



# Běijīng

POPULATION: 15.6 MILLION / TELEPHONE CODE: 010

## Includes »

Sights .....	46
Activities .....	71
Festivals & Events .....	72
Sleeping .....	73
Eating .....	79
Drinking .....	82
Entertainment .....	84
Shopping .....	86
Getting There & Away ..	90

## Best Places to Eat

- » Xiao Wang's Home Restaurant (p79)
- » Capital M (p81)
- » Dàlǐ Courtyard (p79)
- » Crescent Moon Muslim Restaurant (p79)
- » Vineyard Cafe (p79)
- » Element Fresh (p82)

## Best Places to Stay

- » City Walls Courtyard (p74)
- » Opposite House Hotel (p77)
- » Peking International Youth Hostel (p74)
- » Michael's House (p78)
- » Běijīng Downtown Backpackers Accommodation (p74)

## Why Go?

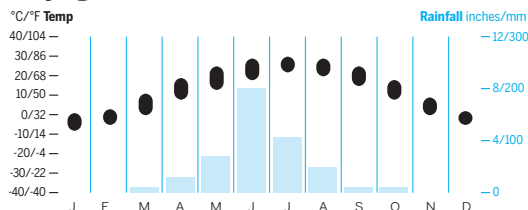
Běijīng (北京) is one of China's true ancient citadels. It is also a confident and modern city that seems assured of its destiny to rule over China till the end of time. Its architecture traces every mood swing from Mongol times to the present, from neglected *hùtòng* (alleyways) to bomb shelters scooped out during the 1970s and the shimmering baubles of contemporary architects.

It's Běijīng's epic imperial grandeur that is awe-inspiring, and there's still much more substance here than in China's other dynastic capitals, bar Nánjīng or Kāifēng. You just need to do a bit of patient exploration to tap into its historical narrative.

The city's denizens chat in Běijīnghuà – the gold standard of Mandarin – and marvel at their good fortune for occupying the centre of the known world. And for all its gusto, Běijīng dispenses with the persistent pace of Shànghǎi or Hong Kong, and locals instead find time to sit out front, play chess and watch the world go by.

## When to Go

### Běijīng



**September–early November** The weather is gorgeously fresh, with blue skies and fewer tourists.

**March & April** Warming up but have your goggles ready for spring dust storms.

## History

Although seeming to have presided over China since time immemorial, Běijīng (Northern Capital) – positioned outside the central heartland of Chinese civilisation – only emerged as a cultural and political force that would shape the destiny of China with the 13th-century Mongol occupation of China.

Located on a vast plain that extends south as far as the distant Yellow River (Huáng Hé), Běijīng benefits from neither proximity to a major river nor the sea. Without its strategic location on the edge of the North China Plain, it would hardly be an ideal place to locate a major city, let alone a national capital.

Chinese historical sources identify the earliest settlements in these parts from 1045 BC. In later centuries Běijīng was successively occupied by foreign forces: it was established as an auxiliary capital under the Khitan Liao and later as the capital under the Jurchen Jin, when it was enclosed within fortified walls, accessed by eight gates.

In AD 1215 the great Mongol warrior Genghis Khan's army razed Běijīng, an event that was paradoxically to mark Běijīng's transformation into a powerful national capital. Apart from the first 53 years of the Ming dynasty and 21 years of Nationalist rule in the 20th century, it has enjoyed this status to the present day.

The city came to be called Dàdū (大都; Great Capital), also assuming the Mongol name Khanbalik (the Khan's town). By 1279, under the rule of Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, Dàdū was the capital of the largest empire the world has ever known.

The basic grid of present-day Běijīng was laid during the Ming dynasty, and Emperor Yongle (r 1403–24) is credited with being the true architect of the modern city. Much of Běijīng's grandest architecture, such as the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven, date from his reign.

The Manchus, who invaded China in the 17th century to establish the Qing dynasty, essentially preserved Běijīng's form. In the last 120 years of the Qing dynasty, Běijīng, and subsequently China, was subjected to power struggles and invasions and the ensuing chaos. The list is long: the Anglo-French troops who in 1860 burnt the Old Summer Palace to the ground; the corrupt regime of Empress Dowager Cixi; the catastrophic Boxer Rebellion; General Yuan Shikai; the warlords; the Japanese occupation of 1937;

and the Kuomintang. Each and every period left its undeniable mark, although the shape and symmetry of Běijīng was maintained.

Modern Běijīng came of age when, in January 1949, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered the city. On 1 October of that year Mao Zedong proclaimed a 'People's Republic' from the Gate of Heavenly Peace to an audience of some 500,000 citizens.

Like the emperors before them, the communists significantly altered the face of Běijīng. The *pàilóu* (decorative archways) were brought down and whole city blocks were pulverised to widen major boulevards. From 1950 to 1952, the city's magnificent outer walls were levelled in the interests of traffic circulation. Soviet experts and technicians poured in, bringing their own Stalinesque touches.

The past quarter of a century has transformed Běijīng into a modern city, with skyscrapers, slick shopping malls and heaving flyovers. The once flat skyline is now crenellated with vast apartment blocks and office buildings. Recent years have also seen a convincing beautification of Běijīng: from a toneless and unkempt city to a greener, cleaner and more pleasant place.

The year 2008 was Běijīng's modern coming-of-age. The city spent three times the amount Athens spent on the 2004 Olympics to ensure the Běijīng Olympic Games were the most expensive in history.

As Běijīng continues to evolve, it is shredding its increasingly tenuous links with its ancient past one fibre at a time. Even the old-school *China Daily* has observed that 4.43 million sq metres of old courtyards have been demolished in Běijīng since 1990, or 40% of the downtown area. The historic area

## PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

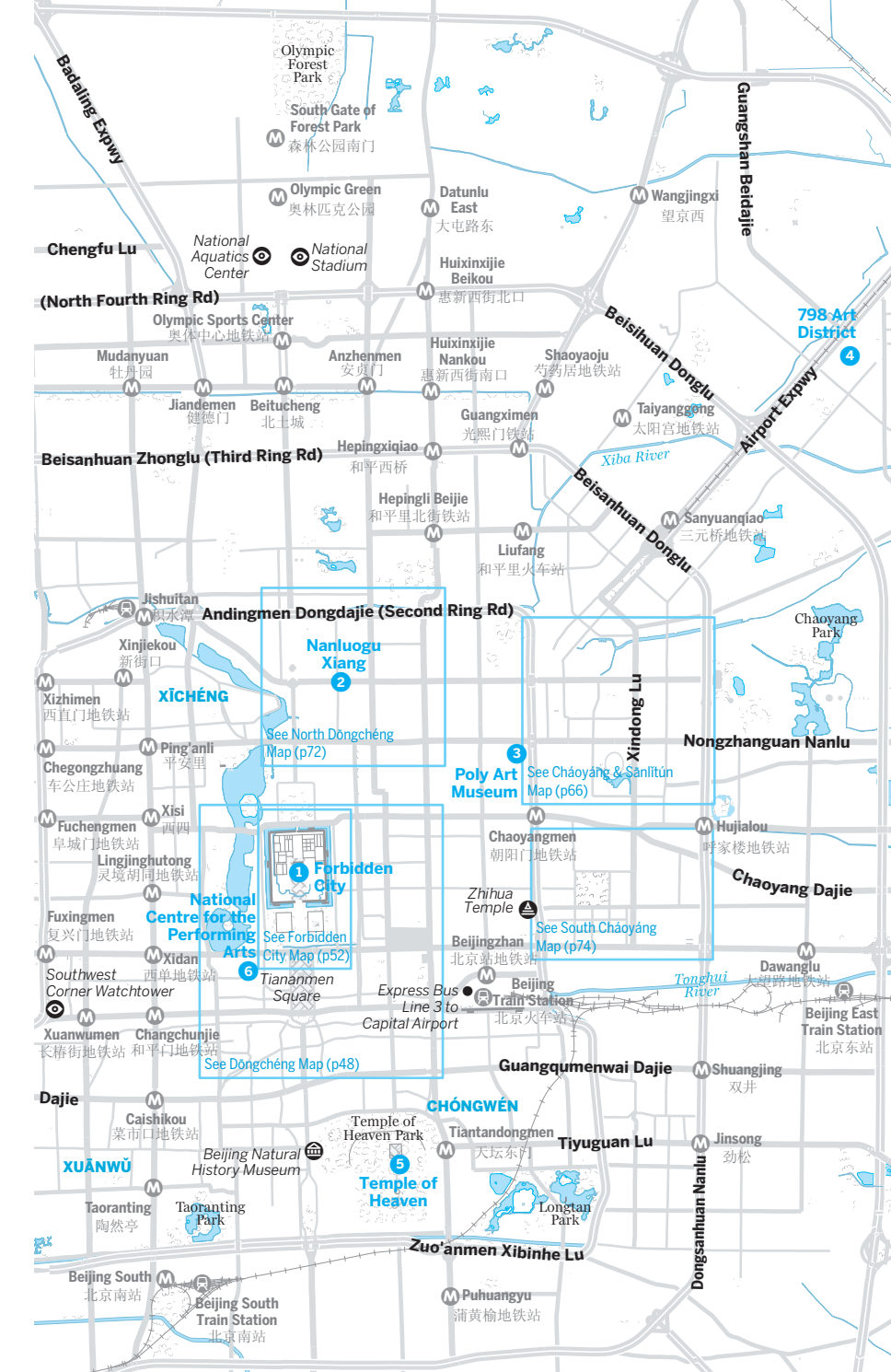
### Sleeping

\$	less than Y400
\$\$	Y400 to Y1000
\$\$\$	more than Y1000

### Eating

\$	less than Y40
\$\$	Y40 to Y100
\$\$\$	more than Y100





Olympic Forest Park  
South Gate of Forest Park  
森林公园南門

Olympic Green  
奥林匹克公園

Datanlu East  
大屯路东

Wangjingxi  
望京西

Chengfu Lu

National Aquatics Center  
National Stadium

(North Fourth Ring Rd)

Olympic Sports Center  
奥体中心地铁站

Mudanyuan  
牡丹园

Anzhenmen  
安贞门

Huixinxijie Beikou  
惠新西街北口

Huixinxijie Nankou  
惠新西街南口

Shaoyaoju  
芍药居地铁站

798 Art District  
4

Jiandemen  
健德门

Beitucheng  
北土城

Guangximen  
光熙门地铁站

Taiyanggong  
太阳宫地铁站

Beisanhuan Zhonglu (Third Ring Rd)

Hepingxiaoqiao  
和平西桥

Hepingli Beijie  
和平里北街地铁站

Liufang  
和平里火车站

Sanyuanqiao  
三元桥地铁站

Andingmen Dongdajie (Second Ring Rd)

Nanluogu Xiang  
2

XICHENG

See North Dongcheng  
Map (p72)

Poly Art Museum  
3

See Chaoyang & Sanlitun  
Map (p66)

Nongzhanguan Nanlu

National Centre for the Performing Arts  
1

See Forbidden City Map (p52)

Chaoyangmen  
朝阳门地铁站

Hujialou  
呼家楼地铁站

Chaoyang Dajie

Fuxingmen  
复兴门地铁站

Xidan  
西单地铁站

Southwest Corner Watchtower

Xuanwumen  
长椿街地铁站

Changchunjie  
和平门地铁站

Tiananmen Square  
6

Express Bus Line 3 to Capital Airport

Beijing Train Station  
北京火车站

Zhihua Temple  
See South Chaoyang Map (p74)

Dawanglu  
大望路地铁站

Beijing East Train Station  
北京东站

Dajie

Caishikou  
菜市口地铁站

Temple of Heaven Park

CHONGWEN

Temple of Heaven  
5

Guangqumenwai Dajie

Shuangjing  
双井

XUANWU

Taoranting  
陶然亭

Taoranting Park

Beijing Natural History Museum

Tiantandongmen  
天坛东门

Tiyuguan Lu

Jinsong  
劲松

Beijing South Train Station  
北京南站

Beijing South Train Station  
北京南站

Zuo'anmen Xibinhe Lu

Puhuangyu  
蒲黄榆地铁站

Dongsanhuan Nanlu

around the Drum and Bell Towers emerged in 2010 as a strong candidate for a 'Ye Olde Peking' remodelling, but at the time of writing the plan had been thankfully shelved.

### Climate

In winter, it's glacial outside (dipping as low as  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and the northern winds cut like a knife through bean curd. Arid spring is OK but awesome sand clouds sweep into town and static electricity discharges everywhere. Spring also sees the *liǔwù* (willow catkins) wafting through the air like slow-motion snowflakes. From May onwards the mercury can surge over  $30^{\circ}\text{C}$  and a scorching sun roasts Běijīng in summer (reaching over  $40^{\circ}\text{C}$ ); heavy rainstorms crash down late in the season. Summer is also curiously considered the peak season. Air pollution can be heavy in both summer and winter.

### Language

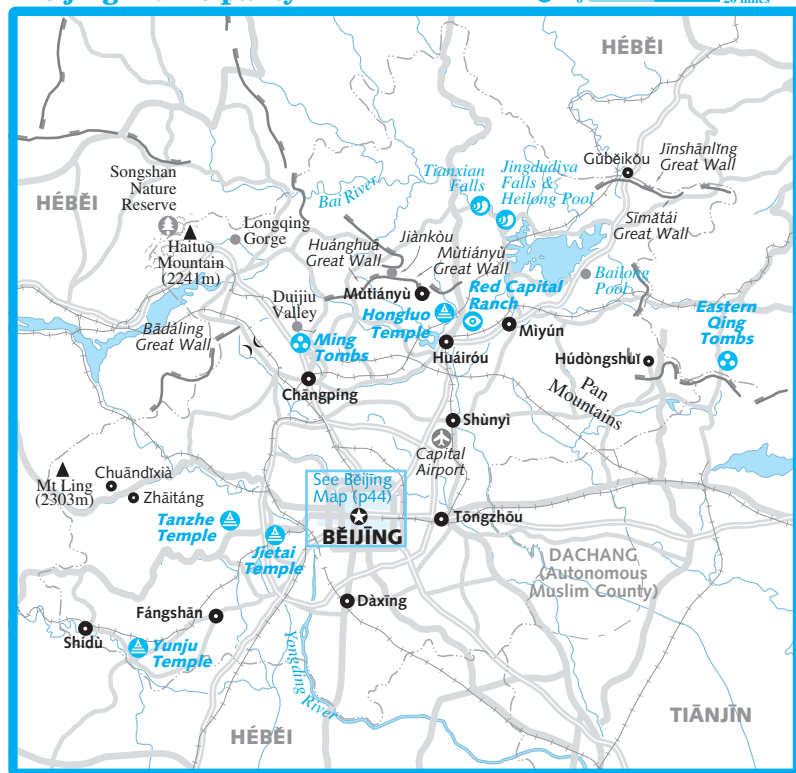
Běijīnghuà (北京话), the Chinese spoken in the capital, is seen by purists as the finest

variety of the Chinese language. Although the standard Mandarin is based on the Běijīng dialect, the two are very different in both accent and colloquialisms. Běijīnghuà is under threat from migrants who flock to town, bringing their own dialects in tow.

### Sights

With a total area of 16,800 sq km, Běijīng municipality is roughly the size of Belgium. The city itself is also colossal, but its central area has a highly ordered design and symmetry. Think of Běijīng as one giant grid, with the Forbidden City at its centre. The historical central areas east and west of the Forbidden City are Dōngchéng and Xīchéng, in what was known as the Tartar City during Manchu rule. South of Tiān'ānmén Sq are the historic districts of Xuānwū and Chóngwén in the former Chinese City, while Cháoyáng District occupies much of Běijīng's east and north. The huge district of Hǎidiàn sprawls to the northwest.

## Běijīng Municipality



The lion's share of Běijīng's sights lie within the city proper. Notable exceptions are the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs.

## DŌNGCHÉNG

东城区

FREE

### Tiān'ānmén Square

SQUARE

(天安门广场; Tiān'ānmén Guǎngchǎng; Map p48; 天安门广场; Tiān'ānmén Xi, Tiān'ānmén Dōng or Qiánmén) Flanked by stern 1950s Soviet-style buildings and ringed by white perimeter fences, the world's largest public square (440,000 sq metres) is an immense flatland of paving stones at the heart of Běijīng.

Height restrictions have kept surrounding buildings low, allowing largely uninterrupted views of the dome of the sky. Kites flit through the air, children stamp around on the paving slabs and Chinese out-of-towners huddle together for the obligatory photo opportunity with the great helmsman's portrait. On National Day (1 October), Tiān'ānmén Sq heaves with visitors.

In the square, one stands in the symbolic centre of the Chinese universe. The rectangular arrangement, flanked by halls to both east and west, to some extent echoes the layout of the Forbidden City: as such, the square employs a conventional plan that pays obeisance to traditional Chinese culture, but many of its ornaments and buildings are Soviet-inspired. Mao conceived the square to project the enormity of the Communist Party, so it's all a bit Kim Il-Sungish. During the Cultural Revolution, the Chairman, wearing a Red Guard armband, reviewed parades of up to a million people here. In 1976 the 'Tiananmen Incident' is the term given to the near-riot in the square that accompanied the death of Premier Zhou Enlai. Another million people jammed the square to pay their last respects to Mao in the same year. In 1989 army tanks and soldiers forced prodemocracy demonstrators out of the plaza.

Despite being a public place, the square remains more in the hands of the government than the people; it is monitored by closed circuit TV cameras, and plain-clothes police can move faster than the Shànghǎi Maglev if anyone strips down to a Free Tibet T-shirt. The designated points of access, sporadic security checks and twitchy mood cleave Tiān'ānmén Sq from the city. A tangible atmosphere of restraint and authority reigns; in fact, some might say the square symbolises the 'harmonious' China of today.

All this – plus the absence of anywhere to sit – means the square is hardly a place

## 'CON' ARTISTS & TEA MERCHANTS

Beware pesky 'art students' and English students around Wangfujing Dajie, Tiān'ānmén Sq and other tourist areas. They drag Western visitors to exhibitions of overpriced art or extortionate tea ceremonies; the latter may cost Y2000 or more. If approached by over-friendly girls wanting to speak English, refuse to go to a place of their choosing.

to chill out (don't whip out a guitar), but there's more than enough space to stretch a leg and the view can be simply breathtaking, especially on a clear blue day and at nightfall when the square is illuminated.

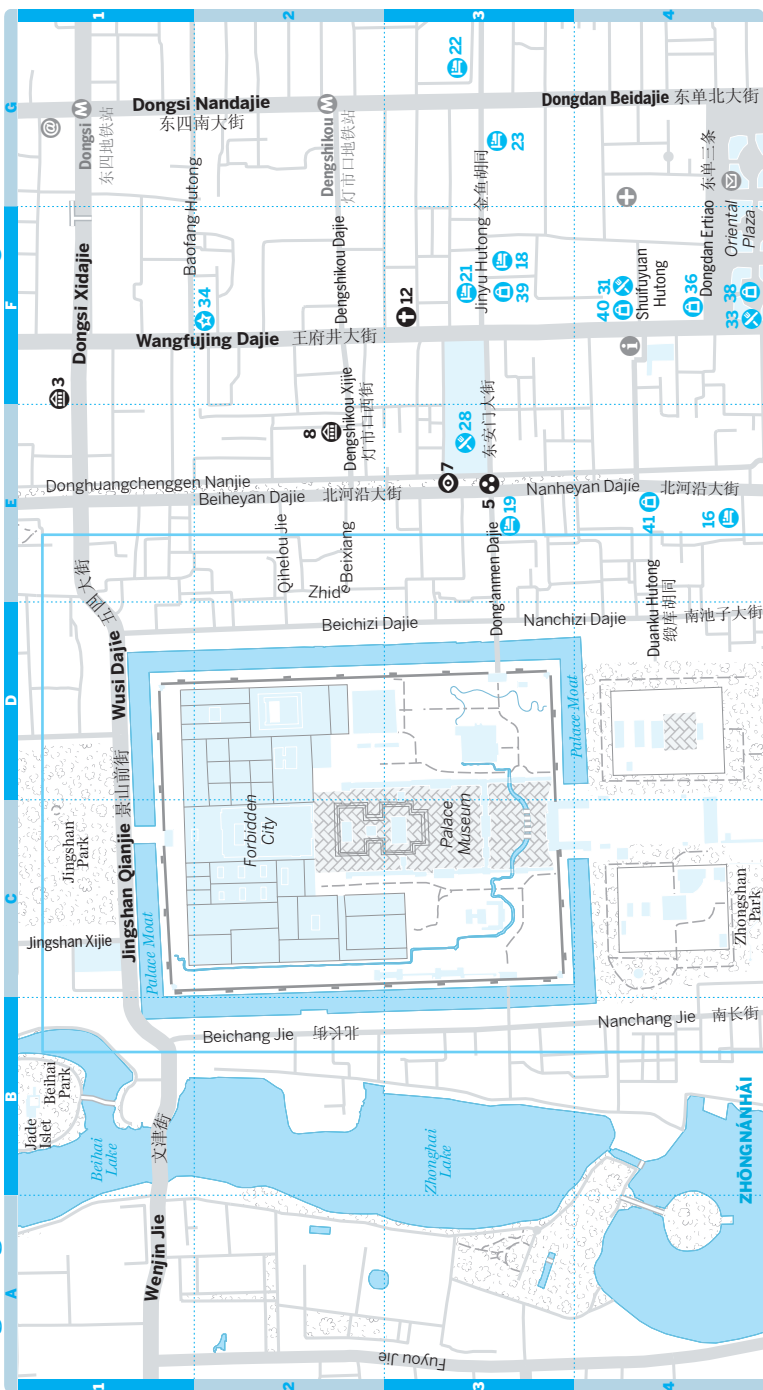
If you get up early you can watch the flag-raising ceremony at sunrise, performed by a troop of People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers drilled to march at precisely 108 paces per minute, 75cm per pace. The soldiers emerge through the Gate of Heavenly Peace to goosestep impeccably across Chang'an Jie; all traffic is halted. The same ceremony in reverse is performed at sunset. Ask at your hotel for flag-raising/lowering times; rise early, crowds can be intense.

## Forbidden City

HISTORIC SITE

(紫禁城; Zǐjìn Chéng; Map p52; www.dpm.org.cn; admission high/low season Y60/40, Clock Exhibition Hall Y10, Hall of Jewellery Y10, audio tour Y40; ☀8.30am-4.30pm, last tickets 3.30pm Oct-Mar, 4pm Apr-Sep; 天安门 Xi or Tiān'ānmén Dōng) Ringed by a 52m-wide moat at the very heart of Běijīng, the fantastically named Forbidden City is China's largest and best-preserved complex of ancient buildings. So called because it was off limits for 500 years, when it was steeped in stultifying ritual and Byzantine regal protocol, the otherworldly palace was the reclusive home to two dynasties of imperial rule until the Republic demoted the last Qing emperor to has-been.

The design of the palace was originally closely based on its grand and now dilapidated forerunner in Nánjīng. Today, the Forbidden City is prosaically known as the Palace Museum (故宫博物馆; Gùgōng Bówùguǎn). In former ages the price for uninvited admission was instant execution; these days Y40 will do. It's value for money







## Dōngchéng

## 📍 Top Sights

Běijīng Police Museum.....	E6
Dashilar .....	C8
Foreign Legation Quarter.....	E6
Front Gate .....	C6
Great Hall of the People .....	C5
National Centre for the Performing Arts .....	B5
Qianmen Dajie.....	D7
Tiananmen Square .....	C5

## 📍 Sights

1 Běijīng Planning Exhibition Hall.....	D7
2 Chairman Mao Memorial Hall.....	C6
3 China Art Gallery .....	F1
4 China National Museum.....	D5
5 Dōng'ān Mén Remains .....	E3
6 Former French Legation .....	F6
7 Imperial Wall Foundation Ruins Park.....	E3
8 Lao She Museum .....	E2
9 Legation Quarter .....	D6
10 Monument to the People's Heroes .....	C6
11 Old Station Building (Qián Mén Railway Station).....	D7
12 St Joseph's Church .....	F3
13 St Michael's Church .....	F6

## 🏠 Sleeping

14 365 Inn.....	B8
15 Chánggōng Hotel.....	B8
16 Days Inn.....	E4
17 Grand Hyatt Běijīng .....	F5
18 Hilton Běijīng Wángfǔjīng.....	F3

19 Hotel Kapok.....	E3
20 Leo Hostel.....	B8
21 Motel 268.....	F3
22 Park Plaza .....	G3
23 Peninsula Beijing.....	G3
24 Qiánmén Hostel.....	C8
25 Raffles Běijīng Hotel.....	F5

## 🍴 Eating

Ajisen Noodle.....	(see 38)
26 Biànyífáng Kǎoyadiàn .....	G7
27 Capital M.....	D7
28 Dōnghuámén Night Market.....	E3
29 Dūyìchù .....	D7
Food Republic.....	(see 38)
Huáng Tíng .....	(see 23)
30 Maison Boulud.....	D6
31 Quánjùdé Roast Duck Restaurant .....	F4
32 Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant .....	D7
33 Wangfujing Snack Street.....	F4

## 🎪 Entertainment

34 Capital Theatre.....	F2
35 Lǎo Shě Teahouse.....	B7
Star Cinema City.....	(see 38)
Sundongan Cinema City.....	(see 39)

## 🛍 Shopping

36 Arts and Crafts Mansion.....	F4
37 Dashilar Entrance.....	C8
38 Oriental Plaza .....	F4
39 Sundongan Plaza .....	F3
40 Ten Fu's Tea .....	F4
41 Zhāoyuán Gé .....	E4

considering how rampantly over-priced many other tourist sights around China are. Allow yourself a full day for exploration or several trips if you're an enthusiast.

Guides – many with mechanical English – mill about the entrance, but the funky automatically activated audio tours are cheaper (Y40; over 40 languages, including Esperanto) and more reliable (and you can switch them off). Restaurants, a cafe, toilets and even a police station can be found within the palace grounds. Wheelchairs (Y500 deposit) are free to use, as are strollers (Y300 deposit).

Many halls – such as the exterior of the Hall of Supreme Harmony – have been vividly repainted in a way that disguises the original pigment; other halls such as the **Hall of Mental Cultivation** (养心殿;

Yǎngxīn Diàn; Map p52) and the **Yikūn Palace** (翊坤宫; Yìkūn Gōng; Map p52) are far more authentic and delightfully dilapidated.

Much of the Forbidden City is sadly out of bounds, including the now ruined Hall of Rectitude (Zhōngzhèng Diàn), destroyed by fire in 1923, which was once lavishly furnished with Buddhist figures and ornaments. The sound of ping pong may emerge from other closed-off halls.

The palace's ceremonial buildings lie on the north-south axis, from the **Meridian Gate** (午门; Wǔ Mén; Map p52) in the south to the **Divine Military Genius Gate** (神武门; Shénwǔ Mén; Map p52) to the north.

Restored in the 17th century, the Meridian Gate is a massive portal that in former times was reserved for the use of the em-

peror. Across the Golden Stream, which is shaped to resemble a Tartar bow and is spanned by five marble bridges, towers the **Gate of Supreme Harmony** (太和门; Tàihé Mén; Map p52), overlooking a colossal courtyard that could hold imperial audiences of up to 100,000 people.

Raised on a marble terrace with balustrades are the Three Great Halls (Sān Dàdiàn), which comprise the heart of the Forbidden City. The imposing **Hall of Supreme Harmony** (太和殿; Tàihé Diàn; Map p52) is the most important and the largest structure in the Forbidden City. Originally built in the 15th century, it was used for ceremonial occasions, such as the emperor's birthday, the nomination of military leaders and coronations. Compare the recent recoloring of the outside with the more sombre and natural pigments of the interior.

Inside the Hall of Supreme Harmony is a richly decorated **Dragon Throne** (Lóngyǐ) where the emperor would preside over trembling officials. Bronze *shuǐgāng* (vats) – once containing water for dousing fires – stand in front of the hall; in all, 308 *shuǐgāng* were dotted around the Forbidden City, with fires lit under them in winter to keep them from freezing over (hopefully the flames did not accidentally start larger conflagrations). Water for the Forbidden City was once provided by 72 wells, 30 of which have been preserved.

Behind the Hall of Supreme Harmony is the smaller **Hall of Middle Harmony** (中和殿; Zhōnghé Diàn; Map p52), which served as a transit lounge for the emperor. Here he would make last-minute preparations, rehearse speeches and receive close ministers.

The third hall, which has no support pillars, is the **Hall of Preserving Harmony** (保和殿; Bǎohé Diàn; Map p52), used for banquets and later for imperial examinations. To the rear descends a 250-tonne marble imperial carriageway carved with dragons and clouds, dragged into Běijīng along an ice path. The emperor was conveyed over the carriageway in his sedan chair as he ascended or descended the terrace.

Note the fascinating exhibitions in the halls on the eastern flank of the Three Great Halls, with displays covering the gates and guards in the Forbidden City and an intriguing collection exploring the emperor's Tibetan Buddhist beliefs. In all there were 10 Buddhist chapels in the northwest of the Forbidden City; among them were the **Big**

**Buddha Hall** (Dàfó Tǎng), the **Rain and Flower Pavilion** (Yǔhuā Gé) – a copy of the Gold Hall from Tholing Monastery in Tibet – and the **Fragrant Clouds Pavilion** (Xiāngyún Tíng), none of which are currently open. Further along in the sequence is an exhibition dedicated to ancestor worship in the palace, and the imperial harem and the lives of imperial concubines. In the next hall along is a detailed diorama of the entire Forbidden City. Halls west of the Three Great Halls exhibit treasures from the palace.

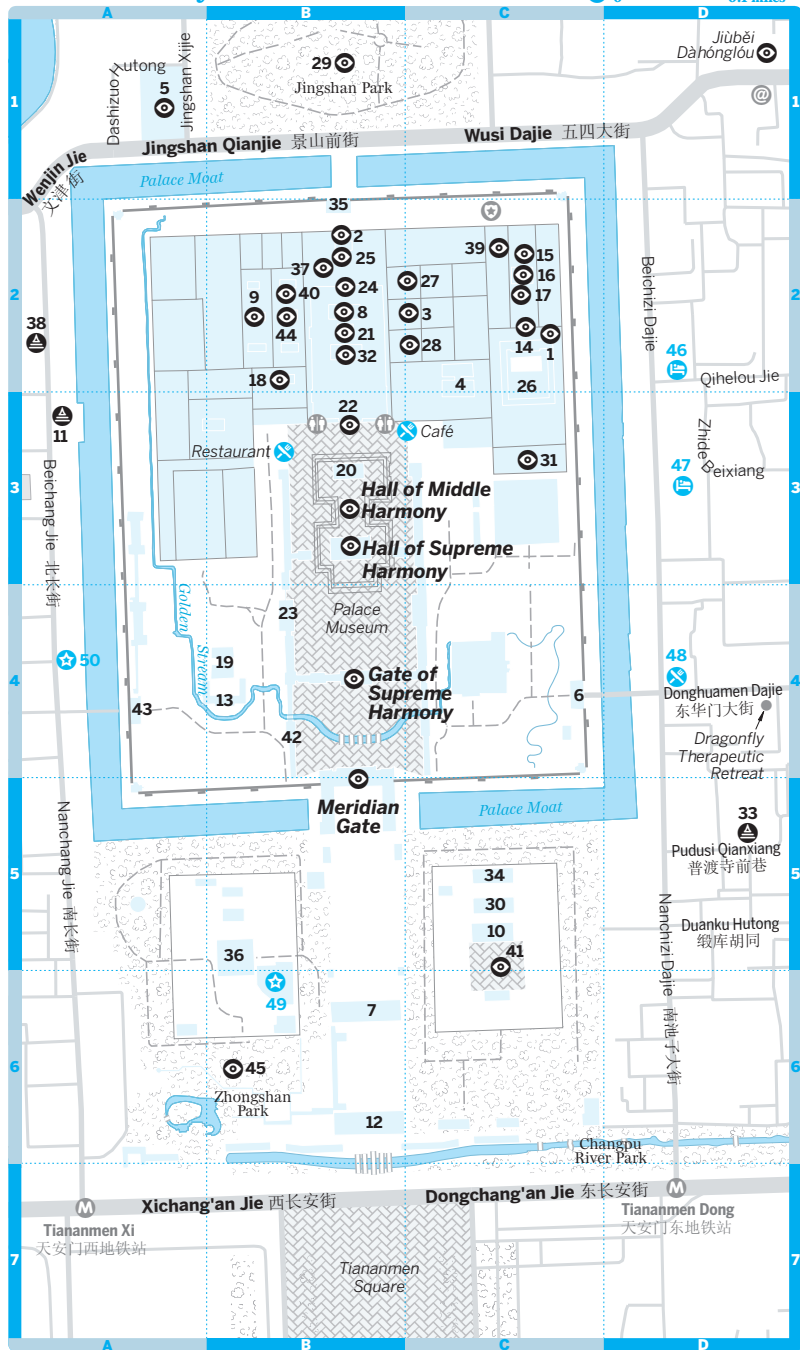
The basic configuration of the Three Great Halls is echoed by the next group of buildings, smaller in scale but more important in terms of real power, which in China traditionally lies in the northernmost part.

The first structure is the **Palace of Heavenly Purity** (乾清宮; Qiánqīng Gōng; Map p52), a residence of Ming and early Qing emperors, and later an audience hall for receiving foreign envoys and high officials.

Beyond the **Hall of Union** (交泰殿; Jiāotài Diàn; Map p52) and the **Earthly Tranquillity Palace** (坤寧宮; Kūnníng Gōng; Map p52) at the northern end of the Forbidden City ranges the much-needed 7000-sq-metre **Imperial Garden** (御花園; Yù Huāyuán; Map p52), a classical Chinese arrangement of fine landscaping, rockeries, walkways and pavilions among ancient and malformed cypresses propped up on stilts. Try to find the **lump tree**, the Elephant Man of the cypress world. Kneeling in front of **Chéngguāng Gate** (承光門; Chéngguāng Mén; Map p52) as you approach the Shénwǔ Gate is a pair of bronze elephants, whose front legs bend in anatomically impossible fashion.

On the western and eastern sides of the Forbidden City range the palatial former living quarters, once containing libraries, temples, theatres, gardens and even the tennis court of the last emperor. Some of these now function as museums with a variety of free exhibitions on everything from imperial concubines to scientific instruments, weapons, paintings, jade ware and bronzes.

The mesmerising **Clock Exhibition Hall** (钟表馆; Zhōngbiǎo Guǎn; Map p52; admission ¥10; ☉8.30am–4pm summer, to 3.30pm winter) is one of the highlights of the Forbidden City. Located in the Fèngxiàn Hall (Fèngxiàn Diàn), the exhibition contains a fascinating array of elaborate timepieces, many of which were gifts to the Qing emperors



## Forbidden City

### 📍 Top Sights

Gate of Supreme Harmony.....	B4
Hall of Middle Harmony .....	B3
Hall of Supreme Harmony .....	B3
Meridian Gate .....	B5

### 📍 Sights

1 Chàngyīn Pavilion .....	C2
2 Chéngguāng Gate.....	B2
3 Chengqian Hall.....	C2
4 Clock Exhibition Hall.....	C2
Courtyard Gallery .....	(see 48)
5 Dagaoxuan Temple .....	A1
6 Donghua Gate .....	C4
7 Duān Gate .....	B6
8 Earthly Tranquillity Palace.....	B2
9 Eternal Spring Palace.....	B2
10 Front Hall.....	C5
11 Fúyòu Temple .....	A3
12 Gate of Heavenly Peace.....	B6
13 Gate of Military Prowess.....	B4
14 Hall of Character Cultivation .....	C2
15 Hall of Harmony.....	C2
16 Hall of Jewellery.....	C2
17 Hall of Joyful Longevity.....	C2
18 Hall of Mental Cultivation.....	B2
19 Hall of Military Prowess .....	B4
20 Hall of Preserving Harmony.....	B3
21 Hall of Union.....	B2
22 Heavenly Purity Gate.....	B3
23 Hongyi Pavilion .....	B4
24 Imperial Garden.....	B2

25 Imperial Peace Hall .....	B2
26 Imperial Supremacy Hall.....	C2
27 Jewellery Exhibition.....	C2
28 Jingren Hall.....	C2
29 Jingshan Park.....	B1
30 Middle Hall .....	C5
31 Nine Dragon Screen.....	C3
32 Palace of Heavenly Purity.....	B2
33 Pudu Temple.....	D5
34 Rear Hall.....	C5
35 Shenwu Gate .....	B2
36 Square Altar.....	B5
37 Thousand Autumns Pavilion.....	B2
38 Wanshou Xinglong Temple .....	A2
39 Well of Concubine Zhen.....	C2
40 Western Palaces .....	B2
41 Workers Cultural Palace.....	C5
42 Xihe Gate .....	B4
43 Xihua Gate .....	A4
44 Yikūn Palace .....	B2
45 Zhongshan Park.....	B6

### 🛏 Sleeping

46 Emperor .....	D2
47 Peking International Youth Hostel.....	D3

### 🍴 Eating

48 Courtyard.....	D4
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### 🎪 Entertainment

49 Forbidden City Concert Hall.....	B6
50 What Bar? .....	A4

from overseas. Many of the 18th-century examples were imported through Guǎngdōng from England; others are from Switzerland, America and Japan. Exquisitely wrought, fashioned with magnificently designed elephants and other creatures, they all display an astonishing artfulness and attention to detail. Standout clocks include the 'Gilt Copper Astronomy Clock', equipped with a working model of the solar system, and the automaton-equipped 'Gilt Copper Clock' with a robot writing Chinese characters with a brush. Time your arrival for 11am or 2pm and treat yourself to the clock performance in which choice timepieces strike the hour and give a display to wide-eyed children and adults.

Also look out for the excellent **Hall of Jewellery** (珍宝馆; Zhēnbǎo Guǎn; Map p52; admission Y10; ☎8.30am-4pm summer, to 3.30pm winter), tickets for which also entitle you to

glimpse the **Well of Concubine Zhen** (珍妃井; Zhēnfei Jǐng; Map p52), into which the namesake wretch was thrown on the orders of Cixi, and the glazed **Nine Dragon Screen** (九龙壁; Jiǔlóng Bì; Map p52). The treasures on view are fascinating: within the **Hall of Harmony** (颐和轩; Yíhé Xuān; Map p52) sparkle Buddhist statues fashioned from gold and inlaid with gems, and a gold pagoda glittering with precious stones, followed by jade, jadeite, lapis lazuli and crystal pieces displayed in the **Hall of Joyful Longevity** (乐寿堂; Lèshòu Táng; Map p52). Further objects are displayed within the **Hall of Character Cultivation** (养性殿; Yǎngxìng Diàn; Map p52). The **Chàngyīn Pavilion** (畅音阁; Chàngyīn Gé; Map p52) to the east was formerly an imperial stage.

### Gate of Heavenly Peace

HISTORIC SITE

(天安门; Tiān'ānmén; Map p52; admission Y15, bag storage Y1-6; ☎8.30am-4.30pm; 📍Tiān'ānmén Xī

or Tiān'ānmén Dōng) Hung with a vast, beatific portrait of Mao and lending its name to the square immediately south, the Gate of Heavenly Peace is a potent national symbol. Built in the 15th century and restored in the 17th century, the double-eaved gate was formerly the largest of the four gates of the Imperial Wall which enveloped the imperial grounds.

The gate is divided into five doors and reached via seven bridges spanning a stream. Each of these bridges was restricted in its use and only the emperor could use the central door and bridge.

Mao proclaimed the People's Republic on 1 October 1949 from here and his gigantic portrait is the dominating feature, with anachronistic slogans on either side.

Climb up for some sweeping views of Tiān'ānmén Sq, and peek inside at the impressive beams and overdone paintwork; in all there are 60 gargantuan wooden pillars and 17 vast lamps suspended from the ceiling. Within the gatetower there is also a fascinating photographic history of the gate (but only in Chinese) and Tiān'ānmén Sq. Yawn-inducing patriotic video presentations celebrating communist events round off the picture.

It's free to walk through the gate, but if you climb it you'll have to pay the admission fee and pay to store your bag at the kiosk (one hour max). Security at the gate is intense and locals are scrupulously frisked. The ticket office only sells tickets for the gate; to visit the Forbidden City, continue north until you can go no further.

### Duān Gate

HISTORIC SITE

(端门; Duān Mén; Map p52; admission Y10; ☉8.30am-4.30pm; 🚶Tiān'ānmén Xī or Tiān'ānmén Dōng) Sandwiched between the Gate of Heavenly Peace and Meridian Gate, Duān Gate was stripped of its treasures by foreign forces quelling the Boxer Rebellion (according to the blurb).

### Front Gate

HISTORIC SITE

(前门; Qián Mén; Map p48; admission high/low season Y20/10, audioguide Y20; ☉8.30am-4.30pm; 🚶Qiánmén) The Front Gate actually consists of two gates, originally linked by a by a semicircular enceinte, which was swept aside in the early 20th century. Without the city walls, the gate sits entirely out of context, like a door without a wall. The northerly gate, 40m-high **Zhèngyáng Gate** (正阳门; Zhèngyáng Mén) – literally 'Facing the Sun Gate' – dates from the Ming dynasty. The largest of the nine impressive

gates of the inner city wall dividing the Inner or Tartar (Manchu) City from the Outer or Chinese City, the gate was partially destroyed during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and the temples that flanked it have vanished. Also torched during the Boxer Rebellion, the **Arrow Tower** (箭楼; Jiàn Lóu) to the south is of a similar age and looks down Qianmen Dajie. To the east is the former British-built **Old Station Building** (老车站; Lǎo Chēzhàn; Qián Mén Railway Station), now housing the (unopened) Běijīng Railway Museum.

### Běijīng Planning Exhibition Hall

MUSEUM

(北京市规划展览馆; Běijīng Shì Guīhuà Zhǎnlǎnguǎn; Map p48; 20 Qianmen Dongdajie; admission Y30; ☉9am-5pm Tue-Sun, last tickets 4pm) For Chinese cities undergoing a face-lift, a planning exhibition hall is de rigeur. The exhibition is all a rather suffocating back-slapping paean to the Běijīng of tomorrow but the detailed diorama of the modern metropolis is worth a look.

### National Centre for the Performing Arts

THEATRE

(国家大剧院; Guójiā Dàjùyuàn; admission Y30; ☉1.30-5pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat & Sun; 🚶Tiān'ānmén Xī) Critics have compared it to an egg, but it's more like a massive mercury bead, an ultramodern missile silo or the futuristic lair of a James Bond villain. To some it's a dazzling work of art, to others it's *the* definitive blot-on-the-landscape. The unmistakable building rises – if that is the word for it – just west of the Great Hall of the People, its glass membrane perennially cleaned by squads of roped daredevil cleaners fending off the Běijīng dust. Despite protestations from designers that its round and square elements pay obeisance to traditional Chinese aesthetics, they're not fooling anyone: the theatre is designed to embody the transglobal (transgalactic perhaps) aspirations of contemporary China.

Examine the bulbous interior, including the titanic steel ribbing of interior bolsters (each of the 148 bolsters weighs eight tonnes). A fascinating exhibition inside displays failed competition conceptions and construction efforts that realised the final building; note how many of the failed entrants (eg the proposal from Obermeyer & Deilmann) incorporated echoes of the Great Hall of the People into their design, something that the winning design (from ADP Aeroports de Paris) avoided at all costs. A noticeboard in the foyer should in-

form you which of the three halls are open, as they are occasionally shut.

### Great Hall of the People

HISTORIC SITE

(人民大会堂; Rénmín Dàhùitáng; Map p48; adult Y30, bag deposit Y2-5; ☎8.30am-3pm; 天安门西) The Great Hall of the People, on the western side of Tiān'ānmén Sq, is where the National People's Congress convenes. The 1959 architecture is monolithic and intimidating; the tour parades visitors past a choice of 29 of its lifeless rooms. Also on the billing is a 5000-seat banquet room and the 10,000-seat auditorium with the familiar red star embedded in a galaxy of lights in the ceiling. It's closed when the National People's Congress is in session. The ticket office is down the south side of the building. Bags must be checked in but cameras are admitted. Hours vary.

FREE

### Chairman Mao Memorial Hall

MAUSOLEUM

(毛主席纪念馆; Máo Zhǔxí Jìniàntáng; Map p48; bag storage Y2-10, camera storage Y2-5; ☎8am-noon Tue-Sun; 天安门西, Tiān'ānmén Dōng or Qiánmén) Chairman Mao died in September 1976 and his Memorial Hall was constructed shortly thereafter on the former site of the Zhōnghuá Gate.

The Chinese display an almost religious respect when confronted with the physical presence of Mao. The Great Helmsman's mummified corpse lies in a crystal cabinet, draped in a red flag emblazoned with hammer and sickle while impatient guards in white gloves brusquely wave the hoi polloi on towards further rooms and Mao memorabilia. At certain times of the year the body requires maintenance and is not on view. Bags must be deposited at the building east of the memorial hall across the road (if you leave your camera in your bag you will be charged for it).

### Monument to the People's Heroes

MONUMENT

(人民英雄纪念碑; Rénmín Yīngxióng Jìniànbēi; Map p48; 天安门西, Tiān'ānmén Dōng or Qiánmén) Completed in 1958, this 37.9m-high obelisk, made of Qingdào granite, bears bas-relief carvings of key patriotic and revolutionary events (such as Lin Zexu destroying opium at Húmén in the 19th century, and Tàipíng rebels).

### Foreign Legation Quarter

HISTORIC SITE

(Map p48; 前门, Wǎngfújīng or Chōngwénmén) For grand shades of Europe, the former Foreign Legation Quarter where the



## BEIJING MUSEUM PASS

To save money and time queuing for tickets, pocket this **pass** (博物馆通票; Bówùguǎn Tōngpiào; Y80) which allows either complimentary access or discounted admission (typically 50%) to almost 60 museums, temples or tourist sights in and around Běijīng. Not all museums are worth visiting, but you only have to visit a small selection of museums to get your money back. The pass comes in the form of a booklet (Chinese with minimal English), effective from 1 January to 31 December in any one year. You can pick it up from participating museums and sights; it can be hard to find (especially as the year progresses), so phone ☎6222 3793 or ☎6221 3256 (www.bowuguan.com.cn, in Chinese) to locate stocks (free delivery within Fifth Ring Rd).

19th-century foreign powers flung up embassies, schools, churches, post offices and banks is well worth a stroll.

Access the area walking up the steps east from Tiān'ānmén Sq into Dongjiaomin Xiang (东交民巷), once called Legation St and renamed 'Anti-Imperialism Road' during the iconoclastic Cultural Revolution. **Legation Quarter** (Map p48; 23 Qianmen Dongdajie) is a classy cluster of elegantly restored legation buildings towards the west end of Dongjiaomin Xiang. The commercial quadrant – which opened straight into the jaws of the credit crunch – is home to several exclusive restaurants (including Maison Boulud), shops and an art gallery. The attractive green-roofed, orange brick building further east at No 40 is the stately former **Dutch Legation**.

The domed building at 4a Zhengyi Lu, on the corner of Zhengyi Lu (正义路) and Dongjiaomin Xiang, is the former **Yokohama Specie Bank**. The grey building at No 19 Dongjiaomin Xiang is the former **French post office**, now the Jingyuan Sichuan Restaurant, not far from the former **French Legation** (法国使馆旧址; Fǎguó Shǐguǎn Jùzhǐ) at No 15.

Backing onto a small school courtyard, the twin spires of the Gothic **St Michael's Church** (东交民巷天主教堂;

## PEKING-KNEES

Běijīng's uncompromising concrete distances can wreak havoc on the body's shock absorbers and bad air days can leave your hair, skin and air sacs worse for wear. Take time out to recharge, revitalise and put that spring back into your step.

**Dragonfly Therapeutic Retreat**

(悠庭保健会所; yōuting bǎojiàn huìsuǒ; Map p53; ☎6527 9368; 60 Donghuamen Dajie; ☀11am-1am; 🚏Tiānānmén Dōng) is a short walk from the east gate of the Forbidden City. Expect to pay from Y135 for an hour-long body or 'Oriental Foot' massage, or Y270 for a 'Top to Toe'. It has expertly trained masseurs.

**Jíxiáng Zhili Foot Massage**

**Health Centre** (吉祥智利; ☎6552 2758; 207 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie; ☀10am-midnight) is where you can massage away those aches and cramps with the excellent-value Y28 foot massage. You can also treat yourself to a full-body massage for Y66.

Dōngjiàomínxiàng Catholic Church) rises ahead at No 11, facing the green roofs and ornate red brickwork of the former **Belgian Legation**.

North along Tajichang Dajie is a brick street sign embedded in the northern wall of Tājichǎng Tóutiáo (台基厂头条), carved with the old name of the road, Rue Hart.

**Běijīng Police Museum**

MUSEUM

(北京警察博物馆; Běijīng Jīngchá Bówùguǎn; 36 Dongjiaomin Xiang; Map p48; admission Y5, through ticket Y20; ☀9am-4pm Tue-Sun; 🚏Qiánmén) Propaganda-infested maybe, but some mesmerising exhibits make this museum a fascinating peek into Běijīng's police force. Learn how Běijīng's first PSB college operated from the Dōngyuè Temple in 1949, and how the Běijīng PSB was destroyed during the 'national catastrophe' of the Cultural Revolution. Upstairs gets to grips with morbid crimes and their investigations; for police weapons, head to the 4th floor. The through ticket includes laser shooting practice and a souvenir. The building was formerly the First National City Bank of New York.

**China National Museum**

MUSEUM

(中国国家博物馆; Zhōngguó Guójiā Bówùguǎn; Map p48; admission Y30, audio tour Y30; ☀8.30am-4.30pm; 🚏Tiānānmén Dōng) This Soviet-style building is due to reopen by 2011 after a massive expansion program that has seen it closed for an interminably long period.

**Zhōngshān Park**

PARK

(中山公园; Zhōngshān Gōngyuán; Map p52; admission Y3; ☀6am-9pm summer, 6.30am-7pm winter; 🚏Tiānānmén Xī) This lovely little park, west of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, has a section hedging up against the Forbidden City moat. Formerly the sacred Ming-style Altar to the God of the Land and the God of Grain (Shìjītán), where the emperor offered sacrifices, it's tidy and tranquil.

**Workers Cultural Palace**

PARK

(劳动人民文化宫; Láodòng Rénmín Wénhuà Gōng; Map p52; admission Y2; ☀6.30am-7.30pm; 🚏Tiānānmén Dōng) Sounding like a social centre for Leninist labourers, this haven of peace was actually the emperor's premier place of worship, the **Supreme Temple** (太庙; Tàimiào). The often-overlooked temple halls, cloaked in imperial yellow tiles and hunched over expansive courtyards, suggest a mini version of the Forbidden City, sans crowds.

**Lao She Museum**

MUSEUM

(老舍纪念馆; Lǎo Shě Jìniànguǎn; Map p48; 19 Fengfu Hutong; ☀9am-4pm Tue-Sun; 🚏Dēngshìkǒu) Parcelled away down a small *hútòng* off Dengshikou Xijie, this simple museum was the courtyard home of much-loved Běijīng author Lao She. Peruse the author's life via newspaper cuttings, first editions, photographs and personal effects. The museum glosses over *the* most salient event in the writer's life: his vituperative beating by Red Guards in August 1966 and his death by drowning in Taiping Lake the following day.

**Courtyard Gallery**

ART GALLERY

(四合院画廊; Sìhéyuàn Huàláng; Map p52; 95 Donghuamen Dajie; 🚏Tiānānmén Dōng) A good-looking pit stop on the way to the imperial palace, this micro-gallery and blank white minimalist space in the basement of its namesake moat-side restaurant, across the way from the Forbidden City's Dōnghuá Gate, displays a thoughtful range of contemporary works.

## St Joseph's Church

CHURCH

(东堂: Dōng Táng; Map p48; 74 Wangfujing Dajie; ☉6.30-7am Mon-Sat, to 8am Sun; 🚶Dēngshìkǒu) Sublimely illuminated at night and called 'East Cathedral' in Chinese, St Joseph's Church was originally built in 1655, damaged by an earthquake in 1720 and rebuilt. The luckless church also caught fire in 1807, was destroyed again in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion, and restored in 1904, only to be shut in 1966. Now restored, the church is an arresting sight on Wangfujing Dajie, with a large piazza in front swarming with children playing; white doves photogenically flutter about and Chinese models in bridal outfits pose for magazine shots. Avoid being press-ganged into buying tacky oils from the art museum behind the church.

## Ancient Observatory

HISTORIC SITE

(古观象台; Gǔ Guānxiàngtái; Map p74; admission Y10; ☉9.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚶Jiànguómén) Star-gazing is perhaps on the back foot in today's Běijīng - it could take a supernova to penetrate the haze that frequently blankets the nocturnal sky - but the Chinese capital has a sparkling history of astronomical observation. Běijīng's ancient observatory, mounted on the battlements of a watchtower lying along the line of the old Ming city wall, originally dates to Kublai Khan's days when it lay north of the present site.

At ground level is a pleasant courtyard containing a reproduction-looking armillary sphere supported by four dragons and halls housing displays (with limited English captions). At the rear is an attractive garden with grass, sun dials and a further armillary sphere.

Climb the steps to the roof and an array of Jesuit-designed astronomical instruments, embellished with sculptured bronze dragons and other Chinese flourishes - a unique alloy of East and West. The Jesuits, scholars as well as proselytisers, arrived in 1601 when Matteo Ricci and his associates were permitted to work alongside Chinese scientists, becoming the Chinese court's official advisers.

Instruments on display include an azimuth theodolite (1715), an altazimuth (1673) and an ecliptic armilla (1673); of the eight on view, six were designed and constructed under the supervision of the Belgian priest Ferdinand Verbiest. It's not clear which instruments on display are the originals.

## Lama Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(雍和宫; Yōnghé Gōng; Map p72; 28 Yonghegong Dajie; admission Y25, English audioguide Y20; ☉9am-4pm; 🚶Yōnghé Gōng-Lama Temple) This exceptional temple is a glittering attraction in Běijīng's Buddhist firmament. If you only have time for one temple (the Temple of Heaven isn't really a temple) make it this one, where riveting roofs, fabulous frescoes, magnificent decorative arches, tapestries, eye-popping carpentry, Tibetan prayer wheels, tantric statues and a superb pair of Chinese lions mingle with dense clouds of incense.

The most renowned Tibetan Buddhist temple outside the historic lands of Tibet, the Lama Temple was converted to a lamasery in 1744 after serving as the former residence of Emperor Yong Zheng. Today the temple is an active place of worship, attracting pilgrims from afar, some of whom prostrate themselves in submission at full length within its halls.

Resplendent within the **Hall of the Wheel of the Law** (Fǎlún Diàn) is a substantial bronze statue of a benign and smiling Tsong Khapa (1357-1419), founder of the Gelukpa or Yellow Hat sect, robed in yellow and illuminated by a skylight.

A magnificent 18m-high statue of the Maitreya Buddha in his Tibetan form, clothed in yellow satin and reputedly sculpted from a single block of sandalwood, rises up magnificently within the **Wàn fú Pavilion** (Wàn fú Gé). Each of the Bodhisattva's toes is the size of a pillow. Behind the statue is the Vault of Avalokiteshvara, from where a diminutive and blue-faced statue of Guanyin peeks out. The Wàn fú Pavilion is linked by an overhead walkway to the **Yán suí Pavilion** (Yán suí Gé), which encloses a huge lotus flower that revolves to reveal an effigy of the longevity Buddha.

Don't miss the collection of bronze Tibetan Buddhist statues within the **Jiè tài Lóu**. Most effigies date from the Qing dynasty, from languorous renditions of Green Tara and White Tara to exotic, tantric pieces (such as Samvara) and figurines of the fierce-looking Mahakala. Also peruse the collection of Tibetan Buddhist ornaments within the **Bān chān Lóu**, where an array of *dorje* (Tibetan sceptres), mandalas and Tantric figures are displayed along with an impressive selection of ceremonial robes in silk and satin.



## BĚIJĪNG CITY WALLS

Had they been preserved – or even partially protected Nánjīng-style – rather than almost entirely obliterated in the ideological 1950s and '60s, Běijīng's mighty city walls and imposing gates would rank among China's top sights. Their loss is visceral, for they were once a central part of Běijīng's identity and the city's geographic rationale owed so much to their existence. Many Beijingers over the age of 50 lament their destruction in the same way they might deplore the devastation of Běijīng's *hútòng*. A disparate collection of original gates (Qián Mén, Déshèng Mén, the Gate of Heavenly Peace) survive and the occasional portal, such as Yǒngdīng Mén, has been rebuilt, but otherwise the lion's share of Běijīng's grand gates is at one with Nineveh and Tyre.

An epitaph for the city walls, the **Ming City Wall Ruins Park** (明城墙遗址公园; Míng Chéngqiáng Yízhǐ Gōngyuán; Chōngwénmén Dongdajie; admission free; ☉24hr; 明Chōngwénmén) runs next to a section of the Ming inner-city wall along the entire length of the northern flank of Chongwenmen Dongdajie. The restored wall stretches for around 2km, rising to a height of around 15m and interrupted every 80m with *dūn tái* (buttresses), which extend south from the wall.

The park extends from the former site of Chōngwén Mén (one of the nine gates of the inner city wall) to the **Southeast Corner Watchtower** (东南角楼; Dōngnán Jiǎolóu; Dongbianmen; admission ¥10; ☉8am-5.30pm; 明Jiànguómén or Chōngwénmén). Its green-tiled, twin-eaved roof rising up imperiously, this splendid Ming-dynasty fortification is punctured with 144 archer's windows. The highly impressive interior has some staggering carpentry: huge red pillars surge upwards, topped with solid beams. On the 1st floor is the superb **Red Gate Gallery** (红门画廊; Hóngmén Huàláng; www.redgategallery.com; admission free; ☉10am-5pm); say you are visiting the Red Gate Gallery and the ¥10 entry fee to the watchtower is waived. A fascinating exhibition on the 2nd floor within details the history of Běijīng's city gates.

Humble counterpart of the Southeast Corner Watchtower, the **Southwest Corner Watchtower** (Xiàbiǎnmén Jiǎolóu; Map p44) is not as impressive as its famous sibling, but you can climb up onto a section of the old city wall amid the roaring traffic. In an excavated pit on Beiheyuan Dajie east of the Forbidden City sits a pitiful stump, all that remains of the magnificent **Dōng'ān Mén** (Map p48), the east gate of the Imperial City. The remains are located in the **Imperial Wall Foundation Ruins Park** (Map p48), a slender strip of park following the footprint of the eastern side of the vanished Imperial City Wall.

The street outside the temple entrance heaves with shops piled high with statues of Buddha, talismans, Buddhist charms, incense and keepsakes, picked over by a constant stream of pilgrims.

### Confucius Temple & Imperial College

CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

An incense stick's toss away from the Lama Temple, the desiccated **Confucius Temple** (孔庙、国子监; Kǒng Miào; Map p72; 13 Guozijian Jie; admission ¥20; ☉8.30am-5pm; 明Yonghegong-Lama Temple) had a pre-Olympics spruce up that failed to shift its indelible sense of otherworldly detachment. Like all Confucian shrines, China's second-largest Confucian temple feels rather like a mausoleum, so expect peace and quiet. Some of Běijīng's last remaining *páilóu* bravely survive in the *hútòng* outside (Guozijian

Jie) while antediluvian *bǎixī* (tortoise-like dragons) glare inscrutably from repainted pavilions. Lumpy and ossified ancient cypresses claw stiffly at the sky while at the rear a numbing forest of 190 stelae (stones or slabs etched with figures or inscriptions) records the 13 Confucian classics in 630,000 Chinese characters.

A ghastly footnote lies unrecorded behind the tourist blurb. Běijīng writer Lao She was dragged here in August 1966, forced to his knees in front of a bonfire of Běijīng opera costumes to confess his 'antirevolutionary crimes', and beaten. The much-loved writer drowned himself the next day in Taiping Lake.

West of the Confucius Temple is the **Imperial College** (国子监; Guózǐjiàn; Map p72), where the emperor expounded the Confucian classics to an audience of thou-

sands of kneeling students, professors and court officials – an annual rite. Built by the grandson of Kublai Khan in 1306, the former college was the supreme academy during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. On the site is a marvellous glazed, three-gate, single-eaved decorative archway. The *Biyōng* Hall beyond is a twin-roofed structure with yellow tiles surrounded by a moat and topped with a shimmering gold knob.

The surrounding streets and *hútòng* are ideal for browsing, harbouring a charming selection of cafes, restaurants and small shops.

### Nanluogu Xiang

HISTORIC STREET

(南锣鼓巷; Map p72) Once neglected and ramshackle, strewn with spent coal briquettes in winter and silent except for the hacking coughs of old timers or the jangling of bicycle bells, the fun-filled north-south alleyway of Nanluogu Xiang (literally ‘South Gong and Drum Alley’) underwent accelerated evolution from around 2000 when the pioneering Passby Bar served its first customer. In the mid-noughties, money was tipped into a Nanluogu Xiang facelift: the alley is now the model for how an old *hútòng* haunt can be converted for those in need of decent breakfasts, diverse shopping, appetising lunches, *hútòng* sightseeing, a round of imported beers with dinner and funky courtyard accommodation (in that order). If you’re looking to put a pillow under your head, a mushrooming array of fine courtyard hotels has sprung up.

It’s quite a carnival. Crowds of Chinese photograph anything that moves (or doesn’t) and the alley is perched precariously between its dwindling charm and commercial overload: the impending arrival of its own underground station may be the final straw. Today you can Hoover up a miscellany of food from German waffles to crepes, Mongolian, Tibetan or Qīnghái yoghurt, fish and chips and cheap alcohol or fork out for toys, trendy T-shirts, ceramics and much more. The shop with the eternal queue is the Wēnyǔ Cheese Shop (No 49), flogging Mongolian cheese. Perceiving a lucrative market, several shops have moved in from Shànghǎi, including Feel Shanghai.

Look out for the 1960s **slogan** on the wall of the Wànqìng Pawnshop, located opposite Plastered T-shirts at 61 Nanluogu Xiang, which exhorts passersby: ‘Industry should learn from Dàqìng, agriculture should learn from Dàzhài, the whole nation should learn

from the People’s Liberation Army’. Just to the north is an earlier slogan from the 1950s, largely obscured with grey paint. Taxis occasionally cruise up the narrow alley, leaving camera-toting pedestrians pinned to the wall.

Do also take time to explore the many *hútòng* that run off east and west from Nanluogu Xiang, if only to fling off the crowds or do our cycling tour in reverse. Mao’er Hutong is one of Běijīng’s most famous old alleys, while Dongmianhua Hutong was poetically renamed Great Leap Forward 3rd Alley during the Cultural Revolution.

### Drum Tower & Bell Tower

HISTORIC SITE

Repeatedly destroyed and restored, the **Drum Tower** (鼓楼; Gǔlóu; Map p72; Gulou Dongdajie; admission Y20; ☎9am-5pm, last tickets 4.40pm) originally marked the centre of the old Mongol capital. The drums of this later Ming-dynasty version were beaten to mark the hours of the day. Stagger up the incredibly steep steps for impressive views over Běijīng’s *hútòng* rooftops. Drum performances are given hourly from 9.30am to 11.30am and from 1.30pm to 4.50pm.

Fronted by a stele from the Qing dynasty, the **Bell Tower** (钟楼; Zhōnglóu; Map p72; ☎6401 2674; Zhonglouwan Hutong; admission Y15, both towers through ticket Y30; ☎9am-5pm, last tickets 4.40pm) originally dates from Ming times. The Ming structure went up in a sheet of flame and the present structure is a Qing edifice dating from the 18th century. Augment visits with drinks at the Drum & Bell Bar.

Both the Drum and Bell Towers can be reached on bus 5, 58 or 107; get off at the namesake Gǔlóu stop.

### China Art Gallery

ART GALLERY

(中国美术馆; Zhōngguó Měishùguǎn; Map p48; 1 Wusi Dajie; admission Y20; ☎9am-5pm, last entry 4pm; ☎Dōngsī) The China Art Gallery has a range of modern paintings and hosts occasional photographic exhibitions. The subject matter of art on display is frequently anodyne – especially from Chinese artists – so consider a trip to 798 Art District for something more electrifying. There’s no permanent collection so all exhibits are temporary.

### Zhihuà Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(智化寺; Zhihuà Sì; 5 Lumaticang Hutong; admission Y20, audioguide Y10; ☎8.30am-4.30pm; ☎Jiànguómén or Cháoyángmén) You won’t find the coffered ceiling of the third hall (it’s

**START** DONGCHAN'AN  
JIE

**FINISH** NANLUOGU  
XIANG

**DISTANCE** 6.5KM

**DURATION** 1½ HOURS

## Cycling Tour Běijīng

Běijīng's spirit-level flatness is tailor-made for cycling, especially if you navigate the *hútòng* that riddle the city. Hop on a pair of wheels and explore some of Běijīng's more historic dimensions on this tour.

Many of Běijīng's *hútòng* have red-painted signs in pinyin and Chinese characters, so following the route should not be too difficult, but we have added *hútòng* names in Chinese characters below to aid navigation. If you get lost, just show these characters to a local and you should be able to get directions.

Set off from Dongchang'an Jie, northeast of Tiān'ānmén Sq. Cycle north through the purple-red archway of Nanchizi Dajie (南池子大街), past the

**1 Imperial Archives** to your right, a quiet courtyard with echoes of the Forbidden City. On your left you'll pass the eastern entrance to the **2 Workers Cultural Palace** from where you can glimpse the imperial yellow roof of the Supreme Temple (太庙; Tài Miào).

The Forbidden City's roofs and towers appear to the west; turn left at Donghua-men Dajie (东华门大街) intersection, then left again to follow the road between the moat and the palace walls. Note the splendid southeastern corner tower of the

**3 Forbidden City** wall.

The trip around the moat is a spectacular route with unique views of historic Běijīng. Thread through the gate of Quèzuǒ Mén (阙左门) and the crowded plaza in front of Meridian Gate (午门), imposing portal to the palace. Cycle through the gate of Quèyòu Mén (阙佑门) opposite, by **4 Zhōngshān Park**, to continue around the moat, which freezes in winter. To the west lie the eastern gates of Zhōngnánhǎi (中南海), the out-of-bounds nerve centre of political power in Běijīng.

Cycling north onto Beichang Jie (北长街), pass Fúyòu Temple (福佑寺; Fúyòu Sì) to your right – locked away behind closed

gates and the palace wall. To your left stand the remains of **5 Wànshòu Xīnglóng Temple** (万寿兴隆寺), its band of monks long replaced by lay residents. The temple once housed surviving imperial eunuchs after the fall of the Qing dynasty.

Reaching the T-junction with Jingshan Qianjie (景山前街) and Wenjin Jie (文津街), follow the road right onto Jingshan Qianjie, but disembark at the bend in the road and wheel your bike across the street to enter the first *hútòng* – Dashizuo Hutong (大石作胡同) – heading north on the other side of the road (the *hútòng* opening is in line with the west bank of the palace moat). East of here is the inaccessible Taoist Dàgāoxuán Temple (大高玄殿; Dàgāoxuán Diàn; 23 Jingshan Xijie), its halls visible through the archway opening onto Jingshan Qianjie. Do not attempt to enter as it is a restricted zone.

Wiggling north, Dashizuo Hutong provided carved stone for the Forbidden City. Like many alleys in modern Běijīng, it's a mix of tumbledown dwellings and charmless modern blocks. Follow the alley to the end, and exit opposite **6 Jingshān Park's** west gate; west along Zhishanmen Jie (陟山门街) is Běihǎi Park's east gate.

Cycle north along Jingshan Xijie (景山西街); at its northern tip enter Gongjian Hutong (恭俭胡同), its entrance virtually straight ahead but slightly west. Exit the alley on Dì'ānmén Xidajie (地安门西大街); to your west is the north gate of **7 Běihǎi Park**; if you push your bike along the southern side of Dianmen Xidajie you'll soon arrive at the park's north gate.

Continuing north, push your bike over the pedestrian crossing then cycle along Qianhai Nanyan (前海南沿) on the eastern shore of Qiánhǎi Lake. On the far side of the lake stretches Lotus Lane, a strip of cafes and restaurants. East of the small, restored white marble Jinding Bridge (金锭桥; Jīndìng Qiáo) is Wànníng Bridge (万宁桥;

Wǎnníng Qiáo), much of which dates to the Yuan dynasty.

Continue north to Yínding Bridge (银锭桥; Yínding Qiáo) to cycle east along Yandai Xiejie (烟袋斜街) with its shops, bars and cafes. A short diversion from Yínding Bridge along Ya'er Hutong (鸦儿胡同) is the Buddhist Guǎnghuà Temple (广化寺) at No 31. Exiting Yandai Xiejie (there are a few steps to negotiate) onto bustling Dì'anmenwai Dajie (地安门外大街), the **8 Drum Tower** rises ahead, obscuring the **9 Bell Tower** behind; both are worth visiting (but the area is primed for development).

Head south and east through Mao'er Hutong (帽儿胡同) which, despite being quite modern in places, gradually emerges into something more traditional. At the first main junction along Mao'er Hutong, the alley changes its name to Bei Bingmasi Hutong (北兵马司胡同), the two alleys divided by the north-south-running **10 Nanluogu Xiang**, one of Běijīng's most famous alleyways. If you can weave through the crowds, cycle down Nanluogu Xiang and have a coffee in the relaxed, snug courtyard surrounds of the Passby Bar (108 Nanluogu Xiang) on the corner of the second *hútòng* turning on your left as you cycle south. Alternatively, keep heading south and pop into the micro-sized bar 12sqm (corner of Nanluogu Xiang and Fuxiang Hutong). You can also find a growing glut of courtyard hotels in the small *hútòng* off Nanluogu Xiang. The area is due to have its own namesake metro stop, facilitating access to the rest of the city but guaranteeing a further swelling of visitor numbers and a diminishing of Nanluogu Xiang's charm.



in the USA) and the Four Heavenly Kings have vanished from **Zhihua Gate** (智化门; Zhìhuà Mén), but the **Scriptures Hall** encases a venerable Ming-dynasty wooden library topped with a seated Buddha and a magnificently unrestored ceiling, while the highlight **Ten Thousand Buddhas Hall** (万佛殿; Wànfó Diàn) is an enticing two floors of miniature niche-borne Buddhist effigies and cabinets for the storage of sutras (its caisson ceiling currently resides in the Philadelphia Museum of Art). Creep up the steep wooden staircase (if it is open) at the back of the hall to visit the sympathetic effigy of the Vairocana (毗卢) Buddha seated upon a multipetalled lotus flower in the upper chamber, before pondering the fate of the 1000-Armed Guanyin that once presided over the **Great Mercy Hall** at the temple rear. Musical performances are held four times daily.

### XĪCHÉNG Běihǎi Park

西城区  
PARK

(北海公园; Běihǎi Gōngyuán; admission high/low season Y10/5, through ticket high/low season Y20/15; ☺6.30am-8pm, buildings until 4pm; ㊟Tianānmén Xi, then bus 5) Běihǎi Park, northwest of the Forbidden City, is largely occupied by the North Sea (*běihǎi*), a huge lake that freezes in winter and blooms with lotuses in summer. Old folk dance together outside temple halls and come twilight, young couples cuddle on benches. It's a restful place to stroll around, rent a rowing boat in summer and watch calligraphers practising characters on paving slabs with fat brushes and water. Some talented calligraphers can fashion characters simultaneously with both hands, with one side in mirror-writing or with characters on their sides!

The site is associated with Kublai Khan's palace, Běijīng's navel before the arrival of the Forbidden City. All that survives of the Khan's court is a large jar made of green jade in the **Round City** (团城; Tuánchéng), near the southern entrance. Also within the Round City is the **Chengguang Hall** (Chéngguāng Diàn), where a white jade statue of Sakyamuni from Myanmar (Burma) can be found, its arm wounded by the allied forces that swarmed through Běijīng in 1900 to quash the Boxer Rebellion. Attached to the North Sea, the South (Nánhǎi) and Middle (Zhōnghǎi) Seas to the south lend their name to the nerve centre of the Communist Party west of the Forbidden

City, **Zhōngnánhǎi** (literally 'Middle and South Seas').

Topping **Jade Islet** (琼岛; Qióngdǎo) on the lake, the 36m-high Tibetan-style **White Dagoba** (白塔; Báitǎ) was originally built in 1651 for a visit by the Dalai Lama, and was rebuilt in 1741. Climb up to the dagoba via the **Yǒng'ān Temple** (永安寺; Yǒng'ān Sì).

**Xitiān Fánjìng** (西天梵境; Western Paradise), situated on the northern shore of the lake, is a lovely temple (admission included in park ticket). The nearby **Nine Dragon Screen** (九龙壁; Jiǔlóng Bì), a 5m-high and 27m-long spirit wall, is a glimmering stretch of coloured glazed tiles depicting coiling dragons, similar to its counterpart in the Forbidden City. West along the shore is the pleasant **Little Western Heaven** (小西天; Xiǎo Xitiān), a further shrine.

### Jǐngshān Park

PARK

(景山公园; Jǐngshān Gōngyuán; Map p48; admission Y5; ☺6am-9.30pm; ㊟Tianānmén Xi, then bus 5) A feng shui barrier shielding the Forbidden City from evil spirits (or dust storms), Jǐngshān Park was formed from the earth excavated to create the palace moat. Come here for classic panoramas over the Forbidden City's russet roofing to the south. On the eastern side of the park a locust tree stands in the place where the last of the Ming emperors, Chongzhen, hanged himself as rebels swarmed at the city walls.

### Prince Gong's Residence

HISTORIC SITE

(恭王府; Gōngwáng Fǔ; ☎6616 8149, 6601 6132; 14 Liuyin Jie; admission Y40, guided tours incl tea & performance Y60; ☺7.30am-4.30pm summer, 8am-4pm winter; ㊟Píng'ānlǐ, then bus 118) Reputed to be the model for the mansion in Cao Xueqin's 18th-century classic *Dream of the Red Mansions*, this residence is one of Běijīng's largest private residential compounds. If you can, get here ahead of the tour buses and admire the rockeries, plants, pools, pavilions, corridors and elaborately carved gateways. Arrive with the crowds and you won't want to stay. Performances of Běijīng opera are held regularly in the Qing-dynasty **Grand Opera House** in the east of the grounds.

### Miàoyīng Temple White Dagoba

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(妙应寺白塔; Miàoyīng Sì Báitǎ; 171 Fuchengmennei Dajie; admission Y20; ☺9am-4pm; ㊟Fúchéngmén) Buried away down a ragged *hútòng*, the Miàoyīng Temple slumbers beneath its distinctive, pure-white Yuan-dynasty

## BĚIJĪNG'S HÚTÒNG

Běijīng's medieval genotype is most discernible down the city's leafy *hútòng* (胡同; narrow alleyways). The spirit and soul of the city lives and breathes among these charming and ragged lanes where a warm sense of community and hospitality survives. Criss-crossing chunks of Běijīng within the Second Ring Rd, the *hútòng* link up into a huge and enchanting warren of one-storey dwellings and historic courtyard homes. Hundreds of *hútòng* survive but many have been swept aside in Běijīng's race to build a modern city. Identified by white plaques, historic homes are protected, but for many others a way of life hangs in a precarious balance.

After Genghis Khan's army reduced the city of Běijīng to rubble, the new city was redesigned with *hútòng*. By the Qīng dynasty over 2000 such passageways riddled the city, leaping to around 6000 by the 1950s; now the figure has drastically dwindled. Today's *hútòng* universe is a hotchpotch of the old and the new: Qīng-dynasty courtyards are scarred with socialist-era conversions and outhouses while others have been assiduously rebuilt, with a garage perhaps for the Mercedes.

*Hútòng* nearly all run east-west so that the main gate faces south, satisfying feng shui (wind/water) requirements. This south-facing aspect guarantees sunshine and protection from negative principles amassing in the north.

Old walled *sihéyuàn* (courtyards) are the building blocks of this delightful universe. Many are still lived in and hum with activity. From spring to autumn, men collect outside their gates, drinking beer, playing chess, smoking and chewing the fat. Inside, scholar trees soar aloft, providing shade and a nesting ground for birds. Flocks of pigeons whirl through the Běijīng skies overhead, bred by locals and housed in coops often buried away within the *hútòng*.

More venerable courtyards are fronted by large, thick red doors, outside of which perch either a pair of Chinese lions or drum stones. The **Lao She Museum** is an excellent example of a courtyard home. To savour Běijīng's courtyard ambience, down a drink at the **Passby Bar**, devour a meal at the **Dǎlǐ Courtyard** and sleep it all off at **Courtyard 7** or any number of Běijīng's courtyard hotels.

Tours are easy to find: *hútòng* trishaw drivers lurk in packs around Qiánhǎi Lake: if you are foreign and not walking with real intent, they pounce, waving flimsy plastic-wrapped cards detailing their tours and repeating the words '*hútòng, hútòng*' (all too often the extent of their 'English').

dagoba (stupa). The **Hall of the Great Enlightened One** (大觉宝殿; Dàjué Bǎodiàn) glitters splendidly with hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist effigies, the highlight of any visit.

In other halls reside a four-faced effigy of Guanyin (here called Parnashavari) and a trinity of past, present and future Buddhas. Exit the temple and wander the tangle of local alleyways for earthy shades of *hútòng* life. Take bus 13, 101, 102 or 103 to Bǎitǎ Sī bus stop (near Baitasi Lu) or take the subway to Fùchéngmén and walk east.

### Běijīng Zoo

(北京动物园; Běijīng Dòngwùyuán; 137 Xizhimenwai Dajie; admission summer/winter Y15/10, pandas Y5, automatic guide Y40; ☀7.30am-6pm summer, to 5pm winter; 📍Běijīng Zoo) The zoo is a pleasant spot for a stroll among the trees, grass and willow-fringed lakes as long as you ignore the animal's pitiful cages and enclosures. If you

want to see fauna, it's best just to zero in on the pandas (if you are not going to Sìchuān) or the **Běijīng Aquarium** (adult/child Y120/60; ☀9am-5pm summer, to 5.30pm winter) in the northeastern corner of the zoo.

Boats to the Summer Palace depart from the **dock** (☎8838 4476; single/return Y40/70) every hour from 10am to 4pm, May to October.

### CHŌNGWÉN

#### Temple of Heaven Park

(天坛公园; Tiāntán Gōngyuán; Map p44; Tiantan Donglu; admission park/through ticket high season Y15/35, low season Y10/30, audio tour available at each gate Y40; ☀park 6am-9pm, sights 8am-6pm; 📍Tiāntándōngmén) A tranquil oasis of peace and methodical Confucian design in one of China's busiest urban landscapes, the 267-hectare Temple of Heaven Park is encompassed by a long wall with a gate at each

崇文区

PARK

compass point. The temple – the Chinese actually means ‘Altar of Heaven’ so don’t expect burning incense or worshippers – originally served as a vast stage for solemn rites performed by the Son of Heaven, who prayed here for good harvests, and sought divine clearance and atonement.

The arrangement is typical of Chinese parks, with the imperfections, bumps and wild irregularities of nature largely deleted and the harmonising hand of man accentuated in obsessively straight lines and regular arrangements. This effect is magnified by Confucian objectives, where the human intellect is imposed on the natural world, fashioning order and symmetry. The resulting balance and harmony have an almost haunting – but slightly claustrophobic – beauty. Police whir about in electric buggies as visitors lazily stroll among temple buildings, groves of ancient trees and bird-song. Around 4000 ancient, knotted cypresses (some 800 years old, their branches propped up on poles) poke towards the Běijīng skies within the grounds.

Seen from above, the temple halls are round and the bases square, in accordance with the notion ‘Tiānyuán Dìfāng’ (天圓地方) – ‘Heaven is round, Earth is square’. Also observe that the northern rim of the park is semicircular, while its southern end is square. The traditional approach to the temple was from the south, via **Zhāohēng Gate** (昭亨门; Zhāohēng Mén); the north gate is an architectural afterthought.

The 5m-high **Round Altar** (圓丘; Yuánqiū; admission Y20) was constructed in 1530 and rebuilt in 1740. Consisting of white marble arrayed in three tiers, its geometry revolves around the imperial number nine. Odd numbers possess heavenly significance, with nine the largest single-digit odd number. Symbolising heaven, the top tier is a huge mosaic of nine rings, each composed of multiples of nine stones, so that the ninth ring equals 81 stones. The stairs and balustrades are similarly presented in multiples of nine. Sounds generated from the centre of the upper terrace undergo amplification from the marble balustrades (the acoustics can get noisy when crowds join in).

The octagonal **Imperial Vault of Heaven** (皇穹宇; Huáng Qióngyǔ) was erected at the same time as the Round Altar, its shape echoing the lines of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. The hall contained tablets

of the emperor’s ancestors, employed during winter solstice ceremonies.

Wrapped around the Imperial Vault of Heaven just north of the altar is the **Echo Wall** (回音壁; Huīyīnbì; admission Y20). A whisper can travel clearly from one end to your friend’s ear at the other – unless a cacophonous tour group joins in (get here early for this one).

The dominant feature of the park is the **Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests** (祈年殿; Qínián Diàn; admission Y20), an astonishing structure with a triple-eaved purplish-blue umbrella roof mounted on a three-tiered marble terrace. The wooden pillars (made from Oregon fir) support the ceiling without nails or cement – for a building 38m high and 30m in diameter, that’s quite an accomplishment. Embedded in the ceiling is a carved dragon, a symbol of the emperor. Built in 1420, the hall was reduced to carbon after being zapped by a lightning bolt during the reign of Guangxu in 1889; a faithful reproduction based on Ming architectural methods was erected the following year.

With a green-tiled tow-tier roof, the **Animal Killing Pavilion** (Zāishēng Tíng) was the venue for the slaughter of sacrificial oxen, sheep, deer and other animals. Today it stands locked and passive but can be admired from the outside. Stretching out from here runs a **Long Corridor** (Chángláng), where Chinese crowds sit out and deal cards, listen to the radio, play keyboards, practise Běijīng opera, dance moves and kick hacky-sack. Sacrificial music was rehearsed at the **Divine Music Administration** (Shényuè Shǔ) in the west of the park, while wild cats inhabit the dry moat of the green-tiled Fasting Palace.

**FREE** **Natural History Museum** MUSEUM  
(自然博物馆; Zìrán Bówùguǎn; 126 Tianqiao Nandajie; ☀8.30am-5pm, last tickets 4pm; 🗺 Qiánmén) The main entrance hall to the recently restored Natural History Museum is hung with portraits of the great natural historians, including Darwin and Linnaeus. Escort kiddies to the revamped dinosaur hall facing you as you enter, which presents itself with an overarching skelly-bone of a *Mamenchisaurus jingyanensis* – a vast sauropod that once roamed China – and a much smaller *protoceratops*.

Some of the exhibits, such as the spliced human cadavers and genitalia in the notorious Hall of Human Bodies, are flesh-crawlingly graphic.

**CHÁOYÁNG**

朝阳区

**Ritán Park**

PARK

(日坛公园; Map p74; Ritan Lu; ☀6am-9pm; 🚶🏻♿️Jiànguómén or Yonganli) Established as an altar for ritual sacrifice to the sun, this is one of Běijīng's oldest and most pleasant parks. The square altar, typically surrounded by kite flyers and playing children, is ringed by a circular wall, while the rest of the park is devoted to pines, quietude, the rituals of taichi practitioners and martial arts shifu. The park is also home to a decent outdoor **climbing wall** (☎8563 5038; per climb Y10; ☀10am-10pm) if you want to climb off calories acquired from the park's gaggle of popular bars and restaurants.

**Dōngyuè Temple**

TAOIST TEMPLE

(东岳庙; Dōngyuè Miào; 141 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie; admission Y10, with guide Y40; ☀8.30am-4.30pm, last tickets 4pm; 🚶🏻♿️Cháoyángmén) Dating to 1607, this active temple's splendid *páifāng* (memorial archway) lies to the south, spliced from its shrine by the noisy intervention of Chaoyangmenwai Dajie. Stepping through the entrance pops you into a Taoist Hades, where tormented spirits in numerous halls reflect on their wrongdoing. Visiting during festival time, especially during the Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival, sees the temple at its most colourful.

**Poly Art Museum**

MUSEUM

(保利艺术博物馆; Bǎoli Yìshù Bówùguǎn; Map p66; www.poly-museum.com; Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie; admission Y20; 🚶🏻♿️Dongsishitiao) Caressed with Chinese music, this excellent museum displays a glorious array of ancient bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties and an exquisite gathering of standing Bodhisattva statues. Resembling a semidivine race of smiling humans, most of the statues are from the Northern Qi, Northern Wei and Tang dynasties. It's a sublime presentation and some of the statues have journeyed through the centuries with pigment still attached. In an attached room are four of the Western-styled 12 bronze animals plundered during the sacking of the Old Summer Palace. The pig, monkey, tiger and ox peer out from glass cabinets – you can buy a model for Y12,000 if you want.

**National Stadium & National Aquatics Center**

STADIUM

(国家体育场、国家游泳中心; Guójiā Tìyùchǎng; Guójiā Yóuyǒng Zhōngxīn; Map p44; National Stadium Y50, National Aquatics Center Y30;

**BIG UNDERPANTS**

The outlandish 234m-high CCTV Building (Map p74), as a continuous loop through horizontal and vertical planes, is a unique addition to the Běijīng skyline. Boldy ambitious and designed by Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren of OMA, the building is an audacious statement of modernity, despite being dubbed 'Big Underpants' by locals. In February 2009, stray fireworks from CCTV's own Lantern Festival display sent the costly TV Cultural Center in the north of the complex up in flames. CCTV famously censored its own reporting of the huge conflagration, even though it was visible for miles around. Big Underpants escaped unsinged.

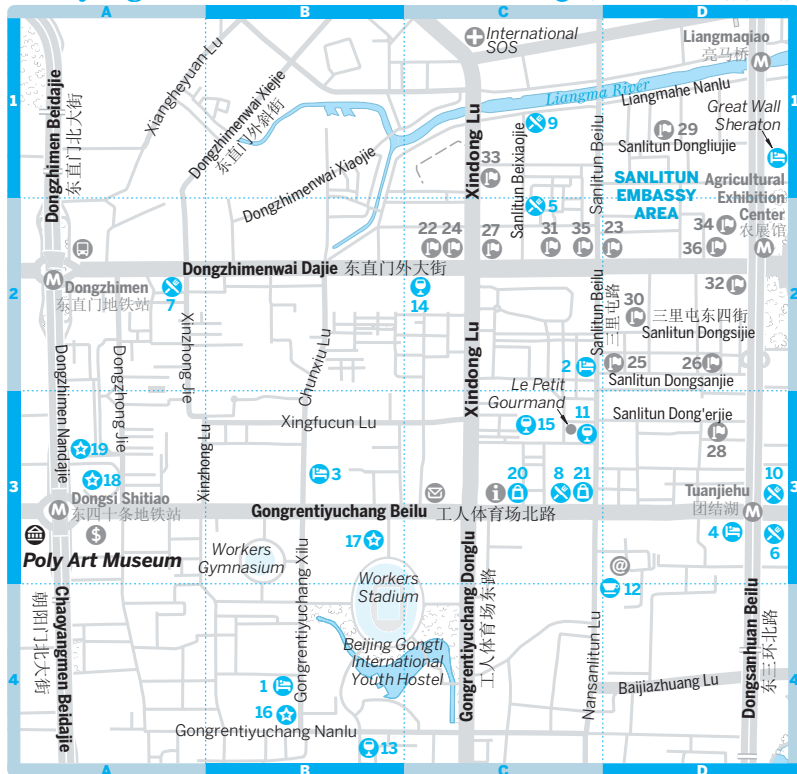
☀9am-6.30pm; 🚶🏻♿️Olympic Sport Center or Olympic Green) It's now hard to imagine that this was the scene of rapturous sporting exultation in August 2008, but such is the fate of most Olympics projects. You can enter the inspiring **National Stadium** – colloquially known as the Bird's Nest – in an attempt to recapture the euphoria of '08 and even ascend the medals podium for a further Y200, or simply admire the architecture for free from the outside. In the winter of 2010, it re-emerged as a snow park; visionaries see its future as a shopping mall and entertainment complex. The nearby **Water Cube** is well worth a gander from the outside, and at the time of writing was set to open as Asia's largest indoor water park.

**FREE Olympic Forest Park**

PARK

(奥林匹克森林公园; Àolǐnpǐkè Sēnlín Gōngyuán; Map p44; ☀9am-5pm; 🚶🏻♿️South Gate of Forest Park) The humungous 680-hectare grassy expanse goes on forever so if you're looking for a casual stroll, stick to parks in the centre of town. In summer you can hop on a boat across the lake, which seethes with fat and well-fed fish, hike along brick and concrete paths or simply make a break for the hills. Considering the epic scale of the park, it's a great way to shed a kilo or two but you may end up flagging down a passing electric buggy (Y20; 9am to 5pm) when your shuddering legs start folding at the knees.





## XUǎNWÚ & FÈNGTÁI 宣武区、丰台区

### Capital Museum

MUSEUM

(中国首都博物馆; Zhōngguó Shǒudū Bówùguǎn; ☎6337 0491; www.capitalmuseum.org.cn; 16 Fuxingmenwai Dajie; admission Y15; ☎9am-5pm; 🚶Muxidi) This rewarding and impressively styled museum contains a mesmerising collection of ancient Buddhist statues and a lavish exhibition of Chinese porcelain. Further displays are dedicated to a chronological history of Běijīng, cultural relics of Peking Opera, a Běijīng Folk Customs exhibition and exhibits of ancient bronzes, jade, calligraphy and paintings.

### Qianmen Dajie

HISTORIC STREET

(前门大街; Map p48; 🚶M Qianmen) Recently reopened after a costly overhaul, this shopping street – now pedestrianised and ‘restored’ to resemble a late Qing-dynasty street scene – was designed to bring the tourist dollar to a once charmingly tatty area. As late as the 1950s, this road was

called Zhengyangmen Dajie (Facing the Sun Gate St), after Front Gate immediately north. Visitors are today treated to the rebuilt **Qiánmén Decorative Arch** (a concrete fake: the original was torn down in the 1950s) and invited to hop on one of the two reproduction trams (Y20) to glide along the street. Qianmen Dajie’s former commercial vitality and sense of community is gone and local shops have made way for Zara, H&M et al.

### Dashilar

HISTORIC STREET

(大栅栏; Dàshílán’er; Map p48; 🚶M Qianmen) Just west of Qianmen Dajie, this recently restored historic shopping street is a fascinating way to reach the antique shop street of Liulichang to the west. A collection of *lǎozǐ hào* (shops with history) include Ruifuxiang, Tongrentang, the Neiliansheng Shoe Shop and Liubiju. It’s also an excellent place to snack and find accommodation.

## Cháoyáng & Sānlitún

### 📍 Top Sights

Poly Art Museum..... A3

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 1 Hotel G..... B4  
 2 Opposite House Hotel..... C2  
 3 Sānlitún Youth Hostel..... B3  
 4 Zhàolóng International Youth Hostel..... D3

### 🍴 Eating

- 5 April Gourmet..... C2  
 6 Běijīng Dàdǒng Roast Duck Restaurant..... D3  
 7 Dōngběirén..... A2  
 8 Element Fresh..... C3  
 Hatsune..... (see 21)  
 9 Indian Kitchen..... C1  
 10 Pure Lotus..... D3

### 🍷 Drinking

- 11 Aperitivo..... C3  
 12 Bookworm Café..... D4  
 13 Face..... B4  
 14 Paddy O'Shea's..... C2  
 15 Tree..... C3

### 🎬 Entertainment

- 16 Destination..... B4  
 17 Mix..... B3  
 18 Poly Plaza International Theatre..... A3  
 19 Tiāndì Theatre..... A3

### 🛍 Shopping

- 20 Sānlitún Yashou Clothing Market..... C3  
 21 The Village..... C3

### Information

- 22 Australian Embassy..... C2  
 23 Cambodian Embassy..... D2  
 24 Canadian Embassy..... C2  
 25 Dutch Embassy..... D2  
 26 French Embassy..... D2  
 27 German Embassy..... C2  
 28 Italian Embassy..... D3  
 29 Kazakhstan Embassy..... D1  
 30 Lao Embassy..... D2  
 31 Malaysian Embassy..... C2  
 32 Myanmar Embassy..... D2  
 33 Nepalese Embassy..... C1  
 34 Pakistani Embassy..... D2  
 35 Spanish Embassy..... C2  
 36 Swedish Embassy..... D2

## White Cloud Temple

TAOIST TEMPLE

(白云观; Báiyún Guān; Baiyun Lu; admission Y10; ☉8.30am-4.30pm May-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Apr; 🚫Muxidi) Founded in AD 739, White Cloud Temple is a lively complex of shrines and courtyards, tended by distinctive Taoist monks with their hair twisted into top-knots. Today's temple halls principally date from Ming and Qing times.

Near the temple entrance, a queue snakes slowly through the gate for a chance to rub a polished stone carving for good fortune. Drop by the White Cloud Temple during Chinese New Year for a magnificent *miào-huì* (temple fair).

To find the temple, walk south on Baiyun Lu and cross the moat. Continue south along Baiyun Lu and turn into a curving street on the left; follow it for 250m to the temple entrance.

## Cow Street Mosque

MOSQUE

(牛街礼拜寺; Niújiē Lǐbài Sì; 88 Niu Jie; admission Y10, Muslims free; ☉8am-sunset; 🚫Càishikǒu) Dating back to the 10th century, this Chinese-styled mosque is Běijīng's largest and was the burial site for several Islamic cler-

ics. Surrounded by residential high-rises, the temple is pleasantly decorated with plants and flourishes of Arabic. Look out for the main prayer hall (only Muslims can enter), women's quarters and the Building for Observing the Moon (望月楼; Wàngyuèlóu), from where the lunar calendar was calculated. Dress appropriately (no shorts or short skirts).

## Fāyuán Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(法源寺; Fāyuán Sì; 7 Fayuansi Qianjie; admission Y5; ☉8.30-11am & 1.30-3.30pm; 🚫Càishikǒu) With its air of monastic reverence and busy monks, this bustling temple east of Cow Street Mosque was originally constructed in the 7th century. Now the China Buddhism College, the temple follows a typical Buddhist layout, but make your way to the fourth hall for its standout **copper Buddha** seated atop four further Buddhas, themselves atop a huge bulb of myriad effigies. Within the Guanyin Hall is a Ming-dynasty Thousand Hand and Thousand Eye Guanyin, while a huge supine Buddha reclines in the rear hall.

## 798 ART DISTRICT

Originally flung up by the East Germans, the disused and sprawling electronics factory known as **798 Art District** (798 艺术新区; Map p44; cnr Jiuxianqiao Lu & Jiuxianqiao Beilu) has for years served as the focus for Běijīng's feisty art community. Standout galleries include **Long March Space** (北京二万五千里文化传播中心; Běijīng Ērwàngwǔqiānlǐ Wénhuà Chuánbō Zhōngxīn; www.longmarchspace.com; ☎11am-7pm Tue-Sun), where paintings, photos, installations and videos get a viewing; and the well-known **Chinese Contemporary Běijīng** (中国当代; Zhōngguó Dāngdài; www.chinesecontemporary.com; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu; ☎11am-7pm). Also check out **Contrasts Gallery** (☎10am-6pm Tue-Sun), **Běijīng Tokyo Art Projects** (北京东京艺术工程; Běijīng Dōngjīng Yìshù Gōngchéng; www.tokyo-gallery.com; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu) and the excellent **798 Photo Gallery** (百年印象摄影画廊; Bǎinián Yīnxiàng; www.798photogallery.cn; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu). For art, architecture and design books, leaf through **Timezone 8** (☎11.30am-7.30pm) and try one of the super-duper burgers. Several cafes are at hand when your legs give way. **Cave Café** (Dòngfáng Kǎfēi) does a fine cuppa and includes a rediscovered, hand-inscribed dedication from Lin Biao on its wall. A further extensive colony of art galleries can be found around 4km northeast of 798 Art District at **Cǎochǎngdì** (草场地). For 798 Art District, ride the subway to Sanyuanqiao station, then jump on bus 401 and get off at Dàshānzi Lúkǒunán (大山路口南).

## Hǎidiàn

## Summer Palace

(颐和园; Yíhé Yuán; Map p70; 19 Xinjian Gongmen; ticket Y20, through ticket Y50, audioguide Y40; ☎8:30am-5pm; 地铁YiYuán or Běigōngmén) Virtually as mandatory a Běijīng sight as the Great Wall or the Forbidden City, the gargantuan Summer Palace easily merits an entire day's exploration, although a (high-paced) morning or afternoon may suffice.

Once a playground for the imperial court fleeing the suffocating summer torpor of the Forbidden City, the palace grounds, temples, gardens, pavilions, lakes, bridges, gate-towers and corridors of the Summer Palace are a marvel of landscaping. Unlike the overpowering flatland of the Forbidden City or the considered harmonies of the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace – with its huge lake, hilltop views and engaging walks – offers a pastoral escape into the landscapes of traditional Chinese painting.

The domain had long been a royal garden before being considerably enlarged and embellished by Emperor Qianlong in the 18th century. He marshalled a 100,000-strong army of labourers to deepen and expand **Kūnmíng Lake** (昆明湖; Kūnmíng Hú; Map p70), and reputedly surveyed imperial navy drills from a hilltop perch.

Anglo-French troops vandalised the palace during the Second Opium War (1856–60). Empress Dowager Cixi launched into a refit in 1888 with money earmarked for a

海淀区

HISTORIC SITE

modern navy; the marble boat at the northern edge of the lake was her only nautical – albeit quite unsinkable – concession.

Foreign troops, angered by the Boxer Rebellion, had another go at torching the Summer Palace in 1900, prompting further restoration work. By 1949 the palace had once more fallen into disrepair, eliciting a major overhaul.

Glittering Kūnmíng Lake swallows up three-quarters of the park, overlooked by **Longevity Hill** (万寿山; Wànshòu Shān). The principal structure is the **Hall of Benevolence and Longevity** (仁寿殿; Rénshòu Diàn; Map p70), by the east gate, housing a hardwood throne and attached to a courtyard decorated with bronze animals, including the mythical *qilin* (a hybrid animal that only appeared on earth at times of harmony). Unfortunately, the hall is barricaded off so you will have to peer in.

An elegant stretch of woodwork along the northern shore, the **Long Corridor** (长廊; Cháng Láng; Map p70) is trimmed with a plethora of paintings, while the slopes and crest of Longevity Hill behind are adorned with Buddhist temples. Slung out uphill on a north-south axis, the **Buddhist Fragrance Pavilion** (佛香阁; Fóxiāng Gé; Map p70) and the **Cloud Dispelling Hall** (排云殿; Páiyún Diàn; Map p70) are linked by corridors. Crowning the peak is the **Buddhist Temple of the Sea of Wisdom** (智慧海; Zhìhuì Hǎi; Map p70), tiled with effigies of Buddha, many with obliterated heads.

Cixi's **marble boat** (清晏船; Qīngyàn Chuán; Map p70) sits immobile on the north shore, south of some fine Qing **boathouses** (船坞; Chuán Wū; Map p70). When the lake is not frozen, you can traverse Kūnmíng Lake by ferry to **South Lake Island** (南湖島; Nánhú Dǎo; Map p70), where Cixi went to beseech the **Dragon King Temple** (龙王庙; Lóngwáng Miào; Map p70) for rain in times of drought. A graceful **17-arch bridge** (十七孔桥; Shíqīkǒng Qiáo; Map p70) spans the 150m to the eastern shore of the lake. In warm weather, **pedal boats** (4-/6-person boat per hr ¥40/60; ☀8.30am-4.30pm in summer) are also available from the dock.

Try to do a circuit of the lake along the **West Causeway** (Xīdī) to return along the east shore (or vice versa). It gets you away from the crowds, the views are gorgeous and it's a great cardiovascular workout. Based on the Su Causeway in Hángzhōu, and lined with willow and mulberry trees, the causeway kicks off just west of the boat-houses. With its delightful hump, the grey and white marble **Jade Belt Bridge** (Yùdài Qiáo) dates from the reign of emperor Qianlong and crosses the point where the Jade River (Yùhé) enters the lake (when it flows).

Towards the North Palace Gate, **Sūzhōu Street** (苏州街; Sūzhōu Jiē; Map p70) is an entertaining and light-hearted diversion of riverside walkways, shops and eateries designed to mimic the famous Jiāngsū canal town.

The Summer Palace is about 12km north-west of the centre of Běijīng, accessed via Xiyuàn station (Exit C2) or Bèigōngmén on line 4 of the metro system. In warmer months there's the option of taking a **boat** (☎8836 3576; Houhu Pier; one way/return incl Summer Palace admission ¥70/100) from behind the Běijīng Exhibition Center near the zoo; the boat voyages via locks along the canal.

### Old Summer Palace

HISTORIC SITE

(圆明园; Yuánmíng Yuán; admission ¥10, palace ruins ¥15; ☀7am-7pm; 🚶Yuánmíngyuán Park) Forever etched on China's national consciousness for its sacking and destruction by British and French forces during the Second Opium War, the old Summer Palace was originally laid out in the 12th century. Resourceful Jesuits were later employed by Emperor Qianlong to fashion European-style palaces for the gardens, incorporating elaborate fountains and baroque statuary.

During its looting, much went up in flames and considerable booty was sent abroad, but a melancholic tangle of broken columns and marble chunks from the hardier Jesuit-designed stone palace buildings remain.

The subdued marble ruins of the **Palace Buildings Scenic Area** (Xiyánglóu Jìngqū) can be mulled over in the **Eternal Spring Garden** (Chángchūn Yuán) in the northeast of the park, near the east gate. There were once over 10 buildings here, designed by Giuseppe Castiglione and Michael Benoist.

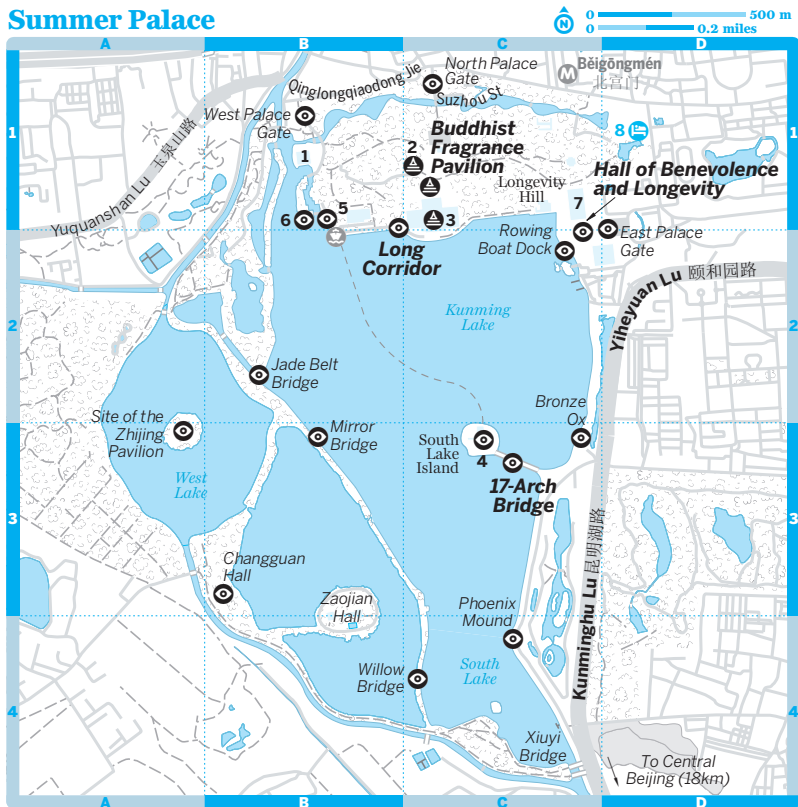
The **Great Fountain Ruins** (大水法遗址; Dàshuǐfǎ Yízhǐ) themselves are considered the best-preserved relics. Built in 1759, the main building was fronted by a lion head fountain. Standing opposite is the **Guānshuǐfǎ** (观水法), five large stone screens embellished with European carvings of military flags, armour, swords and guns. The screens were discovered in the grounds of Peking University in the 1970s and later restored to their original positions.

West of the Great Fountain Ruins are the vestiges of the **Hǎiyàntáng Reservoir** (海宴堂蓄水池台基; Hǎiyàntáng Xùshuǐchí Táiījī), where the water for the impressive fountains was stored in a tower and huge water-lifting devices were employed. Also known as the Water Clock, the **Hǎiyàntáng**, where 12 bronze human statues with animal heads jetted water in 12 two-hour sequences, was constructed in 1759. The 12 animal heads from this apparatus were distributed among collections abroad, and Běijīng is attempting to retrieve them (four animal heads can be seen at the Poly Art Museum). Just west of here is the Fāngwàiguàn, a building turned into a mosque for an Imperial concubine; an artful reproduction of a former labyrinth called the **Garden of Yellow Flowers** (迷宫; Míngōng) is also nearby.

### WANT MORE?

For in-depth information, reviews and recommendations at your fingertips, head to the Apple App Store to purchase Lonely Planet's *Běijīng City Guide* iPhone app.

Alternatively, head to **Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/china/beijing](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/china/beijing)) for planning advice, author recommendations, traveller reviews and insider tips.



The gardens cover a huge area – some 2.5km from east to west – so be prepared for some walking. Besides the ruins, there's the western section, the **Perfection & Brightness Garden** (圆明园; Yuánmíng Yuán) and the southern compound, the **10,000 Spring Garden** (万春园; Wànchūn Yuán).

### Great Bell Temple

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(大钟寺; Dàzhōng Sì; 31a Beisanhuan Xilu; adult ¥10; ☎8.30am-4.30pm; 🚗Dazhongsi, 📍361, 367 or 422) Once a shrine where Qing emperors prayed for rain, the temple today is named after its gargantuan Ming-dynasty bell: 6.75m tall and weighing a hefty 46.5 tonnes, the colossal bell was cast in 1406 and is inscribed with Buddhist sutras, comprising more than 227,000 Chinese characters and decorated with Sanskrit incantations. If you're bell crazy you'll be spellbound by the exhibitions on bell casting, the collection of bells from France, Russia, Japan, Korea and other nations. Also on view are copies

of the bells and chimes of the Marquis of Zeng and a collection of Buddhist and Taoist bells including *vajra* bells and the wind chimes (*fēnglíng*) that tinkle from temple roofs and pagodas across China.

### Fragrant Hills Park

PARK

(香山公园; Xiāngshān Gōngyuán; admission ¥10; ☎7am-6pm) The part of the Western Hills (Xīshān) closest to Běijīng is known as Fragrant Hills Park. It's at its prettiest (and busiest) in autumn, when the maple leaves saturate the hillsides in great splashes of crimson, but the hilly park is a great escape from town any time of year. You can scramble up the slopes to the top of **Incense-Burner Peak** (香炉峰; Xiānglú Fēng) or take the **chairlift** (one way/return ¥30/50; ☎9am-4pm).

Near the north gate of Fragrant Hills Park is the excellent **Azure Clouds Temple** (碧云寺; Bìyún Sì; admission ¥10; ☎8am-5pm), which dates to the Yuan dynasty. The Sun

## Summer Palace

### 🕒 Top Sights

17-Arch Bridge .....	C3
Buddhist Fragrance Pavilion .....	C1
Hall of Benevolence and Longevity .....	C2
Long Corridor .....	B1

### 👁️ Sights

1 Boathouses .....	B1
2 Buddhist Temple of the Sea of Wisdom .....	C1
3 Cloud Dispelling Hall .....	C1
4 Dragon King Temple .....	C3
5 Marble Boat .....	B1
6 Rowing-Boat Dock .....	B1
7 Theatre Stage .....	C1

### 🛌 Sleeping

8 Aman at Summer Palace .....	D1
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Yatsen Memorial Hall contains a statue and a glass coffin donated by the USSR on the death of Sun Yatsen, while at the very back is the marble Vajra Throne Pagoda where Sun Yatsen was interred after he died, before his body was moved to its final resting place in Nánjīng. The Hall of Arhats contains 500 *luóhàn* statues.

To reach Fragrant Hills Park by public transport, take the subway to Běijīng Zoo station and then take fast bus 360; alternatively, you can take bus 318 from Píngguóyuán underground station.

### Běijīng Botanic Gardens

PARK

(北京植物园; Běijīng Zhíwùyuán; admission summer/winter Y10/5; ☀️7am-5pm) Located 2km northeast of Fragrant Hills Park, the well-tended Botanic Gardens, set against the backdrop of the Western Hills, make for a pleasant outing among bamboo fronds, pines, orchids and lilacs. The **Běijīng Botanic Gardens Conservatory** (admission Y50) contains 3000 different types of plants and a rainforest house.

About a 15-minute walk north from the front gate (follow the signs) near the Magnolia Garden is the **Temple of the Reclining Buddha** (Wófó Sì; admission Y5; ☀️8am-4.30pm). First built in the Tang dynasty, the temple's centrepiece is a huge reclining effigy of Sakyamuni weighing in at 54 tonnes, which 'enslaved 7000 people' in its casting. The reclining form of Buddha represents his moment of death, before entering Nirvana. On each side of Buddha are sets of gargantuan shoes, imperial gifts to Sakyamuni.

To get here take the subway to Běijīng Zoo and then hop on fast bus 360; alternatively go to Píngguóyuán subway station and take bus 318.

### Bādàchù

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(八大处; Eight Great Sites; admission Y10; ☀️6am-6pm, later in summer) Named after the eight nunneries and monasteries scattered through its attractive wooded valleys, Bādàchù is an invigoratingly hilly area in the west of Běijīng. Topped with a glittering golden spire, the 13-eaved green tiled brick **Língguāng Temple Pagoda** (Língguāng Sì Tǎ) is also known as the Buddha's Tooth Relic Pagoda; it was built to house a sacred tooth accidentally discovered when the allied powers demolished the place in 1900.

Follow the path up past the small and simple **Sānshān Nunnery** (Sānshān Ān) to the **Dàbēi Temple** (大悲寺; Dàbēi Sì), famed for its 18 arhats (Buddhists who have achieved enlightenment) in the Great Treasure Hall (Dàxióngbǎo Diàn) which were carved by Liú Yuan, a Yuan-dynasty sculptor. Made from a composite of sand and sandalwood, the effigies are over 700 years old. The exterior walls of the hall itself are decorated with slogans from the Cultural Revolution glorifying the supremacy of the Communist Party.

Further slogans adorn the gate to **Lóngquán Nunnery** (Lóngquán Ān; 龙泉庵). Peek into the Lóngwáng Hall (Lóngwáng Táng) where the Dragon King sits with huge, round black eyes. The largest of all the temples is **Xiāngjiè Temple** (Xiāngjiè Sì).

The mountain has plentiful apricot trees, which makes for some cheerful and sweet-smelling scenery around April when the trees briefly bloom. As with other sights, it is inadvisable to visit at weekends, which are busy. A cable car exists for trips to the top of the hill (Y20) and a toboggan (Y40) can sweep you down again. A fast way to reach Bādàchù is to take the underground to Píngguóyuán station and then jump on bus 958 or 389; alternatively, get bus 347 from the zoo.

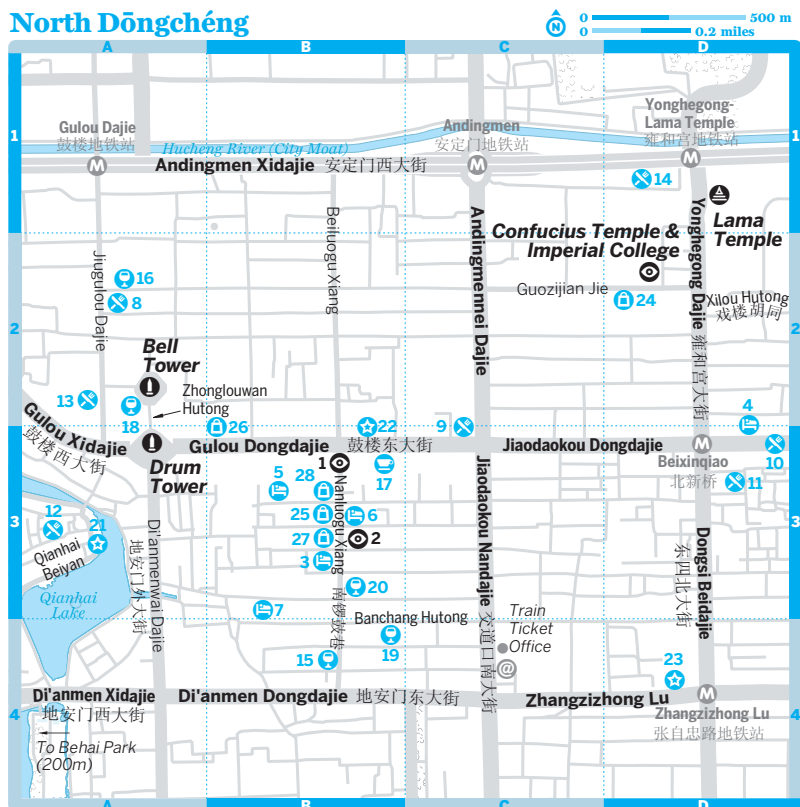


## Activities

### Běijīng Hikers

HIKING

(☎️5829 3195; www.beijinghikers.com/home.php; ☀️9am-6pm Tue-Fri) Organises some breathtaking outings out of town.



## Courses

### Culture

#### China Culture Center

CULTURAL PROGRAMS

(☎)weekdays 6432 9341, weekends 6432 0141; www.chinaculturecenter.org; Kent Center; 29 Anjialou, Liangmaqiao Lu; (M)Liangmaqiao) Offers a range of cultural programs, taught in English and aimed squarely at foreign visitors and expats. The club also conducts popular tours around Běijīng and expeditions to other parts of China.

### Martial Arts

Běijīng is an excellent place to learn taichi and other Chinese martial arts. Several English-speaking instructors teach in Rìtán Park (Map p74); if you are unsure what you want to study, go along and take a look, and then make your choice – mornings and evenings are good times to come and watch. Most schools and teachers accept students at all levels. Alternatively,

check under Martial Arts in the classified pages of free expat magazines such as *The Beijinger* (www.thebeijinger.com) or *Time Out* (www.timeout.com/beijing).

#### Běijīng Milun School of Traditional Kung Fu

MARTIAL ARTS

(☎)136 2113 3764; www.kungfuinchina.com) Lessons near the west gate of Rìtán Park.

### Cooking

#### Black Sesame Kitchen

COOKING CLASSES

(www.blacksesamekitchen.com; ☎)136 9147 4408; 3 Heizhima Hutong) Runs popular cooking classes with a variety of recipes from across China; just off Nanluogu Xiang.

## Festivals & Events

**Spring Festival** A week-long holiday commencing at Chinese New Year, usually in late January or February.

## North Dōngchéng

### 📍 Top Sights

Bell Tower .....	A2
Confucius Temple & Imperial College.....	D2
Drum Tower .....	A3
Lama Temple .....	D1

### 📍 Sights

1 Nanluogu Xiang .....	B3
2 Slogans from Cultural Revolution.....	B3

### 🏠 Sleeping

3 Běijīng Downtown Backpackers Accommodation .....	B3
4 Běijīng Lama Temple International Youth Hostel .....	D2
5 Courtyard 7 .....	B3
Grandma's Kitchen.....	(see 11)
Gǔxiàng 20 .....	(see 6)
6 Hútónggrén .....	B3
7 Mao'er 28 .....	B3

### 🍴 Eating

8 Café Sambal.....	A2
9 Dǎif Courtyard.....	C3
10 Ghost Street.....	D3

11 Grandma's Kitchen .....	D3
12 Hútóng Pizza .....	A3
13 Le Little Saigon.....	A2
Source.....	(see 19)
14 Vineyard Cafe.....	D1

### 🍷 Drinking

15 12sqm .....	B4
16 Bed Bar .....	A2
17 Café Zara .....	B3
18 Drum & Bell Bar.....	A2
19 Mao Mao Chong Bar .....	B4
20 Passby Bar.....	B3

### 🎪 Entertainment

21 East Shore Bar .....	A3
22 MAO Livehouse .....	B3
23 Yúgōng Yíshān.....	D4

### 🛍 Shopping

24 Bannerman Tang's Toys & Crafts .....	D2
25 Clockwork Monkey.....	B3
26 Mega Mega Vintage .....	B3
27 Plastered T-Shirts.....	B3
28 Pottery Workshop.....	B3

**Běijīng Literary Festival** Local and international writers give talks at the Bookworm Cafe, usually in March.

**May Day** Kicks-off a three-day holiday on 1 May.

**International Music Festival** Classical music and opera festival held over five days in May.

**National Day** Launches a week-long holiday on 1 October.

**MIDI Music Festival** (☎6259 0101, 6259 0007) Open-air rock festival at the Běijīng MIDI School of Music in October.

**Běijīng Pop Festival** ([www.beijingpopfestival.com/music](http://www.beijingpopfestival.com/music)) Staged every September in Cháoyáng Park.

**Běijīng Biennale** Arts festival held every two years in September/October.

**Běijīng Music Festival** ([www.bmf.org.cn](http://www.bmf.org.cn)) Held for around 30 days in October and November.

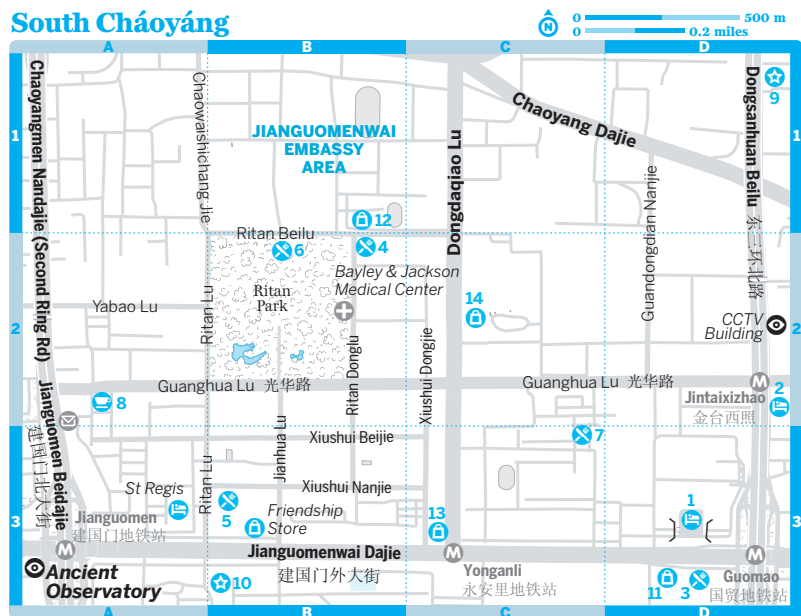
## 🏠 Sleeping

After its Olympic workout, Běijīng has re-emerged with an impressive bevy of accom-

modation spanning all budgets. The budget bracket – which once scarcely existed for foreign backpackers – is now a fiercely competitive arena of youth hostels and affordable lodgings. Even the staid midrange bracket has been slapped into shape, while the opening of top-flight courtyard and boutique hotels has added more eye-catching choice to the top end. Value for money is easy to find, whether it's a peaceful courtyard hotel, a resourceful youth hostel, a nifty midrange business hotel, a modish boutique hotel or a five-star luxury tower that pulls out all the stops.

Most travellers aim to stay within the Second Ring Rd, as that's where most of Běijīng's character survives. The historic districts of Xīchéng and especially Dōngchéng are strong areas across all budgets, and Xuānwū also has historic charm. Cháoyáng is more modern, with lively nightlife and a crop of stylish boutique hotels but little character or sight-seeing. Hǎidiàn is not well supplied with hotels, although the Aman at Summer Palace is tempting for its rarefied sense of seclusion.





Although most hotels allow Westerners to stay, a hard core of hotels irritatingly survives that does not accept foreigners. The sophisticated bar Face was planning on opening rooms at the time of writing.

For hotel bookings, the online agencies **Ctrip** (☎400 619 9999; <http://english.ctrip.com>) and **Elong** (☎400 617 1717; [www.elong.net](http://www.elong.net)) are useful.

## DŌNGCHÉNG

### **TOP CHOICE** City Walls Courtyard

COURTYARD HOTEL \$

(☎6402 7805; [www.beijingcitywalls.com](http://www.beijingcitywalls.com); 57 Nianzi Hutong; 碾子胡同57号; 8-/4-bed dm Y100/120, d Y380; 🍷@📶) Lovely rooms, crumbling *hùtòng* setting, a warm courtyard atmosphere and bubbly owner, this excellent hostel is stuffed away within one of Běijīng's most historic areas. The maze-like web of *hùtòng* can be disorientating: from Jingshan Houjie, look for the *hùtòng* opening just east of the playground and the Sinopec petrol station. Walk up the *hùtòng* and follow it around to the right and then left – the hostel is on the left-hand side. The north gate of the Forbidden City is merely a few minutes' walk away.

### **TOP CHOICE** Peking International Youth Hostel

YOUTH HOSTEL \$

(北平国际青年旅社; Běipíng Guóji Qīngnián Lúshè; Map p52; ☎6526 8855; 5 Beichizi Ertiao; 北池子二条5号; 4-/8-/12-bed dm Y100/100/90, d Y400-500; 🍷@📶) The discreet, central alleyway location is the icing on this particular cake, parcelled away off Nanchizi Dajie, a guidebook's throw from the Forbidden City. The highly relaxing *hùtòng* aspect maintains just the right vibe – homey lounge area, small and leafy courtyard, good dorms (doubles are small though) and an intimate ambience, although it's a tad pricier than many other hostels. Reserve ahead.

### Běijīng Downtown Backpackers Accommodation

HOSTEL \$

(东堂客栈; Dōngtáng Kèzhàn; Map p72; ☎8400 2429; [www.backpackingchina.com](http://www.backpackingchina.com); 85 Nanluogu Xiang; 南锣鼓巷85号; s/d/ste Y150/200/300; 🍷@📶) The central location, helpful staff and lively *hùtòng* aspect on Nanluogu Xiang are hard to beat. Recently restored doubles are tidy (no TV, some no window), with plastic wood floor and clean shower rooms. Free breakfast and free pick-up from Capital Airport (for stays of four days or more, you pay the toll: Y20), plus bike rental (per day Y20, deposit Y400), inter-

## South Cháoyáng

### 📍 Top Sights

Ancient Observatory ..... A3

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 1 China World Hotel ..... D3  
2 Home Inn ..... D2

### 🍴 Eating

- 3 China Grill ..... D3  
4 Jenny Lou's ..... B2  
5 Makye Ame ..... B3  
6 Xiao Wang's Home Restaurant ..... B2  
7 Xiao Wang's Home Restaurant ..... C3

### 🍷 Drinking

- CJW ..... (see 14)  
8 Sequoia Café ..... A2

### 🎬 Entertainment

- 9 Cháoyáng Theatre ..... D1  
10 GT Banana ..... B3

### 🛍 Shopping

- Chaterhouse Booktrader ..... (see 14)  
China World Shopping Mall ..... (see 1)  
11 Five Colours Earth ..... D3  
Garden Books ..... (see 8)  
12 Shard Box Store ..... B1  
13 Silk Street ..... C3  
14 The Place ..... C2

net access (Y6 per hour) and Great Wall trips.

### Mao'er 28

COURTYARD HOTEL \$

(Map p72; 28 Mao'er Hutong; 帽儿胡同28号; s/d/f Y300/380/580; 📍📞) You may need to book a year ahead for a bed at this petite and charming courtyard spot with just three rooms and delightful homestead charm. All the furniture is handmade and Angela the resourceful owner is there for everything, from the cooking to Great Wall trips. The small single has a fan but no air-con. There is no sign outside, just the street number and a bell, which guarantees anonymity.

### Courtyard 7

COURTYARD HOTEL \$\$\$

(七号院; Qīhàoyuàn; Map p72; ☎6406 0777; www.courtyard7.com; 7 Qiangulouyuan Hutong; 前鼓楼苑胡同7号; d/VIP d Y1180/1400, discounts 45%; 📍📞) With tip-top service and three lovely courtyards slung behind a serene old *hùtòng* exterior, this is a delightful and fantastically quiet courtyard hotel in a fabulous central location. It's not cheap,

but discounts take out a fair amount of the sting.

### Raffles Beijing Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(北京饭店莱佛士; Běijīng Fàndiàn Lái fóshì; Map p48; ☎6526 3388; www.beijing.affles.com; 33 Dongchang'an Jie; 东长安街33号; d incl breakfast Y4100, normally 30-40% discount; 📍📞📺) The seven-storey Raffles oozes cachet and pedigree, lucratively cashing in on a lineage dating to 1900 (when it was the Grand Hotel de Pekin) and an impeccable location. The elegant lobby yields to a graceful staircase leading to immaculate standard doubles which are spacious and well proportioned, decked out with period-style furniture and large bathrooms. The flagship French restaurant Jaan is magnificent. Free wi-fi internet in rooms as well as the lobby.

### Park Plaza

HOTEL \$\$

(北京丽亭酒店; Běijīng Lítíng Jiǔdiàn; Map p48; ☎8522 1999; www.parkplaza.com/beijingcn; 97 Jinbao Jie; 金宝街97号; d Y850; 📍📞📺) Appealing midrange value with more than a shot of style in the heart of town, the modish Park Plaza has a tip-top location plus a comfortable, modern and well-presented four-star finish. The lobby is mildly jazzy and sedate - but not subdued - arranged with seats in chocolate brown leather, while rooms are stylish and comfy.

### Hilton Beijing Wangfujing

HOTEL \$\$\$

(北京王府井希尔顿酒店; Běijīng Wángfǔjīng Xī'ěrdùn Jiǔdiàn; Map p48; ☎5812 8888, 800 820 0600; www.wangfujing.hilton.com; 8 Wangfujing Dongdajie; 王府井东大街8号; d Y2300, discounts of 30-50%; 📍📞📺) Muted grey and caramel hues come to the fore at this snazzy new signature hotel off Wangfujing Dajie. The sharp and roomy 50-sq-metre standard rooms come with fastidiously neat bathrooms, spacious walk-in wardrobes and iPod docking stations; the 64-sq-metre superior rooms are effortlessly lovely. The 6th-floor swimming pool has outside views, and Macanese and Chinese restaurants assemble on the 5th floor, where you can find the Flames bar.

### Grand Hyatt Beijing

HOTEL \$\$\$

(北京东方君悦大酒店; Běijīng Dōngfāng Jūnyuè Dàjiǔdiàn; Map p48; ☎8518 1234; www.beijing.grand.hyatt.com; 1 Dongchang'an Jie; 东长安街1号; d Y2600; 📍📞📺) A crisp freshness keeps things snappy at this smart creation beside Oriental Plaza. Doubles are not very roomy and views can be limited, but are

## BĚIJĪNG'S BEST COURTYARD HOTELS

- » Courtyard 7 (p75)
- » Mao'er 28 (p75)
- » City Walls Courtyard (p74)
- » Hǎoyuán Hotel (p76)
- » Peking International Youth Hostel (p74)

attractively, if rather neutrally, designed. The hotel's range of excellent restaurants, cafes and bars – including the elegant Made in China and the luxuriant Red Moon Bar – are genuine incentives.

**Grandma's Kitchen** ROOMS \$\$\$  
(祖母的厨房; Zǔmǔ de Chúfáng; Map p72; ☎ 8403 9452; 28 Shiqie Hutong; d Y480; Ⓜ) There's a rack rate as flexible as an iron rod here, with just a handful of rooms slung out in the courtyard behind the restaurant, but this is a quiet and secluded retreat with more than a measure of charm and some excellent food. Another branch is at 47-2 Nanchizi Dajie.

**Emperor** HOTEL \$\$\$  
(皇家驿栈酒店; Huángjiā Yìzhàn Jiǔdiàn; Map p52; ☎ 6526 5566; www.theemperor.com.cn; 33 Qihelou Jie; 骑河楼街; d Y1600; Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ) The location just east of the Forbidden City is certainly regal, although views from the upper floor rooms merely graze the rooftops of the imperial palace. The funky designed rooms are named after China's emperors; sink a drink in the excellent rooftop bar. Free internet access and wi-fi.

**Hǎoyuán Hotel** COURTYARD HOTEL \$\$  
(好园宾馆; Hǎoyuán Bīnguǎn; ☎ 6512 5557; www.haoyuanhotel.com; 53 Shijia Hutong; 史家胡同53号; d standard/deluxe Y760/930, ste Y1080-1380, VIP r Y1590; Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ) The eight standard rooms in the red-lantern-hung front courtyard are delightfully arranged, albeit small. The gorgeous leafy rear courtyard is more enchanting still. For more space, the largest suite's bedroom is set off from a Chinese parlour, complete with calligraphic hangings, vases, rugs and lanterns, while the VIP room is huge. The only discernible drawback is the yawning wasteland eyecore opposite the front gate. The hotel is a short walk from the Dengshikou metro station.

**Motel 268** HOTEL \$  
(莫泰连锁旅店; Mòtài Liánsuǒ Lúdiàn; Map p48; ☎ 5167 1666; www.motel268.com; 19 Jinyu Hutong; 金鱼胡同19号; d Y268-448, f Y538) A tempting central location coupled with dependably clean and well-kept rooms makes this a good choice from the Motel 268 hotel chain. Rooms are unfussy and low on trim, but good value at the lower end of midrange. The hotel can arrange ticketing.

**Days Inn** HOTEL \$\$  
(美国戴斯酒店; Měiguó Dàisī Jiǔdiàn; Map p48; ☎ 400 881 5555; www.daysinn.cn; 1 Nanwanzi Hutong; 南湾子胡同1号; d/ste Y548/998; Ⓜ Ⓜ) An enviable location is the main draw at this *hútòng*-corner hotel, finished in grey brick, a few minutes' walk east of the Forbidden City. Some guests may not recommend the tours arranged through the hotel, but seem happy with the clean and restful if uninspiring rooms. There's only one suite, but it ranges over two floors.

**Hotel Kapok** HOTEL \$\$  
(木棉花酒店; Mùmiánhuā Jiǔdiàn; Map p48; ☎ 6525 9988; www.hotelkapok.com; 16 Donghuamen Dajie; 东华门大街16号; d Y1280; Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ) Sticking out like a sore but fashionable thumb on Donghuamen Dajie, this trendy and aspiring hotel is popular with the design set and discounts are healthy. A feature of some of the 'fashion rooms' is the overhead atriums for views of the sky. Also recommended:

**Hútònggrén** COURTYARD HOTEL \$  
(胡同人; Hutongren; ☎ 8402 5238; hutongren@ccthome.com; 71 Xiaojie Hutong; 小菊儿胡同71号; s/d Y230/330; Ⓜ) Ensnared quietly away down a small *hútòng* off funky Nanluogu Xiang, this courtyard place has loads of charm with a handful of rooms, decorated with traditional-style furniture and Buddhist carvings.

**Gǔxiàng 20** HOTEL \$\$  
(古巷20号; Gǔxiàng Èrshí Hào; Map p72; ☎ 6400 5566; www.guxiang20.com; 20 Nanluogu Xiang; 南锣鼓巷20号; s/d Y888/1280, discounts 35-40%; Ⓜ Ⓜ) Nanluogu Xiang courtyard-looking hotel with pleasant but small singles decked out in Qing-style furniture and larger doubles; rooftop tennis court.

**Běijīng Lama Temple International Youth Hostel** HOSTEL \$  
(北京雍和宫国际青年旅社; Běijīng Yōnghégōng Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè; Map p72; ☎ 6402 8663; 56 Beixinqiao Toutiao; 北新桥头

条56号; 4-/6-bed dm Y65/60, s/d Y180/220, discounts for members; ㊚㊛㊜) Congenial and pleasant hostel south of the Lama Temple; cold in winter.

### Beijing City Central Youth Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(北京城市国际青年旅社; Běijīng Chéngshì Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎8511 5050; www.centralhostel.com; 1 Beijingzhan Qianjie; 北京站前街1号; 4-8 bed dm Y60, s with shower Y298-328, without shower Y120-160, tw with/without shower Y328/160; ㊚㊛) Across the road from Běijīng train station, this hostel compensates for lack of character with a handy location and clean rooms.

### XUĀNWŭ

#### Qiánmén Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(前门客栈; Qiánmén Kèzhàn; Map p48; ☎6313 2370/2369; www.qianmenhostel.com; 33 Meishi Jie; 煤市街33号; 6-8/4-bed dm Y50/70, tw/d/tr Y200/200/240; ㊚㊛) This heritage hostel combines a relaxing environment with high-ceilinged original woodwork, charming antique buildings and able staff. Affable hostel owner Genghis Kane may show off his environmentally sound heating equipment (fired with dried pellets of plant matter). Heritage rooms are simple; purpose-built rooms are more modern with less character. Western breakfasts, bike hire nearby, laundry available.

### Leo Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(广聚元饭店; Guǎngjùyuán Fàndiàn; Map p48; ☎8660 8923; www.leohostel.com; 52 Dazhalan Xijie; 大栅栏西街52号; 10/12-bed dm Y50, 8-bed dm with toilet Y70, 6-bed dm Y60, q Y60-80, tr Y210-300, d/tw Y240/180; ㊚㊛) Popular and ever busy, it's best to phone ahead to book a room at this bargain hostel tucked away down Dazhalan Xijie. The attractive interior courtyard is decked out with plastic plants; there are OK dorm rooms (pricier dorms with toilet), simple but passable doubles, a lively bar and a fine location.

### 365 Inn

HOSTEL \$

(Map p48; ☎6302 8699; 55 Dazhalan Xijie; 大栅栏西街55号; dm with/without shower Y70/50, d/tr Y160/240; ㊚㊛) Popular hostel with a great ground-floor bar area where you can sit and watch life going by on spruced-up Dashilan Xijie. Clean twins are simple but you could cross Běijīng on foot faster than it takes the hot water to kick in.

### Chánggōng Hotel

HOSTEL \$

(长宫饭店; Chánggōng Fàndiàn; Map p48; ☎5194 8204; changgong\_hotel@yahoo.com.cn; 1 Yingtao Xiejie; 樱桃斜街11号; 4-/6-bed dm Y40, tw without shower Y60, d/tr with shower Y180/210; ㊚㊛) Opposite the disintegrating Guanyin Temple, the marvellous former Guìzhōu Guild Hall is a cavernous old Qing-dynasty building, arranged over two floors linked by a vertigo-inducing flight of stairs. Excellent-value doubles are spacious, if rather threadbare. Friendly staff speak good English but the hotel's echo-chamber acoustics amplify every murmur and winters can be frosty.

### XĪCHÉNG

#### Red Lantern House

COURTYARD HOTEL \$

(红灯笼客栈; Hóngdēnglóng Kèzhàn; ☎8328 5771; www.redlanternhouse.com; 5 Zhengjue Hutong; 正觉胡同5号; dm Y55-60, s Y140-180, tw Y160-260, d Y180-260; ㊚㊛) Offers homely *hùtòng*-located courtyard-style lodgings a short stroll from Hòuhǎi Lake and run by cheerful staff. Doubles are without shower, but are comfy, clean, cheap and charming. If it's booked out, two sibling branches are nearby. Internet (Y1 for 10 minutes), washing (Y10 per kilo), restaurant-bar in main lobby area (Tsingtao beer Y3 per bottle).

### Sleepy Inn

HOTEL \$

(丽舍什刹海国际青年酒店; Lìshè Shìchàhǎi Guójī Qīngnián Jūdiàn; ☎6406 9954; www.sleepyinn.com.cn; 103 Deshengmennei Dajie; 德胜门内大街103号; 6-/4-bed dm Y60/80, s & d Y298; ㊚㊛) In an adorable perch between Hòuhǎi and Xīhǎi Lakes, congenial Sleepy Inn incorporates one of the halls of the former Taoist Zhēnwǔ Temple into its peaceful formula. Rooms are in the three-storey block, with clean pine-bed dorms and well-looked-after doubles (but rooms come with neither phone nor TV). Free internet access.

### CHÁOYÁNG

#### TOP CHOICE Opposite House Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(瑜舍; Yúshè; Map p66; ☎6417 6688; www.theoppositehouse.com; Bldg 1, The Village, 11 Sanlitun Lu; 三里屯路11号院1号楼; d Y1950; ㊚㊛) Artworks litter the lobby area and rooms are top-drawer chic with American oak bathtubs, open-plan bathrooms, underfloor heating and gorgeous mood lighting; the metal basin swimming pool and fastidiously trendy Mesh bar round out a totally sleek boutique picture. Excellent dining options.

**Hotel G**

HOTEL \$\$

(北京极栈; Běijīng Jízhàn; Map p66; ☎6552 3600; www.hotel-g.com; A7 Gongti Xilu; 工体西路甲7号; d Y1488; 🏠📶📶) Natty boutique hotel featuring a snappy blend of deep purple, charcoal greys, black, floral print patterns and crushed-velvet textures. Snazzy rooms spoil you with a choice of six different pillows and you won't want to get out of bed they're that comfy. Wi-fi and free breakfast.

**China World Hotel**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(中国大饭店; Zhōngguó Dàfàndiàn; Map p74; ☎6505 2266; www.shangri-la.com; 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie; 建国门外大街1号; d Y2900; 🏠📶📶📶) The gorgeous five-star China World matches its outstanding level of service to a sumptuous foyer: a masterpiece of Chinese motifs, glittering chandeliers, robust columns and smooth acres of marble. Rooms are modern and amenities extensive, with shopping needs met at the China World Trade Center.

**Home Inn**

HOTEL \$

(如家; Rújiā; Map p74; ☎5207 6666; 34 Dongsanhuan Zhonglu; 东三环中路34号; s/d Y259/299, big-bed s & d Y299, business r Y339; 🏠📶) The location, rising up south of the awesome CCTV Building, is as good as we could find. Handy, neat, crisp, modern, fresh and versatile, it's also a bargain. Regularly shaped, simple and unfussy rooms offer no surprises: we're talking Ikea-style work desks, simple flat-screen TVs and ho-hum artwork on the walls. If space is a high-priority, go for the luxury business rooms.

**Sānlitún Youth Hostel**

HOSTEL \$

(三里屯青年旅馆; Sānlitún Qīngnián Lǚguǎn; Map p66; ☎5190 9288; 1 Chunxiu Lu; 春秀路1号; 6-/4-bed dm Y60/70, tw/d Y258/258; 🏠📶📶) Situated conveniently west of Sānlitún, this functional four-floor hostel has clean dorms and hygienic common shower rooms, but little character. The hotel is tucked away in a courtyard east off Chunxiu Lu. Free internet and wi-fi for guests, bike hire (Y20 per day), Great Wall tours, cafe/bar and friendly staff. No lift.

Also recommended:

**Zhàolóng International Youth Hostel**

HOSTEL \$

(兆龙青年旅社; Zhàolóng Qīngnián Lǚshè; Map p66; ☎6597 2666; www.zhaolonghotel.com.cn; 2 Gongrentiyuchang Beilu; 工人体育场北路2号; 6-/4-/2-bed dm Y60/70/80; 🏠📶📶) A six-floor block behind the Zhàolóng Hotel offering clean accommodation.

**Holiday Inn Lido**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(丽都假日饭店; Lìdū Jiàrì Fàndiàn; ☎6437 6688; fax 6437 6237; cnr Jichang Lu & Jiangtai Lu; 近机场路将台路; d Y950; 🏠📶📶) Highly popular and first-rate establishment with excellent amenities and a resourceful shopping mall.

**Hǎidiàn**

**Michael's House** COURTYARD HOTEL \$\$  
(迈克之家; Mǎikè Zhījiā; ☎6222 5620;

South yard, 1 Zhiqiang Gardens, Xiaoxitian; 小西天志强北园1号南院; d/ste Y608/1008; 📶) Elegant, quiet and convivial courtyard-style hotel with grey-brick styling and helpful, traditionally attired staff. Modern but quaintly Chinese, the comfy abode is attractively fringed with greenery, offering very pleasant *hùtòng* rooms kitted out with a contemporary finish.

**Aman at Summer Palace**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(颐和安缦; Yíhé Ānmàn; Map p70; ☎5987 9999; 15 Gongmenqian Jie; 宫门前街15号; r/courtyard r US\$550/650, ste/courtyard ste US\$850/\$1110; 🏠📶📶) Just round the corner from the Summer Palace, the elegant Aman resort hotel is an exclusive and palatial escape from Běijīng's fuggy and noisy central districts. Service is discreet and intimate, the courtyard rooms are gorgeous, while choice restaurants, a spa, a library, a cinema, pool and squash courts round off the refined picture, although prices can be heart-stopping.

**FURTHER AFIELD****Commune by the Great Wall**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(长城脚下的公社; Chángchéng Jiǎoxià de Gōngshè; ☎8118 1888; www.communebythegreatwall.com; r Y1890; 🏠📶📶) It's not cheap but the cantilevered geometric architecture, location and superb panoramas are stand-out. Positioned at the Shuǐguān section of the Great Wall, Kempinski-managed Commune has a proletarian name but the design is anything but. Treat yourself to a room with the ultimate view.

**Red Capital Ranch**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎8401 8886; www.redcapitalclub.com; 28 Xiaoguangdi village, Yanxi, Huairou County; 怀柔县雁栖镇下关村28号; d Y1425; 🏠📶📶) Běijīng's escapist option, this Manchurian hunting lodge has 10 individually styled villas, a mountain setting, a 20-hectare estate with Great Wall remains and a stress-busting Tibetan Tantric Space Spa. Breakfast included.

## Eating

For a proper handle on Chinese food, get the gloves off and sleeves rolled up in Běijīng. Not only is Běijīng cuisine (京菜; *jīngcài*) one of the major Chinese cooking styles, but chefs from all four corners of the land make the culinary pilgrimage here to serve the faddy masses. Which means you don't really have to leave town to eat your way around China – whether it's Uighur food, Sìchuān hotpot, Lánzhōu Lāmiàn or Cantonese, you can leaf your way through an often-dazzling Chinese atlas of cooking. The international food spectrum is also sorted, so some of your best Běijīng memories could well be table-top ones.

This may be Běijīng, but eating out doesn't necessarily require excessive capital outlays: listed here are restaurants that offer the best food and value within a range of budgets. Supermarkets are plentiful and most visitors will find what they need, but delis stock wider selections of foreign cheeses, cured meats and wines. Street snacking is another way to eat your way around Běijīng, so trust your nostrils to lead you to Běijīng's huge population of tirelessly working street-side chefs.

### Supermarkets

#### Olé Supermarket

SUPERMARKET

Handy branches of this well-stocked supermarket can be found in the basement of **Oriental Plaza** (Map p48; ☎8.30am-10.30pm), the China World Shopping Mall (Map p74) as well as the **Ginza Mall** (basement, 48 Dongzhimenwai Dajie; ☎10am-10pm) in Dōngzhīmén.

#### Carrefour

SUPERMARKET

(家乐福; Jiālèfú; ☎8.30am-10.30pm) Beisanhuan Donglu (6b Beisanhuan Donglu); Fēngtái (15 No 2 district Fangchengyuan Fangzhuang); Hǎidiàn (54a Zhongguancun Nandajie); Xuānwú (11 Malian Dao) Stocks virtually everything you may need, takes credit cards and provides ATMs and a home-delivery service. There are seven branches in town.

#### April Gourmet

DELI

(Map p66; 1 Sanlitun Beixiaojie; ☎8am-9pm) An expat-oriented deli with fine wines and cheeses; three branches in town. Does deliveries.

#### Jenny Lou's

DELI

(婕妮璐; Jiènílù; Map p74; 6 Sanlitun Beixiaojie; ☎8am-10pm) Fresh meat, fish, cheeses, wines and a wide array of deli items; six branches in town.

## DŌNGCHÉNG

For convenient dining and a Pan-Asian selection under one roof, try one of the ubiquitous food courts that can be found in shopping malls throughout the city.

### Dàli Courtyard

YUNNAN \$\$

(大理; Dàlǐ; Map p72; ☎8404 1430; 67 Xiaojingchang Hutong, Gulou Dongdajie; set menu from ¥100; ☎lunch & dinner) Part of the joy of this restaurant is its lovely courtyard setting; the other essential ingredient is the inventive Yúnnán cuisine from China's southwest. It's necessary to book in advance and, unconventionally, there is no menu. Dishes are devised on impulse by the chef, so communicate any dietary requirements up front.

### Crescent Moon Muslim Restaurant

MUSLIM \$\$

(新疆弯月亮维吾尔穆斯林餐厅; Xīnjiāng Wānwán Yuēliàng Wéiwú'ěr Mùsīlín Cāntīng; 16 Dongsi Liutiao; dishes from ¥18; ☎lunch & dinner; 🍷) The meaty lamb kebabs (羊肉串; *yángròu chuàn*) at this well-known *hùtòng*-side Uighur restaurant are the talk of the town and there's a far more intimate feel here than at some of Běijīng's other more high-profile Uighur eateries. The *dàpánjī* (大盘鸡) is a filling dish of potatoes, peppers and vegetables served over thick noodle slices. Picture menu.

### Xiao Wang's Home Restaurant

BEIJING \$\$

(小王府; Xiǎo Wángfǔ; Map p74; ☎6594 3602, 6591 3255; 2 Guanghua Dongli; meals ¥70; ☎lunch & dinner; 🍷) Slung out on several floors in an often bewildering maze, this restaurant has enjoyed years of popularity. The deep-fried spare ribs with pepper salt are delectable: dry, fleshy, crispy chops with a small pile of fiery pepper salt, but dig your way through the menu and you'll find many treasures. There's outside seating and a further attractive branch in Ritán Park (Map p74).

### Vineyard Cafe

EUROPEAN \$\$

(葡萄园; Pútáo Yuán; Map p72; ☎6402 7961; 31 Wudaoying Hutong; set lunch ¥55/60; ☎lunch & dinner, closed Mon; 🍷🍷) Famed for its full-on English breakfasts and excellent pizza, this popular and relaxing *hùtòng* cafe is perfect for lunch after seeing the nearby Lama Temple or as a civilised choice for dinner or drinks.

## GHOST STREET

Hopping at weekends and one of Běijīng's busiest and most colourful restaurant strips at virtually any hour, Ghost St (鬼街; Guǐ Jiē; Map p72) is the nickname of this spirited section of Dongzhimennei Dajie, where scores of restaurants converge to feed legions of locals and out-of-towners. Splendidly lit with red lanterns from dusk to dawn, Ghost St is lined with vocal restaurant staff enticing passersby into hotpot eateries, spicy seafood restaurants and other opening outfits. The street is always open so you'll always be able to get fed. Take the subway to Běixīnqiáo, head east along Dongzhimennei Dajie and you will find yourself immediately in Ghost St.

## Maison Boulud

FRENCH \$\$\$

(布鲁音; Bùlǔ Gōng; Map p48; ☎6559 9200; 23 Qianmen Dongdajie; main dishes from Y205; ☺lunch & dinner; @) An imposing highlight of the impeccably spruced up Legation Quarter, Daniel Boulud's Běijīng restaurant presents standout French-inspired cuisine in a choice setting overseen by fastidious staff.

## Café Sambal

MALAYSIAN \$\$

(Map p72; 43 Doufuchi Hutong; set lunch Y80; ☺11am-midnight; @) In an uncomplicated but trendy grey-brick, concrete and wood setting with rickety tables, Café Sambal brings Malaysian food to Běijīng with style and panache. The Kumar mutton with vegetables and rice set (Y80) is satisfying, and the menu embraces a wide range of Malaysian treats from Nyonya curry chicken (Y60) to beef rendang (Y60). Good wine list.

## Wángfǔjīng Snack Street

STREET FOOD \$

(王府井小吃街; Wángfǔjīng Xiǎochíjiē; kebabs & dishes from Y5; ☺9am-10pm) Don't be put off by the starfish (Y20), cicada, seahorse and scorpion kebabs (Y20), this bustling corner of restaurants is a great place to feast elbow-to-elbow with other diners on Xīnjiāng or Muslim Uighur staples such as lamb kebabs (Y5) and flat bread, steaming bowls of *mǎlà tàng* (麻辣烫; spicy noodle soup), *zhájiàngmiàn* (炸酱面; noodles in fried bean sauce; Y12), *Lánzhōu lāmìàn* (兰州拉面; Lánzhōu noodles) and oodles of spicy *chuāncài* (川菜; Sichuan food). Round

it all off with fried ice cream (Y10). Prices are touristy as it's just west off Wangfujing Dajie.

## Kōng Yiji

ZHEJIANG \$\$

(孔乙己酒店; 322 Dongsī Beidajie; dishes from Y18; ☺lunch & dinner) Classic flavours from the elegant southern canal town of Shàoxīng are the speciality at this much-loved restaurant. Named after a short story from modernist Shàoxīng scribe Lu Xun, Kōng Yiji dishes up timeless dishes such as *zuǒxià* (drunken shrimps) and the legendary *dōngpō ròu* (dongpo pork), named after poet Su Dongpo. No meal is complete without shots of warming Shàoxīng wine (*huángjiǔ*).

## Courtyard

FUSION \$\$\$

(四合院; Sīhéyuàn; Map p52; ☎6526 8883; 95 Donghuamen Dajie; meals Y400; ☺6-9.30pm; @) Discreetly hidden behind a curtain of bamboo, the Courtyard enjoys a virtually unparalleled location perched moat-side opposite the east gate of the Forbidden City; modern menu and scrumptious views for romantic dinners. Book ahead.

## Grandma's Kitchen

AMERICAN \$\$

(祖母的厨房; Zǔmǔ de Chúfáng; Map p72; 28 Shique Hutong; meals Y50; ☺7:30am-11pm; @) 'There's no place like home except Grandma's', goes the blurb, and this place is certainly homely, with a scrummy no-nonsense American menu (steaks, burgers, apple pie and all-day breakfasts), efficient staff and accommodation out the back if you eat so much you'd prefer to be horizontal. There are five branches in town.

## Food Republic

FOOD HALL \$

(大食代; Dàshídài; Map p48; basement, Oriental Plaza, 1 Dongchang'an Jie; dishes from Y10; ☺10am-10pm) Perfect for on-the-spot dining, this huge food court has point-and-serve Chinese and other Asian dining options packed under one roof. Purchase a card at the kiosk at the entrance, load up with credits (Y30 to Y500; Y10 deposit) and browse among the canteen-style outlets for whatever grabs your fancy, from Old Běijīng to Hong Kong, Taiwan and beyond.

## Ajisen Noodle

NOODLES \$

(味千拉面; Wèiqiān Lāmìàn; Map p48; FF08, Basement, Oriental Plaza; @) Ajisen's flavour-some noodles – delivered in steaming bowls by fleet-foot black-clad staff – will have your ears tingling and your tummy quivering. Dishes are inexplicably as tasty as they

## BĚIJĪNG'S BEST VEGETARIAN RESTAURANTS

The words *wǒ chīsù* (我吃素; I am a vegetarian) are only understood in their literal sense by the professionals, so if you require your vegetarian food to be 100% meat free, follow your nose to one of the following.

### Pure Lotus VEGETARIAN

(净心莲; Jìngxīnlián; Map p66; 12 Nongzhanguan Nanlu; ☺11am-11pm; mains from Y58; 🍴Tuánjiéhú; ☺☑☑) Flee the 'world of dust' (the Buddhist metaphor for the temporal world) to this gracefully presented restaurant run by monks, with an attractive accent on Buddhist cuisine.

### Bǎihé Courtyard VEGETARIAN

(百合素食; Bǎihé Sùshí; 23 Caoyuan Hutong; ☺11am-10pm; 🍴Dòngzhímén or Běixīnqiáo; ☺☑☑) This is one place where you can sample Peking duck (Y68) without a major calamity for your karma: all dishes are mock-meat and designed to trick your taste buds.

appear on the photo menu and tea comes free with cups punctiliously refilled. Pay up front.

### Dōnghuámén Night Market STREET MARKET \$

(东华门夜市; Dōnghuámén Yèshì; Map p48; Dong'anmen Dajie; snacks from Y3; ☺3-10pm, closed Chinese New Year) A sight in itself, the bustling night market near Wangfujing Dajie is a veritable food zoo: you can choose from lamb kebabs, beef and chicken skewers, corn on the cob, *chòu dòufu* (臭豆腐; smelly tofu), cicadas, grasshoppers, kidneys, quails' eggs, squid, fruit, porridge, fried pancakes, strawberry kebabs, bananas, Inner Mongolian cheese, stuffed aubergines, chicken hearts, pita bread stuffed with meat, shrimps and more. For tourists, expect inflated prices.

### Capital M MODERN EUROPEAN \$\$\$

(Map p48; ☎6702 2727; www.capital-m-beijing.com; 3rd floor, 2 Qianmen Dajie) The latest outpost of Michelle Garnaut's growing empire unsurprisingly offers some iconic views from the terrace over Front Gate and a delectable menu: try the crispy suckling pig.

### Source

SICHUAN \$\$\$

(都江堰; Dōujiāngyuán; Map p72; 14 Banchang Hutong; meals Y188; ☺lunch & dinner) Delightful Dōngchéng courtyard ambience meets the culinary fireworks of Sichuan province, with great success.

### Huáng Tíng

CANTONESE \$\$\$

(凰庭; Māo p48; Peninsula Palace, 8 Jinyu Hutong; meals Y150; ☺lunch & dinner; 🍴) Faux old Peking taken to its most tasteful extreme, Huáng Tíng resembles a Fifth Generation film set. Dim sum (set lunch Y198), but there's also Peking duck (Y280) and dishes from across China.

### CHŌNGWÉN

#### Quánjùde Roast Duck Restaurant

BEIJING \$\$\$

(全聚德烤鸭店; Quánjùde Kǎoyādiàn; Map p48; 9 Shuaifuyuan Hutong; set menu incl duck, pancakes, scallions & sauce Y168; ☺lunch & dinner; 🍴) Less touristy than its revamped Qiánmén sibling, this branch of the celebrated chain has a handy location off Wangfujing Dajie for shopping-laden diners. The roast duck (half duck Y54, minus pancakes, scallions and sauce) is flavoursome and a key ingredient to a Běijīng sojourn.

### Dūyīchù

DUMPLINGS \$\$

(都一处; Māo p48; 38 Qianmen Dajie; 前门大街38号; dishes from Y26; ☺7.30am-9pm) Recently reopened, this celebrated *lǎozihào* (established restaurant) located on Qianmen Dajie – finished in grey brick and serenaded with traditional Chinese music – is famed for its *shāomài* dumplings, although service is rather slow. Try the lamb *shāomài* (Y38) or the shrimp and leek *shāomài* (Y36) and pay up front.

Also recommended:

### Biànyífāng Kǎoyādiàn

BEIJING \$

(便宜坊烤鸭店; Māo p48; 3/F China New World Shopping Mall, 5 Chongwenmenwai Dajie; half/whole duck Y94/188; ☺lunch & dinner; 🍴) Claiming a pedigree dating to the reign of Qing emperor Xianfeng, Biànyífāng roasts its fowl in the *menu* style, in a closed oven.

### XĪCHÉNG

#### Le Little Saigon

VIETNAMESE, FRENCH \$\$

(西贡在巴黎; Xīgòng Zài Bǎilí; Map p72; meals from Y32; 🍴) The French songs and charmingly sedate, easy-going Indo-Chinese vibe are a world away from the fierce traffic noise outside. This yummy corner of French Vietnam hits all the right taste buds: try



scrumptiously scented seafood tamarind soup (Y32), snails in garlic butter (Y48) or Hanoi noodles soup with beef (Y35). Upstairs terrace open in summer.

### Hútóng Pizza

PIZZA \$\$

(胡同比萨; Hútóng Bìsà; Map p72; 9 Yindingqiao Hutong Hou; meals Y80; ☺11am-11pm; 🍷) The Chinese accuse Marco Polo of stealing pizza from China, and it's come back again. This very relaxing spot near the lakes fires up some enormous pizzas (although they are slow in coming). The *hútòng* house interior is funky and the attic room is handsome, with old painted beams.

### CHÁOYÁNG

#### Hatsune

JAPANESE \$\$

(sushi from Y25; ☺lunch & dinner; 🍷) Chaoyang (2/F Heqiao Bldg C, 8a Guanghua Lu); Sānlitún (Map p66; 3rd fl, The Village) A stylish and relaxed American-style sushi restaurant much applauded by fickle and picky expat gastronomes for the ambience and the standout and novelty-named hand rolls. Good-value set lunch deals.

#### Element Fresh

WESTERN \$\$

(新元素; Xīn Yuánsù; Map p66; www.elementfresh.com; 8-3-3 Bldg 8, The Village, 19 Sanlitun Lu; sandwiches from Y39, pasta from Y58; ☺11am-11pm Mon-Fri, 8am-11pm Sat & Sun; 🍷) It was only a matter of time before the neat, spic-and-span and perennially popular Shànghǎi outfit migrated to town, bringing its health-giving menu of salads, sandwiches, pastas, smoothies and MSG-free dishes to an eager tribe of Běijīng expats. Branches also at a2-112, Qianmen Dajie and Lido Plaza, 6 Jiangtai Lu.

### Běijīng Dàdǒng Roast Duck Restaurant

BEIJING \$\$

(北京大董烤鸭店; Běijīng Dàdǒng Kǎoyādiàn; Map p66; ☎6582 2892/4003; 3 Tuanjiehu Beikou; duck Y98; ☺lunch & dinner; 🍷) A long-term favourite of the Peking duck scene, the hall-mark fowl here is a crispy, lean bird without the usual high fat content (trimmed down from 42.38% to 15.22% for its 'Superneat' roast duck, the brochure says), plus plum (or garlic) sauce, scallions and pancakes. Also carved up is the skin of the duck with sugar, an imperial predilection.

### Dōngběirén

MANCHURIAN \$\$

(东北人; Map p66; ☎6415 2855; www.dongbeiren.com.cn; 1a Xinzhong Jie; meals Y50; 🍷) This hearty Manchurian restaurant, overseen by a smiling gaggle of rouge-cheeked, pig-

tailed *xiǎojiě* (waitresses), cooks up flavour-some dumplings (*jiǎozi*) and a fine range of scrummy northeastern fare. Sit back with a Harbin beer (Hāpí; Y12) and enjoy the garrulous atmosphere (with periodic singing from the waitresses).

Also recommended:

### Makye Ame

TIBETAN \$\$

(玛吉阿美; Mǎjī Āmī; Map p74; 2nd fl, A11 Xiushui Nanjie; dishes from Y30; ☺11am-midnight; 🍷) Comfy restaurant behind the Friendship Store with Tibetan ornaments and a suitably exotic menu: lamb ribs, boiled yak with chilli, tsampa (roasted barley flour porridge), yoghurt, butter tea, cooling salads and evening dancers.

### China Grill

WESTERN \$\$\$

(66th fl, Park Hyatt, 2 Jianguomenwai Dajie; ☺lunch & dinner) For high-altitude views of Běijīng and a menu that will take your taste buds to similar heights.

### Indian Kitchen

INDIAN \$\$

(印度小厨餐厅; Yīndù Xiǎochú Cāntīng; 2 Sānlitun Beixiaojie; ☺lunch & dinner) Simple, authentic, popular, strong menu and appealing set lunch buffets.



### Drinking

During the past two decades, Běijīng has morphed from a straight-laced and sober citadel into a modern, drink-dependent capital. These days Běijīng bars are easing into a more seasoned furrow after years of energetic experimentation, although the bandwagon forever rolls on to occupy any profitable niche in the easily bored expat scene. Any bar with 10 years on the ticker is a sure-fire veteran.

Available beers range from the mundane (Yanjing, Beijing, Qingdao) to the noteworthy (Guinness, Tetleys) and exotic (Chimay, Kwak); for ale and wine, the more exotic the import, the more outlandish the price. Approach bars selling preposterously cheap (read possibly fake) alcohol, however, with caution.

Main bar areas include a now-scattered and thinned-out colony in Sānlitún, a hopping slew of bars along Nanluogu Xiang, a long string of samey bars along the northern and southern shores of Hòuhǎi Lake (Hòuhǎi Nán'àn and Hòuhǎi Běi'àn) and nearby Yandai Xiejie; other outfits do their own thing, in their own part of town, including student dives in Wūdàokǒu.

**Cafes****Bookworm Café**

CAFE

(书虫; Shūchóng; Map p66; www.beijingbookworm.com; Bldg 4, Nansanlitun Lu; ☎8am-1am; ☎) Venue of the annual Běijīng Literary Festival in March, the Bookworm is a great place for breakfast, dining, a solo coffee or a major reading binge. Join the swooning bibliophiles perusing the massive English-language book collection and make this place your home whenever your synapses need energising.

**Cafe Zara**

CAFE

(Map p72; www.cafezarah.com; 42 Gulou Dongdajie; coffee Y18, espresso Y15; ☎10am-midnight Wed-Mon; ☎) Peaceful and serene concrete-floor boho enclave on Gulou Dongdajie tranquilised by ambient/chill-out music (occasionally pierced by the squeal of taxi brakes on the road yonder); you *can* sit outside but you may end up swathed in fumes. Regular coffee comes with its own bottle of warmed, sweetened milk. Winning breakfasts.

**Sequoia Café**

CAFE

(美洲杉咖啡屋; Měizhōu Shān Kāféiwū; Map p74; 44 Guanghua Lu; sandwiches Y25; ☎8am-8pm) Sequoia has won legions of fans for its cracking coffees and deservedly admired deli-style sandwiches, served on fluffy, delectable bread. There are other branches in Sānlitun and the Kerry Mall.

**Bars****12sqm**

BAR

(十二平米酒吧; Shí'èr Píngmǐ Jiǔbā; Map p72; cnr Nanluogu Xiang & Fuxiang Hutong; beers from Y15, cocktails from Y35; ☎noon-midnight) The once self-proclaimed smallest bar in Běijīng has expanded to the rear but this much-loved watering hole, run by a welcoming husband-and-wife team, has lost none of its pocket-sized Nanluogu Xiang charm.

**Passby Bar**

BAR

(过客; Guòkè; Map p72; 108 Nanluogu Xiang; ☎9am-2am) One of the original bars on the cafe-bar strip Nanluogu Xiang and still one of the best, with travel-oriented bar staff, a winning courtyard ambience, shelves of books and mags, and a funky ethnic feel.

**Tree**

BAR

(树酒吧; Shù Jiǔbā; Map p66; ☎6415 1954; www.treebeijing.com; 43 Beisanlinton Nan; ☎11am-2am Mon-Sat, 1pm-late Sun) Seriously popular expat dungeon regularly bursting with gregarious drinkers engrossed in conversa-

tion, chomping wood-fired pizza and gulping Leffe (Y40), Duvel (Y40) and over 40 Belgian brews, flogged by skilful bar staff.

**Mao Mao Chong Bar**

BAR

(毛毛虫吧; Máo máochóng Bā; Map p72; 12 Banchang Hutong; ☎5.30pm-late, closed Tue) Infused with the aroma of freshly baked pizza, this neat and appealing bar in a converted *hùtòng* residence oozes style and personality and the location, just off the Nanluogu Xiang drag, enjoys a welcome anonymity. Winning cocktails; homemade vodka.

**Bed Bar**

BAR

(床吧; Chuángbā; Map p72; 17 Zhangwang Hutong; ☎4pm-late Mon-Tue, noon-late Wed-Sun) One of the few bars where you can get horizontal prior to inebriation, this comfortable bar features beds strewn with cushions, an enticing rear courtyard littered with wobbly tables and repro antique chairs, first-rate music and a small dance floor.

**Face**

BAR

(妃思; Feisī; Map p66; 26 Dongcaoyuan, Gongrentiyuchang Nanlu; cocktails from Y65; ☎6pm-late) Sibling of the renowned Shànghǎi French Concession saloon and with the same Southeast Asian accents, Face is elegant if rather pricey (with Tetley's bitter by the pint) but a great bolthole from Běijīng's more sordid taverns. At the time of writing, accommodation was soon to be in the offing.

**Yin**

BAR

(饮; Map p48; 33 Qihelou Jie; cocktails from Y57; ☎11am-2am Apr-Nov) You don't have to live like royalty to drink like a sovereign on the roof of the Emperor Hotel within earshot of the Forbidden City. Cocktails as the sun dips over the imperial palace at twilight are imperative. Exotic-sounding perhaps, *yīn* merely means 'drink' in Chinese.

**Paddy O'Sheas**

BAR

(爱尔兰酒吧; A'í'ér'lán Jiǔbā; Map p66; 28 Dongzhimenwai Dajie; beers from Y20, cocktails from Y40; ☎10am-2am) Slightly more authentically Irish than a bowl of *jiǎozǐ*, but it's a close call. Spacious and fun with regulars staring goggle-eyed at live football and rugby (and their bills: pint of Guinness Y55); happy hour till 8pm.

**Drum & Bell Bar**

BAR

(鼓钟咖啡馆; Gǔzhōng Kāféiguǎn; Map p72; 41 Zhonglouwan Hutong; beers from Y15; ☎1pm-2am) Clamber to the roof terrace of this bar slung between its namesake towers

and, on summer evenings, duck under the thicket of branches and seat yourself amid an idyllic panorama of low-rise Běijīng rooftops. Alternatively, sink without trace into one of the marshmallow-soft sofas downstairs.

Also recommended:

### Aperitivo

(意式餐吧; Yìshì Cānbā; Map p66; 43 Sanlitun Beijie; coffee from ¥20, wine & cocktails from ¥38; ☺10am-2am) Italian-managed Sānlitún bar with a winning continental feel, strong wine list, small terrace and a relaxing measure of style.

BAR

### CJW

(Map p74; L137, The Place, 9 Guanghua Lu; ☺11am-2.30am) With its formula of black velvet sofas and tie-loosening live evening jazz, CJW is a stylish and seductive (but pricey) alternative to Běijīng's full-on beer bars.

WINE BAR

## ★ Entertainment

Today's Běijīng has seen a revolution in leisure activities as the city's denizens work and play hard. Běijīng opera, acrobatics and kung fu are solid fixtures on the tourist circuit, drawing regular crowds. Classical music concerts and modern theatre reach out to a growing audience of sophisticates, while night owls will find something to hoot about in the live-music and nightclub scene.

### Běijīng Opera & Traditional Chinese Music

Chinese opera has probably as many regional variations as there are Chinese dialects, but like Mandarin language, Běijīng opera (京剧; *Jīngjù*) is by far the most famous, with its colourful blend of singing, speaking, swordsmanship, mime, acrobatics and dancing. Sometimes performances can swallow up an epic six hours, but two hours is more common; at most well-known Běijīng opera venues, around 90 minutes is the norm.

### Húguǎng Guild Hall

(湖广会馆; Húguǎng Huìguǎn; 3 Hufang Lu; tickets ¥160-680; ☺performances 7.30pm) With a magnificent red, green and gold interior and balconies surrounding the canopied stage, this theatre dates from 1807. There's also a small **opera museum** (admission ¥10; ☺9am to 11am & 3pm to 7.30pm) opposite the theatre.

CHINESE OPERA

### Lǎo Shě Teahouse

(老舍茶馆; Lǎo Shě Cháguǎn; Map p48; 3rd fl, 3 Qianmen Xidajie; evening tickets ¥180-380; ☺performances 7.50pm) This popular teahouse has nightly shows, largely in Chinese. Performances include folk music, tea ceremonies, theatre, puppet shows and matinée Běijīng opera. Evening performances of Běijīng opera, folk art, music, acrobatics, juggling, kung fu and magic are the most popular; phone or check the website for the latest schedule.

TEAHOUSE

### Cháng'ān Grand Theatre

(长安大戏院; Cháng'ān Dàxìyuàn; Cháng'ān Bldg, 7 Jianguomennei Dajie; tickets ¥80-800; ☺performances 7.30pm) This theatre offers a genuine experience of Běijīng opera, with an erudite audience chattering knowledgably among themselves during weekend matinée classics and evening performances.

CHINESE OPERA

### Líyuán Theatre

(梨园剧场; Líyuán Jùchǎng; ☎6301 6688, ext 8860; Qiánmén Jiànguó Hotel, 175 Yongan Lu; tickets ¥200-500; ☺performances 7.30pm) Tourist-friendly theatre at the rear of the lobby of the Qiánmén Jiànguó Hotel, with regular performances, matinée kung fu shows and expensive tea ceremony options.

THEATRE

### Acrobatics & Martial Arts

Two thousand years old, Chinese acrobatics is one of the best deals in town. Matinée Shàolín performances are held at the **Líyuán Theatre** (梨园剧场; Líyuán Jùchǎng; ☎6301 6688, ext 8860; Qiánmén Jiànguó Hotel, 175 Yongan Lu).

### Tiāndì Theatre

(天地剧场; Tiāndì Jùchǎng; Map p66; 10 Dongzhimen Nandajie; tickets ¥100-300; ☺performances 7.15pm) Young performers from the China National Acrobatic Troupe knot themselves into mind-bending and joint-popping shapes. It's a favourite with tour groups, so book ahead. You can also watch the performers training at the **circus school** (☎6502 3984). Look for the white tower resembling something from an airport – that's where you buy your tickets.

ACROBATICS

### Cháoyáng Culture Center

(朝阳广场; Cháoyáng Qū Wénhuàguǎn; 17 Jintaili; tickets ¥180-380; ☺performances 7.20-8.30pm) Shàolín Warriors perform their punishing stage show here; watch carefully and pick up some tips for queue barging during rush hour in the Běijīng underground.

MARTIAL ARTS

**Cháoyáng Theatre**

ACROBATICS

(朝阳剧场; Cháoyáng Jùchǎng; Map p74; 36 Dongsanhuan Beilu; tickets Y180-680; ☎performances 5.15pm & 7.30pm) Probably the most accessible place for foreign visitors and often bookable through your hotel, this theatre is the venue for visiting acrobatic troupes filling the stage with plate-spinning and hoop-jumping.

**Tiānqiáo Acrobatics Theatre**

ACROBATICS

(天桥杂技剧场; Tiānqiáo Zájì Jùchǎng; ☎6303 7449, English 139 1000 1860; tickets Y100-200; ☎performances 7.15-8.45pm) West of the Temple of Heaven, this is one of Běijīng's most popular venues. The entrance is down the eastern side of the building.

**Red Theatre**

KUNG FU

(红剧场; Hóng Jùchǎng; ☎6714 2473; 44 Xingfu Dajie; tickets Y180-680; ☎performances 7.30-8.50pm) Nightly kung fu shows aimed squarely at tourist groups are performed here.

**Nightclubs**

Běijīng's nightclub scene ranges wildly from student dives for the lager crowd to snappy venues and top-end clubs for the preening types, urban poseurs and well-heeled fashionistas.

**GT Banana**

CLUB

(吧那那; Bānàna; Map p74; Scitech Hotel, 22 Jianguomenwai Dajie; tickets Y20-50; ☎8.30pm-4am Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat) Banana must be doing something right as it's been around for yonks – maybe it's the caged dancers and fire-eaters. Spicy Lounge upstairs brings more variety to the musical mix with regular appearances from international DJs.

**MixBěijīng**

CLUB

(梅克斯; Mèikèst; Map p66; ☎8pm-late) Major hip-hop and R&B club west of Sānlitún with regular crowd-pulling foreign DJs, inside the Workers' Stadium north gate.

**Propaganda**

CLUB

(☎8.30pm-late) Long-serving Wūdàokǒu nightclub attracting throngs of *liúxuéshēng* (students), lured by free entry, cheap booze and wildly popular sounds. It's 100m north of Huáqīng Jiāyuán east gate.

**Destination**

CLUB

(目的地; Mùdìdì; Map p66; www.bjdestination.com; 7 Gongrentiyuchang Xilu; admission free weekdays, weekend admission incl a drink Y60; ☎8pm-2pm) Běijīng's sole gay club, Destination's coarse concrete finish wins few

awards for its looks, but the crowds at weekends don't seem to mind.

**Live Music**

A growing handful of international pop and rock acts make it to Běijīng, but there's still a long way to go, although the live-music scene has evolved dynamically in recent years.

**East Shore Bar**

BAR

(东岸; Dōng'àn; Map p72; ☎8403 2131; 2nd fl, 2 Shishahai Nanyan; Tsingtao beer Y20; ☎4pm-3am) With views of Qiánhǎi Lake, this excellent bar hits all the right notes with its low-light candlelit mood and live jazz sounds from 9.30pm (Thursday to Sunday).

**Yúgōng Yíshān**

LIVE MUSIC

(愚公移山; Map p72; ☎6404 2711; 3 Zhangzi Zhonglu; ☎7pm-2am) Běijīng's foremost live music venue ensconced within a haunted Qing-dynasty government building and famed for a host of reliably excellent music acts.

**2 Kolegas**

LIVE MUSIC

(两个好朋友; Liǎng Gè Hǎo Péngyǒu; ☎8196 4820; 21 Liangmaqiao Lu; cover free-Y20; ☎8pm-2am Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) Awash with bargain beer and tuned in to independent, rawer sounds, 2 Kolegas is an excellent venue for getting your finger on the pulse of Běijīng's musical fringe; within a drive-in cinema park.

**D-22**

BAR

(☎6265 3177; www.d22beijing.com; 242 Chengfu Lu, Haidian; ☎7pm-2am Wed-Sun) On the music map in Wūdàokǒu for its excellent crop of top Běijīng bands and no-frills, no-nonsense indie spirit.

**MAO Livehouse**

LIVE MUSIC

(猫; Māo; Map p72; ☎6402 5080; www.mao live.com; 111 Gulou Dongdajie; ☎4pm-late) This fantastically popular venue for live sounds is one of the busiest in town.

**What Bar?**

BAR

(什么酒吧; Shénme Bā; Map p52; ☎133 4112 2757; 72 Beichang Jie; admission on live music nights incl 1 beer Y20; ☎3pm-late, live music from 9pm Fri & Sat) Microsized and slightly deranged, this broom cupboard of a bar stages regular rotating, grittily named bands to an enthusiastic audience. It's north of the west gate of the Forbidden City.

## Classical Music

As China's capital and the nation's cultural hub, Běijīng has several venues where classical music finds an appreciative audience. The annual 30-day **Běijīng Music Festival** ([www.bmf.org.cn](http://www.bmf.org.cn)) is staged between October and November, bringing with it international and home-grown classical music performances.

### Běijīng Concert Hall

CONCERT HALL

(北京音乐厅; Běijīng Yīnyuètīng; 1 Beixinhua Jie; tickets Y60-580; ☺performances 7.30pm) The 2000-seat Běijīng Concert Hall showcases evening performances of classical Chinese music as well as international repertoires of Western classical music.

### Forbidden City Concert Hall

CONCERT HALL

(中山公园音乐堂; Zhōngshān Gōngyuán Yīnyuè Táng; Map p52; Zhōngshān Park; tickets Y50-500; ☺performances 7.30pm) Located on the eastern side of Zhōngshān Park, this is the venue for performances of classical and traditional Chinese music.

### Poly Plaza International Theatre

THEATRE

(保利大厦国际剧院; Bǎoli Dàshà Guójì Jùyuàn; Map p66; Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie; tickets Y180-1280; ☺performances 7.30pm) Situated in the old Poly Plaza right by Dōngsīshítíào subway station, this venue hosts a wide range of performances, including classical music, ballet, traditional Chinese folk music and operatic works.

## Theatre

Only emerging in China in the 20th century, *huàjù* (话剧; spoken drama) never made a huge impact. As an art, creative drama is still unable to fully express itself and remains sadly sidelined. But if you want to know what's walking the floorboards in Běijīng, try some of the following. The huge Cháng'ān Grand Theatre largely stages productions of Běijīng opera, with occasional classical Chinese theatre productions.

### Capital Theatre

THEATRE

(首都剧院; Shǒudū Jùchǎng; Map p48; 22 Wangfujing Dajie; tickets Y80-500; ☺performances 7pm Tue-Sun) Right in the heart of the city on Wangfujing Dajie, this theatre has regular performances of contemporary Chinese productions from several theatre companies.

## China Puppet Theatre

THEATRE

(中国木偶剧院; Zhōngguó Mù'ou Jùyuàn; 1a Anhua Xili, Beisanhuan Lu; tickets Y30-100; ☺) This popular theatre has regular events, including shadow play, puppetry, music and dance.

## Cinemas

The following are two of Běijīng's most central multiscreen cinemas. Only a limited number of Western films are permitted for screening every year.

### Star Cinema City

CINEMA

(新世纪影城; Xīnshìjì Yǐngyǔàn; Map p48; shop BB65, basement, Oriental Plaza, 1 Dongchang'an Jie; tickets Wed-Mon Y50-70, students Y25) This six-screen cinema is centrally located and plush (with leather reclining sofa chairs).

### Sundongan Cinema City

CINEMA

(新东安影城; Xīndōng'ān Yǐngchéng; Map p48; 5th fl, Sundongan Plaza, Wangfujing Dajie; tickets Y40) Don't expect a huge selection, but you can usually find a Hollywood feature plus other English-language movies.



## Shopping

Several vibrant Chinese shopping districts have abundant goods and reasonable prices: Wangfujing Dajie (王府井大街), Xīdān (西单) and reconstructed Qianmen Dajie (前门大街; p66), including Dashilar. The *hútòng* of Dashilar (大栅栏; p66) runs southwest from the northern end of Qianmen Dajie, south of Tiān'ānmén Sq. It's a great jumble of silk shops, old stores, theatres, herbal medicine shops, food and clothing specialists and hostels, slung out along an attractively renovated street. Delve into fun Yandai Xiejie (烟袋斜街), east of Silver Ingot Bridge, for Tibetan trinkets, glazed tiles, T-shirts, paper cuts, teapots, ceramics and even *qípáo* (cheongsam). Nanluogu Xiang (p59) has emerged as a fun shopping enclave of small boutiques and specialist shops.

More luxurious shopping areas can be found in the embassy areas of Jiànguóménwài (建国门外) and Sānlitún (三里屯); also check out the five-star hotel shopping malls. Shopping at open-air markets is an experience not to be missed. Běijīng's most popular markets are Silk Street, the Sānlitún Yashou Clothing Market, Pānjiāyuán and the Pearl Market. There are also specialised shopping districts such as Liúlǐchǎng.

**Arts & Crafts****Liulichang Xijie**

ANTIQUES

Běijīng's premier antique street, not far west of Dashilar, is worth delving along for its quaint, albeit dressed-up, age-old village atmosphere and (largely fake) antiques. Alongside ersatz Qing monochrome bowls and Cultural Revolution kitsch, you can also rummage through old Chinese books, paintings, brushes, ink and paper. Prepare yourself for pushy sales staff and stratospheric prices. If you want a chop (carved seal) made, you can do it here. At the western end of Liulichang Xijie, a collection of ramshackle stalls flog bric-a-brac, Buddhist statuary, Cultural Revolution pamphlets and posters, fake Tang-dynasty *sāncǎi* (three-colour porcelain), shoes for bound feet, silks, handicrafts, Chinese kites, swords, walking sticks, door knockers etc.

**Běijīng Curio City**

ANTIQUES

(北京古玩城; Běijīng Gǔwán Chéng; 21 Dongsanhuan Nanlu; ☎9.30am-6.30pm) South of Pānjīayúan, Curio City is four floors of gifts, scrolls, ceramics, carpets, duty-free shopping and furniture. It's an excellent place to turn up knick-knacks and souvenirs, especially on Sundays. Take the subway to Jingsōng and then hop on bus 28.

**Bannerman Tang's Toys & Crafts**

CRAFTS

(盛唐轩; Shèngtángxuān Chuántóng Mǐnjiān Wánjù Kǎifā Zhōngxīn; Map p72; 38 Guozijian Jie; ☎9.30am-7pm) Marvellous collection of handmade toys and delightful collectibles from Chinese weebles (*budao weng*; from Y30), puppets, clay figures, tiger pillows to kites and other gorgeous items; it's just along from the Confucius Temple.

**Clockwork Monkey**

TOYS

(铁皮猴子; Tiěpí Hóuzi; Map p72; 47 Nanluogu Xiang; ☎10.30am-midnight) Fun and colourful collection of old and reproduction toy tin robots, cars, boats, trains and puppets along bustling Nanluogu Xiang, just north of the corner with Heizhima Hutong and next to the Wēnyū Cheese Shop at No 49. Great for children and kiddults alike.

**Spin**

CERAMICS

(旋; Xuán; 6 Fangyuan Xilu; ☎11am-9.30pm) Jīngdézhèn ceramics with a funky new imaginative twist; great gift material or for spicing up your dinner table.

**Pottery Workshop**

CERAMICS

(Map p72; Nanluogu Xiang) Another Shànghǎi import on Nanluogu Xiang, this appealing shop sells good-looking ceramics from traditional cool-green celadon tea sets to inventive and artistic creations. It's just north of Qiānguloutyuan Hutong, and opens 'when they feel like it'.

**Zhāoyuán Gé**

KITES

(昭元阁; Map p48; 41 Nanheyuan Dajie) If you love Chinese kites, you'll enjoy this minute shop on the western side of Nanheyuan Dajie. Chinese paper kites range from Y10 for a simple kite, up to around Y300 for a dragon; miniature Chinese kites start from Y25. You can also browse Běijīng opera masks, snuff bottles, chopsticks, Mao badges and *zǐshā* teapots. The owner does not speak much English, but you can look around and make a selection.

**Shard Box Store**

BOXES

(慎德阁; Shèndé Gé; Map p74; 1 Ritan Beilu; ☎9am-7pm) Captivating collection of boxes intriguingly pieced together from porcelain fragments from ancient vases shattered during the Cultural Revolution.

**Clothing****Five Colours Earth**

CLOTHING

(五色土; Wúsètù; Map p74; 1505, 15/F, Bldg 5, Jianwai Soho, 39 Dongsanhuan Zhonglu; ☎9am-6pm) Unique, distinctive and stylish clothing items – coats, jackets, lovely skirts and sexy tops – featuring embroideries made by the Miao minority from Guizhōu.

**Mega Mega Vintage**

CLOTHING

(Map p72; 241 Gulou Dongdajie; ☎2-10pm) Classic vintage clothing shop hits the nail on the head with a mock-up of an old British red phone box as its fitting room and a great selection of blouses, leather jackets and retro togs galore.

**Silk Street**

CLOTHING

(秀水街; Xiùshuǐ Jiē; Map p74; cnr Jianguomenwai Dajie & Dongdaqiao Lu; ☎9am-9pm) Seething with shoppers and polyglot (and increasingly tactile) vendors, Silk Street was for long synonymous with fake knock-offs, and some pirated labels survive. The market sprawls from floor to floor, shoving piles of rucksacks, shoes, silk, cashmere and tailor-made *qípáo* into the overloaded mitts of travellers and expats. Haggle fiendishly (credit cards accepted).

**Sānlitún Yashou Clothing Market** CLOTHING

(三里屯雅秀服装市场; Sānlitún Yāxiù Fúzuāng Shichāng; Map p66; 58 Gongrentiyuchang Beilu) After slogging through this hopping, five-floor bedlam of shoes, boots, handbags, suitcases, jackets, silk, carpets, batik, lace, jade, pearls, toys, army surplus and souvenirs, ease the pressure on your bunions with a foot massage (Y50 per hour) or pedicure (Y40) on the 4th floor and restore calories in the 5th-floor food court.

**Plastered T-Shirts** CLOTHING

(创可贴T恤; Chuāngkětīè Tìxù; Map p72; 61 Nanluogu Xiang; www.plasteredtshirts.com; ☉1pm-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun) Fun range of tongue-in-cheek, ironic and iconic T-shirts, fitting neatly into the entertaining Nanluogu Xiang mentality.

**Books****Bookworm Café** BOOKS

(书虫; Shūchóng; ☎6586 9507; www.beijingbookworm.com; Bldg 4, Nansanlitun Lu) Growing section of new and almost new books for sale. Library members can borrow a maximum of two books at a time.

**Foreign Languages Bookstore** BOOKS

(外文书店; Wàiwén Shūdiàn; 235 Wangfujing Dajie) Third floor for strong children's, fiction and nonfiction sections plus a smattering of travel guides and seats for tired legs.

**Chaterhouse Booktrader** BOOKS

(Map p74; Basement, The Place, 9a Guanghua Lu; ☉10am-10pm) Excellent kids section and great range of new fiction, even if prices are high.

**Garden Books** BOOKS

(Map p74; www.gardenbooks.cn; 44 Guanghua Lu) Sibling of the Shànghǎi branch, above the Sequoia Café.

**Department Stores & Malls****Oriental Plaza** MALL

(东方新天地; Dōngfāng Xīntiāndì; Map p48; www.orientalplaza.com; 1 Dongchang'an Jie; ☉9.30am-9.30pm) You could spend a day in this staggeringly large shopping mega-complex at the foot of Wangfujing Dajie. Prices may not be cheap, but window-shoppers will be overjoyed. There's a great range of shops and restaurants and an excellent basement food court. Men, beware of being dragged off to exorbitant cafes and teahouses by pretty English-speaking girls.

**The Place** MALL

(世贸天阶; Shimào Tiānjiē; Map p74; 9 Guanghua Lu) With its vast outdoor video screen, snappy shopping plaza The Place has lured big names Zara, French Connection, Miss Sixty and Mango, as well as Chaterhouse Booktrader; there's a good food court in the basement.

**The Village** MALL

(Map p66; 19 Sanlitun Lu; ☉10am-10pm) Anchoring Sānlitún's expensive commercial facelift, this nifty multistorey mall drags in legions of snappy shoppers and diners to its shops, cafes and restaurants; the world's largest branch of Adidas is here.

**Markets****Pānjiāyuán Market** MARKET

(潘家园古玩市场; ☉dawn-6pm Sat & Sun) Hands down the best place to shop for *gōngyì* (crafts) and *gǔwán* (antiques) in Běijīng is Pānjiāyuán (aka the Dirt Market or the Sunday Market). The market only takes place on weekends and sprawls from calligraphy, Cultural Revolution memorabilia and cigarette-ad posters to Buddha heads, ceramics, Tibetan carpets and beyond. Up to 50,000 visitors scope for treasures here: if you want to join them, early Sunday morning is the best time. Also, ignore the "don't pay more than half" rule here – some vendors may start at 10 times the real price, so aim low. Make a few rounds at Pānjiāyuán before forking out for anything, to compare prices and weigh it all up. It's off Dongsanhuan Nanlu (Third Ring Rd); to get there take the subway to Jīnsōng, then take bus 28.

**Pearl Market** MARKET

(红桥市场; Hóngqiáo Shichāng; Tiantan Donglu; ☉8.30am-7pm) The cosmos of clutter across from the east gate of Temple of Heaven Park ranges from shoes, leather bags, jackets, jeans, silk by the yard, electronics, Chinese arts, crafts and antiques to a galaxy of pearls (freshwater and seawater, white and black) on the 3rd floor. Prices for the latter vary incredibly with quality and more expensive specimens on the 4th and 5th floors.

**Tea****Ten Fu's Tea** TEA

(天福茗茶; Tiānfú Míngchá; Map p48; www.tenfu.com; 88 Wangfujing Dajie; 王府井大街 88号; ☉10am-9pm) With perky girls standing outside offering passersby free cups of

tea, Taiwan chain Ten Fu's has a number of branches around town and top-quality loose tea from Tie Guanyin to Pu'er and beyond, with prices starting at ¥20 for 1 jīn (500g). There's another branch just west of Ruifuxiang on Dazhalan Jie.

## **i** Information

English-language maps of Běijīng can be grabbed for free at most big hotels and branches of the Běijīng Tourist Information Center. The Foreign Languages Bookstore and other bookshops with English-language titles have maps. Pushy street vendors hawk cheap Chinese character maps (¥1) near subway stations around Tiān'ānmén Sq and Wangfujing Dajie. The *Beijing Tourist Map* (¥8), labelled in both English and Chinese, has little detail but is quite useful.

## Internet Access

Internet cafes (网吧; wǎngbā) are scarce in the centre of town and tourist areas. Rates are usually ¥2 to ¥3 (pricier at night). You will need to show your passport and pay a deposit of about ¥10; you may be digitally photographed (by the rectangular metallic box on the counter). Many cheaper hotels and youth hostels provide internet access, and numerous bars and cafes around Běijīng now offer wi-fi.

**Dáyùsù Internet Cafe** (达宇速网吧; Dáyùsù Wǎngbā; 2 Hufang Lu; per hr ¥3; ☺8am-midnight) No English sign, but it's around three shops north of the Bank of China on Hufang Lu.

**Internet cafe** (网吧; wǎngbā; 432-1 Dongsi Beidajie; per hr ¥2; ☺24hr)

**Internet cafe** (网吧; wǎngbā; Wusi Dajie; per hr ¥3)

**Internet cafe** (网吧; wǎngbā; per hr ¥5; ☺24hr) Above the Běijīng City Central Youth Hostel, on the 2nd floor.

**Internet cafe** (网吧; wǎngbā; per hr ¥4; ☺24hr) It's on the 2nd floor up the fire escape just east of the Bookworm Café.

**Internet cafe** (网吧; wǎngbā; per hr ¥2; ☺24hr) Next to the Sānlítún Youth Hostel.

**Internet cafe** (网吧; wǎngbā; per hr ¥3; ☺24hr) Corner of Dashiqiao Hutong and Jiugulou Dajie.

**Sōngjié Internet Cafe** (松杰网吧; Sōngjié Wǎngbā; 140-7 Jiadaokou Nandajie; per hr ¥2; ☺24hr)

**Wǎngjù Internet Cafe** (网聚网吧; Wǎngjù Wǎngbā; 449 Dongsi Beidajie; per hr ¥2; ☺24hr)

## Medical Services

Běijīng has some of the best medical facilities and services in China. Identified by green crosses, pharmacies selling Chinese (中药; zhōngyào)

and Western medicine (西药; xīyào) are widespread. Some pharmacies offer 24-hour service; typically this means you can buy medicine through a window during the night. Branches of **Watson's** (屈臣氏; Qūchēnshì) Chaoyangmenwai Dajie (1st fl, Full Link Plaza, 19 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie); Dongchang'an Jie (CC17, 19, CC21, 23, Oriental Plaza, 1 Dongchang'an Jie) purvey some medicines, but are more geared towards selling cosmetics, sunscreens and the like.

**Bayley & Jackson Medical Center** (庇利积臣医疗中心; Bìlì Jīchén Yīliáo Zhōngxīn; ☎8562 9998; www.bjhealthcare.com; 7 Ritan Donglu) Full range of private medical and dental services.

**Běijīng Union Medical Hospital** (北京协和医院; Běijīng Xiéhé Yīyuàn; ☎6529 6114, emergencies 6529 5284; 53 Dongdan Beidajie; ☺24hr) Foreigners' and VIP wing in the back building.

**Běijīng United Family Hospital** (北京和睦家医院; Běijīng Hémùjiā Yīyuàn; ☎6433 3960, 24hr emergency hotline 6433 2345; www.unitedfamilyhospitals.com; 2 Jiangtai Lu; ☺24hr) Can provide alternative medical treatments along with a comprehensive range of inpatient and outpatient care, as well as a critical care unit. Emergency room staffed by expat physicians.

**International SOS** (北京亚洲国际紧急救援医疗中心; Běijīng Yàzhōu Guójí Jīnjí Jiùyuán Yīliáo Zhōngxīn; ☎clinic appointments 6462 9112, dental appointments 6462 0333, emergencies 6462 9100; www.internationalsos.com; Suite 105, Wing 1 Kūnshā Bldg, 16 Xinyuanli; ☺9am-6pm Mon-Fri) Expensive, high-quality clinic with English-speaking staff.

**Wǎngfūjīng Pharmaceutical Store** (王府井医药商店; Wǎngfūjīng Yīyào Shāngdiàn; 267 Wangfujing Dajie; ☺8.30am-10pm) Has a large range of both Western and Chinese medicine, plus wheelchairs.

## Money

Foreign currency and travellers cheques can be changed at large branches of the Bank of China, CITIC Industrial Bank, the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China, HSBC, the airport and hotel moneychanging counters, and at several department stores (including the Friendship Store), as long as you have your passport. Hotels give the official rate, but some will add a small commission. Useful branches of the Bank of China with foreign-exchange counters include a branch next to Oriental Plaza on Wangfujing Dajie and in the China World Trade Center. For international money transfers, branches of Western Union can be found in the International Post Office and the Chaoyang branch of **China Post** (3 Gongren-tiyuchang Beilu).

ATMs taking international cards are in abundance. The best places to look are in and around



the main shopping areas (such as Wangfujing Dajie) and international hotels and their associated shopping arcades; some large department stores also have useful ATMs. There's a Bank of China ATM in the Capital Airport arrivals hall. Other useful ATMs:

**Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng) Lufthansa Center (1st fl, Lufthansa Center Yōuyi Shopping City, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu); Novotel Peace Hotel (foyer, Novotel Peace Hotel, 3 Jinyu Hutong); Oriental Plaza (Oriental Plaza, cnr Wangfujing Dajie & Dongchang'an Jie); Sūndōngān Plaza (next to main entrance of Sūndōngān Plaza, Wangfujing Dajie); Swissôtel (2nd fl, Swissôtel, 2 Chaoyangmen Beidajie)

**Citibank** (花旗银行; Huāqí Yínháng; ☎6510 2933; 6th fl, Tower 2, Bright China Cháng'an Bldg, 7 Jianguomennei Dajie)

**Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation** (汇丰银行; Huīfēng Yínháng; HSBC; ☎6526 0668, 800 820 8878) China World Hotel (Suite L129, Ground fl, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie); COFCO Plaza (Ground fl, Block A, COFCO Plaza, 8 Jianguomennei Dajie); Lufthansa Center (Ground fl, Lufthansa Center, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu) All have 24-hour ATMs.

**Industrial & Commercial Bank of China** (工商银行; Gōngshāng Yínháng; Wangfujing Dajie) Opposite Bank of China ATM at entrance to Sūndōngān Plaza.

## Post

The **International Post Office** (国际邮电局; Guójí Yóudiànjú; Jianguomen Beidajie; ☎8am-7pm) is 200m north of Jiànguómén subway station; poste restante letters (Y3; maximum one month, take passport for collection) can be addressed here. You can also post letters via your hotel reception desk, which may be the most convenient option, or at green post boxes around town.

Handy branches of **China Post** (中国邮政; Zhōngguó Yóuzhèng) can be found in the CITIC building next to the Friendship Store; in the China World Trade Center basement; in the Silk Street basement; east of Wangfujing Dajie on Dongdan Ertiao; on the south side of Xichang'an Jie, west of the Běijīng Concert Hall; and east of the Qiánmén Jiànguó Hotel, on Yong'an Lu.

Several private couriers in Běijīng offer international express posting of documents and parcels, and have reliable pick-up services as well as drop-off centres.

**DHL** (敦豪特快专递; Dūnháo Tèkuài Zhuāndì; ☎6466 2211, 800 810 8000; www.dhl.com; 45 Xinyuan Jie) Further branches in the China World Trade Center and COFCO Plaza.

**Federal Express** (联邦快递; Liánbāng Kuàidì; FedEx; ☎6561 2003, 800 810 2338; 1217,

Tower B, Hanwei Bldg, 7 Guanghua Lu) Also in Room 107, No 1 Office Bldg, Oriental Plaza.

**United Parcel Service** (UPS; ☎6593 2932; Unit A, 2nd fl, Tower B, Běijīng Kelun Bldg, 12a Guanghua Lu)

## Public Security Bureau

**PSB** (公安局; Gōng'ānjú; ☎8402 0101, 8401 5292; 2 Andingmen Dongdajie; ☎8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) The Foreign Affairs Branch of the PSB handles visa extensions; see p993 for further information. The visa office is on the 2nd floor on the east side of the building. You can also apply for a residence permit and obtain passport photographs here (Y30 for five).

## Tourist Information

**Běijīng Tourism Hotline** (☎6513 0828; ☎24hr) Has English-speaking operators available to answer questions and hear complaints.

**Běijīng Tourist Information Centers** (北京旅游咨询服务中心; Běijīng Lǚyóu Zixún Fúwù Zhōngxīn; ☎9am-5pm) Běijīng train station (☎6528 8448; 16 Laopianju Hutong); Capital Airport (☎6459 8148); Cháoyáng (☎6417 6627/6656; Gongrentiyuchang Beilu); Wangfujing Dajie (Wangfujing Dajie); Xuānwǔ (☎6351 0018; xuanwu@bjta.gov.cn; 3 Hufang Lu) English skills are limited and information is basic, but you can grab a free tourist map of town and handfuls of free literature; some offices also have train ticket offices.

## Travel Agencies

**China International Travel Service** (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójí Lǚxíngshè; ☎8511 8522; www.cits.com.cn; Room 1212, CITS Bldg, 1 Dongdan Beidajie) Useful for booking tours.

## **i** Getting There & Away

As the nation's capital, getting to Běijīng is straightforward. Rail and air connections link the city to virtually every point in China, and fleets of buses head to abundant destinations from Běijīng. Using Běijīng as a starting point to explore the rest of the country makes perfect sense.

## Air

Běijīng has direct air connections to most major cities in the world. For more information about international flights to Běijīng, see p995.

Daily flights connect Běijīng to every major city in China. There should be at least one flight a week to smaller cities throughout China. The prices listed in this book are approximate only and represent the non-discounted airfare.

**Chéngdū** Y1440

**Chóngqing** Y1660

**Dàlián** Y780

Guǎngzhōu Y1700  
 Guílín Y1440  
 Guiyáng Y1560  
 Hángzhōu Y1150  
 Hārbīn Y1050  
 Hong Kong Y2860  
 Kūnmíng Y1630  
 Lhasa Y2430  
 Nánjīng Y1010  
 Qīngdǎo Y710  
 Shànghǎi Y1220  
 Shēnzhèn Y1750  
 Ūrūmqì Y2410  
 Wǔhàn Y1080  
 Xiámén Y1710  
 Xī'ān Y840

Purchase tickets for Chinese carriers flying from Beijing at the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (中国民航; CAAC; Zhōngguó Mínháng; Aviation Building; 民航营业大厦; Mínháng Yíngyè Dàshà; ☎6656 9118, domestic 6601 3336, international 6601 6667; 15 Xichang'an Jie; ☀7am-midnight) or from one of the numerous other ticket outlets and service counters around Beijing, and through most midrange and top-end hotels. Discounts are generally available, so it is important to ask. Also book through [www.ctrip.com.cn](http://www.ctrip.com.cn) and [www.elong.com](http://www.elong.com).

Make enquiries for all airlines at Beijing's **Capital Airport** (PEK; ☎from Beijing only 962 580). Call ☎6454 1100 for information on international and domestic arrivals and departures.

## Bus

No international buses serve Beijing, but there are plenty of long-distance domestic routes served by national highways radiating from Beijing. Beijing has numerous long-distance bus stations (长途汽车站; *chángtú qìchēzhàn*), positioned roughly on the city perimeter in the direction you want to go.

**BĀWÁNGFÉN LONG-DISTANCE BUS STATION** Destinations served by **Bāwángfén long-distance bus station** (八王坟长途客运站; Bāwángfén Chángtú Kèyùnzhàn; 17 Xidawang Lu) in the east of town:

**Bāotóu** sleeper Y150, 12 hours, one daily (6pm)  
**Chángchūn** Y221, 12 hours, four daily  
**Dàlián** Y276, 8½ hours, four daily  
**Hā'ěrbīn** Y301, 14 hours, one daily (8pm)  
**Qínhuángdǎo** Y61 to Y90, 3½ hours, frequent  
**Shěnyáng** Y165, 7½ hours, regular services  
**Tiānjīn** Y31 to Y35

**SÌHUÌ LONG-DISTANCE BUS STATION** Buses from **Sìhuì long-distance bus station** (四惠长途汽车站; Sìhuì Chángtú Qìchēzhàn):

**Bāotóu** Y150, 12 hours, one daily (2.30pm)  
**Chángchūn** Y240, 12 hours, one daily (5pm)  
**Chéngdé** Y56 to Y77, four hours, 6am to 4pm  
**Dàlián** Y275, 10 hours, two daily (4.30pm and 6.30pm)  
**Dāndōng** Y180, 12 hours, one daily (4pm)  
**Jìxiàn** Y24, two hours, every 10 minutes (6.15am to 7.30pm)

**LIÙLÍQIÁO LONG-DISTANCE BUS STATION** Southwest of Beijing West train station, **Liùlǐqiáo long-distance bus station** (六里桥长途站; Liùlǐqiáo Chángtúzhàn) has buses north, south and west of town:

**Bāotóu** Y150, four daily  
**Chéngdé** Y73, regular services  
**Dàlián** Y210, one daily (4pm)  
**Dàtóng** Y119, regular services  
**Héféi** Y299, one daily (1.45pm)  
**Luòyáng** Y149, six daily  
**Shěnyáng** Y169, 7½ hours, three daily  
**Shǐjiāzhuāng** Y75, regular services  
**Xiámén** Y579, two daily (11am and 11.30am)  
**Xī'ān** Y259, one daily (5.45pm)  
**Yinchuān** Y239, one daily (5pm)  
**Zhèngzhōu** Y149, 10 daily

**LIÁNHUĀCHÍ LONG-DISTANCE BUS STATION** The **Liánhuāchí long-distance bus station** (莲花池长途汽车站; Liánhuāchí Chángtú Qìchēzhàn) has buses south:

**Ānyáng** Y84, regular services  
**Luòyáng** Y135, one daily  
**Shǐjiāzhuāng** Y59, four to five daily  
**Yán'ān** Y256, one daily

**ZHÀOGŌNGKŌU LONG-DISTANCE BUS STATION** Another important station is **Zhàogōngkǒu long-distance bus station** (赵公口汽车站; Zhàogōngkǒu Qìchēzhàn) in the south (useful for buses to Tianjin and Jinan). There are also direct buses to Tiānjīn (Y70, 7am to 11pm) and Qínhuángdǎo from Capital Airport. Lizéqiáo long-distance bus station on Xisānhuān in west Beijing has buses to Tàiyuán and Nánjīng.

## Train

Travellers arrive and depart by train at **Beijing train station** (Beijing Huǒchēzhàn) near the centre of town, the colossal **Beijing West train station** (Beijing Xīzhàn) in the southwest or at the ultra-modern **Beijing South train station** (Beijing Nánzhàn) for trains from Tiānjīn,

Shànghǎi and Hángzhōu. Běijīng train station and Běijīng South train station are served by their own underground stations, making access simple. International trains to Moscow, Pyongyang (North Korea) and Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) arrive at and leave from Běijīng train station; trains for Vietnam leave from Běijīng West train station. Bus 122 (Y1) connects Běijīng train station with Běijīng West train station.

The queues at Běijīng train station can be overwhelming. At the time of writing, there is an English-speaking service window, but it moves around. A **foreigners ticketing office** (🕒24hr) can be found on the 2nd floor of Běijīng West train station.

If you can't face the queues, ask your hotel to book your ticket or try one of the train ticket offices (火车票售票处; Huǒchēpiào Shòupiàochù) around town, where you pay a Y5 commission for your ticket. A handy **train ticket office** (200 Wangfujing Dajie; 🕒9.30am-8.30pm) is at the rear on the right of the 1st floor of the Arts and Crafts Mansion on Wangfujing Dajie; also try the **train ticket office** (9 Zhengjue Hutong; 🕒8am-10.30pm) east of Xijiekou Nandajie and the **train ticket office** (火车票售票处; 134 Jiaodaokou Nandajie; 🕒8am-9pm) on Jiaodaokou Nandajie. The **Běijīng Tourist Information Office** (北京旅游咨询服务中心; Běijīng Lǚyóu Zīxún Zhōngxīn; ☎6417 6627/6656; Gongren-tiyuchang Beilu) near Sānlǚtún also has a train ticket office.

**BĚIJĪNG TRAIN STATION** Běijīng train station is mainly for T-class trains (*tèkuài*), slow trains and trains bound for the northeast; most fast trains heading south now depart from Běijīng South train station and Běijīng West train station. Slower trains to Shànghǎi (Y327, 13½ hours) also go from here. The high-speed D-class train to Chángchūn (Y239, 6½ hours) departs from here, while T-class overnight trains take nine hours (Y239). For high-speed trains to Tiānjīn and Shànghǎi, go to Běijīng south train station.

Typical train fares and approximate travel times for hard-sleeper tickets to destinations from Běijīng train station:

**Dàlián** Y257, 1½ hours

**Dàtóng** Y108, 5½ hours

**Hǎ'ěrbin** Z-class trains, soft sleeper Y429, under 10 hours; slower train, hard sleeper Y281, 12 hours

**Hángzhōu** Y353, 15 hours

**Jílín** Y263, 1½ hours

**Jǐ'nán** Y137, five hours

**Nánjīng** Y274, 11 hours

**Qīngdǎo** Y215, nine hours

**Shànghǎi** soft-sleeper express Y327, 13½ hours, 12 hours

**Tiānjīn** hard seat Y58, 80 minutes

**BĚIJĪNG WEST TRAIN STATION** Fast 'Z' class express trains from Běijīng West train station:

**Chángshā** soft sleeper only Z17, Y506, 13 hours, one daily (6.10pm)

**Fúzhōu** Z59, hard seat Y253, hard sleeper Y443, 19 hours 40 minutes, one daily (5.08pm)

**Hànkǒu** Z77, Y281, 10 hours, one daily (9.12pm)

**Lánzhōu** Z55, Y377, almost 18 hours, one daily (1.35pm)

**Nánchāng** Z65, Z67 and Z133, hard sleeper Y308, 11½ hours

**Wūchāng** hard sleeper Y281, 10 hours, one daily (Z11 9.06pm, Z37 9pm)

**Xī'ān** hard sleeper Y265, 11 hours, one daily (Z19 9.18pm, Z53 9.24pm)

Other typical train fares and approximate travel times for hard-sleeper tickets:

**Chéngdū** Y472, 25 hours

**Chóngqìng** Y416, 24 hours

**Guǎngzhōu** Y443, 21 hours

**Guiyáng** Y490, 29 hours

**Hànkǒu** Y281, 10 hours 20 minutes

**Kowloon** Y526, 23 hours 48 minutes

**Kūnmíng** Y578, 38 hours

**Lánzhōu** Y377, 20½ hours

**Shēnzhèn** Y467, 23½ hours

**Shìjiǎzhuāng** D-class trains Y88, two hours; slower train, hard seat Y50, three hours

**Ūrūmqì** Y652, 40 hours

**Xī'ān** Y274, 13 hours

**Xīníng** Y430, 20½ hours

**Yíchāng** Y319, 21½ hours

**Yínchuān** Y301, 19 hours

For Lhasa in Tibet, the T27 (hard seat Y389, hard/soft sleeper Y813/1262, 45 hours) leaves Běijīng West train station at 9.30pm, taking just under two days. In the return direction, the T28 departs Lhasa at 9.20am.

**BĚIJĪNG SOUTH TRAIN STATION** Most D-class trains and the Tiānjīn C-class train depart from slick, Gattica-like Beijing South train station (Běijīng Nánzhàn) to destinations such as Tiānjīn, Shànghǎi, Hángzhōu and Qīngdǎo.

**Hángzhōu** D309, Y820, 1½ hours

**Jínán** Y153, three hours

**Nánjīng** seat/sleeper Y274/520, eight hours

**Qīngdǎo** Y275, 5½ hours, six daily

## BORDER CROSSINGS: GETTING TO MONGOLIA, NORTH KOREA, RUSSIA & VIETNAM

### Getting to Mongolia

As well as Trans-Mongolian Railway trains that run from Běijīng to Ulaanbaatar via Dàtóng, the K23 train runs to Ulaanbaatar, departing Běijīng train station at 7.45am every Tuesday, reaching Ulaanbaatar at 1.15pm the next day. In the other direction, the K24 departs from Ulaanbaatar every Thursday at 8.05am, reaching Běijīng the following day at 2.04pm.

### Getting to North Korea

There are four international express trains (K27 and K28) between Běijīng and Pyong-yang. K27 leaves Běijīng train station at 5.35pm and reaches Pyongyang at 7.30pm the next day (four weekly).

### Getting to Russia

The Trans-Siberian Railway runs from Běijīng to Moscow via two routes: the Trans-Mongolian Railway and the Trans-Manchurian Railway. See p1000 for details.

### Getting to Vietnam

There are two weekly trains from Běijīng to Hanoi. The GT9 leaves Běijīng West train station at 4.08pm on Thursday and Sunday, arriving in Hanoi at 7am on Saturday and Tuesday. The GT6 departs Hanoi at 6.50pm on Tuesday and Friday, arriving in Běijīng at 12.09pm on Thursday and Sunday. The train stops at Shìjiāzhuāng, Zhèngzhōu, Hànkǒu (in Wǔhàn), Wǔchāng (Wǔhàn), Chángshā, Héngyáng, Yǒngzhōu, Guǐlín, Lǐuzhōu, Nánning and Píngxiāng. See p999 for information on visas.

**Shànghǎi Hóngqiáo train station** eight D-class trains (five night trains), Y499, around 10 hours

**Sūzhōu** seat/sleeper Y309/620

**Tiānjīn** C-series, Y58 to Y69, 30 minutes, every 15 minutes (6.35am to 10.10pm)

**BEIJING NORTH TRAIN STATION** Inner Mongolia is served by trains from **Běijīng North train station** (Běijīng Běizhàn), including trains to Hohhot (Y170, 1½ hours).

## Getting Around

### To/From the Airport

Běijīng's Capital Airport is 27km from the centre of town, about 30 minutes to one hour by car depending on traffic.

The 30-minute **Airport Express** (机场快轨; Jīchǎng Kuàiguǐ; Y25; ☺6am-10.30pm to airport, 6.30am-11pm from airport) runs every 15 minutes, connecting Capital Airport with Line 2 of the underground system at Dōngzhímén and connecting with Line 10 at Sānyuánqiáo.

Several **express bus routes** (fare Y16) run every 10 to 20 minutes during operating hours to Běijīng:

**Line 3** (☺7.30am-last flight from Capital Airport, 5.30am-9pm from Běijīng train station) The most popular with travellers, running to

the Běijīng International Hotel and Běijīng train station via Cháoyángmén.

**Line 2** (☺7am-last flight from Capital Airport, 5.30am-9pm from Aviation Building) Runs to the Aviation Building in Xīdàn, via Dōngzhímén.

**Line 1** (☺7am-11pm from Capital Airport, 5.30am-11pm from Fāngzhuāng) Runs to Fāngzhuāng, via Dàbēiyáo, where you can get onto the subway Line 1 at Guómào. Buses generally make stops at all terminals, but check with the driver. Bus 359 (Y2, one hour, 5.20am to 10pm) also runs to Capital Airport from Dōngzhiménwai Xiejie.

A bus also runs from **Nányuàn Airport** (☺6797 8899) – Běijīng's other airport – to the Aviation Building in Xīdàn, coinciding with departures and arrivals.

Many top-end hotels run shuttle buses from the airport to their hotels.

A taxi (using its meter) should cost about Y85 from the airport to the city centre, including the Y15 airport expressway toll; bank on 30 minutes to one hour to get into town. Join the taxi ranks and ignore approaches from drivers. When you get into the taxi, make sure the driver uses the meter. It is also useful to have the name of your hotel written down in Chinese to show the driver.



## TAKEN FOR A RIDE

A well-established illegal taxi operation at the airport attempts to lure weary travellers into a ¥300-plus ride to the city, so be on your guard. If anyone approaches you offering a taxi ride, ignore them and insist on joining the queue for a taxi outside.

### Bicycle

Flat as a mah jong board, Běijīng was built for bicycling and the ample bicycle lanes are testament to the vehicle's unflagging popularity. The increase in traffic in recent years has made biking along major thoroughfares more dangerous and nerve-racking, however.

Youth hostels often hire out bicycles, which cost around ¥20 to ¥30 per day; rental at up-market hotels is far more expensive. A handy network of **bike rental stations** (🕒8am-10pm) can be found outside a few underground stations, principally on Line 2 (including Gulou Dajie). Bikes (per four hours ¥10, per day ¥20, deposit ¥400) can be hired and returned to different underground stations. Otherwise there are plenty of other places you can hire bikes, including the shop at 77 Tieshu Xiejie (¥10 from 7am to 11pm; deposit ¥200), one of several along this road. When renting a bike it's safest to use your own lock(s) in order to prevent bicycle theft, a common problem in Běijīng.

### Car

Běijīng's Capital Airport has a **Vehicle Administration Office** (车管所; chēguǎnsuǒ; ☎6453 0010; 🕒Mon-Sun 9am-6pm) where you can have a temporary three-month driving licence issued. See p1003 for more information.

### Public Transport

A rechargeable **transport card** (公交IC卡; gōngjiāo IC kǎ; deposit ¥20) for the underground, buses and taxis is available from subway stations and kiosks. The card typically nets you 60% off the cost of bus trips; merely charge the card at subway stations and swipe as you use.

**BUS** Buses (公共汽车; gōnggòng qìchē) are a reasonable way to get around: there are ample bus lanes, bus routes and fleet numbers are plentiful and prices are low. It can still be slow going, however, compared to the subway. As elsewhere in China, you see precious few foreign faces on town buses: bus routes on bus signs are fiendishly foreigner-unfriendly, although the name of the stop appears in pinyin and announcements are made in English (but try to work out how many stops you need to go before

boarding). Getting a seat can verge on the physical, especially at rush hour.

Most fares are typically ¥1, although longer trips or journeys on pusher, air-conditioned buses and night buses are more expensive. You generally pay the conductor once aboard the bus, rather than the driver. Using a transport smartcard nets you a big saving of 60% off most bus trips (making most trips just ¥0.40); just swipe the touchpad on the bus.

Buses run from 5am to 11pm daily or thereabouts. If you read Chinese, a useful publication (¥5) listing all the Běijīng bus lines is available from kiosks; alternatively, tourist maps of Běijīng illustrate some of the bus routes. See [www.bjbus.com/english/default.htm](http://www.bjbus.com/english/default.htm) for a map of Běijīng's bus routes in English. If you work out how to combine bus and subway connections, the subway will speed up much of the trip.

Buses 1 to 86 cover the city core; the 200 series are *yèbān gōnggòng qìchē* (night buses), while buses 300 to 501 are suburban lines.

Useful standard bus routes:

**1** Runs along Chang'an Jie, Jianguomenwai Dajie and Jianguomennei Dajie, passing Sihui-zhàn, Bāwǎngfēn, Yonganli, Dōngdān, Xidān, Mùxidi, Jūnshì Bówùguān, Gōngzhǔfēn and Mǎguānyíng along the way.

**5** Dèshèngmén, Dì'ānmén, Bèihǎi Park, Xīhuámén, Zhōngshān Park and Qiánmén.

**15** Běijīng Zoo, Fùxíngmén, Xidān, Hépíngmén, Liúlíchāng and Tiānqiáo.

**20** Běijīng South train station, Tiānqiáo, Qiánmén, Wángfǔjǐng, Dōngdān and Běijīng train station.

**44** (outer ring) Xīnjièkǒu, Xīzhimén train station, Fùchéngmén, Fùxíngmén, Chāngchūnjie, Xuānwǔmén, Qiánmén, Tǎijichāng, Chōngwénmén, Dōngbiānmén, Cháoyángmén, Dōngzhímén, Āndíngmén, Dèshèngmén and Xīnjièkǒu.

**103** Běijīng train station, Dèngshìkǒu, China Art Gallery, Forbidden City (north entrance), Bèihǎi Park, Fùchéngmén and Běijīng Zoo.

**106** Dōngzhímén Transport Hub Station to Běijīng South train station.

**126** Useful for the short hop from Qiánmén to Wángfǔjǐng Dajie.

**332** Běijīng Zoo, Wèigōngcūn, Rénmín Dàxué, Zhōngguāncūn, Hǎidiàn, Běijīng University and Summer Palace.

**823** Dōngzhímén Transport Hub Station to Běijīng West train station.

**SUBWAY** The subway (地铁; dìtiě) is fast and reliable. Currently nine lines are operating (including the Airport Line), with two more under construction, including Line 9 which will link Běijīng West train station with Line 1 and

Line 4. The flat fare is Y2 on all lines except the Airport Line (Y25). Trains run every few minutes during peak times, operating from 5am to 11pm daily. Stops are announced in English and Chinese. Subway stations (地铁站; *dìtiě zhàn*) are identified by subway symbols, a blue, encircled English capital 'D'. A further east-west line – Line 6 – was under construction at the time of research. Useful stations should include Beihai North, Nánluóguǐ Xiàng, Dōngsī and Cháoyángmén; the line is planned to intersect with numerous other lines, including Lines 10, 2, 5 and 4.

**Line 1** (一号线; Yīhàoxiàn) Runs east-west from Píngguóyuán to Sihui East.

**Line 2** (二号线; Èrhàoxiàn) The circle line following the Second Ring Rd.

**Line 4** (四号线; Sìhàoxiàn) Links Gōngyìxīqiáo and Ànhéqiáo North, connecting with the Summer Palace (Xiuyuan) and the Old Summer Palace (Yuánmíngyuán).

**Line 5** (五号线; Wǔhàoxiàn) Runs north-south between Tiāntóngyuán North and Sōngjiǎzhuāng.

**Line 8** (八号线; Bāhàoxiàn) Connects Bèitūchéng with South Gate of Forest Park, running through the Olympics Sports Center and Olympic Green.

**Line 10** (十号线; Shíhàoxiàn) Follows a long loop from Jīnsōng in the southeast to Bāgōu in the northwest; handy for the Sānlǐtūn area.

**Line 13** (十三号线; Shí sān hǎo xiàn) Runs in a northern loop from Xīzhīmén to Dōngzhīmén.

**Batong Line** (八通线; Bā tōng xiàn) Runs from Sihui to Tǔqiáo in the southeastern suburbs.

**Airport Line** (机场线; Jī chǎng xiàn) Connects Dōngzhīmén with the terminals at Capital Airport.

## Taxi

Běijīng taxis come in different classes, with red stickers on the side rear window declaring the rate per kilometre. Y2 taxis (Y10 for the first 3km, Y2 per kilometre thereafter) include a fleet of spacious Hyundai cars. The most expensive taxis are Y12 for the first 3km and Y2 per kilometre thereafter. Taxis are required to switch on the meter for all journeys (unless you negotiate a fee for a long journey out of town). Between 11pm and 6am there is a 20% surcharge added to the flag-fall metered fare. For extra room and a sense of style, look out for one of the silver London cabs that cruise the streets.

Běijīng taxi drivers speak little English. If you don't speak Chinese, bring a map or have your destination written down in script. It helps if you know the way to your destination; sit in the front (where the seat belt works) with a map.

Cabs can be hired for distance, by the hour, or by the day (a minimum of Y350 for the day). Taxis can be hailed in the street, summoned by phone or you can wait at one of the designated taxi zones or outside hotels. Call ☎6835 1150 to register a complaint. Remember to collect a receipt (ask the driver to *fāpiào*); if you accidentally leave anything in the taxi, the driver's number appears on the receipt so he or she can be located.

## AROUND BĚIJĪNG

### Ming Tombs

### 十三陵

The **Ming Tombs** (Shísān Lǐng; Map p46; ☀8am-5pm), located about 50km northwest of Běijīng, are the final resting place of 13 of the 16 Ming emperors. Billed with the Great Wall at Bādǎlǐng as Běijīng's great double act, the imperial graveyard can unsurprisingly be a rather dormant spectacle, unless you pack a penchant for ceremonial tomb architecture, Confucian symbolism or Ming imperial genealogy.

The Ming Tombs follow the standard plan for imperial tomb design, typically consisting of a *ling mén* (main gate) leading to the first of a series of courtyards and the main hall, the **Hall of Eminent Favours** (灵恩殿; Líng'ēn Diàn). Beyond lie further gates or archways, leading to the **Soul Tower** (明楼; Míng Lóu), behind which rises the burial mound.

Three tombs have been opened up to the public: Cháng Líng, Dìng Líng and Zhāo Líng.

The road leading up to the tombs is the 7km **Spirit Way** (神道; Shéndào; admission winter/summer Y20/30; ☀7am-8pm). Starting with a triumphal arch, the path enters the Great Palace Gate, where officials once had to dismount, and passes a giant *bìxi*, which bears the largest stele in China. A magnificent guard of 12 sets of stone animals and officials ensues.

**Cháng Líng** (长陵; admission winter/summer Y30/45), burial place of the emperor Yongle, is the most impressive, with its series of magnificent halls lying beyond its yellow-tiled gate. Seated upon a three-tiered marble terrace, the most notable structure is the Hall of Eminent Favours, containing a recent statue of Yongle and a breathtaking interior with vast *nanmu* (cedarwood) columns. The pine-covered burial mound at the

rear of the complex is yet to be excavated and is not open to the public.

**Ding Ling** (定陵; admission incl museum winter/summer Y40/60), the burial place of the emperor Wanli, contains a series of subterranean interlocking vaults and the remains of the various gates and halls of the complex. Excavated in the late 1950s, this tomb is of more interest to some visitors as you are allowed to descend into the underground vault. Accessing the vault down the steps, visitors are confronted by the simply vast marble self-locking doors that sealed the chamber after it was vacated. The tomb is also the site of the absorbing **Ming Tombs Museum** (Shísān Líng Bówùguǎn; admission Y20).

**Zhào Líng** (昭陵; admission winter/summer Y20/30), the resting place of the 13th Ming emperor Longqing, follows an orthodox layout and is a tranquil alternative if you find the other tombs too busy.

Tour buses usually combine visits to one of the Ming Tombs with trips to the Great Wall at Bādáling; see p100 for information about buses to and from Bādáling. Also see p102 for details of tour buses that include visits to Ding Ling.

To go independently, take fast bus 345 (345 路快; 345 Lùkuài) from Déshèngménxī, 500m east of Jishuitán subway station, to Chāngpíng (昌平; Y6, one hour, running from 5.30am to 10pm). Get off at the Chāngpíng Dōngguān (昌平东关) stop and change to bus 314 (running 6am to 7pm) for the tombs. Alternatively, take the slower standard bus 345 to Chāngpíng Běizhàn (昌平北站) and similarly transfer to bus 314.

## Tánzhè Temple & Jiètái Temple

潭柘寺、戒台寺

Forty-five kilometres west of Běijīng, **Tánzhè Temple** (Tánzhè Sì; Map p46; admission Y35; ☉8.30am-6pm) is the largest of all of Běijīng's temples. Delightfully climbing the hills amid trees, the temple has a history that extends way back to the 3rd century, although most of what you see is of far more recent construction. The temple grounds are overhung with towering cypress and pine trees; many are so old that their gangly limbs are supported by metal props.

The highlight of a trip to the temple is the small **Tálin Temple** (Tálin Sì), by the

forecourt where you disembark the bus, with its collection of stupas (reliquaries for the cremated remains of important monks) reminiscent of the Shàolín Temple. You can tour them while waiting for the return bus. An excellent time to visit Tánzhè Temple is around mid-April, when the magnolias are in bloom.

About 10km southeast of Tánzhè Temple is the smaller, but more engaging **Jiètái Temple** (Jiètái Sì; Map p46; admission Y35; ☉8am-6pm). Jiètái (Ordination Terrace) Temple was built around AD 622 during the Tang dynasty, with major modifications made during the Ming dynasty.

The main complex is dotted with ancient pine trees; the **Nine Dragon Pine** is claimed to be over 1300 years old, while the **Embracing Pagoda Pine** does just what it says.

Take Line 1 of the subway west to the Píngguōyuán stop and hop on bus 931 (Y3), running from 6.15am to 5.35pm, to the last stop for Tánzhè Temple (don't take the bus 931 branch line, zhíxiàn 支线, however). This bus also stops near Jiètái Temple, where it's a 10-minute walk uphill from the bus stop.

## Marco Polo Bridge 卢沟桥

Described by the great traveller himself, this 266m-long grey marble **bridge** (Lúgōu Qiáo; 88 Lugouqiaochengnei Xijie; admission Y20; ☉8am-5pm) is host to 485 carved stone lions. Each animal is different, with the smallest only a few centimetres high, and legend insists they move around during the night.

Dating from 1189, the stone bridge is Běijīng's oldest (but is a composite of different eras; it was widened in 1969), and spans the Yǒngdìng River (永定河) near the small walled town of Wǎnpíng (宛平城), just southwest of Běijīng.

Despite the praises of Marco Polo and Emperor Qianlong, the bridge wouldn't have rated more than a footnote in Chinese history were it not for the famed Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which ignited a full-scale war with Japan. On 7 July 1937, Japanese troops illegally occupied a railway junction outside Wǎnpíng. Japanese and Chinese soldiers started shooting, and that gave Japan enough of an excuse to attack and occupy Běijīng.

## CHUĀNDĪXIÀ (CUĀNDĪXIÀ)

Nestled in a windswept valley 90km west of Běijīng and overlooked by towering peaks is **Chuāndīxià** (川底下; admission Y20), a gorgeous cluster of historic courtyard homes and old-world charm. The backdrop is lovely: terraced orchards and fields, with ancient houses and alleyways rising up the hillside. The village's real name is Cuāndīxià (爨底下), but as the first Chinese character 爨 (Cuàn) is so rare, it is colloquially known as Chuāndīxià.

Chuāndīxià is also a museum of **Maoist graffiti and slogans**, especially up the incline among the better-preserved houses. Chuāndīxià's friendly residents long ago flung open their doors to overnighting visitors. The lovely-looking **Bǎishùn Kèzhàn** (百顺客栈), behind the spirit wall at No 43 Chunadixiacun at the foot of the village, is a magnificent old courtyard guesthouse.

To the east of the village is the small Qing-dynasty **Guandi Temple**, making for a delightful walk above the village. For excellent bird's-eye photos, climb the hill south of Chuāndīxià in the direction of the Niángniáng Temple. Two hours is more than enough time to wander around the village as it's not big.

If taking a taxi, consider paying an extra Y20 or so for your driver to take you back via the nearby village of Lingshuǐ Cūn (灵水村), another historic village dating to the Tang dynasty.

A bus (Y10, two hours) leaves for Chuāndīxià from Píngguōyuán subway station every day at 7.30am and 12.30pm, returning at 10.30am and 3.30pm. If you take the later bus, you may either need to spend the night or find alternative transport. The other option is to take bus 929 (make sure it's the branch line, or *zhīxiàn* 支线, not the regular bus; runs 7am to 5.15pm) from the bus stop 200m to the west of Píngguōyuán subway station to Zhāitáng (斋堂; Y8, two hours), then hire a taxi van (Y20). The last bus returns from Zhāitáng to Píngguōyuán at 4.20pm. If you miss the last bus, a taxi will cost around Y80 to Píngguōyuán. Taxi drivers waiting at Píngguōyuán subway station will charge around Y140 to Y150 for a round trip. Some hostels in Běijīng also arrange tours to Chuāndīxià.

The **Memorial Hall of the War of Resistance Against Japan** is a gory look back at Japan's occupation of China. Also on the site are the Wǎnpíng Castle, Dàiwáng Temple and a hotel.

Take bus 6 from the north gate of Temple of Heaven Park to the last stop at Liùlǐ Bridge (六里桥; Liùlǐ Qiáo) and then either bus 339 or 309 to Lúgōu Xīnqiáo (卢沟新桥); the bridge is just ahead.



# Journey to the Great Wall

## Includes »

Bádǎlíng .....	99
Mùtiányù .....	100
Jūyōngguān.....	102
Sīmǎtái .....	102
Jīnshānlǐng.....	102
Jiànkǒu .....	103
Huánghuā.....	103

He who has not climbed the Great Wall is not a true man.

*Mao Zedong*

China's greatest engineering triumph and must-see sight, the Great Wall (万里长城; Wànlǐ Chángchéng) wriggles haphazardly from its scattered Manchurian remains in Liáoníng province to wind-scoured rubble in the Gobi desert and faint traces in the unforgiving sands of Xīnjiāng.

The most renowned and robust examples undulate majestically over the peaks and hills of Běijīng municipality, but the Great Wall can be realistically visited in many North China provinces. It is mistakenly assumed that the wall is one continuous entity; in reality, the edifice exists in chunks interspersed with natural defences (such as precipitous mountains) that had no need for further bastions.

## Great Wall History

The 'original' wall was begun more than 2000 years ago during the Qin dynasty (221–207 BC), when China was unified under Emperor Qin Shi Huang. Separate walls that had been constructed by independent kingdoms to keep out marauding nomads were linked together. The effort required hundreds of thousands of workers – many of whom were political prisoners – and 10 years of hard labour under General Meng Tian. An estimated 180 million cu metres of rammed earth was used to form the core of the original wall, and legend tells that one of the building materials used was the bones of deceased workers.

Its beacon tower system, using gunpowder explosions or smoke signals from burning wolves' dung, quickly conveyed news of enemy movements back to the capital. To the west was Jiāyùguān, an important link on the Silk Road, where a customs post of sorts existed and where unwanted Chinese

were ejected through the gates to face the terrifying wild west.

Ming engineers made determined efforts to revamp the eroding bastion, facing it with some 60 million cu metres of bricks and stone slabs. This project took over a century, and the cost in human effort and resources was phenomenal. The picture-postcard brick-clad modern day manifestations of the Great Wall date from Ming times.

The wall occasionally served its impractical purpose but ultimately failed as an impenetrable line of defence. Genghis Khan dryly noted, 'The strength of a wall depends on the courage of those who defend it'. Sentries could be bribed. Despite the wall, the Mongol armies managed to impose foreign rule on China from 1279 to 1368 and the bastion failed to prevent the Manchu armies from establishing two and a half centuries of non-Chinese rule on the Middle Kingdom. The wall did not even register with the 19th-century European 'barbarians' who simply arrived by sea, and by the time the Japanese invaded, the wall had been outflanked by new technologies (such as the aeroplane).

The wall was largely forgotten after that. Mao Zedong encouraged the use of the wall as a source of free building material, a habit that continues unofficially today. Its earthen core has been pillaged and its bountiful supply of shaped stone stripped from the ramparts for use in building roads, dams and other constructions.

Without its cladding, lengthy sections have dissolved to dust and the barricade might have vanished entirely without the tourist industry. Several important sections have been rebuilt, kitted out with souvenir shops, restaurants, toboggan rides and cable cars, populated with squads of unspeakably annoying hawkers and opened to the public.

The old chestnut that the Great Wall is the one man-made structure visible from the moon was finally brought down to earth in 2003 when China's first astronaut Yang Liwei failed to spot it from space. The wall is even less visible from the moon, where even individual countries are barely discernible.

Consult William Lindesay's website at [www.wildwall.com](http://www.wildwall.com) for reams of info on the Great Wall.

## Visiting the Wall

The most toured area of the Great Wall is at Bādáling. Also renovated but less over-run is Mùtiányù, Sīmátái and Jīnshānlǐng. Unimpressed with the tourist-oriented sections, explorative travellers have long sought out the authentic appeal of unrestored sections of wall (such as at Huánguā or Jiànkòu). The authorities periodically isolate such sections or slap fines on visitors. The authorities argue they are seeking to prevent damage to the unrestored wall by traipsing visitors, but they are keener to channel tourist revenue towards restored sections.

When selecting a tour to the Great Wall, it is essential to check that the tour goes where you want to go. Bādáling or other tours often combine with trips to the Ming Tombs, so check beforehand; if you don't want to visit the Ming Tombs, choose another tour or go by public transport.

Some tours make hellish diversions (see boxed text, p101) to jade factories, gem exhibition halls, Chinese medicine centres and whatnot. When booking a tour, ensure such scams are not on the itinerary. It can be safest to book through your hotel or youth hostel but always consider going under your own steam by public transport or hiring a car and a driver. As with most popular destinations in China, avoid weekend trips and definitely shun the big holiday periods.

Take shoes with good grip, water, sunscreen and waterproofs in summer.

For a Great Wall step-master, lung-master workout, the 3800 steps and brutal inclines of the **Great Wall Marathon** ([www.great-wall-marathon.com](http://www.great-wall-marathon.com)) are tackled every May.

## Bādáling

## 八达岭

The wall's most-photographed and most-visited manifestation, **Bādáling** (Bādáling Chángchéng; Map p46; ☎6912 1338, 6912 1423, 6912 1520; adult ¥45; ☀6am-8pm summer, 7am-6pm winter) is 70km northwest of Běijīng.

The raw scenery yields classic views of the bastion snaking into the distance over undulating hills. Nixon, Thatcher, Reagan, Gorbachev and Queen Elizabeth have all paid their respects. The name Bādáling sends a shiver down the spines of hard-core

wall walkers, however: there are souvenir stalls, T-shirt-flogging hawkers, heavily restored brickwork, guardrails and crowds of sightseers. Chinese guidebooks trumpet that '130 million foreign and domestic tourists have visited Bādǎling' as if it was a unique selling point. If you're curious to discover how many people can fit on the wall at any one time, choose the big holiday periods. Don't anticipate a one-to-one with the wall unless you visit during the glacial depths of winter.

The wall here was first built during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), and heavily restored in both the 1950s and the 1980s. Punctuated with *dīlóu* (watchtowers), the 6m-wide masonry is clad in brick, typical of Ming engineering.

Two sections of wall trail off in opposite directions from the main entrance. The restored wall crawls for a distance before nobly disintegrating into ruins; unfortunately you cannot realistically explore these more authentic fragments. Cable cars exist for the weary (Y60 round trip).

The admission fee also gets you into the **China Great Wall Museum** (☎9am–4pm).

## Sleeping

**Commune by the Great Wall** (p78) is located not far from Bādǎling.

## Getting There & Away

### Public Transport

The easiest and most reliable way to reach Bādǎling is on bus 919 (Y12, 80 minutes, every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 7pm) from the old gate of Dèshèngmén, about 500m east of the Jīshuǐtān subway stop. Ask for the 919 branch line (919支线). A taxi to the wall and back is a minimum of Y400 (eight-hour hire with maximum of four passengers).

### Tour Buses

Hotel tours and hostel tours can be convenient (and should avoid rip-off diversions), but avoid high-price excursions.

Tour buses to Bādǎling depart from the **Běijīng Sightseeing Bus Centre** (北京旅游集散中心; Běijīng Lúyóu Jīsàn Zhōngxīn; ☎8353 1111), southwest of Tiān'ānmén Sq.

**Line C** (return Y100, price includes entry to Great Wall; ☎departures 7.30am–11.30am) Runs to Bādǎling.

**Line A** (Y160, includes entrance tickets & lunch; ☎departures 6am–10.30am) Runs to Bādǎling and Dīng Líng at the Ming Tombs.

Simple **buses** (Y50) also leave for Bādǎling and the Ming Tombs from south of Qianmen between 6am and 11am. Everyone else and his dog does trips to Bādǎling, including **CITS** (☎6512 3075; www.cits.com.cn; 57 Dengshikou Dajie), the Běijīng Tourist Information Center (p90), hotels and hostels.

## Mùtiányù

## 慕田峪

Famed for its Ming-dynasty guard towers and stirring views, the 3km-long section of wall at **Mùtiányù** (Map p46; admission Y45; ☎6.30am–6pm), 90km northeast of Běijīng in Huáiróu County, dates from Ming-dynasty remains, built upon an earlier Northern Qi-dynasty conception. Bill Clinton came here (Reagan went to Bādǎling), if that's anything to go by. With 26 watchtowers, the wall is impressive and manageable; most hawking is reserved for the lower levels (hawkers go down to around Y15 for cotton 'I climbed the Great Wall' T-shirts). If time is tight, the wall here has a **cablcar** (single/return Y35/50; ☎8.30am–4.30pm); a single trip takes four minutes. You can also sweep down on the **toboggan** (滑道; huádào; single/return Y40/55). October is the best month to visit, with the countryside drenched in autumn hues.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Red Capital Ranch** (p78) is not far from Mùtiányù.

### Schoolhouse at Mùtiányù

HOLIDAY HOMES \$\$\$

(小园; Xiǎoyuán; ☎6162 6506; www.theschoolhouseatmutianyu.com; Mutianyu Village; houses per night from Y1800; ☎☎) Magnificent range of thoughtfully designed luxury homes – sleeping up to 10 – with gardens and Great Wall Views. Excellent food.

## Getting There & Away

### Public Transport

From **Dōngzhīmén Transport Hub Station** (东直门枢纽站; Dōngzhīmén Shūniǔzhàn), take fast bus 916 (916路快; Jiūyīliù Lùkuài; Y12, one hour, regular services 6.50am to 7.30pm) to Huáiróu (怀柔), then change for a minibus to Mùtiányù (Y25 to Y30). The normal 916 (Y2, 2½ hours) is much slower. The last fast 916 bus back to Dōngzhīmén from Huáiróu is at 5.30pm; the last slow 916 bus is at 7pm. During the summer months, weekend tour bus 6 departs between 7am and 8.30am for Mùtiányù (Y50) from outside the South Cathedral at Xuānwùmén.

## BĀDÁLĪNG BLUES (OR JOURNEY TO THE GREAT MALL) MIN DAI

Always try to establish exactly what is on any Great Wall tour before you hand over your cash. Ensure the tour avoids rip-off diversions and goes where you want to go. This cautionary tale is a true account of a budget Great Wall trip undertaken in 2010.

**5.20am:** Dragged awake from a fog of sleep by my mobile ringing: it's our tour bus driver saying he's almost at our hotel. He was supposed to call at 7am. The bus doesn't eventually depart town until 8.30am. Ye gods.

**First Stop:** Bādáling. Whistlestop 75-minute jaunt with my children on the Great Wall; later I discover it wasn't the proposed Bādáling section but another section of wall called Bādáling Water Pass (八达岭水关; Bādáling Shuǐguān). Ho-hum.

**Second Stop:** The Ming Tombs. The tour guide announces that the imperial tombs are the same as the graves of ordinary folk. 'Do you really want to be photographed on someone else's grave?' she asks rhetorically, and everyone looks sheepish. She adds that children should not visit the tombs as infants have a 'Third Eye' (天眼; Tiānyǎn) and may see spirits. Neither should old people visit as they will be reminded of their mortality; menstruating women are also disqualified. With loads of kids and pensioners on board, we rocket past the tombs.

**Third Stop:** The Jade Factory. If we want to *fācái* (become wealthy) or have successful children, it is important to buy a jade *píxiū* (a fierce mythical creature without a bottom), the guide insists. We troop off the bus to a factory crammed with other tourists. Despite my best efforts to resist, I somehow emerge with two jade *píxiū* (the cheapest they had; Y100) and a much lighter pocket.

**Lunch:** A bread roll, rice, cabbage, potatoes, eggplants and fish that is 90% fishbone.

**Fourth Stop:** Dried Fruit and Roast Duck Shop. Cheaper and better quality than in town, the guide insists. My guard is somehow down again and I emerge with Y30 worth of dried peaches. A satisfying sense of *schadenfreude* kicks in when I see fellow travellers forking out Y78 for roast duck.

**Fifth Stop:** The Third Pole Exhibition Hall. Supposedly an exhibition on Tibetan culture but I quickly find myself Y75 worse off after signing a Buddhist talisman with my name, before discovering there is a levy. A smiling Lama then takes my hands and says I will enjoy good fortune, my son will succeed and my daughter will be blessed with great artistic talent. These blessings all come for a bargain Y1000 to Y9000, he reveals. Haven't got that kind of money on me, I reply. Credit cards are fine, the Lama reassures, still smiling. I only have Y100. I say (I'm loathe to hand it over, but fear bad luck for my family if I don't cough up). The Lama grudgingly waves me to the till for payment.

**Sixth Stop:** Jade Shop No 2. It's almost 4.30pm now. The tour guide explains that the bus needs to go through a security check before re-entering Běijīng. She tells us we must disembark, but assures us we don't have to buy what's on sale at this stop as it's aimed at foreigners. But the sales team lock us inside and insist the jade pieces we bought at the Third Stop are rubbish, so we should buy theirs instead as they're far superior. In walks the Chinese owner who claims he is from Burma; because his wife has born him a set of twins on this very day, he wants to convey his joy by charging us only Y300 for a normally Y3000 collection of jade. By this time everyone is well and truly 'jaded': we flee without buying anything.

**Terminus:** We are dropped at the Bird's Nest and told to make our own way back by underground. By the time we get back to the hotel it is 8pm and I have spent just 75 minutes on the Great Wall (plus Y305 on unwanted extras).

## Tours

Youth hostels and hotels run tours to Mùtiányù from around Y200; such tours are very convenient, but some hotels charge sky-high prices.

## Jūyōngguān

### 居庸关

Rebuilt by the industrious Ming on its 5th-century remains, the wall at **Jūyōngguān** (Jūyōng Pass; Map p46; admission Y45 ☎6am-4pm), 50km northwest of Běijīng, is the closest section of the Great Wall to town. The wall's authenticity has been restored out, but it's typically quiet and you can undertake the steep and somewhat strenuous circuit in under two hours.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### Public Transport

Jūyōngguān is on the road to Bādǎlǐng, so public buses for Bādǎlǐng will get you there. Either the slow (慢; màn) or fast (快; kuài) bus 919 (Y5, one hour, 6am to 4.30pm) from the gate tower of Dèshèngmén, 500m east of Jīshuǐtán subway station, stops at Jūyōngguān.

### Tour Buses

From the **Běijīng Sightseeing Bus Centre** (北京旅游集散中心; Běijīng Lǚyóu Jísàn Zhōngxīn; ☎8353 1111), southwest of Tiān'ānmén Sq and west of Front Gate, Line B buses go to Jūyōngguān and Ding Líng at the Ming Tombs (Y125 including entrance tickets; departures 6.30am to 10am).

## Sīmǎtái

### 司马台

In Miǎnyún County, 110km northeast of Běijīng, the stirring remains at **Sīmǎtái** (Map p46; admission Y40; ☎8am-5pm) make for a more exhilarating Great Wall experience. Built during the reign of Míng-dynasty emperor Hongwu, the 19km section is an invigorating stretch of watchtowers, precarious plunges and scrambling ascents.

This rugged section of wall can be heart-thumpingly steep and the scenery exhilarating. The eastern section of wall at Sīmǎtái is the most treacherous, sporting 16 watchtowers and dizzyingly steep ascents that require free hands.

Sīmǎtái has some unusual features, such as 'obstacle-walls'. These are walls-within-walls used for defending against enemies who had already scaled the Great Wall. The cable car (single/return Y30/Y50) saves valuable time and is an alternative to a sprained ankle. Take strong shoes with

a good grip. Unperturbed by the dizzying terrain, hawkers make an unavoidable appearance.

The breathtaking (four-hour max) walk between Jīnshānlǐng and Sīmǎtái is one of the most popular hikes and makes the long journey out here worth it. The walk is possible in either direction, but it's more convenient to return to Běijīng from Sīmǎtái.

Before heading out to Sīmǎtái, check if it's open as it was shut for restoration and development at the time of writing.

## **i** Sleeping & Eating

### Dōngpō Inn

GUESTHOUSE \$

(东坡驿; Dōngpō Yì; ☎134 826 292 03; www.dongpo.byways.asia; Sīmǎtái; d/f Y120/230) A whisker within Héběi province, this small, rural guesthouse has access to Sīmǎtái, organic cooking as well as free pick-up (within locality).

## **i** Getting There & Away

### Tours

Most travellers get to Sīmǎtái on early-morning trips with a youth hostel (such as the Běijīng Downtown Backpackers Accommodation), which usually involves being dropped off at Jīnshānlǐng and being picked up at Sīmǎtái; prices are in the region of Y260, including tickets. The entire journey from Běijīng and back can take up to 12 hours. A taxi from Běijīng for the day costs about Y400.

### Tour Buses

Tour buses run to Sīmǎtái at 9am from the **Běijīng Sightseeing Bus Centre** (北京旅游集散中心; Běijīng Lǚyóu Jísàn Zhōngxīn; ☎8353 1111), northwest of Qianmen alongside Tiān'ānmén Sq, but only if there are enough people. Twelve or more people cost Y160, five to 11 people Y220, and four people Y300; the price includes entrance tickets.

### Public Transport

To get here by public transport, take fast bus 980 (980 路快; Jiùbǎilǐng Lùkuài; Y15, regular services 5.50am to 8pm) to Miǎnyún (密云) from the **Dōngzhímén Transport Hub Station** (东直门枢纽站; Dōngzhímén Shūniǔzhàn) and change to a minibus to Sīmǎtái or a taxi (round trip Y120). The last fast 980 bus back from Miǎnyún is at 6.30pm; the last slow bus returns at 7pm.

## Jīnshānlǐng

### 金山岭

The Great Wall at **Jīnshānlǐng** (Jīnshānlǐng Chángchéng; Map p46; ☎0314 883 0222; admission Y50) marks the starting point of an ex-

hilarating 10km hike to Sīmàtái. The journey – through some stunning mountainous terrain – takes around four hours as the trail is steep and parts of the wall have collapsed; it can be traversed without too much difficulty, but some find it tiring. Note that some of the watchtowers have been stripped of their bricks. In summer you'll be sweating gallons but unless you carry your body weight in water you will need to turn to the ever-present hawkers for expensive liquid refreshment. Arriving at Sīmàtái you have to buy another ticket and en route you need to cross a rope bridge (Y5). At the time of writing, the Great Wall at Sīmàtái was shut so it was not possible to complete the entire hike. Check with your hotel or hostel for the latest. The cable car at the start of Jīnshānlíng is for the indolent or infirm (one way/return Y30/50).

You can do the walk in the opposite direction, but getting a ride back to Běijīng from Sīmàtái is easier than from Jīnshānlíng. Of course, getting a ride should be no problem if you've made arrangements with your driver to pick you up (and didn't pay in advance).

## **i** Getting There & Away

### Tours

For information on tours to Jīnshānlíng, see p102.

### Public Transport

Take fast bus 980 (980 路快, Y15, regular services 5.50am to 8pm) to Mìyún (密云) from the **Dōngzhímén Transport Hub Station** (东直门枢纽站; Dōngzhímén Shūniǔzhàn) and then hire a minivan to drop you off at Jīnshānlíng and collect you at Sīmàtái. This should cost around Y100, but ensure you don't pay the driver in full until he picks you up. If you are heading to Chéngdé (in Héběi province), you will pass Jīnshānlíng en route. The last fast 980 bus back from Mìyún to Dōngzhímén is at 6.30pm; the last slow bus returns at 7pm.

side of a collapsed section of wall, one heading off to the east, the other heading west. Tantalising panoramic views spread out in either direction as the brickwork meanders dramatically along a mountain ridge; the setting is truly magnificent.

Tread carefully – sections are collapsing and the whole edifice is overgrown with plants and saplings – but its unadulterated state conveys an awe-inspiring and raw beauty. If you are ambitious and want to continue along the wall, you will need to dismount the wall at several places to skirt brickwork that has either completely disintegrated or plunges almost vertically down mountain sides like a roller-coaster. One of these sections is called the **Heaven's Ladder** (天梯; Tiāntī) – a precipitous section of crumbling bricks. Clamber up to the **Nine Eye Tower** (九眼楼; Jiǔyǎn Lóu) for fantastic views.

Xīzhàzi Village is rudimentary, but if you want to overnight, ask around and a household may put you up very cheaply for a night or more. Some visitors spend weeks here, making a thorough exploration of the surrounding landscape.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### Public Transport

Take fast bus 916 (ask for the 916路快 or fast bus; the normal 916 is much slower) from **Dōngzhímén Transport Hub Station** (东直门枢纽站; Dōngzhímén Shūniǔzhàn) to Huáiróu (Y12, one hour, regular services 6.30am to 7.50pm). At Huáiróu you will need to hire a minivan to the rear Jiànkòu section; this should cost around Y200 return (one hour each way) as it's a fair distance. Alternatively, hire a van and driver either in Běijīng or Huáiróu for around Y400 for a day-long Great Wall tour, including Jiànkòu, Huánghuā, Mùtiányù, Xiāngshuǐhú and other sections of wall. The last fast 916 bus back to Dōngzhímén from Huáiróu is at 5.30pm; the last slow 916 bus (Y2, 2½ hours) is at 7pm.

## Jiànkòu

### 箭扣

For stupefyingly gorgeous hikes along perhaps Běijīng's most incomparable section of wall, head to the rear section of the **Jiànkòu Great Wall** (后箭扣长城; Hòu Jiànkòu Chángchéng; Map p46; admission Y20), accessible from Huáiróu. It's a 40-minute walk uphill from the drop-off at Xīzhàzi Village (西栅子村; Xīzhàzi Cūn) to a fork in the path among the trees which leads you to either

## Huánghuā

### 黄花

The Great Wall at Huánghuā (Map p46), 60km from Běijīng, affords breathtaking panoramas of partially unrestored brickwork and watchtowers snaking off in two directions. There is also a refreshing absence of amusement park rides, exasperating tourist trappings and the full-on commercial mania of Bādǎling.

Clinging to the hillside on either side of a reservoir, Huánghuā is a classic and

well-preserved example of Ming defences with high and wide ramparts, intact parapets and sturdy beacon towers. Periodic but incomplete restoration work on the wall has left its crumbling nobility and striking authenticity largely intact, with the ramparts occasionally collapsing into rubble.

It is said that Lord Cai masterminded this section, employing meticulous quality control. Each *cùn* (inch) of the masonry represented one labourer's whole day's work. When the Ministry of War got wind of the extravagance, Cai was beheaded for his efforts. In spite of the trauma, his decapitated body stood erect for three days before toppling. Years later a general judged Lord Cai's Wall to be exemplary and he was posthumously rehabilitated. The wall was much more impressive before parts of it were knocked down to provide stones for the construction of the dam.

Despite its lucrative tourist potential, the authorities have failed to wrest Huángguā from local villagers, who have so far resisted incentives to relinquish their prized chunks of heritage. Official on-site signs declare that it's shut and illegal to climb here, but locals pooh-pooh the warnings and encourage travellers to visit and clamber on the wall. Fines are rarely enforced, although a theoretical risk exists.

Shoes with good grip are important for climbing Huángguā as some sections are either slippery (eg parts of the wall south of the reservoir are simply smooth slopes at a considerable incline) or uneven and crumbling.

From the road, you can go either way along the battlements. Heading east, one route takes you across a small dam, along a path clinging to the side of the wall until the second watchtower where you climb a metal ladder to the masonry. Alternatively, cross a wooden bridge south of the dam (look for

the sign to Mr Li's Tavern), pop through an outdoor restaurant and then clamber through someone's back garden to the second watchtower. Whichever route you take, it costs ¥2.

Be warned that the wall here is both steep and crumbling, without guard rails. It's possible to make it all the way to the Mùtiányù section of the wall, but it'll take you a few days and some hard clambering (pack a sleeping bag).

In the other direction to the west, climb the steps past the ticket collector (¥2) to the wall, from where an exhilarating walk can be made along the parapet. Things get a bit hairier beyond the third watchtower as there's a steep gradient and the wall is fragile here, but the view of the overgrown bastion winding off into hills is magnificent.

### Sleeping & Eating

There are several simple outfits here if you want to spend the night at Huángguā, with rooms ranging in price from ¥50 to around ¥150. Many of the restaurants along the road that gives access to the wall offer rooms, so ask around.

### Getting There & Away

#### Public Transport

To reach Huángguā, take the fast bus 916 (ask for the 916路快 or fast bus; the normal 916 is much slower) from the **Dōngzhímén Transport Hub Station** (东直门枢纽站; Dōngzhímén Shūniǔzhàn) to Huáiróu (怀柔; ¥12, one hour, regular services 6.50am to 7.50pm). Get off at Míngzhū Guǎngchǎng (明珠广场), cross the road and take a minibus to Huángguā (¥10, 40 minutes); ask for Huángguāchéng (黄花城) and don't get off at the smaller Huángguāzhèn by mistake. Taxi-van drivers charge around ¥40 one way to reach Huángguā from Huáiróu. The last fast 916 bus back to Dōngzhímén from Huáiróu is at 5.30pm; the last slow 916 (¥2) bus leaves at 7pm.

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