

**XINGTAI MUSEUM (HEBEI PROVINCE, CHINA): MUSEUM MANAGEMENT,
STATE FINANCING SYSTEM AND MODERN MODELS OF THE CULTURAL-
CREATIVE ECONOMY**

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Abstract: This article presents a comprehensive academic analysis of the Xingtai Museum located in Xingtai City, Hebei Province, China. The study examines the museum's history, architectural features, exhibitions, visitor statistics for 2023, financing model, and cultural-creative product retail operations based on factual data. Xingtai Museum officially opened on 5 May 2023 and welcomed more than one million visitors during its first year of operation. As a state-funded institution with free admission, the museum operates within the framework of China's public cultural policy. The article also provides scholarly information regarding the general financing system of Chinese museums and the cultural-creative economy (wenchuang).

Keywords: Xingtai Museum, Chinese museum, Hebei Province, museum financing, museum statistics, cultural heritage, Xing Kiln, museum management, cultural and creative products, public museums.

Museums constitute an integral component of contemporary cultural life. They not only preserve historical heritage but also serve as important centers of public education, tourism infrastructure, and national identity. Over the past decade, the People's Republic of China has demonstrated remarkable activity in this field. As of 2024, the country has 7,046 registered museums, a significant increase compared to 3,852 museums recorded in 2015.¹

Xingtai is an ancient city located in Hebei Province, China, with a history spanning more than 3,500 years. Having served as a capital during the Shang Dynasty, it is considered one of the oldest cities in northern China. The establishment of a museum worthy of this historically rich region had long been anticipated. The grand opening of Xingtai Museum on 5 May 2023 represented a significant cultural event not only for the city but also for the entire province.

The purpose of this study is to provide objective information regarding the museum's historical development, architectural characteristics, exhibition structure, financing mechanisms, visitor statistics, and commercial activities through a comprehensive scholarly analysis. The article is structured according to academic requirements and is supported by references and a bibliography. Xingtai is one of the oldest cities in northern China. Archaeological discoveries indicate continuous human habitation in this region from the Shang Dynasty period (approximately 1600–1046 BCE) to the present day. During the Zhou Dynasty, the city became the capital of the State of Xing, and later the State of Zhao was also located here.

¹ Zhang, F., & Courty, P. (2018). The China museum boom. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 26(4), 507–524.



During the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581–907 CE), Xingtai gained prominence as a major ceramic production center. White porcelain produced by the Xing Kilns became famous throughout China and was reflected in the expression “Southern Green – Northern White.” This tradition later became the foundation for one of the museum’s principal exhibitions.

The construction of Xingtai Museum began as part of the city’s cultural development program. The building is located at No. 181 Kaiyuan North Road in Xiangdu District, Xingtai City, adjacent to the historic Kaiyuan Temple from the Tang Dynasty period.

The museum’s total construction area is 78,000 square meters, making it the largest prefecture-level museum in Hebei Province. The structure consists of one main building and four auxiliary sections, designed according to the architectural concept of “Tang Style and Yuan Patterns.”

In 2022, the museum received the China Construction Engineering Decoration Award in the category of public buildings and, in December of the same year, the Hebei Provincial Construction Engineering Decoration Award. In December 2023, it was honored with the National Quality Construction Award of China.

Xingtai Museum officially opened on 5 May 2023, shortly before International Museum Day (18 May). During the first phase, four permanent exhibition halls of the “Xingtai History and Culture Exhibition” on the second floor, together with the entrance hall and cultural-creative center on the first floor, were opened to visitors.²

The museum’s collections comprise more than 10,000 objects.

Among them are:

- 59 Grade I nationally significant cultural relics;
- 149 Grade II relics;
- 1,147 Grade III relics.

Among the most valuable artifacts are:

- A jade spear with animal-head inlay dating from the Shang Dynasty (approximately 16th–11th centuries BCE);
- A bronze vessel from the Shang Dynasty;
- A white-glazed jar marked “Hanlin,” produced at the Xing Kiln during the Tang Dynasty;
- A Han Dynasty bronze vessel decorated with four deities and geometric patterns in gold.³

As of 2025, the museum contains seven permanent exhibition halls (some of which remain unopened):

1. “**Jingtie Changfeng**” – Xingtai Prehistory and Ancient Civilization;
2. “**Xingtai History and Culture Exhibition**” – opened on 5 May 2023;
3. “**Traces of the State of Xing**” – opened on 1 January 2024;
4. “**Millennial Xing Kiln**” – opened on 1 August 2024;
5. “**Song and Ming Tombs**” – archaeological discoveries from medieval China;
6. “**Memories of Xingtai**” – local folk life and traditions;
7. “**A Century of Great Endeavor**” – modern history.

² Xingtai Museum — Tickets, Reviews. Trip.com. <https://www.trip.com/travel-guide/attraction/xingtai/xingtai-museum-130368936/> (Murojaat: 2025)

³ Xingtai Museum — Collection Data. Trip.com. <https://www.trip.com/travel-guide/attraction/xingtai/xingtai-museum-130368936/> (2024)



The exhibitions are organized according to a historical and cultural chronology, encompassing prehistoric stone tools and pottery, Shang and Zhou Dynasty bronzes, as well as the white porcelain of the Xing Kilns from the Sui and Tang periods.

The museum employs modern multimedia and interactive technologies in exhibition design, creating a vivid and engaging experience for visitors of all ages. Free guided tours are offered daily at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Since its opening on 5 May 2023 until the end of that year—approximately eight months—the museum received more than one million visitors. This figure represents a record for newly opened museums in Hebei Province.

Table 1. Main Statistical Indicators of Xingtai Museum (2023)

Indicator	Data	Source
Opening date	5 May 2023	Baidu Baike, 2024
Visitors in 2023	More than 1,000,000	Baidu Baike, 2024
Initial daily limit	3,000 visitors/day	163.com, 2023
Admission fee	Free	Trip.com, 2024
Operating days	Tuesday–Sunday	Bendibao, 2023

From its opening until 30 September 2023, the museum operated an advance reservation system through the “LeYouJi” application. Visitors were required to register with their real names and present a reservation QR code upon entry. Beginning on 1 October 2023, the museum abolished the reservation requirement, allowing direct entry upon presentation of valid identification documents such as passports, ID cards, or military certificates. This decision was made to facilitate access during National Day holidays and other peak visitation periods.

The museum operates from Tuesday to Sunday between 9:00–12:00 (last admission at 11:30) and 14:00–17:00 (last admission at 16:30). It remains closed on Mondays, except during public holidays.

Xingtai Museum is a fully state-funded institution. It is administered by the Xingtai Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism, and its principal financial resources are provided through municipal and provincial government budgets.⁴

The financing model of public museums in China is based on the following principles:

- Free admission to state museums, with operational expenses covered by public budgets;
- Construction and capital expenditures financed by central or local governments;
- Current expenditures, including staff salaries, utilities, and exhibitions, funded through state subsidies;
- Supplementary income generated through cultural-creative product sales, venue rentals, and private sponsorship.

According to the National Cultural Heritage Administration of China, there were 7,046 registered museums nationwide in 2024, the majority of which operate with state subsidies.

⁴ Xingtai Museum attractions review. Trip.com. <https://us.trip.com/travel-guide/attraction/xingtai-460/tourist-attractions/> (2026)



Since 2008, the Chinese government has implemented a free-admission policy for public museums. The objective has been to provide equal access to cultural services for all citizens. As noted by researchers Shao Shu and colleagues, free admission has significantly increased museum attendance, although it has simultaneously intensified competition for private museums.

Admission to Xingtai Museum is entirely free, meaning that its revenue model relies largely on supplementary sources such as cultural-creative product sales, special exhibitions, and venue rental services.

The financial sustainability of Chinese museums has become an increasingly important issue in recent years. According to analyses published by *The Art Newspaper*, museums generally depend on three major supplementary income sources: cultural-creative products, exhibition rentals, and institutional partnerships. Xingtai Museum has implemented all three approaches, with cultural-creative product sales identified as a strategic priority.

In October 2024, Xingtai Museum joined museum alliances in the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta, and the Pearl River Delta. These alliances facilitate artifact exchange, joint exhibitions, marketing cooperation, and the expansion of financial opportunities.

“Wenchuang” (cultural creativity) is the Chinese term used to describe museum souvenirs and cultural products. This sector has experienced rapid growth in recent years. During the 2024 National Day holiday period, Chinese museums welcomed 74.88 million visitors.

According to Lin Shaobo of *Chinese National Geography* magazine:

“Artifacts cannot leave the museum, but cultural-creative products can travel everywhere.”

This concept has become a fundamental principle of museum commercialization strategies in China.

On the first floor of Xingtai Museum, a Cultural-Creative Center serves as the museum’s official souvenir and cultural product store. It opened simultaneously with the museum on 5 May 2023.

According to visitor reviews on Trip.com, the center offers:

- Souvenir vessels and jars inspired by Xing Kiln white porcelain;
- Replica artifacts based on objects displayed in the museum exhibitions;
- Books, brochures, and catalogs devoted to the history of Xingtai;
- Museum-branded accessories such as bags, notebooks, and pens;
- Educational games and interactive kits for children.

The museum also maintains an online product catalog through the LeYouJi digital platform, enabling the distribution of cultural products without geographical limitations.

According to the National Cultural Heritage Administration of China, revenue from museum cultural-creative products reached approximately 10 billion yuan (around USD 1.4 billion) in 2019, and this figure has continued to grow steadily. The popularity of the souvenir market is illustrated by the fact that a magnet inspired by the Phoenix Crown in the National Museum of China sold more than 1,000 units within the first two hours of its release in 2024.

With its total area of 78,000 square meters, Xingtai Museum ranks first among prefecture-level museums in Hebei Province in terms of exhibition space. This status makes it not only a cultural center but also a significant tourist attraction. Its proximity to Kaiyuan Temple further enhances its appeal as part of a historical and cultural complex.

The achievement of attracting more than one million visitors during its first year of operation is particularly noteworthy. For comparison, the annual attendance of the Beijing Museum of History is approximately 3–5 million visitors, while the Shanxi History Museum recorded around 2.7 million visitors in 2017. Within this context, Xingtai Museum’s performance can be considered highly successful for a newly established regional museum.

China’s state museum model raises important questions: To what extent should museums depend on public budgets? How much revenue can cultural-creative products generate? According to *The Art Newspaper*, while financial sustainability remains the principal challenge



for private museums, concerns also exist regarding management efficiency and the long-term sustainability of free-admission policies in state museums.

In the case of Xingtai Museum, the combination of complete state financing and free admission enables broad public accessibility. However, it may also make the institution vulnerable to budgetary constraints and changes in public policy. Consequently, the museum's accession to museum alliances in 2024 and its development of a cultural-creative center should be regarded as positive steps toward financial diversification.

The implementation of multimedia interactive exhibitions and the LeYouJi digital platform demonstrates compliance with contemporary museum management standards. In the future, the introduction of technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence-based guide systems could further accelerate the museum's digital transformation.

Xingtai Museum, opened on 5 May 2023 and recognized as the largest prefecture-level museum in Hebei Province, has rapidly become one of the region's most important cultural institutions. Its 78,000-square-meter building, collection of more than 10,000 artifacts, seven permanent exhibition halls, and visitor attendance exceeding one million people in 2023 demonstrate a highly successful initial stage of development.

The museum's financing model is based on China's traditional public museum system: free admission, government-funded operations, and supplementary revenue generated through cultural-creative products and partnership programs. Membership in museum alliances in 2024 further expanded both its financial and cultural opportunities.

The promotion of white porcelain culture associated with the Xing Kilns, the presentation of Xingtai's 3,500-year history to a broad audience, and the successful integration of modern architecture with ancient heritage should be regarded as the museum's principal achievements. Future research should focus on the museum's digital transformation, the measurable economic impact of the wenchuang sector, and opportunities for international cooperation.

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