

Sleeping ■

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Sleeping

Hotels in Běijīng have undergone a rapid evolution over the past 20 years, but the manufactured and formulaic feel of many establishments persists. Few hotels in the capital have any pedigree, character or strong historic associations that make stays memorable or unique. Nonetheless, comfort and luxury are easy to find as long as you are willing to pay for it and accommodation options in all budget brackets exist.

Midrange Chinese-run hotels – three to four star – are frequently uniform and indistinguishable from each other. Overall midrange standards are acceptable, although English-speaking skills and comprehension of foreign traveller needs are often superior in the budget youth hostel bracket. Unlike Shànghǎi, Hóng Kōng and Mácāu, which all have distinguished hotels dating to colonial and foreign concession days, Běijīng has precious few. Instead, if you want history, courtyard hotels (*sīhéyuàn bīnguǎn*) allow you the chance to eke out Běijīng's inimitable courtyard and *hútòng* (alleyway) ambience, and many travellers opt for this. The downside of courtyard hotels is the smallish size of the rooms and a frugal range of amenities, but the atmosphere is uniquely Běijīng.

Běijīng's growing band of stylish four- and five-star hotels means the top-end bracket is crammed with options in most parts of town. The best five-star hotels offer a standard equivalent to international hotels abroad, but be warned that Chinese-managed hotels may be ranked as five stars, but this may only be because an establishment has a swimming pool – other aspects of the hotel may be wanting. Four-star hotels can similarly be a star lower when measured objectively. This is particularly important when travelling to destinations outside Běijīng.

Běijīng's budget hotel sector belatedly responded to the hordes of travellers seeking cheap rooms and dorm beds and a healthy crop of youth hostels can now be found. Youth hostels are typically centrally located, offer doubles as well as dorms and are staffed by young English-speakers tuned-in to the needs of foreigners. Some ultra-cheap guesthouses (called *zhāodàisù* 招待所; *lǚdiàn* 旅店; or *lǚguǎn* 旅馆 in Chinese) still refuse to take foreigners.

English-language skills can be frustratingly poor, even at five-star hotels, so be prepared. Hotels that deal mainly with Chinese and overseas Chinese guests may have no English-speaking staff.

When you check into a hotel, you will have to complete a registration form, a copy of which will be sent to the local Public Security Bureau (PSB; Gōngānjú).

Price Ranges & Reservations

It often pays to reserve a hotel room through the hotel's website, where discounts are regularly offered. Also visit travel agencies and browse for the best deals online; try CTrip (☎ 800-820 6666; www.english.ctrip.com) or **Beijing Hotels Travel Guide** (www.beijing-hotels.net).

If you are arriving in Běijīng without a reservation and are planning to stay in midrange or top-end accommodation, stop by one of the airport hotel reservations counters, which could secure you a discount of up to 50% off the rack rates. Counters are located just outside the arrivals area, after you pass through customs.

Rackrates for room prices are listed in hotel reviews below, but discounting is the norm, so it is imperative to ask what the discount (*dǎzhé*; 打折) is. Outside peak times (during the Chinese New Year and the first weeks of May and October), discounts of 30% to 40% are common, but make sure you check whether the discounted price includes the service charge, as this will eat up 10% to 15% of the discount. Also ask about special promotional packages at top-end hotels, especially newly opened ventures. If staying long-term, you should be able to get good deals, especially at top-end hotels.

Top-end hotels may list their room rates in US dollars, but you will have to pay in local currency. Practically all hotels will change money for guests, and most midrange and top-end hotels accept credit cards. All hotel rooms are subject to a 10% or 15% service charge, but many cheaper hotels don't bother to charge it.

Longer-Term Rentals

If you are planning to live in a hotel, you should be able to negotiate a discount for a long-term stay.

Fully-furnished serviced apartments are expensive, but offer security, maid service and hotel facilities. For information on rents and availability of serviced and other apartments in Běijīng, consult www.moveandstay.com/beijing.

Housing developments for the Chinese moneyed class and those on expat packages are generally first-rate, with expensive management fees, 24-hour security, guards, sports facilities, swimming pools, kindergartens and shops selling imported goods and delicacies. While you can find a smart three-bedroom flat for as little as Y11,500 per month, prices can top Y75,000 per month for ultra-luxurious apartments.

Modern Chinese housing (eg apartment blocks), however, offers substantially lower rents (from Y4000 per month for a three bedroom flat), and although standards are lower than typical foreign housing, they're much higher than average Chinese housing (there will be tiles on the floor, decent plumbing, guards at the gate, parking etc). Further down the scale is older housing, where rents can be as low as Y1500 per month for a basic two-bedroom flat.

Some long-term residents prefer to live in courtyard houses (see the 'Hútòng Life' boxed text, p112), as they have more personality and charm than sterile modern high-rises and expat housing developments and are located within the Second Ring Rd. What you gain in history and character, however, you might sacrifice in amenities: there is usually nowhere to park the car, the toilet might be outside, heating might be wanting and chances are there won't be any satellite TV. But many courtyard homes on the rental market now have air-con, shower rooms, lavatories and fully equipped kitchens, and have been recently redecorated. Prices for courtyard houses start at around Y4000 per month, rising to over Y75,000 for the most luxurious. Using an expat-oriented estate agent is convenient, but far more expensive; if you manage to find a courtyard residence through a Chinese estate agent, it could be much, much cheaper. Look around and compare prices.

Housing laws stipulate that foreigners can live in Chinese housing as long as the owners of the apartment register the foreign resident with the local PSB. Failure to do so could well incur foreigners a fine of around Y3000 (per person).

If you're coming to study, your school will probably have a dormitory. It's possible to move in with a Chinese family and simply pay rent, but make sure you are officially registered. Families typically charge Y1000 per month for a room. If you teach or work for the government, your housing will likely be provided free or at the local Chinese price.

Homestays can be a fun and educational way to live for long periods in Běijīng. Take a look at www.chinahomestay.org for details of rent-free homestays.

Foreigners expecting to make Běijīng their permanent home can buy property, and by doing so also gain a residence permit. In most cases, buying actually means leasing the property for 75 years, after which it reverts to state ownership. Over recent years, property prices in Běijīng have gone through the roof, averaging around Y8000 per sq metre, although expect to pay much more than that in a desirable part of the city.

Besides word of mouth, the best way to find housing in Běijīng is through a real estate agent or by checking housing ads in the expat mags. *That's Beijing* (www.thatsmagazines.com) is a useful source of rental information and advertisements.

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

PRICE GUIDE

YYYY	Over Y2000 a night
YYY	Y1000-2000 a night
YY	Y600-Y1000 a night
Y	Under Y600 a night

CHONGWEN & SOUTH CHAOYANG

崇文、朝阳南

This area is probably Běijīng's most popular hotel district, at least for midrange and top-end accommodation. Local hotels all offer either proximity or simple transport access to Tiananmen Square, Temple of Heaven Park, Wangfujing Dajie and Běijīng's commercial and business district in the east. Some of Běijīng's best top-notch and mid-range hotels are found here, as well as a handful of decent budget alternatives.

EASTERN MORNING SUN YOUTH HOSTEL

Map pp268-9

Běijīng Dōngfāng Chéngguāng Qīngnián Lǚguǎn
北京东方晨光青年旅馆

☎ 6528 4347; www.hostelsbeijing.com; fl B4, East Bldg, Oriental Plaza, 8-16 Dongdan Santiao 东单三条8-16号; east side d/tr/5-bed Y120-140/180/300, west side d/tr/q Y140/180/240; ☉ Dongdan; 📍

The windowless, cramped rooms, deficient daylight and bunker-style effect is claustrophobic, but many travellers consider these worthwhile sacrifices when weighed against the ultra-central location off Wangfujing Dajie, 2pm check-out and budget tariff. Make a mental note of the fire escape location,

nonetheless. All loos and showers are communal (clean); centralised air-con. Internet café (from 7.30am to midnight), tourist info office, noticeboards, slightly harried staff.

LEO YOUTH HOSTEL

Map pp268-9

Guǎngjùyuán Fàndiàn 广聚元饭店
☎ 6303 1595; 52 Dazhalan Xijie 大栅栏西街52号; 12-bed/4-bed dm Y45/70; d without toilet/shower Y140-160, d with toilet/bath Y200-240; ☉ Qianmen; 📍

Popular and busy, it's advisable to phone ahead and make reservations at this bargain hostel tucked away down Dazhalan Xijie where staff make solid efforts at wooing international backpackers. There's an attractive interior courtyard decked out with plastic plants, OK dorm rooms (pricier dorms with toilet), simple but passable doubles, a small but lively bar, and a location that knocks the spots off lesser competitors.

BEIJING CITY CENTRAL YOUTH HOSTEL

Map pp268-9

Běijīng Chéngshì Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè
北京城市国际青年旅社

☎ 6525 8866/8511 5050; www.centralhostel.com; 1 Beijingzhan Jie 北京站街1号; 4-8 bed dm Y60, s with/without shower Y160/120, d Y298; ☉ Beijingzhan; 📍

Across the road from Beijing Train Station and right next to the underground, this recently opened hostel compensates for

lack of character with a definitely handy location. A natural target for backpack-laden travellers closing in on the capital by train, rooms go fast, so phone ahead. Notice board, info desk, TV and video room, kitchen plus a handy internet café on the 2nd floor.

HOME INN

Map pp268-9

Rújiā Kuàijí Jiùdiàn 如家快捷酒店
☎ 6317 3366; www.homeinns.com; 61 Liangshidian Jie, Dashilar 大栅栏粮食店街61号; d Y178-218; ☉ Qianmen; 📍

Most branches of this budget/midrange chain are unhelpfully scattered around in marginal parts of town, but earmark this one located a short trot south of Tiananmen Square. Double rooms are small, but clean, with modern fittings and bright soft furnishings. Parallel to Qianmen Dajie, Liangshidian Jie (Grain Shop St) is gritty and repellent, but that's OK if you only want somewhere to hit the sack. Internet access (per hour Y10); small restaurant.

TIANSHUI LÜGUǎN

Map p262

甜水旅馆
☎ 6527 9284; 45 Datianshuijue Hutong

大甜水井胡同45号; s/d Y180; ☉ Wangfujing/Tiananmen Dong

Good slow season rates (rooms down to Y130) make this handy place – tucked away down a *hutong* with loads of authentic Běijīng personality – a pleasant choice. Rooms have air-con, TV and shower, but no phone. There's no English sign, but it's on the north side of the alleyway, around 50m west of Chenguang Jie, adjacent to a restaurant. Spoken English could be problematic, so refer to the Hotel Primer (opposite).

GUANQI HOTEL

Map pp268-9

Guānqí Bīnguǎn 观旗宾馆
☎ 6303 8490; No 1 Building, Zhengyang Market, off Qianmen Dajie 正阳市场一号楼; r Y238-300; ☉ Qianmen

Its mediocrity only matched by its stupendous outlook onto the Arrow Tower (p76) of Qianmen, this place is worth contemplating if being at the bull's-eye of Běijīng on a budget tops your priorities. The name means 'See the Flag Hotel' – indicating the views of Tiananmen Square – and even though some of its small and grubby rooms (all with TV, air-con and shower) face the

wrong way or are viewless, the location is exceptional. This is the cheaper of two hotels of the same name; the slightly pricier namesake (☎ 6705 8230/6702 7988; fax 6303 5630; 18 Qianmen Dongdajie 前门东大街18号; r Y280 & Y380) is across the road.

JIANGUO HOTEL

Map pp268-9

Jiànguó Fàndiàn 建国饭店
☎ 6500 2233; www.hoteljianguo.com; 5 Jianguomenwai Dajie 建国门外大街5号; d Y1350; ☉ Yonganli; 📍 ☉

It had to happen sooner or later – this popular old-timer has undergone restyling. Old touches persist amid the modern rehash, with Charlie's Bar (a mainstay for boozy embassy staff and dyed-in-the-wool expats) surviving unscathed. Rooms in the four-storey building 'A' are nicely fitted out, and the ground floor patio decking and greenery is tempting, but rooms opposite the bar can be noisy at night. Rooms in the less attractive nine-storey building 'B' were being renovated at the time of writing. Wi-fi available.

RAFFLES BEIJING HOTEL

Map pp268-9

Běijīng Fàndiàn Láifóshì Jiùdiàn
北京饭店莱佛士酒店
☎ 6526 3388; www.beijing.affles.com; 33 Dongchang'an Jie; d incl breakfast Y1688; ☉ Wangfujing; 📍 📍

With a history dating to 1900 (when it was called the Grand Hotel de Pekin), a winning location on the cusp of Wangfujing Dajie and elegant rooms, the Raffles Beijing is an attractive choice. Service is cordial and the overall presentation impressive, with a good selection of Chinese and international dining options, including East 33 (☎ 6526 3388 ext 5172), for a smart modern Chinese ambience.

NOVOTEL XINQIAO

Map pp268-9

Běijīng Xīnqiáo Nuòfútè Fàndiàn
北京新桥诺富特饭店
☎ 6513 3366; www.accorhotels.com/asia; 2 Dongjiaomin Xiang 东交民巷2号; d Y1750; ☉ Chongwenmen; 📍 ☉

A dated '90s effect reigns supreme in the foyer with soft colours, ageing wood design and undulating oval curves, but the tariff offers reasonable value and the location, conveniently out of the action while

HOTEL PRIMER

Single room	单人间	dānrénjiān
Double room	双人间	shuāng rénjiān
Triple room	三人间	sānrénjiān
Quad	四人间	sìrénjiān
Suite	套房	tàofáng
Reception	总台	zǒngtái
Bathroom	卫生间	wèishēngjiān
Passport	护照	hùzhào
Hotel	饭店/酒店/大酒店	fàndiàn/jiǔdiàn/dàjiǔdiàn
Youth hostel	青年旅馆	qīngnián lǚguǎn
Toilet paper	卫生纸	wèishēngzhǐ
TV	电视	diànshì
Telephone	电话	diànhuà
Air-con	空调	kōngtiáo
Taxi	出租车	chūzūchē
Check-out	退房	tuífáng
Discount	折扣	zhékòu

plugged directly into the metro system, is a bonus. Rooms are modern, if unremarkable, and thin on home comforts. A big choice of restaurants and bars and there's a handy post office (open from 8am to 6pm) on the ground floor and an outdoor tennis court.

GRAND HYATT BEIJING

Map pp268-9 YYYY

Běijīng Dōngfāng Jūnyuè Dàjiùdiàn

北京东方君悦大酒店

☎ 8518 1234; www.beijing.grand.hyatt.com;

1 Dongchang'an Jie 东长安街1号; d Y2150;

📍 Wangfujing; 🚗 🚻 ♿

It may be five years old, but a freshness still reigns at this elegant creation lording it over Oriental Plaza – from the grand sweep of its foyer to the whirl of (largely empty) whizz brand name stores (Shanghai Tang, Zenith, Taghauer) downstairs, syphoning off stray shoppers from the attached Oriental Plaza. Standard rooms are not that spacious, but are attractively designed with glass work tables and modern furnishings. Located only 10 minutes walk from the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, the hotel boasts several excellent restaurants, cafés and bars – including the smart Made in China and the luxuriant Red Moon Bar. Has Wi-fi access.

CHINA WORLD HOTEL

Map pp268-9 YYYY

Zhōngguó Dàfàndiàn 中国大饭店

☎ 6505 2266; www.shangri-la.com; 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie 建国门外大街1号; d Y3200,

ste Y5000-Y31000; 📍 Guomao; 🚗 🚻 ♿

Extensively renovated in 2003, the gorgeous five-star China World Hotel delivers an outstanding level of service to its well-dressed complement of largely executive travellers. The sumptuous foyer is a masterpiece of Chinese motifs, glittering chandeliers, robust columns and smooth acres of marble, an effect complemented by thoroughly modern and comfortable rooms. The amenities are extensive, dining options are first-rate and shopping needs meet their match at the upscale China World Trade Center. Wi-fi access is available.

ST REGIS

Map pp268-9 YYYY

Běijīng Guójī Jùlèbù Fàndiàn

北京国际俱乐部饭店

☎ 6460 6688; www.stregis.com/beijing;

21 Jianguomenwai Dajie 建国门外大街21号;

d/ste Y3150/3980; 📍 Jianguomen; 🚗 🚻 ♿

Its extravagant foyer augmented by thorough professionalism and a tip-top location, the St Regis is a marvellous, albeit costly, five-star choice. Sumptuous and soothing rooms ooze comfort, 24-hour butlers are at hand to fine tune your stay and a gorgeous assortment of restaurants, including Danieli's, steers you into one of Běijīng's finest dining zones.

GRAND HOTEL BEIJING

Map pp268-9 YYYY

Guībīnlóu Fàndiàn 贵宾楼饭店

☎ 6513 7788; www.grandhotelbeijing.com.cn;

35 Dongchang'an Jie 东长安街35号; standard

tw/ste incl breakfast Y3450/5175; 📍 Tiananmen

Dong or Wangfujing; ♿

With regal views over the Forbidden City, this hotel finds itself on some of Běijīng's most prized real estate, but a failure to capitalise on its assets results in a tired and unexceptional presentation, considering the weighty tariff. Wi-fi access.

DONGCHENG 东城

Riddled with both *hútòng* and history, you'll find the best courtyard hotels in Dōngchéng, as well as a handful of decent budget options. High-calibre top-end hotels tend to cluster close to the shopping street of Wangfujing Dajie.

BEIJING SAGA INTERNATIONAL

YOUTH HOSTEL Map p262 Y

Běijīng Shǐjiā Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè

北京时家国际青年旅社

☎ 6527 2773; sagayangguang@yahoo.com; 9

Shijia Hutong 史家胡同9号; dm Y55, d Y180/198,

tr Y210; 📍 Dengshikou (under construction); 🚗

This modern and very popular hostel is ensconced within a historic *hútòng*, offering a standard array of clean and well-kept rooms, a spacious seating area in the main reception area, rooftop common area, table football, a refectory, bar, internet access (Y10 per hour) and washing machine (Y10 per load). Great Wall trips can be arranged, as well as outings to watch acrobats.

PEKING DOWNTOWN BACKPACKERS

ACCOMMODATION Map p262 Y

Dōngtáng Kèzhàn 东堂客栈

☎ 8400 2429; www.backpackingchina.com;

85 Nanluogu Xiang 南锣鼓巷85号; 4/3-bed dm

Y65/75, windowless d/d incl breakfast per person

Y60/80; 📍 Andingmen; 🚗

For backpacker arrivals in town, the central location, helpful staff and lively *hútòng* aspect are hard to beat. Doubles are tidy (no TV), with plastic wood floor and clean shower rooms. Free breakfast and free pickup from Capital Airport (you pay the toll, Y20), plus bike rental (per day Y20, Y300 deposit), internet access (Y6 per hour), adjacent backpacker restaurant, all the nearby bars of Nanluogu Xiang and trips to the Great Wall.

LUSONGYUAN HOTEL Map p262 Y

Lūsōngyuán Bīnguǎn 侣松园宾馆

☎ 6404 0436; 22 Banchang Hutong 板厂胡同

22号; s/d/ste Y458/780-880/1600; 📍 Zhangzihonglu (under construction); 🚗 104 to Bei Bingma

Si stop; 🚗

Rooms may be a bit cramped at this *hútòng* hotel, a courtyard house built by a Mongolian general during the Qing dynasty, but the location and setting are big plus points, and guests can sit out quaffing drinks in the courtyard during spring and summer. Pocket-sized singles come with pea-sized baths; dorms have three beds (with TV, no windows, common shower), there is just one suite and a handful of double bedrooms, so book ahead. Rooms facing

onto the courtyard are slightly more expensive. There's also bike rental (half/full day Y15/30) and a pricey email centre (open from 7.30am to 10pm; Y5 for 10 minutes).

XINMINGJI HOTEL Map p262 Y

Xīnmíngjī Bīnguǎn 新明基宾馆

☎ 6407 9911; fax 6401 2337; 140 Jiadaoakou

Nandajie 交道口南大街140号; d from Y160;

📍 Zhangzihonglu (under construction)

Handily located, this modest hotel may not be buried down a *hútòng*, but it's in the old part of town with decent and very competitively priced rooms over a small number of floors and friendly staff.

FANGYUAN HOTEL Map p262 Y

Fāngyuán Bīnguǎn 芳园宾馆

☎ 6525 6331; www.cbw.com/hotel/fangyuan;

36 Dengshikou Xijie 灯市口西街36号; d inc

breakfast Y198-280, ste Y422; 📍 Dengshikou

(under construction); 🚗

Without its strategic location just west of Wangfujing Dajie or helpful tourist info centre, this good-value spot – its front door guarded by a pair of stone felines – would swiftly join the ranks of the anonymous two star. A minor refit has occurred and all rooms – downstairs cheapies included – are comfortable enough. Staff is used to dealing with foreign travellers, so blank expressions at reception are mercifully kept to a minimum. Breakfast is free, but it's of the boiled egg and congee variety. Internet access is Y10 per hour, bike rental Y20 per day.

BAMBOO GARDEN HOTEL Map p262 Y

Zhúyuán Bīnguǎn 竹园宾馆

☎ 5852 0088; www.bbgh.com.cn; 24 Xiaoshigiao

Hutong 小石桥胡同24号; s/d/ste Y380/680-

880/980; 📍 Gulou

Within roaming distance of the Drum and Bell Towers and Houhai Lake, the cosy, intimate and leafy courtyard aspect is impaired by the jarring modern block opposite and occasionally casual staff, but this place still gets good reviews. The buildings date to the late Qing dynasty, its gardens belonging to a eunuch from Empress Cixi's entourage. The small singles are cheap but ordinary, so upgrading to the more pleasant doubles and suites is recommended. Reception is through the gates on your left.

TOP FIVE PLACES TO STAY

- St Regis (right) The pinnacle of elegance in Běijīng, lavish and sumptuous with full-on pampering.
- Peninsula Beijing (p185) Faultless presentation, outstanding service, great location.
- Haoyuan Hotel (p184) Delightful and charming courtyard hotel with oodles of history and character.
- Far East International Youth Hostel (p187) Loads of personality, good-value rooms and the thumbs up from enthusiastic travellers.
- Peking Downtown Backpackers Accommodation (opposite) Winning location in the heart of the old town on traveller-friendly Nanluogu Xiang.

tral location on Wangfujing Dajie, but has little character or charm with odd-looking sculpture dotted around. Up-to-date rooms have the full range of business comforts and pleasant bathrooms. Wi-fi access.

CHÁOYÁNG 朝阳

Most top-end options in this district can be found near the Sanlitun embassy area and the Lufthansa Center. Midrange options are more limited and a few hotels for those on a budget can be found. This might not be the most historic part of town and only a few of Běijīng's top sights are located here, but travellers will appreciate the proximity to the bar streets of Sanlitun.

ZHAOLONG INTERNATIONAL YOUTH HOSTEL

Map p264

Zhàolóng Qīngnián Lǚshè 兆龙青年旅社
☎ 6597 2299; www.zhaolonghotel.com.cn; 2 Gongrentiyuchang Beilu 工人体育场北路2号; 2-/3-/4-/5-/6-bed dm Y70/60/60/50/50, s/deluxe r Y100/380; Ⓞ Dongsishitiao; 📍

A six-floor block tucked away behind the Zhaolong Hotel, this good choice has tidy common areas and clean rooms, laundry (Y10 to Y20), internet (Y10 per hour), kitchen, reading room, air-con, safe, bike rental (Y30 per day), 24-hour hot water (communal showers) and a ground floor café. Non-HI members pay an extra Y10 on all dorms but the mark-up is larger on other rooms. Breakfast is an additional Y15 (from 7am to 10am). Book rooms in youth hostels nationwide for a Y10 deposit.

YOU YI YOUTH HOSTEL

Map p264

Yóuyì Qīngnián Jiǔdiàn 友谊青年酒店
☎ 6417 2632; fax 6415 6866; 43 Beisanlitun Nan 北三里屯南43号; dm/d Y70/180; Ⓞ Dongsishitiao or Dongzhimen

Adjacent to Poacher's Inn and readily equipped with popular on-site bar the Tree (p145); ☎ 6415 1954; www.treebeijing.com), this handy hostel lies at the nucleus of the Sanlitun bar and restaurant ghetto. Rooms are clean and comfortable enough: four-bed dorms have dark-wood bunks and air-con, doubles (with phone, TV, air-con and radiator) are bright and spacious with large beds and the free laundry service is a hospitable,

TOP FIVE COURTYARD HOTELS

- Haoyuan Hotel (opposite) Delightful Qing dynasty courtyard in the centre of Běijīng.
- Lusongyuan Hotel (p183) Tucked delightfully away down a historic *hútòng*, with bundles of character.
- Red Lantern House (p187) Budget hotel with courtyard-style charm in an authentic Běijīng locale.
- Red Capital Residence (opposite) Historic courtyard hotel with a handful of nostalgically styled rooms.
- Bamboo Garden Hotel (p183) Quiet and spacious courtyard hotel with pleasant grounds in the vicinity of the Drum and Bell Towers.

gilt-edged tariff of the Peninsula across the street. With a fresh and cosmopolitan feel, a straightforward elegance rules without the ostentatious frills. A popular ground floor buffet restaurant and good facilities round off the picture. The cheaper and older rooms in the more scuffed West Wing were undergoing renovation at the time of writing, so prices could take a hike.

PENINSULA BEIJING

Map p262

Wángfǔ Fàndiàn 王府饭店
☎ 8516 2888; www.peninsula.com; 8 Jinyu Hutong 金鱼胡同8号; d Y1920; Ⓞ Dengshikou (under construction); 📍 📺 🚿

Owned by the Peninsula Group and having been repackaged with a further name change (it was previously the Peninsula Palace), the ever-popular Peninsula Beijing is a cornerstone of ostentatious living in Běijīng. Up front with its exclusivity, the hotel hints at classical Chinese grandeur, from the decorative arch outside to the lobby's white marble bridge arching over the fountain floors below, but this is a purely modern tower hotel. Even if the exclusive basement mall is a ghost town of empty, hyperpriced outlets, this is also where you find Jing – with its profusion of glass beads cascading from the lobby above – and Huang Ting, the Peninsula's two signature restaurants.

CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL

Map p262

Běijīng Guójì Yiyuàn Huángguān Jiànrì Jiǔdiàn 北京国际艺苑皇冠假日酒店
☎ 6513 3388; www.crowneplaza.com; 48 Wangfujing Dajie 王府井大街48号; d/ste Y2760/4410; Ⓞ Dengshikou (under construction)
Refitted and overhauled in 2005, the five-star Crowne Plaza enjoys an excellent cen-

REGENT BEIJING

Map p262

Běijīng Lǐjīng Dàjiǔdiàn 北京丽晶大酒店
☎ 8522 1888; www.regenthotels.com; 99 Jinbao Lu; d incl breakfast Y1200 (only promotional rate available at time of writing); Ⓞ Dengshikou (under construction); 📍 📺 🚿 🚻

Christmas unwrapped 2006, the lavish brand new 500-room Regent has staked out a precious plot of land on the corner of Jinbao Lu and Dongdan Beidajie to the east of Wangfujing Dajie. Guest rooms are luxuriously-styled and up-to-the-minute (complimentary high-speed internet access, flat screen TVs) and a full range of health and leisure facilities and five restaurants round off the impressive picture.

RED CAPITAL RESIDENCE

Map p262

Xīnhóngzī Kèzhàn 新红资客栈
☎ 6402 7150; www.redcapitalclub.com.cn; 9 Dongsi Liutiao 东四六条9号; r incl breakfast Y1200-1450; Ⓞ Dongsishitiao

Dressed up with Liberation-era artefacts and established in a glorious Qing dynasty courtyard, this unusual guesthouse is heady with the nostalgia of a vanished age. Make your choice from five rooms decked out with stuff that wouldn't look out of place in a museum: the Chairman's Residence, the Concubine Suites (each with their own courtyard), or the two author suites named after Edgar Snow and Han Suyin. Also in the spirit of the pastiche is the Bomb Shelter Bar, pampering its guests with wine, cigars and propaganda films from a shelter excavated on the orders of Vice-Chairman Lin Biao. For those who really want to get into the swing, the hotel can also arrange cruises of Běijīng's streets in the Red Flag limousine that belonged to Jiang Qing (Mao's doomed wife and Gang of Four member).

NOVOTEL PEACE HOTEL

Map p262

Běijīng Nuòfùtè Héping Bīnguǎn 北京诺富特和平宾馆
☎ 6512 8833; www.novotelpeace.bj.com; 3 Jinyu Hutong 金鱼胡同3号; West Bldg d Y1826, East Bldg d Y1992; Ⓞ Dengshikou (under construction); 📍 🚿

The centrally located Novotel has more flair and a better location than its Chongwenmen sibling, and is far cheaper than the

HAOYUAN HOTEL Map p262
Hǎoyuán Bīnguǎn 好园宾馆
☎ 6512 5557; www.haoyuanhotel.com; 53 Shijia Hutong 史家胡同53号; standard/deluxe d Y585/715, ste Y780-1040; Ⓞ Dengshikou (under construction); 📍

Visitors aiming to get into *hútòng* mode could do worse than hanging their hat in this charming courtyard hotel guarded by a pair of stone lions, where tasteful standard double rooms are delightfully arranged with classical Chinese furniture and the red lantern-hung courtyard feng shui weaves its magical charms. The Qing dynasty buildings were once home to Hua Guofeng (Communist Party chairman after Mao Zedong) but the suites in the rear tree-dotted courtyard boast unexpected mod cons – one has a sauna, the other a Jacuzzi bath. Internet is Y10 per hour. Reception is on the left as you enter; pursue discounts during the slack season.

CUI MING ZHUANG HOTEL

Map p262

Cuiming Zhuāng Bīnguǎn 翠明庄宾馆
☎ 6513 6622; www.cuimingzhuanghotel.com.cn; 1 Nanheyang Dajie 南河沿大街1号; d/ste Y600/1200; Ⓞ Tiananmen Dong

Fronted by a reproduction Chinese roof with green tiles, this pleasant and quiet three-star hotel dates from the 1930s. During the 1940s, the building was an office of the Chinese Communist Party, which helped agree to the ceasefire between the Kuomintang and the communists. It largely caters to Chinese guests, but is excellently located for the Forbidden City and Wangfujing Dajie. Facilities include a billiard room, ticketing office, Sunshine Café and shuffleboard.

NANJING GREAT HOTEL

Map p262

Běijīng Nánjīng Dàfàndiàn 北京南京大饭店
☎ 6526 2188; 5 Xi Jie 西街5号; d incl breakfast Y998; Ⓞ Wangfujing; 📍

This popular, new Chinese-managed mid-range hotel right in the centre of town has competitively priced and comfortable rooms. The location, a ten-minute walk east of the Forbidden City and just by Wangfujing Dajie is a winner, although staff English-language skills can be rudimentary.

albeit sometimes erratic, gesture. There is internet access (Y10 per hour), and room rates include breakfast (from 7.30am to 9am; toast, coffee, eggs and sausage).

HOME INN Map p264 Y

Rújiā Kuàijíe Jiùdiàn 如家快捷酒店
☎ 5120 3288; fax 5120 3299; www.homeinn.com; 2a Xinzhong Jie 新中街2甲; d from Y279; ④ Dongzhimen

A link in the successful and value-for-money lower midrange Home Inn chain (p181), this large branch may not be centrally located, but the position a short distance from Dongzhimen underground station immediately plugs you into the Běijīng subway system. The overall effect is formulaic, but dependably modern and clean. Reserve ahead.

RED HOUSE HOTEL Map p264 Y

Ruixiù Bīnguǎn 瑞秀宾馆
☎ 6416 7500; www.redhouse.com.cn; 10 Chunxiu Lu; s/tw Y350/400, ste Y600; ④ Dongzhimen
Putting you within orbit of the Sanlitun bar scene, rooms are clean and tidy, with wood-strip flooring, traditional-style furniture and good shower rooms. Breakfast is thrown in, there's bike rental (per day Y30), a handy on-site pub with essential English Premier League football action (Club Football Center, p144) and free laundry.

COMFORT INN Map p264 YYY

Káifù Fàndiàn 凯富饭店
☎ 8523 5522; fax 8523 5577; 6 Gongrentiyu-chang Beilu 工人体育场北路6号; d incl breakfast Y1357; ④ Dongshihitiao then bus113; ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦

Benefiting from a first rate location near the Sanlitun bar and restaurant district, this modern midrange hotel has rather bland but serviceable rooms, equipped with free internet, cable and satellite TV and a top-floor indoor pool.

KERRY CENTER HOTEL YYY

Map p264
Jiālǐ Zhōngxīn Fàndiàn 嘉里中心饭店
☎ 6561 8833; www.shangri-la.com; 1 Guanghua Lu 光华路1号; d Y1600; ④ Guomao; ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
Since opening in 1999, the business type-oriented Kerry Center remains modern and eye-catching – from the funky, droopy col-

oured glass bowls at reception to the svelte female attendants at Centro, the hotel's signature bar. The 34 sq metre doubles are crisp and comfortable, with sliding doors onto well-designed bathrooms with both shower and (small) bath. The gym is huge and well-equipped, the swimming pool substantial, and the adjacent Kerry Mall answers shopping needs. Wi-fi access.

SWISSÔTEL Map p264 YYYY

Gǎngào Zhōngxīn Ruìshì Jiùdiàn 港澳中心瑞士酒店
☎ 6553 2288; www.swissotel-beijing.com; 2 Chaoyangmen Beidajie; d/ste Y2755/3675; ④ Dongshihitiao; ④ ⑤

Located just outside the Dongshihitiao subway station, this five-star hotel (managed by Raffles International) has decent-sized rooms, an excellent gym and swimming pool and a much-liked buffet breakfast that gets travellers' thumbs up. Guests moan that spoken English is not up to scratch, but staff are helpful and the (expensive) restaurants get positive reviews. Excellent discounts.

KEMPINSKI HOTEL Map p264 YYYY

Kǎibīnsījī Fàndiàn 凯宾斯基饭店
☎ 6465 3388; www.kempinski-beijing.com; Lufthansa Center, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu; d Y3010; ④ Dongshihitiao then bus 701

The location next to the Lufthansa Center Youyi Shopping City (p166) might be convenient for shopping sprees, but this corner of Běijīng has precious little history. If you want gleaming shoes, stop off at the shoe-shine man and his marvellous, glittering brass shoe rest in the lobby (he operates from 7am to 10pm). There's also a large range of shops, including carpet shops and art galleries (with insipid artwork). As well, there is a decent gym and a good deli and bakery.

ORIENTAL GARDEN HOTEL YYYY

Map p264
Dōngfāng Huāyuán Fàndiàn 东方花园饭店
☎ 6416 8866; fax 6415 0638; 6 Dongzhimen Nandajie 东直门南大街6号; d/ste Y2580/3110; ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦

This recently renovated four-star Chinese-run business hotel has comfortable and attractive guest rooms, Cantonese and Shànghǎi restaurants and a coffee shop.

FÈNGTÁI & XUĀNWŪ

丰台、宣武

BEIJING FEIYING INTERNATIONAL YOUTH HOSTEL Y

Map pp266-7
Běijīng Fēiyīng Qīngnián Lǚshè 北京飞鹰青年旅社
☎ 6315 1165; iyhf@yahoo.com.cn; Bldg 10; Changchun Jie Hou Jie, Xuanwumen Xidajie 宣武门西大街长椿街后街10号楼; 10-/5-bed dm Y30/50, d Y180; ④ Changchunjie; ④
On the edge of things as youth hostels go, but easy access to the subway is a plus here. Bicycle hire, washing machine, kitchen, tourist info as well as internet access (Y10 per hour); no lift. Non-HI members pay Y10 extra for five-bed dorms and an additional Y20 for double rooms. Take exit C at Changchunjie subway stop and walk east past the McDonalds for around 200m.

FAR EAST INTERNATIONAL YOUTH HOSTEL Y

Map pp266-7
Yuǎndōng Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè; 远东国际青年旅社
☎ 6301 8811, ext 3118; courtyard@elong.com; 113 Tieshu Xiejie 铁树斜街113号; Youth Hostel dm high/low season Y60/45; ④ Hepingmen
This hostel is in a pretty old courtyard opposite the hotel of the same name. It is an extremely pleasant and clean place with loads of character, internet (Y10 per hour), bike rental (Y20 per day, Y200 deposit), kitchen, washing facilities and a fine bar-café. There is also a table tennis room, a shop (selling IP cards), a tourist office (open from 7.30am to 11.30pm), pricey VCD rental (Y2 to Y5) and guests can lounge around in the courtyard when the weather's warm. Rooms come without TV, phone or shower. The Far East Hotel (Map pp266-7; s/d/tr Y238/398/378, q Y75 per person) opposite is an unremarkable two-star hotel, but the quads downstairs are clean with wood-strip floorings and well-kept bunk beds. The hotel has a decent café-bar with sports TV downstairs (open from noon to midnight), plus a kitchen with two washing machines and a fridge.

QIANMEN JIANGUO HOTEL YYY

Map pp266-7
Qiánmén Jiànguó Fàndiàn 前门建国饭店
☎ 6301 6688; fax 6301 3883; 175 Yong'an Lu 永安路175号; d/tr/ste incl breakfast Y1078/1298/1430; ④ Hepingmen; ④
Elegant in parts and popular with tour groups (lured by its combination of excellent location and value), this hotel makes brave efforts to ward off that great curse: the generic three-star Chinese hotel effect. Business is brisk so staff is on their toes, even if somewhat reluctant. Rooms are spacious, clean and attractively carpeted and come with satellite TV and phones in bathrooms. You can find the Liyuan Theatre (p148) to the right of the domed atrium at the rear of the hotel.

MARCO POLO BEIJING YYY

Map pp266-7
Běijīng Mǎgē Bólóu Jiùdiàn 北京马哥孛罗酒店
☎ 6603 6688; www.marcopolohotels.com; 6 Xuanwumennei Dajie 宣武门内大街6号; d/ste Y1080/1580; ④ Xidan or Xuanwumen; ④ ⑤
North of the South Cathedral (p97), this unfussy four-star hotel is the best in this part of town. A length in the hotel pool may only take a few strokes, but the basement Clark Hatch Fitness Centre is well-equipped and handy underground stations are nearby.

Hǎidiàn & Xīchéng

海淀、西城

RED LANTERN HOUSE Y

Map pp260-1
Fǎngǔ Yuán 仿古园
☎ 6611 5771; 5 Zhengjue Hutong 正觉胡同5号; 4-bed dm Y60, 6-bed dm Y55, d Y180-220; ④ Jishuitan; ④
This great place couples its homely courtyard-style look – hung outside with climbing plants – with a winning *hutong* location a short stroll from Houhai Lake. The context of its surrounding alleys and local markets transports you to a genuine Běijīng setting. Internet (Y6 per hour), washing (Y10 per kg), restaurant/bar in main lobby area. If it's full, try the equally good Red Lantern House 2 (p188; within walking distance).

RED LANTERN HOUSE 2

Map pp260-1

Hóng Dēnglóng 红灯笼

111 Xinjiekou Nandajie 新街口南大街111号;

6-bed dm Y55, s/d Y140-180/220; 📍

Its pretty, open courtyard charms, lazy tempo and helpful staff make this recently opened enclave of peace – just off busy Xinjiekou Nandajie – a relaxing proposition but the absence of phones in double rooms is an inconvenience. Our visit coincided with the construction of a new batch of rooms with adequate heating to fend off Běijīng's cruel winters. Hidden discreetly away off the main drag, take the small alley to the green door and hunt for the door bell. Laundry, bike rental, lockers, internet (Y6 per hour, from 8am to midnight).

SLEEPY INN Map pp260-1

Lìshè Shíchàhǎi Guójì Qīngnián Jiùdiàn

丽舍什刹海国际青年酒店

☎ 6406 9954; fax 6401 0235; www.sleepyinn.com

.cn; 103 Deshengmennei Dajie 德胜门内大街103号; 6-bed dm Y60, 4-bed dm Y80, tw/d Y258/258

This newcomer, with a mere 27 rooms and an adorable perch on Houhai Lake, has managed to incorporate one of the halls of the former Taoist Zhenwu Temple into its engaging and peaceful formula. Rooms are in the three-storey block, with clean pine-bed dorms and well-looked after doubles, similarly decked out with pine furnishings, but without phone or TV.

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL

Map pp260-1

Xiānggé Lìlā Fàndiàn 香格里拉饭店

☎ 6841 2211; www.shangri-la.com;

29 Zizhuyuan Lu 紫竹园路29号;

d incl breakfast Y1370; 📍 🚗 🚿

The perfumed and air-freshened lobby and muted Chinese motifs may not have the

majesty of sibling China World Hotel but rates are far lower, while the overall business and high occupancy rates – coupled with the looming 2008 Olympics – have prompted the construction of a new tower brimful with spacious Horizon rooms, due for unwrapping in 2007. Modest-sized swimming pool.

RITZ-CARLTON BEIJING, FINANCIAL STREET

Map pp260-1

Běijīng Jīnróng Jiē Lǐjiā Jiùdiàn

北京金融街丽嘉酒店

☎ 6601 6666; www.ritzcarlton.com;

1 Jinchengfang Dongjie 金城坊东街1号;

d Y4600; wi-fi 📶 🚿

The magnificent Ritz-Carlton (opened 2006) in Běijīng's financial district has further raised the bar in Běijīng's exclusive hotel sector. Spacious rooms are at the apex of luxury, with outrageously comfortable beds, huge 37-inch flat screen TVs and further TVs in the bathroom. Occupying an entire floor, the spa and health club has won praise from pampered guests working off their meals enjoyed at the hotel's excellent restaurants.

FURTHER AFIELD**HOLIDAY INN LIDO BEIJING**

Map pp258-9

Běijīng Lìdū Jiàri Fàndiàn

北京丽都假日饭店

☎ 6437 6688; www.beijing-lido.holiday-inn.com;

cnr Jichang Lu & Jiangtai Lu; d Y1330;

📍 🚗 🚿 🚿

On the way to the airport, this hotel – the first Holiday Inn built in China – has virtually everything you may need with excellent amenities and a well-resourced shopping mall.

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