



Re-enactment of a royal ritual from the Qing Dynasty at Qingdongling

Tangshan tombs, traditions beckon tourists

By Liu Xiang

For decades the name Tangshan rekindled painful memories of a severe earthquake that devastated the city in 1976.

Yet Tangshan has risen like a phoenix from the ruins as a new tourist destination attracting visitors with its well-preserved cultural sites and nature.

In the south of the 13,472 sq km city are a cluster of islands covered in forest with soft sandy beaches and diverse bird species.

Stretches of the ancient Great Wall meander through its northern mountains, still standing after centuries and the 1976 disaster.

The short distance that separates Beijing and the coastal city of 7.19 million people is

expected to provide a boon to tourism during the Olympics.

Imperial tombs

An hour-and-a-half's drive east of Beijing visitors come to the largest royal tomb complex in China – *Qingdongling*, the eastern imperial tombs of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Surrounded by mountains, construction on the tombs started in 1661.

Covering 78 sq km, 15 impressive tombs hold the remains of 161 royal family members, including five emperors, 15 empresses, 136 imperial concubines, three princes and two princesses.

Emperors entombed at Qingdongling include Shunzhi, the first Manchu emperor to rule all of China, Kangxi, considered one of the greatest emperors in Chinese history who began an

age of prosperity, and Qianlong, during whose reign the dynasty reached its golden age.

Among the empresses entombed at the complex is Xiaozhuangwen, who assisted her son and grandson – Emperors Shunzhi and Kangxi – in ruling China.

Empress Cixi, who controlled state affairs from behind a screen and influenced China for nearly half a century as an actual ruler, is also buried at the site.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization listed the tombs as world cultural heritage in 2000.

Great Wall

Tangshan has a 220 km length of the Great Wall that contains the fort at Qingshanguan Pass built in the Ming

Dynasty (1368-1644).

The stretch includes a gate under water, a fortification with 72 rooms and towers that each hold their own legends.

The pass was listed as a provincial-level protected historical site in 1956.

An ancient town near the pass was built for the army then stationed there and their families and shares the same name as the pass.

The military center and primitive town are now a must-see attraction for tourists.

Summer resorts

Tangshan also has a string of pleasant islands that offer a refuge from the hot summer.

Among them, Yuetuo – or Moon Island – is shaped like a crescent moon. An ancient Chinese legend says a fairy woman lives on the half-square-km

island where the scent of fresh flowers and wild fruit is in the air. It is home to hundreds of bird species.

Not far from Yuetuo Island is Qianshuiwan Beach, a State-level AA scenic spot on Dawanggang Island.

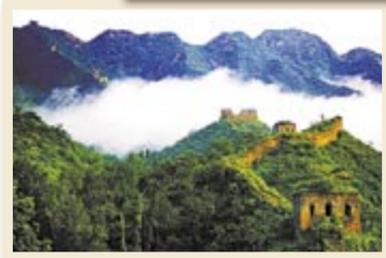
The fine sands of its 1,000-m beach can accommodate tens of thousands of nature lovers.

Since a Hong Kong firm invested in developing the beach, local tourism facilities have been significantly improved. More than 30 holiday sites, a public square, shopping streets and other services are operational on the island.

Activities such as water slides, recreational boats, soccer and volleyball have added to the holiday attraction of the beach.

Other islands in Tangshan also offer relaxing holidays.

Touist guest-houses on Yuetuo Island



Qingshanguan Pass

Legends and leisure mix in Qinhuangdao

By Liu Xiang

Qinhuangdao, 270 km east of Beijing, will host 12 Olympic soccer games in August, but that will not be the first time the city has been in the limelight over its long history.

Named after the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty (211-206 BC) Qinshihuang, who started the Great Wall, Qinhuangdao is noted as the place from which the emperor sent explorers to sea looking for the immortals, according to legends.

Though the journey failed, the area's friendly climate, expansive beaches and historic Great Wall have made it popular holiday destination.

The city has 126 km of coastline that has a number of resorts including Beidaihe, Nandaihe and Changli.

Beidaihe in particular is acclaimed for its beaches and a pleasant climate that averages 24.5 C in summer.

The coast was designated by the Qing government as a summer resort open to foreigners in 1898.

By 1938 the number of villas in Beidaihe surpassed 700, their owners from different countries building in various architecture styles that remain today.

New hotels and recreational facilities have been added since 1949, when it became a favorite summer retreat for

government officials.

Today new hotels, restaurants and bars catering to visitors from home and abroad continue to enhance amenities at the famous coastal resort.

Local authorities have developed a new tourist destination at Nandaihe linked with Beidaihe by a bridge.

Sunbathing, sports and fishing – as well as fresh seafood – add the appeal of the area's beaches.

The two coastal zones offer not only sun and surf, but also prime bird-watching locales.

Thanks to clean air, expansive forest coverage and extensive wetlands, natural bird reserves provide habitat for hundreds of species.

First Pass

Known as the First Pass under Heaven, Shanhaiguan Pass 15 km east of urban Qinhuangdao is famed for its strategic importance in ancient times.

Built in 583, the pass was improved by various rulers until it was trans-

formed into a formidable military stronghold during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

As the strategic passage between north and northeast China, Shanhaiguan was seen as key to defense against nomadic northern tribes. It was the site of many historic battles and left heroic legends that linger today.

Beyond Shanhaiguan Pass, the Great Wall stretches eastward until it dips into the sea at a place called *Laolongtou* – Old Dragon's Head.

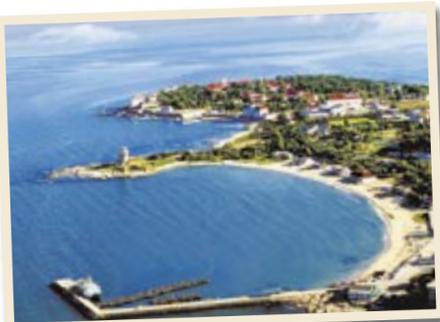
If the Great

Wall is likened to a huge dragon meandering through the mountains, Laolongtou is its head facing the sea.

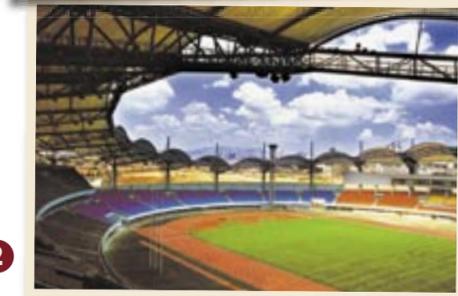
The military outpost was seriously damaged by shelling when an allied force from eight countries landed and invaded China in 1900.

The local government began restoring the ancient defensive complex in 1985. The National Tourism Administration rated it as a 4-A scenic spot in 2001.

Qinhuangdao was among the first 14 of Chinese coastal cities to open up following reforms.



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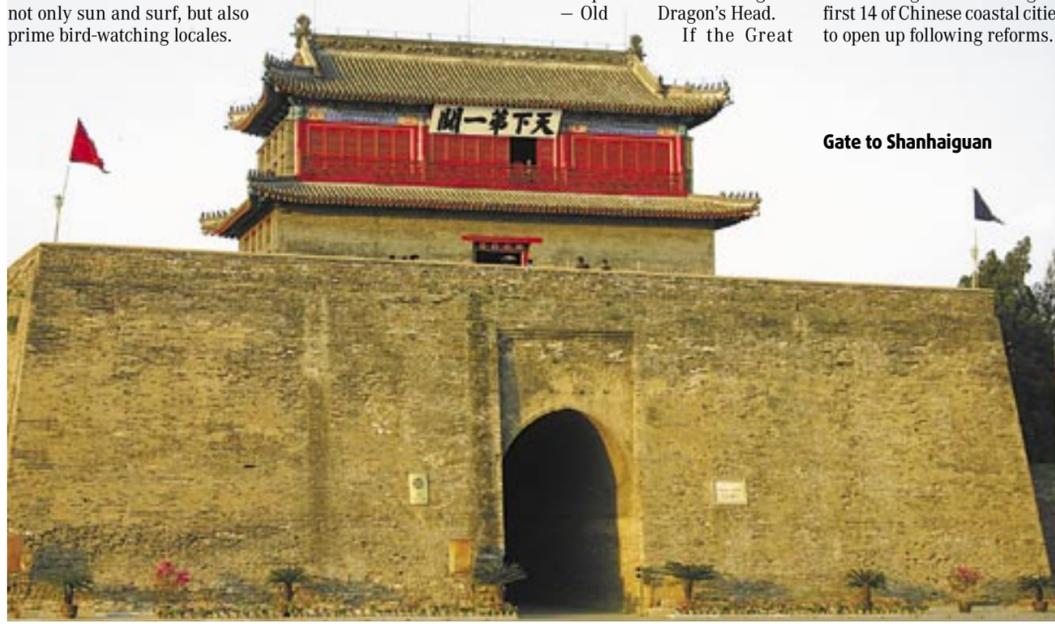


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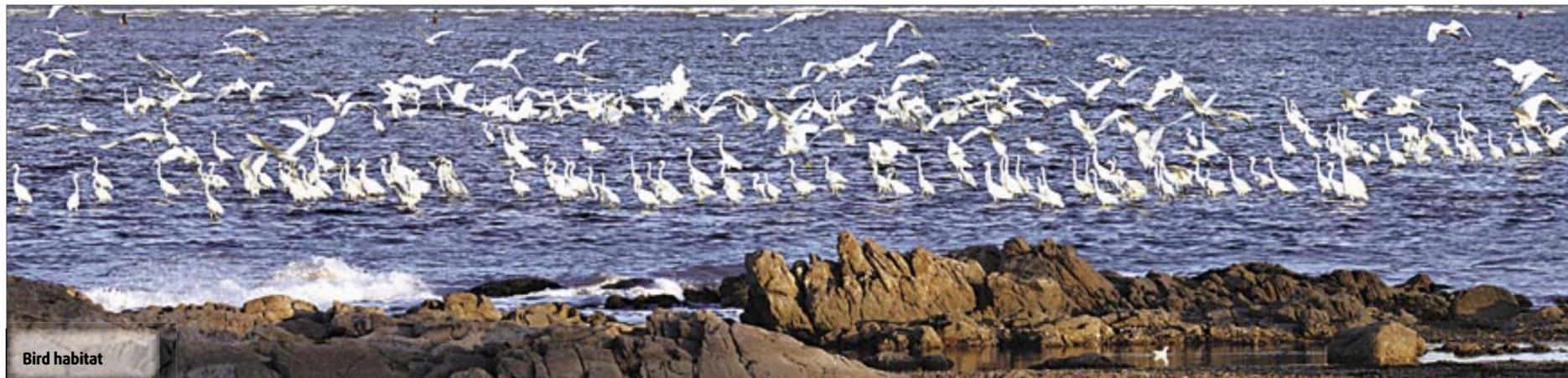


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1. Summer resort Beidaihe
2. Olympic stadium
3. Laolongtou, the eastern end of the Great Wall, built in the Ming Dynasty



Gate to Shanhaiguan



Bird habitat