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Suzhou is one of the 24 famous historical and cultural cities in China. Its history can be traced back 6,000-7,000 years ago. Archeological finds have proven that there were already early inhabitants in the area of Suzhou during the New Stone Age. As a city, Suzhou has a history of 2,500 years. In the late Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), the State of Wu rose in southeast China. He Lü, the King of Wu, ordered his Minister, Wu Zixu, to build a He Lü City in 514 B.C. , with walls of 24 kilometers long in circumference and having eight land and water gates. This was the first city of Suzhou. It not only served as the capital of the Wu State but also as an economic and cultural center in southeast China. During its long history, Suzhou city has witnessed many changes, but the site, scale and structure of its city walls have remained almost the same. Of all the city gates, the Panmen Gate is particularly well-preserved and is the only existing typical land-and-water gate in China. On a *Map of the Pingjiang Prefecture* (during the Song Dynasty, Suzhou was named the Pingjiang Prefecture) on a Song Dynasty (960-1279) stone tablet housed in the Suzhou Stone Carvings Museum, there are six north-south rivers, 14 east-west rivers and 359 bridges depicted in the city. The names of many streets and bridges shown on the map are still in use today.

Suzhou, one of the famous tourist cities in China, has unique natural scenery. Its east side is dotted with lakes and crisscrossed by rivers, and its west is a hilly area. Mount Lingyan, Mount Tianping, and Tiger Hill rise in its western suburbs. Tiger Hill is known as the “First Scenic Spot in the State of Wu.” On its plain in the eastern part

are networks of rivers and lakes. The larger ones are Yangcheng Lake and Jinji Lake. About 15 kilometers to the southwest of the city is the famous Taihu Lake Scenic Area. The water from Taihu Lake flows through the city and empties into the Yangtze River. Residential houses in the city stand mostly along the rivers, and stone steps have been built from the houses down to the water. Stone bridges span the rivers one after another to connect the small streets or lanes on both banks. The distinctive features of Suzhou's scenery are its beautiful natural landscapes, graceful artistic gardens, and the poetic scenes of small rivers flowing under arched stone bridges. Marco Polo, the Italian traveler, came to China in 1275. During his stay in China, he served as an official for 17 years and covered most of the country. His *Travels*, written after his return to Italy, records that Suzhou was extremely beautiful and could rival his hometown — Venice.

Suzhou, with its mild climate, fertile farmlands and abundant products, is known as the "Land of Rice and Fish." In Middle Ages, Suzhou already had well developed agriculture, a flourishing handicraft industry and thriving commerce. During the reign of Qing Emperor Qianlong, the court painter Xu Yang, who came from Suzhou, did a genre scroll painting titled *Prosperous Suzhou*. In the downtown section of this painting, more than 200 shops are carefully depicted to reflect the prosperous scene of Suzhou at that time. Among many of the local products of Suzhou, the most famous are the Taihu Lake whitebait, pearls, crabs from Yangcheng Lake, Biluochun green tea, and white loquats. Its well-known handicrafts include Suzhou embroidery, sandalwood fan, mahogany carving, jade carving, Taohuawu woodblock prints, and mahogany products.

Suzhou's beautiful scenery and abundant products had attracted numerous high officials, scholars, men of letters and rich merchants to come to live in Suzhou ever since ancient times. Many of them built gardens and villas in Suzhou, either for their social activities or for their retired leisure life. According to the city annals of Suzhou, there were as many as 200 private gardens in the city during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911). Hence Suzhou is known as the "Garden City." The most famous gardens are the Surging Waves Pavilion, Lion Grove, Humble Administrator's Garden,

Lingering Garden, West Garden, Fisherman's Garden and Pleasure Garden, each representing a different architectural style of the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. The Suzhou gardens are not like the imperial gardens in Beijing or Chengde which were mostly built outside of the city in vast areas, using the beautiful natural landscapes to construct symmetrically arranged palace halls on a central axis. The Suzhou gardens were all private gardens, taking up very small spaces. But the architects employed miniature techniques to exquisitely put artificial hills, trees, pavilions, towers, platforms, lakes and bridges into a small area, thus creating an artistic effect of viewing big scenes in a small garden.

Today, Suzhou is heading towards modernization. Since the 1980s, Suzhou has sped up its economic and technological cooperation with foreign countries, and about 7,000 Chinese-foreign joint-venture enterprises have been set up. Suzhou has formed sister city relationships with 18 cities in Italy, Canada, Japan, the United States, France and other countries. In recent years, Suzhou has started to build its Industrial Garden with the cooperation of Singapore, and the project is going well. During this modernization process, people can still see the traditional lifestyles and folk customs in the city. Although tap water is now connected to every household, people still have the habit of walking down the stone steps behind their houses to fetch water from the river and doing their washing in the river. At sunset, small boats return to the ferry docks close to the houses, floating peacefully on the water amid the bustling life of the city. At small towns outside of the city, almost every household is engaged in sericulture, with mulberry trees planted in front of or behind their houses. Girls sit in wooden tubs floating on the ponds to gather waternuts. Fishermen row sampans on rivers and lakes, with cormorants perching on the sides of their boats.... Modern life is thus mixed with traditional and folk customs, enabling people to feel the pulse of this ancient and modern city in southeast China.



苏州是中国首批公布的 24 个历史文化名城之一，它的历史可上溯到六、七千年前。从考古发掘材料看，在新石器时代苏州地区已有人类劳动、生息、繁衍。苏州建城的历史已有 2500 多年。春秋时代(公元前 770-前 476 年)后期，诸侯国吴国崛起于中国东南部。公元前 514 年，吴王阖闾命大臣伍子胥在江南平原上筑起了一座周长约 24 公里、有水陆城门各 8 座的阖闾大城，这便是苏州最早的城邑。它不仅是当时吴国的都城，而且长期以来成为江南的经济文化中心。在漫长的岁月里，苏州城虽历经沧桑变化，但基本上保持了原来的城址、规模和格局，其中盘门水陆城门保存较为完整，是中国现存最典型的一座水陆城门。从苏州碑刻博物馆现存的宋代(公元 960-1279 年)古碑《平江府图》(宋代苏州称平江府)上，还可看到宋代苏州城内，南北向的河流有 6 条，东西向的有 14 条，桥梁 359 座，图中记载的许多街道、桥梁名称，现在仍继续沿用。

苏州的自然景观独具特色，是著名的旅游胜地。苏州东部多水，西部多山，山明水秀，景色如画。它的西部有灵岩山、天平山、虎丘山等，山色秀丽，虎丘山号称“吴中第一名胜”。在东侧平畴上，河渠如网，串联着众多的湖泊，较大的有阳澄湖、金鸡湖等。它的西南 15 公里处就是有名的太湖风景区。太湖近苏州一侧流出的湖水纵横交叉穿过城区流入长江。市民住宅都沿河而筑，两岸建有许多水踏步和小码头，一座座石拱桥横跨河上，沟通两岸。苏州自然景观的最大特色是，既有湖光山色、烟波浩渺的气势，又有江南水乡小桥流水的诗韵。意大利旅行家马可·波罗于公元 1275 年来到中国，在元朝任官 17 年，游踪几乎遍及整个中国。他回国后在所写的《马可·波罗行记》一书中，盛赞

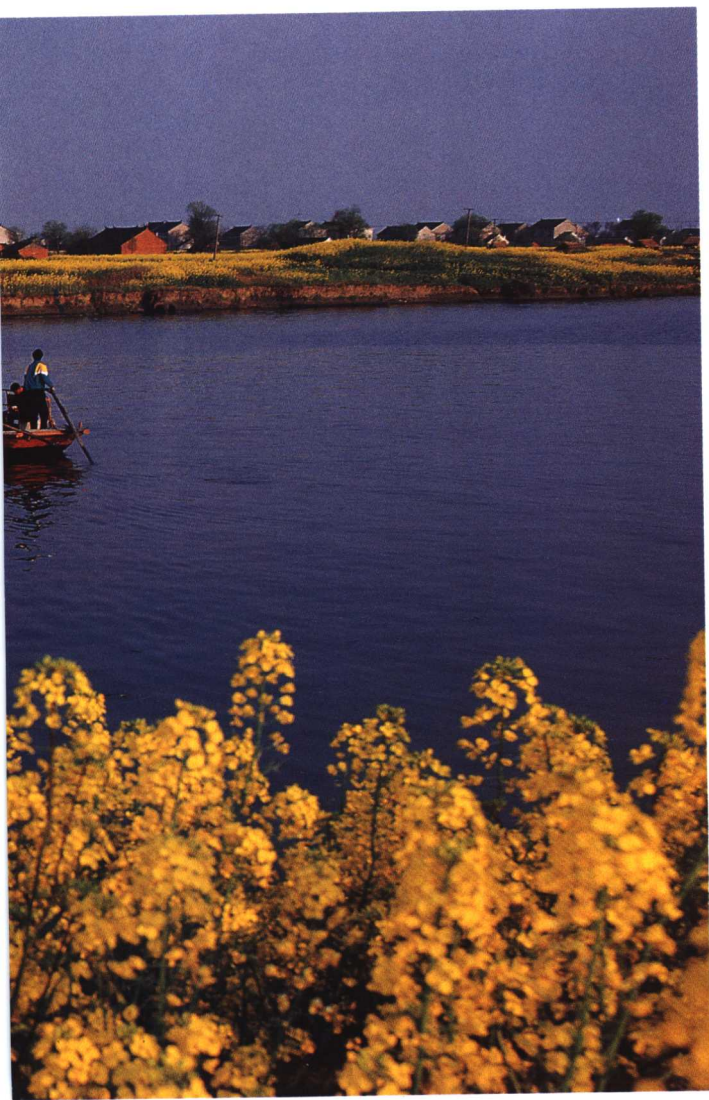
“苏州城漂亮得惊人”可以与他的故乡——世界著名的水上城市威尼斯媲美。

苏州地区气候适宜，土地肥沃，物产丰富，素称“江南鱼米之乡”。中世纪时，这里农业已很发达，手工业兴盛，商业繁荣。清乾隆时苏州人徐扬于公元1759年绘了一幅《姑苏繁华图卷》，画上可辨认的商店市招有二百多家，形象地反映了当时苏州的繁华景象。苏州众多的物产中，著名的有太湖银鱼、珍珠，阳澄湖大蟹，碧螺春茶叶，白沙枇杷等。苏州负有盛名的工艺品有苏绣、檀香扇、红木雕刻、玉雕、桃花坞木刻年画、红木器件等，琳琅满目，美不胜收。

如此名胜佳丽地，如此物产富饶地，从古代到近代吸引了无数达官贵人、文人墨客、富豪商贾在此居停驻足。许多人在苏州觅地营建园林别墅，或作为社会活动场所，或作怡娱暮年、悠然终老用。据苏州府志记载，明清两代（公元1368-1911年），苏州宅地园林竟多至一、二百家。因此苏州又赢得了“园林之城”的桂冠。遐迩闻名的园林有沧浪亭、狮子林、拙政园、留园、西园、网师园、怡园等，分别代表宋、元、明、清四个朝代的不同风格。苏州园林不同于中国北京、承德等地的皇家园林。皇家园林多于郊外利用优美的自然山水，布局营造，面积广大；中轴线上建筑金碧辉煌的宫殿群，给人以雍容华贵之感。苏州园林是私家园林，占地面积小，匠师们多采用缩景的手法，在有限的空间内点缀假山、树木，安排亭台楼阁、池塘小桥，给人以小中见大的艺术效果。

今天，苏州正在向现代化的都市迈进。80年代以来，对外经济技术合作的步伐逐年加快，现已建成“三资”企业近7000家。苏州还与意大利、加拿大、日本、美国、法国等国18个城市缔结为友好城市。近年来，苏州与新加坡合作开发“工业园区”，工程正在进行中。这些，都可以看到它昂首阔步的雄姿。在这同时，人们还是可以捕捉到一些古朴民情的镜头。尽管有了自来水，居民们还是习惯地走下屋后台阶，在河中汲水、浣洗；当夕阳西下水映霞光之际，家家小舟悠然归来，泊于房前，在城市的喧闹声中映衬着静谧和谐的气氛；在城郊、在小镇上，还可看到家家种桑、户户养蚕的景象；姑娘们坐在木盆里在池塘里采摘菱角；渔夫们驾一叶扁舟荡漾于河湖港汊间，小舟两旁排列着待命的鱼鹰……现代化的生活气息与古朴的民情民风相映成趣，人们可以从中感触到苏州历史跳动的脉息。





Suzhou is located to the south of the Yangtze River and to the east of Taihu Lake. Outside of the city are Yangcheng, Chenghu, Jinji and Dushu lakes, and the Loujiang, Wusong and Dongjiang rivers, which connect with the Yangtze River. Suzhou has a network of waterways, so that the rural area people often use boats rather than vehicles.

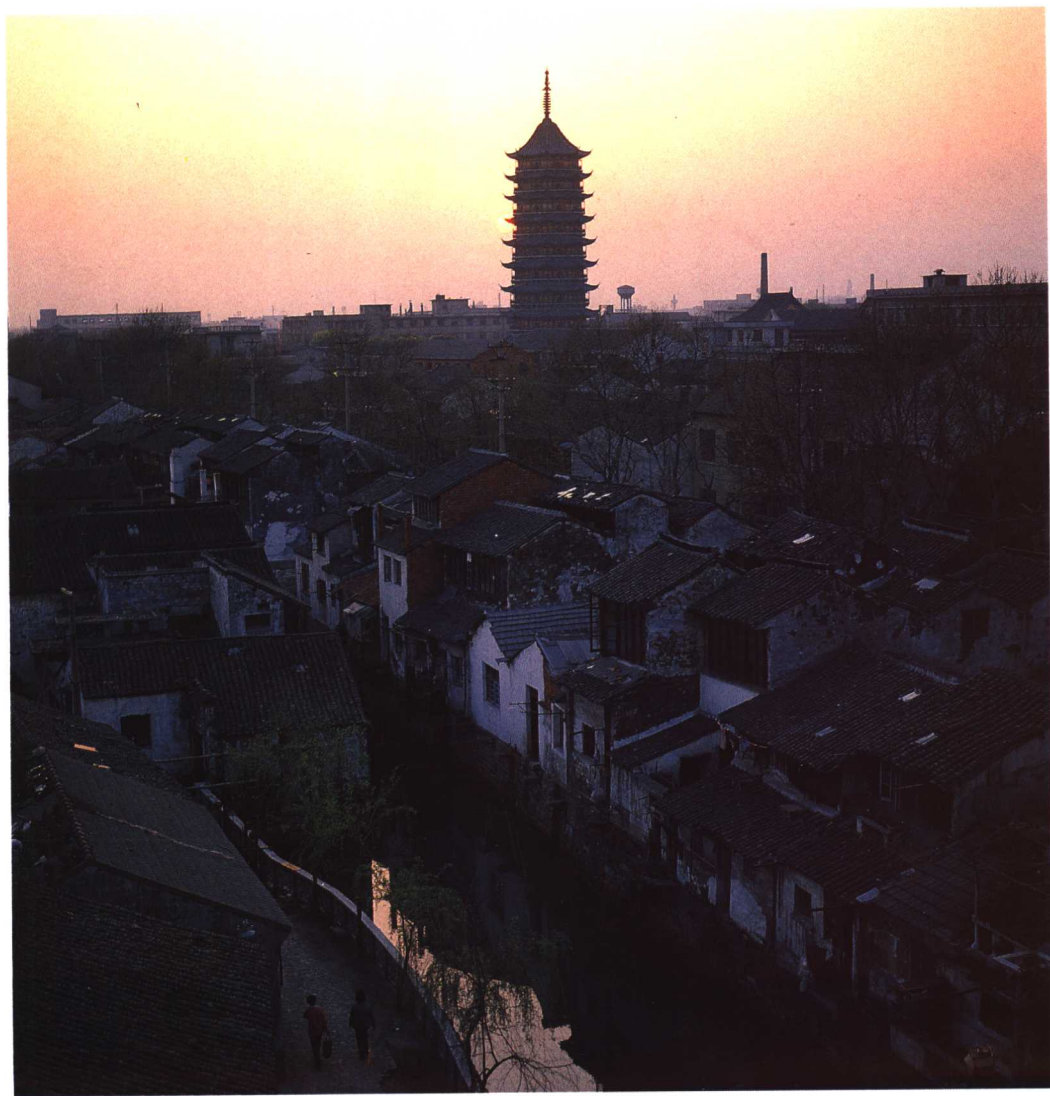
苏州北临长江，西滨太湖，城外尚有阳澄湖、澄湖、金鸡湖、独墅湖，以及与太湖相通的娄江、吴淞江、东江，河湖港汊如网，在农村人们出行常以舟代车。





In the city, waterways run parallel to the streets, and residential houses are built along them. In front of the houses are streets busy with traffic, and behind them are rivers with boats of all kinds.

苏州城内水道与陆衢并行，民宅建于滨河街道的一侧，往往门前是人行车驰的街市，后窗临行舟的水巷。





◁ Today there are many modern buildings in Suzhou, but you can still see crisscrossed rivers, which are spanned by bridges, and the shadows of ancient pagodas in the water. The city thus keeps its ancient flavor.

今日苏州尽管不乏现代化建筑,但是市区内仍然是水巷纵横,举目见桥,古塔映空,保持着水乡古城的风貌。

The State of Wu built eight gates in its city walls 2,500 years ago. The picture shows Panmen Gate, a land-and-water gate, at the south-west corner of the city walls, which is well preserved.

2500年前,吴国建城时曾在四面城垣上辟建了八座水陆城门,图为西南面的盘门水陆城门,至今仍保持着当年的格局。

Suzhou has many ancient pagodas. Cloud Rock Temple Pagoda (*Yunyansita*) on Tiger Hill (*Huqiushan*), the symbol of Suzhou, was built in 961. It is a 47.7-meter-high brick pagoda in imitation of a wooden structure. Because of the sinking of its base, the pagoda slants a bit to one side like the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy. During its renovation in 1956, some precious relics were found in the pagoda such as a box of Buddhist scriptures, embroideries and bronze Buddhist images.

苏州多古塔,被视为苏州城标志的虎丘云岩寺塔,建成于公元961年,高47.7米,是一座仿木结构楼阁式砖塔。由于地基松动,塔身倾斜,如同意大利比萨斜塔。1956年整修时,在塔内发现了经箱、刺绣、铜佛等一批珍贵文物。





Twin Pagodas (*Shuangta*), constructed in 982, sits in downtown of Suzhou. The two pagodas are in the same style — seven-layered, octagonal brick pagodas in imitation of a wooden structure. At sunset, the Twin Pagodas look extremely charming.

座落在市区内的双塔,建于公元 982 年。两塔形式相同,均为七层八角仿木楼阁式砖塔。在夕照下,双塔比肩而立,秀美挺拔。