

Hometown of Confucius, Friendly Shandong

Known as the hometown of renowned philosopher and educationist Confucius, whose teachings extend over Chinese civilization and beyond borders, Shandong province in East China is rich in cultural and tourism resources, including a wealth of cultural heritage, scenic spots, idyllic villages, culinary delights, a widespread transport network and quality tourism services, and has established a reputation as a popular destination, attracting flocks of tourists from home and abroad to immerse themselves in its natural beauty and cultural charm

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By YUAN SHENGGAO

Nestled in the lower reaches of the Yellow River and on the eastern edge of the North China Plain, Shandong province has long been famed for its rich resources, extensive history and diverse cultures.

From multiple historical sites and breathtaking landscapes to appetizing local cuisine, Shandong offers a broad array of attractions and experiences that captivate tourists from around the world.

Historical and cultural heritage

Shandong has been one of the most-developed regions in China since the prehistoric period, fostering a wealth of cultures.

On the Shandong Peninsula, archaeologists have discovered several neolithic sites including those of

the Lixin, Dawenkou and Longshan cultures, which highlight the region's significance as a cradle of ancient Chinese civilization.

From the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-771 BC) to the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), the region was home to the two powerful states of Qi and Lu, which is why Shandong is known as "the Land of Qilu" today.

From the sui Dynasty (581-618) to Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Beijing-Hangzhou Great Canal extended into Shandong, further promoting the region's connectivity and economic growth.

The Shandong section of the Grand Canal is 643 kilometers long, creating a cultural corridor with a series of historical sites, ancient towns and villages, rich intangible cultural heritage, and a variety of exquisite local cuisines.

For example, Shandi-Shaoni Guild Hall, located

on the west bank of the ancient canal in Liaocheng, Shandong, was a place where Shanxi and Shaanxi merchants gathered, conducted business, stored goods and entertained during the mid to late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It is the only well-preserved commercial guild hall in the canal region of Shandong.

Taierzhuang Ancient Town in Zaozhuang city is located in the middle section of the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, rich in intangible cultural heritage and traditional handicraft resources. The town still retains numerous ancient streets, lanes, and buildings, earning it the title of "Living Ancient Canal" by the World Tourism Organization.

Currently, Shandong is developing 30 cultural and tourism routes along the Grand Canal, focusing on the theme of experiencing canal culture on board and experiencing ancient town and village accommodation culture of board. These routes organically connect various cultural themes, such as "water transport on the shore, the past and present charm of the Grand Canal," "looking back to the ancient times, the historical and

modern charm of the canal" and "intangible cultural heritage memories, the enduring charm of the Grand Canal", showcasing the unique charm of the Grand Canal in Shandong from multiple perspectives.

The Great Wall of Qi, located in the Taiyi Mountains in Shandong province, has a history of over 2,600 years. It is the oldest ancient Great Wall in China with accurate remains, well-preserved conditions, and is considered the "father of the Great Wall".

So far, the province has established more than 800 museums to better preserve the cultural heritage, and 10 of its cities — including the provincial capital Jinan, Qingdao, Liaocheng, Qufu and Qiongzhou — have been recognized as national historical cultural cities.

The Shandong Museum, located in Jinan, houses a collection of more than 140,000 historical artifacts. Highlights of the exhibits include the eggshell black pottery high-stem goblet from the neolithic period, the Ya Chou bronze battle-axe from the Shang Dynasty (c.16th century-11th century BC), and the nine-crowned crozier which was unearthed from the tomb of Zhu Tian (1370-

80), the son of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) founder Zhu Yuanzhang.

Among them, Qufu, a county-level city in southwestern Shandong, is the birthplace of Chinese philosopher and educator Confucius (551-479 BC), also known as Kong Qiu.

Confucius's teachings helped build Shandong as a national center of early Chinese philosophy, and have profoundly shaped Chinese culture and society for centuries.

The Temple of Confucius in Qufu, along with the Confucius Cemetery and the Kong Family Mansion, were designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994.

The site offers a glimpse into Confucius's life story and thinking, and showcases the grandeur of ancient Chinese architecture.

Other historical figures hailing from Shandong include the fourth-century thinker Mencius (372-289 BC), who is considered the "second sage" of Confucianism, after Confucius; Sun Tzu, a Chinese military strategist from the Warring States Period; Wang Xizhi,

a master calligrapher from the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420) and Li Qingzhao (1084-1155), a female poet renowned for her subtle and graceful works.

Natural beauty, scenic wonders

Shandong's natural scenery is as magnificent as its cultural heritage, ranging from majestic mountains and mighty rivers to lakes, wetlands and oceans.

Rising 1,245 meters above sea level, Taishan Mountain, esteemed as the "most revered of China's five great mountains", is located in the city of Jinan.

To reach the Jade Emperor Peak, the mountain's highest point, visitors must take on the challenge of climbing nearly 6,000 steps.

One of the most popular coastal cities is Qingdao, which is particularly renowned for its charming beaches, towering pines, steep cliffs thrusting out through the sea of clouds.

The Golden Beach, named for its golden, fine-grained sands, is ideal for sunbathing and swimming, while the Shilaoren Beach offers a perfect viewpoint for watching

the sunrise over the sea.

The coastal city of Dongying is where the Yellow River, China's mother river, joins the Bohai Sea. It's also one of the top destinations among photographers seeking natural wonders.

Spanning about over 500,000 hectares, the Shandong Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in Dongying city is home to nearly 400 species of birds, some of which are under the national first-class protection such as the Oriental stork, the hooded crane and the red-crowned crane.

Beyond mountains and springs, with some 3,200-kilometer coastline, the province also provides visitors with fascinating coastal attractions and seaside activities.

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Heze Peony

Dubbed the "peony capital of China", Heze in Shandong province has more than 1,000 varieties of peony and a complete peony industry chain. The Heze International Peony Cultural Tourism Festival is held in April every year, allowing global tourists to admire the beauty of China's national flower.

Baotu Spring

The Baotu Spring is one of the most famous tourism attractions in Jinan, Shandong province. It was declared by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) as the "No.1 spring under heaven". Today, tourists to the scenic area can admire the lucid spring water and various historical buildings, enjoying the beauty of Chinese-style gardens.

Eggshell Black Pottery High-Stem Goblet

The goblet was unearthed from the Donghaiyu Ruins in Rizhao, Shandong province, in 1973 and is now housed in the Shandong Museum. It is a remarkable masterpiece of the neolithic period, particularly renowned for its unparalleled thinness at an average of 0.5 millimeters, and stunning black gloss finish.

Taishan Mountain

The Taishan Mountain, located in Tai'an, Shandong province, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the "five great mountains in China". With a peak altitude of 1,545 meters, the mountain is a paradise for hikers and climbers, offering impressive landscapes including steep cliffs, lush forests and ancient architecture.

Taierzhuang Ancient Town

Taierzhuang Ancient Town, located in Zaozhuang, Shandong province, is known for its traditional architecture, scenic canals, and the significant role in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945). The Battle of Taierzhuang in 1938 marked the first major Chinese victory in the war.

The Great Wall of Qi

The Great Wall of Qi, a remarkable feat of ancient Chinese engineering, was constructed by the State of Qi during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). With a total length of more than 600 kilometers, it stretches through seven cities in Shandong province.

Temple of Confucius

Located in his birthplace — Qufu, Shandong province — the Temple of Confucius was first built in 478 BC and had been expanded many times over the past two millennia to commemorate the great philosopher, politician and educator. Currently, the temple comprises 104 buildings dating from the Jin (1115-1234) to Qing (1644-1911) dynasties including the famous Dacheng Hall and the Kowen Pavilion.

Nijiao Tiger

The Nijiao Tiger, or Mud Whistle Tiger, is a traditional Chinese folk craft that originates from Gaomi, Shandong province. It is primarily made from mud, then shaped, carved and painted to resemble a tiger. The tiger's front and rear parts are connected by soft sheepskin and there is a reed whistle fixed in the small hole at the front section. When pulled, it can produce a distinct whistling sound.

Yellow River Estuary

The Yellow River estuary, lying in Dongying, Shandong province, marks the final destination of China's second-longest river, as it empties into the Bohai Sea. The region is noted for its unique natural landscapes, rich biodiversity and economic significance, supporting industries such as tourism and fishing.

Oriental Stork

The Oriental stork is a large, white bird with black-feathered wings, a long, thick beak, and red skin around its eyes. Its diet consists mainly of fish, frogs, insects and reptiles. As a first-class nationally protected wild animal in China, the bird has been found in many cities and provinces such as Jiangsu, Jiangsu, Jilin and Shandong.

Weifang Kite

For over 2,000 years, the city of Weifang in Shandong province has had a tradition of making kites. Weifang kites are renowned for intricate designs, vibrant colors and exquisite craftsmanship. Since 1984, the city has held the Weifang International Kite Festival annually, attracting participants from around the world.

Wind in May

Wind in May is a prominent landmark sculpture in Qingdao, Shandong province. It features a spiral design with flaming red color, symbolizing the unyielding spirit of the May Fourth Movement, a patriotic campaign launched by young students in 1919.

Penglai Pavilion

The Penglai Pavilion, nestled in a seaside cliff in Yantai, Shandong province, has a history dating back to the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). It's hailed as one of the "four great towers of China", alongside the Yueyang Tower in Hunan province, the Tengwang Pavilion in Jiangxi province and the Yellow Crane Tower in Hubei province.

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