

# TOP 7 REPLICAS OF ARCHITECTURAL SITES IN CHINA



For the past twenty years, we have been witnessing an unprecedented architectural effervescence in China. A very strange trend is developing throughout the country: replica architecture. The idea is to reproduce more or less exactly the iconic buildings of the world, most often European sights. Given that most of the Chinese outflow of Chinese tourists are driven to other Asian countries, it could be said that architects are trying to bring some of the memorable sights in the country so that people do not have to make long haul flights across the globe. Tourism-Review presents the top 7 replicas of famous architectural sites in China.

## Little Paris – Tianducheng

In the outskirts of Hangzhou, in Zhejiang Province, a replica of Parisian neighborhoods was built in 2007. The inhabitants live in the middle of the Haussmannian boulevards overlooking the Eiffel Tower and the Champs Elysees. The residential complex covers 30 km<sup>2</sup> and houses tens of thousands of residents. Several years ago, it was labelled as a ghost town by many considering the few inhabitants (2,000 in 2013), but the situation has developed ever since. Moreover, a metro station is under construction for the system and is expected to start operating in 2021.

## Tower Bridge – Suzhou

Built-in 2012 in the Xiangcheng District, right in the middle of the new neighborhoods that now form the old water city of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, the identical replica of London's Tower Bridge seems lost in the middle of a typical Chinese urban setting. The Chinese copy also isn't exactly a copy and has an upgrade over the original version in the British capital. While the London version has a classic two-way road, Suzhou's version boasts with a 4-lane highway. The Chinese bridge also has four towers, twice the number of the original. Each tower is 40 meters high and there is an elevator which takes the visitors to the top.

## Hallstatt – Huizhou

This pretty little Austrian village, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was honored with an identical replica of all its buildings and street layout, including the church, in the subtropical province of Guangdong. The Austrians were not particularly enthusiastic about this project, except for the mayor of the village Alexander Scheutz, who even travelled to the opening ceremony of the replica in 2012. It turned out that the mayor had a legitimate point to be more positive about the project, as the Chinese tourists were

amazed about the copy and later on expressed their willingness to visit the Austrian original. Thus, with a little bit of exaggeration, it can be said that the Chinese gave Hallstatt a sort of free promotional campaign.

## **Florentia Village – Tianjin**

This village in the Hebei Province has been designed in an entirely Italian fashion, with a little bit of Tuscany here and a little bit of Venice there. Here, one can find Italian luxury shops like Gucci, Prada, Fendi, Armani, and others. The inspiration of the construction is a 16th-century Italian town which offers its visitors a close copy to what they would experience on the Apennine Peninsula. To make things even more authentic, there are also gondolas flowing in the canals alongside the reconstructed classic buildings.

## **Thames Town – Shanghai**

What is more charming than a British city with its brick buildings and pubs? 30 kilometers from Shanghai, a residential area includes Victorian facades, red telephone boxes, and "corner shops". The town is named after the famous British river Thames and the architecture is inspired by the classic British market town styles. It was completed in 2006 and occupies an area of 1 square kilometer, designed for a population of 10,000. Many have labelled it as a ghost town, with only several permanent residents and most people buying the properties only as their "second homes".

## **Shanghai Minhang People's Court**

Built in 2001, the Shanghai Minhang People's Court shows clear inspiration from the White House and the Capitol Building of the United States of America. It is difficult to imagine what the goal of making this copy was. While building their structures, the US was inspired by Roman architecture, thus, perhaps the aim could have been the same on the Chinese side of the barricade.

## **Zhang-Laffitte – Beijing**

Based on the original building in Paris, Château de Maisons-Laffitte, Chinese billionaire Zhang Yuchen recreated the structure of the baroque landmark in the suburbs of Beijing and it serves as a hotel for the visitors of the capital. The businessman was not entirely satisfied with the original design and chose to improve it by adding two more wings and a sculpture garden. The total cost of the construction reached \$50 million and besides operating as a hotel, it also houses a spa as well as a wine museum.

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