

Dunhuang – A Silk Road Oasis

Silk Road was formed more than two thousand years ago, connecting European and Asian monks, soldiers, traders, and pilgrims. Dunhuang, a prehistoric Chinese city, is located at the junction of the road's Southern and Northern route. It is an oasis in the heart of the desert. It was one of the most popular stops among travelers along this route because of its strategic position along Silk Road. Dunhuang also grew into a significant religious destination and it attracted pilgrims from the East and the West.



The city lost its significance when Chinese trade routes changed but it now attracts tourists who want to explore its natural beauty and prehistoric roots. Dunhuang is both captivating and spectacular. Visitors to this city can enjoy various exciting experiences. Here are 5 of the best experiences in Dunhuang.

Crescent Lake Sunset

A visit to Dunhuang is incomplete if you do not experience the sunset at Crescent Lake. The lake is crescent-shaped as the name suggests and it is one of the most popular attractions in the city. It is located about six kilometers from the city. The sun seems enormous as it disappears under the sand dunes. It is a great spot for taking pictures. Crescent Lake is often crowded especially during the peak season, which is between May and September.

Mogao Caves

For a chance to explore Dunhuang's history, the Mogao Caves, are an ideal destination. These caves are also referred to as Caves of the Thousand Buddhas or Mogao Grottoes. They have an extensive display of rock art and visitors can see some of the most iconic Buddhist art. The collection dates back to the 4th century AD until the 14th century. UNESCO has named the caves a World Heritage Site.



There are about 500 caves in good condition and they contain over 2,000 sculptures and murals that cover more than 147,638 square feet. This artwork depicts western China's medieval history. For art lovers, a visit to these caves allows you to enjoy a combination of various artistic styles from Tibet, Turkey, China, and India. The most well-known cave is Library Cave that was rediscovered at the beginning of the 20th century. It has thousands of silk paintings, sutras, and manuscripts.

Camel Tour at Sunset and Sunrise

One of the most thrilling experiences in Dunhuang is taking a camel trek at sunrise while the winds move across the Mingsha Mountain Dunes peaks. The tours usually start at about 4.30 am to allow you to capture the best images of the desert. It gets very cold in the early morning but it warms up as the sun begins to appear over the dunes, giving them a golden glow.

The sunset tour is more popular among tourists compared to the sunrise trek but you do not get the same tranquility. The afternoon tour starts late in the afternoon and allows you to watch the breathtaking sunrise.



Flight over the Desert

If you are looking for adventure while you are on your Dunhuang visit, you can take a flight over Crescent Lake and the sand dunes. The flights are usually offered in a one or two-seat aircraft and take about 15 minutes. This is an opportunity to explore this ancient city from a different view. You get to see the expansive desert as the sand dunes roll over the surface.

Dunhuang Museum

To learn more about the city's history, a visit to Dunhuang Museum is a great option. This museum has everything you need to put in everything you see around the city into a historical perspective. Dunhuang Museum covers about 26,000 square feet and has several original artifacts. You also get to see some of the recreations. Some of the most popular collections in this museum include sutras obtained from the Library Cave and Han Dynasty grave relics. The museum also has exhibits that portray the city's culture.

The best time to enjoy these experiences is between May and September but you can also plan your trip for November when there are very few tourists in the area. Dunhuang is a small city and you can explore these experiences in a few days, allowing you to explore other nearby locations including Kashgar and Turpan.

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