



Ghost Cities of China: The Story of Cities without People in the World's Most Populated Country (Asian Arguments)

By Wade Shepard

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Over the next couple of decades, it is estimated that 250 million Chinese citizens will move from rural areas into cities, pushing the country's urban population over one billion. China has built hundreds of new cities and urban districts over the past thirty years, and hundreds more are set to be built by 2030 as the central government kicks its urbanization initiative into overdrive. As China redraws its map with new cities, it isn't just creating new urban areas, but also engineering a new culture and way of life. Yet, many of these new cities, such as the infamous Kangbashi and Yujiapu, stand nearly empty, construction having ground to a halt due to the loss of investors and colossal debt.

In *Ghost Cities of China*, Wade Shepard examines this phenomenon up close. He posits that the shedding of traditional social structures in the country is at an advanced stage, and a rootless, consumption-centric globalized culture is rapidly taking its place. Incorporating interviews and on-the-ground investigation, *Ghost Cities of China* examines China's under-populated modern cities and the country's overly ambitious building program.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Having grown up in the 'rust belt' of America, Wade Shepard is familiar with the emptiness and ruin of cities in decline. In *Ghost Cities of China* he guides us on a comprehensive - yet still often intimate - tour of cities "that are just being born." Through his in depth engagement of the country's vast urbanization on the cusp of its emergence, Shepard exposes both the myths and realities of China's ghost cities; haunted spaces, which are not dead and abandoned, but rather have yet to come to life." **-Anna Greenspan, author of Shanghai Future: Modernity Remade**

A well-reported and fascinating primer on China's ghost cities. Wade Shepard cuts through the sensational coverage of China's infrastructure boom to deliver an eye-opening piece of reportage on the topic. A refreshing primer on China's complex and often misunderstood property market." **-Rob Schmitz, Marketplace's Shanghai Bureau Chief**

"There is much to enjoy in this energetic if chaotic account: the landscape Shepard travels is so strange and monumental that it is hard to avoid being fascinated." **-The New Statesman**

"In his exploration of East Asian cities that are literally disposable, Wade Shepard provides an intriguing overview to a phenomenon that combines two of this century's biggest narratives: global urbanization and the unprecedented growth of China." **-Rolf Potts, author of Vagabonding and Marco Polo Didn't Go There**

". . . offers an interesting glimpse of the strange path China is taking on its march to modernization." **-The World Today, Chatham House**

"In this succinct study of a country bulldozed to make way for generic conurbations, China Chronicle editor Wade Shepard dispenses the facts with chilling clarity. As he examines mountains literally moved, relocations on a gargantuan scale and the duplication of Hallstatt, Austria, in Guangdong province, a stunned awe sets in." **-Nature**

For anyone who has visited China beyond the usual tourist destinations and wonders why a large railway station has been built in the middle of a desert, or where the roads with no cars go to, or whether anyone will ever live in the multiplying tower blocks, Wade Shepard's book provides some answers." **-The Socialist Review**

"*Ghost Cities of China* is an accessible look at one aspect of urban development in China that may help to illuminate others, by an author who holds strong opinions about the state of architecture and planning in China." **-Environment and Urbanization**

"*Ghost Cities* tells a mixed story of China's urbanisation drive. . . . Shepard presents an even-handed picture of this process as he has witnessed it and leaves the question of the future open."

(*Royal Society for Asian Affairs*)

“In *Ghost Cities of China*, Wade Shepard guides us on a comprehensive—yet still often intimate—tour of cities 'that are just being born.' Through in-depth engagement with the country's vast urbanization efforts, Shepard exposes both the myths and realities of China's ghost cities; haunted spaces, which are not dead and abandoned, but rather have yet to come to life.”

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From the Back Cover

Featuring everything from sports stadiums to shopping malls, hundreds of new urban areas in China stand empty, with hundreds more set to be completed by 2030. Between now and then, the country's urban population will leap to over one billion, as the central government kicks its urbanization initiative into overdrive. In the process, traditional social structures are being torn apart, and a rootless, semi-displaced, consumption oriented culture is rapidly taking their place. *Ghost Cities of China* is an enthralling dialogue-driven, on-location search for an understanding of China's new cities and the reasons why many have not yet attracted sizable populations.

About the Author

Wade Shepard is an itinerant writer who has been travelling the world since 1999. He grew up in western New York State, at the heart of the infamous Rust Belt - a place that knows ghost cities well. Having graduated with a degree in ethnographic journalism from Long Island University Global (then Friends World Program), he has made his living as an archaeologist, a journalist, and an independent blogger. In 2005 he ended up in China for the first time, and he hasn't been able to fully shake the country yet. Wade is a contributor to the *South China Morning Post*; and his work has appeared in Reuters, CityMetric, Wanderlust Magazine, and other top China and travel focused publications. He blogs at Vagabondjourney.com.

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