



One of the top choices these days for senior sojourners is to experience Tiananmen Square. The world-famous plaza, located in the nation's capital city, Beijing, is the largest public square in the world.

The Gate of Heavenly Peace stands at one end of the Square as guardian archway to the Forbidden City. Since the early 1400s it has served as palaces, religious sites, government quarters and residences of Chinese royal dynasties.

The Communist regime took over the city in 1949. Now, instead of traditional Chinese religious and emperor names, there are more earthy-named structures. There's the Monument to the People's Heroes, the Great Hall of the People, and Chairman Mao Zedong Memorial Hall. The most notorious modern event there happened in June 1989. Following 40 years of strict Communist political and economic control, young Chinese students demanded democratic reforms. After confrontations with police and army, many students were killed or arrested and imprisoned.

However, within a few years, the Chinese system evolved into a more accepting economy. While there are still marching soldiers and red flags these days, visitors may mix with friendly, well-dressed residents, happy children and business-suited techies with SmartPhones and briefcases.

Nearby accommodations include the Tiananmen Square Hotel, Holiday Inn Temple of Heaven, Jianquo Hotel, the high-rise Kerry Centre Hotel, Shangri-La Hotel, St. Regis, Grand Mercure Xidan, Crowne Plaza, 5 Star Grande Hotel and Novotel Xin Qiao. For more info, go to www.travelchinaguide.com