

# Temple of Heaven Park in Beijing

When you enter the Temple of Heaven site, the first thing you notice is the space. This was designed to be an open and spacious enclosure, with the central temples surrounded by open land and trees, enhancing the exclusiveness of the location. Many of the trees here are several hundred years old. Much of the area was planted with cypress trees, with the deep green color traditionally symbolizing respect. Such trees are often found at temple, altar, and mausoleum sites in China. It is claimed there are some 20,000 such trees in the Temple of Heaven grounds; 3,600 of them are more than 100 years old, and the oldest ones close to the main altars date back to the Jin dynasty, being some 800 years old. The landscaping, flower gardens, and mown grass have been added in more modern times. Much of the area is now used as parkland, forming one of the largest public parks in Beijing. You can see many people here exercising, practising *tai chi* or dance routines, or just walking and chatting. With its location now in a busy residential suburb of the city, this has become a popular area. It is particularly active with local residents early in the morning and later in the afternoon; it is well worth lingering here after your temple visit to enjoy some of this relaxed atmosphere. People will gather to sing, play instruments, or perhaps challenge each other to games of chess. It is a magnificent setting for relaxation with the temple buildings in the background.

From 'The Beijing Tour Guide', [www.wanderstories.com](http://www.wanderstories.com).

