

Great Wall of China

The Great Wall of China is more than just an architectural marvel; it is a cultural icon deeply entwined with myth and legend. Over the centuries, the Wall has transformed from a military defense structure to a symbol of imperial power and, ultimately, into a touristic monument rooted in folklore.

Ancient stories tell of a powerful sorcerer who shaped the Wall to ensure its invincibility with the aid of earth spirits and a white dragon. The Wall's haunting aura comes from the countless lives lost during its construction; from these tales come statues and temples dedicated to Meng Jiangnü, whose grief for her fallen husband is said to have caused a section of the Wall to collapse. These legends and transformations have woven the Great Wall into the very fabric of Chinese culture, making it not just a feat of engineering but a timeless symbol of the nation's rich heritage and, eventually, one of the world's seven wonders. The construction of the Great Wall of China began in the 7th century BCE, but the most famous sections were built during the reign of the first Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang, around 221–206 BCE.

Spanning over 13,170 miles (21,196 kilometers), the Great Wall is the longest man-made structure in history. Its full length has been accurately measured and announced by China's State Administration of Cultural Relics in 2012. It roughly consists of:

- 6,259.6-kilometer (3,889.5-mile) artificial wall
- 359.7-kilometer (223.5-mile) trench
- 2,232.5-kilometer (1,387.2-mile) natural barrier
- 5,723 beacon towers
- 7,062 watching towers
- 3,357 wall platforms
- 1,026 other related ruins

This wall has been built over several dynasties, and many of its sections are located in desolate mountains, grasslands, or deserts, making measuring it an almost impossible challenge. Using a combination of advanced remote sensing, GPS technology, and a five-year archaeological survey conducted across 15 provinces, the length is as accurate as it could be today.

The first person to hike the Wall of China was Liu Yutian, who started in 1984 and, after facing life-threatening obstacles, finished in 1986. It took him 2 years to hike 5,000 km, and if you do some math, it would probably take around 9 years to hike the completely discovered 21,196 km today!