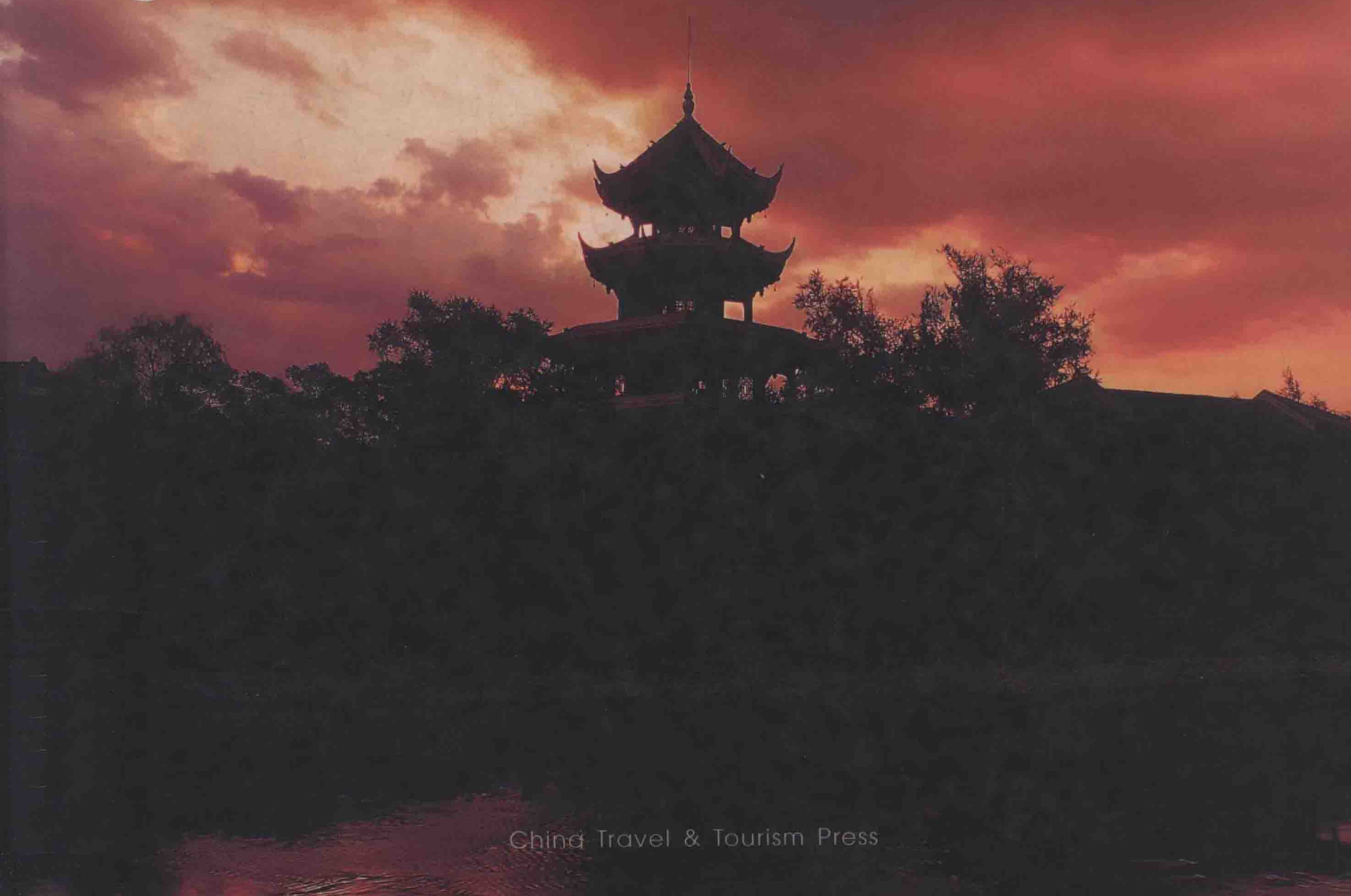


A COMPLETE GUIDE SERIES OF TRAVEL & TOURISM IN CHINA

CHENGDU



China Travel & Tourism Press

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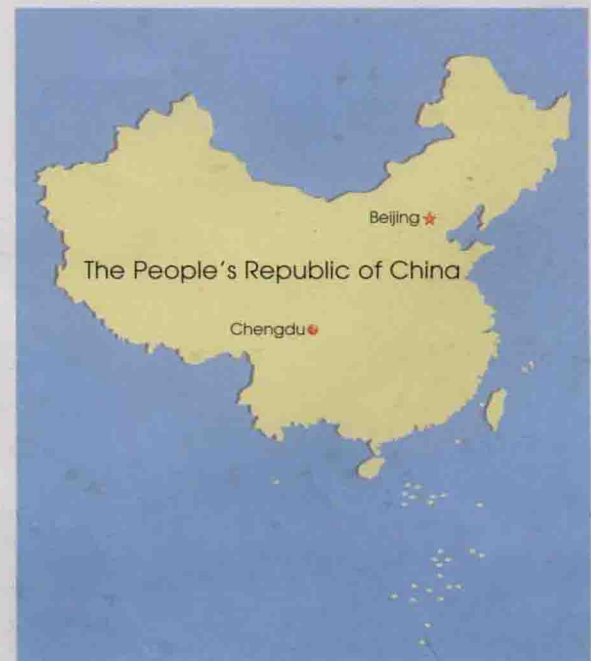
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ChengDu's location on the map of China





成都

Chengdu: City of History

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Preface

Su Peiwei

Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan Province, the home to pandas. It is well known for its long history, cultural charms and beautiful scenery. Chengdu is also a scientific and commercial center in southwest China and a transportation and communications hub in the region. Its gross domestic product in 2000 stood at 131 billion yuan. It is one of the pilot cities in the west development campaign of China.

Chengdu is located in the middle of a vast plain on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River in central Sichuan Province. It administers eight districts, four county-level cities and eight counties, with a total area of 12,300 square kilometers and a population of 10.13 million. The city seat covers 87 square kilometers and has 3.46 million residents. With an altitude of 500 meters, Chengdu has an average temperature of 16 degrees centigrade around the year, 1,238 hours of sunshine time and 1,000 millimeters of rainfall. Its subtropical wet monsoon climate is quite pleasant for tourists in all seasons.

Chengdu has a long history. The city began to take shape about 2,400 years ago when the Kaiming Court of the ancient State of Shu moved its capital city here. In 316 BC, the State of Qin merged Sichuan into its administration. In 311 BC, the Chengdu City was built and the surrounding city walls were about 16 meters high and five

kilometers in perimeter. The name of "Chengdu" means "a newly built city" in ancient Chinese.

The city began to expand with a prosperous economy in the years afterward. During the Western Han Dynasty (202 BC-8 AD), Chengdu was one of the five big cities in the country. In the Tang Dynasty (618-907), it became one of the most flourishing cities in China. When Marco Polo, the Italian traveler, visited Chengdu in the late 13th century, he was surprised at the grandeur of the city. With a circumference of 32 kilometers, the city had rivers surrounding or running through, on which countless fully loaded ships and boats traveled to and fro the city.

Over the past 2,000 years or so, Chengdu has all along been the political, economic and cultural center of the Sichuan region and its name and location have never been changed, which is quite rare in ancient Chinese cities.

The city also has other beautiful names. It was the brocade-weaving center under the reign of the Kingdom of Shu Han (221-263) during the Three Kingdoms period (220-280). The government set up a special office there to take charge of the industry, therefore, the city got the name of Brocade City or Brocade Official City. When the brocade was washed in the river that ran through south Chengdu, it would look more brilliant, thus winning

the river the name of Brocade River.

During the Five Dynasties (907-960), hibiscuses meatballs were grown on the city walls at the order of local ruler. The plant would be in full bloom when autumn came. People liked the white and pink flowers so much that they gave Chengdu another name of Hibiscus City. Hibiscus has now been made city flower of Chengdu.

As the origin of the Sichuan culture, Chengdu has special cultural charms of its own. The vast plain had been the center where the ancient people living on it staged various activities about 10,000 years ago. They created the unique Sichuan culture with their wisdom and perspiration, which has distinct regional features and is in essence intelligent innovation.

In Wang Conga Chi, the Memorial Temple of

King Wang, Duyu and King Cong, Kaiming in the midst of cypress trees are enshrined two enlightened rulers of the ancient State of Shu. King Duyu had taught his people farming and King Kaiming had made contributions to harnessing the floods. They were great creators of the Sichuan culture. The Sanxingdui Ruins were cultural relics of the ancient State of Shu dating back 4,000 years, where a large number of bronze articles have been unearthed. They are a good demonstration of the most splendid bronze art on earth and the remarkable wisdom and creativity of ancient Sichuan ancestors.

The Dujiangyan Weir, one of the world cultural heritage sites, is the only existing example of the large water conservancy projects built by the four ancient civilized countries, namely, China, Egypt,



Hibiscus, city flower of Chengdu



Ginkgo, city tree of Chengdu

India and Babelon. It is still working today after centuries of great changes. It was built some 2,250 years ago at the order and supervision of Li Bing, then chief of the Sichuan Prefecture. The weir had helped turn the Chengdu plain into a land of plenty with a vast expanse of fertile fields. The area of fields benefiting from this ancient irrigation system has expanded from 200,000 hectares in the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1919) to 800,000 hectares at present. It is a best demonstration of ancient Chinese scientific achievements and a milestone in the world water control technology. It is indeed a miracle in the world civilization history.

There is an ancient saying that Sichuan is a cradle of generals and chief ministers. Zhuge Liang (181-234), the great politician and minister of the Kingdom of Shu Han, was from Chengdu. In the eyes of the Chinese, he not only was a great politician, but also epitomized the Chinese wisdom.

If one would like to appreciate the wisdom of the Chinese nation, he should visit the Marquis Wu

Shrine in Chengdu, and if he would like to appreciate the Chinese poems, he should go to the Thatched Cottage of Du Fu in the same city of Chengdu.

Du Fu (712-770), a poet of the Tang Dynasty, was one of the great poets in the Chinese history. He enjoyed the fame of Sage of Poetry among the Chinese. Du Fu had once said that he would not rest in peace if he could not present striking addresses. During his stay in Sichuan, he had written 440 poems and 240 were completed in his thatched cottage. These poems are an important component of the Sichuan culture.

Education has been given special position in the local culture of Sichuan. As early as 1,800 years ago, the prefecture chief Wen Weng had schools built in Chengdu to receive students, which marked the beginning of education funded by local government in Chinese history.

Paper ranked first among the four inventions of ancient China, with the other three being compass, gunpowder and printing technique. Chengdu was one of the papermaking centers during the Tang Dynasty and boasted the most advanced papermaking technology in the country. The Yizhou (another name for Chengdu) paper made from linen was the official paper used for various documents of the feudal court and books collected by the imperial library.

Chengdu was also one birthplace of China's wood block printing technology. The technology was invented in the Tang Dynasty and thrived in the following Song Dynasty (960-1279) when Chengdu became one of the three major bases of printing industry.

Paper money, the most popular mode of money in circulation in today's world, was first invented and used in Chengdu, when it was called Jiaozi. During the reign of Emperor Zhenzong (968-1022) of the Northern Song Dynasty, the Sichuan people invented Jiaozi, which was first used for people-to-people exchanges. In the year 1023, the government began to issue Jiaozi and a special organ was set up in Chengdu to be in charge of the printing and issuance of the notes. There is a Jiaozi Street in Chengdu, which is said to have had



Giant panda, national treasure of China

many private banks running Jiaozi businesses in the Song Dynasty.

The creativity of Sichuan culture is not only reflected in the fields of politics, science, technology, economy, literature, art and education, but also merged into the daily life of local residents. The special cuisine, tea, liquor and opera of Sichuan enjoy great reputation among

the Chinese at home and abroad. Chengdu is a city of arts and crafts. The Sichuan satin, one of the three famous satin varieties in China, and the Sichuan embroidery, one of the four best embroideries in China, both originated in Chengdu. They are best souvenirs for tourists from other parts of the world.

Chengdu has always been a gathering place of talents in history. It was the hometown of many scholars such as literature masters Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong of the Han Dynasty, historian Chang Qu of the Jin Dynasty (265-420) and modern writers such as Ba Jin and Li Jieren. Ancient politicians such as Zhuge Liang, masters of poetry such as Li Bai, Du Fu, Su Shi and Lu You had all once lived in Chengdu. Modern politicians and strategists such as Zhu De and Chen Yi and literature master Guo Moruo had studied in the city. As it is known to all: the greatness of a man lends glory to a place, Chengdu fully deserves the fame of "treasure of nature".

Besides the unique Sichuan culture, the beautiful scenery is another attraction of Chengdu to tourists from all over the world. The diversified landforms have resulted in gorgeous natural scenery. The 6,350-square-kilometer Chengdu Plain is one of the alluvial plains in China. Zhuge Liang had praised it to be "a vast land of fertile fields and abundance, nature's storehouse indeed". Therefore, it got the name of



Rare animal: lesser panda

The charmingly naive pandas, one of the primitive animals on earth, are called "treasure of the nation" by the Chinese. Sichuan is home to pandas. There are about 1,000 live pandas around the world and all of them are living on the Chinese land, with 85 per cent in Sichuan. Chengdu people have used two lovely pandas as their tourism logo. There are three nature reserves for pandas to the west of Chengdu, which, together with the Wolong and Fengtongzhai reserves, make up a large nature reserve for pandas. To make better study and protection of such rare animals, a panda breeding research center has been set up in the north suburb of Chengdu. Sometimes, pandas will visit farmhouses nearby, where the farmers will give them food or treat their wounds. People are trying their best to provide a haven for pandas on this land of plenty.

"storehouse of nature". When spring comes, the Chengdu Plain is full of vitality with surging green wheat seedlings and yellow rape flowers, whirling bamboo forests, cooking smoke rising from farm houses, criss-cross rivers and ditches, and busy working farmers accompanied by cuckooing in the fields. The pastoral countryside scenery is really an enjoyment for tourists to escape from the bustling urban life.

About 70-80 kilometers to the west of Chengdu lie the Qionglai Mountains, which extend several hundred kilometers from north to south with the highest peak 5,000 meters above the sea. The winding mountains provide a natural defence for the Chengdu Plain in the west. Dotted among the Qionglai Mountains are the world cultural heritage sites of Qingcheng Mountain and Dujiangyan Weir, the state scenic site of snow-capped Xiling Mountain, the state forest park and the Tiantai Mountain are. The vast primitive forests, the snow mountains, the dropping waterfalls, the gorgeous

azalea, and the temples hidden in the mists and forests all attract tourists to linger on. The Qingcheng Mountain is well known for its secluded beauty, while the Xiling Mountain is famous for its majestic appearance.

There is no other city like Chengdu that has a compact gathering of so many tourist attractions within such a small area, including two state scenic spot, three state forest parks, three nature reserves for pandas (Longxi-Hongkou, Anzihe and Heishuihe) and seven provincial level scenic areas (Jiufeng Mountain, Jiulonggou, Tiantai Mountain, Chaoyang Lake, Yunding Stone Fortress, Longquan Flower Mountain and Huanglongxi). Besides, the city has lots of places of historical interest such as the Residence of the Liu Family and the springs at Dayi, the Longmen Mountain in Pengzhou, the River-Viewing Pavilion, the Taoist Temple Qingyanggong and the Temple of Manjusri in Chengdu and the Temple of Goddess of Mercy in Xinjin and the Huanglongxi ancient town at Shuangliu.



Comic figurine of the Eastern Han Dynasty

The present-day Chengdu has developed into a metropolis with a combination of both ancient and modern civilizations. The convenient transportation of highways, railways and aviation services has linked it with the outside world and the

communications network has connected it with all parts of the world. Chengdu has become a major tourist destination in west China.

It was selected among the first group of excellent tourist cities in 1999 for its advanced tourist

service facilities and comprehensive tourist accommodation ability. Chengdu received a total of 259,300 overseas tourists, earning US\$81.08 million foreign exchange, and 23.85 million domestic tourists, yielding 12.4 billion yuan of profits. The total



Fuhe and Nanhe rivers after renovation

tourism profits for the whole year amounted to 13.1 billion yuan.

Since Chengdu is the transportation hub in the southwest region, tourists can visit other scenic spots such as the Jiuzhaigou Valley and Huanglong in

the north, the Emei Mountain and Leshan Grand Buddha in the south, the Three Gorges in the east, and Tibet in the west by way of Chengdu. Chengdu will, as always, wait for the arrival of tourists at home and abroad.





Longquan, where peach blossoms flourish in spring



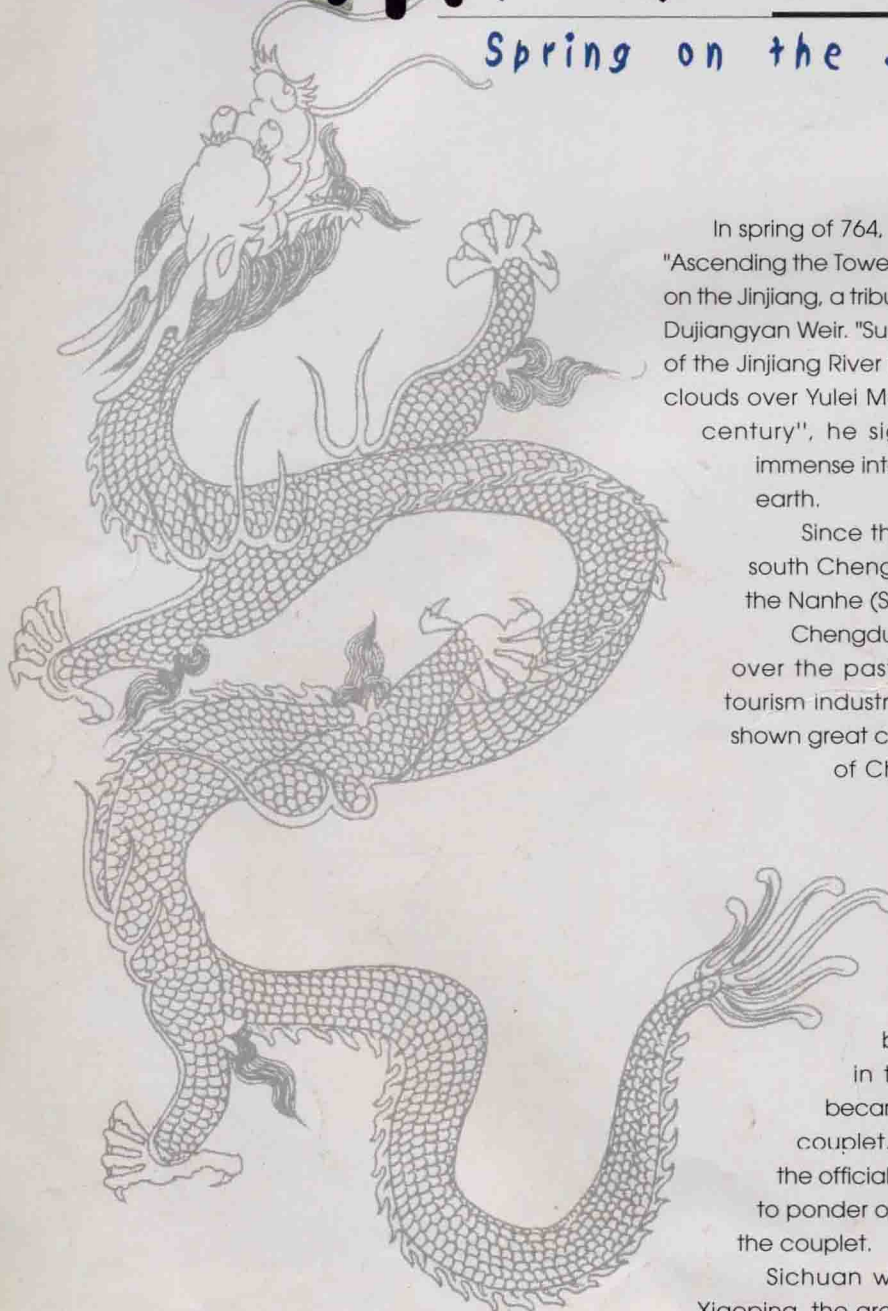


Dujiangyan Weir, world cultural heritage



錦江春色來天地

Spring on the Jinjiang River



In spring of 764, Du Fu wrote a poem entitled "Ascending the Tower", describing the spring scene on the Jinjiang, a tributary of the Minjiang River from Dujiangyan Weir. "Surging the mighty spring water of the Jinjiang River from the horizon, floating the clouds over Yulei Mountain through changes of century", he sighed with emotion of the immense interchange of sea and land on earth.

Since the Jinjiang River runs through south Chengdu City, it is now also called the Nanhe (South River).

Chengdu has witnessed huge changes over the past two decades. So does its tourism industry. Senior state leaders have shown great concerns for the development of Chengdu's tourism industry. In

March 1958, Chairman Mao Zedong inspected the Marquis Wu Shrine, the Thatched Cottage of Du Fu and the Dujiangyan Weir. He stopped for a good while before the Hall of Zhuge Liang in the Marquis Wu Shrine and became lost in thought in front of the couplet. A dozen years later, he told the officials who were to work in Sichuan to ponder on the philosophic meaning of the couplet.

Sichuan was the birthplace of Deng Xiaoping, the great designer and architect of China's modernization. He loved the mountains



and rivers in his hometown so much that he had time and again visited the places of interest in Chengdu. He said in 1986 that one could not say he had visited Chengdu without going to the Thatched Cottage.

President Jiang Zemin has also visited the Thatched Cottage, the Marquis Wu Shrine and the Funan River. He even made an instruction on the protection of the two cultural relics in 1995.



Chairman Mao Zedong inspected the Dujiangyan Weir in March 1958



Deng Xiaoping visited the River-Viewing Park when returning Sichuan, his hometown