

Chengdu - One of China's Most Modern and Affluent Destinations

By Wolfgang Jaegel

Chengdu is one of the most popular tourist spots in China. Chengdu is not only the capital of Sichuan province but also one of the prominent cities in south-west China. Situated about 1700 kilometers west of Shanghai, the city is located in the western region of the Sichuan Basin, at the meeting point of the two rivers such as the Nan and the Fu.

Covering an area of roughly 12500 square kilometers, Chengdu is also the country's fourth largest city. Additionally, Chengdu serves as one of China's most prominent economic centers and transportation and communication centers. With a long as well as interesting history dating back to more than 3000 years ago, the city has been declared among the 24 cultural and historical cities by the State Council.

But, Chengdu is now popular as a modern, vibrant destination, boasting of attractions and comforts of international standards. However, Chengdu is one among the few places in the country that has managed to retain its traditional touch comprising greenery, ancient wooden houses, and customary artisans.

Since 400 BC, Chengdu has been the cultural as well as economic center of Sichuan Province. With towering mountains, azure lakes, splendid rivers, beautiful shrines, interesting museums, and alluring parks and gardens, Chengdu presents a diverse range of attractions. Further, due to its fertile land as well as agricultural wealth, the place is also bestowed with the titles of the 'Land of Milk and Honey' and 'Storehouse of Heaven.'

Chengdu is also sometimes referred to as the 'Brocade City,' because of the production of brocades during the reign of western Han Dynasty, which in turn was very popularly among the rich as well as royals. In fact, Chengdu is one of the most picturesque as well as serene destinations in the country. In this article, further mentioned are some of the top attractions in the place.

Great Buddha Statue at Leshan - Located about 100 miles south-west of Chengdu, this is one of the important landmarks in the province. The focal point is an enormous statue of Lord Buddha, which is about 330 feet tall and lies on the Lingyun Hill. It is built with an armed guard that stands at the either side the statue. Another specialty is that a path with about nine curves winds down from the cliff from atop the Buddha's head. According to legends, it was the Monk Hai Tong of Lingyun Monastery who took initiative to erect such a statue.

It took about 90 years to complete this stupendous work of art. The statue's attraction is not only its size but also its exquisite architecture. For instance, the Buddha's head consists of more than 1000 buns, all of which are exquisitely embedded. Also, a worth mentioning feature of this statue is its drainage system, with hidden gutters as well as channels, all of which are scattered across its head and arms.

The Baoguang Temple - Also known as the Divine Light Temple, this temple is about 15 kilometers north of Chengdu. Occupying an area of about 85000 square meters, this is believed to have been built during the period of the Eastern Han Dynasty. The temple contains several incredible halls, courtyards and pagodas. Some of its most prominent structures are erected with about 500 stone pillars and exquisitely crafted beautiful carvings as well as figurines of animals and birds.

Thatched Cottage of Du Fu - Located at the Chengdu's western suburbs at the Flower Washing Brook, this is the former residence of the legendary poet of the Tang dynasty, Du Fu. The cottage in the form of a traditional garden, and its area a myriad of structures such as the Shrine of Gong Bu, the grand lobby, and the Memorial Hall of Du Fu.

The Qingyang Palace - Built during the period of Tang Dynasty, it is one of the oldest as well as the most famous Taoist temples in the area. It is otherwise known as the Grey Goat Palace. An interesting legend is also associated with this temple.

Wuhou Memorial Temple - Also known as the Temple of Marquis Wu, it is a much famed historical site, which was built in commemoration of Liu Bei Emperor of the Kingdom of Shu and Zhuge Liang.

Other worth mentioning attractions in the city are the Guanxian Dam, which is about 25 miles north-west of Chengdu; Mount Emei, which is one among the four sacred Buddhist mountains in the country; Panda Research Base, which is biggest of its kind in the world; and Chengdu Zoo, with specialties such as elephants, monkeys, and giraffes; and Sichuan Science and Technology Museum.

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