

# Welcome to Běijīng

*Constantly reimagining itself as it races  
towards the future, yet inextricably  
linked to its glorious, notorious past,  
Běijīng is as compelling as it is complex.*

## Food Heaven

Food is an obsession for the Chinese and the dazzling array of different dishes you'll encounter in Běijīng reflects the sheer joy locals take in eating. Dining out is the main social activity; it's in restaurants that Běijīngers hang out with friends, romance each other, hold family reunions and do business, and the sheer variety of restaurants here is mind-boggling. Menus will have you salivating over succulent Peking duck, delicious dumplings and awesome noodles, but there's food from every corner of China (and beyond) to be sampled too. From fiery Sìchuānese to Turkic-inspired Uighur cuisine, Běijīng's 60,000-plus restaurants cover every base.

## Imperial Delights

Few places on Earth can match the extraordinary historical panorama on display in Běijīng. There are six Unesco World Heritage Sites in this city alone (just one less than the whole of Egypt). At its heart is the magnificent Forbidden City, a royal palace on a scale like no other. Běijīng is also home to sublime temples, while the city centre is criss-crossed by enchanting *hútòng*: ancient alleyways that teem with life today, as they did hundreds of years ago. And, to cap it all, the awe-inspiring Great Wall snakes its way across the hills north of town.

## Architectural Ambition

It's not just the ancient architecture that wows tourists. Běijīng is also home to some of the world's most innovative modern buildings. The world's leading architects clamber for the chance to make their mark on this global powerhouse, and jaw-dropping structures such as the CCTV Building, Galaxy Soho, the NCPA concert hall and the Olympic Stadium are clear signs that Běijīng is not shy about proclaiming its status as China's capital. Like the temples and palaces of the ancient past, and the imposing socialist-realist monuments of the 1950s, these latest additions are built on a scale that screams, 'Look at me!'

## Acrobats & Artists

Běijīng isn't just the political centre of China – it's the cultural heart of the country too. The nation's top artists, writers, movie-makers and musicians converge here, making this *the* place to take the pulse of China's ever-evolving cultural scene. With top-class museums, galleries galore, and an increasing number of music venues, there's enough to keep you busy day and night. Whether it's the mystique of Peking opera, tumbling acrobats or the graceful lines of Chinese classical dance that entrances you, the capital has it and more.



## Why I Love Běijīng

By David Eimer, Writer

I am endlessly intrigued by Běijīng's ability to reinvent itself. To spend time here is to be on a permanent journey of discovery, where eye-popping buildings appear seemingly overnight, historic *hútòng* are transformed into hip hang-outs, and new venues open all the time. But some things never change in Běijīng and that is equally enticing. The food is always outstanding and the parks and temples remain oases of peace. Above all, I love being surrounded by the tangible evidence of China's amazing, dramatic history, whether it's the Forbidden City or the Great Wall. It's never boring here.

**For more about our writers, see p288**