

# The **Feng Shui** Way

CREATE THE LIFE YOU WANT THROUGH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

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# What is Feng Shui?

Feng Shui is one of the three branches of Chinese metaphysical studies or prediction which, developed over thousands of years, have become highly systematised. Feng Shui at its simplest is the study of the influences of the environment on individual human destiny – a codified regime concerned with how best to fully utilise the laws of nature. It's a way of taking care of the natural environment and having that same environment support and take care of us.

The other two branches of Chinese metaphysics are The Four Pillars of Destiny and the I Ching.

The Four Pillars of Destiny is a code developed by the ancient Chinese which reveals the cosmic components of a person. Analysing the interaction between these components reveals our characteristics, past, present and future destiny, and, just as importantly, our most favourable elements. The I Ching oracle looks for answers from the Divine – from the Cosmos or the Universe – to specific questions about the future. The I Ching may be used to supplement both Feng Shui and The Four Pillars of Destiny. Fundamentally, Feng Shui is about locating ourselves in the best place in our environment – the place that enables us to take advantage of

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all the forces – both seen and unseen – that can benefit us. It is used to structure, adjust and balance our artificial environment with the natural environment... essentially capturing 'a little piece of heaven' for our own place in the world. By harmonising our living and working spaces with natural laws, we stand to reap great rewards in improved living, better health, deeper and more meaningful relationships, greater success in our careers, increased wealth and greater peace of mind.

Being so ancient and venerable, there is some debate as to how Feng Shui got started. However, it is widely accepted that it was originally developed by the Chinese to ensure their ancestors were buried in the most auspicious

surroundings. As ancestor worship was (and is) a very important part of Chinese culture, it was believed that the location of an ancestor's final resting-place was of vital importance to the health, prosperity and general well being of his or her descendants. In the Chinese tradition it is believed that the dead are directly able to affect the lives of the living.

Feng Shui is believed to have been applied to gravesites during the Kuo P'ò era, although basic texts about Feng Shui are known to have been in existence for over 4,000 years. Interestingly, a Neolithic tomb was found in China that contained clear Feng Shui markings still used in contemporary Feng Shui. The tomb faced north and had the four celestial animals of Feng Shui engraved on the internal walls.

Originally Feng Shui was used exclusively by the ruling classes, as only they could afford to spend time and money on the most propitious locations for their ancestors' burial places. However, somewhere between the sixth and ninth centuries before the Christian Era (BC) the practice of Feng Shui had been sufficiently opened up to allow ordinary Chinese people to use it. Certainly, by the middle of the eleventh century of the Christian Era, it was being applied to the dwelling places of the ordinary people. However, after the Cultural Revolution, practicing Feng Shui was a punishable offence, which prompted the existing Feng Shui masters to flee, mostly to Taiwan and Hong Kong.

As Feng Shui developed, the ancient masters came to understand that the forces of nature are different in relation to every individual building. They recognised that each piece of land manifests its own 'energy' and is subject to various influences from the environment. They developed an understanding of 'placement' and from centuries of empirical study realised that certain influences within the environment are beneficial while other influences could actually bring harm.

Thus Feng Shui developed into a science which could enable people to align themselves with the natural forces of good energy – bringing them beneficial fortune or good luck. Or, conversely, Feng Shui could prevent them from unknowingly aligning themselves with disturbed forces – the negative, unseen, toxic energies that can affect and influence every environment and building.

It is important to realise that Feng Shui is not a religion, although it does emanate from the Tao system of belief and is, in many ways, closely connected to it.

Tao (pronounced 'Dow'), roughly translated into English means 'path' or 'the way'. Essentially, Tao is indefinable. It is far less a theoretical philosophy and much more an empirical one, as it has to be experienced. Tao is a combination of psychology, philosophy and a strategy for living and refers to a power or energy which surrounds and flows through everything, both living and non-living. The Tao regulates natural processes and promotes balance in the Universe by embodying the harmony of opposites – there would be no good without bad, no light without dark, no male without female. The Tao is based on a life lived in conformity with the natural way of things.

Similarly, Feng Shui could accurately be described as a philosophy or a metaphysical belief based, in the final analysis, upon people living in balance and harmony. Although Feng Shui is founded upon mystic Chinese wisdom and can be likened to geomancy, which in English literally means divining the future through an examination of the formations of the landscape, it is nevertheless closely allied to everyday practicality. It incorporates elements of (and novel concepts about) geography, aesthetics, ecology, psychology, astrology and topography.

The point of Feng Shui is to harness the beneficial life force energies in a way that allows them to linger and meander through the building as well as reducing the negative effects from disturbing life forces.

Yet, as you will see, Feng Shui encompasses even more than this. It is, in fact, a completely holistic approach to life and plays a vital part in our existence. This is illustrated by an expression of the Chinese who say:-

- first comes a person's destiny
- second is their luck
- third is their Feng Shui
- fourth is their virtue
- fifth is their knowledge

These are considered the factors that most affect the quality of one's life. It is interesting to note that, unlike people in the West, the Chinese do not put knowledge or its acquisition as the top priority... other factors, including Feng Shui, are believed to be more influential in their lives. Also, when we consider the five factors, Feng Shui is the first of the controllable factors within our lives. Destiny and luck are predetermined at birth.

A literal translation of the term Feng Shui is 'wind and water' but a looser or more figurative interpretation of the term suggests that Feng Shui encompasses the entire natural environment – as represented by wind and water. The term implies the truly dynamic expression of nature.

Water especially is a symbol of strength hidden within apparent weakness. Lao Tse, (604-531BC) the ancient philosopher and the person considered to be the founder of Taoism, pointed out that, although water gathers in lowly places and has no shape of its own, it can overpower or undermine the strongest obstacles; buildings, cities, great rocks, even mountains. Within the modern interpretation of Feng Shui, water means not only literal water, in the shape of rivers or lakes, but also means in modern cities, the flow created by roads, streets, freeways and railways. The term Shui therefore embraces much of our modern physical environment.

'Feng' is more difficult to explain. The term refers not only to wind and air and the perceived energies in our environment, but also to something far more abstract. Feng is also invisible energy. The word includes all the natural forces unseen by the naked eye; all the energies which, although ignored, unrecognised and frequently dismissed by some, were believed by the ancient Chinese (and by many people today) to permeate our cosmos.

All of us know about invisible forces such as gravity, magnetism, cosmic waves and radioactivity and are aware how much these invisible forces may affect us. Although it can be measured, no one can see radiation. Yet no one in their right mind would want to live close to a source of it and living close to electricity pylons and within range of the invisible electromagnetic forces they exude, is now considered to be injurious to health.

What the ancient Chinese discovered was that both visible and invisible forces have a natural inclination; a direction they most often follow and that those different forces are associated with different directions.

What's more, these forces were not static, but moved in a predictable pattern and sequence.

It was the understanding of these forces and how they moved that became the study of Feng Shui. And as they studied, those ancient philosophers came to understand that Feng Shui can:

- create for those who understand and use it properly a healthy and prosperous environment;

- help in the selection of a prosperous site as the location of our homes and offices;
- indicate the best form of interior design and decoration to enhance harmony, health, prosperity and to avoid misfortune;
- point up the best individual decoration to achieve an individual's prosperity and harmony;
- become helpful in forecasting events;
- an aid to understanding the cyclical change of luck over time.

Feng Shui has often been called the Art of Placement. It is. But, it is also much, much more than that.