

Sights ■

Itineraries	71
Organised Tours	71
Chóngwén & South Chaoyang	72
Dōngchéng	83
Cháoyáng	94
Fēngtái & Xuānwǔ	96
Hǎidiàn & Xīchéng	98
Around Běijīng	100

Sights

The neighbourhoods of Běijīng, a flat city of largely uniform character uninterrupted by major waterways or hilly terrain, are not clearly delineated by distinct boundaries or physical features, yet the city is divided into numerous historical districts.

The Forbidden City acts as the cartographic and physical focus of Běijīng, the bull's-eye around which the city's notable historic sights cluster and the city's five ring roads radiate concentrically. Běijīng's most historic quarters surround the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, within the looping boundary of the Second Ring Rd and subway Line 2.

Xìchéng (West City) is the district to the west of the Forbidden City and the Drum Tower. Dōngchéng (East City) is conversely the neighbourhood to the east of these points. Both Xìchéng and Dōngchéng are the city's core districts, containing Běijīng's most ancient monuments, famous lakes and *hútòng* (alleyways) and enclosing the former Imperial City.

For all practical purposes, north and south Běijīng are divided by Chang'an Jie (divided into Dongchang'an Jie and Xichang'an Jie; becoming Jianguomennei Dajie and Jiang

uomenwai Dajie in the east and Fuxingmennei Dajie and Fuxingmenwai Dajie in the west), along which runs Line 1 of the subway. The district of Chóngwén, containing the Temple of Heaven, lies south of Dōngchéng, and Cháoyáng is a huge neighbourhood to the north, east and southeast of both Dōngchéng and Chóngwén.

South of Xìchéng and Dōngchéng is the district of Xuānwǔ, largely enclosed within the Second Ring Rd, and the huge district of Fēngtái which covers a huge swathe of southwest Běijīng. The colossal district of Hǎidiàn, sprawling west and north of Xìchéng, is the preserve of some of Běijīng's premier sights, including the Summer Palace, the Old Summer Palace and Fragrant Hills Park.

ITINERARIES

One Day

The **Forbidden City** (p87) is Běijīng's obligatory sight, so devote at least a morning to the palace and the sights of nearby **Tiananmen Square** (p81). Hop on the subway from Tiananmen Xi to **Wangfujing Dajie** and lunch at **Quanjudu Roast Duck Restaurant** (p131) or **Wangfujing Snack Street** (p124). Walk off your meal browsing shops along Wangfujing Dajie before taking a taxi to the **Temple of Heaven Park** (p79) for a few hours. Try to squeeze in a performance of Chinese acrobatics at the Chaoyang Theatre (p152) before rounding off the evening by wining and dining in **Sanlitun** (p132).

Three Days

The **Forbidden City** (p87) and the monuments of **Tiananmen Square** (p81) can easily occupy an entire morning, before lunch at the **Liquan Roast Duck Restaurant** (p126) or other roast duck eateries in the vicinity of Qianmen. In the afternoon, follow our walking tours around the **Foreign Legation Quarter** (p114) and **Wangfujing Dajie** (p115). Dine perched next to the east gate of the Forbidden City at **Courtyard** (p131) or Hoover up snacks along **Donghuamen Night Market** (p128). To round off the day, take a taxi to **Sanlitun** (p143) or **Nanluogu Xiang** (p141) and find a bar.

On day two take a day trip to the **Great Wall** (p191) and the **Ming Tombs** (p197). Back in Běijīng, spend the evening enjoying **Beijing opera** (p147) at one of the city's numerous theatres and dine at **Xiao Wang's Home Restaurant** (p126).

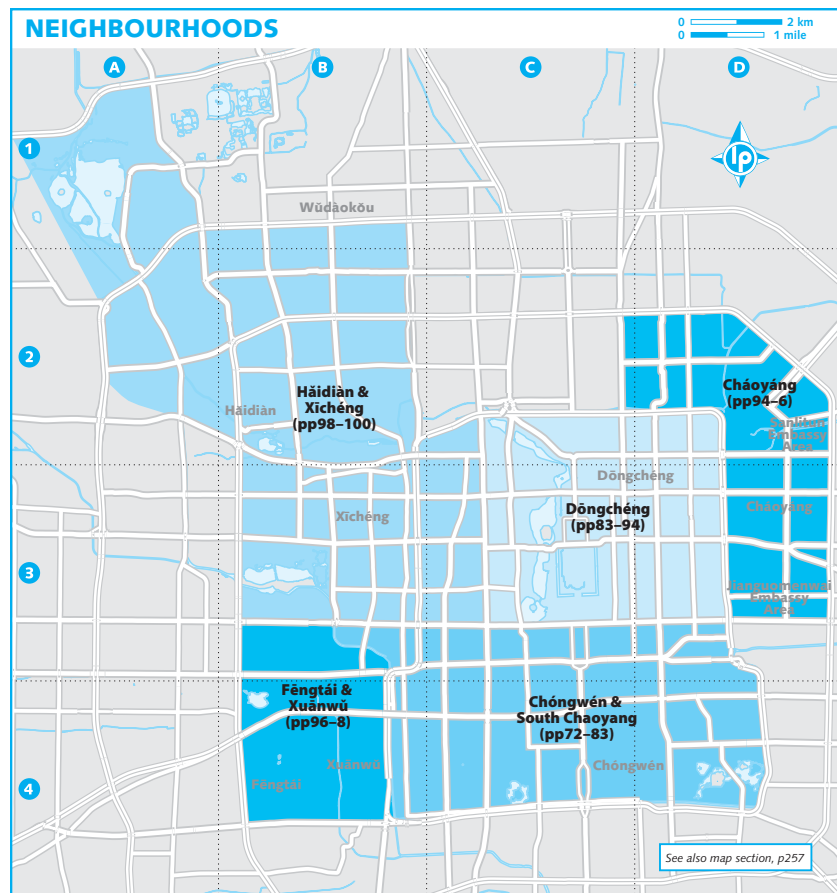
On day three make an early morning visit to the **Temple of Heaven Park** (p79) before browsing the stalls and bric-a-brac shops of **Liulichang** (p167). In the afternoon, journey to the **Summer Palace** (p102); alternatively, walk along the restored **Ming City Wall** (p78) from Chongwenmen to the **Southeast Corner Watchtower** (p79) and then, if you have the time, the **Lama Temple** (p91) or Běijīng's *hútòng* (p106) can be explored. Cap the day dining at **Bookworm** (p135).

One Week

Follow the three-day schedule above but bump exploration of the **Summer Palace** (p102) to day four and devote an entire day to the complex. A comprehensive appraisal of the **798 Art District** (p103) should occupy the morning of the fifth day, leaving the afternoon free for our bike ride around Běijīng (p118), which threads through much of the city's *hútòng* heartland. On day six take a trip to **Chéngdé** (p203) or **Shānhǎiguān** (p200), where you can either return the same day or spend the night. Alternatively, devote the entire day to exploring the Great Wall vestiges at **Huángghuā** (p196), where you can also overnight. Make day seven a shopping day, with trips to **Silk Street** (p164), the **Sanlitun Yashow Clothing Market** (p167), **Oriental Plaza** (p163) and the shops of **Dashilar** (p161); if it's a weekend, rise early to sift through the goods at **Panjiayuan Market** (p163).

ORGANISED TOURS

Tours in and around Běijīng and to other parts of China can be arranged through several companies. The recommended China Culture Club (☎ 6432 9341, ext 18; www.chinese.cultureclub.org; 29 Liangmaqiao Lu) offers a range of fascinating tours geared to expats and foreign tourists. Destinations range from Běijīng to off-the-beaten-track locations



around China and they also offer a variety of stimulating courses on Chinese language and culture. Panda Tour (☎ 6522 2991; 36 Nanlishi Lu) offers tours to popular sights in and around town, including trips around *hútòng*, acrobatic shows and other performances. Panda Tour can also be found at hotel counters including at St Regis (p182), Kempinski (p186) and Shangri-La (p188). Numerous outfits run tours around Běijīng's *hútòng*, see the Historic *Hútòng* chapter (p106) for details. The short '*hútòng*-style' bus tours that run from the south end of pedestrianised Wangfujing Dajie are uninteresting and best avoided. China International Travel Service (CITS; ☎ 8511 8522; www.cits.com.cn; Rm 1212, CITS Bldg, 1 Dongdan Beidajie) and China Travel Service (CTS; ☎ 6464 6400, ext 6448/6422; 2 Beisanhuan Donglu) both run tours, but are generally aimed at Chinese tourists. CTS is at hotel counters including at the Hilton and the Novotel. The Beijing Tourist Information Centers (p231) dotted around Běijīng can also link you up with tours; also ask at your hotel, which should offer tours to the big sights.

CHONGWEN & SOUTH CHAOYANG

崇文、朝阳南

Eating p124; Shopping p161; Sleeping p180

This segment of Běijīng embraces the historic swathe south and southeast of the Forbidden City, largely within the loop of the Hùchéng (City Moat) and the footprint of the now vanished Chinese City Wall. It also incorporates parts of Dōngchéng, Xīchéng and Xuānwǔ districts.

The area north of Qianmen Xidajie and Qianmen Dongdajie and within the Second Ring Rd was the historic Manchu sector of Běijīng. Within the southern extents of the old Tartar City are the Gate of Heavenly Peace and artefacts of the Imperial City, including the Supreme Temple and the Imperial Archives.

Not surprisingly, this core district also contains the city's brashest Communist Party symbols, including the imposing portrait of Mao Zedong and his mausoleum, the Great Hall of the People and Tiananmen Square itself. This is also where the foreign powers chose to establish their legation quarters (p76) in the 19th century.

The area south of Qianmen Xidajie and Qianmen Dongdajie traditionally be-

TOP FIVE BĚIJĪNG MUSEUMS

- Avidly explore the imperial acreage of the **Palace Museum** (the Forbidden City, p87).
- Find time for Běijīng's snappily designed **Capital Museum** (p96).
- Catch up with the long arm of the law at the **Beijing Police Museum** (p74).
- Peruse the exhibition commemorating the Imperial City at the **Imperial City Exhibition** (p77).
- Savour the elegant collection of the **Poly Art Museum** (p95).

longed to the old Chinese quarter, south of the Qing dynasty Tartar City Wall and well beyond the exclusive imperial zone. Historically an enclave of the *lǎobāixīng* (common people), this was a typically more down-at-heel and shabby neighbourhood, threaded by small *hútòng* and home to the shops and bazaars of Dashilar and the *hóngdēngqū* (red light district). Yet this district also belongs in the south, an aspect facing the sun and indicative of *yáng* (the male and positive principle). Blessed with such positive attributes, it is not surprising that the principle imperial shrine of Běijīng, the Temple of Heaven, is also located here. A considerable amount of investment has been ploughed into prettifying the shops around Qianmen Dajie in the lead-up to the 2008 Olympic Games, although Dashilar has also suffered much destruction.

The subway stations of Qianmen, Chongwenmen and Jianguomen recall some of the Tartar City Wall's vast and imposing gates, of which only the Front Gate (p76) and the Southeast Corner Watchtower (Dongbianmen; p79) to the southeast, survive. The road looping south from Jianguomen station, following the line of the city moat, marks the outline of the levelled Chinese City Wall, whose gates survive only in street names, such as Guangqumen Nanbinhe Lu, Zuo'anmen Xibinhe Lu and Yongdingmen Dongbinhe Lu.

ANCIENT OBSERVATORY Map pp268-9

Gǔ Guānxiàngtái 古观象台

☎ 6524 2202; adult ¥10; 🕒 9.30-11.30am & 1-4.30pm, sometimes closed on Monday;

📍 Jianguomen

Star-gazing is perhaps on the back foot in today's Běijīng – it may take a supernova to penetrate the haze that frequently blankets the nocturnal sky – but the Chinese capital has a sparkling history of astronomical observation.

The observatory – today mounted on the battlements of a watchtower lying along the line of the old Ming City Wall – originally dates back to Kublai Khan's days when it lay north of the present site. Khan – like later Ming and Qing emperors – relied heavily on astrologers to plan military endeavours. The present observatory – the only surviving example of several constructed during the Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties – was built between 1437 and 1446 to facilitate both astrological predictions and seafaring navigation.

At ground level is a pleasant courtyard – perfect for parking yourself on a bench and recharging – flanked by halls housing displays (with limited English captions), including China's Ancient Astronomical Achievements Exhibition. Also within the courtyard is a reproduction-looking armillary sphere supposedly dating to 1439, supported by four dragons. At the rear is an attractive garden with grass, sundials and another armillary sphere.

Climb the steps to the roof and see an array of Jesuit-designed astronomical instruments, embellished with sculptured bronze dragons and other Chinese flourishes – a unique mix of East and West. The Jesuits, scholars as well as proselytisers, arrived in 1601 when Matteo Ricci and his associates were permitted to work alongside Chinese scientists. Outdoing the resident calendar-setters, they were given control of the observatory and became the Chinese court's official advisers. Instruments on display include an Azimuth Theodolite (1715), an Altazimuth (1673) and an Ecliptic Armilla (1673); of the eight on view, six were designed and constructed under the supervision of the Belgian priest Ferdinand Verbiest. It's not clear which instruments on display are the originals.

During the Boxer Rebellion, the instruments disappeared into the hands of the

French and Germans. Some were returned in 1902, and others were returned after WWI, under the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles (1919).

BEIJING NATURAL HISTORY

MUSEUM Map pp268-9

Běijīng Zírán Bówúguǎn 北京自然博物馆

☎ 6702 4431; 126 Tianqiao Nandajie; adult ¥30;

🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun, last entry 4pm;

📍 Qianmen

The main entrance to this overblown, creeper-laden museum is hung with portraits of the great natural historians, including Darwin and Linnaeus (here spelt Linnacus). Escort kiddies to the revamped dinosaur hall facing you as you enter, which presents itself with an overarching skeleton of a *mamenchisaurus jingyanensis* – a vast sauropod that once roamed China – and a much smaller *protoceratops*. Creepy crawlies are consigned to the second floor, there's an aquarium with Nemo-esque clown fish and an exhibition on the origins of life on earth, but the lack of English captions is baffling. Some of the exhibits, such as the spliced human cadavers and genitalia in the notorious Hall of Human Bodies are best reserved for those with strong constitutions, while visiting with munchkins could subject them to months of vivid nightmares and nocturnal disturbances. Visiting exhibitions are occasionally staged, again without English explanations. Some halls were being revamped at the time of writing.

BEIJING PLANNING EXHIBITION

HALL Map pp268-9

Běijīngshì Guìhuà Zhǎnlǎnguǎn

北京市规划展览馆

☎ 6701 7074; 20 Qianmen Dongdajie; admission

¥30; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Qianmen

This little-visited exhibition hall takes particular pains to present Běijīng's gut-wrenching, *hútòng*-felling metamorphosis in the best possible light. English labelling is sadly scarce; the only exhibits of note are a detailed bronze map of the town in 1949 – ironically the very year that sealed the fate of old Peking – and a huge, detailed diorama of the modern metropolis. The rest of the exhibition is a paean to modern city planning and the unstoppable advance of the concrete mixer, while 3-D films trumpet 'The New Běijīng'.

BEIJING MUSEUM PASS 博物馆通票

This pass (Bówùguǎn Tōngpiào) is a fantastic investment that will save you both money and queuing for tickets. For Y80 you get either complimentary access or discounted admission (typically 50%) to almost 90 museums, temples or tourist sights in and around Běijīng. Attractions covered include a section of the Great Wall at Bādǎlíng, Confucius Temple and the Imperial College, the Bell Tower, the Imperial City Exhibition, Miaoying Temple White Dagoba, Dongyue Temple, Zhihua Temple, Fayuan Temple, Wanshou Temple, the Beijing Planetarium, the Beijing Natural History Museum, the Xu Beihong Museum and many others. Not all museums are worth visiting, but many are worthwhile and you only have to visit a small selection of museums to get your money back. The pass comes in the form of a booklet (Chinese with minimal English), valid from 1 January to 31 December in any one year. The pass can be picked up from participating museums and sights. It is sometimes hard to find (especially as the year progresses), so phone (☎ 6222 3793 or 8666 0651; you may need a Chinese speaker) or consult www.bowuguan.bj.cn (in Chinese) to locate stocks.

BEIJING POLICE MUSEUM Map pp268-9

Běijīng Jīngchá Bówùguǎn 北京警察博物馆

☎ 8522 5018; 36 Dongjiaomin Xiang; adult Y5;

🕒 9am-4pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Qianmen

Infested with propaganda perhaps, but some riveting exhibits make this a fascinating exposé of Běijīng's *dà gài mào* (local slang for the constabulary). Learn how Běijīng's first Public Security Bureau (PSB) college operated from the Dongyue Temple (p94) in 1949 and find out how officers tackled the 'stragglers, disbanded soldiers, bandits, local ruffians, hoodlums and despots....' planted in Běijīng by the Kuomintang (KMT). There are also eye-opening accounts of how KMT spies Li Andong and Yamaguchi Takachi planned to mortar the Gate of Heavenly Peace (p76), and a welcome analysis of how the Běijīng PSB was destroyed during the 'national catastrophe' of the Cultural Revolution. Altogether 9685 policemen were dismissed from their posts during the paroxysms of violence – spot the yawning gap among portraits of PSB directors from June 1966 to June 1977. The museum covers grisly business: there's Wang Zhigang's bombing of Beijing Train Station on 29 October 1980, an explosion at Xidan Plaza in 1968, while upstairs the museum gets to grips with morbid crimes and their investigations.

BEIJING UNDERGROUND CITY

Map pp268-9

Běijīng Dixiàchéng 北京地下城

62 Xidamochang Jie; adult Y20; 🕒 8am-6pm;

📍 Chongwenmen

By 1969, as the USA landed on the moon, Mao had decided the future for Běijīng's people lay underground. Alarmist predictions of nuclear war with Russia dispatched

an army of Chinese beneath Běijīng's streets to burrow a huge warren of bombproof tunnels. The task was completed Cultural Revolution-style – by hand – with the finishing touches made in 1979, just as Russia decided to bog down in Afghanistan instead.

A section of tunnels enticingly known as the **Beijing Underground City** can be explored. English-language tours guide you along parts of this mouldering warren, past rooms designated as battlefield hospitals, a cinema, arsenals, other anonymous vaults and portraits of Mao Zedong. There's even a rudimentary elevator, flood-proof doors and a ventilation system to expel poisonous gases. Most of the tunnels are around 8m below ground, so it's cold and very damp, with the humidity increasing the deeper you go (sections at greater depths are flooded). Clad in combat gear, the guide waves down dark and uninviting tunnels, announcing their end points: one leads to the Hall of Preserving Harmony in the Forbidden City, another winds to the Summer Palace, while yet another reaches Tiānjīn (a mere 130km away), or so the guide insists. A tiresome detour to an underground silk factory concludes the trip – pass on the pricey duvet covers and pillow cases and make for the door and daylight. Emerging from the exit, head east and take a peek down the first alley on your right – Tongle Hutong – one of Běijīng's narrowest.

CENTRAL ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

GALLERY Map p262

Zhōngyāng Měiyuàn Měishùguǎn

中央美院美术馆

☎ 6527 7991; 5 Xiaowei Hutong; admission Y5;

🕒 9.30am-4pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Wangfujing

A short stroll from Wangfujing Dajie and part of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, this

rather old-fashioned but centrally located exhibition hall displays a selection of Chinese art in a variety of media over three floors.

CHAIRMAN MAO MEMORIAL HALL

Map pp268-9

Máo Zhǔxǐ Jìniàntáng 毛主席纪念馆

Southern side of Tiananmen Square; admission free,

bag/camera storage Y2-10/2-5; 🕒 8.30-11.30am

Tue-Sun, 2-4pm Tue & Thu, not open pm in Jul & Aug;

📍 Tiananmen Xi, Tiananmen Dong or Qianmen

An obligatory place of pilgrimage for China's proletariat and a must-see for those breezing around Tiananmen Square or on the trail of Běijīng's rare freebies, this mausoleum should not be missed. Mao Zedong died in September 1976, and his mausoleum was constructed shortly after on the site of Zhonghua Gate (Zhonghua Men p82).

Easy as it now is to vilify his excesses, many Chinese still show deep respect when confronted with the physical presence of the man. You are reminded to remove your hat and you can fork out Y3 for a flower to lay at the foot of a statue of Mao. Further on, the Great Helmsman's mummified corpse lies in a crystal cabinet, draped in an anachronistic red flag emblazoned with hammer and sickle, as guards in white gloves impatiently wave the hoi-polloi on towards further rooms, where a riot of Mao kitsch – lighters, bracelets, statues, key rings, bottle openers, you name it – ensues. Don't expect to stumble upon Jung Chang signing copies of her *Mao, the Unknown Story* (see p24). At certain times of the year the body requires maintenance and is not on view. Bags need to be deposited at the building east of the memorial hall across the road from Tiananmen Square (if you

leave your camera in your bag you will be charged for it).

CHINA NATIONAL MUSEUM

Map pp268-9

Zhōngguó Guójiā Bówùguǎn 中国国家博物馆

Eastern side of Tiananmen Square; admission

Y30, audio tour Y30; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm;

📍 Tiananmen Dong

Housed in a sombre 1950s edifice, this museum is a work in progress, suffering from chronic lighting, a tawdry layout and sporadic English captions. At the time of writing only three halls were open, the most absorbing of which houses the gorgeous bronzes and ceramics of the Selected Treasures of the National Museum of China – look out for the Bronze Rhino-Shaped *Zun* inlaid with gold and silver designs from the Western Han. The cheesy waxworks museum is mildly diverting.

DUAN GATE Map pp268-9

Duān Mén 端门

North of Gate of Heavenly Peace; admission

Y10; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm; 📍 Tiananmen Xi or

Tiananmen Dong

Sandwiched between the Gate of Heavenly Peace and Meridian Gate, Duan Gate was stripped of its treasures by foreign forces quelling the Boxer Rebellion. The hall today is hung with photos of old Běijīng, but steer your eyes to the ceiling, wonderfully painted in its original colours and free of the cosmetic improvements so casually inflicted on so many of China's other historic monuments – including, it must be added, the slap-dash red paintwork on the exterior walls of Duan Gate itself.

TRANSPORT

Subway Line 1: Tiananmen Xi and Tiananmen Dong subway stops serve Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Imperial City Exhibition and the Imperial Archives; Wangfujing subway stop serves Wangfujing Dajie, and you can backtrack into the Foreign Legation Quarter from here; get off at the Jianguomen stop (both Line 1 and Line 2) for the Ancient Observatory, Southeast Corner Watchtower and the restored Ming City Wall Ruins Park. **Line 2:** The Qianmen stop is right by Front Gate; Chongwenmen takes you to the Ming City Wall Ruins Park that leads to the Southeast Corner Watchtower; alight at the Beijingzhan stop for Beijing Train Station. Line 2 intersects with Line 1 at Jianguomen. **Line 5:** Still under construction at the time of writing, the north-south Line 5 intersects with Line 1 at Dongdan and with Line 2 at Chongwenmen, running south to Ciqikou, Tiantandongmen and Puhuangyu.

Bus Services along Chang'an Jie include buses 1 and 4, travelling from Sihuzhan along Jianguomenwai Dajie, Jianguomennei Dajie and Chang'an Jie; bus 20 journeys from Tianqiao via Qianmen to Wangfujing, Dongdan and Beijing Train Station.

FOREIGN LEGATION QUARTER

Map pp268-9

Ⓧ Chongwenmen, Qianmen or Wangfujing

As James Ricalton described the Foreign Legation district in the days after the Boxer Rebellion:

Here the fire was as hot as anywhere. A cannon ball came through the wall of this legation and carried off the head of Mr Wagener, a gentleman in the customs service. I was told by good authorities that this burned district, destroyed ruthlessly and uselessly, represented, at a low estimate, five million dollars' worth of property.

The former Foreign Legation Quarter, where the 19th century foreign powers flung up their embassies, schools, post offices and banks, lay east of Tiananmen Square. Stroll around Taijichang Dajie and Zhengyi Lu which still suggest its former European flavour (see the Tiananmen Square & Foreign Legation Quarter Walk p114). On the northern corner of Taijichang Toutiao's intersection with Taijichang Dajie survives a brick in the wall engraved with the road's former foreign name: **Rue Hart**.

The district was turned into a war zone during the famous legation siege during the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901). Probably the greatest cultural loss was the torching of the Hanlin Academy, the centre of Chinese learning and literature. Ricalton noted:

The Classics of Confucius inscribed on tablets of marble were treasured there; these are gone; the 20,000 volumes of precious literature are gone; and this venerable institution, founded a thousand years before the Christian era... is a heap of ruins. The loss of thousands of volumes of ancient records recalls

the destruction of the Alexandrian Library as an irreparable loss; not so many precious books, perhaps, yet the Hanlin College antedated the Alexandrian Library by nearly seven hundred years.'

The library was burnt down by Muslim Hui troops in a disastrous bid to flush out besieged Westerners.

At the junction of Taijichang Dajie and Dongjiaomin Xiang stands the gaunt twin-spired **St Michael's Church**, facing the buildings of the former **Belgian Embassy**. Along the western reaches of Dongjiaomin Xiang you'll pass the former **French Legation** (behind bright red doors), the former **French post office** (now the **Jingyuan Sichuan Restaurant**) and the fascinating **Beijing Police Museum** (p74).

FRONT GATE Map pp268-9

Qián Mén 前门

Ⓧ 6525 3176; adult Y10; ⌚ 8.30am-4pm;

Ⓧ Qianmen

Front Gate actually consists of two gates. The northernmost of the two, the 40m-high **Zhengyang Gate** (正阳门; Zhèngyáng Mén) dates from the Ming dynasty and was the largest of the nine gates of the inner city wall separating the inner, or Tartar (Manchu), city from the outer, or Chinese, city. Partially destroyed in the Boxer Rebellion, the gate was once flanked by two temples that have since vanished. With the disappearance of the city walls, the gate sits out of context, but you can climb it for views of the square, although at the time of writing the gate was being restored. Similarly torched during the Boxer Rebellion, the **Arrow Tower** (箭楼; Jiàn Lóu) to the south also dates from the Ming and was originally connected to Zhengyang Gate by a semicircular enceinte (demolished last century). To the east is the old British-built **Qian Men Railway Station** (老车站; Lǎo Chēzhàn), now housing shops and restaurants, while to the south extends **Qianmen Dajie**, undergoing wholesale repackaging for 2008.

GATE OF HEAVENLY PEACE Map pp268-9

Tiānānmén 天安门

North of Tiananmen Square; adult Y15; ⌚ 8.30am-4.30pm; Ⓧ Tiananmen Xi or Tiananmen Dong

Hung with a vast likeness of Mao, the double-eaved Gate of Heavenly Peace is a potent national symbol. Built in the 15th century and restored in the 17th century, the gate was formerly the largest of the four gates of the Imperial City Wall (皇城; Huáng Chéng). Called **Chengting Men** during the Ming dynasty, it was renamed **Tianan Men** during Emperor Shunzhi's reign during the Qing dynasty. The gate is guarded by two pairs of **Ming stone lions**; one of the creatures apocryphally blocked the path of Li Chuangwang as he invaded Beijing at the end of the Ming dynasty. Li fended the lion off by stabbing its belly with his spear while on horseback, leaving a mark that can still be seen. Other locals dispute this story, arguing that it is a bullet hole from allied force guns, when troops entered Beijing to quell the Boxer Rebellion.

There are five doors to the gate, fronted by seven bridges spanning a stream. Each of these bridges was restricted in its use, and only the emperor could use the central door and bridge. The soldiers performing the punctilious daily flag raising and lowering ceremony on Tiananmen Square (p81) emerge through the gate.

Today's political coterie watch mass troop parades from here, and it was from this gate that Mao proclaimed the People's Republic on 1 October 1949. The dominating feature is the gigantic portrait of the ex-chairman, to the left of which runs the poetic slogan 'Long Live the People's Republic of China' and to the right 'Long Live the Unity of the Peoples of the World'.

You pass through the gate on your way to the Forbidden City if entering the palace from the south. Climb up for excellent views of Tiananmen Square, and peek inside at the impressive beams and overdone paintwork. There's no fee for walking through the gate, but if you climb the gate you'll have to buy an admission ticket and pay (Y1-6) to store your bag at the kiosk about 30m northwest of the ticket office. As it's a state symbol, security at the gate can be intense.

GREAT HALL OF THE PEOPLE

Map pp268-9

Rénmín Dàhuitáng 人民大会堂

Western side of Tiananmen Square; adult Y30, bag deposit Y2-5; ⌚ usually 8.30am-3pm (times vary);

Ⓧ Tiananmen Xi

On a site previously occupied by Taichang Temple, the Jinyiwei (Ming dynasty secret

service) and the Ministry of Justice, the Great Hall of the People is the venue of the legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC). The 1959 architecture is monolithic and intimidating, and a fitting symbol of China's remarkable political inertia. The tour parades visitors past a choice of 29 of its lifeless rooms named after the provinces of the Chinese universe. Also here is the banquet room where US President Richard Nixon dined in 1972, and the 10,000-seat auditorium with the familiar red star embedded in a galaxy of ceiling lights. The Great Hall of the People is closed to the public when the People's Congress is in session. The ticket office is down the south side of the building. Bags need to be checked in but cameras are admitted.

IMPERIAL ARCHIVES Map pp268-9

Huángshǐ Chéng 皇史宬

136 Nanchizi Dajie; admission free; ⌚ 9am-7pm;

Ⓧ Tiananmen Dong

Tucked away on the right-hand side of the first road to the east of the Forbidden City is the former Imperial Archives, repository for the imperial records, decrees, the 'Jade Book' (the imperial genealogical record) and huge encyclopaedic works, including the *Yongle Dadian* and the *Daqing Huidian*. You can peer through the closed door and make out the chests in which the archives were stored. With strong echoes of the splendid imperial palace, the courtyard contains well-preserved halls and the **Wan Fung Art Gallery** (www.wanfung.com.cn); ⌚ noon-6pm Mon & 10am-6pm Tue-Sun).

IMPERIAL CITY EXHIBITION Map pp268-9

Huáng Chéng Yìshùguǎn 皇城艺术馆

Ⓧ 8511 5104; www.huangcheng.org; 9 Changpu Heyan; adult Y20, audio tour Y50; ⌚ 10am-5.30pm; Ⓧ Tiananmen Dong

Substantial portions of Beijing survive solely in a twilight world of fading nostalgia. This fascinating museum is devoted to one of the city's most splendid creations: the Imperial City (皇城; Huáng Chéng), which – beyond its fragmented constituent parts – exists in name alone. Centrepiece of the only extant chunk of the Imperial City Wall, the museum is within the **Changpu River Park** (Chāngpú Hé Gōngyuán), a delightful, if contrived, formula of marble bridges, rock features, paths, a stream, willows, magnolias, scholar and walnut trees north of Dongchang'an Jie.

The museum functions as a memorial to the demolished wall, gates and buildings of the Imperial City. A diorama in the museum reveals the full extent of the yellow-tiled Imperial City Wall, which encompassed a vast chunk of Běijīng nearly seven times the size of the Forbidden City. In its heyday, 28 large temples could be found in the Imperial City alone, along with many smaller shrines. Many of these can be observed on the diorama, including a large temple in the northwest of the Imperial City with a double-eaved hall similar to the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests (p81) at the Temple of Heaven Park. Period photos of the old gates of Běijīng and images of the halls and pavilions in Zhōngnánhǎi are hung on the walls.

Further galleries have exhibits of imperial ornaments such as *ruyi* (sceptres), porcelain and enamelware, and the weapons and armour of the imperial guards. There are also small exhibitions on Běijīng's *hútòng* and, downstairs, a bookshop and a rotating exhibition of paintings.

MING CITY WALL RUINS PARK

Map pp268-9

Míng Chéngqiáng Yízhǐ Gōngyuán

明城墙遗址公园

Chongwenmen Dongdajie; ☎ 24hr;

📍 Chongwenmen

Topped with saplings, trees and a healthy head of vegetation, the last surviving slice of the Ming Inner City Wall (originally 40km in length) runs along the length of the northern flank of Chongwenmen Dongdajie, attached to a slender and pleasant strip of park. Levelled in the 1950s to facilitate transport and compromise the legacies of earlier dynasties, the city wall is perhaps Běijīng's most conspicuous chunk of lost heritage.

South of Beijing Train Station, the park runs from the former site of Chongwen Men (Chongwen Gate; one of the nine gates of the inner city wall) to the Southeast Corner Watchtower (opposite). You can walk the park's length, taking in its higgledy-piggledy contours and the interior layers of stone in parts of the wall that have collapsed. The restored sections run for 2km, rising to a height of around 15m and interrupted every 80m with buttresses (*dun tai*) extending to a maximum depth of 39m. The most interesting sections of wall are those closer to their original and more dilapidated state and some of the bricks have bullet holes. You can find a fur-

IT'S FREE TOP FIVE

Badly off or broke in Běijīng? Try the following for free thrills:

- File past Mao Zedong's embalmed remains in the **Chairman Mao Memorial Hall** (p75), followed by a breezy circuit of **Tiananmen Square** (p81).
- Wander at will around Běijīng's charming **hútòng** (p106), either on foot or by bike.
- Pop into the grand **Imperial Archives** (p77) and the art exhibition at the on-site Wan Fung Art Gallery.
- You don't *have* to buy anything wandering along **Wangfujing Dajie** (p161).
- Take our **bike ride** (p118) and see Běijīng on the cheap.

ther section of original, collapsing wall if you follow Jianguomen Nandajie north of the Southeast Corner Watchtower. The dishevelled wall runs to your left as you walk north up Jianguomen Nandajie. Take a left onto Beijingzhan Dongjie where you can see the wall come to a halt as it meets the pavement.

MONUMENT TO THE PEOPLE'S

HEROES Map pp268-9

Rénmín Yīngxióng Jìniànbēi 人民英雄纪念碑

Tiananmen Square; 📍 Tiananmen Xi, Tiananmen Dong or Qianmen

North of Mao's mausoleum, the Monument to the People's Heroes was completed in 1958. The 37.9m-high obelisk, made of Qīngdǎo granite, bears bas-relief carvings of key patriotic and revolutionary events (such as Taiping rebels and Lin Zexu destroying opium at Hǔmén), as well as calligraphy from communist bigwigs Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Mao's eight-character flourish proclaims 'Eternal Glory to the People's Heroes'. The monument is illuminated at night.

SONGTANGZHAI MUSEUM

Map pp268-9

Sōngtángzhāi Mǐnjiān Diāokè Bówùguǎn

松堂斋民间雕刻博物馆

14 Liulichang Dongjie; admission by voluntary donation; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Hepingmen This small museum on Liulichang Dongjie has few English captions, but it's one of the few places you can see traditional Chinese carvings gathered together. Well worth popping into if wandering Liulichang (p167). Seek out the gateway from Jiāngxī with its elaborate architraving, examine drum stones, Buddhist effigies, ancient pillar bases and stone lions.

SOUTHEAST CORNER WATCHTOWER & RED GATE GALLERY

Map pp268-9

Dōngnán Jiǎolóu & Hóngmén Huàláng

东南角楼、红门画廊

☎ 8512 1554; Dongbianmen; adult Y10;

🕒 9am-5pm; 📍 Jianguomen or Chongwenmen

This splendid fortification, with a green-tiled, twin-eaved roof rising up imperiously south of the Ancient Observatory, dates back to the Ming dynasty. Clamber up the steps for views alongside camera-wielding Chinese trainspotters eagerly awaiting rolling stock grinding in and out of Beijing Train Station. Mounting the battlements, two forlorn stumps of flag abutments and a cannon or two can be seen, but really worth hunting out are the signatures etched in the walls by allied forces during the Boxer Rebellion. Look for the brass plaque in Chinese and a sheet of Perspex nailed to the wall near the top of the steps. You can make out the name of a certain P Foot; 'USA' is also scrawled on the brickwork. The international composition of the eight-nation force that relieved Běijīng in 1900 is noted in names such as André, Stickel and what appears to be a name in Cyrillic. One brick records the date 'Dec 16 1900'. Allied forces overwhelmed the redoubt after a lengthy engagement. Note the drainage channels poking out of the wall along its length. You can reach the watchtower from the west through the **Railway Arch**, which was built for the first railway that ran around Běijīng.

The watchtower is punctured with 144 archers' windows, and attached to it is a 100m section of the original inner city wall, beyond which stretches the restored **Ming City Wall** (opposite), extending all the way to Chongwenmen. Inside the highly impressive interior is some staggering carpentry: huge red pillars surge upwards, topped with solid beams. The 1st floor is the site of the **Red Gate**

Gallery (☎ 6525 1005; www.redgategallery.com; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm), one of Běijīng's long-established modern art galleries; the 2nd-floor gallery has an exhibition on the watchtower, the city gates and the history of Chóngwén district, while the 3rd-floor gallery contains more paintings. Say you're visiting the Red Gate Gallery and the Y10 entry fee to the watchtower will be waived.

TEMPLE OF HEAVEN PARK

Map pp268-9

Tiāntán Gōngyuán 天坛公园

Tiantan Donglu; low season Y10-30, high season

Y15-35, audio tour available at each gate Y40;

🕒 park 6am-9pm, sights 8am-6pm; 📍 Chongwen-

men, Qianmen, or Tiantandongmen

The most perfect example of Ming architecture, Tiāntán – literally 'Altar of Heaven' but commonly called temples – has come to symbolise Běijīng.

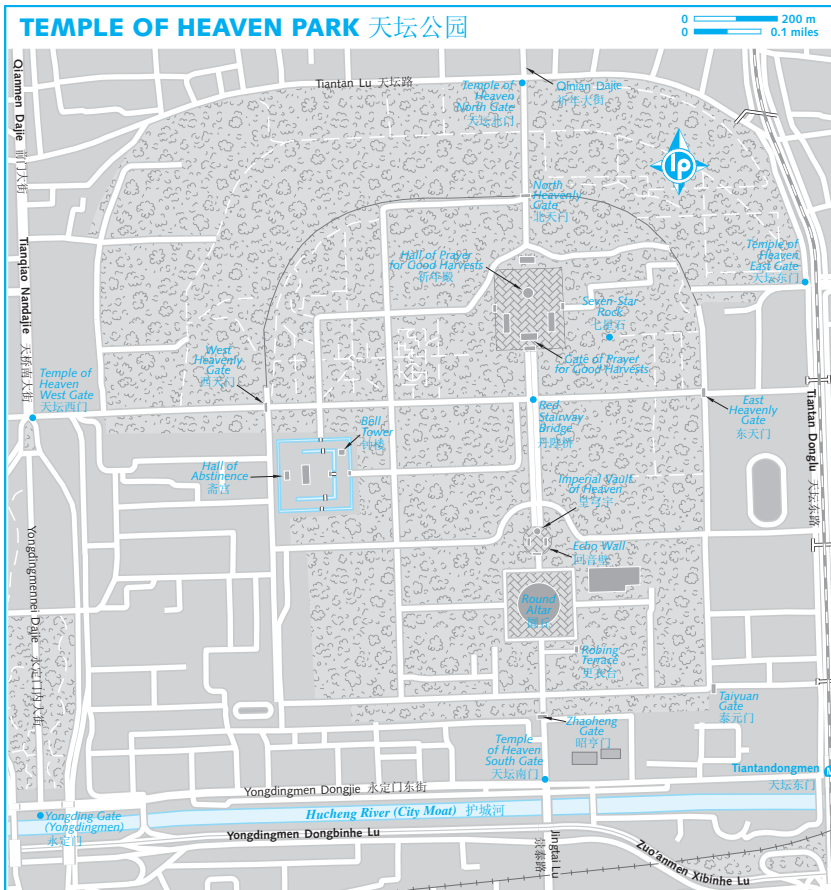
The temple originally served as a vast stage for the solemn rites performed by the emperor, the Son of Heaven (天子; Tiānzi), as he sought good harvests, divine clearance and atonement for the sins of the people. The complex of halls is set in a 267-hectare park with gates at each point of the compass and bounded by walls.

The Temple of Heaven's unique architectural features will delight numerologists, necromancers and the superstitious – not to mention acoustic engineers and carpenters. Shape, colour and sound combine to take on symbolic significance. Seen from above the temples are round and the bases square, a pattern deriving from the ancient Chinese belief that heaven is round and earth is square. Thus the northern end of the park is semicircular and the southern end is square. The **Temple of the Earth**, also called Ditan (see Ditan Park p86), in the north of Běijīng is on the northern compass point, and the **Temple of Heaven** is on the southern.

The most important ceremony of the year was performed just before the winter solstice when the emperor and his enormous entourage passed down Qianmen Dajie in total silence to the **Imperial Vault of Heaven**. Commoners were not permitted to view the ceremony and remained cloistered indoors. The procession included elephant and horse chariots and long lines of lancers, nobles, officials and musicians dressed in their finest, with flags fluttering. The next day the emperor waited in a yellow silk tent at the southern gate while officials moved the

TOP FIVE BĚIJĪNG PARKS

- Size up the imposing grandeur and cosmic overtones of **Temple of Heaven Park** (right).
- Explore the lakeside temple architecture of **Beihai Park** (p84) in low gear.
- Clamber to the top of **Jingshan Park** (p91) for astonishing views over the Forbidden City.
- Make an expedition to **Fragrant Hills Park** (p101).
- Ponder the fate of Běijīng's city walls at **Ming City Wall Ruins Park** (opposite).



sacred tablets to the **Round Altar**, where the prayers and sacrificial rituals took place. It was thought that this ritual decided the nation's future; hence a hitch in any part of the proceedings was regarded as a bad omen.

Although the park can be entered through any of the gates at the cardinal points, the imperial approach to the temple was via **Zhaoheng Gate** (昭亨门; Zhāohēng Mén) in the south, and that is reflected in our ordering of the principal sights below.

Full of old cypresses, the park remains an important meeting place. Get here at 6.30am (before the temple structures are open) to see *tàijíquán* (also known as taichi), dancing to Western music and various other games being played. This is how Běijīng awakens; by 9am it becomes just another Chinese park.

Round Altar 圜丘

The 5m-high Round Altar (Yuán Qū) was constructed in 1530 and rebuilt in 1740. Assembled from white marble arrayed in three tiers, its geometry revolves around the imperial number nine. Odd numbers were considered heavenly, and nine is the largest single-digit odd number. The top tier, thought to symbolise heaven, contains nine rings of stones. Each ring has multiples of nine stones, so that the ninth ring has 81 stones. The middle tier – earth – has the 10th to 18th rings. The bottom tier – humanity – has the 19th to 27th rings. The number of stairs and balustrades are also multiples of nine. If you stand in the centre of the upper terrace and say something, the sound bounces off the marble balustrades, making your voice sound louder (by nine times?).

Echo Wall 回音壁

Just north of the altar, surrounding the Imperial Vault of Heaven, is the Echo Wall (Huíyīn Bì), 65m in diameter. Its form has unusual acoustic properties, enabling a whisper to travel clearly from one end to the other – unless a tour group gets in the way. In the courtyard are the **Triple-Sounds Stones** (三音石; Sānyīn Shí). It is said that if you clap or shout standing on the stones, the sound is echoed once from the first stone, twice from the second stone and thrice from the third stone. Queues can get long at this one.

Imperial Vault of Heaven 皇穹宇

The octagonal Imperial Vault of Heaven (Huáng Qióng Yǔ) was built at the same time as the Round Altar, and is structured along the same lines as the older Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. It used to contain spirit tablets used in the winter solstice ceremony.

Proceeding north from the Imperial Vault is a walkway called the **Red Stairway Bridge** (丹陛桥; Dānbì Qiáo), leading to the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests.

Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests 祈年殿

The crowning structure of the whole complex is the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests (Qinián Diàn), magnificently mounted on a three-tiered marble terrace and capped with a triple-eaved umbrella roof. Built in 1420, it was burnt to cinders in 1889 and heads rolled in apportioning blame (although lightning was the most likely cause). A faithful reproduction based on Ming architectural methods was erected the following year, the builders choosing Oregon fir for the support pillars, as explained by Lucian S Kirtland in *Finding the Worthwhile in the Orient* (1926):

When it was desired to rebuild the temple, and the Manchus were determined to copy in detail the building which had been destroyed, it was found that China's forests were bereft of timbers which could uphold the heavy tiled roof. After much argument with themselves, the necromancers of the court finally

decided that pine logs from the forests of Oregon would constitute proper feng-shui. This decision very happily corresponded with the best engineering advice, and the New World furnished the pillars which you now see.

The four central pillars symbolise the seasons, the 12 in the next ring denote the months of the year, and the 12 outer ones represent the day, broken into 12 'watches'. Embedded in the ceiling is a carved dragon, a symbol of royalty. The patterning, carving and gilt decoration of this ceiling and its swirl of colour is a dizzying sight.

All this is made more amazing by the fact that the wooden pillars ingeniously support the ceiling without nails or cement – quite an accomplishment for a building 38m high and 30m in diameter. The hall underwent large-scale restoration in 2006.

TIANANMEN SQUARE Map pp268-9

Tiānānmén Guǎngchǎng 天安门广场

☉ **Tiananmen Xi, Tiananmen Dong or Qianmen**
The world's largest public square at 440,000 sq metres, Tiananmen Square is a vast desert of paving stones at the heart of Běijīng and a poignant epitaph to China's hapless democracy movement. It may be a grandiose Maoist tourist trap, but there's more than enough space to stretch a leg. And the view can be breathtaking, especially on a clear day and at nightfall when the square is illuminated. Kites flit through the sky, children stamp around on the paving slabs and Chinese out-of-towners huddle together for the obligatory photo opportunity with the great helmsman's portrait. On National Day (1 October), Tiananmen Square is packed.

The square is laid out on a north-south axis. Threading through the **Front Gate** (p76) to the south, the square's meridian line is straddled by the **Chairman Mao Memorial Hall** (p75), cuts through the **Gate of Heavenly Peace** (Tiānānmén; p76) – the gate that lends its name to the square – to the north, and cleaves through the **Forbidden City** (p87).

In the square, one stands in the symbolic centre of the Chinese universe. The rectangular arrangement, flanked by halls to both

east and west, to some extent echoes the layout of the Forbidden City. As such, the square employs a conventional plan that pays obeisance to traditional Chinese culture, but its ornaments and buildings are largely Soviet-inspired. What is noticeable is the low level of the skyline – there are no high-rises here in the very centre of the city – which maximises the dome of the sky.

Tiananmen Square as we see it today is a modern creation and there is precious little sense of history. During Ming and Qing times part of the Imperial City Wall (皇城; Huángchéng) called the Thousand Foot Corridor (Qiānbù Láng) poked deep into the space today occupied by the square, enclosing a section of the imperial domain. The wall took the shape of a 'T', emerging from the two huge, and now absent, gates that rose up south of the Gate of Heavenly Peace – Chang'an Zuo Gate and Chang'an You Gate – before running south to the vanished Daming Gate (Daming Men). Called Daqing Gate during the Qing dynasty and Zhonghua Gate during the Republic, the Daming Gate had three watchtowers and upturned eaves and was guarded by a pair of stone lions. It was pulled down after 1949, a fate similarly reserved for Chang'an Zuo Gate and Chang'an You Gate. East and west of the Thousand Foot Corridor stood official departments and temples, including the Ministry of Rites, the Ministry of Revenue, Honglu Temple and Taichang Temple.

Mao conceived the square to project the enormity of the Communist Party, so it's all a bit Kim Il-Sungish. During the Cultural Revolution, the chairman, wearing a Red Guard armband, reviewed parades of up to a million people here. In 1976 another million people jammed the square to pay their last respects to Mao. In 1989 army tanks and soldiers forced pro-democracy demonstrators out of the square. Although it seems likely that no one was actually killed *within* the square itself, possibly thousands were slaughtered *outside* the square. Despite being a public place, the square remains more in the hands of the government than the people; it is monitored by closed circuit TV cameras, and plainclothes police are primed to paralyse the first twitch of dissent.

West of the **Great Hall of the People** (p77), the future **National Grand Theater** – with its controversial styling and out-of-place looks – was approaching completion at the time of

writing. Outside the China National Museum (p75), a LED clock counts down the seconds to the 2008 Olympic Games.

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

Unless you want a map you'll have to sidestep determined map-sellers and their confederates – the incessant learners of English – and just say no to the 'poor' art students press-ganging tourists to view their exhibitions; fending them off can be draining.

Bicycles cannot be ridden across Tiananmen Square (apparently tanks are OK), but you can walk your bike. Traffic is one way for north-south avenues on either side of the square.

BEIJING WANGFUJING PALEOLITHIC MUSEUM

Map pp268-9

Běijīng Wángfújīng Gǔrénlèi Wénhuà Yízhǐ Bówùguǎn
北京王府井古人类文化遗址博物馆

W1P3 Oriental Plaza, 1 Dongchang'an Jie; adult Y10;

☎ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun;

📍 Wangfujing

Archaeologists and anthropologists will be rewarded at this simple museum detailing the tools and relics (stone flakes, bone scrapers, fragments of bone etc) of Late Pleistocene Man who once inhabited Běijīng. The discoveries on display were unearthed during the construction of Oriental Plaza in 1996. To find the museum, take exit 'A' from the Wangfujing metro station.

WORKERS CULTURAL PALACE

Map pp268-9

Láodòng Rénmín Wénhuà Gōng
劳动人民文化宫

Northeast of the Gate of Heavenly Peace; adult Y2;

☎ 6.30am-7.30pm; 📍 Tiananmen Dong

On the Forbidden City's southeastern flank opposite Zhongshan Park and away from the frantic hubbub is the Workers Cultural

Palace. Despite the unappealing name, this was the emperor's premier place of worship, the **Supreme Temple** (太庙; Tàimiào). If you find the Forbidden City either too colossal or crowded, the temple halls here (all undergoing renovation at the time of writing) are a cheaper and more tranquil alternative; there is also a **tennis court** (☎ 6512 2856) here if you want to practise your backhand within earshot of the Forbidden City. The huge halls of the temple remain, their roofs enveloped in imperial yellow tiles, beyond a quiet grove of ancient cypresses and enclosed within the **Glazed Gate** (琉璃门; Liúli Mén). Rising up to the splendid **Front Hall**, the scene of imperial ceremonies of ancestor worship, are three flights of steps. Only gods could traverse the central plinth; the emperor was consigned to the left-hand flight. The plaque above the Front Hall is inscribed in both Chinese and Manchu. Sadly this hall, as well as the **Middle Hall** and **Rear Hall** behind, is inaccessible. As with Zhongshan Park, the northern perimeter of the park abuts the palace moat (*tóngzi hé*), where you can find a bench and park yourself in front of a fine view. Take the northwest exit from the park and find yourself just by the Forbidden City's Meridian Gate and point of entry to the palace.

XIANNONG ALTAR & BEIJING ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE MUSEUM

Map pp268-9

Xiānnóng Tán & Běijīng Gǔdài Jiānzù Bówùguǎn
先农坛、北京古代建筑博物馆

21 Dongjing Lu; admission Y15; ☎ 9am-4pm;

📍 Qianmen

Dating to 1420, this altar – to the west of the Temple of Heaven – was the site of solemn imperial ceremonies and sacrificial offerings. Glance at any pre-1949 map of Běijīng and you can gauge the massive scale of the altar; today, many of its original structures survive, but what remains is a tranquil and little-visited constellation of relics. Located within what is called the Hall of Jupiter (太岁殿; Tàisui Diàn) – the most magnificent surviving hall – is the excellent **Beijing Ancient Architecture Museum** (☎ 9am-4pm) which informatively narrates the elements of traditional Chinese building techniques. Brush up on your *dougong* brackets and *sūnmāo* joints, get the lowdown on Běijīng's courtyard houses, while eyeballing detailed models of standout temple halls and pagodas from across the land. English captions.

ZHONGSHAN PARK

Map pp268-9

Zhōngshān Gōngyuán 中山公园

West of Tiānānmén; adult Y3; ☎ 6am-9pm;

📍 Tiananmen Xi

This pleasant park sits west of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, with a section hedging up against the Forbidden City moat. A refreshing prologue or conclusion to the magnificence of the adjacent imperial residence, the park was formerly the sacred Ming-style Altar to the God of the Land and the God of Grain (Shèjītán), where the emperor offered sacrifices. The square **altar** (*wúsè tǔ*) remains, bordered on all sides by walls tiled in various colours. Near the park entrance stands a towering dark blue tiled *páilou* (decorative archway) with triple eaves that originally commemorated the German Foreign Minister Baron von Ketteler, killed by Boxers in 1900. In the eastern section of the park is the **Forbidden City Concert Hall** (p150). Take the northeastern exit from the park and find yourself by the Forbidden City's **Meridian Gate**; from here you can reach the **Supreme Temple** and the **Workers Cultural Palace** (opposite).

DŌNGCHÉNG 东城

Eating p127; Shopping p164; Sleeping p182

Bounded to the north and east by the Second Ring Rd and by Chang'an Jie to the south, Dōngchéng (East City) is one of Běijīng's most historic districts. Formerly marking the centre of Yuan dynasty Běijīng, a city whose east-west axis later shifted south, the Drum and Bell Towers rise up from an area riddled with charming *hútòng* and lanes. In fact, *hútòng* crisscross the entire district, and wandering in the resulting maze is one of the best ways to appreciate the city.

The centrepiece of this district, however, is the Forbidden City, which forms a massive and imperious chunk of the southwest. At the heart of the former Imperial City (a large part of which belongs to Dōngchéng), the rectangular outline of the imperial palace and its moat imprints itself on the rest of Dōngchéng. Progressively larger squares and parallelograms of streets radiate out from the Forbidden City, culminating in the boxlike boundary of the Second Ring Rd.

The top right corner of the old Imperial City, the eastern boundary of which ran along Donghuangchenggen Nanjie and Donghuangchenggen Beijie and then west along Dianmen Dongdajie and Dianmen

Kidajie, is in Dōngchéng. None of the four gates of the Imperial City Wall survive, but a few fragments of Dongan Men (p86) can be seen near the Forbidden City's east gate (Donghua Men). Also part of the erstwhile Imperial City, Jingshan Park and Beihai Park have strong imperial connections. Qianhai Lake, across the road north from Beihai Park, lay just outside the Imperial City. The area around the lake, which is also called Shíchàhǎi (Sea of the Ten Buddhist Temples, presumably denoting the shrines that once stood here), has developed an ever-growing bar and café industry thriving on its picturesque and historic ambience.

Běijīng's finest temple, the Lama Temple, lies just within the Second Ring Rd to the northeast, and a short walk south is Běijīng's Confucius Temple.

Dōngchéng also hosts Běijīng's premier shopping street: Wangfujing Dajie, with its host of top-name shops and malls.

BEIHAI PARK Map p262

Běihǎi Gōngyuán 北海公园

Northwest of the Forbidden City; adult Y5, through ticket to sights Y20; ☎ 6.30am-8pm, buildings to 4pm; ☉ Tiananmen Xi, then 🚶 5

A relaxing opportunity to amble about, grab a snack, sip a beer, rent a rowing boat, or admire calligraphers scribbling Chinese characters on paving slabs with water and fat brushes, Beihai Park is largely lake, or more specifically the lake of Beihai (which literally means 'North Sea'). The associated South and Middle Seas to the south together lend their name to the nerve centre of the Communist Party west of the Forbidden City, Zhōngnánhǎi.

The park, covering an area of 68 hectares, was the former playground of the Yuan emperors. Jade Islet in the lower middle is composed of the heaped earth scooped out to create the lake – some attribute this to Kublai Khan.

The site is associated with the Great Khan's palace, the navel of Běijīng before the Forbidden City replaced it. All that remains of the Khan's court is a large jar made of green jade dating from 1265 in the Round City (Tuán Chéng; admission Y1) near the park's southern entrance. Also within the Round City is the Chengguang Hall (Chéngguāng Diàn), where a white jade statue of Sakyamuni from Myanmar can be found, its arm wounded by the allied forces

that entered Běijīng in 1900 to quash the Boxer Rebellion.

Dominating Jade Islet on the lake, the 36m-high White Dagoba was originally built in 1651 for a visit by the Dalai Lama, and was rebuilt in 1741. You can reach the dagoba through the Yongan Temple (included in the through ticket). Enter the temple through the Hall of the Heavenly Kings, past the Drum and Bell Towers to the Hall of the Wheel of the Law, with its central effigy of Sakyamuni and flanked by Bodhisattvas and 18 *luóhàn*. At the rear is a bamboo grove and a steep flight of steps up through a decorative archway, emblazoned with the characters 'Long Guang' on one side. Head up the steps to the Zhengjue Hall, which contains a statue of Milefo and Weituo. Pu'an Hall, the next hall, houses a statue of Tsong Khapa, founder of the Yellow Hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism, flanked by statues of the fifth Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. Eight golden effigies on either flank include Tantric statues and the goddess Heinümu, adorned with a necklace of skulls. The final flight of steep steps brings you to the dagoba.

On the northeastern shore of the islet is the handsome, double-tiered Painted Gallery (Huàláng). Near the boat dock is the Fangshan Restaurant (p131), a restaurant that prepares imperial recipes favoured by Empress Cixi, who was partial to 120-course dinners with about 30 kinds of desserts.

Xitiān Fānjīng, on the lake's northern shore, is one of the city's most interesting temples (admission is included in your park ticket). Taichi (*tàijiquán*) practitioners can frequently be seen practising outside the main entrance. The first hall, the Hall of the Heavenly Kings, takes you past Milefo, Weituo and the four Heavenly Kings. The Dacizhenru Hall dates to the Ming dynasty and contains three huge statues of Sakyamuni, the Amithaba Buddha and Yaoshi Fo (Medicine Buddha). The golden statue of Guanyin at the rear is sadly unapproachable. The hall is supported by huge wooden pillars (*nánmù*), and you can make out where the original stone pillars existed. At the very rear of the temple is a glazed pavilion and a huge hall that are both unfortunately out of bounds.

The nearby Nine Dragon Screen (Jiǔlóng Bì; included in the through ticket), a 5m-high and 27m-long spirit wall, is a glimmering stretch of coloured glazed tiles.

BELL TOWER Map p262

Zhōnglóu 钟楼

9 Zhonglouwan Linzi, north end Dianmenwai Dajie; adult Y15; ☎ 9am-5pm; 🚶 5, 58 or 107

Fronted by a Qing dynasty stele, the Bell Tower – originally built in 1272 – sits along an alley directly north behind the Drum Tower. The tower burnt down during the reign of Yongle and was rebuilt in 1420, only to succumb once again to flames; the present tower dates to 1745. Clamber up the steep steps and marvel at its massive bell (Chinese bells have no clappers but are instead struck with a stout pole), weighing 63 tons and suspended within a pleasantly unrestored interior. Augment visits with rooftop drinks at the Drum & Bell (p142), located between its namesake towers.

CHINA ART MUSEUM Map p262

Zhōngguó Měishùguǎn 中国美术馆

☎ 6401 7076/2252; 1 Wusi Dajie; adult Y5;

☎ 9am-5pm, last entry 4pm; 🚶 103, 104, 106 or 108 to Meishu Guan stop

This revamped museum has received a healthy shot of imagination and flair, with absorbing exhibitions from abroad promising doses of colour and vibrancy. Běijīng's art lovers have lapped up some top notch presentations here, from the cream of Italian design to modern artworks from the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, the latter offering a chance to compare contemporary mainland Chinese art – with its burdensome political baggage and endlessly recurring themes – with the light-footed, invigorating and more universalist conceptions from the island across from Fújiàn. English captions can be sporadic, but this is a first-rate place to see modern art from China and abroad and, just as importantly, to watch the Chinese looking at art. Lifts allow for disabled access.

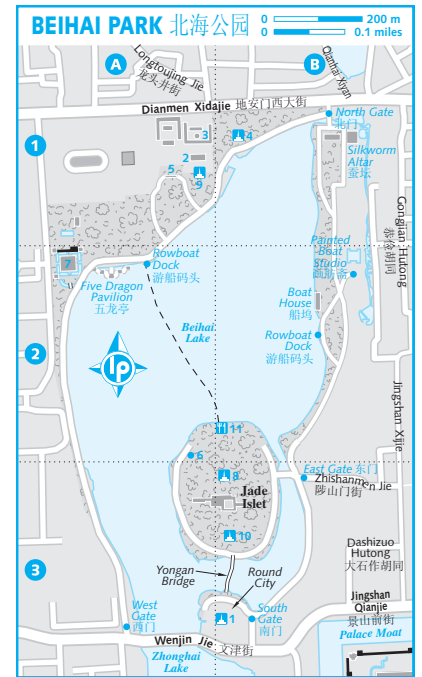
CONFUCIUS TEMPLE & IMPERIAL COLLEGE Map p262

Kǒng Miào & Guó zǐ jiàn 孔庙、国子监

13 Guozijian Jie; adult Y10; ☎ 8.30am-5pm;

☉ Yonghegong

Long neglected like a discarded piece of unloved bric-a-brac, the arid Confucius Temple offers a quiet sanctuary from Běijīng's congested, smoggy streets and snarling traffic. In a bid to clear the dust



SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Chengguang Hall 承光殿.....	1	B3
Dacizhenru Hall 大慈真如殿.....	2	A1
Glazed Pavilion 琉璃阁.....	3	A1
Jingxin House 静心斋.....	4	B1
Nine Dragon Screen 九龙壁.....	5	A1
Pavilion of Calligraphy 阅古楼.....	6	A2
Small Western Paradise 小西天.....	7	A2
White Dagoba 白塔.....	8	B3
Xitiān Fānjīng 西天梵境.....	9	A1
Yongan Temple 永安寺.....	10	B3

EATING

Fangshan Restaurant 仿膳饭庄.....	11	B2
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that perennially swathes its cypresses and pavilions, China's second largest Confucian temple has restored its main hall, which houses a statue of the sage, Kongzi (Confucius). Some of Běijīng's last remaining *pailou* bravely survive in the *hutong* outside (Guozijian Jie).

Many of the temple's stele pavilions are bricked up alongside gnarled cypresses that claw at the sky. At the rear, a forest of 190 stelae records the 13 Confucian classics in 630,000 Chinese characters. Also inscribed on stelae are the names of successful candidates of the highest level of the official Confucian examination system. It was the

ambition of every scholar to see his name engraved here, but it wasn't easy. Each candidate was locked in one of about 8000 cubicles, measuring roughly 1.5 sq metres, for a period of three days. Many died or went insane during their incarceration.

Like everywhere in town, skeletons lurk in the temple cupboard and a distasteful footnote lurks unrecorded between the tourist blurb. Běijīng writer Lao She (p93) was dragged here in August 1966, forced to his knees in front of a bonfire of Beijing opera costumes to confess his anti-revolutionary crimes, and beaten. The much-loved writer drowned himself the next day in Taiping Lake.

West of the Confucius Temple stands the Imperial College (Guózǐjiān), where the emperor expounded the Confucian classics to an audience of thousands of kneeling students, professors and court officials – an annual rite. Built by the grandson of Kublai Khan in 1306, the former college was the supreme academy during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. On the site is a marvelous glazed, three-gate, single-eaved decorative archway, called a *liúli páifāng* (glazed archway). The Biyong Hall beyond is a twin-roofed structure with yellow tiles surrounded by a moat and topped with a gold knob.

Religious artefact and souvenir shops are scattered around the vicinity of the Lama Temple (p91) and Guozijian Jie, stocking effigies of Buddhist deities and Bodhisattvas along with Buddhist keepsakes and talismans (*hùshēnfú*).

COURTYARD GALLERY Map pp258-9

四合院画廊

☎ 6526 8882; www.courtyard-gallery.com; 319 Caochangdi, Chaoyang; admission free; ☎ 735 or 402 Recently relocated from its famous location in the basement of the namesake restaurant (p131) just east of the Forbidden City, this gallery is a trendy component of the flourishing contemporary art scene in Caochandi, a few kilometres northeast of the 798 Art District (p103).

DITAN PARK Map p262

Ditán Gōngyuán 地坛公园

East of Andingmenwai Dajie; park Y2, altar Y5;

☎ 6am-9pm; 📍 Yonghegong

Cosmologically juxtaposed with the Temple of Heaven (Tiāntán; p79), the Altar of the

Moon (Yuètán), the Altar of the Sun (Ritán; p95) and the Altar to the God of the Land and the God of Grain (Shèjītán; p83), Ditán is the Temple of the Earth. The park, site of imperial sacrifices to the Earth God, lacks the splendour of the Temple of Heaven Park but is worth a stroll if you've just been to nearby Lama Temple. During Chinese New Year, a temple fair is held here, and in winter, a sparkling ice festival is staged. The park's large altar (*fāngzé tán*) is square in shape, symbolising the earth. Within the park, the art gallery **One Moon** (Yiyuè Dāngdài Yìshù; ☎ 6427 7748; www.onemoonart.com; 📍 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) displays thoughtful contemporary Chinese art from a 16th-century-dynasty temple hall, a funky meeting of the Ming and the modern. If visiting the art gallery alone (admission free), the entrance fee to the park should be waived.

DONGAN MEN REMAINS Map p262

Míng Huáng Chéng Dōngānmén Yìzhǐ

明皇城东安门遗址

Imperial Wall Foundation Ruins Park, intersection of Donghuamen Dajie & Beiheyuan Dajie; 📍 24 hr;

📍 Tiananmen Dong

In an excavated pit on Beiheyuan Dajie sits a pitiful stump, all that remains of the magnificent Dongan Men, the east gate of the Imperial City. Before being razed, the gate was a single-eaved, seven-bay wide building with a hip and gable roof capped with yellow tiles. The remnants of the gate – just two layers of 18 bricks – may make for dull viewing but of more interest are the accompanying bricks of the excavated **Ming dynasty road** that used to run near Dongan Men. The road is around 2m lower than the current road level, its expertly made bricks typical of precisely engineered Ming dynasty brickwork. The remains are located in the **Imperial Wall Foundation Ruins Park**, a thin strip of park that follows much of the course of the eastern side of the Imperial City Wall.

DRUM TOWER Map p262

Gǔlóu 鼓楼

Gulou Dongdajie; adult Y20; 📍 9am-5.30pm;

📍 5, 58 or 107

The Drum Tower was first built in 1272 and marked the centre of the old Mongol capital Dàdū. Originally constructed of wood, the structure went up in flames and was rebuilt in 1420, since then it has been repeatedly

destroyed and restored. Stagger up the incredibly steep steps for wide-ranging views over Běijīng's rooftops. The drums of this later Ming dynasty version were beaten to mark the hours of the day – in effect the Big Ben of Běijīng. Time was kept with a water clock and an idiosyncratic system of time divisions. On view is a large collection of drums, including the large and dilapidated **Night Watchman's Drum** (*gēnggǔ*; *gēng* being one of the five two-hour divisions of the night) and a big array of reproduction drums. Originally there were 25 watch drums here, and damage to the drums is blamed on allied forces that quelled the Boxers back in 1900. There is also an analysis of the ancient Chinese seasonal divisions and an exhibition relating to old Běijīng. When ascending or descending the Drum Tower, watch out for slippery steps.

FORBIDDEN CITY Map p262

Zǐjīn Chéng 紫禁城

☎ 6513 2255; www.dpm.org.cn; adult Y40 Nov-Mar, Y60 Apr-Oct, Clock Exhibition Hall & Hall of Jewellery Y10 each; 📍 8.30am-4pm May-Sep, 8.30am-3.30pm Oct-Apr; 📍 Tiananmen Xi or Tiananmen Dong

The magnificent Forbidden City, so called because it was off limits to commoners for 500 years, occupies a primary position in the Chinese psyche. To the Han Chinese, the Forbidden City is a contradictory symbol. It's a politically incorrect yarn from a pre-revolutionary dark age, but it's also one spun from the very pinnacle of Chinese civilisation. It's not therefore surprising that more violent forces during the Cultural Revolution wanted to trash the place. Perhaps hearing the distant tinkle of the tourist dollar, Premier Zhou Enlai did the right thing by stepping in to keep the Red Guards at bay.

This gargantuan palace complex – China's largest and best preserved cluster of ancient buildings – sheltered two dynasties of emperors, the Ming and the Qing, who didn't stray from their pleasure dome unless they absolutely had to. A bell jar dropped over the whole spectacle maintaining a highly rarefied atmosphere that nourished its elitist community. A stultifying code of rules, protocol and superstition deepened its other-worldliness, perhaps typified by its twittering band of eunuchs. From here the emperors governed China, often erratically and haphazardly, with authority occasionally drifting

into the hands of opportunistic court officials and eunuchs. It wasn't until 1911 that revolution eventually came knocking at the huge doors, bringing with it the last orders for the Manchu Qing and dynastic rule.

Its mystique diffused (the Běijīng authorities insist on prosaically calling the complex the Palace Museum or *gùgōng bówùguǎn*; 故宫博物院), entry to the palace is no longer prohibited. In former ages the price for uninvited admission would have been instant death; these days Y40-60 will do.

Ignore unscrupulous characters who insist that you must have an official guide to see the palace; it isn't true. For Y40, rent a funky automatically activated audio tour instead.

Don't confuse the Gate of Heavenly Peace (p76) with the Forbidden City entrance. Some visitors purchase a Gate of Heavenly Peace admission ticket by mistake, not realising that this admits you only to the upstairs portion of the gate. The Forbidden City ticket booths are on either side of the Meridian Gate – walk north until you can't walk any further without paying and you will spot the queues nearby.

Restaurants and, controversially, a branch of Starbucks can be found within the Forbidden City, as well as toilets. Exterior photography is no problem, but photographing the interior of halls is often prohibited. Wheelchairs (Y500 deposit) are free to use as are strollers (Y300 deposit). At the time of writing, several palace halls, including the Gate of Supreme Harmony, were undergoing restoration and were inaccessible, shrouded and out of view.

History

Constructed on the site of a palace dating to Kublai Khan and the Mongol Yuan dynasty, the Ming emperor Yongle established the basic layout of the Forbidden City between 1406 and 1420. The grandiose emperor employed battalions of labourers and crafts workers – by some estimates there may have been up to a million of them – to build it. The palace lay at the heart of the Imperial City, a much larger, walled enclosure reserved for the use of the emperor and his personnel. The wall enclosing the Forbidden City – assembled from 12 million bricks – is the last intact surviving city wall in Běijīng.

Most of the buildings you see now are post-18th century: the largely wooden palace was a tinderbox and fire was a constant hazard – a lantern festival combined with a

sudden gust of Gobi wind would easily send flames dancing in unexpected directions, as would a fireworks display. Fires were also deliberately lit by court eunuchs and officials who could get rich off the repair bills.

It wasn't just the buildings that went up in flames, but also rare books, paintings and calligraphy. Libraries and other palace halls and buildings housing combustible contents were tiled in black; the colour represents water in the five-element (*wuxing*) theory, and its symbolic presence was thought to prevent conflagrations. In the 20th century there were two major lootings of the palace by Japanese forces and the Kuomintang. Thousands of crates of relics were removed and carted off to Taiwan, where they remain on display in Taipei's National Palace Museum (worth seeing). Some say this was just as well, since the Cultural Revolution reduced much of China's precious artwork to confetti.

Layout

Ringed by a picturesque 52m-wide moat that freezes over in winter, the palace is so un-speakably big (over 1 million sq metres, with 800 buildings and 9000 rooms) that a permanent restoration squad circulates, repainting and repairing. It takes about 10 years to do a full renovation, by which time they have to start repairs again. Many halls have been repainted in a way that the original pigment is concealed; other halls such as the **Hall of Mental Cultivation** (Yǎngxīn Diàn), however, are more faithful to their former selves. And despite the attentions of restorers, some of the hall rooftops still sprout tufts of grass.

Even though less than half of the palace (430,000 sq metres) is actually open to visitors and it is possible to explore the Forbidden City in a few hours, a full day will keep

you fully occupied and the enthusiast will make several trips. Whatever you do, don't miss the delightful courtyards, pavilions and mini-museums within them on each side of the main complex.

The palace's ceremonial buildings lie on the north-south axis of the Forbidden City, from the **Gate of Heavenly Peace** in the south to **Divine Military Genius Gate** (Shénwū Mén) to the north.

Restored in the 17th century, **Meridian Gate** (Wǔ Mén) is a massive portal that in former times was reserved for the use of the emperor. Gongs and bells would sound imperial comings and goings, while lesser mortals used lesser gates: the military used the west gate, civilians the east gate. The emperor also reviewed his armies from here, passed judgment on prisoners, announced the new year's calendar and oversaw the flogging of troublesome ministers.

Through the **Meridian Gate**, **Xihe Gate** (Xīhé Mén) to your left leads to a pleasantly green expanse that offers a definitive contrast with much of the rest of the palace grounds that overwhelmingly concerns itself with the affairs of man and heaven. The recently restored **Hall of Military Prowess** (Wǔyīng Diàn) contains a collection of Ming dynasty paintings and literature.

The **Golden Stream** (Jīn Shuǐ), delightfully fringed by willows, runs through here and into the courtyard in front of the **Gate of Supreme Harmony** (Tàihé Mén) where it is shaped to resemble a Tartar bow and spanned by five marble bridges. The dwarfing courtyard could hold an imperial audience of 100,000 people. At the time of writing the majesty of the gate was neutralised by the scaffolding and green awning completely enveloping the gate, but this should be down by 2008.

Raised on a three-tier marble terrace with balustrades are the **Three Great Halls** (Sān

Dàdiàn), the heart of the Forbidden City. The **Hall of Supreme Harmony** (Tàihé Diàn) is the most important and the largest structure in the Forbidden City. Built in the 15th century and restored in the 17th century, it was used for ceremonial occasions, such as the emperor's birthday, the nomination of military leaders and coronations. Bronze vats – once full of water for dousing fires – stand in front of the hall; in all 308 such vats were dotted around the Forbidden City with fires lit under them in winter to keep them from freezing over. The large bronze turtle in the front symbolises longevity and stability. It has a removable lid, and on special occasions incense was lit inside it so that smoke billowed from its mouth. Within the **Hongyi Pavilion** (Hóngyì Gé) to the west is an exhibition of the ceremonial music system of the imperial palace.

To the west of the terrace is a small pavilion with a bronze grain measure and to the east is a sundial; both are symbolic of imperial justice. On the corners of the hall's roof, as with other buildings in the city, there's a mounted figure with his retreat cut off by mythical and actual animals, a story relating to a cruel tyrant hanged from one such eave.

Inside the Hall of Supreme Harmony is a richly decorated **Dragon Throne** (Lóngyǐ) from which the emperor would preside over trembling officials. The entire court had to touch the floor nine times with their foreheads (the custom known as kowtowing) in the emperor's presence. At the back of the throne is a carved Xumishan, the Buddhist paradise, signifying the throne's supremacy.

Behind the Hall of Supreme Harmony is the smaller **Hall of Middle Harmony** (Zhōnghé Diàn), which was used as the emperor's transit lounge. Here he would make last-minute preparations, rehearse speeches and receive close ministers. On display are two Qing dynasty sedan chairs, the emperors' mode of transport around the Forbidden City. The last of the Qing emperors, Puyi, used a bicycle and altered a few features of the palace grounds to make it easier to get around.

The third hall is the **Hall of Preserving Harmony** (Bǎohé Diàn), used for banquets and later for imperial examinations. The hall has no support pillars, and to its rear is a 250-tonne marble imperial carriage carved with dragons and clouds, which was transported into Běijīng on an ice path. The emperor was conveyed over the carriage in his sedan chair as he ascended or descended the

terrace. The outer housing surrounding the Three Great Halls was used for storing gold, silver, silks, carpets and other treasures.

Halls west of the Three Great Halls exhibit treasures from the palace. Running from south to north the exhibitions cover: **scientific instruments** (astronomical devices, telescopes etc) and details of Jesuit scientists who attended the Qing court, **articles of daily use** (including imperial hunting guns, chessboards and ceramics), **objects presented as tribute** and **objects made by the imperial workshop**.

The basic configuration of the Three Great Halls is echoed by the next group of buildings. Smaller in scale, these buildings were more important in terms of real power, which in China traditionally lies at the back door or, in this case, the back gate.

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

Immediately behind it is the **Hall of Union** (Jiāotài Diàn), which contains a clepsydra – a water clock made in 1745 with five bronze vessels and a calibrated scale. There's also a mechanical clock built in 1797 and a collection of imperial jade seals on display.

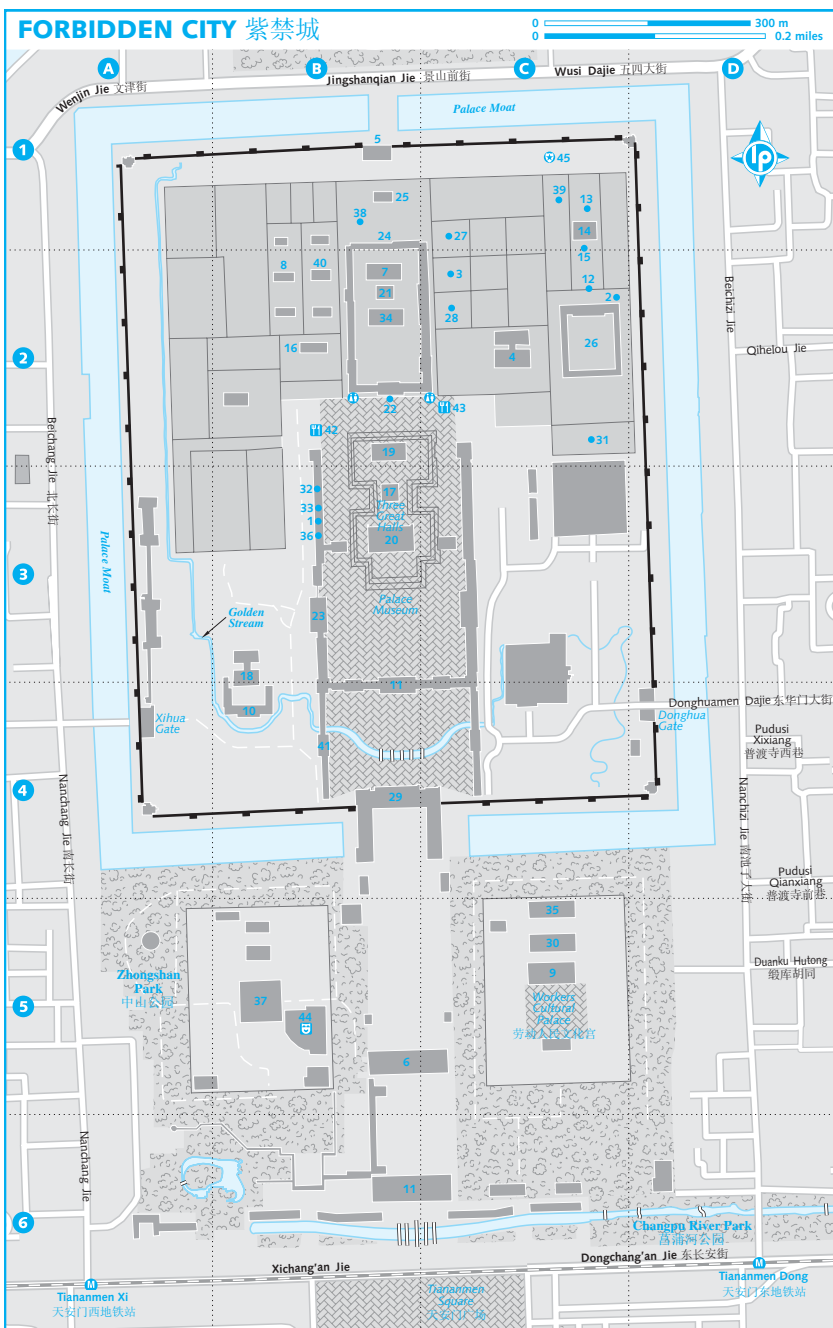
At the northern end of the Forbidden City is the **Imperial Garden** (Yù Huāyuán), a classical Chinese garden with 7000 sq metres of fine landscaping, including rockeries, walkways, pavilions and ancient, carbuncular and deformed cypresses. Before you reach the large Divine Military Genius Gate (Shénwū Mén), note the pair of **bronze elephants** whose front knees bend in an anatomically impossible fashion.

The western and eastern sides of the Forbidden City are the palatial former living quarters, once containing libraries, temples, theatres, gardens and even the tennis court of the last emperor. Walk east and you can access the **Hall of Jewellery** (Zhēnbǎo Guǎn; admission ¥10; ☎ 8.30am-4pm summer, 8.30am-3.30pm winter), tickets for which also entitle you to glimpse the **Well of Concubine Zhen** (Zhēn Fēi Jǐng), into which the namesake wretch was thrown on the orders of Cixi, and the glazed **Nine Dragon Screen** (Jiǔlóng Bǐ). The treasures on view are fascinating: within the **Hall of Harmony** (Yíhé Xuān) sparkle Buddhist statues fashioned from gold and inlaid with gems, and a gold pagoda glittering with precious stones, followed by jade, jadeite, lapis lazuli and crystal

TRANSPORT

Subway Line 2: The Yonghegong stop serves the Lama Temple and the Confucius Temple, and Ditan Park is a short walk north. Line 5: Still under construction at the time of writing, the north-south Line 5 intersects with Line 2 at Yonghegong in the north and Dongdan in the south, running through Dengshikou, Dongsí, Zhangzishonglu and Beixinqiao.

Bus The double-decker bus 2 runs along Dongdan Beidajie, Dongsí Nandajie and Dongsí Beidajie to the Confucius and Lama Temples; bus 5 travels from Deshengmen to the Bell Tower, down to Dianmen Xidajie and Jingshan Houjie (for Jingshan Park), on to Beihai Park and Xihua Men (west gate of the Forbidden City), before heading further south to Zhongshan Park and Qianmen; bus 13 runs from the Lama Temple along Dianmen Xidajie to Beihai Park; bus 103 runs from Sundongan Plaza on Wangfujing Dajie to Dengshikou, on to the China Art Museum, the Forbidden City, Jingshan Park and Beihai Park; bus 107 runs from Beihai Park to the Drum Tower then along to Jiadaokou Dongdajie to Dongzhimen subway station.



SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Articles of Daily Use Exhibition 清宮皇家用物	1	B3
Changyin Pavilion 暢音閣	2	C2
Chengqian Hall 承乾宮	3	C2
Clock Exhibition Hall (Fengxian Hall) 钟表馆 (奉先殿)	4	C2
Divine Military Genius Gate 神武門	5	B1
Duan Gate 端門	6	B5
Earthy Tranquility Palace 坤寧宮	7	B2
Eternal Spring Palace 長春宮	8	B2
Front Hall 太廟	9	C5
Gate of Military Prowess 武英門	10	B4
Gate of Supreme Harmony 太和門	11	B4
Hall of Character Cultivation 養心殿	12	C2
Hall of Harmony 頤和軒	13	C1
Hall of Jewellery 珍寶館	14	C1
Hall of Joyful Longevity 樂壽堂	15	C1
Hall of Mental Cultivation 養心殿	16	B2
Hall of Middle Harmony 中和殿	17	B3
Hall of Military Prowess 武英殿	18	B3
Hall of Preserving Harmony 保和殿	19	B2
Hall of Supreme Harmony 太和殿	20	B3
Hall of Union 交泰殿	21	B2
Heavenly Purity Gate 乾清門	22	B2
Hongyi Pavilion 弘義閣	23	B3
Imperial Garden 御花園	24	B1
Imperial Peace Hall 欽安殿	25	B1
Imperial Supremacy Hall 皇極殿	26	C2
Jadeware Exhibition (Zhongcui Hall) 玉器馆 (钟粹宫)	27	C1
Jingren Hall 景仁宮	28	C2
Meridian Gate 午門	29	B4
Middle Hall 中殿	30	C5
Nine Dragon Screen 九龍壁	31	C2
Objects made by the Imperial Workshop Exhibition 清宮御制文物	32	B3
Objects Presented as Tribute Exhibition 貢奉清帝器物	33	B3
Palace of Heavenly Purity 乾清宮	34	B2
Rear Hall 後殿	35	C5
Scientific Instruments Exhibition 清宮科技器物	36	B3
Square Altar 五色土	37	B5
Thousand Autumns Pavilion 千秋亭	38	B1
Well of Concubine Zhen 珍妃井	39	C1
Western Palaces 宮廷史迹陳列	40	B2
Xihe Gate 熙和門	41	B4
EATING 吃		
Restaurant 餐厅	42	B2
Starbucks 星巴克	43	C2
ENTERTAINMENT 玩		
Forbidden City Concert Hall 中山公園音樂堂	44	B5
INFORMATION 信息		
Police Station 派出所	45	C1

pieces displayed in the Hall of Joyful Longevity (Lèshòu Táng). Further objects are displayed within the Hall of Character Cultivation (Yǎngxíng Diàn), but at the time of writing the further sequence of halls to the south was empty. The Changyin Pavilion (Chàngyīn Gé) to the east was formerly an imperial stage.

The Clock Exhibition Hall (Zhōngbiǎo Guǎn) is one of the unmissable highlights of the

Forbidden City. Located at the time of writing in the Fengxian Hall (Fèngxian Diàn), the exhibition contains an astonishing array of elaborate timepieces, many gifts to the Qing emperors from overseas. Many of the 18th-century examples are crafted by James Cox or Joseph Williamson (both of London) and imported through Guǎngdōng from England; others are from Switzerland, America and Japan. Exquisitely wrought, fashioned with magnificently designed elephants and other creatures, they all display astonishing artfulness and attention to detail. Standout clocks include the 'Gilt Copper Astronomy Clock' equipped with a working model of the solar system and the automaton-equipped 'Gilt Copper Clock with a robot writing Chinese characters with a brush'. The Qing court must surely have been amazed by their ingenuity. Time your arrival with 11am or 2pm to see the clock performance in which choice timepieces strike the hour and give a display to wide-eyed children and adults.

JINGSHAN PARK Map p262

Jingshān Gōngyuán 景山公園

Jingshan Qianjie; adult Y2; ☎ 6am-9.30pm;

📍 Tiananmen Xi, then 🚶 5

Known as Coal Hill by Westerners during legation days, Jingshan Park was shaped from the earth excavated to create the moat of the Forbidden City. The hill supposedly protects the palace from the evil spirits – or dust storms – from the north. Clamber to the top for a magnificent panorama of the capital and princely views over the russet roofing of the Forbidden City.

On the eastern side of the park a locust tree stands in the place where the last of the Ming emperors, Chongzhen, hung himself as rebels swarmed at the city walls.

LAMA TEMPLE Map p262

Yōnghé Gōng 雍和宮

28 Yonghegong Dajie; adult Y25, audio guide Y20;

🕒 9am-4pm; 📍 Yonghegong

With three richly worked archways and five main halls (each one taller than the preceding one), revolving prayer wheels, multi-coloured glaze tiles, magnificent Chinese lions, tantric statuettes and hall boards decorated with Mongolian, Manchu, Tibetan and Chinese, the Lama Temple is Běijīng's most magnificent Buddhist temple.

The temple was once the official residence of Count Yin Zhen who became emperor in 1723 and traded up to the Forbidden City. His name was changed to Yongzheng, and his former residence became Yonghe Palace (Yǒnghé Gōng). In 1744 it was converted into a lamasery and became home to legions of monks from Mongolia and Tibet.

In 1792 the Emperor Qianlong, having quelled an uprising in Tibet, instituted a new administrative system involving two golden vases. One was kept at the renowned Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, to be employed for determining the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, and the other was kept at the Lama Temple for the lottery used for choosing the next Panchen Lama. The Lama Temple thus assumed a new importance in ethnic minority control.

The first hall, **Lokapala**, houses a statue of the future Buddha, Maitreya, flanked by celestial guardians. The statue facing the back door is Weituo, guardian of Buddhism, carved from sandalwood. In the courtyard beyond is a pond with a bronze mandala depicting Xumishan, the Buddhist paradise.

The second hall, the huge **Yonghe Hall** (Yǒnghé Diàn), presents worshippers with a trinity of gilded effigies representing the past, present and future Buddhas.

The third hall, **Yongyou Hall** (Yǒngyòu Diàn), has statues of the Buddha of Longevity and the Buddha of Medicine (to the left).

The **Hall of the Wheel of the Law** (Fǎlún Diàn) further north contains a large bronze statue of a benign and smiling Tsong Khapa (1357-1419), founder of the Gelukpa or Yellow Hat sect, robed in yellow and illuminated by sunlight from above.

The final hall, **Wanfu Pavilion** (Wǎnfú Gé), has a stupendous 18m-high statue of the Maitreya Buddha in his Tibetan form, clothed in yellow satin and reputedly sculpted from a single block of sandalwood. Each of the Bodhisattva's toes is the size of a pillow. You may find yourself transported to Tibet, where the wood for this statue originated, thanks to the smoke curling up from yak butter lamps. Galleries can be seen above, but they sadly cannot be climbed up to. Behind the statue is the **Vault of Avalokiteshvara**, from where a diminutive and blue-faced statue of Guanyin peeks out. The Wanfu Pavilion is linked by an overhead walkway to the **Yansui Pavilion** (Yánsuǐ Gé), which encloses around a huge lotus flower that revolves to reveal an effigy of the longevity Buddha.

An enthralling conclusion to the temple is the collection of bronze Tibetan Buddhist statues within the Jiētái Ló'u. Most effigies

date from the Qing dynasty, from languorous renditions of Green Tara and White Tara to exotic, tantric pieces (such as Samvara) and figurines of the fierce-looking Mahakala.

Photography is not permitted inside the temple buildings but a mini Lama Temple VCD comes free with your ticket. English-speaking guides can be found in the office to the left of the entrance gate or loitering near the temple entrance. The street outside the temple entrance heaves with shops piled high with statues of Buddha, talismans, Buddhist charms and keepsakes, picked over by pilgrims. Exiting the temple and walking east along Xilou Hutong brings you to the former **Bailin Temple** (Map p262; 1 Xilou Hutong) at the bend in the alley, its temple halls now converted to offices and its northernmost wall still daubed with the outline of Maoist slogans.

LAO SHE MUSEUM Map p262

Lǎo Shě Jìniànguǎn 老舍纪念馆

☎ 6559 9218; 19 Fengfu Hutong, off Dengshikou Xijie; adult ¥10; 🕒 9am-5pm; 📍 Tiananmen Dong This modest courtyard museum is dedicated to one of Běijīng's most popular 20th-century writers. Author of *Rickshaw Boy* and *Tea House*, and former teacher at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Lao She (1899-1966) tragically committed suicide by throwing himself into a Běijīng lake during the Cultural Revolution (whispers of murder continue). Captions are largely in Chinese, but a large number of first editions are on view, along with photos and personal effects, and Lao She's courtyard home is brimful of simple charm.

MAO DUN FORMER RESIDENCE

Map p262

Máo Dùn Gùjū 茅盾故居

☎ 6404 4089; 13 Houyuan Ensi Hutong, off Jiaodaokou Nandajie; adult ¥5; 🕒 9am-4pm Tue, Thu & Sat; 📍 Andingmen

Deep in the heart of the historic *hùtóng* quadrant southeast of the Drum and Bell Towers is this small and unassuming museum. Mao Dun was the pen name of Shen Yanbing (1896-1981), who was born into an elite family in Zhèjiāng province but educated in Běijīng. In 1920 he helped found the Literary Study Society, an association promoting literary realism. Mao Dun joined the League of Left Wing Writers in

TOP FIVE BĚIJĪNG TEMPLES

- Step into another world at Běijīng's most distinctive Taoist temple, **Dongyue Temple** (p94).
- Relish the colourful pageant of the **Lama Temple** (p91), Běijīng's largest Buddhist temple.
- Weigh up the mysteries of the awesome **Temple of Heaven** (p79).
- Flee the Běijīng traffic and retire to the **Confucius Temple** (p85).
- Make a foray into the huge **White Cloud Temple** (p97) and enter a universe of Taoist myth, faith and superstition.

1930, becoming solidly entrenched in the bureaucracy after the communists came to power. He lay low during the Cultural Revolution, but briefly returned to writing in the 1970s. The museum is typically parsimonious and low-key.

ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH Map p262

Dōng Táng 东堂

74 Wangfujing Dajie; ☎ 6.30-7am Mon-Sat, 6.30-8am Sun; 📍 Wangfujing

A crowning edifice on Wangfujing Dajie and one of Běijīng's four principal churches, St Joseph's Church is also known locally as the East Cathedral. Originally built during the reign of Shunzhi in 1655, it was damaged by an earthquake in 1720 and reconstructed. The luckless church also caught fire in 1807, was destroyed again in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion, and restored in 1904, only to be shut in 1966. Now fully repaired, the church is a testament to the long history of Christianity in China (see boxed text Christianity in China, p94). A large piazza in front swarms with children playing; white doves photogenically flutter about and Chinese models in bridal outfits wait for the sun to emerge before posing for magazine shots.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MUSEUM

Map pp258-9

Kējìguǎn 科技馆

1 Beisanhuan Zhonglu; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun; Hall A/B/C/Y30/30/20; through ticket ¥50; 📍 Gulou Dajie Some exhibits at this museum are showing their age, but kids can run riot among the main hall's three floors of hands-on displays. Watch industrial robots perform a flawless taichi sword routine, try chatting with the speech robot who only seems able to say

BEHIND THE WALL

If ceremonial and administrative duties occupied most of the emperor's working hours, it was the pursuit of pleasure behind the high walls of the Forbidden City that occupied much of his attention during the evenings. With so many wives and consorts to choose from, a system was needed to help the emperor choose his bed-time companion. One method was to keep the names of royal wives, consorts and favourites on jade tablets near the emperor's chambers. By turning the tablet over the emperor made his request for the evening, and the eunuch on duty would rush off to find the lucky lady. Stripped naked (and therefore weaponless), the little foot-bound creature was giftwrapped in a yellow cloth, piggybacked over to the royal boudoir and dumped at the feet of the emperor; the eunuch recording the date and time to verify the legitimacy of a possible child.

Aside from the emperor's frolicking, all this activity had a more serious purpose: prolonging the life of the emperor. An ancient Chinese belief that frequent sex with young girls could sustain one's youth even motivated Mao Zedong to follow the same procedure.

Financing the affairs of state probably cost less than financing the affairs of the emperor, and keeping the pleasure dome functioning drew heavily on the resources of the empire. During the Ming dynasty an estimated 9000 maids of honour and 70,000 eunuchs were serving the court. Apart from the servants and prize concubines, there were also the royal elephants to maintain. Pocketing the cash was illegal, but selling elephant dung for use as shampoo was not – it was believed to give hair that extra sheen. Back in the harem the cosmetic bills piled up to 400,000 liang of silver. Then, of course, the concubines who had grown old and were no longer in active service were still supposed to be cared for. Rather than cut back on expenditure, the emperor sent out eunuchs to collect emergency taxes whenever money ran short.

As for the palace eunuchs, the royal chop was administered at the Eunuch Clinic near the Forbidden City, using a swift knife and a special chair with a hole in the seat. The candidates sought to better their lives in the service of the court, but half of them died after the operation. Mutilation of any kind was considered grounds for exclusion from the next life, so many eunuchs carried around their appendages in pouches, believing that at the time of death the spirits might be deceived into thinking them whole.

‘对不起 我没有听懂你的话’ (Sorry, I didn't catch you'), follow a maglev train gliding along a stretch of track or test out a bullet-proof vest with a sharp pointy thing. You could spend half the day working through the imaginative and educational displays in the main hall (Hall A), but if you want to make a real go of it, Hall B (astrovision theatre) and Hall C (Children's Scientific Entertainment Hall) offer extra diversions for boffins, young and old. English captions throughout.

CHÁOYÁNG 朝阳

Eating p132; Shopping p166; Sleeping p185

This district covers a vast swathe of Běijīng east and northeast of the Second Ring Rd. As Cháoyáng lay outside the old city walls, it is not a historic district and contains only a few sights of note. But the Sanlitun bar street (Sanlitun Lu) – sections of which have been levelled and are slated for massive redevelopment before the Olympic Games – can be found here, as well as the top-end hotels around the embassy area. The southern part of Cháoyáng, containing the Jianguomenwai Embassy Area and its associated restaurants

and hotels, is incorporated into the Chóngwén and South Chaoyang map (pp268–9), and the Cháoyáng map (p264).

CREATION ART GALLERY Map p264

Kèchuàng Míngjiā Yìyuàn 可创铭佳艺苑

☎ 8561 7570; www.creationgallery.com.cn;

cnr Ritan Donglu & Ritan Beilu; admission free;

🕒 10am–7pm Tue–Sun

This well-lit, intimate space off the northeast corner of Ritan Park (opposite) presents an enjoyable array of paintings and sculptures, with a small area for sedentary contemplation of what's on view. Of the 20 or 30 artworks – many contemporary landscapes – several are composed by the gallery owner, Li Xiaoke. Prices start from around US\$800.

DONGYUE TEMPLE Map p264

Dōngyuè Miào 东岳庙

☎ 6553 2184; 141 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie; adult

¥10; 🕒 9am–4.30pm Tue–Sun; 📍 Chaoyangmen Temple The morbid Taoist shrine of Dongyue Temple is an unsettling albeit fascinating experience. With its roots poking deep into the Yuan dynasty, what's above ground level

has been revived with care and investment. Dedicated to Tàishān, the most easterly of the five Taoist peaks of China, Dongyue Temple is an active place of worship where Taoist monks attend to a world entirely at odds with the surrounding glass and steel high-rises. Note the temple's fabulous *páifāng* (memorial archway) lying to the south, divorced from its shrine by the intervention of Chaoyangmenwai Dajie.

Stepping through the entrance pops you into a Taoist Hades, where tormented spirits reflect on their wrong-doing and elusive atonement. You can muse on life's finalities in the Life and Death Department or the Final Indictment Department. Otherwise get spooked at the Department for Wandering Ghosts or the Department for Implementing 15 Kinds of Violent Death.

It's not all doom and gloom: the luckless can check in at the Department for Increasing Good Fortune and Longevity. Ornithologists will be birds of a feather with the Flying Birds Department, while the infirm can seek cures at the Deep-Rooted Disease Department. The Animal Department has colourful and lively fauna. English explanations detail department functions.

Other halls are no less fascinating. The huge Daiyue Hall (Dàiyuè Diàn) is consecrated to the God of Tàishān, who manages the 18 layers of hell. Visit during festival time, especially during the Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn festival, and you'll see the temple at its most vibrant.

POLY ART MUSEUM Map p264

Bǎoli Yìshù Bówùguǎn 保利艺术博物馆

☎ 6500 8117; www.polymuseum.com; Poly Plaza,

14 Dongzhimen Nandajie; ¥50; 🕒 9.30am–4.30pm

Tue, Thu & Sat, group reservations Mon, Wed & Fri;

📍 Dongsishitiao

Primed to move to new premises (the New Poly Plaza, directly southwest of the current address on the other side of the intersection of Dongzhimen Nandajie and Gongrentiyuchang Beilu), this excellent museum displays Shang and Zhou dynasty bronzes and stone Buddhist effigies sculpted between the Northern Wei and Tang dynasties. It's a sublime display but note the often unaccommodating opening hours for individuals.

PYONGYANG ART STUDIOS Map p264

☎ 6416 7544; Red House Hotel, 10 Chunxiu Lu;

📍 Dongsishitiao or Dongzhimen

Unsurpassed Communist kitsch delivered straight to your hands from the axis of evil.

TRANSPORT

Subway Line 2: The Poly Art Museum is just north of Dongsishitiao stop, and Dongyue Temple is a 10-minute walk east of Chaoyangmen stop; Dongsishitiao is the closest subway stop to the bars and restaurants of Sanlitun. To save walking take a cab or bus 115. Line 10: When completed, part of Line 10 will run through this district, connecting with Line 1 at Guomao and linking up with Line 5, the Airport Line and Line 13.

Bus Double-decker bus 3 takes you from the Jinguang New World Hotel, past Tuanjiehu Park and the Agricultural Exhibition Center to the Lufthansa Center; bus 110 runs from Chaoyangmen subway station along Chaoyangmenwai Dajie, past the Dongyue Temple and then north along Gongrentiyuchang Donglu via the Workers' Stadium and up Xin Donglu; bus 115 runs east along Gongrentiyuchang Beilu from the Dongsishitiao subway stop to Sanlitun.

Finger maps of Pyongyang and turn over edifying literature ('Towards the Eminence of Socialism'), North Korean ciggies (¥20 per pack), liquor, T-shirts (¥80), posters vilifying America, DPRK flags (¥150), postcards (¥80) and badges (¥30), or grab a second impression of 'The US Imperialists started the Korean War' (¥100) – while stocks last.

RITAN PARK Map p264

Rítán Gōngyuán 日坛公园

☎ 8563 5038; Ritan Lu; 🕒 6am–9pm;

📍 Chaoyangmen

Dating from 1530, this park is one of Běijīng's oldest, established as an altar for ritual sacrifice to the sun. The square altar, typically surrounded by kite flyers and children playing, is ringed by a circular wall, while the rest of the park is given over to pines and quietude.

ZHIHUA TEMPLE Map p262

Zhìhuà Sì 智化寺

5 Lumicang Hutong; adult ¥20; 🕒 8.30am–4.30pm;

📍 Jianguomen or Chaoyangmen

Běijīng's surviving temple brood has endured slapdash renewal which regularly buries authenticity beneath casual restoration work. This rickety shrine is thick with the flavours of old Peking, having eluded the Dulux treatment that invariably precedes entrance fee inflation and stomping tour groups. You won't find the coffered ceiling of the third hall (it's in the USA) and the Four Heavenly Kings have vanished from Zhìhua Gate

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA

The explosion of interest in Christianity in China over recent years is unprecedented except for the wholesale conversions that accompanied the tumultuous rebellion of the pseudo-Christian Taiping in the 19th century.

The history of Christianity in China dates to the arrival of Nestorians in the 7th century but it wasn't until the fall of the Qing dynasty in the early 20th century that the religion began to successfully proliferate, as China increasingly drew upon foreign ideologies and practices. The Cultural Revolution and growing secularism of China under the communists was a spectacular reversal, but the faith has flourished in the relatively liberal social climate that followed the death of Mao Zedong.

The economic reforms of the past three decades have brought riches to many urban Chinese, but the spiritual vacuum at the heart of contemporary Chinese life – coupled with the hardships still endured by huge sections of the population – provides an ideal environment for the flourishing of faith. The associations between Christianity and a strong work ethic coupled with the progressive standing of Christian nations around the world have only added to its allure. Christianity is furthermore seen as being tolerant and able to accommodate, and to a degree inspire, scientific endeavour.

It is hard to calculate the total number of Christians in China. Estimates of 70 million Chinese Protestants and up to 20 million Chinese Catholics (the latter including around 10 million members of the state sanctioned church) are hard to verify; what is undeniable however is the huge number of house churches operating in China, attracting legions of adherents. Being free of government control, unregistered house churches attract most worshippers who prefer them to the official state churches. For more details on the Chinese house church movement, click on www.backtojerusalem.com.

Visitors increasingly report being stopped by English-speaking Chinese Christians around China; some are zealously evangelical, an activity that is forbidden. As with the Taiping, whose leader Hong Xiuquan claimed he was the Son of God, the lack of trained priests creates ample room for Christian heresies to appear.

Increasingly concerned about losing ideological ground to a competing system of thought, the Communist Party has responded by closing numerous house churches, but this has done little to stem the tide.

Jesus in Beijing (How Christianity is Changing the Global Balance of Power) by David Aikman argues that China is approaching a tipping point that will transform the land into a largely Christian domain over the next thirty years. However unlikely the scenario, such an achievement would surely owe much to the secularisation of China, which has turned the nation's soul into a blank sheet of paper to be written upon.

(Zhìhuà Mén), but the Scriptures Hall encases a venerable Ming dynasty revolving wooden library and the highlight **Ten Thousand Buddhas Hall** (Wǎnfó Diàn) is an enticing two floors of niche-borne Buddhas and cabinets for storing sutras. Creep up the staircase at the back of the hall, to visit the Vairocana Buddha seated upon a lotus flower in the upper chamber, before wondering the fate of the 1000-Armed Guanyin that once presided over the Great Mercy Hall at the temple rear.

FĒNGTÁI & XUĀNWŪ

丰台、宣武

Shopping p167; Sleeping p187

Fēngtái and Xuānwū occupy the southwest of Běijīng, an area that might not see Běijīng at its prettiest or most historic. But travellers will enjoy rummaging for curios in the stalls and shops of Liulichang (p167), and experiencing the Taoist mysteries of the White Cloud Temple (opposite). The district around the Niujie Mosque (opposite) is distinctive for its Huí (Chinese Muslim) character. The quarter focuses on Niu Jie (Cow St), named after the local Muslim predilection for beef.

CAPITAL MUSEUM

Map pp266-7

Shǒudū Bówùguǎn 首都博物馆

☎ 6337 0491; www.capitalmuseum.org.cn;

16 Fuxingmenwai Dajie; admission Y20; ☎ 9am-

5pm Tue-Sun; ☉ Muxidi

With Běijīng busily hatching a huge and disparate brood of new and often rather

pointless museums, this modern and sleek addition is a showpiece achievement. Staging a headline-grabbing exhibition in 2006 from the collection of the British Museum, the museum – stunning from the outside – aims at high-profile exhibitions from abroad while maintaining permanent displays of ancient bronzes, Buddhist statues, jade, calligraphy, paintings and ceramics.

CHINA MILLENNIUM MONUMENT

Map pp266-7

Zhōnghuá Shìjì Tán 中华世纪坛

9a Fuxing Lu; admission Y30; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm;

☉ Junshibowuguan

Vaguely resembling a vast sundial pointing directly south to Beijing West Train Station, this cumbersome monument solidifies Běijīng's triumphant 21st century aspirations in stone. For such a momentous statement, the design is devoid of imagination or artistry, while examination of the stone cladding shows it already requires repair. The art gallery, however, is worth perusing (included in the ticket price) and you can pick up boats from the dock (世纪坛码头; Shìjìtán Mǎtóu; adult Y70) to the Summer Palace, leaving daily at 10am, 11am, 2pm and 5pm, or go for a stroll in Yuyuantan Park (Yùyuǎntán Gōngyuán; Map pp260-1) to the north (Y2), where you can also board boats (Y60; return ticket Y80; ☎ 10.10am, 11.10am, 2.10pm and 3.10pm) to the Summer Palace from the Baiy Lake dock (Bāiyí Hú Mǎtóu; Map pp260-1).

FAYUAN TEMPLE

Map pp266-7

Fāyuán Sì 法源寺

7 Fayuansi Qianjie; adult Y5; ☎ 8.30-11am & 2-

3.30pm Thu-Tue; ☎ 6 to Niu Jie or 10 to Libaisi stop In a lane east of Niujie Mosque, this temple originally dates back to the 7th century and remains busy with monks and worshippers. Now the **China Buddhism College**, the temple was originally built to honour Tang soldiers who had fallen during combat against the northern tribes. The temple follows the typical Buddhist layout, with drum and bell towers and the usual succession of halls, but look out for its unusual copper-cast Buddha seated on a thousand-petal lotus flower in the Pilu Hall (the fourth hall). The Guanyin Hall towards the rear is a pleasant repository for several statues of the Goddess of Mercy. From the entrance of Niujie Mosque, walk left 100m then turn left into the first *hútòng*. Follow the *hútòng* for about 10 minutes, and you'll arrive at Fayuan Temple.

MILITARY MUSEUM

Map pp266-7

Jūnshì Bówùguǎn 军事博物馆

9 Fuxing Lu; adult Y20; ☎ 8am-5pm, last entry

4.30pm; ☉ Junshibowuguan

This hulking monolith of a building topped with a communist star is purely for military enthusiasts. Cold War-era F-5 fighters, the much larger F-7 and F-8s, tanks, and HQ-2 (Red Flag-2) surface-to-air missiles are down below, while upstairs has further weaponry and a heavy-going gallery of statues of military and political top brass. Other halls include the Hall of Agrarian Revolutionary War and the Hall of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea, while in the forecourt you can clamber aboard a missile boat (Y5).

NIUJIE MOSQUE

Map pp266-7

Niújiē Libàì Sì 牛街礼拜寺

☎ 6353 2564; 88 Niu Jie; adult Y10, free for Muslims;

☎ 8am-sunset; ☎ 6 to Niu Jie or 10 to Libaisi stop

With a history dating back to the 10th century, this recently renovated Chinese-styled mosque is Běijīng's largest. A burial site for a number of Islamic clerics, the grounds of the mosque are given over to a profusion of greenery, flourishes of Arabic, the main prayer hall (only Muslims can enter), women's quarters and the **Building for Observing the Moon** (Wàngyuèlǒu), from where the lunar calendar was calculated. Dress appropriately (no shorts or short skirts) and be

TRANSPORT

Subway Line 2: You can reach the South Cathedral at the Xuanwumen stop. Line 1: Get off at the Junshibowuguan stop for the Military Museum and the Muxidi stop for the Capital Museum. Line 4: When completed, Line 4 will connect with Line 1 at Xidan and with Line 2 at Xuanwumen, heading south to Beijing South Train Station.

Bus Double-decker bus 1 runs from Beijing West Train Station, past the Capital Museum and the Military Museum, east past Xidan and onto Tiananmen Square and beyond along Chang'an Jie; bus 10 connects Niu Jie with Wangfujing Dajie, running through Tiananmen, Xidan and Changchun Jie.

particularly respectful on Fridays, or save your visit for another day of the week.

SOUTH CATHEDRAL

Map pp266-7

Nántǎng 南堂

141 Qianmen Xidajie; ☎ mass in Latin 6am Sun-Fri,

in English 10am Sun; ☉ Xuanwumen

Běijīng's South Cathedral was built on the site of the house of Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit missionary who introduced Catholicism to China. Since being completed in 1703, the church has been destroyed three times, including being burnt down in 1775, and endured a trashing by anti-Christian forces during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. The church is now decorated with modern stained glass, fake marbling, portraits of the Stations of the Cross and cream-coloured confessionals.

WHITE CLOUD TEMPLE

Map pp266-7

Báiyún Guàn 白云观

☎ 6346 3531; Baiyun Lu; adult Y10; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm May-Sep, 8.30am-4pm Oct-Apr; ☉ Muxidi,

then ☎ 708 White Cloud Temple, once the Taoist centre of northern China, was founded in AD 739. It's a lively, huge and fascinating temple complex of shrines and courtyards, tended by Taoist monks with their hair twisted into topknots. Today's temple halls date principally from the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Near the temple entrance, worshippers rub a polished stone carving for good fortune. The halls at the temple, centre of operations for the Taoist Quanzhen School and abode of the China Taoist Association, are dedicated to a host of Taoist officials and marshals. The **Hall of the Jade Emperor** celebrates

BĚIJĪNG FOR CHILDREN

The weeny ones can dig their heels in and holler when faced with the measureless museum-style torpor of the Forbidden City and the Ming Tombs. Thanks to China's One-child policy, however, Běijīng's sibling-less tykes are spoiled rotten by their parents, and the city is bursting with activities to keep toddler tantrums at bay. **Beijing Aquarium** (p98) is an option for a rainy day, while **Beijing Zoo** (p98) is a fun outing. **ExploraScience** (Suōnǐ Tǎnmèng; Map pp268-9; ☎ 8518 2255; 1st fl, Oriental Plaza, Wangfujing Dajie; adult/child Y30/20 ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun, closed 2nd Mon & Tue every month) is a hands-on foray into the world of science and **Beijing Planetarium** (p98) may take them to the stars. The dinosaurs at the **Beijing Natural History Museum** (p73) may go down well, while the **Science & Technology Museum** (p93) has loads of gadgets and fun displays. Alternatively put your children on ice at **Le Cool Ice Rink** (p154). In the evenings, the **China National Puppet Theatre** (p150) casts a spell over its audience of little (and not-so-little) ones. If your children are fed up with window-shopping, take them along to the **Xin Zhongguo Kid's Stuff** (p165), a huge toy emporium on Wangfujing Dajie. For more toys, try **Kids World** (6th fl, Lufthansa Center Youyi Shopping City), the stalls on the 4th floor of the Sanlitun Yashow Clothing Market (p167) and **Kids Toys Market** (Hóngqiáo Tiānlè Wánjū Shìchǎng; ☎ 8.30am-7pm) in the building behind Hongqiao Market (p162). Events and attractions for children – from plays to arts and crafts events and seasonal parties – are listed in the monthly English-language culture magazine **That's Beijing** (www.thatsmagazines.com). Note that many museums and attractions have a cheaper rate for children, usually applying to children shorter than 1.3m, so ask.

this most famous of Taoist deities, while Taoist housewives cluster earnestly at the **Hall to the God of Wealth** to divine their financial future. Depictions of the Taoist Hell festoon the walls of the **Shrine Hall for the Saviour Worthy**.

Drop by White Cloud Temple during the Spring Festival (p18) and be rewarded with the spectacle of a magnificent temple fair (*miàoohui*). Worshippers funnel into the streets around the temple in their thousands, lured by artisans, street performers, *wúshù* (martial arts) acts, craft workers, traders and a swarm of snack merchants.

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

HÀIDIÀN & XICHÉNG

海淀、西城

Eating p136; Sleeping p187

Xichéng occupies the western flank of Běijīng's central district, including part of the Imperial City and sites around the Qianhai and Houhai lake area. Hàidiàn district occupies the northwest of Běijīng, an area noted for the famous Peking and Qinghua Universities; it also incorporates the Zhongguancun high-tech district.

BEIJING PLANETARIUM

Map pp260-1
Běijīng Tiānwénguǎn 北京天文馆
138 Xizhimenwai Dajie; Old Bldg Y15, New Bldg Y10, Optical Planetarium Y15, 4-D Theatre Y30, Space Simulator Y30, Digital Space Theatre Y45; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Sun; ☉ Xizhimen, then 104, 205 or 106

TRANSPORT

Subway Line 2: offers access to the Xu Beihong Museum, the Lu Xun Museum and the Miaoying Temple White Dagoba. Line 4: When completed, Line 4 will connect with Line 2 at Xizhimen before running on to Beijing Zoo and the Old Summer Palace and Summer Palace.

Bus Double-decker bus 4 runs from Beijing Zoo past the Exhibition Center and then south along the Second Ring Rd to Qianmen (for Tiananmen Square); several westbound buses from Xizhimen can get you to the zoo, including buses 104 and 106.

Across from the zoo (below), children will find something to marvel at among the telescopes, models of the planets and the solar system, and the variety of shows in the new building, even though the typical absence of thorough English captions can make full comprehension an astronomical task.

BEIJING ZOO & BEIJING AQUARIUM

Map pp260-1

Běijīng Dòngwùyuán

北京动物园、北京海洋馆
137 Xizhimenwai Dajie; admission Y15 1 Apr-31 Oct, Y10 1 Nov-31 Mar, panda house Y5 extra, English audio guide Y40; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm; ☉ Xizhimen, then 104, 205 or 106

A pleasant spot for a stroll among the trees, grass and willow-fringed lakes, Beijing Zoo is chiefly notable for its pandas (if Sichuan is not on your itinerary), even if the remaining resident menagerie is cooped up in pitiful cages and enclosures. The **Popular Science Museum** (Y5) within the grounds of the zoo has no English captions so is highly missable, but the small **children's zoo** (Y10; ☎ 9am-5pm) is fun for young zoologists.

The polar bears pin their hopes on graduating from their concrete cosmos to the far more stellar **Beijing Aquarium** (☎ 6217 6655; adult/child Y100/50; ☎ low season 9am-5.30pm, high season 9am-6pm), a worthwhile diversion in the northeastern corner of the zoo. On view is an imaginative Amazon rainforest (complete with piranha), coral reefs, a shark aquarium (where you can dive with the flesh eaters), and a marine mammal pavilion. The last hosts lively aquatic animal displays. The ticket price to the aquarium includes entry to the zoo; you can buy this ticket at the zoo entrance.

Boats to the Summer Palace depart from the dock in front of the aquarium (☎ 8838 4476; Y40; every hour from 10am-4pm).

East of the zoo is the distinctive **Beijing Exhibition Hall** (Běijīng Zhǎnlǎn Guǎn; Map pp260-1), designed in the days when Chinese architects were party ideologues.

LU XUN MUSEUM

Map pp260-1
Lǔ Xùn Bówùguǎn 鲁迅博物馆
19 Gongmenkou Ertiao; adult Y5; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun; ☉ Fuchengmen
Lu Xun (1881-1936), born in Shàoxing in Zhèjiāng province, is often regarded as the father of modern Chinese literature. As a

writer, Lu Xun, who first trained in medicine, articulated a deep yearning for reform by mercilessly exposing the foibles of the Chinese people's character. Hampered by a shortage of English captions, the museum's collection of photos and manuscripts remains largely impenetrable to all but the most erudite.

MEI LANFANG FORMER RESIDENCE

Map pp260-1

Méi Lánfāng Jìniàn Guǎn 梅兰芳纪念馆

☎ 6618 0351; 9 Huguosi Lu; adult Y10; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Nov; ☉ Jishuitan

Place of pilgrimage for Beijing opera aficionados, this former *sihéyuán* (courtyard house) of actor Mei Lanfang is tucked away in a *hútòng* named after the nearby remains of Huguo Temple. Beijing opera (p35) was popularised in the West by Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), who played *dàn* or female roles, and is said to have influenced Charlie Chaplin. His former residence has been preserved as a museum, replete with costumes, furniture, opera programmes and video presentations of his opera performances.

MIAOYING TEMPLE WHITE DAGOBA

Map pp260-1

Miàoyīng Sì Báitǎ 妙应寺白塔

☎ 6616 0211; 171 Fuchengmennei Dajie; adult Y10; ☎ 9am-4pm; ☉ Fuchengmen, then 13, 101, 102 or 103 to Baita Si

The Yuan dynasty white dagoba of the Miaoying Temple is similar to that in Beihai Park (p84). The highpoint of a visit here, however, is the riveting collection of thousands of **Tibetan Buddhist statues**. A population of bronze *luóhàn* figures also inhabits the temple. There is liberal use of English captions.

NORTH CATHEDRAL

Běitáng 北堂

☎ 6617 5198; Xishiku Dajie; ☉ Fuchengmen or 14 or 55 to Xianmen stop, then walk north

Also called the Cathedral of Our Saviour, this august cathedral is one of Běijīng's four main churches and the only one located within the grounds of the Imperial City. Built in 1887, the church was badly damaged during the Cultural Revolution before serving as a factory warehouse. Despite being covered in gaudy grey, flaking paint, the cathedral is well worth a look-see.

PALEOZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF CHINA

Map pp260-1

Zhōngguó Gǔdòngwùguǎn 中国古动物馆
142 Xizhimenwai Dajie; admission Y20; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun; ☉ Xizhimen, then 104, 205 or 106

A little bit cheesy, with an impressive tally of zero English captions, but young palaeontologists can scurry among the dinosaur remains and legions of Chinese schoolchildren, gawping at skeletons of *Tyrannosaurus Rex* and *Tsingtaosaurus* and examining the parrot-like beak of *Psittacosaurus*.

PRINCE GONG'S RESIDENCE

Map pp260-1

Gōngwáng Fǔ 恭王府

☎ 6616 5005; 14 Luyin Jie; adult Y20; tour Y60 (including opera performance & tea ceremony); ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm; ☉ Gulou Dajie then 60 or taxi
Reputed to be the model for the mansion in Cao Xueqin's 18th-century classic, *Dream of the Red Mansions*, the residence is one of Běijīng's largest private residential compounds. It remains one of Běijīng's more attractive retreats, decorated with rockeries, plants, pools, pavilions and elaborately carved gateways. Performances of Beijing opera are held in the Qing dynasty **Grand Opera House** (☎ 6618 6628; adults Y80-120 ☎ 7.30-8.40pm, Mar-Oct) in the east of the grounds.

SONG QINGLING FORMER RESIDENCE

Map pp260-1

Sòng Qínglíng Gùjū 宋庆龄故居
☎ 6403 5858; 46 Beiheyuan Lu; adult Y8; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun; ☉ Gulou Dajie or Jishuitan
Madam Song is lovingly venerated by the Chinese as the wife of Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Republic of China. Her house is rather dormant and moth-eaten; on display are personal items, pictures, clothing and books. You can find the museum on the northern side of Houhai Lake and within reach of Prince Gong's residence.

WANSHOU TEMPLE & BEIJING ART MUSEUM

Map pp260-1

Wànshòu Sì & Běijīng Yìshù Bówùguǎn
万寿寺、北京艺术博物馆
Suzhou Jie; adult Y15; ☎ 9am-4pm; ☉ Gongzhufen, then 944
Ringed by a red wall on the southeastern corner of Suzhou Jie (off the Third Ring Rd),

the Ming dynasty Wanshou Temple was originally consecrated for the storage of Buddhist texts. The temple's name echoes the Summer Palace's Longevity Hill (Wànshòu Shān; p103); in fact, from Qing times the imperial entourage would put their feet up here and quaff tea en route to the palace. Wanshou Temple fell into disrepair during the Republic, with the Wanshou Hall burning down in 1937. Things went from bad to worse and during the Cultural Revolution the temple served as an army barracks.

The highlight of a visit to this restored temple is its prized collection of bronze **Buddhist statuary** in the 'Buddhist Art Exhibition of Ming and Qing Dynasties'. The displays guide you through the Buddhist pantheon with statues of Sakyamuni, Manjusri, Am-itabha, Guanyin (in bronze and *déhuà*, or blanc-de-Chine porcelain) and exotic tantric pieces. Also look out for the *kapala bowl* made from a human skull, *dorjes* (Tibetan ritual sceptres) and *purbhas* (Tibetan ritual daggers). Further halls are devoted to Ming and Qing porcelain. Also worth noting is the decidedly masculine-looking Guanyin at the rear of the **Mahavira Hall** (she is usually, but not exclusively, female). The pavilion at the rear once housed a 5m-high gold-lacquered brass statue now long gone; in its place is a miniature pagoda alloyed from gold, silver, zinc and lead. Some of China's holy mountains (including Pǔtuó Shān and Ēméi Shān) in the form of small rockeries can also be found.

WUTA TEMPLE Map pp260-1

Wūtǎ Sì 五塔寺

24 Wutasi Cun; adult Y20; audio guide Y5; ☎ 9am-4pm; ☉ Xizhimen, then 🚶 104, 205 or 106 Known also as Zhenjue Temple (真觉寺; Zhēnjué Sì), the distinctive Indian-styled Wuta Temple (Five Pagoda Temple) is topped by its five magnificent namesake pagodas. The exterior of the main hall is decorated with *dorjes* (Tibetan sceptres), hundreds of images of Buddha and legions of beasts, amid traces of red pigment that can still be discerned. Facing you as you climb the steps to the five pagodas – themselves carved with a galaxy of Buddhist images – are wall carvings of the feet of Buddha. During Ming times, the temple ranged to at least six halls, all later tiled in yellow during Qing times; the terrace where the Big Treasure Hall once stood can still be seen. The temple, dating from 1473, is reached by the canal bridge

directly opposite the rear exit of Beijing Zoo (p98), also houses the **Carved Stone Museum** (Shíkè Bōwùguǎn), with clusters of stone stelae, statues and *bixi* – mythical tortoise-like dragons often seen in Confucian temples.

XU BEIHONG MUSEUM Map pp260-1

Xú Bēihóng Jìniàn Guǎn 徐悲鸿纪念馆

☎ 6225 2042; 53 Xijiekou Beidajie; adult Y5;

☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun; ☉ Jishuitan

The Chinese artist Xu Beihong (1895–1953), best remembered for his galloping horses that injected dynamism into previously static forms of Chinese brushwork, is commemorated in this intriguing museum. Exposed to foreign (principally European) painting styles, Xu possessed one of 20th-century China's more fertile imaginations. The communists feted Xu, which partly explains the success and longevity of his name. His success is celebrated here in seven halls and remembered in a collection of oils, gouache, pen and ink sketches, and portraits.

AROUND BĚIJĪNG BEIJING BOTANIC GARDENS

Map pp258-9

Běijīng Zhíwùyuán 北京植物园

☎ 6259 1283; 2km east of Fragrant Hills Park;

adult Y5; ☎ 6am-8pm; ☉ Pingguoyuan, then

🚶 318; or 🚶 331 from Summer Palace; or 🚶 360 from Xizhimen (via Beijing Zoo)

The well-tended botanic gardens, set against the backdrop of the Western Hills, make for a pleasant outing among bamboo fronds, pines and lilacs. The **Beijing Botanic Gardens Conservatory** (Y50; ☎ 8.30am-4pm), contains 3000 different types of plants and a rainforest house.

Within the grounds and about a 15-minute walk from the front gate (follow the signs) is **Sleeping Buddha Temple** (Wòfó Sì; adult Y5; ☎ 8am-5pm). The temple, first built during the Tang dynasty, has a huge reclining effigy of Sakyamuni weighing 54 tonnes as a centrepiece, said to have 'enslaved 7000 people' in its casting. On each side of Buddha are arrayed some sets of gargantuan shoes, gifts to Sakyamuni from various emperors in case he went for a stroll.

On the eastern side of the gardens is the **Cao Xueqin Memorial** (Cáo Xuèqín Jìniànguǎn; ☎ 6259 5904; 39 Zhengbaiqi; Y10; ☎ 8.30am-4.15pm)

where Cao Xueqin lived in his latter years. Cao (1715–63) is credited with penning the classic *Dream of the Red Mansions*, a vast and prolix family saga set in the Qing period.

FRAGRANT HILLS PARK

Map pp258-9

Xiāng Shān Gōngyuán 香山公园

☎ 6259 1283; adult Y10; ☎ 8am-6pm; ☉ Pingguoyuan, then 🚶 318; or 🚶 331 from Summer Palace; or 🚶 360 from Xizhimen (via Beijing Zoo) Easily within striking distance of the Summer Palace are the **Xi Shān** (Western Hills), another former villa-resort of the emperors. The part of Xi Shān closest to Běijīng is known as **Fragrant Hills** (Xiāng Shān). Scramble up the slopes to the top of **Incense-Burner Peak** (Xiānglǔ Fēng), or take the **chairlift** (one way/return Y30/50; ☎ 8.30am-5pm). From the peak you get an all-embracing view of the countryside, and you can leave the crowds behind by hiking further into the Western Hills. Běijīngers flock here in autumn when the maple leaves saturate the hillsides in great splashes of red.

Near the north gate of Fragrant Hills Park is the excellent **Azure Clouds Temple** (Bìyún Sì; adult Y10; ☎ 8am-5pm), which dates back to the Yuan dynasty. The **Mountain Gate Hall** contains two vast protective deities: Heng and Ha, beyond which is a small courtyard and the drum and bell towers, leading to a hall with a wonderful statue of Milefo: it's bronze, but coal black with age. Only his big toe shines from numerous inquisitive fingers.

The **Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall** contains a statue and a glass coffin donated by the USSR on the death of Mr Sun in 1925. At the very back is the marble **Vajra Throne Pagoda**, where Sun Yat-sen was interred after he died, before his body was moved to its final resting place in Nánjīng. The **Hall of Arhats** is well worth visiting; it contains 500 *luóhàn* statues, each crafted with an individual personality.

Southwest of the Azure Clouds Temple is the Tibetan-styled **Temple of Brilliance** (Zhāo Miào), and not far away is a glazed tile pagoda. Both survived visits by foreign troops intent on sacking the area in 1860 and 1900.

GREAT BELL TEMPLE Map p271

Dàzhōng Sì 大钟寺

☎ 6255 0819; 31a Beisanhuan Xilu; adult Y10;

☎ 8.30am-4.30pm; ☉ Dazhongsì; 🚶 361, 367 or 422

This temple houses a massive Ming dynasty bell, 6.75m tall, weighing in at a hefty 46.5 tonnes, inscribed with Buddhist sutras, comprising more than 227,000 Chinese characters, and decorated with Sanskrit incantations. Clamber up to the **circular hall** (Y2), where there's a small exhibition on bell casting (with some English captions), and chuck a coin through the opening in the top of the bell for luck.

The bell was cast during the reign of Emperor Yongle in 1406, with the tower built in 1733. To get the bell from the foundry to the temple, a shallow canal was dug, and when it froze over in winter, the bell was shunted across the ice by sled.

OLD SUMMER PALACE

Map pp258-9

Yuánmíng Yuán 圆明园

☎ 6262 8501; 28 Qinghua Xilu; adult Y10, palace

ruins Y15; ☎ 7am-7pm; ☉ Yuanmingyuan;

☉ Wudaokou, then 🚶 375 or 726; or minibus from Summer Palace

Located northwest of the city centre, the original Summer Palace was laid out in the 12th century. The ever-capable Jesuits were later employed by Emperor Qianlong to fashion European-style palaces for the gardens, incorporating elaborate fountains and baroque statuary. During the Second Opium War, British and French troops vandalised the palace and sent the booty abroad, an event forever inscribed in Chinese history books as a nadir in China's humiliation by foreign powers. Most of the palace was destroyed, but a melancholic tangle of broken columns and marble chunks remain. The subdued ruins of the European Palace can be mullied over in the **Eternal Spring Garden** (Chángchūn Yuán) in the northeast of the park; entering by the east gate guides you directly to their vestiges. It's here that you can find the **Great Fountain Ruins**, considered the best-preserved relic in the palace.

West of the ruins you can lose your way in an artful reproduction of a former labyrinth called the **Garden of Yellow Flowers**.

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

You can take some pleasant trips in the area by public transport. Take bus 332 from the zoo to both the old and new Summer Palaces; change to bus 333 for Fragrant Hills Park; from Fragrant Hills Park change to bus 360 to go directly back to Beijing Zoo.

Another route is to take the subway to Pingguoyuan (the last stop in the west), and from there take bus 318 to Fragrant Hills Park; change to 331 for the Summer Palace, and then bus 332 for the zoo.

SUMMER PALACE 颐和园

Map pp258-9

Yihé Yuán 颐和园
 ☎ 6288 1144; admission Y40-50, audio guides Y30;
 🕒 8.30am-5pm; 📍 Wudaokou, then 🚏 375; or
 🚏 332 from zoo; or 🚏 726 from Qianmen

The huge regal encampment of the Summer Palace in the northwest of Bèijīng is one of the city's principle attractions. Once a playground for the imperial court eluding the insufferable summer swelter of the For-

bidden City, today the palace grounds, its temples, gardens, pavilions, lakes and corridors teem with marauding tour groups. The site had long been a royal garden and was considerably enlarged and embellished by Qing emperor Qianlong in the 18th century. Enlisting 100,000 labourers, he deepened and expanded Kunming Lake (Kūnmíng Hú) and reputedly surveyed imperial naval drills from a hilltop perch.

Anglo-French troops badly damaged the buildings during the Second Opium War in 1860. Empress Dowager Cixi began a refit in 1888 with money flagged for a modern navy, indulging herself with the extravagant marble boat on the northern edge of the lake.

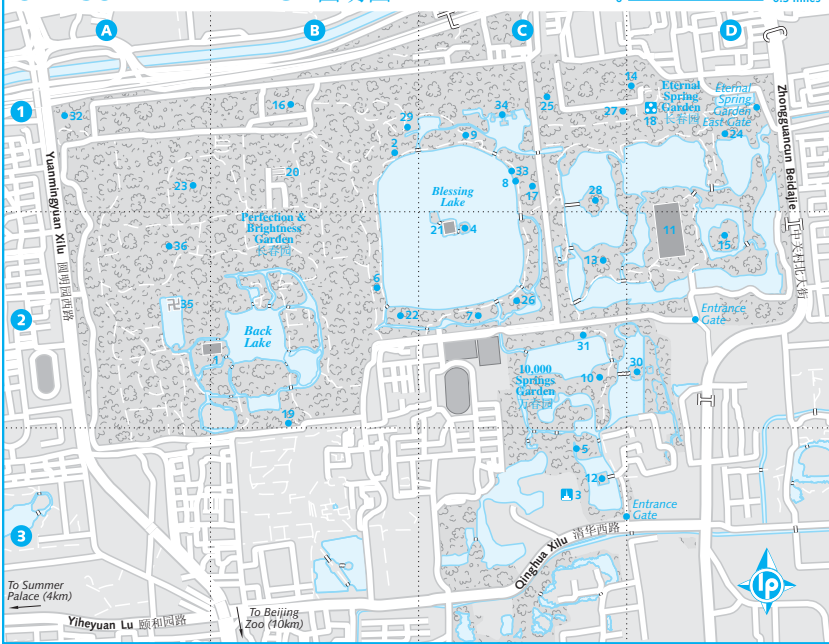
Foreign troops, victorious over the Boxers, again rampaged through the palace grounds in 1900, prompting further resto-

ration work. The palace fell into disrepair during the years of the Republic, and a major overhaul began in 1949.

Three-quarters of the park is occupied by Kunming Lake and the most notable structures are near the east gates and on Longevity Hill (Wànshòu Shān). The main building is the Hall of Benevolence & Longevity (Rénshòu Diàn) by the east gate; it houses a hardwood throne and is fronted by a courtyard decorated with bronze animals, including the mythical *qilin* (a hybrid animal that appeared on earth only at times of harmony). The hall, sadly, is barricaded off so you can only peer in.

Along the lake's northern shore and undergoing restoration at the time of writing, the Long Corridor (Cháng Láng) is trimmed with paintings, while the slopes and crest of Longevity Hill behind are decorated with

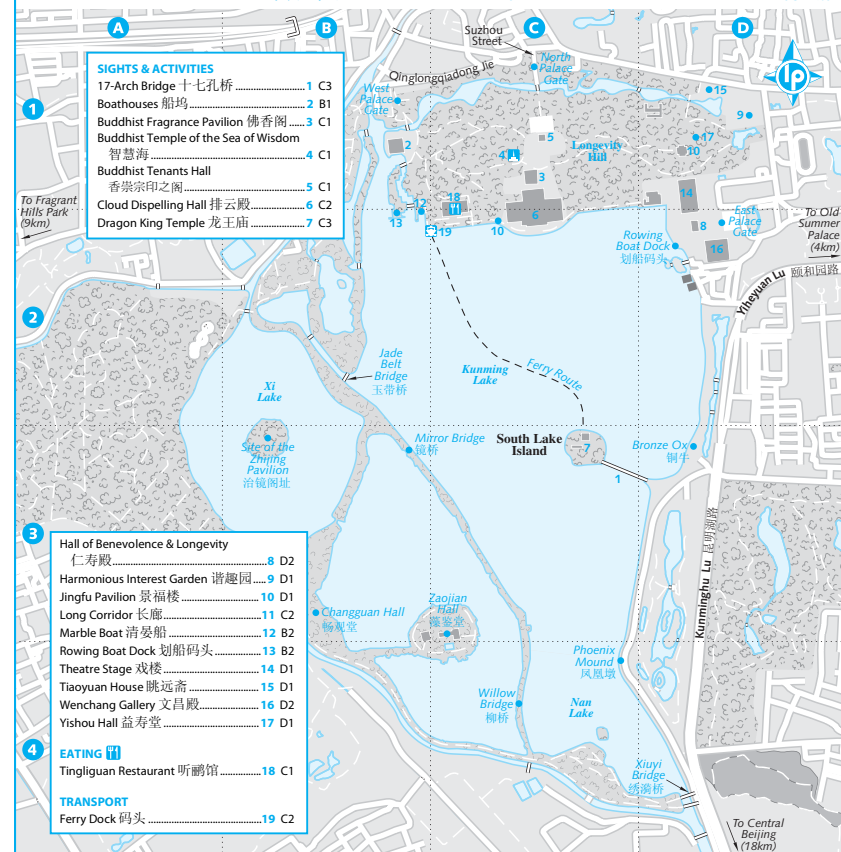
OLD SUMMER PALACE 圆明园



SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Apricot Blossoms in Spring Lodge 杏花春馆	1 B2	Enjoying Jasper Pavilion 鉴碧亭	12 C3	Library Pavilion 文源阁	23 A1
Autumn Moon Over the Calm Lake 平湖秋月	2 B1	Everlasting Thoughts Studio 思永斋	13 C2	Lion's Forest 狮子林	24 D1
Awareness Temple 正觉寺	3 C3	Exhibition Hall 展览馆	14 D1	Maze 迷宫	25 C1
Blessing Sea Fairy Hill Hall 瀛海仙山亭	4 C2	Exquisite Jade Hall 玉玲珑馆	15 D2	New Fairyland 别有洞天	26 C2
Boat Dock 船台	5 C3	Far North Mountain Village 北远山村	16 B1	Oceanic Banquet Hall 海宴堂	27 C1
Body Bathed in Virtue 澡身浴德	6 B2	Grace & Beauty Lodge 接秀山房	17 C1	Open Sea Hill 海岳开襟	28 C1
Broad Nutrient Palace 广育宫	7 C2	Great Fountain Ruins (European Gardens) 大水法遗址	18 D1	Open World to the Public 廓然大公	29 B1
Clear Reflection of the Void 涵虚朗鉴	8 C1	Great Palace Entrance Gate 大宫门	19 B2	Phoenix & Unicorn Isles 凤麟洲	30 D2
Collecting Mysteries Tower 藏密楼	9 C1	Guards' Citadel 舍卫城	20 B1	Pine Moon Pavilion 松月亭	31 C2
Contain Autumn Hall 涵秋馆	10 C2	Jade Terraces on Penglai Isles 蓬岛瑶台	21 C2	Purple Blue Lodge 紫碧山房	32 A1
Containing Scriptures Hall 含经堂	11 D2	Lakes & Hills View 湖山在望	22 B2	Rowboat Dock 船台	33 C1
				Square Pots Wonderland 万壑胜境	34 C1
				Universal Peace 万方安和	35 A2
				Wuling Spring Beauty 武陵春色	36 A2

SUMMER PALACE 颐和园



SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

17-Arch Bridge 十七孔桥	1 C3
Boathouses 船坞	2 B1
Buddhist Fragrance Pavilion 佛香阁	3 C1
Buddhist Temple of the Sea of Wisdom 智慧海	4 C1
Buddhist Tenants Hall 香泉宗印之阁	5 C1
Cloud Dispelling Hall 排云殿	6 C2
Dragon King Temple 龙王庙	7 C3

Hall of Benevolence & Longevity

仁寿殿	8 D2
Harmonious Interest Garden 谐趣园	9 D1
Jingfu Pavilion 景福楼	10 D1
Long Corridor 长廊	11 C2
Marble Boat 清晏船	12 B2
Rowing Boat Dock 划船码头	13 B2
Theatre Stage 戏楼	14 D1
Tiaoyuan House 眺远斋	15 D1
Wenchang Gallery 文昌殿	16 D2
Yishou Hall 益寿堂	17 D1

EATING

Tingliquan Restaurant 听鹧馆	18 C1
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TRANSPORT

Ferry Dock 码头	19 C2
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temples. Slung out uphill on a north–south axis are **Buddhist Fragrance Pavilion** (Fóxiāng Gé; Y10) and **Cloud Dispelling Hall** (Páiyún Diàn), which are connected by corridors. At the crest sits the **Buddhist Temple of the Sea of Wisdom** (Zhì Huihǎi) with glazed tiles depicting Buddha. Many, sadly, have had their heads obliterated.

The graceful **17-arch bridge** spans 150m to **South Lake Island** (Nánhú Dǎo) from the eastern shore of the lake. Cixi visited the island's **Dragon King Temple** (Lóngwáng Miào) to beseech the temple's statue for rain in times of drought. You can traverse Kunming Lake by boat (Y8) from the island to the northern shore where idles Cixi's **marble boat**, north of which survive some fine Qing boathouses.

Set in a clean and engaging pocket of reproduction Qing architecture, the **Wenchang Gallery** (Wénchāng Yuàn; ☎ 6256 5886, ext 224; adult Y20; 🕒 8.30am–5pm) to the south of the entrance is a quiet escape from the hordes rampaging through the palace. The galleries comprise a porcelain exhibition, a jade gallery and an unusual selection of Qing artefacts (including some of Cixi's calligraphy), plus some decent bronzes. In the north of the grounds is **Suzhou Street** (Sūzhōu Jiē), a fun diversion of riverside walkways, shops and eateries. Purchases are made with antique Chinese coins; exchange your *renminbi* at the top of the street.

The Summer Palace is about 12km north-west of central Běijīng. Cycling (1½ to two hours) from the centre of town is feasible and taking the road following the Beijing–Miyun Diversion Canal is pleasant. In summer, boats head along the canal, departing from the dock behind the **Beijing Exhibition Center** (Map pp260–1; ☎ 6823 2179, 6821 3366; one way/return Y45/75 including Summer Palace admission) near the zoo or from the dock behind the **China Millennium Monument** (p96).

798 ART DISTRICT Map pp258–9

Yìshù Xīnqū; 798 艺术新区

☎ 6438 4862; 2 & 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu; admission free;

🕒 galleries 10am–6pm (some galleries shut on Mondays), bars & bistros open longer; 📞 403 or 909

A disused and converted electronics factory, 798 Art District is Běijīng's leading concentration of contemporary art galleries. The industrial complex celebrates its proletarian roots in the communist heyday of the 1950s via retouched red Maoist slogans decorating gallery interiors, effigies of Mao and burly, lantern-jawed workers. The voluminous

factory workshops are ideally suited to art galleries that require space for multimedia installations and other ambitious projects. You could easily spend an entire day visiting the complex and its cafés and restaurants, making 798's non-central inaccessibility less of an inconvenience and more of an opportunity for an outing (but note some galleries are shut on Monday). Some galleries are more innovative than others; there is challenging and cutting-edge material, but prepare for hackneyed and technically unaccomplished work. Standout galleries include the impressive **White Space Beijing** (☎ 8456 2054; 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu; 🕒 noon–6pm Tue–Sun), **798 Red Gate Gallery** (☎ 6438 1005; 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu) – with its utilitarian and industrial ambience – and the vast **798 Space** (798 Shìtài Kōngjiān; ☎ 6438 4862; www.798space.com; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu 🕒 10.30am–7.30pm). **3818 Cool Gallery** (3818 Kù; ☎ 8688 2525; www.3818coolgallery.com; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu; 🕒 10.30am–6.30pm Tue–Sun) contains several galleries with forward-thinking artworks and a handy café. Singaporean-owned **China Art Seasons** (Běijīng Jījié; ☎ 6431 1900; www.artseasons.com.sg; 🕒 11am–7pm Tue–Sun) is a huge warehouse space for modern works from East Asian artists. Supported by the Japan Foundation, **Beijing Tokyo Art Projects** (Běijīng Dōngjīng Yìshù Gōngchéng; ☎ 8457 3245; www.tokyo-gallery.com; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu) is a huge space exhibiting conceptual art. Also worth looking into are **Long March Space** (www.longmarchspace.com) and **Long March Space B**, where paintings, photos, installations and videos get a viewing, and the well-known **Chinese Contemporary Beijing** (Zhōngguó Dāngdài; ☎ 8456 2421; www.chinesecontemporary.com; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu; 🕒 11am–7pm). Independent cinema gets an airing at the third-floor **Hart Center of Arts** (Hàtè Shānlóng; ☎ 6435 3570; www.hart.com.cn; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu; 🕒 10.30am–7pm Tue–Sun). **798 Photo Gallery** (Bǎinián Yīnxiàng; ☎ 6438 1784; www.798photogallery.cn; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu) has a collection of intriguing prints for sale from the Cultural Revolution, and rotating exhibitions of fascinating photography. For funky retro clothing with a dashing modern twist, check out **Fengling** (Fēnglíng Fúshì) near White Space Beijing; a further branch exists on the second floor of the 3.3 Shopping Centre (p166). **First Sound Gallery** (☎ 6477 5195; 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu) is a tranquil and relaxing space caressed with soft music.

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