



# WHITE HORSE TEMPLE

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## 中国第一古刹——洛阳白马寺

从“九朝古都”——河南省洛阳市往东走大约十二公里，便可以看到，在一片苍松翠柏当中，露出巍峨的殿阁和高耸的宝塔，这就是中外闻名的白马寺了。

说起白马寺，不少人把它和“唐僧取经”联系起来。古典神话小说《西游记》当中，“唐僧”不是骑着白龙马到西天取经的吗？所以有人说“唐僧取回的经，放在白马寺。”也有人说，“唐僧的白马死在白马寺。”实际上，白马寺创建在汉朝，“唐僧取经”在唐朝，白马寺和“唐僧取经”是两回事。早在“唐僧取经”前五百多年，白马寺就建成了。

白马寺最早是在东汉永平十一年，也就是公元六十八年修建的。根据一些古书的记载：东汉的第二个皇帝——汉明帝刘庄听说西方有佛，就派遣使臣去西域求取佛法。为首的两个大臣，一个叫蔡愔，一个叫秦景。他们来到大月氏，也就是现在的阿富汗一带，得到佛经、佛像，并且遇到了印度的两位高僧迦叶摩腾和竺法兰，就邀请他们一同到中国来。

这两位高僧和东汉使者一道，用白马驮着佛经、佛像，披星戴月，历尽艰辛，来到东汉的首都洛阳。第二年汉明帝传出圣旨，在洛阳修建这座寺院。因为佛经，佛像是用白马驮来的，所以取名叫白马寺。这是我国官府营建的第一座佛寺，离现在已经有一千九百多年了。

白马寺是佛教在中国早期传播和佛事活动的中心，一向被称为中国佛教的“祖庭”和“释源”。

“祖庭”，意即祖师的庭院；“释源”，意即释教（佛教）的发源地。由此足见白马寺在中国佛教史中的地位是多么重要了。

白马寺座北朝南，是一个长方形的院落。山门是一座牌坊式的券洞门。朱红山门外面，东西两侧伫立着的两匹石雕马，十分引人注目，可以看成是白马寺的标志。这两匹石马，和真马的大小差不多。看他们的形貌，既不像奔腾的骏马，更不像脱缰的野马，这两匹石马的神态，是那樣的温和驯良，安静沉着，让人们好象看到了一千九百多年前，风尘仆仆，翻山越岭，从西域驮回佛经的那两匹白马的形象。

这两匹青石圆雕马，是宋代的石雕作品，刻工润腻，对研究宋代石雕有重要参考价值。

走进白马寺山门，中轴线上依次排列着五重殿阁，就是天王殿、大佛殿、大雄殿、接引殿和毗卢阁。两旁原是禅堂、斋堂、客堂、祖堂等附属建筑。整个

建筑群，庄严肃穆，主次分明，高低错落，左右对称，结构简约而规整，表现了我国古代建筑的独特艺术和传统风格。在寺院的东南角和西南角，还建筑了两座小巧雅致的两层角楼，四四方方，飞檐凌空，这更使得整个建筑群生动有变，不落单调，为白马寺平添了不少光辉。这两座二层角楼，是寺院里的钟楼和鼓楼。

辉煌、壮观的大佛殿，是白马寺里的主要建筑之一，殿顶九脊，筒瓦覆盖，飞檐挑角，斗拱华美。第三重殿堂——大雄殿里的造像最精美。一座贴金雕花佛龕雄踞中央，上面雕着大鹏展翅，两旁刻着蛟龙起舞，天棚上画着色彩艳丽的莲花图案，东西墙壁上塑造着五千多尊“壁佛”。特别是大殿里的明朝“夹纻”造像“三世佛”，元朝“夹纻”造像二天将和十八罗汉，更是造像艺术的精华，文物珍品。韦驮天将，面颊丰润，温和可亲；韦力天将，怒目圆睁，气势逼人；老罗汉深沉含蓄，年轻罗汉坦率纯真。“降龙”罗汉，袒胸露乳，肌肉暴突，孔武刚烈，对面的“伏虎”罗汉，却是拿着手杖，坦然地静坐在那儿，心平气和，从容安详。这两尊罗汉，一张一弛，一藏一露，构成鲜明的对比。

人们在这里看到的不是呆板乏味的宗教木偶泥胎，而是现实生活中不同年龄，不同性格的活生生的人物群像！

最叫游人感兴趣的是，造像大师们还塑造了一尊“女罗汉”。

大雄殿内的十八罗汉当中，十七个都光着头，只有西边一尊罗汉，头戴“宝冠”，身穿袈裟，上衣不裙，柳眉弯弯，娇吻腮，看起来很象是一个温柔、娴雅的女性。所以它被不少观众戏称为“十八罗汉一枝花”。古代造像大师们的彩笔一点，便销尽了罗汉身上的神秘色彩，把他们从天上的神变成了人世间的普通人物。

如果把在大雄殿里欣赏古代塑像艺术比作饮一杯美酒，那么登清凉台就好像是吟诵一首古诗了。

清凉台在白马寺的后院。它是一座长四十三米，宽三十三米，高约六米余的砖砌高台。台上古柏苍苍，重楼高阁，清静幽雅，自成院落，可称之为“空中庭院”。白马寺中轴线上的最后一重殿阁——毗卢阁，就耸立在这个高台上。这是一座古香古色的楼阁，里边放着的大藏经柜，原是供贮藏佛经用的。

毗卢阁前的东西两侧，是二位高僧的配殿，分别塑着印度高僧迦叶摩腾和竺法兰的像。这两位高僧，在一千九百多年前来到洛阳以后，一直住在清凉台上翻译佛经，传播佛教。我国最早的一部汉文佛经《四十二章经》，就是他们在这里编译出来的。他们死后便都埋葬在白马寺。现在白马寺大门里东西两边的柏树林里，还保留着他们两人的坟墓和碑石。

相传古时候，白马寺里的石榴特别名贵，每当石榴成熟季节，皇帝就派人来摘取，回去后再赏赐给大臣和嫔妃们。当时人们得到一个白马寺的石榴后，都舍不得轻易吃去，往往要辗转送给好多人。所以那时候洛阳有句谚语说：“白马甜榴，一实值牛。”意思是说白马寺的甜石榴，一个的价值就等于一头牛。这里的石榴所以名贵是有其历史原因的。石榴和佛教一样，都是古代从西域传入中国内地的。洛阳大概是石榴在中原最早安家落户的园地之一，因此，白马寺出产名贵的石榴也就不是偶然的了。

人们常说：“五月榴花红似火。”可是白马寺的石榴却恰恰相反：这里的石榴花是白色的。每逢农历五月，大殿两侧的石榴树，花团满枝，洁如玉，白如雪，辉映在仲夏季节的一派浓绿之中，十分好看。

白马寺东南方不远，有一座十三层的佛塔，叫齐云塔，高二十五米左右，是一座密檐式的砖砌宝塔，通体四方形，由下向上，塔身略作抛物线形，从第六层起，四周一层层地往里收。轮廓清晰，线条柔和流畅。“玲珑塔，塔玲珑，玲珑宝塔十三层”。用这句民间说唱文艺中常用的唱词来形容齐云塔，是非常贴切的，齐云塔的确是一座名符其实的玲珑宝塔。

据当地人传说：齐云塔下面原有一只金蛤蟆，

人们如果站在塔前二十米外用力拍掌，就可以听到金蛤蟆从齐云塔那里发出的哇哇叫声。至今仍有不少游人当场试验，的确是这样的。不过那并不是蛤蟆的叫声，更没有什么金蛤蟆，这只是人们拍掌的回音，就像北京天坛的回音壁一样，是一种声学中的物理现象罢了。

我国最早的佛寺洛阳白马寺，自东汉以来，几经沧桑，毁了修，修了毁，已经不是原来的模样了。解放后，这一历史文化遗产，被国务院列为国家重点文物保护单位。但是在林彪“四人帮”横行的时候，白马寺又惨遭破坏。粉碎“四人帮”，国家又一次整修白马寺。千年古刹，面貌一新，已成为中外僧俗各界游览瞻仰的胜地。

在旧社会，有多少善男信女，前来白马寺烧香拜佛，祈求“老佛爷”把他们超生到天上的“极乐世界”去，然而，他们却一直挣扎在苦难的深渊之中。

如今呢，来白马寺参观游览的，大多数都是奋战在“四化”前线的工农兵群众和知识分子，他们正在用自己的聪明才智，创造着现实人间的“极乐世界”。

## White Horse Temple

— the First Buddhist Monastery  
in China

About 12 km to the east of Luoyang in Henan Province, a city known as the “ancient capital of nine dynasties” , magnificent palaces and a towering pagoda come into view amid green pines and cypress groves. They are the White Horse Temple buildings— well-known both at home and abroad.

Many people may associate the White Horse Temple with the Tang-dynasty monk Xuanzang's search for the Buddhist scriptures<sup>1</sup>. A mythological novel, *The Pilgrimage to the West*, describes how Monk Xuanzang rode astride a “white-dragon” horse on his pilgrimage to the West in search of Buddhist scriptures. It is said that Monk Xuanzang placed the scriptures in the White Horse Temple. Others say, his white horse died



there. As a matter of fact, this monastery has nothing to do with Monk Xuanzang at all, for it was built in the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25—220), whereas, Monk Xuanzang's journey took place during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618—909). In other words, the monastery was built over 500 years before Monk Xuanzang's search for the Buddhist scriptures.

The White Horse Temple was first built in AD 68 during the Eastern Han Dynasty. Some historical writings suggest that the second emperor of the Eastern Han Dynasty, Liu Zhuang, known as Emperor Ming Di, on hearing that there were Buddhas in the West, dispatched envoys under Cai Yin and Qin Jing—two leading ministers, to seek Buddhist scriptures there. They arrived in Dayuezhi, now in Afghanistan, where they obtained some Buddhist scriptures and a statue of Buddha. They also met Kasyapa-matanga and Dharmaratna, two eminent Indian monks, who were invited to come with them to China. They travelled night and day, and went

through all kinds of hardships and difficulties. The two guests and the Han envoys finally arrived in Luoyang, the capital, with the Buddhist scriptures and the statue of Buddha carried on the backs of two white horses.

In the following year, Emperor Ming Di issued an edict to build a monastery near Luoyang. It was named the White Horse Temple because the Buddhist scriptures and the statue of Buddha were carried there by two white horses. It was the first Buddhist monastery built by order of the Chinese Governor. More than 1,900 years have elapsed since it was completed.

The monastery was the centre for spreading Buddhism and carrying out other Buddhist activities during the early days of Chinese history. It has always been referred to as "Zuting" and "Shiyuan", respectively the "home of the founder" and the "origin of Sakyamunism" (Buddhism). Thus can be seen the important role the White Horse Temple played in the history of Buddhism in China.

The monastery faces south, with a rectangular compound and a gate in memorial archway style. Outside the vermilion gate stands an impressive-looking stone-carved horse on either side. The horses are considered the symbol of the monastery. They are of life-size, carved in a manner suggesting neither galloping horses nor runaway wild ones, but appearing rather gentle, submissive, quiet and calm. One can picture such horses enduring hardships and fatigue of the long journey from the West, burdened with the Buddhist scriptures on their backs, over 1,900 years ago.

The two horses of exquisite craftsmanship, carved out of limestone are works of the Song Dynasty. They provide valuable material for the study of stonemasonry in that period.

Passing through the main entrance, one can see five halls in a line, seemingly the central axis of the monastery. They are the Hall of the Heavenly Kings (Tianwangdian), the Hall of the Great Buddha (Dafodian),

the Hall of the Great Heroes (Daxiong dian), the Reception Hall (Jieyindian) and the Pilu Pavilion. On both sides of these main buildings stand appurtenant ones, which were originally the meditation rooms, dining-rooms, drawing rooms and "ancestral" rooms. The whole complex appears solemn and dignified. The buildings are all distinct from each other and of different heights. laid out compactly in symmetry, displaying the unique art and traditional style of China's ancient architecture.

What make the entire complex look more lively, and remove the feeling of monotony, are a couple of two-storied square turrets, one in the southeast and the other in the southwest corner—the Bell Tower and the Drum Tower. They are elegant and decorative with upturned eaves rearing skyward, adding much to the monastery's splendor.

One of the main structures is the splendid and magnificent Hall of the Great Buddha which is crowned with nine ridges made of tube-shaped tiles, upturned eaves and an

intricate system of wooden brackets connecting the tops of columns and the eaves.

The most splendid sculptures are those in the Hall of the Great Heroes, the third building. A niche with a statue of Buddha overlaid with gold leaf occupies the central part of the hall. Above it, there is a carved roc with outspread wings flanked by two lively dragons. On the ceiling are painted colourful lotus patterns; the walls on both sides are adorned with more than 5,000 Buddhist carvings. The most remarkable ones are the ramie-cloth statues<sup>2</sup> of the Three Buddhas<sup>3</sup> made in the Ming Dynasty and those of the Two Heavenly Generals<sup>4</sup> and 18 arhats<sup>5</sup> made in the Yuan Dynasty. They are no doubt the best that exist demonstrating the art of statue-making, and a treasure among cultural relics. Wei Tuo, a heavenly general, with plump and smooth cheeks, appears gentle and kind, while Wei Li, the other general, with glaring eyes, looks militant and bellicose; the elder arhats seem deep in thought and inscrutable, while the

young ones frank and innocent. The "Dragon Conqueror" arhat is bare-chested and full-muscled, fiery and daring; whereas opposite him is seated the "Tiger Tamer" arhat, with a walking-stick in hand and appearing serene, calm and in good humour. Those two arhats provide a striking contrast: one, vigorous, the other, relaxed; one, expressive, the other, reserved.

Instead of being carved figures and clay idols, dull and dry, the figures seem to be of flesh and blood, differing in age and temperament as in real life.

Of particular interest to visitors is the female arhat carved by great masters.

Out of the 18 arhats in the Hall of the Great Heroes, 17 are bare-headed. Only one on the west side is wearing a crown, and dressed in a kasaya and a skirt. This arhat has finely-shaped arched eyebrows, tender lips and full cheeks. This seems to be a tender and elegant female. So, many sight-seers call it "a flower among the 18 arhats". As soon as the ancient sculptors set their hands to

work on the arhats, their mysterious nature vanished and the gods in heaven were transformed into mortals on earth.

If one compares the viewing of ancient statues to drinking a glass of delicious wine, the climbing of the Cooling Terrace (Qing-liangtai) would be like reciting a classical poem.

The Cooling Terrace measuring 43m long, 33m wide and over 6m high is a brick platform in the rear part of the monastery grounds. Among old cypresses are magnificent buildings and a high pavilion, serene and tastefully laid out on the terrace, forming a courtyard in itself, which can be called "the garden in the air". The Pulu Pavilion, the last structure along the "central axis", towers over the terrace. It is of graceful, ancient style. The chests containing the sutra kept in the pavilion were used to house Buddhist scriptures.

On both side in the front of the Pulu Pavilion are side halls for the two eminent Indian monks—Kasyapa—matanga and Dhar-

maratna, whose statues were sculptured there. After coming to Luoyang more than 1900 years ago, they lived on the Cooling Terrace, translating the Buddhist scriptures and propagating Buddhism. While living there, they translated and edited *Forty-two Chapters of the Sutra*, the earliest Buddhist scripture in Chinese. After their death, they were buried in the White Horse Temple. Today, their graves and tombstones can still be seen in the cypress groves to the east and west inside the main gate.

Folklore has it that the pomegranates in the White Horse Temple are of a rare species. Once they were ripe, the emperor would send for them and award them to his ministers and concubines. People in those days grudged just getting a pomegranate occasionally. In case they did have one, it often passed through many hands, being given away as a gift. Thus, in Luoyang, a saying went: "One sweet pomegranate from the White Horse Temple is worth a head of cattle." There was a historical reason for pome-



granates to be considered a rare fruit. Like Buddhism, pomegranates were introduced to China from the West in ancient times. Luoyang was perhaps one of the first areas in the Central Plains to grow them. Therefore, it was not accidental that the White Horse Temple produced such rare pomegranates.

A common saying goes: "In the month of May pomegranates blossom as red as fire." But, those in the monastery are different—their blossoms are white instead. When the pomegranate trees on both sides of the hall are in full blossom, they look as pure as jade and as white as snow, contrasting sharply with the dark green leaves on mid-summer days. It is a beautiful sight indeed!

A short distance to the southeast of the monastery stands a 13-tiered Buddhist pagoda called the Qiyun (reaching the clouds) Pagoda. It is a brick structure 25m high. Its eaves are closely positioned one on top of the other. Each tier is square-shaped. The pagoda proper with soft and smooth lines is somewhat parabolic in shape, square tiers