

# EXPAT GUIDE: **CHINA**

INCLUDES BEIJING CITY GUIDE

This guide offers information and advice if you are moving to China.

Click on the different tabs to find out about anything from tax rules and banking to education and cultural highlights.

You can also read our city guides for [Guangzhou](#) and [Shanghai](#).



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## Moving to China

One wouldn't think that China is only taking measured steps towards capitalism. For expats moving to China, the country represents an opportunity-filled frontier of international business. Skilled expats are swayed to China to be at the forefront of the rapid growth and inherent changes in the country.

Although China is an immense country, expats in China inhabit only a selection of major coastal cities, namely Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Xiamen and Hong Kong. These cities, acclimatising to international business, have attracted not only eager expats but waves of Chinese job hunters from deep within the mainland. Consequently, the cities are increasingly becoming sprawling metropolises packed with rural populations.

While this can make for surprising diversity, drawbacks of rapid growth (such as pollution and uninspired building developments) can define large parts of the cities. Yet amid the rapid development, expats can experience a Chinese way of life still centred around familiar values and traditional family structures.

Whether moving to China for business opportunity or for novelty, the new culture and settling cities can cause unexpected difficulties for expats. While moving to China offer higher than average incomes and active expat communities it can be difficult to get used to the huge jostling crowds, bureaucracy and general tensions of the new culture. The complex layers of China's cities provide expats and Chinese people with a colourful culture and new way of life.

### Shipping and removals

When shipping to China it is advisable to get quotes from several companies. Shipping from the UK takes around seven weeks, and about four to five weeks from the US. Air freight is a popular and much faster way to ship smaller cargo although prices for equivalent sizes are much more expensive than by sea. Sea cargo is charged by the size of the container and can vary from company to company. Air freight on the other hand is often billed by weight. It is a good idea to buy insurance on shipped cargo. China levies various taxes depending on the type of imported goods.

### Bringing pets to China

Two certificates are needed to bring pets into China. An international health certificate must be given to the pet's owner by a veterinarian within thirty days before the pets are imported. A vaccination certificate is also needed but may be included in the international health certificate. This ensures all vaccinations are covered and up to date. There is a 30-day quarantine period after arrival although the pet may be allowed to spend this time in the owner's residence.

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## Working in China

Below you will find information about:

- [Visas and work permits](#)
- [Business culture](#)
- [Public holidays](#)
- [Banking](#)
- [Taxes](#)

China has the world's second largest economy, which is increasingly opening to foreign investment. Expats represent both foreign companies that are diving into the Chinese economy and to international companies that have large offices in China. Expats have traditionally taken upper management and senior level jobs in IT, human resources, finances, accounting, foreign banking and manufacturing. Other fields in need of skilled workers and trying to entice a larger expat workforce are pharmaceuticals, research and development and engineering. Still the largest sector of expats within China are low-paid English teachers. Increasingly expats are coming to China to work in middle management positions in large companies.

Relocation packages are smaller than they were a few years ago, but many expats can still expect help with housing costs, airfare, health insurance and some tax payments. Expats hired from within China should expect much lower salaries and fewer benefits.

Almost all expat jobs are found in the major cities which all have large expat business communities. Speaking Mandarin is a big advantage and a way to secure a higher-paying job. Many international companies use English in everyday affairs and many expats get by without Mandarin.

### Visa and work permits

Work visas must be applied for at an embassy before arriving in China. Residence permits are applied for from within the country. Most expats coming to work in China are employed by a company already. They are typically familiar with the work visa process and, thankfully, much of the paperwork must be completed by the employer.

After the company completes the initial paperwork, including certification ensuring the health of the employee, a visa notification letter is sent to the applicant which must be forwarded to the nearest embassy along with a visa application, passport, photos, birth certificate and the medical examination certificate.

Shortly after arriving, employees have to register with the Public Security Bureau which requires most of the same documents. After 30 days in China expats will apply for a type of residence permit which depends on how long they plan on staying in china. If you are on a travel visa and are offered a job it is often possible to apply for an employment visa from within the country. Family members must go through the same process for visas. This can be a tedious and confusing process and it may be worth hiring an agency to help with the process.

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Opening a bank account in China is recommended as withdrawing money from an overseas account via ATMs incurs expensive fees. To open a bank account expats need their visa, proof of residence, passport and patience to stand in long queues for a fairly straightforward application process. Often it is possible to connect with an overseas bank account allowing for money transfers between two accounts.

Information provided by banks is often written in Chinese and it is a good idea to either ask for an English translation or bring along a Chinese reader. While Chinese banks will provide new account holders with a debit card which works at the many ATMs in major cities, paying for goods in stores is usually done with cash. The withdrawal limits are lower than in Europe or the US. For the big spenders, opening two accounts doubles the withdrawal amount.

## Taxes

Expats living in China between one and five years must pay taxes on income derived from China and on income brought into the country. Those living in the country for less than one year only have to pay taxes on income derived from China.

China taxes expats on their total worldwide income only when they have lived in the country for at least five years. However, if the individual also pays taxes abroad, it can be deducted from the Chinese tax. For many expats who live in both China and a separate country the total days spent inside China are used to determine tax status.

Incomes over 4,800 Chinese Yuan (RMB) are taxed at a progressive rate which can reach 45 percent of income for top tax brackets. Tax laws change often and it is important to keep up to date as the country has been increasingly concerned with tracking expat taxes. As in any country the tax laws are complex and may be better dealt with through a tax planner. Companies should help newly hired employees register for the tax system.

## Business culture

Chinese people are punctual and it is considered rude to be late for business meetings. It is customary when meeting someone for the first time to shake hands and say "ni hao", which means "how are you".

When giving or receiving a gift or business card, it is customary to hold it with both hands. Chinese people consider gifts as an important show of courtesy.

Business hours are Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm and expats can relax as a five-day week is more normal in larger cities.

## Public holidays

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Founder Day of the Republic of China	1-3 Oct	1-3 Oct

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## Living and culture

Below you will find information about:

- [Culture shock](#)
- [Cost of living](#)
- [Language](#)
- [Being a female expat in China](#)
- [Local customs](#)
- [Is the internet censored?](#)

For information about Bupa International healthcare [click here](#).

### Culture shock

One of the biggest challenges expats report is the indiscreet focus of attention westerners experience in restaurants or walking down streets. Furthermore, there is also an obvious mark-up for products sold to foreigners which can frustrate expats who otherwise try to be part of the community. Others can feel too much part of the community as enormous and dense crowds push and pack into public transportation or crowded sidewalks. Living in densely packed areas is often the largest cultural difference of life in China's cities.

When shopping, it is customary to bargain for goods and the first offered price isn't expected to be accepted. This isn't the case in most shopping malls that are often mirror images of western shopping centres.

Also part of everyday life are long queues and the bureaucracy you face in places such as banks and hospitals.

Many of China's cities have high levels of pollution and it is common to wear a face mask to filter the pollution when walking in the city.

### Cost of living

The cost of living in China is much lower than in western countries although certain aspects of life in major cities can be comparable.

Accommodation in the downtown districts of Beijing and Shanghai can be expensive although cheaper smaller accommodation is usually easy to find. Many relocated expats can experience luxuries that are too expensive in their home country, such as maid service or nannies, with some expats even hiring a car and driver.

### Language

Most of the general population can't speak English. This makes a basic Mandarin vocabulary necessary for ordering food, purchasing goods or asking for directions. Knowing Mandarin, even the rudiments of the grammar, is also a large bonus for employment in any company in China.

Mandarin is very different from western languages and the written characters are separate from the spoken language.

Cantonese is mainly spoken in Hong Kong, Macau and the Guangdong Province.

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### **Being a female expat in China**

Living in China can be a challenge for women because of strong gender stereotypes. Becoming a member of a women's club can ease some of the tension:

- Guangzhou Women's International Club: [www.gwic.org](http://www.gwic.org)
- Expatriate Professional Women Society: [www.epws-shanghai.org](http://www.epws-shanghai.org)
- Article on woman managers in China: [www.beijingscene.com/...](http://www.beijingscene.com/...)

### **Local customs**

Chinese people have three names: The first being their surname or family name. As a result expats should prepare themselves for being called by their surnames. For clarity surnames may be underlined when written down and when addressing Chinese people. Expats should do so beginning with their surname, using official titles.

Foreigners should carry ID at all times as spot checks are common, and failure to show ID will result in a fine or detention.

### **Is the internet censored?**

The Chinese government has censored websites it deems subversive. Foreign news sites, such as CNN and the New York Times, are often accessible for a short period of time and then blocked again. This is an ongoing controversy and levels of enforcement and effectiveness change often.

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## Education and schools

Below you will find information about:

- [International schools in China](#)
- [Chinese private schools and bilingual schools](#)
- [Public schools in China](#)
- [Home schooling in China](#)
- [Links to schools](#)

### International schools in China

Most expats living in China still prefer to send their children to an international school. These institutions are not in short supply, and they tend to be the obvious choice for those searching for a quick transition for their student.

Most of these schools follow an International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum or the curriculum taught in their respective country. Standard coursework is often coloured with elements of local learning, and many of the schools teach Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) to children from a young age. The primary teaching language is usually English or the language of the respective home country.

International schools in China come in many different shapes and sizes and have pupils from all over the world. One common feature connecting all international institutions is a very high annual tuition fee. Depending on the school and the age of the student, costs can rival that of a US university.

Expats moving to China should make an extra effort to negotiate an education allowance in their package if one is not already included. Even if your employer agrees to shoulder the sky-high costs, admissions to these schools can be competitive and the most popular schools may even have waiting lists. Interviews, placement tests and a general application are among admission requirements, so it is best to start correspondence from your home country if possible.

### Chinese private schools and bilingual schools

Some private schools in China are expensive mirror images of their state-sponsored counterparts, but others may integrate parts of foreign and IB curriculum and may even offer instruction in English as well as Chinese. Alternative learning schools, like Montessori and Waldorf, also fall into this category.

These schools tend to attract pupils from a diverse but well-to-do background; as well as many local children who's standardised test scores did not qualify them for one of the more reputable public schools. Tuition tends to be more expensive than that of public schools, but still lower than those of the international schools.

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### **Public schools in China**

As the Chinese economy continues to grow and the expat population consequently expands, more and more foreigners are sending their children to public schools in China. Families are slowly becoming more forthcoming about their permanence in the Far East and those pushing down roots want their children to become as well assimilated as possible.

The best institutions uphold a high-standard, and are often more competitive and more rigorous than those found in an expat's home-country. Foreigners who choose this option should be aware that Chinese schools do not have second language programs; all lessons and coursework will be in Chinese, with few concessions made for foreign students. Furthermore, the teaching style tends to centre less around critical thinking and more on teaching by rote.

Tuition costs for these schools vary, but even the most expensive institution will be cheaper than that of an international school.

### **Homeschooling in China**

Many expats living in China find their children's education options constrained by their own financial status. Specifically, couples who have migrated to the East to teach English simply can't scrape the necessary amount of money together to send their kids to a school that suits their standards.

Homeschooling is both a plausible and popular option for many, and it's common for the larger cities to have home-schooling groups in place as support systems for parents and students.

Though school is compulsory for Chinese citizens, it is not compulsory for foreigners; thus homeschooling is perfectly legal in China for expat children of any age.

Those who choose this option will need to bring all necessary learning materials and textbooks with them. There is only a very limited selection of English literature in China, and it tends to be costly.

### **Links to schools**

Click on the cities for links to international schools:

- [Beijing](#)
- [Guangzhou](#)
- [Shanghai](#)

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## Useful information

Below you will find:

- [A summary of useful information](#)
- [Embassy contact details](#)
- [Useful links](#)
- [Climate: Beijing](#)
- [Climate: Shanghai](#)

### Useful information

**Standard time zone:** GMT + 8 hours.

**Currency:** The Renminbi (CNY, ¥), meaning "The People's Currency", is the official currency of China. It is also referred to as yuan. The units are yuan, jiao and fen although Fen has almost disappeared. 1 yuan is equal to 10 jiao and to 100 fen. You can check the latest exchange rates here: <http://www.xe.com/>

**Electricity:** The electric current in China is 220 volts, 50Hz. Different types of plugs are used but the two-pin flat blade and oblique three-pin flat blade plugs are common and expats should make sure they have compatible adapters.

**Safety:** China is safe in terms of violent crime. Expats usually feel safe to walk home at night in major cities, although obvious risks and bad neighbourhoods should be avoided. Expats have to be careful in crowds as they can be victims of petty crimes, such as pick-pocketing and scams. The largest danger to expats is food safety as many people suffer from disease and bacteria resulting from unclean or improperly cooked foods.

Expats should also be aware of the risk of heavy rains and typhoons, which cause hundreds of deaths each year, particularly around the areas bordering the Yangtze River.

**Communications:** The outgoing telephone code is 00 followed by the relevant country code (eg 0027 for South Africa) and the international access code for China is +86. International direct dialling is available in most major cities and phone cards are widely available. Expats will find that mobile phone networks are very advanced and mobile phone operators use GSM 900 networks and have roaming agreements with most non-North American international operators. Internet cafes and high speed broadband ADSL internet are found in most major cities.

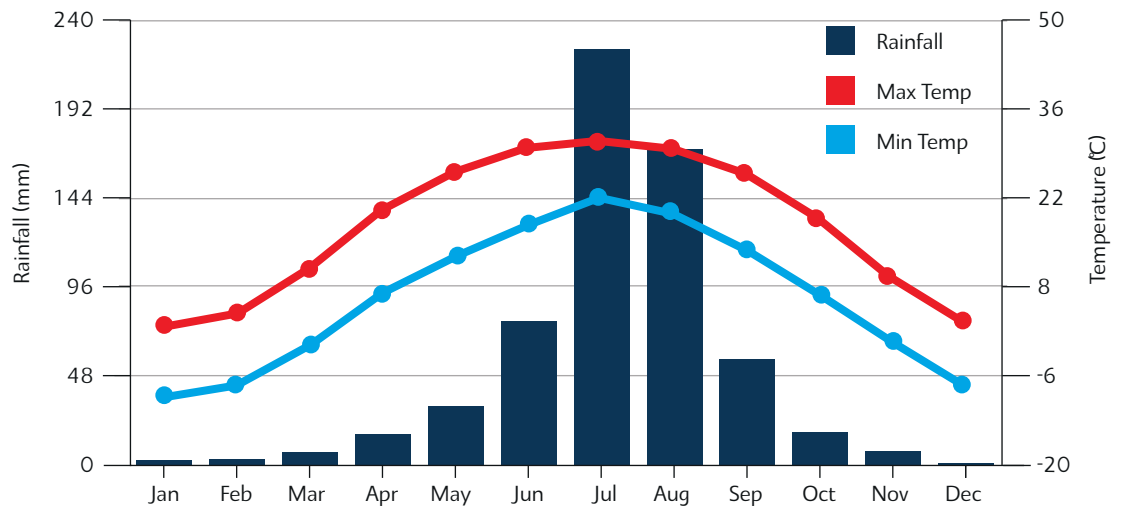
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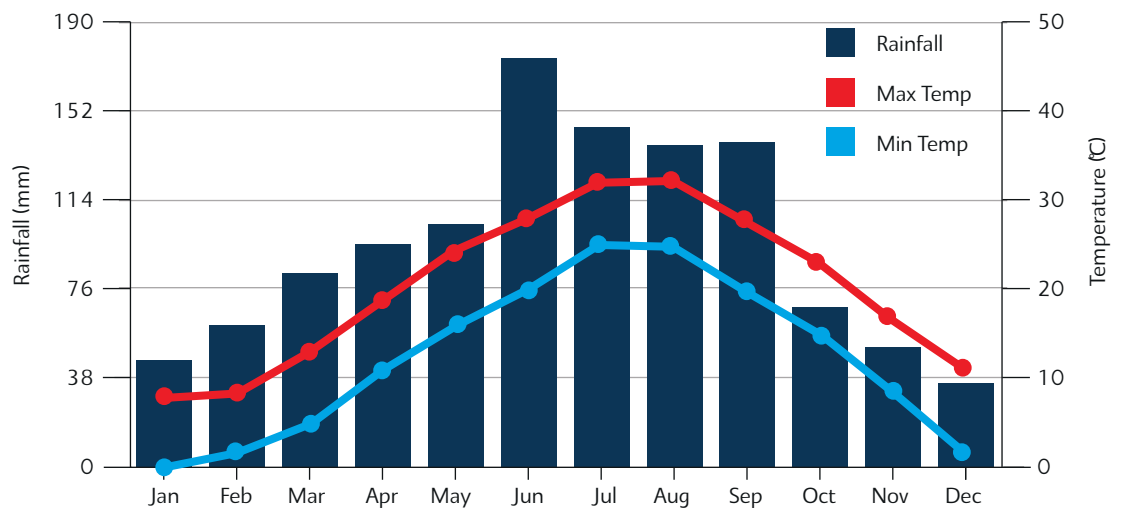
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**Climate:** China covers extensive territory and the weather differs from region to region. The south-east can be very wet with high temperatures all year round. In the central Yangtze and Huaihe River valleys extreme temperatures can be experienced with hot summers and very cold wet winters. The north is dry with sunny summers and long cold winters, while the coast is humid with a risk of monsoons during summer.

## BEIJING



## SHANGHAI



### Embassy contact details

China Embassies:

- Chinese Embassy, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 328 2500
- Chinese Embassy, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7299 4049
- Chinese Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 789 3434
- Chinese Embassy, Canberra, Australia: +61 (0)2 6273 4780
- Chinese Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 431 6500
- Chinese Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 260 1119
- Chinese Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 472 1382

Foreign Embassies in China:

- United States Embassy, Beijing: +86 (0)10 8531 3000
- British Embassy, Beijing: +86 (0)10 8529 6600
- Canadian Embassy, Beijing: +86 (0)10 5139 4000
- Australian Embassy, Beijing: +86 (0)10 5140 4111
- South African Embassy, Beijing: +86 (0)10 6532 7323
- Irish Embassy, Beijing: +86 (0)10 6532 2691
- New Zealand Embassy, Beijing: +86 (0)10 8532 7000

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## Useful links

- Wordtravels.com has an extensive travel guide to China: <http://wordtravels.com/Travelguide/Countries/China>

### Banking, Money and Taxes in China:

- List of Chinese banks: [www.portalino.it/banks/cn.htm](http://www.portalino.it/banks/cn.htm)
- HSBC: [www.hsbc.com.hk/1/2/hk/personal](http://www.hsbc.com.hk/1/2/hk/personal)

### Taxes in China:

- Tax information: [www.chinatax.gov.cn/n6669073/n6669133/6886066.html](http://www.chinatax.gov.cn/n6669073/n6669133/6886066.html)
- Tax advisor: [www.lehmanlaw.com/professionals/tax-advisors.html](http://www.lehmanlaw.com/professionals/tax-advisors.html)

### Working in China:

- Chinese job listings: [www.zhaopin.com](http://www.zhaopin.com)
- Chinese job listings: [www.chinahhr.com](http://www.chinahhr.com)

### Work Permits for China:

- Visa agency: [www.mychinavisa.com](http://www.mychinavisa.com)
- Visa agency: [chinavisaservice.org](http://chinavisaservice.org)

### Shipping and Removals to China:

- Allied Pickfords: [www.alliedpickfords.com.cn](http://www.alliedpickfords.com.cn)
- [www.shipit.co.uk/International\\_Removals\\_China.htm](http://www.shipit.co.uk/International_Removals_China.htm)
- Air Freight: [www.worldfreight.co.uk/commair.asp](http://www.worldfreight.co.uk/commair.asp)
- Shipping and removal company: [www.kellysuts.com](http://www.kellysuts.com)
- Pet relocation: [www.aemovers.com.hk](http://www.aemovers.com.hk)
- Shipping services: <http://www.shipping-international.com/>

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# EXPAT GUIDE: **BEIJING**

This guide offers information and advice if you are moving to Beijing.

Click on the different tabs to find out about anything from tax rules and banking to education and cultural highlights.



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## Moving to Beijing

A short walk around Beijing is a time capsule of Chinese history: the Forbidden City evokes ancient dynasties, Tiananmen Square a reminder of the defining years of Chinese repression, and new Olympic buildings serve as elegant symbols of China's arrival on the world stage.

As with many Chinese cities, moving to Beijing is exciting because of its ferocious entrance into the international community. As Beijing's economy shakes off government regulation, international companies vie to hold on. Yet for all of the furious development and sprawling districts, central Beijing is also steeped in ancient architecture and impressive centres of government, providing a sobering counterpoint to the city's capitalist frenzy.

Expats usually need to make adjustments to an environment that isn't always as accommodating as other international cities. Large cultural hurdles can feel separating from the Chinese. The city's density can feel claustrophobic and pollution on top of frenetic traffic can add to the frustrations. The city of Beijing is aware of the problems and since the 2008 Olympics it has done an impressive string of initiatives to improve air quality.

Beijing encompasses an enormous 6,500 square miles (16,800 sq km) and is home to almost 22 million people (2010). This has created smaller city-like districts within, from expat suburb communities to sprawling, shapeless developments. Yet, at its heart is the political and cultural centre to all of China.

### Shipping and removals

Shipping to Beijing should be a straight forward process through an agency offering door to door service. Depending on where the cargo is originally from the transportation should take between four and eight weeks. Often it is cheaper to buy new furnishings in Beijing rather than pay for long distance shipping. For smaller and lighter items the fastest way of shipping to Beijing is with air transport, although there are size and weight limitations and it can be quite expensive. It is a good idea to buy insurance on shipped goods which can be damaged in transport.

### Bringing pets to Beijing

Dogs and cats in Beijing need necessary health certifications and they need to be quarantined, often at the owner's house, for thirty days. There is a restriction in the city centre on the size of dogs, making suburban areas popular with pet owners.

### Links

- Beijing Shipping company: [http://www.alibaba.com/...](http://www.alibaba.com/)
- Shipping and removal company: [http://www.shipit.co.uk/...](http://www.shipit.co.uk/)
- Air Freight: [http://www.worldfreight.co.uk/...](http://www.worldfreight.co.uk/)
- Shipping and relocation company: <http://www.aemovers.com.hk/>
- Pet relocation: [http://www.aemovers.com.hk/...](http://www.aemovers.com.hk/)
- Shipping services: <http://www.china.shipping-international.com/>

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## Working in Beijing

Below you will find information about:

- [Visas and work permits](#)
- [Banking, money and taxes](#)
- [Business culture](#)
- [Public holidays](#)

Beijing has traditionally been the cultural and political centre with both Hong Kong and Shanghai being better known as the economic centres. Beijing, however, has a large manufacturing industry producing high-tech equipment and a large financial sector, including both Chinese and foreign companies, which drives much of the city's economy. While Shanghai houses the headquarters of many established international companies, Beijing has begun a new role as a start-up businesses centre.

Indicative of the city's desire to do international business are the large number of English language schools. These employ a large community of expat English teachers, and are the easiest places to find employment in Beijing. Teaching wages are usually below those of other expat jobs. Expats hired or relocated from overseas will typically have a much higher salary and more relocation benefits than expats hired from within Beijing.

It's important to note that a Chinese work permit is needed for an expat to work in Beijing.

### Visa and work permits (China)

Work visas must be applied for at an embassy before arriving in China. Residence permits are applied for from within the country. Most expats coming to work in China are employed by a company already. They are typically familiar with the work visa process and, thankfully, much of the paperwork must be completed by the employer.

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Moon Festival	12 Sept	30 Sept
Founder Day of the Republic of China	1-3 Oct	1-3 Oct

### Links

- Job listings: [Foreignhr.com](http://Foreignhr.com)
- Job listings: [www.chinajob.com](http://www.chinajob.com)
- Chinese Business newspaper: [www.thechinaperspective.com](http://www.thechinaperspective.com)

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## Living and culture

Below you will find information about:

- [Accommodation](#)
- [Expat areas](#)
- [Will the communist government affect me?](#)
- [Pollution](#)
- [Weather](#)

For information about Bupa International healthcare [click here](#).

### Accommodation

When choosing a neighbourhood in Beijing it is a good idea to decide what elements of life need to be closest at hand. Beijing is an enormous city and knowing about and finding accommodation is often best done by professionals. Usually the landlord pays the commission to the property finding agency.

Almost all of the housing available in the Beijing city centre is apartments, and most are not exorbitantly spacious. Most expats put high priority on having an apartment with a modern kitchen (with counters, refrigerator, and storage, along with the standard sink and a stove top), and many old-style Beijing flats aren't exactly accommodating in this department.

There are houses available outside of the city centre, and these will have far more familiar amenities.

### Expat areas

There are two main expat districts, each with smaller communities within, that are divided between downtown city life and suburban style communities. Chaoyang is a popular up-scale central district favoured with expats preferring to be close to the financial districts and the city centre. Accommodation is mostly high-rise apartments which is usually preferred by those expats without families.

Expats with children often feel better suited in Shunyi, a western style suburb full of gated communities. Here expats have a familiar setting including western shops, supermarkets, wide streets and international schools. These can be insular and safe communities but come with potentially long commutes into the city centre.

### Will the communist government affect me?

Not really, for most foreigners living in Beijing the communist government means a bit more red tape to deal with. Certain websites may be blocked while books and films can be banned. This can be frustrating, but the government is unlikely to feel repressive to non-citizens.

### Pollution

Beijing has a history as one of the most polluted cities in the world and the air pollution is difficult to escape. But in the later years China has spent 17 billion US dollars in a large scale Beijing green drive involving natural gas buses, building of subways and planting trees.

The air quality has improved and is a bit cleaner farther away from the city centre. Wearing a face mask is still common when outside.

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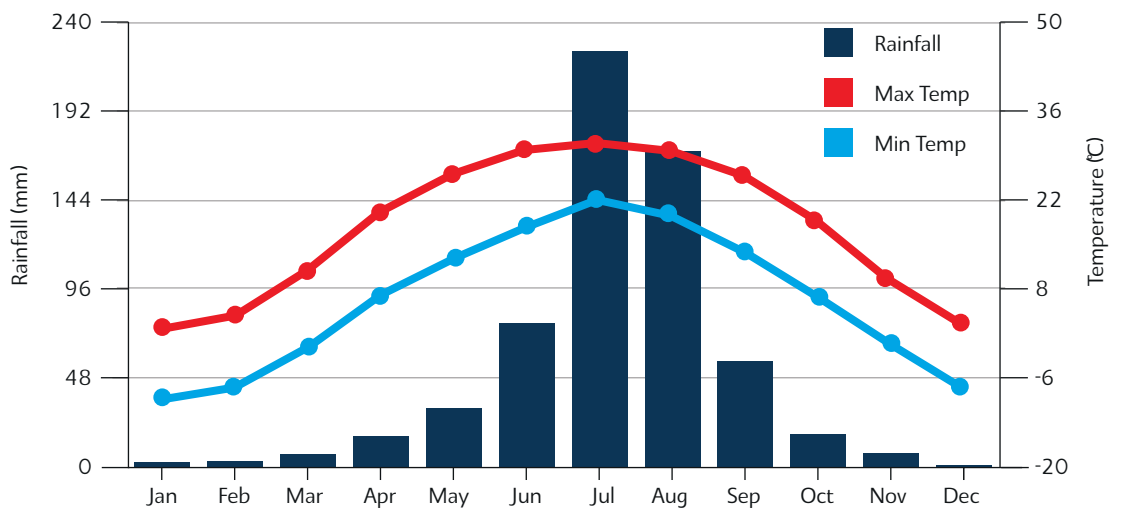
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### Weather

Falling in the monsoon region, Beijing's summers are hot and wet, while winters are very cold and dry. The summer months, especially July and August, are prone to sudden evening downpours so it is a good idea to keep an umbrella nearby. Spring and autumn tend to be mild and pleasant with the autumn foliage being a major highlight.

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## See and do

Below you will find about:

- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Restaurants](#)
- [Attractions for kids](#)
- [See and do](#)
- [Shopping](#)
- [Nightlife](#)
- [Annual events](#)

### Lifestyle

Beijing is a friendly and historical city brimming with wonderful attractions and activities. Beijing features a vibrant nightlife and a wide variety of restaurants, entertainment venues, world-class sports facilities and spas.

### Restaurants

Beijing boasts a multitude of restaurants serving every imaginable kind of cuisine under the sun. From the famous Peking duck to 'mysterious' fillings in a street side soup, the food in Beijing incorporates styles from all across the mainland. Many of Beijing's hotels recruit some of the world's finest chefs making room for some interesting restaurants with inventive fusion cuisine.

### Attractions for kids

Take the kids to discover the nearby iconic Great Wall of China, spend the day at the interactive Sony ExploraScience Museum or explore the Underground City. Alternatively, take the little ones to enjoy the climbing apparatus, jungle gyms, pools, swings and seesaws at Fundazzle - a fabulous indoor children's playground - or take them to see some of the world's most famous and iconic attractions at Beijing World Park.

### See and do

With more than just a few eye-catching structures, new residents of the city should visit the National Stadium, better known as the Bird's Nest, the National Grand Theatre, Tiananmen Square and the Great Wall of China. The Forbidden City is also a fabulous way to learn about the country's past as is the Chairman Mao Mausoleum.

**Summer Palace:** Built in 1750 by the Emperor Qianlong. A walk through the Summer Palace and its breathtaking gardens is a must, not only to learn a bit about the history of Beijing and its emperors, but also for the beautiful surroundings. Marvel at the grand courtyard, the Hall of Benevolent Longevity, the Hall of Jade Ripples, and the Hall of Joyful Longevity.

**Forbidden City:** The biggest and best preserved complex of ancient buildings in China, the Forbidden City began construction in 1407 and was off-limits to the rest of the world for the next 500 years as the emperors lived in seclusion. Now the city is open to the public and new residents of Beijing should take a peek into the city's past. [www.dpm.org.cn/english/default.asp](http://www.dpm.org.cn/english/default.asp)

**Beihai Park:** This exquisite haven is the perfect place to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. With sprawling gardens, colourful pavilions and detailed temples the Beihai Park is an ideal place to spend the day relaxing with a picnic and a good book.

**Chairman Mao Mausoleum:** Chairman Mao Zedong requested he be cremated when he died in 1976 but at the last minute it was decided that he would instead be embalmed. Visitors to the mausoleum can view the Great Helmsman.

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**798 Space:** One of Beijing's most prominent art galleries, this former electronics factory houses some seriously cool works of art and all the latest from China's contemporary scene.

[www.798space.com](http://www.798space.com) / Tel: (0)10 5978 9180

**Beijing Aquarium:** Come and meet the marine life that can be found off the Chinese shore and elsewhere around the world. With everything from piranhas to sharks, there's enough marine life to keep new residents of Beijing captivated and mesmerised for hours.

Tel: (0)10 6217 6655

**The Underground City:** This bomb shelter built underneath Beijing's streets was virtually forgotten for more than 20 years but since 2000 it has become a popular tourist attraction for locals and visitors to the city.

Tel: (0)10 6702 2657

**The Beijing National Stadium:** Known as the "Bird's Nest" because of its appearance, this massive stadium was built for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and is still a popular attraction for locals and visitors to the city.

### **Shopping**

Beijing may not be known for its fabulous shopping and designer stores but a trip to the Xiu Shui Jie Shopping Mall or the Xiu Shui Market will reward even the most seasoned shopper, but be prepared to haggle for everything from fake designer labels to clothing and bags. Head to the area around Wangfujing Dajie for department stores or to the Xidan for electronics. The Hong Qiao Market is a good place to bargain for cheap no-name or fake brand electronics, sunglasses, batteries, watches and jewellery.

### **Nightlife**

Beijing's nightlife is surprisingly vibrant with a wide range of nightclubs, karaoke bars and cocktail lounges. The Hou Hai Bar Area is where many of Beijing's expats hang out – plenty of fun can be had along this lakeside nightlife hub.

### **Annual events**

**Beijing Music Festival (October):** Lasting almost the entire month of October, the Beijing Music Festival which sees orchestras, soloists and opera houses from around the world come together in a celebration of classical music.

**Great Wall Marathon (May):** Each year two races take place on one of the longest man-made structures in the world, the Great Wall of China. Residents of Beijing should head down to the wall to cheer on the runners in either the 3 mile (5km) or 6 mile (10km) race which take part on the some of the steepest sections of the wall.

**Meet in Beijing Arts Festival (April/May):** Each year the Meet in Beijing Arts Festival takes on a different theme with nearly 10,000 artists from around 80 countries coming together to present scores of performances to an ever growing audience.

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## Education

Below you will find information about:

- [Education and schools](#)
- [Links to international schools](#)

### Education and schools

Expat children will most likely attend one of the many international schools in Beijing. The city has the mainland's top international schools. Although most international schools teach in English some are in other languages, including French, Japanese or German. Expats should begin the school application process as soon as they can to avoid being wait-listed for the preferred schools.

Many international schools are located in suburban areas of Beijing such as Shunyi which can be a long commute from the city centre. Kindergarten and lower educational centres can be found easily in the city centre. Tuition is typical of international schools around the world and generally becomes more expensive as the student gets older.

### Links to international schools

- Information of international schools: [www.beijingscene.com/...](http://www.beijingscene.com/)
- International School of Beijing: [www.isb.bj.edu.cn](http://www.isb.bj.edu.cn)
- Beijing City International School: [www.bcis.cn](http://www.bcis.cn)
- Adult expat classes: [www.beijing-classes.com/...](http://www.beijing-classes.com/)

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