2018.¹⁰ The combined import and export trade volume for cultural products in 2019 totalled GBP 84 billion (CNY 756 billion), indicating an 8.9% increase year-on-year.¹¹ National spending per capita on education, culture and recreation totalled about GBP 245 (CNY 2,200) in 2018.¹² Nationwide feature film production had an average annual growth rate of 13.6% between 2001 and 2018.¹³ The sector's high potential and ability to mobilise a wider value chain has made it a priority sector for central and local governments. It has received increasing attention and investment since the State Council identified digital and IP as a primary national development focus in 2016.¹⁴

Regulatory changes and policy directives in recent years have turned to supercharging the interconnectedness between the creative sector and sister industries such as tourism, digital, education and technology. Under this movement, the new Ministry of Culture and Tourism was formed in 2018, combining formerly separated ministries. Following this change, the CCIs received an updated definition:

The role of CCIs is championed throughout the 14th Five Year Plan published in early 2021, highlighting the sector's socio-economic potential to contribute to equitable and inclusive growth in terms of well-being, senior citizen care, early-childhood education and rural development.¹⁶ The plan also features heritage legacy, content production and digital intervention as the frontiers of international exchange along the Belt and Road. Cultural tourism and eco-tourism are positioned as dynamic drivers for rural regeneration and improved livelihoods.

Through the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, China's CCI sector collaborates frequently in international discussions and best practice exchanges to promote sustainable development goals. The UNESCO International Centre for Creativity and Sustainable Development (ICCSA) based in Beijing, published a Creative Sustainable Development Index (CSDI), which provides a research framework to anchor creativity and innovation in the wider global effort to realise urban sustainable development.¹⁷

As a harbinger of this change to embrace sustainable and equitable growth, in 2021 the Central Academy of Fine Arts, China – the most revered fine arts institute in the country – introduced a host of social-practice driven additions to their fine arts programmes, including placemaking disciplines such as art therapy, social design, eco-design, art and tech.



yuyeung-lau / Unsplash

GEN Z AND LIFESTYLE SHIFTS: BORN DIGITAL AND BUY ‘GLOCAL’

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile
China

Mobility and the gig economy

Despite the country's strict household registration (hukou) system, nationwide mobility and migration have increased by 70% over the past decade (2010-2020), seeing a growing itinerant population who live and work outside of their registered areas.

The number of people engaged in flexible employment reached 200 million in May 2021, according to the Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security. This population forms the backbone of the growing freelancer and gig economy in China.

(Source: Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security)

“ The change is being driven by Generation Z, or those born in the late 1990s, who grew up during a period of unprecedented domestic economic growth and China's rise to global prominence. This has instilled in them confidence, national pride and a sense of nostalgia for all things Chinese. They are also digital natives and, since they account for roughly 15% of the population, represent the engine for growth of domestic consumer spending, according to McKinsey & Co. Inc...This has been a boon to consumer startups, which have also benefited from more mature domestic supply chains, sophisticated manufacturing and, perhaps most importantly, slick, targeted marketing. ”

—Caixin¹⁸



China's burgeoning cultural and creative economy has been driven by a population of young, digitally-literate and entrepreneurial-minded producers and consumers. Audience interest in heritage and heritage IP has experienced a renaissance among Chinese millennials and Generation Z, contributing to a vogue of 'China chic' (guochao) and exponential growth in cultural consumption, which is in favour of homegrown cultural products.

This trend of 'going local' reflects an overall confidence and curiosity of the younger generation in Chinese designs. According to financial advisory group China Renaissance, this group of buyers



favour homegrown brands and domestically produced products compared to previous generations. Their spending power is expected to shoot up fourfold to around GBP 1.8 trillion (CNY 16 trillion) by 2035.¹⁹


Being digital natives, Gen Zers prefer to do their shopping online. This phenomenon gives increasing clout to key opinion leaders (KOLs) and online influencers who promote goods and services over livestreaming events via social media platforms such as Weibo, Douyin and Bilibili (China's versions of Twitter, TikTok and YouTube respectively). This digital shift accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the cultural world also transitioned online and influencer communities banded together with the cultural sector in solidarity.

China is also experiencing a boom in its gig economy, with an expanding creative sector that depends on flexible, knowledge-based workers. This recent trend has contributed to a growth in digital nomads and rural migrant workers. According to iResearch consulting firm, the gig economy in China is estimated to reach GBP 111 billion (CNY 1 trillion) in market contribution in 2022.²⁰ Lifestyle-driven, freelancing nomads have, during the Covid-19 pandemic, been attracted to emerging cities to enjoy a slower-paced and higher quality of life.²¹



yiran-ding / Unsplash

TRENDS AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



For this project, 12 emerging Chinese cities were mapped to capture the fast-changing landscape of China's cultural, creative, urban and environmental sectors. The research focuses on the ways in which local cultural ecosystems and creative practices contribute to sustainable and inclusive city design. The research also gives attention to the shifting audience profile and talent outlook brought about by digital and lifestyle changes within the last decade. A sample of case studies below illustrates market trends and potential areas for international collaborations, knowledge exchange and co-investment.

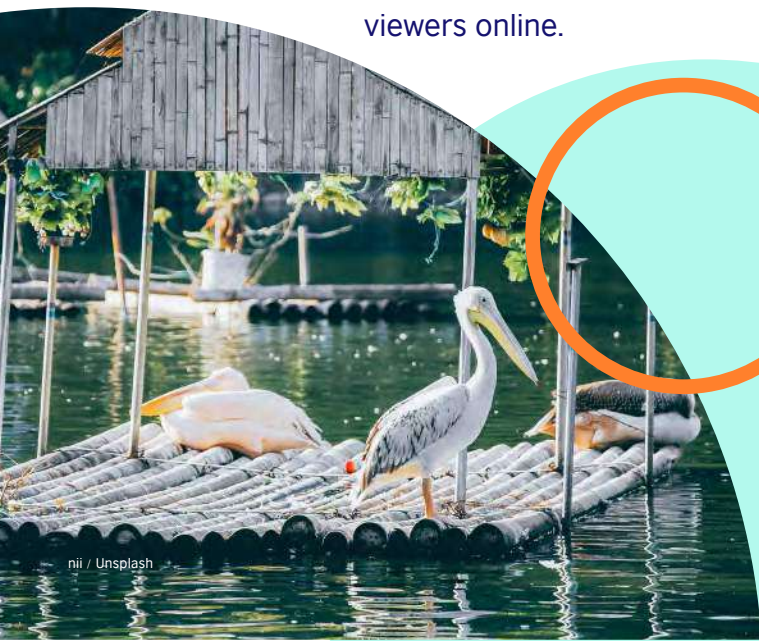
HERITAGE LEGACY IN A CONTEMPORARY CREATIVE ECONOMY

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile China

Museums and heritage sites increasingly turn to interactive and inclusive approaches to better attract a growing population of digitally-native, young cultural lovers and family groups.

- Cultural institutions such as Sanxingdui Museum and Chengdu Museum in Sichuan province have rejuvenated their programmes by providing digital guided tours, podcasts, 4D cinema and heritage-themed merchandise to appeal to this growing base of young consumers.
- In Haikou City, government efforts prioritise the preservation of intangible heritage. Through holding contests such as the Hainan Li & Miao Creative Cultural Design Artworks Tour Exhibition, which invites artists to incorporate traditional Li and Miao embroidery in modern design, the local government aims to increase R&D and IP integration of ethnic culture so younger generations of cultural consumers can become interested in traditional craftsmanship.²²
- Hesuoyou Lifestyle / Rongjin Culture, based in Harbin, is a domestic lifestyle brand promoting heritage IP through 'China chic' (guofeng). Celebrating makers culture, the brand not only works with local designers, but also operates a textile product line that collaborates with female craftmakers in rural China.²³
- During Covid-19, Xi'an Symphony Orchestra, with the average age of members being under 30, experimented with new types of programming based on a hybrid online-offline model. As part of this initiative, the orchestra performed classical music in heritage sites, surrounded by the Terracotta Soldiers or such outdoor sites as the historically-renowned City Wall and Huashan Mountain.²⁴ This series of performances combined some of the city's most iconic scenery with classical music, and attracted about 23 million viewers online.



PLACEMAKING, URBAN REGENERATION AND RURAL REVIVAL

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile China

Place-based cultural intervention is growing in prominence across smaller cities in China. This ranges from major infrastructure projects, to smaller, more independently-driven activities.

- Chongqing is a leading city in the research and practice of rural revitalisation with interdisciplinary place-making initiatives driven by universities, scholars, private investors, SMEs and entrepreneurs. In 2021, Chongqing hosted the Rural Revitalisation and Culture & Tourism Industry Development Summit Forum – a programme to convene thinkers and practitioners across China. Three flagship programmes were announced during the conference: the Rural Designers Training Programme, the Village Songs Programme, and a project that aims to preserve oral histories.²⁵
- DnA_Design and Architecture works with local authorities and communities in 70 villages across Songyang County, rural Hangzhou through a series of intervention programmes to revitalise local handicraft industries and community-based agricultural production ecosystems. Initiated in 2014, this multi-year project has not only created cultural tourism highlights and additional income for villagers, but also local participation rooted in identity.²⁶
- Founded in 2017, Han Shan Art Museum is a government-sponsored, privately-run museum in Suzhou. It features a wealth of exhibition programmes, rooted in place-based practices that bring together a community of arts practitioners in Suzhou. Building on Suzhou's legacy of the signature bell rings at Hangshan Temple, its latest native soundscape - *The Sonic Geography of Suzhou* - involved a series of curatorial practice and placemaking workshops involving musicians, artists, writers, designers, architects, theatre workers, urban designers, folk scholars, anthropologists and historians – all joining forces to co-create a contemporary iteration of Suzhou's soundscape.²⁷
- The Cittasflow Flower Art Exhibition / Land Art Festival, based in Yaxi, Gaochun in rural Nanjing, is a lifestyle-driven, placemaking rural revitalisation project. Taking inspiration from the success of Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in Japan, the exhibition aims to connect nature and cultural life by inviting local artists to create site-specific pieces.²⁸ Handicraft workshops, music performances and 'glamping' activities offer participants a new experience of rural tourism, while building an awareness around 'slow living' as a sustainable lifestyle.

CULTURE, INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile China

For emerging cities, creative hubs and alternative spaces such as bookshops provide a relatively safe space for cultural participation, as well as playing a role in the wider creative and innovation landscape.

- Half-City Book Club²⁹ in Nanjing is one of China's most popular women-only reading groups. Its events focus on empowering women and girls.

- Jinsha Site Museum in Chengdu has launched a sign-language workshop on WeChat mini programme, thereby widening access to its collections.

- 'Unlimited Youth' is a flagship project under the leadership of Foshan Grand Theatre to match lifestyle-sensitive young cultural practitioners with creative spaces in the city. The project's match-making scheme effectively connects public resources with mixed-use private partners to build up a local ecosystem across commercial venues, such as boutique hotels, ateliers, community centres and co-working spaces.³⁰



CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile China



Endeavours which aim at diversifying cultural tourism portfolios can be seen in most Chinese cities. Sustainability-minded grassroots programmes are common, often linked to wider environmental and green initiatives.

- Kunming-based project Gooday Sustainable Lifestyle is a social enterprise that promotes sustainable development and preservation of village culture. As part of this project, a century-old house was transformed into an educational and engagement hub which runs workshops on permaculture and sustainable living practices.³¹
- Inspired by sustainability and rooted in youth culture, Changsha's creative hub PLAN8T (P8) advocates for a balanced lifestyle between work, life and learning. P8 is home to over 30 start-ups and freelancers spanning the fields of design, art and technology. The PLAN8T Artist / Architect in Residence (P8AIR) programme invites international creative talent to live in Changsha and create new works related to new and prototype technologies in sustainable living.³²
- Held in conjunction with the *@Wuhan 2021*, the 2nd East Lake Ecological Sculpture Biennale, titled *100% @Wuhan*, is scheduled to take place from October 2021 to April 2022.³³ Initiated in 2017, the biennale is the first of its kind in China with an ecological art theme.

DIGITAL INTERVENTIONS IN CULTURE

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile China

China's developing e-commerce and digital sectors contribute to a well-connected online-offline ecosystem across the country. This has provided a solid infrastructure for digital intervention in culture.

- Xiangxuetang, a WeChat account co-developed by Chongqing Daily and the Institute of Rural Reconstruction of China at Southwest University, is an online capacity-building platform that offers rural communities online training, business consultation and knowledge exchange.



- During the Covid-19 pandemic, Hangzhou's literary community pioneered a partnership with livestreaming influencers and e-commerce platforms to raise awareness and muster consumer support for independent bookshops. Similar initiatives include a collaboration between OWSpace Bookstore with Viya, China's livestream sales icon, icon – to feature a collective of five independent bookshops across China. This online event attracted 145,000 viewers and achieved a revenue of GBP 77,778 (CNY 700,000).³⁴

PRIVATE SECTOR PATRONAGE AND ECOSYSTEM BUILDING

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile
China

Private patronage through cultural philanthropy and public-private co-investment is on the rise in emerging cities in China. These property-based creative hubs have become critical cultural centres and contributed to the development of local creative ecosystems through capacity-building and knowledge-making.

- Nanjing has a burgeoning private sector scene, underpinned by property-based, philanthropic projects, including the Sifang Art Museum, Beiqiu Museum of Contemporary Art, and G Museum. This reflects a local and wider national trend that highlights the role of contemporary art museums as socio-cultural hubs and drivers of economic development. These hubs enable a mainstreaming of art and culture through research, exhibition, collection and art education.

- Backed by the family behind the appliance brand Midea, He Art Museum was opened in Foshan in October 2020. With a mission to grow Foshan's contemporary art scene, the museum features a host of family-friendly activities, such as art and handicraft courses and glass-making workshops.

- Since the 2010s, Wuhan's contemporary art scene has taken off with the opening of several private art museums and art spaces, notably the United Art Museum and K11 Art Village. By joining forces with state-owned institutions and universities such as Hubei Museum of Art and Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, Wuhan is showing immense potential in following in the footsteps of Beijing and Shanghai to become one of the most important contemporary art hubs in China.

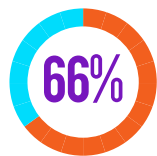


CITY HEADLINES

Harbin is a UNESCO City of Music and a historical hub for cross-border trade and exchange. Its cultural landscape is unique due to historical ties and geo-cultural affinity with Eurasia, the Mongolian-Manchurian grasslands, and the Korean Peninsula. With a strong higher education sector and a budding fashion industry, Harbin is becoming a promising creative centre along the Northern route of the Belt and Road.



9.5
MILLION



66%
TERTIARY
INDUSTRY



56
BILLION



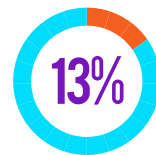
ICE CITY

- The capital of Heilongjiang province, in far northeast China.
- Population: 9.5 million; GDP: GBP 56 billion (CNY 500 billion).
- Tertiary industries, such as foreign trade, finance, insurance and tourism, contribute to 66% of the city's GDP.
- Its long and bitter winter give Harbin the title of Ice City, featuring a winter sports economy. The Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival is the largest of its kind in the world.

Xi'an is the starting point of the ancient Silk Road, and is the gateway between China and central Asia. This historically significant metropolis has a deep legacy in foreign trade and cultural exchange. The city has a heritage sector, a vibrant museum community, and a burgeoning music scene. It is home to a total of six UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the Terracotta Warriors.



8.2
MILLION



13%
CULTURAL
AND
TOURISM
INDUSTRY



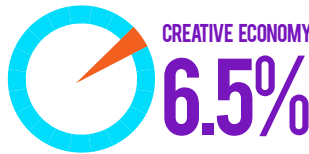
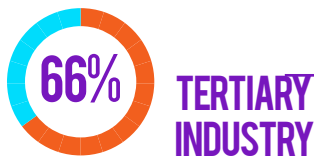
111
BILLION



**LIVING
MUSEUM**

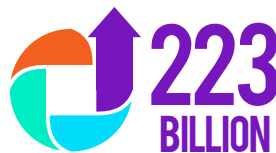
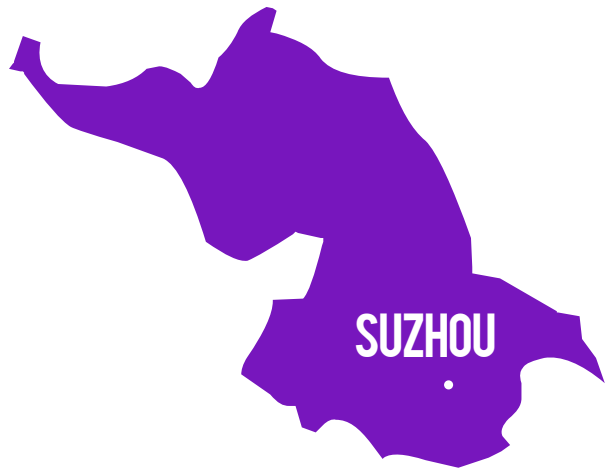
- The capital of Shaanxi province, in northwest China.
- Population: 8.2 million; GDP: GBP 111 billion (CNY 1 trillion).
- Its cultural and tourism industry is the primary economic driver of the city, accounting for 13% GDP in 2019.
- Serving as the capital of thirteen dynasties, Xi'an is a living museum of ancient Chinese civilisation.

Nanjing is a UNESCO City of Literature. As the former southern capital and a river port city steeped in a long history of trade, this metropolis has long served as an international hub of China - both economically and culturally. The city is endowed with a rich and engaging cultural ecosystem and benefits from a highly-educated workforce due to its high-tech sector, forming a young and astute cultural consumer pool.



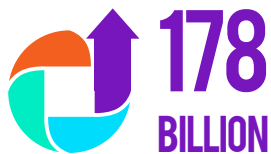
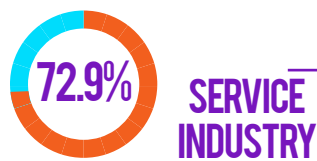
- The capital of Jiangsu province, in eastern China.
- Population: 9.3 million; GDP: GBP 167 billion (CNY 1.5 trillion).
- Known as 'the Capital of Six Dynasties', Nanjing's history dates back to the year 3 A.D.
- 3.2 million people in Nanjing are educated to a university level or higher.
- The cultural and creative economy of Nanjing contributes to 6.5% of the city's GDP.

Suzhou, a UNESCO City of Crafts and Folk Art and dubbed 'Venice of the East', has long been a haven of ancient Chinese literati high culture. One of the fastest growing clusters in new science and green innovation, the city has an established network of public and private infrastructure in the creative and cultural industries, including museum and theatre facilities, competitive higher education institutes, and a vibrant grassroots cultural community.



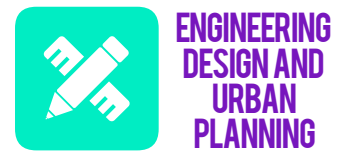
- Located in Jiangsu province, East China – an influential cultural and economic engine in the Yangtze River Delta region.
- Population: 12.7 million; GDP: GBP 223 billion (CNY 2.01 trillion)
- Suzhou's rich cultural legacy and picturesque landscape is laden with canals, bridges, and the classic gardens.
- Suzhou Creative & Design Cultural Industry Expo (CCDE) is the largest and most professional trade show in the field of creative design in China.

Hangzhou, a UNESCO City of Crafts and Folk Art, has a legacy in foreign trade and international cultural exchange, with the city's roots in silk, tea, and porcelain-related industries. A leader in innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity, Hangzhou is a major digital and tech hub in China. The city has a deep history and a dynamic role in the contemporary Chinese art scene, luring both domestic and international talent to the city.



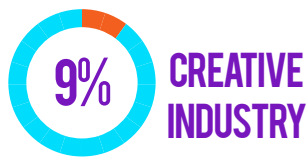
- The capital city of Zhejiang province, East China – a vibrant economy in the Yangtze River Delta region.
- Population: 11.9 million; GDP: GBP 178 billion (CNY 1.61 trillion).
- The city's service industry contributes to 72.9% of its GDP. The digital sector, composed of a comprehensive infrastructure for online-offline logistical system for e-commerce, is a critical driver of the city's economic vitality.
- Known as the 'house of silk', Hangzhou is a renowned commercial and culture node on the silk road.

Wuhan, a UNESCO City of Design, has cultural and creative development at the core of its public agenda. As a historically industrial city, with deep roots in steel and iron, Wuhan is transforming into a bastion for next-generation industries in automobile, IT, life health and intelligent manufacturing. The city's established infrastructure makes it a rising national cultural hub for creative talent and investment.



- The capital of Hubei province, in central China.
- Population: 12 million; GDP: GBP 173 billion (CNY 1.56 trillion) in 2020 and ranked 9th in the country.
- Among design disciplines, Wuhan excels in engineering design and urban planning.
- East Lake High-tech Zone, also known as Optics Valley of China (OVC), housing the Wuhan Creative World cultural park, is 'one of the three most talent-intensive areas in China'.

As a UNESCO City of Media Arts, Changsha has an established infrastructure for film, TV and content production. The city's content sector has shaped the country's entertainment industry and remains a dominant influence in TV, streaming, animation and publishing sectors. Dubbed as China's top 'internet-famous' city, Changsha enjoys a national profile thanks to its early lead in IP / content development and a booming nightlife economy marked by rich gastronomical offerings.



- The capital of Hunan province, and one of the largest cities in central China.
- Population: 10 million; GDP: GBP 133 billion (CNY 1.2 trillion).
- Changsha's cultural and creative industries contribute GBP 33 billion (CNY 300 billion) to the economy of Changsha annually, which accounts for 9% of its GDP.
- Thanks to a well-distributed 5G network, the city is the trial ground of autonomous driving buses operated by Baidu's Apollo system, and the first in China to roll out a self-driving taxi service for the public.

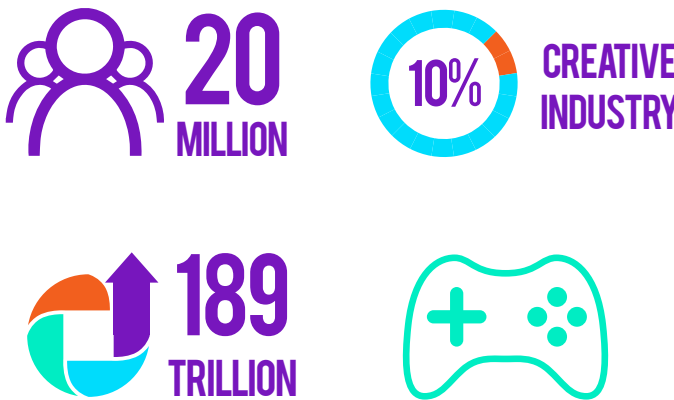
Chongqing, dubbed a cyberpunk city, has a dynamic and inventive cityscape, where contemporary architecture embraces the challenges brought about by its mountainous terrain. Skyscrapers intermix with street markets – providing visual thrills and a constantly changing urban fabric. With a legacy of steel manufacturing leaving behind dilapidated factory spaces, Chongqing has become a national leader in research and practices for placemaking, urban regeneration and revitalisation.



**SPONGE
CITY**

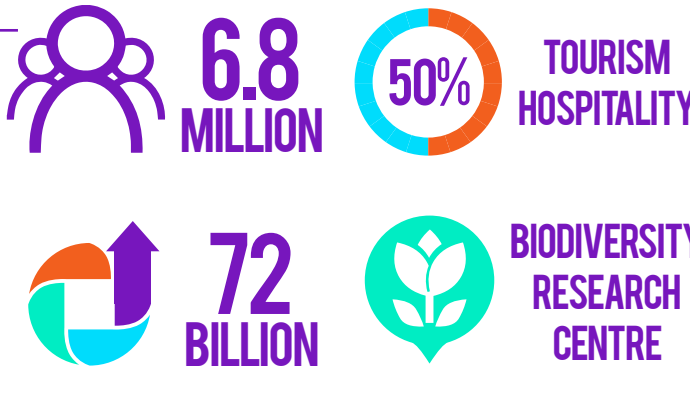
- The largest municipality in China, located in China's southwest region.
- Population: 33.92 million; GDP: GBP 278 billion (CNY 2.5 trillion).
- Cultural tourism is a major engine of the city's economy. In 2020, Chongqing attracted 64.41 million tourists, and 3.9% of the city's GDP that year came from tourism.
- The city was selected as one of the pilot cities to roll out the Sponge City initiative – a pioneering water management system.

Chengdu, a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, is one of the most liveable cities in China. The city embraces sustainable development, with cityscape dotted with parklands, greenbelts and cycling trails. Its laidback lifestyle, cultural inclusivity and lower living cost make it an attractive destination for young creative talent, and an increasingly important regional cultural hub.



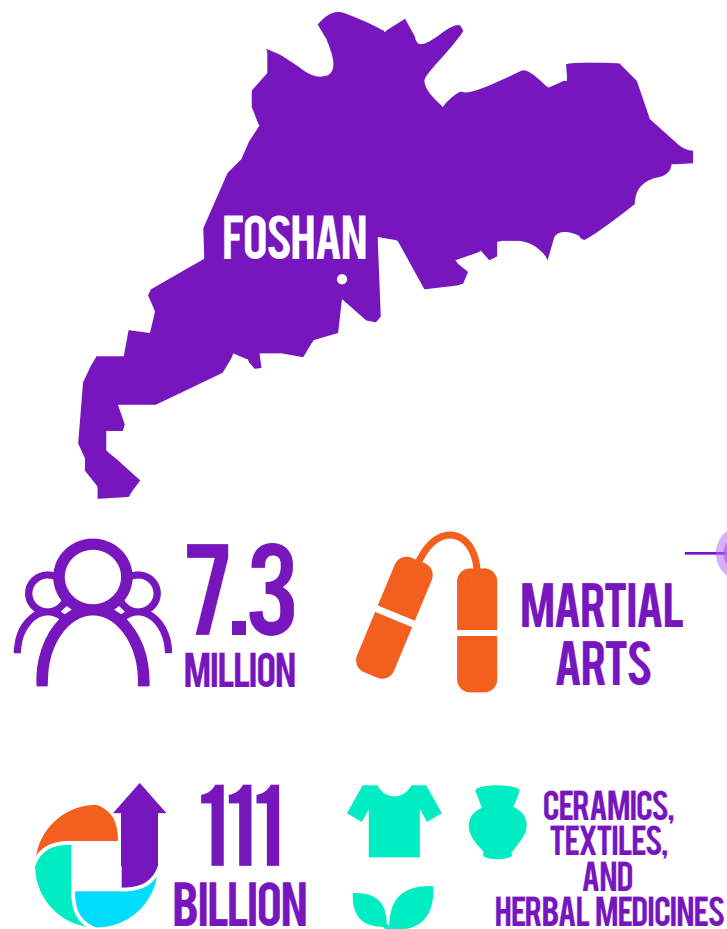
- The capital city of Sichuan province, in southwestern China.
- Population: 20 million; GDP: GBP 189 billion (CNY 1.7 trillion).
- Creative industries contribute over 10% of the city's GDP.
- The city is a rising hub for gaming industries and has a vibrant underground music scene.

Kunming is a regional logistical hub linked to the ASEAN Free Trade Zone. Thanks to its provinces diverse topography and micro-climate, the city has become the country's top research centre in biodiversity and sustainable development. The city is also home to the largest number of international NGOs, research institutes and foundations in China dedicated to climate justice and biodiversity.



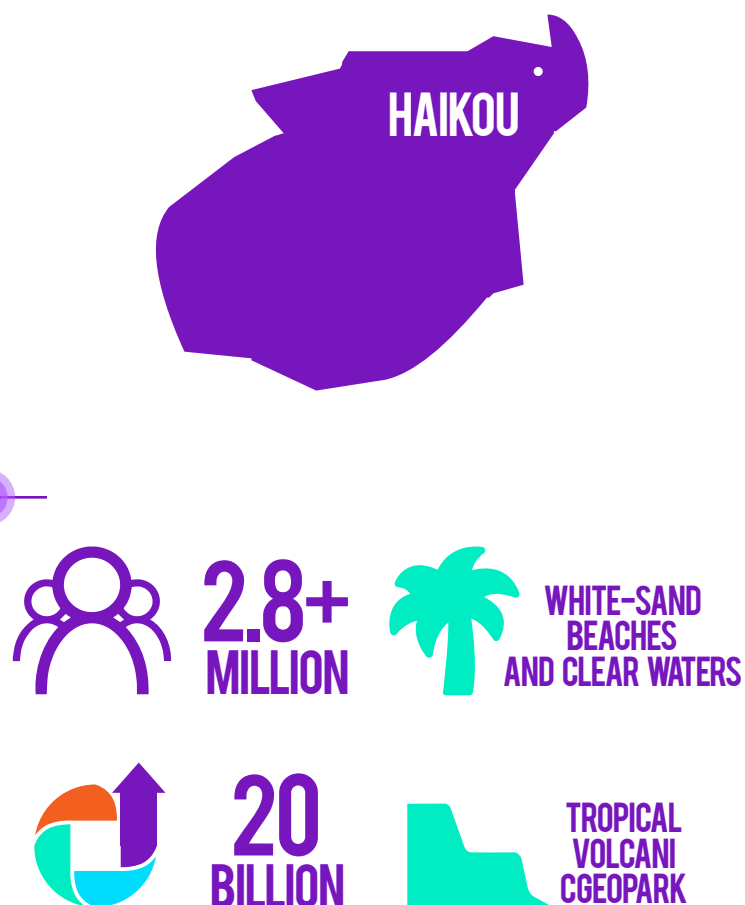
- The capital of Yunnan province, in southwestern China and the geographical centre of Asia
- Population: 6.8 million; GDP: GBP 72 billion (CNY 648 billion).
- Tourism and hospitality are the two major economic engines, contributing to about half of the province's GDP.
- Dounan International Flower Centre is the largest flower production base in China. Kunming was also the host of the World Judicial Conference on the Environment and the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in 2021.

At the heart of the economically vibrant Pearl River Delta, Foshan enjoys strategic importance as a crucial node of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Bay Area. Foshan is a bastion of the Lingnan Culture and is known as the Home of Ceramics and the City of Martial Arts. Its relative affordability and geo-cultural affinity have elevated the city as a top destination for regional start-ups in the Greater Bay Area.



- Located in Guangdong province, in southern China.
- Population: 7.3 million; GDP: GBP 111 billion (CNY 1 trillion).
- Since the 14th century, Foshan has served as a gateway for the distribution of goods and a production base for ceramics, textiles, and herbal medicines.
- Kungfu masters Wong Feihong, Yip Man and film star Bruce Lee practiced a form of martial arts which originated in Foshan. To honour this heritage, international competitions are regularly held to secure Foshan's role as a global leader in martial arts.

A strategic base on the Maritime Silk Road, Haikou is a seabound city rich in oceanic and volcanic resources. A province-wide Pilot Free Trade Zone, launched in 2018, has kickstarted favourable policies to transform the city into a regional hub in R&D, tourism, services and technology. The city's cultural and creative industries focus on intangible heritage preservation, activation and research, and Haikou also plays a leading role in the field of maritime archaeology.



- Located in Hainan province, southern China.
- Population: 2.8 million; GDP: GBP 20 billion (CNY 180 billion).
- dubbed the 'Hawaii of the East' and 'Coconut City' thanks to its long coastline featuring white-sand beaches and crystal-clear waters.
- Home to Leiqiong UNESCO Global Geopark, the only tropical volcanic geopark in the country. It became part of the UNESCO Global Geopark Network in 2006.

HĀR BĪN

哈尔滨

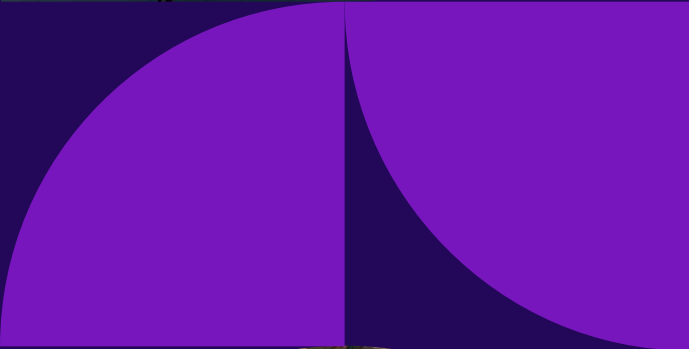
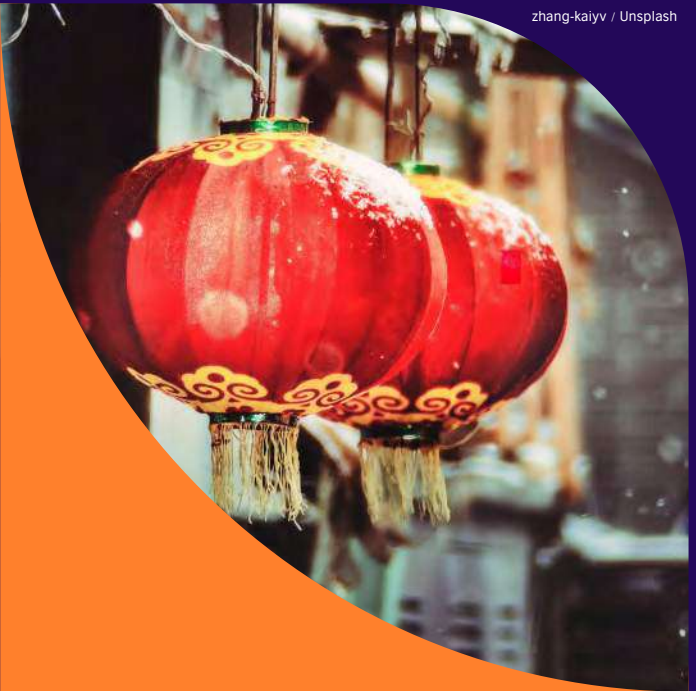
CHINA

Cultural City Profile

flynn-fan / unsplash



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Aserusainhuu / unsplash



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INTRODUCING HARBIN

HARBIN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

“ Home to the wondrous Harbin Ice & Snow Festival, and the world’s largest indoor ski facility, the capital of Heilongjiang...is a stylish city and a highlight of any trip through Dongbei (the northeastern China)...The city’s sights are as varied as the architectural styles on the old street. Temples, churches and synagogues coexist, while deep in the southern suburbs a former Japanese germ-warfare base is a sobering reminder of less harmonious times. ”

—Lonely Planet¹

A historical hub for international trade and cultural exchange, Harbin is the capital of Heilongjiang Province in northeastern China, and is home to ethnic Jin and Manchurian culture. The city’s unique blend of cultures differentiates it from its peers in China due to its historical ties and geographical affinity with Russian and Jewish cultures as well as Mongolian-Manchurian grasslands, the Korean peninsula and Japan.² The city was once a base for Russian military operations and in the early 20th century had the largest Russian population outside the Soviet Union. Although many of its Russian-built buildings were replaced after World War II when the Chinese government took back the city from Soviet occupation, Harbin is still referred to as the ‘Eastern Moscow’ or ‘Oriental Moscow’. The Daoli district is home to the renowned St. Sophia Church, the largest Eastern Orthodox church in the Far East with more than 112 years of history.

Harbin was once the largest Jewish centre in China – a haven for Jewish émigrés from Russia, who escaped to the city from persecution during the world wars. Cultural legacy from this period can still be found in Harbin, including a Jewish cemetery, synagogues, banks, high schools and hospitals. The city was



also the site of the notorious Unit 731, the largest bacteriological warfare facility operated by the Japanese during World War II, where thousands of victims were killed from lethal human experimentation. The remnants of the site are now a museum to remember the loss of life and crimes against humanity.³

The population of Harbin is approximately 9.5 million, and its GDP was recorded at over GBP 56 billion (CNY 500 billion) in 2020. Tertiary industries, such as finance, insurance and tourism, contribute 66% of the city's GDP.⁴ The city's largest international event of the year is the Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival (from January to mid-March). The festival is held across several sites, covering 750,000m², with Harbin Ice and Snow World being the signature venue.⁵ For the event, ice sculptors spend months, and sometimes even years, to create ice art installations. These frequently take inspiration from architectural wonders, folklore and traditional crafts.

Harbin was named UNESCO City of Music in 2010. It is home to the Zaha Hadid-inspired, eco-conscious Grand Theatre, designed by MAD architect Ma Yansong.⁶ The city is also a reputable centre for higher education. Its research expertise in science and technology give it a national profile, housing well-regarded institutions such as the Harbin Institute of Technology, a central member of the University Alliance of the Silk Road.⁷



max-zhang / Unsplash

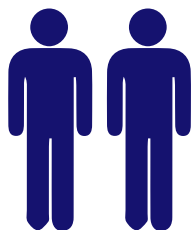


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HARBIN IN NUMBERS

HARBIN

Cultural City Profile
China



47

ETHNIC MINORITIES

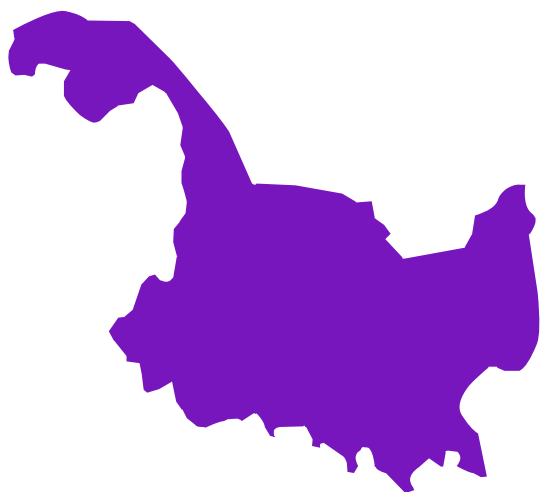
There are 47 ethnic minorities in Harbin, including the Manchu, Chaoxian, Hui, Mongolian and Sibe in Harbin. Different religions coexist, including Bud-dhism, Taoism, Christianity, Catholicism, Islam and Orthodox Christianity.



16.8°C

-38°C

Harbin's average winter temperature is -16.8°C and can drop as low as -38°C.



The city's unique blend of cultures differentiates it from its peers in China due to its historical ties and geographical affinity with Russia, Jewish culture, the Korean peninsula and Japan. Harbin is referred to as the 'Eastern Moscow' or 'Oriental Moscow'. The city was also once dubbed as 'Paris of the East' not only because of its European architecture, but also for the city's passion for textiles and clothing.



The city's research expertise in science and technology give it a national profile, housing well-regarded institutions such as the Harbin Institute of Technology, a central member of the University Alliance of the Silk Road.



Harbin was named UNESCO City of Music in 2010.

GDP
56 BILLION

9.5
MILLION



The population of Harbin is approximately 9.5 million, and its GDP was recorded at over GBP 56 billion (CNY 500 billion) in 2020. Tertiary industries, such as finance, insurance and tourism, contribute 66% of the city's GDP.

750,000M²

The Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival is held across several sites, covering 750,000m². It is a major international event.

CONTEXT

“ Harbin, the venerable Ice City, is known for its picturesque Russian-influenced architecture, its magnificent ice sculptures and the bitterly cold winters giving rise to them. Owing to its historic trade link with Russia, this former village has swelled over recent centuries to become the capital and largest city in China’s north-western Heilongjiang Province. ”

–Crown Relocations⁸

Known as the ‘Ice City’, Harbin is characterised by its long winters and short summers. Due to its proximity to Siberia, winter temperatures in Harbin average -16.8°C and can plunge to a bone-chilling -38°C .

Harbin’s geographic location and historical background make it one of the most diverse cities in China. There are 47 ethnic minorities in Harbin, including the Manchu, Chaoxian, Hui, Mongolian and Sibe across the city, with the Manchu making up the largest segment of the population.⁹ Different religions coexist and flourish in Harbin, including Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Catholicism, Islam and Orthodox Christianity.¹⁰

HERITAGE LEGACY: MUSIC, ARCHITECTURE

HARBIN

Cultural City Profile
China

Harbin has long served as the gateway to Eurasia and as a portal for cross-border exchange and trade with the West. Trade and international exchange accelerated with continental Europe after Russian's construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1898, which extended the Trans-Siberian Railway and significantly reduced the travel time between China and Russia.

Cultural influence from Russia can be observed in both the city's architecture and music. Harbin is home to the oldest orchestra in China, with The Harbin Symphony Orchestra founded in 1908. Its predecessor, The Chinese Eastern Railway Club Symphony Orchestra, was formulated by Russian musicians who presented the first symphony concert in China.¹¹ The first music school in China was also founded in Harbin, namely Harbin No.1 Music School, in 1928. The Harbin Summer Music Concert is a national concert festival founded in 1961, attracting musical talent and music lovers to the city every year as a major contributor to the city's cultural appeal.

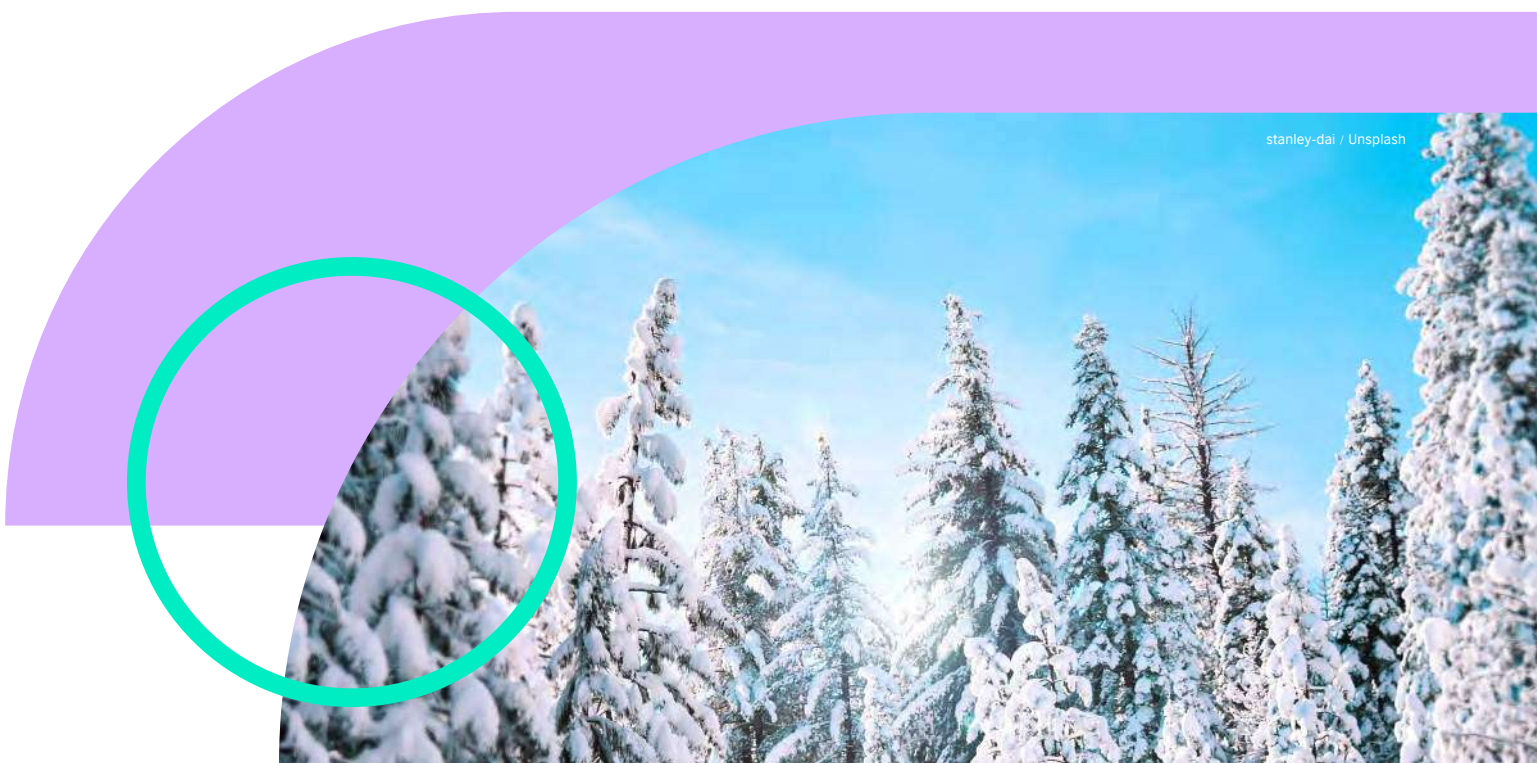
In 2010, Harbin was named a UNESCO City of Music. Harbin Grand Theatre, which hosts an opera house, is a daring architectural design by MAD Architects in 2015. It serves as the centrepiece of Harbin Cultural island. It consists of a grand theatre and a small theatre, which can accommodate approximately 2,000 people. The exterior of the building is also accessible to the public, allowing visitors to go up to the rooftop terrace to admire the Harbin skyline.



Harbin people are known for their love of beer. Harbin has the oldest breweries in China and is ranked first in per capita beer consumption.¹² Back in 1900, a Russian founded a brewery in Northeast China to supply Russian workers constructing the railway. It was renamed Harbin Brewery in 1950 and gradually developed into China's fourth largest brewery.¹³

Northeastern China is the origin of Jin and Manchurian cultures. In the 12th century, Wanyan Aguda unified the Nuzhen tribes (also known as Jurchens, a Tungus people who roamed the region of Northeast China until the 17th century, when they became known as the Manchus) and established the Jin Dynasty. Acheng (now a part of Harbin) was made the capital by Wanyan Aguda, where the emperor built his palace complex. The economic, political, military and cultural might of the Jurchen people made Acheng one of the most significant centres in the region. Harbin Jinyuan Cultural Tourist Area, 23km from downtown, is a heritage cluster that conserves and revives the artefacts, architecture and cultural traditions of the Jin Dynasty.¹⁴

The contemporary art scene in the city started to bud in the early 2010s when local business enterprise, Hong Bo Group revitalised an old machinery factory into a 128,000m² multi-purpose complex named the West Red Square. The square retained the signature red-brick building blocks from the factory and transformed them into a commercial and cultural centre. The revitalisation approach was inspired by Tate Modern and 798 Zone in Beijing, according to Wang Limei, General Manager of Hong Bo Group.



CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

In 2019, the Chinese government launched a campaign to accelerate the development of creative and cultural industries in Heilongjiang Province, with an ambition to elevate it into ‘a province of strong culture’. To realise such an ambition, the Department of Culture and Tourism of the province indicated 6 industries for priority investment: performing arts and entertainment, arts and crafts, fine art, creative design and digital culture.¹⁵

To support traditional handicrafts and the creative design industries, the first Harbin Creative Culture Season was held in 2021 in the form of an outdoor handicraft market. Over 100 exhibitors brought handmade products such as folk crafts, creative handicrafts and local delicacies to their stalls. During the two-day event, performances, live band shows, stand-up talks and catwalk of Hanfu (traditional clothing worn by Han people) were held to provide an all-round recreational experience.¹⁶

Higher education institutions play a vital policy role in connecting the city’s cultural fabric. Harbin is known for the research expertise in science and technology, and is home to many universities, including the highly regarded Harbin Institute of Technology. It is one of the universities in the Chinese C9 League, an official alliance of nine universities in China, which is referred to as China’s Ivy League.¹⁷ Universities in Harbin are active in international outreach, for example Harbin Engineering University has built relationships with the University of California Berkeley, the University of Sydney and the Far Eastern National University of Russia,¹⁸ while Harbin Institute of Technology is a member of the University Alliance of the Silk Road.¹⁹

LAND OF ICE AND SNOW: WINTER AND SPORTS TOURISM

HARBIN
—
Cultural City Profile
China

Harbin was rated as the top city among ‘China Top 10 Ice and Snow Tourism Cities’ and claimed a cultural ambition to develop into a ‘World Famous City of Ice and Snow Tourism’, according to the *Report on development of ice and snow tourism in China 2021* released by the China Tourism Academy in January 2021.²⁰

With an aim to capitalise on an ‘ice and snow economy’, the city expects to benefit from the nation-wide momentum generated by the upcoming 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games and China’s 14th five-year plan (2021-2025) to build an internationally influential ice and snow tourism belt in the Northern region. Harbin is also the first city in China to host world-class winter sports events, such as the 3rd Asian Winter Games in 1996 and 24th Winter Universiade in 2009.²¹ By hosting international festivals and expos, Harbin is forging a leading role as a world-class destination of ice and snow culture and winter tourism.

Due to global travel restrictions in the past two years, China has turned its focus to domestic tourism. Ad campaigns entice travelers from the southern regions of China through virtual tours highlighting the major attractions of the Harbin and Heilongjiang Province. The Ice-Snow World and Sun Island Snow Expo launched activities and dance performances on their official WeChat accounts; and Songhua Rive Ice & Snow Carnival streamed on Tik Tok to widen appeal.²²



ray-hennessy / Unsplash

CITY OF FASHION

HARBIN

Cultural City Profile
China

Harbin has deep roots in the textile and fashion industries. The city was once dubbed as 'Paris of the East' not only because of its European architecture, but also for the city's passion for textiles and clothing. Harbin Fashion Week (HFW)²³, organised for eight consecutive years at the West Red Square, regularly attracts more than 1,300 international designers from over 70 countries and territories. The week-long event includes fashion shows, art exhibitions, fashion forums, showrooms and fashion fairs.



“ Fashion culture is the name card of Harbin, and it should be discovered and promoted. Harbin Fashion Week will become more internationalised and innovative. Through fashion, Harbin's charm can be introduced to the country and the world. ”

—Wang Limei, President of Heilongjiang Textile Association and General Manager, Hong Bo Group²⁴

HFW has become a platform for emerging fashion designers to showcase their works, kickstart fashion businesses and accelerate their careers to the next stage. During the fashion week, there are pop-up showrooms at the Red West Square and year-long online showcases, which provide an attractive opportunity for emerging designers to present and promote their works to potential buyers.²⁵ In the 2019 edition, students majoring in fashion design from Harbin Normal University, Harbin College, Heilongjiang University and Harbin Huade University, organised and presented a joint fashion show, featuring new talent and heritage-inspired collections.²⁶ An interdisciplinary sharing session was held in 2019 where artists and designers from countries such as Armenia, Germany, Russia and India were invited to join conversations bridging art and fashion.²⁷

To attract international talent and encourage the exchange of ideas, HFW initiated the World Fashion Week Alliance (WFWA).²⁸ Fashion agencies and media work together to encourage cross-cultural exchanges and international cooperation for design talent, fashion brands and industry players. World Fashion Week Alliance members and collaborating fashion agencies include:

- Harbin Fashion Week
- Belarus Fashion Week
- Russian St. Petersburg Aurora Fashion Week
- Oleg Art Fashion Production Company
- Vanity Fashion Production Company
- Pavleye Art and Fashion

In the West Red Shopping Mall Creative Centre, designer workshop was set up to assist foreign artists and designers by providing a business environment and workspace for design-making and display, as well as a programme to help young designers make industry connections and facilitate deal making.²⁹



CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to the Ice and Snow World, Sun Island is the other main exhibition area which showcases Harbin's famous ice and snow sculptures during the winter. This scenic spot is located on the northern side of the Yonghua River and is a popular destination for cultural activities. There are a cluster of museums on the Sun Island, including the Yu Zhixue Art Museum, Russian Art Exhibition Hall, Northern Folk Art Boutique Museum, the Sun Island Art Museum, Harbin Ice and Snow Culture Exhibition Hall and the Sun Island Sino-Russian Oil Painting Artistic Creation Exchange Base.³⁰ Surrounded by greenery and lakes, the island cluster is designed with a mindful approach to its natural environment and seasonal changes, making it idyllic to experience the beauty of Harbin across four distinct seasons.

As an important hub for contemporary art, the Harbin West Red Art Museum was established in 2014 within the rejuvenated West Red Square quarter, and has since held regular art exhibitions, artist sharing sessions and music performances.³¹ The art museum and the square aims to nurture emerging artists in Harbin, expecting to provide 100 artist studios for potential art practitioners.³² The cluster is also positioned as a creative intervention that aims to bring art into the community and closer to everyday life.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

HARBIN

Cultural City Profile
China

Harbin's diverse history is evidenced by its rich collection of cultural institutions. With many of these housed in the Baroque and Byzantine-influenced heritage architecture of the early 20th century, walking the old city and visiting them is like stepping into a living museum.

St. Sophia Church/Harbin Architecture Art Gallery³³

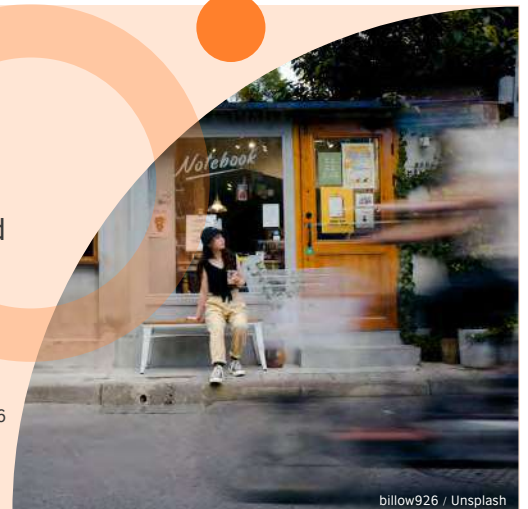
The most iconic architecture in Harbin might be the former St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, which was first built in 1907 and underwent several restorations in the early 20th century. It was later established as the Harbin Architecture Art Gallery and houses exhibitions on the history of Harbin and the church.

Harbin Grand Theatre³⁴

The theatre is part of the Harbin Cultural Island project – which includes an opera house, a cultural centre, and the surrounding wetland landscape along Harbin's Songhua River. Designed by MAD Architects, the swirling building complex blends in with the surrounding environment. It was awarded ArchDaily Building of the Year in 2016.³⁵

“ We envision Harbin Opera House as a cultural centre of the future – a tremendous performance venue, as well as a dramatic public space that embodies the integration of human, art and the city identity, while synergistically blending with the surrounding nature. ”

–MAD Architects³⁶



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Harbin Concert Hall | Harbin Symphony Orchestra³⁷

Home to the Harbin Symphony Orchestra, the Harbin Concert Hall contains a main 1200-seat performance hall and a 400-seat smaller theatre, with a design inspired by a floating ice crystal.

Harbin Conservatory of Music³⁸

Founded in 2016, Harbin Conservatory of Music is the only independently-established, state-run institution of higher learning for arts in Heilongjiang Province. Its campus houses a music hall, a recording studio, 294 piano rooms and nine rehearsal halls. It has an international faculty, featuring eight Russian experts as teachers of the conservatory.

Harbin West Red Art Museum³⁹

Established in 2014, West Red Art Museum is the first contemporary art museum in Harbin in the rejuvenated West Red Square. It held the first experiential art exhibition in the Heilongjiang region in 2019. Its exhibition programme is diverse, including large-scale paintings, installations, sculptures, digital art, new music, experimental and interdisciplinary art.

Heilongjiang Art Museum⁴⁰

Founded in 1962, Heilongjiang Art Museum is situated in a typical 19th century European architectural style building. It has a collection of over 16,000 pieces ranging from Chinese and international modern art to works produced locally in Heilongjiang. It hosts regular art talks and workshops for students and the public.

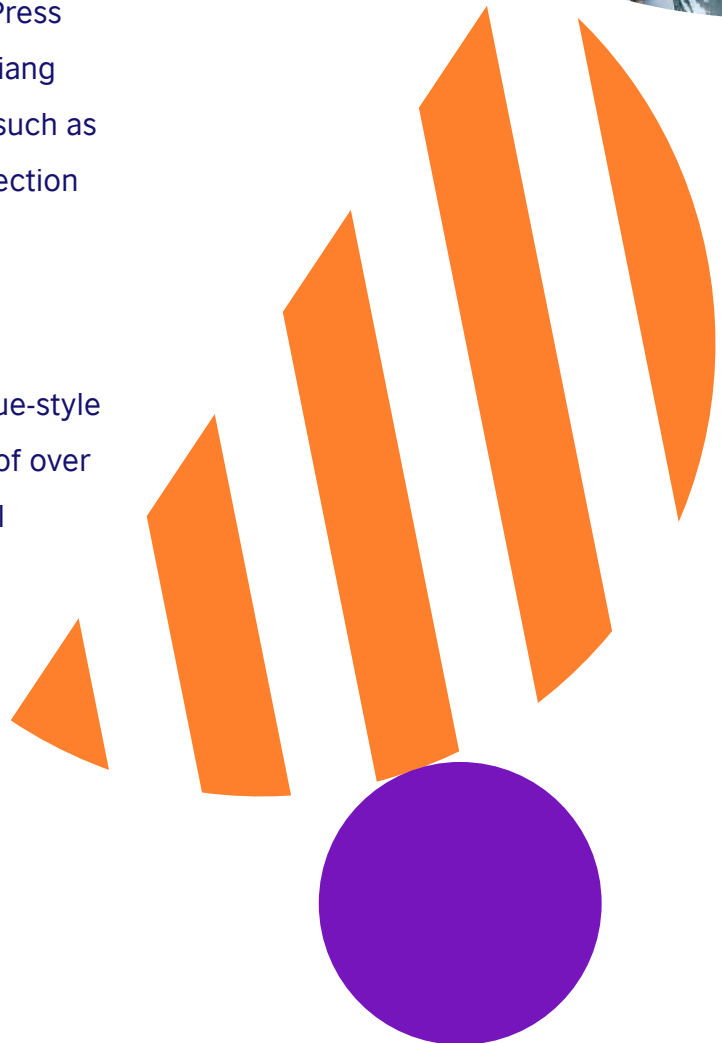
Heilongjiang Daily Art Gallery⁴¹

The gallery belongs to the Heilongjiang Daily Press Group and is the largest art gallery in Heilongjiang province. Its exhibition portfolio covers fields such as art, calligraphy, handicrafts, photography, collection and design.

Museum of Heilongjiang Province⁴²

First built in 1908, the museum sits in a Baroque-style heritage building and boasts a rich collection of over 630,000 pieces categorised by history, natural science, art and archives.

gino-castillo / Unsplash



Harbin Beer Museum⁴³

The Harbin Beer Museum makes use of emerging technology and multimedia devices to recreate the history of beer development. It is equipped with a theatre and China's first ice bar and beer academy.

Glasnov School of Music

Formerly a Jewish middle school, Glasnov School of Music is now a private performing arts academy. The school and concert hall are part of a drive to rejuvenate Harbin's classical music heritage. China's first symphony orchestra was founded in Harbin at the turn of the 20th century, while the original Glaznov Conservatory of Music was set up in the city by a Russian violinist in 1925.⁴⁴

Harbin New Synagogue/Harbin Jewish History and Cultural Museum⁴⁵

Built in 1918, this was the largest Jewish synagogue in China. Now converted into a museum, its three floors of exhibition space display artworks by Jewish artists and displays the history of the Jewish community in Harbin.



CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

HARBIN

Cultural City Profile
China

West Red Square⁴⁶

Originally a machinery factory, West Red Square was rejuvenated by local business Hong Bo Group into a 128,000 m² comprehensive complex that takes on a business model of 'Art+X'. It is a combination of art galleries, commercial stores, office space for young enterprises and venue for large-scale events. Harbin Fashion Week has taken place at the West Red Square since its establishment in early 2010s.

Zhongyang Dajie (Central Avenue)⁴⁷

Harbin's most famous shopping street is paved with cobblestone. Formerly known as Kitayskaya Street (Kitayskaya means Chinese in Russian), the surviving Baroque, Eclectic and Art Deco buildings have a wide appeal among international tourists and locals.⁴⁸

Tencent WeStart Innovation Space⁴⁹

In 2016, Tencent set up their WeStart Innovation Space in Harbin, one of 28 such spaces across cities in China. The space serves as an incubator for young entrepreneurs to develop their businesses in fields such as robotics, AR/VR, artificial intelligence and new media. It has founded 63 projects after one year of operation and created over 1,000 job opportunities.⁵⁰

Harbin High & New Technology Industrial Development Zone⁵¹

A 23.9 km² development zone made up of enterprises that focus on electronic information, optoelectronic equipment, biomedicine, new energy, and new materials.

Harbin Ice-Snow World⁵²

Among all the sites that celebrate the Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival, the Harbin Ice-Snow World is the largest and most popular. It has the longest ice slide - measuring 350m with eight lanes. Outside winter, the park hosts various events such as Harbin International Beer Festival, beach volleyball competitions and outdoor cultural festivals.



yifei-wong / Unsplash



Guogeli Bookstore⁵³

One of the most beautiful bookstores in China, the bookstore is located in Guogeli Street, which has over a hundred years of history. Named after the Russian novelist Nikolai Gogol, it is the first bookstore in China to adopt a Neo-classical style in its interior design. It also hosts book reading sessions and music performances.

Luyu Coffee⁵⁴

Trendy café located at a former Jewish hospital famed for its original windows, lofty ceilings, and artistically crowned cappuccinos. The space also doubles as venues for local cultural events.

Hesuoyou Lifestyle/Rongjin Culture⁵⁵

This new lifestyle brand promotes heritage IP, 'China chic' (guofeng), local designers and makers' culture. The brand operates a physical space, within a private-run commercial centre by the Songlei Industries Group in Nangan. As a collaboration between the Beijing-based Rongjin cultural solution company, it has a textile product line that collaborates with female craftmakers in rural China.⁵⁶

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

HARBIN

Cultural City Profile
China



billow926 / Unsplash

Wang Limei⁵⁷

Wang is the President of Heilongjiang Textile Association and General Manager of Hong Bo Group. She initiated the Harbin Fashion Week and rebranded the shopping malls and parks under the Hong Bo Group by instilling innovative ideas, particularly the revitalisation of Red West Square into a trendy multi-purpose cultural centre. Wang received the mayor's special award for her contribution to urban culture by the Harbin municipal government in 2021.⁵⁸

Muhai Tang⁵⁹

Tang, a world-renowned conductor with over 40 years of experience, has toured internationally and locally. He is now the laureate conductor of the China National Symphony Orchestra, artistic director of Harbin, Tianjin, Guangxi Symphony Orchestras and Guangxi Culture and Art Centre.

Suli Xue⁶⁰

Su introduced the Schoenfeld International String Competition to Harbin in 2014 and is now the Artistic Director of the competition. He has performed as a violin soloist in local and international concerts and festivals including Harbin China-Russia Cultural and Arts Festival and Harbin Summer Music Festival.

Sun Zuofan⁶¹

Graduated from Harbin University and Harbin Normal University, Sun is a locally born painter and cartoonist. His comics make use of humour to raise social issues, especially those related to environmental concerns. He curated a series of contemporary art exhibitions at West Red Art Museum in 2019.⁶²

Zhang Yujie⁶³

Zhang Yujie is the director of Heilongjiang Art Museum. He is the leading figure in the promotion of Heilongjiang lithography and curated a travelling exhibition that toured around different cities in China.

Tian Weiping⁶⁴

Tian is a painter born and based in Harbin, specialising in landscape oil painting of Northern China. He recently moved from oil painting to more contemporary mediums such as digital painting and multi-media. He is the vice president of the China Artists Association of Heilongjiang Province.

Sun Guohui⁶⁵

Deputy Director, School of Art and Design, Harbin University and an active member of Harbin's cultural scene.



FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

HARBIN

Cultural City Profile
China

Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival⁶⁶

The world's largest ice and snow festival takes place annually in Harbin. The festival celebrated its 36th year in 2020. The city turns into a wonderland of ice sculptures, snow sports and snow slides, accompanied by live concerts and performances.

Harbin Ice and Snow Expo⁶⁷

Established in 2019, in 2021 the Expo attracted nearly 500 enterprises and brands that specialise in skiing and ice carving equipment and tools, winter tourism, clothing, winter sports courses and food. The latest edition has an online component that enables business negotiation via live broadcast. Around 4,000 enterprises registered to attend online meetings of the 2021 Expo.⁶⁸

Harbin Ice Collection Festival⁶⁹

A new festival that began in 2019, it is the biggest ice collection event in China. It involves transporting ice blocks from Songhua River to Harbin Ice and Snow World for ice-sculptures to be displayed at the Ice and Snow Festival. A series of ice collection rituals inherited from folk traditions are performed at the opening ceremony including drum performances and tying the first ice block collected for good luck.

Harbin Fashion Week (HFW)⁷⁰

Organised at the West Red Square since 2011, HFW regularly attracts more than 1,300 international designers from more than 70 countries and territories. The week-long event includes fashion shows, art exhibitions, fashion forums, showrooms and fashion fairs.



Harbin Summer Music Concert of China⁷¹

Also known as Harbin Summer Music Festival, the event was founded in 1961 and takes place every other year in August. Packed with concerts, contests and cultural activities, the Summer Music Concert brings in well-known musicians, bands and artists from China and all over the world. 2020 marked the 60th anniversary of the concert. Its opening ceremony was held at the Harbin Grand Theatre with the theme of 'Singing for a New Era and a New Journey'.

The Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld International String Competition⁷²

Based in Harbin, the Schoenfeld International String Competition (SISC) takes place every other year and is supported by Schoenfeld International Music Society. SISC provides a wide-ranging performance platform for young string musicians from around the world.

Harbin International Beer Festival⁷³

An annual event in Harbin where locals and tourists can indulge in more than 100 types of beers and food stalls in 19 beer halls of over 80,000m² in the Ice and Snow World Park. Music and dance performances take place every night in the two-month festival.

Harbin International Economic and Trade Fair⁷⁴

Established in 1990, Harbin International Economic and Trade Fair is held annually in Harbin International Convention and Exhibition Centre Stadium. Exhibitors from all over the world from a wide range of sectors take part. In 2021, the 31st Harbin International Economic and Trade Fair moved online with eight virtual exhibition halls, providing an immersive experience for exhibitors and visitors to participate in the event.

China-Russia Expo⁷⁵

Launched in 2014, the expo promotes Sino-Russian cooperation through bilateral economic trade. In 2019, the five-day event attracted more than 1,700 enterprises from 74 countries and regions.



西安

XI'ĀN

CHINA

Cultural City Profile

jimmy-chang / unsplash



neil-mewes / Unsplash



xaolong-wong / unsplash



harrison-qi / unsplash

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INTRODUCING XI'AN

XI'AN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Xi'an is the capital of Shaanxi Province in Northwest China. Formerly known as Chang'an, the city served as the ancient capital to thirteen dynasties in Chinese history. It is thus a city of rich heritage and historical importance. Famed for the world-renowned Terracotta Warriors, the city welcomes visitors from all over the world, with more than 300 million trips generating over GBP 33 billion (CNY 300 billion) in 2019.¹

In 2021, Xi'an had a population of more than 8.2 million, the tenth most populous urban area in China.² Its GDP has steadily increased since the early 1990s and reached over GBP 111 billion (CNY 1 trillion) in 2020.³ Culture and tourism are the primary economic drivers of the city, accounting for 13% GDP in 2019 and expected to rise to 15% of GDP by 2022 according to Xi'an's cultural and tourism Integration Development Plan.⁴

As the starting point of the ancient Silk Road, Xi'an has been connecting the West and the East through foreign trade and cultural exchange for thousands of years. In 2013, the Chinese government put forward the 'Belt and Road Initiative' to enhance regional connectivity spanning from East Asia to Europe through infrastructure investment and international exchange. This has further consolidated Xi'an's importance as a multi-cultural hub.



“ Xi'an is expected to become the biggest logistics centre along the Silk Road Economic Belt, serving both as a link between the overland Silk Road and the maritime route, and as an international metropolis for cultural exchanges between Asia and Europe. ”

—Dong Jun, Mayor of Xi'an⁵



Xi'an is one of the three international metropolises and the 9th Regional Central City of China designated by the central government. It has been named 'China's Happiest City' seven years in a row.⁶

Benefiting from its extensive collection of historical sites and artefacts, Xi'an has 157 museums spanning history, art and natural science.⁷ In line with the government's strategy of 'Culture+', the city strives to enrich the local community through heritage revitalisation and strengthening its cultural infrastructure.⁸

According to the China Country Report Audience Segmentation Study, residents of Xi'an were the most active and willing to engage in cultural activities among the eight cities surveyed.⁹



XI'AN IN NUMBERS

XI'AN

Cultural City Profile
China

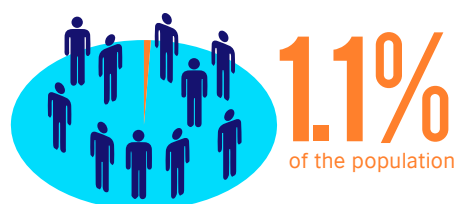
Famous for the world-renowned Terracotta Warriors, the city has welcomed visitors from all over the world, with more than 300 million trips recorded in 2019.



The city has been named 'China's Happiest City' seven years in a row. Benefiting from its extensive collection of historical sites and artefacts, Xi'an has 157 museums spanning history, art and natural science.

276 HIGH-TECH BUSINESS INCUBATORS
MAKER SPACES.

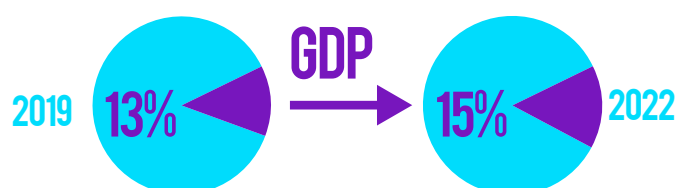
Xi'an is ranked first among cities in West China in innovation capability, with 276 high-tech business incubators and maker spaces.



Xi'an has 52 ethnic groups, accounting for 1.1% of the population. The largest ethnic minority group is Muslim Chinese (also known as the 'Hui people'), with over 60,000 residing in the area in 2019.



In 2021, Xi'an had a population of more than 8.2 million. Its GDP reached over GBP 111 billion (CNY 1 trillion) in 2020.



Xi'an has a history of more than 3,100 years as a city and 1,100 years as a capital, making it the most long-lasting ancient capital in China. Culture and tourism are the primary economic drivers of the city, accounting for 13% GDP in 2019 and is expected to rise to 15% by 2022.



Serving as the capital of 13 dynasties, Xi'an is a living museum of ancient Chinese civilisation. It is home to a total of 6 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

CONTEXT

Xi'an lies in the south-central part of Shaanxi province surrounded by rivers and streams. It has a continental climate with four distinct seasons. Summers tend to be hot and humid while winters are cold and dry. In terms of ethnic diversity, Xi'an has 52 ethnic groups, accounting for 1.1% of its population. The largest ethnic minority group is Muslim Chinese (also known as the 'Hui people'), with over 60,000 residing in the area in 2019.¹⁰ The Muslim Quarter is one of the most popular destinations to explore local delicacies and urban life.

HERITAGE LEGACY

XI'AN

Cultural City Profile
China

“ A perennial stop for history-loving travellers, Xi'an is home to the country's longest intact city wall and it is a place steeped in Silk Road narrative...Relatively low-lying, Xi'an has preserved much of its heritage and historical integrity, particularly its ancient architecture. Combined with an easy-going tempo and laid-back northern Chinese disposition, Xi'an conveys a sense of what China's older quarters were once like. ”

–Damian Harper, Lonely Planet¹¹

Often referred to as the 'ancient city', Xi'an has a history of more than 3,100 years as a city and 1,100 years as a capital, making it the most long-lasting ancient capital, existing across most dynasties.¹² The Xi'an City Wall, built in the 14th century, is one of the oldest and best-preserved Chinese city walls. Encircled by the wall is the traditional downtown area of Xi'an, with the Bell Tower marking the centre.

Serving as the capital to thirteen dynasties, Xi'an is a living museum of ancient Chinese civilisation. It is home to a total of 6 UNESCO World Heritage sites including:¹³

- Terracotta Warriors
- Big Wild Goose Pagoda
- Small Wild Goose Pagoda
- Daming Palace Site
- Site of Weiyang Palace in Chang'an City of Western Han Dynasty
- Xingjiao Temple Pagoda

In addition, the city has 192 intangible cultural heritage listings at the municipal level¹⁴ with 'Xi'an wind and percussion ensemble' officially included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2009.¹⁵



manoj-kumar-kasirajan / Unsplash

Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum (Terra-cotta Warriors Museum)¹⁶

The grandest imperial tombs housing a collection of terracotta warrior and horse sculptures buried in the pits of the first Emperor of China, Qinshihuang's mausoleum.

Shaanxi History Museum¹⁷

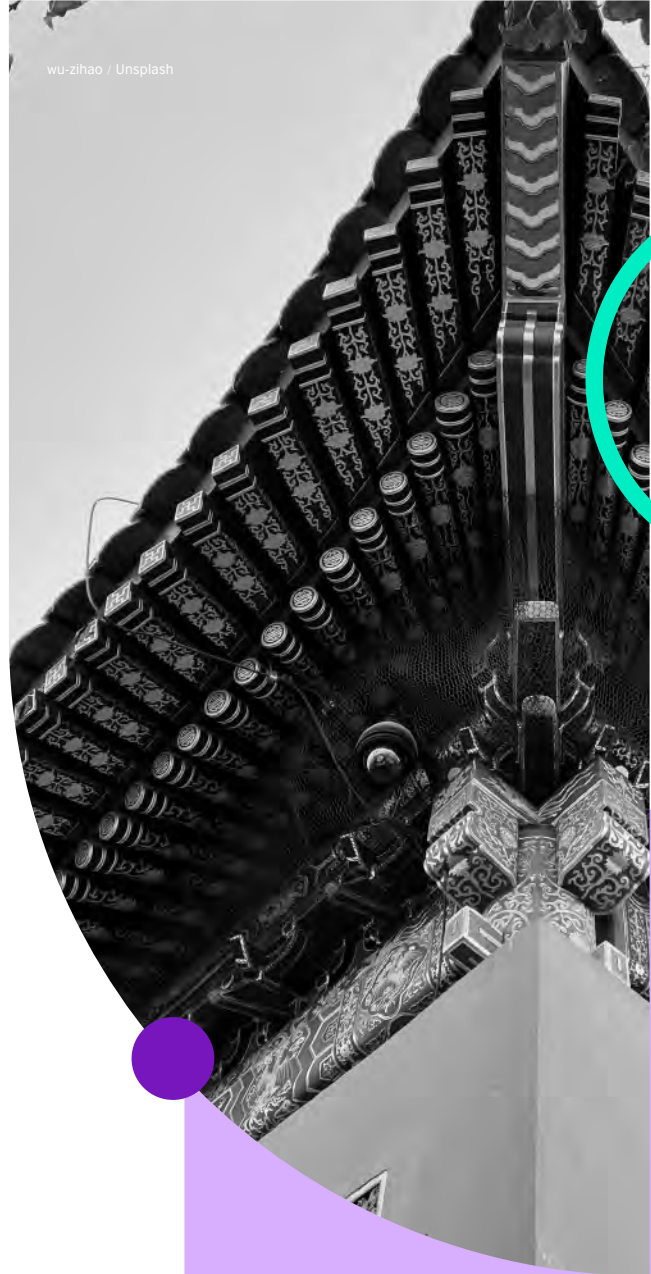
China's first national-level modern museum in a cluster of Tang-style architecture, the museum houses approximately 1.7 million artefacts spanning more than one million years. The website features virtual tours of present and past exhibitions.

Giant Wild Goose and Little Wild Goose Pagodas¹⁸

Built during the Tang Dynasty, the pagodas house Buddhist sutras brought from India to China by monk Xuan Zhang, whose journey inspired one of the most famous works of Chinese literature, Journey to the West.

Shaanxi Han Tang Stone Sculpture Museum¹⁹

Established in 2012, this is the first non-state-owned ancient stone sculpture museum in China. It exhibits more than 100 collections from the Eastern Han Dynasty to Ming and Qing Dynasties. A 'Night at the Museum' programme has been introduced to encourage visitors to visit out-of-office hours.



CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

The development focus of Xi'an's cultural and creative economy is to build an international metropolis with historical and cultural characteristics, and at the same time invest in high-tech industries and infrastructure to attract entrepreneurs and technology giants to the city. Xi'an is ranked first among cities in West China in innovation capability, with 276 high-tech business incubators and maker spaces newly built in 2019.²⁰ In response to the challenge faced by the tourism industry due to Covid-19, the municipal government announced an investment of GDP 1.5 billion (CNY 13.7 billion) and launched 23 cultural tourism programmes to rejuvenate domestic tourism in 2020.²¹ The plan highlights the construction of cultural parks and regeneration projects which will transform old factories into creative hubs. It also invests in infrastructure catered to the boom in the 'stay-at-home economy' – such as creative design as well as gaming, animation, and e-sports.²²

Xi'an has been one of the leading cities in China in terms of cultural infrastructure development. In the 2000s, the city government launched a 'Museum City' initiative and founded the Qujiang New District Administration Committee to manage and plan relevant regeneration and cultural development. With local government backing, a cluster of cultural developments was delivered, including Xi'an Art Museum, Xi'an Concert Hall, Shaanxi Grand Opera House Xi'an and Xi'an Guanzhong Folk Art Museum.²³

An incentive programme was also set up to encourage private investment in the cultural sector. This includes favourable land leasing terms and tax credit for museum developers. As a result, public-private partnership has flourished – such as the Xi'an Art Museum which operates as a 'state-owned and private-run' model. This private-public partnership model enables stable government funding while gaining operational nimbleness and professional credibility with museum specialists from the private sector.

“ Under the flexible management of the private sector, an art museum is better off. Every year we find corporate sponsors and, together with the 'Cultural Industry Supporting Fund' from the government, we secure the revenue to run the museum. This has created a sustainable cycle. ”

—Yang Chao, Director of Xi'an Art Museum²⁴

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND ALLIANCES

XI'AN

Cultural City Profile
China

“

The core goal in the city development of Xi'an as presented by the local government is to become an international city which has a role as an advanced manufacturing base, a high-tech agriculture base and a historical culture hub. ”

—Zhang Rubing and Wang Keyao, architects who co-designed Dahua 1935²⁵

As the gateway between China and central Asia, Xi'an has long been open to international collaboration, dating back to the legacy in foreign trade and cultural exchange of the ancient Silk Road. The city is prominently featured in the 14th Five-Year plan (2021-2025) released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China, seeking to deepen international cultural links and strengthen co-operation and strengthen cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road.²⁶ Shaanxi, as part of the Northwest Silk Road Cultural Industrial Zone, aims to expand its co-operation with neighbouring provinces along the Silk Road to formulate a mega-cluster of cultural districts.

The University Alliance of the Silk Road (UASR) was officially established in Xi'an in 2015 to advance knowledge exchange and partnerships along the Silk Road routes between higher education institutions, involving 151 universities from 38 countries and regions.²⁷ Currently 11 institutions in Xi'an and 3 universities in the Shaanxi region are members of the UASR, including Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an Conservatory of Music and Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts. A wide range of international exchange programmes are carried out regularly amongst the alliance members, such as annual roundtables, webinars and summer camps on topics ranging from heritage management, science and technology to global health.²⁸



The convention and exhibition economy is also a key area of local government investment.²⁹ The Xi'an International Convention Centre covers a total indoor exhibition area of 300,000m² and an outdoor exhibition area of 100,000m² has recently been completed to meet the growing demand for large-scale national and international events.³⁰ Recent international exhibitions and conventions held in Xi'an include:

- Silk Road International Exposition 2021
- Culture City of East Asia 2019
- The Eurasian Economic Forum 2019
- Silk Road Economic Belt Round Table of Cities
- Xi'an Global Key & Core Technology Conference 2019
- Global Venture Capital Summit 2019
- World Culture and Tourism Forum 2019
- 29th National Book Expo

In 2018, National Museums Liverpool organised a unique exhibition - China's First Emperor and the Terracotta Warriors - in collaboration with the Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau and Shaanxi History Museum.³¹ The touring exhibition generated about GBP 78 million for the Liverpool City Region, with over 600,000 visitors.³²

Capitalising on the digital shift accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, local museums have made use of online platforms and social media to stay connected with both domestic and international audiences. For example, during the pandemic, the Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum (the Terracotta Warriors Museum) worked with Xi'an Jiaotong University and Xi'an International Studies University to broadcast a live public programme to students in Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, UK, France and Italy.³³



CREATIVE CITY AND CULTURAL TOURISM

XI'AN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

“As an ancient capital city with a history of a thousand years, Xi'an is one of the root cities of Chinese civilisation...Xi'an should celebrate the heyday cultures of the Han and Tang dynasties and invest in cultural restoration projects to resurrect the collective memory of the Chinese people. We will build the city into a cultural and spiritual landmark of the country.”

—Wang Yongkang, secretary of the Communist Party of Xi'an³⁴

The municipal government strives to position Xi'an as the go-to destination to experience Chinese culture in the most authentic yet innovative way. The campaign 'Spring Festival in Xi'an: Most Cultural and Traditional' began in 2018 and attracted more than 10 million visitors from home and abroad. With this branding campaign, Xi'an was ranked as the fourth most popular destination in the country during the Chinese New Year holidays.³⁵

Rich in intangible heritage, Xi'an has deep roots with Qin Opera (also known as Qinqiang), one of the oldest operas in northwest China, originated in Shaanxi in 1807. In 2017, the local

government submitted its application to become a 'City of Music' with UNESCO and pledges to turn Xi'an into an international metropolis with strong music appeal.³⁶

Busking can be seen in different parts of the city, such as street band performances at the Xi'an city wall. Contemporary indie music also enjoys a strong presence in the city. Built from 63 shipping containers, MBOX, located in the 'music block' of Xi'an Qujiang Innovation Street, is a favourite hang-out in the independent scene.³⁷



During Covid-19, Xi'an Symphony Orchestra, with members of an average age below 30, experimented with innovative programming based on a hybrid online-offline model. As a part of this initiative, the orchestra performed classical music in alternative venues (including the Shaanxi History Museum and Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum) as well as at outdoor sites (such as the City Wall and Huashan Mountain).³⁸ This series of performances, bringing together some of the city's most iconic sceneries with classical music, attracted about 23 million viewers online.

Under the cultural enhancement project of 'Book Fragrance of Xi'an', the city was honoured as the 'Chinese Capital of Bookstores' in 2018. The number of independent bookstores more than doubled from 827 in 2017 to 1,927 in 2018.³⁹ With a mixed business model, these venues are often doubled up as creative hubs – a one-stop destination for shopping, leisure and cultural entertainment.⁴⁰ Qujiang Bookstore, opened in 2016, is the first multi-purpose bookstore complex in the Northwest region.⁴¹ The complex consists of an 'experiential zone' where visitors can engage with a variety of activities such as drone flying, virtual reality and even organic farming. SKP RENDEZ-VOUS⁴² and Maxone⁴³ are recent additions that follow the success of Qujiang Bookstore's business model.

CULTURE AND WELL-BEING

XI'AN

Cultural City Profile
China

A Fitness-for-All initiative was put forward in 2020 to encourage a healthy lifestyle in the Shaanxi region. It aims to achieve the goal of having over 40% of its people exercise regularly by 2022. Public investment was directed to building sports facilities and venues, such as the Xi'an Olympic Sports Centre completed in 2020. 'Healthy Shaanxi Action' (issued in the same year) highlights the importance of improving fitness for priority groups, such as teenagers, women, senior citizens and people with disabilities.⁴⁴ International and large-scale sports events are hosted for citizen and tourist participation, and thereby raising the awareness of healthy living.⁴⁵ The highlights of cultural events promoting health and well-being include:

- The Xi'an City Wall International Marathon
- The Xi'an Yango International Marathon
- Asian Wrestling Championship (2019)
- 14th National Games (2021)
- 11th China National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 8th China National Special Olympic Games (2021)

“ We'd like to attract more international runners, making the [Xi'an City Wall Marathon] competition a mega-event of global standing for all. ”

—Qiang Xiaolan, the deputy mayor of Xi'an⁴⁶

dongsh / Unsplash

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND R&D

XI'AN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

The number of scientific research institutes in Xi'an is second only to a few of China's super first-tier cities. Xi'an has more than 3,000 high-tech enterprises and nearly 460,000 professional and technical personnel.⁴⁷ Samsung Electronics, Bosch and Intel are among the many international enterprises to have set up their R&D centres in Xi'an.⁴⁸

Under the 'Made in China 2025' initiative launched in 2015, Xi'an was made a pilot demonstration city – ten focus industries subsequently received priority funding and government incubation. These included advanced information technology, automated machine tools and robotics, aerospace and aeronautical equipment, ocean engineering equipment and high-tech shipping, modern rail transport equipment, energy saving and new energy vehicles, power equipment, new materials, medicine and medical devices, and agricultural equipment.⁴⁹

Home to the National Xi'an Hi-tech Industries Development Zone, the city has the ambition to catapult Xi'an into a 'Silk Road Science City' which will host 500,000 people and achieve an economic scale of GBP 100 billion (CNY 1 trillion) by 2025 according to the 14th Five-Year Plan⁵⁰



In view of the municipal government's effort to strengthen the technological development of the city, incubators equipped with office facilities have been built to attract start-ups. Companies which focus on the eight disciplines of science and technology are prioritised, including aerospace, optoelectronic chips, new energy, new materials, intelligent manufacturing, information technology, life science and artificial intelligence.⁵¹

Xi'an Innovation Design Centre⁵²

Opened in 2016, the hub supports knowledge exchange with international activities, like the Silk Road International Innovation Design Week and the China-US Innovation-driven Development Forum.

State University Science Park, Xi'an Jiaotong University⁵³

A state-recognised science park, focusing on the fields of microelectronics design, software development, biotechnology, information technology and new energy.

Jingdong Cloud Innovative Centre⁵⁴

Located in the core business district of Xi'an, the 3,000-square-metre centre provides independent offices and co-working spaces for enterprises, with talks and mentor sessions by successful entrepreneurs.



harrison-qi / Unsplash



CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Xi'an has a legacy in Chinese contemporary art reaching back to 1981 when the first Xi'an Modern Art exhibition was held. More than 60,000 visitors were attracted to the most avant-garde showcase of its time. The development of the city's contemporary art scene went through a period of hiatus in the 1990s.⁵⁶ but experiences a renaissance in the mid-2000s.. Heritage regeneration contributes to the revival of Xi'an's creative scene and provides affordable studio spaces for artists. In 2007, 11 artists moved into an abandoned textile district which gradually developed into the Banpo International Art District. Since then, more derelict industrial spaces in Xi'an have been transformed into cultural creative parks, including 3511 TFEP and Dahua 1935. The decade-long regeneration fervour of industrial heritage into multi-functional community centres and creative hubs saw a revival of the city's historic fabric and its manufacturing past. These mixed-offer venues act as a hub for artist studios, gallery exhibitions and live music performances.

“

Xi'an does not lack talents, nor does it lack opportunities. Xi'an contemporary art is in a transitional phase, on the eve of a 'breakthrough'.”

—Yang Chao, Director of Xi'an
Art Museum⁵⁵

“

Like many of China's big cities, Xi'an is undergoing the beginnings of a renaissance, with cafes, hotels and trendy establishments starting to crop up...[including] several venues championing Xi'an's burgeoning live music scene. ”

–Damian Harper, Lonely Planet⁵⁷

“

Xi'an Art Museum does not only promote the ecosystem of contemporary art in Xian, it places its focus on the world through international art exchange with foreign countries. Although it is based in Xi'an, it is connected to the wider contemporary art scene in China and the artists [around the country] here. Such a museum is very precious and essential in the Western [Chinese] region. ”

–Ding Yi, Chinese contemporary artist⁵⁹

In addition to regeneration projects, Xi'an Art Museum has shaped the development of the local art scene with a portfolio of international collaborations and an active nation-wide footprint.⁵⁸ The reputable Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts and Xi'an Conservatory of Music have been the *alma mater* of many outstanding creative talents in the country since the mid-20th century, including artists Cai Liang, Li Xiaoming, composer Zhao Jiping and Chinese opera soprano He Hui.

With regard to education and knowledge exchange in the creative economy, the School of Art and Design of Eurasia University (EAaD) actively engages in international exchange with peer institutions, including Coventry University.⁶⁰ Its campus Museum of Design is the only one of its kind in Xi'an.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

XI'AN

Cultural City Profile
China

Xi'an's historical and cultural significance are preserved and displayed in the city's 157 museums, from ancient relics to folk dance and natural history. In higher education, the city ranks third in the country, with 63 universities and colleges and 95 scientific research institutes.⁶¹

Xi'an Art Museum⁶²

Opened in 2009, Xi'an Art Museum is an important platform which introduces international contemporary art to the public. It has hosted Graphic Design Biennale China Germany 2009, 2010 Germany Contemporary Art Exhibition, and Contemporary Art from The British Council Collection 1980-2010 in 2011. It also provides a venue for academic exhibitions including the graduation show of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts.

OCAT Xi'an⁶³

OCAT is a Chinese independent non-profit art museum group with branches in Shenzhen, Shanghai and Xi'an. OCAT Xi'an draws upon local and international resources to promote Chinese contemporary art to an international standard as well as to support international programmes in Xi'an. As one of the British Council in China's 'Inspiring Women in the Arts' programme, works by British photographers Anna Fox and Karen Knorr were featured in OCAT Xi'an in 2019.

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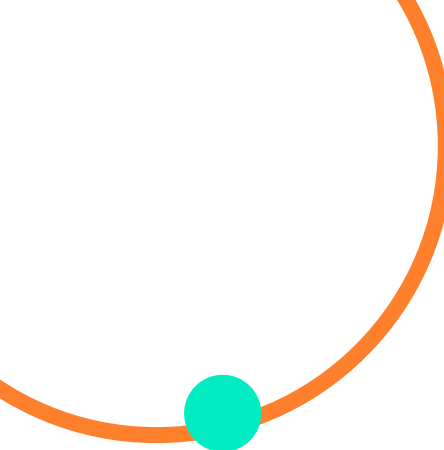
Established in 2014, the museum is a platform for promoting contemporary art through international exchange. Located in a commercial complex in the Qujiang district, it is equipped with exhibition halls, screening rooms and a museum store. It holds regular reading clubs, discussion forums, handicraft workshops and film screenings.

Shaanxi Opera House | Xi'an Concert Hall⁶⁵

Xi'an Concert Hall and the Shaanxi Opera House were opened in 2009 and 2017 respectively. It is the host of the Xi'an International Music Festival and the Xi'an International Drama Festival, featuring numerous world-class performances and outdoor events, symposia and art education initiatives. With in-house production capacity, it also has a robust public programming arm, often presenting performing arts workshop around the city with events like 'Art into the



harrison-qi / Unsplash



Campus', outdoor concerts and the IDEA & THINKING programme – a practitioner-led master lecture series which, since 2014, has featured experimental art practices across music, drama, children's education, visual arts, literature and design.

Xi'an Children's Art Theatre⁶⁶

Founded in 1959, this is one of the four oldest children's art theatres in China. It strives to be an advocate in promoting dialogues between Xi'an and the world and has hosted the Xi'an International Theatre Festival for Children in the past five years.

Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts⁶⁷

Established in 1949, Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts is a higher-education institution located in the metropolis of Xi'an. Its library houses 500,000 volumes of literature, 1,266 ancient paintings and numerous historical cultural relics. It is one of the three major fine arts academies with doctoral degree authorisation in China ((along with Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing(<https://www.cafa.edu.cn/en/>) and China Academy of Art in Hangzhou).⁶⁸

Xi'an Conservatory of Music⁶⁹

Founded in 1949, the Xi'an Conservatory of Music has nurtured many musical talents including composers, educators, singers and conductors. It has developed ties with more than 20 countries and over 30 universities and institutions over the years.

Xi'an Eurasia University⁷⁰

Eurasia University has a strong cultural and creative offer. The School of Art and Design of Eurasia University (EAaD) features technological readiness in their practice-driven teaching, with a network of international partners including Coventry University. The School of Culture and Media focuses on the application and R&D of new media and technology such as AR, VR and big data.⁷¹ The Communication and Cultural Creativity Research Centre, founded in 2014, is a think tank for teaching reform and industrial technology innovation.



CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

XI'AN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Xi'an Qujiang Innovation Street (UP WAY)⁷²

The 1.5-km long street is a platform for young entrepreneurs to hang out and realise their start-up ambitions. Located in this area, the 'MBOX Container Music Block' was created is created from 63 shipping containers for music creation and discovery, and a venue for music events, beer festivals, handicraft stores and cafés.

Ban Po International Art Zone⁷³

Built in 1961 as the first manufacturing industrial base in the Northwest region of China, it has now transformed into a comprehensive creative park that forms the most important artist creation base in Xi'an and a central touchpoint for public outreach.

X-CFCA⁷⁴

A non-profit organisation for contemporary art established in 2013 in Xi'an Ban Po International Art District. It comprises an exhibition hall, an archive, artist resident camps and café.

3511 TFEP⁷⁵

Built in 1949 as the largest towel manufacturing factory site for the army, it was revitalised in 2012 into a community centre housing a bookstore, a creative marketplace, a café, boutique retail shops, and restaurants as well as a flower market.

Internet link is wrong⁷⁶

This former textile mill built in 1935 has been revitalised into a popular retail and entertainment destination frequented by young consumers. It has the first indoor skateboarding venue 'STREET DREAMS Skatepark' and the most sought after electronic music club '15cm'.



joyous-chan / Unsplash

Qujiang Creative Cultural Centre / Creative Circle Performance Centre⁷⁷

Opened in 2019 and tucked beneath the central plaza of Qujiang Creative Circle, the centre comprises a 400-seat multi-functional theatre, a performance and rehearsal room, a multi-purpose gallery, exhibition spaces, workshops, a café and a bar, and a suite of supporting office and auxiliary spaces. It holds a wide range of live performances from classical concerts to contemporary plays.

Localand⁷⁸

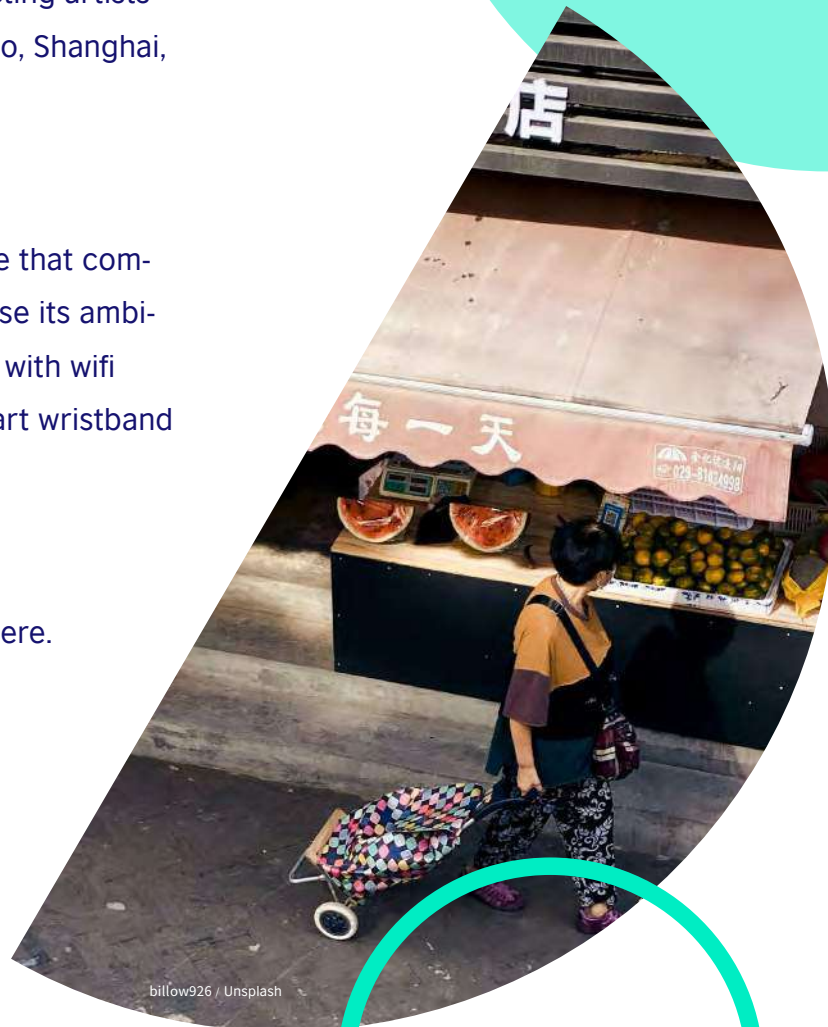
Localand is an urban cultural public space founded in 2018, consisting of a small community museum, a café, restaurants, retail space and a small concert hall. It has organised city-themed exhibitions and various events connecting artists and designers from different cities like Taipei, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Hong Kong.

Qujiang Book City⁷⁹

Opened in 2016, it is a one-stop recreational centre that combines shopping, leisure and entertainment. To realise its ambition to become a 'smart book store', it is equipped with wifi hotspots, RFID technology, app navigation and smart wristband for children to prevent getting lost.

Jamaica Blue⁸⁰

A lively pub and café with a vibrant music atmosphere.



MOVERS AND SHAKERS

XI'AN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Yang Chao

Director of Xi'an Art Museum. Responsible for the planning of the 'Great Tang All-Day Mall' project in 2003 which involved the building of the Xi'an Art Museum, the Xi'an Concert Hall, the Shaanxi Grand Opera House Xi'an and the Xi'an Museum of Literature.

Karen Smith⁸¹

British art critic and curator specialising in Chinese contemporary art. Appointed as Executive Director of OCAT Xi'an in 2012.

Yang Xi⁸²

Curator of OCAT Xi'an. Managing editor of the art publication 'No Art' (Kanyushu).

Wang Lihong⁸³

Actress and General Manager of Xi'an Children's Art Theatre. She has received national awards for her dedication to promoting children's theatre in Xi'an.

Wu Xiaochuan⁸⁴

Artist based in Xi'an and director of the Experimental Art Department of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts. Wu is also the founder of Mangba Arts Festival.

Song Qun⁸⁵

Founder and publisher of independent magazines 'Local Bendi' and 'MOMADA', he is involved in urban development and local industrial heritage projects, including the revitalisation of the Glorious Park and 3511 TFEP projects.⁸⁶



harrison-qj / Unsplash

Wang Mengmeng⁸⁷

Curator and artist based in Xi'an. Director of the Public Art Department of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts. Co-curator of Xi'an Contemporary Art Exhibition 2018.

Dong Jun⁸⁸

Artist and curator based in Xi'an. Dong is also the Head of Teaching and Research of the Department of Motion Picture, Photography & Animation of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts. He is an award winner of the 5th China Pingyao International Photography Festival.

Tao Yong⁸⁹

Director of Xi'an Cultural Creative Industry Association, a non-profit organisation established in 2017 to facilitate the development of the cultural and creative industries in Xi'an.

Xi'an Qujiang New District Administrative Committee⁹⁰

Leading advocate in the government body of Xi'an to provide support in land leasing and tax credit for museum builders from the private sector.



FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

XI'AN

Cultural City Profile
China

Xi'an holds a wide range of cultural events and festivals year-round. Ranging from arts, music, film and theatre festivals to international expositions and sports activities, Xi'an has earned its reputation in delivering major cultural events thanks to its skilled organisers, robust infrastructure and supportive policies.

Silkroad International Arts Festival⁹¹

First international art festival in response to the Belt and Road initiative is regularly held nationally and includes live performances, forums and exhibitions showcasing traditional folk art, music, theatre, drama. The latest online exhibition *Blossoms On The Rural Land-Exhibition of Ansai Farmer Painting Collection of Shaanxi Provincial Art Museum* is co-hosted with the China Cultural Centre in Nepal.⁹²

The Silk Road International Film Festival⁹³

The festival has been held annually since 2014, alternating between Xi'an and Fuzhou. It welcomed influential directors, producers and experts from countries and regions along the Belt and Road.⁹⁴

Xi'an City Wall Marathon⁹⁵

Initiated in 1993, it is the only marathon in the world that runs along an entire ancient city wall. The 2019 edition attracted 5,000 runners from 28 countries and regions.

The Xi'an International Theatre Festival for Children⁹⁶

Organised by the Xi'an Children's Art Theatre, this is one of the biggest theatre festivals in China, and also the first international theatre outdoor festival for children in China.



Xi'an International Music Festival⁹⁷

Launched in 2002, the two-month festival stages hundreds of world-class performances, attended by music lovers from around the world. The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Munich Philharmonic Orchestra are among some of the top-class music groups which have performed in the festival.

Xi'an Drama Festival⁹⁸

Held at the Shaanxi Opera House | Xi'an Concert Hall, the half-year long Xi'an Drama Festival presents over 30 high-quality theatre and musical performances to the public.

Silk Road International Exposition⁹⁹

The Fifth Silk Road International Exposition opened in May 2021 and attracted more than 1,900 guests from 98 countries and regions such as Belgium, South Korea, Tajikistan and Zambia. Exhibitors showcase their products and technology to facilitate economic co-operation along the Belt and Road region.

Mangba Arts Festival¹⁰⁰

Launched by artist Wu Xiaochuan and his student Cui Kaimin, the festival started as a rural project on the southwestern outskirts of Xi'an. It includes outdoor drama performances, art installations and mural paintings.

14th National Games of China, 2021¹⁰¹

A multi-sports event held throughout Shaanxi Province from 15 to 27 September 2021. It attracted around 20,000 athletes across 409 events.



NÁN JĪNG

南京

CHINA

Cultural City Profile



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INTRODUCING NANJING

NANJING
—
Cultural City Profile
China

“Nanjing is a sophisticated metropolis where the remains of past empires and ancient traditions gracefully intersect with contemporary Chinese culture.”

- gotonanjing.com¹

Nanjing, the capital city of Jiangsu province in eastern China, is a city of deep historical and cultural significance. Earning the nickname ‘Capital of Six Dynasties’, its legacy dates back 2,400 years to 3 A.D. In 2020, the GDP of Nanjing reached nearly GBP 167 billion (CNY 1.5 trillion)², surpassing Tianjin to claim the 10th largest GDP in China for the first time since economic reform began in 1978.³ As an economic powerhouse, it is also the only of China’s ten largest cities by GDP with fewer than 10 million permanent residents (9.3 million in 2020).⁴

Nanjing also boasts a highly educated workforce. It is one of the top five Chinese cities in terms of educational infrastructure, and more than 3.2 million residents have achieved a university-level education or higher.⁵ The city is home to many prestigious universities and research centres, with many of those focused on science and technology.

“Nanjing has been China’s ‘southern capital’ on and off since the 3rd century CE until as recently as 1949, and China’s many different ruling classes has a tendency to endow their political, economic and military home-bases with deep-pocketed support for arts, culture, education and research...The former southern capital continues to push boundaries and expand in all directions beyond its ancient fortifications, and is just a one-hour high speed rail ride away from Shanghai.”

– Kira Simon-Kennedy⁸



With the encouragement of central government to resolve an imbalance of regional development, Nanjing's local government, alongside its Yangtze Delta region peers, is leading the way in relaxation of household registration (known as hukou) policies to incentivise inward migration among the highly educated to further its lead in innovation.⁶ According to the emerging city rankings by The Economist Intelligence Unit, Nanjing ranks 9th in terms of growth potential.⁷ The city has the highest consumption per head and the second highest in disposable income per head.



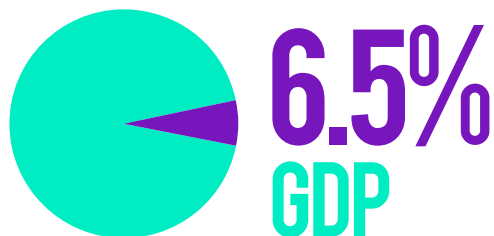
On the cultural and creative economy fronts, Nanjing was named a City of Literature in 2019 as a part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. The city has a mature literary scene and established pipeline of art and culture education. It is home to one of China's earliest art academies – the Nanjing University of the Arts (also known as Nanjing Arts Institute), founded in 1912.⁹ Coupled with the city's historical and economic might accumulated over centuries as a major capital of the south, the city has a legacy in shaping cultural trends across the country.¹⁰ Nanjing has over 60 museums and memorial halls, including key cultural facilities such as Nanjing Library, Nanjing Museum and Jiang-su Art Museum.¹¹ Recent contemporary art initiatives include Sifang Art Museum and Nanjing Contemporary Art Fair. These further propel the city as a major cultural and creative hub.



NANJING IN NUMBERS

NANJING

Cultural City Profile
China



In 2019, the cultural and creative economy of Nanjing contributed to 6.5% of the city's GDP. Cultural tourism is a major economic pillar. In 2019, the city welcomed 147million visitors, generating GBP 31 billion (CNY 278.5 billion).

2,400 years of history

CAPITAL OF SIX DYNASTIES

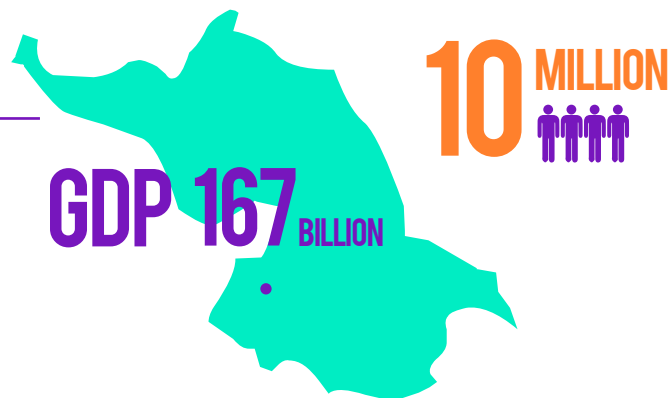
Known to be the 'Capital of Six Dynasties', its legacy dates back to 3 A.D. with 2,400 years of history.

3.2 MILLION
EDUCATED POPULATION

The Educated Population to a university level or higher is over 3.2 million.



Nanjing has over 60 museums and memorial halls, including key cultural facilities such as Nanjing Library, Nanjing Museum and Jiangsu Art Museum.



In 2020, the GDP of Nanjing reached nearly GBP 167 billion (CNY 1.5 trillion), claiming 10th place nationally and becoming the only city among the top 10 Chinese cities by GDP with less than 10 million permanent residents (9.3



Nanjing became a member of UNESCO's 'Creative Cities of Literature' in 2019. As of 2018, Nanjing has over bookstores catering to for the thousands of bibliophiles in the city.

NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

According to Report on Creating a Healthy Nighttime Economy in 2020, Nanjing excels in its nighttime retail offerings, scoring better than New York.

CONTEXT

Nanjing is endowed with rich natural resources consisting of high mountains, deep rivers and wide plains. As the former southern capital and a riverport city steeped in a long history of trade, Nanjing has long served as an international hub – both economically and culturally.

The majority of Nanjing residents is ethnically Han. There are about 50 additional ethnicities residing in the city, among which almost 84% are Hui, with other ethnicities including the Manchu and Zhuang. Most of the minority groups live in Nanjing's Jianye District.¹²

The City Wall of Nanjing was built by Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang after he founded the Ming Dynasty in 1386 and established Nanjing as the capital. As one of the most ancient and longest city walls still standing in China and the world, it is a candidate for the UNESCO World Heritage Protection List.¹³

Besides being one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China alongside Beijing, Luoyang and Xian, Nanjing has played an important role in modern Chinese history. Nanjing was declared capital of the Republic of China in 1912, after Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, who is considered the 'Father of Modern China', ended the imperial rule of the Qing Dynasty monarchy. Nanjing is also where Sun was buried after his death.

The city was also deeply traumatised by war during the the Nanjing Massacre when the Japanese Imperial Army invaded in 1937, burning the city to the ground and killing tens of thousands. The Japanese occupation did not end until 1946. The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall was established in 1985 and its historical documents were inducted into the UNESCO World Heritage Memory of the World register in 2015.¹⁴

As of 2020, Nanjing is home to one UNESCO designated World Heritage site, with two other sites listed on the World Heritage tentative list.¹⁵ 516 cultural relics are protected at the city level, and 11 national intangible heritage items are protected.¹⁶ Several local traditional crafts have been designated as intangible cultural assets by UNESCO, including the Nanjing Yunjin brocade, the guqin (a Chinese classical stringed instrument), Jingling scripture engraving and Nanjing paper-cutting.¹⁷ The city's main heritage and historical sites include:

- Ming Xiaoling Mausoleum (UNESCO World Heritage Site)¹⁸
- Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum¹⁹
- Presidential Palace²⁰
- Jiming Temple²¹
- Linggu Temple Scenic Area²²
- Qixia Temple²³
- Meiling Palace²⁴



jerry bao / Unsplash

CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

In 2019, the cultural and creative economy contributed to 6.5% of the city's GDP.²⁵ Cultural tourism is a major pillar in Nanjing. In 2019, the city welcomed 147 million visitors, generating GBP 31 billion (CNY 278.5 billion). In 1982, the Chinese government declared Nanjing an 'historical and cultural city of China', catapulting a series of municipal-backed investment to build Nanjing into a hub for culture, arts and education. With the founding of the government-sponsored non-profit Nanjing Innovative City Promotion Centre as the main delivery driver for international collaboration and cultural partnerships, it launched Nanjing Week in 2014, with an increased international footprint through multi-lateral shows and conferences such as the World Cities Cultural Forum, London Design Week and World's Expo.²⁶

In positioning Nanjing as an international travel destination, the local government adopts a strategy of 'spreading culture out and inviting tourists in' to facilitate international cultural exchange and tourism promotion. The Nanjing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism has been working with PHG Consulting to reach an international audience. Official Instagram²⁷, Facebook²⁸, Twitter²⁹ and YouTube³⁰ channels were set up to release latest news and promote scenic spots to English-speaking users. To attract the attention of international tourists until Covid-19 travel restrictions are loosened, Nanjing is launching a 'Distance Learning' campaign to provide would-be travelers a chance to learn about the city's top attractions.³¹

The city's cultural community is growing in reputation and size. Alongside long-established cultural institutions such as Nanjing Museum, recent additions like the private Sifang Art Museum are shaping the discourse of contemporary Chinese art and driving international cultural exchange.

Nanjing is ranked 8th in the leading 200 science cities by the Nature Index in 2020 - which is third in China after only Beijing and Shanghai.³² Nanjing University is one of the oldest higher education institutions in China and is a member of the elite C9 League. It has created international ties with other tertiary institutions such as the Centre for Chinese and American Studies with Johns Hopkins University in the United States and the Sino-German Institute for Law Studies with Göttingen University in Germany.³³

CITY OF LITERATURE

NANJING

Cultural City Profile
China

Nanjing has a long and rich legacy of books and literature dating back to famous writers in Chinese history such as Xiao Tong from the Liang Dynasty and Wang Anshi from the Northern Song Dynasty. The city is a haven for book lovers with its extensive portfolio of both independent and more established bookstores. As of 2018, Nanjing had over 300 bookstores to cater to the thousands of bibliophiles in the city.³⁴

The Librairie Avant-Garde, founded by Qian Xiaohua in 1999, is perhaps the most iconic bookstore in Nanjing.³⁵ Qian converted a former bomb shelter into one of China's most remarkable bookshops. It specialises in classic Western literature, Christianity and social sciences. Located in close proximity to Nanjing University, Librairie Avant-Garde can accommodate around 300 people with its reading tables and open-plan seating and has become a popular gathering space for students. In addition to its café and a small shop, it doubles as a venue that hosts talks, concerts and art exhibitions. The bookstore was rated by The Guardian in 2016 as one of the 10 best industrial-chic spaces worldwide.³⁶

“Nanjing is never short of bookstores, because there has never been a lack of readers. Wandering in the all-encompassing cultural environment of Nanjing, you will find a wide range of reading interests across all ages of readers here.”

—Wan Wenjie, Deputy General Manager of Popular Bookstore³⁷



yihua sun / Unsplash



Nanjing city has a vibrant literature and publishing community. One of the earliest book festivals in China, the Nanjing Book Festival, celebrated its 25th edition in 2020. Every year over 500 reading organisations bring more than 8,000 promotional activities to the Festival, ranging from exhibitions to book sharing and author book readings.³⁸ Half-City Book Club, one of China's most popular women-only reading groups, holds regular talks, forums and cultural tours.³⁹ Other major bookstores and libraries include the Phoenix International Book Mall (Open 24 hours)⁴⁰, Literacy Café⁴¹, Popular Bookstore Nanjing⁴², Wine Bookstore⁴³, Singularity⁴⁴, and Gulou Library⁴⁵ – to name a few.

Nanjing became a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Literature in 2019 and has scaled-up international engagement and exchange.⁴⁶

- The Nanjing Literature Centre initiated a touring exhibition titled One City, One Postcard – Cities as Space for Literary Imagination. The tour connected 34 of the total 39 Creative Cities of Literature in July 2020.⁴⁷
- 'Window of Books' is a project that involves donating books to a number of African countries including Nigeria, Congo, Ghana, Namibia and Ethiopia.⁴⁸
- Residency programmes are introduced to invite international writers to stay in Nanjing for one month and participate in discussion events and literary exchange. In 2019, the programme hosted writers from across the UK, France, Spain and Ireland.⁴⁹

NIGHTTIME ECONOMY

Nanjing has an undeniably vibrant nightlife. It was declared as one of China's 'Top 20 Night Economic Influential Cities' at the China Nighttime Economy Forum 2020.⁵⁰ As an early mover in advancing nighttime economic potential, in 2017 the municipal government of Nanjing announced plans to build the city's brand around 'Jinling at Night'. Since then, it has invested in nighttime entertainment and cultural offerings in 27 pilot areas.⁵¹ Plans called for prolonged opening hours and evening specific programmes across arts and cultural venues, cinemas, theatres and night markets. According to the Report on Creating a Healthy Nighttime Economy in 2020, Nanjing excels in its nighttime retail offerings, on a par with Tokyo and scoring better than New York.⁵²


To alleviate Covid-19 disruption to the retail and cultural sectors, the local government has doubled down on boosting the nighttime economy, emphasising the catalytic role of culture to increase the city's appeal. An estimated 30 small theatre spaces are expected to be built along the Qinhuai River by 2023.⁵³ 31 additional major cultural and tourism business projects in the district are in the pipeline, with a total investment of GBP 5.2 billion (CNY 46.48 billion).⁵⁴



“

Newcomer world cities such as Nanjing are still growing their cultural assets, but given the size of this city – and cities like them in China – their investment levels and actions to promote their story mean that they will inevitably catch-up in breadth and depth of cultural offer. ”

–Special Report: *International Forum on Cultural Placemaking and the Night-time Economy* BOP Consulting 2020⁵⁵



Among the many districts lively at night in Nanjing, the Qinhuai District was chosen as one of the top 10 tourist-pick evening scenic spots in 2020.⁵⁶ The Confucius Temple in Qinhuai was repurposed into a traditional ancient market in the 1980s. Eateries, teahouses and street food stalls abound on the streets. In 2019, the revenue of the area reached GBP 1.23 billion (CNY 11.1 billion) with the consumer satisfaction rate as high as 95%.⁵⁷ Leveraging 360-degree and cloud VR technology, the first 5G boat ride along the Qinhuai River offered a one-of-a-kind cruising experience to visitors.⁵⁸

Nanjing 1912⁵⁹

A popular westernised district filled with bars, night clubs, live music venues and tea houses.

Changjiang Road⁶⁰

An historical area home to numerous museums and cultural institutions. The Six Dynasties Museum, Jiangning Imperial Silk Manufacturing Museum and the Chinese Communist Party Delegation Plum Village Memorial Hall are now open in the evenings on Fridays and weekends with regular night exhibitions and performances.⁶¹

Hunan Road⁶²

This scenic street features boutique clothing shops, department stores and restaurants.

Catherine Park⁶³

A newly developed zone with a trendy vibe, offering a diverse culinary experience with cuisine from Italy, Vietnam, and New Zealand, and other countries, as well as the city's own home-grown flavours. Beiqiu Museum of Contemporary Art opened in 2020 as a recent addition to the Park.

SPONGE CITY: SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

NANJING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Nanjing, like many cities in southern and central China, copes with flooding as an environmental reality. Due to rapid urbanisation, population growth and climate changes, flooding is a frequent threat to the livelihood of the people and infrastructure in the city.

The city is now a part of the wider roll out of China's Sponge City initiative after its conception in 2013 and pilot trials starting in 2015. As a brainchild of President Xi, the 'sponge city' concept was realised via sharing of expertise between urban planners from the Netherlands and local specialists, such as Yu Kong-jian from Peking University. The plan strives for sustainable development using eco-conscious design to cope with excess rainfall by reducing the number of hard surfaces and increasing the amount of absorbent land - for example wetlands and lakes.⁶⁴

Jiangxin Island is one of the first 'sponge city' areas of Nanjing. Located on western edge of the city, it is an ecological island with a 70% planned greenland coverage.⁶⁵ The Chinese government has joined efforts with Singapore to develop the island into the Singapore Nanjing Eco Hi-tech Island. The goal is to develop the island into a factory-free, low carbon footprint project, where all commercial and residential buildings will rely only on renewable energy sources, such as solar and hydrogen.⁶⁶ The island consists of a cluster of innovation centres in the field of ecological and environmental protection, new materials and artificial intelligence⁶⁷



ECO-TOURISM AND SLOW LIVING

NANJING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Gaochun, a rural district only one hour by train from downtown Nanjing, has been revitalised after a diplomatic visit by Angelo Vasallo, then Mayor of the Italian city Pollica and Vice President of International Cittaslow in 2010. The impression left on Vasallo by the pristine environment during an ecotour of Yaxi village in Gaochun led to a transformation of the area, and the Yaxi Village Ecological Tour was officially declared an 'International Cittaslow' – the first of its kind in China.

“

International Cittaslow started with the slow food movement...[i]n 1986, [by] Carlo Petrini, an Italian journalist known for his activism...A Cittaslow can be a town, a village or community with a population of less than 50,000. It is anti-pollution, anti-noise, and supports urban greening, green energy and traditional handicraft industries. There are no fast food areas or large supermarkets in Cittaslow areas.

”

– China Cittaslow⁶⁹

The Gaochun International Cittaslow has now developed into a one-stop recreational destination with hotel resorts, campsites, restaurants, and handicraft markets along with heritage sites and lush natural scenery.⁶⁸ There are two main annual events in Gaochun – the Golden Rape Flower Tourism Festival in March and the Land Art Festival featuring the Cittaslow Flower Art Exhibition every autumn.

Cittaslow Flower Art Exhibition / Land Art Festival⁷⁰

Taking inspiration from the successful Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in Japan, the exhibition connects nature and culture in Yaxi village, Gaochun. Local artists are invited to create site-specific land art or outdoor installations. Participating artists in 2021 included Liu Shaoniu, Shen Jingdongm, Yang Yuanyuan and Yan Lei. Emerging artists and students are also invited to join the 'Young Creative Initiative' to add new elements to the village.⁷¹ Handicraft workshops, music performances and 'glamping' activities offer participants a new experience of rural tourism, while building awareness for 'slow living' as a sustainable lifestyle.



CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

“

Institutions in Nanjing continue to build on a long tradition of culture and erudition by adapting historical structures into thriving new literary and artistic hubs. This blend of history, architecture, and re-imagined contemporary culture is key in Nanjing: the city is filled with bookstores that hold exhibitions, music venues hosting movie nights, art museum showcasing young architects, and one of the best contemporary art museums is on a university campus. ”

—Kira Simon-Kennedy⁷²

The Nanjing University of the Arts (also known as Nanjing Arts Institute) is the earliest art academy established in China. Faculty of its Department of Art Studies and Education include world-renowned modern Chinese artists Xu Beihong and Zhang Daqian. Established in 1912, it now has more than 100,000 students and consists of 14 schools, offering a range of expertise from schools of fine arts, music, design, media and the cultural and creative industries.⁷³

Since the beginning of the 2010s, landmark modernist architecture, including the Nanjing Poly Grand Theatre and Jiangsu Grand Theatre, has transformed downtown Nanjing.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

NANJING

Cultural City Profile
China

Nanjing Creative Design Centre⁷⁴

The non-profit Centre was set up by the municipal government and the organiser of Nanjing Week and Nanjing Design Week to oversee city-wide international exchange projects through the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

International Youth Conference Centre⁷⁵

Designed by world-renowned architect and designer Zaha Hadid and opened for the 2014 Youth Olympics Games, the Centre is located at Nanjing's Hexi New Town, a new central business district. It consists of two towers and a podium which houses a culture centre.

Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts⁷⁶

Completed in October 2012, the university museum has a total exhibition and display area of 6,000m². The lecture hall in the museum can accommodate up to two hundred people and regularly hosts international seminars, lectures and press conferences. In 2019, the museum collaborated with Michael Werner Gallery from Germany to host an exhibition Sightings | Positions of Art from Germany featuring works by artists such as Georg Baselitz and Joseph Beuys.⁷⁷

Nanjing Museum⁷⁸

One of the first and largest museums established in China, it houses one of the world's largest collections of Ming and Qing Dynasty porcelain. In 2018, Nanjing Museum co-organised a blockbuster exhibition Renaissance Masters: The Art of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raffaello with Associazione Culturale MetaMorfosi from Italy. The exhibition attracted 180,000 visitors, mostly youngsters.⁷⁹ Its annual Night at the Museum 5th edition event was held in 2020, with a range of dance performances and immersive experiences⁸⁰



Nanjing Municipal Museum⁸¹

The Nanjing Municipal Museum is located in Chaotian Palace, the largest and best-preserved Ming-Qing official building in the Jiangnan region. It holds more than 100,000 cultural objects ranging from ancient China to the modern era.

Oriental Metropolitan Museum/Six Dynasties Museum⁸²

The 23,000m² museum, is built on the ruins of Jiankang Castle from the ancient Jin Dynasty court. It is the largest museum in Nanjing devoted to displaying the history, culture, and relics of the Six Dynasties. The museum website offers an immersive, 360-degree virtual tour, providing an in-depth and comprehensive view across the museum campuses.⁸³



Memorial Hall for Nanjing Massacre Victims⁸⁴

This thematic memorial hall built on the site of the Jiangdong Gate mass murder during the Nanjing Massacre opened to the public in 1985. Since 2014, the memorial hall has been designated as the permanent host for the annual national memorial ceremony commemorating the victims of the Nanjing Massacre. Its outreach programmes include the International Peace School, lectures and children's workshops. In 2019, twelve students from Oxford University visited the memorial hall during the 'Polar UK China Tour'.⁸⁵

Sifang Art Museum⁸⁶

Sifang Art Museum was founded by Lu Xun, son of real-estate developer Lu Jun, in 2013 and is situated in Loashan National Park. The museum aims to introduce the newest forms of art and contribute to the growth of public appreciation for contemporary art. In 2018, the museum launched a collaborative residency involving over 20 artists and musicians, with a call to 'return to nature by detaching from the quotidian, urban routines'.⁸⁷

Beiqiu Museum of Contemporary Art⁸⁸

Newly opened in September 2020, the museum is developed by the Huanya Group. It is the only museum in the country that is partly embedded in a mountain. It is located at Catherine Park, an emerging art and culture quarter. The museum's architecture retains part of the interior and structure of the former 20-year-old building. Its inaugural exhibition featured works by artists from Nanjing.

G Museum⁹⁰

Launched in September 2020, the G Museum is referred to as the 'Cloud Museum' for its location on the 52nd floor of the iconic Nanjing Golden Eagle World, one of Asia's largest shopping and office complexes. The museum, funded by the Nanjing Golden Eagle International Group, offers a 12,000m² space for contemporary art exhibitions, talks, workshops, a bookstore and a café.

Nanjing National 1913 Theatre Troupe⁹¹

The nationally recognised troupe operates a 288-seat black box theatre. It has built a national profile for its dedication to experimental theatre and local talent cultivation.

Nanjing Poly Grand Theatre⁹²

Designed by architect Zaha Hadid, the Nanjing Poly Grand Theatre has hosted world-class performances by internationally acclaimed artists such as Winton Marsalis and orchestras such as London Symphony Orchestra and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

Jiangsu Grand Theatre⁹³

Completed in 2015, the grand theatre's six facilities include an opera house, a concert hall, a drama theatre, and multiple conference halls. Its programme line-up is one of the first in the province that fuses traditional and modern art forms at scale, with a focus on provincial talent. It also houses an art museum with two exhibition halls.

“

We hope that Beiqiu Museum of Contemporary Art can provide a space for artists to communicate and connect, so as to let the public get to know them. We also hope to make good use of our strategic location in the centre of Nanjing to provide citizens with a place to enjoy art exhibitions without deliberately looking for it.

”

—Mao Hui, President of Huanya Group⁸⁹

93 www.jsartcentre.org

CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

Nanjing Maker Space⁹⁴

A grassroots maker space founded in 2012, this collective now has a team of ten artists and focuses on incubating innovation across four major areas: 1) digital applications and software, industrial design and R&D; 2) art, culture, creative economy and humanities; 3) knowledge production, best-practice exchange, and an upskilling programme; 4) promotion of maker's culture and entrepreneurship.

Tencent Westart Innovation Space (Nanjing)⁹⁵

Founded in 2015, the Nanjing branch of Tencent Westart Innovation Space is an incubator and accelerator, focusing on industries such as corporate services, cultural creation, gaming, e-commerce and smart hardware. By 2018, it had cultivated over 200 projects and enterprises. The cumulative financing of venture projects exceeded GBP 33 million (CNY 300 million), with a valuation of over GBP 333 million (CNY 3 billion).⁹⁶

1865 Creative Park⁹⁷

1865 Creative Park is located at the site of the Jinling Machinery Manufacturing Bureau, which was built in 1865. It was renovated and opened in 2007, with a museum-grade programming dedicated to the development of Chinese modern industrial histories. It is the largest cultural, artistic and creative park in Nanjing, housing over 300 enterprises with 80% focusing on cultural and tourism businesses.⁹⁸

Nanjing National Talent Entrepreneur Park⁹⁹

The Park was renovated from an old industrial plant and transformed into an entrepreneurial area in 2013. With over 80,000m² of commercial office space, the Park aims to gather leading entrepreneurs and high-tech talent from home and abroad in the field of creative and design, technology and innovation. It is also home to the Nanjing Jiangnan Silk Cultural Museum.

Gan's Grand Courtyard¹⁰⁰

Gan's Grand Courtyard is a 200-year-old cluster of traditional houses previously owned by the wealthy local Gan family. Its west wing lies the Nanjing Folklore Museum and Nanjing Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition Centre and features exhibitions and interactive activities to display Chinese folk culture such as bamboo carving, opera mask painting and paper cutting.

Niushoushan Cultural Centre¹⁰¹

Opened in 2015, Niushoushan Cultural Park was designed to establish a contemporary connection to Buddhist heritage while remaining authentic to ancient traditions. The glimmering Usnisa Palace houses important religious relics, a worship place and a vegetarian restaurant.

Librairie Avant-Garde¹⁰²

Founded by Qian Xiaohua in 1999, this iconic bookstore was converted from a former bomb shelter. It specialises in classic Western literature, Christianity and social sciences. Located near Nanjing University, Librairie Avant-Garde can accommodate around 300 people with reading tables and open seating. With a café and a small shop, it doubles as a venue for lectures, concerts and art exhibitions. The bookstore was named by The Guardian in 2016 as one of the ten best industrial-chic spaces worldwide.¹⁰³

OLA Art Space¹⁰⁴

This live venue opened by local singer Li Zhi serves as a permanent performance venue for Li Zhi as well as other local and touring music artists.

Monohouse¹⁰⁵

Monohouse is a house and techno club that hosts gigs for local and touring bands regularly.

Jiwu Art Space¹⁰⁶

An independent art space dedicated to discovering emerging and cutting-edge artists. Its methodology features non-discipline-based dialogue and collaboration between artists from different genres. The space has collaborated with Dutch artist Adriaan Rees, Malcolm Ross-White from the UK and Trey Hill from the US.¹⁰⁷

Half-City Book Club¹⁰⁸

One of China's most popular women-only reading groups, Half-City holds regular talks, forums and cultural tours. Its events include inclusive agendas focusing on empowering women and girls.



MOVERS AND SHAKERS

NANJING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Wang Yamin¹⁰⁹

Artist and curator at the Institute for Contemporary Art Nanjing (ICAN) and Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts (AMNUA).

Zheng Wen¹¹⁰

Zheng is a curator, art critic and Deputy Director of the Art Museum of Nanjing University of Arts. He is also the Artistic Director of Banana Art Space, an experiential art space that works with emerging local contemporary artists.

Kong Chao¹¹¹

Kong is the Global Director of NAFI Nanjing International Art Season and Nanjing Art Fair International.

Lu Xun/ Sean Lu¹¹²

Lu Xun, the founder of Sifang Art Museum, is considered one of the most influential young collectors in China. His responsibilities include commissioning permanent artworks across the site and the development of Sifang's contemporary art collection.



Liu Lin¹¹³

Liu is the curator of Sifang Art Museum and curated the Topography Project, which discusses the connection of the museum with Nanjing's history and environment.¹¹⁴

Wu Weishan¹¹⁵

An internationally-renowned contemporary sculptor and curator at the National Art Museum of China, Wu also is a professor at Nanjing University.

Nie Weigu¹¹⁶

Nie is an artist, professor and deputy dean of the Institute of Fine Arts at Nanjing University, as well as the vice president of Nanjing Artists Association. His exhibition World View: Nie Weigu's Chinese Painting Show was held at the National Ukrainian Academy of Arts in 2016.

Bian Ka¹¹⁷

Graduated from the Nanjing University of the Arts, Bian is currently the Director of G Museum. He is also the former director of exhibitions at UCCA Centre for Contemporary Art in Beijing.

Li Zhi¹¹⁸

Li Zhi is a folk singer and founder of OLA Art Space. Li has been a vital member of the national and local music landscape.



FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

NANJING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Nanjing Book Festival¹¹⁹

One of the earliest book festivals in China, the Nanjing Book Festival celebrated its 25th edition in 2020. More than 500 reading organisations participate annually.

Nanjing International Art Season & Nanjing Art Fair International (NAFI)¹²⁰

NAFI features videos, photography, installations, paintings and fashion creations presented by 27 galleries and four art museums from home and abroad. Works by Spanish artists sponsored by the Royal Spanish Academy of Art, the Barcelona Museum of Art, the Spanish Artists Association and the International Exchange Association were showcased at the most recent fair.

Yangtze Nanjing Contemporary Art Fair¹²¹

Set up in 2018, the art fair is a new platform to connect the global art world to the contemporary Chinese art scene in Nanjing, with leading contemporary galleries from Asia, Europe and America participating.

Nanjing Forest City Music Festival¹²²

A two-day music event that brings China's pop, folk, rap and rock bands to the stage every autumn.

Nanjing Sunfun Music Festival¹²³

Nanjing Sunfun Music Festival is a young music festival brand created by the Midou production team and features a line-up of bands performing a diverse fusion of folk, rock, rap and pop music.





xianyu hao / Unsplash

Changjiang Road Theatre Festival¹²⁴

Founded in 2018, this theatre festival is organised by the Nanjing National 1913 Theatre Troupe. The 2021 edition had an incubative mission that invites and showcases original local-based production to revive the city's cultural scene. It has four pillars: incubating local stage productions, introducing foreign productions, a competition showcase for emerging talent, and promoting theatre art to a mainstream audience.¹²⁵

Nanjing Creative Design Week¹²⁶

Organised by the Nanjing Creative Design Centre, this is an annual design week showcasing the city's creative soft power. It has a city-wide footprint and features a design competition prize and trade show.

China Nanjing International Plum Blossom Festival¹²⁷

The plum blossom is the city flower of Nanjing and the city has hosted the annual China Nanjing International Plum Blossom Festival at Plum Blossom Hill since 1996. Located in the Zhongshan Mountain Scenic Area, the festival has become a state-level tourism event renowned at home and abroad during February and March.

Qinhuai International Lantern Festival¹²⁸

Qinhuai Lantern Festival is a popular traditional festival held near Nanjing Confucian Temple since 1985. Each January, several million Nanjing citizens and tourists visit the festival for its colorful lantern shows.

Hairy Crab Festival¹²⁹

September is the peak season for indulging in the rich and buttery hairy crabs harvested from Gucheng Lake in Gaochun County, China's best breeding grounds for the popular delicacy.

¹²⁴ WeChat ID: njgmxjc

SŪ ZHŌU

苏州

CHINA

Cultural City Profile

z / unsplash



zelda zhou / Unsplash



victoria-laroche-crebox / unsplash

yancy-min / Unsplash



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INTRODUCING SUZHOU

SUZHOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Suzhou is a prefecture-level city located in southeastern Jiangsu Province. It is one of the major metropolises in the Yangtze River Delta region close to Shanghai (30 minutes) and Hangzhou (1.5 hours) by high-speed rail. The rich cultural legacy and picturesque landscape laden with canals, bridges, and classic gardens, has earned Suzhou a reputation as the ‘Venice of the East’.

Suzhou recorded a GBP 223 billion (CNY 2.01 trillion) in 2020. It has the largest GDP in Jiangsu Province and is one of the ten Chinese cities with the strongest economies.¹ The city has one of the largest populations in Jiangsu province, with the number of permanent residents recorded as 12.7 million.²

Its efficient transportation facilities, vibrant workforce, and favourable policy environment make Suzhou a strategic hub for business and a frontier for foreign investment. In 2019, Suzhou attracted more than 17,000 foreign-funded enterprises from 115 countries and regions. Its foreign investment portfolio reached GBP 96 billion (CNY 864.2 billion), behind only Shanghai and Beijing.³ The city is also a rising innovation hub for the biomedical and pharmaceutical sectors. Striving to be the ‘Pharmacy Valley of China’ within 10 years, the city is experiencing a boom in attracting local and international biomedical companies looking to set up an R&D arm.

“ Historically, Suzhou was synonymous with high culture and elegance, and generations of artists, scholars, writers and high society in China were drawn by its exquisite art forms and the delicate beauty of its gardens. ”

—Lonely Planet⁴



Suzhou has an established pipeline of public and private infrastructure in the creative and cultural industries, including museum and theatre facilities, world-class higher education institutes, and a vibrant grassroots community. A historical haven for high culture, Suzhou classic gardens were listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1997. The gardens' design philosophies and aesthetics have been the inspiration for many creatives and luminaries in China and overseas. The city's rich intangible heritage includes Kunqu Opera, *Pingtan*, and Suzhou embroidery. Joining the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in 2014 as a City of Crafts and Folk Art, Suzhou has formulated strong global networks and international collaboration, rooted in its industrial and cultural legacy.⁵

“The gardens in Suzhou are a perfect antidote to China's heaving urbanisation...[T]he gardens are thinking machines, they are like living philosophy installations.”

—Wang Shu, Architect and Professor
of China Academy of Art⁶



adriaan terblanche / Unsplash

SUZHOU IN NUMBERS

SUZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China



The rich cultural legacy and picturesque landscape earned Suzhou a reputation as the 'Venice of the East'. It is also a UNESCO City of Crafts and Folk Art.



96
BILLION

In 2019, Suzhou attracted more than 17,000 foreign-funded enterprises from 115 countries and regions. Its foreign investment reached GBP 96 billion (CNY 864.2 billion), only behind Shanghai and Beijing.

90
ISLANDS

Suzhou is the home of Tai Lake, the third-largest freshwater lake in China, which contains roughly 90 islands and is linked to China's Grand Canal.



An estimated 42 per cent of the city is covered by water, with numerous waterways, canals, and streams.



233
BILLION

Suzhou recorded a GDP of GBP 223 billion (CNY 223 billion) in 2020. It has the largest GDP in Jiangsu Province and is one of the ten Chinese cities with the strongest economies. The city has one of the largest populations in Jiangsu province, with permanent residents recorded as 12.7 million people.



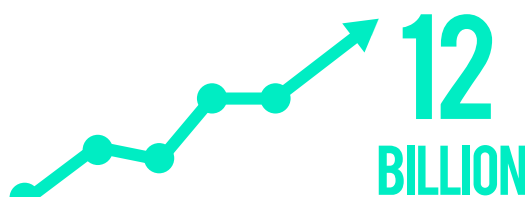
BEIJING-GUANGZHOU: 1.5 hour

SHANGHAI: 30-minute

It is one of the major metropolises in the Yangtze River Delta region close to Shanghai (30-minute) and Hangzhou (1.5 hour) by high-speed rail.



Striving to be the 'Pharmacy Valley of China' within 10 years, the city is experiencing a recent boom in attracting local and international biomedical companies to set up an R&D arm.



In 2020, the added value of cultural and creative industries in Suzhou reached GBP 12 billion (CNY 105.2 billion), the highest in Jiangsu Province.

CONTEXT

Located in the Yangtze River Delta economic zone, Suzhou has been a historically-significant trade centre and a cultural hub for scholars, artists and craftsmen. The city borders Shanghai on the west, and is about 160km north-east of Hangzhou and 200km southeast of Nanjing.

An estimated 42 per cent of the city is covered by water, with numerous waterways, canals, and streams. Its unique water landscape and canal culture has been an inspiration for poets and literati for centuries. The exquisite water townships Zhouzhuang, Mudu and Tongli have made Suzhou one of the top travel destinations in China.⁸ Suzhou is the home of Tai Lake, the third-largest freshwater lake in China, which contains roughly 90 islands and is linked to China's Grand Canal.⁹

Benefitting from the 144-hour visa-free transit policy issued in 2016, citizens from 51 countries can visit Suzhou through neighbouring international airports in Shanghai, Hangzhou and Nanjing.¹⁰

Following the central government's directives to resolve population decline in lower-tier cities, Suzhou, alongside other Yangtze Delta metropolises, has relaxed its household registration (*hukou*) system to attract highly educated talents to live and work in the city.¹¹

“ When Marco Polo first visited Suzhou in 1276, he was impressed by the city's rich culture, elegant canals, small waterways and playful stone bridges. He called it ‘the Venice of the East’. ”

—Global Times⁷

Suzhou is one of the historical cities located in the Yangtze Basin with over 2,500 years' history. The city was established in 514 BC by the ruler of the state of Wu during the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu) period (770-476 BCE). The modern name Suzhou can be dated back to 589 CE, when the Sui dynasty (581-618 AD) governed the southern China. With the development of the Grand Canal, Suzhou quickly secured its economic importance as the major rice-surplus region in China.¹³

Inspired by the Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian philosophies, the classic gardens in Suzhou were built by ancient Chinese scholars as an idyllic escape from the daily administrative burden, in pursuit of art, poetry and music.¹⁴ The design of the gardens has inspired many influential architects and scholars including I. M. Pei, Jun Tong and Wang Shu.¹⁵ The classical gardens of Suzhou were officially included on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1997. With 9 gardens acknowledged on the list, each epitomises aesthetic and philosophical excellence in Chinese garden design. Inspired by classical ink art painting and craftsman traditions, this school of architectural and landscape design seeks to recreate the natural environment in miniature form.¹⁶

Suzhou's rich intangible cultural heritage includes its performance arts such as Kun Opera (*Kunqu*) and Pingtan (*Tanci*). Originating from Kunshan, Kun Opera is one of the oldest Chinese traditional operas of the Han ethnic culture, with over 600 years of history.¹⁷ Pingtan, traced back to the early Qing dynasty, is an art form of storytelling and ballad singing in the Suzhou dialect.¹⁸ In addition to performance arts, Suzhou also has deep roots in craft culture, typified by Suzhou embroidery art, silk weaving, imperial kiln as well as Suzhou fans. The cultural legacy of Kun Opera and *Pingtan* is gaining traction among younger audiences with the help of social media and a younger generation of performing artists. Among them, performer Qian Jinxi is a top influencer on Chinese social media who frequently posts vlogs of his Kun Opera performances or tips on performing techniques.

In 2017, Suzhou joined the Organisation of World Heritage Cities and became the only official member city in China. In 2018, during the 3rd Asia-Pacific Conference of the Organisation of World Heritage Cities, and was the first city to be awarded the title of 'World Heritage Model City', acknowledging Suzhou's efforts in heritage protection, and heritage-centric urban development approach.¹⁹

Contemporary art activities in recent years have taken their inspiration from the city's cultural legacy and classic gardens.. The experimental exhibition *Zi Canglang Pavilion* took place at the historical Canglang Pavilion. In 2016 it paid tribute to the legacy of Kun Opera.²⁰ A collaboration by Here Your Art and Yanlord Land Group Ltd, the exhibition *Su Reflection* shed light on the role of classic gardens in the past and the present.²¹

The local government's effort to promote Kun Opera and *Pingtan* went digital during Covid-19. The third Jiangnan Culture and Arts & International Tourism Festival partnered with Chinese internet giants including Xinhua.net, Toutiao, Douyin, Weibo and Bilibili to increase the festival's reach through livestreaming events.²²

“ Suzhou's classical gardens are indeed very carefully and thoughtfully designed — the water, hills, placement of rocks, location of pavilions, and consideration of relationships as well as the feng shui. This all makes the universe of Suzhou-styled gardens unique and very different from the classical European sense of the word. ”

—Stephen Koss, author of *Beautiful Su: A Social and Cultural History of Suzhou, China*¹²



bernd-dittrich / Unsplash

Master-of-Nets Garden, 12th century²³

An exemplar of Suzhou classical gardens. Originally built in the year of Chunxi of South Song Dynasty in the 12th century by a dismissed official named Zhang Jun. Master-of-the-Nets Garden initially bore the name *Fisherman's Hermitage*. During the Republican period, renowned painter Zhang Daqian and his brother lived and worked in the garden for four years.

The Humble Administrator's Garden, 1509²⁴

Also known as the 'Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician' by UNESCO, it is the largest classical garden in Suzhou and one of the most famous gardens in China. It was a scholar garden during the Tang Dynasty and a monastery garden during the Yuan Dynasty, and is seen as a representative work of the Ming Dynasty building style.

Suzhou Garden Museum²⁵

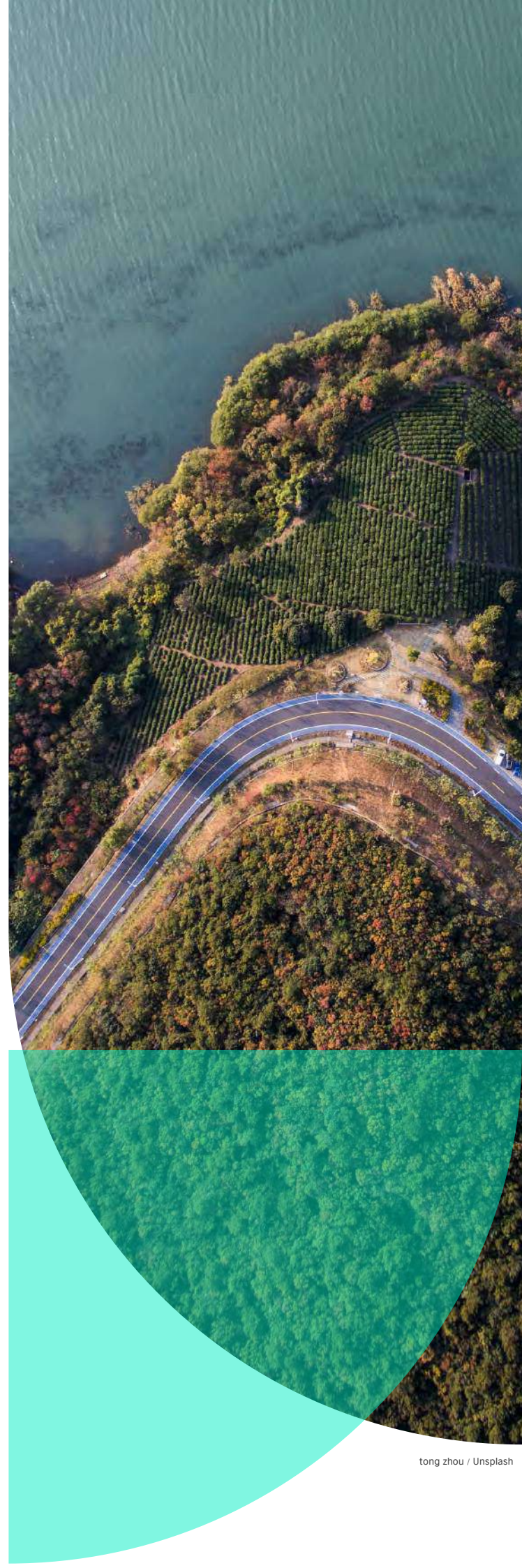
Located in the west of Humble Administrator's Garden, the museum focuses on the history, culture and philosophy of the Suzhou gardens, as well as artworks originating from their cultural context, including literature, inscription, calligraphy and paintings.

Suzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum²⁶

Located within the Horticultural Exposition Park of Suzhou, its design is inspired by the natural environment and traditional literati culture, particularly architectural designs for palaces and gardens. The museum features interactive exhibitions and leverages immersive technologies to invigorate its display of artefacts and traditional lifestyle.

Kun Opera Museum, 1986²⁷

Completed in 1986 as a provincial heritage conservation unit, the museum houses one of the best-designed heritage stages in Suzhou, still in operation and offering performance programmes to the public. It also has exhibition halls demonstrating the development of Kun Opera, *Pingtan*, Suzhou Opera and classical instruments.



tong zhou / Unsplash

Suzhou Kun Opera Theatre of Jiangsu, 1951²⁸

Formerly known as Shanghai Minfeng Su Opera Troupe, it was founded in 1951 and was established in Suzhou in 1953. By preserving the ancient techniques of Kun Opera, it enjoys national fame as one of the most 'classical' producers of the art form.

Suzhou Embroidery Research Institute, 1957²⁹

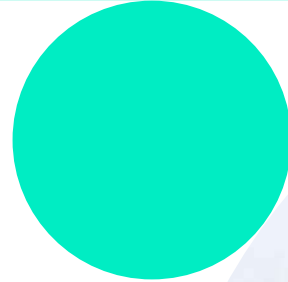
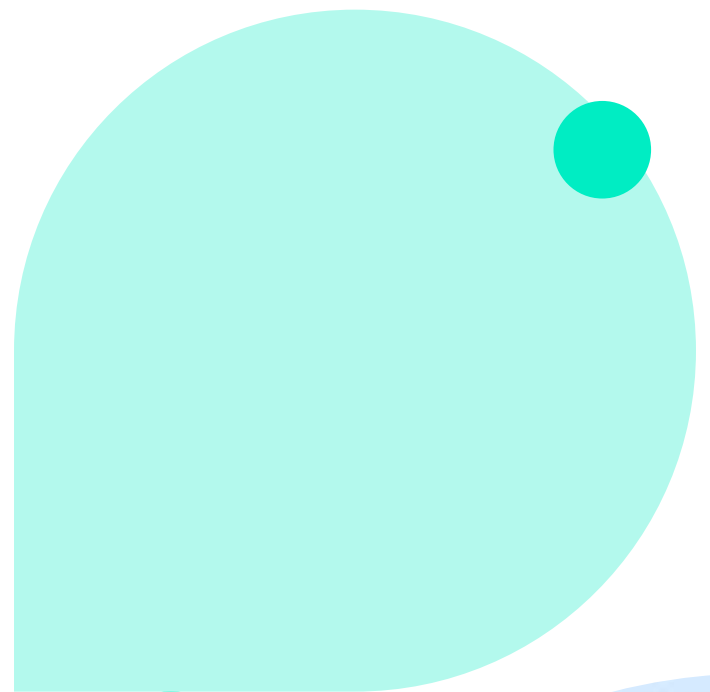
Suzhou Embroidery Research Institute has over 100 senior craftsmen and artists, who not only train new specialists, but also conduct research and studies on embroidery techniques. The Institute also actively engages in international collaborations through knowledge exchange to promote the art form, as well as developing a merchandising arm to popularise Suzhou embroidery.

Suzhou Arts and Crafts Museum, 2002³⁰

The museum has a collection of traditional artworks including embroidery, sandalwood art, sculpture, stage costumes, and miniatures. It also hosts special exhibitions and public events to demonstrate the contemporary iteration of the Suzhou traditional arts.

Suzhou Imperial Kiln Ruins Park & Museum of Imperial Kiln Brick³¹

The museum complex consists of a historic kiln and imperial court, with contemporary architectural interventions that restore the *Jin Zhuan* (Golden Brick) design elements. Its exhibitions incorporate modern technology and interactive media to demonstrate the comprehensive production cycle and traditional processes involved in the making of kiln brick.



CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

Since 2014, Suzhou has been part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a 'City of Crafts and Folk Art'. Its cultural and creative industries as well as the cultural tourism sector have since experienced a renaissance, with frequent international exchange projects, sharing of best practices in heritage regeneration, talent incubation and interdisciplinary collaborations with the technology sector.³²

In 2020, the combined value of the cultural and creative industries of Suzhou reached GBP 12 billion (CNY 105.2 billion), the highest in Jiangsu Province.³³ In 2021, the local government launched a city-wide campaign to brand Suzhou as the epitome of the traditional 'Jiangnan Culture'. GBP 111 million (CNY 1 billion) of estimated investment is expected to be devoted to the revival of heritage and traditional culture. In this area, animation, digital content production and IP development are priority areas of government investment.³⁴ The municipal government also launched a dedicated annual fund of GBP 17 million (CNY 150 million) to revitalise the post-Covid creative economy. Under this scheme, 65 designated projects will receive investment funding, including projects administered by Ximalaya Technology, Alibaba, Tencent, Shanghai Theatre Academy China affiliate School, and The Shanghai Conservatory of Music affiliate research institute.³⁵

Capitalising on the surge in popularity of Chinese heritage among generation Z, known as China Chic (*guochao*), the municipality has launched a city-wide initiative, Gushu 8:30pm,³⁶ to boost its night-time economy.³⁷ This has resulted in a plethora of evening events, featuring traditional cultural heritage including performances and culinary culture on a canal cruise.³⁸

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND LIVEABLE CITY

SUZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China

“ Suzhou can play a special role among Chinese cities in implementing the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), as well as realising carbon peaking and neutrality in China. With its strong industry base and long-term growth prospects, Suzhou is pivotal for Yangtze River Delta integration... Suzhou New District with its investments in innovation, is positioned to become a hub for green tech transfers and green finance development across the Delta. ”

—Beate Trankmann, UNDP Resident Representative in China³⁹

Suzhou is quickly becoming a regional hub for green tech innovation and adoption. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges of the Ministry of Commerce, jointly launched an innovation demonstration project in Suzhou New District in 2021. The UNDP lab aims to foster the research and development of green and low-carbon technology innovation. The project is the first of its kind by the UNDP in China, which supports regional sustainable development.⁴⁰ According to Yicai Reporting, Suzhou will soon launch a carbon footprint passport as a trial for local citizens to calculate and keep tabs on their daily carbon footprints. This covers all aspects of daily life, including consumption of clothing, food, transportation and leisure.⁴¹

Suzhou is a pioneer in urban organic waste management. The municipal government has worked with Jiangsu Clean Environmental Technology Co. to design a domestic waste recycling plan and a comprehensive system for kitchen waste collection and treatment, and associated logistics. The project encourages restaurants to send their organic waste to the company's plant in exchange for annual renewal of their operation certificates.⁴² As part of the China Integrated Waste Management NAMA initiatives, the city has hosted awareness workshops for local primary school students and shared insights related to waste management and treatment.⁴³



Green practices have been widely adopted by both local companies and international corporations based in Suzhou. For example, in 2012, Procter & Gamble (P&G) in Suzhou pioneered a scheme that purchases renewable electricity exclusively through local wind farms.⁴⁴ The Radisson Hotel Suzhou achieved energy and water savings of around 20 per cent in 2020 and was certified for Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies.⁴⁵

Research Institute for Environmental Innovation (Suzhou) Tsinghua⁴⁶

A subsidiary institution of Tsinghua University, specialising in the development of cost-efficient technological solutions to reduce industrial emissions. With over 20 research groups, the institution frequently collaborates with international research centres and start-ups.

Suzhou Western Eco-town Development (SWED), 2009⁴⁷

Invested in and controlled by Suzhou New District Group Corporation, SWED focuses on issues related to urbanisation and development of commercial and resort projects. With a track record of delivery, SWED has grown into a company with total assets totaling GBP 889 million (CNY 8 billion).

Chilye⁴⁸

Chilye is a leading supplier of high-voltage electrical appliances and power distribution units for new energy vehicles.



IP POWERHOUSE AND BIOMEDICAL INNOVATION

SUZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China

“ Suzhou is attractive with its powerful infrastructure, complete industrial chains and sound business environment. ”

—Belinda Wong, Starbucks China chairman and CEO⁴⁹

Suzhou, together with Qiangdao, has the fastest-growing clusters of industries in new scientific and innovative technologies in China, according to the World Intellectual Property Organisation Global Innovation Index 2021.⁵⁰ In 2020, the city had about 138,800 items of intellectual property authorised, among which 9,909 pieces were innovation patents.⁵¹ Suzhou was selected as part of the first batch of cities, alongside Shenzhen and Chengdu, to roll out the country's real-world trials for the Chinese government's digital currency.⁵²

Suzhou has a burgeoning biomedical and pharmaceutical sector, with the local government declaring its ambition to establish the city as the 'Pharmacy Valley of China' within the next decade. Biomedicine cluster BioBAY, established 15 years ago, is a leading-edge life science incubator in China, housing about 430 businesses and 15,000 professionals. Homegrown brands such as Abogen Biosciences and Advaccine Biopharmaceuticals, also based in Suzhou, recently made headlines for their successful development of China's first mRNA-based and first DNA-based COVID-19 vaccines.⁵³ In 2021, French pharmaceutical corporation Sanofi also unveiled its first Sanofi biomedical research centre in Asia, with an annual investment plan of €20 million for the next five years and committing to a team of 50 researchers.⁵⁴

In addition to private sector R&D centres, the higher education sector and joint-venture research institutions play a vital role in driving biomedical research and innovation in Suzhou. Established in 2020, the Xi'an Jiaotong- Liverpool University Wisdom Lake Academy of Pharmacy specialises in pharmaceutical education. Jointly founded by University of Oxford and Suzhou Industrial Park in 2016, the Oxford Suzhou Centre for





Advanced Research is Oxford's first overseas centre for research in physical and engineering sciences as well as medical research.⁵⁵

Suzhou Industrial Park (SISPARK)

Initiated as a co-operative project between China and Singapore in 1994, SISPARK has focused its support on start-up acceleration and incubation. Among the businesses located in the Park, 8 are listed in the Fortune Global 500, while 9 are on the list of top 100 global service outsourcing enterprises. It has become one of the most competitive high-tech industrial clusters in China for artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing, exerting a significant influence in Suzhou and the Yangtze River Delta region.

The Oxford Suzhou Centre for Advanced Research, 2016⁵⁶

A partnership between the University of Oxford and the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), SIP is Oxford's first overseas centre for research in physical and engineering sciences.

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, 2020

An international joint-venture university, offering a broad range of research-led degrees and training programmes in science, engineering, business and culture, with primary courses in English.

Medical College of Soochow University⁵⁷

The College, dating back to Nantong Medical Academy founded in 1912, is one of the oldest medical schools in China. It enjoys a national profile for research in radiology, haematology and orthopaedics.

CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The legacy of Wu Culture has nurtured countless creative figures and genres of arts over the centuries. Among these, Wumen Fine Arts School (Wumen Huapai) is the alma mater of influential figures including Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, Tang Yin and Qiu Ying, whose poems, calligraphy and paintings have had a profound impact on the artistic communities in Asia.⁵⁸

As a member of UNESCO Creative Cities, Suzhou has built a solid talent training infrastructure in crafts and folk art. Local universities such as Soochow University and Suzhou Art & Design Technology Institute cover artistic disciplines dedicated to cultural heritage and the creative economy. The city's network of international partnerships and exchange on heritage preservation is robust. Key regional and global initiatives have been hosted in the city, including the Advanced Course on Conservation and Restoration Techniques of Traditional Architecture for the Asia-Pacific Region in 2015 and 2017.⁵⁹

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

SUZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China

Suzhou University⁶⁰

The institution has a national profile as one of the top universities in China, including distinguished schools such as the School of Humanities; the School of Textile and Clothing Engineering; the School of Chemistry, Chemical Engineering and Materials Science; and the School of Medicine.

Suzhou College of Art & Design Technology, 1958⁶¹

The college's history dates back to the Suzhou School of Art, set up by Yan Wenliang, a renowned oil painter and art educator in China, in 1922. The college, with provincial and national importance, runs a series of Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritor Training Programmes.

Suzhou Museum⁶²

Designed by the architect I. M. Pei, the museum design takes inspiration from Suzhou's traditional architecture. The museum houses cultural relics including traditional paintings, calligraphy, ceramics, and ancient documents. The museum has a robust public programme and education arm. It has also had an influence on contemporary culture through a partnership with one of China's leading art institutions, UCCA, to present an art exhibition titled *Insight & Vision at Yinshanhu Art Museum*.⁶³

Suzhou Culture and Arts Centre

A landmark complex run by the state-owned New Era Group. The Centre is composed of music halls, theatres and cinemas (including the Suzhou Grand Theatre), integrated with world-class stage facilities and the latest digital systems. It offers a rich variety of programmes spanning contemporary Kun Operas, musicals and dramas.

Suzhou Bay Grand Theatre⁶⁴

Unveiled in 2020 with a mission to bring the world to Suzhou, Suzhou Bay Grand Theatre is the third-largest comprehensive theatre complex in China.⁶⁵ It has a 1,600-seat opera house, 600-seat theatre hall and a dozen rehearsal spaces.

Han Shan Art Museum⁶⁶

Founded in 2017, Han Shan Art Museum is a government-sponsored, privately-run museum. It features a wealth of exhibition programmes and specialises in place-based initiatives that convene the community of practitioners in Suzhou. Building on Suzhou's legacy with the signature bell rings at Hangshan Temple, its latest Native Soundscape – the Sonic Geography of Suzhou initiative in 2020-operated a Curatorial Prac-

tice and Placemaking workshop. This brought together 40 interdisciplinary practitioners ranging from musicians, artists, writers, designers, architects, theatre workers, sound researchers, urban designers, folk scholars, anthropologists and historians, to co-create the contemporary iteration of Suzhou's sound-scape.⁶⁷

Yinshanhu Art Museum⁶⁸

A non-profit art museum devoted to promote the traditional culture and heritage of Suzhou. Located near Yinshan Lake with a campus of 4,600m², it operates a host of exhibition and education programmes, with a focus on reviving the legacy of the Grand Canal. Its public events include children's workshops, yoga, calligraphy, and tea appreciation. With a charity fund for the underprivileged, the art museum works closely with community partners to raise awareness of accessibility and social equality.

Suzhou Jinji Lake Art Museum, 2012⁶⁹

A non-profit art museum focusing on contemporary art. Suzhou Jinji Lake Art Museum is located on the second floor of Suzhou Science and Culture Art Centre.

True Colour Museum⁷⁰

A non-profit art museum dedicated to presenting paintings, sculptures, installations and photography which reflects the aesthetic and philosophy of the East.

Espace Qu Art China⁷¹

Founded in Brussels in 2001 and expanding to Suzhou in 2003, Espace Qu Art China operates a 500m² gallery space and organises exhibitions, specialising in public art engagements.



64 WeChat ID: szwdjy01

66 WeChat ID: hanshanartmuseum

CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

SUZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China

“ Book must be the core of a bookstore. Although our bookstore provides services beyond books, from workshops, salons to IP products, we have always asked ourselves whether these are developed around book culture, reading and literature. Bookstore only serves reading – not business. Only through this book-centric approach can authentic and quality content be produced. ”

–Xu Tao, founder of Slow Time Bookstore⁷²



Suzhou saw China's fastest increase in bookstores in 2020.⁷³ The city has over 2,000 bookstores – among which 116 operate 24 hours per day. It also has 831 libraries and 66 public reading rooms. The city's book sales and reading index ranks highly among Chinese cities. Children's books experienced an increase of 2 percent sales in 2020. This rich reading atmosphere coupled with an established library infrastructure have helped independent bookstores to weather the Covid-19 pandemic.⁷⁴

Suzhou bookstores have focused on the customer experience, drawing inspiration from DIY culture as well as design principles, and have also emphasised robust IP protection as well as incorporating eateries into retail sales outlets. Taiwanese brand Eslite Bookstore in Suzhou, has a section dedicated to the showcasing of local designers, specialising in traditional craftsmanship including wood carving, silk embroidery and Suzhou fans.⁷⁵

The municipal government's continuous support for lifelong reading has also lead to a wide range of public events taking place at local bookstores and public libraries. Organised by Fandeng Bookstore, a book shar-

ing programme, *Yunshu*, donates second-hand books to people in need and raises public awareness of sustainable publishing and reading practices. Zuowang Bookstore, which runs a book rental service as well as a range of activities for the public, hosted 115 events from 2019 to 2020.

Eslite Bookstore, 2015⁷⁶

Situated on the bank of Suzhou's Jinji Lake, this bookstore has a diverse collection of books and hosts arts and cultural activities throughout the year.

Wenxue Shanfang, 1899⁷⁷

One of the oldest bookstores in Suzhou founded in Qing dynasty. The shop is currently run by Jiang Chengbo, who is 96 years old and has a family legacy of research in Chinese classics and restoration of historic rare books.

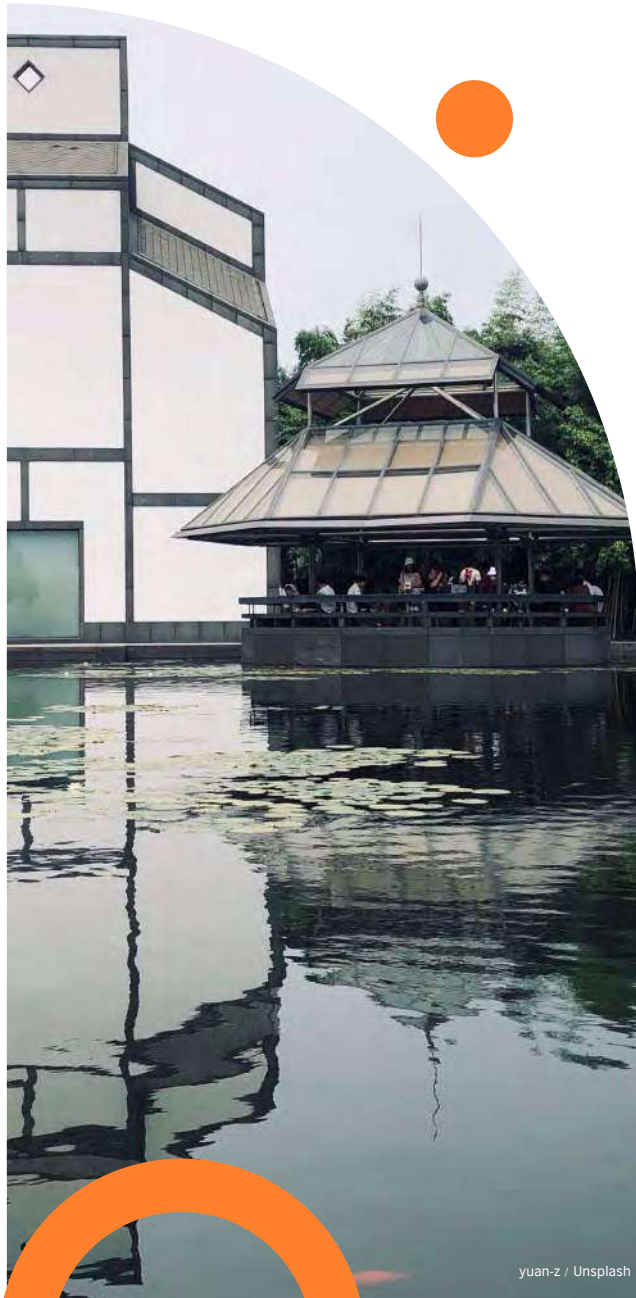
Zhizhi Bookstore⁷⁸

One of the most established independent bookshops in Suzhou, featuring historic books and classical literature on Chinese history and philosophy.

Slow Time Bookstore⁷⁹

A boutique bookstore with an area of only 114m². It has a collection of social science books and regularly organises an English reading salon hosted by Sun Guoqi, an 82-year-old former English professor.





Zuowang Bookstore⁸⁰

Operating a rental service, Zuowang has a carefully-selected book collection and flexible rental scheme. Readers can order home delivery of books for free.

Suzhou Pioneer Park⁸¹

Initiated in 1993 and transformed from a former commercial retail centre, Suzhou Pioneer Park is now a multi-campus start-up and R&D hub. It is one of the first three country-wide pilot innovation hubs. Its national competitiveness was ranked 7th in 2021, among 1,173 incubator peers.⁸²

Rockmaker⁸³

Specialising in 3D printing, Rockmaker is a makers' space and an incubator, backed by the Northbridge Bew Material Technology (Suzhou) Co. Ltd.

Fablab O Suzhou⁸⁴

An MIT-affiliate incubator and makers' space, equipped with 3D printers, digital engraving machines, and laser engraving machines. It regularly organises start-up accelerator events, including training and masterclasses.

Wave live house⁸⁵

An established independent live performance venue in Suzhou. It hosts touring performances from a wide range of genres, including rock, soul music and stand-up comedy.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

SUZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China



Culture Creative Industry Federation Suzhou⁸⁶

Founded in 2011, the Federation is a non-profit organisation initiated by industry professionals.

Chen Ruijin⁸⁷

Director of the Suzhou Museum and deputy director of Suzhou Cultural Relics Bureau.

Xu Yongliang⁸⁸

Founder of Zuowang Bookstore, Xu is known for his creative approach in running bricks-and-mortar bookstores.

Buda⁸⁹

Director and curator of Han Shan Art Museum. He was the initiator behind the series of Curatorial Practice and Placemaking workshops co-produced by Han Shan Art Museum.

Wayne Song⁹⁰

Dr. Wayne Song is the founder of C4X. The C4X group from Suzhou is one of 10 teams competing in the Carbon XPrize, an innovation contest that comes with a US\$7.5 million grand prize for each of its two co-winners.

Lv Jia⁹¹

Leading actress of Kun Opera. She recently performed in the youth edition of the Chinese classics *The Peony Pavilion*.



Chen Lin⁹²

Professor in the Department of Communications, Soochow University, specialising in research and teaching in new media and youth culture.

Winnie Gao⁹³

Gao is the head of the art section for Suzhou Design Week and founder of the New Institute of Fashion, Suzhou.

Tan Weiming⁹⁴

Playwright, director, and co-founder of Tan Drama workshop.

Xu Chien⁹⁵

Owner of A21 art space. With a gallery space in the shopping mall of Suzhou GCL, A21 art space is a multi-purpose production company, providing educational, curatorial and planning services.⁹⁶

HIS Design⁹⁷

Founded in 2000, HIS Design is a Suzhou-based exhibition design company. It has a national footprint with affiliates across Shanghai, Qingdao, Changsha, Xi'an and Chengdu. A frequent collaborator with local museum partners and trade fairs, it also offers placemaking workshops and operates a knowledge exchange arm.

De-Chao Michael Yu⁹⁸

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Innovent Biologics, Inc, a leading and listed company specialising in biological drug development

89 WeChat ID: hanshanartmuseum

94 WeChat ID: TanDrama

95 WeChat ID: A21ARTSPACE

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

SUZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China

Suzhou has an established and young cultural consumer base – experimental, curious and always looking for new cultural experiences. This has made the city an attractive hub for national and international festivals and events, such as the Midi music festival, and has attracted the MDSK hip-hop festival to the city.



Suzhou Creative & Design Cultural Industry Expo (CCDE), 2015⁹⁹

The largest and most professional trade show in the field of creative design in China. It also plays a vital role in leading communications and collaboration between Suzhou and other member cities of the UCCN.

Suzhou Design Week¹⁰⁰

Launched in 2018, Suzhou Design Week is an annual event that focuses on urban regeneration, industrial innovation and cultural aesthetics. The 2020 edition featured a variety of art installations, creative exhibition and live broadcasts that offered visitors an immersive cultural experience.

Jiang Nan Youth Theatre Festival¹⁰¹

Initiated in 2018, the festival is organised by the state-owned New Era Group with a mission to foster local talent. It aims to grow Suzhou's theatre industries and build a national brand for local theatre productions. The festival runs a playwright incubator programme with an open call for scripts.¹⁰²

Suzhou Children's Theatre Festival¹⁰³

Organised by the science and education arm¹⁰⁴ of the Suzhou Dushu Lake Technology Co. Ltd, the Children's Festival was initiated in 2020 and takes place at Dushu Lake Theatre.¹⁰⁵ It aims to provide immersive

theatre for children between the ages of three and twelve, as well as family-friendly productions.

Jiangsu Book Fair, 2021¹⁰⁶

Held in Suzhou in 2021, the fair featured more than 400 publishers and about 80,000 books in the physical venue in Suzhou, while more than 200,000 kinds of books were exhibited via the fair's online platform.

Suzhou 'Zigang Cup' Jade Carving Expo¹⁰⁷

Expanding the legacy of the jade carving industry, the event has become one of the leading trade shows for contemporary jade carving in Suzhou and the region.

Medical Fair China, 2020¹⁰⁸

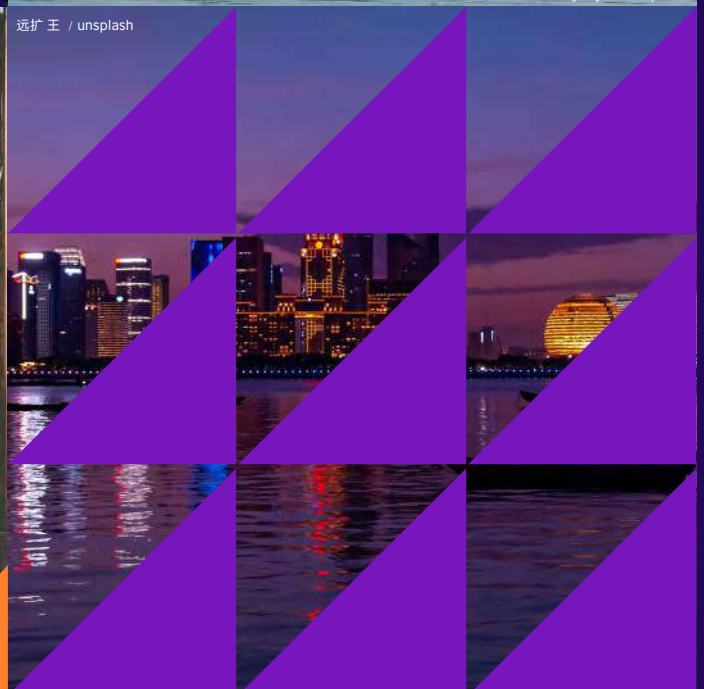
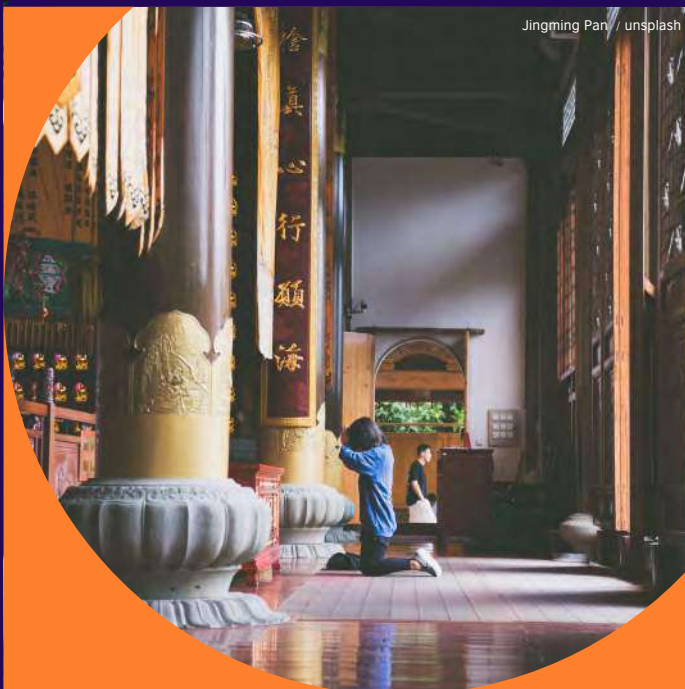
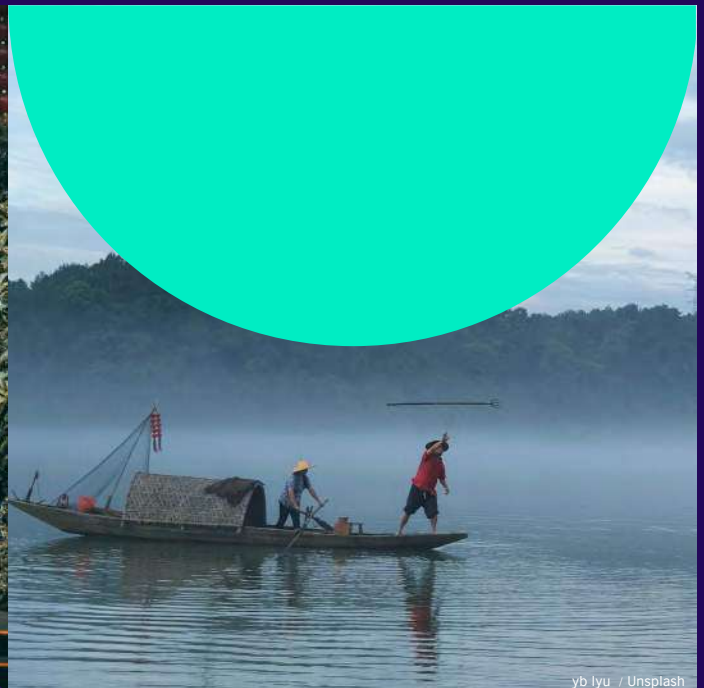
The only satellite exhibition of MEDICA in China, Medical Fair China is co-organised by Messe Dusseldorf (Shanghai) Co. Ltd. and China Service Alliance of Medical Devices Innovation. Held in Suzhou, the exhibition brought together 302 brands of medical device manufacturers and R&D solutions in 2020, attracting 6,989 professional visitors from 33 countries and regions.

HÁNG ZHŌU

杭州

CHINA

Cultural City Profile



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INTRODUCING HANGZHOU

HANGZHOU
—
Cultural City Profile
China

Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang province, is one of the largest and most vibrant cities in the Yangtze River Delta region. Its proximity to Shanghai, (40 minutes by bullet train) and Suzhou (1.5 hours by car) make it a popular weekend destination for Shanghainese. Its rich cultural heritage and abundant natural areas are part of the reason Hangzhou was named by Wall Street Journal as one of the world's ten 'happiest cities' where 'people pay more attention to the quality of life'.¹

In 2020, Hangzhou recorded a population of 11.9 million and a GDP of GBP 179 billion (CNY 1.61 trillion). The city's service industry achieved an added value of GBP 113 billion (CNY1.02 trillion), which accounts for 72.9 per cent of the city's total GDP.² In addition to the service sector, the digital economy is among the city's strongest drivers, contributing to an added value of GBP 48 billion (CNY 429 billion) and accounting for 26.6 per cent of its total GDP.³

Hangzhou is a global leader in innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity, serving as home-base to business giants like Alibaba, gaming powerhouse NetEase, Ant Financial, beverage producers Hangzhou Wahaha Group and Nongfu Spring, automaker Geely, property developer Greentown and fashion brand JNBY. The city is also home to hundreds of tech start-ups and high-growth unicorns. In just 2020, 22 Hangzhou-based companies offered IPOs, boosting the city's total number of listed companies to 191, ranking fourth among Chinese cities.⁴



Fung Martin/ Unsplash

Hangzhou, with its much-coveted status as one of China's tier-1 cities, benefits from a young, well-educated workforce drawn to the city for the opportunities offered by its creative and digital sectors and its quality of life.⁵ According to Economist Intelligence Unit, Hangzhou is a leader in China's growth potential and will 'play an important role over the next five years in the national strategy of transition to a technolo-

gy-driven growth model'. The city boasts a large Gen Z population of consumers and a digital economic structure poised to benefit from government investment announced in the *14th Five Year Plan*.⁶

Hangzhou, a major hub on East Asia's ancient Silk Road, has a legacy of foreign trade and cultural exchange. The city was especially known for the quality of its silk, tea, and porcelain for thousands of years.⁷ It has long played a defining role in China's cultural development, and to this day it maintains an influential role in the country's contemporary art scene. Home to the renowned China Academy of Arts, Hangzhou is known for its vibrant grassroots communities and edgy arts scene. Independent studios, collectives and sub-culture communities embrace and celebrate the experimental spirit of the city, luring internationally acclaimed Chinese contemporary artists. At the forefront of new media and digital arts are artists like Cheng Ran, Zhang Peili, Wu Junyong, and Zhou Yilun.⁸

Hangzhou has hosted a series of major international conferences and events including the 2016 G20 Hangzhou summit – the first ever G20 hosted in China; the 2018 14th FINA World Swimming Championships (25 m). The Asian Games are scheduled to take place in Hangzhou in 2022.⁹

“ Sitting on the tranquil West Lake, Hangzhou is China's imperial city of poetry, also home to avant- garde art and web giants.... [It is also known as] Marco Polo's favourite Chinese metropolis. ”

–10 ways to experience Hangzhou, Conde
Nest Traveller¹⁰



HANGZHOU IN NUMBERS

HANGZHOU

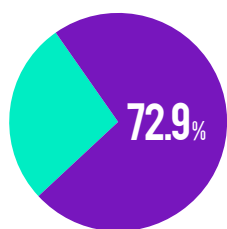
Cultural City Profile
China

GDP
178 BILLION

11.9
MILLION



In 2020, Hangzhou recorded a population of 11.9 million and a GDP of GBP 178 billion (CNY 1.61 trillion).



SERVICE INDUSTRY
113B ILLION

The city's service industry achieved an added value of GBP 113 billion (CNY1.02 trillion), which accounts for 72.9 per cent of the city's total GDP.

QIANDAO LAKE

LARGEST WATER RESERVOIR

BEIJING-HANGZHOU GRAND CANAL

THE WORLD'S LONGEST ARTIFICIAL CANAL

Hangzhou's Qiandao Lake is the largest water reservoir on China's southern coast. The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal is the world's longest artificial canal, and the Qiantang River is best known for having one of the world's largest tidal bores.



BIKE-SHARING

The city has the largest bike-sharing scheme in the world - with eight times as many rental bikes as London.



0.4H

Shanghai



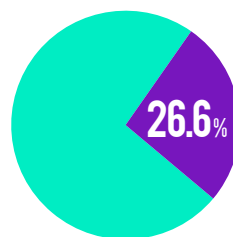
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Hangzhou



Suzhou

Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province, is one of the most vibrant cities in the Yangtze River Delta region. The city is only 40 minutes from Shanghai by train and an hour and a half from Suzhou by car.



DIGITAL ECONOMY
48 BILLION

Hangzhou's digital economy is among its strongest drivers, contributing an added value of GBP 48 billion (CNY 429 billion) and accounting for 26.6 per cent of its total GDP. In essence, it is the Chinese equivalent of Silicon Valley.

In 2020, 22 new companies in Hangzhou offered IPOs, boosting the city's total number of listed companies to 191, fourth among Chinese cities.

5,000 **YEARS OF HISTORY**

The city can be traced back to the Liangzhu Ancient City. Established 5,000 years ago, Liangzhu was one of the two largest prehistoric city sites in China, the other being the Shenmu Shimao site in Shaanxi.

CONTEXT

Located in the south of the Yangtze River Delta and at the western tip of Hangzhou Bay, Hangzhou is a strategic hub on the Silk Road Economic Belt, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and the Online Silk Road. Hangzhou is also a major transportation hub, and is only 40 minutes from Shanghai by high-speed rail and has direct links to Beijing, Nanjing, Changsha and other major cities.¹¹

The city's landscape features abundant hills and water resources such as canals, lakes, creeks and wetlands. Hangzhou's Qiandao Lake is the largest water reservoir on China's southern coast. The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal is the world's longest artificial canal, and the Qiantang River is best known for its spectacular tidal waves.

HERITAGE LEGACY

HANGZHOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Italian explorer Marco Polo referred to Hangzhou ‘the city of heaven’ and ‘the most graceful and splendid city of the world’.¹² As one of China’s seven ancient capitals, it also has one of China’s longest historical legacies. The city’s roots can be traced back to the Liangzhu Ancient City established 5,000 years ago. It was one of the largest prehistoric city sites in China, together with the Shenmu Shimao site in Shaanxi.¹³ The city was first set up as a county during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC). Emperor Yang Jian of the Sui Dynasty (518-618 AD) abolished the old Qiantang County and established Hangzhou, marking the first appearance of its current name.¹⁴ From 907 to 978 AD, Hangzhou was the capital of the Wuyue Kingdom during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period. In 1132, it became the capital of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279 AD).

Hangzhou’s heritage is deeply rooted in the surrounding waters, in particular its West Lake, Grand Canal and the Qiantang River. The lush rolling hills and wide waters of West Lake have inspired famous poets, scholars, and artists since the 9th century. The architecture and gardens of Hangzhou’s temples, pagodas, pavilions have had an influence on design aesthetics throughout China, as well as in Japan and Korea over the centuries.¹⁵ There are two UNESCO World Heritage sites in Hangzhou:

- West Lake Cultural Landscape, since 2011
- Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City, since 2019¹⁶



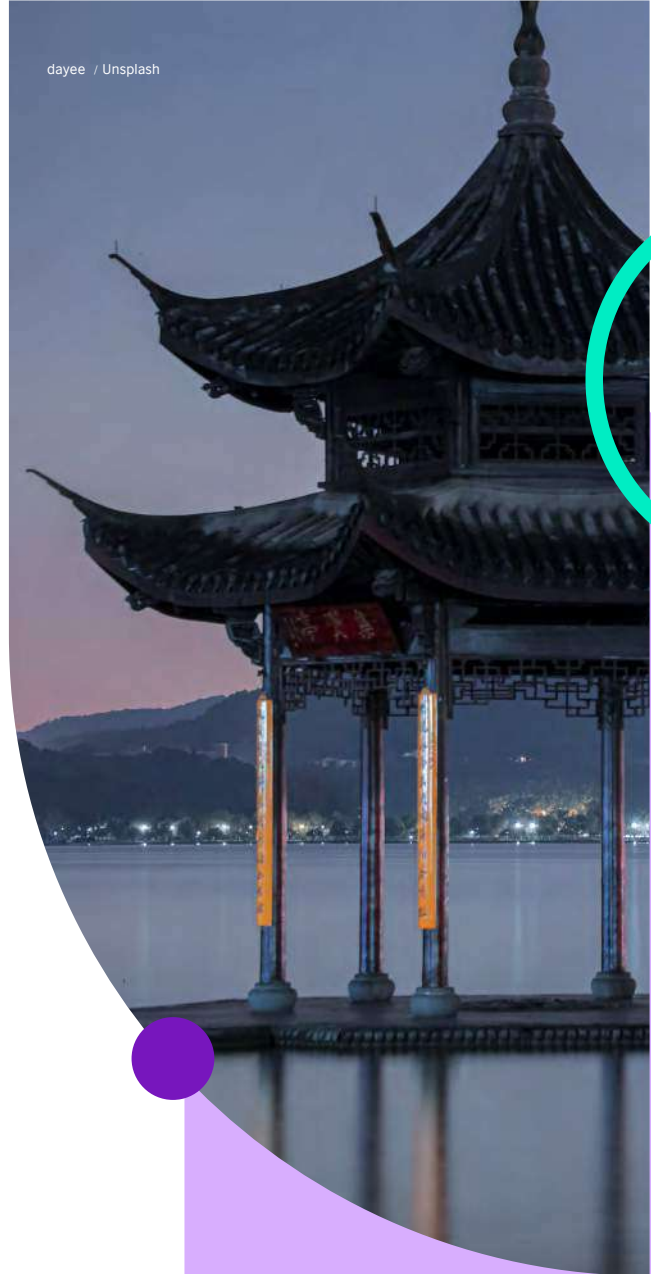
As a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, Hangzhou has a wealth of intangible cultural assets. The city is widely recognised in China for its elegant seal engraving and Chinese silk weaving. Hangzhou has also long held a reputation in China as the capital city of tea and porcelain. The city boasts many art museums, events and festivals promoting and preserving the tradition of its crafts and folk art.¹⁷

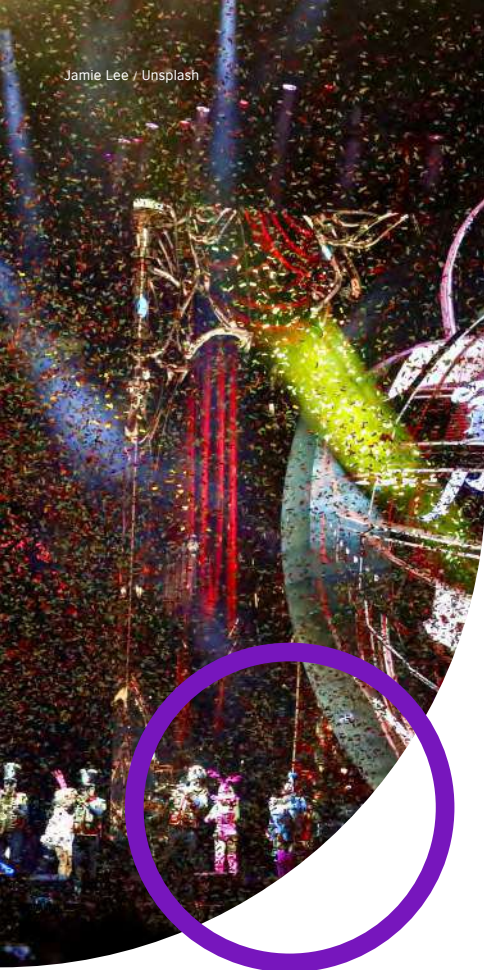
The city government gives strong support to the arts and culture and seeks ways to integrate the two areas into the health and wellbeing of its citizens. During the Covid-19 pandemic, local culture and creative groups were encouraged raise awareness of Covid-19 in various events and exhibitions. The local government also strives to further develop the digital capacity of the city's arts and culture organisations. For example, Hangzhou Museum of Arts and Crafts designed a series of online cultural courses called 'Crafts and Arts cloud classroom' to provide wider public access. The museum also produced a Covid-19 health & art campaign with anti-pandemic themed artworks to promote preventive measures and boost morale.

In addition, the Hangzhou Arts and Crafts Association launched the online learning project 'Master & Apprentice' where experienced craftworkers and makers from diverse areas like woodcarving, pottery, porcelain, embroidery and bronze, can share their techniques with the public. The platform has proved to be popular, seeing more than 1,000 arts and crafts lovers around the country subscribing to the site's videos.¹⁸

Wenlan Pavilion, 1783¹⁹

Wenlan Pavilion is home to the Wenlan Library as well as a scenic garden. It is one of the seven major libraries built by the Qianlong Emperor of the Qing Dynasty to house the Siku Quanshu, China's largest book collection. It is the only surviving edition among the southern collections.





Xiling Seal Art Society, 1904²⁰

A historical Chinese arts organisation with predecessors dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties. It is one of China's most important traditional stone seal engraving associations.

China National Silk Museum, 1992²¹

Near West Lake in Hangzhou, the state-level museum covers an area of 42,286m² and a building area of 22,999m². With an impressive silk-themed collection, the museum focuses on the exhibition, preservation, and promotion of silk weaving craftsmanship. The museum frequently cooperates with international academic institutions and has jointly founded the International Association for the Study of Silk Road Textiles.

Liangzhu Museum, 2007²²

As an archaeological museum dedicated to the Neolithic Liangzhu culture, it houses a collection of archaeological artefacts. The museum was designed by David Chipperfield Architects and was completed in 2007.

Zhu Bingren Bronze Art Museum, 2007²³

Located on Hefang Street, this privately-run museum is named after Zhu Bingren, a famous Chinese sculptor who was born into a family of sculptors and is widely considered 'China's maestro of bronze sculpture'. The museum collects and displays Zhu's sculpture works, including bronze models of the bridges, buildings, halls, and pagodas he has designed.

Hangzhou Arts and Crafts Museum, 2011²⁴

Located on the west bank of the Gongchen Bridge, the museum was rebuilt from the former Honglei Silk Weaving Factory. The museum is dedicated to the research, exhibition, and promotion of Hangzhou's crafts history. It features a host of creative expressions including knives, scissors, swords, fans to umbrellas. The museum also frequently organises public and educational programmes to promote craftsmanship culture.

Crafts Museum of China Academy of Arts, 2015²⁵

Designed by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, the museum is located on the campus of China Academy of Arts and occupies over 11,200m² on a former tea field. The museum's crafts collection spans from shadow puppet arts, Chinese wooden furniture, windowpanes to everyday historic objects from within the Jiangnan region.



CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

In 2010, the Yangtze River Delta Regional Planning underlined the strategic position of Hangzhou as a 'national cultural and creative centre'.²⁶ Since then, Hangzhou has dedicated public resources to transform its secondary and tertiary industries to catalyse the development of its cultural and creative, leisure and tourism industries.²⁷

According to the latest 14th Five-Year Plan published in 2021, Hangzhou will build itself as a global centre of cultural and creative industries with a focus on digital content production, video productions, animation, and creative design. The goal of the plan is to achieve an added-value in terms of culture and creative areas of GBP 33 billion (CNY 300 billion) by 2025.²⁸

Policy initiatives also have focused on the role of culture in sustainable development since the city hosted the UNESCO International Congress on Culture for Sustainable Cities in 2013. The 'Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies' was announced at the International Congress. The Hangzhou Declaration has since then secured a strong national and regional leadership role in sustainable practices.²⁹

Following the central government's directives to mitigate a population decline in lower-tier cities, Hangzhou, alongside other Yangtze Delta metropolises, has relaxed its household registration (hukou) system to attract highly educated talents to live and work in the city.³⁰

RURAL REGENERATION, PLACE-MAKING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

HANGZHOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Hangzhou is a pioneer in rural regeneration.

Exemplar of a paradigm shift that looks toward sustainable development and a spirit of community empowerment, architectural intervention is often coupled with activation programmes that enhances the sense of place.

Two projects in Hangzhou received special mention in a 2021 showcase at *Reuse, Renew, Recycle: Recent Architecture from China by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)*, in New York. DnA_Design and Architecture works with local authorities and communities from 70 Songyang county, rural Hangzhou through a series of programmes to revitalise the handicraft and community-based agricultural production ecosystem. Initiated in 2014, this multi-year project has not only generated culture tourism and additional income for the villagers, but also consolidated an identity rooted in civic participation.

The Fuyang Wencun Village rejuvenation project was initiated in 2012 by Amateur Architecture Studio to prevent the village from demolishing its historical townscape, which now serves as a showcase for Ming and Qing era architecture. The project renovated dilapidated buildings and reorganised the village's public areas and education facilities for community use. Since completion, the village attracts city-dwellers from across China and the income they generate has substantially improved the livelihood of the local community.



“

What brings all these practices together is a commitment to social and environmental sustainability, which marks a decisive shift away from the urban megaprojects of the preceding generation. ”

—Martino Stierli, the Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, MoMA New York and curatorial assistant Evangelos Kotsioris³¹



SUSTAINABILITY AND URBAN RESILIENCE

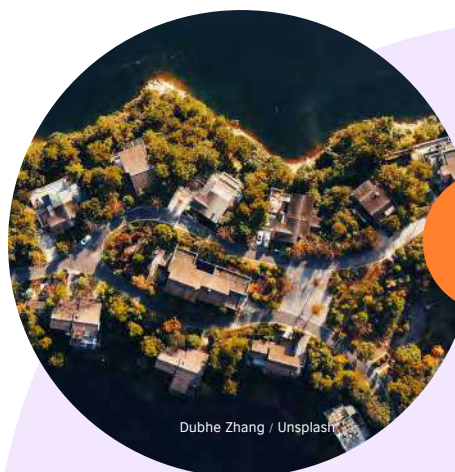
HANGZHOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Hangzhou is a national pioneer in sustainable development in China. The city has successfully reduced levels of air and water pollution by restricting car ownership and promoting use of public transport. The city has the largest bike-share platform in the world, with eight times as many rental bikes as London.³³ Many of Hangzhou's institutions and museums focus on research and education in sustainability.

Hangzhou is also an active contributor to international sustainable development practices. During the ISO/TC 268 Sustainable Cities and Communities conference held in Boston in 2016, Hang-zhou was one of the first pilot cities participating in the IOS 37101 programme to trial a set of industry standards and guidelines on sustainable practices.³⁴ In 2017, Hangzhou collaborated with the French national standards body AFNOR and other cities worldwide to establish the International Smart Sustainable City Club (ISSCC), to support and promote the application of the ISO 37100 series – a global initiative that builds consensus and agenda for sustainable development by providing technical guidelines on smart community infrastructure.³⁵

The green agenda in Hangzhou and the province of Zhejiang receives strong state support and investment. In recent years, local agencies have invested in raising awareness of the city's wetland system and promoted a city-wide ecological sustainability agenda. Since 2003, the government has initiated projects to restore the Xixi wetlands, which has suffered chronic damage from industrial pollution since the 1950s. As a part of the initiative, Xixi National Wetland Park was founded in 2005 and became China's first wetland park. Known as the city's 'natural purifier', the wetland park has had a major impact on water purification, flood mitigation, micro-climate regulation, and the maintenance of biodiversity. Hangzhou's leadership in wetland preservation boosted the number of China's wetland parks to 898 in 2019.³⁶ In 2019, The Jack Ma Foundation donated GBP 11 million (CNY 100 million) for ecological research and protection of the Xixi National Wetland Park.³⁷



Dubhe Zhang / Unsplash

“ The wetland scenery [in Hangzhou] that has lasted for over 1,000 years epitomises the harmonious coexistence of local residents and the wetland ecosystem, represents the highest pursuit of the Convention on Wetlands and is a great contribution to global civilisation. ”

—Lei Guangchun, dean of the School of Nature Conservation at Beijing Forestry University³²

With a successful track record of delivering experimental policies, Zhejiang province has recently been appointed as a pilot zone to achieve ‘common prosperity’ by 2025. The pilot programme aims to address social inequality and rural-urban development gaps with a suite of policy directives to focus on income redistribution through a revised taxation system, employment and labour rights, housing quality, access to education, and public health services in both urban and rural areas.³⁸

Xixi National Wetland Park, 2005³⁹

The first national wetland park in China, it is located 5km away from the West Lake scenic area. The park has a total of 1,150 hectares (2,800 acres) and is crisscrossed by six main waterways, including ponds, lakes and swamps. With a geological legacy of more than 4,000 years, the Xixi wetland also has a wealth of cultural heritage, such as being the birthplace of the Yue Opera.

Low-Carbon Science & Technology Museum⁴⁰

The museum is the largest public institute in China specialising in environmental science education. The museum promotes environmental knowledge through research, public programming and exchange of best practices.

The Green Building Museum, 2009⁴¹

Located at Hangzhou Energy and Environment Industry Park, the museum was awarded LEED Platinum Certification from the US Green Building Council. The eco-friendly museum was constructed with passive ventilation, natural lighting design and a special indoor environment monitoring system. Coupled with the use of renewable energy (i.e. solar, wind and hydrogen fuel) and a rain recycling system, this green design not only regulates internal temperature, humidity level and air quality, but also reduces energy consumption by 76.4 per cent annually.



Peter Wang / Unsplash

CITY OF INNOVATION AND DIGITAL ECONOMY

HANGZHOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

“ Start-ups in Hangzhou can get a lot of help, whether from the government, capital markets or from the society as a whole.....We got our angel investment through an entrepreneurial roadshow organised by Zhejiang University. The government provided offices free of charge to help us get through the most difficult stage. ”

—Tong Luyao, chief operating officer at Entertech, Hangzhou⁴²

Hangzhou is an influential hub for innovation in China and home to some of the world's leading tech companies. Both the Alibaba Group and the game developing giant NetEase were founded in and remain headquartered in Hangzhou. The robust public technology infrastructure and leadership by these and other mega tech companies has attracted a large number of tech start-ups and global talent, as well as international and domestic investors.⁴³

In 2020, the total market value of Hangzhou's tech companies reached GBP 741 billion (CNY 6.67 trillion), making it China's third largest digital market after Shenzhen and Beijing.⁴⁴ The city counted 31 unicorns and 142 quasi-unicorns according to the tally by the Hangzhou Venture Capital Association in 2020.⁴⁵ Top unicorn companies, which are valued at GBP 111 million (CNY 1 billion) or more including Ant Group, Beibei, Caocao Chuxing and CGTZ.⁴⁶

Hangzhou's smart city programme is based on partnerships between the government and the private tech sectors. Alibaba and 13 other companies are collaborating with the local government to create smart service systems. The group has a lead role in rolling out city-wide smart applications such as Hang-



zhou on Palm – the world’s largest public bicycle system, which has 38,000 bicycles stationed at 2,500-plus docking points. Hangzhou City Brain, founded by Alibaba Group, offers a centralised data network providing solutions for digitalised governance for mega cities across China.⁴⁷ In addition, a 24-hour emergency services system has been set up to safeguard the wellbeing of senior citizens and provide social services for those who are living alone and are lacking in family support.⁴⁸

Hangzhou is fast becoming a leader in the digital economy and a major data hub. In 2019, China and the UN jointly announced a big data research centre to be built in Hangzhou with the goal of supporting the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴⁹ The city is ideally positioned as a digital leader with its diverse portfolio of sectors, including blockchain, cloud computing, data security and fintech.⁵⁰ Benefiting from a robust e-commerce and artificial intelligence ecosystem, the city has experienced a boom in the culture and creative sectors - particularly in gaming, animation, digital content development, financial services, health care, and renewable energy industries.⁵¹

The roster of elite higher education and research institutions, including Zhejiang University, Zhejiang University of Finance & Economics, Zhijiang Lab, Westlake University and Alibaba Damo Academy, provide Hangzhou with a high-quality public education ecosystem and a mature talent pipeline. Its young and highly-educated population base also makes it ideal as one of the first batch of pilot cities in AI governance and innovation, alongside first-tier peers such as Beijing and Shanghai.⁵²

Alibaba Group, 1999⁵³

Alibaba is one of the world’s largest digital companies and is ranked 63rd on Fortune’s Global 500. Its businesses include e-commerce, cloud computing, digital media, entertainment, and R&D initiatives. Its Taobao is the most popular e-commerce platform in China and has an international footprint across much of Asia. The annual Single’s Day shopping event hosted by Alibaba on Taobao reached GBP 5 billion (CNY 47 billion) in 2020.



Jack Ray / Unsplash

NetEase, 1997⁵⁴

A leading digital and gaming developer dedicated to providing online services centred around the development and dissemination of innovative digital content. NetEase develops and operates some of China's most popular mobile and PC-based games. The business has expanded its international footprint of late. In addition to game and content development, NetEase provides digital-based service such as intelligent learning (data learning) services under its subsidiary Youdao search engine, music streaming NetEase Cloud Music, and its own e-commerce platform, Yanxuan.

Fang Cloud, 2013⁵⁵

Fang Cloud was created in 2013 and transitioned its online cloud solutions in 2015. It has a nationwide operations network in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. The company also enjoys a strategic partnership with AliCloud, the data security wing of Alibaba.

Alibaba Damo Academy, 2017⁵⁶

As an independent hybrid R&D facility under the Alibaba Group, Damo develops data-enabled technologies that address critical business obstacles and social challenges, such as alleviating traffic congestion in mega-cities and optimising workforce productivity in logistics.

Westlake University, 2018⁵⁷

Westlake University was China's first private university and is focused on cultivating talent in advanced technology. Its targeted research areas include bio-science, quantum materials and environmental science.

Zhejiang Lab⁵⁸

Zhejiang Lab was established as a collaboration between the Zhejiang Provincial Government, Zhejiang University and Alibaba Group. The lab's research focuses on artificial intelligence, intelligent networks and smart system development at scale.

Dream Town⁵⁹

A start-up incubation hub located next to Alibaba's headquarters and central campus, it offers successful applicants free office space, cash subsidies and training. It is now home to hundreds of small businesses and ambitiously aims to attract 10,000 university graduates to set up shops.

Hangzhou International Talents Entrepreneurship and Innovation Park (HITEIP)⁶⁰

Located in Gongshu district and inaugurated in 2017 as the first international talents entrepreneurship and innovation park in China, the park aims to become a platform to attract senior international talent and promote technological exchange and partnership.

Jingming Pan / Unsplash



CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

As the ancient capital of Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279 AD), Hangzhou attests to the peak of Chinese traditional painting, poetry, and literature, as well as philosophy. The city has nurtured some of the most influential historical luminaries, including Su Shi, Lu You, Shen Kuo, Yue Fei, Hu Xueyan, Li Shutong, Xu Zhimo and Lin Huiyin.

Hangzhou's rich legacy in arts and literature make it the most important academic centre of Chinese traditional arts and modern Western fine arts education. Founded in 1928, China Academy of Arts is known for its liberal and experimental ethos, encouraging artistic creation and innovation. The university has fostered a staple of renown art masters, such as Lin Fengmian, Pan Tianshou, Huang Binhong, Wu Guanzhong, Zhu Dequn and Zhao Wuji.⁶¹

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

HANGZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China

Hangzhou has a vibrant arts and cultural community and frequently participates in international exchanges and cultural partnerships. For instance, the exhibition *Fashioned from Nature* was held at the National Silk Museum in collaboration with London's Victoria and Albert Museum. The exhibition addressed the relationship between fashion and nature from 1,600 years ago to the present day.⁶²

The city also has a supportive ecosystem that nurtures a host of independent art studios, creative collectives, and subcultural communities at its alternative art spaces, studios, bars, and tattoo shops that serve as mixed-venues branching out from the China Academy of Arts.

Experimental art platform Martin Goya Business' first exhibition involved over 200 local artists through an open call, attesting to the quality and volume of creative talent in Hangzhou. Private spaces are also staging public art events - such as when the boutique Hangzhou Art Nest Hotel installed an art gallery featuring emerging Hangzhou artists and hosting visiting artists, curators and researchers. The non-profit and multifunctional art space LBX Gallery organises exhibitions, music events, and movie screenings as well as offering tattoo services by appointment.⁶³

Hangzhou's contemporary art scene is experiencing a recent renaissance, with a host of new art museums, and galleries via public-private partnerships. Jointly founded by fashion brand JNBY co-founders Li Lin and Wu Jian, By Art Matters was set to open in November 2021. It will become the city's first arts hub to showcase international and domestic artists, with an R&D and public education component.⁶⁴

“ Privately owned modern and contemporary art centres, compare to those that are ‘historical’ or ‘folk culture-oriented’ cultural spaces, are facing challenges to attract visitors because they are ‘specific’ rather than universal. But the situation is changing in China, in some international [scale] and compatible cities – there are more audiences with modern art taste, especially among young people. Hangzhou is a prominent cultural and educational capital – it has a lot of potential [for development]. ”

–Lu Ming, a global city researcher⁶⁵

China Academy of Art, 1928⁶⁶

The conservatory offers a wide range of music and arts programmes, including composition, conducting, vocal training, music technology, drama studies and dance performance studies. The conservatory houses 12 academic departments and four professional performing ensembles. With capacity for 5,000 full-time students, it is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities including nine concert halls, 102 rehearsal halls, 842 practice rooms and 6 top-notch recording studios.

Zhejiang Conservatory of Music, 2016⁶⁷

The Conservatory offers a wide range of music and arts programmes, including composition, conducting, vocal training, music technology, drama studies and dance performance studies. The Conservatory houses 12 academic departments and 4 professional performing ensembles. With capacity for 5,000 full-time students, it is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities including 9 concert halls, 102 rehearsal halls, 842 practice rooms and 6 top-notch recording studios.

Zhejiang University, 1897⁶⁸

Ranked as one of the top universities in China, Zhejiang University is a comprehensive research university and has led many of China’s R&D and research commercialisation efforts, including patent developments. It has a strong academic legacy in science, technology and social sciences.

Zhejiang Art Museum, 2009⁶⁹

The museum is dedicated to the exhibition, collection and promotion of art works and art literature. It frequently organises public programmes and participates in international research exchanges.



China Design Museum, 2018⁷⁰

A modern museum modeled after the Bauhaus Institute, China Design Museum was designed by Pritzker Prize winner Alvaro Siza. The museum serves both as a heritage of design and as a place for contemporary design collections.

Cang Art Museum, 2021⁷¹

This newly opened contemporary art museum opened its doors with Time Capsule, an exhibition showcasing 40 works to reflect the evolution of contemporary art in China since the 1980s.

By Art Matters, 2021⁷²

This contemporary art museum is slated to open in the OōEli campus of the JNBY corporate headquarters in November 2021. Designed and built by Renzo Piano Building Workshop, the museum will provide exhibition and publication opportunities for artists to exhibit and test new creative ideas. It will offer an incubation hub, regular events and programming, and an artist residency project. The museum plans to feature a concept store designed by American artist Theaster Gates.⁷³

“By Art Matters is going to be an utterly new model in terms of programme and fluidity of ideas that we will have shown, but our program will be flexible and able to respond to the most interesting impulses we will intercept around the world... The core demographic will be cross-generational, with a clear eye to generation Z.”

—Francesco Bonami, curator and director of By Art Matters⁷⁴

Inna Art Space, 2008⁷⁵

Founded by Inna Xu in 2008, Inna Art Space is an artist-centric gallery and independent space. It expanded its footprint to New York in 2014.

HdM GALLERY, 2013⁷⁶

A leading contemporary gallery with a special focus on contemporary Chinese art, the HdM Gallery opened in Hangzhou in 2013 after launching in Beijing in 2009. Founders and partners of the gallery are Hadrien de Montferrand, Laurent Dassault, and Olivier Hervet.

LBX Gallery, 2015⁷⁷

LBX is a non-profit art gallery that organises exhibitions, music events, movie screenings and provides tattoo services by appointment.



MAO Livehouse Hangzhou⁷⁸

MAO Livehouse's Hangzhou branch is the most vibrant live music venue in the city. It provides an intimate performance setting and bar services. National and international bands often perform at the venue when passing through Hangzhou.

Ningbo CMK Livehouse Hangzhou⁷⁹

The Hangzhou offshoot of Ningbo-based livehouse CMK is a popular venue hosting domestic and international indie music performances.



Hangzhou Grand Theatre, 2004⁸⁰

Founded in 2004, Hangzhou Grand Theatre presents a wide array of performances, including dance, music, drama and family-friendly events. It is currently managed by the team of Hung Jianchen.⁸¹

Art Space for Kids (ASK)⁸²

The Hangzhou branch of Shanghai-based children's theatre group ASK is a frequent collaborator of Hangzhou Grand Theatre, presenting multi-sensorial, interactive and experimental productions from around the world. The two organisations have brought at least 13 cross-genre theatre productions from eight countries, ranging from literature, musical, visual arts, modern dance, circus, installation and more.⁸³

Xixi Art Centre, 2015⁸⁴

Located on the high street of the Xixi Wetland Park, Xixi Art Centre has a 400-seat theatre and an outdoor campus presenting diverse performances from traditional theatre to standup comedy and child-friendly showcases. The Art Centre works frequently with the Wetland Park authorities and the National Wetland Museum of China.⁸⁵ It is also the organiser of Xixi International Theatre Festival and is expanding its creative programming to include inter-sector collaborations, and offering public workshops and DIY events at local shopping malls and boutique hotels.⁸⁶

CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

HANGZHOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Hangzhou is home to some of China's most established commercial and independent bookstores, including Yan Youji, Sisyphus Bookstore, Zhongshuge, and OWSpace. Well-designed spaces coupled with boutique restaurants and lifestyle shops have proven to be a winning formula for mixed-used bookstore models in Hangzhou. The commercial success for mixed-model bookshops attracted Japanese leading brand Tsutaya Books to set up shop in 2020.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Hangzhou bookstore community pioneered a partnership with livestreaming influencers and e-commerce platforms to raise awareness and muster consumer support for the independent bookstore communities. Similar initiatives include a collaboration between Xu Zhiyuan, founder of OWSpace with Viya, China's livestream sales icon – to feature and introduce a community of five independent bookstores across China, including Hangzhou's Xiaofeng Bookstore. The event attracted 145,000 viewers and achieved a revenue of GBP 77,778 (CNY 700,000).⁸⁷

“

A city should be able to accommodate bookstores of different varieties. A more localised connection is what I want to highlight. The best bookstore in the future may very well hide in plain sight taking root in a most common community, alongside a mix of offerings like eateries, laundry stores and children's playgrounds. ”

—Zhu Yufang, Founder of Xiaofeng Bookstore⁸⁸

Nanshan House⁸⁹

Nanshan House, a bookstore within the campus of the China Academy of Arts, focuses primarily on Chinese traditional art and design. It regularly hosts public programmes with events such as book launches, musical performances, lectures and screenings.

Xiaofeng Bookstore, 1996⁹⁰

Established in 1996, this independent bookstore has become an iconic cultural landmark in Hangzhou. It now operates 17 branches across the city and has an estimated 400,000 loyal buyers.

Tsutaya Books⁹¹

Located at Hangzhou's Tianmuli art complex, the famed Japanese brand attracted an average of 7,000 daily visitors on weekdays and 10,000 on weekends prior to the pandemic.

Ulysses, 2021⁹²

Ulysses has been operating as an independent 'pop up' store for two years and is an active organiser of the local art community.

Random⁹³

Located on Dajing Lane, the 150m² space serves as an art gallery and a place for art lovers to eat or enjoy coffee or drinks. The design of the two-storey project was inspired by Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture.

Imagokinetics Lab, 2008⁹⁴

As part of JNBY art centre, the lab focuses on nurturing and promoting emerging artists and looking for new arts creations.

Xiangshan Art Commune, 2018⁹⁵

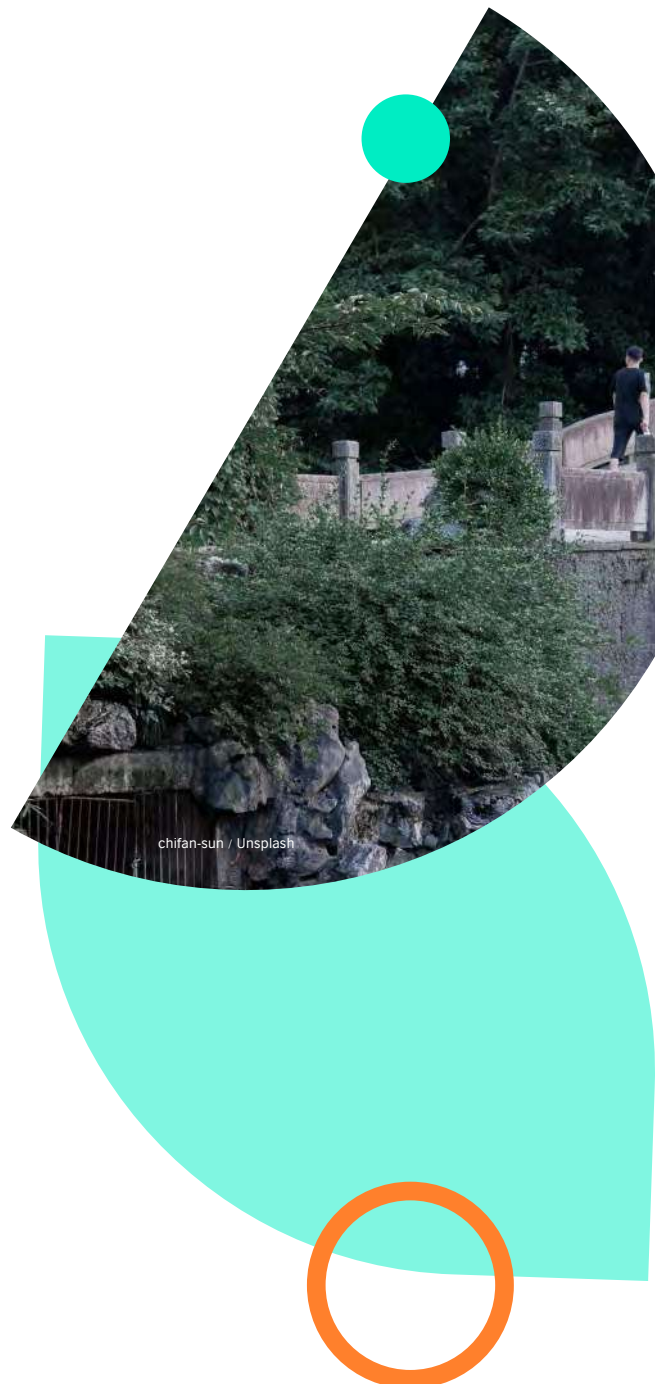
Xiangshan Art Commune is an art community centered around a revitalised village.

Martin Goya Business, 2019⁹⁶

Founded by new media artist Cheng Ran, Martin Goya Business is a platform for artistic experimentations. It functions as an alternative space to bridge the missing link between conventional galleries and non-profit organisations in the city. The Business also houses the TMD Must Tattoo Department, a collective founded in 2017 by artist Bai Taotao and Da Mian, and joined by artist Papapepia in 2019. It provides tattooing and other experimental body art services.

Third Kitchen⁹⁷

A collaboration between Jiang Jie Design and Solife Furniture, the project is an experiment that seeks to 'reinvent' social habits around dining and cuisine art. It was a deliberate choice to set up shop in a quiet alley way and away from the hustle and bustle of commercial shopping malls.



MOVERS AND SHAKERS

HANGZHOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu⁹⁸

A power couple in the Chinese architectural world and cofounders of Amateur Architecture Studio. Wang is also a professor and head of the Architecture School at China Academy of Art, and winner of the 2012 Pritzker Architecture Prize.

Li Kaisen⁹⁹

Architect and professor of architecture at the China Academy of Art. Li is the design mastermind behind the Xiangshan Art Commune opened in 2018 and Chang Art Museum inaugurated in 2021. He specialises in contemporary architectural interventions that revitalise traditional gardening and associated landscapes.

Hung Jianchen¹⁰⁰

As general manager of the Hangzhou Grand Theatre, Hung is an audience-centric, hands-on programmer with an eye for quality productions.¹⁰¹

Inna Xu¹⁰²

Founder of Inna Art Space, her gallery represents a host of emerging artists from Hangzhou and New York as the art space expanded its footprint to New York in 2014.



“For the past 10 years, we try to nurture and grow with young artists and to make art a daily life.”

—Inna Xu, founder of Inna Art Space¹⁰³

Li Lin¹⁰⁴

Fashion designer and co-founder of JNBY, one of China's most recognised fashion brands. By 2019, JNBY had more than 1,500 stores worldwide. As a veteran art collector, Li Lin made the Top 200 Collector list by *ARTnews* and funded By Art Matters, scheduled to be open in November 2021.

Francesco Bonami¹⁰⁵

The Italian art curator and writer is also the director of the soon-to-open By Art Matters – a contemporary art museum designed by the Renzo Piano Building Workshop and founded by the JNBY group.



Cheng Ran¹⁰⁶

Born in Inner Mongolia, Cheng Ran is an artist who lives and works in Hangzhou. Cheng is a graduate from the China Academy of Art and winner of the inaugural Nomura Emerging Artist Award. He has also founded Martin Goya Business – an experimental art space in 2019. Typifying China's new generation of video and cross-media artist, Cheng's practices navigate a diverse range of art forms, including film, poetry, drama, novel, and installation.

Zhou Yilun¹⁰⁷

Graduated with a bachelor's degree from the Oil Painting Department of the China Academy of Art, the artist currently lives and works in Hangzhou. He has exhibited widely across China and overseas - including MOCA Pavilion (Shanghai), Nicodim Gallery (Bucharest, LA), Yang Art Museum (Beijing), the Tampa Museum of Art (Tampa), the Oklahoma City Museum of Art (Oklahoma), and the IAAB project space (Basel).

Deng Tao¹⁰⁸

A master of Chinese silk crafts and founder of Aurora – a company devoted to the R&D, design and manufacturing of silk scarfs. Deng's silk products have been sold in more than 100 countries, winning international recognition from clients and peers such as the CEO of Hermès who once acclaimed the quality of Aurora's silk products as on par with global luxury brands.

Kate Han and George Feng¹⁰⁹

Co-founders of homegrown fashion brand Mukzin, which is known for its elaborate details and provocative motifs. Mukzin is a regular participant at international fashion shows worldwide and a favourite in Gigi Hadid's wardrobe collection.

Shi Dan¹¹⁰

The 22-year-old teacher at Hangzhou Gongshu Vocational High School was the hairdressing champion at the 45th World Skills Competition in Kazan, Russia in 2019.

Zhong Shanshan¹¹¹

Founder and chairperson of the Nongfu Spring beverage company, which is China's largest packaging water supplier. Zhong is also the majority owner of Beijing Wantai Biological Pharmacy Enterprise.

Jack Ma Yun¹¹²

A leading Chinese business magnate, investor and philanthropist. Ma Yun is the co-founder and former executive chairman of Alibaba Group. In 2017, Ma Yun was ranked second in the annual 'World's 50 Greatest Leaders' list by *Fortune*.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

HANGZHOU

Cultural City Profile
China

Hangzhou International Theatre Festival, 2011¹¹³

Founded in 2011, Hangzhou International Theatre Festival is directed by China's renowned avant-garde director Meng Jinghui. It is an important incubator and presentation platform for young performers and directors. In its 2021 edition, it will return with 22 productions and 45 performances.

“

Ten years ago, the audiences of the inaugural Hangzhou International Theatre Festival were mostly 20 something or even younger high-schoolers. The festival has grown with our audience and has created a very sticky and loyal community.

”

—Meng Jinghui, artistic director, Hangzhou International Theatre Festival¹¹⁴

Xixi International Theatre Festival, 2015¹¹⁵

Founded in 2015, the Xixi International Theatre Festival is an annual carnival that gathers a wide array of disciplines, often ranging from musicals, traditional operas, drama, dance, concerts to outdoor installations. The 2020 iteration collaborated with gaming developer Netease to incorporate augmented reality into its outdoor exhibition showcase, bringing the festival across the campus of the Xixi Wetland Park.¹¹⁶ Its 2021 edition lasted two months throughout summer, presenting 10 productions.¹¹⁷

Hangzhou International Music Festival (HMF), 2021¹¹⁸

The festival, co-hosted by the Hangzhou Government, the Culture and Broadcasting Group of Hangzhou and the Philharmonic Orchestra of Hangzhou, offers a diverse series of concerts for classical music such as operas and chamber music, contemporary ethnic orchestral music, and jazz.

Hangzhou Modern Music Festival, 2020¹¹⁹

The festival introduced 'Art Creation Awards' for its International Orchestral Composition Competition 2020, to encourage young composers to create more original music. It offered winners the opportunity to rehearse and perform at a professional level. The festival featured concerts, master forums and composition workshops.

Montreux Jazz Festival China¹²⁰

The first edition of the Montreux Jazz Festival China offered an eclectic programme with the theme of 'When West Meets East', combining Chinese, Asian and world music.

Food & Beverage Innovation Forum (FBIF), 2014¹²¹

Founded in 2014 by Simba Events, the FBIF has become one of the most influential food-industry events in the Asia Pacific. It offers an opportunity to share best practices and industry insights in advanced technology (supply chain management) and other business practices.

Hobby Expo China¹²²

The event brings together decision-makers across the manufacturing and service sectors and provides an international trade fair where innovations and service solutions are shared across the supply network.

China International Exhibition on Intelligent Energy and Energy Storage Innovation and Application¹²³

The event provides an annual opportunity to gain insights into PV (solar) innovative technology and related manufacturing equipment, such as crystalline silicon, thin films, glass, back-plane, and PV-related innovative products.



WŪ HÀN

武汉

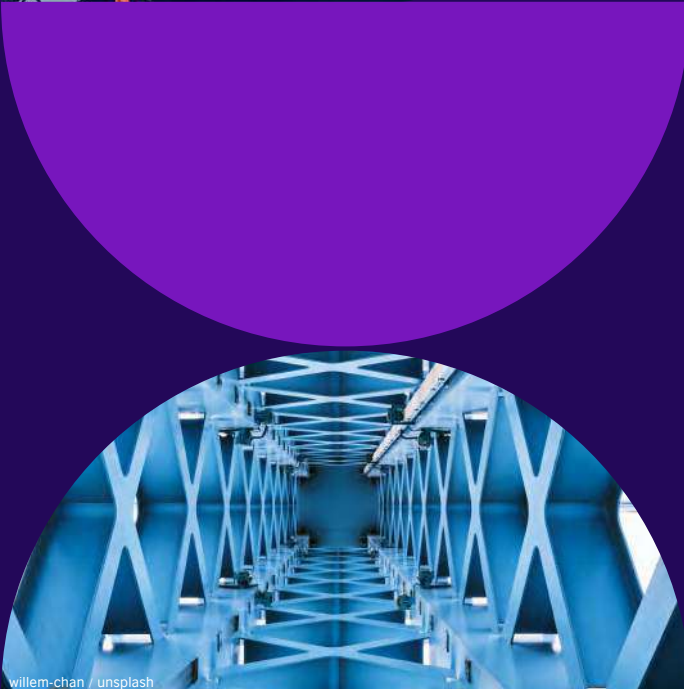
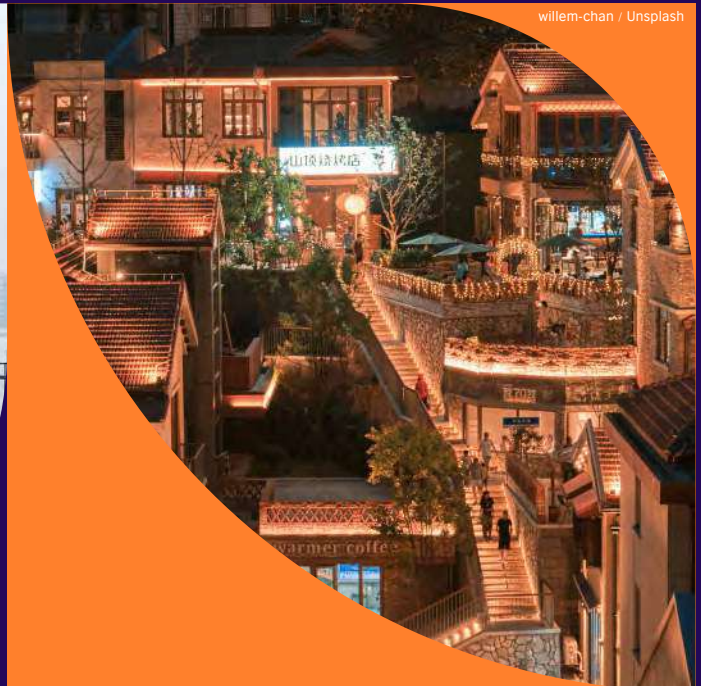
CHINA

Cultural City Profile

yan-xiong / unsplash



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willem-chan / unsplash



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INTRODUCING WUHAN

WUHAN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Wuhan is the capital city of Hubei Province, located in Central China. It has a population of over 12 million people.¹ Wuhan is made up of three former cities, namely Hankou, Wuchang and Hanyang, which were merged into a single entity in 1949. Wuhan was dubbed the 'City of a Hundred Lakes'. Its cityscape is divided by the Yangtze and Han rivers, and it is home to the East Lake, one of the largest urban lakes in China.

The city's GDP reached over GBP 17 billion (CNY 156 billion) in 2020 and ranked 9th across all cities in China.³ With a strategic location at the heart of China and an extensive railway network, the city has had great commercial and industrial significance since the 19th century. Wuhan is a city with an industrial past, with the steel and iron industries forming the backbone of the city's economy until the early 2000s. Under central government directives to gradually restructure the local economy, emerging industrial clusters centred around new technologies have gained momentum in Wuhan, including in the automobile, IT, health care and intelligent manufacturing industries.⁴

Wuhan is a city full of creative energy and potential. It ranked 11th among 30 top cities in China on the 2018 Creative Economy Index developed by the Standard Ranking of Cities Research Institute in China, scoring high on the Vitality Index based on its industrial development, capital availability, human resources, and policy environment, among other factors.⁵ The summary report on China's emerging city rankings 2021 by The Economist Intelligence Unit also points to the high growth potential of Wuhan. In terms of R&D capacity, Wuhan is ranked within the top 20 Chinese cities, excelling in its appeal to top talent and businesses due to its quality infrastructure and public services, as well as relatively low business and living costs.⁶ The city is also one of the top 10 creative cities in terms of its ability to attract creative talent, investment in cultural and creative industries, and favourable government policies.



In 2017, Wuhan was designated as a Creative City of Design by UNESCO.⁷ Since its establishment in 2011, the Wuhan Design Biennale has developed into an influential platform that showcases works by the world's most prominent designers at the intersection of technology and artistry. Creative design also has a prominent role in the city's higher education sector – it is available as a major in over 30 universities in Wuhan, nurturing a pipeline of design talent. Wuhan particularly excels in engineering design and urban planning: 50% of the world's long-span bridges and 60% of China's high-speed railways were designed by Wuhan designers, as was the Three Gorges Dam.⁸

“ Wuhan is the most populous city in central China and has a rich historical and cultural background as well as many tourist attractions. It is a thriving modern city and a place of contrasts, with architecture ranging from traditional Chinese to European influenced early-20th century as well as plenty of contemporary architecture. ”

–Discover China²



willem-chan / Unsplash

WUHAN IN NUMBERS

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China



Wuhan has 81 museums and a dynamic cultural sector. Wuhan has the highest proportion of university graduates in China. It has 84 universities, second only to Beijing.



Creative design has a prominent role in the city's higher education sector – design majors are available at over 30 universities in Wuhan, nurturing a pipeline of design talent.



Wuhan excels in engineering design and urban planning: 50% of the world's long-span bridges and 60% of China's high-speed railways were designed by Wuhan designers, as was the Three Gorges Dam.

300,000

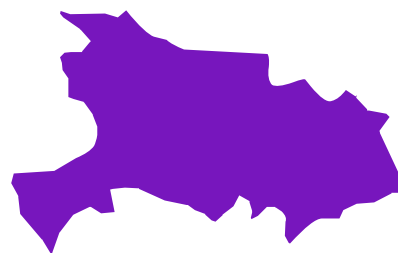
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL PERSONNEL

Wuhan's economic development has been accelerated as a result of the establishment in 1988 of the East Lake High-tech Zone, also known as the Optics Valley of China (OVC). Accommodating more than 300,000 professional and technical personnel, Optics Valley is one of the three most talent-intensive areas in China.



**173
BILLION**

Wuhan is the capital city of Hubei Province, located in Central China, with a population over 12 million people. The city's GDP reached over GBP 173 billion (CNY 1.56 trillion) in 2020 and it ranked 9th across all cities in China.



Wuhan was dubbed the 'City of a Hundred Lakes'. Its cityscape is divided by the Yangtze and Han rivers, and it is home to the East Lake, one of the largest urban lakes in China. Prone to flooding, Wuhan was designated as a pilot 'sponge city' and had implemented 'sponge' features on 20% of its urban land by 2020.



Completed in 2013, Wuhan Creative World is a creative park now home to over 1,000 technology or creative enterprises with more than 10,000 employees. More than 70 local and international artists have taken residencies or set up studios in the complex.

CONTEXT

With over 3,500 years of history, the three towns of Wuhan on the banks of the Yangtze and Han rivers give a unique identity to the city.

- Wuchang consists of the oldest historical district, where many universities are concentrated.
- Hankou is a vibrant financial hub with a Western influence– it was once a British colony.
- Hanyang, the centrally located in relation to the city's heritage sites and an area with vibrant grassroots cultural activities.

Wuhan has a long-established relationship with the UK. It is a sister city to Manchester (since 1986). Both are industrial cities with dynamic cultural sectors, including thriving art and music scenes and an energetic vibe. Following the outbreak of Covid-19 at the beginning of 2020, Manchester City Council sent a letter of support to Wuhan.⁹ To celebrate the 35th anniversary of the twinning of the cities in 2021, a new cultural programme was organised, kickstarted by the UK-China International Photography Competition to promote cultural exchange through mutual understanding.¹⁰

HERITAGE LEGACY

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

In the late Qing Dynasty, Wuhan's status as an industrial and commercial hub earned it a reputation as 'the Oriental Chicago'.¹¹ This referred to the fact that Wuhan was China's second largest treaty port at the time, behind only Shanghai, much as Chicago was the second-largest industrial and commercial centre after New York. In 1911, an uprising in Wuchang sparked the Xinhai Revolution. This eventually ended the 2,000 years of imperial rule in China. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Wuhan continued its national importance as an industrial base and accelerated its development following the reform and opening-up era in the 1980s.

Wuhan owns 14 national-level intangible cultural heritage items, among which opera and music make up a large proportion.¹² This points to the city's cultural importance in preserving the art of Han Opera, Chu Opera, Peking Opera, Hubei drums and Hubei melodies, which are still widely performed in local theatres such as Qintai Grand Theatre, Wuhan Peking Opera Theatre and Wuhan Han Opera Theatre. It is also home to intangible cultural heritage traditions including Han embroidery, wood sculpting and Xiaogan paper-cutting.¹³

Wuhan is endowed with picturesque hills and waters. Together with its cultural assets, these heritage resources make the city a popular destination for domestic and international tourists. The major scenic spots and historical sites include: Yellow Crane Tower, Baotong Temple, Guiyuan Temple, East Lake Scenic Spot, Mulan Heaven Lake Scenic Area and Heptachord Terrace (Guqin Tai).



CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

As one of the cities hit most severely by Covid-19, Wuhan is recovering. According to a study published in April 2020 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Tourism Research Centre and Tencent Culture and Tourism Industry Research Centre, Wuhan was named the top destination Chinese citizens wanted to visit post-pandemic.¹⁴ In fact, during the 8-day holiday that occurred when National Day overlapped with Mid-Autumn Festival in October 2020, the number of domestic tourists visiting Wuhan exceeded 18 million.¹⁵ International travel is still under restrictions, but the city continues to have active social media accounts on Twitter¹⁶, Facebook¹⁷ and YouTube¹⁸ to keep the overseas audience updated on Wuhan's cultural and creative history.

CITY OF DESIGN

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China



Wuhan joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in 2017 as a Creative City of Design. It has a reputation for and expertise in urban planning (sustainable development and urban resilience), high-tech industries and the cultural and creative industries.

Set up in 2011, the Wuhan Design Biennale, which focuses on crosscutting approaches between art and technology, has strengthened the city's position as a leading global design centre. In addition, Wuhan has designated 1 November as Wuhan Design Day and intends to make both the biennale and the design day events a regular platform for cultural exchange and international cooperation with similar global creative cities.

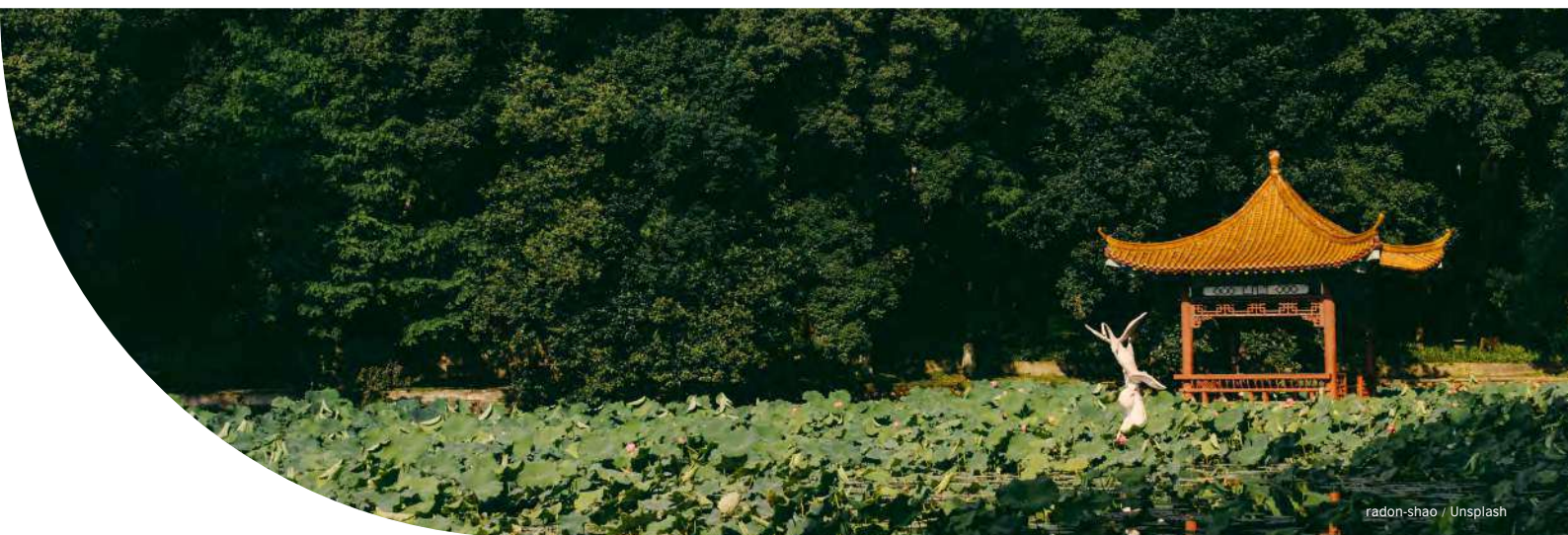
Each biennale edition revolves around a theme, for example 'Exquisite City' in 2019 and 'Quality City' in 2021.²⁰ Exhibitions, forums and design contests ranging from cultural and creative products, gaming, and fashion to urban and industrial design, are held at multiple sites around the city. In 2019, representatives from 15 UNESCO Creative Cities from 13 countries participated in the event.²¹ Other activities taking place in the two-week period during the design biennale also include the Wuhan Creative Cities Roundtable Conference, where keynote speakers from creative cities are invited to share best practices and development trends in cultural infrastructure.



During Covid-19, Wuhan leveraged the power of design to spread a message of hope and solidarity. A global call titled *Fight the Pandemic, Wuhan We Can* was launched on 1 February 2020 to invite designers from the UNESCO Creative Cities to submit works on precautionary measures against the virus. Over 5,400 posters, 1,200 illustrations, 431 children's paintings, 170 videos and more than 130 other works were collected from different countries.²² Some were installed in hospitals and other medical facilities to support frontline workers and patients. A themed exhibition titled *Design in the Epidemic* was displayed at the main building of Wuhan City of Design. Members of the public could view the showcase through online platforms including the WeChat public account, live broadcast and a full-landscape VR exhibition.²³

“ Wuhan is one of the cities with the highest participation in design in China. We have a common commitment to make creativity the driving force behind sustainable development. Wuhan has always played an important role in this advocacy and endeavor. ”

—Ernesto Ottone Ramírez, Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO¹⁹



radon-shao / Unsplash

CONTEMPORARY ART @WUHAN ART MONTH

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

@Wuhan is an arts and cultural promotion platform initiated by art institutions in Hubei in 2016 to provide a better environment for artistic creation and promote the development of the arts and cultural scene of Hubei.²⁴ @Wuhan has built momentum across artistic genres reached national prominence, becoming a fixture in the contemporary art movement.

“ @Wuhan has expanded from Hubei to the whole country. It has gradually formed a complete ecosystem made up of art museums, galleries, art institutions, and art markets. ”

—Fu Zhongwang, Art Director of Hubei Museum of Art and Chairman of
@Wuhan 2021²⁵

In 2018, @Wuhan joined the Wuhan Culture Creative Industry Association and thereby gained more support from the local government. The 2018 event adopted an ‘8+8’ format that connected 8 major art museums and 8 alternative art spaces in Wuhan to showcase 16 exhibitions featuring established and emerging artists. The *7.8.9.0 Wuhan Youth Artist Contemporary Art Exhibition*, held at Tanghu Museum of Art, brought together 160 young artists from Wuhan in a city-wide effort to support creative practitioners.²⁶

There are two exhibition spaces for @Wuhan 2021 – an outdoor space in Shimenfeng Memorial Park and an indoor facility in the No. 9 Art Space in Wuhan Creative World. A total of 50 pieces will be displayed, including 23 large-scale sculptures or interactive installations in the outdoor area.²⁷ Many of these works make use of multimedia such as sound, electronics, VR, AR and 3-D printing, with a focus on environmental protection.²⁸

HIGH-TECH ZONE AND R&D CAPACITY

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

Wuhan's economic development was accelerated by the establishment of the East Lake High-tech Zone, also known as the Optics Valley of China (OVC), in 1988. The Zone has a planned area of 518 km² and a population of about 1.8 million. It covers 42 institutes of higher education, including Wuhan University and Huazhong University of Science and Technology. It also has 56 research institutes at the national, provincial and ministerial levels. Accommodating more than 300,000 professional and technical personnel, Optics Valley is one of the three most talent-intensive areas in China.²⁹

To drive the city's development, the zone is constructing two world-class trillion-yuan industry clusters, namely the 'Optics, IC, Displays, Terminals and Internet' cluster and the biomedicines cluster.³⁰ It is also vigorously advancing plans for future industries such as its infrastructure for 5G and artificial intelligence. Three international pilot neighbourhoods will be introduced in the zone to support the international communities that are expected to settle in the area.³¹

Wuhan Creative World is one of the leading hubs in the city. It was developed by the Optics Valley Union in 2009 on the east bank of the Yangtze River, with the aim to build a world-renowned gathering place for creative industries and an independent innovation base.³² The OVC is also home to China Architectural Science and Technology Museum, a national first-class museum opened in August 2020 when the city was hard-hit by Covid-19.³³ Housed in a structure built to resemble a budding seed, its display ranges from ancient architecture to recent technological achievements such as the building of two makeshift hospitals during the pandemic.

ma-elio / Unsplash

SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

Despite being called ‘The City of Hundred Lakes’, urbanisation in recent decades has left only around 30 lakes in Wuhan. As a low-lying city, Wuhan is prone to flooding particularly during the summer monsoon months. In 2015, Wuhan was designated as one of the country’s first 16 ‘sponge cities’, advocating eco-friendly measures to reduce risks of flooding, such as building green infrastructure including wetland areas, rooftop plants and rain gardens.³⁴ According to government officials, the city had successfully achieved its aim of implementing sponge features on 20% of urban land by the end of 2020.³⁵

The cultural sector also played a role in pushing for a sustainable agenda in public discourse. Held in parallel to @Wuhan 2021, the 2nd East Lake Ecological Sculpture Biennale, titled *100% @Wuhan*, is scheduled to take place from October 2021 to April 2022.³⁶ Initiated in 2017, the biennale is the first in China with an ecological art theme.



gpch / Unsplash

CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

“ In Wuhan, a well-networked central city, we have professional art academies which train many outstanding artists and a large community of young practitioners. In addition, we have Hubei Museum of Art and Wuhan Art Museum, both are resourceful and well-respected in the country. Together with art museums with strong research capabilities such as the United Art Museum, a platform like this is a perfect combination of time, place, and people.”

—Wei Guangqing, Executive Chairman of @Wuhan³⁷

Wuhan people are known for their revolutionary spirit, which makes the city a nursery for avant-garde contemporary artists. Since the 2010s, the city's contemporary art scene has taken off with the blooming of private art museums and art spaces, notably the United Art Museum and K11 Art Village. By joining forces with state-owned institutions and universities such as Hubei Museum of Art and Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, Wuhan is showing immense potential to follow in the footsteps of Beijing and Shanghai and become one of the most important contemporary art hubs in China.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

Wuhan has 81 museums and a highly educated community who enjoy cultural activities.³⁸ Wuhan has 84 universities, second only to Beijing.³⁹ The two most prominent universities are Huazhong University of Science and Technology and Wuhan University. Both institutions were designated by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2015 as 'Class A Double First Class Universities' with the aim that they will develop into world-class institutions by the end of 2050.



Hubei Provincial Museum⁴⁰

Constructed in 1953, Hubei Provincial Museum is a state-level museum with a collection of more than 230,000 cultural relics including excavations from the Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng. It also acts as an important research centre for archaeological exploration, discovery and relic protection as the Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology was incorporated under the museum's remit in 2002.

Hubei Museum of Art⁴¹

Opened in 2007, the Hubei Museum of Art is made up of five floors and is equipped with 10 exhibition halls, a public library, art exchange centres, a painting archive and a café.

Wuhan Art Museum⁴²

As a major cultural construction project of the provincial government, Wuhan Art Museum plays a crucial role in collecting works by artists influential to the development of Hubei art history. It contains more than 1,000 works by over 200 artists from China, including water colours, Chinese painting, oil painting, sculptures and photography.

The Big House Contemporary Art Centre⁴³

Formerly housing the Wuchang No.1 Cotton Mill founded in 1915, the building was revamped into a modern art centre in 2015. It consists of 3 floors including exhibition spaces, a design museum, a restaurant, a wine cellar and reading zones.

United Art Museum⁴⁴

Located in the Wuhan Creative World, occupying 10,000m², the United Art Museum is currently the city's largest private art repository and features high-quality contemporary art exhibitions.

Hubei Institute of Fine Arts⁴⁵

Hubei Institute of Fine Arts (HIFA) is the only top institution of higher learning in fine arts in central China. Founded in 1920, the Institute celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2020. HIFA has signed memoranda of understanding with over 20 institutions in more than 10 countries across Europe, North America and Asia.

The Han Show Theatre⁴⁶

The Han Show Theatre is a state-of-the-art structure built to house the acrobatic water spectacle, *The Han Show*, by renowned theatre director Franco Dragone. The shape of the building is inspired by the traditional Chinese image of the red lantern. The moveable auditorium seats allow the theatre to change shape and configuration during the show.

Qintai Grand Theatre⁴⁷

Since its opening in 2007, it has more than 120 performances annually, hosting large-scale operas, musicals, plays, traditional Chinese operas, concerts and other artistic performances. It is the highest quality venue for cultural performance in the city.

Wuhan Han Opera Theatre⁴⁸

Wuhan Han Opera Theater (formerly Han Opera) is a 400-year-old regional opera house that leads in the production and preservation of Han Opera in China.

The 1911 Revolution Museum⁴⁹

Completed in 2011 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Wuchang Uprising, the museum has a unique design that blends traditional Chinese architectural elements with modern architectural features. Its iconic red triangular structure is a landmark in Wuchang district.

Yiyantang Club⁵⁰

A media and theatre production company founded in 2013. It offers production solutions and programming services across multiple theatre genres.



CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

The city's cultural landscape is underpinned by creative parks which serve as multi-purpose complexes, with purposes ranging from entertainment, leisure and business to arts. Completed in 2013, Wuhan Creative World is a creative park now home to over 1,000 technology or creative enterprises with more than 10,000 employees. More than 70 local and international artists have taken residencies or set up studios in the complex.⁵¹


The centrepiece of Wuhan Creative World is the United Art Museum, a sleek white 10,000m² building with a focus on contemporary art. Together with the nearby 403 Art District and K-11 Art Village on the other side of the river, the city is home to a vibrant and growing arts community.

“ Bookstores are complex systems that are constantly growing and updating. Therefore, Hubei Foreign Language Bookstore is not only a bookstore, but also a cultural and creative combination of lifestyles and aesthetics. ”

—Spokesperson for Wutopia Lab⁵⁸



octone-yuan / Unsplash



nicolas-peyrol / Unsplash

Vox Livehouse⁵²

Wuhan's famous indie music venue. It is the centre of Wuhan's underground rock scene. The venue frequently promotes and organises tours for international bands in China.

Combo Bookstore⁵³

An independent bookstore opened by an illustrator and a game designer. It mainly sells art and design publications.

Goose Corporation and Art Gallery⁵⁴

A multipurpose space which acts as both a bookstore and a venue for art exhibitions, events, talks and workshops.

K11 Select Wuhan⁵⁵

The third K11 commercial project after Hong Kong and Shanghai, K11 Select is the only K11 project with an artists' village which hosts residencies for local and international artists. Similar to other K11 malls, the Wuhan branch offers a high-end shopping experience coupled with a wide variety of art events and exhibitions.

Hubei Foreign Language Bookstore⁵⁶

Recently re-opened after a two-year renovation by the Architecture studio Wutopia Lab, the building has a memorable exterior, with a facade of triangular-shaped aluminum plates illuminated by blue triangular lights. Across six stories, the mixed-use building now houses a bookstore, multiple arts spaces, restaurants and cafés. It was awarded the title of 'Most Beautiful Bookstore of the Year' in 2020.⁵⁷



403 Arts District⁵⁹

Located in Wuchang district, the 403 Arts District was transformed from a boiler factory. It houses art performances and galleries featuring a lineup of emerging artists.

Surplus Space⁶⁰

The centrepiece of 403 Art District, Surplus Space features a small theatre, a public events space, a designer/maker's shop and a café.

Youpin Space⁶¹

A private art space established in 2017 with a vision to provide opportunities and market potential to young emerging artists in Wuhan.

Jinjue Art Space⁶²

An art space that incorporates art into everyday life. Located at Wuhan Creative World, it features exhibition space, a furniture display, and runs an artist residency programme in support of young artists.

Tencent Westart Innovation Space (Wuhan)⁶³

Founded in 2017, the Wuhan branch of Tencent Westart Innovation Space consists of three sites across 8000m². It is an incubator with a focus on industries such as corporate services, cultural creation, gaming, e-commerce and smart hardware.

Tanhualin Art Village⁶⁴

The Tan Hualin Art Village is Wuhan's answer to Beijing's 798 art zone and Shanghai's M50 art district. It spans across 104 hectares. The old neighbourhood consists of many Republican-era buildings. It was transformed and positioned as an art village in 2005 and since then art galleries, artists' studios and cafés have injected new energy into the area.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China



nicolas-peyrol / Unsplash

Huang Liping⁶⁵

Huang is the president of Wuhan Culture Creative Industry Association and curator of United Art Museum.

Zhu Ning⁶⁶

Zhu is the director of Vox Livehouse and a former drummer in the city's first punk band, SMZB. He initiated the collaboration between the British clarinetist Arun Ghosh and local post-rock and punk musicians in 2014.⁶⁷

Lu Mingjun⁶⁸

Lu is a celebrated curator and the artistic director of Surplus Space. He is currently Associate Professor of Art History at Art College, Sichuan University. He has published theses and books on the history of modern and contemporary art, including his latest publication, "Revolution of Art and Modern China" in 2020.

mr.d.mouse⁶⁹

Born in 1986, mr.d.mouse is an interdisciplinary artist raised and based in Wuhan. His works span across multiple media, including painting, installation, video, sound art and theatre & performance.

Mi Yangwen⁷⁰

Mi is a curator and the co-founder of BIG HOUSE Contemporary Art Centre.



Xiao Banruo⁷¹

Xiao is a young female artist born in 1991 who specialises in oil painting. She is currently based in Guangzhou and Wuhan. Xiao graduated from University of the Arts London, UK, with a Master's degree in 2014.

Chi Li⁷²

Chi Li is a contemporary female Chinese writer based in Wuhan. Many of her works and characters reflect the lives of Wuhan. She has received prestigious awards in literature including the Lu Xun Literary Prize. Her works have been adapted into movies and TV series such as *Life Show* (2002) and *Comes and Goes* (1998).

Fang Fang⁷³

Fang Fang is the pen name of Chinese female writer Wang Fang. She was born in 1955 in Nanjing and relocated to Wuhan to major in Chinese literature. She won the Lu Xun Literary Prize in 2010. Her early works concentrated on the struggle of underprivileged Wuhanese but she recently gained public attention with her “Wuhan Diary”, a daily account of the locked-down city in 2020 posted on her Weibo account.⁷⁴ The English version of “Wuhan Diary” was published by Harper Collins in the same year.

Xiao Yin (also known as Wang Zhaohui) ⁷⁵

Xiao Yin was born in 1969 and currently lives in Wuhan. He is a poet and the author of two collections of poetry – Beijing Time (*Beijing shijian*) and Improvised Songs (*Jixing qu*). He is known for updating one feed per day during the Covid-19 lockdown period in Wuhan on his personal Weibo account.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

WUHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

- **Wuhan Design Biennale⁷⁶**

Set up in 2011, the Wuhan Design Biennale, which focuses on crosscutting approaches between art and technologies, has strengthened the city's position as a leading global design centre.

- **@Wuhan⁷⁷**

A city-wide festival initiated by the art community. Founded in 2016, it has evolved into a city-wide art month with national impact. It takes place every December.

- **Qintai Music Festival⁷⁸**

One of the most important music festivals in Wuhan, the annual Qintai Music Festival invites famous domestic and foreign musicians, music groups and outstanding local musicians to perform folk music. Activities take place around the city such as shopping malls, parks and main venues like Qintai Concert Hall and Qintai Grand Theatre.

- **Rye Music Festival⁷⁹**

A large-scale outdoor music festival which brings together well-known singers, musicians and bands at home and abroad.

- **Vision And Colour Music Festival (VAC)⁸⁰**

The VAC is the largest outdoor electronic music festival in central China. Set up in 2018, it features world-famous DJs and producers. Held at Wuhan Garden Expo Park, the festival can accommodate up to 30,000 people.



feng-jiaxing / Unsplash

Strawberry Music Festival⁸¹

Strawberry Music Festival is an outdoor music event created and organised by China's largest independent record label, Modern Sky. The festival has been held annually since 2009 in several cities in China, including Wuhan, Beijing, Shanghai and Changchun.

Wuhan Fashion Week⁸²

A four-day fashion event organised by the Municipal Government of Wuhan which features local and international fashion brands at the REDT Fashion Creative Block. Fashion shows, flash mobs, fashion contests, and summit panels will take place during the week.

China Theatre Festival⁸³

Founded in 1988, the festival is an important platform which brings together high-quality troupes from all over the country, with a performance lineup of traditional theatres and regional operas, such as Peking Opera, Chu Opera, Kun Opera, and Sichuan Opera.

Douyu Live Video Streaming Festival / Douyu Carnival⁸⁴

Douyu.com is a leading livestreaming platform in China. The three-day festival features music performances, e-Sports events, and an animation expo with online influencers and livestreaming celebrities as guests. The inaugural edition attracted an on-site audience of 156,800 and 11.72 million online viewers on the first day.

Wuhan International Maker Art Festival⁸⁵

A festival that occurs over two months held at the Wuhan Creative World. It features art exhibitions, fashion shows, workshops and creative markets, celebrating the confluence of art and technology.

East Lake Ecological Sculpture Biennale⁸⁶

The 2nd East Lake Ecological Sculpture Biennale, titled *100% @Wuhan*, is being staged from October 2021 to April 2022, coinciding with @Wuhan 2021.⁸⁷ Set up in 2017, the biennale is the first in China to take ecological art as a theme.



⁸⁶ WeChat ID: gh_46e9db1be665

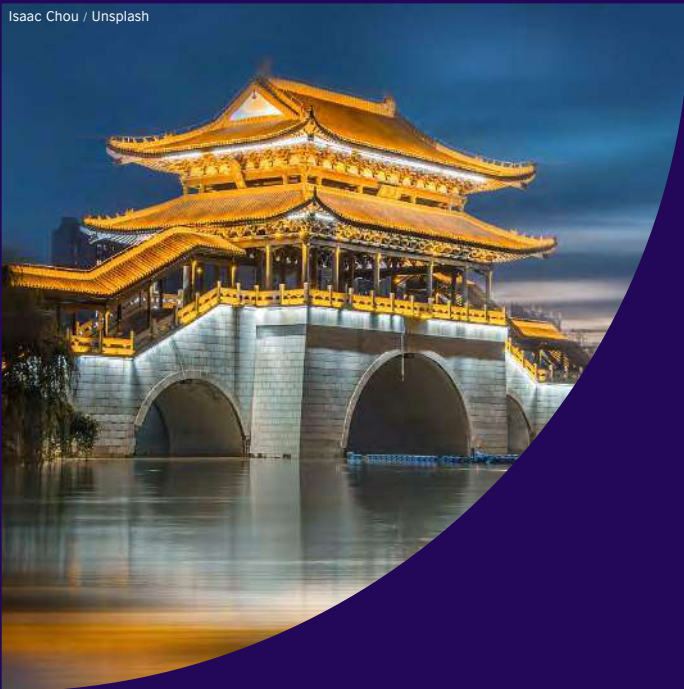
CHÁNG SHĀ

长沙

CHINA

Cultural City Profile

Isaac Chou / Unsplash



Isaac Chou / Unsplash



Isaac Chou / Unsplash



Isaac Chou / Unsplash

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INTRODUCING CHANGSHA

CHANGSHA
—
Cultural City Profile
China

Changsha is the capital city of Hunan province and one of the largest cities in central China. The city's convenient location makes it a strategic logistical hub that connects the coastal areas and inland China. Three major high-speed railways pass through Changsha: Beijing-Guangzhou railway, Shanghai-Kunming railway and Chongqing-Xiamen railway.¹

Changsha covers an area of 11,819 km² and had a population of over 10 million in 2020.² The city's GDP remained robust throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and increased by 4% to over GBP 133 billion (CNY 1.2 trillion) in 2020. This economic dynamic makes it one of the strongest-growth cities in the region.³ In 2020, Changsha's cultural and creative industries contributed GBP 33 billion (CNY 300 billion), which is 9% of GDP in total, making the sector an important engine for investment, growth and talent development.⁴

Among the top three cities for IP and innovation in China, alongside Guangzhou and Nanjing, Changsha has achieved substantial results through embracing the digital economy and smart manufacturing, and innovation.⁵

As a UNESCO Creative City with the designation 'City of Media Arts', Changsha has an established ecosystem for film, TV and content production. Its development has shaped the country's entertainment industry and remained a dominant influence in TV, streaming, animation and publishing sectors.⁶ Some of the most watched variety shows in China, including *Happy Camp*, *Super Girls*, and *I am a Singer*, are produced in the city. As early movers into internet content production, two of the most viewed shows – *Call Me By Fire* and *Sisters Who Make Waves* – hit over 420 million⁷ and 350 million⁸ respective views within the first three days of their premieres on Mango TV.

Changsha is also one of the most 'instagrammable' and 'internet-famous' cities and tourism destinations in China, powered by the vitality of the nightlife and a surge in homegrown gastronomic brands.⁹

Changsha's efforts to regulate the property market over the years makes it one of the most sustainable and affordable cities in comparison to first-tier or emerging second-tier cities.¹⁰

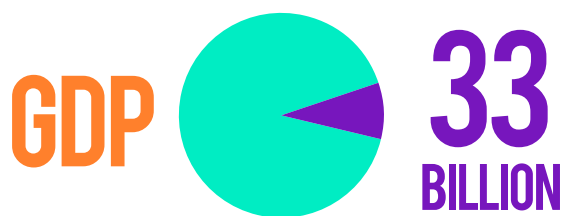
“ Changsha has transitioned from relying on low value-added industry to various pillar industries, covering smart manufacturing, heavy construction machinery, media and entertainment and booming new consumer brands. Besides, Changsha has done a good job in controlling the housing market as local government's revenue stream doesn't rely on property taxes. This advantage makes the city one of the most affordable for young graduates and it's also one of the key reasons why it is such a nursing ground for talents. ”

—Qu Dan, associate professor of School of Economics and Trade at Hunan University¹¹

CHANGSHA IN NUMBERS

CHANGSHA

Cultural City Profile
China



In 2020, Changsha's cultural and creative industries contributed GBP 33 billion (CNY 300 billion), which accounts for 9% of GDP in total.



Lei feng

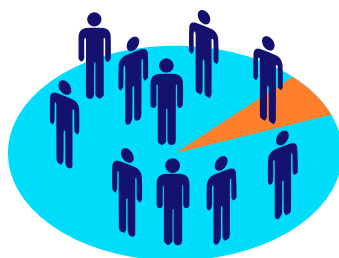


Ou Yangxun

Changsha is known as the birthplace of many influential figures throughout history.



Changsha was selected as a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts in 2017.



55
ethnic minority groups

Apart from the Han Chinese majority, there are 55 ethnic minority groups. The largest ethnic minority groups include Tujia, Miao, Hui, Dong, Yao, Man and Zhuang. The ethnic minority population accounts for 148,000 people, roughly 2% of the population in 2020.



Changsha covers an area of 11,819 km² and had a population of over 10 million in 2020. The city's GDP remained robust throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and increased by 4% to over GBP 133 billion (CNY 1.2 trillion) in 2020.



BEIJING-GUANGZHOU

SHANGHAI KUNMING

CHONGQING-XIAMEN

Three major high-speed railways pass through Changsha: Beijing-Guangzhou railway, Shanghai Kunming railway and Chongqing-Xiamen railway.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INDUSTRIES

1.1 BILLION

THE SCALE OF RELATED INDUSTRIES

5 BILLION

In 2020, the revenue of the city's artificial intelligence industries reached GBP 1.1 billion (CNY 10 billion), and the scale of related industries reached GBP 5 billion (CNY 45 billion).

CONTEXT

Located in the northeast of Hunan Province, at the lower reaches of Xiangjiang and the western part of the Changliu Basin, Changsha is surrounded by Yichun City and Pingxiang City of Jiangxi Province (to the east), Zhuzhou City and Xiangtan City (to its south), Loudi City and Yiyang City (to the west) and Yueyang City.

Changsha is known as the birthplace of many influential figures throughout history, including Zeng Guofan (Confucian scholar and military leader from the Qing Dynasty), Li Shaoqi (late Chinese leaders), Zhang Xiaolong (founder of the social media platform WeChat) as well as Tan Dun (Chinese-American musician and contemporary classical music composer).¹²

Apart from the Han Chinese majority, there are 55 ethnic minority groups. The largest ethnic minority groups include Tujia, Miao, Hui, Dong, Yao, Man and Zhuang. The ethnic minority population accounts for 148,000 people, roughly 2% of the population in 2020. The diverse religious communities in Changsha encompass Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Christianity.¹³

HERITAGE LEGACY

CHANGSHA

Cultural City Profile
China

The city's history can be traced back 3,500 years. It was a major city in the State of Chu (1115-223 BC). The distinctive characteristics of Chu culture remains a pronounced influence in Changsha today. Originating from the Central Plain areas, the Chu legacy can be seen in a wealth of art, history, education, literature, philosophy, and folk customs, and has become a significant source of traditional Chinese culture.

The rich cultural history is reflected across many sites - Mawangdui, Four-goat Square Zun, Bamboo Slips, Yuelu Academy and The Tongguan Kiln - as well as events - Dragon Boat Race, Hunan Embroidery, Changsha Tanci, Shadow Puppetry, and Flower-drum opera.

In 2009, the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival was listed as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage event. The festival recalls the life of Qu Yuan (339-278 BC), a pioneering poet who specialised in Chinese romanticism, and creator and representative of the ballad of Chu.



joshua sun / Unsplash

Combining its strength in multimedia art and technology, Changsha organises multi-media themed festivals to promote and preserve the city's cultural heritage with key programmes that include:

- Hosting cultural shopping festivals online and offline.
- Utilising multimedia and interactive platforms to showcase the craftsmanship techniques of Tongguan Kiln-making and Hunan Embroidery.
- Collaboration between Changsha Cultural Tourism and gaming developer qq dance to embed the visual presentation of traditional Changsha Tanci Musical Storytelling Art, Hunan Embroidery and Flower-drum Opera into game animation.¹⁵

“ Throughout history, traditional Chinese academies were significant cultural and educational institutions that preserve, interpret, teach and research literature and philosophies...Yuelu Academy now shoulders the responsibility of preserving and promoting Chinese traditional literary culture. ”

– Deng Hongbo,
professor of Yuelu Academy, Hunan University¹⁴

CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

“ Culture is the soul of a city, and the foundation for sustainable urban developments. In recent years, Changsha has been committed to culture-driven urban development to boost industries and deliver real benefits to our citizens. Changsha has been integrating innovation and creativity into all aspects of urban construction, industrial development and the city’s living environment. ”

—Zheng Jianxin, Mayor of Changsha Municipal People's Government¹⁶

Changsha was selected as a UNESCO City of Media Arts in 2017 and has been proactively fostering international collaborations. For example:

- In 2020, Changsha, joined by other UNESCO Creative Cities of Media Arts, launched the project ‘City to City’ to support local artists. Artists were invited to create digital artworks under the theme of ‘Human Responsibility’ through remote and virtual collaboration. Works were showcased on the virtual gallery, accessible to the public.¹⁷
- In 2020, Changsha convened an International Youth Forum Special Dialogue. The event focused on Covid-19 relief measures and the role of the global youth community. Under the initiative, the city released the ‘C+C’ Global Youth Innovation Partnership Plan which promotes the two Cs – creativity and culture. Relevant programmes include IP awareness, youth retention initiative, multimedia festivals and access to media art funding.¹⁸
- The city has held the International Youth Forum (IYF) on Creativity and Heritage as a part of the Belt and Road initiative since 2017. Over the past four years, the event has attracted youth representatives from over 111 countries to discuss sustainable development.¹⁹

The city also invests significantly in the building up of facilities for media arts. About GBP 11 million (CNY 96 million) per year has been invested to develop Malanshan Video Cultural and Creative Industry Park.²⁰ In addition, the construction of Xiangtai Cultural Creative Industrial Park, a national pilot project, due for completed in 2025, will further consolidate Changsha's standing as a vibrant media hub.²¹

To boost its nighttime economy, an estimated GBP 40 million (CNY 359.2 million) was injected into the construction of public facilities and infrastructure to provide a friendly and safe environment, including curated 'noctivagation' routes and programme around Yuelu Peak and construction of new night-themed cultural towns.²²



MEDIA ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES

CHANGSHA

Cultural City Profile
China

“ In 2020, even during the pandemic, the zone's revenue rose 30% from 2019 to above GBP 4.8 billion (CNY 43 billion).. Malanshan V Zone attracted 794 companies last year and plans to attract 1,000 more in 2021. ”

—Fang Qian, representative of Malanshan Video Cultural and Creative Industry Park²³

Changsha is a major hub for the development of China's entertainment industries. Located in Changsha, Hunan Broadcasting System (HBS) is one of the country's most influential TV networks, second only to the official China Central Television (CCTV) in scale and reach. HBS's acumen for popular culture enable its entertainment and variety shows to frequently exceed the ratings of CCTV.

HBS together with its new media platform Mango TV (founded in 2006) has about 50 million daily online viewers. Top rated variety shows such as the *Happy Camp* and *Super Girls* have significant impact on China's entertainment culture with a multitude of celebrities. Reality talent shows such as *Sisters Who Make Waves* (2020) have swept the country with an average of over 5.1 billion views.²⁴HBS's latest big-budget talent variety show *Call Me by Fire* (2021) invited 33 celebrities from across mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas to compete, "garnered almost 450 million views within four days of launch".²⁵The growth of its entertainment business creates a mature ecosystem of content, TV and animation production, making Changsha an attractive place to live and work for the media industry.

Government-backed creative industrial parks specialising in multimedia production technologies also incubate a pool of new talent for Changsha. As a national leader, Malanshan Cultural Creative Industrial Park for Creative Videos is paving the way for VR technologies, animation productions and digital media.²⁶ The goal of Malanshan by 2030 is to establish itself as a top provider for the global video industry and innovation value chain to reach an output value of more than GBP 33 billion (CNY 300 billion)..²⁷

Following the integration of media arts and traditional industries, Changsha has also fostered a portfolio of creative businesses including multimedia fireworks and digital light shows. The city attracts more than 250,000 creative talents from multiple disciplines to join R&D and entrepreneurship activities every year.²⁸

MEDIA ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES

CHANGSHA

Cultural City Profile
China



Hunan Broadcasting System (HBS)²⁹

China's second largest television network after China Central Television (CCTV). The television network is owned by the Hunan provincial government. In 2009, the television network expanded its service to Hong Kong and North America. Hunan Broadcasting System created a series of highly rated variety shows including *Happy Camp*, *Super Girls and Super Boys* as well as *Sisters Who Make Waves*. Owned by HBS, Mango TV is the online content production arm and a powerhouse of HBS IPs.

Malanshan Video Cultural and Creative Industry Park

Also known as Malanshan V Zone, the park is a base that produces eight of the top 10 variety shows in China. Over 3,000 companies are located in the zone. It provides critical technology and infrastructural support including cloud computing services and digital platforms to its resident companies. In 2020, the Park saw the establishment of a Multi-scene Application Laboratory for video production by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television. This 5G laboratory is the first of its kind in the country that provides high-tech services and infrastructure for video production.³⁰

Malanshan New Media College

Established in 2019 by the provincial government, the newly founded college dedicates resources to the research and talent development at the cross section of technology and culture. It is positioned as a major hub for creative content production, digital economy and IP trading.

Tianxin Cultural Industrial Park³¹

One of the first pilot projects that integrate advertisement with cultural industries. The Park acts as an accelerator for local cultural and creative brands with specialties in advertisement, copyright and digital publishing.

Caohua Interactive³²

The most established gaming development company in central China, specialises in independent development and operation of mobile games. Most of the games developed by Caohua have hit an average revenue of GBP 11 million (CNY 100 million)³³

AI, ROBOTICS AND SMART ECONOMY

CHANGSHA

Cultural City Profile
China

The Changsha-based Sany Heavy Industry, an established machinery manufacturer, was transformed into a smart, robotics-based system to align with the state's goal of 'Made in China 2025'. Sany's No. 18 workshop is the largest and most advanced intelligent manufacturing plant in Asia.³⁴

Thanks to a well-distributed 5G network³⁵ in the city with an estimated 22,000 stations, the city is home to numerous established and emerging smart automobile brands, such as SAIC Motor, Geely, BYD, NIO, Xiaopeng and Weltmeister, as well as internet businesses such as Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, JD, Huawei Kunpeng, iFLYTEK and CSDN.³⁶ Changsha is also the trial ground of autonomous driving buses operated by Baidu's Apollo system.³⁷ In 2021, it became the first in China to roll out a self-driving taxi service for the public.³⁸

The city's leadership in artificial intelligence is supported by local government and a line-up of top-tier science and engineering universities, including National University of Defense Technology, Central South University and Hunan University. In 2020, the revenue of the city's artificial intelligence industries reached GBP 1.1 billion (CNY 10 billion), and the scale of related industries reached GBP 5 billion (CNY 45 billion).³⁹

The fifth Chinese city to adopt digital currency, Changsha issued 300,000 digital yuan red packets valued GBP 4.4 million (CNY 40 million) in 2021. The currency can be used at offline stores that are equipped to accept digital yuan in Changsha and other pilot cities.⁴⁰

In addition, Changsha is building up a regional big data exchange centre to boost its digital economy and will partner with the Hunan Big Data Exchange, which itself works with southern provinces including Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan to trade geospatial data related to communication, navigation, remote sensing and mapping.⁴¹



Lens Technology, 2003⁴²

A major technology company dedicated to the R&D, manufacture and sale of touch-based screens. It is one of the largest providers of smartphone screens for Samsung, Apple, Microsoft and Nokia and display panels for Tesla.⁴³

Changsha Robox Institute, 2016⁴⁴

A robotics manufacturing and education services provider located in Changsha. The nation-wide institute has a footprint also in Shenzhen, Changzhou, Ningbo and Zhengzhou.

National Supercomputing Centre in Changsha, 2010⁴⁵

Located within Hunan University, the Centre is backed by the National University of Defense Technology and equipped with supercomputing capability ranked third among China's Top100 high-performance computers in 2011.

NIGHT ECONOMY, GASTRONOMY AND GRASS-ROOT CULTURES

CHANGSHA

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Dubbed as the ‘city of entertainment’, Changsha has an abundance of night-time activities.⁴⁷ Changsha has one of the strongest nighttime economies in China, where it is even ranked ahead of Beijing and Shanghai. In 2020, about 52% of the city’s consumption derived from after dark activities and 70% of the entertainment consumption were related to night-time spending.⁴⁸ The city’s vibrant pubs and bars also frequently double as venues for live performances, stand-up comedy and other events.

Several homegrown gastronomy brands make Changsha one of the most popular tourism destinations in China. Beverage chain Chayan Yuese is quickly ascending to the position of top bubble tea brand. The lobster restaurants within the marketplace and restaurant complex Super Wenheyou have also become a must-visit in Changsha.

To meet the growing demand of young consumers, 24-hour nighttime businesses have gained traction, with the all-day cultural offerings such as hotpot restaurants (Haidilao and Dabinjia), bookstores (Taskin and Lezhi) and gyms (Leke).⁴⁹ Changsha’s independent, traditional and 24-hour bookstores are receiving increasing popularity among readers and visitors. Children’s reading events were organised by the 24-hour Lezhi Bookstore from 6pm to 9pm every day in 2019 and were well received by local families.⁵⁰



“ Changsha is appealing because of the city’s down-to-earth culture. Many cities like to highlight skyscrapers and business centres when they develop their city’s image, but this line of branding is hard to resonate with people. A real ‘instagrammable’ and ‘internet-famous’ city like Changsha is not driven by government plans but stems from the everyday living experience of the local community that creates an authentic sense of intimacy. ”

–Ding Junjie, Representative of Academic Committee, Communication University of China⁴⁶

Super Wenheyoun⁵¹

A homegrown dining brand and is also known as the ‘Disney Land’ of Chinese Gastronomy. The 1980s-style venue, interior and decoration provides an immersive dining experience. It leads a new-model of immersive gastronomy business which now expands to other cities.

Bar Street of Jiefang West⁵²

The birthplace of the first bar in Changsha, the street features some of the most iconic bars of the city, such as Golden Times Bar, Soho Bar, Shangri-La Bar, Shuimu Times Bar, Shangshang Bar and others.

Chayan Yuese, 2013⁵³

Chayan Yuese has become one of the top bubble tea brands in China following Heytea, Nayuki and Coco tea.



k-hsu / Unsplash

CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Changsha is the major cultural and education centre in central China. It has nurtured some of the most influential philosophers, poets and politicians in Chinese history. Yuelu Academy is one of the four earliest higher education institutions to foster research, education and cultural exchanges of Confucius philosophies. The Academy was established in the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD) and operated for more than 1,000 years across Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. It was later transformed into Hunan Institute of Higher Learning in 1903 then Hunan University in 1926, which is now one of the top-tier universities in China.⁵⁴ Other established and top-tier universities such as Central South University, Hunan Normal University and National University of Defense Technology also contribute to the strong education offered in Changsha.

The increase of cultural spaces and private museums in the past decade including the Zaha Hadid-designed Meixi Lake International Culture and Arts Centre, Xie Zilong Photography Museum, Li Zijiang Art Museum and Advanced Art Museum, have made Changsha an important hub in touring shows in the country.⁵⁵

Yuelu Academy⁵⁶

Established in 976 AD during the Song Dynasty, Yuelu Academy is one of the most renowned traditional institutions of higher education as well as a centre for research and cultural heritage preservation. Bearing the reputation of one of the top four legacy academies in China, the site was transformed into a part of Hunan University, carrying on the torch in research and talent cultivation.

Hunan University⁵⁷

A top-tier research-based university in China with a focus on engineering and R&D. In 2020, the *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Hunan University at 48th in engineering among Best Global Universities.

Central South University, 2000⁵⁸

A top-tier university, CSU was established in 2000 by merging the former Hunan Medical University, the former Changsha Railway University, and the former Central South University of Technology. With over 100 years of history, the university specialises in medicine, engineering and military Science.

Hunan Museum, 1951⁵⁹

It is one of the first batch of national first-level museums and one of the first eight national museums co-funded by central and local governments. The museum houses over 180,000 artefacts, which feature cultural relics excavated from the world-famous Mawangdui Tombs of Han Dynasty, the bronze wares of the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, relics and artefacts of Chu State, pottery and porcelain works from various dynasties, calligraphy works and paintings, religious objects and other crafts.



Changsha Bamboo Slips Museum, 2002⁶⁰

The government founded museum is currently a large-scale modern museum dedicated to the collection, preservation, study and exhibition of bamboo script (Jiandu). Ranked as a 'First-Grade National Museum' in China, it houses more than 100,000 bamboo slips and wooden tablets dating back over 1,700 years.

Hunan Puppetry and Shadow Theatre, 1953⁶¹

The most celebrated shadow theatre troupe in China. The troupe's technical and scenographic innovations influenced other puppet and shadow theatres in China. Always innovating, it has introduced florescent lighting and incorporated new plays into its repertoire.

Xie Zilong Photography Museum, 2009⁶²

Designed by the team of Wei Chunyu, dean of the School of Architecture, Hunan University, the museum aims to document the history of Chinese photography and acts as an exchange platform to present photography from different regions, with a focus on the discussion on the direction of Chinese photography in particular. In 2020, it hosted the city's first design week that focused on human-based technology.⁶³

Advance Art Museum, 2014⁶⁴

An independent non-profit art organisation founded by Wu Kuo, Chairman of the Advance Group and CEO of 58 Zhong Chuang. The museum is located on an ancient street Taipingli and has specialised departments including exhibitions, collections, education and communication. It also runs an international artist residency programme.

Meixi Lake International Culture and Arts Centre, 2016⁶⁵

The largest and most versatile cultural centre in Hunan Province. Designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, it is home to high-tech theatres, a contemporary art museum (MICA) and office space for creative industries.

Li Zijiang Art Museum, 2016⁶⁶

Founded by artist Li Zijiang, the art museum located in Yuelu District is the largest private art museum in Hunan. It is comprised of the Li Zijian Oil Painting Exhibition Hall, Chen Xichuan Sketch Exhibition Hall, Venerable Master Hsing Yun One-stroke Calligraphy Exhibition Hall and Water Music Hall.



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freya cheung / Unsplash

Meilun Art Museum

Meilun Art Museum is operated by Hunan Fine Art Publishing Ltd. The museum is dedicated to collection, research, exhibition and education of art and culture. In 2020, the 2,000m² space hosted an interactive Vincent Van Gogh show that featured multimedia and VR technologies.⁶⁷

Hunan Tan Guo Bin Contemporary Art Museum, 2005⁶⁸

The 6,000m² art museum was founded in 2005 by director Tan Guo Bin. It is the organiser of city-wide Art Changsha biennial.

Tian Han Cultural Park⁶⁹

Built by the municipal government, the cultural park is to commemorate Mr Tian Han, lyricist of the Chinese National Anthem, and pioneer and principal founder of Chinese modern drama art.

Changsha Experimental Theatre⁷⁰

A state-run theatre opened in 2006 and refitted in 2012. It houses a 700-seat performance hall, a 100m² rehearsal space, a professional recording room, a meeting room and ancillary spaces. It aims to promote art and local cultural tradition with free-to-all performances and education programme.

Changsha 303 Sunshine Theatre

The Changsha branch of the influential independent 303 troupe in west China, founded by director Yuan Ye. The theatre offers a rich programme targeting students and families. It has a 700-seat immersive space and is located at the 100 Fenghuang Street cultural hub. The 303 Theatre produces a diverse portfolio of musical, comedy and other original and adapted performances with an immersive and participatory approach, and presents ballets, orchestras and operas. It runs an exchange and incubation platform for emerging and young playwrights. It co-hosted *Hand In Hand International Children's Music Festival*, *2019 Urban Art Exhibition Qinyuanchun Changsha*, *Music Into DNA Denmark Children Festival* and many other city-wide collaborations.⁷¹

Guoshi Theatre Studio

Founded by entertainment power couple Wang Han and Yang Lele. Goushi Theatre Studio is located in the Cultural Square near Changsha's universities. The studio is dedicated to the production, presentation and development of local-produced performances. It runs an incubation programme to provide a space for young and emerging talents to grow their career in acting, playwrighting and theatrical production.⁷²

CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

CHANGSHA

Cultural City Profile
China

While stand-up comedy TV shows are only recently gaining traction in China, Changsha has long been a bastion of stand-up comedy clubs creating opportunities to showcase local talent and develop this entertainment genre. Venues such as Xiaoma club, Red Lion Pub and Baixiong Hezi Live House are leading the trend in Changsha.

Benefiting from its vibrant entertainment and youth culture, Changsha has a burgeoning community that provides co-living spaces that aim to gather artists, designers, architects and creative talents. Among these, PLAN8T (P8) has set an example with its concept of a future vertical community that incorporate working, living and learning in one space. Its international artist residency programme offers a platform for cross-media and experimental art practices. In 2019, 28 artists from 17 countries participated the programmes.

“ Xiaoma Club is like a utopia for our members. It is a hub of ‘slash youth’ – gig workers – and gives everyone an opportunity to unleash their talent. ”

–Wei Daye, Co-organiser of Xiaoma Club⁷³

Xiaoma Club⁷⁴

The first stand-up comedy club in Changsha organised by a group of comedy fans. The club hosts regular shows every Saturday night and provides opportunities for comedy talents to run trial shows.

Baixiong Hezi Live House⁷⁵

One of the leading live venues dedicated to local stand-up comedy and stage drama in Changsha.

E-Zoo⁷⁶

Invested with GBP 7.8 million (CNY 70 million), the brand-new bar has the finest visual and audio system and is one of the largest electronic music bars in Changsha.

Red Lion Club⁷⁷

An international live music pub and a major venue to present international stand-up comedy talents in Changsha.

PLAN8T⁷⁸

Inspired by the idea of sustainability and youth culture, PLAN8T (P8) is an international platform and vertical co-living space that embraces the 3-in-1 balanced lifestyle of working, living and learning. P8 is home to over 30 start-ups and freelancers spanning from design and art to technology. PLAN8T Artist / Architect in Residence (P8AIR) programmes invite international creative talents to live in Changsha and create works related to new and prototype technologies in sustainable living.

Taskin 24 Hour Bookstore⁷⁹

The first 24-hour bookstore in Changsha which has an average of 1.4 million visitors per year. It has a coffee area, separate reading rooms, exhibition space, tea houses and kid play area.

Lezhi Bookstore

A 24-hour boutique bookstore run by the nation-wide Xinhua Bookstore Group. Located within the Changsha Library, the bookstore's literature selection covers social science, literature, history and philosophy. It also has a salon area and a creative market where cultural events are regularly organised for the public.⁸⁰

Zhijian Bookstore⁸¹

A leading independent bookstore in Changsha, Zhijian has become a cultural hub for emerging and established writers, artists and cultural influencers. Taking reading as its core, the store also hosts product design showcases, art exhibitions and cultural events.⁸²

Sugu Bookstore⁸³

A boutique bookstore with a long-standing reputation for its humble business model and remains a trend-setter for the industry.⁸⁴

Changsha IFS⁸⁵

Located at the business centre of the city, Changsha IFS is a commercial building with a gallery that frequently hosts touring shows such as *KAWS* in 2018 and a *VR Da Vinci travelling show* in 2020. It also hosted *Changsha Miniature Art Exhibition* in 2021, displaying miniature replicas of Changsha's Old Town streets, bars, the Changsha Show, the Aiwan Pavilion, and the Super Wenheyong Restaurant.⁸⁶

“ People said that traditional bookstores is coming to the end, but I don't agree at all. With personalised and crafted recommendations, a niche book can be popular. Running independent bookstores, you have to be precise with your positioning.....and of course leverage the influence of social media. ”

—Li Kun, Owner of Sugu Bookstores⁸⁷



MOVERS AND SHAKERS

CHANGSHA

Cultural City Profile
China



Huang Liting⁹⁰

Co-founder of PLAN8T (P8), an international platform and vertical co-living space that embraces the lifestyle of working, living and learning. PLAN8T operates an international residency programme for designers and architects that works with new technologies.

Dai Jianqing⁹¹

Founder and CEO of Caohua Interactive, the leading game developer in Changsha, specialising in independent innovation and operation of mobile games.

Tan Guobin⁹²

Director Hunan Tan Guobing Contemporary Art Museum. He was the former director of Changsha Art Museum and founder of the city-wide Art Changsha biennial.

He Jiong⁹³

The most popular and influential TV host in China, He Jiong is best known for hosting popular variety show Happy Camp for over 20 years.



Zhou Qunfei⁹⁴

Entrepreneur and founder of Lens Technology, Zhou was one of the world's richest self-made women in 2018. The company supplies smartphone screens for Samsung, Apple, Microsoft and Nokia and display panels for Tesla, employing almost 90,000 people.⁹⁵

Liu Zu⁹⁶

Professor at the School of Architecture, Hunan University, specialising in architectural history and historical heritage preservation. He oversaw the preservation and revitalisation of Yuelu Academy.

He Liwei⁹⁷

Writer and honorary publisher of bi-monthly Chuangzuo magazine – the only mass-published literature periodical in Changsha.

Wang Hang⁹⁸

Mango TV host. Wang and his wife Yang Lele founded Guoshi Theatre Studio. He is an advocate for self-produced theatre works and is dedicated to the career development of young playwrights.

Cblock⁹⁹

A hip-pop collective from Changsha, specialising in rapping with local dialect. They operate under independent music label Sup and perform widely across the country.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

CHANGSHA

Cultural City Profile
China

Through partnership with 29 counties and 50 cities, Changsha has organised more than 1,000 international events such as the *International Sculpture Art Festival*, *Meixi Lake International Culture & Art Festival*, *China Golden Eagle TV Art Festival* and *Orange Isle Music Festival*.

International Youth Forum on Creativity & Heritage along the Silk Roads, 2016¹⁰⁰

A week-long forum regularly hosted in Changsha with an annual event themed on sustainable development and leverages through innovation and revitalisation of cultural heritage.

Golden Eagle TV Art Festival¹⁰¹

Held in Changsha since 2002 and known as China's 'Emmy Award', *Golden Eagle TV Art Festival* is one of three major national award ceremonies recognising excellence in the Chinese television industry.

Orange Isle Music Festival, 2010¹⁰²

Orange Isle Music Festival is an influential music festival brand in central China. The annual festival features rock bands, electronic musicians, and pop-music singers from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The Guitar Festival, 2012¹⁰³

The Changsha Guitar Festival is an annual international guitar festival which aims to promote world-class guitar music in China.

High Surge Cultural Festival, 2020

A city-wide festival that features music, arts and theatre. It has a carnival, art marketplace and DJ showcases.



CHÓNG QÌNG

重庆

CHINA

Cultural City Profile

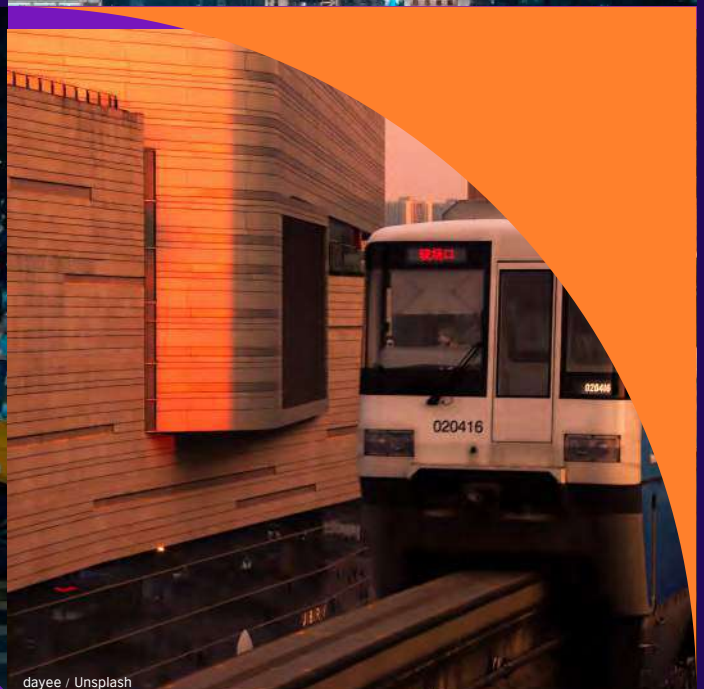
Jingdian / unsplash



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INTRODUCING CHONGQING

CHONGQING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

“

There is a cyberpunk quality to Chongqing that enthralled me.

”

—KM Alexander, novelist¹

Chongqing is the largest municipality in China by territory size and population – an area of 82,400 km² and a population of 33.92 million. The size of the municipality is as large as Austria and its population is close to that of Canada.

A GDP of GBP 278 billion (CNY 2.5 trillion) recorded in the end of 2020 makes it one of the strongest economies in China following Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou.² The city is one of the four municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin) that reports directly to the central government.³ Chongqing is among the top 10 cities with the most consumer market potential, according to the *Economist Intelligence Unit Report*, benefiting from its vibrant retail sector, domestic tourist market and a large Generation Z population.⁴

Known as the 'Mountain City' with Karst topography, Chongqing has an abundance of natural resources including water reserves, mineral resources and dense forests. It is also a pioneer in sustainable urban development, characterised by the smart Sponge City initiative. Successful urban regeneration and rural revitalisation makes Chongqing a leader in cultural tourism and an engine for the investment and growth for inland China.

Dubbed as a 'cyberpunk city', Chongqing has a dynamic and inventive cityscape, where contemporary architecture embraces the challenges brought by its mountainous terrain. Skyscrapers intermix with street markets providing a visual thrill and a constantly changing urban fabric. City landmarks include Raffles City Chongqing, Chongqing Hongyadong, Chaotianmen bridge and Liziba light rail station, which passes through the middle of a 19-storey residential building.⁵

“

[Chongqing is] a playground for architects.... When the city combines pragmatism with dramatic terrain, the incredible results will always top your must-see list. You can easily come across architectural surprises among Chongqing's deeply charming alleyways and neighbourhoods.

”

—iChongqing⁶

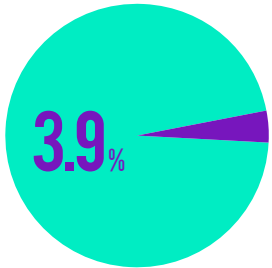
Chongqing is the birthplace of Chinese hip-pop music, with the genre infused by the distinctive local dialect. The city comes in eighth in terms of its millennial followers of hip hop and rap, just behind the first-tier coastal cities.⁷

4.The Economist Intelligence Unit, Sep. 2021. China's emerging city rankings 2021: Unpacking opportunities under the 14th Five-Year Plan.

CHONGQING IN NUMBERS

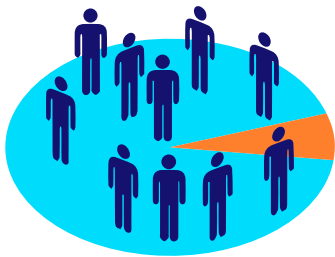
CHONGQING

Cultural City Profile
China



11
BILLION

Cultural tourism is an economic driver, with 64.41 million tourists, generating GBP 11 billion (CNY 97.9 billion) revenue, and accounting for 3.9% of the city's GDP in 2020.

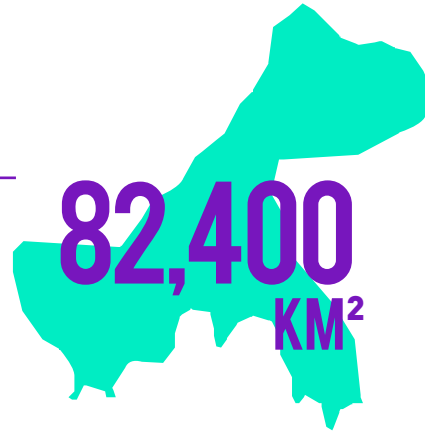


7%
OF THE POPULATION

Non-Han ethnic groups including Tujia, Miao, Hui and Yi among others, and accounts for 2.17 million people, roughly 7% of the population in 2021.

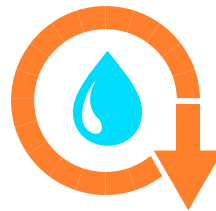
GDP
£ 278
BILLION

A GDP of GBP 278 billion (CNY 2.5 trillion) in 2020 makes it one the strongest economies in China.



33.92 MILLION

Chongqing is the largest municipality in China by territory size and population – an area of 82,400 km² and a population of 33.92 million. The size of the municipality is as large as Austria and its population is close to that of Canada.



£ 67,000

The Sponge City programme in Chongqing will save GBP 67,000 (CNY 600,000) in water charges every year via the Chongqing Yuelai Investment Group.



INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES

The city has an established staple of independent bookstores.

CONTEXT

Located in southwest China, Chongqing is surrounded by mountains (Daba mountains in the North, Wushan Mountain in the East, Wuling and Wulong Mountains to the West, and Dalou Mountains to the south). The unique landscape and geographical environment give the city hot and humid summers and temperate winters. Two major rivers – the Yangtze and Jialing rivers – run through the city making it a major industrial and trading port in the southwest region.

The majority of the population in Chongqing is Han Chinese. Other ethnic groups including Tujia, Miao, Hui and Yi among others, which accounts for 2.17 million people or roughly 7% of the population in 2021.⁸

CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

The city's strategic location in southwest inland China makes it a prominent hub in the country. The city plays an important role in the Belt and Road Initiative, Yangtze River Economic Belt, the new western China land-sea corridor, and the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, as well as the China-Europe rail assembly centre.⁹

In addition, Chongqing, together with 11 other western provinces and cities, form the strategic fabric of the country's West China Development Programme. The policy aims to deliver economic growth and cultural prosperity to revitalise the inland regions. In the 13th five-year plan for culture industries of Chongqing, the government invested GBP 11 billion (CNY 100 billion) to boost the sector, with the following focus:¹⁰

- promote the R&D and production of online television, radio programmes, filming and photography
- support the development of art education and creative think tanks
- revitalise the advertising and the animation sectors, with capital projects including industrial parks and showcasing platforms such as exhibitions and conferences
- leverage the city's industrial base to support manufacturing and the production of cultural goods such as stationary, musical instruments and other equipment
- boost the digital economy and develop ICT industries and online services.



Based on the 'Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle' plan, Chongqing in hand with Chengdu is tasked to promote Bashu culture with the Bashu Cultural Tourism Corridor. The two megacities collaborate to deliver high-quality cultural tourism with co-investment in branding, artistic exchanges and heritage conservation.¹¹

To optimise cultural tourism, the municipal government focuses on cultural ecological zones to enable cultural and creative clusters and hubs. Priorities include crafts and design, museum development, heritage revitalisation and boutique guest houses, as well as history and themed 'art towns'.¹² According to the 14th five-year plan, more than GBP 3 billion (CNY 30 billion) will be invested to accelerate the construction of the Yangtze River Cultural and Art area in Dadugou District¹³ and to deliver a 7.8km² music hub.¹⁴

The cultural tourism industry in Chongqing is also one of the most resilient. It bounced back rapidly after the Covid-19 pandemic. By the end of 2020, the city had received 64.41 million tourists, generating GBP 10.9 billion (CNY 97.9 billion) revenue, which accounts 3.9% of the city's total GDP.¹⁵

HERITAGE REVITALISATION

CHONGQING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

The history of the city originated from the Ba Kingdom in 11th century, and the Bayu culture dating back more than 3,000 years. These remain pronounced influences in Chongqing's culture. The Bayu legacy can be seen in dance and music, heritage sites (Dazu Rock Carvings, Huguang Guild Hall, Ciqikou) and events (Sichuan Opera, Chuanjiang Working Song, Shu Embroidery, Liang Ping bamboo curtain, and Rongchang pottery techniques).¹⁶

Bayu folk songs depict the mountain and river landscape of Chongqing, which has been an important element in the work songs of boatmen, and is listed as a cultural heritage of China.¹⁷

In 2021, Wulipo National Nature Reserve in Wushan county was given UNESCO World Heritage Site status. It is the third World Heritage in Chongqing along side the Dazu Rock Carvings and two sections of the South China Karst.¹⁸ Other heritage sites including Huguang Guild Hall and Ciqikou are also popular cultural destinations in Chongqing.



“

The successful inclusion of Wulipo as part of the World Heritage Site will enable us to take more measures to protect endangered species and maintain the integrity of the ecosystem in the northeast of Chongqing. ”

—Wang Shengbin, Deputy Director of the Chongqing Municipal Forestry Administration¹⁹

With an aim to facilitate knowledge and best practice exchange with global peers, in 2019 Chongqing hosted a twin event – International Intangible Cultural Heritage Town and Intangible Cultural Heritage International Design Week.²⁰

In 2021, a comprehensive revitalisation plan was launched to improve cultural infrastructure and boost the 1,700-year-old Ciqikou Ancient Town in Shapingba District. The project focuses on regenerating Hongyanhun Square, Tegang Steel Plant and one of the world's largest indoor theatres, Chongqing 1949 Grand Theatre.²¹

DIGITAL ECONOMY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

CHONGQING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

The rapid growth of Yongchuan Big Data Industrial Park makes it the largest big data park in Chongqing. This has attracted tech giants including Alibaba, Baidu, Ctrip, iQiyi and over 380 other companies to set up a base. The government's goal is to establish Yongchuan District as a leading base for content-production, focusing on film, animation, gaming, variety shows and short-videos.²²

In 2021, tech giant Netease signed a corporation agreement with the State Government to construct Netease Digital, Cultural and Creative Industrial Park in Nanan District. This is intended to deliver opportunities for fast-growth sectors such as gaming, e-sports, animation, e-commerce, big data and new media.²³

Digital technology is also influencing the cultural sector, which has accelerated due to the pandemic. In 2020, museums such as the Chongqing China Three Gorges Museum (CCTGM) and the Chongqing Natural History Museum, presented digital exhibitions with audio guides and virtual tours. Online visitors were offered access to more than 30 exhibitions and video resources through CCTGM's WeChat account.²⁴



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS-BUILDING

CHONGQING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

“ During heavy rainfall, the water is absorbed by porous bricks and by plants to prevent flooding. We collect and store most of it, then use the water for irrigation or cleaning...The roof of a huge exhibition hall features a special rainwater collection path. Before the water flows into a pipe, we use a special device to purify it for the first time before directly discharging it into wetland through the pipe...Surplus water is purified again and discharged into six reservoirs, [Chongqing Yuelai Investment Group] has been able to save GBP 67,000 (CNY 600,000) in water charges every year. ”

—Yang Ping, Deputy General Manager of Chongqing Yuelai Investment Group²⁵

Chongqing is one of 30 cities taking part in the nation-wide Sponge City Pilot Project, which was launched by China's State Council in 2015. The project is tasked to mitigate flooding risks and resolve water-related threats caused by rapid urbanisation and over-development on natural wetlands. The project aims to re-use 70 percent of rainwater in no less than 80 percent of the city's urban area by 2030.²⁶

Under this Project, Chongqing became the first city in China to establish a smart stormwater control system. The digital system enables the city to monitor, analyse and predict rainwater drainage, urban flooding risks and ecological impacts. The data collected also provides insights to alleviate Yangtze River pollution.



Thanks to the support of local ventures such as Chongqing Yuelai Investment Group, public-private initiatives focusing on resilient urban designs and smart sponge system are growing. Projects including Yuelai International Expo centre Sponge Reconstruction Project and the Yuelai Convention centre Park Reconstruction Project have made significant contributions to the circulation and re-use of water resources and the reduction of pollutants in the Yangtze River.

In 2018, Chongqing Yuelai Investment Group organised the Yuelai Public Art Exhibition entitled *Symbols and Realities – Art Lives in Green Mountains and Rivers*. This featured commissioned artworks and sculptures by established Chinese artists. The show honed in on the Government's push to increase quality of life through a balanced and sustainable approach to urban development. Particular interest was given to preserving the riverside ecosystem and the mutual dependency of the water system and urban ecology.²⁷



CULTURE AND RURAL REVIVAL

CHONGQING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

“ While facing the global challenge of the pandemic, rural revitalisation is a catalyst for economy and development. In the rural revitalisation field, Chongqing will set an example for Asia. ”

—Wen Tiejun, Executive Dean, Institute of Rural Reconstruction of China, Southwest University²⁸

Chongqing is a leading city in the research and practice of rural revitalisation, with interdisciplinary place-making initiatives driven by universities, scholars, private investors, SMEs and entrepreneurs and online media.

In 2021, Chongqing hosted the Rural Revitalisation and Culture & Tourism Industry Development Summit Forum – a programme to convene thinkers and practitioners across China. Three flagship programmes were announced during the conference, including the Rural Designers' Training Programme, Village Songs Programme and a project that will preserve oral histories. Chongqing government plans to cultivate 1,000 rural-based young designers, assist 1,000 villages to create their own songs, and collect 1,000 articles to document the history of rural culture and natural landscape.²⁹

Xiangxuetang, a WeChat account co-developed by Chongqing Daily with the Institute of Rural Reconstruction of China at Southwest University, is an online capacity-build-



ing platform that offers the rural communities online training, business consultation and knowledge exchange.

Cultural tourism in rural areas has contributed to improve livelihoods among rural communities in Chongqing thanks to a series of initiatives to transition traditional studios into cultural venues.³⁰ DIY workshops that feature traditional workmanship and crafts are popular among weekend visitors.

Yuanshan Youyao was transformed from a derelict ceramic kiln into a cultural centre by architect Tian Qi, where the public can learn and experience traditional pottery in a relaxing rural natural landscape.³¹

Yuanshan Youyao, 2017³²

A rural regeneration project to revive traditional pottery and draw in design-loving, urban visitors. Cultural and education programmes formed through exhibitions and DIY workshops were hosted.

Rongchang Ceramics Industrial Park.³³

The Park is dedicated to promote the traditional craftsmanship of ceramic-making and R&D in ceramics production. By 2021, the Park had attracted more than 70 ceramic enterprises, providing over 10,000 jobs and a total annual economic value of GBP 889 million (CNY 8 billion).



Zhao chen / Unsplash

CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Chongqing has contributed significantly to China's artistic development as it is home to some of the most influential art academies in the country. Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in Chongqing is regarded as a prime force shaping the contemporary art scene in China. The Institute has nurtured internationally-known contemporary artists, such as He Duolin, Zhang Xiaogang and Zhou Chunya.³⁴

The campus of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute has generated a cluster of artistic collectives, clusters and studio communes. Among these, Huxi Commune is an art space of two industrial buildings and 375 art studios. The commune plays a key role in fostering the early careers of young and emerging artists due to its favourably priced rents. The commune also functions as a venue for annual graduation showcases and artist solo exhibitions.³⁵

Chongqing also has an established staple of independent bookstores. The city is the birthplace and testing ground for self-financed bookstore brands including Jingdian, Xinshan, Nanzhishan, Himalaya and Shiguangli.

The recent growth of culturally engaged families, dubbed as 'mum groups' has contributed to a boom in activities and events that cater for this market – such as *Maybe International Children's Arts Festival*, co-organised by Chongqing Museum of Fine Arts and Chongqing's Yinzi Theatre.³⁶

“ We are at a critical junction where the education and spiritual development of children are receiving increasing attention. It is the optimal opportunity for family theatre to flourish. ”

—representatives of Chongqing Nan'an District
Culture and Tourism Development Committee³⁷

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

CHONGQING

Cultural City Profile
China

Sichuan Fine Arts Institute

Established in 1940, it is one of the four most prominent art academies in China. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Institute was a leader in handcraft arts. In the 1970s, it specialised in sculpture, especially the most famous group statues, *the Rent Collecting Courtyard*. In the 1980s the Institute focused on oil painting, such as SFAI's president Luo Zhongli's masterpiece *My Father*.

Huxi Commune, 2010³⁸

A 5,000m² art space, consisting of two depot-like buildings close to the campus of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. Designed and managed by the Faculty of the Institute, it includes more than 350 artist studios. Studio spaces with competitive rent are open to external applicants if they can pass the high standard of qualification. The commune hosts regular exhibitions, programmes and exchanges which are open and free to the public.

Huangjueping Graffiti Street³⁹

One of the largest sites of graffiti art in China and the world, Huangjueping is located near the Sichuan Fine Art Institute. Launched by Luo Zhongli, former president of Sichuan Fine Art Institute. The graffiti project involved more than 800 artists, using using 12.5 tonnes (27,558 lb) of paint and 30, 000 brushes of various types. A total of 37 buildings were covered with graffiti.

501 Art Park⁴⁰

Established in 2006, the 501 Art Park is one of the earliest hubs founded under Chongqing National Cultural Resource Operation and Management Ltd. Its convenient location neighbouring the Sichuan Art Academy makes it a popular hang-out for art students and emerging creatives.



ArtDepot⁴¹

ArtDepot is one of the first contemporary art galleries opened in Chongqing. Together with their Beijing space, the gallery explores the innovative practices of art and technology with a special focus on presenting digital art.⁴²

Changjiang Museum of Contemporary Art in Chongqing⁴³

The non-profit museum is located at the economic and cultural centre of the upper reach of Yangtze River. It is operated by a consultative team of contemporary art experts and scholars.⁴⁴

Three Gorges Museum, 1951⁴⁵

The museum is one of the city's landmark structures. It showcases the history, natural environment and cultural heritage of Chongqing and the Three Gorges area. Formerly the Southwest Museum, which was established in 1951, the museum has collected over 180,000 cultural relics, artefacts, paintings and calligraphies of Three Gorges and Yangtze River.

Long Museum Chongqing, 2016⁴⁶

The Long Museum Chongqing is located at the Guohua Financial Centre in Jiangbei District. Opened in 2016, it is the first satellite museum of the Shanghai Long Museum, founded by collector power-couple Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei. The Chongqing branch occupies the first three floors of a twin tower. It has three gallery spaces each focusing on Chinese traditional art, revolution-themed painting and contemporary art, respectively.

Hong Art Museum Chongqing

The Museum was launched for the inauguration ceremony of the China free trade area in Chongqing. It covers an area of 6,000m² comprising a warehouse, an artist's workshop and a conference room. It also works as an auction house and an exhibition gallery. It has a designated team that provide diversified services, including expertise, training, customisation and auction solutions for domestic and international cultural institutions.⁴⁷

Huaren Contemporary Art Museum

Huaren Contemporary Art Museum is a private cultural institution, founded in 1995 on the banks of the Baosheng River in the Yubei District. The Director of National Art Museum of China, Fan Di'an, played a



central role in its founding. The museum houses a diverse collection of paintings, sculptures, artistic installations and photography by well-known Chinese contemporary artists. Free admission to the main gallery (exhibition hall) and reading room is available every Saturday.⁴⁸

Guotai Art Centre⁴⁹

A 36,000m² art complex, formulated by a set of theatres, a music hall and the Chongqing Art Gallery.⁵⁰ Known for its architectural feature, the Art Gallery presents traditional Chinese painting, printmaking and sculptures. The building consists of an interwoven pattern of red beams that is inspired by Chopsticks and the traditional Chinese meal of hot pot.

Chongqing Chuanju Theatre

With a 60-year history, Chongqing Chuanju Theatre preserves and expands the tradition of Sichuan opera and its unique singing technique.⁵¹

Chongqing Grand Theatre, 2012⁵²

This performing arts venue located in central Chongqing was founded in 2012. The theatre is a regular touring venue for international productions such as operas, ballets, symphonies, musicals and other performances.

Chuanju Opera Theatre, 1955⁵³

One of the leading performing art theatres in China, it grew out of Chongqing Experimental Chuan Opera Theatre (established in 1951). The theatre has toured in Poland, former German Democratic Republic, former Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Singapore and Hong Kong.

303 Theatre Troupe, 2009⁵⁴

A leading drama theatre organised by a group of drama enthusiasts. Formerly known as 303 drama club founded by artistic director Yuan Ye in 2008, the theatre cultivates a range of creative stage dramas and has hosted various programmes including cultural salons, master classes, training programmes for young directors as well as theatre festivals. The theatre has expanded its reach to Changsha, the capital of Hunan province, with 303 Sunshine Theatre. The troupe is a dynamic driver of the independent theatre scene in China. The Chongqing branch has organised and hosted international exchange festivals such as the Dutch Arts Festival.

⁵⁴ WeChat ID: Drama303

CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

CHONGQING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

As a 'legacy industrial city' once dominated by steel manufacturing and infrastructure construction, Chongqing has relied on urban regeneration and place-making projects to revitalise its industrial heritage. A plethora of derelict factories and plants have been turned into major creative and cultural destinations.

The transformation of Chongqing Asbestos Factory into an industrial-style creative hub (Yiduchuang Cultural and Creative Park) is one fine example. Established in 1940, the factory was a significant manufacturing engine in China with products sold to more than 30 countries and regions overseas. The factory was preserved in 2014 and turned a creative park, now home to a variety of art spaces, galleries, crafts workshops, graffiti and murals, café and boutique shops.⁵⁵

“

We wanted to create a dynamic composition with layered edges and to allow the existing features of the old factory to sometimes play a foreground...Another fundamental principle was to create a careful reframing of new and old features to allow visitors to build up the sense of the old factory and provide opportunities for them to encounter the old features in multiple ways. ”

—Jamie Wallace, Co-founder of Wallace Liu, architect of
The Chongqing Iron and Steel Factory⁵⁶

The Chongqing Iron and Steel Factory, 2019⁵⁷

The factory shut down in 2011. The remaining buildings were revitalised and transformed into Chongqing Industrial Museum designed by architect Wallace Liu, which opened in 2019.

Beicang Cultural & Creative Quarter, 2014⁵⁸

Renovated from a former textile warehouse, the quarter consists of a public library, a leisure and business centre and an office building. Retaining the industrial architectural features of the 1950s and 1960s, the complex is home to art spaces, mini-theatres, live houses and cafés.



TESTBED2, 2011⁵⁹

Inspired by the London-based hub TestBed, TESTBED2 has one of the most vibrant cultural programmes in Chongqing and has become a popular site for film productions. It is composed of four art studios, an art centre, five exhibition and event halls, and a mix of restaurants and creative shops.

816 Nuclear Plant⁶⁰

Located in a remote mountain of Fuling District, the 816 Nuclear Plant was once a secret underground military base constructed in 1966, and now a municipal heritage site, constructed in 1966. The underground nuclear reactor hall was then the world's largest artificial cave 21km long and 79.6 metres high.

N18LOFT⁶¹

A former printing plant established in 1950, the site has been transformed into a hub of cafés, boutique hotels, and clubs as well as cultural parks.

Organhaus⁶²

Organhaus Art Space is an independent art organisation formed by a collective of artists and curators. Organhaus, located within 501 Art Park, has a use superscript for the m² studio and exhibition space as well as accommodation designed for international residency programmes. Its programmes focus on experimental and new media art.

Independent & Image Art Space⁶³

Founded in 2008 and dedicated to Chinese and international contemporary art, Independent & Image Art Space is located in 501 Art Base. It hosts regular solo and group exhibitions as well as international cultural exchange, lectures, seminars and workshops.



niukai369 / Unsplash

Nuts Live House⁶⁴

Nuts Live House is one of the longest established modern music venues in Shapingba District. Situated in a commuter area for students, it is a gathering hub for solo artists, bands and DJs from across China and abroad.

Jingdian Bookstore, 1998⁶⁵

This is the first independent bookstore in Chongqing, founded by businessman Yang Yi as a social enterprise to promote reading culture. The bookstore has a strict standard for their selection of books, claiming to offer the readers best quality literature. Jingdian Bookstore hosts over 100 cultural events per year including book launches and talks by renowned artists, authors and critics.



Xinshan Bookstore, 2018⁶⁶

This independent bookstore is a mixed-use venue, offering a selection of coffee, music and books appealing to young cultural consumers.

Mil Gotas Bookstore⁶⁷

The first Spanish bookstore in China, Mil Gotas features Latin American culture and has a collection of more than 1,000 volumes, including original Latin American books, Chinese translations and Spanish translations of Chinese classics. The bookstore acts as a platform for cultural exchange and communication between Latin America and Chongqing.⁶⁸

Gutenberg Xinghan Bookstore, 2020⁶⁹

The Bookstore celebrates ‘the pleasure in reading’. The interior of the space is designed to resemble a spaceship landing on a foreign planet, encouraging exploration and curiosity.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

CHONGQING

Cultural City Profile
China

Pang Maokun⁷⁰

A Chinese contemporary artist and president of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. Pang Maokun was born in Chongqing in 1963, he studied in Affiliated Senior High School of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute from 1978 to 1981 and the Oil Painting Department of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute from 1981 to 1988.

Qingyang Li⁷¹

Qingyan is a craftsman, specialising in intangible Southern-style horned bow. He is also a well-known traditional bow master. His original works and replicas of historical horn bows are collected by many museums internationally. On average, it takes him 3 years to make a bow, involving more than 280 hand-made processes.

Ni Kun⁷²

Ni Kun is the co-founder of Organhaus. The hub runs an international residency and programmes in experimental and multi-media art.

Zhou Yaxin⁷³

CEO of TESTBED2, Zhou Yaxin is a polymath entrepreneur in property development, commercial design and art exhibition.⁷⁴

Yang Yi⁷⁵

Founder of Jingdian Bookstore, Yang Yi was a successful entrepreneur before launching his own bookstore brand. He is passionate about presenting innovative





literature and connecting writers and artists to the public via cultural programmes.

GO\$H⁷⁶

An independent label that produces some of the most popular hip pop artists in southwest China. Its success, coupled with variety TV and rap competitions, has set a trend in hip pop music with local dialects.⁷⁷

Yuan Ye⁷⁸

Artistic director and founder of the 303 Theatre Troupe. Yuan Ye is also the founding organiser of Chongqing Nanbin International Drama Festival. He has directed productions and led his team to festivals worldwide.



FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

CHONGQING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Chongqing Youth Film Festival, 2014⁷⁹

An annual festival dedicated to supporting young filmmakers, film start-ups and emerging talent, with screenings, forums and business match-making sessions for emerging talent and filmmakers.

Chongqing Nanbin International Drama Festival

The first international theatre festival in Chongqing, located in Danzishi Old Street on Nanbin Road. In 2020 it presented over 300 performances, 22 troupes and 228 carnivals in 3 days from artists and teams from over eight countries.⁸⁰ Most of its programmes are free to the public. It attracted an estimated 400,000 people in 2020.⁸¹ The organisers embrace international collaboration to present productions and performances with a wide appeal for families and children.

Maybe International Children's Arts Festival, 2017⁸²

Co-organised by Chongqing Museum of Fine Arts and Chongqing's Yinzi Theatre, the festival features a series of events including exhibitions, multimedia animation installations, dance and theatre performances, workshops and lectures.

Aurora Music Festival, 2020⁸³

Taking place in the Wuling Mountain in Fuling District, the summer festival features internet-famous musicians, local comedy teams, multi-media installations and laser light shows.

Yangtze River Art Week, 2021⁸⁴

The Art Week features a comprehensive line-up of cultural and art programmes covering music performances, film screenings, art exhibitions, forums and experiential workshops. With the ambition to connect the cultural communities across Chongqing and Chengdu, the 2021 edition invited art and design professionals from China and abroad to share best practices in the creative industries, cultural tourism, urban / rural revitalisation as well as innovative and sustainable development.

Festival of Indie Coffee, 2021⁸⁵

The event gathers over 40 boutique coffee brands across the country, providing the public a diverse range of programmes around coffee culture and connoisseurship.

CHÉNG DŪ

成都

CHINA

Cultural City Profile

Breeding / unsplash



yinn luon / Unsplash



lawrence macaron / unsplash



Peter Li / Unsplash

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INTRODUCING CHENGDU

CHENGDU
—
Cultural City Profile
China

Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan province in China. The city's GDP of GBP 189 billion (CNY 1.7 trillion) in 2020 makes it the seventh wealthiest city in China¹ and Chengdu is rapidly ascending the ranks of fast-growing “new first-tier” cities.²

Although a megacity with a population of over 20 million people, Chengdu is perhaps surprisingly one of the most livable cities in China, with a strong strategic commitment to sustainability. Its cityscape is dotted with parklands, greenbelts and cycling trails. Chengdu is also ranked as one of the most competitive cities in terms of R&D prospects and ability to attract talent – thanks to its affordability, livability and top-quality universities.³

The city is one of four cities (along with Xi'an, Chongqing and Kunming) located within the new West China Strategic Diamond Economic Zone. This makes Chengdu a critical gateway for the southwest region and an important business centre for China's Belt and Road Initiative.

With a supportive local government, the city positions the creative and knowledge economy at the heart of its future growth, with an emphasis on six connected elements – digital, intelligence, green, creative, mobile and shared economies.⁴

Chengdu's lifestyle, cultural inclusivity as well as a lower cost of living make it a popular destination for domestic and international immigrants, particularly among young creative talent.

“ Chengdu is suddenly the place everyone wants to visit... While Chengdu is witnessing hi-tech start-ups moving in with a growing portfolio of high-end accommodation boutiques, galleries and shopping centres launching, the laid-back atmosphere of taking tea and sitting in parklands remains. As such, Chengdu offers the perfect combination for a city stay. ”

—Robin Chiang, Kayak's country head for Asia Pacific⁵



³ The Economist Intelligence Unit, Sep. 2021. China's emerging city rankings 2021: Unpacking opportunities under the 14th Five-Year Plan.

CHENGDU IN NUMBERS

CHENGDU

Cultural City Profile
China



175

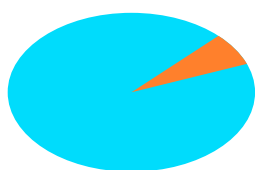
As a rising hub for gaming industries, Chengdu has over 175 e-sports companies.



The city is one of four cities (along with Xi'an, Chongqing and Kunming) located within the new West China Strategic Diamond Economic Zone.



In 2020, 314 historical buildings were approved for inclusion in the city-wide conservation scheme.



201
MILLION

In 2020, the revenue of creative industries reached GBP 201 million (CNY 180.5 billion), accounting for over 10% of the city's GDP.

45% OF CITIZENS'
DAILY EXPENDITURE

Chengdu's nighttime economy accounts for 45% of citizens' daily expenditure, which is one of the highest in the country.



GDP
189 BILLION

GBP 189 billion (CNY 1.7 trillion) in 2020 makes it the seventh wealthiest city in the country.

250 FORTUNE
500 COMPANIES
20K+ TECHNOLOGY
START-UPS

Chengdu has four industrial zones with the presence of over 250 Fortune 500 companies as well as 20K+ technology start-ups.



49
UNIVERSITIES
AND COLLEGES

Home to 49 universities and colleges, the city is also a popular destination for students and families pursuing better education.



20
MILLION

A megacity with a population of over 20 million people, Chengdu is one of the most liveable cities in China.

Monetary value in the report is converted from local currency CNY to GBP for readers' convenience at a fixed exchange rate of GBPE1=CNY¥9.

CONTEXT

Located in the middle of Sichuan Province, Chengdu sits on the west of the Sichuan Basin and at the heart of the Chengdu Plains. The majority of the population of Chengdu is Han Chinese. Other ethnic groups located in the region include Tibetan, Qiang, Yi, and Nakhi. Bordering Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture to the northwest, the city has over 30,000 Tibetans as permanent residents and an additional 200,000 as a 'floating population'.

“ Chengdu is the largest and most internationalised metropolis within the South-west region of China. It is vibrant and welcoming as a commercial hub. As a cultural centre, the city intermixes the traditional, modern and contemporary. People from Chengdu are fun-loving. We enjoy food, life and cultural experiences – curious and fearless, we have a nose for innovation and newness. ”

—Valerie Wang Conghui, Director of Zhi Art Museum⁶



HERITAGE LEGACY

CHENGDU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Chengdu is distinctive and diverse in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The history of the city can be traced back to the Baodun culture, over 4,500 years ago.⁷ The Sanxingdui and Jiasha sites are unique sites of the Bronze Civilisation, characteristic of the ancient Shu State (316 BC).

Chengdu joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in 2010 and has the title of UNESCO City of Gastronomy. It has two UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites, Mount Qingcheng and the Dujiangyan Irrigation System; and one UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site, the Giant Panda Sanctuaries. These sites coupled with a plethora of heritage sites in the city centre including Kuanzhai Alley, Wenshu Temple and Daci Temple, are the most popular cultural destinations in the country.

Chengdu also boasts a wealth of intangible cultural heritage assets, such as handicrafts (Sichuan embroidery, Sichuan brocade, bamboo weaving, lacquer art), specialised performing techniques in Sichuan Opera (spitting fire, changing faces) and folk festivals, such as the Dujiangyan Water-releasing Festival.

Reflected in the government's 'Traditional Technology Revitalisation Implementation Plan' in 2018, heritage conservation and revitalisation has since become a strong focus of Chengdu urban redevelopment. The policy aims to:

- revitalise traditional craft of Sichuan,
- develop a network of traditional craft incubators and creative clusters,
- cultivate high-quality traditional craft artisans,
- improve practitioners' financial standing, specifically among rural areas.

In 2020, 314 historical buildings were approved for inclusion in the city-wide conservation scheme. Heritage buildings are being renovated and transformed into mixed-use cultural sites, including malls, event venues, cultural clusters, traditional Chinese medical clinics and boutique guest houses.⁸

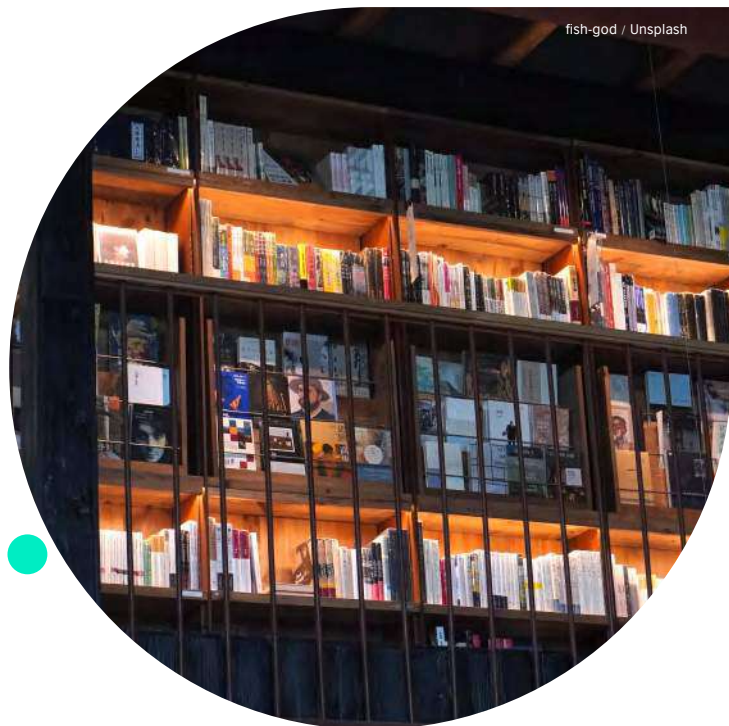
This approach to heritage revitalisation serves as the backdrop for international collaborations, including the State Council-sanctioned International Festival of Intangible Cultural Heritage Festival, co-hosted by Chengdu and UNESCO. Taking place every two years, the festival explores best practices in the preservation and revitalisation of intangible cultural heritage through a rich programme of seminars, exhibitions, performances, presentations, and a trade fair.⁹ The eighth edition was scheduled to take place in September 2021.¹⁰

6 Interview by research team

9 P.47, https://chinanow.britishcouncil.cn/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Arts-and-Cultural-Sector-Guide-in-China_2020-British-Council.pdf

Museums and heritage sites are increasingly turning to interactive and inclusive approaches to better attract a growing population of culture-loving young people. For example:

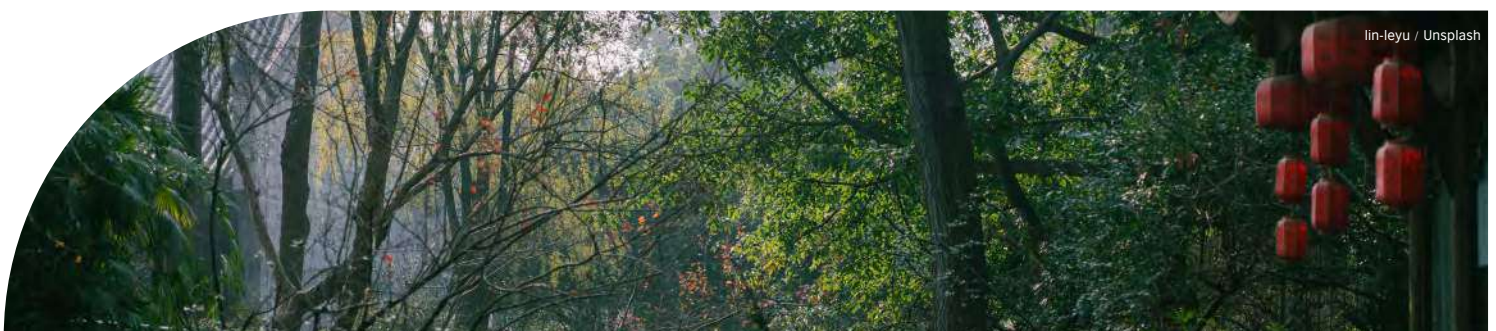
- Cultural institutions such as Sanxingdui Museum and Chengdu Museum have rejuvenated their programmes by providing digital guided tours, podcasts, 4D cinemas and heritage-themed merchandise.
- Traditional cultural events such as Hanfu Festival and Qixi Festival by the Du Fu Thatched Cottage are also gaining new audiences.
- Jinsha Site Museum has launched sign-language workshops on WeChat, offering hearing-impaired followers opportunities to engage with the museum.



Sanxingdui Museum, 1997¹¹

Located 40km to the north of Chengdu, the museum exhibits significant cultural relics of the Sanxingdui ruins site. One of the most important archaeological finds of the 20th century, Sanxingdui revealed the civilisation of the ancient Shu State. New discoveries found at the site in March 2021 have given the museum a high profile as a centre for Bronze Age archeology.

The most popular museum in the culture and heritage field in 2021, Sanxingdui Museum has gained huge popularity online and offline for its creative and engaging initiatives following the latest archaeological discoveries. This includes a series of Sanxingdui figure-inspired products such as ice cream, blind box toys and make-up. It also includes an animated short co-produced by the museum, Sichuan Antique Archaeology Academy and Sichuan Daily. In addition, there have been cross-over collaborations with the game Honor of Kings, coffee brand Seesaw and make-up brand INSBAHA.¹⁵



Jinsha Site Museum, 2007¹²

The Jinsha site was unearthed in February 2001 in Chengdu. It was the capital of the ancient Shu State, the centre of an ancient civilisation in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River from the 12th century B.C. to the 7th century B.C.

Du Fu Thatched Cottage

A park with a museum in honour of the Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu. The 'thatched cottage' period marked the peak of Du's creativity, during which he wrote 240 poems. Regular programming such as cosplay events are held to appeal to younger audiences.

Kuanzhai Alley¹³

Kuanzhai Alley is also known as Wide and Narrow Alleys. Maintaining its original look for hundreds of years, Kuanzhai Alley has been attracting millions of tourists to its ancient Qing style of quadrangle courtyards.

Chengdu Museum, 2016¹⁴

The largest comprehensive museum in Chengdu. There are nearly 200,000 artefacts spanning the Neolithic period to the Republic of China.



CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

“ Chengdu isn't as frenetic as the coastal cities; its slowness allows plenty of time for creativity. ”

– Ge Wei, a prominent Chengdu-based painter²¹

Launched in 2018, the “Three Cities and Three Capitals” plan aims to build the city into a global hub for culture, creative industries, tourism and sports, by leveraging its reputation as the international capital of gastronomy, music, and exhibitions & conventions. To achieve these goals, the municipal government has already:

- constructed a creative industrial park of 8.8 million m².
- created 30,000 seating capacity for indoor musical performance venues, estimated at a cost of GBP 6 billion (CNY 57 billion).
- held over 1,000 exhibitions and conferences, generating revenue of GBP 1.7 billion (CNY 15 billion).

In 2020, the revenue of creative industries reached RMB180.5 billion in comparison to GBP 13 billion (CNY 117.2 billion) in 2018, accounting for over 10% of the city's GDP.¹⁶

The city has a track record of hosting international events including World Architecture Festival China and Chengdu International Sister Cities Youth Music Festival. The city will be hosting the World University Games in 2022.¹⁷

The World Cultural Capitals Tianfu Symposium, organised by the municipal government and Chengdu Media Group in 2019, launched an international collaboration campaign with the support of Rotterdam Museum, Tate Modern, Dunhuang Academy China, Liangzhu Museum (Research Institute) and Wu Hou Shrine of Chengdu.¹⁸

In 2018, Mao Jihong Arts Foundation in collaboration with Centre Pompidou presented the exhibition *Cosmopolis #1.5: Enlarged Intelligence*, which explored the correlations between ecological intelligence, technology and social values.¹⁹

ARTS +iINNOVATION (A+i) located in the City University of Hong Kong Chengdu Research Institute (CityUCRI) is a collaboration with City University of Hong Kong. The institute aims to provide bilateral resources in the research, training and incubation of creative media and digital industries.²⁰

MEDIA ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES

CHENGDU

Cultural City Profile
China

“ Chengdu has very comprehensive policies and concrete measures on supporting the development of ‘e-sports+’ industries. Chengdu has the culture and a good foundation for nurturing the e-sports industry. ”

– Zhang Yijia, General Manager of TiMi Studio, Tencent and President of Honor of Kings.²²

Chengdu is an emerging tech and innovation centre that has attracted international and Chinese tech companies including IBM, SAP, Huawei and Tencent to set up base. Favourable policies around household registration (hukou) and funds for start-ups are also major factors attracting young talent and scholars from across China and overseas. The fast-speed 5G networks and city-wide hotspots enable the R&D and testing of new technological designs and applications, aiding to a gradual clustering of 5G and smart ecosystems.²³ Chengdu has four industrial zones with the presence of over 250 Fortune 500 companies as well as 20,000 technology start-ups.²⁴

Government investment and private funding from tech giants are the primary driver of the city’s creative economy development. The GBP 1.1 billion (CNY 10 billion) Chengdu Culture and Creativity Industry Development Investment Fund was set up in 2018 to support the creative economy, benefiting subsectors from media, film and television, to design, sports, tourism, arts, music, exhibitions & conventions, and the advertising industry.²⁵

To accelerate the development of cultural and creative sectors, incubation initiatives, investment funds as well as creative spaces were provided to start-ups and SMEs. As an example, the Chengdu Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone has set an investment fund of GBP 1.1 billion (CNY 10 billion) as post-pandemic relief for the creative industries.²⁶



As a rising hub for gaming industries, Chengdu has 177 e-sports companies and the number of e-sports training halls, clubs and competition events is only behind Shanghai. In total, the city’s e-sports industry contributed GBP 17 billion (CNY 155 billion) in 2020. Top game companies include Tencent’s TiMi Studio, Perfect World Entertainment, Ubisoft and Yoozoo Games.²⁷

In 2020, Tencent, one of the largest internet companies in China, announced an investment and cooperation memorandum with Chengdu High-tech Zone (CDHT). A total investment of GBP 556 million (CNY 5 billion) will be devoted to the development of new cultural and creative businesses such as games, e-sports, and animation. Priority will be given to incubate an attractive business environment across the gaming and digital value chain to enable IP industries, gaming and animation services, electronic sports contest operations, live streaming and rebroadcasting.²⁸

The School of Huawei Medical Intelligence ICT – the first of its kind in China – was set up at Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in 2020. This school-enterprise-academy collaboration involves R&D in communication and information technology, training and talent cultivation and ambitiously aiming to build the Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine as a “National Model University of Smart Campus”.²⁹

Corporate-sponsored creative parks by established and emerging brands, such as Toutiao, Lifang Group, Perfect World Entertainment, USUN Home, and Coco Carton will also be launched in Chengdu.³⁰



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND LIVEABLE CITY

CHENGDU

Cultural City Profile
China

“ Chengdu is one of the most advanced cities in China – it’s one of those that are making environmental protection, public space and quality of life as its agenda. ”
– Salvatore Fundaro, Urban planning and design branch, UN Human Settlements Programme, Creative industry and economy³¹

Sustainability is at the core of Chengdu’s urban development. It highlights the principle of ‘ecological civilisation’ seeking a balance between environmental preservation, economic growth, and the improvement of living quality.

- In 2018, the government launched a strategy to transform Chengdu into a park city with the world’s largest network of routes and paths for pedestrians and cyclists by 2050.
- In 2020, the completion of the Ecological Ring Zone converted one-third of the usable land in the urban area of Chengdu into green spaces.
- Efforts are also devoted to preserve rural outskirts from over-development. As a part of the preservation initiative, Linpan is a special village unit widely seen across the Chengdu plain. Acting as the foundation of Chengdu’s rural settlement, each linpan also serves the function of a unique socio-economic ecosystem.³² It is forecasted that by 2022, about 1,000 farming villages, also known as Linpan, will be preserved.
- The Tianfu Greenway is designed to extend 16,900km of greenbelt that links up city-wide parks, gardens and protected ecological zones. Approximately 1,585 km was completed in 2018.
- The Longquan City Forest Park in Chengdu will be among the world’s largest, spanning an area of 1,275 km², when completed in 2035.



Luobing / Unsplash

Chengdu has been encouraging a low-carbon system in consumption and transport, the development of clean and renewable energy, as well as intelligent and green infrastructures, products and services.³⁴ In addition, a series of public-engaging green architecture includes The Loop of Wisdom Museum & Reception Centre designed by Powerhouse Company, which has a rooftop pedestrian trail (completed in 2020).³⁵

Urban farms are also gaining traction in Chengdu. Ad hoc gardens created by local residents are prevalent between buildings and on rooftops.³⁶

“The goal is that every 300 metres you see green...you open a window, you see green, you see a park...”
– Chen Lan, an expert in urban design and planning at Sichuan University³³



zhao chen / Unsplash

NIGHTLIFE AND UNDERGROUND MUSIC

CHENGDU

Cultural City Profile
China

“ The city is a treasure trove filled with the chemistry brought by a hybridity between the ancient, the modern, and the contemporary. There is an established legacy and audience participation in music, painting and performing arts. ”

–Valerie Wang Conghui, Director of Zhi Art Museum³⁷

Chengdu is well known for its citizens' passion for *shuǎ* – a leisurely and playful lifestyle that celebrates 'good times, good food and good company'.³⁸ Such a fun-seeking and chilled attitude, coupled with a governmental push to develop the nighttime economy, gives the city a real buzz late into the evening.

The 2019 policy “Implementation Guidance from the General Office of the Chengdu Municipal People's Government on the Development of the City's Nighttime Economy to Promote the Upgrading of Consumption” outlines government efforts to improve public services at night and enhance the business environment for the nighttime economy.

In 2019, Chengdu's nighttime economy accounted for 45% of citizens' daily expenditure, which is one of the highest in the country.³⁹ Revenue generated in the evening on average accounts for 60% of the total revenue of the restaurants in the city.

To meet the demands of young families, Chengdu has introduced family-friendly activities at night, such as nighttime zoos, circuses, theme parks, children's restaurants, children's cinemas, picture book galleries and other parent-child projects. In addition, the city has encouraged museums, botanical gardens, bookstores and communities to organise activities such as night-time excursions, sleepovers, book clubs and outdoor camping. Nighttime tours at Jinli ancient street are becoming increasingly popular for families and young adults to savour local snacks and enjoy the Hanfu night parade with a heritage backdrop.

Chengdu has a vibrant underground music scene and led the way for DJing and other independent production in China. Music genres from techno to house, breaks, avant-garde, bass, afrobeat, disco and funk are all commonly heard on the city's dancefloors. This has also shaped Chengdu into a hub for electronic music and a must-visit destination for electronic music lovers across the country.

Popular nightlife destinations such as TAG, Funkytown, Cue Club, GUANXI and AXIS are leading the city's underground and indie music scene. During the Covid-19 travel restriction in 2020, nightclubs such as TAG put a spotlight on China-based music talent. The club organised week-long events presenting 50 Chinese DJs and creators. Each event began at 10pm and went through the night to 8am. The series finale culminated with a 36-hour-long musical celebration.⁴⁰

For China's rising consumption of hip hop and rap music, Chengdu is ranked sixth, with a loyal audience under 30 years old.⁴¹

37. Interview by research team

39 P.42 http://bop.co.uk/assets/others/BOP_Night_time_Economy_Report_040221.pdf

FASHIONABLE CITY AND ONLINE ECONOMY

CHENGDU

Cultural City Profile
China

Chengdu is among the top three cities in China for homegrown brands. The large, young and fashion-forward consumer base increasingly drives the country's contemporary taste for fashion and lifestyle. The city has ascended as a hub that draws in domestic creative talent from regional areas like Kunming, Yunnan and Gansu.

Mixed-offer venues doubling up as bookstores, cafés and boutique ateliers often display a hybrid selection of homegrown brands with international couture.⁴² Lead shopping malls in the city such as Chengdu IFS and Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li also focus on crafting new campaigns to attract the Gen Zers. These efforts stem from offline retail to incorporate online strategies that work with internet-famous brands and limited-edition merchandise including smart gadgets and ACGN toys. Digital activations that involve pop-culture livestreaming influencers and AR-powered interactive programmes also engage the city's young consumers.⁴³

CULTURE AND INCLUSIVITY

“It's the lifestyle here—people don't work so hard, they're outdoors all the time...People look at you here, they smile and they don't care. I see many gay Chinese couples walking down by the river, hand in hand, and I've never seen that in Beijing, Shanghai, or even in Hong Kong.”
— Kurt Macher, the openly gay general manager of the Temple House⁴⁴

Chengdu enjoys its reputation for high social tolerance. It is characterised by an open-minded attitude which creates a relatively welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ culture. The first widely-reported gay marriage in China took place in Chengdu in 2010.

In 2018, over 100 locals and expats gathered at Temple House to celebrate the marriage of an American entrepreneur and a Sichuan-born lawyer. An additional 150,000 people watched the service live-streamed by an LGBTQ+ activist.⁴⁵ LGBTQ+ organisations also regularly host events in the city to support these communities.



CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Chengdu is the cultural, educational and technological centre of southwest China. A vibrant cultural scene has expanded from the fast-growing cultural infrastructure, spanning public and private museums, galleries and theatres and a batch of new cultural venues, such as the New Century City Art Centre - designed by Zaha Hadid and set to open in 2021.

Chengdu is also home to a cluster of China's world-class museums and galleries, including the Museum of Contemporary Art Chengdu, A4 Art Museum and A Thousand Plateaus Art Space – each with an established legacy of vibrant programmes and an international footprint. Art Chengdu art fair and the newly opened Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum further contribute to the booming arts scene.

International Art Island – a GBP 11 billion (CNY 100 billion) investment project, underway at Tianfu New Area, announced in 2021 by Hong Kong's Sunwah Group conglomerate, will see the establishment of a UCCA Chengdu offshoot, a concert hall for the China Philharmonic Orchestra and a museum dedicated to the sculptor Ye Yushan.⁴⁶

Visual Arts

Luxelakes A4 Art Museum, 2008⁴⁷

Luxelakes A4 Art Museum is a non-profit located in Chengdu's Luxelakes Eco-City. The museum campus is housed in a structure designed by American architect Antoine Predock. Built facing the lake, the art centre blends with the surrounding red sandstone and serves as an architectural landmark of the Tianfu New Area. The museum focuses on Chengdu's water-based culture through a portfolio of programmes ranging across arts, architecture and new media technologies.

Zhi Art Museum, 2018⁴⁸

Designed by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, the museum blends in with the surrounding scenery based on the eastern philosophy of learning from nature. The private museum explores global contemporary art and its conversation with eastern aesthetics.

A Thousand Plateaus Art Space, 2007⁴⁹

A leading gallery in Chengdu committing to presenting and promoting China's contemporary art, the gallery has an exhibition hall and a screening room. It is a regular of regional and international art fairs.

Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum, 2019⁵⁰

As China's first photography-themed park, the museum opened in 2019 and is devoted to contemporary photography and image making.

Loop of Wisdom Technology Museum and Reception Centre, 2020⁵¹

Designed by Powerhouse Company, the museum introduces a recreational walking and running path along the top of its loop structure. The rooftop walkway measures 698m around and rises 25m above ground level access, offering panoramic views of the surrounding landscape and distant mountains.

New Century City Art Centre⁵²

Designed by Zaha Hadid and set to open in 2021, this is a regional art and music centre and new cultural landmark. It features world class arts, performances and zones for leisure time activities. The complex houses three auditoria, an art museum, an exhibition centre, an educational centre, bars, restaurants and shopping areas.

Unicorn Island⁵³

Unicorn Island is a planned development of office buildings and landscaping designed to attract and foster technology companies with valuations above GBP 752 million (USD 1 billion). Designed by Zaha Hadid's studio, the buildings are under construction.

UCCA Chengdu, 2024⁵⁴

The Beijing Contemporary Art Centre has announced its expansion to Chengdu. It will be a part of the International Art Island, at the new cultural hub in Tianfu New Area, under development by Hong Kong Sunwah Group conglomerate.⁵⁵

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION AND RESEARCH FACILITIES

Home to 49 universities and colleges, the city is a popular destination for students and families, producing over 140,000 graduates in 2010.⁵⁶ Top universities of China include Sichuan University, University of Electronic Science and Technology, Southwestern University of Finance and Economics as well as Sichuan Conservatory of Music, one of the top music schools in China.

Sichuan University⁵⁷

It is one of China's top universities and among the oldest institutions of higher education in China. The history of Sichuan University dates back to the Sichuan Chinese and Western School founded by Lu Chuanlin, Governor of Sichuan in 1896 on the orders of Emperor Guangxu. The current university came from the merger of three institutions in 1994: the former Sichuan University, the Chengdu University of Science and Technology (CUST) and the West China University of Medical Sciences (WCUMS).

Sichuan Conservatory of Music⁵⁸

One of the top interdisciplinary music institutions in China. Renowned graduates include pianist Li Yundi and Chengdu-born violinists Ning Feng and Hu Kun.

The Institute of Urban Agriculture (IUA)⁵⁹

One of the 34 national institutes within the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) and an important supporting unit of the National Agricultural Science & Technology Centre (NASC). IUA consists of over 100,000m² of dedicated lab and office spaces, totaling an investment of over RMB100 million to provide a top-notch research environment in urban agricultural sciences.

Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding⁶⁰

Founded in 1987, the base, is a non-profit research and breeding facility for giant pandas and other rare animals. It offers regular educational programmes including tours, talks and workshops on wildlife conservation.



SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Blue Sheep Crafts and Gifts⁶¹

A social enterprise that creates opportunities for some of the most economically disadvantaged. Blue Sheep Crafts and Gifts provides employment opportunities to its collaborators – often those affected by disability, disease, disaster and/or poverty. The organisation provides training in everyday, widely-accessible technology and resources to make marketable products. It currently buys directly from over 35 small co-operatives and traders, totaling 600 producers. All profits are devoted back into the cause to help those in need to become self-sufficient.

Chengdu Lacquerware Factory⁶²

The Factory, established in 1954, is dedicated to preserving and revitalising the traditional lacquer art and techniques from the ancient Shu State, which was enlisted in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2006. Chengdu lacquerware requires about one hundred processes including lacquer kneading, lacquer painting, decorating and polishing.⁶³ The Factory runs a residency programme and hosts regular knowledge exchanges with its international peers.

“At the moment, the Factory...has allocated some resources to international exchange. A residency programme was launched in 2018, inviting seven artists and designers from the US, Japan, Europe and Hong Kong to discuss the materials, skills and theories...The Factory hopes to identify further opportunities through international exchange.”

– Yuefeng Wang. CEO, Chengdu Lacquerware Factory⁶⁴



64 P.41, https://chinanow.britishcouncil.cn/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Arts-and-Cultural-Sector-Guide-in-China_2020-British-Council.pdf

CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

CHENGDU

Cultural City Profile
China

Chengdu is forging strong cultural and art communities through a booming subculture driven by a proliferation of creative spaces, clusters and collectives. Over the past few years, there has been a revived public enthusiasm for craft culture following a rapid opening up of previously inaccessible or dilapidated urban sites to serve as public spaces and exhibition venues for arts and design. Among these, Chaihuo Maker-space has set an example with its training programme for makers and designer, as well as other DIY workshops for the public.⁶⁵

Chengdu is also known as the ‘bookstore capital’ – where bookstore visits have become trendy. Bookstores are anchors for cultural programming. The venues often provide mixed services such as cafés and designer goods. In 2018, Chengdu had more than 3,000 bookstores – one of the highest in the nation only behind the likes of Beijing and Shanghai.⁶⁶

“ The city is culturally open and rarely rejects creative ideas...Chengdu artists can therefore stay true to themselves in their creative pursuits. ”
– Lan Qingwei, former executive director and curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Chengdu⁶⁷



Fang Suo Commune⁶⁸

Fang Suo translates into ‘place and direction’ in English. With a national footprint, it positions itself as a public cultural space that focuses on literature, lifestyle, fashion, and visual culture. The Chengdu shop has a café and an exhibition space for showcases, talks and lectures. A series of cultural programmes were hosted about traditional crafts, sustainability and innovation in fashion design, to name a few.

Almost Four, 2018⁶⁹

Almost Four started from a humble origin of a family-run tailor shop and was transformed into an artist-run space with a residency programme. It is dedicated to place-making and brings contemporary arts into unconventional settings. The project was initiated by an artist collective:



Huang Jiao, Xiang Zheng, and Ma Kun. The space has a small kitchen and an art studio. Despite limited funding, the team proactively connects its resident artists with local resources ranging from peer groups and fellow artists to cultural institutions. The space had hosted German artist Fabian Hammerl and continues to welcome artists, scholars, curators and art workers to stay and work on projects.

ALLAB Art Centre, 2015⁷¹

An old factory conversion, it is now an experimental space specialising in research and practices in place-making that combine urban development, cultural studies, education and public engagement. It hosts exhibitions, events, workshops and interdisciplinary happenings.

Chengdu Makerfun⁷²

The first makerspace created in Chengdu, Makerfun has deep roots in the city's cultural landscape and hosts upskilling programmes. It also operates an incubator for hardware startups.

White Night⁷³

A cultural landmark in Chengdu and one of the most influential hubs in China, White Night is a teahouse, bar and culture salon. Owned by Zhai Yongming, one of the most important female poets and writers in China, White Night is a place where writers, artists, critics, academics and art enthusiasts gather. It also has an art gallery devoted to young artists and has hosted a wide array of interdisciplinary cultural events.



NU Space⁷⁴

NU Space is a performance venue. With a humble origin from a narrow corner in a coffee shop, it has up-sized to a 450-capacity space on Kuixinglou Road. It has one of the best live sound systems in the city and runs NUART Festival, a three-day annual event that has featured artists from some of the most reputable indie labels in China, such as Maybe Mars, D-Force, RAN Music, and Qiii Snacks from Guangzhou. Past events also showcased prominent audiovisual talent, including the industrial techno stars of Shao and Wang Meng.

TAG Electronic Music Club, 2013⁷⁵

TAG took inspiration from clubs in Berlin and Amsterdam and has been driving the electronic underground music scene in Chengdu. Increasing visibility for local talents is at the centre of the club's mission. Over the years, it has also made a name for being amongst the first venues to bring the finest house and techno talents from around the world to Chengdu, such as Australian producer Katie Campbell, Nick Hoepfner from Berlin and Parisian DJ and producer Bambounou.⁷⁶

Fanmate Creative Art Area⁷⁷

Regenerated from a former steel pipe plant, Fanmate Creative Art Area is a new cultural landmark for Chengdu. A creative hub and incubator for music, movie, animation and design talents, it houses about 50 cultural and creative companies with over 30 specialised in the music industry.

Blue Roof Museum, 2009⁷⁸

A non-profit museum promoting contemporary art, the museum's collections encompass paintings, installations and multimedia art works by talented artists both from China and abroad.



bangyu-wang / Unsplash

Eastern Suburb Memory, 2011⁷⁹

This creative park was revitalised from a former state-run electron tube factory. The combination of industrial style with the intervention of the modern urbanism architecture creates an atmosphere of nostalgia and sleek urbanity. Owned and operated by Chengdu Media Group, the park features music and acoustic creation as its central programming theme. The park is home to Chengdu National Music Industry Base and houses a variety of large-scale music production, research, training and performance institutions such as Sichuan Conservatory of Music, Chengdu Associated Theatre of Performing Art, Rongyi Film and Television Education Centre.

The Beer Nest⁸⁰

The 7-year-old pub is a vibrant hub for live music and hosts regular programmes of stand-up comedy in collaboration with the Chengdu Comedy Club.

“ There is no better place than Chengdu for contemporary art museums...Compared to the super first-tier cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, the relative living and business cost in Chengdu is competitive. This coupled with the in-built pursuit for quality and pleasure in life makes the city a perfect heaven for creatives, collectors and cultural institutions across genres. Chengdu has enormous potential for the art and cultural industry to grow. ”

—Valerie Wang Conghui, Director of Zhi Art Museum⁸¹



Ai Zhuo⁸²

The founder of multi-brand fashion boutique Dressing for Fun, Ai Zhuo is often credited as single-handedly bringing international avant-garde fashion to Chengdu. In 2013, Dressing for Fun was the first store in China to stock Marques'Almeida, a 2015 LVMH Prize-winning label that has since become popular among Chinese millennials. Today, Zhuo's boutique curates a selection from a range of local talents, such as Xiao Li, Shushu/Tong, Sankuanz and KKTP, alongside international brands like J.W. Anderson, Y/Project and Anrealage.⁸³

Zhai Yongming⁸⁴

Founder of White Night in Chengdu, Zhang Yongming is an influential Chinese poet, essayist and screenwriter. Her poems were first published in 1981. She developed her first poem cycle, Women, in 1984 which was followed by such sequences as Jing'an Village, Life in This World and The Designs of Death. She is a regular speaker at international conferences and poetry festivals.

Liu Jiakun⁸⁵

Liu Jiakun is the founder and lead architect of Jiakun Architects in Chengdu. Jiakun Architects specialises across a variety of design disciplines from architecture, large-scale planning, urban design, landscape, and interior design to product design and installation art. As an internationally recognised studio, it works with international clients in special collaborations and exhibition production.

Morning⁸⁶

Morning is a multi-disciplinary music collective and organiser behind Chunyou, the iconic music festival in Chengdu that takes place in April each year. Morning celebrates tradition with innovative and can-do spirit, which made it one of the most creative and popular music organisers in China.

Yuefeng Wang⁸⁷

Yuefeng is the CEO of Chengdu Lacquerware Factory. Founded in 1954, the factory aims to revitalise the artisan traditions and techniques of lacquer art.

Valerie Wang Conghui⁸⁸

Director of Zhi Art Museum, Valerie Wang oversees every aspect of the museum from art collections, exhibitions and programmes to museum operation. Established in 2018, the museum is now one of the leading contemporary art museums in Chengdu.

Liu Jie⁸⁹

Liu Jie is the founder and art director of A Thousand Plateaus Art Space, one of the most established galleries in mainland China, committed to presenting and promoting the country's contemporary art.

Lu Peng⁹⁰

Curator and critic. Lu was the inaugural director of MoCA Chengdu and founder of L-Art University, an English-based digital academy.⁹¹ He is also the head of the academic committee of the 2021 Chengdu Biennale.⁹²



preillumination seth / Unsplash

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

CHENGDU

Cultural City Profile
China

The Chengdu municipal government's effort to develop cultural tourism and the creative economy has facilitated a dynamic overall cultural offer. The vibrant underground music scene also provides an authentic texture that shapes Chengdu as a hub for urban subculture. Homegrown event brands such as Chunyou Festival and NUART Festival, together with the touring events Strawberry Music Festival and Midi Music Festival, have consolidated Chengdu's status as one of the country's top destinations for festival tourism.

ChunYou Music Festival⁹³

Established in 2013, Chun You is a music-based, experimental, party-style festival held every year on the third weekend of April. The festival has featured local bands, musicians, DJs and creative artists from across China and abroad. With seven consecutive editions thus far, Chun You has now become the most essential annual fixture for independent music and youth culture in Chengdu.⁹⁴

Art Chengdu⁹⁵

The first international contemporary art fair launched in Chengdu in 2018. The annual fair has grown to over 45 galleries, including international blue-chip galleries such as Pace, Chambers Fine Art, and ShanghArt, and a footprint of 8,000m² in the city's new International Convention and Exhibition Centre. The fair received 58,000 visitors over 5 days and made GBP 10 million (CNY 90 million) in sales.⁹⁶

Chengdu Creativity & Design Week⁹⁷

Since inception in 2014, the Chengdu Creativity & Design Week has been held to fantastic fanfare for six consecutive years. It regularly attracts participation from about 3,000 creative and design firms as well as professional designers from over 30 countries.

Chengdu International Sister Cities Youth Music Festival⁹⁸

The music festival is sponsored by the municipal government and co-organised with the city's Foreign Affairs Office and district-level government. Held annually since 2008, the festival aims to enhance music exchange by offering a platform for young artists and musicians from China and abroad.



The One International Women's Film Festival⁹⁹

Founded by Yang Jing, this is the first and only women-themed film festival officially approved by the government in China. Hosted in September every year, the festival is aiming to support female filmmakers and focus on gender-specific topics including the history and development of feminism through activities including screenings, business match-making, seminars, and galas.

Hanfu Parade Day¹⁰⁰

The annual Hanfu event is staged in Kuanzhai Alley and Wenshu Yuan, gathering Hanfu fans across the country to revitalise Hanfu (namely Han costume) culture with a contemporary spin.¹⁰¹ According to Alibaba, over 20 million people bought Hanfu last year on its shopping site Taobao. In July 2019, Alibaba launched its Gutao App, a social platform dedicated to Hanfu shopping to meet the skyrocketing consumer interest.

Anren Biennial¹⁰²

With a history dating back to 620 AD, Anren is a heritage town that houses 27 historical mansions from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Anren Biennale was launched in 2018 to create a meeting point in Southwest China for the diverse practices from visual arts and architecture to heritage regeneration.

World Architecture Festival China¹⁰³

The first edition of World Architecture Festival China was held in 2020. The jury of this festival consisted of 40 well-known architectural experts from more than 20 countries and regions. The festival aims to create a platform to promote the exchange of talents in the design and construction industry in Chengdu.¹⁰⁴

Chengdu International Bookstore Forum¹⁰⁵

The Bookstore Forum gathers stakeholders from bookstores, publishing and the wider value chain each year. Launched in 2015, the Forum has invited the representatives from bookstores such as London Review Bookshop (U.K), Australian Booksellers Association (ABA), as well as publishing platforms including Bloomsbury Publishing (China) and Shanghai Century Publishing Group Co., Ltd. The 2019 edition was hosted by Fang Suo Commune and shed a light on the increasingly diverse role place-making bookstores play.¹⁰⁶

Chengdu International Festival of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Jointly held by UNESCO and the government as a State Council-sanctioned event, the Chengdu International Festival of Intangible Cultural Heritage runs every two years, showcasing intangible assets from across the country and overseas. The eighth edition took place in September 2021.¹⁰⁷

AYO Music Festival Chengdu¹⁰⁸

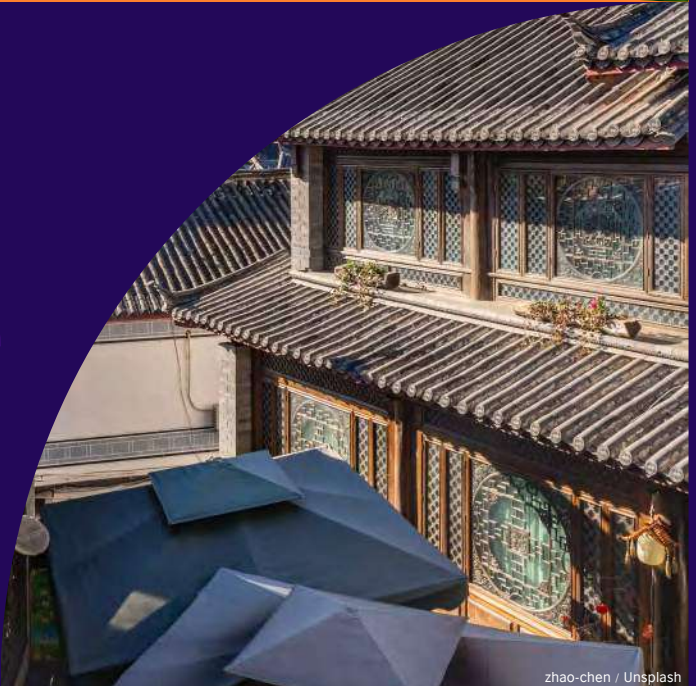
The annual AYO music festival hosted in Chengdu is one of the largest hip hop and rap events in Asia. The event is produced by national media company Fangxuehei.¹⁰⁹ The event, coupled with a rich programme of hip hop related exhibitions and fairs, attracts a loyal following among trend-sensitive millennials and college students interested in home-grown and overseas urban cultures.¹¹⁰

KŪN MÍNG

昆明

CHINA

Cultural City Profile



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INTRODUCING KUNMING

KUNMING
—
Cultural City Profile
China

Kunming is the capital city of Yunnan province and the geographical centre of Asia. The city is the regional logistical hub which strategically links southwestern China with Southeast Asia. The city is the regional trade hub and the gateway to the China-ASEAN Free Trade Zone and the frontier zone for West Asia, South Europe and Africa.¹ Within the Belt and Road Initiative, Kunming's transportation network has been aligned to connect countries in South and Southeast Asian countries, such as Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar via the China-Myanmar-Bangladesh-India Economic Corridor.

In 2020, Kunming recorded a population of 6.8 million and a GDP of GBP 72 billion (CNY648 billion)², Tourism and hospitality are the two major economic engines, contributing to about half of the province's GDP before the pandemic. Kunming, Lijiang and Dali are some of China's most popular destinations in terms of tourist numbers and revenue.³

“ Biodiversity protection and ecological safety in Yunnan is critical for the national development and interest, as well as the regional ecological security. ”
—An official from the Department of Ecology and Environment of Yunnan province⁴



Benefiting from the province's incredible biodiversity, Kunming's Dounan International Flower Centre is the largest flower production base in China and one of the world's top flower markets in terms of trading volume.⁵ As the country's top research centre in biodiversity and sustainable development, Kunming is home to the largest number of international NGOs, research institutes and foundations in China dedicated to climate justice and biodiversity, including The Nature Conservancy, WWF, World Agroforestry Centre, Centre for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge, Narada Foundation, and Yunnan Green Environment Development Foundation.

Kunming is also a regular host of international events and conferences, including the World Judicial Conference on the Environment and the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15).

The city has played an important role in the development of China's higher education since WWII and in contemporary arts since the 1980s. This educational and cultural prominence has contributed to a vibrant contemporary art scene, characterised by a plethora of artist collectives, non-profit cultural spaces as well as larger-scale government-led multi-functional creative and cultural spaces.

“ Though a relatively small city located at the country's southwestern frontier, Kunming has always punched above its weight in matters of art and culture. Situated in China's most ethnically and biologically diverse province, and closely linked to Southeast Asia, the city has a high welcoming attitude for difference. ”

—Jeff Crosby, Deputy Director,
Contemporary Gallery Kunming⁶



6. Interview by research team.

KUNMING IN NUMBERS

KUNMING

Cultural City Profile
China



The city is the regional trade hub and the gateway to the China-ASEAN Free Trade Zone and the frontier zone for West Asia, South Europe and Africa.



Kunming is rated one of the top cities in China for good air quality. Known as a 'spring city', it has an average daily temperature range from 3-16°C in January and 17-25°C in August.



Kunming's Dounan International Flower Centre is one of the world's top flower markets in terms of trading volume.

**2.3
BILLION**

34 factories have been regenerated into creative and cultural parks. A total of 5,000 enterprises in the creative parks contributed an annual revenue of RMB 2.3 billion.

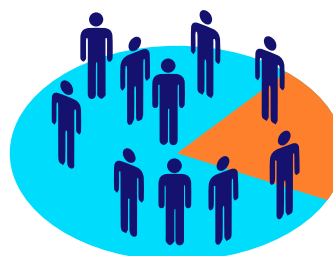


**72
BILLION**

In 2020, Kunming recorded a population of 6.8 million and a GDP of GBP 72 billion (CNY 648 billion).



Tourism and hospitality are the two major economic engines, contributing to about half of the province's GDP before the pandemic.



ETHNIC MINORITIES
33.6%
of the population

Apart from the Han Chinese majority, there are 25 ethnic minority groups and 15 of them are exclusive to Yunnan. The province's ethnic minority population is about 16.2 million and accounts for 33.6% of the whole population according to the survey in 2020.

1

CONTEXT

Situated by Dianchi Lake and Western Hills, Kunming is rated one of the top cities in China for good air quality. Known as a 'spring city', the city has an average daily temperature range from 3-16°C in January and 17- 25°C in August.⁷

In terms of ethnic diversity, Yunnan province has the second largest number of ethnic groups. Apart from the Han Chinese majority, there are 25 ethnic groups and 15 of them are exclusive to Yunnan. The province's ethnic minority population is about 16.2 million and accounts for 33.6% of the whole population according to the survey in 2020.⁸

HERITAGE LEGACY

KUNMING

—
Cultural City Profile
China

The city's history can be traced back to the Warring States period (475-221 BC) and early Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25-220) when the habitants around Dianchi Lake established the State of Dian. In 765, the development of Nanzhao Kingdom marked the beginning of Kunming's history. Its strategic location has made it an important historical pivot of the Ancient Tea Horse Road, which is a part of the Southern Silk Road that fostered trade with Tibet, Sichuan, Myanmar, Nepal and India.

Kunming is the gateway to the abundant natural sceneries and cultural heritages in Yunnan. There are 5 listed UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the province:

- South China Karst & Stone Forest – Natural World Heritage Site since 2007 (about 80 Zkm from Kunming)
- Old Town of Lijiang - World Cultural Heritage Site since 1997
- Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas – Natural World Heritage Site since 2003
- Chengjiang Fossil Site / Maotianshan – Natural World Heritage Site since 2012
- Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces / Yuanyang – Cultural World Heritage Site since 2013⁹



zhao-chen / Unsplash

CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

Yunnan province prioritises the creative economy (cultural tourism and education), medical and health sector, and smart technologies.¹⁰ In 2021, Kunming Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism announced a GBP 29 billion (CNY 260 billion) fund earmarked for 200 projects to energise its cultural tourism sector and healthcare industries.¹¹

Since 2010, Kunming has gradually relocated its industrial factories out of the urban areas and proactively transformed industrial sites into multi-functional cultural spaces. There were 34 factories regenerated into creative and cultural parks in 2021. A total of 5,000 enterprises within the parks contribute an annual revenue of GBP 2 billion (CNY 21 billion).¹²

With the idea of 'Three Green Brands' – Green Energy, Green Food and Green Agriculture – the province is branding itself as a destination for healthy living.¹³ Benefiting from its slow pace and high quality of life, the province of Yunnan, with its capital Kunming, became a major recipient of an inward migration from the coastal regions during the Covid-19 pandemic. The arrival of digital nomads has also given the co-working space scene a boost.¹⁴

BIODIVERSITY, HEALTHCARE INDUSTRIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

KUNMING

Cultural City Profile
China

“ Yunnan province sits in the subtropical zone and is the kingdom of medicinal plants. The plateau plant extracts here are more active and has higher medicinal value than those of other plants grown elsewhere. ”

—Xu Wei, Editor of Yicai Global¹⁵

Kunming has become a rising global leader of eco-industry and a pioneer of environmental sustainability practices. It is also a host to important international events and conferences on environmental justice and biodiversity:

- In May 2021, the World Judicial Conference on the Environment was held in Kunming. Over 160 guests from the highest judicial institutions and 27 countries jointly declared to boost international collaboration to preserve biodiversity and fight climate change with preventive measures to remedy pollution.¹⁶
- Postponed to October 2021, UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) convened governments from the world to agree on a new set of goals for environmental protection for the next decade.¹⁷

The rich biodiversity of Yunnan includes wide-ranging topographies and micro-climates. Over the past 30 years, more than one-third of new species in China have been discovered in Yunnan. According to the checklist of new and newly recorded species (1992-2020) issued in 2021, a total of 3,718 new species have been discovered in the province, including 2,519 new species and 1,199 newly recorded species.¹⁸ With continuous investment to improve ecological research, a huge number of species discovered in the province are led by Kunming-based research institutions.

Yunnan was the first province in China to put forward the ‘plant species with extremely small populations’ (PSESP) initiatives in 2004. More than 120 rescue and protection projects targeting such plants have been implemented in the last five years, and 30 protection zones have been marked out due to the programme.¹⁹

In addition to research and preservation, community-focused initiatives that promote biodiversity protection are also at the centre of Kunming's approach. Among these, the Yunnan Golden Monkey Protection Network educates local communities about conservation and proactively works with community members to develop alternative means to support their livelihood to replace traditional dependency on poaching and logging.²⁰ With the support from The Nature Conservancy, villages self-organise patrol teams to protect the black snub-nosed monkey.²¹

To improve incentives for community buy-in, the 'Green Village Credit' campaign was introduced by the government to offer credit loans for the installation of renewable and clean energy devices as well as loans for eco-industry activities.²²

“ The province's rich plant resources are being used in many new products and industries. Institutes affiliated to the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences in Kunming have provided the city with huge development potential for medical and health industries. ”

—Wang Xiliang, former mayor of Kunming, Yunnan province²³



aneta / Unsplash

Thanks to the wealth of natural resources and favourable climate, Kunming's leadership in medical and health industries echoes a boom in healthcare related industries, including bio-science innovation, health product manufacturing, healthcare tourism as well as high-end medical services.²⁴ The city is home to several top-tier listed healthcare companies, such as China's leading pharmaceutical company Yunnan Baiyao Group and the pharmaceutical skincare brand Winona, which is China's top-ranking skincare brand with a market value of GBP 9 billion (CNY 83 billion).²⁵



Kunming Botanical Garden

With over 60 years of history, the garden has a total area of 44 hectares that collected nearly 6,000 valuable species of flowers, herbs, trees and rare and endangered plants in Yunnan province.

National Botanical Museum, 2024²⁶

The museum spans across 28.55 hectares of land and is situated in close proximity to the Kunming Botanical Garden, Tree Garden of the Yunnan Academy of Forest and Grassland, and Heilongtan Park. Designed by THAD and Sutherland Hussey Harris, the museum will be complete in 2024.

Kunming Institute of Zoology, 1959²⁷

Directly affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), the institute is located at the head of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot. It is dedicated to the research and education in the fields of biodiversity, evolution, conservation, and sustainable development in southwestern China, eastern Himalayas, and South-east Asia.

Kunming Institute of Botany²⁸

A leading research institute, affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and dedicated to research and education of botany and phytochemistry.

Kunming Biomed International²⁹

A leading contract research organisation (CRO) providing preclinical research services, specialising in non-human primates.

The Nature Conservancy, 1951³⁰

The organisation is a partnership with the Yunnan provincial government to help protect biological and cultural diversity of northwest Yunnan province.

WWF Kunming Office, 2009³¹

Yunnan province contains a long stretch of the upper segment of the Mekong River, which is one of WWF's 19 global priority conservations areas. The office is the lead for WWF China's Upper Mekong Programme.

SMART TOURISM AND HEALTHY LIVING

KUNMING

Cultural City Profile
China

In recent years, Yunnan's tourism sector has devoted resources to a digitalisation campaign to update services and infrastructure in cultural tourism, healthcare tourism, eco-tourism and staycation hospitality services.³² To create a more accessible and higher standard of visitor experience, the government has co-developed with Tencent a smartphone app 'You Yunnan' and a WeChat mini programme. The two channels have successfully attracted more than 23 million users according to Tencent's report. This has made Kunming one of China's first batch of cities to apply cloud computing, big data and artificial intelligence technologies to its tourism industries.³³

“ We have to be a part of the digital transformation...we hope to have capabilities in data analysis and other technologies to help us identify and connect our customers, and we're ready to invest in these technologies. ”
—Dong Shenghao, President of the Green Health Industry Research Institute,
under state-owned Yunnan Metropolitan Construction Investment Group³⁴



Both public agencies and private entities in Yunnan are leading the development of healthcare and rehabilitation resorts to meet the booming staycation market, where recuperation through healthy living habits and environment are at the heart of its tourism offer.³⁵

Yunnan Health & Cultural Tourism Holding Groups³⁶

Owned by the state, Yunnan Health & Cultural Tourism Holding Groups is dedicated to developing cultural and creative tourism, healthcare tourism as well as other investments in properties and finance. The Groups have an ambitious goal of achieving a revenue of GBP 22 billion (CNY 200 billion) by 2020 and becoming the leading company in the healthcare tourism sector.

Gooday Sustainable Lifestyle³⁷

The project broke ground in 2015, led by Yunnan native Li Tingting and her husband who returned to their home province to start a community centre focused on promoting sustainable development and village culture preservation through the business model of social enterprise. The couple transformed a century-old house into a space where future volunteers, tourists, educational groups, village school kids, and community members can stay overnight and learn about permaculture and other aspects of sustainable development.



37 Weibo: @麗日 Gooday

CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

“ Arts come from an inner and authentic experience. Living in Yunnan is rather simplistic, plain and secured. People are deeply and tightly connected to the land and nature here. The rapidly changing modern society made less damage to the community fabric, thus many things in Yunnan have been properly preserved. ”

—Mao Xuhui, contemporary artist from Kunming³⁸

Kunming has been at the forefront of China's contemporary arts since the mid-1980s. The city has nurtured numerous influential contemporary artists, including the founding members of a significant collective Southwestern Artists Group (Mao Xuhui, Ye Yongqing, Tang Zhigang, Liu Jianhua, Pan Dehai) and others.³⁹

Located in downtown Kunming and established in the 1990s, Kunming Art Loft Community (Chuangku) is recognised as China's first Soho-style art compound that houses a host of independent art spaces, galleries, studios, bars restaurants, and design studios. This pioneering community has paved the way for the establishment of 798 Art District in Beijing, Moganshan in Shanghai, Blue Roof Museum in Chengdu and other similar types of art communities across China.⁴⁰

Contemporary art continues to contribute to the vibrancy of Kunming's cultural scene, with a recent boom of contemporary art galleries and not-for-profit art spaces. Launched in 2018, Contemporary Gallery Kunming became one of the city's first large-scale institutions dedicated to contemporary art. As a non-profit gallery sponsored by Kunming Top River Group, it is dedicated to the development of a support system for contemporary art in Yunnan through regular exhibition, education and research. With over 20 years history, Kunming is also home to TCG Nordica – one of the country's most experimental art spaces. This presents interdisciplinary programmes across visual arts, music, theatre and performance art.⁴¹

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

KUNMING

Cultural City Profile
China

“ Kunming has produced many influential artists and intellectuals, and Yunnan has long been a destination for people from across the country to escape the big cities and pursue alternative lifestyles. While the art market remains small, there is a thriving scene of independent art spaces and cultural events. ”

—Jeff Crosby, Deputy Director, Contemporary Gallery Kunming⁴²



During the War of Resistance in WWII, Kunming functioned as a critical bastion of stability for war time China, especially in the fields of economy, education, culture and military technologies.⁴³ Being largely spared from direct conflict, Kunming was a beacon of higher education and research, hosting many institutions and scholars. From 1938 to 1939, more than ten leading universities and research centres in China moved to the city.

Among these, the internationally renowned National Southwestern Associated University (jointly formed by Peking University, Tsing Hua University and Nan Kai University) has nurtured over 170-world influential physicists, scientists and scholars. Famous alumni include two Nobel winners Chen-Ning Franklin Yang and Tsung-Dao (T. D.) Lee; a Wolf Prize in Mathematics winner Shiing-shen Chern; as well as a considerable number of scholars who critically shaped the landscape of China's cultural life, making significant contributions to research in history, philosophy and literature, such as Chen Yinke, Qian Mu, Qian Zhongshu, Feng Youlan, Zhao Yuanren and others.⁴⁴

Yunnan Provincial Museum, 2015⁴⁵

The new Yunnan Provincial Museum opened in 2015. It is designed to house and display rare and ancient cultural artefacts of the province. The collection highlights Yunnan's natural resources, geography, history, art, culture, and traditional craftsmanship.

Kunming Museum, 1997⁴⁶

The museum houses a large collection of millennia-old bronze pieces and has a comprehensive display of antique porcelains and fans. It also exhibits a photo series taken by Auguste François, French consul in south China between 1896 and 1904.

Yunnan Grand Theatre, 2017⁴⁷

A major cultural landmark of Kunming with an investment of GBP 86 million (CNY 770 million) on construction and facilities. It is the most comprehensive and highest-quality theatre in the southwest region.

Dynamic Yunnan Theatre⁴⁸

Ethnic musical dance 'Dynamic Yunnan' is choreographed and performed by leading Chinese dancer Yang Liping. Since its debut in 2003, the show has been staged more than 4,000 times in 42 cities around the world. It is regarded as an exemplar of the development of Chinese minority art as well as Chinese theatre culture.

Yunnan Arts University, 1959⁴⁹

Yunnan Arts University is one of the eight comprehensive art universities in China. The university consists of a faculty covering a diverse range of disciplines including music, dance, drama, film & TV, fine arts, design, art management, and ethnic arts.

Kunming Art Loft Community, 1990s⁵⁰

Located in the city, the community also known as 'Chuangku' was this is one of the first artist compounds in China which transformed industrial warehouses into an art district. The district has about 30 artist studios, an abundance of art galleries, bars, tea houses, restaurants and bookshops.

TCG Nordica Cultural Centre, 2000⁵¹

The foremost international art gallery and culture centre in Kunming. Founded by Swedish and Chinese culture workers, Anna Mellergård and Wu Yuerong, TCG is a significant art hub for the city's residents, artists, intellectuals and students. It has organised a series of exhibitions and programmes by influential poets, artists, and musicians from China and north Europe. TCG Nordica also runs an international Artist-in-Residence Programme for both visual and performing arts.

he-ming / Unsplash



Contemporary Gallery Kunming, 2018⁵²

It was the first large-scale contemporary art gallery in Kunming, dedicated to supporting emerging artists and fostering the artistic ecosystem of Yunnan province. It is a non-profit gallery sponsored by Kunming Top River Group.

Kong Art Space, 2019⁵³

A non-profit experimental art space founded by performance artist He Libin, Kong Art Space organises art exhibitions, talks and exchange programmes, and explores a variety of spontaneous happenings by local art communities. The art space also operates as a multicultural alternative space, housing projects including the International Centre for Cultural Exchange, International Creative Studio for Artists, Yunnan Young Artists Incubation Base, Yunnan Contemporary Art and Literature Warehouse, and the Art and Coffee Experience Hall, to name a few.

Kunming House of Art & Culture, 2020⁵⁴

Located in the Dianchi Lake area, this new project is under construction and aims to reshape the experience of contemporary art and culture through a range of visual and performing art forms.

1903 Space⁵⁵

A new gallery space featuring local emerging contemporary artists and established artists in the region.



frankie-ng / Unsplash

CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

KUNMING

Cultural City Profile
China

“ I always dreamed of traveling while working, and the pandemic gave me a wonderful opportunity to do so...As long as the wireless connection is stable, I can work with my colleagues across three continents anytime. ”

—Hu Shuguang, digital nomad⁵⁶



With a high quality of life and a mature staycation ecosystem, Yunnan has received an influx of ‘digital nomads’ during the pandemic. This inward migration was aided by the city’s booming co-working space scene, with early movers such as national brands U Create Space and Rugus. Other boutique co-working space brands including Public Space and Woli Space operate a range of mixed-use venues from cafés and university campus facilities to residential blocks.

With a legacy of machinery manufacturing and military technology, Kunming has invested in regeneration projects to transform retired industrial sites into commercial complexes and creative parks, including the 108 Zhiku Space, M60 Creative Parks, Loft Jinding 1919, C86 Tea House, and 871 Cultural Creative Park.⁵⁷

Independent bookstores in Kunming also double as cultural hubs through curated book selections and imaginative programming. Established brands such as Wheatfield Bookstore and Elephant Bookstore regularly organise book clubs, live music performances and movie screenings. They also collaborate with local designers to produce souvenirs and IP products to expand sustainable revenue sources.⁵⁸

Kunming has a growing music scene for home-grown folk and electronic music. Indie venues include The Turtle, where the owners run the music label Sea of Wood and host ‘Made in Yunnan’ live music nights. The thriving scene has attracted China’s top indie music brands such as Mao Livehouse and Modern Sky Lab to set up shop in Kunming.⁵⁹



C86 Tea House, 2016⁶⁰

The only loft-style commercial complex located in Kunming city centre. Transformed from a television manufacturing factory, the complex has multiple retail offerings in leisure, food, entertainment, bookstores, and hotels.

M60 Creative Parks⁶¹

An historical battery factory revitalised into an art and culture park, which has become the home of traditional folk crafts, art studios, restaurants, bars, cafés, as well as a host of creative businesses.

Loft Jiding 1919, 2009⁶²

An art and commercial complex based in a former factory. The complex now houses a cluster of makers' studios, artisan bakeries, cafés art galleries, and music clubs.

Shicui Yunnan Folk Art Park⁶³

Transformed from a oxygen plant, the park offers a diverse programme that celebrates the intangible heritage and craftsmanship in Yunnan. It operates a marketplace where local craftsmen and designer brands present their products, including handmade crafts, clothes, and pottery made by ethnic groups.

Wheatfield Bookstore, 2001⁶⁴

One of the oldest independent bookstores in Kunming. Wheatfield has a carefully curated selection of literature, philosophy, arts, movie and lifestyle books. The bookstore is also well-known for its live music performances and cultural events co-hosted with foreign cultural bodies such as the series of Dutch Cultural Nights events in collaboration with the Consulate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Chongqing in 2020.⁶⁵

“

It is important to find your position, finetuning the type of books and music records you really want to sell, deciding on the kind of atmosphere you want to create through the display. You have to differentiate your taste from other bookstores. I cannot simply sell any books. Selection and curation become key. ”

– Ma Li, Founder of Wheatfield Bookstore

Elephant Bookstore⁶⁶

The city's most famous independent bookstore with a café run by an architect couple. The bookstore was revamped from an abandoned underground garage located at Wenhua Alley. The book selection features publication on architecture, design, classic literature, arts and culture.

U Create Space⁶⁷

The co-working space is equipped with professional facilities, dedicated to fostering the growth of local SMEs.

Public Space⁶⁸

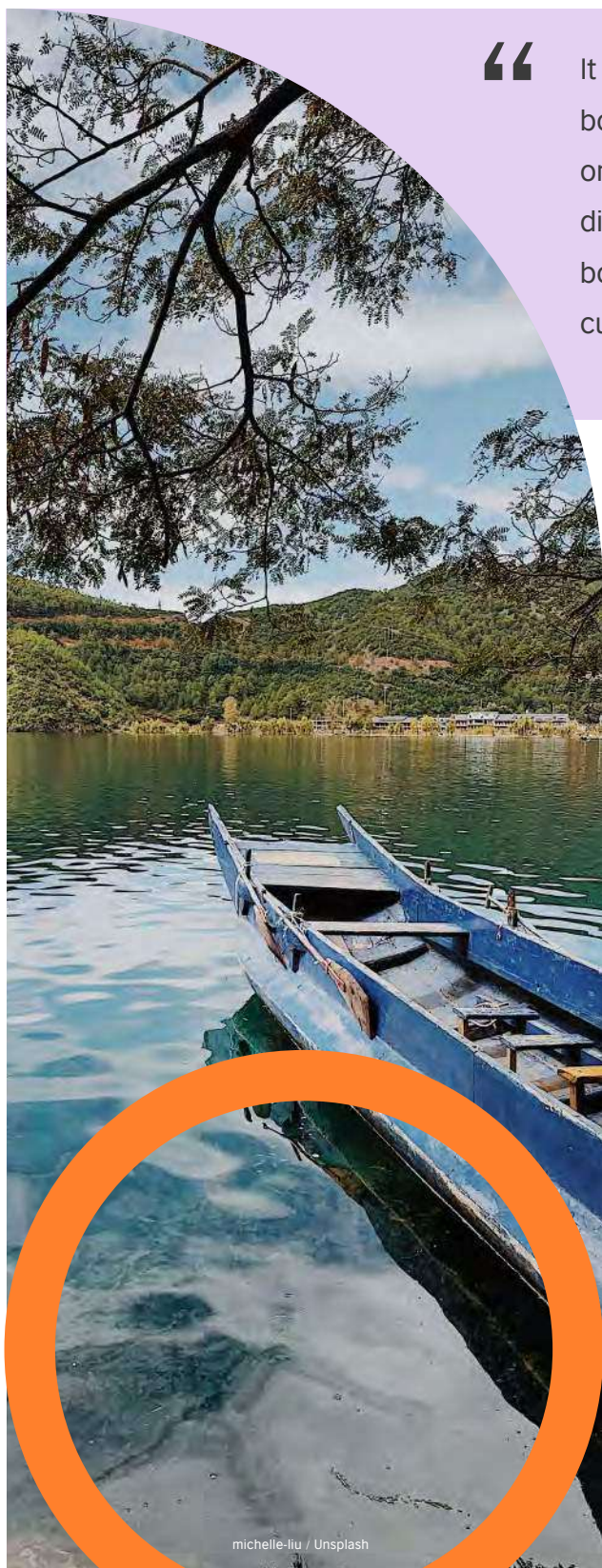
A platform dedicated to promoting shared spaces in Kunming. It enables companies and institutions to post available spaces on their digital directory for users to hire.

Woli Space⁶⁹

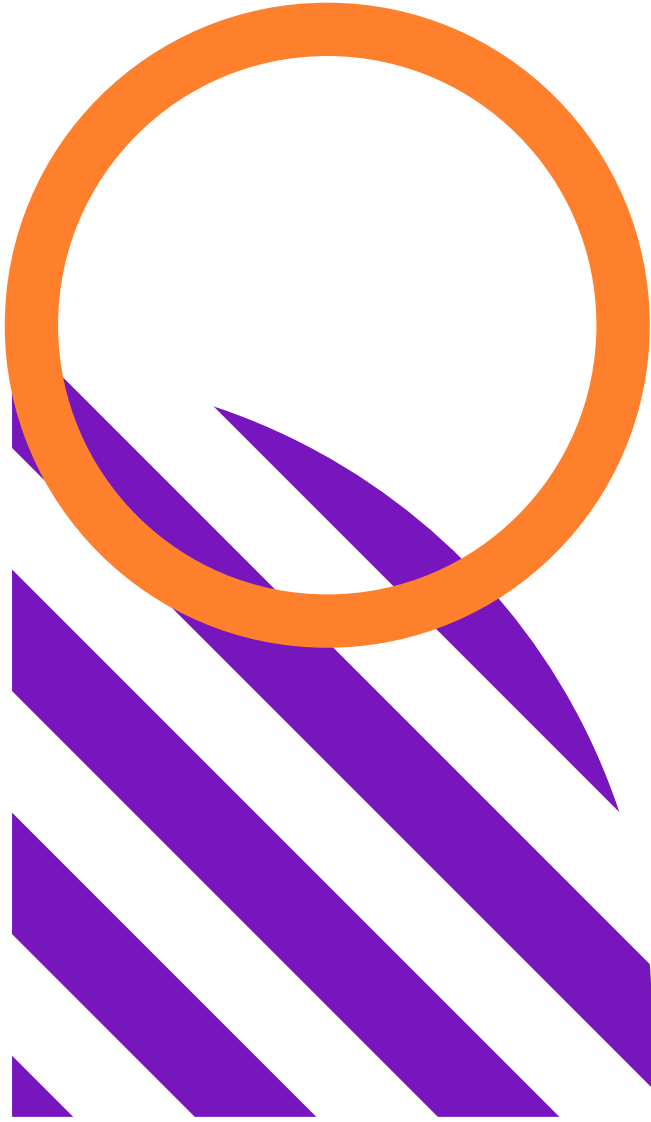
A home-grown co-working space brand dedicated to building a smart office network based on IoT (Internet-of-Things) technologies, providing online and offline services for facility management, intelligent administration and enterprise support for companies. It also provides consulting services for start-ups and an incubation/mentorship scheme.

The Turtle⁷⁰

Kunming's nightlife veterans, The Turtle runs its own music label Sea of Wood and hosts 'Made in Yunnan' live music nights.



michelle-liu / Unsplash



Modern Sky Lab Kunming⁷¹

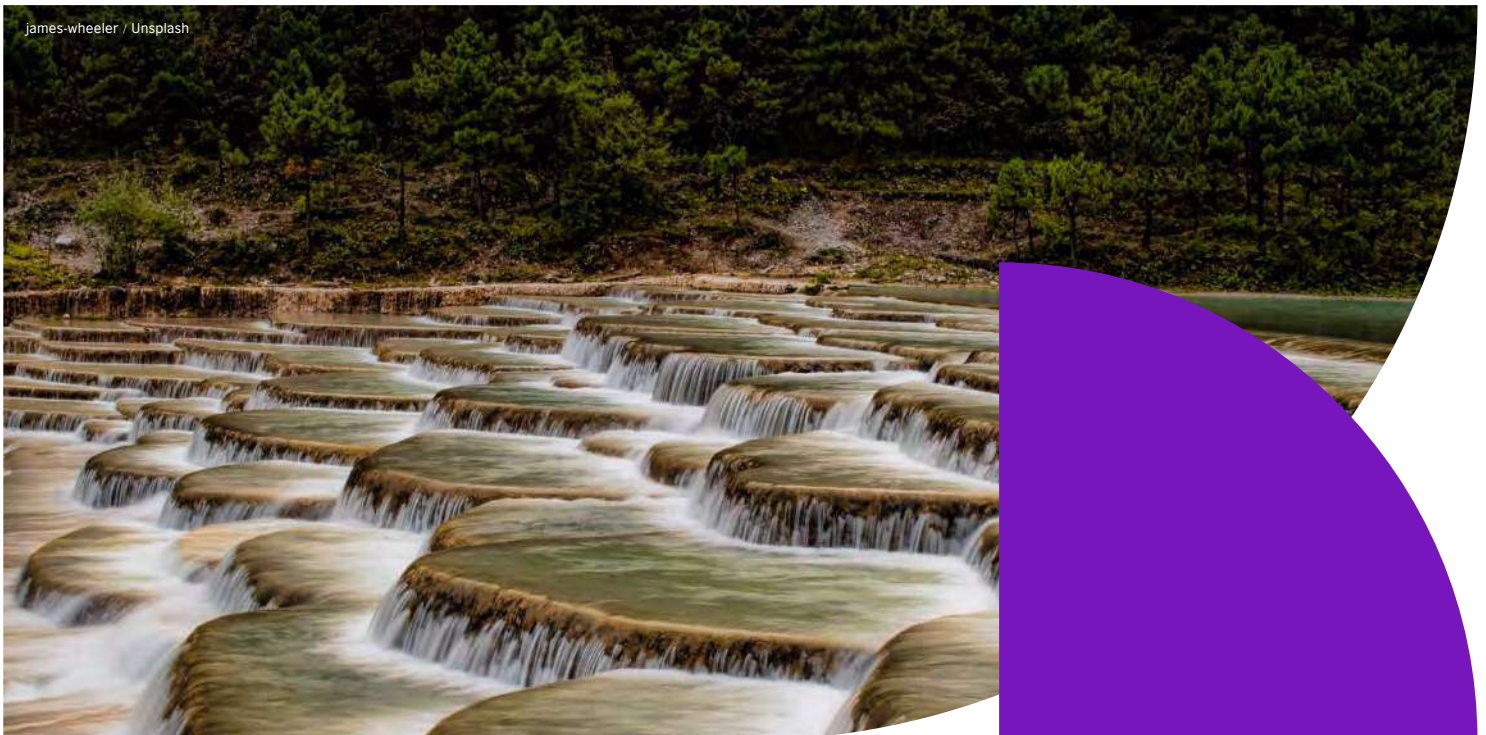
Operated by leading Chinese music company Modern Sky Lab, the Kunming branch runs a music space, bookstore, record shop and café.

Dada Kunming⁷²

Owned by the Dada Club which has branches in Beijing and Shanghai, the Kunming club features live electronic music and DJ performances every Friday and Saturday night, with occasional weeknight events. Its grand opening event included a roster of international DJs.⁷³

MAO Livehouse, 2015⁷⁴

A household name on the Chinese live music circuit with venues in Beijing and Shanghai hosting local and international acts, big and small. Mao Kunming was opened in 2015.





Mao Xuhui⁷⁵

Based in Kunming, Mao Xuhui is a leading member of the Southwestern Artist Group. (Other members of the group also include Zhang Xiaogang, Ye Yongqing and Pan Dehai.) Mao is currently a professor at Yunnan University and plays a key role in driving the development of Kunming Art Loft Community.

Yang Liping⁷⁶

An internationally acclaimed artist, known as China's 'peacock princess' for her contemporary dance productions which draw from her Bai ethnic traditions and cultural identity. She first rose to fame for choreographing and performing 'The Spirit of Peacock' in 1986.

Guo Zhenyu⁷⁷

President of skincare company Winona, Guo Zhenyu previously taught at the George Washington University, USA. In 2002, he returned to China to take over the national brand Dianhong Pharmaceutical from his father-in-law Zhou Jiafeng and later established Winona in 2008.

Dianxi Xiaoge⁷⁸

One of China's top vloggers who is famous for her cooking videos featuring Yunnan's traditional cuisine and rural lifestyle. Dianxi Xiaoge received about 11 million followers worldwide since her first video posted in 2017.

Jeff Crosby⁷⁹

Jeff is the deputy director of Contemporary Gallery Kunming. He also runs a boutique translation and art consultancy firm Crosby & Co. Art Consulting. He has been actively involved in Kunming's international community and local arts scene for more than 15 years.



Yang Xiong⁸⁰

Yang Xiong is a Kunming-based architect and founder of Elephant Bookstore.

He Libing⁸¹

Of Naxi ethnic group origin, He Libing is an artist and professor at Yunnan Arts University, specialising in curating and criticism. He is also the founder of Kong Art Space and organiser of He Libin Performance Workshop.

Liu Au⁸²

Performance artist, modern dancer and choreographer. Liu's practice focuses on refugee rights and arts therapy. She currently sits on the committee of Kunming Youth Alliance.

Liu Hui⁸³

Liu is an artist, curator and current director of TCG Nordia. His practices take root in a nomadic lifestyle with a research focus on inter-regional cultural connectivity in Southeast Asia and South Asia.

Kunming International Situationists Society⁸⁴

Kunming International Situationists Society (KISS) is a Kunming *dérive* (city walk) arts and discussion collective initiated in 2018 by Dutch artist Vera Regina van de Nieuwenhof, British cultural researcher Sean Duffy and Chinese curator Luo Fei.⁸⁵

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

KUNMING

Cultural City Profile
China

Kunming International Flower Expo of China⁸⁶

The largest flower expo in Asia, the Kunming International Flower Expo is dedicated to promoting the global trade of flowers and plants. Together with Africa's Kenya and Ethiopia, and South America's Colombia and Ecuador, China's Yunnan province is the most important flowerproducing base in Asia and one of the world's three regions most suitable for flower- production.

International Conference on Public Art and Human Development⁸⁷

The event scheduled to take place in December 2021 in Kunming will focus on the latest research of public art in relation to human development. It aims to provide an international platform for experts, professors, scholars, engineers and researchers at home and abroad to share best practices and latest research.

The Torch Festival⁸⁸

Taking place every August in Yunnan Yunnan Ethnic Village, the Torch Festival is celebrated by Yi ethnic groups in Yunnan and also across other ethnic groups, including Bai, Naxi, Hani, Lahu and Pumi people.

China Yunnan Pu'er Tea International Expo Trade Fair⁸⁹

The expo hosts academic discussions, tea auctions and tea art appreciation events. It is dedicated to creating a professional and market-oriented tea festivity to promote the drinking and appreciation of Pu'er tea.



Kunming Calling⁹⁰

Organised by music venue Modern Sky Lab and co-organised by Yun Brewing Pub in July 2021, it was a three-day beer and music festival which presented a series of music performances, where over 100 different craft beers were available for sampling.

Melodic Death Metal Festival 2021⁹¹

Hosted by Modern Sky Lab in March 2021, six Chinese melodic death metal bands performed over the course of the festival.

SWM Silvester Electronic Music Carnival 2021⁹²

SW.MISSION (SWM) is a new Yunnan record label. The festival was staged in the ancient town area to the south of Dian Lake. It included a futuristic light show. Various genres of electronic music from hard techno to trance were performed. Local and international DJs participated, including Carta and PINKPANDA.

Maitian Music Festival by Fuxian Lake, 2019⁹³

Hosted by Taihe Music Group, the music festival welcomed bands, rappers and pop singers to Kunming. The event was hosted on the lakeside of Fuxian – an ancient natural lake claiming world-class water quality, making ‘NATURE FIRST’ a fitting slogan. The organisers led a concerted campaign to promote sustainable living, encouraging visitors to take its dedicated buses to reduce their carbon footprint.



vince-russell / Unsplash

FÓ SHĀN

佛山

CHINA

Cultural City Profile

average_person / unsplash



Kirill Sharkovski / Unsplash



clu soh / unsplash



Bobbi Wu / Unsplash

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INTRODUCING FOSHAN

FOSHAN
—
Cultural City Profile
China

Foshan is located at the heart of the economically vibrant Pearl River Delta in the southern part of China. The city enjoys strategic importance as a crucial node of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau (GDHKMC) Bay Area and holds a prominent role in the Guangzhou-Foshan integration plan. Its geographical and cultural importance also makes it a vital hub along the Belt and Road.

Benefitting from the completion of Guangzhou-Shenzhen High Speed Railway and Guangzhou-Zhuhai Intercity Rapid Rail in the early 2000s, Foshan, Hong Kong and Macao have formed a ‘one-hour transportation circle’. The city became one of the 23 cities in China included in the ‘trillion-yuan GDP club’ in 2019 as its GDP exceeded GBP 111 billion (CNY 1 trillion) for the first time.¹ This also makes Foshan’s GDP the third-highest in Guangdong Province, following Guangzhou and Shenzhen.² Its total population reached 7.3 million in 2020.³

“Foshan, located in south central Guangdong Province, is a major part of the heavily-populated Pearl River Delta area and a major hub of South China’s history. West of Guangzhou, it’s the westernmost large city of the Pearl River Delta megalopolis and neighbours Hong Kong and Macau in the south...Foshan provides various attractions and activities for visitors from historic temples to exquisite gardens, from interesting cultural experiences to tasty food explorations.”

—Chris Qian, China Highlights⁴

Foshan is a major manufacturing hub. Secondary industry contributes the largest proportion of GDP⁵, with equipment manufacturing the primary economic drive. Foshan is entering a new smart manufacturing era, catalysed by the 2015 ‘Made in China 2025’ initiative and the 14th Five Year Plan (2021 – 2025), with an emphasis on digitalising and upgrading the local economy while pushing for the development of emerging industries and the service sector.

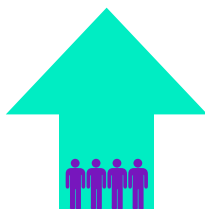
The relative affordability, cultural affinity and geographical proximity of Foshan to Hong Kong and Macau makes the city an attractive place for start-ups and young entrepreneurs in the Greater Bay Area to kick-start their businesses.⁶ With Foshan’s favourable business environment, the city was ranked 15th among China’s top 100 foreign trade cities by China’s General Administration of Customs.⁷

Foshan, with a long history and rich culture, is one of the birthplaces of Lingnan Culture. It has a reputation as the Hometown of Ceramics, Cantonese Opera, Martial Arts, Cantonese Silk, and Folk Arts. Joining efforts with other cities in the Bay Area, Foshan actively engages in intercity and international cultural exchanges to promote and preserve its intangible cultural heritage.

FOSHAN IN NUMBERS

FOSHAN

Cultural City Profile
China



7.3
MILLION

Foshan, Hong Kong and Macao have formed a 'one-hour transportation Circle'. Its total population adds up to 7.3 million in 2020.



111 BILLION



The city's GDP exceeded GBP 111 billion (CNY 1 trillion) in 2019 and it became one of the 23 cities in China included in the 'trillion-yuan GDP club'. This makes Foshan's GDP the third highest in Guangdong Province, following Guangzhou and Shenzhen.



SINCE THE 14TH
CENTURY

Since the 14th century, Foshan has served as a gateway for the distribution of goods and as a production base for ceramics, textiles and herbal medicines.

SINO-GERMAN INDUSTRIAL CITY ALLIANCE

The 'Sino-German Industrial City Alliance', established in 2016, has its secretariat based at the Sino-German Industrial Services Zone in Foshan.



The legacy of Foshan is inter-linked with Guangdong's heritage as a **manufacturing powerhouse**, thanks to its close proximity to Hong Kong and Macau. The city was ranked 15th on the list of '2019 China's top 100 foreign trade cities'.



In 2004, Foshan was awarded the title of 'City of Martial Arts'.

Kungfu masters Wong Fei-hung, Yip Man and film star Bruce Lee, who practiced martial arts, had their origins in Foshan and became household names worldwide.

FOSHAN HIGH-TECH INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ZONE

CITY'S ECONOMIC DRIVER

GBP 19 BILLION

TO THE CITY'S GDP IN 2020

The Foshan High-Tech Industrial Development Zone is becoming the city's economic driver, and contributed GBP 19 billion (CNY 169.1 billion) to the city's GDP in 2020.



CONTEXT

Foshan is strategically located in the central part of Guangdong Province. Connected by a well-developed network of railways, it has long been a transportation and logistics hub in the Pearl River Delta. Since the 14th century, the city has served as a gateway for the distribution of goods and a production base for ceramics, textiles, and herbal medicines.

Foshan has a tropical climate characterised by warm weather and rainy days. The annual average temperature is 22°C. Five districts, namely Chancheng District, Nanhai District, Shunde District, Gaoming District and Sanshui District, are under the governance of Foshan.



INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES

FOSHAN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Foshan has developed sister city relations with Itami in Japan, Port Louis in Mauritius, Stockton in the United States, Ingolstadt in Germany, and many other communities globally. Foshan has also received 'The Award to Friendship Cities for Exchanges and Cooperation'.⁸

The 'Sino-German Industrial Cities Alliance', established in 2016 between cities in Germany and China, has its secretariat based in the Sino-German Industrial Services Zone in Foshan.⁹ The Alliance expanded to 47 member cities in 2020 to facilitate scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries.¹⁰

“ The success stories of industrial cooperation between Foshan and Germany are the epitome of the cooperative achievements among the alliance members. Other members are also making great contributions to Sino-German industrial development. ”

—Zhu Wei, Mayor of Foshan¹¹



HERITAGE LEGACY

FOSHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

“

Foshan (literally ‘Buddha Hill’) was famous for its ceramics in the Ming Dynasty. Today, it’s better known as the birthplace of two kung fu icons, Wong Fei Hung and Ip Man (Bruce Lee’s master), and the Wing Chun style of kung fu developed here.

”

–Lonely Planet¹²

Intangible cultural heritage contributes to Foshan’s well-respected status as a national historical and cultural city. It possesses 14 state-level intangible cultural heritage items, in addition to 24 provincial listings and 103 municipal ones.¹³ Historical and cultural sites protected at the national level include the Qinghui Garden and Liang Garden. They are two of the four famous gardens in Guangdong Province, alongside Yu Yam Ancestral Garden in Panyu District of Guangzhou and Keyuan Garden in Dongguan.¹⁴

The city is known for its excellence in traditional craftsmanship such as ceramics, paper-cutting, wood print painting, gold foil forging and puppetry. With a legacy tracing back to the Ming dynasty, Foshan still plays a significant role in the ceramic industry in China as a major ceramic production site. The city is also widely regarded as the home of Cantonese opera, several martial arts and lion dancing.

In 2004, Foshan was awarded the title of ‘City of Martial Arts’.¹⁵ Kungfu masters Wong Fei-hung, Yip Man and film star Bruce Lee, who practiced martial arts, had their origins in Foshan and became household names worldwide. Wing Chun, a type of Foshan martial arts, was designated an intangible cultural heritage item in 2020.¹⁶ The city strives to strengthen Foshan’s image as the origin of Wing Chun by holding international competitions such as the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Wing Chun Elite Exchange Competition and World Wing Chun Competition.



Foshan Ancestral Temple¹⁷

The most famous icon in Foshan, the Ancestral Temple has more than 600 years of history. It is dedicated to Beidi, the Northern God, who is believed to have power over the waters of Guangdong. The government converted the temple into Foshan Municipal Museum in 1949, including exhibition halls dedicated to martial arts masters, namely the Wong Fei-hung Memorial and Yip Man Museum. It has a wide portfolio of family-friendly cultural programmes, from DIY workshops to martial arts classes.

Ancient Nanfeng Kiln¹⁸

As the longest-established and best-preserved 'dragon kiln' in China, a variety of ancient firewood kiln which is long in shape like a dragon, the Ancient Nanfeng Kiln was built in 1506 during the Ming Dynasty and is still producing ceramics today. Located in Shiwan, 2km from downtown Foshan, the area was once China's most important ceramics production centre. It is a popular tourist destination where visitors can join pottery workshops and get local handicrafts as souvenirs.

Qinghui Garden¹⁹

Originally the mansion of a well-respected scholar in the Ming Dynasty, Qinghui Garden is a traditional South China Garden designed in the Lingnan style of architectural construction that integrates the culture of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Liang Garden²⁰

Established in the Qing Dynasty, this is a traditional private garden which belonged to the Liang Family, a family well known for producing several acclaimed literary masters.

Xiqiao Mountain²¹

With a history of 6,000 years, Xiqiao Mountain is an extinct volcano and an important cultural symbol of Foshan. It is designated as a National Forest Park and National Geological Park.

CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

Foshan is open and friendly to foreign visitors and businesses due to its close connection to Hong Kong and Macau, and its role as a significant manufacturing base for many international corporations.

Foshan is also a growing force in China's budding e-Sports scene.²² The municipal government has invested in developing its Nanhai district into an e-Sports business cluster, featuring competition halls, an industry park, training facilities and other businesses which can add to the e-Sports value chain. In 2020 this attracted Foshan GK, an e-Sports team, to relocate to the Nanhai district and become the first e-Sports team in the city. In 2021, Foshan GK won second place in the Honor of Kings competition marking the first time Foshan achieved a place in the e-Sports finals. In 2021, new media platform JOYY set up its headquarters in Foshan and live-streaming company Huya TV also inaugurated its global R&D centre in the city.²³

CULTURAL HERITAGE

FOSHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

The Foshan government intends to establish the city as one of the signature travel destinations in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau (GDHKMC) Bay Area by focusing on its rich intangible cultural heritage traditions. From 2015 to 2020, the government invested GBP 2.8 million (CNY 25 million) in supporting major and endangered intangible cultural heritage projects and their inheritors.²⁴ The Foshan Qiuse Parade and Xingtongji at the Lantern Festival are two of the main highlight events of the year to attract domestic and international visitors.²⁵

The municipal government invests heavily in the preservation and continuation of Foshan's intangible cultural heritage as a 'live experience' in contemporary urban life. Since 2010, Foshan has been holding the 'Foshan Cultural Heritage Protection and Awareness Month' to coincide with International Museum Day (in May) and Culture and National Heritage Day (in June). The one-month event is packed with performances that showcase the city's intangible cultural heritage such as Wing Chun, dragon-boat racing and Cantonese opera. Museums and art institutions in the city frequently collaborate to hold exhibitions and talks.²⁶ Online platforms are created to give opportunities to craftsmen to sell their innovative handicrafts.



Foshan Qiuse Parade (October to November)

Qiuse refers to 'Autumn colour', The parade can be dated back to the Ming Dynasty, with a history of more than 600 years, and is held to celebrate the agricultural harvest in autumn. Since 2010, the parade has been upgraded to an annual national festival to be held simultaneously with Guangdong Intangible Heritage Week.²⁷ During the festival, a wide array of performances are held including lantern shows, dragon dances and lion dances. Many of these props are handmade from paper and bamboo, using techniques passed down across generations. Since 2016, a learning and participation programme for young children called 'Little Craftsmen in a Big City' has provided handicraft workshops to introduce children to traditional local handicrafts such as paper-cutting, wood carving, and woodblock printing to make Chinese New Year paintings.²⁸

'Xingtongji' (February)

'Xingtongji' - meaning 'Walking through Tongji Bridge' - is an annual cultural event with over 400 years of history. Participants hold small windmills while walking across the bridge, saying 'Crossing Tongji Bridge, Troubles Go Away' to pray for peace and luck in the coming year. In 2019, the festival attracted more than 800,000 visitors.²⁹ Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2021 the event took place online, with interactive games and live-streaming of the event on social media. On their WeChat accounts, users could 'walk through' illustrated landmarks such as Tongji Memorial Gate, Tongji Bridge and the Lettuce Pool, and generate personalised photos and posters.³⁰



GREEN URBANISATION AND LIVEABILITY

FOSHAN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Foshan is a Chinese leader in carbon-neutral city-making. Since 2019, smart mobility has been enhanced through a green transportation programme featuring city-wide hydrogen trams.³¹

As a part of Foshan's 'greening' efforts, public investment is mobilised around improving and increasing access to parklands and green spaces to both enhance citizens' quality of life and act as a prospective resource for ecotourism. From 2013 to 2017, 226 parks were built.³² According to a poll in 2017³³, some of most popular parks include Qiandeng Lake Park, Ming Lake Park, Asia Arts Park, Riverside Landscape in Foshan New City, Lvdao Lake Park, and Sanjiang Shuiyun Park in Sanshui.

In addition to this existing green infrastructure, the Guangdong Province 2021 Key Construction Project Plan announced a total investment of more than GBP 46 billion (CNY 414.5 billion) on 59 key cultural tourism projects, of which GBP 22 billion (CNY 200 billion) will be allocated to the construction of Foshan Midea·Huangchao Bailu Lake Forest Eco-tourism Resort.³⁴ This Ecotourism Resort is expected to become a large-scale cultural destination, including a lake Egret biological conservation zone, a theme park, farms, tea plantations and hot springs.³⁵ As part of this plan, three parks, namely Wenhua Park, Asian Art Park, and Nanhai Children's Park will undergo massive renovation, adding interactive playgrounds and leisure areas.³⁶ The Nanhai Children's Park will be given a facelift, constructing a new mini-water park, a 'rainbow activity area' which uses colour to indicate suitable areas for children to play in, and a skateboarding and roller-skating area.

Asia Arts Park³⁷

A large artificial park, featuring traditional Lingnan garden landscape, in the Chancheng District of Foshan. It is named for the 7th Asia Arts Festival, which took place in 2005. Outdoor cultural events including musical performances are often held at the park.

Foshan Youth Park³⁸

The construction of Foshan Youth Park started in 2019 and is expected to be fully completed in 2022. It is an abandoned factory site which will be revitalised into a large-scale recreational and leisure area for exercising, camping, picnics, outdoor weddings and music festivals.

SMART AND ADVANCED MANUFACTURING HUB

FOSHAN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

In 2015 under the 'Made in China 2025' initiative, Foshan was designated as the national pilot city for the comprehensive transformation and upgrading of industry.³⁹ Since then, the municipal government has been striving to shift the city's manufacturing resources towards robotics, renewable energy vehicles, innovative materials and intelligent equipment.⁴⁰ At the end of 2016, more than 300 companies were engaged in the manufacturing of intelligent equipment, of which approximately 100 of these in the R&D of robots.⁴¹

Recently, Foshan has been Nominated as the pilot city for 'Innovation China', and as a result there are plans for ongoing upgrades to Foshan's manufacturing industry.⁴² The city is proactively promoting the use of robots, is expanding 5G coverage, as well as encouraging the adoption of artificial intelligence and cloud computing. It is also incentivising a new generation of smart factories to build up an ecosystem of smart manufacturing.

Foshan strives to develop into a 'National Innovation City' and offers a favourable environment for start-up companies to build their base in the city. The Foshan High-Tech Industrial Development Zone, spanning over five main parks, one in each of Foshan's districts, is quickly becoming the core driver of the city's economy and contributed GBP 19 billion (CNY 169.1 billion) to the city's GDP in 2020.⁴³

Equipped with a mature manufacturing environment and business-friendly policy, Foshan has attracted many international firms to set up base. Panasonic Electrics and Haier are among the many international corporations which have established facilities in Foshan's industrial hi-tech zones.⁴⁴ Volkswagen has also expanded its production plant in Foshan and re-designed its facility to double production capacity and accommodate an increased demand for electric vehicles.⁴⁵ The plant has achieved zero emission of pollutants, utilising a complete purification and recycling system.

The local home appliance manufacturing giant Midea established a joint venture with the German robotics company Kuka in 2018 and established the Midea-Kuka Smart Manufacturing Industry Park in Shunde District. The Midea Group is also the first enterprise in Foshan to win the China Quality Award in 2021, affirming the city's high standards in manufacturing quality.⁴⁶

“ Foshan is an important milestone on the way to becoming a people-centric provider of sustainable mobility. ”

–Prof. Dr. Jochem Heizmann, President and CEO of Volkswagen Group China⁴⁷

Foshan National Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone⁴⁸

A 10km² scientific and technological industrial zone that gathers 96 of the world's top 500 investment enterprises, 76 listed companies and 1,512 high-tech enterprises.

Sanlongwan Innovation Cluster⁴⁹

A high-tech industrial hub that accumulates/gathers scientific research and innovation resources from China and internationally.



Max Zhang / Unsplash

CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The city's long history of intangible cultural heritage is well preserved by a large number of state-owned and private museums. In 2018, the government proposed to construct a 'museum city' in the hope of increasing the number of art museums in Foshan to 100 in five years.⁵⁰ Since the launch of this plan, the government has invested more than GBP 3 million (CNY 27 million) in encouraging the building of museums. With this push, Foshan now has around 250 museums, including those under construction, making it home to the second highest number of non-state-owned museums in Guangdong province.

Concerted efforts by the local government to increase cross-sector pollination with the wider creative industries saw the launch of a multi-channel 'museum +' initiative, to promote the integration of cultural tourism and heritage digitisation.⁵¹

The launching of He Art Museum (HEM) in 2020 is a long-awaited addition to support Foshan's contemporary art scene and broadens the cultural capacity of the city to expand beyond its traditional cultural heritage. It promises to deliver a robust programme that provides industry thought leadership, rooted in the contemporary interpretation of Lingnan cultural tradition. In 2020, HEM cooperated with Museum 2050, a China-centric platform that looks at museum development, to present the 'Museum 2050 X HEM' series, providing a one-day symposium and upskilling workshops for museum practitioners across China.⁵²

“ We believe that the arts are one of the core motivations for the development of society. The community where the art museum is located is more industrial in nature. Most of the people in the surrounding area have very limited access to opportunities to participate in art, and they don't yet have the habit of seeing art. Therefore, it is a new dawn for a museum in the region. ”

—Shao Shu, Executive Director of He Art Museum⁵³

An ambitious project, tentatively known as the ‘Foshan New City Cultural and Art Centre’ project, has been launched by the city to establish a major new art district.⁵⁴ On completion, the project will create a total campus area of 222,400m² to include the existing Foshan Grand Theatre, the City Exhibition Hall, Science Museum, Youth and Children's Palace, city library, and archive centre among others, as well as a new music hall, exhibition space and fine arts museum, with a total construction budget of GBP 289 million (CNY 2.6 billion).⁵⁵ The relocation of Foshan Museum to a new 20,000m² home is expected to be completed by the end of 2021. The four-storey building, constructed in the shape of six irregularly-sized cubes, will provide 5,000m² of exhibition space to showcase the city's cultural treasures.⁵⁶



CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

FOSHAN

Cultural City Profile
China

The cultural scene in Foshan is robust and has deep roots in the city's heritage. Nimble and digitally savvy, local institutions were quick to navigate the 'new reality' of Covid-19 and pivot to opportunities post-pandemic. For example, Foshan Grand Theatre launched more than 10 online featured activities during its close-down period from February to July 2020, including the popularisation of online theatre arts, live theatre exploration, live interviews with artists, and online concerts.⁵⁷ 22 museums have created their online archives or digital exhibitions to stay connected to their audiences virtually.⁵⁸

To better connect with overseas audiences in the face of Covid-19 travel restrictions, the municipality has also launched a social media campaign 'Discover Foshan' on Facebook,⁵⁹ Instagram⁶⁰ and Twitter⁶¹ to continue sharing the city's latest news and events highlights. The official Facebook account has accumulated nearly 450,000 followers.



Foshan Grand Theatre⁶²

Foshan Grand Theatre is the core element of Foshan New City Cultural and Art Centre, and has over 1,100 seats. As a modern theatre, the complex hosts large-scale performances such as dance, opera, drama, symphony concerts, and variety shows. It also operates art education and training programmes across all age groups/multiple age groups, including performance classes, master classes and knowledge exchange activities. 'Unlimited Youth' is a flagship project under the leadership of Foshan Grand Theatre to match lifestyle-sensitive young cultural practitioners with pan-creative spaces in the city. The match-making scheme effectively connects public resources with private partners, nurturing a local ecosystem across commercial venues such as boutique hotels, ateliers, community centres and co-working spaces.⁶³

He Art Museum⁶⁴

Backed by the family behind the appliance maker Midea, He Art Museum is designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, with its soft launch taking place in October 2020. Its main collection includes emerging contemporary art and modern Chinese paintings, especially those from the Lingnan school. It features a host of family-friendly activities, such as art and handicraft courses and glass making workshops. Its architectural design is a contemporary interpretation of the traditional Lingnan cultural aesthetics. The visual contrast between different geometrical shapes formed from 'circles' and 'squares' took inspiration from ancient Chinese philosophy, with a circle representing the sky and a square representing the earth.

Art Institute of Foshan⁶⁵

Established in 2011, the Art Institute of Foshan collaborates with different arts and cultural institutions to organise exhibitions and art salons in the city. Since 2017, the Institute has recruited young painters from Foshan to work together with the institution for three years to realise their artistic goals.

Foshan Museum⁶⁶

Established in 1959, the museum is preparing to relocate to a 20,000m² new campus within the Foshan New City Cultural and Art Centre. Its comprehensive collection includes over 35,000 cultural relics ranging from ceramics, painting and calligraphy, jade, and wood-carving to bronzeware and lacquerware. Its online archive section provides a 360-degree view of parts of its collection.⁶⁷ The museum organises regular forums at local schools and bookstores.

Dongpeng Mingshan Ceramic Museum⁶⁸

A private museum opened in 2019 showcasing artefacts and relics that run through more than 8,000 years of human history from the Neolithic Age to the Qing Dynasty, as well as the ancient ceramic inscriptions from 20 countries.



Guangdong Shiwan Ceramics Museum⁶⁹

The first museum dedicated to ceramics in the Guangdong region. The renowned Nanfeng ancient kilns and two dragon kilns are situated in the museum outdoor display area.

The Silk Museum of the Southern Silk Capital⁷⁰

This is the first private Silk Museum in Guangdong Province with a collection that spans across the development history of the silk industry from the Ming Dynasty to modern times. In addition to the exhibition hall, the museum consists of a fish pond, a grape ecological park and an agricultural culture experience area for visitors to engage in activities such as mulberry picking, silk reeling, cocoon peeling, weaving and dyeing.

Lingnan Dialect Cultural Museum⁷¹

Newly opened in September 2021, the museum is the first provincial-level physical language museum in China to preserve the three major dialects (Cantonese, Min dialects and Hakka) in the city.

Guangdong Dagan Museum | Lingnan Financial Museum⁷²

This private museum is the first museum in Guangdong province to open at night.⁷³ Their bi-weekly evening sessions, *Tinghongyiehua*, invite curators, archaeologists, scholars, and craftsmen of intangible heritage culture to share their expertise. Subject matters range from gold foil forging techniques to heritage preservation.

Guangdong Province Puppet Art Theatre⁷⁴

Founded in 1956, the Guangdong Puppetry Art Troupe serves a primarily Cantonese audience with approximately 300 shows performed per year in its theatre and other off-site venues such as factories, schools, army camps and rural areas. It created an original puppet show to pay tribute to the front-line personnel involved in combating Covid-19 in 2020.⁷⁵



wulimaymay / Unsplash

CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

FOSHAN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Foshan Youth Innovation Park⁷⁶

An incubation base for innovation and entrepreneurship, composed of a cluster of buildings, including office spaces, multi-functional event areas, a complex for international youth apartments, and rejuvenated studios from former industrial plants.

Lingnan Tiandi⁷⁷

A popular hang-out among tourists and young people near the Ancestral Temple, which combines both the historical and contemporary elements of Foshan. Handicraft stores and exhibitions where visitors can learn about Foshan culture are integrated with the ancient architecture in the area.

Xianhang Bookstore⁷⁸

An independent bookstore brand which co-hosts museum talks and sharing sessions. Its three branches are considered among the most beautiful bookstores in Foshan.

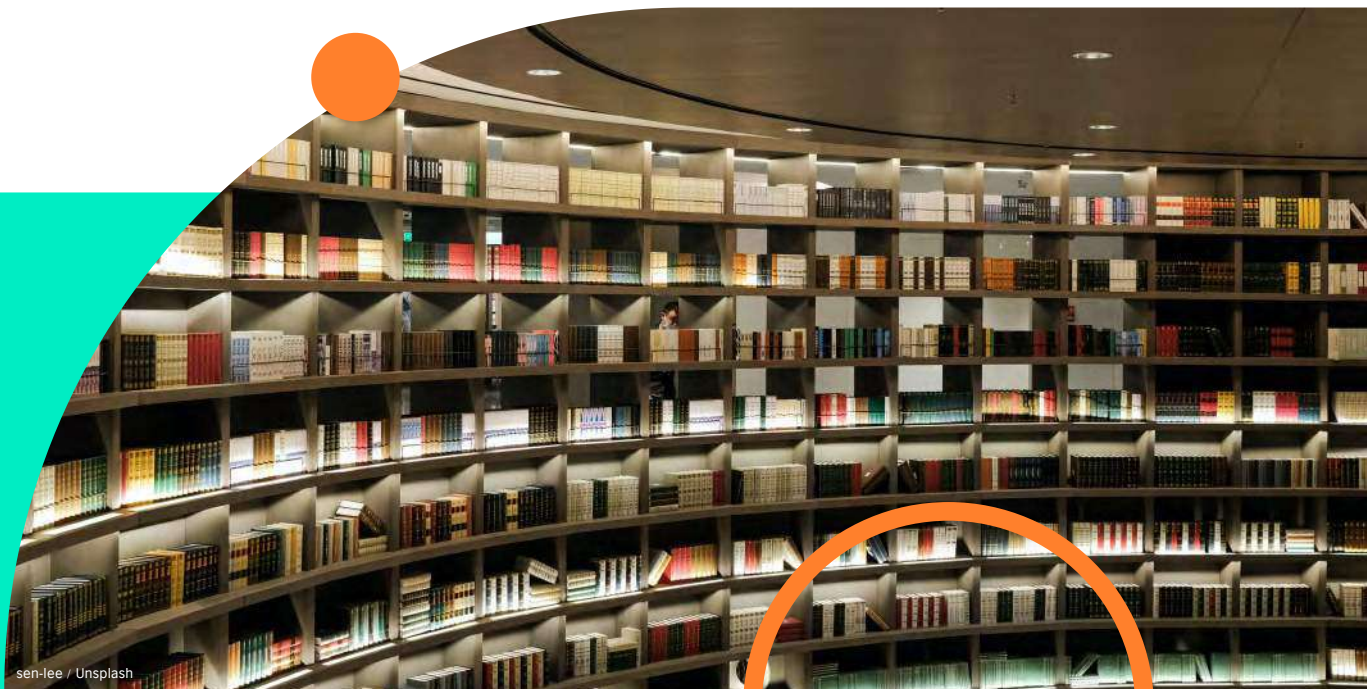
Danru Bookstore⁷⁹

Opened in 2021, Danru Bookstore is open 24-hours a day. Located at the lakeside of Xianhu Lake Resort, it welcomes over a thousand visitors per day and offers a quiet space for reading. It frequently hosts reading sessions, art workshops and connoisseur events.⁸⁰

Shijian⁸¹

Founded in 2017, Shijian is a boutique hotel brand in Foshan. It now operates three branches, providing a mixed range of cultural programming with space rental, creative marketplaces, exhibitions and talks.





Foshan Chenzao book club⁸²

Foshan Chenzao book club is an independent affiliate of book lovers. It frequently organises reading events, book launches, panel discussions, journaling sessions, and health awareness programmes. The club leads the Foshan Chenzao Women's Leadership Forum, founded in 2016 at Foshan Public Library.

Gungho Space⁸³

A co-working space and incubator, founded in 2017 for Bay Area entrepreneurs. 40% of its residents are SMEs coming from Hong Kong, looking for affordable space.⁸⁴

Xia Nan No.1 Community⁸⁵

An old village redecorated with colourful graffiti inspired by traditional Lingnan culture. It is among the top instagrammable locations in Foshan.

79 WeChat ID: gh_24093655e233

81 WeChat ID: gh_c00ec1da7ffb

82 WeChat ID: foshanchenzao

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

FOSHAN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

“

From the finest puppet designer in the nation to the youngest professional lion dancer, Guangdong is home to artists working in over 70 different arts, crafts and culinary traditions that comprise its rich intangible cultural heritage. ”

—That's Mag⁸⁶

Shao Shu⁸⁷

Executive Director of He Art Museum. Shao led the curatorial team at the Long Art Museum, Shanghai between 2012 to 2017.

Ding Fangzhong⁸⁸

Curator of Guangdong Dagan Museum | Lingnan Financial Museum. He was recognised as one of the six 'Persons of the Year for Cultural Heritage Conservation' by the Guangdong Foundation for Cultural Heritage Conservation.⁸⁹ He is a former consultant for Christie's Auction (China) and Poly Auction.

Wu Shenlong⁹⁰

A skilled gold foil craftsman who established Lianhe Gold Foil Factory in 1981. His work won the gold prize for 'Inheritance and Innovation— Arts and Crafts Exhibition' held by the Chinese Arts and Crafts Institute.

He Yaohui⁹¹

A leading figure of Foshan woodcarving with over 50 years of experience. He was selected as the inheritor of the craft when Foshan woodcarving was listed as Guangdong provincial intangible cultural heritage.

Liu Zhongping⁹²

A provincial inheritor of woodcut Chinese New Year pictures in Foshan. Born in 1989, Liu is a part of a younger generation of practitioners devoted to the field. Her contemporary iteration of the traditional woodcut pictures has been well-received by younger consumer groups.

Jian Xizhao⁹³

Ceramic sculptor born in Foshan. He is now Vice President at the Art Institute of Foshan.

Lan Zhifeng⁹⁴

Born in 1982, Lan is a sculptor based in Guangzhou. Currently working as a hired artist of the Art Institute of Foshan, his works are collected by art institutions in Russia, Italy and Turkey.

Guangzhou Zhibuyu Troupe⁹⁵

Established in 2015 and based in Guangzhou with a footprint in Foshan, the troupe is made up of a group of young creatives who focus on Cantonese theatre performances.

Andy Yip⁹⁶

Venture capitalist and CEO of co-working space Gunghe Space. A Hong-Kong native, Yip started Gunghe Space in Foshan and Zhongshan aiming to provide affordable space and great opportunities for the Guangzhou-Hong Kong-Macau area.

Foshan GK⁹⁷

Foshan's e-Sports team, entering the final for the 2021 World Championship for the popular home-made Chinese game Honour of Kings.⁹⁸

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

FOSHAN

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Given the well-developed transport network between Foshan and the neighbouring cities, Foshan is a convenient location for festivals and events, aiming at reaching a regional audience base. The city is also working hard to host large-scale art events to boost tourism and citizen participation. The Foshan City Arts Season and Public Art Exhibition in Nanhai were both successful attempts to scale up the city's cultural offer.

Guangdong Intangible Heritage Week/ Foshan Qiuse Parade⁹⁹

Since 2016, the Guangdong Intangible Heritage Week has been held to coincide with the longstanding Foshan Qiuse Parade to present a series of performances and public activities. Each year the event attracts thousands of visitors from different parts of the country to celebrate the cultural heritage of Foshan.

International Wing Chun Competition¹⁰⁰

An annual competition that attracts over 1000 martial arts practitioners to participate in Foshan.

1st Foshan City Arts Season, 2021¹⁰¹

Co-organised by Foshan Performing Arts Centre (Qionghua Theatre) and Foshan Grand Theatre, the first edition of the event was held from September to December 2021, featuring Cantonese opera, folk dance, modern and contemporary dance, drama performances and band concerts. A 'Star' initiative has been introduced to raise awareness of autistic children, with part of the art season's revenue to be donated to fund organisations in this field.¹⁰²

1st Public Art Exhibition in Nanhai, 2020¹⁰³

From January to April 2020, 27 site-specific art pieces were displayed at the Qiandeng Lake Park in Foshan. New works were commissioned to re-imagine the present and historical cultural assets of Nanhai (South China). He Guiyan,¹⁰⁴ lecturer at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, served as the curator of the 1st Public Art Exhibition.



South China Book Festival (Foshan Sub-branch), 2021¹⁰⁵

Established in 1993, the South China Book Festival takes place in 20 prefecture-level cities in the Guangdong region, targeting teenagers to encourage reading and literature appreciation. The 2021 edition in Foshan saw a combination of online and offline activities, including hybrid book clubs, storytelling sessions and online promotions making use of WeChat and the 'Foshan+' application. The event also collaborated with independent bookstores and libraries across the city as 'check-in' spots to increase engagement.¹⁰⁶

24th National Exhibition of Inventions, 1985¹⁰⁷

This annual convention has been a trade show fixture since 1985. 2021 marks the 5th year for the event to be held at Tanzhou International Convention and Exhibition Centre. The exhibition showcases high-end equipment manufacturing, biological medicine, smart homes, energy conservation and environmental protection.

Internet Plus Expo¹⁰⁸

An annual expo for local and international companies to showcase their latest technologies, products and services, especially in the fields of artificial intelligence, big data, cloud and robotic technology.

Lishui Lily Culture Festival¹⁰⁹

The festival is held in Wanqing Horticultural World in January or February every year, with thousands of lilies, Dutch tulips and spring flowers arranged in creative forms and themes. The 10th edition held in 2021, included a creative market that sold an array of local flower-related products such as perfumes, scented teas, facial masks, and accessories.



Hǎi Kǒu

海口

CHINA

Cultural City Profile

juniperphoton / unsplash



eriksson-luo / Unsplash



isaac-chou / unsplash



paolo nicolello / Unsplash

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INTRODUCING HAIKOU

HAIKOU
—
Cultural City Profile
China

Haikou is the capital city of Hainan province in southern China. Hainan (which literally means south of the sea) consists of various islands, with Hainan Island making up the majority of the province. Acting as the main port since 1949, the old town of Haikou is characterised by architecture influenced by a mixture of styles including Portuguese, French and Southeast Asian.

As a coastal city lined with beautiful beaches and tall coconut palms, Haikou is also known as the ‘Coconut City’. The total population of the four districts in Haikou reached 2.8 million in 2020.¹ The city’s GDP was reported at almost GBP 20 billion (CNY180 billion) in 2020, accounting for roughly one third of the province’s overall GDP.²

Tourism is the primary economic engine of the city, thanks to its tropical climate, rich natural resources, and laid-back atmosphere. To stimulate foreign tourist visits, the province offers a 30-day visa-free entry for citizens from 59 countries.³ In 2019, more than 83 million tourists from home and abroad visited the province, an increase of 9% year on year.⁴ According to the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), the Chinese Government intends to build the province into an international centre for tourism and consumption⁵ with an aim for the added value of tourism to reach 12% of the provincial GDP by 2025.⁶

“ Bordering both the sea and the river, Haikou is an award-winning city with rich and diverse tourism resources. In addition to its historically significant sites and the rich cultural heritage of its people, the city and surrounding areas offer a vast array of stunning landscapes to explore, fascinating natural wonders and mouth-watering cuisine. ”

—Liao Xiaoping, Director of the Haikou Tourism Commission⁷

Alongside tourism, a pilot free trade zone for the province was launched in 2018, aiming to transform Haikou into a high-growth regional cultural and entertainment hub. New infrastructure under construction to realise this plan includes the Haikou International Duty-Free City, Haikou Performing Arts New Space and Hainan Science and Technology Museum.⁸

The city is home to top Chinese higher education institutions such as Hainan University which specialises in research fields of tropical agriculture, marine science and policy development for Hainan Free Trade Port (FTP). Its State Key Laboratory of Marine Resource in the South China Sea is the first state-level facility for marine resources development and protection in the region.

HAIKOU IN NUMBERS

HAIKOU

Cultural City Profile
China



70%

of the park's total output.

Haikou National High-tech Industrial Development Zone is the only national-level industrial park in Hainan, with hi-tech companies contributing over 70% of the park's total output.



NO.1

best air quality in 2020

Haikou is dubbed as 'Eastern Hawaii' and 'Coconut City' thanks to its long coastline featuring white sandy beaches and a clear ocean. It came first with best air quality in 2020.

TOP 10 most famous Chinese historical and cultural streets

In 2009, Haikou Old Town was awarded the title of 'Top ten most famous Chinese historical and culture streets' by the National Ministry of Culture.

1000



20,000

Hainan province's heritage activation efforts resulted in a growth of Li brocade weavers from 1,000 in 2009 to about 20,000 in 2019.



The total population of Haikou reached 2.8 million in 2020. The city's GDP was reported at almost GBP 20 billion (CNY 180 billion) in 2020, accounting for roughly one third of the province's overall GDP.

LEIQIONG UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK

Leiqiong UNESCO Global Geopark, located a 30-min drive from downtown Haikou, is the only tropical volcanic geopark in the country and was included in the UNESCO Global Geopark Network in 2006.



5
MILLION



Hainan has four native ethnicity group, namely the Han, the Li, the Miao and the Hui people. There are about 10 commonly-used dialects in Hainan, among which the Hainan dialect is the most widely understood and is spoken by 5 million citizens.

CONTEXT

Haikou is dubbed as 'Eastern Hawaii' due to its long coastline featuring white sandy beaches and a clear ocean. Situated in the tropics, weather in Haikou is usually pleasant, with tropical storms and typhoons across spring and summer.

As the result of long-time efforts by the provincial government to improve liveability, Haikou came first with best air quality in 2020, followed by Lhasa (Tibet Autonomous Region) and Zhuhai (southern Guangdong).⁹

Hainan has four native ethnic groups, namely the Han, the Li, the Miao and the Hui people. The Han group accounts for more than 80% of the population in the province and resides mainly in the northern and coastal regions, including Haikou.¹⁰ The Li and Miao people were the earliest inhabitants of Hainan Island. The footprint of the Li people on the island can be traced back to over 5,000 years ago, whereas the Miao people came from the Guangdong region about 400 years ago.¹¹ There are about ten commonly-used dialects in Hainan. The Hainan dialect is the most widely understood and is spoken by five million citizens.¹²

HERITAGE REVITALISATION

HAIKOU

Cultural City Profile
China

Haikou and the province of Hainan are rich in natural resources – from volcanic geological landscape to maritime ecology.¹³ Leiqiong UNESCO Global Geopark, located a 30-min drive from downtown Haikou, is the only tropical volcanic geopark in the country and was included in the UNESCO Global Geopark Network in 2006.¹⁴

The coastline between Haikou and Sanya provides some of the best waves in China and gave rise to a growing surfing culture around watersports tourism.

“

Haikou's Qilou Old Street is perhaps the most impressive example of arcade architecture in all of China. To some extent, it is also the symbol of Haikou. The Qilou area has witnessed many changes that have affected the city in the past century; it has also benefited – architecturally and commercially – from the deeply-rooted love felt for their hometown by overseas Chinese from Southeast Asia.

”

–Jake Canning, Tropical Hainan¹⁵

Haikou's Qilou Old Town is one of the best preserved districts in China, featuring a unique Hainan architectural style known as 'qilou'. The architectural vernacular can be dated back to the 13th century, and can be found throughout the island. The streets are usually characterised by two-storey buildings with the first floor set back to form a porticoed arcade. In 2009, Haikou Old Town was awarded the title of 'Top ten most famous Chinese historical and culture streets' by the National Ministry of Culture.¹⁶

The city's Qilou Old Town is a harmonious blend of architectural styles with European and Asian influences, particularly from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Its development is rooted in Haikou's maritime trade and shipping industry, with a fusion of architectural influences. With the government's effort to rejuvenate dilapidated neighbourhoods since 2007, the century-old cobbled streets are now occupied by cafés, bookstores, souvenir shops and boutique hotels.¹⁷ Other qilou districts in Haikou include Deshengsha Road, Bo'ai Road, Xinhua Road, Jiefang Road, and Changdi Road.



agathe-yosefina / Unsplash

In addition to architectural rejuvenation, intangible heritage of minority cultures and traditions is a focus area for conservation and reactivation. Hainan province is one of the major areas where the Li ethnic group resides. Li Brocade was recognised as an intangible cultural heritage item of China in 2009, involving textile techniques of spinning, dyeing, weaving and embroidering employed by women of Li ethnicity.¹⁸ The craft was once at the edge of extinction but local government has committed to its preservation by investing GBP 7.8 million (CNY 70 million) in the past decade. These include:

- establishing five knowledge transfer halls
- a 98,700 m² raw material production base
- 16 Li brocade inheritance villages

These heritage activation efforts triggered growth in the population of Li brocade weavers - from 1,000 in 2009 to about 20,000 in 2019.¹⁹ The Hainan Li & Miao Creative Cultural Design Artworks Tour Exhibition aims to increase the profile and R&D capacity of Li crafts and design, with an appeal to younger markets.²⁰

Haikou was home to a number of important imperial politicians and literati throughout Chinese history, many of whom were government officials banished from the imperial court. As Hainan province is located on the southernmost tip of the country, it used to be a place of exile in ancient China and has accumulated a rich tradition of poetry. This has also left behind a cultural footprint in the city, including key heritage sites such as:



Tomb of Hai Rui²¹

Hai Rui was a Chinese scholar-official and politician during the Ming dynasty born in Qiongsan, Hainan. The site of his tomb is designated as one of the Major Sites Protected for their Historical and Cultural Value at the National Level in Hainan province.

Temple of Five Lords²²

The temple, originally constructed in the Ming Dynasty, was renovated on several occasions during the Qing Dynasty. The existing complex consists of ancient architecture including the Five Lords Ancestral Hall, the Sugong Memorial Temple, Hairui and Fubo Memorial Temples, Guanjia Tang (Watching Crop Hall) and Xuepu Tang (Studying Hall).

Xiuying Fort²³

Built in 1891 to resist a French invasion during the Qing dynasty, Xiuying Fort is now a popular tourist attraction in Haikou. Visitors can wander through the ammunition storage rooms, old billets for the soldiers and underground tunnels.

Xitian Temple²⁴

A temple originally built in the Ming Dynasty made up of entirely wood and brick structures, decorated with classical murals and carvings.



CULTURE, ART AND CIVIC POLICY

Since 2018 with the launch of the Hainan province pilot free trade zone and port, local authorities have introduced favourable policies to lure foreign investors and entrepreneurs to Haikou. Cultural and creative clustering has also been prioritised, including multiple industrial parks which focus on the tourism, service and hi-tech sectors.

Haikou plays an important role on the Maritime Silk Road. This strategic position saw dedicated public investment to strengthen the cultural landscape of the city. Cultural ambition is projected through heritage preservation and activation campaigns across tangible and intangible resource assets – from the field of maritime archeology to ethnic minority traditions.

PILOT FREE TRADE ZONE

HAIKOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

In April 2018, Hainan Free Trade Zone was launched to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the founding of Hainan as a province. The entire island of Hainan is to be transformed into a free trade zone (FTZ), becoming the first FTZ that covers an entire province in China. It will focus on establishing a leading business environment in China and developing tourism, modern service and high tech industries. As the FTZ matures in providing free trade and investment, the plan is to construct a Hainan Free Trade Port by 2025 which connects China with South Asia and Southeast Asia.²⁵ This also ties in with China's Belt and Road Initiative, where Hainan will be an important hub on the Maritime Silk Road.

Duty-free shopping

Opening up Hainan fulfils the 'dual circulation' development paradigm that is based on boosting the 'internal circulation' (domestic economy) and integrating it with the 'external circulation' (global economy).²⁶ Chinese tourists spend millions purchasing high-end consumer products in overseas markets annually, thus Hainan is aiming to leverage its exclusive offshore duty-free policy to attract domestic customers to spend locally. From July 2020, visitors leaving Hainan (but not China) are entitled to an annual duty-free quota of GBP 11,111 (CNY 100,000) per year per person, an increase from GBP 3,333 (CNY 30,000) previously. There are nine duty-free stores in the province, most of them situated in Haikou and Sanya (a city in southern Hainan with a strong focus on tourism). Offshore duty-free sales in Hainan reached GBP 5.2 billion (CNY 46.8 billion) between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021, soaring 226% year-on-year.²⁷

Riding on these favourable government policies and enormous consumer demand, new large-scale duty-free shopping complexes are opening across Haikou, such as the GDF Plaza (Haikong Global Boutique Haikou Duty-Free City) and Times DF (Haikou Mission Hills Centreville Duty-Free City) in January 2021. The former houses over 200 world-renowned brands and the largest Apple store in the province.²⁸ The Haikou International Duty-Free City project, scheduled to open in mid-2022, operated by the leading China Duty-Free Group, will feature around 930,000m² of shopping space.²⁹

MARITIME SILK ROAD

HAIKOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

“

Hainan is at the forefront of China's booming underwater archaeology field.

”

—Emily Conrad, *The World of Chinese*³⁰



conny-schneider / Unsplash

Hainan Island had been a crucial hub for international trade on the route of the Maritime Silk Road – the maritime section of the historic Silk Road that connected China, Southeast Asia, India, Africa and Europe. For thousands of years, ships from different parts of the world carried valuable and rare treasures traveling back and forth across the South China Sea. Some of these merchant vessels did not make it through the vigorous tides and were brought down to the deep ocean along with their fortunes. Given Haikou's strategic location and historical bond to maritime trade, it has become a key site for marine research and maritime archaeology. In 2013, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road was initiated with the purpose of connecting the member countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, with Haikou being one of the main cities on the route.³¹

“

Hainan is an important link in the Maritime Silk Road. Many heritages of the historic Maritime Silk Road are scattered among the cities in the province, such as Haikou, Sanya and Sansha.

”

—Lu Zhiyuan, Director of Hainan Tourism Development Commission³²

As the Belt and Road Initiative takes a more prominent role in China's foreign policy, underwater archaeology has been placed on a higher priority in the central government's agenda to revive the legacy of the Maritime Silk Road. Located at the Jiangdong New District of Haikou, the National Institute for South China Sea Studies (NISCSS) specialises in research on issues of the South China Sea, such as geopolitics, international law, and environmental protection. It is comprised of research centres for maritime economy, marine

science, the Maritime Silk Road and a division for international exchanges. It has established nearly one hundred think tanks with over twenty countries or regions, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan.³³

The South China Sea's Underwater Archaeology Research Centre at the Hainan Provincial Museum is another key centre in Haikou in the conservation of underwater relic and knowledge exchange on maritime archeology and histories of the South China Sea. In 2007, excavation began on Huaguangjiao NO.1, a shipwreck discovered in 1996. It represented a milestone for China's underwater archaeology as it is one of the oldest shipwrecks discovered and excavated in the South China Sea. Remains of the ship and its cultural relics are conserved and displayed at the Hainan Provincial Museum. The Research Centre played an integral role in retrieving a large number of artefacts from the Huaguangjiao NO.1 shipwreck. Open to the public at the museum since 2008, the Research Centre has repaired over 9,500 of the ceramic objects and gave internationally-recognised insights on ancient maritime trade and ceramics production.³⁴



ART IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT: PAVILIONS BY THE SEASIDE

HAIKOU

Cultural City Profile
China

As the ambitious project of transforming Hainan into a free trade zone is in full swing, the local government is accelerating of the upgrade the city's infrastructure. The Haikou Tourism and Culture Investment Holding Group is a state-owned corporation, established in 2005 responsible for the investment and construction of urban tourism transformation projects, such as the facelift of Haikou Qilou Old Town from 2010 to 2015.³⁵ In 2019, the Group launched a Haikou Bay Rejuvenation Plan in an effort to enhance the use of public space along the Haikou coastline.

This plan involves constructing sixteen coastal pavilions along the 32-kilometre Haikou Bay and Jiangdong New District. These will be known collectively as Pavilions by the Seaside. Under the direction of celebrated curator Weng Ling³⁶, some of the world's most critically-acclaimed local and international architects and artists are invited to design the series of pavilions. The line-up includes Anish Kapoor, Kengo Kuma, Ryūichi Sakamoto, Sou Fujimoto, Thomas Heatherwick, Bjarke Ingels, Kimsooja, Zhang Peili, Lin Tianmiao and others.³⁷ Pavilions by the Seaside is expected to become a benchmark for other coastal cities on how to incorporate art in urban development.

In 2021, the first pavilion, Cloudscape of Haikou by Ma Yansong, a Chinese architect and founder of MAD Architects, was completed and immediately became a favourite photogenic spot for youngsters. Its cloud-like structure and expansive harbour view attracts thousands to visit and take pictures to share on social media. Originally called the Wormhole Library, it serves as a multi-functional building for visitors to read, appreciate nature and attend open-air performances.³⁸



INNOVATION PARKS: HI-TECH AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

HAIKOU

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China



wen-guanghua / Unsplash

Attracting local and foreign talent specialising in high-tech industries to base in Hainan province is one of the key objectives of building the FTZ. The establishment of eleven key industrial parks was announced in June 2020 to attract relevant industries and businesses – five of which are located in Haikou. Haikou National High-tech Industrial Development Zone is the only national-level industrial park in Hainan, with hi-tech companies contributing over 70% of the park's total output.³⁹

These parks offer generous deductions in corporate and personal income tax as well as rental subsidies to qualifying institutions and personnel. Opened in 2015, Haikou Fullsinging Town Internet Industrial Park is located in the heart of the Haikou commercial area. It is now home to more than 1,000 companies, including the regional headquarters of Alibaba, Ant Financial, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Suning and iQIYI.⁴⁰

Another ambitious master plan is under construction in the east of Haikou. Expected to be completed by 2025, the Haikou Jiangdong New District will be a 30,000-hectare area which envisages a sustainable residential, industrial, financial and tourist district.⁴¹ Besides serving as an international hub for trade and finance, the district places emphasis on ecological responsibility by featuring a 10,600-hectare national nature reserve.

CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The cultural ecosystem is policy driven and property based in Haikou, with a tight and budding grassroots scene. As of 2019, there are eleven performance centres, two museums, two art museums, two mass art centres, four cultural centres and six public libraries in Haikou.⁴² With the completion of Haikou Performing Arts New Space, Hainan Science and Technology Museum and Pavilions by the Seaside in the near future, the cultural scene of Haikou is expected to become more vibrant.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

HAIKOU

Cultural City Profile
China

Hainan Provincial Museum⁴³

Opened in 2008, it is the only comprehensive modern museum in Hainan province. The museum possesses more than 20,000 collection items that comprehensively display the history of Hainan and the South China Sea, including traditional artefacts and intangible cultural heritage of local ethnic minorities. Its highlight is the Huaguangjiao NO.1 shipwreck and the porcelain pieces retrieved from the ship.

Haikou Museum⁴⁴

A modest museum attached to the Temple of Five Lords in a three-storey traditional style building. It has eight exhibitions displaying the history of famous figures from Hainan and ethnic minority cultures.

Hainan Provincial Library⁴⁵

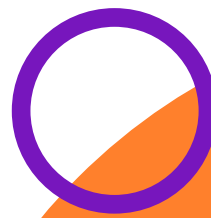
Established in 2007, the library occupies 25,000m² with a collection of more than two-million books and documents. It is equipped with study rooms, a 24-hour self-service library, exhibition halls and cafés.

Hainan Centre for the Performing Arts⁴⁶

Built in 2010, the Hainan Centre for the Performing Arts is the top quality performance venue in Hainan province. Its theatre can accommodate up to 1,230 people, and features musical concerts, comedies, children theatre and dance performances.

Haikoushi Masses Museum of Art⁴⁷

Opened in 1951 as a cultural centre, it was renamed Haikoushi Masses Museum of Art in 1987. It has been named a 'first-class cultural centre' four times by the Ministry of Culture. It hosts regular workshops on intangible cultural heritage and organises exhibitions for Chinese paintings and calligraphy.



Wuyuan River Stadium⁴⁸

Completed in 2018, the stadium provides seats for more than 40,000 visitors – the largest in Hainan province. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the province, 11,914 students participated in a bamboo dance performance, breaking the Guinness record of the largest bamboo dance.⁴⁹

Hainan International Convention And Exhibition Centre⁵⁰

Designed and built by Atelier Li Xinggang, it consists of a 77,000 m² exhibition centre, a conference centre, a five-star hotel, a seven-star hotel on the sea, as well as serviced apartments, offices and commercial facilities.

Cloudscape of Haikou⁵¹

Cloudscape is a library housed in a contemporary building by Chinese architecture studio MAD completed in 2021. The seamless white concrete building consists of a library and a mixed-use and facilities block. The library encompasses a reception area, office space, flexible reading and event space alongside a children's area with alcoves and an intimate reading environment.

“ We want the building to be an urban space that people would like to make part of their daily lives. Architecture, art, humanity and nature meet here, and they will open up a journey of imaginations for the visitors to explore and appreciate the meaning that different forms of beauty brings to their lives. ”

–Ma Yansong, founder of MAD⁵²

⁵² Ibid.



CREATIVE HUBS AND MARKETPLACES

HAIKOU

—
Cultural City Profile
China

Park⁵³

A large-scale shopping mall that targets young people aged 18 to 35 who value quality of living by offering an all-round shopping/leisure experience, such as live music performances, gaming broadcasts and exhibitions.

The Inspiration Market⁵⁴

A handicraft market that takes place at Haikou's Nⁿ Park featuring a variety of local Hainan handicrafts, coconut ice cream, art, live music and island souvenirs.



Guoxin bookstore⁵⁵

This three-storey bookstore resides at the corner of Qilou Old Town. The ground floor houses thousands of Chinese books and a café. The second-floor hosts regular art exhibitions by local artists and the third floor is a tea house.⁵⁶

898 Art Village⁵⁷

Set up in May 2020, the 898 Art Village, transformed from old village near the Jiangdong New District, is now home to more than 20 artists from China and abroad. In 2021, the first Haikou Jiangdong Rural Revitalisation Art Festival was held at the village.⁵⁸

Century Park⁵⁹

Century Park is an 8.40 hectare public park located in downtown Haikou. It consists of a large outdoor music plaza where concerts are held. Its location by the Century Bridge allows visitors to overlook the beautiful Haikou Bay.

Frey Bar⁶⁰

A LGBT+ friendly bar with themed parties on the weekends.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

HAIKOU

Cultural City Profile
China

Chen Gang⁶¹

Chen is an expert in Hainan's history and the director of the Hainan Provincial Museum. He is responsible for curating exhibitions, the collection and protection of cultural relics and museum management.

Li Zhao⁶²

Director of the South China Sea's Underwater Archaeology Research Centre at the Hainan Provincial Museum.

Wu Muye⁶³

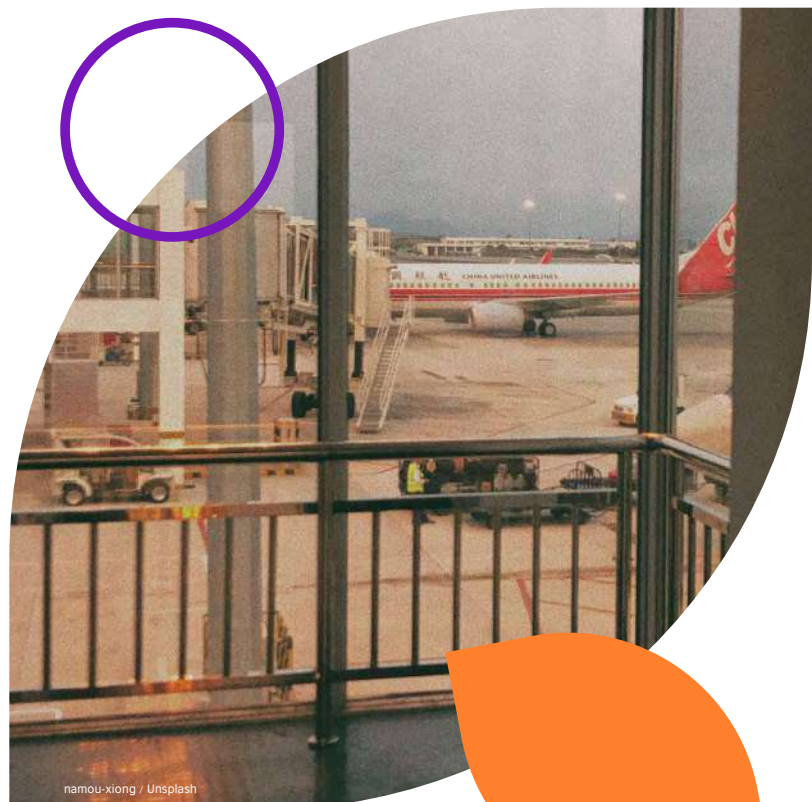
An acclaimed classical pianist who grew up in Hainan, Wu attended the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse in Paris and was the first Chinese pianist to receive the Perfect Piano Performing Artist Medal from the French Ministry of Culture.

Wang Kai⁶⁴

Wang is the co-founder and project Leader of 898 Art Village. He is an artist who has worked in the advertisement and media industry and led the transformation of Quanyong East Village, modeling on the artist hub 798 Art Zone in Beijing.

Wang Bin⁶⁵

Born in 1990, Wang is the vice president of Hainan Oil Painting Academy and co-founder of 898 Art Village. He was the first oil painter who took residence in the village. He realised there was a lack of artist villages in Hainan and decided to start the 898 Art Village with Wang Kai.



FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

HAIKOU

—
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Hainan Island Carnival⁶⁶

Hainan's annual Island Carnival is a lavish festival of over 200 events celebrating Hainan's unique blend of traditional culture, tropical beauty, minority heritage and modern development. 2020 marked the 21st anniversary of the carnival. It is a province-wide festival with Haikou being the main event site.

Hainan Art Festival⁶⁷

Organised by the provincial government of Hainan, the 15-day festival is the largest and most influential art festival in the province. It takes place every three years. Different troupes and art groups bring about 70 performances to the public. The festival also involves awards for fine arts, photography and other categories.

Sanyuesan Traditional Folk Festival⁶⁸

Sanyuesan means the third of March in Mandarin, thus the folk festival is held on the third day of the third lunar month each year. It is a celebration of traditional folk customs of the Li and Miao ethnic groups. The festival was added to the national intangible cultural heritage list by the State Council in 2006.

Hainan (21st Century Maritime Silk Road) Choir Festival⁶⁹

Started in 2018, the festival aims to promote cultural and artistic exchanges along the Belt and Road. It is held at the Hainan Centre for the Performing Arts, featuring concerts, chorus competitions and exchange performances.

Haikou Children's Theatre Festival

Launched in 2021, the Haikou Children's Theatre Festival⁷⁰ is organised by the Hainan provincial government and China National Theatre for Children. It is the latest edition of government sponsored cultural events that appeal to young and family consumers.⁷¹



TGC Tencent Digital Cultural and Creative Festival⁷²

TGC (Tencent Games Carnival) is a festival combining the latest offerings of Tencent Games, Tencent e-Sports, Tencent Pictures and Tencent Anime. It takes place in Chengdu, Shanghai and Haikou. Engaging more than 300,000 people in 2019, visitors can experience immersive exhibitions and interactive games, using the latest immersive technologies. It also has a competition element for multiplayer video games.

Hainan World Leisure Tourism Expo⁷³

Set up in 2015, the annual expo is a trade show of international importance, featuring tourism, recreation and entertainment industries. It focuses on medicine, education, recreation, sports and maritime research.

Hainan Expo⁷⁴

Also known as China International Consumer Products Expo, its inaugural edition was jointly held by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and the Hainan Provincial government in May 2021. More than 1,300 brands from 69 countries and regions participated in the expo, including global luxury brands such as L'Oréal, YSL and Armani. Items displayed at the expo were exempt from import duties, import VAT and consumption tax thanks to Hainan's duty-free policy.

2021 9th Power Surfing Open⁷⁵

Organised at the Yijing Surfing Resort, the 2021 edition of the annual surfing competition hosted by the provincial government attracted over 200 competitors across five categories – male, female, junior, senior and group competitors.⁷⁶



SPECIAL THANKS

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cultural City Profile
China

Commissioned by the British Council, the research was led by Dr. Tom Fleming, director, Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (TFCC); Nana Yu-I Lee, senior researcher, TFCC; Annabelle Yiling Ku and Cindy Yung, consultant researchers, TFCC.

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