

Step into the shoes of a
Silk Road Traveller

敦煌 SACRED
CAVES

DUNHUANG, BUDDHISM, AND THE SILK ROAD

ACROSS THE SILK ROAD:

A TRAVEL JOURNAL



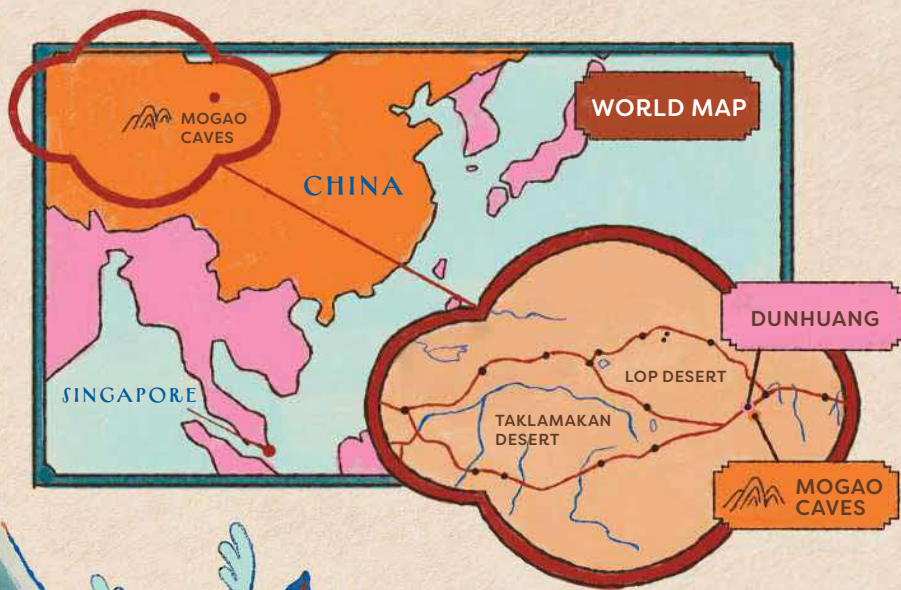
Suitable for ages 7
and up



STEP INTO THE SHOES OF A SILK ROAD TRAVELLER

Over 1,000 years ago, travellers from many lands journeyed along the ancient Silk Road, a network of trade routes that connected parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Dunhuang was an important stop along these routes, home to the Mogao Caves, which were filled with beautiful Buddhist paintings and sculptures.



As you explore this exhibition, you'll follow in the footsteps of countless travellers who made this remarkable journey to visit the Mogao Caves.

RULES OF TRAVEL



BONUS MISSION

Follow the route markers on your map so you don't get lost in the desert.



JOT IT DOWN

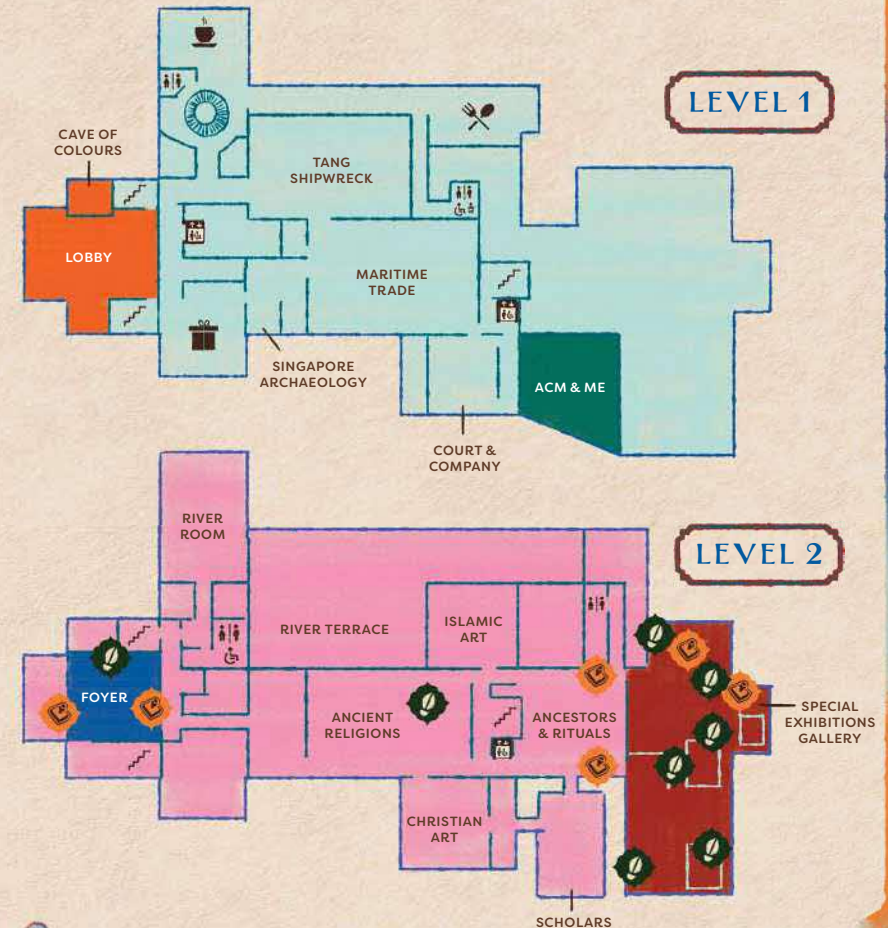
Record your discoveries at every stop in your travel journal (pencils only, please).



MISSION

Look out for special stamping stations along the way for a bonus mission!

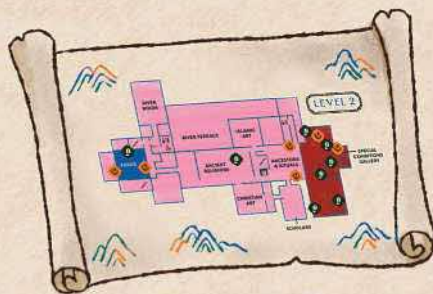
MAPS



BONUS MISSION: BUILD YOUR DUNHUANG PALETTE

Artists in ancient Dunhuang created brilliant paints from precious and rare minerals. As you explore the exhibition, your mission is to collect amazing colours just like they did!

HOW TO COLLECT COLOURS



STEP 1:

Locate the stamping stations in the exhibition on Level 2.

Use the gallery maps to help you.

STEP 2:

Pick up a stamp card and collect all six stamps to reveal an illustration of Nava the Nine-Coloured Deer.



STEP 3:

That's not all!

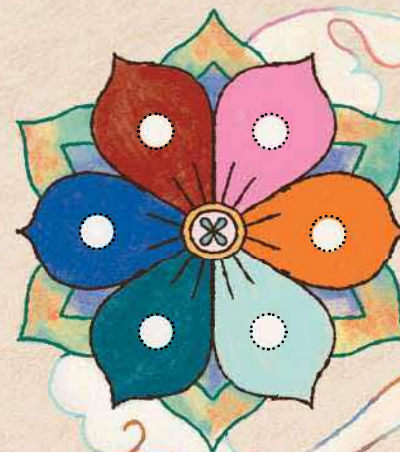
Hold your magic brush near the scanner at each station to add colours in your digital palette.

STEP 4:

Once you've collected all six stamps and colours, head to the Cave of Colours at the Lobby on Level 1 to continue your journey.

TOTAL COLOURS COLLECTED

Keep track of your progress by ticking off the collected colours below.

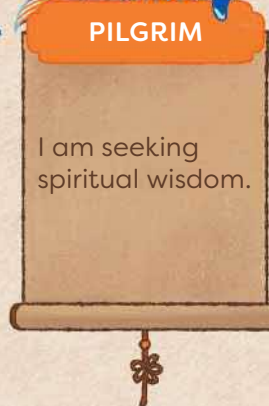


Total colours collected: ____ / 6



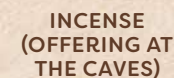
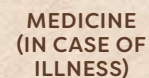
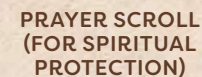
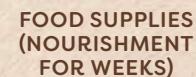
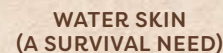
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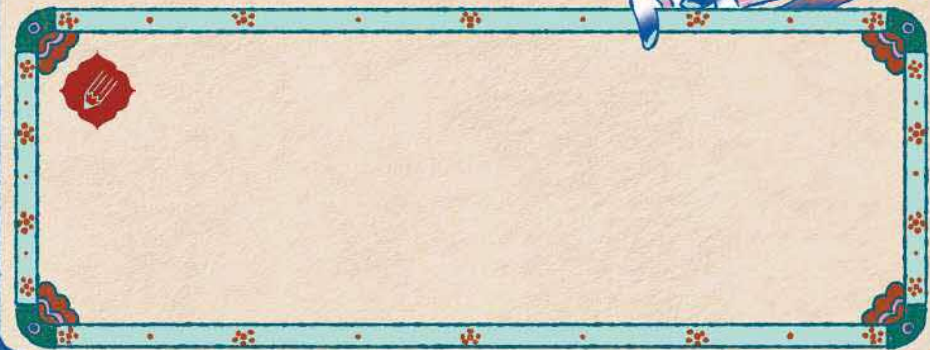


I record stories
and knowledge
from different
cultures.

CIRCLE 5 ITEMS TO TAKE ON YOUR TRIP:



REFLECT



JOURNEY TO THE CAVES

For over 1,000 years, many people worked together to create the Mogao Caves as acts of devotion to the Buddha.

MISSION: LOOK CLOSELY

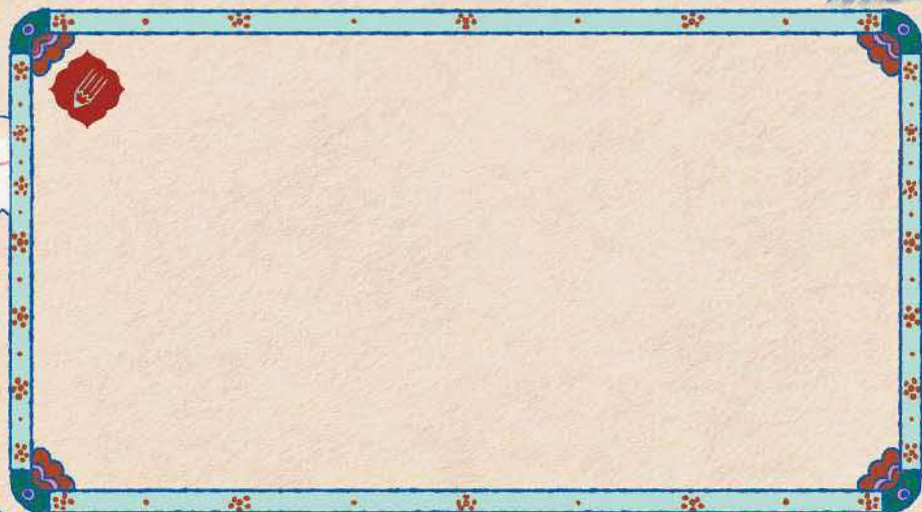
How is the Buddha posed?



Cave 158
Tang dynasty
(Tubo period, 781–847)

This reclining pose shows the Buddha entering nirvana, a peaceful state free from suffering.

Use the space below to draw other shapes and patterns in the cave. See if you can spot these designs as you explore the rest of the exhibition.



MISSION: SPOT THE SCULPTURE

As you make your way to the Special Exhibitions Gallery, find these three Buddha figures and study them carefully to fill in the blanks below. Each posture and hand gesture has a specific meaning.



Buddha
T _____

Gandhara,
3rd or 4th century
Schist
Gift of the Kwan
Im Thong Hood
Cho Temple
2015-00472



S _____
Buddha

Myanmar, Mandalay,
dated 1901
Bronze
2014-00461

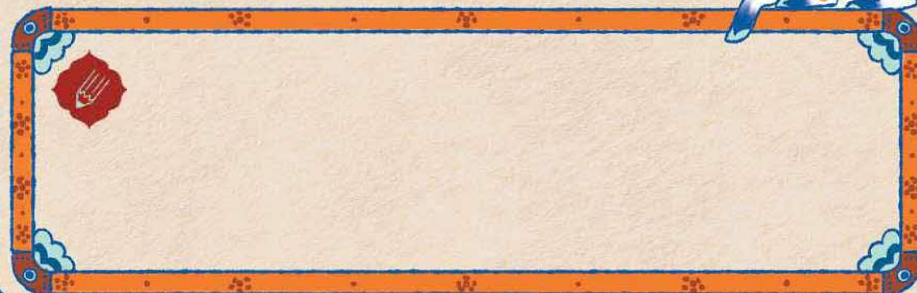


W _____
Buddha

Sukhothai, Thailand,
15th or 16th century
Bronze
1999-01714

REFLECT

Each pose represents a different moment in the Buddha's life. Which is your favourite, and why?



Answer Key: Buddha Teaching, Seated Buddha, Walking Buddha



DANGER ON THE ROAD!

You've spent days on the road, but oh no...what's that approaching? Bandits!

Head to the Special Exhibitions Gallery and search for this painting. It shows bandits stealing goods from a caravan on the Silk Road. In response, soldiers fight back and protect the merchants.



Caravan from the Western Regions
Cave 420, Sui dynasty (581-618)
Duan Wenjie, 1976
Pigment on paper
L01798

LOOK CLOSELY

How many camels and horses are there?

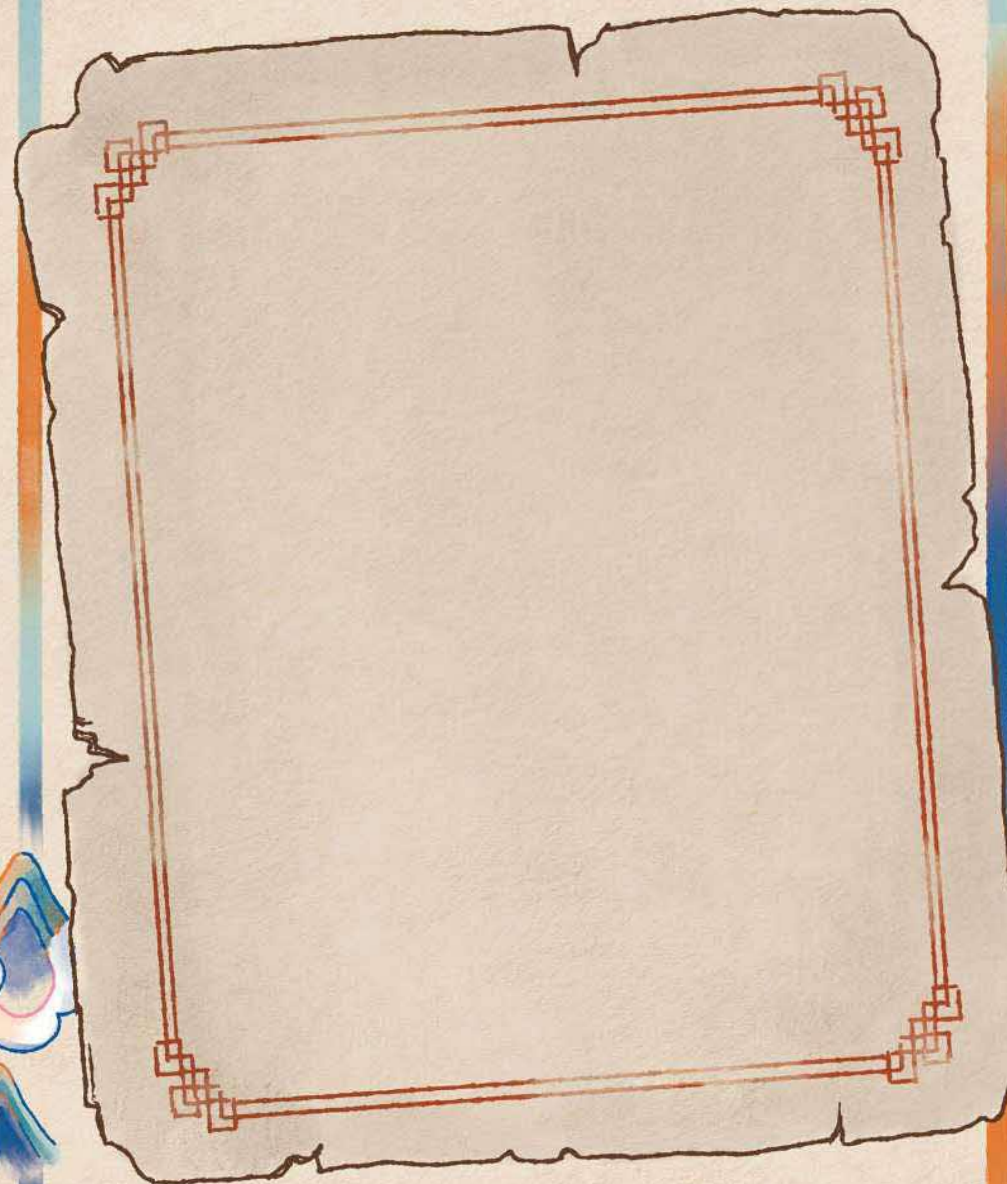
What goods do you think the caravan might be carrying?

Besides bandits, what other dangers might travellers face on the Silk Road?



MISSION: GATHER YOUR TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Quick, show your travel pass for safe passage! Draw a symbol on your pass that represents protection to you.





THE NINE-COLOURED DEER

Phew, you've made it safely to Dunhuang and the Mogao Caves! What an epic journey – and what a story you'll have to tell when you get home.

Speaking of stories, the Mogao Caves are like a giant storybook. Their walls are covered with paintings that tell Buddhist tales, including the jatakas, stories of the Buddha's previous lives.

LOOK CLOSELY

One of the most beloved tales painted in these caves is the story of the Nine-Coloured Deer.

Can you find this painting of the deer?



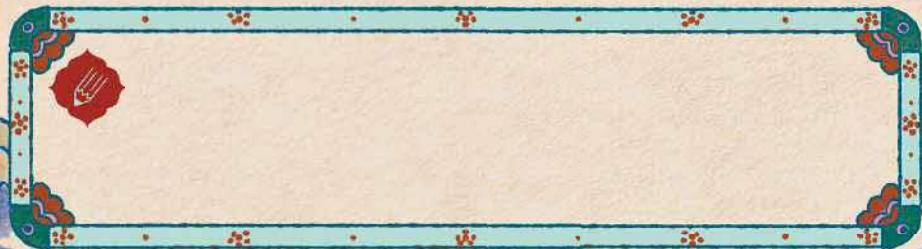
Jataka of the Nine-Coloured Deer
Cave 257, Northern Wei dynasty
(386–534)
Gao Peng, 1988
Pigment on paper
L01601



Scan the QR code to listen to the full story of the Nine-Coloured Deer.

REFLECT

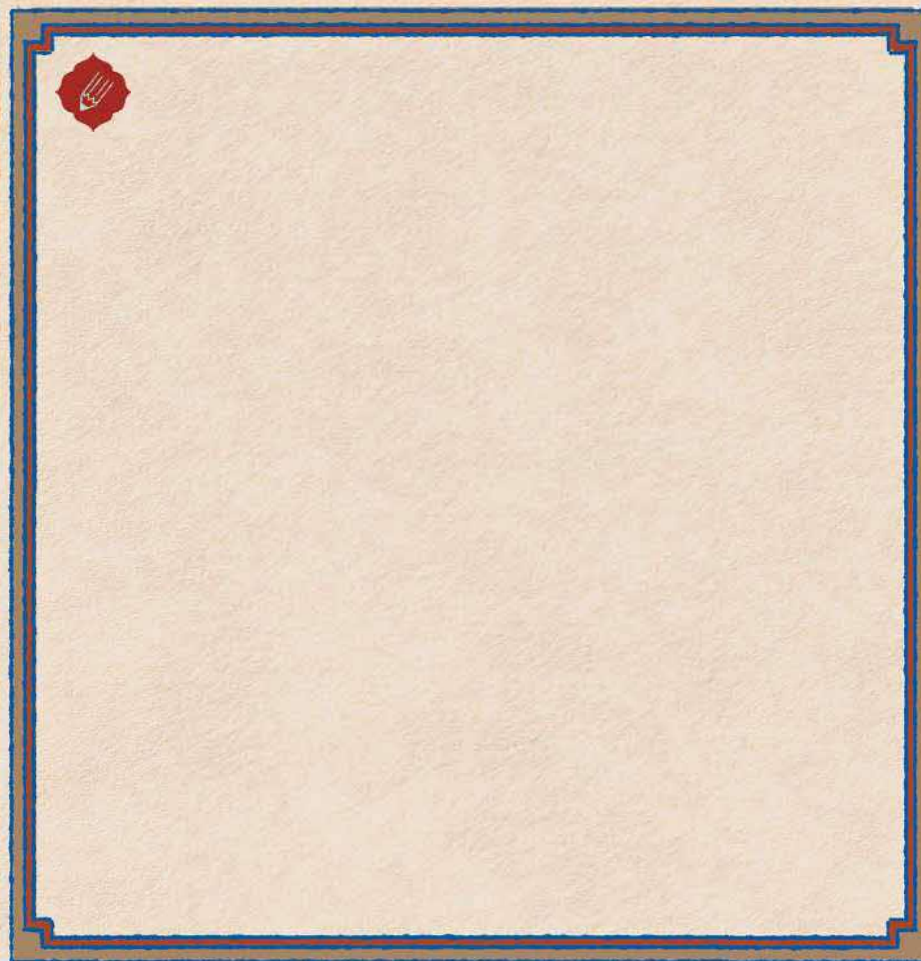
What lesson does this story teach us?



MISSION: DESIGN A CAVE CEILING

Head into Caves 249 and 45 and look up to see ceilings covered in intricate patterns and motifs.

Use the stickers at the back of this booklet to create your very own Dunhuang-inspired ceiling below!





MUSIC AND DANCE OF THE SILK ROAD

Music was an important part of the Silk Road journey. It entertained travellers, accompanied religious ceremonies, and helped people from different cultures celebrate together.

LOOK CLOSELY

Find this painting in the gallery. It shows Amitayus (the Buddha of Infinite Life) seated on a jewelled lotus throne. In front of him, performers play music and dance.



Western Pure Land in the Amitayus Contemplation Sutra
Cave 320, Tang dynasty, 705–780
Duan Wenjie, 1948
Pigment on paper
L02002

Imagine you're in the scene.
What would you perform?



MISSION: DANCE OF THE APSARAS

The figures in the murals of the Mogao Caves often make special hand gestures called mudras.

Can you find them throughout the exhibition?

TRY THESE POSES



ANJALI MUDRA

Palms together at heart
(gesture of respect)



VARADA MUDRA

Right hand down, palm out
(gesture of gift-giving)



ABHAYA MUDRA

Right hand up, palm out
(gesture of fearlessness)



DHYANA MUDRA

Both hands on the lap, palms facing upward, one on top of the other (gesture of meditation)

TRY TO CREATE A SIMPLE DANCE SEQUENCE USING THESE GESTURES.

If you have socials, don't forget to tag us @ACM_SG for a chance to get your dance moves featured.



LIFE IN THE CITY

After a long day exploring the caves, it's nice to be back in the city. The streets are full of noise, colour, and people from many different lands. There's so much to see and do before the sun sets!

MISSION: SIGHT-SEEING

As you wander through the city, keep your eyes peeled...can you spot these scenes and objects?



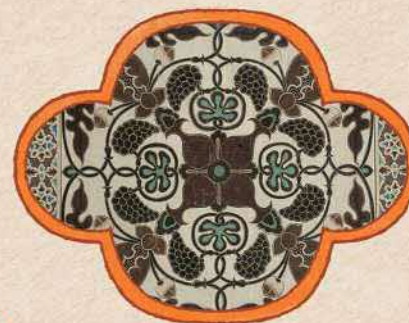
Check them off as you find them!



Your stomach is growling. Head to a butcher's shop to pick up food for later. Can you find the dog nearby, hoping for a scrap?



A burst of music and laughter stops you in your tracks. A wedding party seems to be taking place nearby! Join the crowd and see if you can spot this dancer among the festivities.



Merchants along the Silk Road bring exotic fruits all the way from Central Asia. Look at the ceiling – what fruits can you spot hidden among the vines?

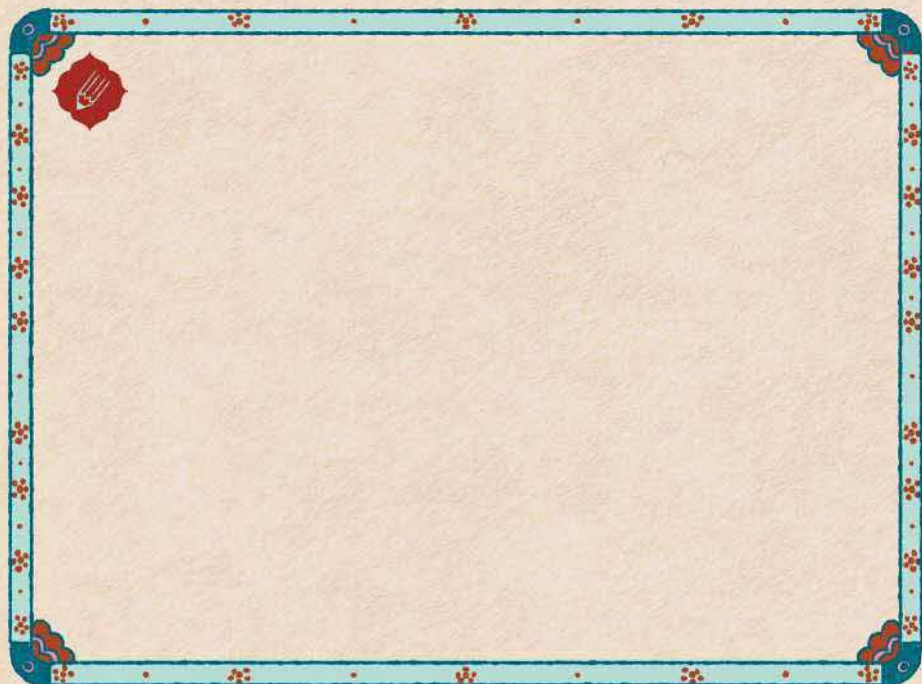


REFLECT

You've met travellers from around the world. What is one thing you'd like to share about your country? Draw or write your answer below.

JOURNEY'S END

What an adventure this has been! What was your favourite part of your journey to Dunhuang? Share your thoughts below.



Your Dunhuang journey doesn't have to end here! If you're hungry for more exciting discoveries, visit the ACM & ME children's activity space on Level 1, where more adventures await.

Safe travels, and see you on our next adventure at ACM!



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for information on talks and programmes organised in conjunction with the exhibition.

Exhibition organised by the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore and the Dunhuang Academy, China



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