

Gateway Běijīng

北京

In China, all roads and railways lead to Běijīng. There are flights to just about every domestic city of note, as well as air links to most major cities around the world. Unsurprisingly, many people choose to start or end their trip to China in the political and cultural capital, home to some of the country's most essential sights. It's here that you'll find the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven, while close by is the Great Wall. Even if you're only in the city for a couple of days, that's enough time to get a taste of Běijīng. If you do decide to return, Lonely Planet's *Beijing* city guide will point you in the right direction.

A vast, sprawling city at first sight, Běijīng is actually a fairly easy place to get around. Five ring roads cut through the city, subway lines and overland rail links connect the centre to the far-flung suburbs, and buses and taxis are cheap and plentiful. Běijīng has some of the best restaurants in the country, a huge array of shops to stock up on essentials for your trip and an ever-improving selection of bars and nightlife. Short-term travellers should stay in the area bordered by the third ring road. Sānlitún in Cháoyáng District is home to embassies and a wide range of hotels, restaurants, shops and bars. To the west of Sānlitún is Dōngchéng District, the heart of old Běijīng with most of the city's remaining *hútòng* – ancient alleyways that crisscross the area. At the southernmost end of Dōngchéng is Wángfǔjīng, Běijīng's premier shopping district. The areas of Qiánmén and Chóngwén, south of Tiananmen Sq, are convenient for many of Běijīng's most famous sights, but less so for restaurants and nightlife.

The climate in Běijīng is harsh. Summers are hot and humid, while the winter is bitterly cold. Severe air pollution is a problem all year round, but especially at these times, and spring is sandstorm season. The short autumn is the most pleasant time to visit.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Foreign Languages Bookstore (外文书店; Wàiwén Shūdiàn; ☎ 6512 6911, 6512 6838; 235 Wangfujing Dajie; 王府井大街235号; ☎ 9am-10pm; 📍 Wangfujing) An ever-increasing range of English-language novels, nonfiction books and some Lonely Planet guides are available here, as well as maps of Běijīng and beyond.

Wangfujing Bookstore (王府井书店; Wángfǔjīng Shūdiàn; ☎ 6525 2592; 218 Wangfujing Dajie; 王府井大街218号; ☎ 9am-9pm; 📍 Wangfujing) The ground floor of this vast place has a good selection of maps. On the 3rd floor there's a limited range of English-language novels.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 120)

Fire (☎ 119)

FAST FACTS

- Area code: ☎ 010
- Population: 15.38 million
- Area: 16,808 sq km

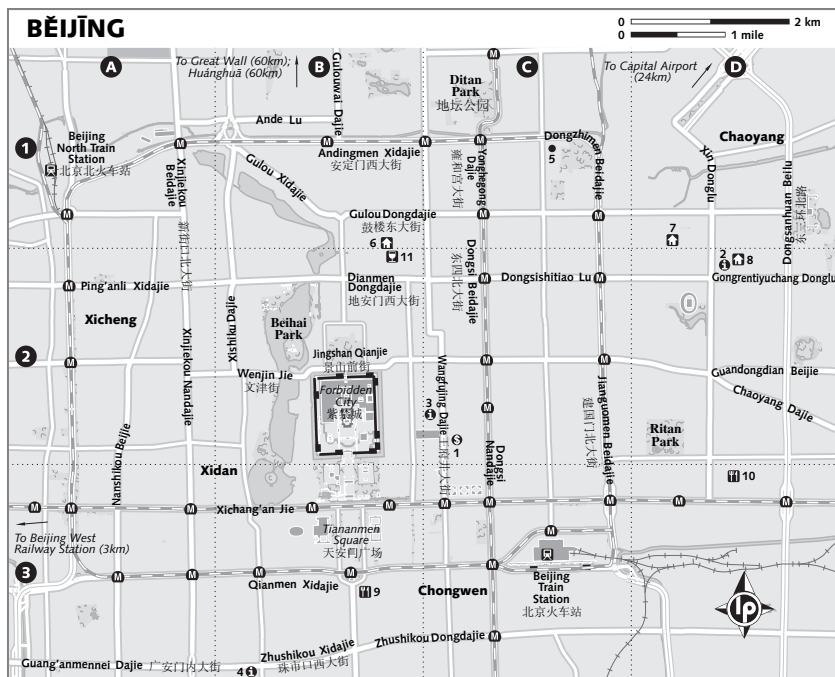
Police (☎ 110)

Public Security Bureau (foreigners' section; ☎ 8402 0101)

Internet Access

You can access the internet at any number of places around town. Most cafés and some bars have wi-fi access.

Beijing Huohu Shiji Internet Café (Běijīng Huòhú Shiji Wǎngbā; Chunxiu Lu; ☎ 8am-midnight)

**INFORMATION**

- Bank of China Sundongan Plaza 中国银行新东安市场...1 C2
 Beijing Tourist Information Centre - Chaoyang
 北京旅游咨询服务中心...2 D2
 Beijing Tourist Information Centre - Dongcheng
 北京旅游咨询服务中心...3 C2
 Beijing Tourist Information Centre - Xuanwu
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 PSB Main Office (Visa Extensions) 公安局...5 C1

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- Peking Downtown Backpackers Accommodation
 东堂客栈...6 B1
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 You Yi Youth Hostel 友宜青年酒店...8 D2

EATING

- Qianmen Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant
 前门全聚德烤鸭店...9 B3
 Xiao Wang's Home Restaurant 小王府...10 D3

DRINKING

- Passby Bar 过客...11 B2

Maps

Free maps can be found at the various Beijing Tourist Information Centres (opposite) around town, as well as at most big hotels. The best English-language map is the *Beijing Tourist Map* (Y7).

You can buy a *Beijing Tourist Map* at the Foreign Languages Bookstore and also the Wangfujing Bookstore (p79).

Media & Internet Resources

There are a number of free English-language entertainment-listings magazines in BĚIJĪNG, offering the latest on the city's bar, club, music and restaurant scene. The best of them are *That's Beijing* (www.thatsbj.com) and *Time Out Beijing*.

www.beijingpage.com General information on BĚIJĪNG and some useful links.

www.ebeijing.gov.cn The capital's official website.

www.newsinchinese.com Chinese news in brief, with word-by-word English translations.

Medical Services

Should you need medical advice or treatment, BĚIJĪNG has some of China's finest medical facilities.

Beijing Union Hospital (北京协和医院; Xiéhé Yiyuàn; ☎ 6529 6114, emergency 6529 5284; 53 Dongdan Beidajie; 东单北大街53号) The best Chinese-run hospital in town. Open 24 hours with a wing for foreigners in the back building.

International SOS (国际SOS救援中心; Guójì SŌS Jiùyuán Zhōngxīn; ☎ clinic appointments 6462 9112, dental appointments 6462 0333, 24hr alarm centre 6462 9100; www.internationalsos.com; Bldg C, BITIC Leasing Centre, 1 Xingfu Sancun Bei Jie (Chaoyang)) High-quality but expensive clinic with English-speaking staff and foreign doctors.

Money

Obtaining or changing money in BĚIJĪNG is not a problem. The ATMs of the Bank of China and the Industrial and Commercial Bank (ICBC) both accept foreign bank and credit cards. ATMs can be found at the airport, inside most top-end hotels, in many department stores and shopping malls, as well as on most main streets. One useful one to note is the Bank of China branch next to the main entrance of Sundongan Plaza on Wangfujing Dajie.

Foreign currency and travellers cheques can be changed at large branches of the Bank of China, ICBC, CITIC Industrial Bank and China Construction Bank, and at the airport, hotels and several department stores if you show a passport. Advances on credit cards can be obtained at the Bank of China branch at Sundongan Plaza, but there is a 4% commission. Only tourist hotels and upmarket restaurants and shops will accept credit cards.

Citibank (16th fl, Tower 2, Bright China Chang'an Bldg, 7 Jianguomennei Dajie) ATM.

HSBC (ground fl, block A, COFCO Plaza, 8 Jianguomenwai Dajie) Twenty-four hour ATM.

Tourist Information

Visitor assistance in BĚIJĪNG lies in the somewhat shaky hands of the **Beijing Tourist Information Centres** (北京旅游咨询服务中心; BĚIJĪNG Lǚyóu Zīxún Fúwù Zhōngxīn; ☎ 9am-5pm). The staff's English skills can be limited, but you'll be able to pick up a free tourist map of BĚIJĪNG, lots of leaflets detailing local attractions and at some branches, such as the Chāoyāng one, you can book train tickets. There is also a **Beijing Tourism Hotline** (☎ 6513 0828; ☎ 24hr), which has English-speaking operators available to answer questions. Useful information centre branches:

Capital Airport (☎ 6459 8148)

Chaoyang (朝阳; ☎ 6417 6627, 6417 6656; chaoyang@bjta.gov.cn; 27 Sanlitun Beilu; 三里屯北路27号)

Dongcheng (东城; ☎ 6512 3043, 6512 2991; dongcheng@bjta.gov.cn; 10 Dengshikou Xijie; 灯市口西街10号)

Xuanwu (宣武; ☎ 6351 0018; xuanwu@bjta.gov.cn; 3 Hufang Lu; 虎坊路3号)

Travel Agencies

Elong (www.elong.net) Popular English-language travel website that offers car, hotel and flight deals.

Kingdom Travel Beijing (BĚIJĪNG Wángguó Lǚxíngshè; ☎ 5870 3388; 1815 Shangdu International Centre, 8 Dongdaqiao Lu; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat; ☎ Chaoyangmen) Located near the Landao Shopping Centre, this efficient English-speaking agency can organise air tickets as well as tailor-made packages.

Visas

For visa extensions, head to BĚIJĪNG's main **Public Security Bureau** (PSB; 北京市公安局出入境管理处; Gōngānjú; ☎ 8402 0101; 2nd fl, 2 Andingmen Dongdajie; 安定门东大街2号; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

BĚIJĪNG is an extremely safe place when compared with most similarly sized cities around the world, however, pickpockets do operate on the buses, subways and trains. Be wary of 'students' who try to lure foreigners to overpriced art exhibitions, or to watch traditional tea ceremonies that can cost hundreds of dollars.

SIGHTS

BĚIJĪNG's parks are oases in what's a largely concrete city and BĚIJĪNGERS flock to them from the moment their gates open. **Beihai Park** (北海公园; BĚIHǎi Gōngyuàn; admission Y5, through ticket Y20; ☎ 6.30am-8pm, buildings to 4pm; ☎ Tiananmen Xi, then bus 5), northwest of the Forbidden City, is a great place to amble around, grab a beer and a snack, rent a rowing boat, or just people watch. Originally part of Kublai Khan's palace, Beihai is home to a number of interesting temples, including the **White Dagoba**. It's a short hop north from here to **Houhai**, a popular restaurant and bar area centred around another lake. To get to Houhai, head out of the park's northern entrance and cross Di'anmen Xidajie.

With permanent displays of ancient bronzes, Buddhist statues, jade, calligraphy, paintings and ceramics, as well as occasional high-profile exhibitions from abroad, the modern and slickly designed **Capital Museum** (中国首都博物馆; Zhōngguó Shǒudū Bówùguǎn; ☎ 6337 0491; www.capitalmuseum.org.cn; 16 Fuxingmenwai Dajie; 复兴门外大街16号; admission Y20; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; ☎ Muxidi) stands out from the rest of BĚIJĪNG's rather disappointing museums.

When the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties were ruling China from the **Forbidden**

City (紫禁城; Zǐjìn Chéng; ☎ 6513 2255; www.dpm.org.cn; adult Nov-Mar ¥40, Apr-Oct ¥60, Clock Exhibition Hall & Hall of Jewellery each additional ¥10; ☎ 8.30am-4pm May-Sep, to 3.30pm Oct-Apr, ☉ Tiananmen Xi or Tiananmen Dong), so-called because the price of uninvited admission was death, it was home to concubines, eunuchs and mandarins as well as royalty. Now, anyone can get into this stunning collection of the best-preserved ancient buildings in China. With 800 buildings and 9000 rooms, it's a vast place (although less than half of it is open to the public) and you could spend days here, but it's possible to explore it in a few hours. There's a good audio tour available for ¥40.

It was Mao who said 'he who has not climbed the Great Wall is not a true man'. The Chairman was right. A day trip to the **Great Wall** (长城; Chángchéng) remains an essential part of any visit to Beijing. Many hotels and hostels run trips to the Wall and some of them come highly recommended, such as those run by Beijing Saga International Youth Hostel (opposite) and Peking Downtown Backpackers Accommodation (opposite). Otherwise, the handiest tours depart from the **Beijing Sightseeing Bus Centre** (北京旅游集散中心; Běijīng Lǚyóu Jísàn Zhōngxīn; ☎ 8353 1111; tickets including admission to the Wall ¥90-125), northeast and northwest of Qiánmén alongside Tiananmen Sq. The round-trip takes about nine hours. Watch out for tours that include side-trips to jewellery exhibition halls and traditional Chinese medicine centres, where you'll be pressured into buying gems or 'cures'. Some tours also take in the Ming Tombs; if you don't want to go there, check the itinerary before you book a ticket.

Bādǎling is the most easily accessible section of the Wall from Beijing, but it's also the most touristy. **Mùtiányù** is less commercial and has a cable car. **Sīmǎtái** is more dramatic and less visited, but walking this section is not for the faint-hearted; it's very steep and rather precarious in places. **Huánguā** can be even more hairy, but the views are fantastic.

If you want to visit the Wall under your own steam, then, for Bādǎling, take bus 919. It leaves from a stop 500m east of Jishuitan subway station and costs ¥5 for the two-hour journey. For Mùtiányù, take either bus 916 or 980 from the long-distance bus station next to Dongzhimen subway stop to Huáiróu (Y8), then change to a minibus to Mùtiányù (Y25). To get to Sīmǎtái, take bus 980 (Y10) from the long-distance bus station by Dongzhimen subway and change to a minibus for Sīmǎtái

at Mìyún. For Huánguā, take bus 916 or 980 (Y8) from the long-distance bus station by Dongzhimen subway to Huáiróu and get off at Míngzhū Guǎngchǎng. Then cross the road and take a minibus to Huánguāchéng (Y5).

Wandering through Běijīng's **hútòng** is a fascinating way to spend a day. Many of the city's residents still live in these ancient alleyways and to plunge into them is to leave the modern Běijīng of skyscrapers behind. Dating back to the Yuan dynasty (1206-1368), thousands of them run east-west through the heart of the capital and they're home to Běijīng's most vibrant street life.

Most **hútòng** can be found in Dongcheng District. A good place to start is the **Drum Tower** (鼓楼; Gǔlóu; Gulou Dongdajie; ☉ Gulou). Head south down Dianmenwai Dajie and then turn left into any of the alleys and you're in the heart of Běijīng's **hútòng** district. Alternatively, you can tour the **hútòng** from the comfort of a pedicab with the **Beijing Hutong Tour Co Ltd** (☎ 6615 9097, 6400 2787; ☎ tours 8.50am, 1.50pm and 6.50pm May-Oct). Tours depart from a point 200m west of the northern entrance to Beihai Park. Hotels and hostels also organise **hútòng** tours. Typically, they last for three hours and cost around ¥180.

Lama Temple (雍和宫; Yōnghé Gōng; 28 Yonghegong Dajie; 雍和宫大街28号; adult ¥25, audio guide ¥20; ☎ 9am-4pm; ☉ Yonghegong), Běijīng's biggest Buddhist temple, is also its most magnificent. There are five elaborately decorated main halls. The final one, **Wanfu Pavilion**, has a stupendous 18m-high sandalwood statue of the Maitreya Buddha in his Tibetan form.

Home to the capital's main concentration of contemporary art galleries, as well as bars, cafés and restaurants, the **798 Art District** (798 艺术区; Qījiǔbā Yìshùqū; ☎ 6438 4862; 2 & 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu; 酒仙桥路2 & 4号; admission free; ☎ galleries 10am-6pm; bus 403 or 909 from Dongzhimen subway station) makes for a good break from ancient monuments. The art on display is a mixed bag, with the genuinely innovative mingling with the stereotypical. Note that many galleries are closed on Monday.

Summer Palace (颐和园; Yìhé Yuán; ☎ 6288 1144; 19 Xinjian Gongmen, Haidian; 海淀区新建宫门19号; admission ¥40-50, audio guides ¥30; ☎ 8.30am-5pm; ☉ Wudaokou then bus 375, or direct on bus 303, 330, 332, 333, 346, 362, 718, 801 & 808), the summer retreat for the old imperial court, is a lovely collection of pavilions, temples, lakes, gardens and corridors and is one of Běijīng's finest sites. Located in the far northwest of the city, it's dominated by Kunming Lake. The most

notable sights are the **Long Corridor** and on **Longevity Hill**.

The 267-hectare **Temple of Heaven Park** (天坛公园; Tiāntán Gōngyuán; Tiantan Donglu; 天坛东路; low season ¥10-30, high season ¥15-35, audio tour available at each gate ¥40; ☎ park 6am-9pm, sights 8am-6pm; ☉ Chongwenmen or Qianmen) originally served as the vast stage for the solemn rites performed by the Son of Heaven, as he sought good harvests, divine clearance and atonement for the sins of the people. The temples, altars, walls and halls in the park are a perfect example of Ming dynasty architecture.

The largest public square in the world, the 440,000 sq metres of **Tiananmen Square** (天安门广场; Tiān'ānmén Guǎngchǎng; ☉ Tiananmen Xi, Tiananmen Dong or Qianmen) lie at the heart of Běijīng. Designed as a celebration and projection of Maoist power, the square will forever be associated with 4 June 1989 and the crushing of the democracy movement. The square is at its best early in the morning – there's an elaborate flag-raising ceremony at sunrise – or at night, when it is illuminated.

SLEEPING

Beijing's hotels have improved out of all recognition in recent years. But there's still a shortage of decent budget accommodation, while many of the city's midrange hotels are distinguished only by their uniform blandness. For budget travellers, the centrally located youth hostels are a good bet. If you want to splurge, Beijing has plenty of excellent top-end hotels to choose from. Rooms in the more popular places go quickly in peak season, so booking ahead is advisable.

Chóngwén & South Cháoyáng

Leo Youth Hostel (广聚元大饭店; Guǎngjùyuán Dàfàndiàn; ☎ 6303 1595; 52 Dazhalan Xijie; 大栅栏西街52号; 12-bed/4-bed dm ¥45/70, d without toilet ¥140-160, with toilet ¥200-240; ☉ Qianmen; ☎) Popular bargain hostel in a good location for the sights. OK dorm rooms, simple but passable doubles and a small but lively bar. It's advisable to book ahead here.

Beijing Saga International Youth Hostel (北京实佳国际青年旅社; Běijīng Shíjiā Guójī Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎ 6527 2773; sagayangguang@yahoo.com; 9 Shijia Hutong; 史家胡同9号; dm ¥55, d with/without bathroom ¥198/180, tr ¥210; ☉ Dengshikou; ☎) Modern, very popular hostel located in a historic **hútòng**. The rooms are well maintained and there's a common rooftop area, a bar, table football and washing machine (¥10 a load). It runs trips to the Great Wall.

Eastern Morning Sun Youth Hostel (北京东方晨光青年旅舍; Běijīng Dōngfāng Chéngguāng Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎ 6528 4347; www.hostelsbeijing.com; fl B4, East Bldg, Oriental Plaza, 8-16 Dongdantsiantiao; 东单三条8-16号; 5-bed dm ¥60, d ¥120-140, tr ¥180, q ¥240; ☉ Wangfujing; ☎) No prizes for the windowless, cramped, claustrophobic rooms here, but the convenient location, late checkout and cheap prices appeal to some. The clean toilets and showers are communal.

Home Inn (如家快捷酒店; Rújiā Kuàijié Jiǔdiàn; ☎ 6317 3366; www.homeinns.com; 61 Liangshidian Jie, Dazhalan; 大栅栏粮食店街61号; d ¥178-218; ☉ Qianmen; ☎) There are 16 branches of this budget-midrange chain scattered around town, but this one's prime location a short walk south of Tiananmen Sq makes it handy for the sights. Double rooms are small but clean. There's a small restaurant.

Tiánshuǐ Lǚguǎn (甜水旅馆; ☎ 6527 9284; 45 Datianshuijue Hutong; 大甜水井胡同45号; d with/without bathroom ¥198/180; ☉ Wangfujing or Tiananmen Dong; ☎) The location in a **hútòng** makes this a pleasant choice; rooms have air-con, TV and shower, but no phone. Room rates drop to ¥130 in the slow season. The staff doesn't speak much English.

Cui Ming Zhuang Hotel (黎明庄宾馆; Cui Ming Zhuāng Bīnguǎn; ☎ 6513 6622; www.cuimingzhuanghotel.com.cn; 1 Nanheyan Dajie; 南河沿大街1号; d/stg ¥600/1200; ☉ Tiananmen Dong) Quiet three-star hotel close to the Forbidden City and the shopping area of Wangfujing.

Peninsula Palace (王府饭店; Wángfǔ Fàndiàn; ☎ 8516 2888; www.peninsula.com; 8 Jinyu Hutong; 金鱼胡同8号; d ¥1920; ☉ Dengshikou; ☎) Top-class restaurants, super-exclusive shops and suitably luxurious rooms make this one of Běijīng's best hotels. You can get a **hútòng** tour here with a Tsinghua University professor as a guide, as well as trips to unrestored sections of the Great Wall.

Grand Hyatt Beijing (北京东方君悦大酒店; Běijīng Dōngfāng Jūnyuè Dàjiǔdiàn; ☎ 8518 1234; www.beijing.grand.hyatt.com; 1 Dongchang'an Jie; 东长安街1号; d ¥2150; ☉ Wangfujing; ☎) Elegant and stylish, the Hyatt is located in the heart of the Wangfujing shopping area and is just 10 minutes' walk from the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Sq. The rooms are attractive, if not that spacious, there's wi-fi access, and the hotel boasts several top-notch bars and restaurants.

Dōngchéng

Peking Downtown Backpackers Accommodation (东堂客栈; Dōngtáng Kèzhàn; ☎ 8400 2429; www.backpackingchina.com; 85 Nanluoguxiang; 南锣鼓巷85号; 4-/3-bed dm ¥65/75, d with/without window ¥80/60, all incl breakfast; ☉ Andingmen; ☎) For backpackers, this place is hard to beat. Located in the lively

hùtòng of Nanluoguxiang, the staff is helpful, the rooms are tidy and there's free breakfast and pickup from the airport (you pay the toll fee). Bike rental costs ¥20 a day. Its trips to the Great Wall come recommended.

Bamboo Garden Hotel (竹园宾馆; Zhúyuán Bīnguǎn; ☎ 5852 0088; www.bbgh.com.cn; 24 Xiaoshi-qiao Hutong; 小石桥胡同24号; s Y380, d Y680-880, ste Y980; ② Gulou) Cozy courtyard hotel close to the Drum and Bell Towers, Houhai Lake and some of Běijīng's most atmospheric *hùtòng*. The buildings date back to the late Qing dynasty. Singles are small and ordinary; the double rooms are much more pleasant. The staff can be a little erratic.

Cháoyáng

You Yi Youth Hostel (友谊青年酒店; Yǒuyì Qīngnián Jiùdiàn; ☎ 6417 2632; fax 6415 6866; 43 Beisanlitun Nan; 北三里屯南43号; dm/d Y70/180; ② Dongsishitiao; ② ③) Located in the heart of Sanlitun's bar ghetto, this decent hostel offers clean and comfortable rooms with air-con (doubles have TV and a phone). There's free breakfast and laundry.

Red House Hotel (瑞秀宾馆; Ruìxiù Bīnguǎn; ☎ 6416 7500; www.redhouse.com.cn; 10 Chunxiu Lu; 春秀路10号; s/tw Y350/400, ste Y600; ② Dongzhimen) Close to Sanlitun's bars and restaurants, this place is slightly gloomy but has solid, clean rooms with good bathrooms and offers free breakfast and laundry. You can also rent a bike for ¥30 a day.

EATING & DRINKING

Beijing's restaurants are one of the great things about the city. Roast duck may be Beijing's best known dish, but chefs from all around China gravitate to the capital and you can find every genre of Chinese cuisine here. There are an ever-increasing number of foreign eateries providing a taste of home too. Nor will eating out break the bank. It's possible to eat very well very cheaply here and with tens of thousands of restaurants to choose from, you won't have a problem getting a table.

Chóngwén & South Cháoyáng

Megabite (Dàshìdài; basement, Oriental Plaza, 1 Dongchang'an Jie; 东长安街1号东方广场; dishes from Y10; ② Wangfujing) A busy fast-food emporium that has Cantonese, Yúnnán, Sichuān, teppanyaki, clay pot, Korean and Indian outlets all under one roof. You can eat well for ¥20. You don't pay in cash here; instead, buy a card from the kiosk at the entrance (available in denominations of ¥30 upwards) and credits are deducted for each dish you order.

Xiao Wang's Home Restaurant (北京小王府; Xiǎowáng Fǔ; ☎ 6594 3602, 6591 3255; 2 Guanghua Dongli; 光华东里2号楼; meals from Y70; ② 11am-

2pm & 5-11pm; ② Guomao or Yonganli) This bustling and big restaurant is great for home-style Běijīng cuisine. The chicken wings (Y35) and deep-fried spare ribs with pepper salt (Y48) are excellent, but there's a huge selection of other things to try too. English menu.

Qianmen Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant (前门全聚德烤鸭店; Qiánmén Quánjùdé Kǎoyādian; ☎ 6511 2418; 32 Qianmen Dajie; 前门大街32号; half duck Y84, scallions & sauce Y5; ② 11am-1.30pm & 4.30-8.30pm; ② Qianmen) Běijīng's oldest and most famous, if not its best, Peking duck restaurant is a vast place that attracts hordes of domestic and foreign tourists. But the duck isn't bad, even if it's a little pricey.

Liqun Roast Duck Restaurant (利群烤鸭店; Lìqún Kǎoyādian; ☎ 6702 5681; 11 Beixiangfeng Hutong; 北翔胡同11号; roast duck Y98; ② 10am-10pm; ② Qianmen) Tucked away in a maze of *hùtòng* that are disappearing by the day, this might be Běijīng's best duck restaurant. Always busy, it's best to book ahead. The duck is roasted in fruit tree wood-fired ovens and is delicious.

Cháoyáng

Middle 8th (中捌楼餐厅; Zhōngbālóu Cāntīng; ☎ 6413 0629; Sanlitun Zhongjie, Zhongba Lu; 东三里屯中八楼; dishes from Y12; ② 11am-2pm & 5.30-11.30pm; ② Dongsishitiao then bus 701 heading east) Hip Yúnnán eatery with an authentic, wide-ranging menu. Signature dishes include drunken shrimp (Y22) and braised rice with pineapple in a bamboo shoot (Y12). Rice wine is ¥6 a glass. English menu.

Bookworm (书虫; Shūchóng; ☎ 6586 9507; Bldg 4, Sanlitun Nanlu; 三里屯南路; lunch set menu Y78, dinner set menu Y108; ② 9am-1am; ② Dongsishitiao then bus 701 heading east) Part bar, café, library and restaurant, the Bookworm serves up sandwiches (from Y35) and pasta dishes (from Y45), as well as more substantial fare. You can buy English-language books, including Lonely Planet guides, and magazines here. There's a pleasant roof terrace and wi-fi access.

Pure Lotus Vegetarian (净心莲; Jìngxīnlián; ☎ 6592 3627; inside Zhongguo Wenlianyuan, 10 Nongzhuanguan Nanlu; 农展馆南路10号 中国文联院内; meals from Y100; ② 9.30am-10pm; ② Dongsishitiao then bus 431 heading east; ②) The monks who run this place consistently come up with the tastiest and most creative vegetarian food in Běijīng, but they charge a lot for it.

Dōngchéng

Passby Bar (过客; Guòkè; ☎ 8403 8004; www.gk01.com; 108 Nanluogu Xiang; 南锣鼓巷108号; beer from Y20, meals from Y40; ② 9am-2am; ② Andingmen) Something of an institution amongst travellers, this friendly place serves up western and Chinese food. The

setting is pleasant, the staff helpful and you can pick up Lonely Planet guides here.

Café Sambal (☎ 6400 4875; 43 Doufuchi Hutong, off Jiu Gulou Dajie; 豆腐池胡同43号, 旧鼓楼大街; dishes from Y35, set lunch Y50; ② noon-midnight; ② Gulou) Cool Malaysian restaurant located in a cleverly converted courtyard house at the entrance to Doufu Hutong. This place is especially pleasant in summer when you dine under the stars and satellites.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

A number of airlines fly to Chéngdū, Chóngqing, Kūnmíng and other destinations in China's Southwest. See the Transport chapter for further details (p486).

All trains to China's Southwest depart from **Beijing West Train Station** (北京西站; Běijīng Xī Zhàn; ☎ 6231 6263; East Lianhuachi Rd; 莲花池东路).

There are three trains a day to Chéngdū, leaving at 11.29am, 4.35pm and 10.48pm. Depending on the train, the journey takes between 26 and 32 hours. A hard-seat ticket is Y231, soft-seat Y366. Hard-sleeper tickets cost Y391/405/418 (top/middle/bottom bunk). Soft sleeper tickets are Y615/642 (top/bottom bunk).

Two trains a day run to Chóngqing, at 4.26pm and 9.28pm. The journey takes between 24 and 30 hours. Hard-seat tickets are Y238, soft-seat Y376. A hard sleeper costs Y401/416/430 (top/middle/bottom bunk); soft sleepers are Y631/658 (top/bottom).

One train runs daily to Kūnmíng, leaving at 6.40pm for the 39-hour trip. A hard-seat ticket costs Y320, soft seat Y509. Hard sleeper tickets are Y539/558/578 and soft sleepers Y852/890.

There is a 24-hour foreigners' ticket office at Beijing West Station on the 2nd floor. Tickets can be bought online at www.china-tripadvisor.com and www.china-train-ticket.com, or through hotels and travel agents, but it's cheaper to get them at the station.

There are no buses from Běijīng to Chéngdū, Chóngqing or Kūnmíng.

GETTING AROUND

The subway (*ditiě*) is the best way to get around central Běijīng. The underground dragon moves much faster than the traffic. There are only four lines in existence at the moment, but another five are set to open in the next couple of years. Tickets cost Y3, or Y5 if you are transferring from Line 1 or 2 to Line 13.

Line 1 runs from east to west, cutting through the centre of town. Line 2 is a circle line. Line 13 loops through the north of Běijīng. The Batong Line runs through the eastern suburbs. There are interchange stations between all the lines.

Buses are plentiful and cover much more of the city than the subway, but they make slow progress in the Běijīng traffic. They're best for short hops. Tickets are Y1; you pay the conductor rather than the driver. The routes on bus signs are in Chinese rather than English, so you need to know how many stops you need to go before boarding.

Taxis are everywhere and finding one is only a problem during (infrequent) rainstorms and rush hour. They cost Y10 for the first 3km and then Y2 per kilometre after that. Between 11pm and 6am there is a 20% surcharge added to the fare. All taxis should have and use a meter. Most Běijīng taxi drivers speak little English, but are generally honest.

Bikes are a good way to see central Běijīng, especially the *hùtòng* districts, but heavy traffic on the roads means it can be perilous riding around. Bikes can be hired at Beijing Saga International Youth Hostel (p83), Peking Downtown Backpackers Accommodation (p83) and Red House Hotel (opposite).

To/From the Airport

Běijīng's Capital Airport is 27km northeast from the centre of town, or about 40 minutes to one hour by car. A rail link between the airport and Dongzhimen subway station will be open by the time of the Olympics. Public bus 359 runs from Dongzhimen to the airport (Y3). There are also several express bus lines that run to the airport; all cost Y16. The most useful are Line 3 and Line 2. Both start running at 7.30am, leaving every 15 minutes, and continue until the last flight has arrived in the evening. Line 3 runs from the **Beijing International Hotel** (北京国际饭店; Běijīng Guójí Fàndiàn; 9 Jianguomennei Dajie; 建国门内大街9号) and Beijing Train Station via Chaoyangmen. Line 2 runs to the Aviation Building in Xidan via Dongzhimen.

A taxi from the airport should cost between Y80 and Y100, including the airport expressway toll (Y10). Avoid the taxi touts at the airport who will try and get you into an illegal taxi that will cost Y300 for the trip into town.

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