

Walking & Cycling Tours

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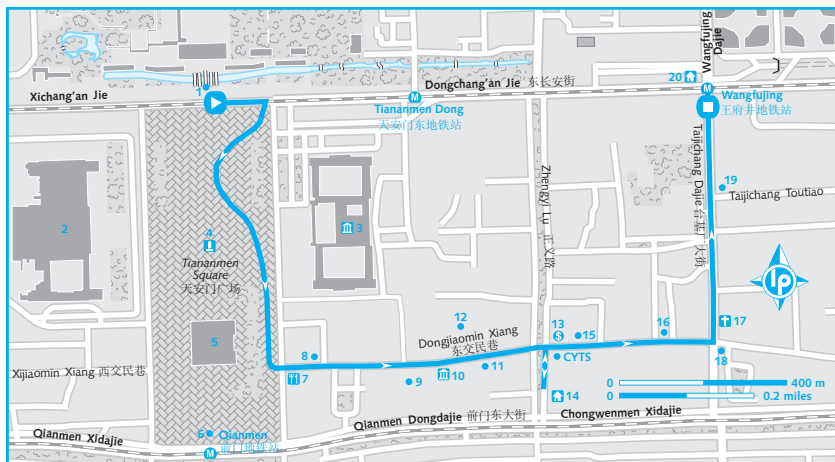
Běijīng is thankfully flat as a chessboard, but walking around town can be an Olympic challenge, as unrelenting miles of pavement, shocking traffic manoeuvres, vehicle fumes and the stifling heat of summer or bone-chilling cold of winter drain the wind from your sails. So the following walks are short and easy to manage, lassoing in some of Běijīng's most fascinating and charming areas.

TIANANMEN SQUARE & FOREIGN LEGATION QUARTER WALK

From the dignified **Gate of Heavenly Peace 1** (p76), take the underground tunnel beneath Dongchang'an Jie to Tiananmen Square (p81), pompously framed to the west and east by the colossal **Great Hall of the People 2** (p77) and the **China National Museum 3** (p75). Sunrise and sunset is greeted by crowds at the daily flag-raising and flag-lowering ceremony (p82), punctiliously performed at the northern tip of the square. Beyond the **Monument to the People's Heroes 4** (p78) sits the squat **Chairman Mao Memorial Hall 5** (p75) and to the south rises Zhengyang Gate and the Arrow Tower, together known as **Front Gate 6** (p76). Walk to the east side of the square and, if you wish, fortify yourself with a meal of Peking duck at the branch of **Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant (7)**; ☎ 6512 2265; 44 Dongjiaomin Xiang; lunch & dinner) just south of the entrance to Dongjiaomin Xiang (东交民巷; Dongjiaomin Alley). Climb the 16 steps into Dongjiaomin Xiang (formerly known as Legation St due to the area's 19th-century status as the diplomatic-mission quarter): the red brick building next to the Tian'an Hotel at No 39 was the former **French Hospital 8**; the green-roofed, orange brick building on the other side of the road at No 40 was the site of the former **Dutch Legation 9**. Further along on your right stands a building with huge pillars, the erstwhile address of the First National City Bank of New York (花旗银行; Huāqí Yínháng), now the riveting **Beijing Police Museum 10** (p74). Roughly 20m

WALK FACTS

Start Gate of Heavenly Peace
End Raffles Beijing Hotel; Wangfujing Dajie
Distance 2.5km
Time Two hours
Fuel Stop Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant (above)



up the road at No 34 (on your right) rises an imposing, red brick building with pillars, the former address of the **Banque de L'Indo-Chine 11** (东方汇理银行; Dōngfāng Huìlǐ Yínháng). Look carefully under the window on the right, and you can discern ghostly, faded Chinese characters that proclaim 'Long live the mighty leader Chairman Mao'. Under the window on the left are the faint characters 'Love live the mighty Chinese Communist Party'. The intimidating **Supreme Court 12** (最高人民法院; Zuìgāo Rénmín Fǎyuàn) is positioned on the other side of the road. Keep walking east to the domed building at 4a Zhengyi Lu on the corner of Zhengyi Lu (正义路) and Dongjiaomin Xiang, in former times the **Yokohama Specie Bank 13**. If the building is open, pop in and examine the period features adorning the interior, especially the ceiling. North on the right-hand side of Zhengyi Lu was the former Japanese Legation, opposite the British Legation to the west, now occupied by the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Public Security. South down Zhengyi Lu and beyond the branch of the China Youth Travel Service (CYTS; 30 Zhengyi Lu) is the **Huafeng Hotel 14**, sitting on the site of the former Grand Hotel des Wagon-Lits (六国饭店; Liùguó Fàndiàn). Backtrack and continue along Dongjiaomin Xiang to the low, grey building at No 19 which is the former **French post office 15**, now the Jingyuan Sichuan Restaurant, before reaching the former **French Legation 16**. The main gate stands at No 15, a large red entrance guarded by a pair of stone lions and impassive security guards. The Capital Hotel on the other side of the road is built on the grounds of what was the former German Legation. Backing onto a small school courtyard, the twin spires of the Gothic **St Michael's Church 17** (东交民巷天主教堂; Dongjiaominxiang Catholic Church) rise ahead at No 11, facing the green roofs and ornate red brickwork of the former **Belgian Legation 18**. Walk south down Taijichang Dajie (台基厂大街) – formerly Rue Marco Polo – to Chongwenmen Xidajie and you can gaze all the way to the Temple of Heaven's Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests (p81) at the end of Qianin Dajie (祈年大街). Backtrack north along Taijichang Dajie and hunt down the brick street sign embedded in the northern wall of Taijichang Toutiao (台基厂头条), carved with the old name of the road, **Rue Hart 19**. Located along the north side of Rue Hart was the Austro-Hungarian Legation, south of which stood the Peking Club, entered through a gate on Taijichang Dajie. At the north end of Taijichang Dajie and across busy Dongchang'an Jie is the **Raffles Beijing Hotel 20** (p181), elements of which date back to 1900.

WANGFUJING DAJIE TO THE FORBIDDEN CITY WALK

This walk takes you along Běijīng's signature shopping street before reaching the Forbidden City via historic backstreets, alleys and historic ruins. You can continue from the conclusion of the Tiananmen Square and Foreign Legation Quarter Walk, or simply take the subway to Wangfujing station where this expedition commences.

Facing north up Wangfujing Dajie, on your left is the Raffles Beijing Hotel (p181), while dazzling **Oriental Plaza 1** (p163) sparkles to your east, a gargantuan shopping mall spanning the entire block to Dongdan Beidajie.

Just north of Oriental Plaza is the **Wangfujing Bookstore 2**, one of Běijīng's largest Chinese-language bookstores (good for maps). Beyond the large 24-hour McDonald's (where the pedestrianised part of Wangfujing Dajie begins), the **Beijing Arts & Crafts Central Store 3** (p162) is a large tourist outlet (the sign outside says 'Artistic Mansions') with several floors of arts and crafts, jade, jewellery, snuff bottles, lacquer, silk, embroideries and ceramics. You may see small tourist buses assembling here for quick tours of the area, but they are banal and best avoided.

Next along on the same side of the road is **Chenggu Zhai 4**, a jade and jadeite outlet over two floors, opposite a colourful **pailou** (decorative archway) that leads to **Wangfujing Snack Street 5** (p124), a bustling melee of open-air food stalls, take-away snack vendors, restaurants and thronging diners. Delve further along the snack street to scoop up souvenirs, collectables and odds and ends from alleyside vendors. If more souvenir shopping is in order, the Yunhong Chopstick Shop (277 Wangfujing Dajie) on the corner of Wangfujing Dajie just north of Wangfujing Snack Street has a colourful range of chopsticks.

Walking north along Wangfujing Dajie, take the first left immediately after the huge Haoyou Emporium (好友世界商场; Hǎoyǒu Shìjiè Shāngchǎng) topped with the vast, green Fujifilm advertising hoarding. This is Datianshuijing Hutong (大甜水井胡同) – the name literally means 'Big Sweet Water Well Alley' – and it's typical of the narrow alleyways that

fragment much of central Běijīng into its delightful waffle-grid. Wander along the lane for a few hundred metres before returning to Wangfujing Dajie.

Buried along Shuaifuyuan Hutong (帅府园胡同), just beyond the Zhongguo Zhaoxiang photographic shop on the east side of Wangfujing Dajie, is a popular branch of the celebrated **Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant 6** (p131). Continuing along Shuaifuyuan Hutong brings you to the small **Central Academy of Fine Arts Gallery 7** (p74); ahead of you is the Chinese-style Beijing Union Hospital. Backtrack to Wangfujing Dajie and keep walking north, passing the Xin Zhongguo Kid's Stuff (p165), a hectic shop sprawling wildly with children's games and beeping gadgets. Further ahead on the east side of Wangfujing Dajie stretches the long shopping mass of **Dong An Plaza 8** and **Sundongan Plaza 9**, all the way to Jinyu Hutong (Goldfish Alley; 金鱼胡同), where handy bicycle hire can be found (p213) if you want to continue the journey on two wheels.

A short foray north along Wangfujing Dajie is rewarded by the abrupt appearance of **St Joseph's Church 10** (p93), with lovingly tended rose bushes along its flank. Further bike rental can be found on the other side of the road.

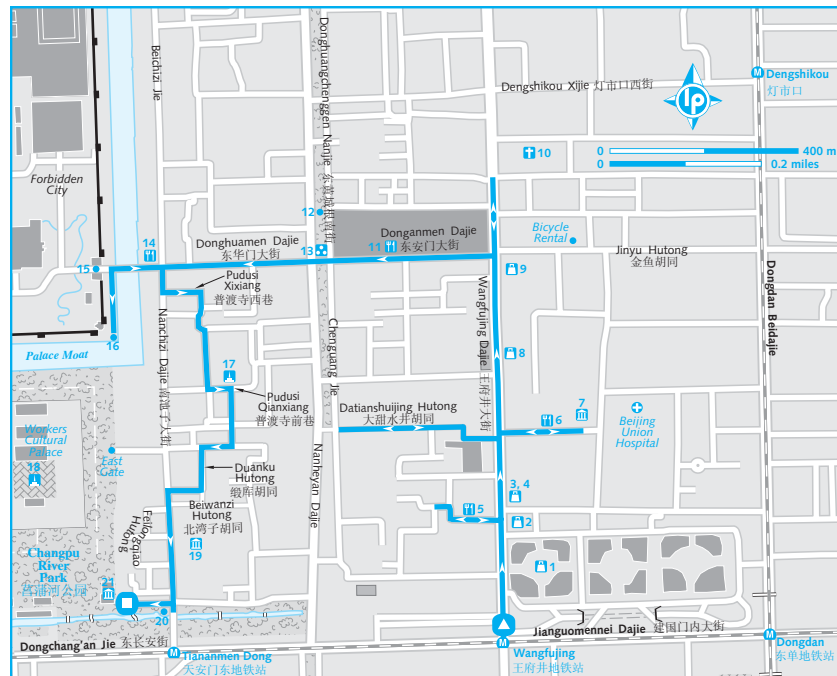
Backtrack south and walk west along Donganmen Dajie (东安门大街) past the vocal stallholders of **Donghuamen Night Market 11** (p128) plying their snacks and culinary exotica from the four corners of China (from mid-afternoon onwards).

At the junction of Donganmen Dajie and Donghuangchenggen Nanjie runs the thin strip of the **Imperial Wall Foundation Ruins Park 12** (皇城根遗址公园; Huáng Chéng Gēn Yízhǐ Gōngyuán), following the course of the Imperial City Wall all the way north to Dianmen Dongdajie. Cross the road and examine the pitiful remains of **Dongan Men 13** (p86) – the razed east gate of the Imperial City.

Traverse the road and continue west along Donghuamen Dajie, past several traditional-style teahouses and cafés that have opened in

WALK FACTS

Start Oriental Plaza
End Forbidden City
Distance 3.2km
Time Two to three hours
Fuel Stop Megabite (p124)



recent years. Cross Beichizi Dajie and pop into **Courtyard 14** (p131), a restaurant hidden behind bamboo fronds, where you can enjoy a fine meal. Just west over the bridge that straddles the Forbidden City moat rises the twin-eaved **Donghua Men 15**, the east gate of the Forbidden City (p87). It's tempting to follow the delightful moat-side road to the Meridian Gate of the palace; on the way you'll pass one of the intricate **decorative corner towers 16** of the Forbidden City wall. The lethargic can take one of the buggies (Y1) that run from here to the Meridian Gate and back.

Alternatively, head south down Nanchizi Dajie and take the first left turn into Pudusi Xixiang (普渡寺西巷; Pudu Temple West Alley), a restored *hútòng* (alleyway) with exclusive, red-painted *sihéyuán* (courtyard homes) doors, many topped with *méndāng* (wooden ornaments) and flanked by pairs of *méndūn* (door stones). Follow the alley as it turns south till you reach Pudusi Qianxiang (普渡寺前巷), which heads east to **Pudu Temple 17** (普度寺; Pùdù Sì), a charmingly-restored temple, its two halls tranquilly sitting atop a terrace. Continue due south from here along Pudusi Qianxiang for about 130m, then turn right when you can go no further, bringing you onto Duanku Hutong (缎库胡同) – 'Satin Storehouse Alley' – where satins for use in the Imperial household were once kept. Passing a small, attractive Běijīng courtyard residence at No 18, follow the *hútòng* to its end and find yourself once more on Nanchizi Dajie, a few metres north of another *hútòng* opening, Beiwanzhi Hutong (北湾子胡同).

With its attractive historic rooftops and brickwork, regularly spaced trees and narrow *hútòng* openings, Nanchizi Dajie is thick with the flavours of traditional Běijīng. The halls of the **Supreme Temple 18** lie splendidly just to the east in the Workers Cultural Palace (p82), which can be reached through the east gate on the other side of the road.

Further down the road are the **Imperial Archives 19** (p77) and the Wan Fung Art Gallery, both well worth a visit. The small *hútòng* opening just opposite the south gate of the Imperial Archives opens onto the splendidly named Feilongqiao Hutong (飞龙桥胡同; Flying Dragon Bridge Alley). Running east and west along Dongchang'an Jie are pleasant walks along **Changpu River Park 20** (菡萏河公园; Chāngpú Hé Gōngyuán). If you head west, visit the **Imperial City Exhibition 21** (p77), before proceeding to the **Gate of Heavenly Peace** (p76), **Tiananmen Square** (p81) and the **Forbidden City** (p87).

LAKESIDE WALK

This short walk is best undertaken after visiting **Beihai Park 1** (p84). Exit the park from the north gate and cross Dianmen Xidajie (地安门西大街) to **Lotus Lane 2** (天荷坊; Tiānhé Fāng), which runs along a section of Qianhai Xiyān (前海西沿) skirting the western shore of Qianhai Lake. Take your pick from one of the waterfront restaurants or cafés – many offering alfresco seating. Keep walking north and exit Lotus Lane onto Qianhai Beiyān (前海北沿). An optional diversion west leads to **Prince Gong's Residence** (p99) on the east side of Liuyin Jie (柳荫街), a broad and dignified willow-lined alley that continues north from Qianhai Xijie (前海西街).

Continue along Qianhai Beiyān and you will soon reach an undignified profusion of **bars and cafés 3** – at the last count almost 50 setups made up the crowd – that wraps its way around Houhai Lake's southern shore to the north. A shorter strip of bars faces you along Houhai Beiyān (后海北沿) while further bars and cafés cluster in pockets elsewhere around the lake. Boats can also be hired at several spots for trips around the lake.

WALK FACTS

Start Beihai Park
End Beihai Park
Distance 2.5km
Time One to two hours
Fuel Stop Drum & Bell Bar (p142)



Cross **Silver Ingot Bridge 4**, and hang a right onto Yandai Xiejie (烟袋斜街) – a narrow jumble of shops, bars and cafés which have quickly dislodged the dilapidated businesses that once operated here. The ancient and diminutive **Guangfuguan Taoist Temple 5** functions as the Guangfuguan Greenhouse (p142), a popular café. It's on your left as you walk east along Yandai Xijie – look out for the rounded archway. The road is a snapshot of the new Běijīng economy with Tibetan and ethnic jewellery shops and cafés cheek by jowl with dazed-looking local residents.

Exit onto bustling Dianmenwai Dajie to find the **Drum Tower 6** (p86) rising massively northwards, obscuring the **Bell Tower 7** (p85) behind; both worth a visit. For a breather and premier views, the rooftop terrace of the **Drum & Bell Bar 8** (p142) is romantically slung out between the namesake towers.

Return to Silver Ingot Bridge and walk south along the east bank of Qianhai Lake, past the famous Muslim restaurant **Kaorouji 9** and the Yuan dynasty **Wanning Bridge 10** to your left, with its original stonework dating from 1285. The weather-beaten stone beasts that lie prone on either side of the bank appear to be water dragons. Continuing south brings you back to Dianmen Xidajie.

BĚIJĪNG BIKE RIDE

Běijīng's sprawling distances and scattered sights can make for blistering sightseeing on foot, but voyaging the city's streets and alleyways by bike allows you to take it all in at just the right velocity. Hop on a pair of wheels (p213), get that bell jangling and tour past some of the city's finest monuments and rarely visited spots off the beaten track. Many of Běijīng's *hútòng* have red-painted signs in Pinyin and Chinese characters, so following the route should not be too difficult, but *hútòng* names have been added in Chinese characters below to aid navigation.

Start at **Donghua Men 1** (东华门), the east gate of the Forbidden City, and cycle south between the moat and the red walls of the palace, observing in particular the **southeast corner tower 2** of the Forbidden City wall. The walls around the palace, 10m high and containing 12 million bricks, are adorned with a tower (角楼; *jiǎolóu*) at each corner, each one a highly elaborate construction with exceptional roof arrangements, supporting three eaves.

The trip around the moat is a spectacular route with unique views of historic Běijīng. At the large gate of **Quezuo Men 3** (阙左门) you may have to dismount, but you can push your bike through and past **Meridian Gate 4** (午门; Wú Mén; p88), the grand portal to the Forbidden City. Tour guides may pounce, so push on unless you want to tour the palace (without your bike). Traversing the courtyard, take your bike through the gate of **Queyou Men 5** (阙右门) to continue along the moat. Reaching **Xihua Men 6** (西华门; no admission), the palace's west gate, look directly west along Xihuamen Dajie (西华门大街) and all the way to the eastern gates of **Zhōngnánhǎi 7**, the out-of-bounds (without official invite) nerve centre of Běijīng's political power.

Head north onto Beichang Jie (北长街) past the bright red doors and brass knockers of several *sihéyuàn* and on your right, **Fuyou Temple 8** (福佑寺; Fúyòu Sì), sadly locked away behind closed gates and the palace wall (although you can catch a glimpse of its roofs). Built at the start of the Qing dynasty, the temple was once a study for the Kangxi emperor and later served as a Lama temple. It was also known as the Rain God Temple (Yùshén Miào).

On your left at No 45 Beichang Jie is a small shop selling Peking Opera face-painting masks. Further north at No 39 are the crumbling remains of the **Wanshouxinglong Temple 9** (万寿兴隆寺; Wànshòuxīnglóng Sì) – its band of monks are long gone and it's now occupied by Běijīng residents. Dating to the reign of the Kangxi emperor (1661–1722), the temple was built on the site of a Ming dynasty arsenal and after 1949 served as the residence for surviving imperial eunuchs. Look for its white-painted archway, graced with full-form Chinese characters on the plaque above. Pop in and take a look at the old temple roof ornaments and original paint on the crossbeams (but take care not to disturb residents). Other temples of the Imperial City existed on this road; at 81 Beichang Jie was the Ming dynasty Jingmo Temple, which is no more.

When you reach the T-junction with Jingshan Qianjie (景山前街) and Wenjin Jie (文津街), bear right onto Jingshan Qianjie, dismount your bike and push it across the zebra crossing to the other side of the road. Push your wheels a short distance east to No 23 Jingshan Xijie (景山西街) and peer through the gates to the remains of the vast **Dagaoxuan Temple 10** (大高玄殿). Dating to 1542, it was once fronted by a fabulous *páifāng* (memorial archway), but you

won't be allowed into the temple as it's now a restricted military zone.

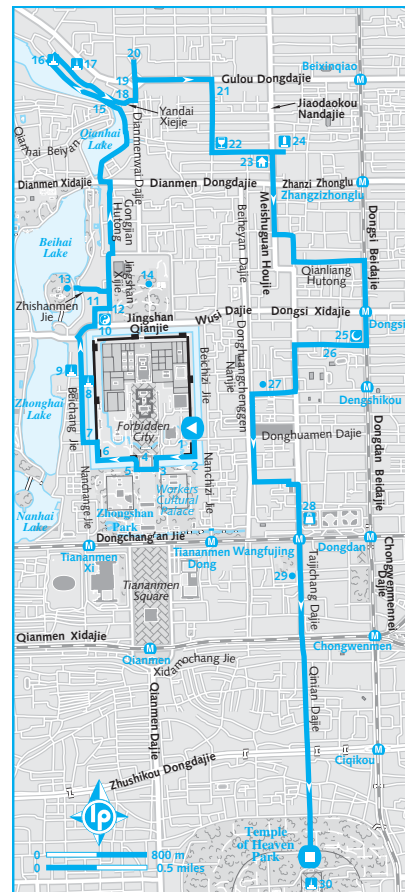
Backtrack west to the narrow *hútòng* opening to **Dashizuo Hutong 11** (大石作胡同; Big Stonemason's Alley) which heads north. The alley – where the stone for the Forbidden City was carved – bends to the right, then left. Follow the *hútòng* to the end and as you exit, look to your right and you will see the rear hall of the Dagaoxuan Temple on the other side of the compound wall. A lovely cylindrical building capped with a blue-tiled umbrella roof topped with a gold knob, the **hall 12** is clearly visible through the gate around the corner at No 21 Jingshan Xijie (again remember that you are not allowed to enter). Looking back down to the junction with Jingshan Qianjie will give you an idea of the colossal size of the temple in its entirety! If you head west along Zhishanmen Jie (陟山门街) you will find the east gate to the **Beihai Park 13** (p84), while to your east is the west gate of **Jingshan Park 14** (p91). Park your bike if you want and clamber up the hill for unparalleled views over the Forbidden City.

Cycle north along Jingshan Xijie and at the northern tip of the street head up Gongjian Hutong (恭俭胡同); its entrance is virtually straight ahead of you. You will exit the alley on Dianmen Xidajie (地安门西大街). Beihai Park can also be accessed here through the north gate, a short distance to your west.

Push your bike over the zebra crossing and cycle north along Qianhai Nanyan (前海南沿) on the east shore of Qianhai Lake. Pass quaint **Yinding Bridge 15** (银锭桥) to your west and continue up along Houhai Beiyuan (后海北沿) past a strip of bars until you reach the small **Dazanglonghua Temple 16** (大藏龙华寺) at No 23, a modest temple dating from 1719 and now a kindergarten. The lakes here are called Shichahai – literally 'Ten Buddhist Temple Seas' – after the many temples in the area. A number survive, including this one, but others have vanished. If you reach the rebuilt Sea-Overlooking Pavilion (望海楼; Wànghǎi Lóu) further along, you have overshot.

Take the first right about 10m after the Dazanglonghua Temple and work your way through this minute, five-foot-wide alley which leads to Ya'er Hutong (鸦儿胡同). Turn right onto Ya'er Hutong and cycle back in the direction of Silver Ingot Bridge, passing the Buddhist **Guanghua Temple 17** (广化寺) on the way.

At the end of Ya'er Hutong you will meet **Yandai Xiejie 18** (烟袋斜街; Pipe Cross-Street), with Silver Ingot Bridge to your right. Cycle along Yandai Xiejie – stuffed with name chop vendors, Tibetan silver trinket sellers, bars and cafés and exit onto Dianmenwai Dajie (地安门外大街). Head north towards the **Drum Tower 19** (p86) and the **Bell Tower 20** (p85) before heading east along Gulou Dongdajie (鼓楼东大街).



BIKE RIDE FACTS

Start Donghua Men
End Temple of Heaven Park
Distance 14km
Time Three to four hours
Fuel Stop Passby Bar (p143)

After cycling about 700m along Gulou Dongdajie, turn right and immediately duck into **Nanluogu Xiang 21** (南锣鼓巷), a splendid north-south running alley in a constant state of renovation and replete with wi-fi bars, cafés and trinket shops and sporting a healthy crop of fully-restored *sihéyuàn*. If you want to rest your feet, take in a coffee in relaxed, snug surrounds by popping into the **Passby Bar 22** (p143), delightfully installed in an old courtyard home. Also look out for hole-in-the-wall kebab sellers that cook sizzling lamb kebab skewers along the alley – an economical and tasty way to stave off hunger.

Take the first turning on your left just beyond the Passby Bar at the street sign that says 'Police Station'. You are now cycling along Banchang Hutong (板厂胡同), a charming stretch of old *sihéyuàn*, some adorned with plaques attesting to their historic significance. You'll pass the old **Lusongyuan Hotel 23** (p183) at No 22, an old courtyard house now serving as a hotel.

As Banchang Hutong meets Jiadaokou Nandajie (交道口南大街), it's worth taking a small detour north and into the first *hútòng* entrance on your right – Fuxue Hutong (府学胡同). A very short way along the alley on the left-hand side is the **Wen Tianxiang Temple 24** (文天祥祠; 63 Fuxue Hutong; adult ¥10; 9am-5pm Tuesday to Sunday), a shrine fronted by a huge *páilou*.

Head south along Jiadaokou Nandajie, cross the junction with Dianmen Dongdajie (地安门东大街) and continue south down Meishuguan Houjie (美术馆后街). Take the fourth street on your left and follow the promisingly named Dafosi Dongjie (大佛寺东大街; Big Buddha Temple East St). Spot the residence on your left at No 6 – now part of a hospital – with a spirit wall (*yingbi*) facing the gate and a pair of stepping-on stones (*shàngmǎ shí*) by the door that the owner would have once used for clambering onto his horse.

Follow the road as it turns the corner and heads south. The Big Buddha Temple in question was actually located ahead at No 76 Meishuguan Houjie. Nothing remains today except a modern, white neo-classical confection built on its footprint, but elderly locals recall the original temple buildings before they were torn down during the Cultural Revolution.

Take the turning to the east just before Dafosi Dongdajie opens onto Meishuguan Houjie and cycle along the courtyard-studded alley of Qianliang Hutong (钱粮胡同), where a few Western bars are making an appearance. Exiting Qianliang Hutong, hang a right onto Dongsì Beidajie (东四北大街), a lively stretch of shops and restaurants. Heading south, cross the intersection with Dongsì Xidajie (东四南大街) and continue along Dongsì Nandajie (东四南大街), past the **Dongsì Mosque 25** on your right. One of Běijīng's few historic mosques, the guardians at the door may be fickle about admitting non-Muslims. Take the first right past the mosque into **Baofang Hutong 26** (报房胡同), strung out like many of Běijīng's alleys with lamb-kebab sellers, restaurants and courtyard houses, and illuminated with lanterns at night. At the end of Baofang Hutong, turn left onto Wangfujing Dajie (王府井大街) and cycle past the Capital Theatre on your left. At the first main intersection turn right onto Dengshikou Xijie (灯市口西街) – but if you haven't yet seen St Joseph's Church continue south along Wangfujing Dajie and then double back – and look out for the second *hútòng* turning on your right which leads into Fengfu Hutong (丰富胡同), home of the small **Lao She Museum 27** (p93) at No 19. This old courtyard residence is worth examining as it is typical of small-style Běijīng courtyard houses.

Continuing west, turn left onto Donghuangchenggen Nanjie (东黄城根南街) and pounce onto the bicycle lane immediately to your left, and journey south along this road that follows the original line of the Imperial City wall. After about 700m and beyond the intersection with Donghuamen Dajie (东华门大街), you will see a big sign ahead of you for the Donglaishun Muslim Restaurant – turn left onto the charming Datianshuijing Hutong (大甜水井胡同), which threads back to Wangfujing Dajie. You may have to dismount your bike as you approach Wangfujing Dajie as the eastern end of Datianshuijing Hutong can get busy with shoppers, but you will have to get off your bike anyway when you reach Wangfujing Dajie as this section of the road is pedestrianised.

Push your bike down to **Oriental Plaza 28** (p163), cross Dongchang'an Jie and cycle south down pleasant Taijichang Dajie (台基厂大街) into the former **Foreign Legation Quarter 29** (p76). See the Tiananmen Square & Foreign Legation Quarter Walk (p114) for a rundown of this district.

At the end of Taijichang Dajie, level your eyes straight ahead and you will see the distant form of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests at the **Temple of Heaven Park 30** (p79), lying due south at the end of Qinian Dajie (祈年大街). Keep cycling and you will reach the north gate to Temple of Heaven Park, where your bike ride concludes.

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