

FORBIDDEN CITY TO OPEN 85% OF ITS EXHIBITION SPACE BY 2020



85% of the exhibition space at Beijing's Palace Museum - also referred to as the Forbidden City - will be open to the public by 2020.

According to a statement by the museum curator Shan Jixiang, some of the ancient buildings at The Palace Museum are currently being repaired. Consequently, more areas will gradually become open to the public.

There are numerous projects going on in preparation for 2020's 600th birthday celebration of the erstwhile Ming and Qing emperor's residence. Among the many projects there is the maintenance work on several of the museum's old buildings.

Over the years, the Palace Museum has constantly expanded its exhibition space. In 2002, only 30% of the exhibition space at the Forbidden City was open to the public. The space available to the public increased to 52% in 2014 and this year, it is expected that the ratio will hit 65%. Plans are in place to ensure that by the end of 2016, the exhibition space available to the public will reach 76% and 85% by 2020.

Shan added that there were plans to move the administrative areas out of the Forbidden City in the near future. To celebrate this year's 90th anniversary of the opening of the museum to the public, there will be 18 unique exhibitions from October 10th onwards. In these exhibitions, 80% of the 15,000 items will be on display for the first time.

Renovation works for the Yanchi House at the Meridian Gate of the museum were completed in May. Its 2,800 square-meter space will therefore be used to display cultural relics. **The western section of the Forbidden City will also be open to the public for the first time.** The Palace of Compassion and Tranquility that was home to the empresses will also become an exhibition hall for sculptures. There will be an initial display of 400 sculptures, out of the Palace Museum's 10,200 sculptures.

Over 15 million people visit the Forbidden City annually. However, the number of visitors to the Palace Museum has been capped at no more than 80,000 daily. This is to minimize pressure on the museum's facilities and staff.

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