

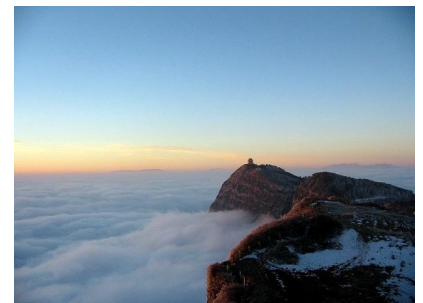
Mount Emei and Leshan – Explore the World Heritage

In the south-west of Sichuan basin stands the majestic Mount Emei, or Emeishan. A marvel of nature enriched by culture, it's one of China's most popular travel destinations and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1996. Renowned as one of China's Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains, it features ancient Buddhist temples and monuments, as well as ritual sites dedicated to the Bodhisattva Puxian (Samantabhadra).



The main peak is the Golden Summit, which abounds with natural wonders and Buddhist landmarks. There are a couple of temples as well as a splendid statue of Puxian. Meanwhile, the highest peak is Wanfoding Summit, which towers 3,099 meters above sea-level. All around are clusters of other peaks and ridges which boast of waterfalls, lush greenery and a wealth of wildlife.

At Mount Emei, visitors will be treated to breathtaking vistas, such as the sea of clouds and the spectacular sunrise. In the autumn, the mountain offers excellent vantage points where you can behold the vivid colors of the season. Every now and then, you may even experience fascinating atmospheric phenomena known as glories, which are also called “Buddhist halos” or “sacred lamps”. When these occur, the light interacts with the moisture in the air, producing some dramatic, ethereal effects: you can cast your shadow upon the mist, and it will seem to have a ring of rainbow-colored light around it.



About 60 kilometers east of Mount Emei is the city of Leshan. Also in the south-west of Sichuan, it lies some 180 kilometers to the south of Chengdu. It's a highly modernized city, yet rich with culture and a 3000-year history. Among Leshan's famous landmarks is the Leshan Giant Buddha. It's the world's largest stone sculpture of the Buddha, which was carved into the rock of Lingyun Mountain (Lingyunshan) during the Tang Dynasty. The sculpture faces westward toward Mount Emei, overlooking

the spot where the Minjiang, Qingyi and Dadu Rivers meet.

Just like Mount Emei, it was declared a World Heritage site in 1996, recognized under UNESCO's Cultural and Natural Heritage Lists. The work on the Giant Buddha began in AD 713, in the first year of Emperor Xuanzong; construction ended in AD 803, the 19th year of the rule of Emperor Dezong, Xuanzong's great-grandson. It was created in the form of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, who is often portrayed with elongated ears, a spiral top-knot, an exposed chest, and bare feet. Though weathered, the sculpture remains today as the tallest Buddha image in the world, at an imposing 71 meters high. It's so massive, the structure spans 28 meters wide at the shoulders. Its head alone measures 14.7 meters, and its hair is made up of over a thousand buns.



Lingyun Mountain is an important Buddhist site, but not only because it's where you'll find the Giant Buddha. It's also home to numerous monasteries and thousands of Buddha images. Amid the mountain's nine peaks is the Pagoda of the Souls, which was built during China's Song Dynasty (AD 960–1279). The pagoda stands 38 meters high and offers a spectacular view of the surrounding landscape. To glimpse even more of the picturesque scenery, you can go south on the Minjiang River, where you can see Lingyun Mountain from afar.

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