

Yellow Pages

The Insider's Guide to Beijing is the definitive guide for anyone planning to stay in the city for a while. It includes information on schools, doctors (of both Western and Chinese medicine) and where to get the best Peking duck, where to buy Italian shoes for kids and how to buy a house in the city. The guide covers everything from transportation to adult education. The 2007 edition also has a section on the Olympics. And since it includes lots of information about daily life in China from a foreigner's perspective, it's also a good read for the armchair traveler. Available in bookstores in major Chinese cities or order from www.immersionguides.com

The most expensive wax figures at the Chinese Waxwork Museum are those of the Top Ten Marshals of China wearing the clothes that made them famous. The figures are worth more than 1 million yuan. See these and other historic Chinese celebrities at the Chinese National Museum (the marshals are on the second floor), on the east side of Tian An Men Square. Reservations and special discounts: Tel. +86 10 65138095 or +86 10 65138940.

Nan Luo Gu Xiang is a small, lively Beijing street dating from the Yuan dynasty (1267). It currently hosts many cafés that are second homes to young artists and expatriates. Locals have named it "Centipede Street" because it is the starting point for eight *hutongs*, or lanes.

The decor of the Zha Zha (Magpie) Café could be mistaken for a 1970s Chinese TV set. It's co-owned by two former students of the Central Academy of Theater, and local artists frequent the café to exchange ideas and experiences. 101 Nan Luo Gu Xiang. For reservations: Tel. +86 10 84024851.

Great Chinese epic films always need extras. Recent Chinese blockbusters like *The Promise* used as many as 400 extras. Aspiring actors will do anything to start a career in the film industry. If you aspire to an acting career, go to the gates of the Beijing Film Studio. Talent scouts and directors (including some of the most famous Chinese directors) scan the crowds looking for the next big star. It could be you.

Two Mongolian brothers who are also horseback riding enthusiasts and excellent photographers are the owners of the Hourglass Café, which serves some of Beijing's best drinks. If you dare, try the drinks named after the owners and their cat (Alus, Wula, and Moka). 1 Mao Er Hutong, Nan Luo Gu Xiang. Tel. +86 10 64023529.

Looking for European food in Beijing? Go to the Passbybar. The well-traveled owner has decorated the walls with souvenirs of his trips. The restaurant is a favorite for homesick Europeans. 108 Nan Luo Gu Xiang. Tel. +86 10 84038004.

Gao Xiao Hutong is the narrowest hutong in Beijing. At some points the hutong is only 65 cm wide, allowing only one person to pass at one time. This causes severe pedestrian traffic in the area. If you're claustrophobic, avoid this hutong at all cost.

A Jian Bing Guo Zi should never cost more than 3 yuan (US\$0.38). This popular breakfast choice is the best deal you can get on Beijing's streets. It's made of millet or green bean powder, eggs, thick sauce and spring onions. For an additional 0.5 yuan (US\$0.06), you can get a fried bread stick or cold beef with your Jian Bing Guo Zi.

In Beijing not all apartments have bathrooms. But there is a solution. Get a complete bathing experience in the public baths in the hutongs. You can indulge yourself with anything from a shower to an intense scrub or massage, while someone cleans you. Prices at the Dong Xiao Shi Public Baths range from 5 to 15 yuan (US\$0.70-1.90) for a shower or a massage.

Oracles and fortune-tellers around the Lama Temple can help you improve your luck and that of your children. Make an appointment with an oracle to get a fortunate Chinese name or some advice for only 100 yuan (US\$12.5).

China has a booming music scene. At Bai Tang Guan in Beijing you can find that CD of the unknown Chinese band you heard in Berlin or Brooklyn or the one you discovered through a blog. Bai Tang Guan is the

city's best underground music store. Owner Lao Yang claims to "live a life sweeter than sugar" among his stacks of CDs and albums. To talk music with Lao Yang, give him a call: Tel. +86 10 64331449 or 66406620.

Without time for dating, matchmaking is delegated to parents. The best place in Beijing to find an interesting prospect for your son or daughter is the Temple of Heaven (9-12 Mon., Tues., Wed. and Fri.) and Yu Yuan Tan park (1-5pm Tues. and Sat.). Send your parents with your CV, photos, personal information, measurements and aspirations in life to one of many "future-parents-in-law" parks, where parents exchange photos of their children like trading cards, searching for the best match for their son or daughter.

You don't need an invitation to enjoy the food and drink at a local wedding. If you're a foreigner, people will think you are a distinguished guest. If you're a local, people will think the same. Crash a wedding for food or for fun and eat like a king at one of the many weddings that take place every weekend at Beijing's best hotels.

Chairman Mao is for sale. Get your very own Chairman Mao statue at Pan Jia Yuan Market. Most of Mao Zedong's statues in China were based on the same pose: Chairman Mao saluting the Chinese people. You can still buy mini-reproductions of the statues for about 50 yuan (US\$7).

Outdoor dancing is popular in Beijing. The outdoor dance square located outside the famous New Century restaurants hosts thousands of dancers every day. Individual and group dance lessons are available.

Something bought in one of the real fake stores could be the ultimate souvenir of Beijing. The finest fake goods are on sale only in the best fake stores. There is fierce competition among distributors for the best fake goods. Fakes of European designer bags sell well and look like the real thing. The best-known store for real fake items is located at the intersection of Xi Dan and Wu Dao Kou.

Hire a friend for a better touring experience. Most people like to avoid the tag of tourist while traveling. To explore the "real" Beijing you can hire a "real" local from the Beijing Language University. They will help you see Beijing and discover things you won't find in any tourist guidebook. And it's a real cultural exchange: Language students are eager to learn from you and show you the life of local people in Beijing. The university also offers the best Chinese courses for foreigners.

The world of porridge is vast and complex. Porridges have a tradition in China, and in Beijing you can find the right porridge for every situation. Haw porridge will help you lose weight, carrot or garlic porridge protects your heart, lotus leaf porridge lowers blood pressure, ginger porridge cures a cold, Chinese date porridge helps cure insomnia. Try them all at the Zhuang Yuan Hong porridge restaurant: Ground floor, Long bao Da Sha, Mai Zi Dian Street, Chao Yang District.

At the 798 Photo Gallery you can see the work of Weng Nai Qiang. His work documents in an extraordinary way the historical period of the Cultural Revolution. For a preview of his photos, visit www.798photogallery.cn



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Winter in Beijing can be as invigorating as a winter in the Alps. There are ski resorts close to Beijing that offer plentiful snow and amazing mountain views. Stay overnight at Russian-style villas or exotic Mongolian tents. The Jundushan Ski Resort, Huaibei Ski Resort and Nanshan Ski Village will satisfy all your ski needs.

Tel. +86 10 69661177. www.hbski.com



The National Tourism Administration holds travel agents responsible for educating and guiding Chinese tourists abroad so they don't misbehave. Newspapers in Southeast Asia and China often carry stories of people refusing to get off airplanes to protest delays, and of littering in parks and spitting in hotel rooms.

Xiangsheng (crosstalk) is traditional Chinese comedy in the form of monologue or dialogue. The language is rich in puns and allusions. Performances are of high quality and hip-hop fans would appreciate their counterpoints of rhymes and rhythm. Weekend Xiangsheng Club, 3rd floor, Dong Cheng Wen Hua Guan. Tel. +86 10 64015522.

With 8 million bicycles, Beijing is the bike capital of the world. You can get one for 20-25US\$. There are plenty of city tour guides who will show you the town by bike but you can also explore it on your own. Get a bike at the Wind Speed Cycling store. www.windspeedcycling.com

Beijing's history goes far back into ancient times, and you can still find 11th century traces in the older part of the city. Return to the past and visit the three gates of the wall that protected Beijing during the Ming Dynasty (1435): Desheng Gate, Yongding Gate and Zhengyang Gate.

China is home to more than 56 ethnicities. To learn about them, go to the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park where you'll find out that the Han nation is the dominant majority and you can find out something about the other 55 minority nations. 1 Min Zu Yuan Lu, Chao Yang District.

Beijing has 6,300 km of water pipes. Find out more about the city's water supply at the Tap Water Museum. You'll find a map of Beijing's underground water system and models of the city's main water purifying systems. Open 9am-4pm Wed.-Sun. Admission RMB 5. 6A Dongzhimennwai Beidajie, Dongcheng District. Tel. +86 10 64650780.

There are about 4,000 public toilets in Beijing. They are especially important in the old areas of the city, where many people don't have toilets in their homes. Most of the public toilets were getting old and smelly, so in 2002 the city established an annual fund of 100 million yuan to modernize public toilets. Toilets are now rated by a star system. Five stars is the best. Bring your own toilet paper.

Millions of years ago Beijing was the site of a glacier. Find out what it left behind at the Fourth Period Glacier Museum. Exhibits include dinosaur eggs and maps. Open 8am-5pm daily. Admission RMB 5. 28 Moshikou, Shijingshan District. Tel. +86 10 88722585.

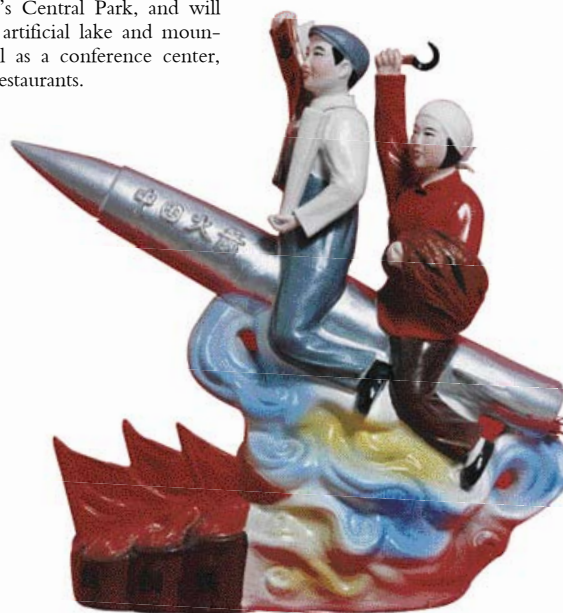
Late at night many children can be seen begging on Beijing's streets. Their "managers" expect them to bring in money. The children are usually dirty and hungry. And in winter the streets are cold. Stacey Hayes has set up Wisdom Springs, an organization that works to get children off the streets and give them an education. It currently houses about 37 young people aged 12 to 20 and needs donations to continue its work. To help, contact: wisdomsprings@psmail.net



The China Honey Bee Museum is located in the Botanical Gardens. Taste different types of honey and see bee-keeping paraphernalia. Open 8am-4pm. Admission RMB 2. Fragrant Hills Botanical Gardens, Haidian District. Tel. +86 10 82590094.

By 2008 all the road signs in the city will be bilingual. The Communication Management Department of Beijing Municipal Government is open to suggestions for setting up signs and lights. To propose ideas: Tel. +86 10 68398087.

Beijing's biggest urban park, the Olympic Forest park, will open by the end of 2007. It will cover 680 hectares, which is twice the size of New York's Central Park, and will include an artificial lake and mountain as well as a conference center, shops and restaurants.



During the Cultural Revolution Beijing's music scene was strongly influenced by Russian music. Punk rock offers an alternative lifestyle to Chinese youths. Listen to punk rock at the Hao Yun Club and meet some of Beijing's real punks.

See what Beijing looks like from above. The Beijing Planning Museum features a 302 m² model of the city. And all around the model are aerial photos of the city under 1,000 m² of glass panels. Open 9am-5pm daily except Mon. Admission: RMB 30. 20 Qianmendong Dajie, Chongwen District. Tel. +86 10 67024559. www.bjghz.com.cn

In 2005 Beijing was the most polluted city in the world (there are about 400,000 pollution-related deaths each year). When the API (Air Pollution Index) reaches level 3 the very young and very old may start to feel the effects. When it reaches level 7 you should stay indoors. Using an air purifier in your home helps. But don't bother to wear a paper mask – they protect your lungs from dust particles and soot but not from the gases that are the most dangerous components of pollution. Beijing's Environmental Protection Bureau announces the API recorded for the previous day. See www.bjepb.gov.cn