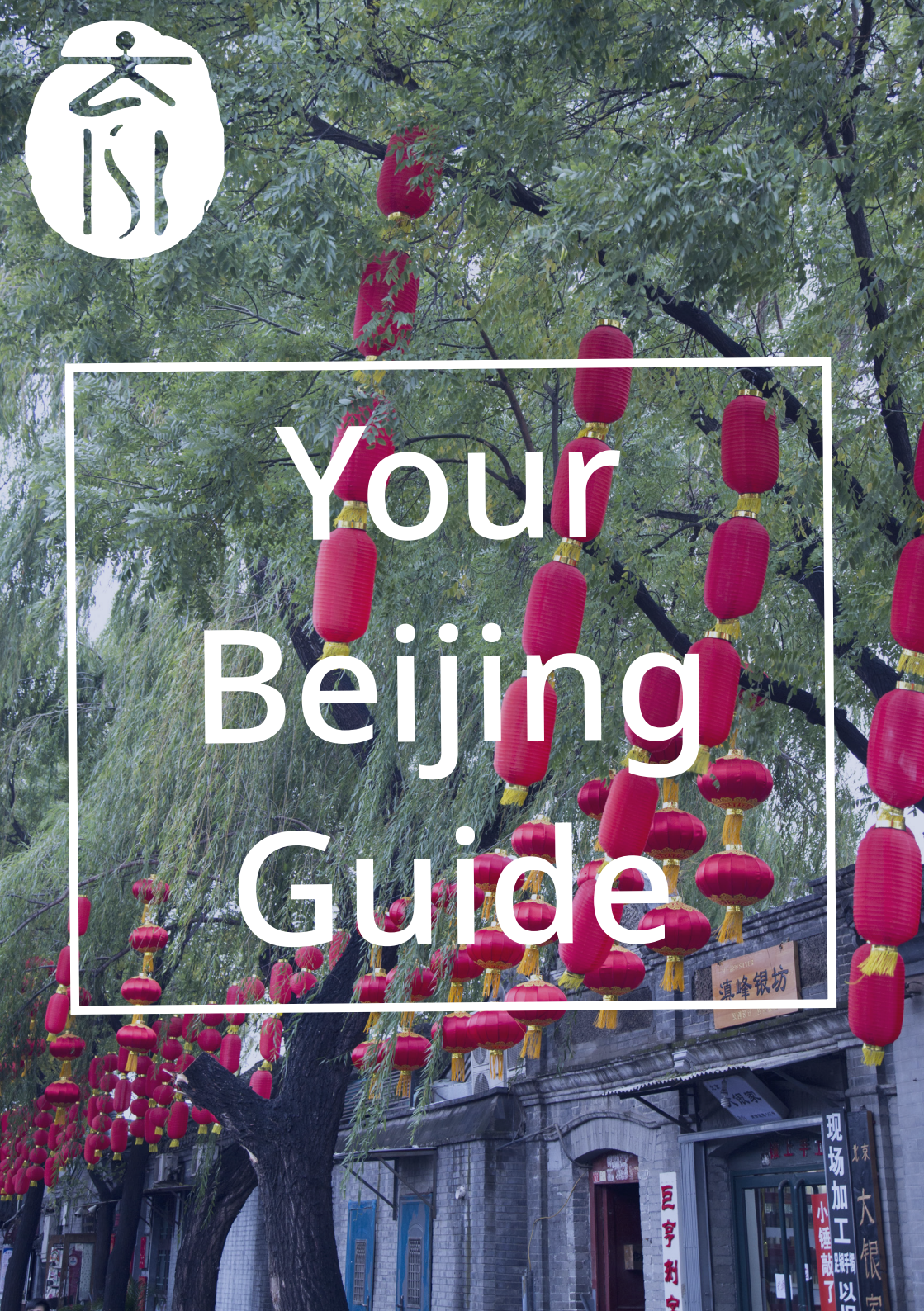




Your Beijing Guide



WELCOME

Welcome to Beijing and the International School of Beijing (ISB)! The task of transitioning to a new country, culture, job, and school can be equally exciting and overwhelming. This guide will help you not just survive but thrive as you adjust to life in Beijing and at ISB.

This guide has been compiled based on feedback from the ISB community. In the following pages you will find useful tips about shopping, transport, accommodation, language, and a whole lot more. Please note that although this guide is an official ISB publication, it aims to provide readers with an objective overview and therefore does not endorse any establishment listed here.

Of course, the best way to adapt to life in Beijing and at ISB is by exploring beyond your comfort zone. There are countless places waiting to be explored, experiences waiting to be enjoyed, and lifelong friendships waiting to be formed.

Welcome to Beijing and ISB!

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OVERVIEW

Since its reform and opening-up 40+ years ago, China has welcomed the global community with open arms. During this time, Beijing (literally “northern capital”) has transformed under the influence of foreign investment and a modern construction boom.

Today, the city is a hub of innovation and art. Beijing boasts a fusion of a rich cultural heritage with cutting-edge technology. Here you will find modern skyscrapers towering over ancient neighborhoods and high-end sports cars zipping past tourist carriages.

Beijing is home to a plethora of ancient temples, imperial palaces, sights, and monuments. It is a place to barter at local markets and dine at countless restaurants that open and close in new locations across the city. This cosmopolitan city can be a home away from home; a place to explore with the comfort of modern conveniences.

Beijing is a world apart from many places you may have experienced. There is a lot on offer for those who invest even a small amount of effort into understanding the culture and learning some basic Mandarin (or *Putonghua*). Chinese civilization has a long history and a rich culture, and Beijing offers many sights to explore and meaningful opportunities to be involved in a thriving community.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Beijing lies at about the same latitude as Madrid and New York. It is situated 1,500 kilometers (about 1,000 miles) north of China's largest city, Shanghai. Beijing's climate is temperate, with humid summers and dry winters. The strong Siberian winds and occasional snow can make winters bone-chillingly cold. Spring and fall are among Beijing's most pleasant seasons, with beautiful foliage and clear blue skies defining characteristics.

CHALLENGES TO LIVING IN BEIJING

Longtime Beijing residents note that the city has been transformed in recent years due to rapid urbanization. There are times when this thriving capital shows the price of such incredible growth. Traffic can test your patience and although there has been huge investment in improving the environment, some days can have higher aqi in the winter. Nevertheless, many expats stay in Beijing for three to five years (and sometimes longer). Their passion for the city and its lifestyle is a testament to the many charms of the Chinese capital.

HOUSING

Your lease can be negotiated to include the following: Internet installation, painting, gardening service, carpet and drapery cleaning (once a year), transition from heating to air conditioning (A/C) in the spring, transition from A/C to heating in the fall (where necessary), air filter cleaning twice a year, A/C duct cleaning before moving in, and club membership fees (if your compound has a clubhouse).

DOMESTIC HELP

A domestic helper in China is called an *ayi*, literally “aunty” in Chinese. Many families employ an *ayi* either part-time or full-time, to help with housework, childcare, shopping etc.

You can often find an *ayi* through personal recommendations. There are also companies that help *ayis* to find jobs with suitable families.

As with any negotiation, it will be helpful to both you and any prospective *ayis* to have a translator present. That way you can be sure you all agree on work conditions, responsibilities and tasks, salary etc.

It is standard for *ayis* and drivers to be given public holidays; some families give extra days in addition to the official days. You will be expected to pay your *ayi* in full even if you are traveling during a holiday. It is also standard to pay double salary at Chinese New Year. In addition, some families also offer for their *ayis* to shower and do their own laundry at their employer’s home. This is because some *ayis* live in houses or villages with limited utilities.

TELEPHONE AND UTILITIES

Some compounds have utilities cards that must be topped up periodically. Check your meters regularly to prevent waking up to no heat, hot water, or electricity! Your management office and/or sponsoring organization should be able to help you learn how to recharge cards.

Your landlord may have agreed to pay for some of these items. It is important to understand who is responsible for payment and how to make the payment. Your relocation company is a good resource for information on these matters.

Cellphone service is available from a variety of providers. Most people use the mobile app WeChat (see below) to top-up their phone credit. The main phone companies are China Mobile and China Unicom, both of which provide various payment plans. Skype and FaceTime are popular and economical means to make international long distance calls.

BANKING AND CREDIT CARDS

China's official currency is the *renminbi* (RMB), literally "the people's money." Colloquially, you will also hear the currency referred to as "*yuan*" or "*kuai*." Paper money comes in denominations of 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 1, 0.50, 0.20, 0.10 *yuan*. The bronze coins are 5 "*jiao*" (aka "*mao*") or 50 "*fen*," while the small aluminum coins are 1 "*jiao*" (aka "*mao*") or 10 "*fen*". Finally, the light thin coins are 5, 2, 1 "*fen*" and decrease in size. 1 RMB = 1 "*yuan*" (aka "*kua*") = 10 "*jiao*" (aka "*mao*") = 100 "*fen*". Although it sounds confusing, rest assured you will soon figure it out!

At the time of writing, \$1USD is approximately 6.5 RMB. The XE mobile app is a useful tool for calculating currency conversions.

Some merchants in Beijing do not accept credit cards, so be sure to check prior to making purchases. Payment methods include cash, UnionPay, and WeChat. WeChat is the most popular payment method but cash and cards are still generally accepted. Smaller vendors may only accept WeChat. There are various options available for local banking. Be aware of the rules, regulations, and fees regarding account limits, withdrawal limits, and sources of funds.

Most overseas ATM cards incur a fee (US\$2-4) per transaction. In addition, your overseas bank may limit your daily withdrawal or charge you a fee for currency conversion. You may be able to open a local bank account that waives fees when you use your local ATM card.

The daily withdrawal limit is most often 20,000 RMB (approx.\$3,000 USD). It is best to inquire about this with your sponsoring organization.

ATMs NEAR ISB

ISB: Lower Gallery; China Construction Bank.

Outside of River Garden: On the street-facing side of the clubhouse; China Construction Bank.

Yosemite C Gate: Bank of China.

Crowne Plaza Hotel lobby: Bank of China.

Tian Zhu Plaza: On Tianbei Road east of Jingshun Lu, in the shopping center with Jing Ke Long Supermarket; Bank of China.

Shine City: China Construction Bank between Shine City North and South, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC)

Please note overseas and local bank cards are accepted at all ATMs. Fees may apply.



WeChat is the most popular messaging service in China. It is a useful platform for communication with friends. This “super app” is extremely versatile and used for networking, chatting, sharing photos and videos, and even paying bills via WeChat Wallet. It has recently grown in popularity overseas too, so you can add your family and friends outside of China.



Alipay is one of China's most popular third-party online payment platforms. It provides an easy, secure way for millions of individuals and businesses to make and receive payments.

TRANSPORTATION

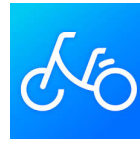
Bicycles: Once known as the “Kingdom of Bicycles,” today China is the “Kingdom of Shared Bikes.” Brightly colored shared bikes are abundant in Beijing, and they offer an inexpensive, fun way to get from point A to B. Simply download one of the below mobile apps, electronically transfer a deposit, and then pay per ride by scanning the QR code on the bike.



Mobike



DiDi



Bluegogo

Driver's License: Check with your company's human resources department to see if your company allows expatriate employees and their family members to drive. China does not recognize overseas driver's licenses. If you have a license from your home country, you will need to take the written test to obtain a Chinese driver's license. A practical driving test is not necessary. Companies can help you get the required medical checks, give you a study booklet (with more than 900 questions), apply for the license, and even take you to the motor vehicle authority to sit the written exam. They will charge you for this service. You will take the exam (available in many languages) on a computer system that randomly chooses 100 questions. You must score at least 90% to pass.

Didi: Didi Chuxing is a popular ride-sharing mobile app akin to Uber. Passengers send ride requests using the app to be connected with drivers. The app is available in English and Chinese.

Taxi: Though most riders favor Didi, Beijing taxis are still a reliable form of transportation. Note that Beijing taxis are metered and be sure to politely decline to ride with them if they insist the meter is “broken.” Make sure to get an official receipt (known as a fapiao) after you pay the fare. This receipt also has the number to trace the taxi in case you leave something in the vehicle. It is not advisable to take the hei che (literally “black car”) as they can be unsafe and notoriously expensive.

Subway: Beijing has the world's second largest subway network (behind Shanghai), stretching nearly 600 kilometers. Fares are distance-based, ranging between 3 and 10 RMB (children under 1.2 meters are free). Subway Line 15 connects Shunyi to downtown Beijing, with China International Exhibition Center (opposite Europlaza) the closest station to ISB. The subway operates between 6:00 am and 10:30 pm everyday however, depending on the day and line, times may vary.



HEALTH CARE

Various medical centers and dental clinics serve the needs of expatriates in Beijing. A few common ones are listed below.

Beijing United Family Hospital (BJU): www.beijing.ufh.com.cn - Medical and dental services. BJU has Shunyi medical and dental clinics in Pinnacle Plaza. Their main hospital is near the Lido Hotel.

Hong Kong International Medical Center: www.hkclinic.com

Raffles Medical Beijing: www.rafflesmedicalgroup.com - Medical and dental services. They also provide emergency evacuation if your medical situation cannot be properly treated in China.

Oasis International Hospital: www.oasishealth.cn - Medical and dental services. Located in Jiu Xian Qiao (across from north gate of 798)

Arrail Dental: www.arrail-dental.com/en/ - Various locations in Beijing

IDC-Dental: www.idcdentalbj.com - Various locations in Beijing

Sunny Dental: www.sunnydental.com - Various locations in Beijing

SDM: www.sdmdental.com - Various locations in Beijing



EATING OUT

Chinese cuisine is possibly the most varied of national cuisines. With 56 ethnic groups across China, the specialities are plentiful and the range of food diverse. Beijing hosts restaurants that offer traditional food from across China. Some highlights include spicy Sichuan Hot Pot, Yunnan style fresh mint and beef, and, of course, Peking duck. It is not, however, the same as Chinese food you find in the west. You will not come across any fortune cookies here but staples such as noodles, rice and the famous Chinese dumpling (jiǎo zi 饺子). And even with these old favorites, there is still great variety depending on the house style.

Some of the best local fare can be bought very cheaply from street food vendors. One of the favorites among expatriates is the jiān bing 煎饼 - a savory crepe cooked on a hot plate with an egg cracked inside with the option of meat, lettuce and spices. This local breakfast staple can be bought on many a street corner starting from 5 RMB (roughly 80 cents or 50 pence). In the summer time, people often sit outside and enjoy chuàn 串儿 - Beijing style barbecue with meat and vegetable skewers.

If you prefer western fare or seek variety, Beijing is teeming with restaurants serving food from across the globe. The central area of Sanlitun plays host to a multitude of international restaurants, from steak houses to sandwich shops, from Italian to Persian, Indian, and Arabic cuisine. Local publications such as *JingKids International* magazine, *The Beijinger* and *TimeOut Beijing* have the latest reviews and recommendations for a wide variety of restaurants across the city.

There are also a number of supermarket chains that specialize in imported western goods. Large WalMart and Carrefour outlets are dotted across the city and stock western groceries for your pantry. Smaller supermarkets such as Market Place (BHG), Jenny Lou, and Jenny Wang stores sell imported produce from all over the world. These stores also stock dietary specific products such as gluten free biscuits and so on. A number of supermarkets such as Carrefour stock organic meats, fruit and vegetables. However, many people find the fresh fruit and vegetables found in smaller local shops to be less expensive and of a higher quality.

FOOD DELIVERY

Food delivery is very common in Beijing. It is generally inexpensive and easy to arrange online or by phone. Depending on taste and the area you live, it is often cheaper to eat out or order in than to go food shopping and cook from scratch. There are many apps for ordering food, some require proficiency in Chinese to use:



Sherpa's



Ele ma



Jinshisong



Meituan Waimai

SHOPPING

FOOD SHOPPING

Carrefour: various locations, with online delivery service.

Ikea: East 4th Ring Road; second location in Daxing South Beijing.

Jenny Wang's, Jenny Lou's: various locations (There are two "Jenny's" businesses, each with several locations, and a bit of family history between them.)

Jing Ke Long: local supermarket chain

Lion Mart: by Capital Paradise south gate

BHG Marketplace: various locations in Beijing

Metro (麦德龙): a German run discount supermarket

Vanguard: local supermarket chain

WalMart: various locations in Beijing

Wu-Mei: various locations in Beijing

April Gourmet: various locations in downtown Beijing

San Yuan Li Market: Produce market near San Yuan Qiao. A remarkable and colorful selection of fruits, vegetables, meat, seafood, spices, etc. Near the embassy district.

Organic meats and vegetables are also available from Carrefour, Ito Yokado supermarket and the supermarket in the basement of Shin Kong Plaza.

PLACES TO SHOP

Bicycles: Check out the Trek store in Shine Hills or the Giant Store on Tianbei Road (on the way to the airport). Decathlon also stocks a reasonably-priced variety of bikes.

Electronics: Gome and Da Zhong are two of the biggest Chinese electronics stores. Carrefour and Auchan also carry electronics and appliances.

Home Furnishings:

Aika

B&Q

Easy Home

Hola

Ikea

Malls:

Europlaza

Shine Hills (9 An Xiang Street, 5 minutes drive from ISB)

Indigo Mall (20 Jiu Xian Qiao Road, near Lido Hotel)

Jia Mao Mall (Wang Jing)

Oriental Plaza (by Wang Fu Jing)

Park View Green (Fang Cao Di)

The Place

Shin Kong Place

Solana (Chaoyang Park West Gate)

Tai Koo Li (The Village at Sanlitun)

Sports: Decathlon (a French sports superstore). Stocks a wide variety of sports equipment.

Watsons: is a Hong Kong chain that mostly carries cosmetics and toiletries. Some stores even have a small pharmacy. Most products include English labeling.

MARKETS

Hong Qiao Pearl Market 红桥珍珠市场: Souvenirs, electronics, shoes, bags, clothing, and pearls on upper floors. The back building houses toys, costumes and stationery. Many tour groups go here, so be sure to bargain hard (see p. 21 for useful vocabulary). 46 TianTan Dong Lu.

Bai Rong World Trade Mall 百荣世贸商城: Enormous fabric market with low prices. Best to go with someone who knows where it is the first time. Located near the 3rd Ring Road north of the Mu Xi Yuan Bridge, Fengtai District.

Pan Jia Yuan Market 潘家园旧货市场: (also known as the “Dirt Market”) Great for “antiques” and everything from pottery to Chinese boxes. It’s busiest on the weekends – go early for the best buys! It is also open on weekdays but has a lot fewer vendors.

Silk Street Market 秀水街市场: a 5-story mall with stalls of clothing, souvenirs, pearls, etc. It’s popular with tourists, so expect higher prices.

E-SHOPPING

The following are the “big three” online marketplaces in China:



Jingdong is a useful platform to browse and buy quality electronic products and household appliances.



Taobao is a popular app and website where you can buy a variety of items at a low price including clothes, accessories, electronics, and household appliances.



Baopals can be considered the “English version of Taobao,” but expect items to be a bit pricier.

FUN AND RELAXATION

FUN STUFF FOR KIDS

Club Football: community based football/soccer league for kids.
www.clubfootball.com.cn

Happy Valley Amusement Park: Roller coasters! East 4th Ring Road, Xiao Wu Ji Lu Bei.

Le Cool ice skating rink: 2/B China World Shopping Center.
www.lecooicerink.com

Movie Theaters: Stellar Int'l Cineplex in Wang Jing, Star City at Oriental Plaza, Megabox at the Village at Sanlitun, Wanda International Cineplex at Wanda Plaza, Shine Hills.

Nan Shan Ski Resort: Mi Yun county, Sheng Shui Tou Village.
www.nanshanski.com

Rebounderz: Trampoline park in Shunyi

Latitude: Trampoline park in Shunyi. <https://latitudeair.com/info/locations/china/>

MR X Escape Room: 2/F, Shimao Department Store, No.13 Gongti North Road, Chaoyang District. www.book.mr-x.com.cn



MASSAGE

Worn out from climbing the Great Wall, shopping, or exploring Beijing on foot? Relax - there are plenty of places to unwind with a massage. Beijing has many hole-in-the-wall massage parlors and traditional Chinese medicine clinics, but professionalism and service can vary greatly. Here are our picks:

Dragonfly: Two locations in Beijing. See www.dragonfly.net.cn for more information.

Le Spa: River Garden Clubhouse, Shunyi District. 010 8046 6558.

Oriental Taipan Massage and Spa: See www.taipan.com.cn/en/ for locations.

Bodhi: 17 Workers' Stadium North Road, Chaoyang District



So, you've decided the hustle and bustle of downtown isn't for you and you've settled in the suburban serenity of Shunyi. Welcome to the neighborhood! Apart from its convenient proximity to ISB, this family-friendly district has a host of enticing places to eat, shop, and relax.

For coffee or a bite to eat, Jamaica Blue is located opposite ISB's west gate next to the Yosemite Club House. The cafe offers a full menu of Western breakfast and lunch options for both takeaway and dine-in. There is an additional location in the River Garden Clubhouse.

At the south gate of River Garden, you will find Le Spa, a full-service spa offering everything from facials, foot massages, and manicures to hairdressing services. The spa often has promotions and the staff at reception speak excellent English.

Victor's Restaurant offers authentic Thai and Indian cuisine across from Le Spa along Yuyang Lu.

Further down the road, past The Swan with Two Necks pub and Jenny Wang's supermarket, you'll find Pinnacle Plaza. This is a great place for lunch or dinner with a wide variety of restaurants, coffee shops, and bars. Thai, Japanese, Vietnamese, and many Western options such as Subway, Avocado Tree (Mexican cuisine), and Burger King.

Shine Hills is a shopping complex with many clothing stores including Uniqlo and Gap, excellent Western and Asian restaurants and craft breweries, several gyms, and a giant cinema. Most places have their own outdoor storefront, so you can wander around on a nice day or sit outside when dining. In summer, children can enjoy various outdoor activities and have fun at a water park.

CHINESE CULTURAL TIPS

Adjusting to a new country can be challenging, but being a respectful guest is a useful rule of thumb that goes a long way anywhere – especially in China. Understanding cultural differences can defuse misunderstandings between locals and expatriates. Some tips to keep in mind include:

DOs

- Do have a name card printed up, even if you are not working outside of the home, to have one to exchange on official occasions.
- Do use both hands to present and receive name cards to show respect.
- Do mention the family name first, then given name when using Chinese names. Remember most women keep their maiden surname rather than taking their husband's surname. Children generally are given their father's surname.
- Do shake hands with people when you first meet them. The Chinese are generally reserved in manner; courtesy rather than familiarity is preferred. Stick to handshakes and only give hugs if you know the person well.
- Do give and receive toasts at a meal – it is a common way to show courtesy and gratitude. Also offer a host/hostess a gift when visiting someone's home or company. An item from your home country will be especially appreciated.
- Do use the number eight (8) at weddings and birth celebrations as it is considered a lucky number (it sounds like the Chinese word for "prosperity").
- Do use the full title of our host country: "The People's Republic of China." This should be used in all formal communications. "China" can be used informally.
- Do ask your helpers how they would like you to refer to them. Some are happy with "*ayi*," which means "aunty." Others might prefer you to use their name.
- You can call your driver "*shifu*," which means "master." This is a respectful, versatile title that can also be used to address workmen. Children should refer to your domestic helper as "*ayi*" and your male driver as "*shushu*" (literally "uncle").

DON'Ts

- Don't show anger in public. If you encounter a conflict/offense, it is best not to confront directly, but work through a third party to allow the original party to save "face."
- Don't be offended if people stare; they merely do so to express open interest in seeing a "foreigner." You may encounter this frank interest, especially when visiting remote provinces.
- Don't stick your chopsticks straight up in your rice bowl (tell your kids to avoid this, too) when eating with Chinese friends or colleagues. This looks like someone offering incense to the dead. Also do not tap your rice bowl with your chopsticks, as beggars do this to attract attention.
- Don't use number four (4) at weddings and birth celebrations. Four is considered an unlucky number and is avoided because it sounds like the Chinese word for "death."
- Don't discuss politics or religion with new acquaintances. Avoid talking about Taiwan, Tibet, Macao or Hong Kong as separate from China, as they are part of the People's Republic of China.
- Don't give clocks, knives, or pears as gifts to Chinese friends. When giving gifts, avoid clocks (meaning your time's up, i.e. wishing someone were dead) or knives and pears (which in Chinese sounds like the word for "separate," or ending a relationship).
- Tipping is not officially encouraged, but accepted in the travel industry.



TRANSLATION & CHINESE LANGUAGE SERVICES

China's official language is Mandarin, or *Putonghua* (literally "common language"). Beijingers have a tendency to add an "er" sound at the ends of syllables. For example, "Sanlitun" becomes "Sanlitur." Of course, there are hundreds of dialects and accents in China, many of which you will encounter in Beijing. Keep this in mind as you try to understand the language.

For Chinese language lessons, it is worth exploring Bridge School (www.bridgeschoolchina.com).

The Chinese Culture Center (www.chineseculturecenter.org) also offers well-organized tours and lectures in English.

There are a large number of Chinese-English apps that offer a reliable, speedy translation guide. Words can be searched in Chinese (using pinyin or characters) or in English. It's best to get a recommendation upon arrival as apps can frequently update.



BASIC CHINESE SURVIVAL PHRASES

English	Chinese characters	Pinyin
Hello, my name is (.....)	你好, 我叫 (。。。)	nǐ hǎo wǒ jiào (。。。)
I'm from (.....)	我是从(。。。)来的	wǒ shì cóng (。。。) lái de
How are you?	你好吗?	nǐ hǎo ma?
Good bye	再见	zài jiàn
Please	请	qǐng
Thank you	谢谢	xiè xiè
Excuse me	劳驾	láo jià
You are welcome	不客气	bú kè qì
I'm sorry	对不起	duì bú qǐ
yes, I have	有	yǒu
No, I don't have	没有	méi yǒu
I want/would like	要	yào
No, I don't want	不要	bú yào
I'm just looking	我先看看	wǒ xiān kàn kan
How much?	多少钱?	duō shǎo qián?
Too expensive	太贵了	tài guì le
Can you reduce the price?	能便宜一点儿吗?	néng pián yi yì diǎn r ma?
Please give me a receipt	请给我发票	qǐng gěi wǒ fā piào
Slow down	慢一点儿	màn yì diǎn r
Hurry up	快点儿	kuài diǎn r
Stop	停	tíng
Turn left	左拐	zuǒ guǎi
Turn right	右拐	yòu guǎi
Go straight	一直走	yì zhí zǒu



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