

## A First-Timer's Guide to Shenyang, China

Shenyang, the biggest city in northeast China, is largely off the radar of the typical tourist in favor of glitzier cities like Beijing, Shanghai, or Hong Kong. But that's a mistake: this provincial capital packs a ton of history and tradition, with plenty of museums and UNESCO heritage sites to occupy your days and a good selection of restaurants and bars for your nights. In more recent history, the city was the site of some of the 2008 Olympic soccer matches, and because of its location and transportation options, it can be a key stopover point on your way to visit the rest of northern China.



### Logistics

As with the rest of China, there are certain logistics to your travel that you'll want to figure out ahead of time. Coming from most countries, you'll need a visa for stays longer than three days, even if you're there just for touristic purposes. If you plan to work in Shenyang, you'll want to apply for your work visa ahead of time, rather than just showing up in the country and starting to work—recently, China has become very strict about this, and if you're caught, you could get banned from ever legally working in the country!

Another thing to keep in mind is regards to technology. The Chinese government blocks many websites from public use, including Facebook and any Google site (including Google Search, Gmail, Google Drive, and more!). If you're a bit sneaky, you can get around this by setting up a VPN on your computer or tablet, but you'll probably want to do that prior to entering the country.

### Getting Around the City

Certain parts of the city—especially the older areas, where many of the tourist attractions are—are easy enough to get around in by foot. To go further afield or out to the train stations, you may want to check out the metro and bus systems. There are [two metro lines](#) which run perpendicularly. If you plan to take the bus, you'll want to make sure you have a good map (check at the airport or train stations) since most of the signage is exclusively in Chinese.



### Historical Sites

If you're interested in the history of Shenyang or of China as a whole, there are a couple important sites for you to check out here. The first of these is the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century **Mukden Palace**. There are only two imperial palaces remaining today: this one in Shenyang and the one in Beijing. The palace remains in excellent shape to this day and is in many ways more ornate than the palace in Beijing. Visit on a Saturday during the summer

and you'll have the opportunity to see the Imperial procession.

Of related note are the Qing Dynasty tombs, **Fuling** and **Zhaoling**, where the first and second emperors of this dynasty were interred. Obviously these are very special sites, especially since there are only three imperial tombs north of the Great Wall.

### Museums

Of course, a city with so much heritage is home to some excellent museums as well. For a general look at the history of the city and the area, check out the **Liaoning Provincial Museum** or the **Xinle Site Museum**. Both have plenty of archaeological relics that will keep you enthralled for hours. Another interesting museum—albeit with a slightly biased version of history—is the **9.18 Memorial Museum** which will tell you the history of a 1931 railway bombing near Shenyang. The railway was run by the Japanese, who blamed the Chinese for the incident and promptly invaded and took over much of northeastern part of the country.

If transportation is your thing, you'll want to be sure and check out the **Steam Locomotive Museum**, the largest such museum in China, and the **Shen-air Museum**, which will tell you all about the history of China's military and civilian aircrafts, missile development, and spacecrafts.

### Statues

In Shenyang, you'll find the largest **statue of Mao Zedong** in all of China. The square around the statue is popular with locals as a place to relax or meet friends—so it's a great place to people-watch! Also visit the Buddhist complex of **Huang Simiao**, which dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is fronted by large black statues depicting each of the Qing Dynasty emperors.



For such a commonly-overlooked city, Shenyang certainly packs a punch! History buffs and those seeking out information about Chinese history and culture, this is definitely the city for you. Complete with palaces, tombs, museums, and more, you'll find no shortage of things to do during your time there. Although a bit of a haul from Beijing, this city is definitely worth a visit.