



A panoramic view of Longchuan



The facade of the Hu Family Ancestral Hall



An interior view of the Hu Family Ancestral Hall



The Yishi Minister Arch

## The tale of Longchuan

Longchuan is a picturesque village in southwestern Anhui province. Nestled between Feng and Chaohu Mountains, the 1600-year-old village enjoys a pastoral setting that recalls an ancient Chinese landscape painting. Longchuan's rows of traditional Hui-style homes built along deep, narrow alleys complete the feeling of a China long forgotten.

One of the defining characteristics of Longchuan is its unique boat-shaped layout. In ancient China, boats were considered auspicious, symbolizing constant movement forward.

The name "Longchuan" – literally "Dragon Creek" – derives from the creek that beginning from Feng Mountain, flows through the village, to the Dengyuan River and finally empties into the

Xin'an River. Ancient inhabitants of the Longchuan area constructed a settlement along Longchuan Creek in order to have easy access to water, simplifying everyday life and travel. As the Longchuan Creek empties into the Dengyuan River, which is itself a tributary of the Xin'an River, for reasons of geography, Longchuan became a cradle of Hui culture – a civilization originating in southern Anhui – in the Xin'an River Valley.

1600 years ago, during the Eastern Jin dynasty, a high-ranking government official surnamed Hu led his extended family in a migration south from Shandong province in central eastern China to Longchuan. In addition to establishing his family's presence at Longchuan, Hu was also part of a team of officials directly serving the Jin emperor. As such, his descendants called him "Hu Yangong," equivalent to "Lord Yu Yan," in memoriam. "Gong" was a title of nobility given to esteemed scholar-officials

in ancient China.

The 1600-year-old Hu Family Ancestral Hall was constructed at the time of Longchuan Village's establishment in accordance with the principles of Chinese geomancy, or "feng shui," historically used in China to orient buildings. The Hall is situated on the Longchuan Creek's northern bank, which is highly favorable from a feng shui standpoint because it is surrounded by mountains and water. Indeed, to the south lies the Longxu Mountain Range, to the east the Dengyuan River and the Longchuan Village entrance to the west – between the feet of Chaohu and Feng Mountains. The main purpose of the Hu Family Ancestral Hall was to serve as a venue for extended family meetings and ancestor worship.

The auspicious location of the Hall chosen by Hu Yangong carries his expectation that future generations would flourish. Indeed, Hu Yangong hoped that his descendants would become senior

civil servants, equal in rank to imperial officials who had the right to meet the emperor with "chaohu" in hand - the term "chaohu" refers to a flat staff made of jade that senior-ranking officials in dynastic China would bring to their meetings with the emperor for the purpose of note-taking.

The architectural features and decoration of the Hu Family Ancestral Hall incorporate many ideas from ancient Chinese philosophy. For example, the 20 wooden doors on both sides of the main hall are notable for featuring the eminent Ming dynasty artist Xu Wei's lotus-shaped carvings and flower, bird, insect and fish carvings. The presence of the disparate carvings together indicates that the Hu family's solidarity allows it to prosper and enjoy harmonious relations with the world. Indeed, the promotion of the idea of "harmony culture" originates from the Hu family's cultural tradition. Among the different carvings in the Hall, of

particular note are the lotus and crab wood carvings on the first door on the left side of the main hall. Pronounced together as one word, the individual words for "lotus" and "crab" in the Chinese language form a homophone for "harmony," which has been the Hu family's motto for nearly 400 years.

Although most Longchuan villagers are surnamed Hu, they rarely intermarried for health reasons. Long ago, they established a strict policy requiring that a newly-wedded couple must be removed five generations from each other's families to decrease the chances of health problems in their children. Because the villagers maintained this strict marriage policy, historically, the people of Longchuan Village are said to enjoy an excellent gene pool. Indeed, Longchuan Village has produced an unusually high number of great figures in Chinese history. At the same time, the Hu family has enjoyed great longevity. Thus far, there have been

48 generations of people surnamed Hu from Longchuan Village.

In the long history of the Hu clan, Hu Zongxian (1512-1565) of the 38th generation had a particularly distinguished record, both as a military officer and a senior government official. As a military officer during the reign of the eleventh Ming emperor Jiajing (1521-1567), Hu Zongxian led forces including the eminent military heroes Yu Dayou and Qi Jiguang – known for their prowess battling seaborne invaders – to drive invading Japanese pirates from China's eastern seaboard, and ultimately restored peace to the area. He later held offices as the Minister of National Defense and governor of Zhejiang and Fujian provinces. The Hu Family Ancestral Hall standing today exists because Hu raised funds from Longchuan residents to restore the building. Additionally, the Yishi Minister Arch erected in his honor and the Hu Zongxian Residence are among Longchuan's most important historical buildings.

Lying at the heart of Longchuan Village, the Yishi Minister Arch is a masterpiece of Hui-style architecture. In imperial China, this type of arch was erected as a means for the emperor to formally honor officials whose heroic deeds, scholarly achievements and upright governance brought great benefits to the nation and commend men and women who were exceptionally faithful in following the Confucian principles of loyalty, filial piety, chastity and righteousness. The vigorous calligraphy inscribed on the front, Yishi Shang Shu, and on the back, Yishi Gong Bao, are the works Wen Zhengming, an eminent Ming dynasty painter, calligrapher and scholar.

The Yishi Shang Shu inscription, meaning "ministers at different generations," refers to the great success of two members of the Hu family during the Ming dynasty. First, Hu Fu, a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations in the year of 1478, served as

Finance Minister during Emperor Xianzong's reign (1454-1522). Then, Hu Zongxian, also a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations in the year of 1538, became Minister of National Defense during the reign of Emperor Jiajing. Hu Fu later was entitled to the high honorary ranking Taizi Shaobao and Hu Zongxian was granted the superior ranking of Taizi Taibao. These rankings entailed that both Hu Fu and Hu Zongxian were responsible for the safety of the crown prince.

With its many colorful stories and figures, Longchuan stands out in Chinese history. Indeed, over the ages, the village's celebrated figures have made important contributions to Chinese thinking. In particular, the Hu family's solidarity and emphasis on cultivating peaceful, mutually beneficial relations with the outside world not only influenced their peers, but will have a lasting impact on Chinese thinking for generations to come.





## Hu Family Ancestral Hall

This ancient hall, which spans a total area of 1,564 square meters, was constructed 1,600 years ago. Since, it has undergone several renovations, first during the reign of Ming dynasty emperor Jiajing (1521-1567) and again in 1898 at the end of the Qing dynasty. The shrine is an ideal showcase for folk art, incorporating many characteristic decorative elements of Huizhou-style architecture, including brick, wood and stone carvings as well as colorful mosaics. The 600-plus woodcarvings are particularly exquisite, such that local residents named the shrine the "Museum of Woodcarving Art." Over the years, Chinese and foreign architecture scholars have praised the Hall's fine decorative features, particularly in light of its age. On January 13, 1988, the State Council declared the Hu Family Ancestral Hall a national relic and placed it under the protection of the state.



## Yishi Minister Arch

Lying at the heart of Longchuan Village, the Yishi Minister Arch, built in 1562, is a masterpiece of Hui-style stone carving. In imperial China, this type of arch was erected as a means for the emperor to formally honor virtuous officials, in this case Hu Fu, Finance Minister and Hu Zongxian, Minister of National Defense. While the Yishi Minister Arch is 400 years old, its engravings are extraordinarily exquisite and well-preserved. One of the most notable engravings, at the top of the arch, shows two dragons playing with a pearl, a metaphor suggesting that the two ministers have extraordinary talents. In the middle of the arch, there is an engraving celebrating Hu Zongxian's victory over invading pirates. On July 3, 1986, the arch was declared an important provincial-level relic and placed under state protection.



## Water Street

Along the Longchuan Creek lie rows of homes facing water with hills in back, which is typical of ancient Huizhou-style village complexes. The banks of the creek are a main thoroughfare for the Longchuan community and are known as "Water Street" among the locals.



## Hu Zongxian's Official Residence



Hu Zongxian (1512-1565), also known as Ruzhen or Meilin, was a celebrated military officer and senior government official. During the reign of Ming emperor Jiajing, he drove invading pirates from China's eastern seaboard and ultimately restored peace to the area. He later held offices as the Minister of National Defense and governor of Zhejiang and Fujian provinces. It is he who marked the Diaoyu Islands as part of Chinese territory for the first time.

## IF YOU GO

1. Highways in Jixi are well-developed and provide convenient access to the Longchuan Scenic Area, which is located just 12 kilometers away from the Jixi exit on the Jixi-Yellow Mountain Highway. Additionally, the Jixi-Yellow Mountain Highway, Anhui-Hangzhou Highway and Hefei-Tongling-Yellow Mountain Highway are interconnected.
2. The Jixi Train Station is a major regional hub, with direct service to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Fuzhou, Kunming, Xiamen, Nanchang, Yingtan, Qingdao, Nanjing and Hefei. By 2014, the Beijing-Fuzhou High-Speed Rail line will be launched with Jixi as one station along the line.
3. Huangshan Airport is the closest airport to Jixi and

can be directly accessed by highway in half an hour. A small international airport, it offers direct flights to major cities on the Chinese mainland including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xiamen and Hefei as well as to other destinations including Taiwan, Macau and South Korea. Jixi is located 351 kilometers away from the Hefei airport, which offers direct flights to Osaka, Japan.

4. The Jixi Bus Station, located in central northern Jixi County, offers shuttle bus service to the Longchuan Scenic Area at 20-minute intervals. Tickets cost 2 yuan each. The shuttle bus runs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

5. Entry tickets to the Longchuan Scenic Area cost 77 yuan each. The tickets provide access to all attractions in Longchuan. The Longchuan Scenic Area is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the spring and summer and 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. during the fall and winter. It is recommended to plan a minimum of 1 hour to see all of Longchuan's sites.

6. The former residence of Hu Shi, the eminent scholar and proponent of China's New Culture Movement, and the museum in memory of Hu Xueyuan, a prominent Qing Dynasty entrepreneur, are also located in Jixi County.

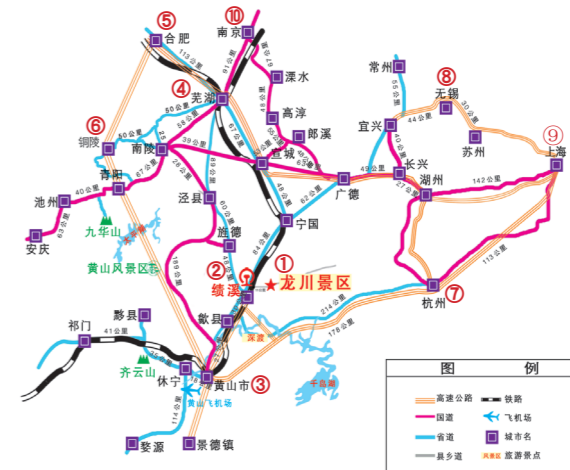
7. Recommended travel agencies:

### Huangshan Overseas Travel Service

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| ①. Longchuan | ⑥. Tongling |
| ②. Jixi      | ⑦. Hangzhou |
| ③. Huangshan | ⑧. Wuxi     |
| ④. Wuhu      | ⑨. Shanghai |
| ⑤. Hefei     | ⑩. Nanjing  |



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