

# Tiananmen Square

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*For the 1989 protest, see [Tiananmen Square protests of 1989](#).*

**Tiananmen Square** (**Simplified Chinese**: 天安门广场; **Traditional Chinese**: 天安門廣場; **pinyin**: Tiān'ānmén Guǎngchǎng) is the large [plaza](#) near the center of [Beijing, China](#), named after the [Tiananmen](#) (literally, *Gate of Heavenly Peace*) which sits to its north, separating it from the [Forbidden City](#). It has great cultural significance as a symbol because it was the site of several key events in Chinese history (See below: [Events](#)). Outside of China, the square is widely known for the [Tiananmen Square protests of 1989](#).

The square is 880 [metres](#) south to north and 500 metres east to west, a total area of [440,000 square meters](#), which makes it the [largest open-urban square in the world](#).



Tiananmen Square as seen from the [Tian'an Gate](#)

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## History

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The [Tiananmen](#) was built in [1417](#) in the [Ming Dynasty](#). In 1699 (early [Qing Dynasty](#)), the Tiananmen was renovated and renamed to its present form. During the [Ming](#) and Qing eras, there was no public square at Tiananmen, and instead the area was filled with offices for imperial ministries. These were badly damaged during the [Boxer Rebellion](#) and the area was cleared to produce the beginning of Tiananmen Square.

Near the centre of today's square, close to the site of the [Mao Zedong Mausoleum](#), once stood one of the most important gates of Beijing. This gate was known as the "Great Ming Gate" ([大明门](#)) during the [Ming Dynasty](#), "Great Qing Gate" ([大清门](#)) during the [Qing Dynasty](#), and "[Gate of China](#)" ([中华门](#)) during the [Republic of China](#) era. Unlike the other gates in [Beijing](#), such as the [Tiananmen](#) and the [Qianmen](#), this was a purely ceremonial gateway, with three arches but no ramparts, similar in style to the ceremonial gateways found in the [Ming Dynasty Tombs](#). This gate had a special status as the "Gate of the Nation", as can be seen from its successive names. It normally remained closed, except when the Emperor passed through. Commoner traffic were diverted to two side gates at the western and eastern ends of today's square, respectively. Because of this diversion in traffic, a busy marketplace, called Chessgrid Streets ([棋盘街](#)) developed in

the small, fenced square to the south of this gate.

In the early 1950s, the Gate of China (as it was then known) was demolished along with the Chessgrid Streets to the south, completing the expansion of Tiananmen Square to (approximately) its current size.

## Features

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The Tian'anmen Square in Beijing

Enlarged in [1949](#) to the current size, its flatness is broken only by the 38 metre high [Monument to the People's Heroes](#) and the [Mausoleum of Mao Zedong](#). The square lies between two ancient, massive gates: the Tian'anmen to the north and the Zhengyangmen, better known as [Qianmen](#) ([Simplified Chinese](#): 前门; [Traditional Chinese](#): 前門; [pinyin](#): Qiánmén; literally "Front Gate") to the south. Along the west side of the Square is the [Great Hall of the People](#). Along the east side is the [National Museum of China](#). [Chang'an Avenue](#), which is used for parades, lies between the Tian'anmen and the Square. Trees line the east and west edges of the Square, but the square itself is open, with neither trees nor benches.

The Square is lit with huge lampposts which also sport video cameras. It is heavily monitored by uniformed and plain clothes policemen.

## Events

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Tiananmen Square has been the site of a number of political events such as the proclamation of the [People's Republic of China](#) by [Mao Zedong](#) in [October 1, 1949](#), for annual mass military displays on all subsequent National Days until October 1st 1959, plus the 1984 military parade for the 35th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 50th anniversary in 1999 plus for mass rallies during the [Cultural Revolution](#). It has also been the site of a number of protest movements, most notably the [May Fourth Movement](#) of [1919](#) for [science](#) and [democracy](#), [protests in 1976](#) after the death of [Zhou Enlai](#), and the [Tiananmen Square protests of 1989](#).

The protests of 1989 resulted in the killing of Chinese protestors in the streets to the west of the square and adjacent areas. Some Western reporters who were on the square during the unfolding events reported that they saw no one actually die *on the square itself*, though did see bloodied people but could not confirm whether they were either dead or injured ([Graham Earnshaw](#) and [Columbia Journal Review](#)). However, Chinese expatriates who left the country after the killings said that the total numbers of deaths ended up being in the thousands. This was a combination of the hundreds killed on the spot and the "miniature" purge that followed. As of June of 2006, the confirmed number of deaths that happened around that night is 186 according to professor [Ding Zilin](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

## Images from near and in the square



Railway station



Zhengyangmen gate



[Mausoleum of Mao Zedong](#)



Monument in front of Mao's Mausoleum on

## Tiananmen Square



Monument to the People's Heroes and the Great Hall of the People



Tiananmen gate to the Forbidden City with reviewing stands in front



Iconic image of the Tiananmen Square from the May Fourth movement of 1919



Overview of the Tiananmen Square

## See also

- May Fourth Movement
- April Fifth Movement
- Tiananmen Square protests of 1989

## References

- ↑ [Professor Ding ZiLin: the list of the dead](#)

## External links



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## [Tiananmen Square](#)

- [Tiananmen Square](#) 30 High Quality Photographs
- [Tiananmen Square in 360°](#)
- [National Museum of Chinese History](#)
- [Tiananmen Square Introduction and Pictures](#)
- [Satellite photo of Tianmen Square](#)
- [Arrests on June 4, 2006 Tiananmen Square Anniversary](#)

**Coordinates:** [39°54′12″N, 116°23′30″E](#)

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