

CHINA'S HISTORIC BRIDGES: ARCHITECTURE OVER WATER

Jiangsu Province

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Unlike most of the understated literati garden bridges found in Suzhou and other cities in the Jiangnan region, the Wuting [Five Pavilions] Bridge in Yangzhou is a showy, stylish, and novel composition that is unrivaled in China.

Built in 1757 across a narrow inlet in Slender West Lake in Yangzhou to the back of the Lianxing Temple, the Five Pavilions Bridge is formally called the Lianhua [Lotus Flower] Bridge because of its resemblance to the spreading petals of the flower.

The base of the stone bridge has an overall length of 55.3 meters and rises about 8 meters above the water.

Set upon twelve piers of varying sizes, the bridge incorporates thirteen hemispheric arches as well as a pair of arch fragments set beneath the stairs that rise to five, square, open-sided pavilions atop its base.



From some angles the bridge looks like a waterside building but from others it clearly serves as a bridge to allow both foot and boat traffic.



蓮花橋











Suzhou's expansive Zhuozheng Yuan [Garden of the Humble Administrator] was used as a residence as early as the Tang dynasty (618-907), but garden construction apparently did not begin until 1513 under the supervision of a disgraced Ming dynasty court historiographer.

Occupying more than 4 hectares, fully three-fifths of the garden is water with many types of bridges.

The highly regarded Xiaofei hong (Small Flying Rainbow) Bridge, while simply a span of adjacent stone beams, is covered with a wood and tile gallery that fully integrates it with the nearby pavilions.