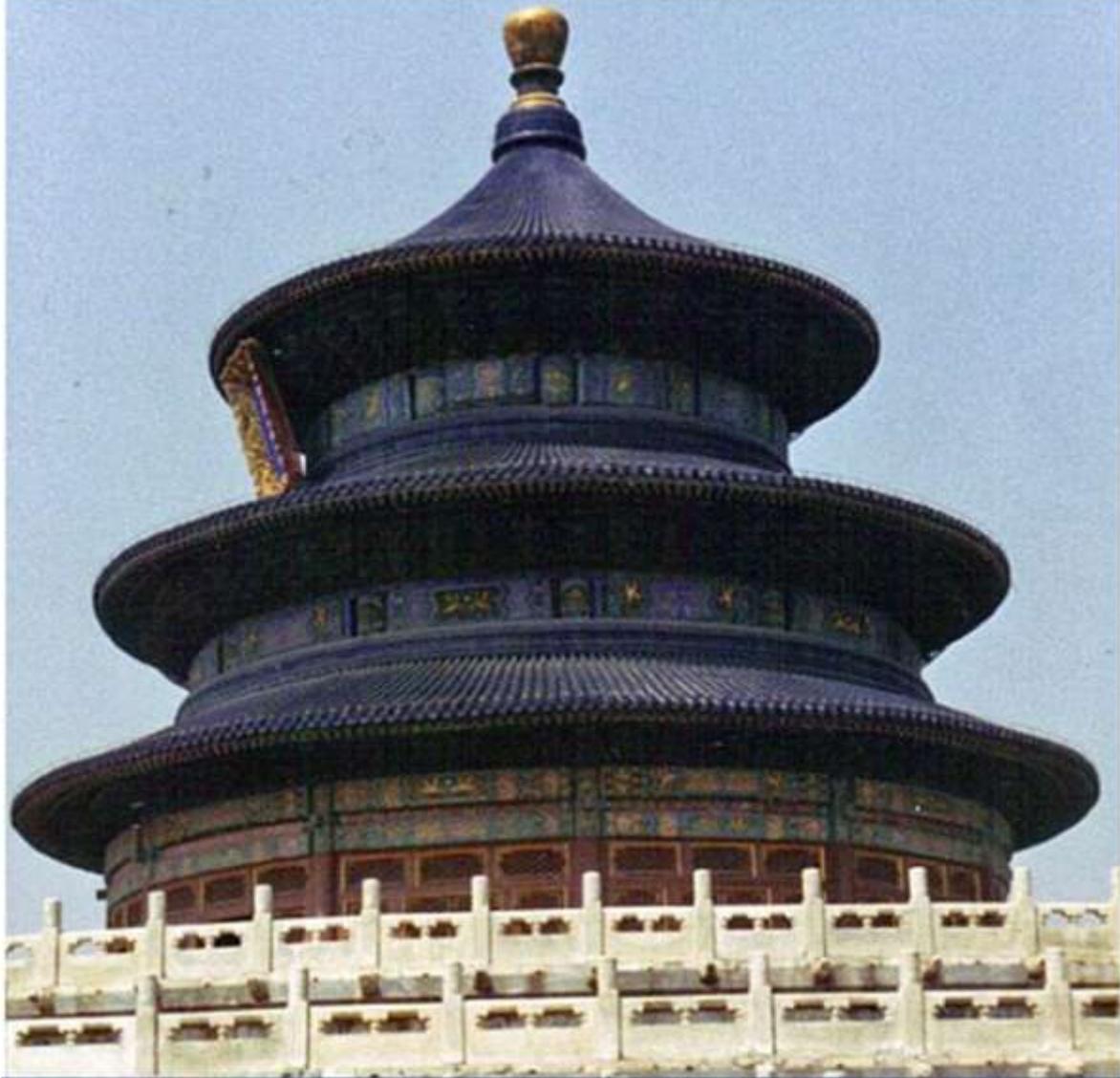


Beijing : Avoiding Crowds



VISUAL TRAVEL TOURS

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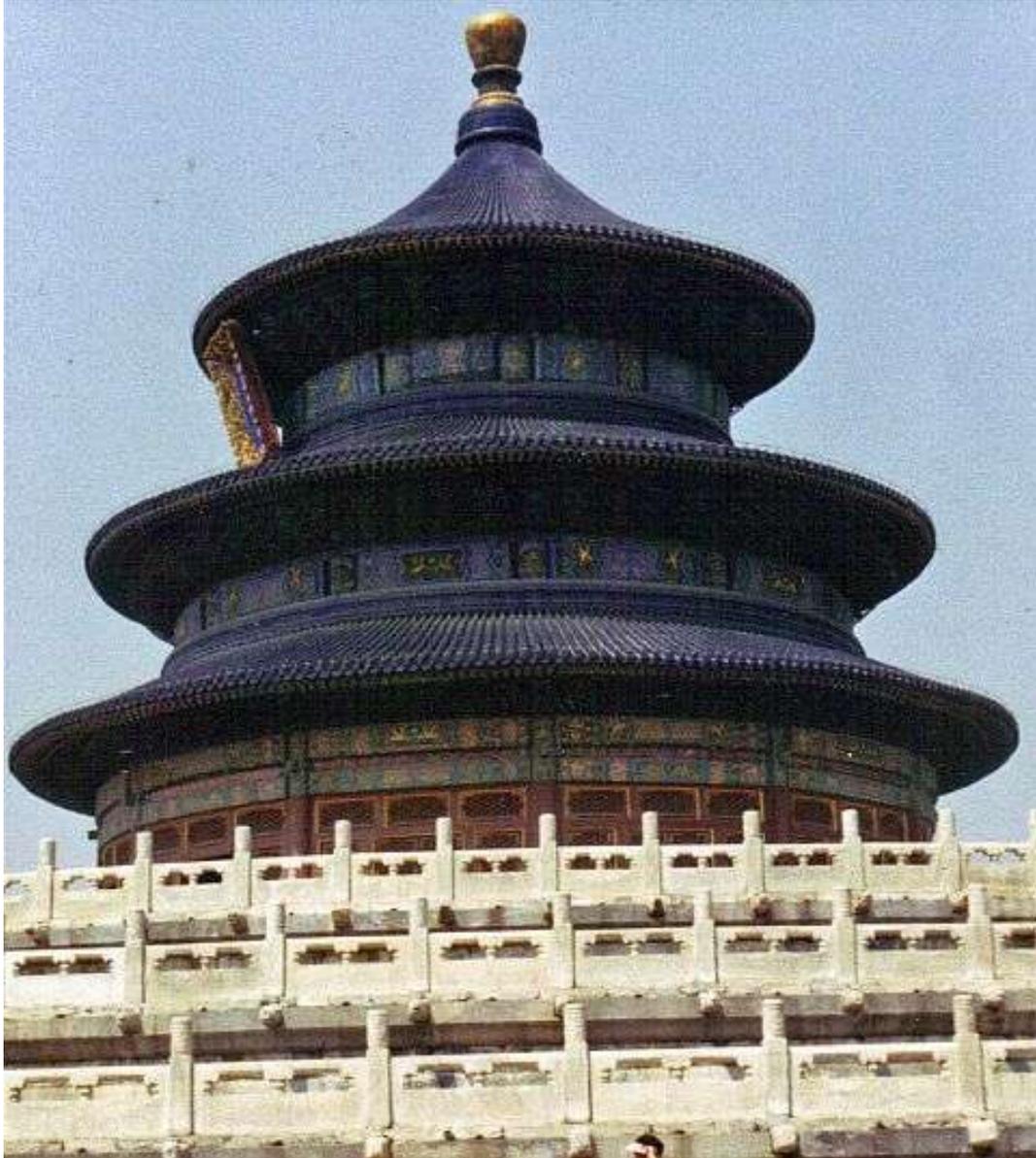
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Tour Summary

The most popular tourist attractions in Beijing can be very crowded, making your visit to the Chinese capital stressful. It's possible to escape some of the crowds by heading off the beaten path. The Temple of Heaven and Yonghegong are popular attractions, but they don't draw tourists like the Forbidden City. You can take a drive to the mountains to see Beijing's oldest temple, Tanzhesi. Or head out to scenic ShiDu, with its karst mountain formations: it's known as the Guilin of the north. Beijing is full of small parks and temples to enjoy, or you can chill out at a sidewalk café in Houhai or Sanlitun.

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Introduction

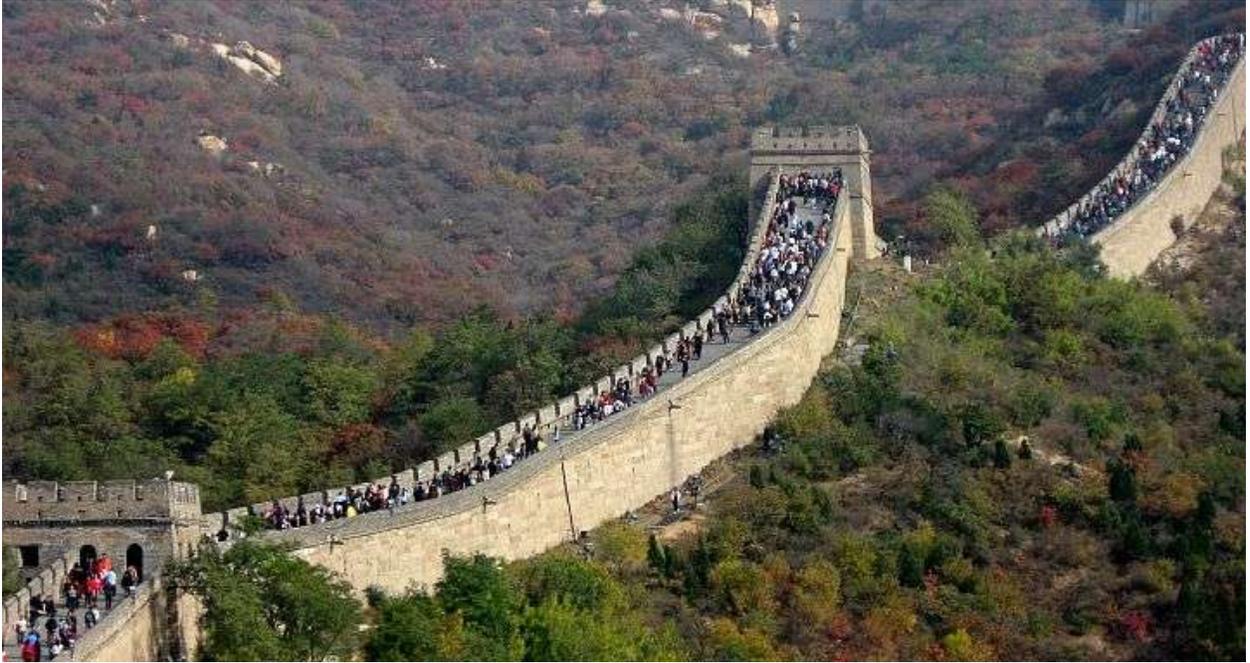




Beijing has a population of around 17 million, give or take a few hundred thousand people. There will be times during your visit that you feel they're all touring the Forbidden City at the same time you are.



There's no doubt about it that Beijing's most popular tourist attractions can get awfully crowded. Not just with foreign tourists but with the Chinese themselves who now have more money to spend on leisure activities. After awhile, the stress of fighting your way through the throngs begins to affect your enjoyment of the trip.



For independent travelers, especially, there was ways to avoid crowds much of the time. The trick lies in knowing when and where to go.



Don't go to the major attractions such as the Forbidden City, Great Wall and Summer Palace on weekends. People will be packed in like sardines then, with no room to breathe, let alone walk. If you're short, forget about seeing anything over this sea of people.



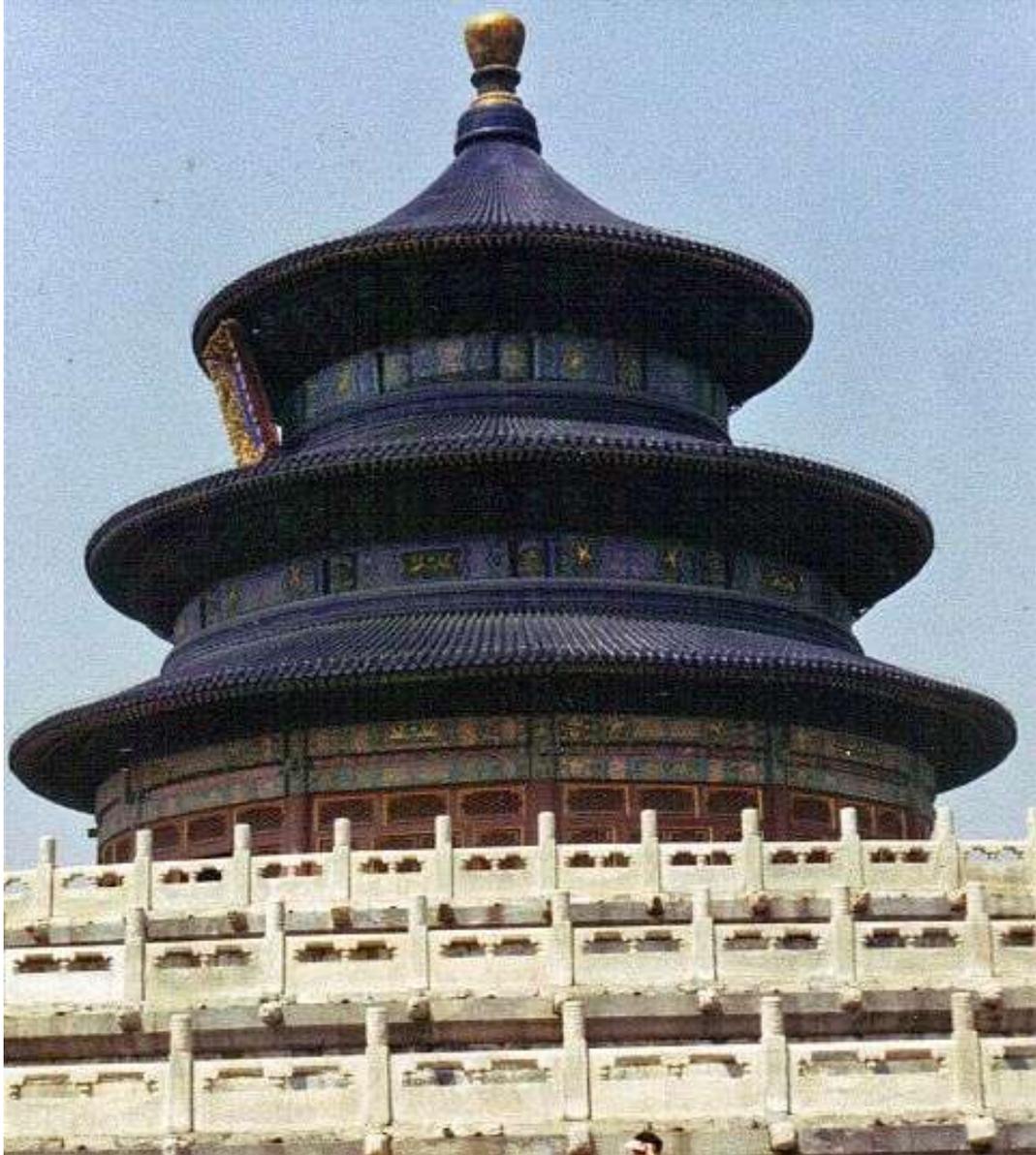
Weekends are a good time to visit off the beaten path attractions, walk around neighborhoods, or relax with a latte at a sidewalk café on the shores of Houhai Lake.



Tour groups generally visit the big three—Forbidden City, Great Wall, Summer Palace—in the morning. These places are going to be crowded no matter what time you go there. But there should be fewer people if you visit in the late morning or afternoon after the tour groups have been rushed through.



Time permitting, definitely take in some of the lesser known sites: Marco Polo Bridge, Tanzhe Temple, Soong Ching Ling House, to name a few.



The Yonghegong lama temple and Temple of Heaven are considered major sites in Beijing, but don't draw as big of crowds as the others.



Beijing has a lot of wonderful parks. Some are tiny, such as the one across from the *Guloudajie* subway station on Second Ring Road.



Others are really big, such as Beihai, Purple Bamboo Garden and YuYuantan. These are good places to chill out and watch the Chinese at play.



Gardeners should be able to pick up a few landscaping ideas while walking through the parks.



Walking through the remaining hutongs is also relaxing. It provides a glimpse into how Beijingers used to live 20 years ago.

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