

Xinjiang: Far West China Presents

# TURPAN

Exploring Xinjiang's Ancient Ruins

by Josh Summers



Includes:

- ❖ Maps
- ❖ Itineraries
- ❖ History
- ❖ Taxi Guide
- ❖ Hotels
- ❖ Pictures
- ❖ Money-Saving Tips



Part of the Open Door Series

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XINJIANG: FAR WEST CHINA PRESENTS:

# ***Turpan***

## ***Exploring Xinjiang's Ancient Ruins***

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Part of the **Open Door Series**  
*“Opening doors to the unknown”*

Written by Josh Summers  
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*Turpan: Exploring Xinjiang's Ancient Ruins is part of the **Open Door Series**, a growing set of travel guides written to open the door to previously unknown parts of the world. The narrow focus of these books is meant to provide the educated traveler with the depth and history of Central Asia not found in any other English-language guide.*

*Self-Published on Xinjiang: Far West China*

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*Disclaimer:*

*Although the author has gone to great pains to ensure the accuracy of the material in this guide, he is not omniscient. The author isn't sure what kind of liability there is in writing a travel guide, but since every other major guide "disclaims liability" from inaccurate information, he guesses he should too. Please forward any corrections to the email address listed above.*

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## **Introduction**

For over three years my wife and I have called Xinjiang our home. During that period of time we have been able to see a good portion of this province, enough to convince us that we accidentally moved to one of the most beautiful and intriguing locales in the world. We have passed up the opportunity to make more money in other parts of China, determining that as long as we're in Asia we'll be living in Xinjiang.

As part of my travels in Xinjiang and in an effort to educate myself on Central Asia and its history I have amassed a collection of various travel books, some unbearably thick and others quite slim. While each of them is useful in their own way, I have found that none of them (at least the ones in English) give a well-rounded, detailed picture of the places that I wanted to visit. What's so interesting about seeing mounds of dirt that you're told are "ancient ruins" if you have no previous understanding of the city's history? It's no wonder some of these travel books tell travelers to "skip" certain sights when it is obvious the writer didn't take the time to understand much of the background history.

So with that in mind I decided to begin my Open Door Series with Turpan. For years I've been sharing discoveries and observations about Xinjiang on my website, [Xinjiang: Far West China](#), but this is the first time that I've attempted to combine my knowledge of the province with the experience of traveling to a specific location to create a travel booklet. It's been a difficult journey requiring more research than I first anticipated, but the result has been rewarding for me – and hopefully it will be helpful for you!

As you prepare for your trip to Turpan, or perhaps as you look back on a completed tour, I hope you can achieve a greater appreciation for the history and beauty of this city. There's a ton of information here, possibly more than you'll need, but it should help you better plan your itinerary.

Finally, don't forget to check out the weekly postings on [Far West China](#) for more pictures, stories, and travelogues covering the larger-than-life province of Xinjiang. On the site you'll find a "Contact Me" page where you can tell me how your trip went and let me know if this guide was helpful for you.

Happy travels!


# Historical Perspective

## *A Condensed History of Xinjiang and the Turpan Basin*

The place that history refers to as “Turpan”, “Turfan” or “Tulufan” as the Chinese say, has actually been a migrating city under different names whose current location was only formally established as the city center less than four centuries ago. Early local settlements existed in the Turpan Basin well before the Chinese Han Dynasty set up garrisons, but thanks to the Silk Road this small town became an important outpost for a wide range of ethnicities and religions. Today the city is better known around the world for its grapes and the incredibly hot summer (the highest recorded temperature was 49.6°C...that’s 121°F!) but the nearby ancient ruins are reminders of a history that will continue to define the region’s legacy.

## **A Brief Xinjiang Overview**

The enormous size of the Xinjiang province (it covers one-sixth of China’s landmass) makes retelling its history a difficult task. However, in order to best appreciate the history of Turpan it must first be understood within the context of the region.



Long before the Chinese hit the scene and even before the Uyghurs called themselves by that name (previously they were just “Türks”), nomads roamed the land that at the time wasn’t constricted by borders. With every turn of the century new rulers were claiming authority and more turf wars were being fought.

Players in this ever-evolving game of chess included the Xiongnu tribe (a ruthless group allegedly related to the Huns), Russians, Mongols, Tibetans, Kazakhs, Türks (out of which came the Uyghurs), Dongans (now referred to as “Hui”) and finally the Chinese.

### ***Did You Know?***

This region wasn’t known as “Xinjiang” until 1759.

It can be successfully argued that up until 1949 no single group retained control of Xinjiang in its entirety, and over the past six decades the Chinese have had quite a hard time at that. What we know as Xinjiang today is really a large puzzle whose individual pieces are uniquely different in geography, history and ethnicity. Turpan is merely a small section of the puzzle but even this one piece is an astonishing patchwork of diverse cultures and peoples.

## ***A Closer Look at Turpan***

### ***Han Dynasty Period***

Although people have inhabited the Turpan Basin for longer than we have written or archaeological record, the best place to start Turpan's history is in 104B.C. when China's Emperor Wudi, a leader whose ambition exceeded his reach, sent an expedition of 60,000 men west into modern-day Xinjiang. The original purpose of this expedition was to gain access to the resilient horses of the western kingdoms that would prove invaluable to the Chinese army, but much more was to come from this trip. Although this difficult journey cost the lives of 50,000 of these men, the army was successful in setting up many garrison outposts including one in the area of Turpan.

This Han Dynasty outpost was located in Jiaohe, whose ruins are still visible, and existed alongside the people already residing in the area. It was during this time that a trade route, which wasn't called the "Silk Road" until 1877, was born that linked China's former capital of Chang'an (modern day Xi'an) to the riches of Central Asia which extended as far as the Roman Empire. The new garrison town in Turpan sat squarely in the path of the northern route, a position that brought traders from the east and religious influence – namely Buddhism – from the west.

### ***Interim Period***

Around 200A.D. the Han Dynasty began its decline and by the time it finally collapsed many of these garrison towns and their troops along the Silk Road were left to take care of themselves. The settlement at Jiaohe continued to survive during this period although the region's balance of power slowly shifted toward another town about 55km to the east known locally as Karakhoja, also called Gaochang.

### ***Tang Dynasty Period***

Once China reunited under Tang Dynasty in 618A.D. they were finally able to return their focus to the far west. In 640A.D. the Tang Empire officially annexed the Gaochang Kingdom (which included Jiaohe) even though power struggles were constantly keeping the troops busy. Chinese involvement in the Turpan area continued throughout the Tang Dynasty period until political changes in the north of Xinjiang caused a massive flood of Uyghurs into the region.

### ***Uyghur Period***

At present, the term "Uyghur" tends to be falsely associated with any Xinjiang inhabitant not of Han Chinese descent, but back as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century the Uyghurs were a specific group of Turkic tribes who built a small empire in the northern portion of the province. The early Uyghur Khans and Han Emperors developed amicable relations through royal marriages and mutually beneficial trade, which is worthy of note considering modern day tensions that exist between the

#### **CHINA DYNASTIES AT A GLANCE**

206B.C.-220	Han Dynasty
220-589	Power Struggles
589-618	Sui Dynasty
618-907	Tang Dynasty
960-1279	Song Dynasty
1279-1368	Yuan (Mongol)
1368-1644	Ming Dynasty
1644-1911	Qing Dynasty

two groups. For nearly a century these Uyghurs ruled in their capital to the north until the 9<sup>th</sup> century when a Kyrgyz army killed the Uyghur khan and seized the capital.

Most of the Uyghurs who were scattered by this event ended up the Turpan area as well as the neighboring province of Gansu. Jiaohe was rebuilt while Gaochang immediately became their new capital and both remained under their control until abandoned in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. To this day a vast majority of Turpan's inhabitants are of Uyghur descent.

### ***Mongol Period***

Shortly after Genghis Khan and his Mongol army tore through Asia creating an empire that included the Yuan Dynasty in China (1279-1368), Mongolian influences began to appear in Turpan's art. Constant wars and fighting crippled the Gaochang Kingdom of Turpan until it was ultimately abandoned. At this point the region and its Uyghur people made one final shift to the west building up a city that we now recognize as Turpan.

### ***Modern Islamic Period***

Islam already had a foothold in the western part of Xinjiang by the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, but it took a couple hundred more years for it to reach Turpan. As the new city became the growing center of economic and political importance, Islam emerged as the religion of choice. So it has been for the last six centuries that Turpan and its inhabitants have inseparably grown together. It is an identity which the residents here hold dear yet thankfully doesn't clash with a history that most definitely isn't Islamic. This celebration of modern day religion against the backdrop of Turpan's colorful history makes this region a special place to visit.



Turpan City Mosque 吐鲁番清真寺

# Transportation

## Bus

The quickest and easiest way to access Turpan is by the many air conditioned buses that travel between here and Urumqi daily. Buses depart from Urumqi's south bus station called Nánjiāo Qìchēzhàn(南郊汽车站), the same station that can get you to Kashgar.

All buses in and out of Turpan depart from the city's central bus station conveniently located on Lǎochéng Lù (老城路) across from the night market. From here you can travel to Urumqi, Kashgar, Kuqa, Hami, and the train station. See Map section B3 for the terminal location.

### BUS TICKET PRICES

Turpan – Urumqi	25 元
Turpan – Train Station	7.5 元
Turpan – Kashgar	126 元
Turpan – Hami	90 元

### **You CAN Wait till the Last Minute!**

Buses to Urumqi run often and rarely sell out except during Chinese holidays, so there is no need to buy your bus tickets more than one day in advance. Often I buy tickets 15 minutes before departure, but I just like to live life on the edge like that.



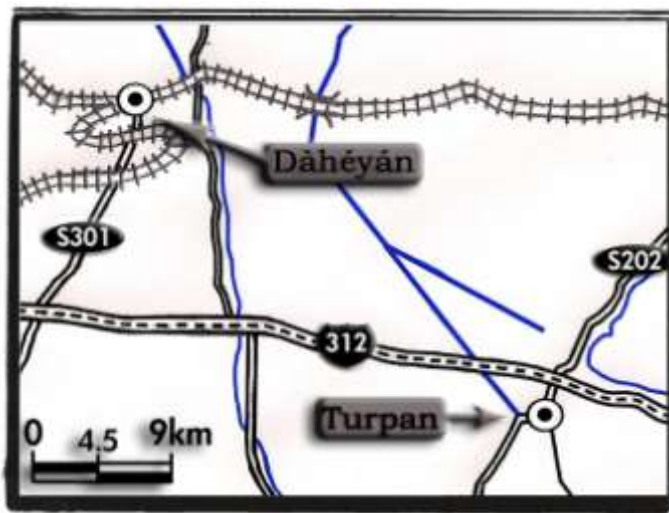
Turpan Bus Station 客运站

## Air

Currently an airport is being built near the city which is scheduled to be completed in May of 2010. When finished, it will likely have a single flight per day to Urumqi lasting no more than 30 minutes. The extra comfort will come at a low cost but the time and effort spent in airports probably won't make it any better than taking a bus or train.

## Train

Although people like to say that Turpan has a stop on the train line, the reality is that the station is located in Dàhéyán (大河沿) a good hour from Turpan's city center. Trains



from here can get you to the Xinjiang cities of Urumqi, Kashgar, and Hami or as far out as Beijing, Chengdu, or Xi'an.

Tickets can be bought at the train station if you happen to be in Dàhéyán, but the easiest way to get tickets while you're staying in Turpan is to buy them from the local ticket office (铁桶). It is located not far from the bus station and right next to the night market (see Map, section A3).

**Note:** If you are entering or exiting Turpan via Urumqi, it's best to just take a bus. It's faster, easier, and there's actually

a guarantee that you'll get a seat.

### To/From Train Station:

Taxis and buses (see Bus section above) are both available to transport visitors to and from the station. A bus will run you 7.5 元 while a taxi will average 40-50 元.

## Getting Around Turpan

Taxis and minibuses are the most common mode of transportation used to visit the sights around Turpan. Unfortunately this is also the place where most tourists get ripped off. However you first arrive you're likely to be met with a number of "guides" trying to sell their services. Take their card but don't be in a rush to secure transportation. Check into your hotel and ask the desk what services they offer or if they can suggest a driver. As you'll see in the hotel section of this guide (Pg 27), every hotel that accommodates foreigners offers tourist services. It's in their best interest to do so.



If you're a single traveler your cheapest option will be to join a minibus tour that should cost around 50 元 per day. If you have a larger group or want the freedom of a taxi, expect to pay around 200-25 元 **per taxi, per day** (not per person!). When negotiating make sure you are clear on all the places you want to visit and at the completion of the tour pay the driver directly.

Nothing spoils a trip faster than getting ripped off so try to give yourself a day to get your transportation sorted out.

TRAIN TICKET PRICES		
Destination	Hard Seat	Soft Sleeper
Urumqi 乌鲁木齐	10-32 元	N/A
Kashgar 喀什	63 元	259 元
Hami 哈密	55 元	120 元
Beijing 北京	640 元	1001 元
Shanghai 上海	675 元	1120 元

## Tips and Itineraries

There are a couple things you should know about touring Turpan. The most fun part of visiting the city is the ability to see *everything*. You don't have to pick your favorites and hope you didn't miss anything really cool. Considering this is one of those places most of us will probably visit only once in our lives, that's a pretty good thing.

Of course, there are a few small attractions hundreds of kilometers outside of Turpan that tour guides might try to get you interested in, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about all of the tourist destinations within a 50 kilometer radius of Turpan. You can see it in two full days with time left over to wander the city.

### Itineraries

Here are some ideas for itineraries depending on how many days you plan to spend in Turpan. My suggestion is to tour the area in four days: arrive on day one and settle into your hotel; tour for two days; depart on day four. Most tour agencies will offer some variation of these itineraries.



### Money-Saving Tip

You can either buy your desired destination tickets in bulk or individually at any of the major tourist site ticket counters. Personally I found it very convenient to keep only one ticket with me the entire time, plus I got an great discount buying in bulk (don't forget to ask for a discount, especially in the off-season). If you take a tour group this won't matter much, but if you decide to hire your own driver **this could save you both time and money.**

## **Safety Tips**

Many people tend to shy away from visiting Xinjiang on the basis of safety concerns. Ethnic conflicts and health scares, the only two news items from the province to reach the international press, paint Xinjiang as a dangerous and crazy area. The truth is that **traveling to Xinjiang is no more dangerous than any other part of China.**

Still, it is a good idea to be alert – not paranoid – about potential problems and to take measures to ensure a safe trip to China. The following are a few ideas for travelers to Turpan or any other part of the country.

- ❖ **Take Care of Your Belongings:** The only problem you are likely to face in China is that of theft. If you are traveling by train, never leave your luggage alone. While at the hotel, take all your valuables along with you when you leave. Pickpockets are also the norm, so watch your wallet and bring along a purse that can be zipped closed.
- ❖ **Over-Identify Yourself:** There are only two ways in which the average traveler has noticed a change in Xinjiang since the riots of 2009: more police and more ID checks. It's a good idea to keep a copy of your passport, visa, and the embassy contact numbers in case you need them, preferably in a different place than where you keep the actual documents. Carrying extra ID isn't necessary but it wouldn't hurt.
- ❖ **Watch Where you Point Your Camera:** The fastest way to get your camera confiscated is to point it toward a group of military or police personnel. If you run across any sort of protest or gathering, resist the urge to pull out your camera.
- ❖ **It's Hot, But Be Modest:** Although Turpan is predominantly Muslim, you don't need to cover your whole body and head when traveling. Just be modest and you'll be fine (i.e. no mini-skirts, etc.).
- ❖ **Use Common Sense:** If it feels scary for you to walk outside at night, then don't. Chances are that in Turpan you'll be perfectly safe, but use common sense. Don't go out alone as a woman and stay away if you happen to run into suspicious situation.




# Turpan City

## Where to Sleep





- Jiaotong Binguan 交通宾馆.....1 A3
- Gaochang Binguan 高唱宾馆.....2 B2
- Oasis Hotel 丝路绿洲宾馆.....3 C2
- Turpan Hotel 吐鲁番宾馆.....4 C4
- Grand Turpan Hotel 吐鲁番大饭店...5 B2
- Karez Hotel 坎儿井宾馆.....6 A2

## Things To Eat

- John's Cafe 约翰西餐厅...C4
- Best Food Burger 百富...B3
- Bazaar 市农贸市场.....B4

 - Supermarket 超市

## Information

-  Museum 吐鲁番博物馆...C3
-  Hospital 人民医院.....B4
-  Post Office 邮局.....A3, B3
-  Bank 银行.....B1, B4

## Transportation

-  Bus Station 客运站.....B3
-  Train Office 铁桶.....A3

*\*\*This map is hand-drawn, but what it lacks in accuracy of scale it more than makes up for in accuracy of detail*





吐鲁番  
**Turpan**  
**Sights**



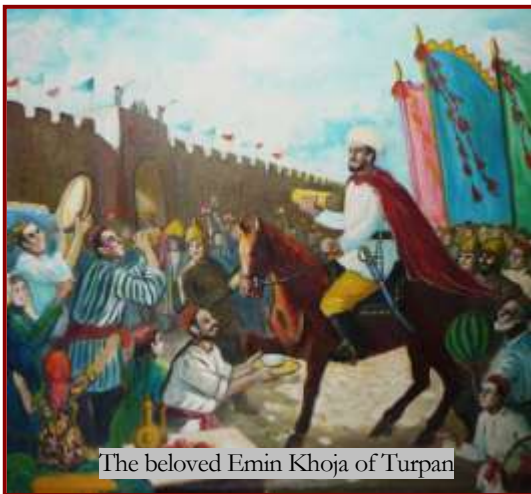
## Emin Minaret

The Emin Minaret is by far the most visibly well-known of Turpan's tourist destinations. Although many beautiful and more colorful mosques exist within the city, the distinctive brick patterns and typical Uyghur architecture make this a poster boy for Xinjiang tourism.



THE DETAILS
Name: Sūgōng Tǎ 苏公塔
Location: 2.5km (1.5mi) E of the Turpan
Price: 50 元

## Historical Perspective



The beloved Emin Khoja of Turpan

This mosque and minaret were constructed in honor of Emin Khoja (sometimes spelled 'Imin Hoja'), a Uyghur Turpan ruler during most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century long after the ancient cities of Jiaohe and Gaochang had been abandoned. Born in 1694 in the nearby town of Astana he became a khoja who, according to the Chinese history books, maintained a constant and friendly relationship with the Qing Dynasty emperors.

**Uyghurs used the word "khoja" to refer to their leaders or "kings".**

For more than half a century Emin Khoja remained a prominent leader in the Turpan area, maintaining peace by resisting invading Jungar troops from the outside and quelling rebellions from the inside. Towards the end of his rule he even made a couple trips out to Beijing to meet with the Qing Dynasty emperor, at one point being asked (or forced?) to stay for an entire 5 years. In 1772, while making a visit back to Turpan for holiday, his health took a dive for the worse. He remained there for five more years, cared for by his two sons, until his death at the age of 83.

Before he passed away, however, he and his son Suleman arranged for the mosque and minaret to be built in his honor. Construction began in 1777, the year that Emin Khoja passed away, and was completed in 1778.

**The Emin mosque is still used on Fridays as a place of worship for the local Muslims**



Inside the Emin Mosque

## What to Look For

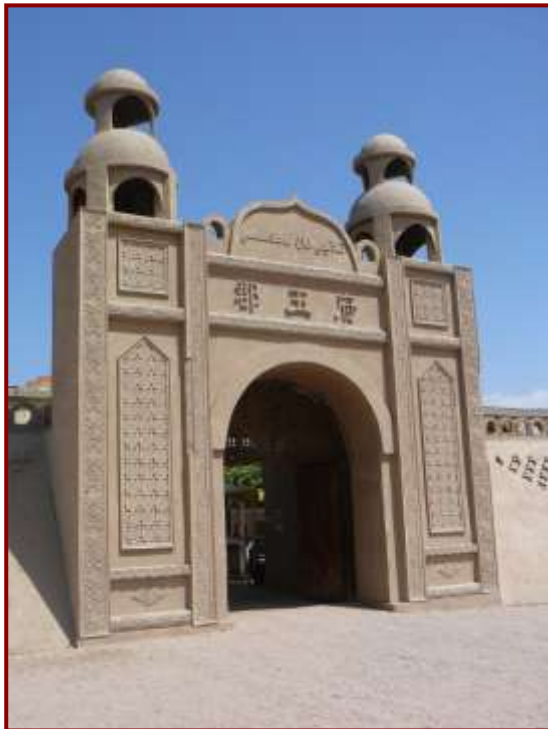


- Take a close look at the **brickwork on the minaret**. Thousands of mud bricks arranged in over 10 different repeating, geometric patterns give you a good representation of Uyghur architecture at the time. Mud is the one material they had in great supply and they knew how to use it!

▪ Directly behind and to the side of the mosque is a **traditional Uyghur cemetery**. Take a walk around and notice the grave designs: round, sometimes pointed at the top, and no markings indicating names or dates. This is common in Uyghur cemeteries around Xinjiang, although they usually aren't this clean.



## Governor's Mansion



Although not mentioned in most guide books, included with your ticket to the Emin Minaret is entrance to what they call the "Governor's Mansion". It's not far, so unless you're on a time crunch you ought to stop by. This is essentially Emin Khoja's palace and a good representation of "upper-class" Uyghur life.

Along an underground tunnel you'll also get a detailed history of the Khoja's life (favorable to the Chinese, of course), written in Chinese, Arabic, and poorly translated English. Artifacts are few and the place isn't well-maintained, but I will say that it's a great place to get pictures of Uyghur-style architecture and woodcarving.



Rating: ★★★★★

## Flaming Mountains

Let me be honest with you: the Flaming Mountains are beautiful but the tourist destination is unnecessary. Anybody driving along the highway can see the same exact cliff face, tourist just pay to view it from a specific plot of land while riding on a camel.

THE DETAILS
Name: Huǒyàn Shān 火焰山
Location: 15km (9 mi) E of Turpan
Price: 40 元

### What's The Fuss About?

The Flaming Mountains owe its name and popularity to a single Chinese novel entitled *Journey to the West*. The fictitious story about a pilgrim monk named Tripitaka is very loosely based on the actual journey of a monk named Xuan Zang who traveled over 5,000km to India and back in search of Buddhist scriptures. He also made recorded stops at the nearby city of Gaochang to lecture in the temple. This bizarre account tells how the monk had to ask the Monkey King for help, who in turn borrowed a palm-leaf fan from the Iron Fan Princess (aren't the names great?). In the story the flames were extinguished to allow for the monk's safe passage but for now the Flaming Mountains still stand as a subtle reminder of how blazing hot the Turpan depression is.

### Tourist Tips:

- As I said above, you can save yourself some money by not actually entering the tourist destination. If you're traveling out to Gaochang or Bezeklik, just ask your driver to stop along the road to snap some pictures.
- Buy a postcard featuring a good picture of the Flaming Mountains. Unless you come at the perfect time of day and use a professional camera, chances are you'll be disappointed with your pictures. Below is my best attempt and it really doesn't do the place justice.



Rating: ★★★★★

# Karez

If you ever find yourself wondering how a green oasis like Turpan can exist in such a hot and dry desert landscape, the answer is simple: karez. Heralded as one of the greatest Uyghur inventions, this ancient irrigation system is the process by which snowmelt from nearby mountains is carried to the city through underground channels.

## THE DETAILS

Name: Kǎnr Jǐng 坎儿井

Location: 1km (.6 mi) W of  
Turpan

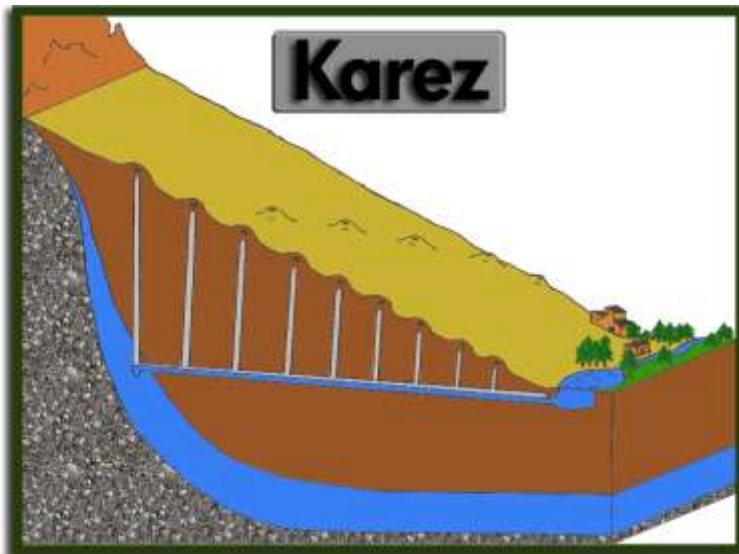
Price: 40 元

### Did You Know?

Turpan is home to over 1,000 karez which span a total length of 5,000km and supply 30% of the region's water.

Because surface temperatures in the Turpan Depression can reach as high as 80°C (176°F), evaporation makes above ground canals impractical and technology at the time couldn't dig a well deep enough to reach the underground reservoirs. A bird's eye view shows what looks like a neat row of gigantic ant

hills, but each of these is actually a vertical shaft that connects subterranean streams of water flowing toward the city by force of gravity.



## THE GREAT ESCAPE

You'll better understand the construction of karez if you've seen the movie *The Great Escape*. In this 1963 classic, a group of prisoners during World War II devise a plan to break out by means of digging underneath the prison gates. Using small shovels, candle light, and a pulley system they dug three primary tunnels 30 feet deep and over 200 feet long displacing over 160 tons of sand. It was an impressive feat that made for a great movie and it will give you an even greater appreciation for these canals.

Turpan's Karez Museum looks impressive on the outside and offers a nice environment to learn about the karez...if you can read Chinese. A random sign here or there is translated into broken English, but for the most part they expect you to piece together the history yourself. Don't worry, though. Use the information provided here along with the large model they have on display and you'll get the idea.

Also on display in this one-room museum you'll find tools and pottery that were used during the time that many of these karez were built. Try to get yourself into the mindset of that time period and then go explore the karez. It's fairly short in length, so don't walk around too fast and snap good pictures while you can.

Rating: ★★ ★

## Jiaohe Ancient City

For nearly thirteen centuries a lively city once sat perched atop this narrow plateau not far from modern-day Turpan. Like most cities in Xinjiang, it bears both a Chinese name, “Jiaohe”, and a lesser-known local name, “Yarkhoto”.

Jiaohe may not be as large or as historically important as the nearby Gaochang ruins, but for a tourist, the familiar street layout and recognizable buildings are more aesthetically pleasing. The two most distinctive features you’ll notice are the absence of any city wall and the fact that most of the structures in the city, including the streets, were dug out of the ground rather than built up.

### THE DETAILS

Name: Jiāohé Gùchéng

交河故城

Location: 10km (6 miles) W  
of Turpan

Price: 40 ¥.



### A Brief History

Established early in the Han Dynasty as a garrison town, Jiaohe continued to flourish under both Chinese and Uyghur rule until it was finally abandoned at the end of the 14th century due to war. The earliest known inhabitants were a group of people called the “Jūshi” (车师) who made the city their capital until it became a part of the Gaochang kingdom in 450 A.D. At this point the capital was moved from Jiaohe to

what is now the ancient city of Gaochang. Almost 200 years later in 640 A.D. the Tang dynasty set up their governmental offices at Jiaohe, offices which are still visible today.

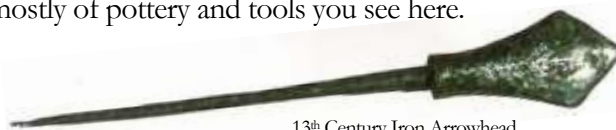
### Archeological Finds



6<sup>th</sup> Century Pottery Basin

Because the most thorough excavations have been focused on the monasteries in the north of town, a good portion of the archeological finds are religious in nature. This is changing, however, as they continue to dig up the residential districts in the east of town. Examples of the former include painted silks, Buddhist statues and manuscripts while the

latter consists mostly of pottery and tools you see here.



13<sup>th</sup> Century Iron Arrowhead







7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century Pottery Lamp  
unearthed in the small monastery

## City Layout

A wide, central street runs north towards the Great Monastery and divides the city into an eastern and western half. Running along this road you'll find all the workshops, while on the far eastern and western sides are all of the residential districts. All administrative and governmental offices were set up in the central part of the city a short distance from the many monasteries and Buddhist stupas that occupy the northern half of the ancient city.

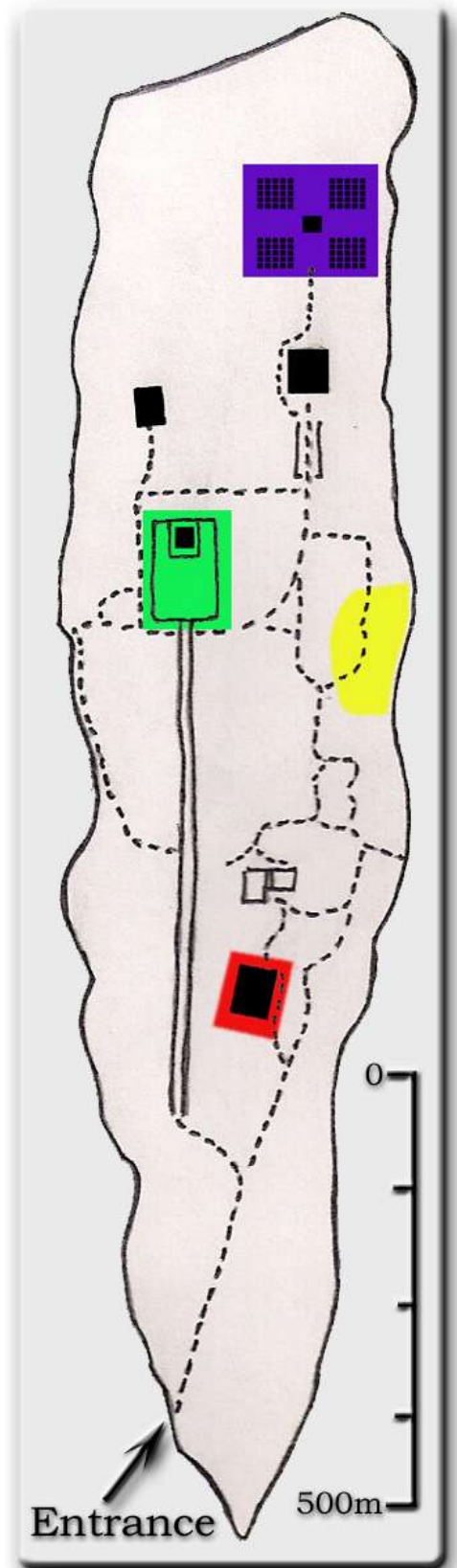
Although walking the entire stretch of the city is a chore, it can be rewarding. If you're up to the challenge, I believe there are four places of particular interest in the ancient city of Jiaohe:

-  **The Stupa Grove:** in the northernmost part of the city (i.e. the longest walk!) sits 101 of Xinjiang's earliest stupas dating from the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries.
-  **The Great Monastery:** the biggest of the city's monasteries is of interest because of rock statues that are still visible in the central pillar of the main hall.
-  **Government Offices:** steps lead down to the courtyard where various caves made up the offices.
-  **Residential District:** along the eastern ridge much of the houses were carved out of the natural ground and still retain their shape.

### **Tourist Tips**

If you're going to be walking around in the heat of the summers, don't forget water, sun block, and your sunglasses. It gets unbearably hot!

**Rating:** 



# Tuyoq (Tuyu) Valley

*A Living Museum of Uyghur History*

Hidden in a small valley between an extension of the Flaming Mountains is one of Turpan's most beautiful, yet surprisingly unknown villages. Tuyoq Valley is a living museum of Uyghur history and a representation of the region's glorious mixture of dry and fertile landscape. Within a pleasant walking distance are Uyghur folk houses, an old cemetery, a Muslim pilgrimage site, a grape valley, and Buddhist caves. The locals are pleasant and at every turn in the dirt road you'll find yourself pulling out your camera for one more picture.

## THE DETAILS

Name: Tǔyùgōu 吐峪沟

Location: 43km (27 mi) E of  
Turpan

Price: 30 元

## Getting There

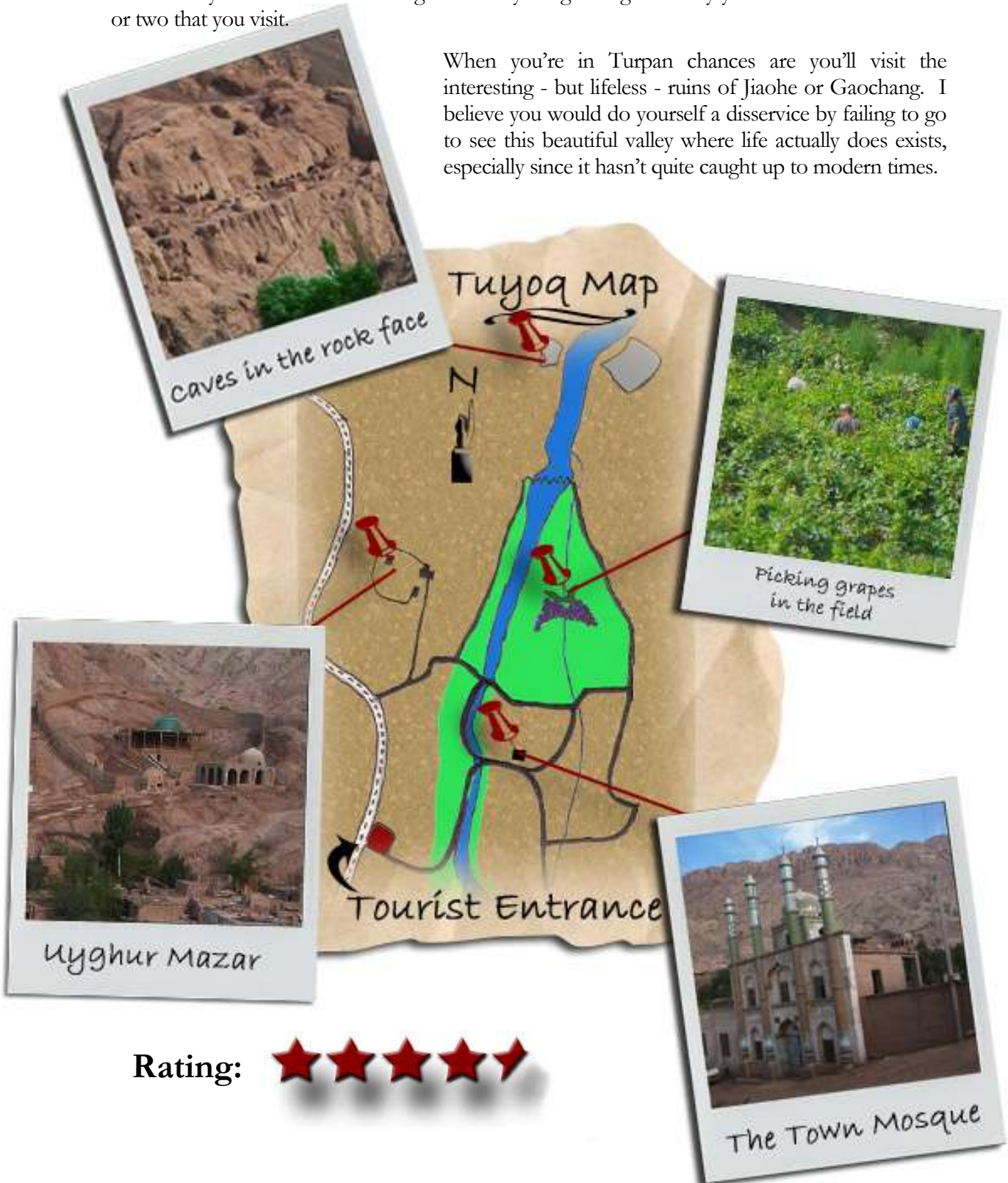
The biggest hurdle to visiting Tuyoq Valley is getting there. Because of its location very few tours make a stop here and unless you plan the trip ahead of time a private driver may try to charge you extra en route. To avoid these problems try to work this into your schedule whenever you're visiting Turpan's eastern destinations, including the Gaochang Ancient City Ruins and the Bezeklik Caves.



## Personal Endorsement

Tuyoq Valley was hands down my favorite stop in Turpan. It amazes me that travel books and tourist agencies don't push this location more... the 43km distance scares them off. The beauty of the valley is that it is small enough to walk yet big enough to carry your attention for the hour or two that you visit.

When you're in Turpan chances are you'll visit the interesting - but lifeless - ruins of Jiaohe or Gaochang. I believe you would do yourself a disservice by failing to go to see this beautiful valley where life actually does exist, especially since it hasn't quite caught up to modern times.



Rating:



# Gaochang Ancient City

For nearly nine centuries the ancient garrison town of Gaochang ruled as a Chinese garrison and Uyghur capital of the region until it was finally ruined by wars during the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the current condition of many of its ruins, the sheer size of the city (2 square kilometers!) and its surrounding walls make for an awe-inspiring, albeit hot and tiring, desert walk.

THE DETAILS
Name: Gāochāng Gùchéng 高昌故城
a.k.a.: “Kharakhoja” “Khocho”
Location: 46km (29 mi) SE of Turpan
Price: 40 元.

## A Brief History

The city of Gaochang was first established in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. as a garrison outpost for Han dynasty troops and in 443 was crowned the capital of the Western Han Empire (to the chagrin of Jiaohe, the prior capital nearby). Later when the Tang Dynasty occupied the area they continued the legacy by naming Gaochang the capital of the local county and province.

### Did You Know?

These ruins were first discovered in 1879 by Dr. Albert Regal, a Russian botanist, during a spying mission in the Tian Shan Mountains.

It was during the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century that the Uyghur empire in the north of Xinjiang near Mongolia collapsed, causing large groups of Uyghurs to migrate south toward Turpan and the Gansu province. At this point the Uyghurs set up their new capital in Gaochang, which in the local language was called “Kharakhoja”.

## Archaeological Finds

Considering its location and traceable history of more than 1,400 years, it should come as no surprise that Gaochang is home to some of the most important archaeological finds for both the Uyghurs and the Silk Road that have been uncovered in Turpan. So great were the findings that in 1904 German explorer Albert von LeCoq (see Pg 23) spent 4 full months hauling out numerous manuscripts and sculptures.



13-14<sup>th</sup> Century Porcelain Tray

Gaochang has often been referred to as a “cosmopolitan town” due to the variety of objects unearthed here. Traces of multiple religions, including Nestorian Christianity,

Buddhism, Taoism, and Manichaeism (a dualistic religion notable for its strict vegetarian diet) were found. Texts have been uncovered written in Uyghur, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan, all of which give a sample of the ethnic changes that took place in the region’s population over time.



9<sup>th</sup> Century Wooden Statue of Buddha

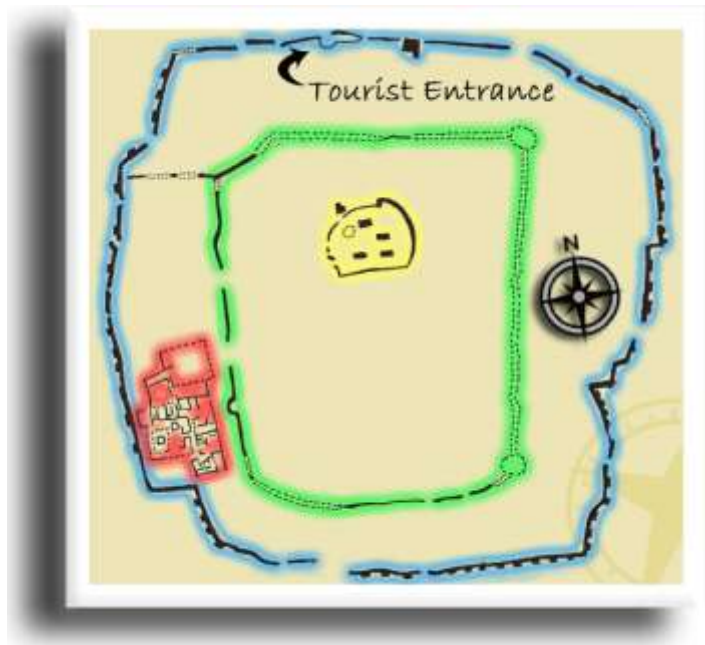
## City Layout

**Inner Walls:** these walls, only parts of which still stand, represent the size of the town during its early existence.

**Outer Walls:** it is believed that these walls were built by the Uyghurs in an effort to extend and fortify the city around the 9<sup>th</sup> century; they measure 8-10 meters in height and thickness.

**Palace Complex:** although difficult to visualize now, the archaeological finds in this central area indicate all administrative offices and royal residences were located here.

**Temple Complex:** many temples existed in ancient Gaochang, but none were as big and impressive as this complex in the southwest corner.



## Tourist Tips

- Bear in mind that Gaochang covers quite a large area and might be difficult to traverse on foot depending on your physical stamina. There are donkey “taxis” that can take you from the front gate all the way to the temple complex and back, but be prepared to barter (expect 10-15 元) for this extra service.



- Within the temple complex take a careful look at the central post building (the square one that looks surprisingly well-preserved). The Buddhist niches on the south face of the building are of particular interest because you can still see traces of Buddhist paintings within the upper few.
- While climbing the inner walls might not be a wise idea, as long as China maintains its “we don’t really care how you treat our historical landmarks” policy (I’ve seen people relieve themselves on the Great

Wall), take a short climb on some of the large outer walls for great panoramic shots of the ruins with the Flaming Mountains in the background.

Rating ★★★★★

# Bezeklik Thousand Buddha's Cave

The Buddhist caves at Bezeklik, comfortably situated on a desert gorge overlooking the Mutougou River, used to house Turpan's most spectacular collection of Buddhist, Manichaean, and Uyghur art. Now, it has unfortunately become a semi-empty monument to early-20<sup>th</sup> century archaeological extraction methods as well as a testament to an international mud fight that still has China a tad bitter.

Despite this and the fact that the Lonely Planet rashly advises travelers to “definitely skip” these caves, there is still something I find intriguing about Bezeklik. It might be the fact that these are one of the few ruins in Turpan where entire painted caves - despite their condition - are viewable, but I believe even more attractive is the history of these caves, especially over the past two centuries.

THE DETAILS
Name: Bózikèlikè 柏孜克里克
a.k.a.: Ningrong 宁戎
Location: 50km (31 mi) NE of Turpan; 10km (6 mi) S of Gaochang
Price: 20 元



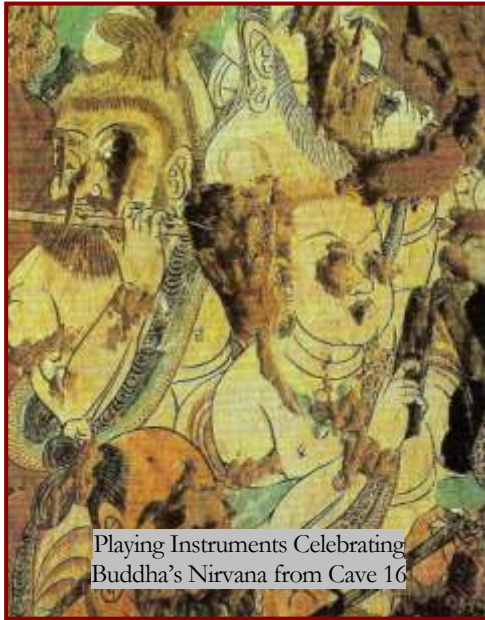
seems to translate to mean “the grottoes of a peaceful army”.

Throughout the centuries the caves were rebuilt, additional caves were added, and more paintings commissioned. The various pieces of art reflect this transition in both people groups and religions. From the 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries much of the art reflected the influence of Buddhism. In the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century when the Uyghurs migrated in they first brought with them the Manichaean religious art but converted to Buddhism in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century as Mongols began to exert their influence on Asia the painting style changed yet again. Traces of this timeline can still be seen in the caves, but the finest examples have already been cut out. Like most places in this area, the caves were abandoned in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

## A Brief History

It is widely believed, based on the shapes of the caves and the style of painting, that the Bezeklik grottoes were first built during the Gaochang Kingdom somewhere between 460-640A.D. History books of that time referred to the caves as the Ningrong grottoes, a name which

**The Bezeklik  
Caves were  
rediscovered  
in 1904**

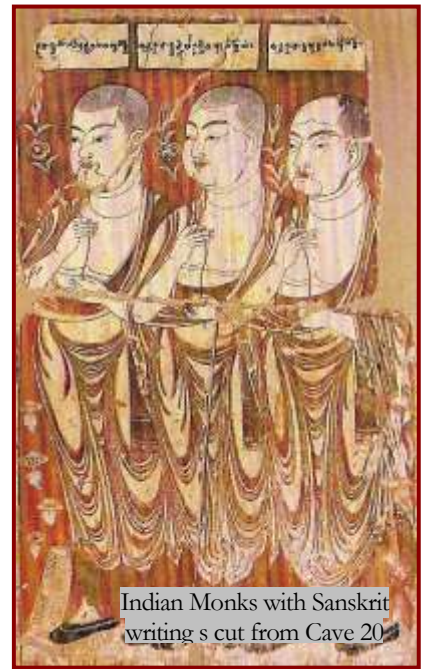


Playing Instruments Celebrating Buddha's Nirvana from Cave 16

## It Just Wasn't Meant to Be

The tale of Bezeklik's art is a sad one to be sure. One of the primary arguments in defense of the 20<sup>th</sup> century explorers who cut out many of the beautiful murals in the caves was the obvious neglect and sometimes blatant vandalizing by the locals. When Islam first swept through this part of China in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the eyes of many of these paintings were gouged out or sometimes the entire depiction of Buddha was defaced (reproduction of the human form is forbidden in Islam). Later the locals began to believe that the paint scraped from these murals created an effective fertilizer.

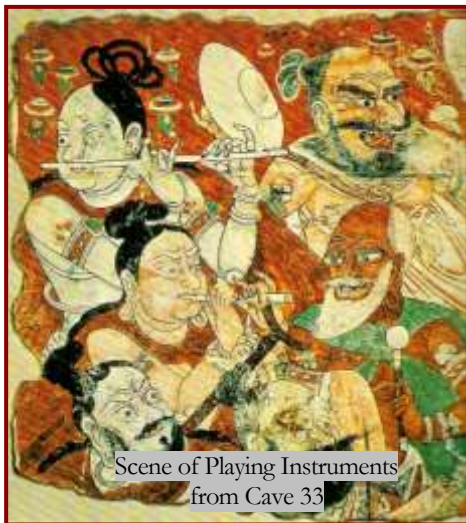
Enter the European explorers, Swedish and German, to "rescue" many of these abandoned works of art. When they finally arrive at the museums in Berlin and elsewhere they were safe from destruction, right? Not quite. World War II brings with it Allied bombs, a few of which destroyed the Berlin museum and half of the Bezeklik murals (not all, as China claims). This art just wasn't meant to be.



Indian Monks with Sanskrit writing s cut from Cave 20

## Tourist Tips

- **Warning:** you can't take pictures inside the caves and more than likely a site overseer will shadow your movement to make sure you follow this rule.



Scene of Playing Instruments from Cave 33

- These site managers seem to open only a number of caves at random, but before you start asking to see every single cave keep in mind that out of the 83 caves here, only 40 were actually painted in. The others were the monk's living quarters. The most distinctive cave paintings are in Cave 33 and 37.
- Take a stroll down the staircase towards the river. Besides offering relief from the intense summer heat and a different angle for pictures,

you will also find a 13th century Uyghur stupa (unearthed in 1980) of minor interest.

Rating:



## Foreign Explorers in Turpan

The race to excavate Xinjiang's gold mine of archaeological relics is believed to have been started in 1875 by an article published in an Indian Government report. In the report, entitled "Lost Cities of the Taklimakan", a Kirghiz tribesman describes in vivid detail the storehouse of treasures hidden beneath the endless sand dunes. Over the next four decades explorers and archaeologist from Russia, Germany, Sweden, Japan, France and later the U.S. led expeditions to uncover and extract these relics. The incredible amount of history that left Xinjiang's borders on account of these expeditions is an offense that China has yet to forgive.

The explorers later defended their "looting" actions, claiming that such treasures would have been destroyed forever if left in place. China, on the other hand, insists that all of these treasures were stolen and to this day still demands that they be returned. Despite any personal feelings on the matter, the fact remains that most every expedition was approved by authorities both locally and in Beijing and each crate of relics was authorized to be shipped out.

Russia's Dmitri Klementz may have been the first foreign explorer to remove a few frescos and manuscripts from Turpan, but very few know his name. The two most famous (and in China the most despised) explorers to enter Turpan were Sir Aurel Stein and Albert von Le Coq.

### Sir Aurel Stein

Aurel Stein, a Hungarian-born explorer who made a name for himself with his exploits in Xinjiang and the Gansu town of Dunhuang, first crossed into the province in 1900. While his first two expeditions were focused on the southern rim of Taklimakan Desert, he finally found his way to Turpan on his final visit in 1914. After a quick stop in Miran, an ancient Buddhist city 380km (240mi) south of Turpan, Stein left Xinjiang with 45 camels worth of frescoes and other treasures during that 3<sup>rd</sup> expedition.

The only place you might find mention of Stein in Turpan today is at the Bezeklik Caves. Signs in some of the grottoes indicate that a fresco was taken and you'll still be able to view his handiwork in the precision cuts visible on the wall.

### Albert von Le Coq

If Chinese historians dislike Stein, then their feelings towards this German explorer can only be described as pure hatred. Not only did Le Coq leave with more treasures than any of the other explorers, but a good portion of it was blown to pieces by WWII bombs in Berlin.

Albert von Le Coq led his first expedition into Xinjiang in 1904 following the sudden illness of his mentor who had come two years earlier. Le Coq's first stop was here in Turpan where he spent an entire four months digging around Gaochang (then referred to as Karakhoja) and the Bezeklik caves. The success of this expedition was far beyond expectations and without a doubt better than his final trip a year later.

During his stay in Turpan he became friends with the local ruler, even posing for a picture that you can find in the Governor's Mansion next to the Emin Minaret. Future leaders didn't look upon him with such favor. Chinese tourism literature and signs in Bezeklik and Gaochang speak of Le Coq as the man who "stole", "looted" and "destroyed" their national treasures.

## Astana Tombs

Throughout history kings and leaders have usually lacked a certain sense of humility when it comes to their burial. Consider the Pharaohs of Egypt, the royalty of Europe or even the Emperors of China, each of which built gigantic monuments in honor of their death.

THE DETAILS
Name: Āsītǎnà Gǔmùqún 阿斯塔那古墓群
a.k.a.: “Kharakhoja Burial Ground”
Location: 2km (1 mi) N of Gaochang
Price: 20 元

Astana, which means “capital”, was once the graveyard for the kings and nobles of nearby Gaochang, but unlike the aforementioned rulers these graves exist below ground. Unless you knew what you were looking for all you would see is bumps in the sand (see picture below-right).



Since 1959 more than 400 graves covering an area of 10 sq. kilometers have been excavated yielding incredible murals, sculptures and a few corpses naturally preserved by the dry Turpan weather. Today, only three of these graves are open to tourist, one of which (No. 210) holds two fascinating mummies.

### Is It Worth It?

Although not Turpan’s most captivating destination, the archeological finds at Astana account for more than half of all the provincial museum’s artifacts. Casual travelers may find the site boring, but its historical significance is undeniable and the method of burial is worthy of note.



**Here’s my suggestion:** if you have time to visit the Turpan museum, which displays the third mummy found in the Astana graves, then a trip to Astana isn’t worth the effort. If, however, the museum is closed or you don’t have time to go, a quick stop at Astana isn’t all that bad. Just don’t allow your expectations to get too high.

Rating: ★★☆☆



## Turpan Museum

Turpan boasts one of the largest museums in all of Xinjiang, second only to the one in Urumqi. That might not mean much, but the Turpan government is putting forth effort. In 2009, twenty years after the old museum was built, Turpan dedicated a new, beautiful building to hold its



growing collection of over 3,200 pieces of art and history. See Map section for the new location.

Within this collection you can find a vast amount of what they call “Tang Dynasty artifacts” (a name referring to the time period, not the type of artifact) mostly dug out of the Astana graves, the most famous being one of the Astana mummies. Other items from Astana include silks, clothes, clay figurines, wood carvings, and even food.

Exhibits include objects excavated from both Jiaohe and Gaochang. These items range from everyday pottery during the Gaochang Kingdom to gold jewelry possibly worn by ancient nobility. Best of all, this is one place in Turpan you can enter for free.

Rating: ★★★★★

### THE DETAILS

Name: Tǔlǔfān Bówùguǎn  
吐鲁番博物馆

Location: See Turpan Map C3

Price: Free

## Grape Valley

### THE DETAILS

Name: Pútao Gōu 葡萄沟

Location: 13km (8mi) NE of  
Turpan

Price: 60 元

During the months of July to October, it's pretty much impossible to miss all of the grapes hanging everywhere in Turpan. And just in case you don't get the picture that grapes are abundant in this area you can take a quick trip out to Turpan's Grape Valley. At 8km in length and 2km in width, this valley covers a staggering 5,000 hectare that burst at the seams during grape season. Each year this valley produces over 6 million kilograms of grapes and almost half that amount in raisins.

There's plenty to keep you interested as you walk around including a winery that might provide good souvenirs, but there's no urgent need to stop here outside of grape season (July-Sep).

Rating: ★★★★★



## ***Grape Season in Turpan***

During your travels in Turpan you will run across the odd-looking building called a 荫方 (*yinfang*) or “shaded house”. These brick silos are used during the late summer season to begin the month-long process of drying the grapes into raisins, a famous export of the Turpan area. When countless bunches of grapes aren’t being hung to wither in the dry Turpan heat the space is sometimes used to store wood to burn for the winter.



Running through the middle of Turpan directly behind the central park is a special street named QingNian Lu (青年路). During the hot summer months this street is covered by grape vines whose fruit hangs in ample supply in season. Under the shade of these vines men gather for chess, children play games and women chat. It is a wonderful place for an afternoon stroll to enjoy this relaxed city.



## ***Turpan Grape Festival***

Between the months of August and September the town of Turpan hosts their annual Grape Festival. If you’re likely to be anywhere near Turpan during this time try and find out the exact dates and plan your trip accordingly. Ever since August of 1990 the city has annually celebrated its most cherished produce with festivities that include local costumes, songs, and dances. By this point grapes are so abundant in the city that people are literally giving them away or selling them for dirt-cheap prices.

## Sand Dunes Park

One of the most fixed images of Xinjiang is a camel trekking along the desert dunes. I believe it's an unfair characterization considering the province's remarkable natural diversity, but it's one that won't easily change. While the largest and most famous desert in the province, the Taklimakan Desert, is quite a long distance from Turpan, the nearby Kumtag Desert does provide its own sand dunes that closely mimic that of its bigger brother to the west. If your trip itinerary doesn't include Kashgar, Aksu, Korla, or any of the other numerous Taklimakan oasis cities and you have a desperate desire to ride a camel in the desert then Sand Dunes Park might be the answer you're looking for.

THE DETAILS
Name: Shāshān Gōngyuán 沙山公园
Price: 30 元

### **Riding a Camel in Xinjiang:**

Don't forget to bargain, and bargain hard! The moment the camel herders see a foreign face they tend to flip a switch and double their prices. If you just want your picture taken on a camel you shouldn't pay more than 5 元 and an hour-long ride along the dunes should cost about 40-50 元.

Another famous activity in the Turpan area is known as "Sand Therapy". Participants bury half their bodies in the dunes in order to take advantage of the healing powers of the local sand. Take part if you wish or just enjoy the chance to take a few funny pictures.

Rating: 

THE DETAILS
Name: Àidīng Hú 艾丁湖 a.k.a. Eding or Moon Lake
Price: 10 元

## Moon Lake (Aiding Lake)

Aiding Lake, at 154 meters below sea level, is known as the second lowest lake in the world. You won't see too many pictures of this lake around town because, frankly, the area is about as picturesque as the Dead Sea in Israel, the title-holder for the world's lowest lake. Locals call the place "Moon Lake" because they say the thick salt crystals reflecting the sunlight resemble the moon in the sky.

Although it may sound enticing during the hot summer to visit this "lake", don't be fooled into thinking you'll get in a good swim. Instead of water you'll find kilometers of thick salt beds making this a "look-only" destination. The location is a bit out of the way and not near any major ruins, so unless you have time to kill you can probably mark this lake off your list of places to visit.

Rating: 

## Where to Sleep

Many more hotels exist than can be listed on this page, but very few of them are allowed to accept foreign guests. Regardless, each hotel here is reasonably priced and should provide all the comfort you'll need for your visit to Turpan. Take note of location (see maps page), however, as some are more centrally located than others. Prices are listed as high season/low season.



**Turpan Hotel** 吐鲁番宾馆 160/140 元  Internet  Tourist Services

Located a short walk from the city life, Turpan Hotel boasts a swimming pool, John's Café (see Pg 28) and a quiet atmosphere. Unfortunately, the building itself is quite old and in need of a renovation. Rooms aren't expensive but lack an inviting ambiance.

Phone: 0995-856-8888

**Oasis Hotel** 丝路绿洲宾馆 400/300 元  Internet  Tourist Services

The Oasis Hotel underwent renovations in late 2009 to spruce up their rooms to match the design of the building. Although a bit more expensive than the others the Oasis offers comfortable rooms in a quiet and aesthetically pleasing environment.

Phone: 0995-852-2491

**Gaochang Hotel** (高唱宾馆) 180/140 元  Internet  Tourist Services

A short walk to the north from the bus station brings you to the Gaochang Hotel with its moderately priced rooms. There isn't much that sets this hotel apart except maybe its close proximity to Gaochang Park (the museum nearby was recently moved – see Pg. 25).

Phone: 0995-626-6996

**Jiaotong Hotel** (交通宾馆) 160/130 元  Internet  Tourist Services

Jiaotong also spent a good portion of 2009 under complete renovation but should return better than before. Although in a loud and busy location, you're a 1 minute walk from the bus station, bazaar, and train ticket office.

Phone: 0995-853-1320

**Grand Turpan Hotel** (吐鲁番大饭店) 180/140 元  Internet  Tourist Services

Across the street from the Gaochang Hotel is the Grand Turpan Hotel, another moderately-priced place with a variety of rooms to meet your budget. It's a 5-minute walk to the city park and a nice supermarket just opened up across the street.

Phone: 0995-855-3668

**Karez Hotel** (吐鲁番坎儿井宾馆) 180/120 元  Internet  Tourist Services

You won't see this hotel in most guide books as it is located a bit outside the city next to the Karez Museum. Surrounded by both a vineyard full of grapes in season and (obviously) the karez, this hotel offers entertainment and great tourist services at a reasonable price.

Phone: 0995-768-5918

## ***Eating in Turpan***

I have written extensively on the topic of food in Xinjiang on FarWestChina. In my opinion food is one of the most enjoyable experiences of visiting this region and I sincerely hope you don't succumb to the temptation to eat at Best Food Burger, Turpan's McDonald's-wannabe. Because I've covered most of this already on the website I am going to just give a quick description here. For even more details and pictures check out the food category on FarWestChina:

### [Xinjiang's Best Food](#)

#### ***A Note on Segregation***

In general, Chinese restaurants are located on the northern part of town (north of the People's Square) while all Uyghur restaurants, including the night market, are in the south and central part of Turpan. You'll find this segregated practice to be normal in Xinjiang.

### ***Western Options***

- **Best Food Burger:** (Map B3) If the strange monkey on their sign doesn't scare you off, then some of the menu offerings should! If, however, you're dying for a chicken-burger and fries then by all means make a quick stop here. For all other intents and purposes I suggest you steer clear.
- **John's Café:** (Map C4) Situated right next to the Turpan Hotel underneath a grape trellis is this small café serving Western and Chinese dishes. Prices are reasonable and the Western dishes, although different, are recognizable. It's a great place to relax, eat, drink, or play cards. Also available are bikes for rent.



## Local Food (a.k.a. “Uyghur Food”)

Although every Uyghur restaurant in the city will serve each of these dishes, it’s an enjoyable experience to eat at the outdoor Bazaar (Map B4). Once the sun begins to set you won’t be able to miss the rows of kebab stands and smells of fresh lamb. Don’t be intimidated if you don’t speak the language, just sit down and point at what you want!



- **Kebabs**: a stick of lamb meat and fat cooked and seasoned to perfection
- **Lagman**: pulled noodles served with a vegetable and meat sauce poured on top
- **Big Plate Chicken**: a large plate of chicken, potatoes, onions, and a wonderful red sauce
- **Pollo**: a delicious Uyghur rice with lamb
- **Samsa**: a small crusty pie baked with lamb and onions inside
- **Uyghur Bread**: fresh from the brick oven, this bread comes in many shapes and sizes
- **Uyghur Ice Cream**: a unique flavor of ice cream churned on the spot

# **Bibliography / Extended Reading**

In addition to my personal experience of traveling extensively through Xinjiang, including Turpan, I have also relied on quite a few travel and historical books to help me compile and write this booklet. A few of them are written in Chinese and not even published outside of Xinjiang, so I will only reference those available internationally. Most of them deal with much broader subjects than Turpan but if you're interested in traveling throughout China or just want more information on the mysterious province of Xinjiang, I recommend these books for your reading.

## **Books on Xinjiang**

Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang by Christian Tyler [Buy on Amazon](#)

*Christian Tyler has done an exceptional job of making a tedious and often factually boring provincial history quite readable. Although the modern history is written with a hint of bias, it gives a well-rounded picture of Xinjiang's historical timeline.*

Foreign Devils on the Silk Road by Peter Hopkirk [Buy on Amazon](#)

*China is still quite bitter about all of the desert relics that have left its borders over the past century and in this book Peter Hopkirk explains why and how it happened.*

Silk Road: Monks, Warriors & Merchants by Luce Boulnois [Buy on Amazon](#)

*This book, written by a renowned authority on Silk Road history, is a great tool to shed light on the mysteries of this trade route complete with maps, photographs, and a detailed history.*

## **China Travel Books**

Lonely Planet: China [Buy on Amazon](#)

*For people who already know their itinerary and require only the necessary information to travel, Lonely Planet is a nice guidebook. In the Xinjiang section they assume you already know what you want to see, they just provide tips and a hotel directory.*

DK Eyewitness Travel: China [Buy on Amazon](#)

*While DK lacks the almost overbearing weight of information that makes the Lonely Planet book so thick, it is a much better guide to help you plan your itinerary. Pictures, descriptions, and diagrams give you a sense of whether or not you would be interested in visiting particular destinations.*

There are way too many China travel books to choose from.

[Use this guide to find the best one for YOU!](#)



## **Online**

Xinjiang: Far West China - [www.farwestchina.com](http://www.farwestchina.com)

The New Dominion - [www.thenewdominion.net](http://www.thenewdominion.net)

This is Xinjiang – <http://blogs.princeton.edu/pia/personal/xinjiang/>

Xinjiang Government's English-language site - [www.aboutxinjiang.com](http://www.aboutxinjiang.com)

For more online resources, visit my [Recommended Links](#) page.

# Taxi / Food Guide

Take this wallet-size guide with you to help if you're not very familiar with the Chinese language. The pronunciation guide is based on English rules and not Chinese Pinyin, the reason being I figure if you can read pinyin you ought to be able to say most of these simple phrases. ☺

*FarWestChina has a free language help guide where you can listen to native speakers! [Find it here.](#)*

# Phrase Guide

You can easily travel around Xinjiang without any knowledge of the Uyghur language. The Lonely Planet is flat wrong to say that "many Uyghurs can't, or won't, speak Mandarin". That said, attempting a few phrases in Uyghur may go a long way in endearing you to the local population.



## Turpan Taxi Guide

<p>Please take me to the: _____ 请去: _____ [ching-choo]</p> <p>Museum 博物馆 [bow-woo-gwan]</p> <p>Bank 银行 [yeen-hong]</p> <p>Hospital 医院 [ee-yooan]</p> <p>Post Office 邮局 [yo-jew]</p> <p>Bus Station 客运站 [kuh-yoon-jan]</p> <p>Train Ticket Office 铁通 [teeyeh-toeng]</p>	<p>Please stop here / at the corner. 请在这里 / 拐角处停车。 [ching zigh juh-lee/gwigh-jeow ting chuh]</p> <p>How much is it? 多少钱? [dwore-show chyen]</p> <p><b>Destinations Accessible by Taxi:</b> Karez 坎儿井 [canr-jean] Emin 苏公塔 [soo-goeng-tah] Grape Valley 葡萄沟 [poo-taoh go] Bazaar 市农贸市场 [shur-nong-maoh-shur-chong]</p>
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## Turpan Food Guide

<p>May I see the menu? 请把菜单给我? [ching-ba-tsai-dan gay wo]</p> <p><b>Popular Chinese Dishes</b> Chicken &amp; Peanuts 宫保鸡丁 [goong-bow jee-ding] Sweet &amp; Sour Pork 糖醋里脊 [tong-tsue lee-jee] Beef Fried Potatoes 土豆烧牛肉 [two-doh shaoh neeo-row] A Bowl of Rice 一碗米饭 [ee-wan mee-fan]</p>	<p>Please bring me the bill. 请给我结帐好吗? [ching-gay-wo jyeah-jang how-ma]</p> <p><b>Popular Uyghur Dishes</b> Big Plate Chicken 大盘鸡 [dah pan jee] Pollo 抓饭 [jwa-fan] Kebabs 烤肉 [cow-row] Lagman 拌面 [ban-meean] Fried Noodles 炒面 [chow-meean] Samsa 烤包子 [cow bow-zuh]</p>
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## Useful Chinese Phrases

<p><b>Basic Phrases</b> Hello! 你好! [nee-how] Thank you! 谢谢! [shyeah-shyeah] No, thank you. 不要. [boo-yaow] I don't understand 我不明白 [wo boo ming-bye] Nice to meet you! 很高兴见到你! [hun gaow-shing jeean-daoh nee] Help me! 救命啊! [jew-min ah] Where is the bathroom? 洗手间在哪里? [she-show-jan zigh nah-lee]</p>	<p><b>Shopping</b> I'm just looking. 我只是看看。 [wo jir-shir kan-kan] I would like to buy this. 我想买这个。 [wo-shong my juh-guh] How much is it? 多少钱? [dwore show chyen] Can you give me a discount? 再便宜一点吗? [zigh pyan-ee ee-dyan ma] Can I try it on? 我可以试穿吗? [wo kuh-ee shur-chwan ma]</p>
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## Useful Uyghur Phrases

<p><b>Basic Phrases</b> Hello [yok shee-moose-siz] Thank you! [rah-gck met] No, thank you. [yok rah-gck met] I don't understand [Man chshan mudum] Nice to meet you! [Tunoosh-kunumden hwashalman]</p> <p>Help me! [koot koozoong lar] Where is the bathroom? [ahjet hana kayarda?]</p>	<p><b>Shopping</b> I would like to buy this. [Man boonee algoom bar] How much is it? [Boo khanchee pool] Can you give me a discount? [Air-zanrak bolsa bolamdu] Can I try it on? [sinap baksam bolamdu]</p>
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## ***Happy Travels!***

I hope you found all the information here useful! I would put Turpan as one of my top two or three places to visit in Xinjiang, so it is definitely worth your time to make the trip. If you have any more questions that this travel guide may not have covered, please feel free to search the archive on FarWestChina or [contact me personally](#).

If this ebook was useful to you, **please consider sharing it with other travelers you may meet or people you know**. My favorite form of advertising is word-of-mouth, and I'm counting on you!

***Enjoy Turpan!***

## Feedback

What did you think about this travel guide? I very much appreciate your comments so please take time to visit the site and leave your praise or criticism. Thanks!

[Leave a Comment](#)

## About Josh



Josh has lived and traveled all throughout the province of Xinjiang for almost four years. Both he and his wife worked as English teachers in a small oil town in the north of the province where they fell in love with the people, bought a motorcycle, and toured on their own terms.

After working with DK Publishing on their 2010 edition of *China: Eyewitness Travel*, Josh decided that the world was lacking a detailed, useful guide to Xinjiang.

This is the product of that idea and a reflection of his passion for the region.