

Xi'an, Shaanxi Province



Deep in the heart of China you'll find the ancient city of Xi'an, literally translated as 'Western Peace', it was the capital of China for over 400 years. This included the period of 618 - 907 AD, China's "golden age" under the Tang Dynasty. Although probably best known for the Terracotta Warriors, Xi'an also boasts many sights of historical and cultural significance.

Although Xi'an is experiencing rapid development, it is still a very traditional Chinese city of approximately 7 million people. Very few people speak English and excluding KFC you can count the number of western restaurants on two hands. Don't worry however, the food here is delicious, varied and cheap; but before you come here learn how to use chopsticks! As one of very few foreigners living here you will find yourself being stared at as you walk down the street and will quite often hear surprised locals exclaim "lao Wai" meaning 'foreigner'! They're not being rude; they're just not used to seeing a western face walking down the street. Everyday you see sights which provoke a second glance, from elderly men playing Ma Jiang on the pavement to women practicing Tai Chi to the sound of traditional music, first thing in the morning. Groups of children with red neckerchiefs pass you on their way to school and, of course, you never walk along a deserted pavement in this city. Xi'an is a great city to experience the Chinese way of life!



How much does Xi'an cost?

Xi'an is a very cheap place to live, your monthly salary is more than enough and you'll be able to enjoy a very good standard of living. A good meal in an average priced restaurant will cost you around 15 - 25 RMB including beer, all bus journeys are 1 RMB, taxis start at 6 RMB and cost 1.5 RMB per KM. There are excellent markets all over where you can buy fashionable clothes cheaply. There are of course many new shopping malls where you can buy DKNY, Boss or Louis Vuitton if you want. A latest release DVD will cost 6 - 7 RMB and a DVD player as little as 300 RMB.

Xi'an also has many bars, several have live music nightly and there are more than enough up the minute night clubs. You can buy 12 bottles of western beer such as Budweiser or Carlsberg in these for 200 RMB. Western toiletries, shampoo, toothpaste, tampons etc are no problem to buy, mobile phones are extremely cheap to use and you can bring the handset you have from home. Cigarettes cost as little as 3 RMB for 20, a visit to a street side shoeshine lady costs 1 RMB and a bar of good chocolate 6 RMB.