



Day Trips from Běijīng

Ming Tombs p184

Unesco-protected burial site for 13 of China's emperors.

Chuāndǐxià p185

Gorgeous, well-preserved Ming-dynasty village, nestled in a remote valley.

Tánzhè Temple p188

Huge, historic, Buddhist temple set among forested hills.

Marco Polo Bridge & Wǎnpíng p189

A 900-year-old stone bridge beside a unique Ming-dynasty walled town.

Ming Tombs

Explore

The Unesco-protected Ming Tombs (十三陵; Shísān Lǐng) is the final resting place for 13 of the 16 Ming-dynasty emperors and makes for a fascinating half-day trip. The scattered tombs, each a huge temple-like complex guarding an enormous burial mound at its rear, back onto the southern slopes of Tiānshòu Mountain. Only three of the 13 tombs are open to the public, and only one has had its underground burial chambers excavated, but what you are able to see is impressive enough, and leaves you wondering just how many priceless treasures must still be buried here.

Top Tip

Keep an eye on the planned extension to the Changping subway line. The line will eventually reach the Ming Tombs and may be operational by the time you read this.

Getting There & Away

► **Bus** Bus 872 (¥9, one hour, 7.10am to 7.10pm) leaves from the north side of Dēshèngmén gateway (德胜门) and passes all the sights, apart from Zhāo Lǐng, before terminating at Cháng Lǐng. Last bus back is at 6pm.

Getting Around

► **Bus** It's easy to bus-hop. Get off the 872 at Da Gong Men (大宫门) bus stop, and walk through the triple-arched Great Palace Gate (大宫门) that leads to Spirit Way. After walking the length of Spirit Way, catch bus 67 from Hu Zhuang (胡庄) bus stop (the first bus stop on your right) to its terminus at Zhāo Lǐng (¥1); walk straight on through the village to find the tomb. Then, coming back the way you came, catch another 67, or walk (2km; left at the end of the road, then left again) to Dìng Lǐng, from where you can catch bus 314 to Cháng Lǐng (¥1).

Need to Know

- **Location** 50km from Běijīng
- **Price** ¥35 to ¥65, combined ticket ¥135
- **Opening Hours** 8am to 5.30pm

SIGHTS

CHÁNG LǐNG

TOMB

(长陵; admission ¥50, audio guide ¥50) The resting place of the first of the 13 emperors to be buried at the Ming Tombs, Cháng Lǐng contains the body of Emperor Yongle (1402–24), his wife and 16 concubines, and is the largest, most impressive and most important of the tombs here. Like all the tombs, it follows a standard imperial layout, a main gate (棱恩门; *lín'ēn mén*) leading to the first of a series of courtyards, and the main hall (棱恩殿; *lín'ēn diàn*).

Beyond this lie gates leading to the Soul Tower (明楼; Míng Lóu), behind which rises the burial mound surrounded by a fortified wall (宝成; *bǎo chéng*). Seated upon a three-tiered marble terrace, the standout structure in this complex is the Hall of Eminent Favours (灵恩殿; Lín'ēn Diàn), containing a recent statue of Yongle, various artefacts excavated from Dìng Lǐng, and a breathtaking interior with vast *nánmù* (cedar wood) columns. As with all three tombs here, you can climb the Soul Tower at the back of the complex for views of the surrounding hills.

DÌNG LǐNG

TOMB

(定陵; admission ¥65, audio guide ¥50) Dìng Lǐng, the resting place of Emperor Wanli (1572–1620) and his wife and concubines, is at first sight less impressive than Cháng Lǐng because many of the halls and gateways have been destroyed. It's the only tomb that has ever been opened, but many of the priceless artefacts were ruined after being left in a huge, unsealed storage room that leaked water. Other treasures – including the bodies of Emperor Wanli and his entourage – were looted and burned by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution.

This, though, is the only tomb where you can climb down into the vast, but now empty, burial chambers.

The small **Museum of the Ming Tombs** (明十三陵博物馆; Míng Shísānlǐng Bówùguǎn; admission with Dìng Lǐng ticket), just past the Dìng Lǐng ticket office, contains a few precious remaining artefacts, plus replicas of destroyed originals.

ZHĀO LǐNG

TOMB

(昭陵; admission ¥35) Zhāo Lǐng is the smallest of the three tombs, and many of its buildings are recent rebuilds. It's much less visited than the others, though, so is more peaceful, and the *bǎo chéng* (宝成; fortified