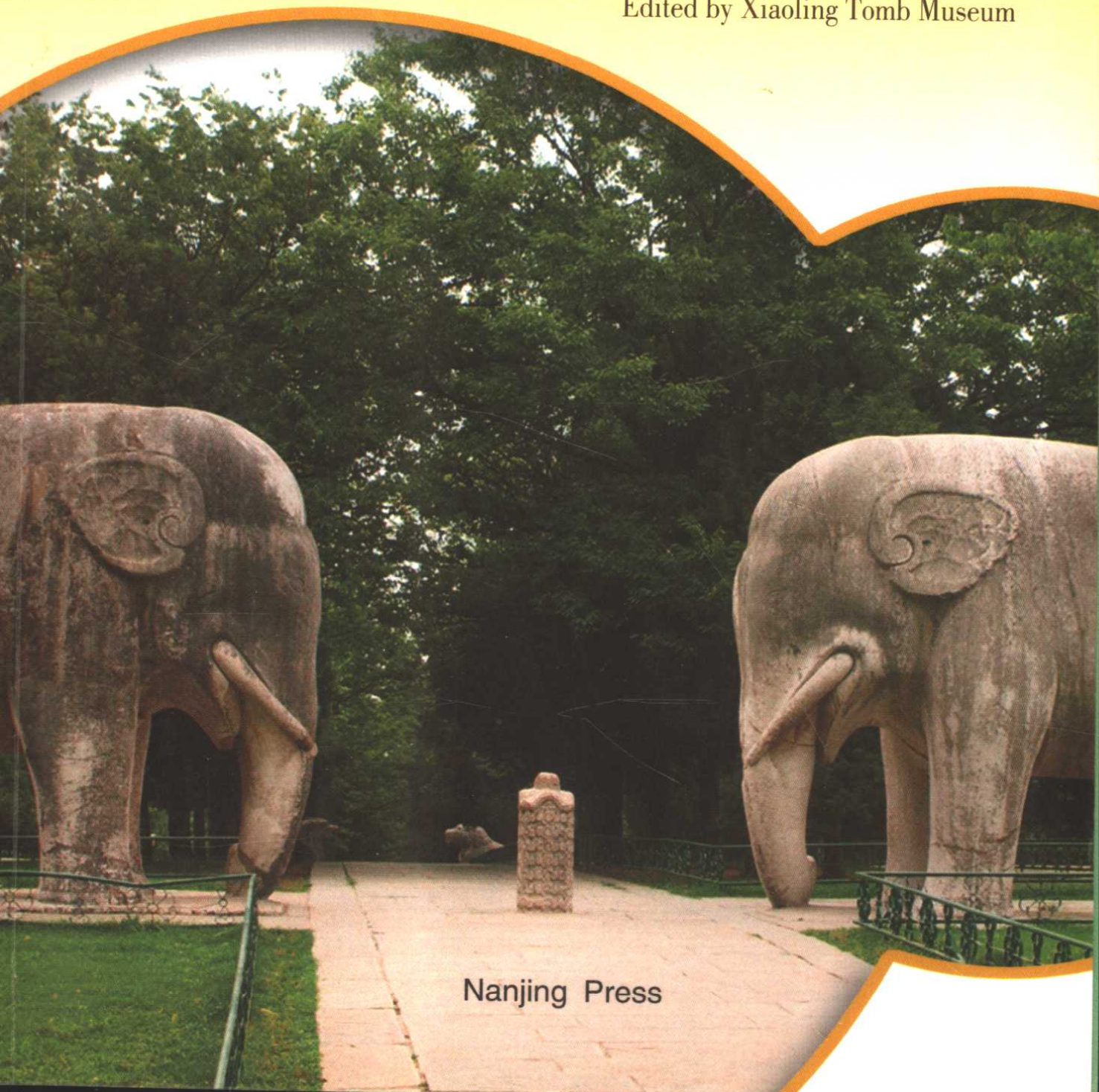




World Cultural Heritage

DIY Tour of the Xiaoling Tomb of the Ming Dynasty

Edited by Xiaoling Tomb Museum



Nanjing Press

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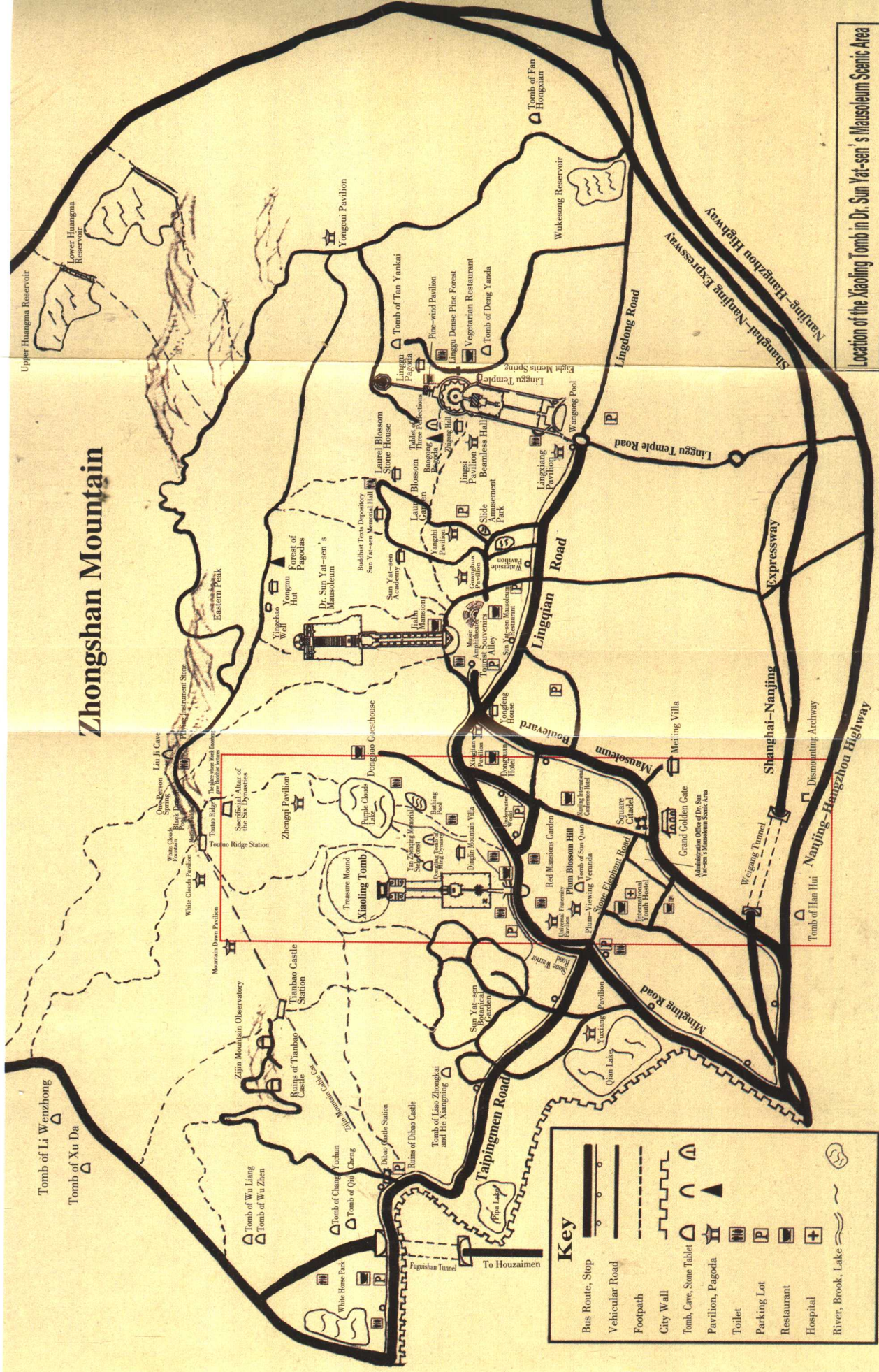
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LOCATION OF THE XIAOLING TOMB OF THE MING DYNASTY IN NANJING CITY



Zhongshan Mountain



Location of the Xiaoling Tomb in Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum Scenic Area



Preface

The Xiaoling Tomb is the burial place of Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398), the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), and his wife Empress Ma. It is situated below the Dulong (Single-Dragon) Mound at the southern foot of the Zhongshan Mountain (also named Zijin Mountain) in the eastern part of Nanjing. As one of the largest imperial tombs existent in China, it became a major historic and cultural site under state protection in 1961. On July 3, 2003, the 27th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee approved to accept it into the World Heritage List as an associated site of “the imperial tombs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties”.



A Portrait of Zhu Yuanzhang

In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang ascended the throne at Yingtian (today's Nanjing), changed the dynasty title into Ming, and began his reign under the title of Hong Wu. Construction of the Xiaoling Tomb was started in the 14th year of the reign of Emperor Hong Wu (1381). Empress Ma died in the following year and was soon buried into the underground palace. Since she was conferred the posthumous title Xiaoci (meaning ‘filial and kind’), Zhu Yuanzhang named the tomb Xiaoling (‘Filial Tomb’). In the 31st year of the reign of Emperor Hong Wu (1398), Zhu Yuanzhang died of illness and was buried here. The whole project lasted for as long as 32 years

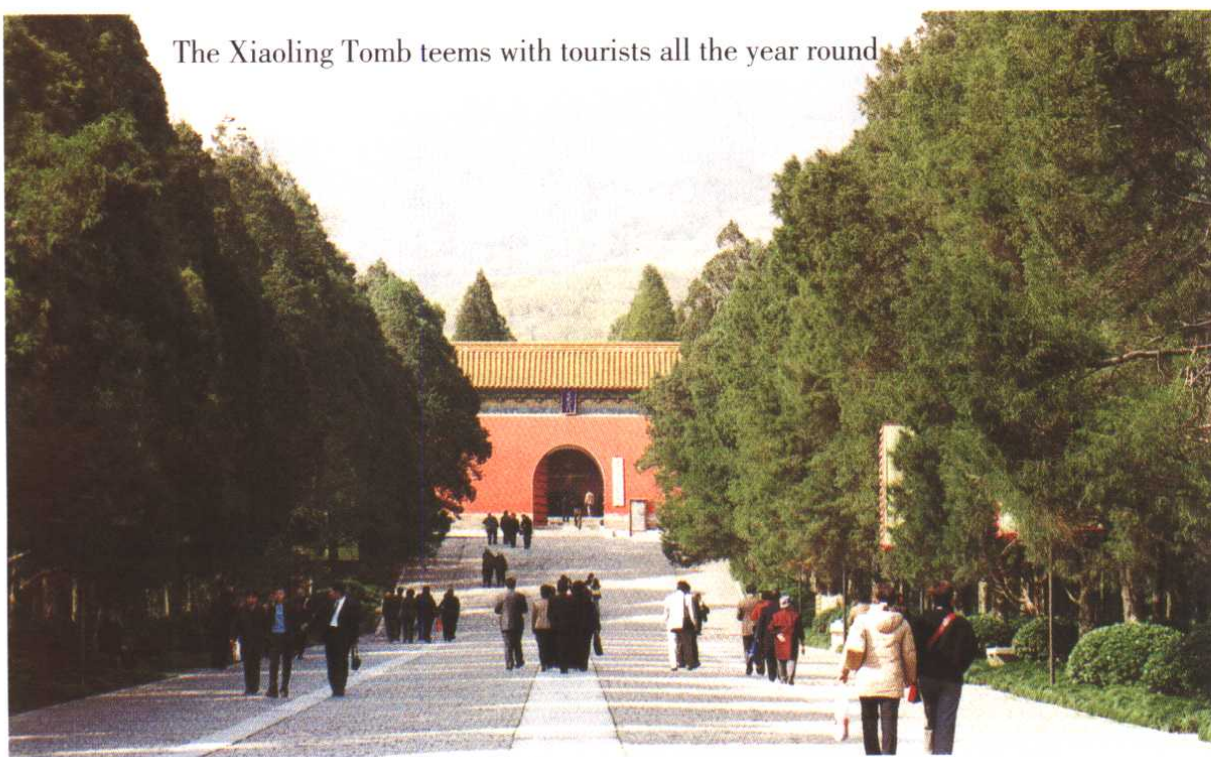
until “the Tablet of Great Merits of the Xiaoling Tomb of the Great Ming Dynasty” was erected in 1413. Over 600 years have passed since the tomb was completed. Although most of the wooden structure has been destroyed, all the remaining buildings are perfectly preserved in their original sites and the natural landscapes around the cultural relics are not spoiled. They are good enough to demonstrate the tomb’s unique design, system and layout, construction scale and artistic achievements.

The Xiaoling Tomb is divided into four parts: 1) the introductory section from the Dismounting Archway to the Grand Golden Gate; 2) the Grand Golden Gate and Tablet Tower section; 3) the Sacred Avenue section; 4) the main buildings in the tomb palace section. Each section has different functions but all are subject to the overall design. Furthermore, each section is separated by water and connected with bridges, thus successfully settle the problem of flood control for such an enormous architectural system in South China, which is abundant in water. The design embodies the individuality and creativity of the imperial tomb as an architectural masterpiece in the lower Yangtze River region.

Around the Xiaoling Tomb there is the Dongling Tomb of the Ming Dynasty and the tombs of meritorious ministers of the Ming Dynasty. They are part of the Xiaoling Tomb architectural system.

Now let’s enter the Xiaoling Tomb complex and enjoy its historic elegance.

The Xiaoling Tomb teems with tourists all the year round



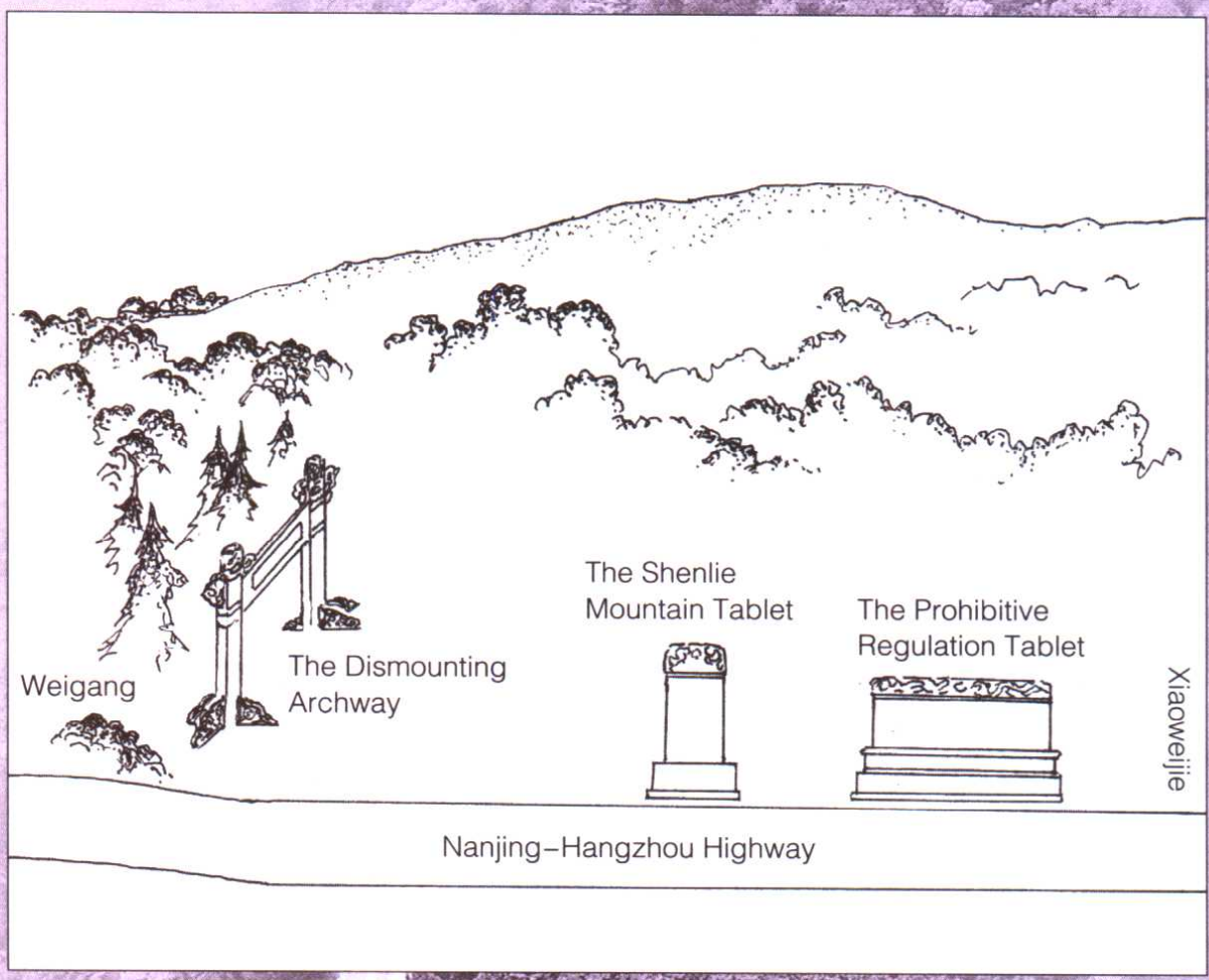


A Bird's-eye view of the Xiaoling Tomb

The Introductory Section

The introductory section is about 750 meters long, starting from the Dismounting Archway to the Grand Golden Gate. Historical remains in this section include the Dismounting Archway, the Shenlie Mountain Tablet, the Prohibitive Regulation Tablet, ruins of the Red Gate and King Gate, and Xiaoling Wei (Garrison), an affiliated organ of the tomb. The sacred path between the Dismounting Archway and the Grand Golden Gate has long been unable to be traced.

DIY Tour of the Xiaoling Tomb of the Ming Dynasty



The Dismounting Archway stands north of the Nanjing–Hangzhou Highway outside the Zhongshan Gate and faces Nanjing Agricultural University across the road. As a symbolic building placed at the entrance of the Xiaoling Tomb, it is a one–gate archway with two carved stone pillars rising up high into the sky. The archway got its name from the six characters “all officials shall dismount” inscribed at top.



The Dismounting Archway



In the early Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang issued a decree that those who passed by or entered the Xiaoling Tomb had to dismount 100 steps away from the archway and walk into the tomb area, otherwise they would be punished for disrespect. The archway collapsed in 1949 and what we see now was renovated in 1984.

The Ming Dynasty deployed a military organ—Xiaoling Garrison, near the Dismounting Archway to safeguard the Xiaoling Tomb. According to the army establishment of the Ming Dynasty, each garrison was composed of 5 600 soldiers, and was subordinated to the Military Command of the Capital Garrison and subjected to the control of the Chief Military Commission of the Capital Army. It mainly took charge of protection and management of affairs external to the Xiaoling Tomb, which was in coordination with the Supervision of the Celestial Palace, an organ set up for internal management. The Xiaoling Garrison was set up in the 31st year of the reign of Emperor Hong Wu (1398), and



The Shenlie Mountain Tablet

maintained sufficient forces, salaries and rations until the reign of Emperor Chong Zhen (1628–1644). Official posts in the Xiaoling Garrison could be inherited; even an ordinary soldier could be substituted by his descendants after death. Today, descendants of some janitors of the Ming Dynasty still reside in Zhongshan Mountain Scenic Area. However, the ruins of the Xiaoling Garrison disappeared long ago.

The Shenlie Mountain Tablet stands 36 meters east to the Dismounting Archway. In the 10th year of the reign of Emperor Jia Jing (1531), the emperor renamed Zhongshan Mountain as Shenlie Mountain and erected this marker tablet. It used to be protected by a square pavilion, but only four stone



The Prohibitive Regulation Tablet



plinths survive nowadays. Small cracks have appeared on the tablet due to erosion and the inscription has become indistinct.

The Prohibitive Regulation Tablet stands 17 meters east to the Shenlie Mountain Tablet. When Chongzhen ascended the throne towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, the political situation in the country was almost out of control. After discussion with his ministers, the emperor believed that it was because the Xiaoling Tomb had fallen into disrepair and this had shaken the dynasty's rule. Therefore, he issued a decree to have a tablet erected at the Xiaoling Tomb in 1641 inscribed with provisions on prohibiting vandalism of the tomb and on matters needing attention when paying homage here. The pattern of two dragons snapping at a pearl at the tablet head looks still exquisite after 400 years.

The Grand Golden Gate and Tablet Tower Section

Building relics in this 100-meter-long section mainly include the Grand Golden Gate and the Tablet Tower.

DIY Tour of the Xiaoling
Tomb of the Ming Dynasty

