

Changsha, China



Changsha, the heart of Hunan

If you are looking to dodge the well-trodden tourist trails and immerse yourself in a city that offers subtlety over spectacle, Changsha quietly calls. This city combines modernity with a revolutionary past, presenting an engaging backdrop for those who appreciate a more thoughtful, nuanced travel experience.

Changsha, the capital city of Hunan Province might not figure prominently on some travellers' China itineraries, but it offers a blend of laid-back experiences and rich history. The city balances urban excitement with a manageable pace, perfect for those who enjoy exploring without the overwhelming hustle. Still largely undiscovered by Western tourists, the city holds a special appeal for families, where locals often greet foreign children with delighted smiles and requests for selfies, offering a red-carpet experience for the little ones.

Rooted deeply in the formative years of Mao Zedong, Changsha's streets thrum with historical depth. The city, also known locally as the Burning Stove due to its sweltering summers, ignites a passion in those who wander its vibrant pathways. Whether you are after fiery cuisines, or a deep dive into history, Changsha offers a unique blend of tradition. Are you ready to explore Changsha, where the spirit of Chairman Mao still echoes through its bustling streets and its vibrant landscapes?



Orange Isle Bridge

Yuelu Mountain

On the west bank of the Xiang River, Yuelu Mountain towers 300 meters above sea level, offering sweeping views and a tranquil escape from the city bustle. This mountain, part of a larger park area, features rugged terrain that stretches across several kilometers, adorned with lush groves of maple, pine, and chestnut trees. The ascent to the summit takes about an hour, providing a fulfilling hike. For those preferring a less strenuous route, a chairlift offers a scenic ascent, while a toboggan ride down provides a thrilling descent, making it especially appealing to children.

This park is not only a natural haven but also a significant cultural site, home to the ancient Yuelu Academy, a cradle of Neo-Confucian learning for over a thousand years. The atmosphere is charged with the mountain's natural humidity and enriched by the legacy of scholars, poets, and philosophers who have drawn inspiration and solace here throughout the centuries. Yuelu Mountain is particularly stunning in autumn when the leaves turn a deep red, painting the landscape with vibrant hues.



Corridor Bridge Of Martyrs Park

Orange Island

Venture onto Orange Island, a vibrant stretch in the heart of the Xiang River. This sandbank, stretching five kilometers in length, is called Orange Island, though it was historically laden with mandarins, a close relative of oranges, not the typical oranges we might expect.

Today, the island is a peaceful retreat away from city life. Orange Island holds a monumental place in Chinese history. Here stands a striking statue of Mao Zedong as a young man, commemorating his time spent in Changsha where he studied at Hunan First Normal University and wrote the poignant poem Changsha, reflecting on his thoughts from the island.

The island is also a hub of local activity, beloved for leisurely walks among seasonal blooms that create a riot of colours and serving as a prime location for Changsha's seasonal firework shows.



Lushan Temple



Kaifu Temple

Hunan Provincial Museum

The Hunan Provincial Museum showcases a vast array of over 180,000 artifacts that animate the rich tapestry of ancient China. Here, you can come face-to-face with artifacts preserved under layers of earth since the Han Dynasty.

Highlights include the exquisitely preserved relics of Lady Dai, the wife of a marquis, who was buried over 2,000 years ago with beautiful lacquer artifacts, musical instruments, and fine textiles. Her remarkably intact body remains one of the best-preserved ancient discoveries. These artifacts, along with a wealth of scrolls, a collection of delicate silk writings, and sculptures from as early as the 4th century, illuminate the intellectual giants and the philosophical and cultural evolution that has shaped China.

Keifu Temple

Anchored in the northern part of the town, an expansive temple stands, tracing its origins back to the Five Dynasties period, with numerous enhancements added during subsequent dynasties. This temple, steeped in over a thousand years of history and wisdom, welcomes visitors with an impressive archway at the entrance. The archway, featuring four pillars and three layers, is adorned with a striking Qing Dynasty plaque that is as historic as it is captivating.

Inside, the prayer hall is the heart of the temple. It invites a moment of reflection or an opportunity to offer up wishes. Surrounded by the temple's ancient architecture and the quiet hum of other visitors, the hall provides a serene environment that fosters a deep connection to the temple's spiritual essence.

Despite its millennial age, Keifu Temple has managed to keep up with the times, moving from a secluded mountain locale right into the hustle and bustle of the city centre. It has become a go-to spot for anyone looking to find a little peace or connect with the past amidst their busy lives.

Taiping Street

Taiping Street, the historic backbone of Changsha, stretches 375 meters through the city like a timeless corridor. This narrow, fishbone-shaped avenue steeped in 2,000 years of history. It harmonises the old with the new - traditional houses with blue-tiled roofs and white-tiled ridges stand alongside bustling cafes and vibrant night markets.

The street, which has been central to Changsha since the Han Dynasty, is a showcase of living history, offering glimpses of its past through preserved sites like the Former Residence of Jia Yi. Encircled by major avenues, Taiping Street blends its historical depth with the dynamic energy of modern city life, presenting a unique urban scene.



Traditional Chinese street in Changsha city



Changsha cuisine : A flavour fiesta for the brave and bold

Changsha is a city full-on feast where the flavours pack as much punch as the history. Known for bold, spicy dishes that rival those of Sichuan, the flavours here are so lively they could wake you up faster than your morning coffee. The famous Huangxing Road Walking Street is a buzzing thoroughfare where food, culture, and commerce intertwine.

A standout among local street food is stinky tofu. Despite its name, this fermented soybean delight has won the hearts of locals and adventurous eaters. Its robust aroma might initially challenge the uninitiated, but the rich, complex flavours are sure to win over your taste buds.

And then there is the endless parade of street food that keeps the city buzzing well into the night. The regional star? Spicy crayfish. These little critters are a local obsession and are usually bathed in a fiery sauce that will have you reaching for water (or maybe even a fire extinguisher!).

For those who dare to walk on the wild side, try the snake in spicy sauce. It is an adventure on a plate, challenging even the most adventurous foodies to take a walk on the wild side of culinary exploration.

So, whether you are a spice aficionado or a curious foodie, Changsha's culinary landscape offers an unforgettable journey through flavours that are as vibrant and spirited as the city itself. Just remember to come hungry and leave your fear of spice at the door!

A city of hidden gems and fiery flavours

Changsha may not bask in the spotlight like China's bigger cities, but for those who wander its streets, it unveils a city rich in character. Revolutionary echoes linger in its alleyways, dramatic landscapes frame its skyline, and fiery cuisine awakens the senses. More than a place on the map, Changsha is an experience woven with history, culture, and bold flavors, waiting to be explored. Come and see why this could be the highlight of your travels in China.

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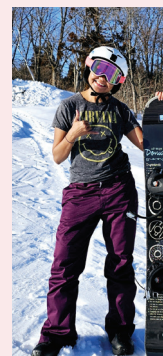
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A view of Changsha's skyline



Fly with Batik Air to Changsha,
China 3x weekly



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Shannim Mohd Sa'ad is an adventurous traveller with a deep appreciation for diverse cultures and off-the-beaten-path destinations. Along her journeys, she enjoys riding motocross, Muay Tai training, and snowboarding. Writing is her passion, compelling to share her unique experiences. Follow her on Instagram @epicadventuress and her blog epicadventuress.com