

FEATURE

China's Mt. Lushan

Mt. Lushan is a very significant, culturally historic mountain in China. Three hundred and fifty (350) square kilometers of towering peaks and dangerously steep cliffs on all sides surround a relatively gentle center. The landscape here is spectacular with some 90 peaks picturesquely mist-veiled for some 191 days annually on average. The tallest peak is Hanyang Peak which rises to a height of 1473.4 meters (4,834 feet). It is particularly cool in summer and is therefore a well known summer resort.

Located along the Yangtze by the Poyang Lake (Jiangxi province), adjacent to Wuhan and about 350 miles inland from Shanghai, Mt. Lushan was designated a National Scenic location in 1982 and awarded a World Heritage listing by UNESCO in 1996 for its significance in world culture and national beauty.

Over the past 2000 years, more than 1,500 historical figures have visited Mt. Lushan leaving over 4,000 poems, articles, travelogues, 900 cliff inscriptions and 300 stone inscriptions. Mt. Lushan (Hut Mountain) was the center of Buddhism, Taoism and the famous 'White Deer Grotto Academy' in ancient times. The Academy, located at the base of Lushan's Wulou Peak, had its beginnings as a learning center for the Tang dynasty poet Li Bo (831) and later during the Song dynasty was rebuilt based on a Temple of Confucius and had a profound and lasting influence on the development of Confucianism.



Photo by Frank P. Lauridsen, circa 1936.

During the late 1800's and early 1900's, more than 600 European-style Villas were built to house hundreds of foreigners from over 20 countries. Several foreign schools operated atop the Mt. Lushan in the town now called Guling. In the days of foreigner residence, the town, also known as the 'Gap' (for the Gap in the mountain where the 1000 steps up the mountain entered the town) was named 'Kuling' because this was the summer resort where foreigners were 'cooling' off from China's heat.

From 1915 to 1938, the Kuling American School (KAS) operated a highly reputable K-12 private school in Kuling for children of missionaries, business and government people stationed in China.

In 1934, the Lushan Botanical Gardens, the first botanical gardens in China, was founded and has emerged as a famous research center and tourist attraction. It now has relationships with botanical gardens around the world. The Gardens cover more than 300 hectares and is planted with more than 3,400 varieties of plants.

During the 1930's, Mt. Lushan became the "Summer Capital" of China's national

government. Both Chiang Kai-shek and Chairman Mao Zedong lived in the villas. After founding the People's Republic of China, Chairman Mao Zedong held three important conferences of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Mt. Lushan.

The major tourist spots on the mountain include Wulao Peak, Sandie Spring, Lulin Lake, Flower Path, Ruqin Lake, Jinxiu Valley, Xianren Dong and Donglin Temple, etc.

Travelers to Mt. Lushan typically fly into Nanchang airport and arrange for car or bus transportation to the mountain. This is about an hour and a half trip. In the future, cars and commercial buses may not be allowed on the mountain or on Guling and visitors would arrive via public transportation.