

# Hangzhou, a city with its own unique kind of beauty

The city's West Lake, one of its most famous tourist spots, exudes a special charm in autumn.

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From Spring Festival treats to winter fruit harvests and ski tours, there's a lot to do in this part of Zhejiang

By YANG YANG

Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province, is a tender sort of city, one with a charm all its own, not as overwhelming as what you get from those immense metropolises; it has a different sort of beauty, in the same way girls from the north of China differ from those in the south, a beauty that can be seen in every bridge or river, in an April shower, in the falling leaves in its parks and along its streets, and in the winter sunshine.

And, while Hangzhou is greater than the sum of its parts, the individual parts are exceptional in the following ways:

#### • Fuyang

The town's poetic scenery is nourished by the Fuchun River and it is proud of its caves, waterfalls, and mountains. It's no wonder that the Yuan dynasty artist Huang Gongwang (1269-1354) could create such a great ink drawing as *Dwellings in the Fuchun Mountains*. It has a cultural village that reproduces the papermaking and printing of the past, two of China's great inventions.

Another old town, Longmen, was the home of Sun Quan, a ruler of the state of Wu during the Three Kingdoms (222-280) period. It has around 7,000 people, 90 percent of whom have the surname Sun, quite obviously heirs of the ruling hero.

The Spring Festival celebration in the old town is a must-see. Visitors can enjoy the surrounding architecture from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, and join the audiences for theatrical performances, then get a taste of some yummy Longmen food, such as the rice cakes.

#### ■ Useful info:

- A ticket to old Longmen town costs 60 yuan
- Contact number: 86-571-6328-3398
- Website: [www.tongtian.fuyang.com](http://www.tongtian.fuyang.com)

#### • Jiande

Jiande has three treasured things: its hot springs, oranges, and strawberries. It sits alongside Qiandao (Thousand Islet) Lake, and its Xin'anjiang Hot Spring is a natural sulfur spring that gushes out 1,500 cubic meters of hot water, every day, that is rich in microelements and good for beauty and health. By late October until early December, the local county, Sandu, has a huge orange harvest and offers "orange picking" tours of its trees spread over 18.67 square kilometers of orchards.

Hard upon the heels of the orange harvest comes the strawberry harvest



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from mid-December to the following April in neighboring Yangcunqiao county. More than 30,000 tons of strawberries are ripe for the plucking, across a 13.33-sq-km area.

#### • Lin'an

Lin'an is not only famous for its bamboo, but, curiously enough, the joy of its snow in wintertime.

Its Damingshan Alpine Ski Park is the largest, highest, and best equipped ski resort in the Yangtze River Delta. It has a 20,000-sq-m snow entertainment area and 30,000-sq-m ski area that can accommodate 3,000 people at the same time. This year's Ski Festival will run from December to next March.

#### ■ Useful info:

- Contact number of the Lin'an Tourism Info Center: 86-571-6371-0111;
- Contact number of the Youhao Travel Agency: 86-571-6370-0288.

#### • Qiandao Lake

Qiandao (Thousand Islet) Lake is nature's breeding ground for thousands of plant and animal species. Here, a tourist's greatest worry is probably whether his or her belly might get too stuffed. It could be the Eight-Dainties Fish Head simmering in wolfberries and ginseng at a high-class restaurant, or just some simple home grilled aquatic delights at a roadside inn, or any of the other yummy dishes.

#### ■ Useful info:

- Contact number for Qiandao Lake Tours: 86-4008-811-988
- Website: [www.qiandaoahu.cc](http://www.qiandaoahu.cc)

#### • Tonglu

The Fuchun River runs through the heart of Tonglu. And, an evening boat tour that starts at 6.50 pm Friday and Saturday, gives tourists the entire picture. It is a combination of peaceful calm and dynamic movement, light and darkness, wind and waves and they can savor the moonlight, as the sky slowly merges with the river.

This place is good for everything, from conferences to large meals to just hanging out with friends on one of the gaily-painted boats.

In wintertime, the Yaolin Fairyland is a must-see, with its natural Karst formations and caves where the temperatures remain constant, year-round. They're the best place to get away from the cold weather — or hot weather.

The caves also have alcoholic spirits stored in earthen containers, that provide various necessary microelements.

And they can have a meal cooked in herbal medicine up on Tongjun Hill, another experience worth trying.

#### ■ Useful info:

- Boarding place for boat tour: Qiliyangfan Port at Tongjun Hill
- Boat reservations: 86-571-6462-2945
- Yaolin Fairyland reservations: 86-571-6436-1118
- Herbal medicine info: 86-571-6462-2945.

#### • Xiaoshan

This was the main venue of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Leisure Expo this September, and the Grand Leisure Stage is still in use with performances from all over the world.

There are also many folk performances, such as the Heshang Plated Dragon, part of Hangzhou's cultural heritage that dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

In the first month of the lunar calendar, thousands of young men in the Heshang area assemble handmade dragon parts glued to plates, to form a 400-meter dragon. They then carry the dragon dancing from one village to the next, while praying for a good harvest the following year.

Each household is responsible for a part of the dragon. The head, however, requires special handicraft skills that only a few elderly citizens of the village of Xitou have mastered.

Xianghu Lake is the main lake of Xiaoshan, one with a long history of bridges.

#### ■ Useful info:

- Getting there: take bus K707, K716, or K701.

#### • Yuhang

The plum blossom in Chaoshan is famed for its antiquity, wideness and strangeness. When the winter comes, the 5-square-kilometer Chaoshan Tourism Region is covered entirely in white.

The annual Chaoshan Plum Blossom Festival is Yuhang's major tourist calling card.

One of its special foods is lamb, a popular dish among local people and tourists alike. The town of Tangxi even has a lamb carnival, with "Big stomach", "Guessing the leg of lamb's weight", and "Naming creative dishes" contests.

The Lamb Pot Festival in the town of Cangqian every November is another must-try.

#### ■ Useful info:

- The plum blossoms are best seen in February.

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Evening boat tour of the city on the Fuchun River, which runs through Tonglu.



Folk performance involving the Heshang Plated Dragon, in Xiaoshan.



The annual Chaoshan Plum Blossom Festival is Yuhang's major tourist attraction.



Snowy scenery at Fuyang



"Orange picking" tour of Sandu



People having some fun on the slope at the Damingshan Alpine Ski Park, in Lin'an.



Left: Xianghu Lake, in Xiaoshan, has long been famous for its bridges. Right: Colorful, scenic view of Qiandao (Thousand Islet) Lake.