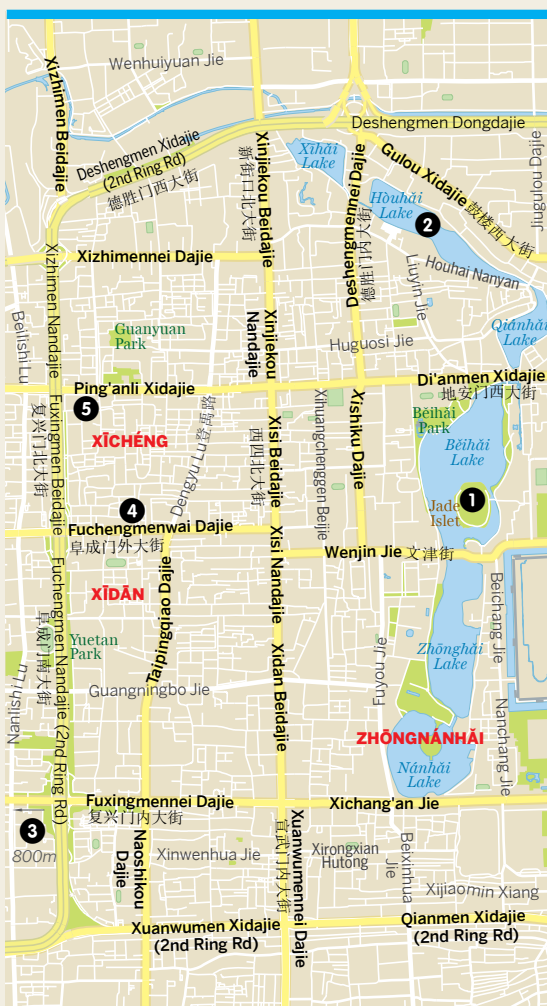


# Běihǎi Park & Xīchéng North



## Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Běihǎi Park** (p115) Once reserved for emperors only, this is one of the capital's most striking imperial parks, dominated by its namesake lake and dotted with temples.
- 2 Hòuhǎi Lakes** (p117) Sedate during the day and raucous at night, these lakes are one of the best places to escape the city sprawl.
- 3 Capital Museum** (p117) Spend a morning at this impressive museum to understand the evolution of this great city.
- 4 Fuchengmenwai Dajie** (p117) Head down this road to explore its authentic *hùtòng*, museums and Buddhist temples, including the peaceful Miàoyīng Temple White Dagoba.
- 5 Mei Lanfang Grand Theatre** (p123) Spend a night at the Peking Opera at this modern theatre named after a local legend.

For more detail of this area see Map p278.

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Come nightfall, the Hòuhǎi Lakes become a madhouse of milling crowds and bartouts trying to entice you into their overpriced bars. If you want to experience a night out drinking, Chinese style, dive in. If you'd rather avoid the wailing karaoke, slip down the *hútòng* that run off the lakeshore, where you'll find quieter bars and cafes. The lanes on the southwest side of Silver Ingot Bridge are a good place to start.

### Best Places to Eat

- Royal Icehouse (p121)
- Kǎo Ròu Ji (p122)
- 4corners (p120)
- Meatball Company (p121)
- Wang Pang Zi (p121)

For reviews, see p120. ➔

### Best Places to Drink

- 4corners (p120)
- NBeer Pub (p122)
- East Shore Jazz Café (p123)
- Táng rén Teahouse (p122)

For reviews, see p122. ➔

### Best Places for People-watching

- Běihǎi Park (p115)
- Hòuhǎi Exercise Park (p119)
- Hòuhǎi Park (p119)

For reviews, see p117. ➔

## Explore Běihǎi Park & Xīchéng North

The majority of the Imperial City was in this part of Xīchéng (西城; literally 'West City'), lending it a regal grandeur that survives to this day. Less visited than Dōngchéng to the east, but equally endowed with ancient temples and charming *hútòng* (narrow alleyways), it's one of the most worthwhile neighbourhoods to visit in all Běijīng.

Any tour has to start at the lakes that dominate the eastern part of the district. Take in Běihǎi Park first, perhaps spending an hour or more floating around its lake, before striking out through the park's north gate to take in the sights and *hútòng* scattered around Qiánhǎi, Hòuhǎi and Xīhǎi Lakes, collectively known as either Shíchǎihǎi or more commonly just Hòuhǎi. Once night falls, eat at one of the many restaurants close to the lakes and then join the crowds promenading around them, stopping in for a drink at the many bars and cafes that line their shores.

A second day here is more or less an imperative. Head to Fuchengmennei Dajie, a street lined with lesser-known temples; the most impressive being Miàoyīng Temple White Dagoba. Then dive into the *hútòng* behind them. The district's best temple, though, is southwest of here: the Taoist White Cloud Temple, which can be combined with a visit to nearby Capital Museum. Come evening, there's a wealth of venues in which to catch everything from jazz to classical music and Peking opera.

## Local Life

- **Fly a kite** Běihǎi Park is prime kite-flying territory. Visit Three Stone Kite Shop (p123) to kit yourself out.
- **Hútòng** The alleyways and lanes here are far less commercial than any others in the city and a great introduction to Běijīng's tremendous street life. The *hútòng* behind Fuchengmennei Dajie are also fascinating.
- **Ice skating** When winter clamps the Hòuhǎi Lakes in its icy embrace, do as Beijingers do and strap on a pair of ice skates (you can hire them by the lakes).

## Getting There & Away

- **Subway** Beihai North (Line 6) and Shichahai (Line 8) subway stations best serve Běihǎi Park and the Hòuhǎi Lakes, although you can also reach them from Line 2 (which circles the district) and Line 4 (which runs north-south). Line 1 cuts across the south of this district.
- **Bus** Bus 1 runs along Xichang'an Jie, Fuxingmennei Dajie and Fuxingmenwai Dajie, taking you to the Capital Museum. Bus 22 takes you from Tiān'ānmén West to Xidān and then north to Xīnjiékou.