

2025 Ningbo Open Kicks Off! What to Expect?

Striving towards a modern
coastal metropolis
建设现代化滨海大都市

The 2025 Ningbo Open, one of the most anticipated stops on the WTA China tour, is now in full swing. From October 11 to 19, this WTA 500 tournament on hard courts features an A-list lineup, thrilling competition, immersive cultural experiences, and a venue with spectacular design.

A Star-Studded Showdown

Four of world's Top 10 players make their appearance, creating a dreamlike lineup for this year's event. Notably, four Grand Slam champions — Elena Rybakina, Markéta Vondroušová, Emma Raducanu, and Sofia Kenin — bring their signature style and fierce competitiveness to the courts.

For many players, Ningbo has become more than just a tour stop; it's a critical battleground to qualify for the year-end finals. The WTA 500 event offers a \$1 million prize pool, with 500 ranking points and \$142,000 awarded to the singles champion. Qualifying rounds began on October 11, followed by the main draw since October 13.

The competition in this week will witness thrilling clashes as the early rounds already delivered

intense rallies and dramatic tie-breaks.

Chinese spectators have a special reason to cheer as the competition would be one of the most exciting events of Chinese tennis season. Wang Xinyu, fresh off a strong season that included a silver medal at the Paris Olympics, leads the charge in the home game and faces a world-class field.

Since its debut as a WTA 250 event in 2023, the Ningbo Open has grown to a WTA 500 in 2024 and 2025. "Ningbo has established itself as a key link in the WTA China swing," noted Zheng Jie, Vice President of the Chinese Tennis Association and tournament ambassador, "It's a place where top players meet passionate fans and where sports and culture intersect in extraordinary ways."

A Blooming "Camellia"

The venue itself has undergone a remarkable transformation. On October 4, the Ningbo (Yinzhou) Tennis Center unveiled its centerpiece: a massive retractable roof inspired by the shape of camellia, Ningbo's city flower. The roof consists of twelve curved panels, or "petals," which glide along advanced radial tracks. It takes less than ten minutes to fully open or close the roof.

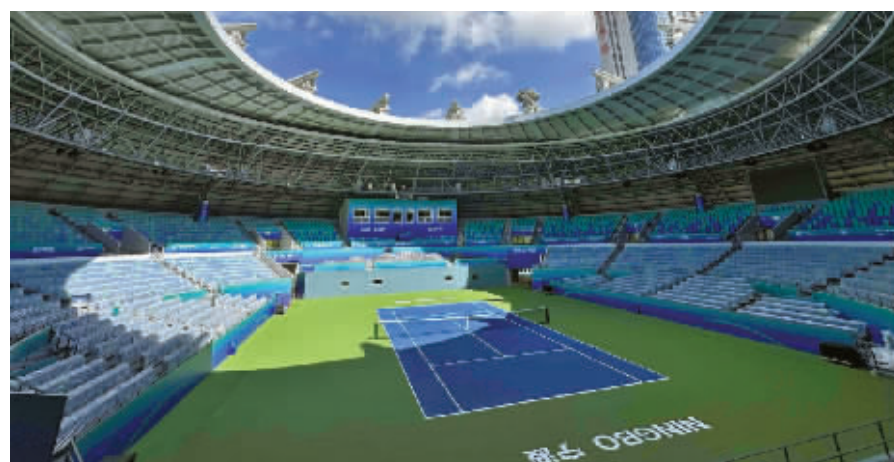
"The 'camellia'-shaped design enables us to hold events in an all-weather venue," said one of the lead engineers, highlighting the stadium's new ability to run uninterrupted matches.

The technical challenge was immense. Unlike building a new stadium, the team had to integrate the roof into the existing structure. Each panel, spanning 300 square meters and weighing 40-50 tons, rests on a solitary beam just one

meter wide and 50 meters long. The closure gaps between the petals are limited to just five centimeters — a feat requiring extraordinary precision.

The team completed the installation on schedule despite heavy summer rains and typhoon conditions. Now, the gleaming camellia roof stands as a symbol of Ningbo's commitment to hosting world-class sports events.

The upgrades extend beyond the main court. The revamped venue is headlined by a new 1,200-seat show court, enhanced training observation areas, autograph zone, and two merchandise stores—where over 40 exclusive tournament-themed products are available this year. Besides, the "Tennis Lifestyle Festival" marked by the integration of food, camping, and cultural markets offers an immersive experience for audiences.



Inside the court.

A Cultural Experience Beyond Tennis

While tennis draws players to Ningbo, it's the city's culture that leaves a lasting impression. On October 9, latest stars Lilli Tagger of the Republic of Austria and Linda Fruhvirtová of the Czech Republic stepped away from the courts to explore the Taolu Cultural Block at Dongqian Lake Tourist Resort.

The historic alleys, lined with ancient walls and distinctive fish-basket doorframes, immediately captivated the players. And the hands-on Song-style tea ceremony allows them to whisk tea into delicate froth—a ritual dating back nearly a thousand years.

"It's amazing that every small detail reflects a deep cultural meaning," said Tagger, this year's junior singles champion at Roland Garros. "Everything is authentic and peaceful. It's a very different rhythm from the tour."

In a fragrance workshop, the players blended osmanthus flowers from

Mount Taogong and lotus leaves from Dongqian Lake to create a personalized scent — their own "Ningbo Memory." According to Fruhvirtová, on her third trip to Ningbo, the experience deepens her appreciation of the city. "It's the combination of history and modern energy that fascinates me."

These cultural excursions, newly added to the official itinerary, aim to enhance players' connection to the local community. "Through tennis, the world sees Ningbo," expressed an event spokesperson. "And through culture, players see the heart of Ningbo."

Fans at the cultural sites have also engaged enthusiastically, sharing live updates and videos online. Many spectators combined the event journey with visits to Dongqian Lake, creating a unique blend of sport and heritage that underscores Ningbo's identity as both a modern city and a cultural hub.

A Global Stage, A Local Story

In just two years, the Ningbo Open has grown from a WTA 250 to a WTA 500 event, becoming a vital stop on the China tennis calendar. But beyond rankings and prize money, Ningbo's uniqueness lies in its seamless blend of elite competition, cultural heritage, and cutting-edge infrastructure.

With matches already underway, the tournament has delivered thrilling rallies, dramatic tiebreaks, and unexpected upsets, captivating both local fans and global viewers.

The first rounds have also provided a platform for rising local talent to compete against world-class stars, highlighting Ningbo as a nurturing ground for China's next generation of tennis champions. Fans have praised the acces-

sibility of the venue and the interactive experiences alongside matches, creating an intimate and spectacular atmosphere.

As the tournament lasts until October 19, the world is watching more than just a tennis competition — it's witnessing a city stepping confidently onto the global stage. The camellia roof, the ancient charm of the cultural excursions, and the world-class roster together contribute to an unforgettable 2025 Ningbo Open, where sport and culture meet under the iconic roof.

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