

From the outer part to the south the emperors exercised their political rule. This section centres around three great halls used for official occasions: Tai he dian (Hall of Supreme Harmony) the throne room; Zhong he dian (Hall of Complete Harmony), the ante-chamber, and Bao he dian (Hall of Preserving Harmony), the banquet room.

In the Inner Court to the north reached by the Chien Ching Men or Gate of Heavenly Purity, the imperial families lived and the emperors conducted their daily activities of rule. Main buildings here are the three Rear Palaces — the Palace of Heavenly Purity (Chien ching kung) the Hall of Union (Chiaotaitien), which used to be the Emperors' throne room and the Hall of Earthly Tranquillity (Kunning kung) — and the twelve courts of the eastern and western areas.

Peihai (North Lake) Park (pronounced Bay-hi)

Peihai is the most northerly of the three lakes belonging to the Imperial City; it lies north-west of the Imperial Palace. The park was one of the imperial gardens during the Liao and Kin kingdoms and the Yuang, Ming and Ching dynasties. The park is built around the lake in the southern part of which rises Chiunghua Island, a small hill dominated at the top by the beautiful White Dagoba. Amidst the greenery and rockeries around the lake and on the island are various structures in the traditional style, including the Five Dragons Pavilions, the Tower of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the Hall of Rippling Waves and the Temple of Everlasting Peace. Other spots of interest include the Nine Dragon Screen and the Iron Shadow Screen, both exquisite works of art.