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《中国妇女》

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June 2019

# WOMEN

中國婦女

June 2019

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OF CHINA 《中国妇女》英文月刊



2019年6月下半月

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### AJ Warner

Proud parent of two boys, AJ Warner has been helping Chinese families for the past 13 years in Beijing. He guides Chinese applicants through the complicated process of getting accepted to US boarding schools and top universities. He is also the former Beijing Chapter President of the Entrepreneurs Organization (EO). WeChat: ajwarner, Email: ajwarner@touchdown.education



### Mike Signorelli

Mike Signorelli arrived in Beijing in 1994 as a student and has called China home ever since. He has held several senior management roles over the past 20+ years, including his last corporate job with NBA China. Mike is the founder of Signature Wine, China's first independent subscription wine club. Contact him at mike@sigwine.com.



### Marianne Daquet

In Beijing for 12 years, Marianne Daquet has always been passionate about art and education. She founded Atelier Art School 6 years ago with the mission to pass on her strong belief that creativity can change the world. She and her French husband have two daughters. You can reach her at Marianne@atelier.cn.com.



### Dominika Mejia

Dominika is career diplomat with a foothold in three continents. She shares a taste for food with a passion for books and travel. She is the author of the bilingual culinary blog D-constructed. While she is full of hope to master Chinese while writing her PhD, she's also the mother of a two-year-old daughter.



### Caroline Nath

Caroline Nath moved to Beijing as a teenager after having grown up in the US, Canada, France, and India. She is a filmmaker, radio host, Parent Effectiveness Training teacher, founder of Bonne Nani Jams, and an organic food promoter. She has two multi-ethnic and multi-lingual children. Contact her at kulfidoll@gmail.com.



### Elisabeth Koch

China's milliner, Elisabeth Koch, arrived in 2007 and hit the ground running with her hats. This TCK has three children who were born in Beijing. While her creations adorn famous heads on the covers of international glossies, Koch gives hat-making workshops in her studio and is kept busy by the kids. Find out more information at www.ElisabethKoch.co



### Lise Floris

Lise Poulsen Floris is an EU official turned blogger. Since leaving her native Denmark in 1998, she has lived in Italy and Belgium before moving to China with her family. She writes about life in Beijing on her blog ninemillionbicycles.com, aiming to tell "the big story through the small story." Her work has been published in the *South China Morning Post*, *Global Times*, and *Point of View International*.



### Juliet London

After seven years in Beijing, market researcher, branding consultant and writer, mother to two teenagers, Juliet 'Lady' London continues to be fascinated by this ever changing city. British by birth, she has also lived in Australia and Hong Kong. Her work primarily focuses on education research, leaving less time than she would like to take exercise, walk her dog, and snap up bargains at local markets.



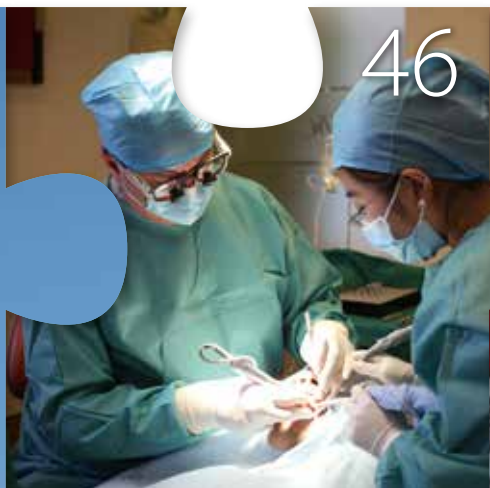


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### ON THE COVER:

Once again we had the pleasure of working with the talented, Liuba Vladimirova. She's well known throughout the city for her fabulous depictions of everyday life in Beijing. To learn more about her work and to pick up some souvenirs for friends or family make sure to check out her website at [www.liubadraws.com](http://www.liubadraws.com). Also, be on the lookout for her upcoming book.



# Capital Encouragement

Choosing a neighborhood is an important decision that requires care and deep consideration to the needs of your family. It's no walk in the park... although Beijing will give you plenty of opportunities to do just that.

This is a massive city in every aspect, and each area has its own characteristics that make it desirable. While one neighborhood might seem unattractive to one family for various reasons, that same location might be the best for your family because it fits your list of essential criteria. The ultimate goal of this yearly issue is to help newcomers make an informed decision.

One thing we tried to do this year is expand our coverage of different neighborhoods. For the first time we've included the entire district of Haidian, and given a page to Dongzhimen and Gulou. While these are by no means the most popular neighborhoods for incoming foreigners, they do have their appeal and deserve recognition as they continue to develop and become more accommodating to newcomers.

Another thing we took further was exploring the best and worst things about being an expat in Beijing. We'll shout from the mountains about how much we love living in China, and Beijing specifically, but we aren't above

gripping a bit about the things that leave us miffed. That's just part of our editorial responsibility to inform readers about this city; warts and all.

We believe that in order to work for a magazine like *beijingkids*, it is essential to love the city you work in, and always be searching out the latest and greatest. And that's precisely what you'll find in the pages of this issue, along with numerous helpful tips to get you acclimated, set up, and linked into Beijing's central nervous system. We believe that the amount of territory we cover here, albeit exhaustive at times, is what sets us apart and makes *beijingkids* an essential tool for incoming families from around the globe. Let us be your guide!



*Kipp Whittaker*

Kipp Whittaker  
Chief Content Manager



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# What's New



## New Rules to (Hopefully) Make the Subway More Civilized

A trip on the Beijing subway can be... interesting at times. However new regulations promise to make it a slightly more pleasant experience in the summer heat. Eating, lying down, and playing loud music without headphones have all, thankfully, been outlawed. Selling or marketing on the subway has also been forbidden, which should put a stop to all those people asking you to scan their QR codes. Offenders will lose social credit, and eventually this can lead to them being banned from using the network, unless they recover their status by volunteering for the subway. We applaud any move to make traveling around Beijing more civilized; it just remains to be seen whether the new rules are actually enforced...



## Back With a Bang, and a Bean-burger... It's the Beijing Burger Festival, June 22-23!

As summer comes it's time to get outdoors and start having fun in the sun. And there are few events on the calendar more fun than the Beijing Burger Festival. This year's festival takes place over the weekend of June 22-23, and will be the usual smorgasbord of performances, games, and of course all the city's best burger flippers competing for your renminbi. There will also be more vegetarian and vegan options than ever before. Early bird tickets including a free bandana are now on sale for RMB 20, and for only RMB 50 you can get a fab Burger Festival t-shirt. Visit [www.thebeijinger.com](http://www.thebeijinger.com) to find out more, and book your ticket.



## New Toy Store Puts Magic Back in Shopping

Parents across Beijing will be getting ready for an assault on their wallets, now that iconic toy store FAO Schwarz has now opened its doors at the China World Center Mall in Guomao. The new store, even larger than the original in New York, aims to bring the magic back to toy shopping. "FAO Schwarz is focused on creating a theatrical experience, where there will be many demonstrators to interact with children and parents in store," the company's Chinese partner said. With 2,600 sqm of teddy bears, robots, dolls, cars, and Lego, there's something for everyone... and for the child who truly has everything, there's a USD 25,000 crystal-studded miniature Mercedes Benz.

## A Season of Change... and a New Career for You?

Summer is always a season of change in Beijing, as it's the time when many families leave and arrive. If you're heading off to new adventures, then we wish you the very best of luck, and hope your time in this city has been a productive and fulfilling one. If you've just arrived – welcome! Whether you're here for the long haul, or just for a couple of years, you'll find this an exciting, unique, and sometimes challenging place to live. But we at *beijingkids* are always here to help, whether it's finding the new fun places to play, or guiding you through the difficult days. You can find us at events or contact us on WeChat, and we're always delighted to answer your questions or share your stories. With the brilliantly talented Nicole Bonnah stepping up to take over as Deputy Managing Editor, we need new writers too, so if you've got a flair for writing and a zest for Beijing, get in touch – you could become part of the team!



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# WHAT'S UP IN BEIJING



Promote your family-friendly event on the *beijingkids* website!

Submit your activity details before **July 16** to be considered for our August listings.

## DOUBLE PIANO CONCERT: "TOM AND JERRY"

**Jun 7**

All ages. The piano has long been a favorite for composers, but two pianos at once is even better. Join this concert, as it presents a family-friendly program of classical works like "The Trout" and "The Carnival of Animals", plus classic songs from the movies and television shows like "Tom and Jerry", "Beauty and the Beast", and "My Neighbor Totoro". RMB 100-380. 10.30am. Beijing Theater. ([www.247tickets.com](http://www.247tickets.com))



## "A NIGHT TO REMEMBER" CHARITY CONCERT

**Jun 14**

All ages. Daystar Academy, Ivy Schools, and the Four Seasons Hotel Beijing are proud to bring you a charitable evening cocktail reception filled with a cappella magic. In their first ever China tour, Harvard University's all female ensemble the Radcliffe Pitches, and their brother group the Harvard Krokodiloes, are providing a one night only evening of entertainment, sure to captivate your heart and imagination. There will also be a silent auction, and all proceeds will go towards Dew Drops Little Flowers and Educating Girls of Rural China. Treat yourself to an relaxing evening with friends while making a difference in someone's life. RMB 688. 7-9pm. Four Seasons Hotel Beijing. (RSVP: [jaw@daystarchina.cn](mailto:jaw@daystarchina.cn))

## VEGAN KITCHEN TAKEOVER

**Jun 8**

All ages. The Orchid Lodge is continuing its Pop-Up Chef events with this Indonesian Street-Food Inspired all Vegan Kitchen Takeover. On Jun 8th at 6pm, enjoy an 8 course family style dinner. Including all of the best street-food dishes Indonesia has to offer. Prepared by independent chef, Sarah, who enjoys experimenting in the kitchen to bring new flavors and ideas to the table. RMB 168. 6pm. The Orchid Lodge. (8404 4818)



## BSB SHUNYI SUMMER FAYRE

**Jun 16**

All ages. Come along for some summer fun at The British School of Beijing (BSB) Shunyi's Summer Fayre. This is one of the biggest events each year at BSB. Bring your friends and family along, as it's open to the whole Beijing community. Families can enjoy snacks and drinks from their many food vendors, fun and games, a water park, bouncy castles, and enjoy visiting a variety of stalls indoors and outdoors. Their raffle will have many fantastic prizes to be won too. Free admission. 12-4pm. The British School of Beijing, Shunyi (BSB Shunyi)

## NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: A NEW AGE OF EXPLORATION 2.0

**until Jun 23**

All ages. The exhibition will showcase classic images of China and include a new display called "China Memory", which allows visitors to rediscover the grand beauty and cultural heritage of Chinese rivers and mountains, from the perspective of award-winning international photographers. RMB 70-100. 9am- 5pm. Beijing World Art Museum. For more information or tickets, go to [www.247tickets.com](http://www.247tickets.com)





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## ROMEO AND JULIET AT THE CENTURY THEATER

Jun 9-23

All ages. This musical version of Shakespeare's classic tale of love and loss is brought to life in French. Audiences have raved about the beautiful score, luxurious set design, and powerful performances. See this production live at the Beijing Century Theater from Jun 9 to 14. RMB 180-1,180. 7.30pm. Century Theater.



## MR. ROMMEL'S COOKING CLASSES AT IVY ACADEMY SANLITUN

every Saturday until Jun 22

All ages. Mr. Rommel's Cooking Class aims to make your kids have fun in the kitchen, helps them to build positive memories, good vibes and great food. Your kids will learn basics in cooking... there's cutting, smelling, pouring, kneading and most of all, have fun and learn without being aware of it! RMB 2,860 (for 13 classes), RMB 260 (individual classes). 10-11am. Ivy Academy. (187 1004 6911, rommel.penullar@ivyschools.com)

## DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS: WORKSHOPS FOR COUPLES AND FAMILIES

Jun 15

Adults. You don't need to be athlete to benefit from a bit of coaching. Professional coaches Virginie Mangin and Eike Westerholt are holding a workshop on dealing with challenges in relationships. Participants will be able to explore concrete tools for effective communication, conflict resolution, and addressing needs in a non-assertive way. RMB 350. 10am-12.30pm. The Bookworm. (eike@eikewesterholt.com, info@beyondcoaching.me)



## CLASSIC BROADWAY MUSICAL: THE WIZARD OF OZ

Jun 13-30

All ages. This production of *The Wizard of Oz* is a spectacular celebration of that classic 1939 MGM film. It's a new, refreshed, and lavish rendition of the beloved classic. Audiences young and old, seeing it for the first time or the fifth, will be dazzled by the brightly colored sets, charmed by its timeless score, and enthralled with its breathtaking special effects. It's a wonderful show for the whole family. And whether it creates new memories or conjures them up from the past, everyone deserves to experience or relive this wonderful, whimsical, and enduring story. The language of the event is English with Chinese subtitles. RMB 100-1,961. 7.30pm. Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center.

## CATS: THE MUSICAL

Jul 3-13

All ages. The international musical phenomenon *Cats* is in Beijing at the Beijing Century Theatre this July. On just one special night of the year, all Jellicle cats meet at the Jellicle Ball where Old Deuteronomy, their wise and benevolent leader, makes the Jellicle choice and announces which of them will go up to The Heaviside Layer and be reborn into a whole new Jellicle life. This classic Broadway classic purrs with exciting musical numbers and choreography, and should be a blast for theater lovers of all ages. RMB 180-1,180. 7.30pm. Beijing Century Theater.





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E

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Find your footing in Beijing's  
most vibrant neighborhoods





Beijing isn't the type of place that will open up to you immediately. It is an enigmatic mistress, full of secrets, which you either need to spend time uncovering, or be content just existing with the city on a surface level.

Many newcomers come to Beijing, expecting it to be modern, metropolitan, and not all that different from any other major city around the world. Well, not to disappoint you, it is, but also it isn't. If a more European sensibility is what you crave, then Shanghai would be more up your alley. Beijing is rough around the edges, and due to it being the epicenter of Chinese cultural currency (music, art, history), it's unlike anywhere you've ever been before. It has spunk, but also a large dollop of charm, and for that reason, we love calling this place home.

Beijing consists of 16 districts containing over 21 million people. We will be focusing on seven neighborhoods in four separate districts, which have become the most popular among Beijing's expat community. While these aren't the only areas that are home to waiguoren, these are the most accessible and offer, in our opinion, the best Beijing experience depending on your tastes and preferences.

The choice of the right neighborhood will impact your Beijing experience significantly. It takes a lot of effort to travel to activities located in different areas of the city, so it's best to put your interests and comforts at the center of your decision-making process.

While some neighborhoods may be rich in these opportunities, others might be sparse in comparison. Like any living situation, residing in an area that's practical for work and school, but doesn't strike the essential chords of being socially and psychologically fulfilling will leave you craving more. You might end up feeling like it's the city's fault, and that Beijing is empty of activities that match your family's interests.

The fact is, Beijing is a gigantic sprawling jumble, and if you don't have an open mind or desire to get out there and jump into the fray, you likely won't be able to appreciate it. If you do anything, heed this one bit of advice. Find the right neighborhood! It will at least make this process more convenient, and put you on the right footing towards gaining a legitimate appreciation for your new life in Beijing.

In the following pages we will be dissecting each of these neighborhoods, analysing their pros and cons along with their most important aspects, including where to live, study, shop, and most importantly play, for as long as you decide to call this incredible city home.





#### Pros

- + A high concentration of international restaurants and bars
- + Lots of events for couples and families
- + Convenient access to schools
- + Western-style amenities
- + Many other expat families

#### Cons

- Living inside the expat bubble
- Inconvenient subway access (nearest Lines are 2, 6, and 10), but this will change in the near future
- Frequent traffic
- Seedier areas at night such as Sanlitun
- Not as green as some of the other neighborhoods covered

# SANLITUN AND XINGFUCUN

三里屯, 幸福村

Topwin Center and Sanlitun Soho

Sanlitun and its surrounding areas have long been major expat hubs. With many bars, clubs, and restaurants concentrated in one place, it's a fast-changing, very commercialized area, but very convenient when it comes to not being far from homely comforts like western cuisine, shopping your favorite brands, or international schools. Just west of Sanlitun lies the slightly quieter Xingfucun with its own developing bar and restaurant scene. All in all, it's the perfect place for newcomers who wish to be close to the action.



### ► Compounds

Seasons Park in particular is popular with expat families as it is close to banks, restaurants, and western supermarkets and has a kids' playground. Located just behind the foreign grocery chain April Gourmet in Xingfucun, Lianbao Garden has a convenient location, spacious apartments, and a children's playground. Tayuan DRC has historically been a more upscale choice for well compensated professionals or diplomats. It is one of the five diplomatic residence compounds (DRC) originally built to serve Beijing's diplomatic and foreign community. Located just north of the Canadian Embassy, the compound contains relatively spacious western-style apartments, a big stretch of grass within the gated community, and even has its own import market.

### ► Schools

In Sanlitun, you can choose between a number of top notch schools including Daystar Academy's Sanlitun campus, British School of Beijing (BSB), Sanlitun, and Beijing No. 55 High School which offers both middle and high school in Xingfucun.

### ► Shopping

Shopping abounds in Sanlitun, from foreign goods markets to mom and pop shops and huge malls. One major shopping and dining hub is Taikoo Li, a sprawling village-style mall with many name brand products. While many of these stores are on the pricy side, it can also be nice for window shopping and getting a walk in. Just south of Taikoo Li is Sanlitun Soho and Topwin Center. This is a great spot for getting your bubble tea fix or finding an affordable tailor to make some of your bespoke fashion fantasies come to life!



Taikoo Li



Nali Patio

### ► Dining

Beijing's dining scene is highly developed. Besides the many western-style restaurants in Taikoo Li and the adjacent Nali Patio, there's plenty of options at Topwin Center, like Beyond Yakatori and a popular food court in the basement. There's also the Slow Boat Taproom, where you'll find a wide variety of craft beer and burgers, and the neighboring Courtyard 4 which is home to Home Plate BBQ, Taco Bar, and a smattering of other foreign-friendly establishments. Xingfucun is also home to a growing number of bars and restaurants, including O'Steak, the 京-A Taproom, and many others at the YU food court or Yoolee Plaza.

### ► Where to Play

Beijing is a huge city with a lot of places to go and things to do, yet many venues can be intolerably crowded during the weekend. During the hot days of summer, Tuanjiehu Park is home to the downtown's best water park, and also features roller-skating and rides. There are also several cinemas in Sanlitun (Taikooli, Yoolee Plaza) that show a handful of Hollywood films. Just a short walk west from Taikoo Li you will spot Shimao Department Store, which is great for finding many kid-friendly activities including play learning venues, toy stores, and much more. For bibliophiles, The Bookworm is Beijing's long running bilingual bookstore and book lending library with regular story times, baby sing groups, and other family-friendly fun that can be a great escape from the hustle and bustle of this commercial neighborhood.



Beyond Yakitori



**Pros**

- + Many famous Beijing restaurants
- + Western-style amenities in a traditional Chinese environment
- + Hutongs and cultural areas
- + Airport Express stop in Dongzhimen
- + Convenient Subway access (Lines 1, 5, 6)

**Cons**

- Older hutong houses can have bad plumbing
- Many apartment buildings don't always have elevators
- No major international schools in the area
- Hutong houses can be cold during winter

# DONGZHIMEN AND GULOU

## 东直门和鼓楼

Inner Dongzhimen is a gateway to Beijing's more historical areas, such as Gulou, Andingmen, and Yonghegong. Many of these old Beijing neighborhoods are being demolished to initiate new developments, such as the extension of the Airport Express, as the city makes moves to modernize, but there are still plenty of attractive housing options if you wish to live a more traditional Beijing lifestyle, complete with neighboring Mahjong parlors and small produce markets. Here, you can explore the hutongs, you are in walking distance to some of the city's most significant cultural relics, and there are many awesome restaurants serving up authentic eats from Beijing and beyond.

### ► Residential Compounds

Most foreigners decide on this area of town for its more traditional Chinese aesthetic. This being said, your standard apartment compounds that are so ubiquitous to most of the city are less common, but do exist at East Lake Villas in Dongzhimen, Guanxuyuan near Yonghegong, and a handful of others near Dongzhimen and Beixinqiao stations. While some might be very rustic, others have the added bonus of providing you and your family with a private courtyard and occasionally even a rooftop terrace for a modest price compared to other more modernized areas of Beijing.

### ► Schools

Where the hutongs lack in having any major international schools, they make up for in having a handful of small but well regarded pre-schools like La Maison Montessori de Pékin, Little Pace Preschool, and Jazzy Preschool for Gifted Children in outer Dongzhimen. Other primary and high schools can be found in nearby Sanlitun or CBD.

### ► Shopping

Traditional shopping, while less than you'd find in major commercial hubs in nearby Chaoyang and Sanlitun, they are still in the neighborhood at Raffles or Ginza Mall. Gulou is also your gateway to many small shops specializing in local souvenirs, musical instruments, and even vintage clothing.

### ► Dining

Head over to Dongzhimen's Guijie, for acres of hot pot and Chinese-style BBQ restaurants. Exploring some of the best Chinese food Beijing has to offer should no doubt be your focus if living in this area as it's not only the most represented but also the most affordable. You can also find a couple other unique options like Furongji at the The Orchid for creative dim sum, or Pebbles Courtyard, which is highly regarded as one of the most authentic Mexican restaurants in Beijing, if not all of China.

### ► Where to Play

While proper play is marginally less accessible, as you often need to journey outside the compound or out of the hutongs, that doesn't mean these opportunities don't exist. There are plenty of great parks in the Dongzhimen and Gulou areas that rank among the best in the city, along with convenient access to well-known historical sites that are also wonderful to explore. If you are looking in Dongzhimen, there's the small Nanguan Park that's often filled with kids playing in the late afternoon. Closer to Yonghegong Temple, there's Ditan Park, which features numerous amusement rides, like go-karts and merry-go-rounds, and plenty of green space. During the summer months, many families head north of Gulou, to Qingnianhu Park, and take a dip at its large and often less crowded, open-air pool.



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#### Pros

- + Proximity to Chaoyang Park (which hosts free yoga sessions, Heyrobics, HeyRunning, pick-up soccer and basketball games, and more)
- + Western supermarkets and restaurants
- + Several embassies and schools

#### Cons

- Some compounds are farther from subway access
- Living inside the expat bubble
- Higher cost of living when compared to some other inner city areas

Yoga in the Park

# CHAOYANG PARK AND LIANGMAQIAO

## 朝阳公园和亮马桥

Surrounded by embassies, Chaoyang Park is the largest, most western-style park in the city and is very popular with middle-class Chinese families and the expat community. Lined with shops, restaurants, and residential compounds, this area is easy for daily living. Solana Lifestyle Shopping Park is pretty much modeled after the mixed indoor/outdoor malls of the west, while nearby Liangmaqiao is a busy commercial area with many expat conveniences and high-end hotels where you can enjoy some amazing fine dining options. This neighborhood is a great option if you require a space that isn't flooded with cars and electric scooters to get a run in every once in a while.





Hello Mart

## ► Residential Compounds

Several residential compounds are available in Chaoyang. Palm Springs has north-facing units overlooking Chaoyang Park, a Roman-style garden, large clubhouse with an indoor swimming pool, children's playground, sauna, and gym—it's no wonder it's popular with families. Park Avenue has a shopping complex with imported groceries, cafes, and sporting good stores in addition to its children's playground, swimming pool, and gym. Jingda International Apartment is near the Chaoyang Park, Palm Springs Living Square, and Solana Park. No. 9 International Apartment has many international shopping malls and restaurants. Greenlake Place is another option, and has many stores, restaurants, and even a Jenny Lou's in the compound.

## ► Schools

Canadian International School of Beijing (CISB), Beanstalk International Bilingual School (BIBS), House of Knowledge (HoK), German Embassy School, and Ivy Academy are all top notch and convenient options if you are residing in this area of the city.

## ► Shopping

Solana Lifestyle and Shopping Park is a large, popular open-air mall next to Chaoyang Park. It's one of the most known shopping centers for families, and features International name brands like Zara, Uniqlo, Muji, H&M, American Eagle, Gap, and more. Also, if you are ever craving something that's not all that different from the farmer's markets back home, check out Farm2Neighbors at Beijing Grand Summit each weekend for a selection of some of the city's best vendors of organic produce and specialty goods. Recent addition, Hello Mart is a sprawling 7,000sqm market, food court, and "mall without walls" that looks to cater to the growing affluence of Liangmaqiao.

## ► Dining

If you are looking for international restaurants in the neighborhood make sure to head to Beijing Grand Summit where you'll find Baker and Spice, Obentos (Japanese, healthy), Cue for contemporary Southeast Asian cuisine, and much more. You can also head to Solana which houses Beijing favorites like Moka Bros, Tribe, and Tube Station Pizza. Just a short walk from Solana to get to Maizidian where you'll find some of the best Japanese food in Beijing at restaurants like Yume Wo Katate, known for serving up hearty bowls of ramen. Recently Liangmaqiao has also generated a bit of attention among foodies with the addition of Xinyuanli, which houses restaurants like Bottega, Q Mex Taqueria, and the Peruvian newcomer, Pachapapi.

## ► Where to Play

There's lots to do in Chaoyang. As the largest patch of green space in Beijing, Chaoyang Park is the obvious choice. Entrance is inexpensive and there's a lot of room to move around. Young visitors can fly kites, rent a pedal boat for the lake, go on fairground rides, or even participate in group yoga and exercise classes on the weekends if weather and AQI permit. When your kids are exhausted from the park, Solana Lifestyle Shopping Park is located a stone's throw away. This family favorite has been open since 2008, with its fountains and whimsical decorations. Indoors, there's an entire children's wing with play facilities and family-oriented shops. For book lovers, Mike's Children's English Book Library near Solana has the original imported British and American selections for children, including children's books, graphic novels, picture books, teen fiction, and more. At Yoga Summit, you can book family yoga classes to get a little respite from the hectic surroundings of life in the capital.



Pachapapi



Solana Lifestyle and Shopping Park



#### Pros

- + Home to one of Beijing's biggest and diverse expat communities
- + Array of malls offers one-stop convenience and proximity
- + Public parks emphasize quality over quantity
- + Limitless shopping options within close distance
- + Variety of international food choices

#### Cons

- Corporate vibe
- Expensive rent, food, and shopping
- Far from historical landmarks and points of interest
- Heavy vehicle and foot traffic
- Limited greenspace options

# CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD) AND SHUANGJING

北京商务中心，双井

Parkview Green

Beijing's Central Business District (CBD) and Shuangjing are often labeled expat havens, and that's not a bad thing. After all, the neighborhood's proximity to quality schools, kid-friendly play areas, parks, and a variety of restaurants and shops makes for a comfortable home away from home. Framed by the Third and Fourth Ring Roads, the diverse Chaoyang District neighborhood encompasses famous architectural feats (CCTV's Big Pants building), walkable greenspaces (Ritan Park), and top-notch shopping experiences (Parkview Green, China World Mall, SKP). Everything is within reach from the city's financial hub, with convenient foot or subway access to all of the above. A short walk south from the CBD, Shuangjing's Today Art Museum, and numerous malls offer just a slice of the many cultural options for family living and fun.



### ► Residential Compounds

Quality, affordable living can be found in pricey Shuangjing, with residential compounds like A Pie and Pingod just a short foot trek to neighborhood supermarkets April Gourmet and Carrefour. The more upscale and spacious Shiqiao Guomao World Trade apartments off the Third Ring Road offer lobby and laundry service, a fitness center, and an onsite playground.

Among the CBD's luxury-style, high-rise compounds are Central Park, Gemdale International Garden, and Windsor Avenue. Many of these Guomao residences offer round-the-clock management, swimming pools, and onsite gardens and parking. Prepare to pay a lot to live here, though consider it an investment in convenience: it's all right next to shopping meccas Kerry Centre, SOHO, The Place, and China World Trade Center, as well as the super-convenient getting to subway Lines 1 and 10.

### ► Schools

Bilingual daycare centers and kindergartens abound. Enroll children as young as 3 at New Garden International in Fuli City, which offers full-day, bilingual kindergarten instruction. In nearby Guomao, options for early learners include Little Pony Daycare, Beanstalk International Kindergarten, and Etonkids, which all introduce toddlers to classroom structure and socializing.

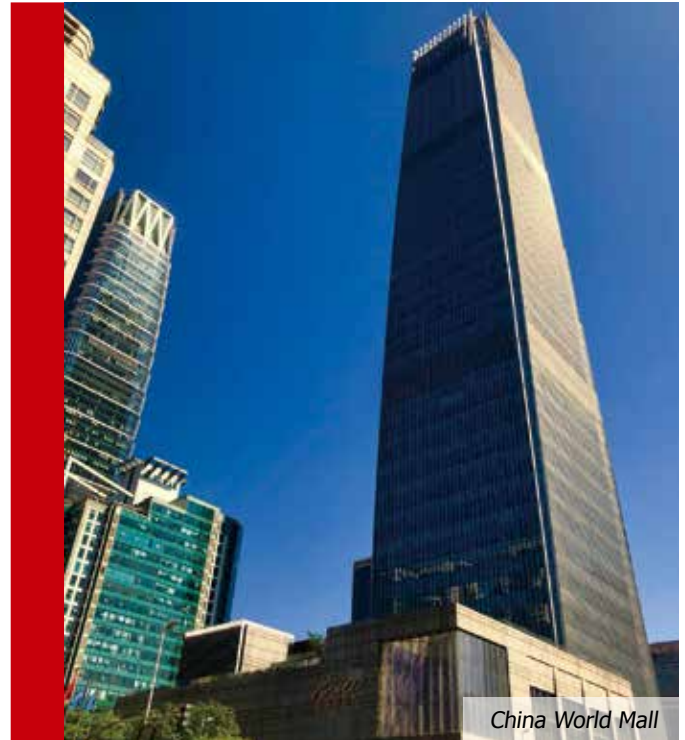
Top international schools like Beijing City International School (BCIS) and Yew Chung International School of Beijing (YCIS) teach kindergarten through high school, and shape students to become competent in both English and Chinese.



Central Park



Panjiayuan Antique Market



China World Mall

### ► Shopping

Let's take it alphabetically: China World Mall, Hopson One, Kerry Centre, Parkview Green, Space 3, The Place, Viva Mall...enough malls for you? Pick one and you'll encounter even more choices, from excellent international food courts to rows of fashion retailers, drug stores, and electronics shops. Feel like hustling a deal? Visit the Silk Market in CBD, where you'll find bargains on knockoff jewelry and apparel or Panjiayuan in Shuangjing for antiques — if bartering's your thing.

### ► Dining

You can't go wrong exploring the food courts inside every CBD and Shuangjing mall. Craving Western-style comfort food? Hotties at Hopson One mall in Baiziwan is a great go-to for cheap burgers. Blue Frog and Moka Bros are the latest newcomers to Space 3, with local favorite Q Mex already into its second year at the mall.

Step outside for more options, including Burger Break and Grinders, which both offer affordable bar grub. Shuangjing staple Lily's American Diner has a bit of everything, and does a consistently satisfying brunch. For Mexican, you can't beat Moji Taco & Salad in Fuli for authenticity. For a round of slices, try La Pizza at The Place in the CBD for a proper sit-down dinner, or Gung Ho! in Fuli for a takeout pie.

### ► Where to Play

On a clear Summer day, nothing beats getting outside for a stroll with your kids for some family playtime. Qingfeng Park, nestled just east of Third Ring Road, is bursting with bright flowers and refurbished amusement park-style rides; there's even safe bungee-jumping for kids). For 200 RMB, load up a card and enjoy an afternoon aboard the roller-coaster and carousel, among other rides. Ritan Park is a perfect escape from the bustle, big enough to run with the kids yet peaceful enough to do absolutely nothing and just revel in its nature. On those rough AQI days, play centers offer clean air and plenty of freedom for children to run and play together. Enjoy a coffee or a meal at Space 3 mall's Kimo Kids Cafe, where parents can buy playtime in increments of two hours. There's also Line Friends Cafe in Guomao's Yintai building, and Little Oasis in He Sheng Hui mall, featuring an entire floor of playspace. New York City Kids Club at Viva Mall offers membership-based packages transferable at all Beijing locations.



# WANGJING AND LIDO

## 望京和丽都

Wangjing and Lido lie halfway between Shunyi and downtown Beijing. These areas are popular with both families and expat English teachers due to their relatively cheaper rent, access to international hospitals and schools, and proximity to major foreign companies such as Samsung, Ericsson, Nokia, and Microsoft. Both have significant Korean communities, especially Wangjing, which hosts a cornucopia of Korean chain stores, restaurants, and grocery chains.

Family workshop at M Woods

### Pros

- + Short commute to international schools in Laiguangying and Beigao area
- + Proximity to the headquarters of foreign companies
- + Close to family-friendly destinations such as Si'de Park
- + 798 Art District
- + Indigo Mall
- + International grocery chains

### Cons

- Connected to the city via satellite subway lines (13, 14, and 15)
- Limited things to do for families, though the area is growing
- Lacks authentic Beijing culture when compared to some other inner city areas





Ullens Center for Contemporary Art

### ► Residential Compounds

Wangjing and Lido have a number of choice compounds on offer. Wangjing Huayuan is in a great location; close to local kindergartens, Chinese groceries, banks, hospitals, post office, beauty salons, and even a Wal-Mart. Upper East Side is also well located, and has its own gym, sauna, and swimming pool, as well as a coffee shop within the compound. Chateau Regency has a fitness center, a convenience store, and a playground. Mookey Swim, a popular parent-owned center offering baby swimming classes, is also located on the ground floor of Chateau Regency.

### ► Schools

Beijing World Youth Academy (BWYA) and 3e International School can both be found in Wangjing. There are also other international schools that cater specifically to the dense population of Koreans and Japanese in the neighborhood. Olivia's Place is also good to know if you require learning support or other special needs services.

### ► Shopping

The world's second largest IKEA is located in Wangjing, right by French grocery chain Carrefour, with its built-in air purification and water recycling systems. Indigo Mall near 798 Art District offers entertainment, good shopping and dining, with a cinema, restaurants, BHG Marketplace, frequent children's events, and a large outdoor playground. You can also find April Gourmet on Fangyuan South Street, just a few blocks away from Upper East Side Compound.



Great Leap Brewing



Indigo Mall

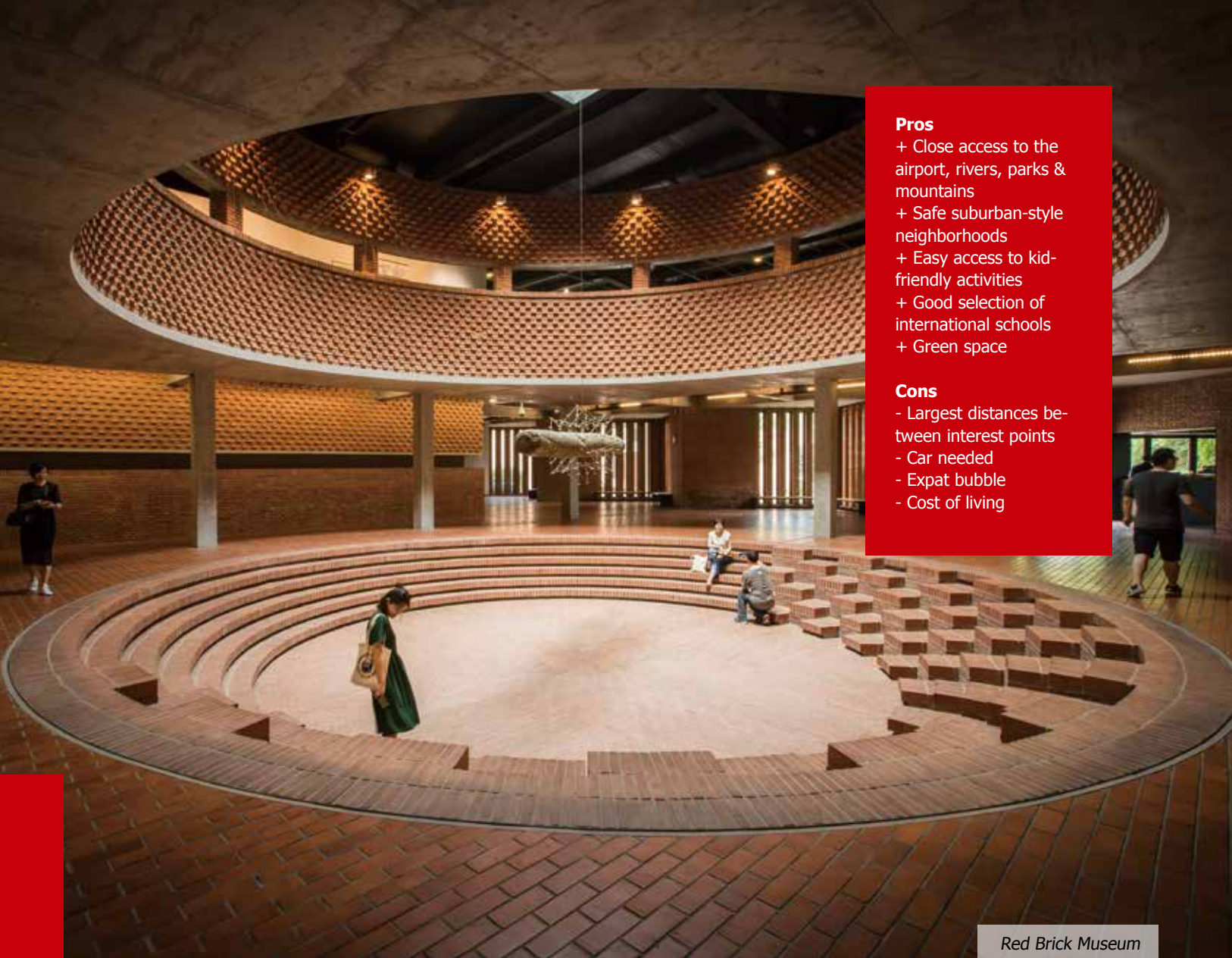
### ► Dining

Wangjing has some great Korean restaurants and markets. Next to Si'de Park, the Korean-owned CJ Foodworld houses a Tous les Jours bakery, Bibigo, Twosome Coffee, and Mann Coffee. There's also Element Fresh, Annie's, Taj Pavilion, a new Great Leap Brewing, and more. If you looking for a superb spot to brunch when the weekend hits, then look no further than either Nuo Hotel Beijing's N'Joy or EAST Hotel's Feast. A good breakfast, lunch, or dinner option can be also found at Ponte, with seasonal offers from their fresh Italian Deli, house bakery, or al la carte menu. Tucked away behind April Gourmet, you will find a little Vietnamese gem, Pho, serving up traditional steaming bowls of pho and a variety of authentic Thai dishes.

### ► Where to Play

Wangjing and Lido both have a very vibrant expat scene with plenty of entertainment options. Lido Place is a popular apartment and mall complex where many foreigners reside and also many fairs and bazaars are held. This can be great for those looking to connect with the local crafts scene or the occasional farmer's market. Another option is Indigo Mall, located just south of 798, which hosts regular kids' events in its airy atrium space. They also have numerous restaurants, children's brands, and play centers. In the warmer months, families can access the Indigo Playground out back, which features a fountain and two play areas connected by a garden. For greenery, Si'de Park in Lido is a modest park and a popular destination for families, which features a running track that winds around the entirety of the park, along with a roller skating rink, a fishing pond, soccer field, playground, a bouncy castle, and fairground rides. For arts and crafts for the kids, check out art studio, DDK Art, tucked behind the North West side of Upper East Side compound or the family art workshops at M Woods in 798. Unique classes in painting, sculpting, pottery, and more are on offer.





#### Pros

- + Close access to the airport, rivers, parks & mountains
- + Safe suburban-style neighborhoods
- + Easy access to kid-friendly activities
- + Good selection of international schools
- + Green space

#### Cons

- Largest distances between interest points
- Car needed
- Expat bubble
- Cost of living

Red Brick Museum

# SHUNYI, LAIGUANGYING, AND BEIGAO

顺义, 来广营和北皋

For a suburban family vibe you need look no further than Shunyi. There are several large international schools in this mostly low-rise residential community, and the numerous villa residential communities with their tree-lined streets and backyards make this area desirable for families and popular with expats. There are plenty of different housing options available: apartment buildings, multi-level townhouses with small yards, village style courtyard houses, and large houses complete with two-car garage. While Shunyi provides quick access to the airport, and shorter travel times for the kids, the commute to the city is quite a distance and will add considerable time onto an already long work day. You may not get the real 'Beijing' vibe living out here, but if you prefer a slower pace of life with more space, then Shunyi may be the right place for you. Keep in mind that when most expats talk about 'Shunyi', they are usually referring to North Chaoyang and the Houshayu (or Central Villa District) of Shunyi, rather than the 'real Shunyi' which is actually several more miles north.



## ► Residential Compounds

There are a lot of good options in the area. Most have lots of on-site businesses, like cafes, supermarkets, restaurants, and gyms. Laiguan-gying is the closest to the city and has several options. Beijing Riviera has large green spaces and an artificial lake, along with a clubhouse, cafe, swimming pool, gym, tennis and squash courts, and a bicycle track. Right across the street is Quanfa Garden, which can have some lovely homes for rent although not much green space. Lane Bridge and Orchid Garden are also worth checking out in that area. In the Central Villa District, most villa compounds have clubhouses with swimming pools, gyms, kids playgrounds and more. Capital Paradise is an older compound that offers more affordable options for large houses, and neighboring compounds River Garden and Yosemite also have great facilities. Le Grande Villa, Merlin Champagne and Chateau Regalia round off the list. For apartment complexes, try Dragon Bay, Shine Hills, I.D City, Vanke and Central Park.

## ► Schools

Most of Beijing's prestigious international schools are located in this district. There are a range of options and curriculums here so there's something for everyone. Harrow Beijing, British School of Beijing, Shunyi, Dulwich College Beijing, Montessori School of Beijing, Keystone Academy, Western Academy of Beijing (WAB), and International School of Beijing are just a few, but you can check out our yearly *beijingkids* School Choice Guide for complete listings of other great schools as well.



EATaria

## ► Shopping

There's not a lot of options for shopping within close proximity, especially if you like the popular retail and fashion stores. However, Shine City is a fantastic outdoor mall that is a pleasure to stroll around and has a good selection of stores and outdoor dining options as well as plenty of kid-friendly activities always happening. Cathay View, Euro Plaza and Pinnacle Plaza have food and boutique stores, but if you really want the typical mall experience you'll need to head to BHG Mall, in Shunyi New Town. Roundabout is a great place to pick up second-hand toys, clothing and home items at a bargain, while their newly opened boutique and community center is a great place to pick up locally sourced crafts, home décor, and organic cosmetics.

## ► Dining

There's plenty of dining options in Shunyi, especially with the opening of Shine Hills. The Orchard, Green T. House, and Doko can be found providing Shunyi residents with a variety of impressive eats. Walk beside Roma Lake and discover many different options including Malacca Legend or check out the art and antique cafes. Other western restaurants and brands include Element Fresh, The English Tearooms, Annie's, Avocado Tree and Pie Squared. Also, the new EATaria has been generating a lot of buzz for their variety of high-quality family-friendly eats ranging from paella, pizza, and breakfast offerings.

## ► Where to Play

Shunyi is rich in kid's activities. Shine Hills is packed with kids' stores, petting zoos, cinemas, and there is usually always some interactive activities for the kids – remember to take the kids swimming suits so they can cool down in the fountains during those hot summer days. For something more active, jump around and get loose with your kids at trampoline parks and indoor adventure playgrounds, Latitude or Le Fan Tian. For biking, Eagle Hub offers some epic pump tracks for your little BMX riders, or just hit the river cycle paths. Heyuan Park is a scenic park that surrounds a manmade lake, perfect for scooters, bikes, flying kites, or playing Frisbee. Take a few sand toys to keep the younger kids amused on the artificial lake edge. Crab Island is a massive amusement park that has a lot to offer visiting families. Some highlights include an ecological science park, go-karting, mini zoo, and water park.



Roundabout Boutique



**Pros**

- + Rich in Chinese culture
- + Significantly more affordable than most parts of Chaoyang District
- + Offers a variety of international restaurants
- + Close to many Beijing-based universities
- + Plenty of green spaces to play

**Cons**

- Relatively far from many prominent international schools
- Not tailored to affluent expat living
- Haidian is a very large, expansive district, not a neighborhood
- Not very close to major international hospitals

# HAIDIAN DISTRICT

## 海淀区

Haidian District is located in the northwest part of the city. In this district, you will find Chinese areas rich in culture and affordable in price as well as more foreigner-friendly hubs. There is a good reason why Haidian is known as the education district: the vast majority of the city's universities are located here including Peking and Tsinghua — the Chinese equivalents to Oxford and Cambridge. In addition to several of China's famous tourist attractions, Haidian is also home to Zhongguancun, a subdistrict often dubbed "China's Silicon Valley". Further west of the city's main thoroughfare Chang'an Avenue and just before the West Fourth Ring Road is Wukesong roadway interchange, an affluent area full of family-friendly fare including many night markets and restaurants.

Beijing Zoo

### ► Residential Compounds

Huaqingjiayuan is a sprawling apartment complex located in the heart of Wudaokou. Popular with foreigners, this complex has its own swimming pool, kindergartens, and a modest import store. Hongshan International Apartments is another option as this complex is right next door to a Holiday Inn and a stone's throw away from Qinghuadongliuxikou station, on Line 15. Up the road, Liudaokou offers a cheaper alternative to Wudaokou. Furunjiayuan, a sought-after compound, is located seconds away from Line 15's Liudaokou station and is within walking distance of a number of grocery stores.

### ► Schools

Both Muffy's International Kindergarten and Eduwings Kindergarten have Haidian branches. For older children, Tsinghua International School offers education for students aged 6-18 (Grade 1-12). There is also the option of Beijing Kaiwen Academy, a private bilingual school for children in Grade 1-12. Over in Qinghe, Saint Paul American School is situated close to a beautiful canal and provides schooling for children aged 13-18 (Grade 7-12). Meanwhile, Haidian Foreign Language Academy offers a comprehensive one-stop service for children aged 3-18.

### ► Shopping

No Haidian shopping guide would be complete without mentioning D-Mart. Best described as Haidian's answer to Jenny Lou's, this store is well-stocked with imported food, beverages, skincare items, and cleaning products. There is also a well-established Carrefour in Zhongguancun. In terms of shopping for non-consumable items, the array of malls peppered across the district has that area well covered. Golden Resources Shopping Mall, often nicknamed "Great Mall of China", is

located near the Fourth Ring Road and was at one time the world's largest mall. Although it no longer holds this title, the sheer scale of the place with its 1,000+ shops means that one is almost certain to find whatever they may be looking for here. Dreamport Mall is another renowned establishment. Here you will find high street stores such as Gap and H&M side by side more upmarket brands such as Ugg. For bulk buys one can make use of either Metro (an international Cash & Carry) or Sam's Club.

### ► Dining

In recent years eateries that were formerly found only on the east side of town have made their way over to Haidian. These include Blue Frog (Zhongguancun) and Element Fresh (Bagou). Owing to the relatively high number of foreigners residing in this area, Wudaokou has a large concentration of restaurants serving international cuisine. Eateries such as Lush, Tous Les Jours, and Steps have long been a part of the Wudaokou scene. There is also Ganges, Tube Station Pizza, and Khan Baba, a Pakistani restaurant with a good value weekday lunch buffet.

### ► Where to Play

Where to begin? Haidian is a great base from which to explore the great outdoors. The Purple Bamboo Park, the Beijing Botanical Gardens, Fragrant Hills, the Summer Palace and the Old Summer Palace, and Haidian Park are a few of the well-known places of tranquility that call this district home. In the summer months, Liu Lang outdoor swimming pool offers lake-like pools and a designated children's swimming pool with abundant engaging gadgets to keep them entertained.



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# Rent Asunder

Navigating the treacherous waters of the Beijing property market

*By Andrew Killeen*

**F**ew things will have a bigger impact on your quality of life than the place you and your family live. Unfortunately though renting in Beijing can be a nightmare, particularly if you're new to the city. It may be your first encounter with *guanxi*, the network of connections which underpins business and social life in China. As a newcomer you have no *guanxi*, and as a tenant you have few rights. If your employer offers to find an apartment for you, then that is very often the best solution, at least while you find your feet; if not, a local friend can be a huge help. But if you have to go househunting on your own, then the tips below might help you avoid the worst traps.

## **Control the process as much as possible**

Don't be railroaded into accepting the first place you see. Agents will often start by showing you the apartments which have been on their books longest, in the hope you'll take one off their hands (a thick layer of dust is the clue here.) They may show you two or three, then ask which you want, as if that's the only choice available. Don't believe them if they tell you the sort of place you want isn't available, and you'll have to make do. Insist on your minimum requirements.

Feel free to work with more than one agent. They don't like this, and may try to make you feel guilty about it. But they are in fierce competition with each other, and if they think they're going to lose a fee they're likely to work harder to meet your needs.

## **The agent is not your friend**

It is near impossible to rent an apartment without going through a letting agent, and you can expect to have to pay them the equivalent of anything from two weeks' to a month's rent for their services. There are many who specialize in helping foreign renters, and this can be a valuable aid in navigating the treacherous waters of the Beijing rental market. However don't believe their more extravagant promises. They may upsell you into buying a "premium" service, where they offer to help you over a longer period.

Although you are paying them, their ultimate loyalty will be to the landlord; because of *guanxi*, and because when you move on, you're likely to be moving elsewhere, and they will want to let the property again. In any dispute, they will probably take the landlord's side against you. There are plenty of other ways to get help and support in your first year in the city, so let them do their job, pay the minimum possible, and don't be fooled into thinking they're going to look after you if there's a problem.

## **Check the rent on a property app, and negotiate**

As a foreigner you are likely to be asked a higher rent than a local would be charged. You can find out by checking the listing on property apps such as Lianjia, Zillow, and 58.com (though if your Chinese isn't good you might need help.) Don't be afraid of haggling. The Beijing property market is overpriced and overstocked, although premium locations will always command a premium rent. Again, agents and landlords may try to make you feel guilty about this, but don't be fooled. As you'll quickly learn if you visit the Pearl Market, the best way to get a good price is to walk away.

Negotiations may be complicated by what's included and what isn't. The landlord should be paying the estate management fee, so don't let them pretend that they're doing you any favors if they offer to. Don't forget to check for heating and air conditioning; the government provides free heating in the winter, but you may be shivering waiting for them to turn it on.

If there's something you want (for example, a modern shower cubicle), you may be able to negotiate to install it yourself in exchange for a reduced rent. However be careful of buying anything for the apartment which you expect to take with you when you leave, as you may find it has suddenly become the landlord's property.



**Don't expect to get your deposit back**

You'll be expected to pay not only a substantial deposit, but often also three months' rent in advance. Sadly you're unlikely to get your deposit back, no matter how careful a tenant you are. Many landlords see this as their right, and will pick on the smallest things as an excuse for keeping it. In fact, many will attempt to get even more money out of you. Sadly the contract means very little when it comes to this sort of dispute. Stay calm, don't be intimidated, and bear in mind that sometimes a small negotiated payment to save the landlord's face might be a good investment to avoid complications. Again, a Chinese friend can be a huge help.

**Not everyone is a shark**

These tips should help you avoid the worst case scenarios. We should point out though that not everyone in the Beijing property market is out to rip you off. There are many ethical, responsible landlords, and many honest, hardworking agents. Sadly if there is one bad experience for every ten good, then it's the nightmare everybody will talk about, and Beijing landlords on the whole have a terrible reputation. So hope for the best, but plan for the worst, and your home can become a great base for you and your family to enjoy all the amazing experiences that the city has to offer.

**CHECKLISTS****Security**

- ☐ Whether the windows have bars (on a lower-level apartment)
- ☐ Whether the front door has a solid lock
- ☐ Policy of guards at the community gates (visitors, delivery men)
- ☐ Proper functioning of video and sound on door monitor

**Furnishings**

- ☐ Amount of storage space
- ☐ Whether your current furniture will fit in the apartment (and through the door)
- ☐ Mattress for firmness

**Electrics**

- ☐ Functionality of all appliances (stove, fridge, hot water heater, air conditioner, washing machine, cable TV, microwave)
- ☐ Number of electrical outlets in every room
- ☐ Phone/broadband jacks
- ☐ Cellphone reception inside the apartment
- ☐ Lighting fixtures for brightness (and whether light bulbs can be easily replaced)
- ☐ Speed and power of all fans
- ☐ Location of fuse box and the electricity meter
- ☐ Location of the radiators

**The Shell**

- ☐ Ceiling for signs of leakage
- ☐ Walls for stains or cracks (check by outlets and height from knee-below)
- ☐ Flooring for unevenness, cracks, or holes
- ☐ Size of the windows and whether there is cross-ventilation
- ☐ Screens and locks on all windows (look for rips in the screens)

**Bathroom and Kitchen**

- ☐ Amount of cabinet space
- ☐ Location of the main gas valve and water valve
- ☐ Location of gas meter, electricity meter, and water meter
- ☐ Water pressure and functionality of the showerhead
- ☐ Sturdiness of the faucets (do they leak? do they need to be replaced?)
- ☐ Amount of counter space
- ☐ Drainage speed in all sinks and tubs
- ☐ How well does the toilet flush?
- ☐ Does the toilet seat need to be replaced?

**Outside**

- ☐ How much natural light does the apartment get?
- ☐ Is the neighborhood noisy?
- ☐ How close is the nearest street?
- ☐ How soundproof is the apartment?
- ☐ Location of garbage cans and recycling bins
- ☐ Location of bike racks

**SOME USEFUL PHRASES**

**Will you clean it before I move in?** 我搬进来之前你能清理一下吗? *Wǒ bānjìnlái zhīqián nǐ néng qīnglǐ yíxià ma?*

**Can I hang things on the walls?** 墙上可以挂装饰品吗? *Qióngshàng kěyǐ guà zhuāngshìpǐn ma?*

**Can you remove this?** 你能把这个拿走吗? *Nǐ néng bǎ zhège ná zǒu ma?*

**Can you buy a \_\_\_\_\_?** 你能买一个\_\_\_\_\_吗? *Nǐ néng mǎi yíge \_\_\_\_\_ ma?*

**How much is the rent?** 房租多少钱? *Fángzū duōshǎo qián?*

**Who pays the agency fee?** 谁交中介费? *Shéijāo zhōngjiè fèi?*

**Who pays the property management fee?** 谁交物业费? *Shéijāo wùyè fèi?*

**Write it down. Put it in the contract.** 写下来吧。在合同上标出。 *Xiěxiàlái ba. Zài hétóng shàng biāochū.*

**Where is the property management office? What's their phone number?** 物业办公室在哪? 电话号码是多少? *Wùyè bàngōngshì zài nǎ? Diànhuà hàomǎ shì duōshǎo?*



# YOU TALK, WECHAT

This powerful app will  
change the way in China

*By Andy Penafuerte III*



Welcome to Beijing! It will definitely take some time for you to get around to everything you need to do to get acclimated to life in this bustling city. But if there's one piece of advice that you need to follow, that will be to download WeChat. Do it now! Immediately! It's simply indispensable.

Okay, think of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Apple Pay, and all the other social apps that you use. Most of the major functions of those apps are available on WeChat. This app is essentially the world's most important super app, and will help you in the coming days, months, and years of your stay in China.

That being said, it might seem that WeChat is just like any other social platform, but let me tell you: it is beyond that. From chatting

and networking, to paying bills and utilities, and even donating to charity, WeChat can do almost everything. And the app is constantly updating and evolving.

Using the app is easy-peasy, and its interface is pretty intuitive and user-friendly. Signing up is effortless as long as you already have your mobile number ready. But remember that a Chinese mobile number is linked to your passport as a means of verification, and you'll be using that number to access many of the app functions, like mobile payments and getting into large groups.

Now look at your app homepage. On the top right of the screen, you'll see a plus (+) icon. Under that menu, you'll see four options. Tap "Scan" and point it towards the QR code above.

That's our official WeChat account! Tap "Follow" and on our account you'll see daily updates, stories, event information, and all the other essential resources to help you get settled into your new home! Now, tap "Back" and "QR Code" to get back to the app homepage.

QR codes are very much ubiquitous in China, and there will be times that you need to point-and-scan to unlock many things here, such as adding contacts, paying vendors, or accessing hyperlinks and information, to name just a few.



# WECHAT FUNCTIONS

As already mentioned, the app interface is pretty user-friendly. But we're going to explain the most basic functions, categorized by their location in the screen.

## More (+)

*Top right icon on the home page*



**Scan** is pretty much like the example we've given on the previous page. This function also now allows instant translations from Chinese characters into English.



**Money** is disabled by default, unless you have already linked your Chinese bank card to your account. When enabled, it shows a bar code and a QR code, which other people can scan to collect payments.

## Contacts

*Second icon on the bottom menu*



**New Friends** is where you'll see all the people who've added you. Tap **Mobile Contacts** to upload your contacts who have linked their mobile numbers into their WeChat accounts.



**Group Chat** shows all the group chats you've saved.



**Tags** is just that; a list of tags. It'll be particularly helpful when you need to categorize your contacts.



**Official Accounts** contains the accounts you're subscribed to (if you tapped "Follow" earlier, you'll see our account!).

## Discover

*Third icon on the bottom menu*



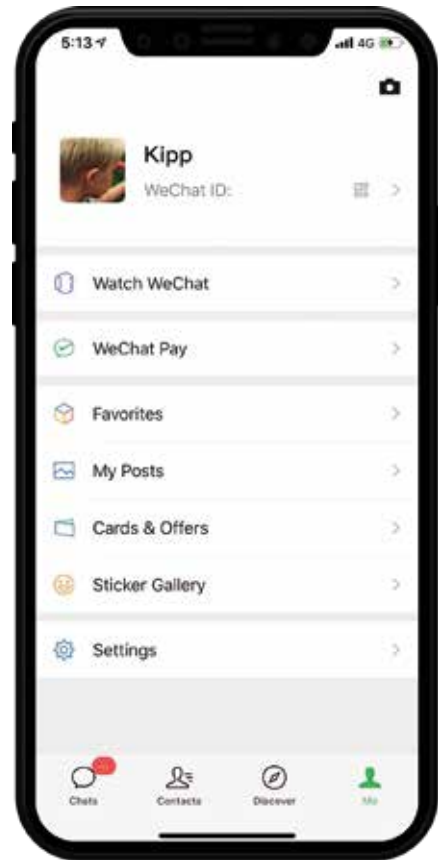
**Moments** is like a scaled-down version of Facebook's Timeline or a Twitter feed. **Scan** is also present in this menu.



**Top Stories** is a curated list of trending topics in Chinese.



**Mini Programs** can be considered as in-app websites. Most of them are in Chinese, though, and require a higher level of Chinese knowledge to navigate.



## Me

*Fourth icon on the bottom menu*



**Favorites** contains WeChat articles, photos, attachments, and other items that you marked as a "favorite." It is helpful, for example, when you need to revisit an article for later reading.



**My Posts** is like your Facebook wall, and includes all the items you posted. The three dots (...) icon will show your friends' comments, and the big camera icon on the current day prompts you to post photos or short videos.



**Sticker Gallery** is a repository of all saved and bought stickers. Stickers are common communication tools in China, and collecting the cutest and funniest ones is nearly an art form.



**WeChat Pay** is a powerful function that acts as your wallet (albeit digitally). Once accessible, you can transfer and receive money, pay bills and rent, accept digital red packets (very important around Chinese New Year), top up mobile credits, purchase tickets, donate to charity, and more. We'll talk more about that in detail on the next page.



**Cards & Offers** contains digital vouchers which you can get by purchasing items from various vendors using WeChat Wallet.

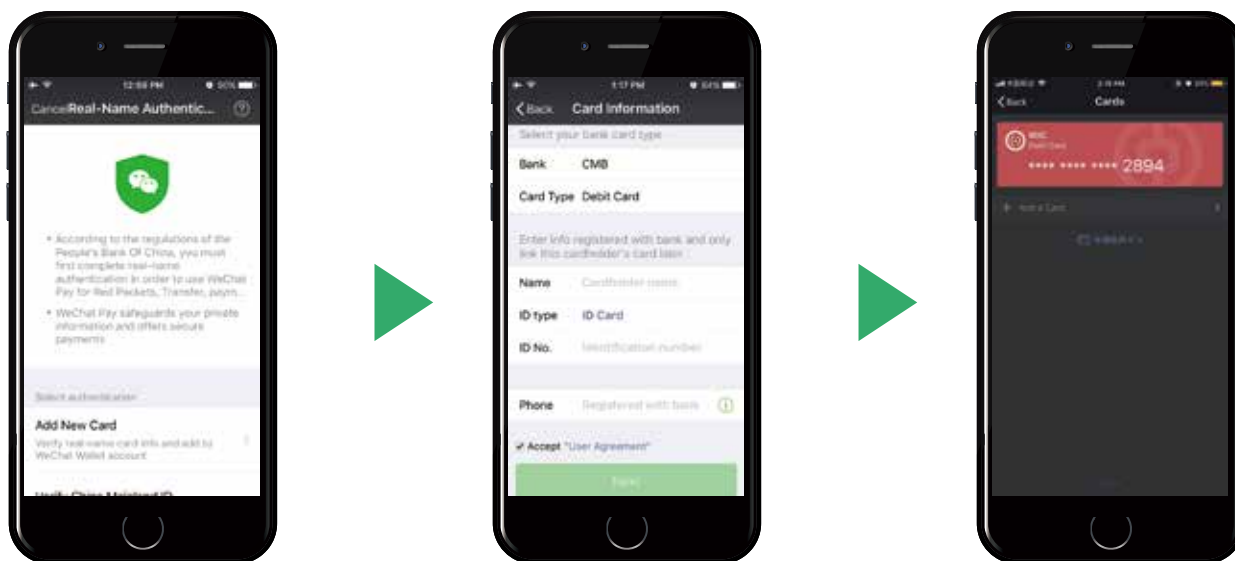


# SETTING UP YOUR WECHAT WALLET

One of the WeChat functions that you need to access right away is WeChat Wallet, as it can make your life in China easier in all sorts of ways. There's information online about this function but unfortunately it gets outdated very quickly, as WeChat implements strings of updates to abide by new government regulations.

The Wallet function is readily available to WeChat accounts set up inside China (also if you downloaded the app here), but it's hidden for accounts set up in the international version of the app. If you already have an account before moving to China, a quick way to activate WeChat Wallet is by asking someone who already has that function to transfer you a small amount of digital cash. When you try to receive that money, WeChat will prompt you to link a bank card or a mainland ID (exclusive to Chinese citizens) to verify your identity.

At the moment, WeChat Wallet allows linking of almost every local Chinese bank card, and a few foreign credit cards with MasterCard, Visa, or JCB. **Linking your WeChat Wallet to your local Chinese bank card** is easy, even if you set up your WeChat account overseas.



**Step 1:** To access WeChat Wallet, have someone transfer you any amount of money. It can be as little as RMB 0.01. Once you attempt to claim the money, you'll be prompted to do a real name authentication. If you set up your WeChat account in China, you can skip this and move straight to Step 2.

**Step 2:** Select "Add New Card" to link your local Chinese bank card and you'll be prompted to enter information, such as your full name, passport number, occupation, and region in China. **Important note: Make sure you input your name the exact way as the bank inputted it into their system. The name field is case sensitive.**

**Step 3:** WeChat sends a code to the phone number linked to your bank account. (This is a very common method of verification in China.) Enter the code in the appropriate box. Once you successfully linked your local bank card, the Wallet function will be available and should stay under the "Me" tab from now on.

At the time of writing, linking a foreign credit card to your WeChat Wallet is technically possible. However, several tech insiders who tried doing so have noted that the hassle of linking credit cards outweighs the benefits, since in many cases you cannot use the card to pay or transfer money outside of China. We recommend just using a local Chinese bank card.

Anyway, let's have a run-through of the functions under the WeChat Wallet tab.

The first three icons, Money, Balance, and Cards are interlinked to one another.

**Money** is used when paying nearly every vendor in the country, from buying a laptop in a mall to buying leeks from a farmer at a wet market. Hold the QR code and bar code out to them, they'll

scan it, and the payment is made. Under this function are several items, but one that you're likely to use is Receive Money, where people can scan a QR code to transfer you money.

**Balance** contains your digital money, including sums you received from digital red packets and transfers. Top Up withdraws money from your bank account, and Withdraw sends money back to your bank account. On the top right side is Transactions that records the amount of money you received or released.

**Cards** is a list of connected bank cards.

The other functions are named in English but their separate pages are in Chinese. The one function that is in English all throughout is Mobile Top Up, which allows you to buy phone and data credits for your linked phone number.



# THINK BEFORE YOU POST

WeChat groups form online communities and support systems and have become an essential part of social communication in China. Want to know more events in town? There's a group for that. Want to volunteer and support good causes during your stint in Beijing? There's a group for that. Want to find secondhand furniture or clothes? Naturally, there's a group for that as well.

But before you get into too many groups, always remember the importance of netiquette, common sense and never forget to "think before you post."

## Stickers and Smileys

Stickers can bring humor to conversations, but many find smileys and emojis to be hackneyed and fake. Stickers can function as an upgraded and animated version of smileys, and this form of non-verbal communication is actually fun and appealing when you know the context and intent of the person you're talking to.

But as much as physical non-verbal communication can be misinterpreted, stickers and smileys have a tendency to add even more confusion to a misconception. There are groups that allow the use of stickers in conversations, but be careful because too many stickers could be seen as spam or offend other members.

## Voice Messages

This function is quite polarizing, in that people can view them as either efficient or annoying. If you, for example, need to send an urgent message, are speaking with friends or family, or you want to practice spoken Chinese with a colleague, then voice messages are ideal. But if you sending strings of audio snippets to a large group chat of mostly strangers or distant acquaintances who have their own business to focus on, then it becomes irritating.

Many people have a preference in sending messages, but consider your recipients' preferences too. You can always revert to the old-fashioned phone call (which you can do on WeChat too), or better yet, arrange to meet face to face.

## Rules and Regulations

Many group owners and administrators post notices and rules when the group has grown big and become unmanageable. Admins have a tricky job enforcing rules while keeping them balanced: if they're too strict, the group chat becomes rigid and members unwilling to contribute; too lax, and the group can be flooded with spam. Admins can also remove members who disregard the rules or blatantly offend other people. So as a newcomer to a group, make sure that you read the group notice, and ask permission of the group admin/owner when you post product reviews or articles, work-related questions, or anything else you feel unsure of involving a lot of people in.



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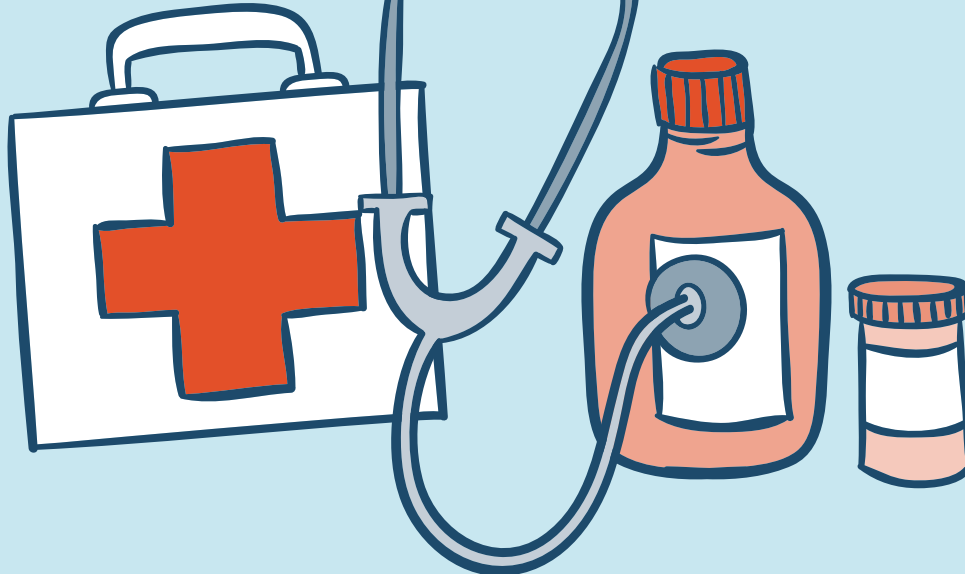
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# HEALTH AND SAFETY

Medical insurance – why you need it, and how to get it

*Updated by Andrew Killeen*

A trip to the doctor isn't cheap, especially to an international hospital. Healthcare costs can be a nightmare to settle if you're uninsured. In most expat remuneration packages, medical insurance is an attractive benefit. Students are usually covered through their institutions of higher learning, while younger students are included in their parents' insurance.

However, as the profile of Beijing's international community changes, with fewer traditional expats posted here by big companies, and more entrepreneurs paying expenses out of their own pockets, increasing numbers have no insurance at all. They gamble that they will stay healthy, or that they can pay for treatment if it's needed. But it's a risky gamble, particularly for families with children, and if you have a medical emergency, you don't need a financial emergency at the same time.

## Understanding Medical Insurance

Your employer may have an insurance scheme which you can join, or you may need to arrange your own. There are three essential questions to consider:

1. What do I need? This includes an assessment of your current health status and family health history.
2. What do I want? Dental, optical and maternity care are often separate from the main package.
3. What can I afford? This may be the most important consideration, as premium packages offering a full range of care at the best hospitals can run into thousands of dollars.

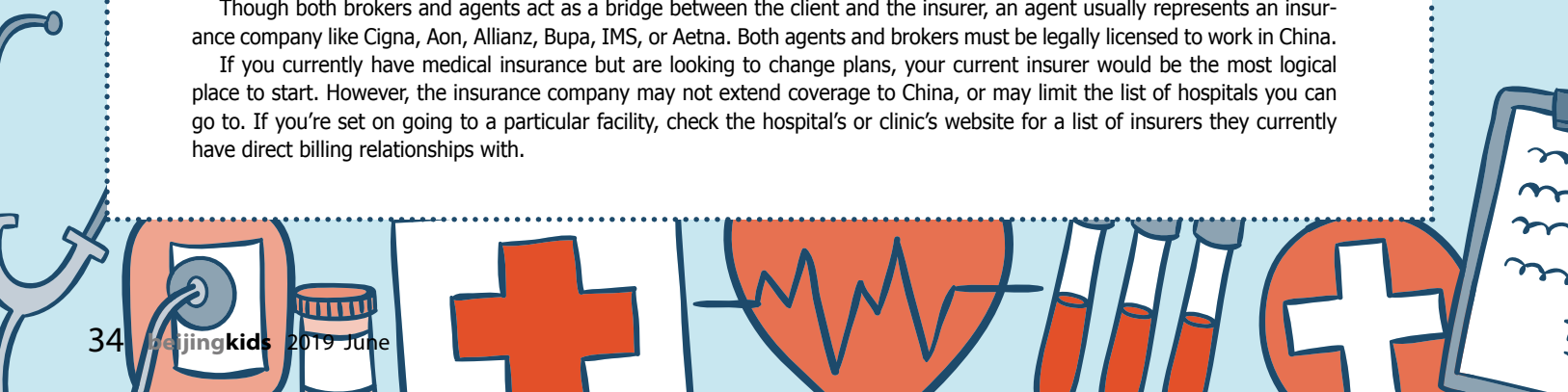
Hospitals require a Guarantee of Payment (GOP) from incoming patients and sometimes the insurance company needs to be notified to ensure that the insured gets the medical coverage they require, and the hospital knows that the bill will be settled. Brokers can act as an intermediary between the insurance company and insured.

## Evaluating Brokers and Insurance Companies

If you need to find your own insurance, a broker can help. Brokers are usually compensated through commissions taken from the premiums charged to policyholders (i.e. you) by the insurance company, so their services are free for clients. Be sure to seek out an advisor who specializes in medical insurance for expats living in China.

Though both brokers and agents act as a bridge between the client and the insurer, an agent usually represents an insurance company like Cigna, Aon, Allianz, Bupa, IMS, or Aetna. Both agents and brokers must be legally licensed to work in China.

If you currently have medical insurance but are looking to change plans, your current insurer would be the most logical place to start. However, the insurance company may not extend coverage to China, or may limit the list of hospitals you can go to. If you're set on going to a particular facility, check the hospital's or clinic's website for a list of insurers they currently have direct billing relationships with.





## FACTORS TO CONSIDER

We asked Jason Zhang, General Manager at Abacare Beijing, what was the most important factor for families newly arriving in Beijing to consider when looking at medical insurance.

"They should think about how long they expect to stay in China," he told us. "If they're only here for a short time, they need to check whether the plan is portable. If not, after maybe two years, they might have to do it all again. And there's a risk that, if any health problems have arisen during that time, that they won't be able to get insurance."

Emergency coverage – including inpatient and emergency evacuation – is another important benefit for families. Other considerations include vaccination coverage, outpatient coverage, annual health check coverage, and the hospitals covered by the plan. Here's a quick rundown:

### Annual Limit

An annual limit is the cap on benefits that your insurer will pay in a year. If the dollar amount of covered hospitalizations, treatments, and prescriptions exceeds the annual limit, you'll need to pay all healthcare costs for the rest of the year. Annual limits range from USD 100,000 to several million per year depending on the plan. The higher the limit, the more expensive the premium.

### Annual Rate Increases

Smaller and mid-range insurers with less financial stability usually have more erratic rate increases. Some even increase the premium in response to claims. Larger, more reputable insurers have more gradual increases, both annually and with age.

### Child Coverage

Medical care for children (including checkups and immunizations) is often included, but confirm this with your insurer. Families with older children who may or may not live at home as dependents may be included, but check if there are any age caps and details of the "global" part of "global insurance coverage" if your kids don't live in China.

### Discounts

Some insurers offer a family discount, which can be especially cost-effective for large families. No-claims discounts or first-year discounts are sometimes also offered, but keep in mind that a 10 percent first-year discount carries a 10 percent (plus age, plus annual) increase at renewal.

### Maternity Coverage

Couples planning to conceive should note that most insurers require a waiting period of 10-12 months of paid maternity insurance before pregnancy, birth, and/or newborn coverage kick in.

### Medical Evacuation

Evacuation is an essential consideration. Take a moment to think about the cost of out-of-pocket repatriation in case of an emergency. Evacuation would cover transport for essential surgery, medical treatments unavailable here, or a health epidemic. Check whether the plan covers return transportation to Beijing. Insurance for evacuation can be overkill if your primary policy covers most or all possibilities, so make sure it complements rather than overlaps existing coverage. Note that medical evacuation doesn't necessarily cover treatment in your home country or a third location like Hong Kong.

### Outpatient Treatment

Consider how often you or your dependents are likely to visit the doctor in a given year. Policies with high deductibles to minimize the cost of monthly premiums may be more cost-effective if you're not expecting to see a doctor more than twice a year.

### Pre-Existing Conditions

Some insurers will cover certain pre-existing medical conditions, but the trade-off is a higher premium. Coverage for high blood pressure or cholesterol may seem expensive, but keep in mind you'd also be covered for heart attacks.

### Travel Insurance

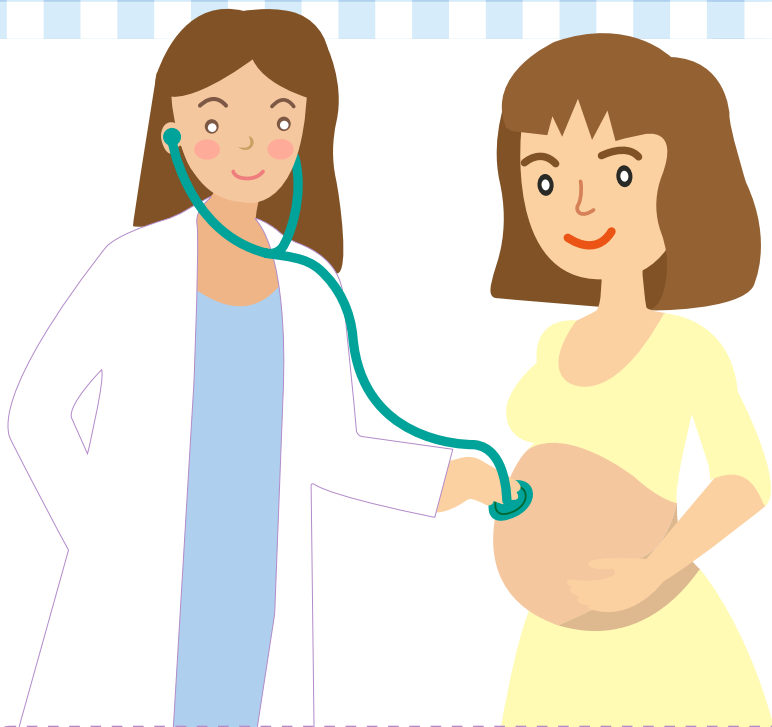
International travel goes hand-in-hand with living in Beijing; getting travel insurance is important as a backup on your rider. This is often available as a small package when you have visitors, either through your current insurance plan or through an international hospital or clinic membership. US citizens should note that many global policies don't cover treatment in the US or only cover it for a limited number of days (usually 30-45).

## OTHER

Additional considerations include coverage for children with special needs, deductible and copayment options, dental and visual insurance, coverage for second opinions on major treatments, and emergency protocols (e.g. whether pre-authorization is required).

In addition to health insurance, international hospitals such as Beijing United Family Hospital or primary care clinics such as Raffles Medical have memberships that offer patients additional discounts and extra services for an annual fee. These memberships can supplement company-sponsored insurance packages; they can also be appealing for expats who select packages based on low upfront fees, or those who must pay for treatment out-of-pocket.





# BEIJING WITH A BUMP

What to Expect When Expecting in Beijing

By Kipp Whittaker,

*text updated by Nicole Bonnah*

**F**inding out you're pregnant is both a magical and restless time for expectant couples. Throw in living and working in a foreign country and being far away from family, and you have yourself a whirlwind of prenatal anxiety about what the next nine months have in store for you and your family.

Hold it right there with the panic. First of all, there are a number of advantages to having a baby in Beijing and there are definite benefits in the maternity process that you won't find in other countries. There is much to look forward to that goes far beyond just the relinquishing of a seat on public transportation. For instance, you can usually expect at least three months of paid maternity leave during your recovery, most of the time at least two weeks of paternity leave, and even multiple lactation breaks at work to either go feed or pump milk for your baby. This, along with affordable help after the baby comes, makes that transition after your child's arrival much more manageable. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let's start from the beginning.

## Getting Started

Chances are if you are reading this with a bun in the oven, or a dumpling in your basket, or whatever metaphor takes your fancy, you have already made it through the initial consultation to find out if your pregnancy test was indeed accurate.

After you receive this confirmation it is time to start looking for a hospital which is best suited for your needs. The first factor you need to take into consideration is what you can afford, as this determines whether or not you should be looking at international or local care. We decided to look into both local and international hospitals. After looking over a number of hospitals online, we whittled it down to five options; three international and two local. Be sure to try and look into hospitals that will be able to meet your birth plan expectations. For example, if you would like to have the option of a water-birth, ask for details about the facilities and birth options available at the hospitals you are interested in. Just like when shopping around for a new home, go and visit hospitals, talk to staff, ask for a tour of the maternity ward, and don't

forget to follow your intuition.

When looking into local options bare in mind that this may come with its own set of challenges. This might include not having the luxury of a doctor or staff that speaks Chinese. However it can be done and because having a baby is a very common procedure, these hospitals are more than capable. Despite this, they operate very differently from what we are accustomed to in the west. I visited a number of reputable local hospitals, and it's important that you reflect upon what may be personal deal-breakers for you or compromises that you are willing to make. To avoid having to make compromises and in some cases sacrifices, many foreigners end up selecting a pricier international hospital.

That being said these hospitals are pricey for a reason. I gave birth at Beijing United Family hospital. Although one of the pricier on my list of hospitals, this choice offered comfortable accommodation, decent Chinese and foreign food options, English-speaking staff, and the necessary amount of privacy you would want during labor and recovery. In

fact, this kind of hospital is almost designed to look like a furnished hotel room, with private bathrooms and showers.

As mentioned a tour of the maternity facilities is key for an expectant couple. Usually, before you decide on which hospital you would like to continue at, there will be a comprehensive tour of the facilities so that you will see exactly what you are paying for. If you want the big day to be at one of these international hospitals but the monthly checkups at a local hospital, to save some money, this is also an option.

If you have insurance that covers maternity, then check if you have access to direct billing with your providers. If not, depending on your finances you may be able to pay for a maternity package up front, which cost you can later claim through your insurers. Paying for each prenatal hospital visit separately will be more costly than buying a maternity package and remember that your newborn baby's vaccinations are unlikely to be covered by your insurance providers. Below you will find a list of popular hospitals.



**Beijing United Family Hospital**

This is likely the most luxurious option in Beijing's birthing scene. With 20 years of service in Beijing and six other locations in China, they also have Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation, which is a fancy way of saying that they are as good as it gets.

• Address: 2 Jiangtai Road, Chaoyang District. 朝阳区将台路2号 (5927 7000)

**Amcare Women's and Children's Specialized Health**

Operating in Beijing for 11 years, this hospital chain focused on women's and children's health currently has branches in four cities and offers excellent, modern facilities. This is a popular option due to the sheer convenience of their services, with three locations in Beijing alone.

• Lido Address: 9 Fangyuan Xilu, Chaoyang District. 朝阳区芳园西路9号 (6434 2399)

• Yayuncun Address: Bldg 5 Anhui Beili Yiyuan Chaoyang District. 朝阳区朝阳区安慧北里逸园5号楼 (400 100 0016)

• Wanliu Address: 7 Wanliu Zhonglu, Haidian District. 海淀区万柳中路7号 (400 100 0016)

**Oasis International Hospital**

First opened in 2012, and located near 798, this is a convenient medical center for families in the Wangjing or Shunyi areas. Also with JCI accreditation, you can expect top-notch modern facilities, with homelike private rooms and delivery suites that offer comfort, safety, and privacy for patients and their guests.

• Address: 9 Jiuxianqiao North Road, Chaoyang District. 朝阳区酒仙桥北路9号 (400 876 2747)

**What's in a Package**

The package usually adds up to a total of 13 visits including all of the necessary laboratory tests, consultations, and physical examinations. If you can't afford the full 13, there are also cheaper options consisting of five or ten visits. These consultations and exams usually begin after week 14 and continue in varying degrees of frequency throughout the term.

On every visit, you will receive a series of tests including but not limited to urine and blood analysis, a 15-minute fetal Doppler monitoring session of your baby's heartbeat, and a checkup from a physician, who usually explains some of the findings from your tests. The doctor will also provide prenatal counseling and general healthcare knowledge to make sure that you are making healthy decisions while your baby comes to term. Finally, the climax of your visit will no doubt be the obstetric ultrasound. These will usually take place at every other visit.

One of the most exciting parts of the prenatal process is the discovery of the baby's sex. This is important for many families as it determines everything from the name to the color scheme of the bedroom or wardrobe. This being said, it isn't always possible to gain this knowledge at a public Chinese hospital as it is technically against the law. Most of our prenatal examinations took place at a Chinese International Hospital. We planned to reveal the sex of our baby at our gender reveal and baby shower party. We had asked for our doctor to note down the sex of the baby and to deliver it to us in a sealed envelope. In what was a hilarious exchange in the doctor's office, my husband and I were told quite bluntly that we were having a boy. The sentiment of what we were trying to do was lost somewhere in translation. More often than not for foreign couples at international hospitals, they will make an exception, so you can ask a little question like "should we buy pants or dresses," and they will likely let you know.

Around the 34th week, you will also go through a mandatory birth rehearsal so that you are aware of the process of admitting yourself to the room and making sure that the hospital is ready for your arrival. I had originally planned a home-water-birth, so there was no rehearsal for me but the show must go on. Especially if you are nine centimeters dilated thirty minutes after having your waters break. If you do happen to get that all important rehearsal day in, it will give you the opportunity to have one last tour of the facilities so that you aren't freaking out when the time comes to welcoming your little human to the world.

**Not so Laborious Maternity Vocab**

Finally, we've compiled a list of necessary terms, that will hopefully make things a tad easier in days leading up to and on the big day itself.

**Birth** – 出生 [chūshēng]

— **Canal** – 产道 [chǎndào]

— **Plan** – 分娩计划 [fēnjiǎn jìhuà]

**Breastfeed** – 喂奶 [wèinǎi]

**Breast Milk** – 母乳 [mǔrǔ]

**Breast Pump** – 吸奶器 [xīnǎiqì]

**Cesarean/C-section** – 剖腹产 [pōufùchǎn] / 剖腹产术 [pōufùchǎn shù]

**Circumcision** – 割礼 [gēlǐ] / 包皮环切 [bāopí huánqiē]

**Crowning** – 儿头初露 [értóu chūlù]

**Deliver (baby) Vaginally** – 顺产

[shùncǎn] / 自己生 [zìjǐ shēng] (common language)

**Doctor** – 医生 [yīshēng] / 大夫 [dàifu]

**Due date** – 预产期 [yùchǎnqī]

**Emergency** – 急诊 [jízhěn]

**Epidural** – 硬膜外麻醉 [yìng mó wài má zuì]

**Exam/Check-up** – 检查 [jiǎnchá]

**Fetus (8 weeks – 40+ weeks)** – 胎儿 [tāi'ér]

**Formula (Milk Supplement for Babies)** – 配方奶粉 [pèifāngnǎifěn]

**Give Birth (to a child)** – 生孩子 [shēng hái] / 生子 [shēng zǐ]

**Hospital** – 医院 [yīyuàn]

**Morning Sickness** – 晨吐 [chén tǔ]

**Movement (of baby)** – 胎动 [tāidòng]

**Natural Delivery; no complications** – 顺产 [shùncǎn]

**Normal (test result, etc...)** – 正常 [zhèngcháng]

**Nurse** – 护士 [hùshi]

**Obstetrical Ward/Maternity Ward** – 产科病房 [chǎnkē bīngfáng]

**Pregnancy test (noun)** – 试孕纸 [shìyùnzhi]

**Pregnancy test (verb)** – 怀孕试验 [huáiyùn shìyàn]

**Pregnant** – 怀孕 [huáiyùn]

**Premature Labor** – 早产 [zǎochǎn]

**Ultrasound** – B超 [Bchāo] (common) / 超声波 [chāoshēngbō] (formal)

**Water Broke; Amniotic Fluid/Water (to naturally break)** – 羊水破了 [yángshuǐ pòle]

# STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE

Knowing your legal rights and responsibilities,  
and what to do when things go wrong

By Annie Wang, Kipp Whittaker, Andrew Killeen

**I**gnorance of the law is no excuse in China, as in most countries. Here are some of the crucial rules that one should know (and not break), the rights that you have as a foreigner residing in Beijing, and other important information that you will need to navigate this city safely and avoid legal entanglements.

## Registration

Foreigners must register their presence with the local police regardless of length of stay. Most hotels will automatically register their guests, while other places might require you to register at a place near where you are staying. If you are moving to a new neighborhood, or just moved in from outside of China, you must register at your local Public Security Bureau within 24 hours of your arrival. Each time you exit and enter the country on a valid visa, you must register within 24 hours at the police station.

## Expired Visas

Staying in China on an expired visa can lead to deportation or being held indefinitely in a foreigners' detention center while your deportation is being arranged. If your visa is about to expire you can apply for an extension at the PSB Exit and Entry Administration Office

## Working on the Wrong Visa

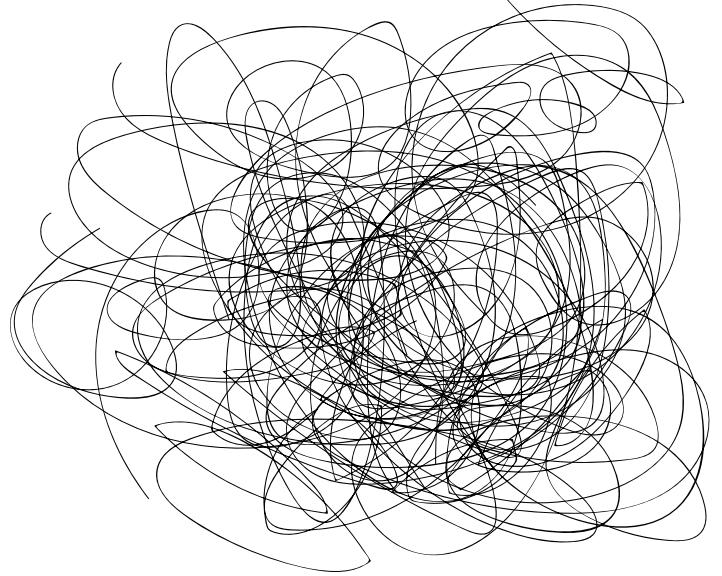
Working on any visa other than a Z or R visa is illegal. It's also illegal to work for any company other than the one which arranged your visa.

## Driving

In order to drive a car in Beijing, you'll need to pass a test here; an international driving license is not recognized. License plates which allow you to drive in central Beijing are strictly rationed, and allocated by lottery. Unless you have an urgent need to drive, you may find that Didi, taxis, and the city's extensive public transport network are a better way of getting around. E-bikes are another convenient mode of transport, but there is currently a clampdown on bikes without pedals which are capable of speeds of over 20kph. They need to be registered at the Transportation Bureau and have number plates, and even this is a temporary measure; the expectation is that in two years' time these bikes will be treated the same as motorbikes.

## Drugs

In recent years there has been a stringent enforcement of China's drug laws, with foreigners particularly targeted. This has included raiding bars and clubs and requiring all customers to take an on-the-spot urine test. Failing the test means immediate deportation with no appeal.



## Common Scams

Violent street crime is almost unknown in Beijing. However there are a couple of notorious scams often perpetrated against foreigners.

### The Teahouse Scam

You are approached by a friendly, attractive young person who engages you in conversation, because they say they want to improve their English. They will invite you to a nearby teahouse or restaurant so that you can experience traditional Chinese cuisine and culture. Once you have been served, they will disappear, leaving you with a substantial check out of all proportion to the food and drink you've been given. Police are unlikely to be sympathetic, and you will have to pay up to extricate yourself.

### Fake Road Accidents

In the event of a road accident, all parties are supposed to wait for the police to sort it out. However, if a foreigner is involved, it's not unusual for a local to exaggerate their injuries and call on passers-by to take their side. What they are after, of course, is money. (Videos circulate on social media showing people deliberately walking into cars before falling spectacularly to the ground.) The police will often see themselves as mediators, sorting a payment so that everyone can get on with their day. Protesting your innocence may be less effective than haggling the smallest amount of money you can get away with (though you should never admit responsibility and leave yourself open to legal action.)



## Know Your Rights

### Maternity and Paternity Leave

Expectant foreign mothers and fathers are permitted a certain number of months of maternity/paternity leave. In 2016, maternity leave increased from 98 days to 128 days. At least 15 days of maternity leave is permitted for pregnancies less than 4 months that were aborted. At least six weeks of maternity leave is permitted for pregnancies lasting over four months that were aborted or resulted in miscarriage. Mothers on maternity leave will also either receive a maternity leave stipend or their usual salary. Fathers are permitted up to 15 days of paternity leave.

### Marriage Leave

Unfortunately, the seven-day marriage leave that was once afforded to new couples was withdrawn in 2016. New couples are no longer guaranteed this seven-day leave, and companies that still award it do so out of tradition.

### Prenatal Checkups

Beginning at 12 weeks, pregnant workers are entitled to paid leave for these checkups. The checkups will also be recorded in a pregnancy handbook given by the local Community Health Service Center. As with maternity leave, these policies can differ across China so be sure to look at the policy specific to your location.

### Breastfeeding

Female employees are permitted one hour of breastfeeding time during every working day for a one-year breastfeeding period. It is common practice for employers to ask women to work the usual eight-hour workday and accumulate the one hour towards their vacation time. Women are also permitted to breastfeed in public without covering up.

### Terminating Contracts of Pregnant Workers

It is illegal to terminate the contract of a pregnant worker during her pregnancy, maternity leave, or breastfeeding period (which lasts until the infant is one year old). If a worker becomes pregnant during her contract and that contract ends during her pregnancy, the contract will be automatically extended until the end of the breastfeeding period.

### Withdrawing Social Security Upon Leaving

All foreign workers are required to contribute to social security in China. If you have contributed to a pension or social security fund in China for 15 years or more, you qualify for social security benefits. Foreigners that leave China before this 15-year period has been reached are entitled to recoup the money they have contributed to social security. In order to begin the process of withdrawing money, you must first be officially terminated from your place of employment in China. Following the termination, you should speak with your company about the appropriate procedures.

### Lease Termination

A landlord that wishes to prematurely terminate the lease agreement must pay double the down-payment (usually one month's rent) and double the security deposit (usually two to three month's rent). This is roughly eight-months of rent. Tenants that prematurely terminate the lease agreement forfeit both the down-payment and the security deposit.

## In Case of Emergencies Theft/Missing Persons

*Though Beijing is a very safe city, petty theft can be common.*

### Passports

If you lose your passport, report the theft at both the police station and the division of Exit/Entry Administration at the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau (or at the Exit/Entry department of the Public Security Bureau branch nearest to where the passport was lost). A new passport can be acquired at your embassy or consulate using the Confirmation of Passport Loss document. Don't forget to apply for a new visa!

### Stolen Property

In the event that your property is stolen, call the police on 110 and report the theft immediately. Then wait for the police to arrive and cooperate with them, which may include going to the station. If your Mandarin is not good, you may need a Chinese friend to go with you.

### Missing Persons

A missing persons' report can be filed 48 hours after that persons' disappearance. The report can be filed both at your country's embassy location in Beijing or at the local police department.

### Embassies

You should locate the embassy nearest to your residence before arriving, and keep their contact information with you. Embassies often send out alerts or other important information that their citizens should know about while in Beijing. At the embassy, you can file a missing persons report and may be able to vote in your home country's elections.

## Emergency Numbers

Fire: 119

Police (Phone): 110

Police (Text): 12110

Police (English Emergency Hotline): 6525 5486

Ambulance (Chinese): 120

Ambulance (English) 999

Traffic Accidents: 122

Foreign Emergency Services: 6525 5486

Beijing Chaoyang District Center for Disease Control and Prevention: 6777 3512

United Family Hospital Emergency Services: 5927 7120

International SOS Clinic and Emergency Services: 6462 9112

Beijing International SOS Office: 6462 9199

Beijing International SOS Assistance Center: 6462 9100

# IF YOU CAN'T HANDLE ME AT MY **WORST**, YOU DON'T DESERVE ME AT MY **BEST**

We asked Beijing's international families to tell us the best and worst things about living in the capital

By Andrew Killeen

**W**hen my family first arrived in Beijing, we had never even visited China before. To say we experienced culture shock would be an understatement. "It's like we've landed on Mars," my wife said, as we encountered toxic air, baffling behaviors, and signs we couldn't read. Did we adapt? Well, four years down the line, we still haven't gone home!

Life in Beijing can be tough, but it can also be thrilling, with opportunities to discover and learn which you won't find anywhere else on the planet. We took to WeChat, the ubiquitous social media app, and asked international families to tell us the best and worst things about bringing up kids in China's capital.

## Safety

**"Beijing is great because it's such a safe place to grow up in."**

**"Best is I don't have to worry about gun violence."**

Of course no city is completely safe, and you always need to keep your street smarts about you. However for a metropolis of its size, Beijing is remarkably free of violence and crime. Private gun ownership is virtually non-existent, and people walk the streets at all hours of the night confident that they will remain unmolested. This makes the city a reassuring place to bring up a family.

## Diversity

**"Best is that there's no 'one way' of doing it, like you would have at home, because Beijing is a melting pot of different cultures."**

Living in Beijing will expand your children's cultural horizons, and not just by introducing them to China's ancient civilization. With embassies from every nation based here, the international community in Beijing includes people from all round the world, and your child will study and play with friends from many different cultures and backgrounds.

You can also enjoy food from every corner of the globe, as Beijing's booming restaurant scene offers cuisines from Georgia to Peru. And as befits a world city, there are amazing touring musicians and art exhibitions.

With the city's extremes of climate, people are expected to dress for comfort, and there's a remarkably easy-going approach to fashion. If you want to go to the supermarket in your pyjamas or in a ballgown and high heels, no one is going to judge you. This diversity also means a wide range of ideas on parenting: debate on the best way to educate, feed, and protect our children is lively, and you will find a community to support your choices.



### Costs: food, shopping, transport

It is possible to live day-to-day very cheaply in Beijing. Western food can be expensive, but if you learn to love Chinese cuisines, you can eat a wide array of delicious dishes for very little. Similarly, if you avoid imported goods at the supermarkets and buy local ingredients from local markets, food need not be expensive. Getting around the city can be inexpensive too. Didi is relatively cheap, and Beijing's metro system costs far less than those of western cities.

### Opportunity to travel and learn

**"Best: the chance for the children to learn Mandarin effortlessly (and with a Beijing accent too!)"**

**"Positive: how many different places you can get to quickly (both around China and Asia)."**

Since moving to Beijing, my children have ridden horses across the Mongolian steppes, dived among tropical reefs, and crossed a "nightingale walk" in a samurai castle: all experiences which would have been out of our reach had we stayed in England. Exploring China is easy too, thanks to the country's extensive, efficient network of high-speed railways. Perhaps even more important for our children's future is the opportunity to learn Chinese, a language which will no doubt be of global significance in the coming century. And Beijing is one of the best places to learn it. Modern standard Chinese, or Putonghua, is based on the north-eastern dialect, so your kids will be picking up the proper pronunciation and vocabulary (for the most part at least!)

### Taobao and kuaidi

**"These days, it's really easy to get all of the imported products needed for baby."**

**"Regarding baby products, there are fakes on Taobao. Be careful."**

China is the manufacturing center of the world, and in the fiercely competitive online marketplace which is Taobao, you can find an astonishing range of products at bargain prices. The website can be intimidating if you're new to China, and there are services such as Baopals which will help you with it for a small fee. But it's much more fun to fire up Baidu Fanyi (or other online translators) and learn to navigate it yourself.

As well as locally-made goods, Taobao offers imported products, including baby milk and diapers. However, some care is recommended when buying these products, as fakes are still available. You may also find that for genuinely imported items you need to upload a Chinese ID to the system... here, as so often, a Chinese friend can be helpful.

Your purchases are whisked to your door by the city's highly efficient kuaidi system. The official China Post system is notoriously unreliable, with a distinctly Communist approach to customer service. But these little three-wheel vans are the lifeblood of the city. You can also access a wide range of food deliveries from your phone.

### Attitude to children

There's a popular saying: "it takes a village to raise a child." In Beijing you can see that principle in action. Everyone smiles at children, particularly younger kids. Normally surly Beijingers become kind and patient when there's a child involved; if your little one is crying or having a tantrum, you won't generally find the kind of tutting and disapproval which you might encounter back home.

There is a downside to this though. You may be pestered by people wanting to take pictures of or with your children, or just filming them surreptitiously from a distance. This is not so common in the city itself, where foreigners are less of a novelty, but the further you travel from the center, the more you'll be treated like celebrities. However fun and flattering this is at first, it gets old pretty quickly.



## Pollution

This is always the number one complaint in the city's parenting forums. However it must be pointed out that the air in Beijing has improved enormously in the last few years. It is no longer among the world's top 100 most polluted cities, and levels of PM2.5 (particles smaller than 2.5 micrometers, considered the most dangerous to health) have fallen 35 percent. Despite this ongoing improvement, a few sensible precautions are required, particularly with kids around. Air filters inside your house, masks for the worst days, and opening the windows to make the most of the good days all help to keep those growing lungs healthy.

## Being a long way from family

This is perhaps the hardest aspect of the adventure for many parents. Without our extended family, their practical help, emotional support, and of course babysitting, bringing up kids can be more challenging. Modern technology makes it easier, as we can make video calls to stay in touch with our loved ones, and hiring help with the cleaning and childcare is still affordable for many (although ayis' salary expectations are rising as China becomes more prosperous.) Perhaps more important though is building a community here in Beijing. WeChat can be a lifesaver, allowing people easily to find like-minded souls and develop friendships and support networks. And of course we at *beijingkids* are always here at hand, with advice, information, and humor, so that you can make the most of the amazing opportunities in this unique, infuriating, and exhilarating city.

## Dirt and hygiene

***"I will never, ever get used to people spitting on the streets."***

In fact, the sidewalks of Beijing are generally clean; you rarely go more than half a mile without encountering a streetsweeper with a broom. And the city is mostly free of the sort of rat infestation which plagues places like Delhi or Jakarta (or, for that matter, London). However, some of the habits of older Beijingers can be hard to take for foreigners. Noisy spitting in public is a constant bugbear, as is allowing small children to use the street as a public toilet. These are elements of daily life which just have to be tolerated, and which are rapidly disappearing among the younger generations.

The city's actual public toilets are plentiful, clean, and well looked after, a legacy of the time when most homes had no indoor plumbing. Westerners will often find the lack of privacy shocking though, and the squat toilet, while actually better for you, takes some mastering for those not brought up to it. And however thoroughly cleaned they may be, the baffling failure to adopt the S-bend means that an unpleasant odor is always lingering.



## Etiquette

***"Worst: general lack of manners..."***

Humans did not evolve to live in overcrowded cities, and tend to adopt survival mechanisms. You can, like the people of Tokyo, develop a highly formal system of manners, or like New Yorkers, a brash, in-your-face aggression. Beijingers have opted for pretending other people don't exist.

Not letting people out of an elevator or subway car before getting on themselves, blocking an escalator or doorway, letting a door slam in your face... these behaviors can seem incredibly rude and inconsiderate to those brought up with a different etiquette. And for parents, it presents the challenge of raising kids to feel confident in the city, without them adopting some of the more abrasive aspects of Beijing manners.

The value of "face" in Chinese society also should not be underestimated. People may helpfully point you in the wrong direction rather than admit to not knowing the way, and often will simply ignore you if they feel that their English may be tested. Expect to see shop assistants vanishing into back rooms at your approach, and not emerging till you've gone. This can though play to your advantage if you need to "tingbudong" your way out of an awkward situation by pretending not to understand.

## Rent and school fees

***"Negatives - school fees, definitely."***

Beijing has world-class international schools, with facilities to match. However the fees also reflect their high standards, being among the most expensive in the world. If you're sent here by your employer, you should ensure this forms part of your package. If not, it's worth looking into scholarships, or even just haggling. But the best costs.

Rents in Beijing are outrageous, and the city's landlords notorious. See page 28 for help with navigating the rental scene.

## Traffic

***"Must add drivers to the worst list... too often I'm praying for my children's or my life..."***

***"I'm a dad with a double stroller, so sometimes the random parking on pavements can be jarring to get through, without having to walk on the roadside and then back on the pavement again."***

Beijing transformed in a couple of generations from a city of bicycles, to one where everyone seems to own an enormous SUV. While the air is improving, the traffic seems to be getting worse; and the recent measures to clamp down on e-bikes will hardly aid the situation. Although it must be said that e-bikes are a significant hazard in themselves, riding on sidewalks, in the dark with no lights, and often with the rider more interested in their cellphone than the road ahead.

The ever-expanding metro network certainly does help, though some lines are unpleasantly crowded at peak times. And with the rental bike wars ending, they may become a positive feature of the city's landscape instead of a blockade at the entrance to subway stations. Authorities have finally begun issuing parking tickets too. But when traveling by car, you can expect to spend a lot of time sitting in jams. Bring something to keep the kids entertained.





# HELP IS ON HAND

Finding and keeping an ayi in Beijing

*Text updated by Nicole Bonnah*

**M**y ayi has been with my family since our little one turned eight-weeks-old. Hiring an Ayi (nanny or au pair) can be an affordable luxury that can provide invaluable domestic help for a family welcoming a newborn, large families needing extra assistance, or to support your household with light ad hoc duties, such as cooking or cleaning a few times a week.

An ayis services can be liberating for new parents and those with limited mobility. Many families develop a bond with their ayi beyond that of employer and employee; time and time again, long-term expats have told us that the hardest part of leaving Beijing was separating from their ayi.

When welcoming a newborn into the family, a support network made up of immediate and distant family members, may not be available to you while living abroad. I was privileged to have my mother come and stay with my family for the first three months of my little one's life, however, I knew that for my plan to continue working and studying, I would need an extra hand around the house to take over the domestic support my mom gave during her stay with us.

I would recommend starting the search for an ayi well in advance, particularly if you are hiring one to take care of a newborn or small children. I started searching and interviewing two months in advance of when I wanted my ayi to start working. If you decide to interview this much in advance, make sure to check the start-date availability of the ayi and be transparent about when the position would be offered should they be successful.

Beyond domestic chores, ayis can also soften the effects of culture shock by helping families navigate some of the more challenging aspects of living in Beijing: dealing with repairmen, tracking down missing parcels, sourcing hard-to-find ingredients, and more.

While a company often assigns personal drivers to executives, the family will almost always hire ayis, either directly or through an agency. The interview is a crucial part of the process, so it is a good idea to ask someone to act as a translator so that both you and the prospective ayi are clear about expectations and benefits. I couldn't find someone to translate for me in time for my interview with my ayi, however it's amazing how far you can get just by using WeChat or any online translation resource.

In general, June and December are the best times to look for domestic help because many employment contracts are up around then. The best way to start your search is through word-of-mouth. Parent-focused WeChat groups such as Beijing Ayis can be wonderful resources for sharing referrals and seeking out recommendations. This is exactly how I found my ayi. Finding an ayi with the kinds of qualifications needed to serve an expat family – the ability to work full-time, cook, clean, take care of children and pets, and perhaps speak basic English – can be difficult, so getting in touch with other parents can save considerable time.

You can also use a whole array of other expat forums and online resources, such as *the Beijinger*, *beijingkids*, Beijing Mamas, and Beijing Exchange. Families leaving Beijing often post advertisements vouching

PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK



for their ayi while others post on behalf of ayis looking for additional work. These forums are also a valuable source of information on the benchmark for typical working hours, average pay, overtime rates (if any), and the range of duties ayis can be expected to perform.

Online classifieds are also a research avenue, but ads are often posted by ayi recruitment agencies and will require more sifting through. The building and compound management office can sometimes provide leads or recommendations for ayis that residents have employed in the past. Also, ayis themselves often leave advertisements on billboards at businesses often frequented by expats, such as April Gourmet or Jenny Lou's.

Once you have a list of applicants, start by checking their references. Do not hesitate to contact previous employers and ask as many questions as necessary; the ayi will have a significant place in your family's life, so find out exactly what you want to know. Determine the qualifications that are most important to you and ask about the ayi's experience and performance in these areas. If you need help with childcare, a history of looking after expat kids is a must. If you need someone to do the groceries and cook, a repertoire that goes beyond simple Chinese dishes might also be beneficial.

Once it is time to interview prospective ayis, be candid, clear, and thorough. There is no such thing as excessively going the extra mile to vet a potential ayi. I went to the extent of providing a translated a PDF file containing a list of expectations, requirements, and information about my newborn to be read during the three-day trial I arranged. It is perfectly reasonable to ask the prospective ayi to go through a trial, such as preparing a meal or cleaning and this along with the prepared document gave the ayi an opportunity to think about if my family and this particular role was for her and gave me peace of mind that I had been as transparent as possible about my expectations.

The interview will also provide a good opportunity to see how much English the applicant speaks, but bare in mind that an English speaking ayi usually comes at a higher cost. If you arrange a trial it is customary to pay the applicant a day rate, which you should try and determine ahead of time.

### What About Ayi Agencies?

If you are short on time, an ayi agency can significantly simplify the process of finding domestic help, but this requires a careful evaluation of the agency first. Your company may be able to recommend a vetted agency.

However, keep in mind that using an agency will likely be more expensive and possibly carry higher ayi wages, though it is much simpler to change ayis if you are not satisfied with the first one. Agencies usually require a membership or management fee, but the monthly wage should go directly to the ayi. Make sure to clarify how the fees are split between the agency and the ayi. Agency websites are a great resource for pay ranges, which are clearly outlined according to qualifications, language ability, hours, and other criteria.

Going through an agency can take some of the guesswork out of the process, with background checks, health checks, and training sometimes included. During the interview stage, use your own translator rather than one provided by the agency. Monthly wages for a full-time, English-speaking ayi range from RMB 5,000-8,000.

### Establishing Expectations

Besides setting expectations for everyday tasks, it is crucial to discuss holiday policies during the interview stage. When negotiating a price make sure that you come to a definitive agreement regarding salary, hourly rates for overtime, sick leave, and holiday. If you go through an agency, it is possible they have their own policies concerning holiday leave and pay.

### Questions to consider include

- How much time will the ayi have off for Spring Festival and other national holidays?
- Will they receive a guaranteed bonus (often referred to as a "13th-month bonus")? Many ayis will expect this, but don't feel obligated and make it clear if this will not be offered
- Will the ayi receive full salary while you are away on vacation?
- Will you need the ayi to travel with you, including out of the country?

Different ayis have different strengths and experiences. Expect to spend some time showing them what "clean" means to you. At the beginning, demonstrate down to the cleaning product how you would like cleaning tasks to be done, including laundry, ironing, and tidying.

If you are interested in a particular posting or referral, contact the candidate immediately; good ayis are always in demand. Remember, if you're happy, your ayi is happy, and more importantly your little one is happy, that's all that really matters. It may take several tries to get it right, but putting in the effort to find and train your ayi will benefit all those concerned.

### Keeping Your Ayi

Consider her workload and pay her accordingly. If you have six kids, make sure to pay her extra, and always make sure she is happy with her position. Be the employee you would want to work for, and don't advertise the fact you have a great ayi to others.

## Ayi Checklist

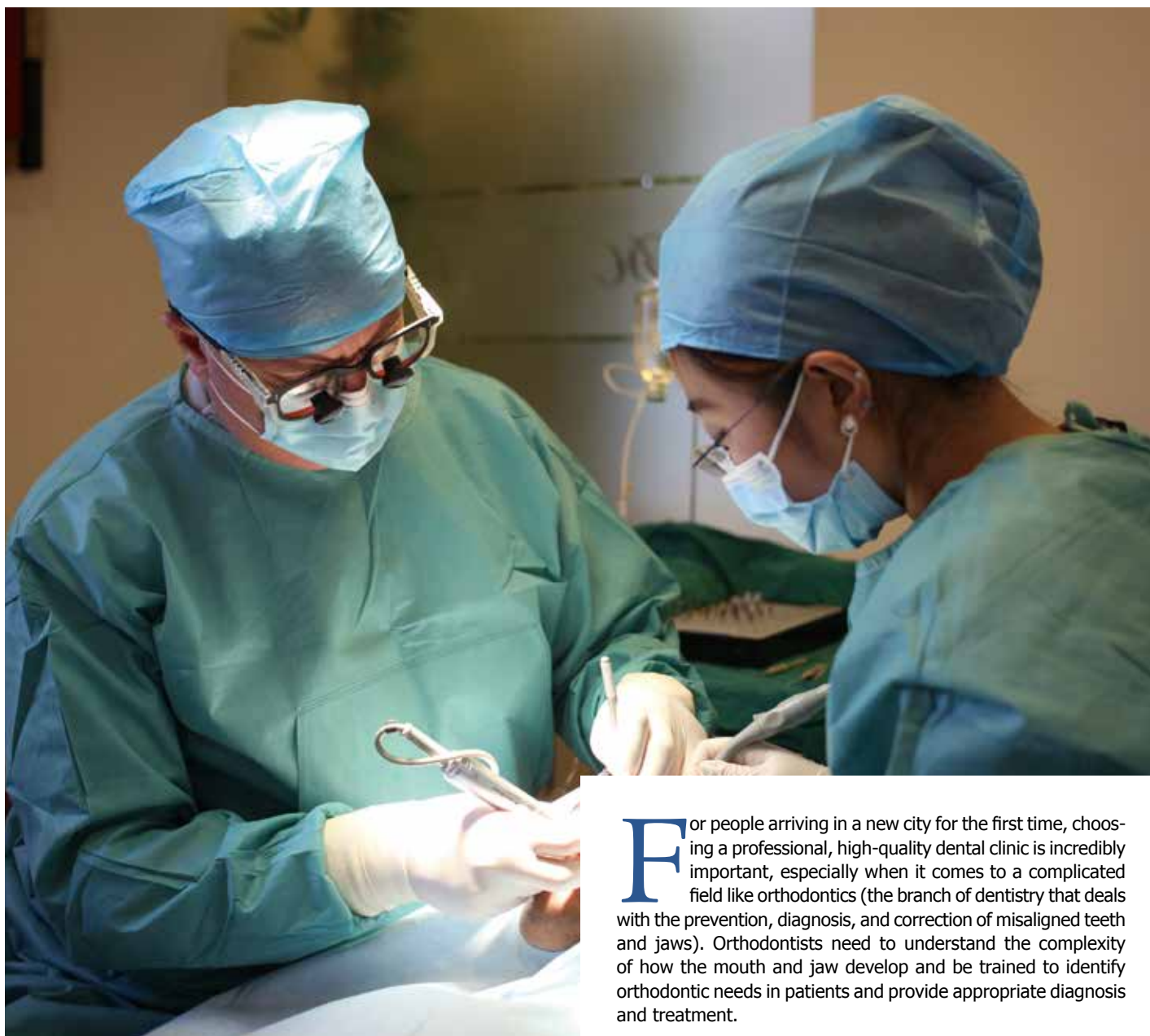
### Questions to consider when hiring an ayi

- ☐ Does she speak English? If so, how well?
- ☐ Do you want her to speak English with your children or help them improve their Mandarin?
- ☐ Has she worked for expat families before? If so, were their customs and background similar to yours?
- ☐ Has she undergone a recent health check? If not, you may want to insist she does so, although you would have to cover the cost.
- ☐ Is she certified in CPR and first aid?
- ☐ How old were the children she has cared for in the past?
- ☐ Does she have any experience caring for babies?
- ☐ Is she available for babysitting and/or on weekends?
- ☐ Does she have any experience looking after pets? Does she have any allergies?
- ☐ Do you need her to cook? Do you want her to cook western food?
- ☐ Do you want a live-in ayi? If so, what are her needs and can you accommodate them?
- ☐ Does she live close by? This can affect her availability, should you need her for emergencies or occasional babysitting duties.
- ☐ Do you want a trial period? This can range from three weeks and upwards of three months.
- ☐ If the ayi is to have keys to your house, is she willing to give you a photocopy of her Chinese ID card?

# Creating Healthy, Beautiful Smiles

IDC Welcomes American Board Certified  
Orthodontist Dr. Jeong Rae Cho

*By Robynne Tindall*



For people arriving in a new city for the first time, choosing a professional, high-quality dental clinic is incredibly important, especially when it comes to a complicated field like orthodontics (the branch of dentistry that deals with the prevention, diagnosis, and correction of misaligned teeth and jaws). Orthodontists need to understand the complexity of how the mouth and jaw develop and be trained to identify orthodontic needs in patients and provide appropriate diagnosis and treatment.

PHOTOS: IDC



Dr. Jaclyn Dam-Laute, CEO and chief specialist at IDC Dental, has more than 25 years of experience and has spent more than 16 of those years in Beijing, so she is well positioned to make decisions in response to the changing dental and orthodontic needs of the market. "There is a growing demand for orthodontics procedures among our patients," she says. "I always want to introduce world-class services at our clinic and have recently made the decision to bring in experienced orthodontist Dr. Jeong Rae Cho, the only American Board of Orthodontists certified doctor in Beijing. Dr. Cho represents our commitment to world-class quality."

Dr. Cho became a board-certified orthodontist in 2014. Just a year later, he was selected as one of the few orthodontists in the country to present his clinical cases internationally at the 2015 American Association of Orthodontists annual conference. "[Being invited to the conference] instilled in me a sense of gratitude and commitment to excellence from the very beginning of my career as an orthodontist," he says with pride.

Working with a diverse group of patients in the US, especially in New York, Dr. Cho quickly learned that it is essential

to offer the highest level of service and care to any patient that walks into the clinic, no matter how unique their dental needs. A great clinic like IDC Dental should give each patient as much information as possible about their treatment so that they can make informed decisions, something that can also help to ease any feelings of anxiety. "Coming to see the dentist is not an isolated experience that happens occasionally. It should be a lifelong relationship," he says.

Dr. Cho is also careful to stay on top of the latest developments in dentistry so that he can pass them on to his patients. "The next phase of orthodontics will incorporate innovative approaches and technologies such as clear aligners, 3D scanning, and 3D diagnosis and treatment," he outlines. This kind of innovation matches Dr. Dam-Laute's commitment to leading the dental industry in China from the front. "As Chinese society has become more affluent, the demand for elective dental care such as orthodontics has increased rapidly," Dr. Dam-Laute says. "We want patients who are having this kind of treatment for the first time to know that they are in good hands. As Dr. Cho concludes, "It is an honor and a privilege to be able to take someone's smile from ordinary to extraordinary."



**IDC** IDC Dental 口腔

International Standards  
国际水准

Dedicated Professionals  
专业服务

Compassionate Care  
人文关怀

*Beautifying Beijing One Smile at A Time*



**International Team of Doctors from USA, China, Korea, Brazil and Ukraine**

USA Board Certified Orthodontist  
USA Invisalign Certified  
Doctors & Clinic  
USA Progressive Orthodontics  
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2/F Richmond Park Clubhouse, Fangyuan Nanli, Chaoyang District

# HELLO, NEIGHBOR!

The best Beijing tips for great neighbor relations

By Vanessa Jencks

**A**s newcomers settle into their homes everywhere in Beijing this summer, one of the first experiences to seek out should be a walk into your neighborhood's courtyard on a clear, clean summer evening. You'll find grandmothers in loafers pushing babies around in strollers, toddlers in pigtails babbling and pointing at different insects, middle-aged women practicing their dance routines to blaring music, rowdy boys chasing each other on bikes, and old men setting up tables and stools for their favorite games.

These neighbors are the pulse of your community, and the first famous saying that should be taken to heart is 远亲不如近邻 (yuǎn qīn bù rú jìn lín). Translated into "neighbors are dearer than distant relatives," this phrase will hopefully characterize this chapter of your life dedicated to China.

If you happen to be from North America, Australia, or the UK, you might want to take particular note to this article, as our societies have slowly lost the art of neighborliness. The Pew Research Center conducted a study in 2010 that revealed nearly half of Americans didn't know their neighbors. Later research conducted by OnePoll revealed even more than half of American millennials cite busyness as the reason they have never spoken to neighbors, and instead sought out community online rather than next-door. This is despite their confession that they secretly crave greater local community involvement.

UK adults fared slightly better than Americans in having spoken to neighbors, though the relationships are mostly cold, keeping the other at arm's length, with common knowledge such as full name, number of



children, occupation, even length of living next door, often being basic topics which are never discussed (Churchill Home Insurance, 2017). And Australians perhaps have fared the worse, or perhaps have proven to be the most honest on their surveys, with the majority admitting to avoiding contact with those next door (Realestate.com.au, 2017).

But expats who live in Beijing will find that having good neighbor relations are essential to surviving in the first months and years, and these relationships will even be foundations for longer stays in the country.

Indian national Sarika Dhani has lived in Beijing for six years and feels particularly lucky to have found her current next-door neighbor Mischell. Previously based in Bangkok and a homemaker, Dhani has two children, an eight-year-old boy attending BCIS, and a three-and-half-year old girl attending a local Chinese kindergarten. Dhani has

PHOTOS: PROVIDED BY SARIKA DHANI



lived on the ground floor of her building for four years, after moving from an upper level in the same building.

For the first year living in the ground-level apartment, the then-pregnant Dhami didn't know her neighbor was also expecting a girl. After she gave birth to her daughter Kaavya, Dhami spent the majority of time getting to know the ayi and caretaker of Mischell's daughter Vivien. But as the relationship between Kaavya and Vivien blossomed, Dhami and Mischell began spending more and more time together.

"Whenever I need help with something she helps. She'll explain flyers to me or anything else I don't understand in Chinese. If she finds good deals she'll tell me. She'll help me with Taobao, calling someone, or booking help," Dhami explained.

The neighborliness isn't one-sided either. "Our daughters are like sisters.

Our doors stay open so they can play in each other's home. Her daughter eats in my home, and we treat her daughter like our own, and it's the same for them," Dhami shared.

When either neighbor returns to their hometowns, they'll bring gifts back to share. Since the girls are like sisters, if one family buys something for their daughter, they'll buy a second for their other daughter next door. "If she buys anything, she buys two, and if I buy something, I buy two. If she bought a lollipop, then my daughter would get one too."

They of course language swap, with Dhami teaching Mischell a bit of English, and Mischell teaching Dhami a bit of Chinese, and as Dhami is more connected to expat groups, she has been able to expose Mischell to a wider variety of friends.

"We used to go to each and every playgroup together, and I used to ask for special permission to take her to expat-only groups. I would explain that she's my good friend and neighbor as our daughters are so close."

Now that their daughters are getting older, Mischell started to look into international schooling for her daughter; she has often sought Dhami's advice as she makes choices about school since Dhami's son already attends BCIS. "We really try to help each other from the heart."

Dhami and Mischell have an exceptional experience in neighbors, and though their relationship is sweet, it shouldn't be the benchmark. Dhami explained it really depends on the Chinese neighbor's attitude. "There are people who don't like to get mixed up with foreign people, but we should always be nice to Chinese people." Dhami believes Chinese language is essential to a good relationship, but even without it, she suggests using a translator or even Google translate.

The work you put into language will pay off, as most of your neighbors are willing to help. They're also more likely to be in location-based WeChat groups, like secondhand buy and sells, neighborhood news and events, and parents and kids playgroups. Though similar expat groups are helpful, expats tend to be more spread out from one another than the location-based groups of your community. On top of that, neighbors are typically more knowledgeable of what type of parks, malls, and playgrounds are within short distances from your home.

To round out cultural perspectives, I asked three good Chinese neighbors for their opinions, how they have built relationships with their neighbors, and what their suggestions would be for fresh expats.

**Name:** Annie Wang

**Occupation:** Mercedes-Benz Finance Department

**Children:** 2 sons, 14 years old and 19 years old

**Hometown:** Tianjin

**Years in Beijing:** 18 years

**How long have you lived in your current apartment?** 15 years

**Number of foreign neighbors:** Currently none, but she had a few in the past who stayed nearby for one or two years.

**Summary of advice:** Wang and her husband have made themselves available to give advice when neighbors ask about marriage and child rearing but they also share food they've cooked if it's particularly tasty. Her neighbors in turn share vegetables they've grown. Wang described neighbor relationships that have evolved over time, as neighbors were closer in relation when children were younger. If an expat neighbor came by with the nostalgic plate of cookies, she would welcome the gesture, but mentioned she found it strange when expat neighbors gave their child the Chinese name Xiyangyang, the popular lamb cartoon.

**Name:** Marie Yuan

**Occupation:** Freelancer

**Children:** 1 son, 12 years old

**Hometown:** Tianjin

**Years in Beijing:** 22 years

**How long have you lived in your current apartment?** 4 years

**Number of foreign neighbors:** None

**Summary of advice:** Yuan pointed out that the closeness of neighbors depends on personalities, life stages and involvement with the property. Yuan was more involved in her community when she was an owner and when her son was younger, in a different neighborhood. In that neighborhood she was very involved, going out to eat and shopping together, forming playgroups, and participating in online forums where neighbors hashed out complaints about trash and parking. In her rental in her new neighborhood, she holds packages for her elderly neighbors during the day when they're out, but due to their significant difference in age, due to cultural respect, she doesn't know their names beyond calling them aunt and uncle. She expects expats would have difficulty with elderly neighbors without learning Chinese, as it would be awkward to elderly Chinese having such a significant barrier.

**Name:** Xiao Hong Zhao

**Occupation:** Worker at SMIC Company

**Children:** 3 girls, 9 years old, 5 years old, 3 years old

**Hometown:** Yuncheng

**Years in Beijing:** 15 years

**How long have you lived in your current apartment?** 8 years

**Number of foreign neighbors:** Six or seven have lived in her building, and even more in her neighborhood.

**Summary of advice:** Zhao is active in her community, and knows the majority of her neighbors. She frequently greets them. Her advice to expats is that they respect both their own and Chinese way of life. Chinese neighbors might find expat behaviors strange, such as owning large black dogs, but that expats should still greet their Chinese neighbors warmly. She would find it to be a surprise for foreigners to share a plate of cookies if she didn't know them before, but she does welcome neighborly behavior.

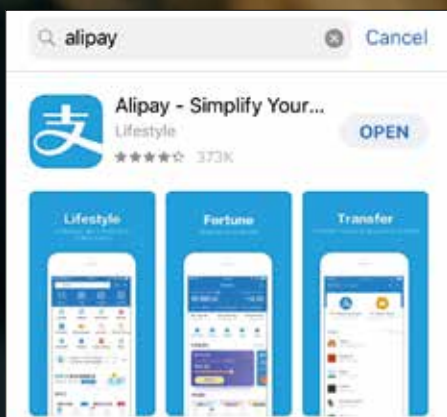
# SHOPPING LIKE A LOCAL

## How to set up Alipay and Taobao

By Wendy Xu

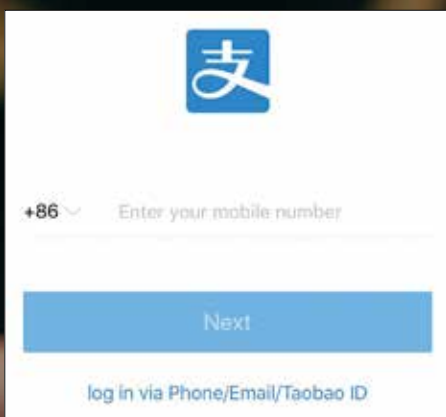
As mobile payment has become a part of people's everyday lives in China, apps like Alipay and Taobao are transforming China into a cashless society where transactions are commonly carried out via mobile devices. Alipay is one of the most-used online payment apps. Once you have connected it with your bank card, you can pay bills, transfer money, purchase services and goods, order food, or book flight or train tickets, and more. Taobao is one of the most popular online shopping platforms in China, which is owned by Alibaba. Its closest equivalent in western countries would be either Amazon or eBay.

### ► How to set up Alipay



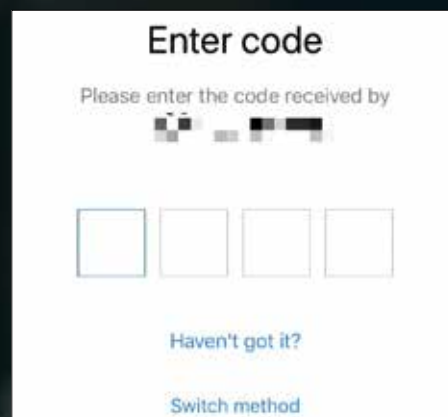
#### Step 1: Download Alipay App

Download Alipay on your phone, and open the app.



#### Step 2: Enter your phone number

As with every other app in China, you will need to enter your phone number to register an Alipay account.

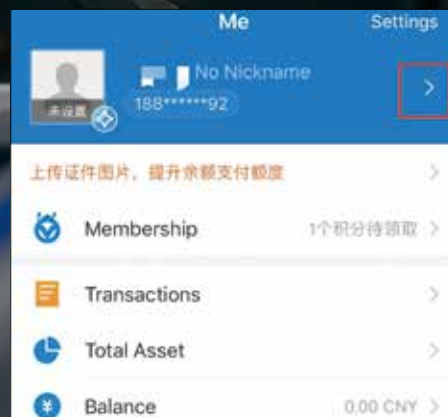
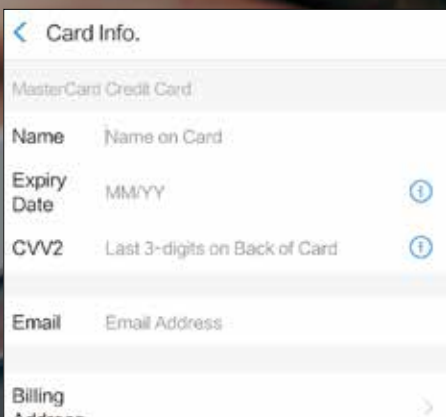


After you receive the verification code via SMS, enter it on the next screen.

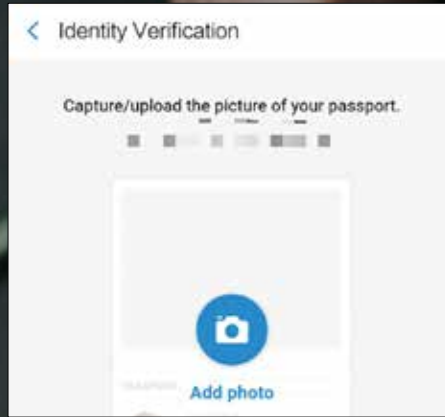
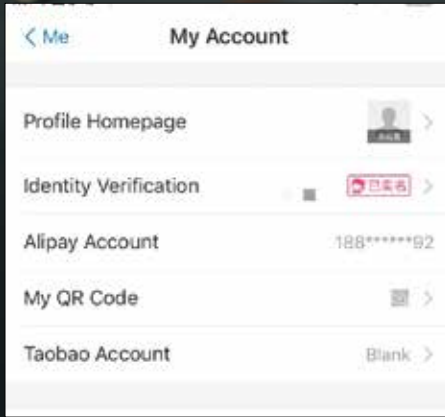


#### Step 3: Set up your payment

Tap on the "Bank Cards" button under the "Me" section to add your card(s). Note that you can only add debit cards and certain credit cards associated with Chinese banks.







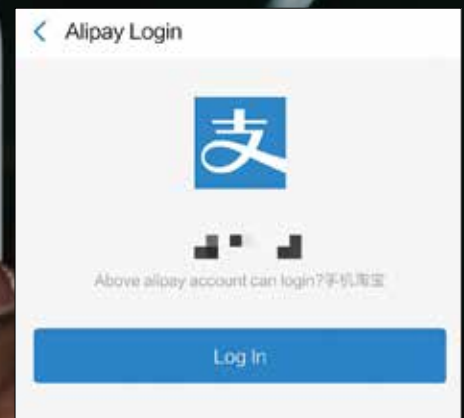
#### Step 4: Verify your identification

Click the tab to access "My Account", and then click on the option to add your passport information in "Identity verification". You will need to show a picture of your main passport page and the page with the stamp from your most recent arrival into China (the stamp you received at the airport). You will be notified about the result of the verification within 24 hours.

#### Step 5: Use your Alipay

You will receive a notification once your account has been successfully verified. You can also check "Profile" under the "Me" button. If there is a blue box which reads "已实名" (profile verified), then it's time to go outside and treat yourself with confidence!

## ► How to set up Taobao using your Alipay account



#### Step 1: Install the Taobao app

Download Taobao to your phone.

#### Step 2: Register your account in a shortcut

If you've already registered Alipay, you can register for Taobao using a shortcut. Tap the Alipay blue button at the bottom of the homescreen and you can link to your Alipay account with Taobao, making payment easy.



#### Step 3: Add your shipping address

Click the "My Taobao" ("我的淘宝") button on the bottom right corner of the home page, then click "my shipping address" ("我的收货地址") to add your shipping address. Here, you can easily add multiple addresses.



#### Step 4: Shop until you drop

Congratulations! You can now start your Taobao adventure.



# ADVISING SO YOU CAN THRIVE

A guidance counsellor's tips on Beijing life

By Nicole Bonnah



**W**e have all been there. The first time we stepped foot into our new home-away-from-home, it may have been with great anxiety and trepidation. Moving to a foreign country is challenging at the best of times, but uprooting your family and acclimatizing to a new cultural environment comes with its own set of unique tests and trials.

Families moving to Beijing have several issues to contend with once their feet touch the tarmac. Relocation can be one of the most testing times for families who have relocated their lives from one country to the next. Usually, they spend a considerable amount of time navigating their way through several transitions; not least is the issue of getting the kids settled into a new school.

Dulwich College Beijing (DCB) has been investing in several ways to help ease the strain that a family may go through when moving across shores to build a new life. Their counseling program with the support of the student body and members of faculty work together to provide a welcoming environment for new students and a support network for both them and their families.

DCB Teacher and Counselor, Karla Hawkins, shared with beijingkids first-hand knowledge of the biggest challenges faced by students and parents who have moved to Beijing,

"They have gone through a roller coaster of emotions from pure excitement and the prospect of all the new adventures ahead, to incredible lows surrounding the leaving of friends, family, and often pets."

Hawkins went on to say that most families start seeking out ways to develop some sort of normalcy after arriving. They often prioritize making efforts to recreate elements of their previous life while doing their best to cultivate friendships. However, this rush to experience some semblance of their old life often results in a family neglecting to take their time to get accustomed to the culture and way of life here, which often leads to them rushing the transitional period only to realize that some things take much longer than anticipated.

To combat some of the disappointment a student and parent might experience during the initial phase of adjustment in a new country, DCB has set up a Peer Mentoring Programme where International Baccalaureate (IB) students are trained to mentor and support Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8, and 9) students. New students in particular really benefit from this program, which offers one-to-one support. "Younger students benefit from talking to older students as they often feel that someone closer to their age understands them better than the adults in their lives," says Hawkins.

When it comes to age-specific challenges for students, there





are a few to consider for both younger and older kids. If you have young children they may tend to miss their usual routines and the comfort of their old surroundings, however, they usually adapt more quickly in comparison to older students on campus, especially if supported by parents who recreate as many of these routines as possible.

For older students establishing meaningful friendships can take time and is one of the key sources of difficulty for some as they try and develop more of a social standing in school, however, this all gets easier as older students begin to immerse themselves in extracurricular activities. "As students move into IB DP (Diploma Program) years, it gets easier again as they tend to focus more on their work and get involved in after-school activity programs," explained Hawkins.

At DCB all new students and their parents attend a New Families Orientation session the day before the rest of the student body arrives at the school for the start of the academic year; "This gives the new students an opportunity to meet their teachers and other new students ahead of the first day of school," said Hawkins. This is vital to supporting students through the initial difficult first few weeks and months and partners other awesome initiatives. These include the Early Years and Junior School summer presentation, where students are presented with a photo and a short introduction to their class teacher, and Buddy program, which involves assigning new students to a member of the student body who can help them find their feet until they are ready to go at it alone.

There is also a week-long transition program for Year 6 students who are moving from Junior School to Senior School, whereby all new and current students join DCB from other schools in Beijing to participate in helping one another to transition confidently into the new year. This, Hawkins said, is a proactive and motivational aspect of student life; "The student body is extremely welcoming and always happy to help new students. Most go above and beyond to help and support."

For the families of students attending DCB, the school organizes a "Newcomers Fair." This is an opportunity for parents and extended family to get familiar with their community, network, and ask questions. Their parent association, 'Friends of Dulwich' is very active in organizing "connection lunches," and "Bring a Friend" coffee mornings to help engage newcomers, welcome them and their families, and offer a support network made up of parents.

Acclimatization is never easy, and stringent back-up initiatives are always needed for those who may continue to struggle with their new environment. The Pastoral system at DCB deals with offering consistent and ongoing support, "The pastoral leaders work closely with the teachers and form tutors to ensure that those who are struggling have a support strategy put in place that will ensure they do acclimatize and settle in," said Hawkins.

If you and your family are struggling to settle in Beijing and wondering how your home-away-from-home will ever really feel like 'home,' then patience is the key says, Hawkins. Take your time and allow you and the kids to adapt without the added pressure of wanting to make everything happen now. Check out what kind of support services the school where your kids attend offer and ensure that you and your family take advantage of the many opportunities to participate in school and family-orientated initiatives and activities. The kids can meet and make new friends and parents can connect with other parents also needing support and advice.

Remember that the name of the game for a family transitioning into a new life abroad often involves a period of testing times. Even seasoned expats have experiences with isolation, challenges with culture, and adapting to a new environment, particularly if you are worried about how your kids are coping at school. As Hawkins put perfectly; "There is often trial and error until your child finds the right activity, but once they do, that sense of being part of a group is essential for belonging and transition."



# FOOD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Ordering takeout the easy way

Updated by Wendy Xu

There's a saying in China: 民以食为天 (mínyǐshíwéitiān), "To the People, Food Is Heaven". It's a good indication of just how serious people are in this country about food and eating. Beijing's food apps have a wide variety of whatever you might be craving to be delivered to your home at any time, and will simplify your life by giving you one less thing to think about. Here we will introduce two English-based delivery services, Sherpa's and Jinshisong, and one of the most popular Chinese-only food apps, Meituan Waimai, with some steps to help you set it up.

## English Apps

### Sherpa's

Sherpa's familiar orange scooters can be seen across the Chaoyang and Dongcheng districts. It has a large selection of partner restaurants including expat favorites such as Home Plate BBQ, Wagas, and Q Mex.

**Delivery zones:** Chaoyang, Dongcheng, Xicheng, and Haidian districts

**Delivery fee:** Starts at RMB 15 that covers the first 3.2km and increases according to distance. Sherpa's has a happy hour promotion from 2-5.30pm on weekdays, where a delivery fee of up to RMB 20 is waived for a minimum order of RMB 80.

**Average delivery time:** 45-50 minutes

**Delivery hours:** Daily 10.30am-10.30pm, closed during major holidays.

**How to order:** Download their app, check their website at [www.sherpa.com.cn](http://www.sherpa.com.cn), or contact 400 856 6209

### Jinshisong

Jinshisong 锦食送 is one of the larger delivery services for western restaurants. It has international and Chinese selections.

**Delivery zones:** Chaoyang, Dongcheng, Xicheng, and Haidian districts

**Delivery fee:** Starts at RMB 15, though many restaurants offer free delivery within 3km if you register your phone number and receive a JSS free Premier Card. There is a minimum order of RMB 60.

**Average delivery time:** 45-50 minutes

**Delivery hours:** Daily 10.30am-10.30pm

**How to order and pay:** Download the app, check their website at [www.jinshisong.com](http://www.jinshisong.com), or contact 400 900 5877. Cash or POS upon delivery, WeChat or Alipay if ordering via the app.

## Chinese-only Apps

### MeituanWaimai

Meituan Waimai (美团外卖 měituánwàimài) offers food delivery, movie tickets, shopping, various discounts, and much more. You can even access Meituan from Wechat Pay.

**Delivery zones:** Across Beijing

**Delivery fee:** This depends on the restaurant but usually doesn't exceed RMB 10. Meituan Waimai also has a minimum price range for food items that can be delivered.

**Average delivery time:** 30-60 minutes, depending on distance

**Delivery hours:** 24-hours for a limited number of restaurants, other opening hours vary by restaurant.

**How to order and pay:** Via the app. You generally need to pay using bank cards, Apple Pay, Alipay, or WeChat Wallet upon ordering, though some restaurants accept cash on delivery.

PHOTOS: WENDY XU, THE BEIJINGER.COM, UNSPLASH



## ► How to set up MeituanWaimai



### Step 1: Download Meituan Waimai

Search on "MeituanWaimai" (美团外卖 měituanwàimài) with a little yellow kangaroo logo on your phone and download it. You can also access it by tapping on the Food Delivery button on WeChat Pay (it's under "Powered by third-party operator," and you'll see the kangaroo.)



### Step 2: Register your account

Tap on the "Me" ("我的" wǒ de) button in the bottom right-hand corner to get started. Then tap the text at the top, next to the profile picture. Here, you will need to enter your phone number to get a verification code by text message (should be six digits). Enter it and continue.



### Step 3: Setting your address

Tap on the "Me" ("我的" wǒ de) page again, click the "Address" ("我的地址" wǒ de dìzhǐ) to set your address to get food delivery. When setting your address, you can use the maps function to try to best approximate your apartment building. Here, on the profile page, you can also set your name, gender, and phone number.



### Step 4: Select your meal

Go back to the Home page to select food. If you already know the food you are craving, type the name at the very top of the page; for example, type "bisa" for 比萨 (bǐ sà), and you'll get a list of pizza restaurants. Tap the first red icon which says "美食" (měi shí, "good food") to see a list of all the most popular restaurants in your area. Enjoy your meal!



# BEIJING ON THE WAY

## How to Get Around Beijing with Mobike and DiDi

By Wendy Xu

As the capital city of China, Beijing has all of the usual big-city transportation options available: bikes, buses, taxis, and subways. However, It could be difficult to utilize any of these options if you don't understand Chinese. Luckily, there are alternative methods to use when travelling around Beijing simply by using your phone and some savvy apps to make any destination in Beijing accessible.

Instead of looking for a cab on the street, it is more convenient to hail a cab on a mobile app called DiDi these days. Don't worry about

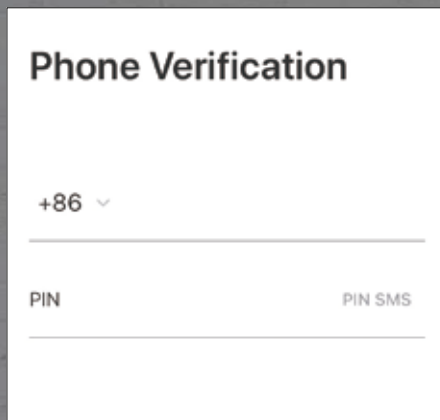
the language barriers as a new arrival, DiDi has a version for English speakers. Alternatively, if you prefer cycling around town, then don't miss out on bike sharing. Bike sharing is a cheap and convenient answer to getting around the city and has become a large market in China over the past couple of years. Currently, Mobike rules the market and their app is incredibly accessible for any English speaker. Here are some steps to show you how to set up your DiDi and Mobike to get around Beijing.

### ► How to Set Up Mobike



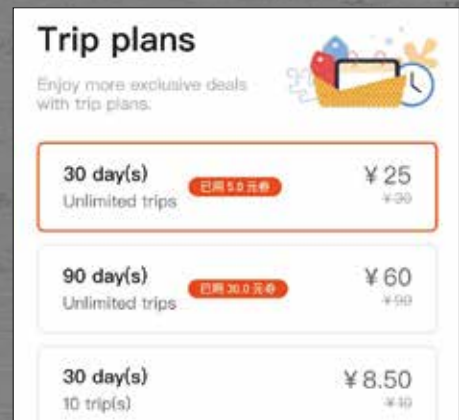
#### Step 1: Download the Mobike app

Mobike has its own English interface if your phone isn't set in Chinese. You can also use Mobike mini program on WeChat by scanning the QR code to access.



#### Step 2: Sign up on your phone

Open your Mobike app and sign in with your phone number to get a verification code. Enter the code and login. You can also sign in with your WeChat account.



#### Step 3: Top up or pay via WeChat

Renting a Mobike costs RMB 1 per half hour. You can tap "My Wallet " to purchase a Mobike card to save money, or top up your wallet. They will also often have promotions and discounts such as monthly passes that costs RMB 25.



#### Step 4: Rent a Mobike

Through the location sharing function on Mobike, you can locate all of the nearby bikes. Then scan the QR code on the bike when found, and it will unlock.



#### Step 5: Park and lock the bike

Once you arrive, park the bike at a proper location and simply lock it up. It will automatically stop the time on the app and you will be charged.



Note: As Mobike was sold to local lifestyle information and trading platform Meituan Dianping in 2018, you can also use Meituan to scan QR codes to access Mobike.



## ► How to set up DiDi English



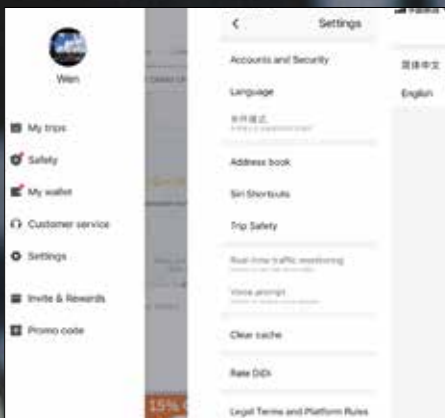
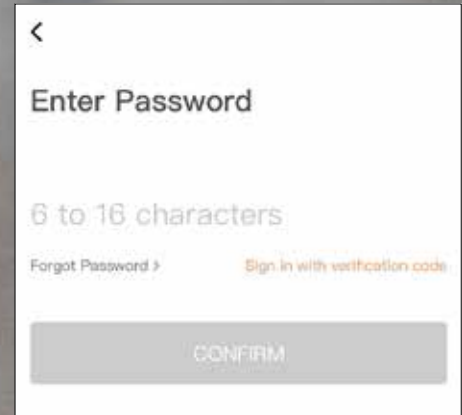
### Step 1: Install DiDi

Search for DiDi in the APP store and download it to your phone.



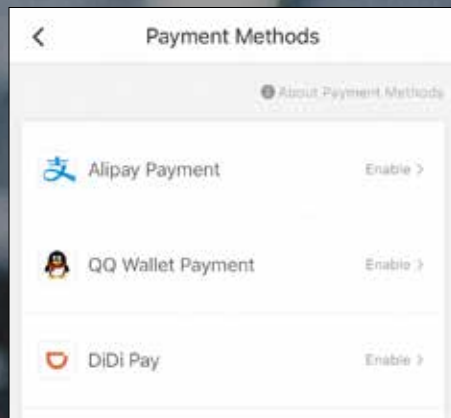
### Step 2: Sign up on your phone

Open the DiDi app and fill in your mobile number. When you enter the "enter password" page, tap "sign in with verification code" to get the code sent to your phone. Enter the code and you can choose to set up your own password for login.



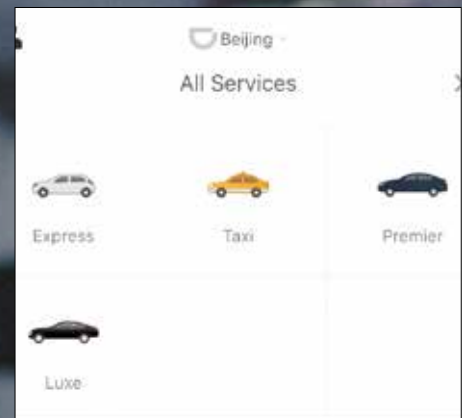
### Step 3: Set language

Go to the "settings" and change the language to English.



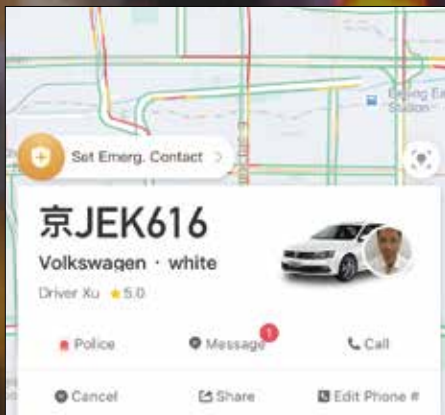
### Step 4: Set up payment

Click and enter "My wallet" page, choose "payment methods". Follow the easy instructions and set up your payment method. This can either be through WeChat or your debit card.



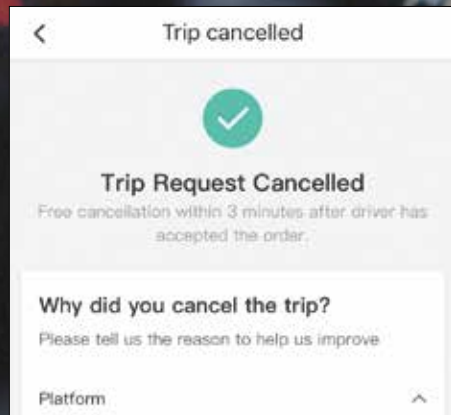
### Step 5: Call a DiDi car

Once you've completed the set up, you can now order a car through DiDi! There are four common car types on DiDi English: Express, Taxi, Premier, and Luxe cars.



### Step 6: Request a car and wait for it

You can see the model and plate number of the car at the bottom, and the real-time location of the driver to manage your time. By tapping "message", you can choose some pre-defined messages which are really helpful to avoid answering a phone call from the driver.



If you want to cancel, you can tap "cancel" and choose the reason for your cancellation. Note that you may cancel without paying a compensation fee within 3 minutes after the driver has accepted the order.



### Step 7: Pay for the ride

The driver will send your fare to your DiDi account once you arrive at the destination. You'll need to confirm the cost and choose a payment method to pay for the ride. But if you take a taxi, they will usually ask you to pay before you get out of the car.

# Out and About

How three families take advantage of living in Beijing and experiencing the great outdoors

By Pamela Djima

**T**here's no denying it, summers in this city can be brutal. So, it's not particularly difficult to empathize with those who desire to spend this season barricaded in an air-conditioned building. Perhaps you're new to Beijing, or maybe you're an old timer who has come to see that no indoor place can adequately replicate the sense of freedom and discovery that often goes with

spending time outdoors. When the perfect balance of clean air and picturesque blue skies combine to make venturing outside irresistible, it's helpful to be in the know about some tried and tested activities that are suitable for families wishing to part with the sofa. With this in mind, we spoke to three families to find out how they like to spend time outdoors in and around Beijing.

## Jogging with the Crawfords

*Terry and Gloria met in Beijing almost 16 years ago. Six years later they moved back to Beijing as a married couple, and they now live in the same part of Haidian where they first got to know each other. Together, they run InitialView, a company that interviews students who are applying for schools abroad. Terry and Gloria have three children aged 13, 12, and 9.*

### What outdoor activities do you pursue as a family?

My favorite activity is going running with my kids around Tsinghua University, every Sunday afternoon. While we often brave the wet or the cold, if the air is terrible, we don't go. Our runs tend to last for about 40 minutes, and we've been doing this for about a year.

### What made you decide to start running with your children?

I love to run, and while they have come to appreciate it, they also like complaining about it. When we are done, we always get a sports drink at 7-11 and sit down and talk. I realized that grabbing a cold drink after a "long" run and sitting on the curb somehow facilitates heart-to-heart conversations with your kids. It's great father/kid time.

### Why did you choose Tsinghua University as the venue for your running sessions?

Tsinghua is across the street from where we live. I used to live there as a student, and some parts are quite scenic, historical, and even iconic.

### Do all the children participate in these running sessions?

Our youngest, Mia, just started running with the boys and me. She did great and even complained less than the boys. They know that she's going to be the best runner of us all.



### What do the kids think about running?

My oldest protests less than his younger brother, but both are always in good spirits when we are done and admit that they were glad to have done it. The boys and I are training to run the Peachtree Road Race in Atlanta on the 4th of July. It's the 50th anniversary of this massive race, and it will be my sons' first 10K. It will be a milestone for us all, and my wife is looking forward to wishing us well from the sidelines.

### What do you especially like about running?

I think that dealing with the pain of running and having to power on through it is one of the best "life lessons" that comes from running. All of my kids have active interests (like organized sports or dance), so running is just such a great foundational activity for these other interests.



## Camping with the Fidlers



Ashley and her husband Owen hail from Australia and have two children who are aged four and 20 months old. Ashley and Owen live in Shunyi and work as teachers at the International School of Beijing (ISB). While most of keep our Beijing experience within the confines and comforts of this urban jungle, the Fidlers enjoy hitting the trail. Here's more about their experiences.

### Tell me about your experience of camping in Beijing.

The first time we went camping, we didn't know there were these caravan park things. We just went for a walk and found a piece of ground. Back in Australia, my husband and I were both outdoor teachers, that's what we did for a living, and so we were very comfortable being in the backcountry. Our daughter was three months old when we first took her camping. Camping is always going to be something that our family does, so it just makes sense. If it's something you love, you just can help but share it with your kids.

## Park-ing with the Hanaway Family

Cory and Ginelle left America for Beijing in August 2018. Cory is a stay-at-home-dad, and Ginelle is a primary school teacher. They have a three-year-old daughter and a 21-month-old son and have quickly adapted to their new life in the capital. Here's how and why they spend most of their free time seeking out the variety of green and lush public spaces that this city has to offer.

### Do you spend much time outdoors as a family?

If the air is good, we try to go outside every day. The weather isn't really a factor. We go out when it's hot, and we go out when it's cold. We just dress accordingly. It's good for kids to go outside and play because it burns their energy and the fresh air does them good. If they are stuck indoors for days on end, they tend to start damaging the house.

### Where do you go?

Sometimes we go to the zoo, or we'll go to a park. We basically just go somewhere the kids can run. We try to mix it up, so we don't go to the same place every day for a week. The destination is more to entertain me; the kids are just happy to be outdoors. There are lots of parks in Beijing. We've been to a fair percentage of them. I really like going to the Purple Bamboo Park, which is just south of the Beijing Zoo. It doesn't have any play equipment, but it has lots of shaded spots and walking trails. If I want a playground, I'll go to the zoo because they have a very nice play area there.

### What are your thoughts about taking public transport with children?

I use it almost every day. It's not that hard, but I would recommend avoiding rush hour. Quite often you'll just be given a seat because you have children with you, which makes it a little easier.

### What tips do you have for a successful camping trip with kids?

1. With very little kids, just go out for one night, then you don't have to take too many clothes and stuff. With regards to what food to bring, we have a camp stove which we use to cook. Sometimes, we'll just look at what's left in the fridge, and we'll take that. Things like pasta and tomato sauce work well.
2. Children also need to have the right clothes. If it's going to be cold, there need to be enough layers. At least one extra set of clothes so that if they get wet they can change into something dry. There almost has to be too many clothes, because being cold is the best way to be unhappy when you're camping.

### Do you have any other advice?

Decide on what type of camping you are going to do. Some campsites already have the tents set up. These usually have toilets and other home comforts. You can also go camping when you take everything yourself and walk down a trail and try and find a flat piece of land. If you're just getting into camping, I would recommend starting with a campsite.

### What are some of the benefits of camping in Beijing?

Just spending time outdoors without any entertainment and screens forces us to find entertainment in the things around us. There's also the opportunity to develop perseverance. For example, not too long ago, we went for a hike with my son, and he walked about 7-8 kilometers. For a four-year-old, I think that's pretty good. Camping also allows you to see a side of Beijing that you wouldn't usually see.



### Is there a limit to how far you will travel to reach a point of interest?

No. If there were a park in the depths of South Beijing, we would try it. It pretty much takes me an hour to get anywhere on public transportation anyway. I usually have to take a bus to the subway station and then transfer a couple of times. Even if I go to a friend's house in Haidian, magically the journey still ends up being an hour.

### When your wife is off work, what sort of outdoor activities does your family participate in?

We have participated in some day excursions, including The Great Wall and Baishishan. We also spent a few days in Tianjin. For the trip to the Great Wall, we used a tour company that is geared towards young adults. Our children were the only kids on the trip, but they were really accommodating. During our little excursions, we make sure to move at a slower pace, and pack enough diapers and snacks. We have two baby carriers, so we were able to carry the kids on our backs as we hiked along the wall. It was a very memorable experience.



# SHIPPING OUT

Helpful tips for when it's time to move on

*By Sijia Chen and updated by Kipp Whittaker*

**F**ew events inspire as much dread as moving. Packing up one's belongings and relocating within the same city is difficult enough, let alone overseas. Consider language barriers, slow Internet, and ever-changing import and export regulations, and you can start to see why China poses a special challenge for expats relocating to or from here.

Though employee benefits have decreased in recent years, some international companies still offer relocation packages and may pre-select a mover for the process. However, many families must do their own research and make the move without the help of a relocation consultant.

## Terms of Service

To begin with, many people are unclear about the differences between the terms "moving," "shipping," and "relocation." Moving is just one part of the relocation process.

Traditionally, relocation consists of moving, the home search, visa, immigration, and cross-cultural training, a moving company focuses on all of the moving aspects, and a relocation company will engage in all separate components in one way or another," he explains.

Then, there are "relocation management companies" (RMCs) which outsource different stages of the relocation process. They might contract with one company to oversee global relocation, another for immigration, and yet another for cross-cultural training; all the while, the RMC remains the single point of contact for the client.

Finally, "shipping" refers to the part of the international moving process where personal belongings and household goods are transported by sea or air freight to the destination country. Generally, air freight is quicker but more expensive while sea freight is slower but cheaper. More commonly, a moving company would be your point of contact for shipping services.

There is no best option; it all depends on your family's needs and budget. In any case, be sure to obtain quotes from at least three companies, arrange a visual survey of the belongings to be shipped, and plan ahead as much as possible.

## Preparing for the Visual Survey

The visual survey is one of the most important parts of the process. This is when an employee comes over and inventories everything your family is planning to ship.

Before the survey, cull as much as possible by donating or selling anything you do not need.

Having a tidy house and setting out everything you are planning to take can save you considerable time and money.

Expect the surveyor to open cabinets, drawers, and wardrobes. Keep in mind that the survey is by definition an estimate; this is why it is important to get several quotes. "If two moving companies have estimated a similar volume and the third is way out, then you pretty much have the answer to your question," says Forrest.

## Moving on a Budget

The best thing you can do to save money is get the process started as early as possible. For starters, there is a wealth of information online about how to organize and estimate the value of possessions before a move. During off-peak times, contacting the moving company one month in advance is fine; however, if moving during a busy month like June, getting in touch in early April is ideal.

It bears repeating that paring down your belongings ahead of time can go a long way, both financially and logistically. "This goes for anyone who is moving, not just those paying for [the relocation] themselves," says Forrest. "There are even people who can come in and help you do this."

Air or sea freight may not be worth the price for expats with smaller-volume shipments. "[For a moving company], it's the same amount of work for 4 cubic meters and 20 cubic meters – the only difference is packing. The office work and everything else that goes into helping you is the same," says Forrest. If you have soft items, he recommends packing them into check-in luggage; some people simply mail their extra belongings back home through China Post.

Watch out for hidden fees, especially if you are planning the move yourself. There are many parts to the relocation process and each stage



carries its own costs, so be sure to clarify exactly which services and conditions are included in a quote: door to door, door to port, port to port, air versus sea freight, etc.

Consider making a moving budget several months before the intended relocation date to prepare for unforeseen costs. Nomadic Matt, a blogger who has traveled to over 80 countries and author of *How to Travel the World on \$50 a Day*, recommends cutting down on unnecessary daily expenses such as Starbucks coffee. Assuming you spend USD 5 on coffee every day, that amounts to USD 150 a month or USD 1,800 per year – enough to last a single traveler around two months in southeast Asia.

### Quality Control

When comparing moving companies, be sure to check accreditations and certifications. "The primary one is called FIDI [Federation of International Furniture Removers]. Member companies must go through a quality audit and continue to be re-certified," says Forrest. FIDI's certification process is known as FIDI Accredited International Movers (FAIM).

Another certification body is the International Organization for Standardization (ISO); the main difference with FAIM that ISO companies set their own procedures and are audited by ISO based on these procedures, while FAIM sets their own standards and companies either pass them or do not.

"This includes everything from financials, to what the warehouse roof is made of, to calling the receptionist and seeing how long it takes for the office to direct you to someone who can answer your question," says Forrest. FAIM also examines the company's claims loss ratio and how quickly insurance claims are processed.

### Clearing for Takeoff

Finally two more things that families need to be aware of are the import duties on household goods and the inspection process for items that are considered to be "relics," which are defined as items made before 1949 and some Communist artifacts dating from before 1979.

While moving companies usually will have an online calculator or a similar system for estimating the import duty for various belongings, including electronics, household appliances, furniture, kitchenware, and musical instruments, remember that it's still best to minimize these items before your move.

In regards to any cultural artifacts you may have picked up during your time in China, a request for an appointment must be made weeks prior to your move and the client's name, photos of the items, item listings, and descriptions of materials (e.g. bronze, wood, stone, etc.) must be submitted before the inspection. In-home inspections can also be arranged if there are many items to be inspected and an application is submitted online with the same time delay.

Because the relics inspection stage generates so many questions, Asian Express usually goes through a PowerPoint presentation with the client after the visual survey on this topic. Fossils cannot leave the country, nor can certain pieces of Tibetan furniture and decorations – even if they are new. Some buddha statues and certain types of wood also cannot be taken out of the country. There is no such issue with Chinese art or books, unless they are deemed politically sensitive.

The final piece of advice that Chad Forrest has for expats leaving the country? "Get everything packed up two weeks before you're going to leave. Get that part of your relocation done, check into a hotel, then spend your last two weeks in Beijing having fun," he says. "I've been here for 21 years and I've had many friends leave. People who have taken that advice have really enjoyed it."



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# Animals Embarking

Helpful tips for when it's time to move on

By Andy Penafuerte III

**M**any expats wouldn't dream of moving without knowing that their beloved family pet could go with them, but the logistics and paperwork involved in relocating an animal to or from Beijing – coupled with the potential language barrier – are enough to worry even the most efficient planner. Many hire a pet relocation company, but whether you choose to outsource the process or go it alone, rest assured that relocating with pets can be straightforward with research and preparation.



**Exiting China**  
(for Beijing-based owners)



**Bringing into China**

There are two sets of processes: one for when exiting China with pets and another for rehoming animals. The timeline below shows a summary of the things to do for both actions as early as a year before the departure date.



## Rehoming Your Pets

Begin the process of finding a new home for your pet as early as possible. Even starting a year in advance is not too soon, because waiting until the last few weeks or months before departure creates panic and desperation for many pet owners. See more resources about rehoming and adoption on our website.



## Territories with strict quarantine controls

Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Singapore and other strict quarantine controls require import permits and EU ISO compliant microchips and rabies antibody titre tests.

As early as possible

12 months to at least 30 days before departure

8-12 months before departure

6 months before departure



## Vaccinations and immunity certificate

Animals departing China must be rabies vaccinated at an officially designated animal rabies vaccination hospital in China and must have the official "PRC (Beijing) Animal Health and Immunity Certificate." (e.g., vaccination red book) with the stamp/chop of the issuing hospital. Dogs must also have an A4 paper rabies vaccination certificate from the pet hospital. Owners are also recommended to keep good records of the pet's local vaccinations upon adoption or arrival in Beijing.



## Moving to EU countries and the UAE

Require EU ISO compliant microchips, rabies vaccination, rabies antibody titre testing (RATT) and at least 90-days waiting period from date of the blood draw for the RATT before pets may enter these countries.

## Moving to continental US, Canada

In a nutshell, these areas require pets to have rabies vaccination, deworming and parasite prevention. Beijing Customs and Quarantine Bureau requires all pets to have microchips in order to depart China.



## Pet Relocation Resources

**International Center for Veterinary Services (ICVS)** is a professionally managed and affordable full service, bilingual animal hospital and pet care facility. ICVS provides spay/neuter, hospitalization, boarding, and grooming and has a pet import and export service center. Open 9am-6pm daily and Wednesdays 9am-8pm. No. 13-16 Rongke Ganlan Cheng Shang Jie, Futongxi Dajie, Wangjing, Chaoyang District | 朝阳区望京阜通西大街, 融科橄榄城商街13-16号 (8456 1939/40, reception@ICVSASIA.com, www.ICVSASIA.com)

**Doctors Beck and Stone Health Care Center** is a chain of animal hospitals staffed with Western and Chinese veterinarians, nurses, and medical technicians. Branches double as emergency centers, with ambulances available for the transportation of pets. For a full list of locations, visit [www.doctorsbeckandstone.com](http://www.doctorsbeckandstone.com).

**Globy Pet Relocation** helps relocate pets from anywhere in the world, including planning, obtaining required papers, arranging flights, and delivering pets. Mon-Fri 8.30am-5.30pm. Rm 26B, Block 2, Bauhinia Court, 30 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District 朝阳区东三环北路30号紫荆豪庭2座26B (8762 5020, [beijing@globypetrelo.com](mailto:beijing@globypetrelo.com), [www.globypetrelo.com](http://www.globypetrelo.com))

**Beijing Guanshang Animal Hospital** is open daily 8.30am-10.30pm. Its 24hr emergency services are available after 5pm (including holidays). 7 Beisanhuan Zhonglu, Xicheng District 西城区北三环中路7号 (6237 1359, Chinese only: 6204 9631/9742, [yuanzhang@chinapet.com.cn](mailto:yuanzhang@chinapet.com.cn), [www.chinapet.com.cn](http://www.chinapet.com.cn))

### ✚ Mandatory exit health examination to obtain an official Exit Health Certificate

After your pets have completed rabies and all other vaccinations and have obtained the official "vaccination red books," pet owners may take their pets for the official exit health examination at the designated government Customs and Quarantine Bureau animal hospital, Guan Shang, 10-12 days prior to the animal's departure date from China.

Owners should bring the pet, the vaccination red book, passport or photocopy (one passport per pet), A4 paper rabies vaccination certificate (for dogs only), rabies antibody titre test report (for EU and other countries that require the test) and cash (about RMB 1,200+ per pet) at the time of the visit.

No more than 12 days before departure

After completing the exit health examination and receiving the official health report

Bringing a pet into China

### ✚ Animal Exit Permit

Owners may present the official health report to apply for the "International Exit Health Certificate" and the "Animal Exit Permit." Bring your "vaccination red book," the official health report, the A4 paper rabies vaccination certificate (for dogs only), rabies antibody titre test report, and your passport (or passport photocopy), and RMB 200 (exit permit fee) to the Customs and Quarantine Bureau. Pets going to the EU must be present to have microchips scanned in order to apply for the exit permit. The exit permit is usually processed within 4-6 business days and is valid for 14 days once issued. Once you receive the exit permit, pet owners should arrive at your destination countries within 10 days of the issue date.

### 🏠 Requirements

- **A work visa.** Each passport is limited to one pet.
- **Proof of a recent rabies vaccination.** The vaccine must have been administered at least 30 days but no more than 12 months before entry. These guidelines are subject to change at any time, so double-check with ICVS or your relocation company as soon as you know that you're moving to Beijing.
- **An official certificate to export your pet from your country of origin.** Every country has different regulations. Usually, it's the Agriculture or Quarantine Bureau or an equivalent government agency that oversees the import and export of animals.
- **A health certificate** issued by a government authorized veterinarian in your country of origin attesting to the health of your pet.



**Our advice to new families in Beijing:**

Make your life easier, connect with the expat community and find your mommy tribe.

**The wackiest thing that we've done in Beijing is...**

The whole three years have been wacky as heck!

**WeChat discovery that saved my life:**

Parenting groups and WeChat Pay

**Dad's date dish for mom:**

Takeaway from the Kangaroo app

**Thing that my kitchen needs to be complete:** I love my knives!

**When we leave Beijing, we'll miss...**

The friends and community

**During the weekends, we...**

Usually go to Roundabout for treasure hunting.

**In 10 words, Beijing is...**

Fast, furious, exciting, filled with good friends, and sometimes lonely

**Mom's life mantra:**

Happy and healthy

## The Manchias Leave Beijing in Style!

Text by Andy Penafuerte, photos by Uni You

Expats in Beijing come and go, but the Manchia family will leave the city with flying colors! This family of chefs have moved back to the UK, but this time, they have several suitcases worth of memories made in China! Professional chef Pauline van Hasselt, who previously graced our pages as our associate editor, has attracted a strong following in Beijing's expat women's circles with her witty and wacky narratives and tasteful cooking classes. Her husband, Joel Manchia, continues to wow guests with his culinary expertise at the Four Seasons Hotel chain in London. Their princess, 7-year-old Laila, and their furry companion Charlie, will continue brightening up everyone else's days with their antics!





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