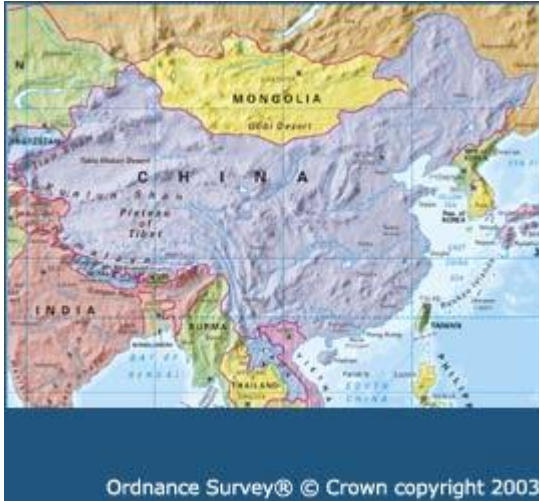


## Great Wall crumbling under pressure

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The Great Wall of China is approximately 6,700 kilometers (4,163 miles) long and in parts, up to 2,000 years old. China's Xinhua news agency however has recently published a report which expresses concern over one of the countries most important tourist attractions. Spokespersons from the agency stated that "booming tourism, development and lack of funds for protection are nibbling away from the Great Wall" - two thirds of the wall is in a state of collapse.

Survey teams who have been monitoring the wall have discovered sections which have been vandalized by graffiti or removed by farmers to build pig sties. William Lindsay, founder and director of International Friends and a trekker of nearly 2,500 kilometers of the wall in 1987 has however stated that "litter, graffiti and illegal constructions are just the tip of the iceberg that poses physical and aesthetic damage to the Great Wall and its natural setting."

### Mass tourism - the good, the bad and the ugly?

Travel and tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. The World Tourism Organisation calculated that in 2002 there were over 700 million international tourist arrivals in the world. The World Tourism Organization calculated that in 2002 there were 36.8 million international tourist arrivals to China (a 5.2% share of the world total) up 11% on 2001, the fastest growing destination in the top ten. China is predicted to be the world number one destination by 2024.

International Tourist Arrivals (million)	Year 2002
<b>World</b>	<b>703</b>
France	77.0
Spain	51.7
United States	41.9
Italy	39.8
China	36.8
United Kingdom	24.2
Canada	20.1
Mexico	19.7
Austria	18.6
Germany	18.0

Source: World Tourism Organization

Tourism is big business. In recent decades the rapid expansion of the tourist industry has brought with it a number of economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits and problems.

Tourism undoubtedly brings valuable foreign currency to developing countries, (US\$ 20.4 billion to China in 2002), and a range of other benefits such as improved infrastructure, and improved funding for healthcare and education. However, recent media debates surrounding the Great Wall of China suggest that mass tourism has become a downfall for heritage sites.

The Badaling section of the wall attracts 10 million visitors per year. However there is little concern over protection and conservation. Instead, exploitation of the site has culminated in an almost Disneyland type scene: Go-Kart's, cable cars and global fast food outlets. Tourism is therefore now a very contentious aspect of the trend towards globalization, providing a clear indication that an economically burgeoning China may be failing to use its new wealth to conserve what might be considered to be once a source of national pride (*The Guardian*, 27 January 2004). The solution lies in being able to strike a balance between the need to protect our cultural heritage and reap the economic benefits of tourism that a cultural site brings to the country.

### **The future?**

With the 2008 Olympics due to be held in Beijing, local Chinese officials are taking action to try and stop further damage by introducing laws to protect a 400 mile section under its jurisdiction. Ten years ago the government appointed three officials to look after the wall with only an annual budget of about £150 for its upkeep. However with poorly trained officials who allowed developers to tear down parts of the wall, overall preservation of the wall seemed dubious. Acts like this clearly exemplify the need for the government to promote education about and provide more resources for the wall. Peter Ferdinand, an expert on Chinese Government from Warwick University believes that the government does have what it takes to save what is left of the wall. He said:

"For ideological reasons previous regimes did not want to preserve the past...but I think efforts are being made to save what is left...A sense of pride remains in the wall and I think the Chinese government will do more to try to preserve it."