

Forbidden City is 600 years old

Beijing's Forbidden City, so-named because commoners were forbidden to enter, was home to 24 emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties for five centuries, and has since served as a public museum. All aspects of the design, in the imperial colours of yellow and crimson, were intended to project the pre-eminence of the emperor

World's largest palace complex, covering 720,000 square metres with 980 surviving buildings

INNER COURT
Private quarters of emperor and household

Dividing line between Inner and Outer Courts

OUTER COURT
Ceremonial and administrative quarters

East Gate
Watchtowers

100m
325ft

City wall: 10 metres high

Moat: 52 metres wide

Imperial Way: Narrow marble path solely for emperor's use

Meridian Gate
Entrance to City

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, surround hall

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

Stone sundial: Reflects role of emperor in proclaiming seasons

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

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

Bronze tripod incense burners

MING DYNASTY (1368-1644)

QING DYNASTY (1644-1912)

1400s

1500s

1600s

1700s

1800s

1900s

2000s

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



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



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



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

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



2020: Forbidden City, named World Heritage site in 1987, marks its 600-year anniversary