

# HOUSED IN TRADITION: Ancient Architecture as the DNA of Civilizations

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*In this episode of "Housed in Tradition", our journey takes us from the provincial capital Chengdu to an ancient temple in the northern mountains of Sichuan.*

MIANYANG, SICHUAN, CHINA, December 5, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Sichuan is known for its relaxed lifestyle, but there is a surprising contrast in the Harley Owners Group of Chengdu. Now in its 16th year, the group has expanded to 800 members from various backgrounds. Among them is Li Wei, who has been working in [architecture](#)-related fields for 25 years. Over the course of his career, he has rediscovered many architectural wonders across the region.

Li introduced us to [Bao'en Temple](#), located in Pingwu County. The temple, which dates back about 580 years, was discovered by Li during a trip to Jiuzhaigou National Park. Impressed by its architectural and historical significance, Li suggested it as a destination for further exploration.

The temple is a classic example of Chinese Buddhist architecture, with its main halls aligned along a central axis and other structures arranged transversely. The remote location of Bao'en Temple, coupled with its scale and beauty, prompts reflection on how such a place could have been found and accessed centuries ago.

Ren Yin, who has served as the curator of Bao'en Temple for the past 30 years, provided some insights into the temple's unique features. Among these is the giant prayer wheel, which weighs 5,000 kilograms and stands 11 meters tall. Although it has been in use for over 500 years, it is still operational, and remains the largest working prayer wheel in China.

Ren explained that the temple's architecture follows a royal style, with all the wooden structures crafted from nanmu, a rare and highly valued timber. The temple also features over 2,000 sets of [dougong](#), a traditional system of interlocking wooden brackets that support the roofs. Remarkably, the entire temple was built without a single nail, and it survived the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, one of the most devastating seismic events of the 21st century.

Ren feels a deep connection to the temple, explaining that, even after his retirement, he plans to continue studying its architecture and preserving its heritage. He emphasized the importance of safeguarding the temple for future generations.

Bao'en Temple stands as a testament to the craftsmanship of ancient Chinese builders, who

used natural materials to create both functional and spiritual spaces. Among its treasures are a golden statue of Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy, carved from a nanmu tree, and a revolving sutra cabinet, which holds the prayers of generations.

As the temple ages, it presents challenges for modern craftsmen. The Palace Museum Cultural Heritage Research Institute has been enlisted to assist with the restoration of the temple's murals, with an emphasis on preserving the original colors and artistic integrity.

The name Bao'en, meaning "repay the grace," reflects the temple's significance. Its timeless architectural beauty continues to offer a window into the cultural and spiritual values of those who built it. As the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism Huineng put it, "The Dharma is to be transmitted from mind to mind, and each must be awakened to it and clarify it to himself."

The Vibe

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