

# Summer Palace

Beijing, China

Photographs by Alan Ward 2003

## Notes on the Making of the Photographs

The Summer Palace was built from 1750 to 1764 as a retreat in the landscape outside of Beijing for the Qing dynasty ruling family. It was originally known as the Garden of Clear Ripples. The Summer Palace, like the Forbidden City, could not be entered by commoners during the imperial reign, however it is now a museum and park.

The site was modified by damming streams to make three lakes on the south side of Longevity Hill, a prominent landform about twenty 20km northwest of the Forbidden City. Traditional halls, palaces and pagodas are sited in woodlands on the south side of Longevity Hill for views overlooking Kunming Lake, the largest created lake. The design of buildings and gardens are derived from precedents and styles from the diverse regions of China and beyond. Kunming Lake and the temples on the south side of Longevity Hill were modeled after Xi Lake in the Hangzhou area. The four-level Temple of Buddhist Virtue is the most prominent structure at the Summer Palace, especially when seen reflected in Kunming Lake – inspired by a similar tower overlooking Xi Lake in Hangzhou (2). A cluster of buildings on the north side of Longevity Hill is derived from Han and Tibetan-style temples and monasteries (11-18), while the Garden of Harmonious Pleasures recalls the water gardens of south China (20-24). The Summer Palace was destroyed by Europeans in the Second Opium War of the 1850s and again in 1900. Each time it was rebuilt. After the Revolution of 1911, the Summer Palace was opened to the public.

The photography was limited to a few hours one morning in March on a business trip to Beijing for Sasaki, while working on the 2008 Olympics master plan and landscape. These few images of Longevity Hill are emblematic of the harmonious composition on the land that reflects the Chinese intention of balancing human works with nature. There are significant other distinctly different areas of the Summer Palace that could not be covered in one visit.

Each image was done with a 2 ¼" X 6 ½" panoramic camera in early morning light that can be quite favorable for photography, especially when aiming to show the tranquil beauty of this World Heritage site. The view east along the tree-lined promenade along Kunming Lake was directly toward the sun, which produced dramatic shadows from the rows of trees, however it was ephemeral as the light was rapidly changing (3-4). Sometimes you discover such a view by accident, however the photographer still has to expeditiously set up the camera at the right place and right time to be able to render the accidental circumstances through the application of the appropriate photographic techniques. In this case, it involved reducing contrast in the exposure and development of the film, as well as avoiding flare from the sun on the lens. It was so early that the photographs of the promenade had very few people, however that allowed the details of this significant and well-preserved design to come forward.

# List of Photographs

1. View west of Kunming Lake
2. Kunming Lake, Longevity Hill and Temple of Buddhist Virtue
3. Long Corridor and view east on path along Kunming Lake
4. Path along Kunming Lake and Long Corridor
5. Marble Boat and Five Sage Shrine
6. Lake on north side of palace
7. Walls at lake on north side
8. Bridge over lake on north side
9. Path along wall
10. View west from Longevity Hill to west dike
11. View north of terrace
12. View north of Temple of Buddha Confirming His Doctrine
13. Tibetan-style structures on north side
14. Temple of Buddhist Virtue
15. View north of Temple of Buddhist Virtue and covered walk
16. Stairs to Temple of Buddhist Virtue and covered walk
17. View south of Kunming Lake at Temple of Buddhist Virtue
18. Roofed corridor and stairs to Temple of Buddhist Virtue
19. Roofed corridor with lattice at Temple of Buddhist Virtue
20. Gate and bridge in Garden of Harmonious Pleasures
21. Connecting bridge in Garden of Harmonious Pleasures
22. Willows and pavilions at Garden of Harmonious Pleasures
23. Pavilions along water at Garden of Harmonious Pleasures
24. View from within pavilion at Garden of Harmonious Pleasures































































# Notes

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