

Friendly Planet Travel

China Delight

China

OVERVIEW

Introduction

These days, it's quite jarring to walk around parts of old Beijing. Although old grannies can still be seen pushing cabbages in rickety wooden carts amidst huddles of men playing chess, it's not uncommon to see them all suddenly scurry to the side to make way for a brand-new BMW luxury sedan squeezing through the narrow *hutong* (a traditional Beijing alleyway). The same could be said of the *longtang*-style alleys of Sichuan or a bustling marketplace in Sichuan. Modern China is a land of paradox, and it's becoming increasingly so in this era of unprecedented socioeconomic change.

Relentless change—seen so clearly in projects like the Yangtze River dam and the relocation of thousands of people—has been an elemental part of China's modern character. Violent revolutions in the 20th century, burgeoning population growth (China is now the world's most populous country by far) and economic prosperity (brought about by a recent openness to the outside world) have almost made that change inevitable. China's cities are being transformed—Beijing and Shanghai are probably the most dynamic cities in the world right now. And the country's political position in the world is rising: The 2008 Olympics were awarded to Beijing, despite widespread concern about how the government treats its people.

China has always been one of the most attractive travel destinations in the world, partly because so much history exists alongside the new, partly because it is still so unknown to outsiders. The country and its people remain a mystery. The rice paddies may have sprouted cities and manufacturing centers, and the streets may be clogged with cars and pollution, but the people remain rooted in a rich cultural heritage. They still burn joss sticks for good luck in an enterprise—even as they iron out the details of that enterprise on a cell phone.

History

China is one of the oldest nations in the world. Its recorded history dates back 5,000 years. For most of that time, China was ruled by a succession of dynasties, and each left its mark on the country. For instance, the Qin began construction of the Great Wall, the Sui built the Grand Canal, and the Song period is known for its artistic achievements.

500 Old York Road * Ste. 200 * Jenkintown, PA 19046
Tel: 800-555-5765 or 215-572-9594 * Fax: 215-572-9803
Email: questions@friendlyplanet.com
Visit us online at www.friendlyplanet.com

The first Europeans to reach China were the Portuguese, who began trading on the island of Macau in the 16th century. The British soon followed, but their efforts were largely unprofitable until they began pushing opium in the mid-1800s. The Opium Wars eventually led to British control of Hong

Kong, a place that was not returned to China until 1997. (Macau was reintegrated into China in 1999.)

The last dynasty officially ended in 1911. The ensuing years devolved into a struggle between the capitalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party. Chiang Kai-shek held control through the 1930s, but after World War II, Mao's guerrilla army began winning the battle. In 1949, the People's Republic of China was born and Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan.

Led by Mao Zedong, the new government transformed China into a communist nation. Land was redistributed, industries were absorbed by the state and, most unfortunately, opposition was not tolerated. Tibet was brought under Beijing's control in the 1950s. Thousands of writers, artists, teachers and others were imprisoned or killed during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-70. In 1989, 13 years after Mao's death, the students demonstrating for democracy in Beijing's Tiananmen Square were overrun by soldiers and tanks.

Although Mao's legacy of intellectual oppression remains intact, China's recent leaders have embraced free trade. The country was admitted to the World Trade Organization in 2001, which means the world's most-populous nation became officially open for global business. The first big venture is set to take place in Beijing in 2008, when the Olympic Games go to China for the first time.

Geography

China, the third-largest nation in the world, encompasses virtually every type of terrain imaginable, from the steamy lowlands of the southeast to the Himalayan peaks of Tibet to the Gobi Desert in the north. Most of the country's major rivers, including the Yellow and Yangtze, flow from west to east. China is bordered by 14 other countries.

Snapshot

China's main attractions are the Great Wall, the terra-cotta warriors, acrobats, shopping, Hong Kong, Tibet, pandas, ancient instrumental music and Chinese opera, food, the Forbidden City and a diverse landscape.

China will appeal to open-minded travelers interested in visiting an important culture that is truly different from their own—they'll have the experience of a lifetime. China will not appeal to travelers who have respiratory problems (many of the cities are rather polluted), who demand impeccable service and accommodations at all times, or who don't like Chinese food. Outside of the major tourist areas, creature comforts can be few and far between. For many travelers, group travel will be the best way to go; in some parts of China—politically sensitive areas such as Tibet, for instance—group travel was once the *only* way to visit. However, as Tibet and other areas of the country increasingly open up to tourism, that is changing. It is certainly possible to travel individually, although the services of a local guide are still necessary and permits require visits to be as part of an organized tour, officially at least. Given that access to parts of the country can be denied to foreigners without advance warning, it's best to have a flexible schedule and to keep abreast of news developments.

Potpourri

The Kong Family Cemetery in Qufu is the world's largest clan cemetery. The great sage Confucius and more than 100,000 descendants spanning 76 generations are buried there. There are now 4 million Kong family members in China and overseas. A China-wide Kong family tree record is maintained in Qufu. The most recent update started in 1998 and took more than five years to complete.

The last eunuch of the last emperor died in 1996, closing the chapter on one of the stranger aspects of imperial China. Aside from the emperor, eunuchs were the only men trusted to enter the inner courtyards of the royal palace where the emperor's concubines resided.

During most of its 5,000-year history, China has been one of the world's technological leaders—it's the birthplace of moveable type, astronomy, gunpowder and spaghetti.

Although the country's minority groups make up only 8% of the population, their traditional homelands cover more than half of China. In addition to the majority Han Chinese, there are 55 minority groups, the largest of which is the Zhuang, numbering more than 15 million. Yunnan province is home to 26 minorities.

The written Chinese language is expressed by a series of characters in which one character or a series of characters together express certain meanings or things. Although there are upward of 40,000 characters in the language, most people know only a few thousand.

Those interested in Buddhism may want to visit shrines in the four sacred mountains of Chinese Buddhism: Emei Mountain (Sichuan), Wutai Mountain (Shanxi Province), Jiuhua Mountain (Anhui) and Putuo Mountain (Zhejiang).

Kaifeng (380 mi/610 km southwest of Beijing) still has a small Chinese Jewish community. Their ancestors fled to China after the Roman conquest of Israel.

Martial-arts fans may want to make a pilgrimage to the Shaolin Temple in Zhengzhou (465 mi/750 km south of Beijing), birthplace of kung fu.

SEE AND DO

Recreation

Because China encompasses such a vast land area, recreational opportunities can seem nearly endless. Practically any sport or terrain you require can be found—but the time needed to get there can be daunting.

Beaches

Few visitors realize that China has beaches. In fact, a number of towns and cities around its lengthy east and south coastline have beaches popular with domestic tourists, but it is tropical Hainan Island—China's southernmost province—which has developed as an international beach destination. The best beaches are near Sanya, the town at the southernmost tip. Luxury resort hotels line Sanya Bay and nearby Yalong Bay, which are lapped by the warm South China Sea.

Bicycling

Beijing has 9 million bicycles, and throughout the country, many locals rely on the bicycle as their mode of transport. Visitors can rent cycles in many places, and most of China is open for those who want to travel around backcountry areas. However, some places remain off-limits and others require permits. Good areas for exploring by bicycle range from the Great Wall near Beijing and around Guilin and Yangshuo in Guangxi province to more demanding terrain in Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangdong provinces. Tibet offers extremely challenging cycling.

Bird Watching

China is home to about 1,200 species of birds, including the red-crowned crane and brown-eared pheasant, which are found nowhere else in the world. Sichuan is among the best provinces for bird-watching, with nearly 600 species resident there, as well as popular areas such as Jiuzhaigou Valley and Mount Emei. Other top bird-watching sites are Caohai Lake in Guizhou, Qinghai Lake in Qinghai and Zhalong Nature Reserve in far northeast province Heilongjiang—China's largest reed swamp, where the endangered red-crowned crane is one of six crane species in residence.

Boating and Sailing

Many of China's cities have parks with lakes where you can rent pleasure boats. They include Beijing's Beihai Park and Kunming Lake, alongside the Summer Palace, as well as Hangzhou's famous West Lake, a favorite spot for lovers. Water sports including sailing are available at hotels in Sanya, on Hainan Island. Otherwise, sailing is in its infancy in China at the moment. However, with its burgeoning economy and a rapidly-growing boat-building industry, China will undoubtedly

become a major sailing destination. It is likely to center on Qingdao in Shandong province, as well as places such as Hong Kong, Macau and Hainan Island.

Golf

There are more than 200 golf courses throughout China. Many of them are at golf resorts where facilities are of the highest quality, with courses by some of the world's top designers. China now hosts several events on the European and Asian PGA tours. Mission Hills Golf Club, at Shenzhen in the southern province of Guangdong, is the world's largest golf complex with 10 courses and plans to add two more, including another 18-hole championship course. Guangdong has more than 70 courses in all. Other golfing hot spots include Beijing, Shanghai and neighboring Jiangsu province, Kunming and Lijiang in Yunnan, Guilin in Guangxi, Chengdu in Sichuan and Dalian in Liaoning province.

Health Clubs

Spas, wellness centers and health clubs can be found in all of China's major cities and in key tourist resort areas. Most are in the luxury five-star hotels that are springing up around the country, with city properties catering mainly to business guests and resort properties appealing to vacationers. Others are at golf and sport complexes. Traditional Chinese treatments are usually supplemented by those from other Asian countries and from the West. There are hot springs with health complexes in several parts of China, including Nantian Hot Springs in Tengqiao on Hainan Island (12.5 mi/20 km from Sanya) and at the base of Mount Emei in Sichuan.

Hiking and Walking

Every kind of hiking option is available in China, from gentle walks through forests and other scenic areas to treks among the world's highest peaks. Some of the best hiking is in western China. One of the most popular routes in Yunnan is Tiger Leaping Gorge, a path high above the fledgling Yangtze River (known as the Chang Jiang at that point) as it squeezes between towering mountains. There is other good hiking around Dali. A walk to the top of Mount Emei (near Chengdu in Sichuan province) and back again takes three days, with accommodations at summit hotels and monasteries on the mountain flanks. Or it can be combined with the mountain minibus service and cable cars to make it as short as half a day.

Get a real flavor of Tibet by following routes used by pilgrims. They range from circuits around Lhasa's Jokhang Temple or Potala Palace to one around the base of sacred Mount Kailash, in western Tibet. The Great Wall can be hiked in a number of areas, among them between Jinshanling and Simatai or around Badaling or Mutianyu—all not far from Beijing. But be aware that the wall is very steep in sections.

Horseback Riding

Horse trekking trips can be undertaken in several areas of China, including the mountainous area of Songpan in northern Sichuan. Local guides lead treks lasting up to five days. Horse treks can also be taken on the grasslands of the Tibetan Plateau in western Sichuan and in the Goddess Lake area, on the outskirts of the Jiuzhaigou Valley reserve in Sichuan. Tourist camel rides can be taken in the desert dunes near Dunhuang in Gansu province.

Jogging

Few people jog in China. Go to a park in any town or city early in the morning and many people will be practicing the ancient art of tai chi instead. It is possible to jog in these parks, although some charge an entrance fee. Jogging alongside roads is not a healthy option because of all the pollution from traffic and the danger posed by the mass of bicycles and mopeds when crossing roads.

Scuba Diving and Snorkeling

The clear, warm waters off Sanya on Hainan Island's southern coast are excellent for scuba diving or snorkeling. The Sanya Coral Reef Nature Reserve, established in 1990, contains approximately 140 different types of hard and soft corals, more than 300 species of fish and a similar number of invertebrates. The best reefs are in Yalong, Xiadonghai and Dadonghai bays. Diving is year-round, and there are diving centers offering lessons. Most sites are a short boat ride away from the beach. The shallow water is ideal for beginners but may not excite more advanced divers.

Skiing

Another sport few outsiders realize can be enjoyed in China is available is downhill skiing. Yabuli

(125 mi/200 km northeast of Harbin) is China's premier ski resort. It hosted the 1996 Asian Games and boasts a 120-day ski season and 11 ski runs, including the longest in Asia, at 3 mi/5 km long. In Sichuan, Xiling Snow Mountain (75 mi/120 km west of Chengdu) is a summer and winter recreation area that has skiing November-March. Mount Emei (100 mi/160 km southwest of Chengdu) has limited downhill and cross-country skiing. In the hills close to Beijing, there are several small ski areas that use artificial snow.

Other Options

Rock climbing is very popular around Yangshuo in Guangxi. The vertical faces of the many iconic limestone pinnacles (known as karsts) that pepper the landscape between Guilin and Yangshuo make for excellent climbing, and there are numerous marked routes for experienced climbers. Beginners can take courses and tackle easier climbs. For those who want the real deal, the Himalayas offer an unrivaled mountaineering experience. Everest Base Camp (Qomolangma Base Camp), near Tingri in Tibet, is the starting point for expeditions trying to conquer the world's highest mountain. Nearby Rongphu Monastery offers overnight accommodation with views of the mighty peak.

Destinations in China

Beijing

The famous portrait of Mao Zedong still looks over this city's shoulder, as though he's guarding communist austerity and discipline. But the Beijing he stares out upon is hardly the city he left behind.

Change is everywhere—in the clothes (you could wear them to the office in London or Los Angeles); in the increasingly paralyzing traffic (more and more European- and American-brand automobiles jam the streets); in the electronics (mobile phones, mobile phones, mobile phones); and in the construction (high-rises, high-rises, high-rises). If you scrub off the Gobi Desert dust, which is glued to everything with diesel exhaust, you'll find the city's true patina—a mixture of old and new. It may surprise you that you can still catch the glimmer of an ancient, lacquered temple or a traditional jadeite bracelet contrasted with the machine-made gleam of chrome and glass.

No doubt it's a calculated gleam. The Chinese government wants Beijing to be recognized as a modern world capital—modern enough for foreign investment, modern enough to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. It's a huge, burgeoning metropolis, with bulldozers carving the way to its future.

Great Wall Of China

No matter how many pictures of it you've seen, the Great Wall of China is still impressive. It follows a ridge of barren hills through northern China, stretching as far as the eye can see—at least 3,750 mi/6,000 km. It's thought that, at one time, it was 6,000 mi/9,700 km long.

The Wall is usually visited near **Badaling** (50 mi/75 km from Beijing)—that's where most of the tour buses go. There's a crowded carnival atmosphere there, with sedan chairs for rent, U.S. fast-food restaurants, and polluted air that tends to curtail the view. Another section of the wall, at Juyong Pass, which is closer to Beijing, has also become popular with tour groups. (You'll find lots of teenagers trying to sprint up the 350-plus steps.)

We prefer the less crowded site at **Mutianyu** (45 mi/70 km from Beijing), although it, too, now receives plenty of visitors. Many people get worn out climbing to the first two watchtowers (it's very steep), but there's a cable car to help you up. When it's not too crowded, you can get an idea of how isolated it must have felt to be a lookout along the Wall 2,000 years ago. You can even spend the night in a former watchtower that's been converted into a hotel: the Mutianyu Great Wall Castle Villa. The portions of the Wall at Badaling and Mutianyu are reconstructions, not the remains of the original Wall.

Adventurous travelers can also visit the Wall at **Simatai** (55 mi/90 km from Beijing) for a memorable sunset and sunrise. It's a non-reconstructed part of the wall that snakes over several steep mountains. In some sections, the wall is only 3 ft/1 m thick. Beijing is about a three-hour bus ride from Simatai. Be sure to take along your own food and water in any case.

Other interesting places to view the Wall are near **Jiayuguan** at its western end, or near **Shanhaiguan**, where the Wall meets the ocean.

There are a number of ways to visit the Wall. Tours geared for Westerners can be arranged at most major hotels. The tours that cater to Chinese tourists are less expensive but aren't worth the savings. They generally spend less time at the Wall and more time at such sites as the indoor aquatic park on the outskirts of Beijing (a thrill for rural Chinese, but not something most Westerners would appreciate). If you can organize a group of three or four, hiring a taxi for the day will be only a little more expensive, and you will be able to see what you want for as long as you want.

It has become popular for hardcore hikers to visit wild sections of the Wall—mostly ruins. However, the government has outlawed such hikes in an effort to preserve these sections.

Yangtze River

China has built the world's largest dam on the world's third-longest river, a project that has begun to raise the waters of the Yangtze along the scenic Three Gorges area. The waters are expected to rise gradually until 2009, when most of the marvelous old temples, landmarks and towns along the river will be underwater.

Major cruise companies now offer cruises from Chongqing to **Yichang** or from Chongqing to **Wuhan**, and longer cruises operate between Chongqing and Shanghai. Most people take the boat downstream from Chongqing to Wuhan (about 900 mi/1,300 km), which takes about three days. The upstream trip is two days longer, and you may be the only tourist on board. The Three Gorges (Qutang, Wu and Xiling), the highlight of the trip, lie between Chongqing and **Yueyang**. With cliffs rising thousands of feet/meters above the river, Wu (20 mi/32 km long) is the most impressive. The cruises usually include an excursion up one of the streams feeding into the Yangtze as well—we like the trip up the Shennonjia Stream near **Badong**, where trackers pull the boats upstream with shoulder harnesses and let the vessels float silently back down through narrow gorges.

You can travel by cruise ship or public passenger ferry. The cruise ships are at the top end of the luxury scale—some have swimming pools and beauty salons, all have English-speaking guides. It's best to arrange these trips from your home country, although you can book them at many travel offices in China. The tourist ships stop in towns of interest to tourists, whereas passenger ferries don't stay long enough for sightseeing.

The passenger ferries are less comfortable—and some are not running at all. Until the permanent locks are in place, some companies are sending passengers to their destination by bus or train rather than by ship. If you do make it on board a ship, try to get a second-class ticket (the best offered) to reserve a two-berth cabin and—most important—to ensure a seat in the second-class lounge, which has the best views.

Chongqing

This big city is one of our favorites simply because it has character. In contrast to many of China's flat, uniformly gray cities, Chongqing (pronounced *chong-CHING*) is on the hilly banks of the Yangtze. We enjoyed just walking the streets (lined with sculpted wood balconies) and spending time on the active docks. Among Chongqing's attractions are the Sichuan Fine Arts Academy (an artists colony), a lacquerware factory and hot springs. There are several museums commemorating postrevolutionary events, including the Hongyancun Revolutionary Memorial Hall and the U.S.-Chiang Kai-shek Criminal Acts Exhibition Hall, complete with displays of torture instruments. (Chongqing was the wartime capital of Chiang Kai-shek.) Pipa Shan Park, the highest point in the area (682 ft/208 m), has a pleasant view.

Despite the city's charms, most travelers go there as part of a trip to **Dazu**, known for its Buddhist sculptures. Set in a mountainous and green area, Dazu was not open to travelers until 1982. Today you'll find an impressive reclining Buddha and thousands of stone carvings, some dating from the ninth century. Chongqing is also a good departure point for a Yangtze River cruise, which usually ends in **Wuhan**, in Hubei province. *150 mi/240 km southeast of Chengdu.*

Shanghai

Just mentioning the name Shanghai conjures images of romance, mystery and adventure. But you need only stand in the city's historic Bund and look across the Huangpu River to see the high-tech Oriental Pearl TV Tower looming over the ambitious skyline of Pudong's Lujiazui financial district like a space rocket. Alongside the glittering, 88-story Jinmao Building and the futuristic, cubic Shanghai Stock Exchange, the 1,377-ft/420-m tower is a symbol of this modern city and its mission—to embrace the challenges of the new millennium and become one of the world's great commercial centers. If Shanghai succeeds, it will be a return to glory days of old.

In its heyday in the late 1920s and '30s, cosmopolitan Shanghai was known as the Paris of the East—a dynamic melting pot for people, ideas and money from every corner of the planet. It was an exciting time of breakneck industrial progress, of swaggering confidence and of smoky jazz venues. Business boomed, fortunes were made—and lost, and made again—and everything seemed possible. But Shanghai was also vilified by many as a corrupt haven for gamblers, pimps, gangsters, drug runners and the idle rich. So when Mao Zedong's communists took control in 1949, they clamped down hard on this shameless playground of colonial adventurers and capitalists.

After four decades of austerity, Shanghai reawakened in the late 1980s, thanks to the economic reforms implemented by Deng Xiaoping. Since then the city has thrown itself into a headlong rush to make up for lost time. Countless glass and steel skyscrapers reach for the clouds, Mercedes and Buick sedans cruise the neon-lit streets, and modern department stores stock Prada, Gucci and all the stylish trappings available in Paris and New York. Perhaps more than any other city in Asia, Shanghai has the confidence and sheer determination to forge a glittering future as one of the world's most important metropolises.

Shanghai's quaint European architecture, flashy nightlife venues and sophisticated elegance often surprise visitors from overseas. The city offers a fascinating glimpse into China's potential. Save some energy to experience some of its fantastic nightlife—from an exquisite dinner at M on the Bund, to clubbing throughout the French concession's cornucopia of nighttime extremes—the place pulsates with an energy all its own. We recommend pulling out all the stops and staying at the Grand Hyatt in Pudong—one of the most breathtaking hotels in Asia. A nighttime stroll on the Bund is also a must-do.

DINING

The variety of Chinese cuisines can be thrilling. There are eight major cuisine schools: Anhui and Shandong in the north; Fujian, Jiangsu (also called Huaiyang) and Zhejiang in the east; Cantonese in the south; and Sichuan and Hunan in the west. It's important to understand that Chinese cooking in China is different from Chinese food served in the West. It's not uncommon, for instance, to find the chicken's head, feet and sundry vitals floating in the soup tureen or to be served an entire fish, complete with eyeballs and scales. And it's important to take a few precautions while you eat as well: Chew your rice carefully, as it often has grit in it; chew meat such as chicken carefully (bones are often cut up into the food rather than removed); and prepare yourself to see those bones being spit out by the Chinese onto tablecloths or the floor (it's considered perfectly acceptable).

In some smaller cities, you'll be ushered into a special room for foreign guests, which is a mixed blessing. It's quieter, cleaner and less smoky, but it's also less colorful and more expensive for the same food. If you politely insist to the waiter that you want to eat with the masses, you'll usually be allowed to. Ask if the chef has a specialty. In rural areas and Tibet, where the language barrier seems impenetrable, you may be invited to the kitchen to point at what you want. A few Tibetan words might help you along: *cha* (butter tea), *thukpa* (noodle soup), *tsampa* (roasted barley flour) or *momo* (vegetable- or meat-filled dumplings).

In many restaurants, food is put on dishes on the table for everyone to share. Large round tables for six or more people will have a large glass lazy Susan, so you just rotate it until the dish you want is within reach. You will have a small plate to use if you don't want to eat directly from the community dishes. Steamed rice, if ordered, is normally served near the end of the meal. Tell your server if you want it sooner. Fried rice is a main course. If a large portion of food is put on the table and you're the only one there, don't feel obliged to eat everything in the serving bowl. Some of the

food may be intended for guests who have yet to arrive. If you are invited to a Chinese home, remember that eating everything is impolite—it implies the host didn't prepare enough food.

Be sure to try Cantonese dim sum, a breakfast or lunch of small dishes. Waiters or waitresses push carts loaded with steaming bamboo baskets or plates with food. (In the northern part of the country, this meal is called *jiao zi*—dumplings—and is served without the push carts.) To order, just wave them over and point to what you want. (Don't feel you need to fill up from one cart—another will be along soon enough with something different.) Other restaurants may give you a card on which you mark your choices. Some of our favorite dim sum dishes are: *ha gow* (shrimp dumplings), *cha siu bau* (steamed barbecue pork bun), *lao mai kai* (sticky rice with egg, pork and mushroom) and *sin chok kuen* (pancakes stuffed with vegetables). More adventuresome eaters could try *mongo pohding* (mango pudding), *satay yao yu* (skewered squid) or *au to* (beef stomach). If the waiter offers you coconut cake, be aware that it's not a baked cake, but rather a square, firm pudding that's very refreshing.

We've eaten at the food stalls in big cities without ill effect, but use your best judgment—if things don't appear clean, eat elsewhere. Those things that look like oversized cherries pierced by a wooden stick and sold on the street are *haw*—glazed crab apples. Don't eat from the food carted down the aisles of the trains; local vendors selling their goods through the windows during stops have food that's more reliably fresh.

China's regional cuisines vary enormously in the way the food is prepared and often in the types of ingredients used. In the north, Mongolian hotpot (similar to a fondue in which meat, vegetables and even solidified duck blood are cooked in a simmering pot in the center of the table) is a particular favorite. Beijing duck (or Peking duck) is another and one more familiar with Western visitors. Seafood is a key menu item in eastern cuisines, which are noted for their subtle and delicate flavorings. *Buddha jumps over the wall* is the strange name for a popular eastern dish which comprises soup or stew with meat, seafood and other ingredients. Late September-December is the season for hairy crab, using the Chinese mitten crab which has become an invasive pest in North America and Europe but is a delicacy in Shanghai and other eastern and southern areas. Sichuan is famed for its spicy flavors, using a lot of chillies and peppers.

But the food is not all fiery. Wild vegetables and herbs are used in many dishes. Typical dishes include *Ma Po doufu*, a spicy mix of tofu (bean curd) and minced pork that literally translates to "pock-marked Mother Chen's bean curd," after the old woman who originated it. Although not one of China's celebrated cuisines, Yunnan has a very distinctive dish worth trying called *guo qiaomian* (across the bridge noodles). It is a bit like a fondue but in a bowl with piping hot soup, into which are placed raw meats, fish and noodles to cook.

In Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai, you'll find nearly every type of food, from Continental to McDonald's and pizza. There are even reasonable versions of a Jewish deli.

In Macau, you won't find the variety of restaurants that Hong Kong has, but you can get good Chinese, Portuguese, Macanese, Indonesian, Thai, Italian, Vietnamese, Japanese and Continental meals. Macanese food has a few distinctive dishes, including *minche* (ground pork with potatoes) and spicy African chicken (in a rich peanut sauce). Because of the mix of cultures, you'll come across restaurants with names like Casa Lee Fung Noodle Shop.

SHOPPING

In nearly all cities, your guides will take you to visit the government-run Friendship Stores as part of your tour. Although they may be convenient places to see what's available locally, to look at good examples of the products and to determine what the high end of the price range is, you'll generally find better bargains elsewhere. And the Friendship Stores are about the only place you can't bargain. After your visit to the Friendship Store, visit the private or provincial stores, craft shops and local department stores. The best shopping is often at public markets. If you don't see anything as good, go back to the Friendship Store. As a rule, if you see something you want, buy it when you see it—prices don't vary greatly, but selection does. The real top-of-the-line products are often sold in Hong Kong or are exported. Be aware that stores attached to craft factories (particularly silk

factories) and government-run stores in general may be selling damaged goods—examine items carefully before buying them.

Shop for carpets, wood-block prints, cloisonne, porcelain, glass items, silk, cinnabar lacquer, hand-painted snuff bottles, stone and jade carvings, books, Mao buttons, reproductions of old art (including sculptures), jewelry, patent medicines, musical instruments, embroidered linens, and acupuncture and calligraphy paraphernalia. Chops (ink seals) and ink stones are also popular. Ethnic tribal crafts are available in the Kunming, Xi'an and Chengdu areas, and in Tibet, anything from Panchen Lama key rings and tiny clay Buddhas to prayer wheels and ornate copper inkwells can be found. If you're buying something that is or looks old, make sure it has an official red seal from the government releasing it for export. Otherwise, it may be confiscated when you depart.

In Hong Kong, shopping is a different story. You can buy virtually any consumer item. There are bargains to be had, but keep in mind that not every purchase will be a fantastic deal. To take advantage of Hong Kong, you need to do a little preparation. You should know exactly what you want before you leave home, and you should take note of what it costs at home when it's on sale. When you get to Hong Kong, don't buy unless the item is far enough below the sale price to justify shipping (or carrying) it back—and, possibly, paying import duty. Before handing over any money, make sure that everything works and that all pieces are included. If the item is a brand-name product, make sure that the manufacturer's warranty cards are all there and that serial numbers on the box match those on the product. Hong Kong merchants are not obligated by law to return or exchange items once purchased, so be very sure of what you're buying before paying; you may be able to talk a merchant into an exchange, but you'll never see your money again. Prices vary greatly from store to store, so shop around. Bargaining can be done in smaller shops in the main tourist areas, especially if prices are not marked. (To give you some idea of costs, the Hong Kong Tourist Board publishes recommended retail prices for a wide variety of goods in a number of free pamphlets, including *Shopping, Dining & Nightlife*, and *Sightseeing & Culture*.) Cash will usually get you a better price than credit cards. Stores displaying the Hong Kong Tourist Board sticker are generally considered to subscribe to higher ethics and to be of greater reliability than those that don't. If you expect a store to ship your goods for you, make sure it's an HKTB member or the goods may never arrive. Be sure to keep your receipts for customs declaration when you return home. Shop for Chinese-made goods even if you're going to other parts of China, as the quality of what is sold in Hong Kong is often higher than what's sold in the Friendship Stores.

Among the better buys in Hong Kong are electronic equipment, glasses and contact lenses (take your prescription from home), gems (if you know what you're doing), silks, perfume, watches and jewelry, ceramics, Asian art, leather goods, antiques, carpets and clothing (including beautifully tailored suits and shirts). Small souvenirs include chopsticks, kung fu and acupuncture paraphernalia, tea, paper items bought in funeral shops, and cloisonne or cinnabar boxes.

A word or two about custom tailoring in Hong Kong: Much is made of the fact that a custom suit can be turned out in 24 hours. It can be, and it'll look like it. If you want clothing custom-made, give the tailor as much time as you can, go back for several fittings, and make sure there's time for alterations. Also, check the quality of the material carefully. If some tailors' prices are significantly lower than others, they're likely using a cheaper fabric (for instance, there are several grades of wool sold in Hong Kong). Some people take their own fabric and patterns (tailors may even work from photographs of the desired article). Good tailors will keep your pattern so that you can order again from home—presuming your shape hasn't changed too much.

China's rapid economic growth and fast-growing middle class means there is demand for the household and leisure goods taken for granted in the West. Store names familiar back home, such as IKEA, Wal-Mart and Carrefour, can be found in cities throughout China, and others are springing up as international companies vie for a slice of the pie. You'll find many rip-offs of international brands, even down to store names on some of China's most popular shopping streets, as counterfeiting has long been a huge industry in China. However, the government has finally started to take action and prosecute local companies breaching internationally registered trade names and copyrights. Even local markets popular with tourists because of their fake designer-name goods have been forced to close. In Beijing, the old Silk Market, notorious for cheap knockoffs, was shut down and replaced by a more sanitized indoor market with traders only allowed to sell legitimate goods. Likewise, Shanghai's infamous Xi'angyang market—where you could buy anything from fake

Gucci, Prada and other designer labels to copies of the latest Nike and Callaway golf clubs—was closed in a crackdown by authorities. However, the enterprising traders will always find somewhere else to ply their trade.

Established markets are well worth seeking out to look for bargain buys. Among the most fascinating is Beijing's Panjiayuan Market, where you can find crafts on sale from all over China as well as souvenirs, handmade jewelry, and secondhand items—even traditional Chinese marionettes. Outside the market, you may see an old man kicking a brightly-colored shuttlecock, a traditional Chinese game in which participants have to stop it from hitting the ground. He's a trader as well, of course, and simply wants to sell his homemade shuttlecocks (painted feathers stuck into a plastic cap and weighted by rusty washers).

Major stores and other shops selling a good selection of fashion and leisure items can be found along shopping streets in key cities. The most well-known in Beijing is Wanfujing, which is close to Tiananmen Square and has food markets selling all kinds of dishes for the adventurous at either end. Shanghai has Nanjing Road and other stores in the old French Concession area as well as touristy emporia in the Yu Gardens Bazaar. Guangzhou has many shops and stores along Zhongshan Five-Road and Beijing Road.

Shopping Hours: Monday-Sunday 9 am-7 pm.

SECURITY

Personal Safety

Except for isolated reports of banditry in the rural areas, travel outside of the cities is safe. The cities, too, are safe. The biggest threat to travelers is petty crime near areas frequented by tourists (hotels, restaurants and transportation sites).

Keep an eye on personal items such as purses and pocketbooks. Do not leave bags unzipped and showing anything that might be tempting. Unfortunately, even China is not immune from opportunistic pickpockets and bag snatchers. In busy tourist areas and at popular attractions, it is especially important to watch your things. Do not put bags down, even for a few seconds, or they are likely to disappear. Reporting thefts to the local Public Security Bureau is a very long, drawn-out affair with endless paperwork. You will need an interpreter with you, and you will probably have to return at last once more to pick up the paperwork needed for insurance claims. And even if you can persuade an officer to go with you back to the scene of the crime, chances are the perpetrators will be long gone—and there will be a stony silence if traders or other locals are asked if they saw anything. Once you lose any possessions, do not expect to see them again. You need to be just as vigilant on public transport. Crowded long-distance buses are notorious for petty crime, as are the open sleeper compartments of trains.

In some cities, you may find yourself being targeted by beggars if you walk alone or in small groups, especially at night. While they are more an annoyance than a threat, they can be quite aggressive and an encounter can be an unpleasant experience that could sour or even ruin an otherwise enjoyable vacation. Avoid dimly-lit areas or places off the beaten track in cities if you go for a walk. However, such instances are happily still uncommon rather than the norm.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Many visitors develop respiratory problems because of polluted air, high altitude, cold weather and the stress that comes with travel. Currently, immunization against polio, tetanus, typhoid and hepatitis are recommended, though not required—consult your physician. Also ask your doctor about malaria suppressants if you will be visiting Hainan Island and areas close to the Laotian and Myanmar borders. Take along insect repellent and clothing to cover arms and legs. Take along all prescription and over-the-counter medicine needed for the trip as well.

Rabies is endemic in China, and there are a number of cases of humans being infected by dog bites each year. However, these are invariably in rural areas. When it happens in populated areas, authorities generally embark on a cull of stray dogs. Avian flu outbreaks have been reported in several areas of China since it first appeared in Asia in 2004. Bilharzia and Japanese encephalitis also occur in rural areas, and southern China has had several outbreaks of dengue fever in recent years. Take diarrhea medication with you, especially if you plan to try any snack food from street vendors. Chinese cooking methods are good at killing bugs and you may find that you can quite happily eat street food with no ill effects, but hygiene standards are likely to be less stringent than in restaurants.

Note: Be aware that RH negative and O type bloods are not commonly stored in China. Also, China has had problems screening its blood supply to prevent the spread of HIV, and any blood products must be viewed with skepticism.

In Hong Kong and Macau, sanitary conditions are much higher than in the rest of China. Outside of Hong Kong, do not drink the tap water. (Stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks.) Most hotel rooms come equipped with a thermos of boiled water for tea.

Major cities in China have excellent joint-venture hospitals, clinics and emergency centers with all the latest facilities and Western treatments. Chinese hospitals are under severe pressure these days from rising costs and under-investment. Standards and facilities in general wards leave much to be desired, but many do have VIP wards or departments where foreign nationals are treated. The Chinese are experts at using natural treatments such as herbs and plants as medicinal cures, and this is often combined with traditional treatment methods including reflexology, acupuncture and massage. Some hospitals have outpatients' departments or clinics noted for their traditional treatments and medicines, such as the Guilin Hospital of Sino-Western Medicine.

Pharmacies are everywhere in China. Those in large cities may sell a selection of Western medications as well as Chinese herbal remedies. Antibiotics are also available but require a prescription now.

Tibet presents its own problems: Going from Xi'an or Chengdu (450 ft/140 m) to Lhasa (12,000 ft/3,660 m) in a few hours may cause altitude sickness. Symptoms include nausea, headaches, insomnia, dizziness and chest pains. A mild case may be gone in a day, or it can linger for weeks. Rest and aspirin seem to help, but altitude sickness can have serious complications, so report your symptoms to your tour leader or a doctor. A local tea, available from shops and restaurants, is reputed to help you acclimate to the altitude if drunk over a few days. (Altitude sickness can be fatal, so you may be required to return to lower altitudes.)

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Etiquette

China continues to evolve in ways that are bringing it in closer contact with the rest of the world. Nonetheless, the country remains a place where business travelers need to tread carefully.

Appointments—You will need to establish local contacts before journeying to China. Begin by contacting the department of your government that deals with international business (the U.S. Department of Commerce, for instance). It can put you in touch with business and government personnel in China. Once in the country, remember that punctuality on the part of all parties is very important (for both business and social occasions). If you are late, it not only reflects badly on yourself; it can also be perceived as a slight that can put the whole business relationship into question.

Personal Introductions—Handshaking is now the norm, accompanied by a slight nod of the head or a slight bow. Maintain a formal demeanor during introductions. Official titles are important. When the person has no official title, use standard English titles unless you are fluent in Mandarin: "Mr.," "Ms." (unmarried female) and "Madam" (married female—the title should accompany her maiden name). The Chinese typically have two or three names: The first is the family name, and that's the

one that should be paired with the title (thus, Mao Zedong is referred to as Chairman Mao). Your business cards should have English on one side and a Chinese translation on the other. Treat the business cards you receive with respect and leave them on the table in front of you during the meeting for reference. At the end of the meeting, place the cards in a wallet or holder in your jacket pocket, not in a wallet that you put in a pocket.

Negotiating—Business meetings begin with a short interval of polite conversation of a general nature, usually over tea or drinks. Hard-driving, get-right-to-the-point tactics usually backfire. Negotiations will typically be protracted and involved. Multiple meetings on the same issues are not unusual. Expect the unexpected, and do not be thrown by last-minute complexities or demands. If you have a deadline, do not reveal it. The host may signal the end of a meeting by offering more tea. The correct response is to decline the offer and say that you are ready to leave. If the host thanks you for coming, that, too, is a clue that the meeting is over.

Business Entertaining—Evening banquets are often extravagant affairs with many courses and often exotic foods. Expect many toasts throughout the evening, often with Chinese liquor (*baijiu*). If you do not drink or are among the many foreigners who don't enjoy its taste, politely decline by toasting with your tea or other drink. Business is usually not discussed at large banquets. At other business meals, it is appropriate to discuss business if your host initiates the discussion.

Body Language—Observe a very formal body posture. Refrain from touching, and keep gestures to an absolute minimum.

Gift Giving—On the whole, gift giving in business is not common, and caution should be exercised. Gifts given to an entire group or company usually get a better response than those given to an individual. Do not bestow the gifts until negotiations have been completed. It is common to be given a gift as a gesture of friendship and goodwill by Chinese hosts. If you receive a gift, do not unwrap it until you are out of the presence of the giver. A small token from your home country is often a good idea to give in return, especially if you are invited to someone's home for a meal. The color of a gift and its wrapping paper have great significance. Two good choices are red (the color of luck) and yellow (the color of prosperity). Avoid items and wrappings that are white because that color is associated with funerals. Clocks of any color can have the same connotation. And never give a green hat as a gift. It will cause great offense, as wearing a green hat is a public sign that the wearer's partner is having an extramarital affair.

Conversation—Avoid politics, especially such sensitive issues as Tibet, Taiwan, the Communist Party or Tiananmen Square. Regardless of your acquaintances' real feelings, they will most likely not be comfortable expressing themselves to you and certainly not in public. History, family and Chinese culture are all good topics. Be careful if you compliment someone on their possessions. An article of clothing or a home decoration you comment on favorably may be offered to you—don't accept.

Dos and Don'ts

Don't be surprised if you're stared at in public places. For many rural Chinese (including those who have recently moved to major cities), it's unusual to encounter Westerners.

Do expect to see people spitting and blowing their noses onto the ground (without a handkerchief). These are accepted practices in China.

Do write down numbers when discussing them. In Chinese, it's easy to confuse, say, 50 (*wu shi*) with 15 (*shi wu*). Likewise, when an English speaker says 16, it may be interpreted as 60. And do learn to count to 10 in Chinese. This will be helpful when shopping because Western hand signals for numbers are completely different (for example, a forefinger and thumb outstretched means eight).

Do try and speak a little of the local language—Mandarin in most of China and Cantonese in Guangdong and Hong Kong. They are notoriously difficult to learn and master. However, a simple

xie xie (thank you) or *ni hao* (hello) will break the ice and invariably produce smiles and friendly laughter.

Don't raise your voice or get angry, even if you feel you have been wronged. Such behavior is considered rude and uncivilized in China. Try to have a reasoned argument rather than losing your cool.

Do take the address of the hotel where you are staying with you, written in Chinese characters, so that you can show a taxi driver. Few speak or can read English, even in Beijing and Shanghai. If you are taking a taxi from the hotel, get the concierge to write down your destination for you. Some hotels have cards listing major attractions in the city in English and Chinese on one side, and the hotel address on the other.

Do look to the right before getting off of a bus. Many bicycle riders riding between the bus and curb do not stop for exiting bus passengers.

Do take along your own toilet paper—you never know when you may need it. In restaurants, you are often given small packets of paper tissues instead of napkins. Always take them and keep them with you in your bag or pocket as emergency toilet paper.

Do stock up on extra medicine for stomach ailments. If you are prone to chest problems, such as asthma, take enough medication to last your trip. A spare course of antibiotics might be an idea to take as well.

Do bargain aggressively—prices quoted to foreign visitors are often grossly inflated.

PRACTICALITIES

Geostats

Official Name: People's Republic of China.

Passport/Visa Requirements: A passport and visa are required for citizens of Canada and the U.S. A departure tax is now included in the cost of airline tickets.

Although there are only a few places in China that are forbidden to tourists, do not attempt to visit an off-limits city without permission. If you have any questions, ask the local Public Security Bureau. Probably the most popular area that requires a permit is Tibet (obtainable through many travel agencies).

A yellow-fever certificate is required for mainland China if you're arriving from an infected area. Certificates are not required if only visiting Hong Kong or Macau. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Capital: Beijing.

Population: 1,313,973,713.

Languages: *Putonghua* (or Mandarin) is the most common language, though it has several dialects. In Hong Kong, people speak Cantonese and English.

Predominant Religions: Officially atheist, but Buddhists, Taoists, Lamaists, Muslims and Christians still practice.

Time Zone: 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts.

Telephone Codes: 86, country code; 10, city code for Beijing; 21, city code for Shanghai; 852, city code for Hong Kong.

Money

Currency Exchange

The Renminbi, or People's Currency, is mainland China's currency and is known as the yuan. It is generally written down as RMB or a capital Y with a bar through it (¥). It is divided into 10 *jiao* and 100 *fen*. The yuan was tied to the dollar, but as a result of growing complaints about it being overvalued, it was revalued in 2005 and given a broader range of movement against a basket of international currencies.

Both Hong Kong and Macau have their own currencies (HK dollar and pataca, respectively). Hong Kong has been a Special Administrative Region of China since July 1997, Macau since December 1999. Autonomy for both was guaranteed for a period of 50 years through a "one country, two systems" policy, under which both will continue to retain their individual currencies.

You cannot change your money into Chinese currency before you arrive. It is a good idea to take traveler's checks, but changing money in China can be done at international airports, major banks and at hotels that cater to international guests. The exchange rate will not be as good at hotels, but if you need money quickly, that may be the most convenient option. You can also withdraw money in local currency from ATMs using major internationally recognized credit and debit cards. A charge is generally levied for transactions. ATMs are becoming more widespread, and you can often find them in large hotels, shopping malls, airports and at large bank branches. Away from big cities, they are harder to track down, so if you are traveling from a city to rural areas, withdraw enough cash before leaving.

Credit cards are accepted in most large hotels. Some restaurants and large stores may also accept them. However, cash is king outside cities, and few places will take payment by credit cards.

If you do have a lot of cash, only take enough for what you will need on that day when you leave the hotel. Deposit the rest in a safe in your room (many hotels have them now) or at the front desk. Carry the remaining cash in a money belt.

Currency Exchange Rates

US Dollar	Chinese renminbi
\$10	78.99
\$20	157.98
\$30	236.97
\$40	315.96
\$50	394.94
\$60	473.93
\$70	552.92
\$80	631.91
\$90	710.90
\$100	789.89

Taxes

An airport-construction fee is levied on all departing passengers from mainland China (currently 90RMB for international flights and 50RMB for domestic flights), now included as part of the ticket price.

Hotels typically levy a 15% service charge to bills.

Tipping

In Hong Kong, tip 10%. In the rest of China, don't tip as a general rule. Most upscale hotels will add a 15% service charge to your restaurant bill. Waiters in hotel restaurants may expect a tip from Western diners, and porters in top-notch hotels will certainly hope for one.

Weather

We prefer seeing northern China during September and October, and southern China and Hong Kong in November and December. China's climate is one of extremes—hot summers in most parts of the country, bitter winters in the north and comfortable winters in the south. Winters in China can feel colder because the heating is never quite right (either too cold or too hot), but gloriously thick quilts and thermoses of hot water are provided everywhere, even in cheaper hotels and on trains. Spring rains can make southern cities (especially Guilin and Guangzhou) dreadfully humid. Sandstorms can be a problem in the north (including Beijing) in April. Tibet can be bitter cold, even in the autumn and late spring. If you don't take enough warm clothing in the winter, you can easily find practical cold-weather gear in most areas of China (though stocks are limited in Tibet).

What to Wear

China has such a vast contrast of climates, you need to consider carefully where you are visiting and at what time of year when choosing what to pack. If you are traveling to southern China, you should take long sleeves and pants to fend off mosquitoes at any time of the year. Elsewhere, mosquitoes are only likely to be a problem from late spring to fall. At high altitudes or away from southern China, long sleeves and pants will help you keep warm. Take extra layers as well, so that you can remove or add them as necessary. A sweater or light jacket will also help keep you warm on cooler evenings, even in summer. If you are visiting areas that experience extreme heat (such as northern China's deserts, the Yangtze River or southern China in summer) pack lightweight cotton clothes. Take a hat and always put on plenty of sunscreen to avoid sun exposure, especially at higher elevations where the sun's rays are much stronger.

Business meetings require conservative business suits with a tie. For less formal occasions, smart casual dress with an open collar is usually acceptable. Dress up and go Shanghai chic with the locals for a night on the town in China's most cosmopolitan city. And take smart evening wear for dining out in upscale restaurants or going to the theater, opera or nightclub (or a casino in Macau). Women should dress modestly in public, especially when visiting temples and monasteries. Shorts are a good option to wear on the beach and when it is hot in other parts of the country, but men should also cover up if visiting religious buildings.

Communication

Telephone

Pay phones are widely available throughout China. There are kiosks on sidewalks and in airports, railway stations and shopping centers. Shops in smaller towns popular with tourists may also display signs to show calls may be made inside. Phones generally take prepaid phone cards, which can be bought from a number of outlets including stores and post offices. Calls within China can be made with an IC card, while international calls require long-distance IP cards. The cards have easy-to-follow instructions, usually in English as well as in Chinese. To call from China, you need to dial 00 and then the country code and area/city code, excluding the initial 0. Local calls are free, and you do not need to dial the city code, but be aware that hotels may add a charge per call. Rates for overseas calls made from hotels are also subject to surcharges.

Cell phone coverage is very good in China's cities, major tourist areas and throughout much of the country. Don't be surprised if you are at the top of a mountain in deepest China and you hear a shrill version of *Auld Lang Syne*, one of the most popular ring tones. Officially, about 30% of the country has cell phone coverage. Roaming agreements with international networks mean cell phones from overseas will generally be able to make and receive calls.

Internet Access

Most large tourist and business hotels provide Internet service, many of them offering broadband access. Upscale properties may have wireless access in guest rooms, while others will generally have cable connections. Smaller hotels may only have the Internet available by the front desk, in which case a machine for guest use is usually provided. Other hotels also usually have a PC in the lobby for guest use. Broadband speeds are a little slower than in other countries but acceptable. Where there is no broadband available, you can get online via dial-up connection. Towns and cities across China have very cheap dial-up access using dedicated local numbers. Check with your hotel. It should be able to provide you with one or more numbers.

Hotels providing broadband may offer it free, but generally there is a daily charge to connect, in line with international hotels in other parts of the world. There are Internet cafes with inexpensive access in towns and cities throughout China. Internet censorship is applied, however, and sites considered to be against China's national interest are blocked. These include several major international news organizations. Google has drawn international criticism for agreeing to apply self-censorship in China.

Mail and Package Services

China's postal service is efficient and a good value. Sending a letter or postcard is easy, and it will normally arrive at overseas destinations in less than a week. Most large hotels have postal facilities for sending mail and small parcels. For other items, you need to go to a post office, where you can buy packaging and a box to fit so you can send them via international Express Mail Service. Parcels may take much longer, especially if they are opened for customs inspection (you need to fill out a customs declaration form at the post office and include the receipt if it is a new item). For quicker, but more expensive, delivery use international carrier services such as FedEx, TNT, DHL or UPS.

Newspapers and Magazines

The major Chinese-language newspapers are *People's Daily* (which also has editions in English and other languages), *Guangming Daily* and *Economic Daily*, while *China Daily* is the main English-language newspaper. You can also find English-language China editions of international publications such as *Newsweek* and the *International Herald Tribune*. English-language business magazines include *China Business Weekly*, *China Economic Review* and *China International Business*, which are national publications, and *Shanghai Business Review*. Among regional English-language newspapers are *Shanghai Daily* and Hong Kong's *China Morning Post* and *The Standard*.

Listings and reviews of restaurant, nightlife and entertainment are carried by English-language magazines freely distributed in China's major cities. Among the largest are *That's Beijing* and *That's Shanghai*. Both cities also have *Metrozine* (monthly) and *City Weekend* (biweekly) along with a host of others, including *Shanghai Talk*, *Shanghai Scene*, *Beijing Talk* and *Beijing Today*.

Transportation

Capital International Airport (PEK) is 20 mi/30 km northeast of Beijing (<http://www.bcia.com.cn>). A new terminal is under construction and due to open by the end of 2007, in time for the 2008 Olympics. A direct rail link from the airport to Beijing's center opens in 2008. Pudong International Airport (PVG) is 20 mi/30 km southeast of Shanghai (<http://www.shanghaiairport.com>). Hong Kong International Airport (KMG) is about 20 mi/30 km from the city (<http://www.hongkongairport.com>). Domestic service is available to all major cities on a variety of airlines.

It used to be difficult for independent travelers in China to book internal flights. The situation has improved dramatically, but it may be that some travelers (not on prearranged tours) will be unable to book return flights from more remote destinations until they actually get there. Travelers may still have to rely on the old method—dashing to the local airline office immediately upon arrival to purchase a return ticket. Check with carriers before departure. If you're on a prearranged tour, this warning doesn't apply.

Trains with steam locomotives, which once operated around the country, have all but disappeared. Generally, domestic train tickets can be bought only in China, although some tickets may be booked

through Chinese travel agencies in North America. If you're traveling on your own, it's impossible to make advance reservations for a train departing any city other than the one you're in. In other words, if you want to go from Shanghai to Beijing and back, you must buy the return ticket in Beijing. It may also be difficult to get same-day or day-after reservations unless you're traveling soft berth (the four classes are soft berth, hard berth, soft seat and hard seat). Soft berth provides a chance to travel in style—semiprivate rooms, lace curtains on the windows, slippers and preferential treatment in the dining car—but it costs almost as much as flying. Hard berth isn't much harder, but there's no privacy, and it may be difficult to get a seat for meals. If you can't book a hard- or soft-berth ticket in time for your departure, it's sometimes possible to buy a hard seat and upgrade with the conductor after the train departs. Be prepared to pay a premium, as the ultimate price is up to the conductor. If you end up riding in a hard seat overnight, be sure to keep a close eye on your valuables: Professional thieves may be riding with you. Remember the golden rule: Always book as early as possible.

Major cities have special booking offices for foreign independent travelers who are going by rail. You pay a small premium but get first choice on tickets. The office in Beijing is in the main train station; in Shanghai, it's just up the street from the Peace Hotel. Outside the major cities, it's usually worthwhile to work through a local travel service, which can prebook tickets in other cities (if they have an office there), as well as help cut through the red tape. Don't throw away your train ticket: You usually will be asked to show it as you leave the station. Your hotel can usually help make these arrangements for you.

Intercity buses tend to be uncomfortable (most Chinese are a lot smaller than most tourists), although they have improved in recent years with the opening of many four-lane expressways. They are recommended for the experienced or unusually tolerant traveler. Avoid sitting in the back of the bus at all costs, especially on rough roads where you'll be bounced around mercilessly.

Some bus routes have been privatized, which has led to some perks and some problems. Perks include sleeper seats on some long-distance buses (usually cheap airplane seats laid flat). The biggest problem is that, regardless of schedules, conductors don't like to leave until the bus is full. Don't be surprised if your bus leaves the station and then drives around the city for several hours trying to lure more passengers. Be extremely careful of theft on overnight buses.

Whether you travel by boat, train or bus, it's a good idea to stock up on snack foods. Shops at stations and ports sell bottled water, fresh fruit, peanuts and candy.

Buses in most large cities are overcrowded. Taxis are available—there's now such a surplus of them that you can hail them from the street (although in Shanghai they can be notoriously difficult to get, especially at peak times or if it is raining); they also queue up at tourist hotels. Unfortunately, taxi drivers don't always calculate fares honestly—it may be better to settle on a fare before getting in. (Often just pointing at the meter will persuade the driver to use it, which gives you at least a chance of a correct fare. Insist on it. But check that the meter has not already racked up a hefty fare before you start your journey if you get a taxi from airports or railways stations.) Some cities have licensed bicycle rickshaw (pedicab) drivers; they're slow and expensive but fun for a short trip. And in most cities, you can rent a bike. (Don't worry if it breaks down—there's a repair stand at almost every intersection.) Several cities have subways (Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Wuhan, Shenzhen, Nanjing and Tianjin), although routes can be rather limited. You can rent a car in Shanghai and Beijing, but it must be driven by someone with a Chinese driver's license.

For More Information

Tourist Offices

Canada: China National Tourist Office, 480 University Ave., Suite 806, Toronto, ON M5G 1V2. Phone 416-599-6636. Fax 416-599-6382. <http://www.tourismchina.org>.

U.S.: China National Tourist Office, 350 Fifth Ave., Suite 6413, New York, NY 10118. Phone 212-760-8218. Toll-free 888-760-8218. Fax 212-760-8809. <http://www.cnto.org>.

Chinese Embassies

Canada: Embassy of China, 515 St. Patrick St., Box 8935, Ottawa, ON K1N 5H3. Phone 613-789-3434. Fax 613-789-1414. <http://www.chinaembassycanada.org>.

U.S.: Embassy of China, 2300 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20008. Phone 202-328-2500. Fax 202-328-0032. <http://www.china-embassy.org>.

Foreign Embassies in China

Canadian Embassy, 19 Dongzhimenwai Dajie, Chao Yang District, Beijing 100600. Phone 86-10-6532-3536. Fax 86-10-6532-4311. <http://www.canada.org.cn>.

U.S. Embassy, 3 Xiu Shui Beiie, Beijing 100600. Phone 86-10-6532-3831. Fax 86-10-6532-5141. <http://www.usembassy-china.org.cn>.

Additional Reading

Wild Swans by Jung Chang (HarperPerennial). A powerful nonfiction account of the turbulent lives of three generations of Chinese women.

The Search for Modern China by Jonathan Spence (Norton). A standard work of modern Chinese history.

Kowloon Tong: A Novel of Hong Kong by Paul Theroux (Mariner Books). A Western-centered novel about the people left out in the cold during the transition of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty.

The Lost Daughters of China by Karin Evans (Tarcher).

Recommended Guidebooks

China by Damian Harper et al (Lonely Planet).

Hong Kong & Macau by Steve Fallon (Lonely Planet).

Beijing and Shanghai: China's Hottest Cities by Steven Schwankert, Paul Mooney, Peter Hibbard (Odyssey Illustrated Guide).

The Insider's Guide to Beijing. Edited by Adam Pillsbury (True Run Media).

Trekking in Tibet: A Traveler's Guide by Gary McCue (The Mountaineers).

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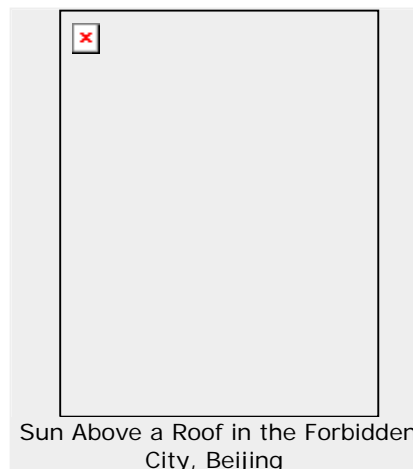
Beijing, China, Asia

OVERVIEW

Introduction

The famous portrait of Mao Zedong still looks over this city's shoulder, as though he's guarding communist austerity and discipline. But the Beijing he stares out upon is hardly the city he left behind.

Change is everywhere—in the clothes (you could wear them to the office in London or Los Angeles); in the increasingly paralyzing traffic (more and more European- and American-brand automobiles jam the streets); in the electronics (mobile phones, mobile phones, mobile phones); and in the construction (high-rises, high-rises, high-rises). If you scrub off the Gobi Desert dust, which is glued to everything with diesel exhaust, you'll find the city's true patina—a mixture of old and new. It may surprise you that you can still catch the glimmer of an ancient, lacquered temple or a traditional jadeite bracelet contrasted with the machine-made gleam of chrome and glass.



No doubt it's a calculated gleam. The Chinese government wants Beijing to be recognized as a modern world capital—modern enough for foreign investment, modern enough to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. It's a huge, burgeoning metropolis, with bulldozers carving the way to its future.

History

Beijing, planted on the edge of a fertile coastal plain, rose from agrarian roots. Nomadic tribes invaded and destroyed it many times over the course of several centuries, but the city was always rebuilt. By the fifth century BC, the area had developed sophisticated administrative networks under a feudal system. It became part of a vast, technologically advanced Chinese empire that was protected—and isolated—from the rest of the world by harsh terrain and a huge wall.

In the 13th century AD, the area emerged as a world capital when Genghis Khan seized control and made it the center of his vast empire. The city was rebuilt as a walled enclave (for the imperial household) surrounded by a checkerboard pattern of streets. This was the time of Marco Polo's travels—a period of extraordinary prosperity and power in China. Khan's grandson Kublai later ruled a huge Eurasian empire from there.

The area blossomed again with the ascension of the Ming dynasty in the 15th century. Vast sums were spent to refurbish the city as a major capital, called Beijing. An immense imperial palace was built, and the Great Wall was fortified and extended by millions of laborers over a period of 100 years. Many of the city's best-known artifacts are legacies from that era, when architecture, and arts and letters flourished. The Ming were overthrown by northern invaders, the Manchu Qing, who preserved and expanded the city during the following 300 years. Elaborate palaces and gardens still remain from what was China's last dynasty.

A chaotic period of warlord rule followed the downfall of the last emperor in 1911. Beijing became a flashpoint of political and cultural dissent, embodied by a student-led demonstration in 1919 and calls for reforms in government, women's rights, science, literature and the arts. The beginning of the Chinese Communist Party dates from this time, when a young Mao Zedong worked as a librarian at Beijing University.

A struggle for power ensued between communists and the Nationalist Party, the leading political force that wanted to supplant the warlords and reunify the country under a military dictatorship. The struggle was temporarily interrupted when Japanese forces occupied the city during World War II. But after that war ended, a civil war broke out. It ended in 1949 when communist forces entered Beijing unopposed, and the Nationalists (led by Chiang Kai-shek) fled to Taiwan, taking the country's entire gold reserves, many art treasures and much of the air force and navy. The People's Republic of China was founded 1 October of that year in Beijing.

During the following decades, Beijing became the center of a new kind of empire. Mao tried to restore central rule, instill self-sufficiency and protect the country from outsiders. He oversaw the building of huge dams, canals and power-generating stations (instead of grand palaces and temples), but the country was still underdeveloped compared with the Western world. A power struggle in Beijing between moderate reformers and Mao's revolutionary socialists resulted in the devastating Cultural Revolution in 1966 when Mao encouraged zealous Red Guards to root out his political enemies within the Chinese Communist Party. The initiative, which lasted until Mao's death in 1976, resulted in the persecution of many intellectuals and would-be reformers and effectively crippled the nation's development. Since Mao's death, more moderate leaders, such as the late premier Deng Xiaoping, have opened the doors to trade opportunities and modernization.

Today the new regime, under President Hu Jintao (who replaced Jiang Zemin in 2003), has kept in line with the policies set in place by Deng and continued by Jiang. With its accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO), China's economic development is progressing at breakneck speed, to the continual amazement of the world. Trade, manufacturing, culture and real estate are booming. However, crucial situations still loom: Taiwan, Falung Gong (a dissident religious sect), corruption, human rights, a huge migrant worker population, pollution, overcrowding and an economy in danger of overheating are among the problems that China must resolve in order to achieve its aims.

Beijing is now preparing for its moment in the spotlight: the 2008 Olympic Games. To China, hosting the Olympics is an affirmation that it is a modern nation, ready to sit at the table with the other major countries of the world. But the question is, at what price? Beijing residents and visitors together mourn the death of many of Beijing's most charming historic areas, bulldozed to make way for the construction of glass and steel symbols of "modernization" as the city prepares to turn its face to the world. It's a gamble that will shape the city's character for decades beyond the 16 days of the Olympics.

Geography

Beijing is geographically vast, exceedingly flat and largely treeless (except in parks, scenic spots and areas around the legation quarter), with a mishmash of architectural styles. Sights of interest to visitors are scattered. Tiananmen Square is the heart of the city, but no one would call it downtown. We recommend traveling with a good map (printed in both Chinese and English) and having your destinations written down in Chinese characters (ask your hotel's staff to help you). For planning purposes, you may find it helpful to know the district where an attraction is located. For instance, Haidian District (Beijing Zoo, Summer Palace) is to the northwest, Chaoyang District (an embassy and nightlife area popular with expatriates) is to the east and Chongwen District (Temple of Heaven) is to the southeast. When you're out and about, you'll discover that the city is built along avenues aligned in a rigid grid. Roads may change their names several times as they go across town.

Several "ring" roads form concentric circles in and around the city, with Tiananmen at the center. Somewhat confusingly, the first is not actually a ring road—it is made up of a series of small local streets. The Second Ring Road (Erhuan Lu) roughly follows the location of the old city wall, which was dismantled in the 1950s. A subway line also follows this route. The Third Ring Road (Sanhuan Lu) goes mostly through residential areas but also hits some major commercial districts, and the Fourth Ring Road (Sihuan Lu) runs primarily through suburbs and residential districts. The Fifth and Sixth Ring roads, which visitors are unlikely to use, effectively orbit the city.

The light-rail system makes a huge arc across the north of the city and connects Dongzhimen (in the east) to Xizhimen (in the west) through some of the city's university areas.

Must See or Do

Sights—Tiananmen Square; the Forbidden City; the Qianmen area; the Summer Palace; the Temple of Heaven; the Lama Temple; a day trip to the Great Wall; Shichahai.

Museums—Beijing Museum of Natural History; the National Art Museum of China; Beijing Capital Museum.

Memorable Meals—Peking duck at Dadong Roast Duck Restaurant; a meal fit for an emperor at Fangshan Restaurant; a Xinjiang meal at Afunti (complete with ethnic music and dance); flash-boiled lamb at Neng Ren Ju; a Hakka meal at Lao Hanzi.

Late Night—Bars and club hopping in the Sanlitun and Houhai areas.

Walks—Make your way up Wangfujing, one of Beijing's prime shopping streets; stroll around the lake in Beihai Park or in the *hutongs* (alleyways) in Dongcheng District.

Potpourri

Beijing is built on strict cosmological principles, with the Forbidden City the center point of a north-south axis, known as a dragon's vein, which also includes Qianmen and the Drum Tower.

There are 1,000 more cars on the streets of Beijing every day.

The actress Zhang Ziyi, who starred in *Memoirs of a Geisha* and *House of Flying Daggers*, has branched out into the restaurant business and owns an organic Japanese-fusion eatery near the embassy district.

Space is at a premium in crowded Beijing, so many older residents keep crickets or songbirds in cages as pets to keep them company as they pass the time in the city's parks.

SEE AND DO

Sightseeing

Visitors should make the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven their top priorities. Other temples will be of interest, too. (Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have flourished alongside one another since the first century AD. Most temples and monasteries were damaged during the Cultural Revolution, but several have been repaired and are worth seeing.)

The city has hundreds of miles/kilometers of ancient *hutongs* (alleys), which are lined with housing in Beijing's distinctive, traditional low-slung style. Just pick a direction and start walking. (See them sooner rather than later—many *hutongs* are being razed to make way for modern shopping malls and office buildings, along with a huge construction project centered around the Olympic Games in 2008.)

No trip to Beijing would be complete without seeing the Great Wall. Make it a day trip because it's quite a drive from the city. Most tourists go to the Badaling, Mutianyu and Juyong Pass sections of the wall, but we recommend that you check out the less visited parts at Simatai, Jinshanling, Huanghuacheng or Lianyunling. Although they're farther away, you'll find fewer tourists and more spectacular views. Other sights worth seeing include the recently renovated White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan), the oldest Taoist temple in the world, and Fragrant Hills Park to the northwest of the city.

Those who can't imagine visiting China without seeing a panda will want to stop at the Beijing Zoo. Its aquarium is a sure hit with children.

Landmarks and Historic Sites

Ancient Music Center (Zhi Hua Si)

Located in Zhihua Temple, east of Nanxiaojie, the center gives performances that range from Ming dynasty ritual music to Buddhist chants, accompanied by period instruments. The main courtyard features Beijing's only Ming dynasty octagonal wooden pedestals. Daily 7 am-4:30 pm. Musical show times: 9, 10 and 11 am, and 3 pm. 20 yuan (free tickets on Wednesday for the first 200 visitors). Zhihua Temple, 5 Lumicang Hutong, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6528-6691.

Azure Clouds Temple (Bi Yun Si)

Located in Fragrant Hills Park, this temple houses a stunning collection of more than 500 statues of Buddhist Arhats. Daily 8 am-4:30 pm. 10 yuan. Fragrant Hills Park, Xiangshan, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6259-1155, ext. 470.

Beijing Ancient Observatory (Guguan Xiang Tai)

This open-air observatory, established by Kublai Khan, has a history spanning three dynasties. Chinese maritime maps and superb instruments from the Ming and Qing dynasties are displayed along with items made by Jesuit scholar-priests in the 17th century. Tuesday 9 am-4 pm. 10 yuan adults, 2 yuan students. Jianguomenwai Dajie (at the Second Ring Road), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6524-2202.

Big Bell Temple (Dazhong Si)

This charming temple has a bronze bell 21 ft/7 m high, weighing more than 46 tons, that is the biggest of its kind in China. It was cast during the reign of Emperor Yong Le (1403-24). It is said that a shallow canal was built so that the bell could be slid over ice in the winter to the newly built temple, which dates from 1733. Buddhist scriptures are engraved on the bell, which is considered a national treasure. It is rung for prosperity on New Year's Eve and during the Spring Festival. Daily 8:30 am-4 pm. 10 yuan. Beisanhuanxi Road, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6255-0819.

Confucius Temple (Kong Miao)

The Confucius Temple isn't a secret, but it sees so few visitors, it seems like it is. This structure is as much museum as it is temple. It was built during the time of Kublai Khan in honor of Confucius, whose ideas have influenced China for more than 2,000 years. It also commemorates generations of scholars who passed grueling three-day exams—perhaps the world's first civil-service tests—to join the ruling elite and serve the imperial court. On the grounds are 198 tablets inscribed with the names of the successful candidates. It also is the site of the former Imperial College, where the emperor went to pay his respects to Confucius and to lecture on the classics. Compared with the crowded Lama Temple, this is a wonderful, quiet place to visit, especially in spring and autumn. Daily 8:30 am-4:30 pm. 10 yuan. Guozijian Jie, Andingmennei, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 8401-1977.

Dongyue Miao

Set amidst the skyscrapers of Chaoyang, Dongyue is home to an amazing assortment of life-size plaster figures depicting the 73 Chiefs of Departments and 18 Layers of Hell in the popular Taosim. Predominately a temple of the God of Taishan Mountain, offerings can be made to the different deities to help with everything from having a baby to getting a new car or a promotion at work. The Beijing Folk Arts Museum is located on the premises and has regular exhibitions. Daily 8:30 am-4:30 pm. 10 yuan; half-price for children shorter than 4 ft/1.2 m. 141 Chaowai Dajie, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6551-0151.

The Drum and Bell Towers (Gu Lou and Zhong Lou)

These magnificent ancient towers have existed in various incarnations for 700 years. The Drum Tower houses replicas of 24 giant drums that were used to announce the time during imperial days. Today, the tower houses 25 drums that are struck for visitors every half-hour 9-11:30 am and 2-5 pm. The drum room offers a great view of the northern part of the city.

Just north of the Drum Tower is the Bell Tower—not to be confused with the Big Bell Temple. Inside is a 500-year-old bronze bell with 4-in-/10-cm-thick walls. During Spring Festival visitors can ring the bell for 100 yuan a pop. 9-A Zhonglouwan (at the corner of Gu Lou Dajie and Dianmenwai Dajie), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 8402-7869.

Forbidden City (Gugong)

Twenty-four emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties lived in the Forbidden City, which got its name because it was off-limits to ordinary citizens (it's also known as the Palace Museum). It was built in the 14th century, but because of fires and other catastrophes, has been rebuilt several times. On the grounds are six palaces and 800 smaller buildings, reportedly containing 9,999 rooms and halls, and hundreds of gardens. The city's design and symmetry make it an architectural wonder.

You would need days to see all of it, but you can see its main halls in a few hours. There are a couple of interesting museums on the grounds, including the Hall of Clocks, which contains an amazing collection of clocks. Be aware that most of the treasures that once filled the rooms were looted by the Japanese during World War II or were taken to Taiwan by the Nationalists in 1949. Some of what you'll encounter is representational. Also be aware that seeing the displays can be a challenge: Many of the rooms are dimly lit as they were when the last emperor lived there. One anachronism: The Starbucks coffee shop situated in a building near the center of the Forbidden City seems oddly out of place among the imperial structures and rich history. Renovation continues throughout the complex but should not affect your ability to visit all the major attractions.

We recommend that you see the Forbidden City with an English-speaking guide who can explain the social and political significance of the architecture. You should be able to arrange a guide through your hotel. Alternatively, rent the audiobook narrated by actor Roger Moore. Daily 8:30 am-5:30 pm (summer), 8:30 am-4:30 pm (winter). 60 yuan (mid-April to mid-October), 40 yuan (mid-October to mid-April). Audio tour 40 yuan, plus 500 yuan deposit. Some exhibits, such as the Hall of Clocks and Hall of Jewellery, require an additional 10 yuan. Changan Dajie (walk through the gate on Tiananmen Square and pass through two courtyards to reach the ticket office), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6513-2255, ext. 615.

The Great Wall

Built over a span of 1,100 years, the Great Wall is one of the most awesome sights in the world. It is a paved, elevated highway that snakes across the countryside for more than 3,000 mi/4,830 km. In some places it is wide enough for carts and horsemen to travel along the top. A barrier to persistent invaders from the north, it also served as a dividing line between settled agriculture on the plain and nomadic life in the mountains. It is built of brick and stone and filled with earth—and supposedly the bodies of conscripted laborers who died building it. Much of it is in disrepair, but several sections near Beijing have been reconstructed.

At Badaling, about 50 mi/80 km to the northwest, and at Mutianyu, 90 minutes away by car, visitors can climb a hill or ride a cable car to the top of the wall. (At Mutianyu there's a steep walk from the main gate.) At Juyong Pass, which is closer to the city, you'll find lots of teenagers trying to sprint up the 350-plus steps. Badaling, Mutianyu and Juyong Pass are heavily visited and developed, with gift shops, theaters, snack stands and even amusement-park-style rides. *Note:* The government has apparently outlawed hiking along sections of the "wild wall" (unrestored sections of the wall around Simatai and elsewhere), although people still do it. Do so at your own risk.

Some hotels will arrange a tour to any of these wall sections, but for a more unstructured visit, take a taxi or a bus. You can easily spend a whole day at the wall: Pack a picnic lunch (take plenty of water) and enjoy the fresh air and vistas. Be aware that temperatures at the Great Wall are almost always cooler than in Beijing, so plan ahead in winter. A visit to the Great Wall may be most rewarding for the physically fit (most sections offer strenuous up-and-down climbs), but just seeing the wall is worth the trip. Admission runs about 50 yuan. Cable car fees at Mutianyu and Simatai are extra.

Huguang Huiguan

Refurbished in 1994 to its Qing-era glory, the Huguang Huiguan originally served as a guesthouse for scholars from southern provinces taking the imperial exams. It later evolved into an entertainment center with lively restaurants and theater performances where famous Peking Opera star Mei Lanfang was a regular performer. Today, visitors can catch excerpts of operas in the 300-seat theater. Daily 9 am-7:30 pm. Performance time daily 7:30-8:40 pm. 10 yuan (museum), 150 yuan-580 yuan (performance). 3 Hufang Lu, Xuanwu District, Beijing. Phone 6351-8284.

Lama Temple (Yonghegong Lamasery)

Former imperial palaces like this one, built in 1694, were converted to religious sites according to

Chinese tradition. The architecture and ornamentation of these buildings show the influence of Han, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan styles, and there's a striking 59-ft/18-m statue of the Maitreya (future) Buddha, carved from a single sandalwood tree. The temple was once an important center of Tibetan Lamaism, and some 200 monks still live, study and pray there. Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. Admission 25 yuan, audio tour 25 yuan. 12 Yonghegong Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6404-4499.

Prince Gong's Mansion

Built in 1777 by an official of the Qianlong period, this compound became the home of the last emperor's father, Prince Gong. The estate is filled with beautiful rock gardens and lily ponds. Visitors can catch regular Peking opera performances in the theater with the 60-yuan package tour. It is a popular stop for Chinese tourists and can be overrun with visitors in the summer. Daily 8:30 am-4:30 pm. 20 yuan, 60 yuan (with guide). 17 Qianhai Xijie, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6616-8149.

Summer Palace (Yiheyuan)

Once the summer home for the emperor and his court, the palace consists of a series of less-formal buildings nestled in a hilly, wooded setting on a splendid lake, with gardens, bridges, pavilions, halls and towers. Though its contents were plundered, the Summer Palace recalls the opulent lifestyle of the privileged few during Qing times. Look for the marble replica of a boat, which was built by an empress using funds meant to modernize the navy. The Long Corridor, a covered 2,275-ft/700-m wooden walkway along the lake, is painted in extraordinary detail. It takes you from one great photo opportunity to the next—most tour groups walk through far too quickly. You can also take a dragon-boat ride on the lake, but it's a pretty slow ride and usually is jammed with tourists. In winter, visitors often ignore official warnings and use the frozen lake as a shortcut walkway through the palace grounds. Don't miss the tri-level opera stage favored by the Empress Dowager near the east gate (it's worth the extra 10 yuan to see it). Daily 7 am-5 pm. 30 yuan (April-October), 20 yuan (November-March). Yiheyuan Lu, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6288-1144.

Temple of Heaven (Tiantan)

Located in spacious Tiantan Park, south of the central city, the Temple of Heaven is less a religious site than a historical one. Dating from the 15th century, it was where the emperor made an annual pilgrimage, complete with a huge entourage, to pray for good harvests (commoners were prohibited from viewing the ceremonies). It is made up of several circular, blue-tiled buildings. The color blue represents the heavens. The crown jewel is the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest, which stands on a square marble terrace (representing the earth). Amazingly, the three-story building was fitted together without a single nail, peg or bit of cement. It was reconstructed in the 19th century after a fire destroyed the original. The whole park easily lends itself to a self-guided walking tour. Take a taxi there, pay at the entrance, find a map (usually near the entrance) and then wander to your heart's content. Daily 8 am-6 pm. 15 yuan (park only), 35 yuan (all access). Yongdingmen Dajie (south gate), Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6702-8866.

Temple of the Azure Clouds (Biyun Si)

Built during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), this temple contains religious statuary and the Diamond Throne Pagoda. It's the most magnificent of the temples in Beijing's western hills. It's especially nice in the spring, when surrounded by blossoms. Daily 8 am-4:30 pm. 10 yuan. Inside the north entrance to Fragrant Hills Park, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6259-1155, ext. 7470.

Tiananmen Square (Tiananmen Guangchang)

This huge, open space (covering 122 acres/49 hectares) is the heart of Beijing. It really doesn't merit a special trip. Most travelers will see it while passing through the city or while visiting the Forbidden City, which can be accessed through the Gate of Heavenly Peace. Said to hold as many as 1 million people, Tiananmen Square was where Mao Zedong inaugurated the revolutionary People's Republic of China in 1949 and where, 40 years later, the government used tanks to cut down reform-minded students. Mao's picture—painted anew four times a year—hangs above the entrance. Mao's Mausoleum is behind the Monument to the People's Heroes, on the square. On the square's south side is a 15th-century gate (Qianmen) that once was part of an outer wall surrounding the city. The Great Hall of the People lies on the west side of the square.

White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan)

The world's oldest Taoist temple—also the center of Taoism in north China—is located among the smokestacks of southern Beijing. Monks are still in residence, and every February during the spring

festival, a temple fair is held there. Inside, you'll find an amazingly tranquil world of exotic deity statues, religious artifacts of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and long-haired Taoist priests. A meditation chamber is open to the public for chanting four times a day at 8:30 and 10 am, and 2 and 3:30 pm. Daily 8:30 am-4 pm. 10 yuan. 6 Baiyunguan Jie, Xibianmenwai, Xuanwu District, Beijing. Phone 6346-3531.

White Pagoda Temple (Bai Ta Si)

This temple is known for its *dagoba*, a reliquary said to hold a part of the Buddha's body. A pagodalike structure, the *dagoba* was built by Lamaists from Tibet during the time of Kublai Khan, but the building dates from the Qing dynasty. Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. 10 yuan. Fuxingmennei Street, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6616-0211. <http://www.bjtwst.org.cn>.

Museums

Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Located on the campus of Peking University (Beida), this collection spans 280,000 years from the Paleolithic period to the Qing dynasty. On display are exquisite Shang dynasty bronzes and pottery from the Tang and Song dynasties. Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. 20 yuan. Inside Peking University campus, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6275-1667. <http://www.sackler.org/china/amschina.htm>.

Beijing Capital Museum

This modern museum opened its doors officially in December 2005 and is a wonderful exhibition space for a quite diverse collection of artifacts relating to Beijing's past and present. This eclecticism means it is also a good place to see visiting exhibitions, ranging from Italian Renaissance treasures to contemporary British art. Daily 9 am-5 pm. Ticket prices 20 yuan-30 yuan. 16 Fuxingmenwai Dajie, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6337-0491 or 8610-6337-0492.

Beijing Museum of Natural History (Ziran Buowuguan)

The largest of its kind in China, this museum contains fossils or specimens of almost all plants and animals found in China, including such prehistoric ones as the woolly mammoth and *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Squeamish visitors and those traveling with children may want to skip the third floor, where exhibits on human anatomy have been created from dissected cadavers suspended in formaldehyde. Daily 8:30 am-5 pm. 15 yuan adults. 126 Tianqiao Nandajie, Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6702-4431. <http://www.bmnh.org.cn>.

The Chinese Military History Museum

See 5,000 years' worth of war paraphernalia: AK-47s, flame throwers, tanks, ancient weaponry, uniforms and even American U2 spy plane wreckage. A military buff's paradise. Daily 7:30 am-5:30 pm. 20 yuan. 9 Fuxing Road, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6686-6244.

National Art Museum of China (Zhongguo Meishu Guan)

Founded in 1959, this renovated museum has permanent exhibits of works by Chinese artists and frequent shows by foreign artists in 14 huge exhibition halls. Daily 9 am-5 pm. 20 yuan. 1 Wusi Dajie (north of Wangfujing), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6401-7076.

Neighborhoods and Districts

Hutongs

The ancient *hutongs* (alleys) afford a glimpse of old China that is quickly disappearing. Traditional courtyard homes, known as *siheyuans*, were built according to principles of order and harmony dating from the second century BC. Their outside walls form the alleys. The *hutongs* that remain are most plentiful near the Forbidden City and the Second Ring Road at Andingmen. (Subtle architectural details differentiate homes of the wealthy from those of commoners or merchants.) We recommend a visit to the back lanes (*houhai*) north of Beihai Park, where you can find such famous *hutongs* as Yichi Dajie (Beijing's shortest) and Qianshi Hutong (the city's narrowest). The alleys are fine for exploration, but the courtyards themselves are private. Remember to take along your hotel's card with the name written in Chinese in case you get lost and need directions back. For more information about touring *hutongs*, contact the Beijing Hutong Tourist Agency. You can rent a pedicab from them, complete with an English-speaking guide. 26 Dianmen Xilu, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6615-3236.

Qianmen (Dazhalan) Area

Qianmen means "front gate," and the Qianmen area is named for the front gate of the old walled city, which was left standing after the walls themselves were demolished. In Ming times, establishments that were banned within city walls—including theaters, brothels, and certain shops and restaurants—found a niche there. The Qianmen area also served as the route for the emperor's yearly procession from the Forbidden City to the Temple of Heaven to pray for a good harvest. The opportunity for a glimpse of "authentic" Beijing is what draws visitors. (Some shops have been in existence since the Ming era.) Today, the area is a busy shopping district, which includes such landmarks as the Tongrentang pharmacy, where you can purchase traditional herbs and medicines, and Liubiju, which sells traditional sweets and pickled vegetables. The imposing Qianmen Gate is itself worth seeing. Just south of Tiananmen Square, Beijing.

Parks and Gardens

Although many of the more affluent parts of the city have been gentrifying in recent years, Beijing is still by and large a gritty, crowded metropolis largely bereft of attractive landscaping in most neighborhoods and business districts. But the city boasts numerous large, beautiful parks—usually consisting of concrete walkways through areas of trees—that draw locals and visitors for strolling, tai chi chuan, picnics and other activities. (In some, you'll find older Chinese doing their daily exercises on colorful apparatuses that resemble children's playground equipment.)

Beihai Park (Beihai Gongyuan)

Located northwest of the Forbidden City, this park has an 800-year history as the royal garden—and playground—of the Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. It was also the site of Kublai Khan's imperial palace and court, now destroyed. The park is grand and sprawling, with some beautiful landscaping, a lake and paddleboats for rent by the hour (10 yuan). Visit at 6 am to see hundreds of people practicing tai chi chuan, or enjoy a meal fit for the emperor at the Fangshan Restaurant in the center of the park. Daily 6 am-8 pm. 10 yuan (park), 20 yuan (all access). 1 Wenjin Jie, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6403-1102.

Beijing Botanical Garden

Situated in western Beijing, the botanical garden offers a nice green retreat from the smog and chaos of city life. Attractions include a huge, modern greenhouse stocked with flowers of all shapes and sizes, quaint promenades and plenty of sleepy pavilions where you can rest and reflect. Wofosi (the Temple of the Reclining Buddha), which dates back to the Tang dynasty, is also in the park, where you can check out its rather large namesake. Daily 6 am-7 pm (summer), 7 am-6 pm (winter). 5 yuan for the park, additional 5 yuan for Wofosi. Wofosi Lu, Xiangshan, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6259-1283.

Coal Hill (Jing Shan Park)

Just north of the Forbidden City, this artificial hill was created from soil excavated to create the moat around the imperial compound. This is where Chong Zhen, the last emperor of the then-unraveling Ming dynasty, hanged himself from a tree as the Manchus were streaming into the city. Now a park, it was once the highest vantage point in Beijing. The Ten Thousand Springs Pavilion at the summit affords a lovely panoramic view that includes the Forbidden City and is the perfect spot to watch the sunset. Nice flowers in season, and good for strolling. Daily 6 am-9 pm April and May; 6 am-10 pm June-August; 6 am-midnight September and October; 6:30 am-8 pm November-March. 5 yuan. 1 Wenjin St. (north of Forbidden City), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6404-4071.

Fragrant Hills Park (Xiangshan)

This park is a favorite place for hiking, especially in autumn when the changing leaves make for spectacular scenery. Once the emperors' hunting grounds, it has remnants of temples and pavilions to visit along the trail. If you have the energy, climb to the peak to watch the sunrise. Many elderly Beijingers practice tai chi chuan and sing on the peak at dawn. The park is also home to the beautiful Azure Clouds temple. Daily 6 am-6:30 pm (winter), 6 am-sunset (summer). 10 yuan. Xiangshan, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6259-1155.

Zoos and Wildlife

Beijing Aquarium (Beijing Haiyang Guan)

Opened in 1999, the aquarium at the Beijing Zoo is a state-of-the-art facility. It features themed exhibits of fresh- and saltwater aquatic life, a rain forest with pools of fish, a shark tank, and shows

featuring dolphins and sea lions. We think it's much better than the Blue Zoo. Daily 9 am-5 pm. 100 yuan adults, 50 yuan children, free for children under 4 ft/1.2 m tall. Prices include zoo admission. 108 Gaoliangqiao Xijie, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 62-1766-5590. <http://www.bj-sea.com>.

Beijing Zoo (Beijing Dongwuyuan)

The zoo is known for its pandas, but it's not a modern zoo by any standard, although conditions in some of the displays (most notably the ones housing primates) have been improved. Still, the weeping willows, bamboo groves and placid ponds provide a pleasant setting. The grounds date from the 17th century, when it was a garden for one of the Qing emperor's sons. It was later converted to a park, but the Empress Dowager Cixi refurbished it to house animals given to her as gifts. Many were stuffed after they died and then put on display. Today, you'll see only live animals at the zoo. Daily 7:30 am-5 pm (winter), 7:30 am-6 pm (summer). 10 yuan (winter), 15 yuan (summer), 5 yuan for the Panda House, free for children under 4 ft/1.2 m tall. 137 Xizhimenwai, Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6839-0274. <http://www.bjzoo.com>.

Blue Zoo Beijing

A joint venture between China and New Zealand, this aquarium is popular with children. The main attraction is a 420-ft-/130-m-long moving walkway underneath the main tank, which provides great views of sharks and other creatures swimming by. Most children want at least two passes along the walkway. A local company, SinoScuba, organizes scuba diving at the Blue Zoo; no previous diving experience is required (phone 369-302-8913; <http://www.sinoscuba.com>). Daily 8 am-8 pm. 75 yuan adults, 50 yuan for children younger than 12, free for children under 3 ft/1 m tall. South Gate of Workers' Stadium, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6591-3397, ext. 1560. <http://www.blue-zoo.com>.

Recreation

With the recent emergence of a class of young, upwardly mobile Beijingers and the influx of visitors from other countries, recreational facilities have blossomed throughout the city. Most major hotels catering to foreigners have modern exercise equipment (weights, cardio machines) and swimming pools. However, the Chinese are learning through trial and error, so prices and amenities often change. Ask at your hotel about aerobics classes, instruction in tai chi chuan, ballroom dancing, yoga and other organized activities that are showing up around town. There are also modern fitness-center franchises, similar to Bally's Total Fitness and Australia's Evolution Spa and Fitness, located mostly in the Chaoyang District. Most of these places require memberships.

Golf

Golf has become the latest sporting craze in China. You can get plenty of information (and advice) about golf in the Beijing area at Frank's Place, which is located near the Lido. The attendants at the golf courses may not speak English, so you may need an interpreter to reserve tee times. Greens fees range 80 yuan-600 yuan during the week, 100 yuan-1,000 yuan on weekends. You'll need to reserve a tee time on weekends.

Beijing International Golf Club

Beijing's first golf club is located near the Ming Tombs River and Reservoir. Daily 7 am-7 pm. For nonmembers, men pay 800 yuan on weekdays and women pay 480 yuan on weekdays; both sexes pay 1,400 on weekends. Northwest of Ming Tombs Reservoir, Changping District, Beijing. Phone 6076-2288.

Beijing Pine Valley International Golf Club

This truly spectacular course hosted the Johnnie Walker Classic in 2006. Designed by Jack Nicklaus, the 7,300-yd/6,675-m course has a driving range, swimming pool, tennis court and other amenities. Daily 11 am-4:30 pm in winter, 7 am-sunset in summer. Course is only open to members. Pine Valley Resort, Nankou Town, Changping District, Beijing. Phone 8528-8038.

Chaoyang Kosaido Golf Club (Guang Ji Tang Golf)

This nine-hole course is one of the most conveniently located in town. Chiefly useful for the driving range to keep your swing in shape. Daily 7:30 am-4:30 pm. 230 yuan weekdays, 290 yuan weekends. Nongzhan Nanlu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6501-8584.

Horseback Riding

There are several places for horseback riding outside of Beijing. The most popular is the Kangxi Grasslands, about 50 mi/80 km north of the city. But Bashang, a large grasslands area 185 mi/300 km north of Beijing in Hebei province, is considered one of the finest locations. The easiest way to go is to join an organized tour group.

Equuleus Riding Club

Located out near the Beijing Riviera villa complex, this school is popular with expatriate children. Cost is 300 yuan for 45 minutes. North of and parallel to Xiang Jiang Beilu, off Jingshun Lu, Beijing. Phone 6438-4947.

High Club

Accommodations are usually Mongolian-style yurts. Take warm clothing, as temperatures are considerably lower in the grasslands than in Beijing. 270 yuan and up for a weekend trip, accommodations are 50 yuan-150 yuan. Phone 5166-8022 or 8580-5080.

Other Options

Tai chi chuan evolved from an ancient Chinese martial art known as *qigong* and is believed to integrate mind, body and spirit. Practitioners move through a series of continuous, rhythmic exercises, called forms, which resemble slow-moving ballet. Benefits of tai chi include reducing stress, promoting balance and flexibility, and even easing arthritis pain.

Tai chi is gaining popularity around the world, but the best way to learn it is straight from the source.

Tai Chi Workshop

Offers tai chi chuan lessons. Lessons in traditional sword and fan dancing also can be arranged. English translation is provided. Lessons offered Wednesday-Friday 7-8 pm. 50 yuan per hour. First Floor Health Club, CTS Plaza, Sanyuanqiao, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 130-0103-9563.

Tianyi Kung Fu

Offers Shaolin Kung Fu (based on Zen buddhist philosophy) and Xingyi Kung Fu (based on philosophical Taoism) lessons, as well as tai chi chuan instruction. Open Tuesday and Thursday 7:30-9 pm; Sunday 3:30 pm-5 pm. Beijing City International School, 77 Baizhwan Nanerlu, Beijing. Phone 130-5113-8804. <http://www.tianyikungfu.com>.

DayTrips

To the **Ming Tombs**. Those visiting the Badaling or Juyong Pass sections of the Great Wall often combine the trip with a stop at the Ming Tombs. Located about 30 mi/50 km northwest of Beijing, the tombs can be seen in about an hour. We're not sure they're worth even that much time, but they would definitely appeal to history buffs. They're not stunning to look at (don't be misled by the name Ming) and, unlike Egyptian tombs, they are not elaborately decorated. The only tomb open to the public is that of Emperor Wanli (1573-1620). Valuables buried with the emperor and his concubines are displayed in a museum nearby. The pavilions marking other tombs can be seen from there. The roads leading to the tombs (called the Spirit Way) are guarded by huge stone animals and are one of the most intriguing aspects of the visit. You can get there by taxi or tour bus, which can be arranged by your hotel.

To **Hong Luo Si (Red Snail Temple)**. Located just north of Huairou, these pine-forested hills are home to the largest Buddhist temple in northern China and the Pearl Spring. The name derives from a legend about two giant red snails inhabiting the area. In warm months, visitors can go boating and swimming in the Hongluo Reservoir. Arrange for transportation through your hotel.

To **Long Qing Gorge**. A scenic gorge about 50 mi/80 km northeast of the city center, Long Qing has attracted tourists since the Ming dynasty. The area covers 45 sq mi/115 sq km and is bisected by a long river flanked by cliffs and waterfalls. Vertical rock formations rise above the mist on the river, creating the quintessential Chinese landscape. You can hike or take a boat tour to look at the

scenery. A hired car (supplied with a driver at a day or half-day rate) is the best way to reach the gorge. You can negotiate a price with most cab drivers.

To **Zhoukoudian** and the **Peking Man Site**. This famous archaeological site, 30 mi/48 km southwest of Beijing, is where archaeologists have found evidence of people living in the Beijing area 700,000 years ago. Finds from the dig are displayed in an exhibition hall. Arrange for transportation through your hotel.

To **Badachu Park**. This lovely park has eight ancient temples and a profusion of apricot trees that bloom in spring. A chairlift will take you into the hills. Inside the pagoda of the second temple (Temple of the Sacred Light) is a holy relic reputed to be a tooth of the Buddha. Visitors usually go to Badachu and Fragrant Hills parks on the same trip. About 15 mi/24 km west of downtown Beijing. Take Bus 347 from the Beijing Zoo.

Local Tours

You can book local tours through your hotel's travel desk or the China International Travel Service. Many tours are available, but be aware that your ability to customize a tour may be limited.

China International Travel Service

This is China's main tourism organization, with staff in most of the major hotels who can help you with tour arrangements. Its most popular tour is a three-day package tour that hits all the major sites (Forbidden City, Great Wall, Temple of Heaven, Lama Temple and *hutongs* tours) and includes a Peking duck dinner and an acrobatics performance. Also offers shorter day tours that hit a selection of the major sites and tours of individual sites, which can be customized to suit your needs. Day tours run Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Tour prices vary. A three-day tour is 1,110 yuan per person for a group of four, including meals and performances. Discounts for larger groups. 1 Dongdan Bei Dajie, Wangfu Fandia (655 ft/200 m east of the Peninsula Plaza Hotel), Beijing. Phone 8610-8522-8888. <http://www.cits.com.cn>.

Chinese Culture Club

This community group organizes cultural activities, lectures and tours, and has proven to be very popular with Beijing's expat community. Some of their tours include visits to the Confucius Temple, boat rides on the Imperial Canal and day trips to small villages outside of Beijing. Two-and-a-half-hour tours start at 40 yuan. Phone 6432-9341. <http://www.chinesecultureclub.org/Tour/tour.htm>.

Hutong Tour

For those who wish to see Beijing as it was during its days as a walled city, a three-hour tour (sponsored by the Beijing Hutong Tourist Agency) visits the *hutongs* (alleyways) created by the traditional Beijing courtyard-style architecture. The tour includes a view of one of the city's older areas from the Drum Tower; a visit to the 700-year-old Guang Hua Temple; and snacks and tea at Prince Gong's Mansion, a former imperial residence. You'll travel by foot and by three-wheeled bicycle rickshaws. Daily at 9 am and 2 pm. Reservations office open Monday-Friday 9 am-5:30 pm. 180 yuan. The tour starts on West Di'anmen Street (west of the north entrance of Beihai Park), Beijing. Phone 6615-9097.

WildChina

Offers unique adventures around Beijing and across China. Phone 6465-6602, ext. 314. <http://www.wildchina.com>.

DINING

Both the variety and quality of Beijing's restaurants may surprise you. The city had fewer than 700 restaurants when Mao Zedong died in 1976 (restaurants were considered bourgeois), but energetic entrepreneurs have boosted that number considerably. Today, you'll find thousands of restaurants serving the cuisines of the world. Western chains are increasingly popping up, as well—not just McDonald's, but the likes of Starbucks, Outback Steakhouse, Tony Roma's and T.G.I. Friday's, too.

If your itinerary will take you only to Beijing, you can visit the different regions of China by sampling their representative foods—from fiery Szechuan cuisine to the milder Cantonese (dim sum). Do try a restaurant specializing in Beijing (Peking) duck.

If you wish to save money or if you are adventurous, you may want to try street food in Beijing. Although most health organizations discourage this, visitors do it all the time—usually with mixed results. Our advice: The night market at Donghuamen is usually safe and is an exotic, delicious dining experience. Exercise good judgment when it comes to the small food stalls along the street, however. If no one's buying or if it looks at all unclean, don't take the risk.

Generally, lunch is served 11 am-2 pm. Restaurants then close and reopen for dinner 6-10 pm. A few places stay open without a break, 11 am-10 pm, and there are more places that stay open late. Less-expensive restaurants almost never have English speakers on staff. Usually reservations are not required unless you have more than five people in your party or it's a holiday. Credit cards are not widely accepted.

Note: Do not tip at restaurants. It's not expected and may even be construed as offensive. Some restaurants add a 15% service charge, which is sufficient to cover any gratuity.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of dinner for one, not including drinks and tax: \$ = less than 100 yuan; \$\$ = 100 yuan-200 yuan; \$\$\$ = more than 200 yuan.

Favorites

Beijing Da Dong Roast Duck Restaurant

Near the embassy district, Da Dong is less romantic perhaps than Liqun, but it makes up for this with a bustling atmosphere and a broader range of homestyle dishes to go with the roast duck. Daily 11 am-10 pm. Building 3, Tuanjiehu Beikou, Dongsanhuan Lu, southeast corner of Changhong Qiao, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6582-2892.

The Courtyard (Si He Yuan)

The Courtyard is a magnificent upscale restaurant set on the banks of the Forbidden City's moat. Housed in a tastefully decorated, gray stone building with exposed ceiling beams and well-worn leather armchairs in the upstairs cigar bar. Works by local contemporary artists are on display. The decidedly European menu is inventive and changes regularly, but the salmon is a constant favorite. Daily for dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 95 Donghuamen parking lot (adjacent to the Forbidden City), Beijing. Phone 6526-8883.

Crab Apple House (Hai Tang Ju)

The centerpiece of this converted Ming dynasty courtyard is a 100-year-old tree set amidst the refined traditional settings. The menu offerings are classified as *si jia cai*, meaning that many of the dishes are unique to the restaurant. Try the *huang jiu* (yellow wine) and *yi tiao lu buo*—a delicious dish made from a single giant turnip. Daily for lunch and dinner (till 9 pm). \$\$. No credit cards. 32 Xiheyan, Xuanwumen, Xuanwu District, Beijing. Phone 8315-4678.

Liqun Roast Duck Restaurant (Li Qun Kao Ya)

Owner Mr. Li was the head chef at Quanjude in the early 1990s before he branched out on his own. His small restaurant is great for out-of-towners who want to experience a Peking duck meal in an authentic old Beijing (albeit decrepit) setting. Best to have a Chinese-speaking guide with you, as the place is tricky to find in the winding *hutongs*. Get there soon: The neighborhood where Liqun is located could be demolished at any time. Daily for lunch and dinner (till 10 pm). Reservations required. \$\$. No credit cards. 11 Beixiangfeng, Zhengyi Lu (northeast of Qianmen), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6705-5578.

Red Capital Club

Housed in a lovingly renovated, traditional courtyard dwelling, this is the place to splurge on a meal fit for emperors. The menu is crammed with Beijing favorites. Nostalgia is the watchword there: The Red Capital Club features a 1950s-era cigar and cocktail lounge. (Pick up the retro-style black phone and listen to speeches by Mao Zedong.) Daily for dinner (closes at midnight). \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 66 Dongsu Jiutiao, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6402-7150.

South Silk Road

One of the see-and-be-seen places frequented by Beijing's *bobo* (bourgeois bohemian) set. This restaurant, opened by famous contemporary Chinese artist Fang Lijun, serves Yunnan-style dishes with an urban twist. Try the water-dipped fish (*zhanshuiyu*) and the famous rice wine (*mi jiu*). Funky, modern and hip. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 10:30 pm). \$\$\$. No credit cards. Lotus Lane (Hehua Shichang), Shichahai, Qianhai Xiyan, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 8580-4286.

Three Guizhou Men (San Guizhou Ren)

This chic favorite of the city's bohemian crowd is the brainchild of three artists from Guizhou province and is famed for its fiery cuisine. Don't miss the fragrant peppermint salad (*xiangban bohe*) and the sour fish soup (*suantangyu*). Daily for lunch and dinner. \$. Most major credit cards. Jianwei Soho Building 3, 39 Dongsanhuan, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 5869-0598.

Local and Regional

Afunti

This restaurant has become so popular that reservations are necessary almost every night of the week. The primary dish is lamb, served in any number of styles—as roasted kebabs (*yang rou chuan*), roasted and stir-fried (*chao kao yang rou*) or served with chopped noodles and vegetables (*chao mian pian*). The lamb tends to be spicy, so those with sensitive palates should choose stir-fried, rather than roasted, dishes. Sample the rose wine—a light, fruity beverage with only a slight kick. Dinner becomes a real event after 7:30 pm, when the resident Uighur musicians pick up their instruments. They're joined on stage by gyrating Uighur dancers. Be warned: Afunti is difficult to find. A taxi is the best way to get there. English menus available. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 10:30 pm). Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 2 Houguaibang Hutong, Chaoyangmennei Avenue, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6525-1071.

Bellagio

This super-hip dining spot specializes in Taiwanese cuisine and caters to a late-night hipster set. Nice decor and tasty food—try the Chongqing spicy chicken (*Chongqing laziji*) and the famous ice snaps (*bao bing*) for dessert. Take along your laptop: Bellagio outlets offer free wireless Internet connections. Two locations. Daily 24 hours. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 35 Xiaoyunlu (next to Kiss Disco), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8451-9988.

Ding Ding Xiang

A refreshingly clean and modern environment serves up some of the best mutton hot pot in Beijing—fresh slices of lamb, searing broth and great sauces make this the perfect meal for cold weather. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order midnight). \$\$\$. No credit cards. First floor, 14 Dongzhong Jie, Dongzhimenwai, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6417-2546.

Fangshan Restaurant

This exquisite restaurant inside historical Beihai Park serves imperial cuisine like the royals used to eat. The perfect tourist trap without the tackiness. Daily for dinner (last order 8 pm). \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1 Wenjin Jie (inside Beihai Park), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6401-1889.

Fei Teng Yu Xiang

The yuppies all flock to this chain of Szechuan restaurants that specializes in the perennially popular water-boiled fish (*shui zhu hu*), a spicy concoction of fish, peppers and bean sprouts. Also try the spicy crab (*xiang la xie*) and spicy snails (*fu shou luo*). Expect long lines. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 10:30 pm). \$\$\$. No credit cards. 1 Gongti Beilu, 36 Xingfu Yicun Sixiang (off of Chunxiu Lu), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6415-3764.

Fu Jia Lou

Get a taste of old Beijing at this traditional-style restaurant replete with robed waiters who yell out a greeting when you walk inside. Try the *zha jiang mian* noodles and the selection of old Beijing street foods. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$. No credit cards. Dongsì Shítiao (655 ft/200 m west of Poly Plaza), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 8403-7831.

Kaorou Ji

Right in the middle of the Houhai nightlife district, this restaurant is a Beijing institution. It offers cuisine of the Chinese Muslim minority, specializing in barbecued lamb and steamed sesame buns.

Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 11 pm). \$. 14 Qianhai Dongyan, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6404-2554.

Kong Yiji

Great Shaoxing (a town in Zhejiang province) style cuisine at these restaurants named for the downtrodden character in a Lu Xun short story. Try the *zui xia* drunken shrimp (eaten raw and wriggling) if you dare. The more picturesque Houhai location, set by the lake, is the best one to visit when you tour the surrounding *hutongs*. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 10 pm). \$\$\$. No credit cards. South bank of Houhai, Shichahai, Deshengmennei Dajie, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6618-4917.

Lao Hanzi

The Hakka people of China's southern provinces have developed one of the country's most interesting cuisines, using the freshest ingredients. This faux-rustic setting is an ideal place to savor traditional Hakka fare. Fish dishes can be excessively salty. A second location in Qianhai (called Han Cang) has scenic views of Shichahai lake. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. No credit cards. Opposite north gate of Beihai Park, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6404-2259.

Mei Fu

This beautifully converted courtyard complex serves up dishes that were enjoyed by legendary Peking Opera star Mei Lanfang back in the 1930s. Set menus selected by the chef come in three price ranges and tend toward the Shanghai style of cooking. Guesthouse on the premises. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 9:30 pm). \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 24 Daxiangfeng Hutong (south bank of Houhai), Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6612-6847.

Neng Ren Ju

Flash-boiled lamb (*shuan yang rou*), a variation on the Szechuan hot pot, shows the influence the nomadic Mongolian people have had on Chinese culture. A self-contained kettle is set to boil, and spices and vegetables are added to create a soup base. The main dish is lamb, but beef, vegetables and rice vermicelli can be added as well. After cooking, each piece is dipped into a peanut sauce flavored with cilantro and chili oil. The restaurant is not easy to find, but it's so famous that most drivers and hotel personnel know it. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. No credit cards. 5 Taipingqiao, Baitasi, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6595-7241.

Qianmen Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant

This is the most elegant of the Quanjude chain of restaurants, but it's also more expensive. The cheapest way to go is right next door, where the same kitchen does the same exquisite duck for about one-quarter of the price (served fast-food style or as takeout). Either way, don't overlook the asparagus. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 32 Qianmen Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6511-2418.

The Xinjiang Red Rose (Hong Meigui Canting)

The Red Rose serves delicious Uighur food in a lively atmosphere. The lamb kebabs and the house band are big draws. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 11 pm). \$. No credit cards. Xinfu Yicun Qixiang (in a small alley across from the Workers' Stadium), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6415-5741.

Cuisines

Asian

Hatsune

Consistently one of the most popular Japanese restaurants in Beijing, Hatsune serves up California-style fusion sushi in a sleek modern environment—one of the few places in town that serves fresh avocados with its rolls. Daily for lunch and dinner. Most major credit cards. Heqiao Dasha, Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6581-3939.

Meshiya

Renowned by Japanese and Gaijin alike for its authentic Japanese cuisine, this upscale restaurant serves Kyoto-style Japanese food, specializing in fresh fish dishes. Daily for lunch and dinner. Most major credit cards. Go south from China World (Guomao) and cross to the east side of the street next to the Yanyuan Hotel, Beijing. Phone 6771-0218.

Phrik Thai

This cozy, stylish eatery serves excellent Thai food—try the milk tea and the delicious green curry. Conveniently located near the embassy area. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. No credit cards. The Gateway Building, 10 Yabao Lu (across from the Bank of China), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8561-5236.

Red Basil

Despite the garish sign outside, this is a stylish Thai restaurant in a city not known for its style. It's definitely not another Cantonese restaurant dressed up with a bit of coconut milk added here and there. Reasonably priced, with excellent service. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Building No. 8, Zuojiashuang, Third Ring Road (just southeast of San Yuan Bridge near the Hilton Hotel), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6460-2339.

Serve the People

Serves some of the best Thai and Southeast Asian food in town. The artistically decorated dining room is a bit small, but it's conveniently located and a great place to dine before sampling the local nightlife. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$. No credit cards. Sanlitun Bar Street, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8454-4580.

Sorabol

There are three Sorabol Korean restaurants in Beijing. Filling standards: *kalbi* (short ribs), *bulgogi* (barbecued beef) and *mandu* (dumplings filled with ground pork, kimchi, spring onions and bean curd). Vegetable side dishes are a meal in themselves. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. 2-F Landmark Towers, 8 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6590-6688, ext. 5119.

Continental

Aria

One of the most popular upscale dining venues with the business lunch crowd. Swanky environment. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 10 pm). Bar is open 11 am-1 am. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 2/F China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6505-2266, ext. 36.

Morel's

Beijing institution serving delicious Belgian dishes, including veal, steak tartare, juicy mussels and, of course, waffles. Terrific selection of Belgian beers. Two locations. Tuesday-Sunday for lunch and dinner (last order 10:30 pm). Bar closes at 1 am. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Gongti Beilu (across from the north gate of the Workers Gymnasium at the Chunxiu Lu intersection), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6416-8802.

French

Brasserie Flo

Just like a French brasserie, from the well-prepared steaks to the onion soup to the comprehensive wine list. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order midnight). \$\$\$\$. Rainbow Plaza, 16 Dongsanhuan Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6595-5135.

German

Schindler's Filling Station

Authentic German food featuring sausages, sauerkraut, German beers (the draft Wernesgruner is only 16 yuan) and outstanding oven-roasted pork knuckles. Daily for lunch and dinner (last order midnight). \$\$\$. 15A Guanghua Lu (east of Ritan Park south gate in the Ritan Office Building), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8562-6439.

Italian

Adria's

This Italian restaurant is known for its 18 varieties of wood-fired pizza. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 16 Xinyuan Lu, 984 ft/300 m north of Capital Mansion, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6460-0896.

Danieli's

Big, comfy chairs and excellent service. A good choice for entertaining, business lunches or dinners—it definitely makes the right impression. But frankly, for the price, the food should be much better. Daily for lunch and dinner (till 10 pm). \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 22 Jianguomenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6460-6688, ext. 2441.

Gisa (Ji Sa)

Great home-style Italian food served by Gisa herself, proud owner of Beijing's only dairy farm that specializes in European-style cheeses. Daily for lunch and dinner (till 11 pm). \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1 Nongzhan Nanlu (by the west gate of Chaoyang Park), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6594-0938.

Metro Cafe

The place for fresh pasta and one of Beijing's best Italian restaurants. Choose a pasta from column A on the menu and a sauce from column B. Try the spinach ravioli but start with an appetizer (they're all good) and leave room for the marble cheesecake. Daily for lunch and dinner (till 10 pm). \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 6 W. Workers' Stadium Road (Gongti Xilu), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6552-7828.

Latin American

Alameda

This elegant restaurant in the heart of Sanlitun frequently pops up in the Best Restaurant category in local listings magazines. It's easy to be won over by its unpretentious contemporary Brazilian cuisine, friendly service and cheerful, well-designed interior. The lunch menu is the best value in town. Daily for lunch and dinner (till 10:30 pm). Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Sanlitun Beijie (beside the Nali Mall), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6417-8084.

Middle Eastern

1,001 Nights (Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye)

Beijing's best Middle Eastern restaurant serves excellent versions of all the standards: tabbouleh, pita bread and lamb kebabs. You can even rent a hookah to smoke tobacco while you watch the belly dancer. Daily for lunch, dinner and late-night (till 2 am). Sanlitun Gongti Beilu (across from the Zhaolong Hotel), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6532-4050.

Spanish

Ashandi Spanish Restaurant

This upscale restaurant features Spanish paella and sangria. It's a nice place for a romantic dinner and an ideal place to check out Beijing's art scene—the walls of the restaurant are lined with paintings by contemporary Chinese artists. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. No credit cards. 168 Xinzhong Jie (opposite Workers' Stadium), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6416-6231.

Mare

Pricier than Ashanti, but known for its tapas and upscale Spanish Embassy crowd. Daily for lunch and dinner. 14 Xindong Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6417-1459.

Vegetarian

Lotus in Moonlight

Great mock-meat dishes made from tofu and gluten products. Try the spicy "lamb" kebabs and spicy "chicken." Daily for lunch and dinner. 12 Liufang Nanli, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 139-0132-3056.

Pure Lotus Vegetarian

Fascinating restaurant run by Buddhist monks where all the dishes are veggie, even the ones that resemble meat. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Zhongguo Wenlianyuan, 10 Nongzhanguan Nanlu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6592-3627.

Breakfast and Brunch

The Den (Dun Huang)

A rowdy nightlife spot after dark, The Den does a consistently good and civilized champagne brunch for about 80 yuan. Its convenient location next to the City Hotel and near the Sanlitun area makes it an ideal meeting spot. Open 24 hours on weekends; till 7 pm weekdays. \$. 4 Gongti Donglu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6592-6290.

Grandma's Kitchen

Founded by a bona fide grandmother from Texas, this is the capital's best American home cooking. Service could be better, but the young waitstaff tries hard. Stick with the classics: pancakes, waffles, omelettes and skilletts. Two locations. Daily 7:30 am-10 pm. \$. 11A Xiushui Nanjie (behind the Friendship Store), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6503-2893.

Peter's Tex-Mex Grill

Founder Peter is the adopted son of Grandma from Grandma's Kitchen, and she certainly taught him everything he knows about cooking. The omelettes and burritos there do the Lone Star State proud. Daily 7:30 am-11 pm. \$. 88A International Club, 21 Jianguomenwai Da Jie (next to the St. Regis Hotel), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8532-2449.

Other Options

Green T. House

Funky fusion food or pretentious schlock? You be the judge. The minimalist-inspired place serves "conceptual cuisine" amidst obtrusive chairs and artsy paraphernalia. A good taste of contemporary Beijing cultural kitsch. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. No credit cards. No. 6 Gongti Xilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6552-8311.

Jing

Another minimalist-inspired contemporary venue that appeals to yuppies of all stripes. There's an open-plan kitchen reminiscent of bistros in the U.S. Daily for dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Peninsula Palace Hotel, 8 Jinyu Hutong, Wangfujing, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6559-2888, ext. 6714.

Traktirr

Good, authentic home-style Russian restaurant right next to the Russian Embassy off of Dongzhimennei. A great place to eat hearty Western food (including black caviar) on the cheap. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$. No credit cards. 1A Xiyangguan Hutong, Beizhong Jie, Dongzhimennei Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6403-1896.

ENTERTAINMENT

Nightlife

The easing of government policies and an increase in the number of foreigners living in Beijing have given rise to several thriving entertainment spots. Clubs and bars of every stripe line Sanlitun Bar Street in Chaoyang District, but the area around Houhai Lake (north of the Forbidden City) is vying for Sanlitun's crown as Beijing's premier nightlife district with dozens of popular bars.

Karaoke bars are *the* nighttime activity for many Chinese. You'll find one in every hotel, as well as on every corner in the tourist areas. (They're recognizable by the letters OK or KTV in their names.) Be warned: Some karaoke bars charge outrageous prices and have been known to rough up customers who refuse to pay their expensive bills; others are fronts for brothels. If you want to try a karaoke bar, go to one in a hotel. It will be expensive, but at least you'll know what you're getting into.

Beijing's clubgoers are a fickle bunch, and venues quickly fall in and out of favor. Also, the turnover rate is extremely high, as many venues in the older hutong areas are demolished and forced to reopen elsewhere. The capital has also seen the arrival of the super-club—giant dance venues that attract international DJs such as Carl Cox and Paul van Dyk. The current hot spots for dancing are

Cargo, Coco Banana and Babyface, which are all located along the side of the Workers' Stadium, and other favorites include Vics and Mix.

You can enjoy a traditional form of entertainment at the Lao She Teahouse (Lao She Cha Guan), where you sit among photos of Henry Kissinger and other world leaders who have stopped in for green tea and a show.

The hours at Beijing nightspots vary. Bars and live-music venues in the Sanlitun and Houhai areas generally close around 2 am. Most clubs and discos stay open all night, depending on their popularity.

Bars, Taverns and Pubs

Bed Tapas & Bar

Minimalist meets antique kitsch in this hip spot nestled in the *hutongs* (alleys) behind Gulou (the Drum Tower). Serves a selection of tapas and mixed drinks amidst loungelike surroundings. Daily 4 pm-1 am. 17 Zhangwang Hutong (off of Jiu Gulou jie), Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 8400-1554.

Cafe Sambal

Owned by the same gentleman who owns Bed, this small courtyard bar is fantastic in the summer, although it's a treat any time of year. It serves nouvelle Malaysian cuisine for the hungry—the thirsty should try a bucket of the house mojitos. Daily from noon until the last customer leaves. 43 Doufu You Hutong, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6400-4875.

Centro

The hotel bar that transcends hotel bars—Centro, in the lobby of the Kerry Center Hotel—is enormously popular in town among the martini-and-cigar set. Daily 24 hours. Kerry Center Hotel, 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6561-8833, ext. 42.

Cloud Nine Bar

Now an upscale bar located in the Shangri-La Hotel, this bar is popular with movers and shakers as well as cocktail fans. Daily 8 am-2 am. Shangri-La Hotel Beijing, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu (north of Poachers in the white building), Haidian District, Beijing. Phone 6841-2211, ext. 2723.

No Name Bar

The bar that sparked the burgeoning Houhai nightlife scene is still arguably the best in the area. It attracts locals, expatriates and tourists who go to enjoy its prime lakeside location, soft lighting and elegant interior. Daily from noon. 3 Qianhai Dong Yan, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6401-8541.

Pass By Bar

Perfect for the granola-and-backpacker set—this place is all about Tibetan decor, travel books and backpacker bulletin boards. Decent pasta, reasonably priced beer and a diverse, down-to-earth crowd. Daily from 9:30 am. 108 Nanluogu Xiang, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 8403-8004.

Poachers Inn

Attached to a popular youth hostel, Poachers attracts a steady crowd of itinerant, hormonally driven youngsters and out-of-towners. Enjoy the cheap beer and peppy hip-hop music blasting from the speakers. Daily from 8 pm. Usually has a cover charge on weekends. 43 Bei Sanlitun Lu (next to the Poacher's Youth Hostel west of the Sanlitun Bar Street), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6417-2632, ext. 8506.

Dance Clubs and Nightclubs

Babyface

Originally a Guangzhou concept, Babyface has been transplanted all over China. Big, well-designed club with top-class DJs and a smooth, professional feel. There is a second Beijing location at Triumph Plaza (A143 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng District, phone 8801-6848). 6 Gongti Xilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6551-9081.

Bar Blu

Combines an intimate bar over two rooms with a steaming dance floor, DJs every night, and a

fabulous terrace for those warm Beijing summer nights. Sunday-Thursday 4 pm-2 am, Friday and Saturday 4 pm-4 am. 4/F Tongli Studio, Sanlitun Beilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6558-4616.

Browns

A bar by day and a nightclub by night drawing a diffuse crowd of expatriates and wealthy Chinese. Drinks are not cheap, but Browns wins on atmosphere. Daily 11 am-4 am. Nansanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6591-2717.

Inner Affairs

A giant Buddha head overlooks the cozy dance floor, where the music tends toward house. Surrounding it are lush sofas and a balcony beset with the idle rich. Lots of champagne, Chivas and green tea. Daily from 6:30 pm. 6 Xiliujie, Sanlitun Beili, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8454-0899.

Latinos

Salsa the night away at Beijing's most popular Latin dance club. It has been relocated, like so many Beijing clubs, but is still drawing a mixed crowd of white-collar locals and expats of all extractions to its new venue. Tuesday-Sunday from 8 pm. A12 Nan Xin Cang Historical Complex, Dong Si Shi Tiao 22, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6409-6997.

Mix

Freshly renovated, this perennially packed, smoke-filled club features booty-shaking, sweat-makin' hip-hop. The younger set loves it. Daily from 8 pm. North gate of Workers' Stadium, Beijing. Phone 6530-2889.

Tango

Obnoxiously large club at the south gate of Ditan Park operated by the same people behind Cloud Nine. Smoke-and-mirrors dance floor downstairs and large live-music venue upstairs. Daily 24 hours. South Gate of Ditan Park (next to Jindingxuan restaurant), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6428-2288.

Vics

The arch-nemesis of Mix sits right across from it in the Workers' Stadium parking lot. Plays a blend of booty-shaking hip-hop and R&B to a consistent crowd of youngsters, students and twentysomethings. Nightly 8:30 until late. North gate of Workers' Stadium, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6593-6215.

World of Suzie Wong (Su Si Huang)

The quintessential Beijing meat market, where hormonally charged yuppies of all backgrounds mingle amidst faux-antique furniture, loud music and Long Island iced teas. Daily from 7 pm. Chaoyang Park West Gate, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6500-3377.

Live Music

Nameless Highland

The Asian Games Village hasn't been the same since this venue opened, featuring a bombastic blend of live music acts that run the gamut of genres, taste and talent. Daily from 8 pm. Building 14, Anhuili Area 1, Yayuncun (655 ft/200 m north of the Yayuncun Hospital intersection), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6489-1613.

New Get Lucky

The Chaoyang location of this Beijing institution still has the same lineup of live music: Death metal, hip-hop, indie rock and beyond. It still brews its own beer as well. Daily 11 am-2 am. A1 Xingba Lu, Nuren Jie, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8448-3335.

Other Options

Lao She Teahouse (Lao She Cha Guan)

Traditional Chinese comedy (*xiangsheng*) and songs may not appeal to those who don't speak the language, but many world leaders and dignitaries have visited this teahouse and have had their picture taken with the grinning manager. Shows nightly at 7:50 and 9:20. 40 yuan-130 yuan,

including a bottomless cup of tea and snacks. 3 Qianmen Xidajie, Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6303-6830.

Lotus Lane

Situated in the hip and happening Houhai area, Lotus Lane is a strip of bars beside the lake—it has a seedy side, but is fun to hang around. The prices in the strip of bars there can vary wildly and can be expensive. Daily from 6 pm. 51 Di'anmen Dajie (Shichahai, Qianhai Xiyuan), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6593-6215.

Tianqiao Teahouse (Tianqiao Cha Guan)

Features a variety of Beijing-style cabaret acts, such as singing, magic, fire-eating and a comic dialogue called cross talking. Shows Tuesday-Sunday 7-9 pm. 180 yuan for table and snacks, 330 yuan for table and duck dinner. 113 Tianqiao Market, Xuanwu District, Beijing. Phone 6304-0617.

Performing Arts

Beijing's arts offerings are impressive—and can be seen year-round. Many artists have begun traveling overseas, lending an increasingly cosmopolitan sophistication to the performing arts. The Beijing Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble is a particularly noteworthy offering, as is Beijing opera. A subset of Chinese opera, Beijing opera is unlike, for example, *Madame Butterfly*: It's a combination of song, dance, acrobatics and other crowd-pleasing stunts. The music is less important than the visual impact. In fact, most people chat (sometimes loudly) throughout the performance.

Dance

Beijing Modern Art Dance Company

Formed in 1995 by Jing Xin, a former PLA officer, the troupe organizes annual modern dance festivals and allows visitors to watch their daily rehearsals. 20 yuan. 8 Majiapu Dongli, Fengtai District, Beijing. Phone 6757-3879.

Beijing Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble (Beijing Dongfang Gewu Tuan)

Performances are usually at the Theater of the Beijing Exhibition Hall. Ticket prices vary. 135 Xiwai St., Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6831-6677.

Central Ballet of China

This company performs at the International Theater of Poly Plaza. Dongsu Shitiao Overpass, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6506-5345.

Central Song and Dance Ensemble (Zhong Yang Gewu Tuan)

Performances are at the Theater of the Beijing Exhibition Hall or the Nationalities Theater. Tickets run 60 yuan-180 yuan. Xicheng District. Phone 6403-3439.

Music

Beijing Symphony Orchestra

This orchestra performs—frequently with guest artists—at the Beijing Concert Hall. Ticket prices vary. Phone 6605-5812 (Beijing Concert Hall).

China National Symphony Orchestra

China's best symphony orchestra, which performs at the Beijing Concert Hall, frequently features guest artists. Tickets 30 yuan-120 yuan. Phone 6605-5812.

Opera

Liyuan Theater

Beijing opera for foreigners: English subtitles are displayed on screens that flank the stage. After the hour-long performance, children are welcome backstage to meet the costumed characters. Shows nightly at 7:30. Tickets cost 30 yuan-150 yuan. 175 Yong'an Road (in the Qianmen Hotel), Xuanwu District, Beijing. Phone 6301-6688, ext. 8860, or 8315-7297.

Ticket Brokers

Tickets are purchased directly from each theater. At many hotels, the concierge or front-desk staff can assist you in obtaining tickets. Avoid buying tickets sold by scalpers outside the theaters, because they may not be tickets for that day's performance.

Other Options

China National Acrobatic Circus

This prize-winning troupe performs a colorful acrobatic show, *China Soul*. Based on the 3,000-year-old history of Chinese acrobatics, the show combines acrobatic stunts with martial arts, dance and opera. Nightly at 7:25. Universe Theater, 10 Dongzhimen Nandajie (just north of Poly Theater), Beijing. Phone 6502-3984 or 6416-89893 (ticket office).

The Legend of Kung Fu

Nightly performances of kung fu fighting in a modern theatrical setting. Nightly at 7:30. Tickets range from 90 yuan (children) to 680 yuan (VIP). 44 Xingfu Dajie, Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6714-2473.

Spectator Sports

Beijingers (and the Chinese in general) are crazy about soccer. Games are held in the spring and summer at the Workers' Stadium and Xian Nong Tan Stadium. The Chinese Basketball League showcases the best basketball talents in the country and some foreign players, as well. Beijing's team, the Bayi Rockets, plays regularly. For sports fans, *That's Beijing* is the best source of information about soccer games, basketball, rugby matches and other spectator sports.

SHOPPING

You will find most of China's products in Beijing: Carpets, silk, cloisonne and lacquered items, jade carvings, pearls and embroidery. The best, however, may be available only in Hong Kong or may be exported. Still, most shoppers will find plenty to buy.

Though shopping in Beijing can be rewarding, it can also be extremely frustrating. There's a wealth of items to buy, but finding them (especially at the right price) can be difficult. The pearl markets, for instance, offer beautiful jewelry, though you may be able to find similar-quality pearls at better prices elsewhere in China. Some great deals on such common items as clothing can be found at Beijing's open markets. So a "bargain" may depend on where you're going in China and how much travel time you want to spend shopping. Designer clothing and other goods can be found in many shops and markets. Beware, however—many counterfeit designer brands are sold, as well.

Bargain vigorously when dealing with small and independent shops—it's expected. Haggling is typically done by calculator; the buyer and seller punch in offers and counter offers until a price is agreed upon, although now many vendors in the Silk Alley and Yaxiu Market speak excellent English. The general rule is to cut the initial asking price in half, and start bargaining from there. Be firm and walk away if they don't agree. Most likely you'll be called back and sold the item. The best rule is: If you really want something, buy it. This is especially true when it comes to local arts and crafts.

Remember that cash is king. A shop's acceptance of international credit cards (such as American Express or Visa) is meant to attract foreign shoppers, but prices may include credit-card service fees.

Shopping Hours: Stores generally open around 8 am and close around 6 pm, with larger department stores opening around 9 or 9:30 am and staying open as late as 10 pm. Open-air markets start at about 9 am and close at dark.

Antique Stores

Be especially careful when buying antiques. There are excellent copies available—so good that they pass for the real thing. This is great, except that fakes are usually sold at the same high prices as the genuine articles. True antiques will be authenticated by the shop selling them, thanks to China's

stringent antiquities-protection laws. These laws also provide that items beyond a certain age—usually those made before the reign of the Emperor Qianlong (1736-95)—cannot be taken out of the country and will be confiscated at customs.

Beijing Curio City (Beijing Guwan Cheng)

This four-story gift shop sells trinkets, jewelry, clocks, rugs, shard boxes (boxes topped with pieces of old porcelain), teapots, statues and furniture. Daily 9:30 am-6:30 pm. 21 Dong San Huan Nan Lu, Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6774-7711.

Gangchen Carpets

Specializes in hand-woven Tibetan wool carpets. Daily 10 am-10 pm. Shop 10 Kempinski Hotel, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6465-3388, ext. 5542.

Liu Li Chang Cultural Street

A good place to buy antiques, but make sure they are authenticated. One of the landmarks on the street is Rong Bao Zhai, which sells both the implements of Chinese art (brushes, ink stones, water dishes) and the items created using them (paintings, calligraphy). You'll also find everything from furniture to Mao memorabilia to dragon kites. None of what they sell is cheap, but it's likely to be more authentic than what's sold at other stores on this street. Shops are generally open daily until 6:30 or 7 pm, but hours vary. Walk south about 1,500 ft/450 m from the Hepingmen subway station, Beijing.

Panjiayuan Antiques Market (Panjiayuan Jiu Huo Shichang)

For perhaps the most interesting antiques-shopping experience in Beijing, visit this open-air weekend market. You'll find everything from Tibetan rugs to old phonographs. There also are aisles of old books, Cultural Revolution paraphernalia, scroll paintings and porcelain. It's a must-visit on any shopping itinerary, and you'll need at least a half-day to see everything. Saturday and Sunday from dawn until 3 pm. (The earlier you get there, the better.) South of the Panjiayuan bridge (in southeast Beijing), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6775-2405.

Bookstores

Beijing Bookworm

Since moving from its original location, Beijing Bookworm has become the coolest bookstore/cafe in Beijing. In addition to loaning out thousands of books for a membership fee, the Bookworm also sells new and lightly used English-language books, especially those from Beijing-based authors. It also offers free wireless Internet connections for those with laptops, along with a full bar and decent food, although portions are, shall we say, nouvelle. Daily 9 am-1 am. Building 4, Nan Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6586-9507. <http://www.beijingbookworm.com>.

Chaterhouse Booktrader

This is the first Beijing branch of the Hong Kong book shop, and it has an excellent range of titles. Also offers a lot of foreign magazines. B107, The Place, Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6587-1329. <http://www.chaterhouse.com.cn>.

Foreign Languages Bookstore

This Wangfujing institution is still the largest source of English books and magazines in Beijing. Daily 9 am-9 pm. 235 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6512-6904.

San Wei Bookstore

This small bookstore stocks mostly art books and fiction, both new and classics, many of them in Chinese. On the weekends, you can hear live jazz or traditional Chinese music in the teahouse upstairs. Daily 11 am-10 pm. Cover charge 30 yuan. 6 Fuxingmennei Dajie, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6601-3204.

Xidan Bookstore

This is Beijing's largest bookstore. It features four floors of books, almost entirely Chinese, and those in English are usually for students learning the language. However, it's worth seeing what's available, and if nothing else, how voracious local appetites for books and learning can be. It's conveniently located right next to the entrance to the Xidan subway station. Daily 9 am-7 pm. 20 Xichanganjie, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6607-8477.

Department Stores

Friendship Store (Youyi Shangdian)

It's a one-stop shop for Chinese products. Everyone should go there just to see the selection of silks, porcelain, cloisonne, embroidery, antique reproductions and jewelry. Prices—which are non-negotiable—have become more reasonable with the advent of local competition, but they're still not as good as those found in markets and smaller stores. Daily 9:30 am-8:30 pm. 17 Jianguomenwai Dajie, Beijing. Phone 6500-3311.

Oriental Plaza (Dongfang Guangchang)

This controversial site opened after knocking down the world's largest McDonald's and plowing over a Neolithic site found during the digging of the foundation. This is *the* Beijing mall, with luxury and foreign brands side by side with local favorites. Stretched across Chang'an Avenue from Wangfujing to Dongdan, it dominates this part of eastern Beijing. If you want to take a look at upwardly mobile Beijing and where they shop, this is it. Oriental Plaza's cinema is also the best in Beijing, and shows original-language English movies, in case you get caught on a rare Beijing rainy day. Daily 9 am-8 pm (individual shop hours vary). 1 E. Chang'an Jie, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 8518-6363.

Galleries

Beijing Tokyo Art Project

One of the signature galleries at the 798 art space, a series of converted factories in Dashanzi in northeast Chaoyang District that serve as Beijing's new arts district. Features contemporary works by Chinese and Japanese artists. Check out the surrounding spaces while you're at it. Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-6:30 pm. 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu (Dashanzi Art District), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8457-3245. <http://www.tokyo-gallery.com>.

China Art Archives and Warehouse

Another great place to check out contemporary Chinese art in an impressively large setting, favored by overseas collectors and dealers. Call for an appointment. Caochangdi Cun, Jichang Fulu (opposite the Nangao Police Station), Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 8456-5152. <http://www.archivesandwarehouse.com>.

The Courtyard Gallery (Siheyuan)

Displays works by contemporary Chinese artists in all media. It also has a world-class restaurant with amazing fusion cuisine. Monday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm, Sunday noon-7 pm. 95 Donghuamen Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6526-8882. <http://www.courtyard-gallery.com>.

Red Gate Gallery

Occupying the Dongbianmen Watchtower, this gallery displays contemporary works by many of the country's top young artists. Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm. Dongbianmen Watchtower, Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6525-1005. <http://www.redgategallery.com>.

Wan Fung Art Gallery

Housed in what was formerly the Imperial Archives, this gallery exhibits traditional paintings and sculptures by Chinese artists. Visitors should ask for Kathy Dai, who is knowledgeable about the artists and their works. The entire staff speaks English. Monday noon-6 pm, Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 136 Nanchizi Dajie (east of the Forbidden City), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6523-3320, ext. 19. <http://www.wanfung.com.cn>.

Markets

Hong Qiao

Also known as the Pearl Market, this market has it all—antiques, produce, seafood, clothing, porcelain, electronics and, of course, pearls. The cloisonne on the third floor is a good buy. The top floor is the place for Cultural Revolution items and other interesting knickknacks. It's not actually an open market: It's in a long row of metal shelters. Beware the strong fish smell coming from the seafood market in the basement. Generally open daily 9 am until sunset. 16 Hongqiao Lu (near the Temple of Heaven), Xuanwu District, Beijing. Phone 6711-7429.

Shopping Areas

China World Shopping Mall (Guo Mao)

This ultramodern mall boasts high-end clothing boutiques (Gucci, Prada, Louis Vuitton), a food court in the basement and an ice-skating rink. Daily 10 am-9:30 pm. 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6505-6688.

Silk Alley (Xiushui Jie)

Formerly a makeshift market around the corner from the U.S. Embassy, Silk Alley has been replaced on the same site by a huge, rather charmless mall where you can buy knockoff authentic clothes, shoes and accessories at very inexpensive prices. Daily 9 am-dusk. Xiushui Dongjie (off Jianguomenwai Dajie), Beijing.

Tea Street

Tea Street has a handful of shops specializing in teas from all over China (ranging from a few yuan per pound to thousands of yuan for a can). There are also teapots and tea sets for sale. Daily 8 am-6 pm. Maliandao Chayecheng, Xuanwu District, Beijing. Phone 6328-1177.

Wangfujing Street/Xi Dan Street/Dong Si Street

Running north from the main street of Changan Dajie, just east of the Forbidden City, are Wangfujing, Xi Dan and Dong Si streets (Wangfujing is a pedestrian-only zone). These three streets contain the department stores, clothing shops, toy stores, drugstores and other stores where locals shop. Because of the incredible crowds, avoid going on a Sunday unless your aim is people-watching, not shopping.

Xin Dong An Plaza

Beijing's first megamall opened in 1998, but don't look for upscale merchandise there. Shops sell arts and crafts, musical instruments and CDs. Wangfujing Street (at Goldfish Lane, west of the Palace Hotel), Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6528-6611.

Yaxiu Market

Similar to the famed Silk Alley, where you can buy knockoffs and name brands under the same roof for cheap. Daily 9:30 am-9 pm. Gongti Bei Lu, Sanlitun 58, Beijing. Phone 6415-1726.

Specialty Stores

Beijing Silk Store

Dating from 1840, this historical shop—located in an old-style European building—is still one of the best places in town to buy silk wear and bolts of silk. Daily 8:30 am-7:30 pm. Qianmen Zhubaoshi Jie, Xuanwu District, Beijing. Phone 6301-6658.

Jianhua Leather and Fur Store

The Russian-style fur hats are popular among non-Chinese residents and tourists from colder regions of China. Daily 9 am-9 pm. 192 Wangfujing St., Dongcheng District, Beijing. Phone 6525-0801.

Jingdezhen Porcelain Shop

This shop sells porcelain from the famous, centuries-old factory in Jingdezhen (an area in southern China). Daily 9 am-8 pm. 149 Qianmen St., Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6303-4452.

Pakistan Goods Store

Get a taste of the silk road at this store that sells goods and crafts from Pakistan and Central Asia. Daily noon-midnight. Sanlitun Bei Jie, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Phone 6417-6355.

Theatrical Prop and Costume Shop

This shop in the historical Qianmen area offers Beijing opera supplies. Even if you're not going to buy, stop in to look. Monday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm. 32 Xichaoshijie, Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6702-2853.

Things of the Jing

Jewelry designer Gabrielle Harris makes ornate silver pieces with a Beijing theme. Great for souvenirs and gifts. Daily 11 am-9 pm. 221 Tongli Studio, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing.

Phone 390-110-2781. <http://thingsofthejing.com/index.html>.

White Peacock Art World (Bai Kongque Yishu Shijie)

Visible from the Second Ring Road, this huge arts-and-crafts shop is touristy but convenient. The staff will help you ship goods overseas. Daily 9 am-7:30 pm. Deshengmenwai Dongbeibinhuo, Xicheng District, Beijing. Phone 6201-1199.

Yuan Long Embroidery and Silk Company

Mostly silk but also carpets and porcelain, old and new. Daily 9 am-6:30 pm. 55 Tiantan Lu, Chongwen District, Beijing. Phone 6701-2854.

SECURITY

Personal Safety

Violent crime is not a problem in Beijing (and what violence does occur is rarely directed at visitors), but you still should be careful at night. Petty theft is common. Keep your passport and money in a safe place on your person or in a safe at your hotel. Although traveler's checks offer a degree of safety, they're seldom accepted outside hotels and banks and may present more inconvenience than protection. If you rent or borrow a bicycle, leave it at one of the hundreds of guarded bike lots around the city. (Be sure to lock it—the guards don't give receipts to identify which bike belongs to whom, so anyone can ride off with an unlocked bike.) The cost is usually 0.30 yuan (about US\$0.04), paid to the attendant when you pick up your bike.

China's urban renewal efforts, including the demolition of older housing units, have led to tensions and sporadic civil unrest in Beijing. Visitors may want to avoid demonstrations and protests, especially those that appear political in nature.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

No vaccines are required to enter China, but travelers venturing into rural areas beyond Beijing may want to consider getting vaccinations for hepatitis.

After the outbreak (in late 2002) and rapid spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in China, arriving visitors are now required to fill out a health declaration stating that they are free of symptoms of SARS (high fever, headache, body aches, respiratory distress) and must have their temperatures checked by infrared scanner.

Don't drink the tap water. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid uncooked vegetables and fruits you haven't peeled yourself. Chinese cooking emphasizes high temperatures and fresh ingredients, but meat is often left unrefrigerated for long periods. When eating street food, choose items such as fried noodles and fried rice.

Smog, especially during summer, can cause problems for asthma and allergy sufferers. People with respiratory ailments should take along ample supplies of medicines for the duration of their trip. Winters are extremely dry. Drink plenty of water to ensure proper hydration.

People requiring contraceptives should take an adequate supply with them. Domestically produced condoms are considered unreliable.

Visitors can obtain information about English-speaking medical providers from the American Citizens' Services section of the U.S. Embassy. Monday-Friday 9 am-noon and 2-4 pm. Phone 6532-3831.

People planning long stays or traveling beyond Beijing may wish to consider joining a medical-evacuation plan. SOS Assistance offers reliable service in Beijing and also operates a clinic in the

Sanlitun area. Contact them directly for short-term coverage plans and rates. Phone 6462-9112 or 6500-3388, ext. 433. 24-hour emergency number: 6462-9100.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Disabled Advisory

Beijing is challenging for travelers with physical limitations. The streets are in poor repair, and few sidewalks have curb cuts for wheelchair access. Traffic lights are short, and only a few have beepers to alert the visually impaired. Tourist sites can be hard to reach, too—ancient Chinese structures tend to have lots of stairs, and there's little accommodation for handicapped visitors.

Etiquette

China continues to evolve in ways that are bringing it in closer contact with other parts of the world. Nonetheless, the country remains a place where business travelers need to tread carefully.

Appointments—If you are going to China on business, you will need to establish local contacts before departing. Begin by contacting the department of your government that deals with international business (the U.S. Department of Commerce, for instance). They can put you in touch with business and government personnel in China. Once in the country, remember that punctuality on the part of all parties is important for both business and social occasions. If you are late, it reflects badly on you and can be perceived as a slight that can put the entire business relationship into question.

Personal Introductions—Handshaking is the norm. Maintain a formal demeanor during introductions. Official titles are important. When the person has no official title, use standard English titles unless you are fluent in Mandarin: "Mr.," "Ms." (unmarried female) and "Madam" (married female—the title should accompany her maiden name). The Chinese typically have two or three names: The first is the family name, and that's the one that should be paired with the title. (Therefore, "Wang Jianguo" is "Mr. Wang.") Your business cards should have English on one side and a Chinese translation on the other. Treat the business cards you receive with respect and leave them on the table in front of you for reference during the meeting. At the end of a meeting, place the cards in a wallet or holder in your jacket pocket, handbag or briefcase, not in a wallet that you put in a pants pocket.

Negotiating—Business meetings begin with a short interval of polite conversation, usually over tea or drinks. Hard-driving, get-to-the-point tactics usually backfire. Negotiations will typically be protracted and involved. Multiple meetings on the same issues are not unusual. Expect the unexpected, and do not be thrown by last-minute complexities or demands. If you have a deadline, do not reveal it. The host may signal the end of a meeting by offering more tea. The correct response is to decline the offer and say that you are ready to leave. If the host thanks you for coming, that also is a sign the meeting is over.

Business Entertaining—Evening banquets are often extravagant affairs with many courses and exotic foods. Expect several toasts throughout the evening, often with Chinese liquor (*baijiu*). If you do not drink or don't enjoy its taste, politely decline by toasting with your tea or another drink. Business is usually not discussed at large banquets. At other business meals, it is appropriate to discuss business if your host initiates the discussion.

Body Language—Observe a formal body posture. Refrain from touching and keep gestures to a minimum. Do not talk with your hands in your pockets or use a finger to point at people—these gestures are considered rude. Use your open hand to point, but do so sparingly.

Conversation—Avoid politics, especially such sensitive issues as Taiwan, Tibet, the Communist Party or the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Regardless of your acquaintances' feelings, they will most likely not be comfortable discussing such topics with you and certainly not in public. History, family and Chinese culture are good topics. Be careful if you compliment someone's possessions. An article of clothing or a home decoration you praise may be offered to you—don't accept.

Dos and Don'ts

Don't complain about the pollution or the traffic; it won't make the skies less smoggy or the streets less congested.

Don't take offense at the number of people who spit on the street. Many Chinese believe "better out than in" when it comes to phlegm, though there are efforts to stop people from hawking so much.

Do sample the local Yanjing beer; it's excellent, especially with *jiaozi* dumplings, a plain but fantastic meal.

Do spend some time in the park. If you get there early enough, you can watch the pensioners doing their tai chi exercises and experience a great sense of calm.

Do visit the Danshanzi art district, also called 798. Chinese contemporary art is red hot at the moment, and a lot of it is made right there.

PRACTICALITIES

Geostats

Alternate Name: Peking (traditional, archaic).

Passport/Visa Requirements: Passport, visa and proof of onward passage are needed by Canadian and U.S. citizens. There is an airport departure tax (called a "construction tax") of 50 yuan for domestic flights and 90 yuan for international flights (including flights to Hong Kong) added to fares. Do not pay a departure tax at your hotel or the airport. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Metropolitan Population: 10,717,000.

Languages: Mandarin, also known as Putonghua. Beyond the major hotels you'll find few people, including taxi drivers, who speak English well. It's wise to have your destination written in Chinese. If you're leaving from a hotel, often the hotel staff can tell your driver your destination in Chinese.

Predominant Religions: Officially atheist, but Muslims, Buddhists, Taoists, Lamaists and Christians practice.

Time Zone: 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts, 50 cycles. There is no standard electrical outlet, although the outlet for three-prong plugs is the most common in hotels. Hotels usually have prong adapters but no voltage transformers, except for the ones built into the outlets for electric shavers and hair dryers.

Telephone Codes: 86, country code; 10, city code.

Money

Currency Exchange

The local currency is the renminbi (RMB for short), also known as the yuan. The RMB is no longer tied to the value of the American dollar and its value fluctuates slightly.

Exchange rates in China are set by the Bank of China and do not vary by location (the exchange rate at a hotel will be the same as at a bank). Most exchange outlets will give a slightly better rate for traveler's checks or credit cards than for cash.

Save any currency-exchange receipts you receive while in China. You'll need them to convert yuan back into other hard currencies upon your departure—which can now be done only at the airport. Without receipts, you have no proof that the yuan you are carrying were not illegally earned in China, and the bank will not change them back. To minimize leftover yuan upon departure, travelers may wish to change money frequently during their stay rather than to do so in one lump sum at the beginning.

Although Beijing has a proliferation of ATMs, it's best not to rely on them, because they are not always connected to international banking networks, and on weekends they are often not refilled. Many, however, are now able to calculate the current exchange rate and dispense money from U.S. accounts in local currency. (Machines that accept foreign ATM cards bear the CIRRUS or MAESTRO logos.) It is still best to have plenty of cash on hand.

Currency Exchange Rates

US Dollar	Chinese renminbi
\$10	78.99
\$20	157.98
\$30	236.97
\$40	315.96
\$50	394.94
\$60	473.93
\$70	552.92
\$80	631.91
\$90	710.90
\$100	789.89

Taxes

There is a sales tax and a value-added tax (VAT), but both are included in the price of goods.

Tipping

Hotel porters now expect 10 yuan for carrying your bags to a hotel room or taxi. However, tipping elsewhere is not expected and may even be construed as offensive. Some restaurants add a 15% service charge, which is sufficient to cover any gratuity. Do not tip beyond that.

Weather

Beijing is renowned for its pleasant springs (65-75 F/18-24 C) and brisk falls (50s F/10-15 C). Summers are hot, with temperatures ranging 85-95 F/30-35 C. Winters can be extremely cold and dry, especially when Siberian winds blow in from the north. Expect frequent temperatures below freezing. Beijing's rainy season is in June and July. Be prepared for dust—and dust storms—at almost any time, but especially in spring.

What to Wear

Except in business settings, dress is casual in Beijing and is becoming more so every year. It's perfectly acceptable for women to wear shorts in the summer. Although shorts and T-shirts are not considered improper, few Chinese people wear them. For business, men wear suits and ties and women wear dresses or suits. Women commonly wear boots in winter, even for business.

Communication

Telephone

Telecommunications in China are generally excellent, and pay phones are widely available on the streets. A phone card is the most practical way to use them as a visitor. These can be purchased in many outlets, but it's a good idea to ask your hotel for the best option.

Cell-phone coverage in China is extremely comprehensive, and you can get a signal even in very remote places. You can buy SIM cards in the airport and in supermarkets and foreign stores, but don't be afraid to ask questions to make sure you get a good-value card. You must dial 010 for Beijing when using phone cards and when dialing from a cell phone.

Internet Access

Internet cafes became hugely popular in Beijing during the late 1990s. At one time there were more than 2,400 such establishments in the city. All that came to an end in 2001 when a fire at one cafe resulted in the deaths of dozens of users. The government immediately clamped down, and many cafes were shut down.

In recent years, the number of cafes has started to increase again, and there are now some large fancy ones in Chaoyang and Haidian districts, particularly near the Buynow computer center in Chaoyang (*Bainao hui* in Chinese). Most Starbucks now have wireless access, as do many of the larger hotels and some individual bars and cafes around town. Your best bet is to check with your hotel in advance to see if they provide this service. The typical charge is 2 yuan per minute, with a 15-minute minimum.

Many restaurants and bars offer free wireless Internet access. For a list of locations in Beijing, visit <http://www.chinapulse.com/wifi>.

Mail and Package Services

The mail service is generally reliable for sending items out of China, although it can sometimes be difficult to receive items. Most hotels sell stamps and mail letters for their guests.

International Post and Telecommunications Office

The main office of the Chinese postal service offers express domestic and international package delivery with its EMS service. Rates are comparable to private package-delivery services. Every branch will accept packages for express shipment. At the main international post office, the customs desk is open 9-11:30 am and 1-4 pm. All packages must be inspected before shipping, and no inspection is available outside of those hours. Two other branches are at the Holiday Inn Lido Hotel and the China World Trade Center. Monday-Friday 9 am-7 pm. (The customs desk is open till 5 pm.) Second Ring Road (on the east side of the road, north of the Jianguomenwai intersection), Beijing. Phone 6512-8120.

Newspapers and Magazines

Local English-language newspapers include *Beijing Weekend*, *Beijing This Week* and the *China Daily*. All state-run publications are carried by hotel newsstands, bars and restaurants around town. *The Asian Wall Street Journal* is the most commonly read business journal. It can be found at major hotels and the Friendship Store newsstand.

The *South China Morning Post*, an English-language paper published in Hong Kong, is available in the evenings at hotel newsstands. The *International Herald Tribune* is also available evenings at hotel newsstands, along with *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the Sunday edition of *The Times of London*.

A handful of other publications cater to travelers and expatriates. Most notable are *That's Beijing*, *Time Out*, *City Weekend* and *Beijing Review*, which list restaurants, bars, nightclubs, art galleries, and musical and cultural performances. These publications are free and can be found in hotels, stores, bars, nightclubs and cafes around town.

Transportation

Although taxis are the simplest way to get around the city, getting into a taxi in Beijing requires preparation. Because drivers don't speak English, be sure you get the address or exact location of your destination written in Chinese and carry a map in English and Chinese that you can point to for your driver's reference. Simply show the directions to your driver, and there shouldn't be a problem. Be aware that some drivers act as if they aren't familiar with an area so that they can run up the meter or avoid taking you to a nearby location. Always make sure the driver uses the meter. Most cabs charge 1.6 yuan-2 yuan per 0.6 mi/1 kilometer, with a minimum charge of 10 yuan for the first 1.8 mi/3 km (the price increases to 11 yuan for the first 1.8 mi/3 km after 11 pm). If you must be on the road during rush hours (7-9 am and 4-7 pm), allow plenty of time to get through traffic. Gridlock is increasingly common, and traveling across town can take as long as an hour.

Getting around by bicycle is an option. Although the traffic in Beijing is chaotic, many streets have bicycle lanes, and many of the major sights are within bicycling distance of each other. The city is incredibly flat, so a cheap, single-speed bicycle is all you need. (Mountain bikes are a favorite of thieves.) Most hotels rent bicycles for about 30 yuan a day. If yours does not, ask the concierge or front-desk staff to direct you to a company that does—there are many in the city. You may be asked to leave a deposit (about 300 yuan) or your passport. Be aware that because bike paths border roads, it's impossible to avoid exhaust fumes. If you have asthma or are prone to upper-respiratory infections, bicycling is probably not a good idea.

Because the city is so large and spread out, walking around Beijing requires time and stamina. Within some areas, walking is a viable option, but be aware that city blocks are quite long.

The bus system is extensive but extremely crowded, and the maps are available only in Chinese. The subway is speedy, but the range of the system is limited.

Air

The recently remodeled and much improved Beijing International Airport (BJS) is 17 mi/27 km northeast of the city center. Plans are under way to expand the airport into the world's largest under the supervision of famous British architect Lord Foster, who also designed Hong Kong's airport (currently the world's largest). The airport expansion is due to open in late 2007, in time for the 2008 Olympics.

The current airport has some amenities, including duty-free shopping, a food court, a Starbucks and a multistory parking garage. There are two main terminals for domestic and international flights, with connecting shuttle buses. The difference between the two is notable, and the domestic terminal strikes one more as a bus station with planes. Be aware that domestic flights frequently change gates, so check and re-check as your boarding time approaches. Plans are under way to construct a connecting high-speed light rail hub to Dongzhimen in East Beijing by July 2008 that will take only seven minutes to get to and from the airport. As in Hong Kong, passengers will be able to check their luggage and go through customs there, instead of at the airport.

Connecting Transportation

Best way:

Arrange for your hotel to pick you up. Generally, the hotels nearer the airport offer courtesy vans, and those farther away will pick you up for a charge. If you plan on taking the courtesy van, let your hotel know in advance of your arrival time. It will be more expensive, but you'll be met by someone who speaks English and knows exactly where you are going.

Other options:

Taxis can be found at stands located outside the main door of the airport. Get in line for a vehicle—don't go with touts who approach you, because they're more likely to overcharge, and some have

reportedly robbed passengers. The approximate fare to the downtown area is 100 yuan. In addition, there's a highway fee of 15 yuan that the driver pays. (Drivers can legally request the fee from passengers at the end of the trip; others ask passengers to pay the fee directly so that there's no confusion.) Note that drivers will often try to negotiate a price with you without running the meter. You should insist on running the meter. If you have a complaint about a driver, take note of his driver number (shown on the placard on the dash) and tell your hotel. It can arrange to help you voice your complaint.

Car

Visitors to China are permitted to drive, but they usually don't. A Chinese driver's license is required to get behind the wheel, and the process is so cumbersome that no one (except those staying a long time) bothers with a rental car. Even residents with licenses shun intercity car travel because roads and facilities are inadequate (although this situation is also improving), and drivers in Beijing tend towards oblivious at best, insane at worst. Travelers can hire a car with a driver by the day or half-day at most major hotels (but not the airport). The cost of a hotel rental car with driver is 200 yuan-700 yuan per day.

Capital Taxi Co.

This company rents cars with drivers from 300 yuan per day. Passengers are no longer expected to cover the driver's meals, but this should be clarified in advance. Phone 6461-4003.

Public Transportation

Adventurous travelers will find the subway a good, cheap way to get around, but schedules and information are available only in Mandarin. There are two lines: One wraps around Beijing's center along the lines of the old city walls; the other goes out to the western suburbs. Entrances to the subways are square, gray, concrete structures marked with an encircled letter D, which stands for *di xia tie lu* (underground railway). Purchase a ticket (3 yuan) at the underground ticket booth before boarding. The Beijing Tourist Communication Map and the Beijing Touring Map, as well as others, show the routes of the two lines and their stops. Beijing is currently constructing additional lines, although many of them won't be completed for a number of years. Check <http://www.urbanrail.net/as/beij/beijing.htm> for a map of Beijing's subway lines.

The city bus system, although extensive, is only for the intrepid traveler. Buses are slow and almost unbearable—a contest to see how many people can cram into a small space. Maps, although essential to figuring out your route, are only in Chinese. If you use the bus, it's best to do so only for direct trips when you're sure of the bus route number. Ask hotel staff for assistance.

Taxi

Taxis are plentiful in Beijing. You can hail one easily on the street, at a hotel or at other tourist spots. Requesting a taxi by phone is possible but usually unnecessary. Taxi drivers generally don't speak English, so take along the name of your destination written in Chinese and a map in English and Chinese so you can point to your destination.

Taxis operate 24 hours a day, and passengers may share a cab—the fare is the same, and passengers split the fare themselves. Taxi fares are set by law, according to the size, age and condition of the car. Taxis are rated 1.60 and 2.00, the latter being found only in line at top hotels. Prices are posted on a green sticker on passenger doors. Rates rise at night. Carry small bills—10-yuan notes are good—because drivers often cannot make change. Tipping is not necessary.

Although we've generally found Beijing taxi drivers to be honest, some travelers are victimized by age-old cabbie scams—skewing the meter or driving around to increase the fare. Use basic precautions: Select a taxi from a taxi stand when possible, make sure the driver starts the meter *after* you get in and check the meter to see if it starts with the proper amount (10 yuan). If you have a problem with a driver, wait until you reach your hotel to handle it: Hotel staff will usually take your side.

Train

Beijing has two main train stations: Beijing Station (Beijing Zhan) and Beijing West Station (Beijing Xi Zhan). Trains from the northeast and coastal areas (including Shanghai) arrive at Beijing Station, which is near the center of the city, south of Changanjieis, right above a subway stop. Trains from the west and south (including the express train from Hong Kong) arrive at Beijing West Station, the gargantuan station west of Fuxingmen. Take a taxi from this station to the city center. If you do not speak Mandarin, get someone who does to call for schedule information. You also may need help at the station because most signs are in Chinese.

For More Information

Tourist Offices

Complaints about bad service from tour companies can be directed to the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and the Beijing Tourism Bureau's 24-hour Tourism Service Quality Supervision and Control Office hotline at 6513-0828. Its fax number is 6515-8251. English-speaking operators are available.

Beijing Tourism Administration

This organization provides tourist publications such as *Touring in Beijing*—but the staff is not exceptionally helpful, and most of the brochures are in Chinese. You're better off asking your hotel to arrange tours and travel. Offers a 24-hour Tourism Service Quality Supervision and Control Office hotline (in concert with Beijing Tourism Bureau). English-speaking operators are available. Monday-Friday 8:30-11:30 am and 1:30-5 pm. 28 Jianguomenwai Dajie (in the Beijing Tourism Tower), Beijing. Phone 8516-2288.

China International Travel Service

This is the national, multipurpose tourist board and travel agency. The staff will arrange tours (expensive) and tickets for plane and bus travel. Daily 8 am-8 pm. 1 Dongdan Bei Dajie (655 ft/200 m east of the Peninsula Plaza Hotel, Wangfu Fandia), Beijing. Phone 8522-7948. <http://www.cits.com.cn>.

Additional Reading

Insider's Guide to Beijing by Adam Pillsbury (True Run Media). This is a lively and comprehensive guide for anyone who plans a longer stay in the city, but it has lots of information for the short-term visitor, too. Includes advice about living in Beijing from a foreigner's perspective, and compiles work by 30 writers.

Recommended Guidebooks

Beijing & Shanghai: China's Hottest Cities by Peter Hibbard, Paul Mooney and Steven Schwankert (Odyssey Publications). Now in its second edition, this beautiful book fills in all the historical nooks and crannies of travel to Beijing and its rival, Shanghai. Too big to carry around while visiting sites, but a great work to read before and after a day—or week—of touring.

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

Just mentioning the name Shanghai conjures images of romance, mystery and adventure. But you need only stand in the city's historic Bund and look across the Huangpu River to see the high-tech Oriental Pearl TV Tower looming over the ambitious skyline of Pudong's Lujiazui financial district like a space rocket. Alongside the glittering, 88-story Jinmao Building and the futuristic, cubic Shanghai Stock Exchange, the 1,377-ft/420-m tower is a symbol of this modern city and its mission—to embrace the challenges of the new millennium and become one of the world's great commercial centers. If Shanghai succeeds, it will be a return to glory days of old.

In its heyday in the late 1920s and '30s, cosmopolitan Shanghai was known as the Paris of the East—a dynamic melting pot for people, ideas and money from every corner of the planet. It was an exciting time of breakneck industrial progress, of swaggering confidence and of smoky jazz venues. Business boomed, fortunes were made—and lost, and made again—and everything seemed possible. But Shanghai was also vilified by many as a corrupt haven for gamblers, pimps, gangsters, drug runners and the idle rich. So when Mao Zedong's communists took control in 1949, they clamped down hard on this shameless playground of colonial adventurers and capitalists.

After four decades of austerity, Shanghai reawakened in the late 1980s, thanks to the economic reforms implemented by Deng Xiaoping. Since then the city has thrown itself into a headlong rush to make up for lost time. Countless glass and steel skyscrapers reach for the clouds, Mercedes and Buick sedans cruise the neon-lit streets, and modern department stores stock Prada, Gucci and all the stylish trappings available in Paris and New York. Perhaps more than any other city in Asia, Shanghai has the confidence and sheer determination to forge a glittering future as one of the world's most important metropolises.

Shanghai's quaint European architecture, flashy nightlife venues and sophisticated elegance often surprise visitors from overseas. The city offers a fascinating glimpse into China's potential. Save some energy to experience some of its fantastic nightlife—from an exquisite dinner at M on the Bund, to clubbing throughout the French concession's cornucopia of nighttime extremes—the place pulsates with an energy all its own. We recommend pulling out all the stops and staying at the Grand Hyatt in Pudong—one of the most breathtaking hotels in Asia. A nighttime stroll on the Bund is also a must-do.

History

Shanghai's beginning was humble—little more than a small fishing village nestled on the Yangtze River delta, where China's longest and most important river completes its 3,906-mi/6,300-km journey to the East China Sea. In the late 1830s, however, the Chinese emperor's efforts to stem the trade in opium (largely conducted by British merchants) within the country's borders resulted in the First Opium War of 1840-42, which China lost. The victorious British forced the Chinese to open up a series of treaty ports along the nation's eastern seaboard, thus allowing increased trade between China and foreign powers. Shanghai was one such port.

The small fishing village was soon divided into independent and autonomous "concessions" administered by France, Britain and the U.S., who brought their own particular cultures, architectural styles and sensibilities to the Chinese city. By the 1930s, 90,000 foreigners called Shanghai home, including British, Americans, French, Germans and Japanese, as well as Russians who had fled communism in their own country. And though the burgeoning metropolis had its own walled Chinese city, many native residents also chose to live in the foreign settlements, where employment was more readily available and foreign police forces administered rule of law, affording a certain level of protection from warlords. In 1939, the city boasted a population of 4 million.

The eclectic mix of cultures and the city's increasing openness to Western influence had a profound effect on Shanghai, which quickly became internationally famous for its culture, arts, opulent buildings and vibrant commerce. But the gap between the haves and the have-nots was wide—according to firsthand accounts, it was not uncommon for wealthy foreigners to nonchalantly step over starving, dying Chinese in the street without a pause.

This paradox of wealth and degradation gave rise to an increasing sense of anger and injustice among many Chinese, and in 1921, 13 delegates including Mao Zedong held the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China at a site that is now open to the public in the Xintiandi area of the city. The Congress started a movement that would change all of China.

Following fierce fighting against occupying Japanese forces from the late 1930s to 1945, and a civil war against the ruling Kuomintang hot on its heels, the Red Army was triumphant, and the communists established the new People's Republic of China in 1949. By then, most foreigners had fled Shanghai, and the city was closed to the outside world behind what was known as "the bamboo curtain." During the ensuing years, Shanghai was deliberately neglected by a Beijing-centric government scornful of the city's decadent past, and it was starved of investment and attention. A sign of its future renaissance, however, came during U.S. President Richard Nixon's historic 1972 visit to China, when the Shanghai Communiqué, a series of formal agreements to re-establish Sino-U.S. diplomatic ties, was signed in Shanghai.

But the city's resurrection wasn't immediate. Shanghai was made to wait until after the launch, in the late 1980s, of Deng's economic reforms before it could hurriedly re-embrace the internationalism that defined its prerevolution identity. Today it's second only to Hong Kong as China's most open city—socially, culturally and economically. As Deng famously said, "If China is a dragon, Shanghai is its head." Now, less than two decades after Shanghai was officially given the go-ahead to embrace economic development, it is preparing for its biggest international challenge: hosting the 2010 World Expo.

Geography

Modern Shanghai is split into two distinct and vastly different districts by the Huangpu River. The west side is called Puxi, former home to the international settlements. Puxi still boasts the historic architecture for which Shanghai is famous. To the east is Pudong—a modern economic development area that Deng Xiaoping designated as China's future financial and commercial heart. Though Pudong boasts the city's stock exchange, financial district and international airport, Puxi is still considered the city center. The Bund (Waitan) is Puxi's waterfront boulevard—it lines the west side of the Huangpu River and is considered to be Shanghai's main tourist attraction.

In its heyday, Shanghai was delineated by its foreign concessions, and the former borders still serve a purpose. The old Chinese city lies within the Zhonghua Lu-Renmin Lu circle. The former International Settlement (the British and the U.S. concessions merged in 1862) stretches north of the Old City. It's bordered by the Huangpu River to the east, Huashan Lu to the west, Suzhou Creek to the north and Yanan Lu to the south. The old French concession lies south of the Yanan Lu overpass, north of Zhaojiabang Lu, and stretches from Xujiahui in the west to the Bund in the east (with the exception of the northern half of the old Chinese city). Much of the city's sightseeing, dining and shopping lie in the former French concession, including Xintiandi, the popular pedestrian-friendly entertainment district that houses Western-style clubs, restaurants and shops in a colonial ambience.

Must See or Do

Sights—The Bund and the Peace Hotel; Yu Garden for a visit to the Huxining teahouse; Jade Buddha Temple and its namesake statue; People's Square for people-watching.

Museums—The Shanghai Museum on People's Square for both its architecture and collections; the Shanghai Art Museum in the old Shanghai Racing Clubhouse; the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre; the Propaganda Poster Art Center for insights into China's turbulent postrevolutionary years; Shanghai Science and Technology Museum.

Memorable Meals—Szechuan duck at Meilongzhen; Nanxiang Dumpling House in Yu Garden for the city's special *xiaolongbao* pork or crab soup dumplings; fine dining at the Bund, especially at Jean Georges for its retro-meets-modern-Shanghai decor and Asian fusion menu; M on the Bund, for its glamour, view and mouthwatering food; home-cooked Shanghainese fare at stylish 1221; authentic Thai or Indian cuisine in an old Shanghai setting at Lan Na Thai and Hazara.

Late Night—A Kunju opera performance; elegant cocktails at Glamour Bar; drinks and dancing at DKD or Mint; jazz at Club JZ or blues at Cotton Club; barhopping in Xintiandi or Tongren Lu; a night cruise on the Huangpu River.

Walks—Admiring the buildings in the old French concession or International Settlement; taking in the view of the Huangpu River along the Bund; strolling through the quaint Old City; watching the crowds at pedestrianized Nanjing Dong Lu; enjoying the morning tai chi, mah jong and dancing in Jing'an Park or Fuxing Park.

Especially For Kids—Oriental Pearl TV Tower with its views from the top and Space City at the bottom; aquatic flora and fauna at Shanghai Ocean Aquarium; crossing the river in the tourist tunnel.

Port Information

Location

During the city's decadent era of the 1920s and '30s, cruise ships sailed frequently into port along the Huangpu River. Today, although Shanghai is a stopping-off point for some Asian cruises, there is less oceangoing passenger traffic. However, the Shanghai International Cruise Port, scheduled to begin operations in 2008, will change things. The 1.41-sq-mi/3.66-sq-km purpose-built passenger terminal is located on the North Bund development area. The berthing dock, at 2,887 ft/880 m, will be able to accommodate three passenger liners of up to 80,000 tons, and it will also feature hotels, shopping and dining.

Shore Excursions

Consider signing up for the excursions offered by your ship. They may not be the least expensive way to see the city, but you won't have to waste your limited time making arrangements—and you won't have to worry about missing the ship. Shore excursions, and their prices, vary from cruise line to cruise line. Typical Shanghai tours include the Bund, Yu Garden, People's Square, Jade Buddha Temple, and dinner in Xintiandi. Check with your ship's shore-excursion staff or your travel agent for additional information.

Potpourri

Shanghai got its name from its location. Located at the mouth of the Yangtze River, where it empties into the East China Sea, the city name is loosely translated as "above or next to the sea."

The vibrant Pudong area was built on a field of former rice paddies. The dynamic skyline includes mainland China's current tallest skyscraper, the Jinmao Tower—fast being overtaken by the under-construction Shanghai World Trade Center.

The term "to shanghai" was coined in the 19th century when laborers were unwittingly recruited into indentured servitude as crew for various ships.

In 2010, Shanghai will host the six-month-long World Expo, slated to be the largest ever hosted. The giant Expo site is being built beside the Huangpu River, as are luxury hotels, subway lines, tourism facilities and city infrastructure projects.

SEE AND DO

Sightseeing

Start your exploration of the city with tea at Huxingting teahouse in Yu Garden. It is said to be the very teahouse on the willow pattern that graces crockery in homes across the world. Then explore the surrounding old Chinese city, with its quaint traditional homes and bustling antiques market and street-food stores, before strolling on the waterfront boulevard known as the Bund.

Stroll down the Nanjing Dong Lu, which has been transformed into a people-only thoroughfare, and soon you'll arrive at People's Square, an ideal spot for people-watching. There, you can see past and present Shanghai interacting: The "square" was originally an oval-shaped racetrack, and it's flanked by some of Shanghai's most modern skyscrapers and finest art-deco architectural treasures, such as the Park Hotel and former YMCA building on the north side. While you're there, don't miss China's ancient treasures on display at the gorgeous Shanghai Museum. Also check out local and international work at the Shanghai Art Museum or take an awe-inspiring look at Shanghai's future at the Urban Planning Exhibition Centre. The Jade Buddha Temple is a short cab ride away, as is Shanghai's vibrant contemporary art district on Moganshan Lu.

Be sure to spend some time in the former French concession, particularly around Huaihai Lu, Fuxing Lu and Sinan Lu, for a view of old Shanghai and the city's chic stores. You can tour the former residence of Sun Yat-sen, considered the father of modern China, and check out the Xintiandi area, which houses the site of the first Chinese Communist Party meeting as well as a host of upscale restaurants and bars.

One of the best ways to enjoy twilight is to make a trip to Pudong. Cross the Huangpu River on the ferry, view the Bund from the cafes and park flanking the Pudong riverside, and then catch a bird's-eye view of the city from the top of the modern, art-deco Jinmao Tower or the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, the gaudy, spaceshiplike symbol of modern Shanghai. If you still have some energy once night falls, take a Huangpu River night cruise or enjoy a leisurely cocktail-with-a-view on the grand terrace of one of the Bund's new generation of classy lounge bars.

Some spots outside Shanghai offer getaways from the city's urban chaos. If possible, take a day trip to the traditional gardens of Suzhou or to a quaint river town, such as Zhouzhuang.

Landmarks and Historic Sites

The Bund (Waitan)

This waterfront boulevard is Shanghai's most photographed landmark. Europeans, Japanese and Americans built their banks, clubs, trading houses, hotels and consulates there, in styles ranging from neoclassical and Gothic to art deco. Many of the historical structures, such as Nos. 3, 5 and 6, have been heavily renovated and converted into luxury shopping, dining and nightlife centers. Two architectural marvels to check out are the art-deco masterpiece that is the Peace Hotel, and the former Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (No. 12, now the Pudong Development Bank), the dome of which is decorated with an exquisite Italian-tile mosaic. The Bund is a bustling gathering place for both tourists and residents at all times of the day and night. It's interesting to note that although overseas visitors tend to point their cameras west to the old structures, Chinese lenses are firmly focused on the modern skyscrapers across the Huangpu River in Pudong. The Bund stretches along Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu, between Jinling Lu and Suzhou Creek.

Jade Buddha Temple (Yufo Si)

Completed in 1918, this temple is new by Chinese standards. It's known (and named) for its more than 6-ft-/2-m-tall seated Buddha made of white jade, originally brought to Shanghai from what is now Myanmar (Burma). The temple is built with symmetrical halls and courtyards, upturned eaves and bright yellow walls—the ancient style of the Song (or Sung) dynasty. It's crowded with worshippers during Chinese New Year (usually, February). Daily 8 am-4:30 pm (the monks chant in the main hall 3:30-4 pm). Temple admission 20 yuan. Jade Buddha Hall admission 5 yuan. 170 Anyuan Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6266-3668.

Jinmao Tower

This awe-inspiring, 88-floor, pagoda-influenced, art-deco-style skyscraper is currently the tallest building in mainland China and among the top five tallest in the world. The city may be full of aesthetically questionable structures, but the Jinmao is an attractive mix of traditional and modern influences, as well as Eastern and Western. It blends the classic 13-tier Buddhist pagoda with postmodernist steel and glass. The ground floor contains exhibition space and an entertainment center. On the 88th floor, you'll find an observation deck that offers great views of Shanghai. Two high-speed elevators get you there in 45 seconds. Observation deck is open daily 9 am-9 pm. 50 yuan. 88 Shijie Dadao, Shanghai. Phone 5047-5588.

Ohel Moshe Synagogue (Moxi Huitang)

Tens of thousands of Jews, first fleeing the Russian Revolution and then escaping Hitler, arrived in Shanghai from Germany, Austria, Poland and Russia in the first part of the 20th century. In 1943, the victorious Japanese forced all stateless Jewish immigrants into the "Designated Area for Stateless Refugees" in Hongkou District, where they lived until the end of the war. This synagogue was built in 1927. It no longer holds services, but its small museum documents the Ashkenazi Jewish community of old Shanghai. Open Monday-Friday 9-11:30 am and 1-4 pm. Free. 62 Changyang Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6512-0229.

Oriental Pearl Television Tower (Dongfang Minzhu)

The people of Shanghai consider this their Eiffel Tower, although it's not half as elegant: It's gaudy and UFO-like, 1,535 ft/468 m high, and made up of 11 steel spheres of different sizes that are supposed to represent pearls (as in Shanghai, Pearl of the Orient). From the top sphere, visitors can enjoy a panoramic view of the surroundings. At the bottom is Space City, an amusement center with laser tag and an arcade, as well as the Shanghai History Museum. Go on a clear day. Daily 8:30 am-9 pm. 60 yuan-100 yuan. 1 Shijie Dadao, Shanghai. Phone 5879-1888.
<http://www.opg.cn>.

People's Square

Shanghai's rather chaotic main square was built for the people (*renmin*) and has become one of their most important social and cultural centers. Constructed in the mid-19th century by the British as a racetrack for the city's elite, today it's home to the Shanghai Museum, the Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, Shanghai Grand Theatre and municipal offices. The square's two tallest buildings house the Marriott and Royal Le Meridien hotels. The northeastern part of the square has been extensively remodeled, and the whole area is now a nexus of commuters and traffic, though the pleasant landscaping in front of the Shanghai Concert Hall attracts families and children to sit and chat as well as, on evenings and weekends, the city's skateboarding youth. It's bordered by Weihai Lu, Xizang Lu, Huangpi Bei Lu and Fuzhou Lu.

Site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Zhonggong Yidahuizhi)

The first National Congress was a secret meeting held in July 1921 at the Bo Wen Girls School, in the area that is now Xintiandi. Thirteen delegates including Mao Zedong, from communist, Marxist and socialist groups from around the nation, gathered in one small back room. The room stands today as it looked then, complete with a table set for 13 people at tea. There's a small museum with relics, documents and photos. Daily 9 am-5 pm. 10 yuan. 374 Huangpi Nan Lu, Shanghai. Phone 5383-2171.

Sun Yat-sen's former residence (Sun Zhongshan Guju)

Dr. Sun Yat-sen was the father of the Chinese republic, which was established in 1911. He and his wife, Soong Ching Ling, lived in this two-story house 1919-24. Admission price includes a tour of the grounds and entrance to the museum. Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. 10 yuan. 7 Xiangshan Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6437-2954.

Museums

The Propaganda Poster Art Center

Lurking in the dark basement of a nondescript apartment block, this miniature museum charts three turbulent decades in modern Chinese history through colorful propaganda art. The posters provide fascinating insights into the political thinking that shaped a nation. The center is the brainchild of tour guide Yang Pei Ming, who has more than 5,000 propaganda posters and believes he has amassed the world's largest collection of Chinese revolutionary art. Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-4 pm, but it's best to call to arrange an appointment. 20 yuan. Room BOC, Basement, Block B (No. 4), 868 Huashan Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6211-1845 or 1390-184-1246.

Shanghai Art Museum

After some time as a less-than-par art venue, this museum is increasingly growing into a premier spot for international and Chinese modern art and has been designated the host venue for the Shanghai Biennale. Its home was originally the Shanghai Racing Club before World War II. After liberation, it was the main branch of the municipal library. It remains a beautiful old structure renovated into a fine exhibition hall and recognizable by its landmark clock tower. You'll find some good contemporary art there, but nothing overly political or shocking. Exhibitions of varying interest and quality rotate through the museum, so check out what's showing before you go in. Information

is presented in English. Daily 9 am-5 pm (last admission at 4 pm). 20 yuan. 325 Nanjing Xi Lu (at the northwest corner of People's Park, near People's Square), Shanghai. Phone 6327-2829. <http://www.sh-artmuseum.org.cn>.

Shanghai History Museum

This small museum recalls Shanghai's pre-1949 heyday. Relocated to the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, it's an interesting place displaying more than 1,300 photos and artifacts, including the boundary tablets of the former International Settlement and French concession. It's also home to the famous bronze lions that once guarded the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank on the Bund. Some information is presented in English. Daily 9 am-9 pm. 40 yuan. Gate 4, OTV Tower, 1 Shijie Dadao, Shanghai. Phone 5879-1888. <http://www.historymuseum.sh.cn>.

Shanghai Museum

This beauty of a museum opened in 1996. Shaped like a bronze *ding* urn, it's mainland China's foremost showcase of artifacts and relics. State-of-the-art galleries house paintings, sculpture, ceramics, calligraphy, jade, Ming and Qing dynasty furniture, and coins. The collection of bronzes is among the best in the world. Each gallery chronologically illustrates the development of the individual art forms over centuries. Information is well-presented in English, and the audio guide is highly informative. The excellent gift shop on the first floor has an extensive range of books and scrolls. Open Sunday-Friday 9 am-5 pm (last admission at 4 pm), Saturday 9 am-7 pm. 20 yuan (45 yuan for entry to Shanghai Museum, Shanghai Art Gallery and Shanghai Gallery; 60 yuan plus a 400-yuan deposit or your passport for the audio guide). Admission is free Saturday 5-7 pm. 201 Renmin Dadao, People's Square, Shanghai. Phone 6372-3500. <http://www.shanghaimuseum.net>.

Shanghai Ocean Aquarium

This impressive aquarium houses 300 species of fish and other marine life from China and around the world. Species include Chinese alligators, Chinese sturgeon, king penguins and giant salamanders. Much of the collection can be viewed from a 500-ft/155-m transparent underwater tunnel. Visitors can also opt to scuba dive in the shark tank. Information is presented in English. Daily 9 am-9 pm. 120 yuan adults, 80 yuan children, 600 yuan for scuba diving. 158 Yincheng Lu, Pudong, Shanghai. Phone 5877-9988. <http://www.aquarium.sh.cn>.

Shanghai Science and Technology Museum

Housed in a vast glass-and-steel building that includes an IMAX theater, this state-of-the-art museum is one of the largest of its kind in Asia. Interactive science exhibits let children and adults discover the wonders of the Earth's crust, new technological designs and the scope of life on the planet. Information is presented in English. Open Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-5 pm. 60 yuan. 2000 Shijie Dadao, Pudong, Shanghai. Phone 6862-2000. <http://www.sstm.org.cn>.

Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre

Don't let the mundane-sounding name fool you: The Urban Planning Exhibition Centre is the city's monument to itself, stunningly showcasing Shanghai's development, past and present. Follow the crowds upstairs to a 1:1,000 scale model representing what the city should look like in 2020. You can find every individual building in Shanghai, from tiny one-story alley houses to towering skyscrapers. Anxious residents crane their necks over the model to see if their pleasant French concession houses will be left standing. The museum also features scaled models of yesteryear Shanghai. Open Monday-Thursday 9 am-5 pm, Friday-Sunday 9 am-6 pm. 30 yuan. 100 Renmin Dadao, People's Square, Shanghai. Phone 6372-2077. <http://www.supec.org.cn>.

Neighborhoods and Districts

Luwan

This area in the former French concession is the most charming part of the city. It's a historic district known for its tranquil atmosphere and beautiful old architecture, as well as shops, bars and cafes. The main thoroughfare is tree-lined Huaihai Lu, a relaxed, upscale shopping street that is still marked by old French buildings.

Nanjing Lu

The Chinese used to consider Nanjing Lu the busiest street in the world, with its multitude of people, cars and bicycles. But in the late 1990s, the government closed off much of the eastern section to cars, cutting down on some of the chaos. Between Henan Lu and Xizang Lu, it is now a pedestrian walkway, full of shops and restaurants, as well as people-watching opportunities. The

west part of Nanjing Lu, between Shaanxi Lu and Jing'an Temple, is now the city's showpiece upscale shopping district.

The Old City

This area within the Zhonghua Lu-Renmin Lu circle remained under Chinese law and administration after the country was defeated in the first Opium War. And it was in these winding back alleys that Shanghai gained notoriety as a haven for gangsters and opium dens. Today the drugs and the crime are gone, but the narrow wandering lanes, crowded-yet-quaint neighborhoods and tiny, pre-1949 houses still remain. A stroll through the Old City offers a look at how most residents once lived. It's best visited during the day.

Pudong

This is Shanghai's financial center, and though much of it is still being built, it seems to grow a little more each day. It's hard to believe that until the early 1990s, rice paddies dominated the ground that now supports some of the world's tallest skyscrapers. Although most visitors forgo Pudong in order to see Puxi's historic centers, it's worth a visit for an eye-opening look at Shanghai's fast track to modernity. The central financial zone of Lujiazui is the heart of the district. Most of Pudong's attractions are along Lujiazui Lu. To the north of the road, along the Huangpu River, is the space-age Oriental Pearl TV Tower. Just south of the road is the Binjiang Dadao, the waterfront promenade. A little farther east stands the 88-story Jinmao Tower that houses the Grand Hyatt Hotel. The hotel has its lobby on the 56th floor and is listed in *Guinness Book of World Records* as the world's highest hotel.

Xintiandi

This shopping, dining and entertainment area has become the second-most visited spot in Shanghai for Chinese tourists (after the Oriental Pearl TV Tower). Developed by a Hong Kong company and designed by Bostonian Ben Wood, Xintiandi is a massive creation meant to fuse the old Shanghai with the future one. Set along winding lanes, the development includes chic restaurants, bars and shops that are housed in renovated stone gate (*shikumen*) homes, complete with redbrick, stone facades and terra-cotta roofs. A park and artificial lake border the area. The whole effect is a bit contrived and Singapore-clean, but young Chinese professionals and foreign expatriates like to go there to look fashionable and imbibe the latest in Western and Asian food and entertainment. Xintiandi also houses the site of the first meeting of the Communist Party. The very place where Mao Zedong and his comrades conceived the People's Revolution is now part of a trendy shopping and entertainment district: This mixture of capitalism and communism makes Xintiandi a perfect symbol for today's Shanghai. Xintiandi is in Luwan (former French concession) and is bordered by Taicang Lu, Huangpi Nan Lu, Madang Lu and Xingye Lu.

Xuhui

Part of the former French concession, Xuhui is largely a residential district, but it is a nice area in which to stroll down pleasant tree-lined lanes. It is also home to some of the city's finest European-style houses and apartment blocks, and it showcases art-deco, art-nouveau and an assortment of other architectural styles from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Parks and Gardens

Riverside Promenade (Binjiang Dadao)

This sterile park that runs 8,200 ft/2,500 m along the Huangpu River features more concrete than grass. But it does offer limited views of the Bund and of the barges lazily running the river. Daily 8 am-9 pm. 5 yuan. Binjiang Dadao, Shanghai.

Yu Garden

This traditional, meditative Chinese garden was built 1559-77 by the Pan family, who were officials in the Ming dynasty. It was destroyed during the First Opium War but later rebuilt. Besides its signature bridges, winding walkways, carp-filled ponds, dragon-lined walls and pavilions, the gardens encompass an old opera stage, a museum dedicated to the Society of Small Swords rebellion against French colonialists in the mid-1800s, and the Chenghuang Si Miao (Temple of the City God). Some think the complex is too touristy (particularly on Saturday and Sunday when it gets very crowded), but it is one of Shanghai's few old attractions still left standing. Surrounding the garden is a modern bazaar of stores that sell overpriced arts, crafts and souvenirs. In the middle of the lake just outside the garden gate is the tranquil Huxingting Teahouse, which opened in 1856 and is said to be the very building depicted on the willow pattern on fine china. Although

tea is cheaper on the first floor, the view is better from the top floor. A traditional tea ceremony is performed there every evening, 6:30-7:30 pm, accompanied by live traditional Chinese music. To get to the garden, you must wind your way through the bazaar to the ticket booth, which is just north of the lake. The gardens are bordered by Fuyou Lu, Jiujiachang Lu, Fangbang Lu and Anren Lu. Daily 8:30 am-5 pm (teahouse is open till 9:30 pm). 25 yuan. Phone 6373-6950.

Recreation

Given its overwhelming air and water pollution, Shanghai isn't the best city for recreation. It is also huge and sprawling, meaning there is very little in the way of hiking or outdoor sports within easy reach—it would be necessary to board a plane or train and leave the city to pursue those activities. In recent years, many of the city's longer-term expatriates have started vibrant sports leagues for all types of team sports, as well as running groups.

Visitors may find it easier to participate in some of the city's indoor sporting options, which include swimming, tennis, snow skiing, bungee jumping, rock climbing, martial arts and scuba diving. Golfers will find several 18-hole golf clubs and driving ranges in Pudong and the outskirts of Puxi. A limited number allow nonmembers to play.

Boating and Sailing

Shanghai Boat and Yacht Club

Nonmembers and sailing enthusiasts are welcome to join club members each Sunday at the Shanghai Water Sports Centre on picturesque Dianshe Lake, 31 mi/50 km from downtown. A free shuttle bus runs from the city. No phone, but you can reach the commodore via the Web site: <http://www.shanghaibyc.org>. www.shanghaibyc.org.

Golf

Shanghai Grand City Golf Club

This comprehensive golfing enterprise offers a driving range, an 18-hole course and lessons. Shuttle buses available from central Shanghai. Driving Range: 20 yuan Monday-Friday, 25 yuan Saturday and Sunday for 30 balls. Greens fees: 200 yuan Monday-Friday, 280 yuan Saturday and Sunday. 9988 Zhongchun Lu, Qibao, Shanghai. Phone 6419-3676.

Shanghai Lujiazui Golf Club

A large, modern driving range overlooked by the imposing skyscrapers of Pudong's Lujiazui financial district. This excellent location makes it the best downtown golfing option. Nonmember per-hour prices range 60 yuan-120 yuan, for off-peak and peak weekday and weekend times. 501 Yincheng Lu, Pudong, Shanghai. Phone 6887-1700. <http://www.lujiazui-golf.com>.

Sun Island Golf Club

This Singaporean-run, family-oriented golf and country club is located on the outskirts of the city. Rounds of golf available for nonmembers, as are lessons from the pro shop. Greens fees 680 yuan weekdays, 980 yuan weekends. Phone 6983-3888. <http://sunislandclub.com>.

Skiing

Quicksilver Snowboard School

This place provides snowboard courses and activities to snowboard lovers. 118 yuan per hour. Yinqixing Indoor Skiing Site, 1835 Qizin Lu, Shanghai. Phone 3415-1788.

Swimming

Shanghai Swimming Pool

The whole family can enjoy these municipal facilities. Daily 7 am-10 pm. 30 yuan. 1300 Zhongshan Nan Er Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6438-1914.

Tennis and Racquet Sports

Shanghai Squash League

This sports group welcomes all levels. It organizes competitions, tournaments and training and can direct you to court facilities. Phone 1370-184-9343.

Other Options

Namaste Yoga Shala

Madonna's former personal yoga master, Duncan Wong, has set up Shanghai's most kharmic yoga center, nestled down a lane alley in an old French concession villa beside a Tibetan temple. It specializes in Ashtanga, hot and flow yoga, and Pilates. House 29, 1400 Beijing Xi Lu (near Tongren Lu), Shanghai. Phone 6247-2488. <http://www.namasteyoga.com.cn>.

Shanghai Stadium

This facility boasts tennis, swimming, badminton, climbing, basketball and table tennis with reasonable fees per person or per court. 1111 Caoxi Bei Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6438-5200. <http://www.shanghai-stadium.online.sh.cn>.

DayTrips

To **Zhouzhuang**. Just outside Shanghai is the traditional canal town of Zhouzhuang, where you can take a gondola ride to admire the classic Chinese architecture. It's one of the few places where the romance of old China still exists. Inside the walled city is a thriving but quaint set of winding alleys and canals that, with the exception of the power lines, looks untouched since its creation hundreds of years ago during the Ming dynasty. You'll find no roads or cars, only quiet waterways, old wooden houses with upturned, gray-shingled roofs, shops selling everything from antiques to simple household goods, as well as traditional teahouses, a town temple and a museum. All-inclusive tickets to enter Zhouzhuang are sold just outside the ancient city. At the boat dock, you can also pay for a short ride through the canals (see photos at <http://www.zhouzhuang.com>).

Zhouzhuang is 50 mi/80 km from People's Square. The easiest way to get there and back is to ask your hotel to hire a car and driver for the day. Many cab drivers hailed on the street will drive to Zhouzhuang, wait there for a few hours and take you back to Shanghai. Expect to pay anything between 600 yuan and 1,000 yuan, depending on size and condition of the vehicle. CITS runs day tours to Zhouzhuang, including door-to-door service.

To **Suzhou**. Suzhou is China's garden city. Known for its classical Chinese gardens, canals and bridges, it's one of the most popular weekend stops for Chinese and foreign tourists. Today, much of the city resembles modern communist China, but there are unique pockets that still have the feel of dynastic times. The traditional tree and rock gardens are beautiful, if not exactly tranquil because of the number of tourists. Many consider the small Master of Nets Garden (Wangshi Yuan) to be Suzhou's best. Other renowned gardens include the Lion's Grove Garden (Shizi Lin), the Lingering Garden (Liu Yuan) and the Humble Administrator's Garden (Zhouzheng Yuan). Next to that, and anything but humble, is the Suzhou Museum, designed by Chinese-American architect I.M. Pei. This fabulous building is a modern twist on Suzhou's traditional architecture, characterized by whitewashed walls and gray slate roofs, and features collections of historic artifacts, calligraphy, porcelain and precious stones.

Suzhou is 40-50 minutes from Shanghai by express train, which is the easiest and most comfortable way to get there. Several trains depart daily from Shanghai Station. You can also try less comfortable buses, which leave several times a day from the Long-Distance Bus Station. Many hotels, as well as CITS, have tours or offer private cars to Suzhou.

Local Tours

Government-run CITS (China International Travel Service) used to have a monopoly on local tours. Now travel agents are offering these services and providing English-speaking guides. The Shanghai Tourism office opposite Jing'an Temple also runs tours in Shanghai (by foot, bus or boat), as well as tours throughout China. Arranging tours through your hotel is, however, usually the most convenient way.

CITS

The government service offers half- or full-day tours. CITS Building, 1277 Beijing Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6321-7200. <http://www.cits.net>.

Huangpu River Cruises

See the Huangpu River by water, from the Bund to the mouth of the Yangtze River and back (about four hours) or on the stretch between Nanpu and Yangpu bridges (about one hour). Night cruises are usually better—the Bund and the Pudong skyline are illuminated. Purchase tickets at the dock at the south end of the Bund. The longer trips depart at 9 am and 2 pm. The one-hour tours depart at 10:45 am and 4:15 and 7 pm (schedules vary seasonally, so call ahead). The long trip costs 65 yuan-100 yuan, depending on whether you plan to eat; the one-hour trip costs 40 yuan. 239 Zhongshan Dong Er Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6374-4461.

Imperial Tours

This English/American tour company, based in Beijing, crafts unique tours of Shanghai's best spots. Foreign and local tour guides by request. Phone them in Beijing at 8610-8440-7162. Toll-free 888-888-1970 in the U.S. <http://www.imperialtours.net>.

Personalized Tours

Bespoke half-day and full-day tour itineraries—for groups or individuals—take in cultural and scenic sights, museums, shopping and dining. Contact Gary Bowerman, a resident China travel expert, at bowerman.gary@gmail.com.

For personalized architectural tours of the Bund and French concession areas, contact Patrick Cranley, a Shanghai historian and co-founder of the Shanghai Historic Housing Association, at wmpatrick.cranley@asiamedia.net.

DINING

Shanghai's tradition of culinary creativity has been revived after a half-century of communism, and since China's opening to the West and economic reform, it has become a city of international tastes.

Although Shanghainese is sometimes called a regional cuisine, akin to Cantonese or Sichuanese, it's really a fusion of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui cuisines. Most Chinese restaurants in Shanghai serve dishes from different regions, and many still serve true authentic fare. Typical dishes include *jiachang doufu* (home-style tofu), *pao fan* (a thick rice soup) and *su ban dou* (cold bean mash with vegetables). Dishes are usually built on foundations of oil, sugar and dark sauces. Fish is extremely popular, with river fish preferred over ocean varieties. Shanghai hairy crab is the region's pricey fall specialty, served in October and November. The city also has its version of Cantonese dim sum, such as the ever-popular *xiaolong bao* (pork or crab soup dumplings) and *shengjian mantou* (pan-fried pork dumplings). You can often find steamed buns and dumplings, *you tiao* (fried breadsticks), Shanghainese fried noodles, and baked and fried breads being sold by street vendors.

If you're not hungry for Chinese food, delicious foreign foods—from Japanese and Korean to Cajun and oven-fired pizza—are readily available. And new restaurants arrive on the scene monthly.

Many Chinese restaurants have English-language menus. Sometimes you have to ask for one, and you may find it difficult to order at eateries that don't have them. In those cases, if you can't find an English-speaking server, pantomime and drawings can suffice, but there is a good chance that mistakes will be made and adventurous surprises may be in store.

In Luwan, you could have every meal of your visit at Shanghai's ever-popular entertainment district Xintiandi. Fashionable—and usually expensive—eateries are housed in its old *shikumen* (stone gate) houses. If you find yourself doing business or staying at a hotel in the Hongqiao district, where the domestic airport is located, there are also some great restaurants there. And the Bund is home to a few excellent, if expensive, dining rooms. The main shopping thoroughfares of Nanjing Lu and Huaihai Lu are packed with hundreds of eateries of every hue and stripe.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines for a two-course dinner for one, excluding tip or drinks: \$ = less than 80 yuan; \$\$ = 80 yuan-160 yuan; \$\$\$ = 161 yuan-350 yuan; \$\$\$\$ = more than 350 yuan.

Favorites

1221

This unpretentious eatery's tasty Shanghainese food makes it an expatriate favorite. The simple but postmodern interior and great service offer an escape from the chaotic dining rooms of most Chinese restaurants. Creative dishes include *you tiao* (fried breadsticks) with shredded beef, crispy duck, garlic-fried shrimp and shredded pork served with scallions and pancakes. The homemade chicken soup with wontons is the real deal, and on top of all that, prices are reasonable. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards. 1221 Yanan Xi Lu (near Fanyu Lu), Shanghai. Phone 6213-2441.

Guyi

This Shanghai gem (often overlooked by visitors) is packed every evening with local diners seeking the fiery "hot pot" cuisine of Hunan province. Many chefs from the city's plusher joints vouch for the food, especially the green beans with minced pork. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards. 89 Fumin Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6249-5628.

Lan Na Thai and Hazara

These beautiful, relaxed and atmospheric restaurants serving Thai and Indian cuisine respectively are housed in a lovingly restored French villa on the manicured lawns of a guesthouse compound. Prices are high for Shanghai, but the food never disappoints, and service is attentive. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations highly recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Building 4, Ruijin Guesthouse, 118 Ruijin Er Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6466-4328.

Le Garçon Chinois

This dimly lit restaurant housed in a charming old French villa serves authentic (despite its name) Spanish fare in a chic and upscale setting. The homey decor is warm and inviting, and large windows frame the surrounding trees and old mansions. Prices are reasonable. After dinner, enjoy a cigar in the intimate bar. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. No. 3, Lane 9, Hengshan Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6445-7970.

M on the Bund

This restaurant represents everything that Shanghai's return to glamour is all about. It is situated on the seventh and top floor of the former Nisshin Kisen Kaisha Building, which was erected in 1925 for a Japanese shipping line. It features Mediterranean-influenced cuisine in a chic modern-meets-retro interior. The terrace overlooking the river is a perfect spot for brunch. Try the *crepes parmentier* with caviar, followed by the famous slowly baked lamb. And leave room for the pavlova. Daily for dinner, Tuesday-Friday for lunch, Saturday and Sunday for brunch. Reservations required for dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Five on the Bund, 5 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6350-9988. <http://www.m-restaurantgroup.com>.

Meilongzhen

One of Shanghai's most famous (and oldest) restaurants, Meilongzhen dates back to 1938. The dining area is made up of traditional Chinese rooms with mahogany and marble furniture and intricate woodwork. Many of the dishes are Sichuanese, combined with Shanghainese flavors and cooking styles. The Sichuan duck is one of the more famous dishes. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1081 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6253-5353.

T8

This restaurant has made a splash in the Xintiandi entertainment area with its slick, trendy identity. A dining area fitted in glass and traditional Chinese furniture surrounds an open kitchen. People go there to be seen and to dine on creative fusion dishes, such as caramelized, salted salmon with green mango and longan salad; Sichuan seared king prawns with octopus; garlic cream and crab spring roll; and rabbit prepared three ways. Open daily for dinner, Wednesday-Monday for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. House 8, North Block, Lane 181, Taicang Lu, Xintiandi, Shanghai. Phone 6355-8999.

Local and Regional

Bi Feng Tang

This place is a favorite with locals in need of a beer and a cheap, tasty bite to eat and a beer. The large establishment is bright and loud with a lively atmosphere. Cantonese dim sum and noodles are the main fare. The wonton soup noodles are reminiscent of those available in Hong Kong—and they'll cost you next to nothing. Daily for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Sunday for breakfast. \$. 1333 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6279-0738.

Fwu Luh Pavilion

Everything at this place is done with a flourish and is appropriately expensive. Owned by a former Hong Kong film actress, Fwu Luh serves glamorous Yangzhou food, a regional cuisine that utilizes a light, subtle touch with flavors. You'll find delicate dim sum and innovative Chinese fusion dishes unavailable elsewhere in town. Try the tender duck. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 603-B Grand Gateway, 1 Hongqiao Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6407-9898.

Jesse's (Xin Ji Shi)

This simple two-story restaurant has only 12 tables. It's a local favorite, with a community feel, and it is the perfect place to sample home-style Shanghainese food, including river shrimp and *jiachang* tofu. The atmosphere is friendly and unpretentious. There is a second location with more seating in Xintiandi at House No. 9 (phone 6336-4746). Daily for lunch and dinner. \$. Most major credit cards. 41 Tianping Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6282-9260.

Nanxiang Dumpling House

Established in the early 1900s, Nanxiang is one of Shanghai's premier places to savor the city's signature dumplings. Located in Yuyuan Bazaar, the restaurant's ground floor is constantly crowded with long lines of locals waiting to get their dumplings to go. Go upstairs for a more refined dining experience. You'll be served delicious *xiaolong bao*, little steamer dumplings filled with pork and crabmeat. (Here's the secret to enjoying *xiaolong bao*: Dip the dumpling in vinegar, bite a small hole off the top, and suck out the soup within before you eat the filling.) This is the real Shanghai deal. Daily for breakfast, lunch and early dinner. \$. 85 Yuyuan Lu (in Yuyuan Bazaar, adjacent to the lake and the Bridge of Nine Turnings), Old City, Shanghai. Phone 6355-4206.

Sichuan Restaurant

Sichuanese food is known for its use of hot red chilies, and this restaurant uses them in volume. The most popular dishes are the stewed beef and crispy chicken, but the menu also includes 14 varieties of Sichuan dim sum, as well as such daring main ingredients as fish maw, turtle, snake, pigeon and frog. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$. Most major credit cards. 737 Dingxi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6281-0449.

Whampoa Club

Decorated in a stunningly modern art-deco style, Three on the Bund's signature restaurant is one of Shanghai's most creative, observing Shanghainese cooking styles but incorporating many nontraditional ingredients into the menu. The results include Shanghai tea-smoked eggs with Sevruga caviar, and red dates with cinnamon, apple, fresh lily bulbs and seared goose liver. Private dining rooms are available, and there are three specialist tea rooms, complete with tea sommelier. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Three on the Bund, 3 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6321-3737. <http://www.threeonthebund.com>.

Yang's Kitchen

Set in a concession-era villa on a quiet lane far from traffic and noise, Yang's offers a rare opportunity to dine alfresco in Shanghai: The tables in the courtyard are prized in the spring and fall, when temperatures are comfortable. Excellent seafood dominates the menu, though the braised pork leg in brown sauce is also a must-have. Reservations recommended. \$\$. Most major credit cards. No. 3, Lane 9, Hengshan Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6445-8418.

Ye Shanghai

Popular both with business travelers and leisure tourists looking for regional cuisines served in an elegant retro Shanghainese setting. The food is a refined mixture of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghainese cuisine. Naturally lit during the day, but at night the red lanterns and heavy, dark wood floors and wall paneling echo ritzy 1920s Shanghai. The highly rated seafood comes baked,

poached, steamed, braised, sundried and drunken. Dim sum is excellent, and vegetarians also get a look-in—unusual for upscale Xintiandi. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 338 Huangpi Nan Lu, Xintiandi, Shanghai. Phone 6311-2323.

Cuisines

American

KABB

This place is a favorite of locals and expatriates alike, because it's one of the few places in Xintiandi where you can get an affordable meal. This is the place to chow down on a massive, quality burger. Daily for lunch and dinner (open late). \$-\$\$. Most major credit cards. 181 Taicang Lu (Xintiandi), Shanghai. Phone 3307-0798.

Asian

Itoya

A well-established Japanese restaurant with several locations around town, Itoya serves some of the most succulent, melt-in-your-mouth raw fish in Shanghai. The fish arrives fresh daily and makes for huge pieces of delicious sushi and sashimi. The salmon is especially good, but also be sure to try the broiled cod, tempura and *udon* noodles. The set lunches are good values. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 24 Ruijin Er Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6467-1511.

Lan Na Thai and Hazara

These beautiful, relaxed and atmospheric restaurants serving Thai and Indian cuisine respectively are housed in a lovingly restored French villa on the manicured lawns of a guesthouse compound. Prices are high for Shanghai, but the food never disappoints, and service is attentive. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations highly recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Building 4, Ruijin Guesthouse, 118 Ruijin Er Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6466-4328.

Simply Thai

Located in an unpretentious two-story building on a small and unprepossessing street of interior-decor shops and tailors, this is one of the best Thai restaurants in town. The food is always excellent, though service can be hit or miss. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$. Most major credit cards. 5-C Dongping Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6445-9551.

French

Jean Georges

This place is unlike any other restaurant in Shanghai. Top-grade French cuisine with a local accent is served in a thickly carpeted old-world interior, offering a stunning view of the Bund. The variety of foie gras on the menu makes it difficult for diners to escape without trying at least one dish. Desserts are highly recommended. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Fourth Floor, Three on the Bund, 3 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu at Guangdong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6321-7733.

Le Bouchon

This charming, intimate wine bar serves simply prepared French bistro fare: crepes, salads, quiche and sandwiches. It's a relaxed setting, with greenhouse seating for those sunny but cold Shanghai days. The best thing about Le Bouchon is its wide selection of quality wines. Open Monday-Saturday for dinner only. Reservations recommended. \$\$. Most major credit cards. 1455 Wuding Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6225-7088.

Italian

Da Marco

This little, unassuming Italian restaurant is a favorite of the Italian expatriates in town—everything tastes just like Mama used to make it. Try the *penne arriabata* and the seafood risotto. The chef's signature stuffed mussels are delicious, too. \$\$. Most major credit cards. 62 Yandang Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6385-5998.

Vegetarian

Gongdelin

Shanghai's most famous (if not the best) vegetarian restaurant has been open for more than half a century. The chefs combine cuisines from all over the country to make the faux-meat creations. A great example is the mock duck made of tofu—a delicious vegetarian delicacy. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 445 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6327-0218.

Zao Zi Shu (Vegetarian Lifestyle)

Zao Zi Shu's tasty Chinese vegetarian cuisine is rated as firmly in the mainstream. Clean, friendly and eschewing MSG, trans-fatty acids, alcohol and smoking diners, it's the real veggie deal. Most of the dishes are fashioned—using tofu, gluten and mushroom protein—to resemble meat and fish favorites. The spicy Sichuan-style chicken with peanuts is excellent, as are the gingered chicken and vegetarian *xiaolongbao*. Also serves a broad range of Chinese teas and fresh juices. Daily for lunch and dinner (until 9 pm). \$. No credit cards. 258 Fengxian Lu (near Jiangning Lu), Shanghai. Phone 6215-7566.

ENTERTAINMENT

Nightlife

Shanghai's nightlife is now truly world-class, ranging from pulsing clubs that attract the world's top DJs and classy Bund-front cocktail lounges to playing pool at an American bar or sipping beer on a garden patio in a converted French concession villa. Most of the popular clubs don't close their doors until 3 am or so. Some stay open until dawn.

Things are always changing, however, with old bars shutting down and new bars popping up out of the blue. The smartest upscale bars are on the Bund, and the best place to barhop is in Luwan (in the former French concession), where you'll find Shanghai's most popular bar streets—Xintiandi and Tongren Lu, and the more downmarket, late-night Julu Lu. The area north of Nanjing Lu, near Tongren Lu, has a few old-style favorites such as the Long Bar, Big Bamboo, Spot Bar, Malone's and Mint.

Shanghai is also known for karaoke. It's ubiquitous, as KTV (Karaoke TV) establishments abound, with private rooms complete with serving girls, fine cognac and fruit platters. Just beware of the prices.

Bars, Taverns and Pubs

Cotton's

Occupying a renovated three-floor French concession villa, this is one of the city's friendliest and most laid-back bars. Owner Cotton Ding and her brother run a tight ship, serving well-priced beers, wines and cocktails, and bar food in a homely atmosphere—note the real fireplaces on each of the three levels. There's also a spacious garden patio and outdoor bar for the long, hot summer nights. Daily 11 am-2 am. 132 Anting Lu (corner of Jianguo Lu), Shanghai. Phone 6433-7995.

DR Bar

Opened by the Boston architect who designed Xintiandi, DR Bar is housed in a former Communist Party meeting hall. But you won't find Mao uniforms there—you'll find a fabulously clad crowd sipping martinis in an equally sleek environment. Daily from 4 pm. Xintiandi, 181 Taicang Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6311-0358.

Face

Bar owners will claim that the locals are a fickle bunch—booming business at a preferred oasis quickly dries up when a new watering hole grabs their attention. Face is an exception. This large, tangerine-hued bar on the ground floor of a magnificent old concession-era house (set on the manicured grounds of Ruijin Guesthouse) is consistently busy with the air-kiss set. They go to take advantage of the 5-8 pm happy hour when drinks are half-price, to lounge on the silk-covered opium beds, to shoot pool and especially to be seen. Daily from 11 am. Building 4, Ruijin Guesthouse, 118 Ruijin Er Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6466-4328.

Glamour Bar

Shanghai's classiest cocktail lounge is a clever melange of modern finesse and 1930s Shanghai chic. The large windows offer fine views of the Huangpu River, and the interior features a variety of modern and ancient sofas and armchairs, retro Chinese furnishings and art-deco accessorizing. The large oval bar means service is always quick; the waiters mix a mean martini. Other highlights include a corner champagne bar, regular live jazz and classical music, and the annual Shanghai Literary Festival. Daily 5:30 pm-late. Five on the Bund, 5 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu (sixth floor), Shanghai. Phone 6350-9988. <http://www.m-restaurantgroup.com>.

Henry's

Brewmaster—and Texan—Gery Heyne serves up the tastiest, freshest microbrewed beer in the city. This cavernous bar and grill is located in a renovated former KTV disco on Sichuan Lu, two blocks back from the Bund. Daily 11 am until late. 33 Sichuan Zhong Lu (near Guangdong Lu), Shanghai. Phone 6321-7127. <http://www.henrysbrew.com>.

Malone's American Cafe

Through the years, this sports bar has withstood Shanghai's fickle party crowds and become one of the most popular bars in the city, especially with foreign businesspeople passing through town. It has numerous TVs broadcasting sports events, a fabulous menu, two billiard tables, a dartboard and typical sports decor. DJs and a Filipino band provide music Tuesday-Saturday. Daily from 11 am. 257 Tongren Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6247-2400.

Sasha's

Charming Sasha's serves up jugs of cold beer, quality comfort food and good times, along with a substantial dose of history, housed as it is in a charming, three-story villa in the old French concession. Once the home of T.V. Soong, one of the richest men in prerevolutionary China, the house later fell into the hands of Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong's wife, who made it administrative headquarters for her revolutionary Chinese opera troupe in the 1960s. Now renovated, it has brought sophistication back to one of Shanghai's most historical and delightful buildings. Daily from 11 am. 11 Dongping Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6474-6628.

Dance Clubs and Nightclubs

California Club and Upstairs

At night, this chic restaurant and bar turns into a nightclub setting with DJs spinning dance tunes on weekends. There may be a line of beautiful people at the door, but it's usually worth the wait. Open Sunday-Thursday from 8 pm, Friday and Saturday from 9 pm. Usually no cover, but on special nights when guest DJs appear, there may be a charge of about 100 yuan. 2 Gaolan Lu (in Fuxing Park), Shanghai. Phone 5383-2328.

DKD

Shanghai's club crowd has deemed this place *the* late-night hangout. Rocking DJs spin the tunes, while young clubgoers crowd the bar, upstairs tables and suspended corridors above the pulsing dance floor. It's not as refined as what you'll find in the Xintiandi area, but at this late-night spot, who cares? Open Wednesday-Saturday from 9 pm. 50 yuan-100 yuan cover charge on weekends. Basement, 438 Huaihai Zhong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6384-8777.

Mint

Created by the same people responsible for Malone's, up-to-date Mint is a great place to go to see late-night international DJs as well as resident expatriate and Chinese spinners. There are also lots of theme parties and regular weekly theme nights. Nightly from 10:30. Cover varies. Second Floor, 333 Tongren Lu, Nanjing Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6247-9666.

Rojam

This three-level techno extravaganza attracts twentysomething dancers who are getting their first taste of clubbing. Nightly from 8:30. 40 yuan on Monday, Friday and Saturday, 30 yuan Tuesday-Thursday. Hong Kong Plaza, Fourth Floor, 283 Huaihai Zhong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6390-7181.

Yunhai Tower

Giant, state-of-the-art club by London's hip Godskitchen DJ company. The central location and regular themed party nights draw a mixed Chinese-foreign clientele. A frequent stopping-off point

for international "superstar" DJs doing the Asia circuit, as well as those hired by international drinks companies for special promo nights. Daily 9 pm-late. 1329 Huaihai Zhong Lu (second floor), Shanghai. Phone 133-2193-9299.

Live Music

4 Live

Formerly a super-chic French techno club called Fabrique, 4 Live has been revamped as an earthy, live-music venue that attracts touring international as well as Asian and Chinese bands. The decor is simple and sparse, but the acoustics are good and the music menus ranges from punk to reggae to alternative rock. Daily 8 pm-late. The Bridge 8, 8 Jianguo Zhong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6415-0700.

CJW

The name stands for Cigars, Jazz and Wine. American and Australian jazz bands are imported to provide the music in this dark, chic, Xintiandi-area jazz club. The music is solid, and so are the drink prices. A second CJW venue, on the 50th floor of the Bund Center building (1 Bund Center, 222 Yanan Dong Lu), has an added attraction—panoramic city views. Nightly music from 9 pm. A minimum drink order of 100 yuan is required. House 2, Lane 123, Xinye Lu (Xintiandi), Shanghai. Phone 6385-6677, or 6329-9932 at the Bund Center.

Club JZ

In its heyday in the 1930s, Shanghai was a metropolis associated with a swinging age of pink gin and jazz. Nowadays, most of the city's faux jazz joints simply feature student musicians from local music colleges. Club JZ, however, shakes up the scene with talented, enthusiastic musicians. They spar with each other, jamming and improvising every evening until the early hours, when the last Gaulois has been stubbed out. Daily from 5 pm. 46 Fuxing Lu (near Yongfu Lu), Shanghai. Phone 6431-0269.

Cotton Club

Despite the competition, this club remains a long-running favorite, specializing in late-night blues. The atmosphere is warm and suitably smoky, and the people are friendly. The house band is a mix of Chinese and foreign musicians who play Tuesday-Sunday nights. Nightly from 7:30. No cover. 1428 Huaihai Zhong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6437-7110.

The Door

A pleasant departure from Shanghai's constant trendsetting venues, this charming, beautifully designed, retro-China-meets-modernism restaurant and bar is accented by cushy sofas and Chinese antiques. Nights are filled with live traditional Chinese music. Nightly from 6. No cover. 1468 Hongqiao Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6295-3737.

Other Options

Partyworld

This popular KTV (Karaoke TV) establishment is a huge complex with rooms for 10-30. Song lists are long, prices are reasonable, and the fun is wholesome. Take a group of friends for a night of singing and drinking. Rooms vary in price. 457 Wulumuqi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6374-1111.

Performing Arts

Artistic development is slowly gaining momentum in Shanghai. Most visitors catch Era, renowned for incredible acrobatic feats and stunts, or a performance of traditional Chinese opera.

Traditional arts such as Beijing Opera and other regional Chinese opera are popular. China's best Kunju opera is in Shanghai. Although lesser-known internationally than Beijing opera, Kunju is considered more elegant, simpler and more melodic.

The premier place to see international and domestic theater, ballet and music is the spectacular, modern Shanghai Grand Theatre (*Da Ju Yuan*). The theater gives tours 8:30-11 am. It's also worth passing by at night, when its glass facade twinkles with lights.

Music

Shanghai Symphony

Although not on par with major orchestras from around the world, the Shanghai Symphony performs classical concerts at the Shanghai Concert Hall. Various international headliners use the concert hall when the symphony is not in its season. 523 Yanan Dong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6386-9153.

Opera

Kunju Opera

The troupe performs operas throughout the year. 9 Shaoxing Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6437-1012.

Yifu Theater

This theater hosts performances of Beijing, Huju, Kunju and Shaoxing opera styles. 701 Fuzhou Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6351-4668.

Theater

Era

If you see only one acrobatic show in Shanghai, make sure it's Era. This spectacular fusion of Chinese acrobatics, dance, traditional theater and music is performed nightly, and it packs in the punters. The daredevil motorcycles-in-a-cage climax is breathtaking. Great entertainment. Shanghai Circus World, 2266 Gonghexin Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6652-5468. <http://www.era-shanghai.com>.

Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center

Modern Chinese interpretation of international and local dramatic theater can be found at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center. High-quality performances—mostly in Chinese—in a quiet part of the former French concession. 288 Anfu Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6473-4567.

Venues

Majestic Theater

This small theater hosts regular music and dance, including the famous (and spectacular) Shaolin kung-fu monks martial-arts shows, which play at least two seasons per year. 66 Jiangning Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6217-4409.

Shanghai Grand Theatre

This venue hosts international and domestic theater, ballet and music. Box office is open daily 9 am-7:30 pm. 300 Renmin Dadao, Shanghai. Phone 6387-5480.

Spectator Sports

Shanghai is increasingly a thriving city for spectator sports, and you can catch popular games of soccer and basketball, as well as international-standard golf, tennis, athletics and motor racing. The city now hosts major international sporting events in a variety of sports, including basketball, tennis, golf, motorcycling and motor racing.

The city's main sporting venue, Shanghai Stadium, is a grandiose, UFO-like stadium that seats 80,000 people. It hosts many athletic events, but its primary use is for soccer matches.

Basketball (both Chinese and U.S. league players) is played at Luwan Gymnasium. There you can see the Shanghai Sharks, where Houston Rockets star Yao Ming got his professional start.

The purpose-built Qizhong Tennis Centre, a one-hour drive from downtown, has hosted the season-ending ATP Tennis Masters Cup since 2005, and the Shanghai International Circuit at Anting hosts the annual Formula One motor racing and motorcycling Grand Prix, and the A-1 racing series.

The Shanghai Sheshan Golf Course hosts the annual HSBC Champions tournament, which has attracted such links luminaries as Tiger Woods, Michael Campbell and Jim Furyk.

SHOPPING

Thanks to Shanghai's obsession with commercialism and internationalism, the city has the widest variety of goods in the nation—except for Hong Kong. Shiny shopping malls now dominate the city's shopping streets. New downtown brand stores pop up nearly every month in an attempt to satisfy the locals' seemingly insatiable appetite for *ming pai*, or famous labels, with such upscale locations as the Bund and Xintiandi specializing in uber-chic brand boutiques. Two streets, Nanjing Lu and Huaihai Lu, have become the city's shopping meccas, and smaller venues such as Taikang Lu and Fuxing Lu offer small, independent boutiques as well as clothing and home-accessory stores. Outdoor markets located in the city's nooks and crannies are also interesting and give insight into Shanghai's bustling street life.

Antiques, Chinese arts and crafts, silk and linen are available in established stores as well as on the street. Be careful when buying antiques, however. Fakes are frequently hidden among the real treasures, and only items dated after 1797 can be legally exported. And no matter what you buy—particularly at markets—be sure to bargain vigorously. Settle for around 30%-40% less than the quoted price, but start your bargaining position by offering 10%-15% of what the dealer originally asks for. Keep in mind that a purchase is not a deal unless both sides think they've done well.

Shopping Hours: Generally, daily 10 am-10 pm.

Antique Stores

Hu & Hu

Accept no substitutes, Lin Hu has been collecting and restoring antiques for two decades, while Marybelle Hu worked at Taipei's National Palace Museum and Sotheby's Los Angeles. The sisters-in-law now run Shanghai's premier antiques emporium, which is free of the "is it real, is it fake?" stain that tarnishes the industry in Shanghai. Daily 10 am-8 pm. No. 8 Lane, 1885 Caobao Lu, Shanghai. Phone 3431-1212.

Shangaitique

Surprisingly, Shanghai is short on shops specializing in genuine non-Chinese antiques. Shangaitique's dark, moody, Agatha Christie-inspired interior is well-stocked with mint-condition armchairs, bookcases, sideboards and sofas that even Hercule Poirot would appreciate. It's not cheap, however: A small, glass-topped art-deco table, for example, will fetch 15,000 yuan. Daily noon-6:30 pm. 699 Huashan Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6249-5986.

Bookstores

Chaterhouse Booktrader

Offers Shanghai's best selection of foreign titles. The best-seller, business and travel guides sections are the strongest, and there's also a selection of international magazines. Daily 10 am-10 pm. Basement, Shanghai Times Square, 93 Huaihai Zhong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6391-8237.

Garden Books

A reasonable selection of travel guides, history books about Shanghai, and assorted foreign titles and magazines in an excellent French concession location. There's also a small coffee shop at the back of the store. Daily 10 am-10 pm. 325 Changle Lu (near Shaanxi Lu), Shanghai. Phone 5404-8729.

Old China Hand Reading Room

This wonderful cafe is worth a stop, even if you're not looking for books. It has the feel of a country living room, where you can nurse a cup of coffee and browse shelves of Chinese art, architecture, history, literature, photography and coffee-table books. Many English-language books on old Shanghai are for sale. Open Monday-Friday 11 am-midnight, Saturday and Sunday 9:30 am-midnight. 27 Shaoxing Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6473-2526.

Department Stores

Isetan

Expatriates love to shop at Isetan. It's one of the city's best and most fashionable stores. Daily 10 am-10 pm. 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6272-1111.

Maison Mode

One of the earliest in the tres-chic stores trend, Maison Mode is a permanent fixture on shoppers' maps. Expect to find many imported and expensive fashion labels. Daily 10 am-9:30 pm. 1312 Huaihai Zhong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6431-0100.

Shanghai No. 1 Department Store

This has been Shanghai's largest and most important state-owned department store for decades. It used to reflect communist disarray, but today it looks shinier than ever. On weekends it attracts masses of Chinese shoppers. Daily 10 am-10 pm. 830 Nanjing Dong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6322-3344.

Galleries

Eastlink Gallery

Several contemporary Shanghainese artists display their work in this expansive warehouse-type gallery. Open Tuesday-Sunday 10:30 am-5 pm. Fifth Floor, Building 6, 50 Moganshan Lu (in Fuxing Park), Shanghai. Phone 6276-9932.

Shanghai Sculpture Space

Housed in an old warehouse, this exciting space has already held a popular Rodin retrospective, as well as sculpture shows dedicated to local artists. It's so hip that it also doubles as a popular venue for new consumer-product launches and fashion-industry parties. 570 Huaihai Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6280-5629.

ShanghART

This is the city's first and finest modern-art gallery. Look for work by Chinese artists Ding Yi, Xue Song, Zhou Tieshai, Wu Yiming and Shen Fan. Daily 10 am-7 pm. Building 18, 50 Moganshan Lu (in Fuxing Park), Shanghai. Phone 6359-3923. <http://www.shanghartgallery.com>.

Markets

Bird and Flower Market (Hua Niao Shichang)

This colorful market sells more than just birds and flowers. Hawkers sell pets such as fish, cats, turtles and frogs, a whole range of plants, bonsai trees, orchids and clay pots. Knickknacks and yummy, greasy Chinese snacks, too. Daily from around 8 am-dusk. Xizang Lu (across from the Dongtai Lu Antique Market, near People's Square), Shanghai.

Dongtai Lu Antiques Market

This antiques market is one of Shanghai's best-known. You'll find porcelain, Victrolas, jade, Mao paraphernalia, antique baskets and lots more. Dealers set up outdoor stalls lining the street, a few blocks west of the Old City. Prices have shot up in the past few years, and fakes abound, so be careful what you buy. It's always fun to browse, though. Daily from around 8 am-dusk. Dongtai Lu (off Xizang Lu, near People's Square), Shanghai.

Fuyou Lu Antiques Market

To the chagrin of many, this favorite outdoor antiques market moved from the narrow, quaint alleys of the Old City into an uninviting warehouse. The market lost some of its charm in the move, but since then, many outdoor hawkers have set up outside the warehouse, and some of the bustling atmosphere has returned. You'll find everything from old wicker baskets and Mao paraphernalia to real and fake antique porcelain. As the years go by, more and more fakes appear alongside the genuine items. On the weekends, hawkers set up outside the warehouse in the wee dawn hours. Get there early for the best selection. Daily 9 am-5 pm. 457 Fangbang Zhong Lu, Old City, Shanghai.

South Bund Fabric Market

The old Dongjiadu fabric market has moved half a mile/kilometer down the road to new premises,

where local vendors gather to sell a wide range of silks and other fabric. If you have several days in Shanghai, this is the perfect place to have any Western clothes ordered (or copied) or Chinese clothes made by professional tailors. Daily 9 am-dusk. 399 Lujiabang Lu, near Nanchang Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6377-2232.

Shopping Areas

Plaza 66

Even for those who don't much care for luxury brands, Plaza 66 has become a tourist attraction all its own. Four floors of top designer stores—think Hermes, D&G, Zegna, Dunhill and Bulgari—in an airy and spacious modern mall, with a dine-to-be-seen atrium cafe, high-end nightclub and, on weekends, a classical sextet playing in the lobby, make this the city's premier shopping address. Daily 10 am-10 pm. 1266 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6279-0910.

Super Brand Mall

This huge, Thai-owned mall opposite the Oriental Pearl in Pudong has some big-name brands, such as Zara, H&M and Toys R Us. The front terrace, overlooking the river gardens, also has some of the city's more established F&B chains. Avoid visiting at lunchtime, however, as it becomes crammed with office workers from the Lujiazui office district. 168 Lujiazui Xi Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6887-7888.

Specialty Stores

Shanghai Huangshan Tea Company

One of Shanghai's main tea stores, this place features China's best. Teas are sold by weight: Generally, the higher the price, the better the tea. You can also buy a Yixing pot there. Daily 9 am-10 pm. 853 Huaihai Zhong Lu, Shanghai. Phone 6437-7627.

Spin

Distinctive handmade tea sets, tableware and household accessories in a modern interpretation of traditional Chinese porcelain styles. Each piece is individually designed and produced at a pottery in Jingdezhen, China's ceramics capital. Daily 10 am-7 pm. Building 3, 758 Julu Lu (near Fumin Lu), Shanghai. Phone 139-1631-4424.

Torana House

Englishman Chris Buckley sources, designs and sells hand-woven rugs and carpets from Tibet, Shandong province and Xinjiang. These marvelous weavings, together with assorted antique Tibetan furniture, are displayed at his gallery-style store in a restored lane house set back from Shaanxi Nan Lu. Daily 10 am-9 pm. Building 1, Lane 180, Shaanxi Nan Lu (near Changle Lu), Shanghai. Phone 5404-4886. <http://www.toranahouse.com>.

SECURITY

Personal Safety

Shanghai, like China in general, has incredibly low crime rates. A woman can walk home in the middle of the night, through the center of town, and feel safe.

However, travelers should still use common sense. With China's changing economy and a growing disparity between rich and poor, street begging and crimes have increased slightly in recent years. Most is petty crime. Keep your belongings close to you and watch out for pickpockets, especially around the train station, on the subway and in front of large hotels.

If you become the victim of crime, call the police hotline at 110.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Don't drink Shanghai's water: Opt instead for bottled or boiled water. Both are readily available. As far as eating goes, visitors generally go through a period of adjustment to the food. Most of the food is safe to eat, even if the restaurant looks a bit unhygienic. But use common sense: If you're uncomfortable with the cleanliness of a restaurant, don't eat there.

In the past, most foreign visitors complained about public toilets, which were merely concrete slabs placed over large pits. However, Shanghai has modernized at a rapid rate, and these days most tourist spots, hotels, restaurants, office buildings and shopping centers have clean, modern facilities.

In case of a medical emergency, you should go to a hospital or health-care center specifically geared to foreigners. For example, Huashan Hospital, one of the best in the city, has a special 24-hour clinic for foreigners (phone 6248-9999, ext. 2531). Another good option is Worldlink Medical Center, a U.S.-run clinic in Shanghai Center (phone 24-hour medical hotline 6445-5999; <http://www.worldlink-shanghai.com>). Most Western-style hotels have arrangements with health-care professionals who speak English. If not, the hotel will be able to direct you to an appropriate health facility. Be sure to take sufficient supplies of any prescription medicine you use (in a pinch, your best bet for medications is at one of the foreign health clinics). Though 120 is the official number to call for an ambulance, take a taxi—you'll get there faster.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Disabled Advisory

Although Shanghai is growing more aware of the needs of the disabled, by and large it is not structured in a way that is friendly to disabled visitors. There is no office, organization or service that addresses the needs of disabled visitors or offers specialized equipment. However, as Shanghai was named as host of the 2007 Special Olympics, and is gearing up for the 2010 World Expo, disabled facilities are being belatedly factored in to the city's new infrastructure planning. Most of the city's five-star hotels provide disabled access and facilities.

Etiquette

China continues to evolve in ways that are bringing it in closer contact with the rest of the world. Nonetheless, the country remains a place where business travelers need to tread carefully.

Appointments—You will need to establish local business contacts before journeying to China. Begin by contacting the department of your government that deals with international business (the U.S. Department of Commerce, for instance, or the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, <http://www.amcham-shanghai.org>). It can put you in touch with business and government personnel in China. Once in the country, remember that punctuality on the part of all parties is very important (for both business and social occasions). If you are late, it not only reflects badly on you, but it can be perceived as a slight that may put the whole business relationship into question.

Personal Introductions—Handshakes are now the norm, accompanied by a slight nod of the head or a slight bow. Maintain a formal demeanor during introductions. Official titles are important. When the person has no official title, use standard English titles unless you are fluent in Mandarin: "Mr.," "Ms." (unmarried female) and "Madam" (married female—the title should accompany her maiden name). The Chinese typically have two or three names: The first is the family name, and that's the one that should be paired with the title (thus, Hu Jintao is referred to as President Hu). Your business cards should have English on one side and a Chinese translation on the other; in swapping, them use both hands to give and take each card. Read visibly the business cards you receive and treat them with respect by leaving them on the table in front of you during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, place the cards in a dedicated business card wallet or holder, separate from that in which you carry cash and credit cards.

Negotiating—Business meetings begin with a short interval of polite conversation of a general nature, usually over tea or drinks. Hard-driving, get-right-to-the-point tactics usually backfire. Negotiations will typically be protracted and involved. Multiple meetings on the same issues are not

unusual. Expect the unexpected, and do not be thrown by last-minute complexities or demands; unflustered patience is critical. If you have a deadline, do not reveal it. The host may signal the end of a meeting by offering more tea. The correct response is to decline the offer and say that you are ready to leave. If the host thanks you for coming, that, too, is a clue that the meeting is over.

Business Entertaining—Evening banquets are often extravagant affairs with many courses and often exotic foods. Expect many toasts throughout the evening, often with Chinese liquor (*baijiu*). If you do not drink or are among the many foreigners who don't enjoy its taste, politely decline by toasting with your tea or other drink. Business is usually not discussed at large banquets. At other business meals, it is appropriate to discuss business if your host initiates the discussion.

Body Language—Observe a very formal body posture. Refrain from touching, and keep gestures to an absolute minimum.

Gift Giving—On the whole, gift giving in business is not common, and caution should be exercised. Gifts given to an entire group or company usually get a better response than those given to an individual. Do not bestow the gifts until negotiations have been completed. If you receive a gift, do not unwrap it until you are out of the presence of the giver. The color of a gift and its wrapping paper have great significance. Two good choices are red (the color of luck) and yellow (the color of prosperity). Avoid items and wrappings that are white, because that color is associated with funerals. Clocks of any color can have the same connotation.

Conversation—Avoid politics, especially such sensitive issues as Taiwan, the Communist Party, China-U.S. relations, human-rights issues or the 1989 uprising in Tiananmen Square. Regardless of your acquaintances' real feelings, they will most likely not be comfortable expressing themselves to you and certainly not in public. History, family and Chinese culture are all good topics. Be careful if you compliment someone on their possessions. An article of clothing or a home decoration you comment on favorably may be offered to you—don't accept.

Dos and Don'ts

Don't tip a taxi driver or restaurant server. This is not part of modern Chinese culture, and once was officially forbidden.

Do try using a few Mandarin (or Shanghainese) expressions, such as *xiexie* (pronounced *shee-ye, shee-ye*) for *thank you*, or *duo shao qian* (*door shaow chee-en*) for *how much?* For *hello* and *good-bye*, say *ni hao* (*knee hau*) and *zaijian* (*zye jee-en*). A smile and even one phrase will get you a long way.

Keep your temper under control, even in the most trying circumstances—ranting tantrums and the loss of self-control are considered undignified and vulgar.

Don't be offended when you are asked how much money you make, or other personal questions. Locals relish the opportunity to find out more about foreigners and are not trying to pry into your private life.

Do join in an early-morning tai chi or evening dancing group in the local parks. Most locals enjoy sharing their exercises.

PRACTICALITIES

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need passports and visas. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Population: 14,503,000.

Languages: Mandarin Chinese, known locally as *Putonghua*. The locals also speak the Shanghaiese dialect, which is distinct from Mandarin. English is increasingly spoken across the city.

Predominant Religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity.

Time Zone: 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts.

Telephone Codes: 86, country code; 21, city code.

Money

Currency Exchange

The days of street-side currency conversion are over. Either change cash or traveler's checks at any international or domestic bank, or use the prevalent ATMs around the city that accept Plus, Star and Cirrus system bank cards. The exchange rates are reasonable, and they don't charge a fee. For credit-card advances, go to the Bank of China or ICBC. The Chinese currency, Yuan Renminbi (or RMB), was pegged to the U.S. dollar until mid-2005 and recently has appreciated by about 5% a year against the dollar.

Many banks in Shanghai are open daily, usually Monday-Friday 9 am-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10:30 am-3 pm. Some close 1-3 pm for lunch.

Currency Exchange Rates

US Dollar	Chinese renminbi
\$10	78.99
\$20	157.98
\$30	236.97
\$40	315.96
\$50	394.94
\$60	473.93
\$70	552.92
\$80	631.91
\$90	710.90
\$100	789.89

Taxes

There is a 10% luxury-goods sales tax on upscale items in China, rendering goods such as luxury brands, computers and camera equipment rather expensive. There is usually a 15% accommodations tax added to your hotel bill.

Tipping

Tipping is not customary and generally not expected. Many hotels and Western-style restaurants add a 15% service charge to your bill, but don't count on the staff seeing any of it. If you're staying at a Western hotel, you may want to tip the staff there, as they're more accustomed to tipping. Don't feel obliged to tip taxi drivers unless they're extraordinary at using the shortest, fastest route—which is rare (and, even then, the tip will most likely be refused. If that's the case, do not insist). Tour guides do now expect a small gratuity, but only 5%-10% of the service price.

Weather

A Shanghai resident once claimed that she had never lived in a city where the weather was so

rarely perfect. That's a very apt description. In summer it's hot and humid, with temperatures reaching the mid-80s F/upper 20s C. In spring, the rains arrive and continue through summer. There's more rain in winter, and temperatures become uncomfortably cold and damp, sometimes dropping to freezing. (It rarely snows, however.) For much of the year, gray skies can continue for weeks. Fall, especially September and October, sees more sunny skies with cool evenings.

What to Wear

Visitors to Shanghai should take lightweight clothes in summer because of the high temperatures and humidity. In winter and spring, warmer clothes are more in order, and during September and October, a combination of light clothes that you can layer, plus a jacket for cool evenings, should suffice. A raincoat or umbrella is necessary at all times of the year.

Communication

Telephone

You'll find public phones all across the city that accept phone cards, which can be bought at the telecom building in People's Square, at most hotels and at the post office. Few people use them, however, given China's widespread obsession with mobile phones—virtually everyone in Shanghai carries and uses one. Most international mobile operators have agreements with China's domestic players, so provided you have a cell phone that can be used overseas, connection will be automatic. Roaming charges can, however, be high, so check first with your home operator. Most hotels take care of international calls.

Alternatively, if you have an international mobile phone, you can get a domestic phone number by purchasing a China Mobile sim card for 210 yuan—ask for a *sim ka*. That includes a phone number and 100 yuan of talk time. China Mobile cards can be purchased at the telecom building in People's Square or at the China Mobile store on Nanjing West Road (opposite Nanjing Road West subway station), as well as at small mobile-phone shops inside the Shanghai Metro or at department stores throughout town. When your minutes run out, you can purchase a recharging card at your hotel's business center or at a convenience store. Many street vendors also sell the cards, which come in 100-, 200- and 500-yuan increments. Directions are in English. English-speaking customer representatives are also available by dialing 1860. If you need to rent an international cell phone, you can do so at your hotel's business center. Most hotels charge about 200 yuan a day, not including the sim card.

When using your hotel room phone, you can avoid exorbitant International Direct Dial charges by purchasing an "IP" card—ask for an *IP ka*. You can buy these cards at the telecom building in People's Square, at convenience stores and from street vendors. Instructions come in both Chinese and English. Many toll-free numbers begin with 108.

For Shanghai directory assistance, dial 114. Keep in mind that most operators don't speak English.

Internet Access

There are about 1,000 Internet cafes/bars throughout Shanghai, so you should have no trouble finding one.

The Chinese government has long been wary of uncontrolled information on the Internet, and a deadly fire in a Beijing Internet cafe in 2002 provided an opportunity to crack down with tough new regulations. Since then, proprietors of Internet cafes have been required to have software installed that will keep records of the sites their customers access. If you visit an Internet cafe in China, you may be asked to provide your name and passport number before being shown to a computer terminal. Be aware that the records gathered by this software can be made available to police on request and that the fine for viewing material deemed subversive or harmful is steep—15,000 yuan.

Forbidden Web sites include those of certain foreign news stations, such as the BBC, as well as sites that can be edited by users, such as Wikipedia, offering content related to the Falun Gong spiritual movement, sovereignty for Taiwan, Tibetan independence, Tiananmen Square and pornography.

The good news, however, is that an increasing number of bars and cafes—including Big Bamboo, Citizen, branches of Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Arugula, Arch, Ginger Cafe, Whisk and Wagas—offer free Wi-Fi access to customers.

Mail and Package Services

The Chinese postal system is incredibly efficient and reliable, offering domestic and international mail and package service, including express delivery.

Post Office

This is an English-speaking branch of China Post, where you can purchase stamps and mail letters or cards. Monday-Friday 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-1 pm. Shanghai Center, Second Floor (above HSBC Bank, off the Bund), Shanghai. Phone 6722-5888.

Newspapers and Magazines

The main dailies are the local *Wenhui Bao* and the national *Renmin Bao (People's Daily)*. Most of its information comes via the communist propaganda machine, including the English-language national *China Daily* and local *Shanghai Daily* newspapers. Most foreigners, however, read the weekly *SH* and monthly *Shanghai Talk*, *City Weekend* and *That's Shanghai* magazines. Most of the English-language publications are available at large hotels, and at restaurants and bars across the city. A monthly city-guide magazine, *Hint List*, is distributed in hotel rooms, and the superior twice-yearly (April and October) *Shanghai Culture & Shopping Highlights Guide* is provided in the rooms of selected luxury five-star hotels.

Transportation

The best way, by far, to get around Shanghai is by taxi. They're plentiful and amazingly cheap (flag fall is 11 yuan for the first 2 mi/3 km). You can save money by taking the subway, but service is still fairly limited. Buses aren't worth the savings: They're crowded, and you'll probably have to transfer a few times to get where you want to go.

Central Shanghai is also a good walking city. The old buildings and small alleys are actually best explored on foot. Just be careful when crossing the street. You may have to cross the street lane by lane. If so, thread your way carefully and steadily among the vehicles.

Air

Hongqiao International Airport (SHA)

This domestic hub airport (before Pudong opened, it was the international hub, hence its still lingering name) lies on the western end of Puxi, about 6 mi/10 km from downtown Shanghai and 11 mi/18 km from the Bund. Phone 5260-4620. <http://www.shanghaiairport.com>.

Connecting Transportation

Best way:

We highly recommend taking a taxi. Depending on traffic, the trip can take 20-50 minutes and usually costs around 40 yuan-60 yuan. Taxis are available outside the main terminal. Don't ride with drivers who tout their services at the terminal entrances: Their cars don't have meters, and they'll try to charge you exorbitant rates.

Other options:

There's a cheap bus service between the airport and downtown, but it's usually more trouble than it's worth, and most hotels also offer shuttles. Taxis are by far the best bet, and they're not expensive.

Pudong International Airport (PVG)

This airport is about 20 mi/30 km southeast of downtown Shanghai, near the East China Sea. It

services all international destinations, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau, and many domestic flights. As part of an ongoing expansion program, a second terminal is scheduled to open in 2008. Phone 9608-1388. <http://www.shanghaiairport.com>.

Connecting Transportation

Best way:

A taxi ride to downtown could take 45-80 minutes, depending on traffic, and you'll pay 160 yuan-200 yuan.

Shuttle buses run to and from the airport from morning to evening. The buses cover 10 different routes, with pickup and drop-off points throughout the city. Depending on where you get on and your destination, the journey can last up to two hours. Fare generally runs 15 yuan-20 yuan. For information, call the airport at 6834-1000.

Many hotels also offer shuttle buses.

Other options:

A novel, if less practical, option is to take the Maglev train (<http://www.smtdc.com>), the world's first commercial magnetic-levitation train—and the fastest passenger train on the planet with a top speed of 268 mph/431 kph. It runs from Pudong Airport to the Long Yang metro station of line No. 2 (daily 7 am-9 pm). At that point you have to transfer to the Metro to continue your journey into Pudong's Lujiazui area or Puxi. A one-way trip on the Maglev costs 50 yuan (40 yuan if you show a same-day airplane ticket), and the onward metro fare to downtown costs 4 yuan.

Bus

Getting to and from Shanghai by bus is usually the least attractive way. That said, there is deluxe coach service between Shanghai and Nanjing. The ride takes almost four hours and begins at Qiujiang Lu, west of Henan Bei Lu. Regular buses, most of which lack comfort, run from the Long-Distance Bus Station (58 Laochongqing Nan Lu, phone 6358-8089). These are OK for shorter distances such as to Hangzhou and Suzhou (though journeying by train is much faster and more comfortable).

Car

The city is connected by highways to Suzhou and Nanjing in the west and Hangzhou in the south. These highways make travel by car faster than ever, but you won't be able to drive yourself. You have to hire a car and driver through a hotel transportation service or find a willing taxi driver. It's virtually impossible for foreign visitors to drive in China.

Ferry

A ferry service connects Puxi to Pudong. It runs from the south end of the Bund and Binjiang Dadao in Pudong. Although most people take the bridge, tunnel or subway across the river, the ferry can be fun on a nice day—and it's cheap (only 2 yuan). The small boat works itself carefully across the Huangpu River through the barges and other boats. There are no seats, just a standing-room lower deck that gets crowded with locals and their bikes and mopeds. Stand at the bow for the best views of the Pudong skyline. Docks are located at Jinling Lu on the Bund and at Binjiang Dadao in Pudong.

Public Transportation

Public transportation in Shanghai primarily consists of buses. Four subway (metro) lines are also in service, with at least seven more planned, many of them for completion before the 2010 World Expo. Most foreign visitors avoid public transport: The buses are generally very crowded (unbearably so at rush hour), uncomfortable and inconvenient. The metro system is fast and efficient with signage and ticket machines in English.

Buses

Shanghai's bus system covers the entire city and its suburbs and runs 24 hours a day. Stops are

clearly marked with signs listing the number of the line and its stops. Most bus maps are comprehensive, but they're printed only in Chinese. You can buy them at almost any bookstore.

Although buses are generally not recommended for visitors, there is an exception: the pleasant No. 911 double-decker buses that run down Huaihai Lu through Luwan (the former French concession). The buses are imported from Hong Kong and have plenty of seats. If you sit on the top deck, you'll get a great view of the beautiful old buildings that line the street.

Subway

Much of the Shanghai metro is still under construction, but four lines are open (three underground and one elevated). The No. 1 (red) and No. 2 (green) lines cross each other at People's Square; No. 5 connects with No. 1, stretching from the outer suburb of Xin Zhuang, through the Xujiahui commercial center, and then terminates at the Shanghai Railway Station. No. 2 travels from Zhongshan park across the river to Pudong. No. 3 (also called the Pearl line or *mingzhu xian*) cuts across the city from the Shanghai South Railway Station in the southwest to the main Shanghai Railway Station, and then to Jiangwan Town in the north.

The metro is modern and clean, but trains get very crowded during rush hour. Station announcements are in both Chinese and English. Around seven more lines are under construction. The system operates daily, roughly 5:30 am-10:30 pm. Fares are 3 yuan-6 yuan.

Taxi

The most convenient way to get around Shanghai is by taxi. Cabs are plentiful, cheap and easy to spot. Most are yellow, blue and green Volkswagen Santanas, although you'll see a few in other colors. A cab is available for hire if there's a red For Hire sign in the window on the passenger side. You can also request one by phone. All are metered. Fares start at 11 yuan for the first 2 mi/3 km (14 yuan 11 pm-5 am).

Most cab drivers don't speak English, so it's best to give them a piece of paper with your destination written in Chinese. Hotel doormen can also tell the driver where you're going. It's a good idea to study a map beforehand: Some drivers may try to take you for a ride, literally. You'll usually get where you want to go, but it may cost you more time and more money.

Train

The Shanghai Railway Station is located in the northern part of the city and connects Shanghai to most other cities, villages and towns in China. Several trains run every day to Beijing, Suzhou, Nanjing and other nearby destinations as well as three trains per week to Lhasa, Tibet (journey time is 52 hours). The best train to catch to Beijing is the overnight express. An express train also runs to Hong Kong. 303 Moling Lu. Phone 6317-9090.

You can buy train tickets at CITS, but they charge a service fee. Same-day, next-day and sometimes third-day tickets can also be purchased at the ticket office in the Longmen Hotel (777 Hengfeng Lu, phone 6317-0000). It's next door to the station, on the western side. If you speak Chinese, or are willing to give it a try, there's a ticket office at 77 Wanhangu Lu, directly behind Jing'an Temple.

The circular and modern Shanghai South Railway Station offers high-speed trains to Hangzhou, Suzhou and some other destinations from the southern district of Xujiahui. Access to the station is via taxi or Line 1 subway.

Additional

Despite increasing personal car ownership and subway usage, many locals still get around town by bicycle. However, it's difficult to find rental bikes in Shanghai. It's also not a very safe idea if you're not used to the traffic flow. Shanghai roads and traffic can be unpredictable and dangerous.

For More Information

Tourist Offices

Shanghai Tourist Information Service Centre

The main office is at the south exit of the Shanghai Railway Station. There's also an office at 1699 Nanjing Xi Lu (by Jing'an metro station). Both offices provide a limited range of English-language maps and information and guided city tours (though these are mostly aimed at Chinese tourists). Open Monday-Friday 9 am-5:30 pm. 303 Moling Lu, Shanghai. Phone 5123-4490. <http://lyw.sh.gov.cn/en/info/indx.aspx>.

Additional Reading

Shanghai by Harriet Sergeant (John Murray Publishers). A history of Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s.

Shanghai 37 by Vicki Baum (Oxford University Press). The city as World War II was beginning there, depicted in a novel originally published in the late 1930s.

Secret War in Shanghai: An Untold Story of Espionage, Intrigue, and Treason in World War II by Bernard Wasserstein (Houghton Mifflin). Stranger than fiction, but true.

Empire of the Sun by J.G. Ballard (Buccaneer Books). Also available as a movie.

Carl Crow—A Tough Old China Hand: The Life, Times and Adventures of an American in Shanghai by Paul French (Hong Kong University Press). How business was conducted early in the 20th century.

In Search of Old Shanghai by Lynn Pan, also called Pan Ling (or anything by same author).

Shanghai Baby by Wei Hui (Simon & Schuster). A contemporary novel of Chinese Gen X-ers.

Recommended Guidebooks

Luxe City Guides: Shanghai, updated twice yearly (Luxe City Guides).

Time Out Shanghai by Andrew Humphreys (Time Out Guides).

The Bund Shanghai: China Faces West by Peter Hibbard (Odyssey Books).

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