THE HANGING MONASTERY

The architectural wonder of the Hanging Monastery was built on a vertical cliff face by the Tuoba people of Inner Mongolia over 1,500 years ago (in the 490s). Devout Buddhists and brilliant engineers, they defied gravity by inserting huge wooden crossbeams deep into the cliff to suspend the monastery's temples, shrines, and monks' living quarters, connected with bridges, corridors, and boardwalks, out into space.

Liao Mongols in the 900s rebuilt and sustained it, and it has been carefully refurbished and restored in the centuries since. While it remains primarily Buddhist with statues and depictions of Sakyamuni (the historical Buddha of 5th century BC) and Maitreya (the future Buddha), the monks welcome reverence to Taoism and its founder Lao Tzu (4th century BC), as well as Confucius (551-479 BC). Thus you also see shrines and statues of them like nowhere else.

It is a unique and inspiring experience to be here. We'll be here again in our exploration of Inner Mongolia next year. (*(Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World #116* photo ©Jack Wheeler)