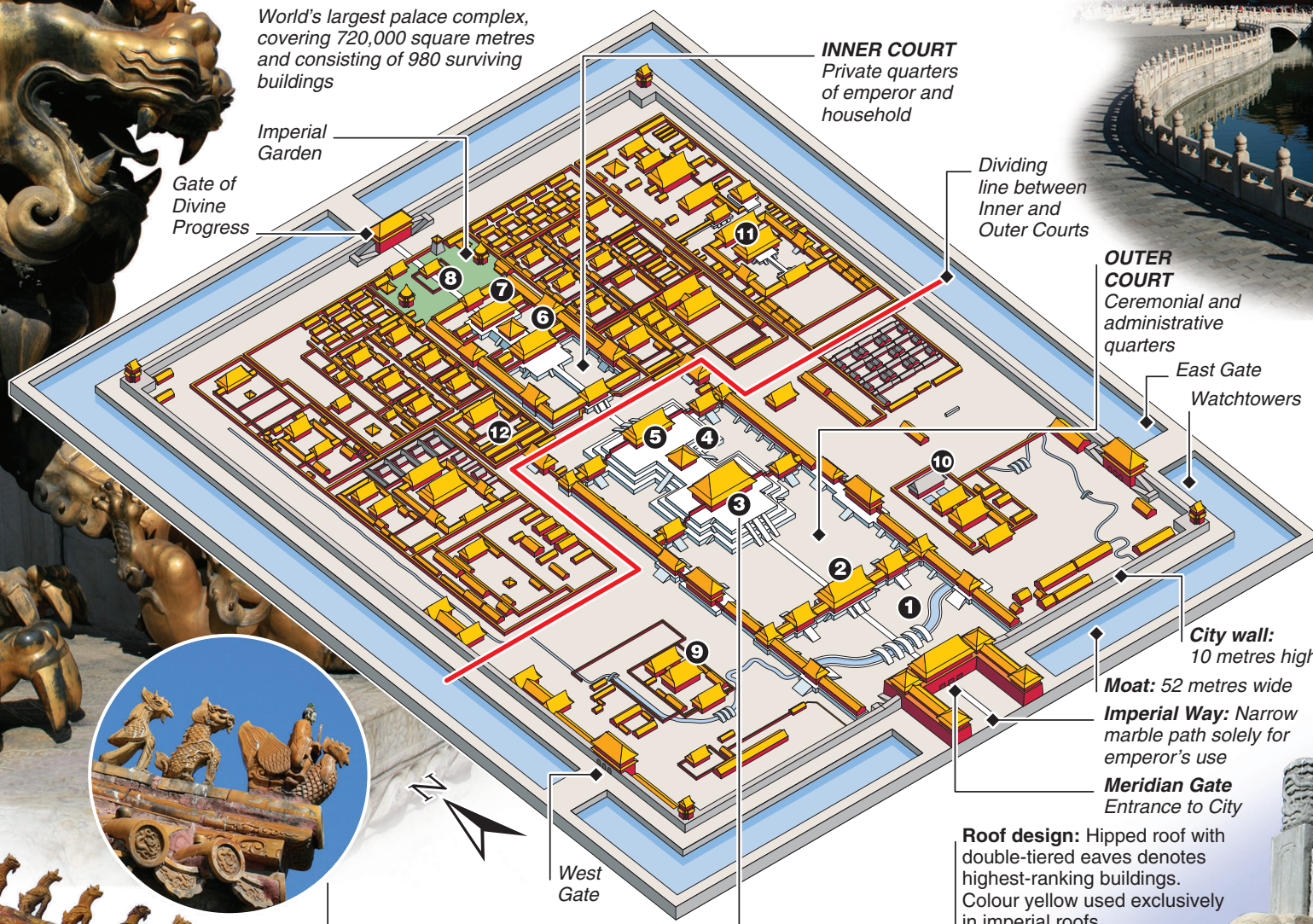


# Inside China's Forbidden City

The Forbidden City, so-named because commoners were forbidden to enter inside its walls, was home to 24 emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties for almost five centuries. From its overall layout to the smallest detail, the design of this crimson and yellow maze – the imperial colours – symbolised the heavenly mandate of the emperor

World's largest palace complex, covering 720,000 square metres and consisting of 980 surviving buildings



## MAIN STRUCTURES

1. Golden River Bridges
2. Gate of Supreme Harmony
3. Hall of Supreme Harmony
4. Hall of Central Harmony
5. Hall of Preserving Harmony
6. Palace of Heavenly Purity
7. Palace of Earthly Tranquility
8. Hall of Imperial Peace
9. Hall of Military Eminence
10. Hall of Literary Glory
11. Palace of Tranquil Longevity
12. Hall of Mental Cultivation

**Roof design:** Hipped roof with double-tiered eaves denotes highest-ranking buildings. Colour yellow used exclusively in imperial roofs

## HALL OF SUPREME HARMONY

Ceremonial centre of imperial power, and largest surviving wooden structure in China

**Terraces:** Three marble tiers with balustrades featuring carved dragons and phoenixes – symbols of emperor and empress – drained through 1,100 dragon-headed gargoyles

**Bronze vats:** Once full of water for dousing fires, stand in front of hall

**Tortoise:** Bronze dragon-head tortoise symbolises longevity, strength and endurance

**Stone sundial:** Reflects emperor's role in proclaiming seasons

**Bronze tripod incense burners**

**Ceremonial ramps:** Part of Imperial Way, featuring elaborate and symbolic bas-relief carvings

**Dragon throne:** Gilded throne features sets of five and nine carved dragons – numbers symbolically connected to majesty of emperor

**Roof guardians:** Glazed ceramic beasts protect building against lightning. Number of statuettes represents status of building – in imperial times Hall of Supreme Harmony was only building in China to be allowed 10 statuettes, bracketed by a dragon and an immortal riding a hen

**Bronze Crane:** Symbol of longevity of reign and good fortune

MING DYNASTY (1368-1644)

QING DYNASTY (1644-1912)

1400

1406: **Yongle**, third Ming emperor, begins building Forbidden City as he moves capital from Nanjing to Beijing

1500



1644: Manchu invaders from north conquer China, starting Qing dynasty. Three great emperors, **Kangxi** (1661-1722), **Yongzheng** (1722-35), left, and **Qianlong** (1735-99), reinvent Beijing as centre of China's political and cultural life. Forbidden City restored

1600

1700



1861-1908: **Empress Dowager Cixi**, once a fifth-rank concubine, is de facto ruler for 47 years. Her resistance to change and inability to stand up to foreign powers heralds end of Qing Dynasty

1800



1912: Last emperor **Pu Yi** abdicates at age six as anti-imperial revolution paves way for Republic of China. In 1925 Forbidden City opens to public as Palace Museum

1900

1949: **Mao Tse-Tung** proclaims People's Republic of China

1987: Forbidden City named World Heritage site



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