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Cover Story—The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal and the Cultural Heritage Sites

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.3974/geodp.2026.04.15



Cover image—the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal and the cultural heritage sites

As the world's longest and most massive man□made waterway, the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal was inscribed in 2006 as a Major Historical and Cultural Site Protected at the National Level (sixth batch). In 2013, the State Council of China expanded the designation to the broader "Grand Canal of China" (seventh batch), which encompasses the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, the Sui-Tang Grand Canal, and the Eastern Zhejiang Canal. This integrated heritage was subsequently inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014.

This cover is designed based on the Dataset of 697 cultural heritage sites along the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal[1] and the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal[2], both published in the *Digital Journal of Global Change Data Repository*. The coastline and provincial/municipal boundaries are derived from the National Geomatics Center of China. The main canal stretches 1,825.17 km from the confluence of 5 rivers in Tongzhou District, Beijing, in the north, to Sanbao Ship Lock in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, where it empties into the Qiantang River. It traverses 7 provincial-level administrative regions (Beijing, Hebei, Tianjin, Shandong, Henan, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang) and 21 prefecture-level cities. The Taigian section in Puyang, Henan, is not depicted as it is an archaeological heritage route without a clear waterway. In cities with multiple branches, only the main navigable sections are shown. The architectural sketches of representative heritage sites are selected from the 697 sites along the canal and redrawn from publicly available photographs. This cover visualizes the spatial distribution of the Grand Canal and its cultural heritage sites, aiming to provide foundational spatial information for research, protection, and management of the canal cultural belt.

[1] Chen, Z. A., Lin, X. Y., Ye, P., *et al*. Dataset of 697 cultural heritage sites along the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal [J/DB/OL]. *Digital Journal of Global Change Data Repository*, 2026. https://doi.org/10.3974/geodb.2026.02.04.V1.
[2] Jiang, Z. C., Liu, C. Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal [J/DB/OL]. *Digital Journal of Global Change Data Repository*, 2026. https://doi.org/10.3974/geodb.2026.07.05.V1.

Received: 25-07-2026; **Accepted:** 16-08-2026; **Published:** 25-08-2026
Citation: Jiang, Z. C. Cover story—the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal and the cultural heritage sites [J]. *Journal of Global Change Data & Discovery*, 2026, 10(4): 509. https://doi.org/10.3974/geodp.2026.04.15.