

4-Day Essence of Datong and Pingyao Tour

Trip overview

Embark on a captivating 4-day cultural journey through Shanxi Province, the cradle of ancient Chinese civilization. This meticulously curated private tour seamlessly connects two of Northern China's most iconic historic destinations: the Northern Wei capital of Datong and the Ming-Qing financial hub of Pingyao.

Your adventure begins in Datong, where you will marvel at the grand Buddhist masterpieces of the UNESCO-listed **Yungang Grottoes** and stand in awe of the **Hanging Temple**, an architectural wonder clinging precariously to a sheer cliff face for over 1,500 years. Journeying south, you will step back in time as you cross the threshold of **Pingyao Ancient City**, China's best-preserved walled town. Walk along its ancient ramparts, uncover the birth of Chinese banking at the **Rishengchang Former Bank**, and explore the sprawling courtyards of the grand **Wang Family Compound**.

With a dedicated private guide, a comfortable non-smoking vehicle, and a seamless itinerary tailored to your pace, this tour offers the ultimate hassle-free immersion into the breathtaking art, engineering, and merchant culture of old China.

- **Durations:** 4 Days
- **Destinations:** Datong - Pingyao
- **Tour inquiry:** <https://asiachinatour.com/4-day-essence-of-datong-and-pingyao-tour/>

Itinerary

Day 1: Datong Arrival & Ancient City Highlights

Welcome to Datong! Your private guide will be waiting for you at the airport or train station exit, holding a personalized sign. A comfortable, non-smoking private vehicle with an experienced driver will be ready to whisk you away to explore the soul of this ancient capital.

The Datong Nine-Dragon Screen and Huayan Temple will be your first stops to experience traditional Chinese architectural wonders. As the oldest and largest glazed screen wall in China, the Nine-Dragon Screen is a magnificent masterpiece. Just a short distance away lies the Huayan Temple, which houses the world's second-largest wooden pagoda. Beneath its towering structure,

you will visit the awe-inspiring Thousand Buddha Palace, an underground sanctuary crafted entirely from pure copper from the ceiling to the floor.

An authentic local lunch will be arranged at a popular social restaurant. Your guide will assist with ordering to ensure you savor the most genuine Shanxi culinary specialties, tailored perfectly to your preferences.

The UNESCO-listed Yungang Grottoes await you in the afternoon. As one of China's most famous ancient Buddhist sculptural sites, its massive statues and grand caves are truly breathtaking. To maximize your time admiring the intricate art, we provide a private battery cart for seamless transport between the caves, saving you from long walks.

A relaxing evening at leisure will conclude your first day. Your driver will escort you to your hotel for a well-deserved rest, and your guide will be happy to recommend the best local dining spots nearby for your dinner.

Accommodation: Garden International Hotel (4-star) / Shanxi World Trade Hotel (5-star)

Expert Tips for Your Datong Exploration:

To truly appreciate the details of the Yungang Grottoes, we suggest bringing a small flashlight as some cave interiors are dimly lit. In the Huayan Temple's Copper Palace, please be prepared to wear provided shoe covers to protect the pristine metal floors. For dinner, don't miss the chance to try Datong's famous "Shaomai"—your guide can point you to the most authentic local eateries.

Day 2: Datong to Pingyao via Hanging Monastery & Yingxian Wooden Pagoda

After enjoying breakfast at your hotel, you will embark on a scenic journey from Datong to Pingyao. While the total driving time is about 5½ hours, the trip is broken up by some of China's most spectacular cultural marvels, ensuring an engaging and comfortable day of exploration.

The Marvelous Hanging Temple will be your first stop after a pleasant 1½-hour drive. True to its name, this architectural wonder clings precariously to a sheer cliff face. Built over 1,500 years ago, it originally served as a safe haven providing food and water for weary travelers. Remarkably, it integrates China's three major belief systems—Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism—allowing followers of all three paths to find sanctuary here. The temple was constructed high up on the mountain to fulfill a specific Taoist principle: "Do not hear the rooster crow and dog bark," ensuring a serene environment completely removed from the noise of daily life.

An authentic local lunch will be arranged near the temple before you head to the iconic **Yingxian Wooden Pagoda**. As a world-renowned historical site, this magnificent structure stands as the oldest and tallest surviving fully wooden pagoda in China. Built entirely without a single nail, its intricate bracket system has allowed it to withstand centuries of earthquakes and weather, making it a true masterpiece of ancient engineering.

A direct highway drive to Pingyao will occupy the rest of the afternoon. Upon arrival, you will check into your atmospheric hotel nestled right within the heart of Pingyao Ancient Town, stepping back in time to the charms of old China.

Accommodation: Hongshanyi Inn (4-star) / Yunjincheng Folk Hotel (5-star)

Expert Tips for Your Journey:

Staying inside Pingyao Ancient Town offers an incredible glimpse into traditional Chinese living,

featuring antique courtyards, wooden furnishings, and the opportunity to sleep on a "Kang"—a traditional heatable brick bed popular in North China. Because Kang beds are naturally firmer than standard Western mattresses, please do not hesitate to ask the hotel staff for an extra quilt or topper to soften the bed to your comfort. Additionally, wear sturdy walking shoes today, as the steep, narrow steps at the Hanging Temple can be challenging to navigate.

Day 3: Pingyao In-Depth Exploration & Ancient Charm

Wake up refreshed in your traditional Chinese-style room and step right into the living history of this beautifully preserved town.

The Ancient City Wall is the perfect place to begin your morning exploration. Stretching around the perimeter of the town, walking along its ramparts offers a bird's-eye view of the gray-tiled rooftops and traditional courtyards below. For photography enthusiasts, catching the early morning light here provides a spectacular opportunity to capture the quiet, timeless essence of Pingyao before the daytime crowds arrive.

The Rishengchang Former Bank will be your next stop, introducing you to the financial heart of old China. As the country's very first draft bank (Piaohao), this historic site marks the birthplace of modern Chinese banking. Here, you will discover how a sophisticated network of paper checks and credit developed, revolutionizing trade across the nation, and trace its influential journey until the system eventually gave way to modern state banks.

An authentic local lunch will be arranged at a handpicked restaurant inside the ancient city, allowing you to sample traditional Shanxi regional dishes.

The Armed Escort Company Museum offers a fascinating look into how these vast banking fortunes were protected. To safeguard tangible silver and gold on the road, professional armed escort companies came into being. This unique museum details the inner workings of this high-stakes security business and introduces the top ten escort companies and legendary guards of the era—all of whom were elite kung fu masters.

The Vibrant Ming-Qing Street awaits you as the day winds down. As the most prosperous commercial avenue in the ancient town, it is lined with traditional shops, teahouses, and local vendors. In the evening, the entire street lights up with hundreds of red lanterns, creating a lively, magical atmosphere that is perfect for a leisurely night stroll.

Accommodation: Hongshanyi Inn (4-star) / Yunjincheng Folk Hotel (5-star)

Expert Tips for Your Pingyao Exploration:

Pingyao Ancient Town is completely pedestrianized, so today involves a significant amount of walking on historic stone paved streets—comfortable, supportive footwear is essential. If you plan to capture the sunrise from the city wall, check the opening times with your guide the day before, as access points can sometimes vary by season. For the evening walk along Ming-Qing Street, don't hesitate to try some local street snacks like Pingyao beef or sea-buckthorn juice, which are famous throughout the region.

Day 4: Pingyao Cultural Treasures & Departure

After enjoying breakfast at your hotel, your guide will meet you in the lobby to explore the magnificent cultural heritage located just beyond the ancient city walls.

The Shuanglin Temple is your first stop, located just a short 10-minute drive away. Often referred to as the "unrestored glory" of Pingyao, this temple houses an incredible collection of over 2,000 colored mud sculptures preserved beneath its humble-looking roofs. Each sculpture is a rare treasure, meticulously crafted with its own unique facial features and lifelike expressions, representing the pinnacle of ancient Chinese sculptural art.

The Wang Family Compound awaits you after a scenic one-hour drive south. This massive residence served as the ancestral home of the Wang family—a highly reputable family of officials who inhabited the estate for over 300 years. Spanning an impressive 25 hectares (62 acres), the compound features 123 distinct courtyards and 1,118 rooms. The intricate layout of the complex is a fascinating architectural study, reflecting the rigid social hierarchies of the time, including the different statuses of men and women, as well as masters and servants.

An authentic local lunch will be arranged at a handpicked restaurant along the way. Your guide will assist you with the menu and ordering to ensure you experience the most genuine regional flavors of Shanxi.

A seamless departure concludes your journey. After exploring the compound, your guide and driver will escort you directly to the train station, assisting with your luggage and bidding you a fond farewell as you head to your next destination.

Expert Tips for Your Final Day:

The Wang Family Compound is vast and involves many steps and slopes; we recommend pacing yourself and wearing comfortable walking shoes. While Shuanglin Temple is smaller, its sculptures are incredibly detailed—bringing a small flashlight can help you appreciate the intricate textures and colors in the darker corners of the halls. Please ensure you have your train tickets or digital booking ready, as your guide will help coordinate the timing to get you to the station with plenty of time for check-in.

Booking Policy

Cancellation Policy

Cancellation by Customer

- Cancellation received before 60 days: FREE of charge
- Cancellation received from 30 days to 59 days prior arrival date: 20% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 15 days to 29 days prior arrival date: 40% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 7 days to 14 days prior arrival date: 70% of total rate
- Cancellation received less than 7 days prior arrival date or No show: 100% of total rate

Children Policy

The rate for children applicable for one child sharing a twin or double cabin with two adults.

- For infant (<04 years old): Free of Charge
 - 04 - 11 years old without bed: 50% adult rate
 - 04 - 11 years old with extra bed: 75% adult rate
 - Above 11 years old with extra bed: 100% adult rate
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