



Kunming is known fondly to its two million inhabitants as the City of Eternal Spring. It is just north of the Tropic of Cancer and sits on a plateau 2000 meters above sea-level. To get a feel of the city, it's necessary to travel by bus, bicycle or on foot. Walking is a pleasure in this city. Wide footpaths under tall, shady trees are well planned for pedestrians, while the twisting backlanes present a more traditional aspect of life in a modern city. The combination of hilltribe dresses, Mao suits and western fashions worn by the locals give the city a special feel, as if it has one foot in the past and the other in the future. This feeling is reinforced by the daily activities people are engaged in -- from selling coal from a horse-drawn cart to offering computer tuition on the street.

By 7 a.m. each morning, Green Lake Park, along with many other areas around the city, is full of people performing tai chi, the ancient and graceful martial art which promotes mental and physical health. As the day progresses, children paddle boats on the lake, old men and women play mahjong and young couples sit dreamy-eyed on beaches by the water. In various corners of the park, groups of people with weather-beaten faces, play Chinese musical instruments and sing folk songs and dance, just celebrating the joy of life. Outside, the park, vendors sell fresh pineapple and soft drinks, while masseurs offer to ease aches and pains for a small fee.

There are also several other favorite hangouts in this pleasant city, such as the zoo, which has a wide variety of animals, and "The Square", an area of fountains, flowerbeds and benches in the heart of town, where there is always something happening, whether it be kite-flying, or a schoolchildren's parade. Night life is picking up as the people grow more affluent and there are several popular bars and karaoke bars are mushrooming. Many of the hotels have discotheques and guests can enjoy good food while watching traditional songs and dances performed by Sani girls.

There are several other attractions that lie within easy reach of the city, such as the National Minorities Park at Haigeng, on the banks of Lake Dianchi 15 km southeast of the city. The lake, also called the Kunming Lake, is protected by Jinma Mountain to the east and Biji Mountain to the west. A series of pathways connects the traditional villages of the Dai, Bai, Wa, Yi and other ethnic tribes of Yunnan. The villages are populated by tribespeople who enact traditional dances for visitors. To the west and north from town lie Western Hills and the Bamboo Temple respectively. The route up Western Hills passes two wonderful temples, Huating and Taihua. It would be easy to spend hours just exploring the temple grounds, but the goal of most who go up the hill is the Dragon Gate.

A tunnel along the cliff leads to a fantastic view over Lake Dianchi and Kunming. The Bamboo Temple, on the other hand, is a fine example of an ancient temple with a quiet, respectful atmosphere. Rooms near the entrance are crowded with lifelike statues and the air is thick with incense. Probably, the most interesting day trip is to the Stone Forest, a wonderland of natural rockscapes weathered into all manner of shapes and sizes. The Stone Forest was formed during the Paleozoic Era. There are stone peaks, pillars, shoots, stalactites, stalagmites, corroded land surface, underground rivers and caves. Located 80 kilometers from the Stone Forest is the A'lu Cave which is also worth a visit. Here, there are rivers, stalactites, stalagmites, stone flowers, stone pillars and stone falls -- all in the cave.

The Qiongzhu Temple, located on the Yu'an Mountain in the northwest of Kunming, was the first temple through which the Chan sect of Buddhism was spread. The Heilong (Black Dragon Pool) is a scenic spot located on the Wulao Mountain in the northwestern suburbs of Kunming. The pool contains very clear water. Legend has it that there used to be 10 dragons here. As they often caused havoc to the villagers, Lu Dongbin, a Taoist master, caught nine of them and locked them in the Zhedong Tower. He ordered the 10th, a small black dragon, to contribute to the welfare of the local people. In honour of its contribution, the villagers decided to name the pool Heilong.

EXERCISES



1. Give **two** reasons why the writer recommends a walking tour of the city.

2. The writer describes Kunming as having '*one foot in the past and the other in the future*'.

- i. Mention an aspect of Kunming which shows it has "one foot in the past."
- ii. Mention an aspect of Kunming which shows it has "the other in the future."



3. According to the passage, what are two advantages of tai chi ?



4. Explain the meaning of the following phrases:
- weather-beaten faces
 - favorite hangouts

5. What may a tourist enjoy at the National Minorities Park ?



6. (a) Where is Western Hills located ?
(b) What is the main attraction of Western Hills ?