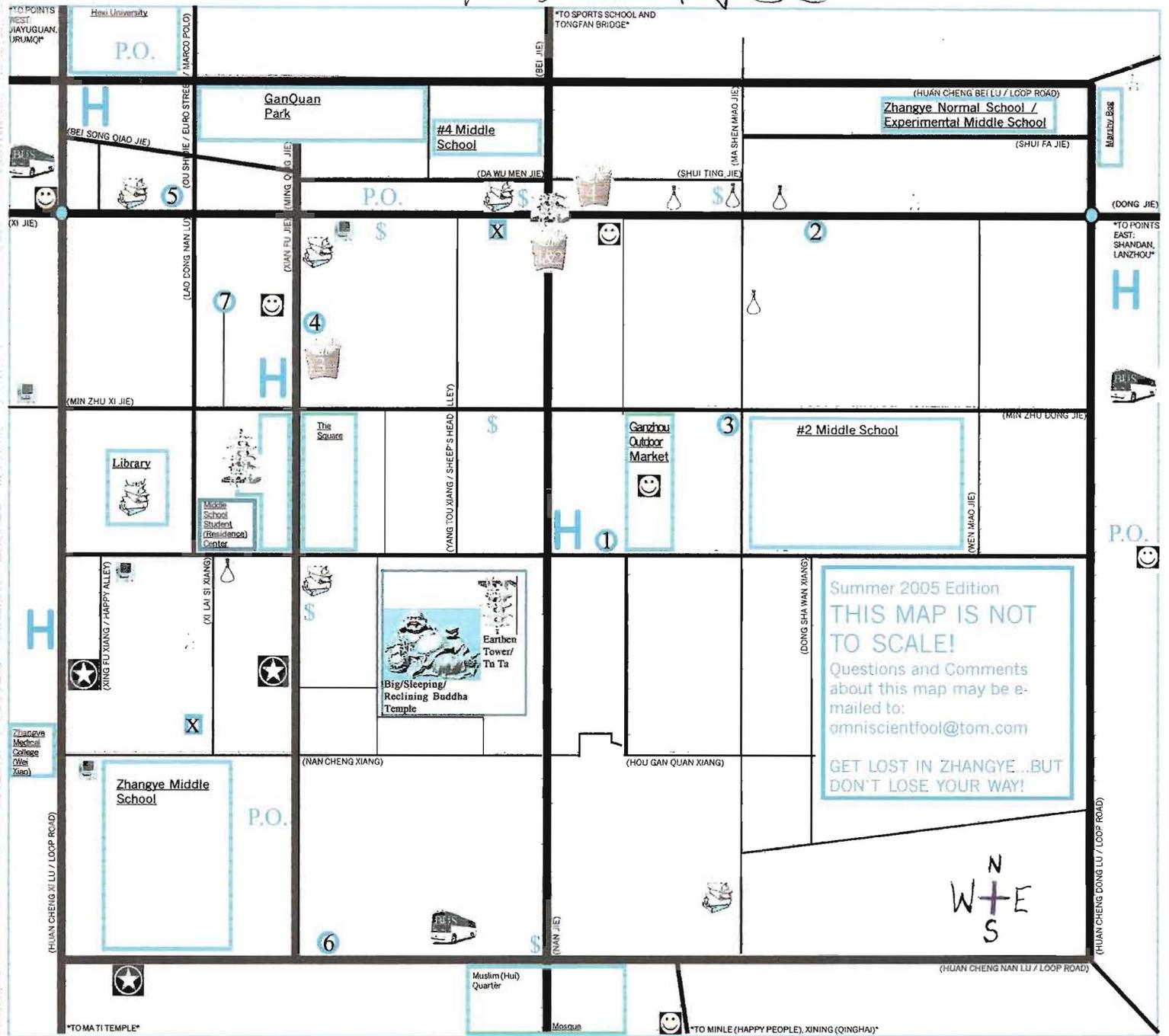


ZHANGYE, GANSU



KEY: \$ = Bank of China Branch P.O. = Post Office ★ = Large Government Building or Military Base ; = Small Temple, Pagoda, or Old Building ● = Traffic Circle ☑ = Internet Bar ♪ = Musical Instruments H = Hospital ○1-7 = Points of Interest (See Text Description Below)

COMING AND GOING: Zhangye's train station is in the narrow sprawl to the northeast of the town (not on this map, which covers only what's inside the loop roads). You can take the 1 or 2 bus there, in the daytime there's a private bus going there from the Shiqu (downtown), and cabs shouldn't charge much more than their pick-up fee of 3yuan to get there from downtown (excepting "odd" hours, of course). There are three long-distance bus stations in the city, helpfully named West (actually in the northwest), East, and South (in order of their supposed importance). Each claims to have buses going to anywhere you're likely to want to go. There is rumor of a daily flight to Beijing from a Zhangye airport, likely military, but which at least one resident claims exists and can be used by foreigners.

CITY TRANSPORTATION: Taxis are generally of the mianbao (breadloaf) type (seating up to 7 "safely" and all-too-tempting to try clown-car cramming), though a few green, regular-looking cars roam the city also. For groups, they're by far the best way to get around, as one can almost cross the whole city before going over the 3yuan pick-up fare. Buses are the smallest ones numbered 1-13, cost 1yuan, and should be treated as taxis on fixed routes, as they will stop most anywhere (though only at stops on the main street) for anyone who waves. Excepting some downtown routes at busy times, they are usually quite empty and honk non-stop. Since the city is very flat, bikes are the best way to see the city, and there is a rental place near Hexi University. There are also the usual assortment of motor-tricycle taxis, sedan bicycles, donkey carts, and mercenary motorcyclists who'd be truly fascinated to take you somewhere for a negotiable fee.

TOURIST SITES: In the city, the Big/Reclining/Sleeping Buddha Temple is the clear favorite, located in the south-central part of the city. Ganquan Park in the north is a nice place to spend some time. Mati (Horse's Hoof) Temple, an hour south of the city by bus, has YuGu minority goings-on, actual vegetation, lazy horses, and amazing air, though the actual temple is closed for reconstruction after a recent earthquake.

WESTERN FOOD: Zhangye's finest, and priciest, western food can be found at the Hagen Coffee Shop, offering a nice second-story view of the drum tower, pizza, and other niceties. One should expect to pay 50 yuan or more per person. Slightly north of the drum tower is Popland, offering microwaved filet sandwiches, French fries, passable milkshakes and ice cream for just over 10 yuan. Finally, there is HK-based Kloo on the second-floor north of the square. It is often missed (its red sign is neither large nor very visible) and empty inside, but western-style value meals of burgers and fish filets may be a welcome change for 10-15 yuan. A "Dicos" chain arrived downtown in summer 2005, after which at least one disco may be forced to re-spell its sign correctly. 

CHINESE FOOD: Expensive, banquet-style restaurants are scattered about the city, usually on the second or higher floor. For a good, cheaper meal for one or more, the ones on the touristy Ming-Qing Street south of the park are recommended, as are the Sichuanese places near the TuTa (earthen tower beside the Big Buddha), next to the outdoor pool tables. For jiaozeries (dumpling restaurants), the Beijing Dumpling Restaurant (Beijing Jiaozi Guan) chain offers over 30 styles of rather similar-tasting dumplings and is cleaner than most places. For the best dumpling soup at under 10 yuan, try the clean, friendly place in the stool and table district, #1. There is a quick baozeria on the east main street. Farther down at #2 is a clean noodle shop with A/C and 3 yuan "gan ban mian" (shaved beef noodles with lots of veggies, potatoes, tofu, etc.).

Zhangye is very proud of its four (or more?) styles of brown-broth breakfast noodles, found nowhere else in China (except probably in Lanzhou or neighboring towns): Xiaofan, Mianjing, Saozi Mian, and Luobo. The last is most different, consisting of bread twists in the broth-the others consist of beef, tofu, and noodles of various lengths, widths, and transparencies. If the nuances of these are not immediately apparent, don't be alarmed. Especially popular in winter, when the hot soups are the only ways to stay warm, no neighborhood is complete without a reputable breakfast noodle joint. The Chinese-challenged visitor to Zhangye who'd like to try new dishes but can't say their names is encouraged to try the cafeteria-style restaurants. Exchange your money for tokens, and with all the dishes on display, all you need to do to order is point and grunt. The downtown one has colorful plastic chairs and offers ice cream, while the southwesterly one, mostly frequented by students, is only worth trying if you're in the area.

ENTERTAINMENT: Other than Karaoke bars of varying prestige, Zhangye's nightlife remains in a rather fledgling state. The concept of a regular bar or dance hall where there is no threat to become a Chinese pop karaoke contest at any moment has not yet caught on here, so anyone looking for something other than teenybopper/syrupy love songs, primitive clothing-store rave music, or histrionic Chinese hair metal is likely to be disappointed. That said, if one is willing to be more wholesome, there are plenty of places to play pool and billiards for mere mao. The small-footed can go rollerskating at a very small rink at #3, in the big clothing mall's upper floor. Bowling costs 10 yuan before and 15 per game after 7PM at #4 on the fifth floor. All-weather billiards and pool can be found there as well as the "Electric Power Mansion" (which also offers year-round membership to a small gym for about \$50 and tennis for an outrageous \$10/hr.), and on the south side at #5. There is cheaper ping pong and billiards in the basement at #6.

By far the preferred mode of entertainment for the locals is to "zhuan-yi-zhuan", literally to "turn around and around" on the streets, popping into stores, meeting in the squares and markets, or stopping for street shishkebab at odd hours of the night. Summer nights on the square are said to be very lively (there is often a dance or other performance there, as well as kites, a large TV screen, and a beer garden). Sunday mornings between 9 to noon, the place to be is the market on the southeast's Minzhu East Street, where you can stock up on houseplants, parrots, cabbage, clothes, fish (live or stinky) and anything else that can be laid on blanket on the street.

BUYING THINGS: Zhangye's dominant store is the Xinle (New Happiness) Supermarket, with locations across the city, the biggest being at the west traffic circle. Those wishing to support the little guy and save a kuai can visit miscellany flea market conglomerations at the Ganzhou Outdoor Market, the Xinhua Bookstore's second floor, or the cheapest in the alley west of the square at #7. Clothing is centered around the Ganzhou outdoor market. Electronic appliances are on the main street south of the drum tower and in a few little flea market-style places not far from the center of town. Computer goods can be found on the West Street and around the square. While there is no official market for touristy antiques, people spread blankets on weekends outside the downtown Telecom building, and the several stalls around the Big Buddha temple foam at the mouth upon seeing a foreigner.

BOOKSTORES, A/V: Zhangye's Xinhua Bookstore is right off the drum tower, and a little ways down is its most upscale, the store with the green leaf on the sign, just before the main post office. Down the main street farther is the post office's bookstore. Chinese maps of the city (listing every last detail) may still be bought at the store east of the square on Qing Nian West Street. A few odd English titles may be found at the collapsing used bookstore in the southeast. The library has a net bar and English classes, but no English books. 

INTERNET BARS: There are several all around the city, often on second floors, charging on average 2 yuan per hour. If you can read Chinese, Zhangye's official website is at: www.0936.com 

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: Those who know the international language of music or are in the market for traditional/western instruments and lessons are encouraged to visit the many friendly and under-patronized music shops. Piano use or lessons cost only 3 yuan/hr. at the store in the north just off Shui Ting Jie. The grouping of sports equipment, stationery, and musical instruments is continued here, and both the Xinhua and Xinle stores have smatterings of traditional instruments.

IF YOU NEED ENGLISH: It's easy to feel isolated in Zhangye when staying awhile. If you're desperate for English conversation, Hexi University and the medical school in the southwest both have foreign teachers who may or may not care to make your stay more western. The former's students are always eager to practice their English. Zhangye's finest middle (high) school, which boasts students in Beijing and Qinghua U every year, number four in the north of the city has many students who may not be able to say much but would be eager to practice with you. Otherwise, if you meet someone who can share more than a few sentences with you, consider it an event.

TIPS: Zhangye is prone to sudden dust storms which can leave you chewing sand for hours. If you see threatening clouds, it's probably not rain, and it's worth seeking shelter. The general lack of clouds means there's a BIG temperature difference between night and day. Asking for documents is extremely rare here, but they may be worth carrying if you want to use a bank or get into a school. There have been reports of pickpocketing at the main post office. The second character in Zhangye's name, 掖, is very close to the character for "armpit", 腋, and if Gansu is an arm, locals sometimes refer to Zhangye as "The armpit" (though the "shoulder cities" of Jiayuguan and Jiuquan are actually geographically closer).