

# TALES & TRAILS



The Yellow River makes a sharp turn at Laoniu Bend in Pianguan county, Xinzhou, Shanxi province. As the mighty river winds through the province, it creates a range of landscapes. ZHAO JUNSHI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## A cultural landscape forged by nature

By **FANG AIQING** in Beijing  
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In North China's Shanxi province, profound cultural legacies are intertwined with a landscape that is majestic, yet graceful. The mighty Yellow River, having journeyed from the distant west, carves through sheer cliffs, entering Shanxi at Laoniu Bend in Pianguan county, Xinzhou, where the Great Wall stands sentinel.

From there, winding south, the grand river forms the border between Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces, before making a sharp turn eastward to separate the former from neighboring Henan.

At Jixian county in southwestern Shanxi, the Hukou Waterfall roars, its thunderous sound echoing through the valley. At this time of the year, glistening icicles hang from the shore cliffs.

On sunny days, a rainbow bridge reaches out to Shaanxi's Yichuan county on the other side, as spray forms clouds of mist that rise ceaselessly from the bottom of the waterfall.

The Taihang Mountains, stretching hundreds of kilometers from north to south, spanning Beijing, Hebei, Shanxi and Henan

provinces, form the backbone of northern China.

Their towering peaks, deep valleys, waterfalls and springs are home to precious creatures such as the North China leopard, brown-eared pheasant and forest musk deer.

In some places, the steep cliff faces have formed impenetrable rock walls — nature's own meandering Great Wall. Such landscapes have given rise to iconic tunnelliike roads chiseled into the vertiginous cliffs, forming perilous precipices. To traverse them is to experience a truly exhilarating journey.

Shanxi is located on the eastern edge of the Loess Plateau. On the rugged terrain, rolling loess terraces undulate as far as the eye can see. Occasionally, on hillsides tens of meters high, local residents have made full use of the loess soil, carving into the mountains and cliffs layers of cave dwellings that stay warm in winter and cool in summer.

With its magnificent mountains, rivers and diverse geographical features, Shanxi offers visitors breathtaking scenery that has nourished generations, and inspired them to foster a vibrant and enduring culture.

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Crystal-clear streams in the forest depths of the Baquanxia (Eight Springs Gorge) scenic area in Changzhi, Shanxi province. LI YU / FOR CHINA DAILY



Highly recommended destinations in Shanxi province include (from top) Hukou Waterfall in Jixian county, Baquanxia (Eight Springs Gorge) scenic area in Changzhi, terraced fields spreading across the Loess Plateau in Linfen, and the Great Wall in Shuozhou. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY; LI YU AND LI XIANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY