**Forbidden City**

**Forbidden City**, Chinese (Pinyin) **Zijincheng** or (Wade-Giles romanization) **Tzu-chin-ch’eng**, imperial [palace](https://www.britannica.com/technology/palace) complex at the heart of [Beijing](https://www.britannica.com/place/Beijing) (Peking), [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China). Commissioned in 1406 by the [Yongle](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yongle) emperor of the [Ming dynasty](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ming-dynasty-Chinese-history), it was first officially occupied by the court in 1420. It was so named because access to the area was barred to most of the subjects of the realm. Government functionaries and even the imperial family were permitted only limited access; the emperor alone could enter any section at will. The 178-acre (72-hectare) [compound](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compound) was designated a [UNESCO](https://www.britannica.com/topic/UNESCO) [World Heritage site](https://www.britannica.com/topic/World-Heritage-site) in 1987 in recognition of its importance as the centre of Chinese power for five centuries, as well as for its unparalleled architecture and its current role as the [Palace Museum](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Palace-Museum) of dynastic art and history.

The architecture of the walled complex adheres rigidly to the traditional Chinese geomantic practice of feng shui. The orientation of the Forbidden City, and for that matter all of Beijing, follows a north-south line. Within the compound, all the most important buildings, especially those along the main axis, face south to honour the Sun. The buildings and the ceremonial spaces between them are arranged to convey an impression of great imperial power while reinforcing the insignificance of the individual. This architectural conceit is borne out to the smallest of details—the relative importance of a building can be judged not only from its height or width but also by the style of its roof and the number of figurines perched on the roof’s ridges.

Among the more notable landmarks are the [Wu (Meridian) Gate](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wu-Gate), the Hall of Supreme Harmony (Taihedian), and the Imperial Garden (Yuhuayuan). The Wu Gate is the imposing formal southern entrance to the Forbidden City. Its [auxiliary](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/auxiliary) wings, which flank the entryway, are outstretched like the forepaws of a guardian lion or sphinx. The gate is also one of the tallest buildings of the complex, standing 125 feet (38 metres) high at its roof ridge. One of its primary functions was to serve as a backdrop for imperial appearances and proclamations. Beyond the Wu Gate lies a large courtyard, 460 feet (140 metres) deep and 690 feet (210 metres) wide, through which the Golden River (Golden Water River) runs in a bow-shaped arc. The river is crossed by five parallel white marble bridges, which lead to the Gate of Supreme Harmony (Taihemen).

North of the Gate of Supreme Harmony lies the Outer Court, heart of the Forbidden City, where the three main administration halls stand atop a three-tiered marble terrace overlooking an immense plaza. The area [encompasses](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/encompasses) some seven acres (three hectares)—enough space to admit tens of thousands of subjects to pay homage to the emperor. Towering above the space stands the [Hall of Supreme Harmony](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hall-of-Supreme-Harmony), in which the throne of the emperor stands. This hall, measuring 210 by 122 feet (64 by 37 metres), is the largest single building in the compound, as well as one of the tallest (being approximately the same height as the Wu Gate). It was the centre of the imperial court. To the north, on the same triple terrace, stand the Hall of Central (or Complete) Harmony (Zhonghedian) and the Hall of Preserving Harmony (Baohedian), also loci of government functions.

Farther north lies the Inner Court, which contains the three halls that composed the imperial living quarters. [Adjacent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Adjacent) to these palaces, at the northernmost limit of the Forbidden City, is the 3-acre (1.2-hectare) Imperial Garden, the organic design of which seems to depart from the rigid symmetry of the rest of the compound. The garden was designed as a place of relaxation for the emperor, with a fanciful arrangement of trees, fish ponds, flower beds, and sculpture. In its centre stands the Hall of Imperial Peace (Qin’andian), a [Daoist](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Daoism) temple where the emperor would retreat for contemplation.

The Forbidden City [ceased](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/ceased) to be the seat of [Qing (Manchu)](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Qing-dynasty) imperial government with the [Chinese Revolution](https://www.britannica.com/event/Chinese-Revolution-1911-1912) of 1911–12. Although some of the ancient buildings (which had been repaired and rebuilt since the 15th century) were lost to the ravages of the revolution and during the war with Japan (1937–45), the site was maintained as a whole. [Puyi](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Puyi), the last Qing emperor, was permitted to live there after his abdication, but he secretly left the palace (and Beijing) in 1924. In the late 20th century several of the palace buildings were restored.

# Interesting Forbidden City Facts

## The Forbidden City is the world’s largest imperial palace.

The Forbidden City occupies 720,000 sq m (7,750,000 sq ft), over three times larger than the Louvre Palace in France. An estimated 1 million laborers worked to complete the structure.

It has more than 90 palace quarters and courtyards, 980 buildings and over 8,728 rooms. (A common myth states that there are 9,999.5 rooms, but it is not supported by survey evidence.)

## There are European and Arabic style buildings in the Forbidden City.

In the west of the Forbidden City, there is a peculiar building with a strong Arabic style. It is named Yude Hall (浴德堂), built in the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). A Persian architect designed the Arabic-style bathroom.

Later, in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), the Yongle Emperor – Zhu Di – built the Forbidden City on the site of the Yuan Dynasty’s capital city. A large number of the buildings were demolished but, fortunately, Yude Hall was preserved. The other building is European-styled Lingzhao Xuan in Yanxi Palace. As Yanxi Palace suffered several fires, the Qing court wanted to build a fire-proof building with a pool at the bottom out of steel and stone (as most Chinese buildings were wooden, this employed some European architectural principles). However, due to the lack of funds and the revolutionary uprising at the end of the Qing Dynasty, it was stopped in the middle of construction.

## The Forbidden City was home to 24 Chinese emperors.

Emperor Yongle, third of [the Ming Dynasty](https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/china-history/the-ming-dynasty.htm), began its construction in 1406 and the complex was completed in 1420. 14 Ming emperors held power there until the Manchus took possession in 1644, and moved the capital to Shenyang for a few months.

[The Qing Dynasty](https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/china-history/the-qing-dynasty.htm) soon moved the capital back to Beijing and the Forbidden City. 10 Qing emperors ruled from there until the abdication of the last emperor in 1912, at the creation of the Republic of Chi

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| **Forbidden City** 紫禁城 | |
| The Forbidden City, viewed from [Jingshan Hill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jingshan_Park" \o "Jingshan Park) | |
| [Forbidden City is located in Beijing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:China_Beijing_adm_location_map.svg)  Forbidden City  Location within Beijing  Show map of BeijingShow map of BeijingShow all | |
| **Established** | 1925 |
| **Location** | 4 Jingshan Front St, [Dongcheng](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dongcheng_District,_Beijing" \o "Dongcheng District, Beijing), [Beijing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing), China |
| [**Coordinates**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system) | [39.915987°N 116.397925°E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Forbidden_City&params=39.915987_N_116.397925_E_type:landmark_region:CN-11)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): [39.915987°N 116.397925°E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Forbidden_City&params=39.915987_N_116.397925_E_type:landmark_region:CN-11) |
| **Type** | [Art museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_museum), Imperial Palace, [Historic site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historic_site) |
| **Visitors** | 16.7 million[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbidden_City#cite_note-visitors-1) |
| **Curator** | [Wang Xudong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang_Xudong_(curator)) |
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| **Area** | 72 hectares |
| **Built** | 1406–1420 |
| **Architect** | [Kuai Xiang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuai_Xiang) |
| **Architectural style(s)** | [Chinese architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_architecture) |
| **Website** | [en.dpm.org.cn](https://en.dpm.org.cn/) (English) [www.dpm.org.cn](https://www.dpm.org.cn/) (Chinese) |
|  | |
| [**UNESCO World Heritage Site**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) | |
| **Part of** | Imperial Palaces of the Ming and Qing Dynasties in Beijing and Shenyang |
| [**Criteria**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site#Selection_criteria) | Cultural: i, ii, iii, iv |
| **Reference** | [439-001](https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/439-001) |
| **Inscription** | 1987 (11th [Session](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Committee)) |

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| **Forbidden City** | |
| [upright=0.575 c=紫禁城](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Forbidden_City_(Chinese_characters).svg)  "Forbidden City" in Chinese characters | |
| **Chinese name** | |
| Literal meaning | "Purple [North Star] Forbidden City" |
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| **Manchu name** | |
| [Manchu script](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchu_alphabet) | ᡩᠠᠪᡴᡡᡵᡳ ᡩᠣᡵᡤᡳ ᡥᠣᡨᠣᠨ |
| [Romanization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transliterations_of_Manchu) | dabkūri dorgi hoton 'Former inner city' |