

## FEATURE

# The Magnificent Forbidden City

## Most Magnificent Imperial Palace in the World

<http://www.chinadiscovery.com/beijing/forbidden-city.html>



structures decorated with yellow glazed tile roof and bluish white marble base.

### Layout & Construction

The quadrate Forbidden City stretches 960m from south to north and 750m from west to east, covering an area of 72 hectares, as large as 101 football fields.

### Forbidden City



Once forbidden and now permitted. It was an amazing experience visiting a huge palace once built by the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The cultural richness of China is truly reflected at this historical palace.

8703 rooms in total. Enclosed by a four stories high city wall, which is surrounded by a 52m moat, the strongly fortified castle has one gate in each direction, and each corner of the quadrate is equipped with a delicate turret.

### Overview

Forbidden City, officially called Gugong, was the imperial palace for 24 Emperors of Ming and Qing Dynasties until the overthrow of Qing Dynasty, now is open to the public as the Palace Museum. As the highest power center over five centuries, ordinary people were forbidden from even approaching the palace wall without a price of instant execution (hence its name).

To emphasize the supremacy of the emperor, according to ancient imperial capital's construction principle, ceremonial halls for

Following the order of Emperor Yongle (Zhudi, third Emperor of Ming Dynasty), Forbidden City was constructed from 1406, the fourth year of his reign. 14-years hardworking by one million civilian workers presented the largest ancient imperial architecture complex, 72 hectares area with 8703 rooms, all were wooden



Map of Forbidden City

emperors to handle state affairs (outer court), imperial living quarters (inner court) and imperial garden are aligning from south to north along the central axis of Forbidden City (the same axis of Beijing City).

Other buildings, like living palaces for emperor's father and the former emperor's concubines and palace for Buddha worship are located on the both sides of the axis.

### Classic Visiting Route

Forbidden City is so large that you can spend all day to wander around the palace. However, most people have limited time to savor the beauty of it, hence, it's very important to



*Meridian Gate*

choose a classic as well as time-saving visiting route. Visiting along the central axis of Forbidden City is the best route which will only take about 2 hours. Besides feasting on the splendid palatial architecture, you will also have opportunity for one of the exhibitions along the central axis if you are a fast walker.

This route starts from Meridian Gate. After entering the Meridian Gate, visit the outer court, inner court, imperial garden in turn, and exit form Gate of Divine Might at last.

Meridian Gate, the front door (southern door) of Forbidden City, will be reached through the Gate of Heavenly Peace (Tian'anmen), lying north of Tian'anmen Square). This is the best place to show the majesty of the empire, where the monarch would issue imperial edict and next year's calendar, pardon the prisoner of war. It's also the punishment place for court officials. Passing through Meridian Gate, across the Golden Water Stream, you will reach the gate of the outer court – Gate of Supreme Harmony.

Outer Court was places where the emperors held important ceremonies and exercise their power. There are three main halls in the outer court. First one is the Hall of Supreme, the largest and most spectacular architecture in Forbidden City and once used for new emperor's accession and other grand ceremonies, like emperor's birthday and wedding ceremonies.

Next is the Hall of Middle Harmony, the transitional palace for emperor to rest and rehearse etiquettes for the ceremonial events held in the Hall of Supreme. The last one is the Hall of Preserving Harmony, once used for state banquet in the New Year's



*Palace of Heavenly Purity*

Eve and Lantern Festival, and for palace exam to select the top 3 of imperial exam. Don't miss the 16.57m pavement behind the hall, which was made of a chunk of 200 tons white marble, and carved with dragons, sea water and clouds.



Step down from the white marble base at the rear of the Hall of Preserving Harmony, a wide courtyard separates the outer court from inner court.

Inner Court was once the imperial living quarters and the work place for the emperors. The door of the inner court is the Gate of Heavenly Purity, where the officials waited for the military and administrative decisions from the emperor.

Through the gate, the Palace of Heavenly Purity will reveal its true face to you. 14 Ming and Qing Emperors had lived in here and handled state affairs. Keep walking north and you will arrive the Hall of Union, famous as the Empress coronation room in Qing Dynasty. The northernmost palace is the Palace of Earthly Tranquility, frequently appearing in Chinese palace TV series, was known by the public as the bedroom for the empress in Ming Dynasty.

Imperial Garden is located at the north of inner court. Slight small than 2 football fields, the garden was the pleasure ground for the emperor and his harem. Verdant pines, cypresses and bamboos were dotted with artificial hill and rock, formed an evergreen landscape architecture in Forbidden City.

Gate of Divine Might is the north gate of Forbidden City. Since the Forbidden City was changed into the Palace Museum in 1925, the Gate of Divine Might was made as the front door

of the museum. (However, you can only enter into the museum through the Gate of Meridian).

Notice: if you have enough time, you can visit the exhibition of

Qing Imperial Birthday Celebrations, located at west corridor rooms to the south of the Palace of Heavenly Purity. The exhibition consists of the grand celebratory spectacles for three Qing emperors and two empress dowagers, including the Kangxi Emperor. 1662-1722), the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1795) and the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908).

### In-depth Visiting Route

For those who are willing to spend more time in the Forbidden City and are crazy about the museum items, there are more places waiting for your exploration. Generally speaking, besides the central line spots, the rest of the Forbidden City can be divided into four parts:

Hall of Martial Valor: located in the west of the Gate of Supreme Harmony (west of the outer court), now is changed into Painting and Calligraphy Gallery and exhibits representative painting and calligraphy works from every historical period;

Hall of Literary Brilliance: located in the symmetrical position of the Hall of Martial Valor, exhibit ceramics through past dynasties.

Six Western Palaces: refer to six palaces in the west of the inner court, and they are all presented in their original forms. The Six Western Palaces were once residential area for the emperor's concubines, and visitors can watch the original living scene of the royal family.

Eastern Exhibition Area: in the eastside of the Forbidden City (east to the inner court),

there are several permanent exhibitions worthy of your time.

Collections exhibited in the Treasure Gallery, Hall of Clocks, Gold and Silver Gallery, Bronze Gallery represent the priceless art history of China.

Normally, it's suggested to visit the Hall of Martial Valor or Hall of Literary Brilliance first, then the outer court and inner court, and last, visit the Western Palaces or the Eastern Exhibition Area.

### Panoramic View of Forbidden City

When you finish the tour in the museum and get out through the Gate of Divine Might, you can go to Jingshan Park to appreciate the panoramic view of Forbidden City if you have extra time. There is only one road between Forbidden City and Jingshan Park. There are five pavilions in the park and the highest one is called Wanchunting, where you can see the panoramic view of Forbidden City and other sites along the Central Axis of Beijing. local people often hold activities in here.

### Where is Forbidden City - Location

Forbidden City is rightly located at the center of Beijing City, very close to Tiananmen Square. You could easily find it and get there by taxi, subway, bus, bicycle, etc.

