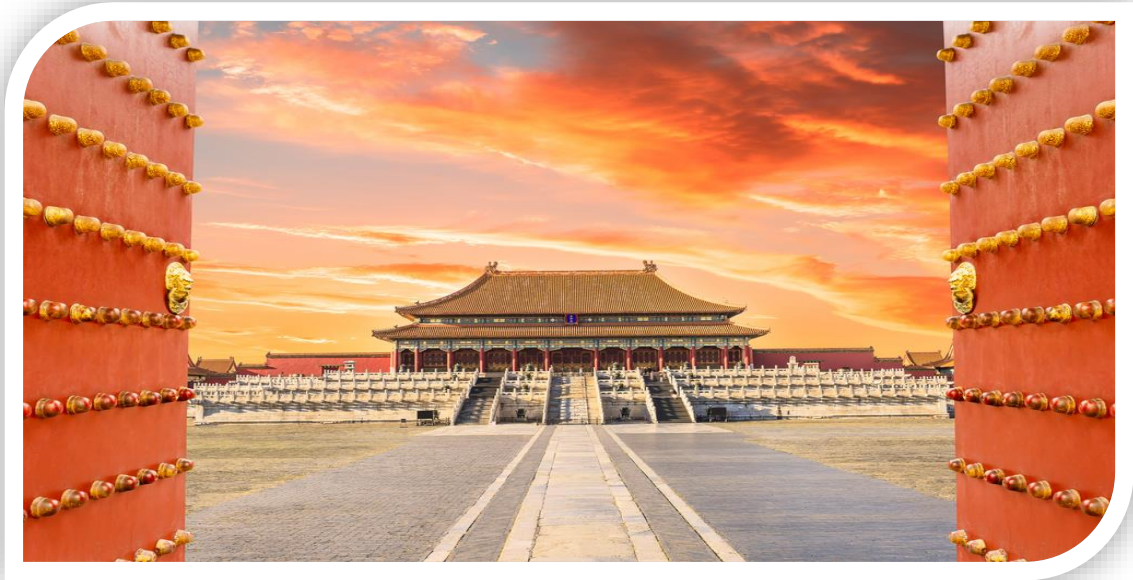


Forbidden City



The Forbidden City (Chinese: 紫禁城; pinyin: zǐ jìn chéng) is a palace complex in Dongcheng District, Beijing, China, at the center of the Imperial City of Beijing. It is surrounded by numerous opulent imperial gardens and temples including the 22 ha (54-acre) Zhongshan Park, the sacrificial Imperial Ancestral Temple, the 69 ha (171-acre) Beihai Park, and the 23 ha (57-acre) Jingshan Park.[2] It is officially administered by the Palace Museum.

The Forbidden City was constructed from 1406 to 1420, and was the former Chinese imperial palace and winter residence of the Emperor of China from the Ming dynasty (since the Yongle Emperor) to the end of the Qing dynasty, between 1420 and 1924. The Forbidden City served as the home of Chinese emperors and their households and was the ceremonial and political center of the Chinese government for over 500 years. Since 1925, the Forbidden City has been under the charge of the Palace Museum, whose extensive collection of artwork and artifacts was built upon the imperial collections of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Forbidden City was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987.[3]

HISTORY OF FORBIDDEN CITY

History

When Hongwu Emperor's son Zhu Di became the Yongle Emperor, he moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing, and construction began in 1406 on what would become the Forbidden City.[13] Construction lasted 14 years and required more than a million workers.[14] Material used include whole logs of precious Phoebe zhennan wood (Chinese: 楠木; pinyin: nánmù) found in the jungles of south-western China, and large blocks of marble from quarries near Beijing.[15] The floors of major halls were paved with "golden bricks" (Chinese: 金砖; pinyin: jīnzhūān), specially baked paving bricks from Suzhou.[14]

From 1420 to 1644, the Forbidden City was the seat of the Ming dynasty. In April 1644, it was captured by rebel forces led by Li Zicheng, who proclaimed himself emperor of the Shun dynasty.[16] He soon fled before the combined armies of former Ming general Wu Sangui and Manchu forces, setting fire to parts of the Forbidden City in the process.[17]

Etymology

The common English name "Forbidden City" is a translation of the Chinese name Zijin Cheng (Chinese: 紫禁城; pinyin: Zǐjīnchéng; lit. 'Purple Forbidden City'). The name Zijin Cheng first formally appeared in 1576.[10] Another English name of similar origin is "Forbidden Palace," though "city" is much closer to the original Chinese meaning. [11]

The name "Zijin Cheng" is a name with significance on many levels. Zi, or "Purple", refers to the North Star, which in ancient China was called the Ziwei Star, and in traditional Chinese astrology was the heavenly abode of the Celestial Emperor. The surrounding celestial region, the Ziwei Enclosure (Chinese: 紫微垣; pinyin: Zǐwēiyuán), was the realm of the Celestial Emperor and his family. The Forbidden City, as the residence of the terrestrial emperor, was its earthly counterpart. Jin refers to a prohibition or taboo (often used in signs saying "no entry" or "no smoking" or "X is prohibited"). Cheng originally meant a castle, fortress, or fortification, but in modern Chinese, the character means city.

Today, the site is most commonly known in Chinese as Gùgōng (故宮), which means the "Former Palace".[12] The museum which is based in these buildings is known as the "Palace museum" (Chinese: 故宮博物院; pinyin: Gùgōng Bówùyùàn).

STRUCTURE OF FORBIDDEN CITY

Structure

The Forbidden City is a rectangle, measuring 961 m (3,153 ft) from north to south and 753 m (2,470 ft) from east to west.[5][6] It consists of 980 surviving buildings with 8,886 bays of rooms.[34][35] The layout of the Forbidden City activated and protected the imperial code of ethics as a physical installation. The courtyard was built on a massive, luxurious scale but it has

the appearance of an ordinary quadrangle courtyard.[36] A common myth states that there are 9999 rooms including antechambers,[37] based on oral tradition, and it is not supported by survey evidence.[38] The Forbidden City was designed to be the centre of the ancient, walled city of Beijing. It is enclosed in a larger, walled area called the Imperial City. The Imperial City is, in turn, enclosed by the Inner City; to its south lies the Outer City.

The Forbidden City remains important in the civic scheme of Beijing. The central north–south axis remains the central axis of Beijing. This axis extends to the south through Tiananmen gate to Tiananmen Square, the ceremonial centre of the People's Republic of China, and on to Yongdingmen. To the north, it extends through Jingshan Hill to the Bell and Drum Towers.[39]

WALLS AND GATES

gates

The Forbidden City is surrounded by a 7.9 m (26 ft) high city wall[19] and a 6 m (20 ft) deep by 52 m (171 ft) wide moat. The walls are 8.62 m (28.3 ft) wide at the base, tapering to 6.66 m (21.9 ft) at the top.[41] These walls served as both defensive walls and retaining walls for the palace. They were constructed with a rammed earth core, and surfaced with three layers of specially baked bricks on both sides, with the interstices filled with mortar.[42]