



WELCOME TO TAIYUAN, CHINA!



Photo courtesy of Sister Cities of Taiyuan

Taiyuan, China is the capital of the Shanxi province and became an official sister city of Nashville in April 2007. It has been the capital of many dynasties in China and is nicknamed Lóngchéng (龙城; Dragon City). Taiyuan and Shanxi have been important to China since ancient times. Taiyuan is located near China's Yellow River, where China's civilization began, and was China's north and west outpost, it is also the region's major producer of coal. Taiyuan is famous for a lot of things, like their unique noodles, their Dragon festival, and more! Let's go explore!

[Video tour of Taiyuan](#) | [Video Tour Around Taiyuan: Another Perspective](#)

~ CULTURE & FESTIVALS ~

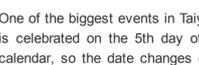


Photo credit: Sister Cities Taiyuan

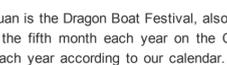


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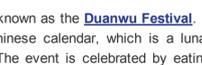
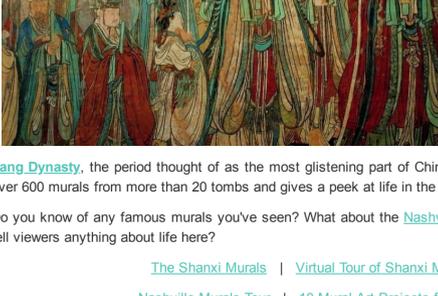


Photo credit: Sister Cities Taiyuan

DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

One of the biggest events in Taiyuan is the Dragon Boat Festival, also known as the [Duanwu Festival](#). It is celebrated on the 5th day of the fifth month each year on the Chinese calendar, which is a lunar calendar, so the date changes each year according to our calendar. The event is celebrated by eating treats like zong zi (a sweet rice wrapped in the form a pyramid using bamboo leaves) and racing [dragon boats](#). The boats are intricately made and decorated and there are drummers on board to keep time for the rowers. The festival commemorates the death of the great [Chinese poet Qu Yuan](#), and is held every year in his memory. While the boat racing is the main part of the festival, there is so much more! The holiday is celebrated differently around the world (Yes! Many other countries join in on the celebrations too and [Nashville has its own](#) Dragon Boat Festival too!) but in Taiyuan there are street performances, dances, music, and lights shows. The whole city celebrates for several days!

[A History of the Dragon Boat Festival](#) (Story) | [Dragon Boat Races Around China](#)
[History of the Dragon Boat Festival](#) (Video) | [Zong Zi Recipe](#)
[Make your own Dragon Boat](#)



THE MURALS OF SHANXI

Murals can be a wonderful way to learn about the culture and life of a group of people. Historical murals have been found in caves, on building sides, in many places left behind by past cultures in China and all over the world. The Shanxi History Museum features a section on murals from the [Tang Dynasty](#), the period thought of as the most glistening part of China's history. The exhibit shows over 600 murals from more than 20 tombs and gives a peek at life in the Tang Dynasty.

Do you know of any famous murals you've seen? What about the [Nashville murals](#)? Do you think they tell viewers anything about life here?

[The Shanxi Murals](#) | [Virtual Tour of Shanxi Murals](#)
[Nashville Murals Tour](#) | [10 Mural Art Projects for Kids](#)

~ LET'S PLAY: ENTERTAINMENT & FUN ~



Photo credit: Youtube.com

SHADOW PUPPET THEATRE

Before there was TV and movies and ipads, there were puppets! While puppet theatre isn't as popular today as it once was it is still an amusing pastime and the making of puppets is a highly regarded artform. In the Shanxi Province, where Taiyuan is located, shadow puppets have a long history. Shadow puppets look a little different than the puppets you have probably seen more of. They are thin figures cut out of leather usually and are controlled by sticks. They are set against a translucent, backlit background, so that you see their shadows. That is where the name came from. In China, shadow puppet shows tell stories about life and history in China and are set to beautiful music. Check out the links below to learn more and make your own puppet!

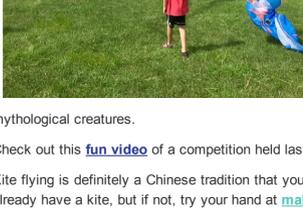
[A Story of Shadow Puppets](#) | [Interactive Shadow Puppet Play](#)
[Make Your Own Shadow Puppet](#)

Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theater Museum

While shadow puppets are a very special kind of puppet in China, there are many other kinds as well. Taiyuan has a museum where you can learn all about the many years of puppet theatre history called the [Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum](#) and view their over 10,000 puppet theater items. Can't get to Taiyuan? Their Facebook page showcases many of their puppets and artifacts!

If you're loving all of the puppets and want more, you should check out [Nashville Public Library's Wishing Chair Productions!](#) Nashville has its very own world-renowned puppet theatre that has produced hundreds of shows and toured around the world. Brian Hull, the director of Wishing Chair Productions, has been producing shows from his own home for your viewing while the library has been closed. Check out the link below for story hours and more!

[Shadow Puppetry Background](#) | [Wishing Chair Productions: Nashville Public Library](#)



CHINESE KITE FLYING

It is believed that kites were invented in China many thousands of years ago during the [Warring States Period](#) (475-221 B.C.), a very divisive time in Chinese history. Mainly, they were used for military purposes including measuring distances, wind speed, and sometimes for signaling to ships at sea. In these ancient times, a Chinese kite was made from simple materials such as wood and cloth and were often resembled the shapes of birds.

In fact, kites have become a [major art form and important part of Chinese history and culture](#). Today, kites are both an art form and pastime, having become much more elaborate and colorful, resembling all kinds of things from real animals and flowers to

mythological creatures.

Check out this [fun video](#) of a competition held last year in China!

Kite flying is definitely a Chinese tradition that you can participate in here at home! Maybe you already have a kite, but if not, try your hand at [making your own!](#)

[Make your own kite](#) | [Kite coloring sheets](#) | [Kite-shaped sandwiches](#)

SCHOOL & EXERCISE IN CHINA

When you are in school, you may have a time in the day when you go out and play on the playground or have PE class. Chinese schools also have a physical fitness requirement, but it's a little different than how we do it here in America. In Chinese schools, the students are required 30 minutes of physical activity, but they do not get to run around on the playground or play in the gym. Instead, the whole school lines up in very straight lines and they perform a series of exercises that are called out and counted. The reason given for this is that they need physical time, but there is not enough space for them all to run. This tradition sometimes continues as they move out from school, as some employers have even adopted calisthenics as a morning routine. See the link below for the a calisthenics routine performed in a Chinese secondary school.

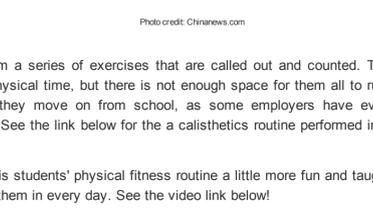


Photo credit: Chinanews.com

One Chinese principal decided to make his students' physical fitness routine a little more fun and taught his students The Shuffle, which he leads them in every day. See the video link below!

Which one would you like to try?

[Chinese Principal in Shanxi Leads the School in the Shuffle](#) | [Chinese School Calisthenics Routine](#)

Photo credit: Wikimedia

~ LET'S EAT: CHINESE NOODLES! ~

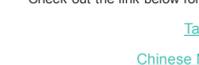


Image 1 credit: isidorslugue.com; Image 2 credit: sammyboy.com; Image 3 credit: isidorslugue.com

Noodles! There is so much delicious food in Taiyuan and the Shanxi province, but what they are best known for is the amazing and interesting ways that they make noodles. It is truly an artform and chefs go to school just to learn how to make their noodles dance! Doesn't that sound funny? It's true! Check out this [dancing noodle video!](#)

Would you like to try to make noodles the way they do in Taiyuan? It's not as hard as you think! Check out the link below for Biang Biang Noodles!

[Taiyuan Noodle Tour](#) | [Noodle Dancing](#)
[Chinese Noodle School](#) | [Biang Biang Noodles Recipe](#)

~ A History ~



Photo credit: intochinatravel.com

TAIYUAN ANCIENT CITY

Taiyuan is a deeply historical and ancient city, but has become largely very modern. However, there is a small section of the city that remains dedicated to its historic roots. There, you can get a taste of what Taiyuan might have been like. Stepping into [Yuci Ancient City](#) is like stepping back in time 1,500 years. The buildings, gardens, and houses are preserved to look like they did over 1,000 years ago so that visitors can get an authentic experience of ancient China. Though the area is a little small, it is a unique opportunity to experience a more authentic ancient Chinese culture.

Would you like to have a little bit of ancient Chinese culture in your home? Many of the buildings in Yuci would have paper lanterns hanging from them. Paper lanterns have been a part of Chinese culture for a long time. Crafted from paper or silk, they symbolize different things during different times of the year. Some of them were made to symbolize certain myths, and some were merely decoration. In some places they are used for entertainment, allowing people to shoot the paper lanterns with pea shooters.

How about [making your own paper lantern](#)? All you need is some paper, scissors and a stapler!

[Make a Chinese Lantern](#) | [A History of Paper Lanterns](#)

~ JOIN US NEXT WEEK! ~

We hope you enjoyed this week's activities! Be sure and post pictures of your camp activities and tag us on Facebook (Sister Cities of Nashville) Instagram (@SCNashville) and Twitter (@SCNashvilleTN)! We can't wait to see all the fun you get up to!

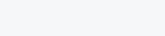
Next week we will venture to our sister city Tamworth, Australia!

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